

## Down With Occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq! U.S. Out of Pakistan, Central Asia!

# Obama Escalates War in Afghanistan

True to his campaign promise to step up the U.S./NATO war in Afghanistan, President Barack Obama announced on February 17 that he was reinforcing the U.S. occupation force with an additional 17,000 troops. This will add nearly 50 percent to the 36,000 U.S. troops that, along with a non-U.S. NATO contingent of 32,000, are currently ravaging that country. Meanwhile, since taking over as Commander-in-Chief, Obama has ordered at least four separate bombing attacks on Pakistani villages by remotely piloted drones, killing over 50 people.

U.S. air attacks in Pakistan—often with the approval of the Pakistani military-backed regime—have inflamed anger among the Pakistani population and exposed that country's rulers as impotent lackeys of the U.S. imperialist overlords. That anger boiled over when Democrat Dianne Feinstein let slip in a public Senate hearing that U.S. drone attacks were launched from a secret base inside Pakistan. According to the *New York Times* (23 February), "more than 70 United States military advisers and technical specialists are secretly working in Pakistan to help its armed forces battle Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the country's lawless tribal areas."

Since August, the Pakistani military, under intense pressure from Washington to curb the growing power of the Taliban and its allies, has been waging a brutal terror campaign in the rugged tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. Entire villages have been razed in "search and clearance operations," creating more than a quarter of a million refugees. The terror has only driven increasing numbers of people into the arms of the fundamentalists and the Pakistani government has repeatedly been forced to accept "truce" agreements, resulting in the creation of what are essentially fundamentalist ministates that are now the focus of U.S. drone bombing attacks.

According to the *New York Times* (21 February), the bombing raids ordered by Obama inside Pakistan have "expanded" the policy introduced last year by George Bush. The attacks ordered by Bush targeted what Washington



Reuters photos

**Above: U.S. troops patrolling Afghanistan's Helmand Province in February. Below: February 15 funeral for victims of U.S. missile attack in Pakistan's North Waziristan region, near Afghan border.**



claimed were "safe havens" in Pakistan for Taliban and Al Qaeda forces fighting U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The attacks ordered by Obama on February 14 and 16 for the first time targeted camps run by Baitullah Mehsud. He is a fundamentalist leader accused of attacks against Pakistani security forces and political leaders but who "has played less of a direct role in attacks on American troops." In other words, the U.S. imperialists are

now beginning to intervene militarily in Pakistan to support their client regime against fundamentalists seeking its removal. The client itself, meanwhile, alternates between terror and capitulation in dealing with the forces to whose destruction the American government is so committed. The bulk of the Pakistani army remains in the eastern part of the country, arrayed against Pakistan's perennial main enemy (and fellow nuclear-armed state)

India, locked together in intractable conflict over Kashmir.

In taking their Afghan war further afield, the U.S. imperialists may be making the worst of a bad situation. A recent article in *Newsweek* (9 February) observes that for U.S. forces "the situation in Afghanistan is bad and getting worse" and asks: "So why not just get out?" The answer given is that, in the resulting power struggle, "the winning side would likely be the one backed by Pakistan, which may end up being the Taliban—just as it was in the last civil war."

During the presidential election, candidate Obama distinguished himself from Democratic rival Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain by insisting that he would not shy away from intervening in Pakistan to chase down Taliban leaders. In office, Obama has not rescinded an order signed last July by Bush authorizing ground raids into Pakistan without prior approval by that country's government. The *Washington Post* (4 February) reported that Obama officials have decided that "Afghanistan and Pakistan are to be treated as a single theater of war" (they are calling it "Af-Pak"). If Obama is moving toward full-scale military intervention in Pakistan, with its large area, mountainous terrain and large, ethnically diverse and fractious population, the U.S. rulers will find themselves with a far greater mess on their hands than the military quagmires inherited from Bush.

The arrogant U.S. imperialists seem undeterred in their ambitions by the unwillingness of the other NATO countries thus far to commit any additional troops to the Afghanistan occupation. And underlining its evident conviction that any number of perceived enemies can be targeted simultaneously, Washington has not ceased to threaten Iran over its nuclear program. It could not be clearer that, in the context of such threats, Iran needs nuclear weapons to deter an imperialist attack.

Obama's escalation of the U.S./NATO war in Afghanistan comes as the military situation in that country is rapidly spiraling out of Washington's control. A December report by the International Council on Security and Development, a London-based think tank, reported that the Taliban "now holds a permanent presence in 72 percent of Afghanistan" and "are closing a noose around" Kabul. On February 11, Taliban gunmen and suicide bombers attacked

*continued on page 8*



New York Post’s Racist Cartoon

On February 18 the *New York Post*, part of Rupert Murdoch’s rightwing media empire, published a cartoon repugnant even by the loathsome benchmark of that gutter press. The *Post*’s page 12 Sean Delonas “cartoon” depicted two policemen, guns drawn, standing over a bullet-riddled creature they had gunned down, lying in a pool of blood. One cop says to the other, “They’ll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill.” Barack Obama signed the stimulus bill the previous day; the dead creature lying on a city sidewalk in the cartoon is a chimpanzee. The *Post* said that it was

taking off from the story of an actual 200-pound rampaging chimpanzee that had mauled a woman in Connecticut and was killed; this, if anything, makes their racist amalgam even more hideous. The message couldn’t be clearer: Obama can claim all he wants that the civil rights movement got America “90 percent of the way” toward racial equality, but this is still racist, capitalist America. No matter how high up you get, black people are still to be targeted for repression, still “fair game” to be gunned down by the cops. Like a suppurating sore, the *Post*’s outburst reveals the viru-

lent poison of racial oppression, which is structurally embedded in American capitalism. Here’s the reality behind the racist *Post* cartoon: Oscar Grant, lying on an Oakland BART platform, shot in the back by a cop on New Year’s Day 2009. Sean Bell, gunned down by New York City cops in a fusillade of 50 bullets on his wedding day in 2006. Even an 88-year-old black woman, Kathryn Johnston, wasn’t safe in her own home, as Atlanta cops killed her in 2006. Amadou Diallo was brought down by a hail of 41 police bullets fired at the unarmed 22-year-old African immigrant in the vestibule of his home in 1999. There are so many thousands more, from past decades’ lynchings to today’s death penalty, the legacy of brutal chattel slavery. Seizing on the justified outrage over the *Post*’s cartoon, black Democrat Al Sharpton has organized several protests against the paper, including a boycott campaign. For this liberal hustler, the aim is to build and cement support for Obama, the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, which is the greatest enemy of working people and the oppressed the world over. In a February 18 statement on the cartoon, Sharpton denounced the *Post* for “making inferences that are offensive and divisive at a time the nation struggles to come together to stabilize the economy.” It’s Sharpton’s version of “national unity”: stand by “our” president, who, along with his fellow Democrats, is now presiding over the unemployment, homelessness, fore-

closures, the nearly 900,000 black men and women in prison and the prison-like inner-city schools that have come to define American capitalism. While the reformist left fawned over Obama’s election, we, as Marxists committed to the overturn of the bourgeois order through socialist revolution, gave no political support to Obama or any capitalist politician—Democrat, Republican, Green or “Independent.” Obama serves as a very powerful propaganda weapon for the bourgeoisie, telling black people and the oppressed to shut up and stop complaining, because, you see, “the American dream” works. But “the American dream” is a nightmare, a cruel lie, and more so today as the global economic meltdown throws even more working people onto the scrap heap. Liberals and reformists of course decry such symptoms of capitalist rot as the *Post*’s racist cartoon. But the special oppression of the black population is deeply rooted in the American state’s origin as a slaveholding society and its continuation in capitalist wage slavery, with its periodic crises and wars and permanent need for a mass of unemployed, where blacks are the last hired and the first fired. Black oppression will not be done away with short of socialist revolution. The Democratic Party is the other party of racist U.S. imperialism and the class enemy of working people. We call for class struggle against the capitalist rulers. We fight to break workers and blacks from any illusions in bourgeois candidates and capitalist electoral politics, and win them to the struggle to build a multiracial working-class party, the necessary instrumentality to get rid of this rotting, racist capitalist system.■



TROTSKY

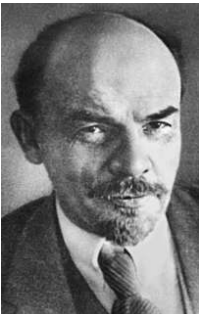
Karl Marx and the U.S. Civil War

February is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the president during the U.S. Civil War. While Lincoln was not a radical abolitionist and had initially opposed only the expansion of slavery, Karl Marx nonetheless recognized that Lincoln came to the understanding that defeating the Confederacy required the smashing of black chattel slavery. Marx hailed the Civil War as a great bourgeois-democratic revolution and rallied the European working class to support the victory of the North. We reprint below

excerpts from an address drafted by Marx for the First International on the occasion of Lincoln’s re-election in 1864. This was written before the systematic export of capital—i.e., imperialism—had come onto the world scene.

We congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved watchword of your first election, the triumphant wacry of your re-election is, Death to Slavery.... When an oligarchy of 300,000 slave-holders dared to inscribe, for the first time in the annals of the world, “slavery” on the banner of Armed Revolt; when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, whence the first Declaration of the Rights of Man was issued, and the first impulse given to the European revolution of the 18th century; when on those very spots counter-revolution, with systematic thoroughness, gloried in rescinding “the [...] ideas entertained [...] at the time of the formation of the old Constitution,” and maintained “slavery to be a beneficent institution,” indeed the only solution of the great problem of “the relation of labour to capital,” and cynically proclaimed property in man “the cornerstone of the new edifice,” then the working classes of Europe understood at once, even before the fanatic partisanship of the upper classes for the Confederate gentry had given its dismal warning, that the slave-holders’ rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy crusade of property against labour, and that for the men of labour, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic. Everywhere they bore therefore patiently the hardships imposed upon them by the cotton crisis, opposed enthusiastically the pro-slavery intervention, importunities of their betters—and, from most parts of Europe, contributed their quota of blood to the good cause. While the working men, the true political power of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic; while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned labourer to sell himself and choose his own master; they were unable to attain the true freedom of labour or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation, but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war. The working men of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Anti-Slavery War will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world.

—Karl Marx, “To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America” (November 1864) [brackets in original]



LENIN

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PAGE 4

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Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War

PAGE 24

Women and Revolution

Women Workers and the Contradictions of China Today

Defend China Against Imperialism, Counterrevolution! For Workers Political Revolution!

PAGE 64

Gérard Le Méteil, 1959–2007.....3

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# Racist Lynchings of Ecuadorian Immigrants in Brooklyn and Long Island

## Labor Must Mobilize to Defend Immigrants!

We reprint the following article from the January 31 newsletter of the New York Labor Black League for Social Defense, as reissued with minor corrections on February 7.

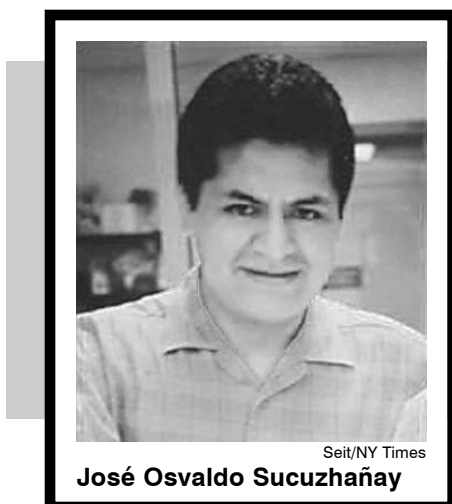
"Today my brother is the victim, but tomorrow it could be your brother, your mother, your father." These words were spoken by Diego Sucuzhañay following his brother's grisly murder. On the night of December 7, José Osvaldo Sucuzhañay, a 31-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant and father of two, was walking with his brother Rómel through the streets of Bushwick in Brooklyn. As they walked arm in arm, four black men pulled up alongside of them, got out of their SUV and hurled anti-gay and anti-Latino epithets at the brothers before launching their murderous attack. Rómel managed to escape, but they surrounded José, beat him and crushed his skull with a baseball bat. He died six days later in the hospital.

