

UAW Tops Enforce Obama's Raw Deal



Left: UAW president Ron Gettelfinger shakes hands with President Barack Obama last month as worldwide auto executives and U.S. government officials applaud. Right: UAW workers leave Chrysler's truck assembly plant in Warren, Michigan.

Wall Street, Washington Shaft Auto Workers

JUNE 2—Global auto giant General Motors, for decades one of the pillars of American capitalism, yesterday followed Chrysler into Chapter 11 bankruptcy under the guiding hand of President Barack Obama's Wall Street cronies in his "auto task force." The plunge in sales brought on by a global economy going to hell left the automakers scrambling for federal aid to stave off financial ruin. From the outset, we have opposed the bailout of the auto bosses, underlining that it "will be purchased through the further destruction of the jobs and livelihoods of working people" ("Bosses Declare War on UAW Workers," WV No. 926, 5 December 2008). This is precisely what's on order with the GM and Chrysler bankruptcies—to reshape the industry to again make it a lucrative source of profits for Wall Street by breaking the back of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union.

Obama, whose election was bank-

rolled to the tune of \$5 million by the sellouts who head the UAW, celebrated "the beginning of a new G.M." But for tens of thousands of auto workers it is the end of the line. Under the "bailout" deal, GM and Chrysler have announced that they will shut down 20 to 28 plants. The UAW, which was once the symbol of union power in the U.S., will be a shadow of its former self. The UAW's membership has already withered from a high of 1.6 million in the 1960s to less than 500,000 today, with a scant 140,000 working for the Big Three (GM, Ford and Chrysler). In the 1970s, GM alone employed nearly 400,000 workers. With the plant closings the workforce will be reduced to fewer than 40,000. The gutting of the UAW is a heavy blow against all workers, organized and unorganized.

The UAW misleaders are helping to foot the bill for "restructuring" the automakers—at the cost of tens of thousands of jobs—by accepting worthless stock in

GM and Chrysler to fund over half the union's retiree health care trust (itself a sellout brokered in the 2007 contract to save the company \$3 billion a year in health care costs). The head of the "New GM" boasted that this was a "defining moment" that would, as the *New York Times* (2 June) noted, allow the company "to 'permanently' unshackle itself from the cost of supporting hundreds of thousands of retirees." Those "lucky" enough to keep their jobs will be shackled by a "no strike" pledge for the next six years while the auto bosses continue to hack away at their wages and benefits to bring them into line with labor costs at non-union auto plants.

Here is the bitter fruit of the trade-union bureaucracy's program of class collaboration, which has long tied the interests of the unions to the profitability of their capitalist exploiters. "I'm very comfortable," UAW head Ron Gettelfinger told National Public Radio on

May 1, the day after Chrysler entered Chapter 11. "It's not like we're going into this bankruptcy fighting with Chrysler and [merger partner] Fiat and the U.S. Treasury. We're going in there in lockstep to put our agreements in place."

Gettelfinger's agreements make the union joint stockholders in bankrupt GM and Chrysler. An article in the *New York Times* (2 June) titled "G.M.'s New Owners, U.S. and Labor, Adjust to Roles," pointed to "industry experts" who "predict that the union, far more than before, will help management increase profitability—with the goal of pushing up the automakers' stock prices." In other words, as a "co-owner" the UAW will directly have a hand in ratcheting up the rate of exploitation of its own remaining members.

The attacks on the UAW highlight the attacks on all workers, in the U.S. and internationally, amid the world economic

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Nuclear Test Rattles Imperialists

Defend North Korean Deformed Workers State!

MAY 31—North Korea's successful May 25 test of a nuclear weapon, reported to be substantially more powerful than a weapon tested in 2006, caused howls of outrage from the U.S. imperialists, who wield their nuclear arsenal as a threat against any regime that gets in their way. Over the next few days, Pyongyang carried out test launchings of several short-range missiles off the North Korean coast. North Korea has also reactivated its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, which the

imperialists had earlier pressured it to dismantle. From the moment landlord-capitalist rule was overturned over 60 years ago, the North Korean deformed workers state has been in the gun sights of both Democratic and Republican Party administrations. It was under Democrat Bill Clinton that the U.S. prepared to bomb North Korean nuclear facilities in 1994. The Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League, supports

North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons and development of effective delivery systems as a necessary defense and deterrent against the imperialists.

The bloody U.S. imperialists and their allies responded to the recent North Korean tests by immediately ramping up threats, with the Obama administration promising to "take action." Defense Secretary Robert Gates declared that the U.S. "will not stand idly by" as Pyong-

yang develops nuclear capability. The imperialists have also threatened increased United Nations sanctions and the interception of North Korean ships. In 2001, the Japanese coast guard sank a North Korean vessel in Chinese waters, claiming it was a spy ship.

The idiosyncratic Stalinist regime of North Korea is very rationally seeking to arm itself against the bloodiest power on earth. The U.S. is the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons—incinerating 200,000 Japanese in Hiroshima and Nagasaki out of racist spite and to send a message to the Soviet Union in the opening shot of the Cold War. As Seumas Milne wrote in the London

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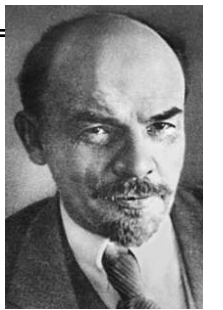




TROTSKY

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF MARXISM

Franz Mehring: *On Historical Materialism*



LENIN

Marxists seek to understand the world in order to change it. Our aim is the forging of workers parties to overthrow the capitalist profit system through proletarian revolutions worldwide, ushering in an egalitarian socialist society. In his 1893 pamphlet, *On Historical Materialism*, excerpted below, Franz Mehring drew on the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and advanced an appraisal of conceptions and thoughts as subordinate but integral elements of the material social structure. A brilliant historian and theoretician, Mehring was also an outstanding communist. When the German Social Democracy aligned with its “own” bourgeoisie in World War I, Franz Mehring—already well into his sixties—picked up the banner of revolutionary internationalism along

with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, including by joining them in founding the German Communist Party in December 1918. Mehring died on 29 January 1919, shortly after the murder of his comrades, Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

* * *

Let us glance once again at the accusations and objections which have been made against historical materialism: that it denies all ideal forces, that it makes humanity the helpless plaything of a mechanical development, that it rejects all moral standards.

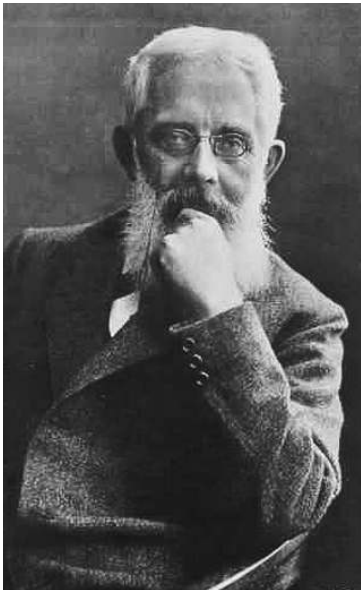
Historical materialism is no closed system crowned by an ultimate truth; it is the scientific method for the investigation of processes of human development. It starts

from the unchallengeable fact, that human beings do not only live in nature but also in society. There have never been people in isolation; every man who accidentally loses contact with human society, quickly starves and dies. But historical materialism thus recognizes all ideal forces in the widest context. “Of everything that happens in nature, nothing happens as a desired, conscious purpose. On the other hand, in the history of society, the participants are nothing but human beings endowed with consciousness, acting with thought and passion, working for specific purposes; nothing happens without a conscious intention, without a planned goal.... Will is determined through thought or passion. But the levers which in turn determined the passion or the thought are

of very different kinds. They can be outside objects or ideal motives, greed, ‘enthusiasm for truth and justice,’ personal hatred or just individual peculiarities of all kinds” (Engels). This is the essential difference between the history of the development of nature on the one hand and of society on the other. But apparently all the innumerable conflicts of individual actions and wills in history only lead to the same result as the unconscious, blind agencies in nature. On the surface of history accident seems to reign as much as on the surface of nature. “Only rarely does what is desired take place; in most cases, the desired aims cut across each other, and come into conflict, or these aims are from the beginning impossible or lacking in means.” But when, through the interplay of all the blind accidents which appear to dominate in unconscious nature, a general law of movement nevertheless imposes itself—only then does the question arise whether the thoughts and desires of consciously acting human beings are also dominated by such a law.

And the law is to be found, if one searches for it, through which the ideal driving forces of human beings are set into motion. A human being can only reach consciousness in a social relationship, thinking and acting with consciousness; the social grouping of which he is part awakens and directs his spiritual forces. The basis of all social community, however, is the form of production of material life, and this determining also in the last analysis the spiritual life process, in its manifold reflections. Historical materialism, far from denying the ideal forces, studies them down to their very

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Niemeyer



Walter Gircke

Left: Franz Mehring. Right: Demonstration in Berlin, December 1918, demands, “All Power to the Workers and Soldiers Councils.” As Spartacists led struggle for workers power, Social Democratic regime drowned proletarian revolution in blood.

Letter

On Big Cars and Big Oil

Los Angeles
22 November 2008

Dear Comrades,

Given the present pass we are probably headed into a period of intensified protectionism particularly here in the U.S. There also seems to be afoot a drive for “oil independence.” So while it’s not a huge deal I wanted to raise a caution about a formulation in a front-page article, “UAW Must Fight GM/Delphi!” in WV No. 857 (28 October 2005). Near the end of the article we say: “That’s fundamentally why GM keeps building gas-

guzzling, unsafe models like the notorious tip-over SUVs, and why it’s quality Japanese and German autos that consumers increasingly want to buy.”

Well first of all, although the fortunes of Detroit did focus on big SUVs and trucks there are any number of gas-guzzling tip-over SUVs and trucks that are made by non-U.S. auto manufacturers. BMW X5 SUVs, the Audi Q7, Toyota’s Sequoia (with a big V-8), and of course the Nissan Armada come to mind. And while it’s true a lot of people prefer to buy cars that are of higher quality

(which aren’t made in the U.S.), auto manufacturers made those SUVs and trucks because a lot of people were willing to pay a premium to own them. If the price of gas hadn’t gone through the roof and jobs weren’t disappearing at a massive rate working people would still buy a lot of them. They’re big and they are comfortable and out here in the West and “Middle America” they get driven a lot. Try to drive a few hundred miles nonstop in a Toyota Corolla. And here in L.A. for example, despite the tip-over problem I’d rather be in a Ford Excursion than a Corolla in a freeway accident. In fact a really gas-guzzling armored Humvee would be nice.

But to bigger matters. That section of the U.S. ruling class that is behind pushing fuel-efficient cars is doing it not just to destroy the UAW. There are concerns for the position of U.S. imperialism here too. Before we write our next big article on Detroit I think comrades should review “The World Oil Racket” in WV No. 535 (27 September 1991) and “Imperialist Aims Behind Carter’s ‘Energy Crisis’” in WV No. 158 (20 May 1977). While the world is obviously a different place than when we wrote those articles I think a lot of what’s in them is still very relevant.

Comradely,
Larry A.

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CORRECTION

In the article “ISO: ‘Third Camp’ Apologists for U.S. Imperialism” (WV No. 937, 22 May), we incorrectly referred to Max Shachtman’s Independent Socialist League as the “Internation-

ational Socialist League.” We also incorrectly referred to the 1960s Independent Socialist Clubs as “International Socialist Clubs”; these were the predecessor organizations that formed the International Socialists in 1969.

The Civil War: The Second American Revolution

Honor Abraham Lincoln!

The following was written as a contribution for a Spartacist League internal educational series.

By Bert Mason

February 12 marked the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Since the days of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, revolutionaries have held Lincoln in high esteem. His world-historic achievement—the single most important event in American history—was to lead the North in a horrendously bloody civil war that smashed the Southern Confederacy and abolished slavery in the United States. In “Comments on the North American Events” (7 October 1862), Marx wrote with characteristic eloquence:

“Lincoln is a *sui generis* figure in the annals of history. He has no initiative, no idealistic impetus, no cothurnus [dignified, somewhat stilted style of ancient tragedy], no historical trappings. He gives his most important actions always the most commonplace form. Other people claim to be ‘fighting for an idea,’ when it is for them a matter of square feet of land. Lincoln, even when he is motivated by an idea, talks about ‘square feet.’ He sings the bravura aria of his part hesitatively, reluctantly and unwillingly, as though apologising for being compelled by circumstances ‘to act the lion.’...

