

U.S. Out of Iraq, Afghanistan Now!



U.S. Marine Corps



Read/WPN

Haditha: U.S. Marines on patrol, April 1; relatives and neighbors mourn over bodies of victims of November 2005 massacre by Marines.

U.S. Imperialism's Massacre in Haditha

War crimes and atrocities against civilians are integral to imperialist wars of conquest and occupation. U.S. imperialism's dirty colonial war against the heroic workers and peasants of Vietnam was historically stamped by the 1968 My Lai massacre. The U.S. occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have produced the torture chambers of the Abu Ghraib and Bagram prisons. The Iraq occupation is now also stamped by the slaughter of men, women and children that occurred on 19 November 2005 in Haditha.

The Haditha massacre is a graphic and bloody illustration of what the U.S. has been carrying out in Iraq for three years—an endless succession of atrocities, from the leveling of Falluja and other cities to widespread bombing of homes and the shooting of random Iraqis. The Haditha massacre, in which U.S. Marines murdered at least 24 people, has been confirmed by too many sources for the Bush administration and the Pentagon brass to keep a lid on it. The military has ordered two investigations—one into the massacre and a separate one into its coverup. This came after *Time* magazine earlier this year presented military officials in Baghdad with the findings of its own investigation. *Time* interviewed survivors of the massacre after being presented with a videotape made by an Iraqi journalism student at Haditha's hospital and inside victims' houses. *Time* published the story, "One Morning in Haditha" in its 27 March issue.

Even Iraq's puppet government, which runs anti-Sunni death squads out of the interior ministry, denounced the Haditha massacre, saying it would conduct its own inquiry and demand that U.S. offi-

cials turn over their investigative files. Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki said that violence against civilians had become a "regular occurrence" by U.S.-led coalition forces who "do not respect the Iraqi people. They crush them with their vehicles and kill them just on suspicion" (*New York Times*, 3 June). Iraq's own ambassador to Washington announced that, in a separate incident, Marines had gunned down his cousin in his home.

A March 15 raid on a home in the Iraqi town of Ishaqi that left as many as 13 Iraqi civilians dead has already been whitewashed by the U.S. military, which announced that it had found no wrongdoing by the commander who led the raid. In a May 30 incident, U.S. soldiers shot to death two women, Nahiba Husayif Jassim and Faliha Mohammed Hassan, as they raced to the hospital for the delivery of Nahiba's baby. Meanwhile, military prosecutors are preparing murder, kidnapping and conspiracy charges against seven Marines and a Navy corpsman for the fatal shooting of an Iraqi in April in Hamandiyah, west of Baghdad.

The killings in Haditha last November were methodically carried out over a period of three to five hours. In retaliation for a roadside bombing that killed a U.S. soldier, Marines went on a rampage, bursting into homes and gunning down residents. Their victims—some of whom were finished off execution-style with a single shot to the head—included women, infants and an elderly man in a wheelchair.

The Marines began their killing spree at the home of Abdul Hamid Hassan Ali, an 89-year-old amputee. They shot him and then turned their guns on his three sons and their families. The man's death

certificate says that he took nine rounds to the chest and abdomen. His seven-year-old grandson described seeing his mother fall to the ground, dying. The boy's aunt, Hibba Abdullah, snatched her baby niece off the floor and ran from the house. Abdullah's husband also slipped out of the house and ran to warn his cousins nearby. As he returned, he ran into the Marines and died in a hail of gunfire.

The Marines then moved to the house next door, where customs official Younis Salim Nusaif lived with his wife, Aida Yassin, and their six children. Yassin was bed-ridden, so her sister had come to stay with the family and help with housework while she recuperated. All were slain—the parents, the visiting sister, and five children ranging in age from four to 15. The only survivor, a 12-year-old girl, later recounted how she lay on the ground, pretending to be dead, while her sister's blood gushed over her. "I was wishing to be alive," she said. "Now I wish I had died with them" (*Los Angeles Times*, 1 June). Moving to a third house, the Marines burst in on four brothers and gunned them down. The final victims were four university students and their taxi driver, who arrived on the scene by chance.

According to the *Washington Post* (27 May): "The remains of the 24 lie today in a cemetery called Martyrs' Graveyard. Stray dogs scrounge in the deserted homes. 'Democracy assassinated the family that was here,' graffiti on one of the houses declared." Some accounts attest to warplanes dropping 500-pound bombs on houses. After the Marine Corps paid \$38,000 in compensation to relatives of some of the victims, Marjorie Cohn, president-elect of the National Lawyers

Guild, wrote in a column in the Web publication *truthout* (30 May): "These types of payments are made only to compensate for accidental deaths inflicted by US troops. This was a relatively large amount, indicating the Marines knew something was not right during that operation."

For the U.S. occupiers, Iraqi life is so cheap that the Pentagon does not bother to keep track of the number of Iraqi dead. Putting together the first Gulf War, the years of sanctions imposed by the United Nations and enforced mainly by the Democratic Clinton administration, and the present war and occupation, the number is staggering: nearly two million people out of a population of 25 million.

In its devastation of semicolonial Iraq, U.S. imperialism has taken one of the more advanced countries of the Near East and turned it into a living hell: whole towns laid to waste; entire families annihilated; imprisonment and torture at the hands of the imperialist occupiers; death-squad killings, communalist bombings and attacks that purposely target civilians as they try to go about their daily lives. ***For the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan!*** There will be no reckoning for the crimes perpetrated by U.S. forces in Abu Ghraib, Haditha and elsewhere in Iraq and Afghanistan short of the defeat of U.S. imperialism through workers revolution.

War Crimes and Liberal Apologists

Marjorie Cohn's article also noted that John Murtha—Democratic Party hawk turned bourgeois defeatist on Iraq—both

continued on page 6



THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1905

SEE PAGE 8

Exchange on NYC Transit Strike

25 December 2005

Comrades,

Bouncing around things within my own small world is not conducive to clear thinking. This letter is written in the hopes I can gain some clarity and thereby be better able to carry forward with a correct revolutionary perspective.

In reading your recent leaflet directed to the striking transit workers of TWU Local 100 (20 December 2005) I'm confused not by what is said but what is left unsaid. You rightly call for the ranks of labor to rally behind and with the TWU in a struggle to smash the capitalist Taylor Law and to lead a fight against the continuing attacks that are destroying our health and pension benefits and any job security we have left. You stridently point out the need for labor to break from the twin parties of racism and war and build a workers' party that struggles for power.

What I find confusing is that you call for all of this while we know the leaders of TWU Local 100 and the rest of NYC labor are ensconced in the Democratic Party cesspool and for all I know Roger Toussaint, President of TWU Local 100, is a functionary in that party. Expecting types such as this to take on Wall Street and the bourgeois State is expecting a pig to fly because it faces the roasting pan.

For sure you point out the need for mass picket lines and elected strike committees but who is going to facilitate this? Now if someone in the union were putting out such a leaflet, this would make more sense. As it is one wonders who you expect to lead such actions?

In the present period, with the corporate media having blanket control of

**December 2005
NYC transit strike
picket line.**



information to the masses, it is imperative that any transport union facing strike action in an urban area needs to prepare the masses in advance. Not possible you say? Well shouldn't you tell the membership that this is a requirement of leadership in the absence of a revolutionary workers' party? With jail time and fines as a club Toussaint folded quicker than iron from a back yard furnace yet your leaflet makes no mention of this possibility. Again the need for TWU members to do something other than paying dues and agitating in the train stations and maintenance yards. Just my opinion of course.

Looking on the arena from 3,000 miles away I'd say Toussaint and his cronies were forced to call a strike for fear that if they didn't they would be unable to control the ranks. Hell even the Democratic Party has to pose as a defender of the working stiff once in a while. Better

to get in a fight knowing you're going to lose than be flat footed, sucker punched and look like a chump. I'd even guess the MTA had similar thinking. The capitulation in Dec. 2002 by this same TWU leadership still rankled the ranks and the attempt by the MTA to eliminate conductors from trains and station agents from the booths threatened the rank and file and riding public directly yet you made no mention of this in the leaflet.

A steady user of the New York subway system is acutely aware that upgrading and refitting are desperately needed and this would take huge amounts of labor and time to do. The MTA is aware of this and knows that cuts will have to be made to allow this to just begin. Of course they expect the workers and the riding public to bear the costs of these burdens. In

reality only a workers revolutionary government can correct and improve the mass transport system of New York City and most of the metro areas of this country. This fact needs to be hammered into the ranks' minds as a practical reason for the need for a workers' party.

As I said views within and from my narrow window are often restricted and unclear. I call on your experience and knowledge in the hopes to gain insight and wisdom.

Yours in struggle
Freedom Now For All Class War
Prisoners & A Socialist World!
C.M.
San Francisco, CA

WV replies: This letter was received shortly after the three-day strike by New York City transit workers had ended. It raises questions that merit consideration, at the heart of which is the relationship between our small revolutionary propaganda group and the trade unions. In belatedly printing this letter, we raise one important consideration in response.

The Spartacist League leaflet addressed questions of strategy and political program posed in the strike, raising in that regard criticisms of the policies of the union leadership. Our posture was to close ranks in defense of the union and its leadership against the bosses and the capitalist state, which were screaming for the head of TWU Local 100 president Roger Toussaint, the leader of the strike. The leaflet did not directly attack Toussaint. Since we could not point to an alternative leadership of the strike, to do so would only have served to weaken the strike. The leaflet and an article assessing the strike appear in WV No. 861 (6 January).■

On Bible-Thumping Bigots

19 May 2006

Regarding "Britain: Anti-sex Witchhunt": The "sexual revolution" of the 60's and 70's is being assaulted by the "anti-sex counterrevolution", spearheaded under the slogan of "family values". I refer you to the cover story in New York Times Magazine of this weekend past, entitled "The War on Contraception". A good source for information on this front is gay sex columnist Dan Savage, who periodically updates the attempts of Bible-thumping bigots to push us back to the Victorian Age. It would be foolish of us to underestimate their power, when close to 40% of the US population describe themselves as "born-again Christians". My objection to "Biblical morality" is that there is no such thing! The Jews were a primitive, barbaric people and anyone

who takes their crude attempts at a system of ethics as a basis for governing ourselves today is nuts! And the fact is, the Bible-thumpers don't! They make something up that suits their agenda and find a verse to support it—agenda first, Bible afterwards. It is all nonsense.

However, the results of this nonsense have to be taken seriously—the gains of the sexual revolution have to be defended. I have my electronic typewriter to engage in this matter, and it is not clear to me what other means could be brought to bear—you are the Workers Vanguard, so you know better than me how to defend revolutionary gains. In all events, the values of the family are not our values, nor is the family itself a value we wish to preserve.

Yours,
C. O.

CORRECTION

In "Government Spy Network Exposed, Again" (WV No. 871, 26 May), WV editorial introduced a factual error, which was drawn to our attention by a reader on the West Coast. In the article, we wrote: "The 'progressive' International Longshore and Warehouse Union [ILWU] bureaucrats call for implementing the Maritime Transportation Security Act [MTSA] and its mandated 'background checks' of waterfront

workers, which would directly threaten blacks and Latinos who have been on the receiving end of racist cop harassment." In fact, while the ILWU leadership calls for the implementation of particular sections of the MTSA, it opposes background checks of longshore workers "on the grounds that employers might dismiss longshoremen because of previous convictions that have no bearing on security," as a 24 April *Journal of Commerce* article put it.

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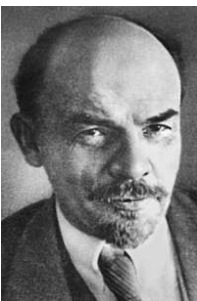


1905: Dress Rehearsal for October Revolution

In describing the principal stages in the development of the Bolshevik Party, V.I. Lenin pointed to the rich experience acquired in the 1905 Revolution in Russia. That experience, combined with a foundation in Marxist theory and the steeling of its cadres in the years of reaction (1907-10), was crucial in preparing the Bolshevik Party to lead the proletariat to power in the October Revolution of 1917.



TROTSKY



LENIN

All classes came out into the open. All programmatical and tactical views were tested by the action of the masses. In its extent and acuteness, the strike struggle had no parallel anywhere in the world. The economic strike developed into a political strike, and the latter into insurrection. The relations between the proletariat, as the leader, and the vacillating and unstable peasantry, as the led, were tested in practice. The Soviet form of organisation came into being in the spontaneous development of the struggle. The controversies of that period over the significance of the Soviets anticipated the great struggle of 1917-20. The alternation of parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle, of the tactics of boycotting parliament and that of participating in parliament, of legal and illegal forms of struggle, and likewise their interrelations and connections—all this was marked by an extraordinary wealth of content. As for teaching the fundamentals of political science to masses and leaders, to classes and parties alike, each month of this period was equivalent to an entire year of "peaceful" and "constitutional" development. Without the "dress rehearsal" of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 would have been impossible.

—V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder (1920)

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EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Rosemary Palenque

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EDITORIAL BOARD: Helene Brosius (managing editor), Kathleen Harris (letters editor), Linda Jarreau (production manager), Bruce André, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Helen Cantor, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, George Foster, Walter Jennings, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour

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9 June 2006

Israel Out of the Occupied Territories!

Imperialists, Zionists Starve Palestinians



EPA photos

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert rapturously received by U.S. Congress, May 24. Desperate poverty in Gaza intensifies as imperialists, Zionists strangle economy.

Since the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas took office in March, a U.S.-led international imperialist boycott has been starving the Palestinians for the “crime” of exercising the “democracy” that George Bush trumpets he is bringing to the Near East. In response to Hamas’ electoral victory in January, the Israeli government has cut off the monthly transfer of some \$55 million in taxes and other fees it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. For their part, the United States imperialists have suspended the transfer of millions of dollars in annual aid to the already impoverished Palestinians. Also suspending aid are the European Union (EU) imperialists, whose posture as “peacemakers” in the Near East has been replaced by a drive to punish the Palestinians for electing Hamas. Meanwhile, the Arab bourgeois regimes, supposed “friends” of the Palestinians, have abandoned the Palestinian masses to starvation—even the paltry \$70 million promised by the obscenely wealthy oil sheikdoms of Saudi Arabia and Qatar has yet to find its way to the Occupied Territories.

As Israeli journalist Amira Hass put it in *Ha’aretz* (21 April): “Every day another country announces that it is canceling the economic aid that over the past five years has become the Palestinian nation’s oxygen.” Although “humanitarian” aid has recently been allowed, the infrastructure to administer it is in collapse. The United Nations predicts that 70 percent of Palestinians will be jobless by the end of the year, and one UN representative warned, “Many families are being forced to reduce their number of meals to just one a day.” Already, more than half of Palestinian children suffer from malnutrition.

“I don’t know how we’re going to cope.... Before, we were in crisis management, now we are in disaster management,” reports the director of Shifa, Gaza’s largest hospital. Patients have already perished for lack of medicine. There are dwindling anesthetics for surgery, and cancer patients are sent home to die. A massive public health crisis, including the spectre of cholera, looms as garbage piles up and sewage systems collapse. Even before the January elections, the Karni crossing—the main checkpoint for transporting all commercial goods and medicines into Gaza from Israel and for exporting goods out of Gaza—had been (and still is) closed more than half the time.

The all-sided pounding of the Palestinians in the wake of Hamas’ electoral victory must be put in the broader context of imperialist machinations in the region. As it maintains its occupation of Iraq, the U.S. threatens Iran with sanctions and attack if it proceeds with its nuclear program, while annually giving Israel, armed with over 200 nuclear weapons, billions in military and financial aid. Israel has announced it will participate fully for the first time in NATO naval exercises in the Black Sea, “as part of preparations for a possible showdown with Iran,” as Reuters (29 May) put it. ***Defend the Palestinian people! Israeli troops, settlers out of all the Occupied Territories! Down with U.S. aid to Israel! U.S. out of Iraq—hands off Iran! Down with the U.S./EU/Israeli starvation embargo against the Palestinians!***

With Hamas in office, the war against the Palestinians has now been made synonymous with the “war on terror.” The day before recently elected Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert addressed a joint session of Congress, receiving no less than 16 standing ovations, the U.S. House overwhelmingly passed the “Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006,” which called for an international boycott of the Palestinians. Olmert earned his spurs in 1996 when, as the Likud mayor of Jerusalem, he oversaw the massacre of at least 62 Palestinians and the wounding of hundreds more who were demonstrating against the opening of an ancient tunnel under a wall of the Al Aksa mosque in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem (see “Zionist Bloodbath,” WV No. 653, 11 October 1996).

