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Debate notebooks

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In Defense of the Theory and Program of the Fourth International

Reform versus Revolution in the 21st Century

An Iron Alternative:

- **Either Soviet strategy** for Socialist Revolution
- **Or reformist program** to “Self-Manage”
the Bankrupt Capitalist System



Barricade in the Paris Commune



Lenin and Trotsky in the Russian Revolution

Unbridled Parliamentary Cretinism...

The PTS, a New Social Democratic Party, Openly Breaks with Trotskyism

By Carlos Munzer, Member of the Editorial Board of “The International Workers' Organizer”

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Presentation

We are releasing Part One of this theoretical debate document against revisionism in Marxism, published as a Special Edition of "The International Workers' Organizer."

It is a strategic and programmatic discussion with the PTS of Argentina and its international cover-up faction, "Permanent Revolution Current."

Here is an advance excerpt from Part One. Part Two of this pamphlet will be published in the lead-up to the 8th Congress of the FLTI. Its title will be: ***"On Marxism and War: A Pacifist Reformism Splashing in a Sea of Blood and Mud. Once Again in Defense of the Civil War Manual and the Theory of Permanent Revolution of Trotskyism and the Fourth International."***

As the reader will be able to verify from everything presented in this work, the recent congresses of the PTS in Argentina, their "workshops" on Permanent Revolution (which they call "expanded"), etc., are links in a chain of revisionism to Marxism that this current has been carrying out for years, leaving no stone on stone in the legacy and theory of the Fourth International.

They are masters of amalgamation, of disguising their revisions with smokescreens, without clarifying the specific points on which they oppose Trotsky and Bolshevism, which are numerous.

Their entirely reformist positions are presented as a "natural evolution" of 21st-century Marxist thought, when in reality they are its negation.

They have already created, as Trotsky said about Stalinism, a school of falsifications. If they don't like what we are saying, they should stop falsifying Marxism and openly admit that they have broken with Trotskyism, because that is precisely what they have done.

They hide behind pseudo-Trotskyist rhetoric, which they use with their militants in closed meetings, but among the masses and the vanguard, this current is already spreading the worst kind of reformism.

In this pamphlet, as the reader will see, we begin by denouncing that Del Caño, one of their most important public leaders, attended a European Parliament meeting sponsored by the UN to "support the Palestinian cause." This is just one example of a completely opportunistic practice.

This open and declared revisionism, which trains cadres to co-exist with the decaying capitalist system while fighting for the "socialism of the future", has been around for decades.

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For example, it is what they have deployed with their theory of “crisis of subjectivity,” which liquidates the central thesis of the Trotskyist Transitional Program that the crisis of leadership is the determining factor of the historical process, while blaming the “backwardness of the masses” for all the defeats they suffer. In this way, they conceal the fact that it was Stalinism that, by imposing capitalist restoration, not only caused a strategic defeat to the international proletariat, but also set it back in its consciousness and subjectivity, leading to the ruin of the former workers’ states through its policy of “socialism in one country” and “peaceful co-existence with imperialism.”

The PTS even went so far as to claim that there was “partial development of the productive forces” and raised the absurd notion that imperialism, which they call “neoliberal” like all reformist movements around the world, was “expanding democracy” from 1989 onwards.

A true brutality and affront to the world working class, beginning with the Chinese and Russian proletariat, the massacres in the Balkans, the miners killed in South Africa, the genocide in the Congo, the occupation of the Palestinian nation, the genocide in Chechnya, the million killed in Iraq. Those are just a few examples of how imperialism “expanded democracy” from 1989 to 2008.

Wherever democratic freedoms were won for the masses, these were nothing more than a byproduct of enormous revolutionary struggles by the proletariat; however, with waves of pacifism, imperialism seized upon them to divert them and close the path to proletarian revolution.

We are witnessing an openly social-democratic current that has become what it is today: a party beholden to Argentina’s bourgeois Parliament. The very same Congress controlled by Milei, the PRO, the UCR, Peronism, and others, which have long ago “abdicated” and gave full power to Milei, an autocratic government and regime subservient to Trump and the US imperialists.

As any minimally serious observer can confirm, the PTS of Argentina is advised by Callinicos and the leadership of the British SWP, one of the most right-wing sectors of the former international Marxist movement.

They have led the PTS down the path of Stalinism, using the “confluences” between Trotsky and Gramsci, which they invented and amalgamated to justify their break away with the Fourth International.

It’s striking that Callinicos and Albamonte noticed the supposed “confluences” between Trotsky and Gramsci, and that Trotsky himself, in the 1930s, didn’t realize he was dealing with a “great revolutionary”... Nothing could be further from the truth: Gramsci, along with Togliatti, were the leaders of the Italian Communist Party, which was under Stalin’s direct orders.

Gramsci rigorously applied Stalinist policies in the mid-1920s and while he was imprisoned in the 1930s, while calling for the massacre of Trotsky’s followers and those of the theory of Permanent Revolution.



US invasion of Iraq (2003)

And the PTS is called the “Permanent Revolution Current”! They really should be consistent.

Through this revisionism of Marxism, reformism trains its cadres and militants, to drag them later into recurring capitulations and adaptations.

For Bolshevism, the struggle against revisionism is inseparable from the struggle for cadres and the revolutionary regrouping of the vanguard of the international proletariat.

The debate we are having here, in this first part, is against the latest leaps in revisionism being made by the party of Myriam Bregman and her coach, Albamonte. It concerns their new pseudo-theory of “socialism from below,” a kind of “anarcho-socialism” and reformism typical of the old “utopian socialists.”

They want to sell the proletariat, like druids, the potion that a “workers’ government” can emerge from a process of “expansion of democracy” whose “class” it is supposedly serving, and a long list of other claims that we will develop in this work.p

It is now clear that we are facing a current whose revisions of Marxism have transformed and crystallized it into a social democratic party that shamelessly raises reformist banners, and it is feeling emboldened by the rise in its leader Bregman’s approval ratings in various polls.

Now they talk about building “socialism from below.” This constitutes a theoretical and programmatic aberration in the very places where bloody imperialist wars are being waged against colonial and semi-colonial peoples.

Their theory in the martyred Gaza and Lebanon would be “socialism from below” built from the rubble, where the martyrs of the heroic resistance and their families still lie murdered.

Are they talking about building “socialism from below” in wars of national liberation when the objective is to defeat the invader? Who are these people laughing at?

Then, they shamelessly propose a socialism for “the future,” the classic Stalinist policy of “Two Stage Revolution.”

