

Labor Tops' New Posture on Immigrant Rights

For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize Immigrant Workers!

The janitors strike in Los Angeles last spring, with its scenes of thousands of predominantly immigrant workers marching through the downtown area chanting "*Si se puede!*" ("Yes we can!"), focused attention on the militancy and potential power of immigrant labor in this country. Long a bastion of the anti-union "open shop," L.A. is now "the unofficial capital of union activity in the United States," as the London *Guardian* (4 July) remarked in an article headlined "L.A. Leads America Back to Union Militancy."

With 850,000 people entering the U.S. each year legally and many hundreds of thousands more risking their lives to cross the border without documents, immigrants, primarily from Latin America, now make up some 12 percent of the U.S. workforce. The proportion of Latino workers within the unions jumped 3.7 percent last year, more than that of any other ethnic group. These workers have been in the forefront of many union struggles, forcing both the capitalists and the labor bureaucracy to take notice.

At its annual conference last February, the AFL-CIO made headlines when, reversing earlier policies, it called for a government amnesty for an estimated six million undocumented immigrants and the repeal of a 1986 anti-immigrant law which fines employers who hire undocumented workers. Latino workers greeted the announcement eagerly, turning out by the thousands to labor forums on immigrant rights held in several major cities. At the Los Angeles forum on June 10, over 17,000 workers crowded the hall, and thousands more were turned away.

Defense of immigrant rights, including against Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) repression, is crucial to the defense of the working class as a whole and is directly intertwined with the struggle against black oppression, which is the cornerstone of racist American capitalism. This central understanding is stressed in the programmatic statement of the Spartacist League/U.S., "For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government! For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!":

"The Spartacist League demands full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We stand for full equality of all languages in all spheres of public life and defend bilingual education against 'English only' bigots. We stand unalterably opposed to the bourgeoisie's anti-immigrant laws and regulations. Against the capitalists' attempts to use undocumented, low-wage immigrant workers as a club against the trade unions, we seek to mobilize the labor movement to fight deportations and INS raids through class-struggle means and to organize such workers into the unions with full rights and protections. It is particularly important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism in the working class and especially among black workers, while the immigrant-derived proletariat must grasp



Almeida/NY Times

Largely Latino janitors strike in L.A. last spring demonstrated combativity of immigrant workers, who have been in forefront of recent unionization battles.

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social reaction in this country.... "The vast numbers of immigrant workers now toiling in U.S. factories can be a powerful leaven to the class struggle here, as many of them come from countries with stronger traditions of labor militancy and anti-capitalist struggle."

But advancing the cause of proletarian class struggle against the American imperialist rulers is not what animates the labor bureaucrats at the head of the AFL-CIO.

Labor Lieutenants of U.S. Imperialism

The current labor leadership under John Sweeney, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, declares itself a "new voice for American workers" as against the AFL-CIO "old guard" exemplified by onetime head George Meany, who bragged that he never walked a picket line. As real wages and union power and membership plummeted, the right-wing Cold Warriors around Meany, who had won their spurs purging reds from the unions in the late 1940s and '50s, grew increasingly discredited. But the "new voice" that the

Sweeney leadership provides is simply what they deem necessary to their role as the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class" whose purpose is to police the labor movement in the interests of U.S. imperialism.

Thus, Sweeney & Co. appeal to youth who are repulsed by the brutal and hideous conditions in "Third World" sweatshops to demand that the U.S. rulers impose "labor standards" in those countries, while immigrants and blacks in this country labor under similar or even worse conditions in "made in the U.S.A." sweatshops. The UNITE garment workers union bureaucracy of Jay Mazur, which typifies the AFL-CIO "new voice," is notorious for sweetheart deals with sweatshop manufacturers in New York's Chinatown, where horribly exploited immigrant women work six- or seven-day weeks for poverty wages. Imbued with protectionist chauvinism and anti-Communism, the AFL-CIO tops target foreign sweatshops for undercutting the profits of American capitalists and rail against "slave labor" in China, serving the imperialists' counterrevolutionary drive to smash the collectivized economy erected by the 1949 Chinese Revolution and reopen the country to unbridled exploitation.

Similarly, the Sweeney bureaucracy's new posture on immigration reflects the interests of a sector of the bourgeoisie that wants to ease up on the current anti-immigrant laws to meet the increasing need for cheap labor—and reflects as well the union tops' need to expand their own shrinking dues base. Even before the AFL-CIO's announcement, Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan, the National Restaurant Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce had come out in favor of an amnesty and repeal of employer sanctions, and in July three retired INS directors held a press conference to call on Congress for a general amnesty.

The battering of the unions over the previous two decades and the resulting increase in the rate of exploitation—25 percent of all jobs in the U.S. pay \$8 an hour or less—have helped fuel the current "boom economy," leading to the lowest unemployment level in 40 years. Facing a labor shortage, the bosses seek to use immigrant labor to keep wages down and unions out. The past year has

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WV Photo

Spartacist banner at 80,000-strong L.A. march against anti-immigrant Prop. 187, October 1994. Democrats, Republicans are enemies of workers, blacks, immigrants.



Bay Area: Bigots Exclude Gays from Palestine Solidarity March

Oakland
20 November 2000

Dear *Workers Vanguard*,

On Saturday, November 4, we went to a San Francisco demonstration in defense of the Palestinian people called by American Muslims for Global Peace and Justice. As demonstrators were preparing to march down to City Hall, a demonstration organizer and a group of black American Muslims who were serving as security for the demonstration prevented a Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention contingent from joining the march. They also tried to rip up the group's banner, which read: "U.S. Out of the Gulf, Israel Out of Occupied Palestine." We Spartacists, as well as the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) and others, protested this disgusting anti-gay exclusion and refused to join the march. A small contingent whose banner

read "Jews for Justice in Israel and Palestine" folded their banner and likewise walked away.

Not so the Workers World Party (WWP) and the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL). WWP and its International Action Center front stood by and did nothing while the gay and lesbian demonstrators were driven away, and then marched with the anti-gay bigots. The RWL, which rematerialized for this protest after virtually disappearing, had witnessed and joined the heated arguments in defense of the gay group—and *still* marched after the exclusion. Both WWP and especially the RWL have in the past uncritically embraced petty-bourgeois gay lifestyle while tailing all manner of other "vanguards" of the oppressed. Confronted with a conflict, they chose to go with nationalist and religious reactionaries, thus lending sup-

port to the exclusion of gay and lesbian defenders of the Palestinians against Zionist terror.

This spineless capitulation serves only to embolden the Islamic fundamentalists who are the enemies of Arab workers, women and all things secular. While posing as opponents of the Zionist occupation and subjugation of the Palestinian people, groups like Hamas push vile anti-Semitic poison and seek to enslave Palestinian women in the veil. Religious obscurantism is a bulwark of women's oppression worldwide and is thus counterposed to the fight for the emancipation of the proletariat and all the oppressed. In the U.S., the promo-

tion of anti-gay bigotry among black people strengthens the forces of racist reaction and is poison to the fight for black liberation.

As Marxists, we understand that to end the oppression of the Palestinian people, Arab workers and their Hebrew-speaking class brothers and sisters must join in common struggle against both the Zionist rulers and the Arab capitalists. This can only happen under the leadership of a revolutionary workers party that fights on behalf of *all* the exploited and oppressed, and smashes anti-woman and anti-gay bigotry under the heel of a victorious workers revolution!

A.S.

Spartacist Protest at NYU

Zionist Killers Off Campus!

Chanting "Zionist killers off campus! Israel out of the Territories!" Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club supporters protested the presence of Israeli army spokesmen at New York University (NYU) on November 15. The NYU meeting was part of a national campus tour sponsored by the Israeli government in an attempt to bolster the image of the Zionist occupation forces who are slaughtering Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

A number of members of Al-Awda, the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition, were thrown out of the NYU meeting for "disruption" after they tried to protest. Responding to apologists for Zionist state terror, one Al-Awda activist wrote in a letter to NYU's *Washington Square News* (20 November): "I wonder what any decent person would do if the men who carried out Nazi orders for the killing of Jews were invited guests of their community?" There was certainly nothing to "debate" at this meeting. During an earlier appearance at UCLA, one of the Zionist killers disgustingly justified the army's coldblooded murder of dozens of Palestinian children: "When shown a picture of a tank and a boy, people's sympathy naturally goes to the boy. But what the picture doesn't show is that the tank is defending homes and civilians and the boy might be attacking them" (*Daily Bruin*, 9 November).

The Zionist garrison-state must be shattered from within through Arab/



WV Photo

November 15: Protest against Israeli soldiers touring U.S. campuses on behalf of Zionist terror machine.

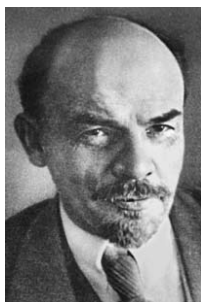
Hebrew workers revolution. SL/SYC slogans included "Down With Bloody Anti-Palestinian 'Pax Americana'—U.S. Imperialists Hands Off the Near East!" and "Down With the Oil Sheiks, Emirs, Kings, Colonels and Zionist Rulers! Workers to Power! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!" We fight to forge internationalist Leninist vanguard parties to fight for proletarian revolution in the U.S., the Near East and around the world. As we chanted during the protest: "Hebrew, Kurd, Sunni, Shi'ite—Workers of the world, unite!" ■



TROTSKY

Socialist Revolution Will Liberate Humanity

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 proclaimed the promise of proletarian rule internationally and an egalitarian socialist society. In the years since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, it has become even clearer that capitalism can promise only further starvation and ever-deadlier wars. In a 1932 speech, given on the eve of the Nazis' rise to power in Germany and as the world was mired in the



LENIN

Great Depression, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky explained to a gathering of socialist youth in Copenhagen that only through international proletarian revolution and socialist planning could the material conditions for the complete liberation of mankind be laid and finally realized.

Capitalism has outlived itself as a world system. It has ceased to fulfill its essential mission, the increase of human power and human wealth. Humanity cannot stand still at the level which it has reached. Only a powerful increase in productive forces and a sound, planned, that is, socialist organization of production and distribution can assure humanity—all humanity—of a decent standard of life and at the same time give it the precious feeling of freedom with respect to its own economy. Freedom in two senses—first of all, man will no longer be compelled to devote the greater part of his life to physical labor. Second, he will no longer be dependent on the laws of the market, that is, on the blind and dark forces which have grown up behind his back. He will build up his economy freely, that is, according to a plan, with compass in hand. This time it is a question of subjecting the anatomy of society to the X ray through and through, of disclosing all its secrets and subjecting all its functions to the reason and the will of collective humanity. In this sense, socialism must become a new step in the historical advance of mankind....

Technology liberated man from the tyranny of the old elements—earth, water, fire, and air—only to subject him to its own tyranny. Man ceased to be a slave to nature, to become a slave to the machine, and, still worse, a slave to supply and demand. The present world crisis testifies in especially tragic fashion how man, who dives to the bottom of the ocean, who rises up to the stratosphere, who converses on invisible waves with the antipodes, how this proud and daring ruler of nature remains a slave to the blind forces of his own economy. The historical task of our epoch consists in replacing the uncontrolled play of the market by reasonable planning, in disciplining the forces of production, compelling them to work together in harmony and obediently serve the needs of mankind. Only on this new social basis will man be able to stretch his weary limbs and—every man and every woman, not only a selected few—become a full citizen in the realm of thought.