Indeed, as Olmert spoke of “peace” before Congress on May 24, Israeli troops invaded downtown Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, in broad daylight, killing four and injuring some 70 people. On May 30, the Israeli military killed four more Palestinians in its first deep military incursion into Gaza since last summer’s exit. Israel’s “disengagement” from Gaza has in fact allowed the Zionist rulers to more effectively tighten their grip around this congested bit of land and the 1.3 million Palestinians trapped in it.

The election of Hamas is bad news for women, Christians and secular Palestinians. It is also a gift to Israel’s rulers, who have used it to pursue their policies without the pretense of “negotiations.” Upon his election, Olmert declared that Israel’s permanent borders would be unilaterally

set by 2010. Kadima, which Olmert currently leads, was founded by now comatose ex-prime minister Ariel Sharon—the man responsible for the slaughter of some 2,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982—working in collaboration with longtime Labor Party leader Shimon Peres. Kadima adopted the line of Labor Zionism that it was necessary to carve up the Occupied Territories (as opposed to annexing them entirely) in order to ensure that Israel maintain a Jewish majority. Today, Kadima is in coalition with the thoroughly bourgeois Labor Party, whose head, Amir Peretz, is the Minister of Defense. An example of the racist and exclusivist nature of the Zionist state can be seen in the Israeli High Court decision in May upholding a law that denies Palestinians from the Occupied Territories who are married to Israeli citizens the right to live in Israel with their spouses.

Hamas’ victory has also been used by the Zionist rulers to further their strategy of divide and rule—of fomenting (if not directly provoking) warfare among Palestinian factions. The turf warfare between Fatah and Hamas supporters is exacerbated by the quest for sinecures in the Palestinian Authority’s multitudinous security services—overwhelmingly dominated by Fatah supporters—which were set up by the 1993 Oslo “peace” accords for the purpose of policing the ghettoized Palestinians for Israel. In the 1980s, Israel promoted Hamas as a counterweight to the secular Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (see “U.S./Israel Tighten Screws on Palestinians,” WV No. 864, 17 February). Now, Israel has announced that it will allow a shipment of arms to the personal guard of Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas, supposedly to protect him against threats by Hamas supporters.

The ostensible reason for the starvation embargo against the Palestinians is that Hamas refuses to recognize the state of Israel or renounce suicide bombings. The first is a bogus pretext given that Hamas has no means to do anything about Israel’s existence and has in fact repeatedly sought negotiations with Israel since the elections. But now, as part of the pressure on Hamas, Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas is cynically planning a referendum in the Occupied Territories because of Hamas’ refusal to accept a document that essentially endorsed the PLO’s “mini-state” program—i.e., a two-state “solution,” with a

Palestinian statelet in the West Bank and Gaza.

As for suicide bombings, indiscriminate terror against Israeli civilians is a crime from the standpoint of the proletariat. However, the terrorism of Hamas and others pales in comparison to the daily state terror perpetrated by the most militarily powerful regime in the region against a largely defenseless people. Israel has made the slaughter of Palestinians, including children, a regular occurrence.

The situation of the Palestinian masses is desperate. The fundamental basis of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict is that two interpenetrated peoples lay claim to the same piece of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of self-determination by one will necessarily be at the expense of the other. The key to the national liberation of the Palestinians lies in the overthrow of capitalist rule in Israel through Arab-Hebrew workers revolution and throughout the region. Only in this way can the right of return for the millions of Palestinian refugees throughout the Near East be exercised. Any other “solution” will only deepen and intensify the Palestinians’ oppression.

When the PLO nationalists became isolated after the 1991-92 collapse of the Soviet Union, which had provided the PLO with financial and political aid, they accepted the Oslo accords, which did not “offer even the most deformed expression of self-determination,” as we wrote in “Israel-PLO Deal for Palestinian Ghetto” (WV No. 583, 10 September 1993). We warned: “By its act, the PLO has invited fundamentalist reactionaries like Hamas to pose as the only fighters against the Zionist occupation. Petty-bourgeois Arab nationalism has been shown to be the bankrupt and impotent dead end that it always was.”

Under Oslo, the number of settlers mushroomed to nearly half a million, and the Zionists continued creating “facts on the ground,” building the apartheid wall in the West Bank, an electric fence around Gaza and hundreds of military checkpoints. The growth of reactionary, anti-woman and anti-Semitic outfits like Hamas has also been one of the bitter fruits of Oslo and the PLO’s political bankruptcy.

Most significantly, under Oslo, the Palestinians became marginalized from Israel’s economy as the Israeli capitalists increasingly resorted to the use of migrant labor from Asia and elsewhere to replace the Palestinians. This has meant even greater poverty for the Palestinians, while making it easier for the Zionists to intensify the isolation of the Occupied Territories. With the growth of unemployment, hunger and destitution, many Palestinians face the prospect of starving or leaving—i.e., “ethnic cleansing” by attrition.

The fight for proletarian rule in the Near East requires a struggle to break the Hebrew proletariat from the grip of Zionist chauvinism and win them to the defense of the Palestinian people—an enormous task that will likely first require the victory of socialist revolution in one or another of the surrounding countries. Nonetheless, Israeli society is divided along class and national lines—including over one million horribly oppressed Palestinian Arab “citizens” of the state. There are also occasional but real expressions of sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians—such as the June 3 demonstration of some 2,000 Jews and Arabs in Tel Aviv against the occupation and the economic embargo. In turn, the Palestinians must also be broken from petty-bourgeois nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. What is essential is the forging of Leninist-Trotskyist parties throughout the Near East to lead the struggle for the national and social liberation for all the peoples of the region through the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East. ■

For a Class-Struggle Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

The fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal has reached a critical juncture. Last December, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals put Mumia's case on a "fast track" for decision. Both Mumia and the prosecutors are appealing decisions made in 2001 by U.S. District Court judge William Yohn, who overturned Mumia's death sentence but upheld every aspect of his frame-up conviction. In a short time, even as soon as six months, the court could decide what is next for Mumia: death, life in prison or more legal proceedings.

A prize-winning journalist, a Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, a supporter of the MOVE organization and a defiant opponent of racist state terror, Mumia was railroaded to death row in 1982 by Philadelphia's notorious cop and court frame-up machine on false charges of killing Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. The frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal has come to symbolize what the racist death penalty is all about. A legacy of chattel slavery, capital punishment in the U.S. is the lynch rope made legal.

Mumia is an innocent man. But innocence means nothing to the forces of "law and order," represented by both the Democratic and Republican parties, who want to see Mumia dead because they see in him the spectre of black revolution, a voice of defiant opposition to the racist oppression of black people that is a cornerstone of American capitalism. The state's quarter-century-long determination to carry out his foul murder is a warning to all who challenge vicious cop repression in the ghettos and barrios, to workers who stand up for their rights on the picket lines, to those who protest U.S. imperialist depredations in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world.

Mumia is up against the vast resources of the capitalist state and its mouthpieces in the bourgeois press who howl for his blood. Court after court has barred the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot Faulkner, as well as the mountains of additional evidence of Mumia's innocence. With the execution last December of Stanley Tookie Williams, over substantial popular opposition, the bloody rulers sent a signal that they want



13 May 2000: Revolutionary Contingent at San Francisco rally opposed reliance on racist capitalist courts and politicians in fight to free Mumia.

Mumia next. California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger made this clear when, in denying clemency for Williams, he cited the fact that his book *Life in Prison* was dedicated to—among others—Mumia Abu-Jamal. To give an idea of what Mumia is up against: many of the Third Circuit judges testified for the reactionary Samuel Alito during his January Supreme Court confirmation hearings. Among the members of the Third Circuit is Marjorie Rendell, wife of Democratic Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell, who was the Philadelphia D.A. during Mumia's frame-up trial and has spent his political life dedicated to seeing Mumia executed.

It was protests of millions worldwide, crucially involving trade unionists, that won a stay of execution for Mumia in August 1995. At the time, and over the next few years, Mumia's name was a household word. Articles about Mumia and his own written commentaries were a regular feature of the U.S. black press. Mumia's face was emblazoned on the T-shirts of student activists and ghetto youth; his name became a symbol in hip-hop for racist frame-up and also rolled off the

lips of many union activists. Not today. A movement of millions was demobilized. This can be seen in the dwindling attendance at annual demonstrations on Mumia's April 24 birthday. Time is running short. Mass protest must be rekindled now—nationally and internationally.

Mumia's freedom will not be won through reliance on the rigged "justice" system or on capitalist politicians, whether Democratic, Republican or Green. The power that can turn the tide is the power of millions—working people, anti-racist youth, death penalty abolitionists—united in struggle to demand the freedom of this innocent man. Crucial to this perspective is the mobilization of the labor movement, which gave a taste of its social power in New York City last December when striking transit workers crippled the financial center of U.S. capitalism.

Lessons must be drawn as to how Mumia's supporters were demobilized. The answer lies in the political program advanced by a host of liberal and reformist organizations that centered their protest actions around the call for a "new trial" for Mumia. That call represented a program of reliance on the racist capitalist courts which at every level have declared, as in the infamous Dred Scott case, that Mumia has no rights they are bound to respect.

Reformists' Faith in the Capitalist State

The call for freedom for victims of the capitalist frame-up system has historically been a staple of the workers movement: Free Sacco and Vanzetti, Free the Scottsboro Boys, Free Huey Newton, Free Angela Davis. The demand for their freedom expressed the belief that their imprisonment for even an hour was an outrage. Since 1995, the call to free Mumia has been explicitly rejected as the basis for major mobilizations by the reformists of the Workers World Party (WWP), Socialist Action (SA) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), among others.

At a January 1999 “Emergency Leadership Summit Meeting,” representatives of SA, Solidarity, WWP, the RCP’s Refuse & Resist, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and others adopted a strategy and slogans for the April 24 “Millions for Mumia” demonstrations and beyond. Following a debate, the “free Mumia” slogan and opposition to the death penalty were rejected in favor of calling for a new trial.

Solidarity's Steve Bloom approvingly wrote in *Against the Current* (March/April 1999): "Everyone who spoke from the podium sounded a similar theme: We must build a broader and more inclusive movement, one which reaches out to the American mainstream."

For the reformists, the “mainstream” included those who were agnostic on Mumia’s innocence. At bottom, the “new trial” slogan was an appeal to bourgeois liberal forces who see Mumia’s case not as the frame-up of an innocent man but as an isolated “miscarriage of justice,” an aberration that threatens to stain the reputation of American “democracy.”

To those liberal forces, Mumia is just another of the anonymous 3,300 men and women on death row, who should be provided all the trappings of “due process” before being sentenced to execution or life behind bars. Behind the attempts to limit the struggle for Mumia to a call for a new trial is a *political program* premised on reliance on the capitalist state—a program directly counterposed to a mobilization of working-class power for his freedom. The capitalist state and its courts are not neutral institutions but organs of repression against the working class and the oppressed. The reformists’ approach dissipated the force of millions around the world who identified the fight for Mumia’s freedom with the struggle against state terror and the fight against their own exploitation and oppression. Since taking up Mumia’s case in 1987, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee have advocated pursuing all possible legal proceedings in Mumia’s case. But we place all our faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatsoever in the justice of the courts. We realize that the courts will only respond if the pressure of the mass movement, particularly that of the labor movement, is brought to bear.



IV Photo

WWP's International Action Center calls for "new trial," sowing illusions in capitalist "justice" system that is intent on executing Mumia.

Although some opportunist “socialists” now raise freedom for Mumia in conjunction with calls for a “new trial,” their politics remain in the framework of reliance on the bourgeois state. The Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, initiated by supporters of the International Bolshevik Tendency, organized a 2000 “Labor Conference for Mumia” that resolved to appeal to Clinton’s Justice Department to investigate Mumia’s case. The conference also resolved to lobby delegates to the Democratic National Convention to pass a motion calling for a new trial. Currently, WWP’s International Action Center (IAC) Web site posts a petition to Pennsylvania’s governor pleading that he direct the state attorney general to take over the case from the Philadelphia district attorney’s office and “confess error” in the court.

Because the Beverly confession makes clear that Mumia's case consists of a conscious, racist, political frame-up of an innocent man, the response by bour-

***Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!
Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!***

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As Mumia Abu-Jamal’s case has entered a legal “fast track” and his life is again in grave danger, the Partisan Defense Committee has initiated a new campaign to free Mumia that is winning important support in the U.S. and internationally. Several prominent authors attending a May 22-28 international PEN conference in Berlin, including Nobel prizewinner Nadine Gordimer, signed a statement issued by the PDC demanding “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal now! Abolish the racist death penalty!” In Mexico, Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) signed the statement, giving his return address as “mountains of southeast Mexico.” Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano has also added his signature.

Gordimer, a staunch opponent of South Africa’s former racist apartheid regime, wrote one of her most famous books, *Burger’s Daughter* (1979), in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprising, during which black students and other protesters were slaughtered. Many of her books were banned in South Africa during that period. Others who signed the PDC statement at the PEN conference included Jiří Gruša—president of PEN international, an organization that defends writers against persecution—poet Chenjerai Hove of Zimbabwe and Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery of Gush Shalom.

The U.S. capitalist state, its cops and courts have wanted Mumia dead for decades. And today, Mumia’s foes are also stepping up their efforts. We have previously reported that the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis named a street in honor of Mumia on April 29 (see “Mumia Honored in France,” WV No. 870, 12 May). In response, the Philadelphia and national Fraternal Order of Police launched a counterattack, sparking renewed tirades against Mumia and his supporters by bourgeois politicians and the Philadelphia media. A resolution

Campaign Update

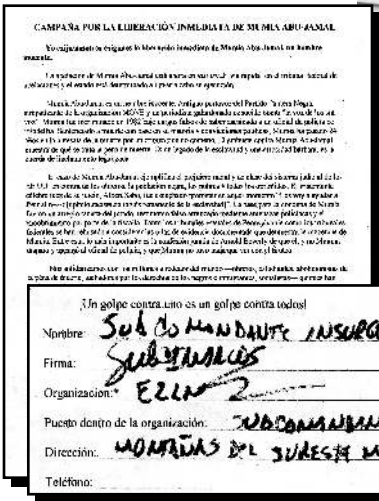
introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (H. Con. Res. 407) and sponsored by several Pennsylvania Congressmen, both Democrats and Republicans, demands that the French government take action against Saint-Denis unless it changes the street name.

This sinister blowback points to the urgency of redoubling efforts to fight for Mumia. While favoring all possible legal proceedings on Mumia’s behalf, the PDC launched its current campaign based on

the understanding that it is only through mobilizing the social power of the working class in mass protest that Mumia’s freedom can be won. Crucially important is winning active support for this campaign in the labor movement, in the U.S. and around the world.

Adding to numerous unions and trade union officials that have joined the fight for Mumia, the New York chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) recently signed the PDC state-

Le Bolchévik



Street named in honor of Mumia Abu-Jamal in Saint-Denis, outside Paris, April 29. Inset: Endorsement of campaign to free Mumia received from Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos, from the “mountains of southeast Mexico.”



geois liberals and their reformist tails to this evidence has ranged from outright hostility to indifference. In 2001, Mumia’s former co-counsel Dan Williams published a lying book titled *Executing Justice* that derided the Beverly confession as “insane,” dismissing any suggestion that the cops knowingly framed up Mumia. Dave Lindorff—a regular contributor to the radical/liberal *CounterPunch* who is often cited as an expert on Mumia’s case—was an early and loud voice trashing the Beverly confession. In an afterword to his book *Killing Time* (2003), Lindorff asks himself whether Mumia actually shot Faulkner and answers “maybe.” This didn’t stop the International Socialist Organization from lauding Lindorff’s book for “exposing the flaws in Mumia’s case” (*Socialist Worker*, 16 December 2005). Over the past two years, *Workers World* has barely mentioned the Beverly confession, while *Socialist Action* has totally disappeared it.

