

Le Pen Rally Aborted in Montreal **No Platform for Fascists!**

On 22 September comrades of the Bolshevik Tendency participated in an important anti-fascist mobilization in Montreal. The protest was a response to an attempt by local fascists to organize a public rally featuring Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a senior official of Jean-Marie Le Pen's French National Front (who was in Montreal to attend an international conference of municipal officials).

Faced with a thousand militant demonstrators, the fascists decided to cancel their provocation. This led to some bitter recriminations between Le Pen's supporters and local Ku Klux Klan thugs. Michel Larocque, Quebec's self-styled KKK Imperial Wizard, denounced the Front as "bourgeois sellouts," and complained that: "When it was starting up in France the Front National had to rely on strong-arm types like us to do their work for them. Now that they've gotten a bit bigger, they're trying to dissociate themselves from people like us" (*Montreal Gazette*, 23 September 1993). The same article also reported:

"Later he [Larocque] told a half dozen Klan supporters: 'I don't have to hide who I am. I don't understand why he (Le Gallou) is trying to hide who he is...'"

"Larocque said he was angry because he and his fellow racists had been called upon by Roger Alacoque, the Front's representative in Quebec, to provide security at the news conference—only to be denounced by other Front members."

The Front National (FN) is the largest and most "respectable" ultra-rightist organization in the world today. It is a good thing that its initial attempt to establish a beachhead in North America was blocked. The 22 September demonstration was therefore a victory for the left and all potential victims of the fascists, but it was a very limited victory, and one gained *despite* the political leadership of the "Coalition contre la présence du Front national et la montée de l'extrême droite" which repeatedly appealed for the state to take the initiative against the fascists.

"Anti-racist group wants [Montreal mayor Jean] Doré to stop visit here by extreme-right politician" announced the headline in the 24 August *Gazette*. On 18 September, an article headlined "Doré praised for decision to exclude rightist," reported that: "Heather Howard, of the Coalition to counter the Front National in Canada [sic], praised Doré for his decision to exclude Le Gallou from the reception," which the city threw for the municipal conference attendees.

Howard was not the only one to praise the mayor for snubbing the FN. The coverage of Doré in the October 1993 issue of *Socialist Worker*, published by the International Socialists (IS), reads as if it had been written by a city hall publicist:

"The mayor of Montreal, Jean Doré, had faced a barrage of demands from the anti-Nazi coalition in Montreal. Doré, apparently embarrassed by the invitation extended

to the FN without his knowledge, arranged to introduce the Metropolis '93 conference.

"Doré stated to delegates proudly that Montreal 'is a city of immigrants.' He said that the most important task for mayors of cities such as Montreal is 'to combat any manifestation of racism which by definition is a perversion of democracy.'"

"While calls from the coalition to bar the FN reps from the conference were rejected, Le Gallou and his cronies were forbidden from attending the welcoming cocktail party at Montreal's city hall, and all city staff were ordered not to rent any city facilities to the *Front National*."

In theory *Socialist Worker* would probably agree that anyone who really wanted to "combat any manifestation of racism" in Montreal might start with the racist, trigger-happy police force that carries out Doré's commands. But this notion did not make it into the article. Nor did the IS mention a recent speech by Doré in which he characterized blue-collar city workers as "martians" for refusing to accept a wage freeze. On 13 September civic workers arriving at Montreal's city hall for a demonstration found all the doors locked. To register their protest, they were obliged to smash their way inside with a battering ram. A number of their leaders have since been charged with a variety of offenses.

This is the kind of labor militancy that revolutionaries want to harness in the struggle against the fascists, but it seems that the IS has trouble identifying the class line. Their upbeat presentation of Doré suggests that they may consider criticism of this labor-bashing capitalist politician to be divisive. Instead of exposing the contradiction between Doré's charade of "opposition" to the FN while Montreal police were assigned to protect the fascist rally, *Socialist Worker* uncritically reprinted his remarks about combatting racism. The other leftist groups in the coalition (the Communist League, Mobilisation and Action Socialiste) who went along with the calls for banning the FN were at least able to resist the temptation to laud the mayor.

