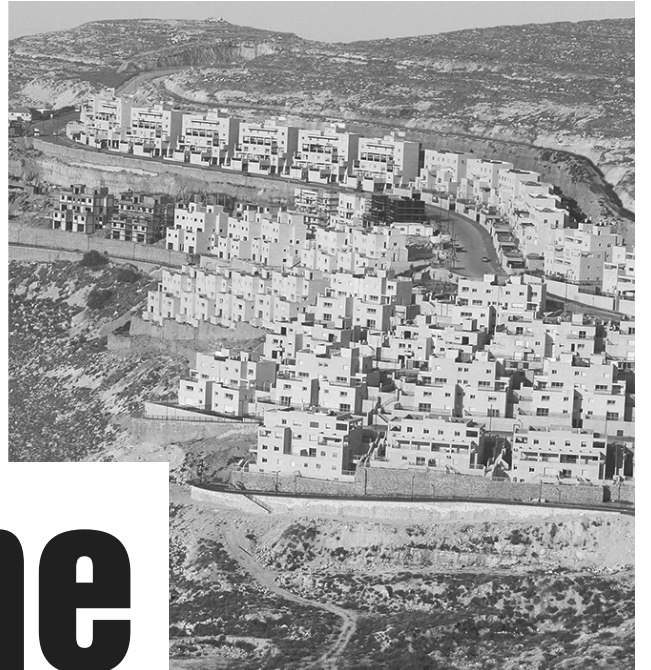
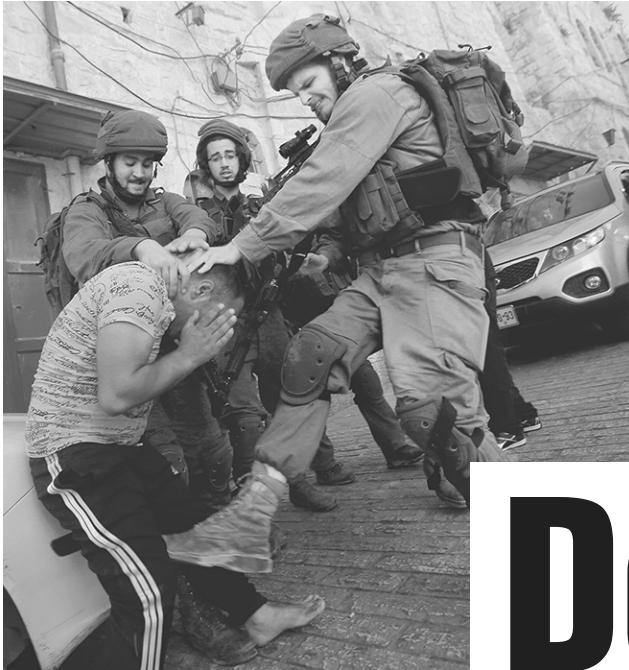


Down With Zionist Colonization of West Bank, East Jerusalem!



Reuters (above); Rex Shutterstock (center)

Reuters

Defend the Palestinian People!

The rulers of Israel are once again escalating their colonization of the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Tel Aviv has been further emboldened by the election of Donald Trump and his virulent anti-Muslim bigotry and denunciations of Iran. Trump has also nominated David Friedman, a staunch Zionist and prominent fund-raiser for the fascist settler movement, as ambassador to Israel.

In January, the Israeli Knesset (parliament) approved the construction of a further 6,000 housing units for Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It also passed a “regularization law” to retroactively legalize settlements that have already been built on private Palestinian land. The settlers are clamoring for Israel to annex Ma’ale Adumim, a settlement of 41,000 Jewish inhabitants covering an area almost the size of Tel Aviv. The construction of such massive, Jewish-only population centers amounts to de facto annexation and has always been aimed at extinguishing the possibility of a Palestinian state.

