

South China Sea

Defend China Against U.S. Military Provocations!

U.S. imperialist military provocations against the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state have grown increasingly bellicose since January, when the U.S. began regular spy flights over Chinese land reclamation and construction projects in the South China Sea's Spratly Islands. In mid May, the USS *Fort Worth*, one of the Navy's most modern combat ships, capable of hunting submarines and supporting amphibious landings, spent a week patrolling around the Chinese construction sites. The next week, a P-8 Poseidon advanced surveillance and anti-submarine aircraft carried a CNN reporting crew on a military flight over Fiery Cross Reef, where China has built an airstrip. The plane was sent to assert U.S. "freedom of navigation" through Chinese-controlled territory as the Chinese Navy issued *eight warnings* to "please go away."

Since the beginning of the year, Chinese dredging and construction have created 2,000 acres of new land, and are transforming seven shoals and reefs into islands with landing strips, an airport tower, a deepwater harbor and lighthouses. Developing reefs and islands in the South China Sea is an important defensive measure for China—the most powerful of the remaining countries where capitalism has been overthrown—against the U.S. and Japanese imperialists, who have been pursuing the military encirclement of China. As the Chinese Foreign Ministry has pointed out, these developments, located near a major shipping channel that is key for the Chinese economy, will improve navigational safety in the area and aid maritime search and rescue operations.

We defend China's development in the Spratlys against the U.S. and Japanese imperialists and their local regional capitalist lackeys, such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, all of whom have their own claims in the Spratlys. We also oppose the treacherous role being played by the Vietnamese Stalinist bureaucracy, which has aligned itself with U.S. imperialism against China.

Behind the imperialists' machinations is their drive to smash the Chinese deformed workers state and reimpose the unchecked capitalist exploitation and imperialist bondage that wracked the country before the 1949 Revolution. In 1949, a peasant-guerrilla army under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) overturned the rule of the capitalists and landlords and freed the country from foreign domination. The Revolution created a workers state with an economy centrally based on collectivized property forms. However, the workers state was deformed from its inception by the rule of a parasitic, nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy.



U.S. Navy
USS *Carl Vinson* in South China Sea, along with American guided-missile cruiser and destroyer and Malaysian Royal Navy frigate, during joint exercises, May 8.

The establishment of the Chinese workers state was a historic gain for the working class internationally. We stand for the unconditional military defense of China and all the other deformed workers states—Vietnam, North Korea, Laos and Cuba. At the same time, we give no political support to the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies, which undermine the workers states by politically suppressing

the proletariat and seeking to accommodate the imperialists.

Ominously, U.S. secretary of defense Ashton Carter insists that the U.S. will continue military operations in the Spratlys. In a consummate show of imperialist arrogance, on May 13 Carter declared: "We will remain the principal security power in the Asia-Pacific for decades to come." Thus he opened his tour of Asia

aimed at negotiating military pacts, arms sales and increased U.S. troop presence in the region. Responding to Carter's spurious assertions about China's threat to free navigation, *CounterPunch* contributor Mike Whitney observed: "China has never blocked shipping lanes or seized boats sailing in international waters. Never. The same cannot be said of the United States that just recently blocked an Iranian ship loaded with humanitarian relief—food, water and critical medical supplies—headed to starving refugees in Yemen" (29 May).

Contrary to the American propaganda barrage, the Chinese military has shown remarkable restraint while standing its ground. Imagine Washington's response if Chinese planes were carrying out surveillance over California's Santa Catalina Island! While increasing military pressure on China, U.S. imperialism is also bringing economic pressure to bear and promoting counterrevolutionary political forces like Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement.

The Japanese imperialists have aggressively joined the U.S.'s military provocations. The U.S. and Japanese ruling classes have their own distinct and competing interests, but they are united in their determination to bring capitalist counterrevolution to China. In April, the U.S. and Japan announced an agreement that will increase the involvement of the Japanese military in regional disputes. The U.S. has encouraged Japan to extend its naval patrols to the South China Sea, and in July, Japan will take part in the U.S. and Australian war games there.

What's at Stake in the South China Sea?

The Spratly Islands lie along the shipping route that connects East Asia to the Indian subcontinent and, beyond that, to the Near East. Half of the world's merchant tonnage passes along this route, including 80 percent of China's crude oil imports. Moreover, the South China Sea has proven reserves of at least seven billion barrels of petroleum and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, as well as rich fisheries that account for some 10 percent of the world's catch. Although the Spratly archipelago consists of tiny specks of land, many of which are under water at high tide, and has no indigenous inhabitants, the islands are claimed by four capitalist countries as well as the Vietnamese and Chinese deformed workers states. Almost every one of these countries has carried out construction in the Spratlys.

Addressing disputes over the Spratlys and other islands in the South China Sea in the past, we wrongly stated: "We take no side in these territorial disputes and condemn in particular the criminal squabbling over fishing and exploration rights that have pitted the Stalinist regimes in Beijing and Hanoi against each other" ("U.S. Imperialism Tightens Military

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Department of Defense
Hanoi, June 1: Vietnamese minister of defense with U.S. defense secretary Ashton Carter. Vietnamese Stalinist rulers criminally support imperialist moves against Chinese deformed workers state.



1965 U.S. Invasion of Dominican Republic

This past April 28 marked 50 years since Democratic U.S. president Lyndon B. Johnson launched a bloody invasion of the Dominican Republic. Tens of thousands of troops were dispatched to that Caribbean country to suppress a prerevolutionary situation and secure the interests of American sugar companies.

The Dominican Republic had been brutally repressed by U.S.-backed dictator General Rafael Trujillo for over 30 years until his own CIA-trained aides bumped him off in 1961, after he had become a liability to the imperialists. Juan Bosch, a liberal anti-Communist, was elected president in December 1962 and passed some mild land and labor reforms to quell popular unrest. But the reforms went too far for Washington, and Bosch was overthrown in a CIA-engineered military coup nine months later.

In the spring of 1965, a group of liberal army officers, including Colonel Francisco Caamaño, launched an insurrection to restore Bosch's 1963 constitution. Workers and students in the capital, Santo Domingo, joined the rebellion and organized committees that were potential organs of workers power. However, the Dominican masses were betrayed by their reformist leadership that tied them to Bosch instead of fighting for socialist revolution.

The uprising took place only a few years after the Cuban Revolution of 1959-60, in which Fidel Castro's peasant guerrilla forces ousted the regime of Fulgencio Batista and subsequently consolidated a deformed workers state with the expropriation of the capitalist class on the island. Moreover, in 1965, a civil war and social revolution were underway in Vietnam. The imperialists feared that the Dominican insurgency similarly threatened an overturn of capitalism.

The crushing of the rebellion by the U.S. invasion and 14-month occupation resulted in the deaths of 2,500 Dominicans; for years afterward, workers and leftists continued to be tortured and disappeared. In 1966, Joaquín Balaguer ascended to the presidency and ruled for most of the next 30 years, keeping the country safe for U.S. imperialist domination.

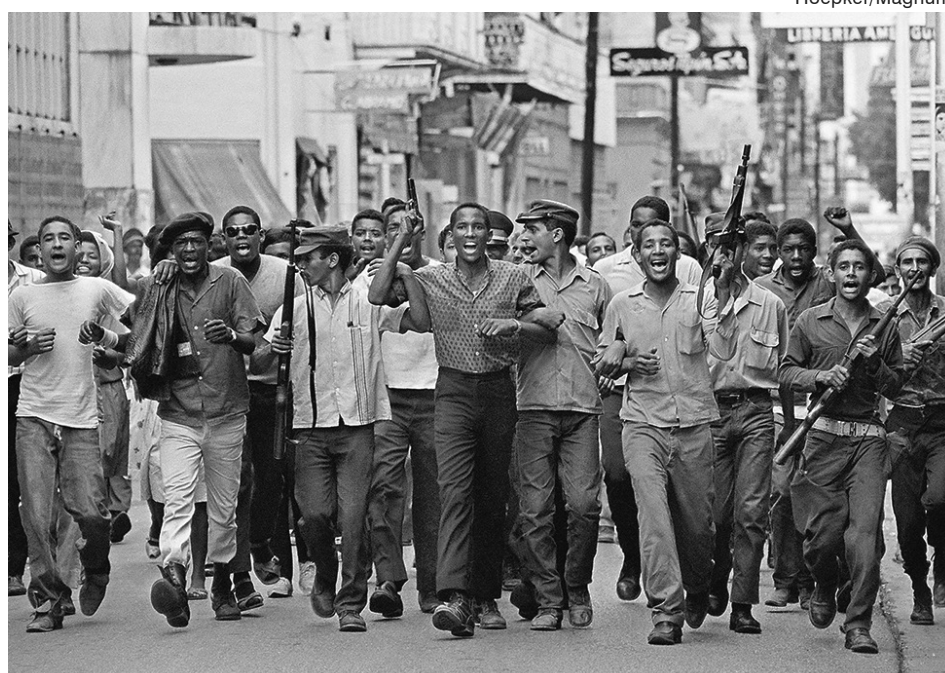
We reprint below a *Spartacist* special supplement issued on 6 May 1965, with one correction on the year of Trujillo's assassination. A follow-up article, "Reformist Betrayal," was printed in *Spartacist* No. 7 (September-October 1966).

* * *

The United States' bloody occupation of the Dominican Republic, by order of the Johnson Administration, has been unquestionably the most brazen of recent American military efforts to safeguard the interests of capitalism and maintain its oppression domestically and abroad. "For the first time since 1927, U.S. Marines have landed in a fermenting Caribbean country—and frankly, we're delighted,"



American marines in Santo Domingo (above) during invasion to crush rebellion of Dominican masses (below) against U.S.-installed military dictatorship, 1965.



said the ultra-rightist N.Y. *Daily News* (30 April 1965) in an editorial entitled "Seems Like Old Times."

Rebellion Led to Revolution

As in all colonial countries, the pro-U.S. Dominican ruling class is maintained by imperialism and in return administers the society for imperialism. The "liberal" wing, led by deposed President Juan Bosch, supports "reforms" and "demo-

cratic" trappings to stave off basic change and maintain social oppression. The liberals attempted a coup against the junta of the right wing, which realizes that only naked dictatorship can save imperialism and Dominican capitalism. It is significant that under *both* regimes the economic condition of the country deteriorated.

This crisis provided an opportunity for the Dominican workers and peasants to intervene, much as they had done in 1961 when Trujillo was assassinated. The fatal mistake of Bosch and Colonel Caamaño in banking upon mass support to help return the liberals to power was described by a pro-U.S. observer: "The leaders of the elements favoring the return of former President Juan Bosch were on the verge of taking over the government 24 hours after the revolution began.... *But then they let the revolution get out of their hands.*"

I saw pro-Bosch forces handing out weapons to anyone who asked for them." (N.Y. *Journal-American*, 2 May 1965.) On 30 April, "U.S. officials in Santo Domingo and other observers believe no one is now in control...of the armed rebel bands, which include many young civilians." At this point, "American officials hinted strongly that it would be necessary for American troops to occupy Santo Domingo." (N.Y. *Post*.)

In spite of U.S. ranting about a "minority take-over," it is clear that what developed was an uprising of a large section of the masses against the imperialist power structure—even against the efforts of certain "Communist" and liberal leaders to tie them to Bosch. According to the press, a rebel stronghold has been the Ciudad Nueva section of the city, "an area of low income housing and student quarters. Planes strafed the area Wednesday and yesterday." (*Herald Tribune*, 30 April.) On 2 May, "the rebels were winning." Their forces, swollen to thousands "by armed civilians...*could not be controlled by their military leaders.*" (Same paper) Johnson at once sent in Marines to "save American lives"; but this "humanitarian" pretext, loudly touted by liberal apologists, was rapidly dropped. Instead, as Johnson has admitted, the aim of U.S. intervention was to crush the developing revolution.

