

**CHAPTER III**  
**The logic of nationalism**

*“Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism — these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world and express the two policies (nay, the two world outlooks) in the national question.” (1)*

The gulf between two paths, two lines, two camps — such is the gulf which separates bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism. Any compromise with bourgeois nationalism leads directly to the revision of Marxism-Leninism and to the passage into the camp of the bourgeoisie and reactionary forces. In this chapter, we will examine the extent to which these two conceptions of the world (as Lenin calls them) are in contradiction and to what extent the so-called Communist League has sunk into bourgeois nationalism, and its immediate consequence, repudiating proletarian revolution. We will see how the League, caught up in the logic of nationalism, adopts the point of view of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie on the question of the nationalist movement in Quebec. Fighting over the leadership of the reactionary nationalist movement with other bourgeois parties, so as to polish the image of this movement and better deceive the working class — that is the logic of nationalism.

## **Under the cover of Marxism hides bourgeois nationalism**

*“It is the responsibility of Marxist-Leninists to prepare the people of their country for the eventuality of war and to steel themselves as firm defenders of independence. On this question there can be no hesitation, no confusion, even if the situation is complex.” (2)*

To be “*firm defenders of the independence*” of their country, this is the nationalist credo of the League. To place independence above all, to place the national struggle above all, is precisely the point of view of bourgeois nationalism. For it would never cross the minds of the vulgar nationalists of the League that a national movement could be **reactionary**, pro-imperialist, or even outrightly **imperialist!** Nor would it cross their minds that, in the case of an unjust war, a war of imperialist

pillage, Marxist-Leninists might not apply themselves to defending their homeland, but might hope and work actively for the **defeat** of their country in the imperialist war by overthrowing “their” bourgeoisie (which they have worked to weaken) and throwing out all imperialists. Why is the League so intent on speculating which country will attack the other in the case of a new world war? Why does the League go out of its way to present Canada as a “victim” (3) of war and not as an aggressive and reactionary imperialist power? Why does it make a point of warning us right away that the main contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and consequently socialist revolution, will have to be abandoned for the national liberation struggle? And why does the League consider it so important that the proletariat take up the immediate defence of the “homeland” if the latter is threatened by the superpowers? Why, if not to bring the Canadian proletariat under the influence of the **reactionary, imperialist, and chauvinist** national movement of the Canadian bourgeoisie which takes part in international imperialist rivalries for the division and redivision of the world? Ladies and gentlemen of the League, you are right to say: *“On this question, there can be no hesitation, no confusion”*. The Canadian proletariat has absolutely nothing in common with the bourgeois movement which uses the banner of independence to strengthen the imperialism of “our” bourgeoisie. We must actively fight this movement, whose interests are opposed to those of the proletariat and the peoples of the world.

What distinguishes Marxist-Leninists from bourgeois nationalists like those in the League, is that Marxist-Leninists **concretely** analyse a given national movement in its historical context to understand what it represents. To draw up this analysis, they use the revolutionary program of the proletariat and proletarian internationalism as a guide. They do this analysis to determine whether or not a given national movement is directed against imperialism, and whether or not it can lead to a revolutionary confrontation with reactionary forces. Marxist-Leninists use the same point of view when they analyse the question of war to determine if it is a just war directed **against** imperialism, or if it is an unjust war led by imperialism. Now let us look at the nationalist movement in Canada, and the foreseeable nature of a possible third world war.

Canada is an advanced capitalist country which obtained its political independence over a century ago. After the revolutionary struggle of the Patriots in 1837, the Canadian bourgeoisie took the path of reformism and set up a politically independent State on the basis of the former colonies of British North America. The fact that the young bourgeoisie in Canada chose the path of compromise and peaceful negotiation with

the dominant imperialism has had important consequences, and still has today. By closely associating first with British monopoly capital, and later, after the Second World War, with U.S. monopoly capital, the Canadian bourgeoisie succeeded, in transforming itself into a highly concentrated monopoly bourgeoisie in only a few decades. So, in spite of its small population and the small amount of capital which the Canadian bourgeoisie possessed at first, Canada was able to rise to the rank of a big imperialist power over a short period of time. The other side of the quick rise of Canadian imperialism was the financial dependence of Canada on the superpower — today, the U.S. — with which it associated, and the political consequences of this.

Although the Canadian bourgeoisie has always participated in the imperialist powers’ biggest undertakings like the two world wars, the creation of the Zionist “State” of Israel, the Korean war, the war in Vietnam and various imperialist missions under the United Nations, it has never missed an occasion to put forward its own imperialist interests on the world scale. While the Canadian bourgeoisie — a full-fledged participant in NATO and NORAD, an observer at the Organization of American States, an influential member of the Commonwealth, a competitor of French imperialism in the organizations of Francophone countries and a member of the Security Council of the U.N. — lines up behind the positions of U.S. imperialism, it still fully participates in world imperialist rivalries in its own name.