In a February 15 joint press conference with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Trump appeared to jettison Washington’s longstanding policy of nominally supporting a “two-state solution.” For his part, Netanyahu once again made it clear that his government would not tolerate a Palestinian state, declaring: “In any peace agreement Israel must retain the overriding security control over the entire area west of the Jordan River.” This assertion merely underscores the fact that since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, when Israel seized the Occupied Territories, there has been only one state power between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea—the Zionist Israeli state backed up by the U.S. imperialists.

As Marxists, we have a side in defense of the oppressed Palestinian masses against Zionist state and settler terror. At the root of

Left: Israeli soldiers brutalize Palestinian man in Hebron, September 2016. Center: Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu with Donald Trump at February 15 press conference. Tel Aviv is pushing for further expansion of settlements on Palestinian land. Right: West Bank Jewish settlement Givat Zeev, with population of more than 16,000.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Palestinian oppression is the impossibility of achieving national justice for geographically interpenetrated peoples within a capitalist framework. Both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews lay claim to the same land. The coming to power of the Nazis in Germany and the unspeakable crimes of the Holocaust played a key role in the consolidation of a nation of Israeli Jews. Refused entry into the U.S. and Britain, desperate Jewish refugees were forced to Palestine both before and after World War II. As we have explained in “Birth of the Zionist State: A Marxist Analysis” (WV No. 45, 24 May 1974):

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

The only way to achieve an equitable solution to the conflicting national claims of the Palestinians and Israeli Jews is through the overthrow of capitalist rule in Israel and the surrounding Arab states,

where millions of Palestinians languish. The national emancipation of the Palestinians—including the right of all refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland—can only be realized through a socialist federation of the Near East in which both they and Israeli Jews would exercise their right of self-determination. What is necessary is an internationalist class perspective that looks to proletarian rule in the region, as well as to socialist revolutions in the imperialist centers.

Today, more than half of the territory of the West Bank has a majority Jewish population. Following the 1993 Oslo “peace” accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which were brokered by President Bill Clinton, the West Bank was divided into three

administrative categories. The largest of these, Area C, makes up more than 60 percent of the West Bank, and its population today includes over 380,000 Jewish settlers and only 150,000 Palestinians. Nearly two and a half million Palestinians are crowded into the numerous non-contiguous areas that make up the remaining 40 percent of the West Bank (Areas A and B).

In Area C, Israel controls not only security but also all land-related civil matters, including planning and construction. Jewish settlements are built, while construction of Palestinian homes and other structures is regularly declared illegal. In 2016, citing lack of building permits as a pretext, the Zionist rulers destroyed the homes of more than 1,400 Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the two million Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip, for all practical purposes a vast prison camp, have been blockaded by Israel and Egypt and are subject to Israeli airstrikes. Eighty percent of the Gaza population depends on humanitarian aid to survive.

We condemned the imperialist-backed Oslo accords as a “grotesque bargain over the subjugated Palestinian people.” A Palestinian mini-state in Gaza and the West Bank would have been a partial and deformed expression of self-determination. But we noted that Oslo “does not offer even the most deformed expression of self-determination” but, rather, “would place the PLO’s seal on the national oppression of the long-suffering Palestinian Arab masses” (“Israel-PLO Deal for Palestinian Ghetto,” WV No. 583, 10 September 1993).

continued on page 2

Black History and the Class Struggle

The Nat Turner Rebellion and the Fight Against Slavery

See Page 4



Palestinians...

(continued from page 1)

That analysis has been fully borne out by events of the succeeding years. The Palestinian Authority was established as the Zionists’ police auxiliaries in the Occupied Territories. Meanwhile, the plight of the ghettoized Palestinians has dramatically worsened, and the population of the Zionist settlements has expanded more than threefold.

Petty-bourgeois Palestinian nationalism has proven to be a dead end. The political bankruptcy and abject betrayals of the secular-nationalist PLO have paved the way for reactionary Islamic groups like Hamas to pose as the only fighters against the Israeli occupation. These fundamentalist outfits are made up of vile anti-Jewish and anti-Christian religious bigots who seek to enslave women. In Hamas-controlled Gaza, Palestinian women are forced to wear the *hijab* (Islamic headscarf) and are subjected to anti-woman *sharia* law.