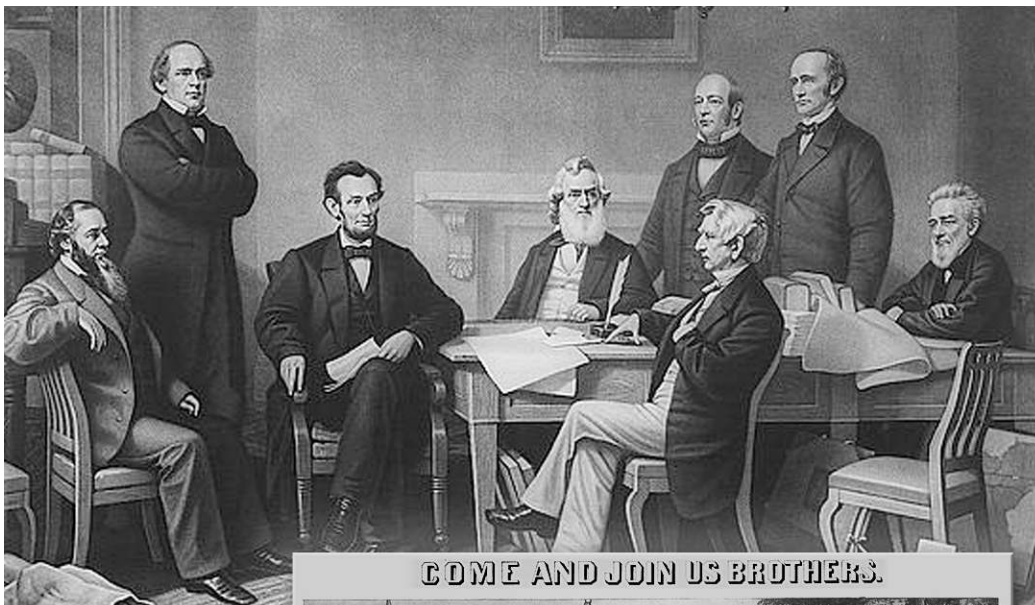
“Lincoln is not the product of a popular revolution. This plebeian, who worked his way up from stone-breaker to Senator in Illinois, without intellectual brilliance, without a particularly outstanding character, without exceptional importance—an average person of good will, was placed at the top by the interplay of the forces of universal suffrage unaware of the great issues at stake. The new world has never achieved a greater triumph than by this demonstration that, given its political and social organisation, ordinary people of good will can accomplish feats which only heroes could accomplish in the old world!”

Many opponents of revolutionary Marxism, from black nationalists to reformist leftists, have made a virtual cottage industry out of the slander that “Honest Abe” was a racist or even a white-supremacist. The reformist who impugns Lincoln for his bourgeois conceptions, which in fact reflected his time, place and position, does not hesitate for a moment to ally with unctuous “progressives” today who praise “diversity” while fighting tooth and nail to maintain the racial oppression and anti-immigrant chauvinism that are endemic to this most brutal of imperialist countries.

Take the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). In *Cold Truth, Liberating Truth: How This System Has Always Oppressed Black People, And How All Oppression Can Finally Be Ended*, a pamphlet originally published in 1989 and reprinted in *Revolution* (17 February 2008), the RCP writes:

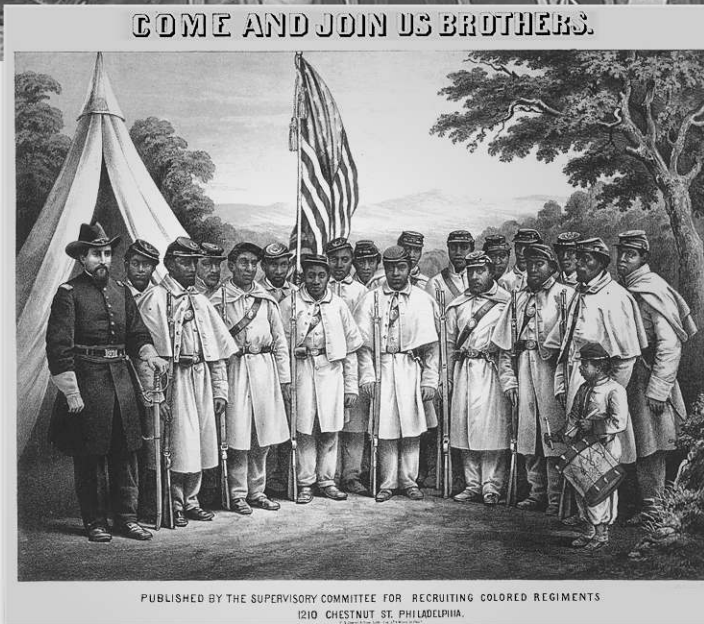
“It is a lie that ‘Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves’ because he was morally outraged over slavery. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves (and not all the slaves at first, but only those in the states that had joined the southern Confederacy) because he saw that it would be impossible to win the Civil War against that southern Confederacy without freeing these slaves and allowing them to fight in the Union army. “Lincoln spoke and acted for the *bourgeoisie*—the factory-owners, railroad-owners, and other capitalists centered in the North—and he conducted the war *in their interests*” (emphasis in original).

Aside from the scurrilous suggestion that Lincoln was not an opponent of slavery who abhorred that “peculiar institution,” the RCP rejects Marxist material-



F.B. Carpenter

Above: President Abraham Lincoln presents to his cabinet the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring freedom for slaves in the Confederate states and opening black enlistment in U.S. military.
Right: 1863 recruitment poster for black troops.



Chicago History Museum

ism in favor of liberal moralizing, denying that against the reactionary class of slaveholders and the antiquated slave system, the Northern capitalists represented a revolutionary class whose victory was in the interests of historical progress. Presenting the goals of the North and South as equally rapacious, the RCP neither sides with the North nor characterizes its victory as the consummation of a social revolution.

Indeed, the Civil War—the Second American Revolution—was the last of the great bourgeois revolutions, which began with the English Civil War of the 17th century and found their culmination in the French Revolution of the 18th. For the RCP, however, there is no contradiction whatsoever in condemning Lincoln as a representative of the 19th-century American bourgeoisie while doing everything in its power to embrace bourgeois liberalism today—from its antiwar coalitions with capitalist spokesmen to its implicit support for the Democratic Party and Barack Obama in the name of “drive out the Bush regime.”

Abraham Lincoln: Bourgeois Revolutionary

In the preface to his 1859 book, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Karl Marx wrote that in studying the transformation of the whole immense superstructure that arises from revolutionary changes in the economic foundation:

“It is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces

of production and the relations of production. No social formation is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.”

The American Civil War was a bourgeois revolution, and Lincoln was both bourgeois and revolutionary at the same time—with all the contradictions this implies. Because the task of the Second American Revolution was to eradicate an antiquated social system based on chattel slavery and erect in its place the dominion of industrial capitalism based on wage labor from one end of the North American landmass to the other, it could not eradicate every form of class and social oppression—the hallmark of all propertied classes throughout the history of class society. As materialists, Marxists do not judge historical figures primarily based on the ideas in their heads but on how well they fulfilled the tasks of their epoch. While Lincoln had bourgeois conceptions—how could it be otherwise!—he was uniquely qualified to carry out the task before him, and in the last analysis he rose to the occasion as no other. That is the essence of his historical greatness.

While bestowing begrudging praise on Lincoln's achievements with the left hand, the leftist critic often takes it back with the right. Lincoln, the critic will admit, opposed slavery; he came to see that a hard war was necessary and prepared to issue his Emancipation Proclamation. However, the critic is more concerned with Lincoln's *attitudes* than his deeds: Lincoln was not John Brown, he was not Frederick Douglass, he was not Marx and Engels, he was not even as left-wing as his Treasury secretary Salmon P. Chase. For example, while Lincoln agreed with John Brown in thinking slavery wrong, he could not excuse Brown's violence, bloodshed and “acts of treason” in

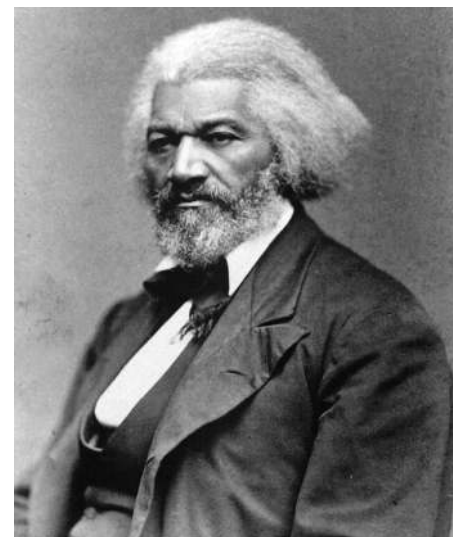
attempting to seize the arsenal at Harper's Ferry to spark a slave rebellion on the eve of the Civil War. Finally, the critic will argue, while Marx and Engels from 3,000 miles away knew that the American Civil War was about slavery, Lincoln and the Republicans sought to ignore the root of the problem and wage the conflict on constitutional grounds to save the Union. Such facts are indisputable, but they must be seen in their historical context.

In his *Abraham Lincoln* (2009), James M. McPherson remarks:

“Only after years of studying the powerful crosscurrents of political and military pressures on Lincoln did I come to appreciate the skill with which he steered between the numerous shoals of conservatism and radicalism, free states and slave states, abolitionists, Republicans, Democrats, and border-state Unionists to maintain a steady course that brought the nation to victory—and the abolition of slavery—in the end. If he had moved decisively against slavery in the war's first year, as radicals pressed him to do, he might well have fractured his war coalition, driven border-state Unionists over to the Confederacy, lost the war, and witnessed the survival of slavery for at least another generation.”

Facing innumerable pressures when the war broke out in April 1861, Lincoln grappled with how to respond to them. But the pressures—as intense as they were—were not merely strategic in nature. As the president of a constitutional republic, Lincoln believed that it was his duty to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law. While he detested slavery, he believed it was not his right to abolish it. That ideology flowed from the whole bourgeois constitutional framework of the United States.

In the first year of the war, Lincoln pursued a policy of conciliating the four border slave states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri—in an effort to retain their loyalty to the Union. Marx



Frederick Douglass House

Frederick Douglass, leading black abolitionist.

and Engels criticized this policy because it weakened the Union's war effort and emboldened the slaveholders. However, did this policy stem from disdain for the enslaved black masses or from a desire on Lincoln's part to let bygones be bygones—i.e., coexist with the slave South? No. It flowed from the whole previous history of the United States. In 1776, 1800 and even as late as 1820, the North and South had similar values and institutions. With the Industrial Revolution, however, the North surged ahead in virtually every area—railroads, canals, literacy, inventions—while the South stagnated. Yet the two regions remained part of the same nation, setting the stage for compromise

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Lincoln...

(continued from page 3)

after compromise. For a whole historical period, Lincoln was hardly alone in seeking détente. In 1848, even the more left-wing Salmon Chase rejected the view espoused by radicals in his Liberty Party that the Constitution empowered the government to abolish slavery in the states, preferring a bloc with antislavery Whigs and Democrats that would agitate merely for keeping slavery out of the territories.

While he conciliated the border states for a time, Lincoln stood firm against secession, countering his cabinet members' willingness to compromise in the face of the Confederacy's belligerence. After his fateful election in 1860, which set the stage for the secession of the Southern states and the Civil War, Lincoln reined in his future secretary of state William H. Seward for advocating support to the Crittenden Compromise, an attempt to allow slavery to flourish anywhere south of 36°30'. Then Lincoln rejected Seward's proposal to abandon Fort Sumter in the Charleston, South Carolina, harbor. Had it not been for Lincoln's relentless efforts to goad his officers to fight and his stubborn support for Ulysses S. Grant in the face of substantial Northern opposition, the North might not have vanquished the slavocracy in that time and place. Lincoln's resoluteness, his iron determination to achieve victory and his refusal to stand down to the Confederacy are hallmarks of his revolutionary role and enduring testaments to his greatness.

Borrowing from today's terminology, one could argue that Lincoln began as a reformist, believing that the reactionary social system in the South could be pressured into change and that the institution of slavery would eventually wither on the vine. But he underwent a radical shift when bloody experience in the crucible of war—combined with the mass flight of the slaves to the Union lines—taught him that the nation could be preserved only by means of social revolution. In contrast to this remarkable personal transformation, the Great French Revolution required a series of tumultuous stages to reach its revolutionary climax, a protracted process that was marked by the domination of different and antagonistic groupings—from the Girondins to the Montagnards to the Committee of Public Safety. The Mensheviks were also reformists, but they didn't become revolutionaries but counterrevolutionaries.

