

## Mass Protests Against Bush's War Moves

# For Class Struggle Against Imperialist War!

### Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party!

On November 8, the United Nations Security Council gave its fig leaf to the pending military assault on Iraq by U.S. imperialism. The ballyhooed opposition by France and Russia, among others, pointed to widespread fears of Washington's increasingly bellicose "unilateralism." At the same time, the unanimous vote simply underlines that it is the "world's only superpower" that calls the shots in the UN and that the other members of this den of imperialist thieves and their victims all have their price. Criminal, but hardly surprising, was the Chinese government's support for the UN resolution, with one of its representatives at the UN crowing: "The sunlight of unity is about to come." The "unity" proffered by the traitorous Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing to the imperialists helps pave the way for the U.S. to realize a central ambition—reconquering the Chinese deformed workers state for imperialist exploitation.

The UN vote came a mere three days after the American midterm elections, which gave the Republicans control of the House and Senate. The Bush gang, which rode into office on a minority of the vote, seized on the criminal killing of thousands of innocent civilians in the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center to get a lock on power, declaring a "war on terrorism" against any perceived enemy, domestic or foreign. Bush & Co. view their midterm victory as giving them something like the "divine right of kings"—the "right" to do whatever to whomever.

It's more tax cuts for the rich and increasingly no rights for anyone else, as the Constitution is put through the shredder of "homeland security." The Bush administration now sees smooth sailing in appointing such federal judges as Priscilla Owens, the virulent anti-abortion bigot currently seated on the Texas Supreme Court, and Mississippi's Charles Pickering, whose credentials include a 1959 law review article advocating that the state's laws against interracial marriage be strengthened. And with the wind in the sails of these nuclear madmen, the rest of the world had better watch out, too.

Among supporters of the Democratic Party there is much hand-wringing over its poor showing in the election, with recriminations flying over the absence of any stand that would have indicated even nominal opposition to the Republican agenda. Indeed, it is notable that the



WV Photo

Washington, D.C., October 26: Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent organized by Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Clubs offered alternative to pro-Democratic Party politics of demonstration organizers.

Democrats didn't even make a pretense of fighting for the "little man" when polls showed that voters were far more concerned about jobs, pensions and health care than about the "war on terror" or Iraq. But the policies being pursued by the Bush administration are in many respects simply the hardcore extension of policies that were implemented under the Clinton White House, from the abrogation of constitutional rights such as *habeas corpus* for death row defendants and the destruction of welfare programs to bombing raids against Iraq. The only difference is that Clinton claimed to "feel your pain" while the Bush administration revels in it.

The idea that the Democrats are the "friends" of labor and blacks has long been used to keep the working class, black people and the oppressed locked into the electoral shell game, through support to the capitalist Democratic Party. Such illusions are also strengthened by putative left organizations such as those that organized and endorsed the October 26 protests against war on Iraq in Washington, D.C. and the Bay Area. We print below an edited version of a presentation at a November 2 Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Club forum in New York City given by *Young Spartacus* editor Michael Davisson.

Nearly a quarter million protesters from across the country took to the streets

of Washington, D.C. and San Francisco in demonstrations to "Stop the War on Iraq Before It Starts" last Saturday, with solidarity rallies taking place in many other cities. Traveling to D.C. from all over the Midwest, Northeast and South, protesters filled the streets for several blocks on a march around the White House. With the crazed U.S. imperialists in the advanced stages of planning a mass slaughter of the Iraqi people, it is a welcome development that large numbers of youth are actively protesting against U.S. military action in Iraq. But on what basis were they mobi-

lized by the demo organizers? The dead ends of moral-witness pacifism and electoral pressure politics.

In Washington and San Francisco on October 26, we Marxists in the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs mobilized revolutionary internationalist contingents with banners and signs based on a counterposed set of demands: "For class struggle against the U.S. capitalist rulers! Defend Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack! Down with the UN starvation blockade!" We sold our press, soapboxed

*continued on page 9*

### Prometheus Research Library Book

#### Dog Days

James P. Cannon vs.  
Max Shachtman  
in the Communist League  
of America, 1931-1933



## Dog Days

James P. Cannon vs.  
Max Shachtman in the  
Communist League  
of America

SEE PAGE FOUR



## Build PDC Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners!

"All through history those who have fought against oppression have constantly been faced with the dungeons of a ruling class. The greater the cause has been, and the deeper it has been rooted in the needs and suffering of the masses, the more it has been menaced by the tortures of prison cells. The number of victims taken from among the ranks of those who have fought for a cause has been the measure of its greatness. No cause is a great one which has not produced fighters in its ranks who have dared to face arrest and trial and imprisonment. The fear of a ruling class, and the effectiveness of those who struggle against them, can always be measured by the number upon whom they wreak revenge in this way....

"The victory of the class-war prisoners is possible only when they are inseparably united with the living labor movement and when that movement claims them for its own, takes up their battle cry and carries on their work."

—James P. Cannon, "The Cause That Passes Through a Prison" (September 1926), reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (Pathfinder Press, 1958)

In this spirit of class solidarity, evoked by the founder and early leader of the International Labor Defense, the Partisan Defense Committee is launching its 17th annual Holiday Appeal fund drive to help maintain our program of monthly stipends for 16 class-war prisoners and

to provide extra funds and holiday gifts for them and their loved ones.

The fight for these class-war prisoners is all the more urgently posed today as a defense of all of us against a ruling class which aims its military arsenal against Iraq and its arsenal of state repression against any perceived opponent of its vicious class rule at home. The "war on terror" is wielded as a cover for gearing up the government's power to spy on the population, jail activists and trade-union militants, and indiscriminately round up immigrants. In a frontal attack on basic constitutional rights, the government has declared that anyone, immigrant or citizen, deemed an "enemy combatant" can be imprisoned indefinitely with no right to a trial or an attorney. That these attacks, initially targeted in the main against Muslims and Arabs, will ultimately be directed against organized labor was vividly demonstrated by the government's use of a Taft-Hartley injunction against the ILWU longshore workers.

All this underscores that opposition to U.S. imperialist military adventures must be linked to defense of the interests of workers and the oppressed in the U.S. It was with this understanding that in San Francisco last February, the PDC and

Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense initiated the first labor-centered mobilization in defense of immigrants targeted under the U.S. rulers' "war on terrorism" and in opposition to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act.

We urge you to contribute to and help build the Holiday Appeal. This is not an act of charity, but rather the duty of fighters against injustice to those inside prison walls as we struggle for their freedom.

**Mumia Abu-Jamal**, award-winning journalist, former Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, supporter of the MOVE organization and defiant opponent of racist state terror. In 1982 Mumia Abu-Jamal was railroaded to death row at the hands of Philadelphia's notorious cop and court frame-up machine on demonstrably false charges of killing Philly police officer Daniel Faulkner. The PDC pamphlet *Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!* reprints the sworn confession of the man who actually did shoot and kill Faulkner, Arnold Beverly. Beverly's account is affirmed in accompanying declarations by Jamal and his brother William Cook, who was at the scene of the shooting.

The pamphlet also features the affidavit of PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, who was a member of Jamal's defense team from 1995 to 1999. It compellingly marshals the evidence of his innocence and powerfully documents the struggle waged against Mumia's former attorneys, who worked overtime to ensure that this exculpatory evidence was never introduced in court.

Last December, a federal court overturned Jamal's death sentence while affirming the conviction, condemning Jamal to life in prison. This ruling is being challenged by the prosecution. Jamal's new legal team has filed appeals against the refusal of both federal and Pennsylvania state courts to even consider Beverly's testimony. This December marks 21 years of Mumia's imprisonment. The PDC calls on working people, minorities, youth and all opponents of racist capitalist oppression to raise the cry: *Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!*

**Jerry Dale Lowe**, United Mine Workers member framed up on federal charges in the July 1993 shooting death of a scab contractor in Logan County, West Virginia. The scab was part of a convoy leaving the mine, shot in the back of the head from the direction of the bosses' thugs. Lowe was singled out by authorities because he was a militant defender of the picket line. For the "crime" of defending his union, Lowe was sentenced to nearly eleven years in jail in Ashland, Kentucky with no possibility of parole. Last year, his appeal based on new ballistics evidence was turned down in federal court.

**Ed Poindexter** and **Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa**, former Black Panther supporters and leaders of the Omaha Nebraska Committee to Combat Fascism. Victims of racist FBI COINTELPRO operation, framed up for an explosion in 1970 which killed a cop. Both were convicted on the basis of perjured testimony, sentenced to life and have now spent more than 30 years apiece in jail. Nebraska Board of Pardons refuses to lessen sentences so that they can be considered for parole. Poindexter is at Lino Lake, MN and Mondo is at Lincoln, NE.

**Jaan Laaman** and **Ray Luc Levasseur** were arrested in 1984 and '85 as part



Jennifer Beach

**Mumia Abu-Jamal**

of the Ohio 7. They are radical activists with a shared history of opposition to racism and imperialism. Sentenced to 45 years to life under RICO conspiracy laws on allegations of bank expropriations and bombings targeting symbols of U.S. imperialism in the late '70s and '80s. Jaan Laaman was transferred to South Walpole, MA. Ray Luc Levasseur is in Atlanta, GA.

**Hugo Pinell**, the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. Militant anti-racist, leader of prison rights organizing along with George Jackson, who was murdered by prison guards in 1971. In prison for over 37 years. In January Pinell was again denied parole and he continues to serve a life sentence at the notorious Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit in California.

Eight MOVE members, **Chuck Africa, Michael Davis Africa, Debbie Sims Africa, Janet Holloway Africa, Janine Phillips Africa, Edward Goodman Africa, Delbert Orr Africa** and **William Phillips Africa**, are in their 25th year in prison. They were sentenced to 30-100 years after the 1978 police attack on their Philadelphia home, falsely convicted of killing a police officer. The PCRA petition to overturn their frame-ups was denied last year.

**Jamal Hart**, Mumia's son, was sentenced in 1998 to 15½ years on bogus firearm possession charges, targeted for his prominent activism in the campaign to free his father. Although Hart was initially charged under Pennsylvania laws, which would have meant a probationary sentence, Clinton's Justice Department intervened to have Hart thrown in prison. He is not eligible for parole. Hart is at Fairton, NJ.



WV Photo

**Jerry Dale Lowe**

**Contribute Now!** All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252.

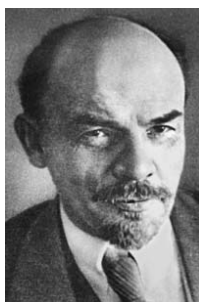
The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization that champions cases and causes in the interests of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. ■



**TROTSKY**

### Internal Struggle in the Leninist Party

*Writing in 1932, as factional turmoil racked the Communist League of America, Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon underlined the crucial importance of internal political struggle for the education and steeling of the membership of a Leninist vanguard party. The CLA was part of Leon Trotsky's International Left Opposition, which fought the Stalinist degeneration of the Third International, at that time as an expelled faction of that body.*



**LENIN**

What is the primary purpose of a discussion in a communist organization? It is not to discredit one another, not to exalt some and push others down, not to present matters as prosecution on the one side and defense on the other. No, the primary purpose is to clarify the principled questions, to educate the comrades on the meaning of the dispute of the moment, to teach them to penetrate the essence of a question and draw their inferences accordingly, so that the lessons are firmly gained and remembered for the future, when similar problems will arise in different forms. In other words, the primary aim of a discussion conducted by communist leaders is to teach the comrades to think and to fight politically, to grasp the main aspects of a question, to go by principle and not to be sidetracked by incidental matters. The acquisition of this method is the condition sine qua non for our comrades to fulfill their mission as the vanguard of the vanguard, not only in future disputes within the ranks of the Left Opposition, but also, and especially, in conflicts with the other party factions, and beyond that in the broad class struggle and in the general labor movement, where they will encounter all kinds of demagogues who are masters of all kinds of tricks.

