

## Israel “Celebrates” Founding by Slaughtering Palestinians Again



AP photos

May 15: Palestinian boy wounded when Israeli soldiers opened fire on protesters at Lebanese border (left); Zionist troops take aim at approaching demonstrators in Golan Heights (right).

### For Arab/Hebrew Workers Revolution! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

In a wave of protests, thousands of Palestinians from Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank gathered at Israel's borders on May 15 to mark the “Nakba,” or “catastrophe.” This is what Palestinians call the anniversary of the founding of Israel in 1948 and the war with Arab states, when hundreds of thousands were driven from their homes and land—many to squalid refugee camps where they and their descendants live to this day. Israeli troops celebrated the anniversary in their own customary way by gunning down demonstrators, killing over a dozen and injuring scores more.

Ever since Israel was established in 1948 in accordance with a United Nations partition plan, Palestinians have been treated as *unttermenschen* (subhuman), subjected to deadly cycles of war and terror, repeatedly robbed of their land and driven into ghetto-like enclaves. The drive for a “greater Israel” was inherent in the establishment of the Zionist state. Today, the entire West Bank, which Israel occupied along with the Gaza Strip as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, is dotted with military outposts, checkpoints and

fortified settlements. Zionist settlers repeatedly rampage in the West Bank. That area is crisscrossed by “bypass roads” that are off-limits to Palestinians, who are walled off in towns and villages where water and other necessities of life are scarce.

Two and a half years ago, the Zionist butchers—armed with U.S. warplanes, helicopters and missiles—slaughtered more than a thousand Palestinians and wounded thousands more in the Gaza ghetto. When a flotilla of volunteers carrying medicine, construction supplies and other goods defied the Israeli blockade of Gaza last year, elite naval units blasted away at the 700 passengers in international waters, killing nine people.

Workers internationally must take up the defense of the besieged Palestinian people and demand: *All Zionist troops and settlers out of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights! For immediate removal of all anti-Arab fortifications! Down with the blockade of Gaza!*

#### Obama Backs Zionist Terror

President Barack Obama last week repeated Washington's long-held position in favor of a supposed “two-state solution” in which the Palestinians would be granted a rump state consisting of Gaza and part of the West Bank. Obama proposed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

based on the borders existing before the 1967 war, supplemented with land “swaps.” What that means was shown in secret documents released early this year (the so-called “Palestine Papers”) revealing the details of years of such “negotiations.” The documents describe how former Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni told Palestinian negotiators that land swaps should involve separating Arab villages from Israel and annexing them to an eventual Palestinian state. Tens of thousands of Arabs could lose their Israeli citizenship under this scheme.

In presenting the U.S. government's position, Obama used language that was meant to appeal to Arab audiences in the Near East and North Africa, a region that has been swept by a series of protests and uprisings. His particular choice of words enraged Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he was about to arrive in Washington for talks with the White House. The Israeli gov-

ernment insists that final control of the territory seized in 1967 must remain in the hands of Israel. This has long been the consensus of all bourgeois parties in Israel, including the Labor Party.

Obama then took the occasion of a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee—the main Zionist lobby—to reassure Tel Aviv that the U.S. would not waver in its support to Israel. The White House has made this clear by opposing a planned UN resolution in favor of a Palestinian state. To defend its interests in the oil-rich Near East, U.S. imperialism each year pumps some \$3 billion in military aid to Israel and another \$1.3 billion for Egypt's military, relying as well on the Saudi monarchy and the despots ruling the Persian Gulf states. *Down with U.S. aid to Israel, Egypt!*

At the heart of the Palestinian question is the impossibility of achieving national justice for geographically interpenetrated peoples within a capitalist framework.

*continued on page 10*



### A REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST HISTORY OF MAY DAY

See Page 4

# Palestinian Trotskyists on the Partition of Palestine and the 1948 Arab-Israel War

Each May, as the Zionist rulers celebrate the anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel, Palestinians across the Near East mark the *nakba*, or catastrophe: the expulsion in 1948 of more than 700,000 Arabs from their homeland in Palestine. The United Nations General Assembly had voted the previous year in favor of ending the British mandate in Palestine and creating two independent states, one Zionist and the other Palestinian Arab. Through mass killings and terror, the Zionists drove out most of the Palestinian population from their homes and villages. Following the declaration of the founding of the Israeli state in May 1948, a number of bourgeois Arab regimes intervened militarily, not to defend the Palestinians but to seize land that had been allotted to them under the UN partition plan.

The small Palestinian Trotskyist group, the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), upheld the position of communist internationalism in the 1948 War between Israel and the Arab states. While recognizing the right of both the Hebrew-speaking and Palestinian Arab peoples to national self-determination, the RCL resolutely opposed the imperialist-imposed partition and took a position of revolutionary defeatism toward both sides in the war. That position is today upheld by the International Communist League.

We reprint below an excerpted editorial, titled “Against the Stream,” that was originally published in the RCL’s Hebrew organ *Kol Ham’amad* (Voice of the Class). The English translation was published by the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party in *Fourth International*



1948: Palestinians in Ramle surrender to Zionist forces who would go on to expel them en masse.

(May 1948). The excerpts refer to Ernest Bevin, who was foreign minister in Britain’s Labour Party government; Chaim Weitzmann (Weizmann), Israel’s first president; and the Husseinis, a clan of Palestinian landowners and political leaders.

\* \* \*

Politicians and diplomats are still trying to find a formula for the disastrous situation into which Palestine has been plunged by the UNO [United Nations Organization] deciding upon partition. Is this a “breach of international peace” or are we dealing with merely “hostile acts”? As far as we are concerned there is no point in this distinction. We are daily witnessing

the killing or maiming of men and women, old and young, Jew or Arab. As always, the working masses and the poor suffer most.

Not so very long ago the Arab and Jewish workers were united in strikes against a foreign oppressor. This common struggle has been put to an end. Today the workers are being incited to kill each other. The inciters have succeeded....

“Keeping order” in Palestine costs England over 35 million Pounds a year, an amount which exceeds the profit she can extort from this country. Partition will release her from her financial obligations, enable her to employ her soldiers in the productive process while her source of income will remain intact. — But this is

not all. By partition a wedge is driven between the Arab and Jewish worker. The Zionist state with its provocative lines of demarcation will bring about the blossoming forth of irredentist (revenge) movements on either side, there will be fighting for an “Arab Palestine” and for a “Jewish state within the historic frontiers of Eretz Israel (Israel’s Land).” As a result, the chauvinistic atmosphere created thus will poison the Arab world in the Middle East and throttle the anti-imperialist fight of the masses, while Zionists and Arab feudalists will vie for imperialist favors....

If the Anglo-American imperialists had forced this “solution” on Palestine of their own, the rotten game would have been patent in the whole Arab East. However, they dodged: the “problem” was passed on to the UNO. The function of the UNO was to sweeten the bitter dish cooked in the imperialist cuisine, dressing it, in Bevin’s words, with the twaddle of the “conscience of the world that has passed judgment.” Exactly! And the diplomats of the lesser countries danced to the tune of the dollar flute, reiterating the “public opinion of the world.” And the peculiar casts in this performance enabled Great Britain to appear as the Guardian Angel overflowing with sympathy for either side.

And the Soviet Union? Why did not her representatives call the UNO game the swindle it really is?—Apparently, the present foreign policy of the SU is not concerned with the fighting of the colonial masses. And as the Palestine question is a second-rate affair for the “Big,” the

*continued on page 11*

## Editorial Note

## Shocking! There’s Gambling in Rick’s Café

Captain Renault announced that he was “shocked, shocked” to see gambling in Rick’s café in the 1942 film *Casablanca*, as he pocketed his winnings for the evening. It was about as shocking to learn that the reformist-led “antiwar movement,” which was premised on “Anybody but Bush” politics, plummeted following the Democratic Party’s gains in the 2006 mid-term elections and Obama’s victory in 2008. Such were the conclusions of a recent study by Michael Heaney of the University of Michigan and Fabio Rojas of Indiana University titled, “The Partisan Dynamics of Contention: Demobilization of the Antiwar Movement in the United States, 2007-2009.”

The authors conclude that the antiwar movement was essentially a movement of the Democratic Party and was dissolved once the Democrats won office. To readers of *Workers Vanguard*, these conclusions are hardly news. But at least they’re now documented with numerous tables and graphs, packaged in excruciating acadamese.

Where once hundreds of thousands could be mobilized in protest against “Bush’s war” in Iraq, today it takes a microscope to spot any opposition in the streets. In evaporating such opposition, the Democrats had the help of the reformist left, which promoted the lie that the imperialist rulers can be pressured to

make their system more humane, peaceful and democratic. In fact, the blood-thirsty depredations of U.S. imperialism continue apace across the world under the Obama administration. U.S. troops still occupy Iraq; an intensified U.S./NATO war rages against the peoples of Afghanistan; U.S. drone strikes and special operations have escalated in Pakistan; the U.S. and NATO are bombing Libya on behalf of a pro-imperialist “opposition.”

The data used in the Heaney/Rojas study were gleaned from Listservs managed by the now-defunct United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), the ANSWER Coalition, Code Pink, the World Can’t Wait, MoveOn.org and the Washington Peace Center. The researchers maintained “personal relationships with leading activists,” conducted interviews with some of them and surveyed attendees at some 27 events nationally. The study notes early on that “Obama maintained the occupation of Iraq and escalated the war in Afghanistan” and that the “antiwar movement should have been furious at Obama’s ‘betrayal’ and reinvigorated its protest activity. Instead, attendance at antiwar rallies declined precipitously and financial resources available to the movement dissipated.” The paper’s conclusion reads in part:

“The Democrats and the antiwar movement struck a useful alliance from 2003 to 2006. The antiwar movement helped to demonstrate grassroots support for a key party issue and the party helped to provide activists, resources, and legitimacy for the movement. By early 2009, however, it was abundantly clear that Democrats were no longer interested in this alliance.”

The alliance certainly was useful for the Democrats. But then the authors continue: “Abandonment by the Democrats gave the movement the independence it desired, but also stripped it of its capacity for political influence. While Obama’s election was heralded as a victory for the antiwar movement, Obama’s election, in fact, thwarted the ability of the movement to achieve critical mass.” This greatly prettifies the liberal and reformist left—the UFPJ; the ANSWER Coalition (once sponsored by the Workers World Party and now by its split organization, the Party for Socialism and Liberation); the World Can’t Wait outfit, sponsored by the Revolutionary Communist Party; the International Socialist Organization, which participated in any number of such coalitions. These organizations never desired “independence” from the Democratic Party, whose fortunes they promoted.

Obama did not “betray” the reformist left. Rather, it was the reformists who betrayed the interests of the proletariat by chaining opponents of the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations to the capitalist Democratic Party, the other party of exploitation, oppression and war. From the outset, the Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Clubs called for the military defense of Afghanistan and Iraq against U.S. imperialism and fought for class struggle at home against America’s capitalist rulers. The bankruptcy of the reformist left was succinctly captured by then-Trotskyist James Burnham in his 1936 piece, “War and the Workers”: “No one can uphold capitalism—whether directly, as an open adherent of the capitalists, or indirectly, from any shade of liberal or reformist position—and fight against war, because capitalism means war.” ■

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: Ray Bishop

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Harold Salt

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Alan Wilde (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, Michael Davisson, George Foster, Walter Jennings, Elizabeth Johnson, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour

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

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

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

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

No. 981

27 May 2011

# Hong Kong: Fake Trotskyists Hail Imperialist Running Dog Liu Xiaobo

It always seems that the more flagrant and bloody the depredations that the imperialists are engaged in, the louder they beat the drums over “human rights” wherever capitalism has been overthrown. In this vein, U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton lashed out during high-level talks with Chinese representatives in Washington a few weeks ago. Referring to a renewed crackdown on dissidents, Clinton blustered that China’s leaders are “trying to stop history, which is a fool’s errand.” Liberal editorial writers and columnists have done their assigned part by bashing China over “human rights.” This at a time when the U.S. ruling class is carrying out murderous occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and bombing Libya, and the use of torture in the “war on terror” evokes only mild debate about just how effective it is.

