



ANC, C.O.P.E.: Two Faces of Neo-Apartheid Capitalism



EPA photos

South African Elections: No Choice for Workers, Poor

JOHANNESBURG, March 21—On April 22 national elections will be held for the fourth time in South Africa since the end of white-supremacist apartheid rule in 1994. That “political breakthrough,” which put the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) in power, did not bring about social and economic equality for the brutally oppressed black, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian masses. The rigid, legally enforced segregation and subjugation that defined apartheid are no more. But behind the “liberation” rhetoric of the ANC and its Tripartite Alliance partners, the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) bureaucracy, and the democratic trappings of “one man, one vote,” the economic and social foundations of white supremacy based on the super-exploitation of overwhelmingly black labour remain intact. Neo-apartheid has benefitted the white capitalists and the emerging black elite.

In the upcoming elections, Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League, declares that there is not a single party that represents the interests of the working class and the poor. Following the split in the ANC last year and the formation of the Congress of the People (C.O.P.E.) by supporters of former president Thabo Mbeki, the Tripartite Alliance partners have been working overtime to rally support for the ANC under the populist Jacob Zuma, who won election as ANC president over Mbeki at the 2007 Polokwane conference. In denouncing C.O.P.E. as an anti-working-class party, SACP/COSATU leaders point to the fact that its leaders split from the ANC to the right. In reality, despite the ANC’s “pro-worker” and “pro-poor” rhetoric, the ANC and C.O.P.E. are both bourgeois-nationalist—i.e., capitalist—parties. Both represent the interests of the aspiring black bourgeoisie and the pre-



Collingridge/The Star

Top left: ANC president Jacob Zuma. Top right: Mosiuoa Lekota, C.O.P.E. leader. Above: Protest against lack of “service delivery”—housing, electricity, basic sanitation, roads—in front of government offices in Soweto, March 3.

dominantly white capitalist ruling class.

During the 1980s, there were huge confrontations between the apartheid regime and the oppressed masses, expressed particularly with a rising wave of militancy by black labour. While defending the courageous anti-apartheid fighters against

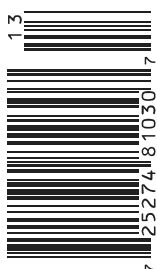
state repression, we stressed that “the ANC’s policy of ‘making the townships ungovernable’ is designed to *pressure*, not overthrow, the white ruling class” (“Smash Apartheid! For Workers Revolution!” WV No. 395, 17 January 1986). Especially through the SACP, the proletariat was

politically subordinated to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. When the ANC did consummate its aspirations to share power with the white ruling class in 1994, it was the logical outcome of its programme. Since then, the ANC/SACP/COSATU government, which until recently included the founders of C.O.P.E., has imposed austerity, broken strikes and presided over the deep poverty of the masses, helping to lead to a revival of capitalist profits.

As revolutionary Marxists, we give no electoral support to bourgeois parties as a matter of principle. Unlike the SACP’s reformist leadership, we do not tell the workers and impoverished masses that their demands for the basic necessities of life will be won through their leaders’ getting their hands on the “democratic” bourgeois state—on a national, provincial or municipal level. Paraphrasing Karl Marx, revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin wrote in *The State and Revolution* (1917): “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.” Nor do we spread the illusion, common to the entire reformist left, that workers and the poor will achieve their demands through pressuring the Tripartite Alliance, a nationalist popular front that chains working-class organisations to the capitalist exploiters through the bourgeois ANC.

The SSA calls for workers and the poor to break from the Tripartite Alliance. We fight to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party that will lead the struggle for socialist revolution. The neo-apartheid capitalist state must be smashed and replaced with a workers state that expropriates the banks, mines and factories and creates a planned economy where production is for social use, not private profit. We fight for a *black-centred workers government*. There can be no justice in South Africa

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Break with the Tripartite Alliance! For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

On the Civil Rights Movement

1 March 2009

Workers Vanguard:

I wish to make some comments about the article “Communist Organizing in the Jim Crow South” (WV No. 925 [21 November 2008]). First, in the section entitled “The Civil Rights Movement.” There is a self-contradictory statement that “...from its onset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership allied to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The aim of liberal-pacifist leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Farmer was to pressure the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to grant formal, legal equality. Yet the myth of the civil rights movement as monolithically pacifist and dominated by King ignores that the struggle against segregation also produced more militant forces, such as Robert F.

SNCC leader Willie Ricks speaking on Atlanta street, winter 1963-64.



Williams, who advocated and practiced armed self-defense....”

The predecessor to the Spartacist League, the Revolutionary Tendency of

the Socialist Workers Party, stated in 1963 that:

“SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] is the most viable part of the southern civil rights movement. Its cadre continually come into conflict with NAACP, CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (King). Its statement of purpose is a credo of non-violence, but people of different ideologies are not excluded. SNCC does not have a worked out program but their workers condemn the ‘black bourgeoisie’ and orient toward the poor masses. They have very close ties with SDS, which is practically dominated by YPSL, and with SCEF. SNCC is the left wing of the southern civil rights movement, and it is a movement which we should be a part of.”

—“The Negro Struggle and the Crisis of Leadership,” reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5R

The main Civil Rights leadership struggled to bring SNCC into line but failed to dominate it. By the time of the “I Have a Dream” speech, King was largely discredited, and most of the old-line Civil Rights leadership had little influence over the militants of both SNCC and CORE. That failure opened the road for the adoption of the Black Power slogan. SNCC broke from non-violence, and the Deacons for Defense caused the CORE leadership to begin to talk about “protected non-violence.” This is not meant to present the militants of SNCC and CORE as revolutionaries (which they were not). They showed a leftward moving impulse, not dominated by King, etc., and were open to revolutionaries.

The noting of Robert Williams, an early heroic figure in the Civil Rights movement, without mention of the mass movement of the 1960s tends to have the effect of re-enforcing the myth of domination by the mainline civil rights leadership. Williams was a relatively isolated individual. It was the contradictions that existed in the civil rights movement as a result of the movement of the black masses that allowed the RT to argue for intervention, and allowed for the early SL to intervene. The civil rights movement of the 1960s was more than militants who were “also produced” as the article states.

Secondly, from the bombing of his house during the Montgomery bus boycott until his assassination, King’s non-violence had little to do with pacifism and much more to do with control of the black masses for the liberal Democrats. The cartoon from *Muhammad Speaks* reprinted with “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom” [1967]

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TROTSKY

Bourgeois Democracy, Revolution and Counterrevolution

There is no such thing as “classless” democracy. Bourgeois democracy is a form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Marxists fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat—the triumph over the capitalist exploiters and the establishment of a workers state based on proletarian democracy. Reformists abandon this perspective in systematic adaptation to bourgeois rule, including by backing capitalist counterrevolution in the deformed workers states in the name of “democracy.” We

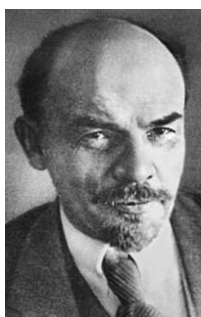
reprint below an excerpt from a 1957 polemic by Shane Mage, who became one of the founders of the Spartacist tendency before he subsequently abandoned Marxism. Mage’s piece was directed against the right-wing majority of the Young Socialist League (YSL), youth group of Max Shachtman’s Independent Socialist League. The Shachtmanite majority’s advocacy of “general democratic aims” in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was an important step in their liquidation into official American social democracy. The Hungarian Revolution was an attempt by the working class—in a workers state where capitalism had been overthrown but political power was in the hands of a Stalinist bureaucracy—to throw off bureaucratic rule and open the road to socialism.

It is no accident that the key phrase in the analysis of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions is “democracy”—not “bourgeois democracy,” not “workers democracy,” not even “peasant democracy,” but plain, unqualified “democracy,” “democracy” *in general*. There may be some younger members of the YSL who see nothing wrong with this procedure. I advise all such comrades to study very carefully the writings of Lenin on this subject, notably “State and Revolution” and “Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky.” The key thought, absolutely basic to the Marxist theory of the state, is that any form of government in a class society, including a democracy, essentially embodies the domination (“dictatorship”) of one class over the others. This is especially true of workers democracy because the proletariat, inherently a propertyless class, cannot rule except directly and politically, i.e., through its own class organizations of the “soviet” type. Any form of “pure” “classless” democracy “in general” can only express the domination of the economically strongest class, i.e., is necessarily bourgeois democracy....

The *workers council* or *soviet* represents the indicated form for the establishment of workers power in Hungary and, with slight difference of form, in every other country. In a country like Hungary, the creation of councils of working peasants, peasant soviets, would provide a means whereby the peasant majority could be represented in the government while preserving the state power of the proletariat through its class institutions. In scientific terminology, the *state* emerging from the revolution would be a *workers state*; the government would be a *workers and farmers government*.

—“The YSL Right Wing and the ‘Crisis of World Stalinism’”

by Shane Mage (1957); reprinted in part in the Spartacist pamphlet, *Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers* (1981)



LENIN

On Origin of Howard University

19 January 2009

Dear Comrades:

In the otherwise fine article in WV No. 925 (21 November 2008), entitled “Communist Organizing in the Jim Crow South: What’s Not in *The Great Debaters*,” we say:

“Nonetheless, black colleges such as Wiley, Morehouse and Howard University were founded by church institutions to primarily train clergy and teachers, the core of the black petty bourgeoisie.”

Howard University was founded in 1867, two years after the end of the Civil War, which abolished black chattel slavery. Oliver Otis Howard was a white Christian Civil War Union general from Maine who lost his right arm during the conflict, yet continued to fight in the war. Howard went on to become the commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau, an institution of the United States government designed to assist and protect blacks after the war during the period of Reconstruction, the most egalitarian period in U.S. history. As head of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Howard was one of the founders of Howard University (named for him), becoming its third president (1869-74).

Liberal and religious education departments were central to Howard University at its beginning, but so were the departments of law, pharmacy, medicine, dentistry and music, which all developed within the first 20 years.

It is also important to note that at its start, Howard was open to men and women of all races. “The student body included, in addition to Black and white Americans, Chinese, West Indians, Africans, and American Indians” according to Michael R. Winston’s “The Story Behind Howard’s Seal” (1976). Howard’s original seal includes black and American Indian figures and the original motto of Howard was “Equal Rights and Knowledge For All.” This seal and motto lasted for about forty years but both died under the pressure of Jim Crow segregation, a product of the white racist “redeemers” taking power in the South with the defeat of Reconstruction. Howard University survived, but it primarily went on to serve, as it does to this day, to educate elite blacks, whom W.E.B. Du Bois deemed “the talented tenth.”

K.S.

