

South Africa: Strikes, Protests Mount

Metal Workers Union Drops Electoral Support to ANC

FEBRUARY 4—Up to 80,000 members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) in Rustenburg are on strike against South Africa's three largest platinum producers—Impala Platinum, Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) and Lonmin—demanding major pay raises for both underground and surface workers. Shutting down production of one of the country's leading exports, the walkout, which began on January 23, follows an eleven-week strike by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) against Northam platinum that ended with workers winning a 9.5 percent pay hike. The National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), which organizes Amplats refinery and smelting operations but had been keeping its members on the job during the AMCU strike, also walked out on February 3 over their own demands. Union solidarity is crucial in the fight against the platinum bosses, who had heavily stockpiled the mineral in anticipation of the miners strike.

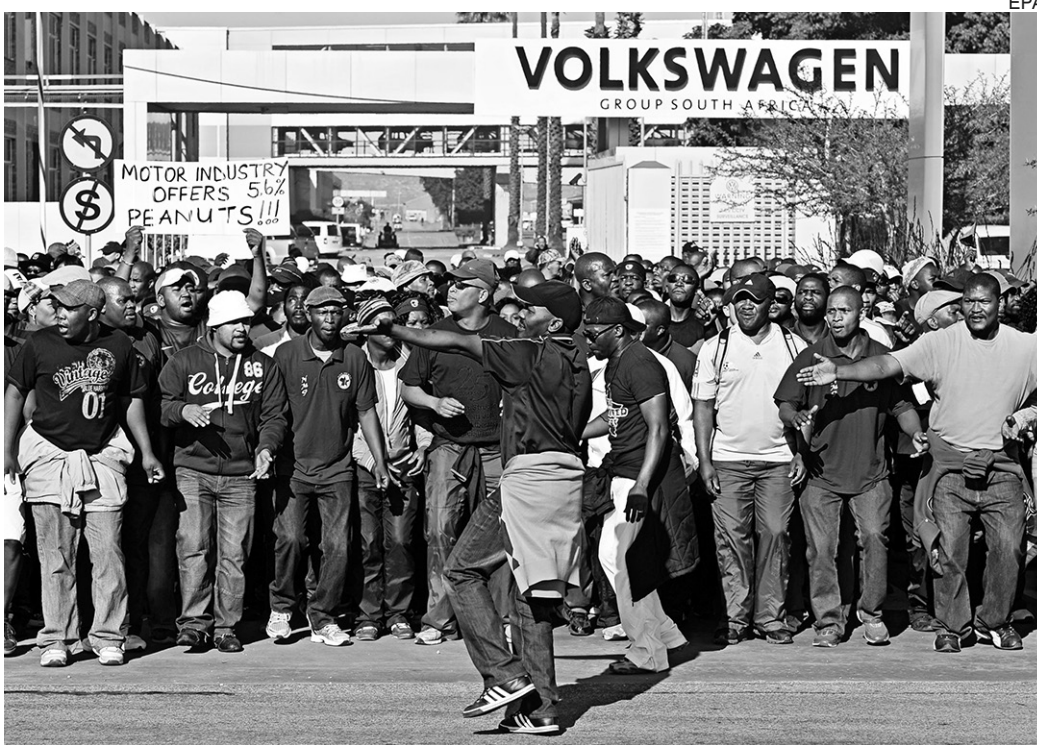
Meanwhile, police continue to terrorize desperate black township residents demanding provision of basic services like housing, water and electricity. On January 13, four people in Mothutlong, a township in North West province near the platinum belt, were killed demonstrating for what should be a basic right: access to clean drinking water. Ten days later, a man participating in a protest demanding housing was shot dead by cops in the Durban Deep area of Johannesburg.

Waves of strikes and ubiquitous "service delivery protests" demonstrate the increasing frustration of the mainly black working class and the impoverished masses with the continuation of their degraded conditions 20 years after the formal end of apartheid, a system of legally enforced white supremacy. The economic structure of this capitalist society, based primarily upon the superexploitation of black labor, has not changed since Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) were voted into government in 1994. Today, the overwhelming bulk of the country's wealth, including mines, industry and land, is still in the hands of white capitalists and their imperialist patrons in Britain and the U.S. While a few black faces have been added to corporate boardrooms, the mass of black workers and all the urban and rural poor struggle merely to survive.

During the August 2012 Lonmin miners wildcat strike at Marikana, the ruling Tripartite Alliance—a nationalist popular



Above: On January 23, at outset of strike, miners rally near Lonmin's Marikana mine, site of 2012 massacre carried out by cops of ANC-led government. Below: Striking NUMSA auto workers outside Volkswagen plant in Uitenhage, August 2013.



front comprising the bourgeois ANC, the Stalinist-derived South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)—unleashed the worst instance of lethal police violence against the struggling black masses since the end of apartheid. In scenes reminiscent of the killing of black protesters at Sharpeville in 1960 and Soweto in 1976, cops gunned down 34 miners in cold blood.

Now, with these and other platinum miners organized by AMCU on strike again, the COSATU-affiliated National Union of

Mineworkers, which has lost tens of thousands of members to AMCU, is scabbing on the strike. And COSATU has called for *more* deadly repression against strikers, demanding in a January 29 statement that police and company security protect the scabs! In fact, today police fired stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse some 3,000 strikers at an Amplats mine shaft. Revealing the treachery of its own leadership, AMCU scabbed on a national NUM strike at the gold mines last year.

On December 10, the growing anger at the ANC coming from the base of society

was on public display when President Jacob Zuma was booed at an official memorial service for historic ANC leader Mandela at Johannesburg's FNB Stadium. Mass memorials were held throughout the country for Mandela, who was imprisoned by the vicious racist regime for 27 years before being released in order to ease negotiations that, ultimately, led to a brokered end to apartheid rule. We Trotskyists defended the ANC and other opponents of apartheid against state repression. However, we never gave an ounce of political support to the ANC, whose bourgeois-nationalist program could only keep the black majority chained to the system of capitalist wage slavery. In the 1994 elections, the International Communist League opposed any support to the ANC, declaring:

"A vote for the ANC—including its Communist Party members and affiliated trade-union leaders of COSATU—is a vote to perpetuate the racist oppression and superexploitation of the black, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian toilers in a different political form. The workers and all the oppressed must be mobilized independently of the capitalist masters."
—“South Africa Elections: ANC's Deal with Apartheid Bosses,” WV No. 598, 15 April 1994

Now, as working-class discontent continues to rise, fissures are opening in the Tripartite Alliance. At a Special National Congress in December, NUMSA—an affiliate of COSATU and, with 338,000 members, the largest union in the country—voted to withhold support from the ANC in upcoming national elections, projected to take place in April or May. Resolving not to support any other party, NUMSA, which is mainly based in the auto industry, also declared that it would cease paying into the COSATU/SACP political levy and would press COSATU to break from the Alliance. NUMSA had been joined by eight other unions in opposing the suspension of COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi last August on charges that he had had sex with another COSATU employee at the federation's headquarters. However, most of those unions have just resolved to maintain their electoral support to the ANC.

The Johannesburg *Sunday Independent* (19 January) reported that at the NUMSA congress “delegates were more militant than its national leadership, including outspoken general secretary Irvin Jim.” While ANC bigwigs were not invited to the congress, guests included representatives of

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Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party! For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

Cops Acquitted in Savage Killing of Homeless Man

LOS ANGELES—On January 13, former Fullerton cops Manuel Ramos and Jay Cicinelli, who led the police charge in the barbaric fatal beating of Kelly Thomas, a homeless white man, walked free out of court. The savagery of the 5 July 2011 assault was captured on 33 minutes of surveillance video that show cops landing blow after blow against an unarmed Thomas, who suffered from schizophrenia. This footage has sparked outrage on the streets, in the press and on the Internet, where it gained wide attention after WikiLeaks tweeted the entire video to 2.1

Orange County Outrage

million followers. As Kelly’s father, Ron Thomas (himself a former Orange County sheriff’s deputy), warned: “This is carte blanche to police officers to do whatever they want.”

The 2011 video shows the two officers confronting Thomas in the parking lot of a Fullerton transit station after a call to the police from a local bar was “embellished”

with the false accusation that Thomas was trying to break into parked cars. Ramos put on latex gloves and told Thomas: “Now you see my fists?... They’re getting ready to f--- you up.” A gang of six cops proceeded to taser Thomas multiple times and bash his skull with the taser and batons as he cried out in pain, repeatedly apologized and gasped that he could not breathe. Finally, he screamed, “Dad, they are killing me!” Thomas, who suffered broken facial bones and a compressed thorax, was knocked into a coma and died five days later.

In an attempt to defuse anger a couple months after the fatal attack, Ramos was charged with murder in the second degree and involuntary manslaughter and Cicinelli with involuntary manslaughter and excessive use of force. The murder charge was a first for an active duty cop in the conservative “law and order” enclave of Orange County. Charges were brought against a third cop but dropped shortly after the “not guilty” verdict was read for Ramos and Cicinelli.

On January 18, some 200 people gathered in front of the Fullerton police station to protest the outcome of the trial. The cops responded with a show of force and ended up arresting ten people for “failure to disperse” and two for vandalism. We demand: Drop the charges now! Another protester was arrested for allegedly assaulting a news videographer.

Police violence is endemic to this capitalist society. Reformist socialists, though, peddle fantasies in the “people” bringing the cops to heel. One refrain is for an all-civilian review board. As the Party for Socialism and Liberation put it

at the time the cops were charged, such a board “would have the power to fire officers, impose sanctions, or even file criminal charges in cases where police act out of line” (*Liberation*, 23 September 2011). The notion that the guard dogs of the capitalist order can be cleaned up and made accountable to the exploited and oppressed masses is a dangerous lie. In fact, if the defense counsellors said one thing truthful, it was when Ramos’ attorney John Barnett (who also defended one of the cops involved in the 1991 beating of Rodney King) told reporters that these cops “were doing their jobs...they did what they were trained to do.”

As the paid enforcers of capitalist rule, the cops brutalize the outcasts of this oppressive and massively unequal society, especially black and Latino youth in the inner cities. Meanwhile, the capitalist masters, who treat the penniless and downtrodden dumped in the streets as beneath contempt, take the ax to social programs for the homeless, the elderly, the mentally ill and the disabled. Access to basic human necessities such as health care, a good education and decent housing should be an elementary right for everyone, not just those who can afford it.

But such a massive reallocation of wealth and resources can be achieved only by ripping power out of the hands of the bloodsucking capitalist class and creating a socialist society where production is for human need, not profit. For that to happen, the anger of the ghettos and barrios, which seethe daily under the boot of the thugs in blue, must be linked to the social power of the multiracial working class mobilized in class-struggle opposition to the capitalist state. What is needed is a revolutionary workers party to lead the way to uprooting this system of exploitation and oppression and the cop terror that defends it. ■



TROTSKY

For the Political Independence of the Working Class

The South African Communist Party, part of the ruling Tripartite Alliance led by the African National Congress (ANC), has long subordinated itself to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC, portraying it as leading the mainly black working class and the poor in a “national democratic revolution.” During the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky fought against the liquidation of the Chinese Communist Party

(CCP) into the bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang, a policy ordered by the Communist International leadership of J. V. Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin with the rationale that the Guomindang was the leader of China’s national revolution. The subordination of the CCP to the Guomindang, founded by Sun Yat-sen, culminated in the April 1927 slaughter of tens of thousands of Communists in Shanghai by forces led by Sun’s successor, Chiang Kai-shek.

Bourgeois society, as is known, is so constructed that the propertyless, discontented, and deceived masses are at the bottom and the contented fakers remain on top. Every bourgeois party, if it is a real party, that is, if it embraces considerable masses, is built on the self-same principle. The exploiters, fakers, and despots compose the minority in class society. Every capitalist party is therefore compelled in its internal relations, in one way or another, to reproduce and reflect the relations in bourgeois society as a whole. In every mass bourgeois party the lower ranks are therefore more democratic and further to the “Left” than the tops....

