

# Intercontinental Press

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## Documents

# 'Far Left' Debates French Elections

### **USA:**

**For Solidarity With the Coal Miners Strike!**

### **India:**

**Hawkers of Popular Frontism Point to West Bengal**

—Statement of the Fourth International—

***Women Around World Raise Demand for Equal Rights***

## Sadat's Fiasco in Cyprus

By Fred Murphy

Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's most recent effort at capturing headlines with a spectacular move ended ignominiously February 19.

Sadat attempted to emulate the commando raids carried out by Israeli forces in Uganda in 1976 and by a West German unit in Somalia last year. Thus he hoped to divert attention from the failure of his "sacred mission" to Jerusalem, while at the same time establishing his credentials as an opponent of "international terrorism."

The exploit needlessly endangered the lives of eleven representatives from Arab countries and from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It also resulted in the deaths of fifteen Egyptian soldiers.

The events leading to this debacle began in Nicosia, Cyprus, February 18. Two armed men entered the lobby of the Hilton Hotel where the African-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization was meeting and shot to death the group's general secretary, Youssef el-Sebai.

Sebai was the editor of the Cairo daily *Al Ahrām* and a leading supporter of Sadat's maneuvers for a separate peace with Israel. He was also well known throughout the Arab world as a novelist and screenwriter.

After shooting Sebai, the gunmen took about thirty delegates hostage and demanded safe conduct out of the country. The two claimed to be acting in retaliation for Sadat's betrayal of the Palestinians in recognizing the Israeli state, but the PLO denounced their actions as "barbarous and brutal."

After several hours of negotiations with Cypriot officials, the gunmen were taken to Larnaca Airport and put aboard a plane with eleven hostages—four Egyptians, three PLO officials, two Syrians, one Somali, and one Moroccan.

The plane headed for Libya but was refused permission to land there, and was also turned away from Kuwait, Somalia, and South Yemen. It finally landed in Djibouti for refueling and then returned to Larnaca Airport.

Soon thereafter, an Egyptian military jet carrying seventy-four commandos also landed at Larnaca. Cypriot officials had been told by Cairo only that a "special plane" was on the way, "carrying a group of people who will assist in dealing with the emergency."

"We were shocked because we had been deceived," Cypriot President Spyros Kypri-

anou said later. "We told them not a single soldier would be allowed to disembark because we were in the process of negotiating release of the hostages."

But as preparations were being completed for this release, the Egyptian troops rushed out of their plane and a fifty-minute gun battle erupted between them and Cypriot National Guard forces. By the time the skirmish ended, fifteen Egyptians lay dead and fourteen had been wounded, as had seven Cypriots and two reporters. The Egyptian plane was destroyed by a Cypriot antitank shell.

The Cypriot regime later charged that the Egyptians had fired "indiscriminately in all directions," even hitting the airport control tower where President Kyprianou and top Cypriot ministers were meeting.

After the shooting stopped, the hostages were released unharmed and the two gun-

men were arrested and charged by Cypriot authorities with the murder of Sebai.

The Egyptian government later admitted that the message regarding the commandos had been unclear, but nevertheless charged that the Cypriot regime had "turned a humanitarian rescue mission into a violent tragedy."

Sadat tried to cover his embarrassment at the fiasco by breaking diplomatic relations with Kyprianou, whom he referred to as a "dwarf." He also used the murder of Sebai to whip up anti-Palestinian sentiment in Egypt.

At the military funeral for the fifteen soldiers killed in Cyprus, Sadat said "Egypt is defending the Palestinian cause everywhere while the Palestinians go to nightclubs and hire themselves out as assassins and terrorists." Crowds at the funeral reportedly chanted "Down with Cyprus" and "No Palestine after today."

Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin also took the opportunity to slander the Palestinian people, as well as to needle Sadat, who still claims to support the creation of a Palestinian state: "There are still people who believe a state can be established to be ruled by the perpetrators of acts such as we have witnessed in Cyprus today," Begin said February 19. □

## Smith Uses Terror to Press 'Negotiations'

By Ernest Harsch

The white minority regime of Prime Minister Ian Smith has stepped up repressive measures in rural areas, including shoot-on-sight orders against any children who venture outside of their villages at any time.

The regime's aim is to broaden the campaign of terror against the Black population as a whole and to reduce the assistance given by the villagers to the Zimbabwean freedom fighters.

Significantly, these new attacks come at the very moment that Smith is negotiating with three prominent Zimbabwean figures over the arrangements for what has been billed as a gradual end to white supremacy.

The new measures, including harsher curfew regulations and stricter control over the movement of rural Blacks in the eastern border region near Mozambique, were outlined in a government pamphlet dated January 20. Augustine Mabika, one of the sixteen Black members of the Rhodesian Parliament, revealed the existence of the pamphlet during a parliamentary debate February 22.

He said that several thousand pamphlets had been dropped by plane over the Maranke Tribal Trust Land and adjoining

areas south of Umtali. About 80,000 Blacks live in the region, which has been a major center of resistance to the white racist regime in Salisbury.

One of the regulations in the pamphlet stated, "No juveniles (to the age of 16 years) will be allowed out of the kraal [village] at any time, either day or night, or they will be shot."

Other regulations threatened execution by hanging of anyone deemed to have aided the guerrillas; imposed a curfew on adults from nightfall until noon; prohibited residents from going on or near any high ground; barred the use of any vehicles, including bicycles; closed all schools and stores; and even restricted the movement of cattle, goats, and sheep.

The measures are designed to give the Rhodesian armed forces free run of the region during counterinsurgency operations and to provide justification for stepped-up reprisals against Black civilians.

During the past few years, more than 2,500 Black villagers have been killed. While the regime tries to blame many of the deaths on the Zimbabwean guerrillas themselves, Rhodesian troops are widely believed to have conducted a number of the

massacres attributed by Smith to the freedom fighters. In addition, the Salisbury regime has admitted killing hundreds of villagers, describing them either as "terrorist collaborators" or as bystanders caught in crossfire.

Smith's continuing terror campaign in the countryside reaffirms his determination to safeguard the white minority's substantial privileges at the cost of yet more Black lives.

Coming during his negotiations with Abel Muzorewa, Ndabaningi Sithole, and Chief Jeremiah Chirau, the new repressive regulations are also no doubt designed to stress Smith's aim of reaching a "settlement" as favorable to white interests as possible.

He has already wrung significant concessions from the three Zimbabwean participants in the talks. They have reportedly agreed to guarantee compensation for any white property expropriated by a future Black regime and to allow the white minority to hold more than a quarter of the seats in a proposed national assembly for a period of ten years. The effect of the latter is to give the white legislators veto power.

During subsequent negotiations over the form of a "transitional" administration preceding the establishment of a majority Black regime, Smith made his intention of controlling the whole process quite clear. He reportedly proposed that he remain the head of state and that the transitional regime be composed of equal numbers of Black and white officials.

Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chirau, who have to sell any agreement they reach with Smith to their supporters, were reported to have balked at this proposal. They were said to have called instead for Smith's resignation and the formation of a largely Black interim government.

Even if these differences are ironed out and a new regime is actually set up with Black participation, Salisbury could continue to face significant opposition. First of all, the Patriotic Front, which was not included in the talks, has condemned them and has pledged to continue its guerrilla campaign.

Most importantly, however, the Zimbabwean masses, who have waged a struggle for real Black majority rule for decades, cannot be expected to accept for long the imposition of any "settlement" that provides for only limited Black political control while retaining many of the economic and social privileges of the white oppressors.

It is this prospect of continued unrest that has dictated the caution with which the imperialists greeted Smith's negotiations. Although Washington at one point termed the initial agreement announced February 15 a "significant step" toward majority rule, White House officials stressed February 23 that they were adopting a "wait-and-see" attitude. □

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# Statement of the Fourth International

## Women Around World Raise Demand for Equal Rights

[The following statement was issued by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International for International Women's Day, March 8.]

\* \* \*

At a Congress of Socialist Women in Copenhagen in 1910, March 8 was designated as an international day of commemoration of the struggle of women for their liberation. The day itself was chosen in honor of a militant march by women garment workers in New York City in 1908, demanding an end to inhuman working conditions and the right of women to vote. It was on International Women's Day in 1917 that female textile workers in Russia rose up and sparked a strike wave that culminated in the overthrow of the tsar.

After years of ritualistic celebration of International Women's Day, primarily by the Soviet Union and other bureaucratized workers states, this day took on a new dimension beginning in the late 1960's with the new wave of women's liberation struggles that has become an international movement. First involving only small layers of relatively privileged women, the movement has steadily extended its impact into every crevice of society in the advanced capitalist countries, while beginning to find expression in the colonial world as well.

On the occasion of International Women's Day 1978, it is clear that the women's liberation struggle is becoming a more and more important aspect of the class struggle as a whole.

On the economic level, the working masses throughout the capitalist world are faced with having to bear the burden of continuing bouts of economic downturn or stagnation caused by the mechanisms of the profit system. Everywhere, the push is on for the imposition or strengthening of austerity programs designed to make working people work harder, tighten their belts, and do without social services so as to boost profit margins.

Women—along with youth, immigrant workers, and workers of oppressed nationalities—are central targets of the bourgeois offensive. They face higher unemployment, greater ghettoization into lower-paying job categories, and cutbacks in child-care centers and medical facilities connected with control of their reproductive functions (abortion and contraception clinics). Charged with management of the household, they are also the ones who feel

most immediately the squeeze of rising prices and declining real wages. Women are victimized indirectly as well: the burden of the economic squeeze produces frustration and demoralizes some sections of the working class, increasing, among other things, the incidence of rape and beatings of women.

Events in the past year have shown the growing importance of struggles by women as part of the struggle of the whole working class against the austerity attacks. One of the most dramatic examples occurred in Britain, where workers at the Grunwick photo-processing plant—most of them women and Asian immigrants—have waged a year-long struggle for the right to form a union to fight conditions of super-exploitation. The tenacious battle of these workers took center stage in British politics for weeks, with the strikers setting an example for the whole working class in their calls for labor solidarity and mass picket lines, and coming up against the combined onslaught of the police, the courts, the bourgeois press, and the far right—aided and abetted by the trade-union and Labour Party bureaucracy.

In the United States, one of the products of the capitalists' austerity drive has been a broad public debate over the issue of "quotas" or affirmative-action programs aimed at reducing discrimination against women, Blacks and other oppressed minorities, in educational and job opportunities. The debate has crystallized around the "Bakke case," which is now before the U.S. Supreme Court. (Allan Bakke is a white man who was refused admission to the University of California medical school for alleged "reverse discrimination" against him because of special admission quotas for Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Asians.)

In defending the principle of affirmative action against discrimination, the women's movement has joined the Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican movements in helping to educate the whole labor movement that a fight against discrimination inside the working class is a precondition for mobilizing the full, united power of the class against the exploiters.

More generally, women in many countries have begun to demand preferential measures to assure them access to the whole range of jobs and educational opportunities, in order to have the possibility of breaking out of the traditionally "feminine" roles and occupations that have imposed on women the lowest-paying jobs and the double day of work in the home.

In Italy, women have been in the forefront of the struggle for jobs, organizing separately—both inside and outside of the trade unions—to fight for their own special needs. And throughout the advanced capitalist countries, women have been in the forefront of resistance to cutbacks in social spending, whether for child-care centers, medical facilities, or education.

On the broader political level, women's struggles have been responsible for bringing to the fore important social and democratic issues. Foremost in many countries continues to be the struggle for the right of women to control their own bodies through the right to safe, financially accessible contraception and abortion on demand and an end to forced sterilization.

In all countries where the right to abortion was liberalized in the late 1960s or early 1970s (such as France, Britain, and the United States), this right is now being cut back—whether through legal restrictions or cutbacks in abortion facilities—as part of the general ruling-class offensive against the rights and standard of living of the oppressed.

On May 14, 1977, 10,000 people marched through London demanding an end to restrictions on the availability of abortion. In France, the refusal of the government, doctors, and hospitals to implement the Veil law, which allows abortions, with certain restrictions, up to ten weeks, has sparked broader opposition than ever before, involving the two major trade-union federations and figures from the Communist and Socialist parties. An example was given by the February 5 meeting on abortion organized by the coordinating body of women's groups of Paris and supported by the CFDT and other mass organizations. This meeting succeeded in bringing together more than 2,000 people.

In Switzerland, a hard-fought referendum to eliminate restrictions on abortion was only narrowly defeated (929,239 to 994,677) on September 25, after an all-out antiabortion campaign by the Catholic Church and certain leading Protestant figures together with Christian Democratic politicians.

In the battle for the right to abortion, women have been in the front lines in answering and mobilizing against the ultraright. The international network of antiabortion organizations is in all countries linked with racist, anti-immigrant, ultraright, and fascist groups. The efforts of the women's movement in politically answering and mobilizing against these

groups is important to the whole working class.

Over the past year women have also come to the forefront in struggles against certain dictatorships. In the past three months, hundreds of women participated in women's demonstrations and hunger strikes against the military or police-state regimes in Argentina, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, demanding democratic rights and the release of all political prisoners.

In Pakistan, where there is certainly no "women's liberation movement" such as exists in the advanced capitalist countries, 1977 saw the entrance of masses of women into political activity for the first time. According to Islamic tradition, Pakistani women are supposed to stay in the home and not show their faces in the street, much less organize politically. But last spring, during the upheavals that followed the March elections, women spontaneously poured into the streets for the first time in history, protesting the repression and demanding the release of political prisoners.

Women's liberation organizations as such are also spreading to the colonial and semicolonial countries. In Brazil, still locked under a dictatorial regime, several women's liberation groups have arisen, as well as two feminist newspapers and women's centers in a half dozen major cities.

The increasing centrality of the struggle of women has also been reflected in the impact of the women's movement on the mass reformist parties (the Communist and Socialist parties) and in the trade unions. In the early years of the most recent rise of the women's movement, the Communist parties generally tried to oppose or ignore it as alien to working-class women. But the spread of feminist ideas, including among working class women, has forced the CPs to be more cautious in dismissing this movement, and in some countries to adapt to it in words so as to be in a better position to lead women into reformist channels. Thus, we saw the Spanish CP campaigning in the June 1977 elections as "the party of women's liberation." But such shifts of position have the effect of creating opposition to the CP's reformist line among women of the party, as the interests of women are in fact sacrificed on the altar of a class-collaborationist austerity pact with the bourgeoisie.

In Britain the betrayal of women by the governing Labour Party has been particularly blatant. Women have seen the Labour Party government and Labour members of Parliament spearheading the attacks on the right to abortion. In addition, the Labour government has presided over a huge increase in unemployment, which has hit women especially hard, and drastic cuts in social services, the major



Joanna Rossi  
March by supporters of women's right to abortion in Kortrijk, Belgium, in February 1977. Signs read, "Decriminalize abortion"; "Free abortion."

burden of which falls upon women. These attacks, together with the glaringly inadequate nature of the Labour government's legislation on women's rights, has led to a sustained and many-sided fight-back by women.

The widespread interest in socialist ideas in the women's movement around the world, manifested in such events as the recent Socialism and Feminism conference of 1,000 women in Manchester, England, demonstrates the great potential that exists to win radicalizing feminists to socialism.

The role of revolutionary socialists in this process is vitally important. In contrast to all the reformist currents in the working-class movement on the one hand, and to the proponents in the women's movement of the struggle of sex against sex on the other, the Fourth International offers a class-struggle strategy for building a mass movement centered on the most burning needs of women of the working class and other oppressed layers.

Women are making their needs and demands felt inside the trade unions as well. In Spain, women workers have been a dynamic part of the upsurge of unionization in the post-Franco era, demanding the right to meet separately to discuss their special concerns and to press most effectively that these needs be fought for by the union. In France, the leaderships of both

major union federations, the CGT and CFDT, have openly discussed and legitimized over the past year the right of women unionists to form internal women's caucuses.

In Spain, Italy, France, and elsewhere, women have pressed for the unions to take up broader social issues, such as the need for child-care centers, for a shorter work-week and jobs for all, and the right to adequate maternity-paternity leaves.

Trade-union women's formations have also been able to pose clearly the objective need for unification of the trade-union federations in Western Europe, which are divided along political party lines. In both Italy and Spain there have been instances of women forming committees that cut across trade-union lines in order to strengthen the struggle of the women. This points the way to the need for the whole working class to overcome the sectarian divisions between trade unions maintained by the policies of the reformist parties.

Another salient feature of the women's movement that should be pointed to on this year's International Women's Day is the internationalism of this movement. From the very beginning, the new feminist movement was internationalist. The number of international conferences and rallies, as well as the rapid international diffusion and assimilation of the literature of the movement reflected the consciousness of women that their struggle was international, extending across national boundaries as well as social systems.

The women's movement is an example in this sense to the rest of the working class. Over the past year especially, we have seen growing pressure toward protectionism, expulsion of immigrant workers, and attempts by the ruling classes to blame the effects of the economic crisis on the workers of other countries. In its internationalist dimension, which will be expressed in thousands of rallies and marches on International Women's Day this year, the women's movement points the way for the workers movement as a whole on this key principle, which is necessary for an effective struggle against the exploiters.

On International Women's Day 1978, these are some of the themes and demands that stand out as most pressing:

- For defense and extension of the right to contraception and abortion on demand, paid for through public health services or medical assistance programs.
- An end to cutbacks in social services such as child-care centers and women's medical facilities.
- The right of women to jobs. No discriminatory firings and layoffs of women.
- Equal rights for women. Down with all discriminatory laws.
- Solidarity of the whole working class movement with the struggle of women! □

## Women Workers and Unemployment

By Jacqueline Heinen

*"Forty-five hours at the factory, plus ten hours traveling time (because work is fifteen kilometers away from home). Leave the house at 6:30 in the morning; work until 12:15. Work again from 1:00 to 6:00 in the evening—that makes nine hours. Plus two hours of travel, but you don't get paid for anything except the nine hours. At 6:00, when I get home, I have to begin the housework. All this adds up to sixteen hours a day, or ninety-six hours a week at the minimum. And I've been living this life for thirteen years now. . . ."*

—An immigrant worker in Switzerland who has a child.

\* \* \*

Low wages, unending workdays, repetitive and alienating unskilled labor—the workers movement hardly talked about these conditions ten or twenty years ago. It began to talk about them much more often after women began to radicalize and organize themselves.

There was still more reluctance to talk about the double workday, brutalizing household chores, and the continual worry and guilt about the children, because of the feeling that these were a woman's natural condition. We had even forgotten that as early as the turn of the century female workers were involved in struggles that called into question not only their superexploitation but also the "second workday" that began every evening.

Today more than ever before, in the context of the economic crisis, the words "superexploitation" and "special oppression" are appropriate. We will try in this article to show concretely what they mean for the majority of female workers, and to show how the statistics on female employment reveal a *general* tendency in all the advanced capitalist countries.

It is true that "last hired, first fired, doubly oppressed," is a slogan, a formula. But it is a slogan based on cruel reality.

### Starvation Wages

Often two to three times more numerous than they were thirty years ago, women represent between 35% and 38% of the work force in most European countries. In Sweden and the United States, it is 40%. In Spain and Portugal, where the number of women in the work force is much lower (28% and 25% respectively), the percentage is rising.

Italy is an exception with a constant decline in female employment since World

War II (from 25% to 17% of the work force). This can be explained by a series of factors. These include the fact that many female agricultural workers did not find wage employment when the big migration to the cities occurred following the last war, the dominant ideology that woman's place was in the home, plus an acute economic crisis and structural unemployment.

But in general, women have entered industry and service jobs in massive numbers, in the process reinforcing the division that traditionally existed between "male" and "female" jobs.

It is true that in many of the advanced capitalist countries there are laws "guaranteeing" women equal pay for equal work, and the bosses solemnly claim to abide by Convention 100 of the International Labor Organization—an agreement signed more than twenty-five years ago! The problem is, simply, that women do *not* get the same type of work that men do. And the bourgeoisie knows this perfectly well, since it moves heaven and earth to keep women in "typically female" jobs.

In France, 95.6% of the assembly-line workers in the garment trade are women! How can you explain the growing gap between male and female wages in countries like the United States, at a time when the rate of female employment is increasing, except by the predominance of women in the worst-paid occupations? Full-time female workers in the U.S. now earn 57% what men earn, compared to 64% in 1974.

In addition, there has been a substantial increase in part-time work in most of the advanced capitalist countries during recent years. More than a third of the employed women in most industrialized countries are part-time workers. Their employment is designed to produce a "second income"—not real economic independence—and fits in very well with the traditional idea of women's role. In Japan almost 50% of female workers "chose" this type of employment in 1973.

