

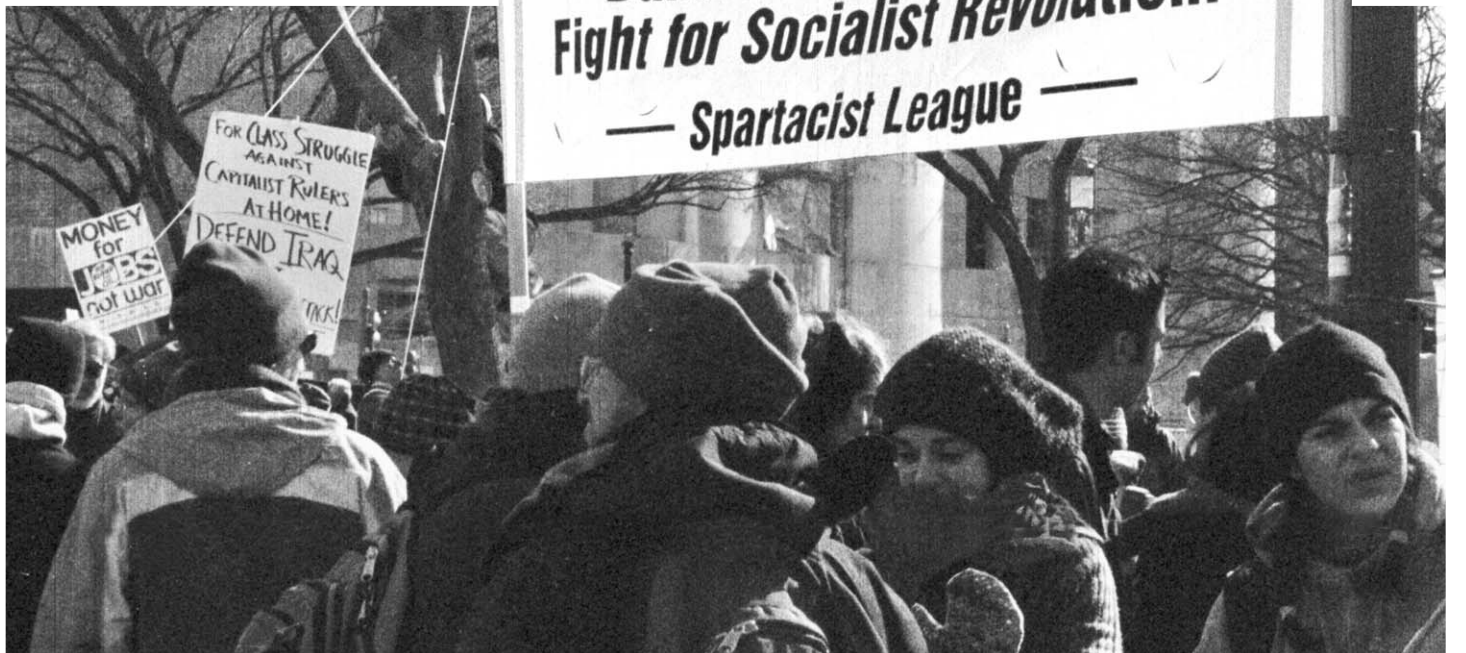
## Fight U.S. Imperialism Through Class Struggle at Home!

### Defend Iraq!

JANUARY 28—The January 18 protests in Washington, San Francisco and other U.S. cities were the largest antiwar demonstrations in this country since the Vietnam War. Within the population at large, support for an invasion of Iraq is at best lukewarm, and polls indicate a growing majority oppose a unilateral U.S. attack. In Europe, hundreds of thousands have marched in protest against the evident intent of U.S. imperialism and its British auxiliaries to launch an all-out attack on Iraq, a country which has had its social fabric and never-considerable military strength eviscerated by more than a decade of United Nations sanctions.

Even as chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix claims that “Iraq appears not to have come to genuine acceptance...of the disarmament which was demanded of it,” he concedes that his team of imperialist spies has found no evidence of “weapons of mass destruction.” Meanwhile, in Washington the drums of war are beating ever louder. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell intoned that the “burden is upon Iraq” to prove that it has no weapons. “The onus is on us to prove we don’t have any,” replied an Iraqi official. “How can you prove a negative?”

Bush’s recent promise to hold Iraq’s oil resources “in trust” for the Iraqi people is simply a promissory note to the oil barons



WV Photo

**Our banner at January 18 antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C. stood out sharply against pro-Democratic Party liberal pacifism of protest organizers.**

support an immediate war against Iraq, it provoked a frenzied response by the Bush administration. Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld contemptuously dismissed France and Germany as “old Europe.” The right-wing tabloid *New York Post* (24 January) ran a front-page head-

paring for the possible use of nuclear weapons against Iraq.” According to the article, the decision to use nukes rests in the hands of STRATCOM, a “tightly controlled, secret organization” under Rumsfeld. The article noted “the contradictions inherent in contemplating the use of nuclear weapons for the purpose of eliminating weapons of mass destruction.”

It is no wonder that the nuclear cowboys in Washington are today seen by much of the world’s population as “the greatest threat to world peace,” as reported in the *Toronto Sun* (26 January). That was the opinion of more than 83 percent of Europeans polled by *Time* magazine’s European edition, with Iraq coming a distant second at 8.9 percent.

This is the shape of the “new world order” emerging from the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. Without Soviet military might to stay its hand, U.S. imperialism has been riding roughshod over and expanding its military presence on every continent. Interimperialist rivalries that were usually subordinated to the common cause of destroying the Soviet Union have now come to the fore. At the same time, the complaints of the European governments about American “unilateralism” are merely the squeals of less powerful states who want a bigger cut of the take (including of a post-Saddam Iraq) and would prefer to be treated less rudely. Even as they condemn

an American war against Iraq, the French government has sent warships to the Gulf.

What is needed is to mount *class-struggle opposition* against this imperialist war. This in turn requires a policy of uncompromising proletarian class independence. Yet the European pseudo-socialist left kowtows to the various labor and social-democratic parties, historic “left” enemies of proletarian revolution. In so doing, the fake left acts in the service of the more “humane” pretensions of their own rulers, whose appetites are currently restrained by the military ascendancy of U.S. imperialism. Last fall, a whole raft of European leftists including the Italian Rifondazione Comunista, the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and the British Socialist Workers Party and Workers Power issued a “call on all the European heads of state to publicly stand against this war, whether it has UN backing or not, and to demand that George Bush abandon his war plans.” Far from advancing a struggle for “peace,” these putative leftists who appeal to their own bourgeoisies against U.S. imperialism promote the resurgent chauvinism that paves the way for a future interimperialist war. Thus, for example, Rifondazione Comunista’s *Liberazione* (23 January) ran a headline, “Paris-Berlin, United for Peace.”

This treacherous role is all the more

*continued on page 10*



AP

**U.S. troops in Kuwait prepare for new desert slaughter in Iraq.**

of ExxonMobil and BP. It is just such moves that offend America’s imperialist rivals, most notably France and Germany, who threatened not to vote for Bush’s war plans in the UN Security Council. The rift between Europe and the U.S. is sharper today than it has been for decades. When French president Jacques Chirac and German chancellor Gerhard Schröder announced last week that they would not

line denouncing Chirac and Schröder as the “Axis of Weasel.”

But it is not only the question of Near Eastern oil. As the Berlin *Tagesspiegel* (24 January) opined: “‘Iraq’ has become the code word for everything that divides Europe from America.” The Bush administration’s naked assertion of Washington’s “right,” without even a fig leaf of pretext or provocation, to “preemptively” attack any country perceived as challenging U.S. power and prerogatives has shocked and horrified people, and governments, around the world.

While 150,000 American troops are being deployed to the Persian Gulf region, an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (26 January) reports that the U.S. “is pre-

### Young Spartacus

## Marxism, War and the Fight For Socialist Revolution...5



# Free Mordechai Vanunu Now!

While hundreds of United Nations “inspectors” storm into homes and factories around Iraq looking for alleged “weapons of mass destruction,” the man who exposed the deadliest arsenal of mass destruction in the Near East languishes in an Israeli dungeon. In 1986, Mordechai Vanunu, a former technician at the Israeli nuclear weapons facility in Dimona, was kidnapped by the secret police, thrown into a desert prison in Ashkelon and sentenced to 18 years by a secret military court for revealing to the *London Times* that Israel had amassed upwards of 200 nuclear warheads. At a parole hearing in November, the state claimed that Vanunu continued to pose a threat to Israeli “security.” His lawyer is pursuing an appeal, but his jailers have told his family that he won’t be released until April 2004.

A London *Guardian* (4 October 2002) article on Vanunu, headlined “Israel’s Arms Inspector,” quotes a defiant poem he wrote in defense of his action: “You are the secret agent of the people. You are the eyes of the nation.” For his courageous act on behalf of all humanity, Vanunu has already spent 16 years behind bars, including 12 years in solitary confinement in a six-by-nine foot cell.

For many years, another former Israeli weapons scientist, Marcus Klingberg, was also imprisoned in a cell in Ashkelon. Klingberg was released recently from his house arrest after completing a total of 20 years of imprisonment. Now 84 years old



Reuters

**Left: Vanunu at 1985 demonstration for Palestinian rights at Beersheba’s Ben-Gurion University. Right: 1996 NYC rally demands freedom for Vanunu.**



and in very bad health, Klingberg was an internationally prominent scientist who had published scores of works on epidemiology when he suddenly disappeared in January 1983. Klingberg, too, had been kidnapped by the secret police and tried in a secret military court. As assistant director of the Nes Tsiona biological research center, Klingberg reported to Soviet intelligence about the more than 40 kinds of weapons produced there, ranging from viruses to mushroom poisons. Klingberg had fought with the Red Army during World War II and recognized the debt he owed to the Soviet Union for saving his life and the lives of countless other Jews

in defeating the Nazi scourge. We honor Marcus Klingberg.

As a Sephardic Jew whose family had emigrated from Morocco, it was Vanunu’s own experience of discrimination at the hands of the European-derived Ashkenazi establishment that led to his active alienation from Zionism. He took up the cause of Palestinian rights as a student at Beersheba’s Ben-Gurion University, where he befriended Bedouin and Palestinian stu-

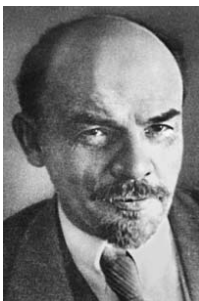
dents and participated in protests for Palestinian equality and against the 1982 Lebanon war. Some 2,000 Palestinians have been slaughtered since the beginning of the Zionist military onslaught in the Occupied Territories over two years ago, and tens of thousands more have been imprisoned. All opponents of Zionist terror must demand: *Free Mordechai Vanunu! Free all Palestinian victims of Zionist repression!* ■



TROTSKY

## Honor Communist Leaders Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg!

*The month of January marks the anniversary of the deaths of revolutionary Marxist leaders Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and V.I. Lenin. Co-founders of the German Communist Party, Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered by reactionary Freikorps troops at the behest of the ruling Social Democrats, who ordered the bloody suppression of the January 1919 Spartakist uprising. Five years later, Lenin, co-leader*



LENIN

*with Leon Trotsky of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, died after suffering a series of strokes following an assassination attempt in 1918. We print below a speech by Liebknecht to the newly formed Congress of Workers and Soldiers Councils in Berlin a month before his murder.*

Brothers, Comrades, Friends! The day on which the first Congress of Workers and Soldiers Councils meets is of historic importance. The first task of this Congress is to defend the revolution, to put down the counterrevolution.

Disarming of all generals and officers, the dissolution of the previous command, the founding of a Red Guard to carry out the social revolution.... Presently we have in Germany not a socialist but a capitalist republic. The socialist republic must first be brought forth by the proletariat through struggle against the current regime, which has become the representative of capitalism. We demand from the Congress that it take full political power into its hands for the purpose of carrying out socialism, and that it not transfer power to a National Assembly which cannot be an organ of the revolution. We demand of the Congress of the [workers and soldiers] councils that it extend its hand to our Russian brothers and request delegates from the Russians. We seek world revolution and the unity of proletarians of all countries under workers and soldiers councils.

—Karl Liebknecht, “To the All-German Soviet Congress,”  
*Die Rote Fahne*, 17 December 1918

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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

EDITOR: Alan Wilde

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Michael Davissou

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Irene Gardner

EDITORIAL BOARD: Ray Bishop (managing editor), Bruce André, Jon Brule, Karen Cole, Paul Cone, George Foster, Liz Gordon, Walter Jennings, Jane Kerrigan, Len Meyers, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alison Spencer

The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

*Workers Vanguard* (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and with a 3-week interval in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net). Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is 28 January.

No. 796

31 January 2003

## Spartacus Youth Club Forums & Classes

### BAY AREA

*Spartacus Youth Club Forum*

#### Lessons of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

Tuesday, February 11, 4 p.m.

San Francisco State University  
Cesar Chavez Student Center, C-112

Information: (510) 839-0851

or e-mail: [slbayarea@compuserve.com](mailto:slbayarea@compuserve.com)

### BOSTON

Monday, 7 p.m.