Israel was founded upon the subjugation of the Palestinian nation. Its establishment in 1948 was marked by the expulsion of some 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland. And the Arab regimes that went to war with Israel that year did so not to liberate the Palestinians but to seize their land. Since its victory in the 1967 War, Israel has encouraged Jewish settlement of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, including by providing subsidized hous-



Palestinians forced to line up at Israeli checkpoint in Ramallah, on way to Al Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem during Ramadan, June 2016.

ing. Today, there are more than 750,000 settlers on occupied Palestinian land.

The settlements are often designated “closed military zones” that are off limits to Palestinians, whose travel is severely restricted by military checkpoints and who are forbidden to travel on “Jewish” roads that are free of checkpoints. An apartheid wall ghettoizes the Palestinians, who are subjected to military occupation by thousands of Israeli troops. The heavily armed settlers act in collusion with the Israeli military in carrying out murderous repression against the Palestinian popula-

tion. *All Israeli troops and settlers out of the Occupied Territories!*

For Proletarian Internationalism!

Israel is a regional power with its own interests that do not always coincide with those of the U.S. Both Trump and Netanyahu have made much of President Obama’s supposed “hostility” to Israel. In fact, Obama’s record of support for the Zionist state was second to none. In December 2016, the lame-duck Obama administration abstained on a toothless UN Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. That was the only time in eight years that Obama failed to side with Israel in the UN. By comparison, previous Republican administrations, including those of Ronald Reagan and both Bushes, allowed numerous resolutions against Israel to pass. In 1991-92, the first President Bush even held up ten billion dollars in loan guarantees to extract a promise that Israel would freeze settlement construction. Of course, it was an empty promise; settlement building continued apace, as did U.S. aid.

In a December 28 speech defending the Security Council abstention, Secretary of State John Kerry stressed the Obama administration’s pro-Israel credentials. Kerry boasted that last year’s \$38 billion military aid deal with Israel “exceeds any military assistance package the U.S. has provided to any country, at any time.” More than half of U.S. imperialism’s entire foreign military financing goes to Israel. *Down with U.S. aid to Israel!*

Despair over ever finding a solution to the oppression of the Palestinians has led many bourgeois liberals to embrace the

idea of a “one-state solution,” under which Palestinians would fight for equality within Israel. Liberal *Haaretz* columnist Gideon Levy argues that the “two-state solution” is dead and “the alternative is one state” and that from now on the struggle should be for “democracy now, equal rights” (*Democracy Now!* 30 December 2016).

A similar sentiment is expressed by Ali Abunimah, cofounder of the online publication *Electronic Intifada*. He argued after the Trump/Netanyahu meeting that if Israel were to annex the West Bank, “pressure would escalate—as it did on South Africa—to end openly declared apartheid. Indeed there could be no greater boost to the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement” (*Electronic Intifada*, 15 February). If Israel’s rulers were to annex the West Bank, they could very well consign the bulk of the Palestinians to an unviable statelet like Gaza or drive them into Jordan. One thing the Zionist rulers would never permit would be a single “democratic” state with anything approaching an Arab majority. And, aside from the 1.7 million Palestinian citizens of Israel and the 4.5 million in Gaza and the West Bank, there are another four million Palestinians living in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Abunimah’s perspective of seeing “openly declared apartheid” as a boost to BDS goes straight to the heart of that movement’s strategy, which seeks to employ moral suasion to pressure campus administrations and American corporations to withdraw investments from Israel, while organizing boycotts of Israeli academic and cultural activities. The aim is to pressure the U.S. and other imperialist powers—including Britain and France, the historic occupiers, colonizers and oppressors of the Near East—to pressure Israel to stop being Israel. This perspective can only build dangerous illusions in the presumed benign nature of the imperialists—whose class interests are fundamentally counterposed to those of the workers and the oppressed of the entire world. It is U.S. imperialism that is responsible for the utter devastation of whole swaths of the region today. *All U.S. forces out of the Near East now!*

Abunimah also repeats the liberal fiction that divestment ended apartheid in South Africa. In fact, it was the mass social struggles of the black and other non-white toilers, centered on the powerful working class, that brought an end to direct white-supremacist rule there. Before the end of apartheid, it was the significant wage gains won by black workers and the instability caused by a growing strike movement that deterred investment.