—Leon Trotsky, "In Defense of the October Revolution" (November 1932)

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1 December 2000

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**15th Annual
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Marxist Archives and the Training of Trotskyist Cadre

We publish below an edited presentation given by Emily Turnbull for the Prometheus Research Library (PRL) at a conference titled "Explorations in the History of U.S. Trotskyism," which was sponsored by the Tamiment Library at New York University from September 29 to October 1. Comrade Turnbull spoke at a session on "Preserving the Past," along with Tamiment archivist Peter Filardo, who spoke about Tamiment Library's collections of Trotskyist material, as well as Esteban Volkov, Leon Trotsky's grandson, who spoke about the history of the Trotsky Museum in Coyoacán, Mexico. The panel chairman, Northwestern University archivist Patrick Quinn, made a point of praising *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism, Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-28*. Published by the PRL in 1992, this book is a compilation of the writings of this founding leader of American Trotskyism, written when Cannon was a leader of the Communist Party.

On the whole, the conference confirmed the characterization we made in a subhead in the *Workers Vanguard* article sold to conference attendees: "Tamiment Conference Organizers Promote Death of Trotskyism" (WV No. 742, 22 September). The majority of the some 200 participants represented not Trotskyism but the flight from Trotskyism. Present were a smattering of veterans from the 1940s and '50s, including former members of both the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Max Shachtman's revisionist Workers Party, which split from the SWP in 1940, refusing to militarily defend the USSR. Shachtman's organization moved steadily to the right under the impact of the Cold War. Shachtman, who died in 1972, ended his life as a member of the Democratic Party, sup-

porting the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1962 and the U.S.' losing imperialist war against the Vietnamese social revolution. The veteran SWPers, on the other hand, abandoned the fight for proletarian revolution in the early 1960s, when the party embraced Fidel Castro as an "unconscious Trotskyist" and accommodated to the pro-Democratic Party liberal leadership of the civil rights movement and then to black nationalists. Politically

cratic Party liberals, during the Vietnam War.

Many of the speakers at the conference and most of its principal organizers were former SWPers who are now members of Solidarity, including supporters of the publications *Against the Current* and *Labor Standard*. Formed in the 1980s in a fusion of ex-SWPers with some of the remnants of American Shachtmanism, Solidarity is a thoroughly reformist

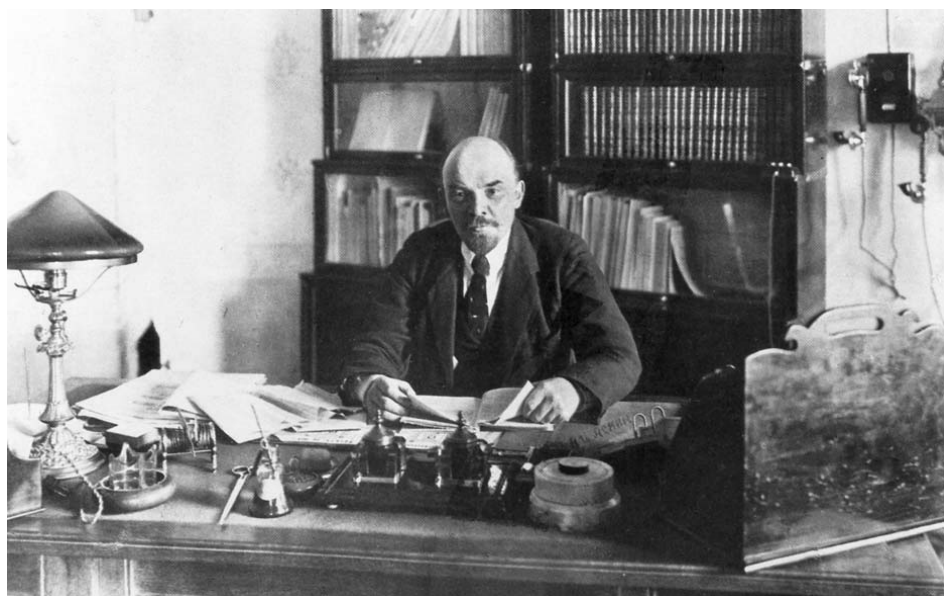
The Mandelites opposed the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan and championed clerical-nationalist Solidarność—from which the U.S. group Solidarity takes its name—which led the capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. Now the USec leadership is proposing to dump all mention of Trotsky's Fourth International—or indeed the fight for proletarian revolution—from its statutes at its next world congress.

Socialist Action (SA), which also had several speakers at the conference, is politically allied with the USec and seeks to pose as an "orthodox" opponent of the majority's liquidationism. But the "depth" of the difference can be gauged by the fact that *Socialist Action* to this day models its masthead on the Solidarność logo; SA leader Nat Weinstein grew apoplectic when we pointed this out in informal discussion during the conference. Socialist Action has from its inception served as waterboys for the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy and devoted itself to building liberal protest coalitions on the model of the SWP's 1960s "antiwar movement," most recently centered on promoting reliance on the capitalist "justice" system to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The spectre of Spartacism clearly haunted SA at this conference. Weinstein abandoned his planned presentation on the legacy of SWP veterans Tom and Carolyn Kerry to showcase his supposed orthodoxy with a lecture on the principles of scientific socialism. SA member Kwame Somburu (formerly Paul Boutelle) vituperated against "the ultra-left sectarian Spartacists" in the midst of a panel discussion on "Trotskyism and African Americans."

One of the few interesting panels at the conference was titled "James P. Cannon

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P.A. Otsup

V.I. Lenin, leader of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Marxists seek to understand the world in order to change it.

dominating the conference was another layer of ex-SWPers, who were won to the party during the 1960s. All these elements drawn from various decomposition products of the once-revolutionary SWP were united in regarding the party's heyday as its leadership of the class-collaborationist National Peace Action Coalition, aimed at appealing to Demo-

swamp which seeks to meld the Cannon and Shachtman "traditions" and includes supporters of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel. Having impressionistically tailed one after another petty-bourgeois "vanguard" for years, the USec was impelled sharply to the right in the 1980s by the imperialist Cold War drive against the USSR.

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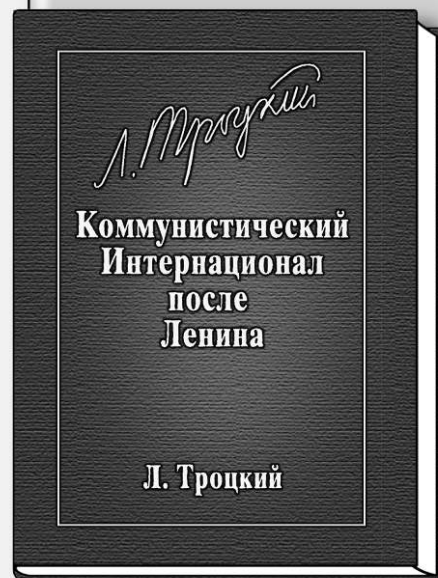
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Reprinted from *Internal Bulletin* No. 3, February 1936,
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James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism

Selected Writings and
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Vietnam...

(continued from page 12)

defects from the millions of tons of Agent Orange defoliant that the U.S. dumped on their country. American war veterans, as usual abandoned by the government that used them as cannon fodder, have a high rate of deformed children, too. But when all was said and done, the Vietnamese won, just as Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh said they would.

U.S. Was Beaten on the Battlefield

In a real way, the American bourgeoisie cannot admit that it was actually beaten by the Vietnamese. A whole self-serving myth has grown up, perpetuated not only by the right but also, from its own angle, by the left. The right-wingers bluster that the U.S. didn't lose militarily; defeat was caused by the "stab in the back" from unfriendly media coverage and peacenik students. The liberals and so-called leftists agree with the right on this point. They brag, "Our vigils, our peace marches, our letters to Congressmen forced the U.S. to end the tragic blunder of the Vietnam War."

Neither is true. The U.S. was militarily defeated on the battlefield! This is not to say that the North Vietnamese Army overwhelmed the U.S. Army with superior military force. That was not possible. However, in the course of the war the American Army underwent a collapse in its own way as dramatic as that of the South Vietnamese puppet forces in 1975. Especially after the Tet Offensive in 1968, the U.S. Army was an increasingly demoralized and beaten army whose soldiers simply wanted to stay alive until they could go home. It was estimated that at least a third of the American troops were on hard drugs. Thousands went AWOL. The military brass euphemistically called mutinies "combat refusals." And "fragging"—killing overly gung-ho officers with fragmentation grenades, which left no fingerprints—became commonplace.

My brother-in-law, who was in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era and has become obsessed with the question, has read hundreds of books on the Vietnam War. He commented that all the books by American soldiers have the same theme: "When I went in, I was patriotic and gung-ho, believed I was there to help the people and fight Communism, and after six months, I said what the hell are we doing here." They faced a revolutionary people, who, one and all, wanted them out of there and were willing to fight to the bitter end. The disillusionment in the army—which was, after all, heavily black and brown—reinforced and was reinforced by a black radicalization at home. Let me give a few quotes from one of the black soldiers who wrote *Brothers: Black Soldiers in the Nam* (Stanley Goff, Robert Sanders and Clark Smith, Presidio Press [1982]):

"Arriving at the induction center in Oakland was very, very depressing.... It felt strange; here I was getting ready to be carted off. I was a black and I thought about slavery. You know, the guys were predominantly black. It's right there. You don't have to be academically accomplished to ask, 'Aren't there any other races to be drafted aside from blacks?' At least 70 percent of the guys in my group were black, and I'm being very conservative....

"The Vietnamese constantly appealed to blacks to get out of the war. They would leave leaflets laying all over the jungle. In perfectly good English, the leaflet would say, 'Blacks get out, it's not your fight,' or, 'They call us g---s here and they call you n-----s over there. You're the same as us. Get out, it's not your fight.' In some ways those leaflets affected morale. It would make us wonder why we were there....

"But I have to say one thing. Charlie himself—the North Vietnamese soldier—was tough, man. I mean, they really got down to it. What frightened me most of all was that it was a political war. Charlie had a philosophy; they'd say that we were aggressors, that we shouldn't have been there interfering in their affairs. To me, it seemed like it was between North and South Vietnam. It was sort of like a revolution they were fighting."



Imperialists seek to overturn gains of Vietnamese Revolution through economic penetration and blackmail.

The front of our pamphlet "Black Soldiers in the Jim Crow Military" shows a black soldier looking at one of the signs put up by the North Vietnamese that says: "U.S. Negro army men! You are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK clique is perpetrating against your family at home" (*Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 4, February 1987). The North Vietnamese appeals to black soldiers reflected Ho Chi Minh's earlier visit to the U.S., when he wrote an article describing the horrors of lynchings in the American South.

German Marxist historian Franz Mehring said that revolutions have long tail winds. By this he meant that the effects of a revolution go far into the future in ways that are not predictable. The Vietnamese Revolution in defeating and weakening U.S. imperialism had a *global* tail wind. For one thing, it produced what's called the "Vietnam syndrome"—the fact that the American public will not countenance seeing American troops die in foreign lands. Bomb them from the air—that the American bourgeoisie can get away with—but American deaths, *no*. Look at the U.S. intervention in Somalia. As soon as some local warlord, whom the imperialist intervention turned into a national hero, led the masses in shooting down a helicopter and killing, I think, 14 Americans, the American public went crazy: "14 dead, the losses are too high!" The troops were pulled out immediately.

But more than the "Vietnam syndrome" in the U.S., the Vietnamese struggle inspired revolutionary struggle around the world. The Vietnamese Tet Offensive in 1968 directly preceded the

French general strike of May-June 1968 which shook that capitalist country to the core. The Vietnamese struggle inspired black nationalists in Angola who drove out first the Portuguese imperialists and then, with the crucial help of Cuban troops and Soviet weaponry, the invading South Africans. The South Africans had been promised U.S. help; the "Vietnam syndrome" made it impossible. For South African blacks, the sight of white South African troops retreating before the Cubans and black Angolans was *really* inspiring. The Soweto uprising, in the summer of 1976, happened only six months after South Africa was defeated in Angola. This led to a whole new period of black militancy and struggle in South Africa. Not that the current neo-apartheid ANC government is what the toiling masses had in mind, but that is the topic of another forum. My point here is that from Africa to Central America, the Vietnamese Revolution had an international effect.