February 3: **Marxism:  
A Guide to Action**

Boston University, Room TBA

Information and readings: (617) 666-9453 or  
e-mail: [bostonsyc@yahoo.com](mailto:bostonsyc@yahoo.com)

### CHICAGO

Alternate Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

February 4: **Marxist Materialism vs.  
Liberal Idealism**

University of Chicago, Cobb Hall  
5811 S. Ellis, Room TBA

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

### NEW YORK CITY

Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.

February 4: **Marxism and the  
Fight for Revolution Today**

Columbia University  
306 Hamilton Hall

Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
or e-mail: [nysl@compuserve.com](mailto:nysl@compuserve.com)

### LOS ANGELES

Alternate Saturdays, 2 p.m.

February 15: **The Revolution Betrayed  
and the Struggle of the  
Trotskyist Opposition**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215  
(Vermont/Beverly Red Line station)

Information and readings: (213) 380-8239  
or e-mail: [slsycla@cs.com](mailto:slsycla@cs.com)

### TORONTO

Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.

February 12: **Fighting Racist  
Repression: Labor Must  
Defend Immigrants, Natives,  
All the Oppressed**

University of Toronto  
Sidney Smith, Room 1088  
100 St. George St.

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
or e-mail: [spartacan@on.aibn.com](mailto:spartacan@on.aibn.com)

### VANCOUVER

Tuesdays, 5:30 p.m.

February 4: **The Russian Revolution:  
How the Working Class Took Power**

University of British Columbia  
Student Union Building, Room 211

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
or e-mail: [tlit@look.ca](mailto:tlit@look.ca)

**Visit the International  
Communist League  
web site:**

**[www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)**

## Just Out in Russian!

*Byulleten' Spartakovtsev Supplement*  
No. 18, January 2003

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

Translated from WV No. 774, 8 Feb. 2002

**\$.50 (10 pages)**

**Make checks payable/mail to:**

Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116





# LRP: Apologists for Arab Nationalism

The gratuitous destruction of dozens of Palestinian shops in the West Bank village of Nazlat Issa by Israeli army bulldozers on January 21 is the latest step in the Sharon government's drive to eliminate even a semblance of Palestinian national existence. That aim was driven home by the massive Zionist military operation last spring—carried out with a green light from the Israeli rulers' patrons in Washington—which was marked by the army massacre in the Jenin refugee camp and the devastation of homes, hospitals, schools and water and sewage treatment systems in other West Bank cities and towns. Under cover of the coming U.S.-led war against Iraq, Israel's rulers could well carry out the genocidal "transfer" program openly advocated by many of Sharon's political allies, i.e., the forcible expulsion of the Palestinian masses from "Greater Israel."

As we wrote in a Spartacist League statement in response to the Jenin massacre (WV No. 778, 5 April 2002): "The international working class must urgently rally to the defense of the Palestinian people against the Zionist military terror machine." ***Defend the Palestinian people! All Israeli troops, settlers out of the Occupied Territories! All U.S./UN imperialist forces out of the Near East! For a socialist federation of the Near East!***

The coming U.S.-led war against Iraq could well ignite renewed explosions of social turmoil in the Arab countries. But if such struggles are to aid the liberation of the Palestinians, the Arab workers, the oppressed women and myriad national and religious minorities, what is required is the forging of internationalist Marxist workers parties implacably opposed to any reliance on the Arab bourgeois regimes or one or another imperialist agency. Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat is today hounded by the Zionist rulers, imprisoned in the bombed-out remnants of his Ramallah headquarters. But it is precisely the petty-bourgeois nationalist politics of Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that has helped bring the Palestinians to this tragic impasse.

The strategy of "armed struggle" pursued by the PLO in the 1960s and '70s was never aimed at defeating the overwhelmingly more powerful Zionist state but rather at pressuring the Arab regimes to take up the cause of "Arab unity" against Israel. Instead, the Arab capitalist states moved to bloodily repress Palestinian militants, with Jordan's King Hussein slaughtering more than 10,000 PLO fighters in the infamous "Black September" massacre in 1970 and tens of thousands more killed later in Lebanon. The PLO's pursuit of the imperialists culminated in the 1993 Oslo accord, granting Arafat the nominal autonomy of a handful of Palestinian ghettos in the Occupied Territories which were then increasingly sealed off and subjected to starvation blockades by the Zionist occupation forces. In despair, the Palestinians, once among the most cosmopolitan peoples of the Near East, have increasingly turned to Islamic fundamentalists like Hamas and Islamic

Jihad, vile anti-Semitic and anti-Christian religious bigots who seek to enslave women and extirpate any manifestation of social progress.

Yet one self-styled Marxist group, the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), urges Palestinian militants to recycle the petty-bourgeois nationalist politics whose

existence is threatened.

Moreover, if the working masses of the Arab countries are to be won to the communist program, it is necessary to directly confront the false consciousness that binds them to their oppressors. That means defending the rights of the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, the Berbers in Algeria

## Defend the Palestinians!



Flemson/NY Times

**Zionist troops round up Palestinian man in sweep of Nablus, August 2002.**

suicidal logic is today manifest. The LRP claims to offer a proletarian perspective, raising the call for a socialist federation of the Near East and declaring: "The road to Palestinian freedom really begins with unchaining the Arab working classes of the region from their bourgeois leaders and opening a revolutionary struggle against their neo-colonial Arab rulers" (*Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2002). But everything the LRP stands for is in flat contradiction to these words.

### LRP: National Unity vs. Class Unity

Sneeringly dismissing "Spartacist fantasies of an 'Arab/Hebrew workers' revolution,'" the LRP rejects out of hand any possibility of winning the Hebrew workers to the cause of socialist revolution. Yet there can be no revolutionary perspective in the Near East without taking into account the proletariat of Israel, the most technologically advanced and militarily powerful country in the region. The Zionist state is armed to the teeth, including with a sizable nuclear arsenal which it would willingly use to irradiate every Arab city if it perceived a threat to its existence. If the Zionist citadel is not cracked from within through workers revolution, all talk of national justice is simply empty rhetoric that does nothing to advance the cause of the Palestinians. But there is no way the Hebrew workers will be won to the need for common class struggle against the Israeli capitalist rulers if their own right to a national

and Morocco, the Copts in Egypt. It means fighting against the horrid oppression of women, symbolized by the veil and *purdah* (seclusion), that is enforced by Islamic reactionaries as well as by "secular" nationalist regimes. And it means combatting the anti-Semitism propagated by the Arab rulers and Islamists, which is one of the main things poisoning the consciousness of the Arab proletariat.

But the LRP does none of these things. Its article does not so much as mention, much less defend, the rights of non-Arab or non-Muslim minorities or of women in the Arab countries. It accepts the lie propagated by Arab nationalists, Islamic fundamentalists and, indeed, the Zionists that the Hebrew-speaking people as a whole are and will always be wedded to Zionist chauvinism. Instead, the LRP enthuses over nationalist "armed struggle against Israel" (not even acknowledging Israel's stockpile of nuclear weapons) and seeks only to give such struggle a more "mass" and "militant" rendering. The LRP declares:

"To aid the Palestinians and expose the present illusions in Arafat and the Arab rulers, proletarian revolutionaries demand of them: provide arms to the masses!..."

"The street protests in support of the intifada are vital, but they need to be joined by massive general strikes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and the other countries of the Middle East demanding arms for the Palestinians."

This is the height of nationalist cretinism. The LRP calls for a general strike, which

poses the question of which class shall rule. But the LRP's purpose is *not* to sweep away the neocolonial Arab bourgeoisies but rather to chain proletarian struggle to the yoke of "national unity" with those bourgeoisies. In its headline, the LRP calls "For Arab Workers' Revolution"—not to smash the Arab capitalist states but "To Smash Israeli/U.S. Terror!"

The Arab regimes that the LRP calls on to aid the Palestinians are themselves responsible for the slaughter of some 50,000 Palestinians between 1967 and 1977. Yet, in pursuit of the treacherous fiction of "united Arab mass struggle," the LRP cannot even bring itself to denounce the blood-drenched, U.S.-backed Hashemite monarchy for the 1970 massacre in Jordan. Instead they blame the Israelis for "the 'Black September' events of 1970 when the Mossad, Israel's CIA, helped to prop up Jordan's monarchy against a Palestinian uprising."

Any socialist worth his salt solidarizes with the Palestinians who defend themselves against the murderous Zionist occupation forces in Gaza and the West Bank—the Israeli army and its fascistic settler auxiliaries. But if the last two years have demonstrated anything, it is that the Palestinians cannot prevail in a purely military confrontation with the Israeli state. And today much of the Palestinian "armed struggle" consists of indiscriminate terrorist attacks against anyone who happens to be in an Israeli shopping mall or disco. Those who perpetrate such criminal acts, deeming every Israeli to be the "enemy," mirror the chauvinist mindset of the Zionist rulers themselves.

The mass protests in the Arab countries last spring were an expression of solidarity with the besieged Palestinians and a measure of the outrage of the Arab masses against their own rulers. But these demonstrations were shot through with anti-Semitism and largely dominated by Islamic fundamentalists. The LRP barely acknowledges this danger, while noting that some Arab workers have "turned to reactionary clerical leaders, another dead end."

Marxists seek to shift the axis of struggle from Israeli against Arab to class against class. We stand with Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, who wrote: "Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism. Be it even of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism" ("Critical Remarks on the National Question," 1913).

Instead of seeking to win the proletariat to a political perspective of class independence, the LRP enthuses over the need for "unity of all Palestinians in the struggle" and "united Arab mass struggle." This is a recipe for unity of Arab workers and peasants with the oil sheiks and bonapartist despots, for unity of leftist Palestinian militants with the cutthroat reactionaries of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. And it serves the purpose of the Arab rulers, who have long played on the need for unity against the "Zionist entity" in order

*continued on page 4*



Der Spiegel

**Left: Amman, Jordan in 1970 as King Hussein's regime slaughtered 10,000 Palestinians in Black September massacre. "Stateless" Palestinians have languished for decades in refugee camps, as in Jordan.**



Gamma

# LRP...

(continued from page 3)

to deflect the anger of those they oppress toward an external enemy.

## Is All of the U.S. “Occupied Territory”?

The LRP explicitly denies the national rights of the Hebrew-speaking people and embraces the call of radical Arab nationalists and Islamists: “All Israel is ‘Occupied Territory’!” In polemicizing against the LRP’s line, we wrote (“Zionist Bloodbath in Jenin,” WV No. 779, 19 April 2002):

“The doctrine that an oppressor nation forfeits its right to self-determination has nothing in common with socialism and democracy; it is the ideology of genocidal irredentism. The Zionist state was created by crushing the national rights of the Palestinians. But securing national justice for the Palestinians does *not* mean reversing the terms of oppression and denying the democratic rights of the Hebrew-speaking people. Basic to the Leninist position on the national question—the only consistently democratic position—is that all nations have a right to self-determination.”

In response, the LRP screamed that we are “in a word, Zionists” and insisted that “Leninists unhesitatingly support the rights of the oppressed over the oppressors” (*Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2002). Leninists unhesitatingly defend small, dependent nations in a military conflict with imperialist countries. And we unhesitatingly oppose every manifestation of oppression and discrimination—be it national, racial, sexual or religious. But we do not thereby elevate the oppressed to the pantheon of “progressive peoples” who have rights as opposed to “reactionary peoples” who have none. If all of Israel is “occupied territory,” what does that make of the U.S.? The Zionists’ atrocities pale in comparison to the brutality and butchery with which America’s founders and rulers wiped out entire indigenous peoples. Why doesn’t the LRP raise the call “*All of the United States is Occupied Territory!*”?

The LRP would do well to note what Lenin actually wrote in his 1914 pamphlet, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, where he explained that “the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the *right* to self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give *anything* at the *expense* of another nation.” This was the policy pursued by Lenin both before and after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution that smashed the tsarist prison house of peoples. Lenin’s aim was to take the national question off the agenda in order to bring the class question to the fore. He fought indefatigably against any manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism while defending the rights of *all* nations to self-determination—i.e., to establish their own states—including under proletarian rule.

Normally, the right of self-determination of an oppressor nation is a moot point. But in cases of geographically interpenetrated peoples—as in Israel/Palestine, where Palestinian Arabs and Hebrew-speaking Israelis live in and lay claim to the same small sliver of land—under capitalism the exercise of national self-determination by either of the populations will necessarily be at the expense of the other. In such cases, a democratic solution to the national question can only come about through socialist revolution, because only the proletariat in power has an interest in resolving national antagonisms and can lay the material basis for the economic development of all peoples, leading to the establishment of a global communist society.

Look for example at how the Bolsheviks dealt with the Caucasus, a patchwork of nationalities and pre-national groupings which had been riven by inter-ethnic conflicts for centuries, after the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks not only granted the various nations in the region the right to form their own independent states but also developed a range

of administrative solutions to allow even tiny ethnic groupings a measure of local autonomy. Thus the workers revolution put a stop to ethnic warfare. Contrast this with the LRP, which offers the Hebrew-speaking people only the following “right” even within the framework of proletarian state power: “Israelis unwilling to live in a Palestinian workers’ state will have the right to leave.”