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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

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

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

The closing date for news in this issue is March 24.

No. 933

27 March 2009

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Thursday, April 2, 6:30 p.m.

Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!
For Free Abortion on Demand!
For the Right to Gay Marriage... and Divorce!

San Francisco State University
Cesar Chavez Student Center
Room: Rosa Parks E

Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

Visit the ICL Web Site:
www.icl-fi.org

NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, April 29, 7:45 p.m.

Marxism and Science:
A Tribute to Darwin and the 150th Anniversary of *On the Origin of Species*
Hunter College, West Building, Rm. 407
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

VANCOUVER

Thursday, April 2, 6 p.m.

The Deception of Capitalist Democracy
UBC, Student Union Building, Rm. 42T
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

“Crack Babies” Furor Was Big Lie

Down With Racist “War on Drugs”!

There’s a “crack baby epidemic,” the press shrieked in the 1980s and ’90s. Headlines like “Time Bomb in Cocaine Babies” and “Studies: Future Bleak for Crack Babies” played a key role in whipping up public support for cop invasions of the ghettos in the bipartisan “war on drugs” launched by the Reagan administration. The crack hysteria helped lay the basis for a pervasive demonization of an entire generation of black youth, the evisceration of civil liberties and a vast intensification of police powers, leading to an enormous increase in the prison population. As the bourgeoisie’s moral cops cried “crack babies,” pregnant black and poor women especially were targeted. Many were secretly tested for drug use in hospitals. Mothers lost custody of their children. Hundreds of women were thrown in jail for supposedly “endangering” their fetuses. In 2001, one woman was even sentenced to 20 years in prison on homicide charges for bearing a still-born child.

Now, decades after who knows how many lives have been wrecked, the bourgeoisie’s main “newspaper of record,” the *New York Times*, admits there *never* was any “crack baby epidemic” (“The Epidemic That Wasn’t,” 27 January). The article quotes researchers who have been “systematically following children who were exposed to cocaine before birth” and states: “So far, these scientists say, the long-term effects of such exposure on children’s brain development and behavior appear relatively small.” The article points out that the effects of cocaine are “less severe than those of alcohol and are comparable to those of tobacco”—two legal substances enjoyed by many in the general population. (Actually, cocaine is pretty popular too.) The specifically racist character of the anti-drug laws is reflected in the fact that penalties have historically been *100 times* harsher for cheap crack, available to the ghetto poor, than for the

expensive powdered cocaine favored by middle-class whites.

The *New York Times* may have treated it as news, but the phony science of “crack babies” was known over 17 years ago. Within a few years after he first anticipated a developmental problem in

bourgeois rulers and the vast majority of their mouthpieces in the press who promoted the anti-drug witchhunt. At its inception, the bipartisan “war on drugs” was a central part of the bourgeois rulers’ efforts to enforce moral conformity to regiment the population during Cold War II

as murderous mobs targeted abortion clinics and hysterical “Satanic ritual” prosecutions shut down day-care centers.

An entire generation of black youth was condemned as “superpredators” who could only be safely housed in prison. This was codified in the 1997 “Juvenile



May 1989: Tenants dumped on streets as U.S. Marshals evict residents from some 60 alleged “crack houses” in Washington, D.C. (above). SL and Labor Black League condemn anti-drug witchhunt at 1986 protest in Brooklyn against cop killing of black man.

the offspring of cocaine addicts, Dr. Ira Chasnoff reported, “Their average developmental functioning level is normal. They are no different from other children growing up” (“The Myth of the ‘Crack Babies,’” *Boston Globe*, 12 January 1992). Another researcher at the time, Claire Coles of Emory University, accurately described the problems of children born to cocaine users as resulting from black poverty in racist America, not the physiological effects of drug use—e.g., the “crack kid” who couldn’t concentrate in class due to hunger, or another who was being raised by a five-year-old sister.

These disclaimers were ignored by the

against the “godless” Soviet Union. In short order this proved to be a war on black America. Ludicrous tales of how crack cocaine turned its users into raving psychotic killers were central to the bourgeois rulers’ push for high-tech weaponry for the racist killer cops, “three strikes” laws and longer prison sentences, elimination of parole, expansion of the racist death penalty and the massive incarceration of black men and women, of whom now nearly a million are imprisoned. Black women were doubly hit by the “crack baby” lies. “Moral Majority” reactionaries claimed “fetus rights” were sacred and that pregnant women were mere vessels,

Crime Control Act” signed by Democratic president Bill Clinton, under which juveniles are imprisoned alongside adults. Citing the “crack baby” mythology, right-wing *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer declared, “The inner-city crack epidemic is now giving birth to the newest horror: a bio-underclass, a generation of physically damaged cocaine babies whose biological inferiority is stamped at birth” (30 July 1989). Similar eugenicist arguments were widely promoted five years later in the *Bell Curve*, which the *New York Times* declared “contains serious scholarship.”

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Driving While Black in Tenaha, Texas

“You can drive into this dusty fleck of a town near the Texas-Louisiana border if you’re African-American, but you might not be able to drive out of it—at least not with your car, your cash, your jewelry or other valuables.” This is Tenaha, Texas, as described by journalist Howard Witt in the *Chicago Tribune* (10 March). Cops in this Klan-ridden backwater have for years targeted black drivers with out-of-state plates, demanding that they either sign over their belongings to the town or face felony charges of money laundering or other crimes. These included a grandmother who was forced to surrender \$4,000 in cash, as well as two people who were obliged to forfeit more than \$50,000.

Lawyers in a federal class-action lawsuit have identified nearly 200 cases between 2006 and 2008 of police seizing cash, jewelry, cell phones and even automobiles from motorists. For example, the Boatrights, a mixed-race family, were pulled over by the police for supposedly driving in a left-turn lane. The police threatened to turn the Boatrights’ children over to Child Protective Services if the couple didn’t hand over the \$6,000 they had on hand. Jennifer Boatright later declared: “We figured we better give them our cash and get the hell out of there.”

This is far from being the dirty secret of a few corrupt cops. In fact, the property seized through terror and intimidation in Tenaha is officially used to pay police salaries. In Texas, as in many other states, state law allows police to seize assets based solely on the cops’ “suspi-

cion” that they are being used to commit a crime. Witt, whose article brought the issue to national attention, reported that “according to a prominent state legislator, police agencies across Texas are wielding the asset-forfeiture law more aggressively to supplement their shrinking operating budgets.”

The raw racism and brazen corruption in Tenaha reflect in crude form the daily workings of American capitalism. The capitalist state, consisting at its core of the cops, courts, prisons and military, is nothing more than an apparatus of organized violence to maintain the rule of the capitalist class against those they exploit and oppress. In this country, founded on chattel slavery, class oppression comes wrapped in the envelope of racism, which is especially raw in the states of the former Confederacy.

And all the more so in locales such as rural Texas. In 1999 in the Texas panhandle town of Tulia, 42 people, including half of the adult black male population, were framed up and imprisoned on transparently false drug charges. Just down Route 96 from Tenaha is Jasper, Texas, where in 1998 KKK race-terrorists killed James Byrd Jr. by dragging him behind a pickup truck. Across the Louisiana border is Jena, which is notorious for the Jim

Crow justice meted out against six black high school students who defended themselves after sitting under a “whites only” tree outside their school in 2007. When East Texas cops beat to death Loyal Garner Jr. in 1987, we wrote: “Some hell-holes are so irremediably backward and racist that it will take the equivalent of Sherman’s march to the sea to make them fit for habitation” (“Loyal Garner Was Victim of Racist Murder!” WV No. 458, 29 July 1988).

Tenaha officials seek to justify their racist rip-off scheme by portraying it as part of a fight against “drug trafficking.” Likewise, Texas’s “Border Star” program, supposedly aimed at drug smuggling, has targeted thousands of Latino drivers near the Mexican border for invasive searches and harassment. The chiefs of three of the law enforcement agencies involved in “Operation Border Star” have been implicated in or convicted of organized crime charges. This is the stark reality of the “war on drugs,” a racist war against blacks, Latinos and other minorities.

Past masters at inflaming every variety of backward prejudice and bigotry to keep working people atomized and divided, the racist American rulers have embarked on an anti-immigrant crusade, seeking to maintain a population of immigrant

workers without legal rights who can be deported at any time. Barack Obama fed into this anti-immigrant frenzy through his calls during the presidential election campaign for increased “security” on the already heavily militarized Mexican border.

As the despised *la migr*a immigration authorities have carried out raids and deportations, breaking up families and destroying lives, Obama simply objected that they are “ineffective.”

As the newly elected chief executive of U.S. capitalism, Obama has done the bourgeoisie a great service by reburialing illusions in capitalist “democracy.” The purpose of executive officials, from the mayor of Tenaha to the top cop of U.S. imperialism, is to administer capitalist class rule. Black president or not, America is America—racist, brutal, violent. The “end of racism” myth, a central theme in Obama’s presidential campaign, is a cruel hoax, as is Obama’s contention that the civil rights movement brought America “90 percent of the way” toward racial equality.

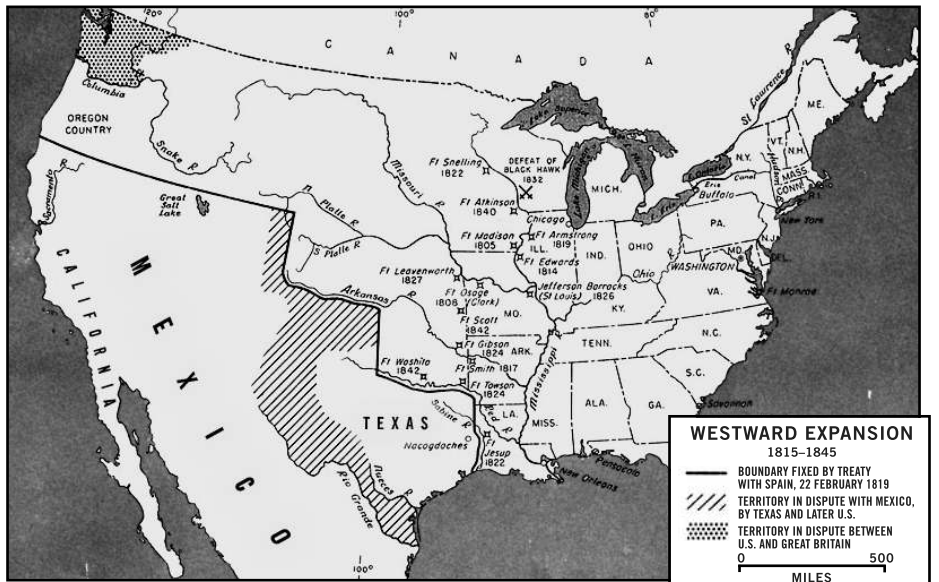
The key to confronting the forces of racist reaction in the South lies in the mobilization of the multiracial working class. This requires a political fight against the pro-capitalist labor tops, not least to organize the open shop South. This is part of the struggle to forge a workers party that acts as a tribune of the people and fights for a workers government. Just as it took a revolutionary war to overthrow the Southern slaveowners, it will take a workers revolution to overthrow the capitalist class and bring about black liberation. ■

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR



Illinois State University

U.S. troops invade Monterrey, 1846. Southern slavocracy sought expansion of slave system into new territory, including through conquest of Mexico.



