
International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)



Report on the Bureaucratic Purge of IG Founders and the Break in Relations with Luta Metalúrgica

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Editorial Note

In the span of a few weeks in 1996, comrades Norden, Negrete, Stamberg and Socorro were driven out of our organization, the International Communist League. These comrades then went on to found the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International (LFI). This bureaucratic purge went hand in hand with a break in fraternal relations we had established with a group in Brazil—Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LM/LQB)—with whom Norden and Negrete were heavily involved.

The main document of this bulletin, on page 5, is the report of the investigation into this purge by the ICL's International Control Commission (ICC), a body that, among other things, investigates breaches of democratic-centralist norms. The investigation was mandated by our 2023 International Conference, and its findings were unanimously adopted at the April 2025 plenum of our International Executive Committee. The ICC investigation concluded that the comrades who went on to found the LFI were driven out of our organization through frame-up internal trials, demagogic fights and multiple breaches of the party's internal democratic norms. The investigation also concluded that the break in fraternal relations with LM/LQB was completely unprincipled and destructive.

Along with the report on the investigation, we have included a number of attachments, including the accounts by the purged comrades (see pages 14, 20, 27 and 49), which we find accurate in depicting what took place. We also include the *Workers Vanguard* articles from the time justifying the purge and the break in relations (see pages 37 and 44). Also, we are publishing for the first time the presentations by leading ICL comrades Robertson, Kendall and Nelson at the Spartacist League/U.S. Bay Area District Conference meeting on 28 May 1996 (see page 15), which clearly show how internal disagreement with this purge was treated as disloyalty to the party.

There is no doubt that this entire episode represents one of the worst stains on the history of the ICL. Comrades were hounded out of our ranks in a manner similar to how Trotskyists were purged from Stalinized Communist parties in the 1920s. Then, for almost 30 years the ICL defended these actions tooth and nail, falsely branding the LFI as “defectors” and the LM/LQB as “union-suers.” This fueled a vicious cycle of resentment. However, while the purging of the LFI comrades as well as the break in relations with LM/LQB were outrageous in themselves, there was something more fundamentally nefarious about this episode. There were no fundamental political disagreements between the ICL and the purged comrades. Therefore, the result was that two organizations with virtually identical programs were now competing against each other, spreading great confusion and disorientation in the movement to reforge the Fourth International.

The documents in this bulletin mainly focus on the organizational measures taken against the LFI and the LM/LQB comrades. So, for many readers they might

raise more questions than provide answers. How was such an obvious bureaucratic frame-up even possible? Why was there not more resistance in the ICL? And why has it taken 30 years to overturn it? The reason the ICL is repudiating this purge decades later is not the result of any moral epiphany. At the root of the events was the ICL's erroneous political program in the post-Soviet period. And what enables us today to repudiate the purge has been an intense internal struggle, which led to repudiating our entire course in the post-Soviet period. This is developed in the document “The ICL's Post-Soviet Revisionism” (*Spartacist* No. 68, September 2023) adopted at our 2023 International Conference. We recommend that this be read alongside the documents in the bulletin.

After having uniquely fought with all its strength against the destruction of the USSR, the ICL entered the post-Soviet period completely disoriented. The party was without a compass to navigate what was a difficult period for all Marxists, who were confronted with the need to find a purpose in the shadow of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, the worst historic defeat for the world proletariat. The triumph of U.S. hegemony and liberal ideology, along with relative economic growth and social progress, threw the Marxist movement to the margins of society, unable to affect the class struggle or justify its own existence. As liberalism came to dominate the workers movement and the left, no Marxist groups understood the necessity to combat this ideological poison—and thus ended up adapting to it or retreating into sterile abstractions.

This is the background of the purge, which was fed by a number of factors. The party leadership was confronted with the need to maintain the organization while being unable to advance the revolutionary movement and lacking an understanding of the historical period and the tasks of Marxists in it. This laid the basis for an ever shriller and more brittle internal regime. The party came to measure itself exclusively by upholding the achievements of the past rather than by engaging in the effort of making new ones in the present. Any sign of dissent and disagreement was treated as an attack on the party itself, and any perceived opportunist mistake as a repudiation of our entire legacy. With Norden, Negrete and their collaborators being critical voices pushing for more active party intervention, the leadership drew a circle around them, falsely branding them as inherent opportunists. This is what eventually led to their purge. This also explains in part why so many ICL members agreed with it, although some did so with much hesitation, as the Bay Area presentations show, while a few members chose to quit.

However, if one looks back at the post-Soviet period, it is clear that this process was not unique to the ICL. Many groups on the far left have seen equally damaging purges and unclear splits in the last 30 years, indicating how far back our movement has been thrown and how incapable it was of charting a way forward. What

distinguishes the ICL today has been our ability to look back critically at this period and understand our failure as well as that of the entire communist movement.

In many ways, the more profound tragedy is that while the comrades of the LFI were able to identify many of the ICL's departures from Marxism, they were never able to get to their political roots and generalize them in a broader understanding of the crisis of the Marxist movement and its tasks in the post-Soviet period. Unlike Trotsky and his followers, who, after their purge, developed a materialist understanding of the degeneration of the Comintern and an analysis of the tasks of revolutionaries in that period against Stalinist perversions, the LFI's agreement with the ICL's perspectives for the post-Soviet period tied their hands politically. Thus, they were unable to provide a Marxist explanation of what had happened to them and what needed to be done in the world. This is why in "The ICL's Post-Soviet Revisionism" we characterized the LFI and the ICL as two satellites orbiting around American liberalism, unable to combat and defeat its poisonous influence on the left and in the workers movement.

The contents of this bulletin go a long way toward explaining why the LFI comrades hold a deep distrust

toward the ICL. Certainly, one reason we publish this material is to seek to repair decades of complete hostility between our organizations. But whether this will work also depends on the LFI. While our two tendencies held a public debate in New York in January 2024, the LFI leadership has refused all of our proposals for formal discussions.

Our main goal in publishing this bulletin is to come out clean in front of the broader movement to reforge the Fourth International. We believe that nothing will be gained by sweeping the crimes and errors of our party under the rug. Only full transparency can advance our cause. Furthermore, we hope that this bulletin can serve as a warning of what might happen when parties created to lead social revolutions find themselves unable to chart a way forward for the working-class movement. Such a warning is particularly timely as the world is seeing profound changes, and as many Marxist organizations are facing internal crises while having drawn no lessons from the last 30 years.

Vincent David
for the International Secretariat of the ICL

—June 2025

Recommended Readings

From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle



internationalist.org/SL-ICL-From-a-drift-toward-abstentionism-to-desertion-from-class-struggle-9607.pdf

The ICL's Post-Soviet Revisionism



spartacist.org/en/68/post-soviet

The Fight for the 4th International Today

Debate between ICL and LFI



icifi.org/pubs/pamphlets/lfi-debate

Report on the Bureaucratic Purge of IG Founders and the Break in Relations with Luta Metalúrgica

The following report, edited for publication, was issued on 28 March 2025 by the ICL's main investigative body, the International Control Commission. Its recommendations have been adopted by our International Executive Committee (IEC).

The ICL's Eighth International Conference adopted the document "The ICL's Post-Soviet Revisionism" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 68, September 2023), which traced our tendency's political disorientation and loss of revolutionary purpose in the face of U.S. imperialism's liberal triumphalism coming off the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991-92. As part of this critical examination, the split in the ICL that gave rise to the Internationalist Group (IG) was determined to have no principled political foundation. At the time and for many subsequent years, the ICL and IG were "two satellites in the orbit of liberalism."

This split was precipitated by the ICL, which expelled four of its members—Norden, Negrete, Stamberg and Socorro—in the first half of 1996. Shortly after being expelled, they went on to found the IG. Our Eighth International Conference mandated an investigation of the organizational measures taken against these comrades, as well as an accounting of the related break in fraternal relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LM/LQB):

"The ICL and the IG have spent almost three decades engaging in polemics dominated by hair-splitting and mutual slander while pursuing fundamentally parallel courses. This has been to the detriment of political clarity in the workers movement internationally. The fight that took place against the founding cadre of the IG in 1995-96 was politically unprincipled. Regarding the organizational measures taken against these former members, the record must be set straight. A proper investigation is mandated. There must also be a reckoning on the question of the ICL unilaterally breaking fraternal relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LM/LQB). These fraternal relations were intertwined with the internal factional disputes of the ICL, and our article justifying our break with LM/LQB provides no principled grounds for our action ("A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica," *Workers Vanguard* No. 648, 5 July 1996)."

The above-cited *Spartacist* article elaborates our present political understanding of the split, whereas this report, in line with the Conference's instructions, focuses on the organizational measures taken by the ICL at the time.

After a thorough review of the extensive documentary record, it is abundantly clear that the 1996 fight against the IG's future founding cadre was a bureaucratic frame-up that sharply escalated over the course of its brief, six-

month time span, itself a comment on the haste to get rid of these comrades. This bureaucratic purge began in early 1996, growing out of an unprincipled political fight against Norden centered on his work as part of the International Secretariat (I.S.) in the ICL's German section, the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands. It was capped by the one-sided dissolution of relations with our fraternal comrades in Brazil.

Taking responsibility for these abuses and renouncing the break in relations is necessary and important. They cloud the clarification of the political differences between our two tendencies and have been damaging to the Marxist movement more generally and the fight to reforge the Fourth International. To this end, we sought to leave no stone unturned.

Demotion of Norden from Full IECer

The opening shot of the bureaucratic organizational measures against the four comrades was Norden's demotion from full to alternate member of the International Executive Committee at its January 1996 plenum for his alleged "destructive role in the German section."¹ The plenum report motivating his demotion alluded to what Norden himself later described as his "one significant error"² in the period under investigation: directing the SpAD Central Committee (CC) in April 1995 to vote a definitive position on an issue in dispute in both the section and the IEC immediately prior to an upcoming German national conference.

The disputed issue was whether or not the article "PDS Party Congress: Anti-Communists Welcome!" (*Spartakist* No. 117, March/April 1995) glorified Stalin by referring to him as the commander-in-chief of the Red Army that liberated Auschwitz. Norden, who was the I.S. rep to the SpAD at the time, defended the article against the charge of Stalinophilia advanced by other IECers—and he would continue to do so after his expulsion. The SpAD CC motion of April 2 not only upheld the article, including the controversial reference to Stalin, but also characterized two documents by SpAD comrades opposed to this formulation as capitulatory toward "the popular-frontist politics of our opponents."

While Norden never considered himself to be wrong on the substance of the matter, he agreed that having the SpAD CC render a verdict when it did effectively preempted the internal discussion process, thus "violating

¹ IEC Minutes, Series II, No. 4 (19-21 January 1996).

² *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996), 23.

the basic substrate of democratic-centralist functioning,” in the words of an I.S. motion of July 5. Norden acknowledged this error and his role in it both before and at the July I.S. meeting. Generally speaking, the party leadership should allow sufficient time for political discussion to clarify differences before making a ruling.

But deciding when this point has been reached can be a judgement call in and of itself; in this case, the SpAD CC vote was preceded by over a month of written discussion, with a number of documents contributed by both sides. Moreover, although said to have pre-empted *pre-conference* discussion in particular, the vote took place well outside of a formal pre-conference period. The SpAD conference call was not issued until October, half a year after the fact. Plus, under the norms of democratic-centralist functioning, a national conference always has the right to review and overturn any position of its sectional CC, no matter when it was taken.

The ICL did not have international organizational rules at the time, but neither those later adopted nor the Spartacist League/U.S. organizational rules then available contain any provision for the demotion of members of party leadership bodies. Stripping Norden of his full vote on the IEC was a political measure taken “to reflect his diminished authority” coming off his interventions in the German section.³ In the event of serious differences within the IEC that lead a majority to want to significantly shake up its composition because an IEC plenum has not resolved a political issue, the normal procedure is to call an international conference and elect a new leadership.

Separate and apart from the particular dispute surrounding the April 1995 SpAD CC motion is the question of whether Norden’s role in the German section was destructive more generally. Notably, he had played his part in a nasty fight stretching over several years against a layer of individual SpAD comrades deemed to have adapted to German social democracy. But in doing so, he was only implementing a policy stemming from the ICL’s Second International Conference document—the very basis on which the IEC had been elected.

On this score, the Second International Conference document (1992) endorsed a fight over sending comrades to the economically devastated city of Halle in what had been East Germany. In a completely moralist and personalist fashion, they were stigmatized as living comfortable lives in the west. The conference document approvingly quoted a SpAD document characterizing these comrades, who were blamed for sabotaging the party’s perspectives in Halle, as “a social-democratic bulge in the organization that is unwilling to confront head-on the hardships engendered by counterrevolution.”

But in a 16 January 1996 document against “Norden’s Role in Germany” released just before the plenum where Norden was demoted, IEC member St. John (who had voted for the Second International Conference document) uniquely ascribed to Norden the “Healy-like ‘theory’” that

the SpAD’s problems were attributable to “conscious sabotage by a social-democratic ‘underground opposition.’”⁴ As for the “bulge” itself, no subsequent internal fight or review ever showed any evidence of its existence, and we note that a number of comrades suspected of being part of it are still ICL members today. Although Norden was charged with poisoning the SpAD’s internal life in party bulletins covering this period, we found no evidence that he went behind the back of the national or international party leadership or acted at variance with the Second International Conference document—or even that his way of intervening in the German section differed much from general I.S. practice at the time.

Even though the offending SpAD CC motion had been put in abeyance for a decision by the then-upcoming national conference, it was cited in the memorandum for the January 1996 IEC plenum where Norden was demoted as primary evidence that “the norms of democratic centralism were violated” in the German section under Norden in the service of “a witch-hunt against perceived opponents within the SpAD.” But the motion itself bears none of the hallmarks of a witchhunt: it sharply characterizes *documents*, not comrades.⁵ Furthermore, we found no evidence of the suppression of documents or any other patent violation of comrades’ rights that would constitute the violation of democratic-centralism.

In short, Norden was demoted for carrying out the decisions of the Second International Conference as he legitimately understood them, not for having broken any organizational rule—e.g., refusing to carry out an assignment. Norden’s demotion was wrong, and it cleared the way for the increasingly harsh measures that led to the expulsions of himself and the other three comrades.

Witchhunt in the Mexican Section

In March 1996, shortly after Norden’s demotion, the frame-up found its legs. Comrade Camila returned to the Grupo Espartaquista de México from a trip to Brazil and voiced some differences with a letter by I.S. secretary Parks over her characterization of the MEL slate put together by our LM/LQB fraternal comrades in Brazil for local municipal workers union elections. Negrete, the GEM’s leader and one of Norden’s closest collaborators on the IEC, expressed agreement with Camila on the question. This occasioned letters by SL/U.S.-based IECers Nelson, Foster and Tanner attacking Negrete as abusive on the grounds that he had browbeaten Camila, a female comrade, into writing to Parks. Nelson argued that Negrete’s conduct was an “act by a political coward and sexist bully,” while Foster and Tanner asserted that Negrete had a reputation for patronizing attitudes toward women. It was also posited that Norden and Negrete were soft on LM/LQB.

The first round of written accusations against Negrete for his behavior in the GEM largely came from comrades outside the Mexican section. In response, some

4 *IB* No. 38 (June 1996), 55.

5 1996 IEC plenum memo, *IB* No. 38 (June 1996), 66.

3 IEC Minutes, Series II, No. 4 (19-21 January 1996).

GEM members openly defended Negrete against the charges. Twice, Negrete and Socorro, his partner who was then also a leader of the Mexican section, requested an official investigation into the abuse allegations; both times, the I.S. denied the request. As a result, we have no way of judging their validity today.

Instead of initiating a proper investigation, the I.S. sent a delegation to Mexico to line up the GEM against Negrete and Socorro. By the time of its arrival, on April 11, Negrete was also being faulted for having an anti-Leninist “star conception” of party leadership. At its April 14 meeting, the GEM unanimously passed a motion that denounced Negrete for having resisted bringing “Bolshevik organizational norms to the GEM,” which was said to represent an adaptation to bourgeois nationalism. The motion continued:

“The internal life of the section was characterized by a poisonous internal atmosphere reflected in the denigration and humiliation of comrades—especially, but not exclusively, young women comrades. A one-and-a-half month youth member was reduced to tears and humiliated for having used the irreverent term ‘Negrete-esque’ to describe behavior she found inappropriate among comrades.”

It also stated that Negrete had humiliated and stripped a leading GEM comrade of authority for failing to get Negrete’s approval for something.⁶

The validity of the latter two accusations is an open question. On the one hand, we found no written documentation to substantiate either, and the leadership’s refusal to investigate is suspicious. On the other hand, the first of the two was verbally confirmed by a comrade who witnessed the incident, and the specificity of the details gives the charges some weight. In short, this is a classic case of “justice deferred is justice denied.” Compounding the problem, some GEM comrades wrote documents in defense of Negrete one day and charged him the next with the same allegations. It is impossible today to sort out which version is more credible.

Over the next month, numerous bureaucratic organizational measures were taken in rapid succession. The GEM motion requested that Negrete and Socorro be transferred to New York City immediately. The I.S. placed Negrete on administrative leave and then reduced him from full to alternate on the IEC. Trampling on the right of any ICL member to talk or write to any other, privately or collectively, I.S. motions were passed condemning Norden for communicating with Negrete and denouncing Norden’s sending a document to the SpAD as “permanent factionalism”.⁷

The escalating organizational abuses made clear that the ICL leadership was hell-bent on getting rid of Norden and his collaborators in an all-out regime fight. From here on out, the underlying assumption of I.S. motions and communications is that Norden and Negrete were in an oppositional bloc out to gain control of the I.S., sections like the SpAD and GEM and relations with the

fraternal comrades in Brazil. Regarding the latter, there is no evidence that Norden or Negrete made any attempt to communicate with the LM/LQB independently of the I.S., and the LM/LQB corroborated that there was no communication with them.⁸

Trial and Expulsion of Socorro

A new front in the bureaucratic attack was opened on May Day. An accusation was raised against Socorro that she “broke, on various occasions, democratic centralist discipline and belittled the authority of the head of the sales team, manifesting in deeds a liberal attitude with respect to the state” as the GEM exec voted the day after the massive May Day march.⁹ In particular, she was said to have lost contact with the rest of the sales team and also to have helped Negrete violate the terms of his leave by allowing him to accompany her and carry her camera bag.

In response, Socorro provided a credible counter-report refuting the charge that she went AWOL during the march or showed any light-mindedness toward security questions.¹⁰ She asked to be present in the GEM exec meeting, but her request was denied. The above-quoted exec motion was based on documents written by GEM comrades Camila and Arturo, but we found no solid evidence in the paper trail that invalidates any of Socorro’s account of events.

Soon after, on May 6, the GEM called for a trial to take place on May 18 because Socorro had rejected the validity of the exec motion “orally and in written form, putting in question the reports of Camila and Arturo” and accused “the leadership of the GEM of systematic lying in its motion over the facts of 1 May.”¹¹ The next day, I.S. secretary Parks sent a letter by fax informing Socorro that the trial would take place in NYC on May 12. The I.S. only passed a motion to that effect two days after Parks wrote her letter. In this May 9 motion, the I.S. declared that it “hereby assumes the responsibilities initiated by the GEM executive committee with their call for a trial served to Socorro.” At the I.S. meeting, a motion by Norden to convene a commission of inquiry was voted down.¹² Negrete and Socorro moved to NYC on May 10 and participated in a very lengthy I.S. meeting on May 11.

The manipulation of the situation by the I.S. is obvious. For example, on April 18 the I.S. passed a motion mandating that Negrete transfer to NYC within two weeks, only to have Parks later deny Socorro’s request for a short delay of her May 12 trial on the grounds that Negrete and Socorro had supposedly themselves decided to move that week. This refusal to postpone was made despite the fact that the I.S. had not even allowed for the seven-day period between the call for a trial and

6 GEM Motions of 14 April 1996, *IB* No. 38 (June 1996), 94.

7 I.S. Minutes, Series VI, No. 4 (18 April 1996).

8 LQB Reply to ICL on Breaking Fraternal Relations (4 July 1996).

9 Motions Voted at the Meeting of the GEM Exec on 2 May 1996.

10 Socorro, Important Correction on May Day Events (2 May 1996).

11 Call for a Trial Committee, 6 May 1996, *IB* No. 38 (June 1996), 108.

12 I.S. Minutes, Series VI, No. 6 (9 May 1996).

its commencement as stipulated in the SL/U.S. organizational rules.

Socorro's trial occurred on May 12, as the I.S. demanded, and was as much of a sham as the events leading up to it. Her request to pose additional questions to GEM comrades for the trial was denied—even though the defense could not call any witness to interrogate in person due to the trial's move.¹³ Socorro herself was denied the right to make a statement during the proceedings.¹⁴ The decision of the trial body is testimony to the underlying personalism and highly undemocratic process. For example, it ruled: "Right before our intervention that day, she used the ruse of lacking film to go off independently [...]. This allowed her to set in motion her plans to (1) get Negrete to the demo (to bring the 'forgotten' lens); and (2) to keep him there as her packhorse and/or bodyguard."¹⁵

In the heat of an NYC local discussion of her trial just two days after on May 14, Socorro made an angry outburst that her rapists of some years past had gotten more justice in the bourgeois courts than she had at her party trial. Although she retracted these internal remarks in writing the next morning, the SL/U.S. Political Bureau (PB) expelled Socorro later that day for having made a statement deemed incompatible with party membership. When considered in context—beginning with the fact that her trial was a travesty of justice—expulsion for this outburst was a perversion of Leninism and the crowning act of an unrelenting two-week bureaucratic hit job.

Expulsions of Norden, Stamberg and Negrete

After Socorro's expulsion, condemnation of her comment was turned into a club against the other three comrades (Norden, Negrete and Stamberg) and an oath of loyalty to the party regime. At a May 28 Bay Area District Conference meeting,¹⁶ party leaders (Robertson, Kendall and Nelson) instructed anyone who might go so far as to raise a question considered sympathetic to Socorro to exit the party. This was especially problematic because comrades had not had much opportunity to explore the differences, such as they were.

Moreover, Nelson projected that longtime *Workers Vanguard* editor Norden, Negrete and Stamberg (Norden's partner and close collaborator in *WV*) would soon blow out of the party as well. This was, under the circumstances, not so much a prognosis based on a political trajectory as a statement of the party leadership's bureaucratic intent. When the three refused to leave the party of their own accord, reasons were fabricated to kick them out.

On May 11, the day before Socorro's trial, an I.S. meeting posited that Norden and Negrete had conciliated the

Brazilian LM/LQB's "trade-union opportunism"¹⁷ and differences on the state and party question. There is no evidence of any such conciliation or even that LM/LQB had differences on these questions. The I.S. passed a lengthy motion about document distribution that seemed designed to prevent the translation and circulation of some of the documents by Norden, Negrete, Stamberg and Socorro. It also commissioned an IEC poll to drop Negrete from the IEC altogether given his "hostile, destructive and underhanded machinations in the Mexican section" and "willful violation of the terms of his leave."¹⁸ At the subsequent I.S. meeting, yet another motion was passed to prevent the circulation of some of the four comrades' documents.

At the I.S. meeting after that, Norden was removed from the I.S. based on an exchange over a draft letter to LM/LQB by Parks and fellow IECer Adam. In the days prior, this draft had been circulated to the I.S. for feedback, and Norden submitted some comments. While we have been unable to find this material, Parks wrote a May 26 letter in response to those comments that provided the rationale cited in the I.S. motion for the removal: "Now Norden has gone one giant step way out of bounds in accusing the party of siding with a police agent against our fraternal comrades and of abandoning our fraternal comrades when they face state repression."¹⁹

But Norden's May 28 reply to Parks, which states exactly what he was objecting to in the draft letter, makes clear this claim is false. In fact, it appears that the I.S. had simply accepted the validity of statements to the bourgeois media by Artur—a member of an opponent organization and agent of the police in the local municipal workers union—that LM/LQB leader Cerezo was a paid union functionary. Norden stated:

"Here is what I objected to in the draft: 'We were disturbed to read in the bourgeois press about an arrangement for C. to serve as a paid advisor to the union. The fact that no payment was made is important but we really should not have to learn about such things by reading quotes from our opponents in the bourgeois press.' This does, in fact, take Artur's version as good coin and repeat it. I pointed out that we already knew from a report by Abrão [Negrete] in January that the Municipal Workers union had offered a paid position. In response, in her letter of yesterday, Parks writes:

"It was not known by the I.S. that there was a showdown in a union executive board meeting over funding Cerezo at approximately twice the pay of an average workers' monthly wage, nor that Cerezo and LM had fought for this in the union and that the proposal was spiked by their opponents."

"The only place I have seen anything like this in print until now—and I believe I have seen all the fax traffic—was in an article citing Artur in the newspaper *O Dia* of 14 May. Is there other information confirming this claim? If so, then where is it? I asked and got no answer, only a further unsubstantiated assertion. And if there is confirmation from Cerezo, we should cite that. But to simply quote the word of Artur—that is provocative."²⁰

13 Report on the Trial of Comrade Socorro, *IB* No. 38 (June 1996), 101.

14 *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996), 77.

15 Verdict of Socorro Trial Body, 12 May 1996, *IB* No. 38 (June 1996), 103.

16 Presentations to Bay Area District Conference, 28 May 1996, *IB* No. 59 (September 1996), 112.

17 I.S. Minutes, Series VI, No. 7 (11 May 1996).

18 *Ibid*

19 Letter by Parks to I.S. and IEC (26 May 1996).

20 Norden to I.S. and IEC, "A Reply to Parks" (28 May 1996).

In addition to stripping Norden of any role in the administrative leadership of the ICL, the I.S. also recommended that he be removed as *WV* editor, which the SL/U.S. PB proceeded to carry out. Norden was also removed from the PB itself.

With the party leadership not wasting a moment in the conclusion of this bureaucratic purge, on May 29 at 11:20pm comrades went to Norden and Stamberg's home and confiscated their party-supplied computer and fax machine, as well as their office keys. On May 30, the final ax dropped.

2:15pm: Norden received a phone call from the treasurer demanding he turn over his phone bills; he refused to comply. At the time, it was common practice for party functionaries to submit their phone bills for reimbursement of the expense of calls made in the furtherance of the organization's work.

4:30pm: Norden, arriving at the office, was escorted in and informed that he was suspended while awaiting trial.

8:30pm: Stamberg refused to bring in the phone bills after being instructed to do so and was also suspended while awaiting trial.

The next day, Norden and Stamberg were handed the "Call for a Trial." As the two wrote in their "Reply to a Frame-Up 'Trial'":

"This is a frame-up. Included in the catalogue of phony charges are:

- Norden supposedly being 'caught in an act of indisdiscipline' for speaking on the phone with another IEC member, Negrete;
- charging Norden with 'failure to declare a faction and instead take his opposition underground,' even though pages of I.S. and IEC motions are attached to the charges condemning his positions and a motion was passed by the I.S. explicitly to limit the circulation of documents by us;
- accusing Stamberg and Norden of a 'de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership' over the course of eight months, even though we have continued to play central roles in putting out Workers Vanguard and numerous other party activities;
- insidiously concocting 'hefty suspicions' of 'political collaboration with non-members'; and
- slanderously speculating about an 'outside source of political funding.'

"Withdrawal from membership, going underground, political collaboration with and even political funding by outside sources, seeking to wreck the party's work and set up comrades for injury—every one of these charges is false to the core."²¹

Our investigation concurs in full with this assessment. Norden and Stamberg's decision to stop seeking phone bill reimbursements was seized on to lay a bureaucratic trap by sensationalizing the sudden decrease in the total from earlier bills as proof of plotting with outside forces. The record bears out as true the answer provided by the two comrades: The decrease corresponded to their demotion and removal from areas of responsibility for party work, not least in the International. At the time, international phone calls could be very expensive. In any event, Norden and Stamberg were under no obligation whatsoever

to turn over their phone bills for reimbursement. The party and its leadership do not have *carte blanche* to intrude into a comrade's personal political life and finances.

Democratic-centralism rests on the party's monopoly over the political expression of its membership in the public arena. This monopoly exists to protect the party against concrete acts of indiscipline damaging to its purpose—e.g., a section taking a public line counterposed to that of the International or a comrade solidarizing against the party with an opponent group at a public meeting. In the case in question, the manner in which the charges were brought—based on (entirely unfounded) suspicions—opens the door to internal political regimentation, which is just as damaging to the party's purpose as the aforementioned hypotheticals, if not more so.

After Norden's suspension for refusing to turn over the phone bills, the Central Control Commission (CCC)—which has full authority to investigate any individual or circumstance affecting the SL/U.S.—intervened to demand them from Stamberg. In doing so, the CCC abandoned its independent role—necessary to adjudicate internal organizational disputes in the best interests of the party—and actively sided with the party leadership's bureaucratic frame-up. Then, when Stamberg, like Norden, refused to turn over the phone bills, she was charged with impeding the work of the CCC. Norden and Stamberg were completely correct to call all this a "fishing expedition" and principled in their refusal to comply.

Comrades have every right to discuss disagreements with one another and to privacy in those discussions. In the face of their own expulsions and with the party leadership demanding the loyalty of the membership writ large—like at the May 28 Bay Area District Conference meeting—Norden and Stamberg's refusal to turn over their phone bills was a reasonable measure of protection of those comrades with whom they had spoken. For some time, the party leadership had considered Norden, Negrete, Stamberg and Socorro an "undeclared faction" as a way to draw a circle around them, while failing to extend them factional rights or even the basic rights of party democracy accorded to all ICL members.

The failure to grant the four comrades factional rights, despite their being perceived as a faction, flew in the face of historic party practice. For example, to facilitate full and open political debate on the disputed issues in the Ellens-Turner fight in 1968, the minority was bestowed the rights of a faction without having so declared themselves. In contrast, the fact that the four comrades here never declared a faction (for which there was no programmatic basis) was used to deny their basic rights as members—making it as organizationally difficult as possible for them to win supporters to their views, whether or not they formed a faction.

Norden and Stamberg were expelled for not appearing at their frame-up trial, and Negrete was then expelled for not signing a statement that he would have no contact with them. From beginning to end, the 1996 fight against Norden, Negrete, Stamberg and Socorro was an exercise in bureaucratic abuse. We recommend that the IEC repudiate in no uncertain terms all

21 *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996), 61.

the organizational measures taken against them in the period under investigation.

Dissolving Fraternal Relations with LM/LQB

The ICL formally dissolved fraternal relations with LM/LQB on June 17, just over a week after the expulsions of Norden, Stamberg and Negrete. This timing was no accident. The break in relations was not only politically unprincipled, but also a direct consequence of the regime fight against the “Norden group.” Norden and Negrete had authored the “Declaration of Fraternal Relations” in September 1994 and were centrally involved in discussions with the Brazilian comrades through the January 1996 IEC plenum, the first ICL gathering attended by an LM/LQB representative.

Up until the expulsions, fraternal relations had been proceeding, not without the usual ups and downs, but proceeding nonetheless around an agreed-upon program and perspectives. In particular, LM/LQB was pursuing a campaign, initiated and strongly encouraged by the ICL, to get the cops (*guardas*) out of the municipal workers union in Volta Redonda and collaborating with the ICL on the publication of a broader propaganda organ.

To be clear, the ICL leadership had declared four months prior: “We take this question very seriously. *Real* agreement *in practice* on a fight for the class independence of the workers and to separate the cops from the union must be the basis for continuing fraternal relations and a fusion perspective” (emphasis in original).²² It was the ICL that not only in practice failed to “take this question very seriously,” but also in fact sabotaged this principled fight. As agreed, though, the Brazilian comrades made this effort the center of their activity and propaganda in the municipal workers union (see, for example, the May 6 bulletin of the LM/LQB-supported incumbent MEL caucus, which featured the article titled “The Rank-and-File Is Deciding: Police Out of the Union; Reaffirmation of MEL’s Program”²³). They persisted and made headway despite the open hostility of the cops and their allies.

Right after Norden, Negrete and Stamberg had been expelled, the ICL sent a team to Brazil, allegedly to help LM/LQB with the production of its newspaper, which was nearly completed:

“We view publication of the paper as the crucial weapon to fight our opponents and to win the workers to our program in VR and beyond. Our aim in sending a new ICL delegation to Brazil is to assist in completing this task.”

—Letter to the LQB by I.S. secretary Parks,
11 June 1996

However, the main purpose of that delegation proved to be the delivery of an ultimatum to LM/LQB to pull out of the municipal workers union. The rationale for the ultimatum was the supposed need to break LM/LQB from trade-union opportunism and unprincipled combinationism. But the main alleged examples cited of each had long since been resolved. The appointed post of official union advisor (attributed to trade-union opportunism) had not

been held by LM/LQB since February. Around the same time, the original MEL slate (unprincipled combinationism) had irrevocably fractured over the issue of the police in the union into an LM/LQB-led majority and a minority headed by pro-cop provocateur and Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista supporter Artur Fernandes.

Issuing the ultimatum could not possibly have served the declared purpose of facilitating a break with trade-union opportunism and unprincipled combinationism, even if this was called for. The only way to truly establish a common basis for principled work in the trade unions is political struggle in the course of a practical effort in that arena to advance the interests of the working class—for example, the campaign to remove the cops from the municipal workers union. The proposed organizational measure—to force LM/LQB to leave the unions for the campuses—was counterposed to clarifying differences in union work and correcting any opportunism that might have existed.

Another rationale provided for the ICL ultimatum was the threat of murderous state violence against the ICL, LM/LQB and municipal workers. This concern was far from unfounded in light of various cop provocations over the preceding months. But the conclusion that the only option was for the ICL to vacate altogether the very struggle it had set in motion while knowing the risks—and the insistence that LM/LQB had to follow suit—was highly damaging to the very project of party-building that the ICL claimed to be its motivation.

A reader of the ICL’s *International Bulletin* No. 41, “The Fight for a Trotskyist Party in Brazil,” could be forgiven for thinking the ICL leadership had experienced a collective psychotic breakdown. Up until page 147, the ICL appears invested in making the fraternal relations bear fruit. The contributions discuss the contents of the LM/LQB newspaper and also how to combat centrism and handle the problems of their trade-union work. The June 11 letter by Parks still offered:

“[LM/LQB had been sowing] confusion among the workers by running for the leadership of a union with cops in it and without specifically and forcefully addressing this crucial question in the union election campaign. The point is not to feel miserable about this, or annoyed with us for insisting on the question. The point is to do something about it.”²⁴

And LM/LQB *was and would continue* doing something about it. This letter makes clear that the ultimatum on union work was intertwined with another one, which was kept implicit: LM/LQB was supposed to condone the expulsions of Norden and Negrete. Four pages of the June 11 letter are dedicated to the Norden issue, i.e., more than twice the amount dedicated to LM/LQB’s priorities. (This seven-page letter contains only four paragraphs on LM/LQB, two on pages 4-5 and two at the very end.) In other words, the main issue was Norden’s expulsion, not the SFPMVR municipal workers union intervention and even less LM/LQB’s newspaper.

But LM/LQB was completely engaged in the municipal workers union, centrally the campaign to oust the

22 Letter to Luta Metalúrgica by International Secretariat, *IB* No. 41 (23 February 1996), 26.

23 *Gestão Municipários em Luta* (6 May 1996).

24 Letter to the LQB by Parks, *IB* No. 41 (11 June 1996), 137.

municipal cops from the union. The comrades understood that they could not pull out at this juncture without betraying their supporters in the union, and they suspected that the ICL “didn’t want to get involved in real union work where real struggle exists,” as LM/LQB leader Cerezo said in preliminary discussions on June 15 between LM/LQB and an ICL delegation.

The intertwined ultimatums pushed LM/LQB not only into refusing to pull out of the union, but also into refusing to condone the Norden expulsion. LM/LQB was principled on both accounts, unlike the ICL. We demanded they commit a class betrayal along with issuing an oath of loyalty to the ICL’s anti-Norden majority. When they rebuffed us, we broke with them on June 17. The events of the very next day were a sharp rebuke of the ICL’s unprincipled maneuver: The section of the municipal workers union leadership aligned with LM/LQB held an assembly for the membership to vote to disaffiliate from the cops.

In effect, the ICL had urged the Brazilian comrades to undertake dangerous but necessary and principled measures vis-à-vis the police, and once things got really hot—a distinct possibility recognized from the get-go—we walked away while LM/LQB courageously pursued the fight. The IG and LM/LQB then correctly accused the ICL of “pulling its hands out of the boiling water.” To top it off, despite pledging to “continue to defend LM and its supporters against attacks by the bourgeois state and pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy,”²⁵ the ICL for all intents and purposes dropped any such defense; the record shows one pro forma *WV* article on the matter in August 1996.

Tellingly, the ICL’s public announcement, “A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” (*WV* No. 648, 5 July 1996), declared: “The dissolution of fraternal relations with Luta Metalúrgica is also a political consequence of the defection of our former comrades Norden and Negrete.” The two are blamed for having poisoned fraternal relations due to their role in everything from crafting the initial declaration to supposedly blunted subsequent political fights with LM/LQB.

The authorship of the declaration was immaterial. What mattered was the formal agreement of all the parties involved and the testing of that agreement through the struggle to implement the program in practice. The IEC majority and Norden and Negrete agreed on all the essentials of program for Brazil and perspectives for common work with LM/LQB, from the start of fraternal relations until Norden and Negrete’s expulsions. The dissolution of fraternal relations indicates as much, beginning: “For many months now the ICL has fought to bring the actual practices of Luta Metalúrgica/LQB into accordance with the revolutionary political program expressed in the Declaration of Fraternal Relations endorsed by both of our organizations in September 1994.”

As for the claim that Norden and Negrete uniquely blunted fights with LM/LQB, it does not survive scrutiny. The two are said to have waged a false fight with

LM/LQB over syndicalism, but the ICL’s *International Bulletin* No. 41 includes a polemic by the I.S. secretary against LM/LQB’s perceived conciliation of syndicalism. Norden and Negrete are also charged with hiding the fight against themselves from LM/LQB. But the IEC majority had put Norden and Negrete in a Catch-22 by proscribing their communication with LM/LQB.