### A Real Choice?

In all the countries under consideration, women represent between 70% and 90% of the work force in textiles, garments, shoes, and tobacco—in other words the industries with the worst working conditions, where a lack of job security leads to reliance on overtime. They are there not because they chose this type of employment but because it was the only thing they could find.

In certain countries where industrialization came later, as in Portugal or Spain, almost a quarter of the employed women still work as domestic servants. They certainly did not choose a job that puts them completely at the service of their masters, with no limit to the number of hours a day or days a week they work, with no contract, at the mercy of their employer's whim.

As for all those who do take-home work in the underdeveloped regions of southern Italy or northern Portugal—who are not even counted, which makes the statistics on female labor incomplete—one cannot say that they have any choice. Actually they are doing exactly the same work they would do in a factory, *but for one-half or one-third the money*. They do not even know who their boss is because they never see anyone but the middleman who brings them the pieces of cloth or leather they have to assemble.

How can you calculate the length of the workday when it is totally integrated into their domestic work? And what about looking after the children? The bosses on the other hand can easily calculate their profits: no Social Security to pay, no risk of strikes with each worker isolated in her own home, and pay that can only be described as starvation wages.

When one considers that the average salary of a female worker in manufacturing rarely permits her to be economically independent in most of the industrial countries, one can imagine the profits squeezed from the labor of those who work at home. In Italy, this is the only type of work that has increased in recent years. (The official estimate is 24,000 persons, but the trade unions estimate that from two to six million persons are employed this way, almost all of them women.)

Women from the same underdeveloped regions can be found working at the worst-paid jobs and working in certain capitalist countries where economic development is based in large measure on the superexploitation of female immigrant workers.

I arrived in a country where I did not know the language. Two days after my arrival, I began to work at a watch factory. After two months, someone told me that I had to work on a piecework basis: My quota was 3,000 pieces a day. In order to produce 3,000 pieces, I had to work at a frantic pace. I became more and more a machine and was less and less considered a human being. . . .

Then I changed jobs. I went into electronics, where I worked with men. My salary was six francs less than that of the men—that is, half theirs—but I was expected to do the same work. I stayed at that factory for three years. When I asked for a better salary, they told me *no* because I was a woman and therefore could not earn as much as a man.

In 1968 I left that job because they would not pay me more. I went back to the watch factory, where they again put me on piecework. But you know how capitalist exploitation is: Now they demanded we produce 7,000 pieces a day—under

the same conditions as in 1962. If you had to work without stopping to make 3,000 pieces in 1962, making 7,000 meant you could not even go to the bathroom!

All women workers are not as conscious as that immigrant worker of the superexploitation they suffer. However, more and more women are beginning to revolt against working conditions that cause all sorts of illnesses and the premature aging of those who work like animals on an assembly line. What the Italians call "white abortion" (that is, miscarriages caused by the hellish pace or by workplace pollution) is today at the center of several trade-union struggles in Italy.

When females are better educated than ever before, to the point where now in many countries there are more girls than boys in secondary school, why should they still be trapped in the worst paying jobs doing the most alienating work?

### An Old Story

While the democratization of education has meant a noticeable increase in the number of years of schooling girls receive, nevertheless the old divisions in professional training have not disappeared. In France, there are more females than males in the last years of compulsory school, but only 22% of apprentices are women. This means they do not get the professional training or certification that would enable them to find, if not job security, at least skilled work. So it is not surprising that the majority of them have to work in mass production jobs that do not require any apprenticeship.

In the technical high schools, the number of females is proportionally higher than in the apprenticeship programs, but the tracking system works in a traditional way. If a third of the students are female, as in France, it is because 80% of them have chosen the program for secretarial and typing jobs.

As for the university, although the percentage of female students is up to 40% in some countries, such as the United States and France, it is only 25% in others like Switzerland and Germany. And the same kind of tracking occurs at the university: Most of the female students opt for the faculties of letters and social sciences, leaving to their male counterparts the hard sciences that prepare them for the more prestigious and lucrative professions. And even where there are as many women as men in medical school, as is the case in some American universities, we find that they tend to go into the typically "female" specializations of pediatrics and gynecology and only represent a minuscule percentage of the researchers.

These various statistics are not all equally important. Those above, for example, concern only a privileged minority of women. But they do show that the same factors govern the "choices" made by



New York Times

Production line in Nikon camera factory near Tokyo.

females when they reach the point of going on to apprenticeships or graduate school. This "choice" is determined by the image they have of themselves and by the way society and everyone around them looks at women, which only perpetuates the discrimination that has warped their education from childhood on.

And even when they question this image, even when they do it because they have come into contact with the women's liberation movement, even when they choose a "male profession," they run into a series of very concrete obstacles limiting their freedom of action and their ability to achieve independence. This is because they are women, and society expects them to fulfill a certain number of specific tasks; it is because one of the basic characteristics of the capitalist system is to count on the institution of the family to assume responsibility without cost for part of the reproduction of the work force.

### For Child Care and Laundry Facilities

At the present time in most of the advanced capitalist countries 50% to 60% of employed women are married, and 40% to 50% have children. This means that the question of *services* is vital if they are to be relieved of at least part of the domestic work which men think is women's responsibility.

But today—and it is not the least important contradiction of the family—the number of child-care centers, fast-food outlets, and laundromats is totally ridicu-

lous in comparison to the needs in every advanced country. Whether you are talking about 6 or 15 or 30 places for each 100 children of working mothers in Canada, Finland, and Belgium respectively, it is obvious that many working mothers have no choice but to find individual solutions: leaving their children with a relative or foster parents, going through all sorts of acrobatics in terms of the hours they work, or stretching their budget to pay for private child care.

Even when a woman is lucky enough to find a place for her child in the public child-care centers, her worries are not over. Often she has to use a center which is very far from her home, she has problems balancing her budget at the end of the month, and she worries all the time she is at work because of the conditions that prevail in many of these centers (overcrowding of children, workers who are not trained, a lack of medical supervision in the private nurseries especially, etc.). Sometimes there are laundromats, but they are expensive; and the fast food places, if they are cheap, usually have poor-quality food.

And while men may accept the idea of "helping" women now and then, you cannot say at the present time that any great number really take responsibility for their share of domestic chores.

This is the general situation that countless women point to when they have had enough, when they have begun to struggle to change things—whether or not they have a clear understanding of the neces-

sity of overturning the system in its entirety so as to create the material bases for the socialization of the thousand and one domestic tasks that stand in the way of the liberation of women.

What is important to us here is to get a better understanding of how the present economic crisis tends to drive women back into their homes and lock them more and more into their domestic chores, while at the same time sharpening certain contradictions of the system.

On one hand, the increase in the absolute number of employed women has been accompanied by a campaign of the bosses to make women assume an even larger responsibility for household chores, some of which had previously been relegated to institutions other than the family.

On the other, the increase in female unemployment comes in a period of inflation in which the wife's paycheck often represents part of the absolute minimum amount necessary for the family to exist; it is no longer the case, as it perhaps was at certain times in previous economic cycles, that the wages women bring home go for "extras" (that is, a certain number of consumer durables, such as refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, automobiles, and so forth, that the working family could not otherwise afford).

#### **Last Hired, First Fired**

All the statistics are there: the rise in unemployment, which is now 8.3% in a country like Canada (more than 10% in Québec), with women and youth accounting for most of the increase. In France, 82% of job seekers under twenty-five years of age who have been unemployed for a long time are females.

In Germany, the unemployment curve is indicative of the tendency in most other countries in terms of the ratios of the increases. From 1974 to 1976, while the number of unemployed men increased by more than 50% (going from 2.2% to 3.4%), that of females almost doubled (from 3.1% to 5.9%).

And this tendency has if anything increased in all the advanced countries over the last few years. What are the basic reasons for these "preferential" firings of women? There are objective reasons tied to the crisis of capitalism, but there are also subjective reasons for the systematic discrimination women suffer everywhere we look.

First of all there is a restructuring of the process of production as soon as the crisis begins to affect the most backward sectors, the industries that are the least developed technologically, those that are not competitive. Whether the capitalists are forced to close their doors, or try to improve their returns by replacing a part of the work force with machines, the result is the same for the male and female workers concerned: layoffs and unemployment. And it

happens that these sectors are precisely and above all those that employ a majority of women: textiles, the garment trade, footwear, tobacco, watchmaking, etc.

A typical case is the Farah pants factory in Belgium, an American multinational company that without any warning laid off the 250 women who worked there, of which a substantial percentage were immigrants. The same kind of brutal layoffs are occurring at thousands of little factories of this type. Whether these factories are independent operations or subsidiaries of larger corporations, the last thing the management is worried about is the fate of the male and female workers who lose their jobs.

The disappearance of 1,500 textile jobs within a few months in a Portuguese city like Porto, and the prediction of 12,000 more layoffs in the rest of the country in coming months explains the rise in cottage industries, since this is the only alternative for the women who have lost their jobs. This is the case in the north of Portugal as well as in other parts of Europe where that type of production has roots and where it is already prevalent (Spain, Italy, and even Britain in the immigrant ghettos of the cities).

Moreover, the cutbacks in state expenditures hit hardest, as everybody knows, in the social sectors that are not profitable from the capitalist point of view, trying not to affect or touch except as a last resort funding that helps the private sector or directly serves its profits (certain improvements in the urban infrastructure, for example).

So when the distinguished members of parliament start looking for a place to cut back, they begin with child-care centers, hospitals, schools, homes for the elderly, and other social institutions. The £8 billion that the British Labour government took out of the public sector in 1976—besides being a direct attack on the working population, which female workers bore the brunt of—condemned thousands of state employees, especially female employees, to unemployment. A similar measure was taken a few months later by the Italian government, which decided to end all loans to local governments, causing hundreds of additional layoffs in a sector employing mostly women.

The closing of child-care centers, school-room classes, and homes for the elderly means that many women have to quit work to take care of the children and older relatives who are no longer cared for by social institutions.

These measures affect not only the countries that have been hit hardest by the economic crisis. They represent a general pattern found not only in Britain but also in Canada, or in Québec, where hospital units have been systematically shut down (the gynecology services before anything else, because they are considered "secondary"). One thing is obvious from looking

at the budgets of *all* the capitalist countries: Whatever the initial target of major cuts (child-care centers, hospitals, schools), it is always primarily in an area where women make up most of the victims, either as workers or as users of the services.

#### **Their Place? In the Home!**

The capitalists do not bother to come up with very complicated reasons to "justify" this discrimination: Women are themselves responsible because they have a "natural" place, which is that of stay-at-home wife and mother. It doesn't upset the bosses at all when a woman cannot put her children in a child-care center, whether it is because there is no center nearby, or because there is no place available, or because she is unemployed and cannot afford to pay anymore; it is just one of the many ways they try to discourage women from working "when the 'heads of families' themselves cannot even find work!"

This was seen recently at the Roche factory in Madrid, where the management decided to lay off fifty persons. In line with Article 45 of the labor law adopted the previous year, saying workers had to be laid off in reverse order of their seniority except in "exceptional circumstances," the management proposed a list to the minister of labor. But the minister modified the list by systematically replacing the proposed names with those of fifty women. Being a woman is an "exceptional circumstance" all right, when it comes to layoffs.

In Switzerland, certain canton governments decided not to renew the contracts of some teachers because they were married and had children. In the United States, in Minnesota, two women lost their jobs in a mine simply because they were women and "suspected" of being lesbians. (A mine, you understand, is not the proper place for a woman . . .)

In some instances it is not so much a question of layoffs but of being refused employment in the first place.

An example is the IBM plant at Porto, where management "does not encourage women to apply for work as programmers." (It does accept plenty of women as key-punch operators, which is repetitive and stultifying work.) And when the capitalists do not use such explicit measures as those cited here (like the rule in France forbidding an unemployed woman to place her child in a child-care center), then they find other methods of dissuasion, less overt, but effective all the same.

The Giscard government, for example, recently offered women two-year unpaid leaves to take care of their children and combined this with a demagogic campaign to persuade women to "temporarily" give up their careers to devote themselves to taking care of their children.

The same tendency exists in most European countries. For the female immigrant,



this means additional discrimination. It can be shown that during the economic recession of 1974 in Switzerland, reduction of the foreign work force enabled the Swiss capitalists to hide the real rate of unemployment—which reached 21% for women compared with 6% for men.

These women workers, who in their great majority went back to their own countries—that is to say, to regions already plagued with unemployment—simply returned to their homes, according to the capitalists, and did not receive any kind of unemployment benefits. Women workers who do qualify for unemployment benefits always get less than men, because of the place they occupy in the production process, the lower salaries they receive, and the less stable jobs that are “reserved” for them—all of which cut into the benefits to which they are entitled.

There is nothing surprising, therefore, about the resurgence of part-time work mentioned above. Far from arising solely or primarily from women’s desire to find work that leaves them “leisure” time to

take care of their children and housework, the increase in part-time employment stems from women’s desperate need to find some kind of work, even if it is badly paid, even if it is not interesting, even if there is no job security.

They have to work, either because their families need two paychecks just to keep body and soul together, or simply because they are alone and must work to survive. One sign of this desperate need is the increase in prostitution in recent years, in particular in the big urban centers. When women are desperate and cannot sell their labor power, some reach the point of selling their bodies.

#### **Their Role? To Manage Somehow!**

In most countries, these types of discrimination against employed women and against women listed as unemployed occur in the context of galloping inflation. Price rises of 40% for margarine, 37% for vegetables, 36% for coffee and tea, 24% for milk, cheese, and eggs . . . These statistics are from the list published by the British

authorities in January 1977 concerning price increases in 1976.

Besides meaning a reduction in the standard of living of every member of an underprivileged family, the price increases mean added work for a housewife. Where she used to be able to make meals out of prepared food, now she has to spend long hours looking for the cheapest meats and vegetables—when she can buy them—and then work hard to prepare these things so that her husband and children can eat them. The laundry that she used to do at an automatic laundromat—when she could find one—she now does herself to save a little money for other necessities. Economizing on money, but not on time . . . And the same thing when it comes to making clothes.

This picture—which some might be tempted to describe as overly pessimistic—applies above all to the female workers most affected by the economic crisis.

But it is what the bourgeoisie has in store, in terms of the position of women, for the great majority of female workers and working-class housewives. □

## **Statement by the Socialist Workers Party**

# **For Solidarity With the American Coal Miners Strike!**

[The following statement was issued February 22 by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party. We have taken the text from the March 3 issue of the *Militant*, a revolutionary-socialist newsweekly published in New York.]

\* \* \*

The courageous strike by 160,000 coal miners has become the biggest test of strength in three decades between the organized working class and the giant corporations that rule this country.

By threatening electricity cutbacks, blackouts, school closings, and mass lock-outs of factory workers, the corporations that provoked the strike have escalated the confrontation from the coalfields into a national social crisis.

By threatening the miners with a Taft-Hartley injunction, compulsory arbitration, and government seizure of the mines, the Carter administration has made the strike the foremost political issue in the country.

The aim of the coal bosses and their political agents is to divide working people and turn public sentiment against the miners, blaming them for hardships caused by alleged power shortages.

Last winter the energy corporations cut back power and cried “crisis” to force up natural gas prices. The human suffering

caused by this blackmail did not concern them. This winter, under cover of a new “energy crisis,” the same profit-hungry corporations hope to break the coal strike and crush the spirit of the militant miners.

The attack on the United Mine Workers is an attack on the entire labor movement. It requires a united response.

*The broadest possible solidarity with the miners—from resolutions and financial aid to mass rallies and demonstrations—is needed to block this union-busting assault.*

Especially urgent is the need to counter the divisive lies of the energy corporations and explain that they, not the miners, are responsible for power cutbacks and layoffs.

The strike was provoked by the mine-owners in an open bid to “tame” the miners. It represents a calculated broadening of a long-term antilabor offensive.

Coal production today is dominated by some of the most powerful sectors of finance capital, including the oil and steel monopolies. Their drive against the miners is a probe to see if the capitalists can cripple or break a major industrial union.

The coal bosses’ plans had from the start the full backing and participation of the capitalist government. A prime goal of Carter’s energy program was to boost coal production and profits without regard for safety—and to break the miners’ resistance.

This assault is an extension of the attacks in recent years on public employees from New York to San Francisco, cutbacks in social services, the racist campaign against busing and affirmative action, and the attempts to roll back women’s rights. The source of this offensive is the world economic crisis of capitalism and the determination of the bosses to increase their profits at workers’ expense.

A defeat for the coal miners would embolden the government-employer offensive on every front and jeopardize the rights and living standards of all working people.

The contract terms demanded by the coal operators are a preview and a warning of what the bosses have in store for other unions. They would have slashed medical benefits, eliminated cost-of-living protection, stripped union safety committees of their power, and allowed the companies to institute speedup “incentive pay” schemes and seven-day workweeks.

Worst of all, they would have provided harsh penalties—fines, suspension, and firing—for miners who strike to defend their rights.

The coal bosses—intoxicated by their own arrogant boasts about the “weakness” and “chaos” in the union underestimated the fighting spirit of the miners.

The acceptance by UMWA President Arnold Miller of the industry’s contract

terms touched off an explosion of rank-and-file anger—including meetings of thousands of miners, demonstrations, and petitions demanding Miller's recall.

Mass strike meetings, discussing and rejecting the contract offer and defying Carter's threats, have strengthened the unity and determination of the miners.

The ability of the miners to stand up to the Carter administration's strikebreaking sets an inspiring example for all unionists, Blacks, Latinos, women, students—for everyone who wants to fight for justice and social progress.

With few exceptions in recent years, workers and their organizations have suffered setback after setback—prevented from fighting back by the subservience of their leaders to the Democratic Party.

But by standing up for their rights, by rejecting the slave-labor contract, by proclaiming again that "you can't mine coal with bayonets," the ranks of the UMWA have not only exposed the Democratic administration as antilabor to the core—they have given a glimpse of the power of the working class against a government that serves only a small, parasitic minority.

After all the bluster, threats, "deadlines," and "options," it has become glaringly evident that Carter cannot force the miners to go into the pits and dig coal.

That is exactly why the administration is relying on a *political* offensive to divide the workers. And that is why a political fight for working-class unity in defense of the miners against the government is so crucial today. At the very center of this class confrontation is the fight for union democracy.

The bosses insist that the UMWA leadership police the miners, discipline militants, stop strikes, guarantee stability, and take responsibility for "industry growth" through speedup and incentive pay.

In short, they are determined to force the UMWA into the mold of class-collaborationist, bureaucratic "business unionism." But nowadays the employers have precious few concessions for such union leaderships, only demands to make on them.

The bosses' plans require rolling back the democratic gains miners have won since the victory of the Miners for Democracy slate in the 1972 union elections—gains such as the right to read, discuss, and vote on contracts, which has been a powerful weapon of the union ranks in the current strike.

The upsurge in the coalfields that led to Miners for Democracy was one of the first reflections inside the unions of the youth radicalization of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since that time, the changes in the union have accelerated.

Tens of thousands of UMWA members are in their twenties or early thirties. Many are Vietnam veterans. They are part of a generation whose attitudes and expectations have been shaped by such big political developments as the antiwar demonstrations and the rise of the Black and women's movements.

The miners want *more* rights, not fewer. They believe they have a right to safer working conditions, free health care, adequate pensions, shorter hours, compensation for black lung and an end to the conditions that cause it.

They want to defend and extend rank-and-file control over the union leadership and union policies—the right to elect and recall officers, vote on contracts, determine negotiating demands, and have bargaining conducted out in the open, not behind closed doors.

And miners have learned through bitter experience that they must have the *right to strike* to defend their interests against day-to-day infringement by the employers.

Miners are not looking for outside "experts," lawyers, or bureaucrats to run their affairs. The conviction is growing that the conduct of the strike and the fate of the union are up to them, the members, deciding and acting together.

The power the miners have shown through united strike action stands in glaring contradiction to the apparent political weakness of the labor movement.

Labor's alleged "friends" in the Democratic and Republican parties have spared no effort to break the strike. Not one of the "options" discussed by Carter, Congress, or state officials is that the mineowners come to terms with the union's demands. All the discussion of the Democrats and Republicans is over how best to force the miners back to work on company terms.

The subservience of the top union officialdom to the capitalist Democratic Party is the fundamental reason for their shameful failure to mobilize labor's strength in defense of the miners.

Despite widespread sympathy for the miners in the union ranks and among students and working people generally—shown by local union resolutions and support meetings—the union tops have scarcely lifted a finger to oppose the anti-UMWA onslaught.

The low point of this treachery was George Meany's February 20 statement that "after all, Taft-Hartley is part of the law of the land. . . . If the president feels it's his only alternative, then we won't criticize him"—an open invitation to federal strikebreaking from the head of the AFL-CIO. But the so-called progressive labor leaders such as Douglas Fraser of the United Auto Workers have done no more than Meany to aid the miners.