A major focus of the recent clamor over “human rights” in China has been the imprisoned anti-Communist intellectual Liu Xiaobo. Especially after Liu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year, the Western bourgeois media glorified him as a stalwart champion of “democracy” and “human rights.” A noteworthy exception was a piece in the liberal London *Guardian* (15 December 2010), which exposed him as a rabid supporter of U.S. imperialist militarism, past and present. Under the headline “Do Supporters of Nobel Winner Liu Xiaobo Really Know What He Stands For?” Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong commented:

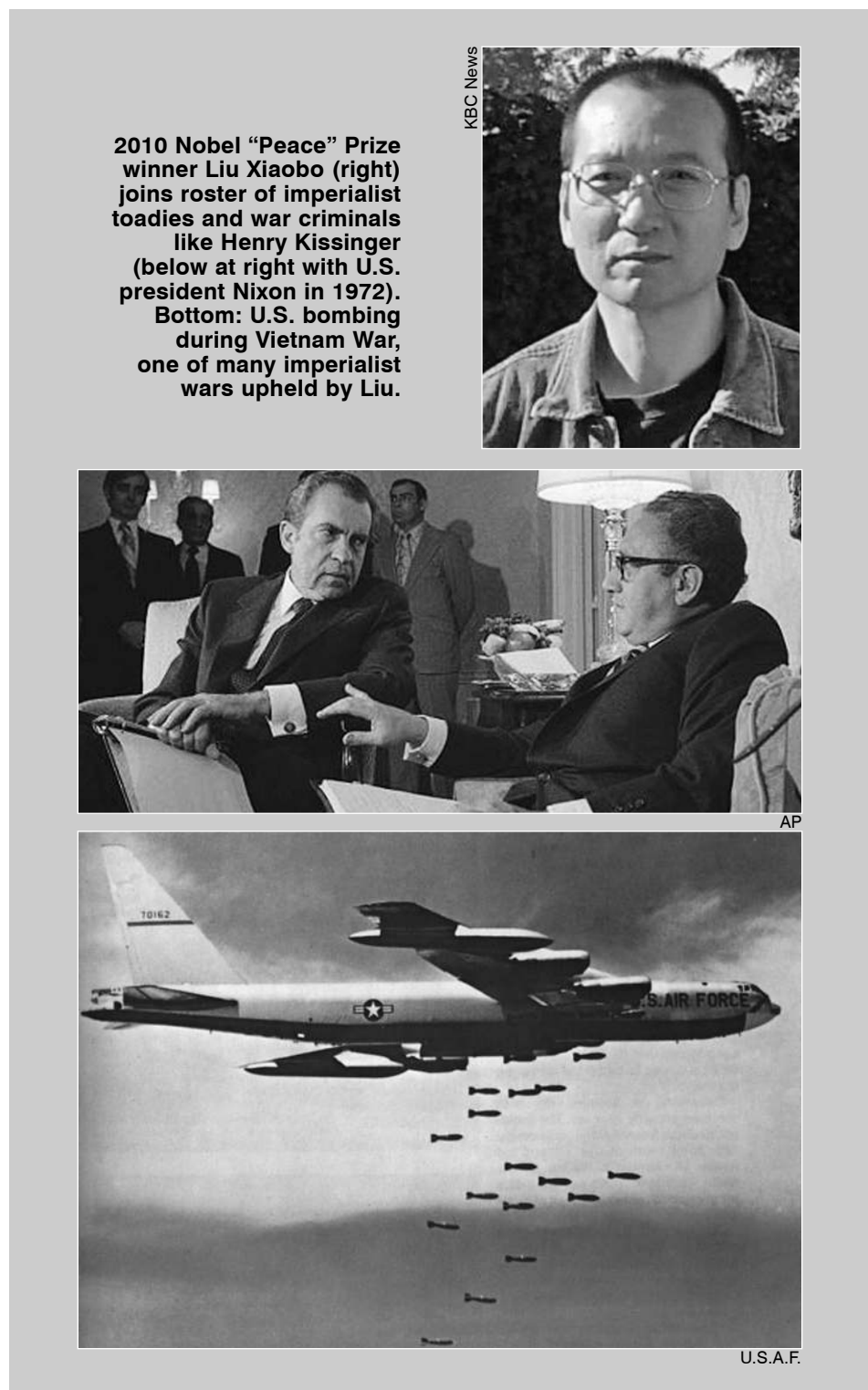
“If Liu’s politics were well-known, most people would not favour him for a prize, because he is a champion of war, not peace. He has endorsed the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and he applauded the Vietnam and Korean wars retrospectively in a 2001 essay. All these conflicts have entailed massive violations of human rights. Yet in his article ‘Lessons from the Cold War,’ Liu argues that ‘The free world led by the US fought almost all regimes that trampled on human rights.... The major wars that the US became involved in are all ethically defensible.’ During the 2004 US presidential election, Liu warmly praised George Bush for his war effort against Iraq and condemned Democratic party candidate John Kerry for not sufficiently supporting the US’s wars.”

It is practically a requirement for those awarded the Nobel Peace Prize that they be imperialist war criminals (e.g., Henry Kissinger and Barack Obama) or toadies of the imperialists (e.g., the Dalai Lama).

Joining the imperialists in praising Liu are the pseudo-Trotskyists who publish *October Review* out of capitalist Hong Kong, the one part of the People’s Republic of China (besides the tiny enclave of Macao) where the CCP does not exercise a monopoly of political organization. Describing this vocal apologist for American imperialist militarism as someone who “fought for democracy through peaceful means,” *October Review* (31 December 2010) ran an article, headlined “Liu Xiaobo Must Be Released Now! Human Rights Must Be Restored in China!” that was suffused with the anti-Communist code words “human rights” and (classless) “democracy.” “Liu being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize is also a criticism of Chinese authorities,” we are informed, “hence it can be an encouragement for the development of the democratic movement in China.” With the same language, the *Washington Post* (30 January 2009)—a major mouthpiece for American imperialism—hailed Liu’s Charter 08 movement as China’s “new democracy movement.”

## “Human Rights” Imperialism Against China

Liu emerged as Washington’s most favored Chinese anti-Communist “dissident” a little over two years ago as the primary author of the Charter 08 manifesto which, as we wrote at the time, was “an



**2010 Nobel “Peace” Prize winner Liu Xiaobo (right) joins roster of imperialist toadies and war criminals like Henry Kissinger (below at right with U.S. president Nixon in 1972). Bottom: U.S. bombing during Vietnam War, one of many imperialist wars upheld by Liu.**

explicit program for capitalist counterrevolution in the Chinese deformed workers state, wrapped in the envelope of ‘democracy’” (WV No. 933, 27 March 2009). Charter 08 demanded the privatization of state-owned enterprises—the collectivized core of the Chinese economy—as well as agricultural land. This was a program to reverse the social gains of the 1949 Revolution, which, if realized, would plunge China back into imperialist subjugation and untrammelled exploitation. Not surprisingly, the organizations Liu has been involved in have been funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, a notorious CIA front.

While we recognized that Charter 08 represented a counterrevolutionary program, we did not support the repression of its initiators and signers by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which defends its privileged position through fierce, all-sided political repression. Liu and the other right-wing intellectuals were not and are not presently leading a movement threatening the existence of the Chinese workers state, as was the case, for example, with Solidarność in Poland in 1981. As revolutionary Marxists (Trotskyists), we called to “smash Solidarność counter-revolution” and fought to win Polish workers to a program of defense of the Polish and Soviet workers states against capitalist counterrevolution and for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies.

In China today, that program is essential to politically defeat the Charter 08 movement and its apologists on the left,

such as *October Review*. Charter 08 retrospectively supported the imperialist-backed Guomindang (Nationalist Party) regime of Chiang Kai-shek against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the civil war of the late 1940s. The 1949 Chinese Revolution was a progressive social revolution of world-historic significance. Hundreds of millions of peasants rose up and seized the land on which their forebears had been exploited from time immemorial. The creation of a centrally

planned, collectivized economy laid the basis for enormous social progress.

However, the revolution was deformed from its inception under the rule of Mao Zedong’s CCP regime, a nationalist bureaucratic caste resting atop the workers state. Unlike the Russian October Revolution of 1917, which was carried out by a class-conscious proletariat guided by the Bolshevik internationalism of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the Chinese Revolution was the result of peasant-guerrilla war led by Mao’s Stalinist-nationalist forces. Patterned after the Stalinist bureaucracy that had usurped power in the USSR, Mao and his successors, including today’s Hu Jintao regime, have maintained the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that socialism—a classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance—could be built in a single country. In practice, “socialism in one country” has meant accommodation to world imperialism and opposition to the perspective of international workers revolution, which is essential for the advance to socialism.

At some point, the explosive social tensions within China will shatter the political structure of the ruling bureaucratic caste. And when that happens, the fate of the most populous country in the world will be starkly posed: proletarian political revolution to establish a government based on elected workers and peasants councils and open the road to socialism, or capitalist enslavement and imperialist subjugation.

In their own way, China’s Stalinist rulers sense that they are sitting atop a social volcano. This is clearly evident in their response to the mass protests that toppled Egyptian despot Hosni Mubarak. The state-directed television news showed pictures of protests from afar in which not a single demonstrator was visible. Instead they focused on broken windows at banks, trucks in flames and looting, accompanied by commentary about how the government was striving to restore order. In the wake of the political turbulence in North Africa, there has been increased suppression of dissent (arrests and detentions of activists, artists and lawyers as well as more Internet censorship).

For their part, elements in American ruling circles evidently saw an opportunity to encourage some Chinese intellectuals and other members of the educated (and materially privileged) petty bourgeoisie to take to the streets in the name of “democracy.” This was labeled “the Jasmine revolution.” Anti-Communist émigrés in the U.S., grouped around the Democratic Party of China, took to their computer keyboards and issued calls in cyberspace

*continued on page 9*

**JUST OUT!**

**Spartacist**  
(English edition)

**No. 62**  
**Spring 2011**  
(64 pages)  
**\$1.50**

*Spartacist* is sent  
to all WV subscribers.

**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO  
New York, NY 10116

**SPARTACIST**  
NUMBER 62 ENGLISH EDITION SPRING 2011

**ICL Holds Sixth International Conference**  
**Fighting for Programmatic Integrity in a Reactionary Period**  
PAGE 2  
Preface to ICL Declaration of Principles .....10

**Edmund Samarakkody and the Legacy of the Ceylonese LSSP**  
**The Fight for Trotskyism in South Asia**  
PAGE 12  
M. N. Roy: Nationalist Menshevik .....32

**In Defense of Dialectical Materialism**  
**Lenin as Philosopher, by Peter Fryer.....36**

**Women and Revolution**  
**Communist International Theses on Work Among Women**  
PAGE 64

AUSTRALIA...\$1.50 BRITAIN...£1 CANADA...C\$1.50 IRELAND...£1.50 SOUTH AFRICA...R3 USA...US\$1.50



# A REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST HISTORY OF MAY DAY

*The following is a presentation, edited for publication, given by comrade Jacob Zorn at a May 7 forum in New York City.*

Every year on the first of May, workers throughout the world celebrate May Day. Like International Women's Day in March, May Day originated in the heat of class struggle against the U.S. capitalist class, but it has not been celebrated in the United States for decades—that is, until several years ago, when tens of thousands of immigrants began demonstrating for immigrant rights.

The Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Clubs go to these May Day protests with our paper, *Workers Vanguard*, and the paper of our comrades in Mexico, *Espartaco*, to put forward our demand that the workers movement fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We also raise our Marxist program of working-class independence in counterposition to the labor bureaucrats and liberals in the leadership of these protests: that the working class must struggle in its own interests, here and internationally, against the capitalists, and that the Democrats and other bourgeois politicians and their allies in the labor bureaucracy are enemies of the fight for workers emancipation.

In Europe and Latin America, celebrating on May Day is much more common. Yet the politics of these celebrations, as pushed by the social democrats, the trade-union bureaucrats and, in the semi-colonial world, bourgeois nationalists, obscure not only the origins of May Day but also its historic revolutionary political message. This forum will emphasize this revolutionary heritage, based on the need for the working class internationally to make a socialist revolution, expropriate



Paul J. Morand

**3 May 1886: Cops outside McCormick Harvester Machine plant in Chicago rampage against rally demanding eight-hour day, killing one worker.**

the capitalist parasites and create a society based on proletarian rule.

## The 1886 Haymarket Police Riot

For most people, the origins of May Day are synonymous with the Haymarket demonstration in Chicago on 4 May 1886, which took place amid a large struggle for an eight-hour day. In order to understand what happened in Haymarket Square 125 years ago, it's important to have a sense of this struggle in Chicago, which was largely organized by anarchist labor leaders August Spies and Albert Parsons, who would go on to become two of the Haymarket martyrs. During these protests, some 400,000 workers struck in Chicago on 1 May 1886; 45,000 other workers had won the eight-hour day without striking.

The first of May demonstrations were peaceful. But this was not due to any effort by the bourgeoisie in Chicago. More than 1,000 National Guard troops were on standby in their armories, which were fortresses built in most cities after the 1877 railway strike. The Chicago capitalists and their hirelings in the police were looking to nip the growing labor movement in the bud, including by going after its leaders. So a Chicago newspaper on May 1 declared: "There are two dangerous ruffians at large in this city; two sneaking cowards who are trying to create trouble. One of them is named Parsons. The other is named Spies.... Mark them for today.... Make an example of them if trouble does occur!"

