

Repudiating Our Position on Haiti Earthquake A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism

The following statement was issued on April 27.

In its articles on the Haitian earthquake, *Workers Vanguard*, the newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., committed a betrayal of the fundamental principle of opposition to one's "own" imperialist rulers. In addition to justifying the U.S. imperialist troops as essential to the aid effort, these articles polemicized against the principled and correct position of demanding the immediate withdrawal of the troops. This

Statement of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

line was carried in a number of presses in other ICL sections, becoming the de facto line of the International Communist League. Without a public accounting and correction, we would be far down the road to our destruction as a revolutionary party. *From the beginning the only revolutionary internationalist position was to demand that all*

U.S./UN troops get out of Haiti!

In our article in WV No. 951 (29 January), repeated in subsequent issues of the newspaper, we baldly stated:

"The U.S. military is the only force on the ground with the capacity—e.g., trucks, planes, ships—to organize the transport of what food, water, medical and other supplies are getting to Haiti's population. And they're doing it in the typi-

cal piggish U.S. imperialist manner. We have always opposed U.S. and UN occupations in Haiti and everywhere—and it may become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the near future—but we are not going to call for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on."

The International Executive Committee of the ICL repudiates this betrayal of our revolutionary program. As stated in the SL/U.S. Programmatic Statement:

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Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!



Garcia/Chicago Tribune

Down With Arizona's Racist Pass Law!

To be brown-skinned in the state of Arizona is to be a suspected criminal under the provisions of the recently enacted "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhood Act." This apartheid-style, anti-immigrant pass law mandates the cops to stop and question anyone they think might be an "illegal" immigrant. Those who fail to immediately produce documentation proving their "right" to be in the United States could be arrested and thrown behind bars. This is the codification in law of the racist roundups of Latinos that have been carried out for years by notorious Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio, whose prisoners are shackled in chain gangs and housed in tent cities in the blazing heat of the desert.

Outrage against the Arizona law brought out tens of thousands in protest in cities across the country on May 1. But as was the case with the massive immigrant rights demonstrations on May Day 2006, the protest leaders are channeling this outrage into the political shell game



AP

Top: Immigration cops unshackle rounded-up immigrants and expel them across Mexican border, El Paso, Texas, January 2009. Above: April 25 protest in Phoenix against Arizona's racist pass law.

that is a central pillar of capitalist rule in America—the idea that the Democratic Party is the "friend" of immigrants, labor and black people. The 2006 rallying cry of

"Today we march, tomorrow we vote" paid off handsomely for the Democrats, who captured the overwhelming majority of the Latino vote in the last presiden-

tial elections. This year, chants of "Sí, se puede! Yes, we can!", the election slogan of today's Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, Barack Obama, were the chorus orchestrated by the Latino organizations, Democratic Party politicians and trade-union bureaucrats who headed the protests.

In a televised message to hundreds of thousands at a March 21 immigrant rights rally in Washington, D.C., Obama promised to "build a future worthy of our history as a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws." The ability to use such honey-coated words to mask a system which is based on the exploitation of the working class and rooted in vicious racial oppression is precisely what has made the Democratic Party the often-preferred party of the American bourgeoisie in times of war and economic crisis.

Behind the words stands the iron fist of capitalist state repression. This was seen in Arizona only a week before the

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Break with the Democrats— For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Capitulation...

(continued from page 1)

“We unconditionally oppose all U.S. military intervention—and U.S. military bases—abroad, and defend the colonial, semicolonial and other smaller, less developed countries in the face of U.S./UN attack and embargo.”

Even in very belatedly raising the call for “All U.S./UN Troops Out of Haiti Now!” in WV No. 955 (26 March), we continued to evade and reject the principle of opposition to the U.S. imperialist occupation of neocolonial Haiti. Moreover this article stated: “As we made clear in our article, ‘Haiti Earthquake Horror: Imperialism, Racism and Starvation’ (WV No. 951, 29 January), while we were not for the U.S. military going into Haiti, neither were we going to demand, in the immediate aftermath of that horrific natural disaster, the immediate withdrawal of any forces that were supplying such aid as was reaching the Haitian masses.” In

fact, our earlier article had not clearly stated that we were not for the U.S. troops going in nor did it even call the U.S. military takeover what it was.

The U.S. military invasion was designed to provide a “humanitarian” face-lift to bloody U.S. imperialism and was aimed at securing U.S. military control in Haiti and reasserting American imperialist domination over the Caribbean, including against imperialist rivals like France. In failing to oppose the invasion, we also ignored the particular danger this posed to the Cuban deformed workers state (as well as to the bourgeois nationalist-populist regime of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela). We accepted Washington’s line that the provision of aid was inextricably linked to the U.S. military takeover and thus helped to sell the myth peddled by the Democratic Party Obama administration that this was a “humanitarian” mission. Our statement that “it *may* become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the *near* future” (emphasis added) amounted to giving conditional support to

U.S. military intervention. As one leading party comrade argued, the only difference between the position we took and August 4, 1914, when the German Social Democrats voted war credits to the German imperialist rulers at the outset of the First World War, is that this was not a war.

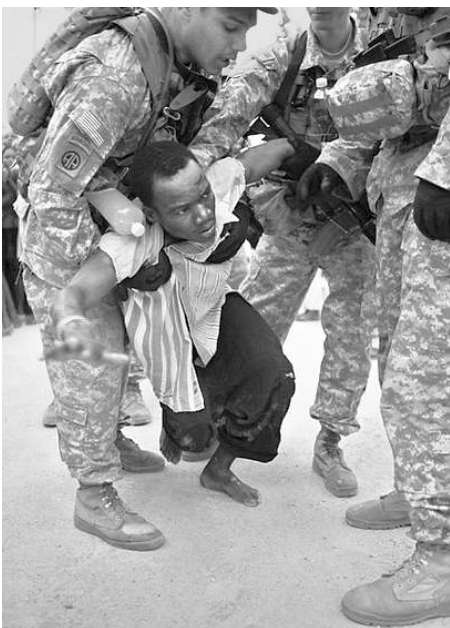
Thus we gutted the revolutionary internationalist essence of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution linking the fight for social and national liberation to the struggle for proletarian state power both in neocolonial and in more advanced countries. This means educating the proletariat in North America, and internationally, that its class interests lie in actively championing the fight against the imperialist domination of Haiti. Instead our articles did the opposite, promoting illusions in U.S. imperialist “democracy” as the savior of the Haitian people. We all but echoed Barack Obama as he dispatched imperialist combat troops, including elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and a Marine expeditionary unit. One doubts that we could so easily have taken such a position if the Republican Bush administration were still in the White House.

In its latest article, “SL Twists and Turns on Haiti” (*Internationalist*, 9 April), the centrist Internationalist Group (IG) writes: “While support to imperialist occupation is a small step for reformists, who only seek to modify imperialist *policies* rather than to bring down the imperialist system, in the case of the SL/ICL it should be harder to digest.” Indeed it is. For its part, the IG treated the earthquake as an opening for revolution in Haiti, asserting: “This small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power, particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police” (“Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!” *Internationalist*, 20 January).

Instead of simply exposing the IG’s Third Worldist fantasies, we concentrated in our polemics on zealous apologies for the U.S. imperialist military intervention, a position to the right of the IG. These centrist apologists for Third World nationalism quite correctly characterized our position as “social imperialist”—socialist in words, support for imperialism in deeds. This is a bitter pill to swallow. Only through a savage indictment of our line can we avoid the alternative of going down the road that led the founders of the IG to defect from our organization in the pursuit of forces other than the proletariat. In their case, this has ranged from remnants of the Stalinist bureaucracy that sold out to imperialist counterrevolution in the DDR to Latin American nationalists and left-talking trade-union bureaucrats.

In the context of polemics with the IG, *Workers Vanguard* misused the authority of the revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in order to alibi support to an imperialist occupation. In his 1938 article “Learn to Think,” Trotsky argued that one should not always put a minus where the bourgeoisie puts a plus. He was referring not to a military occupation force but to instances where an imperialist government might send military *aid* to anti-colonialist fighters. Moreover, Trotsky’s reference in this article to workers fraternizing with an army called in to fight a fire manifestly did not refer to a situation like Haiti where U.S. imperialist troops were invading a neocolonial country, an act which *Leninists unconditionally oppose on principle*.

However, neither do revolutionaries foster illusions in such non-military aid as capitalist governments may provide. In responding to the U.S. imperialist invasion of Haiti following the earthquake, we would have done well to look to the position of our Australian section in 2005 responding to the imperialist “aid” intervention in Indonesia, specifically the secessionist province of Aceh, following the tsunami. Demanding “Australian/all imperialist military/cops get out of Aceh now!” an article in *Australasian*



Reuters

Port-au-Prince, Haiti: U.S. soldiers seize man during distribution of food coupons, February 1.

Spartacist titled “Australian Imperialists Seize on Tsunami Catastrophe” (No. 190, Autumn 2005) indicted imperialist aid programs. The article pointed out that “whatever short-term benefit a part of them may provide to a small number of oppressed people,” such aid is “always aimed at reinforcing neocolonial subjugation of the Third World masses.”

The “Politics of the Possible”

From the time of our tendency’s inception as a left opposition within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the early 1960s, we have recognized that national isolation must in short order destroy any subjectively revolutionary formation, not least one subjected to the pressures of operating in the heartland of world imperialism, the United States. Genuine proletarian internationalism means disciplined international collaboration, without which we cannot successfully counter the powerful pull of nationalist opportunism.

The handmaiden to our embellishment of U.S. imperialist intervention was the abrogation of international democratic centralism. The role of propaganda as the scaffolding of a revolutionary party is to publish *the line of the party as decided through discussion and motions by the party leadership*. Prior to going into print opposing the call for “troops out of Haiti” in WV No. 951, the SL/U.S. Political Bureau and the International Secretariat (the resident administrative body of the IEC) abdicated responsibility by not holding an organized discussion and vote, instead setting our line through informal consultation. However, once the line was published in *Workers Vanguard* it was picked up by many of the ICL’s other sectional presses, indicating that there was little initial disagreement.