From French Colonialism to U.S. Imperialism

So let me back up and talk about the origins of the war in Vietnam. The Vietnam War, actually the second Vietnam War, grew directly out of the defeat of French colonialism in 1954 by the Stalinist Viet Minh forces. In World War II, the French colonialists had been driven out of Vietnam by the Japanese, who then occupied the country. Later the Japanese were defeated by the Americans and pulled out of Vietnam in 1945, leaving a power vacuum. The Stalinists led by Ho Chi Minh, who were the largest but by no means the only force in the country, sought to fill the power vacuum, declaring themselves to be the government. The Stalinists' purpose, however, was not to overthrow capitalism or even liberate the country from French imperialism. Rather they sought to work out a neocolonial deal with the French, who were preparing to re-invade.

Ho's aim was in keeping with the line of the Stalinists internationally during the war (and during the "People's Front" period in the late 1930s), supporting the "democratic" imperialists who were then allied to the Soviet Union against Germany, Italy and Japan. Thus the Stalinists repudiated not only the struggle for socialism but even for national liberation in the colonies of the Allied powers. The Trotskyists called for revolutionary defeatism against all the imperialist combatants, continuing to pursue the class struggle at home, while fighting for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union. As a result, in a number of colonial and semicolonial countries, the Trotskyists were able to supplant the Stalinist parties within the workers movement.

Vietnam was one of the few countries on earth where the Trotskyists had a mass base. In the South, where the Stalinists were weak, the Trotskyists, in a bloc with certain nationalists, led a workers insurrection in August-September 1945 with the purpose of preparing the masses to resist the reconquest of the country by the French and British. In this revolutionary situation, the workers set up more than 150 "people's committees" which took governmental power in Saigon and elsewhere, fighting not only against the imperialists but also the landlords and the native bourgeoisie. This insurrection was suppressed by the Stalinists along with British and French troops. In the aftermath, much of the historic leadership of the Vietnamese Trotskyists was murdered.

Ho Chi Minh worked out an agreement which allowed the French army to return. Needless to say, once the French army came back in force, it turned on the Stalinist government. So began an eight-year war which ended only with the Viet Minh's memorable rout of the French in the historic battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, where a huge colonial garrison was overrun by Vietnamese fighters after a months-long siege and struggle. This humiliating defeat in Vietnam helped spark Algeria's national liberation struggle against France six months later.

U.S. imperialism was moving in even before the French were defeated. The U.S. even considered using nuclear weapons on the Vietnamese during the battle of Dien Bien Phu, but were worried about what the Soviet Union, which also had a nuclear arsenal, and China would do. So the Western imperialists had to reach a compromise with the Vietnamese Stalinists. Going into the Geneva Accords conference in 1954, the Stalinists controlled most of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. But when they left the conference, which divided Vietnam in half at the 17th parallel, they controlled only North Vietnam. The North quickly became a deformed workers state—the Democratic Republic of Vietnam—that is, the capitalists were expropriated and a collectivized economy introduced, but the working class was denied political power.

One of the main reasons the Vietnamese masses lost at the bargaining table what they had won on the battlefield was the pressure from the Soviet and Chinese Stalinist bureaucracies, which were committed to the anti-revolutionary policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. But "peaceful coexistence" and "socialism in one country" were also the ideology of the Vietnamese Stalinists.

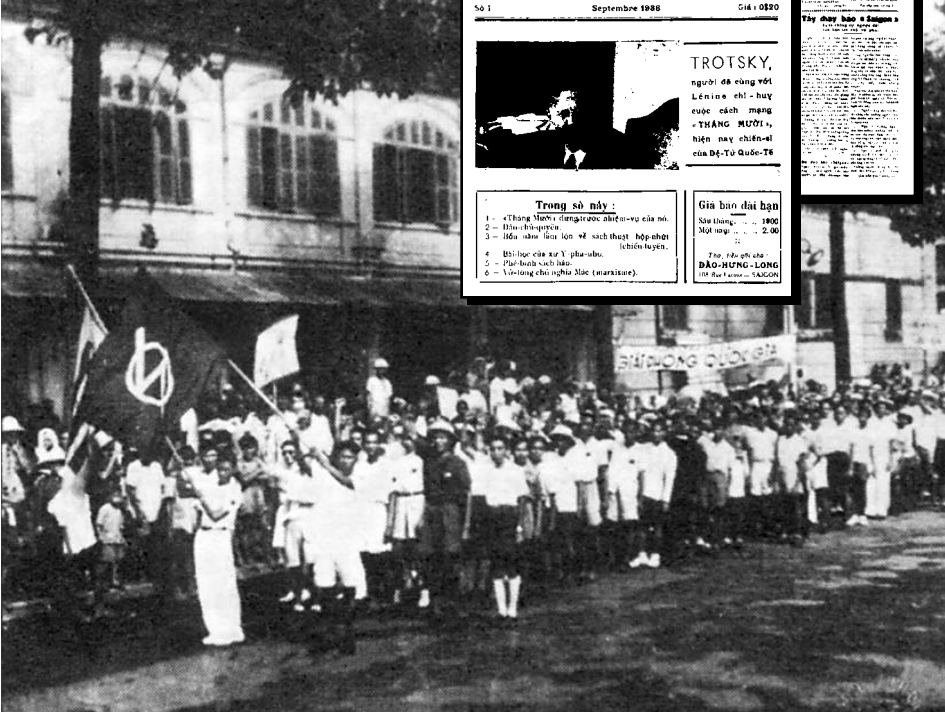
Stalinism vs. Bolshevism

What do we mean by this? The Russian Revolution of 1917 was the defining political event of the 20th century. When the working class led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky seized power from the bourgeoisie and built the world's first proletarian state, they gave flesh and blood to the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels. It was a truism for revolutionaries of that time that the conquest of state power in at least several advanced capitalist countries was necessary if the workers state was to survive in backward Russia. The young Soviet republic—premised on the Marxist slogan "Workers of the world, unite!"—became a beacon for the oppressed and exploited everywhere. But with the hostile imperialist encirclement and the delay of revolutions in advanced capitalist countries—particularly the failure of revolutionary uprisings in Germany in 1919 and 1923 because the working class lacked a tested Bolshevik leadership—a conservative, nationalist bureaucratic caste arose in the Soviet Union. Headed by Stalin, this bureaucracy usurped political power from the working class in a *political* counterrevolution in 1924.

This parasitic layer acquired self-consciousness as it sought to consolidate its privileges atop the apparatus of the young workers state; its nationalist opportunism was codified in the "theory" of "socialism in one country," an

Trotskyists led 1945 Saigon workers insurrection against returning colonial forces as Stalinists welcomed "democratic" imperialists.

Nguyen Khanh Hoi





Vo Anh Khanh/American War Photo Project

Makeshift field hospital in the jungle for North Vietnamese, NLF fighters. Vietnamese prevailed at cost of some three million killed by U.S. imperialist war machine.

impressionistic and defeatist acceptance of capitalist restabilization outside the USSR's borders. Stalin and his henchmen perverted the revolutionary internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky, hoping (vainly) to mitigate imperialist hostility to the Soviet Union, ultimately by giving up on international revolution and turning the Communist parties around the world into border guards for the USSR. In the name of "socialism in one country," revolutionary opportunities were sold out through "popular front" alliances with so-called "progressive" wings of the bourgeoisie.

All of this didn't go unopposed. Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition (and the Fourth International, founded in 1938) fought against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union, insisting that only a return to the perspective of world socialist revolution could save the USSR. After Stalin's Comintern allowed Hitler to come to power in Germany in 1933 without a fight, it became clear that proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy was necessary.

We of the International Communist League called for unconditional military defense of the USSR—embodying the immense social gains of the 1917 workers revolution—against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. We called for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic bureaucracy. Trotsky was clear that the only choices were forward to proletarian political revolution or backward to capitalist counterrevolution. Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 was a world-historic defeat for the proletariat, proving the Trotskyist perspective correct—although, unfortunately, in a negative way. Today we stand for the unconditional military defense of Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, and very importantly, China.

Vietnamese Fought for Social Revolution

In South Vietnam after 1954, the U.S. installed one of the vilest puppet regimes known to man, utterly corrupt and vicious. The new regime attempted to seize back the land that peasants had taken over. There was significant resistance and the beginning of a peasant-based insurrection largely led by old Viet Minh cadre, called colloquially the Viet Cong. This was not encouraged by the Hanoi bureaucracy in North Vietnam at all. But the American-backed Diem regime was so unpopular that Hanoi figured they had better take charge of this burgeoning movement or it would get out of control altogether.

In 1964, a little-known but important incident occurred, which illustrates the role of U.S. imperialism's junior partners in Canada. Washington sent James Seaborn, a Canadian diplomat, to Hanoi with the proverbial carrot and stick. The carrot was that if Hanoi liquidated the revolutionary insurgency in the South, the U.S. would give North Vietnam some economic aid. And if they didn't, the U.S. was going to bomb the hell out of them.

Seaborn gave this message to Pham Van Dong, who was known as a "moderate" in the Hanoi regime, meaning he was more interested in "building socialism in half a country" than in aggressively aiding the revolution in the South. Here is how Pham Van Dong replied:

"It's impossible, quite impossible—excuse me for saying this—for you Westerners to understand the force of the people's will to resist, and to continue. The struggle of our people exceeds the imagination. It has astonished us, too."

—quoted in Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam 1945-1975* (1981)

"Us" meaning the North Vietnamese Stalinist leadership.

Trotsky makes the point that the Soviet Union under Stalin was like a giant trade union with sellout leadership. And Pham Van Dong's remarks really do sound like a trade-union bureaucrat negotiating with the bosses: "You know I'd like to make a deal, but the members are really mad."

The American bourgeoisie couldn't believe that they could lose. So under Kennedy, the Democratic Party president, the U.S. began to send in the troops, first as "advisers"—you know, 50,000 "advisers." (By the way, there's this ridiculous myth that Kennedy was offed by the CIA because he was too peace-loving; there's an Oliver Stone movie to this effect. What a joke! From the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, successfully spiked by the Cubans, to Vietnam, he was every inch an imperialist mass murderer.) By 1965 under Johnson—also a Democrat—the U.S. was getting into Vietnam big-time.

As I said, they faced a revolutionary people who had the will to persist. This book, *The Tunnels of Cu Chi* by Tom Mangold and John Penycate, gives some of that flavor:

"How did the Communists come to bear such devastating casualties or carry out missions of such suicidal bravery? How, in short, did such a backward nation outface the world's greatest superpower and break its will to pursue the war? High-level political shrewdness is one answer. But in the field it was a triumph of organization and motivation by the Communist cadres—and the fact that the youths of Vietnam were already receptive to what they were taught. Most of the GIs had

only a sketchy idea of what they were fighting for in Vietnam. But for the guerrillas, there were often personal blood-debts to settle—home villages bombed, relatives killed, or arrested and tortured, by a government funded and armed by the United States.

"The Viet Cong fought on their own land, to which they felt closely tied. And Mother Earth herself became their protection in the tunnels dug beneath their ancestral fields and villages."

The Vietnamese *fought for social revolution*. There is no more dramatic example of the Vietnamese will to prevail than the 1968 Tet Offensive. In 1967, U.S. officials were claiming the U.S. had almost won, that "there was light at the end of the tunnel," as they were always saying. Then 80,000 men and women (there were women's units), mostly Viet Cong, launched a coordinated nationwide attack, up and down Vietnam, even seizing the U.S. embassy in Saigon briefly. I'll read you another passage from that book:

"The handful of guerrillas who got inside the embassy's wall attracted the attention of the entire Saigon-based press corps, and destroyed years of optimistic public relations efforts by the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, the Americans' information operation.