The Court of Appeals ruled in December that Mumia could raise three issues on his appeal—the racially biased jury selection in his 1982 trial, the D.A.’s prejudicial summary argument that Mumia would have “appeal after appeal,” and the grossly biased post-conviction state hearings before Judge Albert Sabo in the 1990s. These challenges should be heard in court. But every aspect of Mumia’s case shows how much the capitalist rulers want him dead. Thus the harsh reality is that the Court of Appeals—like every other court in this case—has refused to hear the countless other violations of Mumia’s rights or even consider the Beverly confession.

In a recent interview with the French Communist Party’s newspaper, *L’Humanité* (25 April), Mumia said of the current appeal: “I have very little hope in a favorable decision from the Federal Court which has agreed to look at three points of the petition submitted to appeal by my lawyers.” The ref-

ormists have a very different appreciation. The IAC hailed the December ruling as a “resounding federal court victory.” Refuse & Resist posted an article by Lindorff headlined, “A Stunning Win for Mumia Abu-Jamal.” Not to be outdone, *Socialist Action*’s Jeff Mackler declared, “There are several possible outcomes. The worst—but least expected—scenario would be one in which Sabo’s unconstitutional sentencing instructions are upheld, and Mumia faces execution” (*Socialist Action*,

December 2005). This touching faith in the court process was the last statement on Mumia’s case to have appeared in *Socialist Action*.

For Class-Struggle Defense!

In describing a late stage in the court proceedings that led to the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927, James P. Cannon, founder of the International Labor Defense, wrote:

“The latest move should be suspected as another maneuver of the same sort, designed to give the outward appearance

of still more scrupulous ‘fairness’ in the process by which the two labor fighters are to be burned alive.

“Remember, also, that powerful influences of the exploiting class are being brought to bear for the carrying out of the death sentence, and that the final issue, just because it is an issue of the class struggle, and not merely an isolated instance of the miscarriage of their so-called ‘justice,’ will depend upon the power and might of the class forces set into motion on each side.

“The great task, therefore, in the few fateful days remaining, up to the last

continued on page 7

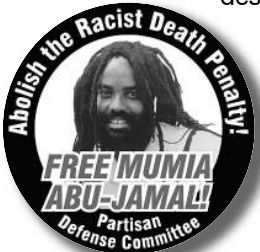
Join the Campaign!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

Make a contribution today, payable to “National Lawyers Guild Foundation” (earmarked for “Mumia”) and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 130 Morningside Drive, Suite 6C, New York, NY 10027.

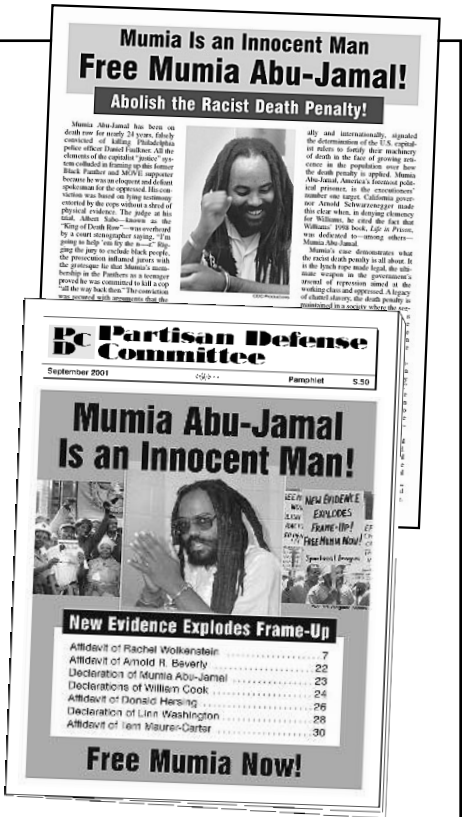
Organize protest! Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organizations demanding Mumia’s freedom. Get your union or organization to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicize Mumia’s case in your union or organization’s newsletter.

Spread the word! Contact the PDC for copies of our pamphlet, *Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!* This 32-page pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia’s freedom with the explosive evidence which completely destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom. It is available for 50 cents. Get the PDC button: “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!”—\$1 each. Order the PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 for DVD, \$15 for VHS. Bundles of the 4-page brochure, *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies. Order from, make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.



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On May 20, the FBI raided the Congressional office of Louisiana Democrat William Jefferson. The Feds’ aim was to seize evidence to buttress their ongoing investigation of his alleged bribe-taking from a small technology company in exchange for his influence. Given that this is the first such incursion in the 217 years since the forms of rule that constitute this country’s national government were established, it seems evident that the Bush administration sought this opportunity to further assert its right to do just about anything it pleases. Given the legions of crooks who inhabit Congress, it is hardly accidental that Bush’s Justice Department selected a black Democrat as the test case to see if this would “play in Peoria,” i.e., in racist America.

In the aftermath, all hell broke loose as Congressmen—Republican and Democratic—led by Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert reviled the raid as an attack on the vaunted “separation of powers”—executive, legislative and judicial—that ensures the mythic purity of American democracy. Bush sealed the seized papers for 45 days in the hope that these branches of bourgeois rule can figure out a way to just get along. The House Judiciary Committee is staging hearings on the FBI raid, which prompted E.J. Dionne Jr. to quip in his *Washington Post* (2 June) column: “The Judiciary Committee is clearly concerned with the rights of 435 House members and—give them the benefit of the doubt—100 senators. Someday, the committee will get around to thinking about the rights of the remaining 296,409,869 of us.”

A *New York Times* (26 May) editorial excoriated Congressmen who have “played dead when the executive branch refused to provide it with information, answer questions or follow laws that the legislative branch has passed.” The *Times* editors leave unmentioned their own cringing servility in parroting virtually every incredible tale—like Saddam Hussein’s non-existent “weapons of mass destruction”—offered by the Bush administration to support the invasion of Iraq.

Cops, Corruption and the Imperial Presidency



May 21: FBI agents loading material seized in late-night raid of Congressional office.

“War on Terror” Hits Congress

The outrage from Congressmen no doubt emanates in good part from the nightmarish possibility that their countless meetings with troops from the army of Jack Abramoffs bivouacked in Washington will be beamed directly from their Congressional offices to FBI headquarters (think Tom DeLay). But while we are not against the prosecution of thieves, this raid is a recent example of the administration’s efforts to use the powers it has accumulated to prosecute the “war on terror” to attack any of its perceived opponents. On May 23, a court decision freed four Connecticut librarians from a government-imposed gag that had forbidden them to reveal that the Feds had demanded lists of readers. And just last week, the chief spokesman for John Ashcroft when he was Attorney General accused Ashcroft’s successor, Alberto Gonzales, of a “reckless abuse of power”

for issuing subpoenas calling for *San Francisco Chronicle* reporters covering steroid use in baseball to reveal their sources. Thus the spectre is raised that reporters might be criminally prosecuted for publishing such “classified information” as, say, Barry Bonds’ batting average.

The “balance of powers” was designed in an effort to contain within one body politic the various competing regional and economic interests of the owners, large and small, whose property rights are the foundation of bourgeois rule. The holy aura emanating from this “principle” fades when one recalls that at the birth of the American state, these institutions and the sacred Constitution itself were “balanced” to ensure that chattel slavery would survive. The Mafia has evolved similar checks and balances, including a court of elders to

resolve internecine disputes. The only difference is that those whose rule is based on wage slavery have deemed the activities of the capos illegal. But while this “balance of powers” is in the service of bourgeois rule, the working class, nevertheless, must oppose the accretion of power to the imperial presidency, an accretion that ultimately points to a police-state dictatorship.

The Bush administration did not invent the proud presidential tradition of foisting lying representations onto the American people, although it is somewhat unusual in that it seemingly chooses *only* to lie. Nor is George W. Bush unique among presidents in his belief that executive power is absolute. Recall that during the Watergate hearings, Richard Nixon’s staff argued that the president had the right to commit robberies while admitting they had not researched the question of his right to commit murder. In the FBI’s COINTELPRO operation that resulted in the murder of 38 Black Panthers, the bourgeois state asserted its “right” to engage in assassination. What was different then is that both operations were covert by necessity, given the scope of the social struggles of that era. Today, Bush & Co. openly demand police-state powers. The contrived “war on terror” and the very real USA Patriot Act are used to buttress these demands, which have been acceded to by both wings of the “property party,” Democrats and Republicans alike.

It is not news that the institutions of the U.S. bourgeois state are cesspools of corruption. But for the working class and oppressed minorities, the real danger resides in the machinery of violence that is at the heart of this state—the cops, armed forces, courts and prisons. The “democratic” trappings provided by the rulers are merely a cover for the capitalist state, whose purpose is to ensure the continued rule of the tiny class of exploiters. While the working people must fight to defend every shred of democratic rights and other gains, freedom from oppression and exploitation will only come through the smashing of the bourgeois state through socialist revolution. ■

Haditha...

(continued from page 1)

indicted and exonerated the Marines when he stated, “Marines over-reacted because of the pressure on them, and they killed innocent civilians in cold blood.” Liberal *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, a leading voice of the “anybody but Bush” crowd, picked the theme right up in her 3 June column: “The American military is not in the business of atrocity, even if an undeniable atrocity was committed and even if the war has become something of an atrocity.” Dowd nauseatingly weeps for U.S. troops who are “under spectacular emotional pressure” and “not trained for a counterinsurgency.”

News flash, Ms. Dowd: this is what counterinsurgency looks like. Far from an aberration, Haditha, Abu Ghraib, Samarra, Hamandiyah, Ishaqi are the result of conscious policies designed to

secure the occupation of Iraq. Examples of this true face of imperialist “democracy” are innumerable. To name but a few: Following the 1898 Spanish-American War, which marked U.S. imperialism’s emergence on the world stage, U.S. forces slaughtered up to half a million Filipinos between 1899 and 1902 to suppress a nationalist uprising. In Latin America in the 1970s and ’80s, U.S.-trained death squads were the tool of choice against leftist insurgents as well as Maryknoll nuns and any other perceived supporters of social justice. In Northern Ireland, the infamous Long Kesh wire cages and torture chambers were employed by the British imperialists against Irish Republican militants. Slaughter of women and children in No Gun Ri during the Korean War was official U.S. policy (see “Korean War Document Confirms: Massacre at No Gun Ri Was Official U.S. Policy,” page 7).

And, of course, there was Vietnam. Unlike the war and occupation in Iraq, the

Vietnam War was waged against insurgent workers and peasants struggling for a social revolution, whose fight became a catalyst for anti-imperialist struggles throughout the globe. Before its defeat on the battlefield, the U.S. military engaged in horrendous war crimes. The My Lai massacre of some 500 Vietnamese—which included mass rape, sodomy, torture and maiming prior to the killing—was infamous. Also, infamously, the U.S. ruling class pinned the blame on low-level “rogue” soldiers and amnestied the most senior officers involved. General Koster, the division commander in overall charge of the troops, watched the massacre from the air and radioed orders to Lieutenant Calley in the village. Calley was as high up in the chain of command as the U.S. government was willing to go. He served three and a half years of house arrest in his quarters at Fort Benning, Georgia, and was freed in 1974. His captain, Ernest Medina, was acquitted at a separate trial.

My Lai was just the tip of the iceberg. There was the CIA’s “Operation Phoenix,” a program of assassination in which thousands of Vietnamese were killed. In October 2003, the *Toledo Blade* won a Pulitzer Prize for a four-part series that revealed the atrocities committed by an Army platoon known as Tiger Force, which killed hundreds of unarmed men, women and children in a *seven-month* rampage through Vietnam’s Central Highlands in 1967. In a subsequent article, the *Blade* (5 September 2004) summarized its revelations:

“Soldiers hurled grenades into underground bunkers full of women and children. They shot elderly farmers toiling in their fields. They severed the ears of the dead to fashion into necklaces. One former unit medic told The Blade that soldiers ‘would go into villages and just

shoot everybody. We didn’t need an excuse. If they were there, they were dead’.”

For pro-imperialist liberals à la Dowd, such facts are surely inconvenient, especially as the Vietnam War was prosecuted first under Democratic president Kennedy and then escalated under Democratic president Johnson. The murderous history of both capitalist parties does not square with the liberals’ painting of the atrocities in Iraq as simply the result of blunders by the Republican Bush administration.

Socialism or Barbarism

Dowd’s column decried the loss of U.S. credibility: “They wanted everyone to be afraid of us, and now nobody’s afraid. Certainly not the nutty president of Iran, whom the administration is forced to kowtow to, now that the American military is not a fearsome force in potentia, but a depleted, demoralized and disparaged force trapped in Iraq trying to police a civil war.”

Such sentiments find an echo among “anybody but Bush” reformists like the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). Take the petition signed by the ISO and the RCP-supported group “World Can’t Wait” that counsels Bush and Cheney on the “most effective way to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons” (weapons inspectors rather than bombs) and implores these war criminals “to lead the way to peace, not war” (see “ISO, RCP to Bush: Disarm Iran, ‘Lead the Way to Peace’,” WV No. 870, 12 May).

In stark contrast to these bootlickers of imperialism, *Workers Vanguard* has forthrightly stated that in the context of the threats by U.S. imperialism, Iran *needs* nuclear weapons to defend itself

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Early in the Korean War, in July 1950, some 400 Korean civilians—mainly women, children and old men—were machine-gunned to death by U.S. troops at the South Korean hamlet of No Gun Ri. Driven from their villages by American forces and strafed by U.S. warplanes, the desperate peasants had sought shelter beneath a railroad bridge. There they were methodically slaughtered by soldiers of the First Cavalry Division. After the massacre was exposed in a series of Pulitzer Prize-winning articles by the Associated Press in 1999, a Pentagon investigation concluded that what happened was “not a deliberate killing” but rather “an unfortunate tragedy” carried out by panicky soldiers acting without orders. That transparent lie has now been demolished by a recently revealed document proving that U.S. forces in Korea had a policy—decided at the highest levels of the government and the military—to kill civilians fleeing the fighting.

The document, a letter by the U.S. ambassador to South Korea, John Muccio, to Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk, states: “If refugees do appear from north of US lines they will receive warning shots, and if they then persist in advancing they will be shot” (AP, 29 May). Muccio’s letter reported on a meeting of top U.S. military officers and South Korean officials that took place on 25 July 1950—the day before the bloodbath at No Gun Ri. The letter was discovered in the U.S. National Archives by former

Korean War Document Confirms: Massacre at No Gun Ri Was Official U.S. Policy

Harvard historian Sahr Conway-Lanz.

The 1950-53 Korean War, led by U.S. imperialism in the guise of a United Nations “police action,” was an attempt to smash social revolution on the peninsula, and beyond that to “roll back” the Chinese Revolution of 1949. Capitalist rule had been overthrown in the northern half of the Korean peninsula following liberation from 35 years of Japanese colonialism at the end of World War II, as the power of the local capitalists and landowners was broken under the Soviet military presence and the newly installed regime of Kim Il Sung. The Korean peninsula was partitioned between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the North and the Republic of Korea in the South, a capitalist police state under American military occupation. Despite the rule of a nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, the overthrow of capitalism in the North was a historic defeat for imperial-

ism and a victory for the working people of Asia and the world.

During the war, North Korean forces were backed by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. U.S. imperialism devastated the Korean peninsula, killing more than three million people and obliterating whole cities. Washington considered nuking China and Korea but was deterred by Soviet military might, including its newly developed nuclear arsenal. In the end, the U.S. could only achieve a stalemate at the 38th parallel in what was widely viewed as a defeat for U.S. imperialism in this first battle of the Cold War. The Korean War was ended in a “truce,” and the U.S. has refused to sign a peace treaty affirming North Korea’s right to exist ever since, maintaining a massive military presence in the South.

The 1999 AP series revealed that No Gun Ri was but one of a number of mass killings of civilians carried out by the

U.S. imperialists, infused as they were with racist hatred of all Koreans. While interviewing veterans, the AP uncovered the following: a July 1950 mortar attack on several hundred refugees southeast of Seoul; the destruction of two bridges over the Nakdong River in August 1950 as hundreds of refugees streamed across; a January 1951 incendiary bomb attack that killed several hundred refugees in a cave near Youngchoon. This was on top of repeated strafing of refugee columns by U.S. warplanes. Since the 1999 AP reports, South Koreans have lodged complaints with the Seoul government regarding more than 60 other large-scale massacres of refugees by the U.S. military during the Korean War.