A meeting of the I.S. on March 18 did at last vote to call for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. and United Nations troops. However, the motions adopted at that meeting, which became the basis for the article in WV No. 955, reaffirmed that “we were correct in not calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.” In stating that “the particular exceptional circumstances that obtained two months ago no longer exist,” the motions also continued to insist that conditional defense of the U.S. military invasion was correct in the immediate conjuncture of a natural disaster. Moreover, while criticizing the formulation that the U.S. military was the only force on the ground with the wherewithal to deliver aid, the I.S. motions did not mandate a public correction of this statement. This kind of dishonesty was condemned by James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism. In addressing a situation where the Trotskyist SWP at its 1954 convention needed to acknowledge mistakes, he noted: “You know, the Stalinists make more changes, and more rapid and drastic changes, than any other party in history. But they never say: ‘We made a mistake.’ They always say: ‘The situation has changed.’ We should be more precise and more honest.”



TROTSKY

Growing working-class opposition to the war and the inspiration of the October 1917 Russian Revolution sparked proletarian upheavals across Europe. Under the pressure of workers who looked to the leadership of the Communist International, various social-democratic and centrist formations like the Independent Social Democratic Party in Germany, the French Socialist Party and the Italian Socialist Party sought admission to the CI. The “21 Conditions” were aimed at winning the genuine revolutionaries within these parties while excluding not only the open social-patriots but also the centrists who masked their treachery with Marxist-sounding rhetoric.

6. Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International is duty-bound to expose not only overt social patriotism but also the duplicity and hypocrisy of social pacifism; to explain systematically to the workers that without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, no international courts of arbitration, no treaties of any kind curtailing arms production, no manner of “democratic” renovation of the League of Nations will be able to prevent new imperialist wars.

7. Parties wishing to belong to the Communist International are duty-bound to recognize the need for a complete break with reformism and the policies of the Center and must conduct propaganda for this among the broadest layers of the party membership. Without this, no consistent communist policy is possible.

The Communist International demands unconditionally and as an ultimatum that this break be carried out at the earliest possible date. The Communist International cannot accept that notorious opportunists as, for example, Turati, Modigliani, Kautsky, Hilferding, Hillquit, Longuet, and MacDonald should have the right to consider themselves members of the Communist International. That could lead only to the Communist International coming to resemble in large measure the ruined Second International.

8. In countries whose bourgeoisies possess colonies and oppress other nations, it is necessary that the parties have an especially clear and well-defined position on the question of colonies and oppressed nations. Every party wishing to belong to the Communist International is obligated to expose the tricks of “its own” imperialists in the colonies, to support every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, to demand that the imperialists of its country be driven out of these colonies, to instill in the hearts of the workers of its country a truly fraternal attitude toward the laboring people in the colonies and toward the oppressed nations, and to conduct systematic agitation among its country’s troops against all oppression of colonial peoples.

—“Theses on the Conditions for Admission,” August 1920; reprinted in *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920* (Pathfinder, 1991)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Down With Anti-Communist Law in Poland!

We print below the translation of an article that originally appeared in Spartakist No. 183 (May 2010), newspaper of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

SPARTAKIST

On June 8, Poland’s right-wing government is set to implement an amendment to the penal code criminalizing the dissemination of “communist symbolism.” Signed into law by the late president Lech Kaczyński last fall after a virtually unanimous vote in the Parliament, the new measure mandates up to two years in prison for anyone who “produces, perpetuates, or imports, stores, possesses, presents, carries or sends a printout, a recording or other object” carrying “fascist, communist or other totalitarian symbolism” for other than “artistic” or “research” purposes. As against the grotesque circus of “national unity” orchestrated in the wake of the arch-reactionary president’s death, the ban underlines that the interests of the proletariat are counterposed to those of all wings of the Polish bourgeoisie. Hav-

ing presided over the devastation of the lives and livelihoods of millions of working people in the past two decades, Poland’s capitalist rulers now seek to criminalize anything pointing to the only solution to the plight of the working masses, the oppression of women, the imperialist exploitation and war and the anti-Semitism, chauvinism and bigotry that are endemic to capitalism: international proletarian revolution and the creation of a global socialist, egalitarian society.

The Polish ban is one of a spate of such measures threatened or implemented by capitalist governments in East Europe since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the bureaucratically deformed workers states. Hungary imposed a ban on communist symbols in 1993, as did Lithuania in 2009. There are moves afoot for similar bans in Estonia, Latvia and elsewhere. In 2007, the Czech government outlawed the Communist Youth Union because it called for social ownership of the means of production. More recently, Czech reactionaries have demanded that the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the third-largest parliamentary party, be outlawed as well.

Such blatant censorship is an embar-

assment to the “democratic ideals” hypocritically espoused by bourgeois liberals. In 2008, the European Court of Human Rights overturned a prison sentence meted out in 2004 to Attila Vajnai, one of the leaders of the ex-Stalinist Hungarian Workers Party, for wearing a red star. And in January, a Czech court ordered the legalization of the Communist Youth Union.

It is an indictment of the ex-Stalinist social democrats of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) that its deputies in the Sejm, the lower house, having initially opposed the anti-communist amendment, then joined in voting for the legislative package that included the ban. Such opposition to the ban as SLD MPs [Members of Parliament] have expressed is confined to the legalistic framework of the Constitutional Tribunal.

Whether ultimately deemed “unconstitutional” or not, the purpose of such measures is to regiment the population and to intimidate all those who seek to fight against the injustices and ravages of capitalism. As George Toussas of the Communist Party of Greece aptly put it in a December 3 statement in the European Parliament, the Polish ban is “an act of provocation aimed at prosecuting any-

one who offers resistance and fights for a better future.” Poland’s rulers will certainly not hesitate to attack as “communists” supporters of the SLD and other leftist groups or workers who engage in militant strikes and demonstrations. It is in the direct interest of every socialist, every trade unionist, every organization representing workers, women, gays, Jews, Romas [Gypsies], immigrants or other minorities—in Poland and internationally—to oppose this reactionary legislation.

The Nazi Holocaust: We Will Not Forget!

The drawing of an equal sign between fascism and communism by the reactionary ruling cabals of East Europe is grotesque. Communism, as exemplified by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and the Polish-Jewish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, expresses the historic and *internationalist* interests of the proletariat, based on the understanding that in liberating itself from capitalist exploitation and oppression, the working class must sweep away class society as a whole and construct a global order in which the nation-state and all forms of social

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Menshevism often takes the guise of “realism” and “expediency.” Looking to come up with a “concrete solution” in a situation where there was no such solution from a proletarian revolutionary vantage point, we capitulated. What our small revolutionary party had to put forward was a proletarian internationalist perspective for the liberation of Haiti, above all through opposition to our “own” imperialist rulers. In the immediate situation, the only concrete expression of such a program was negative—to demand that any and all Haitian refugees be allowed into the U.S. with full citizenship rights, to oppose any deportations of Haitians who had made it here and above all to demand all U.S./UN troops out.

Our articles distorted reality in order to justify the American military presence. We correctly criticized the reformists for spreading illusions in the imperialist governments by demanding that they provide “aid, not troops” but our own response was worse. Our articles presented U.S. military intervention as the only “realistic” way for the Haitian masses to get “aid” and claimed demagogically that withdrawal of U.S. combat troops “would result in mass death through starvation.” This was to treat the question not from the standpoint of Marxist program, but through the liberal lens of “disaster relief.” Michael Harrington—the former leader of the Democratic Socialists of America and adviser to the “war on poverty” programs of Lyndon B. Johnson’s Democratic Party administration—captured the core of such a social-democratic worldview with the expression, “the left wing of the possible.”

The “politics of the possible” is a palpable pressure in the period of post-Soviet reaction, where revolution—or even, particularly in the U.S., militant class struggle—appears remote and there is an overwhelming absence of resonance

for our political views. There is a yawning abyss between what we stand for and the consciousness of the working class and young radicals, even those who claim to be socialist. As we have noted, it has been very difficult to maintain our revolutionary continuity and very easy to have it destroyed.

The Fight to Maintain a Revolutionary Perspective

In fighting against the Cochranite opposition in the then-revolutionary American Socialist Workers Party in the early 1950s, James P. Cannon argued:

“The revolutionary movement, under the best conditions, is a hard fight, and it wears out a lot of human material. Not for nothing has it been said a thousand times in the past: ‘The revolution is a devourer of men.’ The movement in this, the richest and most conservative country in the world, is perhaps the most voracious of all.

“It is not easy to persist in the struggle, to hold on, to stay tough and fight it out year after year without victory; and even, in times such as the present, without tangible progress. That requires theoretical conviction and historical perspective as well as character. And, in addition to that, it requires association with others in a common party.”

—“Trade Unionists and Revolutionists,” 11 May 1953

The example of the degeneration of the SWP from a revolutionary party through centrism to abject reformism is instructive. The party endured more than a decade of stagnation and isolation during the anti-Communist witchhunt. Seeing their role reduced essentially to a holding operation in the citadel of U.S. imperialism, aging party cadre like those in the Cochran wing gave up on a revolutionary perspective. The SWP majority under Cannon and Farrell Dobbs fought to preserve the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism against this liquidationism. But they themselves

were not immune from the deforming pressures that led the Cochranites to split.

Four years later, in 1957, the SWP supported the introduction of federal troops into Little Rock, Arkansas—the end result of which was the crushing of local black self-defense efforts against the howling racist mobs fighting school integration. Painting U.S. troops as reliable defenders of black people engendered significant opposition within the party in the 1950s, particularly from Richard Fraser whose program of revolutionary integrationism as the road to black freedom in the U.S. we take as our own. But the wrong line was never corrected and the view of the U.S. imperialist army as the only “realistic” force to defend civil rights protesters in the Jim Crow South against racist terror deepened. By 1964 the SWP had adopted the grotesque campaign slogan, “Withdraw the Troops from Viet Nam and Send Them to Mississippi!” By 1965, the SWP had thrown overboard the last remnant of a revolu-

tionary opposition to imperialism, promoting the reformist lie that a classless peace movement could stop U.S. imperialism’s dirty war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants.