Just one month earlier, on November 8, four days after Obama was elected, a lynch mob brutally beat and stabbed Marcelo Lucero to death in the town of Patchogue in Long Island. Lucero tried to defend himself against the mob, but one of the racist thugs plunged a knife into his chest. Six of the attackers are white, and the seventh is the son of a Puerto Rican man and a black American woman. The racists who carried out this lynching had told a friend of theirs that they were going to "go jump a Mexican." One of the attackers said, "I don't go out doing this often—maybe only once a week." The *New York Times* reported that on the day of Lucero's killing, two members of this same mob fired a BB gun at Marlon García, 27, and struck him several times after García had tried to stop the beating of another man across the street.

The multiracial working class in the U.S. has a burning interest in mobilizing its social power in protest against these racist murders. This power should be mobilized to oppose anti-gay and anti-immigrant attacks. The New York Labor Black League for Social Defense says: An injury to one is an injury to all! Fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Everyone who made it into this country has the right to stay and live decently. Organize the unorganized—for labor action against racist terror!

These lynchings are a by-product of the U.S. government's bipartisan campaign of terror against immigrants. As is the case during every economic crisis, the racist rulers today are carrying out mass deportations while scapegoating immigrants for the widespread unemployment and poverty that is an endemic part of capitalism. The latest Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) statistics show that during the 2008 fiscal year alone, a staggering total of 349,041 immigrants were deported. The Mexican government recently reported that from January to October 2008, the U.S. government deported 28,456 children to Mexico. These ruling-class attacks provide fertile ground for fascist vermin like the Minutemen and outright fascist terrorists like the KKK and Nazis to come out of their holes to engage in their cowardly and murderous attacks against immigrants.

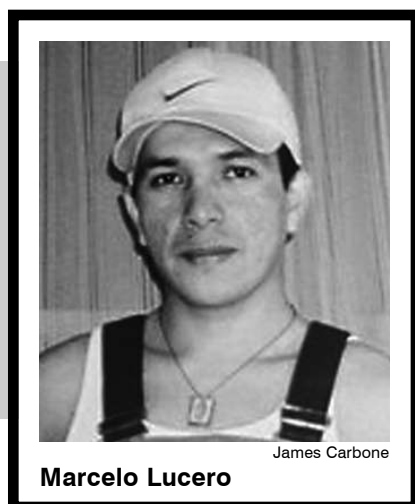
Risking their lives to get to the U.S., most immigrants arrive here to face brutal exploitation, poverty, discrimination,



Seit/NY Times  
**José Osvaldo Sucuzhañay**

insults of every kind and constant fear of persecution by *la migrá*. Before his death, Marcelo Lucero would often say to his mother, "Here a person suffers from several causes: work, racism and the family. The golden dream doesn't exist. Sometimes not even the money justifies this way of life" (*El Comercio* [Quito, Ecuador], 13 November 2008).

Democratic president Barack Obama, the new Commander-in-Chief of bloody



James Carbone  
**Marcelo Lucero**

him to be gay simply for having his arm around his brother. Across the country, there has been a rash of attacks on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. These vile anti-gay bigots surely feel that they have the wind in their sails since the November elections, in which Proposition 8 in California overturned the legalization of same-sex marriage and two other states passed initiatives banning it. As we in the LBL say in our Ten-

nic and racial hostilities to keep the working class divided and weak. As was noted in the 1890s in a letter from Friedrich Engels to a colleague in the U.S.: "Your bourgeoisie knows much better even than the Austrian Government how to play off one nationality against the other: Jews, Italians, Bohemians, etc., against Germans and Irish, and each one against the other, so that differences in the living standard of the workers exist, I believe, in New York to an extent unheard-of elsewhere."

As decaying capitalism's economic crisis threatens the jobs and livelihoods of millions, blacks and immigrants are hit the hardest. In this racist society black people are the last hired and first fired. The racial oppression of black people, which has its origins in black chattel slavery, is the bedrock of American capitalism. Meanwhile, the capitalist bosses also scapegoat immigrants in economic downturns as they ratchet up deportations.

Divisions among black, white and immigrant workers break down in the course of class struggle. Recent examples demonstrating this include the sit-down strike at Republic Windows in Chicago and the unionization of the Smithfield Foods plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 927, 2 January). The workforces at both of these locations were largely black and immigrant. Ultimately what is necessary is a revolutionary Marxist party to instill class consciousness into the multiracial working class. We must combat anti-immigrant chauvinism among U.S.-born black and white workers. At the same time, immigrant workers must understand that anti-black racism must be defeated because it remains the touchstone of social reaction in the U.S.

Working-class immigrants are not simply victims. They produce wealth in society and therefore, together with black and white workers, they have the social power to bring society to a grinding halt. These workers represent a living bridge to the struggles of working people in Latin America and elsewhere. But the obstacle to any real mobilization and militant struggle to protect immigrants from lynch mob terror lies in the class-collaborationist political program of the protectionist,

*continued on page 11*

## Organize the Unorganized! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

U.S. imperialism, has proven himself to be a staunch supporter of the "war on terror," including warrantless wiretapping and the renewal of the racist, anti-immigrant and anti-labor USA Patriot Act. This new, "liberal" overseer of the American plantation supports the death penalty, the system of legal lynching that is the legacy of black chattel slavery. He also supports beefed-up border patrol repression and the construction of fortified border walls to keep immigrants out ([www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)). Obama voted for the failed McCain-Kennedy immigration bill with its "guest worker" scheme of "legalization" through indentured servitude. Any workers who believe that the administration of Obama, the first black president in U.S. history, will bring real "change" in the wake of the much-despised Bush regime will see their hopes brutally dashed.

In line with our principled opposition to parties of the capitalist class enemy, the LBL, which was initiated by and is fraternally allied to the Spartacist League, a multiracial revolutionary Marxist organization, urged workers during the election campaign to give no vote to Obama or McCain or any other capitalist politician, including Green Party presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney. Wage slaves have no business being in the same party with their capitalist exploiters! Workers need their own party to fight for socialist revolution.

### An Injury to One Is an Injury to All!

Before launching their fatal attack, Sucuzhañay's murderers also screamed an anti-gay slur at their victim, believing

Point Program, we fight for "Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals!"

Both of these lynchings involved attackers who are black or Latino, i.e., the very people who are inevitably the targets of the same forces that mobilize against immigrants. The uncle of José Pacheco, who is the black Puerto Rican youth arrested in conjunction with the murder of Marcelo Lucero, told reporters that the home of Pacheco's own parents was burned down twice when they first moved to the area in the 1990s!

The American bourgeoisie fomenteth-



WV Photo  
Labor Black League denounces bipartisan "war on terror" at united-front protest for Mumia Abu-Jamal in Oakland, April 2008.



# The National Question in the Marxist Movement, 1848-1914

*The following article, the text of a presentation given by Spartacist League Central Committee member Joseph Seymour at a 1976 European gathering, was originally printed in two parts in WV Nos. 123 and 125 (3 and 17 September 1976). At the time of the talk, the Lebanese civil war was raging—hence, the references to Lebanese Muslims and Maronite Christians. Additionally, in 1976 we did not advocate independence for Quebec from Canada, while recognizing its right to self-determination. But as comrade Seymour noted in his presentation, “if the national polarization in Canada hardens and the working people of Quebec decisively opt for separatism, we may reverse that policy and come out for independence.” Indeed, since 1995 we have advocated independence for Quebec (see “Independence for Quebec!” Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 52, Autumn 1995).*

As you are aware, our views on the national question, particularly concerning the Near East, are one of the most distinctive and controversial aspects of “Spartacism.” Very often this question is the most obvious and sharpest difference when we first encounter tendencies that appear to be close to us.

This talk is designed as a contribution to understanding the theoretical underpinning of our current positions. In polemics against the Spartacist tendency and within the ostensibly Trotskyist movement, there are often references to the position Marx or Lenin took on this or that aspect of the national question. Without a thorough knowledge of the evolution of the Marxist position, in its historical context, it is impossible to determine whether or not, and how, these references are relevant.

I believe that an understanding of the evolution of the Marxist position on the national question from 1848 to 1914—i.e., from the origins of Marxism to the collapse of the Second International—bears on the Spartacist position in two significant ways. First, there is no Marxist program for the national question as such. The Marxist position has always had a predominantly strategic character, aimed at creating the conditions for a successful proletarian revolution. In this sense, I think that one can draw a contrast with the Marxist position on the woman question. The position in favor of abolition of the family and for the equality of women is a fundamental element of a communist society, and therefore is not subordinate to changing political conjunctures.

The Marxist position on the national question has a much more conjunctural character historically, and is much more determined by changing empirical circum-

stances. Thus, it is not only legitimate, but very often obligatory, to change a specific position on a specific national question in a very short period of time. Today we are opposed to the independence of Quebec, while of course recognizing the right of self-determination. But it is certainly possible that in a couple of years,

tinians or the Lebanese Muslims as inherently progressive, or the Hebrews and Lebanese Maronite Christians as inherently reactionary, as outposts of imperialism. Many of our disputes with various ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies—for example, over the India-Pakistan war in 1972, over Angola and over Lebanon—involve our

the mid-19th century, Russia was analogous to the United States for a South American revolutionary today. Radical democracy in Central Europe was linked to the liberation of Poland and a revolutionary war against tsarist Russia.

A more complex aspect of the unification of Germany arose from the fact that part of the German nation was in the Hapsburg or Austro-Hungarian empire. The majority population of that empire consisted of the various Slavic nations, who were mainly peasant peoples. The most important and advanced of these Slavic nations were the Czechs, and Bohemia was about 40 percent German (concentrated among the urban population) and 60 percent Czech, with virtually all of the peasants being Czech.

Marx and Engels maintained that, with the exception of Poland, the Slavic peoples of the Austro-Hungarian empire were too backward to have a bourgeois-democratic revolution. From that premise, they drew the program of dividing Central and East Europe into three great states—Greater Poland, Greater Germany and Greater Hungary—in which the western and southern Slavs would be expected to assimilate to the higher national cultures.

When the revolution of 1848 broke out, the Slavs—not unnaturally—did not go along with this program. The Czech liberals, led by František Palacký, proposed instead a federated Austro-Hungarian state allied to a democratic Germany. Thus there was a genuine conflict between the national-democratic movement in Germany and Hungary on the one hand, and the Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian empire, who in part looked to Russia to preserve the Austro-Hungarian status quo.

This situation came to a head in early 1849, when the Russian army crushed the Hungarian national movement of Lajos Kossuth and the Croat national minority maintained a neutral position at best. At that point, Marx and Engels developed a program which amounted to the national, if not physical, genocide of the western and southern Slavs in the interests of the democratic or progressive peoples.

In “Hungary and Pan Slavism” (1849) Engels writes:

“Everywhere the forward-looking class, the carrier of progress, the bourgeoisie, was German or Magyar. The Slavs found it difficult to develop a bourgeoisie, the South Slavs were only very partially able to do so. Along with the bourgeoisie, industrial strength, capital, was in German or Magyar hands. As German education developed, the Slavs also came under the intellectual tutelage of the Germans, even deep in Croatia. The



Czech rebels barricade gateway to Prague bridge during 1848 Revolution.

if the national polarization in Canada hardens and the working people of Quebec decisively opt for separatism, we may reverse that policy and come out for independence. Such determinations have a conjunctural and a strategic character.

The second reason I believe a knowledge of pre-Leninist Marxism is important in this question is that our position involves opposition to the notion (which is a resurrection of the earliest Marxist position) that there exist progressive nations and reactionary nations within the colonial world. We do not regard the Pales-

rejection of the notion of progressive nationalities and progressive bourgeois state-building in this epoch.