Following the initial AP revelations, we wrote in “U.S. War in Korea Was Mass Murder” (WV No. 721, 15 October 1999): “The bloodbath at No Gun Ri is the true face of imperialism, exposing as a cynical lie the ‘human rights’ pretensions used by the U.S. and its allies to veil their military depredations from Kosovo to East Timor.” Linking the No Gun Ri killings to the notorious 1968 My Lai massacre, in which over 500 South Vietnamese villagers were raped, tortured and massacred by American troops led by Lieutenant William Calley, we stressed: “Horrific as these particular slaughters were, they were only a drop in the ocean of carnage perpetrated by the U.S. imperialist rulers in their counterrevolutionary wars against the Korean and Vietnamese people.”■

and deter U.S. attack (see “Imperialists Threaten Iran,” WV No. 869, 28 April). We call for the military defense of semi-colonial Iran against imperialist attack. At the same time, we give not an iota of political support to the reactionary Islamic fundamentalist regime in Tehran.

We also called for military defense of Afghanistan and Iraq against U.S. attack, but extended no political support to either the barbaric Taliban or to Saddam Hussein’s murderous capitalist regime, a one-time ally of the U.S. Today, we say that every blow struck against the imperialist occupiers of Iraq and Afghanistan is in the interests of the world working class. But we are in sharp political opposition to the religious fundamentalists and bourgeois nationalists, who, in addition to launching insurgent strikes against the U.S., are often also deliberately hitting civilians.

For the Democratic Party and other bourgeois critics of the Bush gang, the Afghanistan war, unlike the Iraq war, is a just response to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. A common criticism made by Democrats of the Iraq war is that it diverts attention and resources from the “war on terror”—the rulers’ pretext for imperialist rampages around the world and for a massive assault on democratic rights at home. At an April 29 demonstration in New York against the occupation of Iraq, some protesters carried signs distributed by the liberal outfit “Working Assets” that read, “Osama bin Forgotten.”

The mass killings and torture inflicted by U.S. forces on the Iraqi people are also standard operating procedure in Afghanistan. After a May 29 traffic accident involving a U.S. military convoy killed five people in Kabul, anti-U.S. riots broke out all through the capital. At least a dozen people, including a seven-year-old boy, were killed as U.S. troops and Afghan forces fired on protesting crowds. The barbaric face of the “war on terror” is also revealed by the conditions of those incarcerated without trial at Guantánamo Bay, where many of the at least 460 prisoners have repeatedly engaged in hunger strikes, protests and suicide attempts. U.S. out of Guantánamo! Free the detainees now!

Speaking for ruling-class liberals who complain that the Bush administration is ruining U.S. imperialism’s prospects, Frank Rich wrote in his *New York Times* (4 June) column: “On Thursday the latest American-backed Iraqi prime minister,



Ronald Haeberle

1968 My Lai massacre: indelible symbol of U.S. war against Vietnamese Revolution. American defeat was victory for workers, oppressed of the world.

Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, whom Mr. Bush is ‘proud to call’ his ‘ally and friend,’ invited open warfare on American forces by accusing them of conducting Haditha-like killing sprees against civilians as a ‘regular’ phenomenon. If this is the ally and friend we are fighting for, a country that truly supports the troops has no choice but to start bringing them home.”

Following in the footsteps of such Democratic Party liberals are the reformist left and its various antiwar coalitions. Having refused to forthrightly call for the defense of Iraq (much less Afghanistan) against the U.S. onslaught, these coalitions commonly raise the call to “Bring the Troops Home.” Thus the April 29 antiwar demonstration in New York City was centrally called around the slogans: “End the war in Iraq—Bring all our troops home now!” Such demands, meant to evoke sympathy for U.S. troops, serve to clean up the image of U.S. imperialism. These are not “our troops”! The pictures of the slaughtered in Haditha, the images of Falluja leveled, the photo of Lynndie England, dog leash in hand abusing a naked Iraqi prisoner—all are graphic reminders of the routine brutality meted out by imperialism’s military enforcers.

The reformists’ tailing of imperialist liberals does not fall from the skies. During Cold War II, the bulk of the left signed on to the imperialist “human rights” crusade against the Soviet Union launched by Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Carter seized on the Soviet Union’s unambiguously progressive intervention into Afghanistan, and the U.S. funneled billions in aid to the *mujahedin* Islamic reactionaries. Uniquely, the International Communist League (then the international Spartacist tendency) declared:

Free Mumia!...

(continued from page 5)

minute of the last hour, is to put all energy, courage and militancy into the organization of mass demonstrations and protest strikes. All brakes upon this movement must be regarded as the greatest danger. All illusions which paralyze the movement must be overcome. All agents of the bosses who try to sabotage and discredit the protest and strike movement must be given their proper name.”

The road to victory in Mumia’s case begins with the understanding that the class enemy is determined to carry out his execution. The multiracial working class has every interest in fighting against that outcome, which would further bolster the machinery of capitalist state violence whose ultimate target is the working class.

If labor’s power is to be brought to bear on behalf of Mumia, it must be mobilized independent of the very forces of the capitalist state that framed up this innocent man. Based on the only significant integration in racist America, the trade unions have the social power and

potential to become battalions in the struggle against exploitation and racist oppression. If undertaken with a mobilization of the union movement, the fight to free Mumia would be a first giant step in that direction. Integrated unions representing millions of workers have gone on record in support of Mumia. That these millions have not been mobilized *in action* to combat this racist frame-up is the responsibility of the pro-capitalist labor misleaders, who fear calling their members into action to defend their economic interests, much less in defense of blacks, immigrants and others cast off to starve in the streets or locked away in prison hellholes.

The fight to free Mumia and all class-war prisoners is an integral part of our struggle to forge a Leninist vanguard party to lead the working class in socialist revolution. Such a party must act as the champion of all the exploited and oppressed, recognizing that the liberation of labor from the chains of capitalist exploitation is inextricably linked to the fight for black freedom. **Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!**■

Young Spartacus

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1905

We print below, edited for publication, an educational given by comrade Sam Kirk at the Spartacus Youth Club "Youth Maintenance Work-In" on 18 June 2005.

I had one big "problem"—that was a good one to have—in preparing this class. This same material has already been covered in excellent classes given by comrades George Foster and Joseph Seymour some years ago [see: "Prelude to the Bolshevik October: The Russian Revolution of 1905," WV Nos. 288 and 289, 11 September and 25 September 1981 and "Lenin and the Vanguard Party" in the Spartacist pamphlet of the same name, 1978]. So don't expect to hear a lot that is new if you did the reading. But just because it exists on paper isn't enough. Every generation must tackle the key questions of revolution and party building for itself. Marxism is not a religion where revealed truths are handed down by the "chosen." It takes a lot of work to assimilate the experiences of the past in order to shape our current tasks.

We study the 1905 Russian Revolution not simply because it was, in retrospect, the prelude to the first successful workers revolution in history, the October Revolution of 1917. The 1905 Revolution was world-historic in its own right. As Lenin laid out in his January 1917 "Lecture on the 1905 Revolution," this was the first time in history that the industrial working class played the leading role in a revolution. What began as a workers political protest to pressure the tsar rapidly escalated in the course of the year to mass political strikes, mutinies, the formation of soviets and armed uprisings that fought for power.

Bolshevism vs. Menshevism

While the Russian Revolution inspired many, its mechanisms were not widely understood. The world saw the working class fighting, but did not have a programmatic understanding of the political disputes within the leading, most dynamic party of the revolution, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). The RSDLP emerged as the premier force for a revolutionary wing of the Second International and was really two parties, the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions.

The RSDLP was formally founded in 1898 in a tiny meeting in Minsk under constant threat of police repression. The Second Congress in 1903 was essentially the founding congress of a coordinated national revolutionary movement in Russia representing the consolidation of disparate local groups around an agreed-upon



Revolutionary barricades in Moscow, 1905.

Dietz Verlag Berlin

program to be applied in a regular paper, *Iskra*, the political scaffolding around which the party would be built. The 1903 Congress resulted in an unexpected split between two shadings of the party—informally referred to as "hards" and "softs"—that became the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks respectively. The immediate catalyst for the split was the definition of party membership and the composition of the *Iskra* editorial board. But underlying this were deeper political differences that were not fully expressed at the time.

In "Lenin and the Vanguard Party," comrade Seymour gives a compelling description of the Bolshevik faction in 1904:

"Above all it represented a firm commitment to revolutionary social democracy [communism], particularly the leading role of the proletarian party in the struggle against tsarist absolutism. It further represented an intransigent attitude toward demonstrated opportunists, like the Economist leaders, and a distrustful attitude toward their possible conversion to revolutionary politics. Lenin was committed to a centralized, disciplined party, and consequently intransigently hostile to the circlism-cliquism characteristic of the Russian social-democratic movement."

We would do well to live up to this!

In February 1904, Russia entered into its losing war against Japan after the Japanese navy trapped Russia's Pacific Fleet in Port Arthur (today Dalian) in Manchuria. The potential military defeat of the autocracy raised the possibility of some kind of internal reform in Russia. The Russian liberal bourgeoisie, which had a growing economic power but was subject to the whims of the autocratic political system and tied

to the more powerful European capitalists, understood on some level that Russia's defeat in the Crimean War of 1854-56 had led to the tsarist reform of 1861 that had semi-emancipated the serfs. That reform was part of a program that built up capitalist relations in Russia in an effort to strengthen the state against its imperialist enemies.

Seeing a chance to push forward its own interests, the liberal bourgeoisie embarked on a mildly defeatist course during the war, epitomized by the *Zemstvo* [provincial council] "banquet campaign." If it doesn't sound very revolutionary, you're right. These nobility-run, largely peasant assemblies meekly called for a national representative assembly and greater civil liberties. The method of the bourgeoisie was meetings, banquets and petitions, but these developments were symptomatic of deeper stirrings in society.

One important result of the *Zemstvo* campaign of 1904 was that it fleshed out the reformist impulses of the Mensheviks. On the eve of the revolution the Mensheviks wrote:

"If we take a look at the arena of the struggle in Russia then what do we see? Only two forces: the tsarist autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie, which is now organized and possesses a huge specific weight. The working mass, however, is atomized and can do nothing; as an independent force we do not exist; and thus our task consists in supporting the second force, the liberal bourgeoisie, and encouraging it and in no case intimidating it by presenting our own independent political demands."

—Quoted in Gregory Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party: A Popular Outline* (1923)

Lenin ridiculed the timid bourgeoisie, and the Mensheviks charged him and the Bolsheviks with intimidating the liberals. Lenin shot back that the Mensheviks were therefore guilty of being intimidated by the shadow of the intimidated liberals! In the RSDLP, what had begun as heated fights on secondary questions had crystallized into a fight over the central role of the working class in the revolution. The Mensheviks' self-relegation to cheerleaders for the liberals provided a much clearer line of political demarcation between Bolshevism and Menshevism than had existed since the 1903 split. "A process of consolidation began within Bolshevism and like a sponge soaking up water it began to draw in the most revolutionary elements in social-democracy of that time who had

finally become convinced of its correctness" [Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party: A Popular Outline*].

Police "Socialism"

Any discussion about January 9, the beginning of the 1905 Russian Revolution, must address the radical Russian Orthodox priest Father Gapon. His movement was a second failed attempt inspired by the Russian secret police forces to undercut social-democratic influence in the labor movement by organizing workers into secretly police-led unions based on a reactionary program. This supplemented tsarism's preferred method of dealing with the working class, which was bloody repression of any attempt to organize and fight. Gapon's movement was more independent of direct state control than an earlier attempt by Sergei Zubatov, the chief of the Moscow secret police who set up workers societies under police control. The way the Bolsheviks dealt with Zubatovism was to expose the reactionary nature of his societies and, at the same time, to support them when they took part in leading strikes. After Zubatov's societies led several strikes, Zubatov was informed by his masters that his experiment was over. Nevertheless, he directly influenced Father Gapon.

Gapon set up his Assembly of the Russian Factory and Mill Workers of the City of St. Petersburg at about the same time as the war began against Japan. Membership was open to Russian and other Christian subjects of the empire. The Ministry of the Interior approved the statutes of the organization. At the same time, in order to be attractive to the masses, Gapon quietly gathered around himself former Social Democrats, and they came up with a secret "Program of the Five" which had elements of the Social Democracy's minimum program.

In the second half of 1904 events accelerated. A bomb thrown by a member of the Social Revolutionary party killed the notorious anti-Semitic Minister of the Interior, Vyacheslav Plehve. Plehve was an ultrareactionary who had been responsible for dissolving the Zubatov societies and supported the conservative wing of the *Zemstvo* movement. He was replaced by a tsarist "moderate." This, combined with total defeat at Port Arthur (the Pacific fleet was lost and 80 percent of the besieged troops killed) resulted in a very heated political atmosphere. Gapon's organization grew rapidly from a couple of hundred to several thousand industrial workers in the space of months. This was alarming, particularly to the factory owners of the city.

In retaliation for the growing influence of Gapon's Assembly, a handful of its active members was fired from the massive Putilov metal works in late December. Under extreme pressure to act, Gapon held mass meetings on how to respond and more than half the workers at the plant joined the Assembly. In the face of intransigence from management, Gapon found himself at the head of a strike that began on January 3 and was quickly joined by a large number of the workers in St. Petersburg.

In an effort to resolve this dispute by less confrontational means, Gapon produced a petition to be presented on Sunday, January 9, in person, most humbly, by the toilers of Russia to the tsar at the Winter Palace, the center of autocratic power. The content of the petition was



Swan

Hundreds of Russian soldiers, killed during Russo-Japanese War. Defeat of Russia in war shook tsarist regime, spurred revolutionary wave.

contradictory, with many supportable demands, like the eight-hour day and the separation of church and state, mixed in with total groveling before the tsar. Events snowballed. That morning, dressed in their Sunday best, well over 100,000 workers with their families, the bulk of the working population of the capital, began to gather at various meeting points around the city to begin the march to the Winter Palace located in the city center.

Bloody Sunday

Before we consider the fate of the march, let's consider the character of the local Bolshevik organization. This underground group had around 200-300 members, most of whom were in their twenties. One member of the Kiev group in his memoirs gave a general description of the local party organizations in Russia as "mostly callow youths, hotheaded and resolute but weakly linked to the working masses and uninfluential in the factories." Nevertheless, they constantly attempted to gain a hearing in the proletariat in the face of fierce state repression. A typical profile for a student activist was six months of semipublic work, followed by prison, exile and hopefully escape. To the extent that they had members in the factories, they were often apprentices and didn't have a lot of authority with the more skilled workers. As one Putilov

peace towards our sacred goal" [quoted in Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday* (1976)]. Gapon commanded that the Social Democrats march at the rear of the demonstration "to keep up the spirits of the crowd." This softcore censorship was combined with the hardcore version. Bolshevik agitators were often denied speaking rights at meetings of the Assembly, and were at times beaten up and their leaflets destroyed. For the demonstration itself, red banners were forbidden.

The Bolshevik Party Committee was correctly wary that the demonstration was a police trap. It was decided to send teams around to the various feeder points for the march with leaflets and banners, but to wait until the mood of the crowd was sympathetic. Typical of what was occurring around the city, at one such meeting point, only about a dozen party supporters showed up. The guy who was supposed to bring the banner never showed; he was an undercover cop. The marchers were not widely receptive to communist propaganda as they set off full of illusions that Gapon's way would win concessions. Red flags were not unfurled, leaflets not distributed. As the tens of thousands of workers marched to the center of the city by various routes, they were met by concentrations of troops who fired multiple volleys at pointblank range into the tightly packed crowds. Over 1,000 were killed and almost 4,000 injured in the day that is known to history as Bloody Sunday.