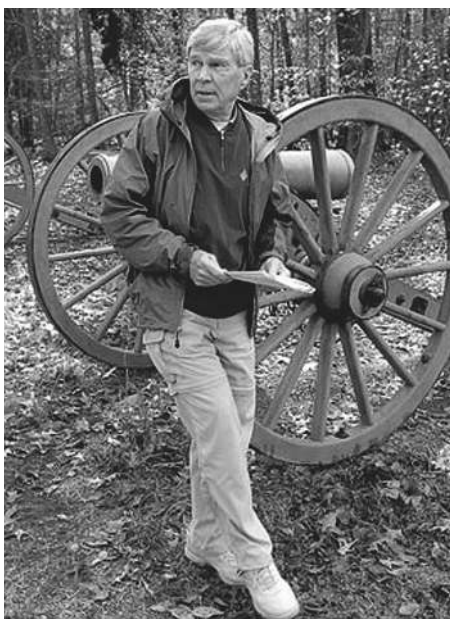
Was Lincoln a Racist?

Although it is beyond dispute that Lincoln occasionally appealed to racist consciousness and expressed racist opinions, the record is not as cut-and-dried as the typical liberal moralist or his leftist cousin will assert. Before a proslavery crowd in Charleston, Illinois, during the fourth debate with Stephen A. Douglas on 18 September 1858, Lincoln declared:

"I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races; that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say, in addition to this, that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And in as much as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I, as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."

Yet two months earlier in Chicago, Lincoln had insisted, "Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man, this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position; discarding our standard that we have left us. Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal."

However, more important than these



Berkey/NY Times

Civil War historian James McPherson giving a tour of Shiloh National Military Park.

words were Lincoln's *actions* in defense of the slaves, the freedmen and the black troops in the Union Army. For example, in the autumn of 1864, pressure mounted for Lincoln to consummate a prisoner exchange that would exclude black soldiers. Some Republican leaders warned that Union men "will work and vote against the President, because they think sympathy with a few negroes, also captured, is the cause of a refusal" to exchange prisoners. Ignoring these threats, Lincoln's agent in the exchange negotiations asserted, "The wrongs, indignities, and privations suffered by our soldiers would move me to consent to anything to procure their exchange, except to barter away the honor and the faith of the Government of the United States, which has been so solemnly pledged to the colored soldiers in its ranks" (James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* [1988]).

That's not all. Confronting growing defeatist sentiment in the North, the grim prospect of defeat in the impending 1864 presidential elections and a cacophony of demands to abandon the Emancipation Proclamation from Democrats and even staunch Republicans, Lincoln stood firm. In response to fulminations such as "Tens of thousands of white men must yet bite the dust to allay the negro mania of the President," Lincoln responded, "If they [the black soldiers] stake their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive—even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept." Emphasizing the point, he maintained, "There have been men who have proposed to me to return to slavery the black warriors of Port Hudson & Olustee to their masters to conciliate the South. I should be damned in time & in eternity for so doing. The world shall know that I will keep my faith to friends & enemies, come what will."

In the last months of the war, the emancipation of the slaves began to raise broader political and economic questions. When reports filtered northward of General William Tecumseh Sherman's indifference toward the thousands of freedmen that had attached themselves to his army, Lincoln's war secretary Edwin Stanton traveled to Savannah, Georgia, in January 1865 to talk with Sherman and consult with black leaders. As a result of Stanton's visit, Sherman issued "Special Field Orders, No. 15," which granted the freed slaves rich plantation land belonging to former slaveholders.

Indignantly protesting that Lincoln valued the restoration of the Union over the emancipation of the slaves, the RCP cites his famous letter to Horace Greeley of 22 August 1862, which declared: "My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that." The RCP neglects to add that a month later, on September 22, Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Comment-

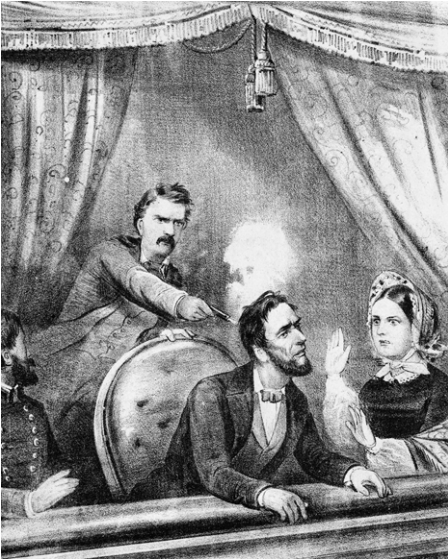
ing on this momentous event, Marx called Lincoln's manifesto abolishing slavery "the most important document in American history since the establishment of the Union, tantamount to the tearing up of the old American Constitution."

What was more important for Lincoln's cause, Union or emancipation? The very question betrays a subjective idealist approach that ignores the objective reality of the time. The two tasks had become inextricably intertwined in the reality of a war that pitted a modern industrial capitalist mode of production in the North against an archaic agrarian slave system in the South. Restoration of the Union required emancipation, and emancipation required a Union victory. For embodying and melding those two great tasks, Lincoln will forever occupy an honored place in history.

Much Ado About Colonization

An oft-repeated theme among Lincoln's detractors is that the 16th president—a racist to his bones, they assert—was dedicated above all else to deporting the freed black slaves to distant shores. The most caustic purveyor of this time-worn slander is Lerone Bennett Jr., executive editor emeritus of *Ebony* and the author of *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (2000). Bennett shrieks that "Abraham Lincoln's deepest desire was to deport all black people and create an all-white nation. It's—sounds like a wild idea now and it is a wild idea, but from about 1852 until his death, he worked feverishly to try to create deportation plans, colonization plans to send black people either to Africa or to...South America, or to the islands of the sea" (interview with Brian Lamb, 10 September 2000, www.booknotes.org/transcript/?programID=1581).

Lincoln did not invent the idea of colonization. Schemes to remove black



Library of Congress

14 April 1865: Assassination of Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth, supporter of the slavocracy who killed Lincoln three days after hearing his speech calling to extend vote to black troops and some freedmen.

people from the United States went back to the American Colonization Society, which was founded in 1816. Very much a product of his times, Lincoln was long a supporter of colonization because he believed that the ideal of racial harmony in America was impossible. Although reprehensible and misguided, Lincoln's colonization schemes were motivated not by racist antipathy toward black people but by his perceptions of enduring white racism in America. In the course of meeting with black leaders at the White House on 14 July 1862, Lincoln declared:

"You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word, we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a reason at least why we should be separated...."

"Your race are suffering, in my judgment, the greatest wrong inflicted on any people. But even when you cease to be slaves, you are yet far removed from being placed on an equality with the

white race. You are cut off from many of the advantages which the other race enjoy. The aspiration of men is to enjoy equality with the best, when free; but on this broad continent not a single man of your race is made the equal of a single man of ours. Go where you are treated the best, and the ban is still upon you."

—cited in "Report on Colonization and Emigration, Made to the Secretary of the Interior, by the Agent of Emigration" (1862)

It is therefore not surprising that Lincoln advocated colonization most strenuously at the very moment that he was preparing his Provisional Emancipation Proclamation following the watershed Union victory at Antietam, which Marx said "decided the fate of the American Civil War." With his colonization proposals, Lincoln sought to sweeten what many whites considered the bitter pill of black emancipation.

However indefensible the idea of colonization was, Lincoln insisted that it must be *voluntary*. Even then, blacks overwhelmingly rejected colonization as both racist and impractical, holding anti-colonization meetings in Chicago and Springfield to protest it. Indeed, Frederick Douglass declared in September 1862: "Mr. Lincoln assumes the language and arguments of an itinerant Colonization lecturer, showing all his inconsistencies, his pride of race and blood, his contempt for Negroes and his canting hypocrisy." One of the administration's two concrete moves to implement colonization, the Île à Vache fiasco, led to the deaths of dozens of freed blacks. However, when Lincoln learned of the disaster, he did the honorable thing and ordered the Navy to return the survivors to the United States.

Besides free blacks and Radical Abolitionists, many other contemporaries of Lincoln were incensed at his colonization efforts. Publications like *Harper's Weekly* considered the proposal to resettle millions of people to distant shores insane. In Eric Foner's words, "For what idea was more utopian and impractical than this fantastic scheme?" ("Lincoln and Colonization," in *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World*, ed., Eric Foner [2008]).

By the waning days of the war, Lincoln's utterances on colonization—if not his attitude—had evolved. In a diary entry dated 1 July 1864, Lincoln's secretary John Hay remarked, "I am glad that the President has sloughed off the idea of colonization." But much more to the point than attempts to decipher Lincoln's attitudes is the indisputable fact that Lincoln's policies on the ground were progressively rendering his colonization schemes a dead letter. Foner writes that in 1863 and 1864, Lincoln began to consider the role that blacks would play in a post-slavery America. He showed particular interest in efforts that were under way to establish schools for blacks in the South Carolina Sea Islands and in how former slaves were being put to work on plantations in the Mississippi Valley. In August 1863, he instructed General Nathaniel P. Banks to establish a system in Louisiana during wartime Reconstruction in which "the two races could gradually live themselves out of their old relation to each other, and both come out better prepared for the new."

Historian Richard N. Current wrote, "By the end of war, Lincoln had abandoned the idea of resettling free slaves outside the United States. He had come to accept the fact that Negroes, as a matter of justice as well as practicality, must be allowed to remain in the only homeland they knew, given education and opportunities for self-support, and started on the way to complete assimilation into American society" (cited at "Mr. Lincoln and Freedom," www.mrlincolndanfreedom.org). Indeed, on 11 April 1865, following Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Lincoln gave a speech in which he declared that literate blacks and black Union Army veterans should have the right to vote in a reconstructed Union—an early step toward the 14th Amendment and citizenship for the freed slaves.

A dishonest charlatan that considers Lincoln no better than Hitler, Lerone Bennett brings the very concept of scholarship

WORKERS VANGUARD

Karl Marx on Lincoln Re-Election

We print below Karl Marx's letter to Abraham Lincoln written between 22 and 29 November 1864 on behalf of the International Working Men's Association.

Sir

We congratulate the American People upon your Re-election by a large Majority.

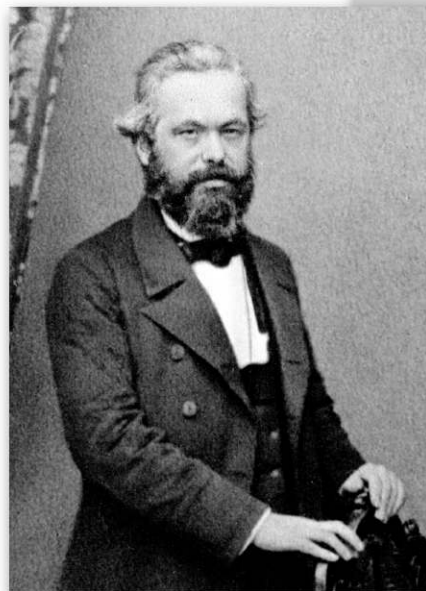
If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved Watchword of your first election, the triumphant Wacry of your Re-election is, Death to Slavery.

From the commencement of the Titanic American Strife, the Working men of Europe felt instinctively that the Star spangled Banner carried the Destiny of their class. The Contest for the territories which opened the dire epopee, Was it not to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the Labour of the Emigrant, or prostituted by the Tramp of the Slave Driver?