Let’s begin by clarifying that **the PTS’s revisionist pseu-**

do-theories are only for Argentina, since, as the reader will see, their elaborations would be a bad joke if they weren't a tragedy for the working class when they are applied internationally, as we have already seen.

Let's imagine for a moment that we have to "expand democracy" in the US by stripping it of all class character, or that we have to fight there for "socialism from below" without occupying Wall Street, without defeating the Pentagon, without a socialist revolution that destroys the imperialist state, which is armed to the teeth... These people are a laughing stock. Only an audience that has been shaped by years or decades of revisionist Marxism could fail to be surprised by such brutality.

Furthermore, let's consider for a minute how "socialism from below" could be built in China and Russia without crushing the ferocious dictatorships in those countries that oppress the working class —by crushing their armed forces, and the neo-Stalinist parties that guarantee the existence of the capitalist system through bloodshed and violence.

As we are finishing this Presentation, several days ago a situation of outbreak and offensive of the worker and peasant masses of Bolivia has opened in response to a brutal attack by the Rodrigo Paz government. The attack consists of privatizations, indiscriminate rate hikes, a ban on wage increases, the expropriation of land from small peasants... That is to say, it is an attack on all workers and the people poor in Bolivia, organized by US imperialism, its transnationals, and the IMF on their Latin American "backyard". To coordinate these attacks throughout Latin America, the "Shield of the Americas" was set up under the orders of the Pentagon and the Trump government.

The first response to this attack, which left no sector of the exploited unscathed, came in the form of a mass uprising at the end of December 2025 and the beginning of January of this year, which forced the COB (Central Workers Union of Bolivia) bureaucracy to call a general strike. Faced with the danger of Bolivia catching fire, a few days after calling it, they signed an agreement with the government and lifted the apply of the attack. Following this betrayal, Rodrigo Paz saw the conditions to attack the masses again under the orders of US imperialism.

Once again, the response was not long in coming, despite and against all the treacherous leaderships. The peasant movement expressed itself in marches more than 1,000 kilometers long to La Paz against Bill 1,720 (which establishes the abolition of communal land tenure). This march began to converge with demonstrations of rural teachers, factory workers... The method of struggle was by blockades. The mining movement, due to the responsibility of the bureaucracy, was lagging behind in the already established political struggle.

This allowed the government to see that it could strike, and so it attacked the 21 blockades encircling La Paz with a brutal repression. The next day, other more than 61 blockades were set up and the cooperative miners burst in; they have been hit hard by the fuel rate hike. The qualitative element is the entry into the struggle of the exploited masses of El Alto.



Mass mobilization in El Alto (Bolivia)

There, a great combat was centralized that shook the mining bureaucracy out of its lethargy and put it at the head of the day of action on May 18, when thousands upon thousands, from different blockades, marched to besiege La Paz. An independent mass action, with the direct intervention now of the miners from Huanuni and Colquiri (both comprising the mining sector that still remains nationalized in Bolivia), which is opening a revolutionary situation in this country. La Paz woke up on May 18 with the tanks of the Armed Forces guarding the Palacio Quemado in Plaza Murillo, and with the masses trying to reach it.

If Venezuela is the territory conquered by the US imperialism while the new Cuban Stalinist bourgeoisie is on its knees before Trump, Bolivia threatens to be the territory conquered by a revolutionary worker and peasant offensive in Latin America. If it were successful, it would transform itself into a bastion of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Latin American masses. But Bolivia will not be able to triumph if its struggle is not generalized to the entire Latin American working class, whose leaderships look the other way as the battle against the "Shield of the Americas" is being decided today in La Paz. In Bolivia, the struggle is already aimed at overthrowing the Paz government.

The masses have understood that to achieve even the smallest of their demands, they must defeat the government. To do this, it is necessary to defeat the police and partition the army horizontally, setting up soldier committees that refuse to fire on the people. The masses in Bolivia are certainly more advanced than Bregman and Albamonte.

They are not waiting for their "cultural battle" or to make "socialism from below". The cry of "*Rifle, machine gun, Bolivia will not be silenced!*" makes it the order of the day to re-conquer the worker and peasant militias, just like in the 1952 revolution. In the Altiplano, the economic struggle rose to a political struggle, and that is making way to a revolutionary crisis. What kind of "socialism from below" is the PTS talking about at a time when the central task in Bolivia is to overthrow the government, horizontally partitioning the Armed Forces, and defeat the police, as we have seen?

How can one not propose organizing mass action through soviet, armed bodies that coordinate all blockades? How can one not coordinate the combative unions of the COB and the Mining Federation with the peasant movement, their organizations of struggle, and the students, adapting a National Worker and Peasant Congress in a sublevated El Alto? In the Bolivian Altiplano, the theory of Albamonte and Maiello, executed by Bregman, breaks its teeth, nose, and spine.

It is of no use to the workers. Yet another proof that we are facing a totally nationalist and pacifist social-democratic policy of the “great PTS”. Meanwhile all this is happening; the PTS seeks to organize parties at the University of La Paz to see if its “bastion” there sets up “socialism from below”. They only gathered a dozen people, while a few blocks away, thousands and thousands of workers and peasants clashed with the police, seeking to enter Plaza Murillo to overthrow the government.

They are a ridiculous bunch. Let’s speak clearly: these people are desperate to make a “good impression” with the Argentine bourgeois regime, on which they depend and where they survive. Why are not Bregman and Del Caño—who rushed off to the European Parliament meeting—already in La Paz, calling for a continent-wide combat in Latin America to expel both the IMF and imperialism?

How can one lie so much to the masses without stating that the struggle for the non-repayment of the foreign debt is either Latin American and continental, or it is nothing? They have not even promoted a rally at the Bolivian Embassy in Argentina because they do not want to appear linked to the civil war that is beginning in the Bolivian Alto. The destiny of the masses of Latin America is being defined to a large extent in the combats of the US masses against ICE and “King” Trump, and in the current battle in Bolivia.

To deactivate this revolutionary rise, the “pro Gringo left” like Petro proposes itself as a “mediator” to avoid civil war, when the civil war was launched by imperialism and the IMF against the masses, starving them to death. To break the imperialist blockade of Cuba, we must fight like in Bolivia, confronting the old and new capitalists, and fighting with the method of the general strike and revolution against the new millionaire bourgeoisie, heir to the Castros. The US bloc would be really confronted by extending the struggle alongside the Latin American masses and with all forces to Bolivia.