In an attempt to defend the indefensible, the LRP resorts to lies and distort-



Brian Hendler

**December 1997: Public sector workers general strike tied up Israel for five days.**

tions. In the latest issue of *Proletarian Revolution* (Fall 2002), the LRP asserts that we oppose the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Continuing a theme from its earlier article, it also equates the Hebrew-speaking *nation* with the Zionist *state* in order to claim that we “defend the preservation of Israel.” Before exposing these lies, it is necessary to first untangle the LRP’s deliberate confusionism. For Marxists, a nation is a people with a common language, culture and political economy; a state is an instrument of organized violence—centrally the army, police and prisons—through which a particular class maintains its rule. The Israeli capitalist state is the enemy not only of the Palestinians but above all of the workers of Israel, Hebrew or Arab. In the very article in WV No. 779 which the LRP attacks, we wrote:

“The national emancipation of the Palestinians—including *the right of all refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland*—necessarily entails workers revolutions to sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the bloody Ba’athist bonapartists in Syria, to bring down the capitalist rulers of Lebanon and to *shatter the Zionist state*, establishing a socialist federation of the Near East.” [emphases added]

## Leninism vs. Petty-Bourgeois Leftism

We take our stand with the Palestinian Trotskyists of the 1940s, who fought against all odds to transcend the nationalist conflict and unite Arab and Hebrew workers in common struggle. They opposed the Zionist partition of Palestine and proclaimed at the time of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War: “*The only way to peace between the two peoples of this country is turning the guns against the instigators of murder in both camps*” (“Against the Stream,” reprinted in *Fourth International*, May 1948; emphasis in original). At the same time, the Trotskyists were sober about the enormous obstacles to united revolutionary struggle by Arab and Hebrew-speaking workers. The 1947 “Draft Theses on the Jewish Question,” which was adopted by the International Secretariat of the Fourth International in the wake of big strikes by Arab and Jewish government and oil refinery workers, stated:

“At the present stage, *large-scale* unity between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine is unrealizable; only on a very limited scale and to the extent that a section of the Jewish workers is employed outside the ‘closed’ Jewish economy, has it been possible for Jewish-Arab strikes such as those of the past year to occur. But this does not mean that such unity is excluded for all time.” [emphasis in original]

More than five decades of Zionist oppression and privation have deeply exacer-

bated differences between Hebrew and Arab workers, while hardening nationalist antagonisms on both sides. These hatreds have grown particularly acute in the face of more than two years of unrelenting Zionist terror.

We have no illusion that it will be easy to shatter the chauvinist consensus that currently binds the Hebrew proletariat to its capitalist exploiters. In all likelihood, it will take great historic events, like a victorious workers revolution in one

of the Arab countries, to inspire Israeli workers on the road of revolutionary struggle against the Zionist bourgeoisie.

When we attacked the LRP for writing off the whole of the Hebrew-speaking working class as a “labor aristocracy,” they admitted to “grains of truth” in our description of class and other social divisions in Israeli society. At the same time, they note that “Israeli workers enjoy a tremendous privilege over Palestinian workers” and that their “elevated standard of living serves to tie large numbers of Israeli workers to supporting the Israeli state.” There is, to use the LRP’s expression, a “grain of truth” in this statement.

But to conclude from this, as does the LRP, that “a majority of Israeli workers can be expected to remain loyal to the continued existence of Israel” is to deny the possibility of making the proletariat conscious of its historic task as the gravedigger of the capitalist system. Israel is no exception to the rule that the interests of capital and labor are irreconcilably counterposed and that the contradictions of capitalism necessarily engender class struggle. In essence, the LRP’s hostility toward the Hebrew workers mirrors the “white skin privilege” line pushed by Third World nationalists and sections of the American New Left in the 1960s and ’70s. They argued that workers in the imperialist countries, and especially white workers in the U.S., had been “bought off” by imperialism and were thus incapable of making a socialist revolution.

From its inception, the LRP has been

defined not by a proletarian—i.e., Trotskyist—program but by the prevailing winds of petty-bourgeois radicalism. The LRP is a direct political heir of Max Shachtman, who led a split from the American Trotskyist movement in 1940. Succumbing to anti-Communist hysteria among radical intellectuals over the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact and the Soviet invasion of capitalist Finland and Poland at the outbreak of World War II, Shachtman repudiated the Trotskyist call for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union. The LRP has throughout its existence followed in Shachtman’s footsteps, joining the imperialists in denouncing the Soviet intervention against CIA-backed Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan in the 1980s and backing Boris Yeltsin in his counterrevolutionary power grab in 1991, which led to the final undoing of the October Revolution.

It was the destruction of the Soviet Union that prepared the way for the current dire situation facing the Palestinians. The Soviet Union provided a counterweight to U.S. imperialism, allowing petty-bourgeois nationalists like the PLO to jockey for support between the U.S. and the USSR. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this leverage was lost—as well as considerable amounts of financial and military support—and a significantly weakened PLO accepted a sham “autonomy,” effectively policing the Palestinian masses on behalf of the Israeli rulers. The 1993 accord laid the basis for further devastating the economy of the Occupied Territories, sealing off tens of thousands of workers from their jobs in Israel, while leading to a massive expansion of Zionist settlements and the virtual imprisonment of the entire Palestinian population in isolated, besieged ghettos. This is what the “democratic” counterrevolution cheered on by the LRP has meant for the Palestinian people.

A workers revolution in one of the Arab countries, proclaiming the internationalist unity of all the working people, would have an enormous impact on the Hebrew-speaking workers of Israel. But if Arab, Persian and Kurdish workers are to break the chains of exploitation and oppression, they must be broken from all variants of nationalism and won to a relentless struggle to extirpate the influence of the Islamic fundamentalists who now pose as the enemies of Zionism and imperialism. Workers of the Near East have a rich tradition of revolutionary struggle. We look to the legacy of the multinational Iranian proletariat that struggled for power in 1953, of the Arab and Kurdish Iraqi workers who sought to make a socialist revolution five years later. To seize on such opportunities when they arise, and to lead them to victory, requires above all the construction of internationalist workers parties, sections of a re-forged Fourth International, in opposition to Zionism, Arab nationalism and all manner of religious fundamentalism. ■

## 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  
(312) 563-0441

### Public Office:

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

### Los Angeles

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

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

### New York

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

### Public Office:

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

### Oakland

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

### Public Office:

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

### San Francisco

Box 77494  
San Francisco  
CA 94107

## 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



# Young Spartacus

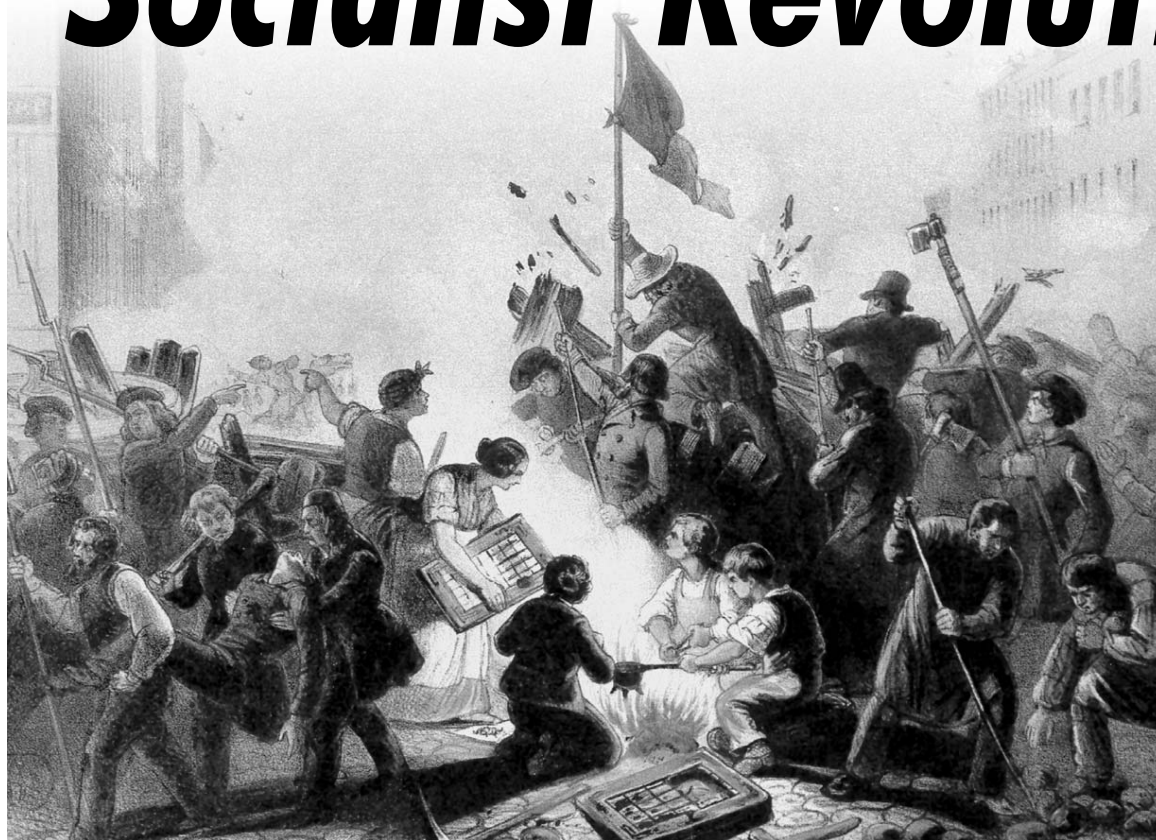
## Marxism, War and the Fight For Socialist Revolution

We publish below, slightly edited, the second part of an internal educational presentation given at a Spartacist League meeting in New York City in December 2002 by Alan Wilde, editor of Workers Vanguard. Part One appeared in Workers Vanguard No. 795 (17 January).

### PART TWO OF TWO

Revolutionary defeatism (that is, fighting for the defeat of all belligerent powers in a war through socialist revolution) and revolutionary defensism (standing for the military defense of a backward country against an imperialist or predatory power) are generalities that help to guide Marxists, but they are not dogmas. Marxism is a living science, and is therefore anti-dogmatic. The positions we hold on war today are a product of the development of both capitalism and the Marxist and workers movements. Along those lines, it is useful to look at how Marxism has historically approached the question of war.

In a certain sense, Marxism came on the scene with the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, which was written in late 1847, on the eve of a great and general upheaval throughout Europe. To understand war and Marxism at that time, one has to understand that this was a period marking about the end of when the bourgeoisie was still a revolutionary, and hence a progressive class. Though it wasn't the first bourgeois revolution, the Great French Revolution of 1789 was the most decisive in bringing the bourgeoisie to political power and destroying feudalism in that country. Within a few years,



F.G. Nordmann

**Workers barricades in Berlin during 1848 Revolution. Across Europe, revolutionary wave sought to eradicate last vestiges of feudalism, but was betrayed by bourgeoisies' alliance with reaction.**

Within France, the radical bourgeois Jacobins took over in the early 1790s, executing the former king and instituting a regime of revolutionary democracy and terror against the counterrevolution. By the end of the 18th century, however, the Jacobins had been overthrown by right-wing elements. The social revolution was not overturned but the regime of mass political democracy was replaced by one of dictatorial bonapartism against the masses. This found its most profound expression in Napoleon—a former Jacobin—who ruled France as emperor until 1814. Napoleon, for his own expansionist reasons, also waged war against Europe. And in the process he did something quite extraordinary. Most everywhere he went,

Marx and Engels still saw revolutionary potential in the European bourgeoisies. Here's one very interesting example. In a January 1848 article by Engels, he supports—repeat, *supports*—the French invasion of Algeria—i.e., he still saw the potential for Napoleonic-type wars by the French bourgeoisie:

“The conquest of Algeria is an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilisation.... And if we may regret that the liberty of the Bedouins of the desert has been destroyed, we must not forget that these same Bedouins were a nation of robbers.... All these nations of free barbarians look very proud, noble and glorious at a distance, but only come near them and you will find that they, as well as the more civilised nations, are ruled by the lust of gain, and only employ ruder and more cruel means. And after all, the modern *bourgeois*, with civilisation, industry, order, and at least relative enlightenment following him, is preferable to the feudal lord or the marauding robber, with the barbarian state of society to which they belong.”

Marx and Engels would soon come to recognize that occupation by the European powers distorted the development of backward countries, and that chauvinism among the proletariat in the advanced countries was a huge obstacle to socialist consciousness.

The revolutions of 1848 had a couple of characteristics. They were democratic revolutions, uprisings to bring about political democracy as well as to destroy any remnants left of feudalism in Europe. In Germany, the revolution also had the vital character of attempting to unify the country, which until 1871 was split into numerous princely states, each ruled by its own prince or king. The revolutions initially involved all the classes of society, except, of course, the feudal-derived classes. But a couple of things became clear as the revolutions continued. The first is that the bourgeoisie feared the prospect of revolutionary upheaval more than the dominance of the landed nobility politically and even to a certain extent economically.

The revolutionary masses were betrayed when the bourgeoisies essentially turned their backs on the revolutions and made alliances with the aristocracy against the working and artisan masses in revolt. What also became clear was that the proletariat was still too weak to vie for power in an immediate sense. It was the experience of the betrayals of the bourgeoisie in the 1848 revolutions that led Marx to emphasize the necessity of organizing the proletariat in a party independent of all other classes. This was elucidated in an 1850 speech where he said:

“Our task [is] to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians in

these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of the existing society but the foundation of a new one.”

