

A Spartacist Pamphlet

**Lutte Ouvrière and Spark:
Workerism and
National Narrowness**

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Introduction to the U.S. Edition

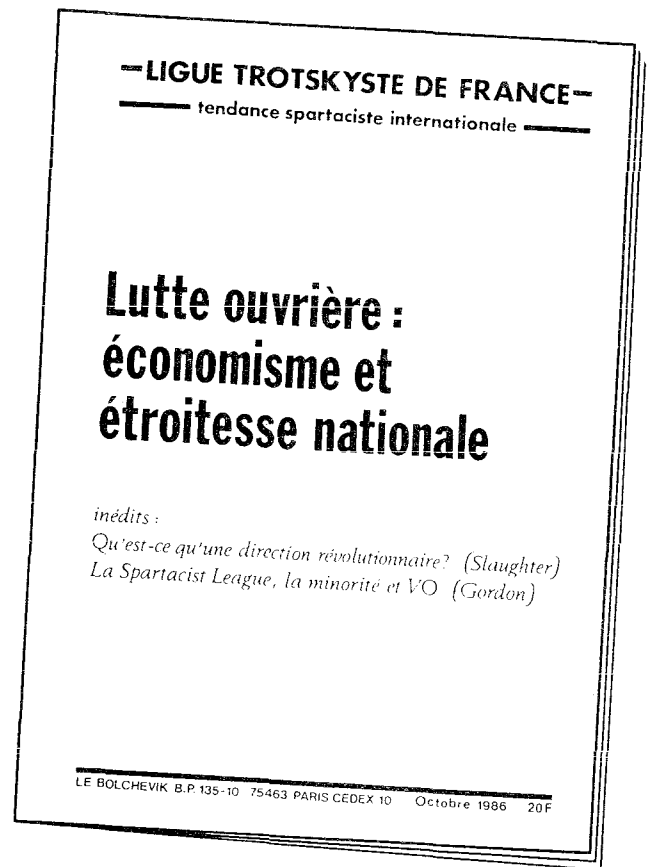
This pamphlet issued by the American section of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) is based on a pamphlet issued in French in October 1986 by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), entitled "Lutte Ouvrière: Economism and National Narrowness." It should be of interest to, among others, our own comrades and the supporters of Spark, LO's cothinkers in the United States. In the selection of materials, it closely follows the French pamphlet, with some substitutions and the addition of some recent material, notably on LO and the defense of the Soviet Union and on the fight against the fascist menace in France.

In July 1986 Lutte Ouvrière invited contributions to "a forum of international discussion between various international Trotskyist tendencies." We reprint here the declaration from LO's trilingual journal, Class Struggle, and our submission for that discussion, which LO rejected as not what they had in mind. Our contribution, written on behalf of the iSt by the Ligue Trotskyste, sets the general international framework which underlies the sorting out of competing claims to Trotskyism, and it serves here as a good introduction to the characteristic politics of the iSt. We present it here along with the introduction which appeared in Workers Vanguard (WV).

For the last several years, the LTF has been recruiting young people in ones and twos out of LO, which in France is one of three substantial-sized organizations claiming to be Trotskyist. Indeed, LO generally has been the best of them. This is not saying a great deal. The Pabloists (LCR), perpetual petty-bourgeois impressionists, have moved under "Cold War II" pressures very far to the right--yesterday's enthusiasts of "Third World" nationalism and insurrectionary Stalinism today behave fully in the

spirit of their mentor Ernest Mandel's conduct toward the 1961 Belgian general strike. The Lambertistes (PCI/MPPT, formerly OCI) have for a long time been more like an "organic" expression of Cold Warrior-style social democracy than a "left" pressure group upon anyone. A major section of the LTF's pamphlet consists of reprints of leaflets and articles from the LTF's monthly paper, Le Bolchévik, polemics about LO which reflected and were part of the recruitment of some fine young people to the iSt. The present pamphlet includes some of these articles, as well as one membership application.

Associated with LO's published call



LTF pamphlet: "Lutte Ouvrière: Economism and National Narrowness," published in October 1986. Available from the LTF for 25F or from the SL/U.S. for \$5.

for an open forum was a tendency for members of the Spark organization to turn up at Spartacist League/U.S. public offices and events to buy literature and talk politics. Evidently, somebody was disposed to take seriously the exhortation to discussion among avowed Trotskyists (or is it only in the United States where the SL is the largest organization claiming to be Trotskyist?). And we suspect that politics is also involved--perhaps a combination of two things.

First, the apparent end of the "Reagan years" is obviously bringing students around the Spark group, as around other leftist groups. Students are curious as a rule, prone to an interest in subjects like Nicaragua, gay rights, women's oppression and the defense of abortion, what's wrong with Jesse Jackson, and so on. And second, the debates taking place in the USSR (as well as in the pro-Moscow Communist Parties of the West) over "glasnost" and "perestroika" have illustrated the bankruptcy of LO's "analysis" of the Russian question in providing any understanding of developments or any axis for propagandistic intervention in the direction of struggle for the rebirth of authentic Leninism, i.e., Trotskyism, in the Soviet Union.

According to LO's "analysis," the USSR remains a degenerated workers state (although an unwary reader of their press would get the definite impression that the gains of the October Revolution are so attenuated as to be barely worth bothering about) while East Europe, China, Cuba, etc. are capitalist. For Spark, there's no important difference between Vietnam and Haiti, and the Vietnamese Revolution--which defeated U.S. imperialism on the battlefield and brought an end to the "American Century"--might just as well not have happened:

"The only solution for the Vietnamese people would have been the overthrow of imperialism and the establishment of a new world order. For the Vietnamese, this kind of fight would not have been any harder, it

would not have meant any further sacrifices....

"Because of the nationalist political leadership, despite 50 years of struggle, Viet Nam is just another underdeveloped country among over a hundred others on this earth."

--Class Struggle No. 21,
August 1985

The Origin of Spark

In our encounters with Spark members, we have found them to be pretty well-versed in works by Trotsky, but apparently rather unfamiliar with the origins of their own organization. Do Spark members know that their founding leader, Kay Ellens, was originally a member of the Socialist Workers Party and participated as a member of the Revolutionary Tendency in the struggle against the SWP's capitulation to Pabloist revisionism? That she attended the 1966 London Conference of the International Committee (which after the SWP's defection was dominated by the political bandit Gerry Healy) and was, of the four Spartacist comrades present, the one most disposed to capitulate to Healy's demand that we make an "apology" for having raised our own distinctive political views? Do they even know much about how their organization arose as a split from the Spartacist League?

We very much want to acquaint Spark members with the important issues debated between Kay Ellens and the SL majority. As we can't expect them to make up their minds solely on the basis of what can be included here, we invite interested readers to contact any branch of the SL or iSt for an appointment to read the internal bulletins. These documents are studied by SL members for the light they cast on our party--and they cast light as well on Spark. To whet your appetite, we are reprinting here one of the main documents of the majority, an unfortunately lengthy piece titled "The SL, the Minority and Voix Ouvrière" (VO is the organizational forerunner of LO), which our French com-

rades translated and put into their own pamphlet. We have added several short excerpts (for the purpose of this pamphlet, we have corrected some typographical errors from the original bulletin) from Kay Ellens' document, "Organizational Methods," which will give readers unfamiliar with Spark a flavor of Ellens' style and views at the time. This section of the pamphlet is prefaced by a separate introduction.

**"Exemplary Work" and the
Fight for Bolshevik Leadership**

In counterposition to the politics of LO, the LTF pamphlet presented several articles illustrating our conception of a fighting propaganda group, one which actively seeks the means to demonstrate in action as well as in its press the necessity of its program. We seek to participate in major class battles and social struggles taking place, to inject into them a crucial component of communist leadership. We seek to become a recognized pole within the unions and organizations of the oppressed, presenting the program which these struggles require to win. And we seek where we can to lead exemplary struggles, in order to show in action that our program can win victories for the workers and oppressed. The LTF pamphlet included, among examples of such work, material on the LTF-initiated anti-fascist united-front demonstration in Rouen on 11 December 1981, as well as prominent mention of the militant mobilization of 5,000 workers and youth initiated by the SL/U.S. and backed by major integrated and black union locals which stopped the fascist KKK from marching in Washington, D.C. on 27 November 1982.

In choosing materials to illustrate this approach in the present pamphlet, we had a lot of choices. The so-called "Reagan years" in the U.S., underlining for many workers the need for a broad-based defense of militants victimized by capitalist reaction, has given the SL/U.S. (and the Partisan Defense Com-

mittee, the class-struggle defense organization we support) many opportunities to demonstrate, in a modest, exemplary way, our perspective of labor-based militant action in defense of strike militants, black activists, minority families victimized by racists or the racist cops, and so forth. From the PDC's fund-raising effort in solidarity with striking British miners, against the vicious red-baiting opposition of the AFL-CIO union tops, to our youth organization's campaign around the slogan to "Crush the Contras--Defend, Complete, Extend the Nicaraguan Revolution," to the successful effort undertaken by Chicago transit unionists and publicized by the SL and PDC to place union power behind the demand to stop the legal victimization of a courageous woman worker and her family after their brutalization by racist cops, the SL has become an organizer of the desire of advanced workers, youth and supporters of democratic rights to fight back. We think Spark members in this country are familiar with much of this work.

For this pamphlet, we have chosen to feature our WV supplement, "Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win." "Hardball" attempts to address workers in a semi-agitational fashion on one concrete and urgent question of the class struggle--the proposition that "playing by the bosses' rules" is a recipe for workers' defeat--without hiding our communist politics and without the patronizing "talking down" in which Spark excels. The "Hardball" supplement was a response to the ruling-class drive to intensify the rate of exploitation of the working class, including by open union-busting, as exemplified by PATCO. The supplement was prompted in part by the sale (not a free distribution, as is common with leftist newspapers) of over 8,000 copies of WV at a labor demonstration in September 1981; the paper's headline calling on labor to "Shut Down the Airports" corresponded quite precisely to what large numbers of workers understood was urgently required to bust the union-busters in this important symbolic con-

frontation between Reagan and labor. Since its initial appearance in 1984, the supplement has been distributed to hundreds of thousands of strikers and other interested working people; it has been well received and has sometimes been used as a picket sign by strikers.

We think the supplement provides the clearest kind of contrast to the patronizing workerism of Spark, which capitulates to backwardness. To mention only a few examples: Who else but Spark could do an article on AIDS that does not mention homosexuals (or drugs)? Defending its abstention from efforts to galvanize the UAW into militant protests against the opening of a Nazi bookstore less than a mile from the giant Local 600 at Ford River Rouge in 1978, Spark (11 September 1978) lamented that "Anti-Nazi demonstrators help Nazis get more attention," and their journal Class Struggle (No. 4, December 1980) followed with an apologia for workers who prefer fascists to communists:

"If no one feels threatened or upset by the opening of such a bookstore or of a few Nazis who want to parade downtown what does the revolutionary movement accomplish by attacking them? At most it seems a little silly to people and at worst it may be the revolutionaries who make the worst impression on the workers, as being undemocratic and bullies."

LO's conduct today in the face of Le Pen's fascist threat in France echoes this criminal indifference.

And nobody but Spark would feature in its "Shop Talk" column (3 July 1978) an item from a Baltimore factory newsletter which begins: "The weeds are extremely bad around the plant. They are growing very high and really need cutting badly." Sure, the personal experience of oppression under capitalism can sometimes provoke an interest in socialist politics, but Spark's approach resembles nothing so much as a paper towels advertisement from decades ago (the

poster adorns some of the bathrooms at our headquarters) which inquires: "Is Your Washroom Breeding Bolsheviks?"

Spark's little column on dreaded weeds is an extreme example of its method for avoiding conflicts with the sellout leaders of the working class--"relating" to the workers without posing the need for a political fight in the unions. With the best of socialist good intentions--and making sure that editorials on the desirability of socialism

Is your washroom breeding Bolsheviks?

Employees lose respect for a company that fails to provide decent facilities for their comfort

Try wiping your hands six days a week with such cheap paper towels and tissue wet, dry, wet, dry towels... Lower service is just one of those small but important necessities--such as proper toilet lighting--that help build up the goodwill of your employees.

That's why you'll find double Scott Tissue Towels in the washrooms of large factory organizations such as R.U.A. Victor Co., Inc., National Lead Co. and Campbell Soup Co.

Scott Tissue Towels are made of strong fiber--an amazing cellulose product that dries up moisture 12 times as fast as ordinary paper towels. They feel soft and pliant as a baby's coat. Yet they're so strong and tough to texture they won't crumple or get in your eyes--even when they're wet.

And they cost less, too--because one is enough to dry the hands--instead of three or four.

Write for free trial copies: Scott Paper Company, Chester, Pennsylvania.

Scott Tissue Towels - really dry!

This decades-old paper towels ad became a "camp" item in the U.S. New Left. The ad's red-scare mentality ("Employees lose respect for a company that fails to provide decent facilities for their comfort," thus presumably "breeding Bolshevism") mirrors LO's notion that workers' disgruntlement at anything from overgrown weeds to unsanitary bathrooms will lead them automatically to revolutionary consciousness.

appear on the reverse side of the factory bulletins (the minimum/maximum program made into an organizational technique)--Spark evades political conflict with the sellout union tops by ignoring them. This schema is guaranteed to collapse under pressure. In practice, economism serves as a left cover for the bureaucrats because it deplores problems but suggests nothing concrete in pursuit of their solution, and economists are wont to become very like the bureaucrats themselves if given half a chance.

In What Is To Be Done? (1902), Lenin wrote that "worship of the spontaneity of the working-class movement, all belittling of the role of 'the conscious element', of the role of Social-Democracy, means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers." To reinforce this point, we include in this pamphlet a 1964 article by Cliff Slaughter on "What Is Revolutionary Leadership?" which deals concisely and quite clearly with the role of the conscious factor in history.

Workerists Can't Evade Politics

Efforts to avoid confronting the opportunist politics of one's opponents by going straight to the workers fall apart at the crucial moments. In France in 1968, under the impact of explosive radicalization of students and young workers, the VO group's linear schemas collapsed and they found themselves approaching the French Pabloists with a proposal for organizational unity of all "Trotskyists." VO--an organization which at its best was marked by its strong class instinct--was pulled into the wake of Mandel, Krivine & Co., a group whose brand of petty-bourgeois "Red University" impressionism and generally Guevarist politics made them the epitome of radical chic in France for a period of time. The "family of Trotskyism" approach--another means of evading confrontation between the counterposed programs of the various "Trotskyist"

organizations--still serves LO in circumstances when opponent organizations cannot be ignored.

If sectarianism is often opportunism in fear of itself, one can see how the theory of immersing the organization in the daily grievances of the proletariat as a counterweight to "petty-bourgeois" (and bourgeois) pressures might be motivated by anti-opportunism. Evading the choice of confronting and combatting illusions in Jesse Jackson or becoming one of his cheerleaders like most of the American "left," Spark virtually never mentions the Democratic Party in any context. On the Russian question too, LO is often not as bad as its line would logically lead it to be. Certainly LO and Spark are incapable of confronting and combatting "Cold War II" over Afghanistan or Poland or pro-capitalist Soviet "dissidents"; they constantly ooze to the right in deference to anti-Communist prejudice among "honest workers" and labor bureaucrats; they are bent out of shape by the rulers' "terrorism" scares. But at the same time, when all the Solidarność-lovers in Paris marched to demand that the French president should refuse to meet with the Polish head of state ("democratic" capitalist France, the social democrats and "captive nations" fascists can agree, standing on a higher moral plane than the Stalinist totalitarians!), LO's sometime-sectarianism toward demonstrations, or something, kept them away.

Unfortunately, LO has remained similarly aloof in the face of the growing alarm in France over the fascist resurgence represented by Le Pen. Trotsky's perspective, as is well known, was for a united front of the working-class organizations to crush the fascists "in the egg." In the U.S., attempted fascist provocations have drawn a sharp line between revolutionaries guided by Trotsky's approach, who seek to mobilize the masses of organized labor and minorities to drive the fascists from the streets, and reformists demanding that the government "ban the Klan," looking to the

capitalist state to defend democracy and protect the workers and oppressed.

In France, the CP has been all over the map on this question, going from a televised debate with Le Pen to actually calling a demonstration last January 27 against Le Pen--which, no matter how cynically intended as a means of blowing off steam, and despite being a far cry from the massive show of force that the CP could have mobilized, constituted an implicit threat of direct workers' action to stop the fascists. It was incumbent upon revolutionists to welcome and seek to deepen any motion toward direct labor action against fascism, which calls into question the CP's orientation that the capitalist state can be induced to act on behalf of the workers against the ultraright. The LTF participated with a contingent in the January 27 CP demonstration; LO was nowhere to be found.

A Bolshevik Party Must Be a Tribune of the People

LO does recognize some obligation to defend immigrant workers, and in this country the ghetto masses, because they are workers and poor. They attempt to do so through moralizing appeals and end up capitulating to backwardness (see "How LO 'Fights' Racism," in our section on LO's work). Spark's application of the same abstract and bloodless approach to black oppression in the U.S. is even more disorienting, inasmuch as all countries are not the same and here, the black question is central and strategic in the pursuit of the class struggle for socialism. Unable to grasp the intersection of race and class, Spark's press deals with black struggles in the manner of sympathetic outsiders, who cheer as they watch through binoculars, or worse.

In explaining why they oppose our labor/black mobilizations against the Klan and Nazis, Spark members say: (1) It creates illusions to say fascism can be smashed under capitalism--the fascists are too strong. (2) The fascists

aren't a threat. (3) Anyway, Spark doesn't believe in demonstrations.

With respect to defending the rights of non-proletarian strata--for example, homosexuals and others targeted in the reactionary social climate--LO and Spark are mirrors of "proletarian" social backwardness. When Spark mentions abortion, there usually appears some kind of disclaimer indicating how distasteful the subject is, and an article in LO's Lutte de Classe (No. 18, March 1974), which professed to be against censorship (the anti-porn campaign), went all the way on abortion by terming it "murder" and referring to contraception as "barbarous." In Lutte Ouvrière No. 993, 13 June 1987, an editorial all but opposed the funding of AIDS research, referring to "astronomical sums" and observing that it's better to spend money on AIDS than on the arms race (!), although after all millions of poor people throughout the world are dying of TB and other curable diseases.

Even if it were not a question of



During 1984 Talbot auto strike, LTF said: "This Government is anti-worker! Break with Mitterrand!" Class collaboration feeds fascist proliferation as social crisis drives petty bourgeoisie to frenzy; when proletariat shows its capacity to lead society out of impasse, intermediate strata follow its lead.

capitulating to backwardness, Spark is not much concerned with the defense of democratic rights, as if such struggles would dilute the proletarian program. It is interesting that the Economists criticized Lenin as too concerned with non-working-class issues, such as persecution of liberals and protests by petty-bourgeois layers. Lenin replied that if the Marxists did not put forward a proletarian perspective to fight against all forms of oppression, they were abandoning the field to the liberals, to bourgeois ideology. "To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social-Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions" (What Is To Be Done? [1902], our emphasis).

Most recently, LO totally besmirched itself by debating a fascist demagogue--an ominous new "low" for them (even the reformist CP had to cope with considerable uneasiness among its ranks when it earlier did the same) which suggests that some kind of extremely morbid process may be at work.

In the Transitional Program, Trotsky explained how the obstacle to the victory of socialism over capitalist barbarism is the crisis of revolutionary proletarian leadership. It is in the hope of winning new forces for resolving that crisis that the publication of this pamphlet is undertaken.

--13 May 1988

Introduction to the French Edition

We publish below several sections of the introduction to the LTF's 1986 pamphlet.

"The interests of the class cannot be formulated otherwise than in the shape of a program; the program cannot be defended otherwise than by creating the party," wrote Trotsky in What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat (27 January 1932). That's why the question of the party is at the center of the differences between the international Spartacist tendency and Lutte Ouvrière (LO). The party is built on a program.

The struggle for the Trotskyist program is the only way to resolve the strategic task of our epoch, which is to overcome the contradiction between the ripeness of the objective conditions for socialist revolution and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard. Among all the "far left" groups LO, a sub-reformist economist organization, has its own unique way of capitulating when faced with the necessity of intransigent struggle on a revolutionary program. It hides behind the consciousness of the least advanced workers, a consciousness which is in fact fostered by their treacherous leaderships.

LO's economism means a refusal to put forward a program against racial oppression, a refusal to defend picket lines, a refusal to fight for mass workers mobilizations against the fascist menace, capitulation to the popular front by voting Mitterrand in 1981. It means a regression to the old program of classical social democracy--a minimum program of reforms possible within the context of capitalism and a maximum program, "Sunday socialism."

In a broader sense, it means zigzagging between sectarian abstentionism over national oppression and political capitulation to nationalist forces--two

"extremes" linked by rejection of the necessity for a proletarian leadership of national/social struggles (the core of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution).

But although its program is economist, such a methodology cannot explain why LO is consistently on the wrong side of the barricades when it comes to the defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the deformed workers states against the imperialist war drive and internal capitalist restoration....

LO brags of having built a "hard" organization, but when its sectarian shell opens up from time to time, we see that LO is soft, soft, soft; that it explicitly justifies its program by the most low-level tailism of the reformists, and that discipline, centralization and semi-clandestinity are simply a straitjacket designed to avoid an organizational liquidation equivalent to its political liquidation....

LO's pseudo-Trotskyism, like all other varieties of revisionism, is profoundly objectivist, denying the role of consciousness in history (the credo of economism being: "Struggle is desirable if it is possible"). Cliff Slaughter's essay, "What Is Revolutionary Leadership?", is not only an antidote to LO's fatalistic prostration, but also a theoretical response--in defense of the Leninist vanguard party--to the economist cult of spontaneity.

* * * * *

The publication of the new trilingual edition of Class Struggle beginning in July 1986 allows us to see LO's conception of the party at a "higher" level. In the context of the growing disintegration of the "United" Secretariat of Mandel/Krivine and the difficulties of the international rotten blocs

which claim the name of the "Fourth International," we get this "new look" Class Struggle.

But LO is only trying to refurbish its "Trotskyist" and "internationalist" fig leaf as it searches for new international non-aggression pacts. Its repudiation of a Leninist party is at the same time a repudiation of a democratic-centralist world party, based on a program.

Its philistine anti-internationalism was displayed in a particularly crude manner by Kaldy, LO spokesman at a panel discussion at the last LO fête (his speech was published in the first issue of the new Class Struggle series). We have already exposed its conception of "peaceful coexistence":

"LO's religion can be summed up by Kaldy's statement: 'The experience of the past forty years has proved that even those groups which belong to international groupings prefer to leave them, beginning with us.' It should be recalled that the departure of LO's forebears took place in 1939 during Trotsky's lifetime, and that the 'grouping' in question was none other than the Fourth International! This statement basically demonstrates a constant in LO's history: to justify its departure from the International after the fact, it claims that the Fourth International ceased to exist a few months later.

"The fact is that LO can sometimes make platonically orthodox criticisms of the betrayals of various international groupings, but has never fought to correct what it saw as the degeneration of the Fourth International, not even by trying to link up with those who tried to continue the fight for Trotskyism after the destruction of the International by Pabloite revisionism in 1951-53."

--Le Bolchévik No. 64, June 1986

LO hypocritically complains that since the death of Trotsky no sufficiently "authoritative" international leadership has existed. Contrary to this mythology which ascribes to him "authority" by divine right, Trotsky was obliged to wage a sharp battle not only against the myriad of centrist groups that appeared in reaction to the bankruptcy of the Second and Third Internationals, but also against the Victor Serges, Sneevliets and Shachtmans in the ranks of the Fourth International itself, who capitulated to the popular front and/or abandoned the defense of the USSR.

From Kaldy's mouth itself we hear that "the Trotskyist movement as a whole, despite its weaknesses, has at least one quality, endurance." And why is that? Why must one go back to Trotsky's writings to learn even of the existence of these centrists? It is a question of program.

It is always a question of program. Today there is no "world Trotskyist movement," no "family of Trotskyism." There is only the fight to reforge a real democratic-centralist Fourth International against all the pseudo-internationals....

Trotsky has already refuted in advance the idea of simply adding together all national opportunist policies:

"From its very first steps the Opposition must therefore act as an international faction--as did the communists in the days of the publication of the Communist Manifesto, or in the days of the First International or of the Zimmerwald Left at the beginning of the war. In all these cases the groups were for the most part small numerically or it was a matter of isolated individuals; but they nevertheless acted as an international organization. In the epoch of imperialism such a

position is a hundred times more imperative than in the days of Marx. "Those who believe that the International Left will someday take shape as a simple sum of national groups, and that therefore the international unification can be postponed indefinitely until the national groups 'grow strong,' attribute only a secondary importance to the international factor and by this very reason take the path of national opportunism.

"It is undeniable that each country has greatest peculiarities of its own; but in our epoch these peculiarities can be assayed and exploited in a revolutionary way only from an internationalist point of view. On the other hand, only an international organization can be the bearer of an international ideology."

--"An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund" (6 February 1930)

* * * * *

LO's fake internationalism consists in looking for elements of similarity between different countries, instead of seeking out the organic interdependence of struggles in these countries. In any case, LO deliberately turns a blind eye to the principal factor that dominates world politics: the new Cold War. It is the anti-Soviet crusade that puts wind in the sails of the fascists and feeds racist terror in imperialist countries. It is their need for "internal peace" for their war drive that pushes the ruling class to an all-out offensive against the organized working class and to launch an "anti-terrorist" witchhunt.

A party that answers every question of any international importance with a

monotonous "it is necessary to build the party in France" is obviously incapable of building an international. But LO has also failed the decisive test for all those who call themselves revolutionaries: the fight against the main enemy--one's own imperialism--over the Russian question.

No doubt for LO the very existence of our tendency is a mystery--its attempts to give us a "Pabloite" pedigree were not very serious. Its leadership can perhaps try to exorcise the Spartanist spectre with the argument that we don't have the necessary minimum of a thousand members (the ante required by LO for its international poker games).

Nevertheless, as a fighting propaganda group we have long since "proven ourselves" by maintaining an international perspective and a principled program, and by our exemplary actions such as the propaganda for a general strike in auto at the Renault-Cléon plant--a petition addressed to the CGT leadership and signed by about 60 unionists, in October 1983, and the organization of a delegation from Renault-Cléon to support the strikers at Talbot in December 1983--initiatives boycotted by LO....

LO militants have a clear choice: between victories--small though they may be, but which show the way forward--which prove the correctness of our program, and LO's propaganda which does nothing but retrospectively justify defeats. It is on the basis of our Trotskyist program that we call on the serious forces of the workers movement to regroup for the purpose of putting an end to capitalism.

What is Revolutionary Leadership?

Cliff Slaughter

'An important element in the strength of a party or a class is the conception which the party or the class has of the relationship of forces in the country.'

Leon Trotsky, 1931.

'But it is absurd to think of a purely "objective" foresight. The person who has foresight in reality has a "programme" that he wants to see triumph, and foresight is precisely an element of this triumph.'

Antonio Gramsci.

'... every shortcoming in historical duty increases the necessary disorder and prepares more serious catastrophes.'

Antonio Gramsci.

'The decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organized and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favourable (and it is favourable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardour); therefore, the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself.'

Antonio Gramsci.

(In this article I have drawn heavily upon Gramsci, *The Modern Prince* and to a lesser extent on Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*.)

GRAMSCI, brilliant intellectual and founder of the Italian Communist Party, and Trotsky, towering example of revolutionary leadership in theory and in practice, had good reason to write the words cited above. Trotsky, exiled by the Stalinist bureaucracy, was urging a policy of United Front on the Communist Party of Germany as the only defence against the danger of Nazism. Gramsci, after the defeat of the Workers' Councils movement in Italy, in which he himself was so prominent, found himself in Mussolini's jail. Eventually Trotsky met his death, 20 years ago, at the hands of Stalin's agents; Gramsci's health was destroyed in prison

and he died a young man, a few days after his release in 1937.

Neither of these two men, the most original Marxist thinkers since Lenin, is regarded with favour by the official 'Communist' movement. Despite Khrushchev's admission that the trials of the 1930s were based on confessions extracted by torture, the slanders about Trotsky's plot against the USSR, his alliance with Hitler, and so on, are allowed to remain as part of the total censorship on his work that exists in the Communist Parties. In 1957 a small selection of Gramsci's writings was published by Lawrence and Wishart. However, *The Modern Prince*, longest essay in this selection, was quite heavily cut, and precious little space was devoted to Gramsci's major contribution on Workers' Councils. One appreciates the great effort made by Dr. Louis Marks, the translator, to bring even this much of Gramsci to English readers; at the same time it must be said that the cuts in *The Modern Prince* are unacknowledged, and that several of the omitted sections (dealing with Rosa Luxemburg, with 'Caesarism', etc.) would have posed awkward questions for Stalinists.

STALINISM AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

It is characteristic that these two men should have laid great stress on the role of human consciousness, and of political leadership. Stalinism can no more entertain such an emphasis than can Social-Democracy. Reformism and opportunism are tied to the existing structure of power: a confused mixture of notions of fair play and expediency is the nearest they ever get to theory. Their political actions are based on an adjustment of the partial and temporary interests of sections of the working class to the existing economy and state power. This is why opportunists abhor theory, for theory insists on an understanding of each problem in terms of the all-round development of society, focused in our epoch on the working-class struggle

for state power. Nor are the Stalinists in any better position; in the 'Communist' movement Marxist doctrine has hardened into an ideology: that is to say, particular phrases are taken from Marx and Lenin and used to justify the particular course taken by the Soviet bureaucracy. The authority naturally accruing to the Russian Communists after the October Revolution facilitated the spread of the degeneration of the Russian to the other Parties in the Communist International. These parties were 'shaken up', their leaderships changed, their structure arbitrarily fixed (under the name of 'Bolshevisation' of course!) until they were transmission belts for the international policies of Stalin's bureaucracy, rather than revolutionary parties of the working class.* In latter years, despite the 'exposure' of Stalin by Khrushchev, the political consequences of this relationship have even deepened, though of course they will inevitably produce a reaction inside the foreign parties, and eventually in the Soviet Party. Peaceful competition between the Soviet and the U.S. economies is now clearly stated to be the major form of the conflict between imperialism and socialism. For this to go on, peaceful relations in the rest of the world must be preserved. And so the 'Communist' parties 'take the lead in the fight for peace'.

As a part of this process, certain theoretical distortions of Marxism play an important part. Above all, Marxism is twisted into an economic determinism. The dialectic is abstracted from history and reimposed on social development as a series of fixed stages. Instead of the rich variety and conflict of human history we have the natural series of slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism through which all societies pass. The USSR's present structure is thus sanctified as an 'inevitable' successor of capitalism and any 'criticisms' of its social and political structure must be regarded as 'secondary'. An apparent touch of flexibility is given to this schematic picture by the doctrine that different countries will find their 'own' roads to Socialism, learning from the USSR but adapting to their particular national characteristics. This is of course a mechanical caricature of historical materialism. The connection between the struggles of the working class for Socialism in, say, Britain, Russia and Vietnam, is not at all in the greater or lesser degree of similarity of social structure of those countries, but in *the organic interdependence of their struggles*. Capital-

* For the process by which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union fell under the control of Stalin's faction, representing the class pressures of the petty-bourgeoisie in Russia on the basis of the international defeats of the working class, see L. D. Trotsky, *Third International After Lenin*, pages 147-163, and *The Revolution Betrayed*, and I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*.

ism is an international phenomenon, and the working class is an international force; the USSR is the result of the first break-through of the world revolution, a result distorted by Russia's particular economic development before and after the October Revolution, and by the impact of imperialism and the fate of the working-class movement since then. Trotsky laid a firm basis for the study of the relation between the Soviet workers' state and the world working class in his writings between 1924, when 'Socialism in One Country' was first theoretically presented, and his death in 1940.

There are many Socialists who are naturally repelled by the bureaucratic distortion of Soviet society and of the Stalinist parties, as well as by the shameful record of Social-Democracy, and yet fail to escape from the distorted theory and method of Stalinism. Retaining that fundamental characteristic of Stalinism, loss of confidence in the ability of the working class of the advanced capitalist countries to conquer power, they dress up this loss of nerve with 'theoretical' ideas which have been current in the anti-Bolshevik sections of the Left since the October Revolution and even before. Elsewhere in this issue Brian Pearce takes up certain historical questions bound up with the periodical 'discovery' that the USSR is a capitalist state, a discovery which of course leads away from certain uncomfortable political duties, such as the defence of the USSR against imperialism. In this article I want to take up another argument closely bound up with these same ideas, viz., that the root of the trouble lies in the Leninist concept of leadership of the working class by a centralized party—Lenin's 'party of a new type'.

THE ROLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN HISTORY

Although this argument takes various forms (Lenin's type of party was suited to autocratic Russia but not to democratic Britain; leadership will emerge naturally from the working class; all organizations develop bureaucracy; the success of 1917 was a 'historical accident' taken advantage of by a brilliant Bolshevik élite; Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky predicted the degeneration of the party, etc., etc.), it is always underpinned by a false conception of the role of theory and consciousness in history, a tendency towards economic determinism, a notion that the laws of social development are something 'natural', standing above men and deciding their destinies. Political events and tendencies are seen as the 'natural' and inescapable reflection of economic interest; Marx's concept of the political and ideological superstructure on the economic basis becomes a 'mere superstructure' of the economic struggle, as one of the founders of the

new 'Workers' Party' recently put it. This implies that politics is only the froth of history, whereas Marx was quite clear that it is in the sphere of politics that men become more or less conscious of the economic contradictions and fight out the issues. Precisely in politics, in the struggle for state power, is the decisive conflict fought out. Trade union and industrial struggle is a school of politics for the working class, in the older capitalist countries decades of trade union struggle were a necessary prelude to real *class conflict*; but the overthrow of political power and the institution of proletarian dictatorship is a qualitatively different question. For this, organization of a more advanced character, and therefore theory of a much wider and deeper character, is required. This means a political party which subordinates all partial struggles to the construction of a leadership firmly welded to the working class and completely devoted to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Such a task requires the ability to learn from all past class struggles in society, particularly the failures and successes of the working-class movement, and an understanding of this history in relation to the total existing structure of society, not only in relation to the daily experience of the working class. The consciousness and organization required to achieve the greatest social overturn in history, these are the basic reasons for what has come to be known as democratic centralism, the bogey of so many 'Left-wingers'.

The revolutionary party must incorporate as far as possible the understanding of capitalist society derived from all past theoretical advances and their testing-out by the working-class movement in history. In this tradition and theory there resides a more scientific truth than the working class can derive from its experience of exploitation and day-to-day struggle. Rather than humbly bowing before the experience of the class at 'the point of production', rather than assuming that the workers' own experience will give rise to revolutionary consciousness, Marxists must on the contrary subordinate their political and theoretical work to the revolutionary party. This is the meaning of revolutionary discipline: that the consciousness represented by the Marxist party constitutes a higher consciousness of the historical tasks of the working class than does the immediate consciousness of the class itself. Only by accepting the discipline of the party, then, does the individual Marxist achieve the prospect of playing an independent historical role. This has nothing in common with the bourgeois notion of 'free' individuals imposing their reason upon the world. Rather, an objective analysis of capitalist production demonstrates that the working class is its gravedigger; the working class is consequently the only independent and decisive force in the

modern epoch. But classes and social movements have to be welded together as *forces* by consciously grasping their situation and organizing to overthrow the classes which stand in their way. The relation between party and class is an aspect of this process; it is not enough for the workers to constitute a class 'objectively', by reason of their all being wage-labourers: from being 'a class *in itself*' the proletariat must become 'a class *for itself*'.

