



Freedom for Öcalan!

Defend Kurds Against Bloody State Terror!

For a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan!

The kidnapping and arrest in Kenya of Kurdish nationalist leader Abdullah Öcalan on February 15 by Turkish security forces aided by the U.S. placed his life in immediate peril. With Öcalan seized, the Turkish regime carried out mass arrests of Kurds in southeast Turkey and launched military attacks in northern Iraq against Öcalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Actively supported by its NATO allies—the U.S., Germany, Italy and France—Turkey has carried out a 14-year war against the oppressed Kurdish population that has left some 30,000 dead, totally destroyed 3,500 villages and forced more than three million Kurds to flee their homes.

In response to the provocative seizure of Öcalan, the PKK organized emergency protest demonstrations worldwide. In a score of European cities, protesters rallied in large numbers outside embassies and consulates. PKK supporters also initiated protests in Canada and Australia. The International Communist League has actively participated in the demonstrations to protest the persecution of Öcalan and the PKK and to defend the national rights of the Kurdish people. At many of the protests, other left groups have been conspicuous by their absence, apparently willing to leave Kurdish immigrants to stand alone in the face of repression. Our comrades have widely distributed a declaration issued on February 18 by the Spartacist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD), where Turkish and Kurdish immigrant workers are a strategic component of the industrial working class. This declaration was issued in Turkish, German, Italian, French and English.

The capitalist governments in Europe, mostly headed by social democrats, seized on the militant protests to further foment racist hysteria against immigrants and to intensify



Germany: Demonstrations against kidnapping of PKK leader have been met with racist state repression.

police-state measures. In Berlin, all demonstrations were initially banned outright. The cops seized anyone with dark eyes in the vicinity of demonstration sites—a chilling reminder of the genocidal Nazi Third Reich. Social Democratic (SPD) interior minister Otto Schily has spearheaded a media campaign to brand the banned PKK and the Kurdish people as a whole as "terrorists." Simultaneously with its crackdown on the PKK, the SPD-Green Party regime imposed arbitration to seal a wage pact for Germany's largest union, IG Metall, heading off the prospect of a class battle in which German, Turkish and Kurdish workers would have challenged the capitalists and their government in united strike action.

At a February 25 rally and march to the Turkish consulate
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Defend Iraq! Defeat U.S./Canadian Imperialism Through Workers Revolution!

Last December the U.S. and British imperialists, with the full backing of Ottawa, renewed their terror-bombing campaign against Iraq. We reprint below a December 17 leaflet distributed by the Trotskyist League on protests in Toronto and Vancouver. Imperialist warplanes continue to carry out daily attacks on Iraq. Elsewhere, Canadian imperialism has eagerly joined its NATO allies in threatening to bomb Serbia and in mobilizing to invade Kosovo. We say: U.S./Canada/NATO, bloody hands off the Balkans and Near East!

* * *

The massive bombing attack on Iraq launched by Washington on Wednesday, with the eager support of British Labour prime minister Tony Blair, is a display of naked imperialist terror. More than a million Iraqis, overwhelmingly young children, have already been killed by the United Nations starvation blockade since the 1991 imperialist "desert slaughter." Now American and British bombs are crashing into heavily populated areas of Baghdad, slaughtering Iraqi men, women and children. Canada's own imperialist rulers, who sent troops and planes to assist in the mass murder of Iraqis in 1991, have again pledged their full support to the U.S./British assault. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, together with the other sections of the International Communist League, calls on working people around the world to stand in defense of Iraq: **Down with the imperialist terror bombing! Down with the starvation blockade! U.S./Britain/Canada: Get your bloody imperialist hands off Iraq!**

The death and destruction being wreaked upon the people of Iraq show what imperialism is all about, a rapacious system based on the exploitation, subjugation and murder of the workers and semicolonial masses in order to expand the profits of a handful of filthy rich capitalists. This system cannot be "reformed," as liberals and reformist "socialists" would have it. It cannot be pressured into being more peaceful and humane. Imperialism is, as Russian Bolshevik V. I. Lenin said, the highest stage of capitalism. And as Lenin's Bolsheviks showed in leading the October Revolution of 1917, it can and must be defeated by workers revolution.

What's behind the murderous attack on the people of Iraq is Washington's aim of intimidating through sheer terror and



AFF

Iraqi victims of U.S. missile strike near Basra in January.

blackmail all the semicolonial peoples over which it rides roughshod and maintaining its position as top dog against its imperialist rivals, especially Japan and Germany. This is the true face of the "New World Order" proclaimed by the capitalist rulers over the corpse of the Soviet Union, destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution. In the face of growing competition from its imperialist rivals, the U.S. bourgeoisie wields its arsenal of terror, including the most massive stockpiles of nuclear and biological and chemical weapons, to guard its position as the pre-eminent power.

The blood of Iraqis is today being spilled to cement U.S. control over vast oil and natural gas resources which are vital to Germany and Japan. Meanwhile, Washington's regional allies carry out their own brutal repression under the umbrella of a bloody "Pax Americana." Zionist Israel continues to subject the long-suffering Palestinian people to starvation, terror and all-sided oppression, now including under the whip of its petty-bourgeois nationalist lackey, Yasir Arafat. Turkey wages a war of annihilation against the deeply oppressed Kurdish people, who are carved up among

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SPARTACIST CANADA

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Reformist Left and the Attack on Iraq

Not content with killing more than one million Iraqis during over seven years of starvation sanctions, last December the U.S. and Britain subjected Iraq to yet another round of murderous bombardment. As usual, the imperialist government in Ottawa gave its full support to "Operation Desert Fox."

The Trotskyist League intervened in demonstrations against the bombing in Toronto and Vancouver, calling to "Defend Iraq! Defeat U.S./Canadian imperialism through socialist revolution." We sought to impart to workers and youth outraged by the crimes of the capitalist rulers the understanding that imperialism is not merely a "policy" of a wing of the bourgeoisie but an organic outgrowth of the profit system. Imperialism, in the words of Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, is the "highest stage of capitalism." As we emphasized in an emergency leaflet dated 17 December 1998:

"The death and destruction being wreaked upon the people of Iraq right now show what imperialism is all about, a rapacious system based on the exploitation, subjugation and murder of the workers and semicolonial masses in order to expand the profits of a handful of filthy rich capitalists.

"This system cannot be 'reformed,' as liberals and reformist 'socialists' would have it. It cannot be pressured into being more peaceful and humane."

Our revolutionary intervention was in sharp contrast to that of other self-proclaimed socialist groups which claim to stand in opposition to the Canadian ruling class. The International Socialists (I.S.) begged Ottawa to carry out more humane policies, demanding "Money for health care, not for warfare." In this, they followed the lead of their British parent group, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which pleaded with the leader of the ruling social-democratic Labour Party, "Tony Blair, stop this war." The SWP acts as a left pressure group on the imperialist Labour government, feeding deadly illusions that it can be forced to act on behalf of workers and the oppressed.

Another reformist outfit, Socialist Action (SA), openly appealed to Canadian nationalism: "We say to the Canadian government: stop playing lap dog to the bully next door, denounce the aggression, and break the embargo of Iraq" (SA leaflet, 18 December). Speaking at a December 19 Toronto protest, an SA leader lavished praise on Ontario NDP leader Howard Hampton for opposing the bombing—nowhere mentioning that the NDP supported the 1991 Gulf War massacre as well as the starvation sanctions!

SA's leaflet fosters the worst kind of social-democratic illusions, notably in its call: "Demand the expulsion of Tony Blair from the Socialist International!" From Blair's Labour Party in Britain to NDP provincial regimes in Canada to Social Democratic and Socialist-led governments in Germany and France, today the parties of the Socialist (Second) International enforce austerity and racist terror on behalf of the bourgeoisie. It was *85 years ago*, in 1914, that the Second International definitively went over to the side of capitalism,

as its component parties supported their "own" bourgeois rulers in the inter-imperialist carnage of World War I.