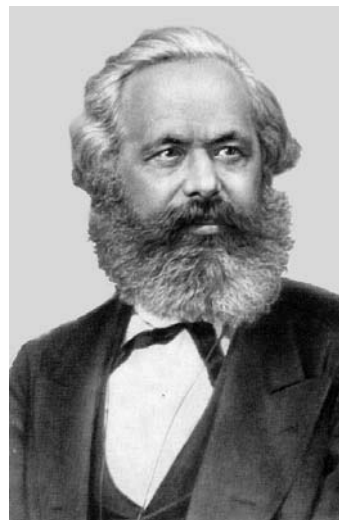
The 1848 revolutions were defeated by a series of betrayals as well as military defeats by stronger forces of reaction. And throughout, one thing became clear: the power that stood behind the most reactionary forces elsewhere in Europe—itsself the most reactionary power in Europe—was Russia.

Russia was hated and feared by all progressive forces in Europe. It was one of the last places where outright feudalism still thrived, where the peasants were still chained in serfdom and where there was no independent bourgeoisie to compete with the tsarist monarchy. And it was a very strong power that also had allies in Europe. In 1848, Marx and Engels genuinely believed that the downfall of Russia would open the floodgates for revolutionary forces throughout the continent, because it would remove the most substantial obstacle to revolution—a strong state defending an outmoded system of production. So they favored any war waged by any European power against Russia.

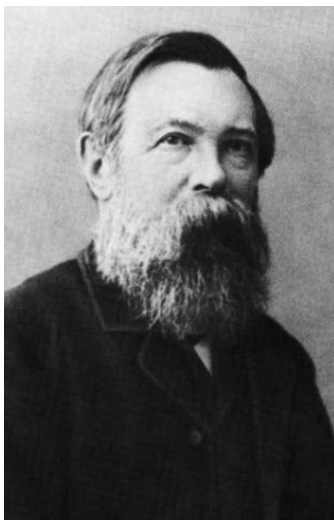
### The National Question

Now, there is another point that plays a strong role in Marx and Engels' attitude to war around 1848, and that's the national question. One of the great gains of the bourgeois revolutions, like the French, was the consolidation of the nation-state on the basis of bourgeois rule. This was progressive in relation to feudalism. It meant the breaking down of provincial barriers—i.e., whether someone's from Normandy or another French province, everyone becomes a citizen of France. The creation of a single nation-state meant the

*continued on page 6*



Progress Publishers



W.E. Debenham

**Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, authors of *Communist Manifesto* and founders of proletarian socialism.**

France was invaded by a terrified feudal Europe, and in turn France waged war on Europe. And it was a new soldier that was fighting in France, not one fighting to defend the land or property of his feudal lord, but one fighting for the nation, for something broader than his own provincial existence—for the defense and spreading of enormous gains and unprecedented promises of liberty, equality and fraternity.

whether it be Italy, Germany, or elsewhere, he overturned the existing feudal property relations and instituted in their place bourgeois property forms. He had to base his rule on the property forms on which his power rested—bourgeois property forms. Napoleon himself had an understanding of what he was doing; he called himself a “soldier of the Revolution.”

Now, the reason I went through all this was to impress the point that in 1848,

## Marxism, War...

(continued from page 5)

consolidation of a single currency and of a capitalist system of production, which meant the greater development of industry and, in turn, the growth of the working class, which at the time was still in its infancy. One country meant one working class and a single official language—i.e., the tearing down of barriers within that nation-state dividing the proletariat. The abolition of serfdom meant the downfall of the feudal lord and the freeing up of the peasant population to become workers. All this meant that small populations within the boundaries of greater powers, or even outside them—small peoples, as Marx and Engels called them—should be assimilated, i.e., Marx and Engels generally opposed the right of national self-determination for “small peoples.”

To give you a sense of what this meant, you can look at where these two questions—Russia as the center of all evil in Europe and the national question—intersected with war: the question of pan-Slavism. The South Slavs, generally the people who occupy the Balkans today, were “small peoples.” Much like their Slavic cousins in Russia, they were ruled by feudal reaction, and much like in Russia at the time, Marx and Engels did not believe there was any internal base there to fight for democratic revolutions. And it’s not just that they resembled Russia, but they were backed to the hilt by Russia, and any ally of Russia, according to Marx and Engels, did not deserve the least bit of sympathy. In fact, it was Russian-backed Slavic forces that militarily suppressed the 1848-49 uprisings in Vienna, Austria. So, as little peoples who are allies of the greatest force for reaction, they should have no rights of self-determination and, according to Marx and Engels, should in fact be assimilated. Here are a few lines from an 1849 article by Engels, written after Slavic forces moved in and crushed the Viennese rebellion:

“There is no country in Europe which does not have in some corner or other one or several ruined fragments of peoples, the remnant of a former population that was suppressed and held in bondage by the nation which later became the main vehicle of historical development. These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled under foot in the course of history, as Hegel says, these *residual fragments of peoples* always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution....

“Such, in Austria, are the pan-Slavist *Southern Slavs*, who are nothing but the *residual fragment of peoples*, resulting from an extremely confused *thousand years of development*....

“The next world war will result in the disappearance from the face of the earth not only of reactionary classes and dynasties, but also of entire reactionary peoples. And that, too, is a step forward.”

—*The Magyar Struggle*, January 1849 [emphasis in original]

Engels and Marx would later substantially soften their position on the South Slavs, also recognizing the internal contradictions that were being played out in Russia. And it wasn’t long after 1848 that they would develop a very different attitude toward colonialism, expressed, for example, by their impassioned and powerful defense of the Sepoy rebellion in British-occupied India in the late 1850s. On the national question, by the late 1860s Marx and Engels called for the independence of Ireland from English rule, explaining the importance this held not only for Irish but also English workers. In 1870, Marx wrote that the antagonism between Irish and English workers was “the *secret of the impotence of the English working class*.... It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power.”

But what must be understood is that at the time of the 1848 revolutions and wars, Marx and Engels viewed the proletariat

as a class still in its infancy. They saw that the class contradictions between bourgeois and worker in Europe, while emerging, were still partial, and that therefore the key task for the European continent was the full development of capitalist relations in order to facilitate the full development of the proletariat. Hence their outlook was colored by a view of progressive and reactionary nations—progressive being those that facilitated the growth of capitalist development and reactionary being those that hindered it, Russia prime among the latter. The only Slavic nationalist movement that Marx and Engels supported was the Polish one, because Poland was occupied and oppressed by Russia.

### The Franco-Prussian War

If you jump ahead a little over 20 years, it is interesting to look at what changed and what didn’t for Marx, as well as in terms of economic developments in

ularly in the early phase, when it was defensive.

In 1870, the North German Parliament (or Reichstag), which was controlled by Prussia, took a vote on war credits. The two main Marxist representatives there were Wilhelm Liebknecht (the revolutionary Karl Liebknecht’s father) and German socialist leader August Bebel. Wilhelm Liebknecht was determined to vote no on the war credits because of genuine opposition to German imperial designs as well as less savory reasons. Liebknecht came from southern Germany, which was extremely resentful of Prussian power. Marx and Engels repeatedly took him to task for trying to form alliances with reactionary South German forces against the Prussians. Apparently, Bebel had a screaming fight with Liebknecht and they compromised and abstained on the vote for war credits.

This vote is important. Both Luxemburg and Lenin turned to it in the course



Roger-Viollet

**Paris Commune of 1871. Communards and National Guardsmen stand over toppled statue of Louis Napoleon, symbol of bourgeois rule.**

Europe. In 1870 the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Germany was not a unified nation, and its unification was a major goal of the Marxists for the reasons I outlined earlier. Through a series of wars, particularly one in 1866, what became clear was that the Prussian leader Bismarck was to make Prussia the dominant region of a unified Germany and himself the dominant leader. The prospect of revolution uniting Germany was bleak. Bismarck was carrying out unification, except it was under the jackboot of Prussian militarism, through a series of wars.

The final one of these wars, and the most decisive, was between Prussia and France, then under the rule of Emperor Napoleon III, who gained power in 1851 after the defeat of the French 1848 Revolution. Bonaparte was determined that Germany not unify, as it would become a major competitor with French power, so he declared war on Prussia. What was Marx’s position on this pivotal war?

Marx’s *The Civil War in France* presents his views on this war as well as on the Paris Commune of 1871, which was the first time the working class had any experience with political power, though it was only in the city of Paris and lasted less than three months. Marx considered the Franco-Prussian War predatory on the side of France. “On the German side,” he wrote, “the war is a war of defence,” i.e., Marxists had a side in this war, but only as long as it remained defensive, because its victory meant German unification. The war did not remain defensive, and Marx had no illusions that it would. The Prussians won, Bismarck united Germany, and he then proceeded to advance into France and take over the region of Alsace-Lorraine. And at that point, Marx’s attitude toward the war changed, especially with the outbreak of the workers rebellion in Paris. For our purposes, though, what I want to look at is the conduct of the Marxists in relation to the war, partic-

ularly in a war where the Marxists had a side, we did not vote for war credits, i.e., we did not place confidence in the bourgeoisie to carry out a defensive war and keep it defensive. After the vote, Liebknecht apparently went back to his job as co-editor of a socialist newspaper, and there were several fights with him on the editorial board because he did not want to concede any support for the war on the Prussian side. Finally, the ed board appealed to Marx directly and Marx asked Engels for his opinion.

When you look at the original documents and letters on this debate, what comes across is a furious argument with Liebknecht over the propaganda he was putting out in the course of the war, which had an abstentionist and neutral quality. Here is a quote from an August 1870 letter to Marx that explains how Engels viewed the question and why he and Marx supported the war:

“The case seems to me to be as follows: Germany has been driven by Badinguet [Napoleon III] into a war for her national existence. If Badinguet defeats her, Bonapartism will be strengthened for years and Germany broken for years, perhaps for generations. In that event there can be no question any more of an independent German working-class movement either; the struggle to restore Germany’s national existence will absorb everything, and at best the German workers will be dragged in the wake of the French. If Germany wins, French Bonapartism will at any rate be smashed, the endless row about the establishment of German unity will at last be over, the German workers will be able to organise on a national scale quite different from that prevailing hitherto, and the French workers, whatever sort of government may succeed this one, are certain to have a freer field than under Bonapartism. The whole mass of the German people of every class have realised that this is first and foremost a question of national existence and have therefore at once flung themselves into the fray. That in these circumstances a German political party should preach total abstention à la

Wilhelm and place all sorts of secondary considerations before the main one, seems to me impossible.”

Engels goes on to emphasize a six-point program for the propaganda of the party:

“1) join the national movement...insofar and for so long as it is limited to the defence of Germany....

“2) at the same time emphasise the difference between German national and dynastic-Prussian interests;

“3) oppose any ANNEXATION of Alsace and Lorraine....

“4) as soon as a non-chauvinistic republican government is at the helm in Paris, work for an honourable peace with it;

“5) constantly stress the unity of interests between the German and French workers, who did not approve of the war and are also not making war on each other;

“6) *Russia*, as in the Address of the International.”

What this last one meant was that if Russia tried to interfere in the war, Germany should declare war on Russia.

The question of the vote on war credits by Liebknecht and Bebel is interesting. I could find nothing from either Marx or Engels that ever refers to the vote. In a sense, they did not care much how the Marxists in parliament voted on the question. It certainly was not an issue of principle. The German workers movement at that time was divided into two wings, one led by those who claimed adherence to Marxism and the other led by followers of Ferdinand Lassalle, who had died in 1864. Since 1866, the Lassalleans had consistently voted for war credits in favor of the Prussians. To my knowledge, while Marx and Engels polemicized against the Lassalleans’ overt allegiance to Bismarck, they never took on the question of war credits. When the Lassalleans and the followers of Marx unified at the Gotha Congress in the mid 1870s, forming what would later become the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Marx issued his scathing critique of the Gotha program. That document, while ripping apart much of what appeared in the unification program, never addressed the question of war credits and in the end supported the unity of the German workers movement.

### Imperialism and Opportunism

During the period between the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War and the beginning of World War I in 1914, the nature of capitalist development and hence the nature of the workers movement had changed qualitatively—in ways that have fundamentally determined our attitude toward war ever since. This period was known as the period of general peace in Europe. But this peace in Europe stood in sharp contrast to the many reactionary colonial wars carried out by the European powers in Asia and Africa for the formation of colonies. An extremely significant step took place in this period, which was the development of imperialism, a system of modern, decaying capitalism. In this stage the nation-state had become a barrier to further progressive economic and productive development. To continue to compete on the international scale, the capitalists had to occupy and exploit colonies and spheres of economic influence, exporting finance capital. The first country to go imperialist was Britain, the last, right before the turn of the century, were Germany, the U.S. and Japan. The rise of imperialism had significant effects both on the workers movement and the nature of war in Europe and around the world.