Well, there wasn't any trouble on that day. And the strike continued for several days. On May 3, as part of the eight-hour struggle, 6,000 union lumber-shovers [lumber yard workers] held a mass rally. By chance, the rally was held near the McCormick Harvester Machine Company plant. There had been a strike against this company, whose owners were particularly anti-union, going on since February 1886, unrelated to the eight-hour day struggle. But by May, about half of the employees of the plant had joined in the eight-hour movement. So 500 McCormick strikers came out for the protest on May 3.

On that day, as August Spies, one of the leading German labor-anarchist radicals of Chicago, was speaking, some of the strikers and lumber-shovers protested as scabs were leaving the McCormick plant. Suddenly 200 cops swarmed down on the workers, killing one, critically injuring five or six more and wounding unknown numbers. Outraged by this attack, Spies helped organize a protest the next day at Haymarket Square against this police violence.

On the evening of May 4, this 3,000-strong protest was relatively subdued, and the fact that it started to rain at the end meant that most of the people had left. Some of the most important labor leaders, particularly the anarchists such as Parsons and Spies, were on the speakers list. The mayor of Chicago observed most of the demo but left early because it was uneventful. Just as the demonstration was about to end, some 280 cops showed up and ordered the 200 remaining protesters to disperse. As the protesters began to leave, a bomb exploded suddenly. Nobody knows who threw the bomb. The only thing that's certain is that it wasn't

anybody who was later convicted of throwing the bomb. The bomb itself was not responsible for most of the deaths. The deaths of seven cops, as well as the killing and injuring of protesters, occurred mainly because the police pulled out their guns and started shooting in all directions.

The cops, and the Chicago bourgeoisie, were incensed by the growing radical labor movement, and they saw in the Haymarket police riot a chance to get Spies and Parsons. What followed was an almost archetypal display of how the capitalist state—armed bodies of men, including the police, the prisons and court system—has nothing to do with justice and everything to do with protecting the rule and profits of the capitalists through violent force. This was the first red scare in U.S. history. Lucy Parsons, who was the wife of Albert Parsons, described the atmosphere shortly after the riot: "A reign of terror has been inaugurated which would put to shame the most zealous Russian blood-hound."

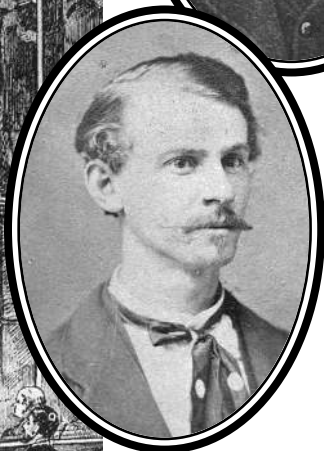
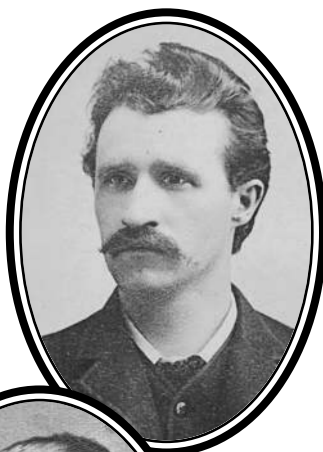
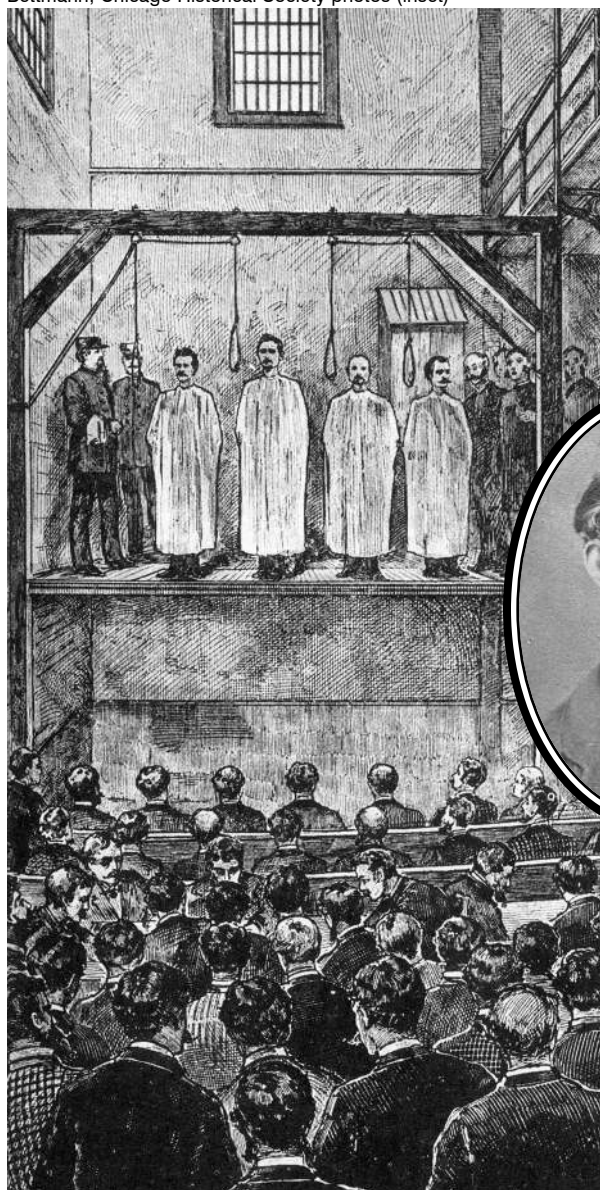
The police, disregarding all laws, rounded up leftists, unionists, immigrants. And once they narrowed down who their "suspects" were going to be, the court system then proceeded to legally lynch the anarchists and workers' leaders.

The trial was one of the most blatant examples that there is no justice in the capitalist courts. The judge, Joseph Gary, turned the trial into an inquisition, with the Haymarket defendants tried for something they had no part in. They were supposedly co-conspirators with somebody—unnamed and unidentified—who threw the bomb. To assure a conviction, the jurors were not chosen at random but were preselected to make sure there were no workers and that all were sufficiently reactionary. When some of the prospective jurors said that they were too biased against the defendants, Gary argued to seat them nonetheless.

On 11 November 1887, Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel and Adolph Fischer were hanged by the state of Illinois. Louis Lingg died in mysterious circumstances in his cell the day before his planned execution. Michael Schwab and Samuel Fielden had their death sentences commuted to life in prison. Oscar Neebe was sentenced to 15 years' hard labor. As James P. Cannon, who went on to become one of the founders of the American Communist Party and then the American Trotskyist movement, put it in a 1927 article titled "The Red Month of November": "They were the pioneers of the eight-hour day movement, and their crime was so heinous in the eyes of the master class that nothing but their blood would satisfy the vampires whose profits and power they menaced." May Day honors these proletarian heroes.

In 1893, Illinois governor John Altgeld released the remaining anarchists who were still in jail. So obvious was the anti-working-class bias of the court that Altgeld in his pardon noted what he called Gary's "malicious ferocity." But that is really the way that bourgeois democracy works: the state acts as the brutal enforcer of bourgeois rule, but it gets dressed up to make it prettier. One of the reasons May Day is not celebrated in the U.S. is that the bourgeoisie has a long memory and remembers what it really means. When I gave this forum in Chicago, the comrades pointed out that the police department's training facility used to have a statue honoring the cops in the Haymarket riot, in

Bettmann; Chicago Historical Society photos (inset)



**Anarchist labor leaders August Spies (top) and Albert Parsons were among four hanged on 11 November 1887 for the Haymarket "conspiracy."**

the courtyard. Anybody who wanted to be a Chicago policeman saw that statue every day.

**Class Struggle and Black Oppression in the U.S.**

The key to why this riot and this day became so important lies in the context of the class struggle in the U.S. during the period of the 1880s, a period referred to today as the “Great Upheaval.” Unfortunately many people, including many radicals, don’t know very much about this period, even though to a large degree it laid the basis for the labor struggles of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the 1910s and the CIO in the 1930s.

As with many things in American history, a good place to start is the Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. The Civil War was a bourgeois revolution, one of the most progressive wars in modern history. The war freed black people from slavery and paved the way for the full development of capitalism in the United States. During the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War, the Federal government extended the rights of citizenship to black people through the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. It used the power of the Army to protect former slaves and establish the Freedmen’s Bureau. And it even mooted land reform. But the bourgeoisie did not complete the task of ending black oppression.

By this time, the American capitalist system was well on its way to becoming imperialist, something that would blossom fully over the next decades. Especially after the Paris Commune of March-May 1871, which was the first time the working class took power, continuing the social revolution that black liberation would have entailed was far from the minds of most capitalists in the U.S., even among “progressives” in the Republican Party. With the Compromise of 1877, the capitalist class betrayed the freedmen and removed the last Federal troops from the South, slamming the door shut on the hopes of black freedom.

The Civil War also inaugurated a fierce class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the industrializing North and West. Karl Marx has a famous quote in the first volume of *Capital*:

“In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralysed 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. But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours’ agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California.”

One of the main results of the failure of Reconstruction is that the labor movement and the fight for black freedom remained separate. To be sure, there were some links. Ira Steward, the founder of the eight-hour movement in the 1860s, is rumored to have fought with John Brown in Kansas, and abolitionist and Republican leader Wendell Phillips advocated the eight-hour day after the Civil War.

Another exception is Albert Parsons himself. Parsons grew up in the South and as a youth fought in the Confederate Army. During Reconstruction, he sympathized with the Radical Republicans and

**CAPITALIST PROFIT MEANS WORKERS’ LIVES**

*The following are the comments, edited for publication, of a Spartacist League speaker during the discussion period of the May 7 NYC forum.*

Jacob mentioned the Triangle Shirtwaist fire of March 25, 1911. This industrial murder of 146 New York City garment workers, mostly young immigrant women, galvanized the labor movement in the city. The doors of the Triangle Shirtwaist sweatshop were locked by the owners, imprisoning garment workers in the factory as the fire raged. This is not uncommon. We had an article on Bangladeshi women garment workers in *Workers Vanguard* No. 974 [18 February] which lays this out, with scores of fires in factories where the doors were locked, constituting mass murder by factory owners. Those who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire were either consumed in the flames or leapt nine or ten stories to their death on the pavement below.

What we saw this year with the Triangle Shirtwaist centennial was that the Democratic Party used the occasion of this tragedy caused by capitalism to seek to present themselves as the friends of labor. This comes off the Republicans and Democrats taking a sledgehammer to the unions, making working people pay with their jobs, homes and meager social benefits to bail out the capitalist parasites whose financial swindles kicked off the worst economic crisis since the 1930s Great Depression.

The centennial event was held outside the factory where the fire occurred, and a team of comrades sold *Workers Vanguard* to a crowd of about 2,000 workers. We sold our papers easily on the front-page article on the anti-union onslaught in Wisconsin and the article on the Bangladeshi women garment workers. Various leading lights of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy spoke from the platform. While 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.” The labor bureaucrats are so beholden to the capitalist order that even the notion that there is a working class in this country is deep-sixed, reflected in



Bettmann

**Victims of 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York City.**

the constant refrain about the “middle class” and not the working class.

Speakers included Obama’s Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, who speechified about the importance of unions and then went on to evoke the 29 coal miners who died in West Virginia and the eleven oil workers who were killed in the Deepwater Horizon explosion. She intoned that the “Department of Labor is back in the enforcement business.” Certainly they are—enforcement of the Obama administration’s union-busting “sacrifice” to bail out Wall Street. There was a Laborers union bureaucrat who translated for a Latino laborer, who powerfully described working with no medical benefits, with doors padlocked and no bathrooms. Meanwhile, a worker whose hand was mangled was fired. What is desperately needed is a new, class-struggle leadership of the unions and the forging of a revolutionary workers party that will lead the working class in the overthrow of the American capitalist order, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class and the establishment of a planned socialist economy.

believed that the former slaves had rights. He married Lucy Parsons, who was of mixed-race background. Because of their support to Reconstruction and the fact that they were in a mixed marriage, they were essentially driven out of the South. They moved to Chicago, throwing themselves into the radical labor movement. As Parsons put it in his autobiography, which he wrote from his prison cell: “I have made some enemies. My enemies in the southern states consisted of those who oppressed the black slave. My enemies in the north are among those who would perpetuate the slavery of the wage workers” (“Autobiography of Albert R. Parsons,” reprinted in *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* [1969]).

