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

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

In the past couple of years, particularly since the financial collapse which came in the wake of the imposition of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexican workers have seen their real wages plummet by 50 percent. The official minimum wage currently amounts to barely $3 a day, and millions of workers can’t even count on that. The NAFTA “free trade” rapé of Mexico has devastated much of the country’s medium and small industry, leading to skyrocketing unemployment in the cities and ever more desperate poverty in the countryside. Beginning with the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas when NAFTA was imposed on New Year’s Day 1994, peasant guerrilla insurgencies centered in the rural southern states have shaken the country.

Since splitting from the PRI a decade ago, Cárdenas has postured as an advocate for the poor and an opponent of escalating imperialist subjugation. Yet the election outcome was greeted positively not only by Mexico’s plebeian masses. An editorial in the New York Times (8 July) enthused over the result of the ballot and an article in the Wall Street Journal made clear the reaction of U.S. financial circles, quoting a spokesman for Standard & Poor who said: “I don’t think the PAN or the PRD will push for anything radical.” The Mexican stock market soared to new highs.

In part, the Yankee imperialists are putting a good face on the crumbling of the PRI, which has been Washington’s favored instrument for neocolonial represscion of the Mexican masses for decades. But at the same time, the routified PRI is increasingly seen by far-sighted bourgeois elements as a liability in keeping the lid on the country’s seething social contradictions. This is what is behind the spate of cynical “exposes” by the U.S. recently of big-time drug runners high up in the Mexican state and military apparatus. Under the guise of the “war on drugs,” the Pentagon has been funneling massive shipments of arms and equipment to its neocolonial lackeys throughout Latin America in order to suppress peasant insurgencies and other threats to capitalist stability.

The crisis of the “one-party” PRI regime was symbolized by the death on June 21 of Fidel Velázquez, who for half a century headed the corporatist Mexican Labor Federation (CTM), a key prop of PRI rule. As the PRI has unraveled, the PRD has come forward as a useful safety valve and alternative face for bourgeois rule, seeking to contain a restless working-class which has increasingly started to escape the control of the mechanisms which have straitjacketed it for so long.

Despite the presence of numerous former leftists, the PRD is not in any sense even a reformist workers party (i.e., a bourgeois-nationalist formation). Cárdenas broke from the PRI in 1987 in order to posture at a return to the “good” old days before that party abandoned its pretense of independence from U.S. imperialism. Cárdenas recognized that class peace was threatened by the massive destruction of jobs in light industry when protective tariffs were lifted (pressaging NAFTA), by the spectre of massive denationalizations and by large-scale expulsions of peasants from the land. But the Cárdenas forces promise only to make the draconian austerity dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) more palatable, while offering the masses the sop of anti-Yankee nationalism.

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

Such actions are neither an accident nor a “betrayal” as the opportunist “left” which supports the Cardenistas would have it. The PRD is fundamentally no more capable than the semi-bonapartist PRI regime of resisting the demands of the U.S. imperialist masters that the Mexican government starve its own people for the greater profits of Wall Street. In colonial and semicolonial countries, characterized by “combined and uneven...
Amanda Vanstone protesting the arrest has also moved to further tighten its rac­
month
Ervin Ervin's visa was restored and he was government as he defiantly resumed his
only ten years away! This pamphlet, displaying greater genius than any other in world
olutionary vanguard parties. Today the International Communist League fights to
ights for visitorsand immigrants.
Trotsky stressed in an introduction to the first Afrikaans edition of the
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sylvania, December 1937)
he said, "not of good characters," while the media kept up a barrage of descriptions of
thing to a clear victory of the working class over the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie's
human culture, is reducible in its essentials to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.
be to me a whipping boy and to keep
me from being able to speak to the Ab­
bilities, but the people who are able to prevent me from going back from here and talking about what's happening."
Wheeling-Pitt Strike Derailed
Steel Union Tops Beg Bankers, Let Strikers Hang

AUGUST 2—Yesterday, United Steelworkers (USWA) officials announced a tentative agreement to end the ten-month-long strike against Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corporation, centrally over the demand that the company restore the guaranteed posting of a picket line at the gates of the plant. This was a long overdue and hard-fought victory for the workers, many of whom have been out of work for over a decade ago. The battle by 4,500 steel workers against Wheeling-Pitt, which idled eight steel plants in Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, has been the longest steel strike in U.S. history.

Throughout that time, strikers and their families sank ever deeper into poverty, and towns like Mingo Junction, Ohio—where the largest of the plants is located—turned into economic ghost towns. But the strikers remained solid. By all accounts, not a single worker crossed a picket line and thousands of unionists from up and down the Ohio River valley participated in solidarity actions for the brothers and sisters at Wheeling-Pitt. Yet despite their enormous sacrifice, the workers have been forced to struggle—which, though details have been left deliberately vague—is the loss of funds in five jobs andenkraft's pension, which it ended.

The AFL-CIO tops, aptly dubbed the "union tops, tentacles of the capitalist class" by early American socialist Daniel De Leon, is to tip the balance of the weakening unions to the national interests of the enemy class. This collaboration with the capitalist state codifies the labor bureaucracy's hostility to the working class. The AFL-CIO misleadership opposes class struggle because it sees the world through the same lens as the capitalists and government. The purpose of the union tops, aptly dubbed "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class" by early American socialist Daniel De Leon, is to tip the balance of the weakening unions to the enemy class.

Far from harnessing the potential social power of organized labor, the union tops refused to employ class-struggle tactics like political actions to win the strike. Instead, of organizing labor solidarity in struggle, the USWA bureaucracy ludicrously appealed to the bankers and bosses for "solidarity." The AFL-CIO has been forced to swing the corporation's economic imperative assuming its role in the class struggle.

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Italian Army Atrocities in Somalia Exposed

MILANO—Even as 2,500 Italian “peacekeeping” forces occupy Albania, Italy has been rocked by exposés of torture and murder in an earlier “humanitarian” military intervention, in the East African country of Somalia. After the weekly magazine Panorama published long-suppressed photos of racist atrocities by Italian troops in Somalia in 1993, several soldiers came forward to attest that they had personally witnessed the incidents and further documentation flowed in directly from Somalia. As the popular-front government of Prime Minister Romano Prodi tried to whitewash these imperialist crimes, hundreds of people joined in a June 15 protest in Rome organized by the Somali community and hundreds more demonstrated in Milano two weeks later.

On June 12, Panorama published June 1993 photographs of a Somali youth pinned to the ground under the boot of a soldier of the Folgore Brigade, the fascist-ridden “special forces,” while an officer attached electric cables to the youth’s testicles. The following week, the same magazine published grisly photos and described a cold-blooded murder by U.S. troops in Mogadishu: “A Somali boy pointed a watergun at a truck of Marines. Three shots were fired from a rifle. Nothing remained of that boy.”