However, the path of collaboration with the great imperialist powers which Canada has always followed has given rise, within the Canadian bourgeoisie itself, to a nationalist movement which calls for the protection of the independence of Canada from the “abusive” stranglehold of U.S. imperialism which controls important sectors of the Canadian economy. This nationalist movement within the Canadian bourgeoisie has always found considerable support among certain sectors of the Canadian working class, particularly, the labour aristocracy and the reformist leadership of Canadian unions, as well as among certain intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie. This nationalist movement has also won the support of certain influential deputies of some Liberal governments of Canada. Walter Gordon and Eric Kierans are cases in point. In general these politicians didn’t last too long since the Liberals preferred to be on good terms with U.S. imperialism, stamping their foot a couple of times to remind the leaders in Washington of the advantages and... demands of a “special friendship” between Canada and the USA. Aside from the periodical flirting of the Liberals with nationalist positions, the NDP and the revisionists of the CPC have been — at least up until the creation of the League — the main leaders of the Canadian nationalist movement. In spite of differences in the

demagogic use of the word socialism, all these defenders of Canadian nationalism have one point in common: they all denounce the cowardliness, the inconsistency, the capitulation, the incompetence, of the "big bosses" of the government and of those businesses which refuse to follow "truly national" policies. These bourgeois parties insist on blaming U.S. imperialism for the deepening of the economic crisis in Canada. They put forward all sorts of platforms, in the auto industry for example, which aim at developing "truly independent" policies for Canada which will be beneficial for the entire Canadian people. As we have shown, and will continue to illustrate, this is basically the political line which serves to guide the League.

Nevertheless, we still have to answer the question — is the Canadian nationalist movement progressive? Is it a potentially progressive movement with an inconsistent leadership, or on the contrary, a completely reactionary and retrograde movement? For us, the answer is clear. The Canadian nationalist movement, offspring of the anti-colonial struggle waged by the Canadian bourgeoisie over a century ago, is fundamentally reactionary. The aim of this movement in today's imperialist Canada is to turn the proletariat away from the **only** means of putting an end to the oppression of U.S. imperialism over the working people and the proletariat, exploited by U.S. capital. The solution to U.S. presence in Canada and to the hegemonic policy of the two superpowers is **not** the "*struggle of the people to preserve and reinforce Canada's national independence in the economic, political, military, and ideological-cultural spheres*" (4). The solution is **socialist revolution!** Though the revisionist "comrades" of the League may claim that IN STRUGGLE! has been "leftist" and revised Marxism-Leninism by neglecting to call on the revolutionary potential of national liberation struggles to struggle against the two superpowers, their petty-bourgeois nationalist demagoguery will not be able to hide the revisionist nature of their arguments for very long. They try to pass off as "revolutionary", nationalist movements which are in reality nothing but retrograde imperialist endeavours..., if the word "retrograde" is not redundant when speaking of imperialism of the national bourgeoisie, and in this case, "our" national bourgeoisie. The Canadian nationalist movement is not anti-imperialist, it is **pro-imperialist!**

In the present situation of capitalist and imperialist Canada, the national movement of the bourgeoisie can no longer play **any** progressive role. Reinforcing the independence of imperialist Canada can lead to nothing other than an increased capacity of Canadian imperialism to exploit the proletariat to develop the "*economic independence*" of the country and the imperialist activities of Canada in the world, and to

blind the proletariat with a reformist and class-collaborationist line. Today more than ever, as the crisis and the threat of war deepens with each new day, we must work to prepare proletarian revolution. To put forward the slogan of national independence for Canada, to bring a slogan out of the moth-balls for something which, in the context of imperialism cannot be accomplished more than it already is (unless Canada became a superpower!) is not only an opportunist and revisionist position. It is pure and simple betrayal! It places the League in the rank of a highly skilled successor of the NDP, which has discredited itself when it was in power, and the CPC which carries around its link to Moscow like a ball and chain. The bourgeoisie should be thankful that revisionism knows how to change appearances, for otherwise the old decrepit flag of national independence for Canada might very well rot or turn white in the presence of the red flag of socialist revolution. So, while the "left image" of revisionism is rather in a bad way, revisionism has re-appeared with a new wrapping: the League, still wrapped in the prestige, among the Canadian people, of the Chinese revolution. Paul Desmarais of Power Corporation recently came back from a trip to China and announced that the Chinese revisionists, who a few months earlier had applauded the positive nature of imperialist Canada's foreign policy, were now about to sign multi-billion dollar contracts with Canadian monopolies. The Canadian bourgeoisie is already revelling over the profits which it plans to make from the arrival of China in the field of imperialist rivalries. While this is happening, the League, faithful mouthpiece of the pro-imperialist, not to say imperialist, line of the new Chinese leaders, engages in collaboration with Canadian imperialism and in the struggle against authentic Marxist-Leninists.

And what about war, these "three world theory" revisionists will probably ask. Indeed, let us speak of this war which makes the League tremble to the point of taking refuge in the bosom of Canadian imperialism, transformed into a progressive force... It is true that war is inevitable, and this will be so as long as imperialism exists. For as long as monopoly bourgeoisies exist, the struggle between rapacious imperialists for the domination of the world and against the peoples will continue. The gruesome spectre of war looms over the world with the millions of deaths and the incredible misery which it entails for the people of the world.

But imperialist war is not only a spectre. It is also a daily reality as big imperialist powers, and especially the two superpowers, manoeuvre in the perpetual game of rivalries at the expense of the peoples of the world. But today we are faced with the growing risk of a big war, a

world war which the two superpowers might trigger in a desperate effort to pull themselves out of the crisis.

What will be the nature of such a war? It is nothing new to state that it will be an imperialist war, an unjust war which we must not lead, but which we must oppose. This may seem self-evident, a mere generality. Especially since this imperialist world war is not the first of its kind. And yet, once again, for the third consecutive time, bourgeois nationalists and revisionists have infiltrated the ranks of communists. We are, of course, thinking of the League and the "three worlds theory".