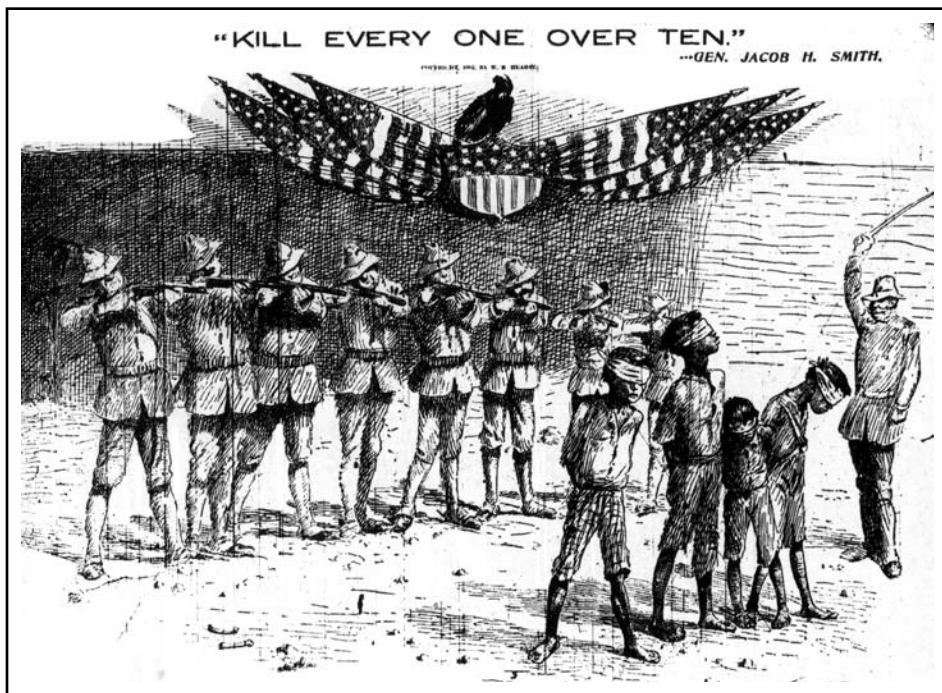
In the early social-democratic movement, including its revolutionary Marxist wing, the source of opportunism was consistently defined as coming from *outside* the workers movement. Opportunist tendencies, it was argued, were a survival of petty-bourgeois democracy carried mainly by the intelligentsia and conditioned by the economic and ideological backwardness or immaturity of the working masses. This definition of opportunism derived from the history of the European left in the decades following the



1848 revolutions. The principal tendencies opposed to Marxism—Lassalleism, for example—were not political representatives of the organic movement of the industrial working class. Rather, they represented the European artisan classes and their struggle against being thrown into the industrial proletariat.

It was understood that Marxism superseded such tendencies through the transformation of the urban artisan classes into a modern proletariat; hence, the struggles by Marx and Engels for national unification and the full development of capitalist relations where they were retarded. By the turn of the century, this definition of opportunism played very much into solidifying the conception of the party of the whole class—that a workers party should encompass every political tendency in the workers movement. It was argued that since opportunism came from outside the workers movement, the growth of the proletariat and of its organization would eventually strengthen the revolutionary tendencies in Social Democracy. Here is a quote from SPD leader Karl Kautsky's 1909 *The Road to Power*, which tried to explain the weakness of revolutionary Social Democracy by pointing to the backwardness of the proletariat, which, Kautsky argued, reflected either a continued identification with the petty bourgeoisie or a lack of confidence in the strength of the workers movement:

"To a large degree hatched out of the small capitalist and small farmer class, many proletarians long carry the shells of these classes about with them. They do not feel themselves proletarians, but as would-be property owners.... Others, again, have gone further, and have come to recognize the necessity of fighting the capitalists that stand in antagonism to



NY Public Library

**Drawing depicts atrocities by U.S. occupation forces in Philippines following 1898 Spanish-American War, which marked emergence of U.S. as imperialist power.**

viks were far stronger in relation to the Leninists than they had been in 1912.

In some of his writings, Lenin began to recognize the inadequate nature of this theory of opportunism. For example, in an April 1914 polemic against Leon Trotsky titled "Unity," he anticipates a split in principle with opportunists in the workers movement, writing:

"There can be no unity, federal or other, with liberal-labor politicians, with disrupters of the working-class movement, with those who defy the will of the majority. There can and must be unity among all consistent Marxists, among all those who

relationship between imperialism and opportunism were Lenin's pamphlet *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (written in early 1916), his article "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism" (October 1916), and *The War and the Crisis of Socialism* (August 1916) by Bolshevik leader Gregory Zinoviev. In his book, Zinoviev addressed the question of opportunism in relation to the German Social Democracy:

"When we speak of the 'treachery of the leaders' we do not say by this that it was a deep-laid plot, that it was a consciously perpetrated sell-out of the workers' interests. Far from it. But consciousness is conditioned by existence, not *vice versa*. The entire social essence of this caste of labor bureaucrats led inevitably, *through the outmoded pace set for the movement in the 'peaceful' pre-war period*, to complete bourgeoisification of their 'consciousness.' The entire social position into which this numerically strong caste of leaders had climbed over the backs of the working class made them a social group which objectively must be regarded as an agency of the imperialist bourgeoisie."

The German SPD's 4 August 1914 vote for war credits was not some error that could be repaired, as Kautsky claimed, but the full flowering of the development of Social Democracy over the previous couple of decades. Hugo Haase, the SPD national chairman, declared after the vote, "In its hour of peril we shall not abandon the Fatherland." The German Kaiser, gratified, replied: "I no longer know parties, I know only Germans." Thus the national unity drive between the long-growing opportunist wing of the Social Democracy and the German rulers was sealed, and it took the whole party with it. Lenin was absolutely right about the necessity to shatter any alliances with the social-chauvinists. The fact that he fought to break revolutionary workers in Russia from opportunism in all its forms laid the basis for the building of a vanguard party, which has proved to be the absolutely necessary and too often missing component of the struggle for work-

ers power. If not for that, there would have been no Russian Revolution (see the Spartacist pamphlet, *Lenin and the Vanguard Party*).

## The First World War

Now, on the question of the changes in the nature of war itself, it's interesting to note Lenin's comments on Luxemburg's 1916 antiwar pamphlet written under the pseudonym of Junius. There were several lines of criticism. One was over a statement in the piece that strongly implied that national wars of liberation were no longer possible under imperialism. This question has been dealt with already in the discussions on revolutionary defensism (see Part One of this article in *Workers Vanguard* No. 795, 17 January). Another major criticism, though, is that in the pamphlet, Luxemburg speaks of defense of the fatherland against invasion, how the right wing of the Social Democracy actually undermined this and left the fatherland unprotected. She wrote that socialists should:

"oppose the imperialist war programme... with the old, truly national programme of the patriots and democrats of 1848, the programme of Marx, Engels and Lassalle—the slogan of a united, Great German Republic.... Hence, the grave dilemma—the interests of the fatherland or the international solidarity of the proletariat—the tragic conflict which prompted our parliamentarians to side, 'with a heavy heart,' with the imperialist war, is purely imaginary, it is a bourgeois nationalist fiction. On the contrary, there is complete harmony between the interests of the country and the class interests of the proletarian International, both in time of war and in time of peace; both war and peace demand the most energetic development of the class struggle, the most determined fight for the Social-Democratic programme."

Lenin makes the point that the author of the text is clearly a revolutionary, but that approaching the question in that way leaves room for opportunists to maneuver. He explains that "in saying that the class struggle is the best means of defence against invasion, Junius applies Marxist dialectics only half way.... Civil war against the bourgeoisie is also a form of class struggle, and only this form of class struggle would have saved Europe (the whole of Europe, not only one country) from the peril of invasion."

In the Junius Pamphlet, Luxemburg broke only partially from the old social-democratic approach to war and national defense. She harks back to 1848, when national unification and national-democratic struggle against feudal reaction, both internally and externally, were on the order of the day. The SPD right wing, in justifying their vote for war credits, cynically pointed to how Marx and Engels would have in 1848 supported Germany in a war against Russia. In turn, Luxemburg inverted the argument by giving as the theoretical basis for her opposition to the war the outmoded program of 1848—i.e., before the development of imperialism. But as Lenin pointed out:

"At the present time, the *objective* situation in the biggest advanced states of Europe is different. Progress, if we leave out for the moment the possibility of temporary steps backward, can be made

*continued on page 8*



Dietz Verlag

**Rosa Luxemburg agitates against war preparations, 1907.**

them, but do not feel themselves secure enough and strong enough to declare war on the entire capitalist system. These look to capitalist parties and governments for relief."

In other words, it is entirely a question of ideology.

With the partial exception of Rosa Luxemburg, every revolutionary Social Democrat accepted this definition of the source of opportunism, including Lenin. For example, until the beginning of the First World War, Lenin generally characterized the Russian Mensheviks as a petty-bourgeois intellectual tendency *outside* the workers movement. When asked to justify the formal split in 1912 between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Lenin argued that the bulk of the class-conscious workers movement in Russia rallied to the side of the Bolsheviks, while the Mensheviks' base consisted largely of intellectuals. This argument had its limits, though. Empirically, at the time of the split, it may have been true, but the view that the Mensheviks were outside the workers movement was impressionistic. The wave of patriotism that swept Russia with the outbreak of World War I, including among workers, served to increase the proletarian base of the opportunist Mensheviks at the expense of the Bolsheviks, who had a revolutionary defeatist line. So, by the time of the February Revolution of 1917, the Menshe-

stand for the entire Marxist body and the uncurtailed slogans, independently of the liquidators and apart from them.

"Unity is a great thing and a great slogan. But what the workers' cause needs is the *unity of Marxists*, not unity between Marxists, and opponents and distorters of Marxism."

But it was only with the outbreak of the First World War that the nature of opportunism became more widely clear. Opportunism was in fact not something that emerged outside the workers movement but was a component of the workers movement. It was not merely a question of ideology but of the material interests of the labor bureaucracy. The bourgeoisie was able to buy off the bulk of the labor bureaucracy, what American Marxist Daniel De Leon called the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class"—as well as a tiny minority of the working class, the labor aristocracy—through the spoils of imperialist plunder.

We often make the point that the AFL-CIO officialdom views the world through the same lens as the capitalist rulers. This is not simply ideological, but has its roots in the fact that for these labor tops to retain their privileged position atop the labor movement, they not only need the maintenance of capitalism but also benefit from the dominance of their own imperialist bourgeoisie.

The first writings to deal with the

First published in 1978, this pamphlet provides a detailed historical and theoretical account of Lenin's struggle for a vanguard party. Includes: "In Defense of Democratic Centralism"

This edition also includes: "The Fight for a Leninist Vanguard Party"

**\$2** (56 pages)

**Order from/make checks payable to:**

Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



## Marxism, War...

(continued from page 7)

only in the direction of *socialist* society, only in the direction of the *socialist revolution*. From the standpoint of progress, from the standpoint of the progressive class, the imperialist bourgeois war, the war of highly developed capitalism, can, *objectively*, be opposed only with a war *against* the bourgeoisie, i.e., primarily civil war for power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie....

“Junius came very close to the correct solution of the problem and to the correct slogan: civil war against the bourgeoisie for socialism; but, as if afraid to speak the whole truth, he turned *back*, to the fantasy of a ‘national war’ in 1914, 1915 and 1916.”

How classical Social Democracy regarded defensive and predatory wars is quite different from how we look at the question. In Karl Liebknecht’s 1907 book titled *Militarism and Anti-Militarism*, for example, the way he defines the nature of a war is over who fired first. For example, if France and Germany go to war and France initiates it, it would be defensive on the part of Germany and predatory on the part of France. The problem is, you see, the whole nature of war had changed. The compulsion for interimperialist war is not so that France and Germany could annex part of each other’s countries. If it were, then one could speak of the defense of Germany against tsarist aggression even in the context of World War I. But it wasn’t. Wars between imperialist powers are to divide and re-divide imperialist spheres of influence, to fight over who will dominate the colonial and semicolonial countries. In the process, Germany would attack France and vice versa, but the nature of the war is predatory and reactionary on both sides.

And it is this understanding of imperialism and war that has guided genuine Marxists since World War I. But there are important differences today. Most of the peoples in the dependent world are not now subject to direct colonial rule but to imperialist economic domination through the agency of local bourgeoisies. The collapse of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, in removing a common enemy and point of unity for the imperialists, has meant a resurgence in rivalries between the imperialists similar to the pre-1914 days. But unlike that time, when you had a number of relatively equal Great Powers, today there is a sole superpower.

That situation cannot continue forever, but it does define how the American rulers act, how their imperialist rivals act and how antiwar activists, particularly in Europe, may view their relations with

their rulers. For example, the sentiment of pacifism among the working population in a country like Germany, which has lost two world wars, is understandable. Likewise, there is the sense that antiwar activity must centrally be mobilized against American imperialism, since it is American imperialism that is waging most of the wars out there.

We solidarize with those who protest the crimes of U.S. imperialism. But we

fear the legal electoral work of the party more than its illegal work, he concludes: “Rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades, which decided the issue everywhere up to 1848, had become largely outdated. Let us have no illusions about it: a real victory of insurrection over the military in street fighting, a victory as between two armies, is one of the rarest exceptions.” When this was published in the SPD’s theoretical journal in 1895, it

the other way and go back and join the working class in fighting your main enemy.