In assessing the campaign to remove the cops from the municipal workers union, the *WV* article acknowledged: “Since the battle was brought to LM, they have waged a principled and difficult struggle against the police presence in the union.” So, even if the view that Norden and Negrete had corrupted fraternal relations held any water, it begs the question of why the ICL, having rid itself of the alleged malefactors, would not wage whatever political fights were still deemed necessary to ensure a revolutionary regroupment. The answer is clear: Fraternal relations had been completely subsumed by the push to rid the organization of Norden and Negrete and any perceived supporters of theirs.

Despite the unprincipled nature of the ICL’s break at a critical moment in the union campaign—which LM/LQB described as “a disloyal break” that “came like a lightning bolt out of a clear blue sky” in a July 4 letter to the ICL—they proposed to give fraternal relations a second chance:

“We have learned much through the discussions, debates, struggles and work with the ICL! We repeat: when you abandoned the joint effort with us to go forward to a fusion, this caused harm to the proletariat and to genuine Trotskyism. We continue to base ourselves programmatically on the Declaration of Fraternal Relations and the programmatic conquests of the ICL (which must be political conquests of the whole international proletarian vanguard) on proletarian opposition to the popular front, on the Russian Question, the “Tribune of the People” (particularly the black and woman questions, central to the question of permanent revolution in Brazil), the struggle for the Leninist party as part of the fight to reforge the Fourth International. We must continue to seek a principled fusion with the ICL....

“We believe it is very important to discuss, in a calm and rational way, the breaking of fraternal relations, the real political reasons for this profound error, and our responsibilities in the world struggle to reforge the Fourth International.”

This proposal went unheeded, and the letter went unanswered by the ICL. In fact, there is no evidence the letter was ever translated into English for internal distribution beyond the I.S., much less seriously discussed by the ICL leadership.

Instead, by early July the I.S. had dispatched a team to Brazil to sift through court records to find evidence that LM/LQB, as part of its defense against the pro-cop backlash, had filed a lawsuit against the union. The only thing ever found was an initial filing that was never pursued—easily explained as the handiwork of an overzealous lawyer who did not share LM/LQB’s opposition to dragging the bourgeois courts into union affairs. But the ICL had found its “proof” of LM/LQB’s trade-union opportunism and branded them irredeemable union-suers, thereby driving the final nail in the coffin of fraternal relations.

25 *WV* No. 648, “A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” (5 July 1996).

After a careful review of all relevant material, we recommend that the IEC renounce the ICL's unilateral break in fraternal relations as a bureaucratic organizational maneuver counterposed and corrosive to the vitally necessary cohering of revolutionary forces under one banner. We also recommend the repudiation of the slander of LM/LQB as union-suers. The ICL's abandonment of LM/LQB was an ignominious chapter in its history—the very antithesis of revolutionary leadership.

Note

Our research was extensive. We reviewed all of the internal bulletins from the period under investigation,

especially *International Bulletin* Nos. 38 (all editions), 41 and 42. We combed through back files on Germany, Brazil and Mexico among other relevant I.S. files, listened to tapes and transcribed portions of them and examined all of the I.S. and PB minutes from the time. We carefully read the expelled comrades' bulletin *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996) and the IG pamphlet *Dossier: Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (February 1997). We also read all of the published articles from the ICL and IG that referred to the disputed questions. In addition, we translated select leaflets from LM/LQB and conducted a few interviews.

Appendices

Letter to Comrades by Socorro

Below is a May 15 letter Socorro wrote retracting remarks she made at the May 14 NYSL local meeting. The same day this letter was received, she was expelled for her local meeting remarks despite this retraction.

15 May 1996

To the comrades

I have been thinking about the NY local meeting of last night and my comments at it regarding the trial. When I spoke on the round, I was thinking about the unfairness of recent events, including the trial and related bizarre comments. Anger welled up inside me and I just lost it.

When I said the men who abducted and raped me got more justice from the bourgeois courts than I did from the trial, this was very wrong, as was calling the trial body a kangaroo court. I withdraw this. And certainly I do not think that there is justice in the bourgeois courts.

I still think the trial was unfair and protest the way it was carried out, and insist that I did not violate discipline on May Day and have told the truth about the events of that day. But again, this does not justify the comments that I made.

Communist greetings,
[signed]
Socorro

Presentations to SL Bay Area District Conference

28 May 1996

The following are lightly edited transcripts of presentations by party leaders Robertson, Kendall and Nelson on the expulsion of Socorro. These first appeared in Spartacist League Internal Bulletin No. 59, September 1996.

Robertson: There's an I.S. meeting and a Political Bureau meeting going on as we speak. Stamberg has just voted for Socorro's expulsion. I always thought there was a little moral fiber to that Stamberg.

Now, if you want to feel sorry for somebody, feel sorry for Norden. He spent a number of decades, going over from some kind of quasi-syndicalist position, struggling to expound revolutionary Marxism in the four corners of the world, and he's now been brought down and is drifting off into some version of centrism with a nominal acknowledgement of the aim of Workers Power and with attraction to the various kinds of centrist combinations that Workers Power is a pretty good example of—that doesn't mean that he's going to end up there. I wish him well. I hope he gets a job with Fidel Castro, paid in foreign currency and that the regime lasts a long time, although I doubt that—that was one of our differences. Well, you should feel sorry for him. He spent the best decades of his life working 16 hours a day for the Marxist, socialist movement and now he spins out in this fashion.

There reputedly has been sympathy for the plight of Socorro, sympathy expressed in the Bay Area and that's why we have this kind of district meeting, and that therefore the people who expelled her, among whom I certainly want to be counted, and not the least, are being called here to account. Now, Socorro did some bad stuff in Mexico. I, for one—and I have to give a bit of personal testimony—wasn't sure what transpired on the May Day in which Negrete, who was supposed to be on leave arranging his affairs to leave the city and the country, turned up in this large and evidently quite dangerous May Day demonstration. But there was a trial with quite a competent trial body and painstaking collection of affidavits from numerous Mexican comrades. And in fact, Socorro, who was supposed to be the photographer for our activity in this tens of thousands of people May Day, detached herself from our demo and spent her time with Negrete and lied about it, lied about everything, lied about getting him there, said that she forgot her film, she forgot her lenses, she had to have Negrete there to bring the stuff and stay with her, failed to make contact. She also did something else that was damn dangerous: Negrete is the most well-known of our people in Mexico City, and if somebody was going to physically attack one of our people, it was going to be Negrete, and incidentally Socorro—in order that Negrete could participate in this demo, which he had no known interest in, except to express his resentment of the new leadership. This was really a very serious matter of breach of security and a whole bunch of lies.

So, I wasn't sure about this. But the trial body was quite good and the affidavits were quite good and Socorro had indeed lied like a trooper and endangered this, that and the other thing, including herself.

Socorro had only been reduced to candidacy for a few months, but she took it very badly and among her remarks were the ones that are on the wall behind. Normally what is written up there is part of a "fuck you, I quit." Well, she said "fuck you," but she couldn't quit because the "group" that she was in, not a very large group, but Norden and Stamberg and Negrete and herself, didn't want to quit then. So she said "fuck you" and didn't quit. So she got expelled.

Now why should there be echoes of concern in the Bay Area over this? If anybody in the room wants to say "this is a no-good party, I quit," you're welcome to do it. But obviously, since you're here, that's not the reason. You're not members of a secret faction boring from within. Evidently some people feel either that the organization is lying through its teeth and committed a frame-up, or that maybe some of your activities, some of your feelings, some of your moods, are in contradiction to what can be, under some circumstances, a combat party that does seriously demand not merely an exercise of discipline but a lot of energy and possibly some risk. So either the party really is bureaucratic, or the claims of a combat party are something that some comrades are uneasy about, or both.

I can understand Socorro's anger. Right now, we hear from Negrete, who hasn't told a true word lately, that she's demoralized and emotional and hysterical and withdrawn. The only empirical evidence that we have is that she's mentally very healthy, i.e., extremely angry. She made a phone call to Paula in Chicago in which she expressed her keen hostility and anger and otherwise showed herself to be in a prime mental state. But she ought to be very angry because Negrete got her into this business in Mexico City by having her tell a bunch of lies and do what he wanted, and then after she got thrown out, Norden and Stamberg voted for her expulsion and she's a member of their group. She ought to be plenty angry. But what does this have to do with any faint hearts in the Bay Area, pray tell? Unless you feel the sinister hand of bureaucracy searching you out or that maybe you can't cut the mustard and that somebody's going to find it out.

What else is there to say for my part? Not bloody very much. Since there's a PB and an I.S. meeting going on right now and we're three hours ahead of them or behind them, depending on how you do it, we asked that they fax us little hourly summaries. There's a note here—besides mentioning that Stamberg voted for Socorro's expulsion—that "By the way, Bay Area comrades should know that the New York local wants to write the BA locals a round-robin letter explaining

what they think about ‘the group’ in case anyone out there thinks there’s a shred of sympathy here. *There isn’t.*” Which is kind of a problem. Socorro got expelled for what she did, not because it is believed, falsely, that Norden likes her.

Kendall: Well, Socorro’s remarks were basically a statement that there was no line between the party and the bourgeois state, and a declaration of her rejection of the party’s discipline which she’d already rejected *in action* at the May Day rally in Mexico City. It is a statement which puts her outside the principles upon which this party is founded. Her statement comes at the end of a month of a non-declared faction that’s claiming that the party lies and conceals documents, that it had no right to keep Negrete from being at the May Day rally, i.e., no right to exercise discipline over its members.

So it’s a pretty simple question: Do you want to be in an organization with someone who has said that, or do you agree that she ought to be expelled? So it’s not very pleasant that there’s a lot of nervous questioning of this expulsion in the Bay Area.

I think it was expressed most clearly by Valerie who has said—the most obvious things—“I’m against summary expulsions except in extreme cases,” “I don’t know what she was really thinking” and “It would have been cleaner to just drop her.” And then there was questioning by Mark K. and, I believe, Lisa whether it’s “right” to expel someone for their ideas. Meanwhile, after Nelson gave a report to the San Francisco local, the SF exec decided that they need another report—by Jane! And members of the local are wondering what the New York local really thought at the time—implying that, well, if they didn’t expel her, maybe the PB shouldn’t have. Javier called Janet in New York and asked a bunch of poking questions like: Why didn’t we get to see Socorro’s deposition at the trial? How did Negrete vote? And before all that, Kathleen apparently—we didn’t find out until lately—was very upset that Socorro hadn’t been given enough time to prepare for trial.

Now in the last few days a lot of people have been backtracking after “reading the documents” or “reading a lot of Cannon” or “listening to the I.S. tapes.” But it’s not like this is a deep political question that one needs to have a lot of historical knowledge to get. Nelson said at one of our meetings recently that when the delegation went in to Mexico to deal with the *political* questions of Negrete’s dispute with the I.S. over LM and the way he ran the Mexican section, that Negrete was trying to turn that into a *juridical* question and that people here now seem to want to turn a juridical question into a political one. To all of those people who now say they’ve changed their minds, I ask: *Where in god’s name were your gut impulses?* Here’s a question of protection of the party from a hostile element who has declared that there is nothing that would stop her from running to the bourgeois state because it’s more “just” than the party.

Comrades here are worried about “thought crimes” and want to make a distinction between what one says

and what one does. I would remind them that we would not tolerate a member making a racist slur to another person, inside or outside the party. In fact we expelled Barry from Cleveland for calling the black girlfriend of a member an “Aunt Jemima”—a reflection of the fact that he spent too much time in white racist bars. What if somebody got up at a local meeting and said they saw no difference between the party’s treatment of black comrades and that received at the hands of the slavocracy? Nelson made the point that in Australia a member of Workers Power accused us of murdering our comrade Martha; would we want to be in the same organization with that person? It’s not just a question of thinking and speaking; there is such a thing as “fighting words.” Membership in this organization is based on agreement with our principles and acceptance of our program and discipline—this in fact, comrades, is a *thought*.

There are some links between the “non” faction fight that’s roaring in the International and the squeamishness about Socorro. Norden’s “group” cannot see a way out in the wake of the collapse of the SU except to chase after non-proletarian forces which requires that he grind the edge off the knife of our program. This is classic centrism: you give occasional lip service to the revolutionary program while seeking deals with other forces on a non-programmatic basis, usually where each gets to do their own thing on their national terrain. Comrades here in rejecting the expulsion of Socorro are busy grinding the edge off the knife of our Leninist organization.

There has been for a while a deep parochialism and disinterest in the welfare of the party out here. Two very notable examples which make the link: One is when Jorge came back from Mexico, sent in as part of a delegation to try and save a section which looked very clearly like Negrete was about to take out of the ICL to assuage his own petty egotism, the only two people who wanted to know what happened were Alma and Angelo; nobody else cared. And two weeks ago, Alma was in doing emergency translation of the transcript of Nelson’s presentation to the German national conference, one of the key fights in our International which had been hidden from the Mexican section, and she was in here trying to get it done before their meeting the next weekend. And Mark K., who was DO at the time, threw her out of the office without inquiring what she was working on or why because it was time for him to go home—time-serving. And the exec was there that night, they probably didn’t know what Alma was working on but they didn’t care because they were just there for an exec meeting; they told Mark “you better put Alma on BART”—and left.

As part of the fight in this district in the wake of ignoring except in the most passive way the teachers strike, we voted a motion which referred to a “lack of appetite to engage, where possible, as the revolutionary party, reflective of a demoralization and despair that the SL cannot have an effect on the world in which we live.” The corollary to that is that if you don’t have the appetite to engage, you don’t need a party that’s ready to engage—you don’t need a Leninist combat party that

constantly prepares itself to lead the working class to power. So what difference does it make who's in it or whether it can protect itself?

The Social Democracy in Germany believed in "the party of the whole class" which meant that opportunists could co-exist in the same party with revolutionaries. So if you don't need a combat party, it really does become "too bad"—as Valerie said to Jane—that we had to politically smash Negrete and Socorro; when Socorro makes a declaration of hatred to the party, there really is no need to throw her out, after all, because we can afford to just wait around and see if she'll *act* on what she said she was going to do.

Now not everybody feels that way. There are still a lot of us around who believe in the need of the Leninist vanguard party that can lead the working class—not as something to give lip service to but to practice. It is the meaning of the fight that Lenin waged in 1903, that we will have only people in our ranks who believe in our principles and accept our program and discipline. Tanner passed around a passage from the SWP's 1940 convention which I thought was very apt, and I'll just read a portion of it here:

"The SWP is a revolutionary Marxian party, based on a definite program, whose aim is the organization of the working class in the struggle for power and the transformation of the existing social order. All its activities, its methods and its internal regime are subordinated to this aim and are designed to serve it.... A loosely-knit, heterogeneous, undisciplined, untrained organization is utterly incapable of accomplishing such world-historical tasks...."

Now Robertson made a point in his document "On Norden's Antics," which I think has been circulated, that Norden in his talk about Socorro needing a lawyer at the trial and Socorro declaiming party injustice are acting like the party is an alien force that wants to put them in prison. And Robertson said well, that's understandable—for them, the ICL has become a prison because our discipline has put a constraint on their *alien* political positions. Democratic-centralism is the organizational form that fits a revolutionary combat party; it is neither necessary nor useful for a socialist club which does not exist to struggle for power. And there are a number of people out here who seem to be just serving time in a Trotsky Memorial Society; they're too scared to leave, having been in this party their entire adult lives, but they're increasingly alienated from the tasks set out and the discipline that's required to do the job. When I mentioned this to Robertson, he protested: But Kendall, even a Trotsky Memorial Society would expel someone who declared they were going to spit on Trotsky's gravestone!

[Seymour: Any German Social Democrat who compared the party unfavorably to Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany would have been thrown out!]

There does seem to be an "anti-bureaucratic" streak that has run through particularly the Oakland local for quite some time. Karen C. addressed it in her document. She said that the leadership in the Oakland local has been pretty bad but that there's a *disdain*, as distinct from criticism, that some of the membership has for the

leadership. It was expressed by Linda when we were talking to her about Don C.'s criticism of her talk and her nasty response, accusing him of race-baiting her. She said that she thought Don's document was a prelude to disciplinary action—and Mark K. agreed with her. And then we have Valerie, who says "the bad thing about expelling someone for what they say is that a lot of people around her are afraid to express what they're really thinking." So the party is somehow portrayed as a big bureaucracy to whom you dare not utter your thoughts. Beside the fact that this is patently untrue, one does wonder what the thoughts are in Valerie's head.

Jeanne sent in another quote from Cannon, from the '52-53 period, in the fight against Cochran and Clarke. Talking about the necessity of steeling the party against internalization of the objective situation—they'd just come off of a period with no class struggle and the witchhunt—Cannon says:

"...the symptoms are manifest most strikingly in the leading cadre itself. This cannot fail to feed every kind of local malcontent arising from theoretical ignorance and indifference, inexperience and defeatist moods on the part of elements who feel about things without thinking about them in their larger scope.... resentful recognition on the part of some comrades—perhaps unconscious or not fully conscious—that they have been pulled along for quite a while against their will."

So I think that the reaction to Socorro's expulsion out here isn't surprising: This is a district that has not been well led in a political manner for some time and certainly where lately the fights have not been made to "steel the party." Partly on account of that and because of the objective circumstances, there are a lot of people who don't want to do the work anymore; they feel that party tasks are a pain in the ass and that the leadership is a bureaucratic morass. There are a number of people who have been completely silent on Socorro's expulsion but probably share some of these sentiments. Well, comrades, you are seeing some leadership in having this discussion tonight, and I don't suspect everybody will like it very well. I thought Steve H. captured something in the Oakland local meeting where he said he'd always suspected that the comrades elected him as organizer out of some kind of non-aggression pact. Well, if you don't like it, it's probably time to figure out what you really want: A social club with a socialist veneer or a Leninist combat party.

Nelson: I was thinking about the conversation I had with Valerie. I said to her, "If one of our members said the same thing as the Workers Power guy, would you be for the expulsion?" She said, "Oh, of course." I said, "But you're not for Socorro's, therefore it's a question of degree. You view a statement that one of us killed Martha Phillips as worthy of a summary expulsion, someone not fit to be in the party. But someone who said this [pointing to wall poster of Socorro's remarks to the New York local meeting] can be in the party. This isn't extreme enough." It's a question of degree, some sliding scale.

That provoked other thoughts in my mind. If a contact came up to us and said, "I've been watching your organization. I know your people. I've been around different locals. You say a lot of good things. I like your paper. But my impression of your organization is that if someone in your party gets in trouble, they'll get no better treatment than a rapist in a bourgeois court." You'd say, "get the hell out of here." That would be an instant response. I can't imagine anybody, the soggiest person around here not reporting back, "Why even bother talking to this scum?" I think that's true.

So what's the difference? Socorro was a member *here* for 18 years. Go back to the '53 fight in the SWP. Cannon ran into resistance to making a fight and it's expressed in a number of the documents. One of them happens to be a letter to Ted Grant. Cannon said: People are treating this like a break in the family. But there's no family in a revolutionary party. Our association is based on programmatic agreement. We're not supposed to be trained in guerrilla warfare. These people have been attacking our party for a year, he said about the Cochranites.

So I think there's a sense of family, "poor Socorro." Valerie said to somebody (I heard it this afternoon) about Socorro and Negrete, "Isn't it sad." No! It's not sad. You can take a step back like Robertson did about Norden. But when someone challenges the very fundamental programmatic basis of the party as Norden has been doing in Germany; as happened with Gino in Italy; the French Central Committee, a big section of it; Norden's operation in Brazil and, through his alter ego Negrete, in Mexico. We've been under attack, and rather intensively, for the last couple of years. You can push the line backward further and find partial expressions going back to the '93 nasty clique stuff in *WV*.

In Italy, under the pressure of the strikes, we got Gino being a reflection of the centrists in our party, who in turn were capitulating to the reformists of *Rifondazione Comunista*—the unlimited general strike as an economist cover for popular frontism. Then our French section had for a long time, longer than we understood, basically a non-aggression pact with the OROs and balked when a red leaflet was written for them in New York; they wouldn't hand it out. This was under the pressure of events.

People read the motions. I don't know what you think. Some comrades respond politically and come up with the issues, assimilate it. But to others I think it must be some distant, benign struggle. Oh, the fight, yeah we had another fight, there's always fights. But all of a sudden it comes home and it's somebody you know. It's "poor old Socorro" who said repeatedly in her goddamn letters, "18 year member...why Camila was only five years old when I was...blah, blah, blah." So it was rather piquant that she was reduced to candidate membership for one week for every year of her membership. Too bad it wasn't Negrete, it would be 23 weeks.

When it's a "family" matter, what that really means is you go all the way back to before 1903. Mark pointed out in *Lenin and the Vanguard Party* that Lenin didn't actually generalize on what course he had been taking until

World War I and realized then that the positions accumulated in a series of fights in the Russian section were actually now splitting the international, driven by the question of social chauvinism and the war, social patriotism. But he had, in practice, broken from the party of the whole class. What that really means is more like Norman Thomas' all-inclusive party—a social-democratic conception that a socialist party can have a revolutionary wing and an opportunist wing and, presumably, with the outbreak of the first imperialist war, a social-chauvinist wing. Lenin, in practice, broke from that.

We're not an all-inclusive party. We're a programmatic defined party. We strive for homogeneity in our party. If the spread is too wide, that's not good. You expect to have a certain spectrum in the party. It's healthy to have that, to have a certain clash of different pulls and pressures. But underneath it all our purpose and our organizational methods and our rules derive from our intent to sweep away every government on the face of the earth. That kind of a party isn't some squishy, social-democratic, all-inclusive party.

The implication is that all of a sudden we're bureaucratic. All the questioning had a logic to it, that there's some linear continuation of the political fight in Mexico about Brazil, about Mexico, the way they ran the Mexican section as a second-class section, hid from them all the major fights in order that Negrete—not just Negrete in some personal way, but Negrete as a representative of other alien impulses (acting in concert with Norden)—could more easily manipulate the section. Norden did the same thing in Germany in a somewhat different way—purged out of the leadership rather systematically, from 1992 on, all the older TLDers. He had a certain umbrella rationale for this, these were the social basis in the party for social democracy. So what he got was an organization that was pliable. He got Mike J., a junior guy. He got Adam—he's taken off like a rocket in Brazil, he's done terrific work there, but under Norden's hammering in Germany he felt unsure of himself so he was pliable. A fear of somehow this party has, inexplicably, now become bureaucratic and will expel you for a certain range of political differences with the party, seeing the expulsion as simply a linear continuation of that, implies and begs social-democratic politics. That is a different kind of party based on a different goal.

Norden's after something else, Norden and Negrete. Their profile emerges pretty clearly in what they have been soft pedaling with *Luta Metalúrgica*. Once we got our hands on it, and Adam went in there (then later Camila), we started having fights from the moment he hit the ground. Norden and Negrete conciliated all the questions that we had fights on. They knew about them, and conciliated them. Now that doesn't warrant an expulsion but it does mean that the programmatic basis of our party is under attack. At some point in this Socorro, in her head, quit.

You get alienation from the party. With Mark and Linda—to think that Don C.'s perfectly warranted and correct political criticism of a defective presentation at Laney was some kind of prelude to organizational

moves—that’s a reflex of some kind that “Hey, this party would do this to me just because I screwed up in this Laney presentation.” That reflex on your part was social-democratic because the party hasn’t changed. One could say in the abstract, “Well, gee, wouldn’t it be possible the party could suddenly become bureaucratic?” No, nothing happens suddenly. It’s visible and there’s a relationship between politics and organizational methods. Intensively, almost continuously since whenever the Italy fight broke out in ’94—Italy to France to Germany to Mexico—we’ve been doing nothing but fighting, which is a reflection of the enormous pressures that are on us in this new period, the New World Order. All this stuff now is becoming real for a lot of people here.

You look at our Australian section right now and they’re giving a new meaning to centrism. Centrism is often defined as revolutionary in words, opportunist in deeds. Their variant is revolutionary in words and nothing in deeds. They’ve made an art form out of abstention and indifference. They even state it in some of their motions: We are indifferent to the privatization of major shipping lines; we are indifferent to this march of 15,000 women; Keith is only involved in social work wanting us to support asylum by very leftist Iraqi Kurds. And then, the worst of all, was when they sat at a goddamn table and allowed this Workers Power guy to sneer at them and say, “You people killed Martha.” Bonnie bragged that, “We didn’t respond to this, we didn’t rise to the provocation.” What that meant is that they’ve got nothing inside them about Spartacism. It was a humiliation of our party. To sit there and take that kind of insult—insult isn’t the right word—is a measure of extreme deterioration, under the pressure of the Australian social-democratic labor movement, isolation, but mainly in the envelope of the world without the Soviet Union. For our opponents there’s no limits. They can say anything they want. The ISO here can talk about “we stand in the traditions of Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolshevik Party.” You couldn’t have got that out of them with a branding iron before the Soviet Union went down. These guys were stone anti-communists all the way back.

So these pressures are on our party and particularly here in the American section because there’s been lots of nothing really since the end of the Vietnam War. Then the ideological pressure got more intense with Reagan’s election, and the air traffic controllers strike

and the cutting down of the labor movement. We’re not trained for a peace-time existence and we’ve had stagnation imposed on us here. That’s just additional pressure.

Then you get this local which has, as far back as I can remember, been an older local. When we had trade-union fractions, the most heavily industrialized, i.e., the most subject to trade-union ideology. We took a lot of quits out of here on that basis and in other locals too that had trade-union fractions. All this comes to a head here when “poor Socorro, 18 years, our good comrade, gee I remember when....” But people change, their politics change. Under pressure they start to take a different path. Their feet start to walk. It’s not conscious. They just begin to have impulses that are at variance with the formal program of the party.

We’ve been in battle with these guys. It’s moving very rapidly. I don’t expect that Norden and Stamberg and Negrete are going to be in the party very long. But it’s going to be their decision. If they step out of line and do something to warrant an expulsion, to trigger something, all right, we can accommodate them. But by and large, it’s better the minority takes the initiative. We make sure that the political fight is waged until there is complete understanding. We did that, and then some, in ’68 with the Ellensites—numerous provocations, overt breaches of discipline. We could have thrown them out three times. And we didn’t, until it was clear to everyone what they were really all about, namely a syndicalist assault on our Leninist conceptions, Leninist party.

So I tell you, if you don’t think that’s worth being expelled for [pointing to wall poster of Socorro’s remarks].... For her to say this to us—especially here, this rape was not that long ago and this was the most rotten way she could think of, in her experience and our experience—was in effect to say “*FUCK YOU!*, I hate you people. In my mind there’s no difference between you and some bourgeois court who treats a rapist better than me.” When Robertson called me up and told me that, I didn’t have to think about it, wring my hands, “Oh, gee, poor Socorro how sad.” Robertson said, “Summary expulsion.” I said, “Right! Good riddance!” And if you didn’t have that reflex, all you 20-25 year people, then you’ve got some green fuzz growing on your brain. Except it has a name; it’s called some other politics, centrism in some form. But it’s not even centrism—your lights are going out.

Reply to a Frame-Up “Trial”

by Jan Norden and Marjorie Stamberg

7 June 1996

The following document previously appeared in the July 1996 bulletin, From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle, issued by the expelled ICL cadres who went on to found the IG and the LFI. Norden and Stamberg were expelled the day after releasing this reply to their trial call for not participating in the proceedings.

In a “Call for a Trial” dated 31 May 1996 and delivered at 23:45 that night, the International Secretariat charges comrade Norden with “defiant and categorical denial of a fundamental condition of membership, that the party has a monopoly over the public political activity (i.e. not personal activity) of its members.” The “same identical charges” are brought against comrade Stamberg. These charges are false: neither of us has ever asserted any such thing, and all of our public political activity in 24 years in the party has been in accordance with Leninist democratic centralism. Starting with its initial false premise, the I.S. proceeds to spin out an entire fantasy of groundless assumptions, wild conjectures and filthy smears culminating in the outrageous slander that “the consequences of Norden’s and Stamberg’s indiscipline”—which does not exist—“could be extremely injurious to the party’s work and its comrades,” and on that basis of speculation based on suppositions based on lies, it calls for our expulsion from the ICL. This is a frame-up.

Included in the catalogue of phony charges are:

- Norden supposedly being “caught in an act of indiscipline” for speaking on the phone with another IEC member, Negrete;
- charging Norden with “failure to declare a faction and instead take his opposition underground,” even though pages of I.S. and IEC motions are attached to the charges condemning his positions and a motion was passed by the I.S. explicitly to limit the circulation of documents by us;
- accusing Stamberg and Norden of a “de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership” over the course of eight months, even though we have continued to play central roles in putting out Workers Vanguard and numerous other party activities;
- insidiously concocting “hefty suspicions” of “political collaboration with non-members”; and
- slanderously speculating about an “outside source of political funding.”

Withdrawal from membership, going underground, political collaboration with and even political funding by outside sources, seeking to wreck the party’s work and set up comrades for injury—every one of these charges is false to the core. They are in total contradiction with our entire political history of over three decades of struggle in the cause of revolution and our years of proudly fighting to build the Spartacist ten-

dency and ICL. Does the I.S. expect anyone to believe these charges?

A Fishing Expedition

The only true fact in the whole list of charges contained in the “Call” is that we refused to hand over our phone bills when these were demanded on 30 May. What is the sudden interest in these bills now? It can only be to see the numbers called, and thus to identify the persons (i.e., comrades) we have spoken with. This is a classic fishing expedition aimed at stifling inner-party discussion. Far from denying the party’s right to a monopoly of public political activity by its members, we protested that there is no legitimate party interest in this information, that we have done nothing against the rules of our party, and this demand to turn over what amounts to a list of comrades we have talked with was raised solely because of our internal political differences.

We have engaged in no public political activity outside the control of the party. As for communication among comrades, this is protected by the statutes of the SL/U.S., which stipulate that “material exchanged entirely privately between SL/U.S. members, i.e., between individuals or within a tendency or faction” may not be demanded by the Control Commission (CCC). Now these charges against us redefine this key point in the statutes to claim that since Norden and Stamberg “denied and continue to deny vehemently that they are members of any faction”... “Therefore their communications with Negrete or any other members of the ICL are not protected by confidentiality.” This throws our party rules out the window and opens the door to rampant bureaucratic intimidation.

According to the charges, “The fact that comrades Norden and Stamberg have not submitted any phone bills for eight months indicates that for some time they have not considered themselves to be subordinate to party discipline.” Later they claim that not having submitted these bills constituted “a de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership”! This is monstrous. Since when is turning over your phone bills a standard of membership? Is every member of the ICL or the SL/U.S. or its Central Committee required to turn in their phone bills monthly, or else be deemed no longer members? Of course not! So why are we required to do so? Because we have disagreed with positions taken by the Political Bureau and I.S. That is the only reason for this unheard-of measure.

Since this would be an all-too obvious reprisal, now a story is invented to justify why we in particular must turn in our phone bills. It is alleged that there was an “existing arrangement” whereby Norden, like other members of leadership bodies, submitted “bills for payment of political/organizational calls” made from our apartment. There is an important sleight-of-hand here, for never was there an arrangement that all “political/organizational”

calls from our home phone would be paid; rather, we were reimbursed for those calls made carrying out organizational assignments. These alone were submitted to the party for reimbursement. We never asked the party to pay for personal calls, including those to comrades that were not directly connected to specific assignments. If there was a different practice with other comrades, we were never aware of it.

Why were org calls not submitted for payment in recent months? The charges coyly ask, “did Norden unilaterally suspend his political responsibilities...or was he engaged in secret correspondence to be kept hidden from the party?” This cynical question is designed to get around the fact, which the I.S. knows full well, that Norden didn’t “unilaterally suspend his political responsibilities,” but rather he was removed from them. Following the 20 July 1995 I.S. meeting, Norden was removed step by step from operational responsibility for the work in areas which he previously oversaw. This was immediately true for everything concerning Germany except work on Spartakist; Brosius took over phone contact with the SpAD. On Mexico, Richard D. was assigned to maintain regular communication with the GEM. This can be verified simply by looking at the reports and fax traffic. On Brazil, Norden supervised the trip by Negrete and Adam in August 1995, but after that communication with Brazil was handled through other comrades.

This culminated in the January 1996 IEC meeting, where Norden was removed from full IEC membership; thereafter he was no longer responsible for any particular area of work in the I.S., and hence there were no org calls to present for reimbursement. So first Norden is removed from his assignments; then, when he doesn’t have the same expenses to submit, this is deemed evidence of an eight-month conspiracy to (a) unilaterally withdraw from membership; (b) go underground; (c) collaborate with non-party members; (d) have someone else pay the bill! How grotesque!

Committee “Discipline”

There is another significant “redefinition” of party statutes contained in the charges against us, namely the introduction, for the first time in the history of the Spartacist tendency, of committee discipline. The charges reproduce a motion passed at the I.S. meeting of 17 April criticizing Norden for not immediately reporting a call from Negrete while an I.S. delegation was in Mexico, ostensibly to aid the discussion of the GEM over “a dispute between the I.S. and Negrete over our work in Brazil” (letter of Parks, 8 April), but actually to purge him and Socorro from leading roles in the work of the Mexican section. Now the charges against us claim that “The above motion indicates that Norden was recently caught in an act of indiscipline which undermined the I.S. and the work of the ICL.” So it is now “indiscipline” for Norden, a member of the I.S., to speak with a member of the IEC, a body on which Norden had served as a full member for almost two decades and was still an alternate, after being punitively deprived of his decisive vote on the committee at the January IEC for refusing to

agree with the utterly false line on the work in Germany.

How can one IECer talking with another IECer be a breach of discipline? Not only are communications “between individuals or within a tendency or faction” protected by confidentiality (according to Article VII, Section 6 of the SL/U.S. statutes), but Article VI, Section 7 of the statutes states explicitly:

“There is no such thing as a special discipline of higher bodies. While it is preferable, for example, that the CC have an opportunity to discuss new questions first, members of the CC are not prohibited from discussing disputed questions with other party members or communicating information to them.”

This provision of our statutes is no minor matter, being the product of the experience of the Revolutionary Tendency in the SWP where RTers opposed the concept of “committee discipline” and were bureaucratically prohibited from discussing differences with youth members. Now this same bureaucratic procedure is being introduced into the ICL, in order to ex post facto declare Norden guilty of breaking discipline for talking with another leading member of the international. For some documentation on this question of “committee discipline” see Spartacist Nos. 38-39 (Summer 1986) which reprints three letters by James P. Cannon under the title, “Don’t Strangle the Party.”

Party Membership Called a “Charade”

It’s particularly ludicrous for the charges to claim, “It would appear that when Norden (and Stamberg) stopped submitting these [telephone] bills it was a de facto and unilateral withdrawal from membership, and that since that time, their nominal membership, which they took full advantage of, was a charade.” Some “withdrawal from membership”! Does the I.S. think that being editor of Workers Vanguard was a “charade”? Norden continued to edit WV up to the day he was bureaucratically removed as editor after 23 years in the job. Not only that, even after the January IEC, Norden heavily participated in formulating policy for the ICL’s work in Brazil, including producing the final version of a major I.S. letter to Luta Metalúrgica laying out our differences over their practice relating to key questions of the party and state. On 25 May, in the midst of the recent uproar, he wrote a seven-page letter with a detailed critique of and suggestions for the draft Mexico article for Espartaco.

In addition, Norden contributed to the last issue of Spartakist with a lengthy and detailed letter on the comrades’ approach to the DGB union tops’ “Bundnis für Arbeit” (Alliance for Jobs) and labor struggles in the present period, raising criticisms which were shared by other members of the I.S. He also wrote a major contribution criticizing the reworked “Tasks and Perspectives” section of the SpAD conference document for lacking any concrete perspectives and for taking a policy of ignoring the PDS. Of course, this was characterized in an I.S. motion as “permanent factionalism.” Evidently, active participation in the life of the organization counts as the work of genuine (as opposed to supposedly “nominal”) members only when it does not involve disagreement.

The same is true in the case of Stamberg. In addition to being a long-time alternate member of the SL/U.S.

Central Committee, public spokesman for the SL and member of the WV editorial board, Stamberg initiated and for several years led the ICL's beginning work in South Africa. It was at her initiative and in response to her written proposal in April 1995 that the Johannesburg station was set up. During the last eight months, while she was allegedly being a "nominal" member and going "underground," in fact she was writing major policy documents on South Africa, including correcting misformulations over the "power sharing" Mandela/De Klerk regime, and earlier this year reorienting the station over the question of how to fight neo-apartheid in the schools in South Africa, which is not a simple reproduction of the Jim Crow American South but requires a struggle for permanent revolution. Most recently, Stamberg wrote the South Africa lead article in WV No. 646 (24 May), and at the moment she was suspended she was at the computer in the office working on an article in defense of imprisoned Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu. But according to the I.S. charges, this party work was just a "charade."

While we have faithfully and loyally carried out our party assignments, virtually everything has been dealt with by the I.S. and PB in factional terms. The latest case was a document against our proposal to run a lead article on the upcoming Russian elections in WV No. 647. In April, Stamberg was removed as de facto managing editor, a role she had filled for the last decade and a half, by the formal appointment of comrade Bishop to this position. The purpose was, as stated by several speakers in the PB discussion, to get "control of the paper." Yet as pointed out in the countermotion by Norden against his removal from the Political Bureau and as WV editor, while he has been in charge of the paper it has always been the organ of and expressed the positions of the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the SL/U.S. and of the leading bodies of the international, bodies of which he has been a member. But now all that has been "rectified."