What does it mean to say that we must oppose war? It means to oppose an unjust war with a just war, to oppose counter-revolution with revolution. Indeed war is inevitable under imperialism, but imperialism is not inevitable. On the contrary, imperialism is doomed to be overthrown by the camp of the proletariat and of revolution. As Lenin said,

*"You, the bourgeoisie, are fighting for plunder; we the workers of all the belligerent countries, declare war upon you for socialism"* (5)

There is only one way to fight imperialist war. It is to mobilize the proletariat in the struggle to overthrow the war-like bourgeoisie. Strangely enough, social-chauvinists in Canada and on the international level quote less and less frequently Mao who had stated very, very clearly that either revolution would ward off war, or if the imperialists declared war, war would trigger revolution. To venture into war against the opposing imperialist camp, the bourgeoisie must be able to count on the proletariat's submissiveness to the national flag, the flag which the League holds up high. The bourgeoisie must also be able to count on a proletariat which will not turn the weapons designed to kill the workers of other nations against it. The League speculates on the relative might of the reactionary forces within the USA and the USSR. However, it is not within each superpower that the balance of power between the camp of socialism and the camp of imperialism develops. It is on a world scale. The superpowers must be sure of their imperialist allies as well as of their rear in the colonized or dominated countries. So, progress for the revolution in one country or another is a step in the direction of socialism and against war. It is therefore absolutely erroneous to think that we are going to prevent war by strengthening secondary imperialist powers and reactionary regimes. Worse still, to practice this absolutely counter-revolutionary line of sharpening inter-imperialist rivalries, and even excusing the policy of aggression, the policy of "hawks" against the policy of "appeasement"

amounts to taking sides for imperialism and for fooling the peoples of the world. It must be quite clear that "the two sides are equally bad" (\*). For they are both aggressive imperialist lines. The line of "appeasement" is generally upheld by more powerful elements. The attitude of U.S. imperialism during the Second World War is a good example of this, as Stalin has pointed out. (\*\*)

When we look at the writings of these apostles of bourgeois nationalism, we see that they are as far from Marxism as Broadbent (NDP) and Kashtan (CPC) are from socialism...

*"In order to combat imperialist war, we must combat those responsible for it. This means the two superpowers, and particularly Soviet social-imperialism."* (7)

According to the League, to combat imperialist war, it is not necessary to combat imperialism — that is nothing but "left phraseology" (8). It is only necessary to combat the two superpowers, and especially the USSR. So, to prevent or put off war, the League proposes — as incredible as it may seem — that we alert imperialists, including the U.S., so that they take as aggressive as possible a stand towards the USSR!

*"The aging U.S. lion is losing ground to the rising Soviet superpower all over the world (...) The rapid expansion of Soviet armaments overshadows the other superpower."* (9)

Then, the League quotes the pro-imperialist positions of the new Chinese leaders and adopts their positions with the following "hawk-line":

*"In order to put off the outbreak of war, it is also necessary to oppose a policy of appeasement."* (10)

To put this line into practice, the League begins to criticize Canada's attitude of "capitulation" towards the USSR! Given that Canada is one of the closest partners of the U.S. on the question of rivalry with the Soviet Union, the League is in fact trying to teach U.S. imperialism

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(\*) "Present-day democracy will remain true to itself only if it joins neither one nor the other imperialist bourgeoisie, only if it says that the two sides are equally bad, and if it wishes the defeat of the imperialist bourgeoisie in every country. Any other decision will in reality be national-liberal and have nothing in common with genuine internationalism." (6)

(\*\*) Stalin, Oeuvres XIV, pp. 239-240, Edition NBE, 1977. The reader will find Stalin's position (later developed by Mao Tse-tung) in PROLETARIAN UNITY, No. 10 (April-May 1978, in particular p. 36). In an article entitled, *The lessons to be drawn from the actions of Communists and the Communist Party of Canada During the Second World War, we show how the collaboration of the CPC with Canadian imperialism in the period immediately before and during the war led this party to complete degeneration. We also show how opportunists today, especially the League, follow exactly the same revisionist line on the question of the danger of a third world war.*

a lesson! Really, things are not like they use to be. Our poor little bourgeoisie and the poor "aging" bourgeoisie of the USA are so unaggressive that they don't even know how to defend national independence any more...

The June 9, 1978, issue of *The Forge* is a brilliant example of mental gymnastics. First of all, the League welcomes the strengthening of NATO on U.S. initiative:

*"Carter led the way at the conference saying the West 'cannot be indifferent' to the Soviet-Cuban-backed aggression in Zaire. (...) Carter, quite rightly, said that the Soviet Union is building a force of aggression 'which far exceeds their legitimate needs'."* (11)

After these smooth-tongued remarks on the U.S., the League, to avoid appearing as an open ally of U.S. imperialism, spends the last three lines of the article demanding the withdrawal of Canada from NATO. In the same issue of *The Forge*, the League scolds the Canadian bourgeoisie for its behaviour, which in a period of a week, varied from negative (concerning NATO), to behaviour with "positive aspects" (Canada's refusal to participate in the Paris talks on Africa), and then to clearly positive behaviour (squirmishes with the U.S. over fishing zones). Let us simply look for the time being at the case of NATO where "the gestures... are not positive in the least" (12).

Since the League has just supposedly criticized Canada's participation in NATO, one would imagine that the "gestures... not positive in the least" are those related to the aggressive nature of Canada as an imperialist country. But no! What is negative according to the League is that Canada has not been aggressive enough towards the USSR... *"In short, Trudeau is trying to appease social-imperialism, refusing to see the danger it really represents; faced with the danger of war, he hides his head in the sand. But Trudeau's appeasement line will not bring about peace."* (13) In short, the League's position is that it is not necessary to condemn imperialism as a whole, but only some of its policies, especially its policy of "appeasement". This is nothing but a demagogic cover-up for the aggressive interests of imperialism. The League is condoning the openly militaristic policy of imperialism, by implying that it is preferable! This is an outright betrayal of Marxism-Leninism. For the point of view of the proletariat, in Lenin's words, is that "the two sides are equally bad". These two imperialist lines are equally aggressive, equally aimed at the peoples of the world. To conciliate with one of these lines is to conciliate with imperialism. It is a betrayal of the revolutionary proletariat so as to tail behind "one's own" bourgeoisie. It is the social-chauvinist position that "what matters above all" is the victory of one's country, that is, the victory of

"one's own" bourgeoisie in an imperialist war. It is the path of bourgeois nationalism and counter-revolution.