—James P. Cannon, "Draft on the Internal Struggle," July 1932, printed in *Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34* (1985)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

**Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.**



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**15 November 2002**

## Benefit for Class-War Prisoners

### Organize for Jamal's Freedom

#### New York City

**Friday, December 6  
6 to 10 p.m.**

6 Harrison St., Manhattan  
(Take 1 or 9 to Franklin St.)

For more information:  
(212) 406-4252

P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Sta.  
New York, NY 10013

#### Chicago

**Sunday, December 8  
3 to 7 p.m.**

United Electrical Hall  
37 S. Ashland (at Monroe)

For more information:  
(312) 563-0442

P.O. Box 802867  
Chicago, IL 60680

#### Bay Area

**Sunday, December 8  
1 to 4 p.m.**

Centro del Pueblo  
474 Valencia, San Francisco

For more information:  
(510) 839-0852

P.O. Box 77462  
San Francisco, CA 94107

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# Young Spartacus

## Full Democratic Rights for Gays!

# Transgender Youth Murdered in Brutal Attack

On October 3, 17-year-old Gwen Araujo, a Latina transgender woman whose birth name was Eddie, was savagely beaten and strangled with a rope after attending a party in Newark, California. Her body was found almost two weeks later buried in a shallow grave 150 miles away in the Sierra Nevada foothills. Three men, ages 19 to 24, have been arraigned and await trial for murder. Youth around California have been mobilizing to protest the hideous attack and show their support for gay rights, from demonstrations in the Bay Area at schools like Berkeley High to Los Angeles, where a multiethnic crowd of about 60 people, mostly transgender youth, marched in honor of Gwen Araujo on November 3.

Araujo's lynching comes four years after gay Wyoming student Matthew Shepard was left to die following a sadistic attack that provoked protests around the country and abroad. Far from isolated incidents, these cases are the demented and concentrated expression of the bigotry faced by gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders in this brutal capitalist society. Transgenders are particularly vulnerable given that the difference between their chosen gender identity and their biological one could be visibly recognized. So far this year, 25 transgender people have been killed, according to the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition. Since 1990, 38 transgenders have been murdered in California alone. In 1999, Alina Marie Barragan was strangled to death in San Jose after a man found out she was biologically male. In 1993, Brandon Teena, a biological female who lived as a male, was kidnapped, raped and murdered in Nebraska, a case made famous by the movie *Boys Don't Cry*.

Newark, a conservative working-class town just north of San Jose, is not exactly part of the mythical "liberal" Bay Area, where more open social attitudes toward sexuality are in fact restricted to areas of San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland. But even in the so-called gay haven of San Francisco's Castro district, gays and others are targeted by fascist scum and anti-gay bigots. According to Community United Against Violence, a group that monitors anti-gay violence, in 2001 there were over 300 anti-gay attacks in San Francisco alone. Meanwhile in West Hollywood, a heavily gay town in the Los Angeles area, a spate of assaults on gays since September has put the gay community on high alert. At least five gay men have been attacked with bats, metal poles and knives on the streets.

Following the news of Gwen Araujo's murder, evil-incarnate Reverend Fred Phelps and his disgusting Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church cohorts threatened to picket her memorial in Newark, just as they did at Matthew Shepard's funeral four years earlier with signs reading "God Hates Fags." Nearly 1,000 youth and gay rights activists came to support Araujo's family and protest this provocation; although Phelps did not show up at the funeral, he and his ilk picketed in front of Araujo's house. Phelps has now announced he will picket performances of *The Laramie Project*, the powerful play

about Matthew Shepard's murder, at Newark Memorial High School, which Gwen had attended, and Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland on the weekend of November 15. When Phelps and his filthy handful of followers came to San Francisco in 1994 to picket and disrupt the memorial of Randy Shilts, a gay reporter and writer who had died of AIDS, a Spartacist contingent joined hundreds of angry counter-protesters in routing these vile anti-gay bigots, making them run for cover like cockroaches exposed to light.

Phelps is not just a nut case, but is one of the shock troops of right-wing reaction, seeking to exterminate gays and drive women back into the home. His anti-gay filth is an incitement to murder, just as the bible-thumping, anti-woman, anti-abortion reactionaries incite terrorist attacks against abortion clinics and the murder of the increasingly few doctors who perform the operations. It is no coincidence that the KKK fascists attack both blacks and gays, as well as union militants and Jews. These bigots go after those they perceive as deviating from their retrograde model of human society.

At a November 8 candlelight vigil for Gwen at Newark Memorial High School, religiosity dominated the crowd as priests and other members of the church passed out candles and held signs that read, "God Loves Everybody." But religious backwardness is one of the central moral props for the oppression of gays in capitalist society. Furthermore, government enforcement and promotion of "family values" moralism gives reactionaries a green light for carrying out terrorist murders and attacks against gays and transgenders.

It is a real measure of the reactionary political climate in the U.S., fostered not least by Christian fundamentalists, that the Democrats can posture as protectors of the rights of women and gays. Bill Clinton slashed welfare for millions of women and children, and under his presidency access to abortion for poor and rural women actually decreased. He enacted the "don't ask, don't tell" policy which ushered in a widespread anti-gay witchhunt in the military. Clinton also signed the Defense of Marriage Act, which enshrined marriage as the union between one man and one woman and blocked access to federal benefits for gay partners indefinitely.

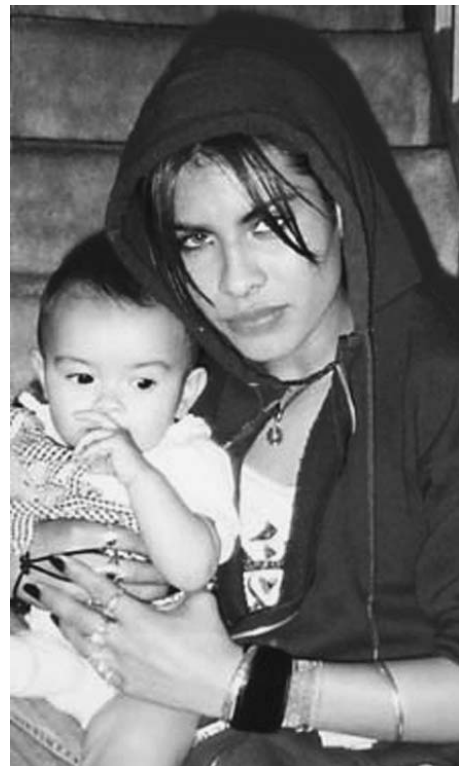
This whole "family values" reaction is aimed at regulating sexual activities for all, especially youth. From the dangerous state-sponsored "abstinence only" campaigns to the rollback of abortion rights, the capitalist rulers are intent on regimenting youth and the population at large. The guiding principle for sexual relationships between *all* people must be one of effective consent. *Government out of the bedroom! Down with reactionary "age of consent" laws! For full democratic rights for gays!*

Groups around the nation have been calling for the expansion of existing "hate crimes" laws to prevent further murderous attacks. This strategy disarms the victims by fostering illusions that the capitalist state will somehow bring justice to those it oppresses. This is the same state that sends cops to smash picket

lines, arrests prostitutes on the streets, terrorizes blacks and Latinos in the ghettos and denies gays their civil rights, while protecting fascist scum from anti-fascist demonstrators. If implemented, such laws would only give cops and the courts added power for increased repression against minority communities and those they deem enemies by allowing the racist state to pass judgment on what is and is not motivated by "hate."

Bigotry against gays and transgenders is not just a matter of personal values or lack of education about "differences." It flows from the entrenched gender roles decreed by the sexual division of labor in the family—the root of the oppression of women in class society—and is reinforced by religious moral codes. The capitalist order is built upon private property and the class domination of the capitalists over workers and all the oppressed. Capitalist society needs the family, a bedrock conservatizing force and the mechanism by which private property is passed down and a new generation of workers raised, and so it *cannot* ultimately "legitimize" those who fundamentally deviate from its restrictions, not least gays and transgenders.

While we fight for an end to all laws that oppress gays and others deemed "deviant" by the American bourgeoisie's Christian anti-sex moralism, we recognize that it will take a more fundamental transformation to change deeply rooted attitudes toward sex roles and sexuality. A socialist revolution is necessary to lay the basis for replacing the family and creating a society in which all individuals are free to fully express themselves. We seek to win the working class to the understanding that workers must take up the fight for gay and women's rights as



San Francisco Chronicle

**Gwen Araujo (with niece), transgender youth murdered by anti-gay bigots.**

their own, which means breaking away from religious obscurantism, male chauvinism and anti-gay bigotry, which only serve the bourgeoisie.

When in 1982 the Nazis wanted to march on Gay Pride Day in Chicago, the Spartacist League initiated a united-front labor/black mobilization which drew support from dozens of trade unions and black, Latino, Jewish, gay, student and leftist organizations. Although the Nazis thought that no one would try to stop an attack on a vulnerable section of the population, 3,000 people came out to stop them. This demonstration was an example of the kind of action that would be undertaken by a revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat acting as the "tribune of the people," like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. We need a proletarian revolution to sweep away the system that spawned the bigotry of the depraved killers of Gwen Araujo, Matthew Shepard and all the countless other victims of reactionary and fascistic terror. We in the Spartacus Youth Clubs seek to win youth to the fight to build a party to lead the working class and all the oppressed to victory. ■

### Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

#### BAY AREA

**Alternate Tuesdays, 7 p.m.**

**November 19: Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution. On the Special Oppression of Women under Capitalism**

UC Berkeley, 246 Dwinelle Hall  
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851  
or e-mail slbayarea@compuserve.com

#### CHICAGO

**Tuesday, November 26, 6 p.m.**

**Finish the Civil War! Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Room 117 Lincoln Hall  
707 S. Morgan St.

Information and readings: (312) 563-0441  
or e-mail spartacist@iname.com

#### LOS ANGELES

**Saturday, November 23, 2 p.m.**

**The 1917 Russian Revolution: How the Working Class Took Power**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215  
(Vermont/Beverly Red Line station)  
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239  
or e-mail slsycla@cs.com

#### BOSTON

**Alternate Thursdays, 7 p.m.**

**November 21:**

**Lenin and the Vanguard Party**

Boston University  
CAS Room 237  
725 Commonwealth Ave.  
Information and readings: (617) 666-9453  
or e-mail bostonsyc@yahoo.com

#### NEW YORK CITY

**Tuesday, November 19, 7 p.m.**

**Defend China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam against Imperialist Attack and Counterrevolution! For Workers Political Revolution!**

Columbia University  
Hamilton Hall, Room 609  
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Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
or e-mail nysl@compuserve.com

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# Dog Days

## James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933

The Prometheus Research Library (PRL), archive and central library of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, is proud to announce the publication of its third book, *Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933*. This 752-page volume, available in both paperback and hardcover, includes 118 documents that chronicle a factional polarization which rent the American section of Leon Trotsky's International Left Opposition (ILO) from 1931 to 1933. This was a period of stagnation that Cannon later aptly called the "dog days of the movement." Pitting supporters of James P. Cannon against the generally younger followers of Max Shachtman, who were less experienced as workers' leaders, the fight in the Communist League (CLA) presaged the defining split in American Trotskyism which occurred in 1939-40. Yet the 1931-33 struggle has never before been well documented.

The PRL's new volume, which includes an exhaustive introduction that situates the CLA fight in the context of the political sorting out that occurred in the early ILO, sheds new light on the history of the Trotskyist movement. It also provides a lively picture of the membership and work of the Trotskyists during this early period, documenting the political and organizational growth of a small, fighting propaganda group which went on to lead one of the decisive American class battles of 1934—the great Minneapolis Teamsters strikes.

In the book's Editorial Note, the genesis of the volume is explained: "In the political youth of James Robertson, co-editor of this compilation, the subject matter of this book had a somewhat mystical and mythical quality, wherein might be found the origins of the profound 1940 scission in the Trotskyist (i.e., the authentic communist) movement." In 1939-40, Max Shachtman and his supporters departed decisively from a revolutionary proletarian and internationalist perspective, abandoning the unconditional military defense of the world's first workers state, the Soviet Union. Cannon and Trotsky led a six-month-long struggle against Shachtman's petty-bourgeois opposition, which composed some 40 percent of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—then the U.S. Trotskyist organization—and its youth organization.