At the same time as the Somali scandal was erupting in Italy, in Brussels the Italian military, the Prodi government appointed a “commission of inquiry” (which includes two generals) in order to whitewash the crimes, while the minister of foreign affairs dismissed the torture and murder as “childish pranks!” This center-left government is dominated by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and actively supported by Riformdizione Comunista (RC), both heirs of the now-defunct reformist Communist Party.

RC leader Armando Cossutta lamely called for an “apology” and for the president to “whitewash the crimes, while the minister of foreign affairs dismissed the torture and murder as "childish pranks!" This center-left government is dominated by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and is supported by Riformdizione Comunista (RC), both heirs of the now-defunct reformist Communist Party. The RC leader Armando Cossutta lamely called for an “apology” and for the president to "whitewash the crimes, while the minister of foreign affairs dismissed the torture and murder as "childish pranks!" This center-left government is dominated by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and is supported by Riformdizione Comunista (RC), both heirs of the now-defunct reformist Communist Party.

Belgian military command absolved two paratroopers who had been photographed roasting a Somali youth over a bonfire! In 1993, Belgian troops killed hundreds in the port of Kismayu, raping Somali women and throwing children into the Juba River to drown. Earlier, attempts by the Canadian high command to cover up murder and torture by units infested with KKK-type fascists provoked a scandal which brought down the defense minister and the head of the armed forces.

After Panorama published its photos of torture in Somalia, the Ulivo (Olive Tree) coalition government in Rome rushed to defend the “honor and reputation” of the Italian army, which had been captured by the ICvil rights organizations and the U.S. State Department. In 1993, Italian troops murdered more than 400 people in Somalia. Since in 1935 and 1939, Mussolini’s troops committed a massacre of 400 people in the region, including through the massive use of poison gas. Mussolini’s Generalissimo also acted as a model. One of Hitler’s military officers wrote a study on the Italian rape of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) entitled “Military Aspects and Lessons of the First Colonial War of Annihilation.”

RC and the PDS were indignant against any comparison between the Mussolini regime’s crimes and those of “democratic” Italian imperialism today. Whether under a fascist regime or with the trappings of bourgeois “democracy,” imperialism means brutal exploitation and oppression and bloody terror against colonial and semicolonial peoples. As the LTd’I recently wrote: “The army, together with the police, the courts, the prisons—the state power—is the system of force and violence which the national class uses to maintain its class rule and defend private property. The capitalist army cannot be reformed or put to the service of the working class but must be split along class lines and replaced by the armed proletariat and Soviet power according to the principle: Those who labor must rule.” (Spartacu No. 50, March 1997. The LTd’I fights to build a revolutionairy vanguard party in Italy as part of a reforged Fourth International, the world party of proletarian revolution.)
Mexico...

development," the most modern forms of concentrated industrial capitalist exploitation coexist with earlier forms of exploitation and oppression. In Mexico, elements of the Spanish colonial feudal heritage survive in the countryside—the hacienda (landed estates), peonage and the tienda de raya (stores that take scrap instead of money, to which many peasants are indebted for generations). In a country like Mexico, the national bourgeoisie is simply too weak and subordinated to imperialism to lead or support a fight to achieve basic democratic tasks, carry through a fundamental social revolution, or break the yoke of imperialist subjugation.

The resolution of these tasks falls to the Mexican proletariat as part of a social revolution which sweeps away the Mexican bourgeoisie, which has gorged itself on the heart of the Mexican masses, and through fighting to extend that revolution throughout the Americas, including to the powerful multinational working class of the United States. This is the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. The combative Mexican proletariat must enter the stage as a "class for itself"—fighting for state power—rallying behind it the millions of the working class in the United States. The indispensable instrument for victory is a revolutionary proletariat party formed through fighting to extend that revolution throughout the Americas, including to the powerful multinational working class of the United States. The Grupo Espartaquista de Mexico is committed to forging an internationalist proletarian vanguard party to lead the proletariat to power.

Explosive Discontents Shake Capitalist Regime

Despite all the self-congratulation over a "blooming Mexican miracle," Mexico is not a single country but a stable bourgeois democracy. The electoral battering of the PRI, losing support in the north and south, to the "left" points to the sharp polarization of the country. The way for the PRI's electoral defeat was paved as legions of middle-class officials, professionals and small businessmen, among others, that were for decades the PRI's social base began to discreditingly abandon it. As Cárdenas inherited part of the state machinery built by the PRI for the decades, with some cosmetic changes and new faces, the rightist PAN will be ready to capitalize on the fears as a forum to appeal to the discontent of the middle classes, whose savings were wiped out by the U.S.-imposed devaluation. Recent mass protests in the capital by teachers reflect the growing desperation of the working class. The corporative CETM's stranglehold over the proletariat has been coming unstuck, with a significant "worker" union and the formation of a breakaway "Forum for a New Trade Unionism" (foristas). In general, the growing strength of workers' union and the telephone and electrical workers' unions, the foristas did not equalize in the short-term the devastating elections. And a couple of years ago, the PRI's slashing of funding and attempts to restrict access to higher education led to massive student protests. Widespread unrest earlier this year over the persecution of Claudia Rodríguez for defending herself against rape threw a popular spotlight on the oppression of women in this deeply male-chauvinist society. The grip of the Catholic church, a feudal remnant, over Mexico in Mexico means that women are brutally oppressed, particularly in the countryside. The ban on abortion—supported by a section of the PRD leadership—leads to the deaths of thousands of women each year as a result of botched illegal operations. At the same time, women have become an increasingly significant component of the proletariat in recent years, with 35 percent of all women of working age now in the labor force. This is even more true in the foreign-owned maquiladora plants near the U.S. border, where young women compose as much as 90 percent of the workforce in some factories. Working women's organizations have been emerging in these areas.

Much of the countryside is under a military state of siege, as the army has massacred peasants mercilessly in its war against the Zapatista (EZLN) guerrillas in Chiapas and the EPRA (Popular Revolutionary Army) concentrated in Guerrero. With the PRI no longer having to take sole responsibility as a result of the PRD's electoral victory, the government may well push for a final military "solution" to the peasant insurgencies. In Mexico City and above all in the working-class suburbs, the army has augmented the police in joint operations to intimidate the impoverished population, while private paramilitary groups mushroom. Iztapalapa, a populous working-class neighborhood, has been subjected to a virtual state of siege by thousands of cops and troops. Meanwhile, Washington's militarization of the U.S. border, including demobilization, mass deportations, shootings of would-be immigrants, has narrowed that safety valve for desperate people seeking to flee the misery and hardship exacerbated by NAFTA.