### From chauvinism to narrow nationalism

The League's bourgeois nationalism is not only present in its apology of the reactionary Canadian nationalist movement. It is also present in the form of its direct participation in the Quebec nationalist movement which has dominated, and still dominates, broad strata of Quebec workers. The League seems to think that narrow nationalism, as opposed to the chauvinism of English-Canada towards the Quebec nation, has "positive aspects". This sounds somewhat similar to the "positive aspects" of the nationalism of Canadian imperialism towards the two superpowers...

*"This (Ed. note: bourgeois nationalism) takes on two forms: English-Canadian chauvinism and narrow Quebec nationalism; the first is completely reactionary and only serves to legitimize national oppression. The second is ambivalent: it opposes national oppression but masks the causes and the ways to eliminate it."* (14)

Quite an attractive position indeed! It is not necessary to denounce bourgeois nationalism as a line completely opposed to the point of view of the proletariat, proletarian internationalism. No, it is sufficient to condemn "bad" nationalism and to criticize its negative aspects while relying on its positive aspects. It is the same thing as the position on the struggle for the independence of Canada. It is an attractive point of view, especially for nationalist elements that have somewhat lost credibility these days and who would really need a Marxist tag for new glamour. Yes, it is indeed an attractive point of view... but a completely anti-Marxist one!

Big-nation chauvinism and small-nation nationalism are the two sides of the same coin. From the point of view of the proletariat, they both result in the same thing: collaboration with the bourgeoisie of "one's own" nation instead of the solid unity of workers of all nations against the bourgeoisie of all nations. Furthermore, it is erroneous to state that narrow nationalism, the nationalism of the oppressed nation "opposes national oppression". It does not stand opposed to the oppression of nations and national minorities. It does not stand opposed to national privileges. Rather it demands national and linguistic privileges for itself. It calls for the end of oppression for "its" nation so as to better oppress other nations and national minorities. Far from putting forward the call for the complete equality of languages and na-

tions, Quebec nationalists demand that French be the only official language and that non-francophones be forced to integrate into the Quebec nation. The replacement of the privileges of the dominant nation by the privileges of the dominated nation: that is the golden rule of small-nation nationalism. If bourgeois nationalism had progressive aspects, it would mean that it could be a positive factor in the struggle of the Quebec and Canadian working class for socialism. But how could this be since such a position deepens the division of the proletariat by maintaining, in one form or another, discrimination and a spirit of revenge.

“Left” nationalists like the League and the various Trotskyist sects consciously mistake the nationalist movement and ideology, and the struggle against national oppression, that is, against the oppression of all nations and national minorities. Yet this struggle — the only one which is truly just and the only one which can put an end to the oppression of Quebec in the interest of the proletariat and revolution — is incompatible with the interests of the Quebec and Canadian bourgeoisie. It is incompatible with these interests precisely because, in a period of imperialist decadence and of domination by the monopoly bourgeoisie, the “democratism” of the bourgeoisie goes from ambivalent or inconsistent as it is throughout the capitalist era to non-existent except as a public-relations facade.

Among the militants of the nationalist movement in Quebec, there are many who are revolted by the national oppression of Quebec and who are prepared to struggle for the respect of democratic and national rights. There are, in particular, many workers who equate “anglophone” and “boss” and are thus influenced by the nationalist ideology and movement. However, the fact that there is a “reserve” of potentially revolutionary workers within the nationalist movement does not change the fact that the Quebec nationalist movement, far from being a movement of opposition to imperialism, is on the contrary a reactionary and pro-imperialist movement. The aim of bourgeois nationalism is precisely to deceive the working class by lining it up behind the interests of the bourgeoisie, and in this case, the imperialist bourgeoisie. For the Quebec section of the Canadian bourgeoisie is no less imperialist than the latter. So, the task of Marxist-Leninists is not to make compromises with the bourgeois nationalist movement. Rather, their task is to struggle relentlessly to win to their ranks workers who have been deceived by the reactionary nationalist movement. To this end, it is essential that communists call on the proletariat, the **entire** proletariat, to take up the immediate and uncompromising struggle for the absolute equality of **all** nations and national minorities, of **all** languages. This approach to the national question is the

proletarian revolutionary approach, not the radical reformist one.

*“A reformist change is one which leaves intact the foundations of the power of the ruling class and is merely a concession leaving its power unimpaired. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power. A reformist national programme does **not** abolish **all** the privileges of the ruling nation; it does **not** establish complete equality; it does **not** abolish national oppression in **all** its forms.” (15)*

This quote from Lenin shows us that the revolutionary position is not ultra-nationalism and national exclusiveness, as the petty-bourgeois radicals of the League claim. On the contrary, it is the complete break with apology for the nation, the consistent defence of **all** national rights, of **all** nations and national minorities. The consistent struggle, free of all opportunist compromises, against all forms of national discrimination, and for the absolute equality of languages and nations, is a necessary pre-condition for the internationalist unity of the proletariat. This is why proletarian internationalism is as opposed to bourgeois nationalism as the proletariat is to the bourgeoisie.