The American army today is not a draft army. But it’s a unique volunteer army. The U.S. is the most powerful state in the world, and therefore must maintain a strong and large military. And the numbers come from working-class and minority youth. They do this through what we call an economic draft—inducing poor and working-class kids to join the military in return for financial, educational and employment benefits. So, in its composition, the U.S. Army more resembles a draft army than a volunteer one. Marxists are not bloodthirsty fiends who savor the idea of American working-class youth getting killed. Any such deaths are the direct responsibility of the bourgeoisie. But we also stand for the military defeat of U.S. imperialism and understand that such defeats can have profound effects not only on soldiers but also on society at large. As the experience of the Vietnam War shows, the casualties and the hatred for the war among many of the troops resulted in a major meltdown in the American military. The Vietnamese fighters understood this, and issued propaganda especially to black enlisted men such as the following: “U.S. Negro Army-men! You are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK clique is perpetrating against your family at home.”

The opening pages of the Junius Pamphlet powerfully capture the scenes on German streets during World War I, once jubilant with patriotic fervor but now depressed with the heavy weight of countless corpses:

“The show is over. The German sages, the vacillating spirits, have long since taken their leave. No more do trains filled with reservists pull out amid the joyous cries of enthusiastic maidens. We no longer see their laughing faces, smiling cheerily at the people from the train windows. They trot through the streets quietly, with their sacks on their shoulders. And the public, with a disturbed face, goes about its daily tasks.

“In the sober atmosphere of pale daylight there rings out a different chorus: the hoarse croak of the vultures and hyenas of the battlefield.... The patriotic cannon fodder that was loaded into the trains in August and September rots on the battlefields of Belgium and the Vosges, while profits are springing like weeds into the fields of the dead. The harvest must be brought quickly from the barns. From across the ocean a thousand greedy hands want to take part in the plunder.”

It was Lenin’s Bolshevik Party that understood how to take the justified desire for peace among Russia’s working masses and turn it into a struggle for social revolution and working-class power. And in our work on war, we really invent nothing new. We study and learn the lessons of the past in order to be able to intervene into the struggles of today. We know that the mightiest empires can fall, that this terribly arrogant ruling class with its absurd designs of world domination also sits atop a volcano waiting to erupt, that will one day erupt against the exploitation and oppression the mass of the population daily lives through. Our struggle as a fighting propaganda group is to intervene into every situation armed with the revolutionary program of Marxism in order to win over the cadre that can assemble a workers party to sweep away the capitalist system.

Since the destruction of the USSR, the U.S. has grown dizzy with one military success after another, and the current displays of imperialist arrogance are a distillation of that unprecedented string of victories. War is an inevitable part of capitalist imperialism. And if this system remains in place, whatever slaughter may take place in Iraq will soon be overshadowed by the prospect of war between the real powers, including with nuclear weapons. This underlines both the urgency and seriousness of the tasks faced by Marxists—that truly, now more than ever, humanity is faced with the prospect of either socialist liberation or imperialist barbarism. ■



**Bolshevik antiwar agitator addresses Russian troops at the front during World War I. In Latvia, Bolsheviks in the army published “Pravda of the Trenches.”**



VAAP

also warn against any illusions that German imperialism could be a lesser evil than American imperialism. That German imperialism is itself not waging a large scale war against the peoples of the world is largely a product of its military inferiority in contrast to the U.S. Any rectification of this imbalance will necessarily be accompanied by increased austerity and militarization at home, that is, at the expense of the working masses. There is therefore a direct link between opposition to imperialist plunder—plunder carried out by another imperialist power—and defense of working-class interests in a country like Germany.

### Revolutionary Work in the Army

Friedrich Engels’ introduction to Marx’s *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850* has an extraordinary clause that the right-wing socialists latched onto around the turn of the last century. After talking about the importance of universal suffrage, about how the bourgeoisie came to

caused a stir. The right wing interpreted it as Engels saying that violent revolution was impossible, at least in Germany, that what was left was legal parliamentary work. However, when the SPD published the article, they removed its revolutionary content—just edited it out. Engels wrote them a furious letter stating that they made him look like a “good democrat.” But that, too, was kept secret.

In fact, Engels makes the point that in the classic time of street fighting, “the barricade produced more of a moral than a material effect. It was a means of shaking the steadfastness of the military. If it held out until this was attained, victory was won; if not, the outcome was defeat. This is the main point which must be kept in view, also when examining the outlook for possible future street fighting.” In publishing the article, Bebel and Kautsky took out that last sentence about future street fighting. Connected with this, later in the article Engels makes what may appear to be a cryptic point: that the ancient Roman Empire, in its decay and as it was persecuting Christians, had within its army a growing number of Christians who were extremely useful when they gained power. I.e., having supporters of your program in the military can be very beneficial.

Not knowing about the missing parts of the article, which only got published after the Russian Revolution, in 1907 Karl Liebknecht published *Militarism and Anti-Militarism*. Engels’ point was that because of technology and organization, the capitalist armies had grown far too large and powerful to be defeated in street battle. Liebknecht’s point was that because of technology and organization, more than ever the capitalist armies rely heavily on the working class for their cannon fodder. These are workers in military uniform, who can be influenced by revolutionary propaganda. The army must be split by winning its proletarian base to the fight for socialism through revolutionary work in the military. And in fact, that’s exactly what the Bolsheviks did. There was already mass disaffection in the Russian army, with huge numbers of soldiers deserting by the beginning of 1917. And, it should be noted, Liebknecht’s slogan—“the main enemy is at home”—was not initially directed at the workers, but at the soldiers on the front—i.e., turn your guns



Novosti

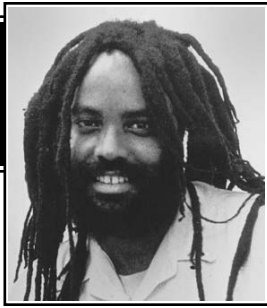
**7 November 1918: Red Army soldiers parade in Moscow with banner hailing “Communism.”**

The ICL has long published the above photo with date given as 1917, based on the best documentation available. Recent research, including in the newly accessible Russian State Cinema-Documentation Archives (Krasnogorsk) has led us to conclude that this photo was taken on 7 November 1918, at a Moscow celebration of the first anniversary of the October Revolution.



# From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

## Gov. Ryan's Song



Gov. George Ryan, in the last passing days of his first and only term, saved the best for last.

He sent shock waves across the nation when he issued four pardons to men sitting on the Condemned Units of the state's prison system, opening the doors of the dungeon for four men, one who sat in the shadow of the gallows for nearly two decades. Speaking in a soft, Midwestern accent, his words were as damning as the death sentences that his orders negated: "The system is broken."

With these orders, he ushered four men, Stanley Howard, Madison Hobley, Aaron Patterson, and Leroy Orange, from the darkest corners of the land, into the light. Quoting a tale of that famed Illinoisan, Lincoln, he recalled the job of the nation's chief executive, who, reviewing execution orders for those who were convicted of violating the military code during the Civil War, asked one of his generals why one young man had no letters in his file from any who wished his life spared. The General, shrugging his shoulders matter-of-factly, said, "He's got no friends." Lincoln, lifting his pen, remarked, "He's got one friend," and pardoned the man from the clutches of the hangman. Ryan said those four denizens of Death Row, each having been subjected to police torture, falsified confessions, prosecutorial misconduct, and judicial blindness to these vile transgressions, had one friend, and decided to cut the Gordian knot, by issuing full pardons to the four, and proving a friend to men who had few real friends in the dark, deserted abode of death. Before day's end, three of the four walked away from the closed cell of state repression, into the fresh air of a windy Chicago, and freedom.

By so doing, Ryan has dealt a serious, crippling blow to the state system of death, and the inability of the dignitaries and officials of the system, to cure the serious problems of the death penalty, were shown in sharp and stark relief.

It is fitting that Ryan, a one-term, embattled polit-

ico, and a non-lawyer ("I'm a pharmacist," he repeatedly explained) would be the one to solve these deep and troubling problems. It is equally as fitting that the problems of the Illinois death system came to light, not through the members of the Bar, but through the meanderings of students of journalism, whose investigations led to the ultimate conclusion voiced by Ryan some years later: "The system is broken."

Hours after his unprecedented announcement of the pardon package, Ryan's office would announce another earth-shattering event: the full commutation of every man on Death Row in the Prairie State. By the end of the week, 167 folks would no longer be on Death Row.

Elected as a conservative Republican who "never gave a moment's thought" to the rightness or morality of the death penalty, Ryan would be the last politician one would expect would strike down the nation's 7th largest Death Row in the United States.

With a hoarse voice, his nervousness evident by his fidgety presentation, the one-term governor struck a mighty blow against the Death System in America.

Exercising a breadth of vision that is truly remarkable in an American sitting (albeit departing) politician, Ryan spoke of the problems facing not just those condemned to death, but in the processes, prosecutions, and judgments affecting those condemned to "life." His words were a rare gubernatorial recognition of the deficits in the system entire: "The system has proven itself to be wildly inaccurate, unjust, unable to separate the innocent from the guilty...and racist."

His commutations of over 150 death sentences, unquestionably stays the cold hand of death, but it does not address the injustices that led many to Death Row, nor keeps them confined on "Life Row," for those problems, those deep cracks in the system, remain.

It is tragically true that, as Ryan charges, "The system is broken." The bitter truth is his efforts, while undeniably noble, and unquestionably historic, does

not fix the mess.

To his credit, Ryan assembled a blue-ribbon panel to examine the state's death system, and the commission, after three years, came to a political, yet systematic, conclusion: "The system is broken." The commission, composed of prosecutors, judges, defense lawyers and scholars, joined in the report, and issued some 85 recommendations to "fix" the system, including the recording of confessions, from beginning to end, the end of "jailhouse confessions," (which are notoriously unreliable, yet influential to unknowing jurors), and a host of others. The legislature opted to ignore the recommendations, just as the state's highest judiciary chose to ignore many of the most blatant injustices, and Ryan, the "non-lawyer," felt compelled to act.

If the system is broken, how can the system fix the system?

Ryan's very extraordinary act, seems to suggest, that it cannot. For while those four men are free of unjust convictions, are they the *only* four innocents on the state's large Death Row, or larger Life Row? That seems unlikely.

In another sense, as the underlying system remains tightly embedded in place, what of those to come? How many years will other innocents suffer in the suffocating holds of steel and brick slave ships (prisons) before another scandal threatens the stability of the system?

Like the notorious cycle of police corruption cases that plagues U.S. cities, like New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and—yes—Chicago, the problem isn't fixed, but passed on to later administrations.

It seems an abolition movement must take this, not as a final victory, but as a first step of a systematic battle for real change.

We may all agree that the system is broken. But that mere agreement does not insure that that which is broken will indeed be fixed.

11 January 2003

©2003 Mumia Abu-Jamal

**Contributions are urgently needed for Mumia's legal defense. Checks made payable to "SEE Mumia Free" should be sent to: Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, 20178 Rockport Way, Malibu, CA 90265.**

**If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370.**

## Death Penalty...

(continued from page 12)

hopeful Senator Joseph Lieberman, who railed that "it did terrible damage to the credibility of our system of justice," and Democratic Chicago mayor Richard Daley, who presided over many of the frame-up prosecutions as Cook County State's Attorney in the 1980s. The current State's Attorney, Richard Devine, also a Democrat, has filed suit to overturn ten of Ryan's commutations. Meanwhile, his office is revving up to fill the vacancies Ryan opened on death row, seeking death sentences in 50 new cases which are heading to trial. Ryan's successor as governor, Chicago Democratic machine hack Rod Blagojevich, called Ryan's move "a gross injustice." In his race for governor, Blagojevich won the endorsement of the

Fraternal Order of Police by coming out against Ryan's proposal to require videotaping of all police interrogations, saying it would make it "a lot more harder" to "convict criminals." This is no aberration coming from Democrats; it was the Clinton administration's 1994 omnibus crime bill that expanded the number of offenses punishable by death and drastically curtailed the ability of death row inmates to challenge their convictions.

Among the most vocal Democratic Party opponents of the death penalty have been black politicians like New York's Al Sharpton and Chicago's Jesse Jackson Sr. and Jr., both of whom hailed Ryan's clemency order. The black Democrats posture as defenders of black and minority rights, decrying the "prison-industrial complex" and police brutality. But their aim is to refurbish the credentials of the capitalist "law and order" system by curbing its "excesses" and giving it the appearance of fairness. Jackson Sr. and other liberals promote as an "alternative" to the death penalty the slow death of life without parole. This living hell was described in stark terms by Ryan, who consigned all but a handful of Illinois' former death row inmates to life without parole: "They will be confined in a cell that is about 5-feet-by-12-feet, usually double-bunked. Our prisons have no air conditioning, except at our supermax facility where inmates are kept in their cell 23 hours a day. In summer months, temperatures in these prisons exceed 100 degrees. It is a stark and dreary existence.... Life without parole has even, at times, been described by prosecutors as a fate worse than death."