Adapted from map by U.S. Army Center of Military History

PRELUDE TO AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

We print below, edited for publication, a presentation by Jacob Zorn of the Spartacist League at a February 28 New York City forum.

PART ONE

This forum is being held in celebration of Black History Month. This is the first time that there is a black president of the United States, which in its own way is historic, especially given the history of black oppression in this country. American imperialism is bogged down in two increasingly unpopular wars and occupations abroad and an economic crisis that deepens each day. Thus, for the bourgeoisie, the fact that there is now a black president, not to mention a president who can put together an English sentence, is used to try to give a facelift to this brutal system, in order to refurbish its very threadbare “democratic” credentials—even as the capitalists plan to jack up brutal exploitation and oppression here and abroad.

Voting for the Democratic Party is counterposed to the interests of the working class and oppressed. During the elections, the Spartacist League called to break with the Democrats and for a class-struggle workers party. We did not vote for the Democrats. Nor do we think that a black president will serve to eliminate racial oppression here in the United States. Black oppression is deeply rooted in the history of the development of capitalism here, and only socialist revolution, which places the wealth of society in the hands of the multiracial working class, can liberate black people and all of the oppressed. This is why we call to finish the Civil War and for black liberation through socialist revolution.

In 1846, the United States invaded Mexico. When the United States finally left, it was only after forcing Mexico to give up about half of its national territory, including all or most of modern-day California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Nevada, as well as Texas. In this

forum, I want to look at how the oppression of black people here in the United States is rooted in the history of the United States, how the U.S. invasion of Mexico was a key part of this history, and how workers struggles in the United States and Mexico are inextricably linked.

The war was fought by the Southern slavocracy in order to further the expansion of the slave system into new land, as a way of solidifying the slave system’s domination of this country. The United States in the early 19th century was integrated into the developing world capitalist system, and the North had begun to develop into a very dynamic capitalist power. But this growth was hampered by the slave system in the South, which dominated the U.S. politically and economically. This coexistence of slavery and capitalism could not continue indefinitely. By the middle of the 19th century, what was called the “irrepressible conflict” came ever closer to breaking out into the open. The U.S. invasion of Mexico was an important signpost in the lead-up to the Civil War. As Marx put it in an article he wrote in 1861, during the Civil War:

“The present struggle between the South and the North is, therefore, nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labour. The struggle has broken out because the two systems can no longer live peacefully side by side on the North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other.”

—“The Civil War in the United States” (1861)

Here in the United States, the invasion of Mexico is often either ignored or justified as inevitable; this was certainly my experience growing up in Arizona, which is part of the land taken from Mexico. In Mexico the war is much better known. No

town or village is complete without its memorial or street dedicated to the “Boy Heroes” who fought against the U.S. There, the invasion is used to bolster Mexican nationalism, with its premise that the country needs to stand as one, regardless of class differences, to maintain eternal vigilance against the monolithic aggressor across the Río Bravo. As Marxists here in the “belly of the beast,” it is necessary to oppose any instance of U.S. aggression toward Latin America and to stand for the class solidarity of the working class throughout the Americas—to fight for workers revolutions throughout the continent, from Alaska to Argentina. Part of this is understanding the 1846 invasion of Mexico and why it happened.

At the same time, it is important to understand the class forces that contributed to the invasion. Yes, on the part of the United States the war was based on a desire to take over Mexican land, with a good deal of anti-Mexican, anti-indigenous and anti-Catholic bigotry thrown in. But more fundamentally, the invasion of Mexico was developed out of the historic division of the United States between capitalist and slave systems. This very division led, less than 20 years later, to America’s second revolution, the Civil War, which smashed the Southern slave system and paved the way for the unfettered development of capitalism in the United States.

For us, as for Marx and Engels, not to mention Frederick Douglass and the millions of slaves in the South, the Civil War was a just war on the side of the North. This is ABC. It’s embarrassing that one has to assert this, but it still seems to be far beyond the grasp of many even so-called Marxists, like for example the Progressive Labor Party. They recently debated for several months about the

Civil War in the pages of *Challenge*—and seemed never to have really reached a conclusion (see “PL vs. Karl Marx (and Abraham Lincoln),” WV No. 919, 29 August 2008). For us, the problem is that the task of black liberation was not completed, and black oppression remains integral to American capitalism.

In order to understand this, it’s necessary to understand the role of slavery in the early United States. The basic task of a bourgeois revolution is to create a unified bourgeois nation: in this sense, the first American Revolution was incomplete. During the War of Independence against Britain, the “founding fathers,” both in the North and in the South, agreed that the 13 colonies would be better off outside the control of the British Empire. But they represented different propertied classes: the budding Northern bourgeoisie and the Southern slaveholding landowners. In 1776, both the Northern merchant capitalists and the Southern planter aristocracy supported independence from the British imperial system, and for several decades it was beneficial for both to coexist in the same economy and the same country.

The new republic was not an equal partnership—the Southern slavocracy was in control. Without understanding this, the entire first half of American history doesn’t make a lot of sense. Increasing cotton production in the 19th century clinched a common economic interest between the plantation owners of the South and the Northern bankers and merchants who profited from the export of cotton to Britain and its manufacture into goods. The “slave power” of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution was codified a decade later in the U.S. Constitution, which was written in 1787.

When he was running for president, Barack Obama claimed “the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution.” This is a lie: while the Constitution never actually uses the word “slave,” it gave the slave South extra power, despite the fact that its

FINISH THE CIVIL WAR! FOR BLACK LIBERATION THROUGH SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

population grew at a much slower rate than the free North. The “three-fifths clause” not only declared a slave three-fifths of a person, but also gave slaveowners extra power within the electoral system. And then there is the Senate, which gives each state the same representation regardless of its population. And when the Constitution was written, the Senate was not elected. Southerners held the presidency more often than not for most of the history of the early United States. This made it all but impossible to legally abolish slavery. Thus both in economic terms and in political terms, human slavery was the cornerstone of the early American republic.

Slavery eventually died out in the North, where the last state to abolish slavery was New Jersey in 1846. By the mid 19th century, Northern capitalism had developed to such a point that it was increasingly fettered by the Southern slavocracy. The envelope for this tension was often expansionism. From the original 13 colonies, the United States had already grown extensively, especially with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Both the slave South and the capitalist North shared expansionist aims. This was later called “Manifest Destiny.” But this expansion meant different things for each section. Northern capitalists and farmers wanted to expand to the west. This included much of what was then called Oregon—which is not only the current state of Oregon but also much of western Canada, which was claimed by Britain. They wanted to expand a market for manufactured goods, obtain raw materials, develop a hinterland for the North, and expand toward Asian markets through the Pacific Rim.

The Southern slaveowners wanted to expand the slave system and deepen its power over the country in order to guarantee that slavery would continue to exist. Immigration and population growth in the North threatened to offset the three-fifths clause, and new free states would mean less power for the slave South in Congress. So politicians from both sides concocted a series of so-called “compromises” to maintain the North/South balance. One example is the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which divided the Louisiana Territory into slave and free zones.

No sooner had one “compromise” been effected than the next crisis would arise. In 1861, after the Civil War broke out, Marx explained this:

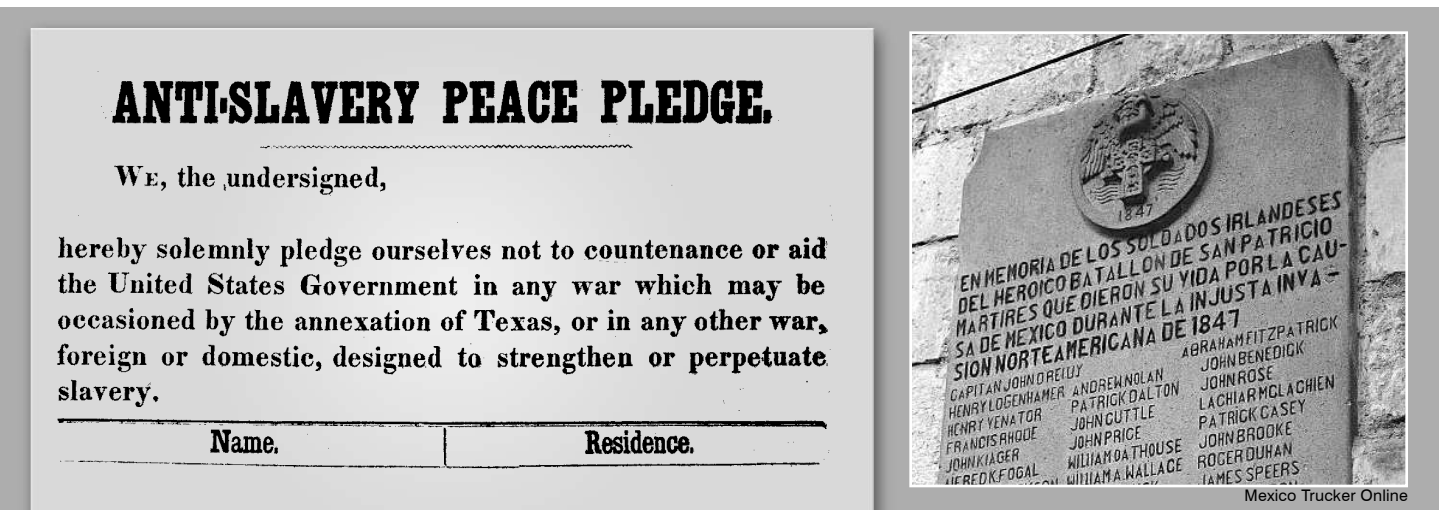
“The progressive abuse of the Union by the slave power, working through its alliance with the Northern Democratic party, is, so to say, the general formula of United States history since the beginning of this century. The successive compromise measures mark the successive degrees of the encroachment by which the Union became more and more transformed into the slave of the slave-owner. Each of these compromises denotes a new encroachment of the South, a new concession of the North.”
—“The American Question in England” (1861)

The Democratic Party at the time was, in the South, the main party of the slaveholders. In the North, it comprised both merchant capitalists who traded with the South and the urban poor. In both regions, it was thoroughly racist.