All these bureaucrats would sooner see the UMWA destroyed than embark on a political confrontation with the Democratic Party. And they are sick with fear that the fight for union democracy will be taken up by the ranks of their own unions.

Yet the coal strike also underlines how urgently the workers *need* their own political representatives, who will fight on the level of government for labor's interests.

This is true not only because the government has taken over the role of chief strikebreaker. It is also because the broad social demands of the miners cannot be resolved solely through collective bargaining and strike action.

Enforcement of job safety . . . free, universal health care that does not depend on the profits or good will of the companies . . . protection of the environment from strip-mining and pollution . . . a shorter workweek to create jobs—these demands are not limited to the UMWA or even to the organized union movement. They are class demands, requiring political action.

The power of the miners comes from independent working-class action—the opposite of reliance on capitalist politicians, arbitrators, and government boards. The logical and necessary extension of their struggle is the formation of a labor party, which would fight to replace the present government of a rich minority with a democratic government of the workers.

The confrontation between the miners and the capitalist rulers poses both a challenge and an opportunity for revolutionary socialists, who strive to be the most consistent defenders of the interests of the entire working class. The top priorities of the Socialist Workers Party today must be:

- To expose the lies and divisive tactics of the energy corporations,
- To help mobilize the broadest possible support for the miners, and
- To draw the lessons of this battle for all working people.

Central to this effort is a nationwide campaign to get the *Militant*—which tells the miners' side of the story—into the hands of unionists, Black and Latino activists, fighters for women's rights, students, and working people everywhere.

Socialist Workers Party candidates from coast to coast will speak out in defense of the miners, explaining the antiunion plot of the energy profiteers.

Socialist activists in the unions and on the campuses are helping to organize broadly sponsored strike support meetings, collect money and other material aid for the miners, and rally visible opposition to government strikebreaking.

The results of the historic confrontation in coal today will affect the course of workers' struggles for years to come.

All out to defend the miners!

## Hawkers of Popular Frontism in India

By Sharad Jhaveri

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI[M] or CPM) emerged as the major Stalinist tendency in the Indian working-class movement after the March 1977 general elections. It overtook the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India (CPI), since the latter was completely discredited as a result of its abject surrender to and identification with Indira Gandhi and her state of emergency.

The CPI(M) has led Left Front ministries—in fact, popular-front regimes—to power in West Bengal and Tripura with overwhelming electoral majorities. It now seems to be in a good position to carry out its class-collaborationist policies, which involve the subordination of independent proletarian politics to the current needs of the Indian bourgeoisie.

It is therefore essential for revolutionary Marxists to analyze the CPI(M)'s policies of class collaboration and warn the masses of the dangers. These are no less pernicious than those that ensued from the CPI's class collaboration with Gandhi and her regime.

On the fundamental questions of the Indian revolution, there is nothing to distinguish between the CPI and CPI(M). Both are Stalinist and hence counterrevolutionary in their programmes. Their leaderships are petty bourgeois. Both act as collaborators of the Indian bourgeoisie, as well as agents of the bureaucracies ruling in the Soviet Union, China, and other workers states.

Both the CPI and the CPI(M) relegate the socialist revolution in India to some distant future, thereby subscribing to the false two-stage theory of revolution in India. Both, therefore, believe that the tasks of a socialist revolution, such as the proletariat's coming to power and socializing the basic means of production, should not be posed now. They view India as still travelling through a bourgeois-democratic phase of its revolution. Both see the Indian revolution and developments in India in isolation from their global context.

Both stress the need for subordination of independent proletarian politics to the needs of the Indian bourgeoisie, which, in their schematic view, inherits leadership by the fact of its being bourgeois in a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Both plead that the Indian working class must therefore support this or that wing, this or that party, of the Indian bourgeoisie.

Both think that socialism has completely triumphed in the workers states.

Both remain silent about the lack of workers democracy in those states. Both reject the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in backward countries. And both reject a genuine concept of proletarian internationalism.

### 'People's Democracy'

The differences between the two Stalinist tendencies centre on the character of the future government they are striving for. For the CPI, it should be a "national democracy," while for the CPI(M) it is to be a "people's democracy." The difference is over who will dominate the coalition or governmental bloc. But both will be multi-class blocs.

In the CPI(M)'s "people's democracy," four classes will be involved. It is a "coalition of genuine anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces, headed by the working class."<sup>1</sup> This coalition—to be led by the working class—includes the national bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the peasantry. The coalition will be pitted against the bourgeois-landlord class headed by the big bourgeoisie that rules India. It is assumed that this bloc will be antifeudal and anti-imperialist by its nature. It is further thought that it is possible to hold it together against its presumed common class enemies—imperialism, feudalism, and the big bourgeoisie.

But the CPI(M) does not explain the obvious class contradictions within "people's democracy." Are these reconcilable or otherwise? Are these contradictions "antagonistic" or "non-antagonistic"? For example, workers and the national bourgeoisie are locked in antagonistic and fundamentally contradictory positions in the social process of capitalist production. But the national bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie are not. Apart from that, what is the class criterion used by the CPI(M) for drawing a dividing line between the so-called national and big bourgeoisies? Moreover, is the entire peasantry antifeudal?

And is it not naïve to assume that the national bourgeoisie will allow its mortal class enemy, the proletariat, to wield hegemony in this bloc, precisely to change bourgeois property relations into socialist ones, even at some future stage? Has the history of the twentieth century ever shown such a governmental bloc where the bourgeoisie or the so-called national bour-

geoisie has willingly placed itself under the leadership of the working class?

To raise these questions—and there are still others—is to answer them. The concepts of both "national democracy" and "people's democracy" are devoid of class content. The words "national," "people," and "democracy" are emasculated, non-class or supra-class terms. As used by the Stalinists, they involve subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie—that is, class collaboration, a long-term political alliance, or a bloc with capitalist parties or groups, whether under the guise of "unity of left and patriotic forces" or "unity of left and democratic forces."

We have seen that these concepts, and the policies of class collaboration based on them, have led the Indian working-class movement into a blind alley.

The pro-Moscow CPI unconditionally supported Gandhi and her emergency, suffered a rout in the March 1977 elections, and now half-heartedly admits some "mistakes," without questioning the concept of "national democracy" itself.

The CPI(M), for opportunistic reasons, had adopted a critical stance towards Gandhi and her regime. It has now staked its fortunes on the Janata Party and has come to occupy a position similar to that of the CPI vis-à-vis Gandhi.

### The CPI(M) in the General Elections

The basic political postulates of the CPI(M) characterized both its approach to Gandhi's call for general elections and its election manifesto.

A resolution of the Central Committee of the CPI(M) said that the call for general elections, coming as it did after the one-year extension of the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) in November 1976, was neither fair nor honest. In view of the institutionalization of the emergency powers through the enactment of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act and other repressive laws, the CPI(M) thought that Gandhi's ruling Congress Party and her regime were "intent upon imparting legitimacy to this repressive rule of theirs through securing an electoral verdict in their favor in this snap election and thus parade before the world a democratic facade."<sup>2</sup>

But considering the elections as a challenge, the CPI(M) decided to run in them and issued a call for unity of "left and democratic" forces and parties. As usual, the CPI(M) failed to define those "democratic" or "progressive" parties. And it later allied itself with the Janata Party.

But the CPI(M) made no deeper class analysis of why the emergency was imposed or why Gandhi was opting for the elections at that particular moment.

According to its resolution, the sole

1. "The Programme of the CPI(M)," p. 34.

2. *People's Democracy*, February 6, 1977.

concern of the CPI(M) was to prevent the division of opposition parties' votes so as to inflict a massive defeat on Gandhi's Congress Party. This concern led the CPI(M) to gloss over class distinctions. It gave up the class criteria for participating in bourgeois elections as outlined by the Second World Congress of the Third International during Lenin's time.<sup>3</sup> And despite its reproaches of the CPI's crass opportunism, it indulged in gross opportunism in matters of electoral tactics itself. Its attitude to the newly formed Janata Party was a glaring example.

In the CPI(M)'s analysis, the Janata Party could not offer a viable alternative to the Congress. The Central Committee resolution said, "It represents an extreme Rightist point of view, *essentially* representing the same vested interests which the Ruling Congress party represents" (emphasis in original). Therefore, the CPI(M) could neither "conceive of any political united front with the Janata Party nor of any electoral front with it with a common programme."<sup>4</sup>

However, since the Janata Party openly expressed itself in favor of ending the emergency rule, annulling the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, restoring the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution, halting the drive towards a one-party dictatorship of the Congress, and so on, the CPI(M) took a favorable view of it.

Guided by its sole concern to prevent splitting of opposition votes, it declared itself "desirous of avoiding mutual contests with the Janata Party." The CPI(M) therefore sought "seat adjustments with all opposition parties and groups which are ready to fight the emergency and inflict a heavy defeat on the Ruling Congress Party and its candidates."<sup>5</sup>

The CPI(M) did not seem to realize that the statements by the Janata Party about democracy and the state of emergency could not be taken at face value. Being a rightist combination designed to save Indian capitalism, it will also be ruthless and perhaps even more authoritarian than the Congress Party.

In any case, a revolutionary Marxist approach would have analysed the emergency and its aftermath in class terms, in terms of the interests of the bourgeoisie that they fulfilled and not merely in subjective terms of Gandhi's proclivity to become a dictator. This is precisely where the CPI(M)'s election manifesto defaulted. Hence its analysis of the antidemocratic

measures and effects of the emergency and its aftermath is descriptive, not analytical.

The manifesto did not make any attempt to show the class limitations of bourgeois democracy in a backward country like India. It did not stress the long-term global trend of capitalist society to throw overboard its own bourgeois-democratic norms and pretensions when they no longer serve the needs of the bourgeoisie. Therefore the election manifesto conveyed a false impression that the throttling of bourgeois democracy in India by Gandhi was only her and her son's handiwork.

Subsequently, the CPI(M) could not exploit the findings of the Shah Commission investigation of Gandhi's emergency to expose the corrupt nature of the entire bourgeois state apparatus and administration in India, to call into question the credibility of the governmental structure, or to stress the vulnerability of the state apparatus that has been kept intact by the Janata regime to such corrupt manipulations.

Such an approach hardly distinguished it from the Janata Party's attitude on this question.

Further, its position on the emergency prevented it from raising the whole issue of democracy to the higher level of demands going beyond mere bourgeois democracy. It therefore did not pose the perspective of socialist democracy as the higher form of democracy containing and extending all that is best in bourgeois democracy.

The election manifesto of the CPI(M) rightly demanded withdrawal of the emergency, release of all political prisoners, repeal of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, and other repressive laws like the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. But it did not call for the convening of a constituent assembly, abolition of private property in the means of production, or legalization of the factory committees that appeared during the last days of the emergency independently of the trade unions. Worst of all, it did not call for the repeal of the emergency powers included in the constitution.

In keeping with its policy of collaborating with the "non-monopolistic" stratum of the Indian bourgeoisie, the CPI(M) demanded nationalization of only the monopolies, while pleading for adequate financial and other assistance to small and medium industries.

In consonance with its four-class-bloc theory, in which the agrarian question involves struggles against feudalism and an alliance with rich peasants, the CPI(M) demanded abolition of landlordism by taking over their land. Here it overlooked the fact that landlordism as traditionally understood in its feudal connotations disappeared after the Congress regime's agrarian reforms.

The entire election manifesto did not try to place the elections in their proper perspective. It did not try to point out that

elections will neither solve the crisis of the Indian bourgeoisie nor the problems of the masses stemming from the crisis and that what was urgently needed was a socialist revolution in India under the leadership of the Indian working class.

### Support for the Janata Party

A very interesting exchange of views between the CPI and CPI(M) took place after the March 1977 general elections concerning the question of which bourgeois formation the working class should give political support to. It makes instructive reading on the various methods of class collaboration.

At that time, the CPI sought to justify its support of Gandhi and the Congress and described the Janata Party in the most unfavorable light, calling on the CPI(M) to give up its continued support to the Janata Party.

M. Basavapunniah of the CPI(M), in a detailed rejoinder in the August 7, 1977, issue of *People's Democracy*, provided a lengthy rationale of the CPI(M)'s current political practice of class collaboration with the Janata Party. At the same time, he wrote, "A clean break with the policies of collaboration with the Congress Party is what is expected of the Right CP [CPI] leaders."

Arguing that the "Right communist party continues that old bankrupt line," M. Basavapunniah notes that according to the CPI "the victory of the Janata Party in the State Assembly elections represents a further consolidation of the power of the rightist forces in our society."

But then, "Why does the CPI(M) extend its co-operation to the Janata Party in its struggle against the Congress Party?" Basavapunniah asks. He answers himself, "Not because it looks upon the Janata Party and its government as basically different in class character from the Congress and its former régime nor has it any illusion that the Janata Party will give up the capitalist path of development and adopt a progressive people's path." (But to dispel these illusions in the working class is another matter entirely.)

But if both are the same, then why support one rather than the other? Is it a case of the lesser evil?

Basavapunniah explains, "The CPI(M) was and is supporting the Janata Party since it looks upon the Janata Party as the *major political force* in the battle for the defense of democratic rights and civil liberties of the people and in defeating the dangerous forces of authoritarianism and dictatorship represented by the Congress Party" (emphasis added).

Let us analyse this argument. For the CPI(M) it is not the "janata" (masses) but the Janata Party which is the major political force in this battle for the defence of democratic rights and civil liberties. The CPI(M), in a style characteristic of Stalin-

3. "The Communist Attitude to Parliamentary Reformism," theses adopted at the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920. Reprinted in *Aspects of Socialist Election Policy*, Education for Socialists (New York: Socialist Workers Party, 1971), pp. 5-8.

4. *People's Democracy*, February 6, 1977.

5. *Ibid.*

ism, does not want to rely on the strength of the masses for defence of democratic rights and does not want to organize mass struggles for that purpose. It views the partial restoration of bourgeois-democratic rights in India as a gift of the Janata Party and not as a result of mass action.

Further, for the CPI(M) at the moment, this is the sole criterion for judging its support for the Janata or the CPI's support for the Congress. Naturally, one cannot support class collaboration by class criteria. One must adopt nonclass, abstract terms, such as "defence of democracy" or "bastion of anti-authoritarianism."

But there are several flaws of a methodological nature in this type of reasoning that must be pinpointed.

First of all, the CPI(M) isolates the struggle for defence of such rights from the struggle for socialism itself. It tends to isolate them both in space and time. It does not consider that in the epoch of world capitalist decline and proletarian revolution that the struggle for the defence of democratic rights becomes a part of the consistent struggle for socialism. It therefore makes a fetish of the defence of democratic rights to justify its political support of the Janata Party.

Further, to equate authoritarianism and dictatorship with only one bourgeois political formation—in this case Gandhi's Congress—is to confuse appearance with essence. The roots of authoritarianism and dictatorship lie in the bourgeois political system, and in the socioeconomic reality of bourgeois society itself, and not in this or that political manifestation.

For the CPI(M), the danger stems only from the Congress. Even if that held true in the class struggle in India at the moment, and even if the CPI committed a mistake on this score prior to and during the emergency, such reasoning is undialectical and non-Marxist. The particular moment is elevated to the level of general or absolute after the end of the emergency.

What does the CPI(M) now say when Gandhi has split the Congress, and the Janata Party regime has already begun to show signs of authoritarianism? The CPI(M) prefers to wait while, in Basavapunnaiiah's words, the "democratic potentialities of the Janata Party are not exhausted." Is the time not now ripe to warn the masses? Or will the CPI(M) wait until doomsday?

Further, the CPI(M) forgets that the Janata Party was able to perform the role of what it calls the "saviour of democracy," precisely because no viable independent proletarian political perspective of superseding bourgeois-democracy was placed before the masses by either the CPI or the CPI(M). Both played the game of defending bourgeois democracy by means of bourgeois political institutions.

It is hypothetical to consider what the picture would have been if Stalinism in India had not practised class collaboration

on the question of bourgeois democracy. Serious scientific political analysis is not concerned with such futile guesswork. Its task is to show what correct proletarian politics and tactics should have been in such circumstances.



Far Eastern Economic Review  
BASU: Assures bosses that CPI(M) government also opposes "coercion" by unions.

The masses were carried away with a "Janata wave"—so the CPI(M)'s argument runs on a lower political level—and it would have amounted to swimming against the stream and isolating itself from the masses if it did not support the Janata.

Apart from the fact that this argument makes a fetish of "remaining always with the masses" at any cost, it amounts to tactically leaving the masses at the mercy of the Janata Party. It amounts to giving up the fundamental task of a communist party: providing a correct Marxist orientation and leadership to the masses on a particular issue. It amounts to justifying the violation of the norms of basic Marxist electoral policy as elaborated by the Third International in the days of Lenin and Trotsky, the norms of not supporting bourgeois candidates and bourgeois parties in elections, but of bringing into sharp focus clear class lines.

The CPI(M) takes the Janata Party at face value and asks the working class to place their political confidence in it. Here is what Basavapunnaiiah says: "The Janata Party is committed to the entire people to undo all these anti-democratic measures and to dismantle the entire dictatorial framework erected under the emergency rule. It has also given solemn assurances to the electorate that it will introduce far reaching electoral reforms to ensure free, fair and democratic elections."

So Basavapunnaiiah goes by the solemn assurances of a bourgeois (and rightist by his own admission) party in evolving the tactics and strategy of unprincipled political support to and confidence in the Janata Party.

Basavapunnaiiah asks, "What are the policies and practices of these two bourgeois-landlord parties and what was

and is the concrete role of each at different stages in the past and in the current period under review?" For him the choice is obvious. The Janata Party is the lesser evil.

How long will it take for the CPI(M)'s policy to reveal its bankruptcy?

Perhaps the bourgeoisie and its mouth-pieces know better than the CPI(M) on this score. An editorial in the November 28, 1977, *Times of India* said:

But if the CPM is convinced, as its pronouncements suggest it is, that the Janata represents the same class interests as the Congress, how can it regard it worth its while to support the former as a guarantor of the freedoms the Congress took away during the emergency? The issue becomes especially pertinent because the CPM has also been pointing to the danger of multinationals tightening their grip over the country's economy under the Janata's economic policy. This places the party in an ambiguous position. It cannot possibly impress its critics by its radical pronouncements when *there is no connection between its analysis of the character of the Janata and its attitude towards the party*. Its dilemma is not as painful as that of CPI during the emergency, particularly during its later phase, vis-a-vis Mrs. Gandhi. *But it cannot sustain its present position for too long* [emphasis added].

#### The CPI (M) and Popular Frontism

In West Bengal (and now in Tripura as well), the CPI(M) heads a coalition government comprising various working-class parties as well as small regional bourgeois parties.

The Left Front's electoral programme promised immediate reopening of closed factories and the lifting of all cases of lockout and layoff. It promised that a Left Front regime would end retrenchment of workers and strive to reinstate all those retrenched or victimized. It promised minimum wages for all based on need, the provision of pension and other social-security schemes, and the abolition of antilabor policies and laws. On the agrarian question, the Left Front pledged to acquire and distribute surplus land to landless and poor peasants and agricultural laborers free of cost. It also promised radical changes in the land-reform laws.

Immediately before assuming office, CPI (M) leader and chief minister of West Bengal Jyoti Basu, in an interview in the June 17, 1977, *Economic Times*, promised a model of honest and efficient government within the existing framework of society. He ruled out any basic transformation saying that this was possible only if the CPI(M) was in power at the centre. But he felt certain reforms could be carried out at the state level. He was all for industrial growth in West Bengal, he admitted.

And if demands of the workers came in the way, asked the interviewer, did he suppose the industrialists might shy away from further investment if pressed too hard on the labour front? In reply, Basu thought that labour demands need not

always lead to deadlock. He was of the view that the disputes could be settled through negotiation. He was for avoiding confrontation with the centre. He thought a "people's democratic revolution" was still the only solution to India's ills.

An anxious attempt was made by his regime to reach a modus vivendi with the Janata Party regime in New Delhi and with the Indian bourgeoisie. Basu went to great personal pains to stress the limits within which his ministry would function. He assured the capitalists that the Left Front would not support any labour "excesses" or "coercion." He is holding a continuous dialogue with the capitalists.

At one well-attended meeting of capitalists organized by four Calcutta-based chambers of commerce, August 19, 1977, Basu said that "conflicts cannot be eliminated in a class ridden society." But he went on to console them, stating, "We must get together to see that conflicts are minimised through bipartite talks and government mediation." He asked them not to be nervous. He explained that his regime believed in "total socialism," but that it had been elected to power in only one state (at that time) and thus had accepted "the present reality of capitalism, or mixed economy."