The best illustration of how far the League has moved along the reactionary path of ultra-nationalism is the positions which it adopted on the discriminatory laws passed by the nationalist government of the Parti Quebecois. As soon as it came to power, the PQ launched an offensive on one of the main themes of the Quebec nationalist movement, the question of the French language, and presented the Charter of the French Language, which then became Bill 1, and finally Bill 101. With the adoption of this law, French has become the only official language in Quebec: access to English schools is prohibited for all new residents of the province, only the French version of laws and collective agreements are considered legal, and signs not in French are illegal. The goal is to replace the privileges of the English language with the privileges for the French language, while maintaining the institutional division on national bases of the health and educational networks, and allowing “business circles” to pursue their policies of national discrimination. It is a law which divides the proletariat of the various nationalities; an anti-worker and anti-democratic law representative of the objectively reactionary nature of the Quebec nationalist movement.

On the language question, and on the question of the PQ’s referendum, beating the Trotskyists to it, the League has set itself up as a far-right opposition to the PQ. For it seems that Bill 101 has not gone **far enough** to protect our oh-so beautiful French language. According to the League, the problem with the “Charter of the French Language” is that it *“maintains the privileges of the English-Canadian nation in*

*Quebec and continues the oppression of the Quebecois nation*"(16). Another problem with the Charter of the French Language is that it is not sufficiently bent on revenge. Indeed, "*Quebecois and certain immigrants will be forced to go to French schools and others will not!*" (17) What injustice! For, according to the League, eliminating national division means eliminating national minorities **by forcing** everyone to go to French schools, while allowing anglophones to study Shakespeare in English. What generosity!

*"We are in support of a single school system throughout Canada. In Quebec this must be a French secular system. This measure will help protect the Quebec nation's language and culture and combat the Quebec English-Canadian minority's privileges. Within the francophone program the English-Canadian minority must have the right to language courses and English-Canadian culture."* (18) What this means is that, according to the League, it is legitimate to discriminate against the national rights of the anglophone minority of Quebec, for it is a part of the dominant nation... "*The francophone minority in Ontario is oppressed; their language and culture are in danger of extinction and they have the right to fight against forced assimilation by the dominant nation. Their situation is different from that of the English minority in Quebec, which as part of the oppressor nation is in no danger at all.*" (19) Therefore, for the League, national rights vary depending on which nation you belong to. How can we think of granting the same rights to francophones and anglophones, and even worse, to immigrants? To justify its racism and ultra-nationalism, the League revises Marxism-Leninism which is a bit "outmoded". Thus the abolition of all national privileges becomes in its words... "*The only way national oppression will be solved is by abolishing the privileges of the dominant nation*" (20). This is the bourgeois vision of the national question: fight the privileges of one nation by replacing them with those of another. But the League does not stop here when it comes to being more "radically reactionary" than the bourgeoisie. So the League considers the PQ to be a traitor to the nation because it refuses, for the time being, to take Quebec workers, who per chance were not born in the right nation, the chosen nation of "pure-blooded francophones", off the list of those eligible to vote in the referendum! "*Our position on this question is clear: every nation has the right to choose its own destiny, and the referendum must consult only the members of the dominated nation. In Quebec, this means the Francophone Quebecois*"(21). What matters if Marxism-Leninism teaches that communists must "*demand the settlement of the question of such secession only on the basis of a universal, direct and equal vote of the population of the given territory by secret ballot*" (22). It is probably out-dated now that the League and

its followers have "enriched" Marxism-Leninism with the "three worlds theory". For, you see, what "*matters above all*", for the League, is the nation. This is why we must demand that the bourgeois State abolish the right to vote of workers who are not "pure-blooded Quebecois" as if the political future of the territory on which they live did not concern them, too.

### The League's "new" position on the question of Quebec

The next step was "Operation camouflage", a carbon copy of the "minor error" on the question of open support for the Canadian armed forces. The League reacted to IN STRUGGLE!'s principled criticism by trying to "civilize" its nationalism and make it more like the PQ's. For appearances' sake, it mouthed the principled arguments put forward and defended by IN STRUGGLE!. Needless to say, however, it did not recognize the validity of our criticisms. It condemned IN STRUGGLE!'s alleged "assimilationism", and then continued to defend essentially the same reactionary position it had always held.

With the League, the "correct line" is the be-all and end-all. So its line is the only logical starting point in discussing its position.

*"Since its creation the League has defended the Quebec nation's right to self-determination up to and including separation. We have shown how the struggle for the socialist revolution must take precedence over all nationalist considerations (sic!). The CCL(ML) has shown that the principal contradiction in Canada is that which opposes the bourgeoisie to the Canadian proletariat, and not the national question. The League was therefore able to carry out a campaign of communist education around the Quebec elections in November 1976, and we still defend (sic!) the proletarian position from attempts by opportunists to deform the national question."* (23)

And then, using a sub-title "*Rectify our errors*" — that had already served them well in the case of the Canadian army, the League went on to say:

*"However we have made an error in the application (sic!) of our line to the question of the right of minorities to an education in their own language... The right of the English-Canadian minority in Quebec to an education in its own language in no way oppresses the Quebec people."* (24)

Its first rectification: "*French is neither superior nor inferior to*

English.” It admits at least that much — the League is at least as liberal and “reasonable” as the humanists and the PQ!