The Trotskyist League stands in the tradition of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, whose *break* with the traitors of the Second International was a precondition for leading the Russian Revolution of October 1917. Sharply counterposing ourselves to the reformists of all stripes, we marched in demonstrations against Desert Fox with signs saying "British Labour Party carries out imperialist mass murder" and "Pro-



TL contingent at December 19 Iraq protest in Toronto. Down with social-chauvinist, pro-imperialist Second International! SC photo

imperialist NDP demanded UN starvation sanctions," calling to "Forge a revolutionary workers party!" As our speaker said in his address to a December 18 Toronto protest:

"This bloody war should end any illusions in social-democratic reformism, in parties like the NDP. The NDP *supported* the 1991 massacre of Iraq. It supported, even *demanding*, the starvation sanctions. And today their friends in the Labour Party government of Britain are Washington's main allies in the bombing of Baghdad. We Trotskyists fight to build a revolutionary workers party like the Bolsheviks, understanding that only the working class has the power to destroy this system of racism, war and oppression. We need a party which champions all the oppressed, a party rooted in revolutionary internationalism, a party which will lead new October Revolutions and put an end once and for all to imperialist mass murder. Defend Iraq against imperialist attack! U.S., Canada, Britain: Keep your bloody hands off! Defeat U.S. and Canadian imperialism through worldwide workers revolution!" ■

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Bolshevik Tendency: Still in the Camp of Anglo Chauvinism

For the whole of its existence, the clot of quitters, renegades and accidental elements called the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) have badgered us to debate them one-on-one. This oft-repeated "challenge" has generally provoked distaste in us, and indifference in others. But mostly it has prompted the question: What's to debate? The BT's founding members all individually quit our international organization. Their current international leader, Bill Logan, is a vicious sociopath who was expelled from our organization 20 years ago for gross crimes against communist morality and elementary human decency. The BT's occasional "journal," *1917*, has not appeared since 1997.

So it was only at the request of a third party, the Brock Socialist Group, that on February 13 the Trotskyist League debated the Bolshevik Tendency at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. The Brock Socialists are a student group which has been examining Marxism and sought the debate to further their understanding of Trotskyism. We proposed "The Quebec National Question and the Fight for Socialism" as an appropriate topic, as this is a central question in the fight for proletarian revolution in Canada.

Our advocacy of Quebec independence is key to the struggle to advance revolutionary class consciousness among the workers. As TL spokesman Charles Galarneau explained:

"Chauvinism and nationalism have deeply poisoned the class struggle in both English Canada and Quebec, binding English-speaking and French-speaking workers to their capitalist enemies. This is caused by the continued existence of two separate and increasingly divergent nations, one oppressing the other, within the same bourgeois state structure...."

"First and foremost, we fight against Maple Leaf chauvinism in the English Canadian working class. We believe with Lenin that 'a proletariat that tolerates the slightest coercion of other nations by its "own" nation cannot be a socialist proletariat.' At the same time, calling for independence helps combat nationalism in Quebec, giving us a hearing to win Quebec workers away from their pro-PQ misleaders."

In sharp contrast, the BT is notorious for *opposing* Quebec independence. Thus, our speaker noted, the choice of topic for the debate was doubly appropriate: "The BT's overtly Anglo-chauvinist line exposes their opportunist positions and social-democratic appetites—in other words, it exemplifies why the BT has *nothing* to do with the struggle for a Leninist party acting as a tribune for all the oppressed."

Characteristically, Bolshevik Tendency representative Tom Riley simply ignored the poisonous reality of national oppression and its impact on the consciousness of workers of both nations. Counting his presentation and summary, he spoke for 40 minutes without once acknowledging that Quebec is an oppressed nation, or making a single substantive reference to the existence of Anglo chauvinism. This silence was maintained by the BT through several rounds of discussion, despite repeated challenges by TL comrades.

Riley sought refuge in historical descriptions of militant actions by the Quebec labor movement, and in appeals for "joint class struggle." Denying or downplaying the crippling



Maclean's

Chauvinist "Canadian unity" rally in Montreal, November 1995. BT was officially invited to participate.

effects of chauvinism, racism, etc. on working-class consciousness, such facile unity-mongering is counterposed to any struggle against the many forms of special oppression engendered by capitalism. The BT directly echoes the social democrats and labor bureaucrats who present any struggle in defense of the oppressed as disruptive of the "solidarity" of the labor movement.

Of course, Riley claimed the BT upholds the right of self-determination for Quebec. So does most of the English Canadian labor bureaucracy today, on paper. But like the social democrats, in the real world the BT endorses the Anglo-dominated status quo. During the narrowly defeated 1995 referendum on Quebec sovereignty, for instance, the BT openly called for a No vote against Quebec independence. TL spokesman Galarneau remarked that "The BT's call to vote No was a gross capitulation to the Anglo rulers." Indeed, the BT's loyalty to the cause of Canadian "national unity" did not go unremarked by the Anglo-chauvinist powers-that-be, who officially invited the BT to participate in the flag-waving rally orchestrated by the federal government in Montreal on the eve of the referendum. Comrade Galarneau also noted that the BT's only Quebec member quit over this, publicly denouncing his former comrades for their "de facto bloc with the Canadian bourgeoisie."

As our speaker emphasized, Quebec is not the first or only place that the BT has embraced the chauvinist status quo. In Britain, their co-thinkers deny that the Scots and Welsh are in any way oppressed, even as they pursue "joint work" with an outfit, the Socialist Party, which adamantly refuses to call for withdrawal of the murderous British army from Northern Ireland. In New Zealand, the BT scarcely mentions the brutal oppression of the indigenous black Maori population. "In fact," said comrade Galarneau, "on every national terrain

where they exist, the BT is a walking capitulation to their 'own' capitalist rulers."

Our speaker located the source of the BT's wilful blindness on questions of special oppression in the founding impulse of its first members:

"The BT's Anglo-chauvinist position on Quebec is perfectly consistent with their political origins, in the early 1980s, in a series of cowardly flinches over the defense of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state....

"For example, when the Soviet army intervened against CIA-backed Islamic cutthroats in Afghanistan in late 1979, we said 'Hail Red Army in Afghanistan,' calling to 'Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples.' The social democrats and pseudo-leftists, who were howling with the imperialist wolves against the Soviet Union, hated our slogan. At the time, we wrote that if the ET (that's the External Tendency, the BT's precursors) were more honest, they would admit that they hated it, too. Well, it took them a few years, but they finally did admit that, yes, they hated it, arguing that it meant we were putting faith in the Stalinists.

"No. First of all, we were simply expressing our *unconditional* defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state against capitalism. And we also recognized that the deformed expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as represented by the Soviet army, was the only force capable of bringing some measure of liberation, especially to women, in Afghanistan.

"The BT is an organization which congealed in reaction to the heat of imperialist Cold War II. From this original capitulation to their own ruling classes, it was a short step down a slippery slope to embracing the chauvinism of the bourgeoisie from Canada to Britain and beyond."

BT vs. Lenin on Revolutionary Class Consciousness

In his remarks, comrade Galarneau extensively motivated our call for Quebec independence as key to the struggle to remove the barriers to *revolutionary class consciousness* among workers on both sides of the national divide. This perspective derives from the basic Leninist proposition that without the leadership of a revolutionary party, the working people must remain in thrall to one form or another of *bourgeois consciousness*, such as national chauvinism. For communists, advocacy of Quebec independence is the means to break the grip of national chauvinism. Unless that grip is broken, the working people cannot be won to a revolutionary socialist perspective.

Denigrating and dismissing the struggle for revolutionary consciousness, the BT substitutes "militant struggle." In fact, Riley's whole presentation rested on a straight equation of class consciousness and simple trade-union militancy. His "argument" consisted of a list of binational strikes since the 1960s, many of which were sparked by the explosive Quebec labor movement of the time. On this basis, he denounced our contention that Quebec independence was necessary for the workers of each nation to see their own rulers as the enemy; he mocked our assertion that chauvinism and nationalism were the fundamental roadblock to revolutionary class consciousness, and therefore to successful working-class struggle.

The falsehood that socialist consciousness derives directly from militant struggles over economic demands is hardly new. Lenin called this view Economism and attacked it in his 1902 book *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin showed how the working class through its own struggles is unable to spontaneously develop a consciousness any higher than trade-union consciousness: the need to unite in economic struggle against the employers and government. But trade-union con-

sciousness is itself a form of bourgeois consciousness: by itself it does not challenge the capitalist mode of production but only seeks to better the workers' immediate conditions. Revolutionary class consciousness has to be brought into the working class *from the outside*, by a revolutionary party which understands the historic necessity of destroying capitalist exploitation and oppression. Integral to this is the fight for the proletariat to take up the cause of all those strata which suffer special oppression under capitalism.