The fight coincided with the outbreak of World War II, and many of the European Trotskyist organizations were functioning in conditions of illegality. The fight in the SWP "became in effect a discussion for the entire Fourth International and was followed with passionate interest by the members of all sections" (*Fourth International*, May 1940). Trotsky's writings from the struggle were collected in *In Defense of Marxism*; Cannon's were published in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*.

Shachtman and some of his supporters went on to



CLA contingent in May Day demonstration, New York City, 1934.

Tamiment Library

establish the Workers Party, developing the view that the USSR was a new form of class society, "bureaucratic collectivist." For a period, Shachtman's organization claimed to adhere to the Fourth International (FI) and acted as a rival to the SWP, the FI section in the U.S. But under the impact of the Cold War, the Workers Party moved rapidly to the right and changed its name to the Independent Socialist League (ISL) in 1949. In 1958 the ISL liquidated into the pathetic dregs of American social democracy. By the 1960s, Shachtman was supporting the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and U.S. imperialism's bloody war against the Vietnamese national and social revolution. His path of renegacy has been well chronicled by the Spartacist tendency, most recently in "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories—Tony Cliff and Max Shachtman: Pro-Imperialist Accomplices of Counterrevolution" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999).

Cannon remained National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party until he retired in 1953. He was then SWP National Chairman until his death in 1974. But by the late 1950s, the party began to succumb to the consequences of the Cold War anti-Communist witchhunt, including lack of recruitment and an aging cadre. By 1960, the party had given up on the struggle for revolutionary proletarian leadership, hailing Fidel Castro as an "unconscious Trotskyist" and tailing the liberal-pacifist leadership of the civil rights movement. The Revolutionary Tendency, forerunner of the Spartacist League, fought the party's degeneration and was expelled from the SWP in 1963. The SL today stands on the heritage of Cannon's revolutionary SWP, which has less than nothing to do with the increasingly quirky reformist sect around Jack Barnes that today calls itself the Socialist Workers Party.

The material published in *Dog Days* documents that there was a deepgoing polarization between supporters of Shachtman and those of Cannon already in the CLA, posing the possibility of a split in early 1933. But

unlike in 1939-40, there was no decisive principled or programmatic difference. Trotsky intervened sharply in the spring of 1933, warning that the two sides "anticipate a lot by sharpening the organizational struggle between the groups and the members without any connection with the development of political work and the questions it raises." He sought to get the two factions to dissolve so that their members could direct their energy into expanding the League's mass work. Trotsky's intervention coincided with an upturn in the class struggle in 1933-34, which provided the objective basis for the CLA to break out of the impasse and go forward.

### Prelude to 1939-40 Faction Fight

In his *History of American Trotskyism* (1944), Cannon correctly called the CLA dispute "the premature rehearsal of the great, definitive struggle of 1939-40." At the same time, he described only a "sea of petty troubles, jealousies, clique formations and internal fights." The extent of the polarization was later downplayed or dismissed by many of the leading participants interviewed by the PRL in the 1970s and 1990s. Some of the old-timers were embarrassed by their positions in the early fight. (For example, Carl Cowl, later a follower of the ultra-leftist Hugo Oehler, supported Shachtman in the CLA, a fact which he never mentioned when the PRL interviewed him.)

The exception was Albert Glotzer, a key leader of the Shachtman group, whose memory was fueled by anti-Cannon passions which burned as hot in later decades as they had in the early 1930s. By the time the PRL interviewed him in the early 1990s, Glotzer was a confirmed "State Department socialist" with ties to the imperialist secret services. (Richard Valcourt, editor of the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence*, spoke at his 1999 memorial meeting.) Yet Glotzer obscenely continued to insist that Cannon had never been a true Bolshevik! The PRL introduction to *Dog Days* makes use of the PRL's interviews with former CLAers, as well as of interviews with Cannon and Shachtman conducted by others in the 1960s and 1970s.

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In 1939-40, the factional lineup among SWP National Committee members who had been part of the early CLA was almost identical to that of 1931-33. Shachtman, Martin Abern and Glotzer were pitted against Cannon, Vincent Dunne and Carl Skoglund. (The one exception was Morris Lewit—later known as Morris Stein—who supported Shachtman in the early fight but became a key collaborator of Cannon's in 1934 and a stalwart of the Soviet defensists in 1939-40.) The magnum opus of the Shachtman side, the lengthy June 1932 "The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect" (referred to hereafter as "Prospect and Retrospect"), harps on the same organizational themes of Cannon's so-called "bureaucratic conservatism" that dominated the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1939-40. When Cannon sent his *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* to Trotsky in 1940, he noted, "Its length must be excused on the ground that the dam of ten years patience has been broken down."

"Prospect and Retrospect," signed by Shachtman, Abern and Glotzer, is the source of all subsequent accounts of Cannon as an unreformed Zinovievist and bureaucrat with little interest in Marxist theory or international questions. Submitted just before a June 1932 plenum of the CLA's National Committee (NC), "Prospect and Retrospect" was withdrawn by its authors at the plenum and then resubmitted a month later. Carbon copies of the document circulated extensively in the CLA through private factional channels, but "Prospect and Retrospect" never appeared in the *CLA Internal Bulletin*.



Left: James P. Cannon and Red Army soldiers at time of Comintern Sixth Congress, 1928. Max Shachtman, Berlin, 1930.



Tamiment Library

because Cannon never completed the reply he was mandated to write by the National Committee majority. In *Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933*, “Prospect and Retrospect” is published for the first time.

The new volume draws together representative documents, motions and correspondence from both sides of the factional divide, as well as all of Trotsky’s correspondence and interventions into the CLA fight. But it does not reproduce Cannon’s major documents and factional correspondence, most of which were published by Pathfinder Press in 1985 as part of Cannon’s *Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34*. That volume includes Cannon’s partial, draft reply to “Prospect and Retrospect” as well as “Internal Problems of the CLA,” which Cannon co-authored with Arne Swabeck in March 1932. Cannon’s 1932-34 *Writings and Speeches* is an essential companion to the PRL’s new book; Pathfinder’s earlier volume, Cannon’s *Writings and Speeches: The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31*, also provides important background information and context. *Dog Days* includes eight Cannon pieces not in the Pathfinder collection, all of which circulated in the minutes of the CLA’s leading committee resident in New York and in *Internal Bulletins*.

Most of Trotsky’s written interventions into the CLA fight were published in English as part of Pathfinder’s *Writings of Leon Trotsky* series. But they are spread over several volumes, and the bulk of them appears only in the *Writings Supplement 1929-33*. *Dog Days* gathers them together in one book for the first time, putting them in the context of the CLA’s internal disputes so that their full import is clear. The new volume also includes seven never-before-published letters by Trotsky, most of them from the section of the Trotsky papers at Harvard University covering his period in exile. This section was opened to the public only in 1980, after Pathfinder’s Trotsky *Writings* series was compiled. Trotsky had no English-speaking secretary at the time of the CLA dispute, so most of his letters were written in German, and a few in French and Russian. The PRL prepared new translations for *Dog Days*.

*Dog Days* includes letters and documents by many other CLA cadres, including Arne Swabeck, Carl Skoglund, Albert Glotzer, Martin Abern and Maurice Spector. PRL researchers searched the papers of leading CLAs in archives around the United States, unearthing in all some 600 items relating to the CLA dispute and the preceding organizational tensions and disputes on international questions. The 118 documents selected for the book give a representative picture of the faction fight as it unfolded. Short introductions by the editors give necessary background material. Extensive footnotes provide additional information and a 40-page glossary identifies people, institutions and publications that might be unfamiliar to the reader. There are 16 pages of photos—many never before published—of leading CLAs and the class-struggle events in which the Trotskyists participated, as well as reproductions of the organization’s publications. The volume contains an extensive index, and the paperback as well as the hardcover have durable smyth-sewn bindings.

The documents in *Dog Days* reveal just how profoundly Cannon was shaped by the CLA’s early factional struggle and especially Trotsky’s intervention, which completed Cannon’s education as a Leninist.

Destroying the Shachtmanite myth that Cannon was simply a “hand-raiser for Trotsky,” this volume illustrates that the relationship between Trotsky and Cannon was forged over time—not least in fights against Shachtman. *Dog Days* is a kind of manual of the dos and don’ts of Leninist internal party struggle. As the PRL introduction notes:

“The documents reveal the myriad tensions that can tear apart a small communist propaganda nucleus. How the CLA overcame the ‘dog days’ to become one of the strongest sections of the Fourth International is an important lesson in the struggle to forge a revolutionary party and its cadre. The Prometheus Research Library, central reference archive of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, is unique in understanding the importance of the CLA fight and making its history accessible to our own and future generations. The ICL, like the ILO, is a fighting communist propaganda group with the goal of forging parties of the proletarian vanguard to lead to victory new October Revolutions internationally.”

It is not a propitious time to bring out a specialized and detailed volume of communist history such as this. Interest in the history of revolutionary Marxism is currently at a low ebb as bourgeois ideologues continue to peddle “death of communism” triumphalism born out of

has the power and the interest to overthrow this decaying social order and to replace it with an internationally planned economy. The leap in development that comes with a planned economy—even a bureaucratically deformed and nationally limited one—has been made patently obvious by the devastation of infrastructure, industry, education and health that have accompanied capitalist counterrevolution in the old Soviet Union and East Europe. Future generations of proletarian revolutionaries will need to assimilate the indispensable legacy of the Russian Revolution. They will find much to instruct them in the pages of the PRL’s new volume. It is unfortunate that this book presently appears only in English.

The Impasse of the CLA

The American Trotskyist movement was founded in October 1928 when Cannon, Abern and Shachtman were expelled from the Communist Party (CP) for attempting to organize support for Leon Trotsky’s Left Opposition. Born in struggle against the Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the Left Opposition fought, in both the Soviet party and the Communist International (CI) as a whole, to continue Lenin’s fight for international working-class revolution,



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From left: Martin Abern, Vincent R. Dunne, Carl Skoglund, Maurice Spector, Arne Swabeck, Max Shachtman, all full members of 1931-34 CLA National Committee. Full members not pictured: James P. Cannon, Albert Glotzer, Hugo Oehler.

the demise of the Soviet Union. But it was Stalinism that died when Stalin’s epigones gave the USSR back to the capitalist world economy in 1991-92, not communism. A crystallizing bureaucratic caste under Stalin usurped political power from the Soviet working class in early 1924. In the aftermath, the Stalinist propaganda machine at the top of the world’s first workers state perverted Marxism. To justify its policies, which oscillated between abject conciliation of imperialism and stupid adventurism, the Stalinist caste insisted that it was possible to build “socialism in one country” and to peacefully “co-exist” with imperialism. These dogmas belong on the garbage heap of history; they have nothing to do with genuine Marxism, i.e., Trotskyism.

Whatever the fads and fancies of bourgeois social sciences, the dynamic of the class struggle is built into the nature of the capitalist economy. The working class



against Stalin’s revisionist insistence on building “socialism in one country.” Cannon was won to the Left Opposition in 1928 while attending the Communist International’s Sixth Congress in Moscow, where he read the two parts of Trotsky’s Critique of the Comintern’s draft program that were distributed to members of the Program Commission. (The whole of the Critique, which consists of three parts, was later published as *The Third International After Lenin*.) Cannon and Canadian Communist Party leader Maurice Spector, also a member of the Program Commission, smuggled a copy of Trotsky’s manuscript out of the Soviet Union and began organizing support for the Left Opposition in their respective parties.

Working of necessity in great secrecy, Cannon managed to win over only a very few of his compatriots—centrally his companion, Rose Karsner, as well as

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# Dog Days

James P. Cannon vs.  
Max Shachtman  
in the Communist League  
of America, 1931-1933



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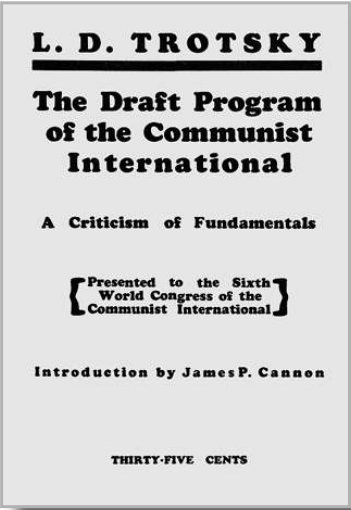
PRL Book...

