

Greed, Hypocrisy and the Profit System



Reuters

Estrin/NY Times

Enron: Capitalism U.S.A.

Media pundits and a growing chorus of capitalist politicians are decrying the “improprieties” that led to the meltdown of Enron, until recently America’s seventh-largest corporation. In fact, the spectacle of Enron executives cashing in their chips to the tune of billions while 19,000 former employees have seen their jobs and future well-being disappear has simply brought into sharp focus the daily operations of the capitalist system. In short, working people produce all the wealth and the rich do as they will with the proceeds. This has aroused anger among ordinary Americans and caused not inconsiderable discomfort for the ruling class, which prefers that the gloss of democracy cover the reality that this is *its* system and *its* state.

From TV talk shows to the editorial pages of leading newspapers like the *New York Times*, much has been made of the seeming failure or erosion of corporate “checks and balances” and government regulations. By their lights, “crony capitalism” was a disease peculiar to Japan and Southeast Asia, whereas American capitalism was “virtuous” in its “transparency,” because the government supposedly controlled such excesses as may occur in the pursuit of profits. An editorial in the *Straits Times* of Singapore, with justice, exposed the hypocrisy of America’s rulers: “How could all this have happened on Wall Street, the benchmark (or so Asians were told in 1997) of corporate transparency? The simple answer is: The U.S. government let it happen.”

From its formation in 1985, Enron could not have prospered as it did without a coordinated effort by the government—from the Supreme Court to Congress and the White House—to deregulate the energy industry and clear other obstacles in its way. The truth of the matter is that the U.S., of all advanced capitalist countries, is one in which the least effort is expended in maintaining the fiction of government “independence” from its capitalist masters. One need only look at the rapidly revolving door between the Enron board of directors and the government.

Former Enron chief Kenneth Lay was at one time the Interior Department’s deputy undersecretary for energy affairs. Thomas White, now Secretary of the Army, began his climb in the military, then became an Enron vice chairman and was then appointed to his current post in the Bush administration, where he pushed efforts to deregulate and privatize energy utilities serving the military. Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman, whose contempt for “immorality” gave him the vice presidential slot in the Gore campaign, has been the recipient of much Enron-related largesse and played a role in quashing efforts to impose stricter financial reporting on corporations in 1994. Now Lieberman runs a Senate committee poised to investigate Enron’s improprieties. Robert Rubin, Secretary of the Treasury under Clinton, was Enron’s man at Goldman Sachs before assuming his Cabinet position and has since gone on to become Enron’s man at Citigroup. The

list of co-conspirators goes on and on and on. Over 50 percent of the current members of Congress have been recipients of Enron handouts. All of this only serves to underline the understanding laid bare by Karl Marx more than 150 years ago, that the capitalist state is the executive committee of the capitalist class as a whole.

As the “let them eat cake” party of the bourgeoisie, the Republicans arrogantly dismiss the sufferings of those victimized by capitalist devastation. Bush economic adviser Larry Lindsey extolled the Enron debacle as a “tribute to American capitalism.” Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill declared that “companies come and go. It’s part of the genius of capitalism.” The other party of American capitalism, the Democrats—which incorporates the trade-union tops as a constituent part in order to capture the votes of those who labor—at times proposes to “reform” capitalism’s most egregious excesses.

At base, the Democrats are no less avaricious. Terry McAuliffe, national chairman of the Democratic Party, was virtually moved to tears by Enron’s aftermath, describing its practices as “simply outrageous” and, with funereal solemnity, declaring that his “heart goes out to the employees and shareholders who were victimized by a web of greed and deceit.” When later confronted with the fact that he had parlayed a \$100,000 investment in Global Crossing, a telecom venture, into \$18 million and “managed” to cash out before it went belly up this week, the fangs of the entrepreneur became more

apparent. Echoing the anti-Communist rejoinder of the McCarthy era, he proclaimed: “If you don’t like capitalism move to Cuba or China.”

The revolutionary overturns that effected the expropriation of capitalism in China and Cuba meant that, even in backward circumstances, all had a job and housing as well as access to education and health care. These gains are now being eroded, particularly so in China, precisely by the penetration, to varying degrees, of capitalist exploitation into the economies of these deformed workers states.

Workers in the U.S. have an option unmentioned by McAuliffe, that is, to carry out a socialist revolution in this country: to overturn the U.S. imperialist order, wrest control of the means of production from the capitalist moguls and proceed to build a society in which there is no exploitation, joblessness, want or injustice.

Monopoly Capitalism and Business Secrets

Lecturing on the ills that had allegedly brought about the 1997-98 Asian economic crisis, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sermonized to an annual gathering of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in July 2000 on the path to capitalist virtue: “A critical component of this effort will be strengthening the rule of law and curbing official corruption and cronyism.” Businessmen hiding their assets and liabilities while working hand in glove with government

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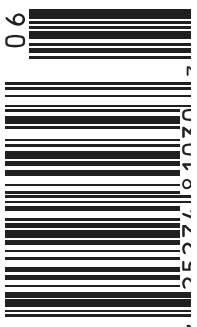
Black Struggle and the Vietnam War



Ten Years After Counterrevolution in the USSR

For New October Revolutions!

SEE PAGE 6



Anti-Arab Witchhunt, Mass Layoffs

Detroit: A City on the Edge

The following is a January 18 report, edited for publication, on a visit to the Detroit area by a team of Spartacist League comrades from Chicago.

Detroit is a city on the edge. The effects of the recession are kicking in, and layoffs are coming with a vengeance. After years of humongous profits, Ford announced a “restructuring” plan including plant closures and tens of thousands of layoffs, and the huge Henry Ford Hospital also announced thousands of layoffs.

The effects will be massive. The parts plants, many of which were spun off years ago, have contracts coming up, and they are going to be nowhere near as good as the old United Auto Workers contracts. A lot of these plants are out in all-white suburbs like Livonia and Sterling Heights, places where black people never hear of job openings, and nepotism is rife. Detroit proper was eviscerated 20 years ago in the last recession, and so it remains. Detroit has a new young mayor, Kwame

Protesters in Dearborn, Michigan demonstrate against government’s anti-Arab campaign.



Waldman/PDI

Kilpatrick, son of a longtime City Council member. He’s promising the sky, of course, but is facing a budget deficit and a teachers union contract coming up soon.

Then the “war on terrorism” gets thrown into the mix. The case that is hot right now is that of Rabih Haddad, co-founder of the Global Relief Foundation, an organization that the FBI says has funneled money to terrorists. The Feds are trying to deport him, and on January 15

they spirited him to Chicago, probably in large part because he has a vocal base of support in Detroit, Dearborn and Ann Arbor. There have been demonstrations of several hundred, and last week Al Sharpton came to town to support him. Congressman John Conyers was refused admittance to his hearing. Dearborn mayor Michael Guido ominously announced that the city will appoint a

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TROTSKY

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Black oppression, rooted in the legacy of chattel slavery, is the bedrock of American capitalism. As a spokesman for the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party stressed during World War II, when the Jim Crow system of racial segregation reigned in the South, racial oppression can only be eliminated through the proletarian overthrow of the American bourgeois order. This Marxist understanding is underscored by the continuing and deepening oppression and immiseration of the mass of the black population today, nearly four decades after the end of legal segregation in the South.

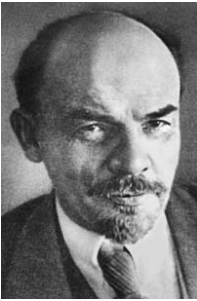
In 1848 Karl Marx, after making a scientific analysis of the history of society, arrived at the conclusion that the state was supported and kept in power by and for the ruling class in society. Whoever owns the means of production makes up the ruling class. The state serves to protect the interests of the exploiting minority over the exploited majority. In slavery days the judges, law officers, and governors, that is, the state apparatus, unfailingly upheld the interests of the slaveholder over the slave. In feudal days the state was always on the side of the noble and against the serf.

We have reached the point in America today where it is the monopoly capitalists who own and control the means of production. The industrial workers, on the other hand, comprise the exploited majority. True to the Marxist analysis, every agent of the state from top to bottom must do the bidding of the monied interests. If he defies the capitalists he is soon kicked out in one way or another. Now what has that got to do with the Negro? Marx said that no ruling class has been able to long exploit the vast majority unless that majority was split within itself. The capitalists know this and they make the most of it. Whether based on race, religion, nationality, language, or custom, the axiom “divide and rule” is never forgotten and never neglected by those who are in power....

Therefore we say that this system—capitalism—is the basic and fundamental enemy of the Negro people. Here is the spring from which flows the vile potion that cascades down to form the final stream of Negro inequality. We have found the source—let us mark it well. This is the reason why the fight against Jim Crow without a fight against capitalism, well intentioned though it may be, is an endless and fruitless fight. To establish Negro equality, we must abolish capitalism....

Now what would bring the Negro full equality? What would bring him full employment? We say not capitalism, but socialism. Socialism with its nationalized property and its planned economy. Now factories hum only with the production of instruments of death and destruction, manufactured solely for the profit of the few. Under socialism factories would hum with the production of instruments of life and construction, manufactured to supply the needs of the many. World socialism, without a doubt, would bring with its classless society full equality, full employment, job security, peace, and plenty to not only the Negro people but to all mankind.

—Charles Jackson, “How to Win the Struggle,” *Militant*, 25 November 1944, reprinted in *Fighting Racism in World War II* (1980)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 774

8 February 2002

Martha Phillips



Spartacist

10 March 1948 — 9 February 1992

It has been ten years since the murder of our comrade Martha Phillips in Moscow. A cadre of the Spartacist League/U.S. for 20 years, Martha was actively involved in the antiwar, civil rights and labor movements. For many years, she had lived and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she helped found the Labor Black League for Social Defense, which grew out of her 1983 election campaign for Oakland City Council.

In 1991, Martha went to Moscow, where she died on the front lines of the struggle to reimplant Lenin and Trotsky’s communism in the homeland of the October Revolution. In July of that year, Martha presented greetings from the International Communist League to a meeting of the Moscow Workers Congress. Her remarks, published in WV No. 532 (2 August 1991), sought to lay bare what capitalist restoration would mean for the working people of the Soviet Union. She presented a fighting perspective for defense of the gains of October and the need for a proletarian political revolution to return the Soviet Union to the internationalist program which animated the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. She sharply denounced the anti-Semitism that permeated the Stalinist “patriot” milieu.

Following Boris Yeltsin’s counterrevolutionary coup in August 1991, Martha oversaw the distribution to Russian workers of tens of thousands of copies of our statement “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counter-revolution!” She played a critical role in the production of our Russian-language *Spartacist Bulletin* series, including an issue published immediately after her death titled “Leninist Party—Tribune of the People,” which was dedicated to her memory.

At the time of her death, Martha was the most visible fighter for the program of Trotskyist internationalism in the former Soviet Union. Our anguish over her irreplaceable loss is compounded by the fact that, to this day, we still do not know who murdered Martha, or why. Our efforts to press for a serious investigation into this tragedy were met with deliberate evasion and incompetence by the Moscow authorities and utter indifference by the American consulate.

The devastation of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union cries out for the construction of a proletarian, internationalist party that can organize and lead the fight against grinding immiseration, murderous chauvinism, all-sided social bigotry and all the other horrors of capitalist restoration. Comrade Phillips dedicated her life to building such a party, a Leninist tribune of the people. We honor our fallen comrade’s spirit, tenacity and courage through our resolve to continue the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.

Mobilizing for the February 9 Immigrant Rights Demo

Bay Area SYC

Our efforts to mobilize labor, blacks, immigrants and students to demonstrate in defense of immigrant and labor rights on February 9 have met a fantastic response here in the Bay Area. From the docks to colleges, from high schools to downtown supermarkets, interested youth and workers are organizing contingents, mobilizing friends and co-workers, and picking up leaflets to advertise for this labor-centered united-front protest. In building from their respective campuses, our Spartacus Youth Club comrades have been giving presentations at high schools and colleges in San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley. The following report is by two members of the SYC, Kat and Burt, who have been actively participating in preparations for the rally.

In October, the Democrats and the Republicans passed the USA-Patriot Act. This allows the government to deport any non-citizen without any hearing at all. This act leaves immigrant labor defenseless, unless fought against by other elements of the working class. That is why we are mobilizing the multiracial Bay Area unions against the USA-Patriot Act.

The bourgeoisie has created this idea of the “terrorist enemy within” in order to strengthen the powers of their own violent state. But just how violent and crazy these racist capitalists are going to get depends on how much class struggle fights them. We have to fight now for our own rights and our own jobs, and the jobs and rights of our immigrant brothers and sisters. We are forging a united demonstration of working-class power—together with youth, black and immigrant organizations—to stop the attacks



WV Photo

February 4, Oakland City Hall: Press conference announcing growing support for February 9 mobilization included representatives of AFSCME Local 444, SF Day Labor Program, Filipino Workers Association, PDC and Bay Area Labor Black League.

of the capitalists’ “national unity” campaign. And if you look at the American left, you’ll realize if we don’t, no one will!

That is being reflected in the conversations we’re having with students from campuses around the Bay Area. Students from Oakland’s Laney College, a heavily black and immigrant community college, while enthusiastic about a labor-centered action to defend immigrants, also want to know what kind of organization would initiate and build such a demo. It’s quite clear that you don’t need to be a communist to realize that workers have to defend immigrant rights because the capitalists’ anti-immigrant campaign is ultimately aimed at the working class as a whole. That is easy to grasp. But it is apparent that it does take a communist organization to organize workers to act

in defense of immigrants. On campuses around the region, most other leftist groups have met our call with silence at best. The International Socialist Organization, which actively boycotted the united-front demonstration we organized in defense of immigrant workers and foreign-born students at San Francisco State University in December, won’t even answer the question as to whether they’ll endorse this demo. This shows their blind faith in the reformability of the capitalist system, and consequent fear of independent labor action, which could threaten bourgeois rule.

The message about this mobilization is traveling fast. People are taking leaflets by the dozens to distribute in their neighborhoods, and many groups are organizing contingents to bring to the demo. Students from high schools from San

Francisco to Walnut Creek are mobilizing contingents; an English as a Second Language teacher at Laney College, active in the defense of immigrant students, took a bundle of flyers to distribute to her students and fellow ESL instructors. A group of black gay youth from Oakland stopped one of our comrades on the street as he was carrying a sign for the demo and got leaflets to pass around, saying they wouldn’t think of missing such a protest. Contingents are also being organized from San Francisco State University, UC-Berkeley, Laney College and UC-Santa Cruz.

Immigrant rights groups are also organizing contingents: CARECEN, the Central American Resource Center, is arranging transportation to bring their members and workers from the SF Day Labor Program to the demo. Supporters have been dropping off leaflets in mom-and-pop stores, with particular success in San Francisco’s Chinatown and on East 14th Street in Oakland, a long avenue with a wide range of Asian and Latino immigrants and blacks. At one barbecue joint, the owner posted in his window all three of our flyers, English, Spanish and Arabic/Chinese.

The main thing we’re cutting across in building this demo is the capitalists’ divide and rule scheme of pitting American-born workers against immigrant workers. We do not see the world divided by national lines—or gender, racial or ethnic lines, for that matter. We see it in terms of worldwide class lines, which means that workers in Mexico are the brothers and sisters of American-born workers. This demo has been endorsed by the SF Day Labor Program, which finds work for immigrant workers, and it has been endorsed by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6

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“We endorse and will help build a united front labor/black demonstration with the following demands: ‘Anti-Terrorist Laws Target Immigrants, Blacks, Labor—No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act!’ and ‘Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!’.”