The Night of 29 May

The charges abound in utterly false statements. Thus under the heading of "Background," it is claimed that on 29 May, the day after the motion was passed to poll the IEC to remove him from the I.S., "comrade Norden was caught photocopying material from the party files of the International Secretariat." Nonsense. Norden went into the I.S. office in full view of everyone, looked through the "Yesterday" folder, asked for the "Today" folder, selected a few items relating to the current fight and walked down the hall to the xerox machine to copy them, as he was entitled to do. Among these items were the motions passed by the I.S., which he had not been given a copy of. He then returned these documents, handing them to Richard D. Two and a half hours later, we received a call at home from Parks saying that Norden had "no right" to copy that material, and if she heard of this happening again, his keys to the floor would be taken. An hour after that a team was outside our apartment demanding all our keys and party equipment in our possession.

The portrayal of the events of the "evening" of 29 May in the charges is thoroughly dishonest. First, they do not mention that we received a phone call at 23:22 p.m. from comrade Brown, who announced that he would ring our buzzer "in two minutes" to demand to be let in to seize the computer and our keys. Exactly two minutes later to the second, as Norden was on the phone to the office asking for confirmation of this outrageous measure, Brown—who was in charge of the five-man repossession squad—rang the buzzer. Meanwhile, Norden was speaking to Parks, who said that this was a decision of the I.S. and PB. When asked why, she said because Norden had allegedly been copying material that he had "no business copying." Norden replied that he was still a member of the I.S., to which Parks said, "Polls are in, you are off the I.S." and also removed from the PB. When Norden asked repeatedly if there had been a meeting of the I.S. to confirm the poll, as required by our norms, she replied "no." When Norden responded, "Therefore it is not valid," Parks dropped this excuse and declared that the privilege of having keys was being denied "because you are untrustworthy" and "you have no loyalty to this party."

The charges state that Norden "protested that this was a bureaucratic abuse," which he certainly did. But the claim that Norden "particularly heatedly denied that the party had any right to retrieve keys to party offices from him," is a flat lie. He repeatedly and clearly stated that he objected not to the party's right to party property, but to the decision to take it back for no justifiable reason. When Parks declared "it's our property," he replied that he "did not question for one minute" that it was party property. "What I am objecting to is this decision." What Norden "particularly heatedly denied" was the vicious, lying charge of "disloyalty." When he angrily stated, "I object to this procedure. I have done nothing that is disloyal, and I have done nothing that in any way contravenes the norms and rules of our party," Parks replied haughtily: "You can object all you want. All you need to do is turn over our keys and our equipment."

According to the charges, "Norden then said that he would put the party's computer and fax machine 'on the sidewalk' in 30 minutes and that if comrade E. Brown or Collins were still there then he would turn his keys over to them." In fact, early in the call with Parks Norden said he would bring the equipment and keys down to the street, to which Parks replied, "Okay, that's fine." The second time he said "I will be down in half an hour, and possibly before, with the computer, and the fax machine, and our keys." When Parks kept yelling, he repeated, "I will get them down there as soon as humanly possible."

At times, the charges descend to the level of utter absurdity. Thus at one point, it is stated that "since the party has repossessed its fax machine from comrade Norden it is revealed that only Mexico City and Berlin were programmed as his 'one-touch' fast dial keys." What startling revelations this research has produced! Of course, to any reasonable person, this would seem only logical since Norden was responsible for work in Latin America and Germany. Actually, although we can't verify this since we no longer have the machine,

we recall that there was a third “fast dial” key—to the C.O. in New York.

Outright Slander

From untruths in small things as well as big, the I.S. charges escalate to dirty smears, vile innuendo, baseless speculation and wild flights of fantasy in classic witch-hunting style. It is claimed that “the outright refusal by comrades Norden and Stamberg to turn over the phone bills can only reasonably be understood as a ploy to shield them from exposure of other acts of freelancing and political activity outside and perhaps against the direction of the I.S. over a protracted period beginning in September 1995.” Freelancing? How—by talking with other comrades?! But this is only the jumping-off point for the escalating slanderous accusations.

The charges declare that refusal to turn in our phone bills raises “hefty suspicions” of “political collaboration with non-members.” Taking this fiction as fact, the charges then go on to ask, “And who was paying the bill? Do they have some outside source of political funding?” The technique is all too familiar. On top of this insidious attempt to smear us as collaborating with sinister unknown outside forces, we get this gem of the frame-up genre: “It is enlightening to ponder the possible extent of comrade Norden’s undirected reach in the eight months he took his political activity underground. A reasonable projection can be made through careful examination of the previous year through documentation provided by the treasury.”

Whatever ponderings, musings, conjecture and groundless speculation the I.S. has become capable of, this is a set of formal charges proposing the expulsion of comrades. The documentation from the treasury will show no evidence of collusion with forces outside the ICL, nor can anything else for the simple reason that there has been none on our part, ever! Moreover, we have paid every penny of our phone bills ourselves, except for those organizational calls reimbursed by the party. We resent the despicable attempt to question our loyalty, to smear us as collaborating with and even being funded by an “outside source.” We do not need to prove our loyalty, because we have always been disciplined and loyal to the Spartacist tendency.

The dirty accusations keep piling up. The charges state: “In view of their escalating opposition to the I.S. and particularly over our extremely sensitive relations with our fraternal Brazilian comrades, the consequences of Norden’s and Stamberg’s indiscipline could be extremely injurious to the party’s work and its comrades.” What is this supposed to mean, that we are setting up comrades for injury and repression?! It is on the basis of this vile statement that our expulsion is called for. The charge is totally without foundation in fact and is but the “projection” of the fevered imaginations of the authors of the charges. Norden has stated before, and we repeat here again, that neither of us have had any independent communication with Brazil whatsoever. We have energetically sought to advance the ICL’s relations with our fraternal comrades of the Liga Quarta-

Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica, seeking political clarity while defending them against threats emanating from the bourgeois state and its agents. There were no acts of indiscipline, and we have done nothing to injure the party’s work or our comrades. On the contrary, we have done everything we can to defend them. We repeat: this is a frame-up, pure and simple.

Norden has outlined the course of the ICL’s relations with Luta Metalúrgica and refuted various false claims about those relations in two documents (17 April and 5 May) on the subject. The latest blow-up came over his “Comments on Draft Letter to LQB/LM” (24 May), in which he particularly objected to the draft’s accusing LM of seeking “union sinecures and positions of privilege” on the basis of no evidence, and asked to change a formulation in the draft which uncritically repeated the claims of a provocateur in league with the cops concerning a reputed arrangement for the LM spokesman to serve as paid advisor to the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers union. Norden also objected to the categorical statement by Parks that we should not “set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again,” and while endorsing the removal of the ICL rep from V.R. in the face of the threat of imminent police repression, he argued it “could be urgently necessary to send someone else to Brazil to aid in defense efforts,” rather than staying out “until this matter is resolved,” as the draft letter stated.

This is what produced Parks’ outrageous statement that Norden was “cop-baiting” the ICL, that he was on a “wrecking operation against his party,” supposedly staging “a filthy, dirty provocation against the party,” and allegedly trying to “engineer a split with LM against the ICL.” It is Norden’s criticisms, in a document submitted to the I.S. containing his solicited comments on a series of points raised in an unsent draft letter, that precipitated his removal from the I.S., PB and WV editor!

A Political Purge

The call for the expulsion of Norden and Stamberg for supposed indiscipline is the culmination of a push to drive us out of the party for supposed hostility (repeatedly cited in the charges) and disloyalty (as stated by Parks in her 29 May phone call with Norden and implied throughout the charges). That this is a political purge is made clear from the “particularly relevant motions from recent IEC and I.S. meetings” against Norden and Stamberg which are appended to the charges. These document how Norden has been removed from one post after another, first from full membership in the IEC, now from the I.S., the PB and as editor of Workers Vanguard. Even here the charges resort to distortions, listing endless votes with Emilio [Norden] opposed, whereas in two instances (on 17 April and 28 May) he presented counterposed motions, which are not deemed “relevant” enough to reproduce.

As this drive has shifted into high gear, motions have been supplemented by attempts to provoke us. Just look at the time sequence in the latest episode. On the evening of 28 May there were back-to-back meetings of the International Secretariat and Political Bureau held to set in motion the removal of Norden from the I.S. and PB

and to oust him as editor, declaring him “unworthy of being a member” of the ICL. Both at that meeting and at an earlier NY local meeting there were choruses of demands that we “get out” of the party. The next night (29 May), using the pretext that Norden had copied relevant materials about the fight, a team shows up demanding, on two minutes notice, our keys and party equipment. These were turned over. Later that night, at 1:10 a.m., we received another call, this time from comrade Meyers, the new editor of *WV*, instructing Norden not to turn up at the office before 4. Why not? No reason was given. Then, when the late-night visit by the hefty repo squad didn’t produce a refusal to comply, or perhaps inspection of the fax machine and computer didn’t yield the hoped-for results, we are presented with the demand for our phone bills.

One of the themes in this purge campaign has been howls of outrage over “Norden’s failure to declare a faction” (from the “Call for a Trial”). Prior to the 11 May I.S. meeting, a draft motion declared an “undeclared faction of four (Negrete, Socorro, Stamberg, and Norden) identified by their opposition (abstention in the case of Norden) to the motions and decisions voted for by the GEM and the I.S.” When objections were raised to this (see Norden’s 10 May document “On the Invention of ‘Undeclared Factions’”), this was changed to officially declaring the four to be a “declared group,” without factional rights, of course. Since no one had requested factional rights, this was unexceptionable—except that now in the charges calling for our expulsion, the confidentiality of communication between individual members of the party is declared only applicable to factions or tendencies (and not to individual members, as stated in the party statutes). In other words, if we had acceded to the enormous pressure to declare a faction, we would not be up on charges, but since we refused, we are fair game. This is, of course, a hoax. If the telephone bill ploy didn’t work, some other pretext would have been found.

So why this push to force Norden and Stamberg to declare a faction, and why have we refused to do so? In the year-long fight over Germany and now again in the much faster-paced fight over Mexico (which totaled less than two weeks from the beginning to the removal of Negrete and Socorro from the GEM leadership) and Brazil, all opposition to the line of the I.S. was labeled “anti-internationalist” and fundamentally deviant on the party question. We replied that the Germany dispute was a false fight to find a Stalinophilic deviation, that the alleged facts, analysis and conclusions bore no resemblance to reality. Defenders of the I.S. and IEC line declared that if we thought that, then we must believe that they are bureaucratic witchhunters. Evidently they have set out to prove this over Mexico and Brazil.

We have sought not to leap to premature conclusions over these fights. Norden initially abstained on the Mexico motions because he wanted to hear the tapes of the GEM meeting and see the evidence for the charges of “anti-internationalism.” Having done so, he declared at the I.S. of 11 May that he would now vote against the Mexico motions. At the same time, in several documents

and in interventions before the I.S., Norden made clear that he had differences in the past with Negrete, over Mexico and the Brazil work, and laid out what those differences were. Negrete, in turn, voted with the majority against Norden’s positions on the work in Germany at the January IEC. It is obvious from this alone that there is no “faction”—declared or not—of a “gang of four.” Yes, there have been some common positions, notably against the purge in the Mexican leadership and to uphold the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica, now called into question by the I.S. motion of 11 May. But by itself this is not a sufficient basis for the declaration of a faction or tendency, which requires a common platform or document.

By upping the pressure on and going after perceived “internal opponents” and trying to force the declaration of a faction, the I.S. clearly has sought to make a preventive strike. The result has been to create a poisonous atmosphere in the party. Thus in the NY local meeting of 14 May, comrade Paul C.—arguing that “the four” must be a faction—quoted the phrase, “If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s a duck.” He was apparently unaware that this was the infamous witchhunting test proposed by Walter Reuther to ferret out Communists in the UAW. Underlying the right to form internal political groupings within the party is the intention of aiding in clarifying party discussion. But seeking to identify which comrades are talking to each other through examining phone bills and trying to prematurely provoke the formation of factional groupings where there is insufficient political basis for them only results in obscuring political discussion.

With the cascading removals of comrades from leadership bodies, involuntary placing on leave (twice in two months in the case of Negrete), a trial, expulsion (leading to great mirth in the last I.S. meeting that the “gang of four” had been reduced to a “gang of three”), and now suspensions aiming at expulsion, there has not been adequate time for far-reaching discussions.

Ironically, the I.S. motion of 28 May accuses Norden of pursuing “an escalating hostile ‘regime fight’” against Parks, whereas in fact there has been a concerted drive to remove him from the leadership of the ICL and now both of us from the membership. In recent months, we have been called Stalinophilic, Castroite, Shachtmanite, Pabloite of the second mobilization, accused of running a Healyite regime, with a touch of Loganism, like the BT, like Hansen, and partly like Goldman-Morrow and Cochran-Clarke. Oh yes, and also believers in Saddam Hussein’s war propaganda. To be all that at once is quite a feat. This string of invective, including various mutually contradictory accusations, makes it clear that what we have here is not a serious attempt at political debate but rather a serious attempt at vilification. Norden’s several documents on Germany and Brazil have for the most part not been answered, and instead dismissed as “voluminous” (which is at least in considerable contradiction to the charge of having gone “underground”).

So what does this supposed “regime fight” consist of? Over the recent period, and particularly in the past several

weeks, the I.S. has taken a series of measures breaking sharply with our Spartacist traditions and norms of internal debate governed by Leninist democratic centralism and instead imposing increasing restrictions and reprisals.

At the meeting of the International Executive Committee last January, after he was overwhelmingly defeated in a vote falsely charging the work in Germany directed toward the Communist Platform of being “Stalinophilic” and no less falsely accusing him of running an internal witchhunt against perceived opponents of this work (of which there were neither, no witchhunt and no opponents of the work at the time), Norden was “reduced” from full IEC member, which he had been since the 1970s, to alternate by a poll of the IEC. This was explicitly presented as an innovation on past Spartacist practice, according to which such changes in the composition of the ICL’s leading executive body should be accomplished by an international conference which elects the body, except under extreme circumstances. Norden voted against this. Now this precedent has been used again, first to poll the IEC to drop Negrete from full IEC to alt and then, when he objected, to remove him from the IEC altogether.

More recently, over the Mexico fight, Stamberg spoke strongly in I.S. and New York local meetings in opposition to the removal of Negrete and Socorro from the leadership of the GEM and the characterization of their “regime” as “anti-internationalist.” She wrote a document (8 May) pointing out that these charges had been demonstrated to be false, and criticizing the scandalously loose use of facts by comrade Kidder, who headed the ICL delegation to the mid-April GEM meeting. Stamberg’s document was condemned by one of the motions attached to the I.S. charges against us.

On 11 May, the I.S. voted a motion declaring that since the “group” of four was not a declared faction, it had no factional rights—fair enough—and therefore “the majority of comrades on the I.S.” would decide what documentation is circulated internationally, particularly over the fight about “Negrete’s regime in the Mexican section” and “disputes over our approach to Luta Metalúrgica.” In the discussion at that meeting, I.S. Secretary Parks stated: “No we’re not going to circulate your documents.... You can write them all you want. You can even mail them to people if you like. It’s not any kind of official party discussion—won’t be translated. That’s what we’re saying.” And this body, what Parks calls the “new I.S.,” accuses us of “going underground”!!

On 21 May, a meeting of the I.S. was held to determine which documents concerning “Mexico I.S./IEC Discussion” should be circulated in an international mailing. Norden objected in a letter to the I.S. that 11 documents concerning the trial of Socorro had not been included, and that this selection of documentation left out significant aspects relevant for the comrades’ information. He wrote: “In particular, by not including these items, comrades would not be informed of (1) the protest by Negrete against the trial call by the GEM executive committee and his demand that he be placed on trial as well; (2) the objection by Socorro that the trial was moved up by six days, and that instead of the required seven days notice of

the trial date she was given only four days; (3) the counterposed motions about the trial at the I.S. meeting of 9 May, which set the trial for 12 May; (4) the discussion about defense counsels in party trials; and (5) Socorro’s statement of 15 May on her remarks at the NYC local meeting.” At the meeting, the I.S. voted to include seven of those items in the mailing, while dismissing others as irrelevant or worthless.

So following the “innovations” of (a) removing comrades from the IEC for political grounds, and (b) deliberately restricting the circulation of documents from comrades declared by the I.S. to be a “group,” we now have the additional changes to Spartacist norms contained in the charges against us, namely (c) communications between individual members are not protected by confidentiality, and (d) the introduction of “committee discipline” incumbent on the I.S., even concerning communications with a member of the IEC, which is a higher body of the international. These latter two changes are explicitly contrary to the statutes of the SL/U.S. All of them go significantly in the direction of bureaucratization of internal party life.

The Trial of Socorro

The trial of Socorro was a real eye-opener to events underway in the ICL. The charges—that she had allegedly lost touch with her team for two hours during the huge Mexico May Day march (with hundreds of thousands of participants), that she had her companion Negrete carry her camera bag although he had been placed on leave, and that she had given her phone number to an ex-member—would hardly be the stuff for a party trial. Socorro contested all the facts. The normal course would have been to name a commission of inquiry to investigate. Instead the GEM exec brought charges against her on 7 May of conspiring to violate discipline. She was to be put on trial before the GEM membership eleven days hence. Socorro and Negrete vociferously objected, including that since the membership included only one more comrade than attends the exec which charged her, this could hardly be a fair trial. So on one day’s notice, without there being a vote by the I.S., the trial was switched to New York (where Socorro and Negrete were moving) and moved up by six days.

When the I.S. met on 9 May to officially set up the trial (now three days away, with Socorro and Negrete still not arrived in New York), Norden put forward a counter-motion for a commission of inquiry, pointing out that it would be almost impossible for the accused to adequately prepare her defense. He also proposed that she be allowed to have a defense counsel, as she requested and was originally dismissed by Parks, noting precedents in Soviet Russia under Lenin. When the motion for a trial was passed, Norden requested that the trial body postpone the proceedings for one week in accordance with the SL/U.S. statutes and to allow her time to prepare.

We observed the trial itself which could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered fair. We are well aware of and defend the distinctions between our Bolshevik norms of justice and the Anglo-Saxon juridical

system of the U.S. The presumption of our traditions is that all parties to the proceedings are seeking the truth. But this was not the case in the trial of Socorro. The defense was not allowed to make a statement to the court, only to answer questions and to submit questions to be posed to other witnesses. It was so egregious that at one point, when a witness had misunderstood whom the question was coming from, it was put to her again by the prosecution and she changed her answer.

Most striking was the behavior of the trial body, which included all members of the CCC resident in New York as well as Richard D. Not only was Socorro not allowed to present her case, the trial body itself refused to ask obvious questions of the two witnesses from the GEM exec about several statements during the trial which confirmed her version of events. The verdict's stipulation of 18 weeks' reduction to candidacy might be taken as not very severe, but she was outrageously and falsely found guilty of committing a "willful breach of discipline" and "a deliberate provocation" against the party. It is inconceivable that such a trial would have taken place over comparable charges in any setting other than the present factional frenzy. The "trial" was clearly meant to send a lesson to the membership as a whole.

At the New York local meeting two days after the trial, there was a report and discussion on the trial. Stamberg described it as a "travesty" and said it was a continuation of the campaign to oust the Mexican leadership. Norden said the trial should never have taken place, that it was not a fair trial and the verdict was false. During the course of the heated discussion, Socorro made an unconscionable and false remark, comparing the trial to that of some men who had abducted her and raped her

several years ago, saying they had gotten more justice from a bourgeois court than she had gotten from this trial, and calling it a kangaroo court. Later that night the Political Bureau was polled on a motion to expel Socorro for her statement. Norden voted for that motion, as did Stamberg later when the CC was polled. Such a statement is not compatible with membership in the party, and Socorro must take responsibility for it, even though she retracted those remarks in a letter to the comrades the next day. At the same time, this enraged outburst was obviously related to the extreme pressure that she had unnecessarily been placed under, particularly considering her diagnosed medical problems stemming from her earlier traumatic experience. And her outburst did not alter one iota the unfair nature of the trial.

Now we have another impending "trial." Under the present circumstances, with frame-up charges based on a bureaucratic rewriting of our party rules, with this clearly intended as the dramatic culmination of the political fight that has gone on over the last several months, with a trial body consisting of a subset of the comrades who brought the charges, and with the recent example of the trial of Socorro in which any defense was totally hamstrung, we see no point in lending credence to this bureaucratic purge trial by our presence. This is not a legitimate party judicial proceeding but a farce—we protest and reject it as Leninists. We remain true to the Trotskyist program and practices of the Spartacist tendency which are now being trampled on.

Communist greetings,
Jan Norden
Marjorie Stamberg
7 June 1996

No to the Purge of Norden and Stamberg!

by Negrete

7 June 1996

The following document previously appeared in the July 1996 bulletin, From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle, issued by the expelled ICL cadres who went on to found the IG and then the LFI. Negrete was expelled the day after releasing this statement for refusing to break off all contact with Norden and Stamberg, who had been purged from the party earlier that day.

The following was mainly written before I was informed late this afternoon that, due to the statement by Norden and Stamberg that they would not attend their “trial,” a meeting of the Political Bureau will be held tonight instead. I have read the “Reply to a Frame-Up ‘Trial’” by Norden and Stamberg, which B. has faxed to me for translation. The thrust of my letter stands despite the change in procedure. The International Secretariat should withdraw its disgraceful frame-up charges, and the SL/U.S. PB should immediately reinstate these comrades as full members and restore them to the posts to which they were duly elected. All ICL comrades must struggle to put an end to the anti-Leninist methods which are damaging our party.

* * *

Comrades:

I am writing this because of the urgent situation in our international party. In light of this urgency, the fact that I have again been placed on leave—despite my request not to be—is no obstacle to the party circulating this letter for discussion.

I have learned of the upcoming trial of Norden and Stamberg, and have spoken to Norden, who informed me of the charges against him and comrade Stamberg. These charges make a point of referring to “calls with Negrete” as well as to supposed “indiscipline” on Norden’s part for “not reporting” a call with me when the I.S. delegation was in Mexico. Are discussions between party members—including between members of the ICL’s highest elected bodies—now to be screened, and “unauthorized” ones forbidden? I also consider it highly significant that this new trial is the immediate aftermath of another sharp exchange on the Brazil work, in which the I.S. secretary made a new round of incorrect and damaging statements—including the assertion that we should never set foot in Volta Redonda again, and that all “economically viable” members of Luta Metalúrgica should leave VR. When challenged, she sought to shield herself behind slanders of “cop-baiting,” wrecking, potentially putting comrades in danger, etc. Now the formal charges against Norden and Stamberg include smears such as possible receipt of outside funding and political collaboration with unknown outside forces. I reject these slanders with disgust, noting that Norden’s and Stamberg’s 24 years of service to our movement are the most powerful evidence against these smears.

Enough! Trotsky taught us to call things by their right names. The so-called “Brazil/Mexico discussion,” also officially called the “fight against Negrete and Socorro,” was based on a series of outright fabrications and lies. In the course of this, young comrades were grotesquely taught that they were “anti-internationalists” if they did not accept falsehoods because a list of important people told them to, and that they would be capitulators to Latin American nationalism and caudilloism, as well as cliquists and splitters, if they continued to speak out about what they knew to be the truth. This can only undermine real internationalism and eventually lead to a genuinely nationalist, anti-Leninist reaction.

The involuntary “leave” I was put on in Mexico was an explicit attempt to silence me and cut me off from the Mexican comrades. The false charges against Socorro were a continuation of the drive to defame us and destroy our credibility with the comrades. That drive culminated in a purge which threw us out of the Mexico office, precipitously threw us out of the country, and has now excluded me from all aspects of this work. Even repeated requests to be allowed to translate materials for the Brazil defense work are ignored (even though I am one of the very few comrades able to translate Portuguese)! The purge continued with another dangerous innovation: throwing me off the IEC, to which I was elected by the 1992 international conference. Then we had a further escalation—the “trial” of Socorro, a sick and shameful travesty of elementary Leninist justice. Gross political distortions and character assassination can only harm our party. And now we have yet another trial, with charges that put forward grotesque slanders, and the name for this is: a frame-up.

The present campaign, driven by elements of the central leadership, has seriously damaged work in Mexico and Brazil, inculcated methods counterposed to elementary Leninist practices, whipped up a hate-filled climate in the party, punitively threw comrades off leading bodies to which they were duly elected, and now pushes to expel the editor of the ICL’s flagship publication (Norden) and a comrade who has played central roles in party work for decades (Stamberg). While the hysterical charge was made that an “undeclared faction” was engaged in a “wrecking operation” in the party, the real damage is being caused by this irrational, dishonest, expensive and destructive campaign.

The Norden/Stamberg trial, scheduled for tomorrow morning, represents yet another major step-up in the frenzied campaign of the recent period. I intend to write detailed documents on the avalanche of false statements in the Brazil/Mexico discussion, as well as on the “Socorro trial.” Yet having gone through these events, it is my immediate responsibility to make these observations, relevant to the new trial.

To the organizers of this frame-up: Be advised that I will not cooperate or collaborate with it in any way. The SL/U.S. Central Control Commission thoroughly discredited itself by its disgraceful, flagrantly unfair behavior in the Socorro “trial.” The International Secretariat is discrediting itself by its repeated use of slander and punitive measures in the place of the honest, angular political discussion needed to hammer out the party’s urgent tasks. If you demand that I “testify,” write depositions or turn over materials for this frame-up trial, I will not comply. Moreover, I state clearly that it is the duty of all Spartacist comrades to oppose the escalating purge and to struggle as Leninists against this drive, which is accompanied by a series of political mistakes and, as the experience of the past weeks makes clear, points in the direction of the bureaucratization of the party.

A Chain of Willful Fabrications

Having gone through the “Brazil/Mexico fight,” I can state categorically that the current campaign involves a chain of willful fabrications. The fight blew up when Camila and I had questions about significantly inaccurate statements on Brazil in an I.S. mailing cover letter. At the same time as some of these statements were then explicitly corrected, a story was fabricated that I had behaved as a “sexist bully” towards Camila (which Camila herself denied was true) and browbeaten her into posing the questions she put in writing. When witnesses said and wrote that this is not what happened, not only was the content of what they said ignored, but they were smeared as cliquists, personalists and anti-internationalists.* At the same time as requests by Socorro and myself for a formal investigation of the charge were rejected out of hand, the lie was not only repeated but inflated into a supposed pattern.

The “discussion” then leapt to a series of assertions that I had tried (with Norden’s backing) to stop or derail discussion and fights in Brazil over the cops, the courts, Marxist education, youth work, propaganda, etc. Not only was it documented in each case that these assertions were false, and that I sought to push these discussions, but in most cases I actually started them. Despite copious documentation (which I can cite to any comrade who wishes to investigate this), these false assertions are now repeated as unquestionable “truth,” and served as stepping stones to new areas of the frame-up campaign.

In mid-April, an I.S. delegation was sent to Mexico, ostensibly to pursue the Brazil discussion as well as to combat the imaginary threat of a “split against the international.” Rather than discussing Brazil, the delegation whipped together a series of allegations about the Mexican section in order to present an entirely new accusation: that the evil Negrete and Socorro (with that mastermind of evil, Norden, in the background) had led the section into an adaptation to Latin American nation-

alism, caudilloism and an anti-internationalist split perspective. On the round, several young members spoke to oppose the charge of nationalism, to characterize the delegation’s statements as inaccurate, grotesque, personalist, etc. But by the end of the meeting only Socorro and I voted against the delegation’s main motion (while three youth members abstained). Why? Because members were fed the line that if they insisted on saying that they knew the picture was untrue, then they were counterposing themselves to the international and defying the authority of a list of members of the I.S., IEC, etc. If you want an example of genuine unprincipled browbeating, you have it right there. While some leading members soon began yelling that we would not be allowed to “drag this discussion out,” the fact is that the “discussion” of these ridiculous accusations on Mexico lasted less than one day before culminating in sweeping, incorrect motions and punitive measures.

Once again the grossly distorted picture was backed up by a series of demonstrably false statements. Yet each falsehood, once it collapsed, gave way to a new one. It was false that the IEC memorandum was not translated, that it was not distributed, that it was not discussed, that it was discussed only once. It was false that the Germany fight was covered up, that it was discussed only once, that it was discussed very briefly, etc. The treasurer and H. both stated it was false that I had yelled at the treasurer about my SP. It was false that the fight in France, the fight in Italy, the “unlimited general strike,” the fight with Y. Rad, the fight over Quebec, etc., were not discussed, that discussions did not occur in meetings, that materials were not translated (dozens were), etc. It was false and absurd to state that I cited “cultural differences” as an argument for building a different, non-Leninist type of party in the Third World. The statement that the “Negrete regime” did not tolerate debate or criticism is as patently false as the idea that the section was anti-internationalist, when it is well known that, despite its tiny size, the GEM was in the front ranks of a series of international campaigns.

It was false that Arturo’s notorious “Multivac” document was not circulated, was not sent to New York, was not discussed formally by the GEM, that it was discussed formally only once by the GEM, etc. It was false that he was denied the standard ability to conduct internal contact sessions, that he was called a Maoist (in fact it was reading entire texts out loud in classes that was first called a “Maoist practice,” and that was subsequently withdrawn), etc. It was false that there were no Cannon books in the Mexico office, as Parks claimed at the 17 April I.S. meeting. The discussion of “Negretesque attitudes” was totally distorted and taken out of context. It was slanderously false that Socorro abused her post as office manager (note that Parks’ 16 November 1995 report on her Mexico trip cited Socorro’s “critical work” as office manager as an example of good functioning). And so forth. It was totally false—as everybody who visited Mexico knows—that there was a poisonous atmosphere in the section, squelching the development and education of young comrades, particularly women.

* I have been informed that when GEM comrade S. went to Eugene, P. confirmed again that he was present throughout the discussions when Camila returned from Brazil, and that my version was accurate.

Again, Parks' report on her "tour of inspection" last fall states the exact opposite.

The above is only a sample of the false statements piled one on top of the other in that fight. Yet a number of well-meaning comrades have urged that all these "details" be overlooked in favor of the "big picture." But first of all, the rules of the Fourth International tell us to "be true in little things as in big ones." And secondly, in this case the "big picture" is made up of a lot of "little" lies and fabrications, which keep getting bigger.

The Trial of Socorro

This pattern was escalated with the Socorro trial, held on 12 May. I want to go into this because it gives a picture of what party disciplinary proceedings have recently become. While I do not have access to the depositions and tapes from the trial, I do have extensive notes and a vivid recollection of this outrageous event.

The political accusations against Socorro and myself, and the conclusions drawn from them, were not holding up—from the allegation that I had blocked discussion of the cops and courts and opposed Marxist education in Brazil, to the flash flood of statements about suppressing documents, abusing posts, isolating the section and fostering anti-internationalism in Mexico. This "big picture" kept shifting like a kaleidoscope precisely because each allegation or "hypothesis" failed the most basic tests cited from Lenin (rather than "taking somebody's word," calmly examine the documents) and Trotsky (base yourself not on "psychological divinations" but on objective verification).

Given the pattern of making, and then tacitly vacating, political accusations; given the trouble with getting everyone to swallow the ridiculous picture of the Mexican group as an anti-internationalist caudillo-ridden "boot camp"; given that the two leading Mexican comrades had initially opposed key statements regarding the "regime"; that several Mexico youth members had denounced accusations sprung on the section at the 14 April meeting and three had abstained on the final vote—given all this, the trial makes a kind of sense. The ground was not to shift to disciplinary action. The objective was not to find facts but to build a "case." In line with that, the trial body itself never posed a single question that was not part of the prosecution's case. Everything that went against this case was ignored or dismissed. In this sordid procedure, the "prosecution" and the trial body broke the organization's rules, acted in a brazenly unfair way, and based themselves on bald-faced, proven lies.

The trial was set in motion when a false report that Socorro had violated discipline and security on May Day was presented by Camila. When Socorro found out about this on 2 May, her request to attend the exec point scheduled to discuss this was flatly denied. The two leading members of the exec then refused to read her written statement on the events before voting for a motion against her based on the false report. During the trial, Arturo testified that this was because of being "eager" to get the situation over with. When Socorro insisted that the allegations were false, she was put on trial.

To my knowledge, the only other trials in our tendency's history were those of the brutal wife-beater S. Green and the vicious psychopath Logan. Socorro was supposedly put on trial for insisting—with first-hand knowledge by witnesses to back her up—that it was false that she had willfully become separated from the sales team she was linked with (at a march of a quarter million people traversing a long stretch of central Mexico City), that she had argued with Camila over the phone and that she had sought to set up a meeting with an ex-member. Other false accusations were later added, and she was denounced because she asked me to carry her bag at May Day when I had been placed on "leave" (against my will). While Socorro was put on trial for asserting that she told the truth about May Day, I was not put on trial despite the fact that I asserted exactly the same thing and demanded to be put on trial with her.

The body formally pressing charges against Socorro was the executive committee of the Grupo Espartaquista de México. The body initially scheduled to try Socorro was the GEM membership—yet all but one of the members of the GEM sat on the exec which brought the charges against Socorro in the first place! When Socorro objected to this, the venue of the trial was simply abruptly moved to New York. When I pointed out to Arturo that this would preclude her being able to question most of the witnesses, he yelled "You don't understand this is a fucking political question and a fight!" In other words, the "trial" was admittedly a continuation, in juridical guise, of the "political question" of what was called the "fight against Negrete and Socorro." In this context, it is noteworthy that, while Parks' 16 November 1995 Mexico report had stated that the GEM functioned like a "good old-fashioned Spartacist League local," by the 14 April meeting Arturo was declaring: "Negrete represents the old school, which we want to combat and destroy."

When the trial venue was moved, the trial date was changed in a way that blatantly violated the SL/U.S. organizational rules, which state that the accused shall be given seven days' written notice of the trial date and charges (in order to be able to prepare). The new trial date was four days and one hour after we were notified of that date; we received notice one hour before Wednesday, 8 May. Since in the course of Socorro struggling to be allowed to have me as her counsel, we had just been told to consult party bulletins as well as historical sources, on Wednesday evening we went to the Mexico office largely to do so. We were abruptly thrown out, with no justification whatsoever. On Thursday we traveled for ten hours from Mexico to New York, arriving just before 3 a.m. Friday. On Saturday we attended a grueling nine-hour I.S. meeting focusing heavily on our supposed crimes in the Brazil and Mexico work. On Sunday there was the nine-hour trial (videotaped over Socorro's objections). On Tuesday there was the heated New York local meeting.

Representatives of the trial body were told of Socorro's documented medical condition (post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD, a condition repeatedly referred to in WV articles on Geronimo Pratt], caused by being abducted,

raped and having her life repeatedly threatened, which led to a trial several years ago whose preliminary stages she had to attend). We noted that this condition, together with the need for preparation time, were powerful reasons to grant Socorro's formal request that the trial be postponed. Yet this request was flatly denied—even a one-hour postponement was refused!

Depositions from witnesses in Mexico were solicited by the prosecution without the defense having the opportunity to pose crucial questions. When we asked to do so in writing, our entire series of questions for those eight witnesses was thrown out by the trial body, at the same time as it continued to solicit depositions for the prosecution even while the trial was going on. Throughout the proceedings, this body acted with undisguised bias against the defendant, brazenly leading the two prosecution witnesses, who dutifully said “yes” to ever-wilder assertions regarding Socorro's supposed actions and motivations. Close to half the defense questions for these two witnesses were squelched. With bald-faced lying and repeated self-contradictions from their witnesses, the prosecution/trial body finally cut the process short, pulling the second of their witnesses off the stand.

As a last-ditch effort, the prosecution/trial body whipped up the pure fabrication that there was a secret “signal” (nodding the head) that meant “leave the Angel Monument,” and that Socorro willfully disobeyed this signal. Yet there was no such agreed-upon signal! Moreover, Arturo's written deposition made no mention of such a signal, instead reporting that he had instructed C. to tell Socorro the team was leaving the monument (which all accounts, including César's written deposition, agree he did not do). C.'s second statement, solicited by phone towards the end of the trial to prop up this weak reed of the prosecution's “case,” was thoroughly confused and did anything but confirm this tawdry after-the-fact invention.

Written depositions and oral testimony clearly showed that, rather than abandoning the sales team led by Arturo, she was left at the Angel Monument without being informed, and then the team failed to wait at the Red Tubes building as arranged. Upon finding nobody waiting at the Red Tubes checkpoint, Socorro called in to the office, and testimony by the witnesses from the GEM exec at the trial stated that Arturo had been informed that Socorro had called in and been instructed to proceed to the next checkpoint (the Hemiciclo). Why did the trial body not pursue this point, which gives the lie yet again to the claim that Socorro was AWOL for two hours? Far from refusing to follow the instruction to proceed from the Red Tubes—which Arturo's team had left shortly after arriving there, despite the arrangement to wait—to the Hemiciclo, she did so forthwith, arriving there with a number of other comrades.

Far from disappearing for two hours, Socorro was seen and greeted along the march route during that period by a whole series of comrades, including members of Arturo's sales team. Far from hiding the fact that she had seen the Morenoite Enrique, Socorro reported it to Arturo, and Arturo as well as other leading members

had seen him themselves; in fact Arturo said there was no problem.

Far from having me present in defiance of instructions, my presence at the march was known to Arturo and Camila from the beginning. Moreover, at the Hemiciclo Arturo explicitly told Socorro and me to proceed alone to the Zócalo—in doing so we were following instructions, not breaking them. Even the GEM motion passed after the events, while criticizing after the fact the duration of my presence, states “Negrete could certainly go to the demonstration.” (Moreover, the trial verdict characterizes the 2 May GEM exec motions as “correct.”)

Far from seeking to meet with the ex-member P.—who she and I were instrumental in having dropped after he went AWOL for weeks—she told him she was too busy and asked him to speak to Arturo, which he did. And so it went with all the allegations. The fact was that P. had been with the party throughout May Day; he was at the office before the march, sold during the march, returned to the office afterwards and talked with many comrades, including the leadership. Yet again, the trial body never followed this up in its questioning. To portray things as if Socorro was trying to set up a secret meeting with him is simply absurd. Regarding the phone call with Camila: in its verdict the trial body simply “takes Camila's version” as true—without ever mentioning that I was present next to Socorro during that phone call and upheld her version.

