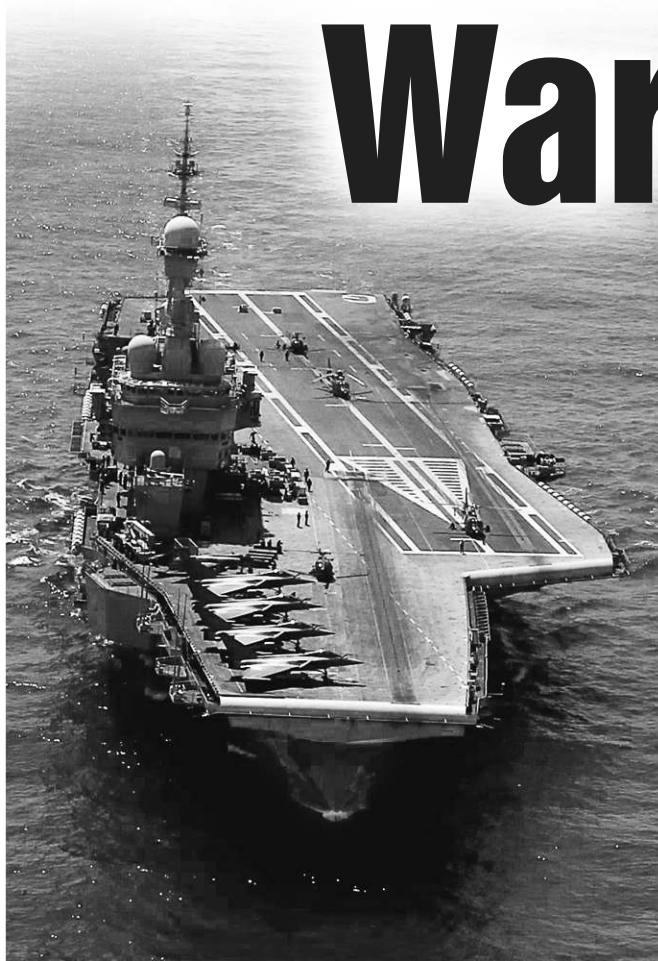


Under Humanitarian Guise Imperialists Escalate War on Libya



AP



AFP

Left: French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* off coast of Libya, April 12. Right: NATO bombing near residence of Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi in suburb of Tripoli, March 29.

APRIL 25—With the month-long aerial bombing campaign by NATO failing to topple the regime of bourgeois strongman Muammar el-Qaddafi, the imperialist powers are taking new steps to ratchet up death and destruction in Libya. In rapid succession last week, Britain, France and Italy—North Africa’s former colonial rulers—dispatched military officers to Benghazi to shore up the opposition forces that have acted as the imperialists’ ground troops and whip them into shape. Today Italy announced that it would join in the bombing raids. The Obama administration, which claims to have ruled out “boots on the ground” in Libya, on April 22 ordered additional firepower into the skies in the form of remotely piloted Predator drones armed with Hellfire missiles.

The murderous purpose of the imperialists’ “humanitarian” mission in Libya was highlighted early today when at least two large bombs destroyed a building in central Tripoli containing a library frequented by Qaddafi and another where he had recently hosted an African Union delegation. This was the second attempt to assassinate Qaddafi by air attack in three days. Last week, missiles struck his personal compound, recalling the 1986 U.S. bombing of Libya, during which his infant daughter was killed in a similar assassination attempt.

The escalation of the war against Libya further exposes the lies spread by the imperialists and their media mouthpieces to justify the bombing campaign. Pre-

sented as a short-term action to establish a “no-fly zone” and “protect civilians”—the terms of the United Nations Security Council resolution giving cover to the terror bombing—the intervention is a drive by the imperialists to impose their diktat on this oil-rich country. From the outset, NATO was bombing Libyan government forces and, soon afterward, such Qaddafi strongholds as his hometown of Surt (Sirte). The only civilians at risk there were those near exploding NATO ordnance.

Since the Obama administration handed

off control of military operations to NATO in late March, U.S. warplanes have continued to fly hundreds of sorties along with their British and French partners. With drone attacks now taking place in Misurata, the site of fierce urban fighting, greater U.S.-inflicted carnage is in the offing. In Pakistan, where the White House has leaned heavily on CIA-directed drone aircraft to launch missile attacks against Taliban fighters, more than 1,500 people, overwhelmingly civilians, have been slaughtered by Predators since August

2008. The most recent such strike on April 22 claimed 25 lives, among them at least five children.

Before the imperialist attack on Libya, the country was being torn apart by a low-level civil war between the Qaddafi government, which had been playing ball with the imperialists, and an imperialist-backed opposition. In the fight between these two bourgeois forces the proletariat had no side. But once the U.S.-led bombing began, the civil war became subordinated to imperialist military intervention. As we declared in “War Against Qaddafi’s Libya: Imperialist Terror and Lies” (WV No. 977, 1 April): “In the present conflict, the workers of the world have a side: military defense of semicolonial Libya against imperialism and the opposition forces, which are acting on the imperialists’ behalf.”

For Marxists, military defense of Libya against the imperialists does not imply the slightest political support to Qaddafi’s bloody capitalist rule. It is necessary to oppose every military occupation and attack waged by the imperialists to further their domination of the planet. Every setback they suffer weakens the class enemy of the world proletariat and assists the struggles of working people and the oppressed. It is the proletariat in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere in North Africa and the Near East that has the potential social power and class interest to lead all of the impoverished and oppressed in socialist revolution against all the murderous regimes of

continued on page 10



WV Photo

Spartacist banner at April 9 antiwar demonstration in New York City.

COMMEMORATING THE WAR THAT SMASHED SLAVERY
FINISH THE CIVIL WAR!.....6



Down With the “War on Drugs”!

U.S. Spy Drones over Mexico

The bourgeois press recently let out that, with Mexico’s permission, the Department of Homeland Security has been secretly flying Predator B drones across the border for the past two years—at times quite a distance into Mexican territory—to spy on Mexico’s drug cartels. Starting in February, these missions have expanded deeper into Mexico, with the Predators supplemented by the Pentagon’s Global Hawk drones, which fly at around 60,000 feet and scan almost 40,000 square miles. The Predators are unarmed versions of the killing machines used by the Pentagon in Pakistan, where they have killed hundreds of villagers in the name of attacking suspected “terrorists.”

The *New York Times* (15 March) reported that on March 3, Mexican president Felipe Calderón and U.S. president Barack Obama agreed to continue expanding the use of spy drones and to open a second counternarcotics “fusion” center in Mexico staffed with both Mexican and American agents. Citing unnamed Mexican and U.S. officials, the *Times* added, “The American assistance has been kept secret because of legal restrictions in Mexico and the heated political sensitivities there about sovereignty.” The U.S. has also been training thousands of Mexican troops and cops, upgrading Mexico’s security and intelligence technology and carrying out its own eavesdropping operations in Mexico.

The pretext for all this U.S. imperialist encroachment is the *narcoviolencia* in

Mexico that has left over 34,000 dead over the past four years, as Mexican drug cartels and their police adjuncts battle over control of the lucrative trade (see “Mexico: Down With ‘Drug Wars’ Militarization!” WV No. 953, 26 February 2010). As with the “war on terrorism,” the “war on drugs” is wielded globally by Democrats and Republicans alike to extend U.S. imperialism’s bloody reach and to bolster the repressive forces of its dependent semicolonial regimes, especially those in its Latin American “backyard.” A Honduran newspaper recently announced that Washington is planning to open a new military base in Honduras, near the border with Nicaragua, to “fight drug traffick-

ing,” while Texas Congressman Michael McCaul is pushing legislation that would designate seven Mexican drug cartels as “foreign terrorist organizations.”

For Latin America as a whole, none of this is new. In 1989, George H.W. Bush sent over 20,000 U.S. troops to invade Panama, where they killed hundreds and arrested President Manuel Noriega on charges of running drugs. Through Plan Colombia, launched by Bill Clinton in 2000, billions of dollars have been funneled to the blood-drenched Colombian government, whose murderous campaign against leftist guerrillas has long been wrapped in the “anti-drugs” banner. Washington crows that, through Plan Colombia, that regime has been able to establish a police presence in each of the country’s 1,099 municipalities for the first time ever. Colombia has become the most dangerous country for trade unionists in the world, with 51 murdered last year alone, and is second only to the Sudan in the number of internal refugees.

In Mexico, the “war on drugs” has similarly meant an increase in state repression and the terrorization of workers and the poor, as seen by the massive military presence on urban streets. The U.S. has boosted its military aid to Mexico seven times over with the \$1.4 billion “Plan Mérida,” initiated in 2007 by George W. Bush and extended by Obama last year.

The program provides for the purchase of aircraft, surveillance software and other services provided by U.S. defense contractors. It has also allowed the Mexican state to modernize its police forces and expand maritime interdiction capabilities. Mexico now has Latin America’s third-largest military—one built for domestic, not foreign, deployment.

North of the border, the anti-drug witch-hunt has meant a sharp buildup of local police forces, increasingly armed with high-tech weaponry and facing ever fewer legal restraints, and the mass incarceration of black people as well as of rising numbers of Latinos and immigrants. The *narcoviolencia* in Mexico has also become a rallying cry of the Republican Party for further clamping down on the border. The Democratic Obama White House has already surpassed the second Bush administration in deporting immigrants, with nearly 800,000 expelled in the past two years. As we pointed out in our article on the Mexican drug wars, the imposition of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) massively deepened the impoverishment of the Mexican countryside, driving the desperately poor either north of the border or into the drug trade in order to survive.

The Spartacist League/U.S. and the Grupo Espartaquista de México, sections of the International Communist League, oppose the military buildup and call for the decriminalization of drugs. By removing the super-profits from the illegal drug trade, decriminalization would also reduce the crime and other pathology that come with it. But such a simple, democratic measure is anathema to the U.S. rulers, for whom laws against drug use and other “crimes without victims,” such as prostitution, gambling and pornography, at bottom serve to maintain social order on behalf of the capitalist rulers. In the U.S., it is the duty of revolutionary Marxists to promote proletarian internationalism by opposing all American military aid to Mexico and Colombia and fighting for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. ***Down with Plan Mérida! Down with Plan Colombia! ■***

Capitalism and “Freedom of the Press”

As explained by Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in a document presented at the founding congress of the Communist International, the mass media in capitalist “democracies” serve as an auxiliary to bourgeois class rule. This is seen, for example, in the retailing of the Qaddafi regime’s supposed mass slaughter of civilians to justify the imperialist attack on Libya and in the propaganda barrage against teachers and others in the drive against public workers unions.