Realpolitik Behind Intervention

William Randolph Hearst, Jr., in a *Journal-American* editorial (2 May), favorably quoted Johnson's State of the Union message of 4 January: "We are prepared to live as good neighbors with all, but we cannot be indifferent to acts designed to injure our interests, or our citizens, or our establishments abroad." Barry Goldwater "stressed the effectiveness of 'big stick' diplomacy" and said, "Yes, I approve the landing of the Marines in Santo Domingo for the protection of American lives and property." (*Journal-American*, 30 April.)

Equally guided by Realpolitik are the liberal apologists who regret Johnson's "imprudence" in "going it alone" in unabashed imperialist fashion instead of relying on the Organization of American States (mainly a band of U.S.-backed dictatorships) to do the job under a "democratic" facade. The token contingent which Johnson finally extorted from the OAS to his "international peace force" has been obviously designed to whitewash his butchery behind a drapery of phony "legality" and "consensus." It is now obvious that Johnson has not sent 20,000 troops to suppress a Communist "minority," but to fight thousands of workers and rank-and-file Dominican militants who partly bypassed their "Communist" and liberal leaders and rallied the support of the Dominican masses to a popular revolution against imperialism. Johnson's "concern" about the "foreign training" of agitators was designed to divert attention away from the *direct rape of the Dominican Republic by a foreign occupation army*. The sensationalism about the "atrocities" of rebels killing cops and Marines was designed to mask the *strafing and bombing of the working-class areas of the city* to smash the revolution. Indeed, imperialism must clearly be *desperate* to commit such a brazen and naked act.

Crisis of Leadership

Castro and other "Communist" leaders have shown their bankruptcy in supporting the capitalist "legality" of Bosch and calling upon the imperialist-dominated United Nations to "intervene." The absence of a truly revolutionary Dominican party to guide the working class and lead the revolution has resulted in confusion among the rebelling masses. The old-line leaders have done their best to abort the revolution and negotiate a "truce" with imperialism. The swearing-in of Boschite military

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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

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

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

The closing date for news in this issue is June 9.

No. 1070

12 June 2015

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August. Our next issue will be dated July 10.

U.S. Out of the Near East!



Reuters photos

Left: President Obama with Saudi Arabia's newly-crowned King Salman in Riyadh, January 27. Right: Devastated city of Saada in northwest Yemen after Saudi-led air strikes, May 22.

Down With Saudi-led War in Yemen!

With all the subtlety of a *Mad Max* film, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced its declaration of war against the Houthi-led forces now in power in Yemen not from its royal palace but rather from its embassy in Washington. Having already turned Yemen into a firing range for drone attacks, the Obama administration is now reluctantly helping its oil-rich Saudi ally further devastate that small, impoverished country. Over 2000 people have been killed since the war was launched in late March and upwards of one million have been displaced from their homes.

As noted by Conn Hallinan in an article in *CounterPunch* (13 May): “The U.S. has played an important, if somewhat uncomfortable, role in the Yemen War.” The U.S. has been supplying the Saudi air force with bombs, in-flight refueling and targeting information. With U.S. and British backing, the Saudis imposed a naval blockade of Yemen, worsening a humanitarian disaster in a country where the populace relies heavily on imported food and where medicine and other necessities are always scarce. In April, U.S. Navy ships, including the aircraft carrier USS *Roosevelt*, were sent to the region to prevent Iranian ships from delivering supplies to Yemen. U.S. president Barack Obama brazenly and hypocritically claimed this naval presence was meant to defend “freedom of navigation”—mass starvation presumably being only a collateral issue.

While supporting its Saudi clients, Washington has been less than enthusiastic about their Yemen adventure. Early on, the lack of a prospect of a quick Saudi victory led the White House to urge negotiations toward a political solution. On June 2, the administration announced that it had engaged in talks with the Houthis aimed at ending the war. The Obama administration is concerned that the anti-Houthi operation is playing into the hands of Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as threatening yet further destabilization in the region. Voicing the concerns of the White House, the *New York Times* (22 April) intoned, “the challenge has been advising a crucial Middle East ally on how to carry out a complex military campaign whose results were starting to undercut larger political goals.” The *Times* article quoted a “Middle East specialist”

who complained, “Once your clients have a quasi-independent military capacity, you lose some control over them.”

Especially since the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, the American empire has been spreading its tentacles ever more widely and deeply throughout the Near East, wreaking mass murder and destruction, strengthening the most retrograde and anti-woman tribal and religious

we now likewise take a stand militarily with the Houthi forces and their allies, without giving them any political support, when they are targeted by the U.S.-backed Saudi-led military coalition and its proxies on the ground.

Apologists for the Saudi intervention claim that it was launched in response to a proxy war waged by Shi'ite Iran, which is supposedly funding and arming the

Bush clan, Jeb, to descend into fits of incomprehensible burbling about bringing democracy and stability to the region. And the current tenant in the White House, who it should be recalled was elected in good part on his pledge to end U.S. involvement in Iraq, is supporting what is arguably the most reactionary regime in the world, Saudi Arabia. That country is a theocracy rooted in the extreme, Wahhabi variant of Sunni fundamentalism, the social strictures of which are quite similar to those of ISIS.

Although U.S. reliance on Saudi oil has declined considerably in recent years, Washington wants to retain control over the flow of Gulf oil to the rest of the world. Moreover, Saudi Arabia, along with Zionist Israel, has long been a key ally of the U.S. in the Near East. Its importance particularly increased after the ouster of the U.S.-backed Shah of Iran by the 1979 “Islamic revolution.” The Saudi monarchy, one of the biggest importers of advanced U.S. and British weapons systems, plays a critical role in financially sustaining other U.S. client states in the area, such as Egypt and Jordan, as well as propping up other oil-rich Gulf kingdoms and emirates.

After the U.S. overthrow of the Sunni-dominated Ba'athist regime in Baghdad in 2003 and the establishment of a Shi'ite-led regime there, the Sunni theocracy in Saudi Arabia appointed itself guardian of the Sunni Arab peoples of the Near East against the Persian-dominated Shi'ite theocracy in Iran. The Saudi monarchy is also fearful of the sizable oppressed Shi'ite minority in its own kingdom and elsewhere in the peninsula. In 2011, the Saudis viciously suppressed Shi'ite protests against the Saudi's fellow royals in Bahrain. Like that other regional gendarme of pro-imperialist reaction, the Zionist rulers of Israel, the Saudi rulers have openly thumbed their noses at Obama over his nuclear deal with Tehran, much to the applause of the Christian fundamentalists in the Republican Party.

Obama has sought to smooth ruffled feathers, hosting a meeting of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council at Camp David in May, where he promised

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WV Map

forces and fueling sectarian conflicts and pogroms. Every time one of its tentacles is weakened or cut off, every time a blow is struck against the American imperialist monster and its local agents and allies, working people and oppressed around the world benefit, not least in the U.S. itself.

That is why we have called for military defense of the Islamic State (ISIS) reactionaries in Iraq and Syria against U.S. imperialism and its foot soldiers on the ground—including Kurdish and Iraqi Shi'ite militias—notwithstanding that the bloodthirsty methods and retrograde outlook of ISIS are counterposed to everything Marxism stands for. And that is why

Houthis, who adhere to Zaidi Islam, a variant of Shi'ism that in fact has much in common with Sunni Islam. Newly installed Saudi king Salman hopes to awe Tehran by deploying his extensive—and expensive—arsenal of military hardware (usually reserved for air shows) against Houthi fighters and civilians, but there is little evidence linking Iran to the fighting in Yemen. Then again, there was little evidence linking the Saddam Hussein regime to non-existent “weapons of mass destruction,” a fact which drives the younger and marginally more articulate brother in the

leader Caamaño as “President” has been due in good part to the efforts of these leaders to channel the masses back into a “popular front” with the ruling class. The agreement of these elements to a “cease fire” even in the face of an imperialist build-up has helped disarm the revolution and facilitated further bloodbaths. The success of the revolution can be guaranteed only by the Dominican workers’ conquest of state power, under the leadership of a *revolutionary party*, and the establishment of a Dominican workers’ republic.

All such advances reciprocally strengthen the socialist revolution in the United States and the world.

WE CALL UPON AMERICAN WORKERS, STUDENTS, AND ALL THOSE FIGHTING OPPRESSION IN THE UNITED STATES TO SUPPORT THIS STRUGGLE OF THEIR BROTHERS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION, AND TO RECOGNIZE THE BI-PARTISAN GOVERNMENT OF U.S. IMPERIALISM AS THEIR COMMON ENEMY! ■

Women and Revolution



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Yemen...

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to send more military equipment to the emirs and to assist the development of an integrated missile defense system in the region. King Salman showed his continuing displeasure with Obama by boycotting the gathering. But, for the moment, Washington continues to stand foursquare behind its Saudi ally, adding further evidence of why Iran needs nuclear weapons to defend its own sovereignty.

Big Oil and Tribal Turmoil

The Houthi movement, centered on a family of the same name that traces its lineage back to the prophet Muhammed, is a Zaidi revivalist movement that arose in the face of Wahhabi encroachment into the Zaidi heartland of northern Yemen. In the early 2000s, the anti-American sermons of Houthi leader Hussein al-Houthi embarrassed the longtime Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh as he was trying to prove himself a valuable asset of Washington in the “war on terror.” In 2004, Saleh unleashed his army in an effort to suppress the Houthis, during which Hussein was killed. Over the next decade, the Houthis waged a low-level insurgency against the central government. Saleh launched five further military campaigns aimed at destroying the Houthis, among them the 2009 “Operation Scorched Earth,” carried out with Saudi involvement.

In 2011, inspired by the “Arab Spring,” Yemen was swept by protests demanding Saleh’s ouster. Washington stood by its dictator until sections of the military threatened to go over to the opposition, at which point the U.S. had Saleh make way “constitutionally” for his vice-president, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Hadi continued his predecessor’s policy of hosting a U.S. command center and endorsing the deadly drone attacks that have killed scores of Yemeni civilians (as well as U.S. citizens targeted for assassination like Anwar al-Awlaki) in the name of combating the local Al Qaeda franchise.

Last year, the Houthis launched a new offensive and, joined by their former tormenter Saleh and his supporters, who made up the bulk of the Yemeni army, they quickly overran the Yemeni capital, Sana’a. Hadi fled and ended up in the Saudi capital Riyadh, as had Saleh following his ouster four years earlier. Notably, Washington continued doing business with the new regime in Sana’a. Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Michael Vickers declared, “The Houthis are anti-al-Qaeda, and we’ve been able to continue some of our counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda” (*Al-Monitor*, 22 January). Indeed, as the Houthis continued their surge into the predominantly Sunni southern and eastern parts of the country, Al Qaeda and Sunni tribes now allied with it have been among the main forces opposing them.

The multiple religious, nationalist and tribal forces in the region join together and fall out with each other in a continual state of flux, while the imperialists favor one or another which they then dump when it has served the purpose of the moment. Marxists had no military side in the squalid civil war in Yemen until the U.S.-backed Saudi air war began. Revolutionary socialists must oppose every imperialist military intervention while pointing the way to a revolutionary-proletarian perspective.

Until the first Iraq war in 1990-91, an important source of Yemen’s income was remittances from the more than one million Yemeni workers slaving away in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf kingdoms and emirates. But they were all thrown out when Saleh’s Yemen became the only Arab state that refused to condemn Saddam Hussein’s takeover of Kuwait. (Saleh was mentored by the Iraqi strongman and was known as “Little Saddam.”) Even before the current starvation blockade, nearly half of Yemen’s children were malnourished; the country ranks 178th in the world in per capita GDP. Until recently, the various tribal leaders and other personages relied on and competed for patronage paid in Saudi petrodollars by the Yemeni govern-

ment, or directly by the Saudis, as a means of keeping them pacified. This competition for patronage has been behind the recurrent domestic tensions and insurgencies.