One definition of a revolution is when "the ruling class can no longer rule in the old way and the masses no longer want to live in the old way." From the moment the first shots were fired, Gaponism was dead. The masses went from bowing to the tsar to demanding his death. Openness to revolutionary propaganda exploded. By the afternoon of Bloody Sunday, red flags were flying and Bolshevik leaflets were being snapped up. Through explosive events, the political scene can change very dramatically in a short period of time. In this changing situation, all programs are considered and tested. All trends get their chance. It was the Bolsheviks who had the program that showed the way forward corresponding to the felt needs of the working class and, due to the events triggered by January 9, they gained a sympathetic hearing from millions of workers, students and soldiers. Among these, tens of thousands began looking to become revolutionary activists and were looking for a party to join.

Lenin was quite critical of the local Bolshevik leaders, the "committeemen," who were slow to react to new events. There is his famous [February 1905] letter to local party leaders Alexander Bogdanov and Sergei Gusev where he metaphorically called for "shooting on the spot anyone who presumes to say there are no people to be had" [i.e., no people to be recruited to the party]. Lenin got a lot of opposition to broadening the organization from the committeemen. The cadre of the Bolsheviks had become habituated to operating under the incredibly difficult conditions of underground work. It took Lenin's strong intervention from a distance to turn things around. Interestingly, Lenin had to carry out a related fight against a tendency to dismiss the influence of their leftist opponents.

With the disaster of Bloody Sunday, the tsar allowed the setting up of what was called the Shidlovsky Commission. This allowed the workers to elect representatives to come and grovel before the tsar. This committee was a farce, yet it is often cited as the origin of the idea of soviets. As in the soviets, representation was one delegate for 500 workers. The elections to the commission provided an opening for Social Democratic agitation at mass meetings. In gushing letters to Lenin, Gusev bragged: "Hurray! The PC [party committee] can be proud; its whole plan, all its resolutions, all the tactics it had worked out, even the details—all has gone through brilliantly." Lenin sent back



John Massey Stewart

Bloody Sunday: Tsarist troops open fire on workers demonstration on 9 January 1905, killing over 1,000.

a sarcastic letter that warned, "You are all too much of an optimist if you hope to get the better of the Peter Mensheviks so easily" [see Solomon Schwartz, *The Russian Revolution: The Workers' Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism* (1967)]. In fact, many workers entering the political struggle for the first time often saw little difference between the two factions. The committeemen flipped from a tendency toward abstention to bragging that political obstacles would evaporate with little struggle.

It is important to understand that, at the time, their reformist opponents derisively called the Bolsheviks a "sect." Likewise, many of the histories of 1905, written from a perspective hostile to the building of a vanguard party, quote fights by Lenin with the committeemen. In defense of the committeemen, these were dedicated revolutionaries who were organizationally competent and politically hard. They organized thousands of workers on a communist basis. But they made mistakes and these were often corrected.

Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution

What every revolutionary was grappling with was the nature of the revolution in a country with a relatively small, but powerful, working class and a huge peasantry. The Menshevik position has already been discussed. It was tailism of the liberal bourgeoisie. First there would be a bourgeois revolution and then down the road an indefinite period, a workers revolution. This is known today as the theory of the two-stage revolution, and Stalinists and Maoists alike embrace its basic framework. The reality of this theory, as shown by the experience of many failed revolutions in the last hundred years, is that the workers hand the bourgeoisie the power during the first stage, and in the second stage the bourgeoisie drowns the workers in blood.

The position of the Bolsheviks was a strong rejection of this kind of tailism. They looked to the working class to form a revolutionary alliance with the peasantry in a joint struggle to bring down tsarism and fight for democratic demands. At the same time the working class would fight for socialist demands. The question of what role the peasantry would play was a huge question in a country where the working class was less than 10 percent of the population. At the end of his life, Trotsky summarized Lenin's position:

"The backward Russian bourgeoisie is incapable of completing its own revolution! The complete victory of the revolution, through the intermediacy of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry,' would purge the land of medievalism, invest the development of Russian capitalism with American tempo, strengthen the proletariat in city and village and make really possible the struggle for socialism. On the other hand, the victory of the Russian revolution would give a tremendous impetus to the socialist revolution in the West, while

the latter would not only protect Russia from the dangers of restoration but would also enable the Russian proletariat to come to the conquest of power in a comparatively brief historical period."

—Leon Trotsky, "Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution" (1939)

Trotsky considered this perspective unrealizable and incomplete because it characterized the stages of the revolution incorrectly, but nevertheless the immediate operational conclusions for the general direction of the struggle were correct and the same as Trotsky's.

The limitations of Lenin's theory did not become operational in 1905 because the revolution did not go far enough. But when discussing the three concepts of the revolution, it's almost impossible not to consider what happened subsequently, in 1917. That is, Lenin dropped his analysis as outdated and in substance embraced Trotsky's position. But in 1905, Trotsky's theory, which became known as permanent revolution, by his own account "met practically no recognition" ["Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution"].

Trotsky rejected the idea of a two-class dictatorship as formulated in Lenin's position and instead conceived of the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry. He summarized his perspective of permanent revolution as:

"The complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialistic tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out the establishment of socialism."

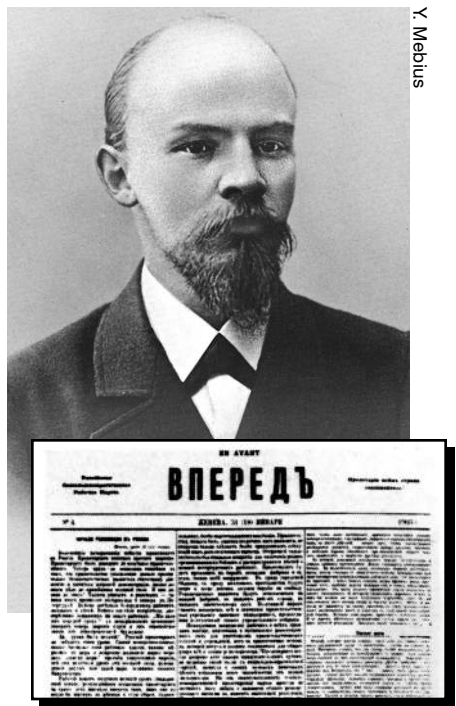
—Trotsky, "Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution"

Keep in mind that Lenin's main thesis, "Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," was written in the summer of 1905 before the key battles of the proletariat had taken place. Trotsky's groundbreaking "Results and Prospects" was written as the revolution was winding down in 1906 and was based on his direct personal experience at the center of events.

At the time, Lenin's position provided the marching orders for *the* revolutionary party in Russia, the Bolsheviks. He emphasized that a general strike is not enough by itself. Along with it a fight for power through armed uprisings must be organized. The vanguard party doesn't just advocate revolution, but provides leadership. The Mensheviks denounced this as adventurism and rebellion and counterposed it to building consciousness. But even Rosa Luxemburg, who worked closely with Lenin beginning in 1905, took a long time to get beyond an idealization of the mass strike.

Keep in mind that although the activity

continued on page 10



V. Medius

V.I. Lenin, 1900. Bolshevik newspaper *Vperyod* with Lenin's January 1905 article "The Beginning of the Revolution in Russia."

worker put it, young workers who tried to talk politics were told to "learn first how to hold a hammer and use a chisel and a knife, and then you can begin to argue like a man who has something to teach others" [quoted in Gerald Dennis Surh, *1905 in St. Petersburg: Labor, Society and Revolution* (1989)].

The Social Democrats in the Narva District, which contained the massive Putilov works, had about 40 supporters out of a total of 30,000 workers, organized in a handful of underground study circles. The initial attitude of the Bolsheviks towards Gapon was to correctly denounce him as a suspicious adventurer, but also to underestimate the extent to which his Assembly was quickly gaining a hearing. Lenin waged a fight from afar to get the party to intervene in this movement aggressively.

Attempts to intervene in Gapon's Assembly prior to the Sunday demonstration were difficult. One Bolshevik, as soon as he identified himself as a party member, had his speech interrupted by Gapon who explained, "It is essential for all to see that this is not a revolutionary movement, but a peaceful procession to the tsar." He continued, "I have always respected you and considered you honest people. I bow to you, I bow low to you: do not bring friction into our movement. Let us go under one united banner of

1905...

(continued from page 9)

on the ground of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was at times similar, their purpose was different, especially the higher up you go in leadership. Both were energetic in trying to organize and lead the working class in strikes against the tsarist state. This points to the push from the ranks for unity between the factions that resulted from events of the year. Trotsky was certainly a spokesman for this tendency for unity as chairman of the Petersburg Soviet; it wasn't until 1917 that he fully gave up on unity between the factions and came over to the Bolsheviks.

The St. Petersburg Soviet

In May 1905, the Russian military was conclusively defeated by Japan. The Baltic Fleet that had been sent half-way around the world to save Port Arthur after the loss of the Pacific fleet, arrived five months too late. En route it was almost completely destroyed in a one-day battle in the Tsushima strait (located between Japan and Korea).

Following defeat on the seas and on the battlefield, in August the tsar finally agreed to a representative assembly, the Duma, which would be based on a limited franchise and be allowed to offer him nonbinding advice. This was met by most of society as a bad joke. The Bolsheviks proclaimed a boycott of the elections. Instead of quieting the political scene as intended, anger boiled over.

In September, the U.S.-brokered Treaty of Portsmouth was signed, codifying the overwhelming victory of Japan. In this case, the defeat of one's own ruling class in war was a good thing for the Russian working class. In October, a revolutionary wave shook tsarism to its foundations. The establishment of the Petersburg Soviet followed a series of strikes culminating in a general rail strike. Trotsky wrote movingly about the incredible unity of the rail workers who not only started but also stopped their strike with the highest discipline [see Trotsky, *1905* (1922)]. Now there was a working-class, revolutionary, representative body in the capital of the empire, the Soviet, largely based on workers in the war industries. The tsar had seen enough. Without meaningful reform, he faced overthrow. The October Manifesto was issued granting a constitution and giving the future Duma legislative power.

Fundamentally this was very little, but the liberal bourgeoisie had seen enough. As the proletariat appeared more and more as an independent force, the bourgeoisie more fully threw its lot in with the camp of open counterrevolution. Their embrace of the October Manifesto further exposed the Mensheviks politically.

The granting of the October Manifesto was coordinated with a nationwide, government-organized onslaught against the Jewish population. Historically in Russia, reactionary counterrevolution means pogroms (i.e., anti-Jewish pillaging and lynching). Lenin cites the figures of 4,000 murdered and 10,000 mutilated during the course of the revolution. Some pogroms occurred at the end of 1904 in a wave of pro-war patriotism; the Jews were ridiculously blamed for aiding Japan. Interestingly, 30,000 Jews served in the Far East for the Russian military. But the vast majority of the pogroms occurred between the issuing of the October Manifesto and the end of the Moscow insurrection in December (i.e., in two months).

The whipping up of hatred for Jews, carried out by the reactionary "Black Hundreds," was a conscious government attempt to derail the revolution. It was heroically opposed by Jewish socialist organizations, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks who organized armed defense guards. Importantly, industrial workers, especially the mainly Russian rail workers, played an important role in defending Jews. Significantly in Petersburg there were no pogroms



Swan

Above: Revolutionary uprising in Odessa, 1905. Workers uprising intersected mutiny by sailors on battleship *Potemkin*, which docked in Odessa under a red flag in June.

Right: Workers demonstration in fall of 1905 with banners reading, "Workers of the World Unite!" "Russian Social Democratic Labor Party," "Down With the Autocracy!" and "We Demand a Constituent Assembly!"

Novosti



because the working class showed its determination in advance to defend the Jewish population, arms in hand.

An example of how backward nationalist consciousness can change rapidly under the pressure of revolutionary events can be seen on the question of Poland. The revolution inspired the struggles of the nationalities in the tsarist "prison house of peoples" where less than half the empire was Russian. The oppressor Russian nationalism fomented anti-Polish chauvinism and, in turn, the nationalism of the oppressed Polish nation was anti-Russian. This infected the working class. The revolution cut across this. Upon hearing of the events of Bloody Sunday, Warsaw and many other Polish cities erupted in general strikes led by communists. Polish communists, led by Feliks Dzierzhinsky (heroic future head of the Cheka [Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage formed to defend early Soviet workers state]), intersected the large number of Russian troops in Poland with internationalist propaganda. In November, when martial law was declared in Poland, the Russian workers repaid their class brothers when the Petersburg Soviet declared a general strike in defense of Poland! [See Robert Blobaum, *Feliks Dzierzynski and the SDKPiL: A Study of the Origins of Polish Communism* (1984).]

The experience of the St. Petersburg Soviet was a glorious step forward for the revolution. Under Trotsky's leadership a body was established that went beyond general strikes and provided an organizational structure for the proletariat to fight for power. Its conduct was heroic and revolutionary from beginning to end, including at the trial of its leaders after it was crushed, which was used as a platform for revolutionary ideas.

The Bolshevik committeemen had trouble dealing with this. They were not against soviets per se; in fact the Bolsheviks established the first one in June. Their problem was that they didn't want to support one that they didn't lead. They had similar problems with trade unions,

which were rapidly being formed for the first time. Lenin intervened to the effect that leadership must be won in struggle, but that the soviets and unions can and should be built on the broadest basis. The committeemen saw the opportunists in the soviets and unwisely abstained because they were for a split with the opportunists. Tactics toward these new phenomena had to be hammered out in struggle.

The Moscow Insurrection

The Moscow insurrection of 7-19 December was a general strike that grew into an armed uprising. Lenin considered it the high point of the revolution, which unfortunately was characterized by the masses having a leadership that lagged behind them. That is, events moved a step faster than the leadership of the working class on the ground was prepared to go.

There is the example of the confrontations with police at the Fielder Academy where groups of students and workers were holding constant meetings. All over the country the universities were centers of working-class organizing and political discussion. The gendarmes, after being surprised at meeting armed resistance, regrouped and shelled the school, slaughtering several students, and carried out mass arrests. It is one thing to have a political line for armed struggle and another to carry it out in the face of a hostile and organized state. There were pitched battles all over the city, barricades going up and fighting units giving battle. There was a battle for the loyalty of the troops, with Lenin estimating 5,000 loyal to the government and 10,000 wavering.

In his balance sheet of the events, Lenin cited Marx that "revolution progresses by giving rise to a strong and united counterrevolution, i.e., it compels the enemy to resort to more and more extreme measures of defense and in this way devises even more powerful means of attack" ["Lessons of the Moscow Uprising," 29 August 1906]. The masses were learning from their own experience Lenin's point that the general strike was

not enough. The question was posed: Who was going to rule? How were they to accomplish the revolution? Lenin was very insistent that revolution is an art and needs to be coordinated, specifically by developing tactics of guerrilla warfare supported by the proletariat.

To get a sense of how serious the Bolsheviks were, look at the example of Leonid Krasin. He was politically the most senior Bolshevik leader in Petersburg and a consummate professional revolutionary. Among other things he organized the production at a high technical level (he was an accomplished engineer) of grenades and trained the fighting units in their use. He organized and ran technical/defense squads. One of these squads was prepared to blow up the railway to Moscow from Petersburg (thereby preventing the dispatch of the troops that eventually put down the Moscow uprising), but the team was unsuccessful at carrying out its mission. Bolshevik Party cadres were deadly serious about an armed uprising, but they were dealing with young and untested forces [see Timothy O'Connor, *The Engineer of Revolution: L.B. Krasin and the Bolsheviks, 1870-1926* (1992)].

The Moscow uprising was put down in just over a week of fighting. Strikes shut down the city. Fighting units and barricades were met by troops and artillery. Over 1,000 were killed and the uprising was followed by a campaign of arrests and executions.

International Significance of 1905 Revolution

It is important to realize the tremendous impact that the events in Russia had internationally. This is something that should guide us as members of the International Communist League as we seek to consolidate and extend national sections of revolutionary Marxism around the world. We are building a programmatically hard, disciplined international that seeks to provide revolutionary leadership. In this struggle we understand that the world economy organically links all nations.

Comrades have hopefully spent the week combatting in practice the effect of bourgeois society's stultifying division between manual and mental labor at this summer's "youth maintenance work-in." In left-wing politics today we are familiar with the division between "direct action" and reformist opportunism (for example, anarchists versus organizations like the International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party), a divide more of form than content. On a much smaller scale, this recalls the political divisions among hundreds of thousands of working-class militants in the world of 1905. The false division between action and theory was contained on the one hand in the anarcho-syndicalists who were known for championing direct action through the "mass strike" and for their rejection of "politics" (i.e., programs, theories, parliamentarism). On the other hand there was the revolutionary, but increasingly conservative, social-democratic Second International, led by August Bebel, Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). They were moving toward a reformist program increasingly limited to raising the consciousness of the working class gradually through education and parliamentary activity.