The young SWP cadre in the Revolutionary Tendency who fought the party’s degeneration were the founding leaders of our organization. Recognizing where the SWP went, and holding it up as a mirror of where we could go without correcting our mistakes and the outright betrayal of our revolutionary internationalist program in response to the Haiti earthquake, is part of the fight to preserve this continuity with Cannon’s revolutionary party that extends back to Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks.

But the ability to make such a correction is hardly cause for celebration. It merely lays the basis for political rectification. We crossed the class line and the urgent necessity is to reassert and struggle to maintain the proletarian internationalist program of Leninism. ■

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Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.

For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!

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Young Spartacus

Mexico:

A Marxist Analysis of the UNAM Student Strike, 1999-2000

From 20 April 1999 through 6 February 2000, students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) shut down the university in protest against attacks on public education. With more than 250,000 students from high school through graduate school and a main campus called University City (CU) spanning more than two million square meters in the south of Mexico City, UNAM is the biggest university in Latin America. It has

ESPARTACO

long been a center of the left in Mexico, including during the student strike and mass protests before the 1968 Olympics, which were brutally suppressed by government forces in what became known as the Tlatelolco massacre.

The 1999-2000 student strike was called against attacks that aimed to exclude thousands of poor and working-class youth from higher education, including the proposed imposition of tuition and limiting the time allowed to complete a degree. The strike polarized Mexican society, gaining support among key sectors of the working class in Mexico City. In the course of the strike, a layer of student activists broke from illusions in the bourgeois-populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), although many of these students turned to a more left version of bourgeois populism represented by the Zapatistas. The strike ended only when thousands of police, dispatched by the federal government and the PRD-led Mexico City government, raided CU and arrested about 700 students.

The strike took place in the context of a push by the rapacious U.S. imperialists and their lackeys in the Mexican bourgeoisie to implement austerity measures, including privatizing state-owned industries, slashing government programs and attacking the living standards of the working class and peasantry, as dictated by the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement and the International Monetary Fund. These “neoliberal” attacks were first implemented in Mexico by presidents Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-94) and Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000)—the last two presidents from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that had ruled Mexico for some seven decades. In the late 1980s, a section of the PRI led by populist Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas broke away to form what became the PRD. Cárdenas lost to Salinas in the fraudulent 1988 presidential elections. When the UNAM strike began, Cárdenas was the mayor of Mexico City. In July 2000, former Coca-Cola executive Vicente Fox, of the Catholic right-wing National Action Party (PAN), won the presidential election, ending the period of PRI rule.

Our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México intervened in the strike, combating illusions in the PRD—a capitalist party that pushes populist rhetoric—and struggling to win young militants to



José Núñez photos

Top: Unionized workers and striking students protest in defense of free education and against privatizations, Mexico City, August 1999. Above: Heated debate at General Strike Council assembly in UNAM's Che Guevara auditorium.

the perspective of forging a revolutionary workers party. Seeking to bring the power of the international working class to bear in defense of the besieged strikers, after the brutal police crackdown the International Communist League mobilized protests internationally, elicited statements of solidarity and raised money for their defense, including here in the belly of the imperialist beast. We print below the translation of an article that appeared in the GEM's newspaper,

Espartaco No. 31 (Spring 2009), on the anniversary of the strike.

* * *

The UNAM strike from April 1999 to February 2000 was the longest and perhaps the most militant student struggle in the history of that institution. For ten months, tens of thousands of radicalized students, mainly from working-class and poor families, occupied the facilities of the largest university in Latin America in a vital strug-

gle to defend free public education.

Having gone as far as it could as a student strike, this movement showed its potential for igniting proletarian struggle. Indeed, the student movement of 1999 had something that others, including 1968, lacked: the active sympathy of key sectors of the proletariat. The student struggle intersected broad worker discontent with the neoliberal policies of brutal capitalist austerity and the threat of the privatization of the energy sector, which led to numerous joint mobilizations of students and unions such as the UNT [National Workers Union], the SME [Mexican Electrical Workers Union] and sections of the SUTERM [national electrical workers union]. However, mainly thanks to the services of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, the working class was demobilized and the strike was left isolated.

The strike was able to stop the imposition of tuition, an important gain, but it was brutally broken in February 2000 by the armed forces of the bourgeois state. This police operation, under the joint command of the federal government and the local PRD government, left hundreds of activists in jail or expelled and their movement dismembered. Access to higher education remains out of reach for the majority (this year alone, 155,000 undergraduate applicants will not be admitted to UNAM).

During the course of our intervention in the strike—helping to extend the strike to the Universum [Science Museum] on the first day, defending the facilities, building barricades, intervening constantly in CGH [General Strike Council] assemblies and in demonstrations and workers' assemblies—we struggled for a strategy centered on mobilizing the social power of the working class and against illusions in the bourgeois populism of the PRD. The struggle for free public education has always been explosive in Mexican society, but, as with other basic rights, free, quality public education for all cannot be fully achieved under capitalism because of the nature of the system itself, which is based on maximizing profits for the capitalist class at the expense of the interests of workers and the oppressed. We struggle to win students to the side of the working class through building a vanguard workers party whose purpose would be the struggle for international socialist revolution—the only way to achieve an egalitarian communist society on the basis of abundance.

The Post-Soviet World and the Strengthening of Nationalist Populism

The political context of the UNAM strike was conditioned by the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, which eliminated the powerful military and economic counterweight to imperialism constituted by the first and most powerful workers state, which issued from the victorious Russian Revolution of 1917. The International Communist League was unique in defending to

For Free, Quality Education for All! Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Workers Party!

the last barricade the Soviet degenerated workers state, which, despite its Stalinist degeneration, still had collectivized property in the means of production and a planned economy. We also fought for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and return the USSR to the road of Lenin and Trotsky.

The rise of U.S. imperialism as the hegemonic power after the counterrevolution brought with it an imperialist military advance and increased intervention in the neocolonial economies of the Third World. The investment of U.S. capital in Mexico underwent enormous growth and a qualitative expansion with the 1994 implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has ruined millions of peasants. The increasing intervention of imperialist capital in Mexico led to a brutal decrease in the standard of living of the masses and a general attack on social gains, such as public education and workers' rights. It also undermined the corporatist national economic structure, which was the foundation of the septuagenarian PRI regime, enabling the PAN to come to power in the elections in 2000.

The ideologues of the bourgeoisie took advantage of the collapse of the Soviet Union to proclaim the "death of communism" and declare that Marxism was a "failed experiment." In this reactionary period, workers organizations around the world generally no longer identify with the ideals of Marxism. In Mexico, where there has never been a mass labor party

Zapatista guerrilla leader Subcomandante Marcos with PRD leaders Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (center) and Pablo Gómez (far right). Zapatistas seek to pressure bourgeois populists to reform the capitalist state.



versity Student Congress] and the CEM [Metropolitan Student Committee]. In our interventions before and during the strike, we Spartacists denounced the class-collaborationist politics of all these organizations. The PRD, a party that is committed to the perpetuation of the Mexican capitalist system based on private property in the means of production, is the enemy of the victory of the proletariat, and its differences with the PRI and the PAN are merely about how to administer the capitalist state.

The influence of populism at UNAM was also reflected in the support for the EZLN [Zapatistas] in the CGH. It was not unusual for student assemblies to end with the singing of the Zapatista anthem, followed by the bourgeois national anthem!



Francisco Olvera

January 2008: Workers and peasants demonstrate in downtown Mexico City against NAFTA, U.S. imperialists' "free trade" rape of Mexico.

and where nationalism has served to bind the working class to the bourgeoisie, for many students even the notion of the enormous social power of the working class—which they have *never* seen mobilized to a significant degree—is a mere abstraction.

Faced with the pro-imperialist "free market" reforms pushed by the "technocrats" of the PRI in the '90s, and without a class-struggle alternative within the spectrum of political organizations in Mexico, most leftist-minded students and workers even more strongly adopted the populist ideology of the sector of the Mexican bourgeoisie grouped around the PRD. The PRD took advantage of the massive discontent with the PRI regime and the electoral fraud in the 1988 elections. Thus, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas won the election for mayor of Mexico City in 1997. Throughout 1999, the PRD was mainly working on building an alliance with the PAN to present its then-traditional candidate, Cárdenas, as a contender in the following year's [presidential] elections—which he lost ignominiously to the neo-Cristero Fox.

At the beginning of 1999, UNAM was a bastion of the PRD in the capital (and still is). Most groups with a certain amount of influence among leftist students at the university, such as En Lucha and the Socialist Workers Party (POS), were tailing populism. Others were openly and directly the arm of the PRD at UNAM, like the "historical" CEU [Uni-

From the beginning of their movement, the Zapatistas were aptly described by Carlos Fuentes as the "first post-communist rebellion," and they explicitly stated that their ideology was "neither communist nor, as they say, Marxist." By the spring of 1994, they were not even in favor of the overthrow of the Salinas de Gortari government, and they openly reduced their role to being a mere pressure group for the democratic reform of the capitalist state. (Today, the EZLN pushes illusions in a new *bourgeois* constitution to serve the poor and oppressed, as they stated in the "Sixth Declaration," the program of the "other campaign.")

Since the Zapatista uprising in 1994, we Spartacists have called for the defense of the EZLN against the attacks of the bourgeois state and for the immediate withdrawal of the army from Chiapas. At the same time, we reject the program of the EZLN, which denies the fundamental division of society into two classes with conflicting interests and dissolves the working class in the mass of the "people." Correspondingly, they embrace and promote the fallacy of bourgeois nationalism—the supposed community of interests between the exploited and the exploiters of the same country. Camouflaged by the fashionable rhetoric of eternal "resistance," Zapatismo is an ideology of defeat; it is the clear reflection of the acceptance of the bourgeois lie of the "death of communism."

By the end of the summer of 1999,

there was a radicalization of the strikers and many boasted of being communists, which was reflected in their signs and slogans. But their vision of "communism" was really a version of the same radical populism; it had more to do with Zapatismo (original [from the 1910-20 Mexican Revolution] and current) than with the October Revolution or the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This prefigured the current fashion among populist intellectuals of talking about "socialism," which they identify with bourgeois regimes like that of Hugo Chávez.

