

# PROLETARIAN UNITY



Theoretical and political journal  
of the Marxist-Leninist Organization  
of Canada IN STRUGGLE!

No. 22 (vol. 4, no. 4), October-November-December 1980

Analysis  
of the referendum  
results (p. 11)

## Poland

### The failure of the regime

## Note from the editor

### Inflation affects us all, even the journal

We have written it often enough in the past four years — we even put it on the cover of our last issue: there is an economic crisis in Canada and throughout the world. Today, we have to face the fact that this crisis affects the journal as well. This means that we will have to raise the price of PROLETARIAN UNITY from \$1.50 to \$2.00 a copy. That may seem a bit expensive, but we have no choice.

The price of the journal has remained unchanged since the publication of the first issue in 1976. It is obvious, nonetheless, that costs have shot up in the field of publishing just as they have everywhere else. As a matter of fact, our production costs have increased 40% over this period. Given these costs, we are therefore obliged to readjust the price of the journal. Even at \$2.00, however, it costs much less than most other journals of this kind.

And \$2.00 a copy just barely covers production costs of PROLETARIAN UNITY. Producing a publication involves more than writing it; it has to be typeset, proofread, the pages laid out, the photographs developed, negatives and plates made, printed, collated, cut and shipped throughout the country. All this takes time, energy and money.

Of course, the long-term solution is not to raise the price of the journal. The solution is ultimately to distribute it more widely, increasing its total circulation. This would be another, better way of allowing us to meet production costs.

So in addition to the basic political reasons, there are also financial reasons for our decision to work at distributing the journal more broadly, increasing the number of subscriptions and places where it is sold. You can help us do this.

Distribute the journal to your friends and acquaintances. Encourage people to subscribe (and subscribe yourself, if you haven't already done so). Ask your corner news stand or bookstore to carry it.

This is one more way of helping to fight the crisis!

### 150 more places will sell the journal

To help improve the distribution of PROLETARIAN UNITY, we have made arrangements to have the journal distributed in English Canada by the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association (CPPA). This agency distributes a number of magazines that are not carried by the major distribution monopolies. It gives us access to 150 more points of sale. The journal will continue, however, to supply the points of sale in English Canada and Quebec that are not covered by the CPPA.

### A new column

There is a new column in this issue: Documents for the criticism of revisionism. Over the next period, this column will include articles and analyses aimed at contributing to a thorough criticism of revisionism. It should be noted that these articles will not necessarily reflect IN STRUGGLE!'s official point of view on the subjects dealt with.

The column is open to readers' contributions and points of view in the debate. Please feel free to send us your suggestions, articles, comments and so on. By doing so, you will help answer the questions that workers and progressive people have been wrestling with for a long time now on the setbacks in the struggle for socialism.

**International Forum** is a journal published by the Marxist-Leninist Organization of Canada IN STRUGGLE! for the international communist movement. Its purpose is to make known the points of view of the various communist forces around the world on the main questions of theory and political line. There are many splits and divisions in the international communist movement today. Open, broad debates are therefore a vital step towards defeating the revisionist deviations and rebuilding unity around a common programme.

The next issue of **International Forum**, to be published in late October, will focus on the question of national liberation struggles in colonial and neo-colonial countries. Documents from Azania, El Salvador, Venezuela and elsewhere will provide the reader with information and points of view on the concrete analysis of the situation and the path of the revolution in these countries.

The next issue will also include polemical articles on the struggle against revisionism and on the unity of the international communist movement. As well, there will be letters and information about the activities of Marxist-Leninist forces around the world.

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**Poland: Workers fight for their rights.** The seriousness engraved on the faces of Polish workers in the pictures published in the front pages of papers around the world reflects the difficult conditions in which they must struggle. Their struggle is more than a reaction to the economic crisis currently rocking Poland; it is also an attempt to find a way to put an end to exploitation  
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**The Quebec referendum on sovereignty-association: the limits of the nationalist dream.** What is the explanation for the victory of the "no" vote in the referendum? Did the "dynamic elements of the nation" really vote "yes"? Is the PQ's step-by-step strategy to blame for its defeat? Our article answers these questions with a detailed analysis of the referendum results, comparing them with the results of the last few provincial elections.  
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**The labour aristocracy in Canada today.** There are always two conflicting attitudes towards economic and political struggles to be found in the working-class movement: some put forward the need for a resolute struggle to defend workers' interest, while others favour all kinds of compromises with Capital. Both these positions have objective roots in the working-class movement, and it is important to understand them  
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**Progressive theatre groups explain: how we work, and why.** Last June, PROLETARIAN UNITY invited representatives from a number of progressive theatre troupes in Quebec to participate in a round table discussion. They talk about the nature of their work, the topics they deal with, artistic forms and the outlook for the future in their work  
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The cover photo: Workers at the shipyards in Gdansk listen to the radio broadcast of Gierek's speech.  
The back cover A poster for the resistance movement in El Salvador, published by the General Association of El Salvador University Students and the Federation of Student Centres at the University Teaching Institute in Caracas, Venezuela.

# Cuba's role in Latin America

After events in Iran and Zimbabwe, the battlefield has now shifted to Latin America. The victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) has sparked a whole series of revolts, especially in Central America. The Conference in Solidarity with El Salvador, held July 4-7, 1980, in Caracas, Venezuela, is a clear indication of the growing internationalist solidarity in this part of the world. The conference was attended by various different organizations — some of them Marxist-Leninist — from Venezuela, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Belgium and Canada; IN STRUGGLE! was one of the organizations present. They had all come to express their support for the struggle of the people of El Salvador and give them whatever aid they need. The discussions and stands taken at the conference gave rise, however, to a major debate on whether or not it was necessary to oppose all forms of imperialism, including the manoeuvres of the Soviet Union in this part of the world.

Any discussion of the role of the Soviet Union in this region necessarily raises the problem of Cuba and its influence in the revolutionary movement in Latin America. For there is little direct Soviet interference in this part of the world. It works instead through its Cuban ally, which faithfully defends Soviet positions on all major issues, from the question of East-West detente to the armed suppression of the Eritrean people's liberation struggle and the invasion of Afghanistan. As a result, the peoples of Latin America have for some years now been faced with serious questions concerning the path of the revolution in their countries.

\* \* \*

Since Fidel Castro was chosen as president of the non-aligned movement last year, Cuba's influence has been growing steadily. In recent years, the Cuban government has established close ties with the Nicaraguan government as well as with the regimes in power in several other countries, such as Grenada and Jamaica — some of which claim to be following in the footsteps of the Cuban revolution.

When Fidel Castro went to Managua (the capital city of Nicaragua) on July 26 for the celebration of the first anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution, he was greeted by crowds of people — a clear sign of Cuba's very real influence on the masses of working people in these countries. It has a similar influence on the revolutionary movement. Many of the organizations — including some that play a leading role in the anti-imperialist struggle recognize Cuba as a socialist country and affirm the existence of a socialist camp that includes the U.S.S.R. This is true of the Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Marti" (FPL) in El Salvador; we are publishing their position in this issue of the journal. It also holds true for the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua and the Working People Alliance (WPA) in Guyana. Before coming to a conclusion on this issue, therefore, it is important to understand the underlying reasons for this influence, which goes back some 20 years.

\* \* \*

From 1953 to 1958, the Cuban people waged a genuine



The experience of the Cuban revolution is still a very important influence throughout Latin America, despite the Soviet Union's increasingly evident control over Cuba.

anti-imperialist struggle that led to the island's independence and the triumph of the July 26th Movement, headed up by Fidel Castro. Cuba was the first land in the Americas to free itself from the grip of U.S. imperialism — a historical fact that has retained a fast hold on the masses everywhere south of the Rio Grande.

But there is another aspect of their struggle that is not so well remembered. The Cuban revolutionaries were victorious because they opposed the sabotage of the movement of armed struggle and the collaboration with the dictator Batista put forward by the Popular Socialist Party (as the communist party of Cuba was then known). The Communist Party of Cuba was only founded much later, as a result of the merger of these two organizations that had previously strongly disagreed on many points. Independence allowed Cuba to improve the living conditions of the masses far beyond anything done elsewhere in Latin America. In terms of the population's health and health care, for example, Cuba outranks all the other countries south of the United States. And despite the fact that Cuba is still entirely dependent on its exports of sugar to the U.S.S.R., despite the fact that it has a

basically one-crop economy, despite the fact that there are food shortages and little economic growth today, the country has made tremendous progress, compared to the terrible poverty and misery that characterizes the other countries of Latin America. This is undeniably the result of the revolutionary struggle waged by the Cuban people in the 1950s.

This helps explain why the Cuban revolution has been such an important source of inspiration for Latin American revolutionary movements for the past twenty years. Furthermore, the Cuban experience proved the importance of armed struggle and represented a radical break with the pacifism and collaboration preached by all the revisionist communist parties.

It was in the 1960s that the Soviet Union gained firm control over Cuba. Cuba found itself in the same situation as many other underdeveloped countries receiving "tied" foreign aid: it had to use nearly all the credit it got from the U.S.S.R. to buy Soviet products. Despite this, and although it began to adopt the Soviet point of view on an increasing number of questions, Cuba continued to provide substantial aid to revolutionary movements and countries in Latin America. It is important to understand the subtlety of the policy: it succeeds in upholding the Soviet theses on peaceful coexistence while at the same time encouraging guerrilla movements. Thus a year ago, the Communist Party of Cuba (only founded in 1965) managed to praise the work of both the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS) and the Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Marti" at a time when the PCS recognized and was part of the military junta in that country. In Guyana, it has official relations with the Forbes Burnham regime, brought to power by the CIA; simultaneously, however, it recognizes the Working People Alliance (WPA), which is fighting the Burnham regime. When Walter Rodney, one of the leaders of the WPA, was assassinated, Cuba condemned the assassination without condemning the murderer. Cuba has also managed to condemn the military coup d'état in Bolivia without mentioning the role played by the Argentinian military regime in the coup. The reason for its silence on Argentina's role is easy to understand: Argentina has substantial economic ties with the U.S.S.R. — sufficiently important that the U.S.S.R. came to General Videla's rescue at the United Nations and prevented any debate on the torture and violations of human rights in Argentina.

At the present time, the Soviet Union's primary goal is to gain a solid foothold in Latin America, the bastion of U.S. imperialism. Cuba therefore has a key role to play. Its job is to promote the reconciliation of the revolutionary forces and the pro-Soviet revisionist parties, thus ensuring Soviet influence within the revolutionary movements without the need for military intervention by either the U.S.S.R. or Cuba. Cuba cannot afford to intervene militarily in Latin America as it has done in Ethiopia, where it helps prop up a feudal regime that denies Eritrea the right to self-determination: it would be rapidly exposed and discredited.

\* \* \*

This is the danger of Cuban influence in Latin America today — the danger that the revolutions that triumph in these countries fall into the grip of another imperialism, as has happened with Angola and Cuba, for instance. This danger is all the more real because many of the revolutionary forces in Latin America have not fully analysed the Cuban revolution. Once again, we have a striking example of the concrete, prac-

tical necessity of a more thorough criticism of revisionism if revolution is to win out in these countries.

In the framework of the struggle against Khrushchevite revisionism, a number of Marxist-Leninist organizations did more than side with the Chinese and Albanian parties; they also began to criticize the erroneous ideas that lay behind the guerrilla movements influenced by Cuba. This was done in Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Venezuela and Chile. But there were also a number of movements of armed struggle and organizations identifying themselves as Marxist-Leninist that did not take part in this criticism. Although they criticized the "focist" conception of revolutionary action as the work of small groups of armed men isolated from the masses, they nonetheless did not break with Cuba. This was true of the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia in the 1960s. Similar debates occurred in the FSLN in Nicaragua. In El Salvador, the FPL made a clean break with the PCS when the latter came out in support of the war between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969. These demarcations were steps forward in the process of working out a revolutionary programme in these countries.

It would be wrong, however, to gloss over the fact that this demarcation is still incomplete; and the recognition of Cuba as a socialist country is a good illustration of this. As long as this demarcation is not carried through more fully, the danger will persist of important compromises on the revolutionary programme needed to free the peoples of Latin America from imperialism. To a certain extent, the Conference in Solidarity with El Salvador helped clear the way for this demarcation.

This is one aspect of the complex situation of the revolutionary movement in Latin America, illustrated by the solidarity conference in Caracas. It should be of the utmost concern, because it affects active revolutionary forces that in many cases play a leading role in some of the most troubled regions of the world, in countries where the masses have taken up the struggle against dictatorship and imperialism. It is a situation that will undoubtedly have repercussions in Latin America; but it may well also affect the progress of proletarian revolution on a world scale.

## Note from the editor

### The column 'Commentaries on the Programme' suspended

In issue no. 20 of the journal, we began a new column called "Commentaries on the Programme" with the first of what was to be a series of articles based on the work undertaken to write the commentaries on the programme adopted by IN STRUGGLE! at its Third Congress. Given, however, the extent of the work to be done by our organization in studying the history of the working-class and communist movement so as to understand to roots of the revisionist betrayal, the Central Committee of IN STRUGGLE! has decided to suspend work on the commentaries. Consequently, the column in the journal is also suspended. It is replaced with a new column, "Documents for the criticism of revisionism".

**Analysis of the referendum vote**

The analysis we (IN STRUGGLE! ed. note) present contains two major errors in terms of how the working-class vote should be interpreted. First, we minimize the percentage of 'yes' votes in the working class; and second, we underestimate the hold which nationalism has in the working class.

To help us understand this error, here are the three basic elements of IN STRUGGLE!'s analysis:

1 — Workers were not taken in by the PQ. The proof of this is the result of the last byelections and the divided vote in PQ strongholds.

2 — Workers were able to see the reactionary nature of the PQ during the three years it has been in power. Its major setbacks in its strongholds during the byelections as well as the referendum are proof of this.

3 — The project of the political sovereignty for Quebec will not change workers' conditions; and in any case, it was never deeply rooted in the working class.

Workers were not taken in by the PQ and the three years during which it led the province have clearly shown its anti-worker character and yet, the referendum results prove the opposite. For example, in the working-class districts of the Saguenay-Lac St-Jean, the North Shore and James Bay regions, the 'yes' won a definite victory. In the Montreal ridings, even if the 'no' won, it did so by a very slim margin (5 to 10 percentage points).

As well, putting the results of the byelections and those of the referendum on the same level, without analysing the prevailing factors in the two situations, is an erroneous way of proceeding. The context in which the byelections took place was very different from the context of the referendum. The PQ was right in the middle of negotiations with public sector workers. It was getting ready to pass Bill 17 on health and safety in the work place. All the opposition forces including us, campaigned mainly against the PQ's policies.

In addition, the character of the referendum differed from that of the by-

elections. Everyone knows that the referendum was mainly waged around emotions and on the level of ideas. The Quebec byelections were, however, waged mainly around facts and the PQ's record.

Workers were able to realize the reactionary nature of the PQ during the three years it was in power...? It is somewhat astonishing that at the same time that they were aware of this reactionary nature they were voting for the forces of chauvinism.

Workers and progressive people generally played the PQ's game by making a clear distinction between its years in power and the referendum. For example, many public sector workers voted 'yes' despite the rotten contract signed last fall.

The project of political sovereignty for Quebec never had deep roots in the working class: I find it particularly significant that we use such an argument to prove that the working class plays a very minor role in the 'yes' camp.

Nationalism has always existed in the Quebec working class for as long as the Quebec nation has suffered oppression. The struggle against national oppression in Quebec has also always been led by the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie. However it is not because this struggle has always been led by classes other than the working class that the latter has not been tainted with and even supported nationalism.

If we look at the union conventions held before the referendum, all of them opted for the 'yes' — the CNTU, the QFL and CUPE.

Finally, the results themselves of the referendum prove that an important part of the working class opted for the 'yes' position; and in general, these were organized workers.

Our analysis underestimates nationalism's hold on the working class. To help us understand our second error, here are three basic elements of our analysis. We state that:

1 — The political sovereignty project does not have a sufficient social base in the Quebec bourgeoisie for it to be realized in the near future.

2 — The political sovereignty project in Quebec has never been deeply rooted in the working class.

3 — The project for the political sovereignty of Quebec draws its support from intellectuals, small businessmen and professionals.

Today it is true that a project of political sovereignty seems an uncertain choice for the Quebec bourgeoisie. It is still probably more to its advantage to be linked to the rest of the Canadian bourgeoisie. But we have repeatedly said that the PQ is a bourgeois party. This is not only true on the basis of the point of view that it defends and spreads among the masses, but also because this party is deeply rooted in and firmly supported by a faction of the bourgeoisie in Quebec. The commerce and textile industries in Quebec, State corporations and certain financial institutions support it and supported the 'yes' camp during the referendum.

I find that our affirmation about the support the Quebec bourgeoisie gave to the 'yes' camp is dangerous because it is open to interpretation. It suggests that the PQ is the representative of the petty bourgeoisie. This idea is widely spread by the Trotskyists: "we should support the PQ in a critical way because it is not a real bourgeois party." This is the kind of argument generally served up by the Trotskyists.

The project of political sovereignty for Quebec has never had deep roots in the working class? As I have already said, nationalism has been constantly present in Quebec ever since this nation has suffered oppression. Isn't it precisely nationalism that is the most difficult barrier to overcome if we are to unite the working class in Canada?

Such an affirmation raises a question. If the project of political sovereignty for Quebec has never been deeply rooted in the working class, what are the manifestations of nationalism in Quebec in the working class?

It was intellectuals, small businessmen and professionals who massively supported the 'yes'? These strata represent the petty bourgeoisie and make up between 20% and 30% of the population but the 'yes' vote was 48%, and not all of the petty bourgeoisie said 'yes'. For example, 75% of the medical profession voted 'no'.

It is true that the PQ was strongly supported by these strata. However, the

'yes' voters cannot be reduced to these strata of the population. So we shouldn't minimize the percentage of 'yes' votes in the working class. The 'yes' received many votes among organized workers, youth and progressive people in general.

Nationalism is present in the working class, and one of its manifestations is the project of political sovereignty for Quebec...

**An IN STRUGGLE! militant Editor's note:**

**We refer readers to the article in this issue which analyses the Quebec referendum results in detail.**

**On wages in Albania**

In the paper and in the last issue of PROLETARIAN UNITY, the argument of the reduced gaps in remunerations is used to demonstrate the abolition of differences between the cadres and the workers. The ration is set at 2 to 1 — in favour of the cadres, of course (in Albania, editor's note).

I don't think that it is very serious to quote this ratio as an argument. The real difference in remuneration has to take into account the privileges which the cadres have over the workers. For example, it is public knowledge that in Vietnam the official ratio is 3 to 1, while unofficially it is higher than 13 to 1.

Even if we can have more confidence in the Albanian regime than in the one in Vietnam, I still feel that the figures that are quoted do not prove the progress being made by socialism. There is nothing to be gained by trying to prove the progress of socialism in a country with dubious arguments. There is already enough confusion as it is. We have to be rigorous when we affirm things.

My aim is not to drag Albania through the mud, but to avoid glorifying it gratuitously.

**A reader of the journal**

**Gays — who are they?**

... Since the late 1960s the number of gays/lesbians seems to be increasing at an alarming rate. They seem to be everywhere! Some claim that this is a

result of the degeneracy of capitalism. My point of view is that the over-all percentage of homosexuals has not increased at all, but the percentage of those open about it has.

Determining an exact figure of the total gay population is impossible since many, many people will not 'come out' of the closet. According to one study (Kinsey, 1948), 10% of the male population are practising homosexuals, 6% for females. I think both of those figures are low. (At my work place, for example, over the past five years there has consistently been 20% of the female workers who have been lesbians.) But even taking the 10%, this means approximately 2.5 million gays/lesbians in Canada. Yet of these 2.5 million, less than 10% of them are open, which could range from going to the gay bars to public recognition among family, friends, work place, etc.

The existence of homosexuality is not a result of the social relations of class society. And it will always be a minority of the total population. So the reason I say there are more people open about their homosexuality is because I think the key factors involved are the relative level of acceptance of homosexuality in the society and the level of resistance of homosexuals to their oppression. Over the past twenty years, the women's movement and the more liberal attitudes towards sexuality and relationships in general have had an important effect on the gay/lesbian population. Of course other movements had developed over this period as well, i.e. the civil rights and anti-war movements in the U.S. While these movements didn't threaten the very life-line of the bourgeoisie, they did confront the bourgeoisie head-on in some cases, e.g. the anti-war movement. Many of the dominant ideas and values were questioned, although there were often bourgeois responses as alternatives. In the midst of this 'movement' atmosphere, the gay/lesbian communities got a shot in the arm to rejuvenate their own movement. June 1969, the police raided a popular gay bar, Stonewal Inn, in New York. Hundreds of gays, erecting barricades in the streets, fought the police for four nights. Shortly after Stonewall, hundreds of gay liberation groups formed across the

United States. In Canada, the gay liberation movement was a bit slower to move. It was not until 1974 that a national coalition of gay organizations was formed.

In analysing how the decaying capitalist system manifests itself, we must maintain a dialectical materialist point of view.

Often the argument is used that women become lesbians because of oppressive relations with men. From my own experience and from the lesbians I know I can't buy that argument. This line of reasoning assumes that all women 'naturally' look to men for relationships. It's not true. A great number of lesbians I know have never had relationships with men. They wouldn't even have thought of it, I'm sure. For many, their sexual preference is known by mid-tens. For others, including myself, relationships with men are more a result of being told, in one form or another, that this is what you're supposed to do. So you do it. But there comes a time (and different factors lead to this for different people) when you just can't go on doing it. And I must add that the sexual aspect is only one of the factors involved in coming to the realization that there is something amiss in your relations with men. It may be worthwhile to ask why it is that for some women who are quite concretely oppressed by some men — battered wives, for example — becoming a lesbian is not even considered as an alternative. This is true of many women who are certainly aware of the oppression of women in society. Finally on this point, if lesbianism is a result of the oppression of women then, the argument runs, under socialism the conditions for solving the problem of lesbianism would be set in place. Well, I know for a fact, both for myself and for others, that no matter how "unoppressive" male-female relations are and no matter how equal women are in society, it can't change the fact that there will be women who are attracted to women, who will be satisfied in their relationships, sexually, emotionally, etc., with other women, not men. This applies to gay men as well ...

**A reader**

# Workers fight for their rights

Last month, the increase in meat prices forced the Polish head of government's resignation for the second time in ten years. Meat prices skyrocketed by between 40 and 60% in Poland when the government stopped subsidizing them. This move sparked a massive strike movement that soon spread to over 400 enterprises and involved some 300,000 workers. Having totally paralyzed the country, the strikers then put forward basic political demands, one of the key ones being the right for workers to set up their own independent unions free from government intervention. The strikes that shook Poland, and that evoked for many the ghost of the Prague spring of 1968, have proven in a few weeks more than any analysis has ever done that the nature of the Polish regime is a far cry from defending workers' interests. Behind the news releases that kept arriving throughout the conflict, a vast popular resistance movement has taken shape against the power of Capital in a country that is socialist in name only.

In Poznan in 1956, workers at the Stalin factory led an insurrection demanding wage increases. This event marked the beginning of the Polish people's movement of revolt that was to take on a real mass character in 1970.

December 13, 1970, exactly ten years ago, a movement similar to today's took Poland by storm. In Gdansk,

Sopot and Gdynia, workers struck to protest the 20% to 30% increase in the prices of basic consumer goods. Steelworkers and sailors joined the protest movement. Government buildings were set on fire and the Polish army's armoured tanks called in to smash the rebellion while the U.S.S.R. lined up its troops on the country's borders. Offi-

The population demonstrates its support for the strikers in front of the fence at the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk.



cial statistics at the time put the number of deaths at 45, but the workers nevertheless succeeded in imposing the withdrawal of the price increases and the resignation of Gomulka, a nationalist leader and founder of the Polish United Workers Party, who had been reappointed first secretary of the party in an attempt to calm the people's revolt in 1956. Gomulka was replaced by Gierek, who promised reforms.

June 28, 1976, 20 years day for day after the 1956 riots, the cities of Ursus and Radom were up in arms. The workers recalled Gierek's promises and realized they were in fact nothing but hot air. The price of meat went up 60%, sugar, 100%. Workers were fed up and they lost no time showing it: the party's offices in many cities were occupied and the railroads paralyzed. Once again, workers succeeded in wrenching victory from the government: the price increases were not implemented. But this victory took a heavy toll: 20 dead and many arrested.

Those who rose in protest last month in nearly every city along the Baltic coast did so for reasons similar to the ones that prompted the workers' action in 1976. But today's movement is more developed than those of 1970 and 1976. It reaches far more people, is more organized and puts forward some very political demands. The movement's strength appeared very clearly when the 16,000 striking workers at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk were soon followed by workers in 17 other of the city's plants. Two days later, the movement had spread to Gdynia, Sopot, Szczecin, Elblag, Silesia, the Nowa Huta steelworks near Krakow, and had even paralyzed Warsaw. At the beginning of the strike, the government offered the workers a \$50.00 wage increase. Not only did the Gdansk workers refuse the offer, but they quickly affirmed their determination to continue the struggle until all their demands were met, including the most fundamental of all: the right to free independent unions. Gierek

pretended to make a self-criticism to win the workers over. Cardinal Wyszinski implored the workers to stay calm. But all these hypocritical actions did not fool the workers, who kept up the fight.

For the first time in ten years in Poland, the workers' movement has taken up political demands — the right to independent unions, the right to strike, an end to censorship and the abolition of the privileges of members of the party and State apparatus — as priorities in the struggle. The Polish workers' movement is also one of the most important protest movements to have developed in Eastern Europe. How can this political effervescence be explained?

## A crisis was brewing

*"They say that this country is run by the workers. Up to now, the workers have had no say at all. Maybe if we had, we wouldn't be so bad off economically and owe all that money overseas."*

This is how Anna Walentynowicz, an old union activist who has been jailed many times, described the economic situation in Poland after hearing Gierek recognize that "mistakes in economic policy" had been made. It was her suspension from her job at the Lenin shipyards for union activities that sparked the strike movement there.

The "mistakes" Gierek referred to in his speech have made Poland the Eastern European country that owes the most money to Western countries. Since 1976, to obtain the money it needed to pay for imported foodstuffs and goods, the Gierek government has gone all out to industrialize the country. In 1977, Poland ranked fourth in the world in terms of industrial evolution. In 1977, for the first time in the country's history, the urban population was larger than the rural population. The problem, however, is that Gierek's industrial boom was practically all financed by borrowing on the international markets.