"In purely military terms, most of the Viet Cong's Tet operations were failures. But that was irrelevant. It was the moment at which American casualties surpassed those in the Korean War. It was a moment of painful truth—always a rare commod-

tion within American society, the very heartland of world imperialism.

There was a famous cartoon which captured this. It showed Nixon with his wife, Pat, looking at a giant anti-war protest on the White House lawn. He declares, "Pat, we need to call out the 82nd Airborne Division." She says, "But dear, that *is* the 82nd Airborne." This was funny because it was somewhat true. Open defiance was breaking out inside the Army—at Fort Hood, Texas, black soldiers refused to go to the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party convention to back up the cops' brutal attack on anti-war protesters. There were demonstrations of GIs at U.S. bases in Vietnam demanding an end to the war. Black veterans were coming home and joining the Black Panthers. Muhammad Ali's famous statement, "No Viet Cong ever called me n-----," was something that tens of thousands of black workers could wholeheartedly agree with. It was carried on signs in demonstrations around the country.

There were ghetto rebellions across the U.S. Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), a former Black Panther leader framed up and jailed for 28 years in California prisons, talks about how his unit served first in Vietnam and was then sent to Detroit to quell a black rebellion in 1967. They were pulled out in a hurry when the government realized that military hardware was making its way into the black community. Well,

Democrat John F. Kennedy ordered tens of thousands of troops to Vietnam in early 1960s in war to "roll back Communism."



ity in Vietnam. Public and political opinion in America never recovered from the impact; within two months President Johnson announced that he would not run for reelection."

Johnson left office a broken man. And the U.S. military, while proclaiming that the enemy had sustained a great defeat, asked for a call-up of 200,000 more Americans. Someone quipped that the light at the end of the tunnel was a train coming the other way. After Tet, the American people became basically cynical and disbelieving about official U.S. pronouncements of success in Vietnam. The vast majority wanted a U.S. pullout even if it meant the "commies" were going to win, which is exactly what it did mean. And tens of thousands, black and white, me among them as a Berkeley New Leftist, actively rooted for the other side and the defeat of U.S. imperialism. Yet the direct U.S. combat role in the war dragged on for five more years. More Americans were killed after Tet than before. This seemingly endless, dirty and losing war produced an explosive situa-

the state is armed bodies of men—the cops, army, prison guards—who protect the power and class rule of the capitalist class and repress the working class. The bourgeoisie has a problem when it can't get the armed bodies of men to do what it wants. (Geronimo's unit was sent back to Vietnam for an unprecedented second tour of duty as punishment.)

New Left activists moved to the left. Many had voted for Johnson in 1964 as the antiwar candidate. His official slogan was "All the way with LBJ," but many liberal student activists said, "Part of the way with LBJ." You know, "critical support," the "lesser evil"—there's nothing new under the sun. Within a couple of years, Johnson would be greeted on campuses with students chanting, "Hey, Hey, LBJ—How many kids did you kill today?" I remember going to a graduation ceremony in the Greek Theater at UC Berkeley when some war criminal was speaking, and we got up and chanted him down and scuffled in the aisles with

continued on page 6

Spartacist



National Guardian



While SWP reformists promoted bloc with imperialist "doves," Spartacists called for victory to Vietnamese social revolution, demanded that Soviet Union give full military aid, including nuclear weapons, to Vietnam and China.

Vietnam...

(continued from page 5)

conservatives. It was great that Cal SYC-ers were the first up to chant when Madeleine Albright, butcher of the Balkans, was speaking at UC Berkeley recently.

Reformists and Bourgeois Defeatism

Into this burgeoning radicalization around the Vietnam War, the SL intervened with a positive proletarian program for class struggle against capitalism. Let me go back and talk about the whole mythology that peace crawls ended the war—"Write your Congressman," etc. One comrade quipped, "Peace marches, hell—I thought General Giap [the leading Vietnamese general] ended the war." For the reformist organizers of these marches, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Communist Party (CP), they were intended as a pressure tactic upon—and if possible, a bloc with—the liberal wing of the American bourgeoisie; the Democrats, what else. Right from the beginning, the SWP at the first peace protest in New York City in 1965 insisted on one liberal, ambiguous slogan that would be acceptable to the Democratic Party. This is what our spokesman said in breaking with the New York Peace Parade Committee:

"The slogan 'Stop the War in Vietnam Now' can mean many things to many people.... We are not simply for stopping the war, but rather *for* the victory of the social revolution that is taking place in Vietnam. It is absurd, and against the interest of the revolution, to call simply for disengagement of forces, and implies a confidence in the integrity of U.S. imperialism to keep such a bargain. You have completely obscured what we think is the most important character of the Vietnam war—that this is a naked, ruthless intervention by U.S. imperialism to interrupt and drive back a social revolution in Vietnam, a revolution that is the *only* road to freedom for the Vietnamese working masses. We are not neutral in this. What is involved is not simply a matter of self-determination or moral indignation or national security or the honor and reputation of the American people as the Call indicates. The best defense of the Vietnamese revolution in this country is to build a militant antiwar movement strong enough to compel the United States to get out of Vietnam!"

—*Spartacist* No. 5, November-December 1965

As Marxists, we understand that you cannot end war without ending capitalism. It is our task to prepare the working class for revolution. That means to utilize every social struggle to make the working class aware of the class basis of society and the class basis of war. Imperialism is not a policy, it is the highest stage of capitalism, monopoly capitalism. The capitalists and their mouthpieces always talk about high moral principles. But the real deal, from Vietnam to the

Balkans, is the struggle for raw materials, spheres of influence, financial markets, world hegemony.

For us it is a question of breaking down the false consciousness of the workers, so that in wartime they are not vulnerable to the appeals of the "social patriots," those who Lenin condemned as "socialists in words, patriots in deeds." The purpose of these antiwar coalitions is to form liberal class-collaborationist alliances with a wing of the ruling class—a form of "popular front"—to *suppress* revolutionary politics. There are certain code words in politics, and believe me, when the fake left starts talking about "broad-based coalitions," what they mean is "it's time for class collaboration."

From 1965 to 1968, the ties of groups like the SWP to the Democratic Party liberals were somewhat disguised because the Democratic Party was solidly for the war. All the SWP could get were stand-ins for the Democratic Party: preachers, Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Spock, the baby doctor. After the Tet Offensive a defeatist wing of the bourgeoisie emerged, which opposed the

ment." The imperialist "doves" were enemies of the labor movement, and their presence tended to prevent, in a very palpable way, a class-struggle antiwar movement by furthering the lie of a common interest between the U.S.' racist capitalist rulers and those they exploit. Counterposed to this liberal class collaborationism, the SL fought for "labor strikes against the war." Had the war continued for a year or two more, that might well have become a reality. There were a series of hard-fought strikes during this period which demonstrated the power of the proletariat. There was the wildcat postal strike of 1970, the Teamsters wildcat strikes of 1970-71; the bourgeoisie had to call out the National Guard against both strikes.

The labor misleaders did not call these strikes. And the AFL-CIO tops remained pro-war to the bitter end. George Meany, the intensely anti-Communist president of the AFL-CIO, was still pro-war when Nixon was ready to get out. They are the "labor lieutenants of capital."

Isaac Deutscher, the Marxist intellectual, commented at the time that one dock

One of the SL's early fights for a working-class orientation in the antiwar movement was our opposition to student deferments and draft-dodging. We said, "You will go!" Burning your draft card was a typical expression of the New Left's petty-bourgeois, light-minded attitude toward the state. Running to Canada was not a real prospect for most working-class and minority youth (nor real appealing—no offense, comrades). We denounced the self-purging of radicals from the army as doing the government's work for them, predicting that as the war dragged on there would be discontent in the army itself and anti-militarist organizing to be done there. And discontent did grow. Our comrades and contacts put out the antiwar newspaper *G.I. Voice*. Trotsky commented that "an insurrection is, in essence, not so much a struggle against the army as a struggle for the army." You need to be in the army to win it over.

Let me make one comment on the bald-faced government lie that the antiwar protesters spit on the soldiers. I went to hundreds of antiwar demos and never saw anything like that. It's become an urban legend, like exploding poodle dogs in microwave ovens or alligators in the New York sewers. But, in truth, this lie is government *war propaganda* consciously aimed at overcoming the "Vietnam syndrome" and preparing sentiment for new wars. Look at the homeless men on the streets of the U.S., a goodly number of whom are Vietnam vets, and you can see that the same government that used them as cannon fodder in the first place is the one who spits on them.

In this radicalized situation, the reformist left was quite prepared to draw the line in blood against revolutionaries in order to maintain its ties to the imperialist bourgeoisie. When in 1971 at a conference of the SWP's antiwar coalition, the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), the Spartacist League and the then left-Stalinist Progressive Labor Party shouted down a Democratic Party Senator, the SWP reacted with extreme violence, throwing our comrades through glass doors, breaking people's noses. They were showing the liberals that they could handle the reds and prevent opposition to the war from taking a revolutionary direction. Leading the charge were reformists like Nat Weinstein and Jeff Mackler, now of Socialist Action.

These very same people are now building demonstrations for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther whom the bourgeoisie wants to kill for his militant opposition to racism. And they're building them on the same liberal, popular-frontist basis, the same appeals to the Democratic Party liberals. Their slogan is a "new trial," as though Mumia's frame-up were an aberration in an otherwise just system of democracy. Behind the call for a "new trial" is a reformist political program premised on the belief that the racist capitalist state, a machinery of organized violence to defend the rule of the capitalists, can be pressured and reformed.

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) gets the award of the month for reformism. They explicitly instruct their members—some of whom are quite disgruntled by this—not to "alienate" people by arguing for abolition of the death penalty now. This is the U.S., the country with the biggest prison population in the world, land of the gas chamber and lethal injections. The ISO's mealy-mouthed slogan is: Moratorium now, abolition next—and socialist revolution never! (Well, that last is implicit.) It was great at the April demonstration for Mumia in San Francisco to see young people throwing down their "new trial" signs and picking up ones that called for "Freedom for Mumia—Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!" and marching under our big banner that said, "Break with the Democrats and Republicans, Unchain Labor Power, For a Workers Party That Fights for Socialist Revolution!"

Let me tell you something about the ISO's predecessor, the International Socialists (I.S.). I remember when they were "neutral" on the war in Vietnam.



Liberation News Service

Black GI in Vietnam. Sign reads, "U.S. Negro Armymen! You are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK clique is perpetrating against your family at home."

war because the U.S. was *losing* and because they felt the U.S. was putting too much time and money into a regional war, thus allowing the Soviet Union to achieve nuclear parity. After 1968 when you went to demonstrations, you were addressed by these imperialist "doves"—Democrats or even Republicans—who told you how the U.S. was the greatest country in the world, the war was just a terrible error, etc.

The Spartacist League fought for "bourgeoisie out of the antiwar move-

workers strike would have been worth a thousand peace marches. How true, because they could have stopped military shipments to Vietnam. Let me make two points here. The National Guardsmen called out against the Teamsters on strike in Ohio in May 1970 were sent directly to Kent State University, where they fired on and killed four student protesters. They fired on unarmed students but were afraid of the consequences of firing on Teamsters. The working class has the social weight and power to stop the wheels of production and tie up the country. Workers have power, students don't. Point two: cops killed two black students protesting the war at Jackson State College in Mississippi only ten days after the killings at Kent State, but these murders are rarely mentioned in the bourgeois press because black life is considered cheap in racist capitalist America.

"You Will Go!"

"Labor strikes against the war" had a real resonance in the late '60s and early '70s. I and my radical feminist cohorts went to work in a factory in Oakland in 1970. The 1968 French general strike, combined with our own observation that students had no power, impelled us and many other radicalized youth to turn to the working class. We did some pretty wild organizing stunts, but we were actually well-received and got a lot of people involved in antiwar protests. One young white working-class woman who got very involved with our radical activities told me several years later that as soon as she set eyes on us she knew we were Berkeley radicals. She said she was overjoyed "that we had chosen her factory." Of course, we had thought we were being quite subtle.