Partial list of endorsers as of February 5, 2002:

Mumia Abu-Jamal, Revolutionary Journalist, Death Row, PA
African Students Union, Hunter College,* New York, NY
AFSCME Local 444, Oakland, CA
Al-Awda/Palestine Right To Return Coalition — NY/NJ Committee Amalgamated Transit Union Black Caucus
Association des Palestiniens en France, Ivry sur Seine, France
Marcellus Barnes, President, Amalgamated Transit Union Black Caucus
Willie Lee Bell, retired Recording Secretary, IAM&AW Local 739 and 1584,* Oakland, CA
Berkeley Stop the War Coalition, Berkeley, CA
Berlin Afrikanisches ImmigrantInnen Projekt, Berlin, Germany
Wanda J. Black, President/Bus. Agent, Local 241, Amalgamated Transit Union,* Chicago, IL
Jackie B. Breckenridge, International Vice President, Amalgamated Transit Union - AFL-CIO*
Canadian Arab Federation, Toronto, Canada
Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Metro Toronto Region
CARECEN, Central American Resource Center, San Francisco, CA
Leroy Collier, President, National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 2200,* Pasadena, CA
Coordination Nationale des Sans Papiers, Paris, France
Michael Crahan, President, LIUNA Local 1141,* San Francisco, CA
Ron Dicks, V.P. for Political & Legis. Action, International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers Local 21,* San Francisco, CA
Filipino Workers Association, Richmond, CA
Freedom Socialist Party/Radical Women
John Holmes, Delegate, Representative Assembly, Typographical Sector, Northern California Media Workers Union #39521, CWA*
Mustapha Houamed, Secretary, Student Committee for Peace in Palestine,* St. Denis University, Paris, France

Hakim Husien, Chicago Chapter President, Palestine Aid Society,* Chicago, IL
International Federation of Iraqi Refugees (Sydney) Inc., Sydney, Australia
International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 6, Oakland, CA
International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, San Francisco, CA
Internationalist Group
Geronimo ji Jaga
Justice Action, Sydney, Australia
Kaws.El.Karama (newspaper), Tunis, Tunisia
Randell Kim, previous 2nd Vice President, AFSCME Local 444
Kurdish, Turkish Human Rights Committee, Melbourne, Australia
La Raza Centro Legal, San Francisco, CA
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement - SF (LCLAA), San Francisco, CA
Latino Workers Center, New York, NY
Patricia Loya, Executive Director, Centro Legal de la Raza,* Oakland, CA
LTS-Contracorriente, Mexico City, Mexico
Stephen Lysaght, President, East Bay Area Local, American Postal Workers Union,* Walnut Creek, CA
Ronald Malone, Shop Steward, HERE Local 2,* San Francisco, CA
Brian McWilliams, SFLC delegate, International Longshore and Warehouse Union,* San Francisco, CA
Charles Minster, Steward and SFLC delegate, National Park and Public Employees, LIUNA Local 1141,* San Francisco, CA
Eugene “Gus” Newport, former Mayor, Berkeley, CA
Kilu Nyasha, Producer/Programmer, “Connecting the Dots” KPOO 89.5 FM,* San Francisco, CA
Gary Okihiro, Professor, Columbia University,* New York, NY
One World Society, Trinity College,* Dublin, Ireland

Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
German Reyes, Shop Steward, SEIU Local 87,* San Francisco, CA
Wilson Riles, candidate, Riles for Mayor,* Oakland, CA
Eduardo Rosario, Vice President, GCIU Local 4N,* and President, LCLAA-SF, San Francisco, CA
Michael Rossman, archivist, Free Speech Movement Archives,* Berkeley, CA
Stephanie Ruby, Secretary-Treasurer, HERE Local 2850,* Oakland, CA
Section Syndicale SUD PTT, Créteil PFC, Créteil, France
SF Day Labor Program, San Francisco, CA
Earl Silbar, Chief Steward, AFSCME Local 3506,* Chicago, IL
Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico City, Mexico
Donald A. Smith, Executive Board-Trustee, NALC,* Pasadena, CA
Socialist Workers Organization
SOS Struggle of Students, Hamburg, Germany
Spartacist League/U.S.
Spartacus Youth Club, San Francisco Bay Area
Ted Wang, Policy Director, Chinese for Affirmative Action,* San Francisco, CA
Everette Whitfield, Steward, SEIU Local 73,* Chicago, IL
John Williams, Shop Steward, General Motors Holden, Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union,* Melbourne, Australia
Gerald Zero, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 705,* Chicago, IL

* Organizational affiliation for identification purposes only.

We want to make it very clear that these endorsers do not necessarily agree in any particular with the call by the Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League for Social Defense.

Initiated by the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee

The movie *Ali* brings to the screen the story of boxer Muhammad Ali, the heavyweight champion whose intransigent opposition to racist oppression and U.S. imperialism's dirty war in Vietnam made him a hero to millions around the world. This gripping movie captures not merely the champ's prowess in the ring, his searing wit and compassion, but his courage in standing up to the U.S. government which threatened him with imprisonment and stripped him of his heavyweight title and livelihood. The movie reminds those who lived through this period, and acquaints those who didn't, why Ali could claim, "I am the greatest."

Directed by Michael Mann, with Ali's close cooperation, and starring Will Smith, the movie focuses on ten years of Ali's life. It begins in 1964, when Ali

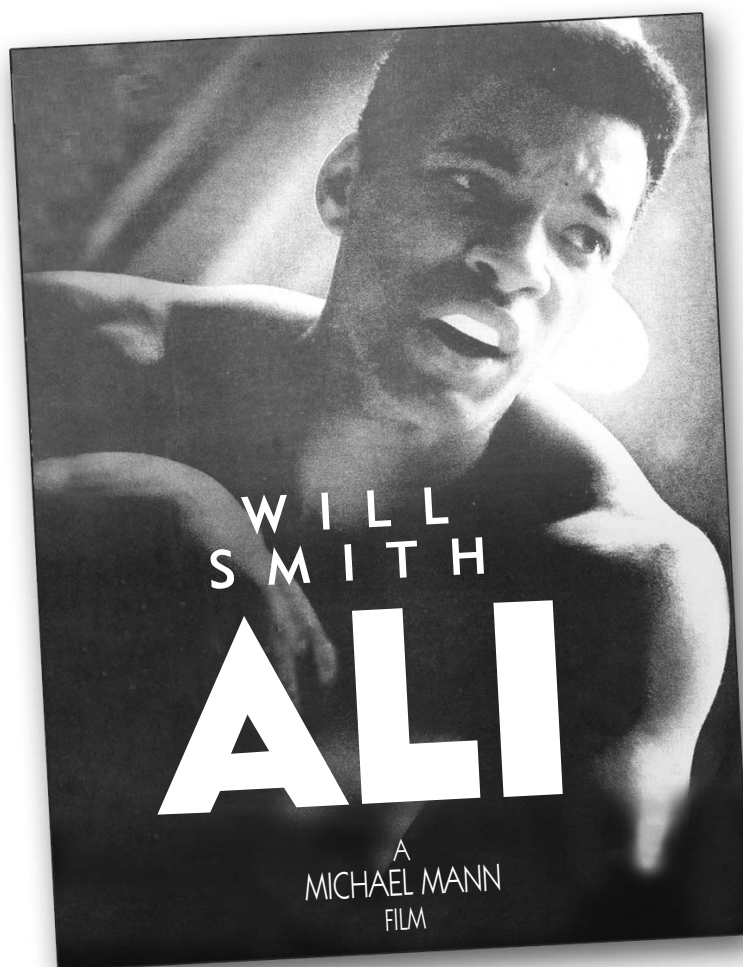
By Paul Costello

(then named Cassius Clay), as a brash 22-year-old underdog known as the "Louisville Lip," won the heavyweight title from Sonny Liston in 1964. It ends on a morning in Kinshasa, Zaire in 1974, when as an aging "over the hill" underdog, Ali recaptured the championship from the seemingly unbeatable George Foreman. This was a period of vast social upheavals—marked by ghetto rebellions, the rise of the "Black Power" movement, the mass protests against U.S. imperialism's brutal war against Vietnam. In 1975 came the battlefield victory of the Vietnamese workers and peasants over the world's most powerful imperialist military.

Ali grew up at the beginning of the movement for black civil rights. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional. Rosa Parks' arrest in 1955 for refusing to move to the back of a Montgomery, Alabama bus led to the year-long Montgomery bus boycott and thrust Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) onto center stage as a national spokesman for pacifist "direct action." Across the South the KKK, heavily overlapping with local police forces, launched a blitzkrieg of racist terror—lynchings, church burnings and brutal beatings of civil rights workers and just about any black person who "got out of line." In 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was castrated and lynched for the "crime" of whistling at a white woman in Mississippi.

The movie's riveting opening sequence intersperses shots of Ali training for the Liston fight—including being stopped by a cop who asks, "What you running from, boy?"—to moments in Ali's childhood which shaped his consciousness. One scene shows Ali being forced to move to the back of the bus in segregated Louisville, Kentucky, as he sees a newspaper headline on the Till lynching. Not shown, however, is how Ali was greeted upon returning home after triumphantly representing the U.S. in the 1960 Olympics. As Ali later recalled, "With my gold

Black Struggle and the Vietnam War



A Review

medal actually hanging around my neck, I couldn't get a cheeseburger served to me in a downtown Louisville restaurant." In disgust, Ali threw the medal into the Ohio River.

Even before his public condemnations of American racism, Ali was being vilified by white sportswriters because he didn't fit their image of what a boxer, especially one who is black, is supposed to be. This brutal sport has always been about pitting two impoverished fighters, who are increasingly likely to be black or Hispanic, against one another to beat themselves senseless to the thrills of a bloodthirsty—mostly white—crowd. Shortly after Georgie Flores became the sixth boxer killed in 1951, James P. Cannon, leader of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) wrote:

"Cock-fighting is illegal; it is considered inhumane to put a couple of roosters into the pit and incite them to spur each other until one of them keels over. It is also against the law to put bulldogs into the pit to fight for a side bet. But our civilisation—which is on the march, to be sure—has not yet advanced to the point

where law and public opinion forbid men, who have nothing against each other, to fight for money and the amusement of paying spectators."

—*Militant*, 24 September 1951, reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (1958)

Ali was different. As he said after his 1971 victory over Jimmy Ellis, "Ain't no reason for me to kill nobody in the ring." Ali used his speed and agility, circling to the left on his toes, snapping off jabs and rapid-fire combinations. With his hands at his waist, Ali dared his opponent to hit him, only to miss widely as Ali either pulled his head back or darted to the side, ripping off a stinging jab as he "danced" away. This style gave birth to his trademark slogan, coined by his black Jewish ring assistant, Drew "Bundini" Brown: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

Ali and Malcolm X

Ali captured the title at the height of the struggles against Jim Crow segregation and a growing polarization within the civil rights movement. Young activists were becoming increasingly disillusioned with King's pacifist strategy.

Through bitter and repeated experience, young black militants, like those of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), learned firsthand that despite King's capacity to land thousands of activists in jails, he was unable to dent the stone wall of racist reaction. On the streets of Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, the dead end of King's pacifism was exposed in blood. Sheriff Bull Connor and his stormtroopers set upon black demonstrators with police dogs and firehoses set at pressures sufficient to strip bark off a tree, hurling children up against the walls. King's nonviolent philosophy was junked by the black masses who fought back with sticks, rocks, knives and bottles against the racists in the streets.

As the young civil rights activists became more radical, they found in Malcolm X the one man who expressed boldly the thoughts they were still afraid to voice themselves. Malcolm was the voice of the angry black ghetto, of black militancy. He was black America's truth-teller, intransigently opposed to the "white man's puppet Negro 'leaders'," as he called King, Bayard Rustin and other liberal civil rights leaders. He reviled their calls to "turn the other cheek" in the face of murderous attacks by the KKK and other agents of Southern Dixiecrat rule. He denounced their appeals to Democratic president John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert, the attorney general who "came to the aid" of civil rights activists by sending the FBI and federal marshals to suppress militant black protest.

After capturing the heavyweight crown, Ali immediately came under fire for his association with Malcolm, who was then the most prominent spokesman for the Nation of Islam (NOI). As the movie shows, Malcolm had been seen with Ali before the Liston bout and rumors surfaced that Ali had joined the NOI. The morning after he defeated Liston, Ali confirmed the rumors, announcing he was a Muslim, henceforth to be known as Cassius X. Shortly afterward, NOI leader Elijah Muhammad gave him the name Muhammad Ali.

Ali's relationship to Malcolm X was outside the bounds of what was deemed acceptable for a black sports figure in racist America. And they were going to make him pay. Because he consistently spoke out in support of the struggle for black freedom, Ali was pilloried by virtually the entire corps of white sportswriters. They wanted him to "know his place" in American society. This is conveyed in the movie when Ali, walking in Harlem with Malcolm X, is asked by a reporter if he is going to be "a great champ, like Joe Louis." Ali replied, "I'll be a great champ, but not like Joe Louis." Louis agreed to be used by the racist rulers to build support for their imperialist war aims in World War II, which they claimed was a "war for democracy against fascism."

One of the film's great attributes is its portrayal of Malcolm X's split with Elijah Muhammad and the NOI in a much more honest way than Spike Lee did in his movie *Malcolm X*. The NOI had existed for more than a quarter of a century, attracting a few thousand followers and no serious interest among politically active blacks. In the early 1960s, at the height of the civil rights movement, the Black Muslims suddenly exploded into the consciousness of black (and to a lesser extent white) America. It had always been a tenet of the NOI that the black Christian preacher was the white man's main tool for keeping blacks subjugated. By this Elijah Muhammad meant nothing more than that Christianity prevented the black masses from discovering "the natural religion of the black man." But amid growing dissatisfaction with the liberal leadership of the civil rights movement, the Muslims' condemnation of Christian submissiveness appeared to be something more, namely a political criticism of King's pacifistic liberalism and ties to the white ruling class.

Although they considered the white



LNS



AP

Left: Black soldier 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." Right: Muhammad Ali escorted from Army examining station after refusing induction, 1967.

man to be the personification of evil, the NOI opposed in principle any struggle against racial oppression. Instead they stood for *maintaining* hard racial separation, even inviting American Nazi leader George Lincoln Rockwell to attend a 1961 NOI rally in Washington addressed by Elijah Muhammad. Where Elijah Muhammad continued to emphasize the sect's religious nature, Malcolm X did not. It was largely through his powerful oratory that the Muslims attracted young black men who wanted to struggle against racist oppression. At the same time, Malcolm upheld the NOI's separatism, declaring "No *sane* black man really wants integration."

Yet masses of blacks were fighting precisely for social, political and economic equality *within* American society. Though a critic of the civil rights movement, Malcolm remained outside. And while the young black militants admired him, they marched against the racists with King & Co., not with the minister of the NOI's Temple No. 7 in Harlem. In the face of the historic struggles for black rights that were shaking the country, Malcolm let it be known that he wanted to see the NOI abandon their abstentionism, arguing that the Muslims were perceived as people who "*talk* tough, but they never *do* anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims."

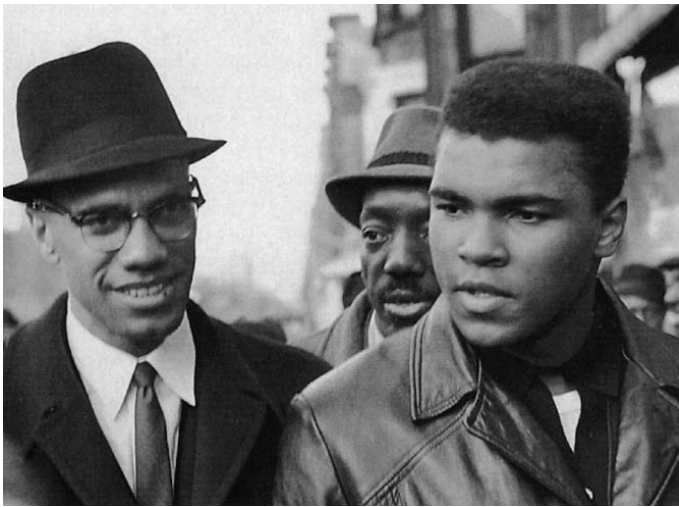
When Malcolm responded to the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy by saying it was a case of "chickens coming home to roost," the civil rights and liberal establishment went apoplectic. Elijah Muhammad responded by suspending him from the NOI. A scene in the movie captures the increasing political gulf which would later lead Malcolm X to split with the NOI. Following Ali's victory over Liston, Malcolm, under suspension at the time, visits Ali and talks of how his "blood was boiling" when a bomb planted by the KKK ripped through Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist church a year before, killing four black girls. Malcolm declares that no more will he allow himself to be restrained by Elijah Muhammad in fighting for black freedom.

Refusing to be silenced by Elijah Muhammad and increasingly aware that the NOI was responsible for the death threats he and his family had received, Malcolm split from the NOI and formed his own organizations, the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). At an OAAU meeting in January 1965, Malcolm read aloud a telegram he had sent to the Nazi Rockwell:

"This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as

free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of nonviolence, and who believe in asserting our right of self-defense—by any means necessary."

Ali stayed with the NOI. The movie shows his last meeting with Malcolm, a chance encounter while both were on separate tours of Africa before the rematch



Howard L. Bingham

Ali with Malcolm X in New York City, 1963.

with Liston. On 21 February 1965, Malcolm was assassinated in Harlem's Audubon Ballroom. In the movie Ali, driving down a Detroit boulevard when he learns of Malcolm's murder, pulls the car over and breaks down in tears. Ten years later, Ali himself left the NOI.