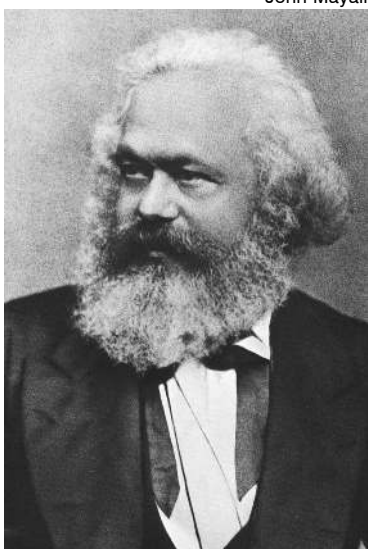
## “Progressive Nations” in the Revolutions of 1848

Marxism as a political tendency begins in early 1846 with the organization of the Communist Corresponding Society in Brussels. What distinguished Marx from other German communists was his belief that it was necessary to have an alliance with the bourgeois democrats, and that the road to socialism in Germany ran through an imminent bourgeois-democratic revolution. As such, he became committed to the program of the unification of Germany as an inherent and important component of that revolution.

The unification of Germany was organically linked to the radical redrawing of boundaries throughout Eastern Europe. Marx was committed to the restoration of an independent Poland, which would serve as a democratic buffer against tsarist Russia. Russia was the strongest military power in Europe, and was considered by Marx as the bulwark of reaction in which a bourgeois-democratic revolution was *not possible*—a position he maintained until the late 1870s. One cannot understand the Marxist position on the national question unless one realizes that for a Central European revolutionary in



W. Hall



John Mayall

Friedrich Engels (left) and Karl Marx.



New York Public Library

Lajos Kossuth, leader of 1848-49 Hungarian Revolution.

same thing took place, only later and therefore on a smaller scale in Hungary, where the Magyars together with the Germans assumed intellectual and commercial leadership....”

And in another article, “Democratic Pan-Slavism” (1849), he concluded:

“We repeat: Except for the Poles, the Russians and at best the Slavs in Turkey, no Slavic people has a future, for the simple reason that all other Slavs lack the most basic historic, geographic, political and industrial prerequisites for independence and vitality.”

Referring to the Russian-Slav counter-revolutionary movement, he wrote:

“Then for a moment the Slavic counter-revolution with all its barbarism will engulf the Austrian monarchy and the camarilla will find out what kind of allies it has. But with the first victorious uprising of the French proletariat...the Germans and Magyars in Austria will become free and will take bloody revenge on the Slavic barbarians. The general war which will then break out will explode this Slavic league and these petty, bull-headed nations will be destroyed so that nothing is left of them but their names. “The next world war will cause not only reactionary classes and dynasties but also entire reactionary peoples to disappear from the earth. And that too would be progress.”

There was, in the Revolution of 1848, a prominent leftist who did adhere to the doctrine of national self-determination as a principle. This was Mikhail Bakunin, who wrote in his 1848 “Appeal to the Slavs”:

“Down with the artificial boundaries which have been forcibly erected by despotic congresses according to so-called historical, geographical, strategic necessities! There should no longer be any other barriers between the nations but those corresponding to nature, to justice and those drawn in a democratic sense which the sovereign will of the people



Nadar

### Mikhail Bakunin

themselves denotes on the basis of their national qualities.... The welfare of the nations is never assured as long as anywhere in Europe one single people is living in oppression.”

—translated in Horace B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism*

At the general theoretical level, Marx and Engels denounced Bakunin for utopian egalitarianism applied to nations, which anticipates their later conflict with Bakuninite anarchism where the same principles are applied to individuals. Thus, Engels polemicized against Bakunin in February 1849:

“There is no mention of the very real obstacles in the way of such universal liberation, of the completely different levels of civilization of the various peoples, of their equally different political needs conditioned by them. The word ‘freedom’ takes the place of everything. There is no mention of reality, or insofar as it is considered at all, it is represented as something entirely reprehensible, something arbitrarily produced by ‘congresses of despots’ and by ‘diplomats’.”

—“Democratic Panslavism”

On a more concrete level, Marx and Engels regarded so-called democratic pan-Slavism as utopian, which in practice would only serve tsarist Russian expansionism.

Marx’s position on the Slav question in 1848 has drawn very considerable criticism, not least from within the later Marxist movement itself. The purpose of this talk is not to second-guess Marx and Engels’ empirical judgments, but rather to focus on their methodology. I will, however, indicate the two criticisms of

their position on the Slav question which I consider to be the strongest.

First, there is a too-close identification of political dominance with cultural development. The Czechs of Bohemia certainly had the economic and cultural level equal, if not greater, to the Hungarians and the Poles. Secondly, there is an over-estimation of the attractiveness of pan-Slavism, and therefore the alliance of all Slavic peoples under Russian dominance. Consequently, there was a corresponding underestimation of the nationalism of the particular Slav nations.

### Bourgeois Reaction and Bourgeois Progress

As a result of the defeat of radical democracy in the revolutions of 1848, Marx substantially modified his program. He blamed the defeat of radical democracy and the proletarian vanguard on objective economic backwardness, not only in Germany and Austria, but also in France. Therefore, classic post-1848 Marxism placed a heavy programmatic emphasis on creating the objective conditions which would enable the proletariat to take power.

This consisted in furthering economic development, in which the unification of Germany and of Italy was considered extremely important. Only economic development would lay the basis for the organization of the proletariat and the expansion of democratic rights to provide the conditions for proletarian power.

An important component of the post-1848 program continued to be the advocacy of the destruction of tsarist Russia’s military power...by anybody. Marx supported the British and French in the Crimean War and always supported Turkey against Russia, on the grounds that Russia was *the* great reactionary power in Europe.

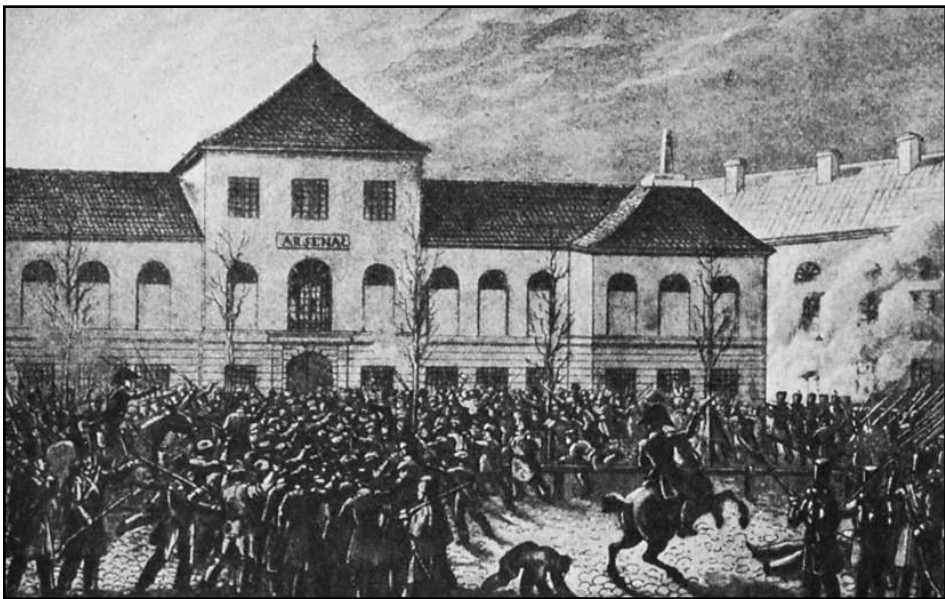
The next major historical event after 1848 that bears on the national question was the Austro-Italian war of 1859. Here, Marx reaffirmed his fundamental commitment to the unification of Germany as the most progressive national development in continental Europe. He did not support the Italians even though he favored Italian unification because the anti-German Napoleon III of France was an ally of Italy. Marx believed that a victory for the Italian-Napoleonic alliance would threaten the unification of Germany. Believing he had to choose which was more progressive—the unification of Italy or of Germany—he chose that of Germany.

From 1848 onward, Marx and Engels were often accused by their opponents within the left of being German chauvinists. They denied that, arguing that their position on the unification of Germany was objective, and that it did not reflect subjective nationalist prejudice. A united Germany would give an enormous impetus to the economic development of Europe, and would produce the most advanced workers movement in Europe. They were proved objectively correct in that sense. However, it was only in 1870 that they got a chance to prove demonstrably that they were not German chauvinists.

In the 1850s and 1860s, Marx and Engels had the following model of what Europe should look like: it was a Europe of multinational states grouped around the great progressive nations—Greater Poland, Greater Hungary, Greater Germany, Greater France and Great Britain (Greater England). The other peoples, which they called the ruins of peoples—*die Völkertrümmer*—were expected to assimilate. Among these ruined peoples they counted the Scots, the Welsh, the Basques and the Czechs.

In his 1859 pamphlet on the Austro-Italian war, “Po and Rhine,” Engels spells out this conception:

“No one will assert that the map of Europe is definitely settled. All changes, however, if they are to be lasting, must be of such a nature as to bring the great and vital nations ever closer to their *true* natural borders as determined by speech and sympathies, while at the same time



Aquatint by Dietrich, from drawing by Piwarski

### Warsaw masses seize arsenal during Polish uprising of 1830-31.

the ruins of peoples, which are still to be found here and there, and are no longer capable of leading an independent national existence, must be incorporated into the larger nations, and either dissolve in them or else remain as ethnographic monuments of no political significance.” [emphasis in original]

### Irish Independence and English Proletarian Revolution

The first major change in this schema occurred in the late 1860s in Britain, where Marx changed his position on the Irish question from the assimilation of the Irish, who were certainly not a great historic people, to independence for Ireland.

The failure of organized Marxism in England obscures the fact that classical Marxism regarded the English revolution as central. Marx devoted much of his energy to the English workers movement. If in the 1850s Marx considered Germany and Italy under-ripe for proletarian revolution, he considered Britain overripe. All of the things that Marx was fighting for in Germany were realized in Britain—a large, well-organized industrial proletariat, a stable bourgeois legality and freedom from Russian invasion.

Yet politically, the British working class in this period moved backward; they were less advanced in 1865 than in 1845. So the English question was important for Marx, not only because the English revolution was strategically important, but because the contradiction between the advanced character of English society and the political backwardness of the proletariat put a question mark over Marx’s entire worldview.

In the late 1860s Marx believed he had found a partial key to this problem in an unresolved national question—namely, the Irish question. In England, Marx ran up against the problem of a divided working class in a multinational state. In 1870, he wrote to two of his American followers:

“Every industrial and commercial center in England now possesses a working class *divided* into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the *ruling* nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country *against Ireland*.... The Irish man pays him back with interest in his

own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the *English rule in Ireland*. “This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling class. This *antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class*, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it....

“England, being the metropolis of capital, the power which has hitherto ruled the world market, is for the present the most important country for the workers’ revolution, and moreover, the *only* country in which the material conditions for this revolution have developed up to a certain degree of maturity. Therefore to hasten the social revolution in England is the most important object of the International Workingmen’s Association. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent.” [emphasis in original]

—Marx to S. Meyer and A. Vogt, 9 April 1870

It was precisely the advanced nature of English society that caused Marx to anticipate the later problems of the workers movement in a multinational state. I should point out that Marx’s position on the Irish question anticipated, but was not identical with, the orthodox Leninist position. Marx expected that an independent Ireland would draw the Irish out of England—that the economic development of Ireland would lead to the repatriation of the Irish working class from England. He looked for the physical separation of the English and Irish working classes as a precondition to political unity. It was not simply the *advocacy* of independence that was important, but its *realization in fact*. As we shall see, it is with Lenin that the advocacy of the right of self-determination becomes key.

### Franco-Prussian War: End of an Epoch

The next major change which rendered what could be called the 1848 program obsolete was the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Marx initially supported the Prussians on the grounds that the war was for the defense of the precarious unity of Germany. When the Prussians defeated Napoleon III and determined to conquer Alsace-Lorraine and crush the

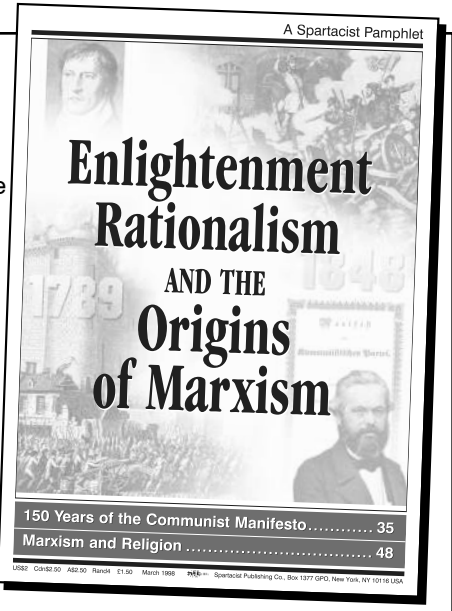
*continued on page 6*

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# National Question...