Basu continued, "Had we been in power in Delhi, there might have been some grounds for nervousness." He assured them, "But we accept your reality."

Basu then added, "In return we expect you to accept ours and give us our opportunity for five years instead of conspiring against us." He pleaded with the capitalists to "please treat your workers as human beings—they too have their wives and children and are finding it difficult to make ends meet."

This attitude towards the capitalists is in marked contrast to the warning he gave to the Maoist Naxalites. Basu threatened that if "they go back to their old ways," the regime "will have to deal with them firmly."

An editorial in the August 23, 1977, *Economic Times* signalled the bourgeoisie's appreciation of Basu's approach, describing it as "more pragmatic than ideologically dogmatic."

The industrial policy of the West Bengal Left Front government released on January 6, 1978,<sup>6</sup> does not rule out investments by multinational corporations and large industrial houses. The draft states, "It is not possible to leave out altogether the multinational corporations and the big industrial houses." Foreign technical collaboration will be sought.

The major goals of the policy were listed as: reversal of the trend towards industrial stagnation; arresting the growth of unemployment and providing for increased em-

ployment in industrial as well as agricultural sectors; encouraging the growth of small and cottage industries; lessening the stranglehold of the monopoly houses and multinational firms on the economy of the state; encouragement of indigenous technology and industrial self-reliance; gradual expansion of the public sector; and increasing the control of the actual producers over the industrial sector.

However, "Ever since the left front government had taken over in June," Sivasdas Banerjee reported in the November 21, 1977, *Times of India*, "its leaders, especially those of CPM, missed no opportunity to reiterate their thorough disapproval of gherao<sup>7</sup> as a trade union weapon."

He reported the candour with which leaders of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU, led by the CPI(M)) spoke of the difficulties facing West Bengal, where wage negotiations are pending, and of the danger of putting too much pressure on employers in respect of any economic issue. He reported that employers have carefully noted the CITU's calculated restraint in West Bengal as much as its growing militancy elsewhere. According to Banerjee, they are also intrigued. How long will the CITU keep up its composure and restraint? The longer it does so, the more it will be exposed to criticisms by its rivals.

Banerjee further reported that the official Indian National Trade Union Congress has welcomed the CITU's "pragmatic approach."

As for the agrarian policy of the Left Front, an editorial in the November 14, 1977, *Times of India* applauds it as "prudent." It remarks, "The CPM-led left front government of West Bengal is prudent to deter for the time being coming to grips with knotty and contentious issues like regularising the status of sharecroppers or ascertaining who is entitled to which piece of land."

Benoy Chowdhury told the West Bengal assembly in September that, in the short run, the state government's land-reform policy would have three main objectives: to recover surplus land, to protect the rights of landless laborers and sharecroppers, and to parcel out surplus land among them. But even that, as the *Times of India* editorial pointed out, is not all that easy.

An earlier editorial in the October 11, 1977, *Times of India* described the dilemma of the CPI(M):

In fact, it [CPI(M)] is in an unenviable position. It is undergoing pressure to prove its radical bona-fides by taking recognisably leftist measures. At the same time, it has to move cautiously so as to erase the widespread impression, created by the performance of the two CPM

dominated United front governments in the state in the late sixties, that radical administrations are equivalent to chaos, lawlessness and the flight of industry and capital. These conflicting compulsions help to explain why the front prefers to concentrate on achieving limited but effective change in the rural scene while leaving the industrial set-up more or less alone.

Ajit Roy, a correspondent for the Bombay *Economic and Political Weekly*, raises two pertinent questions. First, he asks, "given the critical trends in the broader national socio-economic scene, and the narrow limits of the state government's powers in the Indian Constitutional scheme, has the Left Front Government in West Bengal a real chance of offering the state's population any recognisable relief at all?" He concluded that the CPI(M) appears to be substituting reforms for revolution, and asks, "Who will then shoulder the burden of the role of a revolutionary party. . . ?"<sup>8</sup>

In the September 3, 1977, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Ashok Rudra pointed out that since 1967 both Communist parties have experimented with such coalition regimes. Attempting to critically evaluate their performances, he notes the CPI(M)'s incessant efforts to allow capitalism to flourish in West Bengal. He says that economic movements of the workers will be allowed but not political ones. He notes the Left Front's reliance on revenue administration for carrying out its limited agrarian programme. The downtrodden peasantry will not be the vehicle of change, but passive recipients of the benefits of such a programme.

Rudra also takes care to point out that a revolutionary party in such a situation would strive to strengthen its mass, class, and cadre base, develop mass mobilizations, attempt to implement radical measures, invite the inevitable head-on clash with the powers that be, and earn a much-deserved dismissal from office, all the while making good revolutionary use of its holding a state apparatus for pedagogic purposes to show the limitations of a bourgeois state apparatus.

The CPI(M), of course, wants nothing of the kind. The December 4, 1977, *Economic Times* quoted Basu as saying that the whole country was watching the performance of the government in West Bengal and that it would have to show results. If, in his view, the government failed to deliver the goods, it would explain its position to the people. Meanwhile, it would run the administration by maintaining a continuous dialogue with various interests.

The Indian bourgeoisie has thought it wise to allow the CPI(M) once again to try its hand at the game of popular frontism.

Its choice and reasons could not have been given better expression than in an

7. A gherao is a form of mass action in which workers surround and confine management or government officials to press their demands.

8. *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 31, 1977, p. 2154.

6. *Economic Times*, January 7, 1978.

editorial in the June 21, 1977, *Economic Times*, which said, "The lack of any alternative to the left in West Bengal, under conditions of free and fair elections, touches the business community in that state more than ever before."

It continued, "Indeed, the CPM's control of a disciplined cadre, organised peasantry and unionised labor, parallel to its administrative authority, not to speak of the stable political climate which should extend through the state, could spell more production and progress for West Bengal. The opportunity is here."

#### United Front Versus Popular Front

Earlier such coalition governments were called "united front" governments by the Communist parties. Now the CPI(M) calls it a Left Front. But the real name of a coalition with bourgeois formations to run a bourgeois state apparatus is a popular front.

The tactic of the united front originated in 1921-22 during Lenin and Trotsky's leadership of the Third International. In Europe, the revolutionary wave had receded. Capitalism was stabilized. Everywhere the bourgeoisie was on the offensive. The masses were still under the spell of the Social Democracy. Everywhere the Communist parties were in a minority.

The idea of a united front with reformist workers parties to launch struggles on limited issues of common interest was mooted in December 1921 at the Fourth World Congress of the Third International. In November 1922, details were elaborated.

There were two aspects of united front policy. It allowed the largest possible mobilizations of the working class in defence of its immediate interests by bringing together around a specific issue or issues organizations that have fundamental programmatic differences on other questions. Secondly, revolutionists would have the best opportunity to work with the rank-and-file members of the reformist organizations.

Of course, the united-front tactic could be applied to electoral blocs or even to coalition governments of the left, so long as its central direction and thrust was clearly anticapitalist. For example, after the October Revolution the Bolsheviks for a time participated in a coalition government with the left wing of the Social Revolutionaries.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of the popular front was a product of Stalinism. It is a coalition between workers parties and bourgeois parties. It is based on a minimum programme of "liberal" capitalism and is

aimed only at extracting certain reforms. It seeks to demobilize the working class and win its support for continued capitalist rule.

In the history of the world working-class movement, coalitions or governmental blocs or class collaboration with the bourgeoisie or its parties have appeared under many guises. The CPI(M)'s Left Front is but one.

Whatever they are called, their political essence is the same. They are all class-collaborationist electoral or governmental blocs, coalitions involving one or more reformist party and one or more bourgeois party or bourgeois representation, however small such direct bourgeois participation may be. To participate in one or to call for

## 'El Tiempo' Interviews Socorro Ramírez

[The Bogotá daily *El Tiempo*, one of Colombia's leading bourgeois newspapers, recently began a series of interviews with presidential candidates on economic matters by speaking with Socorro Ramírez. Ramírez is the candidate of Workers and Socialist Unity, an electoral bloc of several socialist organizations, initiated by the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party).

[Excerpts from the interview, which appeared on the front page of the January 25 issue of *El Tiempo*, are reprinted below. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

A founder of the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, Socorro Ramírez affirmed that her government's economic policy would be, in short, "exactly and totally the opposite of the policies the capitalist candidates are proposing and the present López Michelsen administration is carrying out—high profits, low wages, high unemployment, handing our natural resources over to American imperialism, protecting the property of the landowners, and continuing to thwart the aspirations of 95 percent of the population." . . .

In explaining why she would repudiate the country's foreign debts, she said: "What we supposedly owe to the imperialists and the bourgeoisies in other countries has already been more than taken away from us through many years of superexploitation and plunder."

She said that the problem of unemployment will be dealt with through large-scale plans for housing and public works. She also said that in Colombia a minority of capitalists lives at the expense of millions of workers. To take the first steps toward a solution, she will begin nationalizing, under workers control, the financial groups . . . that according to her control

a vote for such a bloc is to cross class lines.

Popular frontism is the most pernicious form of class collaboration. It usually arises at the height of the class struggle precisely to divert it along safer channels. It fatally disorients the workers. It ultimately prepares the ground for a stunning defeat of the working class.

In India, class collaboration and popular-front politics continue to be the major bane of the working-class movement. Correspondingly, the need for independent proletarian politics based on revolutionary Marxist theory and practice is becoming more and more vital.

Class collaborationism in any form must be fought to the finish. □

industry, banking, and exports. . . .

Regarding coffee, she advocated a new federation, with a democratic structure, that would deal with the coffee industry in close association with the state. She considered "the immediate nationalization of the National Coffee Fund and the grain export trade" indispensable. . . .

She pointed out that Colombia is experiencing a severe energy crisis, but noted that the country's resources are exceptional. She promised that her first measure in this regard would be to put in practice the plans that the Workers Trade-Union Alliance and the Federation of Petroleum Workers are struggling for: total nationalization of the petroleum industry and its subsidiaries, without compensation, "to which we would add, under control of the workers themselves." . . . □

### Shah's Troops Occupy Tabriz

Iranian troops occupied the northwestern city of Tabriz February 21 after several days of antigovernment protests in which at least nine persons were killed by police.

The regime blamed the disturbances on so-called Islamic Marxists. A report in the February 22 *Washington Post* said the protests in Tabriz began when religious leader Ayatullah Shariatmeddari called for a business shutdown to mark the fortieth day since demonstrators were killed in the southern city of Qum in January.

The troops were withdrawn from Tabriz February 23. Iranian officials said 650 persons had been detained.

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9. For an excellent exposition of the tactic of the united front, see *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932]* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), p. 221; and Leon Trotsky, *The First 5 Years of the Communist International*, 2nd ed. (New York: Monad Press, 1972), vol. 2, p. 91.

# Argentine Union Bureaucrats Seek New Allies

By N. Ducón

[The following article appeared in the December 1977 issue of *Desafío*, a monthly bulletin published clandestinely in Argentina.]

[The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

On June 14, 1974, Perón resorted for the last time to the stratagem of presenting his resignation from the balcony of the presidential palace in the Plaza de Mayo. It was clear that in doing so he was seeking to stem the wave of proletarian struggles that threatened the very government the workers had voted for in massive numbers only a few months earlier.

That working-class offensive, along with the workers' absence from the plaza despite Perón's call, confirmed the fundamental character of the present historical stage: the exhaustion of bourgeois nationalism's ability to lead, control, and contain the proletariat. Fifteen days after Perón's speech in the plaza, his physical death aggravated and sped along the profound effects of his political demise.

Another year went by before the working class demonstrated its full power in the historic mobilizations that culminated in the general strike of June 30-July 1, 1975. Only six months after that (the compression of the time scale caused panic among the bourgeoisie) the mobilization was repeated, improved upon, and made larger still. And the Peronist union bureaucracy was totally incapable of containing or controlling it.

Only the military coup salvaged the situation. In this the armed forces enjoyed the unanimous support of the entire bourgeoisie and all the bourgeois parties, including the Peronists, as well as the acquiescence of all sectors of the union bureaucracy.

Keeping this in mind is useful when considering the present situation of the trade-union bureaucrats and the course of action they have adopted.

### Two Years Later

With the wearing out of Peronism, the bureaucracy faced the urgent problem of securing other political and economic support. New and irrefutable proof of the international character of the class struggle can be seen in the way the bureaucracy has tried to solve this problem.

In 1975, when the Peronists were still in

power, the bureaucracy cast aside its "third-world" verbiage and joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the coup, the bulk of the bureaucracy established contact with the AFL-CIO, the U.S. labor federation. As will be seen, this involved more than mere diplomatic exchanges.

An indispensable complement to the rapprochement with the AFL-CIO was an alliance with the church cemented by another sector of the bureaucracy, a sector differentiated from the majority but in no way opposed to its general policy. At the congress of the CLAT [Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores—Latin American Workers Federation], this grouping displaced the Catholic tendency led by Ongaro.<sup>2</sup>

While having differences among themselves, the agents of American imperialism (the AFL-CIO), of European imperialism

1. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) was founded at the end of World War II on the basis of an alliance between the European Social Democracy and the bureaucratic clique atop the AFL-CIO in the United States. The goal, of course, was to counterpose the ICFTU to Marxism on a world scale. The inter-American affiliate of the ICFTU, known as the ORIT (Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores—Inter-American Regional Workers Organization), has a well-earned reputation among Latin American workers as an apparatus in the service of the CIA.

The AFL-CIO is the powerful U.S. federation led by the George Meany camarilla. While the AFL-CIO ceased participating in the ICFTU some time ago, it maintained joint affiliation with the ORIT. It is now seeking to replace the latter with a new federation based in Buenos Aires, of which the Peronist bureaucracy would be the main component.

A conference of petroleum, chemical, and paper workers unions was recently held in Bariloche under AFL-CIO auspices. That gathering decided to launch the new Latin American federation.—N.D.

2. The World Confederation of Labor (WCL) was also formed at the end of World War II, at the initiative of the Catholic Church and the European Christian Democratic parties. The goal was to counter the Communist and Socialist unions in Europe.

In 1953 this body extended its influence to Latin America by organizing the CLAT, based in Caracas, Venezuela. An Argentine bureaucrat, Emilio Máspero, was named president.

The funds for maintaining this apparatus are provided by the Adenauer Foundation, an adjunct of the West German Christian Democracy.

(the ICFTU), and of "spiritual" imperialism (the WCL), which is nonetheless quite concrete, have in effect formed an "international united front of bureaucrats" to aid the Peronist camarilla that finds its hegemony over the Argentine workers movement seriously threatened.

### A Period of Organization

One must not think, however, that we are dealing with disinterested solidarity. The struggle against revolutionary Marxism in Argentina would provide sufficient justification for such a counterrevolutionary alliance. But it must also be taken into account that, just as petty bureaucrats in a small metal shop defend the boss's interests against the workers, the big bureaucrats who function on the international level represent the interests of the big capitalists and the imperialist trusts. When these big enterprises expand, the labor bureaucracies of the imperialist countries do also. Such mutual dependence explains the international divisions among the bureaucrats, as well as their solid unity against the common enemy: working-class independence and revolutionary Marxism. It also makes clear why the Peronists could dump their old "third-world" policy, and without shame pass bag and baggage, unanimously, into the bureaucratic camp linked to imperialism.

Finally, it explains why U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance met with the Peronist bureaucrats during his stay in Buenos Aires and has taken an interest in the human rights of certain imprisoned Peronist leaders.

There have also been visits by leaders of the ICFTU, the WCL, and AFL-CIO; by envoys of Carter, such as Terence Todman and a U.S. Congressional delegation; and

Ongaro belonged to the CLAT, which gave him political and financial support when he founded to CGTA.

[The left Peronist Raimundo Ongaro led a 1968 split from the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT—General Federation of Labor), the main Peronist union federation. Ongaro's new federation was called the CGT de los Argentinos.—*IP/J*]

However, the Christian sectors represented by Ongaro were displaced at the last CLAT congress held in Costa Rica November 21-26, 1977. Besides retaining Máspero as president, the congress elected another Argentine, Miguel Gazzera, to its Executive Council. The CLAT has opened an "office of relations" in Buenos Aires, to be operated by Gazzera and Carlos Custer.—N.D.



by the German Social-Christian leader Franz-Josef Strauss. All of these have held long meetings with the union bureaucrats. This intense organizational activity at the international level is aimed at putting together a Latin American federation in which the "united front of bureaucrats" would be concretized. The Peronist labor bureaucrats, for their part, have signaled their intentions by sending five delegates from the "Commission of the Twenty-Five" to the AFL-CIO congress (Baldassini, Cabrera, García, Donaires, and Micó; plus Campos, who was not an official delegate). Two of these representatives, Donaires and Campos, later went to Mexico to participate in a congress of the ORIT.<sup>4</sup>

The "Inter-American Conference of Workers in the Petroleum, Chemical, and Paper Industries," held a few weeks ago in Bariloche, was an important milestone in the process of bureaucratic reorganization. This gathering was held under the auspices of the AFL-CIO. Agreement was reached on forming a new Latin American federation to replace the ORIT, with its center in Buenos Aires.

Of course, nothing happens by accident. Veritable "cadre schools" for training new and more capable bureaucrats have also been established. In Fort Royal, a few miles from Washington, the American Institute for the Development of Free Trade Unionism (AIDFTU) has already given some courses to twenty Argentine bureaucrats. The AIDFTU statutes declare that one of its objectives is to "encourage cooperation between labor and management for furthering the investment of American capital in underdeveloped countries." Similar courses have been held in Buenos Aires. The Center for Research and Social Action (a title the Jesuits function under in the labor movement) has organized seminars for union leaders. These have been conducted by Msgr. Quarreccino, bishop of Avellaneda; Miguel Gazzera, a union bureaucrat; Jorge Gualco, of the People's Christian Party; and others.

### The Bureaucracy and the Military Junta

Those who have usurped the workers' unions have not limited their activity to the international level.

Because of its own internal contradictions, the military dictatorship has not been able to develop a consistent policy for rebuilding the battered union bureaucracy. The economic plan imposed by finance capital, and the junta's own dynamic, have in a sense helped to weaken the bureaucracy still further. (Although, as will be seen, this policy has also given the bureaucracy a certain lease on life.)

About a year ago, in January 1977, all sectors of the bureaucracy signed a statement demanding a change in economic leadership and the development of a "national plan" to unite "the people and the armed forces." During the whole subse-

quent period the government did not change its policy, nor did the Peronist leaders appeal for a mobilization of the workers. But the refusal of "the twenty-five" to attend the annual conference of



VIDELA: Sends selected bureaucrats to "cadre school" in Washington.

the International Labor Organization in Geneva<sup>3</sup> did indicate a growing deterioration in the military junta's relations with the bureaucracy.

Exactly one month ago, after the big strikes by the working class, the bureaucracy decided to take a step toward rearming its ranks, putting more pressure on the dictatorship, and preparing to face the mobilizations that will come with the new year. Publication of a weekly newspaper called *Tribuna de la República* [Tribune of the Republic] was begun.

Through this weekly, a harsh attack has been launched on the "liberalism" of [Economics Minister José] Martínez de Hoz, with Videla as an indirect target. At the same time, the bureaucracy looks favorably toward a "people-army" alliance—without, however, closing the door to a pact for a "social democracy" with the parties that formed the Hora del Pueblo and FREJULI.<sup>4</sup> The weekly of course upholds the necessity of maintaining a

3. Leaders of unions not under military intervention refused last May to provide representatives for the Argentine delegation to the ILO, a United Nations labor body, on the grounds that "the minimal conditions for representing the Argentine workers movement at the international level do not exist" (*La Nación* weekly edition, May 23, 1977).—IP/1

"united CGT" to guarantee the "nationalist and Christian" character of the workers movement and bar the way to Marxism. To assure this, it contends, the "Law on Professional Associations"<sup>5</sup> must be kept in force without major changes.

As the product of a front made up of various bureaucratic sectors, the paper is heterogeneous. Nevertheless, it is clearly an organ in which the church has large influence, an instrument in the effort to rebuild a solid union bureaucracy throughout the country. That task is conceived as one in which the bureaucracy should take its distance from the "Peronist Party." In the image of its associates on the international level, it should be a body that acts politically, but is organizationally separate and independent of parties, including the Peronists.

As we said, the paper does not have a uniform line. But there is nothing to give one the impression that the laudable declarations of independence signify any intention to form a "workers party." Its anti-Marxist position is proclaimed on every page; this is underlined in issue No. 4 by a violent attack on the Fourth International.