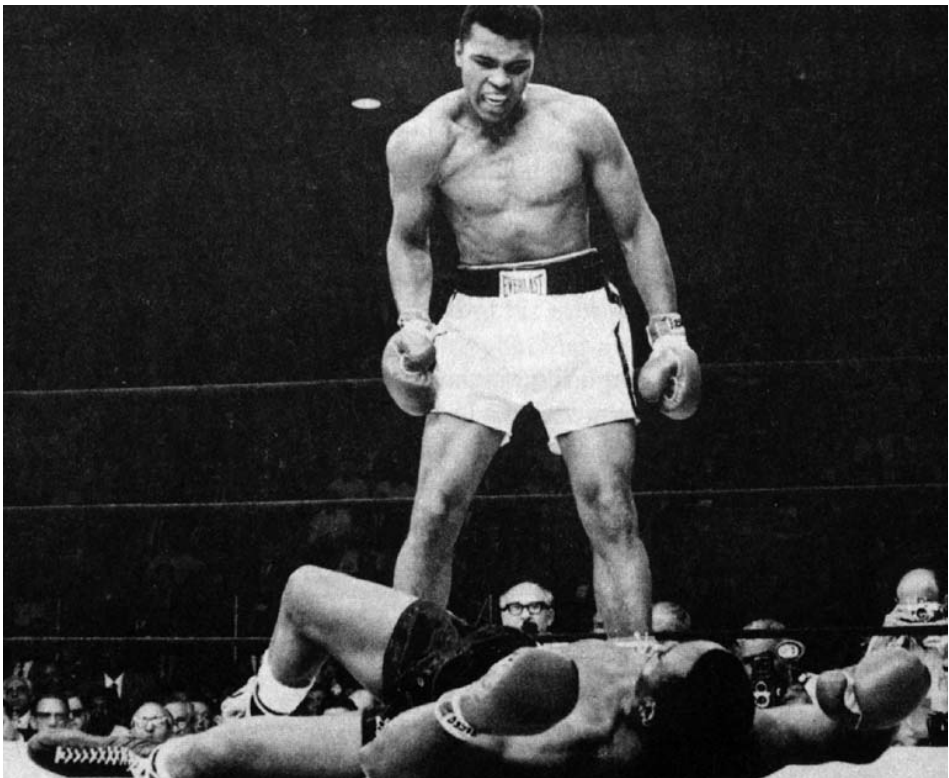
"No Vietcong Ever Called Me N----r"

The year Ali won the championship, 1964, saw the lynching of civil rights workers Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney in Mississippi, the cop riot in Har-

lem and passage of the Civil Rights Act, which formally ended Jim Crow segregation in the South. The next four years were marked by ghetto rebellions in Watts, Detroit and Newark, the rise of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and the assassination of King, which provoked an explosion of ghetto upheavals in scores of cities. It was marked as well by the rapid development of mas-

sive opposition to U.S. imperialism's war on Vietnam.

Because it omits all but one of his boxing matches during this period, the film fails to convey just how public a figure Ali was, and accordingly why he was so despised by the Feds. Unlike other heavyweight champs, Ali took on all challengers. He went overseas to fight Europe's top boxers, and gave a shot at the title—and the only chance at a real payday—to journeyman fighters at the end of their careers, like Cleveland Williams and Zora Folley. Just about every



UPI

Muhammad Ali, victorious in 1965 rematch with Sonny Liston.

match was broadcast live on television. Ali was a fixture on the screen for weeks of pre-fight promotion and post-fight interviews, speaking out against American racism and drawing perceptive analogies between his mistreatment by the boxing establishment and the press and how the U.S. imperialists were trampling on dark-skinned peoples at home and abroad.

For his stand against racist oppression, Ali became one of thousands of black activists targeted by the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO program, which was responsible for the killings of 38 Black Panthers and the frame-ups of hundreds more. But it was his refusal to join U.S. imperialism's killing machine that brought down the weight of government repression upon him.

Earlier found ineligible for the draft, in 1966 Ali was reclassified. As the press corps hounded him about whether he would serve if called up, Ali announced, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong." Capturing the sentiments of millions of black people, Ali added, "No Vietcong ever called me n----r," which promptly became a slogan carried by black activists at protests against the war. On 28 April 1967, he was called up. *Ali* depicts how the champ refused to step forward and complete the induction ceremony when the name "Cassius Marcellus Clay" was called, even though promised that he could coast through military service by performing boxing exhibitions as Joe Louis had done. Ten days later, he was indicted by a federal grand jury for draft evasion. Convicted on June 20, Ali was sentenced to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The government's lead prosecutor was former NAACP Legal Defense Fund counsel and liberal icon Thurgood Marshall, who shortly afterward was appointed the first black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Despite their increasing success in football, baseball and basketball, black athletes, who overcame vicious racism in their college and early professional careers, were then subjected to a quota system which made sure that enough spots on team rosters were reserved for whites. Any step out of line would threaten the loss of their sports careers, which was the only ticket—often fleeting—out of the ghetto hells. The few boxers who made any money found themselves fleeced by unscrupulous managers, promoters or the IRS, and left the sport with nothing to show for their careers but broken noses and scrambled brains. If they minded their Ps and Qs, they could make a few bucks as "greeters" at gambling casinos or resort hotels. Middleweight champ Dick Tiger, who had donated his savings to his native Biafra during the civil war in Nigeria in the late 1960s, was working as a security guard for New York City's Museum of Natural

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Black History Month Forums



Capitalist Rulers Wage War on Immigrants, Blacks, Labor

**No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act!
Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!**

BAY AREA

For more information: (510) 839-0851

Thursday, February 21, 6:30 p.m.

Tearoom, YWCA of Oakland
1515 Webster Street, Oakland

Anti-Terror Laws Target Immigrants, Blacks, Labor

Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!

LOS ANGELES

For more information: (213) 380-8239

Saturday, February 23, 4 p.m.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church
3300 Wilshire Blvd.

Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt—Deadly Danger to Blacks, Labor!

**U.S. Imperialism Abroad Means
Racist Reaction at Home!**

**Break with the Democrats! Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!
Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

CHICAGO

Saturday, February 16, 4 p.m.

University of Illinois
750 S. Halsted
Room 509, Circle Center
For more information: (312) 563-0441

NEW YORK

Saturday, February 9, 2 p.m.

Columbia University
Hamilton Hall, Room 602
116th and Amsterdam
For more information: (212) 267-1025

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

**Slavery, American Capitalism, Reparations and
the Fight for Black Freedom**

BOSTON

For more information: (617) 666-9453

Saturday, February 9, 3 p.m.

Harvard Science Center, Room B-09



Der Spiegel

Yeltsin's barricades of counterrevolution, Moscow, August 1991. Russians thrown into impoverishment following restoration of capitalism line up at soup kitchen in freezing cold.



Economist

Ten Years After Counterrevolution in the USSR For New October Revolutions!

We publish below an edited version of a presentation by Spartacist League Central Committee member Ed Clarkson at a September 8 SL forum in Chicago.

Since the Yeltsin-led counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the world has changed in many ways. I was recently watching a movie called *May Fools* by Louis Malle about a provincial bourgeois French family that's undergoing the process of decay. The old matriarch has just died, and they are figuring out which paintings to sell so that they can get by on the proceeds of previous generations. It is called *May Fools* because it is set in 1968 in the month of May, that is, during the period of the great upsurge of the French proletariat. There's this big family in the countryside, and they're listening to the radio. The batteries are defective, so the radio sputters on and off. They hear that President de Gaulle has fled Paris and the workers have seized the city, and they speculate that the Soviet Army is only two days from the border.

That sense no longer exists. The Soviet Union—as the pre-eminent society where capitalism was overthrown, where working-class property forms were initiated, a power second only in the world to U.S. imperialism—is a place that no longer exists. Just on the purely military level, a great advantage has accrued to the world bourgeoisie. The other thing is that people no longer perceive workers, and indeed to a large extent workers no longer perceive themselves, as inclined toward socialism, as was the French proletariat in 1968. That is a direct result of the final unraveling of the Russian October Revolution of 1917—the first and to date only successful proletarian revolution in history—in 1991-92. Since that time, the imperialists have reveled in “death of communism” triumphalism.

Flashing back to the movie *May Fools*, they all ran out to the woods and hid out for a couple of days until the radio told them it was safe to return. The fears of our bourgeois friends were rather unjustified, even in 1968. The USSR had no intention whatsoever of invading France. Indeed, in the period immediately following the Second World War, Stalin had ordered the disarming of both the Italian and French Communist-led Resistance forces, at a time when there was a power vacuum because the bourgeoisies

in both countries were discredited by their embrace of fascism during the war. In 1968, the French Communist Party, the dominant organization of the proletariat, had no aspirations whatsoever to claiming state power. Yet the strength and depth of the workers uprising was certainly strong enough so that one could have considered that.

Nevertheless, there was some basis for that bourgeois family's fear. The Red Army had, after all, overturned capitalism in East Europe in the aftermath of World War II. And the Soviet Union, by giving considerable material support to Mao's Communist forces in China, had played a significant role in the 1949 Chinese Revolution, which took about a fourth of the population of the planet out of the hands of the imperialists. The con-

tradictory behavior of the Soviet Stalinist regime in these various instances serves to illustrate that what ultimately developed from the October Revolution was a very complex and contradictory historical phenomenon, described by Leon Trotsky as a degenerated workers state.

The imperialists are not so silly as to believe their own public relations campaign about the “death of communism.” They are quite aware that the vicious contradictions of their system will continue to engender working-class opposition and popular uprisings. The remaining workers states, which we describe as bureaucratically deformed—China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam—do not have anything near the military capacity of the former Soviet Union. Nonetheless, since the fall

of the USSR, the U.S. has been relocating most of its military forces to the Pacific theater as a bludgeon particularly against China, which has some nuclear weapons. That is simply because the U.S. imperialists intend, if necessary, to utilize military might to overthrow the last remnants of proletarian state power on the planet. To that end, the U.S. continues to this day its blockade of Cuba, even though probably most of the population here no longer supports the blockade. It's gratuitous in a way, but it expresses the fundamental opposition of U.S. imperialism to the very existence of a society in which capitalism was overthrown.

Now, of course, there are two sides to this question. There have been intrusions of capitalist development into the remaining workers states, but they have not been overthrown yet. The European imperialists have invested considerable capital in Cuba, for example, which has gone on beggars' rations since the demise of the Soviet Union. The economic penetration and the military buildup are two sides of the same coin: both are directed at overthrowing the deformed workers states in East Asia and the Caribbean.

“Death of Communism” Ideological Campaign

At the same time, you have an all-out propaganda campaign, which has been conducted in literary journals by the intelligentsia both in this country and in Europe, directed at the history of the October Revolution and the history of Communism. In this country, it has taken the form of—if one reads the *New York Review of Books*, for example—any number of articles attempting to prove once again that the Rosenbergs were really guilty of spying for the Soviet Union and deserved to be executed in 1953, and that the American Communist Party (CP) was nothing but a nest of spies. In actuality, by the time of World War II the CP was simply a reformist organization. Its leader, Earl Browder, described Communism as “20th century Americanism.” The important thing for us was that the Soviet Union was able to obtain the atomic bomb as a counterweight to the intentions of U.S. imperialism.

In Europe, this ideological campaign is taking the form of an attack not only on the Russian Revolution but on the French Revolution of 1789. Every revolution, even that bourgeois revolution, is



Novosti

Above: Soldiers march through Moscow under banner of Communism in 1917. Right: First Congress of Communist International, March 1919. Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks fought for world socialist revolution.



Y. Shteinberg

now seen as suspect by the bourgeoisie. David Horowitz, an ex-New Lifter from the 1960s, recently appeared at the University of Chicago. He’s fairly well connected with right-wing Republicanism. Previously he did some work for Reagan down in El Salvador, and he was evidently part of Bush’s troops in Florida during the “chad” controversy. He is currently beating the hustings with his peculiar notion that not only is there no racism in American society today, but that American society was always good, that slavery was pretty good and the slaves got a real good break. And if you don’t believe this, then you are condemned in Horowitz’s eyes as an opponent of “free speech” and the American Constitution. Moreover, if you get up and oppose him in one of his forums, he will have you shut up and dragged out.

One remembers that during the McCarthy period of the early 1950s there were two crimes: one, you believed in racial integration and fought for it; and two, you believed in a socialist future. Horowitz plays a role in an effort by the U.S. rulers to squash any sort of oppositional thought or social protest in the egg, before it begins.

The October Revolution and Soviet Russia

The October Revolution, better known as the Bolshevik Revolution, arose out of the holocaust of World War I. It was the signal act of the 20th century, which Lenin described as the epoch of imperialist decay and socialist revolution. It took the question of socialist revolution out of the realm of theory and made it real in the former tsarist empire.

The revolution’s accomplishments were many and great. In backward Russia, it gave land to all the peasants, it eliminated discriminatory legislation against gays and others, it was the first country of any significance to give the franchise to women, which caused all the imperialist states to subsequently try to catch up. It also gave self-determination to the captive nations within the former tsarist empire. It expropriated the capitalists and took the first steps to building a socialist society.

Internationally, it inspired revolutionary uprisings throughout Europe, most notably in Germany, Italy, Finland and Hungary, and triggered colonial uprisings against the imperialist powers. The victorious Bolshevik Party forged an international party of world revolution, known as the Third International, which by 1921 had attracted over six million workers to its banner. It is important to realize that the Bolshevik Revolution, through the first four Congresses of the Third International, educated and organized the world working class in struggle.

Even in the rather politically backward United States, it was the leaders of the Russian Revolution who made the important connection between the cause of black liberation and working-class revolution, emphasizing Karl Marx’s point that one section of the working class cannot prosper when the other section is in

chains. So that even in this country every struggle against black oppression, every effort to build the trade unions—including the building of the gigantic CIO industrial unions in the 1930s—was led by those who were inspired by the October Revolution.

But things did not go well in the Soviet Union itself. In 1918, it was plunged into civil war by an unending series of imperialist-sponsored interventions. The devastation of that civil war was then superimposed on the previous devastation of World War I. Because of this, in the early days of the Soviet workers state a huge governmental apparatus was necessary to simply ration out the scarcity that was prevalent in that starving society at the time.

The other thing that happened during the early years of the Russian Revolution is that the anticipated revolutions in Europe did not transpire. Several attempts at revolution in Germany failed. The revolution in Hungary was reversed. The revolution in Italy never happened, although there were two years called the *Biennio Rosso*—the “two red years”—when the bourgeoisie could not rule, and when the Social Democrats declined to do so.

The main reason that the revolutions did not succeed in Germany and elsewhere was that there was no truly revolutionary party ready to play the same role that the Bolsheviks had played in Russia. But there is another side to this story, too. The Social Democrats, the historic parties of the working class in Europe at that time, had become the labor lieutenants of capital, what Lenin described as *bourgeois workers parties*. They became that current in the labor movement which stood against revolution and on the side of maintaining the bourgeois order—if necessary, by shedding blood, as happened in Germany when the Social Democrats in bloc with right-wing militarists suppressed the Spartakist uprising in 1919, following which its leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, were murdered.

The combination of the devastation of Russian society and the failure of the revolution to spread internationally led to what Trotsky later called the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state. By early 1924, those who spoke for the interests of the developing Soviet bureaucratic caste—for its conservatism, for its right to material privileges—seized control of the Bolshevik Party and thereby of the Soviet state. In the following decade, the party was destroyed by Stalin and turned into a mere bureaucratic apparatus, plain and simple.

Our latest *Spartacist* (No. 56, Spring 2001), our theoretical magazine, has two very good articles that people might read that pertain directly to this period. One is on the 1923 revolutionary crisis in Germany and why the revolution failed to happen, and the other is on the early struggles of the Left Opposition led by Trotsky around the same time. My favorite description of what happened to the Russian Revolution comes



Members of Trotskyist Left Opposition exiled to Siberia commemorate anniversary of October Revolution, 1928. Banner calls for struggle against growing capitalist-restorationist danger: “Turn the Fire to the Right—Against Kulak, Nepman and Bureaucrat.”