(continued from page 5)

Paris proletariat, Marx shifted sides, supporting the French. And in fact, Engels, who was a capable military critic, apparently produced a plan for the French army to defeat the Prussians. Eduard Bernstein, who was Engels' literary executor, destroyed this plan so that it wouldn't embarrass the German Social Democracy should it fall into the government's hands.

Marx and Engels' defensism of the French against Bismarck's expansionism was extremely important in terms of enhancing their moral authority as socialist leaders. After 1870, the accusation that Marx and Engels were really German chauvinists, hiding behind pseudo-scientific doctrines, was obviously untenable. The hegemony which Marxism attained in the international workers movement by the 1890s was a direct product of Marx and Engels' absolutely indisputable internationalism.

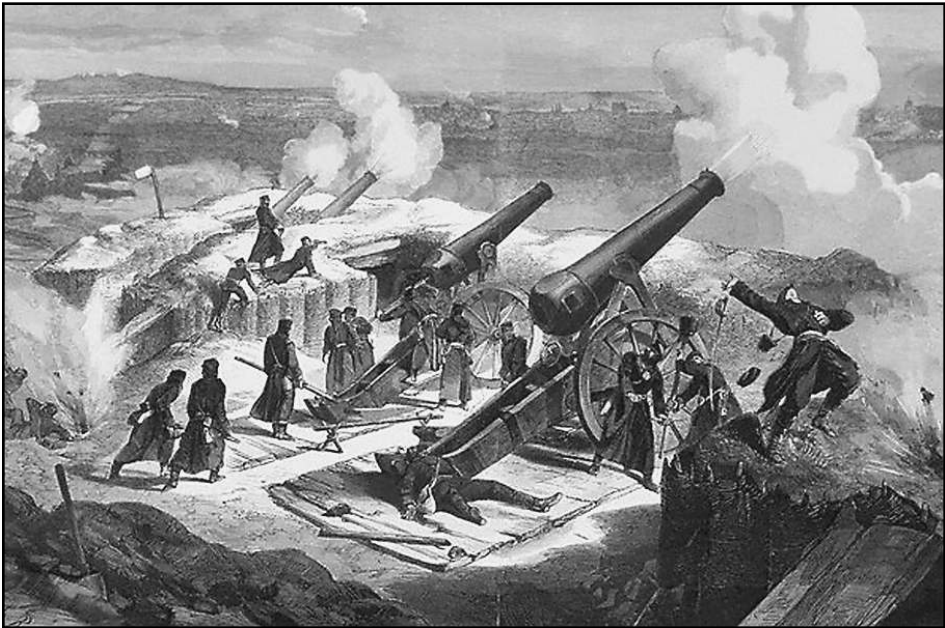
## Engels on the East European Question

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 rendered Marx's *Grossdeutsche* [Greater Germany] position—the inclusion of German-speaking Austria—obsolete. It was now a fantastical program. Marx didn't like it but he had to accept that—except for Alsace-Lorraine—Germany had acquired its boundaries. This, of course, reopened the question of what to do with the Austro-Hungarian empire. Marx died before he tried to figure out a solution to that insoluble problem. Engels, who lived longer, was stuck with it.

By the time he died in 1895, Engels had moved very far away from the 1848 position on what was called the Eastern question—the East European question—but had not entirely abandoned it. By the late 1870s, Marx and Engels had come to expect a radical democratic revolution in tsarist Russia. This made the question of Polish independence much less important strategically. Nonetheless, Engels still regarded Russia as in some sense the gendarme of Europe, even in the 1880s. He was, therefore, very reluctant to accept the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian empire, believing that it would primarily benefit tsarist expansionism. Engels' movement from the notion of "progressive nations" to advocating the right of self-determination can be seen in a letter written in 1882 and an article written in 1890.

In the early 1880s, Engels faced "Luxemburgism" on the national question even before Rosa Luxemburg. For well-motivated reasons, some Polish socialists did not want to fight for the independence of Poland, but rather looked forward to participating in the greater Russian revolution. Engels opposed this position, but he opposed it with a new argument. No longer was an independent Poland seen as a kind of democratic bastion against reactionary Russia—that was not the primary argument. Rather an independent Poland was necessary to sharpen the class antagonisms within Polish society. He wrote to Kautsky (7 February 1882):

"It is historically impossible for a great people even to discuss internal prob-



Gianni Dagli Orti

Bombardment of Paris during 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War.

lems of any kind seriously, as long as it lacks national independence. Before 1859 there was no question of socialism in Italy; even the number of Republicans was small.... Only after 1861 the Republicans increased in influence and later transferred their best elements to the Socialists....

"So long as Poland is partitioned and subjugated, therefore, neither a strong socialist party can develop in the country itself, nor can there arise real international intercourse between the proletarian parties in Germany, etc., with *other than emigre Poles*....

"An international movement of the proletariat is possible only among independent nations." [emphasis in original]

There is still the empirical qualification of "great nations," not all nations. In the same letter, Engels still doesn't think much of independence for the Czechs, Croats, Romanians, etc.:

"Now you may ask me [this to Kautsky, who, incidentally, was half Czech] whether I have no sympathy whatever for the small Slavic peoples, and remnants of peoples, which have been severed asunder by the three wedges driven in the flesh of Slavdom: the Germans, Magyars and Turks? In fact I have damned little sympathy for them."

However, Engels agrees that after the fall of the tsar it would be all right for the small Slavic peoples to have their independence: *after, not before*. Then he adds, "I am certain that six months of independence will suffice for most Austro-Hungarian Slavs to bring them to a point where they will beg to be readmitted." So Engels still considered the smaller peoples of East Europe as economically unviable units, and the Austro-Hungarian state as in some sense progressive.

By 1890 his position had undergone considerable evolution toward the classic Second International position in favor of the right of self-determination. During the 1880s, which was the beginning of the imperialist epoch, the alliances were formed which would result in World War I: tsarist Russia and bourgeois-democratic France against Wilhelmian Germany and Austria-Hungary. Engels foresaw that such a war would have a completely reactionary character. Furthermore, he was aware that changes in military technology meant that the war would be incredibly destructive, and that it would be impossible to predict who would win such a war.

In the 1880s, one begins to notice in Engels' writings and in social-democratic propaganda a strong antiwar and antimilitarist thrust which was absent from the pre-1870 period. As a result there is a much more sympathetic attitude toward self-determination in East Europe. Discussing what will happen the day after tsarism is overthrown, Engels writes in 1890:

"On the same day Austria will lose its single, historical justification for existence—that of a barrier against the Russian drive toward Constantinople.... Magyars, Rumanians, Serbs, Bulgars, Arnauts, Greeks and Turks will then finally be in a position to settle their own mutual disputes without the intervention of foreign powers, to settle among themselves the boundaries of their individual national territories, to manage their affairs according to their own judgments."

—"The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom"

## Kautsky: Multinational States Are Reactionary

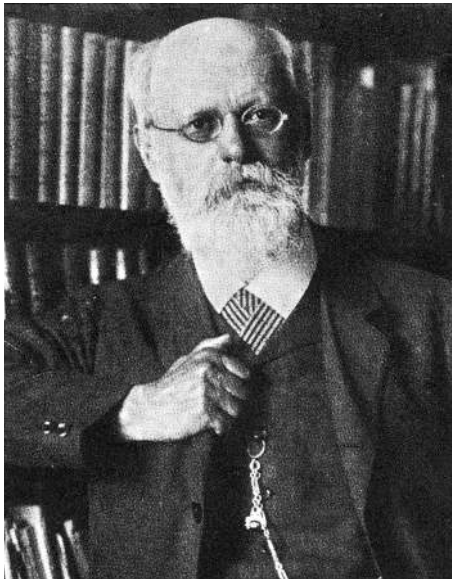
After Engels' death, in the period of the Second International, one can distinguish four characteristic poles on the national question: the German social-democratic center, whose theoretical spokesman was Karl Kautsky; the German-dominated Austro-Hungarian social democracy, whose theoretical spokesmen were Karl Renner and Otto Bauer; Rosa Luxemburg's Polish group; and Lenin's Bolsheviks.

The differences and similarities between these tendencies are extremely complex and defy a simple schema. For example, on the question of the right of self-determination one would find Kautsky and Lenin in favor, and Bauer/Renner and Luxemburg against. On the question

of whether to have a centralized rather than a nationally federated party one would find Kautsky, Luxemburg and Lenin for, and Bauer/Renner against. However, in certain aspects of methodology, I would argue that Kautsky and Luxemburg tended to emphasize the objective economic factor in determining the configuration of nation-states, although they drew diametrically opposite programmatic conclusions. On the other hand, Bauer/Renner and Lenin tended to emphasize the subjective factor, and the question of how to achieve the unity of the workers movement within a multinational state. Finally, I will argue that Lenin's position is unique in his heavy emphasis on the question of the right of self-determination, rather than on any particular configuration of nation-states.

Under Kautsky's guidance, the Marxist movement finally liquidated the outdated notion that tsarist Russia was somehow more reactionary than Wilhelmian Germany. Consequently, the Second International in its 1896 convention in London was now able to assert the general principle of the right of self-determination.

Kautsky's position was that the Russian, Turkish and Austro-Hungarian empires were essentially feudal remnants



Verlag Kurt Desch

Karl Kautsky

—that they were cases of arrested development. He maintained that a normal, healthy bourgeois development in East Europe required the breakup of these multinational units into their constituent nations. In other words, Kautsky regarded the national liberation of the smaller Slavic peoples as a task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in East Europe.

Because the Austrian social democracy did not agree with this position, Kautsky

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Women's Oppression  
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UCLA, Bunche Hall, Rm. 2173  
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239  
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

Visit the ICL Web Site: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org)

### NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, March 4, 7:45 p.m.

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

Hunter College  
West Bldg., Rm. 407  
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
nysl@tiac.net

### TORONTO

Wednesday, March 4, 6:30 p.m.

**The Family and  
Women's Oppression**

University of Toronto  
Sidney Smith Hall, Rm. 1080  
100 St. George Street  
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
spartacan@on.aibn.com

### VANCOUVER

Thursday, March 12, 6 p.m.

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trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

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never fought for it publicly. However, his real position was for the dissolution of the multinational states in East Europe. This comes through clearly in a letter (5 June 1901) from Kautsky to Victor Adler, head of the Austrian party:

“Most of our people suffer from the delusion that one can find a solution to every problem, if only one is clever enough. But there are insoluble problems, and the establishment of a viable Austria is one of them. National autonomy would not be a remedy either. It is essential for us in our propaganda and organisation, but under the given conditions, and with the present relation of forces, it is not conducive to a solution. “In Austria of all places, a gradual approach to some solution or other is unthinkable. The only cure lies in complete collapse. That Austria still exists is to me not proof of its viability, nor yet evidence that we now have the political basis for a slow and peaceful development; all it proves is that bourgeois society is no longer capable of doing away with even the most rotten structures: the Sultan, Tsarism, Austria.”  
—quoted in George Lichtheim, *Marxism* (1961)

**Bauer/Renner: Saving the Austro-Hungarian State**

The national program of Austrian social democracy, codified at the Brünn (Brno in present-day Czechoslovakia) Congress in 1898 called for a federated, democratic Austro-Hungarian state, and did not call for the right of self-determination. The national program of the Russian social democracy, codified in 1903 before the split, called for a unitary state with local autonomy, and did call for the right of self-determination. This significant difference cannot be explained simply on the basis of left versus right. The Russian Mensheviks also supported the right of self-determination, while even radicals in the Austrian party, like Friedrich Adler, did not advocate it.