Also hailing Ryan's decision is the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) and its Campaign to End the Death Penalty (CEDP), which have been active in recent years in pushing for state moratoriums on executions. The

**Chicago, August 1995: Emergency protest against threatened execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal.**

WV Photo

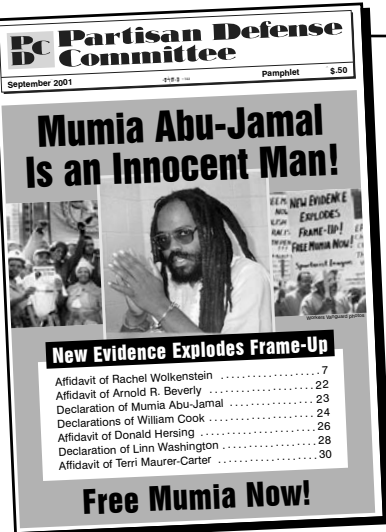


ISO/CEDP campaigns are designed to bring in precisely those bourgeois politicians, like Jackson, whose aim is to "fix" this system of racist capitalist *injustice*. Thus, as moratorium campaigns were building in several states a few years ago, the ISO/CEDP dropped their call to abolish the death penalty in favor of the slogan "Moratorium Now, Abolition Next." This was intended to find "common ground" with supporters of the death penalty who were uneasy about the prospect of executing innocent people. In the same light, CEDP spokesman Alice Kim proclaimed, "There shouldn't be a death penalty if there's any chance that innocent people can be executed" (*Socialist Worker*, 26 May 2000).

In echoing the bourgeois liberals, the ISO and its CEDP obscure the class nature of the capitalist state as the instrument of organized violence by the rulers against the exploited and oppressed. As long as the capitalist class remains in power, any gain won by working people, including even abolition of the death penalty, is *reversible*. The death penalty *was*

suspended nationally in 1972, as the result of the massive social turmoil created by the civil rights movement and U.S. imperialism's losing war in Vietnam. But as the level of social struggle ebbed in the mid-1970s, the death penalty was brought back with a vengeance.

As we wrote at the time of the first execution following the reinstatement of capital punishment, the death penalty "is one among many proofs of the failure of capitalism in its death agony.... The hangman and the firing squad will not be eliminated through civil libertarian reforms. Only the victorious proletarian revolution that overthrows the bourgeois state will abolish the death penalty for good and smash the prisons in the course of rooting out the whole vicious cycle of crime, punishment and repression caused by capitalism" ("State Butchers Gilmore," WV No. 141, 21 January 1977). To get rid of the barbaric state machinery of capitalist rule requires the forging of a workers party, in opposition to the Democratic and Republican parties of capital, to lead the multi-racial proletariat to power. ■



**\$1.50 (32 pages)**

**Order from/pay to:**  
Partisan Defense Committee  
P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station  
New York, NY 10013

# Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

significant because, even before a massive escalation of the air war or the beginning of a ground invasion, there is already a high degree of proletarian opposition to war in Europe. Earlier this month, Scottish train drivers engaged in an expressly political antiwar class-struggle action by refusing to deliver war materials slated for the largest NATO weapons depot in Europe. In Italy, the metal workers trade-union federation has announced a political strike the day war begins.

In the U.S., the organizers of the January 18 antiwar protests, Workers World Party's International ANSWER coalition, strive above all to keep their liberal-pacifist movement safe for preachers and Democratic Party politicians. The left liberals and the occasionally left-speaking sham socialists seek the "reform" of capitalism's excesses and a more "humane" imperialism. The "road" to this ersatz utopia is paved by their political subordination to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Insofar as these Democrats have a different perspective, it is toward supporting the "soft" approach of the United Nations—i.e., to continue the starvation blockade and the weapons inspections and to secure UN mandate for an all-out war. Here, too, the purpose is to stifle and contain any class-struggle opposition to the war.

As we wrote in a statement of the International Communist League (WV No. 790, 1 November 2002):

"The colossal military advantage of the United States against neocolonial Iraq—a country which has already been bled white through 12 years of UN sanctions which have killed more than 1.5 million civilians—underscores the importance of *class struggle* in the imperialist centers as the chief means to give content to the call to defend Iraq. Every strike, every labor mobilization against war plans, every mass protest against attacks on workers and minorities, every struggle against domestic repression and against attacks on civil liberties represents a dent in the imperialist war drive. To put an end to war once and for all, the capitalist system that breeds war must be swept away through a series of revolutions and the establishment of a rational, planned, egalitarian socialist economy on a world scale. *Anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home! Defend Iraq against imperialist attack!*"

## For Class Struggle Against U.S. Capitalist Rulers!

The wave of patriotism ignited by the criminal attack on the World Trade Center is receding amid the increasing real miseries and wholesale attacks on democratic rights that confront the American population. At least 42 union locals, 14 district or regional union councils and four national unions have issued some statement of opposition to a war against Iraq. These resolutions are a reflection of growing discontent among workers with the consummately venal Bush administration, which showers billions in tax cuts on their cronies while workers get pink

New York's health workers union contingent at January 18 D.C. protest.

WV Photo



slips and watch their pensions go down the drain. In the last two years alone, official unemployment has jumped by 50 percent, from a rate of 3.9 percent to 6 percent. This does not include the many millions of ghetto and barrio youth who have never found a job in the first place and the millions more long-term unemployed who are not even counted.

As the last vestiges of welfare and other social programs are shredded, the number of homeless has skyrocketed in the last two years. And those who do have jobs often find themselves one paycheck away from losing their homes and health coverage. Despite the endless predictions by Wall Street hacks that the recession is finally coming to an end, Brad DeLong, a University of California economist, aptly observed: "2003 doesn't feel good at all for the unemployed, and it doesn't feel very good for the employed" (*New York Times*, 26 January).

Many of the union antiwar resolutions simply oppose unilateral U.S. action against Iraq, i.e., advising that American imperialism proceed under the cover of the UN. Others place opposition to war within the framework of American "democracy," such as a January 14 resolution by the National Executive Board of the American Postal Workers Union which "opposes the pending war with Iraq" and continues that "pre-emptive attacks against sovereign states are not consistent with the principles of freedom and respect for all people."

On January 11, trade unionists from dozens of unions across the country attended a conference in Chicago hosted by Teamsters Local 705, the second-largest in the country, to establish "U.S. Labor Against the War." The result of this gathering was a motion opposing the war which proclaimed that American labor has no quarrel with the ordinary citizens of Iraq, that Bush has failed to make a case that an Iraqi threat exists and that U.S. military action "threatens the peaceful resolution of disputes among states, jeopardizing the safety and security of

the entire world." The motion further denounces "the billions of dollars spent to stage and execute this war [which] are being taken away from our schools, hospitals, housing and Social Security," says "Bush's drive for war serves as a cover and distraction for the sinking economy, corporate corruption and layoffs," and condemns "the war [as] a pretext for attacks on labor, civil, immigrant and human rights at home." The conferees resolved to "promote union, labor and community antiwar activity."

Such resolutions are a reflection of the growing dissatisfactions of American workers with their power- and profit-maddened rulers. Moreover, these calls stand as a *partial* rejection of the "national unity" chauvinism that is pledged by the top echelons of the trade-union bureaucracy. While AFL-CIO top John Sweeney has promised to stand shoulder to shoulder with U.S. imperialism in its "war against terror," Teamsters head James Hoffa Jr. is a member of Bush's "Committee for the Liberation of Iraq."

For its part, the Chicago conference was dominated by hoary veterans of the pro-Democratic Party peace crawls that they claim brought an end to the war in Vietnam who now occupy positions in the middle echelons of the labor bureaucracy. A participant at the conference, Joann Wypijewski, approvingly reported in *CounterPunch* (17 January): "The final resolution...includes neither patriotism nor Palestine; it makes no rhetorical flourish on the nature of fundamentalism or capitalism; it neither embraces the UN nor denounces American imperialism." And consciously so.

Invited to speak at the meeting as the obligatory spokesman for bourgeois opposition to the war was one David Cortwright of Keep America Safe/Win Without War, described by Wypijewski as "a mainstream patriotic coalition of Americans who are concerned about Iraq but don't want to go to war." Bill Fletcher, former education director of the AFL-CIO, delivered what has become

the ritual incantation in the service of class collaboration: "We have to have a broad level of unity. If we make anti-imperialism the premise of our work then we're building a sect, and I'm too old for that." The aim of such types is not to mobilize labor's social power in concrete acts of class struggle against U.S. imperialism—e.g., political protest strikes against the war or stopping shipments of military goods. Rather their aim is to organize labor as one more constituent of a pro-Democratic Party "peace movement."

The political points that the *CounterPunch* article enthuses were left out of the Chicago resolution are in fact the very basis upon which any genuine proletarian opposition to the war must be mobilized. Workers must be brought to understand that they share no interests with their capitalist bosses; that imperialist war is simply the extension of capitalism's quest for the profits that are solely obtained by the exploitation of labor; that for the imperialists guns *are* butter; that the UN operates solely to perpetuate and enforce the world's domination by the major imperialist powers. On the side of the U.S., the coming war is completely predatory; on the side of Iraq, it is just and defensive. Workers must be won to the military defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialism's neocolonial war, recognizing that this in no way implies any political support to Saddam Hussein, the butcher of his own working people and oppressed.

For America's capitalist rulers, workers are mere fodder for profit at home and war abroad. But precisely because it is the working class that produces the wealth of society, it is the sole force capable of ending imperialist war through overthrowing the capitalist system that spawns war. The defense of Iraq against imperialist attack is integrally linked to the defense of the working masses here against increasing exploitation and oppression. The task is to forge a workers party to educate and mobilize the proletariat with the purpose of abolishing capitalist class rule. And that requires breaking the allegiance of the workers to the class-collaborationist, national-chauvinist labor leaders.

## The Lessons of Vietnam

Reformists like WWP/ANSWER and left-talking union bureaucrats hope to recapitulate the "successes" of the Vietnam-era National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), which was dominated by the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). But it wasn't the peace demonstrations that drove the U.S. out of Vietnam. The Vietnam War had a combined character as both a resistance to imperialist colonial domination and, given the military intervention of the Vietnamese deformed workers state in the North, the prospect of a social overturn of capitalist rule in the South. It was the battlefield victory of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants that brought an end to the war by defeating U.S. imperialism.

Then as now, it was argued by the antiwar reformists that any course other than "broad"—i.e., class-collaborationist—unity would be "sectarian." The SWP reformists sought to ensure that NPAC would be safe for Democratic Party liberals by imposing a political ban—including by physical force when necessary—on those who sought to advance revolutionary politics. Thus, at a 1971 NPAC conference, the SWP launched a physical attack against the Spartacist League and Progressive Labor Party when we protested the presence of Democratic Senator Vance Hartke. Such repression was not a historical accident. Capitalism's rulers do not countenance proletarian opposition and demand that the social-democratic supporters of the capitalist order "deal" with such opposition.

Today, ANSWER finds itself criticized by the very bourgeois elements it courts for raising such "extraneous" issues as the demand for the release of black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. These critics "wish that when it sponsors antiwar rallies, it would confine its message to opposition to the war" (*New York*

Rauschkolb/Plain Dealer



Howard Ruffner



Left: Cleveland Teamsters rally in April 1970 during wildcat that defied strikebreaking by Ohio National Guard which was called out a few weeks later against Kent State students protesting Vietnam War (above), killing four.



Times, 24 January). While the Spartacist League defends the Workers World Party against this redbaiting, we recognize that when push comes to shove, the reformists carry out the liberals’ wishes with baseball bats. WWP was certainly not hesitant to use violence and to appeal to the capitalist cops in defense of its class collaborationism against the Spartacist League at the time of mass protests against the U.S. intervention in El Salvador in the early 1980s.

After an April 1967 antiwar march brought out a half-million people in New York City alone, veteran Marxist Isaac Deutscher remarked that one dock strike against the war would have been worth a thousand peace demonstrations. His point was not to dismiss student activism but to point out that the political mobilization of labor prepares the basis for the overturn of the capitalist system of exploitation, oppression and war.

By the late 1960s there were enormous opportunities for mobilizing class-struggle opposition against the Vietnam War. As the number of American GIs returning in body bags mounted, popular opposition to the war spread from the campuses to the black population and sections of the working class. The heavily black and working-class base of the U.S. military in Vietnam had become semi-mutinuous, as measured by the number of officers who were being “fragged”—i.e., killed by their own soldiers. In the U.S., the inflationary effects of the massive war spending and the government’s imposition of a wage freeze were fueling large-scale strikes. In 1970, postal workers defied the law and staged the first major strike ever against the federal government. This was followed by a Teamsters wildcat action in Ohio.

The American trade-union bureaucracy was, at that time, dominated by the Cold Warriors who had achieved their posts by driving the reds who had built the CIO out of the trade unions in the aftermath of World War II. AFL-CIO chief George Meany was a rabidly racist anti-Communist who if anything was to the right of Republican president Richard Nixon in his support for the war. And “progressive” labor leaders like Victor Reuther, one of the CIA’s men in purging Communists from the labor movement in Europe and a prominent labor figure at NPAC rallies, voiced opposition to the war in order to defuse labor discontent. Reuther personified the link between the labor movement and the Democratic Party. In the view of social democrats like Reuther, labor opposition was to be confined to their presence on the speaker’s stand at antiwar mobilizations.