There is no "progressive" or "anti-imperialist" wing of the bourgeoisie, which as a class is tied to and intrinsically dependent on imperialist finance capital. The proletariat is the only class with the objective interest and the social power to destroy capitalism and satisfy the aspirations of the masses, such as political democracy, agrarian revolution or national emancipation. Formerly associated with bourgeois revolutions—like the great French Revolution of the 18th century—in the epoch of imperialist decay these democratic demands cannot be resolved without a socialist revolution with the revolutionary proletariat leading the peasant masses and the urban poor, and its international extension, especially and urgently to the imperialist colossus of the North. Only through an internationally collectivized and planned economy will it be possible to eliminate the misery inherent in this society. This is the essence of Trotsky's permanent revolution.

The Student Struggle and the Centrality of the Proletariat

The student struggle was sparked by the attempt to impose the General Regulation of Payments (RGP) in March 1999 by then-university chancellor Francisco Barnés de Castro, as part of an austerity plan that included cutting UNAM's budget by 30 percent during the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. In response, students carried out several rolling strikes beginning March 11, in preparation for the indefinite strike that would break out on April 20. Parallel to this and until August of the same year, massive joint mobilizations of workers and students against privatizations and in defense of free education filled the streets of the city.

There was evident sympathy for the student struggle among the working class;

the call for a worker-student alliance was in vogue and the slogan "SME, UNAM will triumph united!" was common. There was a conjunctural unity of interests between the striking students and the workers who were fighting against privatizations and increased poverty. As we explained in a speech on August 13 at a rally of the CGH in the Zócalo [Mexico City's main plaza]: "The fight in defense of public education, which is part of a broader struggle against the privatizing schemes directed against the working class, can go forward only if the unions also go on strike. By themselves, students lack any social power. What is needed is that labor flex its muscles through strike actions to stop production and services. That the student strike has lasted so long is due to the support received from university workers, reinforced by brigades of workers from other powerful unions" [printed in "Down With Government Repression Against UNAM Student Strike!" WV No. 718, 3 September 1999].

Indeed, students, together with peasants, small vendors and professionals, are part of the petty bourgeoisie, an enormous and heterogeneous social layer with no direct relationship to the means of production and highly stratified between its highest and lowest levels. Lacking social power and its own class perspective, the petty bourgeoisie is incapable of offering an alternative to capitalism; it follows the bourgeoisie or the proletariat depending on the relationship of forces between them.

We Spartacists were guided by the understanding formulated more than 40 years ago by our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S.:

"It is false to assume that the student movement can break its isolation by merely seeking 'allies' in the labor movement.... It is naive and hypocritical to sit back and expect the workers to 'rise,' come to the rescue of the students and remake society without revolutionary consciousness and leadership. Students must go to the workers not as students seeking allies and followers, but as revolutionaries, with the understanding that only the working class, because of its unique position as society's producers, has the power to lead a social revolution in modern society. This involves a complete change of orientation, from student radical to working-class revolutionary, and an adoption of Marxism, the ideology of the revolutionary working-class struggle.

"It is *only* through the construction of a revolutionary Marxist party that the struggles of students, workers and Black people can be effectively linked."

—"The Berkeley Student Strike," *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 9 (January-February 1967)

As an integral part of this perspective, we categorically opposed the bourgeois nationalism that dominated the student movement and the workers protests, which were usually carried out under the prominent slogan of "The fatherland cannot be sold!" and at which prominent members of the PRD like the sinister Porfirio Muñoz Ledo—a former president of the PRI who enthusiastically supported the Tlatelolco massacre—frequently enjoyed themselves parading on the platforms next to the union bureaucrats. Indeed, bourgeois nationalism has historically

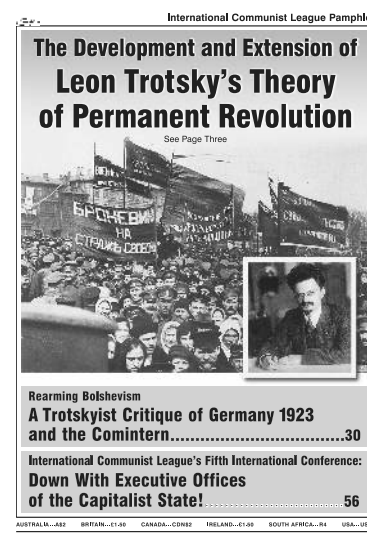
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International Communist League pamphlet comprising three articles from ICL press: "The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution," "A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern" and "Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!" These articles together constitute an introduction to the historically founded principles and program of Trotskyism (i.e., genuine Marxism).

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strike. The “emeritus” group demanded the end of the strike in exchange for the temporary suspension of the General Regulation of Payments. The issue of fees, like all the other demands of the CGH, would be debated in “discussion and analysis spaces,” after which the administration’s right-wing puppet Consejo Universitario [University Council] would make decisions. In essence, the “emeritus” group was calling for the end of the strike with nothing in return.

On August 4 the PRD government brutally repressed a strike picket line at an “alternate site” for registration, resulting in more than 100 strikers being beaten and arrested. From then on, the PRD mobilized its riot police (as well as numerous *porro* thug attacks and provocations) more and more brutally and actively against the CGH. The repression deeply shook the strikers. At the same time, worker support for the student strike was more than tangible. In addition to the joint marches, every day hundreds of STUNAM workers helped students guard the facilities, and they continued to do this on their own initiative throughout the strike. It was especially significant that, beginning in July, the SME had pickets at UNAM for several weeks, carrying with them the enormous social weight of the electrical workers union to discourage any attempt to break the strike.

Far from being intimidated, the CGH kept organizing flying pickets throughout the city to guard threatened university facilities, as well as to prevent “extramural” classes and registration for the coming semester. On August 8, a few days after the first massive PRD attack on the strike, the CGH declared Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and other prominent populists to be “persona non grata” at UNAM. Shortly afterward, the main PRD spokesman in the strike, Fernando Belaunzarán, was literally kicked out of the CGH—well deservedly, of course. The CEU ceased to exist as a current in the strike. The CEM, the POS and [the International Marxist Tendency’s affiliate] Militante were profoundly discredited. The “moderates” briefly attempted to organize an “alternate CGH” as a provocation and sabotage, which only led to ridicule by the majority of the strikers.

The PRD’s expulsion from the CGH was a product of disappointment and healthy fury against this bourgeois party due to the increasing repression against the CGH, and was perhaps the most significant reflection of the radicalization of the student strikers. We fought in our interventions to give this disillusionment with the PRD a *class* character: the understanding that the PRD is a bourgeois party that serves the capitalist regime, that has nothing to offer the workers and oppressed other than hunger and repression.

The Responsibility of the Union Bureaucracies

While the venal PRI bureaucracies openly supported the repression, the SME bureaucracy, worried that worker discontent might escape its control, withdrew the ephemeral workers guards from CU [the main campus of UNAM] at the beginning of August, in an obvious response to the growing disrepute of the PRD in the CGH. After the march on August 28—when *hundreds of thousands* of workers and the CGH mobilized against the privatizations and in defense of free education—the SME bureaucracy stopped all joint mobilizations with the students. For its part, responding to pressure from its base, the STUNAM bureaucracy gave considerable material support to the CGH, even while it backed the “democratic” provocations of the administration—from supporting the proposal of the “emeritus” group in July to the de la Fuente “plebiscite” in January 2000. More significantly, it did everything in its power to demobilize the workers. Thus, with the argument that it did not want to “confront” the student strike, the STUNAM bureaucracy postponed its strike



WV Photo

Left: New York City, October 1999. Partisan Defense Committee called protests internationally against Mexican state’s crackdown on UNAM strike. Right: UNAM’s Che Guevara auditorium on the morning of 6 February 2000 as the police broke the strike.



Francisco Olvera

deadline, which should have been November 1, to 1 February 2000 (when they would then call off the strike!). This was a particularly grotesque and obvious maneuver to isolate the students. As we wrote at the time: “What the student strike needs to win is precisely to be extended to the proletariat. What the nationalist bureaucracy of STUNAM wants to avoid is causing greater problems for the bourgeoisie, not for the student strikers” (*Espartaco* No. 13, Autumn-Winter 1999). In reality, the *central responsibility* for the isolation of the strike rests with these popular, supposedly “independent” and “militant” bureaucracies.

All unions today are led by pro-capitalist bureaucracies—the labor lieutenants of capital in the workers movement—who are conscious of their privileges deriving from their position at the head of workers organizations. The central role of the bureaucracies is to keep the working class under control and tied to the bourgeoisie. We Trotskyists fight to replace *all* these bureaucracies with genuine class-struggle leadership. As Leon Trotsky explained in his article “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940):

“The trade unions of our time will serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capital to subordinate and discipline the workers and to obstruct the revolution or, on the contrary, the unions will become tools of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat....

“In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in addition, the organs of proletarian revolution.”

The Internationalist Group (IG), another of the pseudo-Trotskyist groups active in the strike, brags of having played an important role in the formation of the workers guards of the SME and other unions that were present on the main campus of UNAM for a few weeks in July and August of 1999. The presence of these guards temporarily halted the capitalist repression and showed the type of mobilizations that were necessary to win the strike. Nonetheless, in a typically centrist manner, when the IG promoted the formation of workers guards in a STUNAM meeting on 6 July 1999, it avoided any mention of the presence of the Auxilio UNAM police in the union. Then, it publicly accused us of sabotaging the meeting for having explained exactly this key question! This behavior by the IG was completely consistent with its history, since stumbling over the class line has been a defining characteristic of the IG from its beginnings. Its Brazilian comrades debuted in 1996 by dragging a union into the bourgeois courts—a class betrayal—as part of an intra-bureaucratic fight for control of the union... which was infested with cops! (See *Espartaco* No. 10, Autumn-Winter 1997 [“IG’s Brazil Cover-Up: Dirty Hands, Cynical Lies,” WV No. 671, 11 July 1997].)