While impoverished Yemen lacks much in the way of natural resources, what makes it important for the Gulf monarchies and the imperialists is that it occupies a strategic piece of real estate on the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula and shares a border hundreds of miles long with its Saudi neighbor. The House of Saud is paranoid about any hint of instability that might undermine its stranglehold on Saudi society and its grip on one of the

in Egypt in the 1950s and ’60s, Riyadh financed a massive effort to propagate the Wahhabi doctrine, seeding future jihadist groups, and to buy the loyalty of tribal militias in the region. This led, among other things, to a civil war in Yemen.

For centuries, Yemen had been ruled by a line of Zaidi imams who continued to rule in the North after Britain had colonized Aden. One week after the imam Ahmad bin Yahya died in September 1962, nationalist army officers, who looked to Nasser’s Egypt, seized power from his son and successor Muhammad al-Badr and declared the Yemen Arab Republic.



October 2014: Houthi fighter in Yemen in front of graffiti denouncing murderous U.S. drone strikes.

largest fortunes in the world. The border is secured to keep out hundreds of thousands of desperate immigrants from Yemen and the Horn of Africa as well as “hostile” terrorists, i.e., those who are not currently sponsored by the Wahhabi establishment. Moreover, Yemen is only 18 miles from the Horn of Africa across the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, located at the southeastern end of the Red Sea. If blocked, this choke point would cut off all shipping between the Suez Canal and points east.

Saudi Arabia: Bulwark of Reaction

In 1839, well before the discovery of oil, Britain seized the area of southern Yemen around the port city of Aden in order to secure its passage to India, then the British Empire’s most profitable colony. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Britain played the sort of cynical game that earned it the epithet, “perfidious Albion.” On the one hand, it promised the Arabs independence if they fought against the Turkish-dominated Ottoman Empire, which then controlled much of the Near East and was allied with Germany and Austro-Hungary against Britain and France (and Russia) in the war. On the other, with the infamous Sykes-Picot Treaty of 1916, Britain schemed with France to seize and share the whole region, drawing arbitrary borders to divide up or lump together distinct ethnic or religious populations that had more or less coexisted under Ottoman rule. Britain also promised that the tiny population of Zionist colonizers in Palestine could create a “Jewish homeland” there—at the expense of the existing Arab population.

Nations and peoples were carved up to exacerbate conflict between Christian and Muslim, Kurd and Arab, Shi’ite and Sunni, Arab and Jew. At the war’s end, the British imperialists installed pliant regimes from among the various competing Arab clans. Two brothers of the Hashemite clan became kings of the newly created states of Jordan and Iraq, while the rival Saud family went on to reign in Arabia.

The discovery of large deposits of oil in the late 1930s by what became the Arabian American Oil Company ensured not only that the Saud dynasty would be fabulously wealthy for as long as it retained power but that it would have all the military protection that ascendant U.S. imperialism could provide. Saudi Arabia became a bulwark of reaction in the Near East.

Seeking to counter the rise of “progressive” nationalist forces such as Nasser

An insurgency, supported by Riyadh, was launched to restore the imam. London, fearing that the overthrow of the imamate would bolster opposition to its colonial rule in South Yemen, launched a campaign of covert action, with the support of Washington, to support the royalists. The British imperialists also relished the opportunity to punish Nasser, not least for his seizure of the Suez Canal six years earlier. Egypt responded by sending 20,000 troops to Yemen to bolster the republican regime. The ensuing war involved republican Yemeni officers and Egyptian troops backed by the USSR and China fighting against Saudi-armed tribal militias backed by Britain. As the war ground down the Egyptian forces, the “Arab socialist” Nasser began competing with the Saudis in buying the support of reactionary tribal leaders. The war resulted in the deaths of 200,000 Yemenis and a shattered economy. Although the imamate was not restored, the republican regime that emerged was a conservative one beholden to the tribal leaders and forced to turn to Saudi Arabia after the demoralized Egyptians pulled out.

The declaration of the republic in the North did indeed serve as an inspiration to the masses in South Yemen, including a tiny but politically militant labor movement centered on port and refinery workers. The southern populace rose up against their colonial overlords, who responded with brutal counterinsurgency operations. In the finest Etonian English, a senior British colonial officer intoned: “Pacification of a country unaccustomed to orderly government could not be effected without collective punishment” (quoted in Tariq Ali, “Unhappy Yemen,” *London Review of Books*, 25 March 2010).

After four years of guerilla war, the British were evicted from South Yemen in 1967 and the more left-wing elements of the republican forces set up the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) three years later. With aid from the Soviet Union, the new regime provided for universal education and healthcare as well as significant advances for women. Notwithstanding the hosannas of various fake-Marxists at the time for the PDRY, however, there was no social revolution. This economically and socially backward country could hardly sustain elementary democratic reforms. During the 1980s, the regime started unraveling and, with the Soviet Union itself in crisis, in 1990 South Yemen reunited with Saleh’s Republic of Yemen.

After the unification, the southern population chafed under Saleh’s iron-fisted rule, leading to an all-out rebellion in 1994 that Saleh brutally suppressed. “Arab Afghans,” returning from the U.S.-sponsored “holy war” against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, assassinated many left-wing cadre of the former PDRY regime while ruthlessly attacking women’s rights. Separatist sentiments in the South persist to this day. Around Aden, a significant force opposing the Houthis is the Southern Movement, an alliance of groups favoring autonomy or independence for the South, which is in a de facto bloc with the imperialist-backed Saudi forces. The question of South Yemen’s political status is, for now, subordinated to the defense of the Houthis against the U.S.-backed war.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

What drives the myriad internecine conflicts in the Near East is competition over scarce resources. So long as there is not enough to feed and clothe the masses of the dispossessed—nor any perception that this can be achieved—they will remain mired in the false solace of religion and tribal, ethnic and national solidarities.

The industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, beginning in Britain, led to a qualitative expansion of production, posing the possibility, for the first time in history, that the needs of all could be satisfied. But capitalist property relations (the private ownership of the means of production) and the nation-state became fetters on the further development of the productive forces unleashed by industrial capitalism itself.

The advances in technological and social progress were monopolized by a handful of capitalist ruling classes in Europe, North America and Japan, who enriched themselves at the expense of the workers they exploited. With the rise of imperialism in the decades before WWI, the independent industrial development and modernization of the rest of the world under capitalism were foreclosed. The bourgeoisies of the colonial and semicolonial countries arose as appendages and servants of imperialism and ultimately relied on the imperialists to prevent any challenge by the nascent proletariat to continued capitalist rule.

The development of a proletariat in colonial and semicolonial countries was a consequence of the export of capital that characterizes imperialism. This development was given impetus during WWI, when the disruption of international trade and the diversion of manufacturing in the imperialist centers to production of munitions resulted in the development of local capitalist industry—and a proletariat—in countries like India, China and Egypt.

Today, humanity is being strangled by decaying capitalism, a system based on production for profit, and this is nowhere more evident than in the disease-ridden slums dotted across the semicolonial world, where more than a century of imperialist depredation has served to retard, and indeed reverse, social progress. The only way to overcome the backwardness of the semicolonial world and cast off the yoke of imperialism is the program of permanent revolution. The working class, leading the peasantry and all the oppressed masses, must seize power through socialist revolution—sweeping away all the capitalist regimes of the region: the sheiks, emirs, military strongmen and Zionist rulers.

The proletariat in power would reorganize society on the basis of collectivized property and fight to extend the revolution internationally, especially to the imperialist centers. In breaking the chains of exploitation that enslave it, the proletariat will simultaneously open the door to the liberation of all—peasants, women, youth, national and ethnic minorities—who are oppressed under capitalism. Only in a socialist federation of the Near East will there be a full and equal place for all the myriad peoples of the region—Sunnis, Shi’ites and Christians as well as the Kurdish, Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish nations.

For this to come about, the working class

Hastert Hoist on Own Petard Prosecuted for Withdrawing His Money

Alas poor Dennis. It wasn't supposed to end this way. On May 28, former Republican House speaker Dennis Hastert was indicted on felony charges of violating federal banking laws and lying to the FBI. Throughout 20 years in Congress ending in 2007, Hastert was a pillar of racist reaction, anti-woman and anti-gay bigotry, proponent of imperialist marauding and domestic repression. He was a farm boy made good, a voice of small-town American values—God, family, country and enormous corporate profits—values secured by FBI spying, cop terror and mass incarceration primarily of black people under the “war on drugs.” Now, the sorry bastard Hastert is on the receiving end of a sinister prosecution for violating laws he promoted and a vicious smear campaign portraying him as a pedophile sex predator to make sure the charges stick—and destroy what's left of his life.

According to the indictment, Hastert made a series of \$50,000 withdrawals from his savings that the banks were required by law to report to the government. After bank inquiries in July 2012, Hastert made withdrawals below the \$10,000 reporting threshold, triggering an FBI/IRS investigation for possible “structuring” of currency transactions to evade the reporting

requirement. In December 2014, Hastert told FBI agents that he withdrew his money because he didn't trust the U.S. banking system. (Who would?!) Hastert is charged with lying to the Feds who allege that the money was being withdrawn to pay \$3.5 million to conceal “past misconduct by defendant against Individual A.”

Tempting as it is to revel in Hastert's predicament, we recognize that the use of these legal weapons to railroad such a high-placed, right-wing establishment figure is a bad omen for less well-connected individuals and organizations of the workers movement, as well as black people and Latino immigrants lucky enough to have so much money. We demand that the charges be dropped. At stake is the right to privacy, and with it freedom of association. The banking law under which Hastert is charged, ostensibly targeting organized crime and those labeled terrorists, was adopted in 1970 and reinforced by the 2001 Patriot Act he pushed through Congress. Such laws are used against unions, defenders of the oppressed, opponents of imperialist depredations and anyone the Feds deem a thorn in their side. Deception is the *modus operandi* of the FBI: sting operations, entrapment schemes and confidential informants. But when Hastert purportedly

prevaricated on his use of the funds, the state declared it a criminal offense.

While bank reporting regulations are intrusive, the criminalization of withdrawing money is Kafkaesque. As the *New York Times* reported last year, the IRS has seized assets of restaurants and other small businesses that regularly make cash deposits of less than \$10,000. Be aware—abiding by the law in this exemplar of bourgeois democracy is no defense. For those it wishes to ensnare, the government can spin any innocuous activity into a crime. From the McCarthyite Red Scare hearings of the 1950s to the baseball steroid hearings of the last decade, those who committed no crime were criminalized for concealing their activities from Congressional witchhunters.

The Feds had no business snooping into Hastert's bank withdrawals. There are thousands of reasons people would not want cops and government officials prying into their finances—from helping young women get abortions to funding political protests. In parts of the country in the 1950s-'60s, disclosure of bank withdrawals to donate money to civil rights organizations would have carried the risk of lynching. Today, people are convicted of “material support to terrorism” simply for donating to certain charities.

Hastert's indictment didn't identify what the “past misconduct” was. However, a day later the Feds leaked allegations of “inappropriate” touching of a male student when Hastert was an Illinois high school wrestling coach decades earlier. Thus a banal charge that would have barely survived a couple of days in the news cycles became the Hastert sex scandal—although he is not actually charged with any sexual misconduct.

We have no idea what occurred between Hastert and “Individual A.” But we do know that many lives have been ruined through prosecutions or mere allegations of consensual intergenerational sex—especially between males. We oppose the persecution of anyone who engages in consensual sex, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation. The guiding principle for sexual relations should be that of effective consent.

Hastert played no small part in promoting the official prudery, anti-gay bigotry and hypocrisy that's biting his ass today. He supported a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage, anti-abortion “fetal rights” laws and prayer in public schools. But that doesn't disqualify him from defense against charges that are a deadly danger to us all. ***Hands off our bank accounts!*** ■

requires the consciousness and discipline that can only be provided by a Marxist party modeled on the Bolshevik party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky that led the multinational proletariat of Russia to victory in October 1917. The Bolshevik-led seizure of power in backward Russia, the revolutionary government's publication of Sykes-Picot and all the other secret treaties in the tsarist archives, its courageous modernizing efforts in Muslim Central Asia—all these inspired advanced workers and rebellious youth around the globe.