Bukharin asks, “And what about the Kuomintang masses, are they mere cattle?” Of course they are cattle. The masses of any bourgeois party are always cattle, although in different degrees. But for us, the masses are not cattle, are they? No, that is precisely why we are forbidden to drive them into the arms of the bourgeoisie, *camouflaging the latter under the label of a workers’ and peasants’ party*. That is precisely why we are forbidden to subordinate the proletarian party to a bourgeois party, but on the contrary, must at every step, oppose the former to the latter. The “high” summit of the Kuomintang of whom Bukharin speaks so ironically, as of something secondary, accidental, and temporary is in reality the soul of the Kuomintang, its social essence. Of course, the bourgeoisie constitutes only the “summit” in the party as well as in society. But this summit is powerful in its capital, knowledge, and connections: it can always fall back on the imperialists for support, and what is most important, it can always resort to the actual political and military power which is intimately fused with the leadership in the Kuomintang itself. It is precisely this summit that wrote laws against strikes, throttled the uprisings of the peasants, shoved the communists into a dark corner, and, at best, allowed them to be only one-third of the party, exacted an oath from them that petty-bourgeois Sun Yat-senism takes precedence over Marxism. The rank and file were picked and harnessed by this summit, serving it, like Moscow, as a “Left” support, just as the generals, compradores, and imperialists served it as a Right support. To consider the Kuomintang not as a *bourgeois party, but as a neutral arena of struggle for the masses*, to play with words about nine-tenths of the Left rank and file in order to mask the question as to who is the real master, meant to add to the strength and power of the summit, to assist the latter to convert ever broader masses into “cattle,” and, under conditions most favorable to it to prepare the Shanghai *coup d’état*.... In this the theory of the bloc of classes, the theory that the Kuomintang is a workers’ and peasants’ party, provides the best possible assistance for the bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie later comes into hostile conflict with the masses and shoots them down, in this clash between the two real forces, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, not even the bleating of the celebrated nine-tenths is heard. The pitiful democratic fiction evaporates without a trace in face of the bloody reality of the class struggle.

—Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (1928)

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LENIN



Spartacist Black History Month Forums

We Will Not Forget Trayvon Martin!
Capitalist America: Racist Hell
Break with the Democratic Party of Racism and Imperialist War!

LOS ANGELES Metropolitan Community Church
4607 Prospect Ave.
Saturday, February 8, 3 p.m. (2 blocks north of Vermont/Sunset Red Line Station)

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Slave Revolts, the Abolitionist Movement and the Road to the Civil War

CHICAGO University of Illinois, Student Center East
Room White Oak-AB, 750 S. Halsted St.
Saturday, February 22, 4 p.m. (Take Blue Line to UIC-Halsted stop)

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take A, C, or E to 42nd Street)
Saturday, February 22, 3 p.m.

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For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!



Luc Viatour, Reuters (inset)

Spy agency site near Domme, southwest France, part of extensive surveillance network overseen by French president François Hollande, shown with German chancellor Angela Merkel (inset).

The immense reach of the U.S. and European spy agencies is now out in the open due to the efforts of former National Security Agency (NSA) analyst Edward Snowden. In response, the imperialist powers are taking steps to give their mass surveillance greater legal sanction. A prime example is provided by the French government of Socialist Party president François Hollande, which devised a new domestic spying law—presented as “Article 20” of a military spending bill—to take advantage of the latest technologies like GPS.

Enacted in December without any serious objection in Parliament, this legislation defined the conditions under which government agencies may harvest telephone conversations, e-mails, Internet activity and personal location data. Lacking even the pretense of judicial oversight, the guidelines allow the vacuuming up of data for a broad range of purposes, including “national security,” prevention of “terrorism” or the protection of France’s “scientific and economic potential,” thus expanding the list of state agencies authorized to engage in electronic surveillance.

The groundwork for Article 20 was laid in 1991 under Socialist Party president François Mitterrand, who legalized the longstanding and widespread practice of domestic snooping. The Mitterrand government also established a global satellite surveillance network with bases in the colonies of Mayotte and French Guyana operated in collaboration with the German secret service (BND).

In the U.S., with a wide swath of the population expressing unease over the scope of the NSA spying, president Obama announced a series of measures last month to give the capitalist rulers’ spying apparatus the appearance of greater accountability. A number of liberals hailed the proposals, among them Democrats on Capitol Hill considered critics of certain NSA practices. As we previously noted, we would welcome any hurdle thrown up in the path of the expanding surveillance state. But what Obama has offered is nothing of the sort. In fact, his speech was largely a paean to the NSA.

In a forum presentation held in October and November in New York City, Paris and London, Spartacist League spokesman Alison Spencer explained:

“The spy agencies’ central purpose is to do the dirty work that goes on behind the scenes of the ‘normal’ administrative mechanisms of bourgeois democracy—the surveillance, burglaries, black-bag jobs, infiltration and tricks by agents provocateurs, extraordinary renditions, torture and murder. A whole system of class exploitation—and in this country racial oppression—that is maintained through state repression is not going to come crashing down or be fundamentally reformed...through Congressional cosmetic reforms behind which the state continues its murderous work. Nothing less than victorious socialist revolution can abolish capitalism’s secret police and their deadly ‘dirty tricks.’”

—“Spying, Repression, War: Pillars of Capitalist Rule,” WV No. 1037, 10 January

The forum traced the history of U.S. domestic spying and state repression of

leftists, union militants and fighters for black rights over the last century. By shedding some light on the more recent predations and surveillance operations of the American government, Chelsea Manning and Snowden provided a great service to the working class and oppressed. But doing so came at great personal cost. Manning was sentenced to 35 years in military prison last year, and Attorney General Eric Holder recently ruled out any deal involving clemency for Snowden, who is for now still holed up in Russia. Then there is WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who remains in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

We reprint below, edited for publication, accompanying remarks by Xavier Brunoy from the Ligue Trotskyiste de France at the forum in Paris on 21 November 2013 that addressed similar themes in the case of France.

* * *

Loud howls of protest were provoked in Europe when Snowden revealed that the NSA was tapping the cell phones of

revealed that more than 70 million communications were intercepted in France, the NSA director hastened to fire back that the majority of these intercepted communications were provided to the NSA by the French secret services. And the French were compelled to admit it was true. Kouchner added: “Let’s be honest, we listen in too. Everybody listens in on everybody else. It’s just that we don’t have the means the United States does, and that makes us jealous.”

Le Monde revealed that the French company Amesys sold an Eagle surveillance system (functionally equivalent to the NSA’s Prism program) to the Libyan government. In 2008, former directors of French military intelligence trained Libyan spies. A similar system was sold to the Syrian government by the German company Utimaco. Sensors that make it possible to intercept 5.3 million calls simultaneously and retain two years of metadata were provided by the French company Qosmos, which also, according to one of the company’s founders, worked with the DGSE (the French foreign intelligence service).



Bain News Service

Class studying Alphonse Bertillon’s method of “criminal identification,” early 1910s.

“European partners,” such as German chancellor Angela Merkel and French diplomats. These cries had barely died down when more revelations came out, exposing that these “victims” were doing exactly the same thing as the U.S. The German BND foreign intelligence agency asked the Merkel government to amend the law “to make it more flexible for sharing protected data with foreign partners.” The British imperialists operate a secret service that plays a central role in the NSA’s network. They showed their loyalty by detaining David Miranda (the partner of journalist Glenn Greenwald, who published Snowden’s initial revelations) at London Heathrow airport and by destroying the *Guardian*’s copy of Snowden’s files. Thankfully, several other copies exist.

The shrewd Bernard Kouchner, Minister of Foreign Affairs under former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, exposed the hypocrisy of Hollande’s whining about the NSA when he stated on a France-Info radio broadcast: “They pretend to have just discovered this surveillance, meanwhile their own secret service agencies work together and France has a similar system.” And he’s right. When it was

So much for the innocence of French imperialism.

It is interesting to note that these Qosmos sensors are sold to government spy agencies as well as to private telecommunications companies, which for financial purposes gather essentially the same metadata as the police. This explains the permeability between leaders of private communications companies and the NSA.

French Bourgeoisie: Pioneers of Mass Surveillance

Alison observed that all fighters for social change are on a list. In this regard, the French bourgeoisie has a long history, and we can even say that it was, in its time, a pioneer. In the 19th century, the French bourgeoisie established the first police records on people in Europe. The files included everyone who had been found guilty in a court of law. Or to put it more plainly, all the poor people who were struggling to survive in the cities.

This work was later rationalized in the 1880s by a guy named Bertillon, whose methods were then copied by police agencies all over the world. The records included color-coded cards and notes on

physical traits, to which fingerprints and photographs were later added. One hardly needs to point out how useful these types of files were for the army and the police. At the end of the 19th century, socialist militants had files on them, as did the anarchists, who were actively tracked. For example, in 1886 French General Boulanger began compiling the notorious Carnet B list of those considered potential wartime subversives.

Foreigners were also under surveillance, with records kept on them. As a result of wars as well as the massive increase in immigration brought about by the industrial revolution, the number of people with records rapidly grew as the police sought to keep tabs on the entire “non-French” population. In the 1880s, foreigners had to register and get a receipt, which became the “alien identity card” during World War I. This card was an extremely effective means of control: the police knew immediately whether or not the person they stopped was in good standing, that is, whether or not they should be imprisoned or deported. This card was maintained after the war.

As we said in our supplement on Leonarda [the Roma schoolgirl deported from France last October, see WV No. 1035, 29 November 2013], nomadic people were always particular targets for surveillance and kept in the files. Those “found guilty and without a permanent address” were put on special lists. Thereafter, all nomadic people were subject to even more persecution. The witchhunt against the Roma by Sarkozy and now Minister of Interior Manuel Valls is simply the continuation of a long tradition.

Of course, in the computer age, and in light of the new figures of those spied upon with each passing day, all this may seem like small potatoes. But at the time it was substantial.

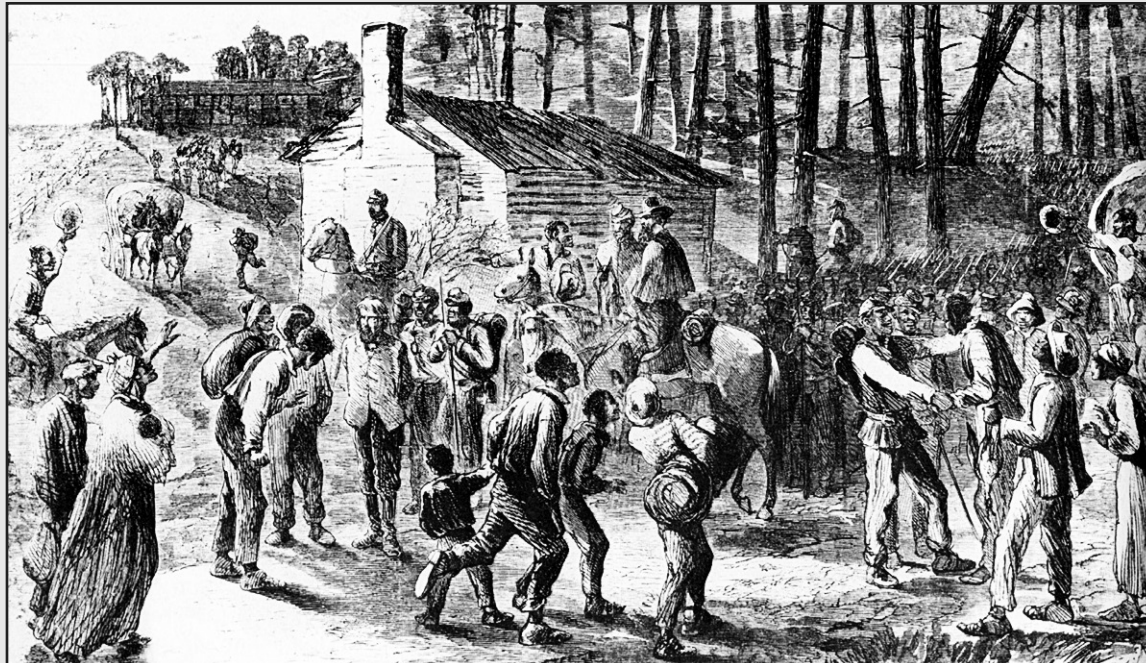
Police Records and the Vichy Regime

The dangers inherent in being on file under the Third Republic became blatantly obvious when it gave way to the Vichy regime during World War II. Marshall Pétain, the quisling pro-Nazi leader of Vichy France, inherited the files on everyone. All the French police had to do was consult the files to organize roundups and arrests. First the Jews, but also homosexuals, Gypsies and more. All those who the national intelligence agencies had patiently and meticulously kept files on, day after day, for years on end, could suddenly end up in one of Pétain’s jails or a death camp.