Now Lenin's primary concern was to find the form of organization and strategy which would express this *political independence* of the working class. It is true that in Russia his opponents, the Mensheviks, were victims of the mechanical idea that the bourgeoisie was destined to come to power after the defeat of Tsarism; they therefore disagreed with Lenin's notion of the proletariat *leading* the struggle against Tsarism, and so the political independence of the class did not arise for them until after the bourgeois revolution. However, Lenin's conviction that the working class was the leading independent force in the modern era was part of his general view of 'imperialism' as the final stage of capitalism. The fundamentals of organization required for a politically independent working class are not in anyway specific to Russian conditions. Indeed, the essence of Lenin's position against the Mensheviks should be much easier to grasp in a country which is highly mechanized, where a large proletariat confronts a bourgeoisie firmly established in power.

IMPERIALISM AND LENIN'S CONCEPTION OF THE PARTY

It is important to stress the connection between Lenin's characterization of our epoch and his ideas on organization. Imperialism, with its rapid expansion of capital investment, the organization of production on a very large scale, more and more domination by finance-capital, and the concentration of standing armies and repressive forces equipped with weapons based on the highest levels of technique of mass production, has given rise to social forces and ideas which restrict and hold back the working class. In the imperialist countries themselves, a considerable stratum of the working class identifies its interests with the expansion of capitalism itself. The new bureaucratic state provides a larger number of administrative jobs for the upper layers of the working class and absorbs most of the disappearing old middle class. A new social group of functionaries, officials, managers, teachers, has grown up, and on the basis of this group, together with the skilled working class, a strong opportunist tendency developed in the Labour Movement. In Britain, the early defeat of Chartism and the subse-

quent prolonged economic expansion led to the development of craft unionism at the expense of political organization. When the new general unions had come on the scene, and the need for independent political representation was recognized, it was not revolutionists who presented themselves as the leaders, but men with a very different standpoint. Fabianism started not from the conception of the working class as a revolutionary force, with the struggle for reforms as part of the building of that force, but from the idea that the state should intervene to alleviate the insecurity and poverty caused by the unrestricted operation of the capitalist market. The more extreme reformists thought that state ownership of certain industries might be necessary to achieve this. In Germany, although the Marxist phrases of the Erfurt programme continued to dominate the statements of the Social-Democratic leaders, a similar development was taking place. The SPD (German Social Democratic Party) became a church of the working class rather than a revolutionary party. When the war of 1914-18 broke out, not only did the SPD deputies vote war credits to their 'national' governments, like almost every other reformist party in Europe, but they boasted of the service they had given the nation by helping create a disciplined, organized and cultured working class. This conduct of the SPD at the outbreak of war closed a chapter in the history of Marxism. In the epoch of imperialist wars there must be parties of men steeled to resist all jingoism and patriotism, to proclaim the slogan 'Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!' The working class of each country had the duty of 'revolutionary defeatism' since the main question was one of cracking the front of imperialism.

To many 'orthodox' Marxists this turn by Lenin was a leap in the dark, adventurism, folly, typical of the 'Blanquist', 'voluntarist' tendencies for which he had been so often criticised. But Lenin's 'fantastic' slogan was deeper and nearer to the needs of the masses than all the 'realism' of the old Social-Democracy. The German Social-Democratic leaders ended up, at the height of the Revolution in 1918, failing to support the demand for the Kaiser's abdication; and they gave 'Marxist' reasons for doing it — 'For the Social Democracy, the external form of the State is unimportant!' And when pressure from below forced their hands they issued a public statement to the effect that 'in insisting upon abdication, they had been motivated solely by the thought that only abdication could preserve order and prevent the spread of anarchy'. Without a doubt, a big factor in the fright of the Social Democratic leaders was the fact that the Russian Bolsheviks were already in power, and there was no telling where the process might stop in Germany. But again a 'Marxist' rationalization was offered: Scheidemann

said afterwards, 'Political actions can, essentially, only confirm an economic development'. It was just this kind of 'Marxism' that Lenin had to defeat in the course of building a revolutionary party in Russia. His whole effort was to assert the *dominance* of the role of the proletariat in determining the course of history in the 20th century, a dominance flowing not from any 'voluntarism' but from the nature of the crisis of capitalism, the character of imperialism as the highest form of capitalist contradictions.

Kautsky and others in the old Social-Democracy fell down on just this point. They were great exponents of Marxism as an explanatory theory of past history, but Marx's conclusion about the necessity of proletarian dictatorship on the basis of modern socialized production was not fully grasped. To do this meant seeing the working class, its consciousness and its organization, as themselves decisive forces in history, not just as the *results* of history. That is the meaning of Gramsci's remarks at the head of this article. It is the direct opposite of Scheidemann's 'Political action can only confirm an economic development' and of all nonsense about politics being 'only the superstructure of the class struggle'. An interesting example of Lenin's method in these questions may be found in his writings during the period of reaction following the 1905 revolution. A certain Levitsky, somewhat in the strain of our own 'proletarian' Left-wingers, objected to the Bolshevik strategy of the working class leading the struggle for liberty against Tsarism. This he saw as a watering down of principle and advanced the slogan '*Not* hegemony in the national struggle for political liberty, *but* a class party!' Lenin roundly condemned this sectarian nonsense, which amounted in effect to an abandonment of the political field to bourgeois leadership.*

SPONTANEITY AND SECTARIANISM

In the Socialist Labour League recently, a small minority developed the idea that as the Labour Party was drifting rapidly to the Right, the only way for the Marxists to preserve their integrity was to set up a party quite independent in every way from the Labour Party. The Labour Party had ceased to be a working-class party in any sense, and a party must be formed which concentrated on the 'real' class struggle at 'the base', 'the point of pro-

* Incidentally, Lenin's insistence on the leading role of the working class even during the period of defeat makes nonsense of those of his critics who claim that only during the revolutionary upsurge did Lenin stress this role of the proletariat (e.g., H. Marcuse, **Soviet Marxism**).

duction'. Not only did Behan and the others show by this trend their utter misunderstanding of the Marxist theory of society and politics, but their conduct gave a valuable lesson in the political importance of theoretical weakness of this kind, showing that with an incorrect theoretical approach and a wrong method, first-class historical blunders can be made. Just when the crisis in the British working-class movement approaches precisely its political peak, just when the contradiction between Social-Democracy and the historical needs of the working class is most sharply expressed in the issues of public ownership, defence and the relation between the organized working class and the Labour Party—at this point the cry goes up: abandon ship! It is the industrial struggle that matters above all! 'Reformism is best exposed at the point of production!'—once again those who fail to grasp the nettle of political action explain their failure with the most resounding of 'Marxist' phrases. Precisely by clinging to such abstract generalities do men get left behind by historical development. The essence of dialectics is not the ability to stand by and pronounce what is base and what is superstructure, but to know when, where and how to *act*. Behan insists on the need to go back to the programme of the Industrial Rank-and-File Conference of November, 1958, as if nothing has happened in the trade union movement and the Labour Party since then. To confine the demands and activity of the working class at this point to the factory level would amount to betrayal; this is what was meant by the reply given to Behan's group at the Socialist Labour League Conference. Our resistance to sectarianism is not a doctrinal one only, but part of the lessons learned from the beheading of the German working-class movement, among others, when the Communist Party failed to follow the policy of the United Front of the working class from 1929 onwards.

One of the interesting features of sectarians is their ability to take up very opportunist positions on certain questions, and particularly on questions of organization. Again the basic theoretical weakness here is lack of understanding of the role of consciousness. To criticise Brian Behan's 'Workers' Voice' would amount to the mistake of taking on not the strongest but the weakest statement of one's opponents' case, and so I take certain points in the first issue of that journal only as an aside, and in order to introduce some more general points. In line with his idea that the class itself must lead the revolution, Behan writes that any workers' organization, shop stewards' committee, etc., may submit amendments to the Constitution of the Workers' Party. This gives an appearance, of course, of a party open to the working class, not dictating to it but responding to it, and so on. But it is clearly only another example of the old 'economism'.

Certainly no workers' party will be successful which is not responsive to changes in the moods of the working class, but that is a matter of *tactics*, of timing, of the form of propaganda, etc., and certainly *not* a question of programme, policy, constitution, which are determined on a basis of *theory*. The correctness of the policy of a Marxist party is not the extent to which it corresponds to the immediate consciousness of the workers. It is a matter rather of correct theoretical appraisal of all the social forces at work in a given period, including the role of the class and the party itself.

This raises the old question of the working class 'throwing up its own leadership' in times of struggle. It is a fact that in every section of the working class there spring up first-class militants with great organizing power and ability to advance the consciousness of their fellow-workers. Without such spontaneous rank-and-file leadership there could be no talk of revolution. But a revolutionary leadership is not just the sum of all these rank-and-file leaders, not just the 'linking-together of rank-and-file committees'. There must be beyond that, *above* that level, a *political* leadership. It is not just a matter of daily struggle between employers and workers, which might even culminate in 'one big strike', but of the conquest of state power, of asserting the revolutionary role of the working class in the transformation of every aspect of capitalist society. The place of the workers in capitalist production is the basis of their revolutionary historical role, but to assert that role they have to be organized politically and theoretically as well as industrially, and the theory required to do this represents a higher form of consciousness than that which flows from the experience of the proletariat. If Lenin was right to condemn the 'Economists' for bringing no theory to the Russian workers other than the news that their industrial struggles were vital, how much more necessary it is to insist on advancing the theory required by the British working-class movement, with its scores of years of industrial organization, its opportunist leadership, and the complex international problems of leadership that have developed since Lenin's day?

This brings out another fundamental weakness of sectarianism: its tendency towards idealism. All the talk about 'no compromises' and keeping clear of the rottenness of reformism amounts to a fear of rubbing up against reality, and is accompanied by the search for some section of workers which remains unaffected and pure despite the economic boom, as a jumping-off ground to defeat reformism. No doubt it is a healthy reaction against bureaucratic reformism to insist on the roots of militancy in the working class itself, but there is no substitute for fighting the political battle. It is not enough to know that reformism is rotten, to condemn it

roundly, and to insist on one's separateness from it; the point is, to take it seriously as a force in the British working class and defeat it on the arena of struggle. At this point, the political mistake of sectarianism ties in with the theoretical mistake of economic determinism or 'economism'. Somehow, it is assumed, the working class will develop revolutionary consciousness because it is exploited. But the ideological struggle within the working class is *real*, it has to be bitterly fought and won before the class can be fully mobilized for battle. When we say that the long-drawn-out crisis of British imperialism rots away the social basis of reformist politics, that is *not* to say that the reformists simply leave the scene and leave a vacant place for a naturally radicalized working class desiring a new form of party. Such a party has to be built in the course of struggle with the reformists, and *it has to be built by those who grasp the historical process theoretically; it does not grow 'naturally' or 'organically' out of the economic base.*

THEORY AND IDEOLOGY IN THE WORKING CLASS

When we say that political ideas and movements reflect the economic base we should remember that such reflection is a series of conscious acts. Men's consciousness is formed in an environment of social institutions controlled by the ruling class, institutions of repression and institutions for educational conditioning, staffed by people trained to operate these institutions as though they were part of a naturally or divinely ordained system. The majority of labour's own organizations have become tied to this structure of established institutions, and are staffed by the 'labour lieutenants of capitalism'. The proletariat's consciousness of its role has to be achieved in struggle against all these institutional forms and their ideological results. Without the highest degree of centralized organization, these ideological battles cannot be won. The crisis of imperialism, which is expressed in the colonial struggle, the arms race and atomic war as well as in the tendency towards slump, constantly produces cultural decay and breakdown. Movements of the extreme Right, like Fascism, are able to call upon depraved elements of the intelligentsia to mobilize petty bourgeois, lumpen proletarians and even numbers of industrial workers behind the most foul and hideous social programmes. The alternative of socialism or barbarism did not pose itself only after Hiroshima, but was clearly before the eyes of the Bolsheviks and Rosa Luxemburg during the First World War. We are in an epoch which has been correctly characterized as one of a crisis of leader-

ship. What is needed *above all* is a strongly disciplined leadership able to develop the theory of Imperialism, the Permanent Revolution, the relation between the Workers' States and the world revolution, and to establish its leadership of the working class. Unless this crisis of leadership is solved, there will be no 'natural' growth towards Socialism, but there will be all the danger of war and barbarism. In this vital sense those who protest against 'vanguardism', against 'too much centralization', represent a reactionary tendency in the working-class movement.

The opponents of democratic centralism like to talk about the inevitable crisis of capitalism as the source of revolutionary action in the working class: this is counterposed to the so-called 'voluntarism' of the Leninists, who are supposed to think they can suck revolutionary situations out of their thumbs. But preparation of the class and of the party is the decisive question in social crises. It is true that periodically capitalism has undergone the most profound crises. We need only mention the Great Crash of 1929 and the consequent depression, and the post-war situation (1945) in Europe, when there returned, particularly in France and Italy, capitalists discredited by their war record and faced with the armed working class. In neither of these cases was revolution the outcome. Instead, helped by the Social-Democratic and Stalinist betrayals of the working class, the capitalists were able to ride the storm and in the earlier case to establish regimes which destroyed the possibility of revolution for many years. The elementary mistake of supposing that in the Marxist view consciousness and organization directly reflect economic need is one that must be conquered if there is to be a victorious revolution. The ideological reflection of changes in the economy lags behind. the machinery of this 'lag' is the structure of ruling-class power and education. There is necessary a theoretical *leap* in the working-class movement, the development of leadership which can grasp the significance of the underlying crisis in society and inform the activity of the class with that consciousness. What is important for the revolutionary class is that it must *not* remain determined in its thinking by the existing economy and institutions. As Gramsci puts it: 'An appropriate political initiative is always necessary to *free* the economic drive from the tethers of traditional policies'. (My emphasis—C.S.)

Important here is the difference between the working class and other revolutionary classes in history. When Lenin says that the only weapon of the working class is organization, he means that whereas the rising bourgeoisie, for instance, developed its own economy, its art, its religion, its schools, its philosophy, and so on, as the expression and organization of its social consciousness, *before*

the political overthrow of the feudal political system, the proletariat does not construct the institutions of the new society within capitalism (despite the Fabians and the New Left). Capitalism is the only system of production in history whose inner dynamism has pushed it to develop the productive forces incessantly and to drive out all other forms of production. In order to mobilize for the overthrow of feudalism, it was sufficient for the bourgeoisie and its allies to recognize and feel the political restrictions upon their growing economic and cultural strength. Their own organic development within feudalism drove their 'own' institutions into conflict with the political regime which prevented their natural expansion. But bourgeois power is total social power: capital dominates all relationships like an elemental natural force. In order to seize in consciousness the nature of this power and to organize for its overthrow, there is necessary a *scientific* consciousness of the whole system of social relationships, and not just a sense of the degradation and exploitation suffered in the process of production, or the abstract knowledge that planned production for use would be more reasonable. There is no repository of this consciousness, and no guarantee of its necessary constant development in theory and practice, other than the proletarian party. To talk about the working class 'itself' as an undifferentiated, potentially revolutionary whole is to substitute myth for reality.

Because it is exploited in an inhuman system, commandeered and degraded in the service of capital, the working class is unevenly developed, apathetic under most circumstances, split into different sections, often backward in its view of most cultural and social problems, unless there is a conscious leadership differentiated from the class itself, not at the daily service of capital, determined to explode the *false* consciousness in which men grasp reality under capitalism. Abdication from the responsibility of constructing such a leadership, under the guise of 'faith in the workers themselves' is capitulation to the forces that numb the consciousness of the working class—the institutions of capitalist society itself. The centralized party is needed by the working class, then, for the purpose of 'breaking up the unity based on traditional ideology, without which the new force (the working class) would be unable to gain awareness of its own independent personality'. (Gramsci). The working class cannot make do, like the bourgeoisie in its revolutionary period, with a crude empiricism or idealism. Because the whole of the capitalist structure must be grasped in consciousness and because this whole and its laws of development are different from the immediate consciousness and experience of the proletariat, *dialectical* theory, advanced theory based on the notion of developing

contradictions in the material world, is the basic element of revolutionary theory. Marx's achievement was to show the working class a mode of action based on this dialectical approach to history. Bourgeois thought had ceased to develop just at this point, and it took the the highest synthesis of philosophical and scientific thought to make the leap forward. It is in this sense that one should understand Lenin's insistence that the programme and strategy of the revolutionary party are based on *theory*, and that this theory is brought to the working class *from outside*, from bourgeois intellectuals. The development of theory among the revolutionary workers themselves, once that leap has been made is, of course, a necessity for any revolutionary party. So long as the working class is not mobilized by a party based on such a theory, its consciousness remains determined by bourgeois culture, a culture which leads man to see society as a set of separate things, not open to his own control and overthrow, but naturally fixed and with independent reality. Marxist theory explains, on the other hand, that the world of men is a man-made world, that the powers standing over men are products of labour, and that if the whole system of labour-exploitation is abolished, man will become free, will dominate social reality instead of being at its mercy. A revolutionary party is one whose strategy and tactics flow from this total conception. Without it, the working class struggles only against partial features of bourgeois domination and, unable to see their connection, tends to fall back after partial victories and defeats.

REVOLUTIONARY CRISES AND THE VANGUARD PARTY

Of course, the building of a leadership capable of theoretical firmness and of combating those tendencies in the Labour movement which reflect other classes, is not the whole of the task by a long way. The actual organization in a revolutionary crisis, the rapid changes of tactics necessary, the planning of insurrection and military operations, all this quite clearly requires centralized authority and discipline of the highest order, and only a leadership developed over a long period will be capable of the task. While this phase of the development of the working-class leadership is not our immediate subject, a few general points should be made here. Certain 'anti-vanguardist' groupings, such as that represented by the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, put forward the idea that the nearer the revolution approaches, and the more the working class itself fills the historical stage, so the leadership 'must prepare its own dissolution'. It is difficult to see exactly what this can mean, but at best it probably

means that as the class itself approaches revolutionary consciousness, the leadership can safely quit the scene. Of course, the outstanding characteristic of revolutions is the entry of the broadest masses into political action, but that is a very different notion from supposing that consciousness of the historical process is clearly fixed in the minds of the people. The possibility of victory in such crises depends above all on the preparation of a leadership, and is inextricably bound up with the earlier phases discussed in this article. Those masses intervening in revolutionary actions are what Lenin called the untrained, undisciplined, undirected forces. The depth of the crisis arouses tremendous force, but the great task of the party, the 'disciplined, trained units' is to give this force its maximum results, to make sure that it is not broken against a wall, dissipated in useless channels, and so on. Rosa Luxemburg, whose shabby 'friends' emphasize her weakest point, and are incapable of learning from her strength, encountered this dilemma in January, 1919. The working class of Berlin was led by rioters and provocateurs to expose itself to bloody repression by the Social-Democratic government; the young Communist Party had had no time to organize the insurrection or to knit together its followers in the rest of Germany. Such a situation could confront the most mature leadership; and the correct lead to the workers would be to sound a tactical retreat, as the Bolsheviks did in the 'July Days' of 1917. But the German Communists lacked the authority and the confidence for such a lead, and the suppression of the Berlin riots was only the beginning of the terrible carnage of 1919, as workers in city after city took up arms against the government, only to be crushed and murdered in thousands.

Rosa Luxemburg had criticized Lenin's centralism and 'overstress on organization' and she had trusted a little too much to the 'organic' growth of the struggle of the working class. Even though she had realized before Lenin the reactionary tendency of Kautsky and the German Social-Democratic leadership, she lacked Lenin's political sense and initiative in seeing the need for organizational expression of the opposition tendency in European socialism. It was not a question only of the Right wing having fallen into conservative habits of distorting Marxism, but of the victory of an alien class tendency in the movement. And since the world had entered the final stage of capitalism, the construction of a leadership devoted unswervingly to the political independence of the proletariat was vital. Because this conclusion was not drawn earlier, because Rosa clung to the view that an ideological (not organizational) struggle within the movement would be sufficient to win the working class, the Left turn of the masses in November, 1918, in Germany did not result in automatic support for Rosa's Spartacists,

the future Communists, but for the 'Independent' Socialists, who appeared to the masses as the Left of Social Democracy. In other words, the shift in the masses was not automatically reflected in revolutionary politics, but was 'mediated' through the existing organisations and forms of consciousness.

One of the favourite references for opponents of the centralized 'vanguard' party conception is the Paris Commune of 1871. It was as a result of the brief experience of workers' rule in that city that Marx sharpened his views on the state and revolution. It was now clear, he said, that the bourgeois state must be smashed, not 'taken over', and that the new state, the proletarian dictatorship, must be the rule of the workers themselves. Latter-day critics of Leninism hold up this picture as a contrast to the centralized 'dictatorship' of Stalin's state and Lenin's party, but in the process they make a mistake which Marx himself could never have made. The conclusions drawn from the Commune about the form of the proletarian dictatorship are not in any way the same thing as the requirements of a revolutionary party to conquer power! *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and similar tendencies argue directly from the form of the future proletarian state to the character of the workers' party under capitalism. But such a party must above all be capable of action and leadership, and it is not identical with the class. We have mentioned the argument that in revolutionary situations, 'the class itself' comes to the fore, and makes the leadership more and more superfluous. Perhaps the best antidote to that argument comes from Marx himself. In a letter to Kugelmann, he made a criticism of the political leadership of the Commune which sets him quite apart from those who invoke him against the Leninists. He criticized the Central Committee of the National Guard for holding democratic elections at a time when it should have exerted its authority, prolonged its 'dictatorship', in order to crush the enemy. For this, the best proletarian elements would have to go to the front, and so a more stringent regime would have been necessary to retain revolutionary authority in Paris itself. But in the absence of a firm revolutionary leadership, it was decided that democracy must have its day; the Commune was defeated. This was only part of the consequences of lack of preparation and revolutionary organization before the Commune (Trotsky —*The Defence of Terrorism*).

LENIN AND INNER-PARTY STRUGGLE

Lenin's firmness and sharpness in defending his political line and organizational discipline was derived precisely from this necessity for training a contingent which will not be 'over-run' by the ir-

regular troops' of the revolution, and not at all to any personal ambition or dictatorial habits, as his opponents unceasingly declared. Bolsheviks are determined to base their party only on the firmest theoretical principles, and to subordinate all party work to these principles. A movement of this kind examines scrupulously all political ideas in the light of the needs of the working class and the party, and ruthlessly fights against all tendencies which divert the movement from its revolutionary path. The method of analysis is always to test these ideas against the needs of the classes in society, both in theoretical argument and in the work of the party.

In the course of the 1903 conference of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, scene of the famous dispute between Lenin and Martov over the conditions of party membership, Trotsky and others of the *Iskra* group originally supported Lenin's political line, but found themselves driven towards the opportunists by what they considered to be Lenin's organizational rigidity. Trotsky later gave his verdict on this episode, and it is worth quoting as an antidote to those who are fond of using Trotsky's early writings about dictatorship over the party. 'It was not for nothing', says Trotsky in *My Life*, 'that the words "irreconcilable" and "unsparing" occurred so frequently in Lenin's vocabulary. Only the highest concentration on the goal of revolution, free from everything petty personal, can justify this kind of personal ruthlessness. . . . His behaviour seemed to me inadmissible, terrible, shocking. Yet at the same time it was politically correct and therefore indispensable from the point of view of organization'. It is in this very important sense that the lessons of building the Bolshevik Party are lessons for all revolutionaries. The whole *method* of building the party politically is involved. Lenin, who had agreement with Martov on political questions at the beginning of the Congress, quite agreed that his difference over the rules was a small one. It became important in the course of the Congress, as it became clear that from this one opportunist formulation Martov was to fall into the hands of the opportunists. In order to preserve the narrow circle atmosphere at the head of the émigré Marxists, he was prepared to line up with the opportunists in opposition to Lenin. Lenin was not only insisting on organizational points when he hammered home the authority of the Congress and the leading role of the majority. The *Iskra*-ites, including Martov, had not gone to the Congress with a factional mandate—that would deny the supreme authority of the Congress, always so dearly cherished by Lenin—but what they did agree, on Lenin's insistence, was to accept all the decisions of the Congress.

This seemed 'innocent enough' at the time, as Lenin wrote, but once 'unfavourable' decisions

(e.g., on the composition of *Iskra's* Editorial Board) were arrived at, the discipline was broken. Lenin, convinced that without a proletarian party of iron discipline there could be no revolution, was prepared to subordinate everything to insistence on this task. Martov's indiscipline and veering towards the opportunists was a capitulation to the bourgeois tendency in the party, the tendency which shrank from independent mobilization of the working class for leadership against Tsarism; hence a split was necessary.

Political and organizational questions therefore cannot be separated. In an epoch where the construction of a leadership of the working class is the most vital historical problem, it is exactly on the questions of concrete planning and discipline for revolutionary work that political differences became explicit. Some Marxists seem to conceive of the party as simply a contractual discipline to stop individuals from going off the rails as they react to class pressure. But it is more than that: it must become the vanguard of revolutionary action, the representative of the general interest of the working class.

In the construction of a revolutionary party, there is a constant need to strive to maintain a correct relationship between democracy and centralism. The balance of this relationship tends to change with the objective situation. During times when the revolutionary movement operates under legal conditions, as in Britain today, it is essential to have full democratic discussion on all questions concerning the working class and the party. This does not, however, mean that democracy is a free-for-all, with nothing being decided. To the Marxist, democracy is a weapon in the struggle against capitalism. Discussion is necessary to arrive at decisions upon which the activity of the party can be based.

The constant training of new leaders in the revolutionary party requires the greatest patience by the leadership. Local autonomy and initiative, allowing the leaders and the rank and file to learn from their mistakes, is essential for the branches of the revolutionary party. The more experienced the revolutionary leadership the more flexible it will be in assisting the ranks by theory and practice to understand the need for a democratic centralist party.

In such an atmosphere differences of opinion can flourish provided such differences do not set out to overthrow the programme and policy of the Marxist movement. Fundamental differences along these lines in an unfavourable objective situation generally lead to a split. Splits of this kind cannot be avoided, and a mature leadership will see to it that the experiences of such a struggle are utilized to educate a membership in the superiority of the

democratic centralist method. Any premature attempt to resolve the internal crisis, based upon excessive centralism and factionalism, will have serious consequences for the revolutionary party. That is why a revolutionary leadership must be the most vigilant custodian of party democracy and the firmest defender of the discipline and rights of the party as a whole. It is the interrelationship between democracy and centralism that constantly confuses the idealist opponents of Leninist organization. In their effort to run away from centralism they embrace a theory of spontaneity and proceed to liquidate the party into the class. The Marxist's interpretation of democratic centralism is part of the fact that he derives his political conclusions from an objective historical study of the political situation, and not only from the existing consciousness of the class. The relation between democracy and centralism to him is based upon the constant requirements of the class struggle. The great problem in Britain today is to obtain a Marxist conception of the party. Capitalist propaganda constantly seeks to equate Marxist discipline with Stalinism. When 'Socialist' opponents of revolutionary discipline make the same equation, they are reflecting capitalist public opinion, regardless of their good intentions in this sense they play a definite part in obstructing the solution by the working class of its most pressing need.

THEORETICAL DIFFERENCES—PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

One aim of this article is to make a little clearer the reasons why Marxists concentrate so much attention on theoretical discussion, even on questions which appear at times to be obscure and remote from the struggle. There are always critics who say: the important thing is to get on with the struggle and get away from this arid and doctrinaire wrangling.

A good example is the 'Russian question'. The nature of Soviet society is a vital question for Marxists and it can only be studied historically. After the Khrushchev exposures of 1956 certain prominent 'New Left' ex-Communists said quite explicitly that Russia had dominated the Left for too long and that in future we should concentrate on contemporary British problems. There were only jeers for those who wanted to know 'what Trotsky said in 1924', and yet without a study of the *social roots* of Stalinism, rather than the horrified turning of one's back on it, there could be no renewal of Marxism. Even if the 1920s in Russia seemed irrelevant to British problems in 1956, it was an essential clue to the balance of forces in the class struggle and the play of tendencies in the

Labour movement of the world. Not only that, but the very existence of the USSR, its bureaucracy's domination over great parties all over the world, and its relationship with imperialism, all the time create situations where one's evaluation of the Soviet social system takes on immediate importance, and for the movement to leave the question open is inadmissible.

One tendency which attracts a certain number of 'Marxists' is that which considers the USSR's economy to be 'state capitalism'. Now the actual consideration of 'State capitalism' as a theory cannot be undertaken here, but some of its adherents illustrate very well the connection between organizational and political questions. The claim that the USSR is 'state capitalist' is usually accompanied by the view that American, British and all advanced capitalisms are tending in the same direction as the USSR—towards a bureaucratic, state-controlled if not state-owned industry, with the workers exploited in ever larger productive units. As in Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* (the product of a similar breakaway from revolutionary Marxism in 1940), the tendency of such theories is to assume that this bureaucratic centralization ('statification', 'managerialism') actually corresponds to the needs of science and technique at their present level of development, that it represents a naturally higher stage than imperialism. And so one is tempted to conclude *either* that all talk of the working class as a revolutionary force is nonsense (Burnham) *or* at least that the age of imperialism, with all the political conclusions drawn from it by Lenin, lie in the past. In the latter case what is required is a completely new analysis to tell us what sort of contradictions dominate the new society and in what sense a revolutionary class might overthrow it, whether that class is the working class, etc. What is usually done (and it is very unsatisfactory) is to cling to the idea of the working class as revolutionary while rejecting: (a) the economic basis (capitalism and imperialism) for this; and (b) the organizational consequences drawn by the Marxists.

As a result, we get among the 'state capitalists' a very abstract, general protest against tyranny and oppression, in many cases a strong leaning towards 'anti-totalitarianism' in the style of the cold war or State Department Socialists. Lenin's organizational conceptions are seen as disastrous, for they paved the way for Stalin's dictatorship, a dictatorship not *of* the working class, but *over* the working class. Bureaucracy 'in itself' is seen as reactionary since it offends against the idea of self-government by the working class.

Currently circulating in translation is a programmatic statement of the group around the French journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. This document entitled 'Socialism Reaffirmed' arrives at the fol-

lowing conclusions:

'Moreover, the objective existence of the bureaucracy, as an exploiting stratum, makes it obvious that the vanguard can only organize itself on the basis of an anti-bureaucratic ideology. . . .

'The main features of a political organization that has become aware of the need to abolish the distinction in society between people who decide and people who merely execute is that such an organization should from the onset seek to abolish such a distinction within its own ranks.'

In place of the concrete development of organizational forms from the specific development of stages of the class struggle and of the type of social crisis arising under capitalism, indeed reacting in a quite topsy-turvy way to the growing concentration of bourgeois state power, we have the abstract argument from general principles. Thus, the aim is workers' rule; therefore the means, the movement, must do away with authority. But how can the working class combat alien tendencies, how can it consolidate its victories and learn from its defeats, how can it organize to crush the powerful enemy, how can it conduct the political struggle from hour to hour, without a leadership, a leadership with *authority*? All the concentration and centralization of bourgeois power, its ideological weapons and its control of leading political elements in the labour movement, all of these make more vital the need for centralized and authoritative revolutionary

leadership. Somehow we are asked to accept that authority in itself is a bad thing, indeed the main enemy.

This is really a retreat from Marxism. It is not bureaucratic or authority-wielding individuals who rule the lives of men under capitalism, but the force of capital, produced by men, yet alienated from them in a structure with its own law of motion, its own imperious demands in terms of human life and effort. Our aim is not the abstract one of 'abolishing the distinction between order-givers and order-takers' but the political overthrow of the class whose interests lie in the perpetuation of the domination of capital, in order that the forces produced by man shall be at his service. For that task we need, not an abandonment of discipline and centralized authority, but its heightening to an unprecedented degree. It is nonsense to suppose that as the working class itself comes on to the political scene, its consciousness developing to new heights, the need for organization and discipline will decline. On the contrary, a more active and politically conscious labour movement will demand it all the more insistently. Just because the rise of the working class is the most universal and world-shaking of all historical transformations, against the strongest ruling class in history, so it requires a higher level of consciousness and a higher degree of organization than any previous class in history.

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Lutte Ouvrière Censors Trotskyist Defense of the Soviet Union

In July 1986, the French organization Lutte Ouvrière (LO) jumped into the game of musical chairs occupying various fake-Trotskyists around the globe by reviving its international organ *Lutte de Classe/Class Struggle/Lucha de Clase*. This was to be a forum for international discussion, LO announced, open to contributions from “various international Trotskyist tendencies.” LO reasons that since the Fourth International no longer exists, all claims to Trotskyism are equally valid. But when we of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) took them up on their offer, by submitting a document on the Russian question, LO’s response was a philistine refusal. We reprint below LO’s invitation, the document submitted by the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, French section of the iSt, and LO’s reply.

The first issue of the new series of *Class Struggle* grouped together under the “Trotskyist” label everything from the parliamentary cretinist Militant group buried deep in the British Labour Party to Jack Barnes’

American SWP, even as the latter formally renounced Trotskyism. LO is happy to engage in bloodless debates over the class nature of the USSR with the likes of Tony Cliff’s British Socialist Workers Party, which labels Russia “state capitalist.” But when it comes to defending the gains of the October Revolution in Poland and Afghanistan, LO is just as rabidly anti-Soviet as the state caps. (The British SWP held up the iSt as the horrible example of what would happen to LO if it ever took seriously its own characterization of the USSR as a degenerated workers state.)

Characterized by workerist philistinism and corresponding national parochialism, Lutte Ouvrière has disdained the struggle for a democratic-centralist International. From its inception, the refurbished *Class Struggle* was intended as an “internationalist” fig leaf while LO seeks out new non-aggression pacts. For fake-Trotskyists, the basis for making (and unmaking) a succession of international rotten blocs is an anti-Soviet consensus, frequently undercut by conflicting oppor-



Spartacist League/U.S. demonstrated in September 1981, saying “Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!”



Robert Capa

Trotsky speaks "In Defense of the Russian Revolution," Copenhagen, November 1932, in his only public address in exile.

tunist appetites on differing national terrains. Support to Islamic reaction in Afghanistan and clerical-nationalist counterrevolution in Poland is taken for granted; what remains for *Class Struggle* is to "compare notes" on their various brands of national opportunism.

At the 1966 London conference of the International Committee, Voix Ouvrière, LO's predecessor, dissented from the political bandit Gerry Healy's self-proclamation of the IC as the Fourth International, as did Spartacist. During the next two years, the Spartacist League/U.S. established fraternal relations with Voix Ouvrière, while criticizing its syndicalist prejudices. VO's workerism and semi-clandestinity rendered it incapable of dealing with the prerevolutionary situation in France in May 1968, ignited by radical students. It is precisely at such moments that LO's schema of patient (and patronizing) sub-minimal "consciousness raising" falls apart, as sharp class struggle shakes everything up at once, undercutting organizational loyalties and posing new questions and the possibility of revolutionary answers. After the '68 general strike, LO moved sharply to the right, attempting to form a lowest-common-denominator merger of the entire French far left.