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and Sat. 12-3 p.m.
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Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

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Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
New York, NY 10008
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Tues. 6:30-8:30 p.m.
and Sat. 1-5 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318

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Because of their refusal to defend the Soviet Union or any of the deformed workers states, to the I.S. the war was just “North Vietnamese totalitarianism” versus U.S. imperialism, so these “third campists” were neutral. But when you don’t oppose your own bourgeoisie in a bloody war, that really comes down to backhanded support to U.S. imperialism. After the Tet Offensive, the I.S. decided that this position was just too unpopular with New Leftists. So they decided the Vietnamese were now waging a struggle for self-determination, ducking the question of social revolution entirely. This was an unusual example of opportunists capitulating to the left.

Two Antiwar Movements

I think about the thousands and hundreds of thousands who marched against the Vietnam War, and the question is: Where are they now? Most of them are straight Democratic Party liberals or worse. And the reformists of the SWP, Workers World and the CP helped make them that way. They demoralized people, they demobilized them, they channeled their anger back into the Democratic Party. They did their small part to restabilize the American capitalist system.

Around 1968, a left/right polarization developed in the antiwar movement. On the right were the SWP and CP, organizing the big protests and doing the donkey work for the Democratic Party. On the left were the antiwar militants who began to positively solidarize with the Communist forces in Vietnam. I remember going to a giant antiwar demonstration in 1969 where we marched in an anti-imperialist contingent up and down the hills of San Francisco, chanting “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh—NLF is gonna win!” This was certainly a subjective step to the left for people who might well have voted for Johnson, but identification with a Stalinist movement was a problem, too. This is what the Spartacist League said in 1968:

“There has been an understandable but nevertheless unfortunate tendency on the part of the American left to idealize Ho Chi Minh and the leadership of the NLF, and for radicals to turn their correct demands for military victory against imperialism and its puppets into uncritical political support for these leaders and their politics. This is a grave error, for not only do these would-be revolutionaries not understand the deformities of those they support—and are extremely likely to feel personally betrayed when the inevitable occurs—but are likely to carry over the Stalinist hallmarks of class-collaboration and murderous opportunism into the American revolutionary movement.”

—Spartacist supplement, “NLF Program: Fetter on Victory,” May 1968

I saw this actually happen. A friend of mine went up to Vancouver to meet with representatives of the NLF. My friend thought she was meeting with the real revolutionaries who would tell us how to make the American revolution. In the time-honored tradition of “socialism in one country” and class collaboration, they answered: “We Vietnamese cannot tell you how to make your revolution. The important thing is to work for the withdrawal of American troops and not alienate anyone who is against the war. Petition your Congressman and fight the right.” In other words, vote for “lesser evil” Democrats. My friend was flabbergasted. It was only after I came around the SL that I came to understand the seeming contradiction between the Vietnamese Stalinists’ incredible heroism and abject reformism. And I remember the famous picture of Mao in China shaking hands with Nixon in 1972 during some of the worst U.S. bombing of North Vietnam.

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

The Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Party

Saturday, December 9, 3 p.m.
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CHICAGO



At 1971 NPAC “peace” conference, SWP social-patriots led by Fred Halstead (inset) and Nat Weinstein attacked SL and Progressive Labor to defend class-collaborationist bloc with Democrats. Below: Spartacist contingent at January 1973 protest in Washington.



My idea was to make a larger-than-life blow-up of the photo and make all my American Maoist friends contemplate the counterrevolutionary U.S.-China alliance aimed against the Soviet Union.

There is another important aspect to the Stalinists’ inherent hostility to proletarian political power. The Vietnam War was a social revolution, but it was *not* a proletarian socialist revolution. The two main agencies of the revolution were the peasant-based Viet Cong guerrillas and the North Vietnamese Army, a disciplined instrument of the Hanoi Stalinist bureaucracy. In 1975, the South Vietnamese cities were liberated from without and the working class subjected to military-bureaucratic rule. That is why we call Vietnam a deformed workers state.

Forward to the American Socialist Revolution!

When the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam in 1975, the antiwar movement—which was not an anti-capitalist movement but an anti-U.S. involvement movement—just collapsed. In fact, it had already started collapsing when the U.S. pulled back from a direct military role with the 1973 Paris “peace” accord. The broader New Left radicalization tended to dissipate into the “me” generation.

The black question was decisive, and here a historic opportunity was lost. The road from the Vietnam War radicalization into the proletariat was largely a black road, but it was a road not taken. If the SL had had 50 black cadre in the late 1960s, the history of the American left and perhaps the whole country might be different. We didn’t have them; the black nationalists did and they squandered them. The Black Panthers saw themselves as revolutionaries, but they viewed the American revolution through the distorting lens of nationalism. They considered blacks to be an internal colony and themselves as something like the American version of the Viet Cong.

In this they were fundamentally wrong. Black people are not a separate nation which can liberate itself independently of a general social revolution. The real lever of black power in the U.S. is the power of the black proletariat as part of the organized working class. The black question is

key to the American revolution. There can be no socialist revolution without the united struggle of black and white workers led by a multiracial vanguard party. And nothing short of socialist revolution will liberate black people from oppression and desperate poverty. That socialist revolution is our goal today.

The Vietnam War wounded the American imperialist beast, but it certainly didn’t kill it. American imperialism has never reconciled itself to losing in Vietnam and to losing China as a sphere for exploitation in the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Through military means or economic penetration, the U.S. has sought to win back what it lost and return these countries to neocolonial slavery. Our unconditional military defense of the workers states, of the social gains of those revolutions—collectivized, state-owned property, the monopoly of banking and foreign trade—is increasingly urgent.

Particularly following the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, which deprived Vietnam of an economic and military lifeline, the Hanoi regime has responded to imperialist pressure by pursuing “market reforms” and inviting foreign investment. This follows developments in China. Sections of the Chinese bureaucracy have openly capitalist-

restorationist appetites, and the policies of the bureaucracy as a whole are paving the way for a showdown between the bureaucracy and the working class that will determine the future of China. And the working class of China is very combative! Proletarian political revolution in China—premised on defense of the planned, collectivized economy which is the social foundation of the workers state—would have a tremendous impact in reversing the bourgeois onslaught that the proletariat has suffered internationally since the demise of the Soviet Union. It would reverberate across Asia, including to Japan, the industrial powerhouse of Asia.

Last year in China there were 120,000 labor disputes as the working class reacted to the ravages of “market reforms” and the attempts of the bureaucracy to do away with the “iron rice bowl,” guaranteed lifetime employment and social benefits. This February, there was literally an uprising in a mining town northeast of Beijing where 20,000 workers and their families battled cops and the army, fighting layoffs and plant closures. And although the bureaucracy uses the army against peasant protests, the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that the bureaucracy is very nervous about using the army against the urban working class. Chinese workers need a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party if they are to go beyond defensive economic struggles and fight for political power. The choice really is capitalist counterrevolution or proletarian political revolution.

A key role in U.S. imperialism’s counterrevolutionary drive is played by the AFL-CIO labor tops, whose anti-Communist operations against militant unions in Latin America and elsewhere have earned them the epithet “AFL-CIA.” The AFL-CIO has been in the vanguard of China-bashing, joined not only by Democrats but also by incipient clerical-fascist Pat Buchanan. The Seattle anti-WTO demonstration last year was dominated by racist protectionism, national chauvinism and anti-Communism. These labor bureaucrats and their leftist tails are trying, once again, to line up the workers to be cannon fodder for new imperialist wars. And students who want to oppose sweatshops are being lined up to turn China and Vietnam back into a giant sweatshop. We have a different message for these youth: Workers of the world, unite! For international socialist revolution!

The modernization of China and Vietnam—providing the basis for a decent life for all based on the advanced technology and productive resources now concentrated in North America, West Europe and Japan—requires proletarian socialist revolution in the imperialist centers. This would lay the basis for an internationally planned socialist economy. And believe me, come the American revolution, one of the first things on the agenda will be to aid the Vietnamese workers and peasants whose victory over U.S. imperialism in 1975 benefited working people everywhere. Join us in the struggle for a socialist future!■

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Immigrant Workers...

(continued from page 1)

seen a slowdown in INS workplace raids as well as moves in Congress to set aside the most embarrassing features of the 1996 “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act,” which calls for deportation even of “green card” holders (permanent residents) who have lived in the U.S. since childhood for trivial offenses committed long ago.

While the Sweeney bureaucracy devotes more resources to organizing efforts than its predecessors, a sizable proportion of this goes to “organizing” the cops, prison guards and security guards who are paid to *repress* working people, immigrants and minorities. A 1999 AFL-CIO resolution crowed that “recent major advances have resulted from a focused effort to bring law enforcement into the American Labor Movement.” The current social-democratic AFL-CIO leadership is, if anything, more committed to appeals to the state agencies and parties of the capitalist class than the old-line “business unionist” bureaucrats.

In this year’s election, the AFL-CIO tops made the largest financial and political mobilizing effort in its history to get out the labor vote for the Democrats. Where \$14 million was allocated to union organizing last year, \$56 million of union members’ dues was thrown into Al Gore’s campaign alone, while millions more helped finance state and local Democratic campaigns. In the lead-up to

Would-be imperialist chief Al Gore embraced by John Sweeney at October 1999 AFL-CIO convention. Union tops promote U.S. imperialist “national interest” at January 1999 protectionist rally. Chauvinist poison fuels attacks on immigrants.



Burke/PageOne

the Democratic National Convention in L.A., the union tops moved to suppress any outbreak of labor struggle.

The bureaucrats’ ties to the Democratic Party—of which they are themselves a central component—have long served to chain the working class to its exploiters and preserve the rule of racist American capitalism. With naturalized Latino immigrants seen as “swing” voters wooed by both Republicans and Democrats, bringing these immigrants behind the Democratic Party was not an insignificant factor motivating the labor officialdom’s new stance on immigrant rights. Boasting of how he is organizing Latino unionists as foot soldiers for the Democrats, including for L.A. municipal elections a year from now, L.A. County Federation of Labor secretary-treasurer Miguel Contreras declared, “We will move heaven and earth to make sure that our candidates win that election” (*Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 18 June).

The Clinton/Gore White House enacted two of the most repressive anti-immigrant laws ever. The 1996 immigration law was accompanied by the “Anti-



terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act,” which mandates summary deportation of “subversive” immigrants on the basis of “star chamber” hearings and charges kept secret from them. “Operation Gatekeeper,” with its 12-foot-high walls sealing off San Diego, was one of a series of measures under Clinton to beef up the militarization of the border with Mexico. As a result, over 340 immigrants have died this year alone trying to reach *el Norte*.

The AFL-CIO’s call for an amnesty was combined with demands for “criminal penalties...to punish employers who recruit undocumented workers from abroad” and chauvinist tirades against immigrant worker programs that “discriminate against U.S. workers” (AFL-

Almeida/NY Times



CIO Executive Council Actions, 17 February). The union tops also “called on the federal government to maintain efforts to keep illegal immigrants out of the country” (*New York Times*, 17 February). This amounts to a call to strengthen the hated INS—*la migra*—and the militarization of the Mexican border.

Just as they use anti-black racism to divide the working class, the capitalist rulers, aided and abetted by the labor bureaucracy, foster anti-immigrant chauvinism to pit native-born workers—black as well as white—against immigrants. Such chauvinism is poison to the struggles of all the oppressed. The trade unions must take up the demand that everyone who makes it to the U.S.—“legal” or “illegal”—has the right to stay here and must champion the call for full citizenship rights for *all* immigrants.