In his thoroughly Economist presentation, Riley never once hinted that the militancy of the Québécois proletariat during the '60s and '70s was fueled by resentment of and opposition to national oppression. When that militancy ran into an Anglo-chauvinist wall of hostility erected by the New Democratic Party and the Canadian Labour Congress leadership, angry Quebec workers were corralled by their own nationalist misleaders into the arms of the bourgeois nationalists of the Parti Québécois. When the TL speaker described the chauvinist opposition to the semi-insurrectionary 1972 Quebec General Strike by the NDP and CLC brass, Riley leapt to defend the social-democratic traitors from any imputation of anti-Quebec bigotry. "The fact is that the NDP and [its leader] David Lewis did the best they could to oppose [the strike] and to scab on it, there's no question about that," Riley declared. "But comrades, they opposed and scabbed on the railway strike in '73, on the postal strike in '78, on the railway strike in '95, etc., etc."

The Anglo-chauvinist social democrats certainly are strike-breakers. Their role is to insure the subordination of the working class to the national interests of the enemy class—and key to that in this country is the ideological glue of Anglo chauvinism. This in turn deepens and hardens the reactionary nationalism instilled by the Quebec labor tops. Yet according to the BT, national chauvinism is simply not a factor. As comrade Galarneau observed, to hear the BT tell it,

"You would not know that the social democrats foment anti-Quebec chauvinism at all. Well, anyone who watches the news knows that the likes of [NDP provincial premiers] Bob Rae, Roy Romanow and Glen Clark have been willing, aggressive point men for the 'national unity' crusade—just as David

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Trotskyist League Forums

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Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

7:00 p.m., Tuesday, 23 March

Race and Class in Capitalist America

7:30 p.m., Saturday, 24 April

Both forums at: International Student Centre,
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7:00 p.m., Friday, 26 March

Stop Capitalist Counterrevolution in China!

7:00 p.m., Friday, 14 May

Both forums at: Britannia Community Centre
Room L4, 1661 Napier St. (off Commercial Drive)

For more information call (604) 687-0353.

Bolshevik Tendency...

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Lewis was 25 years ago."

A Sneering Indifference to Oppression

The BT's snottily dismissive attitude to the national oppression of the Québécois signals and embodies their capitulation to the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie. Indeed, for Trotskyists it would be hard to imagine an attitude more repulsive or more distant from the Leninist ideal of a tribune of the people than their arrogant contempt for specially oppressed sectors of the societies in which they find themselves. Comrade Galarneau's presentation described a notorious and typical example:

"When we organized a 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization which stopped the Ku Klux Klan in Washington in 1982, the BT *spat* on this work. One of their members called it 'ghetto work.' The BT accused us of 'abandoning trade-union work.' What can this mean, except that the BT sees the working class as separate from and counterposed to the black plebeian masses—exactly the view of the labor bureaucracy. In fact, our Washington mobilization brought together in microcosm the forces for American proletarian revolution—black and red. Labor, with its core centrality of black workers, bringing its power to bear in defense of the ghetto masses, who were also mobilized, all under communist leadership."

Riley showed the same kind of disdain in addressing what he called "the implications" of the TL's position on Quebec for the United States. Stating that "the division between white workers and black workers is at least as serious as the division between anglo- and francophone workers here," the BT spokesman asked demagogically: "What's the conclusion to be drawn there? Is class struggle impossible? Or does it only become possible after black workers are somehow separated from white workers?"

The national oppression of Quebec and the oppression of black people as a race-color caste within American society are very different questions. However, the racial divide in the U.S. has indeed severely undermined labor struggles against capital. No, that does not make trade-union struggles of black and white workers there "impossible," any more than national chauvinism precludes joint strikes of French- and English-speaking workers in Canada. However, until and unless the American working class becomes the active champion of the cause of black freedom, **there will be no revolutionary class consciousness and no socialist revolution in America.**

The BT's attitude toward the oppression of Northern Ireland Catholics is similarly steeped in militant indifference. The BT has denounced our simple statement that any imperialist "peace" deal over Ireland would "necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either." But this is a simple statement of *fact*. The so-called "peace process" in Northern Ireland is premised on maintaining the British army presence, and it has unleashed huge Loyalist mobilizations and deepened the communal division among the workers.

In fact, the Irish national question exposes the BT's bogus claims to stand in the revolutionary traditions of Marxism. It was precisely over Ireland that Marx and Engels began to define the revolutionary proletarian attitude to national oppression. During the debate, BT spokesman Riley made the absurd charge that our advocacy of Quebec independence meant we had embraced the Stalinist theory of "revo-



Workers Vanguard

Labor/black mobilization in Washington D.C. stopped KKK. Labor must fight for all oppressed!

lution by stages": "To claim also that proletarian struggle cannot be successful until Quebec is independent implies a kind of two-stage model of social revolution. First we get Quebec independence, *then* we get a successful proletarian struggle." Comrade Galarneau replied:

"Karl Marx said a long time ago that a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free. Here's what Marx wrote about the Irish national question: '*...it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland....* The English working class will *never accomplish anything* before it has got rid of Ireland.' Perhaps the BT will now attack Marx as a proponent of two-stage revolution. In fact, the position of the BT is a straight capitulation to national chauvinism. Our position, like Marx's, is premised on opening the road to proletarian revolution by breaking the hold of chauvinism on the working class."

On paper, the BT is for withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. Yet the reality is that the BT's co-thinkers in England have long courted the reformist Socialist Party, without ever mentioning the Socialist Party's despicable line on the British army presence, or its sponsorship of "former" Loyalist killer Billy Hutchinson. Only after years of exposure by our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain did the English BT's *Marxist Bulletin* (January 1999) print the following justification:

"[The Spartacists] claim to find a great deal of significance in the fact we have not to date written an article criticising the Socialist Party's refusal to call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the north of Ireland. This is indeed a scandalous position for a British left-wing organisation and is indicative of the fundamental problems in their left-reformist programme. But we do not regard this as a sufficient reason to avoid any common work with them on issues where there is agreement nor to consider giving them critical support in elections when appropriate."

Obviously, the BT's paper "principles" are disposable if they interfere with opportunist combinations with open supporters of the murderous British army and its fascist Protestant assassins.

Comrade Galarneau noted how "the BT finds the greatest difficulty in criticizing the anti-Communist, chauvinist

social democrats, and indeed are always happy to unite with them.” He cited BT leader Logan’s participation in a so-called “International Conference” in South Africa in 1997, one of a number of recent “regroupment” attempts among reformists and centrists internationally. The “base document” for the conference enthusiastically greeted the destruction of the Soviet Union, and denounced the very idea of an internationalist Leninist party, saying: “International parties run the risk of establishing predatory relationships with unaffiliated revolutionary groups.” Comrade Galarneau explained our attitude:

“We were invited to this conference, and we declined for obvious reasons, given our fundamental differences with this ‘base document.’ Instead, we fought independently for our views around the conference.”

In contrast, the BT rushed to accept delegate status, signing on to the “base document.” As the TL spokesman noted: “Not only were they too happy to attend, they *praised* the document as a ‘broadly anti-capitalist’ document!”

The Bolshevik Tendency: What Is It?

The BT cares nothing for the struggles of the oppressed, much less the fight for revolutionary consciousness, because it is not an organization which seeks proletarian revolution. In fact, it is a peculiar and dubious outfit with a history of insinuating itself in places and among forces which are aimed at doing us harm. Its perpetual slanders of our organization as a “bureaucratic cult” have even found their way into a premier mouthpiece of the U.S. imperialist ruling class. In the summer of 1995, the *Wall Street Journal* wielded the BT’s smears to try to undermine the vitally important defense of black U.S. death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Riley repeated the BT’s favored anti-Communist “cult” theme during the debate, claiming that our change of line to advocate Quebec independence several years ago came from “leader-worship.” In fact, as the TL spokesman pointed out:

“You know the world only to the extent that you intervene to change it. On the streets, in the factories—not in some library or in your head. So, we intervened and *we learned*. And when the question came to a head once again before the ’95 referendum, based on all these years of work, we stopped and we thought, we reassessed our position in the fashion of Leninists,

and we realized we had been wrong. We figured out—a little late, but in time—that, had we not gone over to the advocacy of Quebec independence, it would have called into question our existence as a revolutionary organization in this country. I encourage everyone here to read our bulletin ‘On the National Question in Quebec,’ which details not only how we came to change our line to advocacy of Quebec independence, but how a truly Leninist organization arrives at a correct political line.”

Contrast this to the BT and their genuinely strange internal life under Bill Logan, an individual who finds personal gratification in the sadistic exercise of power over others, especially women. Logan delights in orchestrating internal torture sessions called “communist criticism.” This was exposed in a bulletin published by a BT split group, which we reprinted as No. 8 of our series *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League*. The bulletin describes an “internal struggle” inside the BT, of which a highlight was a fist fight between opposing BT factions in the streets of Oakland, California!