Even following the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union and Stalin's destruction of the Third (Communist) International of Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolshevik Revolution (albeit refracted through the distorting lens of Stalinism) remained a beacon for all those seeking an egalitarian society free of exploitation and oppression. In the 1950s, pro-Moscow Communist parties rooted in the proletariat and comprised of the most oppressed layers of society could have taken power in Iran and Iraq on the basis of social revolutions, but these opportunities were sacrificed on the altar of “peaceful coexistence” and “national unity” with the capitalist rulers. (For more on this, see “Near East, 1950s: Permanent Revolution vs. Bourgeois Nationalism,” *WV* Nos. 740-41, 25 August and 8 September 2000.)

Particularly since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the necessity and possibility of a communist future has been erased from the consciousness of much of the working class. This vision must be reimplanted in the course of renewed struggle around a *class* axis and through the intervention of a conscious revolutionary vanguard. While there is little in the way of an indigenous working class on the Arabian Peninsula (although there are millions of migrant workers), sizable proletarian concentrations exist elsewhere in the Near East with the potential power to topple the capitalist regimes that subjugate hundreds of millions of people—all under the heel of imperialism. From Egyptian textile workers to workers in Israeli chemical plants, Turkish auto factories and Iranian oil fields, the objective basis exists to forge the nuclei of revolutionary proletarian parties as part of a reborn Trotskyist Fourth International. This is the task the Interna-



May 21: Striking auto workers protesting at Tofas plant in Bursa, center of auto manufacture in Turkey.

tional Communist League sets for itself, in the Near East and around the world.

Down With U.S. Imperialism!

Whom the gods would destroy they first drive mad. There is certainly plenty of evidence of imperialist madness in Washington's role in the Near East. It is now a commonplace that Al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, the most prominent Saudi ever, was a Frankenstein's monster created by the CIA (with the help of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) in order to kill Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan in the 1980s. As revealed by Seymour Hersh in his exposé in the *London Review of Books* (21 May), Pakistan and Saudi Arabia continued to take care of bin Laden until his murder by a U.S. hit squad four years ago.

In Iraq, the toppling of Saddam Hussein led to a pro-Iran regime and unleashed Sunni and Shi'ite fundamentalist militias that have fought alternately alongside and against the U.S., but have mainly carried out pogroms against each other's peoples. In Syria, the U.S. targeted the Alawite regime of Bashar al-Assad, another ally of Tehran, backing and arming the Sunni fundamentalist rebels who, along with Sunni forces in Iraq, spawned ISIS. Now Washington is backing pro-Iranian Shi'ite militias in Iraq while finding itself in a tacit bloc with Al Qaeda of the Arabian

Peninsula against the Houthis!

On top of the irrationality inherent in a system based on the anarchy of the marketplace, imperialist triumphalism over the final overturn of the Bolshevik Revolution made the U.S. rulers drunk with fantasies of their own “democratic” variant of a Thousand Year Reich. Under Democrats and Republicans alike, Washington has been acting as though it can wade in wherever it likes without fear of challenge or concern for the consequences. While sinking ever deeper into the quagmire in the Near East, the U.S. continues to join with Ukrainian fascists and Polish revanchists in baiting the Russian bear and to stage flagrant provocations against the Chinese deformed workers state, such as flying through Chinese air space in the South China Sea (see article on page 1). Add to this the fact that U.S. imperialism's enormous military supremacy is no longer matched by global economic hegemony and you get a dangerous and heady mix indeed.

U.S. imperialism is clearly overextended. The war-weary populace may tolerate the situation so long as it seems wars can be fought from behind video consoles or with proxies and mercenaries, but the situation cannot last. For now, the bourgeoisie faces little social struggle on the home front, thanks in large part to the

pro-imperialist labor bureaucracy—who have sold out and derailed one struggle after another until the very existence of the trade unions is in question—and the absence of even a semblance of militant leadership in the black ghettos. But manifold discontents have been building up at the base of this society over the decades—anger over rampant cop terror against black and Latino youth, frustration over the ongoing decline of living standards among the working people, fear of the steady whittling away of union rights and even rights supposedly guaranteed under the Constitution.

It is not the gods who will destroy U.S. imperialism but the men and women who keep the wheels of production turning and whose labor produces the profits of the capitalists. This may seem far-fetched given the current passivity and demoralization of the working class after decades of defeats and betrayals. But there is no other way. It will take a change in the period, marked by a sharp increase in working-class struggle and the intervention of a communist vanguard, for Marxism to again win the allegiance of a layer of the proletariat. But so long as capitalism exists, the class struggle arising from its contradictions will continue to erupt.

Our role is to maintain and propagate the only program that expresses the historic, revolutionary mission of the working class. This means fighting for parties that will bring to the fore the principle of international working-class unity across all national, religious and communal boundaries in opposition to all forms of bourgeois ideology and religious reaction. As part of a reformed Fourth International extending from the advanced industrial countries to the countries of the semicolonial world, Leninist-Trotskyist parties will be dedicated to the struggle for international socialist revolution.

Only then will humanity embark on the road to a communist future. The organization of production for use, not for profit, under the rule of the proletariat, combined with economic planning on an international scale, will usher in a further massive increase in productivity, leading to an elimination of scarcity and the creation of a global communist society, in which divisions based on class, race, national borders, sex and religion will have become artifacts. ■

To mark the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), we excerpt below James P. Cannon's critical tribute to the revolutionary syndicalist IWW, first published by the Socialist Workers Party in the *Fourth International* (Summer 1955). Cannon recounted a history he knew well, having served his political apprenticeship as a "Wobbly" before becoming a founding member of the American Communist and later Trotskyist movements.

Formed in direct opposition to the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor, the IWW drew its membership largely from young workers who took to the road to find work where they could—as railroad construction workers, lumberjacks, metal miners and seamen. Taught by harsh experience that the bosses could not be overpowered at the ballot box, those who formed the IWW called for "One Big Union" that would serve as the instrument to seize the means of production from the capitalist class. This reflected healthy disdain for the parliamentary reformism dominating many of the parties of the Second International. But it confused the role of the unions, which must embrace the mass of the workers, with that of a programmatically-based revolutionary party.

The IWW's conception was transcended by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which demonstrated that what the working class needs to overthrow capitalism is a Leninist vanguard party. Following the 1917 Revolution, some of the best elements of the IWW and other left-syndicalist organizations were recruited to the newly founded parties of the Third (Communist) International, although most did not make the leap.

* * *

The Bold Design

When the Founding Convention of the IWW—the Industrial Workers of the World—assembled in Chicago in June, 1905, the general strike movement initiating the first Russian revolution was already under way, and its reverberations were heard in the convention hall. The two events coincided to give the world a preview of its future. The leaders at Chicago hailed the Russian revolution as their own. The two simultaneous actions, arising independently with half a world between them, signaled the opening of a revolutionary century. They were the anticipations of things to come.

The defeated Russian revolution of 1905 prepared the way for the victorious revolution of 1917. It was the "dress rehearsal," as Lenin said, and that evaluation is now universally recognized. The Founding Convention of the IWW was also a rehearsal; and it may well stand out in the final account as no less important than the Russian action at the same time.

The founders of the IWW were indubitably the original inspirers and prime movers of the modern industrial unions in the mass production industries. That is commonly admitted already, and that's a lot. But even such a recognition of the IWW, as the precursor of the present CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations], falls far short of a full estimate of its historic significance. The CIO movement, at its present stage of development, is only a small down payment on the demands presented to the future by the pioneers who assembled at the 1905 Convention to start the IWW on its way.

The Founding Convention of the IWW brought together on a common platform the three giants among our ancestors—[Eugene] Debs, [Big Bill] Haywood and [Daniel] De Leon. They came from different backgrounds and fields of activity, and they soon parted company again. But the things they said and did, that one time they teamed up to set a new movement on foot, could not be undone. They wrote a

James P. Cannon on the Legacy of the IWW



Bain News

IWW demonstration in New York City, 1914. IWW set out to be an industrial union movement uniting all workers, declared in 1905 founding constitution: "It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism."

Charter for the American working class which has already inspired and influenced more than one generation of labor militants. And in its main essentials it will influence other generations yet to come.

They were big men, and they all grew taller when they stood together. They were distinguished from their contemporaries, as from the trade-union leaders of today, by the immensity of their ambition which transcended personal concerns, by their far-reaching vision of a world to be remade by the power of the organized workers, and by their total commitment to that endeavor.

The great majority of the other delegates who answered the call to the Founding Convention of the IWW were people of the same quality. They were the non-conformists, the stiff-necked irrecconcilables, at war with capitalist society. Radicals, rebels and revolutionists started the IWW, as they have started every other progressive movement in the history of this country.

In these days when labor leaders try their best to talk like probationary members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, it is refreshing to turn back to the reports of men who spoke a different language. Debs, Haywood and De Leon, and those who



stood with them, did not believe in the partnership of capital and labor, as preached by [American Federation of Labor head Samuel] Gompers and Co. at the time. Such talk, they said in the famous "Preamble" to the Constitution of the IWW, "misleads the workers." They spoke out in advance against the idea of the permanent "co-existence" of labor unions and the private ownership of industry, as championed by the CIO leaders of the present time.

The men who founded the IWW were pioneer industrial unionists, and the great industrial unions of today stem directly from them. But they aimed far beyond industrial unionism as a bargaining agency recognizing the private ownership of industry as right and unchangeable. They saw the relations of capital and labor as a state of war.

Brissenden puts their main idea in a nutshell in his factually correct history of

the movement: "The idea of the class conflict was really the bottom notion or 'first cause' of the IWW. The industrial union type was adopted because it would make it possible to wage this class war under more favorable conditions." (*The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism*, by Paul Frederick Brissenden, p. 108.)

The founders of the IWW regarded the organization of industrial unions as a means to an end; and the end they had in view was the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a new social order. This, the heart and soul of their program, still awaits its vindication in the revolution of the American workers. And the revolution, when it arrives, will not neglect to acknowledge its anticipation at the Founding Convention of the IWW. For nothing less than the revolutionary goal of the workers' struggle was openly proclaimed there 50 years ago.

The bold design was drawn by Bill Haywood, General Secretary of the Western Federation of Miners, who presided at the Founding Convention of the IWW. In his opening remarks, calling the convention to order, he said:

"This is the Continental Congress of the working class. We are here to confederate the workers of this country into a working class movement that shall have for its purpose the emancipation of the working class from the slave bondage of capitalism." (*Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World*, p. 1.)

The trade unions today are beginning to catch up with the idea that Negroes are human beings, that they have a right to make a living and belong to a union. The IWW was 50 years ahead of them on this question, as on many others. Many of the old Gompers unions were lily-white job trusts, barring Negroes from membership and the right to employment in their jurisdictions. Haywood, in his opening speech, indignantly denounced the policy of those unions "affiliated with the A. F. of L., which in their constitution and by-laws prohibit the initiation of or conferring the obligation on a colored man." He followed, in his speech at the public ratification meeting, with the declaration that the newly-launched organization "recognizes neither race, creed, color, sex or previous condition of servitude." (*Proceedings*, p. 575.)

And he wound up with the prophetic suggestion that the American workers take the Russian path. He said he hoped to see



Viking

James P. Cannon (center) with Max Eastman (left) and former IWW leader Big Bill Haywood in Moscow at Fourth Congress of Communist International, 1922.

the new movement “grow throughout this country until it takes in a great majority of the working people, and that those working people will rise in revolt against the capitalist system as the working class in Russia are doing today.” (*Proceedings*, p. 580.)...