8 FEBRUARY 2002



Red Army soldiers trample Nazi flag in Austria, 1945. Soviet victory over Hitler’s Germany demonstrated power of collectivized economy.

from Trotsky, from his monumental book *The Revolution Betrayed*, which analyzed the complexity of the Soviet Union after the working class was politically expropriated:

“The proletarian character of the October revolution was determined by the world situation and by a special correlation of internal forces. But the classes themselves were formed in the barbarous circumstances of czarism and backward capitalism, and were anything but made to order for the demands of a socialist revolution. The exact opposite is true. It is for the very reason that a proletariat still backward in many respects achieved in the space of a few months the unprecedented leap from a semifeudal monarchy to a socialist dictatorship, that the reaction in its ranks was inevitable. This reaction has developed in a series of consecutive waves. External conditions and events have vied with each other in nourishing it. Intervention followed intervention. The revolution got no direct help from the west. Instead of the expected prosperity of the country an ominous destitution reigned for long. Moreover, the outstanding representatives of the working class either died in the civil war, or rose a few steps higher and broke away from the masses. And thus after an unexampled tension of forces, hopes and illusions, there came a long period of weariness, decline and sheer disappointment in the results of the revolution. The ebb of the ‘plebeian pride’ made room for a flood of pusillanimity and careerism. The new commanding caste rose to its place upon this wave.”

Stalinist Russia and the Trotskyist Program

When Trotsky analyzed this society in *The Revolution Betrayed*, he recognized that those who ruled in the Soviet Union and the way they ruled had fundamentally changed since the early years of the revolution. But what was ruled over had not changed. Soviet society maintained the same property forms that existed in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution. There was still nationalized production, there was the state monopoly of foreign trade, there was no capitalist class. Nothing basic had changed at the economic level. To be sure, the Bolshevik Party had been replaced by a bureaucratic caste, nationalist in its orientation. It believed in “socialism in one country,” not anywhere else in the world, which was a promissory note to the imperialists that “if you let us alone, we’ll leave you alone.” Now, you can’t have, in a Marxist sense, socialism in one country. It’s absurd. Socialist production has to exist at *an even higher level* than the imperialist economy, which was international from its birth.

What position should the workers movement take toward the contradictory phenomenon of the Soviet Union under the Stalinist bureaucracy? Well, Trotsky came up with the “trade union analogy.” He said: In a way, the Soviet Union is no different than a reformist trade union, led by bureaucratic betrayers but nevertheless representing a historic gain of the working class. And the position that any militant would take toward such a phenomenon is defense against the bosses on the one hand and an effort to remove the betrayers who lead the union on the other.

Similarly with the Soviet Union, Trotsky argued for a program of unconditional military defense against imperialism and capitalist restoration while seeking proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucratic betrayers, a program that we, uniquely on the planet, hold today for those societies that have expropriated capitalism. That is the basis on which the Fourth International was formed in 1938.

In the end, the Soviet Union was destroyed by a capitalist counterrevolution, which we hold to be a *historic defeat* for the world’s working class. Our opponents on the left—the most prominent in Chicago being the International Socialist Organization (ISO)—hold differently. They hold that the existence of the Soviet Union was an obstacle to winning the working class to socialism and that its defeat would be a good thing. In other words, they sided with their own imperialists in their hostility toward the October Revolution, embodied (albeit in a degenerated form) in the Soviet Union. For them, as for the Social Democrats in World War I, capitalist democracy was superior to red revolution. Same thing, different context.

ICL Said: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!

The anti-Sovietism of the ISO goes back to its origins as a tendency, around the time of the Chinese Revolution of 1949. When U.S. forces invaded Korea in 1950 in an effort to overrun and reconquer North Korea—a move also aimed at the recent Chinese Revolution—the forerunners of the ISO refused to defend North Korea and China against U.S. imperialism. Many of the other assorted groups that call themselves Trotskyist—we do not call them Trotskyist but they would call themselves Trotskyists—were to demonstrate their own fervent anti-Sovietism at the time of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979.

In the late 1970s, a modernizing nationalist regime in Afghanistan, backed by the USSR, instituted some modest reforms in the direction of freeing women from enslavement and Islamic backwardness, like lowering the bride price, educating girls—really not all that radical steps toward social progress. As a result, the mullahs and tribal chiefs went into opposition to the regime. These *mujahedin*, “holy warriors,” threw acid in the faces of unveiled women, murdered schoolteachers, did a variety of barbarous things. And these reactionaries were backed and financed by the CIA.

The Soviet bureaucracy, for its own particular reasons, intervened on the side of the Afghan reformers and sent in the Red Army after repeated requests by the Afghan government. We had no illusions in the motives of the Kremlin rulers. But we stood for the Red Army being there because what was involved was defense of the Soviet Union and a step toward social progress. A quarter of a million men out of a total Afghan population

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Soviet Union...
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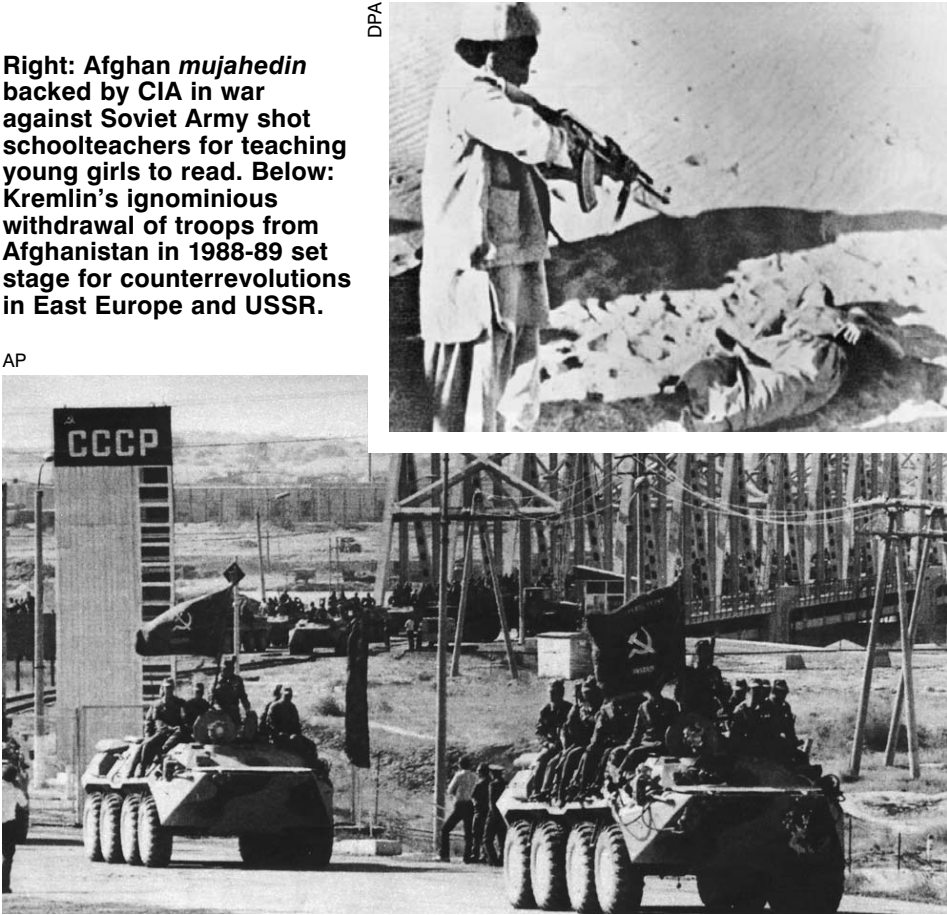
of some 20 million at that time were mul-lahs. This gives you a sense of the human weight of social reaction in that society. The only hope for social progress for that sort of hideous society lay in the military and economic presence of the Soviet Union there over an extended time. The result of the withdrawal of the Red Army in 1988-89 by the government of Mikhail Gorbachev is exactly what we see in Afghanistan today, a society which will not allow women medical care because that means you have to show yourself to a doctor, which won't allow them to go to school, etc.

So, we were very much for the Red Army presence, and the anti-Soviet fake left was very much against, condemning it as a terrible act of "Soviet imperialism." By these lights, Cuba, for example, was just another victim of "Soviet imperialism." The reality was that the Soviet Union sold Cuba oil at below world prices and purchased sugar from it at above world prices. Now, if this is imperialism, every country should be so blessed. In fact, it was the opposite of imperialism, which invests capital in order to extract resources and prof-

titled "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" (WV No. 533, 30 August 1991). That statement began: "The working people of the Soviet Union, and indeed the workers of the world, have suffered an unparalleled disaster whose devastating consequences are now being played out. The ascendancy of Boris Yeltsin, who offers himself as Bush's man, coming off a botched coup by Mikhail Gorbachev's former aides, has unleashed a counterrevolutionary tide across the land of the October Revolution."

In a historic sense, Trotsky predicted what eventually happened in the Soviet Union in 1991-92. A portion of the bureaucracy became interested not just in maintaining its privileges but in having the power to transmit its privileges to future generations—in other words, being part not simply of a parasitic caste but of a capitalist class. Backed by the imperialists, a portion of the bureaucracy led by Yeltsin, who had until shortly before been a leading part of the ruling Communist Party, took over state power and launched the capitalist counterrevolution, while the rest of the vast bureaucratic apparatus melted away. The workers, having experienced decades of Stalinist betrayal, correctly saw the bureaucracy as both liars and thieves. Politically atomized, their consciousness eroded by decades of Stalinist

Right: Afghan mujahedin backed by CIA in war against Soviet Army shot schoolteachers for teaching young girls to read. Below: Kremlin's ignominious withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in 1988-89 set stage for counterrevolutions in East Europe and USSR.



its from impoverished countries. That doesn't mean the Soviet role in the deformed workers states it aided was without its chauvinist and other oppressive aspects. But generally speaking, these societies were able to exist because of the presence of the Soviet Union, and now their existence is threatened because of its absence.

All those same groups I have just discussed were on the barricades with Boris Yeltsin in August 1991 when, with the open backing of American imperialism, he seized power from the decomposing Kremlin regime of Gorbachev. Understand that some of these groups had the official position that one should defend the Soviet Union. But they were intoxicated with the smell of bourgeois democracy in the air. It is not accidental that each of those groups also believes in taking the unions in this country and elsewhere to court. It is exactly the same question, just on a different level: the notion that the bourgeois government will make the trade unions "democratic" and otherwise nice for the workers. If the bourgeoisie were so beneficent, the working class wouldn't need trade unions. But these fake-left groups support such government intervention in the unions and all of them were cheerleaders for the overthrow of the October Revolution.

We had comrades in Moscow at this critical juncture. And we put out a statement, distributing it in the thousands,

betrayals and lacking a revolutionary internationalist party, the Soviet workers didn't rise in defense of the gains of the October Revolution. The result was what we see today.

Global Immiseration in the Post-Soviet Period

Let's look at the impact now of the capitalist counterrevolution. First, in those societies in which it happened, what we see in every case is joblessness, the absence of health care previously present, the absence of educational opportunities previously present and a decline in life



ICL call "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" was distributed in tens of thousands throughout USSR. Below: ICL raises banner of Fourth International in Moscow's Red Square on Revolution Day, 7 November 1991.



span—a fantastic erosion of human well-being. Of course, the bourgeois literati will tell you the streets of Moscow now sparkle, you can get whatever meal you want, but the population unfortunately is wallowing in filth. The former Soviet Union is essentially a big junkyard where people pick apart what was built under the workers state and try to sell it in the marketplace.

Before the overturn of capitalism, Russia and the countries of East Europe were very backward societies, and the only reason that they developed to the level they did was precisely because of the overthrow of capitalism. China was even more economically backward.

There has not been a counterrevolution in China. But nevertheless today you can see with the introduction of capitalist exploitation in each new area of society a corresponding erosion of the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution for the masses. So now medical care must for the most part be purchased, as must education. Now there is massive unemployment in China, tens of millions. That didn't exist before. So these very backward societies, because of the power of a collectivized economy, were able to provide everyone with a job, everyone with a place to live, everyone with the right to education, everyone with the right to health care. Under capitalism, nobody has those rights.

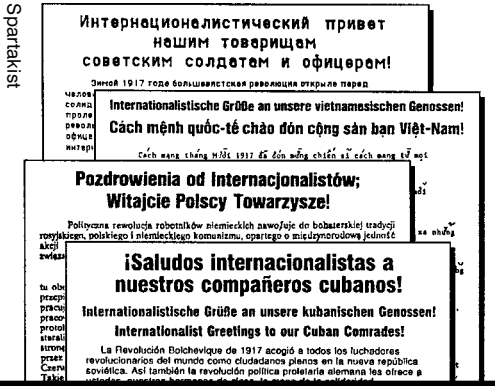
Let's look at the world more generally, and not just the societies where the gains of social revolution have been overturned. Why are youth on the streets today in Genoa, in Seattle and in various other places? Well, some have a peculiar fondness for trees. The trade-union tops, for their part, are mostly out there to press for one form or another of trade protectionism. We are opposed to this because it's a knife in the back of the international working class, directly pitting workers in one country against those in other countries. But most youth, I think, are out there because they see that the imperialists are savaging the world. And in this they are correct.

In the last two decades, the rate of

growth outside of the imperialist countries has been 1 percent, and that was accrued during the ten good years that existed for places like South Korea and Indonesia, which are now going down the drain. You can be assured that who benefited during that period were the moneyed classes, while the masses continued to live in a cesspool.

Now, the youth on the street have the strange idea that this occurred because of some creation called multinationals, which are evidently a more evil form of exploitation than old-fashioned capitalism itself. In that they are mistaken. These are the same old imperialist policies that were seen before World War I: divide, conquer, destroy, savage, make money, get out of town. The youthful protesters tend to address their appeals—especially in the United States, especially in Seattle—to their own bourgeoisie to correct the situation, as though U.S. imperialism is going to make the world a better place for people to be in, contrary to anyone's experience in the last 30 years. The global economic summits where these protests happen are simply opportunities for the imperialists to meet together occasionally to discuss their differences—differences that can in a different context lead to war. It's simply a way of reaching interim understandings.

Everybody is upset that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are doing bad things—and truly they are. But these demonstrations wouldn't have occurred 20 years ago, when the Soviet Union existed. The IMF existed then, the World Bank existed then, but it didn't necessarily matter in and of itself what the imperialists decided, because there was a contending power on the planet that wasn't imperialist. If Third World countries didn't like the deal they got from the U.S., they sought a little Soviet aid and became allies of the Soviet Union for a period of time. They had a bargaining position, if you will. At the same time, the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy repeatedly sold out revolutionary struggles in these countries, while embracing the bourgeois-



January 1990: Spartacists initiated 250,000-strong rally against Nazi desecration of Red Army memorial in East Berlin's Treptow Park. Statements of revolutionary solidarity issued by our comrades to Soviet soldiers, Vietnamese and Cuban workers in East Germany.

nationalist regimes as allies.

Look at the countries of Africa, where the overturn of the October Revolution has led to the intensification of imperialist bloodsucking, and with it increased starvation and bloodshed—tribe against tribe, country against country, everybody out for some advantage in a battle for survival. This has occurred because the IMF and World Bank demanded payment on the money they had given previously as a sop to these African countries during the Cold War against the Soviet Union. The imperialists further destroyed these societies, already devastated by imperialism, by forcing them to focus on a single cash crop (monoculture) for export to the world market, while the masses starve.

The Struggle for Revolutionary Marxist Parties

The condition of the working class internationally is also quite different. The fall of the Soviet Union didn't put an end to the contradictions between labor and capital, contrary to the "death of communism" ideologues. There has actually been quite a bit of class struggle since then, especially in European societies but also in the Philippines and most recently in Argentina. But what is different is that much of the working class no longer sees its ultimate goal as socialism or communism, in some sense, and you see a suspicion of political parties that, especially in places like Italy, leads a layer of more militant workers to identify with anarchism or syndicalism.



Reuters

Teamsters rally in Georgia during 1997 UPS strike. Forging a revolutionary workers party is key to struggle for proletarian overthrow of capitalist rule.

What we see in Europe is that the workers' battles have, for the most part, been directed at what are called popular-front governments, that is, governments composed of (social-democratic or ex-Stalinist) bourgeois workers parties and outright bourgeois parties. The social gains of the European working class—health care, social security, a shorter workweek, etc.—came about in the aftermath of World War II. The reason they came about was because the Soviet Union existed and much of the working class was pro-Communist. So these programs were granted as a buyout to ward off the spectre of revolution. And now who is taking them away? The social democrats. The pseudo-Trotskyists also play a role in the labor movement in various countries, especially in France, and they, no less than the old social-democratic parties, support the various popular-front governments which are trying to destroy the previous gains of the working class.