Only in this way can imperialism be halted. Everything else is a lie and deception by a new lackey-of-imperialism bourgeoisie, like Castroism, with Díaz-Canel on his knees before Trump, just like Delcy Rodríguez in Venezuela. Let’s see if Bregman and her coach Albamonte understand it? The battle of Buenos Aires is being fought in La Paz.

The Milei autocratic government has understood it perfectly. That is why he sent two planes with tear gas and repressive gear for the Bolivian police. And the PTS, which will soon hold a rally



Bolivia: Clashes between miners and police in La Paz

with Bregman in Jujuy, does not even dare to cross the border and bring solidarity to Plaza Murillo where imperialism is being fought against?

Bregman is truly a moderate... When dynamite begins to speak in Bolivia, Bregman is seen as very moderate. When they talk about “socialism from below” it is because they do not want to look like “revolutionaries” and lose votes. They do not want to say that they are going to make a revolution that defeats the bourgeois state.

“Socialism from below” is the formulation of a reformist current that wants to look like the “extreme left” wing of Argentina’s rotten semi-parliamentary democracy. Like any social-democratic current, it is deeply national. Its international faction, the “Permanent Revolution Current,” is nothing more than a cover for the socialist-national policy of its apparatus. No one can argue that we are falsifying a single comma of their position, since this position of “playing hide-and-seek with socialism” is an official stance from their last Congress.

Today, the PTS is an expression within the left of the regime of sectors of the ruined middle classes that have become disenchanted with Peronism. In contrast, yesterday the PTS expressed left-wing sectors of the working class; a process that they themselves helped lead to impotence and demoralization with a sickening parliamentary cretinism.

The time has come to separate banners clearly between Trotskyism and social-democrats coated also in remnants of Stalinism. That is why in this work we present a theoretical, political, and programmatic battle in defense of the Fourth International, its theory, and its legacy. The reader will be able to observe in the attached Summary the titles regarding the different points we develop in this document in debate against the reformism and revisionism of the PTS, which applies well to all currents that have broken with the legacy of the Fourth International.

There You have the LIT, which has just shattered into 20 pieces, which for decades maintained—and some of its sectors still continue to maintain—the theory of the “democratic revolution”. In order not to break with it, they insist and insist that ‘89, the

year of capitalist restoration in the soviet block, was a “left-wing blow” to the world capitalist system. A brutality that causes highly valuable militants of that current to keep marking time in the exact same place.

The LIT, for example, is a current trapped in the reformist program of its 1985 foundation, where it argued that imperialism was a “paper tiger” and that revolution, just like a “train going down a slope,” was “inevitable”. As we can see, this was an open break with the central thesis of the Trotskyist program, which states that the crisis of the working class, and even of the entire civilization, is the product of crisis of the leadership of the proletariat. The LIT’s theory transforms into a norm the exceptions that were the revolutions of the second post-war period, such as in China, Korea, etc. This abnormality quickly returned to the norm: there, just like in Vietnam and Cuba, capitalist restoration is complete.

Likewise, these positions of the LIT were a severe error because that “paper tiger,” as they called imperialism in the mid-’80s, turned out to be Reagan and Thatcher, who were coming from prevailing in Malvinas, crushed the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean with the collaboration of Stalinism, and then imposed capitalist restoration in Russia, China, and other former worker states. How could imperialism be a “paper tiger” when it controlled the most advanced of all productive forces, sustained by the entire Stalinist regimes of the former USSR, China, Vietnam, and Castroism of Cuba? How could imperialism be a “paper tiger” if the former Stalinist bureaucracy had already openly shifted to capitalist restoration, as they did with Gorbachev in the former USSR?

Something similar to what Bregman says today about Milei, that he is a “pampered kitten” on the lap of Wall Street —when he is a rabid watchdog of Wall Street, who must be defeated and crushed alongside Trump, Netanyahu, and the whole gang of counter-revolutionary forces that sustain them. As we have already said, this work we are presenting is preparatory for the VIII Congress of the FLTI, which will take place during the course of this year. With this document, we open the pre-Congress period. In this debate, the different groups and militants of our international current will intervene, as well as the various revolutionary currents and organizations along which we fight in common worldwide.

At the moment in which we publish this material, millions of workers and the rebel youth are seeking a way to defeat the fierce imperialist offensive on the oppressed peoples of the world and the international proletariat, on whom imperialism is throwing its crisis and bankruptcy.

In their fight against the massacre in Palestina and the US attack on Iran, the US masses are revolting and openly confronting the Trump government. The combats in Minneapolis and Los Angeles have shown how to confront fascism, namely,



2025: General strike in Italy with the cry of “Bocchiamo tutto” (We block everything) against the genocide in Palestine

through self-organized committees that clash directly with ICE, Trump’s Gestapo.

The Italian working class is offering a great example of militant internationalism by fighting for their demands and at the same time for the victory of the Palestinian masses, with the dock workers at the vanguard of this struggle.

The same happens in Greece, Belgium and the Spanish state. In the latter, different groups of the working class are clashing with the monarchy and the PSOE government, which is shown as “democrats confronting the right” while they starve people to death.

It was the crisis of leadership what desynchronized the struggle of the international proletariat and allowed the imperialist counter-offensive. Before the working class entered the fight in the central countries, the Latin American mass combats had already been diverted, betrayed and defeated such as in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile and Colombia. This was also the case in Africa, with South Africa as the vanguard of the black proletariat struggle.

Anyway, the key is that the clashes in the semi colonial world are also developing a tough and heroic resistance, such as in Palestine and the Middle East. However, this is based on unprecedented hardships and massacres suffered by the masses.

Also, due to the capitalist crisis, revolutionary outbreaks sprout here and there. In the moment in which we are publishing this document, we can watch a workers and peasants uprising in a generalized political fight against their Milei-like government in Bolivia.

The world masses have witnessed revolutionary uprisings in Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka that threatened to burn down the power citadel to pieces.

We are currently looking at an enormous polarization of the class struggle internationally, amid the slump of counterrevolutionary wars and the imperialist offensive... but the proletariat has not surrendered.

The masses do not have the leadership they deserve. Solving this crisis is the task of the revolutionaries. And this is happening under catastrophic conditions of the current capitalist system.

Margins for reformisms and class conciliation are running out. A period is opening of new wars, revolutions, counterrevolutions and counter-reformism, as Trotsky said.

The crisis and the contradictions of class struggle are driven by the fierce US counteroffensive in the whole planet.