Why was the simple solution of breaking the empire up into its constituent nations unpopular among Austrian social democrats of all shades? The problem—and this is why Kautsky was right to call it insoluble—was that everyone knew the breakup of Austria-Hungary would precipitate a war between Russia and Germany over the spoils. The various nationalities in the Austro-Hungarian empire hated one another, but they feared tsarist Russia and Wilhelmian Germany more. In contrast to all shades of Polish nationalism, the program of mainstream Czech nationalism was *not* independence. Rather, it was extreme federalism—creating a state within a state—combined with some



Otto Bauer

kind of extraterritorial control over all Czechs in the empire.

(I have the impression that present-day French Canadian nationalism is rather similar to pre-World War I Czech nationalism. The goal is not outright independence, but rather virtually unlimited autonomy for Quebec plus some kind of union of all French-Canadians throughout Canada.)

So the Austrian Socialist Party sought to devise a program that would preserve Austria-Hungary in the face of violent national antagonisms. The heart of this program was so-called “cultural-national autonomy,” according to which nations were no longer associated with territo-



Rosa Luxemburg

ries, but were embodied in individuals. In practice this meant that a Czech in Vienna could attend an exclusively Czech school and a German in Prague an exclusively German school. In fact, Karl Renner likened nationality to religion and argued that national organization should be modeled on churches. He writes in 1908:

“We must draw on the map a double network, the one economical, the other political. We must cut in two the sum of the activities of the state, separating national and political matters. We must organize the population twice; once along the lines of nationality, the second time, in relation to the state, and each time in administrative units of different form.”  
—quoted in Arthur G. Kogan, “The Social Democrats in the Hapsburg Monarchy” in *Journal of Modern History* (1949)

From the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism, the worst thing about the Bauer/Renner position was that it regarded nationality as a positive value. They actually presented their scheme to save the ramshackle Austro-Hungarian empire as an anticipation of communist society. Bauer writes in his 1907 opus, *The National Question and Social Democracy*: “The organization of mankind into autonomous national communities enjoying, organizing, and developing their cultural goals is the final national aim of international Social-Democracy.”  
—translated in Robert A. Kann, *The Multi-National Empire*

For Bauer, the state may wither away, but national affiliation goes on forever.

**Luxemburg: National Blindness and Revolutionary Optimism**

Now we come to the anti-Bauer, Rosa Luxemburg. It is important to emphasize that Luxemburg’s position on the national question is very much Polish-centered which in a sense is a paradox. There were, however, rather plausible reasons for a Polish revolutionary Marxist to oppose the independence of Poland. Luxemburg inherited that tradition, she didn’t invent it. One must realize that Poland was the most advanced, most industrialized part of the Russian empire with privileged access to a relatively large market. From the 1880s on, Polish nationalism was a petty-bourgeois, not a big-bourgeois, phenomenon. Luxemburg was convinced that the economic integration of Poland with Russia had gone so far that there was no possibility of an independent, viable Poland. So she considered Polish nationalism a form of petty-bourgeois reactionary utopianism analogous to Proudhonism in France or Bakuninite anarchism in Spain.

Rosa Luxemburg’s position on Polish independence is also closely linked with her revolutionary optimism concerning the possibility of a socialist revolution

breaking out in the Russian empire and then spreading west. She more or less accepted Trotsky’s position on the permanent revolution in Russia. In fact, Trotsky’s seminal articles on the subject were first published in Luxemburg’s Polish-language journal. Thus, Luxemburg developed an attitude toward the Russian empire that was analogous to Marx’s attitude toward the German nation on the eve of 1848: for her the Russian empire became progressive as a powerful material basis for the coming proletarian revolution.

Luxemburg did not recognize what Lenin did: that the antagonisms between the Polish, Ukrainian and Great Russian working classes were an *obstacle* to a successful revolution in the tsarist empire. Her method of countering nationalist attitudes exclusively through internationalist propaganda was not enough. A positive programmatic opposition to tsarist Russia as “the prison house of nations” was necessary.

**Lenin: Self-Determination and Workers Unity**

The Leninist position on the national question was only developed in its final form during World War I, around 1917, but I believe it is basically relevant to the pre-1914 period.

Superficially, the Bolshevik position appears to be orthodox Kautskyan. However, I believe that the formal similarities obscure significant differences. Kautsky advocated self-determination because he was really in favor of independence as a means of pushing the bourgeois-democratic revolution in East Europe forward. Insofar as Lenin recognized that national emancipation for Poland, for the Ukraine, for the Czechs was an uncompleted bourgeois-democratic task there was a similarity of position.

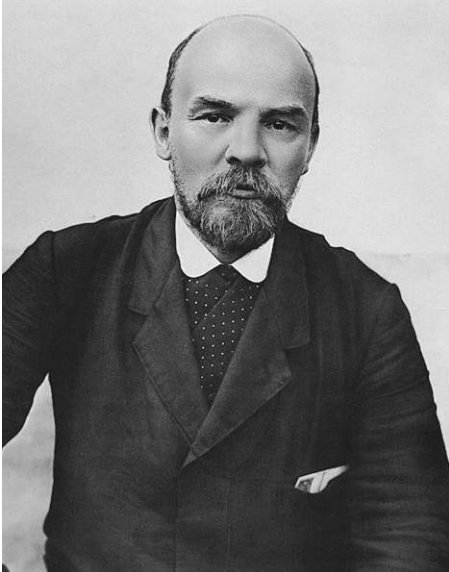
But Lenin’s position was not essentially a two-stage revolution which looked forward to a relatively lengthy period of development of a bourgeois-democratic Polish, Ukrainian or Czech state. Rather, what Lenin emphasized—and he was the first Marxist to do so—was *advocacy* of the right of self-determination as a necessary means of unifying the working class in a multinational state.

Lenin maintained that Luxemburg’s abstract propaganda in favor of internationalism was not adequate to convince the Poles and the Ukrainians that the Great Russian socialists were not chauvinist. The workers movement in the oppressor nation must demonstrate in practice and in immediate programmatic form that it supports the right to independence of the oppressed nation. For Lenin, the question of whether independence would be realized or not was not a fundamental question, it was secondary. Before the 1917 Revolution, the Bolsheviks did not take a position for or against independence for Poland, the Ukraine or Finland. The core of Lenin’s position comes through in “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination” (1914):

“Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle “guesses,” we firmly

uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state. We respect this right; we do not uphold the privileges of Great Russians with regard to Ukrainians; we *educate* the masses in the spirit of recognition of that right, in the spirit of rejecting *state* privileges for any nation.” [emphasis in original]

In New Left and “Third World” Stalinist circles, Lenin’s position is systematically misinterpreted so that he appears as a supporter of any demand put forward by an oppressed national minority. The anti-Luxemburgist Lenin wrongly overshadows the anti-nationalist Lenin. Lenin was violently hostile to “cultural-national autonomy” because it directly and immediately furthered nationalist ideology. He was opposed to federalism, and favored limited regional autonomy for minority nations in a unitary state. On this latter point, he was in basic agreement with Luxemburg. Some bourgeois commentators have noted that Lenin seems to have



B.D. Vigilev

V. I. Lenin

an all-or-nothing position on the national question. This is in contrast to the Austrian social democrats who offered the population an infinite gradation of steps between independence and assimilation. Richard Pipes in his *The Formation of the Soviet Union* writes:

“Lenin’s theory of national self-determination, viewed as a solution of the national problem in Russia, was entirely inadequate. By offering the minorities virtually no choice between assimilation and complete independence, it ignored the fact that they desired neither.”

However, Lenin’s program was not designed to be popular with Russia’s minorities at any given time. It was designed to foster the fighting unity of the working class within the Russian state. If the working masses of the various nations are so hostile to one another that it makes unified class struggle virtually impossible, then separation into independent states is called for. Where national minorities choose to coexist within the same state framework, the task of Leninists is to break down all the barriers separating the working masses of the different nationalities. While championing the equality of languages and related democratic rights, we work for the gradual, organic assimilation of the various nationalities making up the working class. ■

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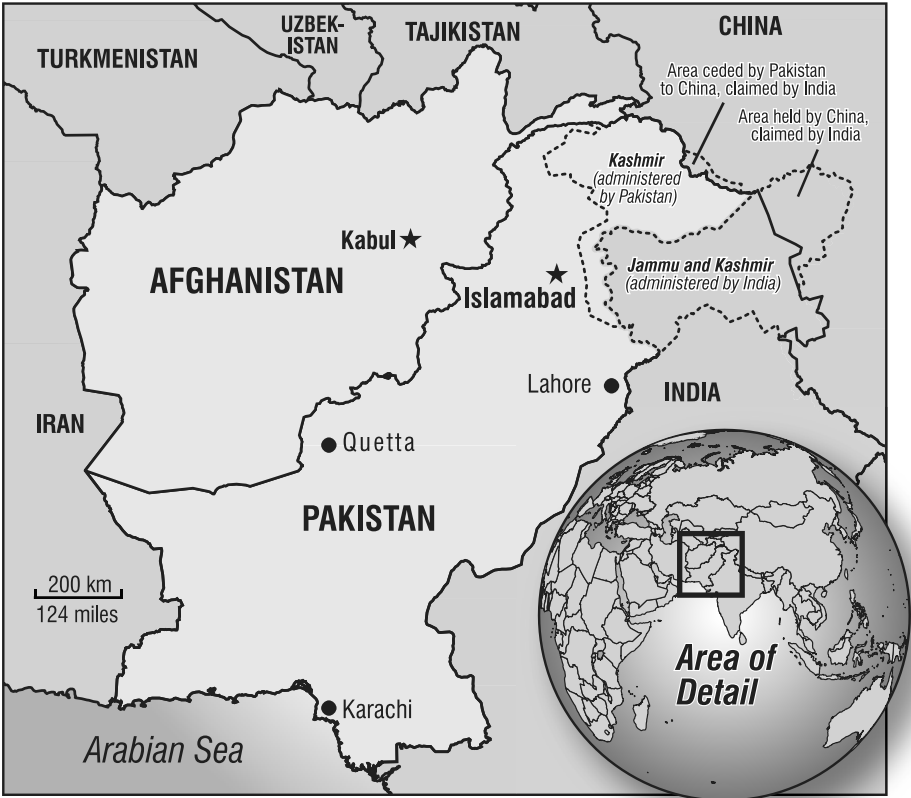
# Afghanistan...

(continued from page 1)

the Justice Ministry and two other government buildings in the capital, killing at least 20 people. A conservative military analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote (*Nation* online, 10 October 2008): “We currently are losing,” adding, “We face a crisis in the field—right now.”

Meanwhile in Pakistan, fundamentalists opposed to the U.S.-backed regime have in the past several months dramatically extended their reach to more developed regions beyond the western tribal areas. Over 140 girls’ schools have been blown up or burned down in the North West Frontier Province. In September a suicide bomb attack demolished the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, killing more than 50 people. Less than 100 miles from Islamabad, in the Swat valley, a relatively developed area of the North West Frontier Province that was once a leading tourist attraction and site of a ski resort, months of clashes between security forces and fundamentalists resulted in yet another “truce” last week in which the government accepted the imposition of Islamic law in the region.

Fundamentalist forces in Pakistan pose an increasing threat to the vital supply line that carries more than three-quarters of the provisions for U.S./NATO forces in landlocked Afghanistan. That route runs more than 700 miles from the port of Karachi, north to Peshawar and then through the Khyber Pass, a critical gateway since the time of Alexander the Great. Attacks on truck convoys and the bombing of a key bridge have turned the stretch of road from Peshawar to the Khyber Pass into



WV Map (sources include *Economist*)

for the military defense of Afghanistan and Iraq against imperialist attack without giving any political support to the reactionary, woman-hating Taliban cutthroats or the bloody capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. We underlined that every victory for the imperialists in their military adventures encourages more predatory wars; every setback serves to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed the world over. Today, we call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops and bases from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia!



Bettmann

**Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s National Security Adviser and current Obama foreign policy adviser, at Khyber Pass outpost overlooking Afghanistan in 1980, as U.S. financed and armed cutthroat mujahedin against Soviet Red Army.**

a deathtrap. Meanwhile, the Obama administration is scrambling to come up with an alternative to the crucial U.S. air base in Kyrgyzstan, after that country’s president—within hours of being granted a hefty aid package by Russia—ordered the base to be closed within six months.