In his summary, TL spokesman Galarneau cited this *Hate Trotskyism* series, which makes available many documents written against us by political opponents, including the BT. He noted:

“This is hardly what a bureaucratic organization would do. Our own history is well documented in the bound volumes of many hundreds of copies of *Workers Vanguard* and elsewhere. With our organization, what you see is what you get. We are still doing what we set out to do from the beginning—to forge a revolutionary, internationalist, proletarian party to lead the working class to power.”

Building such a party means struggling to clear away the obstacles to revolutionary consciousness created by the bourgeoisie and perpetuated by its reformist henchmen. As the TL speaker concluded:

“Let me reiterate why calling for Quebec independence is decisive if you want to build a proletarian revolutionary party. It’s the only way to break the workers of English Canada from chauvinism, and to shatter the grip of nationalism in Quebec. So I want to say to any members of the Brock Socialists and others who really want to dedicate their life and *fight* for proletarian revolution, that their place is among the ranks of the International Communist League—the party which uniquely has the program and perspective to achieve world socialist revolution.” ■

Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Now Available in Chinese! We are pleased to announce the publication in Chinese of this important document, which was adopted at the Third International Conference of the ICL in early 1998. It has already appeared in nine other languages. The ICL’s Declaration of Principles is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist international which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution. **18 pages. \$1.25**

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Kurds...

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in Melbourne, Australia, Labor Party senator Kim Carr blatantly lied, telling the crowd that his party and the social democrats in Europe supported the Kurdish people. A speaker for the Spartacist League of Australia, demanding the dropping of all charges against arrested Kurdish protesters, pointed out that the state Labor government in New South Wales sent its cops to viciously attack and arrest Kurdish protesters. In Europe, our comrade noted, Labor's social-democratic counterparts dish out the same treatment on behalf of their capitalist masters.

Pointing to Australian imperialism's support for Washington's war against the heroic Vietnamese peasants and workers, and the Australian government's complicity in the U.S.-led attacks against Iraq today, our comrade criticized the PKK and the Australian fake left for their program of trying to pressure the imperialists to be "friends" of the oppressed. Fending off efforts at political censorship, the SLA speaker was cheered by many in the crowd when he called the imperialists the enemy of liberation. When he counterposed our call to free Öcalan now to the talk of a "fair trial" for the PKK leader "under international supervision," protesters started chanting, "Freedom for Öcalan."

The petty-bourgeois nationalist PKK calls on the United Nations and imperialist powers to broker a "political solution" to the Kurdish question in Turkey. Many signs and speakers at the various demonstrations expressed the same illusions in NATO, the UN or the European Union. But the imperialists are the godfathers of the Turkish militarist government. The U.S. imperialists are dead set against any expression of Kurdish national rights as this would weaken their Turkish ally—which has played a key role in the American terror bombing campaigns against Iraq—and destabilize the oil-rich region.

The PKK's nationalism is a dead end for the Kurdish people and their aspirations for national liberation. Only a thoroughgoing social revolution can liberate the toiling masses from the yoke of imperialism and capitalist exploitation. Even to achieve the democratic right of national self-determination for the Kurdish people requires uprooting capitalist rule throughout the entire region where the Kurds are concentrated. The Kurdish masses must look to an alliance with the Arab, Persian, and Turkish proletariats, who in turn must be won to actively championing the Kurdish right of self-determination.

The potential for united class struggle was shown in the 1991 strike of 48,000 coal miners in Zonguldak, Turkey, carried out by both Turkish and Kurdish workers on the eve of the imperialist Gulf War against Iraq, which inspired solidarity strikes in Kurdish eastern Anatolia as well as among Turkish workers. Significantly, the miners reportedly raised the demand for the right of Kurds to use their own language.

The road to liberation of the Turkish toilers from the military-run dictatorship of the Kemalist bourgeoisie lies through the Turkish proletariat embracing defense of the Kurds against their "own" exploiters. As part of the multinational proletariat of the region, the Kurds can play a leading role in socialist revolution in Turkey and throughout the Near East. The key lies in forging an internationalist leadership modeled on Lenin's Bolshevik Party, which liberated the oppressed nationalities of the tsarist autocracy's "prison

house of peoples" by leading the proletariat to power in the 1917 Russian Revolution.

We reprint below the February 18 declaration by the SpAD.

* * *

On 15 February, the Kurdish PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was abducted in Kenya in a night-and-fog action conducted by the Turkish secret service—reportedly in cooperation with the American CIA and the Israeli Mossad. Öcalan was kidnapped en route to the airport from the Greek embassy, then flown to the Turkish prison island Imrali and deposited in the notorious torture chamber of the Turkish murder regime. Ominously, all other prisoners have been removed from the island; evidently the Turkish state wants no eyes and ears to witness what they intend to inflict on Öcalan. While blustering about a "fair trial," Turkey refused to even allow Öcalan's lawyers into the country. Over the last 15 years, tens of thousands of Kurdish people were murdered in Turkey's gruesome war of annihilation which has destroyed more than 3,000 villages. As the leader of the guerrilla struggle for Kurdish independence, Öcalan could now face the death penalty in Turkey. We Trotskyists of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei, German section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), demand: **Freedom for Öcalan!**

Across Europe, in Australia and in Canada, thousands of Kurds took to the streets and occupied embassies to protest the arrest of Öcalan. In acts of extreme desperation, young PKK supporters set fire to themselves. From Blair's Britain, to Jospin's France and D'Alema's Italy, to Schröder's Germany, the social-democratic rulers of Fortress Europe, all of whom refused asylum to Öcalan, unleashed a storm of police terror against the Kurdish protesters who are themselves now threatened with mass deportations to Turkey's torture chambers. Yesterday, three Kurdish protesters were shot to death by Israeli security guards in front of the Israeli consulate in Berlin; another 16 were seriously injured. These murders were abetted by the racist capitalist SPD/Green government, which mounted a massive police offensive against the PKK supporters and now obscenely scapegoats the victims for their own murders. The area around the SPD offices in Hamburg which was occupied by the PKK was turned into a war zone. More than a thousand Kurds were arrested by the German cops, hundreds more have been beaten, arrested, and "disappeared." Even the names of the murdered Kurds are being kept secret. We demand: **Drop the Charges! Free the Kurdish Prisoners! No Deportations! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! Down With the Ban on the PKK and the Kurdish Associations!**

Öcalan tried for months to get asylum in West Europe and appealed to social-democratic-led governments to mediate on behalf of the Kurds in Turkey. The struggle for Kurdish national independence has been repeatedly sacrificed by bourgeois nationalists in futile pursuit of support from imperialist powers and regional capitalist regimes, be it Hussein's Iraq or Assad's Syria. German imperialism, along with U.S. imperialism, is the godfather of the Turkish campaign of extermination of the Kurds, arming and training the death squadrons. Since the destruction of the degenerated Soviet workers state through capitalist counterrevolution, there has been an increase in imperialist rivalries to plunder the region's oil reserves. There can be no illusions in the rapacious imperialist powers whose only interest is increasing

Protest State Attacks on Kurds in Canada!

While tens of thousands of Kurds in Europe protested the kidnapping and arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, demonstrations also erupted in cities across Canada. As in Europe, Kurdish protesters here have been targeted for repression by the capitalist rulers and their cops and courts.

Kurdish protesters occupied the Greek consulate in Vancouver on February 16. The next day, riot police in Ottawa attacked PKK supporters who were staging a 300-strong demonstration outside the Turkish embassy. A similar number rallied at the U.S. consulate in Toronto the next day, one of several angry Kurdish protests in that city. Trotskyist League supporters joined the demonstration and distributed several hundred copies of our leaflet headlined "Freedom for Öcalan!" PKK supporters in Montreal protested outside the Israeli consulate the same day.

Nearly two dozen Kurdish demonstrators have been arrested. Toronto cops seized two high-school students as they were leaving the February 18 demonstration. Both now face trumped-up charges of assaulting a police officer. Montreal police arrested 16 demonstrators the same day. Four have since been charged with assault, and three of them remain in prison, having been denied bail. Two other Kurds who attended their hearing on February 24 were themselves arrested as they left the courtroom. Free the imprisoned protesters! Drop all the charges!