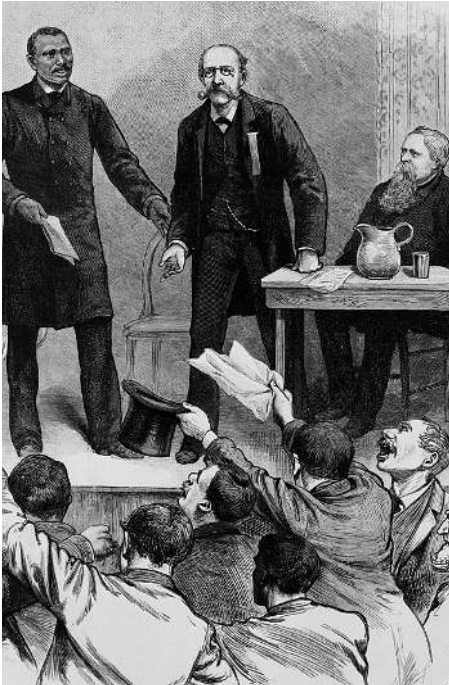
But while the shadow of the Civil War hung over the 1880s, it was a failing that the importance of the continued fight for black liberation remained alien to most of the labor movement. It was only after the October Revolution of 1917 that the importance of fighting for black liberation was driven home among left-wing workers in the United States, at the insistence of the Communist International under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky. The race-color caste oppression of black people at the bottom of American society is integral to the capitalist system itself. A key part of our understanding of black oppression is that it will take a third revolution—a workers revolution to smash capitalism—to achieve black liberation. And thus our slogans: Finish the Civil

War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!

**The Early Labor Movement**

It was no exaggeration when Marx said that the labor movement began in earnest after the Civil War. William Sylvis, an iron-molder, made the first attempt at a national trade-union federation in 1866, the National Labor Union. At the time of his premature death in 1869, Sylvis was in correspondence with the First International, of which Marx was a principal leader. The eight-hour day movement was the first real cause of the American labor movement. And in fact, the first May Day was not in 1886 but in 1867, when workers in Chicago demonstrated in support of a state law guaranteeing an eight-hour day. Like most such reforms, the bourgeoisie found a way around these laws.

Compared to Europe, the condition of the U.S. working class was contradictory. On the one hand, class relations between workers and capitalists were more brutal. In 1886, Karl Marx’s daughter Eleanor and her husband, Edward Aveling, toured the United States. In their book, *The Working-Class Movement in America*, they wrote: “The first general impression left on the mind is, that in this country of extremes, those of poverty and wealth, of exploitation in its active and passive form, are more marked than in Europe.... There are in America far more trenchant distinctions between the capitalist and labouring class than in the older lands.”



Leslie's Illustrated Weekly

**Knights of Labor leader Terence Powderly (center) being introduced by Frank Farrell, black delegate at union’s tenth annual convention in Richmond, Virginia, 1886.**

On the other hand, many workers did not see being proletarian as a permanent condition. Friedrich Engels called America “the ideal of all bourgeois: a country rich, vast, expanding, with purely bourgeois institutions unleavened by feudal remnants or monarchical traditions, and without a permanent and hereditary proletariat. Here everyone could become, if not a capitalist, at all events an independent man, producing or trading, with his own means, for his own account. And because there were not, *as yet*, classes with opposing interests, our—and your—bourgeois thought that America stood *above* class antagonisms and struggles” (“Engels to Florence Kelley-Wischniewetzky,” 3 June 1886).

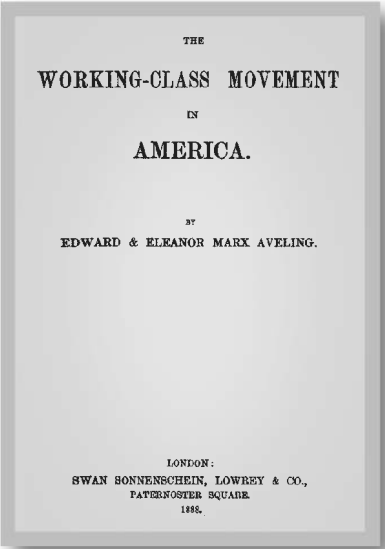
Since the age of President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s, most white male workers could vote, and they did so, supporting the Democratic Party. Workers could learn a trade and, after an apprenticeship, could become master workmen or small businessmen. Many could move to the countryside and make a

*continued on page 6*



Culver

**State militia fires on strikers in Baltimore during Great Rail Strike of 1877. Book by Eleanor Marx and her husband Edward Aveling described brutal class divide in U.S.**





(continued from page 5)

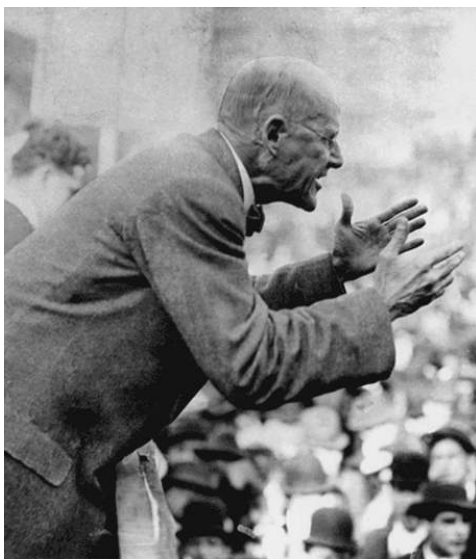
good living as small farmers. Until the 1920s, more Americans lived in the countryside than in urban areas. This is almost exactly the opposite of most every other capitalist country, where peasants move to the city to escape the problems of the countryside.

Now as Marxists, we define one's class based on one's relationship to the means of production. Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie owns the means of production. The proletariat, or the working class, are those who are forced to sell their ability to work to the capitalists. Workers are exploited by the capitalists, who appropriate the products of their labor but pay only a fraction of their value back in wages. But class consciousness also has a different dimension: not just what one's position is at any given time, but how one sees one's position in the future. As Engels put it in "The Labor Movement in America" (26 January 1887):

"In February 1886, American public opinion was almost unanimous on this one point: that there was no working class, in the European sense of the word, in America; that consequently no class struggle between workmen and capitalists, such as tore European society to pieces, was possible in the American Republic; and that, therefore, Socialism was a thing of foreign importation which could never take root on American soil."

The Haymarket events really punctured the myth of there being no classes or class struggle in the United States.

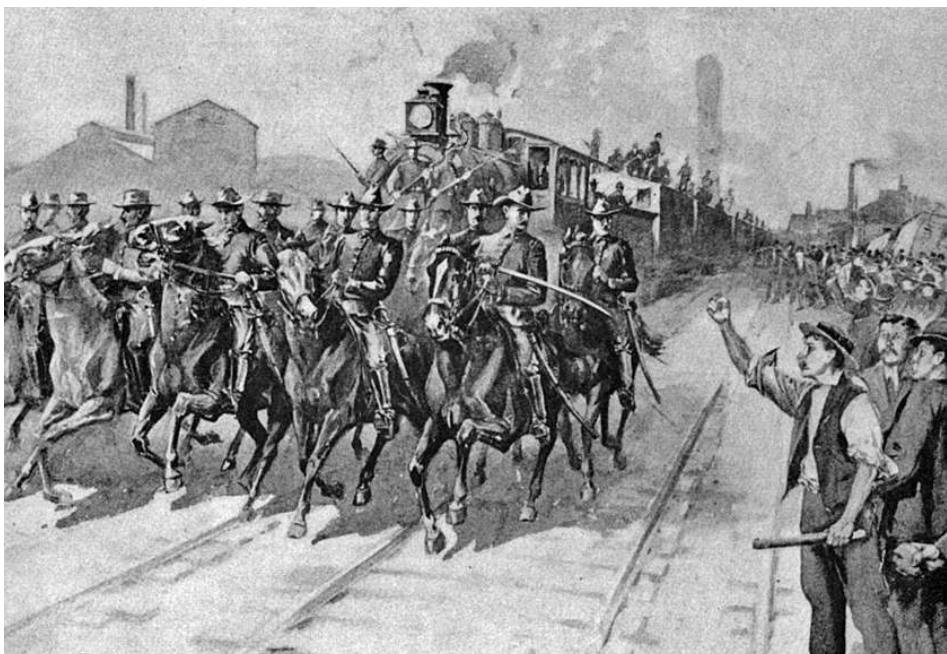
The last quarter of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century were marked by massive class battles in



Indiana State University  
**Eugene V. Debs was leader of railway union during 1894 Pullman strike. Right: Army was sent to smash strike.**

man railway strike in 1894; the Coeur d'Alene (Idaho) miners strikes in the 1890s; the so-called "Uprising of the 20,000" among women textile workers in New York in 1909-10 that gave rise to International Women's Day. There were the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike; the Paterson, New Jersey, silk strike of 1913; the Ludlow Massacre of 1914 in Colorado; the Phelps Dodge strike in Bisbee, Arizona, in 1917; the 1919 steel strike.

But despite this massive class struggle, the proletariat in this country has always been among the most politically backward. If nothing else, this should prove the truth of Lenin's assertion that economic struggle does not in and of itself lead to socialist consciousness, which



the petty-bourgeois Populist movement that was seen as the vanguard of fighting against the excesses of capitalist industrialization. As the name implies, however, Populists saw the world divided not into classes but into the producers, or so-called “little people,” on one side and the parasitical financiers, bankers and speculators on the other. Instead of socialism, populists advocated a whole array of schemes, some of them supportable and some of them rather bizarre—everything from nationalizing the railroads to a tax on land and printing “cheap money” based on silver instead of gold.

The fundamental reason why the American working class does not have even a rudimentary labor party is, as I mentioned before, the role that black oppression plays in maintaining capitalism. As we write in the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.:

“The central enduring feature of American capitalism, shaping and perpetuating this backward consciousness, is the structural oppression of the black population as a race-color caste at the bottom of society. Black oppression with its profound and pervasive ideological effects is fundamental to the American capitalist order. Obscuring the class divide, racism and white supremacy have served to bind white workers to their capitalist masters based on the illusion of a commonality of interest based on skin color.”

## The Knights of Labor

I want to get back to the labor movement in the 1870s, a period of tremendous economic hardship. Until the 1930s, this period was called the Great Depression; today it's generally known as the Long Depression because it lasted throughout most of the 1870s. The bourgeoisie used the state and armed thugs to wage war against the working class. Trade unions generally stagnated and became very weak, with one exception. In 1869, tailors in Philadelphia, under the leadership of Uriah Stephens, began to organize a group that became known as the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, the first national labor organization.

Who and what were the Knights of Labor? They're very hard to understand today. They changed over time and were, in practice, very decentralized, with different regions having different politics and different attitudes on various questions. As their name implies, the Knights at first were heavily influenced by Masonic traditions. They were originally a secret organization. You couldn't even tell somebody the name of the group before they joined. They had all kinds of rituals and handshakes and stuff like that.

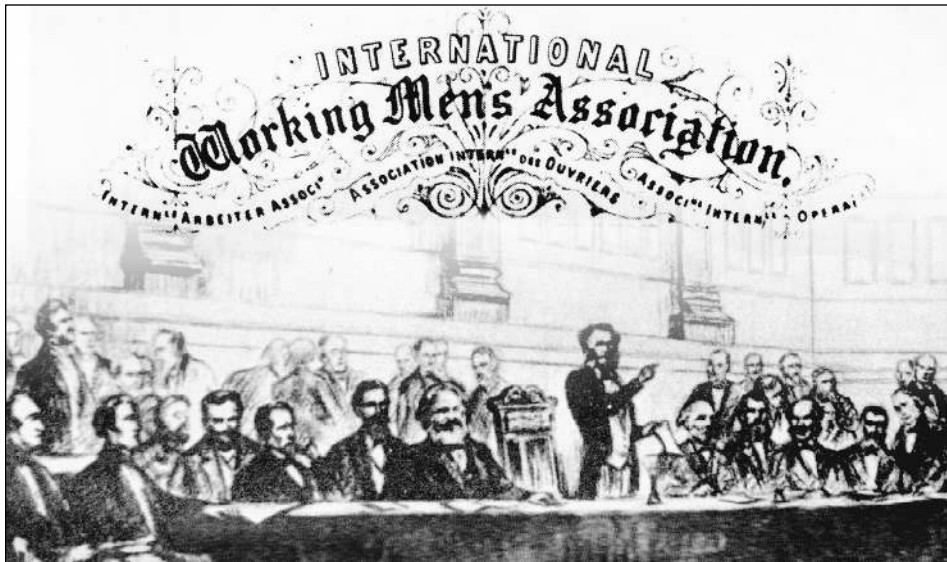
In terms of their politics, on the one hand they were based on a pre-industrial republicanism and reflected populism. Their original declaration of principles stated: "We mean no conflict with legitimate enterprise, no antagonism to necessary capital." But on the other hand, Stephens had also called for "the complete emancipation of the wealth producers from the thralldom and loss of wage slavery." Their watchword was solidarity, and their motto was: "An injury to one is the concern of all." In their book, the Avelings described the Knights as "the first

spontaneous expression by the American working people of their consciousness of themselves as a class."

The Knights are sometimes described as an industrial union. That's not exactly true. They had locals of skilled trades and also had what were called "mixed" locals, which contained unskilled workers. As opposed to the skilled craft unionists of the time, they believed in class solidarity and also understood that industrialization created a mass of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in need of organization. Two of the earliest industrial unions originated from the Knights of Labor: the brewery workers union and the United Mine Workers. The brewery workers were devastated by Prohibition, but the United Mine Workers went on to be key in the founding of the CIO industrial unions in the 1930s.