LENIN

“Freedom of the press” is another of the principal slogans of “pure democracy.” And here, too, the workers know—and socialists everywhere have admitted it millions of times—that this freedom is a deception while the best printing-presses and the biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists, and while capitalist rule over the press remains, a rule that is manifested throughout the world all the more strikingly, sharply and cynically the more democracy and the republican system are developed, as in America for example. The first thing to do to win real equality and genuine democracy for the working people, for the workers and peasants, is to deprive capital of the possibility of hiring writers, buying up publishing houses and bribing newspapers. And to do that the capitalists and exploiters have to be overthrown and their resistance suppressed. The capitalists have always used the term “freedom” to mean freedom for the rich to get richer and for the workers to starve to death. In capitalist usage, freedom of the press means freedom of the rich to bribe the press, freedom to use their wealth to shape and fabricate so-called public opinion. In this respect, too, the defenders of “pure democracy” prove to be defenders of an utterly foul and venal system that gives the rich control over the mass media. They prove to be deceivers of the people, who, with the aid of plausible, fine-sounding, but thoroughly false phrases, divert them from the concrete historical task of liberating the press from capitalist enslavement. Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the Communists are building, and in which there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the direct or indirect power of money, and no impediments in the way of any workingman (or groups of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing-presses and public stocks of paper.

—V.I. Lenin, “Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (March 1919)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 979

29 April 2011

Letter

On the Libyan Opposition

21 March

To the editor:

Apropos of the Libyan civil war, you declare in the latest issue of *Workers Vanguard* that “Marxists presently have no side in this conflict.” This is absurd. The civil war began with a mass civil uprising that the Qaddafi regime brutally crushed in Tripoli and then moved to extirpate in other cities as well. Are you neutral when unarmed protesters are shot down in the streets? Do you take no side when the most elementary democratic rights are violated? In your statement on the US, UK, and French intervention, you refer to the Benghazi opposition as a “cabal of pro-imperialist ‘democrats,’ CIA stooges, monarchists, and Islamists.” What about the thousands of ordinary workers fighting for their lives against the nationalist regime? Are they less worthy of support than the Egyptian, Yemeni, or Bahraini masses? This is a travesty of Marxism. You people have really lost your way.

Daniel Lazare

WV replies:

What began as an uprising against the bonapartist bourgeois regime of Muammar el-Qaddafi quickly turned into a civil war between the Tripoli-centered government and an imperialist-backed opposition in the eastern areas, heavily overlaid by tribal and regional divisions. For Marxists, the question of extending military support in civil wars and other conflicts is determined by whether the victory of one side or the other would further the cause of the working class and the oppressed. As we explained at the time in

“Imperialists Hands Off Libya!” (WV No. 976, 18 March), from this class standpoint neither the Qaddafi regime nor the Benghazi-based opposition—a motley crew of former officials of the Qaddafi regime, monarchists, Islamists and tribal leaders who early on appealed for imperialist intervention—merited support. But, as the article noted, the world proletariat would have a side in opposing any intervention into Libya by the imperialists.

Indeed, immediately after NATO forces began their attack on Libya, the International Communist League declared in a March 20 statement: “The civil war in Libya has now been subordinated to the fight of a neocolonial country against imperialism” (“Defend Libya Against Imperialist Attack,” WV No. 977, 1 April). In this war, it is the duty of Marxists to stand for the military defense of Libya against imperialism and the opposition forces that are acting as the imperialists’ ground troops, while not giving Qaddafi an ounce of political support. Daniel Lazare, who writes for the *Nation* and other publications, does not say where he stands on the imperialist war against Libya.

The ICL statement continued: “Every step taken by the workers of the imperialist countries to halt the depredations and military adventures of their rulers is a step toward their own liberation from capitalist exploitation, impoverishment and oppression.” We also note that militant opposition to imperialist intervention is a prerequisite for the working class in Egypt, Tunisia and throughout North Africa and the Near East to emerge as a revolutionary force under its own class banner. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

PARIS, April 18—In a blatant display of contempt for anyone deemed insufficiently “assimilated” into (white, Catholic) French society, a new law makes it illegal for women to appear in any public area while wearing the full Muslim veil—*burqa* or *niqab*. With this law, the French capitalist ruling class is fraudulently trying to pass itself off as the great liberator and protector of Muslim women. But this law is no blow against women’s oppression; it is an anti-democratic outrage that sets up fully veiled women for harassment, arrest and worse. In barring them from appearing in public, it amounts to a state-enforced French version of *purdah* (seclusion in the home).

Careful not to mention the Islamic covering by name, the new law simply states that “no one shall, in any public space, wear clothing designed to conceal the face.” But the law is commonly known for what it is: the anti-*burqa* law. So far, in the week since it went into effect on April 11, four women in the Paris region have been fined.

The vote on the law took place last fall with virtually no dissent. With the government of Nicolas Sarkozy gearing up for massive attacks on workers’ pensions, the racist campaign against the veil clearly served to divide and weaken the multi-ethnic working class. And by voting for or abstaining on the bill, the reformist workers parties—the Socialist Party, Communist Party and Left Party—demonstrated that they would not stand in Sarkozy’s way.

As the Ligue Trotskyste, French section of the International Communist League, observed in *Le Bolchévik* No. 192 (June 2010), “The French reformists snap to attention when ‘secularism’ is invoked, even when it’s by the government in its racist campaigns against the population with a Muslim background.” The article noted that the left capitulated to the government’s 2003 campaign against the veil, which was launched in order to head off renewed struggle in defense of pensions for teachers, for whom “secularism” is a sacred principle. The state persecution of Muslim women—among the most oppressed in society—is poison to workers struggles and must be *combated* by the workers movement.

The Sarkozy government has launched a massive propaganda offensive against the tiny number of women in France—estimated at just 2,000—who wear the full-face veil. Some 100,000 posters and 400,000 flyers were printed for distribution at government offices and schools, as well as airports and other entry points into the country. A new Web site, “Uncovered Face,” was launched and government circulars explained in painstaking detail the need to “solemnly reaffirm the values of the Republic and the requirements of living together.” Public sector workers, for example, are told not to serve fully veiled women and to demand that they either unveil or depart the premises. Police are to be called if the women prove recalcitrant.

As to what is considered “facial concealment,” bandages and motorcycle riders’ helmets are okay but, along with *burqas* and *niqabs*, hoods, masks and pretty much any other attire that prevents the face from being easily seen are *verboten*. To be sure, this law is not going to be used to go after bundled-up skiers in the French Alps, street-corner Santas or those attending costume balls. It is aimed first and foremost at Muslim women, but

France: Down With Racist Anti-Veil Law!



April 11: Woman wearing full Islamic veil is arrested in Paris on first day racist law went into effect.

also at their husbands, brothers and sons, who are implicitly portrayed as woman-hating bigots. While women face fines of up to 150 euros [\$220] and may be forced to attend “citizenship” classes, those who are said to “force” another to conceal her face can be threatened with huge fines of between 30,000 and 60,000 euros.

Moreover, in banning hoods, this law gives a green light and legal cover for further police harassment and attacks on young men in the suburban ghettos (*banlieues*) for whom the hooded sweatshirt is standard dress. Even wearing a mask on a political demonstration—like those with Sarkozy’s face, which is quite common these days—could well expose activists to more police repression.

As fighters for the liberation of women, we Marxists oppose the veil—be it a full *niqab* or merely a headscarf—as a symbol and instrument of women’s oppression. We stand in solidarity with those women who fight to escape the tyranny of this oppressive “tradition” and all other forms of reactionary religious traditionalism, from the bride price and arranged marriage to female genital mutilation. But the French government’s ban on the *niqab* and *burqa* in public places, like its earlier ban on the headscarf or *hijab* in the schools, has nothing to do with sexual equality or integrating Muslim women into society. In France and elsewhere in Europe, the oppressed Muslim minority suffers the daily humiliations of racism, segregation and police violence. The numerous and varied laws targeting Muslim women are an expression of this. We unambiguously oppose these racist and discriminatory laws, which have, for example, seen Muslim

girls and women expelled from schools and driven from workplaces, further isolating them from society and deepening their oppression.

With breathtaking arrogance, the Sarkozy government portrays itself as the best defender of secularism and the separation of church or mosque and state. The principle of secularism, as it arose during the French Revolution, came out of the fight to rip the emerging bourgeois society from the stranglehold of the Catholic church. Today’s racist crusade against Muslim women has absolutely nothing to do with the separation of church and state, which Marxists uphold. The fact is that the French state is a far cry from secular: one-fifth of all primary and secondary education, which is financed by the state, has traditionally fallen under the control of the Catholic priests. In upholding the genuine separation of church or mosque and state, we oppose such state subsidies for churches, mosques, etc. and all state funding of religious schools, as well as religious instruction in the public schools.

In its opposition to women wearing the veil, the reformists of Lutte Ouvrière (LO) imbibe the “values” of the French rulers, waving the banner of bourgeois “secularism.” Indeed, LO was in the forefront of the 2003 campaign against two high school girls, Alma and Lila Lévy, who were expelled from their school in a Paris suburb for wearing the headscarf. These expulsions paved the way for right-wing president Jacques Chirac’s 2004 law banning young women in headscarves from the high schools, a law that LO welcomed.

More recently, LO was quick to laud the commission—initiated by Communist Party deputy André Gérin—that proposed the new anti-veil bill. LO opined that “it doesn’t seem to be an extraordinary measure to ask someone to enter public buildings with their face exposed. Even banks oblige their clients to do that!” (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 30 January 2010). A few months later, *Lutte Ouvrière* (9 July 2010) complained about the “hypocrisy” of the government because of its “policy of concessions to ‘law-and-order’ and anti-Muslim prejudice” even as it repeated LO’s support to the law against the headscarf in schools. Speaking of “law and order,” LO was elected on Gérin’s slate in 2008, constituting the majority of the Vénissieux municipal council near Lyons, where it has regularly voted for

the municipal budget, including funds for the municipal police!

As for the reformist New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), while it opposed the new anti-veil law, one of its prominent national leaders, Pierre-François Grond, is a teacher who was a leader of the reactionary campaign to kick Alma and Lila Lévy out of school. Meanwhile, in the 2010 regional elections, the NPA fielded a woman wearing a headscarf on one of its electoral lists, flying in the face of the obligation for Marxists to combat religious backwardness. These consummate opportunists, who will tail anything, are presently locked in a rip-roaring fight over whether they should capitulate to bourgeois “republican secularism” or to religion. So far they’re doing both.

The anti-veil law is part of a larger ruling-class offensive against immigrants and their descendants, Muslims in particular, who face daily police harassment, threats of being stripped of their French citizenship and deportation. Last fall, Roma (Gypsies) were tossed on airplanes and deported to Romania. More recently, the French and Italian governments have been engaged in a racist contest over who can best keep Tunisian immigrants out of their country. The “anti-terror” and anti-Muslim hysteria launched by the government and aided by its left “opposition” fuels racist reaction and emboldens the likes of the fascist National Front. A deadly danger to the multiracial working class, the National Front significantly increased its percentage of votes in recent county assembly elections. Struggling for class unity, workers must oppose all the racist laws targeting immigrants and fight for full citizenship rights for all.