The real evidence showed Socorro was telling the truth. This included information in written depositions by H. (“We underscored that it would be safer if she was somewhat independent”), V., C. and Arturo himself, as well as the fact that B., Ca. and others (including I. and I., members of Arturo's brigade) saw Socorro along the march route between the Angel and the Hemiciclo. In the teeth of the evidence, the trial verdict cynically asserts the opposite of the truth on every point. At the same time it invents out of the whole cloth the statement that Socorro engaged in “ruses” in order to carry out supposed “plans” to carry out the supposed crime of...having me present at May Day. That this is a chain of fabrications will be proved again, ten times over, as soon as one of the weaker links breaks and one or more of the fabricators decide to spill the beans.

That the formal sentence at her trial was to reduce Socorro to candidate for 18 weeks (one for each year of membership) was in fact a ploy: this supposedly made the whole travesty “all right,” nothing to get upset about, even trivial—a line of argument remarkable for its cynicism, particularly in light of the great amount of energy, time and money spent on this violation of elementary Leninist justice. The damage was done—and not just to Socorro (who was expelled a day later when, after being pushed beyond endurance, she made an angry and highly incorrect comment which she soon withdrew in writing). Above all, the damage was done to the party itself.

For comrades who were not present at the 11 May I.S. meeting, the 12 May trial and the 14 May New York local meeting, a flavor of the atmosphere can be had through

a small sample of some remarks. At the I.S. meeting, a member of and reporter for the I.S. delegation to Mexico screamed at Socorro: "You hate the party's iron boot on your neck!" Iron boot? Another comrade, arguing for the existence of this "faction," quoted the famous McCarthy-era adage that "if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck." F. from Washington ranted that Socorro was a nationalist from "Aztlán" and race-baited me as a white Quetzalcóatl teaching the Indians what to do. [Etc.] Listen to the tapes and ask yourself if this was a rational, communist political discussion.

In her role as prosecutor at the trial, Spencer went red in the face screaming invective against the defendant and me. (She displayed a particular obsession with calling me Socorro's "burro," a term bizarrely reproduced in the verdict itself.) While waiting for the final verdict, we asked Spencer where the trial body was. Her answer was "They're out digging your grave." Spencer then "justified" this as "feeding your paranoia." At the New York local meeting two days later, discussion was punctuated with hate-filled screams of "shut up" and "get out."

No, Socorro's trial was not a trivial event. It was not just a bad taste left in your mouth that will eventually go away. That it was part of the escalation of an irrational vendetta is shown for all to see by the staging of another trial in less than a month.

What Is Real Loyalty to the Party?

There is little to say to those who are self-conscious fabricators and liars; they know who they are in any case, and some even boast of it. To those who go along with these events or wish to overlook them, it is imperative that they stop and think. I know that some comrades are aware that what is happening is wrong, or have serious doubts, but are going along with it anyway. This is a disservice to the party and to yourselves as revolutionary militants; it can lead only to cynicism and demoralization. Moreover, as has already been shown, those who are pushing this drive will demand more of you than passive acceptance; you will be asked to show your "100 percent agreement" through active participation in this dirty campaign. Comrades: the methods of dishonesty, character assassination and toadying are counterposed to the basic tenets of Leninism and to the rules of the Fourth International as stated in the Transitional Program reproduced on the back of the SL/U.S. membership card. Only the truth is revolutionary.

At the trial of Socorro, the prosecution made lengthy speeches (one posturing peroration lasted 18 minutes), while the accused was repeatedly shut up and denied the chance to make a statement. Yet after the shame-

ful "verdict" was read, Socorro made a courageous and powerful statement insisting that she had not broken discipline and that she had told the truth, as a Leninist. Her statement ended with a quotation from a speech by James P. Cannon. (The speech is "Internationalism and the SWP," which was previously misused by Kidder in the most absurd way to argue that in a party fight...facts don't matter!) Cannon notes:

"In his appeal to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, Trotsky said: 'That party member who changes his opinion at command is a scoundrel.' He meant by that that such a member is disloyal to the party; because the least the party can expect from the most inexperienced, the newest rank-and-file member is that he be honest with the party, tell the party honestly what he thinks, and not change his opinion when he gets the command from this or that leader, or this or that committee..."

He stresses that while abiding by revolutionary discipline, "No one should change his mind because authority tells him to. That is not the mark of a revolutionist.... Trotsky said that a Bolshevik is not only a disciplined man but also an independent thinking man, who will raise his point of view again and again, until either he convinces the party he is right, or the party convinces him that he is wrong."

The hysterical campaign underway within the organization is counterposed to this tradition of Trotsky and Cannon upon which our organization is based. This campaign has brought repeated violations, by the frame-up organizers, of the basic rules of Leninist democratic centralism. It is counterposed to the construction of the healthy revolutionary party, based on the ICL's program, that the world's proletariat and oppressed so desperately require.

It is time to call a halt, and for each comrade to think about where these events are leading. It is not for nothing that Marxist Bulletin No. 3 (Part II) begins with this quotation from comrade Trotsky:

"Each compromise with the revolutionary conscience prepares a greater compromise on the morrow, and therefore renders it more difficult to break away."

Loyalty to our international party means breaking away from the false methods used in this frame-up campaign, so as to adhere to and push forward the revolutionary program of Trotskyism that our tendency has advanced over the course of more than three decades. For these reasons, I state again that it is my duty as a communist to refuse to comply, collaborate or cooperate with this frame-up trial and that I call on all those who are devoted to the principles upon which our party was built to oppose these destructive, anti-Leninist methods.

Down with frame-ups and witchhunting methods!

For the communism of Lenin and Trotsky, long live the ICL!

Negrete

LQB Reply to ICL on Breaking Fraternal Relations

Below is a translation of a letter written by our former fraternal comrades in Brazil. The ICL never replied to this letter.

Volta Redonda, 4 July 1996

To the International Communist League
Comrades,

After receiving the 17 June 1996 letter signed by Parks, breaking Fraternal Relations between the ICL and the LQB, the comrades of our organization were in a state of shock. The disloyal break came like a lightning bolt out of a clear blue sky. Now we are analyzing and studying the situation. When Cirrus handed the letter to comrade R., on the 18th, she did so without saying a single word, and he only learned of its content on his way back to Volta Redonda. This not only goes against our hopes of a Trotskyist fusion with the ICL, but, as the ICL representatives were fully aware, the day you cut off relations was one day before the union assembly called to separate the guardas from the municipal union! Everything indicates that the ICL did this in such a hurry because it wanted to cut any association with the LQB before that meeting. It is still hard for us to believe that you have done this, but we must face reality squarely.

Yet this shock did not cause an irresponsible and desperate short circuit. We were obliged to keep a cool head, particularly in the current situation of hard-fought struggle to separate the municipal guardas from the municipal workers union (SFPMVR).

This struggle is even harder-fought now, since the bourgeois courts have suspended Geraldo from his post as president of the union, due to his struggle for the separation of the guardas. This suspension was requested by the pro-police faction led by Artur Fernandes, using as a pretext the cost of the April 11 bulletin with the excellent article by Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?" whose 10,000-copy press run exceeded the 3,000 copies normally distributed by the union.

Comrades, we went over your June 11 and 17 letters again and observed that they were written as if our campaign to separate the police from the union were non-existent. The ICL encouraged this struggle and we took it on. Now you pretend that it is not even happening. In the days before the letter of June 17 we spoke with ICL representatives about this struggle and Arturo said we should leave the union, a position which we unanimously rejected.

Eight days after delivering the letter breaking relations, Cirrus asked I. what he thought of the June 17 letter. He answered: "We think that the breaking of Fraternal Relations is a grave error which will harm the cause of the international working class." We would add, also in his words (as he wrote in his July 1 report): "for us the breaking of fraternal relations ONE DAY BEFORE THE MEETING TO THROW THE GUARDAS OUT OF THE UNION is an act of cowardice, and we feel stabbed in the back."

It was necessary to have in-depth, ongoing discussions about whatever differences existed, in order to arrive at a principled fusion, without allowing these discussions, however tense they might have been, to lead to hysteria or precipitous actions by either side. We of the LQB thought we were fighting together with you to reforge the Fourth International. The ICL dealt a heavy blow to that task when it broke relations; when we protest against that blow, this is part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International.

Before the June 17 letter, there was a series of important advances in the Fraternal Relations (as attested to in several prior letters). Thus we thought we were on the road to a fusion. We were very proud and hopeful to have established Fraternal relations with an international organization with the heritage of James P. Cannon, Richard Fraser (who formulated revolutionary integrationism) and fighters like Martha Phillips. This was a victory against the petty-bourgeois nationalism, prejudice, belief in the myth of Brazilian "racial democracy," male chauvinism and popular-frontism of organizations like Causa Operária, the T-POR, LBI/PBCI, Morenoites and others.

We also believed that the hard-fought political struggle for the disaffiliation of the municipal guardas from the SFPMVR would bring our organizations closer together, on the road to fusion.

But now you have abandoned us, without a discussion, without the possibility of a debate over this break, since it is presented as a fait accompli. "We are radical and we don't turn back," Cirrus told M.C. on the telephone a day after the June 19 meeting. But what you did was not "radical" at all. It was running away from the class struggle on the question of the police, a question which has importance for the entire working class, not only in Brazil but throughout the world, since in a very concrete way it shows the need for total independence from the bourgeois state, the struggle for the revolutionary political independence of the working class, as well as a class-struggle fight against the oppression of blacks and other oppressed groups. We are sure that proletarian revolutionaries like Cannon would have condemned the type of cowardly abandonment that you have now carried out.

In his discussion with us, the ICL's Arturo brandished his sword as a scholar of Latin American Trotskyism, saying the fraternal relations between the ICL and the LQB were a "precipitous" product of Abrão's [Negrete] and Norden's search for "success," since only "syndicalism and nationalism" are to be found in Latin America. It seems Arturo used this sword to help cut fraternal relations. In Latin America, pseudo-leftist, populist and reformist rhetoric have been dominant, serving as a kind of opiate to conceal the oppression and exploitation of the masses. The ICL could advance politically in the world, including on this continent, only by putting into practice its revolutionary and internationalist discourse. This is the opposite of breaking fraternal relations in the midst of the bitter struggle for the separation of the

police from the SFPMVR. This posture may remain indelibly in the memory of the international working class, and cannot be covered over by self-justifying rhetoric from an organization that says it wants to forge the vanguard of the international working class.

Surely Menshevik organizations like the LBI/PBCI, CO, the PSTU, the Loraites, centrists around the world, the “Bolshevik Tendency” and other opportunist anti-Spartacist groups will try to exploit the ICL’s flight for their own objectives, seeking to discredit the genuine Trotskyist program. It seems Causa Operária already knows about the break carried out by the ICL, since two days ago a CO member tried to talk to comrade J., asking if it was true that the LQB and Spartacists are no longer together. It is regrettable that the ICL’s shameful action has helped these popular-frontists, who seek to sow confusion and opportunism. We must also ask: What impact will this have on those who, after serious discussions, joined the international campaign for “Police, Hands off the SFPMVR”? You speak of the “trade-union opportunism” of the LQB (as if we were a group of union bureaucrats, when in reality we have been under heavy fire from the bourgeoisie and their agents for months because we fight for Marxist principles) and its non-Bolshevik practices. But these statements will not go beyond liquidationism when you have abandoned the struggle on the question of the guardas and have broken the effort which we jointly undertook to forge a Trotskyist party. That, comrades, is not a Bolshevik practice. The Marxist struggle of the LQB speaks louder than rhetoric. Everyone knows what it means to struggle politically to throw the Brazilian police out of the unions. “Trade-union opportunists” occupy themselves with tasks that involve greater rewards and fewer dangers.

In your previous letter, dated June 11, Parks wrote that Norden and Abrão wanted to destroy the LQB’s Fraternal Relations with the ICL. Then on June 17, six days later, you wrote to break the Fraternal Relations!!

All ICL members should ask: Why were relations broken on that day? The answer is to be found not only in the content of the June 17 letter but also in the declarations which the ICL representatives made to us during meetings on June 15 and 16. They repeatedly talked about the union meeting planned for June 19. They said that we had to abandon the work in the SFPMVR, and that is the meaning of what you wrote in the motion of June 5 and subsequent letters. ICL representative Arturo said we were “putting in danger” the LQB, the union itself and the ICL’s possibilities in Brazil. He spoke of the danger of a “bloodbath,” the possibility of a “confrontation,” etc., etc.

But the reality is that there was no bloodbath on the day of the union assembly called to disaffiliate the guardas. The meeting was carefully prepared. We fought to increase the ranks’ consciousness of this question, which has been strengthened even further now that the workers observed how the guardas harassed union meetings and acted as strikebreakers during the June 21 general strike. On June 13 a union conference was held, to which delegates had been elected on the slogan

(among others) of disaffiliating the cops. The SFPMVR received the support of other unions and thousands of union leaflets have been distributed weekly, to keep working-class public opinion alert. (Now the expense for printing leaflets has been used by Artur Fernandes’ *pelega* [sell-out bureaucrat] faction to get the bourgeois “justice” system to suspend Geraldo.) The leaflets are distributed in the SFPMVR, to workers at CSN, city workers in Belo Horizonte (where, as Workers Vanguard reported, police murdered street children as a “protest against low wages”) and five universities in this region, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

When the attempt was made to carry out the June 19 union assembly, Artur’s faction yanked away the microphone when comrade Geraldo was reading the resolution from the union conference calling for the disaffiliation of the guardas. The police, “invited” by Artur and sent in by the municipal Popular Front government, closed the Municipal Chamber where the meeting was to be held. The class struggle is not an easy matter; it means an effort to advance the working-class program. But not only was there no bloodbath, there were not even any arrests that day.

On June 21, the day of the general strike, our comrades led the strike in Volta Redonda, where the SFPMVR was the only union that stopped work. Because of his courageous action of leading 150 workers that were blocking the municipal garage, our comrade M. was arrested, but he was released within a couple of hours. As we mentioned, the workers observed how the municipal guardas and police acted as strikebreakers, and this strengthens the struggle to separate the cops from the union. We are going forward with this struggle, which now includes fighting the suspension of Geraldo and the court intervention into the union. At this very moment we are mobilizing union assemblies to carry out this historic step of disaffiliating the guardas, but without your help.

On the same day that Artur Fernandes got the “justice” system to suspend Geraldo and intervene in the union, Artur went on the radio attacking the LQB and the “Police Out of the Unions” campaign, reading an article from the LBI’s “Luta Operária” newspaper, which calls the “Police Hands Off the SFPMVR” campaign a farce. In other words, the LBI is advising Artur Fernandes, who provokes attacks, and now court intervention, against the union. These facts must be publicized to the entire revolutionary movement to unmask the centrists of the LBI and PBCI. You should have been participating in that struggle against them. But you have fled, fearing a “bloodbath” and that problems could be posed for the work of the ICL.

While in the class struggle one cannot guarantee that the bourgeoisie will not carry out repression, since if that were so it would not be the class struggle, as revolutionaries it is our duty to do everything possible to minimize the dangers. That is what we are seeking to do, on the basis of our experience in the strikes at CSN, the municipal workers’ strikes, etc., and our study of Marxism. Why didn’t you measure seven times before cutting? Why didn’t you investigate the situation for

yourselves before drawing such fundamental conclusions? You pretend you had to break with us over questions of “opportunism.” But the facts show this is only “leftist” rhetoric to cover up a rightist action. The previous letter from Parks (June 11) points out that the ICL correctly spurred the struggle for the separation of the guardas, but it is written cynically as if we were doing nothing about this question, and this when the ICL knows that is not true. We are struggling because we agree with carrying out the programmatic point made by Trotsky and the ICL on this basic question.

This has appeared in many LM/LQB leaflets and also in those of our *companheiros* who are members of the SFPMVR. A few examples: the May 6 leaflet by the MEL, with a headline in large letters saying “The Ranks Are Deciding: Police Out of the Union, A Reaffirmation of the *Municípios em Luta* Program!” The text of the leaflet begins: “On Monday 6 May 1996 at 6:00 a.m., the Garage workers decided unanimously at their assembly that: The police should not be part of nor interfere in the SFPMVR and the workers movement in general. Because they are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.” (How would this be possible if we really had “no base” in the union or the city of Volta Redonda?) The leaflet for the June 13 conference, point 7 of which was on the municipal guardas. The leaflet of June 18 which reported on the conference, unmasking the Popular Front and the centrists, called for a “revolutionary workers party” that “would have to be internationalist with a multiracial composition of men, women and youth” in the struggle for socialism, explained the campaign for “Police Hands Off the SFPMVR and the Workers Movement” and said that one of the main programmatic points is “the complete independence of the workers movement, and thus the unions, from the bourgeois state and its state apparatus.”

Also: the June 28 leaflet which called for mobilizations because the “Artur faction, the Popular Front, Military Police and the municipal guardas are trying to suspend Geraldo and destroy the SFPMVR,” reported the June 20 provocation by the Artur faction and stressed that “among the main points” of the union conference was “Disaffiliating the municipal guardas from the SFPMVR, since they are not part of the working class” and that “police (any kind of police) are not part of the workers movement” but rather repressors against workers and blacks. The leaflet calling today’s assembly against the suspension of Geraldo finishes with the following slogans: “The union is ours, not theirs! For the class independence of the workers! Out with the bosses’ intervention and repression! Down with the suspension of Geraldo! Bosses’ courts, Military Police and guardas: get out of the SFPMVR! Defeat the intervention provoked by Artur’s coup faction! Respect for the ranks and the workers! Workers of the world, unite! Bourgeoisie, hands off our union!”

That is in the SFPMVR. And what do our enemies, like Artur’s faction, have to say? They attack the June 13 conference and the June 19 assembly and “members of *Luta Metalúrgica*” for demanding the “disaffiliation

of the municipal guard, etc.” (June 1996 leaflet published by Artur’s faction).

In addition, you have the three LM/LQB leaflets on these questions.

We want the unity of words and deeds. But in reality, you comrades are saying one thing and doing another.

The discussion on the police was initiated by Abrão in 1994 and led to a very strong political fight against the opportunists of the LBI in Fortaleza on this question. In London Abrão and comrade J. stressed the position that the separation of the cops should be achieved as quickly as possible, a correct fight. Later there was discussion on tactics: a letter from the LQB to the ICL dealt with these concerns. Artur Fernandes’ faction carried out, and continues, the worst kind of provocations against the LQB to derail the struggle (slanders about a plan to pay “ten minimum wages” when there was no agreement or attempt to receive anything, the staging of an “assault,” etc.). Without fearing the immense obstacles, we are involved in that struggle at this very moment, with the help of the international solidarity campaign you initiated, and we believe this struggle is very important for bringing revolutionary consciousness to the working class here and internationally, since in many countries the opportunists have the position of supporting the police as part of their reformism, and this struggle is part of the fight against pro-capitalist trade-unionism. It could have been the pride of the whole ICL to move forward in Latin America—where the left has backed the police—through a struggle of this importance. It would also have repercussions around the world, for example in South Africa, the U.S., Europe, etc.

But when it came down to the wire you had an attack of nerves and erroneously broke Fraternal Relations, an action which when it comes down to it means no solidarity, fraternity, support, etc. It is not logical to make (correct) criticisms about the way the MEL slate was put together and to say (correctly) that, while the MEL program originally talked about the question of the police in general, it did not explicitly call for the disaffiliation of the guardas, and then run away from the struggle when we try to improve the MEL program and put the program of the ICL and Trotsky on this question into practice.

Marxism teaches that before drawing major conclusions it is necessary to seriously study the facts. This is part of dialectical materialism. But we believe that in Parks’ draft letters there were many affirmations that were not based on facts, together with many furious statements (psychological pressure techniques frequently used by *Causa Operária*, we can cite their polemical documents against LM), without a Marxist consideration of the situation. But not only that. In the draft letters, and in recent letters sent to us, we see deductions which are drawn from a “reality” that does not exist. There is a name for this: idealism, or even illusionism. Every Marxist must face the reality of the class struggle which, like a “Twister”-type tornado, will shatter the glass houses of those who try to hide from it.

In Parks’ letter of June 11 she writes that various comrades thought that the draft letter “was not very good.”

That is true enough, since in that and other documents (including the motion of June 5 which evidently served to prepare the break) we have seen the repetition of lies and slanders against us, including some from the bourgeois press (Artur's absurd slander about the "ten minimum wages"), others made by Cirrus and Adam, etc., etc. And we must say that, yes, in the workers movement this practice is "not very good."

Why didn't you ask us about the facts? Because you wanted to break relations and the facts were an obstacle to that objective? It has been said that we are ignorant of Marxism (something Causa Operária also liked to say), but we have the following quotation from Trotsky, which might be useful for comrades who write about things that don't exist:

"A critical attitude toward information is an organic part of the political physiognomy of every politician." (from "Factions in the Struggle" in the book "In Defense of Marxism")

We are writing systematic accounts of the facts, based on documents. For the moment we think it is very important for all ICL members to know the following:

- It is not true that we are "trade-union opportunists" or "nationalists." We are internationalist communist revolutionaries who are fighting to implement this program. That is why we are under constant attack from the bourgeoisie and its popular-front agents, the centrists and also types like Artur Fernandes. These attacks have included many slanders, and we are very shocked that you have repeated some of those slanders.
- Not only did we not receive any payment from the SFPMV, there was never any agreement or attempt on our part to receive anything, and Cerezo never asked for anything! You already have the transcript of Geraldo's radio interview (March 18) where he clearly declared, against Artur's lies, that Cerezo's actions as an advisor were "free advice" and "without any charge." (In the same interview Geraldo emphasized that he supports LM's class-struggle program.) Geraldo repeated this fact in his July 2 declaration where, besides writing about his support to the LQB program and about the question of the cops, he stated that "brother Cerezo and Luta Metalúrgica do not receive and have never received payments of any type from the union" (attached find the declaration of the union accountant backing this up), and that statements about a formal or informal agreement for such payments, or any attempt by LM/LQB to receive them, "are LIES and SLANDERS."
- We are not carrying out an irresponsible and adventurist "confrontation" on the question of the guardas in the SFPMV. Neither is it true that what is going on is a vulgar "struggle for power within the union," or a struggle to maintain an official union position as "advisor" (which has not even existed since February, see the March 1996 leaflet by Artur's faction regarding the February 20 executive board meeting and Geraldo's March 18 radio interview). Our struggle is for class-struggle positions, among other things to throw the guardas and police out of the unions,

against the popular front, for internationalism, for a revolutionary workers party, against the oppression of blacks and women, etc. You have spoken of taking these struggles to the union ranks. This is exactly what we are doing (for example with the election of delegates for the June 13 conference, the June 19 assembly, today's assembly of 150 workers, leaflets, etc.) and that is what you have abandoned.

- It is not true that the LQB "doesn't have members" in the SFPMV, as affirmed in the June 5 motion of the ICL's International Secretariat, which you gave to us.
- It is not true that the work in the SFPMV is "the only current public work of the LQB/LM." Besides recruitment and work among other sectors, we have distributed the three Luta Metalúrgica leaflets, plus the MEL leaflets on the question of the cops, at several universities as well as other locations. We are studying Marxist texts and will continue with the publication of a newspaper, despite the damage done by your breaking of relations.
- On the same point, it is not true that we did not want to publish a newspaper, because even before Adam left Brazil we were already dealing with the layout.
- We had no unity discussions or negotiations with the bigoted opportunists of the LBI.
- Etcetera.

Thus, there have been many false declarations, so many that we believe they must have served a harmful political objective contrary to the interests of the fight for the international party of the proletariat.

Despite the breaking of Fraternal Relations, we are interested in reestablishing the truth.

Comrades Adam, Cirrus and Arturo asked us several times what we thought of the struggle with Norden, Abrão and other comrades. We answered that before judging, we wanted to see all the documents, since critical analysis is a part of daily life for all Marxists. You refused, arguing that these documents were internal to the organization, and you only sent copies of decisions after the accomplished fact. But then why ask our opinion about things we couldn't investigate? Reading those documents now (after the accomplished facts), we observe that the LQB occupied at least 60 percent of the discussions. Events around Germany, which supposedly involved democratic discussions, spilled over as a contentious precedent, projected onto the LQB as if we had been contaminated by the hands of the comrades recently expelled from the ICL (one of whose major sins was supposed to be their work for a fusion with the LQB). This suggests a spirit of revenge, and this impression is reinforced by the enraged polemic against Norden and Abrão. This is the idea we get from reading and investigating the documents on the expulsion process.

Now we have come to a strong conclusion: it seems to us that there was a relation between the comrades' expulsion and the breaking of Fraternal Relations. Not only that: the fight against these comrades was in large part due to the fact that they protested against accusations concerning the LQB—accusations they said were false.

And we know that those accusations are indeed false and are lies, and that several political positions drawn from them are absurd (like to hide the fraternal relations and international affiliation, to leave Volta Redonda instead of maintaining work here while extending it to the large cities, and many other things). After having seen how this method was used with us now, we must have strong doubts about the other “fights with Norden and Abrão” which you mention as part of their supposed “desertion from Trotskyism.” Especially when, in the literal sense, it is you who have deserted from a very important class struggle to put into practice the slogan (crucial for workers, blacks, women, landless peasants and all the oppressed) that the police must not be part of the workers movement.

For your information: those comrades never tried to communicate with us during those fights, until after they were expelled. But now we are discussing with them and we have observed that while they continue to insist on debating all principled questions for the Leninist party, they have not abandoned us.

We have learned much through the discussions, debates, struggles and work with the ICL! We repeat: when you abandoned the joint effort with us to go forward to a fusion, this caused harm to the proletariat and to genuine Trotskyism. We continue to base ourselves programmatically on the Declaration of Fraternal Relations and the programmatic conquests of the ICL (which must be political conquests of the whole international proletarian vanguard) on proletarian opposition to the popular front, on the Russian Question, the “Tribune of

the People” (particularly the black and woman questions, central to the question of permanent revolution in Brazil), the struggle for the Leninist party as part of the fight to reforge the Fourth International. We must continue to seek a principled fusion with the ICL at the same time as we explain the errors and fight against incorrect methods (breaking of fraternal relations when we are under attack from the bourgeoisie, lies, expulsions, running away from the struggle to separate the guardas, etc.).

In her letter, Parks proposes that we carry out common work. We hope the ICL will continue with the international “Police, Hands Off the SFPMVR!” solidarity campaign, which is even more important now. We would like to do joint work on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

We believe it is very important to discuss, in a calm and rational way, the breaking of fraternal relations, the real political reasons for this profound error, and our responsibilities in the world struggle to reforge the Fourth International. We will go forward.

We await your reply. Revolutionary greetings,

[signed]

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil
WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

P.S.: This letter was written before we received the translation of the Workers Vanguard article (delivered by Cirrus) on the breaking of relations, which we will analyze over the next days.

We attach some of the reports and documents on the facts*, others will be sent in the next days.

*List attached. [Reports and documents not reprinted here.]

Pabloism of the Second Mobilization

A Shamefaced Defection from Trotskyism

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 648, 5 July 1996.

Jan Norden, who for 23 years was the editor of *Workers Vanguard*, was expelled from the Spartacist League/U.S. by a meeting of the Political Bureau on June 8 for willful violation of the most fundamental condition of membership in a Leninist party: that the party has a monopoly over the public political activity of its members. Marjorie Stamberg, a longtime member of the WV Editorial Board, was also expelled for refusing to accept the democratic-centralist discipline of the revolutionary party.

Norden, who had until recently been a member of the International Executive Committee and International Secretariat of the International Communist League, as well as of the SL/U.S. Central Committee and Political Bureau, had for some time evidently taken a large proportion of his political activity underground. For some eight months, he had stopped asking the party for reimbursement for bills incurred in discharging his political responsibilities from his home by phone, or through fax and computer equipment that had been supplied by the organization. At the same time, he continued to submit bills for all other material he felt he needed for whatever political work he was doing.

Of course, this doesn't explain much. The anarchist Bakunin was expelled from the First International for financial chicanery. But that tells one very little about the differences between Marxism and anarchism. In Norden's case, his organizational pathology reflected a shamefaced political defection from the program of revolutionary Trotskyism, not fought or argued forthrightly as such, but rather expressed in an increasingly desperate search for, and accommodation to, social forces other than the proletariat and vehicles other than a Leninist vanguard party to advance the cause of the struggle for human emancipation. After a long and exhaustive internal struggle, Norden's revisionist course had been so thoroughly exposed that, despite his years of authority in the party, in the end he left with only his longtime political collaborator and personal companion, Stamberg, and his protégé Negrete.

Trotsky noted in *The Lessons of October* (1924) that sudden changes in the world situation always provoke disorientation and confusion within the revolutionary party, especially within its leadership. The period from 1989 to 1992 was marked by profound changes and historic defeats for the working class internationally as capitalist counterrevolution destroyed the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe and the Soviet Union. Buying into the imperialist triumphalism over the "death of communism," the left generally is rapidly repudiating even any pretense of Leninism, seeking "regroupment" in larger reformist formations together with social democrats and ex-Stalinists. Our small revolutionary

international is hardly immune to the disintegrative pressures of this period of post-Soviet reaction. But unlike our centrist and reformist opponents, who wallow in their opportunism while glibly denying any internal problems, we strive to be candid in assessing the tasks and difficulties facing us and are unique in bringing this before the international working class and the left.

This is because unlike other self-proclaimed Trotskyists, who have long forsaken the goal of international proletarian revolution, we fight for a new October Revolution. But the disproportion between this purpose and the current political consciousness of the working class, youth and the left internationally is great. Today, even most subjective leftists view as rather esoteric the idea that a proletarian revolution, like that successfully pursued by Lenin's Bolshevik Party in Russia in 1917, is the key to the liberation of mankind. This is due in no small measure to the crimes of the Stalinists, and the Social Democrats before them, who made a mockery of the program and ideals of revolutionary Marxism.

As we wrote in a "Perspectives and Tasks Memorandum" adopted at a meeting of our International Executive Committee (IEC) last January and reprinted in a recently published *International Bulletin* ("Norden's 'Group': Shamefaced Defectors from Trotskyism"): "Failure to recognize the period we are in and the necessary relationship of our small revolutionary vanguard to the proletariat, and the absence of the Soviet Union as an active and defining factor in politics, have led to disorientation and appetite to follow alien political programs and forces."

An early manifestation of the liquidationist pressures on the ICL in this period was the 1994 minority faction in our Canadian section of Y. Rad and Marie Hayes, who frantically cast about the world for forces other than the proletariat to lead "the struggle." This included glorifying various ex-Stalinist formations, like the Russian nationalist, fascist-infested "red-brown coalition"; looking to the murderous Algerian military regime to combat Islamic fundamentalism (while simultaneously retrospectively saluting Khomeini's mullahs as the "ally" of the Iranian workers in 1979); and calling for support to the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress in the 1994 South African elections.

Rad/Hayes' overt proclivity toward unsavory nationalist formations rapidly led them out of our international. Though not as extreme, the pressures of the period have also been manifested in fights over the relevance and purpose of a revolutionary Leninist vanguard in virtually every section of the ICL. These fights have been essential not only as a political corrective but in sharpening our revolutionary program for intervention into those struggles that are erupting and that will break out in the future against the ruthless offensive being waged by the capitalist rulers internationally. But for Norden the disproportion between what we strive for and the current

consciousness of the working class had become a yawning, unbridgeable abyss.

He and Stamberg evidenced a deepening pessimism about the ability of our party and its revolutionary program to have any impact in the “New World Order,” expressed in their ever more frequent broadsides against the ICL’s supposed “abstract” or “passive” propagandism. This was matched by an increasingly hostile alienation from the party leadership, in which Norden had been no mere ornament. Stamberg, an alternate member of the SL/U.S. Central Committee, long preceded him in an increasingly frenzied alienation. She was the Spartacist candidate for mayor in the 1985 New York City elections—and it would have been hard to find a better one. But for some time now, she had bridled against a perceived leaden “bureaucracy” that stood in the way of her often “rad-lib” appetites. Over the last year or so, it became increasingly evident that she had essentially quit, at least in her head, as she shed various areas of political and organizational responsibility.

The Pathology of Impressionism

Norden had always had strong tendencies toward impressionism and vicarious adventurism, animated by an often-fatuous optimism about the capacity of forces very distant from Trotskyism, or from the proletariat for that matter, to “struggle” in some successful measure against the depredations of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Within the framework of a political collective, these appetites could not only be curtailed but could also provide for a healthy tension in determining political line and intervention. At the same time, there were occasions when that balance tipped over, introducing distortions in our propaganda.

From the question of the survival of Sandinista Nicaragua against U.S. imperialism in the 1980s, to the capacities of the army of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq to inflict serious damage against the imperialists during the Persian Gulf War, Norden always stood at the extreme end of a tendency to impressionistically overdraw (and often fantastically so) the military factor. Correspondingly, this meant conjuring up an anticipated flood of anti-imperialist struggle while seriously downplaying the crucial and related factors of political consciousness and material economic reality. As Trotsky noted, impressionism on military matters can lead either to the idealistic view that revolutionary fervor will make up for any military handicap or conversely can fuel a rightist impulse that any struggle is hopeless. On the latter score, early on in his time in the party, Norden viewed the 1973 Indo-China “peace accords” as the end of the war against U.S. imperialism by the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

The defects in *WV*’s coverage of the Gulf War were particularly addressed in a document by comrade Ralf Eades, of the Spartacist League/Britain, titled “Cold War Impressionism, *Workers Vanguard* and the ‘Gulf War.’” Noting the overblown statements in *WV* articles on Iraq’s military might and its ability to inflict serious damage on the forces of U.S. imperialism, Eades asked: “Would it have been a capitulation to ‘smoke and mirrors’ impe-

rialist propaganda to wake the workers of the world to the revolutionary defence of Iraq, to halt, derail, smash by class-struggle means the crushing one-sided slaughter being *prepared* before our disbelieving eyes?”

Norden’s lightminded attitude toward the military might of U.S. imperialism was reflected in the ironic tone of a front-page article on a U.S. missile attack on Baghdad in *WV* No. 579 (2 July 1993). Comrades’ criticism of this article, and of the way the paper was managed, was “met with a furiously defensive, turf-conscious, hypersensitive, arrogant, cliquist, anti-Leninist response” (“The Post-Soviet World: Perspectives and Tasks of the Spartacist League/U.S.,” *Spartacist* No. 51, Autumn 1994). This outburst was an expression of Norden’s stated position in favor of “one-man rule” over the party press (and over any aspects of our international work in which he was personally involved).

In practice this meant creating a parallel apparatus, centered on *Workers Vanguard*, to that of the central party administration. Norden’s personal power ambitions meant that he was constantly chafing against the Bolshevik practice that the press is subordinated to the party leadership collective. These issues came to a head in a sharp fight at a Political Bureau meeting in September 1993. The PB passed a motion noting that the Editorial Board “was beginning to act in a self-conscious and independent fashion.” Nevertheless, as long as Norden accepted the discipline of the party and the corrective measures ensuing from internal political struggles, he remained as editor of *Workers Vanguard*.

Norden also had a Stalinoid bent particularly vis-à-vis Castro’s Cuba which was expressed, perhaps most grotesquely, in initial attempts to alibi the Stalinist show trial and execution of General Ochoa on charges of international drug dealing. Ochoa had fought with Castro against the Batista dictatorship and led the Cuban troops in Angola against the forces backed by the U.S. and South Africa. Norden was finally persuaded that the Ochoa trial was a classic Stalinist purge. But in the article “Stalinist Show Trial in Cuba—The Execution of General Ochoa” (*WV* No. 500, 20 April 1990), Norden insisted on “disproving” Washington’s claims that the Havana regime was involved in the drug trade by upholding Castro’s integrity: “For Castro to lie about this would be to invite an invasion.”

Of course, the White House’s drug charges against Castro were part and parcel of U.S. imperialism’s relentless drive to crush the Cuban Revolution. But to assert, as Norden did, that Castro couldn’t lie about this was a statement of blind faith in the Cuban Stalinist bureaucracy. This was fought out, resulting in a clarification in *WV* No. 501 (4 May 1990). But even in the face of the bitter reality that Cuba’s isolation following the collapse of the Soviet Union had led to a devastating erosion of the gains of the revolution and growing impoverishment and inequality, Norden’s infatuation with Castro’s Cuba did not abate.

Reporting on Cuba to an August 1993 meeting of our International Secretariat, just after Castro had made an enormous concession to the forces of capitalist restora-

tion by introducing the dollar into the Cuban economy, Norden and Stamberg echoed the Stalinoid cheerleaders in North America who proclaim that “The Cuban Revolution is going to make it.” Stamberg enthused that “the regime has a lot of authority...most people want to fight, they are clear, they are class conscious.” In fact, as another comrade later replied, “They are *not* class conscious. It’s populist consciousness; it’s exactly the consciousness that the Stalinists have instilled.” While calling for unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against U.S. imperialism, Marxists understand that the Cuban Revolution can only be “saved” by fighting for workers revolution throughout the Americas and proletarian political revolution against the nationalist Castro bureaucracy.

With the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1990, quantity turned into quality. Norden’s attraction to Castro’s Cuba was paralleled by his fascination with the East German deformed workers state of Erich Honecker. When the DDR went down, presaging the subsequent collapse of the Soviet degenerated workers state, Norden began to become politically unhinged.

From Impressionism to Revisionism

With the collapse of the Honecker regime and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the DDR was engulfed in a developing political revolution. The impulses of the East German masses were directed not toward capitalist reunification but rather to building what they considered to be a decent socialist society on the foundations of the DDR’s nationalized economy. This produced an exceptionally open situation for Trotskyist intervention. The ICL undertook the biggest sustained mobilization in the history of our tendency, drawing upon the personnel and other resources of all sections.