When an Oligarchy of 300,000 Slaveholders dared to inscribe, for the first time in the annals of the World, Slavery on the Banner of Armed Revolt; when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great democratic Republic had first sprung up. Whence the first Declaration of The Rights of Man was issued, and the first impulse given to the European Revolution of the 18th Century; When on those very spots counter revolution, with system-

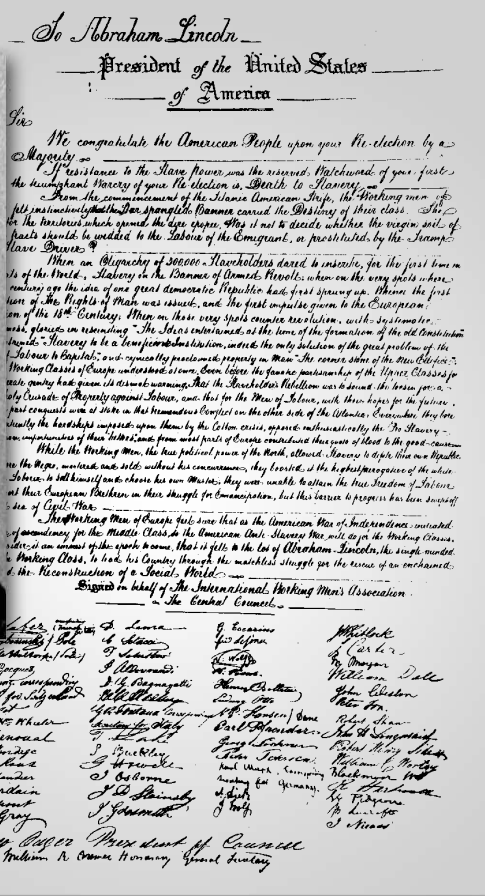
atic thoroughness, gloried in rescinding "The ideas entertained at the time of the formation of the old Constitution" and maintained "Slavery to be a beneficent Institution, indeed the only solution of the great problem of the relation of Labour to Capital," and cynically proclaimed property in Man "The corner stone of the New Edifice"; Then the Working Classes of Europe understood at once, Even before the fanatic partisanship of the Upper Classes for the confederate gentry had given its dismal warning, That the Slaveholder's Rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy Crusade of Property against Labour, and that for the Men of Labour, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous Conflict on the other side of the Atlantic. Everywhere they bore therefore patiently the hardships imposed upon them by the Cotton crisis, opposed enthusiastically the Pro Slavery Intervention, importunities of their "betters," and from most parts of Europe contributed their quota of blood to the good cause.

While the Working Men, the true political power of the North, allowed Slavery to defile their own Republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white



Beard

Karl Marx and congratulatory letter sent to Lincoln by First International.



skinned Laborer to sell himself and choose his own Master, they were unable to attain the true Freedom of Labour or to support their European Brethren in their struggle for Emancipation, but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of Civil War.

The Working Men of Europe feel sure that as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the Middle Class, so the American Anti-Slavery War will do for the Work-

ing Classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come, that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded Son of the Working Class, to lead his Country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained Race and the Reconstruction of a Social World.

—Karl Marx, "To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America" (November 1864)

into disrepute. In disgust at Bennett's diatribes, one critic, Edward Steers Jr., sarcastically titled his review, "Great Emancipator or Grand Wizard?" And McPherson wrote that while Lincoln "was not a radical abolitionist, he did consider slavery morally wrong, and seized the opportunity presented by the war to move against it. Bennett fails to appreciate the acuity and empathy that enabled Lincoln to transcend his prejudices and to preside over the greatest social revolution in American history, the liberation of four million slaves" ("Lincoln the Devil," *New York Times*, 27 August 2000).

Honor Lincoln—Finish the Civil War!

At times, Frederick Douglass was highly critical of Lincoln's moderation and his relegation of black people to the status of what he called "step-children." But Douglass also saw another side of the 16th president. In his autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1882), the great abolitionist wrote of his meeting with Lincoln at the White House in 1864: "The increasing opposition to the war, in the North, and the mad cry against it, because it was being made an abolition war, alarmed Mr. Lincoln, and made him apprehensive that a peace might be forced upon him which would leave still in slavery all who had not come within our lines. What he wanted was to make his proclamation as effective as possible in the event of such a peace.... What he said on this day showed a deeper moral conviction against slavery than I had ever seen before in anything spoken or written by him. I listened with the deepest interest and profoundest satisfaction, and, at his suggestion, agreed to undertake the organizing of a band of scouts, composed of colored men, whose business should be somewhat after the original plan of John Brown, to go into the rebel States, beyond the lines of our armies, and carry the news of emancipation, and urge the slaves to come within our boundaries."

Rather than weigh the "good" Lincoln against the "bad" in search of the golden mean, Marxists must seek to understand that he was a bourgeois politician in a time of war and revolution—"a big, inconsistent, brave man," in the words of W.E.B. Du Bois (cited in Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Was Lincoln a Racist?" *The Root*, available at www.theroot.com/views/was-lincoln-racist).



WV Photo

Spartacist supporter, dressed in Union Army uniform, tearing down Confederate flag of slavery and Klan terror at San Francisco Civic Center, 1984.

With the election of Barack Obama as America's first black president, bourgeois media pundits are acting as if he is the reincarnation of Abraham Lincoln. Billboards show a huge portrait of Lincoln with Obama's face superimposed on it. Obama takes the presidential oath on Lincoln's Bible. Liberal students go a step further, preferring Obama over Lincoln because Lincoln, they assert, was a racist who would have disapproved of a black president. In fact, U.S. imperialism's current Commander-in-Chief has as much in common with the bourgeois revolutionary Abraham Lincoln as British prime minister Gordon Brown has with the great English revolutionary Oliver Cromwell or French president Nicolas Sarkozy has with the French revolutionary Maximilien Robespierre.

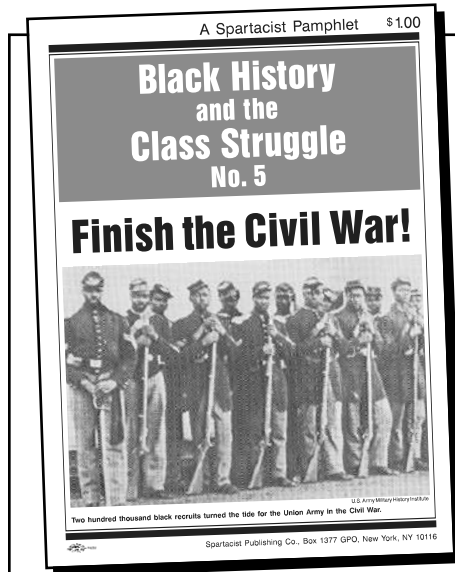
In condemning Lincoln as a racist and besmirching his supreme role in the liquidation of slavery, fake leftists like the RCP surely must have a hard time with Marx's November 1864 letter to Lincoln on behalf of the First International congratulating the American people for his re-election as president (see accompanying box). By declaring that the European

workers saw the star-spangled banner as carrying the destiny of their class, was Marx forsaking the red flag of communism? Not at all. For Marx and the workers of the Old World, Lincoln's re-election guaranteed the irreversibility of the Emancipation Proclamation; it meant that the Union Army—first and foremost its "black warriors"—did not fight in vain. And they understood that with the demise of the slave power, the unbridled growth of capitalism would lay the foundation for the growth of the American proletariat—capitalism's future gravedigger.

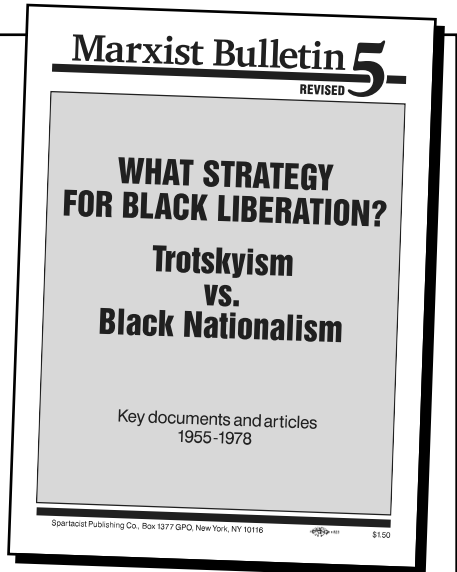
At bottom, the impulse to denounce Lincoln and to minimize his monumental role in history denies that political people—even great ones—are constrained by objective reality. If only poor Lincoln had not lacked the necessary will to eradicate all forms of racial oppression! As Marx explained, "Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation" (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* [1859]). The elimination of racial oppression in all its

forms was not possible in 1861 or 1865 because the objective means to accomplish it were not yet present—the unfettered growth of industrial capitalism in America and the development of the working class.

Lincoln accomplished the task placed before him by history: the abolition of slavery. He could do so despite, and because of, the conceptions in his head. The task of Trotskyists—revolutionary Marxists—is different. Our aim is proletarian revolution. Our perspective is revolutionary integrationism. While opposing every manifestation of racist oppression, we underline that liberating black people from racial oppression and poverty—conditions inherent to the U.S. capitalist system—can be achieved only by establishing an egalitarian socialist society. Building such a society requires the overthrow of the capitalist system by the working class and its allies. This is possible only by forging a revolutionary, internationalist working-class party that champions the rights of all the oppressed and declares war on all manifestations of social, class and sexual oppression. That task will be fulfilled by a third American revolution—a workers revolution. ■



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We print below, in slightly edited form, a presentation by Don Cane to a Spartacist League educational in the Bay Area on March 14.

The German Social Democratic leader Karl Kautsky, in reference to the early English settlers in North America, wrote that they:

“carried the peculiar Anglo-Saxon mode of thought along with them across the ocean. They did not find anything on the other side that could have shaken them in their views. No class free from the work for a living was formed that could

THE GRANT ADMINISTRATION (1869-1877) AND THE RISE OF U.S. IMPERIALISM

have cultivated arts and sciences for their own sake. We only find farmers and city dwellers whose maxim was that of the home country: Time is Money.... This also became the principle of the gradually arising proletariat for the simple reason that they did not feel as a proletariat, but considered their position only as a stage of transition for the purpose of becoming farmers, capitalists or at least lawyers....”

—“Socialist Agitation Amongst Farmers in America” (1902)

I will not be able to cover all subjects related to this class in a timely manner. I

PART ONE

will address the Ulysses S. Grant administration (1869-1877) and imperialism in detail, Reconstruction in general and some details as well as the emergence of the organized labor movement and Populism.

In his classic book, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Lenin defined imperialism as:

“The monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few very big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist associations of industrialists; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unseized by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolist possession of the territory of the world, which has been completely divided up.”

It is generally accepted by Marxists that American capitalism entered the imperialist stage with the Spanish-American War (1898), when the U.S. took over the Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. But is it possible to fix a date for such a dynamic process? I do not believe it is possible to fix such a date. The following quote is from an American business journal:

“Excess capacity became a problem in a number of industries well before the depression of the 1890s. Efforts begun in the 1870s and 1880s to limit or regulate production were spurred on by the depression of the 1890s. Experiments with trade associations, pools, and trusts often culminated in the late 1890s with the creation of large holding companies. These companies concentrated control over production and pricing decisions in

fewer hands, and they often bought out and closed down the most inefficient firms in their industries.”

—Quoted in William H. Becker, “American Manufacturers and Foreign Markets, 1870-1900,” *Business History Review* (1973)

The journal further asserts that by 1890, “America’s industrial might had

reached a point where supply exceeded domestic demands and its need for foreign markets was sharply increasing.” Emily Rosenberg in *Financial Missionaries to the World* (1999) states that the American economist Charles Conant’s “theory, identifying overproduction and declining profits as the motive forces behind late-nineteenth-century imperialism, reappeared in the analysis of [J. A.] Hobson and ultimately became enshrined in the writings of V.I. Lenin.”

The thing that is most characteristic about U.S. imperialism is that it did not reach world dominance by a gradual ascent, but by leaps and bounds. American products were in demand in foreign markets. By 1900 American capitalism, firmly based on the gold standard, began the work of manipulating world finance away from London, transforming New York into a world financial center. J.G. Wright, in an article in the June 1936 issue of the Trotskyist *New International* covering much of this same material in detail, concluded, “In 1898 the United States was a world power conducting a colonial policy with the perfect consciousness of her major imperialist interests.”

With the Northern capitalist victory over the Confederate South in the Civil War all the elements compelling U.S. capitalism toward the imperialist stage cohered. Overproduction and the formation of finance capital were evident early on.