The Duality of the IWW

One of the most important contradictions of the IWW, implanted at its first convention and never resolved, was the dual role it assigned to itself. Not the least of the reasons for the eventual failure of the IWW—as an organization—was its attempt to be both a union of all workers and a propaganda society of selected revolutionists—in essence a revolutionary party. Two different tasks and functions, which, at a certain stage of development, require separate and distinct organizations, were assumed by the IWW alone; and this duality hampered its effectiveness in both fields. All that, and many other things, are clearer now than they were then to the leading militants of the IWW—or anyone else in this country.

The IWW announced itself as an all-inclusive union; and any worker ready for organization on an everyday union basis was invited to join, regardless of his views and opinions on any other question. In a number of instances, in times of organization campaigns and strikes in separate localities, such all-inclusive membership was attained, if only for brief periods. But that did not prevent the IWW agitators from preaching the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in every strike meeting.

The strike meetings of the IWW were in truth “schools for socialism.” The immediate issues of the strike were the take-off point for an exposition of the principle of the class struggle, for a full-scale indictment of the capitalist system all up and down the line, and the projection of a new social order of the free and equal.

The professed “non-political” policy of the IWW doesn’t stand up very well against its actual record in action. The main burden of its energies was devoted to agitation and propaganda—in soap-box speeches, press, pamphlets and songbooks—against the existing social order; to defense campaigns in behalf of imprisoned workers; and to free-speech fights in numerous localities. All these activities were in the main, and in the proper meaning of the term, political.

The IWW at all times, even during strikes embracing masses of church-going, ordinarily conservative workers, acted as an organization of revolutionists. The “real IWW’s,” the year-round activists, were nicknamed Wobblies—just when and why nobody knows—and the criterion of the Wobbly was his stand on the principle of the class struggle and its revolutionary goal; and his readiness to commit his whole life to it.

In truth, the IWW in its time of glory was neither a union nor a party in the full meaning of these terms, but something of both, with some parts missing. It was an uncompleted anticipation of a Bolshevik party, lacking its rounded-out theory, and a projection of the revolutionary industrial unions of the future, minus the necessary mass membership. It was the IWW....

The Turning Point

The whole record of the IWW—or at any rate, the best part of it, the positive revolutionary part—was all written in propaganda and action in its first 15 years. That is the enduring story. The rest is anti-climax.

The turning point came with the entrance of the United States into the First

World War in the spring of 1917, and the Russian Revolution in the same year. Then “politics,” which the IWW had disavowed and cast out, came back and broke down the door.

These two events—again coinciding in Russia and America, as in 1905—demonstrated that “political action” was not merely a matter of the ballot box, subordinate to the direct conflict of the unions and employers on the economic field, but the very essence of the class struggle. In opposing actions of two different classes the “political state,” which the IWW had thought to ignore, was revealed as the centralized power of the ruling class; and the holding of the state power showed in each case which class was really ruling.

From one side, this was shown when the Federal Government of the United States intervened directly to break up the concentration points of the IWW by whole-

While the IWW was settling down in ossification, converting its uncompleted conceptions about the real meaning of political action and political parties into a sterile anti-political dogma, the thinking of others was catching up with reality, with the great new things happening in the world. The others, the young left-wing socialists, soon to call themselves Communists, lacked the battle-tested cadres of the IWW. But they had the correct program. That proved to be decisive.

The newly formed Communist Party soon outstripped the IWW and left it on the sidelines. It was all decided within the space of two or three years. By the time of its fifteenth anniversary in 1920 the IWW had already entered the irreversible road of decline. Its strength was spent. Most of its cadres, the precious human material selected and sifted out in heroic struggle, went down with the organization. They

together in a union, but by doctrine and program, the IWW was in practice, if not in theory, far ahead of other experiments along this line in its time, even though the IWW called itself a union and others called themselves parties.

That was the IWW’s greatest contribution to the American labor movement—in the present stage of its development and in those to come. Its unfading claim to grateful remembrance will rest in the last analysis on the pioneering role it played as the first great anticipation of the revolutionary party which the vanguard of the American workers will fashion to organize and lead their emancipating revolution.

This conception of an organization of revolutionists has to be completed and rounded out, and recognized as the most essential, the most powerful of all designs in the epoch of imperialist decline and decay, which can be brought to an end only by a victorious workers’ revolution. The American revolution, more than any other, will require a separate, special organization of the revolutionary vanguard. And it must call itself by its right name, a party.

The experimental efforts of the IWW along this line remain part of the permanent capital of those who are undertaking to build such a party. They will not discard or discount the value of their inheritance from the old IWW; but they will also supplement it by the experience and thought of others beyond our borders.

The coming generation, which will have the task of bringing the class struggle to its conclusion—fulfilling the “historic mission of the working class,” as the “Preamble” described it—will take much from the old leaders of the IWW—Debs, Haywood, De Leon and [Vincent] St. John, and will glorify their names. But in assimilating all the huge experiences since their time, they will borrow even more heavily from the men who generalized these experiences into a guiding theory. The Americans will go to school to the Russians, as the Russians went to school to the Germans, Marx and Engels.

Haywood’s advice at the Founding Convention of the IWW still holds good. The Russian way is the way to our American future, to the future of the whole world. The greatest thinkers of the international movement since Marx and Engels, and also the greatest men of action, were the Russian Bolsheviks. The Russian Revolution is there to prove it, ruling out all argument. That revolution still stands as the example; all the perversions and betrayals of Stalinism cannot change that.

The Russian Bolsheviks—Lenin and Trotsky in the first place—have inspired every forward step taken by the revolutionary vanguard in this country since 1917. And it is to them that the American workers will turn for guidance in the next stages of their evolving struggle for emancipation. The fusion of their “Russian” ideas with the inheritance of the IWW is the American workers’ prescription for victory.■



Workers at Putilov metal works in Petrograd, Russia, a bastion of soviet power during 1917 October Revolution. Banner at left proclaims: “Long Live the Third International!”

sale arrests of its activists. The “political action” of the capitalist state broke the back of the IWW as a union. The IWW was compelled to transform its principal activities into those of a defense organization, striving by legal methods and propaganda, to protect the political and civil rights of its members against the depredations of the capitalist state power.

From the other side, the same determining role of political action was demonstrated positively by the Russian Revolution. The Russian workers took the state power into their own hands and used that power to expropriate the capitalists and suppress all attempts at counter-revolution. That, in fact, was the first stage of the revolution, the pre-condition for all that was to follow. Moreover, the organizing and directing center of the victorious Revolution had turned out to be, not an all-inclusive union, but a party of selected revolutionists united by a program and bound by discipline.

The time had come for the IWW to remember Haywood’s prophetic injunction at the Founding Convention in 1905: that the American workers should look to Russia and follow the Russian example. By war and revolution, the most imperative of all authorities, the IWW was put on notice to bring its theoretical conceptions up to date; to think and learn, and change a little.

First indications were that this would be done; the Bolshevik victory was hailed with enthusiasm by the members of the IWW. In their first reaction, it is safe to say, they saw in it the completion and vindication of their own endeavors. But this first impulse was not followed through.

Some of the leading Wobblies, including Haywood himself, tried to learn the lessons of the war and the Russian Revolution and to adjust their thinking to them. But the big majority, after several years of wavering, went the other way. That sealed the doom of the IWW. Its tragic failure to look, listen and learn from the two great events condemned it to defeat and decay.

The governing role of theory here asserted itself supremely, and in short order.

had borne persecution admirably, but the problems raised by it, and by all the great new events, overwhelmed them. The best militants fell into inactivity and then dropped out. The second-raters took over and completed the wreck and the ruin....

The Heritage

The working class can be really united only when it becomes a class *for itself*, consciously fighting the exploiters as a class. The ruling bureaucrats, who preach and practice class collaboration, constitute in effect a pro-capitalist party in the trade unions. The party of the socialist vanguard represents the consciousness of the class. Its organization signifies not a split of the class movement of the workers, but a division of labor within it, to facilitate and effectuate its unification on a revolutionary basis; that is, as a class for itself.

As an organization of revolutionists, united not simply by the immediate economic interests which bind all workers

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Left: Workers in Tiananmen Square during incipient proletarian political revolution against Stalinist regime led by Deng Xiaoping, May 1989. Placard reads: “Workers strike/Students strike/Xiaoping, step down!” Right: “Goddess of Democracy” statue erected during protests. Bourgeois media seized on petty-bourgeois “pro-democracy” forces to falsely portray uprising as pro-capitalist.

On China’s 1989 Tiananmen Upheaval

We print below a contribution by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour on our understanding of the May-June 1989 mass protests in China centered on Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. It was written in response to a longtime reader of the International Communist League press who, in a letter to a comrade, commented on our article “Hong Kong Protests: Spearhead for Capitalist Counterrevolution” (WV No. 1054, 17 October 2014).

Offering several useful observations about political developments in Hong Kong, the reader criticized the article’s assessment of the Tiananmen upheaval, which brought the Stalinist Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime of Deng Xiaoping to the point of collapse. Writing that “there has been an overestimation of the break between the main body of the working class (crucially the section in state-owned companies) and the CCP in 1989,” he also challenged our depiction of the role workers’ defense groups played in the protests and the extent of the repression subsequently meted out against workers.

The imperialists and the bourgeois media falsely portray the events in the spring of 1989 as a movement for capitalist counterrevolution under the banner of Western-style “democracy.” The social explosion was triggered by protests initiated by students in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, which increasingly drew in groups of workers and spread throughout the country. Far from seeking a return to capitalism, Chinese workers overwhelmingly directed their anger at the sharply rising economic inequalities, rampant corruption and inflation encouraged by Deng’s program of “building socialism with capitalist methods.”

The events of May-June 1989 decisively demonstrated that the Stalinist bureaucracy was not a new type of possessing class but rather a brittle and contradictory caste parasitically resting atop the collectivized economy. While a capitalist ruling class faced with a proletarian challenge to its rule inevitably unites around a program of counterrevolution, the Stalinist bureaucracy, including the military officer corps, began to fracture under the impact of the proletarian upsurge.

The CCP bureaucracy, whose rule undermines the workers state and socialized economy established through the 1949 Revolution, must be swept away through proletarian political revolution that establishes a regime based on workers democracy and committed to inter-

national socialist revolution as against the Stalinist bureaucracy’s reactionary, nationalist utopia of building “socialism in one country.” As opposed to bourgeois parliamentarism, such a regime would be based on elected workers and peasants councils (soviets). Proletarian political revolution would be premised on defense of the collectivized economy and would suppress counterrevolutionary elements.

The mass upsurge in 1989 was an incipient proletarian political revolution; what was centrally lacking was a Leninist-Trotskyist party to bring genuine communist consciousness to the working class. Such a revolutionary party would necessarily be internationalist, linking defense of the Chinese workers state to the fight for proletarian revolutions in the imperialist centers to establish an internationally planned economy and lay the basis for the construction of a socialist world of material abundance. The International Communist League fights to build a revolutionary international party, a reformed Fourth International, the necessary instrument to lead the working class to power internationally.

* * *

Our reader raises a number of criticisms of the section of the article in WV No. 1054 that discusses the crisis in China in the spring of 1989. In considering and responding to these criticisms, I’ll begin by restating the assessment we made at the time.



AP

June 1989: Shanghai worker condemned to death for protesting killing of demonstrators.

We described the student-based protests *as such* as having “something of the character of political theater (including a statue of ‘the goddess of democracy’) and pressure politics” (WV No. 479, 9 June 1989). However, these protests evoked widespread sympathy and support among the mass of working people. Thus, the initial attempt by the CCP regime to use the army to suppress the protests in mid May was confronted by spontaneous mass resistance as military convoys sought to traverse Beijing. Tens of thousands of people poured into the streets, obstructing the troop movements while imploring soldiers and officers not to use force against the student protesters. The regime then temporized, enabling the protests to continue for another two and a half weeks.