USA has lost its hegemony on the world's politics and economy since 2008. The imperialist Europe, under the French-German axis, set up a common market from the Russian steppes to Portugal which had left USA out of it. This was the position of Maastricht Europe, which was also threatening to control the "oil routes" (after the US defeat and retreat from Iraq) and also the "the Silk route" to China.

An anomaly had happened: Germany, which was defeated in WWII, was the one that reorganized the whole European market and conquered, to a great extent, the Russian market.

Maastricht closed upon itself to shield against the recurring crises of USA in 2008, 2017, 2020 and the different blows.

However, the US got back to the world, first with Biden and now with Trump, using gunfire, wars and asserting its victory in WWII. Wars are the way in which imperialist gangs distribute the world among themselves, even if reformists try to hide it.

In Ukraine, USA used the Russian invasion to that oppressed nation to break up the European market and take the sources of cheap raw material, such as gas, from the Maastricht powers.

Now, with the Zionist gendarme, US imperialism controls, once again, the "oil routes" in the Middle East, as it is also shown by the war on Iran. Trump has stepped on his Latin American "backyard", invaded Venezuela, and took one of the biggest oil reserves in the planet.

From this counteroffensive, during a recent trip to China, Trump told Beijing: "Taiwan is untouchable". It was in Taiwan that the big US tech companies have installed their factories, which have the greatest production of the latest generation chips, which are vital to AI and the war industry.

Xi Jinping accepted this, in exchange of the US market opening for some Chinese products. He placed China for what it is: a world trade pole, great buyer of raw material (with its oil supply threatened by the war on Iran) and a great exporter based on the overexploitation of the Chinese working class as slave labor. The world imperialist transnational companies made enormous profits from that waged-slavery. They even control an important part of different banks of the Chinese provinces. These companies are now going for the entire domestic market.

Here, imperialism does not battle against China and Russia but FOR China and Russia. These countries are under dispute of the US imperialists, all the imperialist powers of Europe and even Japan.

US imperialism has come to destroy the world division of labor and the world market that caused the loss of its hegemony.

At the end of WWII, USA, the victorious power, had a plan to



2025: Bregman and other leaders of the FIT-U at the PJ headquarters after Cristina Kirchner's prison sentence is upheld

rebuild the world economy in its image and likeness, even rebuilding Europe with the Marshall Plan. Now, in crisis, USA is coming to destroy the world economy and politics in order to recover its lost hegemony and regain control.

While the working class suffers the weight of the imperialist crisis on their shoulders; the great capital, the great imperialist investment funds, mainly those of Wall Street today such as Black-Rock, State Street and Vanguard, which concentrate enormous masses of capital, have merged the high tech companies (like AI's ones) with the military industry, not only war private companies but also directly from the Pentagon. So much so, that high-tech companies CEOs were made to swear into colonels of the US army to which they must subdue.

At the same time, the imperialist European countries are increasing their war budgets at the expense of the working class and the masses' gains so that they pay the war credits and the European transnational companies can reconvert... into war companies.

As Revolutionary Marxism claims, war is the most important business of our time.

Meanwhile, the European imperialist powers are seeking their place in the new distribution of the world that USA is re-building. The imperialist Maastricht is in a total splinter.

Clashes between revolution and counterrevolution, and wars are decisive and already here. It is about the fate and the combats of the working class which is the only class that can save the entire civilization from the catastrophe and the intrinsic tendencies to war that capitalism has in its phase of imperialist putrefaction. There are no halfways out.

In order to survive, the capital recruits reformist currents so they disorganize what the masses build with their combats.

This is why we are not having here just another debate with the PTS, as may seem to any superficial reader. However, every serious Marxist knows the PTS is being used by the Argentinian

bourgeois regime as a “left” safety valve on the perspective of a new revolutionary mass revolt.

“I will never be moderated!” screamed Bregman at the last PTS rally on May Day. “I will never be moderated!” she insisted. And what about a revolutionary calling to smash the murderous police and the Videlista officers’ caste with the struggle for the proletariat dictatorship? This was not part of her speech.

Undoubtedly, the struggle for the international socialist revolution as an immediate task becomes more acute than ever. While reformists claim this task is for the future, as if we could get out of this catastrophe and defeat imperialism without an immediate revolution.

It is about the life and death of the international working class. Hundreds of thousands lay under debris in Gaza. Parliamentarism, and reformism on which it is held, have lost every base of support. In spite of this, they are getting ready, with their revisions, to “self-manage” the capitalist system in bankruptcy.

Once again, the established struggle within the Marxist movement is between reform and revolution in the 21st century. Once again, it is Stalinism and social democracy vs. Trotskyism and the 4th international legacy. These are political and programmatic clashes among fractions of the workers aristocracy and the petit bourgeoisie on the one hand and the 4th international currents combating to express the interests of the international revolutionary proletariat.

This is what this combat in the trenches of the theory, the strategy and the program that we are waging is about. Every ideological and programmatic struggle within Marxism turns into a real social force within the masses... The time has come to unmask and undress that current and each of the revisions they have cruelly and shamelessly made against Marxism.

The reader can access the TBI platform of our split with PTS in 1998, the “Thesis of the 1989” events, in which we settle scores with the character of the capitalist restoration and theoretical works on the productive forces or leadership crisis vs. “subjectivity crisis” among others. They have been all published, and can be read, on our website (www.fti-ci.org) and by the Rudolph Klement publishing house.

As we will develop in this material, the PTS’ last stroke to Marxism consists of upholding the thesis that the theory of the permanent revolution needs to be “broadened”. They try to piece together the bourgeois revolution of 1789 with the theory of the socialist revolution, to end up stating that we must intensify “democracy”, which would open the way to the “perspective of socialism”. This is all a smokescreen as we demonstrate in this document.



León Trotsky

The truth is that the leadership of that party hides they have falsified every revolutionary lesson drawn by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Louxemburg from the Paris Commune. Their current policy is the theory, the program and the political imposture of the German social democracy that, by the end of the 19th century and beginnings of the 20th, had founded the great reformist worker parties. They accomplished this by hiding the lessons of the Paris Commune of Marx and Engels that Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg would recover and retake for the international proletariat. And so will we demonstrate.

The PTS follows the steps of Hilferding, Bernstein, Kautsky...that is why we denounce they are social democrats and confessed pacifists. They prepare the proletariat for a “peaceful way to socialism”, as Stalinism did yesterday — which brought about great historical defeats for international proletariat.