The capitalist rulers would have us believe that a tiny, vulnerable Muslim minority represents the main threat to the rights of women. In fact, it is the rule of the bourgeoisie which upholds the reactionary institution of the family, the central force that oppresses women the world over. The family is the vehicle for transmitting property from one generation to the next and the mechanism for raising new generations of workers. Bourgeois family law is thus tightly bound up with defense of private property, and women’s inequality is always reflected in the legal and social codes of every capitalist society. Reactionary ideology and religious obscurantism can never be combated by reactionary bourgeois laws. Women’s oppression originates in class society and can only be eradicated through the destruction of capitalist rule, laying the basis for replacing the functions of the family with socialized childcare and housework in an egalitarian socialist society.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to build a revolutionary workers party that will fight in the interests of all workers and thus against racist terror and the oppression of women. For women’s liberation through socialist revolution! ■

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Lucy Parsons on the Origins of May Day

“The Haymarket Martyrs”

1926 Article from *Labor Defender*

What is celebrated internationally on May 1 as a workers’ holiday was born in the raw class struggle of labor against capital, originating 125 years ago in Chicago with the fight for an eight-hour day and the 4 May 1886 police riot against workers protesting in Haymarket Square. Anarchist labor organizers were framed up on conspiracy charges, and four were executed the following year; a fifth killed himself in jail just before the scheduled execution. The article reprinted below was written four decades later by Lucy Parsons, the wife and comrade of Albert Parsons, who was one of those hanged by the State of Illinois in November 1887. The article appeared in the November 1926 issue of *Labor Defender*, journal of the International Labor Defense, a class-struggle defense organization associated with the American Communist Party. In the article, “Bradstreet” refers to a financial publication of the time.

* * *

Does this rising generation know that those who inaugurated the eight-hour day were put to death at the command of capital?



Lucy Parsons Project

Lucy Parsons

Until forty years ago men, women, and children toiled ten and often twelve hours a day in factories for a mere pittance and children from eight to nine years of age had to work to help to keep up the family.

The Knights of Labor, a powerful organization, claiming 500,000 members, had never agitated for a reduction of the hours of labor. Then who were the pio-

Depiction of Haymarket martyrs being led to their execution in Chicago, November 1887.

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper



neers of the eight-hour movement?

Those martyrs who were strung from the gallows in Chicago on November 11, 1887, the much lied about and abused Anarchists.

I will verify this statement. Until 1885 there had never been a concerted action for the reduction of the hours of labor. If eight hours was mentioned in some of our meetings (they were never really mentioned), why, that was only a dream to be indulged in by fools; the bosses would never tolerate such a thing, was the reply.

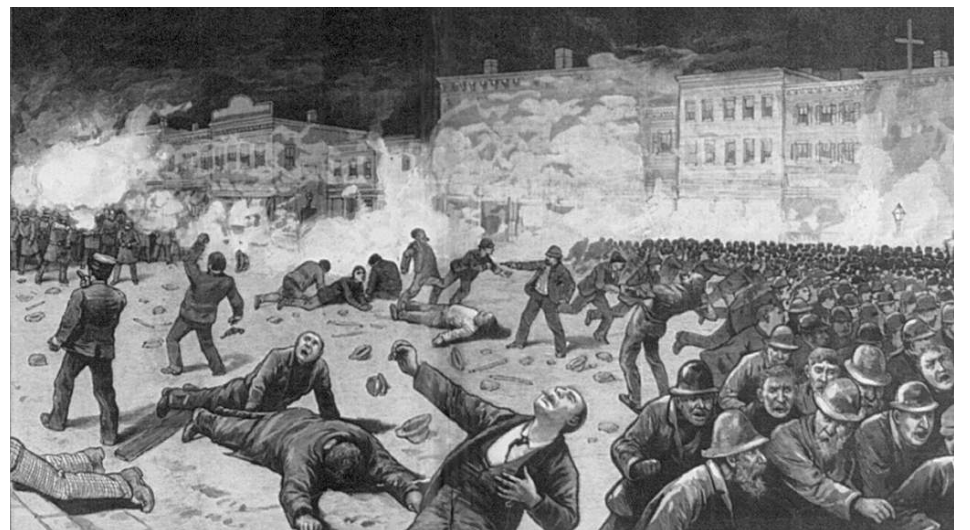
In 1885 a convention was held in Chicago, composed largely of delegates from Canada. They passed a resolution calling upon the workers of this country and Canada to unite in a demand for a reduction of the hours of daily toil to eight a day on the first of May, 1886, and to strike wherever it was refused. Albert R. Parsons brought the matter up before the Trade and Labor Assembly of Chicago, the first central body ever organized in this city, a body which he himself organized and of which he was elected president three consecutive times. The matter was hotly debated and finally rejected on the ground that the bosses would never tolerate it.

The Central Labor Union, composed of German mechanics, took the matter up and endorsed it. At the same time they passed a resolution requesting August Spies, editor of the Chicago *Arbeiterzeitung*, the daily German paper, and Albert R. Parsons, editor of the *Alarm*, to support it in their papers and speeches; they were both splendid orators.

Thus it was that the eight-hour movement got under way. Many other cities agitated for it, but Chicago was the storm

center of the movement owing to the zeal and courage of the men and women of this city who worked day and night for it. The result was that when May 1, 1886, arrived, it found Chicago well organized and demanding the eight-hour day, striking by the thousands where the demand was refused. It was a veritable holiday for the workers.

The bosses were taken completely by surprise. Some were frightened and threatening; some were signing up; others were abusing those “scoundrels” who had



Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper

Police gun down workers in Chicago’s Haymarket Square on 4 May 1886.

brought all this trouble upon “our” city and declaring that they would be made examples of, that they ought to be hung and the like.

Bradstreet declared (see Bradstreet of that date) that stocks had slumped on the New York market owing to the strike situation in Chicago.

The police were unspeakably brutal, clubbing and shooting; factory whistles blew, but few responded.

I was chairman of the Women’s Organization Committee and know personally how that great strike spread. I have never seen such solidarity. I only wish I could describe it in detail, those stirring times. It would make the blood course swiftly through the veins of the rebels of today, but lack of space forbids.

In the afternoon of May 3, the McCormick Reaper Works employees were holding a meeting at the noon hour, discussing the strike and declaring for the eight-hour day—they were then working twelve hours—when wagon loads of police dashed down upon them and began clubbing and shooting without a word of warning. An afternoon paper stated there

were five killed and many injured at this meeting.

August Spies who was addressing the meeting, returned to the *Arbeiterzeitung* office and issued the circular calling the Haymarket meeting for the next evening, May 4. I will allow Mayor Harrison, who was the first witness for the defense, to describe that meeting:

“I went to the meeting for the purpose of dispersing it in case I should feel it necessary to do so for the safety of the city...there was no suggestion made by either of the speakers looking toward calling for immediate use of force or violence. I saw no weapons at all upon any person. In listening to the speeches I concluded that it was not an organization to destroy property...”

For holding that peaceable protest meeting, five of as fine young men as ever lived, all labor organizers, were condemned and judicially murdered on November 11, 1887, in Chicago, Illinois.

There was a riot at the Haymarket meeting, it is true, but it was a police riot. Mayor Harrison further testified that, when the meeting was about to adjourn, he went to the police station, half a block distant, and ordered Captain Bondfield to send the reserves to the other stations, as the meeting was about to adjourn and was quiet. Instead of Bondfield obeying the orders of the Mayor, as soon as the Mayor started home, Bondfield rushed a company of police at double quick, with drawn clubs, upon the meeting of peaceably assembled men, women and children. At the onrush of these violators of the people’s constitutional rights someone hurled a bomb. Who threw that bomb has never

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and fairly and impartially make up your mind from the evidence whether that evidence proves that they are guilty beyond a reasonable doubt or not?"

"I think I could but I would feel that I was a little handicapped in my judgment. I am prejudiced, sir."

"Well, that is a sufficient qualification for a juror in this case. Of course, the more a man feels that he is handicapped the more he will guard against it."

W.B. Allen, another juror. The judge asked:

"I will ask you whether what you have formed from what you have read and heard is a slight impression or an opinion, or a conviction?"

"It is a decided conviction."

"Have you made up your mind as to whether these men are guilty or innocent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would it be difficult to change that conviction or impression perhaps?"

"It would be hard to change my conviction."

Seven years later Governor John P. Altgeld reviewed the whole case. He, having been a judge before he was elected governor, was amply competent to review the case in a legal manner. He took the testimony and proved from it that our comrades were absolutely innocent. In his masterly State Paper, Altgeld's "Reasons" (I can only take a few extracts from it here, the document is printed in the *Life of Albert R. Parsons* in full) Governor



Novosti

Petrograd, 1917: May Day demonstration six months before Bolshevik-led revolution that smashed capitalist rule. Banner in middle reads: "Arms for the People/Long Live the International."

Altgeld says:

"The state has never discovered who threw the bomb which killed the policemen and the evidence does not show any connection between the defendants and the man who did throw it...and again it is shown here that the bomb was, in all probability, thrown by someone seeking revenge, that is, a course had been pursued by the authorities which would naturally cause this; that for a number of years prior to the Haymarket affair there

had been labor troubles, and in several cases a number of laboring people, guilty of no offense had been shot down in cold blood by the Pinkerton's men, and none of the murderers were brought to justice..."

"All facts tend to show the improbability of the theory of the prosecution that the bomb was thrown as the result of a conspiracy on the part of the defendants to commit murder; if the theory of the prosecution were correct, there would

have been many more bombs thrown and the fact that only one was thrown shows that it was an act of personal revenge...

The record of the case shows that the judge conducted the trial with malicious ferocity and forced eight men to be tried together who should have been tried separately."

Albert R. Parsons was not arrested immediately after the Haymarket meeting. He left Chicago and stayed with his friend, D.W. Hoan, father of the present mayor of Milwaukee, at Waukesha, Wisconsin. The day the trial began he came into court and surrendered, stating that he was innocent of bomb-throwing and only wanted a chance to prove his innocence. But he too was murdered along with the other four.

Parsons, Spies, Lingg, Fischer and Engel. Although all that is mortal of you is laid beneath that beautiful monument in Waldheim Cemetery, *you are not dead*. You are just beginning to live in the hearts of all true lovers of liberty. For now, after forty years that you are gone, thousands who were then unborn are eager to learn of your lives and heroic martyrdom, and as the years lengthen the brighter will shine your names, and the more you will come to be appreciated and loved.

Those who so foully murdered you, under the forms of law—lynch law—in a court of supposed justice, are forgotten.

Rest, comrades, rest. All the tomorrows are yours!■

Attack on Minority Women

Congress Bans Abortion Funds for D.C.

For weeks this spring, Republicans and Democrats competed over how deeply to cut the U.S. government budget, finally agreeing on April 8 to the largest cuts in U.S. history, a massive \$38 billion in the next six months. The Republicans, with a majority in the House of Representatives, took advantage of the "budget crisis" to further the assault on abortion rights. Their key demands included reinstating the recently lifted ban against the District of Columbia using its own money to fund elective abortions through Medicaid and banning federal funding for Planned Parenthood.

While the latter has been temporarily set aside, the Obama White House okayed the ban on local D.C. funding for abortions, sacrificing black women and others who are dependent on such aid on the altar of the anti-abortion bigots. The Democrats also agreed to ax \$17 million from Title X, which provides federal money for birth control and reproductive health to Planned Parenthood and other organizations nationwide.

From the time of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Democrats as well as the Republicans have instituted one measure after another to limit access to abortion. The new measure will redound most harshly against impoverished black women who cannot afford to pay for this simple and safe medical procedure, which we say should be freely available on demand. The one-quarter of the city's population that depends on Medicaid is overwhelmingly black and Latino. As soon as the ban took effect on April 13, Medicaid funding was immediately cut off for 28 women scheduled to receive abortions that week.