There is certainly ample tinder for social conflations in Mexico. The working class has grown explosively in recent years, from an earlier base limited largely to the extractive industries. Maquiladora workers in particular exemplify a layer which is characteristic of semicolonial countries generally, from Asia to Latin America: a new, youthful working class being subjected to intense exploitation, lacking basic union protection but also not subject to the control of any well-oiled machine of reformationist cooperation. Their workers are as well a concrete embodiment of the necessity to link up working-class struggles on both sides of the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande. Mexican society is highly unstable and increasingly polarized. Yet there has been no proletarian challenge to capitalist class rule. The reason for this lies in the continuing hegemony of bourgeois nationalism which, pointing to the plundering imperialists to the north, the masses lose the illusion that they can join with some "anti-imperialist" section of the bourgeoisie class enemy in a fight for "democracy." While the radical peasant forces during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17 were defeated, the victorious bourgeois forces found it necessary to co-opt the mantle and rhetoric of the Revolution to legitimize their regime. The nationalists seek to convince the workers that only "Yanke imperialism"—and not the Mexican bourgeoisie as well—is their enemy, cutting against the crucial need to ally with workers in the U.S. and elsewhere in order to defeat capitalism. In particular, the growing Latino sector of the working class in the Southwest, can be a human bridge linking the struggles of the Mexican and North American workers.

Against the bourgeoisie nationalism pushed by the trade-union bureaucrats and self-styled "socialist" groups, the GEM fights to win the working masses to an understanding of the fundamental identity of class interests of the proletarians of all countries. The hold of national-liberation ideology is strengthened by the treachery of the U.S. labor bureaucracy, which suppresses class struggle and instead pushes violently chauvinistic nationalism and fans the flames of anti-immigrant racism. In its fight to build a revolutionary party of the working class in the United States, the Spartacist League/U.S. denounces the NAFTA "free-trade" ruse of Mexico, which immensely mobilizes the multinational proletariat in defense of the rights of immigrants and all the oppressed to fight for a Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.

No Support to Bourgeois Nationalism—For Permanent Revolution!

As revolutionary Marxists, we are opposed in principle to any political support to bourgeois nationalist parties, as the PRD in Mexico or the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. This question, however, is of prime importance in the workers movement, between those who fight for proletarian power and those who are only "pro-revolutionary" or "anti-imperialist" wings of the capitalist class.

In the 1970 October Revolution, under the leadership of the newly victorious proletariat of the working class of Russia proved the validity of the theory of permanent revolution. The workers, bureaucracy, to whose reformist reaction and international imperialism, was incapable of a revolutionary struggle to accomplish the tasks associated with bourgeois-democratic revolutions in the epoch of rising capitalism (e.g., national independence and anti-imperialist struggle). The proletariat was the only class capable of taking leadership of the nation to sweep away the old regime, massacring feudal remnants. For this, the revolution had to be at the same time and from the outset a socialist revolution. Establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat—workers class rule—which expropriated the bourgeois ruling class and overthrew capital in semicolonial revolutions elsewhere, especially in the advanced imperialist countries.

During the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, whose bloody defeat was ensured by Stalin's insistence that it was not a "proletarian" war but an "opposition" battle between the bourgeoisie-nationalist Guomindang (Kuomintang), Trotsky generalized the theoretical model which proved entirely applicable to all colonial and semicolonial countries. As we will see, the common threat of the "national-liberation" opportunism in such countries today is the rejection of this perspective in favor of the Menshevik/Statist schema which politically tries the proletariat to a section of the bourgeoisie in the name of "two-stage" revolution. History has shown what this two-stage schema means in practice: in the first stage the proletariat rallies behind the bourgeoisie and in the second stage the liberal bourgeoisie massacres the comrades.

Trade Unions in Semicolonial Countries

In many countries with mass reformist workers parties, as in West Europe, a favored form of class collaboration is the popular front, an electoral coalition continued on page 6
tying the workers organizations to bourgeois nationalism. In cases like Nelson Mandela’s South Africa, with its “tripartite alliance” of the ANC, the Communist Party and the Congress Trade Union Federa- tion, such cross-class coalitions can take the form of a “nationalist popular front.” However in Mexico, the tendency of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie has been particularly naked, with the trade-union movement directly tied to bourgeois nationalism. As in many semi-colonial countries, Mexico has not seen a working class with its own political voice. In the 1930s the workers were organized into corporatist unions (directly linked to the state) and considered the “worker sector” of the PRI and its predecessors. This reflected also the particular destiny of the defeated Mexican Revolution of 1910.

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

“Colonial and semi-colonial countries are under the sway, not of native capitalism but of foreign imperialism. However, this does not mean that the native bourgeoisie is incapable of building a state, independently of the foreign-imperialist domination. The native bourgeoisie is perfectly capable of transforming itself into a native capitalist-bureaucratic state. Ferdinand Marcos has shown this in the Philippines. The development of a pure, native bourgeoisie which would be independent from the foreign-imperialist domination is a historical possibility, but it is an extremely difficult one to realize.”

In the 1960s and 1970s, by contrast, there was a more popular form of folkloric nationalism which took the form of a genuine peasant rebellion to the century-old plan of subordinating the working class, the workers and their organizations will con-

The unrolling of the PRI stranglehold on Mexican political life and the emergence of the FPU, as a veritable autonomous and independent of the corporatist CTM (and the increasing “irreducibility” of even some of the CTM unions, shown for example by their defying the ban on May Day demonstra- tions in recent years) will certainly arouse the hopes of the plebeian masses for some alteration of their desperate situation. But in the absence of a revolution- ary party fighting for the political and economic independence of the working class, the workers and their organizations will continue to be the pawn of the parliamentary ambitions of bourgeois-nationalist politi- cians. As Cárdenas seeks to generate a more “propaganda” and “national” face for this regime of bourgeois austerity, he can count on political support from “inde- pendence” unions. While organizationally independent of the PRI-loyal CTM, these unions are no more politically independ- ent of capitalism than the unions in the United States, which are tied to the capi- talist Democratic Party.

The death of the indigenous movement in Xalapa came to the upward surge of guerrilla move- ments see in Cárdenas in their only hope of mitigating the brutal repression. Yet the PRD explicitly solidarized with the EZLN (wrongly) and supported its struggle. We are now seeing a new appearance of the EZLN in the northern state of Chiapas. The EZLN has already seized control of the old Cárdenas-dominated region, a ghost of the old PRI. The EZLN is a genuine working class movement, and not the petty-bourgeois Zapatistas, or the PRI.

Opportunist Leftists in the Shadow of the Bourgeois PRD

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Impoverished shantytown outside Mexico City. To fight deepening immiser- ation of Mexican masses requires sweeping opposition to the PRI/PRD and to the PRD.

“opposition” with various “leftist” ration- als, backing Cárdenas either directly or through building illusions in the Zapa- tista struggle. The PRD is a petty-bourgeois formations. These groups are in essence nothing more than petty bourgeois liberals with guns, seeking to pressure the existing capitalist state to be more “democratic.” Relying on an atom- ized peasantry with no coherent class interests, the guerrillist strategy, how- ever, is incapable of breaking the chains of capitalist and imperialist enslavement.