A final difference is that the youth on the streets today wouldn't have called themselves anarchists 20 years ago. I'm referring to young radicals who have shed a political identification with capitalism and want to adopt a sense of opposition to that system. They might have called themselves Trotskyists, they might have called themselves Guevarists, they might have called themselves Maoists, but they wouldn't have called themselves anarchists.

The best of the anarchists and syndicalists of their day were won to Bolshevism after the October Revolution. In Spain, where anarchism retained influ-

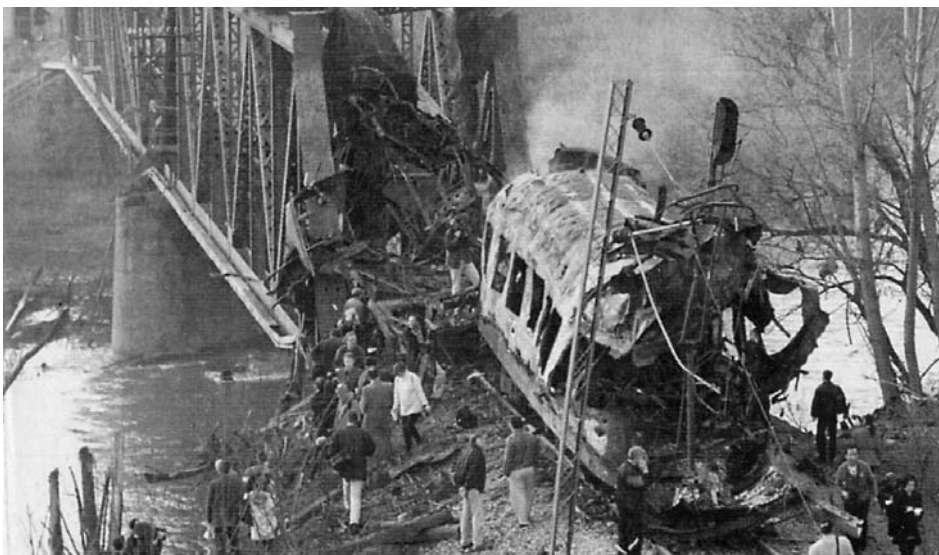
ence, it was exposed as bankrupt as a revolutionary force during the Spanish Revolution in 1936-38. This was a revolution that Trotsky described as being much more powerful at the outset than the Russian Revolution itself, which began with the overthrow of the tsar. During the course of the Spanish Revolution, the anarchists, who deplore forming a working-class government because they don't believe in governments, joined the bourgeois (Popular Front) government. That bourgeois government proceeded to undo the initial expropriations which the revolutionary workers had undertaken. Trotsky aptly described the role of the anarchists in Spain as like an umbrella with holes in it—it worked when it didn't rain but was not much good when there was rain.

Anarchism has no solution to the problems of capitalist exploitation and is therefore sort of perforce consigned to a role, as it was in Spain, of pressuring the bourgeoisie. But notice that even the rather mild struggles that have happened in various cities as the anarchist youth follow the imperialist confabs around are denounced by the fake Trotskyists and those social-democratically inclined. They complain about what we admire in the anarchist youth. We admire their impulse and their outrage against injustice. Our disagreement is that they have nothing to propose, no answer to imperialist oppression. The social democrats, on the other hand—and here I mean groups like the ISO, the fake Trotskyists and the

like—actually deplore the fact that these young radicals challenge the cops, the bourgeois order. The problem with even the most left-wing anarchists—the ones who aren't anti-communist liberals at heart—is they don't see that if you are going to threaten the existing order, you better have something to replace it—and that means a struggle for proletarian state power. Because if you don't replace it, they'll massacre you. And the ones who will eagerly massacre you are the ones who did it very eagerly in Germany in 1919, the sham socialists.

I wanted in this forum to point to the importance of the October Revolution and what the Soviet Union represented. But, as importantly, I also wanted to point to the role of consciousness—the subjective factor, the revolutionary party—as a necessary ingredient for socialist revolution, which alone can open the door to social progress on the planet. In the only society in which there was a proletarian revolution, there was such a party of working-class revolution, the Bolshevik Party. The erosion of the gains of the October Revolution was dependent, in large measure, on the absence of revolutionary parties, and as a result the failure of socialist revolution, in the advanced capitalist countries.

And that absence is what we seek to redress. The world has actually been awash in class struggle. There's no absence of working-class combativity. Even in the United States there have been several major strikes in the past years, notably UPS and General Motors. The battle that most impressed me in



**Passenger train demolished by U.S./NATO terror bombing of Serbia in 1999.
Destruction of Soviet Union emboldened U.S. imperialists in their military
adventures around the world.**

terms of our program—the necessity of linking struggles against injustice and exploitation with the struggle for black freedom—was the one on the Charleston waterfront that occurred in January 2000.

This struggle occurred just subsequent to a large civil rights demonstration in South Carolina directed against the Confederate flag. The Charleston longshore union had played a role in that demonstration. We're not talking about radical revolutionaries; those in the leadership of these struggles are at best reformists. But nevertheless the state brought in hundreds of cops against these longshore workers fighting to defend their union against scab labor in Charleston, and the workers faced them down. This small example shows that our premises for socialist revolution in the United States are absolutely correct.

Now, I'll conclude with another story, about a loss. The International Communist League played a role in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in 1989-90. When the Berlin Wall came down in late 1989, we decided that this posed both a threat and an opportunity. It was a threat to the existence of the working-class property forms in the East German deformed workers state, but at the same time an opportunity for our Trotskyist program of defense of those gains, for the political overthrow of the ruling Stalinist party that undermined them and for a socialist revolution in capitalist West Germany. And so we intervened quite heavily. We had a very small group in West Germany at the time, and we sent many of our comrades from elsewhere in the ICL over there to assist them in raising the Trotskyist program. But understand, we are still talking about a small number, many of whom couldn't speak German.

Nevertheless, we put out a daily newspaper, and we distributed hundreds of thousands of copies of that newspaper. Partly in response to our agitation, there were soldiers committees in the East German army. There were also workers committees in the factories. We were



Ali...

(continued from page 5)

History when he died penniless at the age of 42. The advent of free agency and million-dollar salaries didn't alter this much. Just a few years ago, black basketball player Mahmoud Abdul Rauf was vilified for refusing to stand for the national anthem, in accordance with his religious beliefs, and ultimately driven out of the NBA.

The New York State Athletic Commission stripped Ali of the heavyweight crown and revoked his boxing license. In short order, every other boxing commission in the U.S. followed suit. Although he remained out on bail while he appealed his conviction, the government took away his passport, preventing Ali from boxing overseas as well. Unable to support his family, Ali's major source of income was the money he received for speaking at college campuses, where he encouraged student activists in protesting against the war.

With their cash cow dried up, the NOI turned its back on its most famous and popular member. The film shows Ali being suspended for a year by the NOI when he told Howard Cosell in an interview that he needed money. In an article titled "We Tell the World We're Not with Muhammad Ali" (*Muhammad Speaks*, 4 April 1969), Elijah Muhammad wrote: "Mr. Muhammad Ali shall not be recognized with us under the holy name Muhammad Ali. We call him Cassius Clay. We take away the name of Allah from him until he proves himself worthy of that name.... We, the Muslims, are not with Muhammad Ali in the desire to work in the sports world 'for the sake of a leetle money'."

A Decade of Social Struggle

Ali's refusal to join the U.S. military resonated not only with the growing movement against the Vietnam War but spoke for a generation of young black men. In the early years of the war, blacks (11 percent of the U.S. population) made up 31 percent of combat troops and 23 percent of fatalities.

As revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, founder of the Soviet Red Army, pointed out, "An army is always a copy of the society it serves—with this difference, that it gives social relations a concentrated character, carrying both their positive and negative features to an extreme." Not surprisingly, black soldiers in Vietnam got shafted. They were singled out for front-line duty, forced to walk point on patrol—making them first in the line of fire—while positions in the rear were generally reserved for whites. Confederate flags were common in the rear areas, and there were even cross-burnings. As one GI recounted in the book *Bloods* (Random House, 1984), which contains



Boenzi/NY Times

17 October 1975: Ali at head of Trenton, New Jersey protest demanding freedom for frame-up victims Rubin "Hurricane" Carter and John Artis.

personal accounts by 20 black vets, edited by Randall Terry:

"A few days after the assassination [of Martin Luther King], some of the white guys got a little sick and tired of seeing Dr. King's picture on the TV screen. Like a memorial. It really got to one guy. He said, 'I wish they'd take that n---r's picture off.' He was a fool to begin with, because there were three black guys sitting in the living room when he said it. And we commenced to give him a lesson in when to use that word and when you should not use that word. A physical lesson."

Vietnam was one of America's dirtiest colonial wars. American forces and their Vietnamese puppets killed, maimed and tortured millions of Indochinese men, women and children before they were driven out by the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants in 1975. The Vietnamese National Liberation Front found resonance in its appeal to black soldiers. In the jungles of Vietnam was a sign reading, "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."

A big reason that the U.S. Army lost on the battlefield was that the troops saw no reason to fight and die, and that was doubly true for black GIs. Toward the end, there was not just indiscipline but outright mutiny in the army. There were numerous instances of "fragging" of unpopular officers, who were usually killed by a fragmentation weapon, most often a hand grenade. Throughout all branches of the service, black soldiers organized "Black Power" groups and carried out militant protests against the war and racist discrimination. Often overlapping with this Black Power movement in the armed forces were integrated groups of GIs who published antiwar newsletters.

The war played a major role in radicalizing young black militants. At the same time that SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael was calling for "black power"

in 1966, he denounced the "illegal and immoral war." When King, the NAACP's Roy Wilkins and the Urban League's Whitney Young pleaded with SNCC to call off an antiwar protest outside the wedding of President Johnson's daughter, SNCC denounced them as messengers for the White House. Seeking to maintain credibility among the black masses, King also spoke out against the war shortly before his assassination.

Returning from Vietnam, many of those black vets who became radicalized were, not surprisingly, particularly drawn to the Black Panther Party, which campaigned for black self-defense against racist victimization and cop terror. Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) was one of those who joined the Panthers. As a soldier, Geronimo was wounded three times, received two Purple Hearts, two Bronze Stars for valor, one Silver Star, a soldier's medal, an army commendation medal, three combat infantry badges and master paratrooper's wings. As a Panther leader, Geronimo was framed up and sent to prison for 27 years for a killing the government knew all along he could not have committed—because they had FBI tapes proving he was nowhere near the site of the murder.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of students were marching against the war, driving army and CIA recruiters off campus. Yet the antiwar movement and the black movement remained separate rather than flowing together in a revolutionary tide. The New Left and reformist organizations never mobilized the black masses against the war but instead glorified separate sectoralist struggles—students, blacks, women, workers. This

was the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the flesh.

The Communist Party, which had long since sold its political soul to embrace the Democratic Party, stood foursquare behind the King leadership of the civil rights movement. The once-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party was in the process of a rightward political degeneration—a signal reflection of which was its refusal to intervene into the civil rights struggles, instead adapting to black nationalism while simultaneously tailing the liberal reformism of King & Co. As a result, the "Black Power" radicals never found the bridge between their struggles and the program of workers power. The recruitment of a substantial layer of black communists would have had an enormous impact on the course of subsequent struggles.

Although our forces were small, the Spartacist tendency fought to intersect the growing militant wing of the civil rights movement. Against *both* the liberal pacifism of King and the growing tendencies toward nationalist separatism, we stood for revolutionary integrationism, a program of struggle against every manifestation of discrimination premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system. We advanced the call for a "Freedom Labor Party" as the axis to link the struggle against segregation to the power of labor, North and South. Fundamentally, we sought to bring to black militants the understanding that the working class, which is racially integrated at the point of production, is the only class with the historic interest and social power—derived from its role in production—to sweep away the system of exploitation and racist oppression.

To lead the struggle for black freedom and the emancipation of all of the working people from the chains of capitalist exploitation and oppression requires a revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat. As we wrote in our October 1967 leaflet "From Protest to Power": "With the widespread discontent over the war, the rising militancy and restiveness in the labor movement, and the explosiveness of the black ghettos, the prospect for initiating such a party is better now than at any time in the last twenty years."

But this anger and militancy were dissipated by the reformist misleaders of the antiwar movement who consciously suppressed revolutionary politics to keep the protests safe for the Democratic Party politicians they pandered to. Locked up in a popular-front coalition with "antiwar" Democrats, the "official" antiwar movement led by the reformist SWP made it a virtue to refuse to address

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

National Office

Box 1377 GPO,
New York, NY 10116
(212) 732-7860

Boston

Box 390840, Central Sta.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 666-9453

Chicago

Box 6441, Main PO
Chicago, IL 60680
(312) 563-0441

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 380-8239

Public Office:

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

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
New York, NY 10008
(212) 267-1025

Public Office:

Tues. 6:30-8:30 p.m.
and Sat. 1-5 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland

Box 29497
Oakland, CA 94604
(510) 839-0851

Public Office:

Sat. 1-5 p.m.
1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

San Francisco

Box 77494
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 395-9520

Public Office:

Tues. 6-8 p.m.
564 Market Street
Suite 718

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto

Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, ON M5W 1X8
(416) 593-4138

Vancouver

Box 2717, Main P.O.
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2
(604) 687-0353

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BOSTON

Thursday, 6:30 p.m.

February 14:

**The Exploitation of the Working
Class as the Basis of Profits**

Boston University
College of Arts and Sciences, Rm. 426
725 Commonwealth Ave.
Information and readings:
(617) 666-9453

CHICAGO

Alternate Tuesdays, 6 p.m.

February 19:

**U.S. Imperialism—World's
Biggest Terrorist!**

University of Illinois at Chicago
104 Stevenson Hall,
701 South Morgan Street
Information and readings:
(312) 563-0441

LOS ANGELES

Alternate Saturdays, 2 p.m.

February 16:

**Black Liberation Through
Socialist Revolution**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Suite 215
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239

NEW YORK CITY

Alternate Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

February 12:

**U.S./UN/NATO Out of Afghanistan,
Central Asia, the Persian Gulf,
and the Near East!**

Columbia University (116th and Broadway)
Hamilton Hall, Room 306
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025

TORONTO

Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.

February 20:

**Anglo Chauvinism and Canadian
Capitalism: Why Marxists Advocate
Independence for Quebec**

York University Student Ctr., Room 313
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Alternate Wednesdays, 6 p.m.

February 13: **For Class Struggle
Against the Cuts—No Illusions in the
Pro-Capitalist NDP!**

Students: Ally with Labor!

UBC Student Union Building, Rm. 213
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
tlit@look.ca



WV Photo

If You Stand For—

1 Full rights for black people and for everyone else in jobs, housing and schools! Defeat the racist assault on affirmative action! For union-run minority job recruitment and training programs! For union hiring halls! Open up the universities to all—for open admissions, free tuition and a full living stipend for all students. Free, quality, integrated public education for all!

2 A fighting labor movement—picket lines mean don’t cross! Defeat police scabberding and strikebreaking through mass pickets and union defense guards! For sit-down strikes against mass layoffs! Fight union-busting, keep the capitalist courts out of the unions! Organize the unorganized, unionize the South! Jobs for all—for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay with full cost-of-living escalator clause! Cops and prison guards out of the unions!

3 Fight for women’s rights! Defend abortion clinics! Free abortion on de-

Join the Labor Black Leagues!

The first Labor Black Leagues were formed as a result of the Spartacist League-initiated, 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped the Ku Klux Klan from marching in Washington, D.C. in November 1982. We stand for mobilizing the masses of minority and working people in militant integrated struggle against

the brutal system of racist oppression that is capitalist America. Initiated by and fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, a multiracial revolutionary Marxist organization, the Labor Black Leagues are part of the revolutionary movement of the workers and oppressed against the bosses and for socialism.

mand; free, quality 24-hour childcare! Equal pay for equal work! For free, quality health care for all!

4 Full citizenship rights for all immigrants; everyone who made it into this country has the right to stay and live decently! Stop deportations! No to racist “English only” laws! Down with anti-Hispanic, anti-Semitic, anti-Arab and anti-Asian bigotry!

5 Down with anti-gay laws! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Government out of the bedroom!

6 Mass labor/black/Hispanic mobilizations drawing on the power of the unions against the racist terrorists. Stop the Nazis! Stop the KKK!

7 Abolish the racist death penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all victims of racist capitalist repression! No faith in the capitalist courts! No to gun control! Defend victims of cop terror and racist police frame-up! For class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense; support the work of the Partisan Defense Committee!