Barring the city from funding abortions from its own budget is another measure of the boundless contempt the ruling-class parties have for the mostly black residents of Washington, D.C., who have never been accorded full democratic rights. This has always been a divided city, a government center served first by slaves and later by wretchedly paid, largely black labor. While in the past couple of decades Washington's demographics have changed with an influx of whites, more than half of black adults and 31 percent of Latino adults in D.C. are jobless. Those who live in the nation's capital, otherwise known as "the D.C. plantation," are denied the right to a vot-

ing representative in Congress. Until 1964, the city's residents could not even vote for president. It was not until 1973 that the right to elect a mayor and city council was granted.

But so-called "home rule" for D.C. is a fraud, for it is Congress that really pulls the strings according to its own political agenda, especially when the city government tries to enact a budget or a law. In 1998, D.C. residents overwhelmingly voted in favor of a medical marijuana program, but Congress forbade them to implement the law. That same year, the district, which faces an HIV/AIDS rate rivaling that of African countries, tried to use local funds for needle-exchange programs. Congress stopped it. While killing abortion funding this April, Congress also ordered the D.C. City Council to reinstate a reactionary school voucher program that gives local tax dollars to private and religious schools.

For an act of civil disobedience in protest against the blatantly undemocratic abortion funding ban, Mayor Vincent Gray, six members of the D.C. Council and 34 others were arrested on April 11. Held in jail for hours without food, Gray was not released until 1:00 a.m. the following morning, and the remaining protesters were only released several hours later. The abuse of a black mayor at the hands of police is not new in D.C. For Marion Barry—a victim of a bipartisan racist vendetta—it was much worse. For years in the 1980s and early 1990s he was constantly hounded by the Feds and spent six months in federal prison.

Condemning the funding ban, D.C.'s non-voting Congressional delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton declared: "These Republicans are saying, 'You don't count as American citizens. Indeed, you raise some money, hey, it's ours. We will decide how you spend your money, and we will close you down if you don't like it.'" This certainly captures the Republicans' arrogance. But Norton self-servingly alibis her own party, the Democrats, who have themselves ensured that for most of the last 20 years, local funding for elective abortions has been banned in D.C. President Bill Clinton signed the ban into law *six times*, and Obama and the Democratic-controlled House and Senate upheld it in 2009. (They tempered this a bit some months later by easing restric-

tions on the city using its tax money for abortions while upholding the ban on federal funding.) Senate majority leader Harry Reid, who cried foul over Republicans' attacks on Planned Parenthood, has voted *ten times* for the D.C. abortion funding ban since 1995.

Nationwide, access to abortion is increasingly out of reach. It was the Democrats' health care "reform" that made good on Obama's promise that no federal dollars will be used to fund abortion. During the 2008 campaign, Obama declared his support for restrictions and even prohibitions on late-term abortions. Between the onslaught of government legislation and the extralegal violence of the anti-abortion terrorists, very few doctors in the U.S. today are willing to perform late-term abortions.

When running against the Republicans, who openly flaunt their racist, anti-worker, anti-woman program, the Democrats pose as defenders of black, labor and women's rights. This is a deception that serves to keep the exploited and oppressed politically chained to the capitalist system. In regard to abortion, the "pro-choice" Democrats' strategy has been to keep it safe and legal for the wealthy, but to hell with the poor and minorities. This was seen with the Hyde Amendment, signed into law by Demo-

cratic president Jimmy Carter in 1977, which eliminated Medicaid funding for abortions. Even as abortion rights continue to be axed and access is increasingly limited, pro-Democratic outfits such as the feminist National Organization for Women have limited their actions to "fight the right" electoral tactics.

Looking to the Democrats to defend women's rights is a time-tested strategy that has brought nothing but defeat. The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs fight for free abortion on demand as part of our call for free, quality health care for all. This is the only way that legal abortion can become a reality for black, immigrant and all working-class and poor women. The anti-abortion offensive is part of a generalized assault on the living conditions of the working class. It is in the interest of the working class to mobilize in its own name—in opposition to the Democrats—to fight for access to abortion and full equality for women.

In the ban on funding abortions in Washington, D.C., the bourgeoisie's attacks on women, on minorities and on basic democratic rights come together. This underscores the need to build a revolutionary workers party that will champion the interests of all the exploited and oppressed against the outrages of this capitalist society.■

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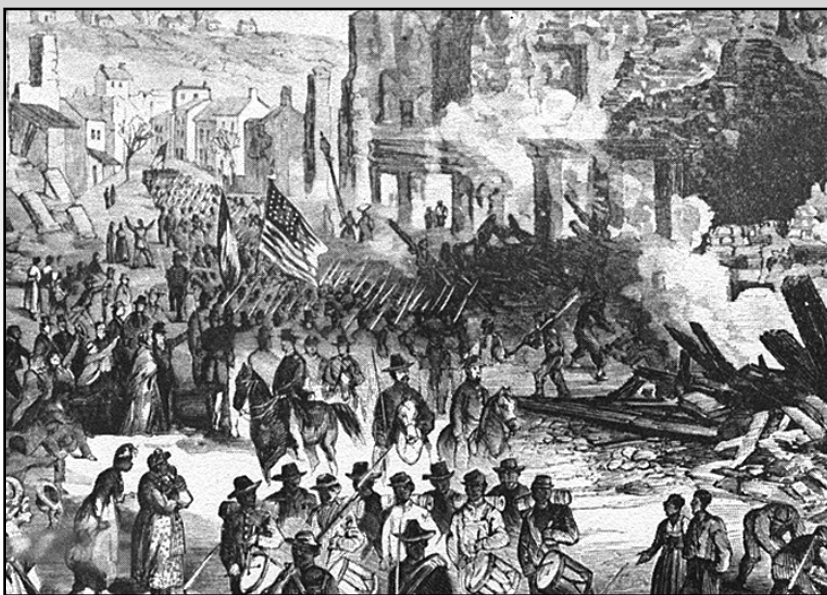
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COMMEMORATING THE WAR THAT SMASHED SLAVERY



Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper



Thomas Y. Crowell Company

Left: Victorious Union Army marches into Richmond on 3 April 1865. Right: Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House six days later.

FINISH THE CIVIL WAR!

The following is a presentation given by Spartacist League speaker Diana Coleman, veteran of the Southern civil rights movement, at a forum in Oakland on March 5.

In 1965 I went down to Gulfport, Mississippi, with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) for the second Freedom Summer. It startles me to realize that that was nearly 50 years ago—46 to be exact, but who's counting. There had been a debate in SNCC about whether to do voter registration or direct action sit-ins for integration. Well, by the summer of '65, SNCC people were sick of registering people to vote, that is, to vote Democrat in a state that was run by the racist Southern Democrats, the Dixiecrats. Stokely Carmichael, in one of his better utterances, said that it was as ludicrous

PART ONE

for Negroes to join the Democratic Party as it would have been for Jews to join the Nazi Party. That seemed right to me.

So we preferred sit-ins and demos. When our integrated group wasn't served at a lunch counter, we organized demos, first a small one of our project members and then bigger and bigger ones of black youth, mostly teenagers, to demonstrate in front of the store. There are some poor-quality photos of this at the literature table. Well, with the Gulfport black longshore union threatening a port shutdown, those lunch counters finally did get integrated.

Even as a New Leftist, I was impressed with the power of labor. But in the interim, we were surrounded by an ugly crowd of raving white racists waving Confederate flags. I wasn't surprised that they called us every racist name in the book. And I wasn't surprised at the vile misogyny directed toward me and the two other young white women. But I was surprised to be called a "carpetbagger." I didn't even know exactly what one was. I thought it might have something to do with the Civil War. And I figured it was probably a good thing, not a bad thing, considering the

racist scum who were mouthing off.

Indeed, it was a compliment, although not intended as such. This is what the Southern planters called the Northern Radical Republicans who stayed in the South after the Civil War and who, along with black Union soldiers, made up the backbone of the Freedmen's Bureau. The term also included New England women abolitionists who came to the South to teach blacks to read. That accusation embodies as well the racist assumption that black people are happy with their lot and only get "stirred up" when white "outside agitators" come along.

This was my introduction to the fact that the contemporary black question, including the very concept of race, has its roots in the system of chattel slavery. People try to tell you that that was a long time ago. Not really. When I was in Mississippi that summer, I ran into old people whose grandparents had been born as slaves, and they told them all about it. As William Faulkner famously wrote about the South, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." The Civil War and its aftermath continue to shape this country to this day. The black population of America is no longer enslaved, but neither are they free. The Civil War was the Second American Revolution which ended chattel slavery, but it will take a third American revolution, a workers revolution, to end wage slavery, racial oppression, imperialist war and endemic poverty for blacks and all of the multi-racial American working class.

As I look around at this country, Wall Street and the banks are doing great, while working people, particularly but not exclusively blacks and Latinos, lose their jobs, their houses, their health care, their pensions. There are the endless, orchestrated attacks on the unions. The homeless wander the streets. Police brutality is a fact of life in the ghettos and barrios. The U.S. is still in Iraq, still in Afghanistan, still running the Guantánamo prison camp. The U.S., with less than 5 percent of the world's population, has one-fourth of the world's prison population,



WV Photo

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

most of them black and brown. And we see Obama, the first black president, presiding over the smashing of the United Auto Workers union, an institution that actually made a concrete difference in the lives of black working people. If this is "change we can believe in," I sure don't see it. It looks like the "same-old, same-old" to me. We say: No support to either bourgeois party, Democrat or Republican!

The Fight for Black Liberation Today

For the title of this forum, we wanted to make it clear *how* we wanted to "Finish the Civil War"—that is, by black liberation through socialist revolution. Indeed, there is another side out there that thinks that it's just halftime in the Civil War and that the South will rise again. In December there was a Secession Ball in Charleston, South Carolina. In February, there

was a re-enactment of the inauguration of Jefferson Davis. Last year, the governor of Virginia declared April Confederate History Month. A Virginia textbook is trying to peddle the lie that lots of black men took up arms fighting for their slave-owners.

Beyond this outright racist garbage, it is a sign of the reactionary times we live in that the Civil War is controversial with those who consider themselves leftists. In L.A. we talked to a young woman looking to join a socialist group who told me that she couldn't really support the North in the Civil War because they were simply fighting for capitalism. *And* that blacks were better off as slaves than later as free sharecroppers, since they had higher caloric intake as slaves. Probably not true, but even if it was, so what!

A young man around the left group Spark argued that the Confederate flag was an "ambiguous symbol" expressing not only racism but also opposition to Northern aggression. Or how about Progressive Labor (PL) which, hailing "resistance" to the *revolutionary war* waged by the Union Army that smashed black chattel slavery in the South, lauds riots in New York City in 1863 that turned into an anti-black pogrom, killing at least a dozen black people and burning down black housing and an orphanage for black children. This kind of leaves you shaking your head and saying "right on" to Sherman's March to the Sea.