We published and circulated tens of thousands of copies of a daily newsheet, *Arbeiterpressekorrespondenz* (*Arprekorr*, Workers Press Correspondence), centrally fighting to forge a Leninist-egalitarian party to establish a government of workers councils (soviets) in the DDR as a springboard to a unified German *workers* state based on a perspective of a Socialist United States of Europe. We later learned that our call for workers and soldiers councils had been widely discussed within units of the East German National People’s Army (NVA), leading to the formation of incipient soldiers committees particularly in the northeast. Our political impact was shown when 250,000 turned out for the 3 January 1990 united-front demonstration, to which the SED had acquiesced, in East Berlin’s Treptow Park to protest the fascist desecration of a memorial to Red Army soldiers who died liberating Germany from the Nazis. Spartakist spokesmen addressed the crowd from the platform, denouncing the ruling Stalinist SED bureaucracy and advancing a program of proletarian internationalism. The spectre of organized working-class resistance to capitalist reunification manifested at Treptow alarmed the West German imperialists and their Social Democratic front men, who turned up the heat in their campaign to stampe the DDR into reunification.

The Stalinists in the Kremlin and in the DDR gave the green light for capitalist restoration in East Germany. Two months later, the parties of West German imperialism swept the March 1990 East German elections and the DDR deformed workers state was swallowed up in a reunified capitalist Fourth Reich. The document of the Second International Conference of the ICL in 1992 noted:

“As Treptow later showed, from the beginning we were in a political struggle with the abdicating Stalinist regime over the future of the DDR. While we were calling for a government of workers councils, the Stalinists were consciously acting to prevent a workers insurrection by demobilizing all army units that had formed soldiers councils as a result of our early propaganda. Although shaped by the disproportion of forces, there was in fact a contest between the ICL program of political revolution and the Stalinist program of capitulation and counterrevolution.”

Norden was centrally involved in our intervention in Germany, both in editing many issues of *Arprekorr* and in the political deliberations of our international leadership. But he could not face the reality of capitalist *Anschluss*. Unable to accept the verdict of history—that mass resistance does not follow in the wake of historic defeats—Norden began to look around for a “fightback” on the terrain of the ex-DDR. This perspective was predicated on looking for a split among the Stalinist remnants of the old DDR regime, now grouped in the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), who would supposedly lead such a fight.

To prepare for future struggles, through building the necessary proletarian internationalist leadership, the most conscious workers in the former DDR needed to acquire a political understanding of Stalinism and the collapse of the East German deformed workers state. Such a Trotskyist analysis was cogently put forward in documents by Joseph Seymour (“On the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe”) and Albert St. John (“For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective”) which were published in English-language *Spartacist* No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91. But these documents did not appear in a German-language edition of *Spartacist* until 1994! Instead, taking advantage of his German language capacity and his role in the International Secretariat, Norden urged on our German section, the Spartakist Workers Party (SpAD), a policy of endless economist sorties into the working class of the former DDR, launching a campaign in 1991 to agitate for mass strikes. This posture of imminent “mass resistance” negated the critical factor of *consciousness* which only a Leninist vanguard could introduce.

Norden’s ignorant and anti-Trotskyist perspective, that working-class struggle would lead a wing of the PDS to split and “fight” against the ravages of capitalist counter-revolution, had a disorienting impact on the SpAD, which itself could not face the grim reality of the destruction of the DDR. When his fantasy of economist “fightback” didn’t work out (which must have been devastating for Norden, given his skewed, ahistorical expectations), Norden turned his attention to a perspective of recruiting “anti-fascist youth” through yet another “get rich quick” scheme.

The increasingly murderous fascist attacks on immigrants in Germany which came in the wake of capitalist

counterrevolution provoked a significant radicalization of youth who sought to stop the Nazi terrorists. Exemplary united-front actions against the fascists, demonstrating in action our revolutionary program based on the centrality of mobilizing the social power of the working class, was surely one means to win the best of these leftist youth to Trotskyism. But Norden and Stamberg's idea of "anti-fascist actions" was all photo-op and little political content, as was seen the one time it was implemented, in an entirely tokenistic defense of an immigrant hostel in Berlin in which no damage was done to the fascists and out of which not one youth was recruited.

Continuing to flail about in his desperate search for a split in the PDS, Norden then came to see the main chance to "clean up" through an opportunist orientation to the geriatric remnants of the former East German Stalinist regime in the Communist Platform (KPF), the supposed "left wing" of the PDS. Excited by the increased vote for the PDS in the November 1994 German elections and opinion polls showing widespread "socialist" sentiment among the population of the ex-DDR, Norden argued for a "regroupment" perspective toward the Communist Platform, conceived as a rearguard action to make up for the recruits we didn't get in 1989-90.

If one were seeking to recruit workers or youth mistakenly attracted to the PDS milieu as a perceived alternative to the West German Social Democrats, that would mean unmasking and combatting the KPF/PDS as a political prop for Social Democracy. Instead Norden pushed the vacuous idea that these Stalinist has-beens retained "attachments" to the former East German deformed workers state—which *they had sold out!* This was precisely what the PDS purveyed—playing upon the desperation of the East German working people and their nostalgia for the "good old days"—in order to build up its own social-democratic parliamentary base.

Norden's opportunist appetites soon emerged in a flagrant public expression in a January 1995 presentation at Berlin's Humboldt University aimed at the KPF. This speech was a case study in centrism worthy of the late Joseph Hansen, who wielded his able pen to cloak the revisionist degeneration of the once-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party with reams of "orthodox" formulations. While invoking the program of Trotskyism, Norden presented a *liquidationist* view which *denied the ICL's role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard*, repeatedly intoning that in Germany in 1989-90 "the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership." He disappeared the central purpose and intent of the ICL's intervention: to organize for a political revolution against the Stalinist regime, which had bureaucratically undermined the DDR deformed workers state and was now preparing to sell it off to the West German imperialists. A workers insurrection to replace the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy with genuine proletarian internationalist rule was key to stopping capitalist counterrevolution.

Instead, Norden reduced our own revolutionary intervention to a litany of ineffective tactics, while "reaching out" to the sclerotic remnants of the former ruling bureaucracy as misguided colleagues who had a "grudging

respect" for our efforts in 1989-90—which were aimed at sweeping away their Stalinist regime! According to Norden, the "SED tops" had simply been "paralyzed" at the time and not one of them "could even conceive" of a proletarian political revolution. In fact, the SED tops could not only "conceive" of a political revolution, but did everything in their power to *suppress* one, because they would have been its *targets*. Far from being paralyzed, these Stalinists took conscious, active steps to prevent a workers insurrection.

Centrist Politics, Bureaucratic Practices

After more than six months of internal party discussion and struggle that definitively exposed Norden's revisionist course, which if left unchecked would have destroyed us as a revolutionary Marxist tendency, Norden's opportunist policies were decisively defeated at the January 1996 International Executive Committee meeting. Norden, and Stamberg, completely rejected this decision of the highest leading body of the ICL between international conferences. They declared that any and all criticisms of the "regroupment" orientation to the KPF and Norden's Humboldt speech were completely false. At the same time, Norden arrogantly denied all responsibility for nearly destroying our German section with the concomitant bureaucratic practices he pushed to realize his perspective.

James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, noted that there is always a consonance between the politics of centrism and anti-Leninist organizational practices. In Germany, Norden's opportunist pursuit of the geriatric Stalinist remnants in the KPF was complemented by a vicious witchhunt denouncing any comrades perceived as an obstacle to his orientation as a "comfortable social-democratic" layer opposed to "youth recruitment"! Comrades who criticized an article in *Spartakist* directed toward the PDS, in which Norden had grotesquely and gratuitously inserted that the Red Army forces who liberated Germany from the Nazis had "Stalin as commander in chief," were condemned for "capitulating" to the anti-Communism of the Fourth Reich and the popular-front left.

As comrade Albert St. John, who launched the fight against Norden's centrist liquidationism, said in his remarks to Norden at an SpAD conference immediately following the IEC meeting:

"Your denial of any political or organizational wrongdoing and your arrogant and defiant refusal to accept any responsibility for the consequences of your actions indicates to me that you are no longer being motivated by the program in practice of Trotskyism. Or perhaps more accurately there is a very deep contradiction between your alien political appetites and your formal adherence to the party's program. Now there is a real danger, if you don't try to pull back, that your currently strong centrist impulses will become dominant and thus resolve that contradiction negatively."

Trotsky emphasized in "The Mistakes of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question" (January 1931): "...the revolutionary policy of Marxism rests upon the conception of the *party* as the vanguard of the proletariat. "Whatever may be the sources and political causes of opportunist mistakes and deviations, they are always

reduced ideologically to an erroneous understanding of the revolutionary party, of its relation to other proletarian organizations and to the class as a whole.”

Norden’s accommodation to alien political forces externally and his increasingly visceral opposition to the party “regime” internally were manifestations of a rejection of the need for a Leninist vanguard party. This correspondingly reflected a demoralization in the capacity of the working class to act as a “class for itself,” i.e., to become conscious of its social position and power to overthrow the entire system of capitalist exploitation and to become the new ruling class in an egalitarian society.

In place of the Leninist party needed to bring revolutionary consciousness to the proletariat, Norden increasingly came to objectify certain political formations and layers—particularly in the former DDR and Latin America—as somehow inherently susceptible to revolutionary politics. In the case of the Communist Platform, Norden saw elements of communist consciousness where none existed. On the Latin American terrain, Norden invested our fraternal relations with Luta Metalúrgica (LM)—in which he and his understudy Negrete, then a leading member of our Mexican section, initially had a central hand—with a level of political sophistication and broad agreement with the program of revolutionary Trotskyism that simply did not exist.

To defend his own “infallibility” regarding our early dealings with LM, Norden generated a revisionist methodology justifying the sort of rotten-bloc “international relations” pursued by centrist outfits like the British Workers Power group and its “League for a Revolutionary Communist International,” in which high-sounding agreements on paper mask all manner of programmatic disagreements in practice. At the same time, Norden and Negrete argued for conciliating LM’s non-Bolshevik organizational practices, implying a different conception of the party question for Latin America. Political struggle for genuine programmatic clarity and agreement with LM brought this to the fore.

Negrete in particular tried to alibi a centrist conciliation of LM’s practices with the patronizing, anti-Leninist argument that these reflected “cultural differences.” This invocation of Latin American exceptionalism represented an adaptation to the nationalism and “caudilloism” which politically characterize the Latin American left. In the course of a political struggle within the Grupo Esparquista de México, it came out that these features also characterized Negrete’s regime in our Mexican section. The section was deliberately kept isolated from the vital struggles and debates within our international and every attempt to introduce Bolshevik norms of functioning were resisted by Negrete, who worked to maintain the section as his own personal fiefdom in which he was the unchallenged “all-knowing” leader.

When this situation came to a head and was fought out, Norden and Stamberg rallied to the defense of Negrete, arrogantly declaring that the members of our Mexican section were either liars or dupes who had been lined up by the “International.” In return, Negrete attached himself to Norden and Stamberg, like a piece of lint on a pair

of serge pants. Toward the end, Negrete fancied himself the modern-day equivalent of a member of Trotsky’s Left Opposition being led away to a Siberian gulag. His (typically) long-winded proclamation in defense of Norden and Stamberg’s refusal to abide by democratic centralism concluded with the grandiose exhortation, “Down with frame-ups and witchhunting methods! For the communism of Lenin and Trotsky, long live the ICL!” But then Negrete was always, as one comrade quipped, something of a “legend in his own mind.”

Disintegrative Pressures on the Revolutionary Vanguard

The ICL is a voluntary organization. But, impelled by his own alien political appetites, Norden increasingly came to see the party and its leadership as some kind of bureaucratic prison with himself as the victim of wanton regime tyranny. The party hadn’t changed, nor had Norden particularly. What had changed was the world. As Joseph Seymour, a member of the WV Editorial Board, wrote in a letter to Norden, with whom he had worked closely for over two decades:

“I am very concerned about your increasing alienation from the rest of the leadership. Your political personality has not changed fundamentally over the years though you do seem to have become more impatient for organizational successes, especially where you are personally involved in the work. What has changed fundamentally is the world in which we live and function. And therein lies the crux of the problem.... I believe you do not accept that, beginning in the late 1970s, there has occurred a *historic retrogression* in the political consciousness of the working class and left internationally. This development both conditioned the counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc and has been reinforced by it.”

As belligerent and frankly bizarre as Y. Rad’s factional struggle became (which included Rad’s belief in mental telepathy!) at least he forthrightly put forward his political views. Not Norden. He used squid tactics, spilling ink in hundreds of pages of documents that were as obfuscating as they were turgid. Since the beginning of 1995 alone, at least 392 pages of internal material were written by Norden and Stamberg and circulated to all sections and locals of the ICL. Although he had fundamental differences with the program and perspectives of our international, his documents were a study in centrist evasion.

Norden obviously believed the leadership of our international was increasingly going off the political rails. But rather than declaring a faction to fight against this and for a different political perspective and a corresponding new leadership, Norden and Stamberg engaged in cliquist guerrilla warfare against the decisions of the party. Operating under the perception that the party press was his personal fiefdom—“WV c’est moi,” to paraphrase Louis XIV—“His Editorship” (as Stamberg came to refer to Norden’s position) rejected the Leninist understanding that the majority determined the line.

It is said that colleagues of Eduard Bernstein in the German Social Democracy advised him not to put his disagreements with, and rejection of, Marxism in writing. Instead they argued that he avoid a political struggle

and simply act on his disagreements. But Bernstein was, evidently, an honest revisionist who committed to paper his reformist view that the “movement was everything” and the “goal” of socialist revolution “nothing.” Norden was the opposite. He acted upon and tried to implement the substance of his political differences, which were increasingly antithetical to the program and purpose of the ICL, but would not openly argue for a different program or perspectives.

When caught out he would simply deny everything. But he knew he was operating on the basis of a different set of politics, as evidenced by the fact that he increasingly attempted to operate in secrecy, outside of the scrutiny of the party and its leadership. When asked to submit his phone bills, a common practice among leading cadre of our organization and something Norden had done routinely for at least the last decade, Norden defiantly and categorically refused.

Charges were brought by the International Secretariat against Norden and Stamberg “for violation of the party’s discipline of democratic centralism, specifically [their] defiant and categorical denial of a fundamental condition of membership, that the party has a monopoly over the public political activity (i.e. not personal activity) of its members.” Norden and Stamberg refused to attend the party trial which had been called to allow them to defend themselves against these charges, dismissing the party’s democratic procedures as a bureaucratic “frame-up” and denouncing the request for their phone bills as a demonic ruse to persecute other comrades. As the PB motion expelling Norden and Stamberg noted:

“In fact, either Norden and Stamberg have nothing to hide because their calls are all to comrades (who whatever their sympathies or antipathies for the politics of Norden and Stamberg have the right to discuss their views with *any* member of the party), in which case Norden and Stamberg’s refusal to submit their phone bills (at considerable financial cost to themselves) is a dim provocation designed to engineer their own expulsion; or they have been in contact with political formations outside the organization.”

We are still left wondering what game Norden and Stamberg were playing. As to where they are going, the possibilities are wide open so long as the minimum norm of being anti-Marxist is met. In this regard, we have the excellent example of Y. Rad. He left our organization screaming against the supposed “Stalinophobia” displayed in our opposition to the revolting Russian “red-brown coalition” and in our refusal to support the Serbian nationalist forces in the all-sided fratricide in ex-Yugoslavia. A few months after quitting, Rad had made a 180 degree turnaround, denouncing us as “the best defenders of counter-revolutionary Stalinism.” Rad retrospectively took up the defense of Solidarność counter-revolution in Poland, of Yeltsin’s 1991 imperialist-backed counter-coup in Moscow, and of the Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs!

Pabloism of the Second Mobilization

Years ago, Norden was won over from a quasi-syndicalist, New Leftist position to the Spartacist League. He devoted the best decades of his life to work-

ing 16 hours a day for the Marxist socialist movement, struggling to expound revolutionary Trotskyism around the globe, particularly through *Workers Vanguard*, the flagship paper of our international. An early expression of Norden’s alienation from the party was his increasingly self-conscious view that *WV* was his fiefdom, and corresponding resistance to party intervention and criticism of the paper. Under the impact of the historic defeat represented by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, and his increasing rejection of democratic centralism, Norden’s episodic impressionism (which always had a centrist bent) became chronic and acute.

Impressionists are prone to wild and quick reversals. A case study is that of Michel Pablo, an adventurer who emerged after World War II as the leader of the decimated forces of Trotsky’s Fourth International and whose impressionism liquidated the political program and purpose of Trotsky’s International. In the 1950s, following the creation of deformed workers states in East Europe, Pablo predicted “centuries of deformed workers states” and pursued a “deep entrism” liquidation into the Stalinist and social-democratic parties. In the 1960s, Pablo’s heirs in Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat (USec) chased after petty-bourgeois guerrillaism and championed “student power.” At their 1972 World Congress, the USec rediscovered the working class, writing: “After May 1968 and, more generally, after the revival of workers’ struggles throughout Europe, an irreversible turn has taken place in this milieu everywhere in the world.” The irreversible was quickly reversed as Mandel & Co. embraced the cause of anti-Soviet social democracy in the 1980s. By the 1990s, Mandel was speaking of the “crisis of credibility” of socialism, and the USec was debating simply throwing in the towel and liquidating their organization outright.

Norden’s liquidationist course was a Pabloism of the second mobilization: denial of reality, suppression of the Trotskyist program, vicarious political adventurism and adaptation to alien political pressures, and liquidation of the Trotskyist vanguard as the necessary subjective factor in history. He was given plenty of opportunity to reverse his course. But he rejected any attempt at a political corrective as a mindless bureaucratic abuse simply aimed at “destroying his authority,” an authority which he correspondingly invested with papal proportions of infallibility.

It Is Desperately Necessary to Fight!

We fight to complete the task begun by Lenin and Trotsky when they led the working class to victory in Russia in 1917—to pursue the class struggle to a victorious conclusion, with state power embodied in workers councils around the world. In a period conditioned by the colossal defeats for the international proletariat signified by capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and across East Europe, this puts our small forces in a conjuncturally fragile situation.

Across West Europe, the working class has fought back in some of the largest and most militant battles in

years, yet for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or the program of proletarian revolution. In the U.S., where the political consciousness of the working class has long been retarded by a ruling class which has effectively fomented first religious and then raw racial hatred as a fundamental prop for capitalist exploitation, the labor movement has been fractured and driven back by two decades of surrender by the trade-union bureaucracy before a massive anti-labor offensive. Many youth who consider themselves to be “radical” are imbued with liberal-democratic idealism which finds its expression in vaguely anarchist sentiments or variants of “green” radicalism.

Failure to recognize the period we are in and the necessary relationship of our small revolutionary vanguard to the proletariat has generated disorientation, demoralization and appetites to look elsewhere for the “answer.” In this context internal political struggle is inevitable, and desperately necessary, to keep our party on the

rails. As Trotsky observed in his 1937 article “Stalinism and Bolshevism”:

“Reactionary epochs like ours not only disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard but also lower the general ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions, the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the backward flow: it must swim against the current...it must at least retain its ideological positions, because in them is expressed the dearly purchased experience of the past. Fools will consider this policy ‘sectarian.’ Actually it is the only means of preparing for a new tremendous surge forward with the coming historical tide.”

As the recent strike waves in France and Italy and the anti-racist mobilizations throughout West Europe demonstrate, there is a new generation of fighters, both in the working class and among radical youth, to be won to the program of international socialist revolution. The fights to reorient and steel our forces in the face of a “New World Order” are aimed at intersecting new social struggles as they erupt and winning the best elements to the program of communism.

Brazil: For Revolutionary Trotskyism, Not Trade-Union Opportunism A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica

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The International Communist League has dissolved its fraternal relations with the Brazilian Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LM/LQB) group. In a June 17 letter to LM by the ICL's International Executive Committee (IEC), we explained:

“For many months now the ICL has fought to bring the actual practices of Luta Metalúrgica/LQB into accordance with the revolutionary political program expressed in the Declaration of Fraternal Relations endorsed by both of our organizations in September 1994. In particular, since our January 1996 IEC meeting there have been sharp political struggles against LM's trade-union opportunism and centrist subordination of the revolutionary program to a policy of endless unprincipled blocs and amorphous combinations in the trade unions....

“As the LM/LQB is evidently adamant on its opportunist course, we therefore dissolve fraternal relations and separate our organizations. We look forward to opportunities for common struggle.”

LM originated as a proletarian formation with a militant history in the steel industry center of Volta Redonda. In 1989, this group joined the Brazilian Causa Operária group (a tendency allied with the pseudo-Trotskyist Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira in Argentina) but split in 1994 centrally over CO's centrist accommodation to the popular front. CO called for a vote to the “workers' candidate,” Lula, in the bourgeois formation, the Frente Brasil Popular, a class-collaborationist alliance between Lula's Workers Party (PT) and various “progressive” capitalist politicians (see “Brazil: IMF Candidate Wins Election,” *WV* No. 608, 14 October 1994).

It was LM's opposition to the Lula Popular Front and also its understanding of the centrality of the fight against racial oppression—ignored by the rest of the Brazilian left—as a *strategic* question for socialist revolution in Brazil which laid the basis for our establishment of fraternal relations in the fall of 1994. Fraternal relations are a dynamic process of testing the apparent programmatic agreement through common work and debate of differences. A lengthy and difficult process in any case, this process was rendered more difficult in Brazil because of geographic distance, language difficulties and low level of communications technology. We sought to deepen our ties to LM, overcoming differences or potential differences, through patient and pedagogical discussion.

Recognizing that there is no stasis in fraternal relations, i.e., if we weren't moving forward we were sliding back, the ICL brought one of LM's leading representatives to an authoritative gathering of our International Executive Committee in January. We then invested significant resources to maintain an ICL representative in Brazil for many months to pursue an agreed-upon agenda for common work. This centered on the need to

publish a party propaganda organ, to extend our presence to a major metropolitan center, and to seek to win recruits from the younger generation, including in the steel industry where LM has earned authority.

In the months prior to the IEC meeting, LM was centrally involved in an amorphous and unprincipled lash-up, *Municipários em Luta* (MEL), which had recently won the leadership of the municipal workers union in Volta Redonda. At the January IEC meeting, the ICL first learned that this union includes police! For the past six months, our relations with the LM/LQB have been dominated by the interrelated issues of fighting to oust the cops from the union and of breaking the LM group from its ingrained practice of unprincipled combinationism in the unions. Despite a formal advocacy of the class independence of the workers, LM combined with non-Marxist and even sinister elements and braintrustered the MEL slate without ever mentioning in their election propaganda the question of removing the cops from the municipal workers union. Moreover, this election program, which sounded quite left-wing, was so sparsely distributed that a majority of the cops in the union voted for the MEL slate!

While LM opposed the bloc between Lula's PT and various bourgeois politicians, a “union” between workers and cops is actually a purer form of popular front than that which exists at the parliamentary level: the mass organization purportedly for defense of the workers' class interests is directly tied to the armed bodies for the defense of capital. The most dangerous form of popular front, especially common in neocolonial countries, is that between the leaders of the workers movement and “progressive” commanders of the armed forces. The outcome has been measured in rivers of blood, from the Chinese Communist Party's bloc with the Guomintang (Kuomintang) in the mid-1920s, to the Indonesian Communist Party's bloc with Sukarno and the Muslim generals in the mid-1960s, to the agreement between Allende's Unidad Popular and “patriotic” generals like Pinochet in Chile in 1970-73. In microcosm, a similar bloc exists in the Volta Redonda municipal workers union.

In a February 23 letter to LM, we noted: “The fight for removal of the cops from the unions is the equivalent of the call for no vote to Lula: it is the concrete expression of the Marxist principle of the independence of the labor movement from the capitalist state.” Furthermore, we warned that LM's stated position on the black question is undermined by and stands in contradiction to its actual current practices:

“Among the political issues that draw Luta Metalúrgica and the ICL together is our emphasis on and fight for a proletarian-centered strategy to smash racial oppression. Comrades, consider what this means in concrete terms. If tomorrow the need were posed for the municipal workers union to take the lead in organizing labor/black defense,

such a mobilization would be obstructed, vitiated or made impossible by the presence in the unions of the forces which carry out racist massacres like those of Candelária, Vigário Geral and Carandirú, who massacre peasants in Rondônia.”

Just a few weeks after we sent this letter, military police carried out a massacre of peasants in El Dorado dos Carajás (see *WV* No. 644, 26 April). At the same time, cops in the municipal workers union were exposed in the bourgeois press for their continued participation in death squads responsible for the murder of street children.

The urgent issue of ousting the cops from the labor movement came to a head when the state itself threw down the gauntlet through an ominous raid on the March 13 municipal workers union meeting by the notorious military police. In defense of our fraternal comrades and of the union, and based on our principled stand for the independence of the labor movement from the capitalist state, the ICL mobilized its resources for an international campaign of solidarity. Organized by the Partisan Defense Committee, this campaign drew the support of labor unions and militants from South Africa to Tokyo to demand that the cops keep their hands off LM and the union itself. Since the battle was brought to LM, they have waged a principled and difficult struggle against the police presence in the union.

However, in the crucible of this campaign, our political differences were sharply revealed even as we made a united stand with LM against state repression. Despite abstract agreement with the need to forge a Trotskyist nucleus in Brazil, LM subordinated necessary party work—such as publishing a newspaper to openly make their case to the workers and expose the witchhunters—to preserving their control of the union from the top through the unelected position of “union adviser.”

Yet the MEL slate included the chief witchhunter himself, one Arthur Bonizetti Fernandes, who has made himself the spokesman for the cops. Scandalously, this pro-cop provocateur is working under the direction of an ostensible Trotskyist group, the Liga Bolchevique Internacional (an affiliate of the Argentine PBCI)! In a joint leaflet issued by the ICL and LM/LQB (reprinted in *Espartaco* No. 8, Spring-Summer 1996) we wrote: “This is a dirty matter: a recent letter (1 March 1996) from the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista (LBI) to Arthur (coup-plotter against MEL) instructs him to attack Luta Metalúrgica and the ICL because we defend blacks and homosexuals.... The fake-leftists like Arthur and the LBI spit on blacks and women and embrace the repressive forces of the state.”

Fraternal relations were at an impasse over the two most fundamental issues for revolutionary Marxists: the state and the party question. In another letter to LM on June 11, we wrote:

“The job of Marxists is to have a program that conceptually opens the road to a working-class revolution. Luta Metalúrgica, in its program and treatment of the state and its armed bodies of men threw up roadblocks to this program of working-class revolution, sowing confusion among the workers by running for the leadership of a union with cops in it and without specifically and forcefully addressing this crucial question in the union election campaign. The point is not to feel miserable about

this, or annoyed with us for insisting on the question. The point is to do something about it....

“A solid core of genuine Bolsheviks must be forged in a clear political struggle for the political independence of the workers movement from the bourgeois state, even if the risk is losing influence at the top of this union at this time. Continued delay in subordinating the question of principle to the quotidian struggle for influence in the union’s leadership can only lead to continued provocations by the police, the political forces who run the police and the ‘leftists’ who do their bidding. More importantly, the struggle for Marxist clarity and revolutionary political consciousness will be set back. The trustworthy base for revolutionary Marxists is to be found, and fought for, at the *base* of the union—among the actual workers.”

Trade Union Consciousness vs. Revolutionary Consciousness

Leninist work in the trade unions is directed *at the base*, to programmatically win the most advanced workers to an understanding of their class interests—embodied in the revolutionary program—and to building the revolutionary leadership that is needed to fight for those interests against the exploiters and fake-left misleaders. The famous “21 Conditions” for admission into the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky were aimed precisely at separating genuine communists from reformists and centrists by insisting on the fight to *implement* a communist program, not to merely express abstract agreement with such a program while violating it in practice. Similarly, the entire thrust of the Organizational Resolution of the Communist International was to direct and organize communist cells in the unions, not to engage in maneuvers and unprincipled blocs at the top.

A negative example is seen in the practice of the Stalinized American Communist Party (CP) which let its powerful base in the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) in the late 1930s dissipate. Pursuing its popular-frontist strategy of “left-center coalitions,” the CP focused on maneuvers for positions of influence with pro-Democratic Party bureaucrats at the top of the unions. Having frittered away a substantial amount of their working-class support, they were then largely destroyed by the McCarthyite witchhunt in the late 1940s and early ’50s which followed the promulgation of the Marshall Plan, the Truman government’s anti-Soviet assertion of U.S. imperialist domination in West Europe. Even some of these Stalinists came to publicly regret their neglect of their base.

A base of support for a revolutionary party in the trade unions cannot be built and maintained simply through trade-union militancy. A central aspect of Leninism is the understanding that socialist consciousness is not a linear extension of the economic struggle between workers and employers at the point of production. Advanced workers must be won to the program and perspective of leading all sections of the exploited and oppressed in overthrowing the bourgeois order and reconstructing society on a just and egalitarian basis. As Lenin wrote in *What Is To Be Done?*, polemicizing against the Economist trend which glorified the day-to-day struggles of the workers:

“Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon

too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity....

“Consequently, *however much we may try* to ‘lend the economic struggle a political character,’ we *shall never be able* to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for *that framework is too narrow*....

“Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of *all* classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between *all* classes. For that reason, the reply to the question as to what must be done to bring political knowledge to the workers cannot be merely the answer with which, in the majority of cases, the practical workers, especially those inclined towards Economism, mostly content themselves, namely: ‘To go among the workers.’ To bring political knowledge to the *workers* the Social-Democrats must *go among all classes of the population*; they must dispatch units of their army *in all directions*.”

LM’s stubborn trade-union narrowness is a *travesty* of Leninism. A fraction of communist workers in the trade unions cannot substitute itself for the party and its propaganda. The Communist International outlined important political reasons for a division of labor between union and party formations. While fighting for leadership within the unions, communists seek to build the strongest possible unity of the working class against the capitalist exploiters. The task of the communist vanguard, however, is to sharpen the differences between competing political tendencies in order to bring the workers to communist consciousness and assemble the cadre, through splits and regroupments, in a Leninist party whose purpose is to lead the workers to state power. As one ICL comrade summed up in a discussion with Luta Metalúrgica, “Profintern = Unity; Comintern = Split.” (The Profintern was the Red International of Labor Unions associated with the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky.)

Instead, LM partakes of the opportunist practices of the Brazilian fake “left” where each contender typically measures its strength by the number of unions it controls. Thus political program is blunted in the service of trade-union opportunism, and the unity of the union as a class defense organization is compromised by sectarian maneuvers in which the workforce is divided into competing union formations controlled by different political parties. As Trotsky wrote in “Communism and Syndicalism” (October 1929), “The question of the relationships between the party, which represents the proletariat as it should be, and the trade unions, which represent the proletariat as it is, is the most fundamental question of revolutionary Marxism.”

LM carries with it the baggage of its experience in centrist politics and trade-union maneuvers. Through the period of fraternal relations, LM encountered something in the ICL which their prior political experience could not have prepared them for. For the ICL, a political program is not socialist camouflage or an abstrac-

tion to be belied in practice, but a guide to communist intervention in all spheres of life.

For Revolutionary Regroupment, Not Centrist Conciliationism!

The dissolution of fraternal relations with Luta Metalúrgica is also a political consequence of the defection of our former comrades Norden and Negrete. Unfortunately for LM, it was these very comrades who for a long period of time served as the ICL’s links to LM. As fraternal relations moved forward through patient pursuit of political debates and common work on the ground led by comrades who better represented the ICL, Norden and Negrete capitulated to LM’s former posture and attempted to blunt the ICL’s intervention at crucial junctures.

But the real harm done to LM by Norden and Negrete came right from the inception of fraternal relations. Our international tendency has been built through splits and fusions with other leftward moving formations. That is why we emulate Lenin’s Bolsheviks in devoting so much attention to polemics as we seek to win over those subjectively revolutionary militants who are in or around our fake-Trotskyist competitors. Substantive programmatic agreement tested in practice through exemplary interventions and involvement in mass struggles, vigorous internal debate, rigorous cadre education: these are the methods of Bolshevik party building.

In contrast, with Norden and Negrete at the helm of our party work in Latin America, the approach to Luta Metalúrgica had more in common with oily bourgeois diplomats than Leninist internationalists. Both egomaniacs and facile pens, Negrete and Norden each later acknowledged that they personally wrote the Declaration of Fraternal Relations themselves! This document presumed and portrayed a broad, deep and synthetic programmatic agreement that simply did not exist. Moreover, fraternal relations was clearly viewed not as a substantive process to achieve a real transformation and the crystallization of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard, but rather as “press release Trotskyism” for external consumption. The declaration was immediately released into print before the International Executive Committee had even discussed it or voted on it!

Our relations with LM in this regard contrasted sharply with our relations with the Japanese Rekken group. A 1986 agreement establishing fraternal relations was a modest document focused on the party question which included certain concrete tasks such as translating into Japanese selected fundamental documents of our tendency. This document was only made public a year later (see *Spartacist* [English Edition] No. 41-42, Winter 1987-88) after a period of testing demonstrated that the agreement was real.

The methods of Negrete and Norden have more in common with our centrist opponents like Workers Power, whose “international” is built with the same phony methods. Lofty statements are written for public consumption and to create an umbrella of “orthodoxy” to shield the very alien political practices carried out on the ground. Moreover, Norden’s ability to spin out voluminous state-

ments in multiple languages from a remote international center while ignoring the real problems (disgustingly patronized by Negrete as “cultural differences”) gave Luta Metalúrgica the false notion that the ICL was a federated combination, not a genuinely democratic-centralist international tendency. The ICL is not dominated by big sections with the smaller ones reduced to the status of mere onlookers, nor is the work of any one section its own national property. Rather, our internationally determined priorities are keenly followed and discussed by the cadre throughout the tendency.

Rather than recruit LM to Trotskyism, Norden and Negrete hoped to reel in LM as a showcase Latin American section whose “base” in the unions they could brag about in international propaganda. Unfortunately for the comrades of Luta Metalúrgica, their adventure with Negrete and Norden came late in the stage of Norden’s degenerative Pabloite disease. A motion voted by the International Secretariat at its 11 May meeting noted in part, “Norden and Negrete’s attempt to blunt the necessary sharp political fights with LQB/LM in Brazil manifests the same centrist appetites exposed in Norden’s conciliation of the German KPF. Norden and Negrete’s false fight against ‘syndicalism’ in the LQB/LM was designed to alibi LM’s trade-union opportunism which was most egregiously revealed in the elementary question of opposition to the encroachments of the bourgeois state on the labor movement.” A study of fraternal relations with LM prior to the January IEC meeting is a textbook case in how *not* to build a communist international.

Normally on the road to a healthy fusion, the groups that are fusing let down their guard and become more candid and generally open as their common political purpose begins to render their separate organizational structures increasingly redundant. Negrete and Norden kept LM isolated from internal discussions within the ICL, conveniently and especially regarding the fights with Norden over Germany. In an attempt to advance candid discussions and spur LM to adopt Bolshevik organizational norms, which were wholly lacking, we proposed an exchange of internal minutes of our leading party bodies. But the nascent process of internal differentiation within the group, combined with the political opposition of the individuals who were previously their main links to the ICL, and the growing conflict between LM’s professed aims and its actual work, inculcated an organizationally protective reflex. The exchange of internal documentation was refused by LM, and they drew a hard line on maintaining their opportunist course in the unions.

As a group consisting mainly of advanced workers and political autodidacts which was primarily defined by empirical opposition to the popular front on its own national terrain, and as former leaders of mass workers’ organizations at the local level, it was difficult for LM subjectively and conceptually to transform themselves into a propaganda group. In the best-case scenario, it would take a substantial time to assimilate our methods of work as a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group. But we were very prepared to try, including allocating our limited cadre and financial resources to work in Brazil.

It was our sense that this group had the *potential* to forge a vanguard cadre of communist workers, something seen only a few times before in the history of the Trotskyist movement, as with the Belgian miners or Minneapolis Teamsters in the 1930s. As we wrote to LM in March:

“Lenin’s Bolshevik Party was built through the fusion of ‘declassed’ intellectuals and the most advanced layers of the proletariat. The practice of the various centrist organizations in Brazil, and not only there, is the antithesis of Leninism. Theirs are two-tiered parties in which a layer of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, posturing as the ‘great thinkers,’ lord it over the working-class members. This is simply a reflection of their opportunist politics which seek not to advance the consciousness of the proletariat but rather cater to backwardness and the influence of their ‘own’ bourgeoisie. The comrades of LM represent the vanguard elements of the proletariat. *You comrades* must become the nucleus of a Trotskyist party in Brazil. We wish to assist this political transformation.”

Political Program Is Primary

This is a reactionary political period but one nonetheless presenting opportunities for communist intervention and growth of our party which are, however, spread unevenly around the world. Brazil is among the places where there is a lot of ferment among the workers, and among the students, and our commitment to a class-struggle fight against racial oppression and to build a party as a Leninist tribune of the people has enormous appeal. Still, it is a period where the collapse of the Soviet Union has brought the identification of the workers’ class interests with the ideals of socialism to a nadir on the world stage. Rather uniquely on the left, the ICL swims against the stream and insists on the validity of revolutionary Marxism as a program for struggle today.

Indicative of the flawed character of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations was its failure to even mention *permanent revolution*. Yet this is a key question for Marxists in Latin America! Without a conception of the centrality of the proletariat and the need for a Leninist vanguard to bring the workers to state power as the liberators of all the oppressed in society, the workers will be condemned to repeated cycles of “anti-imperialist united fronts”—i.e., popular-frontist blocs with their own bourgeoisie (surely camouflaged with lots of rhetoric against Yankee imperialism)—and to military coups and unbridled police-state terror.

Regarding the primacy of a correct political program, the ICL noted in its June 11 letter to Luta Metalúrgica:

“The ICL too has had to recognize and remove roadblocks we too created and which would have blocked the road to working-class revolution if we had not recognized our errors. A good and very recent example is the fight with and in our Canadian section to advocate independence for Quebec. If the forces within our organization had failed to block the comrades capitulating to Anglo-chauvinism within our Canadian section, then we would have had to forge a new party to lead the proletarian socialist revolution in Quebec and English-speaking Canada. Instead, very sharp internal debate, organized cadre education, and extensive discussion won the Canadian comrades over to the program that is *essential* for a Marxist perspective in Canada today....