LO's obscure American affiliate, Spark, originated in a factional struggle within the Spartacist League at that time. LO supporter Kay Ellens combined an apolitical workerist posture with capitulation to petty-bourgeois black nationalism. Thus LO and its American sup-

porters opposed the 1968 New York City teachers strike when the liberal Democratic city administration abetted by various black demagogues sought to break the largely Jewish teachers union. In the 1967 Arab-Israel war, LO militarily supported the Arab bourgeois states while the Spartacists called for revolutionary defeatism on both sides.

In the almost 20 years of its existence, Spark has buried itself in a few plants in Detroit and Baltimore in order to churn out reams of apolitical shop newsletters. Of late, however, Spark has raised its head on campuses in an effort to recruit radicalized student youth. To would-be revolutionary youth attracted to Spark's stance as studious Trotskyists and hard-working militants, we warn: LO's workerist politics are a left face of Cold War anti-Communism. Witness the fact that all of the participants in its "international forum" have the State Department line on Afghanistan and Poland.

In the first issue of *Class Struggle*, Georges Kaldy put forward LO's position that "an International will be set up only when a leadership emerges because a section in a country, or in several countries, will have succeeded in leading important struggles..." LO's response to every major international question is, "build the party in France!" In the meantime, LO is content to organize vague international "discussions" and radical tourism to "exchange experiences." Thus LO's diplomatic relations with the followers of the late Argentine adventurer Nahuel Moreno simply disappeared after a delegation was dispatched to Buenos Aires to observe the Morenoites *in situ*.

Defending the basic Leninist proposition that "only an international organization can be bearer of an international ideology," Trotsky refuted in advance LO's notion of an arithmetical sum of opportunist national policies: "Those who believe that the International Left will someday take shape as a simple sum of national groups, and that therefore the international unification can be postponed indefinitely until the national groups 'grow strong,' attribute only a secondary importance to the international factor and by this very reason take the path of national opportunism" ("An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund," February 1930).

LO is quite simply opposed to the necessary programmatic political struggle, the *splits* and *fusions* essential to reforging a genuinely democratic-centralist Fourth International. LO's version of "peaceful coexistence" within the so-called "family of Trotskyism" represents the most naked expression of its fatalistic denial of the necessity for revolutionary leadership. LO's politics are a reversion to those of the Russian Economists, fought by Lenin at the turn of the century: the notion that revolutionary politics are the spontaneous outgrowth of the daily struggles of the industrial proletariat. This negates the necessity for a programmatically based vanguard party. LO hides behind the political consciousness of the "average worker," a consciousness

transmitted by the current misleaders of the working class to cover their reformism.

LO's workerist orientation to backward sections of the class, under the pretense that these supposedly "politically virgin" workers are the easiest recruits, has led them to adopt a series of scandalous positions for which they are notorious on the French left. Thus LO opposed any act of concrete solidarity with the British miners strike in 1984 and characterized the miners' heroic defense of their picket lines as "dividing" the workers. LO defended the fact that one of its "workers leaders" at the CKD auto parts plant at Rouen *scabbed* on a strike last year. LO refuses to advance a program to fight against racial oppression in the face of the wave of anti-immigrant racist terror in France and avoids the fight for mass workers mobilization to crush fascism by denying that Le Pen's murderous National Front is a fascist organization! And in 1981, LO capitulated to the popular front by calling for a vote, "without illusions but without reservation," to Cold Warrior Mitterrand.

It is not surprising that on the fundamental question dividing revolutionaries from reformists and centrists, LO comes down on the wrong side of the barricades whenever it's a question of defending the Soviet degenerated workers state and the bureaucratically deformed workers states from the imperialist war drive and internal capitalist restoration. LO admitted that the leadership of Polish Solidarność proclaimed "nationalist, clericalist and reactionary political ideas openly" and that "it finds its political model in the memory of the deceased dictator Marshal Pilsudski." Nonetheless, they concluded, "It goes without saying that even if the Polish workers struggle on the basis of a program which does not lead to their social emancipation, revolution-

aries must be *in complete solidarity* [our emphasis] with their struggles" (*Lutte de Classe*, 22 December 1980).

LO is equally the "left" wing of social-democratic anti-Communist hysteria around Afghanistan, comparing the Red Army's intervention on the side of social progress to that of French colonialism in Algeria or U.S. imperialism in Vietnam! But of course LO only defends the "tradition" of the Russian Revolution and does not see any *lasting social gains* to be extended to Afghanistan or defended in Poland. After all, collectivized property forms are only "formal" and "juridical" since, in LO's view, the same institutions that constitute a workers state in the Soviet Union can be the basis of "state capitalism" in Vietnam, Cuba, Eastern Europe, etc. The absurd position that these deformed workers states remain bourgeois is now a rationalization—neither intelligent nor consistent—of LO's programmatic betrayals.

The organizational methods of workerist semi-clandestinity which are LO's trademark are inseparable from its program. Rejection of political struggle—inside as well as outside the organization—is the basis of LO's system of strictly individual contacting and recruitment, arbitrary membership criteria and secret leadership. LO boasts of being a "hard" organization, but this is just an organizational straitjacket designed to prevent an organizational liquidation matching its political liquidation. As for the international role assigned to satellites like Spark, LO's cavalier dismissal of "grouplets of a few ten of militants, or even less, dragged from some other Trotskyist organization, with no militant past of their own and who are pompously called by the name of section or even party" (see below) is eloquent enough.

LO's Call for "International Discusssion"

This trilingual review is published by four Trotskyist organizations which have been active together for a number of years and the first three of which are better known under the name of their press organs:

—Lutte Ouvrière—France

—The Spark—USA

—Combat Ouvrier—French-speaking West Indies

—UATCI (African Union of Internationalist Communist Workers)

This publication is not the first of its kind: from 1972 to 1980, many bilingual issues (French-English and English-Spanish) of this review have been published by the same organizations—though from 1972 onward these bilingual editions have been replaced by monolingual ones in each language).

At still earlier date, a similar bilingual review had

been published in 1967-1968 by Union Communiste (trotskyist), an organization which was banned in May 68 under De Gaulle.

Class Struggle will of course print the analysis and points of view of our organizations on political and social current events of international interest, based on our common fundamental options.

However, our ambition is to address ourselves to all Trotskyist militants who wish a genuine political confrontation between the various Trotskyist groups existing throughout the world, to all revolutionary workers who have an interest in the political future of their class and in the role it is bound to play in world history when it starts moving independently and autonomously—at the political and organizational levels—with respect to the other social classes, whether they be revolutionary or not.

Our hope then is for the review to become a forum of international discussion between various international Trotskyist tendencies even if, given the sectarianism of some of them, the discussion will not always be under the form of a dialogue and will perforce be restricted to



Fabian/Sygma

Lech Walesa embraces anti-Communist Pope. LO supported Solidarność though admitting it pushed "clericalist and reactionary political ideas."

one-way criticisms of other groups' interventions and political options as they appear in their press. But even if there can be no dialogue, we will keep clear of any kind of sterile polemical aggressions, as our aim is not to prove that we are in the right and all the others are in the wrong, but to discuss our own as well as the other currents' choices and options in front of the whole Trotskyist movement.

Of course, we would rather have a genuine discussion with the other groups, but despite our efforts those currents who claim to be an International in their own right stand their ground—not out of a conviction which does not exist but out of sheer self-satisfaction—and refuse any kind of relationships with other international groups with the exception of basically apolitical talks aimed at a future merger (the prelude to a further more or less rapid split).

In this review, we will no doubt have other opportunities to formulate our opinion on the evolution of the Trotskyist movement since World War II, on the political as well as the organizational level, and to set down how we think the Fourth International could be built, or rebuilt.

The fact that many organizations either pretend they are the Fourth International or, more modestly, say they want to rebuild it is not in itself sufficient proof that none of these groups has enough credit—that is, enough political and human capital—to claim to be even the embryo of a World Proletarian Revolutionary Party which is what its founder, Leon Trotsky, wanted it to be.

A much more significant fact, unfortunately, is that none of these organizations, including the United Secretariat, has more than one national organization of any

weights, (at the scale of today's Trotskyist movement).

The successive leaderships of the International Secretariat and later of the United Secretariat have stated as a principle that they were the Fourth International without raising the problem of whether during World War II Trotskyist organizations had really faced up to the situation created by the war and, more importantly, by the after-war period.

In any case, neither during post-war years in Europe nor during the 1945-1955 decade of revolutionary crises in the Third World (or even later) did any organization belonging to the Fourth International play any role, least of all any leading role.

And as pretences are not sufficient to bend facts the way one wishes for, the Fourth International underwent split after split, first at the time of "Pabloism" after which it broke down into ever smaller splinters to reach its present state.

Today, any national organization with a minimum number of militant forces refuses the arbitrary leadership of a would-be International and refuses to be forced to follow a policy decided upon by organizations which do not represent anything real. Each of these organizations will entice a few militants away from this or that organization affiliated to the USec and "build" their own International on the same model as the USec.

This is how, today, all these Internationals are made up of but one sizeable organization (and even those are marginal in relation to the political life of their country and even more so in relation to the working class), surrounded by grouplets of a few ten of militants, or even less, dragged from some other Trotskyist organization, with no militant past of their own and who are pompously called by the name of section or even party. The relationships between these sections inside the so-called Internationals reflect the basi[c] reality and, despite the pomp of World Congress PS and other international bodies, they are based on nothing more than the personal influence of a few individuals, or even a single militant. This is not in itself blameworthy—if nothing else is possible—, but what is, is to use an erroneous vocabulary which deceives the militants, workers, and youths one wants to train and which renders them inefficient because they are incapable of discerning the tasks that lie before them.

There are political differences as well, of course, but they deserve to be assessed more seriously for they do not always lie where each of the so-called Internationals say they are.

The fact remains that this type of methods only favors sectarian and even national deformations. In any case, it does not work and this is why, though we are extremely rich in Internationals these days, there are no more Trotskyist militants today than in 1945. More importantly, the programs and the political and militant strategies of these militants cannot be compared any more to those for which Trotsky fought till his death. This is one of the problems we have in common, and it is not the least.

As for us, we do not claim we can tell others what they must do. If we are ever in a position to teach a thing or two to other militants, it will be through our activities and interventions. That is the only thing that counts.

The aim of this review, as we said before, will be

merely to have a discussion which does not yet exist between the various Trotskyist trends.

We hope it will be of some help to all those who devote their activities to the victory of the world proletarian revolution.

French Spartacists' Suppressed Contribution

"I said again in my speech that politics is a concentrated expression of economics, because I had earlier heard my 'political' approach rebuked in a manner which is inconsistent and inadmissible for a Marxist. Politics must take precedence over economics. To argue otherwise is to forget the ABC of Marxism."

—V.I. Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin," 1921

"War is a mere continuation of policy by other means."

—Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832

1. The world vanguard party—the Fourth International—can only be reformed in political struggle against revisionism and on the basis of a living program, that is, clear and precise positions on the burning questions of our time. The unconditional military defense of the USSR against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution is as crucial a question today as it was when the Fourth International was founded. We thus address

ourselves to the Russian question in this contribution to the discussion being carried on in the pages of *Lutte de Classe*.

2. The Russian Bolsheviks took the question of the workers revolution out of the realm of abstraction and gave it flesh and blood reality. Since October 1917, the defense of the Soviet Union has been a crucial task in the struggle to advance the world proletarian revolution, and simultaneously one of the touchstones that distinguishes those who struggle to retain and apply the understanding of the practices and traditions of the international communist movement in the spirit and program of the Bolsheviks from those who bend to prevailing political pressures.

3. Stalinism is a system of bureaucratic rule based on collectivized property. Writing about the USSR in 1921, V.I. Lenin noted: "A workers state is an abstraction. What we actually have is a workers state, with this peculiarity, firstly, that it is not the working class but the peasant population that predominates in the country, and, secondly, that it is a workers state with bureaucratic distortions." In comrade Lenin's acute observation, subsequently deepened and expanded by Trotsky and the Left Opposition in their struggle against the consolidating Stalinist bureaucracy, are laid bare both the roots of Stalinism and the necessity of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperial-

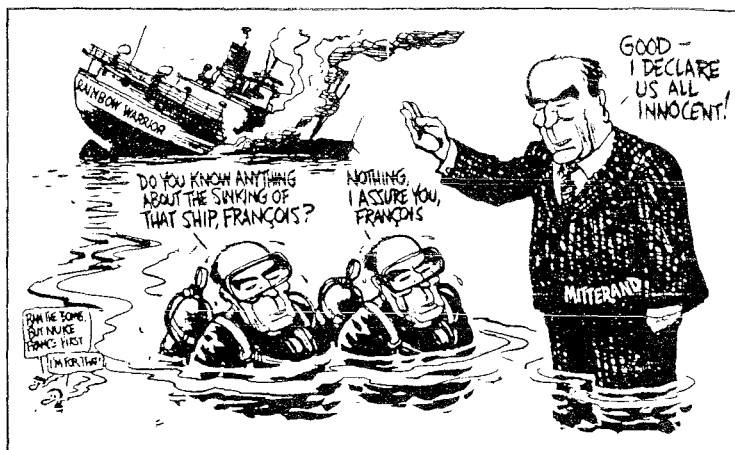


Le Bolchevik

Ligue Trotskyste de France initiated December 1981 united-front protest in Rouen to smash fascist attacks. LTF banner says: "The popular front disarms the working class! Crush the fascist vermin! For workers self-defense!"



LO supported social-democratic Cold Warrior François Mitterrand in 1981 election "without illusions but without reservations." In 1985 Mitterrand's commandos killed a pacifist by blowing up Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* to carry out French nuclear tests in the South Pacific.



Pat Oliphant

ism and capitalist counterrevolution. It was in 1923-24 that the qualitative change, the Soviet Thermidor, took place with the expropriation of political power by a bureaucratic caste. A proletarian political revolution is necessary to restore the Red Army and the Soviet state to their revolutionary and internationalist mission.

4. The class nature of the deformed workers states (Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam), as defined by the property forms defended by those states, is qualitatively similar to that of the USSR. The bourgeoisies in these countries were expropriated and a bureaucratic caste holds political power. The program of the necessary Trotskyist vanguard parties in these countries is also qualitatively similar to that of the Soviet Union: defense of the proletarian gains and political revolution.

5. Cold War II dominates world politics, from the Pacific to the Near East, to Africa and Central America. Active propaganda aimed at winning the advanced workers in the imperialist centers and potential revolutionaries in the colonial and ex-colonial countries to the slogans for the defense of the USSR and the deformed workers states is an urgent and non-postponable task. Only a party that steadfastly defends the Soviet Union will win the Soviet proletariat to the banner of Trotskyism and be capable of leading a successful proletarian political revolution against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy.

* * *

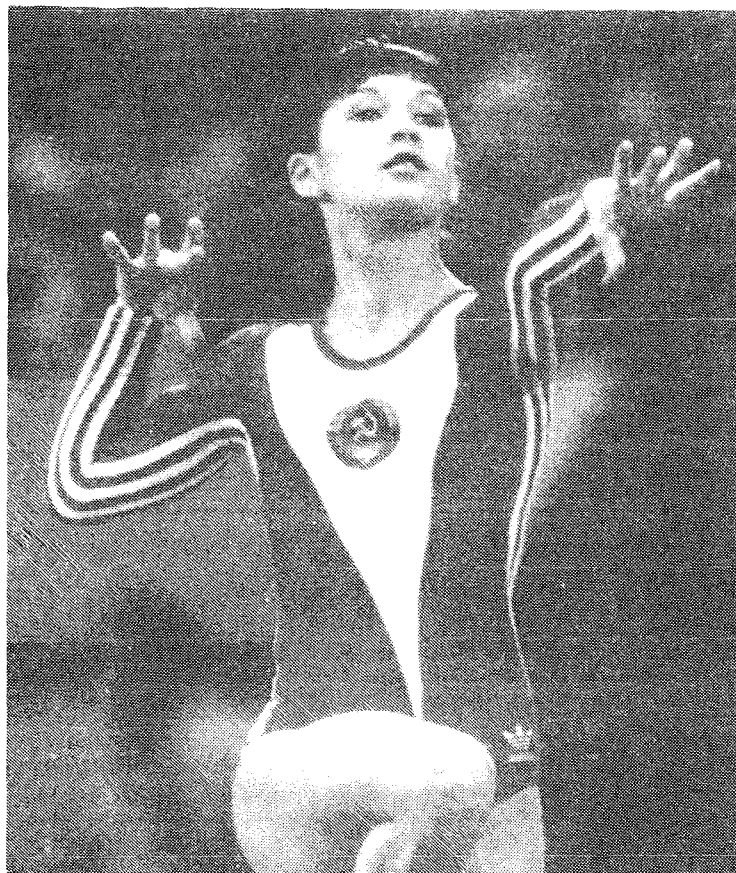
6. The 1980s, like the period of the 1930s when the Left Opposition struggled to assemble cadres and forge the Fourth International, is a period of war preparations. Yesterday's "far-leftists" are running for cover from the dangers and pressures by seeking accommodation with their own bourgeoisies. Now, as then, the Russian question is a watershed. Trotsky's last major political battle was against Max Shachtman and his faction in the American Socialist Workers Party, who embraced third campism in a centrist fashion on the eve of World War II.

Now, as then, revolutionaries reject any support to any version of the popular front. To build such class-collaborationist alliances the bourgeoisie demands of its labor lieutenants two key guarantees: to not touch capitalist property relations and to support national defense. As the French Communist Party's support to the Stalin-Laval pact preceded its support to the Popular Front in 1936, its support for the anti-Soviet *force de frappe* was a necessary precondition for its participation in the Mitterrand popular front, for whom all the ostensibly Trotskyist groups in France—with the exception of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF)—voted in 1981. The electoral tactic of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) in 1981 in France was conditional opposition to the workers parties participating in the class-collaborationist alliance, that is, a precondition for considering the possibility of critical support to a mass reformist workers party is class independence, that it present its candidates in its own name. We were prevented from extending savagely critical support to presidential candidate Georges Marchais by the racist atrocity at Vitry, which also paved the way for the PCF's entry into the government immediately after the elections.

In recent years the Cold War has known two crucially important "hot spots": Afghanistan and Poland. Especially in continental Europe, social democracy on the rise has been the vanguard of anti-Soviet hysteria, with the Mitterrand popular front leading the pack. The iSt has alone stood firm and remained intransigent in the face of the prevailing pressures.

* * *

"...the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland.... The popular masses in western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations. A revolutionary party which failed to notice this impulse in time and refused to utilize it would be



Sports Illustrated



Planeta Publishers

Russian Revolution liberated women of the East from the veil. Soviet Central Asian Olympic gymnast Nelli Kim (left); Afghan women enslaved to Islamic reaction (above).

fit for nothing but the ash can.

"This impulse in the direction of socialist revolution was possible only because the bureaucracy of the USSR straddles and has its roots in the economy of a workers' state....

"Seeking to get around reality, namely that nothing else but the social foundations of the USSR forced a social revolutionary program upon the Kremlin, Shachtman refers to Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia where everything has remained as of old. An incredible argument! No one has said that the Soviet bureaucracy *always* and *everywhere* either wishes or is able to accomplish the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. We only say that no other government could have accomplished that social overturn which the Kremlin bureaucracy notwithstanding its alliance with Hitler found itself compelled to sanction in eastern Poland. Failing this, it could not include the territory in the Federation of the USSR."

—Leon Trotsky, "From a Scratch—To the Danger of Gangrene," 1940

7. In Afghanistan, the imperialists support and arm an insurrection led by reactionary tribal chiefs and mullahs against a petty-bourgeois nationalist regime allied to the USSR. In this war, a victory for the pro-Western rebels would mean: 1) the yoke of an obscurantist Islamo-feudal dictatorship for the peoples of Afghani-

stan; 2) imperialist bases for military aggression, espionage and subversion on the border of Soviet Central Asia. In Afghanistan the Red Army plays a doubly progressive role: it defends the USSR against a direct military threat and it represents the camp of social progress. This latter is particularly clear on the woman question: on the rebels' side it is the assassination of schoolteachers, the veil, forced marriage, the life of a beast of burden; on the Soviet side, the right to be a human being. Even the hardened anti-Communists of the "humanitarian organizations" which aid the Afghan guerrillas are horrified by the "freedom fighters'" despicable treatment of women. In December 1979 the international Spartacist tendency chose its side in this military clash between two social systems: Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples! The other groups who claim filiation with Trotskyism, including Lutte Ouvrière, call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, thus acting as direct conduits for the anti-Soviet campaign of the bourgeoisie and the social democracy.

8. It is scandalous and erroneous to compare the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan with the imperialists' colonial wars in Algeria and Vietnam, as does LO. In the absence of a significant Afghan proletariat, the most elementary gains of bourgeois democracy can only be introduced in Afghanistan from the exterior. The Soviet state and its army can play this eminently pro-

gressive role—and for once are doing so—and the reason is precisely the historically progressive character of the planned economy in the Soviet Union.

9. Far from being bogged down in Afghanistan, the Red Army and Soviet-backed forces of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan are winning hands down. This fact has not prevented the Stalinists from seeking once again to conciliate the imperialists in the framework of their strategy of peaceful coexistence. The recent “peace initiative” from Moscow and Kabul is misguided and dangerous. There is a civil war in Afghanistan, and one side or the other must win. Offers of “compromise” will only embolden the imperialists. The sooner the feudalists are smashed, the sooner the bloodshed will end and the road to social progress will be secured.

* * *

“Victor Serge has disclosed in passing what caused the collapse of the Bolshevik party: excessive centralism, mistrust of ideological struggle, lack of freedom-loving (*libertaire*, in reality anarchist) spirit. More confidence in the masses, more freedom! All this is outside time and space. But the masses are by no means identical: there are revolutionary masses, there are passive masses, there are reactionary masses. The very same masses are at different times inspired by different moods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralized organization of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of overcoming the vacillation of the masses themselves. To invest the mass with traits of sanctity and to reduce one’s program to amorphous ‘democracy’, is to dissolve oneself in the class as it is, to turn from a vanguard into a rearguard, and by this very thing, to renounce revolutionary tasks. On the other hand, if the dictatorship of the proletariat means anything at all, then it means that the vanguard of the class is armed with the resources of the state in order to repel dangers, including those emanating from the backward layers of the proletariat itself. All this is elementary; all this has been demonstrated by the experience of Russia, and confirmed by the experience of Spain.”

—Leon Trotsky, “The Moralists and Sycophants Against Marxism: Peddlers of Indulgences and Their Socialist Allies, or the Cuckoo in a Strange Nest,” 1939

10. The crisis which was opened in Poland by the general strike on the Baltic coast during the summer of 1980 marked the complete political (and economic) bankruptcy of Polish Stalinism. The Catholic church, which the bureaucracy has conciliated for decades and which has its own social base (the small landholding peasants) and had the monopoly on opposition to the regime, constituted the rallying point and backbone of those coun-

terrevolutionary forces which existed from the beginning in Solidarność. The iSt recognized the initially contradictory character of Solidarność and said that the task of Trotskyists was to split the workers from the clerical-nationalist forces on the programmatic basis of defense of the proletarian gains—socialized property—and the unity of the Russian and Polish proletariats. Winning the workers to these points was precisely the way to organize for a proletarian political revolution and to stave off the danger of restorationist counterrevolution.

11. 1981 witnessed the further development of Solidarność, a mass political organization with a largely working-class base (but a strong petty-bourgeois component), behind an openly pro-Western leadership. One of the worst of the Stalinist crimes in Poland is precisely to have pushed the Polish proletariat, historically socialist, into the arms of the Vatican and the imperialist West. During its first congress, in September 1981, this organization definitively consolidated around a program of capitalist restoration: the dismantling of the planned economy (“self-management” and “autonomy” of enterprises); the call for foreign investments



Workerist philistinism and electoral cretinism: LO's Arlette Laguiller campaigns as “a worker, a woman.”

and the appeal to the IMF; “free elections” to parliament which would have meant placing governmental power at the base of society in the hands of explicitly anti-Communist and nationalist forces which included in their midst the Pilsudskiite anti-Semites of the KPN. A delegate’s motion to put Solidarność on record for socialism (in order to deflect charges that it was pro-capitalist) was *defeated*. At this point the iSt called to: “Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!”

The strength of Solidarność created a situation of cold dual power which could not last. At the end of 1981, the leadership of Solidarność, around Lech Walesa, decided to undertake a test of strength with the goal of seizing power, which was exposed by the “Radomgate”

tapes, large extracts of which were printed in the Western press.

12. The success of this undertaking would have been a catastrophe of historic proportions for the world proletariat and for the Polish proletariat, which would have rapidly been subjected to IMF-dictated austerity and white terror, indispensable for defending "Polish sovereignty" against "atheistic Russian Communism." The international Spartacist tendency's position was that it was necessary to spike the counterrevolutionary power bid by Solidarność and fortunately Jaruzelski's counter-coup d'état did so. Here again, the pseudo-Trotskyist organizations cried with the bourgeois wolves at the crucial moment (the LCR marched in the same Parisian demonstration as the fascists and the RPR), de facto becoming apologists for the "democratic" counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc.

13. LO has the position that the "states of the People's Democracies... were and remain bourgeois states" ("Les démocraties populaires," December 1971, reprinted in *Textes et documents, 1971-1985*, I, Part 1, p. 9). This position is untenable and flies in the face of empirical reality not to mention the Leninist theory of the state. But it does mean that LO believes that there is nothing to defend with regard to the property forms in Poland. LO does also state that "Imperialism will not intervene to 'liberate' the countries of Central Europe, but to subjugate both the Soviet Union and its former defense perimeter" ("L'Union Soviétique," December 1971, *ibid.*, I, Part 1, p. 8). But when it came to Solidarność, which was financed by the CIA and the Catholic church, this cautionary afterthought was subordinated to a more systematic logical development of a fundamentally Stalinophobic position: "It goes without saying that even if the Polish workers struggle on the basis of a program which does not lead to their social emancipation, revolutionaries must be in complete solidarity with their struggles" ("La situation internationale," November 1980, *ibid.*, I, Part 2, p. 24); and later on to regret that "the Polish working class [sic] was defeated without a struggle" ("La Pologne, Extraits des textes d'orientation de novembre 1982," *ibid.*, I, Part 3, p. 5). LO criticized Walesa, but when the crucial moment came, LO was on *his* side of the barricades.

14. But 13 December 1981 in Poland settled nothing. The defensive action of the bureaucracy froze *in extremis* a situation which is untenable in the long run. It is necessary to profit from this breathing space to construct clandestine Trotskyist propaganda and education cells to rip the working class away from the influence of the priests and reactionaries and to prepare the political revolution.

15. With regard to Poland and Afghanistan, Lutte Ouvrière capitulated to the social democracy and was in the camp of the bourgeoisie at the decisive moment, against the historic interests of the proletariat. The position of LO on the defense of the USSR is illogical and disastrous. In our opinion, Lutte Ouvrière is torn

between a Stalinophobic negation of the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy and an appreciation that it would be suicidal to cut itself off from the advanced sectors of the French proletariat, whose attachment to the land of the October Revolution, albeit through the deforming influence of the class-collaborationist PCF, has for the moment withstood the onslaught of the anti-Communist propaganda of two Cold Wars.

16. From our inception as a tendency 25 years ago, we have based ourselves on international democratic centralism, a form of organization which is anathema to the nationally conflicting opportunist appetites of the ostensibly Trotskyist groups. Their attempts at international mergers ceaselessly fly apart no sooner than they are patched together, despite their common capitulation on the Russian question. We are building toward an International Trotskyist League which Trotsky would recognize; our goal is the reforging of the Fourth International and world revolution.

Ligue Trotskyste de France
French section of the international
Spartacist tendency
4 May 1987

LO Reneges

Lutte Ouvrière
Paris
27 May 1987

Ligue Trotskyste de France
Paris Cedex 10

Dear Comrades,

We received your letter of May 5, as well as the document you ask us to publish in *Lutte de Classe*, the organ of our international tendency.

However, we see no reason to publish a document such as the one sent us. This document is not a discussion document, but theses on your own general political positions, "on the Russian question," as you state in the first point of your theses, but also, pell-mell, on the class nature of the states in East Europe, on the 1981 Presidential elections, on Afghanistan, Poland, etc. We cannot view the sporadic allusions to the positions of Lutte Ouvrière or others as even the starting point for a discussion.

As we said in the introduction to *Lutte de Classe*, we want to open our pages to a real discussion between organizations which lay claim to revolutionary communism. But we don't see why our journal should provide space for a soliloquy by another organization which has its own publications for that purpose.

With our revolutionary greetings,

Georges Kaldy
For *Lutte de Classe*

Origin of Spark:

The 1968 Faction Fight in the Spartacist League

The Spartacist tendency came into existence as the oppositional Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the Socialist Workers Party. It's only in the last few years that the SWP's Jack Barnes has come out of the closet as an explicit, sneering anti-Trotskyist, but the decisive political battle against the SWP's abandonment of a Trotskyist program (first over Cuba) was fought by the RT in 1961-63. Soon thereafter, the SWP embraced class collaboration "at home" as organizers of the wing of the antiwar movement most dominated by the liberal capitalist politicians, while Dobbs' 1965 Organizational Resolution which justified the political expulsion of the RT is the cornerstone of the SWP's now-notorious "norms" of bureaucratic organizational control. We hope that this important history is studied by Spark members as part of their political education. Kay Ellens was a participant in the RT although she was never a leading spokesman.

The initiating cadres of the Spartacist League were shaped in this experience. But for most of the comrades who were members of the SL in 1968, the internal struggle against Kay Ellens & Co. was the first exposure to serious internal political struggle. The younger comrades learned that seeking to answer the arguments of articulate supporters of an oppositional viewpoint is more educational than the best-intended class series.

At a distance of 20 years, some aspects of the 1968 fight are closed questions. (We still don't know to what extent the Voix Ouvrière--now Lutte

Ouvrière--group braintrusted or approved of Ellens' splitting operation inside the SL, but this is somebody else's problem.) The issue of whether the Ellens minority--which was at the time linked to another vociferous and literarily productive minority (of two people) around Harry Turner--had any intention of remaining in the party and abiding by its decisions when they launched their fight which tied us up in internal struggle for an entire year is obviously now clear. And likewise, the majority's characterization of Ellens-Turner as a rotten bloc.

The majority predicted that Ellens, who disclaimed interest in VO's mostly state-capitalist position on the deformed workers states and professed to be concerned solely with questions of organization and "proletarianization," would immediately upon departing rally to VO's views on the Russian question. When she did, this seemed to inexperienced Spartacist League comrades of the time a stunning proof that Marxism is a science. But Ellens' soft-pedaling of her real views, while strongly suggesting a certain lack of Bolshevik firmness toward political questions, does not justify dismissing her views from consideration--now, as then, they must be judged on their own merits.

Indeed, what is notable now is that Ellens, once she had acquired a half-dozen supporters and disencumbered herself of the SL and Turner (who now, by the way, is linked with the Morenoites), proceeded to build a group which as far as we can tell embodies the organizational principles she advocated of semi-

clandestinity and apparent "cell" structure. And, based in the (once) proletarian city of Detroit, Spark is still devotedly pursuing the factory-bulletin-and-contacting road to the working class (and we have persevered on our road).

On questions of concrete organization, we know little about how Spark functions. Nor do we know to what extent the Ellens document actually describes the philosophy and methods of the French group she admired. Still, we think the brief excerpts from her document aptly capture a quality of deliberately apolitical or anti-programmatic recruitment and training procedure. Whereas Ellens projects the winning of fresh forces to the revolutionary cause mainly through the methodical "contacting" of individuals repelled by the daily indignities heaped on workers under capitalism, we seek as well and especially to maximize our impact at crucial junctures of sharp struggle--when under the impact of a strike workers are actively debating counterposed strategies and feeling a sense of their social power (something the bureaucrats work very hard to conceal), when movements against oppression become so massive that they threaten to flow outside the control of reformist "leaders," when large events in the world upset the schemas of reformist or centrist groups, challenging the routine habits and organizational loyalties that normally prevent members from rethinking their views and affiliations.

The Challenge of the New Left

Ellens' document admits that the "organizational methods" she favors were worked out as a response to isolation and reaction. One should ponder the implications of applying tactics perhaps appropriate to recruiting individuals in the midst of America's McCarthy witch-hunt, or in the teeth of a hard and hegemonic Stalinist leadership in some of the French trade unions at particular times--tactics which might be summarized as recruiting "against the stream" without overtly confronting the stream at

every point--in 1968, when France had just been ripped apart by the May-June events (a radical student revolt capped by workers' general strikes). Throughout Western Europe, America, Japan and elsewhere, student youth, spurred in large measure by America's losing war in Vietnam, were drawn to the idea of communism as they understood it.

In 1968, the Spartacist League was an organization of perhaps 80 members, and that included a lot fewer cadres. We had thus far been agonizingly unable to establish a regular, frequent newspaper, even before the faction fight absorbed the totality of our literary capacity. If literary productivity was our weakness, our strength was our commitment from the outset to a conception of a fighting propaganda group--that propaganda does not consist of commentary, but must grow out of involvement in struggle: through the participation of party members in the labor movement and in the major social movements of the time. We had been expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in 1963 in part owing to our sharp criticism of the SWP's abstention from the civil rights movement--and to the "theoretical" foundation for that abstention, as the party embraced black nationalism (as did Ellens, in a low-key way, in her tendency's documents) rather than fight for communist leadership within the black movement. By 1968 our own slender roots in the black movement had been snapped by the rise of exclusionism, but we continued to pursue contact with black radical circles as well as involving ourselves in the tumultuous antiwar activism of the time.

Having recognized in the rise of the student radical SDS an imperative arena for Trotskyist intervention, the SL was badly hampered by a lack of student youth. Tied up for a year in a faction fight with Ellens and Turner who were advocating the need to go to the working class--and not even by getting concentrations of our young members into important union situations, but by news-

letters from the outside--the SL managed only the shallowest entry into SDS. When SDS split between the "anti-party," "student vanguardist" wing which exemplified the worst, petty-bourgeois elitist aspects of the New Left and a more serious, pro-working-class wing, the crudely "leftist" and workerist, semi-Maoist Progressive Labor group reaped the benefits.

At the same time, the 1968 faction fight was a shaping experience for our party. The majority defended the conception of a polemical press which fights for leadership of the advanced workers by unmasking the programs and claims to leadership of the reformist and centrist opponents of Marxism. We defended the tactic of regroupment--splits and fusions on the basis of program, aiming to win to Trotskyist politics cadres who are already activists and leaders in social struggle--against an orientation to the chimerical "honest worker" presumably uncorrupted by the ideologies of alien organizations (but not by those of alien classes?). The fight reaffirmed the obligation to intervene among students who were in leftward motion and to direct our press in part toward militants of other left groups. (The so-called "petty-bourgeois" left was itself shaken up by the emergence of a generation debating such questions as "spontaneity" and sectoralism vs. "the party," the "guerrilla road," Stalin vs. Trotsky.)

**Workerism vs.
a Working-Class Perspective**

The comrades who came together to repulse Ellens' workerist challenge--those like Joseph Seymour, who wrote the majority's replies to Turner's voluminous documents, and those who came forward during the debates--became the foundation for a more broadly-based leadership than the party had had before.