All in all, the appearance of the union bureaucracy's propaganda organ is a notable event, surely the most important sign in recent months of a perceptible resurgence of political activity. It will undoubtedly be a protagonist in the difficult political and ideological battle opening before us.

For the immediate future, the bureaucracy has certainly taken a solid step forward and is gaining political ground. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that it is prepared to take the lead in the workers' protests—in order to capitalize on them and stave off the development of class-struggle forces. This means a dynamic of growing confrontation between the bureaucrats and the dictatorship, or at least between the bureaucrats and what they call the "liberal wing of the armed forces."

### A United Front With the Bureaucracy?

While the jailing of many of its cadres and the sometimes drastic restrictions on union activity have weakened the bureaucracy, the dictatorship's policy has also re-

4. Hora del Pueblo (The Hour of the People)—a front of bourgeois parties, plus a faction of the Socialist Party, formed under the Onganía dictatorship in 1970 to press for a greater role for political parties. It included the Peronist movement and the Radical Civic Union. FREJULI—Frente Justicialista de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Front for Social Justice), a front of Peronist parties formed for the 1973 elections.—IP/1

5.) Legislation similar to the Taft-Hartley Act in the United States. It establishes government regulation of union activity while allowing broad scope to the functioning of the bureaucracy.—IP/1

vived it. As a result, it is the only structure available to the workers movement for uniting and mobilizing its forces.

Since the bureaucrats might well adopt measures of struggle against the military's economic plan and tutelage over the unions, the question is raised: What position should revolutionary Marxists take? Should we call for a united front with the bureaucracy?

Before answering that question it is necessary to digress briefly and lay down some principles that are indispensable if we are to orient ourselves correctly.

The resolutions of the first four congresses of the Third International, along with other documents on which the Fourth International was founded—all of which we recognize as the basis of our revolutionary activity—exclude all possibility of confusion, terminological ambiguity, or doubt regarding the content of the united-front slogan. Let us look at a brief outline:

"The united front is nothing other than the union of all the workers dedicated to the struggle against capitalism" (Second Congress of the Communist International).<sup>6</sup> "Unity of the proletarian front must be understood as unity of all workers who want to combat capitalism" (Fourth Congress of the CI). In an article on this theme, Trotsky wrote, "The problem of the united front arises from the need to assure the working class the possibility of uniting itself in the struggle against capital" ("Historical Sketch on the Problem of the United Front").

*Proposition one*, then: It is impossible to confuse the concept of the united front with that of the need for unity of action around concrete questions with nonrevolutionary, centrist, or counterrevolutionary forces inside the workers movement. "United front" signifies unity with the explicit objective of struggle against capitalism.

*Proposition two*: "To apply the proposed tactic (of united front) successfully, the party must be strongly organized and its leadership must be distinguished by the perfect clarity of its ideas" (Fourth Congress of the CI).

*Proposition three*: "Inasmuch as the workers have recently arrived at conscious political life, and are yet without experience, the slogan of united front is the sincere expression of their desire to oppose to the capitalist offensive all the forces of the working class; for the reformist leaders this slogan is nothing more than a new attempt to drug the workers and lead them down the road of class collaboration" (Fourth Congress of the CI).

It is important to reemphasize these three points: Not only reformists and centrists, but even many revolutionary comrades, underestimating the theoretical and practical lessons of international revolutionary Marxism, tend to confuse the un-

questioned need for common action on concrete questions at the trade-union level with the concept of the united front. To do this is to lead down a blind alley the revolutionary forces that are trying to build a party.

Therefore our response to the question about seeking a united front with the bureaucracy is unequivocal: No.

Just the contrary—the bureaucracy is reorganizing itself with the *express objective* of maintaining the capitalist regime and derailing the class struggle. It has found it necessary to seek international support from counterrevolutionary forces—support that will put it in position to combat revolutionary Marxism. The bureaucracy has seen with total clarity how revolutionary Marxists rely on the dynamic of radicalization among the masses who are breaking with nationalism, and on the profound loss of prestige suffered by the bureaucratic leaders.

The political task facing us at the moment is not to launch a struggle for power, but simply to deepen and carry through to the end the process of raising the consciousness of the workers movement, to further the development of a united trade-union organization independent of the state apparatus, and to continue building a revolutionary workers party.

The bureaucracy's moves that we have noted above show that there is no doubt or confusion in its top circles about what road to take. On the other hand, the proletariat does not have a "strongly organized" party whose leadership "is distinguished by the perfect clarity of its ideas."

So in these circumstances, what could it mean to argue for a *political* front with the bureaucracy?

The workers movement is passing through a period of transition. It is breaking with the bourgeois nationalism that has dominated it for thirty years, and trying to recover trade-union and political independence. A decisive battle is taking place among the workers between revolutionary Marxism on one hand and all the reformist, populist, and centrist currents trying to fill the vacuum left by Peronism on the other. Calling for a political front with the bureaucracy amounts to withdrawing from this battle.

The revolutionary workers organizations are little more than weak tendencies at present, not parties capable of leading the workers movement. The bureaucracy, on the other hand, controls all the main unions and is backed by powerful international federations designed specifically for containing the socialist revolution. Our central task is educating and organizing the masses of workers and their vanguard; to seek a political front with the bureaucracy would be to subordinate ourselves to it and abandon our principles.

Reaching this conclusion is only the first step. However indispensable, it is not enough to fully delineate our approach.

We have posed the need to resolve two contradictions: On one hand, the bureaucracy is quite discredited among the masses of workers and very much weakened, both politically and organizationally. But at the same time, it controls the organizations that unify the working class at the national level—organizations the workers see and defend as their own. The bureaucracy is involved in a slick maneuver to solve the problem arising from the shipwreck of Peronism through an energetic political and organizational offensive. Inasmuch as its cadres are discredited before the masses, it has resolved to make some necessary changes and is consciously preparing to do so.

On the other hand, although the bureaucracy did lend support to the military coup and has collaborated with the dictatorship, it is no less true that the dictatorship has dealt blows to the bureaucracy—military tutelage over the most powerful unions; dismissals (and in many cases kidnappings) of agents of the bureaucracy who had functioned in the delegate bodies and internal commissions; prolonged imprisonment of leaders such as [CGT head] Lorenzo Miguel; and the kidnapping of [Oscar] Smith [leader of the Light and Power union]. These blows are as much the result of the junta's internal contradictions as of the logic inherent in its government.

But what carries the most potential danger for the bureaucracy is the junta's economic policy. This policy is giving rise to a rebellion by the workers; thus it puts before the bureaucrats the choice of leading a fight or being shoved aside. So even while it negotiates and attempts to forge a "people-armed forces" alliance, the bureaucracy finds itself forced into a confrontation with the regime.

Finally, we must understand that the bureaucracy is not homogeneous and monolithic. There are differences between the big bureaucrats who meet in the official bodies, travel constantly all over the world, and plunder millions for their own use; and the ones at the other end of the bureaucratic stepladder who work in the plants, feel the direct pressure of the rank and file, and on occasion even have to face the "excesses" of the repression. And between these two extremes are a whole series of similar differences.

Likewise, there are differences among various political sectors. Although everyone combines against the class-struggle forces, this doesn't mean they don't have their own internal differences. Under certain conditions, these can provoke serious splits inside the apparatus.

The gravity of the economic and political crisis underlines all these contradictions in red. While the crisis imposes urgent demands upon us, it also opens up big opportunities for us to put intelligent and audacious tactics into practice.

The same reasons and principles that deny all possibility of forging a united

6. All the quotations in this section have been retranslated from the Spanish.—IP/I

front, a political front, with the bureaucracy, oblige us to call for unity of action among all its sectors around specific objectives. The three main focuses should be expulsion of the military from the unions and the workplaces; release of the prisoners and restoration of the democratic rights of assembly, expression, organization, the right to strike, and so on; and the fight for higher wages.

It goes without saying that for us the imperativeness of working inside the unions and insuring the unity of the workers movement is beyond question. What is involved is convincing the entire proletariat of the reactionary and anti-working-class character of the bureaucracy. In no way is it a question of convincing the already convinced or of trying to organize marginal unions outside the ones the masses see as their own.

The contradictions we have noted and the gravity of the crisis make it both possible and necessary to call upon the bureaucracy to unite in action in defense of the unions and the immediate needs of the working class. This is even more important because the ranks feel the need to join forces against the dictatorship. It must be clear that it is the bureaucracy that blocks a united struggle, and not the revolutionists. The majority of the working class will not be won without a tactic of constantly proposing unity in action on all possible levels to the bureaucrats. Only this can expose them before the ranks as the direct enemies of such unity.

#### Class-Struggle United Front

It is not only incorrect to call for a "united front" with the bureaucracy in the present situation; it is impossible to propose a proletarian united front as outlined by the Communist International—for the simple reason that workers parties solidly based in the class do not exist.

So what we need to do is seek unity among the class-struggle forces, on the basis of antibureaucratic and antidictatorship oppositions organized in each workplace, coordinated in a class-struggle united front on the national level.

It is only on the basis of the successes that will be achieved through the intelligent combination of these tasks that the revolutionary Marxists will be able to overcome their present dispersion and lack of influence, and construct a powerful party with the allegiance of the masses. □

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## NAACP Demands Cancellation of Davis Cup

### U.S.-South African Tennis Matches Protested

By Matilde Zimmermann

Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, has refused to call off the Davis Cup tennis matches between the United States and South Africa, despite growing protests from opponents of apartheid. The games are scheduled to be held at the university March 17-19.

Benjamin Hooks, leader of the largest civil-rights organization in the United States, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), has urged the group's 1,700 chapters to send representatives to protest in Nashville March 18.

Another group active in the protests is the American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sport and Society (ACCESS). The national chairperson of ACCESS, Dr. Richard Lapchick, went to Nashville February 10-13 to help build support for the Davis Cup protests, and was the victim of a brutal racist attack when he returned to the Virginia university where he teaches.

Lapchick was beaten unconscious by two masked assailants who called him a "nigger lover," told him to stay out of "South Africa's business," and carved the word "nigger" across his stomach.

On February 14, Vanderbilt students began what they describe as a daily picket line outside the administration offices. Student protests have also been organized on the three predominantly Black colleges located in Nashville. Delegations of community activists and civil-rights leaders have met with Vanderbilt President Emmett B. Fields to urge him to cancel the matches.

Fields's response has been to insist that hosting the South African team is consistent with the university's principle of "open forum."

"When Stokeley Carmichael came to the campus, it was protested," said Fields, referring to visits of the militant civil-rights leader a decade ago. "In one sense, the Davis Cup is the same as Stokeley Carmichael."

Supporters of the anti-apartheid demonstrations have explained that the issue is not free speech or an "open forum." The issue is Vanderbilt's complicity with a South African regime based on the absolute denial of rights to Blacks.

This is not the first time South African participation in the Davis Cup has been challenged. At the 1977 meeting of the International Tennis Federation in Hamburg, Germany, more than half the countries represented voted to oust South Africa from the Davis Cup because of its

segregationist policies. The motion failed for lack of the three-fourths majority required.

South Africa moved to ward off some of the criticism with its February 12 appointment of the first Black player to its Davis Cup squad. Peter Lamb, an eighteen-year-old South African Coloured (of mixed ancestry), is a student at Vanderbilt University. Although he has been formally named to the team, Lamb is not expected actually to play in the Davis Cup matches.

The NAACP reacted to Lamb's appointment by calling it "tokenism, too little, and too late," and said that it was going ahead with plans for a mass demonstration in Nashville March 18.

The protest campaign has forced the original underwriter of the event to withdraw its support, citing "the political controversy that now surrounds the event." The \$88,000 tab was then picked up by Joe Davis of the Davis Coal Company. □

#### Concorde Compensation?

The British government, eager to get its flying financial disaster started on a London-to-Sydney route, has offered to pay compensation for any damage caused in India by Concorde SST overflights.

After test flights in 1974 and 1976, Indian experts concluded that sustained sonic booms from the needle-nosed noisemaker could cause damage to weak structures such as old monuments, buildings, and bridges.

"In the view of observers," Mohan Ram wrote in the *Christian Science Monitor* February 2, "the British offer . . . overlooks the fact that, in the absence of any foolproof means of establishing a connection between sonic booms and damage . . . the result might be endless litigation. There is as yet no way of ascertaining the long-term effects of sonic booms at regular intervals in a given air corridor."

The route sought by British Airways passes over areas of high population with countless structures such as bridges and culverts. At present, the Concorde is allowed to fly at supersonic speeds over land only in Jordan and Bahrain; much of the area subject to overflight in those two countries is desert.

Prime Minister Morarji Desai has promised his British counterpart James Callaghan that an earlier Indian ban on supersonic overflights will be reconsidered.

## Debate in French Left

### What Stand to Take Toward the Elections

[With the approach of the parliamentary elections, scheduled to be held in two rounds March 12 and 19,<sup>1</sup> a lively debate on electoral strategy and tactics is taking place in the pages of the publications of the French left.

[At issue are such questions as the following: should revolutionary-socialist organizations run their own candidates on the first round? Is it correct and useful for organizations claiming to stand to the left of the Communist and Socialist parties to divide up the election districts so as not to compete with one another? In the second round, is it correct to call for a vote for the CP and SP, and if so, on what grounds?

[We are printing below a selection from this discussion. The translation and footnotes are by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

\* \* \*

#### 1. Letter From the OCI

[The following is an exchange of letters between the Political Bureau of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste and the Political Bureau of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire. The letters were published in the January 28-29 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

Dear Comrades,

In our letter to you dated November 10, 1977, we proposed to examine with you the possibility of running a joint campaign in the upcoming legislative elections, based on our adherence to the program of the Fourth International, and on the main political slogans that concretize the struggle for a workers united front today.

Since then, you have chosen to engage in an electoral combine with political currents not claiming to be Trotskyist, based on a platform that, owing to the various positions it contains, does not take a clear stance either on the character of the Union of the Left, the class nature of the parties that make it up, the principle of a vote for the workers organizations alone, or the

1. French elections are held in two rounds. If no candidate for a given post wins an absolute majority on the first round, a run-off is held between two candidates in a second round.

#### French Political Groups

The following are among the groups referred to in the accompanying documents:

CCA—Comités Communistes pour l'Autogestion (Communist Committees for Self-Management), emerged from a split in 1977 from the PSU (see below). One of its main leaders is Michel Pablo.

LCR—Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International.

LO—Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle), publishes a weekly newspaper by the same name and a monthly journal, in English, entitled *Class Struggle* and subtitled *For the Rebuilding of the Fourth International*.

OCI—Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (Internationalist Communist Organization), a member of the Organizing Committee for the Recon-

struction of the Fourth International, of which Pierre Lambert is one of the major leaders.

OCT—Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs (Communist Workers Organization). Emerged from a 1971 split in the LCR. It was formerly known as *Révolution*. Fused in 1976 with the Workers and Peoples Left, a Maoist current that had split from the PSU (see below).

PCMLF—Parti Communiste Marxiste-Léniniste Français (French Communist Party Marxist-Leninist), a Maoist current, publishes *l'Humanité Rouge*.

PCR-ML—Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire Marxiste-Léniniste (Revolutionary Communist Party Marxist-Leninist), a Maoist current.

PSU—Parti Socialiste Unifié (United Socialist Party), a centrist grouping.

call for a government of the workers parties alone. Accordingly, from the standpoint of upholding the transitional program of the Fourth International, the OCI could not, of course, take part in this type of front, nor endorse your call for a vote on the first round for the candidates representing it.

Along with this, you felt obliged to wage a vigorous polemic against our organization, and against the massive campaign we have been carrying out for several weeks to get the French Communist Party to make an immediate and unconditional pledge to stand down in favor of the workers party candidate with the best chance of winning. You did not shrink from saying in your press that this issue was of little concern to the workers, and that raising it amounted to giving political support to the Social Democratic apparatus. However, we do not intend to let these twists and turns divert us from the responsibilities that fall on those who claim to be Trotskyist, at a time when the division in the ranks of the working class, contrary to all the hopes of the masses, is threatening to return a Giscardist-Gaullist majority to parliament.

That is why we are now glad to see the

LCR, through its Political Bureau, state in turn that "to reject this elementary rule, to place conditions on standing down, simply means taking the risk of leaving the Giscard government in power," and demand from the CP "a clear commitment to stand down on the second round in favor of the workers candidate with the best chance of winning" (*Rouge*, January 7-8, 1978). We feel it is important to follow through on this statement. A consistent struggle for this elementary demand is essential right now to apply in practice the principle of a "class vote" and the fight for a CP-SP government, which you claim to support in principle, contrary to other currents such as Lutte Ouvrière or your main electoral ally, the OCT.

Therefore, however else we may differ in our outlook, we are proposing to discuss with you, without any preconditions, actions that could be undertaken jointly by our two organizations from now until the elections, in order to win the broadest possible hearing for this question by placing it in the overall context of the struggle for a workers united front.

For the CP to commit itself unconditionally to standing down in favor of the

workers candidate with the best chance of winning.

For a class vote. Neither Gaullists nor Radicals. Not a single vote for the bourgeois candidates. For a CP-SP majority.

For the satisfaction of workers' de-

mands. For an end to Barre, Giscard, and the Fifth Republic. For a CP-SP government without bourgeois ministers.

Trotskyist greetings,  
Charles Berg

## 2. Reply by the LCR

Dear Comrades,

In reply to your letter of November 10, 1977, we reminded you of the invitation you had been given to participate in the discussions then under way among the LCR, LO, the OCT, and the CCA, concerning the political basis for dividing up the election districts.

The agreement finally reached between our organization, the OCT, and CCA is neither an "electoral combine" nor a "front," as various organizations explained. What is involved is a political agreement that justifies dividing up the election districts, voting for each other's candidates, and holding joint discussions and meetings.

Contrary to your assertions, this agreement describes the Union of the Left as a class-collaborationist front, and the Common Program as a bourgeois program, while calling for a vote for the reformist parties on the second round, so that once they hold a majority in parliament, they will not have any excuse for backpedaling and retreating on workers' demands. The agreement clearly explains that each organization will put forward its whole program, under its own emblem and with its own candidates.

Accordingly, the LCR candidates will run on the platform of their organization (published in *Rouge*, and later in pamphlet form).<sup>2</sup> They will be presented as candidates fighting for working-class unity, which means:

For unity of the working-class political parties and trade unions (CGT, CFDT, FEN, FO).<sup>3</sup> For satisfaction of workers' demands. Against any kind of austerity.

For unity to unseat Giscard, Barre, Chirac, and put an end to the Fifth Republic state.

For unity to establish a workers government. Under the present circumstances, the struggle for a workers government takes the form of the fight for a government of those parties supported by a

majority of the working class, the CP and SP, which should break with the bourgeoisie and pledge to satisfy workers' demands by relying on the strength of the working class.

Such a fight for working-class unity will be reflected in the call for a vote for the far left on the first round (LCR, OCT, CCA, and LO, where LO is running candidates on its own), and on the second round, by a call for automatic withdrawal in favor of the workers candidate—CP or SP—with the best chance of winning, to the exclusion of all the bourgeois candidates.

You, on the other hand, reduce the struggle for a united front to a class vote on the second round of the elections, limiting the fight for a workers government to the call for an electoral majority for the SP and CP. In this way, you lock the struggle for a workers government into the straitjacket of bourgeois parliamentarism. Therefore, it is logical—though regrettable—that you did not see fit to publicize your program on the first round by running candidates. And surely this is the reason why you did not reply to the repeated invitations to participate in discussions on dividing up the election districts.

What is worse, the logic of your politics has led you to make a grave opportunist error with respect to the SP. Didn't you go so far as to write in *Informations Ouvrières* No. 824 [November 3-9, 1977] that "on the specific question of standing down, the attitude of Mauroy and [SP head François] Mitterrand corresponds totally to the interests of the workers, who call for a fight for an SP-CP majority in the legislative elections, while the CP's attitude corresponds totally to the interests of the bourgeois parties of the reactionary, anti-working-class Fifth Republic"? The fact is that the SP itself has signed an electoral agreement with the Radical grouplet, giving it thirty election districts in return for giving the SP a hand in taking first place away from the CP candidates in 200 others. Far from corresponding "totally to the interests of the workers," therefore, the SP's policy on the "specific question" of standing down is in keeping with its whole policy of comprom-

ise and division, and is no better than that of the CP.

It might be thought that what is involved is no more than a simple error on your part, if you did not show such remarkable consistency in supporting the Social Democratic leadership apparatuses. This includes your support to the Portuguese SP in the summer of 1975, your attacks on the reformist left wings of the Social Democracy in France, Portugal, and West Germany, which you described as "crypto-Stalinist," your vote for the report by the FEN leadership, or your adoption of the Force Ouvrière bureaucracy's position on the CFDT, the second-largest trade-union federation in France, which you insist on viewing as "a Vatican hotbed."