(continued from page 5)

Shachtman and Abern—before being expelled from the CP. However, the fledgling Trotskyist group immediately began publishing a newspaper, the *Militant*, to propagate its views. The group quickly won adherents. Cannon had been the co-leader, along with William F. (Bill) Dunne, of the smallest of the three major groups that vied for leadership in the factional wars that dominated the Communist Party in the 1920s. Cannon had a great deal of authority as a founding Communist with a history in the pre-communist workers movement, going back to his days as an itinerant organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World in the 1910s. He was elected chairman of the Workers Party when it was founded in December 1921 as a legal organization parallel to the underground Communist Party. While many members of the CP’s Cannon faction—including Bill Dunne—went along with Cannon’s expulsion, many others opposed or at least questioned it. These questioners, too, were unceremoniously expelled by the CP leadership, which was at the time in the hands of an opportunist faction led by the unprincipled, ambition-crazed adventurer Jay Lovestone (who later evolved into an imperialist secret service operative). After reading Trotsky’s Critique, the majority of the expellees declared for the Left Opposition and began distributing the *Militant*. The ILO considered itself an expelled faction of the Communist Party, fighting to return the Communist International to the program embodied in its first four congresses.

The Communist League of America, which initially included the Canadian comrades in a Toronto branch, had some 100 members at its founding convention in May 1929. The former Cannon faction members were joined by a handful of former adherents of the third CP faction, which was led by William Z. Foster. At the time the Trotskyists were expelled, the Cannon and Foster factions were in a bloc against the opportunist Lovestone leadership. Disgusted by the continued and sharpening rightward course of the CP under Lovestone, disaffected Fosterites gave the fledgling Trotskyists a hearing and some were recruited. But this source of new members was soon cut off, as the *Dog Days* introduction recounts. Lovestone, failing to accurately judge the winds blowing from Moscow, did not break early enough with his main Moscow sponsor, Nikolai Bukharin. He was expelled from the CP the same month the CLA was founded. Lovestone took his closest supporters with him, but Stalin had managed to isolate him from the vast majority of his faction, which remained in the party.

The expulsion of Lovestone was part of a wholesale left turn in the policies of CI parties decreed by Moscow



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In 1929, CLA published the first two parts of Trotsky’s 1928 Critique of draft program of Communist International. Trotsky (right) with (from left) Jan Frankel, son Leon Sedov, wife Natalya Sedova and Czechoslovakian Trotskyist Jiri Kopp in Prinkipo, Turkey, 1930.

in 1927-28. Stalin moved against the Soviet party right wing, led by Bukharin, which had advocated a series of economic concessions that were made to the well-off peasants who could hire labor (the kulaks) from 1925-28. Stalin and Bukharin had stood together in the fight against the Left Opposition, but the concessions made to the peasantry proved a horrible disaster (as the Left Opposition had predicted). By 1927 the kulaks were hoarding grain, threatening to starve the Soviet cities. In an abrupt about-face, Stalin moved to brutally and forcibly collectivize the peasantry and implement a planned, but adventurous, rate of industrialization. At the same time, the Comintern declared that a new “Third Period” of post-World War I political life had opened up in which revolution was just around the corner. Bukharin and most of the leaders of the right in the Soviet party soon capitulated to Stalin, but internationally Bukharin’s supporters were expelled from most communist parties. The Bukharinites congealed into an international Right Opposition which included the Lovestone group in the U.S.

The international turn toward “Third Period” ultraleft rhetoric—which was often combined with adventurist actions—assuaged many communists previously disaffected with the Comintern’s growing opportunism. The new policy further undercut the LO’s appeal by seeming to co-opt its call for a more rapid pace of Soviet industrialization. In Cannon’s words, the Third Period

was “a devastating blow.” In the early ’60s, Shachtman recounted:

“We could no longer speak of the Party going further and further to the right. We could no longer speak of the Lovestoneites ruining the Party. We could no longer speak of the Fosterites having illusions that they would get the leadership of the Party. If anything resulted from that, it was a counteroffensive by the Fosterites—in the ranks, to be sure, unofficially, to be sure—to get us to return to the Party. They didn’t succeed in convincing a single one of our people, but not even the possibility of success existed any longer for us in recruiting dissident Fosterites.”

Just a few months after Lovestone’s expulsion, the stock market crash inaugurated the Great Depression. The CLA sank into the dog days. Not only were the Trotskyists cut off from the vast majority of class-conscious American workers organized in the Communist Party, but the CLA’s already meager financial resources all but disappeared as its members were laid off or forced to work for reduced wages. Class struggle in the country was at a low ebb. Moreover Cannon, whose first wife died just before the CLA was founded, leaving him responsible for their two children, had to get a job outside the organization. He underwent a period of evident demoralization, absenting himself from the CLA office for weeks at a time. The personal frictions and organizational grievances born in this period fueled the later faction fight and dominate Shachtman, Abern and Glotzer’s “Prospect and Retrospect.”

The Cannon Faction in the CP

The PRL introduction to *Dog Days* deals extensively with the 1929-30 frictions. Some of the tension grew out of the fact that Cannon recognized early on that the Third Period had shut off the CLA’s possibilities for immediate substantial growth. Shachtman and Abern resisted this conclusion, insisting on taking the *Militant* weekly in late 1929. Other tensions arose as the American Trotskyists avidly assimilated Trotsky’s writings, realizing the depth of the political deficiencies of the old Cannon faction in the Communist Party. Cannon explained in a 1974 interview referenced in *Dog Days*:

“As we began to get the writings of Trotsky, it opened up a whole new world for us. And they [Abern and Shachtman] discovered, this is my assumption, that while they had always taken what I said for gospel, they discovered there were a lot of things I didn’t know. That I was just beginning to learn from Trotsky. What they didn’t know was that I was learning as well as they were. Shachtman at least, I think, had the idea that he had outgrown me.”

Shachtman, Abern and Glotzer took great exception to Cannon’s 1930 statement that the CLA’s cadre had been “‘prepared by the past’ for our place under the banner of the International Left Opposition” (*Militant*, 10 May 1930). Labeling Cannon’s assertion a “theory of gestation,” they disparaged the record of the Cannon faction in the CP, insisting that their being won over to the Left Opposition was some kind of historical accident.

The PRL’s first book, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism: Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928*, which was published in 1992, covered Cannon’s years as CP leader, documenting the political evolution of the Cannon faction. The Cannon faction was motivated largely by national concerns and did not break fundamentally with the Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country.” At the same time, the faction’s record proves that there was much in their worldview that led them to the ILO’s door. As the PRL noted in the introduction to *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism*:

“When, in 1932, Shachtman and Abern led a rebellion against Cannon’s leadership of the Communist League of America, they were only interested in telling one side of the story. The material presented here also tells another, one that *predisposed* a deliberate and considered workers’ leader like Cannon to turn away from high office within the American party in favor of remaining true to the revolutionism that had animated his youth and continued to animate the program of the Left Opposition.”

The introduction to *Dog Days* notes that in particular Shachtman et al. underplayed the importance of

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Cannon’s history of hard opposition to the opportunism of Lovestone, the American version of the Right Opposition. Trotsky fought many battles in the early ILO against those, like Spanish Opposition leader Andrés Nin, who sought to merge banners with the Right Opposition. It was a particular strength of the American League that its members, in general, were not disposed to make common cause with the Right Opposition.

The CLA’s extensive publishing program was key to the assimilation of its cadre into the international Trotskyist movement. Besides the weekly *Militant*, which often included articles by Trotsky, the CLA published an array of Trotsky pamphlets, including his major articles on the rise of fascism in Germany and on the unfolding revolutionary situation in Spain. They also published in book form a selection of Trotsky’s writings on the lost opportunity for proletarian revolution in China from 1925 to 1927, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*. In letters included in *Dog Days*, Trotsky praised the quality of the CLA’s translations and publishing efforts, and he sought to get the North American Trotskyists to produce a theoretical journal (which they began only in 1934).

In late 1930, leading CLA member Arne Swabeck moved from Chicago to New York to help overcome the tensions in the CLA national office. Cannon was again fully politically engaged by this point, and he and Swabeck began an axis of collaboration which was key to the stabilization of the CLA and the expansion of its publishing program throughout 1931. In late 1931, the CLA began publishing a monthly youth press, *Young Spartacus*, as well as an episodic publication in Greek and a somewhat more regular publication in Yiddish. As the *Dog Days* introduction notes, Shachtman, Abern and Glotzer objected far more to Cannon’s revival than they had to his absence. Shachtman in particular had grown used to treating the CLA’s relations with Trotsky and other ILO parties as his personal fiefdom. He bridled at Cannon’s attempts to get the National Committee as a whole to take responsibility for international work. This was the issue that precipitated the factional polarization. In documenting the key role that international questions played in the CLA fight, *Dog Days* breaks new ground.

The International Questions

Shachtman was the first CLA leader to go to Prinkipo, Turkey, to meet with Trotsky in exile, after which he went to Europe and took part in the first ILO international gathering in April 1930. He was subsequently co-opted onto the ILO’s leading body, the International Bureau. In Europe he developed close relations with Kurt Landau, a leader of the ILO’s German section, and with Pierre Naville of the French Ligue Communiste. Trotsky subsequently waged sharp political fights against both men.

Shachtman treated his correspondence with Trotsky about the political struggles in Europe as “personal.” Moreover, he did not seek to get the CLA to take positions on the questions at issue. After a series of skirmishes in 1931, this issue finally broke out into the open in early 1932, when Cannon sought—over Shachtman’s opposition—to put the CLA on record in support of Trotsky’s positions in the internal ILO struggles involving Landau, Naville and others. The PRL introduction explains the basis for the ILO’s many political disputes: “Many dissident Communist elements who sought to regroup under the ILO’s banner did not fully grasp the significance of the struggle in the Russian party. All were attracted to the Left Opposition’s struggle against bureaucracy in the Soviet party and state. But many saw this as a simple ‘democratic’ issue, misunderstanding or disagreeing with the underlying programmatic basis—the fight to forge the politically homogenous revolutionary proletarian vanguard in opposition to all varieties of centrism and reformism. Political softness toward the Right Opposition was common.... Trotsky’s primary task was the systematic education of the ILO cadre and the weeding out of opportunist, sectarian, accidental, and dilettantish elements. This entailed almost constant internal political struggle.”

The PRL introduction sketches out Trotsky’s arguments with Alfred Rosmer and Pierre Naville on the trade-union question in the French section, his fight against the cliquism of Kurt Landau, and his struggle against Andrés Nin’s centrist orientation toward unity with Joaquín Maurín’s Workers and Peasants Bloc in Spain. All these issues figure in the documents published in the volume.

*Dog Days* is divided into three sections—“Shachtman in the International,” “The Fight” and “The International Intervenes”—with documents presented chronologically within each section. The first section consists mostly of Trotsky and Shachtman’s correspondence on problems in the European ILO sections from 1930 to ’31. Those who know the ICL and its work will be struck by the familiarity of Trotsky’s concerns, especially his struggle

to create a centralized political and administrative apparatus for the ILO. Trotsky’s aim was to forge a politically homogenous democratic-centralist tendency, even if it consisted at first of small propaganda groups. This aim, carried forward today by the ICL, separates us from all manner of fakers who (used to/sort of) pretend to be the continuators of the Left Opposition.

Trotsky fought against the Bordigists and others who wanted the ILO center to be simply a political clearing house for nationally delimited (and therefore necessarily centrist) parties. He fought for an early delegated international conference to establish an elected leadership, and he condemned the leadership of the Spanish section in particular for not paying enough attention to international questions and for not translating the ILO discussion bulletins for its membership. The CLA, it should be noted, took the responsibility early on for

*Century*,” Humanities Press, 1994]. In fact, Trotsky’s opponents in Europe invoked Shachtman’s name in defense of their own actions.”