In 1978, Poland's foreign debt reached \$11.22 billion. Per capita, this amounts to a debt that is twice as high as the U.S.S.R.'s and six times that of Czechoslovakia. Result? The country has a serious crisis in its balance of payments, due almost entirely to its balance of payments problems with Western countries.

As a matter of fact, a week before the uprising, Poland contracted another loan of \$672 million with 25 banks in West Germany, its second economic

partner after the U.S.S.R. A week later, an international consortium directed by the Bank of America lent Poland another \$325 million. This last loan was, however, \$175 million short of what Poland had initially applied for. The picture wouldn't be complete without mentioning the fact that 80% of Poland's oil is imported from the U.S.S.R. Since Soviet oil prices have increased significantly in the last period, Poland is forced to export more and more goods to the U.S.S.R.

When you put all these ingredients together, you end up with rampant inflation, which in turn, combined with the agricultural crisis in the country, accounts for skyrocketing food prices. Faced with this situation, Gierek decided that the working people would bear the brunt of the crisis.

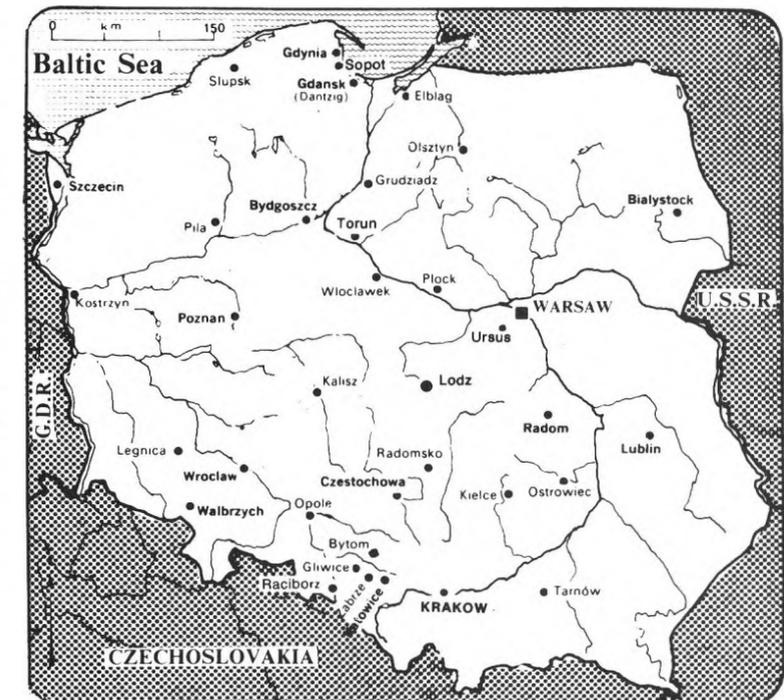
Polish agriculture is indeed in a bind. This sector employs 33% of the country's population, but its productivity is very low. This sector of Poland's economy has been practically ignored in the last few years and 80% of it belongs to the private sector. Consequently, the country's balance in agricultural trade is negative, and more and more food is imported every year. Polish peasants grow poorer by the day, while foodstuffs become increasingly scarce. Inflation in Poland is different from what we know in our country, for there the State finances 30% of the country's spending on food and controls the prices. The State is thus capable of keeping prices under control for a given period, thanks to its subsidies. But when the upward pressures on prices are too strong, this safety valve gives



In 1956, there were street demonstrations to welcome the appointment of Gomulka as leader of the Polish United Workers Party. In 1970, workers again demonstrated in the streets — but this time they brought down Gomulka.

way and the working people are hit full face with massive price increases. The fact that the workers demand that their wages be adjusted to the cost of living indicates that inflation is also a reality in Poland.

As for the Polish peasants, their situation is rapidly becoming intolerable. In the cities, foodstuffs are scarce but in rural areas, there are often no stores at all. This is the case in Wierzchowina, where there are 45 farms and where the land is not even irrigated. On top of this, the peasants are heavily taxed. In 1978, half a million peasants refused to pay their premiums for the pension fund, which in fact amount to disguised taxes that are very hard on peasants, especially poor peasants. The peasants' struggles often put forward demands to ensure minimal living conditions. In Lozisk (near Rzeszow), peasants protested against the lack of coal. In Lowisko, in the same region, peasants defied the police who tried to appropriate their lands. Teachers refused to have to walk five kilometres to and



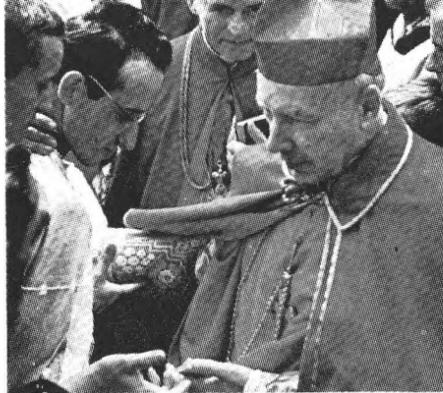
Poland

from work every morning and night.

These facts give us a good idea of what the crisis means in a country like Poland that is supposed to have been socialist for more than 30 years now. The Polish crisis is made worse by the fact that this country, like all Eastern European countries, depends heavily on the U.S.S.R. Between 1971 and 1975, East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria agreed to build new energy complexes in the U.S.S.R. and to develop that country's natural resources. For example, Poland signed an agreement under which it promised to build 558 km of gas pipelines and 900 km of oil pipelines within two or three years in the U.S.S.R. To do so, Poland had to invest 500 million rubles and transfer thousands of workers to the U.S.S.R. to build the pipelines. Quite a special form of economic aid isn't it, when the Eastern European country that owes the most money abroad is forced to borrow even more to develop the U.S.S.R.'s economy!

In the last months, the world's main news agencies have declared that the Polish crisis is due to bad administration which is too rigid, too centralized, and which does not give enough room to the private sector. In other words, socialism is responsible for all the country's woes. What they have forgotten to mention, however, is that the prevailing tendency in Poland for many years has not been towards centralizing the economy in order to serve the workers' interests. On the contrary, Poland's economy has developed all the characteristics of capitalist economic anarchy. For example, in the 1950s the government recognized the right of landowners to own private property and for individuals to set up businesses. Poland was a people's democracy that declared itself capable of reaching socialism without establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat (1).

It is difficult to assert that the country's lands have been collectivized in the last thirty years, since in 1980, 80% of them are private property. As for the industrial sector, it has been characterized by decentralization. It has been oriented towards implementing methods of management like those applied in Europe and North America. In Eastern Europe, Poland is the country that is the most dependent on foreign capital. Polish workers even have to fight against the fact that those in charge of an enterprise have the right to fire a worker at will.



In 1970 and again this year, Cardinal Wyszynski appealed to the workers to remain calm. The workers gave him short shrift.

Economists in Washington and Bonn can blame the Polish crisis on socialism all they like. It doesn't change the fact that for the last twenty years, "Polish-style socialism" has been looking more and more like what exists in West Germany and the United States. Consequently, Polish workers are waging struggles that take up the same basic demands as their brothers and sisters in Western countries.

### Change will come "from below"

When analysing the development of a protest movement in a country like Poland, we have to beware of the trap of making unilateral and simplistic judgements. It is important to take into account the contradictions that necessarily arise in a movement developing in a country where socialism has been distorted by years of State capitalism practised in the name of Marxism-Leninism. In such a situation, the movement of opposition can take on many forms and follow many paths that are often contradictory. It can range from religious movements to a workers' protest movement, without forgetting the dissident intellectual movement.

The roots of today's opposition movement in Poland can be traced back to the major revolts of 1970 and 1976. In 1968, student revolts erupted throughout Poland. The students demanded the right to freedom of opinion as well as cultural freedom. Many of today's opposition leaders participated in those student revolts, which were also undoubtedly linked with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops. However, it was the 1976 events that marked the expansion of the protest movement, particularly in the intellectual milieu, which have always been active in Poland.

September 27 1976, the Workers Self-Defence Committee (KOR) was

founded. This committee took up the struggle for the liberation of the workers arrested after the riots. The prisoners were finally released and, by 1978 the Committee was firmly established in nine major cities. It then became the Social Self-Defence Committee (KSS). It began to publish secretly a newspaper called *Robotnik* (The Worker) that called for free independent unions. The clandestine press (Samizdat) was widely distributed and soon published in 20,000 copies. In 1977, the Movement for the defence of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCIO) was created; it publishes *Opinia*. Contrary to the KOR-KSS, this latter movement presents itself as apolitical and rejects any idea of socialism. It was later to become the Confederation for an Independent Poland (TKN).

Meanwhile, the students' movement created the Students' Solidarity Committee, which leads the struggle to replace the official student youth organizations in Poland. The Committee publishes *Bratniak* and *Indeks*. Another organization, the Society for Educational Courses, publishes works for university students that have been censored by the State. These works are read in many courses of the flying university (organized by the opposition) that are given throughout the country.

The Church is often associated with these protest movements, which also demand freedom of religion. The Church has also often defended human rights in Poland. But lately, it has been mainly characterized by its increasingly close relations with State power. During the present conflict, Cardinal Wyszynski has done exactly what he did during the 1956 and 1970 uprisings: he called the workers to order. Since Pope John XXIII's reign, the Vatican has preached the reconciliation of the Church with the government. In 1957, the religious club *Tygogonik* Pows-

1. In the 1950s, the French communist Jean Baby wrote an article entitled "La démocratie polonaise" (Polish democracy), in which he says: "Poland is trying its best to reach socialism without going through the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Polish revolutionary elements are trying to transform society gradually with the aim of peacefully achieving a society where class differences will disappear little by little, where a completely planned economy will put an end to capitalist anarchy and ensure the constant progress of the whole population's living conditions. History does not seem to have proven this theory correct."

zechny got five of its members elected to Parliament. Since then, even though it has often been the victim of repression, the Church has succeeded in recuperating its property rights to the dioceses and eliminating the inventories that were used to evaluate the amounts of taxes that the Church had to pay. The quotas of paper allotted to the Catholic press have also been increased.

1976 was also the year when the opposition changed its tactic. After having tried to change the United Workers Party from within and to provoke the ascent of a Polish Dubcek (2), the opposition movement, particularly the KOR-KSS, turned its attention towards the masses and the workers' movement.

Adam Michnik, historian and members of the KOR-KSS, describes this move in the following way:

"The lack of realism of the revisionists and neo-positivist (two opposition trends that existed within the United Workers Party — ed. note)... became evident during the period from the mid-1960s through the 1970s when social conflicts became sharper." (3)

"The main thing in the conception of a new strategy for the opposition movement in Poland is that it has realized the full force of the workers' movement, which has shown time and time again that it is determined enough to wrench important concessions from State power. It is difficult to predict the evolution of the situation in working-class milieu, but they are definitely the milieu that the State fears most." (4)

Three years before today's events, Michnik also wrote: "The process will be neither simple nor easy to predict, for it implies that each and every time, the barrier of fear is broken, that a new political consciousness is formulated. The fact that workers' associations and institutions have been destroyed, that the tradition of workers' resistance has been broken, may well seriously hinder this process. But working-class consciousness reached a new stage when the first independent workers' self-defence organization was created, when strike

committees were set up in the Szczecin and Gdansk shipyards. It is difficult to predict how and where other, more durable, workers' institutions will be set up and how they will function: workers councils like in Spain, independent unions, solidarity funds? One thing is certain, though: when these institutions are created, the 'new strategy' will take shape and will cease to be a figment of the mind seeking hope." (5) Further on, Michnik adds: "All the rest is only words." (6)

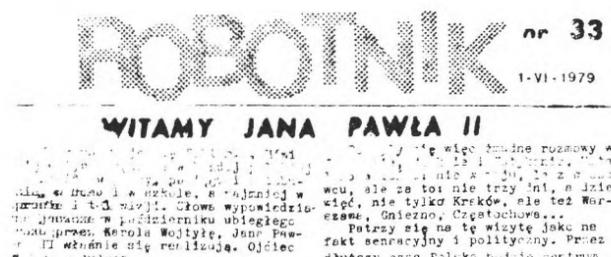
This call for changes "from below" is what was concretized before our very eyes last August. For the first time, the opposition movement and the workers' struggles were welded together in a revolt that, while it did not overthrow the regime in power, nonetheless forced it to concede some extremely important gains: the right to independent unions, the right to strike, and certain limits to censorship. As the leaders of the KOR-KSS predicted, the opposition movement has taken on a clearly proletarian and organized character. This is why it was able to win such a remarkable victory.

Organized within unions that really belong to them, and enjoying greater freedom of expression, Polish workers will be able to pursue even further the debate of the perspectives of their struggle.

Two leaders of the Workers' Self-Defence Committee (KOR): left, Jacek Kuron and right Adam Michnik.



The front page of the KOR's newspaper, *Robotnik* (The Worker).



### The debate within the opposition movement

The opposition movement that has developed over the last ten years in Poland has proven itself. Throughout the country's factories and plants, Polish workers celebrated their victory, a fact which clearly demonstrates the correctness of the KOR-KSS's orientation. This orientation clearly indicated that change could only come from the rank-and-file movement and from the determined struggle to answer the people's demands. This seems to be widely accepted within the opposition movement in Poland that identifies itself as Marxist.

Today, this movement is faced with the important question of the struggle's perspectives, of the strategy to follow. This is the issue already being debated in intellectual and working-class milieux. Needless to say, this debate raises many contradictions and ambiguities.

The grave look in the eyes of the Gdansk workers who appeared on the front pages of the world's newspapers says a lot about the difficult conditions under which they must wage their struggle. These workers have to battle the State in a country where arbitrary measures reign supreme and where the threat of Soviet tanks looms in the distance as soon as State power is seriously questioned. These factors have a definite impact on the strategy put forward by the leaders of the KOR-KSS. Jacek Kuron, a KOR-KSS leader, describes the situation as follows:

"We are threatened with an explosion of popular anger on a larger scale even than the combined force of June 1956, December 1970, June 1976 and March 1968. As we know, such an explosion could easily become a national tragedy — in all probability with an

- 2. Dubcek, former first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. After the Soviet invasion in 1968, Dubcek was replaced at the head of the party because he was considered to be too liberal. He was later expelled from the party.
- 3. *Pologne: une société en dissidence*, a collection of texts from the opposition put together by Z. Erard and G.M. Zygier, Editions François Maspero, Cahiers libres 338, Paris, 1978, p. 105
- 4. *Ibid.*, p. 108
- 5. *Ibid.*, p. 108-109
- 6. *Ibid.*, p. 111

eventual Soviet armed intervention." (1)

The concrete situation that Kuron concisely explained seems to weigh heavily in the debate over the strategy that the worker's movement should follow. For example, Kuron has clearly indicated that it is impossible at present to openly challenge State power.

*"The Soviet Union and its armies are still a reality that we must take into account. But we can nonetheless legitimately suppose that the rulers of the U.S.S.R. will not attempt a military intervention in Poland as long as the Polish people do not overthrow a State that obeys the U.S.S.R. Consequently, let's refrain from doing so."*<sup>8</sup>

This is why the KOR-KSS puts forward a minimal programme that is centred around workers' demands, the recognition of political rights and the development of forms of worker's control.

*"Today's programme calls for a democratic society organized in professional or co-operative associations that are economically and locally self-controlled."*<sup>9</sup>

It is difficult to evaluate the implications of the immediate programme put forward by the leaders of the KOR-KSS. It is difficult to determine whether this programme aims at setting up a social-democratic regime like those found in Europe or if it aims at transforming Polish society radically. This question becomes all the more complex when you see that all the leaders of social democracy throughout the world, our very own Ed Broadbent included, have been gushing praise for the Polish workers' movement. After his recent visit to Poland, Broadbent, national leader of the NDP, seemed much more concerned about the workers' right to strike in Poland than he is about the right to strike here when postal workers defy the State's back-to-work legislation. One can't help but wonder...

But to get back to the situation in Poland. The leaders of the KOR-KSS were uncompromising with the Polish government when it came to their fundamental democratic demands. As Adam Michnik explained:

*"The democratic opposition must not place its hopes in the 'intelligent leaders' of the party, nor must it fall into the trap of not making life too hard for the present leaders in case their followers turn out to be worse. The democratic opposition must above all formulate its own political aims in order to evaluate,*



The strike committee of the workers at the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk, during negotiations.

*on that basis alone, whether or not a compromise is possible."*<sup>10</sup>

The Polish workers' movement has begun precisely to "formulate its own political aims". This debate will necessarily raise the question of whether Polish workers must struggle for a reformist bourgeois democracy or for proletarian revolution. The answer to this question, in the specific conditions prevailing in Poland, will undoubtedly determine the outcome of the struggle that Polish workers have been waging for ten years now. We can rest assured that the Polish workers' movement will know how to answer the questions that confront it, that it will recognize the path of its true emancipation.

## Workers remember

Polish workers have won a superb victory. They can now organize in independent unions, they have won better wages, they have forced back government censorship, they now have the right to strike and will be able to do so in better conditions. The workers' movement has come out of this battle reinforced and better organized. Through-

**Eward Gierek, first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party from 1970 to September 1980:**

*"There are limits beyond which we cannot go."*



out the country, workers have started to experiment with the first forms of working-class democracy. Polish workers did not win all this by praying or by listening to the Pope's emotional declarations. They won because they struggled relentlessly, ignoring the calls to moderation launched by Gierek and Cardinal Wyszynski.

This victory will undoubtedly have an important effect on the struggles of workers throughout Eastern Europe. Already, authorities in Czechoslovakia have warned the union bureaucrats to pay more attention to the workers' demands and living conditions. Rumour has it that similar strikes are taking place in Romania. The workers' movement in those countries is becoming a force that the bureaucrats of Moscow, Warsaw, Bucharest, Prague and Sofia will have to contend with.

The workers of Gdansk, Warsaw, Sopot, Gdynia have gone back to work; but their struggle helped them identify their real enemies. Never again will they believe the lies of the country's leaders. Most important of all, these workers have started to debate the path to follow for their total liberation from the grip of capitalism. •

7. Jacek Kuron, "The Situation in the Country and the Programme of the Opposition, Some Notes", in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 3, no. 8, July-August 1979, p. 12

8. Jacek Kuron, "D'abord renforcer l'auto-gestion", in *Le Monde*, August 20 1980, p. 4

9. *Ibid.*

10. *La Pologne: une société en dissidence*, op. cit., p. 110-111

## The Quebec referendum on sovereignty-association

# The limits of the nationalist dream

May 20, 1980 — a critical day for the Parti Quebecois (PQ), the day of the referendum on its sovereignty-association proposal. The results are well known: 2,187,991 people (58.52%) voted "no"; 1,485,761 (or 39.74%) voted "yes"; and 65,012 (or 1.74%) spoiled their ballots. If the spoiled ballots are excluded, the "no" got 59.56% of the total vote and the "yes", 40.44%. And there was a record turnout at the polls: 86% of those on the voters' list voted (again, not counting rejected ballots).

The referendum results were immediately interpreted in a number of different ways. The most chauvinist commentators jumped on the occasion to reiterate their refusal to recognize the Quebec nation:

*"Canada remains intact today. It is one nation, and that is the way the Quebec people want it."* (1)

*"A majority of Quebecers of all languages and origins voted yesterday to keep Canada together, one sovereign nation."* (2)

Despite these self-satisfied statements by the editorialists of the big capitalist media, politicians realize quite well that the PQ's defeat in the referendum does nothing to solve the crisis in Canada's political system. After the results were in the evening of May 20, Quebec Premier René Lévesque commented that "the ball is now in the federalists' court". It was a candid admission of the real purpose of the referendum, designed to give the PQ government "the service", i.e. the initiative in the struggle for power between the various factions of the bourgeoisie in Canada. The victory of the "no" vote in the referendum means that the initiative now lies with Trudeau and the federal Liberal Party to direct the flow of the game in forging a new alliance between the different bourgeois factions. This assessment has been borne out by the last round of constitutional talks, instigated by Ottawa.

The day-to-day shifts in the relative strength of the bourgeoisie's political parties in Canada are part of the picture. But the referendum results also raise the question of the social basis of the nationalist ideal in Quebec. Who has an interest in sovereignty-association? Who supports it? What does the future hold for it? These are the questions we intend to explore and try to answer by analysing the results of the referendum vote in more detail.

*"The 'yes' side is largely composed of youth and workers; it also commands the allegiance of the dynamic elements of the nation. Voters on the 'no' side are older, better off, and come from a more rural setting."* (3)

In two short sentences, the PQ sociologist Pierre Drouilly disposes of the referendum results. Lined up on one side are the "dynamic elements of the nation"; on the other, the "remnants" — the "old", the "country hicks". Even more striking, the "yes" side was backed by the workers, while the "no" was supported by the wealthy, the establishment.

This is not a unique or unusual interpretation of the referendum vote. On the contrary, in nationalist circles it seems to be taken for granted that Drouilly's analysis reflects reality. For instance, Marcel Henry, president of the St. Jean Baptiste Society in Montreal followed up his remarks on the "inevitability of independence" by saying, *"The Quebecois who voted 'yes' are the most active, dynamic elements of the population; they are also the youngest, and represent the wave of the future."* (4)

The "yes" camp, the camp of the future. But how does this stand up when you sit down and analyse the facts?



## The polarization of the vote along language lines

One of the major themes of the "yes" side's propaganda in the referendum was "solidarity", the solidarity of the Quebecois — by which they meant the French-speaking population of Quebec. In the white paper on sovereignty-association, Lévesque refers to the Quebec nation as being "the most firmly anchored nation on this continent". (5) The "yes" campaign made full use of the traditional nationalist clichés about the French Canadians, hewers of wood and drawers of water, who were now building dams that ranked with the best in the world.

In the light of the results of the referendum vote, it would seem that this nationalist propaganda did little to restore the sacred unity of the French-speaking population. Instead, its effect was to encourage a heavy turnout among English-speaking voters, and a no less solid bloc of support among them for

1. *Toronto Star*, May 21, 1980; our translation
2. *Montreal Gazette*, May 21, 1980
3. *La Presse*, May 28, 1980
4. *Le Devoir*, May 22, 1980
5. *Quebec-Canada: A New Deal*. Editeur officiel du Québec, 1979, p.105

the "no" side. The statistics produced by André Blais (published in the Montreal daily *Le Devoir* indicate that there was a qualitative change in the percentage of participation of the different linguistic groups in the referendum (see table 1).

The degree of correlation used in table 1 is a measure which indicates to what extent a group's turnout at the polls is directly (represented by a positive value) or inversely (represented by a negative value) proportional to the percentage of one language group or another in the population in each riding. The degree of correlation ranges from -1 to 1; and the further from 0 the figure is, the more significant it is. For instance, before the referendum, the voter turnout was **lower** in the ridings with a **higher** proportion of English-speaking people. This correlation seems to lose its significance, however, with the passing of the years and the improvement in the PQ's election performances. With the referendum, the situation is entirely reversed: the **more** English-speaking people there are in a riding, the **higher** the turnout at the polls. This shift is paralleled by an inverse evolution of the French-speaking population's participation at the polls.

Blais illustrates these trends by pointing out: "In the ten ridings where the majority of the population is non-French-speaking, the average rate of participation rose from 81.4% in 1976 to 88.4% in 1980 — an increase of 7%. In the 32 ridings where at least 98% of the population is French-speaking, the average rate went from 84.1% in 1976 to 85% in 1980 — an increase of less than 1%." (6)

The differentiation along language lines stands out even more clearly when one looks at the correlation between the PQ's vote and the linguistic composition of the ridings. Table 2 indicates that the vote is increasingly polarized along linguistic lines. It is noteworthy that there is a shift in the trend among "allophones" (i.e., people whose mother tongue is neither French or English): in contrast to the situation in 1970, in 1980 the higher the proportion of "allophones" in a riding, the stronger the vote against sovereignty-association.

These statistics do indicate that non-French-speaking people have tended more and more to reject the PQ's proposal. But they provide no grounds for concluding that its proposal has gained the support of the majority of French-speaking people in Quebec. This is amply borne out by table 3, which gives

the average percentage of "no" votes by riding for groups of ridings with the same percentages of French-speaking residents. The table clearly indicates that the fewer French-speaking residents there are in a riding, the higher the "no" vote. It also indicates that in the six ridings where 40% or less of the population is French-speaking — ridings in the west end of Montreal with a concentration of the English-speaking bourgeoisie — there was a strong "no" vote. But at the same time, even in the ridings that are 99% or 100% French-speaking, the "no" side got well above 50% of the vote on the average.

Those who equate the "yes" vote with the "Dynamic elements of the nation" try to get around this fact by resorting to dangerous and scientifically meaningless acrobatics. Drouilly, for instance, goes so far as to write:

"Since support for the 'yes' side among non-French-speaking voters reaches a maximum of 4% in the centre of Montreal and hovers around 0% elsewhere, we can conclude that English-speaking voters account for a negligible proportion (approximately 0.25%) of the 41% who vote 'yes'. Furthermore, since the rate of participation for non

6. *Le Devoir*, May 22, 1980

French-speaking voters, and in particular for English-speaking voters, was higher than the rate for French-speaking ones, the percentage of French-speaking voters must have been slightly less than 81%. We can therefore conclude that with 41% of the vote, the "yes" probably won a very slight majority among French-speaking voters." (7)

What a gem of scientific reasoning! It's like saying that the sun must rotate around the earth, since it rises in the east and sets in the west.

Undoubtedly somewhat taken aback by the theoretical lack of rigour in his own reasoning, this established sociologist feels obliged to add:

"Given the difficulties in establishing this majority, and in order to be utterly objective, we have to conclude that the referendum results were for the French-speaking population to all intents and purposes a tie." (8)

### The class underpinnings of the sovereignty thesis

People in nationalist circles, including those who advocate "socialist independence", commonly associate the polarization of the vote along language lines with a polarization along class lines. Thus Drouilly classifies workers on the "yes" side and the more well-off population on the "no" side. The Socialist Workers' League (SWL), a Trotskyist organization, goes so far as to assert that the working class is the "bastion of support for independence". (9) Once again, the facts prove just the contrary.