The use of the military to disperse the Tiananmen protests in early June triggered mass, militant protests—heavily involving working-class and plebeian youth—elsewhere in Beijing and also other major cities. We wrote at the time:

“While pro-regime military forces still occupy the center of Beijing, the rest of the city is in the hands of insurgent workers and students: ‘everywhere in Beijing people reacted to the killings by torching vehicles and creating blockades. The troops only controlled a few major thoroughfares, and elsewhere citizens continued to control the streets’ (*New York Times*, 5 June). In the great industrial metropolis of Shanghai, student activists and militant workers have set up barricades using buses, trucks and cars. And a de facto general strike has brought economic activity to a standstill. In the central industrial city of Wuhan workers and students occupy a strategic bridge over the Yangtze River, a crucial transport link between northern and southern China.”

—“Beijing Massacre—Civil War Looms,” WV No. 479, 9 June 1989

We characterized these protest actions as an incipient proletarian political revolution.

Our understanding of events in China in the spring of 1989 was summarily stated in the document adopted by the Second International Conference of the ICL in the fall of 1992:

“The rampant official corruption and emergence of nouveau riche petty capitalists along with rising inflation and unemployment fueled a growing popular discontent which came to the surface in the 1989 crisis. While the student-based ‘democracy’ movement had illusions in Western-style parliamentarism, the working masses who took to the streets wanted a return to economic equality and security, a restoration of the ‘iron rice bowl.’ “The Deng regime moved to suppress the mass protests by ordering loyal army units to carry out a massacre. Contrary

to Western imperialist propaganda, the main victims of this bloodbath were not the student activists, most of whom withdrew from Tiananmen Square unscathed, but rather young workers in Beijing and other cities. In the days following the Beijing massacre—when the attitude of the army as a whole was still in question—China was poised on the brink of a proletarian political revolution.”

—“For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky!” *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 47-48, Winter 1992-93

During the following two decades we have not significantly revised much less reversed the above-quoted assessment in light of additional empirical research and argumentation.

Our reader presents a significantly different assessment. To validate that assessment, he strongly recommends a book by Zhao Dingxin, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (University of Chicago Press, 2001). (The publishers used the English format, putting Zhao’s surname last.)

Zhao was a young Chinese intellectual in the spring of 1989 doing graduate work in entomology at a Canadian university. After visiting China in April for academic and personal reasons, he returned in May to Canada, where he followed the mounting protests and political crisis from afar. The suppression of the Tiananmen protests caused him to change his main intellectual concern from science to social theory. Eventually he became a professor in the sociology department of the University of Chicago. In 1993 and 1997, Zhao visited China, where he conducted interviews with many young intellectuals who as student activists had participated in the ’89 Tiananmen protests. These interviews (in addition to documentary material at the time) are the main source for the empirical analysis presented in *The Power of Tiananmen*.

In its basic political outlook, the book is an expression of the “death of communism” ideology prevalent among Western bourgeois intellectuals in the post-Soviet period. In the concluding section, Zhao contended that the only alternative to military repression would have been for the CCP leadership to surrender political power in the course of a “transition to democracy” such as occurred, he maintained, in the former Soviet bloc in 1989-92:

“Once such a large-scale social movement gains momentum, a state such as the current China actually has few means of conflict resolution. Often, the state is left with only two choices: sur-

render or repression. As events in the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries have clearly shown, when confronted with this alternative, a generation with no revolutionary experience may not defend a regime by way of bloody military repression. Even if some leaders were to decide on repression, the more professionally trained soldiers may no longer follow their orders. A sudden surrender, instead of gradual change, made the transition to democracy in the former Soviet Union very painful.”

To avoid replicating the convulsive experience of the former Soviet bloc, Zhao advocated the gradual “democratization” of China undertaken from above:

“Therefore, the current Chinese leaders should place political reform at the top of their agenda. This is not to suggest that China should copy any particular Western political system. However, such a political reform has to aim at changing the foundation of state power from ideology and performance legitimization to legal-electoral legitimization. It should minimally include formally abandoning Marxism as a state ideology, renaming the Communist Party as a socialist party, establishing an independent legal system, and gradually instituting competitive elections with candidates competing only for the office rather than for mutually incompatible ideologies.”

Obviously, our reader does not share Zhao’s program for a “bourgeois-democratic” counterrevolution in China. But it is not clear whether he agrees with Zhao that had the CCP regime collapsed in the spring of 1989, it would necessarily have been replaced by a Chinese version of Poland’s Lech Walesa or Russia’s Boris Yeltsin. More likely, he agrees with Zhao’s analysis in the narrower empirical sense of recounting what actually happened.

Workers, Students and the Effects of “Market Reforms”

Before discussing Zhao’s empirical research and analysis, I want to compare his views with those of Wang Hui, who emerged in the 1990s as the best-known left-critical intellectual in China’s academic milieu. Wang identified with the main current of the Western far left that found an ephemeral organizational expression in the “anti-globalization” protest movement of the early 2000s. As it happened, he was teaching at the University of Washington when the first major “anti-globalization” protest took place in Seattle in late 1999. Perhaps influenced by that event, Wang wrote a lengthy essay retrospectively analyzing what he termed the “1989 social movement” in China. Unlike Zhao Dingxin, Wang Hui personally participated in the Tiananmen protests. According to his own testimony, he was in one of the last student groups to leave the Square in the early morning of June 4.

Looking back, he saw a *fundamental difference* in the attitude and aspirations of the student protesters and the mass of working people who sympathized with and supported the protests. Most young Chinese intellectuals welcomed the post-Mao market-oriented economic “reforms,” which they associated with

greater personal freedom, and favored their expansion. The mass of working people were reacting against the *negative* effects of the “reforms”—rising inflation, unemployment among youth first entering the labor market, the loss of job security for workers in state-owned enterprises as well as in the growing private sector, pervasive nepotism and corruption among the CCP officialdom.

With regard to these differences, Wang wrote:

“Taken as a group, however, the intellectuals not only lacked the capacity to provide practical social goals, but they also never understood the full extent of the social mobilization that had taken place. This was partly because, as an intellectual movement critical of the practices of state socialism, the social thought of the 1980s could neither perceive nor comprehend the social contradictions peculiar to the times. Neither could it understand the socialist tendencies inhering within the grassroots social movement nor transcend the intellectual blinders imposed by Cold War ideology. It is necessary to distinguish between two conceptions of socialism: one is the ‘socialism’ of the old

the impact of the shock upon their economies. Those decisions also created troubling longer-term challenges.

“The result, none the less, was an acceleration of the already rapid shift in the balance of the world economy from the high-income countries to the emerging countries, particularly China.”

For sophisticated bourgeois intellectuals like Martin Wolf, China’s supposed “state capitalism” lies at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum from neoliberalism.

Liberal Political Bias

As previously noted, Zhao’s empirical analysis draws heavily from interviews he conducted in China in 1993 and 1997. Almost all of these interviews were with young intellectuals who as students had participated in the Tiananmen protests. Very few of the interviews were with non-students who had taken part in the actions that prevented military units from converging on Tiananmen when martial law was first proclaimed on May 20. And there were no interviews with those (e.g., young workers and unemployed plebeian



Reuters

Shanghai, December 2011: Striking workers block entrance gate of Hi-P International electronics factory.

state ideology, characterized by a system of state monopoly; the other is the movement for social security that developed out of that system of state monopoly and the expansion of the market system, characterized by its opposition to monopoly and its demands for social democracy.”

—“The 1989 Social Movement and the Historical Roots of China’s Neoliberalism” in *China’s New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition* (Harvard University Press, 2003)

Here I want to comment (parenthetically, so to speak) on Wang’s misuse of the term “neoliberalism” with regard to China. It is, or at any rate was, common for Western leftists to identify the market-oriented economic policies undertaken by Deng and his successors with the ideology and program of neoliberalism. Mainstream Western bourgeois intellectuals also contend that capitalism in some form has been restored in post-Mao China. Nonetheless, the latter recognize that China’s economic system is *fundamentally different* than capitalism, not to speak of neoliberalism. The favored term used by Western academics and financial journalists to describe China’s economic system is “state capitalism.” For example, this term is used throughout with respect to China by Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator at the London *Financial Times*, in a recent book on the post-2008 global economy, *The Shifts and the Shocks: What We’ve Learned—and Have Still to Learn—from the Financial Crisis* (Penguin Press, 2014). Moreover, Wolf, a highly regarded and influential bourgeois intellectual, judges China’s Keynesian-type economic policies *favorably* compared to the policies pursued by the leaders of the capitalist world:

“The great recession that followed the worst of the financial crisis, in late 2008 and early 2009, hit many emerging and developing countries hard. Those who were least hit—China, above all—had to make bold policy decisions to offset

youth) who engaged in militant protests in the immediate aftermath of the military’s clearing of Tiananmen. Zhao’s narrative account as well as the calendar of events listed in the beginning of *The Power of Tiananmen* ends on June 4.

The unbalanced selection of the interviewees presents a picture of China in the spring of 1989 in which liberal-minded students and their ideology of “pure democracy” were the only possible opposition to the continued “authoritarian” rule of the CCP. What Wang Hui termed the “socialist tendencies” among the working masses is written out of this book.

The biased nature of Zhao’s empirical research is evident with respect to the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Union (also known as the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Federation). His analysis of this group is partly based on interviews with leading student activists involved in it. Evidently, no worker members of the group were interviewed by him. At any rate, none were quoted in the relevant section of his book.

Arguably, the most important event that occurred in Beijing in the spring of 1989 did *not* take place in Tiananmen Square. Rather it took place in working-class and other lower-class neighborhoods whose residents effectively blocked the military units converging on Tiananmen. The investigation of this pivotal event in Zhao’s book is meager compared to the exhaustive chronicling of the student-based protests and the various competing factions therein. When martial law was declared, numerous protesters vacated Tiananmen and some leading student activists went into hiding or were preparing to do so. Only when the troops were turned back in the outlying neighborhoods did the students who had left return to Tiananmen. The occupation continued, mainly with the influx of students from other cities.

In order to avoid a repetition of what happened during the first attempt at a military crackdown, in early June a large number of soldiers were infiltrated through Beijing wearing civilian clothes and not carrying arms. They were then provided with arms as they approached Tiananmen. That the CCP/People’s Liberation Army leadership had recourse to this unusual tactic indicated that they recognized the extent of popular support for the student-based protests.

Zhao’s empirical analysis does substantiate one of our reader’s criticisms to a certain extent. This concerns the nature of organized working-class presence in the Tiananmen protests. The Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Union was formed on May 18 at the initiative of certain leading student activists. The group attracted very few workers. The main documents put out in the name of the Union were written by young intellectuals who were active in the various student organizations. The protest actions in which worker members of the group participated were under the direction of leaders of the student organizations. Zhao concludes, I believe correctly, that “if we examine the role of the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Union through such criteria as leadership, sources of material resources, and major activities and participants, it becomes obvious that the union was basically only an appendage of the student movement.” But it does *not* follow that even the small number of workers who joined this group shared the political views of the young intellectuals who organized them and directed their activities.

At this historical juncture it wasn’t possible for members of the working class to intervene in the Tiananmen protests in a way that was politically and organizationally independent of the main body of student activists. The various student organizations formed in the course of the protests had been incubated, so to speak, in the broad regime-critical milieu that emerged in Beijing’s universities in the mid-late 1980s. A number of leading student activists had been involved in discussion circles grouped around professors who expounded somewhat critical views of the CCP regime and its history. Compared to university students, workers in Beijing’s factories were atomized and had no institutional framework for discussing and developing shared political views, not to speak of independent organizations.

But that does not mean that the inchoate political attitudes of most Chinese workers corresponded to those of liberal-minded young intellectuals. Nor does it mean that they supported the CCP regime, as our reader contends:

“In short, the students and those who backed them tried to produce a Solidarnosc-type ‘independent workers’ movement’ as an appendage of the ‘democracy movement’. They failed because the main body of the working class did not heed their message, and were largely loyal to the CCP.”