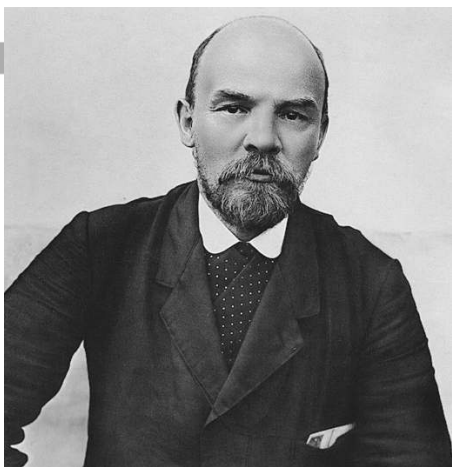
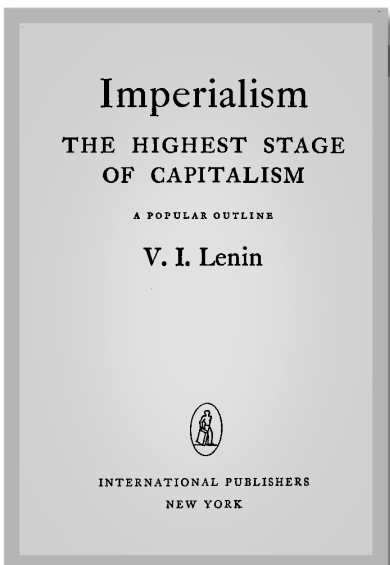
I would like to say a few words about Grant himself. The popular historical image of him is of a dimwitted and bloody drunk. But I believe that this image is a product of the same forces that wish to rewrite the history of the 1861-1865 American Civil War as a “war between



Top: Library of Congress, above: Felice Beato

Above: 1871 slaughter of Koreans by U.S. military. Below: Investigating commission visits Santo Domingo in 1871 during Grant’s attempt at annexation of Dominican Republic.

Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper



B.D. Vigilev

Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote 1916 pamphlet providing classic Marxist analysis of imperialism.

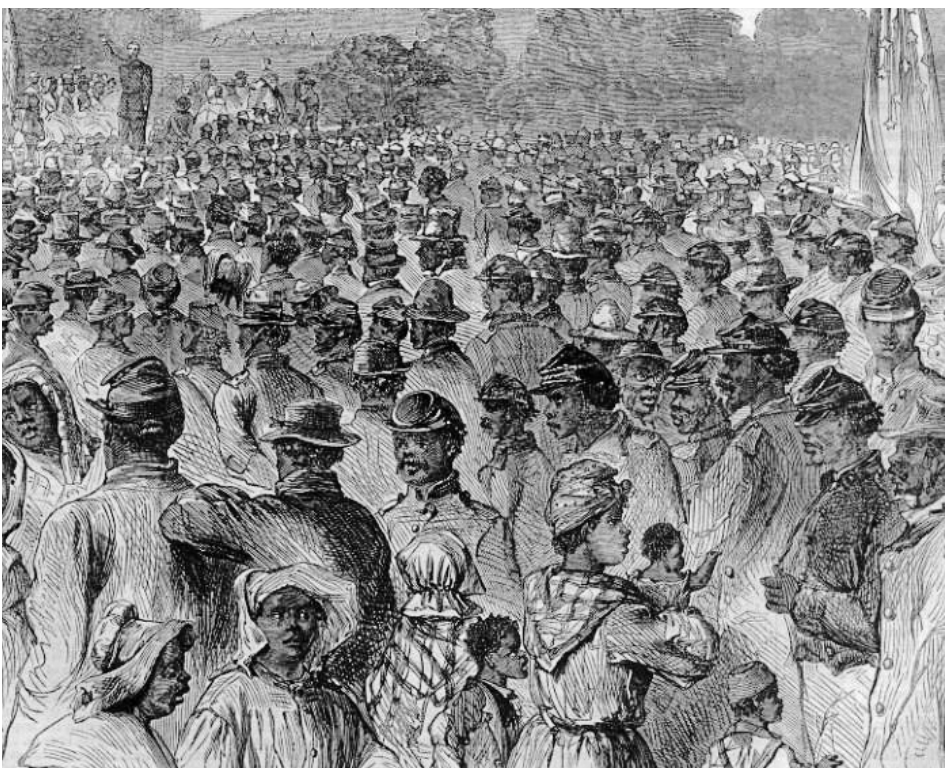
two property classes—the capitalists and the slave masters—ended with the victory of the Northern-based capitalist class. Reconstruction was a struggle to consolidate this victory and reshape the whole of American society in the image of the bourgeoisie.

In an historical irony, Abraham Lincoln created the U.S. Secret Service the same day he was assassinated. When Grant entered the White House as president it was common for several Secret Service agents to be present on every floor of the White House. Nonetheless, it was also common that the general public was allowed use of the White House grounds and free entry into the White House to await the arrival of the president or other officials. It was the Grant administration that padlocked the White House gates, denying use of its grounds to the public. Under the Grant administration, access to the president was by appointment only. The Grant administration was the first to recruit military officers for the White House staff. Responding to the pressure of Republican Party politicians, Grant replied, “I am not the representative of a political party.” In a letter accepting the Republican nomination, he clearly stated the president was “a purely administrative officer,” elected “to execute the will of the people” (quoted in Geoffrey Perret, *Ulysses S. Grant, Soldier and President* [1997]). In all of this we see shades of the imperial presidency to come.

Grant strongly opposed the Tenure of Office Act (1867), which denied the president the power to remove from office anyone appointed by the president and approved by the United States Senate unless the Senate also approved the removal. He consistently fought for the power to hire and fire his appointed cabinet. At the same time, he supported the British model of civil service in opposition to party patronage. It was political tradition that the party that won the election carried out the wholesale firing of political opponents then in government employment, replacing them with its own supporters. This spoils system was a source of incompetence in government. In the British government it was those officials whose work concerned military affairs who first came to appreciate the advantages of a hiring and promotion system based on competitive examination—civil service. It should be no surprise that Grant, a professional soldier who witnessed firsthand the incompetence of politically appointed Union Army officers, would also appreciate the advantages of such a civil service system.

U.S. Expansion into Asia

In 1871 the Grant administration sent a naval force into Korean waters. Some of the senior officers of this force were experienced Civil War veterans. This naval force sent out survey teams to map the Korean coast. When this act was not sufficient to provoke a Korean response, survey teams armed with artillery and rifles were sent upriver in the direction of the



Harper's Weekly

Above: U.S. adjutant-general in Louisiana addresses black soldiers and freed slaves in 1863. Right: Thomas Nast cartoon depicts victory of racist reaction as Northern capitalists betray post-Civil War Reconstruction.



Korean capital, Seoul. Needless to say, they were fired upon, and the Americans retaliated by killing over 250 Korean soldiers at a loss of only three of their own. Journalists wrote about the episode as a pivotal event in 19th-century U.S.-East Asian relations—as one wrote, “by far the most important political action undertaken by the United States in Asia until the occupation of the Philippines in 1898” (quoted in Gordon H. Chang, “Whose ‘Barbarism’? Whose ‘Treachery’? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871,” *Journal of American History* [March 2002]).

The war was one of the largest and bloodiest uses of military force overseas by the United States in the 50 years between the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 and the Spanish-American War of 1898. It was also the first time that American ground forces actually seized, held and raised the American flag over territory in Asia. The American objective was to “open” Korea for trade—just

as Commodore Matthew C. Perry had “opened” Japan in the 1850s. Korea was a protectorate of China, paying tribute to the Chinese court in exchange for being left alone. American diplomats pressured Chinese officials to obtain a Korean invitation for this naval force. The Chinese officials reluctantly complied, but the Korean invitation never came. To the imperialists, a backward nation’s refusal to open itself up for trade was an affront to their “civilizing” mission of world conquest. The Koreans, of course, forced to capitulate, protested that it was the right of any nation to defend its borders. At an earlier time they had defeated a French military excursion attempting to accomplish similar objectives as the Americans. Indeed, the American officers consulted the French, following the same upriver route of the French forces.

In the summer of 1879, Grant and his wife were in the final stage of a two-year pleasure trip around the world following the end of Grant’s second term. In Grant’s words he was a “private citizen” touring the world on U.S. warships. With his arrival in China, a very revealing incident took place. The Japanese government had seized a group of islands belonging to the Ryukyu island chain (including Okinawa) claimed by China. The Chinese appealed to Grant to intercede on their behalf. Grant responded, “I have no knowledge on the subject, and no idea what opinion I may entertain when I have studied it.” But it is clear in Grant’s negotiations with the Japanese that he did, in fact, have some knowledge on the subject. To the Chinese he had nothing much to say, except to deplore the Europeans’ treatment of Asian nations. To the Japanese he had a lot more to say, first of all, urging them to come to a negotiated settlement with the Chinese—a settlement that they easily and readily came to.

Grant reminded the Japanese that the United States was their nearest neighbor in the West. He went on to state, “No nation needs from the outside powers justice and kindness more than Japan, be-

cause the work that has made such marvelous progress in the past few years is a work in which we are deeply concerned” (quoted in Horatio Wirtz, “General Ulysses Grant: Diplomat Extraordinaire,” in Wilson and Simon, eds., *Ulysses S. Grant: Essays and Documents*). This, of course, was in reference to Japanese capitalist modernization under the Emperor Meiji at the time (see “The Meiji Restoration: A Bourgeois Non-Democratic Revolution,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 58, Spring 2004).

Again, Grant deplored the European treatment of Asian nations. But Grant also raised the problem of extraterritorial rights forced on Japan by European powers, supported by the United States, which was now willing to revise these. These treaties limited to 5 percent the tariff Japan could place on imports. Grant urged the Japanese to defy the Europeans and claim a greater percentage of profit from commerce that they were rightly entitled to. He explained that such a move would make it possible to relieve the Japanese people of a great burden—the land tax. At the time only 3.8 percent of Japanese revenue came from customs duties while 64.8 percent came from the land tax. The land tax was clearly an obstacle to development. Furthermore, Grant advised the Japanese to avoid European bank loans. Grant explained to the Japanese that the British, after the experience of the Afghan and Zulu campaigns, were in no position to take counteraction.

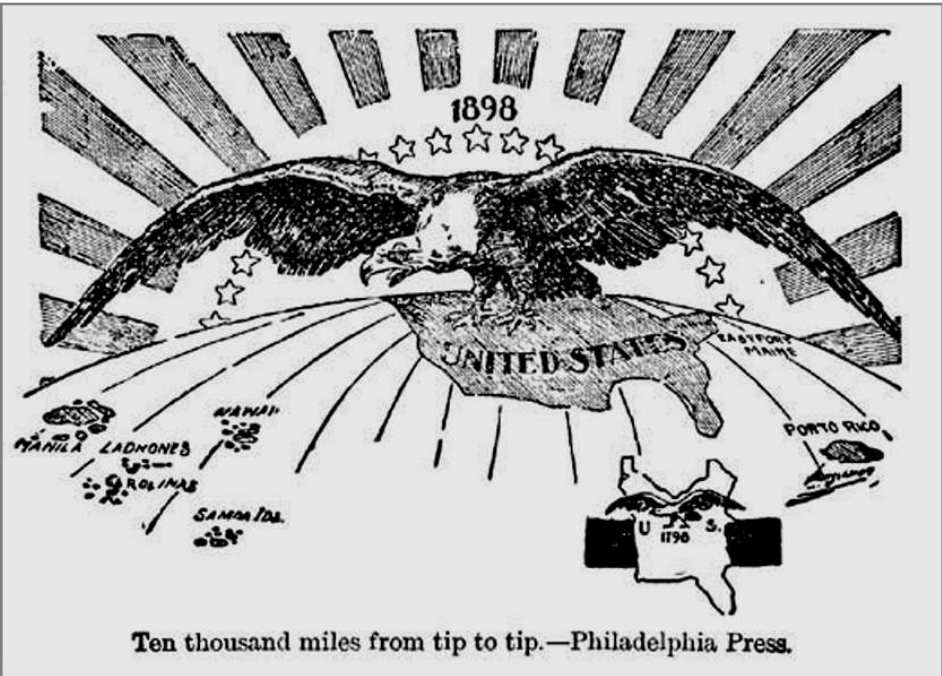
In 1872 the United States Navy acquired a mid-Pacific coaling station at Samoa, Pago Pago Harbor. Such coaling stations were of immense importance for the extension of naval power. The Germans were alarmed and laid claim to an interest in the Samoan islands group. This solicited a response from the British. All three nations then sent battleships to the Samoan waters. But the American and British naval forces were clearly acting in concert to block the Germans. After some period of jockeying, these islands passed permanently under American control. At a later period, 1893, the American sugar plantation owners, supported by American military forces, staged a Texas-style revolt overthrowing the native monarchist government of Hawaii. The strategic Pacific islands were soon annexed by the United States.

U.S. Expansion in the Western Hemisphere

In 1869, seeking Caribbean harbors, Grant had concluded an annexation agreement with the dictator of Santo Domingo (the modern-day Dominican Republic). Grant’s administration also sought the purchase of the Caribbean islands of St. John and St. Thomas from Denmark. The purchase agreement of these islands was concluded at a later period. The annexation agreement of Santo Domingo failed in the Senate, which was angry that the Grant administration had negotiated it without consultation with the Senate. Grant envisioned the future of Santo Domingo as an annexed American state with a black majority. He also viewed it as a solution to the black question. He wrote of blacks that they were “brought to our shores by compulsion, and now should be considered as having as good a right to remain here as any other class of our citizens. It was looking to a settlement of this question that led me to urge the annexation of Santo Domingo.”