We have described the black population in the U.S. as an oppressed race-color caste. We noted in our seminal document "Black and Red" [printed in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, "Basic Documents of the Spartacist League"] that "from their arrival in this country, the Negro people have been *an integral part* of American class society while at the same time *forcibly segregated* at the bottom of this society." Thus blacks face discrimination, in different degrees, regardless of social status, wealth or class position. The grotesque arrest of noted Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. showed that in living color.

But blacks are today still an integral

BLACK LIBERATION THROUGH SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

and strategic part of the working class, despite unemployment and mass incarceration. As Leon Trotsky, leader along with Lenin of the Russian Revolution, stated, “We must say to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class.” Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multi-racial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party.

From the formation of the Spartacist tendency in the early 1960s, we have stood for the perspective and program of revolutionary integrationism. This position is counterposed to both the liberal reformist response to black oppression and to all political expressions of black separatism. The liberation of black people from conditions of racial oppression and impoverishment—conditions inherent to the U.S. capitalist system—can be achieved only in an egalitarian socialist society. And such a society can be achieved only through the overthrow of the capitalist system by the working class and its allies. This talk is an exposition of those points.

Karl Marx and the Civil War

You cannot understand the black question in the U.S. without understanding that “peculiar institution,” slavery, and the bloody Civil War which ended it. And I want to deal prominently here with the role of Karl Marx in understanding these questions. There’s endless garbage out there from black nationalists and academics about how “Marxism is Eurocentric,” “Marx was a racist,” “Marx didn’t know nothing about the U.S.,” etc., etc. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In their Civil War writings, one is struck by Marx and Friedrich Engels’ astonishing knowledge of American history. They saw the Civil War as one of the century’s major battles for emancipation, a social overturn and a harbinger of socialist revolutions to come.

I read this book called *Marx at the Margins* by Kevin B. Anderson, a follower of Raya Dunayevskaya, and found his chapter on Marx and the Civil War quite useful. He makes the point that although Marx’s writings on the Civil War and slavery are quite available in the U.S., they are often disregarded and considered as “falling outside Marx’s core concerns, or even his core concepts.” Of course, in Volume 1 of *Capital*, which presumably does deal with Marx’s “core concepts,” Marx writes: “In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” You will find these last words on the membership cards of our Labor Black Leagues.

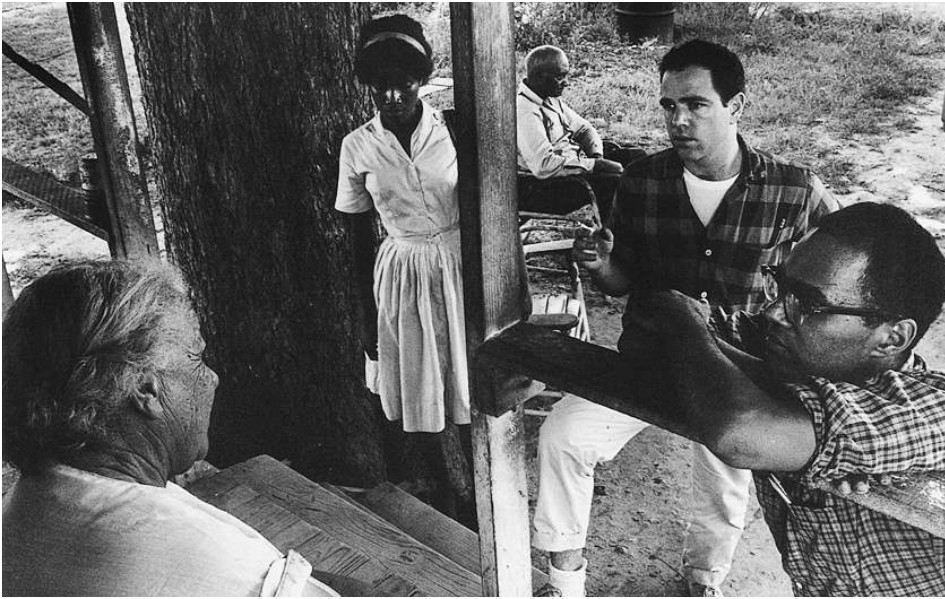
Comrade Jacob gave a great class called “Slavery and the Origins of American Capitalism,” which was reprinted in WV [Nos. 942, 943 and 944; 11 September, 25 September and 9 October 2009]. I cannot recapitulate it all here, but what it demonstrated so well is that slavery, although it was certainly an outmoded social system, was key to the early development of American and British capitalism. In the 1800s, the textile mills of Britain ran on cotton from the Southern slavocracy, shipped on boats owned by Northern capitalists and leaving from Northern ports. British and American capitalists were tied to slavery by a million threads, even if they themselves didn’t own slaves. Anderson’s book had an interesting early quote from Marx in 1846, speaking about slavery in the American South and Brazil:

“Direct slavery is as much the pivot upon which our present-day industrialism turns as are machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery there would be no cotton, without cotton there would be no modern industry. It is slavery which has given value to the colonies, it is the colonies which have created world trade, and world trade is the necessary condition for large-scale machine industry.... Slavery is therefore an economic category of paramount importance.”

And in slavery we see the beginning of the material basis for the creation of a race-color caste. As Frederick Douglass said: “We are then a persecuted people, not because we are *colored*, but simply because that color has for a series of years been coupled in the public mind with the degradation of slavery and servitude.” The unscientific category of “race” and the racist myth of black inferiority were necessary props to slavery in the U.S. As Dick Fraser, a veteran Trotskyist who made a unique contribution to the Marxist understanding of the American black question, wrote, “Particularly when the world was bursting with revolutions proclaiming the equality of all men. This slave system became so repulsive in fact that only weird and perverse social relations could contain it. To despise the black skin as the mark of the slave was the principal and focal point of these social relations,” [“The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution” (November 1953), reprinted in *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, “In Memoriam, Richard S. Fraser: An Appreciation and Selection of His Work” (August 1990)]. “Weird and perverse” is about right, now as then.

There’s this image that Marx spent all his time sitting around in the library of the British Museum writing *Capital*. Well, it’s good that he did, but he and the First International also *fought* slavery as an inseparable part of the struggle for working-class emancipation. A number of German workers came to the United States following the defeat of the 1848 bourgeois-democratic revolution. These “Red ’48ers” were animated by revolutionary ideals and became involved in the anti-slavery struggle. Joseph Weydemeyer, a close collaborator of Marx’s, became a Union officer at a critical juncture when the North needed leaders with military experience.

Marx and Engels also played a key role in winning English workers in the cotton industry to the cause of Northern victory. The British bourgeoisie wanted to intervene on the side of the Confederacy but was stymied by working-class opposition. These workers in England endured great privations and suffering, but they were won to an internationalist conception that they had an interest in fighting to get rid of black chattel slavery. If you are interested in more info on this topic, I recommend a talk by Don Alexander called “Karl Marx and the War Against Slavery,” which was given in 1990 [printed in WV No. 502, 18 May 1990].



Danny Lyon



Oxford University Press

Above: Team led by SNCC activist Bob Moses (right) during voter registration drive in Mississippi in 1963. Left: Klansmen beat black man in Birmingham bus station during Freedom Rides, 14 May 1961.

“The English working class has won immortal historical honour for itself by thwarting the repeated attempts of the ruling classes to intervene on behalf of the American slaveholders by its enthusiastic mass meetings, even though the prolongation of the American Civil War subjects a million English workers to the most fearful suffering and privations.”

—Karl Marx, 1863



Beard (inset), Dietz Verlag Berlin

Police attack workers meeting in London’s Hyde Park, 1862.

James McPherson starts off his book *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* by stating:

“Four years after the guns fell silent at Appomattox, Harvard historian George Ticknor reflected on the meaning of the Civil War. That national trauma had riven ‘a great gulf between what happened before in our century and what has happened since, or what is likely to happen hereafter. It does not seem to me as if I were living in the country in which I was born’.”

Indeed, the Civil War was a social overturn that freed the slaves and opened the road to the development of the United States as a modern industrial power. Before the Civil War, the U.S. was very federated and didn’t have a national currency; there was no federal income tax or IRS (I leave it to you whether this was an advance!); many areas weren’t accurately mapped. Before the Civil War, the United States was a plural noun, as in “The United States are beautiful.” After the Civil War, the United States became a singular noun, as in “The United States is beautiful.” Or ugly, depending on

whether you’re referring to the scenery or today’s political situation.

Writing in 1861, Marx said, “The present struggle between the South and North is, therefore, nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labour. The struggle has broken out because the two systems can no longer live peacefully side by side on the North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other” [“The Civil War in the United States”]. Criticizing Lincoln’s early wavering on emancipation, Marx declared, “Events themselves drive to the promulgation of the decisive slogan—*emancipation of the slaves*.”

The Civil War: A Social Revolution

Marx was quite clear that slavery was an expansionist system that had to be stopped. Very much like Frederick Douglass, with whom there was a real convergence, Marx returned again and again to the notion that the Union needed to wage the war by revolutionary means, whether by the use of black troops or by encouraging a slave uprising. After John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, Marx wrote to Engels: “In my view, the most momentous thing happening in the world today is, on the one hand, the movement among the slaves in America, started by the death of Brown, and the movement among the slaves in Russia, on the other.... I have just seen in the *Tribune* that there was a new slave uprising in Missouri, naturally suppressed. But the signal has now been given.” After Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and gave the go-ahead to the recruitment of black troops, nearly 200,000 joined up to fight for their own freedom. They spread fear in the hearts of the Confederacy as Marx had predicted, and helped turn the tide to win the war.

Let me make a point here that the American Revolution was more of a political revolution than a social revolution. It didn’t overthrow an entrenched aristocratic order—it was more the question of which capitalists, British or American, would be profiting. The war of independence did not really need a radical, plebeian, terrorist phase. It didn’t give rise to a living radical tradition or heroes with whom we can identify. Who would it be—Jefferson, the slave-owner?

It is in the Civil War era that there are parallels with the plebeian component of the French Revolution. The radical abolitionists—Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman and John Brown—are the only figures in American history before the emergence of the workers movement with whom we can identify.

continued on page 8

Civil War...

(continued from page 7)

The life of Harriet Tubman illustrates in a particularly acute fashion the tremendous obstacles black women faced regarding even the elementary decencies of life. Despite her courageous work for black freedom, she lived in poverty all her life and was compelled to wage a decades-long fight for the pension her Civil War service entitled her to. Today black working women face triple oppression as blacks, women and workers.

John Brown is denounced in public schools as a dangerous extremist and a maniac. Of course, we don't share John Brown's religious outlook. But he was a committed fighter for black rights who wanted to inspire black rebellion and was willing to die trying. If that makes you crazy, then perhaps we need more crazy people. When John Brown said: "I, John Brown, am quite certain that the crimes of this land will never be purged away but with blood," he was so right. It took blood and iron and a war that cost 600,000 men, almost as many as have died in all other U.S. wars combined, to end slavery.