Despite this major revision of Trotskyism in practice, we take seriously your declarations of unswerving loyalty to the Trotskyist program, and your repeated approaches to the French section of the Fourth International.

That is why we are making the following proposals to you:

1. If you are really "glad" about the positions taken by our Political Bureau and our last Central Committee meeting, why don't you call for a vote on the first round for the candidates of the LCR and CCA, the only ones who call for a class vote on the second round (for the CP and SP, excluding all bourgeois parties)? If you took such a position, which would be consistent with your statements, we would, of course, be willing to offer you speaking time at our rallies, to explain the meaning of your call for a vote for the LCR, in spite of the deep differences between us.

2. If you are not as "glad" as all that, it seems obvious to us, at least, that an elementary class vote on the first round, if it is to be free of opportunism with respect to the programs of the various workers parties, should go to all the workers parties without exception. Therefore, we are sure that you will call for a vote on the first round not only for the SP and CP, but also for the organizations you characterize as "centrist"—the PSU, LO, OCT, CCA, and LCR included, inasmuch as your characterizations range from "leftist centrists" to "revolutionists claiming to stand on the Trotskyist program of the Fourth International," as the occasion calls for.

Whatever the range of epithets, you found it necessary to explain in your first guest column in *Rouge* that the LCR was a working-class organization. Surely you will not fail to match your words to your acts.

We hope to receive a specific response to these two proposals.

Communist greetings,  
LCR Political Bureau

## 3. Statement by OCI Central Committee

[The following statement by the Central Committee of the Organisation Commu-

niste Internationaliste was issued January 15. We have taken the text from the Janu-

2. For an English translation of the LCR platform, see *Intercontinental Press*, December 19, 1977, p. 1403.

3. CGT—Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labor). CFDT—Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (French Democratic Confederation of Labor). FEN—Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale (National Education Federation, the largest teachers union). FO—Force Ouvrière (Labor Force, a smaller union federation).

\* \* \*

Workers, activists, youth:

It will be necessary for everyone to tell the truth.

It will be necessary for everyone to take a clear position.

It will be necessary to stop replying to simple questions with a flood of innumerable, rambling speeches and articles.

Do the toiling masses and youth of this country want to put an end to the Giscard-Barre government? Do they want to give the SP and CP a majority in the next National Assembly?

To these specific questions, there is only one real, specific answer: *yes*.

There can be no doubt about it. The toiling masses and youth of this country want to put an end to the Giscard-Barre government. They want an SP-CP majority.

How can we put an end to the Giscard and Barre government and make sure that an SP-CP majority is formed in the National Assembly, except by a mutual commitment on the part of the SP and CP to automatically stand down on the second round of the elections in favor of the CP or SP candidate who comes in first on the first round?

This is a fact. Whoever refuses right now to make an explicit pledge to stand down, whoever refuses to make this pledge, is helping the reactionaries remain in power.

The OCI says openly:

As Marxists, we consider it necessary to take part in elections. To us, the electoral arena is one of the battlegrounds of the class struggle. But while duty-bound to use all legal openings, the OCI proclaims what all of history teaches—that the proletariat cannot win its emancipation except by taking the road of socialist revolution. Never before and nowhere has the march toward socialism been achieved by the parliamentary road.

The OCI, along with Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, and all the founders of the workers movement, thinks that the exploited producers will not be freed of capitalist exploitation except by taking control of the means of production, and that this collective expropriation cannot be achieved except by the revolutionary action of the proletariat, which draws into its fight for emancipation the poorest layers of working farmers and the urban petty bourgeoisie.

The OCI, along with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, believes that the proletariat cannot expropriate the capitalists, take control of the means of production, and run the economy to meet the material and cultural needs of the masses except by replacing the bourgeois state apparatus, its standing bodies, its police, army, and courts, with a republic of workers councils.

The socialist revolution is and will re-

main the only way to liberate humanity from the chains of capitalist exploitation. Revolutionary combat demands that, to that end, the toiling masses use all the means available to them, including the right to vote. Marxists may decide both to participate in elections and not to participate in them, as circumstances permit. To Marxists, the electoral arena is a battleground of the class struggle, but it must be subordinate to preparing for the socialist revolution.

The toiling masses who want to unseat the Giscard and Barre government are fully aware of the importance of the upcoming elections on March 12 and 19, 1978.

Given the political circumstances, the OCI Central Committee has decided not to run candidates. What is most important in these elections is to fight to elect an SP-CP majority to the next National Assembly.

For the OCI, the goal of a united fight for an SP-CP majority in the elections is to help the toiling masses and youth gather their strength to replace the Giscard-Barre government with a government of the SP and CP without representatives of bourgeois parties, to put an end to the reactionary institutions of the Fifth Republic, and open the road to the socialist revolution.

The situation is clear. The SP and CP claim to represent the working class. Both say that a change is needed. Confronted by the SP and CP, the bloc of bourgeois parties upholding the Fifth Republic is breaking up. It is at this point that one of the two parties claiming to represent the working class, namely, the Communist Party, is taking the fateful responsibility of setting itself up in opposition to the hopes of the toiling masses who are demanding that it make a pledge to stand down on the second round. For its part, the SP has stated that those of its candidates who receive fewer votes than the CP candidates on the first round will automatically stand down, without any preconditions.

All workers and activists, those of the CP included, are asking: leaders of the CP, are you willing to be responsible for continuing the divisive policy you have begun?

Leaders of the CP, will you take the responsibility, will you take the risk, with maneuvers like this, of making the toiling masses lose this political battle by trying to confuse everything, when all indications are that this battle can lead to the extinction of the reactionary institutions of the Gaullist Fifth Republic, together with the Giscard and Barre government?

That is why, in this situation, the Central Committee of the OCI declares that the fundamental and primary task of all OCI members and of the entire working-class and youth vanguard is to redouble political work in all areas, to help the toiling masses foil the CP leaders' attempt

to lose the elections so that there will be no SP-CP majority.

Above all, it is necessary to gather the forces to establish unity committees everywhere, in the plants, neighborhoods, and districts, to obtain an unconditional pledge of withdrawal, to induce each candidate run by the CP and SP to make a pledge to stand down.

Workers, activists, youth:

The position of the OCI (for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International) is based on facts established with utter certainty. By taking facts established with utter certainty as the point of departure, it becomes clear that the CP leadership's refusal to make a pledge to stand down amounts to leaving the reactionaries in power.

It is an absolutely unquestionable fact that an SP-CP majority is practically assured. The main obstacle to forming an SP-CP majority is the policy of the CP leadership.

No one can allow a policy that flies in the face of unity to be continued amid shouts of "Long live unity."

It is necessary to help the masses to set up their own committees for withdrawal on the second round, providing the masses with the greatest opportunities to gather their own strength, to make sure that an SP-CP majority is established.

*Helping the toiling masses to achieve what they want—that is the policy of the OCI.*

In the last few months, the OCI has enabled tens of thousands of workers and youth to express their demands for unity, and has made it possible to send hundreds of delegations to meet with the CP leadership, to ask them to make a pledge to stand down.

The OCI Central Committee has determined very precisely and accurately what has been begun and what has not yet been completed. There are scarcely two months left in which to help the toiling masses to impose their will.

Everything can be achieved.

We repeat: it is possible to gather sufficient forces to make sure that, above all, each CP candidate makes a pledge, immediately, to stand down for the SP candidate if the former comes in second on the first round.

Workers, activists, youth:

This is the policy of the OCI, which will be outlined at a *mass meeting called for Friday, January 27, 1978, in Paris*. Everything must be done to see to it that the toiling masses sweep away all opposition to unity. To that end, delegates from the rank-and-file unity committees, set up to work for a withdrawal pledge, will make an initial evaluation of the fight for unity. This will take place at the *second session of the National Conference of Workers and Youth, to be held Sunday, January 29, in Clichy*.

## 4. Four Questions for Lutte Ouvrière

[The following exchange between Alain Krivine of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and Jacques Morand of Lutte Ouvrière was published in the December 24, 1977, issue of *Lutte Ouvrière*.]

\* \* \*

Our differences with Lutte Ouvrière are long-standing. Far from wishing to evade them, we have conducted an ongoing discussion both in our respective newspapers, and through guest columns in each other's press, on those issues that divide us.

1. What makes it impossible now to reach the kind of agreement that we had in the municipal elections?

The debate over what policy to adopt toward the reformist parties had already begun at the time of the municipal elections. In a column published in the March 19, 1977, issue of *Rouge*, Lutte Ouvrière stated: "But it would be spreading illusions to present the second round of the electoral battle as something of importance to the workers, as a chance to 'beat the right,' or a chance to 'remove an obstacle' to future working-class battles. . . . because over and above the municipal elections, from the standpoint of the legislative elections, it is false to claim that the workers will be better off in the event that a Union of the Left government comes about—which, by the way, is not at all assured."

These arguments were answered by us at the time they were raised. The fact remains that such differences did not prevent us from signing an agreement for the municipal elections ("For socialism, for power to the workers").<sup>4</sup>

2. What are the novelties of the agreement reached by the LCR, OCT, and CCA?

In an article in *Lutte Ouvrière* of December 4, Jacques Morand reports on the communiqué issued by the LCR, OCT, and CCA in regard to a unity agreement. Morand concludes that the organizations signing the communiqué "did not see fit to say clearly what kind of government of the left would result from a possible victory in the elections, which they say they are prepared to work for." But he ignores this sentence from the communiqué: "There exist major points of agreement in evaluating the different versions of the Common Program as a class-collaborationist program, incapable of meeting the demands of the masses." The comrades of Lutte Ouvrière will be able to judge for themselves by reading the text of the final agreement<sup>5</sup>—where it is stated that a gov-

ernment that maintains the institutions of the Fifth Republic and preserves a market economy cannot defend the workers' interests.

The political basis for the agreement is the same one that underlay the agreement for the municipal elections. Today, Lutte Ouvrière seems to be raising questions about the position it took nine months ago, and no longer appears inclined to raise—prior to the first round—the same call for a vote for the CP and SP. We hope that the open polemic between the CP and SP is not the grounds on which LO has changed its position on this point.

3. Does the brochure published in September, entitled *Changing Our Lives—Yes, It Can Be Done* still reflect LO's position?

This brochure states: "We are fighting to make sure that a Left victory in the elections takes place without illusions. . . . We are fighting for the working class to send its representatives to parliament without giving them a blank check, and while mobilizing to enforce the supervision and control that are essential." Nowhere does this brochure state that a government of Mitterrand and Marchais would be a bourgeois government. And so, comrades of Lutte Ouvrière, this means one of two things:

Either you have two positions—one for the masses, contained in an election brochure where, as of September 1977, you call for a vote for LO—and another for the far left.

Or you think that the current political situation makes this campaign brochure obsolete. But in that case, it is hard to understand why you treat the CP-SP polemic as simply an episodic twist, if it has led you to change the major focus of your propaganda.

4. For an agreement among the revolutionary organizations to divide up the election districts.

## 5. Reply by Lutte Ouvrière

Each election calls for a specific response. The LCR, moreover, knows this very well, for it has adopted a different position toward every national election in the last ten years—running a candidate without consulting anyone (including Lutte Ouvrière, with which it was holding discussions about the possibility of fusion at the time) in the 1969 presidential elections; total abstention from the 1971 municipal elections (despite our proposal to

run common slates); an agreement for dividing up election districts in the 1973 legislative elections; deciding to run a candidate against the LO candidate in the 1974 presidential elections, and so on.

The fact is that we knew what our differences were in March 1977 as well as we do today.

But at the time, there were two considerations propelling us toward an agreement. The first was the need to run a full list of candidates residing in a given election district, which compelled both of us to run a common slate rather than risk not appearing on the ballot at all. Secondly, the political issue in these elections was to

run common slates); an agreement for dividing up election districts in the 1973 legislative elections; deciding to run a candidate against the LO candidate in the 1974 presidential elections, and so on.

Since our differences were, for the most part, as well known then as now we do not understand why that proposal would be withdrawn at this time.

In view of the division maintained by the CP and SP out of petty self-interest, with no connection to the genuine interests of the workers, we all agree on working for workers unity based on an anticapitalist program. In this common struggle, how much credibility would revolutionary candidates competing in the same election district have?

On the other hand, the meaning of the agreement reached by the LCR, CCA, and OCT (and proposed to LO), the method of running candidates, will allow each organization to put forward not only the common positions contained in the agreement, but also its own positions.

A vote for the revolutionary candidates in March 1978 will have the meaning of a challenge and a warning to the parties that claim to represent the workers movement, the CP and SP. Do the comrades of Lutte Ouvrière think that a vote for their candidates will have a different meaning than a vote for the other revolutionary organizations?

Over and above the question of preparing for the legislative elections, Lutte Ouvrière's present course is a troubling one. Could it be that those comrades who, only six months ago, proposed publishing a joint weekly newspaper with the LCR, have chosen to isolate themselves from the rest of the far left?

Alain Krivine

For the LCR Political Bureau

4. For an English translation of the text of this agreement see *Inprecor*, January 27, 1977, p. 28, or *Intercontinental Press*, February 28, 1977, p. 212.

5. For an English translation of the text of this agreement, see *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, January 16, 1978, p. 59.

proclaim the existence of a revolutionary current, to put forward this current's answers to the problem of a democratic city government and to the day-to-day concerns of people in the neighborhoods and cities.

No worker, no one, saw the outcome of the municipal elections as bringing the left to power.

The prospect of the left coming to power has become the main issue in the March 1978 legislative elections. Consequently, the position that each of us takes in this matter has become a central, decisive political question.

However, the policies of our organizations on it are completely different.

The reason why, right after the municipal elections, Arlette Laguiller was already saying that it would not be possible to carry over the agreement reached in the municipal elections, but at best, to arrive at a division of the election districts, was that we were already well aware that our political differences with respect to the left were either going to deepen or at least take precedence over other considerations.

Since then, these differences showed up strongly during the demonstrations on May 1, May 24, and most recently, December 1. May 1, for instance, showed that even when we managed, after long drawn-out negotiations, to agree to march together under a common banner, in practice there were still two contingents, each one shouting very different slogans, when they weren't trying to drown out each other's voices.

No amount of hairsplitting over documents can hide the fact that our policies today are counterposed. To dissect this or that pamphlet to try and prove the opposite would be ludicrous. The sentence that you quote is ambiguous, since it seems to say the same thing as you. That we readily admit. Our ideas would be better expressed in this way: "We are fighting so that, if the working class does send its representatives to parliament, it will do so without giving them a blank check."

In fact, in the political platform you signed with the OCT and CCA, a Union of the Left government is described as a bourgeois government. But look at what the OCT says about it: "We can be glad," they write in *l'Étincelle*, "that the LCR is using the term 'bourgeois class-collaborationist government,' which it formerly reserved for publications of limited circulation." But this agreement too is intended for limited circulation, and we will see what you do with its content in the election campaign.

Let's not play on words. In a nutshell, you are telling the workers today: Granted, their program is bad, and we distrust these men of the left, from the SP and CP. Nevertheless, their coming to power would still be a good thing and a significant step forward for the workers.

In your common platform, for example,

you state: "Nevertheless, it would not be just another bourgeois government, for the CP and SP, once in power, would both be compelled (though in different ways) to take the demands of the 'proletarian constituency' into account."

For our part, we repeat: a government of the left will be just another government. Just as with the right, the workers will have to fight to win their demands. Let's not delude ourselves about what this government of the left will do. It will defend only the interests of the bourgeoisie. Such a government will not only ignore workers' demands, but may carry out a policy that the right does not dare, or cannot carry out.

Under these circumstances, a vote for your candidates in March 1978 will have a very different meaning than a vote for ours. Those who vote for your candidates will be saying, in essence: We have quite a few criticisms to make of the CP and SP, but we are voting to bring them to power anyway, because it will be a step forward that will bring results for the workers.

Those who vote for the Lutte Ouvrière candidates will be saying: We distrust the Marchais and Mitterrands, we have no

confidence whatsoever in them, we know that if they come to power tomorrow the workers will have to struggle just as they had to struggle under a Chirac or Barre government to win their demands.

Let's not hide the fact that the logical extension of these two different policies under a government of the left could lead to widening the gulf between our two organizations—critical support in your case, steadfast opposition in ours.

Still and all, we can "reassure" the comrades of the LCR. What is involved is in no way a turn on LO's part, least of all a "sectarian" turn. We have always been and we are still in favor of doing whatever it is possible to do together, particularly publishing a joint weekly paper.

The elections are only one episode of political life among others, and not a vital one. If before, during, or after the elections, there are areas in which we find ourselves in agreement, the fact that we are competing against one another in these elections will in no way prevent us from collaborating with you. And if it prevents you from doing so, that is indeed a shame.

Jacques Morand

## 6. LCR Reply to Lutte Ouvrière

[The following response to Lutte Ouvrière by F. Lourson of the LCR was published in the December 30 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

That serious differences exist between the LCR and LO on what position to take toward the Union of the Left is a fact we have never concealed.

The differences do not (as Morand pretends to think, attributing the PSU's positions to us) center around the LCR's "critical support" to the Union of the Left versus LO's "steadfast opposition." Nor do they have to do with how to characterize a government of the left—it would not be a workers government, but a *bourgeois* government, since it would maintain bourgeois institutions and a capitalist economy.

### 1. What Attitude to Take Toward a Government of the Left?

The differences have to do with how to approach workers who see no other solution than the Union of the Left, so as to reinforce their distrust of the Communist and Socialist parties.

We think that it is politically ineffective to limit ourselves to repeating: "The left is no better than the right. A government of the left would be just another bourgeois government. The CP and SP are traitors; they have already betrayed you, and they will betray you again."

On the contrary, what we should tell

them is: "You have confidence that the SP and CP will meet your demands and begin the march toward socialism. But this cannot be done by allying with the "left" Radicals and Gaullists, by keeping Giscard and his 1958 constitution, by leaving four-fifths of the plants in the bosses' hands, and by keeping the judges, cops, and generals who have served the bourgeoisie so well. Like us, you want a government that will really defend workers' interests.

"Fine—we are ready to struggle with you to make sure that the CP and SP take that route, that they break all alliances with bourgeois parties, that they kick out Giscard, that they nationalize all the key sectors without compensation or indemnity, that they extend workers control over the economy, that they recognize soldiers' trade-union and political rights, and that they get rid of the reactionary officers.

"We revolutionists say openly that this policy is the opposite of that of the CP and SP, and that we have no confidence whatsoever that they will carry it out. But you workers who have confidence in them think that you will be able to impel them to adopt such a working-class policy. We say to you: let's go through the experience together."

We think that this approach is a thousand times more convincing than any abstract denunciations, which can only appear to the workers as an outright amalgam between their parties and those of the bourgeoisie.



This discussion, moreover, is not a new one in the workers movement. In 1936, after the sabotage of the general strike, Trotsky wrote to his supporters in France to explain how revolutionists should conduct themselves with respect to the Popular Front government. "We do not put Léon Blum<sup>6</sup> in the same bag with the de Wendels and their de la Rocques. We accuse Blum of not understanding or foreseeing the formidable resistance of the de Wendels. We must repeat that despite all of our irreconcilable opposition to the Blum government, the workers will find us in the front lines in the fight against its imperialist enemies. This is a very important distinction, even a decisive one, for the coming period. It is in this sense that systematic propaganda has to be carried on for the second general strike, not to overthrow the government but to break the obstacles before it."<sup>7</sup>

It is surprising that Lutte Ouvrière, which publicly claims to be Trotskyist, should choose as an indication of "critical support" a quotation that says that "the Union of the Left is not just another bourgeois government." This quotation only reiterates the traditional Trotskyist explanation of the need to distinguish between a bourgeois government made up of bourgeois parties and a bourgeois government where leaders of workers parties hold sway, forced to maneuver between the demands of their "capitalist bosses" and the pressure of their "proletarian constituency," whom they are defrauding.

## 2. What Slogan to Raise on The Second Round?

In the 1974 presidential elections, where the question of the government was directly posed, Arlette Laguiller, from the start of her campaign, called for a vote "against the right without giving Mitterrand a blank check." She did not lump together a government of the right and of the left. You don't give Giscard any check at all.

Nowadays Lutte Ouvrière seems to have changed its tune. It refuses to raise the slogan "Out With Giscard!" It accuses other revolutionary organizations that are running candidates of making political concessions by "rushing to raise their call for a vote" for the CP and SP. This criticism is odd, to say the least.

Workers like things to be clear. On the second round, there are only two possible positions. One is abstention, the tradi-

tional stance of Maoists or anarchists, who are against elections in principle. This would amount to telling the workers that they don't have to choose between "plague and cholera."