Obama took office pledging to draw down U.S. troop levels in Iraq in order to pursue what a significant portion of the U.S. bourgeoisie sees as more strategic aims, including the occupation of Afghanistan. A major consideration behind this policy is the encirclement of China. Ultimately, the U.S. imperialists aim to restore capitalist rule in the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state, and for this they have a two-pronged strategy: military pressure combined with capitalist economic penetration. At the same time, the Democrats, backed by the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, have been in the forefront of those pushing anti-China chauvinist protectionism. It is vital for the international proletariat to stand for the unconditional military defense of China and those other countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown: Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

## Only Socialist Revolution Can End Imperialist War

In the lead-up to the 2001 and 2003 invasions, the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), stood

politicians). With Obama they have gotten what they wanted, while he delivers on his warmongering campaign promises. Now they will plead with him to change his mind and adopt more pacifistic and people-friendly “priorities.”

A case in point is the “National Assembly to End the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and Occupations,” a lash-up that grew out of a gathering in Cleveland last June in which fake leftists such as Socialist Action, the ISO, the Party for Socialism and Liberation and Workers World joined with an array of liberals. Endorsers included the Progressive Democrats of America and Cynthia McKinney, presidential candidate of the bourgeois Green Party. The National Assembly, which has called for demonstrations on March 21 demanding “Troops Home Now From Iraq and Afghanistan,” features on its Web site a link to a letter to Obama calling on him “to end the emphasis on militarism in U.S. relations with other nations and to set a goal of ending war in the 21st Century.”

The capitalist system cannot be pressured or reformed to work in the interest of human needs. The relentless drive for profits and spheres of influence by the rulers of the U.S. and other big capitalist powers necessarily results in neocolonial pillage and wars. Imperialist aggression and war are not “policies” that can be ended within the framework of capitalism—the entire system must be overturned! Only by wresting the means of production from the hands of the capitalist imperialist rulers and creating an international planned economy can the needs of the billions of toilers now consigned to hideous poverty begin to be met and the threat of war ended once and for all.

## Islamic Reactionaries, the CIA and the Red Army in Afghanistan

Largely the creation of the Pakistani military and Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) as well as the American CIA, the Taliban and Al Qaeda are Frankenstein’s monsters turned on their former masters. The U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, among others, armed, funded and trained reactionary *mujahedin* (holy warriors) to kill Soviet soldiers following the entry of the Red Army into Afghanistan in 1979 at the request of the modernizing nationalist PDPA regime.

That war, in which imperialist-backed forces threatened the southern flank of the Soviet Union, posed an acid test for revolutionaries. The Soviet military intervention was one of the few genuinely progressive acts carried out by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Red Army intervened on behalf of a regime that sought to introduce minimal social reforms and faced a *jihad* (holy war) led by reactionary landlords, tribal chiefs and mullahs.

The U.S. imperialists seized on the Red Army intervention as the pretext for their revived anti-Soviet crusade (“Cold War II”). As the CIA undertook

its biggest covert operation ever, Afghanistan became the front line of the imperialists’ relentless drive to destroy the Soviet Union. In 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to the Democratic Carter administration, boasted: “That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.” Today, Brzezinski is a key foreign policy adviser in the Obama administration.

The Soviet intervention was unambiguously progressive, underlining the Trotskyist understanding that despite its degeneration under a Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the Soviet Union remained a workers state embodying historic gains of the October Revolution of 1917, centrally the planned economy and collectivized property. These were enormous gains, not least for women and the historically Muslim peoples of Soviet Central Asia, where conditions before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution had been as backward and benighted as in Afghanistan. For Afghanistan, which is not a nation but a patchwork of tribes and peoples, with its minuscule proletariat, progress would have to be brought in from the outside. The international Spartacist tendency, now the International Communist League, said: “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” and called to extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples.

In stark contrast, the bulk of the left internationally lined up with the imperialists by denouncing the Soviet “invasion” of Afghanistan. The anti-Communist International Socialist Organization (ISO) and its then-parent group in Britain, Tony Cliff’s Socialist Workers Party (SWP), criminally stood foursquare with the imperialists. The 12 January 1980 issue of the SWP’s *Socialist Worker* blared, “Troops Out of Afghanistan!”

Today, in a lengthy article in *International Socialist Review* (January-February 2009), the ISO essentially disappears the gains, particularly for women, implemented by the PDPA government and defended by the Red Army. While saying next to nothing about the hideous barbarities routinely perpetrated by the Islamic reactionaries, who burned down schools and flayed teachers alive for the



AP

**During July 2008 visit to Jalalabad, then-presidential candidate Obama met with Afghan warlord Gul Agha Shirzai, governor of Nangarhar Province, who in early 1990s ran Kandahar as part of mujahedin’s bloody rule.**

“crime” of teaching young girls to read, the ISO rails against the PDPA regime for its “ruthless brutality” and “arrogance and violence.” Echoing Cold War lies about the Soviet Army targeting “entire groups” and “repressing resistance in a way that killed civilians,” the ISO reaffirms the stand it took at the time—on the side of the Islamic insurgency against the Soviet intervention.

When then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in a vain attempt to appease the imperialists, withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, we denounced this as a crime against the Afghan and Soviet peoples. That betrayal by the Kremlin bureaucracy opened the road to *mujahedin* rule in Afghanistan and prepared the ground for



According to the *New York Times* (28 January), Obama officials intend to “put more emphasis on waging war than on development” and “work with provincial leaders as an alternative to the central government.” One provincial warlord who caught Obama’s eye is Gul Agha Shirzai, the governor of Nangarhar Province. Shirzai ran Kandahar in the early 1990s during the bloody rule of the *mujahedin*, when that province first emerged as Afghanistan’s opium capital. When then-candidate Obama visited Afghanistan last July, he snubbed Karzai (saying the president had not “gotten out of the bunker”), meeting first with Shirzai, who was later invited to the inauguration festivities.

In Obama, the U.S. imperialist ruling class has gained an effective executive for pursuing its bloody aims abroad and its exploitation of working people at home. Thus, he is moving to clean up some of the most blatant excesses in the “war on terror” while maintaining the underlying policy laid down by the likes of Dick Cheney, John Ashcroft and George Bush. Obama won plaudits from many liberal quarters, including the American Civil Liberties Union, for his promise to shut the CIA’s secret prisons, halt military commission trials and close (within a year) the notorious prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Yet Obama is a staunch supporter of the “war on terror”—which has served as the pretext for imperialist depredation abroad and the evisceration of democratic rights at home—including voting as a Senator for warrantless wiretapping and the renewal of the USA Patriot Act.

Most significant is the Obama administration's endorsement of indefinite detention, a hallmark of police state dictatorships, which was the centerpiece of Bush's war on democratic rights. Savage pointed out: "In little-noticed confirmation testimony recently, Obama nominees endorsed continuing the C.I.A.'s program of transferring prisoners to other countries without legal rights, and indefinitely detaining terrorism suspects without trials even if they were arrested far from a war zone." While Obama's January 22 Executive Order on Guantánamo calls for a review to determine which detainees can be removed to other countries or prosecuted in U.S. courts, it also calls for "other disposition...consistent with the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States." In plain language, that means continued indefinite detention without charges or any recourse to the courts. While opining that it's "hard to imagine," White House counsel Greg Craig admitted that Obama could be "the first President of the United States



**Above: School in Pakistan's Swat Valley reduced to rubble by Islamic militants in January. More than 140 girls' schools have been destroyed in recent months. Below: February 12 protest against Taliban in Lahore, Pakistan. The following day, officials announced that two women were murdered by Taliban thugs in a northwestern town.**

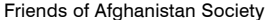


Imperialists and their ideological spokesmen are increasingly voicing fear that the turmoil in Pakistan's western regions could lead to the disintegration of Washington's client state. The London *Guardian* (23 October 2008) expressed alarm at the "cycle of violence" that "threatens the very fabric of Pakistan, an unstable nuclear-armed state that at times appears on the very brink of unraveling. Were that to happen the consequences both for the country and the region would be unthinkable."

Pakistan, like India, is a prison house of peoples, a legacy of three centuries of British colonial “divide and rule” in the region. That policy culminated in the partition of the Indian subcontinent by the British imperialists in 1947, unleashing the forced migration of millions of poor Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs accompanied by communalist slaughter of indescribable savagery. During the partition, Punjab and Pakistan’s North West Province were rent by murderous pogroms.

Pakistan's claim to constitute "one nation" of all Muslims masks the domination of the Punjabi ruling class over Baluchis, Pashtuns and other oppressed nationalities. The myth of "national unity" has been imposed through brutal repression carried out by the Pakistani military. For most of the years since Pakistan was created, it has been subjected to direct military rule. In addition, the borders arbitrarily drawn by the British imperialists and inherited by Pakistan deliberately cut across the territory of virtually all the nationalities. The purpose was to undercut their power to revolt while creating a legacy of conflict that could be manipulated at will by the imperialists.

In turn, Islamabad has sought to use influence among Pashtun tribes to extend its influence in Afghanistan. According to Pakistani military doctrine this would provide “strategic depth” against the country’s perennial foe, India. Today, amid the powers vying for influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia, Pakistan and India are playing their own version of the “Great Game,” the 19th-century



**Afghan women militia volunteers mobilized against CIA-backed *mujahedin* cutthroats. Spartacists hailed Soviet intervention, called to extend gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples.**

The task of liberating all the exploited and oppressed of the Indian subcontinent demands the forging of Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties dedicated to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisies in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and the establishment of a socialist federation of South Asia. Crucial to such a proletarian-internationalist perspective is the fight for workers political revolution in the Chinese deformed workers state, a fight that must be premised on the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and domestic counterrevolution. Only an internationalist perspective, uniting social struggle on the subcontinent with the fight for workers revolution in the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries, can open the door to real social liberation for the impoverished masses. ■

# Auto Bailout...

(continued from page 12)

time the capital of the UAW and a center of working-class black America, Detroit resembles New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina; both disasters are the products of racist America’s capitalist order. The current economic crisis will continue to throw millions of workers into the ranks of the unemployed.

In this context, the fight for jobs is equivalent to the fight against the devastation of America’s working people. What is necessary is a massive program of public works at union wages to rebuild the dams, bridges and roads that are in an advanced stage of decay; to tear down and replace the crumbling public schools in the nation’s inner cities; to create an America that looks like a place that its inhabitants could survive in. It is necessary to call an end to the layoffs by shortening the workweek at no loss in pay, as part of the struggle for jobs for all.

All must have full access to medical care at no cost and unemployment benefits must be extended until there are jobs, with all pensions completely guaranteed by the government. Such demands, the elements of which were laid out in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International, will not be granted by the rapacious capitalist rulers. The capitalist state exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. It cannot be reformed or wielded to serve the interests of working people. The catastrophe of joblessness, threatening the disintegration of the working class, can be effectively fought only by a workers movement led by those committed to the struggle for socialist revolution and the establishment of a workers government where those who labor rule.

While auto workers are in a precarious situation, people in the U.S. still require cars to get around, and the auto industry is vital to the military power of the U.S. imperialists. The American ruling class is not about to entirely shut down its domestic auto industry. Armed with a class-struggle program that is based on the understanding that the working class shares no interest with the bosses, a union with the power of the UAW could spearhead the fight against capitalism’s ravages, including by enlisting support from the rest of the proletariat and the unemployed.

But Gettelfinger and his ilk in the top echelons of the American trade-union bureaucracy are not going to lead such struggle. Aptly described by the early American socialist Daniel De Leon as the “labor lieutenants of capital,” these types share with their capitalist masters the belief in the inviolability of the profit system, a belief concretized by their integration into the capitalist Democratic Party. While it is possible, although unlikely, that these union tops may be moved to some militancy if their status is threatened, once that is secure they will again betray.