The objective of Marxists in doing anti-fascist work must be to mobilize the power of the working class and the oppressed against the racist pogromists. This cannot be done by prettifying the enemies of working people. The tactic of alternately praising and pressuring Doré pursued by the anti-FN coalition was not one with much appeal to the militant workers locked in class struggle with "hizzoner." Like the black and minority youth victimized by cops, these workers see the civic authorities as their enemies, not their friends.

The attempt to build "broad anti-fascist unity" with elements of the ruling class is a prescription for defeat. Those would-be revolutionaries who put a higher value on building a "mass movement" than on promoting revolutionary politics usually find themselves setting up the chairs and microphones for people whose pro-capitalist policies they ostensibly oppose. This is exactly

what happened at the 22 September rally, as the coalition's MC vainly appealed for a representative from the reactionary Zionist B'nai Brith to come to the microphone. But B'nai Brith, which places its faith in Mayor Doré and the cops, had publicly disassociated itself from the demonstration in advance, and refused to address the crowd. Of course none of the "revolutionary" groups in the coalition had anything to say—they were all too afraid that a mention of socialism might alienate the liberals they wanted to draw in.

This abject political capitulation to liberalism must seem a bit incongruous to those members of Action Socialiste (AS) who take their politics seriously. For much of the last year, AS has been vigorously defending the Peruvian Maoist Sendero Luminoso's policy of assassinating liberals (as well as union leaders, social workers and rival leftists). In Montreal, however, these Sendero-boosters work along different lines. Combating reformism and illusions in the state is fine in theory, but at the moment the AS leadership apparently sees its job as "broadening" the movement by limiting its politics to what liberals find tolerable. In the Marxist movement this approach is called liquidationism.

Revolutionaries are not sectarians. We do not stand aside from the concrete struggles of the moment, but neither are we prepared to become the "best builders" of, or take political responsibility for, formations preaching reliance on the state against the deadly threat of fascism. The Communist International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, developed the tactic of the united front as a means for revolutionaries to overcome such contradictions and achieve principled unity with other forces in pursuit of common, practical objectives. "March Separately, Strike Together!" was the Comintern's united-front slogan: each organization retains the right to argue for its own politics (including the right to criticize its partners) while joining forces to carry out a common action. Unfortunately the initiators of the 22 September demonstration, including the ostensible revolutionaries among them, chose to organize on a lowest-common denominator basis and ended up adapting to the illusions of the least militant elements in the coalition.

Reprinted below is a translation of a leaflet distributed by the Bolshevik Tendency in Montreal:

On 22 September in Montreal Jean-Marie Le Pen's racist, xenophobic National Front (FN) plans to make its first public appearance in North America. Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a senior Front official, described by the *Montreal Gazette* as Le Pen's "right-hand man" is billed as the featured speaker. Working people and all others threatened by fascist terror (women, Jews, Asians, blacks, gays and lesbians, immigrants, native people and leftists) must answer this provocation with a massive and militant counter-mobilization. The best time to confront the fascists is *now*, before they can grow.

The FN meeting is being organized by Roger Alacoque, leader of the "Cercle National des Français à l'étranger," a local group of Le Pen supporters. Alacoque is a buddy of Quebec Ku Klux Klan leader Michel Larocque, whose violent crimes against immigrant youth,

gays and leftists are a matter of public record. Alacoque describes Larocque as a "good boy" and an "occasional ally," but, like Le Pen, he aspires to move beyond the lumpen fringe and make far-right politics "respectable."

Alacoque has been a member of Quebec's governing Liberal Party since 1984. Using the platform of the Orford riding association, he has described Quebec as a "garbage can for the Third World," and called for tighter controls on non-white immigration. Alacoque's local Liberal MNA, Robert Benoit, openly defends his fascist supporters on the grounds that, "The Liberal Party has always been a very broad coalition of different viewpoints" (*Gazette*, 26 August [1993]).

Officials of the Montreal Urban Community (MUC) take a similarly benign attitude to the fascists, and have instructed the cops to protect the 22 September meeting. Meanwhile, anti-racist activists, organized in the "Coalition to Counter the National Front and the Rise of the Far-Right" have, according to press reports, been appealing to MUC Chairman Michel Hamelin to prevent the Le Gallou meeting from taking place. While the call for a ban on the FN meeting has not been specifically endorsed by any of the leftist groups in the coalition, neither, to our knowledge, has it been disavowed.