8 Unconditional opposition to every attempt to abolish welfare! Down with slave-labor, union-busting “workfare” schemes! Fight any and every attempt of the government to take away or cut back even more social programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public health and aid to education and housing! For a massive program of public works—high-quality integrated housing, schools, libraries, hospitals for the working people and the poor!

9 Down with the chauvinist poison of protectionism! For international working-class solidarity! Support revolutionary struggles of working people abroad! Defend Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea against capitalist restoration and imperialist attack! For labor action against U.S. imperialist war moves and military adventures! For the right of independence for Puerto Rico! U.S. troops out of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean!

10 Down with the Democrats and Republicans! For a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all



WV Photo

the oppressed! Finish the Civil War! Those who labor must rule! For a workers government to take industry away from its racist, incompetent and corrupt owners! Rebuild America on a socialist planned economy!

—Join the Labor Black Leagues!

Membership pledge is \$3/year unemployed; \$10/year employed. For more information, contact:

CHICAGO (312) 563-0441

Labor Black Struggle League
Box 6938, Chicago, IL 60680

NEW YORK (212) 267-1025

Labor Black League for Social Defense
Box 2502, Church St. Station
New York, NY 10008

OAKLAND (510) 839-0851

Labor Black League for Social Defense
Box 29497
Oakland, CA 94604

black oppression, stressing the need for a “single issue” focus on the war!

The endless peace crawls were nothing more than a giant postcard to your Congressman, a pressure tactic aimed at shifting administration policy. The impoverished black masses would never be attracted by such reformist tactics. *To mobilize the ghetto requires a struggle for proletarian power*, a fight against black oppression and class exploitation at home as well as imperialist war abroad. The Panthers, who wrote off the working class and looked instead to mobilizing lumpen rage, had nothing to offer but heroic gestures while the cops and Feds murdered some of their leaders, and bought off the rest.

Stressing that what was posed in Vietnam was a social revolution, the Spartacist League raised the slogans of revolutionary proletarian internationalism, “Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution! All Indochina must go Communist!” We called for labor strikes against the war, to mobilize the U.S. working class in *action*. The prospects for such action were not far off at the time, despite the efforts of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy

under George Meany—a racist and rabid Cold Warrior—which did all it could to oppose any mobilization of labor power in the black freedom struggles of the 1960s and was among the staunchest supporters of the war.

The same National Guard unit that murdered four students at Kent State in 1970 had been called out to put down a Teamsters strike in Ohio. That same year, postal workers went out in the first major strike against the federal government in the history of the U.S. Open defiance was breaking out in the army: at Fort Hood in Texas, for instance, 43 black soldiers refused to go to Chicago to be used against antiwar demonstrators outside the 1968 Democratic Convention.

What was missing was a revolutionary party, with roots and authority in the working class and among the black masses, to have brought this all together in the fight for proletarian state power.

Imperialist War and Bourgeois Hypocrisy

In June 1970 the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Ali’s conviction, and months later the boxing lords reinstated his

license to fight. Rusty after his forced exile from the sport for three years, Ali suffered his first professional loss in March 1971, a 15-round decision in his effort to regain the championship from Joe Frazier in Madison Square Garden. A rematch was squelched when George Foreman took the championship from Frazier in 1972. Though few “experts” gave him a chance, in 1974 a 32-year-old Ali knocked Foreman out in the eighth round to recapture his crown. This was a fitting triumph for Ali.

Foreman’s career was propelled by winning the heavyweight gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Ten days before the games opened, hundreds of student protesters were slaughtered by Mexican troops and cops in the infamous Tlatelolco Massacre. The games themselves were marked by a boycott by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (then still known as Lew Alcindor) and other prominent black athletes to protest racist oppression in the U.S. One of their demands called for Ali to be reinstated as the heavyweight champ. In solidarity with the protests, black sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their gloved fists when receiving their gold and bronze medals for the 220-yard dash. They were immediately kicked off the team and banished from the Olympic Village. Foreman’s response to the protests was to demonstratively wave an American flag after winning his gold medal.

Today, Muhammad Ali is no longer a pariah. Two years ago, he was named athlete of the century by *Sports Illustrated*. Last month, a star-studded extravaganza was held to celebrate his 60th birthday. But while the racist rulers may have temporarily forgiven his “transgressions” of the past, they have not been forgotten. New York’s *Daily News* chose to “honor” Ali’s birthday by reprinting 30-year-old drawings of what for them is the “highlight” of Ali’s career—his loss to Joe Frazier.

The ruling class of this country mercilessly hounded Ali for his courageous opposition to its dirty, losing war in Vietnam. Today, they hypocritically seize the opportunity to parade Ali, seriously debil-

itated by Parkinson’s disease, before the media to promote the virtues of their “war against terrorism” in Afghanistan and at home. But the movie *Ali* reminds audiences of why “the champ” was so revered by tens of millions of people around the world. In Brooklyn, overwhelmingly black audiences cheer as Ali declares: “I am not going ten thousand miles from here to help murder and kill and burn poor people simply to help continue the domination of white slave masters over the darker people.” Here is a measure of the fragility of the American imperialists’ “national unity” crusade, a cynical fraud aimed at furthering brutal exploitation and racial oppression at home and abroad. Our purpose is to take the sympathies of those who identify with the Ali who refused to serve the interests of American imperialism and translate them into the forging of a revolutionary proletarian party that will end the rule of the capitalist slave masters through workers socialist revolution. ■

Sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise “black power” salute at 1968 Mexico City Olympics in protest of racist oppression in U.S.



Immigrants...

(continued from page 16)

always tried to wrap anti-working-class and anti-communist measures in anti-immigrant chauvinism. Their aim is to divide and weaken the working class and purge its most class-conscious component, especially in times of depression and war. The Smith Act is a perfect example. Ostensibly passed to suppress the American Hitlerites after the outbreak of World War II in Europe, it was first used to imprison leaders of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the militant Minneapolis Teamsters, to the cheers of the Stalinist Communist Party (CP). It was later used to go after the CP, which shows that even under capitalism, crime doesn't always pay.

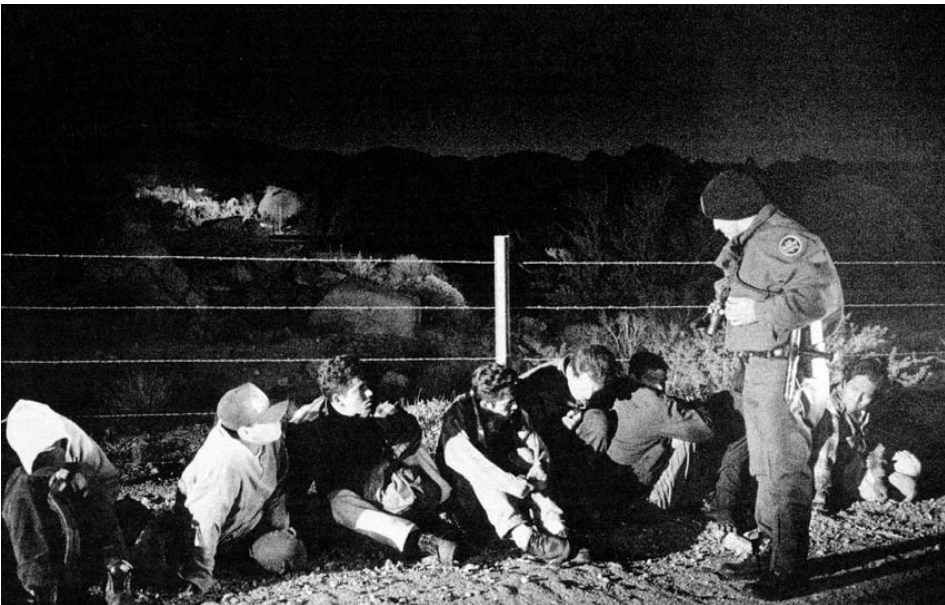
Today, the Cliffites of the International Socialist Organization moan that the "Democrats Cave In to the Attack on Civil Liberties," as the headline of a 14 December article in *Socialist Worker* would have it. But it was Democratic president Clinton who militarized the border with Mexico in 1994 under "Operation Gatekeeper." Likewise, it was that Democratic administration that in 1996 signed into law the "Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act" and the "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" that:

- Guttured *habeas corpus* to speed up the state's machinery of death.
- Created a special court that uses secret evidence to jail and deport foreign-born so-called "subversives."
- Allows the deportation of foreign-born individuals based on membership in a group designated by the Secretary of State as "terrorist," even if the individual had only participated in the group's political or humanitarian activities—a revival of McCarran Act exclusions.

These laws set the stage for the present assault on civil liberties and immigrants. In 2000, 1.6 million Mexicans were thrown back trying to cross the border. Before 1996, there were fewer than 100 deaths a year of Latinos coming across the border, but with the reactionary Clinton-era legislation in place, the number reached 369 in 1999.

We stand opposed to all the bourgeoisie's anti-immigrant laws and regulations and demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We defend bilingual education against "English only" bigots and stand for full equality of all languages in all spheres of public life. Against the capitalists' attempts to use undocumented immigrant workers as a club against unions, we seek to mobilize the labor movement to fight deportations and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) factory raids through class-struggle means and to organize the foreign-born into the unions with full rights and protections.

The crucial need for the labor movement and all the oppressed to defend immigrant rights was seen in 1982, when the race-terrorist Ku Klux Klan, with



Sebastião Salgado

Militarization of Mexican border in 1990s has led to deaths of hundreds of desperate immigrants.

its preferred candidate Ronald Reagan in office, announced that they were going to march through the streets of the nation's capital, something they had not done since 1925. The Klan said they were going to target immigrants, but predominantly black Washington, D.C. and organized labor throughout the region understood that they, too, were the targets. They backed our initiative for a united front to stop the Klan based on mobilizing the social power of labor, and more than 5,000 unionists, leftists and black youth turned out to run these fascist murderers out of town. It was the power of the working class that was seen on the streets of Washington that day.

Defend Immigrant Workers, Labor's Advance Guard

As revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin wrote in "Capitalism and Workers' Immigration" (October 1913):

"There can be no doubt that dire poverty alone compels people to abandon their native land, and that the capitalists exploit the immigrant workers in the most shameful manner. But only reactionaries can shut their eyes to the *progressive* significance of this modern migration of nations. Emancipation from the yoke of capital is impossible without the further development of capitalism, and without the class struggle that is based on it. And it is into this struggle that capitalism is drawing the masses of the working people of the *whole* world, breaking down the musty, fusty habits of local life, breaking down national barriers and prejudices, uniting workers from all countries in huge factories and mines in America, Germany, and so forth."

Lenin pointed out that the Russian immigrant who had gone through the 1905 Revolution brought with him advanced methods of class struggle like the mass strike. That may help explain the solidarity, militancy and tenacity of the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts textile workers, who did not speak English but understood the international language of the class struggle. Today the immigrant worker, who often brings with him the

militant traditions of class war, is vital to reinvigorating the working class here, breaking down *its* supremely musty, fusty habits of local life, breaking down deeply ingrained national prejudices. Latinos from Mexico and Central America have turned "open shop" Los Angeles into a battleground of the class war. In addition, proletarian immigrants from throughout the reach of Wall Street's empire form a living link between the working class in



Cameron & Kahn

IWW leader Big Bill Haywood (center) with immigrant women strikers during 1912 Lawrence textile strike. Revolutionary syndicalist IWW fought to organize immigrant workers spurned by chauvinist AFL leadership.

their country of origin and the multiracial proletariat here in the belly of the imperialist beast.

But our task is not easy. Near the end of his life, Friedrich Engels noted in a December 1893 letter to the German American Marxist Friedrich Sorge that among the obstacles to forming a mass workers party in America was:

"immigration, which divides the workers into two groups: the native-born and the foreigners, and the latter in turn into (1) the Irish, (2) the Germans, (3) the many small groups, each of which understands only itself: Czechs, Poles, Italians, Scandinavians, etc. And then the Negroes. To form a single party out of these requires quite unusually powerful incentives. Often there is a sudden violent *élan*, but the bourgeois need only wait passively, and the dissimilar elements of the working class fall apart again."

"It Was Not in Ireland You Learned This Cruelty"

So we have our work cut out for us. In that spirit let me begin by discussing the Irish immigration. Between 1845, when the potato blight began, until 1855, one million people in Ireland died from starvation and related illnesses. Of the one and a half million who emigrated to the U.S., 20 percent died in mid passage or shortly after disembarking. From 1815 to 1920, five and a half million people would flee Ireland for the U.S. As one of their ballads proclaimed:

"I would not live in Ireland now, for she's a fallen land,
"And the tyrant's heel is on her neck, with her reeking bloodstained hand.
"There's not a foot of Irish ground, but's trodden down by slaves,
"Who die unwept, and then are flung, like dogs, into their graves."

Frederick Douglass, the freed slave and articulate abolitionist, knew the plight

of the Irish well, because he toured their country in the 1840s. In a February 1846 letter to William Lloyd Garrison, Douglass wrote:

"I spent nearly six weeks in Dublin, and the scenes I there witnessed were such as to make me 'blush, and hang my head to think myself a man'....
"I see much here to remind me of my former condition, and I confess I should be ashamed to lift up my voice against American slavery, but that I know the cause of humanity is one the world over."
—*Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (1950), Vol. 1

Many in Ireland identified themselves as the "slaves" of the British, and in 1842 thousands signed petitions to their countrymen in America declaring: "Irishmen and Irishwomen! Treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren." But white supremacy proved to be a formidable barrier to that message of solidarity. Faced with economic hardship and prejudice in America, the Irish vented their rage on black people, with whom they were forced into direct competition for jobs. In 1830, the majority of servants in New York City were black; 20 years later they were Irish women.

As Ronald Takaki writes about the Irish immigrants in *A Different Mirror* (1993): "Targets of nativist hatred toward them as outsiders or foreigners, they sought to become insiders, or Americans, by claiming their membership as whites. A powerful way to transform their own

identity from 'Irish' to 'American' was to attack blacks." The noted Irish nationalist Daniel O'Connell declared to his countrymen here: "It was not in Ireland you learned this cruelty."

Another route for Irish men to become "white" in the U.S. was military service in the war against Mexico for conquest of what became the Southwest of the U.S. In 1830, the Mexican government outlawed slavery. This affected what later became the state of Texas, where a number of Anglo settlers were raising cotton with slave labor. By 1835, the Anglo population outnumbered the Mexican 20,000 to 4,000. In 1836, some of these Anglos rebelled against Mexican rule and raised the flag of the so-called "Lone Star Republic" over a converted mission south of San Antonio, the Alamo. In 1845, the U.S. annexed this ersatz republic and declared that Texas began at the Rio Grande. President James Polk sent American troops and ships to occupy the mouth of the river and blockade its waters, provoking war with Mexico. There ensued a campaign of such unrestrained brutality that even the commanding officer, General Winfield Scott, admitted that his troops "committed atrocities to make Heaven weep and every American of Christian morals blush for his country. Murder, robbery and rape of mothers and daughters in the presence of tied-up males of the families have been common all along the Rio Grande."

Frederick Douglass thundered against this war of pillage and plunder for slavers and plutocrats in the pages of the abolitionist newspaper *North Star*:

"The loss of thousands of her own men, and the slaughter of tens of thousands of the sons and daughters of Mexico, have rather given edge than dullness to our appetite for fiery conflict and plunder.

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The civilization of the age, the voice of the world, the sacredness of human life, the tremendous expense, the dangers, hardships, and the deep disgrace which must forever attach to our inhuman course, seem to oppose no availing check to the mad spirit of proud ambition, blood, and carnage, let loose in the land.”
—*Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 1

Even before the Mexican-American War, Polk declared in a message to Congress his designs on California, whose harbors “would afford shelter for our navy...and would in a short period become the marts of an extensive and profitable commerce with China, and other countries of the East” (cited in Takaki, *A Different Mirror*). As the war got underway, John C. Frémont, then a lieutenant in the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, fomented with a handful of soldiers the so-called “Bear Flag Revolt.” The Mexican governor was seized and California declared an “independent republic.” The war ended in early 1848 with Scott occupying Mexico City, forcing the government to cede Texas, California, New Mexico, Nevada and parts of Colorado, Arizona and Utah, altogether one-half of Mexico’s territory. Mexicans who remained under their new masters were promised American citizenship, but in fact, like Palestinians today, they were treated as foreigners in their own land. This conquest also accelerated the formation of a Mexican American working class, as they picked cotton, built railroads and carried out of the bowels of the earth 200-pound packs of ore strapped to their backs.