I think he does not understand the specific historical conditions that underlay the mobilization of the mass of workers in Poland on a counterrevolutionary basis in 1980-81. The organizational basis for Solidarność was provided by the Roman Catholic church, which had functioned as a quasi-official opposition to the Warsaw Communist regime since 1956. The coterie of social-democratic intellectuals (e.g., Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik) involved in the formation of Solidarność acted as political front men for the Catholic hierarchy headed by the Polish pope Wojtyła. The political authority of the Catholic church was closely linked to the popular strength of anti-Russian (i.e., anti-Soviet) Polish nationalism. Neither of these factors was or is relevant to the potential for a mobilization of workers in China on a counterrevolutionary basis.

The extent of illusions in bourgeois forms of “democracy”—a government supposedly based on freely contested elections with universal and equal suffrage—is another question, one that we will certainly encounter and have to confront when the political situation in China opens up. ■

SPARTACIST

NUMBER 53

ENGLISH EDITION

SUMMER 1997

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Defend China...

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Vise on China,” WV No. 1005, 6 July 2012). This neutral position disregarded the islands’ military importance, undercutting our principled defense of China, and underplayed the growing rapprochement between Vietnam and the U.S.

The Spratly Islands form part of a strategic military perimeter called the “first island chain,” which runs from the Southeast Asian coast through the Spratlys and Philippines to Japan. Numerous military sources make clear that, in the event of a war with China, the U.S. plans to establish a naval blockade along this perimeter, closing off shipping lanes and blocking Chinese access to the Pacific Ocean. China aims to develop sufficient forces to maintain its own barrier along these same islands to keep shipping lanes open and prevent hostile forces from approaching its coast.

A particular danger recognized by China is the potential chokepoint for petroleum imports at the Strait of Malacca, a narrow channel between Indonesia and Malaysia where the South China Sea connects with the Indian Ocean. Chinese development of gas and oil resources in the South China Sea has the potential to go some way toward alleviating this concern. China is also developing “new silk road” overland trade routes and pipelines.

The Pentagon officials who are banging the drums for military maneuvers against China are also promoting the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade pact with countries on the Pacific Rim including Vietnam. The TPP is designed to counteract Beijing’s growing economic clout and to secure markets for U.S. industry through the further subjugation of dependent and economically backward countries. The Obama administration is seeking to fast-track the TPP through Congress. The pro-capitalist AFL-CIO trade-union bureaucracy opposes the pact on the protectionist basis that it does not go far enough “to create the strategic advantage over China” and that it will cost American jobs by moving work to Vietnam (“The U.S.-China Economic Relationship: The TPP Is Not the Answer,” aficio.org, undated). While bashing China, this chauvinism binds American workers to their class enemy, the U.S. capitalist exploiters, against the working people of other countries.

Vietnam: Don’t Be a Cat’s Paw for U.S. Imperialism!

Forty years ago, the U.S. imperialists were humiliated on the battlefield in Vietnam. The Vietnamese workers and peasants carried out a social revolution that expropriated the capitalists and landlords and drove U.S. forces and their Vietnamese puppet regime out of Saigon in April 1975. The cost was high: almost three million Vietnamese were killed and many more maimed. Even today, 20 percent of the country is uninhabitable as a result of unexploded U.S. ordnance. The U.S.-imposed starvation embargo was lifted only in the late 1990s.

The victory of the Vietnamese Revolution was achieved despite the treacherous

U.S. Navy surveillance photo of Chinese construction on man-made islands in the South China Sea, May 20.



U.S. Navy



policies of the Stalinist bureaucracies in both the USSR and China, who repeatedly prevailed upon their Vietnamese counterparts to give back at the bargaining table what had been won militarily. Vietnamese nationalist hostility to China has been massively reinforced by such betrayals: in 1972, as U.S. bombs were raining down on revolutionary Vietnam, Mao sealed his own criminal alliance with the U.S. against the Soviet Union. In 1979, China had Washington’s encouragement when it invaded Vietnam—only to suffer a well-deserved, stinging defeat.

But in recent years, Vietnam has made its own pact with the devil. As part of growing ties between the two countries, U.S. warships have regularly visited Vietnamese ports. One factor driving this thaw is Vietnam’s appeals to the U.S. in its territorial conflicts with China. On June 1, Vietnamese defense minister Phung Quang Thanh and Ashton Carter jointly announced an expanded military agreement that allows for common combat operations. Carter promised \$18 million in U.S. aid for vessels for Vietnam’s Coast Guard, which has a history of confrontation with Chinese forces in the South China Sea.

The fact is that the ruling bureaucracies in the Chinese and Vietnamese deformed workers states are cut from the same cloth. Their treacherous alliances with the U.S. imperialist mass murderers follow from their anti-Marxist perspective of building socialism in (only) one country. First put forward by Stalin in 1924 as an expression of the outlook of the consolidating conservative bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, this dogma represented the

repudiation of the revolutionary, internationalist program that animated the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—a program that was upheld by the Left Opposition under Leon Trotsky’s leadership and subsequently by the Trotskyist Fourth International. Stalinism meant seeking to placate the imperialist powers by showing the bureaucracy’s determination to head off any threat of workers revolution in the capitalist countries.

Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92—a historic defeat prepared by decades of imperialist economic and military pressure as well as Stalinist misrule—removed what had been the most substantial counterweight to the U.S. in its aim of world domination and emboldened the U.S. imperialists to run roughshod over working people and the oppressed around the world. The CCP regime’s support to the anti-Soviet crusade helped create a world where China is now front and center, a strategic target of the U.S. bourgeoisie. If the forces of capitalist counterrevolution succeed in China, this would be an unmitigated disaster for the workers and peasants of China and a grave defeat for working people worldwide. It would pose an immediate threat

to the survival of the Vietnamese workers state.

The task faced by the Chinese and Vietnamese working classes is the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies through proletarian political revolutions, establishing regimes based on workers democracy and the perspective of international extension of the revolutions. If revolutionary workers and peasants governments were in power in Beijing and Hanoi, their territorial conflicts would be easily resolved, with both countries sharing technology and resources and cooperating in mutual defense against imperialism.

U.S. Imperialism: Enemy of Workers and the Oppressed

In 2010, the Obama administration announced that a “pivot toward Asia” would be a top priority. This “military rebalancing” has been constrained by the U.S.’s continued involvement in the slaughter in Afghanistan and in the Near East. Nonetheless, as the recent American aggression in the South China Sea makes clear, Washington’s strategic goal remains to destroy those countries where the capitalist system of exploitation has been overthrown. As part of the struggle to mobilize the U.S. working class against its capitalist rulers, we demand: *All U.S. troops and bases out of Asia!*

The “pivot toward Asia” has included a growing U.S. military presence in the Philippines. Seized in the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Philippines was one of the first colonies of the rising U.S. imperialist power. U.S. forces brutally suppressed anticolonial uprisings in the colony, slaughtering up to half a million Filipinos between 1899 and 1902. After gaining formal independence following World War II, the Philippines remained a semicolonial U.S. vassal, serving as a linchpin of its anti-Communist machinations in the region. The U.S. is pushing for an “enhanced defense cooperation” agreement that would allow even more U.S. troops, planes and ships to flood into Filipino military bases.

Workers from the U.S. to Japan to the Philippines must be won to the defense of the deformed workers states as part of the struggle to overthrow their own capitalist ruling classes. To smash the U.S. imperialist war machine will require an American workers revolution. The Spartacist League/U.S. is dedicated to building the party that can lead such a struggle as the American section of a reforged Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. The victory of proletarian revolutions on a world scale will eliminate forever the drive for war inherent in the global capitalist system and, by eliminating the exploitation of man by man, lay the basis for unimagined material abundance to fulfill human needs. ■

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Death Penalty...

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and sharpen the executioner’s ax. Ultimately, such measures are directed against the ability of working people and the oppressed to struggle in their own interests against their exploiters.

From the Lynch Rope to Lethal Injection

Expressing a widespread but fatuous sentiment, *Time* magazine declared on its June 8 cover: “The Last Execution: Why the era of capital punishment is ending.” The number of executions is down considerably, especially compared to the late 1990s. But for much of the bourgeoisie the main concern is not the justice system’s proclivity to frame up and kill innocent people nor the unspeakable torture inflicted by the drug cocktails. Rather, it cites dollars and cents, especially in states with cash-strapped budgets. When Nebraska’s Republican legislature overturned the death penalty in late May, one Republican state senator explained: “The taxpayers have not gotten the bang for their buck on this death penalty for almost 20 years.”

On occasion, the American rulers engage in a charade over how to more “humanely” put people to death. In recent years, manufacturers in Europe and the U.S. have, for their own reasons, stopped



Owensboro, Kentucky, 1936: Crowd of some 20,000 at public execution by hanging of Rainey Bethea, a black man.

the lynch rope. In the 1890s, blacks were lynched at a rate of one every other day; four decades later, the state was carrying out executions at the rate of one every other day. A 2015 study by the Alabama-based Equal Justice Initiative titled “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror” documents nearly 4,000 lynchings in the South, noting: “By 1915, court-ordered executions outpaced lynch-

by the tumultuous social struggles of the civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements, the Supreme Court declared the death penalty as practiced unconstitutional, ordering states to rewrite their laws. A mere four years later, the Court gave the green light for the killing machines to resume their grisly work. The next year, Gary Gilmore was executed by firing squad in Utah.

The International Socialist Organization (ISO) has posted an April 29 article by the national director of their Campaign to End the Death Penalty that recycles the liberal prognosis that “the death penalty, it seems, is dying” and summons activists to “continue to chip away at the death penalty system” (socialistworker.org), without a word of criticism of the Democrats. Here is yet another expression of the reformist illusion that the cruelties and “excesses” of the capitalist state can be chipped away, leaving behind institutions that act humanely and justly from the standpoint of workers and black people. In contrast, we Marxists aim to imbue those protesting the depredations of U.S. capitalism with the understanding that putting a final halt to the rulers’ machinery of death—the killer cops, the swollen prisons, the imperialist military—requires sweeping away the whole capitalist system through proletarian socialist revolution.

Marxism on Crime and Punishment

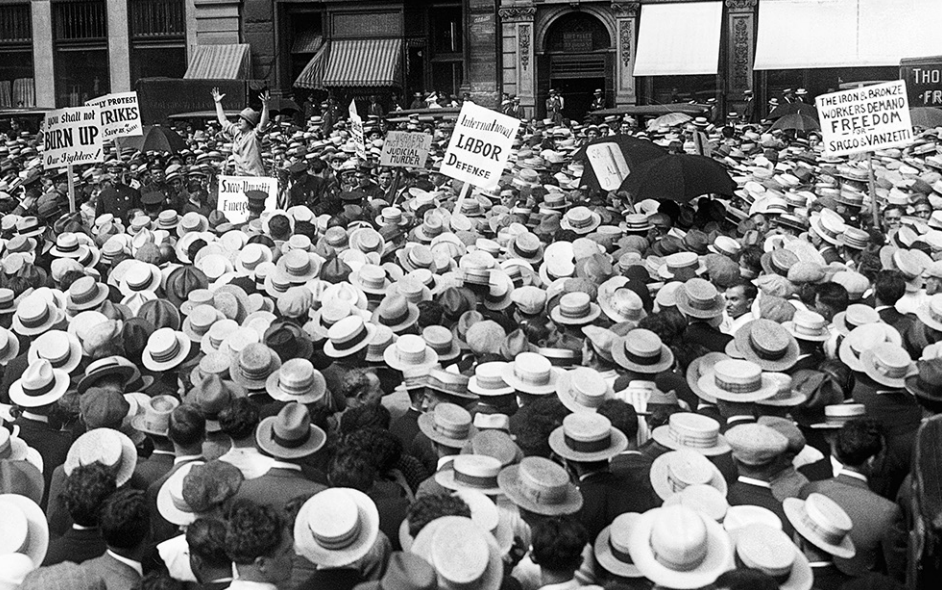
Death sentences, the “living death” of life without parole, and the whole concept of punishment under capitalism are relics of ancient religious codes of retributive justice. As we wrote when the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976: “The Marxist attitude toward crime and punishment is that we are against it...