Grant explained that the island was capable of supporting 15 million people and he “took it that the colored people would go there in great numbers, so as to have independent states governed by their own race. They would still be states of the union, and under the attention of the general government; but the citizens would be almost wholly colored” (U.S. Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters*). But it was the race question that led ultimately to the Senate rejection of the annexation agreement. They did not desire more “colored” U.S. citizens. They felt the same way about Hawaii, but the strategic importance of these islands overcame race prejudice.

continued on page 10



1898 political cartoon following U.S. victory in Spanish-American War celebrated U.S. status as imperial power.

UAW...

(continued from page 1)

crisis. The auto industry’s devastation is a stark example of the anarchy and decay of capitalist production for profit to which there is no simple trade-union solution. But one thing is clear. If the unions are to fight not only in their own interests, but in the interests of the mass of unorganized workers and the unemployed, there must be a new leadership of labor, one armed with a program of class struggle. This is an integral part of the fight to forge a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of black people, immigrants and all the impoverished masses brutally ground down under the heel of America’s capitalist rulers. As we wrote in “Auto Bail-out Means Union Busting” (WV No. 931, 27 February):

“The fight for jobs is equivalent to the fight against the devastation of America’s working people. What is necessary is a massive program of public works at union wages to rebuild the dams, bridges and roads that are in an advanced stage of decay; to tear down and replace the crumbling public schools in the nation’s inner cities; to create an America that looks like a place that its inhabitants could survive in. It is necessary to call an end to the layoffs by shortening the workweek at no loss in pay, as part of the struggle for jobs for all.
“All must have full access to medical care at no cost and unemployment benefits must be extended until there are jobs, with all pensions completely guaranteed by the government. Such demands, the elements of which were laid out in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International, will not be granted by the rapacious capitalist rulers. The capitalist state exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. It cannot be reformed or wielded to serve the interests of working people. The catastrophe of joblessness, threatening the disintegration of the working class, can be effectively fought only by a workers movement led by those committed to the struggle for socialist revolution and the establishment of a workers government where those who labor rule.”

Capitalism’s Labor Lieutenants

In return for allowing the automakers to cut in half the billions owed the health benefit program, the UAW will get 55 percent of the equity in the “New Chrysler”—and one seat on the board—and up to 20 percent in “New GM” once the companies emerge from bankruptcy. But what’s 55 percent of nothing? Until the private equity firm Cerberus bought Chrysler in 2007, the UAW head had sat on the board for almost 30 years. Chrysler first offered the UAW tops a seat when it was threatening bankruptcy in 1979, all the better for UAW chief Doug Fraser to help shove concessions and plant closings down the workers’ throats. Now, the UAW rep on the Chrysler board is obligated to vote “in accordance



August 1973: Doug Fraser, then UAW vice president, after organizing 1,000-strong goon squad of union functionaries to quash factory occupation at Mack Ave. Stamping Plant in Detroit.

with the direction of the independent directors.”
Round after round of concessions from the labor traitors have greatly undermined union organizing, as workers rightly expect something to show for being members of a union. In 1982, GM closed its assembly plant in Fremont, California—a relatively new facil-

U.S. automakers. In testimony before Congress last year, the UAW chief went so far as to boast that “the gap in labor costs” between the Big Three and the non-union “foreign transplant operations will be largely or completely eliminated by the end of the [2007] contracts.” This is what the union misleaders’ poisonous “America First” protectionism means:

November 1945: Auto workers launch strike at Chevrolet Gear & Axle in Detroit.



ity built in 1968—dispersing the heavily black workforce. The company reopened the plant as a joint venture with Toyota, with no union. After cutting a “sweet-heart” deal with the automakers in 1985, the UAW got back into the plant. Now one Fremont UAW worker told WV that workers increasingly don’t see the benefit of the union. The very survival of the unions demands a struggle against the class collaborationism of the labor bureaucracy.
For Gettelfinger & Co., the overriding concern is not the livelihood of the UAW membership but the “competitiveness” of

railing against “outsourcing” of jobs abroad while not lifting a finger to organize the mass of unorganized auto workers in “foreign transplant operations” in the American South and elsewhere.
In an e-mail to UAW members at GM, the UAW bureaucracy called on Obama to “maintain the maximum number of jobs in the U.S. instead of outsourcing more production to foreign countries.” Such protectionism undermines struggle by poisoning workers’ class consciousness and solidarity, scapegoating foreign workers for the loss of jobs in the U.S. while reinforcing support to the American capitalist order.
The UAW bureaucracy has long been a leading force tying the working class to the capitalist rulers through support to the capitalist Democratic Party. A *New York Times* article (30 April) quoted Walter Reuther, who became UAW head in 1946, saying, “We have to fight both in the economic and political fields, because what you win on the picket lines, they take away in Washington if you don’t fight on that front.” For the social-democratic Reuther and his UAW successors, the Washington “front” has always meant subordinating the union to the Democrats. In service to this class-collaborationist alliance, the union tops have all but given up the class-struggle methods that built the unions in the first place.
The only way the labor movement can be revitalized is by returning to the road of class struggle. Immediately posed is the fight to organize the mass of unorganized workers, particularly in the “right to work” South. This will require actively combating black oppression, long used by the capitalists to divide and weaken labor as a whole. Against the govern-

ment’s anti-immigrant raids, which have derailed one organizing campaign after another, the union movement must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Key to all such battles is the fight for the political independence of the workers from the capitalists and their government and political parties. *Break with the Democrats! For a revolutionary workers party!*

Reformist Nationalization Schemes

Having joined the labor bureaucrats in hailing Obama’s election, the reformist “socialists” now “hope” that he’ll bail out working people. *Socialist Worker* (6 April), newspaper of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), baldly stated: “Instead of using its billions to help auto executives push through attacks on workers or to create small surges in demand, the Obama administration could use its leverage as the auto industry’s creditor of last resort to implement a comprehensive plan that includes taking over the auto industry.” Obama is “taking over the auto industry” precisely to “push through attacks on workers.” The Obama administration is littered with Wall Street financiers—from Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner to National Economic Council head Larry

Summers—whose program is trillions for the capitalists and sacrifice by the workers.
Appealing to this bankers’ cabal to nationalize the auto industry, the ISO wrote in *International Socialist Review* (May-June 2009): “Nationalization of industries under threat of bankruptcy has historically been a demand of the socialist movement as a means to save jobs and ensure the provision of needed services.” The ISO would be more honest if it said that this has historically been a demand of social democrats who seek to tinker with and administer the capitalist state. Such nationalizations amount to nothing more than giving failing

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Tiananmen 1989: Incipient Proletarian Political Revolution

June 4 marks the 20th anniversary of the Chinese government's bloody suppression of mass protests centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The imperialists and their media mouthpieces have seized on the anniversary to falsely portray those protests as a movement favoring capitalist counter-revolution under the banner of Western-style "democracy." In the two excerpts printed below, taken from articles published in *Workers Vanguard* before and after the Tiananmen massacre, we underscored that the mass upheaval—which began with students but increasingly drew in workers chafing under the impact of pro-capitalist "market reforms"—heralded the beginning of a proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist rulers of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state.

* * *

The imperialists would like to see in the Beijing spring the flowering of a pro-Western mass movement. Some of the students' appeals are clearly aimed at the American media, such as the banner proclaiming (in English) "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death." But as an April 27 march of 150,000 students attracted the support of an even larger number of workers, the marchers responded by chanting "Long live the proletariat!" And over and over they sing the *Internationale*, the historic anthem of the socialist working class. Again on the weekend of May 20-21, as the regime headed by Deng Xiaoping and Prime Minister Li Peng ordered troops to remove student hunger strikers, workers streamed into the square to stand with them. But while the workers have been massively present in the protests, they have not yet mobilized behind their own *class* program—to oust the bureaucratic misleaders of the Chinese deformed workers state and establish the rule of proletarian soviets....

Most dramatic is the immobilization of the army. Li Peng's order for a military crackdown was essentially ignored. Not only were the units which ventured into



Peter Turnley

May 1989: Contingent from Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation arriving in Tiananmen Square.

the capital surrounded by the populace, subway workers and management refused to transport them underground. The 38th Army, which is based in Beijing and includes many draftees from the capital, reportedly refused to move on the crowds. (The commander's daughter is supposed to be among the hunger strikers.) Now a letter has surfaced from seven former high-ranking military leaders, and signed by more than 100 officers, opposing bringing troops into the capital: "The army absolutely must not shoot the people" (*New York Times*, 23 May). The Paris *Libération* (18 May) quotes a former officer saying, "the situation in China currently rather resembles Hungary in 1956, except there is no possible Soviet intervention to save the regime."

In the face of this explosion of mass discontent, Deng called for "tough tactics," to "spill blood" if necessary to stop the protests; Gorbachev warned against "hot-heads." While Bush and other Western leaders worry in public about "stability"

in Beijing, privately they talk of counter-revolution. But it's far from clear that the inchoate mass upsurge is going in any such direction. What the Chinese working people urgently need is *genuine communism*, a genuinely Marxist and Leninist communist party to replace the bureaucratic regime with *workers and soldiers soviets* at the head of the poor peasantry. Instead of the nationalism of the Chinese Stalinists from Mao to Deng, which has led China into a counterrevolutionary military and diplomatic alliance with the U.S. against the Soviet Union and Vietnam, what's needed is *communist unity against imperialism*.

—"Upheaval in China"
(WV No. 478, 26 May 1989)

* * *

The June 4 massacre at Beijing's Tiananmen Square brought China to the brink of civil war. The mass outpouring of defiance heralded the Chinese proletarian political revolution against the corrupt

and despised Stalinist bureaucracy. For the moment the Deng regime has weathered the storm and is now cracking down, striking first and hardest at the working class. But the decrepit bureaucratic caste, which has opened the doors of China to massive capitalist encroachment and shamelessly allied itself with U.S. imperialism, can be shattered. *The central lesson of the Beijing spring and the urgent task which stands before the Chinese workers is the forging of an authentic communist party, an internationalist vanguard....*

The Western media usually describes the oppositional forces in China as "the student movement for democracy." But it was the beginnings of a working-class revolt against Deng's program of "building socialism with capitalist methods" which gave the protests their mass and potentially revolutionary nature. Organized workers' contingents started to participate in the marches, and it was the threat of a general strike which led Li Peng to order martial law in mid-May. Moreover, the outpouring of hundreds of thousands of working people into the streets stymied the regime's attempted crackdown then. When the troops attacked unarmed people in Beijing on June 4, thousands of workers battled them with whatever came to hand....

The present repression may restore a certain surface stability to China for awhile. The working class has been forced back but has by no means been crushed. The unemployment, inflation and gross inequality spawned by Deng's "reforms" will continue to fuel popular discontent....

The only road forward remains the proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy, combined with socialist revolution against capitalist rule—not least in Hong Kong, Taiwan and strategic Japan. For Lenin's Communism! For a Chinese Trotskyist Party, section of a reformed Fourth International!

—"Defend Chinese Workers!"
(WV No. 480, 23 June 1989)■

enterprises a new lease on life. The nationalization of the losers of capitalist competition has nothing in common with the socialist expropriation of the means of production by a workers government. Taking over and subsidizing bankrupt firms to "save jobs" was for many years a standard practice of British Labour Party governments by which they sought to promote the interests of British imperialism.

As our comrades in the Spartacist League/Britain observed in "New Labour Fleeces Working People" (*Workers Hammer* No. 205, Winter 2008-09): "In the

context of British imperialism's loss of hegemonic power, the nationalisations of coal, steel and other industries by the [post-World War II] Clement Attlee Labour government were in reality giant capitalist bailouts designed to help British capitalism to compete in the world market." In competition with more efficient private firms, nationalized enterprises require massive subsidies financed by immiserating the working class through, for example, high taxation.

Polemicalizing against reformist "socialists" who put forward nationalization schemes to rescue failing capitalist enter-

prises, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky declared:

"We can say to the miner, you wish nationalization. Yes, it is our slogan. It is only a question of conditions. If the national property is too burdened with debts against the former owners, your conditions can become worse than now. To base the whole proceedings upon a free agreement between the owners and the state signifies ruin of the workers. Now you must organize your own government in the state and expropriate them."