A somewhat more leftist version of the same fundamental politics promoted by the POS-Z and LUS is presented by a centrist split from the Morenistas, the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS). The LTS is allied with the Argent- ine Partido de los Trabajadores por el Socialismo and is currently linked to the Workers Power grouping in England. The main question for the working class in Mexico is to what extent the PRD is directed to the existing of a popular front around Cár- denas, and how can it be oriented to the workers and their organizations. The LTS views the PRD as a national bourgeoisie bourgeoisie. It is therefore tantamount to betray the workers who are the main force of the EZLN. This enables the LTS to orient to the EZLN in the guise of looking for a purported “working-class” sector of the PRD. Just as the other centrists now distance themselves somewhat from the Morenista Partido Obrero Socialista-Zapatista (POS-Z) calling for “voting down the PRI/PRD” as a long-winded, resentful discourse against Cárdenas’ promises to carry out the aus- terity which is demanded by the U.S. imperialists.

That this alienation from Cárdenas is tactical and temporary is shown by a LUS statement upholding their political support to the PRD in 1994: “On that occasion, the democratic and revolution- ary sectors, tactically supported by the EZLN, bet on the ‘useful vote’ and it was given to Cárdenas” (Umbra!, 3 March 1997). Presuming that the PRD was ever something other than the tame bourgeois party of the “national bourgeoisie,” the LUS now laments that it “has become an integral part of the Mexican political system, rather than remaining firm as a revolutionary refuter and chal- lenger of the same.”

While the Morenistas didn’t vote for the PRD in 1994—coexisting them a split in which half of their group, now UNIOS, went for Cárdenas—they nonetheless backed the PRD in a more indirect fashion. The POS-Z called at the time for a vote to the petty-bourgeois Zapatistas, although as was predictable the EZLN decided not to run in the elections in order not to take away votes from the PRD. Now the POS-Z shouts with joy, “22 million against the PRI” (El Socialis- tista, July 1997), and proposes a program for “popular alienation” under a Cár- denas government.

In practice, these “Trotskyists” all serve to tie the proletariat to the bourgeoisie.
Cárdenas, the LTS complains that the PRD provides “democratic” covering for the PRI regime (Estrategia Obrera, May 97). But in a joint leaflet with the LUS to striking teachers earlier this year, the LTS did not so much as mention, much less denounce, the PRD. Yet it was because the PRD did not want any mass unrest in the run-up to the elections that the mobilizations around the teachers strike were stopped. Under certain circumstances, revolutions can raise the demand that workers’ organizations in a popular front break their alliance with the bourgeoisie. But the PRD is not a popular front. The LTS’s slant of hand therefore dissolves into calling upon Cárdenas to break with the bourgeoisie and the imperialists and lead the workers in struggle! When Cárdenas raised a few tepid criticisms of the then-impending NAFTA pact four years ago, the LTS proclaimed: “If he declared himself against the Agreement, it would be the beginning of a new chapter in Mexican politics— a paper that but on the call to mobiliza- tion of the Mexican workers’” (Alternativa Socialista, October-September 1993). While claiming that this demand would “unmask him before the masses,” the LTS was itself fueling the masses’ illusions in Cárdenas as an “anti-imperialist” workers’ leader.

**IG Discards Permanent Revolution**

At bottom, these politics are a repudia- tion of the popular front program of perma- nent revolution in favor of a fictitious “anti-imperialist united front” with one or two members of the national bourgeoisie. At the tail end of the syphil- ic chain of subordination to Mexican bourgeois nationalism is a new development on the political scene: the “Internationalist Group” (IG), formed a year ago by a small group of intellectuals in the U.S. and Mexico expelled from our international party. In earlier articles, we have charac- terized the IG’s political outlook as “a misconception of the national and imperialist bourgeoisie as ‘Pahlism of the second mobilization,’” noting that they “look to ‘adapt’ to various revolutionary situations” (‘Potemkin Village Idiocy,” Espartaco No. 9, Spring-Summer 1997), translated from NV No. 663, March).

Under the impact of bourgeois triumph- alism over the “death of communism,” the PRD, the IG has forsaken the Permanent Revolution and claims to be separation of the bourgeois masses from the re- publican front—leaving the working class in the con- que st of an anti-imperialist front. Instead, they seek to preclude the existence of the workers and to convince themselves that the “socialist” landscape is imminent and can triumph without revolutionary leadership.

In a July 25 Web posting, the IG again disavows the PRD as a revolutionary party, and asserts that workers in an independent movement demand the traditional workers’ alliance with one or another of the pro-PRD unions that lie ahead for the IG in Mexico. In an earlier polemic, the IG took up the IG to our having pointed to the heritage of feudal peonage in the Mexi- can countryside. In our response, in “Potemkin Village Idiocy,” we pointed out that the only reason for the PRD to break with the “regroupment” IG is that the revolution requires a revolutionary vanguard that can comprehend the whole of the economic and political reality of the country. Moreover, the LQB went on to drag this union through the capitalist courts (see “Caught in a living stipend for all stu- dents, without a union!"

Forge a Proletarian Vanguard Party! Revolutionary Spartacists must fight for class-struggle unions, organized on the basis of industrial unionism and politi- cally independent of the capitalist state and the capitalist political parties—not only the fairly deprect PRI but equally the more dynamic and popular PRD.

This includes as well a struggle to root out the Mexcon labor move- ment. In the current context, this means organizing unions like the Mexico City UNAM university workers and teachers union. The fight for permanent revolution must continue: for workers organizations from the bourgeoisie requires the forging of a revolutionary working class.

The proletarian vanguard must lead the fight against all manifestations of social reaction, serving as a “tribune of the people.” We fight for freedom on demand as part of the struggle against the last vestiges of subordinated bourgeoisie like the Mexico City UNAM university workers and teachers union. The fight for permanent revolution must continue: for workers organizations from the bourgeoisie requires the forging of a revolutionary working class.

The social power of the working class can be liberated only when the workers themselves have their own vanguard party, break the chains of subordination to bourgeoisie politics and the bour- geoisie and its parties. The fight for the class independence of the working class has not been completed. In our response, in “Potemkin Village Idiocy,” we pointed out that the only reason for the PRD to break with the “regroupment” IG is that the revolution requires a revolutionary vanguard that can comprehend the whole of the economic and political reality of the country. Moreover, the LQB went on...
The Communist Manifesto of 1848 opens with the statement that a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism. Today the world's history is still dominated by this specter. But what is so peculiar about this specter? Nobody, not even the Communists, was forced to its door. Nobody came to the Communist League and said, “You Communists, you have to do this, you have to do that.” It came all by itself. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: “Communism is the specter haunting Europe today. It is the specter of a new world order. It is the specter of communism.”