TROTSKY

Sparked by an International Women’s Day demonstration on 8 March 1917 (February 23 by the old Julian calendar), the February Revolution in Russia toppled the autocratic rule of Tsar Nicholas II amid the interimperialist First World War. But the Provisional Government that came to power—and was supported by the Mensheviks and petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionaries—was a bourgeois government that continued to prosecute the war. At the same time, Soviets (councils) of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies were formed, posing a situation of dual power—i.e., whether it would be the proletariat or the bourgeoisie that would ultimately rule. Writing before his return from exile in Switzerland, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin outlined a course to turn the imperialist war into a fight for working-class power. Lenin’s struggle for this strategy was vital for the victory of the Bolshevik-led proletarian socialist October Revolution.

To achieve peace (and still more to achieve a really democratic, a really honourable peace), it is necessary that political power be in the hands of *the workers and poorest peasants*, not the landlords and capitalists. The latter represent an insignificant minority of the population, and the capitalists, as everybody knows, are making fantastic profits out of the war.

The workers and poorest peasants are the *vast* majority of the population. They are not making profit out of the war; on the contrary, they are being reduced to ruin and starvation. They are bound neither by capital nor by the treaties between the predatory groups of capitalists; they *can* and sincerely want to end the war.

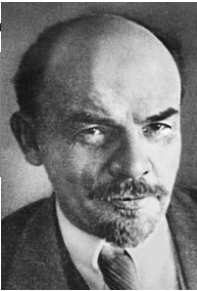
If political power in Russia were in the hands of the *Soviets* of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies, these Soviets, and the *All-Russia Soviet* elected by them, could, and no doubt would, agree to carry out the peace programme which our Party (the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party) outlined as early as October 13, 1915, in No. 47 of its Central Organ, *Sotsial-Demokrat* (then published in Geneva because of the Draconic tsarist censorship).

This programme would probably be the following:

- 1) The All-Russia Soviet of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies (or the St. Petersburg Soviet temporarily acting for it) would forthwith declare that it is *not* bound by *any* treaties concluded *either* by the tsarist monarchy *or* by the bourgeois governments.
- 2) It would forthwith publish *all* these treaties in order to hold up to public shame the predatory aims of the tsarist monarchy and of *all* the bourgeois governments without exception.
- 3) It would forthwith publicly call upon *all* the belligerent powers to conclude an *immediate armistice*.
- 4) It would immediately bring to the knowledge of all the people our, the workers’ and peasants’, *peace terms*: liberation of *all* colonies; liberation of *all* dependent, oppressed and unequal nations.
- 5) It would declare that it expects nothing good from the bourgeois governments and calls upon the workers of all countries to overthrow them and to transfer all political power to Soviets of Workers’ Deputies.
- 6) It would declare that the *capitalist gentry themselves* can repay the billions of debts contracted by the bourgeois governments to wage this criminal, predatory war, and that the workers and peasants *refuse to recognise* these debts....

For *these* peace terms the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies would, in my opinion, agree to *wage war* against *any* bourgeois government and against *all* the bourgeois governments of the world, because this would really be a just war, because *all* the workers and toilers in *all* countries would *work for its success*.

—V.I. Lenin, “Letters from Afar, Fourth Letter: How to Achieve Peace” (March 1917)



LENIN

100 Years

1917

The First World War and the Struggle for Proletarian Power



Israeli armed forces interrogating Palestinians in Gaza at time of 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel seized Arab territory, including Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: John Blake

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

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

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 1618, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email 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 February 21.