The state terror inflicted on Kurdish protesters is part of a general racist crackdown against immigrants and refugees. Ottawa has declared the PKK a "terrorist organization," and at least two PKK supporters were recently deported for alleged fundraising and recruitment. The capitalist rulers'



Kolley/Globe and Mail

Toronto demonstration in defence of Öcalan. Drop all charges against Kurdish protesters!

efforts to incite anti-immigrant racism serve as an ideological tool to wreck working-class solidarity along racial and national lines. The labor movement must fight to smash the racist immigration laws, while defending Kurds and all the foreign-born against the deadly attacks of the state. Stop the deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! ■

their own profit margins at the cost of enormous suffering and death of workers and oppressed around the world. U.S. bombers take off from the NATO base in Incirlik, Turkey to bomb Iraq back to the stone age. The German imperialists have once again stationed troops in former Yugoslavia where in World War II they murdered one-fifth of the population. The German air force, along with NATO allies, is now preparing to launch air strikes against Serbia. We Trotskyists say: **Bundeswehr/UN/NATO: Out of the Balkans! Down With the UN Starvation Embargo Against Iraq! Defend Iraq Against Imperialist Attack! Turkish Army: Out of the Kurdish Territories Now!**

Today, most Kurds live in industrial centers from Istanbul to Berlin. It is the working class, including its strategic component of workers of Kurdish and Turkish background, which produces the entire wealth of society and has the power to smash the exploitative capitalist system. These workers can serve as a living bridge between the Kurdish struggle for independence and the fight for socialist revolution in the Near East, fighting to extend proletarian revolution to the imperialist heartland of West Europe. Unity across national and ethnic lines by the most class-conscious Kurdish, Turkish and German workers would be a powerful force in the struggle to emancipate all workers from capitalist exploitation. This revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist perspective requires a sharp political struggle against the social-democratic misleaders—the SPD and PDS [Party of Democratic Socialism]—who organize state terror and split the workers through racist agitation and chauvin-

ism. Only a Trotskyist party which mobilizes the Kurdish, Turkish and German workers against the imperialist divide-and-conquer politics of the ruling class and their social-democratic lieutenants in the labor movement will be able to systematically mobilize for socialist revolution and defeat all manifestations of nationalism and class collaboration.

The 25 to 30 million Kurdish people in the Near East constitute the largest nation in the world without a state of its own. Since the downfall of the Turkish Ottoman empire in World War I, the Kurdish people have been carved up primarily among four countries—Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, with a small scattering of Kurds in the Caucasian republics of the former Soviet Union. The realization of an independent Kurdistan requires the revolutionary overthrow of at least four different capitalist powers in the region. This is the Trotskyist perspective of *permanent revolution*—that in the colonial and semicolonial countries in the imperialist epoch, only the proletariat in power can achieve the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. This perspective is counterposed to the illusions peddled by petty-bourgeois nationalists who appeal to the immediate oppressors of the Kurdish people and their imperialist godfathers. The fight for Kurdish national and social emancipation requires revolutionary leadership—the construction of Trotskyist parties rooted in the proletariats of the Near East and among the workers of Europe—a reformed Fourth International to struggle as the world party of socialist revolution. Building such a party is the task to which we are dedicated. **For a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan!** ■

Defend Iraq...

(continued from page 2)

four capitalist states. And while Washington hypocritically condemns Iraq's Saddam Hussein for his repression against the Kurds, the U.S.—along with Germany—arms the Turkish bourgeoisie to the hilt. Saddam Hussein is an anti-Communist butcher of Iraqi workers and minorities, but it is the task of the Iraqi proletariat to sweep away his despotic regime. We say: Defend the Palestinians—Israel out of the Occupied Territories! Down with all the sheiks, colonels, mullahs and Zionist butchers! For a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan! For permanent revolution—For a socialist federation of the Near East!

In backing the terror bombing of Baghdad, the imperialist rulers in Ottawa are again acting in concert with their senior partners in Washington. From the Near East to the Balkans and Haiti, Canadian troops have repeatedly been dispatched to enforce neocolonialism and prop up the oppressive status quo. Anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home! The same capitalist rulers who are wreaking terror abroad are destroying jobs, tearing apart medicare and gutting welfare in order to boost their profits. In order to “divide and rule” the working class, they whip up chauvinism against Quebec and scapegoat immigrants and refugees. To defend its own interests, the working class must take up the defense of all the oppressed, while opposing the depredations of Canadian imperialism abroad. Canadian troops out of the Near East, Haiti and the Balkans! Down with national chauvinism—For Quebec independence! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

The NDP, political arm of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, today cynically postures as an opponent of the starvation sanctions against Iraq. Yet in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf massacre, these right-wing social democrats *demand* such sanctions against Iraq. When the shooting started, the New Democrats openly joined in Ottawa's war frenzy.



Workers Vanguard

December 1995 Spartacist demonstration outside UN headquarters in New York protests U.S. military aggression against Serbia, Iraq.

Today their social-democratic counterparts in Britain, Tony Blair's Labour Party government, are Washington's main allies in waging bloody war against Iraq.

Ostensible leftists like the International Socialists foster illusions in the possibility of reforming capitalism, seeking to pressure the ruling class to “Stop the war.” From the Gulf War to the present day, these perennially pro-NDP reformists have not once raised the elementary call for defense of Iraq against U.S./Canadian assault. Especially to youthful militants revolted by the mass slaughter of the Iraqi people, we emphasize that no war has ever been stopped by pacifist “moral witness” or protest, no matter how militant. Pacifism relies on the illusion that the imperialist military can be restrained by reason and pressure. But wars are the inevitable outgrowth of capitalism, a supremely irrational system based on private profit and competition among rival states.

Imperialism breeds war, but it also breeds revolution. It was out of the carnage of World War I that the Bolsheviks led the Russian workers to power. The bloody imperialist ruling classes that unleash terror on the semicolonial peoples also sap the lifeblood from working people at home. In the U.S., the capitalist rulers consign millions of poor and minority women to starvation through the axing of welfare, while robbing black youth of any future other than poverty or prison. They crave to kill Mumia Abu-Jamal because he is a black man who speaks out against racist repression.

The power to destroy this system of racism, war and exploitation lies in the hands of the international working class. Against the labor tops who tie working people to their exploiters, particularly via the social-democratic NDP, the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste is dedicated to building a revolutionary workers party like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky—a party which champions the cause of all the oppressed, a party rooted in proletarian internationalism. Join us in building the party which will lead new October Revolutions and put an end once and for all to imperialist mass murder. **Defend Iraq! Defeat U.S./Canadian imperialism through workers revolution!** ■

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Quebec...

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the early '60s as both the aim and almost exclusively the achievement of the Quebec Liberal Party governments of the time, and of the francophone bourgeoisie which stood behind them. In short, the story goes like this: Maurice Duplessis, a reactionary instrument of the church, English Canada and American imperialism, ran the province with an iron fist for twenty years, then the people elected Jean Lesage's "équipe du tonnerre" (Thunder Team), which proceeded to implement economic and social reforms which turned Quebec into a modern liberal democracy. The working class, if it is mentioned at all, is mainly presented as a passive object.

But the very irony behind the expression "Quiet Revolution" tells a different story. This was a period of the most explosive working-class struggles in Quebec history, indeed in all Canadian history. But for all its militancy, the Quebec working class lacked a revolutionary leadership which could lead the fight for socialist revolution, as shown most clearly during the semi-insurrectionary general strike of 1972. Instead, the proletariat was drawn into the political framework of bourgeois Quebec nationalism. And this is something which has sharply increased in the intervening years, thanks above all to the chauvinist hostility from English Canada's labor misleaders, helping to throw the workers' struggles and consciousness way back.

Especially in the post-Soviet world, where the imperialist rulers have declared that Communism is dead and revolutionary class struggle a thing of the past, Marxists intervening among workers and youth in this country need a clear understanding of the history of the Quebec labor movement in order to fight bourgeois ideology and build the necessary vanguard party. So let's get in our time machine and take a closer look.

Duplessis' "Great Darkness"

We will land in 1946. As in much of the world, the end of the war saw a dramatic increase in working-class struggle here. In Canada, man-hours lost to strikes reached a record of four and a half million that year. In Quebec, the unionization rate went from 20 to 25 percent in just one year, between 1945 and 1946. Expecting an end to wartime privation, the working class struck all over the province, centrally in the manufacturing sector. But those strikes came up against the ferocious repression of the provincial police and the courts. Picket lines were tear gassed, union leaders railroaded to jail—for instance, Dominion Textile strike leader Kent Rowley spent six months in jail for "seditious conspiracy."