They cover themselves under the revisionism of the Reformist German social democracy to hide their “new” theories of “broadening” the Permanent Revolution. We will unmask them, as they have lied and still lie to their rank and file.

The infamous veil they have deployed against Marxism must be removed. The time has come, before it is too late. Let the debate begin. On our part, we are doing it under the banners of the 4th International whose program and theory have passed the test of history while the revisionist have broken their teeth trying to muddle them, so taking the world proletariat to real tragedies.

This document intends to collaborate with the currents that belong to revolutionary Marxism and find the way to recover the banners of the 4th International and refund it.

Editorial Board of “The International Workers Organizer”

Continued from the back page

Leon Trotsky Lessons of the Paris Commune

defines the precise lines of action, that the proletariat frees itself from the need of always recommencing its history: its hesitations, its lack of decision, its mistakes.

The proletariat of Paris did not have such a party. The bourgeois socialists with whom the Commune swarmed, raised their eyes to heaven waiting for a miracle or else a prophetic word, hesitated, and during that time the masses were groping in the dark, disoriented, because of the indecision of some and the frankness of others. The result was that the revolution broke out in their very midst, too late. Paris was encircled.

Six months elapsed before the proletariat had reestablished in its memory the lessons of past revolutions, of battles of yore, of the reiterated betrayals of democracy – and it seized power.

These six months proved to be an irreparable loss. If the centralized party of revolutionary action had been found at the head of the proletariat of France in September 1870, the whole history of France and with it the whole history of humanity would have taken another direction.

If power passed into the hands of the proletariat of Paris on March 18, it was not because they consciously seized it, but because its enemies had quitted the capital city.

These latter were losing ground continuously, the workers despised and detested them, the petty bourgeoisie no longer had confidence in them and the big bourgeoisie feared that they were no longer capable of defending it. The soldiers were hostile to the officers. The government fled Paris in order to concentrate its forces elsewhere. And it was then that the proletariat became master of the situation.

But it understood this fact only on the morrow. The revolution fell upon it unexpectedly.

This first success was a new source of passivity. The enemy had fled to Versailles. Wasn't that a victory? At that moment the governmental band could have been crushed almost without the spilling of blood. In Paris, all the ministers, with Thiers at their head, could have been taken prisoners. Nobody would have raised a hand to defend them. It was not done. There was no organization of a centralized party, having a rounded view of things and special organs for realizing its decisions.

The debris of the infantry did not want to fall back to Versailles. The thread which tied the officers and the soldiers was pretty tenuous. And had there been a leading center of the party at Paris, it would have incorporated into the retreating armies – since there was the possibility of retreating – a few hundred or even a few dozen devoted workers, and given them the follow-



Paris Communards

ing instructions: enhance the discontent of the soldiers against the officers, profit by the first favorable psychological moment to free the soldiers from their officers and bring them back to Paris to unite with the people. This could easily have been realized, according to the admissions of Thiers' supporters themselves. Nobody even thought of it. Nor was there anybody to think of it. In the midst of great events, moreover, such decisions can be adopted only by a revolutionary party which looks forward to a revolution, prepares for it, does not lose its head, by a party which is accustomed to having a rounded view and is not afraid to act.

And a party of action is just what the French proletariat did not have.

The Central Committee of the National Guard was in effect a Council of Deputies of the armed workers and the petty bourgeoisie. Such a Council, elected directly by the masses who have taken the revolutionary road, represents an excellent apparatus of action. But at the same time, and just because of its immediate and elementary connection with the masses who are in the state in which the revolutionary has found them, it reflects not only all the strong sides but also the weak sides of the masses, and it reflects at first the weak sides still more than it does the strong: it manifests the spirit of indecision, of waiting, the tendency to be inactive after the first successes.

The Central Committee of the National Guard needed to be led. It was indispensable to have an organization incarnating the political experience of the proletariat and always present – not only in the Central Committee, but in the legions, in the battalions, in the deepest sectors of the French proletariat. By means of the Councils of Deputies – in the given case they were organs of the National Guard – the party could have been in continual contact with the masses, known their state of mind; its leading center could each day put forward a slogan that party militants could have spread among the masses, uniting their thought and their will.

Hardly had the government fallen back to Versailles than the National Guard hastened to unload its responsibility, at the very moment when this responsibility was enormous. The Central Committee imagined "legal" elections to the Commune. It en-

tered into negotiations with the mayors of Paris in order to cover itself, from the right, with “legality”.

Had a violent attack been prepared against Versailles at the same time, the negotiations with the mayors would have been a ruse fully justified from the military standpoint and in conformity with the goal. But in reality, these negotiations were being conducted only in order to avert the struggle by some miracle. The petty bourgeois radicals and the socialistic idealists, respecting “legality” and the men who embodied a portion of the “legal” state – the deputies, the mayors, etc. – hoped at the bottom of their souls that Thiers would halt respectfully before revolutionary Paris the minute the latter covered itself with the “legal” Commune.

Passivity and indecision were supported in this case by the sacred principle of federation and autonomy. Paris, you see, is only one commune among many others. Paris wants to impose nothing upon anyone; it does not struggle for the dictatorship, unless it be for the ‘dictatorship of example’.

In sum, it was nothing but an attempt to replace the proletarian revolution, which was developing, by a petty bourgeois reform: communal autonomy. The real revolutionary task consisted of assuring the proletariat the power all above the country. Paris had to serve as its base, its support, its stronghold. And to attain this goal, it was necessary to vanquish Versailles without the loss of time and to send agitators, organizers, and armed forces throughout France. It was necessary to enter into contact with sympathizers, to strengthen the hesitators and to shatter the opposition of the adversary. Instead of this policy of offensive and aggression which was the only thing that could save the situation, the leaders of Paris attempted to seclude themselves in their communal autonomy: they will not attack the others if the others do not attack them; each town has its sacred right of self-government. This idealistic chatter – of the same gender as mundane anarchism – covered up in reality a cowardice in face of revolutionary action which should have been conducted incessantly up to the very end, for otherwise it should not have been begun.

The hostility to centralized organization – a heritage of petty bourgeois localism and autonomism – is without a doubt the weak side of a certain section of the French proletariat. Autonomy for the districts, for the wards, for the battalions, for the towns, is the supreme guarantee of real activity and individual independence for certain revolutionaries. But that is a great mistake which cost the French proletariat dearly.