A major precipitant of the faction struggle was a disagreement over whether

to continue putting out "Militant Labor Civil Rights Committee" newsletters aimed at New York City hospital workers, following the departure of supporters who worked as hospital workers. Ellens and Turner were determined that this work had to continue at all costs. In the eyes of the majority, this constituted at best a social-workerist approach to the working class, and at worst was counterposed to real union work based on disciplined party comrades acting politically within the unions.

In the sequel, it was the party's recruitment of students and ex-students from the New Left milieu which provided the cadres to "go to the working class" in a modest but real way--i.e., through the systematic implantation of numbers of young comrades into key industries and union situations, to constitute union fractions. Fractions are concentrations of party supporters in selected places where they can combine, together with others where possible, in a union caucus or other formation to fight within the union to advance a class-struggle perspective based on the transitional program, in opposition to the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy. This approach is traditional in the communist movement, and was codified notably in the Communist International's resolution on organization, adopted at the Third World Congress in 1921. (Considerable documentation exists of the revolutionary SWP's fractions in such industries as auto workers, maritime and Teamsters.) It presupposes patient work as the comrades win authority for themselves as militant fighters for the union in its economic struggles, as advocates of the measures necessary to make the union fight on behalf of its members and on behalf of specially oppressed victims of capitalism, and as thoughtful supporters of a Marxist press which seeks to offer leadership in the struggles of the working people of the world.

In a 22 May 1968 document ("What Is a Working-Class Perspective?") Ellens was explicit that "proletarianization of

the SL" "of course, does not mean sending students into the factories, which would probably be more disastrous for the militant worker than it would be for the students." Can it be that, in the name of protecting the workers, Spark members recruited from petty-bourgeois backgrounds are exempted from the possibility of taking an industrial job to benefit the party's political work? Does Spark guarantee to its student recruits that they can continue on their class-tracked path to the careers they took for granted before they became socialists?

After the departure of Ellens & Co., rapid recruitment and regroupments out of the New Left milieu directly laid the basis for the SL to make "leaps" in a number of areas. As well as developing trade-union fractions based on ex-student comrades who, as part of deciding to become "professional revolutionaries," welcomed the chance to go into industry, the party achieved regular press capacity (Workers Vanguard was launched in 1971), founded a youth group--and became an international tendency.

Ellens vs. Democratic Centralism

"The SL, the Minority and VO" does not do justice to the politics underlying Ellens' views on organization. The document, written early in the faction fight, bends over backwards to avoid prematurely harsh or definitive judgments on VO and its organizational methods. But even beyond this, there is a marked incomprehension of how totally the structure described diverges from democratic-centralism as familiar to a Spartacist member. Without much knowledge of how Spark actually functions,

one can nonetheless see from the excerpts reprinted here from Ellens' "Organizational Methods" that the norms suggested bear an unfortunate resemblance to practices familiar to the communist movement historically as "cell structure"--the breaking down of large groups of organized militants into very small units--and specifically associated with all manner of Stalinist organizations, where it is quite clearly used as a means of suppressing political discussion by keeping the ranks isolated from each other. A structure of cells of a few comrades apiece, with the cells linked through their leaders, who get together in higher-up cells, could have a legitimate purpose under some circumstances--let's say, if you were organizing in Saigon during the Vietnam War, or in South Africa today.

Spark supporters should also think about Ellens' description of the contact who, having regularly attended a study class, becomes a "sympathizer"--a status which seems to entail submitting an application and having it accepted, doing sales or other work for the organization, attending regular meetings, undertaking serious study, etc., but seems to confer little in the way of rights beyond membership in a particular "circle" along with other "new people" and other people who are said explicitly to be not moving toward membership. As a model for training cadres, this description suggests a deliberately sanitized version of "education" where the right answers are patiently explained to young comrades by leaders selected for the purpose, while the internal policy debates and political disputes of the inner circles remain shrouded in mystery.

--13 May 1988

The Spartacist League, the Minority and VO

By Liz Gordon

--Reprinted from Spartacist League
Internal Bulletin No. 7, December 1968

While the Turner-Ellens-Stoute Minority faction has not, at least yet, taken a formal position on the Voix Ouvrière group, the organizational methods of VO, at least as described by Comrade Ellens, have played an important role in the present factional dispute in the SL. Presumably the Minority has chosen not to take a position as a faction on the questions raised by Ellens' report of 8 April 1968 on "Organizational Methods" of a European Trotskyist group which was circulated by Comrade Ellens nationally. The group in question, the French "Union Communiste," has since been dissolved by government decree as a result of the May general strike and its organs, Voix Ouvrière and the bilingual Lutte de Classe/Class Struggle, no longer appear. (The document submitted by Turner on 17 July 1968 is the first document to be signed by the Minority comrades collectively.) At the same time, the tendency of which Comrade Ellens is a leading spokesman has concentrated its fire heavily on questions of organization and so-called "Leninist functioning." Comrade Ellens' first documentary contribution to the discussion was an attachment to the PB minutes of 25 March 1968, as a statement qualifying her vote in favor of Comrade Robertson's motions on how we seek to function politically and organizationally. These motions were presented and motivated in the PB meeting of 4 March. Her entire statement was, "The three motions on organization do not take into account that we are not functioning in a Leninist manner. This must be done in

their implementation." While Comrade Ellens' justification for having circulated her report on VO's organizational methods herself and over the head of the PB was that the report was not a factional document, her use of the time allotted her during her recent July trip to the Bay Area for a factional presentation to present the organizational ideas of VO has made it clear that VO is being used as a major factional issue by the Minority. This makes it necessary that the Majority respond to the issues raised.

It seems clear that the Minority, or Comrade Ellens at least, has been attempting to sell VO's successes and impressive aspects, especially in lieu of a more concrete schema of proposals by them for what the SL should seek to be and to do. This is not to say that there has been no political basis of real differences in the founding of the Minority tendency. The general proposition of "getting to the masses" and an implied policy of proletarianization as the solution to the SL's ills has become more and more clear, and poses legitimate political questions which must be discussed in their own right. But the question of VO and its organizational methods has been a second current running through the proselytizing of Comrade Ellens and, further, is one which ties in well, at least superficially, with the expressed concern with "getting to the working class," since VO is presented as being the model of a proletarian Trotskyist organization with proper "Leninist functioning" which the SL should emulate. VO has been used as a prime recruiting device of the Minority and is therefore de facto part of the Minority's program for change.

It is in a way unfortunate that VO

has become a factional football. The necessity of answering the attributions and attacks of the Minority makes us insist here on the weak sides of VO. The comrades must keep in mind that VO is in many respects a fine and Trotskyist organization, and it is not an accident that the SL has chosen to maintain fraternal relations between our two groups. Further, VO has behaved towards the SL and the IC (the two opportunities we have had to observe VO most closely) in a serious, comradely and scrupulous manner. Likewise, the comrades must keep in mind that, despite the Minority's attempt to suggest an implicit identity between itself and VO, the Minority is not VO. In choosing to wear the mantle of VO, Ellens is implicitly assigning to VO her opinions of the SL and her concept of what VO is. A VO'er, for example, might choose to accentuate some of its disagreements with the SL over political questions which Comrade Ellens has not chosen to treat in her representation of what is basic to that organization. For another example, Comrade Ellens has stated that VO's position against having full-time political functionaries is not very important and flows from a specific difference between French and U.S. conditions, i.e., the allegedly greater ease of getting a part-time job in France. Judging from the whole of VO's organizational outlook, it seems likely that VO itself considers this question of considerable importance and strongly disapproves of having full-timers whose only political assignment is party work. In short, we cannot exclude the possibility that VO views itself differently from the way Comrade Ellens views it and/or that she has chosen to emphasize those ideas and aspects of VO which would be most "saleable" to SL'ers, in order to recruit to her faction. Similarly, we have had rather little day-to-day contact with VO's actual functioning and cannot judge whether Ellens' picture of VO's efficiency is idealized. One SL'er whose contact with VO was much more limited than Comrade Ellens' points out that, despite Ellens' assertion that "meetings

start on time," those which she [this other SL'er] attended started late, monthly meetings 45 minutes late, classes less so. Trivial reminders like this may serve to keep us within the bounds of reality. But the most important point, of course, is that we must not be misled by the spectre of VO being raised to lend weight to the arguments of the Minority; if Comrade Ellens has received the VO "franchise," we are not aware of it.

False Comparison

One obvious point to be made about the use of VO as a factional point by Ellens is that the comparison is not particularly fitting. While the organizational theories of VO are certainly relevant points to be debated, as are VO's political differences with the SL, VO certainly cannot be used as a measure of efficiency or effectiveness. According to Comrade Ellens' report, the VO organization has four times as many full members as the SL, four times as many candidate members and again four times as many organized sympathizers. Using our membership criteria, this would give them eight times as many members as we have (we do not distinguish in counting our members between fulls and candidates) and four times as many of a category for which we have no equivalent, but would be roughly whatever close contacts we have regular working relations with in arenas and, in addition, have sufficient agreement with us to work with us to some extent as the SL, circulating the paper and the like. Thus the SL has at this point roughly one-twelfth VO's strength in members and contacts. Clearly our existence is much more tentative, our standards for what makes a minimally acceptable member somewhat lower by necessity, and our expected efficiency of functioning in no way comparable. Further, while VO's membership is overwhelmingly concentrated in Paris, ours is very lightly spread over an area which, translated into French terms, extends over the equivalent of Paris to the Sahara to the

Urals. Hence the effective force we can bring to bear on the main American center, New York, is in the range of one one-hundredth of VO's sheer numerical impact in Paris! It is clear that the burdens on our national center include not only maintaining local functioning in the political center of the country with far less concentrated forces but also attempting to service a national organization with local groups thousands of miles away. While we must concern ourselves with VO's theories of organization, we must realize that to reduce them in our minds to being identical with VO's more efficient functioning is to render them absurd.

Selection of Leadership

The actual organizational structure of VO is, in our terms, rather frightful. According to the information in Comrade Ellens' written organizational report and verbal presentation to the PB of 30 January 1968, VO's structure may be described as federated in the choosing of a national political leadership. ("Federated" in this context should not be taken to mean that locals are autonomous in their coordination with each other or with the central leadership.) Members of the VO equivalent of the Central Committee are chosen on the following basis: one member of each cell is elected by the cell to serve on the higher body. This is not necessarily undemocratic (cells are undoubtedly of roughly equal size; this system is not equivalent to our having, for example, one representative apiece from Berkeley and Austin) but it is most certainly not Leninist. In a Leninist organization like the SL, the central political leadership is chosen by the membership as a whole irrespective of what local they come from, on the basis of political positions. Attempts to make VO's system more workable in practice (for example, by having a second CC-level person from a cell choose to attend CC meetings as an observer, or juggling the membership in the cells to be sure that there is somebody qualified in each one--and who

would get to gerrymander the cells in this way anyway?) may rectify individual inequities but are in principle not enough to reconcile this structure with Leninist principles of organization. Such a selection of national leadership on the highest bodies of the organization is clearly incompatible with proportional representation for national minority factions. If one cell is in its majority in opposition on some question, it can of course send somebody representing its particular views to the CC. But what if a minority view is spread across several cells, without a majority in any? The selection of a leadership geographically, rather than on the sole basis of political views, does a fundamental injustice to the right of factional democracy in a Leninist organization. The right to factions is key in the Leninist method of determining the line of the organization. While it is quite likely that minority elements are given some leeway in the VO organization--we have no knowledge of VO's provisions for internal discussion--and may well be positively encouraged by the leadership, VO's structure means that any representation of minority views necessarily has the character of a privilege, not a right. To be permitted--if they are permitted--to discuss differences internally is not enough; part of the Leninist concept of internal discussion is the right to stand for election on the basis of views, have representation proportional to the strength of those views in the entire organization, and seek to become a majority and determine the line of the organization. Minority views should not simply be aired as criticisms; there must be a mechanism for their competing with the majority line, which means ultimately the right to elect leaders embodying the line.

A further aspect of the selection of the political leadership is even stranger. Three particular leading VO'ers are automatically put on the CC-type body, without standing for election by the membership in the cells or otherwise.

While we have no evidence to indicate that the co-option of these particular leading comrades is anything but in accord with what would be the result if these designated leaders stood for election on the same basis as the others, it is certainly clear that such a provision leaves the door open to bureaucratic abuse of the worst sort. At best this feature is a kind of benevolent despotism, even if it is never abused.

Contact Work and Education

Other features of VO's organizational practice are quite good. These features are not so much structural as practical, although there are theories behind the emphasis they are given. Undoubtedly the most touted of these practices has been VO's systematic contact work. Another is the heavy emphasis on internal Marxist education of members. I would hope it is clear that the SL is strongly in favor of both these practices. Energetic pursuit of contacts and an attempt to make high Trotskyists of all members are mainly just common sense. The New York local has adopted a motion in favor of energetic and sustained contact with contacts, and has put Comrade Ellens in charge of this aspect of functioning. The local has also nominated Ellens for local organizer on two occasions in order to assist her in putting into action whatever practical improvements in functioning she had learned from VO or could think up. (She has repeatedly refused to accept the post, perhaps to avoid taking responsibility for making her schemas live up to the implied promises.)

At the same time there are features of VO's emphases on systematic contact work and internal education which are not wholly positive. In our discussions in the PB following Comrade Ellens' presentation, some comrades felt that the extreme emphasis on individual contacting seemed to produce an excessively linear assessment of tasks. A process of individual members discussing with individual contacts can proceed almost inde-

pendently of the course of development of objective situation and struggle; each member should recruit a certain number of contacts per year by individually convincing individuals. Such a conception leads to a kind of theory of stages; everybody recruits contacts until we reach a size of x members, then we move on to a different stage. (There is no room in such a conception for the possibility that under some circumstances a group might get smaller rather than ever and automatically larger.) PB comrades also feared that such an approach, if overemphasized, could lead to VO's ignoring political struggle with competing organizations and leftward-moving sections of other groups, the possibility of splits in opponent groups on the basis of Bolshevik politics. The struggle to become the vanguard party entails not only increasing one's own forces but also combating whatever "ostensibly revolutionary organizations" are competing for the banner of revolutionary Marxism, by exposing them and seeking to win individual members and sections of such groups to one's own program. Otherwise, all groups might grow by linear contacting, with little progress being made toward political clarification and the crystallization of a vanguard party.

Regarding internal Marxist education and a disdain for coffee-klatch, cafe-society politicking, this indicates first of all VO's concern with being serious. But VO's method of putting this desire into practice can be criticized. One of the features considered by VO, according to Comrade Ellens, as integral to this approach is the organizing of people according to their levels of commitment. The resulting division into full and candidate member cells has something of a hierarchical character. In the candidate member cells, each of which contains one full member assigned to it, a kind of student-to-teacher relationship could develop; instead of all members being considered as equals, the newer members would be second-class citizens. Great stress is put by Comrade

Ellens on the advantages this type of organization offers for education and re-shaping the minds of new members in an anti-petty-bourgeois direction. However, such a concept of education is a very formalistic one. With the exception of the monthly political meetings and the contact with the one assigned full member, the candidate members are isolated from working contact with the real cadres of the organization on the living political questions. In addition, the Leninist concept of education is that the most important way in which comrades are educated is through internal factional struggle. Purely on educational grounds, then, the lack of this basic Leninist practice renders the VO concept of education purely formal in character. Education means to a Leninist far more than the study of texts.

Organization Tied to Politics

The function of organizational structure and methods is to safeguard against bureaucratic abuse and political stultification. While the leading cadre of VO may well lean over backwards to prevent these faults, whatever internal democracy exists in VO exists in spite of and not because of VO's much-touted organizational procedures. We want our members to have rights, not to be constantly granted privileges by a benevolent and paternalistic leadership.

Thus we have severe criticisms of VO's organizational practices. Before going on to examine VO's intimately related theoretical positions on organizational and political questions, we would like to establish that they are extremely relevant to the present dispute within the SL. No doubt the Minority would like to disclaim responsibility for VO's positions, pointing out that they have never tried to defend all of VO's views. In fact, our Minority would probably like to avoid defending any of them. Our Minority would like to stand entirely on the basis of VO's functioning. And certainly, if one seeks only to demonstrate that VO is a more

effective organization than the SL (i.e., visits more contacts, holds more classes, has more union fractions, has a better publication schedule) then one need not defend VO's theories. But, as shown above, to show that an organization twelve times the size of another is more effective is not very startling, and cannot exhaust the relevance of the VO example in the eyes of the Minority. In having made VO a factional point, Comrade Ellens has made it incumbent upon her faction to show 1) that the SL's weaknesses relative to VO are a result of the SL's political line and/or its organizational practices, and 2) that the Minority's program and proposals have the answer. So far, with the exception of the question of energetic contact work (which suggestion has been widely accepted by the organization and the leadership), no other specifics of VO's practices have been frankly suggested for the SL out of the totality of the VO example. Yet this cannot possibly exhaust the criticisms of Comrade Ellens or explain why she felt it necessary to make an extended report on VO's functioning as part of the time allotted her in the Bay Area for a factional presentation. It is hardly necessary to form a faction in order to argue for systematic contact work. What Ellens seeks to capitalize on through raising the issue of VO is the non-success of the SL over the past year or so, during which time membership size has been about constant. The Minority attempts to lay these difficulties at the door of 1) our allegedly non-proletarian orientation and, 2) our allegedly non-Leninist mode of functioning. Both Ellens and Turner have submitted documents dealing with the first point; VO has been offered as the model of what we should be if not for the second. But to select a few gimmicks (e.g., systematic contacting) out of one's model is not enough. Since VO is irrelevant as a quantitative measure of the SL (i.e., efficiency in functioning), the Minority must mean VO to be a qualitative measure--i.e., relevant for its principles of organization, its politics, since the question of who has

the right line is always relevant to any organization no matter what its size. The theories and practices of VO form an integrated whole, and the Minority must take responsibility for the organizational and political theories of VO, not simply seek to take credit for its efficiency and its practical features.

Theory Behind Organizational Emphasis

Underlying VO's emphasis on organizational methods is the proposition, with which we heartily concur, that organizational questions are not separate from politics and that organizational theories are themselves political questions. According to Ellens, the concern with organizational questions began during and after the second World War, when the individuals who were to form VO reacted against the increasing social-patriotism of the formerly-Trotskyist organizations in France. VO's founders sought to determine what practices and concepts of functioning had facilitated the deterioration into revisionism. From Ellens' representation to the PB of 30 January 1968: "They decided that the policies taken by the other groups had come about in the absence of contact with working-class areas, as a way of meeting widespread petty-bourgeois sentiment. They wanted to avoid themselves coming under such strong petty-bourgeois influences. They saw that groups could change their policies very easily under pressure and concluded that this was a function of a lack of basic education and training and an attitude toward being a lifetime Trotskyist revolutionary...." Ellens' presentation to the PB of 6 May also dealt with this point and stressed VO's determination to avoid functioning like an unserious, dilettantish discussion group. Ellens' organization report of 8 April deals with the necessity of rooting out petty-bourgeois hang-ups, proletarianization of the organization and of the minds of petty-bourgeois recruits and deepening seriousness and commitment. Through its internal education and organizational methods, VO, according to Ellens, is

frankly trying to prevent the seeds of political degeneration from springing up in their organization.

At the London Conference of the IC in April 1966, the VO comrades submitted several documents dealing with the question of Pabloism and the Fourth International. Their view was that this revisionism stemmed primarily from the petty-bourgeois composition of the Trotskyist movement. To quote from their documents:

"...the failure of the Fourth International was due to the refusal of its militants and of its leaders ...to admit that the social composition of the sections in majority petty-bourgeois, intellectuals, necessitated strict political and organization measures to keep out corrupt elements, and, as far as possible, to escape from the influence of petty-bourgeois ideology by making a maximum effort to recruit within the working-class, and by obliging elements of petty-bourgeois origin to tie themselves to work in the factories.... Pabloism, in the form of liquidationism, was but the finished expression of this petty-bourgeois opportunism of all the sections of the International.... Pabloism was not the cause of the failure and the demise of the Fourth International; it was its product."

And later:

"Our organization was born precisely of the necessity to separate physically from the petty-bourgeois environment with its Social-Democratic practices which made up the Trotskyist organizations in France at the beginning of the war, to be able to recruit, educate and form cadres capable of putting into practice Leninist and Trotskyist organizational principles and which were not content with 'Bolshevik' verbiage covering up opportunist practice. It is because we ran up against the

sarcasm and incomprehension of the militants of the Fourth International with respect to these questions that we had to carry on an activity separate from the Fourth International, although we have always upheld its ideas and its program."

Another document makes it clear that "petty-bourgeois ideology" is defined by VO by the class composition of those who hold the ideas; in another document they speak about seeing "the Pabloite degeneration as an elaborated form of the ideology of certain strata of the petty-bourgeoisie influenced by the apparatus of imperialism and of the bureaucracy" (our emphasis). In our opinion, Pabloism is a petty-bourgeois ideology because it denigrates the idea of a proletarian class party and a proletarian revolution in favor of revolutions made by petty-bourgeois or bureaucratic strata in the interests of a class other than the proletariat--e.g., Negroes as a multi-class nationality, peasants in Latin America, a petty-bourgeois bureaucratic elite. On the question of the roots of Pabloism, see Spartacist No. 6, the statement of the SL delegation to the IC conference. While one may argue with merit that the lack of deep roots within the working class is a built-in source of weakness and can in changing circumstances reinforce and even produce deep disorientation and a tendency to shift the axis of the party away from a revolutionary line, should one then conclude that a super-proletarian orientation is a safeguard against political error and revisionism? A number of questions are raised: Should one expel one's members of petty-bourgeois origins? This would undoubtedly reduce the size and effectiveness of the organization, but surely it is preferable to have a small organization with the right line than a large group which is necessarily centrist. How completely can one revamp the consciousness of one's petty-bourgeois members by formal Marxist education? Or, alternately, are one's members of petty-bourgeois origins still petty-bourgeois despite

having chosen to become "class traitors" in favor of the cause of the proletariat? What of Lenin's concept of de-classed professional revolutionaries? With such an analysis, how does one explain the conservative tendencies that have developed in the Russian Bolshevik party, or the CPUSA, or the SWP, among the party's trade unionists? (Regarding the latter, see Cannon's article on the Cochran group, "Trade Unionists and Revolutionists," Fourth International magazine, Spring 1954.) Or, on the most serious note, what do you do in an objective situation (which includes your size, composition and roots) in which you are not likely to have great success in reaching and recruiting workers?

The Politics of VO

Continuing with the correct proposition that politics and organization are intimately related, we come to the political positions of VO. Let us note first of all that we are dealing here with the positions of difference between VO and the SL, which is to say, in our terms, with their wrong positions; we must continue to keep in mind that many of VO's positions are correct. The Minority, ignoring the intimate connection between organizational and political questions, has chosen repeatedly not to deal with VO's political differences with the SL. They have not chosen to defend VO's positions; neither have they put themselves on record as being opposed to them. In fairness to the Minority, this should be taken to constitute not necessarily agreement on VO's politics, but rather an elaborate non-concern over political questions. Yet we must assume that VO itself, unlike the Minority, would agree that political questions are important in evaluating an organization. And perhaps this document will at least cause our Minority to tell us where they stand on VO's political differences with the SL.

In general, VO's emphasis on class composition is indicative of its semi-syndicalist deviation from Trotskyism.

In a letter to a comrade in Europe on 20 January 1967 I characterized VO as having "an excessive concentration on 'the point of production'" and as having "semi-syndicalist tendencies." This leads them to a de-emphasis of the importance of Marxist theory and the consequent over-emphasis on organization. It is not an accident that in the "Outline of Study-Week Session" reproduced in the Ellens document, of the 13 numbered points 11 of them, in her words, "elaborate points on organizational methods." VO seems to feel that it is defined primarily as a tendency by its organizational theories rather than by its politics; and in the sections quoted above from the documents presented to the IC conference VO frankly defines its modes of functioning as the basis for its separate existence.

VO's semi-syndicalist deviation from Trotskyism (which is not to say that VO has a semi-syndicalist perspective or that it is not Trotskyist) is the main methodological point which produces both VO's political strengths and its political weaknesses. In its domestic line, VO was the only left-of-Stalinism organization with a significant base in the working class, but was limited in its influence in the radical student movement. Unlike the SWP's orientation exclusively to the petty bourgeoisie, excessive concentration in the working class cannot be defined as a political sellout, but may well be a tactical error. When elevated to the level of a theory, it is a theoretical one.

In its international line, VO does very well indeed whenever the working class is a real factor in the situation; VO's line on, for example, the Chinese "Cultural Revolution" made its primary insistence, correctly, on the need for the working class to act as a class in its own interests and the need for a Trotskyist vanguard party. Unlike the Healyites, Pabloites, Posadasites and their ilk, VO knew that the Shanghai general strike was important, that the working class is not a fascist class,

that the Cultural Revolution is directed against the workers. They were not about to give any quarter to the enemies of the Chinese working class.

Yet in situations in which the ascension of the working class to power does not seem to be an immediate possibility, VO is disoriented. Their strong proletarian class instinct (the positive aspect of their emphasis on working-class composition and work in the mass movement) is not a sufficient substitute for consistent Marxist theoretical analysis in such cases. On a whole series of issues involving what seem to them to be national questions or sections of the population other than the working class (U.S. Negroes, Latin American peasants, petty-bourgeois guerrilla movements, the Viet Cong) VO's line and essential methodology is not qualitatively different from that of the Pabloists.

VO on the U.S. Negro Question

Regarding the Negro Question, Class Struggle/Lutte de Classe of October 1967 (No. 8) stated: "If a Trotskyist organization appears within the black population this could, through a quirk of history, and our epoch abounds in such quirks, bring down the international citadel of capitalism through a class struggle in which the national and racial factor is predominant at the beginning." VO here sees the Negro Question as a legitimate national question, although they nonetheless view the national question as ultimately secondary to the class question. Further, we have here the possibility that the black movement, or, by implication, any movement, can spontaneously generate a Trotskyist leadership. In methodology, this is not different from the Pabloists' abdication.

To quote further, "The white population can learn to forget its racism, half through solidarity with people who know how to defend themselves and half through fear." Of the two criteria here, the first is sensible--i.e., respect.

The concept of the white population's increasing fear having any progressive, anti-racist aspect is wishful thinking and is dangerously wrong. White working-class racism can only be eroded by the opposite of fear, the realization of common interests with the black workers. Race fear, on the contrary, has only reactionary effects. In Algeria, the increasing predominance of the race-nationality question ended by the total eclipse of the class question and caused the total demise of the communist movement which had previously had strong holdings among the white workers in Algeria. The classic response of the racial or national grouping which is "on top" in the society to fear of the other race is a massacre. A fear reaction can only strengthen a reactionary solution. It is the recognition of common class interests which alone can heighten the tempo and intensity of class struggles and increasing consciousness on the part of the whites.

VO goes on, "The oppressed must build their own power to free themselves." The lesson drawn by us here is an anti-nationalist one, the fight against lumpenization of the ghetto masses. To the extent that the Negroes have no economic power through unions and the possibility of strikes, etc., they become increasingly vulnerable to a fascist solution, in the worst case, of concentration camps, deportation, extermination. VO continues, "The most radical among the present leaders of the black movement [i.e., H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael] have already progressed a great deal. Will they, in the course of the struggle, come to a socialist consciousness, a clear vision of the antagonistic classes...? One cannot say." Again the possibility of spontaneous development of socialist consciousness without the intervention of the Trotskyists is raised. Continuing, "The first necessary step is to create a black revolutionary organization, strictly independent on a national basis on all levels from American organizations including whites. It is not a

matter of creating a mass organization. It is a matter of creating a Trotskyist revolutionary party, an authentic organization of the struggle of American blacks, since the black population has the highest level of consciousness." This is a frank statement of a dual vanguardist position.

Examining VO's conclusions, we find: "If the Trotskyists are incapable of taking the head of the black movement, as it is now constituted, and in a manner appropriate to the movement, they have only several years, if not several months, left before they can do nothing but support Carmichael and Brown unconditionally, attributing to them an unconscious and transcendent socialism in order to appease their own conscience. At the present time, the actions of Brown and Carmichael must be physically supported, while their limits must be pointed out unhesitatingly." Thus, to the extent that the present leaders are not supplanted, they must be supported. Having nothing to offer as transitional demands, with the exception of the question of self-defense, it is hard to see how VO could avoid this position which is essentially liquidationist and capitulatory to Black Nationalism. An active VO'er, informed on American conditions, with whom we discussed, agreed with our criticisms of this line and said that it flowed simply from lack of knowledge of the U.S. situation. Yet this issue is not the only example of such disorientation.

VO took a position of support to the Arab side in the Arab-Israeli conflict. To be sure, their line was less obnoxious and more honest than that of the Pabloists; VO denied that there was any such animal as the "Arab Revolution." Yet VO's position, while more honest and therefore less consistent, shows again the inability to respond in a correct manner in a situation where the class question seems immediately less prominent than some other question, i.e., the national question. It is worth noting here that at least at that time Comrade

Ellens held the VO position on this question. Despite the PB having raised political criticisms of this and other political positions of VO at two times (PB meetings of 30 January and 6 May), Comrade Ellens is evidently so little interested in VO's politics that there has been no way to tell whether she still holds her former position on this question; she has never bothered to say.

VO on the Soviet Bloc

As VO would no doubt be quick to say, the Russian Question is paramount for Trotskyists. And on this question, VO has shown itself unable to develop and apply Trotskyist theory to the East European Soviet bloc countries, China and Cuba. As all comrades should already be aware, VO recognizes the Soviet Union as a deformed or degenerated workers state and China, Cuba and the East European Soviet bloc countries as capitalist. (From the logic of their analysis, they should not recognize the Soviet Union as a deformed workers state either.) The methodology here is again that of the Pabloists, with the important difference that VO chooses to take essentially a revolutionary state capitalist position while the Pabloist position is liquidationist of the Trotskyist vanguard party and essentially a capitulation to Stalinism regarding political revolution.

The underlying methodology of the VO position is made clear in VO's comradely and serious critique of the SL's Guerilla Warfare Theses (Spartacist No. 11) which appeared in Class Struggle No. 15, May 1968. This critique is mainly concerned with the question of Cuba. VO shares with the Healyite IC the view that Cuba is a capitalist state, and for much of the same reasons. The view seems to be that if we grant that Cuba is a deformed workers state, there is no more reason for a Trotskyist party; if the petty bourgeoisie can ever be forced to break with the capitalist economic system and establish what is viewed as a deformed kind of socialism, Trotskyists

can have no perspective except to become a left pressure group seeking to push the Stalinists to the left. A few quotations will make their position clear.

"In the last analysis, such a state will be a workers' state only if the working class seizes power and builds its own state apparatus. And this holds true whatever the extent of the economic reforms carried out" (page 13). "And to consider that this state interference has the slightest 'workers' or 'socialist' character leads directly to abandoning the proletariat in favor of other social groups supposed able to play the same historical role. Indeed, this conception leads to openly admitting that bourgeois organizations (or petty-bourgeois organizations) can, by leaning on certain petty-bourgeois and in any case non-proletarian social layers, create workers' states, even deformed ones, and lay the bases for significant economic progress in the underdeveloped countries. This is the very negation of the Communist Manifesto. It is also the negation of the reasoning which led Trotsky to characterize the USSR as a 'deformed workers' state' because of the particular and decisive role played by the proletariat in its creation" (page 14).

It is clear that a kind of healthy attitude leads VO to this analysis: they fear that to grant Cuba (and by implication East Europe or any place where the workers never took power) a characterization of "deformed workers state" will cause them to sell out. And they don't want to sell out. This is admirable. However, this position also leads them to deny reality. The East European states, and Cuba, and China, are identical in qualitative terms to what now exists in the Soviet Union as a result of its degeneration. The power of theory and a dynamic and creative approach to a changing world is that it is not necessary to falsify history in order to

reach a revolutionary conclusion.

The basis of VO's theoretical incapacity over these questions is a too close identification between a "workers state" and a "deformed workers state." It is this error which leads the Pabloists to liquidationism: if the Stalinists or the petty bourgeoisie can ever, under the pressure of one of the two contradictory forces operating on them, actually create something which is "pretty good," then what role is there for the Fourth International? What the VO comrades forget here is that in order for the Soviet Union to go from being a workers state, however seriously threatened and in crisis, to a deformed workers state, it required a political counterrevolution and the physical extermination of the old Bolshevik party. VO and the Pabloists see only a quantitative difference between the victorious Russian workers state and the product of its degeneration.

The Spartacist analysis has two virtues: it leads us to a revolutionary conclusion, and it is correct. We concur wholeheartedly that "such a state will be a workers state only if the working class seizes power and builds its own state apparatus." But the VO comrades apply this same criterion to a deformed workers state. Is this criterion true now for the USSR? Certainly not. Yet VO considers it a deformed workers state. Their only reason must be that in the USSR the working class once did hold political power. This can be only a sentimental reason for characterizing the Soviet Union as a deformed workers state. Further, to hold that such a state does not have the slightest "workers" or "socialist" character is oversimplistic, and denies the fundamental contradiction facing the bureaucracies: that they are both the enemies of the working class in their own countries and internationally and at the same time rest on top of a state in which the economic system and the formal ideology constantly pose the issue of workers control. The renunciation of the recognition of this fundamental contradiction

has been the basis for all third camp theories--Shachtman's bureaucratic collectivism and J.R. Johnson's or Tony Cliff's state capitalism. Finally, VO's semi-syndicalism leads them to write off the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie (for example, in the Cuban case) as fundamentally irrelevant to Marxists. In fact, the cause of intermediate classes can at times overlap to some extent the interests of working-class revolution; in such cases we will conclude an uneasy alliance with these forces--for example, the slogan of a workers' and peasants' government. Where we agree with VO is that the working class must maintain hegemony over the peasants and that the vanguard party is absolutely not a two-class party, but a party of the proletariat.

Further, let us not be too bemused by the fact that VO's analysis is at present both incorrect and episodically revolutionary. Incorrect analysis takes its toll, and we may in the future find our positions dramatically counterposed. VO would critically defend the Soviet Union against imperialist aggression. But what line would they take in a war between East and West Germany? Let us hope that VO would find some inconsistent excuse to avoid being neutral about the reintroduction of capitalism into the deformed workers states. Or, what was their line on the India-China border war? Here is a clear case in which the logic of their position must lead them to be neutral.

The "Trotskyist Family"

Another political weakness of VO has been a too-fraternal and non-combative attitude toward other formally "Trotskyist" groups. At the London Conference in 1966 we raised the criticism that VO seemed to have a conception of a "Trotskyist family" (see Spartacist No. 6), that they seemed to have the conception that all groups calling themselves "Trotskyist" were actually Trotskyist. This criticism, at least, of all the ones we have raised, has been disputed by Comrade Ellens as a question of fact.

She has stated that VO only recognizes a certain responsibility to new members of "Trotskyist" groups who may have joined such groups on the basis of their formal "Trotskyism" rather than their opportunist practices. If this is the case, of course, the SL has the same view, in insisting on the necessity for a continual struggle to expose the Pabloists and others as not really Trotskyists and for clarification and polarization in groups which are the only representatives of formal "Trotskyism" in their countries and therefore may include members who would choose a revolutionary position. Yet the present rather disturbing course of VO lends some preliminary support to our criticism of their "Trotskyist family" orientation.