The League now recognizes that English-speaking people in Quebec have a right to an education in their mother tongue — but that is as far as its rectification goes. Apart from that, it has not budged one iota. The League does not even criticize its reactionary position in favour of refusing non-French-speaking people the right to vote in the referendum. It simply tries to shirk the issue by saying

*“On this question we made an error in bringing up the question of Quebec’s minorities’ right to vote in the referendum. ...It is not our job to misdirect the attention of the masses to secondary questions...” (25)*

The League is certainly the equal of any corrupt politician when it comes to serving up lies and hypocrisy. The League sees nothing wrong with its ultra-right-wing positions apart from the fact that they involve “secondary questions” that are better left alone for the time being... It is true, they are better left unsaid as far as the League is concerned, because they expose the League’s crude betrayal in adopting such extreme nationalist positions that even the PQ is unready to defend them. (The PQ leaves that up to nationalists like Reggie Chartrand and Marcel Barbeau, who are widely known to be sympathetic to fascism.) The League even has the nerve to conclude its article by saying:

*“Lenin teaches us that the ability to self-criticize and correct one’s errors is the mark of real Marxist-Leninists” (26)*

You are absolutely right, “comrades” (!) from the League. It is quite clear from your self-criticisms that you are not real Marxist-Leninists!

What about immigrants? What do the ladies and gentlemen from the League, fervent defenders of the *third world, motor force of history*,<sup>1</sup> have to say about immigrants in their sham self-criticism? It is very simple: the League holds the same reactionary position on immigrants that the PQ does. They both hold that new immigrants, including those whose mother tongue is English — including, for instance, American, Jamaican, Indian, Pakistani or English workers — should all be **forced** to integrate into the French-speaking majority, through the use of repression by the bourgeois State.

*“Immigrants arriving in Quebec from outside Canada must integrate into French schools. This is only natural since they have chosen to live in a francophone nation.” (27)*

And if you are not satisfied with that, “Go back home!” Nevertheless, since we are “humane” and “civilized” people, as the PQ’s politicians

like to point out, we will condescend to allow immigrants already settled here and who have already adopted the English language to continue attending English-speaking schools, for the time being.

*“As for immigrants already living in Quebec who have adopted the English language, the most just policy at the present time is to permit them to remain in English schools if they so wish.” (28)*

The Inuit and the American Indians are treated more “generously”, and can choose their second language without restriction, although they are to be encouraged to choose French.

*“Inuit and Indians must have the right to choose their second language without restriction, although we can encourage them to adopt French as a second language in Quebec.” (29)*

As might be expected, the key argument invoked to justify all these national restrictions is the notorious scarecrow of “assimilationism”. The League rivals with Reggie Chartrand’s Chevaliers de l’Indépendance (\*) when it comes to demagogic use of this bogeyman. All these reactionary nationalists see immigrants as people who come here to assimilate the Quebec nation.

*“The bourgeoisie’s immigration policies attempt to assimilate and liquidate the Quebecois nation by artificially building up the English-Canadian minority.” (30)*

A statement like this reveals a very peculiar concept of assimilation. The League doesn’t use the term here to refer to the fact that French-speaking people may be forced to abandon their language and culture because of the discrimination and oppression from which they suffer. Rather, it is talking about how English-speaking immigrants who integrate into the English-speaking community (a minority in Quebec) swell the ranks of the English-speaking minority and thus perhaps, might upset the demographic balance between English and French-speaking people. This, combined with the fact that the “revenge of the cradle” has tapered off with the decline of the role and influence of the Roman Catholic clergy, means that in the long term there is a chance that the French-speaking group may become a minority — a catastrophic turn of events, in the minds of the nationalists. This is a typically bourgeois point of view. It sees the nation first and foremost as a framework and a means for achieving its goals as a class, which involve creating a national State to guarantee a national market, national capital and a national proletariat well-controlled by the national

(\*) The Knights of Independence, a right-wing nationalist group in Quebec.

bourgeoisie. At the heart of this utterly racist and reactionary argument is the idea that the cause of national oppression lies in the relative numerical size of nations and national minorities. This leads to and justifies the bourgeois nationalist point of view that says it is necessary to promote the Quebec nation, the French language and Quebec "national culture", and to restrict the growth of other national groups, so as to "even up" things and assure the "survival" of the endangered nation. That is what bourgeois nationalism says. And here is what Lenin says:

*"Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight for any kind of national development, for "national culture" in general? — Of course not. The economic development of capitalist society presents us with examples of immature national movements all over the world, examples of the formation of big nations out of a number of small ones, or to the detriment of some of the small ones, and also examples of the assimilation of nations. The development of nationality in general is the principle of bourgeois nationalism; hence the exclusiveness of bourgeois nationalism, hence the endless national bickering. The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary warns the masses against such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege." (31)*

If non-English-speaking immigrants and even French-speaking Quebecois decide to integrate into the English-speaking minority, it is not because they are agents of national oppression but rather that they do not want to suffer the discrimination French-speaking people are subjected to. Their choice is a result, not a cause, of national oppression. The vicious circle of national division created by discrimination and oppression cannot be broken by forcing everyone to **endure** the same oppression, especially since immigrants already have enough to cope with, given the racism and discrimination they are subjected to because of their national or ethnic origins. On the contrary, the only way to solve this dilemma is to lead the proletariat of all nationalities, and in particular of the dominant nation, in a death struggle against national oppression in any shape or form and to, ourselves, apply at all times a resolute political line of national equality. Such a position can in no way tolerate the defence of one language or culture at the expense of another, regardless of whether the language or culture is a dominant or a dominated language or culture. Unlike the nationalist approach which tries to touch up the **status quo** of national discrimination, this way of dealing with the national question is revolutionary, in that it is a

firm and thorough defence, now and always, of the absolute equality of languages and nations and the iron unity of workers of all nations and national minorities in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism, the root of national oppression.