No. 1106

24 February 2017

In Memory of Martha Phillips

The following remarks were delivered by Jon Bride, member of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League, at a February 12 meeting in the Bay Area.

Twenty-five years ago, our comrade Martha Phillips was murdered in Moscow. She died in the front lines of the fight against counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. The ICL waged an international campaign to press for an investigation into this heinous crime, but it remains unsolved.

Russia was the birthplace of the communist program. Martha understood that Soviet Russia belonged to the workers of the whole world and that we were coming home to defend the gains of the October Revolution. For Trotskyists the USSR had never been a foreign country, and we can say truly that Martha died in her homeland.

Before joining our tendency, Martha had been a member of the American SWP [Socialist Workers Party]. There she took on the “pint-sized Kautskyites,” as she called them, who were seeking to build a “peaceful, legal” anti-Vietnam War movement. This was a gigantic popular front with liberal Democrats, whose purpose was to prevent a defeat for U.S. imperialism. Martha was won to Spartacism and fought for “Military Victory to the NLF” [National Liberation Front] and “All Indochina Must Go Communist!” She died in Moscow fighting for the same revolutionary internationalist program she defended against the ren-



egades in the SWP who had reconciled themselves with their own bourgeoisie.

Martha did not have an easy life. She had a handicapped child. In midlife, she began a serious study

of the Russian language. Later, she got a job teaching in a Soviet school. Her Soviet friends were astounded that any foreigner would live like that. She could have found an easier way to survive, but Martha wanted to get a better sense of how Soviet working people lived.

Martha was the leader and principal spokesman of the ICL group in Moscow. This job was not made easier for her, as a Jewish woman communist, in a period when anti-Jewish bigotry and backward social attitudes were proliferating in the final days of the Soviet Union. She was one of several outstanding women leaders in the ICL; her interview with Soviet women in *Women and Revolution* [No. 40, Winter 1991-92] is testimony to Martha's conviction that a Leninist party must be a tribune of the people.

Trotsky once said that all genuine revolutionaries live for the future; that is, they refuse to sacrifice principle for temporary expedient. Martha refused to allow herself to be daunted by the temporary setbacks of today or yesterday. When asked by skeptics how many members we had, she always replied: “A few less than Lenin had at the time of Zimmerwald.” She often made the point that at the time of the February Revolution, the Mensheviks had larger numbers, more writers, etc. But Lenin had a hard cadre trained in a revolutionary program. That is what made the difference. For her entire political life, Martha was a party person from head to toe, understanding that it was the subjective element that was indispensable to proletarian victory.

Seeing its continued profits threatened, U.S. imperialism began to look upon the South African regime as a liability.

By the early 1990s, the imperialists and key sections of the apartheid ruling class had decided to go for a “power-sharing” deal with the African National Congress (ANC). A key factor was the 1991-92 capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, which for decades had supported the ANC materially and diplomatically. As the Moscow Stalinist regime disintegrated, ending what the imperialists saw as the “Communist threat,” the South African rulers came to terms with Nelson Mandela and the ANC. Moreover, the end of formal apartheid did not end the oppression of South African blacks. Under the current system of neo-apartheid, the mainly black working class is still superexploited by the same capitalist class that ruled under apartheid. The ANC-led Tripartite Alliance government serves as black front men for the capitalist rulers, who are still overwhelmingly white.

In South Africa, the white capitalists *need* the black workers, and thanks to its centrality to production, the black proletariat has tremendous social power. In contrast, the consolidation of the Israeli Jewish nation entailed large-scale displacement of Palestinian labor by Jewish labor. The exclusion of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories from participation in the Israeli economy deprives them of social power, while increasing their marginalization and impoverishment.