I want to say something about Lincoln and historical materialism. Many opponents of revolutionary Marxism, from black nationalists to reformist leftists, have made a virtual cottage industry out of the slander that "Honest Abe" was a racist or even a white-supremacist. Here's a quote from the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP): "It is a lie that 'Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves' because he was morally outraged over slavery. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves (and not all the slaves at first, but only those in the states that had joined the southern Confederacy) because he saw that it would be impossible to win the Civil War against that southern Confederacy without freeing these slaves and allowing them to fight in the Union army" [Revolutionary Worker, 14 August 1989]. The RCP's conclusion: "Lincoln spoke and acted for the *bourgeoisie*—the factory-owners, railroad-owners, and other capitalists centered in the North—and he conducted the war *in their interests*."

Actually Lincoln *was* morally outraged by slavery, but the real point is that the RCP rejects Marxist materialism in favor of liberal moralizing. They deny that against the reactionary class of slaveholders and the antiquated slave system, the Northern capitalists represented a revolutionary class whose victory was in the interests of historical progress. Presenting the goals of the North and South as equally rapacious, the RCP neither sides with the North nor characterizes its victory as the consummation of a social revolution. Do they, Spark or PL even bother to think they might want to deal with Karl Marx's positions on this question? Not really; their Marxist pretensions are pretty thin.

As Marxists, we must be able to grasp that the bourgeoisie was once progressive, but now, in the epoch of imperialist decay,



Library of Congress

Left: Slaves pick cotton on Georgia plantation. Right: Textile looms in Britain in 1830s. British textile mills depended on cotton from American South.



Dietz Verlag Berlin

is no longer. Things change, that's dialectical. Of course, this is all a little rich coming from the RCP, whose calling card is back-handed support to the Democrats, through their "Drive Out the Bush Regime" campaigns. Or PL, which brags that its members worked in the Obama campaign.

Lincoln and Emancipation

One of the more important and controversial of Marx's writings on the Civil War is his letter to Abraham Lincoln on the occasion of his re-election in 1864. This was somewhat controversial in the First International at the time. And it still is controversial. Let me give myself as a bad example of this. One of the pictures on the forum flyer shows Ritchie Bradley

come up in unions like the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. But by 1984, with some pushing especially by our National Chairman, Jim Robertson, the Bay Area SL decided that the flag had to go.

This was a real project: the pole was a huge metal thing and the flag was hooked way at the top; you couldn't just stand at the bottom and pull it down. Ritchie had to practice pole-climbing with a special rope device. He and another guy dressed in workers coveralls (over a Union Army outfit) went to the pole first with a ladder. The guy got Ritchie started and then pulled away the ladder. Meanwhile, we had someone at the nearby pay phone who called the *SF Chronicle's* press reps in

was for acquittal; it was a hung jury and the city didn't try him again because they knew they'd never get a conviction.

So to get to my point here, I was supposed to testify as a witness and go into the SL's politics. I was supposed to read Marx's letter to Lincoln, but on the stand I just balked and wouldn't read all of it. Valerie kept saying, "Isn't there something else you want to read?" and I kept saying, "No." What's a lawyer to do? Anyway, here's what Marx wrote:

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

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

Here's the part I really didn't like and refused to read:

"From the commencement of the Titanic American Strife, the Working men of Europe felt instinctively that the Star spangled Banner carried the Destiny of their class...."

It goes on:

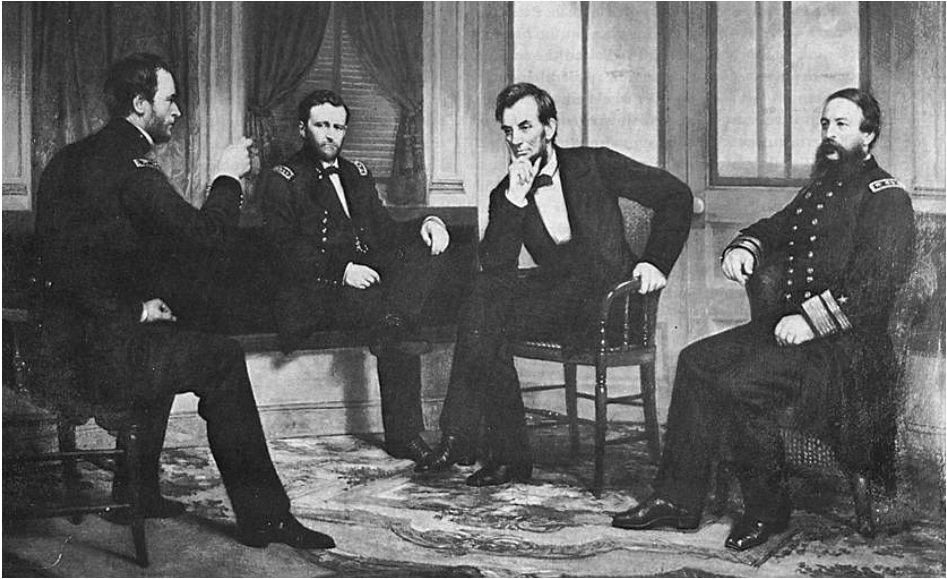
"The Working Men of Europe feel sure that as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the Middle Class, so the American Anti-Slavery War will do for the Working Classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come, that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded Son of the Working Class, to lead his Country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained Race and the Reconstruction of a Social World."

By declaring that the European workers saw "the star-spangled banner" as carrying the destiny of their class, was Marx forsaking the red flag of communism? That was my view, but it really reflected my own New Leftism and lack of historical perspective. Is "the star-spangled banner" waving over Sherman's March to the Sea, followed by ten solid miles of black people who rightly saw the Northern force as a liberating army, just the same as "the star-spangled banner" on U.S. warplanes dropping napalm on Vietnam? Is Lincoln sending an occupying army into the South the same as Obama, Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, sending an occupying army into Afghanistan? No!

The Civil War was the last of the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions, and Lincoln was bourgeois and revolutionary at the same time—with all the contradictions that this implies. As materialists, Marxists do not judge historical figures primarily based on the ideas in their heads but on how well they fulfilled the tasks of their epoch. While Lincoln had bourgeois conceptions—no surprise there!—he was uniquely qualified to carry out the task before him, and in the last analysis he rose to the occasion as no other. That is the essence of his historical greatness. We can complain that Lincoln wasn't Lenin. That's true—but there wasn't much of an organized working class in the U.S. until after the Civil War, either. Marx understood that with the demise of the slave power, the unbridled growth of capitalism would lay the foundation for the development of the American proletariat—capitalism's future gravedigger.

The Defeat of Radical Reconstruction

Now on Radical Reconstruction. As we said in "Black and Red": "Capitalist and slave alike stood to gain from the sup-



White House

March 1865: Lincoln with commanders who led military victory against Confederacy. From left: Generals William T. Sherman and U. S. Grant; Admiral David D. Porter (far right).

cutting down the Confederate flag that hung in San Francisco Civic Center. That this symbol of slavery and the KKK was hanging in San Francisco in the 1980s really was outrageous. It had been there for years, sometimes taken down if there was a big demo but put back up. When Ritchie and I ran for SF Board of Supervisors in 1982, we had made an issue of it and said that, if elected, our first act would be to see it taken down. The issue had

City Hall and said, "Wow, there's this guy climbing the flagpole in a Union Army outfit, looking like he's gonna tear down the Confederate flag. You should come out and take a picture." So there were great photos in the bourgeois press.

The same day Ritchie first took down the Confederate flag, an all-white jury for a second time acquitted the Klan/Nazi killers of the five civil rights and labor organizers who were murdered in 1979 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Actually, Ritchie tore down two Confederate flags because "Dixie Dianne" Feinstein, then SF mayor, now Senator from California, kept putting them back up. She also had destroyed a replica of the historic Northern Fort Sumter flag that the SL kindly donated to the city and which Ritchie kindly installed. In fact, the Confederate flag only finally stayed down after anonymous militants came in the night and cut down the whole damn pole with an acetylene torch.

In the meantime, Ritchie went on trial for vandalism. But Ritchie and his lawyer, Valerie West, put Feinstein and the city administration on trial, as communists are supposed to do in this situation. Valerie tried to get the videotape of the Greensboro massacre, which prominently shows the KKK/Nazi murderers with Confederate flags, entered as evidence, but the judge thought that was "too good" and would unduly influence the jury. But there was all kinds of testimony about slavery, the KKK and the Civil War, which the jury just loved. One juror later said the trial changed his life. Most of the jury

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RACIST TRASH: NOT *GONE WITH THE WIND* YET

In addition to being the 150th anniversary of the outbreak of the Civil War, this year also marks the 75th anniversary of the most wildly successful, poisonously syrupy and all-around trashiest justification for slavery produced in the U.S.: Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel *Gone With the Wind*. The continued popularity of such racist "entertainment" as this book and movie counters the myth, touted by President Barack Obama, that he has ushered in a "post-racial" society. Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, countering the "smug insistence that race is no longer a factor in our society," pointed out recently that the result of the histories written in the war's aftermath "has been to blur the reality that slavery was at the heart of the matter, ignore the baser realities of the brutal fighting, romanticize our own home-grown terrorist organization, the Ku Klux Klan, and distort the consequences of the Civil War that still intrude on our national life" ("A Conflict's Acoustic Shadows," *New York Times*, 12 April).

Atlanta will host *Gone With the Wind* celebrations once again this summer, billed as "a global pilgrimage to Atlanta." On the occasion of the book's 50th anniversary, the Atlanta area saw "Tara balls" *ad nauseam*, one of which was attended by then mayor Andrew Young and his wife, the only black people present amid the plethora of Confederate army uniforms. On that occasion, we wrote "'Gone With the Wind'—50 Years of Racist Trash" (WV No. 407, 4 July 1986), excerpts from which are printed below.

* * *

This book and the hugely successful movie based on it sprinkle "moonlight

and magnolias" on one of the most brutal slave systems the world has ever known. The life of a slave meant back-breaking work from dawn to dusk; a slave's child or spouse could be sold at any time; hunger was ever-present. The antebellum South was a totalitarian po-

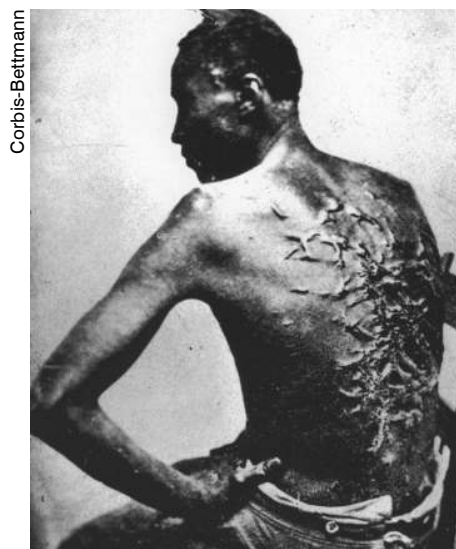
save the Scottsboro Boys from the hangman's noose—while "liberals" like Franklin D. Roosevelt and the editor of the Atlanta *Constitution* opposed the anti-lynching law in Congress. The movie came out on the eve of World War II. The heritage of slavery and police-

girl, a period when the Klan off and on ran the Georgia state government for years. Mitchell was a reporter for the Atlanta *Constitution* in an era when Georgia was trying to crush the life out of courageous black Communist Angelo Herndon. It says a lot about Mitchell



Warner Home Video

Left: Still from 1939 movie *Gone With the Wind*, which glorified slavery. Right: 1863 photo of slave scarred from whipping.