First of all, although it is true that a large majority of the non-French-speaking population voted "no" in the referendum, this does not mean that all these votes belonged to privileged or bourgeois voters. It takes a big dose of nationalist demagoguery to swallow that conclusion. There is certainly no doubt that the English-speaking bourgeoisie of Montreal does not support sovereignty-association, and never has. But the bourgeoisie is a small minority, even within a population whose mother tongue is not French.

In fact, many of the poorest workers belong to the minorities of Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Irish or other such origin. And whether the chauvinist nationalists like it or not, these workers are definitely part of the working class.

Furthermore, even if the defenders of the "yes" option are French-speaking,

**Table 1**  
Correlation between the linguistic composition of the ridings and the rate of participation at the polls

	participation (1970)	participation (1973)	participation (1976)	participation (1980)
% English-speaking	-.32	-.27	-.18	.35
% French-speaking	.43	.30	.20	-.32
% other language groups	-.46	-.23	-.15	.13

**Table 2**  
Correlation between the linguistic composition and the percentage of the vote in favour of the PQ and the "yes" option

	participation (1970)	participation (1973)	participation (1976)	participation (1980)
% English-speaking	-.30	-.38	-.59	-.81
% French-speaking	.14	.25	.52	.81
% other language groups	.25	.13	-.13	-.44

**Table 3**  
Average percentage of the "no" vote in ridings, according to the percentage of the population that is French-speaking

% French-speaking	number of ridings	average % of "no" vote
99-100	23	55
96-98	17	52
91-95	17	55
86-90	13	57
81-85	10	56
71-80	6	63
61-70	11	68

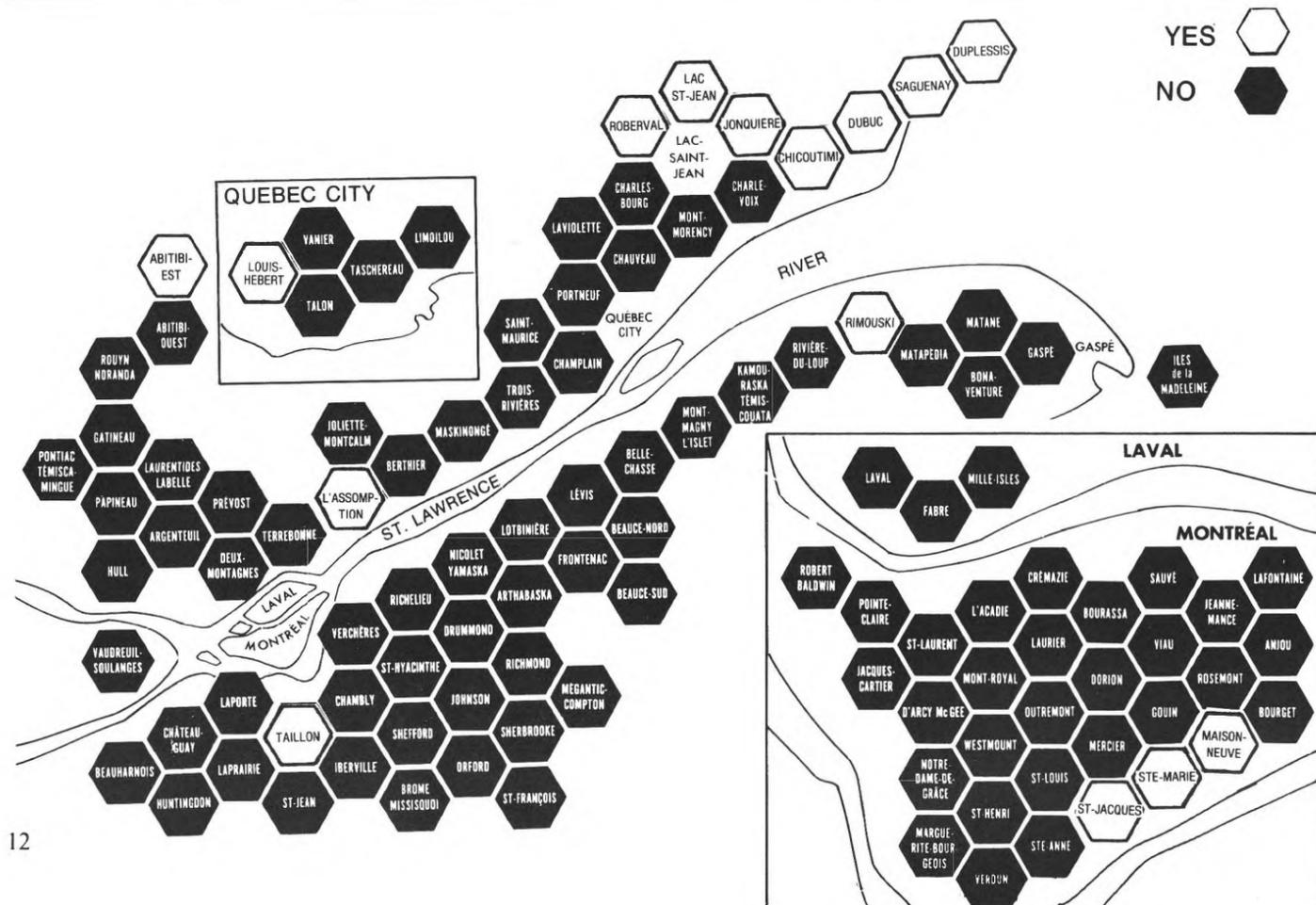
this does not mean that they are all workers — far from it. This can be seen quite clearly in the results of a study done shortly before the referendum by Maurice Pinard and Richard Hamilton, two sociologists at McGill University in Montreal. Their research, sponsored by *Le Devoir*, *Le Soleil* and the *Toronto Star*, proved to be the most accurate of all the surveys and public opinion polls done in the pre-referendum period. Going beyond an ordinary public opinion poll, it provided some very telling sociological data on the groups of voters who supported the "yes" and "no" options.

Table 4 shows that, in the French-speaking population, the groups with the largest majorities in favour of sovereignty-association are to be found among office workers, sales personnel, semi-professionals and, above all, professionals and intellectuals. And since the final, over-all results of the referendum indicate that most of the "others" ultimately voted "no", the table provides no grounds for concluding that there was overwhelming support for the PQ's proposal among blue collar workers.

These findings are reflected in table 5, which indicates how French-Canadian respondents intended to vote, according to their level of education. It shows that support for the PQ's option is concentrated in the best-educated sectors of the population. This tends to confirm that the PQ's main base of support comes from the petty bourgeoisie, intelligentsia.

This correlates with table 6, which breaks down how French-speaking people intend to vote in terms of family income. Although there is a slight majority in favour of a "yes" vote in the \$11,000 to \$15,000 income group, the strong support for the "yes" comes in the group with annual incomes of \$20,000 to \$25,000 — approximately the income of the petty bourgeoisie intelligentsia. The only groups in which the "no" vote outweighs the "yes" are the low income groups; in the group with the highest incomes (\$30,000 or more — hardly the typical income of

7. *La Presse*, May 28, 1980; Drouilly's emphasis  
8. *Ibid.*  
9. See *IN STRUGGLE!*, June 17, 1980, p. 3



your average working-class family) there is still very strong support for the PQ.

Leading Pequistes have a ready explanation for these voting patterns: the poorest sectors of the French-speaking population succumbed to the blackmail and scare tactics of the federal government and the "no" forces. It is nonetheless curious, to say the least, that the social progress the "yes" is supposed to represent scares the poor and is welcomed by the more well off. It is true, of course, that the politicians on the "no" side used all the most demagogical arguments they could think of. But the politicians on the "yes" side were worthy rivals: their counter-propaganda was to be heard and seen everywhere. Its impact was all the greater because it came from a political party in power that enjoyed the almost unanimous support of the journalists and stars of the press, radio and television. The "yes" propaganda machine was in fact just as effective as the "no" machine. So when they try to explain away the results by saying that "the poor were frightened", they simply betray their contempt for the people, whom they see as a herd of sheep ready to believe any lie if it is big enough.

### A significant shift in the vote

Another pattern in the referendum results also tends to undermine the argument that the "yes" camp includes the progressive sectors of the population while the "no" voters are basically the reactionary and more conservative part of the electorate. Looking at table 7, we can see that the "yes" vote lagged significantly behind the PQ's vote in 1976 in the Montreal region; in Quebec City, the proportion of the vote remained the same; and elsewhere in the province, the PQ's vote in 1980 was up substantially from 1976.

Yet the Montreal region is the industrial heartland of Quebec. As well, this is the region in which national oppression has always been most strongly felt, inasmuch as most of the non-French-speaking population is concentrated in Montreal. So the decline in support for sovereignty-association in the Montreal region would seem to suggest that fewer people now see independence, or autonomy, as the solution to national oppression.

Some observers would undoubtedly like to dismiss this conclusion, arguing that the declining support for sove-

**Table 4**  
Voting intentions, according to the occupation of the head of the household or the chief wage-earner (French Canadians only)

"White collar" occupations:	YES	NO	OTHER
1 — senior management	38	44	18
2 — lower-level management	39	48	13
3 — office workers, sales personnel	50	38	12
4 — professionals	66	15	19
5 — semi-professionals	61	30	9
6 — intellectuals	69	19	12
"Blue collar" occupations:			
7 — skilled workers	44	37	19
8 — semi-skilled workers	47	38	16
9 — unskilled workers and labourers	45	39	16
10 — Farmers	40	56	5

Note: Given the outcome of the referendum, it's fair to assume that most of the "others" ended up voting 'no'.

**Table 5**  
Voting intentions, according to years of schooling (French Canadians only)

	5 yrs or less	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16 yrs or more
YES	36%	26%	34%	52%	49%	58%	59%
NO	47	55	49	36	39	29	27
OTHER	17	20	17	13	12	13	15

**Table 6**  
Voting intentions, according to family income (French Canadians only) (income in thousands of dollars)

	5 or less	5-8	8-11	11-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30 or more
YES	43	37	34	52	48	57	50	52
NO	50	51	40	36	38	32	42	31
OTHER	6	11	26	11	15	12	8	16

**Table 7**  
Average percentage per riding of vote in favour of PQ (1976) and the "yes" position, by regions

	PQ (1976)	YES (1980)	Number of ridings
Montreal area	41%	35%	37
Quebec City area	48%	47.6%	8
Rest of province	38.5%	50.0%	65

**Table 8**  
Average percentage of votes per riding in favour of PQ (1976) and "YES" (1980, according to the percentage of French-speaking voters in the riding) (Montreal area only)

% French-speaking	PQ (1976)	YES (1980)	Number of % points lost
91-100	58	51	7
81-90	56	47	9
71-80	50	43	7
61-70	40	34	6
51-60	32	26	6
41-50	33	28	5
-40	13	13	0

reignty in the Montreal region is the result of the non-French-speaking population mobilizing in favour of a "no" vote. But once again, the statistics prove the contrary. Table 8 indicates that the PQ suffered comparable setbacks in all ridings, regardless of the proportion of the population that was French-speaking.

One can hardly blame non-French-speaking voters for a seven-point drop in the PQ's vote from 1976 to 1980 in ridings where 90% of the population is French-speaking! As a matter of fact, if there is a relationship between the PQ's decline and the linguistic composition of Montreal ridings, it is that the PQ's held its ground best in the ridings where a minority of the population is French-speaking.

In contrast, a more detailed examination of the ridings where there was an increase in the vote in favour of the PQ's option shows that the added vote correspond to a shift of votes that went to the Social Credit and the Union Nationale in 1976. Both these parties have traditionally been associated with the most right-wing ideas. There were thirteen ridings in Quebec where the "yes" vote was 10 points higher than the PQ's vote in 1976, and in these thirteen ridings the Social Credit (including Fabien Roy, the former "independent Creditiste") and the Union Nationale got 44% of the vote on the average in 1976. In comparison, these two parties put together got 26% of the vote for Quebec as a whole, while in the 53 ridings where support for the PQ's option dropped from its 1976 level, these two parties together only got an average of 17% of the vote in 1976. In other words, a significant proportion of the UN and Social Credit electorate seems to have supported the "yes" option. This puts another light altogether on the nationalists' assertion that the "yes" camp attracted to its side the "dynamic elements of the nation".

### The nationalist vote levelling off

In the wake of the PQ's defeat in the referendum, there was a resurgence of an old, persistent myth in "left-wing" nationalist circles. The defeat of the "yes" option, the argument goes, is the fault of the PQ's opportunism; it stopped defending the idea of independence and adopted a strategy of compromises and successive stages.

Here as well, however, the argument does not stand up in the light of the

facts. The Pinard-Hamilton study indicates that 17% of the respondents who said they would vote "yes" in the referendum would have voted "no" if the referendum question had dealt with a mandate to carry out sovereignty-association, instead of negotiating it. Furthermore, only 57% of those in favour of a "yes" vote said they would vote for independence in a second referendum. So the result of the PQ's "step-by-step" strategy was in fact to give it the widest possible basin of electoral support. Given this, the nationalist vote can certainly be said to be levelling off. In fact, as Hamilton and Pinard point out:

*"The YES respondents in favour of sovereignty were more likely to be professionals, semi-professionals and intellectuals (24%); the proportion of the corresponding group dropped among the neo-federalist YES respondents (16%), the neo-federalist NO respondents (11%) and the status-quo NO respondents (6%). There was a similar decline in the number of years of schooling between the four groups — 35%, 22%, 21% and 5% of the respondents in the four groups had completed 14 or more years of schooling."* (10)

This further confirms that the real "bastion of support for independence" is the petty bourgeoisie intelligentsia and the professionals, not the working class. And adding the word "socialist" in front of independence does nothing to change this fact.

A number of people pointed to the majority of "yes" votes in the Saguenay-Lac St-Jean region and the North Shore as proof of the working-

**'No' supporters in Quebec City on referendum night.**



class basis of the nationalist movement. The argument is rather suspect. Fernand Daoust, secretary-general of the Quebec Federation of Labour, took great delight in this victory and remarked with satisfaction that "the unions have delivered the goods". His comment simply showed up the fact that in this region, dominated by the big U.S. aluminium and steel monopolies, the large industrial unions controlled by the labour aristocracy put everything they had into the PQ's campaign.

The ridings in these regions are overwhelmingly French-speaking; they are not the areas most seriously affected by problems of national discrimination. The population there was undoubtedly much more influenced by the nationalist industrial strategy held out by the PQ. In a sovereign Quebec — whether or not it is associated — the "multinationals" will keep right on doing business as usual in this area, just as the oil wells would continue to pump out the black gold in a more autonomous Alberta. The PQ's economic nationalism, like that of the NDP at the federal level, does not aim at rooting out the U.S. monopolies; instead, its goal is to reap greater benefits from their operations. To do so, the bourgeoisie does its best to channel the anti-imperialist feelings of workers to its own advantage.

This economic nationalism also explains why a minority in the Quebec business community supported sovereignty-association. The weekly paper *Finance* explained why it was for a "yes" vote in an editorial in its May 19 issue:

*"Alberta elected the Lougheed government and returned no one in the opposition; Newfoundland has backed Peckford's demands in energy and fiscal issues. In both these provinces, the population has already given their real representatives a mandate to negotiate. The referendum question is not asking for anything different."* (11)

It could hardly be put more explicitly. For the bourgeoisie in Quebec, the national question is a "bargaining tool", comparable to the oil resources of Alberta and Newfoundland. For *Finance*, support for the "yes" option is the logical extension of its support for

10. Richard Hamilton and Maurice Pinard, "Les raisons du OUI, celles du NON", in *Le Devoir*, May 17, 1980

11. *Finance*, May 19, 1980

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

the PQ's economic policy, designed to "protect the traditional sectors of the Quebec economy" (12) "stimulate saving and investment in Quebec" (13), modernize the forest industry, etc. When it comes to the mining industry, however, **Finance** makes no bones about its opposition to the expropriation of the Asbestos Corporation, a company controlled by the U.S. corporation, General Dynamics. It nonetheless supported the creation of the Société nationale de l'amiante (the National Asbestos Company) and the buying out of Bell Asbestos (with the latter's approval).

This is what economic nationalism really boils down to. Above all, it means avoiding any challenge to the alliance with U.S. imperialism. Naturally, **Finance** welcomes the "fiscal rebate of 166% of spending on mineral prospecting in Quebec", (14) comparing it with Alberta's creation of an oil marketing board. It would seem that for the nationalist bourgeoisie, Alberta's very conservative Peter Lougheed is a twin to René Lévesque. After all, they share a common enemy, the centralizing government in Ottawa, don't they?

**Finance** rounds out its defence of the "yes" position by writing: "Quebec's leading source of wealth is still the tax returns generated by the work and savings of its citizens" (15). Well put. The nationalist bourgeoisie has one good reason for wanting to strengthen its control of State power in Quebec: it wants to use the fruits of the work of the people to its own profit.

## A changing balance of power

**Finance's** editorializing in favour of sovereignty-association has the advantage of allowing us to understand why most Quebec capitalists, although they have benefited from the PQ's policies, nevertheless are not ready to back sovereignty-association. There is an industrial boom going on right now in Western Canada, and the arguments for sovereignty-association seem to be a risky choice for capitalists who have succeeded since the 1960s in building their capital resources on a country-wide scale and developing "our very own" monopolies that today are seeking to expand in a growing Canadian market with a view to eventual expansion into the U.S.

French-speaking capitalists have taken over Sun Life's (16) market. They



'Yes' supporters looked glum as the results came in on referendum night.

now head up Hydro-Quebec and the Caisse de dépôts et de placements (a Crown loan and investment corporation). They built MLW-Bombardier, Culinar (17) and other companies into monopolies which now invest outside Quebec. Today, these French-speaking capitalists are talking about closer and sustained co-operation between the Montreal Board of Trade and its French-language counterpart, the Chambre de Commerce. This is significant development inasmuch as it signals a possible coming together of the interests of the English and French-speaking bourgeoisie in Montreal. In other words, the French-speaking business community is now sufficiently well developed to co-operate "on an equal footing" with the English-speaking bourgeoisie. As well, the two factions of the bourgeoisie today seem to have a common interest in uniting to defend their position against Toronto and increasingly, Calgary and Edmonton.

## Words no match for reality

As could naturally be expected, the great ideological arguments eventually lost out to the real social implications of the nationalist dream in the referendum debate. The Quebec bourgeoisie had supported and benefited from the PQ's nationalist policies, but it had no need for a project of political sovereignty that was likely to weaken its position in the Canadian market. The PQ's project was also rejected by a majority of Quebec workers, for the nationalist dream has no social benefits to offer the masses of the people, deprived of any power at either the provincial or federal level. And everything else being equal, can you really reproach the average worker, already hard-hit by the crisis, for worrying about whether he will have to pay more for his oil if Quebec pulls out of Confederation? Who can reproach him

with wanting to retain the widest possible borders for this country?

Events since the referendum have been very revealing about just what the PQ's real project is. The referendum ballots had hardly been counted before Quebec Premier René Lévesque was hurrying off to a bargaining session on the constitution. His finance minister, Jacques Parizeau, said a few weeks ago that the next provincial election would be fought on the theme of "good government", just as previous ones have been. With the first ministers' meeting coming up soon, the Quebec national assembly has decided to unite around a number of constitutional demands. The only sour note in all this comes from the long-time partisan of independence, Pierre Bourgault, who is now — twelve years too late — accusing the PQ of not being in favour of independence.

The referendum and subsequent events have ultimately shown that the nationalist pitch has reached its peak. It is in no way a measure of social progress. The referendum also showed that the burden of national oppression in Quebec is not sufficiently heavy to sustain a vast popular movement in favour of independence. In fact, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie have both already abandoned this as a goal. There can be no doubt that the struggles waged in Quebec in the 1960's and 1970s were responsible for some reforms being granted — for example, in terms of certain language rights. National oppression in Quebec is therefore fundamentally different from the national oppression of the Native peoples in Canada, for example.

The defeat of the "yes" position in the referendum cannot be blamed on the PQ leaders' "step-by-step" strategy. Nor can it be blamed on the demagoguery of the "no" camp or a fear of change among the population. It was the result of a nationalist political programme that has nothing to offer to the most important classes in our society. •

15. *Ibid.*

16. **Sun Life is an English-Canadian insurance company notorious for its chauvinist attitudes. It finally moved its head office to Toronto. Since then, it has been steadily losing its market in Quebec, mainly to the advantage of French companies.**

17. **Culinar is a monopoly in the food industry (Vachon's cakes, etc.). It is backed by the Caisses Desjardins, which is currently also trying to take over Nordair.**

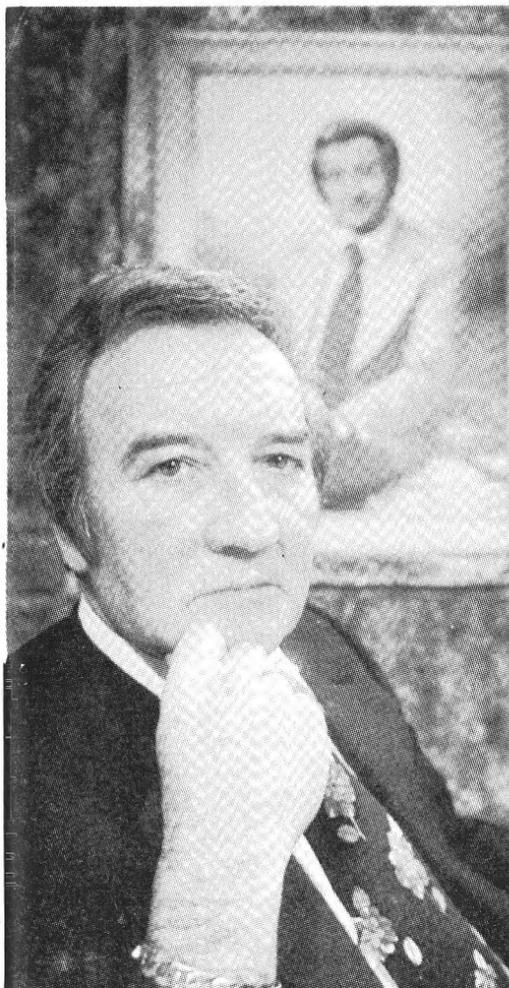
# The labour aristocracy in Canada today

**Two fundamentally opposed points of view are present in all struggles in the labour movement, from small strikes to economic and political struggles of national importance. On the one hand, there is the viewpoint defended by labour leaders like Dennis McDermott who stalk the halls of parliament looking for compromises or a future job. On the other hand, there are workers who will fight it out to the end to defend the interests of their class.**

**The source of these perpetually opposed points of view can be found in the material conditions in which the contemporary Canadian working class developed. The bourgeoisie used these conditions to corrupt a section of the working class, the section we now call the labour aristocracy.**

**There is in fact an objective basis for opportunism, class collaboration and reformism in the labour movement. Understanding this basis is important if we want to make the programme of the revolution prevail in the working class. We will only be able to understand how one section of the working class has been able to appropriate the leadership of the Canadian labour and working-class movement by examining this objective basis.**

**Corporation president? Big financial magnate? Cabinet minister? No — it's the very aristocratic Dennis McDermott, president of the Canadian Labour Congress...**



In the mid-19th century, Marx first analysed the question of the labour aristocracy in England to explain the relative lethargy of the English labour movement at that time. Canadian communists face the same question in 1980. The question is still important, because the domination of reformist ideas in the Canadian labour movement has to be explained. It is still important because we must explain why some sectors of the working class are receptive to communist ideas while others are much more reticent or even opposed outright. We cannot mechanically invoke the domination of bourgeois ideology to explain this. We have to look for the material conditions that make it possible for this ideology to exist and even to flourish within the working class.

These are not new questions. All revolutionaries who have fought to win the working class to the programme of the proletarian revolution have faced them. These questions are of vital importance in imperialist countries, given the difficulties encountered in winning over the proletariat, and the proletariat in big industry in particular. The answers given to these questions can determine the development of communist parties or organizations and their ability to adopt tactics that correspond to reality. Consequently, we shall first look at the historical conditions that made it possible for a labour aristocracy

to develop in Canada. Then we will examine its present characteristics.

## Some historical background

As Canada reached the imperialist stage of development, a fundamental split began to appear within the labour movement. Skilled workers set themselves apart from the rest of the working class and defended positions that other workers opposed.

For example, in the 1903 rail strike all the lower categories of workers (like the bagagemen) stopped work across the country. But workers at three higher levels (locomotive engineers, conductors and firemen) stayed on the job.

More generally, skilled workers formed unions based on their specific trade and were fiercely opposed to the unionization of industrial workers. That struggle reached its peak in the 1920s and 1930s. Skilled workers did indeed become better off than unskilled workers as the division of labour increased, as assembly lines became common and as Taylorism (a method of division of labour to increase productivity) gained acceptance. At the same time, skilled workers felt threatened by other workers who might gradually replace them as the division of labour became even more extreme. So the unions formed by skilled workers sought to maintain the labour aristocracy's privileges over the majority of workers. The crash of 1929 showed just how lasting these privileges were as the labour aristocracy took it in stride and was even able to make some money as prices fell. The situation was quite different for the majority of workers, however. They had a very hard time of it and unskilled and young workers were the first to lose their jobs.

But in the 1930s, Canadian imperialism was not in a very good position on the world market and the crisis was very real. Popular discontent was growing. The labour aristocracy no longer had hegemony over the labour movement. The Communist Party of Canada was then a revolutionary party. It worked at organizing industrial

workers and stepped up its activity amongst other particularly hard-hit sectors of the working class, like the young unemployed who had been sent to work camps. The time was also ripe for a reformist party that used radical language and condemned profit. Thus the CCF (which later became the NDP) was founded in 1932.

With the Second World War, Canadian imperialism grew by leaps and bounds at the economic level. The number of unionized workers doubled and today's big unions like the Steelworkers and the United Autoworkers of America (UAW) were built at that time and soon outranked the old trade unions in importance.

One might conclude that the importance of the labour aristocracy then started to decline. In fact, quite the opposite is true. U.S. imperialism and its Canadian ally came out of the war with an almost total hegemony over the Western world. Apart from some minor crises, the Canadian economy was to continue its rapid growth for the next 20 years. The situation of Canada and the U.S. was similar to the situation in England from 1848 to 1880, when that country had no rivals for the domination of the world. The world hegemony that Canada was a partner in meant that vast profits could be accumulated and then used to corrupt a section of the working class. In the 20 years following the end of the Second World War, Canadian investment abroad increased 500%.