—"Conversation on the Slogan
'Workers and Farmers
Government',' *Writings of
Leon Trotsky, 1938-39*

The program of the labor bureaucracy and its reformist tails—defined by what

is "practical" under capitalism—has led to disaster for the working class. We Marxists put forward the revolutionary strategy offered by the Transitional Program, where Trotsky declared: "The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin.... If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish." The burning necessity is for a proletarian revolution to rip the productive wealth of society out of the hands of the greedy capitalist rulers and build a collectivized, planned economy where production is based on social need, not profit.■



Reuters

Protectionist rally organized by "Keep It Made In America," which includes United Steelworkers bureaucrats, in Sterling Heights, Michigan, May 11.

5 JUNE 2009

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The Rise of U.S. Imperialism...

(continued from page 7)

Grant played an active role in counter-ing European influences in the Western Hemisphere. It was General Grant, in his military capacity, who urged the use of the American army to help expel the French from Mexico. In 1865, General Philip Sheridan was dispatched to the Mexican border with a large armed force prepared to do just this. The French withdrew from Mexico.

In 1867 the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. The purpose of this purchase was to contain the British. Grant, like many other representatives of the American ruling class, viewed Britain as a natural ally, but with wary bitterness. During the Civil War, the British government had permitted Confederate cruisers, built in British ports, to escape and prey upon the commerce of the U.S. The most famous of these Confederate cruisers was the *Alabama*. In 1871 the British and American governments entered into arbitration, known as the Alabama claims. Grant was the spokesman for a section of the American ruling class that demanded not only that the British pay a heavy fine but also that they concede Canada to the United States. It was rumored that the British were willing to give up Canada, though the Canadians objected. But other members of the American ruling class pointed out that London was still the center of world banking and the heavily indebted Americans coming out of the Civil War could not afford to confront them. The British paid a fine of \$15.5 million and the matter was closed.

Marshall, Harrison County, Texas: A Microcosm of the Defeated South

We have always noted that imperialism abroad has a domestic reflection at home. Predatory imperialism’s devouring of smaller nations, in competition with other imperialist powers, requires the suppression of class struggle at home. The American Civil War unleashed a great expansion of wealth and democracy. However, this expansion of political democracy was short-lived, as the American ruling class quickly entered upon the imperialist stage.

Michael Goldfield in *The Color of Politics* (1997) uses the term “dual power” loosely to describe the short-lived period of expansion of democracy based on the class struggle as it presented itself at this time. But to pose the question as one of a dual-power struggle between the Northern capitalist class and the defeated slave-master class is wrong. The American Civil War ended with the destruction of the slave-master class as a class and with the class emancipation of the slaves. In other words, slavery was abolished. What ensued in the aftermath was a struggle of contending class forces to reshape



U.S. Army

Integrated faculty of a Freedmen’s Bureau school near Norfolk, Virginia.

American society, in particular the South. C. Vann Woodward’s *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (1963) described the time: “A few old heads recognized ‘Reconstruction’ for what it was—a Yankee euphemism for capitalist expansion.”

The essence of the struggles between the contending class forces after the Civil War was over control of the wealth created by labor—old wealth created by slave labor, new wealth created by the “free labor” of the freedmen. The following is a description of this struggle as it unfolded between 1865 and 1868 in Marshall, Harrison County, Texas (the home of Wiley College of *The Great Debaters* fame). [See “Communist Organizing in the Jim Crow South: What’s Not in *The Great Debaters*,” WV No. 925, 21 November 2008.]

General Sheridan, commander of the Union occupation troops in Texas, declared that if he owned both Texas and hell he would “rent out Texas and live in hell.” It was reported that 2,700 blacks were killed in Texas between 1866 and 1867. The Freedmen’s Bureau reported that between 1 January and 1 July 1867, 2,316 murders or assaults with attempt to kill occurred in Texas. The vast majority of victims of these assaults was black. There existed a state of lawlessness as senior Confederate officials fled to Mexico—from state to county to local towns, governmental authority ceased to function. Demobilized Confederate soldiers plundered Confederate and state properties, roaming the countryside robbing whites as well as blacks of anything of value.

The only semblance of law and order to prevail was with the Union Army deployed at county seats such as Marshall. In 1860 Harrison County was the wealthiest county in Texas and had the highest percentage of slave ownership. Of the total population of the county of 15,000 persons, 59 percent were slaves. Over 60 percent of white households owned at least one slave. The average slavehold-

ing family possessed eleven slaves. Sixty-eight slaveowners owned 20 or more slaves; one slaveowner owned 104 slaves.

The emancipation of Harrison County’s 10,000 slaves meant an immediate loss of approximately \$7 million to the slaveowners. The misfortunes of war—high taxes, high cost of living, loss of fugitive slaves and the inability to market cotton at a profit—forced many planters into bankruptcy. During the war, Harrison County residents had no access to Northern financial institutions and Texas, like much of the South, had few banks. The local economy, reliant on the Confederate dollar, was reduced to bartering since neither cash nor credit was available. Large land holdings enabled a significant number of pre-Civil War planters to retain their status after emancipation. They did, however, suffer a real loss of wealth.

Northern capitalist interests and Southern planter interests both wanted a stable black labor supply. The system of contract labor was introduced by the Union Army and overseen by the Army’s Freedmen’s Bureau. The purpose of the contract was to keep black labor in place. The freedmen’s desire to be paid in wages could not be met. Ready cash in the form of Union currency was still severely restricted. The Freedmen’s Bureau intervened to negotiate sharecropping in lieu of wages. What is revealed here is the beginning of the South’s notoriously oppressive sharecropping system of farming.

But one key element of the sharecropping system had not yet found its place. The planters sought to continue the work practices and organization that were typical of the slave system—to work gang labor under an overseer. The planters sought to continue working conditions similar to slavery—the planter possessed absolute authority and the worker no rights at all.

The freedmen resisted any work practice and organization similar to slavery. They resisted gang labor in preference to a division of the land to be worked indi-

vidually. This breakup of the large plantations into smaller units was, of course, inefficient. But on this score the freedmen prevailed over the wishes of the planters with the planters retaining ownership of the land. The freedmen resisted any work contract that required the women and children of the family to work the fields. However, success on this point was entirely uneven. To the planters’ displeasure, the freedmen resisted work outside of the crop—the planters defined the work to encompass the whole of the farm operation.

The freedmen faced powerful class enemies. Cotton, the leading export crop in the U.S. during the 19th century, secured foreign exchange for the U.S. Treasury. With \$1.5 billion in war debts, the U.S. government was under pressure by European creditors to resume the exportation of cotton.

Marshall, Texas, attracted large numbers of freedmen who sought the security and assistance offered by the Union Army and the Freedmen’s Bureau stationed there. Blacks who were either too young or too old for productive labor were simply dumped. Harrison County authorities refused to allocate funds to care for orphaned black children. County authorities devised a system of apprenticeship of black youth that committed them to labor for a master until the age of 21. This measure, of course, lessened the labor costs of white landowners. Oliver Otis Howard, the first Freedman’s Bureau chief, declared: “State laws with regard to apprenticeship will be recognized... provided they make no distinction of color” (quoted in Kenneth Hamilton, “White Wealth and Black Repression in Harrison County, Texas: 1865-1868,” *Journal of Negro History* [1999]). This color-blind approach of Howard’s masked forced labor of black youth under the title “apprenticeship.”

The initial Reconstruction government of Texas was composed of white pro-Union partisans exiled under the Confederate regime and now returned with the Union Army. Black Republicans entered the stage a little later, changing the character of the state government. Like the Northern capitalists, this state Reconstruction government recognized the benefits of a tax-supported education system; however, it established schools solely for white students. Blacks relied on the Freedmen’s Bureau school that, with a black staff, taught blacks who supported the school with a monthly fee of \$1.50 per student. Whenever blacks attempted to establish schools outside of the county seat of Marshall and the protection of the Freedmen’s Bureau, their schools were broken up and the teachers forced to flee for their lives. This was Marshall, Harrison County, Texas, a microcosm of the defeated South in the period immediately following surrender—one can see why Sheridan preferred to live in hell than to live in Texas.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Tiller...

(continued from page 12)

Alabama, firebombing, 1998. Also in 1998, Dr. Barnett Slepian, the only staff physician at the only clinic providing abortions in Buffalo, New York, was shot in the back and killed by a sniper outside his home.

It’s no accident that the last rash of vicious killings was in the 1990s, when anti-abortion terrorists felt they had lost the White House, and subsided when George W. Bush was in. Democrat Bill

Clinton won the 1992 presidency with the support of women who favored his “pro-choice” stance. Determined to push their agenda, the “God squad” took to the streets. However, as Marxists we understand that the source of anti-woman bigotry in this violent country is not the particular capitalist party in power—Democrat or Republican—but the capitalist order that breeds oppression and bigotry as a necessary corollary to its system of exploitation, which both parties uphold. Despite the Democrats’ pretense to care for “women’s issues,” during Clinton’s presidency welfare for mothers was axed, safe access to abortion was massively reduced (the number of abortion providers plummeted 14 percent between 1992 and 1996) and state after state passed laws restricting abortion rights. According to the Guttmacher Institute, as of 2005 some 87 percent of U.S. counties, containing 35 percent of women aged 15-44, had no access to abortion providers.

Upon taking office, Barack Obama repealed George Bush’s restrictions on

federal money for international family planning groups and embryonic stem cell research. But like Bill Clinton, who said “we should all work to reduce the number of abortions,” Obama seeks “dialogue” with the anti-abortion bigots. At his May 17 Notre Dame commencement speech, where “pro-life” demonstrators protested, Obama appealed to “both sides,” supporting a “sensible conscience clause” that would allow health care providers to withhold abortion or other services that conflicted with their religious beliefs. Picking up where Clinton left off, Obama said: “Let us work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions.”

Along with his emphasis on “faith” and “family values,” Obama’s accommodation to the anti-abortion reactionaries reflects a fundamental political reality: the institution of the family, the main source of the oppression of women, is a necessary social prop for the capitalist system of exploitation for profit, as it has been for all previous class-divided societies. While Obama claimed he was

“outraged” by Tiller’s murder, as the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, he is the class enemy of working and oppressed women around the world. Both capitalist parties are enemies of women’s liberation.

The wealthy will always get their medical care and their abortions, while the myriad anti-abortion laws target young, working-class and poor women, who can’t afford quality health care, childcare, housing. We demand **free abortion on demand** and **free quality health care for all**. The liberation of women requires a socialist revolution that will uproot the private property system and create a worldwide socialized planned economy. Only then will society be able to replace the institution of the family with socialized childcare and housework, bringing women into full participation in all areas of social and political life.

It is as communist fighters for women’s liberation that we honor Dr. George Tiller, murdered for his courageous stand for abortion rights.■

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August.

Our next issue will be dated July 3.

Lanka...
(continued from page 12)

and other sections of the International Communist League have joined in the Tamil protests, distributing literature in solidarity with the besieged Tamils and putting forward our proletarian-revolutionary perspective for national and social liberation. As we wrote in Spartacist Canada No. 160 (Spring 2009) [see WV No. 930, 13 February]:

“We have long upheld the right of self-determination for the Tamil people—i.e., their right to form an independent state in the largely Tamil North and East. We stand for the military defense of the LTTE against the army assault and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Lankan army from the area.
“At the same time, we give no political support to the LTTE—bourgeois nationalists who, carrying out the logic of nationalism, have staged their own inter-ethnic attacks on Sinhalese villagers and expelled Muslims from the historic Tamil city of Jaffna, the capital of the northern region, while employing murderous violence against other Tamil nationalist groups.”

In the wake of the devastating blood-bath, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa staged grotesque chauvinist rallies in Colombo and declared a national holiday. Meant to further degrade an already defeated Tamil population, this sickening triumphalism underscores that the communal divisions fostered by the regime and its predecessors are deeper than ever. What we wrote at the time of the government-

orchestrated anti-Tamil pogroms in 1983 retains all its force and more today:
“The government-orchestrated Sinhala-chauvinist bloodbath against the Tamil people in the small Indian Ocean island nation of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) has catastrophically altered for the foreseeable future the prospects for common class struggle between the Sinhalese working class and the oppressed Tamil minority.”
—“Massacre in Sri Lanka,”
Spartacist No. 35, Autumn 1983
Our organization had always upheld the right to Tamil self-determination while counseling against its exercise, arguing in favour of united working-class struggle for Tamil freedom and socialist revolution in Lanka and its extension



Demonstration in New York initiated by Spartacist League protested attacks on Tamils, June 1981. Spartacist placard in Sinhalese reads: “Forward to a revolutionary workers and peasants government in Sri Lanka!”