The French bourgeoisie’s dreams of keeping files on the entire population to control everyone were realized under the Vichy regime. Every individual living in France was assigned a unique number. A census was organized to assure that nobody had been overlooked, and the country was combed by thousands of census-takers. The national identity card, which served as an internal passport, was instituted in

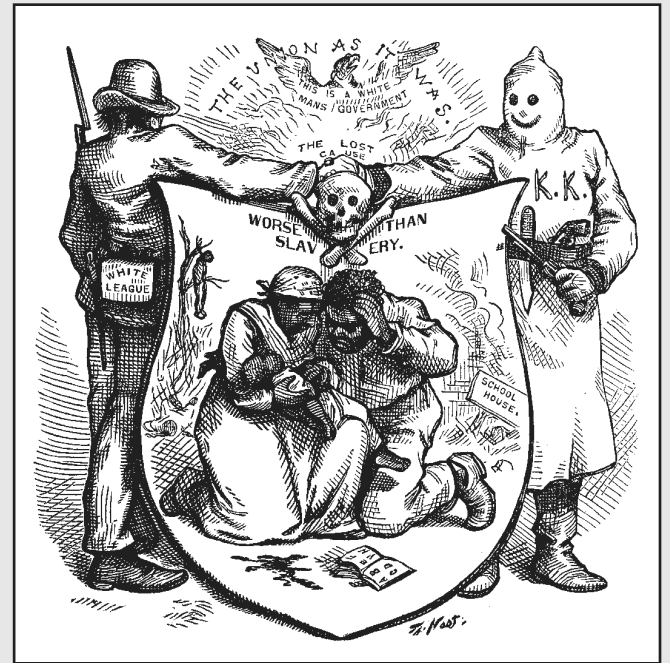
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Defeat of Reconstruction and the Betrayal of Black Freedom



Harper's Weekly

Left: Black Union troops liberate South Carolina slaves during Civil War. Right: Thomas Nast cartoon depicts victory of racist reaction as Northern capitalists betray post-Civil War Reconstruction.



We print below, edited for publication, the first part of a presentation given by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Alan Wilde to internal meetings of the International Communist League in Mexico City, New York City and Chicago.

PART ONE

“When Edwin Ruffin, white-haired and mad, fired the first shot at Fort Sumter he freed the slaves.” This simple yet extraordinary sentence, which encapsulates the Civil War, comes from W.E.B. Du Bois’ 1935 work, *Black Reconstruction in America*. Ruffin was a notorious slaveowner and the Confederate soldier reputed to have fired the first shot of the war in April 1861. A year and a half before, in December 1859, he attended the execution of the great abolitionist John Brown to revel in Brown’s demise. But by April 1865, four years after Ruffin blasted his rifle, a social revolution had taken place: Robert E. Lee’s Confederate army surrendered to Union general Ulysses S. Grant, the North emerged victorious and four million human beings held in bondage won their freedom. Ruffin understood the monumental nature of this transformation. He committed suicide in June of that year.

The Civil War was the pivotal event of American history that redefined the very nature of this country. This was expressed even in terms of grammar. After 1865, the U.S. was no longer referred to with the plural “are,” signifying a federation of independent states, but the singular “is,” signifying the consolidation of a single capitalist nation-state. Out of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the American Constitution was fundamentally altered with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The Thirteenth abolished slavery; the Fourteenth defined citizenship for the first time in U.S. history, granting it to anyone born in this country or naturalized; the Fifteenth granted universal male suffrage.

On the most fundamental level, the Union victory meant the victory of the capitalist social order—“free labor,” as it

was termed—over the slavocracy and its system of slave labor. The America we see today is less the product of the American Revolution of 1775-83 and more the product of the Civil War and Reconstruction period.

It is not easy to speak comprehensively about Reconstruction, the period following the Civil War when the defeated Southern states were supposed to be “reconstructed” and brought back into the Union. Reconstruction was a tumultuous, brief and extraordinary period of American history defined by an unprecedented experiment in interracial democracy. It was an era of exceptional developments, all taking place simultaneously and impacting one another. For example, this period marked the emergence of an American labor movement, combative and engaged in often-violent struggle. At the same time, this movement was polit-



Library of Congress

Union general Ulysses S. Grant at his headquarters in Cold Harbor, Virginia, June 1864.

ically backward and immature, not least on the issue of race.

Reconstruction was also the period, with the final destruction of the slavocracy, that saw the embryonic growth of an American imperialist ruling class—expressed in massive industrial development, the creation of monopolies and trusts and the consolidation of American finance capital. Mark Twain didn’t call it “the Gilded Age” for nothing. It was also expressed in gunboat diplomacy against Korea in 1871 and a failed attempt to annex Santo Domingo (now known as the Dominican Republic).

It was a period of westward expansion—freed from the threat of the spread of the slave system—bringing with it new markets and increasing capitalist investment and growth. It also brought more wars with various Native American tribes. Many of the troops initially charged with maintaining the rule of the national government over the defeated Southern states were eventually siphoned off to fight these wars. It was the period of the 1871 Paris Commune in France, the first time the working class seized power, and the Great Panic of 1873, which touched off what was known until 1929 as the Depression. Both events had an enormous conservatizing effect on the U.S. bourgeoisie.

Above all, it was the period when black Americans, freed from bondage, exercised and fought for their rights in every form. As you hear this story, with its debates in the halls of Congress, with its introduction of drastic and important new laws and constitutional amendments, bear in mind that at the same time there is a massive human wave of former slaves staking their claim to U.S. citizenship—fighting to be recognized as Americans and to define citizenship on the basis of expanded political rights for all. For the first time, a public education system—for black people as well as impoverished and illiterate poor whites—was founded in the South and was widely expanded in the North.

Throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction, black people bravely fought at the risk of life and limb for their freedom and their rights. And that striving by the

freedmen for political and social equality was met with the most brutal acts of terror at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camellia, the White Leagues and other race-terrorist outfits. A few years ago, PBS put out a documentary titled “Reconstruction: The Second Civil War.” Indeed, the Reconstruction period can be characterized as the most violent period of American history outside of the Civil War. With only a small handful of exceptions that violence went in one direction: to suppress the rights of the freedmen.

Nonetheless, if you can imagine in 1860 telling a white American—Northerner or Southerner—that in 10 to 15 years not only would black people be free but they would exercise political rights as citizens and that over 1,500 of them would serve in various legislative, executive and administrative posts throughout the South—the very land where they were once slaves—you would have been reasonably considered insane. But that was, in fact, what happened. And that was, in fact, what was ultimately defeated.

Reconstruction was a period of enormous promise but also of promises unfulfilled. As we aptly wrote in “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom” (1966, reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9):

“Capitalist and slave alike stood to gain from the suppression of the planter aristocracy but beyond that had no further common interests. In fact, it was the Negroes themselves who, within the protective framework provided by the Reconstruction Acts and the military dictatorship of the occupying Union Army, carried through the social revolution and destruction of the old planter class.”

The defeat of Reconstruction did not begin with the 1877 Compromise, when the handful of federal troops remaining in the South were withdrawn to their barracks. Its seeds were sown almost from the beginning with the refusal of even the Radical faction of the Republican Party (except for a very small number that included Pennsylvania Representative Thaddeus Stevens) to carry out a program of land confiscation from the old slave

oligarchy and distribution of that land to freedmen and landless whites.

The indisputably radical program of equal political rights collided with the reality facing the former slaves, whose condition was one of destitution and lack of property. Land was the key question. Yet it was precisely land that the bourgeoisie denied to the former slaves.

American Capitalism and Black Oppression

As we wrote in the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S. (2000): “While many freedmen desired to have the former plantations redistributed to those who tilled them, the American bourgeoisie was not interested in a thoroughgoing social reconstruction of the South. Northern capitalists looked at the devastated South and saw an opportunity not for building a radical democracy but for exploiting Southern resources, and the freedmen, profitably.” The bourgeoisie’s aim was not to create a class of independent black yeomen but to get the agricultural workforce, namely blacks, back to toiling for the landowners.

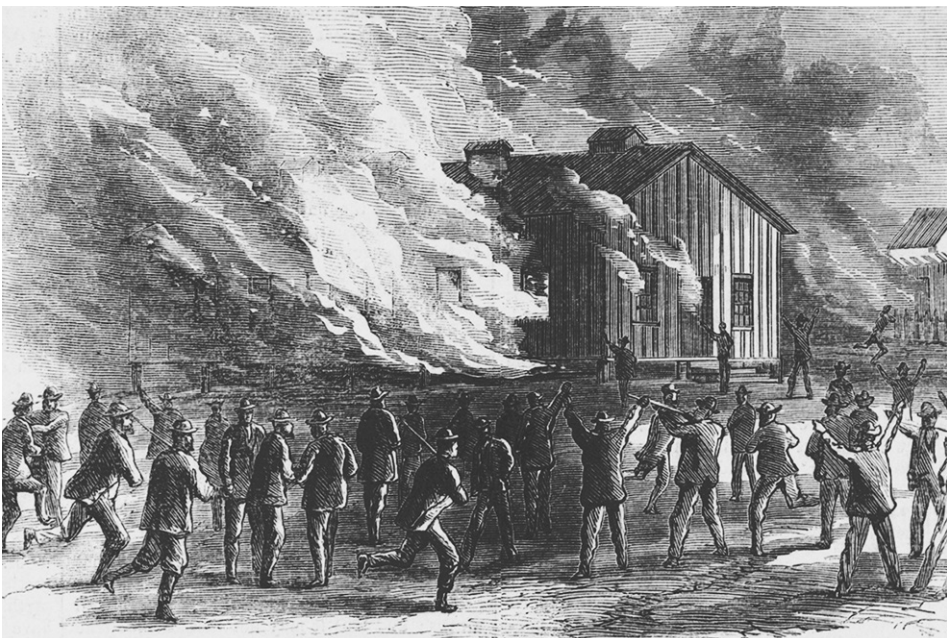
While the Civil War was a tremendous social revolution, it was also a *belated* one, the last great bourgeois-democratic revolution. The belated nature of this revolution meant that as soon as it effected one of the greatest acts of expropriation in history—the freeing, without compensation, of four million people branded as chattel or property—an act *necessary* for the further development of American capitalism, the bourgeoisie was unwilling to go further on the economic front.

Consider as a point of reference the 1848 revolutions in Europe, when the bourgeoisies in several European countries made common cause with the forces of aristocratic reaction against the insurgent proletariat. This period marked the end of the historically progressive role played by the European bourgeoisies. In their March 1850 address to the Communist League, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasized that “it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance,” the working class has taken state power and the revolution has spread internationally. “For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of the existing society but the foundation of a new one.”

Contrasting the Civil War and Reconstruction era to the period of the French Revolution, American Communist Party historian James Allen wrote in *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy 1865-1876* (1937): “The Second American Revolution took place at a much later period, when the bourgeoisie was already so highly matured that, in relation to a rising proletariat and farming middle class in the North, it was becoming reactionary. The rapidity of capitalist development was sapping seriously the revolutionary potency of the bourgeoisie.” It took six decades from the start of the French Revolution in 1789 until 1848 for the nature of both the bourgeoisie and the laboring classes in Europe, specifically France, to decisively change. In the U.S., instead of 60 years, there was about a decade between the end of the Civil War and the end of Reconstruction.

The bourgeois order that emerged out of the French Revolution saw its biggest enemy in feudal-derived forces of reaction in France and throughout Europe. In contrast, the consolidated bourgeois order that emerged out of the U.S. Civil War was confronted with tumultuous demands by the freedmen in the South for land and tumultuous labor upheavals in the North.

From today’s vantage point, there is a quality of tragic inevitability when dealing with Reconstruction, even if this or that contour could have been different. The bourgeoisie was not going to complete the radical social transformation in the South. The labor movement, although combative, was too politically backward and immature. The freedmen and their

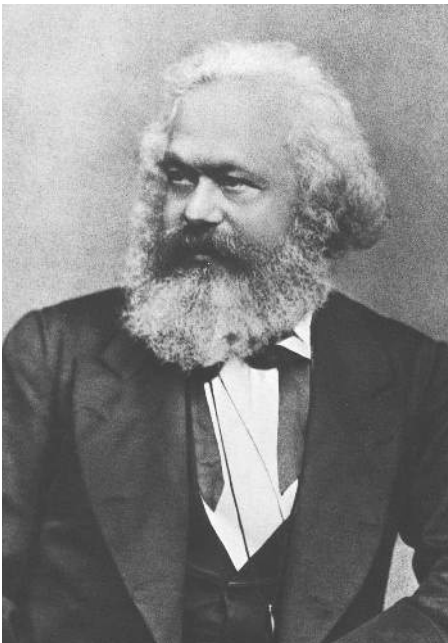


Harper's Weekly
Klan terror against Radical Reconstruction: ex-Confederate soldiers burn down black school in Memphis, 1866.

allies fought with all their might but were simply too weak. Nonetheless, our purpose as Marxists looking back at this period is to try to understand how and why things turned out the way they did, not least because we fight to change the world today.