Re-Unification with Pabloism?

Much concern has been voiced within the SL over the unity-of-action pact signed between the Pabloists and VO, and later also signed by the Pabloites, who are insignificant in France. The text of the pact is:

"In view of the development of the present situation, which cruelly points up the absence of a revolutionary leadership, and considering that it is essential to unify the struggle carried on by the organizations claiming to be Trotskyist, representatives of the Union Communiste [VO], the Parti Communiste Internationaliste [Pabloist] and the Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire [Pabloist youth] met on Sunday, May 19, 1968, and decided to form a permanent coordinating committee for their three organizations. This coordinating committee now calls on all organizations claiming to be Trotskyist to join in this move. The three organizations advise their members everywhere to come together to coordinate their activity."

--Reprinted in Intercontinental Press, 3 June 1968

While initially it was not clear whether VO viewed this agreement as the

beginning of a reunification of the "Trotskyist" movement, the Healyites in their denunciations and the Pabloists in their applaudings of the pact certainly view it as such. Several comrades in the PB raised the fear that VO had been disoriented by finding itself on the same side of the barricades with the Pabloists and were reacting in an overfraternal manner to this, and perhaps also as a reaction to the inability of the leftists to bring France past the negative situation of a general strike into a positive struggle for workers' power. It was decided after discussion in the PB and NYC local to raise in the article for Spartacist No. 12 on the French events the criticism that VO had chosen the wrong axis to capitalize on the French events and the exposure of the PCF-CGT; that the comrades should have called upon all those who stand in favor of workers' committees and workers' power to come together to form the needed new vanguard party of the working class--that is, for regroupment based on the Bolshevik program, not only the basis of the formal protestations of Trotskyism of the various groups, which latter axis might include some who actually stood outside the actual basis for the formation of a new revolutionary party and might exclude sections of groups who had moved left under the pressure of the events and now stood for workers' power. Although we consider it highly unlikely that VO now wishes consciously an unprincipled unification with the Pabloists, a group such as VO which has functioned on the basis of subjective revolutionary class instinct without much theoretical capacity could well find itself in such a situation despite its intentions.

Concern over this point has been strengthened considerably by the front-page editorial in the new Lutte Ouvrière No. 4, dated 17 July 1968, entitled "Towards the Revolutionary Party." The article states:

"May '68 has been a forceful demonstration of the validity of revolutionary ideas.... The future now

depends on the capacity of the revolutionary movement to capitalize on this acquisition of confidence.... We have already written and repeated several times in our columns that this is only possible if the revolutionary movement is capable of surmounting its division into multiple indifferent tendencies however distrustful each is of the others.... To struggle for the fusion of the forces which, until now, have been fighting dispersed, and to surmount for that the obstacles, the misunderstandings, the dangers, this is the most imperative duty of all revolutionaries at this time. The objection which one meets most frequently among even those revolutionaries who are most sincerely desirous of seeing the far left possessing the organization strength equal to its ideas concerns the seeming incompatibility between effectiveness and the absence of centralism, the latter being understood as monolithism.... However it is not only that the unity of action doesn't exclude the free confrontation of ideas; this is even the condition for action to stand on a sane base. The bolshevik party...has known in the course of its history numerous tendencies and sometimes even factions. Its militants have by all means the right and even the duty to publicly defend their own ideas even when [the ideas] are in contradiction with the official positions of the Party. [?]. Also it is not a question of hiding that the political differences which separate the revolutionary tendencies are important and sometimes grave.... It is the experiencing of action and experience (of the facts) which will be charged with selecting the ideas. But in order for that to be, it is necessary that the revolutionary movement have a stake in the events and that will not really be the case unless they are united. What seems the most difficult [problem] to surmount is that the differences are not only political, but concern even

the conception of the Party. But even that is up to experience to determine, for if the different revolutionary currents wait, before uniting themselves, to convince one another only by the discussion, they can wait a long time. Events, by contrast, do not wait. Certainly the unification of the existing revolutionary forces will not give [us] ipso facto a party capable of leading the struggle of the proletariat to victory. Such a party will be forged through long years of struggle.... Unification is not an end, it is a beginning.... Revolutionary militants that are separated by important differences learned to struggle together in the factories, in the neighborhoods, in the different committees, and to make a common front against their common enemies. They discover, through the daily combat that they lead together that, although what separates them is sometimes very important, what unites them is fundamental" (our emphasis).

This seems to be a call for a unification among the ostensibly revolutionary organizations. Parenthetically, one might note that the most serious difficulty is conceived to be differing concepts of the party, i.e., of organizational questions, rather than political differences. No demands are raised as to the basis of such a unification--unification on the basis of what political program, workers power? formal Trotskyism? being left of CP?--except that all the revolutionary organizations (in this conception, there seem to be lots of them) should unite in order to make their combined force strong enough to influence the events. From having called for all Trotskyist organizations to get together on no particular basis except an implied opposition to the CP's reformism (in the original unity-of-action pact), there is now a move to call for all "revolutionary" groups to get together on no basis whatsoever. Judging from VO's past history of principled (and perhaps too standoffish)

behavior towards other groups, we find it likely that Trotskyists will pull back from the present course before such a unification, or at least find itself compelled after such a unification to split out and reaffirm a program which is to be found nowhere in this editorial and a commitment to Trotskyism which is to be found nowhere in this publication.

What is pervasive to VO's political errors is the syndicalist-related feeling (and resulting practice) that the working class is immune from anti-revolutionary deviations and a kind of narrow "workerism" which leaves them without a revolutionary line towards other struggles (U.S. Negroes, the Arab peasant masses) and without any axis towards social transformations in which the working class has been largely absent (East Europe, Cuba). This "workerism" is a current in the Bolshevik movement which has been fought since the Leninist amplification of Marxism, e.g., in "What is to be Done?", written by Lenin in 1902. The working class is our class because it is the only class capable of decisively smashing the capitalist system and laying the basis for social progress in our epoch. The working class is not, however, a magic talisman to ward off evil and bring automatic success to the socialist movement.

The Minority and VO

As pointed out above, the Minority as a faction has not embraced the Ellens VO document as they have the Turner document. At the same time it is clear that VO is being used by Comrade Ellens as an at least informal recruiting device and an implicit comparison with the SL. Yet, Ellens has steadfastly refused to deal with VO in a serious and political way. She has sought to sell VO's successes as a plank in the Minority's program for the SL, but only covertly. She has created the image (perhaps somewhat idealized) of VO as an eminently serious (which it is) and efficient organization through propagandizing VO's

gimmicks--systematic contacting, orderly meetings, internal Marxist educational programs, proletarianizing the psyches of petty-bourgeois members--while only tacitly accepting VO's essential and theoretical organizational precepts and ignoring VO's politics. We are tacitly promised that we can be "as good" as VO if we will support the Minority, but since neither the organizational philosophy nor the politics is frankly pushed, her assurances can mean only that an organization of our size can be as effective as one twelve times larger through the institution of systematic contacting and the like. Ellens has sought to concentrate on the gimmicks of VO and ignore the basic questions. Further, the strengths of VO are certainly not employed and embodied by the Minority--any VO'er worth his salt would be horrified with the proposition that the situation for the SL in the New York hospital workers' union was essentially unchanged by the departure of both party members in the union. If there is one thing which epitomizes VO's strength it is the desire to be involved in real struggle, to have a caucus-building perspective in unions, to be above all serious and responsible in its work in the mass movement. Finally, there is no indication that a VO'er in the SL would concentrate so exclusively on the techniques of organization; in short, VO is not as non-political as our Minority.

The Spartacist League has very grave weaknesses--in its functioning, its resources, its human material. And it has a strength--its uniquely correct political line. It is the particular political ideas of the SL which justify its existence as a separate organization. Let us not be so eager, as is the Minority, to sell our strength down the river in exchange for phantom schemes and implied promises which cannot solve our problems. Those who support the Minority are headed for a political destination which they perhaps do not know yet, but which is liquidation of Trotskyism.

--6 August 1968

Organizational Methods

(excerpts)

By Kay Ellens

--Excerpted from Spartacist League
Internal Bulletin No. 7, December 1968

This report will attempt to explain how one section of the European Trotskyist movement functions. Although their beginnings and some of their methods are due to specific conditions, they have, in general, taken the logic of Lenin's ideas and built an organization accordingly.

They see the development of a Marxist-Leninist organization--its ability to produce revolutionaries, who can then project their influence within wider and wider circles within the working class and the population as a whole, its ability to fulfill its historic role--this development must be seen in a conscious, systematic way.

There are two essential changes an individual revolutionary must go through before he or she can function in a meaningful way in this organization. First is the development of a working class point of view toward existing problems, and second is the simultaneous breakdown of individualistic attitudes and development of collective, responsible attitudes. These changes take a long time and have as their goal the development of a comrade whose gut reaction as well as consciousness enable him to become a revolutionary cadre within a Leninist organization. This transformation is, of course, done consciously on the part of the organization as a whole as well as on the part of the individual being changed (as soon as he becomes sufficiently politically conscious to do so). This organization feels that the application of consciousness to all aspects

of the building of the revolutionary party and the development of the revolutionaries therein, cannot be sufficiently stressed. This means, at minimum, looking at the logical outcome of one's theories and practices.

To give you a picture of how the development and training of cadre is carried out in this organization, I will trace the process by which contacts are turned into cadre.

Treatment of Contacts

Contact "A", a student, hangs around the left-wing circles of the student union (an organization, not a building). He's sort of sympathetic to various anti-imperialist sentiments and "third-world" attitudes. "A" becomes a contact when he has a discussion with a comrade who is distributing leaflets announcing one of the monthly forums. The coming meeting is on China and "A" expresses interest in this organization's position on China, so this is what they discuss. Both are busy at that moment so they agree to discuss further at a later time. "A" comes to the forum, gets some literature and the comrade sets up another meeting with him to discuss the forum and the literature. A series of meetings takes place between "A" and Comrade "X" on a more or less weekly basis. Comrade "X" convinces Contact "A" to the point that he gets a sub, contributes a little money each month and agrees to help out on some of the work. The weekly appointments between Comrade "X" and Contact "A" become more regular, and a lot of reading material is fed into the program, material of a basic nature pertaining to the discussions they've been having. (Novels are also important to open discussions of attitudes--such as racism, nationalism, Bohemianism, the woman question--class

consciousness, or to get the contact in the habit of reading.) "A" becomes increasingly interested and reads more and works on one or more of the following teams: (these are regular weekly assignments) poster paste-ups, newspaper sales, distributions or prospections (these are teams going door to door in housing projects). And his weekly discussions continue, though he might be seeing another comrade now.

After a few months of continued activity and study (and if the contact is at all aggressive, he will begin having contacts of his own; how to bring them along becomes a topic for his weekly discussions), Comrade "X" invites "A" to a regular class (held each week all winter long) and soon recommends "A" for membership in a sympathizers circle. His recommendation includes reports from those comrades in charge of the one or more teams he is working on. Contact "A's" recommendation is discussed in the next monthly executive committee meeting. If the comrades decide that "A" is sufficiently serious and reliable, his application-recommendation will be accepted and he will be at the next meeting of the sympathizers circle he has been assigned to.

The sympathizers circles include all new people, including those who will be remaining only sympathizers. Not everyone who is interested in revolutionary ideas is able to function as a reliable cadre-type revolutionary. Those who are not can function as sympathizers, come to their circle meetings, classes and of course public meetings, if they do some work for the organization (for example, one sale a week). By the same token, if a contact will not at least read or work, he will not have any discussion time after a few discussions. The comrades have earlier made it clear that if the contact is not serious enough to even read, then he is not serious enough to be wasting time on.

Now to pick up the thread with contacts "B" and "C". "C" works where a

factory bulletin of this organization is being put out. It is a very large factory and he works in another building; consequently his knowledge of this bulletin is haphazard. "C" is not a union member (even within a large plant only about 12 percent of the workers are union members adding all the different union memberships together--there is no such thing as a closed shop in this country) and hears about this factory bulletin only because he happened to come to work one day through the main doors and got a leaflet. His curiosity brought him to the location near work mentioned in the factory bulletin. (The comrades locate someplace that can be advertised, usually a coffee shop, where at a specific time each week the public can buy literature and discuss current events, factory and trade union activities and general politics. These coffee shops are advertised in the factory bulletins and in the weekly newspaper, stating the day and time the comrades will be there.)

So "C" comes to this coffee shop and is drawn into the contacting sessions, that is, he is discussing individually with a comrade on a more or less regular basis. He is also, in a short while, drawn into the production of the factory bulletin (or even eventually starting a new one for his building). He develops sufficiently to join a sympathizers circle. His development as a revolutionary is under way.

"C" had brought his wife "B" to a forum a few months before this. "B", in the course of a discussion with a comrade at the forum, had agreed to continue their discussion later in the week. It then became the responsibility of another comrade to aid Contact "B" in her political development. Contact "B's" education then proceeds independently from that of her husband's relationship to the organization. (The level of consciousness of both of them will have to be upgraded in order to overcome the difficulties which this society produces on these questions.) She will be going

into a different sympathizers circle than that of her husband's and, in general, will be dealt with so much as an individual that most of the comrades will not know the details of her personal life. Her political functioning and development will be her responsibility.

* * * * *

Outline of Study Week Session

3. Contact work and the development of militants and cadres: This is the basic work of the organization. It can continue even in underground conditions. Personal, regular contact should be maintained between the militant and the person who it is hoped will become a militant. The contact should be seen alone at regular weekly (or more) appointments. (Unless as a security measure the meetings must be changed in time and place each week.) Students functioning entirely in the student community should be seen outside the student quarters so they can get used to going out of their way a bit. The role of this sort of contact work is the transformation of someone just interested in revolutionary ideas into a politicised and devoted revolutionary, or at least into such a sympathizer. One tries to develop the contact politically, explaining the necessity of reading and getting him in the habit of reading. The purpose of this long sustained contact work is that of human transformation. One aims to transform this contact into an educator, organizer, recruiter and revolutionary catalyst within the working class. One tries to change the contact's whole behavior, attitude and approach (his comportment) toward others and his attitude toward himself so he can begin to function as a transmitter of the ideas and actions aimed at overthrowing capitalism....

8. Some of the problems and approaches of doing political work among the workers: The militant must have a general competence about factory life in

general, the various craft divisions and qualifications, the payment systems and the general organization of the work. Some of this information can be found in the local press, library and leaflets. During periods of quiescence, militants are found in very small numbers. Then, workers are unspirited, not interested in organization and are under a lot of pressure by the Stalinists. This organization's solution for this situation is through factory bulletins. In this way an isolated militant can have a "public" activity even if he cannot, or is not ready to, face the Stalinists, the boss or the lack of understanding of his friends. The factory bulletins permit public, yet secret, activity; permit the organization of workers who do not yet have sufficient consciousness to join the party; permit the organization of the guys on the job around the bulletin, its writing and distribution and discussion of it. This slight resurgence of activity can help the workers regain confidence in themselves while waiting the necessary time until one is stronger or a higher decisive stage is reached. Therefore the factory bulletins are an adaptation to a difficult situation--of a decline of working class consciousness, paternalism, terrorism and suppression from the bosses and Stalinists. The need to maintain working class contact, to train militants how to function in the working class, to win and develop workers into revolutionaries--these can be aided through the development of a factory bulletin. It is a primary activity, simple and easy, which can be proposed to a worker contact. It is not excluded that the militant distribute the bulletin himself. In general, contacts are urged to go into the trade unions....

12. Some of the problems encountered when writing the factory bulletins: Generally, the workers know the various problems and conditions within the plant, but often take for granted the daily manifestation of their oppression, exploitation and degradation. A more specific understanding of the two types

of articles is required--there are direct articles in response to a specific incident in the shop and a second type of article which is indirect, about general conditions inside and outside of the shop (these shouldn't be more than 10 lines long). It is important not to engage in merely reportage journalism--each article must bring something in the way of political enlightenment....

* * * * *

When the level of understanding and commitment increases sufficiently and the contact-sympathizer has decided to become a revolutionary, he applies for membership. If his application is accepted, he becomes what we call a candidate-member. The candidate-members are organized separately. They are in "circles" of the organizations as distinct from "cells." These circles are more or less the most active section of the organization. They have one of the leaders of the organization as a guide and are organized separately so that a tighter training program can be maintained. This way slack habits of the older members won't interfere with the developing comrades' habits. His political contact with the organization as a whole takes place in the monthly general membership meetings, where he has voice, in the monthly trade union commission meetings, where he has voice, and in

public meetings and classes (both of which are semi-public)....

* * * * *

The aspects of the organization's functioning described in this report are considered by them to be the organizational foundations for a revolutionary organization composed of the vanguard of the working class. Therefore, there is the need to have the organizational forms which enable workers to become cadre. The factory bulletins are a training ground for the young revolutionary and can be the rallying point for the workers in the plant. Contact work, the second corner-stone, is essential in the transformation of a friend to revolutionary ideas into a comrade functioning in the collective unit of an organization whose members need to rely on each other. And thirdly, discretion and secrecy are essential if one is to increase, even in only a small way, the cohesiveness and effective power of the working class.

This organization started out as a very small group, a handful of young comrades, some contacts--two years later the first factory bulletin came out. Many of the organizational forms described here were developed as they grew....

--8 April 1968

LO Dissolves the Class Line in the "Soupe Populaire"

Translation of LTF leaflet distributed at the Lutte Ouvrière fête, Pentecost weekend, 6-8 June 1981. Lutte Ouvrière voted for Mitterrand in the second round of the presidential elections. The point was not made explicit in this leaflet only because it was so well-known at the time. Now LO tries to deny this glaring fact. "Soupe populaire" means both a "soup-line" and a "populist stew."

While the OCI [Organisation Communiste Internationaliste] and the LCR [Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire] capitulate openly to Mitterrand and his Cold War government of austerity, LO [Lutte Ouvrière] postures as the organization which "was not swept off its feet by the opportunist torrent created by the electoral victory of Mitterrand and the Socialist Party" (Lutte Ouvrière [LO] No. 678, 30 May [1981]). You've got to be kidding! Arlette Laguiller ran as a [presidential] candidate who was "above all a candidate of the left." Of the "left"? Like Mitterrand and Marchais, like the "Left" Radicals or the "left" Gaullists, for example Grimaud, today head of the Minister of the Interior's "left" cabinet and yesterday's Gaullist police chief in May 1968?! As a so-called opposition to Mitterrand, Laguiller kept repeating throughout her campaign: "My candidacy is not aimed at creating an obstacle to electing Mitterrand" (LO No. 669, 28 March 1981). And LO continues to call for a vote for the "left" (Crépeau, Jobert and Grimaud included?) in the legislative elections on the pretext that Mitterrand must not have an excuse "to justify his future backsliding or about-faces." As if he ever promised anything other than to govern with bourgeois politicians in order to carry out a policy of austerity and anti-Sovietism! Moreover, LO does not even have the "excuse" of the LCR or the OCI who believe (or say they believe) that Mitterrand's election means an improvement for the workers: "...there should be no illusions about the program that Mitterrand will imple-

ment. It will be similar to that of Giscard d'Estaing" (ibid.). It is therefore with full knowledge of the consequences that LO calls for votes for class collaboration and an anti-working class policy! LO is simply the most cynical of Mitterrand's supporters!

But, explains Laguiller, "if the workers, rightly or wrongly [sic], prefer Mitterrand, it is necessary to go through the experience of Mitterrand" (supplement to Lutte de Classe No. 84). The Spanish workers in the '30s went through the "experience" of this type of government, the popular front! Those in Chile in the '70s also! As revolutionists we don't want the workers to go through "experiences" which lead to defeats, sometimes even bloody ones. No to the Mitterrand/Gaullist bloc! No to the NATO popular front! The road forward for the proletariat is independent mobilization against Mitterrand's popular front for the establishment of a workers government.

Instead of struggling for the class independence of the proletariat, LO dissolves the working class into the shapeless mass of the "popular classes," "the little guy," and the "humble," indulging in unbridled populist rhetoric. They throw in haphazardly women, youth, retirees, office workers, artisans, workers, peasants, small shopkeepers, ...even cockroach capitalists: "The arrogant right scorns everyone, even the small bosses whom they view as a simple electoral stepping stone" (ibid.). As Marx explained in the Commun-

nist Manifesto, these "middle classés" are "not revolutionary but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history." To win over such layers, the working class must not liquidate but must resolutely fight for power in its own name.

But LO's program is not a Trotskyist program for the revolutionary conquest of power. Far from it! Its program? "A general plan so that the crisis will not be paid for by the workers alone but also by the property-owning class" (LO No. 659, 17 January [1981]). Laguiller's only proposal during her campaign was: "That we cut the military budget in order to create jobs, to defend the purchasing power of the poorest and to get the economy going again" (supplement to Lutte de Classe No. 84). In short, capitalism with a human face where the bosses and workers fraternally divide up the costs of the crisis and the bourgeoisie transforms its bombs into bread. A real preacher's exhortation, but not the faintest beginnings of a revolutionary program.

LO and Sub-reformism

LO proposes no more than to fix up capitalism. Destroy the bourgeois state? Establish a workers state based on organs of proletarian power (soviets)? Certainly not: "The state could have both cheap government and more democracy" if administrative functions were performed by volunteers, préfets [appointed regional governors] abolished, and powers for local elected officials increased (ibid.). And don't forget the "democratization" of the cops, the armed fist of capital: "For if the goal of the police were really to protect the population, they would be scattered throughout it. The policemen would be in fact the friendly cop on the beat, as the PCF [Communist Party] demands; each would be very familiar with his neighborhood, and would be present where assaults might be committed and where the population feels insecure" (LO No. 662, 7 February [1981]). A cop in each stairwell, this

must be what LO calls "decentralization of the (bourgeois) state"! It's enough to make a Marcellin [Minister of the Interior under Pompidou; responsible for banning of the LCR in 1973] or a Peyrefitte [Justice Minister under Giscard d'Estaing; introduced expanded police powers] drool with envy!

The convergence of LO and the PCF is no surprise. LO is only a pale, third-rate copy of the big reformist parties, but too insignificant for its betrayals to get it any compensation from the bourgeoisie.

LO for an Army Which Really Defends the Fatherland

Reformism has its corollary: chauvinism. Thus, concerning the PCF's chauvinist policy on immigration, LO (while objecting to the PCF's "methods") has the nerve to say that "in substance we cannot criticize this, because its exposures are valid and well-founded" (Lutte de Classe No. 81, 22 December 1980).

But LO has not finished dragging through the mud the program of Marx and proletarian internationalists, for whom "the workers have no country." When a journalist asked Laguiller, "Don't you believe in the necessity of defending the borders," she replied: "You know, in 1940, in June 1940 to be exact, it didn't do us much good to have paid the generals and the officers for so many years before the war.... We've seen what the army was, what it was used for, namely for the last 30 years fighting more effectively or being ready to fight against what they call the enemy within, the whole French people in fact, rather than defending us, because, as far as I know, we haven't been attacked" (LO No. 670, 4 April [1981]). LO criticizes the bourgeois army for...not having defended the "fatherland"!! Shame! Ah, LO must really applaud that bourgeois army of 1914 which "was good for something" and defended the "French people" (!) when "we" (!) were attacked! Until now, LO's

claiming the authority of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky was rather laughable. Today it is revolting!

LO Against the Defense of the USSR

It is not surprising that the partisans of defending the "fatherland" refuse to side with the USSR facing imperialist threats. From the very first signs of renewal of the imperialist Cold War (especially over Afghanistan), LO was quick to distance itself from the Soviet degenerated workers state: "Our camp is neither that of Reagan and Giscard nor that of Brezhnev" (LO No. 654, 13 December 1980). A certain Trotsky, with whom from time to time LO claims (in theory) a connection, was (like us) on the side of the USSR against imperialism which above all seeks to destroy those tremendous workers' gains: expropriation of the bourgeoisie, collectivization of the means of production, etc. At the same time he called on the Russian proletariat to overthrow the parasitic and conservative bureaucracy which usurps the political power of the proletariat. Similarly, revolutionists both defend unions against the threats of

the bosses and fight to oust the treacherous bureaucrats which lead them. But not only does LO not defend the USSR against imperialism, it criticizes imperialism for its lack of intervention. "[The imperialists] send their radar signals far and wide, have their eyes and their big ears, to seek out possible concentrations and movements of Russian troops and to alert public opinion, rightly or wrongly [!]. But what would they do to defend the Polish workers if the USSR intervened? Nothing. No more than they did for the Hungarian workers, the Czechoslovak or Afghan populations" (LO No. 654, 13 December 1980).

LO seeks to prove that one can have a program as rotten as the PCF's on immigrants, defense of the "fatherland," democratization of the bourgeois state, cops, etc., without having, as does the PCF, the "disadvantage" of being linked to Moscow. And LO succeeds.

To find a proletarian internationalist program and revolutionary opposition to the popular front, go to the LTF's stand and buy Le Bolchevik, the fighting Trotskyist newspaper.

Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers

The complex block contains four items related to the 'Solidarność' movement. On the left are three pamphlets: an English one titled 'Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers' (US\$1.00), a Spanish one titled '¡Alto a la contrarrevolución de Solidarność!' (US\$1.00), and an Italian one titled 'Fermare la controrivoluzione in Polonia!' (L. 1000). On the right is a clipping from the French newspaper 'SPARTACIST' (8F), featuring the headline 'Solidarité roule pour la CIA et les banquiers' and a table of contents.

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Do We Have to Vote for LO in the "European Elections"?

--Translated from Le Bolchévik No. 47,
June 1984

Many conscious workers are asking themselves whether they should vote for the Lutte Ouvrière slate in the "European elections." It's a valid question.

Indeed, it's true that this election is largely seen as a referendum on the government's policies; and Arlette Laguiller's campaign could well draw the votes of workers who want to express their hostility to Mitterrand. As Arlette puts it so well, she is running "as the spokesman for your resentment, disillusion and anger." However, LO's campaigns in '78 and '81 contributed to spreading these illusions, since LO called for votes for the Union of the Left. It should be noted that at the same time its campaign was aimed at the "little guys," thus drowning the working class in the soupe populaire. Industrial workers, small shopkeepers and even cockroach capitalists were all lumped together. Tried and true principles, such as determined struggle for proletarian class independence from the bourgeoisie, are stored away backstage. Because the "masses" aren't "ready" to understand them, of course.

Moreover, we would be hard put to find in the torrent of speeches and declarations from Laguiller the slightest perspective, the least call for action--not even a demand which the workers could make their own and go into struggle with. As usual, LO leaves unanswered the question every conscious worker is asking himself: "Obviously the Mitterrand government is not the solution, so what is? What is to be done?" No answer. We are witnessing a campaign of "common sense" about the bosses' profits, the growing discontent, etc.

And the cities' walls are blossoming [with LO's election posters] whose puns are--some more, some less--silly.

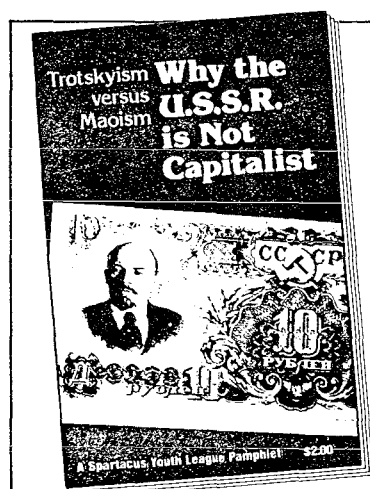
There is another question to consider: What is this election? Who is being elected? Why? For the LO leadership there's no problem here; in fact, their logic is as follows: We can't take power through the ballot box (which is true); therefore the nature of an election is not in itself important; so we can do whatever we want! It was with this kind of justification--justification, not reason--that Lutte Ouvrière called for votes for Mitterrand in '81, as well as for the bourgeois Left Radicals in previous elections, etc. The reason is of course clear: don't go against the illusions workers might have in their leaderships. Which comes down to not opposing these treacherous leaderships who impose on the ranks of the workers their disastrous class-collaborationist program. And therefore to tailing the bureaucrats.

To hear Laguiller talk, the EEC [European Common Market] is nothing but an association of merchants. She "forgets" to specify that this consortium is the necessary economic counterpart to a military alliance, and that its goal is, insofar as possible, to regulate inter-imperialist competition so as to preserve the common front of the national capitalist classes against the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states. But this "oversight" is not innocent: for LO the Trotskyist principle of military defense of the USSR against imperialist war plans doesn't exist. Worse, in Afghanistan LO implicitly calls for a Soviet defeat. Indeed, in response to a letter to the editor, we learn that the USSR "conducts itself" there "like any imperialist power, like France in Alge-

ria or France and then the United States in Vietnam" (*Lutte Ouvrière* No. 835, 2 June [1984]). For any Marxist, the logical conclusion of such an analysis is to call for the victory of the reactionary Afghan rebels against the Red Army. LO lines up, hypocritically, with the campaign of the anti-communists of all stripes like "Doctors Without Borders," in the service of the "free world." We can already hear the indignant denials. "We've never called for the victory of anyone in Afghanistan!" First of all, comrades, the LO leadership has never called for anything, period, outside of negative formulations and litanies like "the workers can only rely on their own strength." They have never advocated anything concrete in terms of action around the major struggles, military or otherwise, which are rocking the planet. "But we denounce oppression by the imperialists, the bureaucrats, the foremen and the bad guys!", we will once more be told. But, comrades, workers around the world know that they're exploited, peoples know that they're oppressed, American blacks know they're segregated! Have you ever put forward a solution, a class solution? Politics, like nature, abhors a

vacuum: by not saying one thing, you say another. To simply register a series of more or less intelligent observations on a given situation without offering any perspective--even if only in an exemplary, propagandist fashion--can only have one result: the proletariat remains in the grip of its traitorous leaderships, working-class or petty-bourgeois, and thus in the final analysis, in the grip of the bourgeoisie.

The LTF could have called for a vote to the Arlette Laguiller slate as an expression, albeit very deformed, of class independence, if it weren't for the nature of these elections. Without batting an eyelid LO takes part in elections to a body which is nothing more than the political extension of a military alliance aimed at that which the Stalinist bureaucracy has not destroyed: the gains of the first victorious proletarian revolution. Conscious workers definitely can't vote LO, even to express their class hostility to the bourgeois Mitterrand government, because they have no interest in these elections to NATO's European political board of directors.

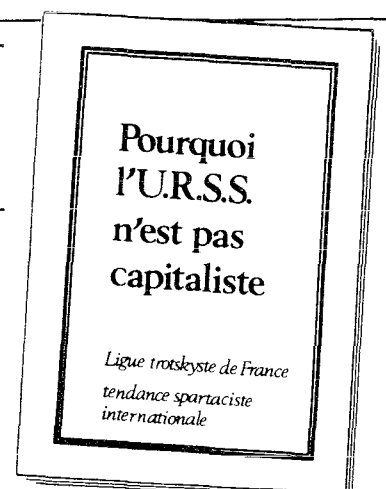


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LO and the Miners Strike

--Translated from Le Bolchévik No. 54,
April 1985

The attitude of Lutte Ouvrière (LO) during the British miners strike was quite removed from the sense of urgency and solidarity which--notably in France--prompted thousands of workers to participate in massive fund drives and to overturn carloads of coal destined for Great Britain. LO did no more than discretely collect money in a few factories such as Renault-CKD near Rouen, but only as "workers," rejecting any direct association with their organization. Thus it is no surprise that some of its members have been led to explain that for the organization to conduct a fundraising campaign would be "charity work." Others even stooped to dodging the question with the argument that the only worthwhile aid to the miners was to "build the party in France." One can imagine what a party built on the basis of "internationalism" of this sort is worth....

But it would be too easy just to criticize LO for having taken up clandestine collections. In fact, throughout the strike LO paid a certain amount of attention to this question, finishing up with a political balance sheet in Lutte Ouvrière (LO) of 9 March [1985] (No. 875). But it approaches this commendable task wearing the blinders of a sort of "made in France" pseudo-Trotskyism. It imposes its habitual analysis of French workers struggles on those of Great Britain. The British unions (including Scargill) didn't want to unleash a general strike, explains Laguiller. And she continues: "What's surprising about that? Behind names which are a little different, they are exactly the same as our own" (ibid.). You can get away with simplifying all the strikes in France over the last few years so as to leave nothing but the overt betrayals of the union leaderships--although doing so

doesn't provide very rich programmatic lessons to the workers, who may well want to know what concretely LO would have done differently if it had been heading up the strikes at Talbot, Citroen, etc. In France, repeating that the bureaucrats betray--in itself obvious and banal--offers the debatable advantage of preserving (as in formaldehyde) LO's posture of criticizing the bureaucracy from the left. But when it comes to Great Britain, claiming that Scargill is nothing but a Krasucki [head of the CGT] from the other side of the Channel does more than expose the incompetence caused by LO's French-centered ignorance. LO is afraid to acknowledge that Scargill knows full well how to lead a strike, that the other union bureaucrats hate him and his base loves him, because LO is incapable of explaining what good a Trotskyist party is.

Scargill's problem is that he's not a revolutionary. Lenin taught that "the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine 'class struggle' until this struggle is led by a strong organisation of revolutionaries" (our emphasis, What Is To Be Done?). But as we shall see, that is precisely the ground LO doesn't dare to do battle on. At least Scargill knows his job, even if he is no more than a "trade unionist," so LO is reduced to mean-minded, petty attacks. Referring to last summer's "battle of Orgreave" in front of a Yorkshire cokeworks, LO (which, nevertheless, thinks that it was a victory) whines: "Scargill, slightly injured, got front-page coverage in the press the next day, but how many anonymous strikers will be marked for life?" (LO No. 838, 23 June 1984). Should he have gotten himself killed?

The exceptional situation created by the miners strike has, nevertheless, forced LO to develop its criticisms of

the NUM leadership to a greater extent than usual. Let us see, then, what it's all about--for rarely do we get such an opportunity--and make use of it to better understand the opportunism of this organization.

The two main criticisms LO levels at Scargill are, first, that the mass pickets and flying pickets supposedly isolated the miners and divided their ranks, making them vulnerable in the face of their "united and centralized" "adversaries." LO's press is crawling with attacks on the "corporatism" of the NUM leader. In the workers movement the word "corporatism" is generally applied to the pursuit of privileges by the labor aristocracy and its craft unions (whereas even LO must know that the NUM is a mass industrial union). We are therefore led to conclude that LO is using the term "corporatism" in a revisionist sense; moreover, when it explains that "in order to achieve some success, the workers can no longer permit themselves to remain isolated in a corporatist framework" (LO No. 875, 9 March [1985]), LO shows more concern for the scabs' lot than that of the strikers. Its second main criticism of Scargill is that he didn't extend the strike (and LO maintains that he didn't want to). Its advice: "...it is only by politicizing the movement that the miners could have won" (ibid.).

Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross

In this attempt to give advice to the British working class, LO trips over the starting line, because it refuses to understand that a picket line means don't cross. LO can even write: "by choosing to make physical confrontation with non-strikers the only goal of the strikers, Scargill's union has dug a deep gulf between them which will take months, perhaps years, to overcome" (ibid.).