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

The workers agreed, they organised the Communist League and forthwith proceeded to set up a newspaper, the ‘Vanguard’ to prepare the Communist Manifesto.”

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

 Particularly as their ideas began to solidify in 1845-46, Marx and Engels sought out working-class communists with the aim of forging an organization around those ideas, an organization that from its outset was to be built upon an international foundation. One should understand that at the time there was a clear disjunction between the theory of communism and socialism. Socialism was considered a bourgeois doctrine, identified with the various utopian and reformist schemes of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologues. The communists clearly defined themselves as those who were for the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order and for the establishment of an egalitarian society. The communism of that era originated in a far-left split from French Jacobinism, epitomised by Gracchus Babeuf and Filippo Buonarroti.

The League of the Just consisted of workers, mainly German and Irish artisans, located in London, Brussels, Paris and a few outposts in Germany. These were not mainly modern proletarians working in large-scale mechanized factories. But nonetheless, and to their credit, they were won over to Marx and Engels’ conceptions of the nature of modern capitalist society. The League of the Just had inscribed on its banner the slogan, “All Men Are Brothers!” When it embraced Marx’s standpoint and transformed itself into the forerunner of the modern Marxist movement, the slogan became the Manifesto’s ringing call, “Workers of the World, Unite!”

When the Manifesto was commissioned in November 1847, everyone was expecting that Europe was about to erupt in revolution. Yet that spring, 1848, widely felt sense of urgency Marx, was as apparent as his wont, some time to write this document. He was then living in exile in Brussels, while the leadership of the Communist League resided in London. In late January, they sent Marx a testy and impatient letter which read:

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

The letter and the manuscript were crossed in the mail, the latter arriving literally just in time for the outbreak of the expected revolution. It first appeared in Switzerland, spreading rapidly to Italy and Paris, and from there to the Rhineland, then Prussia, thence to Austria and Italy. The Manifesto was worth the wait. It really is the first systematic explication of scientific socialism, the foundation of modern communism stands for. As Engels explained in 1883, the year Marx died, the basic thought in the Manifesto—
The whole understanding of society was the previous systems of egalitarianism, classical English political economy, and French socialism as it was up to that time, including its organizational doctrines. That is to say, Marxism could not have arisen as a set of ideas at some earlier juncture of history, but rather grew both out of its historical antecedents and the real material conditions and struggles of the time, including those of the very new industrial working class.

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

The Manifesto makes the point that the history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggles, and this class struggle was not a discovery of Marx. Bourgeois historians of the Great French Revolution of 1789 recognized the class struggle necessarily leads to the abolition of class society. This is the fundamental discovery of Marx. You cannot really understand modern society or any society without adopting such a viewpoint. Marxism represents the correct leap in human understanding of the nature of events. When revolution erupted in Paris, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, a group, led by Georg Herwegh and railroad!

Communist revolutionaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, founders of Dialectical Materialism vs. Idealism.

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

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

"The world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes with the things apparently stable to less than their mind in process. . . . The concept of the non-linear and the concept of the world and everything as a knowledge of being and passing away. Engels goes on to try to acknowledge this fundamental thought in words and to apply it in reality in detail to each domain of investigation. But the struggle for a better comprehension of the world and much as a knowledge of physiology will aid your digestion of food.

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

What Marx set out to do—and accomplished—was to bring the science of society into harmony with its materialist foundations. The bourgeoisie, particularly in its current state of decay and despair, does everything to obfuscate the truth. It is incomprehensible that one could have Marx without certain key developments in modern science and production. The proletariat is a historically determined class, one unknown in its modern form in previous historical periods. As Marx noted: 'In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces.' Marx stated that the sum total of the relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society. On this foundation arises a legal and political superstructure and corresponding forms of social consciousness. This is the fundamental discovery of Marx. You cannot really understand the modern society or any society without adopting such a viewpoint. Marxism represents the correct leap in human understanding of the nature of events. When revolution erupted in Paris, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, a group, led by Georg Herwegh and railroad!

Communist revolutionaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, founders of revolutionary socialism.
Communist Manifesto... (continued from page 9)

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

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

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

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

The revolutions of the time, including Marx, based themselves on the expectation of the Great French Revolutionary upsurge of 1789. The French Revolution was a protracted affair. From 1789, when the Parian mob stormed the Bastille, the revolution moved through a series of increasingly radical stages. In 1792, the third French revolution was a counterrevolutionary coalition of European powers galvanized the population, leading to the proclamation of the First Republic. For the following year, the king was executed and the left-wing Jacobins came to power under conditions of revolutionary war. Marx and Engels believed that a democratic revolution and universal suffrage in France would lead quickly to the rule of the proletariat and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

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

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

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

Throughout 1848, Marx was using the pages of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung to advocate a wide front against the bourgeois revolution. It was his hope that such a war would have the same effect as the war of revolution in France had against the counter-revolution. The same was true for the counter-revolutionary coalition—that it would galvanize and save the revolution. But 1848 was not 1793—everywhere in Europe the bourgeoisie feared the revolutionary wave, because in it they saw the proletariat.

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

Drawing the Lessons of the Defeats of 1848

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

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

The first, dated March 5, 1850, raised the idea of permanent revolution. The term "revolution in permanence" had originated in French Blanquiist circles in the 1840s—signifying the successive radicalization of the revolution from the overthrow of the monarchical regime to the establishment of communism—though the underlying concept went back to Buonarroti. It was the 1830 circular, however, which later inspired Trotsky to extend and develop the theory of permanent revolution. Clearly critical of errors made by Marx and Engels during 1848, the circular noted:

"A large part of the members who directly participated in the revolutionary movement believed the time for secret societies to have gone by and public activities alone sufficient. The individual circles and communities allowed their connections with the Central Committee to become loose and gradual and dormant. Consequently, while the democratic party, the party of the petty bourgeoisie, organised itself more and more in Germany, the workers' circles, with usually only firm foothold, remained organised at the most in separate localities for local purposes and in the general movement thus came completely under the domination of interests are concealed and in which the particular demands of the proletariat may not be brought for the sake of the beloved peace. More than 80 years later, in the 1930s, the Stalinists employed the same artifices under the rubric of the "popular front" to fend off real revolution in Spain and France. What Marx and Engels said of unity with the petty-bourgeois democrats—"the petty-bourgeois democrats were the workers in a party organisation in which general social-democratic phrases predominated, behind which their special
Lenin’s fondness for the 1805 circulates is not surprising, permeated as they are with revolutionary spirit and intelligence. In that reality, they remind me of Lenin’s own writings on the lessons of the 1905 Moscow Revolution. Lenin noted that the workers were too little known. There he makes the point that the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1905, and not thesoviet trials, was the real dress rehearsal for 1917. In their 5 March 1895 document, Marx and Engels pointed to the necessity of uniting the workers. In a clear change from their position a year earlier, they emphasized the need for the workers to put forward their own candidates in elections—even when there was no chance of winning—in order to preserve the revolutionary tradition and party standpoint to public attention. “If the German workers are not able to attain power and achieve their own class interests without completely going through a lengthy revolutionary development,” Marx and Engels wrote, “they at least know for a certainty that the first act of this approaching revolutionary drama will be to side with the direct victory of their own class in France and will be very much accelerated by it.” The document concluded: “Their battle cry must be: the Revolution in Permanence.”