“The Bolshevik party too encountered many roadblocks, including within the party itself, and Lenin’s writings are

filled with urgent polemics to remove the obstacles to revolution which often turned up right in the Bolshevik Party Central Committee. To return to the point that the job of revolutionary Marxists is to have a program that conceptually opens the road to a working-class revolution, it is interesting to note that the Bolsheviks barely made it to the October 1917 Revolution. The Bolsheviks stumbled into the February 1917 revolution with a program which was inadequate for October. Specifically, the Bolsheviks' concept of the coming Russian Revolution was the errant theory of two-class rule expressed in their program for a 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.'

"The party, led by Lenin and aided by the more radical Petrograd committee, semi-empirically overcame the limitations of this 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry' because their political appetite was clearly for proletarian power and that's what they fought for despite the theoretical ambiguity. But in fact the Bolsheviks never adopted Trotsky's correct and essential theory of permanent revolution. This theoretical failure, and the failure to explicitly repudiate the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry,' then became a conduit for the forces later posturing as the Bolshevik

'old guard' (e.g., Stalin) to attack Trotsky, the theory of permanent revolution, and the revolutionary internationalist premises and implications of the Bolshevik Revolution itself. Some fifty years later, and after the ultimate capitulation to imperialism by the Stalinist bureaucracy in giving up proletarian state power, one can bitterly appreciate what a very large roadblock this programmatic error had become over time."

We do not have Lenin and Trotsky, but we have their experience to assimilate, particularly as a methodology.

We will of course continue to defend LM and its supporters against attacks by the bourgeois state and pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy. We remain open to common work with this group. We will also continue working to build a Trotskyist organization in Brazil, the nucleus of a revolutionary proletarian party in this strategically important Latin American country. We hope that militants of the LM/LQB will reconsider and reject their present centrist course and on that basis will find their way into the ranks of the ICL.

After Spartacist League Purges Leading Cadres, ICL Flees from Class Battle in Brazil

From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle

by Jan Norden and Marjorie Stamberg

Below is the title document from the July 1996 bulletin, From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle, issued by the expelled ICL cadres who went on to found the IG and then the LFI.

Last month the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), expelled long-time leading cadres, comrades with two dozen years each as party members. This political purge was intended to silence internal opposition to the increasingly erratic course of the ICL's International Secretariat (I.S.), which has in recent months veered sharply to the right toward a policy of abstention from the class struggle. In order to carry out its bureaucratic action, the SL leadership had to trample underfoot the party's traditions of Leninist democratic-centralism, and even to violate its own statutes. The expulsions of Jan Norden, a member of the I.S. and the Political Bureau of the Spartacist League/U.S. and editor of Workers Vanguard for the last 23 years; of Marjorie Stamberg, a member of the editorial board of WV and alternate member of the SL Central Committee; and of Negrete, a member of the International Executive Committee and principal leader of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, took place on June 8. The ruinous meaning and consequences of the I.S.' course were brought out less than two weeks later, as the ICL formally dissolved fraternal relations with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil/Luta Metalúrgica on June 17, demanding that the LQB/LM turn its back on a crucial struggle it had undertaken, to remove the municipal guardas (police) from the ranks of the Municipal Workers Union in the steel center of Volta Redonda. When the LQB refused to abandon this urgent class battle, undertaken with the I.S.' encouragement, the ICL leadership abandoned them.

This is a sharp turn for the ICL and Spartacist League, with grievous consequences for the course of the party which for more than three decades has represented the continuity of Trotskyism internationally. The ICL leadership's recognition of the gravity of what it accurately calls the crisis in the party is gauged by the fact that Workers Vanguard, the paper of the SL/U.S., devoted almost half of its last issue (WV No. 648, 5 July) to these events: three pages (out of 16) trying to explain the split with the LQB/LM and four full pages seeking to justify our expulsion. These two events are intimately linked together, and not only in the columns of Workers Vanguard. The expelled ICL cadres had objected to the I.S.' renunciation of the

1994 Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica. Norden opposed the uncritical acceptance of slanderously false charges against the LQB/LM, raised in the bourgeois press by a pro-police provocateur in Volta Redonda, as an alleged "proof" of "trade-union opportunism," and statements by International Secretary Parks that the ICL should never "set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again." For this internal criticism, he was accused of "cop-baiting" (!) the ICL and of trying to "engineer a split with LM against the ICL." Yet less than three weeks later, it was the I.S. that "engineered a split with LM." And they did so precisely in order to avoid association with the LQB/LM as pressure mounted from the capitalist state on the class-struggle activists. The ICL leaders caved in to the pressure of the bourgeoisie.

The I.S.' shameful policy in Volta Redonda was a betrayal of the working class, and particularly of the ICL's Trotskyist program, the program we continue to defend. This fact is cynically disguised in the Workers Vanguard articles, and was also hidden in good part from the ICL membership. While WV professed to support "Revolutionary Trotskyism, Not Trade-Union Opportunism," readers were not informed that the fraternal relations with the Brazilian comrades were broken "one day before the union assembly called to separate the police from the municipal union!" as the LQB's 4 July letter answering the ICL bitterly pointed out. Two days earlier, ICL representatives had told the LQB that there was a danger of a bloody confrontation if it continued to pursue the fight to oust the cops from the union. With its forces, they claimed, the LQB "cannot, at this time, stand up to this whole offensive of bourgeois reaction, which is trying to destroy the union and which is trying to wait for the best moment to destroy our organization in Brazil.... We are telling you: let's pull our hands out of that boiling water and dedicate our attention and time to building a revolutionary party." What a grotesque perversion of Leninism—"building a revolutionary party" by pulling one's hands out of the boiling water of the class struggle!

This was not some off-hand remark, but the synthesis of a whole policy that has been pursued for some time by what Parks terms "the new I.S." On June 5, the I.S. passed a motion saying that "given the sinister provocations and threats of state repression," association of the ICL with the union work of the LQB/LM "presents unacceptable risks to the vanguard"—as well, it said, to the LQB and the union itself. A June 11 letter to the

LQB by Parks declared that continued leadership of the union was “not sustainable.”* In the meeting with the LQB immediately before the ICL broke relations, ICL representatives told the Brazilian comrades that it was necessary “to formally leave” the “leadership of the union,” because it was “the most prominent issue” used by the bourgeoisie against them when the union “is in the crosshairs” of the bourgeois state. But in the face of these risks, the Brazilian revolutionaries cannot simply walk away from the struggle at its high point without being traitors to the workers’ cause. It is to its immense credit that the LQB categorically rejected the I.S.’ outrageous demand, and has continued to fight for the separation of the cops from the union. The ICL will be known for years, in Latin America and elsewhere, for its ignominious flight from this battle because it deemed the “risks to the vanguard” to be “unacceptable.”

But more than that, in calling on the Brazilian comrades to walk away from the responsibilities of leadership they have undertaken in the class struggle, the I.S. policy and the view expressed by its representatives point toward a fundamental revision of Leninism on the central question of the revolutionary party. V.I. Lenin, the founder of the Russian Bolsheviks and co-leader together with Trotsky of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, insisted in his fundamental work, What Is To Be Done? (1902):

“Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes.”

The fact that communist consciousness must be brought to the workers from without is the fundamental reason why there must be a separate party of professional revolutionaries. But that party does not stand outside the working class and its struggles—rather it is the most conscious part of the proletariat fused with declassed revolutionary intellectuals. This is axiomatic for Trotskyists, who stand on the program of the early Communist International led by Lenin and Trotsky. The theses on “The Role of the Communist Party in Proletarian Revolution” (July 1920) of the Second Congress of the Comintern stated:

“1. The Communist Party is a part of the working class, the most advanced, politically conscious and revolutionary part. The Communist Party is composed of the best, most politically conscious, most dedicated and far-sighted workers. The Communist Party has no interests other than those of the working class. It differs from the general mass of workers in that it surveys the whole historical path of the working class in its totality, and tries at each stage of the struggle to defend the interests of the working class as a whole, rather than of individual groups or trades. The Communist Party is the organizational and political lever which assists the more advanced part of the working class to direct the mass of the proletariat and semi-proletariat onto the right path.”

What does it mean when the I.S. tells the LQB, “let’s pull our hands out of that boiling water” of the class

struggle, and “dedicate our attention and time to building a revolutionary party”? This is the outlook not of a revolutionary workers party, but of someone standing outside the class, who can decide to simply walk away when the risks become “unacceptable.” This is not bringing the communist program to the workers from the outside (including recruiting from among the intelligentsia and other layers of the population), but rather reflects the viewpoint of a petty bourgeois haughtily observing the class struggle from without. Moreover, it reflects a tendency to retreat from the class struggle, to adopt a policy of passive propagandism, that underlay the fights over Germany and Brazil that have been boiling in the ICL for the last year and a half. The I.S. resolved the internal fight by slicing off a section of the leadership, and “solved” its problem in Brazil by pulling its hands out.

Brazil: “Police Are the Armed Fist of the Bourgeoisie! Cops Out of the Unions!”

Luta Metalúrgica grew out of a nucleus of proletarian militants forged in the struggles of the workers at the Volta Redonda steel plant, the largest in Latin America, where three workers were killed by the Military Police in a 1988 steel strike. Entering into struggle at the beginning of the 1980s, during the last years of the military dictatorship, they were strike leaders and became local leaders of the newly formed Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT—Workers Party) of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. But when in the 1989 elections Lula set up a coalition with bourgeois politicians, the Frente Brasil Popular, the LM comrades fought against this class collaboration. This largely black group of class-struggle militants joined the ostensibly Trotskyist organization Causa Operária (C.O.), followers of the Argentine Jorge Altamira, and were the first victims of a purge of left-wingers from the PT later that year. (The hatchet man sent to carry out the purge in V.R. was a prominent member of the Democracia Socialista current of the PT, followers of Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat.) However, while the Altamiristas attacked the popular front in the pages of their newspaper, in typical centrist fashion they called to “Vote Lula!” in the elections.

Inside Causa Operária, the Volta Redonda local fought to take up the struggle against black oppression, ignored by virtually the entire Brazilian left, and made contact with the ICL via trade-unionists in São Paulo who had received our material. In the run-up to the 1994 elections, the V.R. local went into opposition to the “Vote Lula” line, and wrote documents calling for no vote for any candidate or party of the popular front on principle. After splitting with C.O. in July of that year, the Luta Metalúrgica group pursued talks with the ICL, leading to the signing of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations in September 1994. This Declaration was published in Portuguese by LM, and in English, Spanish, French, German and Polish by the International Communist League, including in Spartacist, the organ of the IEC. Until recently the entire ICL was rightly proud of this Declaration and our ties with the Brazilian fraternal comrades. Now the I.S. pretends that it was all phony and they were

* June 5 and 11 quotations retranslated from Portuguese.

hoodwinked. On the contrary, it is the ICL leadership that is trying to deceive the comrades and the world at large in order to cover its own betrayal.

There are real risks in any serious class struggle, all the more so when the issue is the role of the cops in a country like Brazil, where police death squads have been at work for years. The Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR), with supporters of the LQB in the leadership, pointed out that V.R. is one of the areas with the highest number of street children murdered by police. But the “sinister provocations and threats of state repression” that the I.S. considered “unacceptable risks” to itself are directed above all at the Brazilian comrades. In early March, a SFPMVR meeting was invaded by shotgun-wielding Military Police, at the instigation of a pro-cop provocateur in the union, one Artur Fernandes. The ICL and the Partisan Defense Committee launched an international campaign for solidarity with the class-struggle unionists, demanding “Police Hands Off Volta Redonda Union!” In May, Fernandes claimed to have been fired at in a transparent ploy to deflect mounting support for the campaign to remove police from the union. Undeterred, SFPMVR president Geraldo Ribeiro, with the support of LQB, continued the campaign, including through a series of leaflets, workplace assemblies and a union conference with delegates elected on this point, among others. But instead of standing by the Brazilian comrades, the ICL leadership cut relations and ran from the struggle. “We feel stabbed in the back,” wrote one LQB comrade in a personal statement, noting that he began his struggle in the metal workers union opposition under the military dictatorship in 1982.

The June 19 SFPMVR union assembly brought out 200 workers. It was dissolved by a judicial order sought by the popular-front mayor, at the instigation of the same pro-cop provocateur. The police intervened just as union president Ribeiro was reading the motion to disaffiliate the cops. Two days later, during a nationwide general strike, the Municipal Workers Union struck in Volta Redonda, and LQB militants led the strike actions. One comrade, Marcello Carega, was arrested on charges of “disobedience” for refusing to move the union van blocking a gate at the head of 150 workers. Subsequently, the courts have suspended Ribeiro from the presidency, using as a pretext the printing of a union bulletin containing a column on the police by Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and acclaimed journalist on death row in Pennsylvania. Ribeiro is now being sued by the mayor for defamation of the city (potentially facing four years in jail) for denouncing as racist the firing of a black woman, Regina Célia, for not having a “good appearance,” a racist codeword in Brazil, and for leading a union campaign for her reinstatement. Most recently, on July 26, a membership assembly of the SFPMVR voted to reaffirm Ribeiro as president and to disaffiliate the cops. Yet Workers Vanguard and the I.S. claim these courageous Trotskyist militants are just “trade-union opportunists” engaged in “endless unprincipled blocs and amorphous combinations in the trade unions.”

What kind of “trade-union opportunists” are these, who are suspended by the courts for demanding cops out of the union, who are sued for defending victims of racist discrimination, who are arrested for defying the Military Police to shut down work in the midst of a general strike? The WV article quotes a June 11 letter from the I.S. taking the LQB to task for running for leadership of a union with cops in it while not “specifically and forcefully addressing this crucial question” in the campaign, and then saying: “The point is to do something about it....” Yes, indeed. But the WV article fails to mention that the program of the Municípios em Luta (Municipal Workers in Struggle) slate supported by LM stated that the armed forces and police, including the guarda municipal (municipal police), are “all of them, the armed fist of the bourgeoisie,” and any “alliance” with them is incompatible with class independence, “since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions.” And WV tries to disguise the fact that something is being done about the cops in the V.R. municipal workers union. Every city worker and reader of the local press in Volta Redonda is well aware that a raging battle is going on over precisely this key question of the capitalist state.

The I.S. claims that Norden and Negrete, who were earlier principally responsible for the ICL work in Brazil, conciliated the LQB. Yet the issue of police in the Brazilian trade unions was raised by comrade Negrete two years ago, long before the SFPMVR elections. In the aftermath of the victory of the MEL slate, when we became aware at the January IEC of the presence of cops in the union, a discussion was begun (again by Negrete, along with comrade Bride), in which the I.S. correctly insisted that removing the police from the unions was urgently necessary and a fundamental matter of principle. As a member of the I.S., Norden played a leading role in this fight, including writing the final draft of a 23 February letter to LM, and the key sentence quoted in the recent WV article: “The fight for removal of the cops from the unions is the equivalent of the call for no vote to Lula: it is the concrete expression of the Marxist principle of the independence of the labor movement from the capitalist state.” This sharp discussion had an effect, spurring efforts (which had already begun in December, as Ribeiro described in a written statement) to separate the police from the SFPMVR. In line with the earlier advice of the ICL, they have sought to accomplish this avoiding unnecessary confrontations but also by building class consciousness among the union ranks.

In the entire three pages in WV on the ICL’s break of fraternal relations with the LQB/LM, the only mention that the Brazilian comrades are actually doing something about the cops in the union is the laconic statement that “Since the battle was brought to LM, they have waged a principled and difficult struggle against the police presence in the union.” What cynicism! This statement is clearly incompatible with the picture of ingrained opportunism the article presents. Obviously inserted in order to be quoted when they are attacked for ignoring this whole dramatic battle, that sentence proves that the ICL leaders

know the truth and are consciously covering it up. WV does not report, and I.S. secretary Parks has denied, but every V.R. municipal worker knows full well that the police invasion of the March union meeting was in direct response to the position of the elected union leadership under Geraldo Ribeiro that cops are not part of the workers movement. The provocateur Artur Fernandes issued a leaflet calling the March 13 meeting to “defend the guardas,” reproducing the section of the MEL program that called the cops part of the “armed fist of the bourgeoisie.” The leaflet began:

“Geraldo clearly wants to exclude the Municipal Guardas and watchmen from the union movement, stigmatizing them as **ARMED FISTS OF THE BOSSES**, claiming that an alliance with the Municipal Guardas and Watchmen is incompatible with **MUNICIPÁRIOS EM LUTA**, making clear the intention to disaffiliate all the Municipal Guardas and Watchmen from the Union.”

WV does not report, and the ICL leadership did not even distribute internally, a MEL union leaflet of May 6 headlined: “THE RANK AND FILE IS DECIDING: Police Out of the Union; Reaffirmation of the Municípios em Luta Program.” That leaflet reported on a 6 a.m. union meeting at the municipal garage which:

“voted unanimously that: The police should not be part of, and should not interfere with, the SFPMVR or the workers movement in general. Because they are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie. They also decided in favor of the MEL program, which defends workers’ class independence; women, their rights and gains; blacks; children; socialism and the construction of a Revolutionary Workers Party which fights to put an end to capitalism; for proletarian opposition to the Popular Front and for workers mobilizations to defeat the starvation plan, firings and misery of FHC [Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso] and the IMF.”

It is no secret in Volta Redonda who is leading this fight. In May, amid the uproar caused by the claim of the provocateur to have been shot and his sinister attempts to implicate LM, the local papers were full of articles on the subject. One began:

“Guardas Say They Feel Pressured by Members of Luta Metalúrgica

“Commander says the group wants to exclude municipal guardas from the Municipal Workers Union

“Volta Redonda—The commander of the Municipal Guarda, retired army lieutenant Paulo Roberto Freitas, will call the troops together this morning to find out if his subordinates are being subjected to pressure as a result of the statements by the leader of Luta Metalúrgica and vice president of the regional CUT [union federation], Alexandre Cerezo. Luta Metalúrgica made its support to the election campaign of Geraldo Ribeiro’s slate—which ended up winning the election for the leadership of the Union of Municipal Workers of Volta Redonda—conditional on carrying out a program drawn up by the organization ‘Municípios em Luta’ which precludes municipal guarda being part of the union.”

—Diário do Vale, 17 May

The same article ominously declared: “The attacks and provocations of Cerezo and Geraldo Ribeiro are not being well-received by the guardas...” Not a word of this entire incident was reported in WV.

In Brazil, however, it is impossible to pretend nothing is happening about the cops in Volta Redonda. The

Petroleum Workers Union (whose strike was broken by Military Police last year) has supported the V.R. municipal workers against the provocations, as have Belo Horizonte municipal workers and other unions. Various pseudo-Trotskyist groups have written about it, and the provocateur Fernandes liberally uses their material to attack Ribeiro, the LQB and the ICL. The alleged shooting was his response to the fact that the SFPMVR ranks were backing union president Ribeiro and his campaign to remove the cops from the union. Instead of informing the ICL membership of this, the I.S. passed over the steps being taken to remove the cops in silence and falsely claimed that the LQB was being persecuted for proclaiming its fraternal ties with the ICL. (Parks complained that they were “dim” about “the dangers of international affiliation”!)

The I.S. secretary even drafted a letter accusing LQB leader Cerezo of seeking “sinecures” and “positions of privilege” in the union by repeating a false accusation from the bourgeois press quoting Fernandes, who openly brags he is “advised by the police,” about Cerezo supposedly asking for a salary ten times the minimum wage as an official union advisor. In response to this charge, the union’s president and its accountant (who was part of a previous administration) have published affidavits stating not only that the union never paid Cerezo anything, but that no such salary was ever discussed or requested. When Parks wrote, in a draft letter to the LQB, that “we really should not have to learn about such things” from the bourgeois press, Norden objected to the uncritical acceptance of this slanderous charge—and for this, he was vilely accused of “cop-baiting” the ICL! This, too, is not reported in WV.

The WV 648 article states:

“Despite abstract agreement with the need to forge a Trotskyist nucleus in Brazil, LM subordinated necessary party work—such as publishing a newspaper to openly make their case to the workers and expose the witchhunters—to preserving their control of the union from the top through the unelected position of ‘union advisor.’”

Once again, it was the provocateur Fernandes who first attacked LM leader Cerezo being an official union advisor. Moreover, Fernandes himself announced in a leaflet in February that this was no longer the case, as was stated as well by union president Ribeiro on a radio program in March. It is not as “advisors” but as comrades that LM contributes to leading the union. Ribeiro has made no secret of the fact that he is a supporter of the LQB/LM. Did the Minneapolis Teamsters hide the fact that they were Trotskyists and part of an international during the 1934 strike? And what of charges that James P. Cannon and Max Shachtman, the most prominent leaders of the Communist League of America, were unelected “union advisors” when they went to Minneapolis to help lead that strike? The American Trotskyists in the ’30s responded to the anti-communist “outside agitator” baiting by ridiculing it (see Cannon, Notebook of an Agitator [1973], pp. 84-86). Today the ICL fearfully echoes it.

While gratuitously claiming that the LQB comrades were “dim” about the “dangers of international affiliation,” Parks even came out (two years after the fact)

against the public announcement of the fraternal relations of the ICL with Luta Metalúrgica, saying that there should only have been an “internal document”! This amounts to calling for hiding international affiliation. This is in direct contradiction to the principles and practice of the revolutionary Third and Fourth Internationals. The ICL has always denounced the pseudo-Trotskyists who hide behind the bourgeoisie’s witchhunting laws (like the Voorhis Act in the U.S.) to downplay international ties. The Morenoites have often used this same methodology in Latin America. We protested this policy inside the ICL, pointing out that whatever the motivation, this amounts to capitulating to the ideological pressure of nationalism and imperialism.

Moreover, the LQB is not seeking to “preserve control of the union from the top” but is waging a determined struggle among the ranks. With several supporters in the SFPMVR, they have put out hard-hitting propaganda in the union. The union paper put out by Ribeiro featuring the defense of Regina Célia had a front-page excerpt from Trotsky on the woman question, and the paper repeatedly stresses that the struggle is against capitalism and its popular-front administrators. In the face of the court intervention suspending Ribeiro, they gathered almost 300 signatures—roughly 15 percent of the union membership—on a petition demanding a meeting to reinstate the elected president and to remove the police from the union. And the newspaper that the ICL leadership claimed the LQB/LM had “subordinated” to a power fight in the union and didn’t really want now exists. The first issue of *Vanguarda Operária* was published on July 16, and we are proud to have aided as fraternal comrades in that effort. The I.S., on the other hand, was content to denounce the LQB for the fact that it hadn’t appeared, although the publication was held up for several weeks because the ICL rep hadn’t given them the computer codes (attributes) needed to open the files!

Has the ICL membership been informed of any of this, of the fact that the ICL broke off relations on the eve of a meeting called to vote for cops out of the union, and that the ICL representatives called on LQB/LM to desert from this vital class battle at the high point of the struggle on the grounds that the forces of the bourgeoisie and its state were too strong?! Certainly nothing of this was reported in the two articles in *WV* No. 648.

Instead, the readers are given half-truths, distortions and outright lies. Thus the I.S.’ June 17 letter breaking fraternal relations attacks the LQB for “unprincipled blocs and amorphous combinations in the trade unions...” In fact, it was Norden who wrote, in the 23 February I.S. letter to Luta Metalúrgica, the criticism of the MEL as an “amorphous union formation.” As a result of debate and experience (including the treachery of Fernandes), in its 4 July reply to the ICL’s breaking of fraternal relations, the LQB/LM recognizes that the ICL made correct criticisms on the formation of the MEL slate and that the ICL was also correct in criticizing the original MEL program for not explicitly demanding the disaffiliation of the police from the union—while scoring the hypocrisy of the I.S. for then abandoning the struggle.

Contrary to a May 11 I.S. motion attacking “Norden and Negrete’s attempt to blunt the necessary sharp fights with LQB/LM in Brazil,” we were the first to address problems in LM’s union work, in several letters to LM and memos to the I.S. and IEC warning of a syndicalist danger in their practice. At the time, in the greater interests of waging the fight against Norden over Germany, this was denounced as slandering LM. At the January IEC meeting and in a subsequent letter to LM, leading comrades (with justification) said the V.R. group potentially had the significance of the Trotskyist cadres who led the Minneapolis Teamsters and Belgian coal miners of the Charleroi basin in the 1930s. Yet only a few weeks later, many of the same comrades were declaring LM to be nothing less than “trade-union opportunists” and claiming that our warning of a syndicalist danger was just a cunning cover-up!

On June 11, Parks wrote to the LQB on behalf of the I.S.: “More delays in the subordination of principles to daily struggles for influence in the leadership of the union will only lead to a continuation of the provocations of the cops, the political forces behind the cops, and ‘leftists’ who do their bidding.” Not only does this letter (as well as the June 18 letter breaking fraternal relations) dishonestly portray the situation in Volta Redonda as if the LQB was not waging a struggle for the separation of the police from the union—when readers of the local press are bombarded with articles about Luta Metalúrgica’s fight to remove the cops—it outrageously blames the LQB for inviting police provocation! And what the I.S. leadership’s fine words about principles mean in practice is not an effort to intensify the struggle for cops out of the union, but a demand that revolutionaries run away from the battle! Contrast this shameful back-stabbing to the policy of Trotsky’s Fourth International as put forward in the Transitional Program:

“The Bolshevik-Leninist stands in the front-line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. He takes active part in mass trade unions for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their spirit of militancy. He fights uncompromisingly against any attempt to subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state and bind the proletariat to ‘compulsory arbitration’ and every other form of police guardianship—not only fascist but also ‘democratic.’ Only on the basis of such work within the trade unions is successful struggle possible against the reformists, including those of the Stalinist bureaucracy.”

Now, in order to drive home the false “lessons” of recent fights in the ICL, the *WV* 648 article on “A Break in Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” claims that the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with LM was fundamentally deviant from the outset. (The article conveniently fails to explain why almost two years went by without anyone noticing this.) To back up this claim, the article asserts: “Indicative of the flawed character of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations was its failure to even mention permanent revolution.” There follows a disquisition on the importance of this fundamental part of the Trotskyist program, supposedly demolishing the “flawed” Declaration we uphold. Yet like so many other

allegations in the article, the claim on which this whole edifice is based is demonstrably false. Not only is the entire document imbued with the program of permanent revolution, the Declaration explicitly declares:

“As the tribune of the oppressed, it is indispensable that the Leninist party raise the banner of struggle against the oppression of women, rooted in the institution of the bourgeois family—a question of utmost importance in Brazil—as part of the program of permanent revolution.”

It also quotes Trotsky saying that unless the road is found to the deeply oppressed black population in the U.S., “The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie.” Read it in Spartacist No. 52 (Autumn 1995) or Workers Vanguard No. 608 (14 October 1994).

So WV’s claim that the permanent revolution was left out of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations is a flat lie. In fact, the entire article on the ICL’s break of relations is one long lie. While there is not enough space here to refute every false statement and distortion, many are answered in two documents by Norden, “On Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” (17 April) and “Once Again on Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica” (5 May). Then there is the comparison of fraternal relations with the Brazilian LM, who were long-time recognized union fighters with authority gained from leading mass struggles, with the Japanese Rekken, which had existed for over a decade as an isolated study group. It is because they were actively engaged in political struggle in competition with other ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies that LM requested that the Declaration be quickly approved so that they could publish it in Brazil, where they were the only group to take a principled position against voting for Lula’s popular front in the 1994 elections. The I.S. duly approved the Declaration of Fraternal Relations, which was later ratified without controversy by the IEC—as has been the case with numerous other decisions over the years.* Behind the phony hue and cry, two years after the fact, over the procedure by which the document was adopted lies the fact that the “new I.S.” would prefer a study circle to having to deal with the difficult problems facing a group like the LQB/LM.

We can proudly say that Workers Vanguard in the 23 years Norden was editor and the more than a decade and

* The fusion with the Japanese Rekken group is now held up by the “new I.S.” as a model counterposed to the Declaration of Fraternal Relations with Luta Metalúrgica. Yet the Spartacist delegation to the fusion conference was selected by no official body. The minutes of the August 1988 fusion conference include the statement by Foster that “the IEC must be polled, but this is only a formality.” A 1 October 1988 cover letter to a poll to be sent to the IEC states: “Participants considered the iSt delegation as constituted to be authoritative,” while noting that the decisions of the conference were only recommendations to the IEC. However, due to intervening events, the IEC poll confirming was not sent out until late December. While these procedures were perfectly valid, the fact is that they were qualitatively less rigorous than those used to approve fraternal relations with LM.

a half that Stamberg acted as managing editor consistently told the truth. WV had a deserved reputation for uncompromising honesty. Those who were skewered by our sharp polemics frequently squealed like stuck pigs. But we could always back up our assertions with proven facts, and did so when challenged. This cannot be said of the SL’s paper today. The “new WV” lies! And it does so in the service of a program of fleeing from the class struggle, of abandoning in practice the Trotskyist program of independence of the unions from the state. We have argued that the ICL has recently shown a strong tendency in the direction of abstract or passive propagandism, counterposed to the long-standing Spartacist conception of building a “fighting propaganda group” that fuses Trotskyist propaganda with intervention in exemplary actions where the party has the ability to do so. While over the years many centrist pseudo-Trotskyists have falsely accused the SL of being “ultraleft sectarians,” what is happening now is the opposite: the developing tendency to abstentionism is a rightist policy that means betraying the ICL’s own historic program and liquidating the party as an active factor in the class struggle.

Germany: A False Fight...

The Workers Vanguard 648 article on our expulsions states:

“After more than six months of internal party discussion and struggle that definitively exposed Norden’s revisionist course, which if left unchecked would have destroyed us as a revolutionary Marxist tendency, Norden’s opportunist policies were decisively defeated at the January 1996 International Executive Committee meeting. Norden, and Stamberg, completely rejected this decision of the highest leading body of the ICL between conferences. They declared any and all criticisms of the ‘regroupment’ orientation to the KPF [Communist Platform of the PDS] and Norden’s Humboldt speech were completely false. At the same time, Norden arrogantly denied all responsibility for nearly destroying our German section with the concomitant bureaucratic practices he pushed to realize his perspective.”

As with the rest of the WV article, the claims about the fight over Germany consist of a massive accumulation of distortions, false assertions, and outright inventions. To begin with, we didn’t “reject” the decision of the IEC by refusing to abide by it; we completely opposed its false conclusions. Also, the Germany discussion didn’t last for six months but for an entire year, during which there was a desperate search for a “Stalinophilic” deviation in the SpAD; after about six months, in which the “evidence” for this assertion kept constantly shifting, the I.S. with Al Nelson leading the charge declared that the source of the deviation had been found in the person of Norden, the policies he had pursued (which the I.S. had approved), and his January 1995 speech at Humboldt University in Berlin on the collapse of Stalinism in East Europe. The next half year was spent in demonizing Norden’s work in Germany, after which another six months were consumed with a similar operation over Mexico and Brazil, culminating in our expulsion.

Contrary to the allegation that Norden ran a “vicious witchhunt denouncing any comrades perceived as an

obstacle to his orientation,” there was no witchhunt. Nor were there “bureaucratic practices...pushed to realize his perspective.” No one in the German section was bureaucratically abused, and certainly not as a “perceived obstacle” to the KPF intervention, since that perspective had been universally supported in the SpAD. The accusation of “nearly destroying our German section” is a vicious lie. The KPF work was an excellent Trotskyist intervention that built the SpAD. But in the frenzy to find a pro-Stalinist deviation where it didn’t exist, the ICL leadership endorsed a line that capitulated to the social-democratic anti-communist campaign which equated Stalinism with anti-Semitism. And this along with intimidating leading comrades of the German section to recant their views, which they did, has taken a terrible toll in severely damaging and even destroying their revolutionary fiber.

We said at the time that this was a false fight from start to finish, that there was no truth in the alleged “facts” on which it was based, the analysis and the conclusions drawn. The only “answer” of the I.S. majority to our refutation of the string of falsehoods was to demand that we answer what does that say about them—we must be calling them lying bureaucrats. We did not jump to conclusions. But in the aftermath, with the explicit codifying of the SpAD “perspectives” of passive propaganda, the subsequent equally false “fights” over Mexico and Brazil, and the welter of bureaucratic measures against us and other comrades for continuing to oppose the “lessons” drawn, one has to conclude that what the I.S. claimed we thought about them was in fact what they knew to be the truth about themselves. There was a campaign of lies in the service of a policy of abstention from intervention as a Trotskyist fighting propaganda group—as was the case even more dramatically over Brazil a few months later—and of purging those who were perceived as obstacles to consolidating the “new I.S.” And to properly carry out this operation, the history of the SpAD has now been systematically rewritten on a whole series of previous fights and interventions over the past six years.

The tendency to passive propagandism was pronounced in the German section of the Spartacist tendency (then the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands) even before the demise of the DDR. At the height of the stormy events of 1989-90, when the ICL mobilized its forces to the maximum to intervene in the beginnings of a political revolution in the East German deformed workers state, the TLD was excruciatingly slow to shift gears and overcome what the document of the second international conference of the ICL (1992) termed a “propaganda circle mentality.” From October through early December 1989, when political events were moving so rapidly that years of “normal” development were compressed into days, crucial weeks were lost in getting our propaganda into East Germany. There was foot-dragging resistance to getting comrades to take time off from work. In December, at a time when streams of East Germans were coming daily to our meeting hall in West Berlin, the founding of the Spartakist-Gruppen

as transitional organizations was inexcusably delayed by almost three weeks. And even after fights about this, a section of the TLD sat out most of the battle for the DDR in Hamburg, right up through the March 1990 Volkskammer elections.

In the aftermath of the capitalist reunification, there was a strong tendency, particularly among former members of the TLD to retreat from struggle into their accustomed narrow and self-satisfied propaganda circle mentality. This was manifest in a number of sharp fights, notably against resistance to the Spartakist campaign in the 1990 Bundestag elections; resistance to maintaining Halle as an East German center, through necessary in-transfers of cadres from the West; and resistance to the January 1993 united-front defense of an immigrant workers hostel in Berlin. Accompanying this, there was a pattern of political flip-flops by the SpAD leadership centered on Max Schütz, who is notorious throughout the ICL as a wildly changeable impressionist. In the recent Germany discussion, we emphasized that the deviations of the SpAD were all over the map, with a kaleidoscopic character politically. The common denominator was the lack of a dialectical outlook on virtually everything, particularly a failure to recognize contradictions. But of the SpAD’s various deviations, the most dangerous were those reflecting the pressure of their “own” bourgeoisie.

The German discussion began in response to a December 1994 document by Mary Ann Clemens arguing that the SpAD had over a period of years capitulated to, conciliated and failed to fight Stalinist conceptions among its own members, particularly those relatively newer East German recruits from the former DDR. Norden remarked at an SpAD central committee meeting in January 1995 that there was some truth to what Clemens was saying, and those points should be incorporated in a conference document. There have been pro-Stalinist errors in the SpAD—for example, it was repeatedly necessary in Spartakist articles on the witch-hunt trials of former DDR leaders to put in from New York that they were being tried by the wrong class for the wrong crimes. Norden also opposed a decision by the SpAD CC to make defense of former DDR security minister Mielke a condition for joining the Spartakist-Jugend. But such errors are only part of the story—the SpAD also capitulated to social democracy, and in Germany, the economically most robust and now politically aggressive imperialist power, the social-democratic pressures were the greatest. Clemens gave a partial and somewhat skewed picture of the party. Moreover, she falsely argued that at the height of the 1989-90 struggle in the DDR, “the SpAD intervened with the slogan: ‘For the Unity of the SED’.” Yet this was never the line of the SpAD and ICL, public or internal.

“Unity of the SED”: While the new secretary of the International Secretariat of the ICL, Parks, has vociferously accused Norden of capitulation to Stalinism over the KPF work—where there was no such capitulation—it was Parks who in late January 1990 first raised the slogan of “Unity of the SED.” along with Brosius, claiming (wrongly) that this was suggested by comrade Robertson.

That slogan directly transmitted pressures from dissident SEDers the SpAD was in contact with in Rostock and Schwerin, who were panicked at the sellout of the DDR by Gorbachev and Modrow and sought to resist by closing ranks of the Stalinist “party.” This line, which really did conciliate and capitulate to Stalinism, was fought—by Norden, among others—and defeated as soon as the I.S. heard of it. These facts can be verified by any member of the ICL by consulting the International Internal Bulletin No. 21 (“Documents and Discussion on the Collapse of Stalinism,” Part II), pp. 94-99 and 104-109. As Norden wrote at the time:

“Take the proposal for the slogan ‘unity of the SED.’ It wasn’t just Parks getting it wrong, since various comrades argued for it. Partly, I’m sure, it was a product of exhaustion and not being able to think straight. But it also has to be in part a reflection of the widespread sense of panic over the stepped-up imperialist campaign to swallow the DDR. We’re not big enough, so people look around for a force that could stop it, and they come up with the SED. Except the SED, the political mouthpiece of the crumbling Stalinist bureaucracy, can’t stop the imperialists—that’s precisely why this crisis is coming to a head. But the working class can, and in fact actions by the most conscious sections could have a tremendous impact.”

—Jan Norden, “Supplemental Points from I.S./Financial Consultation” (29 January 1990)

This is not some minor question. The professional anti-Spartacists of the Bolshevik Tendency, in their pamphlet on the ICL in Germany in 1989-90, have a whole section falsely claiming that “Unity of the SED” was the actual policy of the SpAD, just as Clemens said five years later. In fact, at Norden’s January 1995 Humboldt University forum, BTers argued this and were refuted from the podium. In essence this is the same as the line put forward by the revisionist Michel Pablo on Hungary in 1956—the line of self-reform of the Stalinist bureaucracy—only here in a situation where the bureaucracy was handing over the country to imperialism! The line of “Unity of the SED” in the DDR in 1989-90 inevitably recalls the Zinoviev/Kamenev line of unity with the Mensheviks in Russia in 1917, that is with the counter-revolution in “socialist” garb. And now the same people who conceived this truly Stalinoid, truly liquidationist line, at the height of the battle for the DDR, cynically accuse Norden of capitulating to Stalinism!