The Fight

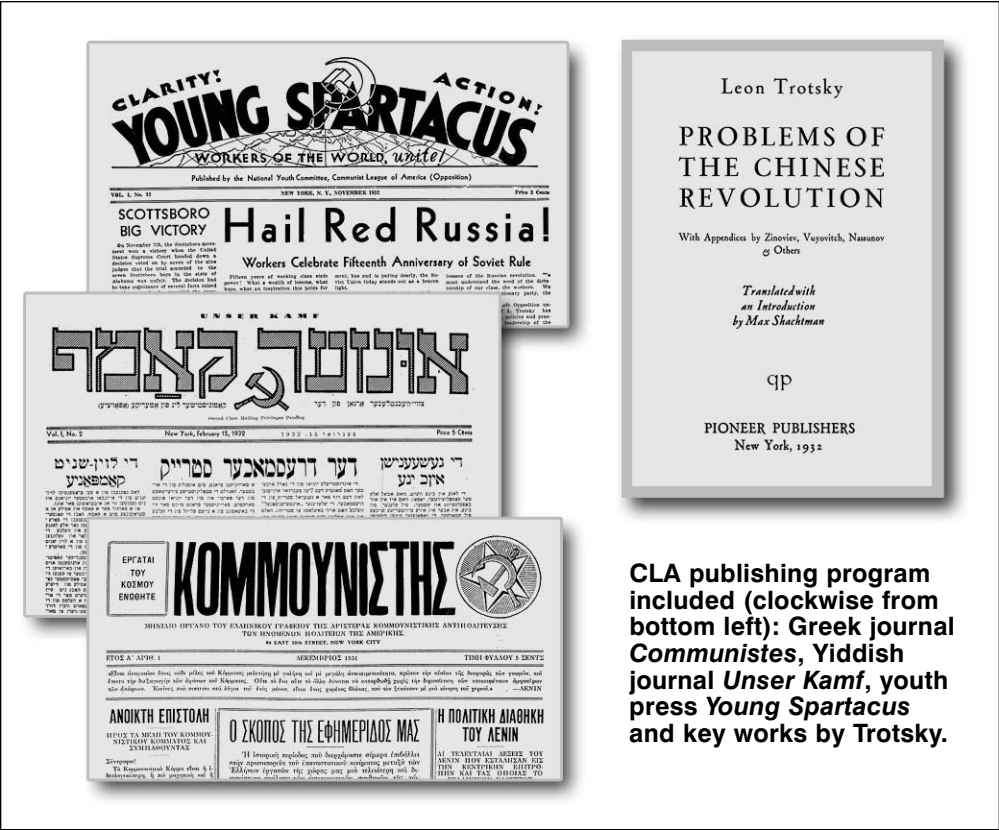
After returning from his second trip to Europe, Shachtman refused to vote for Cannon’s 1931 draft NC statement supporting Trotsky’s positions in Europe. He resigned his post as *Militant* editor and attempted to deflect the discussion from the international questions by making an issue of Swabeck and Cannon’s supposed harshness toward a supercilious and scholastic group of petty-bourgeois youth in the New York local (the “Carter group”). Abern and Glotzer, who claimed to disagree with Shachtman on the debates in Europe, aided and abetted Shachtman in deflecting the discussion, co-signing “Prospect and Retrospect” and submitting it on the eve of the June 1932 NC plenum. The documents reveal that Spector and Glotzer privately prevailed on Shachtman to capitulate on the international question, which he did at the plenum. The two sides also managed to work out a joint motion on the New York local and the “Carter group.” Under pressure from Cannon and his supporters, who promised a reply if “Prospect and Retrospect” remained in the record, Shachtman et al. withdrew their document.

Yet the “unity” thus achieved exploded just a few weeks after the plenum. Over the next year, the two groups fought over a myriad of organizational issues, from the co-optations to the National Committee proposed by Cannon, to Cannon’s proposal to accept only working-class activists for membership in the New York local, to the date for the CLA’s third national conference. Documents from both sides of these disputes are published in the section of the volume titled “The Fight,” as well as representative internal factional correspondence from the Shachtman side. (Cannon’s letters to his supporters were published in the Pathfinder volume of Cannon’s writings from 1932-34.) As the PRL introduction notes, there is a sharp contrast between the correspondence from both sides: “Where Shachtman, Glotzer, and Abern are politically vague and gossipy, Cannon is programmatic and forward-looking. The same contrast can be drawn between Shachtman and Glotzer’s lengthy letters to Trotsky and Swabeck’s terse, informative correspondence.”

Organizational tensions were exacerbated by the League’s utter financial poverty as well as by some non-Leninist organizational practices. When Trotsky received a visa to visit Copenhagen in the fall of 1932, Shachtman and his supporters refused to send Swabeck—who was born and raised in Denmark—to Copenhagen immediately to take part in ILO deliberations. Although he missed the ILO gathering in Copenhagen, Swabeck was able to go to Europe in early 1933 to attend an important ILO meeting. He traveled on to Prinkipo, where his discussions with Trotsky played a great role in resolving the CLA’s polarization. The trip was possible only because funds were raised privately by the Cannon faction.

Cannon rightly saw the root of the problem as the petty-bourgeois basis of the Shachtman faction, concentrated in the New York local. As the *Dog Days*

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CLA publishing program included (clockwise from bottom left): Greek journal *Communistes*, Yiddish journal *Unser Kampf*, youth press *Young Spartacus* and key works by Trotsky.

publishing the ILO discussion bulletin in English. Thus the North American membership was able to follow the disputes in the international movement.

The Trotsky-Shachtman correspondence illustrates Trotsky’s growing impatience with Shachtman’s refusal to make programmatic considerations primary, starting with Shachtman’s first foray into Europe in the spring of 1930, when (despite explicit instructions from Trotsky) he failed to ensure that the ILO’s first conference issue a political manifesto. Shachtman attempted to blunt the fight against Landau’s disastrous leadership of the German section, and he encouraged Nin in Spain and Naville in France. After Shachtman made a second trip to Europe in the fall of 1931, Trotsky was so alarmed that he wrote to the CLA National Committee to inquire if Shachtman represented the views of the CLA leadership as a whole. These documents expose Shachtman’s lying assertion, made later in the CLA fight, that he had never had significant differences with Trotsky. They also (in the words of the PRL introduction) “explode the image of Shachtman as Trotsky’s happy international commissar, a myth spread by Shachtman and his supporters in later years and more recently purveyed by Peter Drucker in his biography of Shachtman [*Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist’s Odyssey Through the “American*



*Militant* (10 September 1932) hailed founding of Progressive Miners of America. Left: Gerry Allard, a PMA leader and member of CLA. October 1932: 15,000 Illinois miners rally for PMA union recognition, Springfield.

# PRL Book...

(continued from page 7)

introduction notes, Cannon “was desperate to find an entry point into a mass proletarian movement and thus recruit a way out of the factional impasse caused by the political weight of the League’s literary recruits.” Cannon’s younger supporters like George Clarke and Sam Gordon went out into the field as itinerant party organizers. When Skoglund and Dunne began their work organizing the coal drivers in Minneapolis, Shachtman’s supporter there, Carl Cowl, branded them as “opportunists.”

The cavalier attitude of the Shachtman faction toward the CLA’s fragile roots in the proletariat was amply demonstrated by its periodic obstruction of the CLA’s work in the Southern Illinois breakaway from the United Mine Workers, the Progressive Miners of America (PMA). For most of the period covered by the book, the CLA’s best opportunity to recruit real working-class support appeared to lie with the PMA. A CLA member, Gerry Allard, was the editor of the PMA paper, *Progressive Miner*. The PRL introduction deals in detail with developments in the PMA, providing essential background for the reader. The volume includes a never-before-published letter by Cannon to Trotsky requesting advice on relations with Allard.

Throughout the period of the greatest organizational tensions, however, the two sides remained united on the League’s fundamental political tasks. When Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, the decision to take the *Militant* from weekly to triweekly to champion the expected resistance of the German working class was not controversial. Neither did the two sides fight about the CLA’s work in the unemployed movement.

The polarization began to take on an embryonic political character only in early 1933, when Shachtman and Abern objected strenuously to Cannon’s raising the possibility of a role for the Soviet Red Army in a proletarian offensive to beat back Hitler’s rise to power. Shachtman and Abern were at the time capitulating to the prevailing “socialism in one country” opinion in the CP milieus to which the CLA oriented. The Shachtman faction’s opposition to posing the use of the Red Army outside the borders of the USSR presaged their 1939 abandonment of the defense of the USSR when the Red Army entered Finland and Poland. But in 1933 they dropped their objections after Trotsky intervened to support the thrust of Cannon’s position. Trotsky’s statement on this dispute, “Germany and the USSR,” has long been available as part of Pathfinder’s Trotsky collection, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*. But its import is much clearer when it is read along with the documents from the CLA fight.

At the time of the Red Army dispute, Shachtman and Abern labeled Cannon an opportunist because he delivered a speech to a trade-union conference in Southern Illinois—in which the PMA was heavily involved—as a representative of a group of left-wing workers in New York instead of as a member of the CLA. But political groups had been banned from speaking at the conference, and the alternative would have been to cede the field to reformist and anti-Communist PMA leaders. Trotsky’s comments on the CLA’s work in the PMA—centrally “Trade-Union Problems in America” (previously published in *Writings of Leon Trotsky Supplement 1929-33*)—have a much bigger impact when read in the context of documents from both sides of the CLA divide. “Trade-Union Problems in America” is published in the new volume’s final section, “The International Intervenes.”

## Trotsky’s Role

In many ways, “The International Intervenes” is the most powerful section of the book. Trotsky’s experience in internal party struggle was brought to bear, first in discussions with Swabeck in Prinkipo and later in his letters to CLA leaders on both sides of the factional divide. In addition to Trotsky’s correspondence, the section includes letters written by Swabeck to Cannon reporting on further discussions in Prinkipo. Criticizing both factions for drawing harsh organizational lines in the absence of programmatic differences, Trotsky pointed out that the Cannon group, as the majority of the NC, bore central responsibility for the tenor of internal discussion. As the documents reveal, Cannon immediately took Trotsky’s criticisms to heart, making substantive organizational concessions to the minority.

Under pressure from Trotsky to intervene sharply and prevent a split, the International Secretariat (I.S.) scheduled a plenum in May 1933 where the situation in the



**Shachtman and Cannon during 1934 Teamsters strike in Minneapolis, where both were arrested. Pickets confront scabberding deputy in key strike battle.**



Minnesota Historical Society photos

CLA would be thoroughly discussed. Swabeck was scheduled to attend on his way home from Prinkipo, and the I.S. requested that a minority representative also attend. Drawing on funds lent by Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, then a Trotskyist sympathizer, Shachtman once again went to Europe. On the boat to Europe, Shachtman wrote to Glotzer, insisting that he would not dissolve their faction. However, he quickly changed his tune. In Paris he cosigned a resolution with Swabeck calling for dissolution of the factions and he traveled on to Prinkipo for discussions with Trotsky. His letters home to Abern and Glotzer—mimeographed for distribution to his faction in the League—are included in the book. They amplify and elaborate on Trotsky’s thinking about the situation in the CLA.

The CLA National Committee adopted a resolution in June calling for the cessation of the internal struggle and for turning the League outward to take advantage of new opportunities opening up before it. The campaign for a united-front working-class offensive against Hitler in Germany had a strong impact on the CP cadre and the CLA was again recruiting from the party. It was able to intervene to great effect in conferences called by the CP of the unemployed movement and legal defense organizations.