It is a bitter irony that Mexicans, hunted down like dogs by the INS when not struck down by hunger and want, are branded as “illegal aliens” when they traverse this border drenched by a river of blood, mainly their own. In fact, they are only reclaiming a bit of their birthright. Our program promises that the successful workers revolution here will make restitution to Mexico, including in land, for the rape and pillage that marked this inglorious chapter in American history and that was to presage its sanguinary imperialist future.

German Red '48ers and the American Civil War

While the U.S. was engrossed in a war of aggrandizement against Mexico, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* hit the streets just as a revolutionary wave swept Europe. Among the one million Germans who came here between 1844 and 1854, several thousand were participants in the failed 1848-49 Revolution. The “Red ’48ers” brought not only their democratic and socialist ideals, but invaluable military experience as well (see “The ‘Red ’48ers” and the Fight for Black Freedom,” WV No. 734, 21 April 2000). Here are two examples.

August Willich, a captain in the Prussian Army and a sympathizer of Karl Marx’s Communist League, participated in the 1848-49 Revolution as leader of the Köln (Cologne) insurrection and later led a workers’ legion together with Engels in the Rhineland. In the American Civil War, he took command of the 9th Ohio Regiment as well as the 32nd Indiana Regi-

Below: Brutally exploited Chinese workers were key to building transcontinental railroad. Right: Drawing of anti-Chinese riot in Denver, 1880, part of wave of chauvinist anti-immigrant reaction.



Denver Public Library

ment (the first German regiment formed). He led the charge up Missionary Ridge in Tennessee that relieved the Union armies at Cumberland and opened the road to Sherman’s march to the sea.

Joseph Weydemeyer in 1842 joined a circle of fellow Prussian officers around the *Rheinische Post* that Marx edited. Kicked out of the army because of his revolutionary views, by 1847 he was an organizer for the Communist League. Forced to flee Germany in 1851, he eventually emigrated to the U.S. During the Civil War, he was a colonel in the 40th Missouri Regiment, one of 500 German officers that helped lead the Union Army to victory in the last great bourgeois democratic revolution.

Chinese Immigration and Chauvinist Reaction

The period of Radical Reconstruction that followed the North’s victory over the Southern slavocracy, won in good measure by the emancipation and arming of the black slaves, was the most egalitarian decade in American history. This period also opened up unparalleled capitalist development, signified by the building of the transcontinental railroad. The challenge was enormous: 1,800 miles across arid plains and desert and the rugged granite walls of the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. The Union Pacific began laying track westward from Omaha, Nebraska. The Central Pacific had the much more arduous task of laying track eastward from Sacramento, California.

The Central Pacific suffered from an acute labor shortage, so they decided to recruit Chinese immigrants. Asian and especially Chinese immigration really began in the decade before the Civil War. In 1852, 20,000 people came from China alone. Driving this immigration were China’s devastating defeat in the Opium War by the British—let nothing stand in the way of these imperial drug pushers!—and great social upheavals like the Taiping Rebellion. This rebellion, akin to the 16th-century peasant wars in Germany, promoted the equality of the sexes, abolished footbinding and appointed women

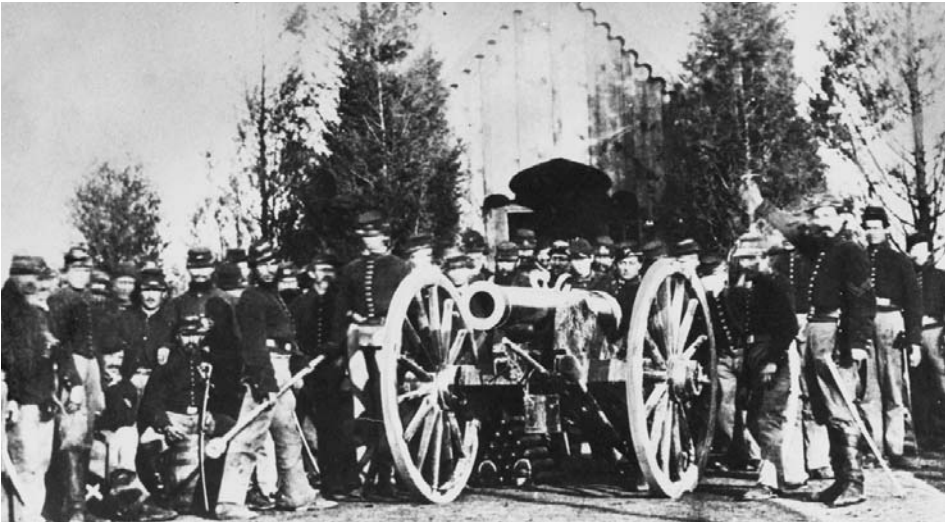


Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Weekly

as administrators and officers in the Taiping army. It also tried to abolish private ownership of land and distribute it to the tiller. The rebellion’s defeat left 30 million dead and the country’s economy in a state of collapse.

At first, the Chinese came to work the gold mines. But as that dried up, they were recruited for rail construction. They received just \$26-\$35 a month for a 12-hour day with a six-day workweek and had to provide their own food and tents. White workers received about \$35 a month and were furnished with food and shelter.

Twelve thousand of the Central Pacific Railroad’s 13,500 employees were Chinese immigrants. Our article “Chinese



Americana Image Gallery

All-German artillery unit of Union Army. Tens of thousands of German soldiers joined fight against Confederate slavocracy in U.S. Civil War.

Immigrant Workers in Racist America” (WV No. 719, 17 September 1999) relates the hazards they faced and the casualties they suffered. In June 1867, 5,000 of them struck for \$45 a month and the eight-hour day. The rail barons would grant higher wages but not shorter hours. They cut off provisions and starved the striking Chinese workers back to work.

The completion of the transcontinental railroad set off an industrial boom in San Francisco. The Chinese population there increased from 2,700 in 1860 to 12,000 a decade later. In San Francisco’s four key industries—shoemaking, woollens, tobacco products and garment—Chinese made up half the workforce. California passed the first Chinese exclusion law in 1862, called “An Act to Protect Free White Labor Against Competition with Chinese Coolie Labor, and to Discourage the Immigration of the Chinese into the State of California.” And that was only the title.

At the same time, some of the democratic gains of the Civil War were extended to Chinese immigrants by the 1870 Civil Rights Act. Asian immigrants and black people were made legal persons who could sue, testify in court, etc. But 1870 was also a depression year. White workers in the Bay Area went from store to store threatening a boycott if Chinese workers were not fired. In that year, Congress passed a new Naturalization Act which further barred Chinese immigrants from gaining United States citi-

zenship and prohibited their wives from entering the U.S.

Racist “Labor Lieutenants of Capital”

The year 1877 saw the Great Railroad Strike, the first national strike in American history. But when an 8,000-strong support rally assembled in the streets of San Francisco, the “Anti-Coolie Club” turned it into an anti-Chinese pogrom. In Oakland, an anti-Chinese bigot formed a Workingman’s Party of California that proposed to “rid the country of cheap Chinese labor...by all means in our power.” On Thanksgiving Day 1877, this party led a march of over 7,000, including representatives from nine unions. The following year, the party won the mayoral elections in both Oakland and Sacramento before going into decline and losing most of its supporters to the Democrats. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, shutting the door to Chinese laborers (but not merchants) for ten years.

In his 1988 *Reconstruction, America’s Unfinished Revolution*, Eric Foner writes: “In California, where indentured Chinese immigrants by 1870 constituted a quarter of the wage labor force, the agitation for their exclusion, more than any other issue, shaped the labor movement’s development.” The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, admitted blacks and eventually women, but excluded Chinese and campaigned to prevent further immigration. In February 1886, mobs led by the Knights rounded up Seattle’s Chinese-born workers and herded them to a waiting steamer. Knights of Labor chief Terence Powderly raised the slogan: “Bar John Chinaman to Eternity!” and went on

to serve a term as U.S. Commissioner-General of Immigration, including during the 1898 Spanish-American War, the U.S.’ first imperialist war.

Then there was Samuel Gompers, who founded the American Federation of Labor (AFL) on a narrow craft basis. In 1902, Gompers co-authored an article titled, “Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion. Meat vs. Rice. American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?”

While Chinese immigration was being restricted, 180,000 Japanese immigrated to the U.S. mainland and 200,000 to Hawaii between 1885, when Japan first legalized emigration, and 1924, when new U.S. laws would drastically curtail Asian immigration. Immigrant workers turned the California desert into orchards and vegetable gardens. In 1903, the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (JMLA) was established. Composed of 800 Japanese and 400 Mexican agricultural workers, the union struck the Western Agricultural Contracting Company in Oxnard, California on March 18 of that year, protesting the company’s hiring through contractors, payment in goods rather than money and threats of a wage cut. A hard-fought strike produced a compromise agreement.

However, the union faced an obstacle *within* the labor movement, the Gompers bureaucracy. When the JMLA and another Japanese union applied to

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Immigrants...

(continued from page 13)

the AFL for charters, Gompers wrote to J.M. Lizarras, the Mexican secretary of the JMLA: “Your union will under no circumstance accept membership of any Chinese or Japanese.” No wonder the American socialist Daniel De Leon called these miserable misleaders the “labor lieutenants of capital”! Lizarras fired back the mandate from the union: “We will refuse any other kind of charter, except one which will wipe out race prejudice and recognize our fellow workers as being as good as ourselves” (cited in Takaki, *A Different Mirror*). But without the support of the rest of labor, this early experiment in multiracial unionism could not survive.

IWW Wobblies vs. “Jingo-Socialism”

In the “Panic of 1893,” with the failure of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and the collapse of 500 banks and 15,000 businesses, millions of workers were thrown into the ranks of the unemployed, while those still working were increasingly restless. Economic crisis spurred on U.S. imperialism’s drive for colonies, markets and spheres of influence. Victory in the Spanish-American War, dubbed that “splendid little war” by cheerleaders for the American empire, gave the U.S. Guam, Cuba and Puerto Rico. The subsequent suppression of the Philippine independence struggle at the beginning of the 20th century also gave the U.S. control of these strategic islands. While Admiral Dewey pursued the “Open Door” policy for American pillage of China, “Progressive” president Teddy Roosevelt bolted the door to Chinese immigration by making the Chinese Exclusion Act permanent.

Japan’s surprise military victory over Russia in 1905 cast a deep shadow over U.S. imperialism’s appetite to turn the



Brown Brothers

Garment workers striking for eight-hour day in 1913 carry signs in Yiddish, Italian and Russian.

Pacific into an American lake, evoking “yellow peril” hysteria from ruling circles here, typified by a *San Francisco Chronicle* front-page headline: “The Japanese Invasion, the Problem of the Hour.” San Francisco labor leaders contributed to that chauvinist campaign by forming the Asiatic Exclusion League that year.

Walking south through Chinatown in Oakland today you come upon Jack London Square, named after the so-called socialist and author of *The Iron Heel*, a fictionalized account about the masses fighting against the capitalist oligarchy in America. But London was also an open racist who railed against the “yellow peril.” Typical of the American Socialist Party’s attitude toward Asian immigrants was a letter it sent to the Second International and published in the party’s main theoretical magazine, *International Socialist Review* (June 1910):

“We advocate the unconditional exclusion of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Hindus, not as races, per se, not as peo-

ples with definite physiological characteristics—but for the evident reasons that these peoples occupy definite portions of the earth which are so far behind the general modern development of industry, psychologically as well as economically, that they constitute...an obstacle and menace to the progress...of our working class population.”

—“The Socialist Congress and the Immigration Question,” quoted in Jennifer Jung Hee Choi, *The Rhetoric of Inclusion: The I.W.W. and Asian Workers* (1999)

No wonder that Lenin wrote in late 1915 to the Socialist Propaganda League, composed mainly of left-wing Lettish immigrants who went on to become a cornerstone of the early American Communist Party:

“In our struggle for true internationalism & against ‘jingo-socialism’ we always quote in our press the example of the opportunist leaders of the S.P. in America, who are in favor of restrictions of the immigration of Chinese and Japanese workers (especially after the Congress of Stuttgart, 1907, & *against* the decisions

of Stuttgart). We think that one can not be internationalist & be at the same time in favor of such restrictions. And we assert that Socialists in America, especially English Socialists, belonging to the ruling, and *oppressing* nation, who are not against any restrictions of immigration, against the possession of colonies (Hawaii) and for the entire freedom of colonies, that such Socialists are in reality jingoes.”

The proud exception to this record of chauvinism in the early labor movement was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)—better known as the Wobblies—which was founded in 1905, the year of the first Russian Revolution, as a class-struggle organization whose preamble boldly stated the simple truth so often betrayed: “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.” The IWW declared:

“The Industrial Workers of the World is an international movement.... We realize workers have no country.... In our organization, the Caucasian, the Malay, the Mongolian and the Negro, are all on the same footing.... An injury to them is an injury to us.”

—*Industrial Solidarity* (13 September 1913), cited in *The Rhetoric of Inclusion: The I.W.W. and Asian Workers*

In 1912, the IWW responded to a call for help from some 23,000 striking textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts in what became known as the “Bread and Roses” strike. The strikers were mainly women and almost all foreign-born, from 28 different nationalities speaking 45 different languages.

With the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, many of the best IWW fighters saw in living struggle the need for a working-class vanguard party to achieve state power and went on to help found the Communist Party here. Our own movement, founded by such Wobbly class-war veterans as James P. Cannon and Arne Swabeck, can rightfully lay claim to its honorable legacy.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Mobilizing...

(continued from page 3)

and Local 10, a heavily black union; in other words, this demo breaks with the capitalists’ divide and rule scheme, replacing it with common class struggle and solidarity.

The other legislation we’re fighting against is this Port, Maritime and Rail Security Act. The history of this bill pretty much exposes the fact that its purpose is to attack black and Latino workers. Originally this act was drafted as part of the “war on drugs,” months before September 11. After the World Trade Center attack, Congress gave it the twist of supposedly protecting American transportation, railroad and ships from the terrorists. The title changed to better hide its true intentions, but its essence remains the same. This act calls for “background checks” on all waterfront workers, meaning any felony, even a minor drug charge, in the past ten years could get any worker fired, without a hearing—just like the government is deporting immigrants without

a hearing. The waterfront unions are heavily black and Latino; most blacks and Latinos live in the ghettos and barrios, which are under the brutal occupation of the police. This, coupled with the “racial profiling” that pervades the American judicial system, means that it’s very likely that many dockworkers have had to deal with the police in their lives. Furthermore, this act would take the power of hiring out of the union’s hands, making it way easier for labor leaders and militant workers to be fired if they cause any “trouble” for the bosses.

One SYC member recounted a distribution of the “call to action” on the docks, where it has not taken any effort to convince workers that their very livelihoods are being attacked by the Maritime and Patriot acts. The SYC comrade reported:

“Just from selling *Workers Vanguard* at the longshore union hall in San Francisco, for an hour, I sold to five people who realized that if this act passed they would lose their jobs, because they had been in prison in the last ten years. After I explained to them what these bills are about, these guys got really mad and took stacks of demo flyers to pass out in their union hall. Some have even signed up to

work with us so that they could help build for this fight. It is not a coincidence that it is the most oppressed elements of the working class who are in a position to see through the lies of the bourgeoisie. In America, because of its history of slavery and immigration, these elements are immigrants and blacks. These are not just abstract slogans, for them this is the difference between eating and going hungry, for themselves and their families.”

Port truckers, who have been especially targeted by the Maritime Security Act, have also responded to this demo with great enthusiasm. In Oakland we have met Latino, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Iranian and black drivers who, while at first unaware of its impact, all became very interested in defeating this viciously anti-immigrant, anti-black legislation. Although we have been passing out leaflets in Spanish, Chinese and Arabic, there are requests for more info in other languages, such as Farsi (Persian). Very importantly, this demo is already breaking workers away from the anti-immigrant chauvinism of the union bureaucracy, which treats immigrants as dangerous competition for jobs, rather than as class brothers and sisters. A longshoreman we met at one of our sales was outraged that the heavily immigrant port truckers aren’t unionized, while black truckers would greet our calls for the defense of immigrants with “right on” and “good work,” expressing their solidarity.