We would support time-limited, trade-union actions against the Israeli state, but we are politically opposed to standing economic boycotts, divestment and sanctions. Such boycott campaigns serve to reinforce the view of a monolithic Israeli society and drive Jewish workers even more deeply into the arms of their Zionist exploiters.

Despite our disagreements with the liberal strategy of BDS, we vigorously oppose the vicious Zionist-led witchhunts against BDS and other fighters for Palestinian rights. As we wrote last year in “Down With Zionist Witchhunt Against BDS Activists!”:

“Equating anti-Zionism with anti-Jewish bigotry is aimed at silencing all opponents of the bloody crimes of the Israeli state, including a growing number of Jewish students and activists who support BDS. It also serves to bury actual instances of anti-Jewish hatred under a mountain of lies. Moreover, in the supercharged climate of the imperialists’ ‘war on terror,’ to be charged as ‘allies’ of terrorism is to be branded as people whom the capitalist state can and should eliminate.”

—WV No. 1089, 6 May 2016

There has indeed been an increase in anti-Jewish threats and attacks in the

U.S. in recent months. In January alone, 48 Jewish Community Centers received bomb threats. But these anti-Jewish incidents have nothing to do with BDS. They are part of the all-around racist reaction unleashed by Donald Trump's campaign and election victory. Fascist and Nazi scum have been emboldened to go after blacks, immigrants and Jews.

However distant it may seem, fighters for Palestinian rights must look toward a proletarian solution to the oppression of the Palestinian people. Like every other capitalist country, Israel is a class-divided society, with a capitalist ruling class that exploits the Jewish, Arab and immigrant proletariat. And while Israeli society has continued to move to the right, there are Israeli Jews who are sympathetic to the plight of the

Palestinians. Earlier this month, thousands of Jews and Arabs demonstrated in Tel Aviv against the demolition of the Bedouin Arab village of Umm al-Hiran.

There is broad support for the Palestinians among significant concentrations of the industrial proletariat in countries like Egypt, Iran and Turkey. These workers are exploited and oppressed by the imperialists as well as their “own” ruling classes, which reinforce their rule by pushing nationalism and religious sectarianism. These bourgeois rulers are enemies of Palestinian national liberation and channel justified anger against the subjugation of the Palestinians into anti-Jewish bigotry. Through the intervention of revolutionary Marxist parties and in the course of class struggle, the workers of the Near

East must be broken from all-sided bigotry and won to the understanding that they share a common historic interest in sweeping away all the capitalist ruling classes of the region.

The perspective of the Spartacist League and the International Communist League is to forge revolutionary workers parties throughout the Near East, including Israel, and in the imperialist centers, not least the U.S. These parties will be national sections of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. Only with the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a voluntary federation of workers states in the Near East will there be a full and equal place for all the peoples of the area—including Israeli Jews and Palestinians. ■

Letter

On Protectionism in Dependent Countries

7 February 2017

Dear comrades,

In our article “Mexico: Mass Protests over Gas Price Hike” in WV No. 1104 (27 January), we write: “Trotskyists do not equate protectionism in neocolonial countries, where it constitutes a measure of national self-defense, with the protectionism of the imperialists, which pushes chauvinism and seeks to bolster the domination of one or another imperialist bourgeoisie.” This line is correct insofar as our attitude towards protectionism as pursued by imperialists. However it is not always the case when implemented by neo-colonial countries. In neo-colonial countries protectionism can be adopted for national self-defence, as well as to subdue/dominate other neo-colonial countries and, just like in the case of imperialists, encourage chauvinism as well as to support the imperialist overlords.

For instance in June last year, Zimbabwe decided to ban certain imports, mainly consumer goods from South Africa, Zambia and Botswana. The Robert Mugabe regime justified this move by asserting its dire need to revive local industry. Despite acknowledging Zimbabwe's economic woes, the ANC [African National Congress]-led Tripartite Alliance government declared that Zimbabwe cannot

revive its industry at the expense of South Africa. To this end, the South African government issued ultimatums and threatened to retaliate, claiming that the ban violated the SADC (Southern African Development Community, a regional economic body) treaty. This squabble led to massive protests on both sides of the Beitbridge border. The Zimbabwean protesters were mainly concerned about the prospect of goods scarcity with the inevitable higher prices that would follow, while the South African protesters were mainly traders worried that they are going to lose business.