The UAW tops are so fixated on the company’s bottom line that Gettelfinger has promised to grant Ford whatever concessions are given to GM and Chrysler and to work together with Obama to “rebuild” the auto industry. Last February, then-candidate Obama journeyed to the GM plant in Janesville, Wisconsin, with promises of federal aid so that “this plant will be here for another hundred years.” Today, the plant is closing down, and President Obama is considering whether the auto bosses’ “restructuring” plans contain sufficient concessions by the UAW. His auto industry task force is headed by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, a former Wall Street financier and onetime head of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, who now insists that auto workers accept poverty wages.

It is time for the labor traitors, complicit in the gutting of the unions, to go. The road forward lies in building a class-struggle leadership in the unions to carry out the vitally necessary battles against America’s bourgeois masters. This will be part of the forging of a multiracial



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**Dilapidated buildings in Detroit. Plant closures and mass layoffs have devastated the city.**

revolutionary working-class party dedicated to the overthrow of decaying imperialism’s world order.

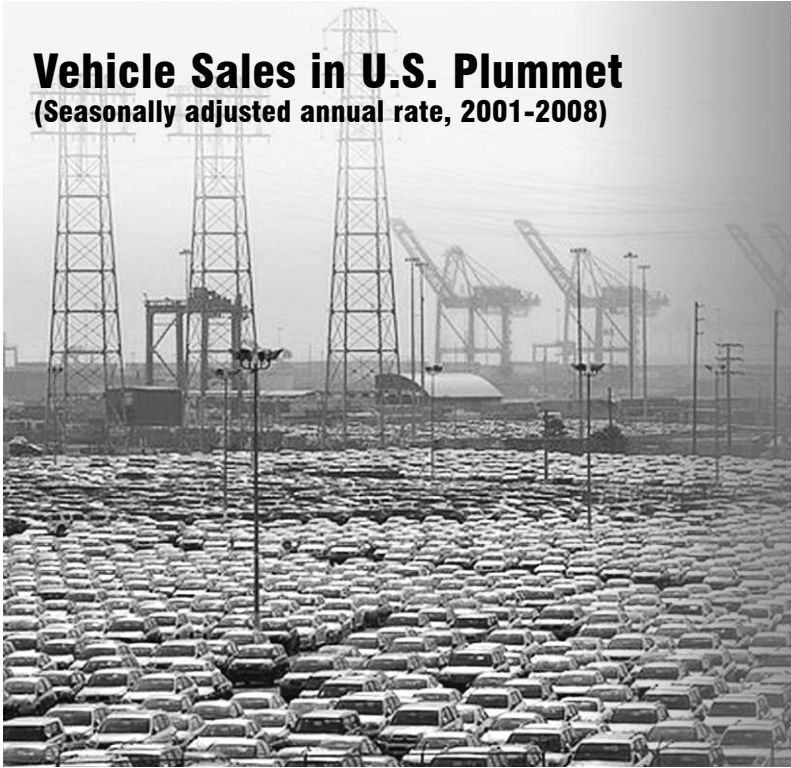
## Organize the Unorganized! For International Working-Class Solidarity!

Each giveback to the bosses has fueled the withering of the UAW from its peak of 1.6 million members in the 1960s to well under 500,000 today, of whom less than 150,000 work for the Big Three.

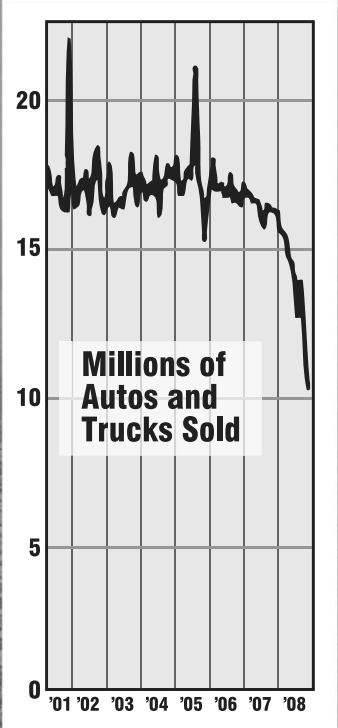
to avoid messy class struggle by having inserted in it the “right” to demand arbitration to secure a first contract after four months should the bosses prove obdurate during negotiations, thus seeking to beg favors from the capitalist state that they could not obtain from the bosses.

The recent bailout hearings give ample testimony to the fact that such hopes are a pipe dream, as is the notion that the EFCA would safeguard organizing against intimidation by the bosses. There will be no sig-

## Vehicle Sales in U.S. Plummet (Seasonally adjusted annual rate, 2001-2008)



**December 2008:  
Toyota vehicles  
pile up in Port  
of Long Beach,  
California.**



WV Graphic based on chart by calculatedriskblog.com; Chart Source: BEA. Photo: Getty

The trade-union tops give much lip service and little action to the crucial need to replenish the ranks of labor by organizing the unorganized. And a UAW that repeatedly rolls over is hardly attractive to the non-union worker.

But the current assault on the UAW threatens all workers in the industry, from the foreign-owned, non-union plants in the South to the offshore plants in Mexico and overseas. Historically, auto workers in non-union plants were paid more than the unorganized in other jobs as the bosses attempted to ward off the scourge of union organizing. Now, with the slashing of UAW wages and benefits to the level of those in the non-union plants, a race to the bottom has been set in motion, as the cutbacks at Toyota show. In going along with the concessions, the union tops are undercutting the elementary purpose of a union.

The trade-union officials place all their hopes to increase trade-union membership on the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), the card-check bill currently languishing in Congress, where the Democrats who promised their fervent support for the bill are in command. This sup-portable bill would allow workers to bypass the prolonged “secret ballot” procedures currently in place, during which the employers mobilize to crush pro-union sentiment (see “Why Marxists Support the EFCA,” WV No. 929, 30 January). However, while strikes are not categorically proscribed by the bill, the trade-union bureaucrats signal their intent

nificant and lasting increase in union membership without class struggle. And that struggle cannot go forward without a fight against the forces that divide workers one from the other: anti-immigrant and anti-foreign-worker chauvinism promoted primarily by the union tops and their Democratic Party cohorts, and the race-color caste oppression of black people, which is the bedrock of capitalist rule in this country.

This is dramatically the case in the open shop South, where union organizing cannot go forward without linking the fight for black rights to labor’s cause. In the southern tier of the U.S., the KKK and similar fascist organizations are historically the shock troops of anti-union reaction. Their ultimate aim is the destruction of the class organizations of the proletariat. Meanwhile, the anti-immigrant workplace raids by the Feds in the South and elsewhere have broken up union organizing drives. The union movement must unequivocally stand on the side of immigrant workers, who often bring traditions of militant trade unionism into labor’s ranks, by demanding an end to the vicious deportations and by raising the banner of full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The fight for such demands will set the stage for the mobilization in common struggle of the workers in the auto plants in Mexico and elsewhere with auto workers in the U.S.

GM has manufacturing plants in 35 countries. The best measure of protection for auto workers in the U.S. would be to

fight together with their working-class allies in other countries. But probably the only banner the UAW tops have consistently unfurled during the decades-long withering of the American trade unions has been the yellow banner of poisonous chauvinism: “American Jobs for American Workers.” Such protectionism undermines struggle by poisoning class consciousness and solidarity, scapegoating foreign workers for the loss of jobs in the U.S. while reinforcing illusions in the American capitalists.

In the service of motivating cutbacks at the UAW National Convention three years ago, Gettelfinger railed against the non-Big Three multinational corporations that jail union supporters, lock workers in factories and “tolerate young children being forced to work 12 hours or more a day” overseas while seeking to “impose poverty-level wages on workers” in the U.S. A particular target of for Gettelfinger is the Chinese deformed workers state, which he condemned in a speech he gave a month later for its “repression of basic worker and human rights.”

Gettelfinger, like his bureaucratic peers, joins America’s rulers in their mission to restore capitalist rule in all those societies where it was overthrown, primarily targeting the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state but also Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. In this quest, he joins with representatives of the now-ruling Democratic Party who seek to turn

up the pressure against China in the service of counterrevolution. He would sabotage the militant struggles of the Chinese proletariat against the encroachments of capitalism there, encroachments fostered by the venal bureaucratic caste running China, while bolstering the authority of the very American imperialists who are attacking working people in the U.S.

Albeit on different scales, both the UAW and the workers state in China are the fruits of historic victories for the proletariat. One resulted from the formation of industrial unions in the U.S. during the 1930s, the other from the expropriation of capitalist rule in the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Both must be defended unconditionally from attacks that seek to undo these gains, despite the fact that each is led by a bureaucratic layer that puts the gains in jeopardy. The bureaucratic mis-leaders of the trade unions here must be driven out of their positions of leadership and replaced by a class-struggle leadership committed to the overthrow of the American imperialist order through socialist revolution. The bureaucratic caste in China must be ousted by a proletarian political revolution in order to preserve and expand the working-class property forms established following the Chinese Revolution.

## Reformist Nationalization Schemes

Besotted by illusions in the reform of the imperialist order are organizations like the International Socialist Organi-



zation (ISO) and Workers World Party (WWP) that dress socialism in the garb of a Swedish-style capitalist welfare state. For the ISO, it is only necessary to appeal to the chief of U.S. imperialism to nationalize troubled industries: “Why should the government hand over \$15 billion in loans to incompetent executives when it could take over the auto companies outright for roughly the same amount of money—and put the workers who know them from the bottom up in charge of transforming the U.S. car industry?” (*Socialist Worker* online, 9 December 2008). For its part, the WWP writes in the 31 January issue of its paper, “It’s time the union leadership advance the slogan of workers’ control.”

Nationalization of dying or bankrupt industries is a reform that has long been used by capitalist governments elsewhere to buy off working-class discontent and prop up failing enterprises. When Chrysler threatened bankruptcy in 1979, then-UAW head Doug Fraser drafted a tepid nationalization plan while at the same time pledging to exempt the company from strike action. Whether then or now, full nationalization would simply result in pay cuts, tax subsidies and import controls to make the auto plants profitable. In the end, Fraser settled for a bogus version of “workers’ control”—a seat on Chrysler’s board of directors—and proceeded to shove concessions down workers’ throats, which did nothing to stop the hemorrhaging of jobs.

As we wrote in our article on the Chrysler bailout, “No Government Hand-out for Bosses! Whatever Chrysler’s Worth—Give It to the Workers!” (*WV* No. 238, 17 August 1979): “The reformist practice of nationalizing only the *least* efficient capitalist operations is in a sense the exact opposite of socialist expropriation. Socialist economic planning is based precisely on appropriating from the capitalists the *most advanced* means of production.” Furthermore, for Marxists, workers’ control of production is an expression of dual power in industry during a revolutionary crisis. Otherwise, it is nothing more than a call for workers to

force on themselves the same cost-saving measures as the bosses previously had. Thus, under WWP’s framework, GM workers would soon see the “wisdom” of accepting near worthless company stock rather than cash to fund their retiree health care benefits, while those who labored at one of the ISO’s nationalized companies would have such “solutions” imposed.

Both these reformist groups propose that the working class should be part of an amorphous (and nonexistent) people’s movement that seeks to tame the capitalist beast. For the reformists, who play the part of waterboys to the trade-union bureaucracy, class struggle is to be considered only within the parameters sanctioned by the capitalist order.

Let Capitalism Perish!

The present crisis is not the first faced by a weakened American labor movement. Throughout the 1920s, the craft-based, pro-capitalist AFL union leadership did little to organize those millions of workers in American industry that did the backbreaking work in the open hearths and on the assembly lines. In the four years after the October 1929 stock market crash, unemployment skyrocketed from under 1.5 million to over 12 million, so that virtually any worker could be easily replaced. The working class was torn asunder, confronted not just by joblessness but with homelessness and starvation. By 1933, AFL membership was less than half of what it had been in 1920.

It is normal that at the beginning of a massive economic recession or depression the working class will be gripped by paralysis. In the case of the Great Depression, in 1933 the economy experienced a slight upturn. The next year, citywide strikes broke out in Minneapolis, San Francisco and Toledo, led by Trotskyists, the Communist Party and left-wing socialists, respectively. These strikes set the stage for a large-scale outpouring of class militancy. Workers turned en masse to the very unions that had disdained them to demand organization, prompting a wing of the lily-



Nagoya, Japan: Protest against lay-off of temporary Toyota workers, 23 December 2008.

white AFL tops to form a committee empowered to organize industrial workers, which became the CIO. Once organized, the workers fought the bosses tooth and nail, sacrificing, if necessary, their jobs, their freedom and their very lives.