During this time, the Canadian ruling class adopted many reformist policies: unemployment insurance, old age pensions, family allowances, medicare, the recognition of the "usefulness" of unions (so long as they controlled their members — Beveridge Report, 1943). It almost appeared as if the imperialist system could go on granting reform after reform and make capitalism livable for the working class. The labour movement could easily go from that conception to linking its fate to

that of the capitalists. The two main labour bodies of the time — The Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), composed mainly of industrial unions, and the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) composed mainly of craft unions — gave wholehearted support to imperialism. They supported the alliance with U.S. imperialism, the Marshall plan, the Korean war, etc.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the labour aristocracy had a stranglehold on the Canadian labour movement in those years. The union leaderships began their witch-hunt against communists in the unions in 1947, a year that also marked the beginning of the cold war. The ruling class had left it up to the labour aristocracy to organize the repression within the labour movement. The labour aristocracy's struggle for total control of the labour movement continued for the next six years. There were splits, inter-union raiding, expulsions and the plain and simple destruction of the most progressive unions. No methods were too low. At the 1950 TLC convention, for example, the leadership went over the list of delegates elected by the local unions with a fine tooth comb and prevented any who were communists or suspected of being sympathetic to communism from participating in the convention.

That done, nothing really differentiated the industrial unions from the craft unions. They were both controlled by the labour aristocracy. The merger in 1956 of the CCL and the TLC to form the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) bore this out. The number of unionized workers in Canada stopped increasing until the mid-1960s, when the civil service was organized. The unions' basic policy was open collaboration with the bourgeoisie. The communist movement was destroyed, itself a victim of rampant opportunism in the midst of this period of relative prosperity for imperialism. But prosperity was not to last much longer.

**Hal Banks, a labour bureaucrat imported from the U.S., led the anti-communist witch-hunt in the Canadian Seamen's Union in the 1950s.**



Inter-imperialist rivalry became more intense towards the mid-1960s. Japan, Europe and the U.S.S.R. also wanted their share of the spoils. In Canada, the economic situation began to deteriorate. In 1966, inflation and unemployment both increased simultaneously for the first time. The labour and mass movements began to stir and struggles were breaking out everywhere. New and very exploited members of the working class, like hospital workers, unionized and joined the struggle. Gradually, the ruling class gave up its reformist policies. People lost what they had fought for and there were cutbacks in the public services that had been won only a few years earlier. This threatened the domination of the labour aristocracy. Workers started rejecting many of the agreements made by the leadership. It can be said that this movement culminated recently in the radical criticism directed at Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) president Dennis McDermott. The resurgence of the communist movement during this period was not a simple coincidence. It corresponds to the state of the class struggle and to the growing opposition to the labour aristocracy's domination of the labour movement. The split in the labour became much more apparent.

### The labour aristocracy today in Canada

The concrete situation of the Canadian working class has to be analysed on the basis of this split.

The most striking thing is the differences in wages from one job to another. For example, the average weekly wages for selected sectors in April 1977 were:

- textile: \$159.00
- services: \$168.00
- primary transformation of metals: \$313.00
- coal and oil products: \$380.00
- industrial average: \$246.00

From these figures it is clear that the average wage in oil refineries is more than 54% higher than the average industrial wage and is more than double the average wage in the textile industry.

Worse still, the gap has been growing without let-up, as is clear from a look at wages between 1946 and 1966. In textiles, wages went up 250% and in the oil industry by 350%. Clearly, not everyone gains the same benefits from economic

development, even when there's a boom.

Now, if we look at the economic sectors it is clear that the chances are even greater that the labour aristocracy is concentrated in certain specific areas, namely: automobile assembly, steel, electrical equipment, construction, mines, pulp and paper, oil refineries, the chemical industry and transport. These correspond generally to the sectors found in the heartland of the country, in Ontario. But, it is also important to remember certain regional particularities, like the forest industry in British Columbia.

As far as wages are concerned, the size of an enterprise is an important consideration. In Ontario, the wages in workplaces of more than 500 employees are 12% higher than those in workplaces of 100-499 employees; and 26% higher than wages in businesses with less than 100 employees.

But the third element is undoubtedly the most important. It is the age-old division found in all workplaces between tradesmen and production-line workers. The gaps in the wages between these two groups can be enormous. At Dominion Bridge in Montreal, for example, tradesmen in 1977 were making \$2 an hour more than unskilled workers. If you add to that the fact that their work is less exhausting, which means they can do more overtime, tradesmen were making \$25,000 a year. With overtime, a mechanic at the Ste. Therese General Motors plant outside Montreal can make \$35,000 a year while a semi-skilled worker, like a body worker, can make \$30,000 with overtime. That's almost twice what a production-line worker makes. In other words, the company is consciously playing the game of concentrating on corrupting a small number of workers at the top end of the scale. A Montreal-area study of 29 types of jobs has shown that the highest average wages are made by maintenance carpenters, maintenance electricians, milling machine operators and plumbers, etc.

There exists, therefore, a stratum of workers who stand out from the rest because of their higher wages. A study of one department at CN in Montreal illustrates the way this wage disparity works. Almost three-quarters of the privileged workers there have taken advantage of their positions to go into business or by a small fleet of taxis, or a restaurant, or an apartment building, etc. As well, their lifestyles were typically petty-bourgeois, with motor



**The labour aristocracy gained hegemony very early in the history of Canadian unions. Above: the first executive of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), in 1956.**

boats, trips down south and cottages. Their competitiveness and desire for social success led them to look favourably on the idea of sending their children to private schools. In short, both the lifestyle and the living standard of the labour aristocracy are exactly the type of image the bourgeoisie wants to impose on the entire working class.

We have emphasized wages, even if our data is not complete, because wages are at the base of the corruption, the base of the objective interests of the labour aristocracy in supporting imperialism. A worker who makes only \$4 or \$5 an hour is hardly likely to have the same objective interests.

### It is not wages alone

The privileges of the labour aristocracy are not limited to wages, far from it. There are also privileges in terms of working conditions, and here again it's important to distinguish between skilled and unskilled workers. For the latter, at a place like the GM plant in Ste. Therese the work is very tough and there are always speedups, overtime, overheated working places and continual surveillance. Not surprisingly, the turnover of workers is high.

On the other hand, you have the tradesmen, those who maintain and

**Walter Reuther, former president of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and a well-known anti-communist and anti-progressive in the labour movement.**



repair the machinery. According to the department of industry and commerce, the breakdown among different classes of work in the auto industry is as follows:

- labourers 75%
- semi-skilled 23%
- skilled 2%

Skilled workers and to some degree the semi-skilled workers are subject to less control on the job. They don't have to work as hard and their breaks are longer, etc. You'll find the same phenomenon in the sawmills in British Columbia. For example, the sawyers and certain other specialized workers make more than \$2 an hour more than unskilled workers, and they get to set the speed everyone works at. That points up an important trait of the labour aristocracy: its privileged place in the production process. It is responsible for keeping the equipment going, something that is key to the production itself. In addition, in many places it sets the speed of the work. Clearly, the labour aristocracy has power that is not shared by production-line workers, who can be replaced at any moment by, for example, students (as happens at GM).

Such is not the case for skilled workers. If this small group refuses to work, production itself is put in jeopardy. It's the same thing for some semi-skilled workers in key jobs, like those in the finishing and final inspection departments of an auto plant. The bourgeoisie wants people it can count on in these positions and it will pay up to get them. At the opposite end of the scale, production-line workers can only count on unity and solidarity to fight back.

So, objectively, some workers do not need the unity of the entire working class. On the contrary, they use their position to form alliances with management. In exchange for the privileges we have just talked about, they go out and

sabotage the workers' movement. That is clear enough at the GM plant we have been talking about. As soon as there's a wildcat, an occupation or a sit-in, the tradesmen set themselves apart and truly act like a group that does not share the same interests.

But it would be wrong to conclude that the labour aristocracy never shows signs of militancy. Sometimes tradesmen do have to go on strike and they have been known to use quite radical pressure tactics. The gangsterism of Hal Banks and Dédé Desjardins (!) has little in common with revolutionary violence. Theirs are struggles for privileges without regard for the mass of workers. For example, some collective agreements have clauses sheltering a union from a wage freeze instead of thinking of a fight of the entire working class. These struggles are marked by corporatism and localism, of factory by factory struggles, of "target-company" strategies where a single factory fights to establish the pattern for all the others, as is the case in the auto industry.

There are also examples in the unions of the total preponderance of their specific interests for a minority of privileged workers. For example, in the early 1970s the tradesmen in the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) in B.C. tried to form a separate union for themselves. In Ontario, tradesmen at Ford won the right to veto the contract in 1976.

There we have a concrete illustration of what Engels meant when he said that the labour aristocracy was also the leading segment of the working class. John Porter, a Canadian sociologist who has studied what he calls the elite, points out some interesting aspects of the control of unions during the 1950s by the labour aristocracy. Porter found that skilled workers provided much more than their share of union leaders and that unskilled workers were largely underrepresented at the highest level of trade unions. This is in addition to the common practice of almost all unions of directly co-opting full-time union staffers. Porter found that 89% of these full-timers were full-time in the fullest sense of the word, i.e. they could not be gotten rid of.

That is only one aspect of labour-aristocratic control, but it amply illustrates that the influence wielded by the labour aristocracy is out of proportion to its numbers. And the labour aristocracy also has the advantage of being politically organized, thanks to the

NDP, which itself was created at the initiative of, among others, the CLC. No wonder this segment of the working class has such influence in the working-class movement.

The privileges of the labour aristocracy go beyond material benefits, wages, working conditions and the place it occupies in production. It also has political privileges. Some representatives of this segment are in a position to sit on governmental tripartite committees. Often payment goes along with these positions, adding to the already considerable remuneration enjoyed by union bureaucrats. McDermott gets \$50,000 plus a cost-of-living clause, plus a pension fund, plus expenses, etc. These people, or their leaders, are in a position to contribute to the bourgeoisie in its development of Canadian imperialism, while building themselves fancy careers, like the former head of the CNTU, Senator Jean Marchand, or the former president of the UAW, Ambassador Leonard Woodcock.

All these privileges make the labour aristocracy and the union bosses who represent it into a stratum whose interests conflict with those of the rest of the working class. These privileges inevitably bring with them pro-imperialist, chauvinist and reformist political positions. The giant unions like the UAW, the Steelworkers and the IWA provide the lion's share of political manpower and financial backing for the NDP, whose programme is a synthesis of their interests. Unions like the Teamsters and some of the construction unions are even more reactionary, because there the labour aristocracy does not have to deal with an uncorrupt majority. After

**Textile workers and refinery workers: there is a difference of more than \$220.00 in their average weekly incomes in Canada.**



all, industrial unions like the Steelworkers include more than labour aristocrats. Many of their members come from small factories where it would take a microscope to find privileges. Radio Shack in Barrie, Ontario, is an example. There is no doubt that the objective interests of the majority of the Steelworkers are in conflict with those of the labour aristocracy. That's why an industrial strategy which promotes itself as being in the collective good is inevitably key to the defence of the interests of the labour aristocracy.

### A short conclusion

All has not been said about the labour aristocracy, but a few serious hypotheses are possible. The labour aristocracy is basically made up of skilled workers working for monopolies. More information is needed on what precisely the situation is outside of the monopolies, but surely the phenomenon there does not take on the same proportions. In the big monopolies, the power of the labour aristocracy is strengthened by

1. Hal Banks and Dédé Desjardins are labour leaders known for their gangsterism. Banks was active in the Seafarers' International Union in the 50s and Desjardins was active in construction unions in the 70s.



The workers at Radio Shack in Barrie, Ont., struck in August 1979. Affiliated with the Steelworkers, these workers are very underpaid.

the fact that all of the workers at the company enjoy privileges in comparison with the working class taken as a whole. That doesn't make all these workers into labour aristocrats, but it does make it easy for the latter to dominate.

As well, the concentration of the labour aristocracy varies considerably from one sector to another, even from one monopoly to the other. In highly automated refineries, for example, the labour aristocracy is often the majority. On the other hand, in an auto assembly plant, it would only represent about 10% of the workers... In other places, it is even less. So while it is said that the labour aristocracy is only a very small segment of the proletariat, its relative size depends on the province, the city, the industrial sector and the degree of economic development.

When we say that it is a small segment in a relative sense, it is also because its influence extends far beyond its numbers. The relative prosperity enjoyed by Canadian imperialism, even if it is beginning to diminish, created favourable conditions for its domination so far. Along with the labour aristocracy, broad segments of the working class in Canada enjoy much better economic conditions than in other countries. That is why the labour aristocracy can maintain its hold on the labour movement.

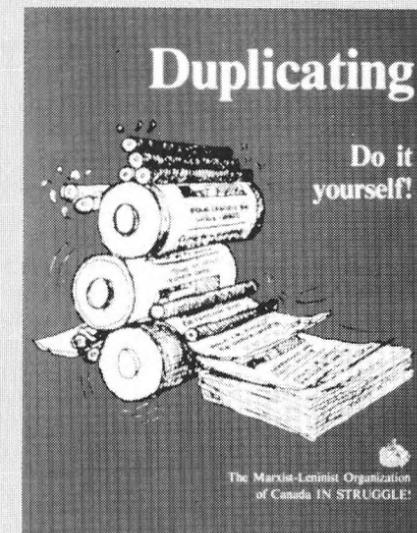
These conclusions must be applied to the tactics communists must use to win the working class over to the communist programme. Among other things, it would be suicidal to concentrate all our energies on sectors where the labour aristocracy is most dominant. As we

have seen, this means mainly big industry. Unfortunately, many communists see winning over the proletariat to the communist programme in this manner. As they would have it, it is simply a question of converting the bastions of the labour aristocracy into bastions of the revolutionary proletariat.

Our practice in past years and our analysis shows that this is the wrong way to go about things under present conditions, which are not the same as in Russia or Germany at the beginning of the century. Not only must we remember that the labour aristocracy is centred in the industrial proletariat of the big monopolies, we must also remember that the most combative strata of the proletariat are now found in the public sector, among youth, in the women's movement and in the oppressed nations and national minorities. Our first task is to reach these more receptive strata. That is where the revolutionary programme can penetrate most easily because reformist and social democratic ideas are less strongly implanted there. To act otherwise under present circumstances would mean taking on the fortress without having the forces or the organization to do so. It would mean forgetting about the most combative strata of the proletariat.

So there are two tactics in winning over the working class. We believe in one of them on the basis of a concrete analysis. That, we feel, is how we can best win over the entire working class to revolutionary ideas and defeat this divisive factor, this obstacle to the revolutionary struggle that the labour aristocracy represents.

## Duplicating: do it yourself



Do you know how to produce a leaflet, pamphlet, magazine or other printed matter yourself? Do you know how to choose which of the different techniques of duplication generally available are best for your purposes and then take advantage of them? Do you know at least how to talk shop competently to get across what you want done at a commercial shop? These are all things which should be part of the basic knowledge of any revolutionary, community or labour organization whether made up of immigrants, Canadians or both. We hope to make this basic information available as widely as possible by publishing this manual.

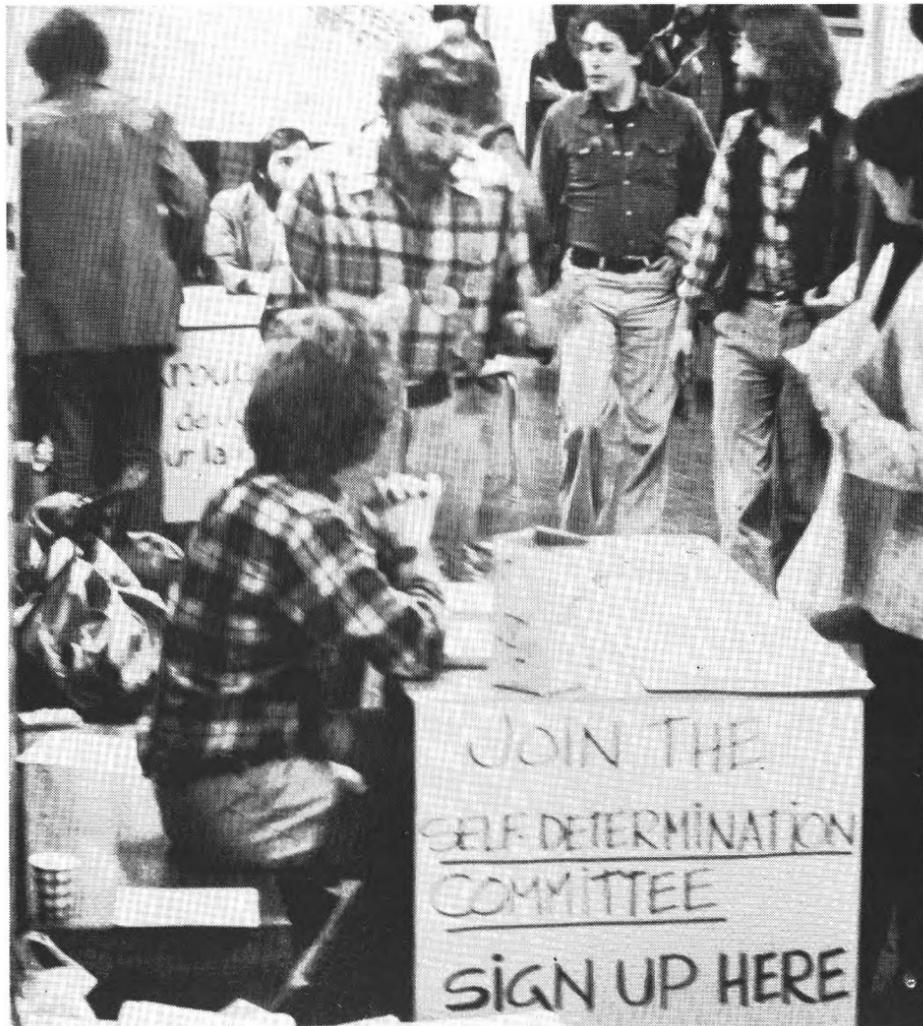
This little manual is the fruit of the experience of many different people who are working in the field of printing, mock-up, camera work, and general production techniques. It should prove to be a useful guide for all those who organize in their area to carry out educational activities to put across the point of view of the working class.

(Available at The Spark and l'Étincelle bookstores.)

# Support for Quebec's right to self-determination is very much alive in English Canada

In the past few months, the MLOC IN STRUGGLE! has centred its political work in English Canada on the defence of the right of Quebec to self-determination and the idea of the equality of languages and nations. In practical terms, we tried to fight big-nation chauvinism and promote the democratic viewpoint by getting involved in setting up committees and organizing activities aimed at defending the Quebec nation's most basic democratic rights. What follows is an evaluation of that work (1).

The English-speaking Montreal Committee to Defend Quebec's Right to Self-Determination organized a booth at the May 10 Teach-in on "Workers and the Referendum".



The assessment made here also includes details on the results of the work carried out by the many committees created in all the major cities and on the movement created around them. However, this is not an evaluation by the committees as such of their work. It is our viewpoint, as a political formation actively involved in the creation of the committees and in their subsequent activities, on the practice of the committees. We put forward below the facts and figures that we have been able to gather. In a number of cases it was not possible to be all that precise. We have done our best to cite real uninflated figures and unromanticized events which do justice to the main features and highlights of this important political struggle.

The ground for our participation in this political campaign had been cleared by several years of fighting battles on the issue of national rights in Canada. Since the election of the Parti Quebecois in 1976, we have made the struggle against national oppression a major theme in our political work. We started to promote our viewpoint widely in 1977 with the decision to circulate the Declaration for the Absolute Equality of Languages and Nations, which obtained more than 60,000 signatures across Canada.

The scheduling of the Quebec referendum made it clear that Quebec would occupy centre stage in the country's politics. We would fight for the democratic rights of the Quebec nation. The attention of Canadian workers would be attracted to the Quebec national question. The case of Quebec would be a starting point for spreading the democratic view of the absolute equality of languages and nations and a terrain for combatting chauvinism. All of this could only have

1. This article only deals with the work we did in English Canada. The work done in Quebec in the same period will be reviewed later in our press.

very positive effects on the struggle of workers of all oppressed nations and national minorities in Canada.

A number of facts were clear from the outset. The chauvinists were taking advantage of the referendum to go on the offensive. Quebec had divided workers in the past. And finally, struggles around this issue had previously led to repression in Quebec. There could be no thought whatever of letting the bourgeoisie have a free hand on this issue. The challenge before us was to make the referendum an occasion for strengthening the unity of the people's forces. That unity, based on mutual respect for one another's rights, is critical for workers. To achieve it required mobilizing all democratic forces possible in Canada, especially the labour movement.

## Unite all who can be united

In the space of a few months, sixteen committees to defend Quebec's right to self-determination were established in as many Canadian towns: Vancouver, Prince George (B.C.), Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto (where the committee already existed well before December 1979), Ottawa, Hamilton, St. Catherine's, Sudbury, Hurst, Montreal, Halifax and Moncton. The committees' activities spilled over beyond the strict boundaries of the cities they were based in. At least 24 cities were affected by their activities. All parts of the country were affected except for Newfoundland, P.E.I. and the Northwest Territories.

The committees were autonomous. They were not organizational extensions of any political party or organization. Membership was on an individual basis. The total number of people directly involved was about 130. Many more did concrete things to promote the cause championed by the committees, although they were not members. Our estimate is that about 1,000 people gave direct support to the work of the committees. Activities included the circulation and signing of public statements, sale of buttons supporting self-determination, participation in meetings, demonstrations, picket lines, writing letters to newspapers and to magazines and so on. The support that existed for the committees beyond such work directly linked to committee initiatives is impossible to quantify.

There were a lot of people involved and they came from a very broad cross-



The Halifax-Dartmouth Committee to Defend Quebec's Right to Self-determination organized picketing of the conference held by the Council for Canadian Unity in Halifax last April. The police intervened to prevent journalists from approaching and interviewing demonstrators.

section of backgrounds. Committee members included people from the New Democratic Party (NDP), Communist Party of Canada (CP), Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) and ex-RWL members, the Socialist Workers' League (SWL), the Socialist Organizing Committee (SOC), the International Socialists, the Workers Communist Party (WCP), the Marxist-Leninist Organization of Canada IN STRUGGLE!, the Ottawa Committee for Labour Action (OCLA), some anarchists, some Christian activists and progressives with no ties to any political formation as well as trade unionists.

All the committees had similar platforms, centred on three points: Quebec is a nation, not just a province; it is an oppressed nation; it has the right to self-determination, a right which must be recognized and upheld.

It turned out to be the most important action by a broad and united country-wide movement that has been carried out for a number of years. The labour movement got involved, although the CLC leadership did not. You could see it very clearly at the CLC convention: 450 delegates sported the button declaring "Defend Quebec's right to self-determination". The labour bosses were unable to defend their chauvinist policy on Quebec in such an atmosphere.

The experience of broad-based unity of action contains a number of important lessons which are worth noting.

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In the class struggle, building unity between democratic, popular and working-class forces is always on the agenda. But that unity does not exist by itself and for itself. Nor is it something that is created one day and then lasts forever in the same form. Each battle

requires a unity which is in line with its relative political importance and with the character of the countries in which the battle takes place. It depends on what social forces are involved, what demands are raised and the people who are ready to unite to carry out the particular struggle. In other words, unity can only be built in the real world if you take full account of the concrete situation and the prevailing political situation in an all-round way.

The struggle to defend Quebec's right to choose its own political destiny is a democratic struggle. It is thus inherently the kind of fight that could potentially interest all consistent democrats. Thus unity in this case could be a very broad array of forces coming from different class backgrounds and even, up to a point, comprising people of opposing political and ideological views. The forces that could be reached around the issue of Quebec had shown in the past that they were able to get together around major immediate struggles.

Country-wide unity was a practical prospect because the issue directly concerned all regions of Canada. Quebec, and its political destiny, directly and immediately affect the political future of the whole country.

Unity of action was also possible to attain because it was evidently what was needed to draw out all the forces that could potentially be mobilized at the time. But it could not, the situation being what it is at present in Canada, be accomplished in the form of a coalition of organizations. The committees had to be independent gatherings of individuals who were ready to act. The unity was all the more solid because it was around one single thing: the defence of Quebec's right to choose its political status. There was no attempt to extend this political basis to include other points, and this contributed to making the committees and the over-all movement pretty homogenous.

## Dealing with the here and now

Unity of action had to be as broad as possible if interventions were to have an impact on current events. All means had to be explored to get the democratic message out to the public. Work had to be done to stimulate public expressions of views which favoured Quebec's rights in all parts of the society. Just how extensive the work of the committees and the broader movement was is apparent from the following facts:

**Use of the media:** there were 23 press conferences and press releases, 34 radio and TV appearances, 44 articles, letters and so on in newspapers and magazines.

**Public actions:** There were 8 picket lines and 17 meetings which drew about 500 people. There were 31 interventions in public events others than those organized by the Committees (literature tables, distribution of leaflets and statements etc.).

**Distribution of written literature:** All of the committees distributed a statement of their own which explained their goals. The extent of such distribution varied from committee to committee and we do not have exact figures on how many were given out or how many signatures were collected indicating support for the views expressed in them. The Toronto committee put together a Dossier on Quebec which was distributed by just about all committees. We ourselves distributed over 2,500 copies of our pamphlet, *Quebec has the Right to Choose*. Films on Quebec, *Les ordres* and *Action*, both about the October 1970 crisis, were shown on five occasions. About 3,000 self-determination buttons were sold.

**May Day Message to workers of Quebec:** it was published in the Montreal daily, *La Presse*, and signed by 350 people, three-quarters of whom were trade unionists. Some \$2,820.00 was donated to pay to run the ad in *La Presse*.

**Letter on October 1970:** published in five newspapers, including Montreal's *Le Devoir*.

**Open letters:** The Toronto committee sent a letter to 30 Ontario municipalities to protest the use of public funds to promote the People to People Petition. Questionnaires were sent to candidates of all parties in Ontario during the last federal election. There were many other open letters produced which denounced the People to People petition, notably in British Columbia, Ontario and the Maritimes.

Statistics tell part of the tale about how extensive the impact of the committees was. A look at the different social groupings affected by these activities tells more.