Plantation-based cotton agriculture is very hard on the soil, especially as it was practiced in the South. Therefore the slavocracy had a constant demand for new land. Many Southerners wanted to create what they called an “empire for slavery,” which would include much of Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to make sure that there would always be plantation slavery in the United States. British military power was an obstacle to the North’s wish to expand to the northwest in Oregon, but Mexico appeared to be a scintillating morsel to the slave South.

Mexico After Independence

Both the U.S. and Mexico bore the marks of their colonizing powers. British North America, including later the United States, was largely based on the mercantile model of Britain, which was by



Opposition to U.S. war against Mexico. Left: Peace pledge published in abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*, 18 July 1845. Right: Monument in Mexico City to Irish-American soldiers who defected to Mexican side during war and formed the San Patricio Battalion.

the mid 18th century one of the most dynamic European economies and the first industrial capitalist country. Spain by this time was one of the most backward and bankrupt European powers; it had already squandered the wealth that it had taken from its American colonies. Rather than develop the productive forces of New Spain, the Spanish crown focused on getting as much gold and silver from its colony as it could and sending this wealth back to the Iberian Peninsula. Between 1808 and 1821, Spain was beset by various problems in Europe, and it lost control of its empire. Almost all of its American colonies became independent in this period, the exceptions being Cuba and

not a modern nation-state. Local *caciques* opposed central control and political power alternated between Federalists who favored a decentralized government and conservative Centralists who wanted to place power in the hands of the government in Mexico City. One of the central figures in this period was the adventurer General Antonio López de Santa Anna, who himself ruled Mexico eleven times.

The U.S. had long had its eyes on Latin America. One example of this was the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which told European countries to keep their hands off the Western Hemisphere. Mexico—or as the Spanish colonialists called it, New Spain—was particularly enticing for the

was so far from God and so close to the United States.

Texas

I want to talk a bit about Texas, because it’s quite important. By the 19th century, Spain had already lost its territories in Florida and Louisiana. In 1819, the U.S. had signed a treaty with Spain, the Adams-Onís Treaty that established the boundary between the U.S. and Spanish territory at the Sabine River, and the U.S. renounced “forever” any claim to Texas—but Spain was still worried that its sparsely populated northern territory was vulnerable. So to populate the northern part of its territory, the Spanish government encouraged English-speaking North Americans, so-called Anglos, who were mainly citizens of the United States, to settle in Texas. The newly independent Mexican government continued the same policy. These immigrants were required to formally convert to Catholicism, which was the only legal religion in Mexico at the time, and the idea was that they would become Mexicans. But many of the immigrants had very little intention of actually doing so. Instead, they were mainly Southerners who wanted to extend slavery as far as possible into Mexican territory.

The first large-scale Anglo settlement in Texas was founded by Moses Austin and his son Stephen. By 1825, it had 1,800 inhabitants; 443 of them were slaves. Soon, Anglo immigrants and slaves outnumbered Mexicans in Texas ten-to-one, although it’s important to keep in mind that Native Americans outnumbered both. The links between far northern and central Mexico diminished even more as trade with the increasingly dynamic United States grew, and the Mexican government was too weak to force the Americans in Texas to do much of anything.

Slavery was a very special issue in this relationship. It was illegal in Mexico but was central to the economy in Texas, just as it was in the economy in the Southern United States. The Mexican government saw limiting slavery as a way to rein in these settlers, and it repeatedly reasserted

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Christian Schusselle

U.S. Army occupies Mexico City in September 1847.

Puerto Rico, which remained Spanish colonies until the United States took them in the Spanish-American War in the late 1890s.

I want to touch on African slavery in Mexico for a moment. The Spanish were in fact the first European power in the Americas to use African slaves. And the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, such as Santo Domingo, were based on slavery. The first black slaves arrived in Mexico with Hernán Cortés, and slaves were important in early colonial Mexico—something that is often ignored by contemporary Mexican nationalists. But the main source of labor in Mexico was indigenous peasants, not African slaves, and by the 19th century slavery had died out in Mexico. So at its independence, Mexico abolished slavery, but this was more a symbolic than a real act—except, as we’ll see, in Texas.

Shortly after its independence in 1821, Mexico was crippled by the legacy of Spanish colonialism, which had left the country underdeveloped and economically weak and heavily indebted. Mexico was very unstable; it had no real central government. Its extreme southern territories, including modern-day Guatemala, and its far northern territories were not under control of Mexico City. Between independence in 1821 and 1861, Mexico had 56 presidents, suffered several coups, and faced invasions by Spain in 1829 and France in 1838 in addition to the U.S. invasion in 1846. Mexico, in short, was

United States. At the same time, the United States was pulling northern Mexico into its economy, and central Mexico was very distant. Just to give an example, one of the largest settlements in far northern Mexico was Santa Fe, New Mexico, and it took 60 days to get to Santa Fe from Missouri. But to get to Santa Fe from Mexico City it took some six months! As the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz allegedly put it almost a century later, Mexico

SPARTACIST

NUMBER 61 ENGLISH EDITION SPRING 2009

Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!

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Spartacist (English edition) No. 61
Spring 2009, \$1.50 (64 pages)
Spartacist is sent to all WV subscribers.
Order from: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

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Mexican-American War...

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its opposition to slavery, while not doing much to actually limit its practice in Texas. In 1829, the Mexican president Vicente Guerrero abolished slavery but allowed Texas to maintain slavery as long as no more slaves were admitted. The Texans got around even this by forcing their slaves to sign so-called “contracts” with their masters that virtually guaranteed their perpetual servitude.

The Texas “Revolution”: Pro-Slavery Coup d’Etat

There’s a lot of mythology about what’s called the “Texas Revolution” of 1835-36, in which Texas broke away from Mexico. But at bottom this was a slaveholders’ rebellion, fought to guarantee the existence of human slavery. Sometimes it is depicted as a reaction to a growing Mexican central government—



Harper’s Weekly
Ulysses S. Grant as lieutenant in the Mexican-American War, 1846.

this is what I was told when I visited the Alamo several years ago. I haven’t forgotten. But as veteran American Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser put it in an unpublished study of the development of black oppression in the United States, “The colonists didn’t care what government sat in Mexico City as long as slavery was tolerated. What they feared was that a stronger central government would most assuredly move against their practice of slavery.” Stephen Austin, a founder of Texas, himself argued: “Texas must be a slave country.” And in fact, as a state, Texas would become fervently pro-slavery and joined the Confederacy in the Civil War. The University of Texas has something called the “Handbook of Texas Online” and it describes:

“The Texas Revolution assured slaveholders of the future of their institution. The Constitution of the Republic of Texas (1836) provided that slaves would remain the property of their owners, that the Texas Congress could not prohibit the immigration of slaveholders bringing their property, and that slaves could be imported from the United States (although not from Africa). Given those protections, slavery expanded rapidly during the period of the republic.”

Many slaves in Texas saw the Mexican army during the so-called “revolution” as an army of liberation. Since Mexico had abolished slavery, slaves in independent Texas escaped to the south. As one former slave put it: “All we had to do was walk, but walk south and we’d be free as soon as we crossed the Rio Grande. In Mexico you could be free.” At least 4,000 slaves escaped to Mexico in the 1840s and 1850s.

The Texans of course defeated General Santa Anna in 1836 and won de facto independence, although it’s a funny type of independence, because as soon as they became independent many Texans wanted to join the United States. The slavocracy wanted to annex Texas, but to do so threatened to undo the balance between the North and South and also to provoke war with Mexico, which did not recognize Texas’s independence.

“Manifest Destiny”

Now as I mentioned earlier, there was a shared expansionism in both the North and the South. This was called Manifest Destiny, the idea that God had a unique plan for white, English-speaking, Protestant North Americans to conquer and “civilize” all of America. By the 1840s, the slavocracy and the Northern capitalists were increasingly at odds over the nature of this destiny, of this expansionism. To the North, it was tied to the growth of capitalism, the expansion of free labor and markets and more influence in Congress. Oregon, as I said, was very important. To the South, expansionism meant increasing the reach of slavery and bolstering its power in government. The more the country expanded, the greater the tensions between slavery and capitalism became.

At the time, Texas remained a lightning rod. Many Southerners were anxious that Britain would try to make Texas a client state and abolish slavery there. James Polk, a Southern Democrat, was elected president in 1844 as a militant advocate of Manifest Destiny. Polk, like many American presidents, was a representative of the slavocracy: he owned a 920-acre plantation and 34 slaves—he bought 19 of them while he was president of the United States. According to historian Joseph Wheelan, he was “an unrepentant slaveholder” who “as a congressman had consistently sided with Southern interests in blocking attempts to interfere with slavery” (Invading Mexico: America’s Continental Dream and the Mexican War, 1846-1848 [2007]). In his presidential campaign, Polk promised to expand into Oregon and to annex Texas. In 1845, under this pressure, lame-duck president John Tyler—himself a slaveholder from Virginia—announced the annexation of Texas.

This was a provocation against both Mexico and the Northern free states and would lead to a war with each. The pretext for invading Mexico was the border between Mexico and Texas. The border between Texas and the rest of Mexico had always been the Río Nueces, but after annexing Texas, the United States claimed that the border was actu-

ally the Río Bravo del Norte (called the Rio Grande in the United States), which is some 160 miles to the south. This not only meant making Texas bigger, but also it expanded the U.S. claim to much of New Mexico as well, which concretely meant the possibility of creating several more slave states. In his Personal Memoirs, former president Ulysses S. Grant, who fought in Mexico, argued: “The fact is, annexationists wanted more territory than they could possibly lay any claim to, as part of the new acquisition.”

The Invasion

The U.S. provoked a war with Mexico by stationing troops in this disputed area and then, when an American soldier was killed, claiming that, in Polk’s words, “American blood has been shed on American soil.” This was the first in a list of lies that have been used by the U.S. to justify invasions of different countries—the USS Maine (Cuba), the Gulf of Tonkin (Vietnam) and most recently supposed “weapons of mass destruction” (Iraq).

In the war, the U.S. had a three-pronged strategy. Stephen Watts Kearny invaded westward, into New Mexico and California (the latter with John C. Frémont). Zachary Taylor invaded northern Mexico, occupying Monterrey, and Winfield Scott invaded Mexico City from the Caribbean port city of Veracruz. Polk wanted a short war; he feared that if the war lasted too long, Taylor and Scott, who were Whigs, would become too popular. However, the war lasted longer than he expected, since Mexico did not surrender until forced to. The Marine Corps’ hymn still celebrates this invasion, asserting the U.S power in the “Halls of Montezuma,” that is to say, in Mexico City.