Immigrant Rights and the Fight for Black Freedom

After nearly two decades of labor defeats, inaugurated with Reagan’s 1981 smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers union, the last few years have

seen a number of solid, widely popular and winning strikes, beginning with the Teamsters’ walkout against UPS in 1997. Symptomatic of the breakup of the Reagan years is the growing number of workers who want to join unions. *Business Week* (19 July 1999) reported that the number of workers who would join a union if they could has more than doubled since 1984. If even half of those were allowed to unionize, the labor movement would represent as much as 35 percent of the workforce, the same share it held at its peak in 1945. And that would cost the employers *hundreds of billions of dollars* in wages and benefits. No wonder union-busting is a multibillion-dollar industry in capitalist America.

While the SEIU service employees union, Sweeney’s old base, has grown in recent years, membership in the Auto Workers, Steelworkers and other unions in basic industry has plummeted. Disdaining class struggle against the bosses, the labor tops instead seek to negotiate “neutrality” clauses in union contracts which purportedly pledge management to allow organizing in non-union shops. This has led to drawn-out, failed unionization drives typified by the one at the DaimlerChrysler plant in Vance, Alabama.

The union bureaucracy likewise relies on legislation like the 1935 Labor Relations Act, passed under “New Deal” Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, which supposedly guarantees the right to organize. But it’s still perfectly legal to fire farm workers, who are not covered under its provisions, for trying to join a union. Nor do such “labor friendly” laws prevent the widespread victimization of pro-union workers in other industries. A recent report by Human Rights Watch estimated that *125,000 workers* were fired or otherwise victimized just between 1992 and 1997 for supporting a union. Among them was Haitian immigrant Marie Sylvain, a nursing home worker in Miami whose firing intimidated 70 co-workers into abandoning an organizing drive.

After four earlier union recognition votes—and organizing efforts which began *93 years* earlier—the overwhelm-



WV Photos

Banner at head of militant protest by Latino L.A. port truckers (left) during 1994 campaign against Prop. 187 reads: “Long Live the Immigrant Workers’ Struggle—United Against Racism and Discrimination.”

ingly black and immigrant textile workers at the Fieldcrest Cannon plant in the company town of Kannapolis, North Carolina voted last year to join UNITE. But to translate this isolated victory into a drive to organize the “open shop” South as a whole comes right up against the legalistic strategy pursued by the pro-capitalist labor tops. Any significant organizing drive poses a direct confrontation with state “right to work” laws and the cops and courts that enforce them, as well as their lynch mob auxiliaries of the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK and the people behind them have always understood that unions mean racial integration. Unionizing the South would require mobilizing not only the ranks of labor but the black masses, who would rally to the unions’ cause in struggle against the racist oppressors.

One of a series of articles on racism in America in the *New York Times* earlier this year gave a sense not only of how the workforce in the South has changed as a result of recent immigration but also of the lengths to which the capitalists will go in keeping unions out. Smithfield Packing in Tar Heel, North Carolina is the biggest employer in the region and the largest pork production plant in the world. “The few whites on the payroll tend to be mechanics or supervisors,” reported the *Times* (16 June). “With few exceptions, that leaves the blacks and Mexicans with the dirty jobs at the factory, one of the only places within a 50-mile radius in this muddy corner of North Carolina where a person might make more than \$8 an hour.” Management kept lists of union sympathizers during a failed union recognition vote in 1997, firing black workers and replacing them with Latino immigrants. The morning of the vote, workers were met by deputy sheriffs in riot gear and the union trailer had been defaced with “N-----lover.”

Black oppression, rooted in the legacy of slavery, is central to the economy, history and social institutions of capitalist America. The color bar is key in obscuring the irreconcilable class divide between labor and capital. Even the relatively privileged Cuban immigrants who

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¡Forjar un partido leninista-trotskista!
Se derrumba el régimen del PRI
¡Romper con todos los partidos
burgueses: PRI, PAN, PRD!

Tras la victoria electoral de Vicente Fox, Obisado del PAN, el próximo 1° de diciembre terminarán siete décadas de dominio del PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). Después de su derrota electoral en la presidencia, el PRI ha perdido también una batalla de gobiernos municipales y gubernamentales, y se enfrenta ahora a una desbandada. Grupos internos del PRI exigen la expulsión de Zedillo, mientras que el Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN) anterior, casi en su totalidad, ha sido reemplazado. Los conflictos internos del PRI fueron exacerbados de manera sangrienta por la violencia en Chiapas, Estado de México, Antioquia y el grupo de “La Loba”, dejando un saldo de varios muertos, en una lucha por el control del municipio. El Ejército y la Armada se ven envueltos en distintos escándalos relacionados con el narcotráfico, mientras que varios ex funcionarios políticos son acusados de diez meses, la burguesía enfrenta aún el problema en la Ciudad de México. Ante su derrota, el PRI una hora de poder como una “oposición tímida” al derecho y clerical PAN.

En reuniones con empresarios camiones, Fox anunció sus planes de “apertura completa”, es decir, privatización de las industrias petrolífera y eléctrica, con perspectiva a formar un mercado común norteamericano al estilo de la Unión Europea. El imperialismo estadounidense está lejos de renunciar a su política de un mercado común bajo sus términos. Y Fox encontrará muchos problemas al tratar de introducir sus planes proteccionistas en México. Según el *Journal* (18 de agosto), 75 millones de dólares, cerca del 75 por ciento de la población de México, viven en la pobreza. Tras la ruina de la biología, la UNAM, que polarizó profundamente a la sociedad mexicana, se enfrenta a un problema.

¡Ninguna ilusión en el PRD
nacionalista burgués, enemigo de explotados y oprimidos!

Trabajadores de Volkswagen en huelga, declarada “insubordinada” por el gobierno. Obreros, ¡para ganar hay que darle duro a la patronal!

are welcomed into the U.S. by the anti-Communist American rulers soon find this out. While white Cuban *gusanos* (counterrevolutionary “worms”) run Miami, the black Cubans who get there are relegated to low-paid jobs, segregated in ghettos like Liberty City and Overtown and subjected to racist cop terror.

In racist America, class exploitation has always been wrapped in the envelope of raw racism. Today the desperate conditions of life—rotten schools and rotting housing, no health care, low-wage jobs—that were visited first on black and immigrant workers are increasingly a reality for the working class as a whole. As long as workers are pitted against each other in competition for a limited pool of jobs, the necessary consequence will be a divided and weakened labor movement. At the same time, there will be no resistance to immiseration of the working class without the unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black and Hispanic poor. Black workers, who continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat, can be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multi-racial proletariat.

The potential for such unity in struggle was seen in the widespread sympathy of the ghetto and barrio poor for the recent strike by the overwhelmingly black L.A.



Democratic Clinton administration has stepped up racist anti-immigrant campaign, imprisoning and deporting hundreds of thousands. Border patrol agents’ roundup of immigrants (left), INS detention center.



AP photos

ing plants, deporting hundreds. When Latina maids at a Holiday Inn in Minneapolis attempted to join a union, their boss called in the INS, which arrested nine workers. Even after a court ruled that they were unfairly victimized and awarded them \$72,000 in damages, these courageous women workers still face deportation. Triply oppressed as immi-

times of economic contraction. Thus capitalism in ongoing fashion creates different strata among the workers, while simultaneously amalgamating the workers of many different lands. Everywhere, the capitalists, abetted by aristocracy-of-labor opportunists, try to poison class consciousness and solidarity among the workers by fomenting religious, national and ethnic divisions. The struggle for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism is thus a vital task for the proletarian vanguard.”

Until the substantial entry of blacks into the industrial workforce, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic chauvinism were the chief weapons of the capitalist rulers in dividing and holding back the working class, in the first instance directed against the Irish and German immigrants who began arriving in the 1840s. The Chinese laborers who were brought over around the same time to work in segregated gangs in the gold fields and on the railroads were subjected to vicious racism. The nativist “Know-Nothing” Party that arose in the 1850s was anti-Catholic and virulently anti-Chinese. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which all but cut off Chinese immigration and banned naturalization of Chinese immigrants; this racist law remained on the books until World War II.

The end of the 19th century saw a wave of South and East European immigrants, many of them socialists or anarchists. In the years after the 1917 Russian Revolution, thousands of immigrants and leftists were deported in the anti-Communist Palmer raids. This was followed by a series of laws restricting immigration and imposing a discriminatory quota system mainly directed against East European Jews, reducing immigration by 60 percent by 1927. These racist quotas were perpetuated in the 1952 McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act, which was passed

amid the Cold War McCarthyite hysteria and the purge of militants who had been in the forefront of building the CIO unions. Attacks on immigrant workers have always served as a spearhead for attacks on the labor movement as a whole.

“Use ’em, abuse ’em and send ’em back” has long been the motto of American capitalists, who have seen Mexico and other countries as a vast reservoir of cheap labor to be tapped in order to drive down wages at home. During the Depression, both Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in California came under attack, culminating in the “Zoot Suit” pogroms in the L.A. area in 1943. While thousands of “temporary” Mexican workers were brought in under the “*bracero*” program between 1942 and 1964 to slave in agribusiness, denied the most elementary rights, over a million Mexican immigrants and many Mexican Americans were targeted for mass deportations under “Operation Wetback” in 1954.

For Proletarian Internationalism!

As the history of immigration in the United States demonstrates, foreign workers brought into the country during times of economic boom are made scapegoats when the boom inevitably goes bust. At such times, the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats are enlisted to maintain “labor peace” and divert workers’ outrage by spreading racist anti-immigrant chauvinism among the workers.

The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 as one of the first national trade-union organizations, while admitting black workers, barred Chinese workers from membership. The newly fledged labor bureaucracy connived in making Chinese workers scapegoats for a series

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Brown Brothers

Immigrant workers played key role in building U.S. unions. Garment workers striking for eight-hour day in 1913 carry signs in Yiddish, Italian and Russian.

transit workers union. Earlier, the largely Latino janitors strike was met with equal sympathy and support. But to realize the social power of labor, and link it to the defense of the black and Latino inner-city masses, there must be a new, class-struggle leadership of the labor movement which actively champions the cause of black liberation and mobilizes the unions in defense of the rights of immigrants and all the oppressed. That means breaking the chains forged by the labor bureaucracy which shackle the working class to the rule of capital, centrally through the agency of the Democratic Party.

Imperialism and Immigration

Immigrants continue to work the most backbreaking and the lowest-paid jobs and are subjected to discrimination, violence and the threat of deportation. California’s Prop. 187 in 1994 denied public education and medical care to undocumented immigrants. Although most of its provisions were struck down in the courts, it achieved its purpose in terrorizing immigrants. Such measures, including chauvinist “English only” campaigns and attacks on bilingual education, are the legislative counterpart to racist terror, such as the recent attempted murder of two Mexican day laborers on Long Island (see “Labor: Mobilize to Defend Immigrant Workers!” WV No. 743, 6 October).

Among the hundreds of INS raids carried out in 1999, “Operation Vanguard” in the Midwest specifically targeted unionization efforts at meatpack-

grants, workers and women, such workers have played a vanguard role in labor struggles in their homelands and in the U.S. But here, too, the labor tops bow before the most reactionary enemies of these women workers—centrally the Catholic church.

L.A.’s Cardinal Mahony, who has presided over vicious strikebreaking against workers in the city’s Catholic hospitals and was instrumental in ending a walk-out by county workers just before the presidential elections, was a featured speaker at the AFL-CIO’s immigration forum in L.A. Posturing as the defenders of immigrants, the Catholic hierarchy seeks to bolster its flagging flock and fill its collection plates while it spearheads reactionary campaigns against abortion rights, seeking to enforce the subjugation of women to church and family.