That testifies to total ignorance of the traditions and struggles of the British miners. The division between

strikers and scabs (LO avoids the word "scab" like the plague) was neither a Machiavellian slogan launched by Scargill, nor a peculiar "folk" custom of the Anglo-Saxons, as you might believe from reading LO's drivel. It has existed for generations in the guts of the miners and their families. In those vil-lages, people remember scabs from the 1926 strike, and they're still pariahs today. And that's a good thing.

And that's not all--LO sinks to the point of feeling sorry for the scabs: "Bitterness increased to the point that retaliatory measures were taken, including sometimes against families, just because one of their members was a non-striker" (ibid.). LO speaks of "the increasingly hostile attitude of the non-strikers, who came to regard the strikers as responsible for the massive police presence that they, too, had to put up with" (ibid.). LO is howling with the wolves, with all those--Thatcher, her press, the social democracy--who attacked the miners' "violence" in the face of Thatcher's police state. It doesn't breathe a word about the fact that the bastion of the scabs, Nottinghamshire, was also the bastion of the company unions during the '20s ("Spencer unionism"), and that this region was therefore favored by the bourgeoisie in order to organize conscious strikebreaking.

Taking as its pretext the French situation--where minority strikes and desperate plant occupations are commonplace and where every union breaks the others' strikes--LO refuses to act as a vanguard party and get across the message that picket lines are the means of consolidating, protecting and extending a strike, winning over wavering elements. In places where LO has a free hand, as at Renault-CKD where it leads a union, it has proposed the same ineffectual "informational picket lines" as are favored by the reformist bureaucrats. And LO boasts about it: "Everyone approved of blocking the trucks, which caused problems for management without

blocking the workers who didn't want to strike fully" (LO No. 855, 20 October 1984).

For LO, solidarity with the miners, boycotting coal, could not be the starting point for a general strike. So picketing in front of the steel plants was just an attempt to force the steelworkers to "strike for other people's demands" (LO No. 875, 9 March [1985]). (The exception to this rule was, of course, when the British dockers strike was precipitated by their refusal to touch scab coal. During this period, LO didn't entertain any criticism of the NUM's "corporatism," since LO holds true to the tradition of economic spontaneism denounced by Lenin in What Is To Be Done?: "The struggle is desirable if it is possible; and that struggle is possible which is being waged at this moment.")

**"Lending the Economic Struggle
a Political Character" and All
That Old Crap**

LO, which is not willing to enforce respect for picket lines, is hardly in a position to give lessons to the combative British miners. But even its oh-so-sincere call to "transform [the strike] into a general strike, into a political strike against the government and its economic policy" (*ibid.*) resembles at best the old anarcho-syndicalism's pacifist notion of making a revolution simply by downing your tools.

A genuine economist group, from the cult of spontaneity and "shopfloor leaflets" (analogous to the "factory exposures" ridiculed long ago by Lenin) to descending to the level of "the average worker," LO occasionally rises to the level of its Russian ancestors when it seeks to "lend the economic struggle itself a political character." As Lenin pointed out, the cops' billy clubs ordinarily fulfill this role.

To begin with, not only the miners but the entire country was profoundly

politicized by this strike, first of all the miners' wives who played a central role in the strike, and the youth of the oppressed minorities (blacks and Asians) who protected the miners against the cops (the miners did the same for them). Yet LO's readers will never know that the miners, faced with repression, grasped the role played by these same police and soldiers in Northern Ireland. They will never hear a word about the miners' hatred for Solidarność, that company union for imperialism and the Vatican, whose leader, Walesa, publicly supported Thatcher against the strike. They will never know that the TUC leaders, advocates of the Cold War as well as of strikebreaking, wanted Scargill's hide because he denounced Solidarność. But for LO, all that isn't "political"; what is "political" is a strike against the government around the "economic program" of these lesson-givers. LO's general strike would be the act of white, male, English workers; but fortunately, the class struggle is more powerful than the ravings of these Parisian savants.

If Scargill ever heard a speech by an LO representative about the need to "politicize the movement," he would smile and say (not out loud, for he is

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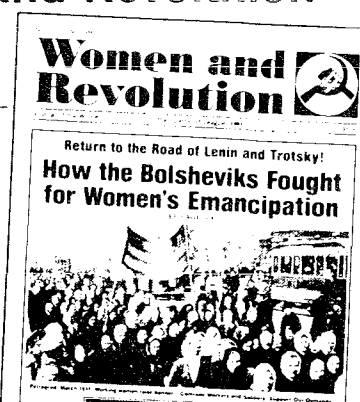
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an experienced diplomat): "Your vanguard must be composed of simpletons. They don't even understand that we are in the process of 'politicizing the strike.' We want to guide the workers toward politics, but to those of the Labour Party, not revolutionary politics. Besides, we may succeed in getting a Labour prime minister elected; Thatcher is so discredited."

As Lenin explained in "Left-Wing Communism", "the trade unions inevitably began to reveal certain reactionary features, a certain craft narrow-mindedness," not in relation to this or that spontaneous movement, or even to soviets, but in relation to "the revolutionary party of the proletariat, the highest form of proletarian class organization" (Works, Volume 31). LO, in contrast, counterposes to the trade unions--a spontaneist vacuum; it advises the workers to bypass the unions in order to throw themselves without organization or weapons (such as the picket line) into the final showdown with Thatcher.

The general strike poses the question of power. The fear of posing this question, of committing oneself to a confrontation with the bourgeois state, has tied Scargill's hands just as it ties the hands of every reformist, no matter how combative. That and the unity of the Labour Party were the barriers on which the momentum of the miners was shattered.

Extending the miners strike into a general strike would have posed the question of a split in the Labour Party.

For those who seek to build a Trotskyist vanguard party, that would have been a good thing. Not for Scargill--and not for LO, which states its hostility to any division in the working class, including that between strikers and strikebreakers!

Should one have waited for the creation of a Trotskyist party before fighting for a general strike? The heroic miners strike provoked a social and political crisis of British capitalism. Literally millions of workers wanted to support the miners and beat the strikebreakers. In these conditions, a general strike would have been "a necessary stage in the mass struggle, the necessary means for casting off the treachery of the leadership and for creating within the working class itself the preliminary conditions for a victorious uprising" (Trotsky, "The ILP and the Fourth International," 18 September 1935). In contrast, LO's "economic" general strike, lacking this perspective of building a revolutionary party, is a recipe for defeat.

The spirit of national parochialism and scorn for the working class have corrupted LO to the point that the majority of its members attending the Cercle Léon Trotsky on March 1 in Paris just sneered when a British miner called for a minute of silence in memory of the French miners killed in Forbach, and the leaders at the podium set the tone by refusing to rise! After the miners strike, one thing is clear: the British workers need a Bolshevik party. French workers do too. And it is not to LO that they should look.

How LO "Fights" Racism

--Translated from Le Bolchévik No. 55,
May 1985

Over the years, Lutte Ouvrière has built a reputation as an organization that systematically refuses to intervene in anti-fascist and anti-racist mobilizations. Its excuses have varied: there is no fascist danger in France, it isn't possible to crush fascism in the egg, or, in any event, you shouldn't give fascists publicity. These abstentionist arguments, drawn directly from the arsenal of Stalinist or social-democratic reformism, are symptomatic of a deep-going anti-Leninism which obstinately denies special oppression of immigrants. LO abstractly preaches "the unity of the working class" in order to hide its fear of politically taking on the racial and national divisions within the working class.

The appearance of LO contingents in the anti-racist demonstrations of March 30 and 31 [1985] may therefore come as a surprise. But if LO declares that it "solidarizes with the anti-racist struggle of SOS-Racisme, without thereby adopting its ideology" (Lutte de Classe No. 117, April 1985), and if its members sport the button saying "Don't touch my buddy," it is because the impotent liberalism of SOS-Racisme is simply the flip side of the coin of LO's economism. It is extremely revealing that LO takes the moralizing, insipid sermons of SOS-Racisme for genuine "anti-racist struggle." The position that all you have to do is shout "the proletarians have no country" in order to make racial divisions in the proletariat disappear has this in common with philanthropic "anti-racism": denial of the burning necessity for workers mobilizations against the wave of racist terror, spearhead of reaction in this country today. The dialectic would even have it that LO consciously uses moralism (reducing racism to the bad ideas in people's

heads) to dodge the need for a Marxist program to abolish racial oppression.

Since sectarianism is simply opportunism standing in fear of itself, LO's leadership feels the need to inoculate its troops against liberal "anti-racist" ideology by taking the offensive against "nationalism" of all stripes. To distinguish itself from the "anti-racist" milieu, it had the "clever" idea of raising the slogan: "Proletarians have no country. The only foreigners are the exploiters." This in a country where denouncing "cosmopolitan" Jewish finance capital has been the distinguishing feature of fascists and reactionaries for a century! LO complains that some liberals have cut its stickers in two, leaving only "Our people: Humanity--our country: Earth" (Lutte Ouvrière [LO] No. 879, 6 April [1985]). Imagine LO's other sticker--"Proletarians have no country. The only foreigners are the exploiters"--in the hands of racists who leave only the part that says, "The only foreigners are the exploiters"!! So then the sticker suddenly disappeared without the least self-criticism, to be replaced by another which concluded: "Their only enemies are the exploiters." Unfortunately, this idiot blindness to the realities of French society is more than a "slip."

Racism, Nationalism and Racial Oppression

The April [1985] installment of LO's "theoretical" Lutte de Classe gives proof of that. The syllogism is simple, too simple in fact: racism "was a totalitarian incarnation"; racism is "the crude, uneducated and violent nationalism of the wretched." So, to fight racism, you combat nationalism. "Who gains by making a French worker believe that he has more in common with Mitterrand, Chirac, Giscard and Le Pen, because they are French, than with an Arab worker....

Fundamentally the same people as those who want to make a Moroccan worker believe that he has more in common with Hassan II than with an Algerian worker....," etc. (LO No. 879).

We willingly admit that every nationalism contains a kernel of genocide in the countries of the "Third World"

**les prolétaires
n'ont pas de patrie,
les seuls étrangers
sont les exploiters.**
LUTTE OUVRIÈRE

**les prolétaires
n'ont pas de patrie,
leurs seuls ennemis
sont les exploiters.**
LUTTE OUVRIÈRE

**patriotisme,
nationalisme,
racisme,
c'est la même chose
et c'est idiot.**
LUTTE OUVRIÈRE

LO stickers (from top): "Proletarians have no country. The only foreigners are the exploiters." "Proletarians have no country. Their only enemies are the exploiters." "Patriotism, nationalism, racism, it's all the same and it's idiotic." The first says that Rothschild is a foreigner, the second denies the fascist danger, the third equates racist killers with their victims.

(as the Kurds or Eritreans could testify) just as much as in the imperialist countries. Thus Leninists cannot give the slightest political support to nationalism, even the most "refined" variety.

Now, as Lenin taught us--in counter-position to "imperialist economism" which advocated "monism," that is, abstract denunciation of all nationalisms--"in order for the action of the International, which is in practice composed of workers divided into workers belonging to oppressor nations and to oppressed nations, to be unified, propaganda must be conducted in a manner that is not identical in the one and the other case..." ("A Caricature of Marxism and A Propos of 'Imperialist Economism'" [1916], translated from the French). A "revolutionary" who equated French nationalism and Algerian nationalism during the Algerian war was nothing but a social-chauvinist with "left" phraseology.

But what about this case? It is a matter of immigrant workers and their children being targeted by a wave of racist terror, fueled by the government's deportations and police raids, from which the fascists are benefiting. In this situation, LO's "contribution" is a sticker which declares: "Patriotism, nationalism, racism--it's all the same and it's idiotic." Which amounts to saying that you should condemn in identical manner the nationalism of an Algerian worker and the racism of one of Le Pen's goons!

Le Pen: How to Muddy the Waters

The disastrous consequences of LO's "monism" become clear in relation to Le Pen. What's the difference between the nationalism of Le Pen and the nationalism of Chevènement [PS Minister of Education under Fabius/Mitterrand; tried to reintroduce singing of the "Marseillaise" into classrooms]? "The difference between cynicism and hypocrisy," explains the April issue of Lutte de

Classe. In a grotesque inversion of the Stalinist theory of "social-fascism," to LO everybody is simply nationalist, nothing more.

For, according to LO, the National Front is of course not "a party of the fascist type." They aren't even interested in knowing whether its program is racist, but whether it is nationalist (LO No. 879). More seriously, Lutte de Classe explains: "Giving approval to an anti-immigrant campaign in the anonymity of the voting booth is one thing. Signing up to go on a raid against immigrants, militant workers and leftists, with the risks that entails, is something else."

LO seems to believe that Le Pen's speeches on the "hierarchy of races," his slogans blaming immigrants for unemployment or his call to "smash the dictatorship of the CGT and CFDT" and put an end to "Maghrebine picket lines" are simple figures of speech, just like Arlette's "Sunday socialist" speeches. But the fascists, alas, have a better notion of combining parliamentary work and extraparliamentary struggle than many "revolutionaries." Today Le Pen is the spokesman for a program of anti-immigrant and anti-working-class terror. We must not wait for his henchmen to move into action on a massive scale! There have already been a dozen attacks against newspaper salesmen and meetings of the far left, including LO.

The sad truth is that LO does not want to commit itself on the burning terrain of the struggle to organize mass workers mobilizations against racist terror and to smash the fascists. In 1977, LO was capable of seeing that although "the essence of its influence is electoral" the National Front, which "offers a simple solution: kick out the immigrant workers," was "an organization of the fascist type" (Lutte de Classe No. 49, October 1977). But that was a question of the National Front...of Britain.

There, LO set itself up as an adviser to the British Socialist Workers Party, its workerist, state-capitalist cousins, who were waging a campaign of adventurist confrontations with the fascists by small groups. But LO counterposed to the SWP, not workers mobilizations of crushing weight, but "assisting" the black community to defend itself on its own, barricaded in its ghetto, in order "to organize itself to demonstrate its hostility, or even to ridicule the fascists." Anything, as long as it's not organizing worker/immigrant self-defense groups based on the trade unions! There is always the same fright in the face of the practical tasks which concretize the fight for the unity of the working class.

Confusing Victims with Executioners

As with the liberal ideologues of SOS-Racisme, for LO racial oppression is reduced to the behavior of individuals. But the particular use LO makes of this view is scandalous and sickening. In the summer of 1983, when psychopathic gunmen cut down a dozen immigrants, when young Toufik was murdered for shooting off some firecrackers, LO said: "Yes, we are unable, collectively, to impose upon everyone a respect for other people; for polluting the environment (one's own as well as others') by making noise or by pissing anywhere you want is also a form of intolerance, it's 'me first and other people second'" (LO No. 789, 16 July 1983). Adapting to the racist prejudices of the most backward workers, LO puts on the same plane the "noise" made by immigrant children and their murder by the racists...

So we can understand the frenzy with which LO No. 879 insists, with respect to the latest racist murders, that "here it's a question of poor wretches killing other poor wretches," as if from the Black Hundreds to the Nazi SA, the shock troops of reaction were not themselves "poor wretches."

These crimes are not special "cases." They are backed up by bourgeois "justice" and encouraged by the climate of racism created largely by the government's anti-immigrant campaign. Contrary to LO's "theory" of racial oppression, this is not a simple plot by the bosses to divide the workers. Because these economists ignore the material roots of racism--racial segregation of immigrants as the industrial reserve army--LO shuts itself into a hall of mirrors, worrying about knowing whether nationalist ideology engenders racist ideology (and dealing with the problem with the aid of little sermons/stickers).

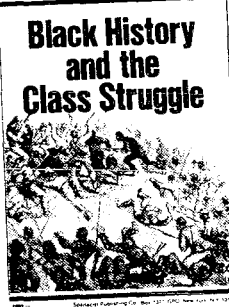
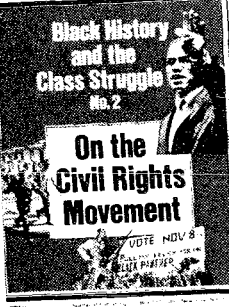
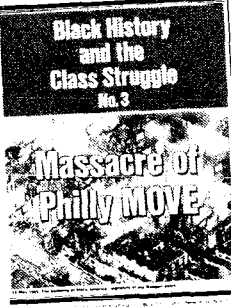
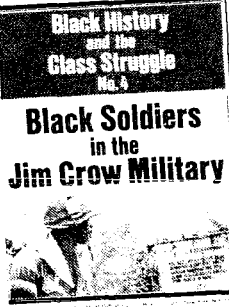
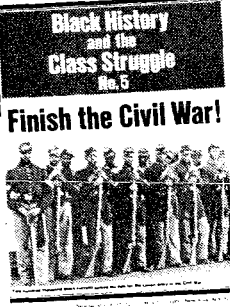
This reserve army is deprived of elementary democratic rights and may be thrown out of the country in a period of capitalist crisis. But LO is capable of writing: "The governmental measures, however threatening they may be for the living conditions of immigrant workers, nevertheless do not actually mean that the government and employers have the intention, or above all the possibility, of really driving the immigrants out [!]" (Lutte de Classe No. 49, October 1977).

This is why the announcement last October of new anti-immigrant measures, including veritable concentration camps for "illegals," does not cause LO excessive alarm: "As far as real effectiveness goes, one may doubt whether this

provides any additional means, since French legislation is abundant and already offers a broad juridical arsenal making it possible to limit immigration" (LO No. 854, 13 October 1984). This, after Dufoix had abolished family regroupment [the right for immigrant workers to bring their families to France]. It's no surprise that the slogan of full citizenship rights for immigrant workers and their families virtually never appears in LO's press. There's really no urgency about it!

The same is true of the question of the social segregation of immigrants. LO could declare: "The French Communist Party demands that there be a maximum quota of immigrant workers for every town.... In substance we cannot criticize this, because its exposures are valid and well-founded" (Lutte de Classe No. 81, 22 December 1980). Two days later, the PCF mayor of Vitry undertook the "fair distribution" of the immigrants...with the aid of a bulldozer!

LO adjusted its aim a bit, talking about the PCF's "debatable actions," but basically it relapsed: "The campaign of the PCF and its mayors on this question may well involve numerous debatable formulations, pandering to an electorate that is not free of racist prejudices, but the problem it raises is real" (Lutte de Classe No. 82, 20 January 1981).

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Racial quotas are not "debatable"; they must be fought. Treating immigrants like the plague is precisely what reinforces racist prejudices. And so what electorate is being "pandered to" by LO's economism?

LO puts forward no program to combat the segregation in housing and schools, inequality of wages and working conditions, racist terror and police raids that immigrants suffer from...but it appeals to "the unity of the working class." On the basis of the racist status quo? In that, LO represents a regression toward the social-democratic movement of before Lenin's time, criticized by James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism:

"The earlier socialist movement, out of which the Communist Party was formed, never recognized any need for a special program on the Negro question. It was considered purely and simply as an economic problem, part of the struggle between the workers and the capitalists; nothing could be done about the special

problems of discrimination and inequality this side of socialism....

"The American communists in the early days, under the influence and pressure of the Russians in the Comintern, were slowly and painfully learning to change their attitude; to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a special question of doubly-exploited second-class citizens, requiring a program of special demands as part of the over-all program--and to start doing something about it."

--"The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement,"

The First Ten Years of American Communism (1962)

Obviously, it's not a question of mechanically equating the situation of American blacks and that of immigrants in France, but this reminder of the Leninist method underscores the enormous gulf which separates the struggle for a multiracial Trotskyist party, acting as the tribune of all the oppressed, from the economism and national narrowness of the sub-reformists of LO.

LO: Who Do They Think They're Kidding?

--Translated from Le Bolchévik, No. 58, November 1985

A few days ago posters suddenly appeared on the walls of Paris, displaying in large type a whole series of "maxims" which are obviously supposed to be models of hearty "common sense" of the populist and simple-simon sort. For any militant worker who has even the slightest familiarity with the fake-Trotskyist organizations in this country, these proverbs, with their paternalistic and demagogic style, carry without the shadow of a doubt the "signature" of Lutte Ouvrière.

Who else could have said: "Right or left, two wrappings for the same politics.... We workers must learn to read the labels" on an unsigned poster? What contempt for class-conscious workers! (But examining these posters with a magnifying glass, we find the trademark of LO's printshop.) What are labels good for? Comrade Trotsky taught us that "In politics, the 'name' is the 'flag'" ("Labels' and 'Numbers'," 7 August 1935).

This is certainly no red banner LO is showing the workers. We suppose these posters are intended to be sucker-bait for backward and racist workers who wouldn't look twice at a poster signed by LO. LO is unquestionably fishing in the same electoral waters as Le Pen. Witness the laborious efforts to catch Le Pen in a flagrant "contradiction," such as: "Le Pen wants to throw out all foreigners, but he wants to force the Kanaks to remain French against their will.... He doesn't care about logic, because he trades on stupidity." He's not the only one! Another poster explains that Le Pen owes his riches to employing immigrant workers. And if the

National Front chose as its leader a café owner who refuses to serve Arabs, LO would have expended its meager "anti-fascist" ammunition.

In fact, LO persists in seeing the numerous racist crimes which have stained this country with blood as nothing but the acts of "assholes." Concerning the murder of Nordine Mechta in Lyon, they write: "Today, there are jerks who think they can justify their crimes, that is, who think they can go unpunished or at least get public sympathy by calling themselves fascists" (Lutte Ouvrière [LO] No. 905, 5 October [1985]). LO has simply decided that there is no fascist movement in France. For them, there are only "jerks," "poor wretches who kill other poor wretches"--except that now these "jerks" "call themselves fascists"!

The other big gun in LO's "anti-racist" arsenal: "Racism: a virus more dangerous than AIDS" (LO No. 909, 2 November [1985]). This slogan is simply revolting. First of all, racism is not a communicable disease (fortunately for some "revolutionaries") which each individual afflicted worker can be "cured" of by applying tepid compresses of liberal moralism or the "common sense" enemas of Doctor Laguiller. [Arlette Laguiller is LO's main public spokesman.] It's precisely because they share this profoundly liberal conception that LO is incapable of polemicizing, for example, against SOS-Racisme's liberal line other than by an abstract and abstentionist workerism. Secondly, LO feigns ignorance of the fact that the right wing, in the U.S. and also in France, has eagerly seized upon the AIDS drama to whip up a campaign for moral order that is anti-homosexual and simply anti-sex (except between husband and

wife in the missionary position). LO's indifference in the face of this sinister obscurantist propaganda and the threats of reinforced sexual discrimination represents nothing less than outright capitulation to the backwardness of "la France profonde" [equivalent to "little England," "middle America"], a backwardness which, alas, permeates many of the "workers from the ranks" LO wants to avoid rubbing the wrong way. The pathetic denunciations of the "pharmaceutical trusts" that are the sum total of LO's articles on AIDS are only a miserable smokescreen designed to cover up this capitulation. We Trotskyists demand billions for research on AIDS to conquer this terrible plague--reading LO, one would end up forgetting that before making the fortune of the pharmaceutical trusts, quinine, antibiotics and tuberculosis vaccines saved millions of lives!

It is quite frankly intolerable to see LO appoint itself as giver of proletarian lessons to the LCR on the subject of electoral blocs with petty-bourgeois ecologists, when we see the kind of neo-Poujadist [named after a right-wing populist in the '50s] sludge LO is mired in. We have already been given a sad foretaste of the electoral "propaganda" LO will soon be serving up to us with these sub-reformist posters demanding a more equitable capitalism: "If the state controlled the revenues of the rich as it controls those of the workers...we would have enough to invest and create jobs"; or this one: "Enterprises have to live, and workers do too" (which we saw covered with graffiti proclaiming: "No strikes").

The secret of the "LO method" which we see here so brilliantly in action is quite simple: while the LCR is always

trying to find substitutes for itself in order to get around politically struggling against the reformist leaderships of the working class, LO avoids this combat by plunging headlong into the most backward layers of the class, seeking politically "virgin" workers.

Before berating the LCR for its propensity (quite real, moreover) for tailing after petty-bourgeois forces, LO would do well to take a look at the beam in its own eye. Their contempt for the workers--barely worthy of receiving mini-doses of an ersatz sub-reformist program--is an attitude typical of workers, petty-bourgeois "pedagogues" who reduce their propaganda to the dimensions of what they imagine to be the current consciousness of the working class. Which sometimes brings them some unpleasant surprises, as when, according to a worker at Citroen Saint-Ouen, LO's sticker from last spring, "Patriotism, nationalism, racism--it's all the same and it's idiotic" was rather poorly received by Algerian workers who didn't appreciate being put on the same level as the thugs of the National Front.

In "What Is a 'Mass Paper'?" (30 November 1935) Trotsky polemicized against militants who at least openly advanced their program (centrist, yes, but ever so much better than LO's--workers militias, revolutionary defeatism). But the points are still valid. Trotsky described the attitude of the Molinier centrists as follows: "The program of the Fourth International, that's for 'us,' for the big shots of the leadership. And the masses? What are the masses? They can rest content with a quarter, or even a tenth, of the program. This mentality we call elitism, of both an opportunist and, at the same time, an adventurist type."

LO's Murderous Despair

--Translated from Le Bolchévik No. 60,
January 1986

Bloodthirstiness is directly proportional to the thirster's distance from the battlefield. Lutte Ouvrière has just demonstrated this in its 28 December [1985] issue where, in an article headlined "During a civil war, terrorism is also a means of mass struggle," a certain Jean-Jacques Franquier shamelessly calls for indiscriminate mass terror against the entire white population of South Africa. Let us be clear about this: they are not talking about "armed struggle," the guerrilla warfare so dear to the New Leftists of yesteryear; no, what they are talking about is "a means to take vengeance on the white population which, in the best of cases, is neutral." Because, you see, "there are no 'innocent' victims on the white side either." Whereas Marxists see week after week in South Africa evidence of the urgent necessity for a multiracial Leninist party whose task would be to lead the struggle against apartheid along class and not race lines, and which would seek at a minimum to insure the neutrality of a part of the white population, LO calls for race war and adopts as its own the old and sinister judgment: "Kill them all and let God sort them out!"

In the last two years we have gotten used to LO's cheap polemics against Krivine's LCR for its capitulation to the Kanak nationalists, a polemic which only seems to hide a position that is at best ambiguous on the question of immediate independence for the French colonies. But this time, LO makes use of the worst anti-working-class, nationalist justifications for blind terror: noting correctly that the apartheid police kill blacks indiscriminately, the article continues:

"The white children of 25 years ago, when the black children were being slaughtered at Sharpeville, are today adults.

"They could have chosen to struggle alongside the blacks. They didn't do it. That's called complicity. Most of these whites accept being the social base in whose name the South African leaders maintain the dictatorship. And the whites today are reaping the hate that they sowed."

This reminds us of another declaration made by Youssef Zighout, an Algerian FLN commander, in 1955: "To colonialism's policy of collective repression we must reply by collective reprisals against the Europeans, military and civil, who are all united behind the crimes committed upon our people. For them, no pity, no quarter!" (Alistair Horne, A Savage War of Peace). The concretization of this program was the August 1955 massacres in the Constantinois region where the Algerian population, horribly oppressed by French colonialism, let loose an indiscriminate slaughter of the European population. The reaction was not long in coming: an even more horrifying and monstrous massacre of the Algerian population, cut to pieces by the paratroopers' machine guns. According to Soustelle (at that time Governor General of Algeria), and his figures are certainly partial, there were 123 European victims and 1,273 Algerian victims (the FLN claims 12,000 victims, which is probably close to reality).

LO-watchers could be surprised by such wrath coming from an organization better known for distilling the intellectual poison of "common sense" and populist platitudes coated with a tasteless, odorless "socialism." However, this is just a monstrous "slippage" away from its despairing economism. We know

very well that as soon as the question comes up of what policy to have some- place outside French borders, LO takes refuge behind the hypocritical formula- tion "How can we give lessons to this or that people since we aren't there," and therefore refuses to offer even a propa- gandistic alternative to the disastrous policies of various Third World nation- alists. This leads them to bow down before the facts, before "spontaneity." In the present case, LO criticizes the nationalist ANC for wanting to "carry out terrorism in place of the masses" and counterposes "bomb attacks [which] could be a means of spontaneous defense of the masses themselves."

Such murderous irresponsibility leaves one speechless: abandoning the class struggle, LO calls for spontaneous

race war, and so they can be certain that it is "pure," one without organiza- tion! And already in the Antilles, LO's comrades in Combat Ouvrier have shown the same "deviation" with the slogans "Whites Out!" and "For a State of Poor Blacks Independent of the Whites and the Rich!"

It is possible that during the com- ing months, in an insipid article, LO will "correct" this murderous aberration without admitting it. But let them re- member that the population of that small Transylvanian village held Baron Frank- enstein responsible for the crimes of his monster who "got away."

The LTF Is Voting for LO

The following column by the LTF, dated 4 March 1986, is translated from Lutte Ouvrière No. 927, 8 March 1986. It appeared under the headline "Open Forum."

On March 16, the Ligue Trotskyste (LTF) is calling for a vote for Lutte Ouvrière. Opposition to popular fronts--class-collaborationist governments--is a question of principle. From the outset we have refused to call for a vote for any candidate whatsoever of the Union of the Left, which is a popular front. That is why we refused to help bring them to power in 1981. And why we won't vote for the LCR's "red, pink and green" slates [LCR electoral blocs with the social democrats and the ecologists] in 1986. That is also why we did consider giving critical support to candidate Marchais in the fall of 1980 when he was saying "three times is enough" [popular fronts of 1936, 1944 and 1972 Union of the Left] because, if the Vitry incident hadn't intervened, that could have been a vote of no confidence in Mitterrand & Co. That same desire to destroy illusions in the popular front leads us to give critical support to LO today. It is a chance to vote for class independence. LO is running in opposition to the government and this time explicitly refuses to vote for the PS [Socialist Party] or the PCF [Communist Party].

The LTF and its paper Le Bolchévik are known for unconditional military defense of the USSR and of the deformed workers states against imperialism and internal attempts at capitalist restoration (such as Solidarność after September 1981), and for mass working-class mobilizations against anti-immigrant terror. This fact has not escaped the PCF militants we are trying to convince to vote for LO. Their typical reaction is: "How can you vote for LO with your position on the Russian question? What about Afghanistan? What about Poland?" We reply: on 23 June 1981 Marchais signed a governmental agreement which gave the PCF four ministerial back seats; in order to get them he capitulated

to the PS's anti-Sovietism by calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Because class collaboration has a concrete content. Hence the racist bulldozer atrocity in Vitry, hence the about-face on Afghanistan, hence the governmental deal. We say to PCF militants: a vote for LO is a vote against a future "governmental agreement" with the PS that would force Marchais to eat new anti-Soviet and anti-working-class crap.

Class independence also must have a concrete content. In her call for the 7 March meeting at the Mutualité, comrade Arlette Laguiller said: "I was the only one who told you to vote for the left [in '81] because that was what you wished, but that you shouldn't expect anything from those on the left who would come to power." That's true. That prevented us from voting for LO in 1981 precisely because to fight constantly against fatal illusions in popular-frontism is to oppose this "experience," including by refusing to vote with the stream. For this "wish" represents above all the influence of the treacherous leaderships over the working-class ranks. Bowing down to the masses' "state of mind" means in fact leaving them in the grip of reformist leaderships and shifts the responsibility for illusions, and thus for the absence of struggles, onto the workers.

It isn't enough to say "The workers can count only on their own forces." You have to have a program that points the way to victory for workers revolution. The workers must prepare to fend off the reactionaries and fascists and to defeat renewed attacks on the working class, immigrant workers first and foremost, through extraparliamentary mobilization. LO's campaign merely poses the need for this program.

What Program for What Party?

--Translated from Le Bolchévik No. 62, March-April 1986

In the course of our campaign of critical support to Lutte Ouvrière in the legislative elections (during which we sold more than 600 copies of Le Bolchévik with our call to vote LO), we were able in meetings and discussions to broaden our political debate with the comrades of LO. This was a necessary clarification, for as we said, the LO campaign--its refusal to vote for the Communist Party (PCF) or the Socialist Party (PS)--only raises the need for a revolutionary program in order to oppose the popular front. LO lacks the programmatic means to back up the position they took.

Obviously the Russian question is one of the central differences between our organizations. And both the militants of LO and its leadership are well aware of it. Let us be clear: this difference often puts us on opposite sides of the barricades, as in Afghanistan and Poland. LO often insists, however, that the party question is the difference between us. But the Russian question is the party question, for the party question is the question of program. It is not by accident that one of Lenin's pamphlets, What Is To Be Done?, which is a thorough polemic against the program of the "Economists" (at the time important opponents of Lenin in the Russian movement), has since become a manual for building the revolutionary party.

For Lenin, the democratic-centralist party is the proletariat's only tool for the seizure of power.

What Is Economism?

LO's politics are, in a word, economism. Lenin defined economism as the position of an organization which "while fully recognising the political strug-

gle..., which arises spontaneously from the working-class movement itself, it absolutely refuses independently to work out a specifically Social-Democratic [Marxist] politics" (What Is To Be Done?). It must be understood that economism is not apolitical. Its watchword is: "Lend the economic struggle itself a political character." But this is precisely the question: which politics? Lenin insisted that "class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers" (ibid.). Again, according to Lenin, "to bring political knowledge to the workers the Social-Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions" (ibid.).

Now let us examine how LO justifies itself in terms of Leninism. Due to its "weakness" (which means that LO remains a propaganda group, despite the fact that its members sometimes try to claim the contrary), "we should be careful not to cultivate illusions about a so-called political intervention which exists only on paper or in our congress documents" ("Orientation Documents" No. 4, supplement to Lutte de Classe No. 119, October 1985). According to LO, the political campaigns of organizations which claim to be Trotskyist today "are useful only in terms of helping the group survive by getting it to believe that it is undertaking political activity." And it criticizes "good slogans which may be valid in and of themselves, without even worrying about whether they encounter any echoes outside the narrow circle of revolutionaries." LO also criticizes participating in other organizations' campaigns and in petty-bourgeois milieus "which revolutionaries wind up adapting their politics to because they lack the influence and the necessary balance

which only an implantation and work in the working class could provide" (ibid.).

The conclusion? You mustn't "dispatch units in all directions," which is exactly what Lenin wanted to do! All you have to do is implant in the working class in large factories.

How would immersion in the working class guarantee revolutionaries against capitulation to these petty-bourgeois milieus? And does the type of guarantee against capitulation that LO demands exist in politics? That is LO's soft underbelly, an opportunism standing in fear of itself--that's a constant in LO's politics. No, such guarantees don't exist! Otherwise, why would Lenin have waged so many factional battles within his party?

"Rank-and-File Workers"

In a polemic against the LCR's trade-union work, LO tells us: "The fact of limiting their activities and struggle to this milieu ['the most politically active workers, yes, but under the influence of these bureaucracies'] ultimately leads these revolutionary organizations to make their peace with and align their policies with those of the trade-union bureaucrats, however much they may try to keep their distance" (ibid.).

So LO falls back on...the least politically conscious workers--"rank-and-file" workers. First of all, and Lenin was quite clear on this, the path to the "average" worker passes through winning the advanced workers. And these famous average workers, the "rank-and-file" workers, are no political virgins either. A politically virgin worker doesn't exist. Nor are workers spontaneously reformist, they are the victims of bourgeois propaganda, propagated most often by their treacherous leaderships.