A. Hoffy
Antonio López de Santa Anna, adventurer, general and eleven-time president of Mexico.

of the superior organization and wealth of the United States. Incidentally, Karl Marx thought that the United States won despite its leadership. He called General Scott “a common, petty, untalented, carping, envious cur and humbug.” The Mexican army was officer heavy; at one point, Santa Anna commanded an army of 24,000 officers and only 20,000 enlisted men. According to historian Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, the “conditions of the [Mexican] army were disastrous, it was tired, poorly fed and unarmed, it was large but untrained and confronted an army that was small, but disciplined, equipped, fed and regularly paid” (De la Rebelión de Texas a la Guerra del 47 [1994]). One thing I’ll mention about the U.S. side, it should be noted that many Catholic Irish and German immigrants in the U.S. Army resented the Protestant leadership, and there were even Irish-American soldiers who defected to



Jürgen Buchenau
Monument to the “Boy Heroes” on outskirts of Mexico City.

The war served as a testing ground for future military leaders in the Civil War and was the first war in which West Point graduates played a key role. From Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson on the Confederate side to George McClellan and U.S. Grant on the Union side, most of the commanding officers in the Civil War had fought in the invasion of Mexico.

Many of these officers had very different takes on the war. In the case of Grant, he later called the war “one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation.” To use one example, there’s the northern city of Monterrey, which was occupied for almost two years. Historian Miguel Ángel González Quiroga describes how “the city was subjected to a furious onslaught unlike any it has witnessed before or since. The fighting left devastation and ruin that converted the town, in the words of one eyewitness, into a vast cemetery.”

Even though Mexico had a larger army, the U.S. won the war. This was a reflection not of Manifest Destiny but

Mexico, forming the San Patricio Battalion. Remember that during the 19th century, anti-Irish and anti-Catholic bigotry was rife in the U.S.

Furthermore, the Mexican government was divided; it was unstable and unable to mobilize the resources necessary to fend off the United States. Mexican soldiers—largely indigenous and mestizo peasants—had little incentive to fight for a largely white landlord class of hacendados. During the war, there were numerous changes of government in Mexico itself and there were rebellions, for example, in southern Mexico. As many as 200,000 people died or were dislocated in the so-called Caste War of Yucatán by 1848. The Mexican army was used to attacking other Mexicans, not fighting foreign armies. The U.S. also had better artillery. And to top it all off, Mexico was led by General Santa Anna—who was more concerned with holding on to his own power than winning the war. And as we will see, the war itself was not popular in the Northern part of the United States.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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South Africa...

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until the non-white majority has power in a workers state that would unite the many black tribal- and language-based groups along with the coloured and Indian populations, with ample room and full democratic rights for those whites who would join in building a society based on genuine equality.

Tripartite Alliance Oversees Masses' Misery

It is a measure of the hellish conditions of life in South Africa that some 1,000 people die of AIDS every day. The health care system is criminally neglected—a problem compounded by the enormity of ignorance promoted by government officials. Mbeki was infamous for denying that HIV causes AIDS. Zuma reinforced backward attitudes and ignorance about AIDS by stating during his 2006 rape trial that he took a shower after having sex with an HIV-positive woman to prevent himself from becoming infected. As part of the ANC-led government, the SACP tops bear responsibility for the government's attacks on workers and the poor as well as the criminal neglect of those suffering from AIDS and HIV. The current government has verbally disassociated itself from Mbeki's denialism. But the fact of the matter is that the vast majority of people who need anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) lack access to or cannot afford them. For four months beginning last November, more than 15,000 people needing ARVs in Orange Free State were denied them because the province had run out of its supply, and many patients there are still waiting to receive them. We demand free ARVs for all HIV/AIDS patients as part of the struggle for free quality health care for all!

Meanwhile, starting in 2004 in Orange Free State, protests over the lack of "service delivery"—housing, electricity, basic sanitation, roads—have spread to virtually all the black townships in the country. On March 8, Zuma was confronted during his door-to-door campaign in a township in Mpumalanga province by angry residents. He sat motionless as Sthembile Nkosi, a single mother of one, told him she did not register to vote because nothing has changed in the past 15 years. "We are promised a better life, but we only see the better life on TV," she scolded. Among the residents' many grievances is the spread of disease due to lack of proper sanitation. With one toilet for every four families, and most of these blocked, people are forced to relieve themselves in the bush. While the recent cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe has taken thousands of lives, many parts of South Africa have also been hit by cholera because they lack clean water supplies and working sanitation systems.

Such conditions can be seen throughout the desolate rural areas as well as in shacks and squatter camps in urban townships. People have been on waiting lists for government-provided houses as far back as 1996. Much of the coloured population—descended from a mixture of Malays brought to the Cape Colony as slaves, whites, indigenous Khoi and San peoples and others—lives in utter destitution in townships like Crossroads and Uitsig in the Western Cape. In and around Durban, where the Indian component of the proletariat is centred, a good number of Indians also live in shacks, sometimes right next to mansions.

The power of the trade unions, based on labour's role in producing the wealth of society, must be wielded in defence of the township and rural masses, most of whom are unemployed or only marginally employed. In the absence of such a class-struggle fight, disillusionment and anger can take starkly reactionary forms, as seen in the pogromist anti-immigrant violence that took 62 lives last May. Responsibility for anti-immigrant violence must be placed squarely on the Tripartite Alliance government, which presides over the capitalist system that keeps

Government-backed anti-immigrant violence: Cops stand guard at gates of refugee camp north of Pretoria, March 2. The immigrants were evicted, and the camp burned, bulldozed and torn down.

the vast majority in wretched conditions and brutally oppresses immigrants.

On March 2, the government tore down the last camp in Gauteng province housing immigrants displaced by the pogroms. Cops beat and pepper-sprayed the refugees while the camp outside Pretoria was literally burned to the ground. Women and children slept outside after being refused entry into the Lindela Repatriation Centre, where immigrants are routinely humiliated and brutalised, as the only other choice the state gave them was to return to the townships where they might well be killed with impunity. At the same time, hundreds of Zimbabweans displaced by the closing of a refugee camp in Limpopo province headed to Johannesburg's Central Methodist Church, already jam-packed with people who fled the May pogroms. Durban ANC ward councillor Vusi Khoza is facing charges of murder, assault and robbery after a January mob attack on for-



Gideon Mendel

HIV patients at Palmerton Clinic, Eastern Cape, 2004. Government's criminal neglect of HIV/AIDS epidemic has exacerbated crisis in which some 1,000 die every day.

eign nationals claimed the lives of a Tanzanian and a Zimbabwean.

Adding fuel to these fires, COSATU leader Zwelinzima Vavi ranted at an ANC election rally in Sebokeng, near Johannesburg: "There is no country in the world where borders are as uncontrolled as here" (*Daily Sun*, 10 March). In an interview in the *Sunday Independent* (15 March), Vavi "explained" his statement by complaining that "the Fishmonger restaurant in Illovo [a Johannesburg suburb] employs 53 people, only seven of whom are South Africans." Condemning "foreign" workers for "stealing jobs" is the common coin of trade-union bureaucrats throughout the capitalist world, often serving to incite reactionary violence. Vavi's poisonous diatribes show the real face of the nationalism of the COSATU tops and their political patrons in the SACP, whatever their sermonising against "xenophobia."

Proletarian militants must fight against

any attempt to channel workers' anger over poverty and unemployment into anti-immigrant racism and other devices—from tribalism to bigotry against women and gays—used by the capitalists to divide the working class and weaken its struggles. This is especially crucial as tens of thousands lose their jobs in mining and manufacturing due to the world economic crisis, adding to an unemployment rate already over 40 per cent. As we did last May, Spartacist South Africa raises the demands: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations! (see "South Africa: Mobilize Trade Unions Against Anti-Immigrant Terror!" WV No. 915, 23 May 2008). The courts have granted the right to vote to expatriates, many of them whites who left South Africa after the ANC's rise to power. We say that immigrants and refugees who live in South Africa must get the vote.

Deepening social inequality and enduring tribal/ethnic divisions and white privi-

power by the proletariat. The necessary precondition for revolutionary struggle is the complete political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. There is no wall separating the democratic and socialist tasks of the revolution. Rather, the working class in power would be faced with the socialist reconstruction of society.

Key to the defence of such a revolution from capitalist counterrevolutionary attacks will be its international extension to especially the imperialist centres of West Europe, Japan and North America, the only road to achieving a world socialist order based on material abundance. Many militants in South Africa believe that a workers revolution would inevitably be crushed by the imperialists and write off the possibility that the workers in North America, Europe and Japan will ever overthrow their "own" capitalist rulers. No one would deny that the U.S. and other capitalist powers represent a formidable obstacle to proletarian revolutions. But as we wrote in the April 2008 ICL pamphlet, *The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution*:

"The imperialist countries are class-divided societies with deep discontents and insoluble contradictions, necessarily leading to class and other social struggles. In the course of sharp 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, the workers will become conscious of themselves as a class fighting for itself and for all the oppressed against the capitalist order."

The Economic Crisis and the Elections

Despite all the evidence of disaffection with the ANC, it is likely that it will win the elections with a healthy majority. The ANC's bourgeois opponents are currently up in arms over press reports that the National Prosecuting Authority will drop corruption charges against Zuma, who in any case is due to become president after April 22.

The enduring mass support for the ANC testifies above all to the treachery of the SACP and COSATU misleaders in tying the powerful proletariat to this bourgeois party, which they falsely portray as the embodiment of national liberation. The SACP packages its class-collaborationist alliance with the ANC as the "national democratic revolution"—the South African variant of the "two-stage revolution" doctrine that the party inherited from the degenerating Communist International under Stalin and Bukharin in the late 1920s. The SACP is what Lenin called a bourgeois workers party: a party with a working-class base and a thoroughly pro-capitalist leadership and programme. Key to building a Leninist vanguard party will be splitting revolutionary-minded SACP members from their reformist tops.

Following Zuma's election as ANC

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The global crisis underlines the unity of class interests of the international proletariat. The nationalism and class collaborationism of the SACP/COSATU bureau-



Black children face miserable conditions at school in Orlando East, Soweto, October 2008.

Workers are increasingly angry about their leaders using the unions as stepping stones to build credentials for careers in Parliament and business. COSATU's Vavi has made a big deal about declining his nomination to be on the ANC's parliamentary election list. Out of the initial list of 12 COSATU officials, only four remain on the slate. This simply represents a division of labour in the Tripartite Alliance. The SACP, which currently accounts for some 20 per cent of the ANC's parliamentarians, is well-placed on the new slate. While retaining a few posts on the list, the COSATU hierarchy puts up a pretence of "independence" in order to obscure its role as a crucial prop of the

One of C.O.P.E.'s main spokesmen, Willie Madisha, has announced plans to split workers from COSATU and form a new union federation supposedly "independent" of political parties. In 2008 Madisha was ousted from the COSATU presidency and the SACP Central Committee. His call for an "independent labour movement" is laughable coming from a prominent C.O.P.E. leader. He



Cops in neo-apartheid South Africa attack striking Woolworths workers in Johannesburg city center, 9 October 2008.