Under the form of the “struggle against despotic centralism” and against “stifling” discipline, a fight takes place for the preservation of various groups and sub-groupings of the working class, for their petty interests, with their petty ward leaders and their local oracles. The entire working class, while preserving its cultural originality and its political nuances, can act methodically and firmly, without remaining in the tow of events, and directing each time its mortal blows against the weak sectors of its enemies, on the condition that at its head, above the wards, the districts, the groups, there is an apparatus which is centralized and bound to-



Trotsky Rallying the Red Army soldiers

gether by an iron discipline. The tendency towards particularism, whatever the form it may assume, is a heritage of the dead past. The sooner French communist-socialist communism and syndicalist communism emancipates itself from it, the better it will be for the proletarian revolution.

The party does not create the revolution at will, it does not choose the moment for seizing power as it likes, but it intervenes actively in the events, penetrates at every moment the state of mind of the revolutionary masses and evaluates the power of resistance of the enemy, and thus determines the most favorable moment for decisive action. This is the most difficult side of its task. The party has no decision that is valid for every case. Needed are a correct theory, an intimate contact with the masses, the comprehension of the situation, a revolutionary perception, a great resoluteness. The more profoundly a revolutionary party penetrates into all the domains of the proletarian struggle, the more unified it is by the unity of goal and discipline, the speedier and better will it arrive at resolving its task.

The difficulty consists in having this organization of a centralized party, internally welded by an iron discipline, linked intimately with the movement of the masses, with its ebbs and flows. Power cannot be seized without powerful revolutionary pressure from the working masses. But in this act the element of preparation is entirely inevitable. The better the party will understand the conjuncture and the moment, the better the bases of resistance will be prepared, the better the force and the roles will be distributed, the surer will be the success and the less victims will it cost. The correlation of a carefully prepared action and a mass movement is the politico-strategical task of the seizure of power.

The comparison of March 18, 1871 with November 7, 1917 is very instructive from this point of view. In Paris, there was an absolute lack of initiative for action on the part of the leading revolutionary circles. The proletariat, armed by the bourgeois government, was in reality master of the town, had all the material means of power – cannon and rifles – at its disposal, but it was not aware of it. The bourgeoisie made an attempt to retake the weapon of the giant: it wanted to steal the cannon of the proletariat. The attempt failed. The government fled in panic from Paris to Versailles. The field was clear. But it was only on the morrow

that the proletariat realized that it was the master of Paris. The “leaders” were in the wake of events, they record them when the latter were already accomplished, and they did everything in their power to blunt the revolutionary edge.

In Petrograd, the events developed differently. The party moved firmly, resolutely, to the seizure of power. It deployed its men everywhere, consolidating each position, extending every fissure between the workers and the garrison on the one side and the government on the other.

The armed demonstration of the July days was a vast reconnoitering conducted by the party to sound the degree of close contact between the masses and the power of resistance of the enemy. The reconnoitering was transformed into a struggle of outposts. We were thrown back, but at the same time the action established a connection between the party and the depths of the masses. In the months of August, September and October, a powerful revolutionary flux was developed. The party profits by it and augments considerably its points of support in the working class and the garrison. Later, the harmony between the conspirative preparations and the mass action takes place almost automatically. The Second Congress of the Soviets was fixed for November 7. All our preceding agitation was to lead to the seizure of power by the Congress. Thus, the overturn was adapted in advance to November 7. This fact was well known and understood by the enemy. Kerensky and his councillors could not fail to make efforts to consolidate themselves, to however small an extent, in Petrograd for the decisive moment. Also, they stood in need of shipping out of the capital the most revolutionary sections of the garrison. We on our part profited by this attempt by Kerensky in order to make it the source of a new conflict which had a decisive importance. We openly accused the Kerensky government – our accusation subsequently found a written confirmation in an official document – of having planned the removal of a third of the Petrograd garrison not out of military considerations but for the purpose of counter-revolutionary combinations. This conflict bound us still more closely to the garrison and put before the latter a well-defined task, to support the Soviet Congress fixed for November 7. And since the government insisted – even if in a feeble enough manner – that the garrison be sent off, we created in the Petrograd Soviet, already in our hands, a Revolutionary War Committee, on the pretext of verifying the military reasons for the governmental plan.

Thus we had a purely military organ, standing at the head of the Petrograd garrison, which was in reality a legal organ of armed insurrection. At the same time we designated (communist) commissars in all the military units, in the military stores, etc. The clandestine military organization accomplished specific technical tasks and furnished the Revolutionary War Committee with fully trustworthy militants for important military tasks. The essential work concerning the preparation, the realization and the armed insurrection took place openly, and so methodically and naturally that the bourgeoisie, led by Kerensky, did not clearly understand what was taking place under their very eyes. In Paris, the proletariat only realized that it was the master of the situation immediately after its actual victory – a victory which it had not,



Lenin in the Russian Revolution

moreover, deliberately sought. In Petrograd, it was the contrary. Our party, basing itself on the workers and the garrison, had already seized the power, the bourgeoisie passed a fairly tranquil night and learned only on the following morning that the helm of the country was in the hands of its gravedigger.

As to strategy, there were many differences of opinion in our party.

A part of the Central Committee declared itself, as is known, against the seizure of power, believing that the moment had not yet arrived, that Petrograd was detached from the rest of the country, the proletariat from the peasantry, etc.

Other comrades believed that we were not attributing sufficient importance to the elements of military complot. One of the members of the Central Committee demanded in October the surrounding of the Alexandrine Theater where the Democratic Conference was in session, and the proclamation of the dictatorship of the Central Committee of the party. He said: in concentrating our agitation as well as our preparatory military work for the moment of the Second Congress, we are showing our plan to the adversary, we are giving him the possibility of preparing himself and even of dealing us a preventive blow. But there is no doubt that the attempt at a military complot and the surrounding of the Alexandrine Theater would have been a fact too alien to the development of the events, that it would have been an event disconcerting to the masses. Even in the Petrograd Soviet, where our faction dominated, such an enterprise, anticipating the logical development of the struggle, would have provoked great disorder at that moment, above all among the garrison where there were hesitant and not very trustful regiments, primarily the cavalry regiments. It would have been much easier for Kerensky to crush a complot unexpected by the masses than to attack the garrison consolidating itself more and more on its positions: the defense of its inviolability in the name of the future Congress of the Soviets. Therefore the majority of the Central Committee rejected the plan to surround the Democratic Conference and it was right. The conjuncture was very well judged: the armed insurrection, almost without bloodshed, triumphed exactly on the date, fixed in advance and openly, for the convening of the Second Soviet Congress.