Corbis-Bettmann

lice state ever in fear of slave uprisings. This is the society Margaret Mitchell referred to as "glamorous," writing at length about the happiness of the "child-like" slave and his devotion to his master. At one point, the novel's heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, muses that "Negroes were provoking sometimes and stupid and lazy, but there was loyalty in them that money couldn't buy, a feeling of oneness with their white folks."...

Gone With the Wind, the novel, appeared in the mid-1930s in a period of unremittent lynch terror in the South, symbolized by the prolonged struggle to

state oppression of blacks in the Jim Crow South belied American imperialism's fraudulent claim to be fighting for "democracy" against Nazi racism. *Gone With the Wind* shined up the tarnished image of racist America and in this way furthered Washington's mobilization for war. Attacks on the struggle for black rights have always accompanied the U.S. rulers' preparations for war.

Margaret Mitchell worshipped slave society. She grew up in a period that saw the rebirth of the Klan with the hanging of the innocent Jewish businessman Leo Frank, framed for the murder of a white

that she was ten years old by the time her family broke the news to her that the South had lost the war!

Gone With the Wind is not just another trashy Harlequin romance, a piece of escapist fluff. It is about as politically innocent as D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which openly glorified the Klan. It will take a third American revolution to truly finish the Civil War, set the record straight and relegate *Gone With the Wind* to the scrap heap of history. The cultural record of human emancipation will record this debunking with great relish. ■

pression of the planter aristocracy but beyond that had no further common interests. In fact it was the Negroes themselves who, within the protective framework provided by the Reconstruction Acts and the military dictatorship of the occupying Union army, carried through the social revolution and destruction of the old planter class."

Radical Reconstruction was the most democratic and egalitarian time in American history. Public education was set up in the South. Very brave abolitionist women from New England risked death teaching blacks. These schools were flooded by blacks of all ages. It had been a crime to teach a slave to read, but even for poor whites there had not been a public school system. Blacks voted at rates as high as 90 percent and many, mostly ex-slaves, were elected to state and national office. The 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were passed, abolishing slavery, declaring that anyone born in the U.S. was a citizen and that the right to vote could not be denied on "account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Of course, women, black or white, still couldn't vote. And indeed, Mississippi did not officially ratify the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery until 1995. Luckily, they lost the war, so slavery was abolished, official consent or not, but it's certainly a statement.

These amendments were progressive measures won, as is always the case, by struggle. Initially, I had no idea how progressive the 14th Amendment was. I assumed that in all countries, if you were born there, you were a citizen. But in many countries you aren't a citizen if you aren't of the "native stock." Today, this progressive measure is under attack from the anti-immigrant bigots. For example, Republican U.S. Congressman Gary Miller, ranting against immigrant women and "anchor babies": "By granting children of illegal immigrants citizenship, the child can eventually anchor an entire family into the United States.... Conse-

quently, the child—and potentially their family—will have access to a wide array of taxpayer-funded benefits."

Tell me please, what is this "wide array of taxpayer-funded benefits"? We all know the undocumented workers get the worst work at the lowest pay, are afraid to collect benefits and face a higher risk of deportation under Obama than they did under Bush. These immigrants often bring experience of class struggle, experience which the U.S. working class could really use, and they provide a living link to the proletariat of other countries. The labor movement must see the struggle against anti-immigrant and anti-black racism as central to its own cause. No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! An injury to one is an injury to all!

Now as I said, "Capitalist and slave alike stood to gain from the suppression of the planter aristocracy, *but beyond that had no further common interests.*" For Reconstruction to have succeeded would have required breaking up the large landed estates and for blacks to have got-

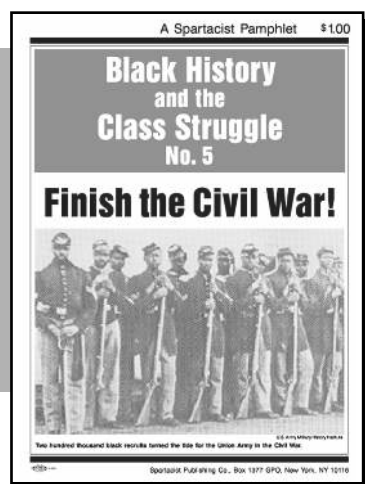
ten the "40 acres and a mule." But the promise of black freedom was betrayed when the Northern capitalists formed an alliance with the remnants of the slavocracy in order to exploit Southern resources and the freedmen. Especially after the Paris Commune of 1871, which the American bourgeoisie watched with great horror, they saw expropriation and redistribution of private property in the land as a threat. Black freedmen and poor white sharecroppers hardly had the social weight to effect this change. In the Compromise of 1877, Union troops were pulled out of the South—and sent to repress the Great Rail Strike of 1877. That tells you a whole lot right there!

Over the next 20 years emerged the postwar Southern system of sharecropping, poll taxes, chain gangs, the convict lease system and lynch law. This was codified in a series of laws institutionalizing the rigid Jim Crow segregation and police-state terror that dominated the South right up until the civil rights movement. It took a while, because blacks

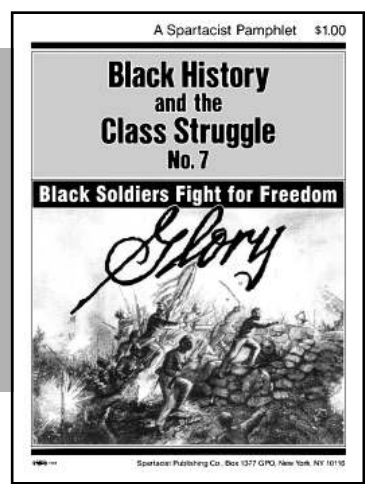
fought to defend the rights they had won. But there was a *political* counterrevolution, and the armed agents of it were the Ku Klux Klan. Hundreds, maybe thousands of blacks were lynched during this period. This was the so-called Redeemer period glorified by racist academics and racist movies like *Birth of a Nation*.

While blacks were not returned to slavery, the legacy of the defeat of Reconstruction is that blacks in the U.S. were consolidated anew as a specially oppressed race-color caste segregated at the bottom of this society. Segregation was the main prop of the new racist order. This was generalized throughout the country, where the harsh economic realities of black oppression were always in evidence despite the fact the segregation might be de facto, rather than the Jim Crow, back-of-the-bus kind. The segregation of blacks as an oppressed race-color caste is essential to the maintenance of American capitalism and has served U.S. imperialism very well.

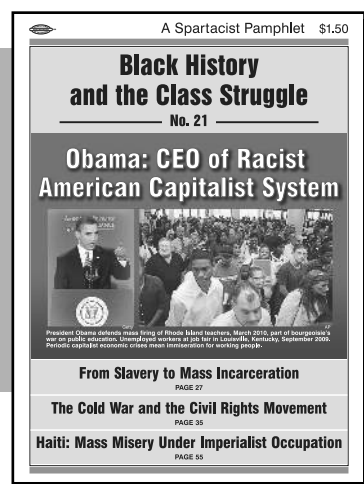
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Defend ILWU...

(continued from page 12)

a new leadership of the unions can be forged. This is not simply a matter of militancy but, as Cannon pointed out, a question of political program. What is needed is a leadership that will arm the workers with an understanding both of their social power and their historic interests to free all of humanity from the exploitation, all-sided misery and war inherent to a system based on production for profit. Forging such a leadership is in turn an integral part of the fight for a multiracial revolutionary workers party whose aim is no less than doing away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery through socialist revolution.

“Progressive” Labor Tops: Different Talk, Same Walk

In an interview on KPFA radio the day after the April 4 protests, ILWU Local 10 executive board member Clarence Thomas said that “one of the reasons” no Local 10 member was allowed to speak “is because the Democratic Party is not in favor of workers taking independent action.” True enough. But when asked if he was opposed to the unions continuing to pour millions into backing the Democrats and funding Obama’s re-election campaign, Thomas responded that the unions should support only those Democrats who would be “accountable” to the working class. In short, behind all the seemingly radical rhetoric that has historically been a trademark of the “progressive” labor tops in Local 10 is the same old shell game of peddling the Democrats as a party that can be made to serve the interests of the working class and the oppressed if, in Thomas’ words, their feet are “held to the fire.”

Last year, the Local 10 leadership pulled out all the stops to mobilize the ranks for the election of Democrat Jean Quan as mayor of Oakland. Boosted as a “friend of labor,” Quan was the headline speaker at the Oakland April 4 rally. Denouncing Wisconsin governor Walker for stripping public workers unions of the right to bargain for their members, Quan contrasted the good offices of her administration, declaring: “We will have layoffs but they will come as part of collective bargaining.” It would be hard to find a more chemically pure expression of the role played by the Democratic Party. The Republicans revel in taking out the knife to slaughter the unions. The Democrats hand the knife to the union bureaucrats to slash the wages and benefits of their members in the name of “preserving collective bargaining.”

That’s exactly what the union leaders following the Democrats, who had already agreed to such givebacks, were willing to do in Wisconsin. In California, the bureaucrats promote Democratic governor Jerry Brown, who has axed millions from social programs for the poor, as a man they can do business with.

But Quan’s appeal for the unions to sacrifice more jobs did not go down well with much of the crowd at the Oakland rally. She was drowned out in a chorus of booing, a response aptly described by one reporter as reflecting “a schism between the labor leaders who invited Quan to headline their rally and rank-and-file workers impatient with years of government cut-backs” (*Bay Citizen*, 4 April). It is precisely such burgeoning anger that the labor tops are working overtime to head off.

At the same time, calls for a “general strike” have been coming from left-talking bureaucrats like Ken Riley, president of ILA Local 1422 in Charleston, South Carolina. Heading into an “Emergency Labor Meeting” held in Cleveland on March 4-5, which was called to “explore together what we can do to mount a more militant and robust fight-back campaign to defend the interests of working people,” Riley said, “I don’t see any other way than a general workers strike.” But there was no call for any such action coming out of this meeting, which drew some 100 of the more radical-sounding and even “socialist” labor fakers and their hangers-on. Rather, the best

they could choke out was that labor “must go to the streets,” meekly adding that “where possible” the participants would promote “industrial actions” on April 4.

Evidently, they did not find it “possible.” Instead, the April 4 protests are being portrayed as helping build “momentum” toward a general strike. This is simply to provide some militant-sounding cover for a program these labor fakers share in common with the top AFL-CIO officialdom: reliance on the capitalist state. The “perspectives” approved by those attending the Cleveland meeting advise: “There is plenty of money available without demanding givebacks from public employees, but this requires changing our nation’s priorities to raise taxes on the rich, redirect war dollars to meet human needs, and more—all demands that we

has to be about winning public support, and if rallies don’t help us accomplish that goal, maybe we need to be doing other things such as a general strike across the United States with support from all unions and labor.” This is an extraordinary, indeed unheard-of, statement coming from an official in the upper echelons of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, for whom the very mention of working-class struggle is to be avoided like the plague. While it lacks credibility, it is a measure of the desperation of at least some of the union misleaders as they feel heat from the ranks.