Mobilizing the working class independently, for its own interests, is the only way to fight these reactionary attacks. Students alone can only be heard as loud as they can yell, and this is the truth. We as students have no social power; if we really try to change something by just being militant, the government will just jail us or kill us, as happened with the anarchist youth protesting the G-8 summit in Italy last year. What the proletariat, the key workers that keep society running, has that no other class has is the ability to shut everything down. An SYC comrade speaking at the School of the Arts explained: “Workers create all the wealth of society with their hands; any

given creation that we use to survive has gone through hundreds of different working hands. For example, the steel from the desks we’re sitting at was dug from the earth by workers, smelted in plants by workers, put onto ships by workers, sailed around the world and unloaded by workers, made into desk legs by workers and delivered to SOTA by workers. The only thing the capitalist owning class had to do with the whole process of these desk legs was taking all the profit. The workers can bring the capitalists to their knees—the same capitalists who wrote the Maritime and Patriot acts, the same capitalists that are trying to kill Mumia Abu-Jamal, the same capitalists who feast on the labor of the working class as parasites.”

Most importantly, it is only through organized labor action such as this demonstration that we can challenge bourgeois rule. These anti-immigrant, anti-black, anti-labor laws can only pass if the ruling class feels its power is unopposed. We can strike a blow against the government, the bosses, the state and all its repressive apparatus by demonstrating that the working class is not going to take it anymore. The capitalists don’t have a prayer against the power of labor, acting in the interest of all the oppressed. Those who labor should rule! Down with the anti-immigrant witchhunt! No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act! ■

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Enron...

(continued from page 1)

politicos were supposedly ills endemic only to Asian societies.

Enron used about every trick in the book, from dummy corporations to reporting profits not yet realized and hiding its debt obligations. And so did many another company in the '90s. In large part, this speculative orgy was facilitated by killing a number of the remaining New Deal measures instituted during the Great Depression to mitigate corporate/banking capers. Although these measures did nothing to change the system of capitalist exploitation, they did provide some obstacles to unfettered looting. It was also hoped that they would smooth out the downward slides in the trade cycle, i.e., anti-depression recipes named after the economist John Maynard Keynes.

Today, such calls as are being raised for new reforms and regulations don't go much further than easing some of the conditions under which workers are bound to their companies' 401(k) pension plans. It is minimal justice that those who have toiled for years should, upon retirement, live no worse off than when they worked. Under capitalism, however, such reform is no less a pipe dream than that of full employment. The anarchy of capitalism, demonstrated by the Enron collapse, derives from the fact that this system is based on the social organization of labor for production while the means of production are owned by individual capitalists who can dispose of the profits of such production as they will.

In the final analysis, no reform can prevent the capitalists from cutting their losses through increasing working-class misery. In the 1938 Transitional Program, written at the time of the New Deal reforms, Leon Trotsky explained:

“Liberal capitalism, based upon competition and free trade, has completely receded into the past. Its successor, monopolistic capitalism, not only does not mitigate the anarchy of the market but on the contrary imparts to it a particularly convulsive character.”

Trotsky characterized efforts to regulate the capitalist system as vain attempts “to drain the ocean of anarchy with spoonfuls of bureaucratic ‘planning’.”

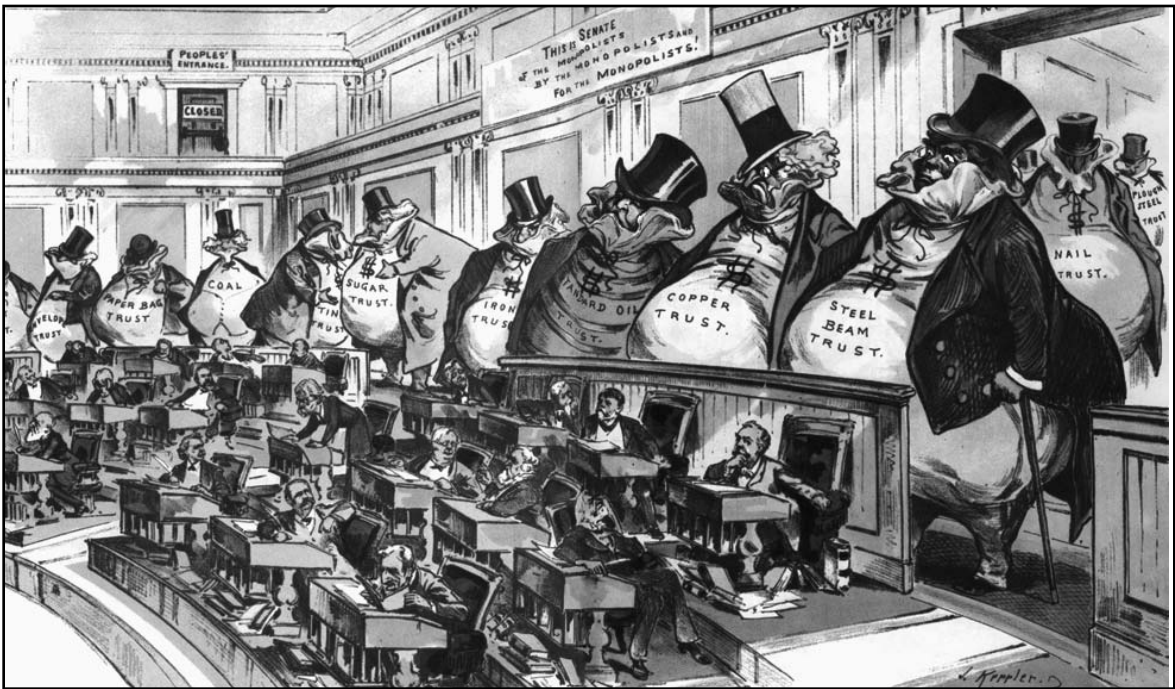
The administration of Bush Jr., an integral part of the Enron “family,” is now seen to be liars and cover-up artists by 59 percent of Americans surveyed. Bush & Co. now plead for the right to keep secret their consultations with industry. This is more than a little amusing. It was the Republicans who trumpeted the “right” of the American people to know each and every detail of Bill Clinton’s sexual indiscretions—activities harmful to no one—and who tried to impeach him for concealing them. However, secret “consultations” designed to further fatten the bosses and screw America’s working people are painted by Bush and Vice President Cheney as a defense of the government’s need for “unvarnished advice.”

Such secrets are only in the service of hiding the wheelings and dealings of the capitalist lords of commerce and industry. Trotsky put it succinctly in the Transitional Program: “In reality, the trusts keep no secrets from one another. The business secrets of the present epoch are part of a persistent plot of monopoly capitalism against the interests of society. Projects for limiting the autocracy of ‘economic royalists’ will continue to be pathetic farces as long as private owners of the social means of production can hide from producers and consumers the machinations of exploitation, robbery, and fraud.”

Boom-Bust Cycle of Capitalist Misery

Debacles like Enron are and always have been a recurrent feature of capitalism. Just over a decade ago, it was the savings and loan bailout. Almost invariably, there has been government collaboration with the scoundrels—from robber baron Jay Gould’s efforts to corner the U.S. gold supply in 1869 to the Teapot Dome scandal of the mid-1920s. Teapot Dome was a naval oil reserve in Wyoming

Joseph Keppler’s 1889 cartoon “Bosses of the Senate.”



which was leased with other government oil reserves in California on the sly by then Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall to oil barons Harry Sinclair and Edward Doheny. For these services, Fall received \$400,000 in “gifts” and “loans,” hardly chicken feed in today’s dollars. Fall eventually got a year in jail and a \$100,000 fine. Sinclair spent a brief time in jail for contempt of court and President Warren Harding, who had pardoned Socialist Eugene V. Debs (who had been imprisoned for opposing World War I), got a “bad name.”

Similarly, a few heads may yet roll in the Enron debacle. While Kenneth Lay refuses even to appear before a Congressional investigation, his wife Linda Lay tearfully pleads that they have already suffered enough and have been left destitute. In reality, this corporate version of Tammy Faye Bakker still has in her portfolio at least 18 properties in Texas and Colorado, only two of which are up for sale, and \$10 million in non-Enron stock.

Scandals like Enron and Teapot Dome generally occur around the peak of boom periods of intense profit-gouging and, come the bust, are followed by periods of “reform.” Then comes another upturn, and the reforms of yesterday are ignored or cast aside. The greater the surge, the more caution is thrown to the wind. Capital chases the highest rates of profit realization, and collusion in the pursuit of these becomes rampant. Hallucinatory visions of unending wealth and well-being proliferate until the glut of investment can no longer realize increased profit. Enron imbibed the heady brew distilled in the “ain’t we got fun” era of the 1990s, when the hottest items were stocks that multiplied in value well beyond any real increase in productivity. Fictitious earnings and, thus, stock values are the current norm for American enterprises.

The impact of the Enron bankruptcy on the lives of ordinary Americans is not yet fully measured. State or municipal workers in Florida, New York and around the country have seen their retirement funds plunge by hundreds of millions of dollars because of heavy Enron investments. Projects to build power plants, pipelines and transmission lines are on hold while plans to develop natural gas deposits are being cut back dramatically, posing the possibility that all Americans will be faced with the astronomical energy costs that beset Californians early last year. And banks like J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. and Citigroup are facing billions of dollars in losses because of partnerships with Enron.

With millions jobless and government surpluses depleted by obscene tax breaks for the wealthy, even the Bush administration has had to give some lip service to reforms. Bush, who is now considered eloquent despite a vocabulary seemingly constricted to the words “good” and “evil,” used his State of the Union address to talk of the need for “jobs” and safeguards for 401(k) and pension plans, the latter without mentioning Enron. The next day, Bush announced huge cuts in what job training programs exist, including one in Houston that is currently

retraining over a thousand former Enron workers. All of this is a codicil to the “war on terror” which, Bush intoned, “may not be finished on our watch, yet it must and it will be waged on our watch.”

The Enron collapse has inspired the out-of-power Democrats to act as something of an opposition and propose reforms, albeit timidly as they fear being labeled “unpatriotic” by the Republicans. The AFL-CIO tops are currently pushing for a return to “guaranteed” monthly benefits upon retirement. At the same time, they beg the bosses’ government to “save American jobs” by protecting from foreign competition the very industries that have dumped union members on the street.

What is necessary to end for all time this cycle of misery is not scotch-tape reforms but the mobilization of the working class in defense of the oppressed, fighting tooth and nail against every manifestation of capitalist exploitation and injustice and intransigently opposing American imperialism in all its efforts to maintain and expand its world dominance. Only by storming the walls of the capitalist order—smashing the state that

maintains the rule of the profit-glutted bosses and replacing it with a workers state—can the proletariat proceed to establish a planned, collectivized economy that will provide the resources to fuel world socialist revolution and organize an egalitarian, classless society internationally.

It is not possible to begin on this road unless workers are broken from the bourgeoisie’s “national unity” war drive and from the trade-union tops who fully endorse every foreign venture of U.S. imperialism. This requires the forging of a revolutionary proletarian party to win workers to the understanding that labor shares no interest with its capitalist exploiters, that imperialism’s wars are in the service of maintaining and expanding exploitation and oppression at home and abroad. It is the sole purpose of the International Communist League, standing in the tradition of the Bolshevik Party that led the world’s first successful proletarian revolution, to forge the world party of socialist revolution necessary to lead the working class to its destiny as the grave-diggers of capitalism. ■

Detroit...

(continued from page 2)

local “homeland security coordinator” and allocate \$250,000 to fight “terrorism.” The approximately 30,000 Arabs and Arab Americans in this city of 97,000 can only view this as a threat, and you hear “homeland security” being talked about even in local restaurants.

At Wayne State University in Detroit, one Arab student told us he had been in an Iraqi restaurant when it was attacked, with a rock thrown through a window. We heard from several people that Arabs that they know are “disappearing,” either snatched up by the government or disappearing for their own safety. However, there hasn’t been much in the way of protest activity on campus. We heard there had been a protest in defense of immigrant rights in the wake of September 11, and a white woman told us she and others wore a *hijab* (Islamic headscarf) for a day in solidarity with Arabs.

Several black students noted, sometimes sympathetically and sometimes not so sympathetically, that Arabs are now getting a taste of what blacks get every day. One told us: “America is America. It was racist before September 11, it’s racist after. They want us to believe that we’re united, but America is America.” Another black student said that the government went overboard in its racial profiling, but that’s to be expected. A third said that the attacks on civil liberties are wrong and racist, but added that Arabs seem surprised that it has come back on them. We got into an argument with a black nationalist who has been involved in a boycott of Arab-owned gas stations because one Arab owner shot a black person in 1999. This boycott was organized by Rev. Horace Sheffield III, of Sharpton’s National Action Network.

When we did a sale outside the Ford River Rouge plant, we found a lot of interest among both black and Arab workers in our article on Palestine (“Defend the Palestinian People!” WV No. 771, 28 December 2001). We sold 47 copies of *Workers Vanguard* and eight of the Partisan Defense Committee pamphlet, *Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!* There was some anger at the projected layoffs, especially since the Dearborn Assembly Plant is working ten-hour days. There was widespread recognition that the attacks on civil liberties will be used against black people, but the workers we talked to were more equivocal regarding the war against Afghanistan, and a couple even said they were in favor of the government targeting immigrants. Everybody said that they hadn’t noted any harassment of Arabs in the plant, but they also said that the union leadership wasn’t doing anything to help Arab workers. “The union just sits by and watches,” one black worker said.

One thing about Detroit as distinct from other areas of the country is that, probably because of the nature of industrial production in the area, workers are more conscious of their power. The bourgeoisie recognizes that labor is a player, too. Newspapers in Detroit prominently address labor issues in a way that they don’t in other cities. An article in the black press that we saw talked favorably about the Industrial Workers of the World and Big Bill Haywood, something we’d never see in Chicago.

At Rouge, one black worker talked bitterly about how his father and grandfather had worked for the company before him and “this country still won’t give us our freedom.” But, he noted, he has the power to shut down the whole plant with the push of a button, and all the bosses in the place wouldn’t be able to get it started again. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

For a Workers Party That Fights for All the Exploited and Oppressed!

Immigrants and the Class Struggle

The following presentation was given by comrade Reuben Samuels last month to a meeting of members and sympathizers of the Bay Area Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club as part of mobilizing for the February 9 Oakland protest against the anti-immigrant witchhunt and the new "anti-terror" laws.

PART ONE

Draconian police-state legislation has been rammed through Congress or simply decreed by the president promoting the illusion that it is intended for a specific, small section of the population: immigrants and foreign students from Muslim countries. But it targets all of us. The Maritime Security Act, aimed in the first instance at black and Latino longshoremen and largely immigrant port truckers, targets all dock workers. As the bourgeoisie drives to squeeze out greater profits in the midst of the worldwide recession, the buildup of police-state powers serves to intimidate and suppress, i.e., terrorize, the whole working class.

In 1790, the founding fathers of this slave-based republic passed the first naturalization law for "whites only," thereby excluding the black people and Native American Indians already here, not to mention the immigrants to come. In this racist country built upon the bedrock of black oppression, anti-immigrant chauvinism is a deadly danger to black people as well. But for decades, black Democratic politicians and pseudo-nationalist community hustlers have assisted the



WV Photo

80,000 march in Los Angeles against anti-immigrant Prop. 187, October 1994. Immigrant workers have brought militant traditions to labor struggles in U.S.

capitalist ruling class in pitting one sector against the other, fomenting chauvinism against Latino, Korean and Arab immigrants in the fight for scarce jobs and government programs.

How this plays out was seen in 1994, when almost half of black and Asian American voters voted for California's Proposition 187 denying health care, social services and education to undocumented immigrants. Two years later, Prop. 209 passed, targeting women as

well as blacks and minorities by gutting affirmative action on college campuses and in government programs. In 1998, Prop. 227, the "English only" attack on bilingual education and immigrants, passed. Meanwhile, liberals push the "people of color" myth, as if a light-skinned Cuban *gusano* counterrevolutionary has anything in common with a Salvadoran refugee from the death squads in his country; or as if the eloquent fighter against racist injustice Mumia Abu-Jamal

has anything to do with black reactionary Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, who wants him dead.

Clinton White House Set the Stage

From the Espionage and Sedition Acts of World War I to the 1940 Smith Act (or Alien Registration Act) and the Cold War's Walter-McCarran Immigration and Nationality Act, the capitalist class has

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All Out February 9!

Anti-Terrorist Laws Target Immigrants, Blacks, Labor

**Down With the
Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!
No to the USA-Patriot Act and the
Maritime Security Act!**

Initiated by the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee

Frank Ogawa Plaza, Oakland, California, 2 p.m.

Rain location: HERE Local 2850, 548 20th Street (between Telegraph and San Pablo)