Ultimately, to really understand the basis of the League's reactionary point of view, the basis of its bourgeois nationalism, it is necessary to study what underlies its thesis, which dates back to the **Statement of Political Agreement**. In that document, the League says, "*The Quebec nation is an important reserve of the proletarian revolution.*" (32)

It took IN STRUGGLE! a while to realize what the League really meant in this short, seemingly fairly innocent sentence. There are good reasons to explain why the League has developed yet another vulgar lie about how our group is chauvinist, about how it advocates the compulsory assimilation of the Quebec nation. According to their latest find, IN STRUGGLE! has revised the "*principle*" of the "*nation as a reserve*".

We must admit in all humility that we have been unable to discover the Marxist works that deal with this famous "*principle*" we have supposedly revised — unless, of course, the League is referring to the "three worlds theory". Although the League has repeatedly dredged up bits and pieces of various texts to back up its principle, in each case an attentive reading of the texts concerned has the very peculiar result of **proving the opposite** of what the League would like to make them say.

But to start with, take a closer look at the League's line of reasoning.

*"The Quebec nation, because it is an oppressed nation, constitutes a reserve for the socialist revolution in Canada in the same way that all movements against national oppression in the era of imperialism constitute a reserve for the socialist revolution." (33)*

It is true that in the case of some groups of workers, their revolt against national oppression may, if they can be freed from the influence of bourgeois nationalism, lead them to the conviction that socialist revolution is necessary, just as some women may adopt the communist program on the basis of their revolt against their specific oppression — again, if they can be freed from the influence of bourgeois feminism. But this is not what the League means when it talks about the "*nation as a reserve*". No, the League means that, regardless of concrete historical conditions, the nation and the national movement as such constitute a "*true ally*" (34) of the socialist revolution. Granted, it does tack on a rider — out of sheer opportunism — that "*the Quebec middle bourgeoisie is a fraction of our principal enemy and is in no way an ally of the revolution*" (35).

So, what this means is that according to the League, the bourgeoisie

has betrayed the nation, and it is up to the proletariat to defend “national interests” — as if national interests exist detached from classes!

*“The Parti Quebecois, a bourgeois nationalist and anti-worker party, is not the consistent defender of the Quebec nation. It must be combatted for what it is: a bourgeois nationalist party which serves class interests rather than national ones.” (36)*

So the League answers the PQ by serving national interests instead of class ones.

In other words, the problem with the nationalist movement in Quebec is not that it is objectively reactionary in the context of Canada today. The problem is that its **leadership**, restricted in practice to the PQ, is reactionary. This explains why the League consistently stresses the PQ as the target in its agitation (the PQ’s police, the PQ’s courts and perhaps one day the PQ’s State) instead of attacking the nationalists, the bourgeoisie and the Canadian State. In reality, the League is vying with certain bourgeois parties for the leadership of the reactionary nationalist movement on both the Quebec and Canadian levels. Furthermore, the League itself spells out the relationship between its narrow nationalism in Quebec, its social chauvinism in Canada and its bourgeois nationalist point of view in international relations.

*“IS’s analysis of the international situation rejects the revolutionary role of the third world including national liberation movements. In Canada, it denies that the Quebecois people are a true ally of the proletariat. This shows that IS rejects the basic principles of Leninism concerning the role of national movements during the era of imperialism...” (37)*

Embodied here is the nationalists’ classic revisionist falsification to the effect that **all** national movements, regardless of their class content, are progressive. This is very wrong, as the Canadian case goes to prove. The Marxist-Leninist position on that is very clear: the proletariat must support those national movements directed against imperialism, and no others. Once again, it is easy to see whether it is the League or IN STRUGGLE! that rejects the basic principles of Leninism.

The key to the League’s sleight-of-hand is that it defends the nation and bourgeois nationalism while affirming that the bourgeoisie must be excluded. In short, it wants to take the bourgeoisie’s place and mimic the bourgeoisie’s political line.

*“...the struggle of the Quebec nation for its rights contains an enormous revolutionary potential. In this sense the oppressed Quebec nation constitutes a reserve of the proletarian revolution in our country.” (38)*

*“It is the Canadian bourgeoisie, especially the monopolist fraction, which profits from and is the source of the oppression of the Quebec people. This contradiction is antagonistic, and it is principal in the national question.” (39)*

There you have it: on the one hand, there is the “*struggle of the Quebec nation*” (40), and on the other, the PQ which “*is not the consistent defender of the Quebec nation*” (41). The League’s crowning touch is to add a new principal contradiction, this time between “*the Canadian monopolist bourgeoisie and the Quebec people*” (42). This, from the very group that for ages has lectured us on the necessity of opposing the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie to the people. Now, in the same vein as the revisionist Communist Party of Canada’s slogans, the League has limited its new principal contradiction to a monopolist fraction. At the same time, the League refers to the bourgeoisie in Quebec as a middle bourgeoisie... In plain language, the League is trying to drive square pegs into round holes, and to reconcile the irreconcilable: bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism, revisionism and Marxism-Leninism. If that is what the League’s “clear” and “correct” line amounts to, then it is now evident that the real revisionists are to be found at the head of the supposed Canadian Communist League!