The Spartacist League recognizes that immigrant workers, many with experience in social struggle in their countries of origin, can serve as a human bridge linking up workers in the U.S. with their class brothers and sisters internationally. In the International Communist League’s “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998), we wrote:

“Modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, reaching into all areas of the planet, in the course of the class struggle and as economic need demands, brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labor, principally immigrants from poorer and less-developed regions of the world—workers with few rights who are deemed more disposable in

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For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!

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Marxist Archives...

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and Max Shachtman.” It pitted Canadian academic Bryan Palmer, who is writing a biography of Cannon, against USec supporter Peter Drucker, author of the tendentious *Max Shachtman and His Left*. Palmer ably defended Cannon as a *proletarian revolutionary*, insisting rightly that he “showed us the way.” Palmer pointed out with disgust that there was more conference speaker time devoted to the egomaniacal ex-Trotskyist C.L.R. James—long a favorite in academic circles—than to Cannon. But this is merely an indication of the utter indifference of most of the conference participants to the fight for proletarian revolution. We also enjoyed the presentation of Edmond Kovacs on the legacy of Murry and Myra Tanner Weiss, who led the Los Angeles SWP local in the 1940s and early 1950s.

SL and PRL publications sold briskly during the conference, especially the newly published *Prometheus Research Series* No. 5 containing the 1936 document “Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?” written by Shachtman when he was a close collaborator of Cannon. Several of the conference participants have made use of the PRL holdings in their research and many paid tribute to our archival and publishing work.

* * *

What’s a nice girl like me doing at a place like this? A Spartacist speaking on the platform? Well, let’s just say that the invitation for us to speak was the acknowledgment that vice gives to virtue.

The Prometheus Research Library is a working research facility for a wide range of Marxist studies. More fundamentally, we are the central reference archive of the Spartacist League, which is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). We in the ICL are forging an international movement dedicated to making new October Revolutions around the globe. Thus we see ourselves as the active *subjects* of Trotskyist history, rather than simple passive commentators about it. The relationship between a library’s holdings and its purpose is an interesting



Pathfinder

Founder of American Trotskyism, James P. Cannon.

question. In our case, of course, the relationship is direct. Our task is the general education and political arming of ICL cadre. We seek both to learn from the victories of previous generations of revolutionary Marxists—and not to repeat their mistakes.

Our collection is centered on, but by no means limited to, the history of the Communist and Trotskyist movements. For example, given the extensive international travel of our cadre, we have many books on airplane disasters. But we have very little on C.L.R. James. Even when James was a member of the Trotskyist movement, the review in the SWP’s *New International* (February 1938) of his history of the Comintern, *World Revolution, 1917-1936*, was dominated by a refutation of its numerous errors. That’s a dubious distinction not claimed by any other Trotskyist author to my knowledge.

Our library grew out of the personal holdings of Spartacist League National Chairman James Robertson. Jim painstakingly acquired his volumes of Plekhanov, Marx and Trotsky and Lenin in the 1950s and early ’60s. At the time, books by Trotsky in English were scarce. The SWP didn’t reprint much by Trotsky during the period from World War II to the early 1970s, when George Breitman began Pathfinder’s ambitious Trotsky publishing program. Jim tells the story of

how happy he was when he acquired in the late 1950s the last published work by Trotsky in English that he didn’t have, *Between Red and White*—a polemic in defense of the Red Army’s overturn of the capitalist Menshevik government in Georgia in 1921—not a Trotsky work very popular with the crowd here. The volume was given to him by Murry Weiss as a going-away present when Jim returned to the Bay Area after a few months’ stay in New York. Jim always speaks fondly of Murry and Myra Weiss.

The PRL collections now include some 5,600 books, hundreds of reels of microfilm, thousands of documents and bulletins. Our main collection is in New York, but we also have a Western Station in the Bay Area, as well as a small library in London. Our collections do not circulate; they are available on site to our members. Our New York library is open to other qualified researchers by appointment.

The PRL seeks collaborative relationships with other individuals and institutions who share our interests. Many of you know of our collaboration with George Breitman on our book of Cannon writings. We have assisted the Trotsky Museum in Coyoacán, which I hope Esteban will be able to talk about. We have an active publishing program, seeking to make important historical material available to a wider audience. Many of you have bought our bulletins.

Origins of the Spartacist League

I want to give a bit of Jim’s personal political history, since it goes some way to explaining our archival holdings. Comrade Robertson joined the Communist Party youth in 1946. But he was disgusted with the reformism of the Henry Wallace campaign in 1948. He left the CP to join Shachtman’s Workers Party in 1949, just before the organization changed its name to the Independent Socialist League. As the ISL plunged to the right under the impact of the first Cold War, Jim became a left-wing oppositionist, trying to maintain the so-called “third camp” against Shachtman’s increasingly open preference for the U.S. imperialist camp. In this capacity, Jim debated Shachtman twice and still remembers the look on Shachtman’s face when Jim arrived for a debate on the Korean War carrying a copy of Shachtman’s January 1941 polemic against the SWP’s Proletarian Military

Policy, “Working Class Policy in War and Peace.” It is reprinted in our *PRS* No. 2, which you can buy at our literature table.

But Jim came to realize that the “third camp” was untenable. What won him away from bureaucratic collectivism was the Hungarian political revolution of 1956, in which the bureaucracy manifestly did not act like a social class, but as the brittle caste that Trotsky said it was. Jim and Tim Wohlforth led the Left Wing Caucus of the Young Socialist League in 1956-57—that was the Shachtmanite youth organization. The Left Wing Caucus opposed the liquidation of the ISL into the Socialist Party. They joined with youth around the SWP in publishing the *Young Socialist* newspaper and became the founding leadership of the YSA (Young Socialist Alliance) in 1960.

The PRL has complete sets of the Shachtmanite newspaper, *Labor Action*. We also have extensive, but not complete, holdings of the WP/ISL internal and educational bulletins, as well as youth bulletins and minutes. We have bulletins and extensive personal correspondence documenting the fight of the Left Wing Caucus and the founding of the YSA.

The Spartacist League, of course, has its origins in the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP. The nucleus of the RT originated in the central leadership of the YSA and it fought against the degeneration of the SWP as manifested by its abandonment of a proletarian perspective, as well as its abandonment of the fight for revolutionary vanguard parties around the globe, when it embraced the Castroite leadership of the peasant-based Cuban Revolution as “unconscious Trotskyists”—an oxymoron if ever there was. This is when the SWP first denied Trotsky’s permanent revolution in program and practice, if not yet in theory. As I mentioned in the workshop yesterday, the RT also fought to get the SWP to intervene in the civil rights movement, against the party leadership’s policy of tailing first the liberal pacifist leadership of Martin Luther King, and later the black nationalist leadership. We have complete documentation of the RT’s fight and the founding conference of the Spartacist League in 1966, as well as the international extension of the Spartacist tendency in subsequent years.

We stand firmly on the shoulders of James Cannon, the finest Leninist this country has yet produced. Ed Kovacs was wrong yesterday to say the Weiss group

Immigrant Workers...

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of economic crises. American Federation of Labor head Samuel Gompers, whom John Sweeney lionizes today, was an outright racist who lobbied for the Chinese Exclusion Act, arguing that the “maintenance of the nation depended upon maintenance of racial purity and strength.”

In the 1950s, the union tops supported “Operation Wetback.” In the ’70s, California Farmworkers leader Cesar Chavez called on *la migra* to deport undocumented workers who refused to join the union. A decade later, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy was one of the main backers of the 1986 “Immigration Reform and Control Act” which imposed employer sanctions against hiring undocumented workers. In 1995, the call by Atlanta building trades tops for raids against undocumented workers triggered the INS’ “Operation SouthPAW” (“Protect American Workers”) and the seizure of thousands of foreign-born workers throughout the South.

The shining exception to such anti-immigrant chauvinism in the U.S. labor movement was the revolutionary-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), founded in 1905 with the understanding that “the working class and the employing class have nothing in



Ruben R. Ramirez

Women workers have been in vanguard of labor struggle in Mexico against foreign corporations’ *maquiladora* plants along U.S. border, as in 1995 RCA Thomson strike in Ciudad Juárez.

common.” The IWW fought for integrated labor struggle north and south of the Mexican border and opposed anti-Chinese and anti-Mexican racism. Many of the best IWW militants, such as James P. Cannon (who later became a founding American Trotskyist), were inspired to join the early Communist Party following the Bolshevik Revolution. A 1922 resolu-

tion of the Communist International directed the Communist parties in the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries to “conduct an energetic campaign against laws prohibiting immigration” and to “explain to the proletarian masses of these countries that such laws, by stirring up race hatred, will in the end bring injury to themselves.”

The AFL-CIO bureaucracy cannot fully defend the rights of immigrant workers because, at bottom, its loyalty lies with the American capitalist rulers against those they exploit and against their imperialist rivals. After decades of aiding the U.S. government in gutting unions in Latin American countries and throughout the Third World, the AFL-CIO now calls on the U.S. government to enforce “labor standards” on those impoverished countries. While we denounce the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as the “free-trade rape of Mexico” by U.S. imperialism, the labor tops’ opposition to NAFTA is completely couched in protectionist terms of “saving American jobs,” exemplified by the Teamsters tops’ chauvinist campaign to ban Mexican truckers from the U.S.

Our watchword is not the deadly dangerous trap of “defending American jobs” against foreign competition, but the words which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels inscribed on their banner more than 150 years ago: “Workers of the world, unite!” What communists have to say to the impoverished masses of the backward countries is that the answer to their desperate social conditions does not lie in an individual ticket to the U.S. or West Europe, but rather in international socialist revolution: the necessary precondition for the economic reorganization of human society through freeing the productive forces from the fetters of private ownership and the capitalist nation-state. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

were the last Cannonists. *We are Cannonists*—and not the last ones, because we fully intend to train future generations.

Trotskyism, the Bolshevism of Today

The PRL’s priority is collecting material from our direct revolutionary forebears, the Communist Party of the 1920s, the (Trotskyist) Communist League of America, the Workers Party of the United States from 1935-36 (not to be confused with Shachtman’s later party), the Trotskyists during the Socialist Party entry and the SWP to 1963. And of course the international Communist and Trotskyist movements they were part of, from the Comintern to the International Left Opposition through the Fourth International until it was destroyed by Pabloite revisionism in 1951-53, and the International Committee which waged a belated, partial fight against Pabloism.

We place no premium on having original copies, or the complete papers of any individual. Rather, we seek complete sets of Central Committee and Political Committee minutes and internal and international bulletins, as well as correspondence. For our purposes, an archival-grade xerox is just as good—even better—than an original. Jim collected SWP internal bulletins and Communist Party material even as a young member of Shachtman’s organization. But we have expanded well beyond Jim’s original collection—through purchases, xeroxing from old timers’ libraries and bequests.

Our collection includes substantial internal material from the American Communist Party and its youth group in the 1920s, including Political Committee minutes. We drew from this in preparing our selection of Cannon’s writings and speeches from the 1920s, which Bryan Palmer told you about yesterday. We were not allowed access to the Comintern archives in Moscow when preparing the book, but they opened up shortly thereafter. From these archives we obtained microfilm copies and many more items by and about Cannon in the ’20s. Bryan has used this material in researching his biography of Cannon.

We have a complete set of the *Militant* from its founding to the early 1960s, as well as the *New International (NI)* and *Fourth International* (we also have the *NI* from 1940-58, when it was Shachtman’s theoretical journal). We have almost complete holdings of American Trotskyist internal and international bulletins from the founding of the Communist League of America. Our holdings of SWP internal bulletins are complete but for a few issues through 1984. As far as leading body minutes, we have what I believe is a complete set of the resident National Committee minutes which were produced and circulated in the CLA. We also have some rare and original internal documentation from the CLA and its youth group, including the draft minutes of the CLA’s Third Conference in 1934, which to our knowledge exist in no other collection. Our holdings of National and Political Committee minutes for later American Trotskyist organizations are more partial, but substantial for some periods. Similarly, we have substantial ILO International Secretariat minutes for the early 1930s, but our international holdings are more spotty for later periods.