Yet the documents reveal that tensions continued to run high over Cannon’s proposal to move the CLA headquarters to Chicago. Aiming to take advantage of the proletarian nature of the city (as compared to New York) and the greater openness of CP milieus in Chicago, Cannon’s proposal was eventually supported by Trotsky, who saw it as part of turning the CLA outward toward the working class. While not campaigning against the move, Shachtman and Abern quietly planned to remain in New York and produce a theoretical journal. This was a recipe for a “cold split” in the CLA, and in late 1933 Cannon wisely shelved the idea of moving the organization’s center. This aspect of the fight has never before been dealt with in print.

Hard on the heels of the international attempts to mitigate the CLA struggle came Trotsky’s initiative for a bold political turn for the ILO as a whole. Already in May 1933 Trotsky had noted that the German Communist Party’s failure to organize any opposition to Hitler’s consolidation of power meant that it was dead as a revolutionary force. He called for a new party in Germany and in July 1933, after it was clear that no organized opposition had emerged within the Communist International as a whole, he proposed that the ILO reorient itself away from acting as a faction of the CI. Trotsky advocated the call for a new, Fourth International and suggested that the Opposition attempt to regroup with subjectively revolutionary elements who were now organizing outside the CI. The new orientation was endorsed by an I.S. plenum in August 1933 and enthusiastically embraced by the entire CLA National Committee.

The turn toward functioning as the embryo of a new party formation came just as the class struggle began to heat up in the United States. In January 1934, the CLA addressed an open letter suggesting discussions with

the leftward-moving centrists of A.J. Muste’s American Workers Party, who advocated the formation of a new workers party in the U.S. Fusion between the CLA and the Musteites took place in December 1934 and was greatly facilitated by the CLA’s leadership of three strikes in the spring and summer which won union recognition for the Minneapolis Teamsters, and by the Muste organization’s leadership in a major class battle at Toledo Auto-Lite in the spring.

It was the new opportunities opening up before the American Trotskyists that laid the basis for the resolution of the CLA’s internal polarization. Shachtman and Morris Lewit went on to collaborate with Cannon in turning the League toward the class struggle, while the majority of the old Shachtman faction, now organized as the Abern-Weber clique, obstructed the work. That story is told in *Prometheus Research Series* No. 5, which reprints Shachtman’s 1936 document “Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?”, a devastating indictment of the unprincipled, personalist methods of Shachtman’s former supporters. In this document Shachtman reveals that—despite the May 1933 agreement to dissolve the factions—the Shachtman/Abern/Glotzer faction in New York went on meeting through January 1934. The Abern clique remained as a fault line in the American Trotskyist movement throughout the 1930s, one that ruptured again in the 1939-40 struggle, when Shachtman rejoined it.

## Prescient and Equivocal

Ruminating on the problems of party leadership as he was about to be sent to prison along with 17 other SWP and Minneapolis Teamsters leaders in 1943, Cannon drew a balance sheet of the CLA experience:

“At one time in the early days, the so-called Cannon-Shachtman fight, which was conducted with all the intensity of the final struggle with the petty-bourgeois opposition and even with more acrimony—in that struggle Comrade Trotsky made the comment that the two factions each anticipated too much. They fought each other not on the ground of the political merits and qualities which were fully demonstrated as of that day, but from a point of view of a generalization as to what the ultimate development of the political tendencies on each side would come to.... In such a situation, Comrade Trotsky said, the most progressive tendency is the conciliatory tendency—those who propose to make peace and test out in further common action what is the basis and merit of the accusations on each side. That advice of Comrade Trotsky was accepted in the old fight. Some people accepted it diplomatically and some honestly, but, in general, the prescription was to plunge the party into mass work, stop the faction struggle, disband the faction organizations, and test out in political action what were the tendencies of the two groups.

“And eventually we came to a solution of it in the year 1940—but the fight had begun ten years before, and if we had tried to solve it in 1933 by means of a split—which is the only way you can solve irreconcilable faction fights—there is no way the movement might have profited by it, because we would have had to explain to the workers outside the movement what the fight was about. And if we couldn’t make this clear to comrades inside the party how could we make it clear to the nonparty people we wanted to join? The result would have been the stagnation of the movement as was the case in England.”

—Cannon, “The Situation in the New York Local,” 23 December 1942, printed in *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II: Writings and Speeches 1940-43*

On questions of party organization and attitude toward workers struggle, the 1931-33 Shachtman faction embodied the same petty-bourgeois approach that Cannon exposed so eloquently in 1939-40 in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*. But the decisive question for a Leninist is **political program**. The petty-bourgeois orientation of Shachtman, Abern and Glotzer took on decisive programmatic coloration in 1939-40, and it was only at that point that factional struggle was mandated. Cannon learned from Trotsky’s intervention into the early struggle, and he went on to prove himself a superb Leninist leader in the 1939-40 fight and beyond. He won the majority in 1940 because the American Trotskyists, having turned outward, had recruited a layer of serious, proletarian revolutionaries. The PRL introduction ends by drawing the central lesson of this experience:

“While the revolutionary character of a proletarian organization is defined by its program, which represents nothing other than the historic interests of the international working class, there is an interplay between a party’s program and its social composition. Marx insisted that ‘being determines consciousness,’ and this applies as much to aspiring revolutionaries as to other sectors of society. A Marxist vanguard without deep roots in the working class not only lacks the means to implement its program, but is necessarily more susceptible to the social pressures of alien classes.”

*Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933* is an essential reference book for any communist. ■



# Mass Protests...

(continued from page 1)

and marched and chanted, putting forward our revolutionary opposition to this imperialist war. We look to the working class as the only force in society that has the ability and interest to stop imperialist war. As a part of our defense of workers and the oppressed internationally against the imperialist order, we take a side in a war between the U.S. and Iraq. We call upon working people to mobilize in class struggle to defend Iraq, without granting the Saddam Hussein regime any political support whatsoever. Ultimately, there is no way to stop imperialist war and capitalist exploitation short of working-class socialist revolution.

It is this understanding that the reformists try to obscure. To quote our contingent call:

“It is futile to oppose war against Iraq but not oppose the economic system which generates war and the ideology that legitimizes it. Moreover, pushing illusions in the reformability of the bloody American imperialist state can only result in the *demobilization* of the only force in capitalist society that can challenge the rule of the capitalist class: the working class.”

Every time some big-name politician, like a Kennedy or a Gore, speaks up, you can feel the hearts of the liberals surge. They think, “Maybe now the Democrats will turn the tide?” In hopes of building the “broadest possible antiwar movement,” the reformists hold a hand out to the liberals in and around the Democratic

former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, founder of WWP’s International Action Center. In his advocacy of change through the ballot box, Jackson chanted: “Come alive on November 5!” Not surprisingly, the general tenor of the demos was one of “reclaiming our democracy” from the Bush gang, captured in the many “peace is patriotic” signs and buttons and calls for “regime change at home.”

## Imperialism and War

As Marxist revolutionaries, we stand in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, co-leaders of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, the only successful workers revolution to date. As Trotsky wrote of Lenin’s understanding of imperialist war:

“It is impossible to fight against imperialist war by sighing for peace after the fashion of the pacifists. ‘One of the ways of fooling the working class is pacifism and the abstract propaganda of peace. Under capitalism, especially in its imperialist stage, wars are inevitable.’ A peace concluded by imperialists would only be a breathing spell before a new war. Only a revolutionary mass struggle against war and against imperialism which breeds war can secure a real peace. ‘Without a number of revolutions the so-called democratic peace is a middle class utopia’.”

—Trotsky, “Lenin and Imperialist War” (December 1938)

Thus, the choice between revolution and reform is the choice between socialism and the barbarism of war, the product of imperialist competition.

So what is meant by imperialism? A lot of liberals who decry what they might sometimes call the imperialism of the



Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie

**Iraqi women demonstrate in 1998 against United Nations sanctions that have led to deaths of more than one and a half million people.**

Party. While a member of a reformist outfit such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Workers World Party (WWP) or the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) invariably could point to some sentence in their newspapers denouncing the actions of the Democrats, it is what the reformists are *doing* that matters. And what they are doing is building antiwar coalitions that welcome “progressive” imperialists. The result is to continue the cycle of chaining the oppressed to their own oppressors, maintaining the capitalist system of war and racism.

At this early stage in the struggle against war in Iraq, the prevalent political consciousness is an undifferentiated “War is bad, peace is good.” For WWP’s ANSWER coalition, the October 26 protest organizers, and the other reformists, the amorphous liberal demos represented an opportunity to harness this broad moral indignation at a war of naked imperialist aggression in order to pressure Democratic Party politicians into standing up for a more “humane” U.S. capitalism. The ANSWER protest call boasted that the demos “come just one week before midterm Congressional elections,” raising the prospect that “anti-war forces” could “become a major factor” in debates “within the political establishment.”

Among other liberal fixtures, the featured speakers in D.C. included Democratic Party politicians Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and Cynthia McKinney and

U.S. view it basically as a matter of the U.S. suppressing undeveloped countries in Latin America, Asia, the Near East and Africa. There is without question a long list of bloody U.S. interventions in those regions of the world. At the turn of the last century, the U.S. staked its place at the table of imperialist powers with the racist ferocity of its savage wars in Cuba and then the Philippines. Under Democratic and Republican administrations, the U.S. ruling class incinerated Japanese civilians in World War II, napalmed and bombed the Vietnamese people, armed and orchestrated death squad terror in Latin America and bombed black people in its own cities. In the recent past, the U.S. has carried out wars in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Iraq and occupied Haiti and Somalia, among others. Left-liberals like Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky are popular for exposing U.S. war crimes and telling the sordid history of the bloodiest ruling class on the planet.

But this understanding of imperialism *doesn’t* actually explain what it is, which makes it impossible to find a way of ending it. Imperialism is the “highest stage of capitalism,” marked by the concentration and domination of finance capital, the pre-eminence of the export of capital and competition among the advanced industrial countries to control markets and spheres of exploitation. Let us consider this definition in more detail. American oil companies such as Exxon today are commonly referred to as multinational



AFP

**Buildings reduced to rubble in 1999 U.S. bombing of Iraq under Democratic president Clinton.**

corporations. These corporations are multinational in the sense that they have capital invested in multiple countries, including the Persian Gulf region in the case of Exxon. But the corporations remain nationally based—it is ultimately the U.S. military and none other that enforces the property rights of Exxon in the Gulf. The imperialist bourgeoisie, in pursuit of profits and spheres of economic influence, exploits the world’s backward countries for raw resources, cheap labor and new markets. Thus, the enormous growth of militarism is essential to capitalist development.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, this exploitation was accomplished by direct colonial occupation and territorial annexation. Today, most of these countries have won nominal independence. But economic independence has not accompanied such independence, in a way making the exploitation of the so-called Third World countries by foreign imperialist powers even more insidious today. Competition is an essential part of the capitalist economic system, so it is only natural that capitalists from rival powers would begin to square off in the scramble for profits, triggering trade wars. The strains of competition invariably lead to interimperialist shooting wars as the industrial countries fight among themselves to divide and redive markets, as was demonstrated in two bloody world wars. In other words, imperialism breeds war.

Imperialism is not simply a set of mean-spirited policies open to change given enough pressure or the election of nicer politicians. But in fact, that is exactly what Zinn, Chomsky and other left-liberals believe. They don’t actually oppose imperialism; that would mean opposing capitalism. Their beef is with what they see as especially bad, bloody policies undertaken because the wrong people get elected by the American people, who—presumably under the control of the all-powerful American media—don’t know better than to elect them. They want the U.S. to use its pre-eminent position in the world to play a “humanitarian” role.

Ultimately, requests for a kinder, gen-

tlar imperialism are an invitation to and cover for imperialist slaughter. Witness the UN-sponsored embargo of Iraq. Today, after well over a million Iraqi men, women and children have succumbed to the UN starvation blockade, Chomsky and other liberals deplore the impact of sanctions. But at the time of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Chomsky called on Washington to implement “sanctions” as a “peaceful means prescribed by international law” in order “to secure Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait, settle regional issues, and move towards a more decent world” (*Z Magazine*, February 1991).