The Knights leadership under Terence V. Powderly, who succeeded Stephens in the 1880s, was opposed to strikes. But, as is often the case, the rank and file often felt differently. And in this period workers were eager to organize. As the country climbed out of the depression in the early 1880s, the percentage of nonagricultural workers in unions jumped from 2 percent to 12 percent in about five years. In 1885, railroad workers organized in the Knights faced down robber baron Jay Gould—one of the strongest, most powerful capitalists of the period—forcing him to accede to some of their demands and to agree to negotiate with the union. This was seen as a major defeat for Gould and caused the prestige of the Knights to soar, along with their membership.

The Knights went from less than 10,000 members in 1878 to as many as 700,000 in 1886. In February of that year alone, the Knights organized 515 local assemblies. They had become truly a national union. They put out propaganda in various languages to attract immigrant workers, although it's worth noting that, like most unions, they excluded Chinese workers. They organized women workers. They also organized locals in England, Belgium, Ireland and Australia and New Zealand. And at times the Knights broke through the color bar. In November 1887, they organized a three-week strike of some 10,000 overwhelmingly black sugar plan-



**Founding of International Working Men's Association (First International) in London, 1864. Superimposed is detail from Friedrich Engels' membership card.**

an almost endless class *war*. And I'm not using the term "war" lightly. Hundreds of strikers were killed and thousands imprisoned. In the 1880s, there were some 30,000 Pinkerton strikebreakers; the U.S. Army had less than 27,000 soldiers, and of course the soldiers could be used to break strikes as well. There was the first general strike in the United States, in St. Louis, as part of the national railway strike of 1877. There was the Haymarket police riot in 1886; the Homestead strike against Carnegie Steel in 1892; the Pull-

needs to be brought to the working class from without. This requires the intervention of a revolutionary party into class and social struggles.

A defining feature of the U.S. historically is the lack of a mass social-democratic party or any other workers party that recognizes the division of society between workers and capitalists and the struggle between these two classes, if even in a crude way. Now I just want to make clear that our goal is *not* the creation of a social-democratic party. Following Lenin, we call such parties, like the British Labour Party, bourgeois workers parties, because while their base is in the working class, their leaderships and programs are dedicated to maintaining capitalism. What we stand for is the forging of a *revolutionary* workers party that fights for all the oppressed. In countries with social-democratic parties, this means splitting the base from the top. In the U.S., this means fighting to break the working class from the capitalist Democratic Party.

Bourgeois historians and political scientists have made a cottage industry of explaining why there is no labor party in the United States. Now, there are lots of reasons. One is the historic ethnic divisions among workers. Another is the importance of farmers in American society and the sense of upward mobility, real or illusory. For much of the 1880s and 1890s, it was not the working-class movement but

## Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

## LOS ANGELES

**Saturday, May 28, 2 p.m.**

**Defend, Extend the Gains of  
the 1949 Chinese Revolution!  
Down With Imperialist  
and Dalai Llama Provocations!  
For Proletarian Political Revolution!**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215  
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239  
slycla@sbcglobal.net

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



## Publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México

**No. 33, Spring 2011, \$.50 (24 pages)**

**Subscription: \$2 for 4 issues**  
(includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

**Order from/make checks payable to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

tation workers in Louisiana. The strike was broken by racist vigilantes who mowed down, by one estimate, as many as 300 black workers.

By the time of Haymarket in 1886, the Knights were the largest union in the country. But they were not the only national union. In 1881, the much smaller Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions was founded, and this would eventually become the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Its key leaders were Samuel Gompers and Adolph Strasser, both from the Cigar Makers union, and P. J. McGuire, the founder of the Carpenters union. In the 1880s, the Cigar Makers split from the Knights in a very sordid way, involving pretty much all the elements you would expect from Gompers, including jurisdictional disputes, scabbing on other unions and anti-socialism.

Gompers, Strasser and McGuire are often described as having cut their teeth as Marxists. And it's true that they—like many successful trade-union bureaucrats since—had some kind of a leftist background. But it was not Marxism but social-democratic reformism, which they adapted to American conditions. Like the revisionists in the German Social Democracy, the AFL's early leaders accepted capitalism. Here is Strasser in 1883: "We have no ultimate ends.... We are fighting only for immediate objects—objects that can be realized in a few years."

Unlike the inclusive Knights of Labor, the AFL leadership focused on skilled craft workers. It became increasingly anti-black, anti-Chinese and all-around piggish. Gompers emphasized what he called "pure and simple" trade unionism.



Robert Sennecke

**Left: Revolutionary socialist Karl Liebknecht speaking in Berlin, 1918. Right: Soldiers killed in World War I, when millions of working-class men were slaughtered.**

He was vehement in his opposition to creating a working-class political party. The heritage of Gompers and the AFL accounts for much of the weakness of the American labor movement today, led by its pro-capitalist bureaucracy. The fruits of its class collaboration can be seen in the fact that today unionization rates have fallen to the point that they are about the same as they were in the mid 1880s.

**Working-Class Politics in the 1880s**

I had mentioned that there was no socialist party in the United States. Now in point of fact this isn't strictly speaking true. Although much weaker than in Europe, in the U.S. at this time there was a tradition of socialism, broadly defined. By the 1880s and 1890s, there were two main trends within the American socialist movement. The first was social-democratic, the second anarchist. And I just want to make a point that it is not always easy to separate these two trends when looking at the period. Both contained working-class militants who saw their fight as putting the proletariat in power. It really wasn't until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 that there was a clear differentiation between revolutionary and reformist in the socialist movement.

The first socialist organization in the U.S. was the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), which was founded in Newark, New Jersey, in 1877. A lot of people know about the SLP because in the 1890s it would be



Library of Congress

**1913 May Day parade in New York City's Union Square, with signs in Yiddish, Italian and English.**

led by Daniel De Leon. Before this, the SLP largely consisted of German-speaking immigrants, who often had a higher theoretical level than American workers but remained aloof from American reality, including the centrality of black oppression in maintaining capitalism.

In the 1880s, many socialists split from the rather legalistic SLP in the direction of anarchism, with many joining the International Working People's Association (IWPA). By 1885, this group had some 7,000 members, compared to 4,000 members in the SLP. Until about the time of World War I, the American bourgeoisie saw anarchism as a more dangerous threat than the legalistic social democrats

paper, which Parsons edited, a daily German paper edited by Spies and a daily Bohemian (Czech) paper. The Parsons wing of the anarchist movement, with its emphasis on militant unionism, is a thread that runs through the Industrial Workers of the World, which formed later on. Some of the best IWW elements, such as Cannon, found their way to revolutionary Marxism after the Bolshevik Revolution.

**The Eight-Hour Day Movement in the 1880s**

After Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling visited the U.S. in 1886, they described how many workers they met toiled 55, 60



Bettmann

or even 80 hours over a six-day work-week. Some industries were worse than others. Bakers were probably the worst of all—anybody who has read Marx's *Capital* probably remembers the description of bakers. Transportation workers were also forced to work long hours.

As an aside, although the 40-hour week is supposedly enshrined today in labor law, it's still out of reach for a lot of workers. Many are still cheated out of pay, or even if they are paid, they are made to work mandatory overtime. Even if it's not mandatory, many are compelled to work overtime, or to take another job, just to survive. While I was working on this forum, two things happened that drew my attention to the importance of the eight-hour day. The first were those two long-distance bus accidents in New York and New Jersey that highlighted the fact that for many workers, workdays of 12 or more hours are still common. And then within the last several weeks was the rash of air traffic controllers falling asleep. Now that's really scary, but it's also a predictable result of the busting of the PATCO union in the early 1980s, which resulted in horrid working conditions.

Basing ourselves on the Transitional Program, which was written by Trotsky for the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, we call for "30 for 40"—30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay. This links the fight for humane work to the struggle for jobs for all. I am sure that to many Americans, this sounds completely

unreal. But it was the same for the 40-hour week in the 1880s. The capitalist class and its press argued that death by overwork was an inalienable right, and if a man wanted to work—or a woman or a child—for that long, it was nobody else's business. The more honest argued that it would hurt the capitalists' profits to limit the workday.

In 1884, the forerunner of the AFL declared that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886." Gompers' name is often associated with this motion, but I want to make two points. The first is that the craft-union federation was much smaller than the Knights of Labor and had less to lose. The Knights were officially opposed to the call to strike for the eight-hour day. Terence Powderly refused to participate in the 1 May 1886 strike. Some anarchists also originally opposed the eight-hour day slogan, arguing that it didn't matter how many hours you worked because you were still working for the capitalists. But in Chicago, it was the anarchists, particularly Spies and Parsons, both members of the Knights, who made this struggle come to life. The May Day strike was largely coordinated by the Central Labor Union, led by Parsons and Spies.

The Haymarket riot and the subsequent witchhunt created a massive anti-radical scare that set back the labor movement quite a bit. Anarchist newspapers were shut down, and the anarchist movement never really achieved the same success that it had before. The Knights of Labor, even though they were not involved as an organization in the eight-hour day struggle, were basically swept away by this reaction. The main beneficiaries within the labor movement of the destruction of the anarchists and of the overall reactionary atmosphere were Gompers and the AFL, with their narrow focus on skilled workers.

**May Day: International Workers Holiday**

In the years following the Haymarket affair, the tradition of May Day was kept alive in the U.S. largely by socialists and anarchists. By the late 1890s, the AFL bureaucracy under Gompers had abandoned any celebration of May Day, with its hint of radicalism. Instead, they began to push Labor Day in September. Labor Day represents almost the exact opposite of May Day. Where May Day is a day of international proletarian struggle, Labor Day was instituted to celebrate the *American* worker's contribution to American politics. For Gompers, this meant skilled, English-speaking men, dressed up in the finest clothes, coming out to show their respectability.

However, May Day and the struggle for an eight-hour day soon became a focal point of class struggle throughout the world. In 1889, an American delegate to the Paris Congress of the Second (Socialist) International called to make May Day a day of international labor struggle. Why did workers in Europe and across the world heed this call? One reason is that workers in the U.S. came from all parts of the world, so their struggles were closely followed elsewhere. Another big reason is

*continued on page 8*



Reuters

**Labor chief Richard Trumka introduces Barack Obama, CEO of American capitalism, at August 2010 meeting of AFL-CIO Executive Council in Washington, D.C.**



May Day...
(continued from page 7)

that the U.S. in the 1880s was an up and coming imperialist power, and workers' struggle here resonated loudly elsewhere. As did the point that in the U.S., with its claims of democracy and social mobility, bourgeois rule depends on naked violence against the working class.

This is clear if you read what some European Marxists wrote at the time. The founder of Russian Marxism, Georgi Plekhanov, wrote in an 1890 article about May Day:

"The practical Yankees have forgotten all shame and every tradition of political freedom since they noticed the bugbear of communism. The judicial murder of the anarchists in Chicago showed that in the struggle for existence all means are as suitable for the American bourgeoisie as for the European. 'The specter' of communism has become a universal guest; the workers' question a universal question in the full sense of the word."

Or as the German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht put it in his famous book, Militarism and Anti-Militarism (1907), "The gruesome judicial sequel of 4th May, 1886, which proved in a striking way what American democratic class justice is capable of is universally known."

Within a decade of the Haymarket affair, workers across the world were celebrating May Day as a day to fight for their class interests. The first congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1898 explicitly included organizing May Day demonstrations as a task of its Central Committee. Back in the U.S., by the early 20th century the Socialist Party was holding massive rallies, including here in New York where it was common for some 30,000 to 50,000 workers to march under the party's banners. One hundred years ago, May Day commemorated the 146 mainly female Jewish and Italian garment workers who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire.

In a 1924 speech, Trotsky noted that "the eight-hour working day...the international solidarity of workers and the struggle against militarism are the three fundamental May Day slogans." May Day developed at the same time as the rise of imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, marked by the dominance of finance capital and the struggle of the richest capitalist powers to divide the world among themselves. May Day became a day for the working class to show solidarity with its class brothers and sisters in other countries and to oppose the inevitable wars that imperialism has on offer.

In 1898, the New York City police chief banned the SLP from celebrating May Day. This was the year of the Spanish-American War, the bloody debut of U.S. imperialism. According to the New York Times of that day, the chief "had heard that inflammatory speeches would be made denouncing the course of the United States with Spain" and demanded the right to read the rally's resolutions before the march. When the SLP refused, he revoked their permit to march.

As imperialism developed and moved toward the carnage of the First World War, when workers from different coun-



VAAP

Left: Russian factory workers at Petrograd May Day demonstration in 1917 carried Bolshevik slogans such as "Long Live Socialism" and "Long Live the Third International!" Right: Madrid May Day demonstration in 1919 hails Soviet workers state.