The bourgeoisie defends the nation and the national flag so as to convince the working class to embrace its own exploitative class project. The working class, however, **only** takes up the national struggle inasmuch as the national movement leads to taking up the **revolutionary** struggle against the forces of reaction (\*). And the revolutionary nature of the struggle resides principally in the strategic alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry and the leadership of the proletariat in

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(\*) The point of view defended by the League is the exact opposite. First, it claims to subordinate the proletarian revolution in Canada to the world revolution: “It is a principle for Marxist-Leninists to subordinate the interests of proletarian revolution in their own countries to revolution on a world scale” (43) But what the League in fact puts forward is the subordination of proletarian revolution to the “world united front” of capitalist and imperialist countries: “This means that their people, and consequently their country, in the case of a second or third world country, must take active part in the world united front.” (44) Concretely, this means directing the national struggle against hegemonism: “They must also mobilize their people to resist the hegemonic aims and preparations for war of the two superpowers. All Marxist-Leninists must raise the banner of their country’s independence.” (45) That is how the “struggle to defend the country’s independence against the superpowers is an integral part of the struggle for world proletarian revolution.” (46) To be more exact, that is how bourgeois nationalism replaces proletarian internationalism and social revolution. That is how, in the logic of nationalism, the League’s line on the international situation and the “endangered homeland” becomes a basis for class collaboration and the rejection of the proletarian revolution in Canada for the sake of the struggle against preparations for war and the struggle for the protection of world peace. This struggle would in turn be a struggle for another possible struggle — the proletarian revolution. The League, Tito and Teng Hsiao-peng certainly have nothing to learn from Khrushchev and Brezhnev!

this alliance. Tactical alliances with the national bourgeoisie or support for this or that national movement led by the bourgeoisie are entirely conditional on the revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie and the movement. Is a specific national movement directed against imperialism? Is it a way to involve the proletarian and non-proletarian masses in mobilization for revolutionary work? Does it enable genuinely communist forces to develop independent action to defend the one and only thoroughly revolutionary program, the communist program, the program of proletarian revolution?

For the working class, there can be only one political line and only one political program: to strengthen the camp of the revolution and socialism, and to destroy the camp of the bourgeoisie and reaction. The international proletariat has only one flag: the flag of socialism. This flag requires the total union of the workers of all nations and countries. It requires that the peoples and nations oppressed by imperialism unite around the proletariat. Consequently, it requires a resolute struggle against national divisions and barriers imposed by the bourgeoisie. The names of these barriers are oppression, discrimination and nationalism. This is the fundamental point of view of the proletariat on the national question.

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- ( 1 ) Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, Volume 20, p. 26
  - ( 2 ) *The Forge*, Vol. 1, No. 8, April 8, 1976, p. 10
  - ( 3 ) *Statement of Political Agreement...*, op. cit., p. 44, among others
  - ( 4 ) *Ibid.*, p. 54
  - ( 5 ) Lenin, *The Junius Pamphlet*, Collected Works, Vol. 22, p. 318
  - ( 6 ) Lenin, *Under a false flag*, Collected Works, Vol. 21, p. 144
  - ( 7 ) *The Forge*, Vol. 1, No. 8, April 8, 1976, p. 9
  - ( 8 ) *The Forge*, Vol. 2, No. 7, March 31, 1977, p. 16
  - ( 9 ) *The Forge*, Vol. 3, No. 12, June 9, 1978, p. 8
  - (10) *Ibid.*, p. 8
  - (11) *Ibid.*, p. 8
  - (12) *Ibid.*, p. 14
  - (13) *Ibid.*, p. 14
  - (14) *The Forge*, Vol. 1, No. 8, April 8, 1976, p. 3
  - (15) Lenin, *The discussion on self-determination summed up*, Collected Works, Vol. 22, p. 344
  - (16) *The Forge*, Vol. 2, No. 9, April 28, 1977, p. 4
  - (17) *The Forge*, Vol. 2, No. 8, April 14, 1977, p. 5
  - (18) *Ibid.*, p. 5
  - (19) *Ibid.*, p. 5
  - (20) *The Forge*, Vol. 2, No. 9, April 28, 1977, p. 4 (our emphasis)
  - (21) *The Forge*, Vol. 2, No. 5, March 3, 1977, p. 12 (N.B. the word "only" is in large capital letters in the French version, but not in the English!)
  - (22) Lenin, *Thesis on the National Question*, Collected Works, Vol. 19, p. 244
  - (23) *The Forge*, Nov. 11, 1977, p. 9
  - (24) *Ibid.*, p. 9
  - (25) *Ibid.*, p. 9
  - (26) *Ibid.*, p. 9
  - (27) *Ibid.*, p. 8
  - (28) *Ibid.*, p. 8
  - (29) *Ibid.*, p. 8

- (30) *Ibid.*, p. 8
- (31) Lenin, *Critical remarks on the national question, in Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 35
- (32) *Statement of Political Agreement...*, op. cit., p. 46
- (33) *The Forge*, Nov. 11, 1977, p. 8
- (34) *Ibid.*, p. 15
- (35) *Ibid.*, p. 8
- (36) *Statement of political agreement...*, op. cit., p. 46
- (37) *The Forge*, Nov. 11, 1977, p. 15
- (38) *October*, No. 2-3, p. 73
- (39) *Ibid.*, p. 76-77. (Translator's note: This is our translation from the French version. The English version of the same passage reads, "It is the Canadian bourgeoisie, especially the monopolist fractions, which profits from and is the source of the oppression of the Quebec people. This contradiction is antagonistic. It gives the national question its antagonistic character. The bourgeoisie is the principal aspect of the national question...")
- (40) *Ibid.*, p. 73
- (41) *Statement of Political Agreement...*, op. cit. 46
- (42) *October*, No. 2-3, p. 76. (Translators note: Again this is our translation from the French version. The English version of this sentence reads: "The contradiction which characterizes the Quebec national question is between the Canadian bourgeoisie and the Quebec people".)
- (43) *Against right opportunism in the analysis of the principal contradiction*, p. 17 (Translators' note: Once again, this is our translation from the French version. The English of this passage says, "In principle, Marxist-Leninists see the interests of proletarian revolution in their own countries as an integral part of the revolution on a world scale.")
- (44) *Ibid.*, p. 17
- (45) *Ibid.*, p. 17
- (46) *Ibid.*, p. 17