The IG was by then inventing a *class* difference between these pro-PRD union bureaucracies and those that are tied to the PRI. The IG considers that the unions affiliated with the PRI are nothing more than “an arm of the bourgeois state” (*El*

Internacionalista, March 2000). The IG’s politics are not based on any Marxist analysis but rather are an accommodation to the anti-union prejudices dominant in the student body. Thus, according to the IG’s convenient “analysis,” the only genuine workers unions in the country are those tied *to the PRD*! But the class struggle does not appear to be particularly concerned with the IG’s rulings. In fact, defying their right-wing leadership, entire sections of the powerful SUTERM, together with the pro-PRD unions and the CGH, called the enormous mobilization of 28 August 1999. Between the end of September and mid-October 1999, the sugar workers union, affiliated with the CTM [pro-PRI Mexican Labor Federation], carried out an economic strike, and a workers delegation came to the CGH to express its solidarity and donate tons of sugar for the student strikers to sweeten their coffee. In addition, for several years now, the miners union has been involved in the hardest class struggles against state interference and in defense of economic conquests. The IG has a *union-busting* line in the service of the bourgeois PRD and its lieutenants in the workers movement. With this spurious “justification,” the IG in fact refuses to defend the PRI unions and their struggles against the state and the bosses—a class betrayal—because their leaderships support the wrong bourgeois party.

The Strike at an Impasse

After the retreat of the union bureaucracy, the bourgeois offensive against the strike became especially brutal and sinister. Besides the constant *porro* thug provocations, on October 5 “El Mosh” and our comrade Humberto Herrera, a union member with 20 years of experience at the time, were kidnapped and tortured for hours. In response, sections of our International Communist League held protests at Mexican embassies and consulates around the world demanding: “Defend the UNAM strike! Down with state terror against the left! For union strikes against privatizations and in defense of public education!” A few days

later, on October 14, a CGH march on the Periférico beltway was brutally attacked by riot police. In spite of the brutal repression, the strikers were determined to continue with their struggle, as shown by the November 5 CGH march from Televisa San Angel to Los Pinos [the official residence and office of the president] via the Periférico, which had more than 100,000 participants and was surrounded by more than 15,000 cops.

Faced with growing criticism from the bourgeoisie over his inability to resolve the conflict, the chancellor, Francisco Barnés, tendered his resignation on November 12. This awakened new illusions within the CGH, and many strikers celebrated this “victory.” The LTS was among the most enthusiastic, writing soon afterward:

“The CGH, with its democratic organization and great methods of struggle (like the occupation of facilities and mobilizations like the ones on the Periférico), got rid of Barnés, the first great triumph of the strike.”

—*Estrategia Obrera* No. 11, January-February 2000

The LTS’s glorification of the supposed “horizontal democracy” of the CGH and its “great methods of struggle” (the “powerful actions” of “El Mosh”) show the total prostration of these pseudo-Trotskyists in the face of student militancy and their lack of a forward-looking perspective. Barnés’s resignation was no triumph. In reality, the student strike had gone as far as it could as such, and in the face of the withdrawal of union support, it found itself at an impasse.

The Breaking of the Strike

The incompetent Barnés was soon replaced by a much more efficient politician, de la Fuente, who wasted no time before starting to pave the way for massive repression and the final breaking of the strike through his university “plebiscite” on the strike. With the support of the entire spectrum of the populist intelligentsia (including Elena Poniatowska, Carlos Monsiváis, and many other current members of [leading PRD politician] Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s

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Mexico...

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top brass), de la Fuente mobilized bourgeois “public opinion” against the CGH, demanding the end of the strike in exchange for the promise of a “congress” and declaring that any “dialogue” was at an end until the strike was lifted. Nonetheless, En Lucha again misled the CGH into a renewed attempt at “dialogue” with the person who would, a few months later, facilitate the massive repression of the strike.

The CGH responded to de la Fuente’s “plebiscite” with its own plebiscite in the middle of January, in which hundreds of thousands, within UNAM and outside it, declared their support for the CGH’s demands. After the repression against the December 11 protest, there were several more attacks, including the police occupation of the Prepa 3 high school on February 1. The biggest blow was when the STUNAM bureaucracy postponed the strike scheduled for February 1, at a moment when it was clear that massive repression was coming. Finally, on February 6, the PFP [Federal Preventive Police] and the riot police—more than 2,000 in all—took over the main campus and broke the strike, with about 700 arrests. Putting a spotlight on repression in Mexico, the ICL again held protests around the world against the repression and for the immediate release of all those detained. We again called on STUNAM to flex its muscles in defense of the students through a strike. Letters of solidarity written as a result of our campaign

arrived from important unions in South Africa and Italy, among others. We also organized an international fund drive to help the detained students make bail.

As we wrote in a 6 February 2000 ICL statement [“Free All Arrested UNAM Strikers! Defend Public Education!” WV No. 729, 11 February 2000]:

“The government has bloodied and repressed the students because they think they can get away with it. The student strike has held out for many months and the students have fought valiantly. But student protest on its own is insufficient. To go beyond verbal protest and change society, students and all those seeking social justice must be anchored in the social and economic realities of the country and must mobilize the tremendous social power of the proletariat against the Mexican rulers and their imperialist overlords. We say: *No new 1968 massacres! Mobilize the power of the working class! Forge a revolutionary Trotskyist party!*”

The history of the UNAM strike brings key lessons for social activists today. The illusions of the CGH leaders in the “democratization” of UNAM and their confidence in the authorities reflect the rejection of the need for the revolutionary reorganization of society. Only through the construction of a revolutionary workers party can a consistent struggle be waged for the interests of workers, women, indigenous people, peasants and all the oppressed. Any path other than the revolutionary one leads inevitably to co-optation by the PRD or some other bourgeois force and/or being crushed by the state. The purpose should not be to pressure the PRD and its numerous fellow travelers but to break with them; it is nationalist populism that prevents successful struggle by the working class and



Espartaco

SME Mexican electrical workers union march in August 1999. We fought to link student strike to social power of working class.

keeps it divided. To forge a revolutionary party that, in Lenin’s words, acts as the “tribune of the people,” the fight against all forms of oppression and backwardness is key. A constant feature of our intervention during the UNAM strike was the fight against students’ enthusiastic acceptance of widespread discrimination and fanaticism. We constantly had to raise our voices against the sexist, homophobic and anti-Semitic epithets that echoed during the marches and assemblies of the strike.

In the struggle against false bourgeois ideology, we Spartacists raise the declaration of Leon Trotsky: “Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer” (*Lessons of October*, 1924). We empha-

size that students have an important role to play: the revolutionary organization of the working class must unite the vanguard of the working class with *declassed* intellectuals who use their abilities and knowledge in the service of *proletarian emancipation*. Quoting James P. Cannon, the founder of Trotskyism in the United States, the Spartacist speaker concluded his remarks on 13 August 1999:

“Our party is a party of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletarian revolution is the only solution to the problem of the working class, and all our work must lead to that goal.’ Such is the basis of Spartacist politics. Break with the bourgeoisie! No illusions in the bourgeois PRD! Forge an international Leninist-Trotskyist party! For new October Revolutions around the world!” ■

Poland...

(continued from page 3)

oppression have been eliminated once and for all. Fascism, defined by ultranationalism, is a form of *capitalist* rule in extremis: when it feels its power and profits sufficiently threatened by an insurgent proletariat, the bourgeoisie finances the mobilization of enraged petty-bourgeois and lumpen mobs to crush the workers movement under the iron heel of genocidal social reaction. Fear and hatred of Communism has always been a central pillar of fascist ideology. For example, Hitlerite Germany’s 1936 agreement with the Japanese militarists was called the “Anti-Comintern Pact.”

The truth of the matter is that the anti-communists who today denounce “totalitarianism” by and large stood *with the Nazis* against “Jew-Bolshevism.” Baltic nationalists openly declare themselves to be the heirs of the likes of the Estonian Forest Brothers, who abetted the Nazi Holocaust of millions of Jews, Roma and Soviet citizens. And the architects of Polish Solidarność, which spearheaded the drive for capitalist restoration throughout the Soviet bloc, drew inspiration from nationalist, anti-Communist antecedents such as interwar dictator Jozef Pilsudski, who presided over a panoply of discriminatory measures against Jews, and the virulently chauvinist, overtly anti-Semitic National Democrats (Endeks).

While many Polish workers courageously opposed anti-Semitism as a tool of bourgeois reaction, the vast majority of Polish nationalists not only did nothing to fight against the Nazi “final solution” but, as with the Endeks, actually welcomed it, joining in pogroms of Jews both before and after Poland’s liberation by the Soviet Army. In 1991, Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, a former Solidarność activist, claimed that “45 years of communism had caused more damage to Poland than the Nazi occupation.” (This beneficiary of “reborn” Polish capitalism is also known for saying: “The first million has to be stolen.”) To Bielecki and his ilk, the slaughter of three million Polish Jews (as well as Roma and nearly three million other Poles), whose numbers included a large and vibrant component of the multiethnic revolutionary workers movement, was not at all “damaging.”

In conjuring up allegations of tens of millions of victims of Communism, Polish reactionaries take a page from *The Black Book of Communism* published in France in 1997, which in turn borrowed not a little from the demented ravings of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Stéphane Courtois, the editor of the *Black Book*, railed in his introduction that “a single-minded focus on the Jewish genocide in an attempt to characterize the Holocaust as a unique atrocity has also prevented an assessment of other episodes of comparable magnitude in the Communist world.”



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New York, September 1981: Spartacists demonstrate in front of Solidarność office at teachers union headquarters, exposing Solidarność as company union for CIA, Vatican and Wall Street.

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certainly be subject to revolutionary justice.) *Nevertheless, Katyn is not a crime against the Polish working people.* These were the military officers of a fascistic, anti-Semitic dictatorship which regularly butchered workers and even bourgeois dissidents" ("Pilsudski and Counterrevolution in Poland," WV No. 293, 20 November 1981).