Dietz Verlag Berlin

tries would be forced to kill their class brothers from other countries, May Day became even more a symbol of proletarian internationalism. In 1913, on the eve of the war, Rosa Luxemburg wrote in "The Idea of May Day on the March": "And the more the idea of May Day, the idea of resolute mass actions as a manifestation of international unity, and as a means of struggle for peace and for socialism, takes root in the strongest troops of the International, the German working class, the greater is our guarantee that out of the world war which, sooner or later, is unavoidable, will come forth a definite and victorious struggle between the world of labor and that of capital."

But far from fighting against the war, most of the leadership of the Second

internationalism, which he expressed in a speech on May Day, when he declared:

"Forward, let us fight the government; let us fight these mortal enemies of all freedom.... Workers, comrades, and you, women of the people, let not this festival of May, the second during the war, pass without protest against the Imperialist Slaughter. On the first of May let millions of voices cry, 'Down with the shameful crime of the extermination of peoples! Down with those responsible for the War!'"

Here in New York City in 1917, when the left wing of the Socialist movement was swelling with workers and immigrants, 125,000 people marched on May Day.

The Bolsheviks and May Day

Amid the wreckage of the imperialist war, the working class in Russia, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky's

liberating, progressive and forward looking in it we have taken over, including the May Day holiday. For us this is a great festival of liberation at the same time as German social-democracy suppresses it by force. And the same thing with the eight-hour working day and with all the rest of the May Day slogans."

At that time, a conservative bureaucratic caste led by Stalin had arisen and begun to consolidate control over the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International. This was to take on a programmatic expression in late 1924, as the Stalinist bureaucracy propounded the anti-Marxist dogma of "building socialism in one country." May Day would become a tribune to push not revolutionary internationalism but the narrow interests of the bureaucratic regime that sat atop the workers state. Through its futile pursuit of accommodation with imperialism and its opposition to international revolution, the Stalinist bureaucracy undermined the gains of the revolution and ultimately opened the door to capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92.

In most of the world, May Day is still celebrated by millions of workers. However, what dominates these protests is not the Bolshevik program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism but the illusions and reformist program pushed by the trade-union bureaucrats, the social democrats and what remains of the Stalinists. But as highlighted by the imperialist wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, by the onslaught against unions, black people and immigrants, the revolutionary lessons of May Day are crucially relevant today, as are the lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. There is a need for hard class struggle to fight for immigrant rights, to organize the unorganized, to establish working-class independence from the bourgeois parties, to oppose imperialism—struggles that must be linked to the fight for socialist revolution. These tasks demand building a revolutionary workers party, the task that the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, sets for itself. ■



Y. Shteinberg

Delegates at March 1919 founding Congress of Communist International in Moscow.

International betrayed the working class, showing their social chauvinism by supporting their "own" bourgeoisies against the workers of other lands. But there were socialist militants who fought against this betrayal. In 1916, Karl Liebknecht was arrested in Germany for his proletarian

Bolshevik Party, seized power from the capitalists in the October Revolution of 1917. The Revolution stood as the living embodiment of the ideals of May Day, and it is the Bolsheviks who made May Day synonymous with Communism internationally. In April 1918—some six months after the Revolution—Lenin signed a decree to "mark the great revolution that has transformed Russia," declaring that tsarist monuments should be replaced with tributes to the working class and that by May Day, "some of the more monstrous statues will have already been removed and the first models of new monuments set out for the masses to see." These would display "the ideas and mood of revolutionary working Russia." By the first May Day after a victorious revolution in this country, the working class should have torn down the monuments to the leaders of the Confederate slavocracy and to the imperialist war criminals who came after them.

In his 1924 speech, Trotsky stated: "We represent not merely the irreconcilable opponents and enemies of today's Second International but we also represent its direct heirs: everything that was

WORKERS VANGUARD
Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League
\$10/22 issues of Workers Vanguard (includes English-language Spartacist and Black History and the Class Struggle)
\$2/6 introductory issues of Workers Vanguard (includes English-language Spartacist)
\$2/4 issues of Espartaco (en español) (includes Spanish-language Spartacist)
I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the production of Workers Vanguard.
Name \_\_\_\_\_
Address \_\_\_\_\_
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_
Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_
Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Karl Marx Was Right
Capitalist Anarchy and the Immiseration of the Working Class
For Workers Revolution!
For an International Planned Socialist Economy!
\$2 (56 pages)
Order from: Spartacist Pub. Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



# Labor: Organize Wal-Mart!

## NYC

Anti-union colossus Wal-Mart wants to boldly go where it has never gone before: New York City. In response, a coalition led by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and including small business owners, bourgeois politicians, community groups and churches is beseeching the Democrat-led City Council to stop the “invasion” with zoning law changes and other legal obstacles. The interests of the working class and poor are not served by agitating over which capitalist retail chain distributes wares in what market. Instead, labor needs to seize the opportunity of the corporate behemoth’s arrival in one of the most heavily unionized cities in the U.S. and finally begin an aggressive campaign to *organize Wal-Mart!*

Everyone has heard horror stories about this giant retailer, which, originating in Arkansas, brought the racist, anti-union “open shop” of the Southern bourgeoisie with it as it moved into the rest of the country and a large chunk of the world. (It is currently making a bid to buy South African retailer Massmart.) Off-the-clock overtime, employees locked in overnight, violation of child labor laws, flagrant discrimination against women, racist hiring practices—the list of Wal-Mart crimes grows by the day.

These iniquities, however, do not particularly distinguish Wal-Mart from Home Depot, Target, the German grocer Aldi or, for that matter, small independent grocers. Whatever the difference in scale, each is a capitalist enterprise whose profit is based on the exploitation of labor. Squeezing workers dry is what they do.

The average wage for a full-time Wal-Mart worker in the U.S. in 2008 was \$10.86 per hour. Many of the workers who might be able to afford the com-

pany’s lousy health plan leave Wal-Mart, which is notorious for its high turnover rate, before they are eligible for the program. Wal-Mart’s poverty-level wages have the effect of driving down wages and working conditions for *all* workers.

Wal-Mart, the largest company in the world, is angling for a space in the Gateway II shopping center in Brooklyn’s East New York ghetto as its entry point into the New York market. Following a well-tested playbook, the company is counting on being positively received by residents, whose access to a variety of goods and lower prices—much less a decent supermarket—is very limited.

**February 3:  
Union contingents  
and small business  
owners protest  
outside City Hall  
against proposed  
opening of  
Wal-Mart in East  
New York.  
Labor tops reject  
hard struggle  
needed to organize  
the anti-union  
behemoth.**



Unemployment is 13.9 percent in East New York, almost 5 percent higher than the city average, and Wal-Mart is promising jobs to area residents. At the same time, it is appealing to the beleaguered NYC construction trade unions by pledging to build its stores with union labor—before slamming the door on unions once they open.

In the few instances in which local

workers have succeeded in organizing a Wal-Mart department or an entire store, the company has picked up its marbles and gone elsewhere. When meat cutters in the Supercenter in Jacksonville, Texas, won union representation, Wal-Mart disbanded its butcher shops nationwide and switched to pre-packaged meats. When workers at the store in Jonquière, Quebec, voted to join the UFCW, the first such success in North America, Wal-Mart closed the store.

In China, a deformed workers state, workers at all Wal-Mart stores are organized by the Stalinist bureaucracy’s trade-union federation. This is doubly ironic.

The pro-capitalist labor tops at unions like the UFCW and its Retail, Wholesale and Department store affiliate, who are heading up the “Walmart Free NYC” coalition, have barely lifted a finger to organize the retailer in the U.S. But they sure do blow hard with anti-Communist China-bashing and “America first” protectionist poison (see “Labor: Organize Wal-Mart!” WV No. 851, 8 July 2005).

By focusing on blocking new Wal-Mart stores, in more than one city the labor bureaucracy has found itself opposed by sections of the black and minority population looking for cheaper commodities. But there is a way for the unions to fight for their own interests as well as those of the ghetto and barrio poor: undertaking a massive and combative union organizing drive. Unionizing Wal-Mart will require the kind of hard class struggle that built the country’s CIO unions in the 1930s—mass pickets, occupations and strike action. This militant perspective is utterly counterposed to the “corporate” and “community” campaigns the current labor leadership favors.

What better place to kick off such a drive than New York City, historically a labor stronghold in a state with the highest union membership rate in the country at over 24 percent. Today NYC labor is under attack by a capitalist class that is chalking up one victory after another in its relentless drive to cripple the unions if not destroy them outright. Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council to which “Walmart Free NYC” appeals are busy bashing the teachers and other city workers. A bare-knuckles campaign to organize Wal-Mart combined with vigorous defense of the public employee and construction workers unions now under attack would go a long way to turn this around. Success in the UFCW’s current drive to organize Target stores in the NYC area would be a good start.

Our goal is not just to see Wal-Mart unionized but to *expropriate* it, along with the productive property of the entire capitalist class, through workers revolution. The wealth and highly developed infrastructure of companies like Wal-Mart should be harnessed by a centrally planned economy under workers rule. To this end, there must be a struggle to break the multiracial working class from the capitalist Democratic Party and to build a workers party that fights for a workers government!■

## Liu Xiaobo...

(continued from page 3)

for actions in Beijing, Shanghai and other Chinese cities. A headline in the *New York Times* (29 April) captured it: “Trying to Stir Up a Popular Protest in China, From a Bedroom in Manhattan.” The “Jasmine revolution” turned out to be a bust. Only a handful heeded the call, including the U.S. ambassador, who just “happened to be passing by” one of the announced locations at the time. The very places chosen for these “democracy” protests spoke to their upper-class character: Starbucks, McDonald’s and Wangfujing, a fancy shopping district in Beijing patronized by foreign tourists and China’s newly rich.

### Fake Trotskyists Push “Democratic” Counterrevolution

Someone might argue that would-be participants in the “Jasmine revolution” were cowed by effective police-state repression. However, this same period saw a three-day strike and angry protests in Shanghai by truckers, most of whom own their own rigs, directed at soaring prices for gasoline and also high government fees. There is no lack of seething discontent among large sections of the Chinese populace—workers in both state-owned and private enterprises, peasant leaseholders and also members of the urban

petty bourgeoisie. The question is what political direction will opposition to the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy take. A decisive factor will be the character and aims of the leadership of such opposition.

When the political situation in China opens up, revolutionary Marxists will confront tendencies that advocate classless “democracy” while also claiming to stand for the interests of the working class and even for socialism. These will include groups that falsely claim the mantle of Trotskyism, such as *October Review*. This outfit is aligned internationally with the United Secretariat (USec), which has a long history of serving “bourgeois-democratic” counterrevolution by prostituting Trotsky’s revolutionary opposition to Stalinism. During the last phase of the Cold War in the 1980s-early ’90s, the USec, led by the late Ernest Mandel, supported every imperialist-backed, anti-Communist force in the Soviet sphere, from Solidarność in Poland to the “democrats” around Boris Yeltsin in Russia. The *October Review* crowd is, if anything, even more strident in expressing anti-Communist hostility toward China than were the Mandelites toward the Soviet Union. But this is simply a matter of degree.

Genuine Trotskyism means carrying forward the revolutionary proletarian-internationalist banner of the October Revolution of 1917. As we concluded our article on Charter 08:

“A proletarian political revolution producing a China of worker and peasant councils would be a beacon for the oppressed working masses of Asia and the entire world, dealing a deathblow to the bourgeoisie’s ‘death of communism’ propaganda, lifting up the downtrodden masses of the former Soviet Union and East Europe and inspiring the workers in the imperialist heartlands. This, ultimately, is the only perspective that can defeat the siren call of ‘democracy’ pushed by imperialist-backed outfits as well as fake ‘socialists’ who are enemies of the gains of the Chinese Revolution.”■

## Refugees...

(continued from page 12)

brothers in East Europe and against the Chinese deformed workers state as well.

Rifondazione Comunista and the rest of Italy’s reformist left have been shedding crocodile tears over the fate of immigrants and refugees under the Berlusconi government and denouncing racist atrocities against immigrants perpetrated by the Qaddafi regime in Libya. What Rifondazione & Co. would like to hide is that the 2010 agreements between Qaddafi and Berlusconi to work together against immigrants effectively constituted a sanction of a previous agreement signed in December 2007 by the government of Romano Prodi, in which Rifondazione’s current Secretary was a minister. And slaughtering immigrants and refugees at sea is not the exclusive prerogative of right-wing governments. We do not forget the tragic sinking of the *Kater i Rades*, a boat loaded with Albanian refugees that was sunk in 1997 by the Italian military boat *Sibilla*, killing more than 100. This was when Italy was ruled by a popular-front government supported by Rifondazione.