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

Thus, commenting on the first of the 1805 circulates, the famous Menshevik and Bolshevism, Bois Nigou became identified by Karl Marx: Man and Fighter: “Whether the document in all its details really represents Marx’s ideas is difficult to decide.” Basically, Nikolayevsky views the document as an altercation flowing from an unrealistic assessment of the revolutionary possibilities in Germany in 1830, noting that Marx’s optimistic predictions of a revolutionary wave led him into a political bloc with “left” communists such as August Welle. But to tell the truth, it is not clear that Marx at the time shared the views of the Société Universelle des Communistes Révolutionnaires and its journal, which included not only the Communist League and the British Chartistists, but also the followers of French insurrectionist Auguste Blanqui. According to Nikolayevsky, for whom Blanquism was nearly synonomous with Bolshevism, “The fact that Marx accepted this kind of revolutionism, which he had like a foolhardy document, is a political struggle, as against the arguments of the French bourgeoisie, led by the Paris Commune, lasted only a couple of months, but sufficiently long to establish that the workers cannot lay their hands on the bourgeoisie without first winning political power. But a lot of the blanks were filled in by the concrete experiences of proletarian struggle.

Marxism: A Guide to Action

In his “Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto” (October 1937), Trotsky observed that “this pamphlet was the most revolutionary work of its time.” He enumerated a number of key points “which made a mark on the pages of history.” Thus Trotsky elaborated on what had to be modified in the Manifesto in light of experience, and also pointed to certain omissions. Contrary to Marx’s prediction at the time, there was only a relative retardation of the productive forces of capitalist development. The Revolutionary of 1848 ultimately consolidated the economic rule of the bourgeoisie, although in a combined and uneven way. But there was an enormous expansion of productive forces up to the period before World War I. So there was a tele­

"Workers of the world, unite!" The Third International, 1919; Leon Trotsky, depicted in Diego Rivera mural, founded Fourth International in 1938.

8 AUGUST 1997

Continued on page 12
Trotsky further notes that the liquidation of the intermediate classes projected in the Manifesto did not happen. He points out that the bourgeoisie ruined more of the petty bourgeoisie than could be absorbed into the proletariat. And the capitalistic state grew in a paralyzing excessiveness, self-consciousness and artificially maintained a considerable petty-technicians, decades artificially maintained a large peasantry. In the U.S., the great Western farmers to the region as a conscious alternative to building up an urban proletarian population.

Manifesto...

Those of you who have read the Manifesto know that it contains a section with ten demands, demands that a quarter of a century later Marx and Engels addressed as demands inherited from the French Revolution of 1789. The complete sweeping away of all classes, the destruction if not extinction for mankind. That lever is a revolutionary workers party of the Leninist type, organized in working class, international. Such parties cannot be simply proclaimed but must be forged in struggle. That is what Trotsky was as well as against those who call themselves Marxists or Trotskyists while renouncing in practice the fundamental principles of the Marxist movement. Take, for example, the British Militant group, which now calls itself the Socialist Party. Their international resolution of a couple of years ago had three little propositions which showed a touching faith in the bourgeois order. The first was that a revolutionary party is not necessary because if the workers are found in one way or another, through trial and error, find their own way. They go on to say that there’ll be no party that is less bourgeois than rational. And they also say there won’t be any fascism, because the bourgeoisie exterminated Hitler. And the last is presented in a very "orthodox" frame-wo k, yet is a complete revision of everything said so far about the state, imperialism and fascism.

There then is David North’s outfit, which is actually the Authentic Socialist Equality Party. The Northites have taken to dismissing the unions as absolutely conservative, as serving the function of the organizations of the working class. Yet the American bourgeoisie spends over one billion dollars a year in busting the American unions, breaking up organizing drives, breaking strikes, debilitating unions. They have a different appreciation of the question.

While promoting their scabbering, economistic version of "class struggle," the Northites also spit on the struggle against black oppression. It is precisely because of the fact that the U.S., uniquely among advanced capital­ist countries, does not have an independent working class, a working class of a labor-reformist type. In general, America’s capitalist rulers have been successful in killing the working class ideology for the same reason that it’s the legacy of the unfinished Civil War for black freedom that contributes most directly to the international revolutionary movement if you will, of this country. We understand that the fight for black liberation is a strategic question for proletarian revolution in this country.

A century and a half has passed since the publication of the Manifesto, a period marked by proletarian struggles. Our purpose in discussing the present state of the Trotskyist movement is to add an appreciation of this movement to the history of the movement and an appreciation of its present state and the manner of the struggle.

So we are both the party of the Russian revolution and the party of those who struggled to defend it against its Stalinist degeneration. The subsequent struggles of Trotsky—his generalization of the theory of permanent revolution based on the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in the 1920s, his elucidation of the tactic of the united front in the struggle against fascism in Germany, his struggles against the betrayal of the October Revolution, the Left Opposition was forged in struggle against the consolid­ation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which itself was a direct consequence of the economic backwardness of Russia and the failure of the October Revolution to spread internationally.

Today the Soviet Union is no more, and I think China is on the skids. The question posed there is who will prevail: the totalitarian proletariat or the Stalinist bureaucratic class? This is an open question. The question of the future of China, which showed a touching faith in the Trotskyists, is a question of who will prevail.

Former Editor of The Militant, The International Third International After Lenin, The Bolshevik Party, and the German Social Democracy to the October Revolution. Lenin did not become a Leninist over night, nor did the Bolshevik Party suddenly appear on the scene fully fledged and with the Trotskyist program. The Bolshevik Party, you can see a development. Lenin worked his way through the conceptions inherited from Marx and the German Social Democracy to the conception of the Leninist combat party. And are we to think that this development was a sharp struggle, strong, internal and external, defense of the program of Marxism. The answer must be no. That is why we say that the struggle in the 1917 October Revolution, which occurred at the weakest link in the chain of socialist revolutions and in World War I, and the lessons of this rev­olution were codified in the early con­gresses of the Communist International. We very much are the party of the Russian revolution, but we are also much more. The question of permanent revolution, the forces around him actually went to struggle against a new phenome­non, the de­generation of the October Revolution. The Left Opposition was forged in struggle against the consolid­ation of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which itself was a direct consequence of the economic backwardness of Russia and the failure of the October Revolution to spread internationally.