The other possibility is to call for a vote against the right, for the workers parties that hold the confidence of the majority of workers. A victory for these parties would bolster the will to struggle on the part of the working class, which includes struggling against the policy of its leaderships, so that they can experience what this policy means in practice.

By refusing, unlike in the past, to clearly say what its position will be, Lutte Ouvrière seems to be telling the workers: We will decide when the time comes. It is choosing to foster confusion on an essential question.

## 3. Does Lutte Ouvrière Have Two Lines?

Let's be frank. We have an unpleasant feeling that Lutte Ouvrière is much more definite about rejecting out of hand any kind of unity agreement for dividing up election districts than about its own political positions.

We have frequently quoted from the only brochure published by Lutte Ouvrière for the legislative elections. To begin with, this brochure does not lump together governments of the left and of the right (as Morand does when he polemicalizes with us). Furthermore, it includes a number of formulations that are opportunist, to say the least, like this one, which pictures the CP and SP as merely inconsistent: "A government of the left, at least in the beginning, will try to bring some improvements for the workers, but the few temporary gains won will be quickly taken back and wiped out by the deepening of the crisis itself."

Now, however, Morand chides the LCR for saying that a government of the left "will bring some gains for the workers."

We quoted a section of this brochure that says: "We are fighting to make sure that a Left victory in the elections takes place without illusions....We are fighting for the working class to send its representatives to parliament without giving them a blank

check, and while mobilizing to enforce the supervision and control that are essential." Morand replies that this sentence is in fact "ambiguous, since it seems to say the same thing as you," and revises it to: "We are fighting so that *if* the working class *does* send its representatives...."

This is irresponsible. Tacking on a conjunction on a whim is no substitute for either reaffirmation or self-criticism. Either Lutte Ouvrière has changed its mind since this brochure was published—and if so, they should say so; this would clarify the discussion—or else, in its election campaigns, it is talking out of both sides of its mouth, saying one thing to the workers and another in its polemics with the far left.

In light of this, we could not help but be surprised by the first LO campaign posters that we saw pasted up. Not one of them tells the workers: "A government of the left = a government of the right," or "Mitterrand and Marchais = Barre and Chirac."

They are confined to abstract propaganda slogans ("Expropriate those who take our jobs away," "Production should be planned") and elementary explanations—"One more person without a job is one less consumer," "Small shopkeepers aren't the ones causing our problems," "Money for schools, not for bombs"—that do not clash with what the CP says (or has said).

We have said and we repeat: we have had just as many differences up to now with Lutte Ouvrière as with the OCT on what attitude to take toward the traditional organizations. The kind of election agreement that we are proposing will allow each organization to put forward its program, while at the same time enabling the workers to express their distrust toward the Union of the Left. That a single candidate should run in each election district on the basis of political agreement is therefore crucial.

Lutte Ouvrière rejects such an agreement out of hand. But for the sake of which line? The one in its weekly paper, or the one in its campaign posters?

F. Lourson

## 7. Why There Is No Electoral Agreement Between Lutte Ouvrière and the LCR, OCT, and CCA

[The following statement appeared in the January 14 issue of *Lutte Ouvrière*.]

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On Tuesday, January 10, in Paris, the LCR, OCT, and CCA held a meeting to present the agreement these three organizations had reached on the legislative elections. Lutte Ouvrière, which, as is well known, is not associated with this agree-

ment, was invited to the meeting to present its point of view. The following is the major portion of our remarks.

\* \* \*

It is true that we have refused to sign the joint political platform put forward by your three organizations, to associate ourselves in one way or another with the slate known as "For socialism, for power to the

6. Léon Blum, a leader of the French SP in the 1930s, was premier under the first People's Front government in 1936.

7. From a letter by Trotsky, dated June 21, 1936, to the Central Committee of the French section of the Fourth International. An English translation may be found in *The Crisis of the French Section* by Leon Trotsky (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977, p. 150).

workers" that you have set up, and even to make a simple agreement to divide up the election districts.

Is it out of "sectarianism," as you insist?

Your various criticisms all center around the same basic point. We are said to be exaggerating our differences. You say there are no basic political differences between Lutte Ouvrière and yourselves, at least with regard to the key question in the March 1978 legislative elections—that of the left's chances of coming to power. At best, there are tactical differences, you say, over how to approach the workers at this time.

#### The Case of 1956

It seems to us that, on the contrary, there are fundamental differences in the analysis that we each make of the nature of a possible left government.

For several months, we have observed your reluctance to state firmly that this government of the left—this Mitterrand government, to call things by their right name—will be an outright bourgeois government. And when you cannot avoid using the word, you immediately add—as you do in your joint platform—that "it will not be just another bourgeois government." And what you imply by that is that in one way or another, it will be more beneficial for the workers.

We, on the other hand, say that a Mitterrand government would be just another bourgeois government. We say that, from the workers' point of view, it will not have a different character from the Barre government. We even say, so as to leave no doubt in the matter, that this government might be worse in a certain way, in the sense that it may be able to take advantage of its leftist image and its ties to the parties that will support it—the Socialist and Communist parties, along with the working class—to make the workers accept quietly what they would not accept from a government of the right.

And for those who might be shocked or offended by such statements, we will recall a historical precedent involving the most recent left government that this country has seen. That was the one headed by Socialist Party leader Guy Mollet—in which, incidentally, François Mitterrand was included.

It was this government of the left that did what the preceding governments of the right had not dared to do—to call up hundreds of thousands of young men for military service, lengthen the period of conscription, and escalate the filthy colonial war in Algeria. And it did all this by bracing itself on the widespread illusion that a government of the left would be better than a government of the right.

We ask you: Who would have been right? Who would have had a correct policy in the elections that led up to the formation of the Mollet government? Those who stressed

that it would not be just another bourgeois government, those who emphasized the need for the workers to have a left majority on the first or second round?

Or those who would have told the workers: Beware of the left as well as the right; the left is getting ready to rule in the same interests, which are not yours; to win your demands, beginning with forcing a halt to the filthy colonial war, prepare yourselves to fight, even against this government of the left, which may very well follow a worse policy than the right?

Yes, comrades, who would have been right? And what would the correct policy have been? Transpose that situation to the present. Put François Mitterrand in Guy Mollet's place. And put the economic crisis in place of the colonial war. And we think you will get the right answer.

#### A Tactical Difference?

But let's suppose for the time being that we agree on the basics. Let's suppose—since now and then you also say that the future government of the left will be a bourgeois government—that your outlook is the same as ours. Let's suppose that our differences actually center only around the way things should be presented to the workers.

When it comes to an election—which is precisely our opportunity to address large numbers of workers—a sharp difference over how to do this is a fundamental difference.

You think—as you wrote in *Rouge* ten days ago—that "it is politically ineffective to limit ourselves to repeating: 'The left is no better than the right. A government of the left would be just another bourgeois government. They have already betrayed you, and they will betray you again.'"

We, however, think that in this electoral period, it is precisely by emphasizing that point that revolutionists can be politically effective, and can lay the groundwork not only for the elections as such, but for the period to follow.

We think that stating firmly that a government of the left would not represent the workers but the class enemy is the best way to prepare them for the postelection period. This is true whatever the outcome of the elections, whether it be a government of the left of another government of the right.

You think that by taking this stance we cut ourselves off from the radicalized workers. We think that your position only helps to spread illusions, to push the workers into the arms of a left that, once in power, will betray them.

#### No Struggles Should Be Subordinated to a Left Victory in the Elections

A single example taken from the central themes of your campaign: your greater and greater emphasis on campaigning now for the second round of the elections.

You have made calling for a vote and voting on the second round for the candidate of the left with the best chance of winning a condition for belonging to your electoral front, with the result of excluding—at least temporarily—the Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire.

Ever since the CP made clear that it would not decide itself on what position to take until after the first round, the LCR has even undertaken an entire campaign directed at the CP. "You must commit yourselves," says the LCR, "to stand down on the second round for the left candidate with the best chance of winning."

We should note in passing that this campaign is futile. There is no doubt that in one way or another the CP will observe the rule of standing down on the second round. It has always done so in past years, even when it had no agreement with the SP. It is still in the CP's best interest to do so. There is no need for a campaign by the far left to make Marchais understand this.

But that is not what is important. What is important are the differences between us that this reveals.

To us, the question of the second round is a tactical one, to be decided essentially according to how the first round comes out. The far left can, of course, call for a vote for the left candidate with the best chance of winning, out of solidarity with the majority of workers who will vote for that candidate, but without creating illusions about the CP and SP.

But what really counts in the first round, the number of votes that will go to the revolutionary candidates in the first round, the number of voters who will say, by voting for us, that they have no more confidence in the left than in the right, that they think, as we do, that the workers must rely only on their struggles.

And the reason why we are running is precisely to give everyone in the country who thinks this way a chance to express it when the elections come around.

By giving equal and even greater weight to the second round than to the first, by focusing on the need for the SP and CP candidates to stand down for one another, you, on the other hand, are saying something else. You are saying that, at bottom, the number of votes for the revolutionary candidates is not very important. And in that case, the voters may well wonder why you are running at all.

It is almost as though you were ashamed of running and wanted to make people forget about it by being instead for unity of the CP and SP.

You say that what matters is having a left majority in the next parliament. And you say that it is vital for the workers to have a left parliamentary majority, that it is a necessary stage in their struggles. Clearly, you are subordinating workers' struggles to a victory of the left in the elections.

That is what *we* call helping to bolster

illusions both in the elections and in the left.

That is what we do not want to take part in. That is what explains why we do not think an electoral agreement with you is possible. That is what explains why we must run independently from each other.

#### We Decide What Is 'Politically Effective'

What is involved here is a clear political judgment. It has nothing to do with sectarianism, contrary to what you say. . . .

Furthermore, over the last ten years, we have taken different approaches in different elections, and so have you. This shows that you too know perfectly well that unity of the far left in the elections depends on the type of election, on what is at stake, on the policies of all sides in the matter. That is why it is odd to ask us why we formed an electoral alliance with you a year ago, during the municipal elections, when we refuse to form one now for the legislative elections. Quite simply, it is because the circumstances and issues in these elections are not the same, nor are the campaigns of our respective organizations.

However, for our part, throughout the years in which we have taken part in the elections, either jointly by agreement or separately, this has not prevented us from agreeing to or proposing unity to other far-left organizations in those areas and on those issues where such unity seemed possible.

And what we can at least say with certainty today, when our differences do not permit us to reach an electoral agreement, is that our position on this is no different from the one we have had up to now.

We will continue to seek unity with the far left whenever possible.

But again, unity is neither possible nor desirable in these elections, even if we were to assume that our differences do not stem from fundamental differences in outlook but are instead purely tactical, involving only the way we approach CP and SP voters.

Since you think that our way of approaching the workers is ineffective, we think there is a need to run separate campaigns. It is one way to find out—and that is precisely what the elections should do—which way of approaching the masses will be better understood, ours or yours.

We will each run our own campaign, we will each approach the workers in the way we think most effective and on the issues we think are central. Then all of our members and sympathizers will be able to make an assessment after the campaign is over.

That is what we propose to you, comrades. The debate now underway should continue up to the eve of March 12 and 19. For two months, we will each present our point of view to the public. And everyone—each member and sympathizer of each of

the far-left organizations—will be able to see the different approaches we have taken, judge them, and measure their results.

It will be up to each of them to decide what was "politically effective" or not.

## 8. Statement by the CCA

[The following excerpts from a letter sent to the LCR Central Committee by the *Comités Communistes pour l'Autogestion* were published in the January 14-15 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

Dear Comrades,

At a time when the political situation is conferring responsibilities on revolutionary Marxists in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, for workers unity, and against class collaboration, we are pleased by the progress made by our two organizations in forming a united front. This progress has been reflected in the discussion begun since our first congress, and especially by the platform known as "For socialism, for power to the workers," that our organizations signed jointly with the OCT. This platform commits us to a joint campaign in the legislative elections, whose importance we are both well aware of. . . .

It would be feasible—and this is what we are proposing—for our two organizations to sign an agreement at the national level that would commit us to run joint campaigns in the districts where we are both running. Such an agreement would in no way conflict with the OCT-LCR-CCA platform. It would take it one step further, going into more detail about what is noted only as a disagreement between our two organizations and the OCT, in order to provide a basis for a joint campaign that would take up the points we can make together. These include:

- Renewing the discussion on nationalization with regard to the CP and SP. The joint campaign would publicize the idea of widespread nationalizations without compensation or indemnity, under workers control, moving toward workers management of society as a whole.
- For establishment of a soldiers' union, independent of the military hierarchy, and linked to the workers movement.
- For building mass unions among student youth.
- For building an independent women's movement.
- For a moratorium on nuclear energy.
- Raising the following demands focusing on the united front and workers control:

—For a united front of the political parties and trade unions to bring about unity of the workers and of their organizations.

—For a CP-SP government without Gaullists or Radicals, meeting the de-

In no way are we turning our backs on unity with you. We will meet with you to carry on this discussion, and perhaps forge new unity in the struggles of the working class, but on a political basis that is clear, correct, and effective.

mands and expectations of the masses of workers and oppressed layers, breaking with the bourgeoisie, supported and controlled by unified rank-and-file committees of the workers and all those who claim to be socialists—trade-unionists, Socialists, Communists, revolutionists. We should propagandize for these committees just as we do for a CP-SP government.

Finally, we could conduct a joint campaign of support to the antibureaucratic opposition in the Eastern European countries.

The purpose of such an agreement would not be to congratulate ourselves on having one more joint document, nor would it be limited to each of our campaigns. Its aim would be to establish, on a clear programmatic basis, overlapping slates of regular and alternate candidates in those districts where we are both running. This could solve certain problems of dividing up the districts in a way that is most honest politically, and most beneficial to our organizations and to the joint campaign of "Power to the workers" itself.

Therefore, it seems to us that to systematically reject the idea of any overlapping slates (in Paris, for example) between our two organizations (since we often run in the same neighborhoods), and instead to run only regular and alternate candidates of the LCR, is in contradiction with your publicly announced policy, and stems from a desire to push our organization into the background.

Our second point concerns the way in which the joint campaign is being carried out. Even though the united-front policy that you claim to support today presupposes the existence of mass organizations, even on a limited scale, that are broader than a mere front of the organizations involved, you refuse to assign any independent role to the joint campaign committees, and do not visualize them as anything but support groups for one candidate or another.

To us, this seems to be the exact opposite of a united-front policy. A real united-front policy does not require agreement with or support for an organization as a prerequisite for participation in unified rank-and-file structures, but simply agreement on slogans to be raised for action and agitation.

Your refusal to set up campaign committees as long as the candidate of the organization has not been named, seems to us to further stand in the way of an aggressive united-front policy. . . .

## 9. LCR Reply to the CCA

[The following reply to the CCA by Jean Métais of the LCR was published in the January 21-22 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

The CCA says that the "systematic rejection" (in Paris, for example) of "any overlapping slates between our two organizations" (consisting of a regular candidate from one and an alternate from the other) is regrettable. They interpret it as a desire to "push [their] organization into the background." The CCA proposes that "our two organizations sign an agreement at the national level that would commit us to run joint campaigns in the districts where we are both running."

### A Joint LCR-CCA Campaign?

Our persistent differences with the OCT over our conception of the battle for workers unity are what have made it impossible for our three organizations to run a joint campaign. On this question, which we consider a decisive one in the current campaign, broad agreement exists between the CCA and the LCR.

Therefore, it is entirely possible to visualize "overlapping" LCR-CCA slates "where we are both running" and where there are problems with the division of districts. The campaign will be run on the basis of a political agreement that includes major portions of our respective platforms. This is the approach that was decided on in leadership discussions. Campaigns of this type will be run in Besançon, Reims, and Gennevilliers.

The CCA regrets the fact that we have not increased the number of overlapping slates. We sought first of all to divide up the election districts with both the CCA and OCT. This corresponds to the framework and spirit of the unity agreement. It is what makes for the best representation of each of our organizations. Each time that a division has proved impossible, we have agreed to overlapping slates, on condition that it correspond to a certain minimal presence of forces and mass work on the part of each of our organizations.

### The Campaign and the Joint Committees

The CCA criticizes our conception of joint campaign committees: "You refuse to assign any independent role to the committees. . . . The united-front policy that you claim to support today presupposes the existence of mass organizations, even on a limited scale, that are broader than a mere front of the organizations involved. . . ."

Yes, we did want our organizations and their candidates to take responsibility for the campaign, and to be ready to welcome any national or local group whose political

approach was the same as ours. The OCT and CCA agreed with this from the start.

Moreover, the CCA has nothing more to say about this political approach, which is the same as theirs on this point (see *Rouge* of June 30): "Starting from the central themes outlined in the nationwide call, the local groups will work out the concrete platform of the campaign, taking into account the real possibilities and ongoing region-wide struggles, and will democratically select their candidates."

The CCA (and the OCT) seem to have drawn the lessons of the line known as "candidates of struggles, committees, movements." They now recognize that such methods lead to the organizations' either going along with confused political campaigns (if they wish to stick to a hodge-podge acceptable to the various components of the committees), or manipulating the components of the committees (to get them to adopt the coherent political outlook that ought to be put forward by revolutionary organizations). The PSU's "Self-Management Front" represents the crowning example of this orientation.

The agreement warrants a political division of election districts and a call for a vote for each other's candidates. It lays the groundwork for many potential joint initiatives. But it is not a sufficient basis for a joint campaign. Our three organizations agreed on this. There is too large and fundamental a disagreement with the OCT on

## 10. Statement by the OCT

[The following guest column by Samy Joshua of the OCT appeared in the January 20 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

A recent statement by the LCR Central Committee [printed in the January 9 *Rouge*] stressed once again the campaign this organization is carrying out for "workers unity," according to its concept of what such unity means. At the same time, the Central Committee statement clearly registered a desire to limit the political scope of the pact "For socialism, for power to the workers," and a tendency to reduce it to simply an agreement to divide up election districts.

### 1. Does CP-SP Unity Equal Workers Unity?

The LCR began to deepen its present course in the wake of the split between the CP and SP. Basing itself on the unquestionable confusion and even demoralization caused by the breakup, the LCR

the way to approach the masses of workers who look to the reformist organizations. That is the reason why the agreement gives each organization a chance to run its own campaign, with its own candidates. So why should there be joint campaign committees?

Many workers and young people are ready to pounce on this campaign to raise their demands, express their distrust of the Union of the Left, discuss and explain some or all of our views before the masses of workers. They would not understand if, in those areas where our three organizations are active, the same number of campaign committees (supporting the same candidate) were counterposed to each other, any more than they would have understood running competing candidates.

Therefore, we will build the broadest possible campaign committees in all the areas where more than just our own forces can be involved. Each time that several organizations participate, they will calmly explain their ideas. Everyone in the committee will be able to form an opinion of them.

The committee will organize mass actions and joint discussions. We will work toward a consensus rather than impose majority votes; it will be up to the organizations to explain their positions openly, without using the committees as a "screen" to hide behind.

The greatest number of clear campaigns by each of our organizations, and the greatest number of joint discussions and actions—that is our conception of the campaign, which we will explain in the campaign committees.

campaigned against "division" and for "unity."

In doing so, it carefully avoided at least two questions.

Where did the division between the CP and SP come from? Leaving aside a more thorough analysis of this question, it is undeniable that the breakup in the left brings to the surface the underlying factors that divide the working class, but that the breakup itself did not create. Does the deepening of the divisions between employed and unemployed, between the struggles in various sectors, between men and women, and between French workers and immigrants stem from the division between the CP and SP? Or does it come from the class-collaborationist policies followed by these parties when they were united?

It is class collaboration that has caused the division.

Conversely, achieving unity between the CP and SP is not the same as achieving unity of the working class, because this cannot come about on the basis of class

collaboration. History abounds with examples of "unity" between reformist bureaucracies that has worked against development of the mass movement.

The LCR generally replies that it agrees with these eternal verities. Then how can it be that they have no influence at all on its tactics?

## 2. A CP-SP Government?

Hold on there, they will say. Yes, the LCR is for unity between the CP and SP—but on an anticapitalist basis. Unfortunately, that doesn't solve anything. "To put an end to austerity," the LCR Central Committee says, "there must be a determination to break with the bourgeoisie. There must be a government of the SP and CP that breaks all ties to the bourgeois parties." But everyone knows that this is in no way what the reformists want, that it is even the exact opposite of their programs. So?

Where have we ever seen reformist parties in operation with a "determination to break with the bourgeoisie"? The mass movement can, of course, make a lot of demands on a reformist government. That happened in France in 1936. But it cannot change the nature of the reformist parties. Not only can it not change the character of the loyal administrators of bourgeois order, but it will find them on the other side of the barricades when the crunch comes.