The near-daily bombings and 12 years of sanctions—mostly carried out under the Democratic Clinton/Gore administration—have devastated Iraq, which was once one of the most cosmopolitan, prosperous countries in the Near East. Statistics hardly begin to capture the reality. Infant mortality rates in Iraq today are among the highest in the world. The death rate among the general population is three times what it was 12 years ago; for children under five it’s five times the previous rate. One reason for this is that the imperialists deliberately targeted the water supply and sewage systems. The “Oil for Food” program initiated by the UN five years ago was hailed for charitably averting an outright famine in Iraq. Thanks to this “humanitarianism,” the Iraqi population is starving more slowly. But in recent months the U.S. Navy and its Australian junior partners have tightened the noose of the blockade, all but shutting off the excess flow of Iraqi oil through the systematic boarding of every Iraqi vessel in the Persian Gulf. Which just goes to prove what we said from the outset—sanctions themselves are an act of war.

## Defend Iraq Against Imperialist Attack!

Most of the youth with whom we talked at the October 26 protests could not distinguish between the ubiquitous reformist slogan “No to Bush’s war in Iraq!” and our call to “Defend Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack!” Far from the pacifism of the “No to war” slogan, our demand is aimed at mobilizing

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# Mass Protests...

(continued from page 9)

the working class, both in the U.S. and abroad. The starting point for revolutionary opposition to U.S. attack is that the workers of the world take a side in this conflict—with *Iraq against U.S. imperialism*. A war between the U.S. and Iraq would be reactionary and predatory on the part of the U.S., but just and defensive on the part of Iraq. On one side of this terribly unequal contest is the U.S. military behemoth; on the other is the semicolonial Iraq, a dependent country. There is a *qualitative difference* between bloody U.S. imperialism, the greatest enemy of the oppressed in the world, responsible for the massacres of millions upon millions of people, and a tinpot dictatorship like Hussein's Iraq. Imagine Iraq trying to send an armada of ships to bombard the East Coast of the U.S. In fact, it is because Iraq is so weak at the moment that the U.S. is so bold about attacking it.

Easy wins, such as that in Afghanistan, embolden the imperialists to run roughshod over other peoples. In turn, any setback or defeat of the U.S. imperialists is a victory for working people across the world. The humiliating military defeat of U.S. imperialism by the heroic workers and peasants of Vietnam, who were fighting for a social revolution against capitalist exploitation and imperialist depredation, produced what is known as the "Vietnam syndrome"—the fact that the American public will not countenance American troops dying in foreign lands. The victory of the Vietnamese Revolution served to stay the hand of bloodsoaked American imperialism around the globe. We say: two, three, many more defeats for U.S. imperialism!

Military defense of Iraq does *not* imply the slightest political support to the regime of Saddam Hussein, who has carried out terrible slaughters of Kurds and other ethnic minorities, Communists and labor leaders, any who might challenge his rule. But in this Hussein is no different from any of the other emirs, colonels and sheiks of the region, not to mention the Zionists with their huge nuclear arsenal who are fully capable of expelling or massacring Palestinians on a truly genocidal scale under cloak of a U.S. attack on Iraq. In the struggle between a dependent, barbaric dictatorship and an imperialist "democratic" republic, socialists would side with the dependent country notwithstanding its dictatorship and against the imperialist country notwithstanding its "democracy." Trotsky addressed this question in the 1930s posing a hypothetical case of Brazil, then under a semi-fascist regime, going to war with "democratic" England:

"In the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will

put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat."

—Trotsky, "Anti-Imperialist Struggle Is Key to Liberation" (September 1938)

The one-sided slaughter carried out by the U.S.-led coalition in 1991 and the impact of sanctions have left the Iraqi military one-third its former size. As a result, the chief defense of Iraq lies in class struggle against the imperialist rulers, above all in the U.S. but also in the other imperialist strongholds. A historical example: In the 1950s, with Algeria

locked out by the bosses, who want to break the union, rather than having gone out on strike, even the screaming headlines of the bourgeois media confirmed that these workers are critical to the functioning of American capitalism. Clearly, the proletariat can bring the economy of the "world's only superpower" to a halt. When 100,000 antiwar protesters marched around the White House, Bush at most probably yawned. But when 10,000 longshoremen shut down the West Coast ports, he quickly moved to invoke the anti-labor 1947 Taft-Hartley law to reopen the ports.

The defense of Iraq against imperialist attack is in the interests of working people the world over, not least in the U.S. War demands civil peace. A decade of imperialist attacks against defenseless peoples abroad has been accompanied by



Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent at October 26 San Francisco antiwar demonstration.

fighting for its national independence from France, there were instances in which French dock workers aided the Algerian cause by refusing to handle French military goods headed for Algeria. More recently, Japanese dock workers in Sasebo refused to load armaments and military supplies onto Japanese navy ships headed to assist the U.S.-led war of terror on Afghanistan last year.

## Centrality of the Working Class

Why is the working class the key social force? Precisely because of its role in production, which bestows upon it alone the ability to shut down the ports, the mines and the factories. Workers create the wealth of this society with their labor and can bring the capitalists to their knees by withholding that labor power. One example of the tremendous social power wielded by the working class is given by the recent West Coast port shutdown. Though the ILWU longshoremen were

vicious union-busting, the loss of millions of jobs and the shredding of the social safety net. The "war on terror" means anti-immigrant witchhunts, racist assaults and the shredding of civil rights, with organized labor the ultimate target. Ominously, there are plans to call up large numbers of the National Guard and Reserves at the outset of an attack on Iraq to patrol what we are told are potential terrorist targets: power plants, transportation hubs, medical centers and factories, i.e., the strategic industrial centers.

The main obstacle to independent working-class action is the leadership of the trade unions, the labor bureaucracy which ties the workers to the class enemy, most often through support to the Democratic Party. ILWU bureaucrats spoke at the October 26 demos on both coasts. A union leader in San Francisco spoke bitterly of all the work the ILWU did to get Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein elected, only to have her "betray" the union by calling for Taft-Hartley during the longshore lockout. Labor must break with the Democrats and Republicans, which will require a political fight within the trade unions against their pro-capitalist misleadership. We fight for a class-struggle leadership in the trade unions. This is part of our fight to build a revolutionary workers party that mobilizes the working class and all the oppressed in the fight against imperialist rule.

## Reformists and the Democratic Party

Half the Democrats voted in favor of the Congressional war resolution. The other half fear a war could throw the Near East into turmoil or spark social struggle at home. These dissenting voices would prefer that the U.S. dress up its naked imperialist aggression by first acquiring the backing of its UN allies and allowing the UN weapons inspectors (in reality spies) to enter Iraq to manufacture a pretext for war. All the better to build broader support *for* this imperialist war through the fig leaf of the UN.

The UN is the same imperialist den of thieves and their victims that partitioned Palestine in 1947, that gave cover to the

U.S.-led killing of three million Koreans in 1950-53, and that continues to starve Iraqis to this day. On the issue of UN weapons inspections, if you read any of the publications of the reformist "socialists" in this country, they whine about how it is not true that Iraq is developing "weapons of mass destruction." Correct enough, but even if Iraq were not so disarmed and weakened by imperialism, the spying inspectors, these agents of war, should have no right to be there!

In every war, there are always some of these "progressive" imperialists on hand, who break with the Democratic Party consensus the better to perpetuate the illusion that the Democrats represent the interests of working people and the oppressed. All these politicians want to do is to get ahead of, and contain, antiwar sentiment. They believe they have a better way for imperialism to go about its daily business of exploiting workers and impoverishing and terrorizing the peoples of the world. Congresswoman Barbara Lee in the Bay Area is one such politician; she is the darling of the reformist left despite the fact that her qualified antiwar votes against Afghanistan and now Iraq have alternated with backing the USA-Patriot Act, an expression of the "war on terror" at home. Lee, who was greeted with near-religious ecstasy at the San Francisco demo a week ago, is joined in this role by Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.

The reformists, despite the occasional speechifying about socialism, do not think workers revolution is possible. That leaves them with few options but to appeal to the Democrats. Consider WWP and its ANSWER coalition. Of course, they *claim* to oppose the Democrats; an article in *Workers World* (31 October) distributed at the October 26 demonstrations about the Bolsheviks in World War I even argued against "trying to win over liberal politicians and capitalists who are beholden to the interests of Big Oil, Wall Street and the military contractors." An earlier article, "War and the Class Struggle" (*Workers World*, 26 September), has some fine language about how the working class has the potential strength to intervene and change history because of its strategic role in production. We are told that the "vaunted technology [of the ruling class] is just a pile of junk once the fury of the masses is unleashed." It does sound exciting—but how is the fury of the masses to be unleashed? Through the October 26 demos?

ANSWER's call for this "furious" demonstration talks about the "Bush administration's" war and "another war for Big Oil." The leaflet doesn't see fit to mention their alleged opposition to the Democrats, or to even mention the Democrats; nor does it take up the strategic role of the working class. But it does slip in that point that the demos come "just one week before midterm Congressional elections." But of course, *Workers World* claims to "oppose" pressuring the Democrats! That is why the mass-produced placard for the rally signed by ANSWER had no political content at all, just a tug-at-your-heartstrings photo of an Iraqi child and the slogan "Stop the War Against Iraq." That is why they dared not utter a "furious" word from the platform in D.C. That is why its major initiative coming off the demos is the People's Anti-War Referendum, a petition drive collecting the signatures of those who feel "Congress did not represent me" in its war vote, to be brought to D.C. at the time of planned January demonstrations.

Another group working to build "the broadest possible antiwar movement" is the Revolutionary Communist Party. They are behind the "Not In Our Name" coalition, which organized nationwide demonstrations on October 6. No less than ANSWER, the Not In Our Name coalition seeks to channel disgust with imperialist war into the illusion that mass protest by itself can stay the hand of the imperialists. Its "Pledge of Resistance," distributed widely at the antiwar demonstrations, speaks of the "injustices" of

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

Web site: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org) • E-mail address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto: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  
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### Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.  
222 S. Morgan  
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### 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

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

### Oakland

Box 29497  
Oakland, CA 94604  
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Public Office:  
Sat. 1-5 p.m.  
1634 Telegraph  
3rd Floor

### San Francisco

Box 77494  
San Francisco  
CA 94107

## 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



“our government.” Such moral entreaties and talk of “our” government perpetuate the myth that American capitalist rule can be pressured to act on behalf of those whom capitalism exploits and oppresses.

Then there is the ISO, which is very active in building antiwar coalitions on the campuses. On occasion, the ISO claims the heritage of Lenin and Trotsky and purports to build a “socialist alternative,” but in reality it has nothing to do with the revolutionary program of the Bolsheviks. When the ISO speaks of unity in the antiwar movement, it is not referring to the unity of the working class and its allies internationally on the basis of class struggle, but class-collaborationist unity based on the politics of the lowest common denominator. What this unity results in was shown in 1991 when the ISO tore up its paper opposition to sanctions in order to endorse a “Campaign for Peace” coalition march which called for UN sanctions as an “alternative” to war. Some “socialist alternative.”

In its 1 November issue, the last issue before the elections, the ISO’s *Socialist Worker* ran an article headlined “Democrats Sweating over Outcome of Midterm Elections—Why Won’t They Stand Up to Bush?” Included in the article are perfunctory statements about how “we need to build a socialist alternative,” but the core of the article is an advice column to the Democratic Party:

“How can the Republicans be hoping to win in spite of all the factors working against them?...

“The more important reason for the Republicans’ prospects is the spinelessness of Democrats. The recent ‘debate’ in Congress over Bush’s war drive against Iraq is a good example....

“The Democrats—as they have so many times in the past two years—rolled over when Bush demanded a congressional resolution authorizing a war. The Democrats’ conventional wisdom was that they should vote for the resolution so they could ‘get back to’ talking about the economy. But this cynical calculation—made at the cost of thousands of Iraqi lives—ignored two factors.

“First, it ignored the real possibility that challenging Bush on the war would win more support than it would lose....

“Second, avoiding a debate about Iraq assumed that the Democrats have something to say about other issues. But the Democrats haven’t even offered an alternative.”