Anti-Communism and anti-Semitism were part and parcel of Polish nationalism from well before the Hitler-Stalin pact. Almost from the moment of its birth in December 1918, the Polish Communist Party was banned in “independent” capitalist Poland (which was in fact utterly dependent on French and British imperialism). Throughout the party’s existence, until its dissolution by Stalin in 1938, the heroic Polish Communists who fought underground for the cause of the proletariat were subjected to imprisonment, torture and murder. Against nationalists of all stripes, we proclaim the historic slogan of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky: *For the revolutionary unity of the Polish, Russian and German proletariat!*

Anti-Communism: Spearhead of Social Reaction

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Polish deformed workers state and the restoration of capitalist class rule in 1989-90 ushered in widespread unemployment and immiseration and the



Fidrych/Agencja Gazeta

**Walbrzych, Poland:
Unemployed
men risk their
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intrusion of anti-Semitic and anti-woman Catholic reaction into every sphere of society. Millions of women were driven out of social production and forced back into the stifling confines of the kitchen. The unconditional right to abortion was overturned; day-care facilities for children were eliminated; secular education and the separation of church and state were demolished as crucifixes and religious instruction were imposed on schools. For large numbers of working people, the "magic of the market" meant emigrating abroad in an attempt to secure some sort of livelihood.

Anti-communism goes hand in hand with broader social reaction. This is exemplified by the fact that the current anti-communist ban is linked to meas-

ures aimed against pornography, sexual activity involving youth under the age of 15 and other such “crimes without victims.” These measures are linked to a vile witchhunt targeting the right of adults and youth to engage in mutually consensual sexual relations, with the Polish bourgeoisie screaming for pedophiles to be imprisoned and “chemically castrated.” We are against any government intrusion into consensual sexual relationships. *Down with the criminalization of pedophilia! Down with the reactionary concept of “age of consent”! Priests, cops and prosecutors out of the bedroom! For the unrestricted right to abortion—Free abortion on demand!*

The proposed ban on communist symbols would generalize and legitimize the reactionary vendetta that has been a hallmark of capitalist restoration in Poland. The right wing continues to pursue a witchhunt against the former Stalinist officials of the People's Republic of Poland. Earlier this year, the government cut pensions for former employees of the old state security apparatus, including even office cleaners and clerks. Wojciech Jaruzelski, who stood at the head of the Stalinist regime that suppressed a counterrevolutionary bid for power by Solidarność in December 1981, is again on trial on criminal charges. Former ZOMO anti-riot police last year received prison sentences of up to six years for the shooting deaths of nine miners in Kato-

wice during the 1981 state of emergency.

Jaruzelski is being tried by the wrong class for the wrong crimes. For proletarian revolutionaries, the suppression of Solidarność counterrevolution was no crime. From the moment Solidarność consolidated around an open program of capitalist restoration at its first national congress in September 1981, we Trotskyists declared: Stop Solidarność counterrevolution! (see Spartacist pamphlet, *Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers*). In this we were opposed by an alliance ranging from the Vatican and the CIA to the German Social Democracy (SPD), the New York City teachers union of Albert Shanker and Yetta Barshevsky (Max Shachtman's widow) and the bulk of the fake-Trotskyist left. We fought for a proletarian political revolution to replace Stalinist misrule with the rule of democratically elected workers soviets committed to a perspective of international proletarian revolution. We condemned the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy for its betrayals, for its nationalism and conciliation of imperialism abroad and the church at home, for its lies and bureaucratism, which ultimately drove much of the historically pro-socialist proletariat into the arms of clerical reaction in 1980-81. Then in 1989-90, the Stalinists sold out the deformed workers state to Solidarność and its imperialist backers. We say: *Hands off Jaruzelski and other former Stalinist officials!*

In a creditable protest against the anti-communist ban posted on its Web site (www.kompol.org, 26 September 2009), the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) stated: “We strongly oppose efforts to equate fascism—which, based on racism, led to the bloodiest war in history thanks to the implementation of a plan to exterminate millions of people—with communism, which is built on the principles of social justice, and which defeated



Der Spiegel

1945: Poles greet Soviet Red Army troops following liberation of Poland from Nazi scourge.

the genocidal fascists thanks to the utter dedication to struggle and sacrifice of countless millions of men, women and children. Despite even the most brutal repression we will not stop in our struggle for the victory of socialism, nor turn from the road to a victorious communist destiny!"

But what the KPP means by “communism” is not the proletarian internationalism of Marx and Engels and the Bolsheviks but its nationalist antithesis, codified in the Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country.” In their own ways, the SLD and the KPP are both decomposition products of the former Stalinist bureaucracy and its sham “people’s democracy.” Where the SLD exalts (capitalist) “democracy,” the KPP glorifies Stalin.

Unlike reformists and liberals, we do not call on the bourgeois state to ban the fascists. Such calls, premised on illusions in the good offices of bourgeois democracy, will inevitably be used against the left and the workers movement, which is the main target of capitalist state repression. For instance, a law criminalizing a fascist group in West Germany in the early 1950s was used a few years later to ban the Communist Party there. And a recent Czech court ruling banning the fascist “Workers Party” is now providing further ammunition to those who want to ban the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. We look to the mobilization of the proletariat, standing at the head of all the potential victims of fascist terror, to sweep the fascists off the streets.

While the class rule of the bourgeoisie is not threatened right now, the world recession underlines the truth of Marx's analysis that capitalism is a crisis-ridden system. The right-wing parties governing Poland have been in power for a number of years. But Poland is hardly a stable bourgeois democracy, and though socialist revolution is not imminent, this decadent, third-rate bourgeoisie has good cause to fear a reawakening of the once pro-socialist Polish proletariat. Notwithstanding that sections of the working

class had been intoxicated by clerical-nationalist *Solidarność*, when the first *Solidarność* government tried to implement its “free market” attacks on the working class in 1990 it was met by a wave of strikes and was soon replaced by a government led by the social-democratic SLD. Even now, despite 20 years of official anti-Communist hysteria in every sphere of public life, half the population continues to support the December 1981 state of emergency imposed by Jaruzelski. “God, Honor and Fatherland,” the watchwords of Polish reaction, ring hollow to a generation of youth raised amid the glorification of capitalist greed and fawning capitulation to the NATO imperialists.

Those looking for a way out of the stultifying dead end of this decaying capitalist order will find it in the authentic communism of the Three L's—V.I. Lenin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. As the 1990 founding statement of the Spartacist Group of Poland, section of the International Communist League, stated (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91):

“A Trotskyist party must be a tribune of the people, championing all victims of oppression. The drive to restore capitalism revives and intensifies all the ‘old crap’ of the prewar social order, from reactionary clericalism to Pilsudskiite nationalism and anti-Semitism....

“Polish Trotskyists must seek to reclaim the best traditions of the Polish workers movement, forged in the struggle against national chauvinism. This is exemplified by Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish Jewish communist and leader of the revolutionary German proletariat. Reviling Luxemburg for her internationalism, Stalin never trusted and finally liquidated the Polish CP, which was the first to come to the defense of comrade Trotsky by asserting in 1923 that ‘the name of Comrade Trotsky is insolubly connected with the victory of the Soviet Revolution, with the Red Army, with communism’.”

*Down with the anti-communist ban!
Forward to a red Poland of workers coun-
cils as part of a Socialist United States of
Europe! Reforge Trotsky's Fourth Interna-
tional, world party of socialist revolution! ■*

[illegible]

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Immigration...

(continued from page 1)

passage of the new law, in anti-immigrant raids carried out by Obama’s Department of Homeland Security (now headed by former Arizona governor Janet Napolitano). With helicopters buzzing overhead, up to 800 agents from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) and other police agencies, some in black hoods, launched a military-style attack on shuttle van businesses that transport immigrant workers in Phoenix, Tucson, Rio Rico and Nogales. Heralded as the biggest smuggling bust in the I.C.E.’s history, these raids provide a chilling snapshot of the Democrats’ program for “immigration reform.”

As described in a *Washington Post* (1 May) article: “The Democrats’ legislative ‘framework’ includes a slew of new immigration enforcement measures aimed at U.S. borders and workplaces. It would further expand the 20,000-member Border Patrol; triple fines against U.S. employers who hire illegal immigrants; and, most controversially, require all American workers—citizens and noncitizens alike—to get new Social Security cards linked to their fingerprints to ease checks of their work eligibility.” Obama promised to “open a pathway to citizenship” for the more than eleven million undocumented immigrants in this country. What this means is seen in the current Democratic proposal that these desperately impoverished workers turn themselves in as “lawbreakers,” pay heavy fines and back taxes, pass background checks and be proficient in English. Even then they would be granted only a provisional status for eight years.

This has not shaken the reformists’ illusions in Obama as “change” they can “believe in.” As usual, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) takes second place to no one on this score. A 30 April article in its press, *Socialist Worker*, opines: “A conversation about really progressive immigration reform needs to start by strategizing about how to stop the Arizona scare, and how to force Obama, who repeatedly has recognized that the system is broken, to stop deportations”! This, they argue, “can buy time for the movement to push for legislation...that puts the interests of the entire working class, immigrant and native-born alike, up front.”

The hard truth is that the capitalist

system is based on the brutal exploitation of all labor, with the ruling class inflaming racial and ethnic hostilities to keep the working class divided and thus ensure a greater extraction of profit. Just as immigrant workers are brought in during economic boom times to provide a pool of low-wage labor, the current rise in anti-immigrant attacks worldwide is exacerbated by the global economic crisis and its attendant soaring unemployment. As we wrote in the Interna-

for all immigrants as part of our struggle to advance the class consciousness and solidarity of the multiracial working class, preparing it for the necessary revolutionary battle to end capitalist class rule. A real fight for immigrant rights in this country will only begin when the workers—white, black, Latino and others—struggle based on their common interests as a class. This means opposition to all the political parties and state agencies of the capitalist class. Unlocking the



Spartacist banner at Los Angeles demonstration for immigrant rights, March 2006.

tional Communist League’s “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“Modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, reaching into all areas of the planet, in the course of the class struggle and as economic need demands, brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labor, principally immigrants from poorer and less-developed regions of the world—workers with few rights who are deemed more disposable in times of economic contraction. Thus capitalism in ongoing fashion creates different strata among the workers, while simultaneously amalgamating the workers of many different lands. Everywhere, the capitalists, abetted by aristocracy-of-labor opportunists, try to poison class consciousness and solidarity among the workers by fomenting religious, national and ethnic divisions. The struggle for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism is thus a vital task for the proletarian vanguard.”