The defeat of Reconstruction is like a wide brush painting American reality to this day. Out of this defeat, black people were consolidated as a race-color caste, a permanent mark of capitalist America. Black people have always been an integral part of the U.S. economy. Their stolen labor laid the foundation of American capitalism. Yet, they are in the mass forcibly segregated at the bottom of society.

Every bourgeois society has some national, religious or ethnic minority that faces discrimination and oppression.



John Mayall
Karl Marx: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.”

Black oppression in the U.S., however, has unique characteristics. It is a strategic component of the bourgeois order, with its material basis embedded in the very nature of American capitalism. The U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s successfully fought to overturn *legal* segregation in the South. But as we often point out, when it moved North it faced the intractable reality of segregation and oppression built into American capitalism itself. Yes, there is a black president, and sanctimonious bourgeois ideologues pat themselves on the back over the supposed accomplishments of “post-racial” America. But that intractable reality of black oppression remains and can be measured in mass unemployment, impoverishment, segregation, ghettoization and imprisonment.

Black oppression is the bedrock of U.S. capitalism and to touch it in any serious way is to touch the question of revolution. As a caste, black people face oppression regardless of their social class. At the same time, black oppression is deeply and fundamentally intertwined with class in this country. As veteran American Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser put it, “The

Negro question appeared upon the scene as a class question.” In the main, the black person was a slave, then a sharecropper or tenant farmer and then part of the multi-racial working class. For the bourgeoisie, racist poison is an invaluable tool to keep the working class—white, black, immigrant—divided and its potential revolutionary power checked. For the American proletariat to free itself from wage slavery, it must answer the unresolved question of Reconstruction, that is, racial oppression, by fighting for black liberation through socialist revolution.

The Civil War and Its Background

The First American Revolution, the War of Independence, put an end to British rule over the 13 colonies, paving the way for the expansion and development of the indigenous economy. However, it was not a social revolution but more a political one over who would call the shots in the colonies. The nature of the revolution defined its fundamental conservatism.

Left unresolved in the American Revolution was the question of slavery—i.e., the very course and nature of economic development in the newly formed United States. What emerged was a strengthening of the slaveowners’ powers. For example, written into the U.S. Constitution is the “Three-Fifths Compromise,” which counted black slaves, concentrated in the South, as three-fifths of a person for determining the total number of state representatives in Congress. It, among other things, helped ensure Southern domination of American politics. Of the first 16 presidents, concluding with Abraham Lincoln, eleven were slaveowners, and several of the remaining five had close familial relations who engaged in human bondage.

As a slave society—i.e., a society where the primary mode of production was based on slave labor—the South resembled ancient Rome. American slavery, North or South, quickly came to be equated with black skin. Rome never had to justify slavery; it simply *was* the prevailing mode of production. In contrast, American slavery, existing in the framework of world capitalism with its claims to rights and liberties, demanded justification. Slavery thus came to be conflated with black skin color, giving birth to the social concept of race.

The slave order had a dialectical relationship with capitalism, helping to foment its growth while also restraining that growth and being restrained by it. The key role played by slavery and all-round bloody plunder in the primitive accumulation of capital was powerfully captured by Marx in *Capital*: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterise the dawn of the era of capitalist production.” Concluding that capital comes into this world “dripping from head to toe, from every pore,

with blood and dirt,” Marx asserted: “The veiled slavery of the wage-labourers in Europe needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.”

American slavery, well into the 19th century, played an important role in the development of international capitalism. For example, in 1860 about 75 percent of the cotton used in British textile production came from the American South. Southern plantation agriculture, “King Cotton,” supplied the principal exports for the early American bourgeois state, providing the financial resources for the growth of mercantile and industrial capitalism in the North. At the same time, the Southern plantation system acted as a brake on the growth of industrial capitalism.

Throughout the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War, repeated “compromises” sought to offset what was called the “irrepressible conflict” between the North and South. However, each compromise only delayed the inevitable conflict and further entrenched the power of the slavocracy. The abolition of slavery required a brutal civil war in which more than 620,000 soldiers were killed.

Each social order, capitalist and slaveowning, sought expansion. For the South, expansion was a question of life and death, not least because slave-based plantation agriculture tended to overwork the soil, requiring the acquisition of new land to maintain crop production. And the question that always arose was whether newly incorporated states would be free or slave. It was precisely for the sake of expanding the slave power that the U.S. invaded Mexico in 1846-48, in the process stealing half of Mexico’s territory.

The 1850s saw a number of events that brought the question to a head. Coming off the Mexican-American War was the “Compromise of 1850,” which made California a free state but put off a decision on the rest of the former Mexican territories, opening the door to slavery. As part of that compromise, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act mandating that Northern states, where slavery had been abolished years or decades before, return runaway slaves to their owners. Not only were slaves returned to their masters, but many free black people in the North were captured and enslaved by what abolitionists aptly called “bloodhounds.” Then, in 1857 the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Dred Scott* case denied citizenship rights to all blacks, including free men, declaring that black people “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”

There also was “Bleeding Kansas,” a localized expression of the conflict to come, fought with arms in hand over whether Kansas would be a free or a slave state. In Kansas, John Brown built a reputation as a fighter for black freedom. His raid on the armory in Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859 by a multiracial band of fighters aiming to spark a slave rebellion can be said to mark the real opening of the Civil War.

As a military act, Brown’s raid was a failure. But as a political act, it was a

continued on page 6

A Spartacist Pamphlet\$1

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 23

South Africa: Marikana Massacre

The True Face of Neo-Apartheid Capitalism

Massacre of 34 striking platinum miners by police in Marikana on 16 August 2012 (inset) did not break the workers' fighting spirit. More than 2,000 miners marched in protest in Marikana on September 5.

Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Forge a Leninist Party!

No. 23, Feb. 2013 \$1 (32 pages)

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Reconstruction...

(continued from page 5)

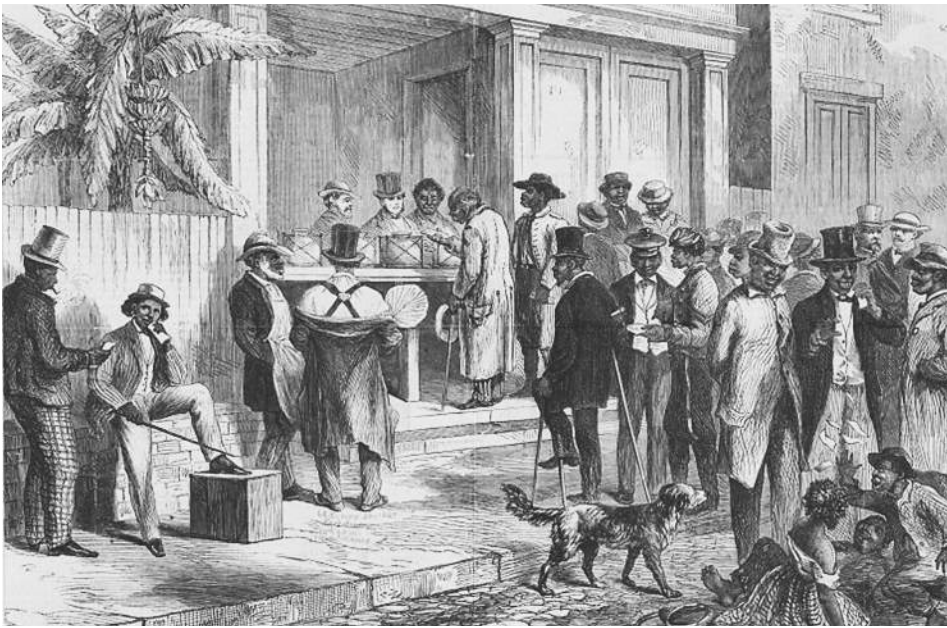
strike for freedom that paved the way for the Second American Revolution and the destruction of slavery. Foreshadowing the coming war, the military officer in command of defeating and capturing Brown and his men was Robert E. Lee, who went on to become the celebrated general of the Confederate army. On 2 December 1859, the day of his execution, John Brown scrawled a small note that stated: “I John Brown am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty land*: will never be purged *away*; *but* with blood.” That was to come shortly thereafter, following the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln as president.

It is useful to recall what the political parties represented at the time. The dominant one was the Democratic Party, which was a coalition of Southern and Northern forces. In the South, it was the party of the slavocracy, and the slavocracy held sway in the party. In the North, it represented merchant capitalists who profited from trade, particularly in cotton, with the South. Its popular base in the North was the white urban poor, especially immigrant workers such as Irish Catholics. In both South and North, it was thoroughly racist.

The Republican Party formed in the 1850s around opposition to the *expansion* of slavery. Republican ideology was encapsulated well by the title of historian Eric Foner’s 1970 book *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*. The party quickly became dominant in parts of the North. It represented the growing power and interest of the burgeoning industrial bourgeoisie as well as small farmers. The party sought the development of modern industry, supporting railroad land grants and advocating high tariffs on imports. While there were abolitionists among the Republicans, the party did not demand an *immediate* end to slavery. It viewed the extension of slave territory as an obstacle to economic growth.

The clash between the Southern slavocracy and Northern capital boiled over with the 1860 presidential election. On the eve of the elections, the Democratic Party split along sectional lines. The Northern Democrats were not opposed to slavery. Their position was that in each newly incorporated state, the legality of slavery should be decided by popular vote (of white males). But the Southern Democrats, supremely arrogant in their defense of slavery, forced the split. As a result, the Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln won the presidency. The South soon declared war, rallying behind the banner of “states’ rights,” which to this day means racist reaction.

For the North, the Civil War was by necessity a war of liberation. As Du Bois put it: “The Negro became free because the North could not win the Civil War if he remained in slavery.” That did not



New York Public Library

Freed slaves voting in New Orleans following the Civil War. Reconstruction was most democratic period in U.S. history.

mean that leading politicians, including Lincoln, saw it that way from the beginning. To them, the war was simply to save the Union. But others recognized reality, such as the radical abolitionists who devoted their lives to wiping out slavery. And the slavocracy understood that it was fighting for its life as a class. Across the Atlantic, so did Marx and Engels. Marx characterized the war as “nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labour,” adding that it “can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other.” While the British bourgeoisie wholeheartedly supported the South, the founders of scientific socialism labored to win English working-class support for the North—even as most of these textile workers relied on Southern cotton for their livelihoods.

There is a very interesting exchange between Marx and Engels, both of whom were critical of the North’s conduct of the war in its early years. In a July 1862 letter to Marx, Engels bitterly complained of the “flabbiness” of the North: “They shrink from conscription, from resolute fiscal measures, from attacking slavery, from everything that is urgently necessary.” He added, “Unless the North instantly adopts a revolutionary stance, it will get the terrible thrashing it deserves—and that’s what seems to be happening.”

Marx’s response reasserts the *social revolutionary* nature of the war. He acknowledges that the North had so far been conducting the war along “constitutional” rather than “revolutionary lines” but nonetheless asserts: “All this is going to take another turn. The North will, at last, wage the war in earnest [and] have recourse to revolutionary methods,” meaning the abolition of slavery and enlistment of black troops. A single such regiment, Marx wrote, “would have a remarkable effect on Southern nerves.” In a subsequent letter, he chides Engels: “It strikes me that you allow yourself to

be influenced by the military aspect of things a little too much.”

Lincoln came to understand the urgent need to make this war into one of liberation. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect on 1 January 1863, and called for the raising of black troops. Some 200,000 black people joined the Union Army and Navy, fighting a war for freedom. They helped to turn the tide of the war. Against enormous opposition from Northern Democrats and others who wanted a compromise with the slavocracy—including during the 1864 elections, which he believed he would lose—Lincoln did not back down on the elimination of slavery. Frederick Douglass issued one of the most astute assessments of Lincoln shortly after his assassination, declaring that he was “a progressive man; he never took any step backwards. He did not begin by playing the role of Moses and end by playing that of Pharaoh; he began by playing Pharaoh and ended by playing Moses.”