We oppose the concept of political unions, which divide workers at the point of production along party lines, leading to scabbing on each others' strikes. Thus we oppose COSATU's purging of officials belonging to organisations that oppose the ANC, as has been happening in the SADTU teachers union (Madisha's former base). We stand for industrial unions, where all workers in a company or industry, irrespective of craft, political affiliation or race, belong to one union. This creates conditions for the maximum unity of the working class in its economic struggles against the bosses. We also oppose the syndicalist notion that unions can be "independent" of politics. There must be a fight for a new, class-struggle labour leadership that supports the building of a revolutionary workers party.

As Marxists, we proceed from the standpoint that the proletariat and its organisations must be independent of the parties and state agencies of the capitalist class. We are opposed to the executive offices of the capitalist state, from president to provincial premier to mayor. The ICL opposes Marxists running for those offices on principle (see “Marxist Princi-

Several leftist groups that had announced their intention to contest the April elections were excluded because they could not raise the exorbitant deposit set by Parliament, amounting to more than R500,000 (over \$50,000), for parties contesting national and provincial elections. Despite fundamental programmatic differences, we agree with the Workers International Vanguard League (WIVL) and others in opposing such anti-democratic measures, which virtually guarantee the exclusion of small working-class parties.

Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists

— a bulletin of opponent material

NUMBER 1

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Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 667, 2 May 1997

**"Open Letter to the Spartacist League by the
National Central Committee of the Workers
International Vanguard League"**

Reprinted from an unpublished letter, 1 October 1997

**"A Reply to the Workers International
Vanguard League"**

By Spartacist South Africa, 19 July 1998

Spartacist
Pamphlet Suite 248
Private Box 30250
Johannesburg, South Africa 2000

Printed by Independent Worker at the 100000
21 Charlotte Street, London

July 1998
Number: 1
18 US\$ 2000
P111 2485 50 47 25 1 5 0000 00
Master Print: 101 9480 433

A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1

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Pseudo-Science in the Service of Racism
The "Bell Curve" and Genocide U.S.A. SEE PAGE 34

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sciousness of nationalism, which is the glue holding the Tripartite Alliance together and the biggest obstacle to winning advanced workers to a Marxist worldview. Black cops under apartheid were despised because they were correctly seen as serving the interests of the oppressor. But now, the line of the ANC and its reformist supporters is that the state, with its majority-black “democratic” government, serves the masses. The truth is that just as under apartheid, cops and security guards, who are auxiliaries to the police, today act as guard dogs of capitalist property and profits, breaking strikes and firing rubber bullets at township and student protests.

The SSA is unique on the left in demanding: Cops, security guards out of the unions! In the current elections, the SACP’s “Vote ANC!” manifesto calls to “build street, village and block committees to fight crime” and to “strengthen and support community policing forums” (CPF), which has been SACP policy for some time. We oppose such structures, which act as auxiliaries to the murderous cops and encourage vigilantism. CPF members reportedly were ringleaders of the January anti-immigrant pogrom in Durban. According to the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), twice in the last nine months, activists in Sebokeng have been killed by CPF members or cops. One victim was an APF member.

The labour movement must defend those who come under attack for engaging in protest actions, such as the “Kliptown Five” activists, including a leader of WIVL, who were recently sentenced on phony charges of “public violence” stemming from a September 2007 APF housing protest in Soweto (see box above). Despite the fact that APF protests have repeatedly been attacked by cops, the APF hailed a strike by Johannesburg municipal cops, the paid thugs of the bourgeoisie.

In 1995, while everyone else on the left was celebrating the dawn of the “new South Africa,” we warned: “The ANC-led nationalist movement cannot achieve any semblance of ‘liberation’ for the non-white masses since it is committed to maintaining South African capitalism, which has always been based on the brutal exploitation of the black toilers” (see “South Africa Powder Keg,” *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12, February 1995). Unlike the reformist Keep

Defend the Kliptown Five!

We print below a protest letter sent on March 23 to the High Court, Witwatersrand Local Division, South Africa, by the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian, legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League.

We vehemently protest the 13 March sentencing of Thabo Modisane, Charlie Nyatumba, Sibongile Maphalele, Ricardo and Oscar in the Protea Magistrate’s Court on bogus charges of “public violence.” The five activists were victimized for their participation in a 3 September 2007 housing protest in Kliptown, Sowe-

to, organized by the Anti-Privatisation Forum. Thabo Modisane, national organizer of the Workers International Vanguard League, was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment or a R3,000 fine while the other four received five-year suspended sentences, which Modisane also received.

The Kliptown protesters were arrested for the “crime” of demanding houses that had been promised by the government. The routine cop violence meted out against township protests and workers’ strikes shows that the “justice” system in the “new,” “democratic” South Africa, as under the racist apartheid

police state, exists to uphold a brutally oppressive capitalist order. Modisane was singled out by the court for harsher sentencing specifically because he had suffered court repression previously for his involvement in social struggles for the poor, including during apartheid. We join with others in the working-class movement in demanding that the convictions of the Kliptown Five be overturned immediately. We further call for charges to be dropped against the many others who have been victimized for engaging in social protests demanding the most basic necessities of life.

Left!, part of the International Socialist Tendency of the late Tony Cliff, and Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), part of Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International, we have always opposed giving electoral or any other form of political support to the ANC. In 1994 the ICL gave critical support to the Workers List Party, which, despite a reformist programme that did not even criticise the ANC, drew a crude class line with its independent campaign.

The DSM, which was buried inside the ANC for nearly two decades, left this

bourgeois party only in 1996. The Cliffites voted for the ANC in 1994 and 1999. Now, following the split by Terror Lekota and other ANC leaders who went on to form C.O.P.E., Keep Left! leaders Alan Goatley and Claire Ceruti have all but explicitly called for a vote to the ANC in *Socialism from Below* (November 2008), painting a “class line between the Lekota ANC and the Zuma ANC” and declaring, “Boycotting is not an option with this choice.”

Like the DSM and WIVL, Keep Left! acts as a pressure group on the Alliance

through the APF and other single-issue groups which sow the illusion that this bourgeois government can be pressured to serve the interests of the poor. Combating such illusions is crucial to forging a workers party of the Bolshevik type, one that would act, in Lenin’s words, as a tribune of the people by mobilising the enormous power of the South African proletariat on behalf of all the poor and oppressed. The SSA dedicates its efforts to this task as part of the ICL’s struggle to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■



Thembinkosi Dwayisa

Above: ANC’s Jacob Zuma (left) with SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande and COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi. Tripartite Alliance presides over neo-apartheid capitalism in South Africa. Right: Cops fire rubber bullets at Soweto demonstrators protesting lack of services, 3 September 2007.



Beukes/SAPA

Big Lie...

(continued from page 3)

The Democratic Party represents this capitalist system of oppression and exploitation no less than the Republicans, though usually with more of a veneer of concern for the “little people.” It’s no accident that among the biggest pushers of Reagan’s “war on drugs” were the Democrats. In the 1980s, Democratic Party demagogue Al Sharpton led anti-drug vigilante sprees through Harlem, while black capitalist politicians made common cause with the biggest racists in America, bringing police shock troops into black communities. Jesse Jackson Sr. pushed endless variations on how “dope,” not the (lynch) “rope,” was the biggest problem for black people—a disgusting apology for racist terror. This was the old “blame the victim” rhetoric, the same tactic employed by President Barack Obama to try to blame black people for their oppression, as when he declared in his 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, that “minorities, individually and collectively, have responsibilities as well” for their own condition.

As opposed to the “crack baby” myth, one of the very real health problems afflicting ghetto children is lead poisoning. In “Lead Pipes vs. Crack Pipes” (28 January), the *Columbia Journalism Review* pointed out that the same day the *Times* wrote about the “crisis that failed to show up,” the *Washington Post* reported that studies showed that hundreds of children in Washington, D.C., had unsafe amounts of lead in their

blood due to corruption of the water supply. The “sad irony,” the *Columbia Journalism Review* notes, is that “lead poisoning in young children actually produces some of the irreparable cognitive and developmental damage that was once believed to be caused by exposing infants to cocaine.... But while crack babies became a symbol of America’s deteriorating inner city during the Reagan administration, President Reagan cut funding for lead screening and ordered the Centers for Disease Control to stop keeping lead poisoning statistics.”

Most people have understood the dangers of lead poisoning for some time—to say nothing of the effects of poverty, poor education, joblessness and homelessness. But such *real* threats to children have been downplayed by the capitalist media and politicians because the perps were (and are) landlords, employers and big-city governments—that is, the capitalists and their institutions of racist class rule, for whom the lives of the poor and the black population are cheap.

We are glad that Regina McKnight, the woman convicted of homicide after she suffered the stillbirth of her child in the hospital, was finally released from prison in 2008, as the South Carolina Supreme Court finally recognized that there was no evidence cocaine had caused what was *never* a crime but a personal tragedy. McKnight’s supporters had worked for nearly a decade to prove that the cocaine theory was wrong. Indeed, a doctor had already pointed this out in a letter published in the *Times* on 22 May 2001. But there’s almost eight years gone from this innocent woman’s

life that she’ll never get back—and how many others are still suffering under racist drug laws?

We oppose all laws against drugs, as well as against all the other “crimes without victims”—prostitution, pornography, gambling and so on. Of course drug addiction, like alcoholism, can be dangerous—but this is a personal and medical matter, not one for the police. Such laws have always been used for social control, not social benefit. Chi-

nese immigrants were persecuted under anti-opium laws in the late 19th century, after they finished building the railroads; Latinos were targeted under 1930s Depression-era anti-marijuana laws; the black population has always been a primary target. The fight for black liberation and women’s liberation from this racist society and its repressive social institutions requires smashing the capitalist economic system and its state apparatus through socialist revolution. ■

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China...
(continued from page 12)

contradiction between the formal equality proclaimed by the ‘democracy’ of the capitalists and the thousands of real limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into wage-slaves.”

While the demand for pure “democracy” might play a certain role in mobilizing the forces of counterrevolution in China, their victory would not bring a stable bourgeois parliamentary-type regime. Rather China would be subjugated and perhaps torn apart by American, West European and Japanese imperialism, transformed into a giant sweatshop.