This was under premier Maurice Duplessis, nicknamed "the chief," whose right-wing Union Nationale (UN) had come back to power in 1944. Duplessis and the UN had had a first term in 1936-39. Their program coincided with that of the church: building a French-speaking Catholic fortress in North America. In 1937, they passed the infamous law to "Protect the Province against Communist Propaganda," also known as the Padlock Law. Any building suspected of being an oppositional rallying point could be raided, and a padlock would be put on the door for all to see, to make an example.

Duplessis' appeal was his occasional rhetoric against the federal government in Ottawa and his deeply religious brand of French Canadian nationalism. At election times, priests would remind their parishioners that "Heaven is blue, Hell is

red." Blue was the color of the conservative UN. "Red" in this case meant the opposition Liberal Party, but the *double entendre* was not lost on anyone. The influence of the church in politics was greatly helped by the fact that electoral ridings were hugely drawn in favor of the more sparsely populated countryside. And on top of all that you had the usual array of corruption and blackmail, not to forget voting rights for the dead.

This regime was bankrolled by and stood for the defense of powerful English Canadian and American capitalist interests. But while Quebec had long been heavily urbanized and industrialized, it continued to be saddled with a priest-ridden political and cultural superstructure. As time went by under Duplessis' reign, known as the "Great Darkness," the contradictions only became more acute and evident, leading to the tumultuous changes of the 1960s and '70s.

To understand what happened you have to look above all to the struggles of the working class. Almost to a man, the so-called architects of the Quiet Revolution started their careers in the Quebec labor movement of the 1940s and '50s. Pierre Elliott Trudeau first made his mark as a supporter of the 1949 Asbestos strike. His collaborators Gérard Pelletier and Jean Marchand were in the top leadership of the Catholic union federation before moving into federal politics. For his part, future Liberal minister and later nationalist leader and premier René Lévesque was arrested in 1959 on the picket lines of the Radio-Canada strike.

So let's look at the labor movement at the time. Coming out of the war, there were three major union formations. There was the Provincial Federation of Labour, affiliated with the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress and the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Many other AFL unions remained outside the provincial federation, but together they were the biggest group. Then you had the much smaller Quebec affiliate of the Canadian Congress of Labour—they were new CIO industrial unions, and only founded a Quebec federation in 1952. And in between these two, numerically, was the Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada (CTCC), the Catholic federation. Starting with World War II, the CTCC membership hovered around 30 or 40 percent of the unionized workforce of Quebec.

The CTCC is the one that had future federal Liberal cabinet minister Jean Marchand as general secretary. Now what in heaven's name is a Catholic union federation? If you asked the priests who founded the CTCC, it was meant to be an agency for good relations between capital and labor, in direct opposition to the nasty AFL-affiliated "internationals" who only stirred up trouble. Membership in the CTCC was to be limited to members of the Catholic faith. Strikes were considered a dangerous American infection. But lo and behold, the thing still led strikes, and during World War II they had to drop their discrimination against non-Catholics, if only to abide by the federal labor code.

The Asbestos Strike

The 1949 Asbestos strike was the first serious *political* challenge to Duplessis. I want to explain why: let's look at it more closely.

In late 1948, Duplessis tried to strengthen his iron fist with airtight union-busting legislation. Bill 5 called for the expulsion of all suspected "communists" or "communist sympathizers" from unions, disclosing union membership lists and financial reports to the government, making the closed shop illegal, etc. But the bill backfired on the government.

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The three union centrals formed their first ever Common Front against Bill 5 and the government was forced to withdraw it in early 1949. But this only led to more militancy in the ranks. In February, after a series of press reports on the deadly effect of asbestos dust on miners, a strike broke out in southeastern Quebec, in the towns of Asbestos and Thetford Mines. Those highly creative city names give you the idea of what sort of company towns we're talking about here.

The miners went over the heads of their CTCC leadership and walked out, illegally, before mandatory arbitration. For Duplessis, this in itself was tantamount to a revolt against Western civilization. Let's listen to the little man himself:

"The present strike is fundamentally illegal because the strike leaders refused to go through arbitration.... Disregard for the laws engenders anarchy and disorder. Disregard for civil laws leads to disregard for all other laws.... If the laws are broken with impunity, we have disaster on the labor, economic and national fronts."

—quoted in Denis Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec* (1977)

So the strike confronted the government from the start, not just the companies.

The miners demanded the elimination of asbestos dust, higher wages, more vacation and a union voice in promotion, transfers and layoffs, as well as the Rand Formula of collecting union dues at the source. The strike lasted almost five months and encompassed almost 5,000 workers. It was very popular, and it polarized Quebec society along lines never seen in living memory. Half a million dollars was collected in financial support of the miners, and another \$75,000 in foodstuff and supplies. And we're talking 1949 dollars here. The strike gained wide support among young intellectuals like Trudeau, and even in a big section of the lower clergy.

The strike eventually lost in the face of brutal repression and scabbing. The union was not smashed, but otherwise the workers' demands were not met, and the scabs kept their jobs after the strike. And other people too were going to pay dearly for their support to the miners. The most famous may be Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau, archbishop of Montreal, who stood up on his altar (or whatever) during the strike and denounced the "conspiracy" to "smash the working class," while his subordinates collected tens of thousands of dollars at church doors in strike support funds. Well, in 1950, Mgr. Charbonneau was fired and sent to do missionary work in... Vancouver, B.C. Cruel, I tell you.

The Asbestos defeat did put a bit of a damper on workers' struggle in the early '50s, but things were just boiling under the surface, and violently exploded on several occasions. Many strikes would actually win gains throughout this period. As in the rest of the continent, the working class was able for the first time to taste a bit of modern comfort, buy a home, own a car, etc.

And yet the ruling clique was stuck in the dark ages. Books and movies which the church deemed offensive were proscribed. You had to go to an underground bookshop to buy a Jean-Paul Sartre novel. An Elvis Presley concert in Montreal was canceled under church pressure. And after Bill 5 had been defeated, Duplessis just reintroduced the same labor legislation piecemeal throughout the decade. There

was no health insurance, high school was a luxury, etc. With three-quarters of the population living in the cities and a unionization rate of 30 percent, you had a government glorifying rural life and the fanatical observance of religion. So something had to give.

In 1957, there was another illegal miners strike in Murdochville, in the Gaspésie. A miner was killed during the strike and the union was smashed to pieces after a seven month walkout. But again, the strike was spectacular and popular. The following years, labor struggle hit two of the pillars of francophone culture at the time: first, a victorious 13-day strike at *La Presse* in 1958, then the highly visible 1958-59 directors strike at Radio-Canada, where very popular actors and journalists walked the picket lines in solidarity. This is when René Lévesque, then a TV journalist, got arrested, along with Jean Marchand.

Politically, arguments raged on how best to defeat Duplessis and end the reign of obscurantism. The unions were the scene of stormy debates between those who wanted to put faith in the Liberal Party and those looking for a more left-wing alternative. The Liberals had given themselves a facelift starting in 1955, but everyone knew that as a parliamentary opposition they opposed none of Duplessis' major anti-union offensives. Furthermore, they were widely associated with big business and their senior partners in Ottawa. The new leader of the party, Jean Lesage, was himself an ex-federal minister. Trudeau agitated within the labor movement for a bloc with the Liberals, but was voted down every time.

The main alternative posed was to build a sort of provincial CCF or NDP, but that presented a whole series of problems as well. The unions did opt for the formation of a social-democratic party, but it didn't take off. In 1958 the newly founded Fédération des Travailleurs du Québec (FTQ, the Canadian Labour Congress affiliate following the AFL-CIO merger) endorsed the "Winnipeg Initiative" which was going to lead to the foundation of the NDP. They thought once the federal social-democratic party had been founded, they could safely launch their own provincial version, and sweep the Union Nationale out of office. But real life was going to smash those plans.

On September 1, 1959, Satan recalled his creature: Maurice Duplessis went belly up. He was replaced by one Paul Sauvé, who in his turn died four months later. Elections were called for June 1960. There was no third party, new, democratic or otherwise, so the Liberals won with the support of the labor movement and a big section of the local bourgeoisie.

The Quiet Revolution

Under the pressure of industrialization, the so-called Quiet Revolution implemented a few necessary reforms for the advancement of a modern capitalist society. Education reforms were both a longstanding demand of the labor movement and a necessary step to build a base of Quebec-born skilled workers and managers. Breaking the authority of the church was explicitly *not* an objective of the Lesage government—Lesage would rant against secularists like the Mouvement Laïque de Langue Française and called atheism a "spiritual sickness." But the period beginning in the 1960s nonetheless saw a massive erosion of the power of the church. The Québécois went from one of the most to one of the least religious peoples in the capitalist world, as evidenced by abysmal church attendance, low marriage rates, etc.