“Stalinophilia”? When comrade Doris Kohn objected in a January 1995 document that “‘Stalinophilia,’ as the BT always accuses us of, is not the problem of the SpAD,” Clemens went ballistic, denouncing the vile “insinuation” that she was suggesting the section was Stalinophilic; she claimed she was being charged with “Stalinophobia,” and that this was part of a witch-hunt against her. No one ever said she or her supporters were Stalinophobic: she invented this charge.* But

* Correction: Two and a half months after Clemens claimed she was being accused of Stalinophobia, allegedly by Kohn, who never wrote or said that, Gerrard did make such a charge, in a 19 April 1995 document. For Norden’s criticism of Gerrard’s statement, see Part 2 of his document “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany” (3 July 1995).

a year later, the IEC passed a resolution claiming that there was a witchhunt against her and her co-thinkers for objecting to the SpAD’s “Stalinophilic collapse”! In response to Clemens’ furious telephone campaign to line up the international leadership behind the claim that Norden and Stamberg had launched a witchhunt against comrade Clemens and her document at the January 1995 SpAD Central Committee meeting, we asked that the discussion at that meeting be transcribed and translated. The charges were repeated over and over for almost a year, but when the transcriptions were finally completed in January 1996, all references to the SpAD CC meeting were suddenly dropped—everyone could read with their own eyes that there was no onslaught against Clemens or her document but a comradely discussion with partially differing views.

1993 Berlin hostel defense: In actuality, the initial reaction in the German section to Clemens’ paper was rather muted. Far from there being a witchhunt against it, the biggest complaint voiced in the I.S. at the time was that there were hardly any responses to it. Many comrades weren’t quite sure what point Clemens was trying to make. However, when she came back with another document, titled “For Round 2,” that sneered at the 1993 defense of an immigrant workers hostel in Berlin as a “mountain bringing forth a mouse,” a “Potemkin village” action and an example of “fake mass work,” this produced a justified outburst of opposition from much of the SpAD leadership. Documents against this were written by Petersen, Hecht and others. At an 11 April 1995 I.S. meeting, in his report on Germany, Norden said of Clemens’ new document: “Behind that, if you take that seriously and develop that out, is the logic of a different program a program for, at best, a De Leonist and sterile propaganda sect.” At the time, he was not the only one in the international leadership to hold this view. During the discussion at that I.S. meeting, George Foster said: “The heat on the hostel stuff is completely understandable. The key point there is not so much exemplary actions, but if we’re to be a real fighting propaganda group you cannot stand aside in a situation in which there are fascists running amok and you’re sort of duty bound to do something—or you do become a De Leonist.”

But that was then. Now the Workers Vanguard article on our expulsion calls this “an entirely tokenistic defense of an immigrant hostel in Berlin in which no damage was done to the fascists and out of which not one youth was recruited.” It was hardly “tokenistic”—the hostel defenders were fired on by fascists, the action received a number of labor endorsements and brought out well over 100 youth and leftists who spent the night of the 60th anniversary of Hitler’s takeover of power doing shifts on the perimeter of this large building complex and talking about Trotskyist politics inside during their rest periods. It is also false that no youth were recruited out of it; several who later joined the Spartakist Jugend participated in the hostel defense. This was a militarily competent action which provided a concrete example pointing to the kind of worker/immigrant defense the SpAD has called for in its propaganda. It

grew out of months of work among the immigrants there, and had a big impact at the time among leftist youth, from Autonomes to those in the PDS milieu. And we would repeat today that behind the ICL's retrospective dismissal of this action is indeed "the logic of a different program a program for, at best, a De Leonist and sterile propaganda sect." (See accompanying text on the 1993 hostel defense, page 43 [see *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*].)

Stalin as commander in chief: The next clash in the Germany fight was over an article in *Spartakist* No. 117 which supporters of Clemens claimed glorified Stalin as commander in chief of the Red Army. This was a classic example of a quote taken out of context in order to distort it. The article was about the anti-communist witchhunt by the PDS leadership of Gysi and Bisky in response to demands by the Social Democrats (SPD) to purge the Communist Platform (KPF); the SPD, in turn, was responding to the demands by Kohl's Christian Democrats that the SPD break all contact with the PDS for harboring "Communists." At the PDS conference a resolution was put forward saying that support for "Stalinist views" (defined as "vanguardist and centralist conceptions of socialism and the party") were just as incompatible with party membership as support for "nationalist, chauvinist, racist, anti-Semitic views." The KPF voted for this witchhunting motion. *Spartakist* noted:

"This equation of anti-Semitism and 'Stalinism' exactly 50 years after the Red Army (with Stalin as commander in chief) liberated Auschwitz, chimes in scandalously with the totalitarianism 'theory,' with which the German bourgeoisie trivializes the crimes of the Nazis."

In no way does this glorify Stalin—it cited a historical fact that powerfully undercuts the obscene campaign, then running full-blast, by the bourgeois and social-democratic (SPD and PDS) witchhunters to relativize Nazi genocide under the sign "Hitler = Stalin." Moreover, the same issue of *Spartakist* contained the text of Norden's speech at Humboldt University, which spoke of "Stalin's sabotage" of the Soviet Army, "his beheading of the general staff under Marshal Tukhachevsky, his criminal trust in his pact with Hitler Germany," despite warnings from the heroic Soviet spies Richard Sorge and Leopold Trepper, and said that "this illusion almost led to the victory of Nazi Germany over the Soviet Union." So the charge of glorifying Stalin, now embraced by the ICL leadership, is a fabrication.

This question is dealt with extensively in part 2 of Norden's document, "For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany" (3 July 1995), placing it in the context of the voluminous "anti-Stalinist" propaganda being churned out by the media of the Fourth Reich on the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz; and in a document by Bert Matthes, "On the Question of Stalinism, Anti-Semitism, PDS" (14 March 1995). We will be publishing these and other documents of the Germany fight that the ICL leadership would now like to forget.

Communist Platform: The *WV* 648 article on our expulsions claims that "Norden argued for a 'regroupment' perspective toward the Communist Platform." Nelson

claimed that Norden talked of winning a "big piece" of the KPF in a "non-Trotskyist regroupment with homeless Stalinists." In fact, in an 8 March 1995 letter to the SpAD, Norden wrote of the possibility of a "revolutionary regroupment" not with the Communist Platform, but by winning "a small layer, out of the KPF" through hammering away at "the fundamental question of Stalinism vs. Leninism/Trotskyism." The previous October, while insisting the main priority must remain youth work, he had raised to the German leadership a proposal for some limited work directed at the KPF. In a memo, "Observations on the Kommunistische Plattform of the PDS" (10 December 1994), Norden argued:

"I think the SpAD should be paying attention to the Kommunistische Plattform in the PDS. Not necessarily for prospects of recruitment directly out of its ranks (two-thirds of KommPlatt members are reportedly over 50)—although we could get some, especially if the party leadership tries a purge. Rather, there are likely to be potential recruits around it, and in any case, given the prominence of attacks on the Plattform in redbaiting the PDS, it will be a reference point for revolutionary-minded youth."

It should be noted that the KPF is not simply a homogeneous bunch of "geriatric remnants of the former East German Stalinist regime," as *WV* claims. The Communist Platform had perhaps a couple thousand members (it claimed 5,000), and at that time was drawing radical-minded youth around it precisely because it was the object of an anti-communist witchhunt. Its best-known spokesman was 25-year-old Sahra Wagenknecht, whose excuse when confronted with the KPF's line of selling out the DDR in 1989-90 was that she was still in secondary school at the time. KPF supporters were active in the PDS-linked youth group at Humboldt University where we had a fraction and contacts; and we had several active youth contacts around the KPF in Halle. The KommPlatt also had a layer of "thirty-something" leftist intellectuals from around the dissident "Les Lenin" (Read Lenin) group centered at Humboldt, formed in the late '80s, which had contact with Mandel's United Secretariat and whose members were reading Trotsky before the Wall fell.

Contrary to Nelson's arguments and the line of the *WV* article, this was a grouping that any serious Trotskyist tendency would seek to intersect and win people from, particularly at the height of an anti-communist witchhunt against them that had thrown the KPF into turmoil. In the course of its work, the SpAD published a sharp and rich polemic, "Communist Platform: Red Fig Leaf of the PDS" (*Spartakist* No. 116, January-February 1995) and made several very good interventions in state and national meetings of the KPF. Norden gave a speech at Humboldt University in January 1995 on the collapse of Stalinist rule in the DDR and East Europe, and a debate was held between Fred Petersen for the SpAD and former Platform leader Eberhard Czichon on the 50th anniversary of the Red Army's victory over the Nazi regime, centered on Stalinism vs. Trotskyism and the popular-front "anti-Hitler coalition." This all had considerable impact on the KPF and the PDS. Two powerful resignation statements

by Communist Platform cadres (Dorte and Michel) in solidarity with the SpAD and ICL were written, read to KPF meetings and circulated. Dorte, who was recruited to the party in the course of the KPF intervention, wrote last July:

“I want to defend our recent successful interventions into the PDS/KPF milieu, and I’m glad of having had a small part in this ORO-work. Also it was during these interventions that I learned a lot more about the nature of ex-Stalinists (even in the KPF there are hardly any hard Stalinists...). After all, our intervention in this milieu, beginning with the KPF conference and the PDS party congress, laid the basis for our broad mobilization for the Mumia campaign, and we won many supporters, also prominent ones, from the PDS. Our PDS/KPF work, Mumia campaign and youth recruitment—these things are firmly integrated into one another and cannot be taken apart.”

However, as part of the factional campaign against Norden, this excellent Trotskyist intervention has been declared deviant. We hold that, on the contrary, this was some of the best work the SpAD has done.

A Social-Democratic Bulge: The January IEC memorandum claims that Norden “stigmatized” a layer of older, mainly ex-TLD comrades and tried to drive them out of the party. False. Nelson elaborated on this to claim Norden was responsible for the removal of a number of ex-TLDers from the SpAD central committee. False again. Norden did say that there was “a social-democratic bulge in the organization that does not want to confront hardships engendered by counterrevolution.” This was a generalization of fights in the SpAD over a period of several years. And this was not some new invention by him but was codified at the 1992 SpAD conference (and reprinted in the ICL document—see Spartacist [English edition] Nos. 47-48, Winter 1992-93, p. 25). Referring to “the leadership’s abusive neglect of Halle,” the conference document said: “There is a social-democratic bulge in the organization that does not want to directly confront hardships engendered by counterrevolution which has destroyed the livelihood of millions.” A motion passed at that conference stated: “The struggle to build Halle up as a strong regional center” was “sabotaged by the outgoing CC.... This means not only passive resistance but an explicitly social-democratic adaptation in our party. It plays into the hands of the social democracy, which pursues the splitting of the working class.” The motion noted that “all former TLD members in the CC but Weiß, who was seen as a ‘troublemaking element’ in the CC, were taken out of the cadre list for reinforcing Halle.”

The WV 648 article accuses Norden of waging a “vicious witchhunt denouncing any comrades perceived as an obstacle to his orientation as a ‘comfortable social-democratic’ layer opposed to ‘youth recruitment!’” What Norden actually said, in a report to the I.S. of 11 April 1995, was:

“There’s a layer of older comrades in the party, mainly coming from the TLD, who have rather comfortable lives and don’t want to see that threatened by the activities of the organization. That was behind the attempt to liquidate the Halle local, because we initially could not get any of the West German comrades to move there to strengthen

a weak and endangered local.... There are real social pressures here, and I think this is part of the context in which the complaints about softness on Stalinism in the SpAD comes.”

In part II of his document, “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany,” Norden elaborated:

“To state that there is a layer of older, mainly ex-TLD comrades from among whom there has repeatedly been resistance to struggle—from the 1990 Bundestag election campaign to the 1991 Halle anti-fascist mobilization to the 1992 fight to save Halle to the 1993 underground opposition to the hostel defense and Menshevik mutiny in Hamburg* to the endless obstacles placed in the way of youth recruitment in 1994—is to describe a social reality in the party.”

In a conversation before the 20 July 1995 I.S. meeting, Nelson conceded that there was a similar layer in the Bay Area, but in the interests of his witchhunt thesis, he argued that to mention this in party discussion was to “stigmatize” those comrades. On the contrary, because there was a serious problem that was faced early on in Germany and openly fought, things improved in the SpAD in 1993-94 and a leadership began to consolidate that was not oriented to abstention. Youth recruitment began in earnest, and Spartakist-Jugend groups were formed in Berlin and Hamburg. The fact is that there was no stigmatizing of anyone in the SpAD for being older, ex-TLD comrades. The SpAD’s Political Bureau and the CC always consisted mostly of former Western comrades. Far from seeking to purge ex-TLDers, it was Norden who objected (in a 28 June 1993 letter to the SpAD CC) when several long-time TLDers were knocked off the Central Committee at the SpAD conference.

As for Nelson’s claim that Norden tried to drive these comrades out of the organization, this is another lie. In fact, he said the opposite. At the 11 April 1995 I.S. meeting, Norden cited Trotsky on how to deal with “vague, semi-centrist moods,” and concluded: “I think the way to deal with that is to have the discussion, deal with the points that have been raised, but also to integrate them into the work of the party.”

The Class, the Party and the Leadership: The whole indictment against the work in Germany and Norden’s role in leading it is a string of falsehoods made up out of the whole cloth. But the central charge contained in the IEC memo, and now elaborated in the WV article, is that, in the January 1995 speech at Humboldt University, “While invoking the program of Trotskyism, Norden presented a liquidationist view which denied the ICL’s role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard” (WV’s emphasis). This is the core of the characterization of Pabloism now being thrown against us. And what is the “proof” of this absurd characterization? That Norden said that in Germany in 1989-90 “the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership.” Nelson even claimed that Norden insisted that “we were not the

* In early 1993, the Hamburg leadership refused to bring comrades to Berlin for a scheduled national educational the week after the hostel defense on the question of the state and how to fight fascism, claiming this would upset local priorities.

revolutionary leadership, and according to him could not have been” (Nelson’s emphasis). This is all a cynical invention. Here is the passage in Norden’s document “A Reply on the German Question” (17 November 1995) that Nelson utterly distorted:

“But Nelson claims that by saying the revolutionary leadership was missing, I was somehow denying that we were ‘the proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary formation there at the time.’ This is false to the core, and so downright grotesque that it makes one’s jaw drop in disbelief. Just before the passage [in the Humboldt speech] Clemens disparages, is where I called for an ‘internationalist workers party’ as ‘the goal to which we Spartakists devoted ourselves then, as we do today.’ Some Pabloism! I was making the point that we were fighting to build the revolutionary leadership, but that time was too short to overcome the damage to proletarian consciousness that decades of Stalinism had wrought. We were not yet the leadership of the class, to which we aspired and for which we fought.”

In the Humboldt speech, Norden stated: “What was lacking was above all the genuinely communist leadership, which could have turned the real existing possibilities of a socialist development into reality.” A “liquidation” of the ICL’s role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard? Not at all. This passage referred to “the voices for socialist-minded opposition and reform” in the DDR at the time. It was in a section on “‘Critical’ Socialist Currents in the DDR” polemicizing against the Mandelites, the United Left, Markus Wolf, the WF Platform and Communist Platform of the PDS, pointing out that “all of these...are more or less explicit social-democratic” currents. Norden’s statement that “precisely the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership” was not Pabloism but the core of Trotskyism. This is the heart of the Transitional Program, which declares: “The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.” The claim that Norden conciliated Stalinism and liquidated the role of the ICL and the program of Trotskyism in Germany is a monstrous lie.

The ICL’s intervention in the DDR in 1989-90 was the focus of the Humboldt speech, which was titled, “Who Defended the DDR, Who Fought Against Capitalist Reunification: The Spartakists on the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe.” Norden stated at the outset that the purpose was to talk “about the struggle we of the ICL carried out then, first for a proletarian political revolution in the DDR, then, and really from the beginning, against the imperialist conquest and destruction of the workers state.” Conciliating Stalinism? Hardly. The entire last third of the speech was devoted to the question of Trotskyism vs. Stalinism in relation to counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc. This was not just abstract. Norden stressed that “practically the entire left, from the SED/PDS through its Communist Platform to smaller groups like the KPD, Die Nelken and the Vereinigte Linke in practice accepted reunification; at most they haggled over the price for selling out.” In particular, Norden said, the SED “handed over the DDR” and “made a present of the DDR to the class enemy.” And he went after the KPF for its line that it was “unrealistic to defend the existence” of the DDR, its

call for a coalition government with the SPD and talk of a “reunification process” with “new ecological, feminist and humanist qualities.” The SPD was the “Trojan horse of counterrevolution,” we Spartakists had said, and the KPF wanted to be the “tail on the Trojan horse.”

It is a grotesque distortion to claim that this speech “denied the ICL’s role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard” (WV 648). The ICL strained its resources to the hilt to fight for proletarian political revolution against the bankrupt Stalinist regime in the DDR and to oppose capitalist counterrevolution in 1989-90. In this it was unique among tendencies claiming to be socialist or communist. Far from belittling this intervention, in which he played a leading role and of which we are proud, as all ICL members should be, Norden highlighted this intervention. Moreover, as all ICL cadres know, in debates leading up to and at the ICL’s second international conference, he led a fight against proposed amendments to the conference document that exaggerated the mistakes made in that intervention. Norden did, indeed, mention in the Humboldt speech those self-criticisms the ICL had agreed upon and which are explained in the 1992 conference document (printed in Spartacist). This is hardly “conciliating Stalinism,” but rather following the rules of Trotsky’s Fourth International to “speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be.”

Because the ICL was present and fought to the best of its abilities in 1989-90, does that resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership? What about in France in December 1995—the ICL was present and active there as well. The revolutionary vanguard must become the revolutionary leadership of the class by defeating the present misleaders in struggle. You can’t simply proclaim this and be done with it. The Spartacist tendency has always fought against this methodology, for example at the 1966 London conference, opposing Gerry Healy’s insistence that his International Committee was the Fourth International, and stressing that the task was to reforge the FI by combating Pabloism, including in particular through revolutionary regroupment, a process of “splits and fusions.” But now to state this fundamental fact of the absence of a revolutionary leadership is labeled “liquidationism.” On the contrary, it is to state clearly the tasks of the Trotskyists.

At the January IEC meeting, comrade Robertson read some notes on this hotly debated question:

“Re: ‘Were we the political leadership in Germany?’ We shouldn’t pose the question in a metaphysical or theological manner but in the concrete. We weren’t the leadership in the DDR but we had the potential to become it. And we were clearly a factor: the SED saw the sales of our APK [Arbeiterpressekorrespondenz] among particularly the factory councils, the NVA and the Red Army soldiers and they saw Treptow, that is, they saw and even exaggerated the influence we had in the moves we were making and sensed that we were a counterweight to their own disintegration, which was a large factor in them going for a deal with the West.”

This is fully in accord with the Humboldt speech and everything Norden has written since. No doubt these remarks were intended to clean up the condemnation of Norden’s role in Germany. It was Robertson, after all,

who proposed removing Norden from full IEC membership. But it was a sign that the discussion had moved beyond rational Marxist discourse that even these sensible observations were simply brushed aside in the stampede to convict Norden of denying that the ICL was the revolutionary leadership in Germany in 1989-90.

Consider this: if it is Pabloism for Norden to say that the revolutionary leadership was missing in Germany in 1989-90, what are we to make of this statement by Leon Trotsky 50 years earlier summing up the defeat in Spain?

“...the insurrectionary proletariat was strong enough to have conquered power. Had it possessed a revolutionary leadership and not a treacherous leadership, it would have purged the state apparatus of all the Azañas, instituted the power of the soviets, given the land to the peasants, the mills and factories to the workers—and the Spanish revolution would have become socialist and unconquerable.

“But because there was no revolutionary party in Spain, and because there was a multitude of reactionaries imagining themselves as Socialists and Anarchists, they succeeded under the label of the Popular Front in strangling the socialist revolution and assuring Franco’s victory.”

—Leon Trotsky, “Once Again on the Causes of the Defeat in Spain” (March 1939)

There was a Trotskyist group in Spain, numbering as many as we had German speakers in Berlin in 1989-90. They had an impact during the Barcelona May Days workers uprising of 1937. Does this mean that when Trotsky wrote that there was no revolutionary party, no revolutionary leadership, he was denying that the Fourth International was the conscious revolutionary vanguard? Of course not! But that was Trotsky, and that was then. This is now, and the ICL has now adopted a different viewpoint.

As comrade Dorte stated in her 28 July 1995 document: “Because Norden in his speech at the Humboldt university said that the revolutionary leadership was missing during the political revolution in 1989, but that we were fighting to build one, he is now accused of false modesty and of not centering around the party. Well, Norden was answering to one of the most common lies spread around by the PDS/ComPlatt all the time: that it was useless to fight, because the workers didn’t want to fight, so the proletariat was guilty of the counterrevolution. This criminal accusation Norden answered by counterposing the Trotskyist position that the crisis of humanity is the crisis of communist leadership. Knocking the ex-Stalinists on their own failure of even defending their own bureaucratic regime is hitting them at one of their sore points.... “Repeatedly there was the accusation that Norden was apologizing (to the Stalinists) that we came out too late during the political revolution. However, I cannot see what is wrong about stating in a public forum a fact which can be read in our own official propaganda. Lenin said, ‘The one who is afraid of admitting an error, because this might be utilized by the opponent, is no communist.’”

Under the tremendous pressure to denounce Norden in the last several months, Dorte has since renounced the views she stated here.

This touches on another important aspect of the recent fights—both in Germany and Mexico, several leaders of the sections initially opposed the false attacks coming from leaders of the I.S. on the grounds that they were simply wrong. Comrade Jäger objected to letters from Nelson and Seymour, saying in a 19 May 1995 response

to the latter that Nelson’s “charge of a ‘Stalinist-style witchhunt’ was false, unfounded and destructive. Comrades like you and Al, with your immense authority in the organization, could do a little more research before firing off missives.” For this he was accused of “narrow-minded national parochialism,” opposition to Leninist internationalism and with a “logical implication” of a “break from democratic centralism.”

Sensing which way the wind was blowing, Max Schütz, who is wont to confess early and often, wrote a document (14 May 1995) saying “I can rightly be accused of being a force behind the witchhunt.” In July, Fred Petersen wrote letters to the I.S. and to comrade Robertson, criticizing the I.S. for supporting “the cliquist campaign of initially Clemens and Schütz, later joined by others, that there is going on a ‘witchhunt in the SpAD’ against them,” and for the destructive role the I.S. was playing in Germany. He refuted in detail, with quotations, the charges that Spartakist had glorified Stalin or that Norden had ignored the key question of consciousness or the ICL’s fight for political revolution in the DDR (the initial charges against his Humboldt speech, later dropped). Nelson (in his speech to the 20 July 1995 I.S. meeting) denounced Petersen’s letters as “an unmistakable threat of a break with the International.” Under a barrage of accusations of “anti-internationalism,” Jäger and Petersen repudiated their letters.

It should be pointed out that the recent 142-page ICL International Bulletin on “Norden’s ‘Group’” includes Petersen’s recantation statement but not his earlier documents, and also none of the several documents by SpAD members disagreeing with the “general line” being laid down. It is also worth noting that the method of intimidating leaders of national sections into disavowing their views by accusing them of anti-internationalism and of threatening to break with the international was repeated in Mexico. Over Brazil, Norden was accused of trying to engineer a split of LM with the ICL. The fact is, no such threats were ever made—not in Germany, not in Mexico, not over Brazil, not anywhere. But as a means of browbeating comrades whose deepest desire is to be internationalists into recanting, this proved to be a very effective device.

When we refused to bow before this onslaught and continued to refute the endless false allegations, we were charged with claiming “infallibility” and running a “100 percent regime.” This, too, is false. In his document, “A Reply on Germany” (17 November 1995), Norden stated that there were a couple of misformulations in the Humboldt speech, notably the statement that “a proletarian political revolution was necessary, which no one among the SED tops, nor in the critical currents among the cadres, could even conceive of at the time.” Nelson (and the WV 648 article) seized on this sloppy formulation to charge that Norden was looking to the Stalinist bureaucracy to lead the struggle. Yet the speech emphatically stated, “That nothing could be expected from the Stalinist SED leadership was clear from the outset.” What Nelson, Parks and other ICL leaders objected to in the Humboldt speech was that it didn’t simply denounce the

sellouts—though it did that as well, very strongly—but it also sought to give a Trotskyist explanation of what had happened in the destruction of the DDR. This was and remains an urgently necessary task, for there are significant numbers of would-be revolutionary youth in Germany who are deeply confused about Stalinism and the DDR.

The Humboldt speech was a good exposition of Trotskyism vs. Stalinism and the fight of the ICL against counterrevolution in the DDR and the rest of the Soviet bloc, which had a considerable impact on the quite varied audience. Likewise, the intervention directed at the Communist Platform effectively exposed the bankruptcy of the KPF and sought to win youth and cadre from this milieu. The WV hatchet job tries to make hay out of Norden's comment, in his December 1994 "Observations" on the Communist Platform, about KPF members' "grudging respect" for the SpAD, because they know well that the ICL stood for defense of the DDR, whereas they betrayed it. But if this is so deviant, what is one to make of the sentence in the 1992 ICL conference document that says of France in the 1980s: "Our principled stand earned us grudging respect at the time as the 'Soviet-defensist Trotskyists,' particularly among broader layers of Communist Party members and working-class militants who had never before encountered authentic Trotskyism"?

One significant error was made: a 2 April 1995 meeting of the SpAD central committee passed a motion declaring that the documents by two comrades who had argued that the article in Spartakist 117 glorified Stalin "ignore this overall context of our polemic against the PDS and Communist Platform, concentrate mainly on the crimes of Stalinism and thus express a capitulationist stance toward the witchhunt and the popular-frontist politics of our opponents." This was and is a politically accurate characterization. However, as comrade Robertson later pointed out, by voting on a definitive characterization prior to a conference, this had the effect of preempting the discussion process, and thus "violating the basic substrate of democratic-centralist functioning," as a motion adopted by the I.S. at its July 1995 meeting said. Norden stated, already before that meeting, that this had been an error, for which he shared the responsibility. But that is a long way from a "witchhunt"—and it is nothing compared to the months of demonization directed against us on the most cynical, trumped-up charges of "nearly destroying" one section after another, ultimately leading to our bureaucratic expulsion on yet another pretext. Moreover, we reaffirm that the charge (now formally adopted by the SpAD and the IEC) that the Spartakist article glorified Stalin represents a capitulation to the social-democratic anti-communist witch-hunt in the Fourth Reich.

And we would add: if the 2 April 1995 SpAD CC motion, coming after more than a month of discussion, with a number of documents written on both sides, was preemptive, what is one to say of the 14 April 1996 motions in Mexico, after barely a week of discussion, during which the focus shifted abruptly from Brazil to the GEM, with the most serious charges of supposed

"anti-internationalism" first raised in the meeting itself, thus constituting a one-day discussion; a discussion which ousted two comrades from the GEM leadership and ordered them to leave the country, with the former leader (Negrete) immediately placed on involuntary leave so that he couldn't talk to members who were unsure about the whole business? The April 1996 GEM motions, confirmed by the I.S. three days later, were a wholesale assault on Leninist democratic centralism.

...Leading to Revisionist Conclusions

In fact, over the course of the recent fights, whether for simple factional animus or reflecting a deeper shift in the party, the ICL has now not only revised its own Leninist organizational norms and parts of its recent history, it has begun to adopt revisionist positions at the formal programmatic level. Most significantly, in the Germany dispute, the ICL has rejected important aspects of Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism. Nelson, in his 16 January 1996 document on "Norden's Role in Germany," states: "What Norden can't seem to grasp (because his centrist impulses won't let him) was that the SED in 1989-90 was leading the counterrevolution" (Nelson's emphasis). Actually, it is basic Trotskyism and the real development of events that stand in the way of "grasping" this revisionist contraband. Nelson is here portraying the Stalinist bureaucracy as spearheading the destruction of the proletarian property forms on which it was an excrescence. In reality, this is the line that Stalinism is "counterrevolutionary through and through." The Spartacist tendency has always fought this kind of equation between the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and that of direct representatives of the capitalist class. It is false, and deeply anti-Trotskyist.

In the first place, it is not what happened. Did Gorbachev "lead the counterrevolution" in the Soviet Union? Or perhaps the Stalinist "conservatives" around Ligachev spearheaded the establishment of capitalist rule? No, as the ICL always insisted, it was led by the open counterrevolutionary forces grouped around Yeltsin. The ICL rightly raised the call: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin/Bush Counterrevolution!" Yeltsin represented a sector of the bureaucracy which had broken from its previous ties to the collectivized economy and made itself the direct instrument of the imperialists. In doing so, they ceased to be Stalinists. It is true that Gorbachev's perestroika "reforms" led to the shattering of the bureaucratically planned economy, and that Gorbachev, Ligachev and all the other sectors of the bureaucracy eventually embraced a program of "controlled" introduction of a capitalist "market economy" within a "Soviet" state. But they were overwhelmed as "the imperialist bourgeoisie grasped this long awaited opportunity to destroy the governing apparatus of the Soviet Union and install a pliant capitalist-restorationist regime in Moscow," as the document of the second international conference of the ICL put it. In that document you will read of the "collapse of the Soviet bureaucracy," of the "collapse of Stalinism," of the "Terminal Disintegration of the Stalinist bureaucracy," but never of the Stalinist bureaucracy leading the counterrevolution—because it didn't.

This was the same throughout East Europe. Did Jaruzelski and the Communist Party lead the counter-revolution in Poland, or was it Walesa and the open pro-capitalist forces of Solidarność? To ask the question is to answer it, at least for authentic Trotskyists. (There are, of course, a host of pseudo-Trotskyists who, in order to alibi their support to Solidarność, claim Jaruzelski led the counterrevolution, but the ICL has fought against that pro-imperialist line for more than a decade and a half.) The Stalinist bureaucracies, a parasitic intermediate layer, undercut the defense of the workers states by their treacherous policy of conciliating imperialism and politically suppressing the workers, and thus prepared the way for counterrevolution. In this way the Stalinists play a counterrevolutionary role, even more so in their international policies. But the actual overthrow of the bureaucratically deformed workers states and installation of capitalist rule was led not by the bureaucracies but by the direct agents of capitalism.

In Germany, it was not Gysi/Modrow and the SED-PDS who led the counterrevolution but Kohl and the other representatives of German imperialism. Because Germany was one nation, though divided on a class basis into two states, West German forces from the outside—both Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (SPD)—played a much greater role in spearheading capitalist counterrevolution through reunification than was the case elsewhere in East Europe. We said at the time that the SPD was the “Trojan horse of counterrevolution,” not the SED. The SED capitulated to and went along with capitalist reunification; the communiqué from the Moscow meeting of Gorbachev and Modrow in late January 1990 accepted the destruction of the DDR; and the Stalinists clamped down hard on the working class, dissolving the Betriebskampfgruppen (factory fighting groups) and NVA (National People’s Army) units that had established soldiers councils (in good part as a result of the Spartakist calls to form workers and soldiers councils). All that was said in the ICL conference document, and in Norden’s speech at Humboldt University. What was not said was that the SED “led the counterrevolution,” because that didn’t happen.

It is not just empirical. For the Stalinist bureaucracy to head up the counterrevolution would imply a different theoretical understanding of that contradictory and brittle social formation. The fact that the bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to defense of the workers state and its economy, from which it obtained its privileges, that large sectors of it would go over to the capitalists, was foreseen by Trotsky and corresponds to his analysis of this parasitic caste. But the line that the bureaucracy as a whole could lead the counterrevolution, without fracturing, would mean that the class nature of this social formation was different from that analyzed by Trotsky, who always emphasized the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Thus, he wrote in his essay “Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?” (November 1937):

“The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie.

The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle. The struggle is not concluded. In spite of all the efforts on the part of the Moscow clique to demonstrate its conservative reliability (the counterrevolutionary politics of Stalin in Spain!), world imperialism does not trust Stalin, does not spare him the most humiliating flicks and is ready at the first favorable opportunity to overthrow him.... For the bourgeoisie—fascist as well as democratic—isolated counterrevolutionary exploits of Stalin do not suffice; it needs a complete counterrevolution in the relations of property and the opening of the Russian market.”

Trotsky stated in the Transitional Program that “all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko).” But Nelson rejects this analysis today. In fact, right before he declares that the SED “was leading the counterrevolution,” he objects to Norden’s statement that:

“At the same time, it is our Trotskyist understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy that it is a contradictory caste, which will fracture and split under the impact of revolutionary class struggle, and one can anticipate the possibility [of] sections of it, the size of which cannot be predicted in advance, coming over to the workers side in a political revolution.”

Seymour, as well, argues that it is impossible today for a section of the bureaucracy to come over to the workers in a political revolution.

You will look in vain in ICL materials on Germany during 1989-90, or in the 1992 ICL international conference document for the claim that the SED “led the counterrevolution.” You will, however, find it in the publications of the Stalinophobic BT, who in 1989-90 were screaming at Spartakist meetings that DDR prime minister and SED leader Modrow was the main enemy. This was also the line of the Workers League of David North, who since the mid-1980s claimed that Gorbachev and the Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. In Latin America, it is the line of Jorge Altamira, from whose tendency the LM/LQB broke in 1994. Ultimately, this is a “Third Camp” line.

In line with Nelson’s anti-Trotskyist argument, the WV 648 article on our expulsion pretends that Norden’s description in the Humboldt speech of the SED tops as “paralyzed” contradicts them taking an active role to suppress workers action or being for capitalist restoration. Not at all. The Stalinist tops were paralyzed because they saw no way to maintain the deformed workers states they fed off of within the framework of “socialism in one country”; hence they went over to counterrevolution, seeking to bargain for the best terms for themselves—setting up dummy companies, refounding the Stalinist SED as the social-democratic PDS, and so on. Meanwhile they kept the lid firmly clamped on the working class. Trotsky wrote an essay which is relevant to this matter, under the title “‘Progressive Paralysis’: The Second International on the Eve of the New War” (July 1939). Commenting on an article by the Menshevik leader Dan, he noted that “this progressive paralysis [of the Social Democracy] started in August 1914 and has today entered its final stage.” The Second International was paralyzed and incapable of acting as a

coherent force in the face of imperialist war, as its key sections actively lined up with their “own” bourgeoisies.

In an analogous manner, the Stalinist bureaucracy was paralyzed in the face of the final counterrevolutionary onslaught and ultimately shattered, with some sections (Yeltsin) openly going over to the capitalist side and others being cast aside (Gorbachev) or rolled over by the imperialists. A perfect example of the paralysis and the counterrevolutionary role of the Stalinists was the behavior of the “State Emergency Committee” coup plotters in Moscow in August 1991: they did not attack Yeltsin’s headquarters, they were quick to assure the imperialists of their support for a capitalist “market economy,” and they firmly told the workers to keep out of the streets. This also was the analysis of the role of the SED in the 1992 ICL conference document, which stated:

“The East German deformed workers state, which had been established from the top down and from without, was swallowed by more powerful West German imperialism. Lacking any viable perspective, the bureaucracy simply collapsed.”

This was also a key part of comrade Robertson’s point about the East German Stalinist bureaucracy’s “disintegration, which was a large factor in them going for a deal with the West.”

Bureaucratic Purge to Consolidate the ICL’s New Leadership...

Earlier this year, Al Nelson remarked during the Germany fight that this was the first time that an internal struggle in the ICL had involved the core cadre of the tendency. This is certainly true. It is significant that of the recently expelled comrades, two have 24 years in the Spartacist tendency, a third has 23 years and a fourth 18 years in the organization. We are long-time Spartacist cadres who have devoted our political lives to building the International Communist League as the political continuity of Trotsky’s Fourth International. And we continue that struggle for authentic Trotskyism, despite the bureaucratic purge that removed us from the ICL’s ranks and against the centrist political course on which the leadership has embarked. Contrary to the title of the recent 142-page ICL internal/public document against us, we are not “defectors” from but defenders of Trotskyism against a misleadership whose policies have shown a growing tendency toward abstention from the struggles of the working class, which means emptying the role of the party as an active force in fighting for leadership of those struggles. What this leads to was shown most dramatically by the ICL’s shameful desertion from a key class battle being waged in Brazil.

The WV 648 article tries to draw a parallel between us and the Rad/Hayes faction, which arose in the Canadian section of the ICL in 1994, as examples of “liquidationism” and a “Stalinoid bent.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Y. Rad renounced Trotskyism by calling for political support to Nelson Mandela’s now bourgeois-nationalist ANC in the South African elections and for military support to Russian troops in the

UN/imperialist intervention in Yugoslavia. He was a political adventurer, who shortly after leaving the ICL simply discarded all the positions he had stood for and put on a whole new set of political clothes. Moreover, we played a leading role in the fight against Rad’s genuinely Stalinophilic politics. Stamberg wrote a document on “South African Elections—Reply to Leninist-Trotskyist Faction” (25 April 1994). Negrete wrote a document on Rad’s embrace of bourgeois nationalism, “Permanent Revolution vs. Capitulation to Nationalism” (2 May 1994). Norden wrote three major documents in the fight—“The Politics of Ex-Stalinist Despair” (11 May 1994), “For a Bolshevik Workers Party in South Africa” (1 June 1994), and “Straw Men and Red-Brown Herrings” (14 June 1994)—and led the debate against Rad for the party majority at the June 1994 conference. Of course, there is not a mention of all this in the WV article, for that would undercut its lying amalgam between Rad/Hayes and “Norden’s group.”