Socialists do not proceed from the standpoint of punishing the offender. Such a vindictive penal attitude is fundamentally a religious rather than a materialist conception of social relations” (WV No. 117, 9 July 1976). Of course, a humane and rational society, which capitalism decidedly is not, may find a need to separate out certain dangerous individuals—for the protection of others as well as the offenders themselves. But this would be done without stigma or deprivation and with education, medical care, rehabilitation and the goal of reintegration as productive members of society.

When the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky led the workers to power in the October 1917 Revolution, they carried out this program and banned the death penalty in Russia. The determination not to base the penal code of a workers state on retribution found its fullest expression in the 1919 party program, which advocated “a fundamental alteration in the character of punishment, introducing conditional sentences on an extensive scale, applying public censure as a means of punishment, replacing imprisonment by compulsory labour with retention of freedom, and prisons by institutions for training, and establishing the principle of comradely courts.”

At the same time, the Bolsheviks did not flinch from the necessary and extraordinary measures of Red Terror required by the 1918-20 Civil War against imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary forces. But the penal code was a more permanent feature of the proletarian state, embodying the Bolsheviks’ expectations that the securing of Soviet power and the extension of the revolution internationally would open the path to the gradual withering away of the state. It was only after the parasitic bureaucracy around J.V. Stalin usurped political power from the proletariat that the old “tortures and torments” denounced by the early Soviet government, including the death penalty, were resurrected as permanent features. Despite this bureaucratic degeneration, the Soviet Union remained a workers state based on collectivized property forms. The Trotskyists continued to defend the Soviet Union unconditionally against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution, while calling for proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucrats.

Our perspective is that of Lenin and Trotsky—for socialist revolutions to overturn capitalism worldwide and the repressive state machinery that defends it. There can be no fair or “humane” system of justice for the working class and oppressed in a society based on exploitation. With its central position in production, the working class has both the social power and the material interest to shatter the capitalist order. To bring that consciousness to the proletariat requires forging a revolutionary workers party of the Bolshevik type. ■



New York City protest meeting to save condemned anarchist workers Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were executed in 1927.

providing the sedative used in the execution cocktail. States have scrambled to find substitutes, like the one that had Charles Warner writhing in agony while strapped to the gurney in Oklahoma earlier this year, crying out: “My body is on fire!” Now the Supreme Court is considering the case of three other condemned prisoners from that state attempting to block the use of the same drug. In the face of the drug shortage, politicians in some states are now debating gruesome alternatives to lethal injection: firing squads, electric chairs, the gas chamber.

In the states of the former Confederacy, the death penalty is not about to go away. Indeed, while nearly every other advanced industrialized country has abolished capital punishment (with the notable exception of Japan), its persistence in the U.S. is rooted in the legacy of black chattel slavery. Slaves were killed with impunity for “crimes” ranging from insolence toward whites to rebellion against the slave masters. It took a bloody Civil War to smash slavery. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed when the Northern capitalists ended the period of Radical Reconstruction by withdrawing federal troops from the South, leaving black people impoverished and largely defenseless. With the Ku Klux Klan as the spearhead, the white propertied classes subjected blacks to legally enforced racial segregation, stripped them of all democratic rights and held them down through terror, especially lynching. The black population was consolidated anew as a specially oppressed race-color caste.

Capital punishment in America is a direct descendent of and replacement for

ings in the former slave states for the first time.” In the period between 1910 and 1950, black people made up 75 percent of those executed in the South.

The racist application of the death penalty was sanctified by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1987 case of Warren McCleskey, a black prisoner executed in Georgia in 1991. McCleskey’s attorneys presented an authoritative study detailing that black people in Georgia convicted of killing whites were sentenced to death 22 times more frequently than those convicted of killing blacks. In rejecting McCleskey’s appeal, the Supreme Court explicitly acknowledged that to accept this premise would throw “into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system.” In its callous pronouncement, the court expressed a basic truth: McCleskey was a victim of the racism that pervades the criminal justice system. As guardians of the American bourgeois order, the capitalist state is also committed to enforcing the oppression of black people that is its bedrock. *For black liberation through socialist revolution! Finish the Civil War!*

We welcome the recent repeal of the death penalty in Nebraska and any other measure that would curtail capital punishment. But even if the death penalty were eliminated, it would not fundamentally change the violently racist and oppressive nature of capitalist class rule. The slowdown on death row has not slowed the executioners in blue uniforms from gunning down black people and Latinos in the streets.

Moreover, under capitalism all reforms are reversible. In 1972, at a time marked

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12 JUNE 2015

11

WORKERS VANGUARD

Feds Push Tsarnaev Execution



Syigma, FBI (inset)

Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

When a Boston jury handed down a death sentence last month to 21-year-old Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, a U.S. citizen of Chechen Muslim descent, it was the culmination of the sort of show trial in which the U.S. rulers revel. The Obama Justice Department seized on the case as soon as Tsarnaev was arrested for involvement in the 2013 Boston marathon bombing, a criminal act of indiscriminate terror that left three dead and over 260 wounded. Waving the Boston bombing as a bloody shirt, the federal government pulled out all the stops to pack Tsarnaev off to death row and put a shine back on capital punishment.

The Feds were not about to be frustrated by the fact that Massachusetts abolished the death penalty decades ago. These overseers of the entire machinery of bourgeois state repression simply took the case to federal court, where they repeatedly brushed aside defense offers of a guilty plea in return for life without parole. At trial, prosecutors “death qualified” the jury by striking anyone opposed to capital punishment in a city where the overwhelming majority is opposed to putting Tsarnaev to death.

As Marxists, we oppose the death penalty on principle, for the guilty as well as the innocent, and Tsarnaev is no exception. We do not accord the state the right to decide who lives and who dies. The great majority of those on death row are poor and disproportionately black and Latino, lacking decent legal representation and thus excluded from the justice that only money may buy.

Public support for the death penalty has eroded over the last two decades in the wake of the exonerations of scores of innocent death-row inmates, along with a series of ghoulishly botched executions. Nineteen states, including most recently Nebraska, have banned capital punishment, and another eight states have moratoriums. The last federal execution took place in 2003, with Washington effectively putting a moratorium on executions five years ago.

Nevertheless, both capitalist parties—Democratic as well as Republican—are determined to maintain this ultimate sanction in the arsenal of state repression. Even when, shortly after a horror-show execution in Oklahoma last year, Barack

Texas lethal injection chamber. Inset: Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

Obama directed then-Attorney General Eric Holder to review the implementation of the death penalty, the president reiterated his support for capital punishment. The White House especially wants to have the option to execute so-called terrorists and those convicted of “crimes against the state” such as treason or killing a federal officer.

The current administration is seeking to remove the cobwebs from the federal apparatus of execution, which was given a major boost by the last Democratic regime. By signing both the 1994 Federal Death Penalty Act and the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, Bill Clinton vastly expanded the federal death penalty and gutted the *habeas corpus* right of state prisoners to have federal courts review their convictions. Soon after, the assembly line of death kicked into high gear, reaching 98 executions in 1999.

In addition to shining a light on the bloodthirstiness of this country’s capitalist rulers, the Boston case starkly illustrates the all-sided shredding of civil liberties under the rubric of the “war on terror.”

Right after the marathon bombing, the Boston metropolitan area was placed under a virtual state of martial law as National Guardsmen and SWAT teams backed by helicopters and armored vehicles sealed off streets and carried out house-to-house searches. The federal dragnet extended to three UMass-Dartmouth students who were sentenced earlier this month to three to six years in prison for removing Tsarnaev’s backpack and laptop from his dorm room after the bombing.

With Republicans initially howling to dispatch Tsarnaev by branding him an “enemy combatant” and locking him away indefinitely, the Obama White House preferred to prove that the federal courts could just as effectively dispatch the accused, while adding a thin veneer of due process. How thin a veneer was evident from the moment of Tsarnaev’s arrest, when government officials boasted that they would not even make a pretense of honoring his basic Constitutional rights. Tsarnaev was interrogated for hours at his hospital bed without a *Miranda* warning and despite his repeated requests for a lawyer. With the Justice Department out to get rid of

Miranda protections altogether for alleged terrorists, the creeping police state now has another precedent for gutting procedural rights for the accused more broadly.

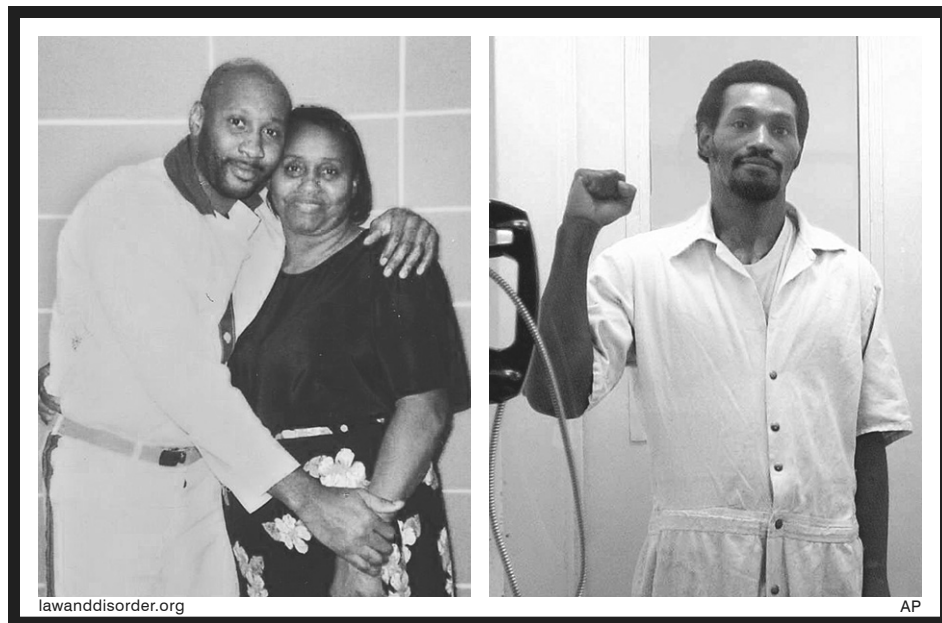
Once in custody, Tsarnaev was gagged with “special administrative measures” isolating him from other inmates and denying him access to the media. His visits, calls and mail were monitored and restricted to family members and legal counsel. Tsarnaev’s lawyers were also prevented from disclosing their communications with their client except for purposes of legal defense.

The U.S. government also asserts its right, both at home and abroad, to simply blow away those whom it views as “terrorists,” as in the case of Ibragim Todashev, a 27-year-old acquaintance of Tsarnaev who was gunned down two years ago in his Florida apartment after a 4-hour interrogation by an FBI agent and two Massachusetts state troopers. After Todashev was killed, one of the troopers texted his fellow officers “well done” and “great work.” Predictably, it was first claimed that Todashev threatened the officers with a knife, but a week later the Feds admitted he was unarmed.

When it comes to terror, blood-soaked U.S. imperialism has no equal. Its history of raining death and destruction across the globe is long and sordid—witness everything from the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and massive napalming in Vietnam to the Obama administration’s drone warfare in Central Asia and the Near East. Within the U.S., fighters for labor’s cause as well as black militants have been targeted for death by the capitalist state over the years—such as anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti, executed in Massachusetts in 1927, countless striking workers killed on picket lines by cops and National Guardsmen in the early decades of the 20th century, and the 38 Black Panthers assassinated by the FBI’s COINTELPRO conspiracy in the 1960s and ’70s.

The ruling class is ever eager to bolster its repressive state apparatus, an instrument of organized violence against working people and the oppressed in defense of capitalist profit and rule. Labor has every interest in fighting the federal government’s drive to strip people of rights

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Victims of legal lynching: Troy Davis, with mother, executed in September 2011 (left). Shaka Sankofa (Gary Graham) days before his execution, June 2000 (right).