**The unions:** Members and officers from at least 30 different unions got involved in the movement. A good proportion of these were from Canadian unions in the public and semi-public sector. **The universities:** This was the main base for the committees in many places. **The women's movement:** at least five women's organizations got invol-



**A press conference was organized to publicize the "Message to the Workers of Quebec" published in the Montreal daily *La Presse* on May Day. From left to right: Lloyd Ingram, president of CUPW in Vancouver; Dave King, treasurer of the VMREU; Bill Saunders, of the ITU; and Jess Succamore, secretary-treasurer of CAIMAW.**

ved. In addition there were people from the anti-nuke movement, the injured workers' movement, students and members of national and ethnic minorities (Ukrainians, francophones, Palestinians, Chileans, Chinese, Blacks, Native Indians), and members of the artistic world, such as Rock against Racism and the Cultural Workers Alliance.

Hence the committees were created and managed to organize a large number of activities throughout the country in the short space of a few months. It was not a mass movement. It would have been simple pipe-dreaming to have set that as an objective. But the results are real and appreciable. One can imagine how much the trade-union movement could have done if it had taken the lead. However, as long as labour is chained to the NDP election machine, it will not play the role it could and should in the important political battles like the one around the referendum.

## Chauvinism is driven back a step

The main country-wide chauvinist movement took the form of the People to People petition. The idea was to use it to win over public opinion. The come on was soft sell: advice to the fellow members of our one big Canadian family, we love you, let's keep our wonderful democratic country together (?). That brand of chauvinism was likely to be swallowed more easily by a larger part of the Canadian population. The People to People campaign was also more active in Quebec than were the other chauvinist forces.

The movement to defend Quebec's right definitely hurt the People to People campaign. It didn't stop the pe-

## MESSAGE DU PREMIER MAI

DES TRAVAILLEURS DU CANADA ANGLAIS

En ce jour de fête internationale des travailleurs nous exprimons notre solidarité avec les travailleurs du Québec, les travailleurs de tout Québec qui ont le droit de décider de leur avenir politique. Les Canadiens doivent décider s'ils veulent continuer à vivre dans la Confédération, nous considérons que le choix revient de vous seuls.

Comme Canadiens nous sommes conscients de la nécessité d'apporter des changements à notre société et nous avons des points de vue différents sur ce qu'il faut faire et sur ce qu'il ne faut pas faire. Cependant, nous sommes tous d'accord sur le fait que le peuple du Québec demeure avec nous dans la bataille pour apporter les changements qui nous permettent de vivre dans une société démocratique et libre.

Ce message de solidarité et de bonne volonté a été lu à l'occasion du Premier Mai de nombreux travailleurs de notre région de Québec, comme toujours, de notre union pour la culture et de notre intérêt profond pour les droits des travailleurs de toutes les nations.

tion altogether. But the anti-chauvinist work succeeded in tarnishing the phoney "we love you" image among many sectors of the population.

The protests against the use of public funds to promote the petition cast a bit of a dark shadow on the whole image of an expression of pure-minded apolitical sentiments by groups of disinterested concerned citizens. The Ontario People to People committee felt obliged to issue a press release to try to brush up its reputation again. Protests led a number of store chains to change their minds and decide not to distribute the petition. In Nova Scotia, the premier himself wrote to the Halifax-Dartmouth Committee to say that the government would not be circulating it.

In Quebec, the would-be hoopla and high profile ceremony to present the petition from the "Canadian people" to the "Quebec people" turned into what at best was a grotesque farce with demonstrators from the MLOC IN STRUGGLE! and the WCP on the scene. Even the bourgeois media responded by taking shots at the People to People ceremony. Last but not least, the active and visible anti-chauvinist movement was a key factor in stopping the leaders of the trade-union movement from endorsing the People to People Petition. This constituted the biggest victory in the fight against chauvinism in the early going. Because if the

2. For a detailed look at this chauvinist movement, see *Quebec has the right to choose*.

movement had not been around there could be doubt that the labour movement would have backed the petition. After all, some of the main people in the organization distributing the petition were well-known NDPers. And the higher-ups in the NDP in some places, notably in Ontario, got a little cheesed off with the development of the movement against the petition.

The media were also criticized when they pushed chauvinism openly and especially when they blacked out all information on the pro-Quebec movement. The Vancouver Sun was one such target when it refused to publish letters to the editor defending Quebec. It backed down and published some letters. The CBC in Vancouver was also hit for the same reasons. In Toronto, people protested the CBC's firing of an employee for the crime of defending Quebec's right to self-determination and the rights of Franco-Ontarians.

Chauvinist politicians were also in the line of fire. The committees went into action at Queen's Park in Toronto throughout the whole week of the debate which resulted in unanimous adoption (with NDP support) of a motion opposing sovereignty-association and rejecting negotiations with Quebec if the Quebec people had the temerity to vote "yes". Protests were raised in Vancouver against a similar stance by Premier Bill Bennett. In Saskatchewan, the visit by NDP premier Blakeney to Quebec to express "we won't negotiate" sentiments was condemned as outside interference. Despite these actions, the movement was not all that strong in counter-attacking on this front. And the threats and harangues by the provincial premiers and legislatures were a trump card played by the chauvinist forces in the final weeks of the referendum campaign.

The facts we have just summarized

**John Robarts, former premier of Ontario and co-author of the report of the Pépin-Robarts Task Force on National Unity: another leading light behind the chauvinist People to People Petition.**



do, however, show that it is possible to organize an effective campaign against the forces that work to divide workers. Public opinion can be alerted even with little money and resources and limited manpower. The forces that falsely pretend to be democratic can have their image tarnished and lose some of their influence. If we dare to attack them we can expose them.

## Making this movement known in Quebec

The work done in English Canada by the committees had a certain impact in Quebec. Newspapers like IN STRUGGLE! and *The Forge* gave regular coverage. The Montreal committee helped set up two press conferences to publicize the activities being carried out by the committees. The creation of some committees like the ones in Edmonton and Ottawa were noted in the Montreal press. The May Day Message was run as an ad in the Montreal daily *La Presse*. The Montreal *Le Devoir* carried the Letter on the 1970 October Crisis. A number of Quebec workers and trade unionists spoke in meetings outside Quebec and were able to report back to their own unions and workplaces on the reception they got. IN STRUGGLE! organized some such forays, including one by a Quebec student in the Maritimes. The May Day Message was widely distributed as a leaflet at the June CNTU convention in June.

There was certainly some impact felt in Quebec, but it didn't go that far. The existence of an anti-chauvinist movement in English Canada could have been much better publicized than it was. Let's take a look at some of the reasons for this (not in any particular order of importance).

The narrow nationalism of the union leaders in Quebec was certainly a factor. They were not exactly in a big hurry to link up with workers in English Canada who supported Quebec's right to self-determination. Thus, for example, when someone from Vancouver approached Quebec union leaders to suggest that the May Day Message be presented as part of the May Day programme in Quebec City, no one found it to be an idea important enough to follow through on. Meanwhile, the capitalists were spending millions of dollars to fly in chauvinist personalities to spout their line across the province. The Quebec unions couldn't find enough spare cash to bus

in a single anti-chauvinist from English Canada to explain that some people in English Canada did not agree and supported Quebec's right to self-determination.

The Parti Québécois obviously had no interest in Quebec voters finding out about the anti-chauvinist movement in English Canada. The nationalists had no time for anything else but attacking the federal government. Very few of them thought twice much less did anything about publicizing the existence of significant forces, including within the labour movement, that supported Quebec's right to choose its political destiny. The Quebec Federation of Labour even manoeuvred so that the last CLC convention would not take a clear-cut position of support for Quebec's right to self-determination.

It is also a fact that the committees themselves were not united on this question. Some were reticent about intervening in Quebec. They thought that any intervention would be interpreted as interference. But this is a matter of failing to distinguish fish from fowl. Those people who prance into Quebec to say "You do not have the right to separate", or "We will not negotiate with you and you will be all alone" and "If you separate you won't be getting any more Albertan oil" are clearly interfering. They are making threats and trying to pressure Quebec voters. That kind of intervention is completely different from people coming to Quebec to say quietly and firmly "It is up to you to choose and whatever that decision is we will respect it".

The delay in setting up a viable committee in Montreal was another significant factor. We believe that our Organization made an error in not acting more rapidly in this regard. We underestimated the importance of a strong Montreal committee at the beginning of the campaign.

Finally, the fact that the committees never managed to co-ordinate information and activities on a country-wide basis did not help either. If such co-ordination had developed, say for example if there had been a national co-ordinating committee of sorts, it could have been an invaluable instrument in getting the news of what was going on to the people of Quebec. It would have produced a greater impact on both the media and the unions. In the absence of any co-ordination, the initiative was left to local committees in isolation from the others and the effect of their work was correspondingly less.



A rally in support of Quebec's right to self-determination in Toronto, on May 14.

## IN STRUGGLE!'s work in the anti-chauvinist movement

It is no secret that, starting in December 1979, two members of IN STRUGGLE! travelled across the country to promote the creation of groups to defend Quebec's rights and fight chauvinism during the referendum. All the committees did not owe their creation to this initiative by any means, but in many cases it provided the extra push that was needed to get things moving and to bring people together for united action. Subsequently, IN STRUGGLE! comrades got involved in just about all the committees. We mobilized our people and resources to give support to the activities undertaken by the committees.

The newspaper IN STRUGGLE! provided regular and substantial coverage of the movement's activities right up to the referendum voting day on May 20. We also produced and distributed the pamphlet on Quebec.

We were aware from the start, when we adopted the basic policy which was to guide our work throughout the campaign, that it could create problems we would have to face and solve. We had to maintain our ideological and organizational independence and keep up our own activities without at any point competing with the committees. We avoided using the committee actions to promote our own organization such as would have been done had we, for example, organized our own picketing the night before a committee picket in the same place. Another way we could have exploited the committees would have been by planning a meeting in the same city and on the same evening as a meeting had originally been scheduled by the committee. These two examples are not plucked out of thin air. They actually happened. The WCP did both those things and they stand as examples of what not to do.

On the whole, we managed to get actively involved in the movement without competing with the committees or giving up our own independence of action. We continued to get signatures on the Declaration for the Absolute

Equality of Languages and Nations (9,400 people signed between January and May). We distributed our newspaper and *Quebec has the right to choose*. We organized demonstrations such as the one in the Ontario Legislature and the one against the People to People Petition presentation ceremony in Montreal. We also intervened in a considerable number of union conventions, including those of the CLC, CNTU, New Brunswick Federation of Labour, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Canadian Union of Postal Workers in Saskatchewan and the British Columbia Teachers Federation.

Within the committees, we avoided aggravating contradictions with other political formations. We were very well aware that if the committees were turned into a battleground for polemics between organizations, the progressives would quit and the committees would lose their credibility. We implemented this policy right up to the referendum, despite the many provocations by the WCP and numerous actions and attitudes on their part that warranted condemnation.

After the referendum, we made our criticisms of the WCP known in an article in the newspaper IN STRUGGLE!. We continue to hold that these criticisms are well-founded in fact and that it was correct to publish them. However, we did more than that. We also sent copies of the article to all the committees in the form of an open letter. We now consider that this was an error. The open letter formally invited the committees to take stands on the criticisms which were in fact difficult for them to substantiate on their own, given the absence of co-ordination of information among the committees. We were in effect asking the committees to

**The organizers of the People to People campaign for Canadian unity showed up in Montreal to present the results of their petition campaign. But they got a rather unexpected welcome: hundreds of people demonstrated in defence of workers' unity and the Declaration for the Absolute Equality of Languages and Nations.**



judge the validity of criticisms where this was simply not possible for them to do.

But this error does not invalidate the contribution we made to the anti-chauvinist movement, which remained correct and consistent throughout. We certainly spoke strongly in favour of increasing the amount of country-wide and regional co-ordination. We called repeatedly for organizing at a minimum a national conference where information and experiences could be exchanged and planning of joint actions could be carried out. Although some people liked to fill everyone's ears with talk about how this was all a design to control the movement, it was not. On the contrary, if the committees themselves had managed to attain a greater level of co-ordination and had regularly exchanged information, it would have made them a good deal more effective and autonomous in practice. If the committees had been in regular communication and had co-ordinated things based on common information, it would have been a lot harder for some forces to employ manipulative tactics and spread rumours in the hallways. It is obvious that without this co-ordination and resulting autonomy, the organizations which did have centralized country-wide structures were in a position to have a better detailed knowledge of what was going on in the movement than the committees themselves.

There is another lesson to be drawn from the past few months about the work of communist organizations. It is possible to concentrate our energies for a certain time on a specific aspect of the communist programme, even on a major democratic demand, without having to stop doing communist work



May 17 in Toronto, the Committee for Canadian Unity organized a final rally to "keep Canada united", in total disregard for Quebec's national rights.

or shelving the revolutionary programme. Some of us thought at first that work in the committees was not communist work and that all the communist work would be done outside the committees. That approach proved to be wrong. If the political situation puts a democratic issue at the top of our agenda and becomes the centre of our work for a time, the work around that remains communist work and in line with our programme. If we have analysed the current situation correctly and are working as we should, then the issue will become the best battleground to fight on to bring people even closer to the over-all communist programme.

We did communist work by making our views known as widely as possible by distributing our newspaper and the pamphlet, by intervening in unions and in a number of union conventions and by participating in a number of public debates. We were able to link the immediate interests of workers to the fundamental struggle for socialism because we explained the causes of national oppression and the way to get rid of it.

The experience of people working together in unity in most parts of the country also taught us much about the progressive trends and how to work with a broad cross-section of forces. The experience certainly helped us break with the sectarianism which had sometimes been present in our work in the past.

## The fight for the equality of languages and nations progressed

The cause of equality of languages and nations was advanced as a result of the anti-chauvinist campaign. Chauvi-

nism was given a few licks and many thousands more people are now more conscious of the importance of national rights in this country. There is a lot more talk these days about Quebec's right to self-determination. The PQ itself has decided to make it a rallying cry after having decried it throughout the pre-referendum period as an "out of date" demand. The movement in English Canada certainly has had something to do with this turn of events.

We must nevertheless draw attention to a number of weak points in our work in the pre-referendum period. We could well have explained more fully and more widely why we were counselling Quebec voters to spoil their ballots in the referendum. We did not take advantage of all the opportunities that presented themselves to discuss this issue, which we found was of great interest to a lot of the people we worked with in English Canada. Second, we now consider that it was a mistake to continue on with the campaign to get people to sign the Declaration. It drained a lot of our manpower off when it was needed elsewhere. It is always a mistake to spread out your forces all over the place in a major action. We could easily have kept up our work to promote the idea of the equality of languages and nations while dropping the petition-signing.

Important progress was made in uniting the revolutionary, progressive and democratic forces. Mind you, the earth was not remade in five months. The unity of action that was attained had a lot to do also with the fact that conditions conducive to such unity had been fostered beforehand. Those conditions are still in the process of developing.

There is a real need for unity which is evident in other major struggles against

racism and nuclear development, for women's liberation, on the artistic front, etc. The fact that this need for unity and desire to realize it have been translated into independent and autonomous groupings is directly related to the fact that the two major "left-wing" parties, the Communist Party of Canada (CP) and the NDP, are unable to provide satisfactory leadership to the many forces that are looking for thorough-going and radical changes in the status quo. That bankruptcy of leadership, if we are to judge from the experience of the movement to defend Quebec's rights, also extends to the former organized left of the NDP, the "Wafflers", who steered their way clear of the committees. They were paralyzed by a sectarian mentality.

The CP was relatively inactive except in two committees. The NDPers that got involved were mostly people who are not all that active in the NDP itself, although a number of the better-known members of the NDP's left did play a role. Their contribution moreover was greatly appreciated. But it should be noted that they were acting against NDP policy, which was in practice working alongside the most notorious chauvinists to "save Canada". That expression of dissidence is a good thing and hopefully the trend will get stronger. We hope that the campaign to uphold Quebec's rights contributed to strengthening it.

In the immediate future, the constitutional debate will be attracting most of the attention and will provide us with opportunities to demonstrate that unity again. For the time being, it provides the best focus for carrying through with struggles that can unite the working-class forces and the various democratic and progressive trends. If, on the other hand, everyone stays in their own bailiwick — if the workers' movement confines itself to pushing the NDP electorally and the oppressed nations and national minorities remain on their own instead of uniting their voices in a single chorus — then the likes of Trudeau, Clark, Lougheed, Bennett and Davis will be calling all the shots. We will come out of the constitutional debate period weaker and more isolated. We should use the lessons and the experience of the referendum battle to force the leaders of the union movement to put the enormous potential power of the workers' movement to use in backing all those who are fighting oppression in whatever form across Canada. •

# A central question: rallying workers

Almost a year ago, IN STRUGGLE! decided to begin a systematic evaluation of its work in the working class and among the people in general, and more particularly of the rallying of the working class to its programme and organization.

This evaluation was of course related to the decisions of IN STRUGGLE!'s Third Congress, which established that rallying was to be the main task in the coming period in the struggle for the construction of the Party. It was also related to the need to adjust our work and our Organization to the demands of the present situation and the considerable expansion of our interventions.

This evaluation gave rise to important decisions at the last meeting of the Central Committee (CC) on some very major questions, such as where should we start from, communist leadership in the class struggle, and our work in unions, the women's movement and with youth. These questions are of prime importance for the development of our work, and before these decisions were made, readers, sympathizers and members expressed their points of view on them in the newspaper and within our Organization.

In this article, we would like to present the main conclusions adopted by the Central Committee. Despite the somewhat schematic nature of these conclusions, they do more than simply sum up our evaluation of our work of rallying. They also set out the orientation that will guide IN STRUGGLE!'s work so as to win more and more workers over to the communist programme. As well, they are in many respects a rectification of our previous policy — for example, concerning the women's movement in Canada. More specifically, they mark a break with certain forms of sectarianism that had been present in our work in the past.

In the coming months, we will deal with some of these questions in greater detail in our various publications (1). But as of now, we invite everyone to express their comments or questions on these new orientations, which will extensively affect all of IN STRUGGLE!'s work over the next period.

## The present situation with respect to rallying to our Organization

The Central Committee considers that our Organization has succeeded not only in establishing its political presence in all regions but also in developing its influence. We are on the way to becoming a political force which has to be taken into account. These results can be measured by the increasing number of workers and progressive people who take up and defend our calls to action. But what is even more significant is that a good number of these people are people who were already involved and influential in their milieu and in their mass organizations. It is important to note that almost 50% of these contacts come from the proletariat. It is also important to note the rise of our influence in the various regions of English Canada, in particular in the West (British Columbia and the Prairies) and also in Ontario.

These very positive results can be explained by the development of our capacity to analyse the general situation and give leadership in the class struggle; the development of our capacity to apply our tactical line of openness and unity (by breaking with the forms of sectarianism and dogmatism which still influenced us); the development of our capacity to involve others in action by getting involved ourselves in actions wherever we are present, in committees, in mass organizations, and in struggles; and the development of our propaganda work, which became more diversified and more closely linked to our agitation.

Yet we must recognize that our Organization is having difficulty recruiting. There is still a relatively large gap between the number of people who take up our positions in their struggles, those who work under our leadership in specific struggles or on specific questions and the number of those who join our Organization. The result of these difficulties is that there has been little in-

crease in the number of members and sympathizers engaged in carrying out the tasks of the Organization. This is due to the fact that the number of resignations is almost equal to the number of new sympathizers and probationers.

What are we to think of this? The CC feels that we must look at our present difficulties in recruiting in relationship to the considerable development of our work since the Third Congress, and more particularly in the past year. Far from weakening, our political influence within the masses is growing steadily. Just a little more than a year ago, our calls to action were rarely taken up by the masses, and the results of our work in English Canada remained weak. However, having said this, the Central Committee considers that we must step up our efforts between now and the Fourth Congress so that the growth in our political influence leads to increased recruitment.

There is another very important factor which we must also take into account, and which does not depend on the work of the Organization itself. That is the setback in the struggle for socialism, in particular in the Soviet Union and in China. It is undoubtedly true that the hesitations of many people to work more closely with the Organization or to join its ranks are a result of these setbacks. However, these problems have been more hard-felt by other political organizations which claim to work for socialism in Canada. These organizations, such as the Trotskyist groups, the Workers Communist Party (WCP), the Communist Party of Canada (CP) and the Communist Party of Canada (M-L) (CPC(M-L)), have undergone important splits.

And finally, the CC considers that the idealism and voluntarism which characterized our activity in the past definitely had effects on the number of

1. Some of the decisions made at the June 1980 meeting of the Central Committee of IN STRUGGLE! are reflected in two articles in this issue of PROLETARIAN UNITY: "The labour aristocracy in Canada today" and "Support for Quebec's right to self-determination is very much alive in English Canada".

resignations and the hesitations of many sympathizers to accept "that way of life".

There is no magic formula. We must not look for THE "means" or THE "organizational structure" which will enable us to recruit new forces. We are on the right track and it is simply a matter of working more intensively towards this goal. We can only recruit through our capacity to offer greater and more concrete political leadership in the class struggle, through greater involvement in the struggle of the masses, and through greater contact with the progressive elements in the working class and popular movement. In order for a greater number of workers to get involved in revolutionary political work, our Organization must in general establish close and lasting links with their immediate struggles. This is how many workers will come to see the practical implications of the communist programme and the real meaning of the struggle for socialism.

The Central Committee studied the tactical questions raised by closer links with the masses. However, the CC wants to stress that closer links with the masses is not the only question which must be resolved in order to recruit the most conscious elements to our Organization and win them over to our Programme.

The Central Committee also pointed out that, in all our actions and interventions, we always have a two-fold objective. On the one hand, we want to

support the forces struggling for progress, develop the unity of those forces, and thus help them to win their immediate demands. On the other hand, we want to make our Programme and our Organization known and win over the most conscious elements.

We must also constantly have recruitment in mind in all the work we do. In order to recruit more people, we must pay greater attention to the organization and leadership of our work with contacts and active sympathizers.

We should not merely make more contacts and encourage them to be active in specific struggles. We must use every possible opportunity to explain our line and our programme to them in greater detail — not in a static and dogmatic way, but by explaining our positions on questions with which they are more particularly involved. We must use such questions to explain our criticism of capitalism, nationalism and reformism, and thus point to the need for socialist revolution as the only real solution for the various problems which the masses face.

At a time when the communist point of view is far from known and accepted in our country and in the world, we must rely on the distribution of our newspaper, journal, pamphlets, conferences, readers' circles, etc., as means of making our point of view more widely known.

We must simplify the recruitment of the people with whom we work in various struggles and, above all, of

active sympathizers. It is also important to allow these people to continue to be as active as possible in their milieu and mass organizations after they have joined our Organization.

## Where do we start?

In an advanced capitalist country like Canada, we must reckon with a sizable labour aristocracy. It is composed of the stratum of specialized workers employed by monopolies, and it is generally concentrated in big industries. Besides being the upper stratum of the working class, corrupted by the super-profits of the monopolies, it is also the leading stratum of the working class. The labour aristocracy developed its hegemony over the working class as a whole in a period when Canadian imperialism was economically flourishing and a vast campaign of repression was being waged against a progressive tendency.

The labour aristocracy is very well organized within the labour movement. It also has its political party, the NPD. The power of the labour aristocracy and its hold over those who benefit to one degree or another from the advantages of imperialism varies according to the economic development of imperialism in each province, city, and industrial sector. It is for this reason that we should avoid seeing the labour aristocracy as a static reality.

We have good reason to believe that the effects of the crisis on the industrial proletariat, including the proletariat in big plants, will open up better possibilities of recruitment in the future. Consequently, we must be attune to the struggles which may develop in this sector. However, we must reaffirm that the objective and subjective conditions of workers in big industry have not changed sufficiently to justify changing our tactical line.

The Central Committee therefore reaffirms that the best way to penetrate the working class at present is to work with the strata of the proletariat and people who are the most exploited, the most militant and the most open to Marxist-Leninist ideas, the strata of the proletariat where the labour aristocracy is the weakest.

We believe that these strata are found most often in the public sector (where there are an important number of Canadian unions), among women, youth and national minorities.

Spring 1980, in Quebec City: the debate around the Declaration for the Absolute Equality of Languages and Nations. Active communists and sympathizers discuss and assess their work.



## Communist leadership in the class struggle

The Central Committee considers that it is still correct to affirm that the leadership role of communists in the class struggle consists in indicating the path which the proletariat must follow in each particular situation to move forward in its struggle against the bourgeoisie and modify the balance of power in favour of the proletariat and its struggle for power. This makes it possible to determine the political orientation which must be adopted at specific moments of the class struggle, identify the key issues in the current situation — those which are of great importance for the working class as a whole — and mobilize the working class around specific and concrete slogans to take up various actions and get involved in struggles. This is crucial if we want our Organization to really be able to play its leadership role, including in struggles, in various movements and in mass organizations. In the coming period, we must seek to exercise greater political and practical leadership in the class struggle by broadening the issues on which we work.

In the present context of the crisis, larger and larger sectors of the masses are beginning to mobilize and act. At the same time, an increasing number of workers are turning to our Organization in search of a solution to the present situation. In order to broaden our influence, we must get more actively involved in the most important struggles and movements. We must develop our agitation in struggles, as they present themselves, and our tactics must seek to unite the masses around correct demands, against the bourgeoisie, against the main enemy and against those who openly betray those demands.

To be able to adopt concrete positions and to put forward correct tactics, we must continue to develop our capacity at every level of the Organization to concretely analyse the concrete situation of a struggle in terms of the demands put forward, the political tendencies present, the tactics, etc. In order to develop correct tactics and to give correct leadership to a struggle, it is crucial to know and understand the various forces involved, including the leading forces.

We must get rid of a sectarian attitude which has, to a certain extent, marked the work of the Organization in



August 5, 1980, three hundred women march through the streets of Toronto to "Take back the night" — a protest against the sexual harassment that makes the streets unsafe for women at night.

struggles, in the labour movement with regard to certain labour leaders, and in the women's movement, and which weakened our links with the masses.

This raises the question of our attitude towards the reformist forces, especially left social democracy, and how to demarcate from them. On this subject, we must always keep in mind that our main goal is not to demarcate from other currents but to help move forward the struggle of the working class and other popular strata. This does not mean that we should stop demarcating, but it means that we should do so in the context of struggles, on the basis of what is at stake, in the conditions in which the struggle is taking place and according to the existing balance of power. We must also distinguish between workers who are under the influence of reformism and revisionism but who struggle sincerely to defend their rights, and organized opportunist forces as such. If we fail to do this, everyone appears to be social-democratic or revisionist, and we are thus unable to correctly evaluate the various forces in struggle.