Also contrasting to what happened with the Rad/Hayes faction, in order to accomplish its bureaucratic purge of internal opposition to the I.S.’ turn to the right, the ICL leadership has repeatedly resorted to lies, staged frame-up trials, introduced new anti-democratic practices and openly violated the statutes of the Spartacist League/U.S. Thus, Norden was removed from full membership in the IEC for opposing the IEC majority’s phony claim of a “Stalinophilic” deviation in Germany; condemned for “permanent factionalism” for writing a document pointing out that the SpAD had no perspectives for external work; removed from the International Secretariat and the Political Bureau of the SL/U.S. and sacked as editor of WV for the “crime” of objecting to passages in an unsent draft letter to the Brazilian LQB on which his views had been solicited! Negrete and Socorro were ousted from the Mexican leadership, and Negrete removed from the IEC for opposing the lie that they had led an “anti-internationalist” regime in the GEM. When we wrote documents contesting the charges against us over Mexico and Brazil, including supposedly “blocking” and “blunting” fights with the LQB/LM—in fact, we had started the discussions with them on the key points in dispute, and wrote some of the major letters and statements by the I.S.—measures were passed to drastically limit the number of pages written by us that would be circulated. “No, we’re not going to circulate your documents,” announced I.S. secretary Parks, making matters perfectly clear.

There was a concerted effort to drive us out of the party, and when pressure didn’t work, more energetic measures were resorted to. Less than 24 hours after the vote to remove Norden from all positions of leadership (claiming he was not fit to be a member of the party), even before polls of the IEC and SL/U.S. CC were completed, a hefty repo squad showed up at our door at 11:22 p.m., giving us “two minutes” notice to turn over keys to party offices, a fax machine and a computer purchased by the party, using as a pretext that Norden copied some materials about the fight, including the motions which were faxed around the world but never given to us.

Twelve hours later, our phone bills were demanded, and when we refused to aid this blatant fishing expedition, aimed at seeing what comrades we had spoken with, we were suspended and our expulsion demanded. The catalogue of charges of our supposed “indiscipline” concocted against us was totally trumped up, beginning with the lying claim that we denied the party’s monopoly over the members’ public political activity. As we wrote in our “Reply to a Frame-Up ‘Trial’” (7 June):

“These charges are false: neither of us has ever asserted any such thing, and all of our public political activity in 24 years in the party has been in accordance with Leninist democratic centralism. Starting with its initial false premise, the I.S. proceeds to spin out an entire fantasy of groundless assumptions, wild conjectures and filthy smears, culminating in the outrageous slander that ‘the consequences of Norden’s and Stamberg’s indiscipline’—which does not exist—‘could be extremely injurious to the party’s work and its comrades,’ and on that basis of speculation based on supposition based on lies, it calls for our expulsion from the ICL. This is a frame-up.”

In our “Reply,” we detailed some of the previously unheard-of (in the SL) measures used against us, summarizing:

“So following the ‘innovations’ of (a) removing comrades from the IEC for political grounds, and (b) deliberately restricting the circulation of documents from comrades declared by the I.S. to be a ‘group,’ we now have the additional changes to Spartacist norms contained in the charges against us, namely (c) communications between individual members are not protected by confidentiality, and (d) the introduction of ‘committee discipline’ incumbent on the I.S., even concerning communications with a member of the IEC, which is a higher body of the international.”

For public consumption, the I.S. has tried to clean up some of its more outrageous violations of Leninist organizational norms. Thus the official PB statement of our expulsion pretends “comrades...have the right to discuss their views with any member of the party.” Yet the “Call for a Trial” specifically charged that Norden, a member of the I.S., had been “caught in an act of indiscipline” for having spoken with Negrete, a member of the IEC, while an I.S. delegation was in Mexico, ostensibly to discuss differences over Brazil but actually to purge Negrete and Socorro from the GEM leadership. This bogus “indiscipline” was used as the pretext to demand we turn over our phone bills, and then as the basis for speculating that our refusal “can only be reasonably understood as a ploy to shield them from exposure of other acts of freelancing and political activity outside and perhaps against the direction of the I.S....” Yet despite the I.S.’ “hefty suspicions,” we engaged in no political activity with outside forces, and the charge of a possible “outside source of political funding” is pure slander.

A notable aspect of the recent fights and sharp turn to the right by the ICL has been its systematic use of distortion and outright lies, in flagrant contradiction to the proud tradition of the Spartacist tendency. On Brazil, the I.S. under Parks made unsubstantiated claims that the LQB/LM had engaged in “unity negotiations” with the centrist Brazilian LBI and had supposedly formed a bloc with Causa Operária in the union, despite the fact that these two groups were up to their centrist

necks in the dirty provocations aimed at destroying the LQB. Parks also uncritically repeated the slander by a police-connected provocateur that an LQB leader had asked for, indeed fought for, a salary as paid adviser to the Municipal Workers Union at ten times the minimum wage. (This was not only slanderous but absurd, as it would have come to more than a quarter of the union’s monthly income!) When we objected to the multiple inaccuracies and unsupported outrageous claims, Parks flew into a rage and proceeded to purge first Negrete and Socorro from Mexico and then Norden from the I.S. In both cases, invented charges were tossed around with abandon, and when one didn’t fly it was simply replaced by a new one. This mud-slinging is an all-too familiar witchhunting technique, based on the assumption that eventually something will stick or the targets will tire of scraping off the slime.

The method of spewing out a barrage of false charges with no regard for the facts was repeatedly used in the Germany fight (for example, claiming that there was a “witchhunt” against “perceived opponents” of an opportunist adaptation to the Communist Platform of the PDS, when in fact there was no adaptation, no opposition and no witchhunt), and again in the lightning strike to remove the leadership of the Mexican section, claiming Negrete was a “sexist bully,” conciliated the LQB and isolated the section from international discussion. A letter by Socorro to Nelson of 30 April refutes these charges in detail. The I.S.’ response was not to answer her arguments but to bring her up on trumped-up disciplinary charges over May Day. Stamberg exposed this methodology in a document (8 May) complaining of blatant disregard for truth by the head of the I.S. delegation to Mexico, Kidder. The latter had charged that Socorro and Negrete were violating the terms of his enforced “leave” by secretly setting up a meeting with two young members; when this was revealed to be false, she simply reasserted her conclusion of secret factionalism without a shred of evidence, saying this was a war. It is a norm of bourgeois historiography that “the first casualty of war is the truth,” and Kidder, Parks and the rest of the “new I.S.” seem to believe their ends justify those means. But such contempt for truth grievously undermines the integrity of a revolutionary party. In response to Stamberg’s demonstration that there had been a conscious disregard for facts, a motion was passed by the I.S. denouncing her document as “despicable and dimwitted” as well as “slanderous.” That is the method in a nutshell: lies covered by vituperation.

This is only one of many examples that could be cited from the recent fights. On such “evidence,” leading comrades were removed from one post after another for their political views; motions were passed in order to stop the official circulation of their documents; party trials were called on phony charges, and we were quickly expelled. What is behind this outbreak of heavy-handed and increasingly bureaucratic measures is in good part a transition in leadership in the Spartacist League and International Communist League. In the last several years, Jim Robertson has gone into semi-retirement, and a new generation of leadership has taken the helm, led

by Parks, first as national secretary of the SL/U.S. and then as head of the International Secretariat of the ICL. This transition has been marked by the increasing weight in the ICL leadership of elements lacking any experience whatsoever in the class struggle, with insecure footing in Marxism (inversely proportional to their arrogance), and whose terms of reference are heavily shaped by the stultifying Reagan and post-Reagan years in North America.

Comrade Robertson has often repeated the axiom that no revolutionary party outlives its founding leadership. This was certainly true of Lenin's Bolsheviks and James P. Cannon's SWP, where the political degeneration coincided with the withdrawal of the principal leaders due to illness or age. Cannon himself, while not actively leading the fight against the Revolutionary Tendency in the SWP, did condone it, and Robertson has unfortunately played a similar role in the fight against us. Early on in the Germany discussion, Jim Robertson wrote (15 May 1995) that the first part of Norden's document, "For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany" read very plausibly and "corresponds to what I do know.... to me the story of the TLD and more particularly of its successor the SpAD had been one of endless flip-flops, i.e., shallow impressionism." Previously, in the Italy fight during 1994, he had said that he wanted to be associated with Norden's document, which Parks hated (because it didn't come out against calling for general strikes). As recently as mid-October 1995, Robertson said in a phone call with Norden that "I can't see you as an opportunist." A couple of weeks later, he objected to a proposal by Parks to exclude Norden from the delegation to the German conference (see below). But with Nelson and Parks firmly determined to smash Norden, comrade Robertson eventually joined the onslaught, evidently seeing this as necessary for the consolidation of the new leadership.

We were clearly seen as a big obstacle by this new regime led by Parks. We are accused of waging a "regime fight," whereas the reality is that for several years a fight has been steadily waged against what was termed the "WV collective" and which was portrayed as an alternative leadership. Thus the WV 648 article is full of charges of "a parallel apparatus centered on Workers Vanguard, to that of the central party administration." In Robertson's notes on "Some Major Considerations that the New I.S. Confronts" (9 February 1996), printed in the ICL bulletin on "Norden's Group," he writes: "It appears to me that the ICL leadership now passes from the American Political Bureau to the I.S., if you look at the composition and the dynamics. Comrade Foster wryly notes that the actual shift in leadership was from the editorial board of Workers Vanguard to the I.S. with a brief stop at the American PB along the way." But as Norden's countermotion to the 28 May PB motion removing him as editor stated:

"The removal of Norden from the Political Bureau and as WV editor is punitive, as was his removal from full membership in the IEC and now his removal from the International Secretariat for his political views. With Norden as editor, Workers Vanguard has expressed the line of the Political Bureau and Central Committee of the Spartacist League/U.S. and of the leading bodies of the international."

This motion, of course, is not printed in the ICL bulletin.

The new leadership of the ICL has had a recurring tendency to bureaucratism even before the final act of the recent fights. In November 1995, Parks mooted a proposal to exclude Norden from the international delegation to the upcoming German conference—even though, or rather because he was by then the main target of the attack—on the grounds that he didn't have the majority position. Parks' "thought" was discussed informally in the I.S., but not mentioned to Norden, nor was a note shown to him which came in during the 2 November 1995 I.S. meeting with a message from comrade Robertson that this was "wrong and sets a dangerous precedent.... To exclude Norden or to have him go in but not be part of the delegation would be most similar to Zinoviev-ization of the Comintern where higher bodies are put under discipline in lower bodies and could only present a common face." In a 5 November 1995 letter to Parks, Robertson elaborated on how Parks' tentative proposal smacked of Zinoviev's "Bolshevization" of the CI, and admonished her to look into this "so that we don't go on to laboriously attempt to reinvent Stalinism" (our emphasis).

The reference to the early stages of the bureaucratization of the Comintern is stunningly appropriate. Another salient aspect of the "Zinovievization" of the Comintern was the removal of leaderships of any national sections who appealed to Moscow for restraint towards the 1923 Opposition of the 46. As Isaac Deutscher notes, "Others allowed themselves to be browbeaten and apologized for their faux pas" (The Prophet Unarmed, Chapter 2, p. 146). This was already seen in the Germany fight in the ICL, where several leading comrades were intimidated into renouncing their documents or face charges of splitting. Then the same thing occurred in Mexico. When Negrete was accused of "sexist bullying" and "browbeating" Cirrus [Camila] into raising what were supposedly his positions in a letter she wrote to the I.S. correcting some misstatements by Parks on Brazil, comrades Humberto and Arturo wrote documents objecting to the charges. Humberto actually proved that the charges were false by stating what he witnessed of the discussion in question, in which Cirrus [Camila] was the first to raise questions about Parks' statements about the LQB (see their letters of 6, 7 and 8 April 1996). Again, they were attacked as anti-internationalists, and they capitulated, with Arturo quickly becoming a rabid witchhunter.

How was this accomplished? In the opening statement for the I.S. delegation to the April 14 GEM meeting, Kidder began by reeling off a list of the names and ranks of eight full or alternate members of the IEC who had written documents on the fight, then saying: "You don't have to take anybody's word for it in our organization, leadership or not. Yet comrade Negrete would have you believe that these comrades who together represent about 150 to 200 years in our international tendency have it all wrong, don't really know the facts, are simply engaging in gratuitous insults against him. What kind of organization is Negrete saying that you have joined, comrades?" Beginning with a naked argument by authority, Kidder proceeded to pose the question as a

loyalty oath. Even then, several of the youth abstained in the final vote, unable to swallow the charge of nationalism about the leadership of a section of the ICL that had recruited them to proletarian internationalism.

In the aftermath of the April 14 vote ousting Negrete and Socorro from the GEM leadership there was a rapid escalation of bureaucratic administrative measures accompanied by disgusting personal insults and vilification. Negrete was immediately placed on leave against his will. When Negrete wrote the I.S. saying he and Socorro wanted to ameliorate relations in the Mexican section, which had become “terribly poisoned,” Parks in her inimitable style fired off a response: “You really don’t get it, do you.... For the third time, let me make it very simple for you: **LEAVE TOWN!**” Comrade Socorro, a chicana former farm worker, was reviled as “dim” and having her head in a “sewer”! Then she was accused of violating discipline for allegedly losing contact with her team at the huge Mexico May Day march and having her companion Negrete carry her camera bag. When Socorro objected that the reported facts are all wrong, she was put on trial. When Socorro and Negrete objected that this was unfair, since essentially the same body was having the “trial” as brought the charges, the proceedings were moved to New York (without a prior vote by the I.S.). Negrete’s demand to be put on trial on the same charges was dismissed. When the I.S. got around to voting on the change in venue, a motion by Norden to instead have a commission of inquiry was voted down.

Socorro was given four days and one-hour notice of the trial date, contrary to the statutes of the SL/U.S., which require seven day’s notice. The trial took place two days after they arrived in New York, with a heated nine-hour I.S. meeting on the intervening day which focused on Brazil and Mexico. A request to postpone the trial for documented medical concerns was denied. Also denied were all requests for delays—even for one hour—to consult the depositions. The trial body never asked key questions of the two members of the GEM exec present as witnesses which would have confirmed Socorro’s account that she in fact met members of her team, that she followed instructions on how to proceed and that Negrete’s presence was sanctioned. Witnesses were crudely led through their testimony. One question was restated to make it clear that it came from the prosecution not the defense, whereupon the witness changed her answer. To get around the fact that two of the witnesses admitted that Socorro was not told the team was leaving, a supposed “signal” that she allegedly ignored was simply invented. Even then, they couldn’t get a straight story from the comrade who supposedly gave the “signal.”

In the trial decision, Negrete is repeatedly referred to as Socorro’s “burro” and “pack horse.” (In the WV article he has gone from animal to inanimate, being compared to “a piece of lint on a pair of serge pants,” as well as being accused of being an egomaniac and so forth). After the harrowing experience of the frame-up trial, at a New York local meeting two days later that was filled with howling choruses of “get out,” Socorro

was driven into a rage and made an impermissible statement, for which she was expelled from the SL. The PB decision expelling her is reproduced in the 142-page ICL bulletin; her letter the next morning retracting her statement is not. But in the WV account, Socorro is not even mentioned: not a word about her ouster from the GEM exec, nothing about her trial or expulsion—she has been turned into a non-person. Thus they avoid discussing the shameful “trial” of this comrade.

This gives a measure of the methods of the “new I.S.” The situation in the ICL today recalls in some respects the early period of the bureaucratization of the Communist International. Obviously, the proportions are vastly different; in the Soviet case the party held state power, had hundreds of thousands of members and had made a revolution. But the techniques are uncannily similar. In an early 1924 article, “Down with Factionalism,” Nikolai Bukharin raised a hue and cry because oppositional comrades had stated, “The center wants to intimidate the party with [talk of] a split.” Bukharin also said the opposition appeals to the youth in order to “go after the ‘old cadres.’” Shades of the recent fight in Germany, where we were accused of trying to drive out a layer of older TLD cadres in favor of youth recruitment. Trotsky was referred to as a “superman standing above the CC”—read, “caudillo,” advocate of “one-man rule,” etc. Stalin said (at the 13th Conference of the RCP[b], January 1924) that “It is not a question of the regime here,” and took Trotsky to task for denying that there was an opposition “faction” but admitting there were “groups.” Such charges were “laboriously reinvented” in the recent ICL fight.

Ah, but when we charge you with going “underground,” the I.S. will say, we were only seeking to bring it above ground. Except that when Norden talks with Negrete, both of them members of the IEC, this is declared a violation of discipline. Then a motion is passed saying if there were declared factions, then there could be a proportional circulation of documents (i.e., the number from the opposition would be drastically cut down); but since there are no factions and only a “group,” the I.S. will decide, and the I.S. secretary says “we’re not going to circulate your documents.” And when Norden hands in solicited comments to the I.S., objecting to statements in a draft unsent letter, he is removed from the I.S., PB and WV editorship, and we are shortly expelled. To explain this all to the radical public, the ICL issues a 142-page bulletin which complains in its introduction that Norden and Stamberg had submitted “392 pages” of documents for internal party discussion (pretty good for going underground!), but prints none of them except for our final protest against the frame-up purge “trial.” This is quite a shift: a party that used to pride itself on publishing the attacks on it by external opponents (the Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League series) now purports to document an internal fight giving only the official story. Any reader of the ICL bulletin must ask, what is the other side?

And then the entire international is called upon to take a position—as is the LQB in Brazil, even though they were given almost none of the documents. Complaining of Menshevism in the Bay Area, where there

was considerable unrest over the Socorro trial, Nelson writes that anyone who does not agree “100 percent” with the expulsion of Socorro should be out of the organization. This is a “100 percent regime” of a new type indeed. As Trotsky wrote in *The Third International After Lenin* (1928) of Zinoviev’s “Bolshevization” campaign during 1924-25:

“A revolver was held at the temples of the leading organs of the communist parties with the demand that they adopt immediately a final position on the internal disputes in the C.P.S.U. without any information and discussion; and besides they were aware in advance that on the position they took depended whether or not they could remain in the Comintern.... Of course, the work of purging was also necessary after 1924 and alien elements were quite correctly removed from many sections. But taken as a whole, the ‘Bolshevization’ consisted in this; that with the wedge of the Russian disputes, driven from above with the hammer blows of the state apparatus, the leaderships being formed at the moment in the communist parties of the West were disorganized over and over again. All this went on under the banner of struggle against factionalism....

“But to employ the split as a preventive measure against differences of opinion and to lop off every group and grouping that raises a voice of criticism, is to transform the internal life of the party into a chain of organizational abortions. Such methods do not promote the continuation and development of the species but only exhaust the maternal organism, that is, the party.”

Such bureaucratization is not peculiar to Stalinist organizations. German social democracy, in a different social context, was quite heavy-handed and bureaucratic toward internal opposition, particularly on the left, even before it went over openly to the side of the bourgeoisie by voting war credits in August 1914—witness the treatment of Rosa Luxemburg, or the systematic purge of left-wingers from editorial boards in 1910-12. To repeat, the ICL is neither the massive apparatus of the German SPD nor a party with the power of vast state resources behind it, as with the Stalinists. But it is not immune from the kind of social pressures that produce bureaucratic degeneration. The ICL has itself recognized this in the past. The document of the 1992 second international conference stated:

“Thus far, the American section has weathered the Reagan/Bush years rather well. But as comrade Robertson recently pointed out, there are three ways we can wreck ourselves unless we make a conscious effort otherwise. We could degenerate into: (1) Menshevism, (2) Stalinism (i.e., become some sort of bureaucratic organization) or (3) De Leonism (i.e., drift into abstract propagandism, concomitantly withdrawing from struggle.”

These categories are not mutually exclusive, and indeed the course that has been undertaken by the ICL today has aspects of all three tendencies.

Turn Toward “Passive Radicalism”: De Leon and Kautsky

The escalation of bureaucratic measures never before practiced in the Spartacist tendency, the unprecedented purge of long-time cadres of the International Communist League for their political views, the dissolving of fraternal relations with the Brazilian LQB and the ICL’s shameful flight from a major class battle underway in

Volta Redonda are all part of a sharp turn in the party. As James P. Cannon stressed against the petty-bourgeois Shachtman-Burnham opposition in the SWP, organizational questions in the Marxist movement are not “independent” of but directly reflect the political program:

“What is the significance of the organization question as such in a political party? Does it have an independent significance of its own on the same plane with political differences, or even standing above them? Very rarely. And then only transiently, for the political line breaks through and dominates the organization question every time.”

—*The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (1940)

Cannon emphasized, “Thus it is clear that the question stands not organizationally in the first place, but politically. The political line is and must be the determining factor. It is and must be placed in the center of the discussion.” So what is the political line behind the sudden appearance of bureaucratic practices in the ICL?

A short answer is that there has been an increasingly pronounced tendency toward abstract or passive propagandism, which divorces the party propaganda from active intervention in the class struggle. In the communist movement this tendency is known as De Leonism, after Daniel De Leon, one of the early American Marxists, who opposed fighting for any kind of “immediate demands,” arguing that this watered down the revolutionary program, and instead confined himself to abstract propaganda for socialism. This policy is justified with the argument that since this is a reactionary period, little can be achieved; that perceived opportunities for intervention are illusory, and thus only a reflection of opportunism; and that the job of revolutionary Marxists is defined as (limited to) keeping the flame alive against attempts to squelch it.

The fight against revisionism must be a constant and central focus of communists, particularly in reactionary periods when the ideological pressures of the bourgeoisie mount. Part of that fight is to guard against tendencies toward abstention from class struggle, which are ultimately social-democratic and Kautskyan. The German SPD theoretician Karl Kautsky, even before Lenin, insisted that socialist consciousness must be brought to the workers from the outside by the socialist party. However, Kautsky’s conception of the party was very different from Lenin’s. Not only did he conceive of a “party of the whole class,” rather than a Leninist vanguard party of professional revolutionaries, in the period leading up to World War I Kautsky developed the policy of what he called “passive radicalism,” i.e., that the job of the party was to concentrate on educating and to “wait for the appropriate opportunity” (from “The New Tactic” [1912]). This policy was a key component of Kautsky’s centrism, allowing him to maintain a veneer of Marxist orthodoxy while cohabiting with the increasingly reformist trade-union and SPD party bureaucracy.

The present period grows out of the world-historic defeat for the proletariat represented by the triumph of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states. Yet despite and as a result of this defeat, there have been numerous sharp outbreaks of social and class struggle, from Brazil,

South Africa and Mexico to the upsurge of workers' struggles in Italy (autumn 1992 and autumn 1994) and the December 1995 strike wave in France. These struggles have been set off by the bourgeoisie's drive to gut the trade unions and dismantle social programs instituted to counter the "communist threat," and by the drive to form trade blocs in this period of heightened inter-imperialist rivalry. They provide important openings for intervention by revolutionary Trotskyists, to combat the manifestly bankrupt programs of Stalinism and social democracy, and to show the road to take these initially defensive struggles in the direction of a fight for power, through a transitional program. But there has been a tendency in the ICL to draw defeatist conclusions from defeats—to conclude, as WV 648 puts it, that the present post-Soviet period is one in which the forces of the "small revolutionary vanguard" are in a "conjuncturally fragile situation" and their "necessary relationship to the proletariat" is one of distance. What this boils down to is waiting for an appropriate moment, i.e., "a better period."

To be clear, this is only a tendency, and is uneven across the ICL. In a country where it knows its way around the political terrain and the dangers are less pronounced, the Spartacist League/U.S. is prepared to initiate the recent admirable action that trounced KKK racist terrorists in Chicago. This is in line with the SL's correct policy of seeking through labor/black mobilizations to interdict the hooded Klan fascists from staging their provocations in the major cities. Yet the increasing tendency of the ICL leadership is to "pull our hands out of that boiling water" of the class struggle, particularly where it feels out of its depth politically. This is a tendency toward what Kautsky called "passive radicalism," toward the construction not of "fighting propaganda groups" but of passive propaganda groups, whose activity consists of commentary to the exclusion of ongoing active intervention in the class struggle. In order to cut short a developing fight over this abstentionist policy, the I.S. resorted to bureaucratic measures never before practiced in the Spartacist tendency. And the results are seen in Volta Redonda, as the ICL deserted from a class battle.

Facing attacks and provocations by the bourgeois state and its agents, the I.S. was seized by panic. The I.S. secretary wrote that the ICL should never "set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again." (As it turns out, while sending ICL representatives to Brazil was ruled out for purposes of defense of the Brazilian fraternal comrades, ICL representatives were dispatched to Brazil for factional aims, to demand that the LQB line up against us.) The I.S. declared (in a motion of 5 June), on the basis of no evidence, that "The state appears ready to use the pretext of a 'foreign red threat' to weaken an entire sector of the labor movement and through this to destroy the present and future perspectives for a revolutionary vanguard in Brazil." In the last discussion with the LQB before breaking relations, one of the ICL representatives summed up: "The reality is that right now the police are using all their power to smash you and the municipal workers union," and while the present situation may be demoralizing for

the ranks of the municipal workers, "it would be even more demoralizing for them to see one of their leaders dead in the street. That is the point. The point has to do directly with the power of the bourgeois state."

Some may recall the fate of the French OCI and its youth group, the FER, during the events of May-June 1968. While the context is different, it's hard not to be struck by the parallel of leftist verbiage to cover a rightist course. A popular history describes what happened when the Lambertiste youth marched up on the key "Night of the Barricades" (May 10-11, before the bulk of the working class entered the struggle):

"...at the sight of the barricades, their leader was seized by doctrinal doubts: This was clearly going to be murder. It was an 'adventurist' enterprise, in which the FER would have no part. Their squad marched off the field to the derisive hoots of the embattled students. FER's defection at the hour of combat will long be remembered."

—Patrick Seale and Maureen McConville, Red Flag/Black Flag: French Revolution 1968 (1968)

And indeed it was. The Lambertistes never lived it down, despite the "orthodox Trotskyism" they brandished like a protective talisman. While they continued to maintain a "revolutionary" veneer over the next few years, this episode showed what their real politics were in practice.

The corollary of the ICL leadership's panicked response, and the broader tendency to passive propagandism, is the accusation against us of "vicarious political adventurism." So now, after all the epithets thrown at us over the last year (Stalinophilic, Castroite, Healyite, ultra-Shachtmanite, BT-like, like Hansen, like Cochran/Clarke, like Goldman/Morrow, and don't forget dupes of Saddam Hussein's war propaganda), the I.S. has settled on "Pabloists of the Second Mobilization." Of course, they have the small problem that Norden authored the Prometheus Research Series No. 4 bulletin on Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism.

The hard core of the accusation against us is adventurism. For doing what, exactly? Obviously in the first instance for fighting to continue fraternal relations with the LQB/LM and to pursue the fight to remove cops from the V.R. union. "Adventurism" for saying that it's wrong to say "we" should "never set foot" in Volta Redonda again, for saying that it might be necessary to send an ICL representative to Brazil to defend the LQB/LM against the mounting witchhunt. Grotesquely, Parks wrote in the ICL discussion: "With Norden in command it is likely that...LM would be destroyed, the union would be busted, and the ICL would have the reputation as international hitmen." Norden responded: "What's next—will I be named 'fingerman for the international bourgeoisie'?" Parks' charges are pure slander. As the comrades know, Norden was in charge of the iSt/ICL's Latin American work for over two decades. In "A Reply to Parks" (28 May), he asked: "Where is the slightest scintilla of evidence to back up Parks' dire fantasies? It doesn't exist."

Taking its fantasies for reality, the I.S. expels internal critics from the highest level of the ICL leadership, cuts its ties to the LQB and flees from the struggle. Its

reputation will not be of “international hitmen” but of panicked deserters, who abandoned a fight after encouraging it. Interestingly, a description that Cannon wrote of the petty-bourgeois Shachtman-Burnham opposition in the SWP applies to the ICL leadership today:

“The driving impulses behind the opposition as a whole are petty-bourgeois nervousness at the prospect of impending struggles, difficulties and sacrifices, and the unconscious desire to avoid them at all costs.”

—from James P. Cannon,

The Struggle for a Proletarian Party (1940)

This description certainly applies to the leadership of the “new I.S.” today. In that same fundamental text, Cannon takes aim at the tendency of “isolated groups to console themselves with the monotonous repetition of adherence to great principles without seeking ways and means and new opportunities to apply them.”

This rightist tendency toward abstract propagandism is not simply, or even particularly, the expression of a literary conception of politics. Real social pressures, to which the SL is not immune, are at work here as well. An outlook and orientation geared to the labor aristocracy is increasingly in evidence, in tandem with the weight of this sector (and the disproportionate number in white-collar jobs) in the wake of the decimation of the SL trade-union fractions in the late-1970s layoffs. That this requires serious analysis is indicated, for example, by the fact that despite our interventions in one PB meeting after another to get effective party intervention in Los Angeles—where low-paid immigrant workers have spearheaded some of the most dynamic labor struggles of recent years and the upsurge against the racist acquittal in the Rodney King case rocked the triumphalism of the U.S.-dominated “New World Order”—the branch is just as stagnant as ever.

The I.S.’ desertion from the fight to oust the cops from the union in Brazil represents a major departure from Marxism toward centrism, a policy of mouthing revolutionary phrases while flagrantly contradicting them in practice (see Trotsky’s essay, “Centrism and the Fourth International,” *Spartacist* No. 9, January-February 1967). But this is not the first time such tendencies have appeared in the ICL. As the reporter for the I.S. at the second international conference, Brosius, put it, the Australian section has been the “bellwether of social-democratic deviations in the ICL.” At the beginning of the 1980s, it flinched badly on the Russian question, beginning with dropping the slogan “Defense of Cuba, USSR Begins in El Salvador.” Over the years, the SL/A has had a series of sectarian responses, most recently in failing to demand a halt to French nuclear testing in the Pacific, out of a knee-jerk reaction to the disgusting Australian nationalism of the anti-nuke protesters. Moreover, until a recent fight, the SL/A didn’t call for independence for East Timor, the beleaguered island under the jackboot of the Indonesian military for over two decades.

The most stunning examples of the Australian section’s repeated “social-democratic drift” came in the last several years, when it repeatedly placed itself in opposition to union strike struggles. The first was an October

1991 24-hour general strike against anti-union laws of the New South Wales state government. In this case, some comrades even went to work during the strike. The section also missed a one-day general strike in the state of Victoria. As one comrade put it during the ICL’s second international conference, “The lesson learned in Australia was that a general strike means ‘oh shit!’” But even after a 1992 emergency conference called to deal with this tendency, the editorial board of *Australasian Spartacist* in 1994 wanted to publish the position of “militant indifference” (!) to the privatization of Australia’s nationalized shipping line. In all cases, this very rightist sectarian abstentionism was justified with supposed left arguments against the wretched trade-union bureaucracy. This was also the posture adopted by the Spartacist League/Britain (later corrected) in declaring the Liverpool dockers strike dead last fall, even though union mobilizations for the strikers continued.

Now Parks has taken up the position in several countries that it is wrong for a small Trotskyist propaganda group to call for a general strike. This arose in Italy, when G. Maggi produced a draft leaflet during the workers upsurge of autumn 1994 headlining a call for an all-out general strike. In fact, this represented a capitulation to the popular front then being formed, as the reformist union and party leaders wanted a show of worker militancy to build pressure for their class-collaborationist parliamentary coalition against the rightist Berlusconi government. For Trotskyists, the key was to highlight opposition to the popular front and the need for a revolutionary party. But Parks went further, opposing a call for all-out workers struggle against the cutbacks and inclusion of a call for a general strike among the listed demands. Over the years, pseudo-Trotskyists have routinely called for general strikes as an all-purpose, radical-sounding demand on the union bureaucracy, to disguise their actual policy of tailing the labor fakers. But Parks’ lesson from this 1994 Italy fight, that it is wrong for small propaganda groups to call for a general strike at all, is a caricature of Trotskyism. What about the campaign of the French Trotskyists for a general strike in the mid-1930s?

During the December 1995 strike wave in France, the CC of the French section was paralyzed, incapable of producing interventionist propaganda to bring the Trotskyist program into the developing struggle. In this case, the LTF leadership collapse was fought from the I.S., and particularly by Parks—while at the same time she was denying that this had anything to do with passive propagandism. But subsequent events have shown that this tendency has been increasingly generalized. For example, in Germany not only was the intervention directed at the Communist Platform repudiated after the fact, but after the SpAD conference in January, the tasks and perspectives section of the conference document was redone to rule out any work directed at the PDS. Nor were any concrete perspectives raised toward the Autonomen, or indeed any other focus for external work.

In the months before our expulsion, we found ourselves constantly fighting for articles in the ICL sectional

presses to pose transitional demands as a tool of intervention, instead of simply passive commentary. In Germany, an article on the Balkans for Spartakist in January raised no call for, or even any perspective of, working-class action against imperialist intervention, even though this was the first time the Bundeswehr has been deployed outside the Reich since World War II. Instead the draft declared: “The task of Marxists, however, is to raise the consciousness of the workers and to convince them of the necessity and tasks of the socialist revolution.” True, but the whole question of how to mobilize the working class in struggle leading to a fight for power is not addressed.*

In March, a Spartakist draft on the “Alliance for Jobs” (a stillborn scheme by the union tops for a “partnership” with Kohl) virtually ignored actual labor struggles and failed to put forward a program of demands to lead the struggle forward. In a draft for Spartaco on the Italian elections, where the recently elected Ulivo (Olive Tree) popular front promises to push through the austerity program the right-wing Berlusconi government couldn’t implement, Parks opposed a suggested slogan to “Prepare for Hard Class Battles Against the Ulivo’s Anti-Worker ‘Reforms.’” She argued once again that a small Trotskyist propaganda group should simply put forward general propaganda on the popular front and the need for a revolutionary workers party. It’s classical De Leonism—no transitional demands.

Parks also objected to any reference to the Italian bourgeoisie’s push for a “strong state” to ram through the brutal “restructuring” of government and industry, including the massive layoffs and drastic lowering of real wages, that the ruling class is driven to accomplish following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has been a point we have raised in numerous articles on Italy for the last several years. In the same vein, a lead article on Mexico for Espartaco omitted any reference to the semi-bonapartist nature of the Mexican regime and the corporatist character of the PRI-controlled “unions,” while seeing big opportunities in a split by dissident corporatist “unions.” Thus the key point of Trotsky’s analysis of Mexico is simply dropped!

Skipping over the question of bonapartism, the Mexico article calls for “combat” against the “glorification” of “trade-union struggle” in order to “leap from the struggle for mere demands for higher wages” (in a country where real wages have been slashed to below 1940 levels) “to political struggle which coheres and raises the consciousness of the working class about its tremendous social

* In the June 11 I.S. letter to the Brazilian LQB, the formulation is: “The task of Marxists is to have a program which conceptually opens the road to revolution for the working class” (retranslated from Portuguese). But the mere “having” of revolutionary “conceptions” is nothing but an idealist veneer for opportunist passivity, unless an active fight is waged to transform the consciousness of the proletariat in the class struggle, without which it is impossible to open the road to revolution really, and not just conceptually.

power.” Rather than this glib rhetorical “leap,” what is urgently required is a system of transitional demands as a bridge from the present demands and consciousness of the working class to the struggle for socialist revolution. Naturally, no demands were raised in the article for a sliding scale of wages and hours, turning strike pickets into workers militias, factory committees, etc. If ever there was a situation crying out for the Transitional Program, Mexico today is it. But this is not to be found in the “new” Espartaco.

In his speech at the SpAD conference in January, Nelson cited a quote from Trotsky’s 1937 article “Stalinism and Bolshevism” as summing up the tasks of Marxists today:

“Reactionary epochs like ours not only disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard but also lower the general ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions, the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the backward flow: It must swim against the current...it must at least retain its ideological positions, because in them is expressed the dearly purchased experience of the past.”

This quote (repeated and expanded in the WV 648 article on our expulsion) is utterly correct, but Trotsky never intended these words to be counterposed to the tasks of participating in and giving leadership to the struggles of the working class. The year after he wrote the above essay, with the Spanish Revolution strangled and World War II fast approaching, at a time that Victor Serge characterized as “midnight in the century,” Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program:

“The strategic task of the next period—a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization—consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard... It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.”

The ICL leadership notes one way in which the pressures of the period and historic defeats weigh on the proletarian vanguard, in the form of attempts to revise and reject our fundamental Leninist-Trotskyist programmatic positions. But in addition to outright programmatic revisionism there is another way in which the pressure of defeats takes its toll on revolutionary organizations. In the Transitional Program, Trotsky notes that “the influence of the betrayal by the historic organizations of the proletariat” led some elements to “a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses” and to conceive of revolutionary struggle as “convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism.” He noted:

“These sterile politicians generally have no need of a bridge in the form of transitional demands because they do not intend to cross over to the other shore. They simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the selfsame meager abstractions. Political events are for them an occasion for comment but not for action.”

Here, too, one can recognize elements of the SL/ICL leadership today, more comfortable with “calling for” a revolutionary vanguard than shouldering the responsibilities, challenges and dangers of intervening to build one in the class struggle. But as Lenin stressed in What Is to Be Done? (at a time when the Russian party was still consolidating as a fighting propaganda group): “it is not enough to call ourselves the ‘vanguard,’ the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that all the other contingents recognize and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard.”

So far we have seen a tendency toward passive propagandism. The ICL can still make other turns, it can zig and zag, carrying out an action against the KKK in Chicago at the same time that it abandons a struggle against the cops in Volta Redonda. But with the recent purge of long-time cadres, the accumulation of bureau-

cratic measures never before practiced in the organization, the dissolving of fraternal relations with the Brazilian LQB and precipitous flight from a major class battle underway in Volta Redonda, there has been a turn in the ICL in the direction of bureaucratization and a policy of “passive radicalism.” Particularly its shameful abandonment of the fight for cops out of the unions in Brazil marks the turn as centrist, revealing a sharp cleft between the ICL’s stated program and its policies in practice. We would be fighting within the ranks of the ICL to defeat this disastrous course were it not for our unjust expulsion, which we hereby appeal. We have fought to build the ICL based on the Trotskyist program, which we have helped formulate and defend. We continue to fight to build a Leninist world party of socialist revolution, a reforged Fourth International Trotsky would recognize as his own.