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Trotsky, in The Third International After Lenin, addressed what he thought was an area of great need, that of a revolutionary workers party of the Leninist type, organized in working class, international. Such parties cannot be simply proclaimed but must be forged in struggle. That is what Trotsky was as well as against those who call themselves Marxists or Trotskyists while renouncing in practice the fundamental principles of the Marxist movement. Take, for example, the British Militant group, which now calls itself the Socialist Party. Their international resolution of a couple of years ago had three little propositions which showed a touching faith in the bourgeois order. The first was that a revo­lutionary party is not necessary because if the workers are found in one way or another, through trial and error, find their own way. They go on to say that there’ll be no party that is less bourgeois than rational. And they also say there won’t be any fascism, because the bourgeoisie exterminated Hitler. And the last is presented in a very "orthodox" frame-wo k, yet is a complete revision of everything said so far about the state, imperialism and fascism.

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Let me give you two examples. Of course, we are opposed to the abolition of welfare. But for us, welfare is a lesser evil; it is not a positive good. We do not accept an economic system which can demand a large section of the population to permanent lumpenization. It is not good that large numbers of black women are forced to spend much of their lives, at best, watching afternoon soap operas on television; that is not what we want to see. Better that than being put in prison for prostitution or dealing drugs to support their families. Better welfare than that these women and their children are maltreated; but welfare is not our program.

It is a basic goal and value of socialism that everybody who can engages in productive labor. Under a planned, socialist economy, 90-plus percent of the women who have had to rely on Aid to Families with Dependent Children will be educated and trained to do useful work. If we don’t say that when we deal with the question of welfare, we are going to look like old-fashioned “welfare state” liberals—which we are not—and we are not going to recruit to our communist program.

Another example is NAFTA. We oppose NAFTA because it represents an institutionalization and intensification of the exploitation of Mexico by American capital. But obviously our program is not to return to the relations between the U.S. and Mexico that existed before NAFTA was implemented. Nor are we indifferent to the economic integration of Mexico and the United States. Quite the contrary: a key to socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere is the integration of the unceded industrial economies of the United States and Canada with the more backward regions of Latin America. But, again, we have to say that: it’s not enough to just say we’re against NAFTA.

All of this takes place in the context in which, I would argue, the popular understanding on the left of communism and socialism has changed. I was in high school in the late 1950s when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first unmanned space satellite. And this had quite a big impact on public opinion in this country, not only in regard to the Soviet Union but in regard to communism as it was then understood. Even though a lot of people thought this was horrible, they nonetheless understood that a planned, collectivized economy could produce major breakthroughs in science and technology. They had to accept that.

Then I, like high school and college, it was commonplace to discuss whether the Soviet Union could catch up economically with the United States, and the means of enjoyment. Free time—which includes leisure as well as time for higher activities—naturally transforms someone who enters it into a different person, and it is this different person who enters the direct process of production.

That now doesn’t mean that the Babouvist conception of communism can’t be attractive. In fact, it can be attractive, especially in backward countries. But if we run into people who say, well, they like socialism or communism, at the first approximation we have to assume that they don’t say what we mean. When things open up in China, we are going to run into some leftist intellectuals and advanced workers who will say they want to go back to an idealized version of what existed under Mao—not what life was really like under Mao—they don’t know
Steel... (continued from page 3)

"America’s mission in the world" to promote "freedom and democracy." In a similar vein, calls for trade protectionism and the capitulation of the USWA... (continued from page 16)

Workfare... (continued from page 16)

further weakened the unions. As tens of thousands of minor workers and other public employees have been pressured into layoffs off, the privatized union jobs have been filled by welfare recipients at a fraction of the cost. Now state and city governments are becoming slave-labor contractors for private industry, hiring out "workfare" recipients and also convert labor to hotel chains and other companies.

It is in the vital interest of the integrative labor movement in defense of the poor, mobilizing labor’s social power to demand jobs for all at living wages. Yet the union misleaders are helping to enforce the vicious capitalist onslaught against the poorest and most vulnerable.

AFSCME District Council 37, the New York municipal union representing 120,000 workers, has publicly declared its intention to organize the city’s "workfare" laborers. But the pro-capitalist union officials aren’t prepared to make any kind of fight to extend union wages and benefits to these workers; rather they seek every opportunity to "wage-" the "job" and ghettoes to maintain their own dubious dase. It was DC 37 Stanley Hill who cut a deal with Giuliani allowing welfare recipients to take over the more than 20,000 formerly unionized cleaning and maintenance jobs which were eliminated as a result of budget cuts. And last September the leadership of the 33,000-strong Transport Workers Union, potentially the most powerful in the city, rammed through a contract which, when implemented, will allow the transit workers to replace 500 full-time union jobs with "workfare" cleaners.

The death of Marsha Miporesad of the LWB in 1996 opened eyes to the continued onslaught against working people and minorities. This has been accompanied by a new wave of incarceration of black and Latino people on both sides of the border. Last year, more than a dozen black people were killed by cops in New York City alone. This April, the NYPD killed 16-year-old black youth Kevin Cedeno in Washington Heights— and the cop who shot him in the back named precipitous "Cop of the Month." The message is clear: under the system of racist capitalism, the lives of minorities and the poor are cheap. The assault on welfare and the reign of cop terror is aimed first and foremost at the ghetto masses, whom the capitalists rue increasingly more as a source of direct threat. But, as we wrote in "Welfare-Bashers: Busting Unions, Starving the Poor" (WW No. 470), "these rhetorical strategies are creating enormous pressure at the base of society: people don’t like the idea of the welfare system and they and their kids. The need for socialist revolution to break the power of the corrupt, racist, welfare-bashing state will be sharpened sharply today. What is needed is a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed and fights to sweep away this system of racism, repression and poverty, replacing it with an egalitarian socialist society.

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NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July

Our next issue will be September 5.
The anti-immigrant hysteria being pushed by Democratic and Republican politicians has fueled a rising wave of racist violence in Northern California, particularly in California. In the early morning hours of April 29, police in Rohnert Park, a small city in Sonoma County, shot dead Kuanchung Kao, a 33-year-old Chinese American. Responding to a 911 call at about 3:15 a.m., four Sonoma County cops found Kao, a young computer engineer and naturalized citizen, at his house with sirens wailing, the cops at his house while offering first aid to his dying husband. Outraged by later police claims that they had administered CPR, Wu declared: “I was physically battered and psychologically terrorized by a California County SWAT team in full battle gear. The officers entered the driveway until noon the next day, kept the family under house arrest, surrounded our house, administered CPR, and later the cops claimed to be acting in self-defense.”