Within both of these tendencies there was a revolutionary wing—James P. Cannon, who joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and later helped found the American Communist Party, Alfred Rosmer and Victor Serge, anarcho-syndicalists who later became communists, and Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who were the leaders of the revolutionary wing of the SPD. They were attempting to combat the anti-revolutionary conclusions of each tendency. The Russian Revolution of 1905 presented the possibility of combining the best aspects of both currents in a revolutionary way.

Rosa Luxemburg, in her 1906 work *The Mass Strike: The Political Party and the Trade Unions*, hailed the 1905 developments in Russia as the “historical liquidation of anarchism” because, after years of the anarchists holding up the general strike as the highest goal, it was the social democrats in Russia who had actually led it. But the thrust of her polemic was against the conservatism within her own party. She explained that Marx’s dynamic criticism of the adventurism of anarchism was being turned into a smug caricature of Marxism: the view that socialism would be arrived at only after a slow, peaceful march to educate the workers by an ever-growing social democracy. Conservative social-democratic opposition to the general strike was summed up in the paradox: “Either the proletariat as a whole are not yet in possession of the powerful organization and financial resources required, in which case they cannot carry through the general strike; or they are already sufficiently well organized, in which case they do not need the general strike.”

The masses in Germany were greatly affected by the events in Russia where in one year they saw that the “bastion of nineteenth-century reaction became the vanguard of twentieth-century revolution” [Carl E. Schorske, *German Social-Democracy, 1905-1917: the Development of the Great Schism* (1955)]. As many workers went out on strike in Germany in 1905 as in the previous five years combined. For the entire year the Russian Revolution was front-page news every day in the socialist papers. The fact that the working class dared to vie for power in tsarist Russia was a huge blow to the “evolutionary theory” of socialism whose influence had been steadily growing as a pro-capitalist layer of “labor lieutenants” was consolidating itself within the socialist and trade-union movement in Europe and the U.S. At the same time, the socialist trade-union leadership was increasingly becoming a privileged layer, which the imperialist rulers could afford to bribe with material benefits. The union bureaucracy derived its privileges from its position atop the workers movement and became increasingly comfortable operating within the framework of capitalist society. In Germany the trade-union leadership came out in open opposition to the left wing as it treacherously sought to limit and defuse the strike movement throughout 1905 [see Schorske].

Luxemburg’s polemics were scathing and largely correct against the conservative and opportunist elements in her own party. But the left wing, like all wings of social democracy, subscribed to the theory of the “party of the whole class,” which maintained that the working class should have only one party with all political tendencies represented. In Europe, this theory served to prevent an organizational break with opportunism within the workers movement and eventually served to subordinate the revolutionary wing to the reformist wing. This was not an abstract question. With the rise of radicalism in 1905, Luxemburg formally won the SPD to her line of advocating and employing the tactic of the political

mass strike, but by 1906 the conservative trade-union leadership won a rotten “compromise” that gave them the right to veto the party line as it applied to their activity.

Luxemburg envisioned that the revolutionary wave would wipe away conservative opportunism like a rapidly moving river empties a stagnant pond of scum. Luxemburg’s belief that an upsurge of militant class struggle would naturally dispel the opportunists proved very wrong. Comrades are aware that Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered in 1919 during the counterrevolutionary terror unleashed by a government run by their former “comrades.”

Despite political criticisms, we honor Luxemburg as a revolutionary internationalist to the core. She wrote in her 1906 pamphlet *The Mass Strike* that it would be:

“entirely wrong to regard the Russian revolution as a fine play, as something specifically ‘Russian,’ and at best to admire the heroism of the fighting men, that is, the last accessories of the strug-

gle. It is much more important that the German workers should learn to look upon the Russian revolution *as their own affair*, not merely as a matter of international solidarity with the Russian proletariat, but first and foremost, as a *chapter of their own social and political history*.”

rose up to shake off their own oppressor, the autocratic system of capitalist Russia. This provided an internationalist example to the national struggles against colonial domination. It is interesting to consider China, a country which has such an important place in the world today. Northern China provided much of the battleground for the Russo-Japanese War. Russian troops occupied Manchuria and among these troops it is estimated that by the end of the war, in mid 1905, there were 3,500 active Bolshevik supporters agitating for demobilization of the troops. Chinese revolutionaries who returned from Russian territory after the revolution played central roles in the Chinese Eastern Railroad strikes of 1906-07. In 1907, Chinese and Russian revolutionaries organized a joint political strike to commemorate the second anniversary of the Bloody Sunday massacre of Russian workers by tsarist forces.

Iran offers another example with a large number of Iranian immigrants working in Southern Russia, largely cen-

not be turned back. That is to say that subsequent periods (the period of reaction, the period of working-class resurgence, World War I and ultimately the 1917 revolutions) were all played out under the shadow of the experiences of 1905.

The revolution was defeated, but the real gain was a Bolshevik Party with thousands of new members who showed in struggle that they meant business and who gained the authority and active support of thousands upon thousands of workers. The party had a leadership that could generalize the lessons and correct errors. A party that was hard enough to combat the illusions in the working class that the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks should just get together, that the programmatic differences “weren’t that serious,” but flexible enough to bring in revolutionaries like Trotsky in 1917 and incorporate the substance of his correct theory of permanent revolution and his several thousand supporters by 1917. The Bolshevik Party that began the revolution of 1905 as a propaganda group of



Members of St. Petersburg Soviet during 1906 trial. Leon Trotsky, leader of the Soviet, in jail following 1905 Revolution.



Basil Blackwell Inc. photos

James P. Cannon made a similar point for American workers in his essay on the anarcho-syndicalist IWW, which was founded in 1905 amid intense praise of the Russian Revolution.

In Asia the influence of the revolution was also felt, but in a very different way. There were two related events: first, the defeat suffered by Russia, a major European power, at the hands of Japan, an emerging force in the imperialist world, in the Russo-Japanese War. This marked the first time in modern history that an Asian country defeated a European country. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 was an interimperialist war in which the working class had no side. Yet Lenin in his burning hatred for tsarism incorrectly supported the victory of the Japanese bourgeoisie over the tsarist autocracy as the victory of “advancing, progressive Asia” over “backward and reactionary Europe” (“The Fall of Port Arthur,” January 1905). Seen in the light of the inter-imperialist world war that broke out in 1914, Lenin’s position in 1905 was a mistake. But in 1905, capitalist imperialism was a new phenomenon and Lenin had not yet arrived at a theoretical understanding of the imperialist epoch. Thus he viewed the Russo-Japanese conflict through the prism of the 19th-century Marxist view that progressive national wars were supportable and that tsarist Russia was the chief reactionary power in Europe. Russia’s defeat showed the masses of Asia that the colonialist countries of Europe and the United States were not invincible.

But what really shook the East was that in the midst of this war the masses of Russia, with the working class in the lead,

tered in the Baku oilfields where there was a direct organizational connection to the Russian Social Democracy. When the Iranian revolution broke out in December 1905 it was the working class at the forefront with a general strike in Tehran. In India and Turkey, 1905 also marked a dramatic beginning to the anti-colonial movement.

Dress Rehearsal for 1917

Ultimately, the 1905 Revolution was defeated. That the bourgeoisie internationally was relatively stable was a factor contributing to the revolution not going further. The world was not in the turmoil it would be in 1917 after three years of world war. In that sense the ruling class had room to recover and save itself through state repression. Another factor is that the protests in the cities did not penetrate deeply enough into the countryside where the rate of protest by the peasantry was perhaps 20 percent that of the proletariat. That is to say, the illusions that the St. Petersburg proletariat had in the tsar prior to January 9, although greatly undermined, were held longer in the countryside. That was reflected in the fact that the army did not split, with a section going over to the side of the revolution. That is not to say that there weren’t some huge cracks. Lenin and Trotsky both cited the example of sympathetic troops during the Moscow insurrection marching down the street singing the *Marseillaise*. Likewise, during the summer of 1905 the mutineers of the Battleship Potemkin tried to join with the revolutionary workers of Odessa (the fourth largest city in Russia). The police were able to prevent this only by slaughtering 1,000 demonstrators in one day on the docks.

The authority of the ruling class was greatly undermined by the revolution and the liberal bourgeoisie was exposed. Despite their best efforts, the memory of 1905 could not be erased. The clock could

1,000 to 2,000 ended it as a small mass party. In 1907, before the onset of reaction decimated the ranks of the party, the Bolsheviks had about 45,000 members. And, thanks to their previous experience, the party and the class had a much better chance at clarity and success for the next time. To really learn about 1905 provides a glimpse of what we, as a small propaganda group, have ahead of us if we are to live up to our slogan that “we are the party of the Russian Revolution!”

I hope this talk provides a framework to inspire further study. One hundred years later, world reality is not pretty. The idea that experiences of the past are irrelevant to a “new world reality” is unfortunately prevalent, especially among the left. This is an aspect of acceptance of the “death of communism” mythology of bourgeois public opinion. We are fully confident that these people will go the way of the Mensheviks when hit with revolutionary situations where their program is exposed (by us) as having no revolutionary answers to the burning questions. In our fight we are guided by Lenin who observed on the fifth anniversary of 1905 that “only stern battles, only civil wars, can free humanity from the yoke of capital, and, on the other hand, that only class-conscious proletarians can and will give leadership to the vast majority of the exploited.” Long live the memory of the 1905 Revolution! ■

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Zapatista “Sixth Declaration”: Petty-Bourgeois Populism

We print below excerpts from a January 2006 leaflet by the Grupo Espartakista de México on the “Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle”—a document adopted by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in southern Mexico in June 2005. The declaration called for a series of democratic reforms and also announced that the EZLN would not support any of the candidates in the upcoming presidential elections. The EZLN subsequently launched its “other campaign,” an attempt to rally supporters throughout Mexico around its declaration during the presidential campaign.

In the context of the coming presidential elections and the evident popularity of the bourgeois PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution], which leads the polls and has strengthened its support in the working class, the Zapatista Sixth Declaration and the “other campaign” have reawakened illusions in the Zapatistas among many left-minded youth. This is due to the campaign’s “radical” rhetoric and its criticisms of the electoral circus and the bourgeois parties—especially the PRD, which is discredited among many radicalized students in Mexico City.

This turn by the Zapatistas, after eleven years of placing confidence in the bourgeois PRD, is not surprising. The Zapatista rebellion started in 1994 in response to the implementation of NAFTA—a treaty for the imperialist plunder of the Mexican economy, which has sunk the peasantry even further into misery—and against age-old racist, anti-indigenous oppression. The timid nationalist politics of the PRD (which does not even oppose NAFTA) have disappointed the Zapatistas, and in fact PRD senators themselves approved the infamous 2001 *anti*-indigenous law. Further, as the EZLN itself has documented, the PRD has directly participated in murderous repression against the Zapatistas. The EZLN’s criticisms of the PRD are empirical—based on unfulfilled promises and on repression, not on an understanding of the PRD and the other bourgeois parties as instruments of capital, enemies of the workers and all the oppressed regardless of their current policies.

After decades of so-called “neoliberalism,” which has sunk the masses into the most complete misery, populism is on the ascendance throughout Latin America, with [Venezuela’s] Hugo Chávez as its most famous exponent, while in Mexico it is represented by the PRD. Populism is simply an alternative policy of capitalism, seeking only to renegotiate the terms of the Third World bourgeoisie’s subordination to imperialism. By means of its concessions to the workers and the oppressed and through its nationalist, “anti-neoliberal” rhetoric, populism strengthens the ties of the exploited to their exploiters and helps perpetuate this brutal regime.

The Zapatista program, reduced to bourgeois-democratic reforms in opposition to so-called “neoliberalism” but in no way opposed to the capitalist system itself, is in reality a petty-bourgeois variant of bourgeois-nationalist populism. In fact, [EZLN leader Subcomandante] Marcos himself made it clear that voting for the PRD or any other bourgeois party is not counterposed to *Zapatismo*, when he asserted that “electoral preferences or sympathies are in no way an impediment to belonging to the other campaign” (*La Jornada*, 19 January). The “other campaign” is a politically amorphous petty-bourgeois movement whose purpose is to pressure the nationalist bourgeoisie. It leads those breaking from the PRD to the left to remain within the limits of bourgeois politics.

We Spartacists solidarize with the

Army Out of Chiapas! Down With Paramilitary Terror!

struggle of the indigenous peasantry against their ancient oppression and misery and call on the workers to defend the EZLN against state and paramilitary repression. However, we embrace not *Zapatismo* but the program of revolutionary Marxism, which is a counterposed worldview. Marcos says, “This country’s problem is not a party, but the capitalist system” which “we must transform” (*La Jornada*, 15 January). But there is nothing in the Sixth Declaration attacking the basis of the capitalist system: *the system of private property*. The most prominent call in the Sixth Declaration is for a new constitution “that recognizes the rights and liberties of the people and defends the weak before the powerful,” which will be imposed by a “civilian, peaceful movement.”

It is utopian to think that capitalism can be reformed, by means of new legislation or otherwise, in order to put it at the service of the exploited and the oppressed. In any society, laws are only the superstructure resting on the property regime. Under capitalism, the whole economy serves the extraction of profit by a handful of capitalists who own the means of production. Additionally, the Third World bourgeoisies, such as the Mexican bourgeoisie, are inextricably tied to the imperialists and are incapable of breaking with them and achieving the gains obtained by the old bourgeois revolutions (for example, the French Revolution of 1789), such as the building of a strong economy (the basis for national emancipation) and the modernization of the countryside.

It is necessary to overthrow capitalism by means of a socialist revolution that abolishes the system of private property—i.e., that collectivizes the means of pro-

duction and establishes a planned economy in order to satisfy the needs of the population. This revolution must be extended internationally to eliminate the imperialist counterrevolutionary threat and to put the immense resources and developed productive forces of capitalism at the service of the exploited and oppressed. This is the road to achieving socialism, which requires generalized abundance.

The working class, due to its relationship to the means of production, is the *only* class with the historic interests and the social power necessary to lead the oppressed masses to that end. Having only its own labor power to sell, the working class has no objective interest whatsoever in maintaining the regime of private property; on the contrary, its interests are in the collectivization of the means of production. Also, the proletarians produce the wealth of society collectively, which gives them enormous social power. Oil workers, telephone workers or electricians, for example, have the power to disrupt the entire economy and even to paralyze it altogether.

In contrast, the peasantry is a heterogeneous layer forming a part of the petty bourgeoisie, which also includes, for example, students and street vendors. Poor peasants, reduced to production for their own consumption, lack social power and long for their own plot of land; small peasants compete against each other to sell their produce on the market. The objective interests of the peasantry as a social stratum are in private ownership of the land. Due to these characteristics, the peasantry—and the entire petty bourgeoisie—is incapable by itself of advancing a revolutionary program: it always follows one of the two

fundamental classes of capitalism, the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. In the absence of a revolutionary workers party openly contending for power, the peasantry today necessarily limits its struggle within the bounds of capitalism.

We seek to build a revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and the poor peasantry, but this is only possible under the leadership of the workers’ vanguard organized in a communist party. Thus, our purpose is to build a workers party like the Bolsheviks of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, one capable of leading the working class in this historic task. This is, in its general features, the perspective of permanent revolution developed by Trotsky and vindicated in practice by the Russian Revolution of October 1917.

After having in fact defeated the bourgeoisie [during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920], the peasant armies of Villa and Zapata simply withdrew from Mexico City *without even touching the foundations of the capitalist regime*, illustrating the incapacity of the peasantry to reorganize society. What the exploited and oppressed need is *not* a peasant guerrilla movement more combative than the EZLN, but a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party that fights for *socialist revolution*, mobilizing behind itself not only the poor peasantry but also the immense mass of the pauperized urban petty-bourgeoisie.