But the key to the Lesage government's "revolution" was

the use of state levers to generate and reinforce what had been so far by world standards a pretty anemic national bourgeoisie. The creation of various funds, planning commissions and societies, as well as the 1963 nationalization of hydroelectricity, enabled the local élite to use resources otherwise only available to much bigger fish. At the same time, the administration of a strong state sector served as a training ground for the future CEOs of what was later called Quebec, Inc.

We Marxists understand that nationalizations by a capitalist government are not a step towards socialism, but one of many tools a capitalist ruling class can use to maintain its own power. In its own way, the bourgeoisie understands this too. In the opening speech for the 1962 elections, Lesage was very clear:

“Not only is the nationalization of electricity not the beginning of a general socialization campaign throughout Quebec, but I would even say that nationalization is an essential condition for the growth of private enterprise in the Province.”

—quoted in Roch Denis, *Luttes de Classes et Question Nationale au Québec* (1979)

But the misleaders of the labor movement at the time, and even self-proclaimed leftists, supported the Liberal government as a representative of the “progressive” national bourgeoisie. The journal *Parti-Pris*, which called for independence, secularism and socialism, is a significant example. Starting from the facts of foreign (centrally American) economic domination, and of national oppression within Canada, this group called for “tactical support” to the “progressive bourgeoisie” and for electoral support to the Liberals against the right-wing UN. The logic of using national oppression as an excuse to give *political* support to the Quebec bourgeoisie would bear its full disastrous fruits over a decade later with the trade-union support to Lévesque’s Parti Québécois. But even in those early days, cabinet minister Lévesque was touted as the “progressive” petty-bourgeois wing of the Liberals, as opposed to Lesage.

It’s in that period that the Quebec union federations essentially took their modern form. They were now divided into the FTQ, the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN, the former CTCC—it dropped the word “Catholic” in 1960, but still included the defense of “Christian values” in its constitution) and the teachers federation, which ended up being called the Federation of Quebec Teachers (CEQ). Talks of fusion of the CTCC/CSN with the FTQ in the late ’50s went nowhere, and the two federations often went through some pretty disgusting and violent raiding sprees, especially in the construction industry.

In the early ’60s the CSN, more nationalist and more conservative (contrary to its later image), was much closer to the Lesage government, but the FTQ essentially supported it at election time as well. The CSN got a boost in 1965-66 when it incorporated the provincial civil servants. It again had about 30 percent of the union membership, while the international unions, only a part of which were members of the FTQ, were still close to 50 percent.

It was actually around the battle for union rights in the public sector that the public honeymoon with the Liberals collapsed. First the nurses, then the teachers and finally the civil servants fought hard battles from 1963 to ’66, and won the right to organize and strike. They rapidly went from having the worst working conditions to having the best, when compared with the private sector. For the bourgeoisie, the Quiet Revolution had gone too far. For the working class, it



RENÉ LÉVESQUE
 PRESSES SOCIALISTES INTERNATIONALES

René Lévesque addresses 1960 FTQ conference.

hadn’t gone far enough by a long shot. This is when Trudeau announced that we had now entered the “Quiet Reaction.”

Bourgeois Reaction and Working-Class Radicalization

If the period from 1960-65 had seen more strikes than the late years of the Duplessis regime, those tended to be much less spectacular, and were resolved quickly. But starting with the year 1966, no more. For the next decade or so, the number of strikes, their length and militancy, and the unionization rate would reach levels never seen before, or since. In Canada as a whole, five million man-hours were lost to “labor conflicts” in the year 1966 alone, topping the 1946 record. A large proportion of these were in Quebec.

This whole period was conditioned by international events including the Cuban Revolution, anticolonial struggles in places like Algeria, mass opposition to the United States’ war in Vietnam, and the May ’68 general strike in France. Reaction to these events helped to radicalize whole layers of workers, as well as petty-bourgeois youth. It is also the period when the national question increasingly came to the fore in Quebec society and in its labor movement.

Until the mid to late ’60s, the majority of trade unionists associated Quebec nationalism with the religious paternalism of Maurice Duplessis. The small separatist groupings were seen as wacky radicals. The fact that Lesage was known as a hard-core federalist didn’t prevent the unions from giving him electoral support. But parallel to this, a small *indépendantiste* movement had emerged during the Quiet Revolution. I already mentioned *Parti-Pris*. To its right was Pierre Bourgault’s Rassemblement pour l’Indépendance Nationale (RIN), founded in 1960. They could gather about 8-10 percent of the vote in subsequent elections. *Parti-Pris* set up the Mouvement de Libération Populaire (MLP). Also in the MLP were Pierre Vallières and Charles Gagnon, later to lead the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) and give the latter a more leftist coloration. The FLQ itself had first appeared in 1963 by planting some bombs in mailboxes in Westmount, the rich Montreal enclave which was (and is) the center of the anglophone bourgeoisie.

In a more respectable vein, the Quebec wing of the NDP had split right after its foundation in 1963. The more autonomist—although they were not *indépendantistes*—wing went on to form the Parti Socialiste du Québec (PSQ), under the

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Quebec...

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leadership of the redoubtable Michel Chartrand, a leader of the CSN left-wing, and later of Jean-Marie Bédard, who had been a Trotskyist in the '40s. In 1966 the MLP entered the PSQ and tried to push it to the left and towards a pro-independence position; a year later, they entered the RIN to push it to the left.

This kind of development became a constant refrain of Quebec politics. Labor reformism means acting as a prop for your own national bourgeoisie—but from the Quiet Revolution on, there have been two quite distinct bourgeoisies in this country. As good Canadian nationalists, the NDP was always hostile to Quebec's national rights. So whenever they got something going in Quebec it would soon split away in the direction of Quebec nationalism. And these splits would die pretty quickly as independent organizations, as they ended up directly supporting the bourgeois nationalists in one way or another. So the capitalists basically didn't need a big independent reformist organization to lord it over the working class. From Lesage's Liberals to the present PQ government, Quebec's national oppression within Canada has been the glue that the Quebec bourgeoisie has needed to keep the working class stuck to its coattails.

In 1966, to everyone's surprise, the right-wing UN under Daniel Johnson was returned to office with its slogan "Equality or Independence." While purposely ambiguous, the UN's slogan was clearly designed to win support from among the nationalists. This shook the Liberals, who then went through a faction fight. In 1967, just a couple of months after French president Charles De Gaulle declared "*Vive le Québec libre!*" from the Montreal city hall balcony, former cabinet minister Lévesque and a small group split and founded the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association, which became the Parti Québécois a year later. The PQ rapidly absorbed the RIN and the major part of the emerging "left" nationalists.

The unions did not follow suit right away, but they did become increasingly nationalist. For example, they put support to French-only language legislation on their books in the late '60s. They still didn't call for electoral support to the PQ—the FTQ was the first federation to do so, but only in



Canapress

October 1970: Canadian army occupies Montreal under War Measures Act invoked by Trudeau.

1976. But it is precisely the weight of the national question which prevented the formation of a party of the working class, even the deformed expression of class consciousness expressed in a labor-reformist party.

But let's come back to the late '60s. In February 1967, the Johnson UN government decreed teachers back to work with Bill 25. This was the most savage piece of legislation since Duplessis. In October of the same year, the Montreal transit workers were similarly forced back to work. The police were sent to smash picket lines, like at the 7 Up strike in Town of Mount Royal.

But overall, the bourgeoisie was unable to bring discipline into its workforce, and sounded increasingly desperate. One popular group of young comics at the time suggested that the authorities call on Quebec's "adoptive sons," Batman and Robin, to come and stop the strikes. This is when the federal government took the sort of decisive action it is very good at: they set up...a study group, the Woods Commission. One of its members had previously written: "If the union leaders are to be able to act in a responsible manner in the long term, they may have to make gestures which seem irresponsible in the short term, lest their membership dislodge them" (quoted in Roch Denis). In other words, the ruling class was consciously relying on its first line of defense: the misleaders of the working class, its labor lieutenants. Unfortunately, they were not to be disappointed.

Meanwhile, Trudeau, Marchand and Pelletier had made their way to the federal government, with the stated aim of "saving Canada" from the "separatists." Trudeau always had displayed a strong streak of anti-Québécois chauvinism. In arguing for support to the Quebec Liberals in the '50s, he started developing the thesis that the French Canadians were practically genetically incapable of democracy and unable to govern themselves. The rise of pro-independence groups in the '60s made him berserk. Trudeau became federal party leader and Prime Minister in 1968, and he soon did take some decisive action.