Presidential Reconstruction

The question of reconstruction began to come to the fore as early as 1863, when the Union had committed itself to abolition and won some major battles. The question posed was: on what basis will the Southern states be readmitted into the Union? Marx concluded his famous 1864 letter to Lincoln by declaring that it fell to Lincoln to “lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world.” Lincoln’s Reconstruction plan was called the “10 percent plan.” It was quite lenient to the Southern states. When 10 percent of a state’s 1860 voting rolls claimed adherence to the Union, they would elect a state government that could then be readmitted.

Radical Republicans protested it bitterly and proposed their own plan. Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner declared that by going into rebellion the Southern states had committed “state suicide,” meaning they would have to be “reconstructed” before readmission. Thaddeus Stevens was even more radical. He argued that the South was akin to a conquered foreign territory and therefore subject to the whims of Congress.

In 1864, in opposition to Lincoln, Radicals passed the Wade-Davis Bill, which required that the Southern states write constitutions abolishing slavery and that a *majority* of each state’s white males pledge support to the federal Constitution. Only then could elections be held for a constitutional convention, with suffrage restricted to those who took an “ironclad oath” that they never rebelled against the U.S. Critics complained that the provisions were virtually impossible to meet, making it likely there would be prolonged Congressional control over the Southern states. Lincoln never signed or vetoed the bill; he just let it die.

Having made enemies of the Radicals over Reconstruction, Lincoln, the consummate politician, then worked with them on the Thirteenth Amendment. Lincoln’s Reconstruction plan, however,

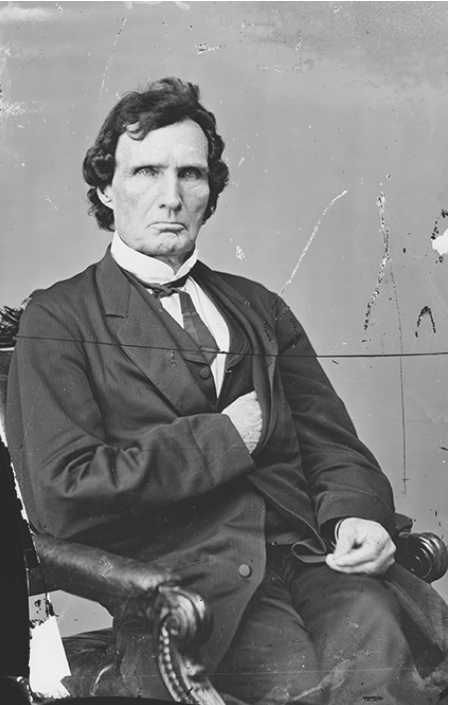
never addressed black suffrage. The closest he came was in a speech four days before his assassination, when he argued that literate blacks and black Union soldiers should be given the franchise.

It should be noted that there was a major difference of approach, not only of policy, between Lincoln and the Radicals. The Radicals had a real plan for Reconstruction. For Lincoln, the main point was to provide a plan that would undermine the Confederacy from within—i.e., put down your arms, and we will be lenient. Whether he would have gone beyond that is a matter of speculation. Lincoln was shot on 14 April 1865. He died the next day, six days after Lee surrendered to Grant.

With Lincoln dead, the presidency moved to Vice President Andrew Johnson. From Tennessee, Johnson was the only Senator from a seceding state to stay in the Union government. Picked as Lincoln’s running mate during the 1864 elections as a political sop to Democratic Party Unionists, Johnson saw himself as a representative of the poor white farmers of the South and was known as an opponent of the Southern oligarchy.

Marx and Engels initially had hope for Johnson, as did the Radicals. In an address on behalf of the International Workingmen’s Association, the First International, Marx wrote: “Yours, Sir, has become the task to uproot by the law what has been felled by the sword, to preside over the arduous work of political reconstruction and social regeneration.” In a letter to Marx, Engels predicted: “Johnson will insist on confiscation of the great estates, which will make the pacification and reorganisation of the South rather more acute.” To put it mildly, things did not go that way.

Johnson hated the Southern oligarchy, but he hated black people far more, view-



Library of Congress

Thaddeus Stevens, Radical Republican Congressman.

ing free blacks as a threat to poor whites. He mostly reversed the few land confiscations that took place. Even the 10 percent plan was done away with in favor of a plan whereby any number of supposedly loyal whites could form the basis of a state government. Johnson provided blanket amnesties to most Confederates. Indeed, in 1865-66, many of the Representatives and Senators sent to Washington from the South were former Confederates, including, as Senator, Alexander Stephens, the former vice president of the Confederacy.

Johnson encouraged the Southern states (though they needed little encouragement) to implement Black Codes. The laws’ purpose was to subjugate blacks: they could not bear arms; their right to land ownership was severely restricted; they had a poll tax placed on them; they were forced into contracts with their former masters to keep working the land; and it was made illegal for a black man to be unemployed, meaning he could be arrested, fined, jailed and sent to work on the plantations. In essence, with an assist from Johnson, the former slavocracy maintained the despised system of gang labor on the plantations.

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To be sure, black people fought back. During the war and in the period afterward, hundreds of thousands left the plantations with little more than the clothes on their backs, flooding into cities like New Orleans looking for work. In addition, there were thousands of armed black soldiers throughout the South. “Colored conventions” took place to protest the injustices of the Black Codes.

Southern white racists responded with ferocious and violent reaction. The Klan was founded in Tennessee in 1865 by former Confederate soldiers. In addition, countless other Confederate guerrillas and soldiers were instituting a reign of terror against blacks.

Two massacres caught the attention of the North. The first one took place in Memphis in early May 1866. It was sparked by an altercation between white cops and black Union veterans. White mobs rampaged through black neighborhoods for three days. In the end, nearly 50 black people were slaughtered.

Less than three months later, there was another massacre, in New Orleans. While a Radical-dominated constitutional convention was meeting inside the State House to discuss black suffrage, about 200 black people, many of them Union Army veterans, gathered outside to welcome the conventioners. A race-terrorist group known as the Southern Cross, which included local police and Confederate veterans, had likewise gathered. After a signal shot was fired, the white mob launched its rampage. Some 600-700 shots were fired and black people were hunted through the streets of the city. Nearly 50 black people were murdered.

Radical Reconstruction

The supreme arrogance of the former slavocracy, the intransigence of Johnson, the institution of the Black Codes and the bloody massacres all worked to turn Northern public opinion toward the Radicals. For many moderate Republican politicians, representing various sectors of the bourgeoisie, what was posed was whether the Southern oligarchy would continue to rule as before. When Congress reconvened in December 1865, a parliamentary war of sorts started to unfold between the Republicans and President Johnson.

Johnson claimed that Reconstruction had been completed. The Republicans shot back by refusing to recognize Johnson’s governments or seat Representatives from the South. In the 1866 Congressional elections, taking place on the heels of the Memphis and New Orleans massacres, the Republicans won a decisive victory, gaining control of more than two-thirds of Congress. Radical Reconstruction was to begin.

Even before the elections, Republicans had passed—over Johnson’s veto—the Civil Rights Act of 1866. This legislation provided the basis for the introduction of the Fourteenth Amendment, which granted citizenship to everyone born in the U.S., including black people. In the debate over the Amendment, the question of black suffrage became a lightning rod. Thaddeus Stevens, while voting for the Amendment, was highly critical of it, not least because it only implied black suffrage.

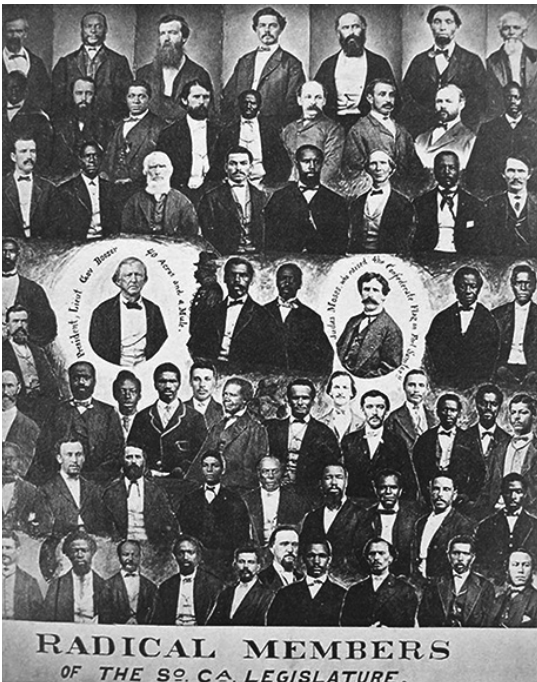
The Fourteenth Amendment is one of the most important and contentious in U.S. history. Decades after its adoption, this Amendment became the legal foundation that formally guaranteed the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights to the vast bulk of the population. In recent years, the Fourteenth Amendment has come under attack by anti-immigrant bigots because it gives citizenship to the children of immigrants, including those without documents. It’s an expression of the ties between the rights of blacks and immigrants.

Along with the Radicals in the U.S., Marx and Engels quickly became disillusioned with Johnson. Engels noted in a July 1865 letter to Marx that anti-black sentiment in the South was “coming out more and more violently.” “Without coloured suffrage,” he wrote, “nothing can be done.” One should not be under the illusion that the North was a haven

of enlightenment. Black suffrage in the North was restricted in virtually every state. The difference was that black people constituted less than 2 percent of the Northern population. In the South, they were the majority in some states and very sizable minorities in others. In Southern elections, a voting black population would hold the balance in determining the ruling party. Thus, it was Republicans from the Deep South, probably the most conservative sector of the party, who initially supported and even pushed for black voting rights.

Amid debates over suffrage, the Congressional war with Johnson continued. At every turn, Johnson sought to thwart the efforts of the Republican-dominated Congress. For example, in early 1865 the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands—better known as the Freedmen’s Bureau—was established for a one-year term to aid newly freed blacks in the South (they also provided aid to displaced poor whites). When it came time to renew the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1866, Johnson vetoed it, and Congress overrode the veto. Likewise, Johnson mobilized against the Fourteenth Amendment and encouraged states not to ratify it.

In an April 1866 letter to Engels, as fighting between Congress and Johnson heated up, Marx wrote: “The phase of the Civil War over, only now have the United States really entered the revolutionary phase, and the European wisecracs who believe in the omnipotence of Mr. John-



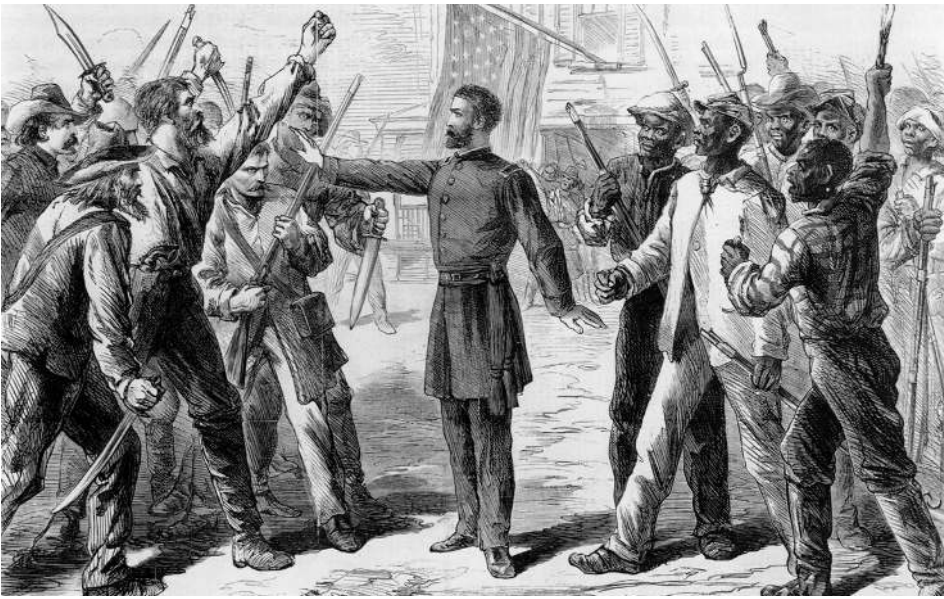
Ex-slaves made up majority of Radical Republicans in first South Carolina post-Civil War legislature.

son will soon be disappointed.” Things came to a head when Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts, four laws promulgated between March 1867 and March 1868 that completely overturned Presidential Reconstruction. Johnson vetoed these, and his vetoes were overturned.