Some local media here painted Mugabe and his acolytes as being selfish and out of touch with reality, hell-bent on perpetuating the misery of Zimbabweans. They conflated the genuine concerns of Zimbabweans with business interests of the South African small traders and the bourgeoisie, who obviously favour the status quo. In seeking to overturn the ban, the South African bourgeoisie wants to consolidate its economic dominance, whereas by banning these products, chiefly agro products, Zimbabwe seeks to revive its key national industry, and this is being constantly frustrated by the Randlords. That the South African bourgeoisie benefits from the wretched economic state of Zimbabwe was hardly mentioned even

though this fact was staring many in their faces. South African consumer products, including canned fruits and vegetables, have a huge market in Zimbabwe.

Because of their vulnerable legal status, Zimbabwean immigrants are a boon of cheap labour for the South African bourgeoisie. From farming and construction industry to the service sector, these workers endure untold abuses. Meanwhile COSATU [union federation] and other unions are indifferent to organising them. Recently, in a move that will certainly encourage pogroms against immigrants or foreign nationals, the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance government announced that they are going to heavily fine companies hiring Zimbabweans instead of locals. This move is clearly aimed at gutting the remittances which are a lifeline for the Zimbabwean economy.

Another weakness of our formulation above is that it doesn't take into account what our attitude is regarding protectionism pursued by neo-colonies against deformed workers states, in particular China. For one thing, due to a slump in worldwide steel prices in the past two years, the bourgeoisie and NUMSA [metal workers union] have been calling for tariffs on steel imports from China. It goes without saying that this neatly dovetails with the thinly veiled, aggressive imperialist campaign to demonise China in the South China Sea, which aims at nothing less than counterrevolution in the most powerful of the remaining deformed workers states.

Comradely,
Kgori

Black History and the Class Struggle

The Nat Turner Rebellion and the Fight Against Slavery

We print below, edited for publication, the first part of a presentation given by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Alan Wilde to the New York Spartacus Youth Club on January 28.

PART ONE

In 1831, American slaveowners learned what it means to have the fear of God put into them. In August of that year, an insurrection was launched by rebel slaves led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia. Before their suppression, the rebels killed up to 60 whites in the course of a few days—the highest number to die in a slave uprising in the U.S. It was the unmistakable justice and vengeance of revolutionary terror. And it was met with the reactionary terror of the slaveowners, who crushed the rebellion and drowned it in blood. We honor Nat Turner's rebellion, as we honor John Brown's 1859 Harpers Ferry raid. These were blows struck in the cause of black freedom and heralded the Civil War that finally smashed the slave order and emancipated the slave.

Truth be told, while the rebellion and its aftermath are well documented, including through newspaper articles at the time, we know little about Nat Turner himself. As brilliant as he was, he was a black slave living in the South. As such, no one was going to document his life. What little documentation exists of Nat's life consists mainly of the record of him being bought and sold. As Thomas Wentworth Higginson—a radical abolitionist and the commander of the first regiment of freed slaves to fight in the Civil War—wrote in an August 1861 *Atlantic* article, “Nat Turner's Insurrection”: “The biographies of slaves can hardly be individualized; they belong to the class.” Speaking of Nat Turner, Higginson noted that he “did not even possess a name, beyond one abrupt monosyllable,—for even the name of Turner was the master's property.”