The industrial unions have been ravaged, with the rate of unionization in the private sector now below 7 percent. Public workers are now the majority of union members in the country, and the laws being brought down against them chal-



San Francisco, 5 July 1934: “Bloody Thursday” assault by cops killed two striking longshoremen, sparked citywide general strike.

must place on the federal government.” Far from building momentum for any kind of real labor action, much less a general strike, such appeals serve merely to dissipate and divert the workers’ anger into the illusion that the government can be pressured into serving their needs.

A central chant at both the SF and Oakland rallies was “tax the rich!” The banks, corporations and other capitalist enterprises are sitting on mountains of cash, the ill-gotten gains of a system based on the exploitation of labor for the profits of the few. But the working class is not going to get its hands on this money by appeals to the federal government, whose purpose is not to “meet human needs” but to defend and increase the profitability of American imperialism.

Capitalist governments might temporarily increase tax rates for the rich to meet the needs of the ruling class as a whole, such as gearing up for war or bailing out their economies at times of crisis. And in the face of class or other social struggle, the rulers may shell out some money to buy social peace. But once such peace is purchased, the benefits gained through struggle come under attack, and all the more so in times of economic crisis like today. What they take out of the hides of the working class and oppressed at home they invest in waging war against the workers and oppressed abroad to expand their spheres of exploitation and their domination around the globe. These “priorities” cannot and will not change short of getting rid of the profit system in which they are rooted.

For the workers to reclaim the wealth that is the product of their labor, they have to break the power of the bourgeoisie and its state. That means fighting for a workers government that will expropriate the expropriators and put the wealth of this society to serving the needs of society under a planned socialist economy.

Bureaucrats Feeling the Heat

It’s not just left-talking labor bureaucrats who are mouthing the words “general strike.” In his column in the March issue of the ILWU’s *Dispatcher*, the union’s International president, Robert McEllrath, wrote: “Holding a rally is usually the first thing we think of. It’s good to feel pumped-up for a few hours or even a few days, but they’re soon over and then people ask: ‘now what do we do?’ If the answer is, ‘hold more rallies,’ then maybe we need to think harder, because our goal

lunge their survival. Asking “Will we be able to win over workers—many who once belonged to unions—but have since seen their pay, benefits, and job security go down?” McEllrath argues: “The stakes in this fight couldn’t be higher, as it may determine whether the labor movement continues to shrink or survives long enough to organize and grow in the future.”

While the ILWU holds real social power in its hands, the union itself is an increasingly isolated bastion of labor organization in a sea of unorganized workers on the docks and the inland warehouses. The union leadership has done little to nothing to organize these workers.

Standing amid the wreckage that their sellout policies have produced over the past 30 years and more, McEllrath is expressing the bureaucrats’ concern for their own survival, which is, after all, dependent on having dues-paying members. To preserve their status, it is possible that they could be moved to take some kind of strike action. But that would not change their fundamental loyalty to the capitalist system, particularly as represented by the Democratic Party, which includes the labor officials among its key components. Following his musing over a general strike, McEllrath makes clear its purpose, arguing that “if we want more politicians to stand with us, then we’ll need to rally a lot more troops to our side.”

For a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!

The April 4 protests were called in conjunction with the anniversary of the assas-

sination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, who was killed in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was supporting a strike by black sanitation workers. The photos of these black workers with picket signs reading “I Am a Man” are a searing statement of the integral link between the struggles for labor rights and black rights. But while much was made at the protests of King’s dedication to labor’s cause, the truth is that King was a spokesman for reliance on the capitalist government, seeing the courts and the Democratic Party as the vehicles for legal reform of the racist status quo.

The myth that black people could achieve equality within the confines of racist American capitalism was ripped apart when the civil rights movement “came North.” Here the forcible segregation of blacks in the ghettos was not a matter of a legal code but was and is rooted in the very foundation of capitalist rule in America. When the black masses in the Northern ghettos entered the struggle—fighting for real equality, for jobs, for decent housing and schools—the role of King and others in the liberal leadership of the civil rights movement was one of fearful containment. Thus, King supported the troops sent in to brutally suppress ghetto upheavals in the 1960s.

With the deindustrialization of large swaths of the U.S., the ghetto poor who once supplied a “reserve army of labor” to be employed when the bosses needed them have been written off as a “surplus population” by the capitalist rulers, their labor and very lives no longer seen as necessary for the production of profit. But black workers remain a militant backbone of organized labor—from the ILWU to the public workers unions—and are critical to linking the power of the working class to the simmering anger of the ghettos. If the unions are to fight for their very existence, they must take up the defense of the ghetto and barrio poor by fighting for jobs, quality housing, education, health care and more, and must as well defend the rights of immigrants, an increasingly important component of the working class. Organizing the unorganized is a life-and-death question for labor everywhere. Crucially it means a fight to break the open shop South, directly posing the need for labor to combat anti-black racism and anti-immigrant bigotry.

Many workers no longer buy the lie peddled by the trade-union bureaucracy and its “socialist” water boys that the election of Barack Obama would bring “change” they could “believe in.” The massive protests in Wisconsin inspired many to believe that finally there might be some fight-back against the war on their unions, their families and their livelihoods. The leaden hands of the labor bureaucracy are trying to drown any such impulse. It doesn’t have to be this way. There is a real explosive potential here. But to transform that potential into some successful class struggle poses the question of leadership. The labor misleaders must be ousted and replaced with workers’ leaders who will link the fight to defend the unions to building a multiracial revolutionary workers party. This is the necessary instrument to lead the struggle to free the working class and the oppressed from the chains of exploitation, poverty and imperialist war. ■

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Union Attacked for Solidarity with Public Workers

All Labor Must Defend ILWU Local 10!

Port of Oakland on April 4.

WV Photo

In their call for nationwide protests on April 4, the AFL-CIO tops said the day would be one of “rising up to support workers in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana and other states.” But the only genuine labor action was taken by members of Bay Area Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), who overwhelmingly stayed away from work that day. The port of Oakland was shut down for 24 hours.

Now the shipping companies represented by the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) are gunning for the union with a lawsuit against Local 10 and its president, Richard Mead, demanding that the ILWU foot the bill for “damages sustained” by the PMA as a result of the port shutdown. Although no price is named, in a similar suit East Coast shipping companies are demanding that the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) pay \$5 million for a two-day shutdown of the ports in New York and New Jersey last September in response to a union-busting attack on ILA jobs. According to the head of the PMA, the employers also want the courts to enforce an injunction against further work stoppages.

Local 10 longshore workers stood up against the assault on public workers unions. Now all of labor must stand up for Local 10! Stop the PMA’s union-busting attack!

That Local 10 members gave up a day’s pay in solidarity with embattled public workers unions is a real statement of the deeply felt anger and desire to fight at the base of the unions. This was also witnessed in the tens of thousands of workers who mobilized in protest outside the capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin, this winter. But the labor misleaders have done their level best to contain any militancy and redirect it back into support for the Democratic Party. This was the intended purpose of the April 4 “We Are One” rallies, as was baldly stated a week later by AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka in a speech to the National Women’s Democratic Club in Washington, D.C. Declaring that “the energy of working people is infectious and their solidarity and commitment are inspiring,” Trumka advised that “if Democrats are to take back the House in 2012, and to hold on to the White House and the Senate, it will be because they succeed in riding this wave.”

The price of the bureaucrats’ subordination of the unions to the political fortunes of the Democratic Party, which no

Reliance on the Democrats: Recipe for Defeat

less than the Republicans represents the interests of the capitalist class enemy, can be counted in busted unions, millions of unemployed and the living hell that is life for the ghetto and barrio poor and countless others who have been written off by a system based on the exploitation of labor. So beholden are the labor bureaucrats to the capitalist order that even the notion that there is a working class in this country has been deep-sixed, reflected in

“union brothers,” the cops are the armed thugs of the capitalist state whose job is to smash labor struggle. This would readily be seen if there were any real fight against the union-busting assault on public workers, just as it was seen when the SF police killed two workers in the 1934 longshore strike. The “bloody Thursday” assault by the cops was the spark for the citywide general strike that laid the basis for founding the ILWU.



WV Photo

Spartacist banner at April 4 “We Are One” demonstration in Oakland.

the pitch at the April 4 protests to “reclaim the middle class.” By the same token, the union misleaders were desperate to avoid the remotest hint of working-class struggle against the one-sided class war by the capitalist exploiters and their state.

At the “We Are One” rallies in Oakland and San Francisco, called by the Alameda and SF Labor Councils, the organizers would not even allow a speaker from ILWU Local 10, the only union whose members took any kind of actual labor action! There was no such censorship of a representative of the strikebreaking cops. One of the few speakers at the opening rally for the thousands-strong SF protest was the president of the Police Officers Association of San Francisco, who used the occasion to declare: “I am a member of labor just like you are.” Far from being

The only speaker who even mentioned that Local 10 members had not worked on April 4 was the secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, Stephanie Bloomingdale. But this was not to promote any such action by others, much less to address the crying need to mobilize the power of labor in strike action to fight the assault on public workers unions. On the contrary. Bloomingdale hailed the Wisconsin judge who put a temporary stay on the implementation of the state’s union-busting bill for not letting Republican governor Scott Walker “get away” with it. But Walker did get away with it, as did the Ohio legislature, which passed an even more draconian anti-union law in the immediate aftermath.

In response to the PMA’s lawsuit against Local 10, the San Francisco Labor

Council passed a resolution calling for a “mass mobilization of all Bay Area Labor Councils and the California AFL-CIO” on April 25 at PMA headquarters. But the Labor Council officials did little to nothing to mobilize their membership for this protest, which drew about 150 people. Fine words will not stop the union-busters!

The capitalist rulers have been winning the war against labor because the power of the working class has been shackled by the class-collaborationist policies of the trade-union leadership. Labor’s weapons are inherent in its collective organization—strike action, mass pickets, plant occupations, hot-cargoing of scab goods, etc. The capitalists’ arsenal is the state—the courts, cops and military. The 1934 SF general strike, and mass strikes in Toledo and Minneapolis the same year, were pitched battles between workers and cops and other strikebreakers. All of them were led by reds. The 1934 Minneapolis strikes, which forged the Teamsters as a powerful industrial union, were led by supporters of the Trotskyist Communist League of America. James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism, underlined the political program that lay behind this victory:

“The modern labor movement must be politically directed because it is confronted by the government at every turn. Our people were prepared for that since they were political people, inspired by political conceptions. The policy of the class struggle guided our comrades; they couldn’t be deceived and outmaneuvered, as so many strike leaders of that period were, by this mechanism of sabotage and destruction known as the National Labor Board and all its auxiliary setups. They put no reliance whatever in Roosevelt’s Labor Board; they weren’t fooled by any idea that Roosevelt, the liberal ‘friend of labor’ president, was going to help the truck drivers in Minneapolis....”

“Our people didn’t believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity.”

—James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944)

If the unions are to wage the battles necessary for their own defense and in the interests of all the oppressed, they must be mobilized in opposition to the capitalist state and independently of all of the political parties of the class enemy—Democrats, Republicans and Greens. That means a political struggle to get rid of the sellouts sitting on top of the unions who strangle the workers’ fighting spirit. It is in the crucible of the class struggle that

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