The reformists also bear direct responsibility for the current imperialist massacre in Libya and for the mass murder of immigrants at sea, through their support to the UN/NATO attacks on Libya and/or their hailing of the Benghazi-based opposition that is acting as the imperialists’ ground troops. Ahmed Jibril, a spokesman for the National Transitional Council in Benghazi, told the TV program “Porta a Porta” that they are “totally in favor of and encourage” the joint patrolling of Libyan borders with EU troops, railing that “illegal immigrants came to Libya and remained for months and years, spreading diseases and provok-

ing clashes with Libyan citizens.” Opposition forces have rounded up, tortured and killed people suspected of being Qaddafi supporters, especially black Africans alleged to be his mercenaries.

For the working class to take a stand in defense of Libya is particularly key in Italy, a country whose bourgeoisie has long sucked the blood of the Libyan people and is still among the main beneficiaries of their oppression. The only “human right” the imperialist masters truly recognize is their own “right” to exploit Libya’s vast gas and oil reserves. Before the war, Italy got 25 percent of its oil imports and 13 percent of its gas from Libya, and Italy’s biggest companies (headed by the Eni oil conglomerate) occupy leading positions there. This year marks a century of imperialist plunder of Libya by the Italian bourgeoisie, which occupied the country in 1911. After ousting the Ottoman army, Italian forces proceeded to wipe out any resistance. Using poison gas, concentration camps and mass murder, they killed more than 70,000 people and fully 80-90 percent of the livestock. Our defense of Libya against imperialism is in the best traditions of the Italian proletariat, which in 1911 rose in revolt in many towns against the bloody imperialist occupation.

To put an end to the imperialist system of war, neocolonial domination and racist oppression, the proletariat needs to smash the capitalist system and replace it with a collectivized, planned economy, on an international scale. Only through the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist ruling classes will the proletariat be able to rationally use and develop society’s productive resources, on the basis of its own state power, for the benefit of all. This struggle requires, as its necessary instrument, the reorganizing of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.■

### Moving?

To receive *Workers Vanguard* without interruption please let us know at least three weeks before you move. Send your new **and** old address to:

Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO  
New York, NY 10116

# Israel...

(continued from page 1)

Both Palestinian Arabs and Hebrew-speaking Israelis lay claim to a small portion of the Near East. Key to the creation of a nation of Hebrew-speaking people in Palestine was the rise of the Nazis in Germany, which caused massive waves of Jewish emigration both before the Holocaust and again after World War II. The Zionists had appealed directly to British imperialism, which controlled Palestine militarily, to sponsor a so-called “Jewish homeland.” The British rulers, anti-Semitic to the core, agreed because they saw this as a way to further their divide-and-rule schemes in the Near East, at a time when the British Empire was in sharp decline. The European-derived Jewish settlers were supplemented by an influx of Oriental Jews fleeing Arab countries.

As we explained in “Birth of the Zionist State, Part Two: The 1948 War” (WV No. 45, 24 May 1974):

“It was clear that the establishment of an independent nation-state, either by Palestinian Arabs or the Jews, would occur in Palestine only at the expense of the other nation. When national populations are geographically interpenetrated, as they were in Palestine, an independent nation-state can be created only by their forcible separation (forced population transfers, etc.). Thus the democratic right of self-determination becomes abstract, as it can be exercised only by the stronger national grouping driving out or destroying the weaker one.

“In such cases the only possibility of a democratic solution lies in a social transformation.”

So long as the national principle prevails, the oppression of the Palestinians by the massively armed Zionist state will only deepen. The only way to achieve an equitable solution to the conflicting national claims of the Palestinian and Hebrew-speaking peoples is through the overthrow of capitalist rule in Israel and the surrounding Arab states, where millions of Palestinians languish. The national emancipation of the Palestinians—including the right of all refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland—necessarily entails workers revolutions to shatter the Zionist state from within and to sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where more than half the population is Palestinian, as well as the Syrian Ba’athist and Lebanese regimes.

The Arab working masses must be broken from Islamic fundamentalism and bourgeois nationalism, and the Israeli workers must be broken from the Zionist consciousness that politically binds them to their Israeli exploiters. We have no illusions that this is an easy task, but the alternative is the perpetuation and deepening of the misery of the Palestinians and continual threats of military conflict, with a nuclear-armed Israeli



AFP photos

**Above: Barack Obama meets with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) and Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas (right) in New York, September 2009. Below: Palestinian police block protesters en route to Jewish settlements in Hebron, West Bank, on May 15.**



state prepared to obliterate its neighbors, whatever the consequences. Israel is a class-divided society, with high income disparities. Sephardic Jews, though overwhelmingly under the sway of right-wing and religious parties, suffer widespread discrimination and poverty.

Revolutionary Marxists fight to forge workers parties throughout the region in political combat against all forms of nationalism and religious reaction. *Down with the oil sheiks, emirs, kings, colonels and Zionist rulers—Workers to power! For a socialist federation of the Near East!*

## Bankrupt Arab Nationalism

The outlines of what Washington sees as a “solution” in Israel/Palestine were laid out in the 1993 Oslo “peace” accords between Israel’s Labor Party government of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat’s Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Brokered by then-president Bill Clinton, the deal established the

Palestinian Authority as the Zionists’ police auxiliaries in the Occupied Territories, giving it some limited powers in the West Bank and Gaza. We noted at the time that the accord “does not offer even the most deformed expression of self-determination” (“Israel-PLO Deal for Palestinian Ghetto,” WV No. 583, 10 September 1993).

The Oslo accords led directly to the doubling of the settler population in the Occupied Territories by the end of the decade. Most significantly, the Palestinians became even more marginalized from Israel’s economy as the Israeli capitalists increasingly resorted to the use of migrant labor from Asia and elsewhere.

The political bankruptcy of the PLO and the increasingly desperate situation the Palestinians faced set the stage for the rise of reactionary Islamic groups like Hamas. In 2006, Hamas won a Palestinian parliamentary election and then seized power in Gaza in a military conflict with Palestinian Authority forces. Presented by some in the Western left as a paragon of resistance to Zionist rule, Hamas in fact was initially promoted by the Israeli rulers as a counterweight to secular Palestinian nationalists. Israel set up conservative “Village Leagues” in the Occupied

Territories where the Islamic Association, a front group of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and predecessor of Hamas, gained prominence. The Zionist government also funded welfare programs to help the Islamists win a base among the poor. Israel broke relations with Hamas in the fall of 1989 after discovering that Hamas had killed two Israeli soldiers.

Recently the new Egyptian military regime brokered a “reconciliation” agreement in Cairo between Fatah, the dominant party in the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, and Hamas, the ruling party in Gaza. Twelve smaller organizations, ranging from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine on the left to the hardcore reactionaries of Islamic Jihad, also signed on. The agreement calls for holding new elections and forming a coalition government, allowing the Palestinian parties to present the UN in September with the basis for declaring in favor of the semblance of a Palestinian state. In fact, this is more in the nature of bargaining over the terms of oppression of the Palestinians, who would remain locked down in their desperate ghettos.

The unity agreement has been hailed in the U.S. by the Workers World Party as bolstering “the struggle for a free Palestine” and providing an “unmistakable sign of the importance of the Arab revolution that has swept the Middle East and North Africa” (*Workers World*, 9 May). The WWP’s political cousins in the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) also hailed the Cairo agreement, posting it on its Web site and writing a May 12 article attributing the pact to the “Egyptian revolution” and “a Palestinian youth-led movement...inspired by the revolutionary uprisings” in North Africa.

The WWP/PSL’s support to the unity pact is but the latest expression of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism they have long promoted in the Arab countries and elsewhere in the Third World, by which they act as apologists for brutal capitalist regimes. The pro-Palestinian rhetoric of the capitalist rulers of the Arab states—which have long had their own *modus vivendi* with the Zionist rulers—is a cynical means to divert popular discontent at home into a show of opposition to Zionism. Thus, forces in Syria linked to strongman Bashar al-Assad bused “Nakba Day” protesters to the normally off-limits border of the Golan Heights, which Syria lost to Israel in 1967. This came as Assad’s military and security forces have for weeks unsuccessfully sought to drown in blood the almost daily mass protests sweeping the country.

Contrary to the myth of Arab unity behind the Palestinian cause, the bourgeois Arab regimes have been ruthless enemies of Palestinian national emancipation. When Arab armies went to war with Israel in 1948, it was not to liberate the Palestinians but to seize territory allotted to the Palestinians under the partition plan. Between 1948 and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Jordan and Egypt occupied the West Bank and Gaza respectively, brutally repressing the Pales-

## SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

**Web site:** www.icl-fi.org • **E-mail address:** vanguard@tiac.net

**National Office:** Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

**Chicago** ..... Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441  
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net  
**Public Office:** Sat. 2-5 p.m., 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

**Los Angeles** ..... Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239  
slsycla@sbcglobal.net  
**Public Office:** Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

**New York** ..... Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025  
nysl@tiac.net  
**Public Office:** 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318

**Oakland** ..... Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851  
slbayarea@sbcglobal.net  
**Public Office:** Sat. 1-5 p.m., 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

## TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

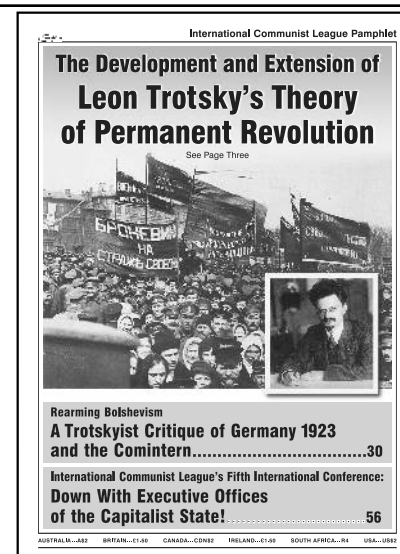
**Toronto** ..... Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138  
spartcan@on.aibn.com

**Vancouver** ..... Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

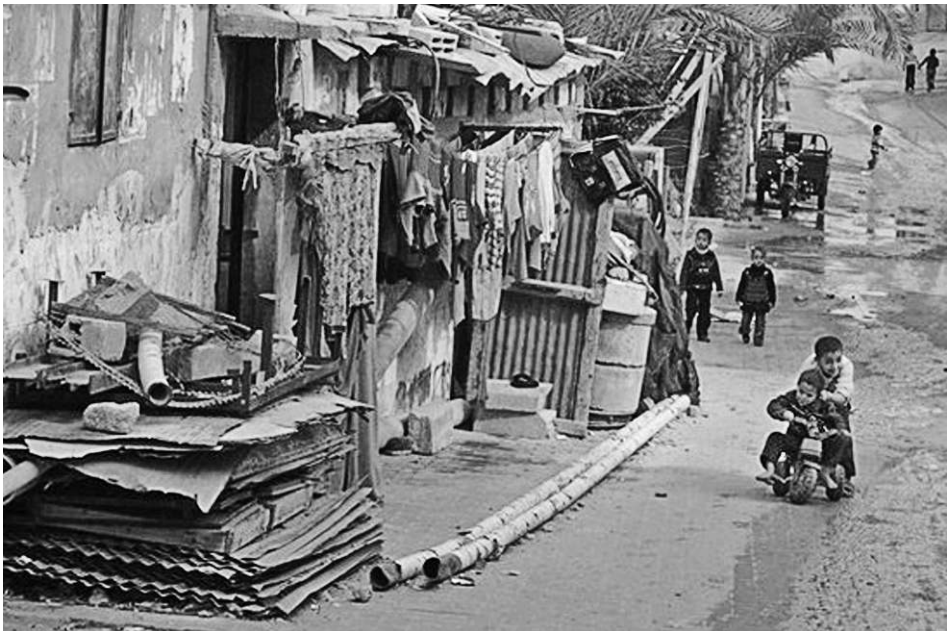
International Communist League pamphlet comprising three articles from ICL press: “The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution,” “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern” and “Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!” These articles together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

**\$2 (56 pages)**

**Make checks payable/mail to:**  
Spartacist Publishing Co.  
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116







Reuters

Squalid Khan Younis Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza Strip.

tinians, who remained politically dispossessed. In 1970, Jordanian King Hussein carried out the “Black September” massacre of some 10,000 Palestinians—with the acquiescence of Egyptian president and Arab nationalist idol Gamal Abdel Nasser. From the oil sheiks of the Gulf emirates to the bankers of Beirut and the bonapartists of Cairo and Damascus, the ruling classes of the Near East are subordinated to the imperialists, subject to the dictates of the world capitalist market and ultimately dependent on the U.S.

and other capitalist powers for their own survival.

### For Proletarian Internationalism!

The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt during what has been dubbed the “Arab spring” have been dominated by class-collaborationist coalitions ranging from viciously anti-woman Islamic fundamentalists to bourgeois liberals and reformist leftists. In the name of “national unity,” the proletariat, whose strike actions had

contributed to the downfall of Tunisia’s Ben Ali dictatorship and Egypt’s Mubarak regime, has remained politically submerged as a class. In Libya, the “coalition” of Islamists, tribal leaders, CIA stooges and defectors from Qaddafi’s regime appealed for imperialist military intervention and, aided by NATO bombs, has provided the ground troops.