These Acts marked the real beginning of Radical Reconstruction. The governments of the former Confederate states—except Tennessee, which had already ratified the Fourteenth Amendment—were dissolved. To be readmitted into the Union, there were several conditions states had to meet. New state constitutions had to be drafted, which then had to be approved by Congress. These constitutions had to enshrine universal male suffrage (i.e., give the franchise to black men) and disenfranchise whites who had been leading members of the Confederacy. The former Confederate states also had to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment.

The former Confederacy was divided into five military districts and placed under the authority of federal troops. Congress assigned the commanders to oversee each military district. Johnson continued his obstruction. When Congress appointed a commander who was sympathetic to the Radicals, Johnson removed him. When Congress set a condition for the Southern states, he tried to overturn it.

Things went so far that Johnson was impeached by Congressional Republicans. They claimed that he had overstepped



Freedmen’s Bureau, backed by Union Army in South, was instrumental in defending rights of freed slaves.

his powers as president. Congress fell one vote short of removing him. This was most likely the result of backroom dealing: the 1868 elections were about to begin and Johnson promised to not further obstruct Congress if allowed to finish his term.

I want to speak for a minute about the question of federal troops in the South during Reconstruction. Congress apportioned only 2,000 soldiers per state, a total of about 22,000. Usually these soldiers, many of whom were black, were confined to their barracks or brought out to guard state capitol buildings under attack by white racist mobs. The contradictory reality is that, on the one hand, without these troops next to nothing in Reconstruction would have been accomplished. On the other hand, the number of troops was nowhere near enough to fully implement the letter and spirit of the Reconstruction Acts. In fact, the number of troops quickly began to dwindle with Johnson’s massive demobilization of the Army following the war—from one million soldiers to 38,000 by the end of 1866. Many of the troops originally sent to the South were quickly siphoned off to fight Native Americans in the West.

The 1868 presidential elections became, in effect, a referendum on Congressional Reconstruction. The Republicans ran war hero Ulysses S. Grant with Schuyler Colfax as his running mate. The Democrats ran former New York governor Horatio Seymour, with former Missouri Congressman Francis Blair Jr. as his running mate.

The Democrats’ motto was: “This is a White Man’s Country; Let White Men Rule.” As historian David Blight put it in his *Race and Reunion* (2001), the Democrats “conducted one of the most explicitly racist presidential campaigns in American history.” Grant ran under the rather inane slogan “Let Us Have Peace,” while promising to not interfere with Congress’s Reconstruction policy.

Although Grant emerged victorious, in good part due to the Southern black vote, what marked the 1868 elections was

massive racist violence in the South by the Klan and its ilk. To give you but a few examples: Several Republican leaders, black and white, were assassinated in Arkansas and South Carolina. In Camilla, Georgia, 400 armed whites, led by the local sheriff, opened fire on a black election rally and then scoured the countryside looking for those who escaped. At least 20 were killed or wounded.

White gangs roamed New Orleans, breaking up Republican meetings. In St. Landry, Louisiana, a mob invaded area plantations, killing some 200 black people. In Louisiana alone, nearly 1,100 people, the vast majority freedmen, were murdered between April and November 1868. Nonetheless, at the risk of livelihoods and lives, black people voted in droves, determined to exercise their newly acquired rights of citizenship.

Buoyed by Grant’s electoral victory, the Radicals moved on to the Fifteenth Amendment in early 1869. It granted universal male suffrage throughout the country regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Even this measure fell short of what many Radicals wanted. Women were still disenfranchised and while the Amendment prohibited barring the vote on the basis of race, it said nothing about other qualifications, like property ownership, literacy or the payment of a poll tax. These would all be used later to disenfranchise black people in the South.

Despite the Amendment’s ratification in early 1870, that year marked the beginning of the decline of Reconstruction. By 1870, the Freedmen’s Bureau was a shadow of its former self, though it would continue to exist in name until 1872. Thaddeus Stevens, probably the closest thing the U.S. had to a parliamentary Jacobin, had died in August 1868. More fundamentally, what the Fifteenth Amendment brought to a head was the debate among the Radicals specifically and the Republicans more generally over the question of political rights versus economic independence. If the land question was off the agenda and the main issue was to be framed entirely in terms of political rights, then for most Republicans the Fifteenth Amendment represented the culmination of these rights. Yet, without land to the freedmen, Reconstruction had little hope of success.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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South Africa...

(continued from page 1)

the imperialist U.S. and German embassies. On paper, NUMSA’s decision on the elections marks a significant break from the ANC, but it was not on the basis of a principled opposition to supporting a capitalist party.

In an 11 December 2013 leaflet, our Spartacist South Africa comrades noted that the NUMSA leadership maintains its loyalty to Mandela’s ANC, particularly the bourgeois-populist Freedom Charter adopted in 1955. The NUMSA tops also swear by the “two-stage revolution” doctrine of the SACP, long a formula for allying with a supposedly progressive wing of the bourgeoisie. While Irvin Jim decries particular “neoliberal” policies adopted by the Alliance, such as the late 1990s GEAR program and the current National Development Plan (NDP), he upholds the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the first ANC-led government, a blueprint for a “reformed” capitalism that did nothing to satisfy the masses’ needs.

We reprint below the SSA leaflet, which was distributed at the NUMSA congress.

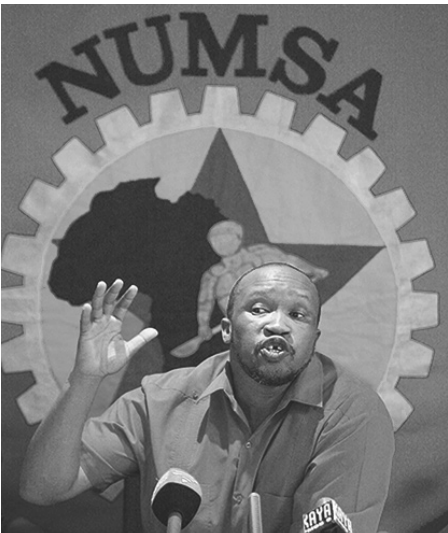
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From all sides, the Special National Congress of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) on 13-16 December (now postponed to 17-20 December) has become the focus of intense interest. In particular, the congress is supposed to decide on a proposal that NUMSA not support the ANC in the 2014

20 years of neo-apartheid rule, strangling strikes on behalf of the bosses and repeatedly herding the working class as voting cattle for the bourgeois ANC.

The anger and disgust of many workers toward COSATU president Sdumo Dlamini and others in the “anti-Vavi” faction of COSATU is understandable. Dlamini and Co. are open, craven apologists for every atrocity committed by the Zuma-led government—most despicably for the bloody massacre of 34 striking mineworkers in Marikana last year. But the role of Vavi, Jim and Co. has fundamentally been no different—they just spout some “critical” phrases and adopt an “independent” posture while pushing through the same class-collaborationist betrayals. Last year they stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Dlamini and the National Union of Mineworkers tops against the Marikana strikers, including supporting Zuma for a second term just a few months after the massacre. Earlier that year, Irvin Jim and other NUMSA leaders visited Zuma at his lavish Nkandla homestead, where they reportedly discussed the possibility of Vavi being promoted to Zuma’s deputy among other measures to smooth over tensions in the Alliance. And don’t think for a minute that they have “learned their lesson”: Vavi and the NUMSA tops are currently suing COSATU in the courts of the very same state—a *capitalist* state, as even Vavi now admits—to have Vavi’s suspension lifted. This is yet another betrayal of elementary working-class principles.

What’s urgently needed is a policy of complete political and organisational independence from the bourgeoisie, its



NUMSA general secretary Irvin Jim.

revolution, and replaced with the dictatorship of the proletariat to suppress the capitalist exploiters and begin socialist reconstruction of society. In South Africa, where the unresolved task of national liberation for the non-white majority is strategic, this means a *black-centred workers government*, which would include full democratic rights and an important role for the coloured and Indian toilers, as well as for those whites who would accept a government based centrally on the black working people.

As a possible alternative to the Tripartite Alliance, the NUMSA National Office Bearers propose something they call a “United Front,” which they say would be “similar to the UDF [United Democratic Front] of the 1980s” and based centrally on the “full implemen-



Xinhua



Rex Features

Growing anger at ANC from base of society: South African president Jacob Zuma (left) booed by crowd during speech at Nelson Mandela’s memorial service in Johannesburg, 10 December 2013.

elections (including refusing to pay a R2 million [\$180,000] “political levy” to the ANC), and another proposal to investigate “alternatives” to the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance. These decisions could have a significant impact on politics and the labour movement in neo-apartheid South Africa. Recognising this, the leaders of the bourgeois ANC—together with their cronies in the leaderships of the SACP and COSATU—have been working overtime to intimidate the NUMSA delegates and either force them to back down or isolate them. The congress is also supposed to discuss a campaign of political strikes beginning in February 2014 to protest the National Development Plan (NDP) and other government attacks.

Many militants in NUMSA (and other COSATU-affiliated unions) have great expectations that the congress will be a step toward ending the union’s subordination to the ANC and the capitalist government, and seriously fighting for the working class and poor. The likes of NUMSA general secretary Irvin Jim and COSATU’s suspended general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi have been using a lot of left rhetoric to build support among these workers, including acknowledging that “the post-apartheid state is a capitalist state” (Vavi), that the ANC is “bourgeois,” and suggesting that their opponents in the Alliance play the role, under neo-apartheid, of “receptionists of white monopoly capital and imperialism” (Jim and NUMSA deputy general secretary Karl Cloete). This is cynical hypocrisy on the part of the NUMSA leaders and Vavi, given that they themselves have been very reliable “receptionists” over the last

parties and its state. A decision to not vote for the ANC in the elections would be significant, but on its own this is not enough for working-class political independence. The NUMSA leadership’s proposals are not based on any principled opposition to political support for bourgeois parties, but on the hopes of *pressuring* the ANC and the government to change some of their policies. This is clear from the NUMSA National Office Bearers’ (NOB) notes distributed to delegates of the NUMSA Regional Congresses on 23 November. Everything is blamed on “the neo-liberal NDP”—as if the capitalist Tripartite Alliance government hadn’t been carrying out constant attacks on workers, immigrants and unemployed people in the townships and rural areas for some 19 years before the adoption of the NDP, whether under the RDP, GEAR or some other label!

The point of the NUMSA tops’ focus on particular policies is to *cover up their own role* in propping up neo-apartheid capitalism all these years, and to channel the anger of the working class and poor into the reformist dead-end of tinkering with the system of capitalist exploitation and oppression—to “transform the state” or “fundamentally change the current socioeconomic strategy of the government,” as the NUMSA NOB notes put it. The capitalist government, and the state it administers, can never “fundamentally change” to represent the interests of the workers and oppressed. As comrade Lenin explained in *State and Revolution* (1917), the capitalist state can never be used to serve the interests of the oppressed and exploited classes; it must be *smashed, broken* through a workers

tation of the Freedom Charter.” The formation envisioned by the NOB proposal, like the UDF of the 1980s, is a *popular front* and has nothing at all in common with the united front tactic as employed by the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky and the early Communist International. The united front is an agreement reached between two or more parties or organisations, which have *different programmes*, for joint action on specific demands. Each organisation retains intact its entire programme as well as the right to put it forward and criticise the other organisations in the united front.

The popular front, on the other hand, is not about agreement for joint action on specific demands, but agreement on a *common programme* between working-class and bourgeois organisations—and inevitably, that common programme is *bourgeois*. The popular front is not a tactic to advance the interests of the working

class, but a class-collaborationist betrayal of those interests. The history of bloody defeats suffered by the working class as a result of the popular front is long—from strangling the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s and paving the way for the Franco dictatorship, to subordinating the working class in Chile to Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular and opening the way for Pinochet’s bloody coup in 1973, to the Marikana massacre in 2012.