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We must have fewer and shorter political campaigns if we want to develop our capacities to intervene in the struggles of the workers and the masses. Determining the orientation for a given period or situation should not necessarily lead to a political campaign, even though political campaigns remain an important form of intervention for communists. When we decide to wage a country-wide political campaign, we must have very specific objectives as

well as specific and particular means of action. There can be various types of campaigns. We can hold an information and agitation campaign which is limited in time and for which we use press conferences, speaking tours, meetings and distribution of literature. We can have campaigns to mobilize, to struggle against a specific law or measure, etc. In this case, it is very important to make a judicious choice of when and for how long it will take place. We succeed in mobilizing the masses when they see the immediate issues at stake in a struggle, when they become aware that the struggle must be waged right away.

## Our Organization's work in the unions

Today, the struggle for the democratization and, to a lesser extent, the Canadianization of unions is clearly becoming an immediate struggle which has to be waged, given the offensive of the labour aristocracy and the union bosses. Its outcome can have major effects on the labour movement as a whole, and especially on the most militant unions and the communist movement.

The Central Committee remains convinced that it is correct to state that, at the present stage of party building, our Organization should not aim at taking organizational control of unions, and that this is not a precondition for building the party. Nevertheless, to broaden and stabilize our influence, our action in the unions must be more systematic and organized.

We must develop communist work in unions to make our Programme and our slogans widely known. One aspect of this work is the support and consolidation of militant tendencies and forces in the labour movement. This can take the form of opposition caucuses, struggles for democratization, etc., which we initiate or in which we participate. We can also propose specific platforms for elections, a particular struggle or a convention which would make it possible for these forces to unite around immediate objectives. And finally, in the very way we ourselves intervene in unions, we must aim at developing the use of democratic methods and procedures in unions.

The Central Committee has decided that our Organization must begin to devote energies to union work as such, especially in the most militant unions

which have the greatest political influence on the Canadian labour movement as a whole. Given that our forces and energies are still limited, and given that we must distribute them correctly in order to accomplish all our tasks, we must rely on sympathizers, on those who are already active in their unions, and provide them with leadership so that they can develop communist work in their unions. These comrades will have this as their only task and should be active in the struggles in their workplace, in union elections, in struggles for the Canadianization and democratization of their union, etc., nor should they be afraid to intervene on all issues. A certain number of experienced cadres of the Organization should be assigned to work with the unions as their only task and we should see to it that the various levels of leadership of the Organization provide leadership for this area of work.

We must also take the necessary steps at the national level to analyse and follow the development of the labour movement and provide guidelines for our action across the country. Despite some progress, there are still delays at this level. For quite a long time now, we have been putting forward the call for the democratization and Canadianization of unions. But it is only recently that we have begun to understand the expressions of this struggle in the

**The women's movement in Toronto demonstrates against a "Right to Life" (anti-abortion) conference in October 1979.**



The women's movement in Saskatchewan is one of the most dynamic in the country. Above: a demonstration for the right to abortions in Saskatoon, in April 1980.

labour movement in Canada, the forms it takes on and the complexity of the situation.

As a result of these decisions, the Central Committee considers that we must rectify some of the points presented in the pamphlet *The Goals and Work of Canadian Communists in Trade Unions Today*, published by our Organization in 1978. While the positions presented in this pamphlet are in principle fundamentally correct, they did not take account sufficiently of the progressive forces in the labour movement. It leaves the impression that the main enemy in the labour movement is bourgeois ideology, instead of the bourgeoisie itself. It must also be clear that in the unions, as elsewhere, the tactical line and slogans of the Organization remain the basis for our agitation work and unity of action with progressive forces, in union elections, conventions, etc.

## The Canadianization of unions

There has been a persistent movement of struggle for the Canadianization of unions in our country. For the most part today, this is an important aspect of the broader struggle of workers for more democratic unions. It is in the context of the struggle for democracy in the unions, and not in and of itself or as a necessary stage for socialist revolution, that we support the Canadianization of unions.

In this struggle, no solution — including the demand for greater autonomy, breakaway and the strengthening of Canadian union centrals — can be rejected out-of-hand. With

respect to changes in affiliation, we must make a concrete analysis of the situation. We must not hesitate to support and take part in movements which will reinforce the workers' capacity to fight and which are widely supported by the workers themselves.

## Our Organization's work among women

For the past few years, the women's movement in Canada has been flourishing. Many women's committees have been set up in unions and many groups of women have been set up around various forms of oppression which are specific to women like rape, battered wives, abortion, etc. This movement, and in the particular unionized women's groups, are very militant and adopt progressive positions. These women are one of the strongholds of the struggle against class collaboration in the union movement. As well, women's groups very often adopt correct positions on questions like the struggle against repression and the right of Quebec to self-determination, and they are open to the points of view of our Organization on many questions.

The women's movement is now very active; there is much at stake in it for all classes. Women's groups are tending more and more to set up local and regional coalitions — for example, the *Etats-généraux* in Quebec — or more structured organizations, as in Saskatchewan. Women's demands are having more impact. Women's committees in unions are taking up various specific women's demands and, conversely, women's groups are including demands related to working conditions in their struggle.

This adds to the importance of the women's movement. At the same time, the labour bosses are clearly trying to gain control and leadership of this movement. This is presently a very real concern in the women's movement.

The Central Committee considers that our work among women, despite some improvement over what it was in past years, is still generally weak. Historically, we have always had difficulty in correctly analysing the movement of women's struggles as a whole. In the last year, we supported women's demands in a more coherent way (in unions and other defence organizations), but until recently we made the error of thinking that this movement was dominated by feminism. The result of this was to cut us off from many women's groups, slow down the development of greater unity with a militant sector of the masses and prevent us from recruiting women who are in fact open to the communist programme.

This raises a certain number of theoretical and tactical problems on which our Organization has not yet developed a unified point of view. We must look into the question of feminism, and especially the question of the autonomous organization of women. We must state clearly that it is quite legitimate for women to organize on their own in order to put forward specific demands, or for other reasons, such as encouraging the participation of women in their union or in struggles waged across the country. The experience of the women's movement in Canada makes it clear that the fact that women organize among themselves, on the basis of their specific interests, is not in itself feminist or a source of division between men and women. On the contrary, a general assessment of the situation indicates that women's groups play a positive role in mobilizing women in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

In our work among women, we must remember that the women's movement is influenced by various ideological and political tendencies. A detailed analysis of these political tendencies remains to be done, but it seems that reformism is dominant there, as in the labour and popular movement. We must give unconditional support to the correct demands put forward by women's groups and know how to unite with them; but at the same time we must demarcate from feminism. This is an erroneous ideology which blames men for women's oppression and proposes solutions which are not in the interest of

women themselves or the people in general.

Nevertheless, in its work with women our Organization must not mistake feminism for the main enemy, forgetting that the main enemy is the Canadian bourgeoisie. It is also important to recognize that in society as a whole, chauvinism is a greater factor of division than feminism, and that in many cases it is a real obstacle to women's participation in revolutionary struggle and the rallying of women to the communist programme.

The Central Committee considers that, for the time being, it is not a duty of our Organization to set up a mass organization of women. However, we must devote time and effort to intervening in the groups that our analyses of the current situation indicate are most important, paying particular attention to struggles which mobilize large number of women. We must make sure that the various levels of leadership establish links with these groups. We must intervene more on questions specific to women, develop our analysis and work to have our point of view more widely known.

### Our work among youth

Until now, our Organization has worked almost exclusively with students and has done very little with young workers — this, in spite of the fact that in Canada, between 40% and 50% of all young people between the ages of 15 and 19 no longer attend school, and that this percentage has been on the rise in the past ten years.

Our work with university and junior college students has been more or else intensive in the various periods of our history, but the guideline was correct: we recognized that students have

**Young unemployed workers at a manpower centre. Capitalism has nothing to offer them.**



common interests in the defence of their rights and we saw the necessity for them to have defence organizations. Our experience has shown that consistent work in this milieu soon leads to results in terms of rallying. We have also learned that these young people have been mobilizing for many years now, not only on questions which are specifically related to them, but also on all questions of class struggle: the national question, international questions, support for working-class struggles, the anti-nuke movement, progressive cultural movements against various forms of racism and oppression.

However, the situation is very different in regard to working youth, many of whom are unemployed: one unemployed person out of two in Canada is less than 24 years old. Since we ignored this situation, we know very little about it. However, this section of youth is undoubtedly one of the most exploited sectors of the Canadian proletariat. Along with women (mainly young women, as a matter of fact), young people are often left with no other choice but to accept seasonal and temporary jobs, dangerous and hard work, low-paid jobs in weaker sectors of the economy such as lumber and construction. The bourgeoisie uses systematic repression against youth: measures

**A jail? Guess again. It's the Polyvalente Pierre Marquette, a Montreal high school.**



**Living conditions of Canadian Blacks in Africville, Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1950. Thirty years later, things haven't changed much.**

such as UIC cutbacks, real and constant harassment in the streets, in parks and in school.

In such a situation, young workers have a huge potential for revolt which has not yet found a correct form of expression: between the ages of 15 and 19 years, suicide is the main cause of death in Quebec; criminal activities and delinquency usually begin between the ages of 15 and 24. For the most part, working youth finds itself facing a dead end. It is unable to get involved in struggles, due among other things to the lack of an organization.

The bourgeoisie is multiplying its efforts to win over youth as a whole: there are 17,000 cadets in the armed forces in Quebec, 250,000 scouts in Canada, thousands of charismatics, etc. Various opportunist groups (Trotskyists, CPC, WCP,...) have also developed their intervention among youth, especially working youth, in the past few years.

Hence the bourgeoisie is engaged in a vast offensive to win over youth. We must take this very seriously. In the interests of the future of the class struggle in Canada, we must considerably intensify our work among this stratum of the people. Conditions are all the more favourable given that youth is obviously looking for a solution to this difficult situation. We are still at a point where youth may join one side or the other of the class struggle. In order to win youth over to proletarian revolution, we must:

— put more effort into developing our knowledge of youth in all its various aspects: living and working conditions, the specific problems of young people,

struggles, etc. We must open our eyes to this aspect of reality and do away with preconceptions we still sometimes hold with regard to youth;

— work on a regular and sustained basis in the various struggles and organizations of students and working youth;

— adjust our work to the specific characteristics of youth. For example, we should not simply distribute our literature at the school doors. We will have to intervene in different ways, on different issues, using imaginative methods, and in particular, in the cultural field. We will have to take into consideration young people's specific needs, their need to be together, their need for action, etc. We will discover what these needs are more specifically as our work develops;

— in places where we recruit young people, make sure that they have the possibility of continuing to work with others around them. We will have to give them complete freedom to use their initiative and imagination to reach other young people, and then systematize their experience and discuss it...

When and where conditions allow, we will have to consider setting up youth circles or sections, which will bring together a certain number of young cadres and sympathizers whose task will be to work with youth and create a youth section.

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During the debate on rallying, the Central Committee also adopted the two following resolutions:

### On the question of implantation

The Central Committee reaffirms its opposition to implantation as a general tactic, while continuing to consider that, as a method, it can be used selectively, in certain workplaces or mass organizations, as a way of establishing links with the masses to facilitate the work of the Organization. In practice, this means that the regional and local leaderships may examine the political perspectives of various job possibilities, although such considerations should not be central in choosing a job or in the general distribution of our forces.

### On the question of racism and our work with some national minorities

To apply our tactical line to national minorities and oppressed nations and recruit among these strata of the people, we must adjust our work to take into consideration the specific characteristics of these nationalities, their economic and social conditions, their relation to the social institutions of our country, the material and ideological forms of their domination. We must develop our understanding of the origins and consequences of racism, and expose and fight it. We must be particularly sensitive to these questions among those minorities which cannot be assimilated because of their colour, like Native Indians, Blacks and the Inuit. •

Odette Lavoie  
from Théâtre  
Parminou

"We have been in operation 10 years. Our latest show is **L'information c'est bête à dire**. It is about the control over and the power of information in today's society. We have two ways of working. We do shows upon request; we have a team of actors called the command performance team. We have a second team which performs what we call in-house shows, by which we mean the ones where the theme was chosen by the troupe. Requests come from popular organizations, unions, etc. We did one last year on request about parental rights which was performed on CNTU picket lines, for status of women committees and at demonstrations, conferences etc. of the main labour centrals (CNTU, QFL, CEQ). We also do a play called **La faim justifie les moyens** (Hunger justifies the means, a play on words where "faim" is pronounced like "fin", end) on hunger in the world and where developed countries stand in relation to it. It was requested by an international development organization. We also did a show called **L'économie passe au cash** (The economy under fire) which was requested by adult education people in our area. We are trying to reach the adult public in three milieux: artistic, school and community. We also put on a show last year called **O travail** (At /Oh, work) which was on the social organization of work in the capitalist system."



## On the cultural front

# Progressive theatre groups explain; how we work, and why?

Marie-Renée Charest  
from the Theatre  
A L'OUVRAGE

"To date we have organized two shows which we have taken on tour. The first was **C'est pour quand le progrès?** (When are the good times coming?), which talked about the scandalous situations brought about by the capitalist system. The second was **Une histoire sur not'dos** (A history at our expense) on national oppression. Besides those, we have done short street theatre pieces about topical events like the federal election, the international year of the child, etc. We have also begun to do shows upon request to support campaigns launched by community groups. We will be doing a production soon to publicize the urban renewal campaign launched by FRAPRU, which is a coalition of organizations dealing with urban squalor."



Marie-Hélène Falcon  
from the Association  
québécoise  
du jeune théâtre (AQJT)

"The AQJT is not a troupe of actors but an organization which brings together many troupes and provides services. It tries to inform people about what's happening in new theatre in Quebec and to upgrade the skills and techniques of people in new theatre. We are aiming at a broad public: our members are both professionals and amateurs. We have been around for 22 years. Before we were called the Association canadienne de théâtre amateur (Canadian Amateur Theatre Association). The name was changed in 1972. It is a long story which you can read up on in the next issue of **Jeu**, which is about AQJT's 20-year history."



Last June, the newspaper **IN STRUGGLE!** and the magazine **PROLETARIAN UNITY** brought together in Montreal a number of representatives of theatrical troupes and organizations involved in popular and progressive theatre in Quebec. The idea of the round table discussion was to hear from some of those people who for a number of years now, in often difficult material conditions, have used theatre as a cultural tool to serve popular struggles. The session only went on for a few hours, yet the following few pages are barely enough to sum up a debate so rich with important points. (1)

Actors and actresses from 5 different troupes took part: *Theatre de la riposte* ("Fightback theatre"); *Theatre de quartier* ("Neighbourhood Theatre"); *Theatre des cuisines* ("Kitchens Theatre"); *Theatre Parminou* ("Theatre in our midst") and *Theatre A L'OUVRAGE* ("Let's Get Down to Work"). Also in attendance were representatives from the Association québécoise du jeune théâtre (AQJT, Quebec new young theatre association) and the magazine **JEU** (play).

After seeing how each troupe arrived at the choices they made about themes for their shows, the discussion turned to the role of theatre as a tool for intervening and making people aware.

**Robert:** Personally, I came out of the community groups. I find theatre is an extraordinary tool for understanding si-

tuations and bringing them to life. As often as not there is a lot of verbiage and intellectualism in community groups. The people who come from the neighbourhood cannot see themselves

1. See issue 211 of **IN STRUGGLE!**, July 1, 1980, p. 11

Gilbert David  
from the  
magazine **Jeu**

"The magazine has been publishing for five years. It is a theatre magazine which tries to take up the problems of the theatre and society. We try to get the actual practitioners to talk. We invite them to take up themselves the work of criticism. Thus we do a lot of interviews and descriptions. We are trying above all to be a sort of register. Theatre is an ephemeral art, here today, then gone. We would like to capture some of the traces of some of the shows, some of the attitudes to the theatre and to artistic work in general."



Marie-Claude Bary  
and Johanne Doré  
from Théâtre des cuisines

"The troupe has existed for five years. In the first two years we did **Nous aurons les enfants que nous voudrions** (We will have the children we want) and **Maman travaille pas, a trop d'ouvrage** (Mom doesn't have a job, she has too much work to do). We started again a year ago with a new group of people and just put together **As-tu vu, les maisons s'emportent?** (about women's role and responsibility in the home and in men-women relations). The audience we are aiming at is working people, women's groups, community groups and the unions."



Pierre Rousseau  
from Theatre de quartier

"We have been around for five years now. Our troupe does half and half impromptu drama (involving the audience) and set shows. We have done a dozen shows on social issues like housing, day care and indebtedness. For example, we put on a play called **Logement à louer** (House to rent) and another called **Les garderies: un jeu d'enfants** (Daycare: a child's game). The audience we are trying to reach is working people and students. We play a lot in the schools."



Robert Faulkner  
and Denise Beaulieu  
from the Théâtre de la riposte

"The work that we do is largely a matter of collective creation of drama based on situations like unemployment, delinquency, etc. The people we are aiming at mostly is the community groups. Our last show was called **Jeune Vaurien** (Young good-for-nothing) and it dealt with the problems of juvenile delinquency. Before that we did **Chômeur circus**, (Unemployed Circus) on unemployment."



in those big words. But when we did a play on getting into debt, people said afterwards in the discussion: "We could see ourselves in that play." It all became very concrete to them.

**Denise:** That is always the problem right there. You are always in a position of wanting to give out information. For example, to explain why people are in debt, what percentage of people are in debt and so on. You could get people around the same table for a couple of hours but probably what you have to say is so intellectualized they won't understand it. A show makes it more concrete. When people see a guy going back again to Household Finance, they can see themselves in that character. They may well live through situations like that.

**Marie-Renée:** If we start by trying to find a bunch of definitions we will miss the real debate. We use all sorts of names to describe the theatre we do: committed, progressive, communist agitation, political, intervention. You can make up any name you want. To my mind what we do basically is replay out life on the stage. Why? Because we think that the public is going to understand the drift of things if they get to see them a second time. We replay life on the stage in many different ways, from many different angles. We do it so the public will get to re-examine it and see where it is going. They become conscious. They become themselves an active agent in that process. It is not just an emotional reaction. We don't just induce emotion, we enable them to reflect upon things. We make it so they can be active agents and can transform the situation in the direction of meeting their interests. Besides which, that is the very origins of theatre, its basic foundations. People started doing drama to replay life out on the stage to see it and to understand it better.

That is basically what all the troupes here today do. We replay life out on the stage. We try to make the audience more conscious so they will better understand the mechanisms of life and will be better able to change it. That is how we see theatre too. As far as what theatre is useful for, we do it as part of a campaign by a community group for urban renewal or around indebtedness, or we do it to get across what national oppression is. Take for example **A L'Ouvrage**, which has collaborated on this level more with **IN STRUGGLE!**. Fundamentally, we have the same role. We play the same role. We want theatre to be useful. And it is useful when there

are people who intervene side by side with us and who can take the energies which our play has aroused in people and direct it into some common action, into putting forward some demands.

**Odette:** I feel that this is where theatre as an instrument of teaching people stops. You cannot do everything. You do your job — it makes little difference whether you do so full-time or part-time — and if people don't respond and act on what you present, then you've had no effect. That is why the shows we do with community groups become really worthwhile. Theatre cannot only condemn, reflect upon or propose but above all it can make connections between things. In today's society it is difficult to make all those links. You might have a health problem or a housing problem or a work problem and you can understand it. But that doesn't mean that you can connect it to the way society is organized and to the whole political system. The big thing that theatre has going for it is that it is able, by taking shortcuts, to portray images that show how unemployment is maybe not all that unrelated to the housing crisis.

**Marie-Hélène:** I can see quite clearly the work that is being done at that level.

**Un jeu d'enfants (A child's game)** "aims at illustrating the extent to which the poor conditions in which some children have to play are a direct consequence of the poor living conditions of their parents."

— from the *Théâtre de quartier's* introductory pamphlet



But sometimes I am obliged to admit that theatre is a tool that reaches a lot fewer people than movies do. Theatre is more difficult to make popular than music is, than a song is. Why then do we carry on using theatre to do this work? What is so special or important about theatre? For example, Odette was talking about making links between different phenomena. You could make those connections just as well with a singing group or a film or any other medium.

**Pierre:** The specific thing that theatre has is that it is accessible. Movies can reach a lot more people but very few people are able to work with film. The same is true of videotaping. You can learn it easily enough but you need a lot of equipment. The big advantage of drama and singing is that they can be so easily learned. Most community groups have their own theme songs. It is not very hard to do one: you just take the tune to a popular song and make up new words for it and there you have it. You have a theme song that people can learn very fast and sing anywhere.

The strength of popular culture is its ability to spread out to others, to be everywhere. And that is our job, really, to be the Johnny Appleseeds that spread the seeds around everywhere.



"My policy on information? Be a good doggie, sit up and beg; it pays."  
— from *L'information, c'est bête à dire!*, a play by the *Théâtre Parminou*.

## People's theatre and bourgeois theatre

The discussion about drama as a way to represent life so that people can make links between things, to become aware, led the round table participants to pose a still broader question. What relationship exists between the actor and the audience? In short, what distinguishes people's theatre from bourgeois theatre?

**Gilbert:** I believe that people as a whole these days are basically passive. That is a state which is kept up by a whole system of performances bombarding you — the radio, movies, popular music. It is like a series of sleep inducing drugs by means of repeated messages. People develop an ideology that they have been manipulated into. They think whatever the people behind the media want to make them think. The ideology of "I'm okay, You're okay" for example. A theatre group that wants to be progressive and wants to mainly use the technique of performances is signing its own death warrant. A theatre group that really wants to change things must turn the passive into the active. The audience must become active. They must be actors as rapidly as possible. Right now we present people with performances that communicate new messages, new representations of the world. But at what point does this become just one more thing coming down from on high? At what point is it just more stuff from people who have thought about the world and who send messages to others, no matter how pertinent their analysis may or may not be?

Right now there is a rupture between two things we do: first we perform, we represent life; then afterwards we get people active, we bring them alive.

Which is often enough a very uninspiring experience. We are still caught in a relationship where there is no activity to get involved in, where people have not begun to learn to overturn the whole domination they live with every day. Even if they learn to do this in a fictitious situation — in a theatre forum for example — they have started to do it in public. They have already begun to be active. They have made a move towards freeing themselves. Whereas if this all stays at the level of a simple discussion — and furthermore it is rare that everyone speaks in a discussion — I wonder if we aren't deluding ourselves about its effectiveness... Which leads me to wonder whether we might not be headed yet again in the same direction as bourgeois theatre, where the performance is what is predominant, where messages are sent to people, whether in the form of ads of any other form.

**Odette:** I don't think that it is the theatre which is bourgeois...

**Gilbert:** I didn't say that...

**Odette:** No you didn't, but still... It is not the theatre which is bourgeois, it is the ideas that you communicate with your theatre. That is what is bourgeois.

**Gilbert:** But what you end up saying is: "I have good ideas. Thus my theatre cannot be bad." I do not separate off the content from the form. The actor has the stage for an hour. He gets to do the talking. I am not sure that is what he should be doing.

**Pierre:** I agree with some of the things you are saying and I disagree with others. It is certainly easy enough to get trapped in the box of just doing a performance to a working-class audience and nothing more and then people get to put in their two cents worth afterwards. But I think that when you are out in the community the kinds of discussions you can have are pretty different from the ones you are likely to

have in a more artsy scene — different from the kind you would get into after seeing a film for example.

**Marie-Claude:** It is the first time that I have ever done theatre. I think that you are taking things a bit too far. We performed our last show five times, twice before groups of women. You cannot even imagine how much feedback we got! We had discussions afterwards. They told us: "It is the first time we could see ourselves in the characters on stage." That is something, I'll tell you. I believe in the theatre as a medium. Other people told us: "You make us want to do theatre ourselves". We got lots of reactions coming out of that one.

**Johanne:** That doesn't sound too passive to me.

**Pierre:** We have also tried to do theatre in ways that lets people get active in the theatre. We have developed three types of theatre to organize and arouse people with: instant theatre; theatre forum (we even took a course recently); and straight animation where we try to give people the basic tools so that they can do performances and can stimulate people to action too.

Briefly, instant theatre is where you have a resource person and some actors. The audience defines what the theme is going to be, who the characters are that will be played, etc., and the actors improvise. We try to visualize a problem and then to go back and look at possible solutions. **THEATRE FORUM** is somewhat similar, except that the audience is in this case invited to perform themselves and not just tell the actors what to do. When a group wants to do a sketch we loan them a resource person who helps them put the sketch together. At the *Théâtre de quartier*, that is what popular theatre comes down to.

**Odette:** As Pierre said, there is not one fixed way to do popular theatre. There may well be a lot of ways. The important thing is to define what your objectives are in relation to the form. Thus, if you are doing theatre with spectators you have got to know pretty clearly what you are expecting to come out of it. It may not be right to expect that the people will all leave wanting to do theatre themselves.

As you know very well, we have one big objective, a political objective. But the forms that we choose are going to differ depending on what the specific immediate objective we fix for ourselves is.

**Marie-Renée:** It is certainly true that theatre can play many roles. We said

just a while back that all of the troupes here believe it is important to do good theatre and to make it entertaining. We are going to do a play up in Ville-Marie (a small town in northwestern Quebec — ed. note) we will be in a place where 60% of the people are alcoholics. There is nothing to do in that town except go to the movies, where the standard fare is Kung-Fu shlock. People get bored and the only thing left to do is to go down to the pub. It is very important when we go to a town like that that the people get to see a show which is interesting and worthwhile. People have a right to art which is well-done and theatre which is interesting. It is important that you be able to see yourself in the plays and that the representation of you be done intelligently. After all, what kind of vision of what people are do we get from bourgeois plays and movies? That people are alcoholics and whores. They certainly never convey a very uplifting vision of things. In the theatre we do, we manage to attain our goal of entertaining people. We make people enthusiastic and give them confidence so they can see they have these qualities.