Calling on the civic authorities to ban the fascists may seem like a smart tactic to some, but relying on the bourgeois-democratic state promotes dangerous illusions. The state is not neutral—it is a tool of the capitalist rulers of this society. Political bans are inevitably used far more aggressively against anti-fascists and the left than against the right. Democratic rights and freedoms are all very well, but the function of the state, and its armed thugs, is primarily to safeguard private property.

Fascism: Vanguard of Imperialist Reaction

The victory of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet bloc produced neither the democratic freedoms nor economic benefits that capitalist propagandists promised. Instead, living standards have plummeted and there has been an explosion of ethnocide, xenophobia and all manner of social reaction. Emboldened by the imperialist triumph, the ultra-right is on the rise throughout Europe. In country after country, fascist terrorists launch murderous attacks...while the police and state authorities turn a blind eye.

While the Soviet Union existed, the capitalists found it expedient to provide a social "safety net" for some of the victims of their profit-driven economy. Today, with the working class in retreat and the "communist menace" vanquished, these programs are being systematically dismantled as the ranks of the jobless and homeless swell. Employers are aggressively attacking wages and working conditions, while the struggles of workers, ethnic and racial minorities, immigrants and the unemployed are increasingly met with repression.

In this New World Order, where the very idea of socialism has been pronounced dead and all aspirations for a humane, egalitarian international social order are supposed to be forgotten, reaction and oppression rule supreme. Workers forced to leave their homelands in search of a better life are treated as criminals and

hounded by the state's repressive apparatus. Immigrants are scapegoated for the irrationalities of the capitalist business cycle. Class-conscious workers in Quebec and the rest of the "developed" world must firmly oppose the xenophobic hysteria of their rulers and fight for full and equal citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Racist and fascist groups such as the Heritage Front, White Power, the Ku Klux Klan and Le Pen's National Front seek to spearhead the bourgeois offensive, either as vigilantes or auxiliaries to the armed bodies of the bourgeois state. Their attacks on homosexuals, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees and other victims of capitalist oppression are aimed at galvanizing and misdirecting the anger of backward layers of the working class, lumpens and pauperized petty entrepreneurs who are themselves being crushed beneath the wheels of "free enterprise."

Labor Bureaucrats Blind to Fascist Threat

Rather than organizing to sweep the fascists from the streets, the nationalists who head the powerful Quebec labor movement have helped create the political climate in which they can grow. The union misleaders are quite willing to unite with xenophobes and Quebec Français demagogues in defense of the French language supposedly "threatened" by immigrants. Le Pen's followers are consciously seeking to recruit francophone ultra-nationalists to create a cadre of ready-made strikebreakers and company goons which will eventually be turned against the organized labor movement.

Quebec's cultural elite in the 1930's and 1940's was riddled with anti-Semites and fascist sympathizers. Organizations such as Jeune Canada and Action Nationale had a broad following, and the Theatre Monument National on St. Laurent Boulevard—owned by the reactionary Société St. Jean Baptiste—was the setting for the

racist rantings of Lionel Groulx and Quebec fascist leader Adrien Arcand. Racist demagogues such as Groulx are still revered and honored by today's political elite, school-children are still taught to pronounce his name with respect, and he even has a metro station named after him. The leftist "indépendantistes" of Gauche Socialiste prefer to downplay the contemporary significance of these earlier advocates of Quebec nationalism, but the fact remains that the labor bureaucracy is in a political bloc with Groulx's heirs, not with Gauche Socialiste.

For United Labor/Minority Action to Smash Fascism!

Le Pen's fascist supporters in the Cercle National are not a collection of social theorists with a slightly skewed, oddball or backward point of view. Theirs is not a literary discussion group. They seek to recruit a vanguard of reaction through terrorist attacks on the most vulnerable and isolated sectors of the oppressed. They want to build a movement committed to organizing much larger-scale attacks in the future.

The FN meeting on 22 September is an attempt by the fascists to test the water in Montreal. If they are successful, their activity will increase, wavering elements will draw closer, and they will be harder to stop the next time. Crushing the fascists before they can grow is a matter of elementary self-defense. It is a task that cannot be left to the capitalists' democratic state, whose representatives have historically been far more sympathetic to the fascists than to their opponents. Unity in action by the left, the organizations of the oppressed and militant trade unionists can inflict a crushing defeat on the nascent fascist movement in Quebec. ■