Despite the myths preached by Jim, Vavi and the like, there is nothing “socialist” or “working-class” about the Freedom Charter—it is a *bourgeois-populist* programme. The ANC leaders have always been quite honest about its bourgeois nature, including the recently deceased ANC icon Nelson Mandela, who emphasised in his 1956 article “In Our Lifetime” that the Charter was “by no means a blueprint for a socialist state,” but rather aimed at making possible “the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class.” The Freedom Charter’s rhetoric about “the people” sharing the wealth, etc., is nothing but a populist smoke-screen intended to obscure the class divisions among the black majority and keep the black proletariat shackled by nationalism—the mistaken belief that all who were oppressed under white minority rule have common class interests. The reality of the neo-apartheid system that resulted from the negotiated settlement with the white rulers has been a layer of mainly politically-connected blacks enriching themselves in partnership with the same Randlords and monopoly capitalists who dominated under apartheid. The super-exploitation of mainly black labour and grinding oppression of the masses remain unchanged. To try to foist the bourgeois Freedom Charter on the working class now means ignoring the experience from the past 20 years of continued suffering under this system and preparing the way for more betrayals and defeats.

Another alternative proposed by the NUMSA NOB document concerns the kind of party required by the working class: “Given that the SACP has become embedded in the state, we must explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism.” Just what this means is supposed to be determined by investigating “different types of parties—from mass workers parties to vanguard parties” and studying “the lessons we can learn from such countries as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Greece.” This could include everything from some kind of reformist workers party that would seek to administer capitalism on its own or in coalition with openly bourgeois forces—like Lula’s Workers Party (PT) in Brazil—to outright bourgeois populist parties like those led by the late Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. None of these alternatives offer a solution to the burning problems faced by the working class and the poor, and they can’t because they are all premised on maintaining capitalism.

The Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) has produced a bulletin for the NUMSA Special Congress with the title, “Sikhokhele NUMSA!” [Lead us, NUMSA]. In it, WASP “congratulates the NUMSA leadership for recognising the changed political situation post-Marikana” and “for tabling an agenda that addresses the key issues facing the working class” while writing *not a single word* of criticism of the betrayals by the NUMSA leaders and

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Vavi. This is not surprising, because the “mass workers party” that WASP seeks to create is really no different from the reformist party the NUMSA tops are contemplating—based on touching faith in the bourgeois state, narrow trade-union economism, ignoring questions of special oppression, and tailing bourgeois nationalism. The main force behind WASP, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), and their international cothinkers [Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International] have a long, rotten history of supporting “strikes” by cops, security guards and prison guards—who they grotesquely embrace as “workers in uniform.” The DSM’s predecessors were buried in the ANC up to the mid-1990s, loyally campaigning for it in elections and *opposing* the call for a workers party. Like Irvin Jim and Co., their beef with the ANC today is not based on principled opposition to bourgeois parties, but on the ANC’s adoption of certain unpopular, “neo-liberal,” policies like GEAR and the NDP, which they complain are a “betrayal” of the Freedom Charter. Thus, WASP recently tried (unsuccessfully) to negotiate an electoral bloc with the bourgeois populist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) of Julius Malema.

As a matter of fact, there already is a mass reformist working class party in South Africa—the reformist, Stalinist-derived SACP. While the SACP tops are widely reviled by many workers in NUMSA and other unions (and by militants in the SACP itself) for their wretched betrayals, the reformist, anti-revolutionary *programme* of the SACP is fundamentally what Jim, Vavi and others are offering up today as an “alternative”—from recycling the Freedom Charter, UDF and other treacherous popular fronts, to promoting “Two-Stage Revolution” and alliance with a mythical, “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie under the label of “National Democratic Revolution.” It is crucial that advanced workers learn to consciously reject this reformist programme in favour of the genuine communism practiced by the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky—the revolutionary international-



Mothutlong, January 14: Residents of township near platinum belt built barricades during protest for access to clean water. Cops unleashed vicious repression, killing four protesters.

ist programme that was trampled underfoot by the Stalinists and replaced by its opposite.

We urge workers to study the true programme and history of the Bolsheviks, who were able to lead the only successful workers revolution to date in October 1917. That party was built on the basis of an uncompromising struggle for the independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie and for proletarian leadership of the toiling masses, acting as a revolutionary tribune of the people to oppose every manifestation of capitalist oppression. This is the kind of party that Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), is trying to build. We have consistently opposed, on principle, any political support to the ANC or any other bourgeois parties and from the beginning denounced the post-1994 neo-apartheid system, administered by the Tripartite Alliance government, as a betrayal of the struggle for black freedom. Today, it is necessary to assimilate the lessons of the history of international class struggle—including the last 20 years under neo-apartheid South Africa—to begin the work of building the revolutionary vanguard party needed to get rid of this racist system of capitalist exploitation. Toward that end, we raise the following:

1. Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! For political independence of the proletariat from *all* bourgeois parties—ANC, EFF, PAC [Pan Africanist Congress], AZAPO [Azanian People’s Organisation], DA [Democratic Alliance], Agang, etc.
2. No reliance on the state that massacred the Marikana strikers. Cops and security guards out of the unions! The capitalist courts have no place in disputes of the workers movement. Labour must clean its own house!
3. Down with labour brokers! The unions must fight for full, permanent jobs for all contract and temporary workers and for equal pay for equal work. Organise the unorganised!
4. For integrated, multi-ethnic defence guards based on the trade unions to fight against anti-immigrant attacks and defend working-class communities against vigilantism. Labour must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and oppose deportations.
5. Down with the Traditional Courts Bill! This and other attacks hit particularly black women, who are triply oppressed under neo-apartheid. For access to free, safe abortion and birth control on demand, as part of free, high-quality health care for all. Oppose oppressive, backward traditional practices like polygamy, *lobola*

[bride price] and *ukuthwala* [abducting girls or young women for marriage].

6. For a massive public works programme, at union wages and conditions, to maintain and expand roads, build hospitals, schools, housing, etc. For free, quality health care for all! For free education, open admissions, and a state-paid living stipend through to the university level! Smash “e-tolls”—for free, safe, mass transport!

7. For a 30 hour workweek with no loss in pay to distribute the available jobs among all who need work and combat unemployment at the expense of the capitalists. For massive wage increases to close the apartheid wage gap, and a sliding scale of wages to keep pace with the skyrocketing costs of living. For a class-struggle leadership in the unions!

8. New October Revolutions—not the Freedom Charter—are the only way forward to national liberation of the black majority. For a black-centred workers government, part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa, that fights for international workers rule and an international planned socialist economy. Expropriate the bourgeoisie—from Jo’burg, to London, to Wall Street!

9. Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party as a section of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

Israel...

(continued from page 12)

(17 April 2012) to become the “world’s largest holding facility for asylum-seekers and migrants.” Conditions in detention centers are so harsh that many held there have attempted suicide.

The draconian measures against migrants were accompanied by efforts to penalize those who shelter or transport them. Employing refugees incurs fines and a jail sentence. In 2010, hundreds of rabbis throughout Israel issued a religious edict instructing Jewish people not to sell homes or rent apartments to migrant workers and asylum-seekers.

What is posed is a fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, including the African refugees and everyone else who has made it into the country. In Israel, this democratic demand raises far deeper issues. The Zionist rulers rail against “infiltrators” because the influx of non-Jewish immigrants runs up against the very foundations of the Zionist state, at the heart of which is the “Law of Return” that grants citizenship on the basis of Jewish ancestry. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ranted: “If we don’t stop the problem, 60,000 infiltrators are liable to become 600,000, and cause the negation of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”

The plight of African asylum-seekers is inseparable from the oppression of the Palestinians, a defining axis on which the Zionist state turns. Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories are under lockdown and imprisoned behind a barrier of huge concrete walls, electrified fences, trenches and razor wire, with exit and entry tightly controlled by the Israeli army. The walls divide families, separate farmers from their land and cut the population off from jobs, hospitals, schools and water. Palestinians are continually robbed



Israeli soldiers arrest Palestinian during protest against expansion of settlement near Ramallah in the West Bank, 17 January.

of their land, their homes razed to make room for new settlements. In Gaza, Palestinians are further subjected to a starvation blockade, raids and assassinations.

Israeli Arabs suffer widespread discrimination in housing, jobs, social services and virtually all aspects of life. Accorded far fewer rights under the law than Jews, they live under constant threat of having those rights stripped away. As a condition of accepting the latest “peace” plan hatched in Washington, Netanyahu’s far-right foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman has stipulated that predominantly Arab regions in central and northern Israel must be cut off from the rest of the country and incorporated into a rump Palestinian state.

Israel, a major recipient of U.S. military aid that is routinely hailed as Washington’s “only democratic ally” in the Near East, is a prison house for not only Palestinians but also Ethiopian Jews, Bedouins and others. Brought into Israel in the 1980s-90s to inflate the Jewish population, Ethiopian Jews face rampant racism and discrimina-

tion in housing, transportation, education and employment. Last year, following a public exposé, the government admitted that it had been injecting Ethiopian women with Depo-Provera—a potent and long-lasting contraceptive—without their knowledge, causing a dramatic fall in the community birth rate. Bedouin Arabs, who have lived for centuries in desert villages, have been denied basic services such as water, electricity, schools and health care. A bill introduced in the Knesset last year but later shelved had sought to forcibly displace 40,000 Bedouin from their “unrecognized” villages in the Negev.

At the same time that the Zionists vilify immigrants, Israeli capitalists rely heavily on migrant labor, especially to fill low-wage menial and unskilled jobs. After subduing the first Palestinian *Intifada*, in the 1990s the Israeli rulers initially moved to replace Palestinian labor with that of foreign migrants, many from East Europe and Asia. Denied any and all rights, these migrant laborers live in

constant fear of police breaking into their homes in the dead of night to arrest and deport them. Many children born in Israel to immigrant parents have been deported along with their families to countries that are totally foreign to them.

Full citizenship rights for all migrant workers, refugees and their families as well as the right of return for Palestinians cannot be realized without a fight to shatter the Zionist capitalist state from within through socialist revolution. Although the Jewish working class is heavily imbued with Zionism, it is exploited at the hands of its “own” ruling class. After years of government austerity and wage-gouging, Israel has one of the highest poverty rates of any industrialized country in the world, fueling resentment and anger among workers in both the public and private sectors.

The Near East is a cauldron of peoples carved up by the imperialists and competing at the expense of each other. At the same time, imperialist penetration has created strategic concentrations of the proletariat, from Iran’s oil workers to Egypt’s textile and port workers. What is needed is the construction of revolutionary internationalist workers parties throughout the region to unite the proletariat—Arab, Persian, Kurdish and Jewish; Muslim and Christian; native-born and migrant—in struggle on the basis of a program of world revolution.

Israel/Palestine is a case of two interpenetrated peoples laying claim to the same piece of land. Assuring the right of self-determination for both the Palestinian and Jewish peoples requires the overthrow of the Israeli capitalist rulers and also those of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, where the Arab capitalist rulers oppress millions of Palestinians. Only through the creation of a planned economy in a socialist federation of the Near East can conflicting claims over land and resources be equitably resolved. ■

Censorship...

(continued from page 12)

cohesion.” Young Muslims and veiled women will probably be targeted in the first instance as part of the “war on terror.” But such weapons in the ruling class’ arsenal are ultimately aimed at the organized working class and its allies. Class struggle between workers and capitalists is inherently antithetical to “national cohesion.” The working class is the only class with the social power to shut off the flow of profits by withdrawing its labor through strike action. Only the workers can ultimately challenge and overturn capitalist rule.

Capitalist Austerity, Racist Terror Fuel Fascists’ Growth

The January 9 Council of State decree is certainly not the first ban on Dieudonné’s shows. In recent years, local courts have ordered either cancellations or bans in France, Switzerland and Montreal. In Brussels in 2012, cops turned off the power during a performance upon hearing Dieudonné use “xenophobic” slurs. We protest and condemn Dieudonné’s anti-Semitic poison, which sows division by fueling racism. In so doing, he serves the very interests of those he claims to oppose—namely the French ruling class and its Zionist allies. The latter seek at all costs to obscure the common class interests of Jewish and Palestinian workers in the Near East and of workers internationally.

Dieudonné’s personal ties to and promotion of [fascist] Jean-Marie Le Pen, Alain Soral and Holocaust deniers such as Robert Faurisson are well known. He also conducted a sympathetic interview with historic skinhead leader Serge Ayoub shortly after the murder of [anti-fascist youth] Clément Méric last summer. During this interview, Dieudonné proclaimed: “We represent the France of the lower classes, the France of different origins, different histories but who in the end...have the same enemy.” Méric’s murderer, Esteban Morillo, was a member of the fascist group Troisième Voie [Third Way], which was founded and led by Ayoub.