The People’s Republic of China is a bureaucratically deformed expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The class rule of the capitalists has been smashed and the economy collectivized, but the proletariat is deprived of direct political power. What is needed is a fight for proletarian democracy. The workers and rural toilers need their own class-based governing institutions, the soviets (the Russian term for councils), which would be open to all parties defending the workers state.

Charter 08 Pushes “Free Market” Capitalism

Charter 08’s call for capitalist restoration is unambiguous:

“We should establish and protect the right to private property and promote an economic system of free and fair markets.... We should establish a Committee

conomic program of privatizing industry and commerce from editorials in the Wall Street Journal or London Economist of two or three years ago. Actually the roots of their ideas are probably closer to home. Despite Charter 08’s hostility to the CCP regime, in a sense it has taken the CCP leaders’ doctrine of “market socialism” to its logical conclusion. For decades, the Beijing Stalinists have extolled market mechanisms and competition as superior to centralized planning and management. They have wielded the whip of the market in an attempt to resolve the problem of stagnant productivity inherent to the bureaucratic commandism that prevailed under Mao. Their claim has been that China can become a great power by integrating into the world capitalist market via foreign investment and the export of cheap manufactured goods to the U.S. and West Europe. But now that economic strategy has been derailed—spectacularly—by the global capitalist economic crisis.

The dominant weight of the state-owned enterprises and banks has prevented China from being dragged into the kind of deep economic crisis that is ravaging most capitalist countries. Nonetheless, major sectors of its economy have been hard hit. In Guangdong province, the center of China’s export industry, shipments plummeted over 50 percent in the first two months of this year. Already over 20 million migrant workers have been laid off, mainly from factories owned by foreign and offshore Chinese capitalists that produce consumer goods for export.



Corbis

People’s Liberation Army marching through Beijing, June 1949. Revolution smashed landlord/capitalist rule but was deformed from its inception by nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy.

on State-Owned Property, reporting to the national legislature, that will monitor the transfer of state-owned enterprises to private ownership in a fair, competitive, and orderly manner.”

It’s more than a little ironic that this demand for “free market” capitalism is being raised at the very moment when the destructive irrationality of the capitalist system—the anarchy of the market—is more evident than at any time in the past several decades. World capitalism is in the throes of a deepening financial/economic crisis centered in the imperialist countries of North America, West Europe and Japan. Desperate to stanch the bleeding, the governments of these countries are nationalizing banks, subsidizing key industries and engaging in other forms of state intervention in the economy. At the same time, many U.S. politicians, especially around the Democratic Obama administration, have been pushing an increasingly protectionist stance against China.

One might think the authors of Charter 08 had taken their neoliberal eco-

This has precipitated an upsurge of defensive labor struggle that has seen angry workers, demanding back pay or severance pay, fighting pitched battles with the police. The CCP regime has responded with a mixture of repression, cash handouts to some of the newly unemployed and the reversal of some of its privatization measures. “So much for capitalism,” headlined the Economist (5 March) in an article on China’s latest economic moves, which noted ruefully that the “opening up” of China’s economy appears to be going “into reverse.”

Anti-Communist Social Democrats Laud Charter 08

It is to be expected that leading organs of Western bourgeois opinion would praise Charter 08. But so do a number of groups claiming to be socialist, indeed Trotskyist. In reality, these groups reject Trotskyism in favor of a program of “democratic” capitalist counterrevolution.

A recent article by the Hong Kong-based October Review group, linked to the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec), supports Charter 08 without the slightest criticism (“The State of Human Rights in China,” 31 December 2008). Saluting “the efforts of the people for democracy and human rights,” the article has not a single reference to capitalism, socialism or the working class!

For its part, the British-based Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) led by Peter Taaffe writes:

“This manifesto, now with over 7,000 signatures, calls for an end to one-party

Communist Party leader in Mianzhu begs enraged parents of victims of last year’s Sichuan earthquake to stop their protest of shoddy school construction, May 2008.



Fukuda/NY Times

rule and for basic civil liberties—things that socialists also fight for (many ‘charter 08’ signatories, however, are liberals who favour a faster pace of capitalist ‘economic reform’).” —chinaworker.info, 16 January

While chiding Charter 08 for its economic proposals, the CWI positively identifies with its calls for “democracy.” This is nothing new for the Taaffeites, who have backed all manner of anti-Communist forces in the degenerated/deformed workers states. In the final tumultuous years of the USSR, they supported the capitalist-restorationist “democratic” camp of Boris Yeltsin. In August 1991, Yeltsin, openly backed by then U.S. president George Bush Sr., staged a successful counter coup against the remnants of the disintegrating Kremlin oligarchy. The Taaffeites joined Yeltsin’s reactionary rabble on the Moscow barricades. In sharp contrast, our comrades in Moscow distributed a leaflet in the tens of thousands with the urgent call: “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” Capitalist counterrevolution brought mass unemployment, falling life expectancy and social degradation to the peoples of the former USSR and East Europe, while emboldening the imperialist exploiters in attacking working people and minorities.

Today, the CWI publicizes the work of the Hong Kong-based China Labour Bulletin (CLB). While masquerading as a workers organization championing “independent trade unions,” the CLB is a counterrevolutionary group with direct connections to U.S. imperialism. Its leader Han Dongfang has long had a program on the CIA’s Radio Free Asia and is vice-chair of the World Movement for Democracy, an outfit founded and run by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a notorious CIA front. Han has been called the “Chinese Lech Walesa,” after the leader of Poland’s Solidarność. In the 1980s, Solidarność, the only “union” supported by Reagan, Thatcher and the Vatican, led the drive to bring capitalist exploitation in “democratic” guise back to the Soviet bloc, with full support from the Taaffeites and the USec.

Like Charter 08’s demand for “free elections,” calls for “free trade unions” on the Solidarność model are a reactionary trap for the working class. The struggle

for unions free of bureaucratic control, important for China’s embattled working people, must be based on defense of the workers state that issued from the 1949 Revolution. This struggle, as well as the fight for the right of assembly and freedom of the press, will unfold as part of the fight for soviet democracy, for the formation of workers councils opposing the bureaucratic parasites and suppressing counterrevolutionary elements.

Witting Tools of U.S. Imperialism

Charter 08’s leaders are not naive ingénués; many among them also have open associations with U.S. imperialism. Liu Xiaobo, one of the Charter’s main organizers, is president of the U.S.-based “Independent Chinese PEN Center,” which receives regular NED funding. Two other prominent Charter spokesmen, Li Baiguang and Teng Biao, were given the NED’s “Democracy Award” at a ceremony in Washington last year. To date, the CCP regime appears to have treated these pro-imperialist dissidents with untypically mild repression. While taking steps to block the Charter from the Internet, it has arrested only one Charter spokesman, Liu Xiaobo, while briefly detaining others or putting them under surveillance. This is in contrast to the severe repression that has been inflicted on leaders of workers strikes and other protests.

While sharply opposing Charter 08’s politics, we do not at this time support the repression of its initiators and signers. These right-wing ideologues are clearly not leading a movement that threatens the existence of the Chinese workers state, as was the case with Polish Solidarność by the fall of 1981. At that time, we wrote: “The threat of a counterrevolutionary thrust for power is now posed in Poland. That threat must be crushed at all costs and by any means necessary” (“Stop Solidarity’s Counterrevolution!” WV No. 289, 25 September 1981). When the Stalinists moved to suppress Solidarność in December 1981, we supported this. At the same time, we indicted the bureaucracy for its nationalism, economic mismanagement and decades of capitulation to the Catholic church and other pro-capitalist forces, which drove workers from the historically socialist-minded

CORRECTION
The article “Milk: A Review” (WV No. 932, 13 March) stated that Dan White, who killed Harvey Milk and San Francisco mayor George Moscone, was “sentenced to less than seven years in prison.” White was in fact sentenced to seven years and eight months.

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proletariat of Poland into the arms of reaction.

With their hosannas to the “free markets” that are wreaking havoc around the globe, the right-wing intellectuals of Charter 08 are highly unlikely to gain any traction among China’s working people, for whom the “magic of the market” has meant savage exploitation and growing unemployment. Three decades ago, even as it promoted bourgeois “democracy,” Charter 77 did not call for the restoration of a capitalist economy because at the time such a demand would have repelled most Czechoslovak intellectuals, not to speak of the workers.

The program of “democratic” counter-revolution pushed by the likes of Charter 08 must be defeated *politically*—and that is something that the nationalist CCP bureaucracy is manifestly incapable of doing. In meting out repression, the Stalinist rulers do not differentiate between counterrevolutionaries and those who politically oppose bureaucratic rule from the standpoint of the historic interests of the proletariat. After the smashing of capitalist class rule in 1949, hundreds of Chinese Trotskyists who fought in defense of the Revolution were rounded up and thrown in prison or shot. Following the worker and student upheavals centered on Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in 1989, the regime executed workers. We oppose the institution of capital punishment on principle, in China—where thousands are executed each year—no less than in capitalist countries.

The U.S. group known as the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL) makes correct criticisms of Charter 08 in its February 10 Internet posting, “The Truth Behind China’s Charter 08 Manifesto—Liberal Language Cloaks Counterrevolutionary Aims.” But the PSL looks to the Stalinist bureaucracy as the key barrier to counterrevolution: “The CCP government, in spite all of its contradictions, remains the most important obstacle to the return of China to its previous state of semi-colonial slavery.” While criticizing the CCP leaders’ “market reforms,” the PSL hopes that Hu Jintao & Co. will see the light and return to the “socialist road”:

“Faced with an intensified imperialist offensive, the CCP leadership could change course, turning to the working class for support and reinstituting socialist measures.

“However unlikely, the path to a renewal or strengthening of socialist methods is possible as long as the CCP retains its hold on state power.”

The PSL contrasts the CCP’s “market reforms” to “the path followed by the Communist Party during the Mao era.” However, Mao-style national “self-sufficiency” (economic autarky) and the market-oriented policies of later CCP leaders were both ways by which the Chinese



China Photos

Stalinist bureaucracy sought to “peacefully coexist” with world imperialism in different periods and different international contexts. Under Mao, this was expressed in China’s grotesque alliance with U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union.

In reality, the continued rule of the CCP *undermines* defense of proletarian state power in China. Thanks to the regime’s policies, a sizable class of capitalist entrepreneurs with links to the off-shore bourgeoisie in Hong Kong and Taiwan has emerged on the mainland,

reaucracy continues to preserve state property not out of a subjective identification with socialism but, as Trotsky wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), “only to the extent that it fears the proletariat”—i.e., to protect its privileged position as a parasitic caste atop the workers state. Sooner or later, by one political path or another, the Stalinist regime will bring China to the brink of capitalist counter-revolution, posing pointblank the fate of the most populous country on earth.