This strategy cannot, however, become a general rule, it re-

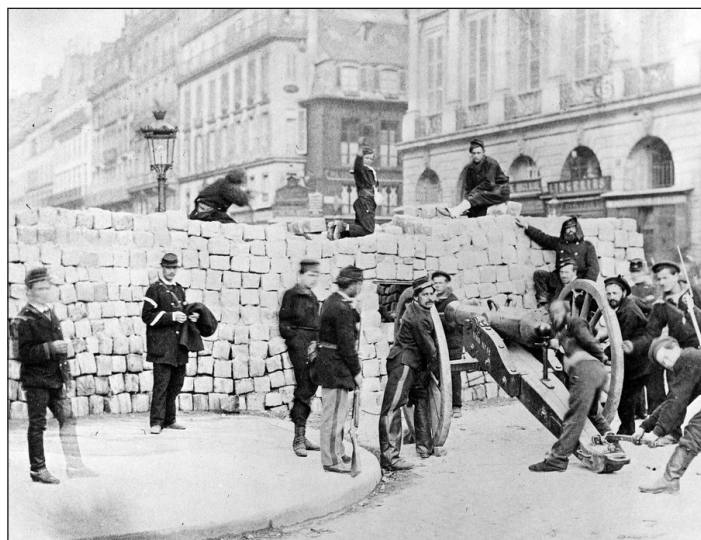
quires specific conditions. Nobody believed any longer in the war with Germany, and even the less revolutionary soldiers did not want to go to the front. And even if the garrison as a whole was on the side of the workers for this single reason, it became stronger in its point of view to the extent that Kerensky's machinations were revealed. But this mood of the Petrograd garrison had a still deeper cause in the situation of the peasant class and in the development of the imperialist war. Had there been a split in the garrison and had Kerensky obtained the possibility of support from a few regiments, our plan would have failed. The elements of purely military complot (conspiracy and great speed of action) would have prevailed. It would have been necessary, of course, to choose another moment for the insurrection.

The Commune also had the complete possibility of winning regiments, even those formed by peasants that has lost all confidence and all respect for the power and the command. Yet it undertook nothing towards this end. The fault here is not in the relationships of the peasant and the working class, but in the revolutionary strategy.

What will be the situation in this regard in the European countries in the present epoch? It is not easy to foretell anything on this score. Yet, with the events developing slowly and the bourgeois governments exerting all their efforts to utilize past experiences, it may be foreseen that the proletariat, in order to attract the sympathies of the soldiers, will have to overcome a great and well organized resistance at a given moment. A skillful and well-timed attack on the part of the revolution will then be necessary. The duty of the party is to prepare itself for it. That is just why it must maintain and develop its character of a centralized organization, which openly guides the revolutionary movement of the masses and is at the same time a clandestine apparatus of the armed insurrection.

The question of the electibility of the command was one of the reasons of the conflict between the National Guard and Thiers. Paris refused to accept the command designated by Thiers. Varlin subsequently formulated the demand that the command of the National Guard, without exception, ought to be elected by the National Guardsmen themselves. That is where the Central Committee of the National Guard found its support.

This question must be envisaged from two sides: from the political and the military sides. Both are interlinked but which should be distinguished. The political task consisted in purging the National Guard of the counter-revolutionary command. Complete electibility was the only means for it, the majority of the National Guard being composed of workers and revolutionary petty bourgeois. More than this, the motto "electibility of the command", must be extended also to the infantry. In one fell swoop, Thiers would have been deprived at a single stroke of his essential weapon, the counter-revolutionary officers. In order to realize this plan, a party organization, having its men in all the military units, was required by the working class. In a word, electibility in this case had as its immediate task not to give good commanders to the battalions, but to liberate them from commanders devoted to the bourgeoisie. Electibility would have served as a wedge for



Paris Commune

splitting the army into two parts, along class lines. Thus did matters occur in Russia in the period of Kerensky, above all on the eve of October.

But the liberation of the army from the old commanding apparatus inevitably involves the weakening of organizational cohesion and the diminution of combative power. As a rule, the elected command is pretty weak from the technico-military standpoint and with regard to the maintenance of order and of discipline. Thus, at the moment when the army frees itself from the old counterrevolutionary command which oppressed it, the question arises of giving it a revolutionary command capable of fulfilling its mission. And this question can by no means be resolved by simple elections. Before wide masses of soldiers acquire the experience of well choosing and selecting commanders, the revolution will be beaten by the enemy which is guided in the choice of its command by the experience of centuries. The methods of shapeless democracy (simple electibility) must be supplemented and to a certain extent replaced by measures of cooptation. The revolution must create an organ composed of experienced, reliable organizers, in which one can have absolute confidence, give it full powers to choose, designate and educate the command. If particularism and democratic autonomism are extremely dangerous to the proletarian revolution in general, they are ten times more dangerous into the army. We saw that in the tragic example of the Commune.

The Central Committee of the National Guard drew its authority from democratic electibility. At the moment when the Central Committee needed to develop to the maximum its initiative in the offensive, deprived of the leadership of a proletarian party, it lost its head, hastened to transmit its powers to the representatives of the Commune which required a broader democratic basis. And it was a great mistake in that period to play with elections. But once the elections had been held and the Commune brought together, it would have been necessary for the Commune to create herself create an organ possessing real power to reorganize the National Guard. This was not the case. By the side of the elected Commune there remained the Central Committee; the elected character of the latter gave it a political authority thanks to which it was able to confront with the Commune. But at the same

time that deprived it of the energy and the firmness necessary in the purely military questions which, after the organization of the Commune, justified its existence. Electibility, democratic methods, are but one of the instruments in the hands of the proletariat and its party. Electibility can in no wise be a fetish, a remedy for all evils. It must be combined with methods of appointments. The power of the Commune came from the elected National Guard. But once created, the Commune should have reorganized with a strong hand the National Guard, from top to bottom, given it reliable leaders and established a regime of very strict discipline. The Commune did not do this, being itself deprived of a powerful revolutionary directing center. It too was crushed.

We can thus thumb the whole history of the Commune, page by page, and we will find in it one single lesson: a strong party leadership is needed. More than any other proletariat has the French made sacrifices for the revolution. But also more than any other has it been duped. Many times has the bourgeoisie dazzled it with all the colors of republicanism, of radicalism, of socialism, so as always to fasten upon it the fetters of capitalism. By means of its agents, its lawyers and its journalists, the bourgeoisie has put forward a whole mass of democratic, parliamentary, autonomist formulae which are nothing but the shackles with which he binds the feet of the proletariat and prevents its advance.