Our purpose, as the Mexican section of the International Communist League, is to build a revolutionary workers party capable of leading a new October Revolution in this part of the world. Therefore, our task is to elevate the consciousness of the working class, bringing to the proletariat the understanding of its historic mission of universal emancipation, as the only class capable of leading all the oppressed toward their emancipation: peasants, indigenous people, women, impoverished urban petty-bourgeois masses. Right now, an important part of this struggle is to combat the illusions generated by petty-bourgeois Zapatista utopianism. ■

Wildcat Strike Shuts Down Toronto Transit

TORONTO—Fed up with management harassment, safety violations and arbitrary shift changes, members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113 staged a wildcat strike in Toronto on May 29, shutting down North America’s third-largest transit system for most of the day. Subways, buses and streetcars came to a halt when drivers refused to cross picket lines set up by plant workers at the depots. Declaring the strike “illegal,” the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) bosses got an early morning court injunction banning the walkout. When the union refused to order a return to work, management got a second injunction, after which Local 113 president Bob Kinnear called off the strike in mid-afternoon. But much of the subway system remained tied up for hours as ATU members picketed the key Wilson marshalling yard until early evening.

The immediate spark for the strike was management’s unilateral reassignment of over 100 track workers and janitors to the midnight shift. But workers on the picket line pointed to numerous other issues, including management inaction on installing protective screens for bus drivers

and the TTC’s refusal to obey a court order to pay workers’ health care premiums. There are no fully paid sick days, and workers face formal discipline if they’re off sick more than three times a year. Safety is a major issue, highlighted by a carbon monoxide leak that poisoned a section of the Yonge subway tunnel earlier this year. Eight TTC workers and four firefighters were hospitalized in this near-fatal incident. For years, the union has been pushing for gas detectors to be used in the tunnels.

The strike showed the tremendous social power wielded by the 8,500-strong ATU local, without whose labour Toronto simply cannot function. As hours-long traffic jams tied up the city amid a heat wave and smog alert, the capitalist media went into hysterics about trade unionists “holding the city hostage.” Toronto mayor David Miller, a member of the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), joined the anti-union barrage, railing that those responsible for the strike should be “punished” and vowing to seek up to \$3 million in fines from the ATU.

The media vilified ATU local presi-

dent Kinnear for backing the strike and refusing to demand an immediate return to work. For their part, many ATU members are still bitter at Kinnear for pushing through a contract settlement in April of last year that resolved none of the outstanding issues around job security and contracting out. Fully 40 percent of the members who voted were against this sellout deal. And while Kinnear now rightly denounces NDP mayor Miller for “antagonizing working-class people,” the ATU supported his election in 2003. Miller’s anti-union rantings show clearly how this social-democratic party supports and enforces the capitalist system against workers and the oppressed.

With none of the issues resolved and the ATU facing the threat of huge fines, there is talk of new walkouts to press the union’s demands. It is crucial that the entire labour movement—from the auto factories that surround Toronto to city workers and the heavily immigrant hotel workers union, whose contract is set to expire—stand with the transit workers against the attacks of the bosses and city government. Beat back TTC attacks—Defend the ATU!

Mexico...
(continued from page 16)

Jornada (4 May) hailing the repression the previous day. Using language worthy of the beast [1970s-'80s Argentine dictator Jorge Rafael] Videla, the ad called the peasants "subversive groups that only want to disrupt the peace and harmony we live in." The cynicism of the PRD takes on macabre hues. This is the capitalist organization that bases its campaign on the slogan "For the good of all, the poor go first." In other words, "for the good of all"—the bosses and landowners—the poor will be the first to go to prison or the grave. We call to free all the Atenco detainees now and to drop all the charges. We call on the working class to defend the peasants and the students who support them. The repression in Lázaro Cárdenas and Atenco is a portrait of the true face of capitalist "democracy."

Miners Play Hardball

Above all else, I want to talk about the struggle of the SNTMSRM miners and steel workers. The struggle began when the government and bosses, facing the rage of the relatives and co-workers of the deceased miners of Pasta de Conchos, tried to divert attention away from themselves and went after the union, deposing its leader, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, and installing their own puppet, Elías Morales. The response of the union was to carry out 40 hours of rolling strikes across the country. Afterward, a strike began on April 2 at the Sicartsa and Mittal plants in Lázaro Cárdenas, along with other strikes in Nacozari, Sombrerete, Taxco and other places.

SNTMSRM Local 271 in Lázaro Cárdenas already has a long history of combativeness. In 2001, for example, the company tried to dissolve the local and form a company union. The workers elected a new executive committee opposed to the one supported by the company and carried out factory occupations. The company sent riot police to expel the workers and, like now, with the help of the local population, the workers sent the cops running. Just last year, this same local went on strike in struggle for its own economic demands and for unionization of their co-workers in Apodaca, Nuevo León, a bastion of PAN company "unionism."

Lázaro Cárdenas is an industrial port [on the Pacific coast] of some 100,000 residents, centered on the steel plants and the docks, which are mainly connected to these plants. In addition to Sicartsa, there's another metallurgical plant, Mittal, of Indian ownership, both organized by Local 271. The steel complex Grupo Villacero, centered in Monterrey with plants throughout the country, including one in Tultitlán here in Mexico City, is the most important in Latin America and has the lowest production costs. A worker told us that these plants export various steel products to the U.S., South Korea, Japan and China. Another worker told us that the Villarreals [the family that owns Sicartsa] are just figureheads for [former president Carlos] Salinas. He's the guy



Notimex
Above: Cárdenas Batel, PRD governor of Michoacán state. Federal and state police stormed steel plant occupied by workers, killing two. Right: PRD presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador.



Reuters

who privatized Sicartsa, giving it to the Villarreals for \$170 million. The company takes in \$2.5 billion a year. Apparently, the Villarreals haven't even finished paying for the business.

The struggle of the miners and steel workers is a good example of why we communists base our perspective on the working class; it's an example of the constant antagonism between the interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the social power of the latter. The steel industry is one of the most strategic in the country, along with oil and basic services like electricity and transport. The miners union's rolling strikes carried out in March, which mobilized some 270,000 workers, caused losses estimated at \$17 million. At the time of the cop attack against the Sicartsa workers, losses for the strike at that company were estimated at some \$80 million. Seventy-five percent of industry in the country is related to the steel sector. Students and poor peasants are very combative, but it is clear that they simply don't have social power. The working class's position as the force that sets all branches of capitalist economy in motion also gives it the power to paralyze the economy.

But the working class has another characteristic, derived from its central role in production, that makes it unique. When the workers struggle, they do so not to obtain a machine or a piece of one, nor to redistribute the tools. They struggle collectively for better wages and working conditions. In order to survive, the working class is compelled to sell its labor power to the capitalist exploiters. Objectively, the working class has no interest in private property or in preserving the system of capitalist exploitation. It's because of these characteristics that the proletariat is the only class capable of reorganizing the entire economy, collectivizing the means of production to put it in the service of the people, not to generate profits for a handful of capitalists. The way to reach this goal is through socialist revolution.

Combatting Illusions in Populist Nationalism

We made two trips to Lázaro Cárdenas last month. The first was a week before the cop attack. We immediately discovered many illusions in the bourgeois PRD. Even so, the workers were very

open and interested in our newspaper, of which we distributed dozens of copies along with hundreds of copies of our March 11 statement, "Government Hands Off the Miners Union!" (reprinted in "Protest Cop Killing of Steel Workers," WV No. 869, 28 April).

One of the workers told us that if there were repression against the strike, it would come from the federal government, because Cárdenas Batel [PRD governor of Michoacán] had promised not to send the police. PRD presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador [AMLO] had recently been campaigning in the port and, in fact, the union local's journal covered the event with flattering photos and in a totally uncritical man-

May 3: Police attack on protesters in village of Atenco near Mexico City killed two, injured dozens. Some 200 were arrested.



Reuters

ner. AMLO declared in favor of "union autonomy" in his speech, something many workers mentioned to us in discussions. The workers seemed surprised when we quoted AMLO's declaration immediately after the Pasta de Conchos tragedy, where all he did was criticize the union leaders as simply "contract traffickers," evidently in support of Fox's anti-union attack.

As we explained in Espartaco, "For these bourgeois politicians—the biggest Mafiosi and crooks—to rant and rave against the union leadership requires more than just shamelessness." The workers were also surprised to hear about AMLO's constant attacks against the SUTGDF [Mexico City government workers union] and the Metro [Mexico City subway] union under the pretext of "fighting mob influence," and about the fact that López Obrador has made sure that workers at his pejeprepas [high schools that he founded] have no union representation or benefits.

We returned to Lázaro Cárdenas a few days after the cop attack. The area around Sicartsa resembled a battlefield, with burned-out cars blocking the streets. The workers told us about the attack. At least 800 members of various police entities, including that of the state and the PFP [federal police], arrived on Thursday, April 20, at approximately 7:15 a.m., after the pickets' shift change, so they would face fewer workers. With firearms, tear gas and clubs, they managed to dislodge the workers.

But, during this struggle, everyone notified everyone else and a couple of hours later, all the workers (including from Mittal), together with an important part of the local population, massed at the plant's main gate with trucks full of rocks. Some workers mounted the various huge mining implements—bulldozers, steam shovels and steamrollers—to defend themselves against the cop attack. They also obtained ball bearings used to grind the ore when it leaves the mine, which were four centimeters in diameter [1.5 inches] and weighed 200 grams [half a pound], and used them to battle the cops, hurling them with slingshots, catapults and by hand. After a few hours of field battle, they managed to repel the cops and regain control of the plant. However, army and navy units remain inside the plant, supposedly guarding the blast furnaces and the plant's gates to the sea.

The federal and state governments said the cops were not armed. After being forced to admit that they were armed, the government then stated that the police had orders to fire "only at the feet." Even this grotesque mockery was refuted by the bloody evidence. The fallen workers were shot in the head. The workers told us they filled a 19-liter [five-gallon] bucket with shells. The union local's journal has a photo of several shotgun, handgun and assault rifle shells. One worker showed us the stitched-up entry and exit wounds made by a projectile on his right arm.

There was a perceptible change in the workers' opinion of the PRD. In the area

around the plant, there was graffiti with slogans against Cárdenas Batel, one of which called him a "Nazi." The majority of the workers with whom we spoke no longer defended the PRD against our Marxist opposition to it, but intently listened to what we had to say. Many agreed with us. After explaining the necessity of socialist revolution, one responded: "Yes, the bourgeoisie only understands chingadazos [blows]."

The brutal repression carried out by the PRD and the PAN shook workers' illusions in the PRD, but it would be pollyannish to think it destroyed them. The consciousness of most of the workers clearly remains within the bourgeois framework of populism. Some workers defend López Obrador, maintaining that Cárdenas Batel is a traitor; AMLO, they say, is different. We had several intense discussions with some workers who defended the policies of [military general and 1930s populist president] Lázaro Cárdenas del Río as policies genuinely in the interests of the working class and poor. One of the slogans painted on the wall of the plant summed up the illusions. It read: "If the general were alive, he'd die of shame."

Nationalist Populism: Deadly Trap for the Workers

As I said earlier, nationalist populism is just another way of running brutal capitalist exploitation. The events in Atenco and Lázaro Cárdenas have shown

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Mexico...

(continued from page 13)

that illusions in these kinds of bourgeois politicians are literally suicidal. After decades of brutal “neoliberalism,” there’s been an about-face in recent years throughout Latin America back to the old nationalist populism that was once represented prominently in Mexico by the PRI and its predecessor, the PRM [Party of the Mexican Revolution] founded by Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, or in Argentina by Peronism.

This about-face is not anti-capitalist but, on the contrary, reinforces the ties that bind the working class to its exploiters. In the face of the convulsive struggles we have witnessed, today it’s clearer than ever that the fundamental role of the PRD is to channel the struggles of the masses into the sterile framework of electoralism. The PRD’s purpose is to stabilize the manifestly volatile Mexican capitalist regime and renegotiate the terms of its subordination to imperialism, trying to get a few more crumbs from their masters’ table at the White House.

Due to the weakness of the lackey Mexican bourgeoisie in relation to both its imperialist masters and to the working class, the wing of the bourgeoisie represented by the PRD and in part by the PRI needs the support of the working class to achieve its objectives, and thus tries to occasionally present itself as a friend of the workers, granting them a few concessions. The recent events show clearly what the old PRI tactic of the carrot and the stick consists of: concessions on the one hand and savage repression on the other if the workers and peasants try to go too far.

In spite of differences in their rhetoric, AMLO, Hugo Chávez [of Venezuela] and Evo Morales [of Bolivia] are basically the same and pursue the same goal: to rope in the masses. Thus, Chávez babbles on about Bolivarian “socialism”—which doesn’t infringe on private property! And what’s most pathetic is that a lot of supposedly Marxist organizations promote him and his policies as socialist. In Bolivia, where the working class has been decimated, Morales has also tried to placate the demands of the masses through a timid “nationalization” of hydrocarbons. This concretely means that the Bolivian state now has 51 percent of the shares of the oil and gas companies and that these companies can continue to get their profits, though even this has raised the ire of the Spanish and Brazilian oil companies and of the U.S. imperialists. These measures are in no way “anti-capitalist,” but, in the end, actually benefit the national bourgeoisies, not only at an economic level but mainly at a political level, by tying the



March 1938 mass demonstration (below) in support of nationalization of oil industry by President Lázaro Cárdenas (left).



masses ideologically to their own national exploiters.

Take the example of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río. Through his support of the formation of unions in the 1930s—a policy that at times put him in conflict with the bosses, especially in Monterrey—and reforms such as the nationalization of oil and the railroads and land redistribution, he won the support of the working class and peasants. The result was not national emancipation, nor a qualitative improvement of the masses’ living conditions, but more than a half-century of the so-called “perfect dictatorship” of the PRI and its brutal corporatist stranglehold on the unions. Some Sicartsa workers we spoke with were also surprised to learn that Cárdenas del Río himself broke strikes. For example, he sent the army to savagely break the 1940 Azcapotzalco refinery strike.

For Permanent Revolution!

We base our program on the perspective of permanent revolution, as formulated by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky. In the epoch of imperialism, there is no “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie. The capitalist rulers of industrially backward countries such as Mexico are completely subordinated to their imperialist masters and are incapable of winning even basic bourgeois demands like national emancipation. Raising itself up as the leader of all the oppressed, the

working class is the only class capable of shattering the imperialist yoke, leading the peasants out of the abyss of ignorance and misery they find themselves in, laying the foundations for the emancipation of women, granting full rights for gays, etc. The way to achieve this is socialist revolution: destruction of the bourgeois state and the construction of a workers state based on collectivized ownership of the means of production and economic planning.

This understanding was exemplified by the great Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, which laid the basis for lifting backward Russia out of misery and ignorance, and for its transformation into an industrial and scientific powerhouse that was able to serve as a military counterweight to the rapacious U.S. imperialists. Stalin betrayed the October Revolution, and his heirs surrendered the Soviet degenerated workers state to capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. Since then, the U.S. imperialists in particular have perceived few obstacles to carrying out their wars and other depredations. We say: Down with the colonial occupation of Iraq! Imperialist troops out of Afghanistan! Hands off Iran! We say that in the context of imperialist threats, Iran needs nuclear weapons to defend itself and deter an imperialist attack. Only new Octobers can stop bloody imperialist plunder once and for all.

It’s clear that neither the Mexican proletariat nor any other can achieve socialist liberation on its own. In fact, it was the poverty of Russia and the isolation of the Bolshevik Revolution following the defeat of revolutionary opportunities in Europe that laid the material basis for the emergence and consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste in the USSR. The Stalinist bureaucracy’s nationalist dogma of building “socialism in one country” meant opposition to the perspective of workers revolution internationally and accommodation to imperialism. Imperialism is a global system of exploitation and domination. A workers revolution in Mexico would need to spread to the advanced capitalist countries, especially the U.S., to destroy the threat of capitalist counterrevolution and put the immense material resources of the advanced countries at the service of all humanity. The true friends of the Mexican working class are the workers of the entire world. That’s why it’s necessary to uncompromisingly fight the harmful and almost omnipresent reactionary ideology of bourgeois nationalism—the myth of “national unity” between the exploited and their exploiters.