Mehring...
(continued from page 2)

basis, so that it can achieve the necessary clarity about where the power of ideas is drawn from. Human beings make their own history, certainly, but how they make history, this is dependent in each case upon how clear or unclear they are in their heads about the material connections between things. Ideas do not arise out of nothing, but are the product of the social process of production, and the more accurately an idea reflects this process, the more powerful it is. The human spirit does not stand above, but within the historical development of human society; it has grown out of, in and with material production. Only since this production has begun to develop out of a highly variegated bustle into simple and great contradictions, has it been able to recognize the whole relationship; and only after these latter contradictions have died or been overcome, will it win domination over social production, and will the “pre-history of man come to an end” (Marx); and then “men will make their own his-

tory with full consciousness, and the leap of man from the realm of necessity into that of freedom” will take place (Engels)....
Only historical materialism demonstrates the law of this development of thought, and finds the root of this law in that which first made man into man, the production and reproduction of immediate life. That beggarly pride which once decried Darwinism as the “theory of the apes” may struggle against this, and find solace in the thought that the human spirit flickers like an unfathomable will-o’-the-wisp, and with Godlike creative powers fashions a new world out of nothing. This superstition was dealt with by [German Enlightenment-era writer and philosopher] Lessing, both in his mockery of the “bald ability to act now in one way, now in another, under exactly the same circumstances,” and also through his wise words:
The pot of iron
Likes to be lifted with silver tongs
From the flame, the easier to think itself
A pot of silver.
We can deal more briefly with the accusation that historical materialism denies all moral standards. It is certainly not the task of the history researcher to use

through the Indian subcontinent. But, as we wrote, “in the wake of the mass killing of Tamils, the bitterness and hostility between the peoples of Ceylon has evidently become insurmountable at least in the short run.” Thus we raised the call for the right of Tamil Eelam:
“The bloody communal struggle argues that even with proletarian revolution in Ceylon and South Asia generally, a federated socialist republic in Ceylon will be necessary to achieve the unity of Tamils and Sinhalese on a basis of justice and equality (and to take into account Sinhalese fears of vengeance at the hands of the millions of Tamils in south India).”
At the same time, we noted that the

moral standards. He should tell us how things were on the basis of an objective scientific investigation. We do not demand to know what he thinks about them according to his subjective moral outlook. “Moral standards” are caught up, involved in a continuous transformation, and for the living generation to impose on former generations its changing standards of today, is like measuring the geological strata against the flying sand of the dunes. Schlosser, Gervinus and Ranke, and Janssen [German historians]—each of them has a different moral standard, each has his own class morals, and even more faithfully than the times they depict, they reflect in their works the classes they speak for. And it goes without saying that it would be no different if a proletarian writer of history were to make rash criticisms of former times from the moral standpoint of his class today.
In this respect historical materialism denies all moral standards—but in this respect alone. It bans them from the study of history because they make all scientific study of history impossible.
But if the accusation means that historical materialism denies the role of

prospects for an independent Tamil capitalist state in the arid and underdeveloped North were not good. Nor would the formation of such a state ensure the national survival of the Tamils, who were (and remain) interpenetrated with the Sinhalese majority throughout much of the island. On the other hand, the establishment of a federated socialist republic of Eelam and Lanka would be a beacon to the oppressed and subjugated masses throughout the subcontinent, including among the 65 million Tamils across the Palk Strait in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
The struggle of the Tamils is today at its most desperate pass. Drawing the lessons from a bitter history is difficult but necessary for pro-working-class elements, Tamil and Sinhalese alike. The once-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party abandoned the interests of the proletariat and the defense of the Tamil people when it entered the Sinhala-chauvinist government of the SLFP in 1964.
Today the struggle to forge a Trotskyist party in Lanka must begin with the understanding that the eradication of national oppression and true social progress for the peoples of Lanka and the region will come when the barbaric rule of capital and the divisions inherited from imperialist domination are overturned through socialist revolution. Lasting national and class justice for the Tamil working people will be secured through permanent revolution—rule by the workers and peasants in a socialist federation of South Asia, and the extension of proletarian revolutions into the imperialist centers.■

moral driving forces in history, then let us repeat: the precise opposite is true. It does not deny them at all, but rather for the first time makes it possible to recognize them. In the “material, scientifically determinable upheaval of the economic conditions of production” it has the only certain yardstick for investigating the sometimes slower, sometimes faster changes in moral outlook. These too are in the last analysis the product of the form of production, and thus Marx opposed the Nibelungen tales of Richard Wagner, who tried in the modern manner to make his love stories more piquant by means of a little incest, with the fitting words: “In remote antiquity the sister was the wife and that was moral.” Just as thoroughly as it clears up the question of the great men who are supposed to have made history, historical materialism also deals with the images of historical characters that come and go in history according to their favour and disfavour in the eyes of different parties. It is able to do every historical personality justice, because it knows how to recognize the driving forces which have determined their deeds and omissions, and it can sketch in the fine shadings which cannot be attained by the coarser “moral standards” of the ideological writing of history.■

North Korea...
(continued from page 1)

Guardian (27 May), “In April 2003, North Korea drew the obvious conclusion from the US and British aggression against Iraq. The war showed, it commented at the time, ‘that to allow disarmament through inspections does not help avert a war, but rather sparks it’.”
Our defense of North Korea is based on the fact that, under the protection of the Soviet Army following World War II, the workers and peasants expropriated the capitalists and landlords. However, the North Korean workers state was deformed from its inception, with the working class deprived of political power under the rule of Kim Il Sung’s regime, a nationalist and parasitic bureaucratic caste resting atop the collectivized economy. We stand for the unconditional military defense of North Korea and the other remaining deformed workers states—China, Vietnam and Cuba—against imperialist attack and domestic counterrevolution. To renounce the defense of states that have overturned capitalism is to renounce the fight for

international socialist revolution.
Were it not for the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet workers state acting as a deterrent, U.S. imperialism would have had free rein to crush the revolutions in China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. The U.S. and its allies, under the flag of the UN, killed some three million people during the Korean War of 1950-53. This was part of the drive to crush the revolutionary upsurge of Korean workers and peasants in the South and to overturn the social revolution in the North—intended as a stepping stone to overturning the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Since it was fought to a stalemate by Korean and Chinese forces, the U.S. has maintained a massive military presence in South Korea, with some 28,500 troops stationed there today. This past week the U.S. and South Korean military went on high alert, elevating its “Watch Conditions” to “Stage Two,” its second highest level. All U.S. troops and bases out of South Korea now!
A strategic goal of U.S. imperialism is the restoration of capitalism in China, the largest of the remaining deformed workers states. This makes it all the more criminal that the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy

expressed its “resolute opposition” to North Korea’s nuclear weapon test. Beijing has also called on North Korea to return to the “six nation talks,” aimed at disarming North Korea. This demonstrates the bankruptcy of the nationalist program of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which promotes the anti-Marxist dogma of building “socialism in one country.” In practice, this has always meant opposition to the perspective of international workers revolution and accommodation to world imperialism, as can also be seen in the North Korean regime’s call for “peaceful reunification” with the capitalist South.
As we noted following a North Korean rocket launch in April (“Defend North Korea!” WV No. 934, 10 April):
“‘What is desperately needed is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist party with a proletarian internationalist perspective to lead the struggle for the revolutionary reunification of Korea—for a socialist revolution in the South and workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats in the North. The fight for revolutionary reunification must be linked to the struggle for proletarian political revolution in China and the extension of proletarian power to Japan, the industrial heartland of Asia, as well as to the U.S. imperialist colossus.’”■

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Heroic Abortion Provider Dr. George Tiller Assassinated

JUNE 1—The bloody war against women's right to abortion waged by "right to life" terrorists has claimed yet another life. On Sunday morning in Wichita, Kansas, Dr. George Tiller was gunned down in the foyer of his church. The service was just beginning when a man pulled a handgun and shot Tiller in cold blood as he served as an usher; Tiller's wife was in the choir. Authorities have arrested a suspect, Scott Roeder, who "has long discussed violence against abortion providers and belonged to right-wing militia groups," according to the *Los Angeles Times* (1 June).

Despite massive harassment, legal and extralegal, for over 35 years Dr. Tiller heroically provided women with abortions, including late in pregnancy. Just hours after his death his family

issued a moving statement, declaring: "George dedicated his life to providing women with high-quality health care despite frequent threats and violence. We ask that he be remembered as a good husband, father and grandfather and a dedicated servant on behalf of the rights of women everywhere."

Tiller's Wichita clinic, Women's Health Care Services, was one of the very few providers of "late-term" abortions remaining in the U.S. Tiller himself had been in the eye of the storm for decades. In 1991, tens of thousands of "Operation Rescue" fanatics blockaded his clinic for six weeks. In 1993, Tiller was shot in both arms. His clinic has been bombed and vandalized—as have other clinics across the country.

In 2007, the state of Kansas charged

Tiller with 19 misdemeanor counts of violating a law requiring two doctors, without financial or legal ties to each other, to sign off on abortions done late in pregnancy. He was acquitted in March. But within moments of the verdict, the state's health board announced that it was launching yet another prosecution—one that was still ongoing when Tiller was murdered. The repeated legal persecution of Tiller and other abortion providers has served to embolden the murderous bigots who terrorize patients and clinic staff and murder doctors.

Between 1993 and 1998 anti-abortion terrorists murdered *seven people* for providing abortions: Dr. David Gunn, shot dead in Pensacola, Florida, 1993; Dr. John Britton, shot dead along with an escort in Pensacola a year later; Lee Ann



Hutmacher/Wichita Eagle

1941–2009

Nichols and Shannon Lowney, shot dead in a clinic in Brookline, Massachusetts, 1994; a security guard killed and a nurse severely wounded in a Birmingham, *continued on page 10*

Asylum Now for Tamil Refugees!

Massacre in Sri Lanka: Defend the Tamil People!



Sri Lanka Army



AFP

Murderous offensive by Sri Lankan army has destroyed remnants of Tamil mini-state. Right: Tamil civilians in April, among the hundreds of thousands driven into prison camps.

The following article was written by our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste of Canada, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

The savage 26-year war waged by the Sri Lankan government in the North and East of the Indian Ocean island ended on May 18 with the destruction of the remnants of the Tamil mini-state and the execution of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. But if the goals of the blood-drenched Sinhala-chauvinist regime have been achieved, its merciless repression of the Tamil people and their national rights continues.

Since January, at least 8,000 Tamils and perhaps as many as 20,000 have been killed in a war that had already taken at

least 70,000 lives. Cutting through the wall of press censorship, reports are emerging that an estimated 300,000 Tamils—40 percent of them children—are now imprisoned in a network of prison camps and interrogation centers. Particularly chilling was a May 23 account by the *Toronto Globe and Mail's* Doug Saunders, who reported that the detainees "are not just those who have fled the violence, but the entire civilian population of the northeastern conflict area, which is being swept clean of inhabitants by the military." Those in the camps will be "screened" as a precondition to release, a process which a government spokesman says could take up to two years.

Against the bloody vengeance of the Lankan government, the international working class must rally to the defense

of the Tamil people. Tamil émigrés in Canada, Britain and elsewhere now watch in helpless agony, knowing their families could be dead or held in the army's camps. We stand with them demanding asylum now for Tamil refugees!

In the months leading up to this catastrophe, in cities around the world Tamils have carried out protest after massive protest. In Toronto where the 200,000-strong Tamil community is one of the largest outside South Asia, the demonstrations were among the biggest in the city's history. The sight of tens of thousands of angry Tamils choking major Toronto streets in a sea of Tamil Eelam flags (which resemble the flag of the LTTE) sparked howls of outrage from bourgeois politicians and journalists.

The U.S., Britain, the European Union

and Canada had all banned the Tigers earlier, declaring them a "terrorist" organization. In doing so, the imperialist powers effectively gave the green light to the Lankan regime in its murderous army offensive. This underscores that the repeated calls on the Canadian, U.S. and other imperialists to intervene on behalf of the Tamils could only be in vain, for they have overwhelmingly supported the Lankan government's war against the Tamil people. From the start we denounced the bans on the LTTE, which signaled the repressive attacks on exile Tamil organizations that continue to this day. It is in the clear interest of all working people to defend Tamil organizations against state repression.

The Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste *continued on page 11*