And how is it that work among "rank-

and-file" workers doesn't have the same risks as work among "the most politically active" workers, not to mention the petty bourgeoisie? Is it any accident that LO's slogans aimed at these workers (or even garnered from among them, from what LO says) are reformist: "Make the rich pay"; "Enterprises have to live, and workers do too"; "Struggle doesn't always pay, but resignation is expensive"? Another confession by LO--and a substantial one: LO voted for the popular front on the second round for a decade (1973, '74, '78, '81) as a "concession to the electoralist illusions of the masses." Where do these illusions come from? Isn't that a capitulation to the reformist leaderships--with the "masses" as intermediary?

Trotskyists fight the reformists' program with the Transitional Program--which deals with the immediate demands of the working class by showing that they can be satisfied only by expropriating the bourgeoisie. Thus the Transitional Program leads to the threshold of seizing power--but for LO that's much too concrete.

LO and the Cold War

How can a group claiming to be Trotskyist be so crudely economist? The reply to this very legitimate question is to be found in LO's analysis of Stalinism and its "anti-Stalinist" practice. While it is true that Lenin's articles against the Russian Economists are amazingly applicable to LO today, Lenin's opponents existed before the Russian Revolution and thus also prior to its Stalinist degeneration. LO's economism has two sources. The present group comes from a tendency which was founded on the explicit rejection of the need to build the Fourth International in 1938--the party question expressed in the most profound and principled fashion. Having disarmed itself concerning the party question, that is, on the perspective of taking power, and having voluntarily condemned itself to national isolation in France, very little of its

"Trotskyism" has survived, except its criticism of the Stalinists' scorn for the masses, their corruption and arbitrariness--in short, for their bureaucratism. Many who sought to escape their duty to defend the USSR usurped Trotsky's name and work by trying to transform him into a vulgar anti-Stalinist democrat. Given LO's economism, it couldn't help but be buffeted about between the social democracy and the pro-Soviet traditions of the working class in France.

When confronted with the imperialists' anti-Soviet Cold War, led by Mitterrand and the social democracy in France since 1981, only the Ligue Trotskyiste has defended the principled Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of the workers states against all attempts at capitalist restoration, whether from abroad (imperialist war threats) or internally (Solidarność after its 1981 congress). This principled position is inseparable from the perspective of proletarian political revolution against the usurping bureaucracy.

The LCR became the "far-left" activists of this Cold War campaign, lackeys of social democracy. But LO (with arguments all its own) has also chosen the camp of the Afghan mullahs and Solidarność (despite its criticisms of the leadership's nationalism and clericalism) against the collectivized property of the Polish deformed workers state. If LO militants doubt this, they should look at what their organization wrote:

"[the imperialists] send their radar signals far and wide, their eyes and their big ears, to seek out possible concentrations and movements of Russian troops and to alert public opinion, rightly or wrongly [!]. But what would they do to defend the Polish workers if the USSR intervened? Nothing. No more than they did for the Hungarian workers, the

Czechoslovak or Afghan populations."
--Lutte Ouvrière No. 654,
13 December 1980

Overthrow the bureaucracy, yes, comrades, but not by means of the imperialists (and by an imperialist war to boot)! Moreover, "armed" with this position, LO members would have found themselves on the opposite side of the barricades from the Budapest workers in 1956, because these workers wouldn't put up with a return to capitalism and were prepared to defend their barricades against Western tanks coming to their "rescue" just as much as against Russian tanks.

While denying the existence of the anti-Soviet campaign, LO has in fact been forced to take it into account and take its distance from it. Otherwise LO wouldn't have been able to write that LCR militants, by "associating themselves with a policy that favors the Socialist Party against the Communist Party, are associating themselves with an anti-communist campaign" within the CGT (Lutte de Classe No. 90, 19 January 1982).

Yes, LO kept its distance; it didn't demonstrate side by side with anti-communist scum, as did the LCR last December 4 [when Jaruzelski came to Paris]. But on what basis? With a philistine argument: "And so the LCR confuses the unrest which disturbs a certain number of union and political cadre in certain sectors with the views of the working class, which was not particularly concerned about the question of Poland..." (ibid.)! The LTF, on the other hand, publicly called for smashing the reactionary 21 December 1981 strike. Fortunately, despite the deep deformations caused by Stalinism, a certain historic memory still exists in the working class; it is reluctant to take sides with "its" bourgeoisie against the USSR. That is why the bulk of the industrial working class did not participate in that reactionary strike. That's what

"saved" LO.

LO's pamphlet "De la Russie révolutionnaire à l'URSS des bureaucrates" ("From Revolutionary Russia to the USSR of the Bureaucrats") states that the workers army and the workers state have gone from being "transitional bodies" to "institutions" and that they are "weapons dangerous for the revolution itself": that provides a measure of how far they have gone. Trotsky gave short shrift to the syndicalist Monatte, who used the Stalinist degeneration as an excuse to trot out all the old anarchist prejudices against "the dangers of power," saying that the main "danger of power" stemmed from the existing bourgeois state and that it was those who defended the bourgeois order who had a stake in "warning" the working class against taking power!

Trotsky added the following: "Yes, the dangers of state power exist under the regime of the dictatorship of the proletariat as well, but the substance of these dangers consists of the fact that power can actually return to the hands of the bourgeoisie" ("The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism," 21 October 1929).

Once it has explained that the USSR originated in a proletarian revolution, LO is quite incapable of telling us what remains of this revolution. The Stalinist political counterrevolution destroyed soviet democracy and the Bolshevik Party, but not the economy and the collectivized property forms. For LO, all that is purely "formal" and "legal," because they think that these same institutions (state planning, monopoly of foreign trade, etc.) can also be the basis for "state capitalism" in China, Cuba, etc.

Hence the awkward explanations when their pamphlet tries to show that the USSR is still a workers state: due to the social weight of the working class, the weakness of the bureaucracy's base, etc. This mish-mash is scarcely serious

and it condemns LO not only to fail to understand anything at all about Solidarność's restorationist program--the restoration of capitalist private property--but also to be unable to tell us how proletarian political revolution differs from social revolution in the capitalist countries. The Transitional Program is crystal clear, however: it is a question of preserving and extending what remains of the gains of October by tearing them out of the hands of the bureaucracy.

Once More on Afghanistan

LO's positions on the Russian question are as shaky as their characterizations: the Red Army in Afghanistan is killing civilians, violating the independence of Afghanistan, Jaruzelski is a dictator, etc. A bit light-minded for anyone who claims to be a Marxist.

To begin with, the fact that these swashbuckling crusaders against any and all nationalisms think that the borders traced by imperialism in the 19th century are sacrosanct is in itself significant. That they then refuse to understand that the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the Kabul government had only just begun a fight against their country's Islamic backwardness, a fight which only the Red Army, due to the social basis on which it rests, is in a position to carry out (since the Afghan working class is virtually non-existent), shows once again that they grasp nothing about the nature of the USSR.

When LO compares the Red Army in Afghanistan with the imperialist French army in Algeria, it "forgets" that French colonialism, after over a century of domination, left Algeria even poorer and more illiterate than before. But that isn't the case in Soviet Central Asia--and after stubborn resistance by Islamic reaction, no less! Trotsky commented:

"It is true that in the sphere of national policy, as in the sphere of

economy, the Soviet bureaucracy still continues to carry a out certain part of the progressive work, although with immoderate overhead expenses. This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union, which must of necessity pass through a more or less prolonged period of borrowing, imitation and assimilation of what exists. The bureaucracy is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois, culture."

--The Revolution Betrayed

In fact, the bureaucracy's progressive role is based only on the fact that it rests on the economic foundation of a workers state. But LO stubbornly defends the aberrant notion that this bureaucracy has been administering capitalist states in Eastern Europe for 40 years. If that were the case, the bureaucrats would have long since restored capitalism in the USSR itself. When confronted with U.S. imperialism, Stalin was forced to expropriate the Eastern European bourgeoisie, if only in order to consolidate his grasp on these states.

LO thinks that recognizing the dual nature of the bureaucracy--its military defense of its own economic foundations and its counterrevolutionary policies of class collaboration internationally--means recognizing that the existence of the bureaucracy is necessary, giving it a historic mission, so to speak. Not at all. While Jaruzelski spiked Solidarność's pro-capitalist coup d'état in 1981 (an action we supported militarily) in order to defend his own interests and, thereby, the economic foundations on which he is a parasite, only the construction of a Trotskyist party capable of overthrowing the parasitic bureaucracy at the head of the Polish proletariat will save the Polish workers state and allow a democratic soviet government to be installed.

LO and French Stalinism

The Russian question is the question of the party, because the question of the party is the question of program. Just as LO has emptied the notion of the party of its Leninist content, so too it has emptied the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat of its content by relegating it to "Sunday socialist" rhetoric, transforming it into an idyllic paradise: a state which would be "simultaneously cheap and more democratic," like a little French village, as Arlette said in 1981.

LO's current leadership was forged in a period when the PCF systematically terrorized its opponents on the left in the factories--up until and even following 1968. In so doing, the Stalinists, as reformists, were defending the bourgeois order. But LO counterposes to Stalinist strikebreaking (carried out in the service of their pop-frontism) nothing except workers democracy, and not the Transitional Program, the concretization of the perspective of socialist revolution.

That a tendency which claims to be Trotskyist is proud of its role in a strike against a popular front--the 1947 Renault strike--is honorable, of course. But it seems as if all LO wants is to repeat this experience, which represents in fact its entire program. The Renault strike was an elemental revolt by the workers against the Stalinist leadership on the basis of economic demands. LO's ancestors were already limiting themselves to being the driving force in the strike committee in certain Billancourt departments when the Trotskyists of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste were fighting for a general strike of all metal workers, advancing the perspective of a workers government against the popular front. The tendency which became LO was already turning its back on unions controlled by the Stalinist

bureaucracy.

But just as the gains of October can't be left to the Gorbachevs, the gains of 1936--unions implanted in the big industrial centers--must not be left to the [CGT head] Krasuckis and [CFDT head] Maires.

LO is programmatically disarmed vis-à-vis the PCF. That is why it is quite incapable of splitting it and why it even calls on PCF members to stay in the PCF. The answers to the questions which many PCF members are asking are

certainly not to be found in LO's "shop-floor leaflets"! They are to be found in the program defended by the LTF. The same goes for LO members who are looking for a real fighting perspective against popular-frontism and for proletarian revolution: a program which derives not from an economist break with the Fourth International (even while Trotsky was still alive) but which takes its roots in continuity, via the experience of James P. Cannon, the leader of American Trotskyism--the program of the international Spartacist tendency.

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LO and Libya: The Stench of Fear



Le Bolchévick Photos

Paris, 23 April 1986: LO capitulated to imperialist anti-Soviet hysteria. LO banner (left) reads: "Reagan is not trying to overthrow dictators, he wants to terrorize the people." LTF banner (right) says: "USA/France: Hands Off Libya! French Troops Out of Africa! Defend the USSR!"

--Translated from Le Bolchévick No. 63,
May 1986

Last Wednesday, 23 April [1986], Lutte Ouvrière did its level best to turn a Paris demonstration called to protest Reagan's attack on Libyan cities into an "anti-terrorist" spectacle, scandalously placing the imperialist Reagan on the same level as Qaddafi's Libya. For the first time any militant can recall, LO marched at the head of a demonstration, with one banner saying "Great power terrorism is no less criminal just because it's done on a big scale" and another which read: "Against terrorism wherever it comes from, counterpose the unity of all the world's oppressed." By doing this, LO accepted and made its own the imperialist propaganda designed to whip up warmongering hysteria against the USSR through one of the its military clients, Libya. Another

banner explained that LO opposes Reagan's murderous raid on Tripoli and Benghazi because "Reagan is not trying to overthrow dictators, he wants to terrorize the people." For the White House, "dictators" are all those who are friendly with the USSR (Nicaragua, Grenada, Angola, Afghanistan) and Reagan certainly wants to overthrow them, and kill them! Coming from the labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie, like the leadership of the PCF or the PS, this would not be surprising, but coming from an organization claiming to be Trotskyist, i.e., internationalist, it is nothing less than scandalous! Even the criminally passive Marchais does not have this rotten line.

This is not a question of the usual "third camp" refusal to defend the Soviet Union as in Poland or Afghanistan, expressed passively in its writings, or

even LO's deplorable ambiguity on the Leninist program for unconditional independence of the colonies even if under nationalist leadership. No, this time the LO leadership took great pains to express physically and in action its explicit refusal to defend semi-colonial Libya, the victim of imperialist aggression. Trotsky was clear on this question. He said, regarding Italy's war against Ethiopia and its feudal monarch, Haile Selassie:

"If Mussolini triumphs, it means the reinforcement of fascism, the strengthening of imperialism, and the discouragement of the colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere. The victory of [Ethiopia], however, would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole, and would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples. One must really be completely blind not to see this."

--"On Dictators and the Heights of Oslo" (April 1936)

LO is adapting to bourgeois public opinion. Reagan and the French bourgeoisie are preparing a third world war; theoretically, revolutionary organiza-

tions are tested in a period of crisis, not in the routine of electoral campaigns. The USSR is threatened, Libya is raped by the arrogant imperialists, and the leadership of LO marches through the streets of Paris to give guarantees of its "respectability," seeking to placate this witchhunting government. This is also shown by its absence from the 18 April [1986] rally in defense of Libya organized by several immigrant associations, where the LTF was one of the two French organizations present. Frankly, all this stinks. And believe us, comrades, it won't work. You'll have to stoop a lot lower before you are "safe."

If you want to remain in the tradition of revolutionaries like Karl Liebknecht, who opposed the war hysteria in 1914 by proclaiming "the main enemy is at home," you have to turn seriously to the propaganda and activity of the international Spartacist tendency. Our slogans at the demonstration last Wednesday were unambiguous:

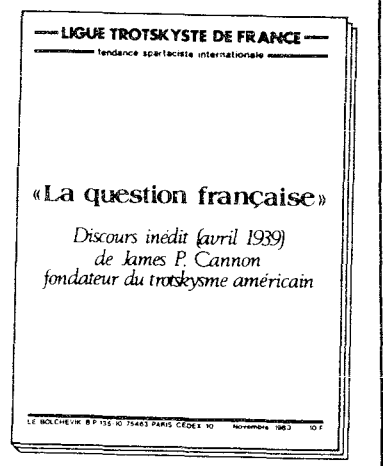
USA, France, Hands Off Libya!
French troops out of Africa!
Defend the Soviet Union!
Reagan and Libya, Mitterrand and Greenpeace--the real terrorists are the imperialists!

En janvier 1939, le comité exécutif de la Quatrième Internationale confiait à James P. Cannon, dirigeant de longue date du trotskysme américain, la tâche de faciliter l'entrée des trotskystes français dans le PSOP (une scission de gauche de la social-démocratie) et d'empêcher une scission sur cette question dans la section française.

Les textes que nous publions dans cette brochure, le rapport de Cannon sur sa mission, son article «Sur la direction du mouvement révolutionnaire» et les «Résolutions sur les tâches de la section française» adoptées par le congrès de la Quatrième Internationale en 1938, dissèquent certaines des faiblesses historiques du trotskysme français, avec ses luttes fractionnelles incessantes, sa direction formée d'un conglomérat de «vedettes» individuelles, l'amateurisme et l'improvisation de son fonctionnement. Ce sont des classiques, toujours riches d'enseignements pour les révolutionnaires d'aujourd'hui.

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LO Is No Place for a Trotskyist

This article was translated from Le Bolchévick No. 83, May 1988. A section dealing with LO's view of international regroupment has been omitted as duplicative of other material in this pamphlet.

If opportunism has a thousand faces, it is in essence national. It is always a question of capitulating to political pressure from the bourgeoisie, directly or through the intermediary of the reformist bureaucrats, the labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie in the working class. Ever since the early 1980s in France, the pressure of bourgeois public opinion has above all taken the form of anti-Soviet hysteria over Poland and Afghanistan. There, LO didn't hesitate to howl with the wolves against the USSR. But its record is no better when it comes to class collaboration in France: on 10 May and then in June 1981, like the rest of the charlatan fake-Trotskyists, LO called on the workers to put Mitterrand in power, voting for him "without illusions, but without reservation," with the excuse that that is what the workers "wanted." In reality, the LO leadership was above all afraid of the ire of the reformist bureaucrats (especially those of the PCF [Communist Party]) who would otherwise have accused them of "playing into the hands of the right wing." However, this didn't stop Laguiller from cynically explaining seven years later how she had "warned" the working class that Mitterrand would betray them! Opportunism always has a short memory.

Incapable of politically confronting the reformists by offering the advanced workers under their influence a revolutionary program and leadership, LO sidesteps the obstacle, addressing the "rank and file" and the "little guy" with a populist demagoguery devoid of any trace of Marxism. This is nothing new, nor is LO's typically workerist indifference to oppression and racist terror--the workers should first struggle for better wages, and after that we'll see. But in

a country ravaged by economic crisis and racism, this indifference becomes an increasingly nauseating insensitivity, especially since many of the "little guys" whom Arlette, "la femme du peuple" [woman of the people], addresses, are now turning toward the fascists.

Today LO has lowered itself into the demagogic slime where Le Pen wallows, to fight with him over the votes of these "little guy" white racists [petits Blancs]. Thus we read in an 11 January editorial of one of their "factory bulletins" that:

"Le Pen doesn't give a damn about immigrants and the real or imagined problems that their presence could pose to workers. Le Pen defends the bosses. If the bosses need immigrant workers, Le Pen won't stop any immigrant workers from coming to France, nor force any to leave."

--Lutte Ouvrière No. 1024,
16 January [1988]

We can only assume that LO militants really think that on one side are "the workers" (French and white) and on the other "the immigrants" who pose "real problems" (!) for them, and that one must explain nicely to the "little guy" white racists that Le Pen has tricked them because he won't keep his promise to throw all the Arabs out. How can they stand to distribute such filth at factory gates?

And this isn't an isolated "slip," scandalous as it is. Two months later, on March 7, Laguiller debated one of the National Front (FN) honchos on the television program "Duel on [Channel] Five." The fascist Martinez, after spewing his anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic hate

(the "billionaire Fabius"), affably proposed to Laguiller to "make the national revolution together"--the battle cry of the Pétain regime. Alas, Le Pen's lieutenant understood perfectly that he was dealing with a representative of a "down home" organization--LO's solution to all the problems of the planet is always to "build the party in France"--whose populist demagoguery doesn't hold a candle to that of the fascists, which is simpler and more "radical."

And this, unfortunately, is what emerged from the infamous "arguments" that "Arlette" used:

"You're for closing the borders to workers. But you're not for closing the borders to capital. And today, it doesn't bother you that de Benedetti, Goldsmith or Empain, who don't even have [French] nationality...[interrupted by Martinez]. It doesn't bother you that their capital, which they made here from the sweat of the workers--whether French or immigrant--that they send it out of the country. That doesn't bother you. There, you're not a nationalist. Where money is concerned, you're not a nationalist. You're only nationalist when it comes to workers."

Here is the reformist, chauvinist "Produce French" program of the PCF, pushed to its most nauseating limits! But when it comes to chauvinism, the fascists are not afraid of competition. To the petty bourgeoisie ruined by big capital, they offer a scapegoat: on the one hand the immigrants, on the other the Jews, denounced as "foreign exploiters." That is why barely veiled anti-Semitic allusions are omnipresent in Le Pen's harangues.

The LO leadership continues to repeat that the FN is "not yet" a fascist party. But facts, alas, are stubborn

things, and after the shock of the first round of the presidential election, Lutte Ouvrière was obliged to recognize that Le Pen is a danger and that the most conscious workers are looking for the means to fight him. But all that Laguiller & Co. have to offer is "to unite and fight together"...for a SMIC [monthly minimum wage] of 6,000 francs and no more layoffs! As Trotsky explained in 1936, when the fascist "leagues" were growing:

"Should the resistance of the workers to the offensive of capital increase on the morrow, should the strikes become more frequent and important, Fascism...will not evaporate but instead grow with redoubled force....In defending ourselves against the economic blows of capital, we must know how to defend at the same time our organizations against the mercenary gangs of capital."

--"Once Again, Whither France?"
(1936)

We ask LO members and sympathizers to think about this: LO has no answer to the burning question posed, correctly, by advanced workers in this country. And we warn them. In a country where the fascists got almost 15% of the vote, populism, especially when combined with anti-Sovietism, can carry a small propaganda group with no mass working-class base into deep water, far from the workers movement. To those who want to be revolutionaries but are seduced by LO's appearance of combativity and attachment to the working class, we say: you don't belong in this organization whose leaders scab, crossing picket lines (like at Renault-CKD in 1986), and who are as incapable of defending workers and immigrants against fascism as they are incapable of defending the working-class gains in the USSR. LO is no place for a Trotskyist!

Application to the LTF

--Translated from the French

4 February 1984

Dear Comrades,

After more than four months of discussion, classes and (sometimes laborious) theoretical clarification, I am in agreement with the overall program of the LTF, with its way of analyzing the current situation and with its truly communist morality. I have had the opportunity, during these four months and before, to get a clear idea of the political strategy of other far-left organizations: the LCR, the PCI and LO, of which I was a candidate member for over a year and a half. The LTF comrades were able to give comprehensive answers to the questions I had already been asking myself for some time. I now think that the ist is the only international organization with a program that does not lead to capitulation pure and simple and to reformism (even if tinted red).

Before going into detail, I would like to say a few things about my brief experience in LO.

I was introduced to a woman LO comrade by my uncle who was a cadre in the organization. He left us alone in a cafe immediately after introducing us, since the militant-contact relationship is always one-on-one, generally with the same person. While this may have the advantage of being practical, it can be unhealthy and eliminate additional enrichment the contact might gain from talking to other militants. I can clearly recall that first discussion (or rather monologue, since I had nothing to say): in a few years "things were going to blow," there would be huge struggles and you had to prepare for that. The task in the coming years was to build the great revolutionary party that would lead us to victory. You had to "do something"...with the Russian Revolution

trotted out as an example. I readily accepted these ideas which were new for me (though not so new!), but at the time I was scared stiff of what it might mean to join, to commit myself, to find people (who would probably listen to what I was saying as if it were off the wall). I agreed to see her again and for weeks we had discussions about which I recall almost nothing. I also went to classes on the history of the workers movement, a bit like LO's present public meetings (though much more interesting). The questions sympathizers raised in the classes frequently exposed LO's political strategy: the question "what is to be done while waiting for a revolutionary situation?" was particularly interesting. They inevitably answered "become active" or "make a choice" or "commit yourself," but at no time did they raise the question of the concrete program for today.

I joined LO (if you can call it that) rather abruptly and I wasn't really aware what I was doing or joining. One day the comrade said I should plan to stay a bit longer. At the end of the discussion, she simply asked if I wanted to "do something" and when I somewhat awkwardly said yes, she immediately introduced me to an "old-timer." He informed me that I wanted to join the organization (the woman comrade hadn't been very clear), asked me about my political past, took my phone number and address, suggested I attend an internal school, gave me a pseudonym and took off.

So I went to the internal school. I was with a bunch of other kids who talked to me and shared their experience with me (the old-timers didn't talk much about their past as militants), and with some other "novices" too. During the day we read in groups, in the evening there was a meeting. The readings for the school were purely political (Communist

Manifesto; Value, Price and Profit; Ten Days That Shook the World; Victor Serge's The Year One of the Russian Revolution; The Eighteenth Brumaire [of Louis Bonaparte]; The Transitional Program) except for the tract on "How to recognize petty-bourgeois elements in ten easy lessons" ("girls who wear makeup and jewelry are petty-bourgeois; LO doesn't take homosexuals into the organization because it creates problems," etc.). Other internal schools continued the readings we had begun (Lenin's writings on 1917; The Revolution Betrayed; pamphlets on LO's political antecedents, on the unions, on different "left" parties, on the "bourgeois" regimes in Cuba, Algeria, various African states, Mao's China). We also learned how to use a mimeo and write a [factory] newsletter on a given subject chosen at random. Evening meetings were devoted to political discussions about the day's reading. The kids asked questions, discussed and argued among themselves and finally the old-timers supplied the answer. One of these meetings gave me an idea of LO's application of proletarian internationalism: "First we want to create a revolutionary party in France and then build an International. We don't seek discussions with foreign comrades, unless they come to us and insist. We are putting this task off for later." At that point, a young Maghrebine comrade began to launch a harsh polemic against this stagist position with one of the old-timers. The rest of us didn't know what side to take. The young comrade finally shut up, but without accepting LO's position. Another discussion that shook things up was on the "petty bourgeois" problem (to which I referred before). It was also during one of these schools that I found out what LO thought of the LTF: "they're nuts who defend Jaruzelski and make speeches learnt by rote, but when we defend our positions, they're lost and don't know what to say." That piqued my curiosity more than anything else...

At the end of the first internal

school, we were told that each of us had to form his own group, that we had to recruit, find people by hook or by crook, get our own experience, among friends or family for example. (Only at a more advanced level were we told that we had to orient to the working class, for example by getting back in touch with some former schoolmate who was now working, in order to get him to go into a big plant after he was won over.)

So I recruited. It wasn't easy at first. I didn't know how to go about it and I was afraid. In vain did the woman comrade explain to me that "people change," there are elements of revolt in everyone--I didn't dare. (Besides, being chewed out daily by the comrade--"you're not a real militant, etc."--paralyzed me.) Finally, I started talking to people I knew and that worked.

Little by little, I learned to think and to defend what I thought. I had one failure with one of my friends (a young Stalinist) due more, I now think, to the lack of clear political program than to any deep-going disagreement. And LO's secretive mania about not talking, or talking as little as possible, about one's activity as a member! We could only discuss "ideas" and not about what it meant to be politically active (discussions with other people, meetings, leafleting, etc.). Another mania: clandestinity (don't use the phone, don't talk about our internal schools to the comrades in my group--that is, about what we did there) which led to the craziest stuff: covering over the license plate of the car bringing food to the internal school, violently chewing out a comrade because he said "comrade" to another comrade on the train platform when we were leaving the location of the internal school. Of course you have to be discreet ("an iron front externally"), but that was crazy. In fact, the woman comrade once said: "Clandestinity is more to protect us from ourselves than from the cops." Just try to understand that!

Then I continued discussions with Pascal, who I had known for eight years, and Alexandre, who I met during a student strike. Many problems came up: for both of them it was generally discussions on violence and religion. They needed to break with the remnants of idealism. Pascal had discovered the class struggle and what a boss is as a result of some supervisors' persecutions, and that changed his "religious calm" into a revolt against the system. But to say that the bosses are nasty and you have to fight them offers a merely "trade unionist" perspective. You need a program to give the working class a perspective and to take power. They were both "taken in" before the LO fête and we were finally able to form our group, despite Alexandre's deep-going differences on LO's organizational system. I never was able to answer the questions he raised and I made do with downplaying them. In our meetings, we were only supposed to discuss people we were contacting, that is, recruitment. But it didn't last long. During summer vacation, the group disintegrated and we didn't meet. But Pascal and I continued to see the woman comrade (who criticized me for not maintaining political contact during the summer vacation, something I hadn't foreseen, since as the "group leader" I was supposed to "set an example").

After that, things were a total mess following an episode in LO which shook my confidence considerably. It was at that point that, looking for a perspective, I came into contact with the LTF comrades--I must say that I didn't take it very seriously at first. And it was over the question of the automobile industry [Talbot strike] (and the popular front) that I discovered a coherent program and perspectives for the present epoch.

Until then, LO had told me to wait "until the workers start to fight" ("no doubt they haven't had a hard enough time yet," others added), assuring me that the Mitterrand government would

discredit itself, that you had to explain to the workers that this wasn't their government, and once they understood that--on to the second stage. But then how do you call for a vote for Mitterrand without discrediting yourself? Revolutionaries have almost always gone against the stream of what the masses were thinking. Why not be right one more time, not just by warning the workers beforehand, but also by drawing all the conclusions: that is, calling for abstention; that is, working out an independent class program instead of calling for exerting pressure on Mitterrand's policies to get him to force the capitalists to invest instead of speculating. The working class can count only on its own strength, but for that it needs a revolutionary program to prevent demoralization and to provide a perspective in the epoch of decaying capitalism. Today more than ever, the slogans of the Transitional Program remain valid: sliding scale of wages and hours. Especially after the Talbot strike and the announcement of other layoffs, it is urgent to raise them. What LO told me is that the LTF seeks to radicalize the masses, that it might organize a few workers around the slogan of a general strike in automobile but that these workers would go away disappointed (you know, guys who tell you they're with you and afterwards disappear--I've known quite a few!). LO's perspective is extremely demoralizing: but of course they are ready to go into clandestinity if the working class is crushed...besides, what can they do in Talbot, they're not implanted there! (But don't you think that it might be a good time to get implanted?) I think that today we have no other alternative than to fight with our program to forge the great future revolutionary party.

I was first attracted by this part of the LTF's program (if you can speak of "parts" of a program), but the Russian question gave me the most trouble. I really didn't know whether I was coming or going with two such different analyses. In a subsequent discussion,

the woman comrade defended the position that, in the case of Afghanistan, even a healthy workers state would not have had the right to cross a border without the people's consent (but which people?). She argued the right of nations to self-determination, by referring to Lenin. At the time, I was not sufficiently armed to tell her that I was not in favor of the mullahs' right to determine for the Afghan people (or rather peoples); to raise the problem of the enslavement of women; the necessity for the bureaucracy, in order to maintain itself in power, to make reforms and liquidate the clergy, the main support of imperialism. The Polish question is much trickier, since there is a working class there which up to now has fought against the bureaucracy side by side with a reactionary leadership (and not a reformist one, as LO claims). LO's position on this question is more than simplistic: in the absence of a Trotskyist party (which, by the way, we don't seek to build!) we support the Polish working class in its struggle for a better life. Except that what awaits the Polish workers if they cling to Solidarność--whose real nature I learned thanks to the LTF comrades--is not a better life, but a catastrophe and a threat to the gains they enjoy (planned economy, etc.). The only way out for the Polish working class is to forge an independent Trotskyist party which will fight simulta-

neously against the imperialists and the parasitic caste which is destroying the Polish state. In this regard I find LO's theory on Cuba, China, the buffer states, very strange: these states are supposedly bourgeois (because internationally they carry out bourgeois policies) but you can't talk about their being capitalist because they have an economy like that of the USSR, with a bureaucracy and everything... This isn't Marxism any more, it's metaphysics. Finally, I now know what a deformed workers state is, thanks to reading and discussion, and I don't think it is necessary to answer in detail this kind of witch doctor's argument.

To conclude, comrades, I was at LO's public meeting yesterday, and I was deeply upset by the attitude of people in the hall toward the LTF. I think it will be hard, but when you are depressed, think of Zimmerwald.

So, as a Marxist, Trotskyist and internationalist, for a workers' insurrection to take power, after reading the organizational rules of the LTF and agreeing to respect the discipline of the LTF, I ask the comrades to accept me into their organization.

Trotskyist greetings,
Xavier

WORKERS VANGUARD

—reprinted from
Workers Vanguard
 No. 349, 2 March 1984

Bosses' Rules—A Losing Game

Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win

UPI



**Cops attack
 striking
 shipbuilders
 in 1979 at
 Newport News,
 Virginia.**

The head of the bus drivers union bargaining council remarked, "It was a game of hardball and they played harder ball than we did," announcing the sellout of the Greyhound strike last December. That's for sure, and not only at Greyhound. Reagan set the tone in 1981 by firing 15,000 air controllers, the entire PATCO union. The next year Iowa Beef Packers used National Guard bayonets to shove a four-year wage freeze down the workers' throats. In 1983 came the Phelps-Dodge copper strike in Arizona—this time hundreds of Guards-

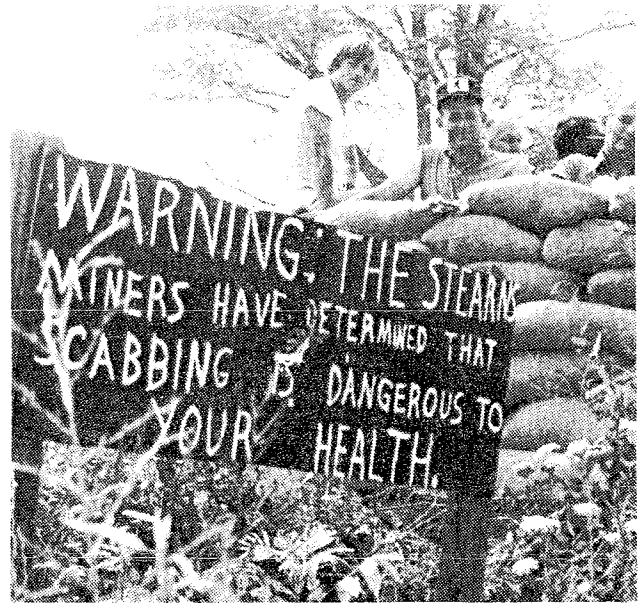
men, helicopters, armored personnel carriers, shootings, evictions, as the full power of the state was mobilized against the miners. After knocking off some peripheral sectors, the union-busters are now aiming at the heart of organized labor: the key national industrial and transport unions. At Greyhound they demanded a 25 percent pay cut. At the beginning the union tops soft-soaped the ranks, claiming they couldn't lose their jobs because the walkout was "legal." But the scab buses rolled anyway, cops busted picketers' heads coast to

coast, hundreds were fired, and when the "negotiations" were over, those who went back had to eat monstrous concessions. What did the AFL-CIO bureaucrats do about this? Nothing—they sat on their hands and called a few token rallies so angry unionists could blow off steam.

In Reagan's America it's open season on the unions, on blacks, the poor, the illegal aliens, the radicals—we're all targets of the drive to roll things back to the way they were when the robber barons rode high in the saddle, when the only business of America, said Calvin Coolidge, was business. The biggest growth industry in the U.S. today isn't high tech or armaments—it's strikebreaking. The Pinkertons and Wackenhuts are having a boom providing the bosses with armored cars, vans and guards to protect scabs. These are the scum of the earth. Remember Lt. Calley? His first public act was strikebreaking on a railroad in Florida. From there to butchering Vietnamese women and children at My Lai was a natural progression. And if the death squad killers get kicked out of El Salvador by the leftist guerrillas, pretty soon they'll be here as "freedom fighters" working for these scabherding outfits.

Unions aren't the only ones under the gun today—by no means. "Dividends are rising—black people are starving," we wrote recently. Every day there is new evidence. "Report Says U.S. Hunger Is Widespread and Rising," headlined the *New York Times* on February 7. Two weeks later the Census Bureau officially reported 34 million people living below the poverty line in 1982, an increase of almost 50 percent in the last three years. As the economy climbs up from the depth of the worst crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s some white workers are finding work again, but black unemployment is still officially above 15 percent. In fact, *almost half* of all black men do not have a full-time job! U.S. capitalism maintains a huge army of black and "illegal" Latin workers to provide low-wage labor; now they are using this club to beat the unions. During the Greyhound strike the company's appeal for scabs was directed explicitly at minorities and women. All across America, thousands of unemployed lined up to act as strikebreakers. And worst of all, they felt no fear.