In April 1970, the Quebec Liberals were returned to office under Robert Bourassa. Six months later, Ottawa proclaimed the War Measures Act and sent the troops to Montreal. The excuse was the kidnapping of Quebec labor minister Pierre Laporte and British diplomat James Cross by the FLQ, but everyone understood this was an attempt at bringing back "social peace" to the province, fueled by Trudeau's fixation against the separatists. With lists provided to the army by arch-reactionary Montreal mayor Jean Drapeau, 500 trade unionists and leftists were picked up and became the guests of the notoriously uninviting Montreal constabulary. Others were simply victims of the cops' intellectual deficiencies: I heard that one person was rounded up for possession of an art book on cubism, which the policeman in charge took for a pro-Castro tract.

But once again, the heavy-handed repression blew back in the rulers' face. Bourassa was now permanently seen as a right-wing economic ideologue, an anti-union freak, and a wet noodle in front of Ottawa. In 1971, *La Presse* locked out its workers. In October, a *La Presse* union support rally was banned by mayor Drapeau and the police killed a young woman at the demo. It's also in that year that the FTQ and the CSN published their revolutionary-sounding manifestos, respectively "The State Is Our Exploiter" and "It's Up to Us," as well as many other articles and pamphlets along those themes. The labor bureaucrats were responding

to pressure from the base of the unions, where the anger was about to burst out.

The 1972 General Strike

In 1972, it was time to renew the public-sector collective agreements. The union federations formed the first Common Front since the Quiet Revolution and forced the government to bargain collectively. In April, they went on a 210,000-strong general strike and Bourassa legislated them back to work. The strike leaders called to defy the injunction, called a vote, which they won, and then decided to...go back to work anyway. The rank and file were obviously taking the unions' fiery manifestos far too seriously for the union bureaucracy.

One month later, the three union leaders were nevertheless condemned to one year in jail just for having recommended defiance of the back-to-work legislation. This led to the explosion of May 11-17. About 300,000 private and public sector workers went on a spontaneous general strike, took over the cities of Sept-Îles, Sorel, Thetford Mines, Joliette, took control of radio stations, blockaded highways, etc. The police were incapable of quelling the protest, and it was only the three union leaders' call to go back to work which put an end to the movement. For more details, there is a good article on the general strike in *Spartacist Canada* No. 57 (March 1983).

I want to talk for a moment about the despicable role of the English Canadian union tops and NDP during the general strike. At the height of the strike, the Canadian Labour Congress passed a resolution denouncing "those elements, in any part of Canada, which advocate the destruction of confederation." Then-NDP leader David Lewis supported the jailing of Quebec labor leaders. The wall of hostility to Quebec workers' struggle from the misleaders of English Canadian labor was to have a profound impact on the consciousness of the Québécois working class. Seeing nothing but arrogant chauvinism on the other side of the Ottawa River, in the period after 1972 huge chunks of the working class began to be driven straight into the arms of their "own" bourgeois nationalists, the PQ of René Lévesque.

The 1972 general strike marked the high point of class struggle in Quebec. It posed sharply the question: who will rule, the workers or the capitalists? The only possible next logical step was the fight for working-class state power. But the crucial missing ingredient was revolutionary leadership—a Leninist vanguard party. And if 1972 showed the radicalization of a significant section of advanced workers, it had the reverse effect on the Quebec union tops. Their manifestos quickly went from radical-sounding to either non-existent or pro-PQ. Finally, in 1976, the FTQ trade-union federation threw its rather enormous authority behind the election of Lévesque's Parti Québécois, which was later to turn around and wage its own savage attacks on the unions. In particular, the PQ's 1982-83 decrees in the public sector, producing huge wage cuts, were a body blow to the working class from which it has yet to recover.

I am not going to go into details on these events, which are beyond the scope of this presentation. Suffice it to say here that only the PQ managed to achieve what had been an objective of all Quebec governments since the war: they successfully curbed labor militancy and crippled the unions. They did this with the assistance of the nationalist labor tops themselves, by driving down public-sector labor costs into line with those of the private sector. That they managed this despite massive workers mobilizations is a true testament to the fealty of Quebec's labor tops to the anti-working class



CSN-CEQ

1972 general strike posed question of power.

bourgeois nationalists of the PQ.

As I said, the missing ingredient in the class struggles of the 1960s and early '70s was a Leninist vanguard party. While standing squarely against Anglo-chauvinist oppression, such a party would have given no support to bourgeois Quebec nationalism. It would have fought to rally the proletariat in revolutionary *internationalist* struggle against capitalism.

The Quebec left of the time failed this test. The pseudo-Trotskyists, followers of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, were mired in Quebec nationalism. Two radical-sounding, anti-nationalist Maoist groups were founded in the aftermath of the general strike, one of them led by ex-MLP and ex-FLQ leader Charles Gagnon. By the late '70s, under the PQ regime, they claimed thousands of members in Quebec. But as followers of Mao Zedong's China, which was then in an obscene alliance with U.S. and Canadian imperialism against the Soviet Union, these groups wound up embracing the Canadian bourgeoisie as a supposed "lesser evil." Thus the Maoists ended up explicitly supporting a "united" Canadian capitalist state, a straight Anglo-chauvinist line. Virulently hostile to the Soviet Union and full of unresolvable contradictions, these groups blew apart at the start of the 1980s Cold War.

In the aftermath of the period I have talked about today, the national divide in Canada has sharply grown, reflecting the decline of working-class struggle and consciousness. In the face of this, our organization recognized several years ago (belatedly, it must be said) that it was now essential to advocate independence for Quebec in order to lay a basis for internationalist, revolutionary class consciousness among the workers of both nations.

In intervening with our revolutionary program among leftist-minded youth and workers in Quebec today, we must keep in mind the central lesson of the last 50 years of labor struggle there. Bourgeois nationalism, fueled by the Anglo chauvinism which dominates this country, was key to quelling one of the most militant periods of class struggle in North American history. In winning over Quebec workers and youth to the program of genuine Marxism, the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste will build the revolutionary pole that was lacking at that time. ■

1949 Asbestos Strike to 1972 General Strike

Nationalism and Class Struggle in Quebec



CSN



CSN-CEQ

Militant labor struggles like 1949 Asbestos strike (left) shook grip of Union Nationale premier Duplessis (above, at left), who ruled Quebec through naked state terror in alliance with Catholic church.

The bitter national divide in Canada today is a major obstacle to making the workers of both English Canada and Quebec conscious of their historic task of sweeping away capitalism. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste opposes all forms of nationalism—first and foremost the dominant Anglo chauvinism pushed by the NDP and the labor bureaucracy in English Canada, but also the nationalism of the Quebec labor tops. We advocate *independence for Quebec* in order to remove the national question from the historic agenda, thereby laying a basis for the workers in both nations to recognize that their respective ruling classes are the enemy, not each other.

The national polarization in this country has been shaped by more than two centuries of oppression of the Québécois. As we wrote in the TL/LT Programmatic Theses adopted at our Eighth National Conference in summer 1998:

“For well over a century following the Conquest of 1759-60, Quebec remained a priest-ridden backwater. Industrial development and urbanization began to change the character of Quebec society by the beginning of the 20th century, but it took several more decades for this to take political expression. “Beginning in the 1960s, a Quebec bourgeoisie emerged, based on key nationalizations like Hydro-Québec. The same period saw the development of a militant proletariat, whose struggles were fueled by opposition to national oppression. The aspirations of the ascendant Québécois bourgeoisie to be

the exploiters of ‘their own’ working class collided with the dominance of English Canadian capital. Anglo-chauvinist reaction—especially the military occupation of Quebec and the imposition of martial law by the federal Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau in 1970—in turn fueled nationalist sentiment among Québécois workers. This was reinforced by the chauvinism of the leadership of English Canadian labor, expressed not least in its hostility to the 1972 Quebec general strike.”

—“Who We Are, and What We Fight For”

In the following talk, first given as an educational presentation at the same conference, TL/LT Central Committee member Charles Galarneau elaborates on the period from World War II to the early '70s, especially the rise of a militant labor movement in Quebec. The cumulative effect of the defeats and betrayals of this stormy period was the decisive deepening of national animosity between the English- and French-speaking working classes. This reactionary outcome continues to cripple possibilities for anti-capitalist class struggle.

The presentation has been slightly abridged and adapted for publication in *SC*.

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The petty-bourgeois nationalists who run Quebec's history departments today usually present the Quiet Revolution of

(continued on page 11)