We do not seek to tinker with the capitalist system by advising the bourgeoisie to take up an alternative immigration policy. We call for *full citizenship rights*

social power of the multiracial working class will take a political fight against the current pro-capitalist misleaders of labor who have shackled the working class to their exploiters, particularly through support for the Democratic Party.

Labor Lieutenants of the Capitalist Class

Many of the 1.8 million members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) are immigrants, and many of these have waged militant struggles to organize unions. But their interests are betrayed by the union leaders. A statement on Arizona’s anti-immigrant law by Eliseo Medina, executive vice president of the SEIU, declared:

“This radical anti-immigration law should be a wake-up call to Congress and the White House. Immigration is a national problem that needs a national solution.... We need immigration policies that will eliminate the underground economy by getting undocumented immigrants into the system, paying fines, back taxes, learning English and getting on local, state and federal tax rolls. We need reform that will truly end illegal immigration and hold bad-actor employers responsible for depressing wages and violating the right to a safe worksite for all workers.”

Likewise, AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka’s statement in opposition to the Arizona law demanded that “our focus should instead be on a comprehensive solution to the broken immigration system.”

Last year, the SEIU’s “Change to Win” union federation and the AFL-CIO issued a joint statement for “comprehensive immigration reform.” Embracing the government’s campaign against undocumented workers, these labor traitors seek only to tinker with its methods of repression. To regulate immigration, their “unified framework” called for “an independent commission to assess and manage future flows” of immigrant workers, leaving open the possibility of their own participation on such a commission as the labor police for the capitalist state. It also demanded more “rational operational control of the border” and a “secure and effective worker authorization mechanism.”

Since coming to power, bankrolled by millions in contributions from the labor tops, the Obama administration has expanded such “worker authorization mechanisms” as the E-Verify program, which is aimed at confirming the legal status of workers through checking their Social Security numbers against government databases. At one workplace after another, mass firings of immigrant workers have followed such audits. Last year, 254 workers, mostly women, at the

food processing plant Overhill Farms and another 1,500 at clothing maker American Apparel, both in the Los Angeles area, were driven out of their jobs after these so-called “desktop raids.” The Obama administration boasts that in its first year it deported a record number of “illegals.”

Such raids are an open invitation to get rid of union activists and other “troublemakers.” In 2006, the bosses at Smithfield’s pork processing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, tried to stop a fight for union recognition by firing 75 “no match” workers. A two-day walkout that included black and white workers as well as Latinos forced the company to rehire everyone. The workers won their union in late 2008, but by that time I.C.E. workplace raids had driven out a significant number of the immigrant workers.

The battle at Smithfield underlines the need for a mass, militant union organizing drive throughout the country and particularly in the open shop South. Only 6.5 percent of workers in Arizona, a notorious “right-to-work” state, are organized. Now, in response to the new anti-immigrant law, an article in the *Phoenix Business Journal* (30 April) reports that SEIU union representatives “say they are seeing a surge in inquiries from Hispanic workers in Arizona worried about the new law and the potential for more police raids and inquiries into their workplaces.” Enlisting immigrant workers—many of whom have a history of militant struggle in their own countries—in the front ranks of the labor movement is an urgent task both to fight the exploitation of the most vulnerable layers of the population and to bust the government’s anti-union laws. This in turn could reverse the decades-long decline of the trade unions in this country. Rather than defending the working class as a whole or even members of their own unions, the union bureaucracy embraces the “national” interests of the U.S. capitalist rulers as its own.

The Democrats’ “immigration reform” plans include the institution of a national biometric identity card for everyone in the United States. This will increase the police-state powers and repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, which have already been vastly augmented under the so-called “war on terror.” Under the Transportation Workers Identity Credential (TWIC) program, such biometric ID cards have already been mandated for hundreds of thousands of workers at the ports. To qualify for a TWIC card, all port workers had to submit to extensive criminal background and immigration checks. For black and Latino port workers, who have been particularly targeted under the racist “war on drugs,” even applying for the card meant running the risk of possible deportation or being pursued as some kind of “fugitive from justice.” The applications of tens of thousands of port workers were rejected, although some eventually won their cases on appeal. An unknown number of longshore and other port workers are permanently gone, branded as a threat to “national security” for trivial offenses like drug possession with “intent” to distribute, or just being an “illegal” immigrant.

Rather than fighting this “anti-terror” law, the response of the leaders of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union—which is still widely seen as a bastion of labor power and militancy—was to call for a more expedient and “fair” implementation of the TWIC program! As we wrote in “War on Terror”

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Crackdown on the Docks” (WV No. 936, 8 May 2009):

“For the ILWU and other longshore unions to wage a real fight against TWIC and the racist, union-busting ‘war on terror’ laws, the obvious starting point must be *opposition* to the very state that is enforcing these laws. It means championing full citizenship rights for all immigrants and fighting to organize foreign-born workers.... In a country built on the subjugation of black people, where racist reaction has long served to ratchet up the exploitation of the working class as a whole, the fight for black freedom is directly linked to the fight to break the chains of capitalist wage slavery and the state forces and laws that maintain it. But to wage that kind of struggle, the unions must be led by a different kind of leadership, one rooted in a program of class struggle, as opposed to the present misleaders whose policies of class collaboration increasingly subordinate the unions to the capitalist state.”

When the ILWU embraces TWIC, making itself an auxiliary to the racist crackdown on the port truckers; when the auto unions lobby for the bosses’ bailout schemes, pledging to lower the cost of union labor to rival the depressed wages and rotten conditions in non-union plants; when the powerful Teamsters union pleads that “unsafe” Mexican truckers should be barred from America’s highways: the conservative bureaucrats are lining up against the basic class interests of the international proletariat. Their highest loyalty is to capitalist profitability on behalf of their own racist ruling class, whose benefits are supposed to “trickle down.” This means pitting workers against one another in competition for crumbs and increasing poverty and unemployment, especially for the most vulnerable social layers.

Black Rights and Immigrant Rights

Calls for an economic boycott of Arizona have come from a variety of Democratic Party politicians, ranging from the San Francisco city government to New York’s Al Sharpton, with the reformist left, such as Workers World Party, bringing up the rear with the demand that capitalist investors and businesses “divest from the apartheid-like police state!” The last time there were appeals for such a boycott was in response to the refusal of the Arizona state administration to recognize Martin Luther King’s birthday as

an official holiday. That refusal, together with the state’s apartheid-style, anti-immigration law, captures something of the history of Arizona. This history is in turn emblematic of the racial oppression of blacks and anti-immigrant reaction that are central to the maintenance of American capitalism.

Until the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, Arizona like most of the Southwest was part of Mexico. It was in large measure the Southern slavocracy’s drive to extend slavery that motivated the invasion of Mexico, which resulted in the U.S. stealing half of Mexico’s territory. Today, Latinos—largely Mexicans and Mexican Americans—make up more than 30 percent of the state’s population. Although black people are a mere 4.2 per-



Lenny Ignelzi

Obama’s Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano at Southern California’s Otay Mesa port of entry, April 2009.

cent of Arizona’s population, the state has long been a bastion of anti-black racism. Barry Goldwater, five-term Arizona Senator and Republican candidate for president in 1964, voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. For decades Goldwater was an icon of a right-wing backlash against black rights, unions and any and all social welfare programs. In the past decade, Arizona has been on the cutting edge of anti-immigrant reaction, spawning vigilante Minuteman militias to patrol the borders against “illegals.”

Now, Sharpton—a political hustler who mobilized against Korean-owned grocery stores in Brooklyn before he became a more “respectable” Democratic Party politician—bombastically declares “we will bring Freedom Walkers to Arizona just like Freedom Riders went to the deep south 50 years ago” (*New York Daily News*, 26 April). The courageous civil rights struggles of the 1960s led to the elimination of formal Jim Crow segregation in the South. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the leaders of the civil rights movement, who tied their fortunes to the Democratic Party and were bought off for token concessions and a few “black faces in high places.” Today, Sharpton’s invocation of these heroic freedom riders is aimed at enforcing

the rule of racist American capitalism in its Democratic Party face.

A keynote speaker at the 50,000-strong immigrant rights protest in Los Angeles on May Day was the city’s Latino Democratic Party mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. A sign read “We Latinos Are the Jews of the 21st Century.” Only two weeks earlier, a gang of Hitler-loving Nazis staged an anti-immigrant, race-hate rally in Los Angeles to “Reclaim the Southwest.” They were protected by hundreds of L.A. cops, mobilized by the mayor’s office,

South Africa...

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prevailing circumstances to further their own privileges and bourgeois-nationalist political careers. In fact, the victims of nationalists chanting such slogans as “kill the boer” are the farm workers, who face immediate retribution from their “boer” employers. Also, the most likely to suffer as a result of the “narrow nationalism” which Malema and his ilk promote are immigrants from other African countries.

One of the main factors contributing to the untenable relations on the farms is the failure of the land redistribution program of the bourgeois ANC/SACP/COSATU government, which is based on a “willing seller, willing buyer” arrangement. Less than 6 percent of the land has been transferred back to black people, while the white minority, which forms less than 10 percent of the population, owns more than 70 percent of the country’s urban and arable rural land. In line with their commitment to capitalist relations of private property, most black nationalist organisations call for allocation of more land to small farm owners. In counterposition to this program of breaking up large, mechanised commercial farms into smaller, unproductive pieces, we are for the expropriation of the large, white-owned farms and for their transformation into collective and state farms under workers rule. Farm workers are going to be central in achieving this goal, which is indissolubly bound up with the socialist revolution to be led by the mainly

urban proletariat. To address the lack of housing and related problems, we stand for the expropriation without compensation of all privately owned urban land and the building of racially integrated residential areas as part of a massive public works program.

Problems of poverty facing the majority of the South African black population extend beyond the farm environment, as South Africa overtakes Brazil as one of the most unequal societies in the world. They are currently expressed in the rebellious township service delivery protests that are spreading like wildfire throughout the country. The masses’ frustrations over the lack of satisfaction of very basic human needs like electricity, water, houses, roads, etc. are met by state violence with cops firing rubber bullets at and arresting tens and tens of protesters.