Under these circumstances, what "educational" value can there be to presenting an unreal outcome that the LCR itself knows is impossible as a central task of the workers? In this way, the LCR is single-mindedly pursuing a line of putting pressure on the reformists, to push them "further to the left." After having relegated the building of workers unity to them, the LCR now entrusts them with directing a break with the bourgeoisie from their posts in government.

At that point, the distance between such a position and one of critical support to a left government is negligible. Moreover, this explains why the LCR, while paying lip service to the idea that such a government would be a bourgeois government, refuses to declare itself part of the "revolutionary opposition." This would not, in any case, determine what tactics to adopt toward such a government. But there is basically no middle position between "revolutionary opposition" and "critical support."

## 3. Two Contradictory Approaches

At the same time, however, another approach, contradictory with the previous one, is being maintained. To put an end to austerity, there must be a CP-SP government, the LCR resolution says. But one paragraph further we read: "To put an

end to austerity, it is necessary to prepare for unified mobilizations of working men and women. And such mobilizations must be prepared and organized starting now." This is followed by a long list of the stumbling blocks put in the way of such mobilizations by the CP, SP, and trade-union leaderships. Under these conditions, what should the main task of revolutionists be? Shouldn't it be to take the steps necessary for the desired mobilization, in spite of the resistance of the reformists, and, if need be, in opposition to it?

How to determine a many-sided, complex tactic for arriving at such a mobilization—that is the real problem that must be solved. Contrary to what the LCR frequently says, the OCT in no way ignores the question of the specific relationship to the reformists for arriving at it. But to set the goal of a CP-SP government is not a "detour," it is a different policy, one that is in contradiction with the desired goal.

## 11. LCR Reply to the OCT

[The following reply to the OCT by A. Artous was published in the January 23 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

In a January 20 guest column in *Rouge*, Comrade S. Joshua criticized the LCR's "opportunism toward the reformists." Let's look at his arguments one by one.

### Workers Unity

The LCR's error, in practice, is that it allegedly confuses unity of the working class with unity of the CP and SP. Yet the policy of class collaboration only deepens the existing divisions (between French workers and immigrants, men and women, and so on), and "history abounds with examples of 'unity' between the reformist bureaucracies that has worked against development of the mass movement."

S. Joshua states: "The LCR generally replies that it agrees with these eternal verities. Then how can it be that they have no influence at all on its tactics?"

Precisely because in working out our political tactics, we are not satisfied with restating 'eternal verities.' We will go into this in more detail by analyzing the contradictory relations between the reformists and the working class.

Let's take the examples of the Popular Front in 1936, the Popular Unity government in Chile, or the Union of the Left in France. Differences can be noted in the form of collaboration with the bourgeoisie on the part of the reformist parties, and in their ties to workers' struggles, but they have a characteristic in common—they are class-collaborationist coalitions. While in

## 4. 'Workers' Unity and Revolutionary Unity

For the time being, the chief policy is the search for "workers" unity, as the LCR understands the concept. It is understandable, then, that revolutionary unity should be relegated to a lesser role, important mainly in terms of the need to establish a favorable relationship of forces for the struggle against class collaboration.

This goes hand in hand with a purely propagandistic campaign, aimed above all at the reformists, without a battle for real campaign committees.

Is there a possibility that the LCR may not wind up in such a rigid position? We hope so. It will be possible to tell from the forces the LCR allocates to actions that it claims to support, such as the march on Arenc prison in Marseille, and from what it does in the committees.

the final analysis such coalitions are set up to check the rise of the mass movement, they are seen by the majority of the working class as a reflection of unity (although an inadequate one).

### 'Pushing the Reformists to the Left'

So a contradiction exists between the aspirations of the workers, who rely on the reformists, and the latter's policy of class collaboration, which can only conflict with these aspirations. This contradiction is precisely what our tactic is designed to take into account.

Moreover, history has repeatedly shown that large sections of the workers can collide with one aspect of a reformist line in their struggles, without initially breaking with all of their reformist illusions in the process.

We see this in Spain, where a high degree of militancy and very radical demands, that in practice often overflow the boundaries that the reformists would like to impose on struggles, coexist with a growth of the organizations that the reformists control. Furthermore, the first outgrowth of "critical" tendencies that may develop in the working class may try to transform these traditional organizations, to "push them to the left."

### Which Tactic?

Must we then be content to tell the workers: "Throw off your illusions. It does no good to look to the reformists, workers unity must be achieved without them!" Or should we talk to them in terms that take into account their level of class conscious-

ness? That is, not giving an inch on criticizing the program of the CP and SP, but at the same time fighting together with all the workers, whatever illusions they may have, to make all of the workers organizations take up their demands.

We counterpose concretely such unity on a class basis to the policy of the reformists.

S. Joshua says it is contradictory to call for unity while making political criticisms. What he does not understand is that this seeming contradiction is but a reflection of the contradictory relations between the working class and the reformists' policy.

#### Pure Propagandism?

Such an approach would trap us in abstract propagandism. Let us look more closely at the reactions of the LCR and OCT to the breakup between the CP and SP. The OCT limited itself to calling for the building of a "revolutionary alternative," and to declaring that "the workers must rely only on their own strength." This refusal to fight for workers unity starting with the tools that the workers now possess, while struggling for unity of all the workers organizations on an anti-capitalist basis, is what really leads to becoming trapped in propagandism!

Comrade Joshua also says that more and more, our challenge to the reformists is merely verbal. There too, let's be specific. Can the comrade give a single example of one mass action that the LCR did not participate in? Were we satisfied with merely making appeals to Marchais and Mitterrand when Klaus Croissant was extradited?<sup>8</sup>

Finally, we are not relegating our policy for unity in the far left to a lesser role. This policy is important for its impact in struggles, particularly its impact vis-à-vis the workers as a whole and the reformists. But again, such revolutionary unity must be a means of struggle for workers unity. As a matter of fact, we would be opposed to a policy of revolutionary unity like that of the Portuguese FUR,<sup>9</sup> which at the time the OCT supported in totally uncritical fashion. What does Comrade S. Joshua have to say now about it?

On the other hand, the agreement for the legislative elections seems to us to be a good example of the type of unity in action that we desire—marching side by side, without concealing our differences, and striking in unison based on the points of agreement that exist.

8. See "Thousands Protest Extradition of Klaus Croissant," in *Intercontinental Press*, December 5, 1977, p. 1331.

9. Frente de Unidade Revolucionária (Front for Revolutionary Unity). For an English translation of the text of this accord and the subsequent manifesto issued by the FUR, see *Intercontinental Press*, September 15, 1975, p. 1206, and September 22, p. 1259.

## 12. 'Rouge' Report on Split in the OCT

[The following account by J.-F. Vilar of the split in the OCT was published in the January 25 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

Comrades who had formed a minority tendency, Tendency A, at the OCT's last congress (end of November) made a decision to leave the organization at a meeting held last weekend. According to reports confirmed by comrades in the OCT leadership, this decision affects most of the minority members of the Central Committee.

At the close of the congress, Tendency A had obtained 34 percent of the delegates, compared with 62 percent for Tendency B, the majority tendency. The Central Committee, made up of 56 members, had been elected in proportion to the tendencies.

In a guest column reporting on the congress, however, the comrades of Tendency A stated: "This decision was conditional; all members of the Central Committee were supposed to make an individual commitment to take up inside the OCT the content of a resolution evaluating the preconvention tendency debates . . . a

resolution the minority had expressed total disagreement with three hours earlier."

The sharpness of the preconvention debates, and, of course, the depth of the differences, had caused a walkout by a group of members—most of them former members of the Workers and Peoples Left, one of the organizations that formed the OCT—prior to the congress. These activists formed an "Initiative Committee for the Worker Left" that, so far, has made hardly any public showing.

Since the congress, it seems, walkouts by former members of Tendency A have been increasing. Last weekend's split, therefore, was not unexpected. It appears, however, that the comrades who left do not intend to form another organization.

"We have not given up on our fight to transform the OCT and the entire far left," the comrades of Tendency A said in their postcongress report. Their split belies this intention. The comrades of former Tendency A have not yet made public the reasons for their walkout. It goes without saying that we will give them, as well as the comrades of the OCT, a chance to express their views in *Rouge*.

## 13. OCT Leadership's Account of Split

[The OCT leadership gave an account of the split in the following guest column published in the January 28-29 issue of *Rouge*.]

\* \* \*

The French far left—whether it admits it or tries to conceal it with dogmatic, sectarian arrogance—is going through a severe crisis of perspectives, from which the OCT has not been spared. This has been manifested by the gradual loss over several months of many members who came out of both the former Révolution and the former Communist Organization—Workers and Peoples Left. In several cities, comrades who had been in the minority at our second congress in November 1977 left the OCT. In every case, they did so—disoriented and lacking perspectives—for their own sake and for the sake of those whom they are content to follow.

What is involved is not peculiar to the OCT, but a phenomenon that is becoming widespread in most of the far-left organizations—dissident tendencies that, in the name of the need to go beyond being tiny communist organizations, in fact refuse to tackle the unavoidable necessity of building them. This phenomenon has deep-going origins.

#### From the Crisis in the Far Left . . .

"Ten years after 1968"—an already trite

phrase, with overtones of bitterness and disillusionment, even resignation, among broad sectors of the revolutionary movement, and even among the post-1968 revolutionary generation, who are in the majority in the far-left organizations.

"Ten years after 1968," this generation is measuring the distance traveled. The international situation is raising questions about the meaning of its support for Cuba, for the struggles of the Indochinese people, for the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The setbacks for the revolution in Europe are intensifying doubts and confusion. The reactionary counteroffensive against Marxism, multifaceted and insidious, is bearing down hard on a generation that has not yet been able to resurrect a revolutionary theory disfigured by the Stalinist period.

But the seemingly plodding pace of the revolutionary alternative in France is no doubt the determining factor. And there are always friendly folk around who regularly conclude from our difficulties that we are bankrupt. And just as regularly, the revolutionary far left gives reminders—as shown by its role in social struggles, its growth in the plants, and the 1977 municipal elections—that it is playing a unique role.

The fact remains that this role is not equal to the stakes involved. While the far

left is now no longer only a force for social protest, it is not yet capable of offering a political outlook to the social movements in which it is active. Its political following is growing, but its organizational existence and its ties to the mass movement are unsuited—and occasionally unreceptive—to some aspects of anticapitalist protest. In the discussion prior to our second congress, we said:

“In this difficult situation, there are several possible shortcuts:

“Falling back, in a dogmatic, sectarian way, on supposed ideological and organizational gains, cultivated with zeal while awaiting better times. Such efforts are constantly being renewed in ‘Marxist-Leninist’ circles and in the archaeo-Trotskyist wing of the LCR.

“A headlong flight into support for mass movements that are breaking with reformism, if not yet antireformist. Such efforts, combined with our feeble strength in the working class, lead to retreating from the task of giving political focus to struggles, and the arduous task of building communist organizations.”

Any of these attempted shortcuts would be fatal for communist combat today.

#### ... to the Crisis in the OCT

These suicidal efforts are partly reflected

right now in the headlong flight of the comrades who left the OCT in search of an illusory way to participate in building a communist organization.

OCT members, whether they were in the majority or the minority at the congress, may have different opinions on the origins of the current situation. Nevertheless, all of us would agree that neither gimmicks nor shortcuts will get us beyond the “grouplet” stage. If we were to give an inch on this basic truth, we would be impelled to do a great deal of capitulating.

The walkout of members of our organization represents a serious political setback, for which we are responsible because we were unable to convince them of their error and of the secondary character of the initial differences. When activists leave an organization that they have helped to build, it sometimes happens that the more unresolved they are, the more strident they become, referring to events and differences that are as fictitious as they are disoriented. This was the case with some of the letters and accounts that appeared in *Libération* in the wake of our congress. We did not follow suit, and we will not. We will continue to seek discussion and joint action with all of the former OCT members whenever possible—not out of some die-hard nostalgia, but to convince them of their error.

class and to our people.” Especially, the PCR explained, since this bourgeois scheme was flanked by another bourgeois scheme, that of the RPR.<sup>10</sup> “This policy threatens to provoke a violent response from the most reactionary currents assembled around Chirac, a response that would sweep down on all of our people.”

Accordingly, by voting for the “revisionist and reformist” candidates on the second round, “we would only be bolstering the illusions of the masses and disarming them.”

“Whether to vote or abstain is not a principled question, but a tactical one. If the mass movement were sufficiently strong, it would be necessary to call for a vote for the revisionists, for then this would result in a heightening of the contradictions, and would facilitate the onset of a revolutionary crisis.”

The PCR therefore believes that a victory for the right in the elections “would not have a demoralizing effect on the mass of the working class.” Just the opposite: “That is the road of struggle, which will show up clearly. The genuinely revolutionary forces must be ready for this.”

It was this view that helped speed up the rapprochement between the PCR and PCMLF, to the extent that these two organizations signed an agreement registering their determination “to go forward in the process of unification of Marxist-Leninists.”

“The two organizations call on the workers to gather their forces on an anti-capitalist and antirevisionist basis, so as to build the broadest possible front against the bourgeoisie of the right and left.”

The two organizations are to unite in a national action committee that will build the campaign of the “Workers and Peasants Union for Proletarian Democracy.” Local committees will be set up wherever possible.

“In the election districts where candidates of the Union are not running, the two organizations will jointly examine at the national level the possibility of supporting candidates who will not stand down for one of the bourgeois parties of the right or left on the second round.”

We should note that at the national level, only the Self-Management Front led by the PSU, the Antinuclear Movement, and Lutte Ouvrière could possibly meet this criterion.

With this agreement that smacks of perfectly orthodox “Marxism-Leninism” (or, more accurately, Maoism and Stalinism), the PCR is falling back into the sectarian rut that it seemed to have climbed out of. The tiny Marxist-Leninist coterie will be the only forces to profit from it. □

10. Rassemblement pour la République (Assembly for the Republic), Gaullist party led by Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac.

## 14. Maoists Call for ‘Revolutionary Abstention’

[The following article, by Jean-François Vilar, appeared in the January 17 issue of *Rouge*.]

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“Revolutionary abstention.” That is the slogan for the second round of the elections issued by the Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire Marxiste-Léniniste. This decision was reached at the organization’s national conference, held over the weekend [January 14-15].

In a joint news conference held yesterday with *l’Humanité Rouge* (the newspaper of the Parti Communiste Marxiste-Léniniste Français), the platform of a “Workers and Peasants Union for Proletarian Democracy” was made public. On the basis of this document, the PCR and HR are planning to build a broad front. The “Workers and Peasants Union” intends to run about 150 candidates.

“We are surprised by the repeated advice lavished on us by some of our friends, inviting us to remain simply among Marxist-Leninists, and not to consider the questions facing revolutionists, together with other currents of the so-called far left.” This was said by a national leader of the PCR in November 1977. At that time,

this organization was planning to participate in the discussions then under way about the platform known as “For socialism, for power to the workers.”

This position was strongly criticized by other “Marxist-Leninist” organizations. The PCMLF, for example, denounced “the LCR of Krivine, which calls itself revolutionary but has always come forward as a defender of the CP.” It also denounced “the Trotskyist organization OCT, which has more rotten politics, which speaks of the Union of the Left as a bourgeois alliance, but presents a victory for the Common Program as beneficial to the ‘people’s forces,’ and is already planning to call for a vote for the Union of the Left on the second round of the legislative elections.”

In this light, it is certain that the decision made by the PCR at its national conference brings it back into the fold of “orthodox Marxism-Leninism” of the blindest and most sectarian type.

At the close of this conference, the PCR said that the “revisionist scheme” of bringing the CP into the state apparatus was more imminent than ever.

“The CP wants to come to power. It wants to establish state capitalism. This presents grave dangers to the working

## The Jailing of Ngugi wa Thiong'o

By Ernest Harsch

In an early-morning raid near Nairobi December 31, 1977, twelve uniformed police descended on the home of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, one of East Africa's best-known writers. According to Ngugi's wife, the police spent a long time examining each book in his study. When they were through they seized about 100 books and took Ngugi to the police station at Kiambu, a small town outside of the capital.

For more than a week the authorities refused to disclose any information about the writers' whereabouts, and inquiries by his wife, friends, and relatives were fruitless.

Finally, on January 12, the Kenyan government officially confirmed that Ngugi was being held under the Preservation of Public Security Act, which provides for indefinite detention without trial. Under this act, detained persons have no right of habeas corpus and cannot defend themselves in court against any charges leveled against them. No court may challenge a detention order. According to Amnesty International, which has adopted Ngugi's case, no charges against him have yet been made public. It is thought that he may now be imprisoned in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison in Nairobi.

Ngugi joins four other prominent Kenyan figures, all members of parliament, who are being held under the Preservation of Public Security Act: Wasonga Sijeyo, John Marie Seroney, Martin Shikuku, and George Anyona. Seroney and Shikuku were detained in October 1975 after criticizing the Kenya African National Union, the only legal party in the country. Anyona was arrested in May 1977 after charging top government officials with corruption and inquiring into Shikuku's health.

Just a few weeks before Ngugi's arrest, Oginga Odinga, a former leader of the banned Kenya People's Union, was briefly detained along with seventeen other persons after giving an unauthorized speech critical of the regime's agricultural policy.

Ngugi is thus only the most recent victim of President Jomo Kenyatta's policy of trying to silence prominent critics of his regime. But he is the first well-known intellectual to have been arrested.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (formerly known as James Ngugi) is among the best-known and most influential novelists and playwrights from East Africa. He was an associate professor of literature and chair-



NGUGI WA THIONG'O

man of the department of literature at the University of Nairobi at the time of his arrest.

All of his novels—*Weep Not Child*, *The River Between*, *A Grain of Wheat*, and most recently *Petals of Blood*—are concerned with the impact of white colonization on traditional African society, the struggle against British rule, or the disillusionment and class antagonisms of post-independence Kenya.

He has also written *The Black Hermit*, a play that was performed at the Uganda National Theatre in 1962 during Uganda's independence celebrations, as well as *Secret Lives*, a collection of short stories, and *Homecoming*, a volume of critical essays on literature, culture, and politics.

Ngugi's main characters are generally workers and peasants and his writings are highly critical of the Kenyan authorities for betraying the causes they fought for during the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s. At an African writers' conference in Stockholm in 1967 he pledged to fight in the interests of the peasants and workers of Africa, and in one of his essays in *Homecoming* he argues for the development of a new culture based on an end to exploitation and "the competitive accumulation of private property."

His social criticisms of present-day Kenya are most marked in *Petals of Blood*,

published several months ago in London. In it he asks:

How did we come to be where we are? How did it come about that 75 percent of those that produce food and wealth were poor and that a small group—part of the nonproducing part of the population—were wealthy? History after all should be about those whose actions, whose labour, had changed nature over the years. But how come that parasites—lice, bedbugs and jiggers—who did no useful work lived in comfort and those that worked for twenty-four hours went hungry and without clothes? How could there be unemployment in a country that needed every ounce of labour? So how did people produce and organise their wealth before colonialism? What lessons could be learnt from that?

Without directly attacking President Kenyatta by name, he sought to expose those Kenyan politicians who have enriched themselves since independence:

This was the society they had been building since Independence, a society in which a black few, allied to other interests from Europe, would continue the colonial game of robbing others of their sweat, denying them the right to grow to full flowers in air and sunlight.

The authorities' displeasure with Ngugi's social commentaries was made evident several months before his arrest, when they halted performances of a Kikuyu-language play he had written with another playwright. The play, *Ngaahika Ndenda* (I Will Marry at My Will), covers the period from before independence until after. A review of *Ngaahika Ndenda* in the February issue of the London monthly *Africa* explained, "Through the use of flowery Kikuyu proverbs the play succeeds to expose the exploitative nature of society and the growing gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.'"

The play ran for more than a month in the village of Kamiritho in the heart of Kikuyuland, and its actors were themselves peasants and workers. The district government office refused to renew its license on the grounds that it was "provocative and inciting."

Ngugi's subsequent arrest has drawn protests from other African writers, including appeals by two literary organizations in Nigeria. One of the appeals, among whose signers was the well-known Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, described Ngugi as a "most gifted novelist." The protest note, which was sent to President Kenyatta, went on to state that Ngugi's books "in a real sense, signalled the emergence of East African literature in Africa and throughout the world."

Protests have also been sent to Kenyatta by Amnesty International, as well as by various chapters of PEN, the international writers' organization. The African Students Union in Britain and the London-based Pan-African Association of Writers and Journalists are planning to mount campaigns to demand Ngugi's release. □