The evidently nonaggressive 33-year-old Kao was the eighth person killed in the last two years by Sonoma County cops. In February a Hispanic man, Salomon Hernandez, was gunned down as a “robbery suspect” as he was returning to a gas station to pay a bill. Blacks and Hispanics have long been in the gunshots of deadly cop terror. What the killing of Kuanchung Kao points to is the growing rate at which Asians are being targeted for murderous police violence as well. Now, with anger mounting over the killing of Kao, a “Coalition Organizing for Police Accountability in Sonoma County” has been formed by various liberal organizations such as the NAACP, Copwatch, the Redwood Empire Chinese Association and the Japanese American Citizens League. The coalition is calling for an FBI investigation of the killing and for a police “civilian review” board. Looking for justice to the FBI—the agency that led the murderous ruling-class vendetta against the Black Panther Party—and other agencies of the bourgeois state is a cruel hoax. Similarly, civilian review boards act only to refurbish the credentials of this system of injustice by occasionally giving the appearance of cleaning out a few “bad apples.” The cops, along with the courts and prisons, are the armed fist of the capitalist ruling class. They cannot be reformed or otherwise held “accountable” to those they are meant to suppress on behalf of the racist ruling class.

The escalation of racist cop terror and the all-sided intensification of bourgeois state repression—from attacks on civil liberties to the speedup on death row—go hand in hand with attacks on welfare, jobs and working conditions, affirmative action and immigration. As the class struggle between rich and poor widens, the capitalist rulers are intent on keeping a lid on the deepening social contradictions. Anti-Asian chauvinism in particular is driven by the American bourgeoisie’s rivalry with its Japanese imperialist competitors in the Pacific Rim.

The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium reported a 37 percent rise in “hate crimes” against Asians nationally in 1994-1995. In San Francisco in March, a white racist street gang, the Sunset White Boys, carved swastikas into the storefronts of Asian businesses in the Sunset District. Such blackness of history in California, from the anti-Chinese pogroms of the 19th century to the herding of Japanese Americans into concentration camps during World War II.

Anti-immigrant hysteria helps set sections of the working class and the oppressed against each other while fostering the idea that the victims are somehow to blame. This strike could also be a launchpad to unionize the many non-union UPS work(!rs. This strike could also be a launching point for jobs for all through a shorter work week at no loss in pay! The escalation of racist cop terror and the all-sided intensification of bourgeois state repression—from attacks on civil liberties to the speedup on death row—go hand in hand with attacks on welfare, jobs and working conditions, affirmative action and immigration. As the class struggle between rich and poor widens, the capitalist rulers are intent on keeping a lid on the deepening social contradictions. Anti-Asian chauvinism in particular is driven by the American bourgeoisie’s rivalry with its Japanese imperialist competitors in the Pacific Rim.

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AUGUST 5—In the first national strike ever against United Parcel Service (UPS), 185,000 members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) walked off the job at midnight Sunday. With picket lines set up at 2,400 UPS locations across the country, the strike has effectively crippled the giant parcel delivery company.

This is a crucial battle for all labor. As one worker on the picket line in Atlanta said, “We’re striking for every worker in America. We can’t have only low service-industry wages in this country.” For 25 years now, the real wages of American workers have dropped dramatically with the imposition of two-tier and even many-tiered pay scales and lines set up at the workplace. This has produced vastly increased profits for the capitalists alongside great poverty for millions of working people.

UPS, which raked in over a billion dollars in profits last year, has been at the forefront of this drive: 60 percent of UPS workers are part-timers, many of them recent immigrants. UPS youth forced to work horrible shifts at a breakneck pace. This huge part-time workforce also includes African-American, Hispanic, and immigrant workers, who are targets for racist and sexist abuse by UPS management. Part-timers start at $8 an hour, less than half the full-time rate, and have not had a pay increase since 1982. They are regularly laid off during “off-peak” periods. For many younger UPS workers, this strike is their first taste of class struggle.

A victory at UPS could turn around the string of defeats which has plagued the labor movement in recent decades. And a victory is eminently possible: UPS handles 80 percent of all package delivery in the country, and a solid strike would have a huge impact on wide sectors of the economy. Though the picket lines have only been up for two days, this strike has already resonated among workers everywhere. Notably, the 2,000 UPS pilots organized in the Independent Pilots Association announced from the outset of the strike that they would refuse to cross picket lines. At the Oakland airport, pilots walked the lines alongside drivers and package handlers. In San Francisco, nurses from the Kaiser Permanente health conglomerate—who are themselves embroiled in a fight against massive wage cuts—joined the Teamster picket lines with leaflets calling for solidarity. UPS picketers have also been joined by other IBT members.

Key to galvanizing the multiracial UPS workforce in a winning strike is the fight to mobilize the union as a whole to combat widespread and systematic racist harassment and job tracking by the company. Fed up with the refusal of the IBT officials to lift a finger in defense of minorities, many black UPS workers have been driven to embrace the liberal anti-racial violence NAACP’s futile strategy of looking for justice in the capitalist courts. A vicious strike, taking up the cause of black and other minority workers—many of whom are ghettoized in the part-time workforce—would do more to fight racism at UPS than a million court suits.

It is necessary for UPS strikers to understand that the union cannot defend their interests if it is in any way tied to the employers and their government. For years, capitalist politicians, particularly Democrats, have waged a relentless ven­detta to cripple the Teamsters union, finally placing it under direct govern­ment supervision in 1989. While Presi­dent Clinton has denied any plans to impose a Taft-Hartley injunction for now, strikers must beware of any move toward government strikebreaking. Feds’ hands off the union!

The question of government inter­vention is directly related to one of the key issues in the current strike. For 30 years, the feds have been after Teamster pension funds. Now UPS wants to stop contributing to the union-controlled fund and set up its own.

The independence of the union from the capitalists requires opposition not only to direct government intervention but also a political struggle against those within the labor movement who have openly invited the feds to meddle in union affairs. IBT president Ron Carey was elected under the sponsorship of the Justice Department and with the backing of big business interests. And both Carey’s “reformers” and the “old guard” around Jimmy Hoffa Jr. subordinate the interests of the union to the employers by tying the Teamsters to the capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

The results of such class collaboration were seen in the February 1994 strike at UPS, which Carey folded after ten hours while regional bureaucrats tied to the “old guard” bowed to a court injunction and organized massive scabbing. Two months later, the IBT tops sold out a three-week national strike by 70,000 drivers and dock workers, abandoning strikers who had been victimized and arrested for defending their picket lines.

Marxist fight for the complete inde­pendence of the unions from the capital­ist state and the bosses’ political parties. The core of the bourgeois state is its armed bodies of men—the police, prison guards, army, etc.—whose job is to defend the interests of the ruling class by defending private property, protecting scabs and breaking strikes. UPS strikers continued on page 13