Students from poor backgrounds are struggling against financial exclusion from institutions of higher education. Currently thousands of members of the National Union of Mineworkers are on strike against pending retrenchments [layoffs] and for recovery of at least two months’ worth of unpaid salaries in the provinces of Gauteng and North West. These workers are employed by Aurora, a “black empowerment” mining company run by the relatives of former and current presidents Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma. These black exploiters were also trying to buy more mines in Zimbabwe. So it is clear that the ruling Tripartite Alliance elite have direct interests in the continued superexploitation of black labour that the “new” South Africa shares

with its apartheid predecessor.

Writing in the *City Press* (11 April), Andile Mngxitama, a representative of Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) nationalism, effectively captured the reality of black oppression in the “new” South Africa as revealed in the light of Terre’Blanche’s death:

“Ventersdorp is South Africa.... This dorpie [small town] eloquently tells the story of the criminal neglect of black people by the ANC government in the past 16 years. Go see for yourself the demeanour of black residents. They are tense and fearful, a powerful symbol of black powerlessness, because the ruling party has made a pact with the devil.”

But Mngxitama’s conclusions reveal the bankruptcy of BCM’s brand of nationalism, no less than that of the mainstream ANC, by pushing illusions that solutions to the problems facing the oppressed majority can be realised by pressuring the ANC: “It must simply use its political power to change things. The problem

against a protest by about a thousand anti-fascists. The trade-union misleaders, in a city where immigrant workers have been in the forefront of union organizing over the past two decades, turned a blind eye to this deadly fascist provocation. The fascists should have been stopped by a militant mass mobilization of working people and oppressed led by the labor movement. Labor’s inaction spelled an unqualified defeat for the working class, the bitter fruit of the labor bureaucracy’s allegiance to the Democratic Party.

The working class needs its own party, a multiracial revolutionary workers party. It is the purpose of the Spartacist League/U.S. to forge such a party, which, through education and in the course of sharp class struggle, can make the working class conscious not only of its social power but also of its historic interest as the gravedigger of the vicious and depraved rule of capitalist imperialism. Crucial to building such a party in the U.S. is the understanding of the inextricable link between the fight for labor’s emancipation, the defense of immigrant rights and the cause of black freedom. When the wealth of this country is in the hands of the working class that produced it, we will begin the construction of a socialist planned economy which will provide the material basis for the eradication of black oppression. Grounded in a program of revolutionary internationalism, a workers government will begin to right the historical crimes of U.S. imperialism, for example by returning to Mexico the predominantly Spanish-speaking areas along the border. Such a gesture would be the sharpest possible repudiation of the social-patriotic politics of the present American labor movement and a concrete demonstration of the internationalist program to smash the imperialist world order.

As we wrote in a 2006 joint declaration of the SL/U.S. and our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), written to intervene into the mass immigrant rights demonstrations held that year: “The multiracial U.S. working class is potentially the most powerful ally of Mexican workers. The SL/U.S. and the GEM are dedicated to forging revolutionary workers parties on both sides of the border as part of the fight to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.” ■

is not the white racists, but the refusal of the ANC to use its political mandate to end racism.” This is no surprise, as Mngxitama wastes a lot of ink in his bourgeois press articles telling black people they are oppressed, which they already know, while his only proposals for what to *do* about this oppression are for blacks to overcome an oppressed “state of mind.”

We of Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), remain steadfast in our conviction that the economic and social emancipation of the black majority can only be achieved through a proletarian socialist revolution and the creation of a black-centred workers government as a link in the chain of world socialist revolution. This is the South Africa-specific application of Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution and a central lesson of the epoch-making Russian Revolution of October 1917. ■

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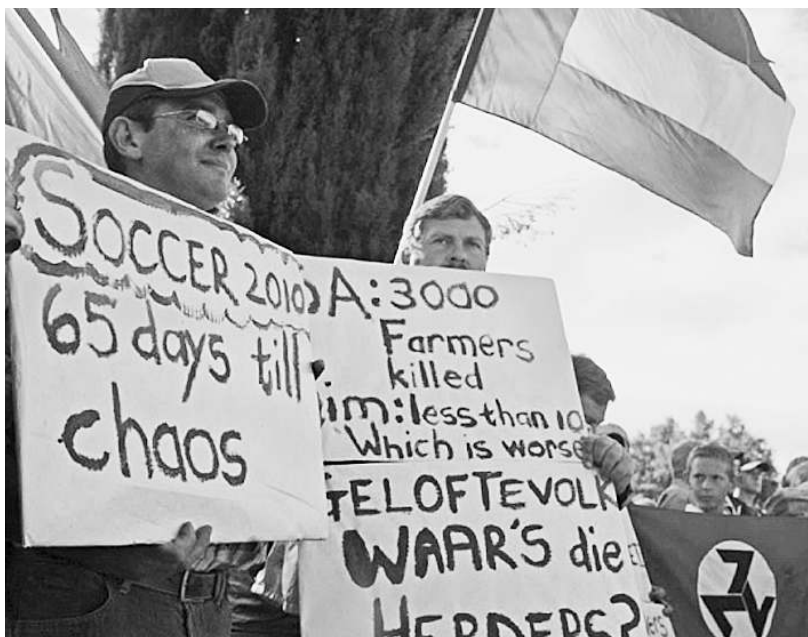
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WORKERS VANGUARD

On the Killing of Fascist Terre'Blanche

Black Oppression in Neo-Apartheid South Africa



Ventersdorp, South Africa, April 6: Outside the court where farm workers accused of killing Terre'Blanche were to appear, white racists threatened retribution while black protesters expressed solidarity with the defendants.

The following article was written by our comrades of Spartacist South Africa.

JOHANNESBURG—The killing of Eugene Terre'Blanche, leader of the white-supremacist, fascist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement—AWB), allegedly by his two black employees, including a 15-year-old, has raised black-vs.-white racial tensions to a level not seen at least since the killing of Chris Hani, a leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP), in 1993. The Saturday, 3 April killing happened at Terre'Blanche's Ventersdorp, North West Province, farm as a result of a dispute over unpaid wages, as low as R300.00 [\$40] per month, owed to the two workers. The older of the workers, 28 years old, says they acted in self-defence.

The reactions from right-wing Afrikaner racists, the mainly white bourgeoisie, its mouthpieces in the bourgeois media and the tops of the ruling capitalist Tripartite Alliance—the African National Congress (ANC), SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)—ranged from anger and threats of revenge to condemnation of the killing and eulo-

For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

gising Terre'Blanche in the name of “calm.” (The government is particularly worried about bad international press with the World Cup looming.) To this end, President Jacob Zuma appeared on TV the night after the killing, grotesquely mourning the death of “a leader of his standing.” Zuma's partner in the nationalist popular front, the reformist SACP, echoed his calls for “calm” and expressed “regret and shock” over the killing in a wretched 5 April statement, “Our Condolences to the Terreblanche Family.”

In contrast, most of the black masses received the death of this white-supremacist with joy and relief, but also fear over a backlash by racist farmers and other whites. Unlike the SACP, which denounces the accused farm workers as murderers and

calls on “their own” capitalist government to “act swiftly” in meting out punishment, we stand for the right of farm workers and other workers to self-defence, which is a question of survival given the racist attacks regularly carried out by their bosses. **Free the accused! Drop all the charges!**

This racial polarisation shows the total bankruptcy of the ANC/SACP/COSATU project of “nation building” and exposes as a rotten sham their rhetoric about the “rainbow nation” and “non-racialism.”

A very small, mainly farm-owning section of the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking white population rejected the 1994 “power sharing” deal between the Tripartite Alliance led by Nelson Mandela's ANC and the white minority government of F.W. De Klerk's National Party. They opted to fight for a whites-only republic where they can exercise self-rule within majority-black South Africa. This is the program of Terre'Blanche's AWB. These racist farm owners not only refused the 1994 political deal but have also refused to implement laws meant to ameliorate the slave-like conditions of black workers on those farms. These workers are denied rights to join unions or even vote. When they are dead, the farmers refuse their families permission to bury them on the farms they have worked all their lives in case those graves are used as evidence for future land claims. Often existing graves are willfully destroyed by these deranged racists. More than a million farm workers have been evicted from the farms with total impunity since the dawn of neo-apartheid capitalist South Africa in 1994.

Other atrocities farm workers are sub-

jected to include getting shot for being “mistaken” for dogs, baboons and warthogs; being dragged behind vans on concrete roads with pieces of flesh plucking off; being thrown alive into a lion's den; the list never stops. The week following the death of Terre'Blanche saw seven farm workers' heads cracked by their employer with an iron rod in revenge for the killing simply because they are black. Outside Ventersdorp, a young black woman was brutally raped—to avenge the killing—by her employer, Henning Buys, who only paid R1,000.00 for bail and left without his blood samples being taken by the local police. Black farm workers' lives continue to be living hell in the master-slave relationships with their employers in 16 years of the “new” South Africa.

The response of both blacks and whites showed a country characterised by such deep racial divisions that even the death of a leader of such a fringe racist white organisation like the AWB can lead to fears of an imminent racial war. The leaders of the AWB and other white organisations blamed the ANC Youth League leader, Julius Malema, for fuelling racial tensions by singing the old anti-apartheid struggle song with the lyrics “kill the boer.” [“Boer” is Afrikaans for “farmer.”] It is also used to refer to Afrikaners in general.] Both the SACP and COSATU tops condemned the killing, labeling it as criminal irrespective of what they know about the conditions of farm workers, which they only offered as a secondary comment. Both organisations blamed Terre'Blanche for opposing democracy and reconciliation. So they see their priority as defending the neo-apartheid capitalism they help administer and which perpetuates the immiseration of the black masses.

It is this continued immiseration of the black masses and the explosive anger at the base of society that explain the racial polarisation, whatever slogan Malema chants. Nationalist demagogues like Malema do take advantage of such

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April 7, Springs, Johannesburg: Police fire rubber bullets at protesting workers of Grootvlei mine, owned by “black empowerment” firm Aurora.