In blaming the French Zionist groups CRIF and LICRA along with the Israeli state for every possible ill, Dieudonné ends up exonerating the French bourgeoisie. CRIF and LICRA are agents of Israel, but they also serve their French masters in helping the bourgeoisie cover up its own history, which is steeped in anti-Semitism, from the Dreyfus Affair to the Vichy regime’s zealous persecution of the Jews—including sending tens of thousands to their deaths in Nazi Germany. But today CRIF & Co. provide even greater assistance to the French state as part of its “war on terror.” The Zionists’ crusade against pro-Palestinian activists is used to strengthen anti-terror legislation and oozes with the bourgeoisie’s racist contempt for (but also fear of)



Black comedian Dieudonné M'bala M'bala, now victim of state censorship, greets French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2007.

the French *banlieues* [working-class and largely Muslim neighborhoods].

But Dieudonné’s case has particular meaning because he is black and he started out as a witty, sharp critic of French racism and colonialism, staging shows with [Jewish comedian] Elie Semoun that denounced the racism dividing Jews and Africans. He took up the cause of the *sans-papiers* [undocumented immigrants], fought for immigrants to win the right to vote, defended the Palestinians against Zionism and opposed the fascist National Front (FN). His fans included blacks, North Africans and leftists. But he turned to black nationalism and anti-Semitism. Denying that society is divided into social classes—French, white, black, Jewish workers against French, white, black, Jewish capitalists—he increasingly blamed Jews for racist oppression. His new status as a pariah in the media led him to increasingly wallow in anti-Semitism, so much so that he picked Jean-Marie Le Pen, a vile anti-Semitic racist and torturer during the Algerian War, as godfather for one of his children.

This pariah status has continued to win him fans among black and North African youth who are also treated as second-class citizens by the French Republic because of their social origins and the color of their skin. Valls is fully aware that his witchhunt against Dieudonné is seen by *banlieue* youth—as well as by the bourgeoisie—as an attack on this country’s minorities. Valls has undoubtedly been the greatest promoter of anti-Semitism among oppressed youth in this affair.

While Dieudonné’s anti-Semitic rants before a largely young minority audience are clearly inflammatory, responsibility for any social explosion in this country will lie with the government. Just like its forerunners, this government has nothing but economic austerity, unemployment,

racist terror, repression and humiliation to offer youth in the *banlieues*. Youth unemployment in the “sensitive urban areas” now officially stands at 45 percent. (Given government directives to exclude some unemployed people from the official lists, actual numbers are higher.) For young men, police checks and harassment is their daily lot. If their mothers or sisters wear Islamic headscarves they are barred from public sector jobs. Following the “Baby Loup” decision last November (which upheld the firing of daycare worker Fatima Afif), even the private sector increasingly refuses to hire these women.

As for the crusade against the Roma, Valls positively revels in his eviction “results” for 2013. Over the course of a single year, cops expelled 19,380 Roma from their makeshift camps or squats—more than double those expelled in 2011 under [former president Nicolas] Sarkozy’s top cop Claude Guéant, or in 2012. This is the equivalent of the entire Roma population in France (some 20,000 people) being evicted from their homes at least once in 2013. In nearly all cases, they were given no alternative housing, their children’s schooling was disrupted and their personal belongings were generally destroyed. Last September, like any mainstream racist, Valls summed

by the trade-union bureaucrats’ protectionist campaigns and their capitulation without a fight to the bosses’ repeated attacks on gains won decades ago through hard class struggle. These attacks are all carried out in the name of defending French jobs against those of their class brothers abroad. A joint fight to defend jobs here and for decent wages and working conditions in the countries that the bosses target for superexploitation would undermine the capitalists’ efforts to divide and rule.

But the union bureaucrats ensure that the battles being waged here to stop plant closures remain isolated, breeding further demoralization and bitterness among workers. What’s needed is a leadership that uses transitional demands to link the daily struggles against austerity to the need to overthrow the capitalist order. In response to mass unemployment and plummeting wages, for example, such a leadership would fight for dividing the work among all with no loss in pay and for indexing wages to inflation. As the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky put it: “If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish.” A class-struggle revolutionary leadership would fight to keep the unions



23 August 2013: Roma families evicted from camp in Vaulx-en-Velin, near Lyon.

up his policies as follows: “The Roma’s place is back in Romania or in Bulgaria.”

This climate of state-sponsored racism, which scapegoats *banlieue* youth, Roma and other minorities for the austerity attacks and mass unemployment, is fueling the growth of the fascists, who are increasingly emboldened in their physical attacks and public demonstrations of force. And while Valls plays the little despot and chases Dieudonné off stage around the country in the name of holy “Republican values,” the same Republican state is officially funding the fascist FN to the tune of millions of euros for its meetings, etc.

The reformist parties—the French Communist Party (PCF), the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) and Lutte Ouvrière (LO)—and the trade-union bureaucracy also carry a share of responsibility for the growth of racist reaction and fascist violence. Many leaders of the reformist left and trade unions, such as Bernard Thibault, then-leader of the CGT union federation, called for a vote for [Socialist president François] Hollande in 2012, except LO. More hypocritically, LO declared that the question of whether or not to vote for this class enemy was a “personal decision” and refused to take a position before the working class.

This “unity of the left” for the popular front (which also included the bourgeois Left Radical Party and Green Party) against “the right” will no doubt only be reinforced as the fascist threat grows. This is an obstacle to the overthrow of capitalism and paves the way for the defeat and despair of the proletariat and the oppressed. At the time of the 2012 elections, our paper headlined: “2012 Elections: No Choice for Workers—For a Multiethnic Revolutionary Workers Party!”

The trade unions are the ultimate targets of the fascists but also have the power to stop them by uniting the proletariat in struggle. That power has been seriously undermined

independent of the capitalist state and link the need to combat capitalist depredation with the fight against fascism.

Down With State Bans and Censorship!

There has been little protest from the reformist left against Valls’ “pre-emptive censorship” and the strengthening of the state’s arsenal of repression. Quite the opposite. [Jean-Luc] Melenchon’s Left Party attacked Valls for not going far enough. They demand that the state also ban Dieudonné’s videos on the Internet: “But it is also intolerable to find the same author broadcasting videos with very violent and stubbornly anti-Semitic statements.... The Left Party therefore calls on the competent authorities to prevent this type of video being broadcast on the Internet.” The Left Party may get what they wish for as the government is preparing more bills to expand Internet censorship.

The PCF did condemn the expansion of Valls’ “legal arsenal,” but it did so by arguing that the 1990 Gayssot law prohibiting Holocaust denial, which carries a prison sentence of up to one year, was perfectly adequate for dealing with the Dieudonné problem. This law, introduced by Jean-Claude Gayssot, then PCF deputy (and later PCF minister under [Lionel] Jospin) and PCF senator Charles Lederman, has been sharply attacked from both the left and the right. For example, left-liberal academic Noam Chomsky correctly condemned this law for granting “the state the right to determine historic truth and to punish those who deviate from its decrees.” State censorship against racist provocations and ideology is always used to regulate what people can and cannot say and to create a regimented society, seeking to stamp out any protest.

We also oppose state bans on the fascists, such as those imposed by the Hollande government last July against the

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Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851

slbayarea@fastmail.net

Public Office: Sat. 1-4 p.m., 1904 Franklin (Buzzer #407)

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Montréal.....

CP 83 Succ. Place-d'Armes, Montréal QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578

trotskyiste.montreal@gmail.com

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

WORKERS VANGUARD

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Israel: African Refugees Protest Racist State Crackdown

The first week of January saw an unprecedented wave of mass demonstrations by African asylum-seekers in Israel. Tens of thousands took to the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to protest against Israel's refusal to grant them refugee status as well as against the opening of a new detention center. They also demanded the release of those detained. Solidarity protests were held at Israeli embassies in capitals around the world, including London, Paris and Washington. A young Sudanese woman told a January 5 rally in Tel Aviv: "We left our countries due to prosecution, war and genocide—and we are treated like criminals."

The protests were triggered by the December passage in the Knesset (parliament) of an amendment to the so-called Prevention of Infiltration Law that allows the authorities to jail asylum-seekers indefinitely. Enacted in 1954, the law targeted Palestinians who sought to return to their homes after the Zionist-orchestrated mass expulsions of 1947-48. This is but one example of how measures directed against African refugees were prepared by decades of repression of the Palestinian people.

Over the past decade, some 60,000 black Africans fleeing repressive regimes in Sudan, Eritrea and other sub-Saharan

countries have arrived in Israel. Zionist leaders have responded with a racist campaign demonizing African refugees as "criminals" and "rapists." Former interior minister Eli Yishai attacked African refugees for refusing to recognize that Israel

"belongs to us, to the white man." Knesset member Miri Regev branded Sudanese refugees as "a cancer" in Israeli society. Her later "apology" was directed not to the Sudanese but to cancer patients.

The Israeli rulers are doing everything



Tel Aviv: Wave of arrests and detentions sparked protest of some 10,000 African refugees on January 5. Signs with ID numbers evoke numbers tattooed on arms of Jews in Nazi concentration camps.

possible to make the lives of the African asylum-seekers so miserable that they give up all hope of normal life and leave. Denied legal work permits, the refugees eke out an existence in dead-end jobs washing dishes in restaurants and cleaning bathrooms and changing diapers. They live in constant terror, subjected to beatings and stabbings by racist mobs that go largely unreported because of the victims' fear of arrest. In May 2012, whipped into a frenzy by Zionist politicians, mobs rampaged through the heavily African neighborhoods of south Tel Aviv, attacking dark-skinned people, looting shops and throwing firebombs, including into a kindergarten courtyard. To even reach Israel, these refugees endure a horrifying trek across Egypt's Sinai Desert, where they are routinely shot at by Egyptian forces and brutalized by traffickers.

In 2009, the government set up a new immigration police force known as the Oz Unit to round up migrants and deport them. A massive prison complex in the Negev Desert has been constructed at a site where thousands of Palestinians were imprisoned during the first *Intifada*. Designed to eventually hold up to 11,000 people, the detention complex was projected by the British *Guardian*

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Workers Must Combat Racist, Anti-Semitic Poison

Down With French Government Censorship of Black Comedian!

We reprint below a January 16 leaflet issued by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France denouncing the French government's recent ban on shows by black stand-up comedian Dieudonné M'bala M'bala. Socialist Party interior minister Manuel Valls, notorious for vicious racist repression of minority youth and evictions of Roma (Gypsies), banned the shows on the grounds of their anti-Semitic content. The state has continued its vendetta despite Dieudonné writing a revised, expurgated show. The British government has followed suit by barring Dieudonné from entering the country.

Dieudonné initially gained a large following by denouncing the racism of French society. The government ban has,

if anything, increased his standing among oppressed black and Muslim youth. However, his vile anti-Semitism diverts their legitimate anger away from the real source of racist oppression—the French capitalists and their state. Heeding Dieudonné's call, some black and North African youth joined a right-wing, fascist-infested "Day of Rage" anti-government protest on January 26. The key targets of fascist terror are blacks, Muslims, Jews and other minorities and ultimately the organized working class. A key task of the workers movement is to mobilize to fight the growing fascist threat.

* * *

In a sinister attack on the right to free speech, cop minister Manuel Valls

brought back pre-emptive censorship to stop projected shows in Nantes and Tours by anti-Semitic populist black comedian Dieudonné. Not since the state of emergency introduced in 1955 during the Algerian War has such a pre-emptive order been decreed by the government. That measure allowed the cop minister and regional prefects at the time to "take all necessary measures to control the press and publications of any kind as well as radio shows, film showings and theater performances" and to "order the temporary closure of theaters, bars and any kind of meeting place."

Of course, there has been no lack of state censorship or bans over the last six decades, but they are generally implemented by prefects and mayors; hence

Valls' January 6 circular advising prefects on how to ban Dieudonné's tour. Valls turned to the Conseil d'Etat [Council of State—the administrative supreme court] only after the Nantes Court of Appeals overturned the decision to ban the show. The court had disagreed that the "risk of public disturbance" justified banning the show and disputed the fact that the show's "fundamental aim was to violate human dignity."

Citing its "Republican traditions," the Council of State argued that Dieudonné had in the past made statements that "threatened national cohesion." This is a dangerous legal precedent that can now be used against all those perceived by the capitalist state as threatening its "national

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