There is only one possible explanation for this turn to class warfare. The very conditions that grind down the working class, the same conditions that demoralize workers and set them one against the other in a fight to survive—that is, the capitalist mode of production—these same conditions also propel the working class toward unity in battle against its exploiters. As long as capitalism exists, it will generate the conditions that spawn class struggle. It is in the course of such sharp

Immigrants...

(continued from page 3)

anti-immigrant and pro-Democratic Party bureaucracies of both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win-affiliated trade unions. These pro-capitalist misleaders chain workers to their class enemy and prevent them from engaging in independent political action in their own class interest. For the unions to champion the cause of immigrants and the poor requires a political struggle to oust the trade-union bureaucracies and replace them with a class-struggle leadership that will mobilize the workers independently of and in opposition to the capitalist rulers.

The organized labor movement has by and large been criminally silent in the face of the racist killings of Marcelo Lucero and José Sucuzhañay. (In contrast, the rallies were literally crawling with local capitalist politicians anxious to channel the just outrage into impotent vigils and promises of justice at the hands of the government that persecutes these immigrants daily.) A notable exception came from 20 janitors of SEIU Local 32BJ who attended a protest in Long Island against the killing of Marcelo Lucero (*Militant*, 1 December 2008). To its credit, Local 32BJ issued a November 12 press release condemning the lynching. However, the statement sows dangerous illusions in the government of the class

enemy by calling on Long Island’s elected officials, “especially Steve Levy,” to “work toward real solutions to fix our broken immigration system.” Democratic Party politician Steve Levy is the arch-reactionary Suffolk County Executive who has for years spearheaded a vicious campaign against immigrants throughout the county where Patchogue is located.

No Illusions in the Capitalist State!

At protests and vigils in response to the racist murder of Lucero and Sucuzhañay, several fake-socialist groups showed up to peddle their program of trying to pressure the Democrats to defend immigrants. The International Socialist Organization (ISO), once again acting as the wagging tail on the Democratic Party dog, exhorts: “We should welcome [!] the news that Pelosi and other Democrats are questioning [!] the usefulness [!] of federal raids” (*Socialist Worker*, 18 November 2008). In other words, the ISO has the audacity to hope that Obama and the ruling class of this irrational and murderous capitalist system will find more benevolent and “useful” ways to extract their pound of flesh from immigrant workers than through I.C.E.’s terror raids. The groveling reformists of the ISO perpetuate the reformist hoax that the workers can pressure the Democratic wing of the ruling class into serving the interests of the workers and oppressed. Such was the motivation behind the ISO’s election night party in Harlem to “celebrate the end of far too many years of republican [sic] rule” and to discuss “what can activists do to press their demands on the next administration?”

The National Council of La Raza and the National Urban League, with the reformists of the Communist Party USA in tow, call for federal “hate crimes” legislation and specifically for passing the “Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act,” (HR 1592). We are op-

posed to hate crimes legislation because such laws give the cops and courts added powers for repressing those who are truly in their cross hairs: blacks seeking to defend themselves against racist terror, antiwar protesters, union militants and leftists. The state is not neutral! It is an instrument of organized force and violence—consisting at its core of the police, army, courts and prisons—for maintaining capitalist property and profits through the suppression of the working class and the oppressed. It is a deadly illusion to expect protection from the very same federal government that is responsible for the Gestapo-like raids against immigrants, the brutal deaths of scores of immigrants locked up in America’s jails and detention centers, the systematic torture of prisoners in Guantánamo and the imperialist slaughter in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We fight to win workers to the need for a class-struggle program that tears through the straitjacket of “national unity” promoted by the U.S. capitalist rulers and breaks down the poisonous racial and ethnic divisions they promote. The way forward was shown by the 9 February 2002 united-front protest initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense in Oakland, California, that was called around the demands “No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act! Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!” This protest, which included the participation of black ILWU longshoremen and Latino day laborers, was a real, if modest, demonstration in action in defense of immigrants and against government repression. We fight with a class-struggle program in opposition to the class collaborationism of the union bureaucracy and the racial and ethnic hostilities it foments that are a critical barrier to working-class consciousness and struggle.

In racist capitalist America the oppression of black people is endemic to capitalist exploitation, poverty and repression.

class struggle and through the instrumentality of a revolutionary party that patiently educates the working class in the understanding not only of its social power but of its historic interests that workers will become conscious of themselves as a class fighting for itself and for the oppressed against the capitalist order.

The gigantic class battles of the 1930s carried the American trade-union movement to unprecedented heights and set the stage for the further development of class consciousness in the working class, the most advanced elements of which were receptive to the idea of forming a workers party in opposition to the two capitalist parties. Leon Trotsky expressed the problem succinctly in “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940): “In the United States the trade union movement has passed through the most stormy history in recent years. The rise of the CIO is incontrovertible evidence of the revolutionary tendencies within the working masses. Indicative and noteworthy in the highest degree, however, is the fact that the new ‘leftist’ trade union organization was no sooner founded than it fell into the steel embrace of the imperialist state. The struggle among the tops between the old federation and the new is reducible in large measure to the struggle for the sympathy and support of Roosevelt and his cabinet.”

The very leaders of the new industrial union movement, including social democrats and the Stalinist Communist Party, crippled it through their support to Roosevelt’s liberal bourgeois politics. Such links to the Democratic Party are the coffin for the aspirations of an awakened working class. It is urgently necessary to combat and defeat the reformist opponents of socialist revolution, to sever labor’s ties to the Democrats and to build the revolutionary working-class party that will overturn the bloodsoaked U.S. imperialist order through socialist revolution. It is to this end that the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, devotes all its resources. ■

Black workers, as the most experienced and conscious section of the working class, will play a vanguard role in the struggle to eradicate this outmoded capitalist order—the source of all social oppression. Full and equal rights for immigrants, gays, black people and other minorities, decent housing and jobs, free quality health care and education for all can only be achieved through a workers revolution that smashes the capitalist profit system and ushers in an egalitarian socialist society. Workers and minorities do not need a “lesser”-evil party of racist capitalism, whether Democratic or Green. What we need is a revolutionary workers party that, as champion of the cause of all the oppressed, will lead the class to sweeping away the capitalist system once and for all. ■



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**CORRECTION**

In “Obama: Commander-in-Chief of Racist U.S. Imperialism” (*WV* No. 925, 21 November 2008), we misspelled the first name of Marcelo Lucero, the Ecuadorian immigrant killed by racist thugs on November 8, as Marcello. The correct spelling is Marcelo.

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## UAW Tops Hand Over Hard-Won Gains

# Auto Bailout Means Union Busting

With the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression growing worse, the liberal and not-so-liberal “friends of labor” in the Democratic Party—the Nancy Pelosis and the Barack Obamas—would have it that now is the time when *all* must sacrifice. For the capitalist masters of U.S. imperialism, whose anarchic system of production for profit wrought this disaster, “sacrifice” means possibly having to mothball a few corporate jets and forgo a bonus or two in return for receiving uncountable billions in bailout dollars. The real suffering is reserved for America’s poor and working people, who face layoffs, slashed wages and benefits, homelessness and draconian cuts in public education, transportation and welfare.

Atop the agenda of the modern-day robber barons is making the members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) pay for the financial collapse of the Big Three auto producers. From the start, the drawn-out auto bailout proceedings have focused on how best to gut the union, which was forged in the giant class battles of the 1930s. The intent is to reduce the UAW—the union that once epitomized working-class power in this country, the union that for a brief historical period provided its members with something at least resembling a good life—to parity in poverty with the vast mass of unorganized workers in the private sector. Indeed, the companies will qualify for the bailouts only if they lay off tens of thousands of workers and slash benefits.

At the time of the first bailout hearings, we wrote: “We are opposed to the bailout of the auto bosses. A government bailout will be purchased through the further destruction of the jobs and livelihoods of working people” (WV No. 926, 5 December 2008). By the terms of last December’s bailout proposal, co-drafted by Bush’s Treasury Department, the Congressional Democratic leadership and the incoming Obama administration, the first step is in fact to reduce UAW members’ benefits and wages to the level of those in the non-union, mainly foreign-owned U.S. auto plants. With UAW head Ron Gettelfinger playing the part of loyal lapdog to the bosses, you can forget the jobs banks and unemployment benefits at close to full pay, forget the pensions that make a decent retirement possible, and forget the good-paying job.

And now Gettelfinger has gone another step and helped to further endanger health care benefits for retirees and their spouses. On February 23, the UAW announced a deal with Ford to accept half the company’s payments to a union-managed health care



Reuters

**Above: UAW president Ron Gettelfinger (second from left) flanked by auto bosses Richard Wagoner (GM), Alan Mulally (Ford), Robert Nardelli (Chrysler) at December Senate hearing. Right: Laid-off workers leave GM assembly plant in Janesville, Wisconsin, December 2008.**



Wood/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

trust in the form of virtually worthless company stock, rather than cash. With Orwellian doublespeak, Gettelfinger triumphantly announced that this deal “will protect jobs for U.A.W. members”—even as the Big Three are shedding tens of thousands more jobs.

Two weeks before submitting the mandated “restructuring” plans to the government on February 17, the auto bosses at GM and Chrysler offered to buy out *all* their hourly employees, with GM offering a paltry \$20,000 and a \$25,000 voucher for a new car, while Chrysler is throwing in a few tens of thousands of dollars more. The purge of the current workforce will clear the way for the automakers to hire new workers at half the

wages, \$14 per hour, a concession granted by the UAW tops in the last contract. Saddled with a pro-capitalist union leadership that has for years put the “competitiveness” of the Big Three above all else, since 2006 about one-third of the UAW members at GM have opted to take previous buyout deals and leave the industry.

In the event of an auto workers strike to resist the bloodletting, the bailout deal would allow the Treasury Department to revoke the loans to GM and Chrysler, throwing the automakers into bankruptcy. Exactly: there is no real difference in impact between bailout and bankruptcy; either the workers will concede “voluntarily” or the bosses’ courts will order them to do so. Fear that the companies

may go under will be manipulated to intimidate workers into accepting devastating givebacks.

But whatever concessions Gettelfinger & Co. bring to the union membership for approval, the workers must vote them down. To vote for such terms would be to give up the sole advantage offered by unionization, the ability to collectively organize and fight to improve the lot of workers. Those few hard-won gains that remain today will be up for renegotiation tomorrow as the economy continues to go to the dogs. Not fighting will only assure greater misery in the future. The sharks of Wall Street and industry will not end their plant closings and layoffs until they feel assured they can turn a sufficient profit. The Great Depression had its ups and downs, but employment did not significantly improve until the Second World War, which America’s rulers entered in order to cement their imperialist dominance, in the process mobilizing the working masses in the factories and on the battlefields.

### The Fight Against the Devastation of the Working Class

Auto workers across the globe are under the gun. Sales in the U.S. and elsewhere have taken a nose dive, and company after company is contracting. Toyota is expecting to report its first annual loss in nearly six decades and, taking its cue from Detroit, has offered buyouts to some 18,000 workers in the U.S. while announcing wage cuts for those who remain.

The crisis in auto is an example of the anarchy and decay that reign in capitalist production in general, to which there is no simple trade-union solution. In their drive for ever-greater profits, the capitalist rulers have looted the wealth of this country and sabotaged its vital infrastructure by refusing to invest in and modernize basic industry like steel and auto. The deindustrialization of the U.S., under way for several decades, has only exacerbated the current crisis.

Black workers are especially at risk. The 1941 strike at the Ford’s giant River Rouge plant in Detroit was a turning point in bringing black workers into the UAW and enabling it to become America’s most powerful trade union. That was then. With all but a few auto plants in the Detroit area shut down for good, black male joblessness in the city hovers at 50 percent. The jails are overflowing and social services and the housing market have collapsed, with the *Detroit News* (23 February) reporting that the average sale price of a house in the city is \$7,000. At one

*continued on page 10*

## For Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!