We also spoke about getting people to act, of giving people confidence. Odette said that to go perform on a picket line is a gesture of solidarity. Theatre in this case is again getting people's enthusiasm up to continue with their struggle. That is important. But beyond that, when we talk about getting people involved in struggling, about making people conscious and getting them to be active in dealing with their lives, in relation to what is going on in the world, theatre definitely has a contribution to make but it is not the be-all and end-all. That is something that all troupes who do this kind of theatre have gone through. Take for example what happened at the Euh theatre with the

play **Un, deux, trois, vendu** (One, two, three, sold). People said to us, "You have opened our eyes. We are ready to follow you. Lead us. We are ready". We thought we were really getting somewhere, boy. We were making the revolution in one neighbourhood. But that is not our role. That is why we talk about fitting within a larger picture and working together with groups and structured organizations which exist to continue on and carry out the struggle.

Our plays deal with revolution and social change, but that revolution is not going to be made on the artistic and cultural front. People have to create their own revolutionary organizations in order to make revolution. Certainly, theatre is going to contribute at a lot of levels but it isn't everything. And it is quite right that the capacities of theatre should not be overestimated.

**Odette:** The thing that I think is important is to bring people along to the point where they make some choices. What makes it difficult is that nowadays people are caught in a condition of alienation that prevents them from making choices about the kind of society they want to live in. My aim in theatre is to take an audience where there are all sorts of people, and hopefully at the end of the performance there will be some of them who are more able to make choices. The key thing is to be sure that in defending the specific interests of people at any one point you don't project capitalist or social-democratic values.

### Build up the artistic front. Champion people's culture.

The discussion went on for quite a while about the steps taken by the

**Une histoire su notre dos (A history at our expense), a play about national oppression presented by the Théâtre A L'OUVRAGE. In this scene, Thériault, a Quebecois worker, learns about the struggle of the Acadians for the right to an education in their mother tongue.**



various troupes to carry out political activity in general. Then talk shifted to the present situation with popular theatre, which is also hit by the capitalist economic crisis and has taken some knocks from the State. To start the debate, Marie-Hélène Falcon explained the background to the activities of the Association québécoise du jeune théâtre (AQJT).

**Marie-Hélène:** The AQJT is an organization which includes a number of troupes. It is a democratic organization with a general assembly. The policies, decisions, activities and guidelines are decided upon in the annual general assembly. Participation in the convention and in the general meetings is always at a high level. The AQJT has gone through all sorts of changes in the course of its evolution. There have been stages in terms of theatre and artistic creation. There have been stages in terms of the groups of people we were able to bring together. The two are always linked: on the one side, artistic preoccupations, and on the other concern with bringing people in. The AQJT has come more and more to define itself as a service association, as it did in the beginning.

The task of bringing people together is a very difficult one. The economic situation at present is increasingly disastrous for everybody. The arts are among the first to feel the fallout from that. We hear about it at the same time that the social services and subsidies for the arts get cut. In the face of that, we feel that in unity there is strength. It is important for artistic workers to get together and to work together. We try to be as broad as possible, include as many people as possible. Bringing people together is all the more difficult to pull off because of all the economic difficulties people are grappling with. The tighter the situation gets, the more each troupe works to survive, and everyone is in competition with everyone else on the market. Shows must be sold and bringing together the active forces is all the more difficult to accomplish.

**Gilbert:** Look at the **Theatre de quartier** for example. What happens if one of these days an evil spirit comes along and sizes up the situation to conclude, "Yes, well, when you get right down to it, you people really don't do theatre, do you. You are community organizers. I mean, that's all very fine to do, you understand. We are all for it but you will have to talk to the Welfare and Social Affairs Department about that!" And if the troupes continue to do



**The AQJT, a democratic association at the service of new theatre troupes. — poster announcing the 7th festival of children's theatre.**

theatre like all the others, they may soon face serious problems because their product is often not compatible with the kind of stuff you find in the young theatre which plays to more commercial audiences. This raises problems of artistic work, I think.

**Marie-Renée:** I have a pretty optimistic view of progressive theatre. We are no longer at a stage where we are talking about one or two individual troupes which uphold this idea of theatre. It has become a movement. That idea of theatre is not on the defensive. It is moving forward and is being practiced by a large number of troupes, by at least ten or more here in Quebec.

**Marie-Hélène:** It is certainly spreading. The troupes promote this themselves in the agitation and discussion part of their performances. And amateur theatre is being brought along in the same way.

**Marie-Renée:** It seems at any rate that there is a real upsurge in the progressive movement in the artistic world. It is going to get attacked for sure. It is already getting hit a lot financially. Look at the cutbacks that the AQJT has suffered. Look at the slashes in funds made available to the **Theatre de quartier** and the problems they have had with the Montreal Catholic School Board (CECM). And the **Grosse valise** troupe too. But despite all this, and perhaps indeed because of this financial situation where you are obliged to do battle to control the product of your

work, to get places to play, to find your own way, the movement is dynamic. It is alive, strong and far from being pushed over the edge into the grave.

**Denise:** I don't agree with people who say that progressive theatre is sometimes inferior in quality to young theatre productions. The problem is the audience we are aiming at. Our problem is that it is not profitable to aim at the audience we do. When you play for \$50 before a community group because they cannot afford to pay you, you do not even cover your production costs. We are obliged to do it nevertheless because of our objectives, because of the kind of work we want to do. That is something that the Canada Council and the Cultural Affairs Department don't take into consideration. There are undoubtedly going to be struggles in the future where we will have to win recognition of the fact that the type of work we are doing is not profit-making but that at the same time it is indispensable.

**Odette:** Political theatre was in style on the artistic market. Now that the fad is over, it is obvious that you face incredible problems on the artistic market when you define yourself as progressive or a troupe which does political theatre. There is a revival of the Right going on. And the whole system of the arts is being watched.

In the "social market", just the opposite is true. The community groups have learned the usefulness of this kind of theatre and how they can use it as a tool to sensitize people and make them aware. It balances off. Things are neither more difficult nor easier than they were. Only, the popular or social market does not recognize the manpower and work that it takes to put together and promote a show.

**Denise:** That is true, but while you are having your budget slashed by the government departments so are the community groups.

**Pierre:** As an artistic worker you are sort of in the same situation as the day-care people. If a day-care worker decides to get unionized it will be a while before he can really put forward some demands. As long as there is no universally-accessible free day-care system, the day-care worker cannot push those demands without bringing the day-care centre down with him. I figure that once you have decided once and for all to work with community groups and you still are working in terms of being paid and you price the value of the artistic work you do at its

true value, then you are pushing in two directions at once. You are playing right along with Centraide (the central organization for distributing "charity" money in Montreal — ed. note). Those who are willing to pay you the real price are also the ones who get the most money from Centraide. The groups that you will be sure to miss are the ones that Centraide has passed over. You too will cast them aside.

We refuse to make that split. We will go somewhere for ten bucks or nothing at all. We don't think that we are failing to take our living conditions into due consideration either. We are properly evaluating what those conditions can be in relation to the political situation of community groups in Quebec today. If we didn't work that way we would make the same split we referred to earlier and that would be dangerous.

**Marie-Renée:** An important part of popular theatre is the fact that it is a terrain for advocating something you believe in. You fight on the artistic front to uphold a certain idea of art which is an idea of popular theatre, people's theatre. You cannot put up with the kind of economic situation we have to put up with unless you are fighting for something.

### And since we must wind up the discussion

And so it went. The round table participants continued to discuss how such a theatre which serves the people demands the training of a new kind of actor. They went on to talk about the whole question of creating a circuit where plays can get performed and the necessity to organize not just places where progressive theatre can get exposure but also places where there can be reflection and study. Because, as Pierre from the **Theatre du quartier** noted, we do not have the theory to defend this kind of theatre. We should take advantage of all available outlets and platforms to get the theoretical justification across to people, to get the ideas circulating.

As **Marie-Hélène** said: "Popular and progressive theatre are growing. As often as not, you have to do everything at once. You have to write the scripts, do the research, get some political education too. You have to suggest shows to people who are not used to theatre. In the final analysis, what we are helping to develop is a popular theatre and a popular culture."

On Enver Hoxha's book,  
'Eurocommunism is anti-communism'

## There are questions that still need to be answered

Marxist-Leninists throughout the world are all now grappling with the criticism of modern revisionism (and social democracy). This question has been especially important in Western Europe, particularly in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, where the revisionist parties are dominant in the working-class movement. Elsewhere in Western Europe (in Belgium, West Germany, Sweden and Great Britain, for example), social democrats have the most influence in the working-class movement.

Given this situation, Marxist-Leninists have to destroy the influence of the modern revisionists and social democrats and win workers and working people to the programme of socialist revolution. In doing so, existing Marxist-Leninist organizations and parties can grow and become a leading force in the masses. It is certainly to the merit of the recent book by Comrade Enver Hoxha, first secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA), *Eurocommunism is anticommunism*<sup>(1)</sup>, that it draws attention to this very pressing question. In his 300-page book, Comrade Hoxha traces the origins of Eurocommunism, which are indeed the same as those of modern revisionism. He then criticizes the positions of three parties in particular — the French, Italian and Spanish parties. Finally, in his last chapter he describes the principles that should guide the action of communists in Europe today.

Comrade Hoxha's book will undoubtedly be widely read by Marxist-Leninists and revolutionaries. For this reason, and despite the fact that it is not possible to go into a detailed analysis at this time, there are two particularly important points that are worth looking into. First, there is the incomplete way that the origins of modern revisionism are examined in the book. Second, there is the abstract nature of the general perspectives given to European communists in the struggle against the opportunism of the Eurocommunist parties. The only exception to this is on the question of the defence of national sovereignty, which we shall examine in some detail.

### The origins of modern revisionism

"Taken as a whole", Hoxha writes, "it (modern revisionism) is a product of the pressure of the bourgeoisie on the working class..."<sup>(2)</sup> Further on he adds, "Modern revisionism... has its source in the hegemonic policy of American imperialism."<sup>(3)</sup>

Revisionism is not described as representing primarily the interests of a class or of a segment of a class in a country where it appeared and developed, but as primarily the result of the bourgeoisie's activities, especially those of the imperialist U.S. bourgeoisie.

But how did the revisionist ideas resulting from the hegemonic policy of the U.S. come to triumph in Europe, the U.S.S.R., China and other countries where revisionism grew? According to the sequence of events described in Hoxha's book,<sup>(4)</sup> these ideas first surfaced in the U.S. party in 1943 when Browder proposed its dissolution. They then surfaced in the Chinese Communist Party, particularly with Mao Zedong, then with Tito of the Yugoslav party and finally in the Soviet party led by Nikita Khrushchev. At the same time, the French party led by Thorez, the Italian party led by Togliatti and the Spanish party led by Carillo became

"Documents for the criticism of revisionism" is the general title for the articles PROLETARIAN UNITY is publishing with the purpose of contributing to a better understanding of the successes and failures in the struggle for socialism so far.

The articles, accompanying comments and other texts in the series "Documents..." do not necessarily represent the point of view of our Organization, which is currently studying these questions. Our Organization will be debating these issues broadly in its own ranks, with its readers and friends and with other organizations and parties before coming to firm conclusions.

All our readers are therefore strongly invited to share their comments, points of view and criticisms with us. We will do our best to circulate all such contributions, either by publishing them or by summing up the basic points made in them.

A correct understanding of our struggle's history will inevitably contribute to its progress in the future. This history is rich in lessons that the proletariat must be allowed to put to its advantage today, free from the distortions that have all too often accompanied our understanding or interpretation of this history.

Incidentally, readers should note that the article in the previous issue (no. 21) entitled "What had become of the socialist camp by 1960?", should have been more clearly identified as one of these working documents.

The editorial board  
of PROLETARIAN UNITY

corrupted by the same erroneous ideas.

Once these imperialist-inspired ideas appeared, they were able to develop, notably in Europe, because of the conditions in that region. Hoxha writes:

1. Enver Hoxha, *Eurocommunism is anti-communism*, The "8 Nentori" publishing house, Tirana, 1980
2. *Ibid.*, p. 13
3. *Ibid.*, p. 24
4. *Ibid.*, p. 24-61

"The economic and political conditions which were created in Western Europe after the Second World War were even more favourable to the consolidation and spread of those mistaken opportunist views which had existed previously in the communist parties of France, Italy and Spain..."<sup>(5)</sup> Hoxha goes on to specify that the political conditions — i.e. "the re-establishment of bourgeois democracy", "the repeal of fascist laws" and "the post-war economic boom in the West" — are factors that contributed to the growth of revisionism. So Hoxha doesn't think that the origins of revisionism in the imperialist countries lie in the communist parties or in the proletariat. He thinks it originated with activity by the imperialist bourgeoisie and then developed according to the specific circumstances.

As for Soviet revisionism, Hoxha describes it as follows: "As an ideological and political current, Khrushchevism has no great difference from the other currents of modern revisionism. It is the result of the same external and internal pressure of the bourgeoisie, of the same deviation from the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and of the same aim of opposing the revolution and socialism and preserving and strengthening the capitalist system."<sup>(6)</sup>

"The Communist Party of the Soviet Union degraded, was weakened, and became a 'party of the entire people', that is, no longer the vanguard party of the working class which carries forward the revolution and builds socialism, but a party of the new revisionist bourgeoisie, which causes the degeneration of socialism and carries forward the restoration of capitalism."<sup>(7)</sup>

This analysis of the origins of modern revisionism, which is only outlined here, does, however, pose a certain

April 24, 1978, the congress of the Communist Party of Spain officially discarded Leninism.



## Eurocommunism is anti-communism

Enver Hoxha's latest book, published by the "8 Nentori" Publishing House, Tirana, 1980.

number of questions. Unfortunately, Hoxha's book does not give any answers to these questions. For example, why was the working class in Europe and the U.S.S.R. so quickly won over to the bourgeois ideas propagated by U.S. imperialism? What about the creation of a "new revisionist bourgeoisie" in the Soviet Union? What about the importance of the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 and of the role of the Cominform from 1947 to 1956 in this process?...

### The Comintern was dissolved in 1943

It is somewhat strange that since he traces modern revisionism back to Browder's 1943 proposal to dissolve the U.S. communist party, Hoxha does not even mention the dissolution of the Comintern the same year. It is equally strange that he does not even mention the existence of the Cominform, which did play a central role in the orientation of communist parties for nearly ten years.

It should be recalled that the June 1943 communiqué announcing the dissolution of the Comintern gave two reasons for the decision: the maturity of communist parties and the diversity of the concrete situations that they faced. It is all very well to then criticize Tito, Togliatti and others for their brand of "particularism" (as it is sometimes called), but we should not forget that the Comintern opened the door for them in 1943. Later events were to show that it was only a small step from pleading "national particularities" to adopting nationalism; and the vast majority of parties wasted little time taking that step.

The line and slogans of the Comin-

form merit serious study from this same point of view of substituting bourgeois nationalism for proletarian internationalism. But there is also more than that. Why were only nine parties members of the Cominform? Within these nine, why were three of them (the parties of Tito, Togliatti and Thorez) the parties in which, according to Hoxha, the worst revisionist positions were quickly becoming dominant? Why did the Cominform devote most of its energies to promoting the peace movement throughout the world and coexistence with imperialism while giving little attention to the mass struggles against this same imperialism going on in China, Greece and elsewhere?

These questions must eventually be answered. Even if finding satisfactory answers (i.e. found scientifically) means examining the policies and activities of the Soviet party under Stalin's leadership, the answers must still be found. Incidentally, Stalin is another of the major figures missing from Comrade Hoxha's book.

For now, let us simply say that a historical study which ignores major events in the period being studied can hardly be judged satisfactory from a scientific point of view.

### When was the "new revisionist bourgeoisie" of the U.S.S.R. created?

No one would question the fact that U.S. imperialism played a significant role in the degeneration of the international communist movement after the end of the Second World War. But we must immediately add that an ideology can only receive a positive reception in a specific class or social stratum if there are at least some people whose interests lie in accepting the ideology.

It is quite clear that the advantages gained by the labour aristocracy through the superexploitation of dominated countries by imperialist bourgeoisies were a determining factor in the growth of revisionism following the

5. *Ibid.*, p. 80
6. *Ibid.*, p. 52
7. *Ibid.*, p. 53

Second World War. And this situation continues to play the same role in the maintenance of revisionism. Engels proved this at the end of the 19th century in relation to the English working class.

In other words, now as before, the labour aristocracy is the social basis of revisionism for the simple reason that this segment of the working class profits from imperialism. One need



**Nikita Khrushchev, who succeeded Stalin as leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. His rise to power and the triumph of his revisionist ideas certainly cannot be explained away by some kind of spontaneous generation.**

only compare the living conditions in North America or Europe with those in Africa, Asia and Latin America to see this. Briefly, that is the social base for revisionism in imperialist countries; what about in other countries and, more to the point, in a country like the Soviet Union?

We saw above that Hoxha talks about a "new bourgeoisie" in the U.S.S.R. in Khrushchev's time. So we can understand that Khrushchev was simply the representative of this new bourgeoisie within the party and the State apparatus. If Khrushchev was one member among others of this bourgeoisie while he was a party member and if there were enough Khrushchevs within the Soviet party for them to take over and transform it into a bourgeois party, we must then recognize that a communist party can become a bourgeois party because there are people with bourgeois interests within it. We may note here that Mao Zedong's thesis of the existence of the bourgeoisie within the party of a socialist country perhaps merits more serious attention than many Marxist-Leninist organizations — including ours, incidentally — have given it thus far.

Whether or not the "new bourgeoisie" which dragged the Soviet Union back to a class society existed

within the party, one thing remains certain: this new bourgeoisie was created, or at least the bases for its existence were created, within the Soviet society. In short, the origin of revisionism in the U.S.S.R. remains to be explained scientifically, because the new revisionist bourgeoisie that took power shortly after Stalin's death was surely not imported from the United States! And, to repeat, such a study requires at least an outline study of the class relationships within a socialist society — a question to which little attention has been given thus far. In doing such a study, we must remember that the socialist society is a society of transition in which exploitive relationships are not totally destroyed until the conditions for communism itself are created. And no socialist society has yet reached this stage of development.

## Principles or a programme?

The last chapter in Comrade Hoxha's book contains a description of the principles that should guide the actions of communists, particularly in Western Europe. To sum up this chapter, Hoxha states that they should base themselves on Marxism-Leninism, that they should build solid, disciplined parties of action and not of discussion, that they should link themselves with the masses, be involved in their organizations and even create some, and that they should pay special attention to trade unions, the women's movement and young people.

So far, there is nothing very new, nothing that has not been repeated many times for many years, beginning with the *Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement* by the Chinese communist party, published in 1963.

The principles Hoxha recalls in chapter 4 of his book sum up what has often been called within the movement the "general line of the communist movement" (\*). At the present time, there is a considerable amount of confusion on the relative importance of such a line composed of principles compared to the programme that communists should put forward. It is easy to understand the importance of firmly applying principles drawn from Marxist-Leninist theory in building revolutionary parties. However, the construction of solid and well organized parties will never replace building parties with a correct political

line, with a correct programme. Only this will allow them to determine a strategy and tactics in every situation that will lead the proletariat to victories and move forward the struggle for socialism.

By themselves, these principles only make a very abstract demarcation and often have little practical importance. For example, we say that communist parties must be parties of action and that they must not be limited by legalism. At the same time, we violently condemn terrorism. This resolves nothing, and the question of which forms of struggle are correct is left open.

But this question cannot be resolved in the abstract nor by placing the problem in the masses' hands, as Hoxha openly suggest:

*"It is the complex actions of the political, ideological and economic struggle of the Marxist-Leninist parties at the head of the working class against the bourgeoisie, social-democracy, revisionism and the bourgeois state, which allow the masses to determine whether or not these activities are truly revolutionary in character. The masses know how to distinguish genuine revolutionary actions which are in their interests from terrorism and anarchism."* (\*)

Even if the masses do know how to distinguish revolutionary action from terrorism (something which should be studied more carefully, however), the question is whether communists can do so. They can if they are able to refer to a programme, to strategy and tactics that are based on the concrete conditions of their struggle and not simply on a "general line" of principles.

What differentiates direct revolutionary action from terrorism is not the label it is arbitrarily given, but the line that the action serves. And to judge the correctness of a political line in a given situation, we must inevitably refer to the programme that it is an application of in a given situation.

The essential differentiation between communists and revisionists is made on the basis of the programme they advo-

8. *A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement, by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, Foreign Language Editions, Peking, June 1963*

9. Hoxha, *op. cit.*, p. 259; our emphasis

cate and translate into strategy and tactics in each concrete situation. Marxist-Leninists can criticize revisionists all they want for abandoning such and such a principle. They can reaffirm the same principles continually. But their action will only bear fruit if they offer a correct path for the working class to follow in its daily struggles and, more generally, if it can offer the path of socialist revolution. In short, the present task of Marxist-Leninists is to offer the programme of the socialist revolution as the alternative to the programme of the revisionists and Eurocommunists.

Comrade Hoxha's book, however, has little to say on the questions of programme. It neither makes a serious criticism of the European revisionists' programme nor does it offer a communist programme.

## The national question in Europe

It would be wrong to say that Hoxha's book does not deal with any question of programme. It deals with one — the national sovereignty of West European countries. Hoxha writes:

*"The Eurocommunists do not want to see the existence of a major national problem, the question of American domination in Western Europe and the need for liberation from it. From the end of the Second World War down to this day, American imperialism has bound this part of Europe with all kinds of political, economic, military, cultural and other chains. Without breaking these chains you cannot have socialism, or even that bourgeois democracy which Eurocommunists praise to the skies."* (10)

Hoxha is more precise later on when he speaks of the necessity of alliances given the threats of fascism and superpower interference. He writes:

*"The Eurocommunists can prattle as much as they like that their countries are free and sovereign, but in fact the Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and other peoples are oppressed and exploited. A bourgeois democracy exists in each of their countries but the state there is bound hand and foot to foreign capital. The people, the working class do not enjoy genuine democracy and sovereignty, they are not free because everything is controlled by foreign capital."* (11)

This political position (incidentally, it is one of the few discussed in any detail in the book) cannot be passed over in silence.

First, it is not fundamentally different from the position of Eurocommunists themselves. For example, at the 22nd congress of the French communist party, Georges Marchais stated:

*"Faithful to its tradition, the French communist party is fighting and will continue to fight with all its energy to keep France independent and sovereign, i.e. the capacity to act efficiently and on an international scale and to determine its own people's future. Far from being an outdated idea, national independence is one of the main demands of our time. Winning it, defending it and consolidating it are all questions on the agenda in the contemporary world. There is nothing more pressing or more modern than the struggle for the independence, sovereignty and full development of France. The communist party calls on all the country's democrats and patriots to play their part in this national struggle."* (12)

Second, all revisionist parties, beginning with the Canadian one, have consistently defended the national sovereignty of West European and other Western countries since the Second World War. It was also the position defended by the Chinese communist party in its famous **Proposal Concerning the General Line...** in 1963. In short, this nationalist position was one of the essential factors in the degeneration of the international communist movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

Finally, Hoxha says that the proletariat of European countries must first fight for "genuine democracy and sove-

reignty" (13) before struggling for socialism because *"without breaking these chains (of U.S. domination) you cannot have socialism, or even that bourgeois democracy (is that the same as 'genuine democracy'? — C.G.) which the Eurocommunists praise to the skies."* (14)

After that, we can well ask if there have been any useful results of all the fuss made for the past two years over the "three worlds theory" which made the "superpowers" the main enemy of the peoples, including the people in less powerful imperialist countries! The "three worldists", of course, view the U.S.S.R. as the principal of the two main enemies of the peoples of the world. But Hoxha's views and the three worlds theory share the idea that the working class in relatively powerful imperialist countries must first defend their national sovereignty against a more powerful imperialist power.

We have explained our position on this question amply in the past and we have shown how this debate brings us back to the central question that split the Comintern from the Second International. Whether this nationalist position is today defended by those who support or oppose the "three worlds theory" changes absolutely nothing. The "independence and socialism" line, at the time of the Second World War and that has acted as a gangrene in the

10. *Ibid.*, p. 173

11. *Ibid.*, p. 272

12. PCF, *Le socialisme pour la France. 22e Congrès du PCF. Editions sociales, Paris, 1976, p. 56 (our translation)*

13. Hoxha, *op. cit.*, p. 272

14. *Ibid.*, p. 173

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as it is commonly referred to in Canada, a revisionist line that appeared Marxist-Leninist movement ever since, must be firmly rejected and fought.

We cannot claim to have made an exhaustive criticism of Enver Hoxha's book. We can claim even less to have made a conclusive criticism of modern revisionism as it appears in the programmes and practices of the European revisionists. However, we believe we have raised some important questions not answered in Hoxha's book. These should convince Marxist-Leninists that there is still much to be done in the criticism of revisionism and that this criticism cannot simply consist in indefinitely repeating the general principles of Marxism-Leninism or of what is sometimes called the general line of the international communist movement.

The fact that the Party of Labour of Albania demarcated extensively from the "three worlds theory" and the fact that it is adopting positions very similar to the positions held by those who defend this theory on a question as important as the path of revolution in Europe (i.e. advocating a path that begins with the conquest of "genuine sovereignty" before the struggle for socialism) should make it easier to understand what we have been stating for months — that the struggle against revisionism has remained superficial thus far, and that true demarcation from revisionism, including the Euro-communist variety, must begin by drawing up a programme for revolution in various countries and on a world scale.

While the supporters of Mao and the supporters of Stalin get hot and bothered over so-called questions of principle and repeat quotations from Marxist-Leninist classics, the revisionists are free to continue boring away at the working-class movement. They can continue because the concrete criticism of their programme — i.e. an analysis showing which classes or segments of classes are served by these programmes — has not yet been done and because a revolutionary programme which alone can counter these revisionist programmes has not yet been drawn up. In short, Marxist-Leninists today have more important things to do than to spend their time building up or tearing down "monuments".

**Charles Gagnon,**  
Secretary-General of the MLOC  
IN STRUGGLE! August 15, 1980

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## International Communist Movement

# Political, military and revolutionary elements of the strategy of the FPL (Popular liberation forces)



The text published here, written by the Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Martí" (FPL), discusses the history of the emergence of the new revolutionary forces in El Salvador. It gives a more concrete account of the successive stages in the break made with the reformists in the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS), emphasizing in particular how the influence of the Cuban revolution had strongly contributed to the rejection of the PCS's peaceful and conciliatory theses. The example of the successful armed struggle for power in Cuba provided progressive forces throughout Latin America with a real alternative.

Subsequently, as this text by the FPL illustrates, this rethinking of the revisionist party's reformist strategy grew to encompass a whole series of questions.