Our brochure notes that the fact that our collection centers on the American Trotskyist and Communist movements is both a strength and a weakness. A weakness because our foreign-language holdings are more partial than we would like. But more fundamentally because the 1917 Russian Revolution, including both the lead-up to it and the revolutionary years which immediately followed, continues to be *the* central reference point for genuine opponents of capitalism. The October Revolution was the first successful working-class insurrection to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat—and maintain it for some 74 years. To write off this experience as irrelevant today is, quite simply, to abandon Marxist historical materialism.



Putilov factory workers in Petrograd at May Day demonstration in 1917. Banner at left reads, “Long Live the Third International!”

Trotskyism was forged in the struggle to defend and extend the gains of the Russian Revolution—both material and ideological. “Trotskyism” is nothing but the Bolshevism of Lenin as extended to the period of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. The Fourth International stood squarely on the program and principles elaborated by the first four congresses of the Comintern. This is a historical truth buried by every other speaker at this conference.

The PRL’s collection includes various-language minutes and resolutions of Comintern congresses as well as its international journals in English and German. Our first Prometheus Research bulletin was the first complete, authoritative English translation of the Organizational Resolution of the Third Congress of the Comintern. It’s a manual of party building and has direct relevance to what we do today.

The comrades of the ICL’s Moscow station also managed to procure for us much of the Russian-language record of the Bolshevik Party. We have some 323 published Russian-language titles (representing many more volumes), including stenographic reports of the Russian party congresses and conferences and memoirs by old Bolsheviks. We also took advantage of the brief opening of Trotskyist material in the Comintern archives—much of it is now unavailable again—to copy some Left Opposition material. We have several manuscript memoirs of Russian Oppositionists.

The Communist International insisted on an irreconcilable break with all forms of reformism and revisionism. It also showed revolutionaries around the world how to link the struggle for socialist revolution to the day-to-day struggles of workers in the imperialist epoch, superseding the old Social Democratic division between minimum and maximum program. This is what the Transitional Program is based on. And all this constitutes a powerful refutation of the thesis peddled by Alan Wald and other members of the reformist organization Solidarity speaking here—who argue for junking the “old Trotskyism”—that the program that Cannon built the SWP on is only appropriate for a period of working-class upsurge, that it is no longer relevant today. The “new” arguments raised by Wald et al. amount to nothing but a restatement of the “party of the whole class” reformism of the Second International—at best. At worst it’s a call for the eclectic political bloc that was the First International. As if the whole 20th century—two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the victory of Hitler in Germany, the Stalinists’ strangling of the Spanish Revolution—never happened!

The Purpose of the PRL

The PRL is known for the thoroughness and accuracy of our historical research. This is not a personal quality of

our staff. Rather it flows from the fact that we have the same aim as that of our forebears—the forging of a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class as the *historically proven, necessary* instrument for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We *need* to know what really happened, to learn from it. In contrast, the revisionist “Trotskyist” historians simply seek justification in the past for their reformist program today.

I’ll give you an example, one mentioned yesterday by Bryan Palmer. The PRL has collected some 600 documents—including minutes, correspondence and polemics—from the factional polarization between what can broadly be called the Cannon group and the Shachtman group in the Communist League of America from 1931-33. Most of the leading protagonists downplayed the fight—if they didn’t deny it—in later years. Even Cannon’s *History of American Trotskyism* deals with the period pretty superficially. But the CLA almost split, a development which Trotsky feared would have led to the stillbirth of American Trotskyism.

As Pierre Broué alluded to on Friday night, the fight began over Shachtman’s support to petty-bourgeois careerist elements in Europe, like Kurt Landau, Pierre Naville and M. Mill. Shachtman had made two trips to Europe and was the CLA’s supposed international “expert.” But Cannon had to wage a fight and do a poll of the National Committee just to put the CLA National Committee on record in favor of Trotsky as against Naville and against the Spanish section under the leadership of Andrés Nin, which was moving rapidly away from the ILO. Shachtman capitulated early on the international questions; even so the fight continued, and in fact deepened. It prefigured the 1939-40 faction fight in a myriad of ways, from the social composition of the two groups to their political methods, petty-bourgeois vs. proletarian.

Almost all the tales on the “organi-

zational question” that surfaced in 1940—Cannon the Zinovievist, Cannon the meanest tiger in the so-called “bureaucratic jungle,” Cannon the hand-raiser for Trotsky, Cannon the anti-internationalist—have their origins in the Shachtman faction’s main document of the time, “The Communist League of America: Prospect and Retrospect.” But there were no principled or programmatic differences. So Trotsky intervened hard to put a stop to it in the spring of 1933. The polarization dissipated as Shachtman went over to collaborate with Cannon in pursuing the new opportunities that opened up before the American Trotskyists in 1934. What Cannon learned from Trotsky in this fight completed his education as a Leninist, as Cannon repeatedly said in later years.

All this material speaks powerfully against the myths perpetrated in Peter Drucker’s *Max Shachtman and His Left*—you know, Shachtman, the happy commissar for Leon Trotsky, running around Europe in the early 1930s as Trotsky’s agent; Shachtman as Cannon’s “idea man.” In fact, by late 1931 Trotsky had had it with Shachtman in Europe. And Shachtman’s contributions to early American Trotskyism, while quite substantial, were almost exclusively *journalistic*. Cannon quipped in 1943 that “if Shachtman ever had an original idea, I never caught him at it.” Peter Drucker doesn’t quote *that*. So we’ve collected all this material, and we hope in the future to publish a selection as a book.

I said the fight dissipated after 1934. Well, not quite. There remained a group of Shachtman’s former supporters, who took shape as the Abern clique. There’s significant light shed on that in our new *Prometheus Research Series* No. 5, a reprint of Max Shachtman’s 1936 document “Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?”—which many of you have already bought.

At the beginning of *The State and Revolution* Lenin noted that after his death, Marx was increasingly turned into a harmless icon, the better to emasculate and vulgarize the revolutionary essence of his ideas. The same has happened to Trotsky at this conference. He’s been turned into a harmless, democratic “anti-Stalinist” by those who want to cover their own accommodation to the decaying “democratic” imperialist order.

Let’s let Trotsky speak for himself, and in so doing summarize what are the aims of the PRL. This is from his 1937 work “Stalinism or Bolshevism”:

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

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Defend the Gains of the Vietnamese Revolution!

Clinton Visit: Imperialist Mass Murderers Preach “Reconciliation”

In the first visit to Vietnam by an American president since that small country inflicted a stinging defeat on the U.S. 25 years ago, imperialist Commander in Chief Bill Clinton in November cynically preached “reconciliation” and talked of the “shared suffering” which supposedly joins together the imperialist mass murderers and their victims. Vietnamese Communist Party leader Le Kha Phieu aptly responded to this hypocritical cant: “Where did the cause of our resistance war against invaders come from? Fundamentally it came because imperialists invaded to get colonies. Why did the United States bring its army to invade Vietnam when Vietnam did not bring an army to invade the United States?”

Having slaughtered three million or more Vietnamese, Washington then imposed a vindictive starvation blockade against the impoverished and war-ravaged country, an embargo lifted only a few years ago so that bloodsucking companies like Nike could move in and set up sweatshop operations exploiting low-paid Vietnamese workers. Clinton made clear that the American bourgeoisie continues to pursue through economic blackmail the aim it could not achieve on the battlefield: the smashing of the gains of the Vietnamese social revolution. He praised “entrepreneurship, innovation and competition” and lectured that “the trend towards freedom is virtually irreversible.”

As the mouthpiece of the American bourgeoisie, the *New York Times* (20 November), noted, “Today, it is not troops the United States is bringing to Vietnam but a free market.”

The Vietnamese people had years of experience of imperialist “freedom”—with its carpet bombings, concentration camps and CIA and domestic torturers—and they have seen what the “free market” brought to the working people of the former Soviet Union. Quoted in the *Times*, Le Kha Phieu said: “We have seen the collapse of the U.S.S.R. We are still on our feet, we have reaffirmed Socialism.” However, the Vietnamese Stalinists themselves encourage the forces of capitalist counterrevolution by conciliating imperialism, inviting foreign capital in and implementing “market reforms.”

It is the duty of the international proletariat to fight for unconditional military defense of the Vietnamese bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. It is necessary for the Vietnamese workers to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy through proletarian political revolution as part of a program of world socialist revolution. We publish below in edited form a talk by Spartacist League member Diana Coleman last spring in Vancouver celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Vietnamese victory over U.S. imperialism.

* * *

On 30 April 1975, North Vietnamese tanks rolled into Saigon, driving out the defeated U.S. imperialists. Panicked Americans were taking off in helicopters from the roof of the U.S. embassy. South Vietnamese collaborators, agents and torturers tried to fight or beg their way onto the helicopters. With the U.S.’ typical contempt for its erstwhile allies, most of them were left to face their just desserts. A recent *New York Times* (19 April) article recounts their frenzied attempts to escape as well as the celebration throughout Vietnam following the U.S. pull-out, as documented by a number of Vietnamese war photographers. One of the photographers, Duong Thanh Phong, recalled, “It was such a happy day. Everybody was on the streets laughing and singing.” Describing some of the photos he took on his 30-mile ride to Saigon, the article continued:

“The most evocative shot from that ride shows a road filled with hundreds of pairs of military boots, discarded by South Vietnamese soldiers who ripped off their uniforms to try to mingle with civilians.

“Mr. Phong said that he had also taken pictures of the fleeing soldiers in their underwear but that he had thought it too embarrassing to print.”

For revolutionaries, victories—especially of this magnitude—are few and far between. Our reformist opponents whine, “No more Vietnams!” (By the way, this is also the title of Richard Nixon’s book



Reuters

Hanoi, November 17: Clinton with Vietnamese president Tran Duc Luong in front of bust of Communist leader Ho Chi Minh.

lamenting the U.S. defeat.) But we say, “Vietnam was a victory! Two, three, many defeats for U.S. imperialism!”

Vietnam was a social revolution, a victory for the working people everywhere. The bourgeois press routinely refers to Vietnam as the most humiliating defeat ever suffered by the U.S. military. Well, it was. As we look at the world today, where U.S. imperialism has bombed Iraq back to the Stone Age (as an American general once threatened to do to Vietnam), where U.S./NATO terror bombing of Serbia was conducted under the cynical pretext of “human rights” for “poor little Kosovo,” we are here to say that imperialist war, exploitation and racism are only going to be ended through international proletarian revolution.

To get a picture of the scope of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, you have to get a picture of the scope of the war effort. This was U.S. imperialism’s war against Communism in Asia, and their drive to smash the Vietnamese Revolution was no less aimed at China and the Soviet Union. At the height of the war, the U.S. had half a million combat troops in Vietnam and another 300,000 in the surrounding region. Fully 60 percent of the entire U.S. infantry and Marine Corps was engaged in Vietnam. With the exception of nuclear weapons, every weapon in the Pentagon arsenal was used in Vietnam. The war was regarded as a testing ground for new weapons, everything from cluster bombs to chemical poisons like Agent Orange. The U.S. dropped more bomb tonnage on Vietnam than the combined total dropped by all of the combatants in World War II. Every day, a fleet of B-52 bombers would take off from Guam or Okinawa heading toward the jungles of Vietnam. Every day, for years!

All told, the U.S. killed directly at least two million Vietnamese, maiming and wounding millions more. Even today Vietnam has a massive problem with birth

continued on page 4

Vietnam Was a Victory— Two, Three, Many Defeats for U.S. Imperialism!



Le Minh Truong/American War Photo Project

Heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants inflicted humiliating defeat on U.S. imperialist colossus. U.S. mass murderers scramble as Vietnamese Communists liberate Saigon, April 1975.



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