The Spartacist League called for military victory to North Vietnam and the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front and raised the slogan: “All Indochina must go Communist!” We sought to galvanize the widespread discontent that was expressed through economic strike struggles and to win the working class to political opposition to the war, raising the call for “Labor strikes against the war!” In a 23 March 1970 leaflet directed at the postal strike, we wrote: “The same army that Nixon is threaten-



Spartacist Group Ireland at December 7 antiwar demonstration in Dublin.

ing to use in breaking the postal strike is being used to suppress the Vietnamese workers and peasants in order to keep Asia safe for American business.” When the National Guardsmen initially called out to break the Ohio Teamsters wildcat gunned down four antiwar protesters at Kent State, we explained in a May 1970 leaflet titled “Blood and Nixon”:

“Only the working class, because of its economic power, can lead an effective anti-war struggle. Only the class-conscious workers can lead the struggle to defeat capitalism....

“Workers whose job conditions and falling real wages force them continually into conflict with the bosses must see as essential to their own interests the fight to end the bosses’ imperialist war and to break from the bosses’ warmonger political parties to form a party of labor. These struggles—like struggles for militant economic demands—will necessitate the replacement of the treacherous union bureaucracies which seek at every turn to tie the workers to the status quo.”

### Only Workers Revolution Can End Imperialist War!

But the class-collaborationist antiwar movement that the likes of ANSWER hark back to embraced the class enemies of the proletariat. As bourgeois opposition to that *losing* imperialist war mounted, finally forcing Nixon to begin withdrawing U.S. troops, the pacifist antiwar movement simply melted away. The thousands upon thousands of youth won to opposition to U.S. imperialism quickly exited the struggle against that system. America’s rulers moved to reassert the dominance of their class and their state power with an assault on labor, on the scant gains of the civil rights movement, and on the very ability of the poor to survive. However mad, Bush’s declaration of eternal war against all those who dare to oppose the American imperialist order, both at home and abroad, is a simple expression of the logic of the decaying capitalist system.

To intervene into last October’s antiwar protests, the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs built Revolutionary Internationalist Contingents around the slogans: “For class struggle against the

U.S. capitalist rulers! Defend Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack! Down with the UN starvation blockade!” As we argued in the mobilizing call for these contingents: “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:

## Transit...

(continued from page 12)

fellow worker and in a union fight for safe working conditions! At the time of the deaths of Baby and Antony, we wrote in “New York Transit Workers vs. Union-Busting Austerity” (WV No. 792, 29 November 2002):

“Unsafe procedures should be stopped *before* workers are killed or injured! Transit workers must fight for *elected union safety committees* with the power to *shut down any unsafe working conditions on the spot.*”

Such gains, as with any union gains, will not be won in the courts or state-house, but through the independent mobilization of the working class in its own interest. They will be won not through parading Democratic Party officials like Hillary Clinton—who supports the slave-labor Taylor Law—across speakers’ platforms at union events, but through class struggle. But looking to the courts and Democratic Party politicians is precisely the perspective of the TWU bureaucracy—from the “old guard” to the present leadership under Roger Toussaint.

Toussaint used the occasion of the memorial for Bennerson to announce the ratification of his sellout deal with Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) head Peter Kalikow. But this deal which Toussaint brags will bring “dignity” and “respect” to the overwhelmingly black and immigrant transit workers in fact reinforces the deathtrap conditions they already face. This contract, which ties paltry wage increases to “productivity,” is a recipe for increased speedup which will mean more workers killed and maimed. Already, transit workers are subjected to “broadbanding”—forcing workers to do jobs they’re not trained for—while supervisors routinely impose “standard rate times” (SRTs) for a given task, i.e., cutting corners on safety to decrease the amount of time that jobs are supposed to take. As a transit worker told WV, workers are ordered to do dangerous work all the time, putting individuals under tremendous pressure. And when they turn to the union for help, they’re often told to do the work and grieve it later.

Transit workers have justly denounced the “plantation justice” of the MTA bosses who are ratcheting up disciplinary measures to squeeze ever more out of a workforce increasingly composed of

the working class.”

Today, such bourgeois opposition as exists is, in the main, oriented toward directing U.S. imperialism’s attentions against the “real threat,” the North Korean deformed workers state, and ultimately against all such societies—China, Vietnam and Cuba—where capitalist rule was overthrown. Self-proclaimed leftists like the International Socialist Organization and the Revolutionary Communist Party now decry the arrogance of the Bush administration in its bid for world domination. But these same groups made their own, albeit pusillanimous, contribution to U.S. imperialism’s rise as the world’s only “superpower” by supporting the forces of imperialist-backed counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state, the major counterweight to the untrammelled ambitions of U.S. imperialism.

The Spartacist League seeks to educate and when possible organize the proletariat against imperialist war and in its class interests, which ultimately require the overthrow of capitalism through socialist revolution. Proletarian opposition to the depredations of the imperialist exploiters can, in the words of Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, be pursued “only through the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, that is, by widening, deepening, and sharpening those revolutionary methods which constitute the content of class struggle in ‘peacetime’” (“Learn to Think,” May 1938). We fight to forge the internationalist workers party needed to lead the proletariat to power. ■

minorities. These workers face the same type of “justice” outside work as they run a daily gauntlet of racist cops brutally enforcing “law and order.” In the first two days of this year alone, the NYPD shot dead four people, three of them black youth. And today immigrant workers are a particular target for victimization as the government steps up its racist roundups and detentions in the name of “fighting terror.”

Janell Bennerson died because the transit bosses, eyes fixed on the bottom line, could care less about the lives of workers. And this is certainly something not lost on the overwhelming majority of the TWU Local 100 membership. Even in the face of massive fines and other penalties carried by the strikebreaking Taylor Law, over 10,000 workers at two mass meetings unanimously voted to strike. Despite the workers being atomized through a mail-ballot vote on the contract, nearly 40 percent voted against. And the seething anger of the ranks in any case had little outlet, as no alternative to the Toussaint leadership was offered either by the venal “old guard” or by such putative oppositionists as the “Rank and File Advocate” group who boosted the Toussaint leadership to power.

It will take some hard class struggle to fight for safe working conditions and defend the very lives of workers from the transit bosses. Such a struggle should be linked to a fight against the Taylor Law, which makes it illegal for the TWU to strike. It should be linked to the fight for union jobs with full union wages, benefits and protections for the most vulnerable members of the workforce—WEP workers, provisionals, new-hires and apprentices. But such a fight requires a union leadership that understands that the interests of workers and bosses can never be reconciled; a union leadership that relies on the social power of the workers, rather than appealing to Democratic Party politicians; a union leadership that will fight to link the social power of the black and immigrant workers in the TWU to the defense of the impoverished masses in the ghettos and barrios. The struggle to forge such a leadership will be key to the building of a revolutionary workers party that will bring to power those whose labor creates the wealth through overthrowing the rule of those who currently expropriate the fruits of this labor. ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

\$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard*  
(includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*)  
international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail    \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

796

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

☐ New    ☐ Renewal

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## As NYC Transit Workers Seethe Over Sellout Contract

# More Blood on the Tracks

## For Elected Union Safety Committees!

Janell Bennerson, a 39-year-old black conductor working the A line on January 18, died a horrifying death when her head struck the bars of an eight-foot-high gate on the platform of the Aqueduct/North Conduit Ave. station. Her hat, scarf and safety glasses were found on the platform after the accident. Bennerson is survived by her longtime companion and 16-year-old daughter.

This gruesome death was industrial murder, which even the most elementary safety precautions would have pre-

vented. The gate was not marked to alert conductors of its presence and extended to approximately eight inches from the window through which Bennerson was leaning as the train left the station.

The transit bosses are blaming Bennerson for her own death, with one transit official claiming she “failed” to keep her head inside the train car as it pulled out (*Newsday*, 20 January). Moving into damage control mode, the transit bosses reduced the fence’s height to three feet by the next day as they continue to

“investigate” the incident.

Bennerson is the third transit worker to be killed on the job in the last three months. In November, two maintenance workers, Joy Antony and Kurien Baby, were killed in the space of two days due to unsafe working conditions. Grotesquely, Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 president Roger Toussaint alibied the company’s callous attitude to workers’ safety, declaring that recent deaths in the industry had to do “with the extremely hazardous nature of the work we do.” He further stated that car door trouble, which is what likely led to Bennerson leaning out her window in the first



NY Daily News

Janell Bennerson

place, “comes with the territory.”

Any time that a transit worker is killed on the job, the workforce should lay down its tools in honor of its slain

*continued on page 11*

# Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

CHICAGO—In a stunning indictment of state-sanctioned murder, Illinois governor George Ryan ordered a blanket clemency for the state’s death row inmates on January 11, commuting 167 death sentences to life without parole, or, in three cases, lesser terms. The day before, he pardoned four other death row prisoners outright, three of whom walked out of prison that day.

As Marxists, we oppose the racist death penalty in principle—for the guilty as well as the innocent. We do not accord the state the right to say who lives and who dies. We welcome Ryan’s blanket clemency order, and any other measure curtailing the barbaric death penalty, just as we oppose any move to expand and intensify the repressive powers of the capitalist state.

A conservative Republican, Ryan explained that he had taken office as “a firm believer in the American System of Justice and the death penalty.” “I never intended to be an activist on this issue. I watched in surprise as freed death row inmate Anthony Porter was released from jail,” Ryan said, referring to the case of a mentally retarded black man who was released after his frame-up was exposed in 1999. “He was 48 hours away from being wheeled into the execution chamber where the state would kill him. It would all be so antiseptic and most of us would not have even paused, except that Anthony Porter was innocent of the double murder for which he had been condemned to die.”

It was the Porter case—and those of 12 others freed from death row after proving their innocence—that prompted Ryan to declare a moratorium on executions three years ago and appoint a commission to find remedies to “fix” the death penalty. In his January 11 speech, Ryan declared:

“It is difficult to see how the system can be fixed when not a single one of the reforms proposed by my Capital Punishment Commission has been adopted. Even the reforms the prosecutors agree with haven’t been adopted. So when will the system be fixed? How much more risk can we afford? Will we actually have to execute an innocent person before the tragedy that is our capital punishment system in Illinois is really understood?”



Cheney/Chicago Tribune

Leroy Orange (left) and Aaron Patterson (far right), two of four death row inmates pardoned by Illinois governor George Ryan.



AP

Innocent people have been executed and will continue to be executed until the death penalty is abolished. This was sanctified by the Supreme Court in 1993, when it rejected an appeal by Texas inmate Leonel Herrera to hear evidence that another man had confessed to the murder he was convicted of. Herrera was executed later that year. Frame-ups and racist victimizations by the cops and courts are integral to the American legal system, which is designed to serve the interests of the capitalist ruling class against the working people and oppressed of this country. And in racist America, this means that the prison population is overwhelmingly black and Hispanic. In emptying Illinois’ death row, Ryan pointed out: “Of the more than 160 death row inmates, 35 were African American defendants who had been convicted or condemned to die by all-white juries. More than two-thirds of the inmates on death row were African-American.”

Exemplifying the racist death penalty in the U.S. is the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther Party member and MOVE supporter who was framed up for the 1981 murder of a Philadelphia cop, and then sentenced to death because

of his outspoken opposition to racist oppression. Over a year after Jamal’s death sentence was overturned by a federal judge, and nearly two years after the confession of the man who really killed the cop was filed in state and federal courts, Jamal remains on death row. **Free Mumia now!**

It is notable that even as the Bush administration wields the spectre of terrorism to whip up support for augmenting the state’s repressive powers, there is continuing apprehension among large sectors of the population toward the application of the death penalty. This has largely been propelled by the highly publicized cases of **over 100 innocent people** who were falsely convicted and sentenced to death but freed in recent years, mostly due to DNA evidence. Expressing a concern shared by a number of politicians, novelist and lawyer Scott Turow, a member of Ryan’s death penalty commission, wrote in a *New York Times* (17 January) op-ed piece that “the risk of undermining Americans’ faith in the legal process... may be the most compelling reason for those who now favor the death penalty to reconsider their position.”

All four of the men Ryan pardoned—Stanley Howard, Aaron Patterson, Madi-

son Hobley and Leroy Orange—were victims of Chicago’s notorious Area Two police torture chamber in the 1980s. Headed by Commander Jon Burge, who learned his “interrogation techniques” as an MP during the Vietnam War, the Area Two cops routinely secured confessions by hooking live electrical wires to the testicles of black “suspects,” or suffocating them with plastic typewriter covers. Patterson was convicted for a 1986 double murder based in large part on a phony confession squeezed out of him by the Chicago cops. He had the presence of mind to scratch a chilling message into a bench in the interrogation room: “Aaron lied—4/30—Police threaten me with violence—slapped and suffocated me with plastic—signed false statement to murders.” But even after a defense investigator managed to get a photograph of the message on the bench, Patterson remained on death row. Outrageously, Illinois authorities are sticking Patterson with a three-year parole term for an unrelated conviction, forcing him to wear an electronic monitoring bracelet.

Ryan’s blanket clemency was met with howls of protest by Democratic presidential

*continued on page 9*