At the same time, however, the text totally ignores the turn taken by the Cuban revolution since it took power. This indicates that many of the revolutionary forces in Latin America have not yet drawn the lessons of a critical evaluation of the Cuban experience.

ESTRELLA ROJA (Red Star) publishes the following material on elements of the strategy of the FPL.

Comrade EVA prepared this material to be published for the people. EVA, the beloved leader of the FPL, fell fighting alongside comrades FRANCISCO and ANTONIO in a heroic battle against the military tyranny's forces on October 10 and 11, 1975. They gave their lives for their people.

FRANCISCO and other comrades participated fully in the preparation of this material.

\* \* \*

To understand the rise and present stage of development reached by revolutionary strategy in El Salvador, it is necessary to begin, however briefly, with a few historic events of the class struggle as it developed in the last two decades. This is necessary as much to see the changes that have taken place in imperialist policy as to look at those that have taken place in the Latin American revolutionary movement, and in particular the movement in El Salvador.

## General Framework

One of the basic traits which characterize the present situation in Latin America is the marked sharpening of class struggle, generated by antagonistic contradictions in the present dependent capitalist system which have become more serious in the past few years. This must be seen in the framework of the general crisis of decaying capitalism on the world level.

During the past two decades this class struggle in the dependent Latin



American countries has led to direct confrontation between imperialism, allied to the local bourgeoisie in each country, and the working class, peasants and the rest of the popular sectors. In practice, struggle has been reflected in the development of the revolution and counter-revolution.

The victorious triumph of the Cuban Revolution at the end of the 1950s was a historic event that marked the beginning of a new stage in the class struggle in the continent. The example of the Cuban people was to have a strong influence on the future development of the revolutionary movement, as well as on the policy followed by Yankee imperialism and the local oligarchies. Both needed to re-structure themselves. The revolutionaries had to find new forms of struggle against the oppressors, in particular with regard to armed struggle. The exploiters had to adapt their whole form of domination to the new historical conditions of class struggle.

What have been the real changes in the class struggle in Latin America since the Cuban revolution?

1. **In imperialism's policy:** The taking of power by Cuban revolutionary forces was an unexpected blow to the United States and its Latin American puppet dictatorships. They never expected Fidel Castro's regime to be anything other than a bourgeois government of a populist hue. Even less did they expect it to adopt policies that would make profound changes in economic structures. However, imperialism quickly learned its lesson.

In the 1940s, beginning right after World War Two (from which socialism emerged reinforced), the U.S. began a broad offensive on a world scale. The offensive was mainly a military one and it fed a complex war industry that spread the arms race throughout the hemisphere. However, the undying purpose of this offensive at that time was to prevent the consolidation of the socialist bloc and ward off the "danger" of this bloc invading other countries. It was in fact a defence of monopolies and of Yankee transnational businesses, which have interests to defend all over the capitalist world.

But in 1960 imperialism was confronted with a new enemy in Latin America. The Cuban Revolution raised the pros-



### The Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Marti": what are they?

The **Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Marti" (FPL)** of El Salvador defines itself as a clandestine military and political revolutionary organization. It also defines itself as Marxist-Leninist. The FPL adopted the name "Farabundo Marti" in memory of the founder of the **Communist Party of El Salvador**. The assassination of Marti by General Martinez in 1932 marked the beginning of the era of military dictatorships in El Salvador.

The first steps towards the creation of the FPL "Farabundo Marti" were taken in April 1970. Right from the start, the FPL undertook to wage urban guerrilla warfare.

The FPL have a five-point anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist platform:

- 1— destroy the bourgeois State;
- 2— eliminate the landed bourgeoisie as a class;
- 3— get rid of all imperialist forces on Salvadoran territory;
- 4— establish a revolutionary people's government under the hegemony of the proletariat, and based on an alliance with the peasantry; and
- 5— lay the foundations for full socialist construction.

pect of a more immediate and concrete danger which threatened to set the whole continent on fire — the fire of popular insurrection which was beginning to take form in each country. Yankee imperialism was forced, during the Kennedy administration, to revise and adapt its strategy and tactics to new conditions resulting from the rise of the popular movement in the continent.

Starting in the 1960s, the U.S., with the support of the local oligarchies in Latin America, began to implement strategy, a strategy of war against the people aimed at trying to contain or prevent the development and spread of the revolutionary movement and crushing whatever insurrectional attempts the people made. It is instructive to remember something Robert Kennedy said during those years, when talking about the future of Latin America: "Revolution in Latin America is inevitable. What we can do is to change its course." This new policy was announced at the Punta del Este (Uruguay) meeting of Latin American Presidents in 1961.

The counter-insurgency strategy had economic, military and political implications. Right from the beginning it involved three basic aspects.

a) A policy of development on the social and economic levels aimed at promoting an economic policy of foreign aid to dependent countries. On the one hand, this was to give the puppet regimes a favourable image, by means of different reforms, in order to obtain the support of the masses and neutralize the influence of revolutionary organizations. On the other hand, it was to find new methods for imperialist capital to penetrate. At the same time, a pseudo-industrialization was begun, in order to use Latin American workers as cheap labour.

b) On the military level, the promotion of anti-guerrilla action and repression against the population was aimed at preventing the rise and consolidation of revolutionary organizations and containing the development of popular armed struggle and the masses' attempts at insurrection.

c) On the ideological level, this strategy was applied by adapting education to the new economic and political needs. The press and mass media in all Latin America came under stricter control.

The first steps were taken in psychological warfare to sow discontent, terror and confusion in the hearts of the people.

This new strategy forced imperialism and local oligarchies to make some changes in State structures: modernizing the puppet armies and repressive forces; giving them new technology to use against the guerrilla and to repress the people; modernizing their intelligence and control systems; changing old public institutions and creating new ones. All these changes had the same goals: to develop counter-revolution.

### In the Latin American popular movement

The Cuban revolution became an external factor favourably influencing objective and subjective conditions in each country. It awoke the will and combativity of the masses and the consciousness of Latin American revolutionaries.

The Cuban revolution broke with a series of dogmatic concepts held for many decades by the traditional leadership encrusted in the large majority of Latin American communist parties.

These had abandoned Marxist-Leninist positions on socialist revolution by the people and had taken up conciliatory and collaborationist policies with regard to the local bourgeoisie.

The majority of these parties considered that the socialist alternative for the people was only possible in the far future. They considered that the conditions at that time made it impossible to base their strategy and tactics on the people taking power. They put forward "preliminary stages" of organization as necessary first steps, and advocated the organization and inclusion of all sectors of the people in the revolutionary struggle through exclusively peaceful forms. They also said it was possible at this stage to ally with "national and progressive" sectors of the bourgeoisie which were in conflict with imperialism and local landlord oligarchies.

All this was based on the erroneous thesis that our countries were semi-feudal and that there was a national bourgeoisie which still could play a revolutionary role. They could set up democratic bourgeois regimes which would permit the accelerated development of capitalism based on a national bourgeoisie. With this stage the working class would also develop, as a

preliminary stage to beginning revolutionary struggle towards socialism.

These conciliatory and reformist positions were quickly unmasked by reality.

These old traditional theses soon began to be questioned, and not simply in ideological terms. The years following the Cuban triumph saw the creation of conditions which permitted the resurgence of popular armed struggle in almost all countries. New revolutionary organizations appeared which aspired to liberate their people and tried to put their strategic plans into practice.

However, many of these first efforts failed, because their strategic plans did not correspond to the new conditions existing in Latin America. Many of these failures were caused by the following factors:

1. The lack of a really Marxist analysis of Latin American society, and therefore the absence of a strategic and tactical line corresponding to reality.
2. Petty-bourgeois elitist and short-sighted ideas were not overcome. This led to disdain for the different kinds of struggle by the people, so necessary for mass political struggle. More particularly, this led to badly evaluating the role of the working class as the leaders of the revolution. They considered armed struggle as a vanguard struggle and not the people's struggle, considering the people's participation as simple support for guerrilla action and not as its principal component.
3. A subjective and unilateral view of the revolutionary war caused many organizations to commit militarist-style errors.
4. There was an attempt to apply the Cuban experience in a mechanical and dogmatic manner.
5. The political immaturity of revolutionary organizations was reflected in their incapacity to overcome populist and putschist influences, which led them in some cases to underestimate the strength of imperialism and to believe that it was possible through a quick struggle to precipitate general insurrection, when the conditions were not ripe for it.
6. The intensification of counter-revolutionary action by the enemy on all levels permitted them to encircle the guerrilla both politically and militarily, cutting them off from the people.

Meeting of the Revolutionary Co-ordinating Body of the Masses in El Salvador.



Despite all this, these temporary defeats for the Latin American revolutionary movement were rich experiences for the development of a new revolutionary Marxist strategy in accordance with new historic circumstances.

It is necessary to see the first ten years of popular struggle (1960-1970) as part of the process of acquiring political maturity and gradual development which the Latin American revolutionary movement as a whole went through, and not as isolated phenomenon unconnected to (or better still, disconnected from) the present situation. Some vanguard organizations which are active at the present time have learned the lessons taught by those first years, namely the cost of the short-term vision; of the subjective and unilateral conception of the revolutionary process; of the elitist and vanguardist idea of war; and of the underestimation of Yankee imperialism. Despite the profound crisis it is going through, imperialism is still very strong and again has a more ferocious eye on Latin America, encouraging counter-revolution on all levels.

## In El Salvador

In our country, after the massacre of 1932 (in which more than 30,000 workers, peasants and brave leaders like Farabundo Martí, Luna and Zapata were killed) the left-wing organizations stopped considering THE TAKING OF POWER BY THE PEOPLE in their strategic plans. This was especially true of the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS). They considered that the strength of the class enemy was too great, and did not correctly evaluate the revolutionary potential of the people. They believed that the people were too weak, that they were unorganized, without the consciousness or will to take power, and that this objective was therefore too distant.

During the decades following 1932, the PCS fell into conservative positions which gave in to the bourgeoisie. Even when they envisaged the necessity of reinforcing and developing forces so as to bring about a gradual change in the balance of power, they considered it in a mechanical fashion. They did not plan the taking of power; they divided the process into stages that were separate from each other. They planned to mars-

hall forces through peaceful means, and then to use violence at the last moment only. They therefore gave the struggle for the demands of the masses into a narrow political practice, with an equally narrow content, imprisoned by bourgeois influence, with short-term perspectives and devoid of any strategic revolutionary goal.

All this reflected the traditional and metaphysical concept which saw the revolutionary process as a series of disconnected stages which succeeded one another in a linear fashion. According to this vision of things, the tasks of each stage had to be completed before starting to develop the next.



*"The traditional leadership understood the marshalling of forces as a process linked exclusively to peaceful action by the masses to develop their struggles to defend their demands and participation in elections (when permitted by the regime) for immediate goals only."*

*"Not having a clear perspective for seizing political power, the mass struggle by peaceful means only is not linked to clear revolutionary goals and is really at the service of the interests of other classes, and more particularly of the so-called 'progressive' bourgeoisie."*

*"It was considered that the so-called progressive bourgeoisie could come to power with the help of the conscious forces of the people, later establishing a*

*democratic regime which would replace the military 'pro-oligarchy and pro-imperialist' tyranny. This would accomplish the bourgeois-democratic reforms necessary to weaken the economic and political power of the landowner-oligarchy. In such a manner the mass struggle was not consciously linked to a really revolutionary objective, but directed towards a change from the military tyranny to a bourgeois government which would establish greater democratic margin for manoeuvring, permitting legal conditions that would favour the development of the organization and open struggle of democratic forces, including those of the left. These efforts were clearly demonstrated in the political struggles of 1944 and continued to dominate the political strategy of the left in the following years."* (Taken from "BASIC MATERIAL FROM THE FPL")

However, after the revolution in Cuba, many erroneous theses which had become dogma for the PCS were proven wrong by reality. This brought about the development of ideological struggle within the left and cleared the way for the development of a new strategy more in keeping with reality in our country in the present historical period.

The necessity of including the basic element of the goal of the people taking power was understood. The necessity of adopting this as the strategic objective of revolutionary forces was understood. The second change was to see the need to resolve the problem of the FORMS of struggle, and the BASIC MEANS to achieve the objective of taking power.

Basing themselves on the study of the situation in the country, subjected for many years to a criminal military tyranny which daily developed its repression and political domination, they concluded that given conditions in the country during the past years, and given the future events secured to point to, **the only way for the people to seize political power was through armed struggle.**

*"These two elements represented a significant advance in the strategic objectives of revolutionaries. However, they were only words; in practice, the conception of the basic means to marshal forces remained unchanged."* (same source)

Although it is true that armed struggle was recognized as the decisive means of taking power, the erroneous conception that this was not a way to develop forces for the revolution was

also adopted at the same time. In fact, it was considered harmful, because the opportunists thought that armed struggle would prevent the large masses from taking part in struggles for their demands, endanger the people's democratic liberties, provoke political repression by the regime and lead to the destruction of the popular movement. Consequently, only peaceful means were to be used during this long period; armed actions were to be avoided, since it was argued that the conditions to permit it were not present. Thus armed struggle was put off until later, as a form of struggle to be used only during the actual taking of power through popular armed insurrection.

To sum up, armed struggle was considered valid for a strategic period after the so-called period of marshalling of forces; and to accomplish this preliminary stage, it was considered necessary to carry out a series of basic tasks considered to be preliminary steps without which it would be impossible and inappropriate to begin armed struggle (which was only to be developed when a revolutionary situation existed, in our country.)

According to this way of looking at things, before beginning armed struggle it was necessary to:

1. organize the working class in the city and country;
2. create trade-union unity;
3. organize peasants;
4. create the worker-peasant alliance which would be the base for the progressive alliance of forces; and
5. organize the different popular sectors.

And during this long process of organization and mobilization and developing the people's consciousness, it was considered prejudicial to wage armed struggle.

The Cuban revolution proved that many of the basic theses of the traditional strategy did not correspond to the present historical period; they were dogmatic and, far from contributing to the development of Latin American and Central American revolution, had in fact become a stumbling block.

What did the Cuban Revolution really prove?

1. *"That it is not necessary that all objective and subjective revolutionary conditions (characteristic of a revolutionary situation) exist to begin armed struggle. That it is necessary that some*

*objective conditions exist, as well as a sufficient number of subjective ones (especially, the existence of a series of revolutionary organizations, and an acceptable degree of consciousness and willingness to fight)"*.

2. *"That armed struggle, linked to several kinds of struggle, particularly mass political struggle, accelerates the creation and development of the organization and revolutionary consciousness of a large part of the people. It is much more efficient than mass political struggle by peaceful means alone."*

3. *"That armed struggle is an essential aspect, necessary for the development of the forces and that it accelerates the change in the balance of military and political strength that is required for the triumph of the revolution."* (Basic Material of the FPL).

However, despite the fact that their dogmatic projects were contradicted by practice, the traditional organizations continued unchanged, shutting themselves off from reality in their old ways of looking at things, which had led them to become an appendix of the bourgeoisie and to fall into deep right-wing opportunism which paralyzed the people's revolutionary struggle.

The ideological and political struggle within the PCS and the union movement, which lasted more than ten years, led inevitably, to a break away from them (PCS) by the most advanced elements, who were most coherent and consistent in their defence of the people's interests. This happened a few

months after the war with Honduras and the 1969-70 elections, in which the PCS unashamedly supported Sanchez Hernandez' and the Salvadoran bourgeoisie's policy of aggression, which called on the people to get ready to contribute to this fratricidal war.

This break was a historic event which was to have a profound influence on the new path taken by the El Salvador revolutionary movement.

In 1970, clandestine political and military organizations began to be set up in our country (FPL and ERP — People's Revolutionary Army), and with them came an upsurge in the people's armed struggle (revolutionary guerrilla). This marked a qualitative leap forward in the development of the revolution in El Salvador and in Central America.

During the last six years, practice has been showing the validity or erroneous nature of the tactics and strategic objectives of each of these two organizations. This has been a step forward in the theoretical and practical development of the strategic objectives in El Salvador, as well as in the political maturity and leadership capacities of these revolutionary organizations, particularly the FPL. •

**(Translated by PROLETARIAN UNITY from the first chapter of the pamphlet, 'Que son las — FPL — Farabundo Martí'? no. 2, published by the FPL in Spanish in El Salvador in January 1976)**



## Books in review

### Interventions critiques en économie politique

### Analysing the current crisis...

The fifth issue of the Quebec journal *Interventions critiques en économie politique* (Critical comments and analyses political economy), now available, is almost entirely devoted to an analysis of the current crisis and its basic mechanisms. *Interventions critiques* has been published three times a year for two years now by a progressive Montreal collective. The journal wants its analyses to serve the struggle of the labour movement. This is why it tackles economics by criticizing bourgeois political economy, which is how it got its name.

In the latest issue, the collective defines the subject of its study in this way: "The crisis is not just an abstract concept for learned theoreticians, it is a very tangible daily reality. It accounts for and determines many activities, including the fightback of the labour and popular movement."(!) The journal offers almost a dozen articles on this subject, as well as some articles on current affairs, education, art, etc.

The articles worth mentioning include one by Louis Gill, written at the request of the Secrétariat d'action politique of the CNTU, entitled "L'économie capitaliste en crise, quelques éléments de réflexion". This document has the merit of being easily accessible and sets out mainly to explain the basic mechanisms of the capitalist crisis, illustrating them with recent examples of inflation, overproduction, unemployment,

etc. It is an article which is very useful for those who want to familiarize themselves with the fundamental mechanisms of the crisis.

Another well-documented article by C. Deblock and J. Charest, "La nouvelle politique monétaire canadienne", is very pertinent in this period of monetary instability. The article is a good refutation of monetary theories which advocate restricting the mass of money in circulation as a solution to the crisis. As the authors point out in the conclusion: "The Bank of Canada has given itself the historic mission of putting an end to inflation, even if the immediate consequences of its policies may be to push the economy into the swamp of stagnation.... The only problem is that the central banks, regardless of whether they are headed up by Keynesians or monetarists, have never, despite all their good intentions, prevented crises, waste and the resulting deprivation."(?)

Finally, we should mention the article by Pierre Paquette on "Le labyrinthe pétrolier", which sketches the evolution of the oil market, especially since the oil crisis in the early seventies. The article also presents conclusions — which could have been more fully developed — on the question of oil in Canada and the rivalries to which it has led.

In closing, we have to congratulate the journal for having devoted so many pages to previously unpublished articles and new research in the field of economics. We eagerly await the next issue, which will deal with capitalism in Quebec.

1. *Interventions critiques en économie politique*, La crise, no. 5, spring-summer 1980, p. 5
2. *Ibid.*, p. 150

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### Principles of communism (Engels)

### Economics and politics in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat (Lenin)

### Two short articles that have much to say

"The problem is that, as a reader of your paper, I don't have time to read all that was written by these men and by the different communist parties in the world, in order to be able to follow and participate in the debates."

This comment, published in the August 5 issue of the newspaper *IN STRUGGLE!*, is undoubtedly representative of the feelings of many readers who would like to participate in an informed way in the debates on the origin of revisionism.

*Principles of communism* is a short article that in just a few pages gives us an over-all picture of the evolution of society and the historical goal which it is up to the working class to achieve.

Written in 1847 by Engels, *Principles of communism* was the basis for the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, written a few months later. This explains the awkwardness of its presentation, due to the schematic, question-and-answer form in which the article is written. But — and it is perhaps precisely because of the schematic way it is written — *Principles of communism* has the merit of bringing out the backbone of the scientific Marxist analysis of history. The way in which Engels presents the tasks of socialism is particularly illuminating today, when these tasks have been abandoned by the so-called socialist countries of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Albania.

"In fact, the abolition of private property is the shortest and most significant way to characterize the transformation of the whole social order which has been made necessary by the development of industry, and for this reason it is rightly advanced by communists as their main demand." (question 14)

V. I. LENIN

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS  
IN THE ERA OF  
THE DICTATORSHIP OF  
THE PROLETARIAT

FRIEDRICH ENGELS  
PRINCIPLES OF  
COMMUNISM

This position of Engels is certainly the best known of the principles of communism. But it is significant that Engels speaks of it as "the shortest way to characterize" this transformation, and not as the entire transformation. He also specifies that the new social order "will... abolish competition and replace it with association" and that it will establish "communal ownership of goods" (*ibid*). In short, not only does socialism mean the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production (factories, land, transportation facilities, etc.), it also means the establishment of new **social relations** between people, relations which are no longer based on competition, but rather on association. This also means that "the distribution of all products according to common agreement" will replace the market regime. And with these three aspects of socialist construction, the division of labour itself is put into question.

"The existence of classes originated in the division of labour and the division of labour as it has been known hitherto will completely disappear." (question 20)

It is important to see that there is an indissoluble link between the "communal operation of production" and the creation of "entirely different kind of human material", "human beings with many-sided talents and the capacity to oversee the system of production in its entirety." (*ibid*)

It is in this way that socialism will eliminate the antagonism between the city and the countryside. And it is in the same way that it will transform the family as it exists today, based on "the dependence of the wife on the husband and of the children on their parents". (question 21)

On the level of political strategy, *Principles of communism* is also very revealing. We can see that, taking into

account the universal character of proletarian revolution, Engels already saw how in the less developed countries there was a need for revolution in stages characterized by the "political rule of the proletariat". (question 18) But at the same time Engels considered that it was in the more developed countries, and especially in England at the time, that conditions were most favourable for revolution. And yet history has shown that it is in the less developed capitalist countries, and notably Russia, that revolution has first broken out.

On this point, a short article by Lenin, *Economics and politics in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat*, written in November 1919, is a very useful complement to Engel's article — and this in two ways. First, because it exposes the particularly sharp nature of the difficulties encountered in building socialism in a country where small commodity production is dominant and creates, almost spontaneously, the conditions for the rebirth of capitalism. One of the paradoxes of our era is that because of the development of imperialism and the resulting corruption of a narrow stratum of the working class in the developed countries, it is in the dominated countries that revolution breaks out. But it is also in these countries that the economic basis for building socialism is weakest. This is undoubtedly an objective factor which has to be taken into account if we are to understand the failure of socialism in Eastern Europe and China.

But above and beyond the specific characteristics of the situation in Russia, Lenin's article pinpoints Engel's scientific conception of socialism as the "period of transition" between capitalism and communism, that is as a period of **confrontations** "between capitalism which has been defeated but not destroyed and communism which has been born but is still very feeble". This means that the final victory is far from guaranteed and that "the class struggle waged by the overthrown exploiters against the victorious vanguard of the exploited, i.e., the proletariat, has become incomparably more bitter".

*Principles of communism* and *Economics and politics in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat* are not recent articles. But, as we have seen, they deal with some of today's burning issues. Available\* in English and French, published by Foreign Language Press,

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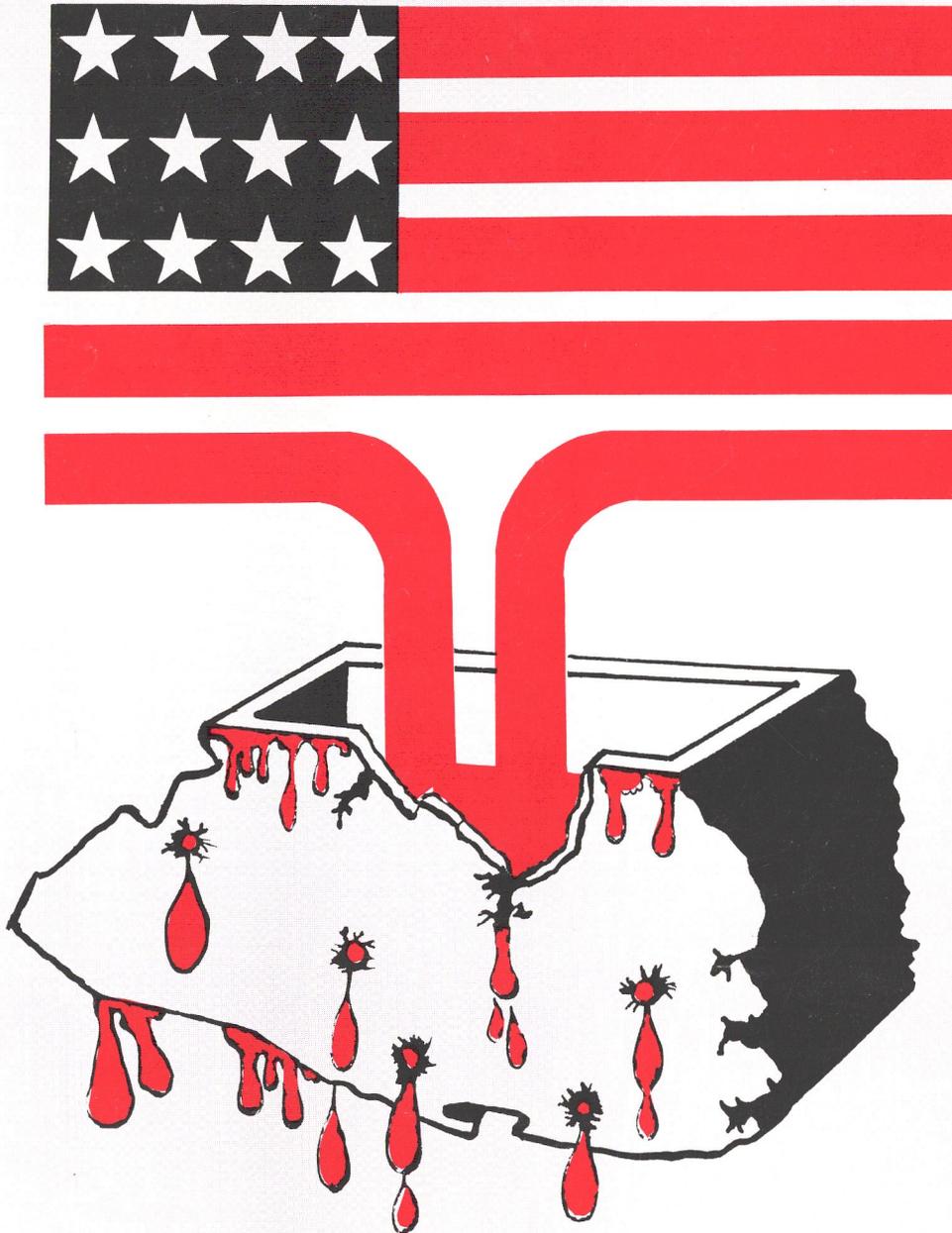
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