In Egypt, the same military that had been the backbone of the Mubarak regime came forward openly as the governmental power, arresting and torturing hundreds of leftists, worker militants and others. The same military rulers who won plaudits for arranging the Palestinian “unity” agreement had earlier set their forces against Egyptians trying to march to the Gaza border on “Nakba Day” in solidarity with the Palestinian masses. Women and Coptic Christians are increasingly besieged by reactionary fundamentalists. This is the reality behind what the WWP, PSL and others call the “Egyptian Revolution.”

Revolutionary Marxists fight for the proletariat to emerge as a contender for power in its own name, independent of all bourgeois political forces. A socialist revolution in Egypt, with its large, militant working class, could open a vista of national and social liberation for the oppressed Palestinian masses, and, extending a hand of working-class solidarity to the Hebrew-speaking proletariat of Israel, could help lay the basis for shattering the Zionist garrison state of Israel from

within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution. Throughout the region, internationalist workers parties must be forged. By linking the struggle for socialist federations of the Near East and North Africa to the fight for proletarian power in the U.S. and other imperialist centers, such parties will open the way for a world society free of poverty, national oppression and war. ■



WV Photo

January 2009 NYC protest against Israeli military assault on Gaza, which killed over 1,000 Palestinians.

## 1948 War...

(continued from page 2)

Soviet diplomats saw fit to dwell upon what Stalin had said about “the Soviet Union being ready to meet America and Britain halfway, economic and social differences notwithstanding.”...

The Jewish worker having been separated from his Arab colleague and prevented from fighting a common class struggle will be at the mercy of his class enemies, imperialism and the Zionist bourgeoisie. It will be easy to arouse him against his proletarian ally, the Arab worker, “who is depriving him of jobs and depressing the level of wages” (a method that has not failed in the past!). Not in vain has Weitzmann said that “the Jewish state will stem Communist influence.” As a compensation, the Jewish worker is bestowed with the privilege of dying a hero’s death on the altar of the Hebrew state.

And what promises does the Jewish state hold out? Does it really mean a step toward the solution of the Jewish problem?

The partition was not meant to solve Jewish misery nor is it likely ever to do so. This dwarf of a state which is too small to absorb the Jewish masses cannot even solve the problems of its citizens. The Hebrew state can only infest the Arab East with anti-Semitism and may well turn out—as Trotsky said—a bloody trap for hundreds of thousands of Jews.

The leaders of the Arab League reacted to the decision on partition with speeches full of threats and enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, a Zionist state is to them a godsend from Allah. Calling up the worker and fellah [peasant] for the “holy war to save Palestine” is supposed to stifle their cries for bread, land and freedom. Another time-honored method of diverting an embittered people against the Jewish and communist danger.

In Palestine the feudal rule has of late begun to lose ground. During the war the Arab working class has grown in numbers and political consciousness. Jewish and Arab workers stood up against the foreign oppressor, against whom they together went on strikes. A strong leftist trade union had come into existence; and the “Workers’ Association of the Arabs of Palestine” had been well on the way of freeing itself from the influence of the Husseinis. The murder of its leader, Sami

Taha, committed by hirelings of the Arab High Committee could not restrain this development. But where the Husseinis failed, the decision of the imperialist agency, the UNO succeeded. The partition decision stifled the class struggle of the Palestine workers. The prospect of being at the hands of the Zionist “conquerors of soil and labor” is arousing fear and anxiety among the Arab workers and fellahs. Nationalist war slogans fall on fertile soil. And feudal murderers see their chance. Thus the policy of partition enables the feudalists to turn back the wheels of history....

The two camps today mobilize the masses under the mask of “self-defense.” “We have been attacked, let us defend ourselves!”—say the Zionists. “Let us ward off the danger of a Jewish conquest!”—declares the Arab Higher Committee. Where does the truth lie?

War is the continuation of politics by other means. The war led by the Arab feudalists is but the continuation of their reactionary war on the worker and the fellah who are striving to shake off oppression and exploitation. For the feudal effendis [lords] “Salvation of Palestine” means safeguarding their revenues at the expense of the fellahin, maintain-

ing their autocratic rule in town and country, smashing the proletarian organizations and international class solidarity.

The war waged by the Zionists is the continuation of their expansionist policy based on discrimination between the two peoples: they defend *kibbush avoda* (ousting of Arab labor), *kibbush adama* (ousting of the fellah), boycott of Arab goods, “Hebrew rule.” The military conflict is a direct result of the policy of the Zionist conquerors.

This war can on neither side be said to bear a progressive character. The war does not release progressive forces or do away with social and economic obstacles in the path of development of the two nations. Quite the opposite is true. It is apt to obscure the class antagonism and to open the gate for nationalist excesses. ***It weakens the proletariat and strengthens imperialism in both camps.***

Each side is “anti-imperialist” to the bone, busy detecting the reactionary—in the opposite camp. And imperialism is always seen—helping the other side. But this kind of exposure is oil on the imperialist fire. For the inveigling policy of imperialism is based upon agents and agencies within *both* camps. Therefore, we say to the Palestine peo-

ple in reply to the patriotic warmongers: ***Make this war between Jews and Arabs, which serves the end of imperialism, the common war of both nations against imperialism!***

This is the only solution guaranteeing a real peace. This must be our goal which must be achieved without concessions to the chauvinist mood prevailing at present among the masses.

How can that be done?

“The main enemy is in our own country!”—this was what Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg had to say to the workers when imperialists and social democrats were inciting them to the slaughter of their fellow workers in other countries. In this spirit we say to the Jewish and Arab workers: The enemy is in your *own camp!*

Jewish workers! Get rid of the Zionist provocateurs who tell you to sacrifice yourself on the altar of the Hebrew state.

Arab worker and fellah! Get rid of the chauvinist provocateurs who are getting you into a mess of blood for their own sake and pocket.

***Workers of the two peoples, unite in a common front against imperialism and its agents! ■***

## Prometheus Research Series

Published by the Prometheus Research Library

### No. 1: Guidelines on the Organizational Structure of Communist Parties, on the Methods and Content of Their Work

Complete and accurate English translation of 1921 Comintern Resolution from final German text. (August 1988)  
\$6 (includes postage) 94 pages

### No. 2: Documents on the “Proletarian Military Policy”

Includes materials from the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. and Europe during World War II. (February 1989)  
\$9 (includes postage) 102 pages

### No. 3: In Memoriam, Richard S. Fraser: An Appreciation and Selection of His Work

A selection of the writings of comrade Richard S. Fraser (1913-1988), who pioneered the Trotskyist understanding of black oppression in the United States. (August 1990)  
\$7 (includes postage) 108 pages

### No. 4: Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism

By Jan Norden. Covers the internal discussion within the Fourth International over its flawed response to the Yugoslav Revolution and the 1948 Tito-Stalin split. (March 1993)  
\$7 (includes postage) 70 pages

### No. 5: Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism? Internal Problems of the Workers Party

Max Shachtman’s document from the 1936 internal bulletin of the Workers Party of the U.S. Includes introduction and glossary by PRL and appendices. (September 2000)  
\$7 (includes postage) 88 pages

### No. 6: Selected Speeches and Writings in Honor of Three Women Leaders of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist): Martha Phillips, Susan Adams, Elizabeth King Robertson

(March 2007)  
\$7 (includes postage) 96 pages

Order from/make checks payable to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Down With Fortress Europe's War on Immigrants and Refugees!



Ships carrying over 800 Libyan refugees arrive on island of Lampedusa, Italy, May 7. Right: Detained Tunisian immigrants in Lampedusa protest plans to deport them, April 11. EPA photos

# Refugees Drown as Imperialists Step Up War on Libya

MILANO—Among the main victims of the imperialist war against Libya have been nearly two million foreign workers in that country. Beginning with the low-level civil war that pitted the bourgeois government of nationalist strongman Muammar el-Qaddafi against an imperialist-backed opposition, up to 750,000 have fled Libya. While most went to Tunisia or Egypt, some 12,000, according to United Nations estimates, have tried to reach Italy or Malta by boat. This is in addition to several thousand Tunisians who had already reached the Italian island of Lampedusa following the downfall of the Ben Ali dictatorship.

The “humanitarian” code words that the imperialists mouthed to prettify their attack on Libya have been belied by the treatment they have meted out to the refugees. The United Nations—the body run by thieves and murderers that gave the green light to the bombings in the name of “defending civilians”—has been compelled to admit that an estimated 1,200 refugees are missing and presumed dead, with horrific eyewitness reports of death by drowning or starvation.

The London *Guardian* (8 May) reported that in late March, 72 people trying to get to Lampedusa died of thirst and hunger while their boat drifted under the eyes of NATO units, including a helicopter and an aircraft carrier. They simply were left to die despite their desperate pleas for help. On April 6, a boat with 350 refugees, including many women and children, sank between Malta and Sicily, killing up to 250. A month later, a vessel with 600 people fleeing Tripoli, which had come under intensified NATO bombing, also sank. In a small sea packed with NATO ships, vessels of the European Union (EU) border agency Frontex and of various Coast Guards and other forces, this cannot be

called anything but mass murder. At the same time, NATO ships blockading Libya aid rebel forces transferring military supplies from one coastal city to another. As the captain of one rebel ship told the *New York Times* (23 May), “Nothing crosses without permission from NATO.”

Those fleeing North Africa who survive the trip and land in Malta or in southern Italy have been imprisoned under inhuman conditions. Italy’s right-wing Berlusconi government initially chose to let them rot for days in Lampedusa, sequestered in the detention center or simply abandoned in the village or on the rocky coast, with no shelter or food. Then it “solved the problem” by packing the immigrants off to military camps on the Italian mainland, mainly in the south.

The government went on to try to force the new Tunisian military regime to accept mass deportations from Italy. Finally, when it became clear that most Tunisians wanted to reach France, where they have relatives or friends, they were granted a temporary permit allowing them to stay for three months, in the hope that they would filter across Italy’s northern border. In turn, the Sarkozy government in France reintroduced controls at the Italian border town of Ventimiglia, compelling hundreds of immigrants to wait for days around the local train station. Those who made it to Paris or other parts of France were then targeted by police dragnets for deportation.

The Lega Trotskista d’Italia, along with the Ligue Trotskyste de France, demands: **Close the detention camps! No deportations! For the right of asylum for all refu-**

**gees from Libya! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!** In the latest escalation of the NATO war against Libya, France and reportedly Britain are preparing to deploy attack helicopters to step up pressure against Qaddafi’s regime and to bolster the sordid opposition. Together with our comrades throughout the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), we call for the military defense of Libya against the imperialists and the opposition forces that are acting as their ground troops, without giving any political support to Qaddafi’s bonapartist capitalist regime.

The relatively small influx of immigrants and refugees from North Africa into Italy in the wake of the Tunisian revolt and the war on Libya has been used by capitalist governments all over Europe to wage a hysterical racist campaign, with the aim of further tightening immigration controls in “Fortress Europe” and otherwise augmenting the powers of the bourgeois state. At a meeting in Rome on April 25, Sarkozy and Berlusconi demanded an “in-depth revision” of the Schengen Treaty, which is supposed to allow residents of EU countries to move freely among member countries. On May 12, a meeting of the EU interior ministers resolved to allow the governments to restore border controls, intensify surveillance of Europe’s frontiers and re-establish pacts with North African governments to control the flow of immigrants across the Mediterranean. On the same day, the Danish government unilaterally announced it was reinstating police checks at the

borders with Germany and Sweden.

Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain are among the poorer EU members that traditionally had been a source of cheap labor for more advanced capitalist countries. But in the last two decades, these states have had to import a huge mass of foreign workers to offset a declining birth rate. This has created a significant layer of the working class that is deprived of citizenship rights and is easy to deport when the economy slows down and jobs dry up. These workers are often victims of murderous racist attacks and are used as scapegoats by the bourgeoisie to derail popular frustration from the real enemy, the capitalist class. At the same time, these new layers of the working class provide a living link to the struggles of the downtrodden masses in the neocolonial world.

With the protracted world economic crisis, the capitalist rulers have pushed racist poison in order to further divide and weaken any resistance by the working class and its trade unions to the sweeping austerity that their governments have imposed (see “Italy: Unions Must Defend and Organize Immigrant Workers!” WV No. 961, 2 July 2010). Defense of immigrants against racist repression is a key component of the struggle to defend the lives and wages of all workers. The labor movement must organize immigrant workers and fight for their citizenship rights. But to carry out this crucially important task requires fighting against the chauvinist politics of the pro-capitalist union misleaders, who embrace the national interests of their “own” capitalists. Thus the Italian labor bureaucracy has pushed “Made in Italy” protectionism, which is poison to the class consciousness of the Italian proletariat and a weapon against its class

*continued on page 9*