The operational conclusion: Let’s protest in large numbers to give the Democrats some spine so that they might offer an alternative next time. In the same article, the ISO states its support for Stanley Aronowitz, Green Party candidate for New York governor. In the 2000 presidential elections, the ISO hustled the vote for Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, a *capitalist* politician whose stated purpose in running was to pull the Democrats “in the right direction.”

### Green Party, Shill for the Democrats

The Green Party had a large presence at the October 26 demos, and many left-leaning youth view it as an alternative to the Democrats. But the role of capitalist third parties like the Greens in the U.S. is to divert anger among the masses away from social protest and back into bourgeois electoral politics. Plain and simple, the Greens are shills for the Democrats.

On October 26, the Greens passed out a handbill declaring, “Green Party opposes war in campaigns nationwide.” Of what does this opposition consist? That the U.S. “act in concert with the United Nations to address any potential security risks posed by Saddam Hussein.” That such opposition is none at all is amply shown in the case of Germany, where the Green Party, in a governing coalition with the Social Democrats, has already helped lead German imperialism into war twice, in the Balkans and then in Afghanistan. In an “Open Letter to the Democratic Party” (31 October) last Thursday, Ralph Nader points to not wanting the U.S. to go to war “when rigorous UN inspectors can go to Iraq first.” Although Aronowitz recommends “the immediate elimination, for humanitarian reasons, of all economic sanctions,” he supports continuing what



Below: International Socialist Organization promotes liberal pacifism, refusing to call for defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialism.



he terms “military” sanctions against Iraq so as to keep the Iraqi military weak and therefore leave the country in continued servitude to the imperialist powers.

The other half of the Greens’ alleged opposition to war is a demand to “shift investment from military spending to address the basic needs of humanity.” Such “butter not guns” talk was peddled by the reformists as well, and its variations appeared on innumerable signs on October 26. This poses the question as if the capitalists just need a change of priorities. The call to end war and allocate money for social programs and other good things begs the question of how all this will be accomplished. Exploitation, unemployment, racial oppression and imperialist war are endemic to the capitalist profit system. This blood-drenched and war-driven system must be destroyed through the revolutionary struggle of the American working class.

### For New October Revolutions!

The greatest defeat yet to world imperialism was the 1917 Russian Revolution, which ripped one-sixth of the globe from the clutches of the capitalists amid the carnage of the first interimperialist world war. The October Revolution demonstrated in practice that the proletariat in power was the sole force for human progress on the planet. It succeeded because the working class of Russia was led by a party, the Bolsheviks, which opposed its “own” Russian imperialist rulers despite the patriotic fury of World War I.

In turn, the destruction of the Soviet Union through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92 was a historic defeat for working people all over the world, not least for working people in Russia and the former Soviet republics. Despite the degeneration of the Soviet workers state under Stalinist misrule, it was a measure of the power of the planned, collectivized economy that for the most part all had jobs, housing, education and health care. Today, however, Russian life in all aspects is in drastic decline; unemployment and lack of health care is rampant, infant mortality is up and life expectancy is in decline.

The collapse of the Soviet Union also decisively altered the international political landscape. No longer challenged by Soviet military might, the U.S. imperialists have grown intoxicated with their easy success in running roughshod over semicolonial peoples from the Persian Gulf to Haiti, making the world a far more dangerous place. The unbridled

Bush administration now has arrogated to itself the right to go after anybody at any time, even threatening a nuclear first strike. Opposition to imperialism requires defense of those gains the international working class has already won. Trotskyists fought tooth and nail against capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. For their part, the ISO and other reformists cheered the collapse of the Soviet Union, backing every imperialist-sponsored counterrevolutionary cause in the process.

It is as part of our struggle against imperialist capitalism that we stand for the unconditional military defense of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—the remaining deformed workers states—against imperialism and capitalist restoration, including defending the right of North Korea and the others to possess nuclear weapons to defend themselves against the war-crazed imperialist madmen. Simultaneously, we call for workers political revolution to oust the sellout Sta-

linist bureaucrats and fight to extend proletarian rule to the advanced capitalist countries.

The same American ruling class that used COINTELPRO in the 1960s to round up the perceived “enemy within” in the person of black militants, particularly those around the Black Panther Party, is now rounding up immigrants, expanding domestic spying programs and shredding constitutional rights in its “war on terror.” Reformists portray the capitalist state as a neutral body which can be pressured to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed. But in reality, the capitalist state is the instrument for organized violence to ensure the rule of the bosses.

We put our Marxist principles to work in our own mobilization in Oakland, California last February 9 against the “war on terror.” In contrast to the fake socialists who betray their ostensible program to get the “biggest possible turnout,” we drew a *class* line. The call for the protest declared: “What America’s racist rulers can get away with will be determined by class struggle.... A united demonstration of the power of our class, together with youth, black and immigrant organizations, can spike the bosses’ racist ‘national unity’ campaign.” And we had a very successful united-front mobilization, the first protest in the country against the “national unity” campaign that was centered on the power of labor. It brought out immigrant, black and white workers alongside radical-minded youth in action against the bloodthirsty U.S. imperialists.

There is ample reason for people all over the world, including within this country, to fear the U.S. capitalist class and its state. But the commonly held belief that U.S. imperialism is omnipotent and eternal not only serves the interests of the ruling class, but it is *wrong*. The key ingredients already exist to bring down U.S. imperialism. This irrational, bloody capitalist system has bred the seeds of its own destruction, and it can do nothing to change that fact. As mighty American capitalism developed, so did an organized, multiracial working class with the power to bring down the warmongers. Every bloody military adventure the imperialists undertake abroad, every attack on workers, blacks and immigrants here, creates fresh social tinder. The way forward is to build a revolutionary party of the Bolshevik type that can infuse the working class with an understanding of its historic task to overturn the imperialist order and reorganize society on an egalitarian socialist basis. ■

Spartacist  Forum

Down With the UN Starvation Blockade!  
Defend Iraq Against  
U.S. Imperialist Attack!

Saturday, Nov. 16, 5 p.m.  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Circle Center (CCC) Room 613  
750 S. Halsted

For more information: (312) 563-0441  
e-mail: spartacist@iname.com

CHICAGO

Trotskyist League Forums

Thirty Years After the Quebec General Strike:  
For Class Struggle Against Canadian Imperialism!  
Independence for Quebec!

Thursday, Nov. 28, 6:30 p.m.

TORONTO

University of Toronto  
Room 2111 Sidney Smith  
For more information: (416) 593-4138  
e-mail: spartcan@on.aibn.com

Leninist Opposition to Imperialist War  
Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

Saturday, Nov. 23, 3 p.m.  
Britannia Community Centre  
1661 Napier St.  
(just off Commercial Drive)

For more information: (604) 687-0353  
e-mail: tlnt@look.ca

VANCOUVER

15 NOVEMBER 2002

11

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

# Asylum Now for Haitian Refugees!



AP photos

October 29: After cops drag off Haitian refugees, SEIU service employee union militants and others protested outside INS building in Miami.

A rickety wooden boat carrying 232 Haitian refugees and three Dominicans was shipwrecked off affluent Key Biscayne, Florida, on October 29. As television news helicopters circled overhead, refugees plunged into the chest-deep water, passed small children to other refugees and made for the shore with the police and U.S. Coast Guard in hot pursuit. The cops shut down the busy Rickenbacker Causeway, which links Key Biscayne to Miami, as sympathetic drivers passing by picked up people desperately seeking to evade the police.

Cold and hungry, the refugees were quickly rounded up and herded into detention centers, including the infamous Krome Avenue concentration camp in Miami, to be held until the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) deports them. Nineteen of those who made the harrowing journey have already been hauled back to a dock in Port-au-Prince, Haiti by the Coast Guard.

The roundup of the refugees sparked almost immediate protest in Florida. Some 300 demonstrators confronted Governor Jeb Bush on October 30 as he swung through Miami's Liberty City

ghetto. Protesters contrasted the brutal treatment meted out to Haitians seeking asylum—detention, humiliation, deportation—with the way the U.S. welcomes counterrevolutionary *gusanos* (worms) whom they encourage to “flee” from Cuba. A social revolution in Cuba overturned capitalism in what had been an impoverished neocolony, and ever since then the U.S. has been determined to overturn the Cuban Revolution and re-establish capitalist exploitation in that country.

For America's racist rulers, Haitians represent not only a significant flow of immigration into the United States, but a flow of *black* immigration in particular. Last December, the Bush administration instituted a policy of automatically jailing Haitian asylum-seekers in detention centers—a practice not applied to refugees from any other country. The treatment of these most recent refugees has been so vicious that even two right-wing Cuban American Republicans in the Florida state legislature have demanded that the Haitians “be afforded all procedural rights, in order to ensure that they are not summarily deported.”

The unimaginable hell in which most Haitians live drives thousands to flee their homes and brave the treacherous waters of the Windward Passage. Most of the population ekes out a miserable existence on small parcels of depleted soil in the mountainous country. The poverty rate stands at 80 percent and more than two-thirds of the population is unemployed. Now the U.S. imperialists have withheld \$500 million in international loans and grants, threatening to plunge Haiti into even deeper destitution.

Haiti was born of a great slave rebellion that extended from 1791 to 1804, out of which emerged the first independent black republic in the Caribbean. The Haitian Revolution was an example and inspiration for all major slave revolts in the American South that followed. And for the Southern slavocracy, which dominated pre-Civil War U.S. governments, Haiti was a frightening spectre to be isolated and suppressed (see “The Haitian Revolution and the American Slavocracy,” WV No. 764, 14 September 2001).

Throughout the 20th century, one dictator after another was propped up by the U.S. imperialists, who twice occupied the country, first under Democratic president Woodrow Wilson beginning in 1915 and again under Bill Clinton. The 1994 occupation came after mass demonstrations in Haiti demanding the return of populist president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had been deposed three years earlier by a military coup. This was a classic example of the U.S. bourgeoisie using the pretext of “human rights” to justify an imperialist invasion, grotesquely dubbing it “Operation Uphold Democracy.” As we warned at the time: “‘Restoring democracy’ was just a fig leaf for racist U.S. imperialism's real agenda, which is to restore *order*, and clamp down on Haitian emigration to the U.S.” (“U.S. Out of Haiti!” WV No. 607, 30 September 1994).

Today, Aristide has unleashed state repression against the populist Lavalas movement on whose back he came to

power. His government is widely believed to have been involved in the kidnapping and possible slaying of three pro-Lavalas activists, Félix “Féfé” Bien Aimé, Gérard Normil and Paul Musac Jean. These disappearances, as well as other acts of repression, have led to demonstrations throughout Haiti. “Every time you demonstrate, they want to kill you,” one of the refugees said. “They beat me. It's not easy to return to Haiti because I can die” (*Washington Post*, 7 November).

In the early 1990s, high rates of HIV/AIDS in Haiti were used as a pretext to detain Haitian refugees in the U.S. When the government banned Haitians from donating blood, it touched off huge protests on the East Coast, including a march of 70,000 in New York City in April 1990. Today, it is the “war on terror” that is used to go after Haitians and other immigrants. A recent statement by the Coast Guard justified increased patrols in the Caribbean, declaring Haitian and other “illegal migration” to be “a matter of national security.” The border with Mexico, already militarized by the Clinton administration, has been sealed tighter since 9/11. In the past year alone, hundreds have died as undocumented immigrants are forced to make their way through deserts and mountains. The bodies of eleven Mexican migrants were discovered in a grain car in Iowa on October 14; it was estimated that their bodies had been there for at least four months.

The hundreds of thousands of Haitians who labor in America's garment sweatshops, restaurants, hospitals and other service industries provide a vital link between the impoverished masses of Haiti and the multiracial working class in the U.S. It is particularly as part of the American proletariat fighting for a socialist revolution in the U.S. that these workers will play a critical role in the struggle for the emancipation of the long-suffering Haitian masses from the depredations and exploitation of U.S. imperialism. *Asylum now for Haitian refugees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!* ■



U.S. military policeman brutalizing man during 1994 occupation of Haiti ordered by Clinton White House in name of “restoring democracy.”