The temperament of the French proletariat is a revolutionary lava. But this lava is now covered with the ashes of skepticism—result of numerous deceptions and disenchantments. Also, the revolutionary proletarians of France must be severer towards their party and unmask more pitilessly any non-conformity between word and action. The French workers have need of an organi-



Lenin and Trotsky

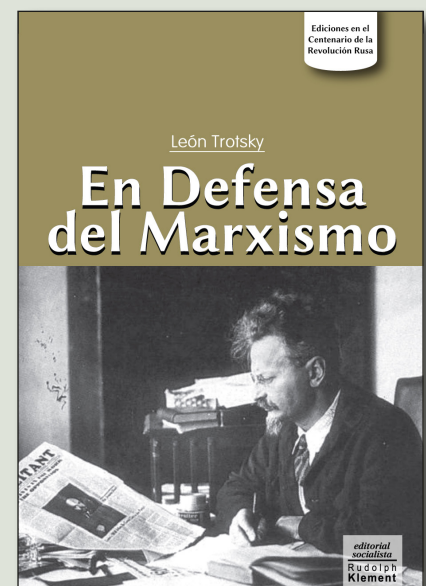
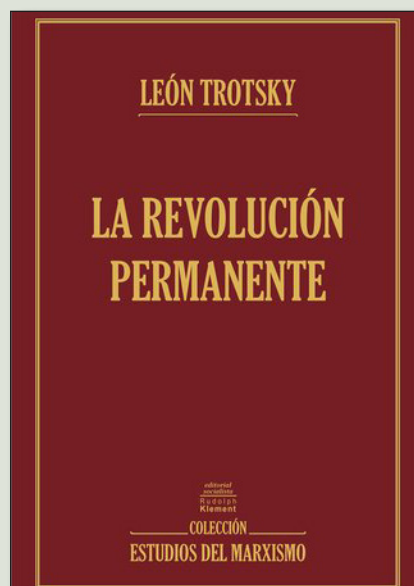
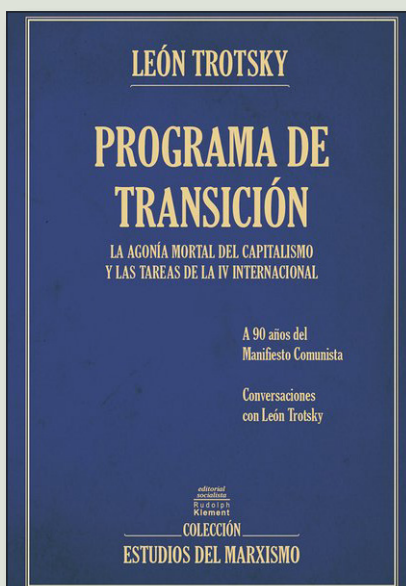
zation for action, strong as steel, with leaders controlled by the masses at every new stage of the revolutionary movement.

How much time will history afford us to prepare ourselves? We do not know. For fifty years the French bourgeoisie has retained the power in its hands after having elected the Third Republic on the bones of the Communards. Those fighters of '71 were not lacking in heroism. What they lacked was clarity in method and a centralized leading organization. That is why they were vanquished. Half a century elapsed before the proletariat of France could pose the question of avenging the death of the Communards. But this time, the action will be firmer, more concentrated. The heirs of Thiers will have to pay the historic debt in full.

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APPENDIX

We are publishing as an appendix a text by Leon Trotsky entitled "Lessons of the Commune," concerning the first great proletarian revolution, the heroic Paris Commune of 1871, which concentrates and synthesizes the enormous elaborations developed by Marx and Engels, and later by Lenin in his work "The State and Revolution."

Leon Trotsky

Lessons of the Paris Commune

February 1921

Each time that we study the history of the Commune we see it from a new aspect, thanks to the experience acquired by the later revolutionary struggles, both the Russian and the German and Hungarian revolutions. The Franco-German war was a bloody explosion, harbinger of an immense world slaughter, the Commune of Paris was like a flash of lightning of a world proletarian revolution.

The Commune shows us the heroism of the working masses, their capacity to unite into a single bloc, their talent to sacrifice themselves in the name of the future... but at the same time it shows us the incapacity of the masses to choose their path, their indecision in the leadership of the movement, their fatal penchant to come to a halt after the first successes, thus permitting the enemy to regain its breath and to reestablish its position.

The Commune came too late. It had all the possibilities of taking the power on September 4 and that would have permitted the proletariat of Paris to place itself at a single stroke at the head of the workers of the country in their struggle against all the forces of the past, both against Bismarck as well as against Thiers. But the power fell into the hands of the democratic praters, the deputies of Paris. The Parisian proletariat had neither a party, nor leaders to whom it would have been closely bound by previous struggles. The petty bourgeois patriots who thought themselves socialists and sought the support of the workers did not really have any confidence in themselves. They did nothing but shook the proletariat's faith in itself, they were continually in quest of celebrated lawyers, of journalists, of deputies, whose baggage consisted only of a dozen vaguely revolutionary phrases, in order to entrust them with the leadership of the movement.

The reason why Jules Favre, Picard, Gamier-Pages and Co. took power in Paris on September 4 is the same as that which permitted Paul-Boncour, A. Varenne, Renaudel and numerous others to be for a time the masters of the party of the proletariat.

The Renaudels and the Boncours and even the Longuets and the Pressemanes are much closer, by virtue of their sympathies,



The National Guard at a barricade of the Paris Commune

their intellectual habits and their conduct, to the Jules Favres and the Jules Ferrys than to the revolutionary proletariat. Their socialist phraseology is nothing but an historic mask which permits them to impose themselves upon the masses. And it is just because Favre, Simon, Picard and the others abused of a democratico-liberal phraseology that their sons and their grandsons are obliged to resort to a socialist phraseology. But the sons and the grandsons have remained worthy of their fathers and continue their work. And when it will be necessary to decide not the question of the composition of a ministerial clique but the much more important question of knowing what class in France must take power, Renaudel, Varenne, Longuet and their similars will be in the camp of Millerand – collaborator of Galliffet, the butcher of the Commune ... When the revolutionary babblers of the salons and of parliament find themselves face to face, in real life, with the Revolution, they never recognize it.

The workers' party – the real one- is not a machine for parliamentary manoeuvres, it is the accumulated and organized experience of the proletariat. It is only with the aid of the party, which rests upon the whole history of its past, which foresees theoretically the paths of development, all its stages, and de-

Continued on page 39