The killing of *strikers* is becoming routine practice. Today no company feels like they've gotten satisfaction with a mere 15 percent wage cut—they've got to have a dead striker as a scalp to wave around. Ray Phillips, a Greyhound driver in Ohio run down by a scab "trainee" in December. A few weeks later, Greg Goobic, a young Union Oil striker killed by a scab driving an 18-wheeler through a picket line at a Rodeo, California refinery. This is *murder* as company policy. And it must be stopped! It won't be stopped by the cops and courts—they're on the other side, the guardians of the capitalists' "law and order." Potential strikebreakers should be educated to understand that you can't cross a picket line on two broken legs, and county hospitals are rotten places. The next time a scab even thinks about, or is



WV Photo

Striking coal miners in Stearns, Kentucky, 1977.

coaxed by his bosses to run down a striker, he should go pale with fear. Then we can talk about *winning* some battles for a change.

The misleaders of American labor are literally letting the bosses get away with murder. Why? Charles Craypo, a professor of industrial relations at Cornell, put his finger on it. As the Greyhound strike was going under he remarked that union leaders "are careful to stay within legal boundaries, and if you stay within legal boundaries, there is not a whole lot you can do" (*New York Times*, 7 December 1983). Damn right, there isn't! The Greyhound union leaders even *voluntarily* limited the number of pickets, guaranteeing that the scab buses would roll, so they couldn't be accused of "breaking the law." And when the Auto Workers scabbed on Greyhound strikers in Detroit, the excuse was that they were "upholding the contract." Solidarity is not sending \$500 and a valentine. Solidarity is respecting picket lines, it is secondary boycotts, "hot cargoes" struck products. "But that's illegal," the bureaucrats whine. So maybe some labor leaders go to jail six months *after* they surround the terminals with thousands of pickets and call a solidarity strike and the battle is *won*. Throughout most of the history of this country there have always been numerous labor men in prison, as a necessary cost of maintaining some kind of social equilibrium on behalf of the workers. But today the union leaders are taking casualties lying down, for nothing.

The future of the unions is on the line. And while the capitalists are grabbing every gun in their closet, the union bureaucracy is handcuffing the workers with the bosses' laws. They're blunting our weapons. The bureaucrats invented the "informational picket line." We say, along with every miner and self-respecting trade unionist, "Picket lines mean *you better not try to cross!*"

When PATCO strikers were in chains, the AFL-CIO's response was to call an impotent consumer boycott. The Spartacist League said: "Shut Down the Airports!" Machinists and Teamsters had the power to bring the country to a halt—they just had to say the word, the ranks were ready. Over Greyhound we said: "Stop the Buses! For a National Transport Strike!" Again the labor traitors called for a consumer boycott to hide their refusal to fight.

The bureaucrats are allowing the bosses and their state to hack up the unions not only by their cowardly legalism but also and no less importantly by their racism. It was not just the militant and "illegal" tactics like the sit-down strike and mass picketing which built the industrial unions in the 1930s. The great CIO organizing drives in auto, steel, meat packing, maritime and other industries broke down the traditional Jim Crow system as black workers took their place as rock-solid union militants. In the 1930s-1940s the black ghetto masses identified with the labor movement. But today what black man does not see in a Lane Kirkland or a Doug Fraser a defender of the racist status quo? To organize the open shop South, for example, will mean pitched battles with the Ku Klux Klan and cracker sheriffs. Can anyone imagine the AFL-CIO tops involved in, much less leading, this kind of fight? In white racist America the fate of organized labor and the oppressed black masses is closely bound together. The bureaucracy's accommodation to the racist status quo set the stage for the union-busting offensive of the Reagan years. And there will be no effective defense against this union-busting unless the labor movement becomes a powerful champion of black rights. Reagan's shock troops for his war on unions, blacks and other minorities are the fascist KKK and Nazis. The SL strategy of mass labor/black mobilizations to stop the fascists—powerfully displayed in action when the Klan was stopped in Washington, D.C. on November 27, 1982 by 5,000 black and other working people under our leadership—heralds the kind of fighting, class-struggle labor movement and revolutionary workers party this country needs.

Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win

No decisive gain of labor was ever won in a courtroom or by an act of Congress. Everything the workers movement has won of value has been achieved by mobilizing the ranks of labor in hard-fought struggle, on the picket lines, in plant occupations. What counts is power. The strength of the unions lies in their numbers, their militancy, their organization and discipline and their relation to the decisive means of production in modern capitalist society. The bosses are winning because the power of labor, its strength to decisively cripple the enemy, has not been brought to bear. So how *do* you fight to win? After the recent string of unmitigated disasters, thousands of union militants must be asking themselves this question. We do not advocate the practice of

Labor in Reagan's America: Leaders of striking air controllers union (PATCO) led away in chains, August 1981.



the McNamara brothers, the early Iron Workers organizers who until they were sent away for dynamiting the *Los Angeles Times* building in 1910 (thanks to Clarence Darrow pleading them "guilty") were some of the most successful labor organizers the country had ever seen. The key is mobilizing militant mass action in a thought-out way, one which minimizes the damage in terms of jail sentences and other casualties.

Take the Union Oil strikers in Rodeo, California where Gregory Goobic was killed. Refineries are generally located out in the boondocks and the companies are tight with the highway patrol, so take a look at how the miners take care of business in similar situations. Back in 1977 striking coal miners in Stearns, Kentucky were faced with a squad of gun thugs who began throwing lead from their steel-reinforced bunker. The strikers put up a sign—"Warning: The Stearns Miners Have Determined That Scabbing Is Dangerous to Your Health"—and responded in kind. Some cowardly company guards complained that one night they were disarmed by miners, given a tour of the county and dropped off minus their pants. Later when state police attempted to herd scabs into the struck mines, the entire force of strikers showed up to face them down. Even though scores of United Mine Workers (UMWA) men were arrested and the Stearns strike defeated—because it was criminally isolated by the UMWA leaders—their militancy set the stage for the historic 110-day coal strike in 1978.

Phone installations, unlike oil refineries or coal mines, are generally located in urban centers. Highly technologically advanced, the system can be run for weeks, perhaps months, with only supervisory person-

nel. And there has never been a successful telephone strike in this country. The Communications Workers (CWA) started out as a company union and then hooked up with the CIA (via its AIFLD "labor" front). How do you win in phone? In February 1981 the telephone union in British Columbia, Canada showed how: instead of marching out they occupied every major BC Tel installation around the clock. They held the property hostage while the company ran to the courts. During last summer's nationwide telephone strike we put forward a strategy to bring the arrogant, parasitic and widely hated monopoly to its knees: hundreds of thousands of phone workers occupying the buildings, rallying unionists throughout the country, and "with a flick of the switch, phone workers could win millions of allies among working people by providing free phone service...."

Or in New York City transit, which has been run downhill for a couple of decades. In 1966 the newly elected liberal mayor John Lindsay arrogantly tried to humiliate the Transit Workers and got his head handed to him instead. When TWU leader Mike Quill was arrested for defying a back-to-work injunction, he replied:

"It is about time that someone, somewhere along the road, ceases to be respectable. Many generations of great Americans before us have taken this road, and if they didn't take this road, half of you would be on home relief.... The judge can drop dead in his black robes, and we would not call off the strike."

Quill went to jail and died shortly thereafter of a heart attack. But they couldn't arrest 40,000 transit workers. As the strike wore on, the bosses were reminded that they couldn't run the center of American world finance capital without the subways and buses. Transit workers got their best settlement in years, and for a few years afterward transit was the best job in town.

For American labor today, a damn good slogan is: It's better to fight on your feet than die on your knees. To be sure, many strikes will be lost, even if they are hard-fought, as at Stearns or the 1937 Little Steel strike. But when an important strike *is* won, it dramatically alters

the entire situation, as in the Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco general strikes of 1934—all led by reds, which set the stage for the rise of the CIO—and the 1937 Flint sit-down strike.

Smash Taft Hartley— For Secondary Boycotts!

Labor's weapons are inherent in its collective organization: the picket line, solidarity strike, secondary boycott. The capitalists' arsenal is their state: courts, cops and ultimately the army. The unions must be independent of the bosses' state! But the "lieutenants of the capitalist class" inside the labor movement weaken the capacity for union struggle by supporting corporatist laws to undermine that independence.

Take the matter of elementary labor solidarity, for instance. Every decent unionist has the reflex to refuse to handle struck goods, to "hot cargo." There is a long tradition of use of this basic trade-union tactic during the militant period of the rise of the CIO and industrial unionism. In the battle that smashed the open shop at Ford in 1941, the car haulers refused to transport scab autos. One of the reasons for the Kennedys' vendetta against Jimmy Hoffa was his use of the "hot cargo" technique—a tactic Hoffa said he learned from the Trotskyists who led the Minneapolis Teamsters strike.

But "secondary boycotts" are "illegal," say the union tops from coast to coast. Unions themselves were once branded as "illegal criminal conspiracies." The entire history of the American labor movement is one long string of laws broken and court injunctions defied. Otherwise there would be no labor movement. And how did "hot cargoing" become illegal? The "secondary boycott" was banned by the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947. This was linked to a ban on Communists holding union office, a key part of the Cold War witchhunt. Communist-led unions were barred from going to the NLRB, supposedly more sympathetic to labor than the regular courts, and could not have Labor Department-supervised union elections.

These corporatist laws and institutions were sup-



Militant



AP

Army of state cops (above) mobilizes against Phelps Dodge copper strike in Arizona. Militant copper workers (above) have held out against the bosses and their state for almost a year.



Hardy/SF Examiner

Memorial march by California oil workers for labor martyr Gregory Goobic run down by scab truck (right). Goobic's body lies beside police car (above).



WV Photo

ported by the bureaucrats and reformists in the labor movement. Today the labor reformists continue to look to the state claiming it can be "reformed" in the workers' interest. At the same time they use the state as an excuse to refuse to struggle in the interests of the unions. At bottom, they do not want to struggle and see in the bosses' state a willing "partner."

These corporatist laws integrating the unions into the state are also closely linked to the question of the dues checkoff. If you are going to wage a militant strike, then a system whereby the company acts as banker for the union by collecting the dues money is a liability. In the middle of the strike, when you need it most you will see your funds cut off. (The NYC transit workers union had its dues checkoff removed for over a year as punishment for their 1980 strike.)

The cowardice of the labor tops has certainly emboldened the anti-labor offensive to pass even more reactionary laws. Kirkland & Co. squeal like stuck pigs over legislation such as the recent ruling allowing companies to rip up union contracts when they become "burdensome."

But there is an explosive potential here as every union weapon becomes "illegal" and the bureaucrats rely even more heavily on the state. It means that nearly any hard-fought struggle will throw the ranks of labor up against the state as well as the labor bureaucracy. Consider the elementary tactic of the secondary boycott in this context. Under Reagan, a solidarity strike in support of PATCO would certainly have been a confrontation with the state. If the Machinists had refused to cross air controllers' picket lines and the airports had been shut down, Reagan might even have had to bring in the armed forces. Militant labor struggle could bring down Reagan the way the Vietnamese Tet Offensive sealed the fate of Lyndon Johnson.

The bureaucrats understand that such militant action would not only put the working class on the offensive against Taft-Hartley, it would spell the end of their reactionary game in the labor movement. Thus the desperate necessity for labor to fight means a political struggle against the union tops, for a revolutionary leadership that will take labor and its allies into a confrontation



WV Photo

Militant black auto workers walk out against Fraser's sellout contract at Detroit's Jefferson Avenue plant, 16 September 1982.



Class war on the streets of Minneapolis as Trotskyists lead victorious general strike in 1934.

Our people didn't believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity. Consequently, they expected from the start that the union would have to fight for its right to exist; that the bosses would not yield any recognition to the union, would not yield any increase of wages or reduction of the scandalous hours without some pressure being brought to bear. Therefore they prepared everything from the point of view of class war. They knew that power, not diplomacy, would decide the issue. Bluffs don't work in fundamental things, only in incidental ones. In such things as the conflict of class interests one must be prepared to fight.

—James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944)

with the state and *win it*, on the road to winning a workers state.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in a document that was found on his desk after he was assassinated in Mexico in August 1940:

“In other words, the trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, i.e., ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of people and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.”

—L.D. Trotsky, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940)

It is no accident that the same Taft-Hartley “slave labor” Act which outlawed the secondary boycott also banned Communists from holding union office. The present wretched, legalistic and racist labor leadership is very much the product of the anti-red purge of the McCarthy era. Under Meany/Reuther the AFL-CIO became an instrument of Cold War fanaticism. Indeed, George Meany and his errand boy Lane Kirkland supported the Vietnam War to the bitter end, even after

Nixon and Kissinger had given it up as a lost cause. Today, whether it comes to financing Solidarność, Polish company union for the CIA and bankers, or lobbying Congress for funds for the MX first-strike missile or Salvadoran death squads, Ronald Reagan has no more fervent allies than the AFL-CIO tops.

The present union-busting offensive, the attacks on blacks, the poor, the aged are directly linked to the anti-Soviet war drive. This government with bipartisan support is literally taking food out of the mouths of ghetto schoolchildren to build nuclear missiles. Defense of the Soviet Union—the social gains of the Bolshevik Revolution despite subsequent Stalinist degeneration—is integral to defense against union-busting and racist attacks on black people.

As this capitalist government becomes more and more directly involved in union-busting as it mobilizes for war against the Soviet Union, every major workers’ struggle becomes a political fight requiring class-struggle leadership. Labor militants must therefore link the fight to oust the die-on-your-knees union bureaucrats to building a revolutionary workers party. Such a workers party would fight for a workers government to expropriate capitalism to end once and for all the hideous social system that turns the enormous industrial wealth squeezed out of the lifeblood of the working class into misery, poverty and the spectre of nuclear holocaust. ■

United-Front Action in Rouen:

French Trotskyists Lead Fight Against Racist Ban

--Reprinted from Workers Hammer (No. 90, July-August 1987), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Britain.

For two weeks, from 25 May to 3 June, every evening at 7:00 p.m., 100 people picketed in front of the Flunch restaurant in the centre of Rouen. They were responding to the call by the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF) for a boycott protesting against the restaurant's racist policy of systematically barring admittance to North Africans and blacks. As fascist attacks on immigrant neighbourhoods continue to mount and the government maintains its racist "nationalities" bill (threatening to deport "trainloads" of "foreigners"), the urgency of this anti-racist boycott is dramatically heightened.

In mid-April, after receiving numerous complaints, a local radio station asked a notary public to be an official witness accompanying five young North Africans as they attempted to enter the restaurant. The notary reported that the security guard at the door barred their way, explaining: "Management has given orders and I am not allowed to let in anyone who looks like an Arab or who is black." Youth from Rouen's working-class/immigrant suburbs have long been victims of such racist practices in the provincial city's "chic" nightspots. Now the blatant segregation by the restaurant's manager Robinet has become a symbol and must be stopped!

The Ligue Trotskyste, section of the international Spartacist tendency, is known in the region for having initiated a united-front mobilisation of more than

400 people in December 1981 to stop the fascists. An LTF leaflet distributed on 23 May at markets in the working-class suburbs of Rouen called for protest demonstrations at the Flunch: "In the context of the rise of Le Pen, whose meetings are regularly followed by pogroms (as at Marseille and Lyon), we must act now against this scandalous racial discrimination. What's needed to definitively crush the fascist scum is a massive mobilisation by the working class organised by the trade unions and immigrant organisations."

While Rouen's daily newspaper remained silent, several radio stations and the local TV news publicised this call. For two weeks, some 100 persons representing numerous political organisations, immigrant associations and trade unions participated in a militant picket chanting, "Boycott the Flunch!", "Down with racist segregation!" and "Full citizenship rights for immigrants!" Demonstrators applauded as a sizable number of the restaurant's clientele walked out after reading the leaflet condemning the racist ban.

The mobilisations broadened during the second week. A number of beurs (second generation North African youth) arrived from the immigrant ghettos. Speakers at the pickets included two trade unionists from the Renault-Cléon car factory. And on 27 May the branch of the CGT union federation at the plant sent a telegram to the Flunch's Paris head office:

"In the name of the 7,000 employees of the enterprise: the Renault-Cléon

CGT trade union energetically protests against racist measures and violation of human rights by Flunch management against workers and immigrant employees. Demand immediate halt to all racist measures barring access to eating facilities. Will take necessary steps to inform employees and population if this revolting decision stands."

Certainly a thousand Renault workers in front of the Flunch would convince local restaurant owners that racist segregation is bad for business.

The LTF initiative received a broad response because of concern over the rise in racist terror and the activity of fascist gangs. Protest telegrams and letters began arriving from, among others, the CGT postal workers branch at Tours, a CGT and a CFDT branch at two Paris post offices, and other unions; a branch of the Communist Party in Lyon and one of the main anti-racist organisations in the same city, CIMADE; and various professors including Marxist philosopher Etienne Balibar. On 5 June a united-front demonstration at a Paris branch of the Flunch was called by the LTF in conjunction with two groups of members and ex-members of the Communist Party, Tribune Communiste and the Union Communiste de France. Some 70 people participated in a spirited picket line. These pickets were exemplary actions showing the road to more massive working-class mobilisation.

On 4 June, after ten days of militant picketing organised by the LTF, one of France's main anti-racist organisations, the MRAP, called a demonstration in Rouen. The Communist Party threw its weight behind this demonstration, which brought out some 1,000 demonstrators including a number of trade-union contingents. The Ligue Trotskyste joined the call for the protest and organised a 100-strong contingent, including many beurs who had come out during the week. A supporter of the LTF at Renault-Cléon addressed the protesters, and as the

demonstration broke up another LTF spokesman addressed the crowd. Many CPers listened attentively as she stressed how the Mitterrand popular front's racist repression paved the way for the reactionaries.

With the 4 June demonstration, a new stage opened up. The visible and threatening presence of fascist thugs protecting the Flunch along with the cops raised the stakes. And even if he later had to pull back the Flunch manager sought an injunction against the LTF in the courts in order to prove the determination of the local reactionaries. It is more than ever up to the leadership of the labour movement--and particularly to the Communist Party and the CGT--to take up the challenge. This is the only way to win a victory.

But this requires a break with all illusions that the bourgeois state has the desire, or the ability, to defend victims of racial oppression. Workers and immigrants can rely only on their own force, their own organisation and their own mobilisations. Before the demonstration, the MRAP and the CP (in its paper l'Avenir de la Seine-Maritime, 3-9 June) had asserted their intention to demonstrate in front of the Flunch. The ominous presence of cops and fascists, who had made the area around the Flunch a veritable ambush, made this impossible. But this was because the thousand demonstrators (who constituted a real force) were not prepared to deal with this provocation in the appropriate manner. Concretely, this would have meant a solid defence guard, well prepared and determined, formed of dockers and car workers, with the whole weight of their unions behind them.

The MRAP-led demonstration did not have such a character; thus it limited itself to a demand that the court open an inquiry and apply the 1972 anti-racist law. We have nothing against taking this racist manager to court. But one thing must be understood: bourgeois "justice" acts only when hundreds of

workers are in the streets! No illusions in a "justice" that lets go the murderers of Malik, the North African youth killed by cops during last December's student revolt! Reforms and legal victories are simply by-products of the class struggle.

As the demonstration rallied in front of Rouen cathedral, the forces of "law and order" showed their sympathies once again: three fascists came up from behind police lines to launch their provocations. And when one of these provocateurs received a well-deserved lesson the cops charged. Many CGT and CP militants feel this in their guts: throughout the demonstration, chants like "Cops, fascists, murderers!" and "Mitterrand, Pasqua [government interior minister] are responsible!" kept flaring up. But only the Ligue Trotskyiste contingent gave the programmatic response with its slogans: "Jail the torturer/murderer cops!", "No confidence in the bourgeois state to crush the fascists!", "Full citizenship rights for immigrants!" and "Worker/immigrant self-defence squads based on the trade unions!"

Many CP and CGT militants understand that the passivity of their leaders in the face of Le Pen's growth is suicidal. The fascists have the entire workers movement in their crosshairs. (The popularity on the demonstration of our slogan "Le Pen wants to crush the unions, but he loves Solidarność" is explained in part by this sentiment.) But they must understand that their leadership is against the revolutionary programme capable of ending racial oppression; it is even against the elementary notion that everyone who toils in France and is exploited by the bosses must enjoy full citizenship rights for himself and his family. And if it is true that Mitterrand's popular front is responsible for unleashing the wave of racist terror which, together with anti-Sovietism, has paved the road to Le Pen, where is the alternative? Certainly not in the "new popular majority" pushed by the CP--a

new (hypothetical) repeat of this very same popular front! We Trotskyists say to these militants that a new leadership is needed, armed with the Leninist programme.

As for the social democrats and pseudo-revolutionaries around the Rouen Anti-racist Collective, the 4 June demonstration proved their miserable bankruptcy. The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (French section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat) and its allies did all they could to keep the LTF out of their meetings for the "crime" ...of having launched an anti-racist action and being the initiators of the Flunch boycott. This Collective then proceeded to boycott the boycott of the Flunch--a line happily not shared by some 100 beurs, young blacks, political and trade-union militants. Furthermore, the LCR and the Collective disgracefully split the 4 June demonstration, seeking to substitute the Palace of Justice for the police headquarters as the focal point of the march--as if there was the slightest political difference! If after weeks of almost complete inactivity they found themselves tailing along behind the MRAP and CP demo ("reinforced in numbers by the LTF," in the words of Rouge, 11-17 June), it is in fact, as the LCR weekly continues, "because the collective has been paralysed in the recent period, involved in debates and going in circles instead of calling quickly for a mass response." An admonition, in mild language, from the LCR national leadership against its Rouen section! Happily, the LCR managed subsequently to overcome its sectarianism and did protest against the legal attack on Le Bolchévik.

Lutte Ouvrière showed up at pickets in front of the Flunch, albeit "in a personal capacity." But their behaviour at the end of the 4 June demonstration was completely irresponsible. They tried to pull the demonstrators, without any preparation, into the fascist/police ambush near the Flunch. And when they arrived at the Palace of Justice (a

short distance from the Flunch) they simply withdrew together with the LCR and its allies in the Anti-racist Collective! And anyway what did LO do to build this demonstration among the working class, with its famous "factory papers"? Or where was "Workers Democracy," the trade union LO leads at Renault-CKD, in the Rouen docks?

The escalating confrontation around the racist segregation in Rouen is a crystallisation of the political situation in France today. During the trial of the SS "Butcher of Lyon" Klaus Barbie with its grisly testimony, Le Pen's National Front openly paraded defending the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy dictatorship. While Le Pen pursues his rapid attempts to whip up anti-AIDS hysteria, the reactionary ruling coalition of Jacques Chirac has openly declared that it needs the support of these fascist gangsters to stay in power and win the

presidential elections of 1988.

The reformist misleaders and their "far left" hangers-on are attempting to channel popular revulsion to Chirac into a new Mitterrand popular front. (During the last presidential campaign, the CP even joined in the chauvinist backlash when the Communist mayor of Vitry, a Paris suburb, bulldozed an immigrant workers' hostel.)

But last winter's student strikes, mass protests against racist cop murder, and the powerful railworkers strike are still fresh in the memory. The power of the working class must be brought to bear to stop the fascists in their tracks with massive united-front demonstrations and political strikes. The workers movement and the oppressed must mobilise their forces now to defeat this dangerous offensive of rightist reaction.

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**Workers, Minorities Must
Crush Le Pen in the Streets!**

Behind French Elections: Fascist Threat Mounts



Patrick Artinian



Gavin Smith

Flag-waving chauvinist mob cheers fascist Le Pen's electoral success.

As the results came in from the first round of the French presidential elections on April 24, millions in France and throughout Europe reacted in shock. Jean-Marie Le Pen—candidate of the fascist National Front, paratrooper-torturer from the dirty colonial war in Algeria, the man who reaped international infamy with his declaration that Hitler's gas chambers were only a historical "detail," the sinister inciter of anti-immigrant terror—had won over 14 percent of the vote. From Amiens in the north to Marseille in the south, in many cities, including the Paris region, Le Pen beat the candidates of the "respectable" bourgeois parties and more than doubled the Communists' total, finishing second only to "socialist" François Mitterrand.

The second round, on May 8, pits President Mitterrand against Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, former disciple of de Gaulle. Although he came in ahead of Raymond Barre, the other major bourgeois candidate, the Gaullist Chirac received less than 20 percent. The score of the Communist Party (PCF), historically *the* party of the militant French proletariat, was catastrophic: 6.8 percent, its lowest since the 1920s, down by two-thirds from the last presidential elections. Mitterrand himself received only 34 percent. So while Chirac is bidding for Le Pen's racist electorate, Mitterrand is trying to undercut the National Front by promising public spending to improve housing conditions in areas with high unemployment and immigrant population.

Mitterrand will likely remain in the Elysée presidential palace, perhaps with a coalition of his Socialist Party (PS) and sections of Barre's UDF.

On May 1, Le Pen held a sinister anti-working-class provocation in Paris. Mixing May Day and Joan of Arc, the fascist leader wanted to review his troops under the watchwords of "fatherland" and "labor." Nearly 25,000 people marched, shouting "France for the French"—code words for attacks on immigrants. This fascist demonstration wasn't the massive outpouring that the National Front hoped for after its spectacular electoral breakthrough. Aside from a hard core of some 2,000 fascist thugs sporting military haircuts, former paratroopers and lumpen elements, the mass of the ranks was made up of provincial shopkeepers. Yet the fact that it could take place on the international proletarian holiday is an outrage only possible due to the treachery of the PCF/PS misleaders who dissipated the anti-fascist anger instead of sweeping away Le Pen's provocation.

The traditional May Day march of trade unionists and immigrants—which took place in two contingents, one under the banner of the Communist-led CGT labor federation and the other called by the social-democratic CFDT and FEN (teachers union)—was considerably more important, both numerically and socially. But the reformist bureaucrats deliberately held a passive protest march. If a solidly organized united-front mobilization of the same 70,000 or 100,000 workers had been called for the same place as the National Front demonstration, the fascist parade would not have come off. A massive and disciplined squad of marshals (and the CGT knows how to organize one) would have stopped the fascists cold. The pro-Le Pen shopkeeper getting off

his bus would have decided to go see the Eiffel Tower or the Folies Bergères instead!

In the face of Le Pen's May Day provocation, our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France issued an urgent appeal for a united-front worker/immigrant mobilization to stop the fascists. The 27 April LTF leaflet declared:

"The working class has the social power to prevent the fascists from demonstrating on May 1st and to crush them. Hundreds of thousands of workers are needed, solidly organized to occupy the terrain where the fascists plan to parade. But there's not a moment to lose. Already on January 27, united-front demonstrations took place at the call of the PCF (which, however, buried this initiative soon after) in which the Ligue Trotskyste participated: tens of thousands of workers and anti-fascists rallied across France to cry out 'Le Pen: Enough!' Today we must go to a higher level. Working-class and democratic organizations, both political and trade-union, have the duty to organize, starting now, a determined and massive united-front action, rallying youth, women, immigrants, Jews, homosexuals, etc. in the streets on this day around the workers' battalions, mainly organized by the CGT, to stop the fascists."

What's needed is "an agreement for combat, not a so-called 'action' of parliamentary pressure in order to reelect Mitterrand 'against the right and far right.'" The felt need for united anti-fascist action must not be prostituted in the service of a new popular front!

Crush the Fascist Threat!

Unfortunately, the impunity Le Pen enjoyed on May 1st can only embolden this leader of reactionary petty-bourgeois layers to forge ahead in his strategic plan of organizing his heterogeneous voters into assault

Ligue Trotskyste/
Tribune Communiste
contingent at
January 27 protest in
Paris against Le Pen.
Banner reads:
"Le Pen—Enough
is Enough! For
Worker/Immigrant
Mobilizations to
Crush the Fascists!
Full Citizenship
Rights for
Immigrants!"



troops against the workers organizations and immigrants. His voters, Le Pen told the May Day crowd, are "a vanguard that must now be organized." This is an open call for brownshirts. Le Pen's election meeting in Marseille before the first round featured a precision jump by five paratroopers into the middle of the stadium to kick off the meeting. French paratrooper units have long been noted as the shock troops of the extreme right wing, ever since the abortive generals' coup against de Gaulle in 1961 which aimed at preventing the "loss" of Algeria.

With the exception of Le Pen's campaign, it had been one of the most vacuous presidential campaigns in French historical memory. There was nothing to debate: Mitterrand's campaign has not a trace of "socialism," and Mitterrand/Chirac/Barre are united around an anti-Soviet, anti-working-class, anti-immigrant consensus. Mitterrand's record of savage capitalist austerity and his role as Reagan's Cold War European lieutenant during the 1981-86 popular front, and the ensuing two years of "cohabitation" with Chirac, disarmed his rightist opponents. The Communist Party, meanwhile, has abdicated any pretense of organizing working-class opposition to the massive unemployment and anti-union offensive that have increased under governments of both the right and "left." So the fascists moved in.

Bourgeois commentators have concluded that the National Front has replaced the PCF as the party of the disgruntled elements in French society. It is true that the poison of racism has seeped into backward sections of the working class, rendered desperate by massive unemployment—Le Pen's score in Lorraine, where the coal and steel industries have been gutted by the capitalist crisis, and his victory over the PCF in many of the "red belt" workers suburbs around Paris, attest to that. But the electoral house of mirrors is no true gauge of the potential for class struggle. In the winter of 1986-87 student protests, more than a million strong, with a heavy anti-racist component, turned back the government's attempt at accentuating the class bias of the university system. This victory was followed by a hard-fought wildcat strike of railway workers, which posed the necessity of a general strike.

But without revolutionary leadership, the militant French workers' will to fight was criminally frittered away. The history of the past two decades—from 1968 on—has been one of derailing, sabotaging and suppressing class struggle in the service of class collaboration. In contrast to the reformists and their fake-Trotskyist tails, the Ligue Trotskyste de France has stood out for its proletarian opposition to popular-frontism. In a long article on the Le Pen campaign, the Munich *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (20 April) noted the LTF's stand: "Left-wing extremists distributed their newspaper, *Le Bolchévick*. You can't fight unemployment, racism and fascism with Mitterrand and [PCF candidate] Lajoinie, the headline read, 'they're the ones

that got us into this shit.' And in passing *Le Bolchévick* accuses Gorbachev of squandering Afghanistan." The article referred to from the LTF newspaper declared:

"It is the governments of class collaboration, the anti-worker, anti-immigrant and anti-Soviet popular front in which they participated and which they supported since 1981, which paved the way for the right bent on revenge and for the fascists. . . . And if today these same leaders are blocking the mass workers mobilizations urgently needed to drive Le Pen's scum back into their rat holes, if they display such shameful prostration and passivity in the face of fascist provocations, it's because their one and only objective is to replay '81."

—*Le Bolchévick* No. 82, April 1988

As a result of the Mitterrand popular front, which put the cost of the capitalist crisis onto the backs of the workers, France has become the European country with a mass fascist movement. And the fight to crush the National Front has an importance extending beyond the borders of France. Le Pen's success emboldens fascist rats to crawl out of their holes elsewhere. In West Germany, for example, the neo-Nazi FAP announced plans to hold a May Day rally outside Rheinhausen, where the threatened closure of the Krupp steel plant has sparked massive workers' protests throughout the Ruhr region. Yet while the fascists mount provocations from West Berlin to Bremen to the Ruhr, the reformist Social Democracy does its best to turn May Day rallies into apolitical beer festivals.

Return to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky!

Le Pen's results inspire a real fear, but for a number of left and labor organizations this fear is transformed into panic. And this panic is used to "justify" their call for workers to vote for Mitterrand on the second round. The Communist Party leadership exhorts all those who are "anti-Chirac and anti-Le Pen to block their path on May 8." Former PCF leader and pro-Mitterrand "renovator" Pierre Juquin, now supported by the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), says "don't do the work of ChiPen-LeRac." Arlette Laguiller, perennial candidate of Lutte Ouvrière (LO), is competing with the fascists for votes on a program of populist anti-Sovietism. Le Pen & Co. are trying to "push politics in a reactionary direction," so "we need another vote, a vote which is a counterweight" (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 26 March).

All these reformists who are urging workers to fall in behind Mitterrand "forget" rather conveniently that after the 1936 Popular Front came the bonapartist dictator Pétain; after Allende, Pinochet. So too the anti-working-class, anti-immigrant and anti-Soviet policy of the 1981 popular front paved the way for the fascists. To want to repeat 1981—while an anti-immigrant consensus unites the social democrats and bourgeois politicians and the fascists draw strength from the instability of the regime—is criminally to lead the workers to a much more serious defeat than the electoral victory of the right in March 1986. In contrast to the LO/LCR pseudo-Trotskyists, the Ligue Trotskyste proclaimed: "We didn't call for a vote to Mitterrand in '81, and we



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On the barricades: struggles by militant workers (above) and students against Mitterrand/Chirac's racist austerity and anti-immigrant attacks, 1986-87.



Cochin/Keystone

won't do it in '88 either."

Authentic Trotskyism may get a hearing from Communist militants fed up with their party's criminal passivity. The PCF says it "harbors no illusions" (*L'Humanité*, 28 April) that a Mitterrand victory will benefit the working class ("on the contrary," Marchais adds cynically), while it calls for voting Mitterrand to stop the right. But many of its ranks may not follow this road to defeat. On May Day, as they marched past a local PS headquarters, CGT militants chanted, "Mitterrand, betrayal." PCF supporters who seek to break from the infernal cycle of popular fronts alternating with open reaction should study the example of *Tribune Communiste*, a group which came out of the pro-Soviet "anti-opportunist" milieu in and around the PCF, and fused with the *Ligue Trotskyste* this February.

An important step in *Tribune Communiste's* evolution toward genuine Leninism was taken when they refused to vote for the PCF in the legislative elections of June 1981, opposing the Communist Party's entry into the Mitterrand popular front. And in their resolution this year which served as a basis for the fusion with the *Ligue Trotskyste*, *Tribune Communiste* wrote:

"In 1988 it is not possible to back Lajoinie's candidacy with a vote, since he is running, all by himself, as the candidate of a popular front that the PS is in no hurry to form—waiting for the PCF leadership to come over once more."

—"From the Illusory Transformation of the PCF to the Road of Lenin and Trotsky,"
Le Bolchévique No. 81, March 1988

On the eve of the fusion, *Tribune Communiste* participated together with the LTF in the anti-fascist

demonstration called by the PCF on January 27. The joint contingent marched under the slogans of "Worker/Immigrant Mobilizations to Smash the Fascists" and "Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrants."

As Leon Trotsky underlined in his famous pamphlet *Whither France?* written after the fascist-bonapartist-royalist march in February 1934, the key to crushing the fascists is "Not a Program of Passivity But a Program of Revolution":

"...if opposition to further aggravation of the situation of the masses under capitalism is still possible, no real improvement of their situation is conceivable without a revolutionary invasion of the right of capitalist property...."

"The social crisis in its political expression is the crisis of power. The old master of society is bankrupt. A new master is needed.

"If the revolutionary proletariat does not take power, Fascism will inevitably take it!"

Only by accomplishing its historic mission, by taking state power with a workers government which will appropriate the bourgeoisie and undertake the socialist reconstruction of society, can the proletariat crush the fascist scum once and for all. And for that, as in all working-class struggles, the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party is indispensable. Such a party must be a tribune of the people, championing the cause of all the oppressed. It must also squarely oppose the anti-Soviet war drive and uphold the banner of unconditional military defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states. This party will be the section of a reformed Fourth International, regrouping genuine communists behind the Leninist-Trotskyist program of world socialist revolution. ■