It is instructive to look back at the



AP

Global capitalist economic crisis has slowed Chinese growth, hit export industry hard. Left: Massive jobs fair in Shaanxi province, March 1. Above: Laid-off workers in Harbin stage workplace sit-in on March 18 demanding reinstatement of insurance and retirement benefits.



Corbis

Chinese workers join Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, May 1989. Banner reads: “The Workers’ and Students’ Hearts Are Joined.”

though they are still prevented from organizing politically and vying for power. Many CCP officials have financial and familial ties to such entrepreneurs. Contrary to the PSL’s claims, the bu-

social and political dynamics of counter-revolution in the Russian core of the former USSR. This was *not* led by anti-Communist dissident intellectuals analogous to China’s Charter 08 but by major elements derived from the decomposing *nomenklatura*, the Soviet bureaucratic elite. A few years before Boris Yeltsin took power and announced the dissolution of the USSR, he was a senior leader in the Kremlin. There are today more than a few potential Yeltsins in the leading bodies of the CCP. At the same time, the Chinese Stalinists have learned something from the counterrevolution in the ex-USSR. Seeking to forestall such developments in China, the CCP leaders have pursued policies of *perestroika* (market-oriented “reforms”) without a hint of *glasnost* (political democratization).

For Proletarian Political Revolution!

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, his classic analysis of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky emphasized: “Under a nationalized economy, *quality* demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative—conditions incompatible with a totalitarian regime of fear, lies and flattery.” The CCP regime’s policies and practices create a climate in which some of the proponents of “democratic” counter-revolution could gain a hearing, at least among a layer of intellectuals, peasants and even some workers. At the same time, the increasing antagonism between the bureaucracy and China’s toiling

are today certainly cradles of the “talented tenth,” they were founded in a collaboration between missionaries and the Freedmen’s Bureau for the purpose of teaching former slaves to read. It had been illegal to educate slaves in most of the South under slavery. As a result, there was a tremendous thirst for knowledge (mainly of the bible) by former slaves at the end of the Civil War. According to Eric Foner in *Reconstruction*:

“In the broadest sense, the schools established by the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Northern aid societies, to quote the American Freedmen’s Union Commission, aimed ‘to plant a genuine republicanism in the southern States’.” (p. 147)

At the time, that was a part of trying to complete the Civil War.

Joe Vetter

WV replies:

We thank Joe for his letter. Readers are also referred to the Spartacist pamphlet *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2 (1985), titled “On the Civil Rights Movement,” which includes the articles “Bourgeoisie Celebrates King’s Liberal Pacifism” (reprinted from WV No. 207, 26 May 1978) and “SNCC: ‘Black Power’ and the Democrats” (reprinted from WV No. 327, 8 April 1983).■

Civil Rights...

(continued from page 2)

aptly depicts this by having King say to someone being beaten by the cops in Watts: “If there is any blood spilled in the streets, let it be *our* blood!” In his speech “Why I Am Opposed to the War in Vietnam” [1967], given after he received the Nobel Peace Prize, King condemns only the war in Vietnam! He does not oppose war in general, but calls for a “revolution of values” that would allow for the end of wars. His position on war is no different from thousands of preachers. He says that the Vietnam war interfered with the anti-poverty program of LBJ, and, by the way, war is terrible. The problem with genuine pacifism is that it is dumb and calls for individual action (“moral witness”). King chose to use the non-violent ideas that he got in discussions with the right-wing social-democrat Bayard Rustin to try to keep the black masses corralled.

Lastly, the article takes a swipe at the founding of black colleges in the South, saying that they “...were founded by church institutions to primarily train clergy and teachers, the core of the black petty bourgeoisie.” While these colleges

masses is also preparing the ground for a proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic ruling Stalinists.

The potential for a pro-socialist workers uprising was shown in the May-June 1989 Tiananmen upheaval. In its article on Charter 08, the PSL endorses the line of the Chinese Stalinists on these events, calling them “a counterrevolutionary effort painted in the West as a ‘struggle for democracy’.” In reality, protests that began among students opposing corruption and seeking political liberalization were joined by masses of Chinese workers, driven into action by their own grievances against the impact of the regime’s market measures, especially high inflation.

Workers assemblies and motorized flying squads were thrown up, pointing to the potential for the emergence of authentic worker, soldier and peasant councils. The entry into struggle of the working class terrified the CCP rulers, who eventually unleashed fierce repression. But the bureaucracy, including the officer corps of the military, began to fracture under the impact of the proletarian upsurge. The first army units that were mobilized refused to act in the face of enormous popular support for the protests among Beijing’s working people. Other more regime-loyal army units had to be brought in to carry out the massacre of June 1989, which was overwhelmingly targeted at workers rather than students. This was an incipient proletarian political revolution, drowned in blood by the Stalinist bureaucracy (see “The Spectre of Tiananmen and Working-Class Struggle in China Today,” WV Nos. 836 and 837, 12 and 26 November 2004).

The crucial missing element, during the Tiananmen events as well as today, is an authentic Bolshevik—i.e., Leninist-Trotskyist—party to rally the working masses around the banner of workers democracy and communist internationalism. Such a party would be forged in political combat not only with currents emerging out of the decomposing Stalinist bureaucracy but also with the anti-Communist purveyors of Western-type “democracy,” including some who will doubtless posture far to the left of the Charter 08 group.

The survival and advancement of China’s revolutionary gains hinges on the fight for socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries of Japan, North America and West Europe, the only road toward the all-round modernization of China as part of an international planned economy. A proletarian political revolution producing a China of worker and peasant councils would be a beacon for the oppressed working masses of Asia and the entire world, dealing a deathblow to the bourgeoisie’s “death of communism” propaganda, lifting up the downtrodden masses of the former Soviet Union and East Europe and inspiring the workers in the imperialist heartlands. This, ultimately, is the only perspective that can defeat the siren call of “democracy” pushed by imperialist-backed outfits as well as fake “socialists” who are enemies of the gains of the Chinese Revolution.■

China

Charter 08: Program for “Democratic” Counterrevolution

In December, a document titled Charter 08 appeared on the Internet in China. Signed by some 300 individuals, largely intellectuals and academics, it has since garnered another 8,000 signatories. An English translation was quickly circulated abroad and then published in the *New York Review of Books* (15 January). The capitalist media in the U.S. and elsewhere has heaped praise on Charter 08. An editorial in the London *Financial Times* (7 January) saluted it as “a powerfully written affirmation of universal human rights.” A *Washington Post* editorial (30 January) called it China’s “new democracy movement.”

Charter 08 is an explicit program for capitalist counterrevolution in the Chinese deformed workers state, wrapped in the envelope of “democracy.” Its initiators seek to emulate the imperialist-backed “human rights” dissidents in East Europe who spearheaded the counter-revolutions in the former Soviet bloc in 1989-92. The Charter calls for “free elections” as a political mechanism for capitalist-restorationist parties to attain governmental power. It demands the privatization of the collectivized core of the Chinese economy—the state-owned enterprises—as well as the land. In short, this is a program to reverse the social gains of the 1949 Revolution that, if realized, would plunge China back into imperialist subjugation and exploitation.

Charter 08 retrospectively supports the imperialist-backed Guomindang (Nationalist Party) of Chiang Kai-shek against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the civil war of the late 1940s: “Victory over Japan in 1945 offered one more chance for China to move toward modern government, but the Communist defeat of the Nationalists in the civil war thrust the nation into the abyss of totalitarianism.”

The 1949 Chinese Revolution was a progressive social revolution of world-historic significance. Hundreds of millions of peasants rose up and seized the land on which their forebears had been exploited from time immemorial. The creation of a centrally planned, collectivized economy laid the basis for enormous social progress. The revolution enabled women to advance by magnitudes over their previous miserable status rooted in the old Confucian order in such practices as forced marriage and concubinage. A nation that had been ravaged and divided by foreign powers was unified and freed from imperialist subjugation.

However, the Revolution was deformed from its inception under the rule of Mao Zedong’s CCP regime, a nationalist bureaucratic caste resting atop the



George Bush in May 2006 hosts Chinese anti-Communist “human rights” dissidents Li Baiguang, Wang Yi, Yu Jie (left to right), later signatories to Charter 08.

workers state. Unlike the Russian October Revolution of 1917, which was carried out by a class-conscious proletariat guided by the Bolshevik internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky, the Chinese Revolution was the result of peasant guerrilla war led by Mao’s Stalinist-nationalist forces. Patterned after the Stalinist bureaucracy that had usurped power in the USSR, Mao and his successors, including today’s Hu Jintao regime, have preached the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that socialism—a classless, egalitarian society

based on material abundance—could be built in a single country. In practice, “socialism in one country” has meant accommodation to world imperialism and opposition to the perspective of international workers revolution that is essential for the advance to socialism.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and counterrevolution. In answer to the aspirations of the Chinese workers and rural toilers for democratic rights and a government that

represents their needs and interests, we stand for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy and establish a government based on elected workers and peasants councils and committed to revolutionary proletarian internationalism. This perspective, premised on defense of the gains of the Revolution, is diametrically opposed to the counterrevolutionary machinations of outfits like Charter 08.

“Human Rights” and “Democracy” in the Service of Counterrevolution

Charter 08 takes its name from Charter 77, a document put out by dissidents in Czechoslovakia in 1977. This and similar groups were encouraged and promoted by the “human rights” campaign launched by then U.S. Democratic president Jimmy Carter as a way of politically undermining the Soviet Union and its East European bloc partners. It is, as they say, no accident that Vaclav Havel, a leading figure in Charter 77, later played a central role in the imperialist-backed counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989-90.

Far more openly than Havel & Co. in 1977, the group around Charter 08 brandishes the watchwords of “human rights” and “democracy” to attack the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist rule. The Charter states: “Where is China headed in the twenty-first century? Will it continue with ‘modernization’ under authoritarian rule, or will it embrace universal human values, join the mainstream of civilized nations, and build a democratic system?” Concretely, it demands: “We must abolish the special privilege of one party to monopolize power and must guarantee principles of free and fair competition among political parties.”

There is no such thing as a classless “democracy.” Western-type parliamentary government elected through universal suffrage is a disguised political form of the *dictatorship of the capitalist class*. In such a system the working class is politically reduced to atomized individuals. The bourgeoisie can effectively manipulate the electorate through its control of the media, the education system and the other institutions shaping public opinion. In all capitalist “democracies,” government officials are bought and paid for by the banks and large corporations. As Lenin explained in his 1918 polemic *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*: “Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying

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Workers at Baosteel plant in Shanghai, part of China’s collectivized industry.

Defend the Chinese Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State! For Workers Political Revolution!