Many workers in this country have the idea that there is no class struggle north of the Río Bravo, nor in imperialist countries

in general. Nothing could be more wrong. To give just two recent and very important examples, French workers took to the streets in March along with students to stop the “First Employment Contract” that robbed young workers of any kind of employment security. Last December, subway and bus workers in New York City carried out a three-day strike that crippled the financial center of world imperialism, fighting the same attacks on pensions and retirement plans that the Mexican bosses have been pushing, until now successfully, in this country.

By going on strike, the combative transit workers defied the reactionary anti-worker Taylor Law that bans strikes in the public sector. Their fight was very popular among the impoverished black and Latino masses in the city. In response, the spiteful capitalist rulers sentenced the union’s leader to ten days in jail, slapped the union with a multi-million dollar fine, fined individual strikers and are threatening to suspend the dues checkoff in an attempt to bankrupt the union. Workers solidarity knows no borders. We call on Mexican workers to protest these attacks against their U.S. class brothers.

Coming back to Mexico: Workers’ persistent illusions in nationalist populism show that trade-union consciousness, as combative as it may be, is still bourgeois consciousness. Trade unionism as such does not put the rule of private property in question, but limits itself in the best of cases to struggles against individual bosses to renegotiate the terms of exploitation of the workers. The essential tool to make a socialist revolution is a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, like that of the Bolsheviks. Fusing declassed intellectuals ready to fight for the cause of the proletariat with the most advanced workers, this party must consist of professional revolutionaries that bring revolutionary consciousness to the working class; it should act as the proletariat’s historic memory, bringing it the lessons of the history of the international class struggle. The party needs to be built by combatting all kinds of bourgeois ideological influence in the working class, fighting especially for the *political independence* of the working class.

I’d like to talk a bit about the Zapatistas. Many workers in Lázaro Cárdenas and here in Mexico City are hostile to the EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation], but for the wrong reasons: because the EZLN criticizes the PRD during election time. Some workers informed us with well-deserved scorn that “*delegado zero*” [Zapatista leader “Subcomandante” Marcos] conspicuously avoided coming through Lázaro Cárdenas during his “other campaign” tour, only visiting nearby indigenous communities, which certainly gives some idea of Marcos’ disdain for the working class (see “Zapatista ‘Sixth Declaration’: Petty-Bourgeois Populism,” page 12).

We Spartacists solidarize with the indigenous peasants’ struggles and defend the EZLN against state and paramilitary repression. But we certainly *don’t* solidarize with the Zapatista program, which in reality is a petty-bourgeois variant of nationalist populism that does not challenge private property or the capitalist state. Instead, it calls for a “civil and peaceful movement” that will achieve its demands through drawing up a new constitution.

If recent events have shown anything, it’s that the capitalist state can’t be reformed, not through a constitution nor any other way. The bourgeois state consists at its core of armed detachments—the cops and army as well as prisons and courts—that keep the bourgeoisie in power. The state can’t be reformed to serve the interests of the exploited and oppressed masses. Can anyone imagine the blood-drenched federal police defending the peasants against the landowners, the workers against the bosses? The capitalist state has to be destroyed through a proletarian revolution that replaces it with a new state, a workers state, that defends

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the rule of the proletariat.

As Lenin explained in “Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the Workers’ Party” in 1906, Marxists solidarize with the peasant movement, “but we have to remember that it is the movement of another class, *not the one* which can and will bring about the socialist revolution.”

Marxism and the Trade Unions

In the imperialist epoch, trade unions are increasingly linked closer to the state, and tend to function as organizations to subordinate and discipline the working class, serving as an auxiliary instrument of capitalism. Writing in 1940, shortly before his assassination by one of Stalin’s henchmen, Trotsky explained this phenomenon in “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”:

“Inasmuch as imperialist capitalism creates both in colonies and semicolonies a stratum of labor aristocracy and bureaucracy, the latter requires the support of colonial and semicolonial governments as protectors, patrons, and sometimes as arbitrators. This constitutes the most important social basis for the Bonapartist and semi-Bonapartist character of governments in the colonies and in backward countries generally. This likewise constitutes the basis for the dependence of reformist unions upon the state.”

The struggle for internal democracy and for the independence of the unions from the state can’t be separated from the struggle for revolutionary leadership—forging a vanguard party. As Trotsky himself explained: “In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in action, the organs of proletarian revolution.”

Unions today are without exception led by pro-capitalist bureaucracies. Since the era of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, a large part of the unions in Mexico has been affiliated with the PRI and headed by extremely repressive bureaucracies that are submissive to the state. The leaders of the PRI-affiliated CTM [Mexican Labor Federation] and CT [Congress of Labor] have supported Fox in the attack against the miners union and backed the scab Elías Morales. The current struggle of the SNTMMSRM has sharpened the crisis of corporatism. Union leaders get their privileges from their position at the head of workers organizations, and today they see this position being threatened by the government. Thus for the first time, this May Day the so-called “independent” unions marched with a number of PRI-affiliated unions, including the SNTMMSRM.

While the misnamed “independent” unions are in fact more democratic, their bureaucrats are almost always loyal to the PRD, tying the working class to the bosses above all through nationalist ideology and illusions in the “democratic” reform of the capitalist state. Revolutionary Marxists strive for the working class to replace all these bureaucratic and pro-capitalist leaderships with leaderships based on a program of proletarian political independence and opposition to all bourgeois parties.

We are opposed to any intrusion of the state into the unions, even the most bureaucratic. The interest of the capitalists and their state is in shackling, weakening and if possible destroying the unions outright. This is the only objective the bourgeois state seeks when it interferes in union life. The working class should clean its own house. As part of our struggle for the complete independence of the unions from the state, we also oppose all legislation that ties the unions to the state: binding arbitra-

tion, “taking of note” [mandatory government approval of union leaders], control of union dues by the government. We call for government hands off the miners union! Drop the charges against Napoleón Gómez Urrutia! Free [jailed SNTMMSRM leader] Indalecio Pérez Morones now! Drop the charges against all the striking workers!

In a recent class of the Juventud Espartaquista [youth group of the GEM], one of the attendees argued against our position, saying that one should take advantage of the government’s campaign against Gómez Urrutia to get rid of him and replace the leadership. The struggle for a revolutionary leadership in the unions must have as its premise the defense of the union against the bourgeois state. Nothing good can come of a leadership that takes power in coordination with the attacks of the bosses and their state.

I’d like to digress a bit to explain a classic Marxist analogy that Trotsky made referring to the trade unions and the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated

fact is that the PRI’s corporatist federations are not workers’ unions any more than are the company unions (*sindicatos blancos*) sponsored by the right-wing PAN (National Action Party); rather, they are apparatuses for bourgeois control of the workers” (*Internationalist*, Summer 2001).

Thus, the IG dismisses with a wave of the hand powerful unions like the miners and steel workers union or the oil workers, identifying the base with the leadership, and refuses to defend these unions against state attack. The class struggle has hit the IG in the face, and they haven’t been able to come out of their stupor.

In their most recent publication (special supplement to *El Internacionalista*, May 2006), the most they can say is that the government’s removal of Gómez Urrutia from office “is a settling of accounts within the regime”—that is, a conflict within the bourgeoisie—which in an extraordinary way “affects the workers, thus we must mobilize to reject this violent blow of the government.”



Little, Brown and Co.

Moscow, 1918: Soviet leader Yakov Sverdlov addresses Red Army soldiers headed for front during Civil War. Bolshevik Revolution ushered in world’s first workers state.

workers state. As Trotsky wrote more than a half century ago: “In the last analysis a workers’ state is a trade union which has conquered power” (*In Defense of Marxism*, 1939).

Trotskyists always understood the class nature of the USSR as a workers state, and as such we defended it against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution in spite of the reactionary policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy in power. Today we defend the remaining deformed workers states: Cuba, China, Vietnam and North Korea. Defense of these states is a duty of the world proletariat, and the future of China in particular is of utmost importance for the future of the class struggle at a global level. In the same way, we defend the unions against the bosses in spite of the pro-capitalist bureaucracies that lead them. And just as we fight for a class-struggle, anti-capitalist leadership in the trade unions, we fight for workers political revolution in the deformed workers states to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats and replace them with regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

In fact, you don’t have to be a Marxist to defend the unions against the state. You only need to have basic class consciousness. Nevertheless, this basic line has earned us loud reproaches from the Internationalist Group (IG), which like “*delegado zero*” reflects and seeks to exploit the petty-bourgeois, anti-union prejudices prevailing in the student and very misnamed “anti-capitalist” milieus. According to the IG, the PRI unions, including the SNTMMSRM, are not workers organizations but the “class enemy” (*El Internacionalista/Edición México* No. 1, May 2001). The IG also maintains that “the

ance before the trip and wear a hard hat. And the IG should start with trying to explain how a “company union” is carrying out what the IG itself confesses is the “biggest strike movement the country has experienced in the past decade.”

The cited publication of the IG includes two articles on the miners union, in which the IG gives an inventory of the betrayals of the PRI bureaucracy for the last half-century and stupidly puts an equal sign between the company and the government on the one hand and the union on the other. While it raises pompous slogans such as “National strike against the assassin government!”, conspicuously absent in ten two-column pages is any basic slogan demanding that the state take its hands off the miners union, any call for victory to the miners strikes, any demand to drop the charges not only against Gómez Urrutia but also against the dozens of strikers and leaders wanted by the state, a call to free Indalecio Pérez Morones, one single demand to unfreeze the union’s bank accounts. If the IG were honest, it would openly say that it does not defend the union or its strikes. It goes without saying that such would be a union-busting position not worthy of those calling themselves “Marxists” or even any decent union member.

We’ve had this debate with the IG for almost ten years. But reality is as stubborn as the miners, and today the question is posed pointblank. As Trotsky explained in “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay”:

“The matter at issue is essentially the struggle for influence over the working class. Every organization, every party, every faction which permits itself an ultimatic position in relation to the trade union, i.e., in essence turns its back upon the working class, merely because of displeasure with its organization, every such organization is destined to perish. And it must be said it deserves to perish.”

As I said before, the present conflict is the biggest outburst of class struggle in this country in several years. The outcome will mark a signpost for workers struggles in the coming period. The class line is sharply drawn with workers’ blood. And the IG, by refusing to come out clearly in defense of the embattled union, is on the wrong side.

The workers have shown tremendous social power and will to fight, having repelled the murderous April 20 cop attack and held out in their strike. However, they have illusions in nationalist populism, most clearly represented in Mexico by the PRD. The working class needs its own party to fight for proletarian revolution because this is the only solution to the problems of the exploited, impoverished, oppressed masses. There are no shortcuts. We Spartacists base ourselves on the key fundamental experience in the entire history of the class struggle: the October Revolution. And our objective is new October Revolutions around the world. So, we invite you to study our press and the classics of Marxism and discuss them with us. If you agree with this perspective, join us in struggle for the emancipation of the working class, which means the emancipation of all humanity. ■

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Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August. Our next issue will be dated July 7.

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15

Miners, Steel Workers Strikes Shake Mexico



Reuters



AP

Left: Aftermath of police attack on striking Sicartsa steel workers in Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico, April 20. Right: Defiant workers rally the next day as strike continued.

An ongoing wave of miners and steel workers strikes throughout Mexico was touched off by the February 19 explosion at the Pasta de Conchos mine in the state of Coahuila, which killed 65 miners. As anger and indignation at the miners' deaths mounted, the federal government of Vicente Fox's National Action Party (PAN) removed from office the national leader of the SNTMMSRM miners and metal workers union, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, and is investigating him for "corruption." The government is also investigating his wife and sons as well as two other union officials.

When the government attempted to install a pliant bureaucrat at the head of the SNTMMSRM, the union launched a series of strikes, demanding that the companies negotiate only with the Gómez Urrutia leadership. On April 20, state and federal police stormed the Sicartsa steel plant occupied by workers in the city of Lázaro Cárdenas (named after the 1930s populist president Lázaro Cárdenas del Río) in Michoacán state, killing two workers. The Fox government has appealed to the international police agency Interpol to find Gómez Urrutia, who has left Mexico. Meanwhile, workers at the giant Cananea copper mine—100 years after the brutal repression of a historic strike there by Mexican troops and Arizona Rangers—have vowed to continue striking until Gómez Urrutia is reinstated.

With July 2 presidential elections looming, the struggles by the miners and steel workers illuminate the role of each of the bourgeois parties—the PAN, the former ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the nationalist-populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). We print below an edited translation of a presentation by Sacramento Talavera, spokesman for the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League, at a May 12 Mexico City forum.

* * *

Mexican society is extremely volatile. The struggle of the SNTMMSRM, especially the strike underway at the Sicartsa plant in Lázaro Cárdenas, is the most important outbreak of class struggle in at least a decade. Its outcome will mark a signpost for workers struggles in the

immediate future. The Grupo Espartaquista de México solidarizes completely with the struggle of the miners and steel workers. We say: Government hands off the miners union! Victory to the strike! We emphatically and bitterly denounce the

among workers toward the shamelessly anti-worker starvation economic policies of the last two decades. But "neoliberalism" and populism are nothing more than two alternative ways of running capitalism. Despite their differences,

paper came off the press, our prediction was borne out in the bloody deeds in Lázaro Cárdenas, where the PRD, PRI and PAN acted jointly in the repression.

The entire bourgeoisie is worried about the threat of social explosions in the face of the growing social polarization on the eve of the elections, and it's working overtime to get rid of the so-called "red flash-points." Barely two weeks after the bloody attack on the Sicartsa workers, the three main parties of the bosses united once again behind the savage repression by at least 3,500 cops of peasants in the town of Atenco, resulting in two youths killed, more than 200 arrested and dozens injured—many critically—as well as revolting cases of rape and humiliation of those arrested by the cops. The purpose of this bloody attack was to destroy once and for all the combative organization of the Atenco peasants, the Peoples Front in Defense of the Land, which came out of the struggle that stopped Fox from stealing their communal land five years ago. The excuse for the attack: a small group of peasants from Texcoco wanted to sell *flowers* on a public road and the Atenco population came to their aid.

The PRD's parliamentary faction in the state of Mexico published an ad in *La* continued on page 13

Presidential Elections: No Vote to Bourgeois PRI, PAN, PRD! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

bloody April 20 cop attack on the Sicartsa workers, which took the lives of two young workers. We solidarize with their relatives, friends and co-workers, and those of the 65 fallen miners in the Pasta de Conchos tragedy, caused by the blood-sucking bosses' insatiable thirst for profit.

The SNTMMSRM's struggle occurs in the context of the July 2 presidential election campaign. Until a couple of months ago, the PRD was ranked as the most likely winner of the elections. However, since then the PAN has regrouped, rallying its base and rightist "public opinion" around the "danger" of "ungovernability." Some polls put the PAN slightly ahead in electoral preferences. We Spartacists don't take sides in this contest, since none of the candidates represents the interests of the working class. The PAN, PRI and PRD are all bourgeois parties dedicated to the preservation of the brutal system of capitalist exploitation. We fight to build a revolutionary workers party, following the example of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, to fight for proletarian revolution. Explaining these objectives is the purpose of this forum.

It's no secret that the PAN is the historic party of Catholic reaction, founded by neo-Cristeros [referring to the 1920s reactionary Cristero rebellion] with a firm, openly anti-worker ideology. For its part, the bourgeois PRD poses as a friend of the workers and the oppressed. Today, Mexican society is extremely polarized between, on the one hand, the PAN's Cristero "neoliberalism" and, on the other, the PRD's nationalist populism, with the PRI divided between both ideologies. The convulsive struggle of the miners reflects the generalized disgust

each necessarily and inherently involves exploitation and repression of the masses.

In the current issue of our newspaper, *Espartaco* [No. 25, Spring 2006], we warned:

"The PRD—nothing more than a new PRI, brandishing the old populist politics of this party—only wants to renegotiate the terms of the subordination of the Mexican economy to the imperialists, for which it needs the support of the working class. This party is an *enemy* of the working class. As it has already done in the D.F. [Mexico City], if it wins the presidency it will administer brutal capitalist exploitation at a national level and won't hesitate a second to unleash the repressive force of the state against those who today support the party."

Little more than a week after our news-



Cuartosuro



Alfredo Domínguez

Mass protest in Lázaro Cárdenas against police siege of occupied steel plant. Inset: Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, union head being hounded by Fox government.