Many of the books and articles that address Nat's life before the rebellion base themselves on Thomas R. Gray's *The Confessions of Nat Turner, The Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, VA* (1831). Gray, a Southern lawyer and ardent defender of slavery, supposedly sat down with Nat after his capture and took down his “confession” verbatim. Many historians cast doubt on Gray's *Confessions of Nat Turner* for an obvious reason: Does one really believe that this slaveowning lawyer took down the words of Nat Turner precisely, without inventions or omissions? At the same time, “When the document is viewed in historical context,” as noted by Stephen B. Oates in *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (1975), “the confessions seem an authentic and reliable document.” Oates writes that the confessions are “very close” to Turner's statements in his October 31 court interrogation, and the details correspond to the slave trial records and contemporary newspaper accounts. (A very useful website, www.natturnerproject.org, has collected and collated the available documentary record of Turner's rebellion and

its aftermath.) So, with all these caveats, I will refer to Gray's *Confessions*, as well as other works, in this talk.

Nat Turner was born in October 1800—incidentally, the same year of Gabriel Prosser's planned slave rebellion and the same year Denmark Vesey won his freedom. His father is believed to have escaped slavery when Nat was a young boy. His mother, Nancy, seems interesting. One story has it that she was brought to the U.S. through the harrowing Middle Passage directly from Africa; another that she was sold to the Turner family by a slaveowner escaping the Revolution in Saint-Domingue, what is now Haiti. Whatever the reality, the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804, the world's first and only successful slave revolution, loomed very large over the Americas. How much of it was known to Nat Turner personally, I do not know. But it was well known among slaves and certainly among the slave masters, who dreaded and feared its implications for America's “peculiar institution.”

As a youth, Nat Turner learned to read and write. Oates credits this not only to his deep intelligence, but also to his Methodist owners who “not only approved of Nat's literacy but encouraged him to study

the Bible.” In Gray's *Confessions*, Nat is quoted as saying that his intelligence meant that “I would never be of any service to any one as a slave.”

Slavery is by definition an unimaginably brutal and deeply degrading institution that denies people their humanity. In North America, along with the genocidal annihilation of the indigenous population, slavery provided the basis for the primitive accumulation of capital. Slavery was *not* an incidental outgrowth of American capitalism. It was a fundamental component of its birth and development, and its legacy continues to define American capitalism more than 150 years after the destruction of the slave system. American society is still shaped by this history through the continuing oppression of black people as a *race-color caste*, integrated into the working class while, in their majority forcibly segregated at the bottom of society.

We do not know much about Nat Turner's family life. It is widely believed that in the early 1820s, he became involved with a young woman at the Turner farm named Cherry, and at some point they were married. To be clear, slave marriages, which were usually marked by the couple jumping over a broomstick together, had no

legality. One of the crimes inflicted upon black people in the South was the separation of families, with wives, husbands, mothers and children sold to different owners. One of the biggest fears was to be sold to one of the notoriously brutal, huge cotton plantations of the Deep South. As Oates notes, “For Virginia slaves, accustomed to a modicum of family life, Georgia seemed a living hell.”

Nat and Cherry faced that prospect in 1822 when Samuel Turner—their owner—died. While they were not sold to the Deep South, they were each sold to different owners: Nat to Thomas Moore and Cherry to Giles Reese, whose plantation was a few miles away. They could see each other from time to time, but they were separated. Higginson powerfully captured the horror of this reality in his *Atlantic* piece:

“This is equivalent to saying that by day or by night that husband had no more power to protect her than the man who lies bound upon a plundered vessel's deck has power to protect his wife on board the pirate-schooner disappearing in the horizon; she may be revered, she may be outraged; it is in the powerlessness that the agony lies.”

Newspaper accounts of the time reported something else about Cherry: Following Nat's execution, she was lashed and tortured to produce papers he had entrusted to her, after which both she and their daughter were sold to slave traders.

The Religion of the Slave

In his piece, Higginson notes that Nat Turner saw himself, and was seen by his fellow slaves, as a prophet. He was not, as he is usually depicted, a preacher—for example, in last year's film by Nate Parker, *The Birth of a Nation*. There is no question that Nat was a deeply religious man, and his fervor found expression in messianic visions.

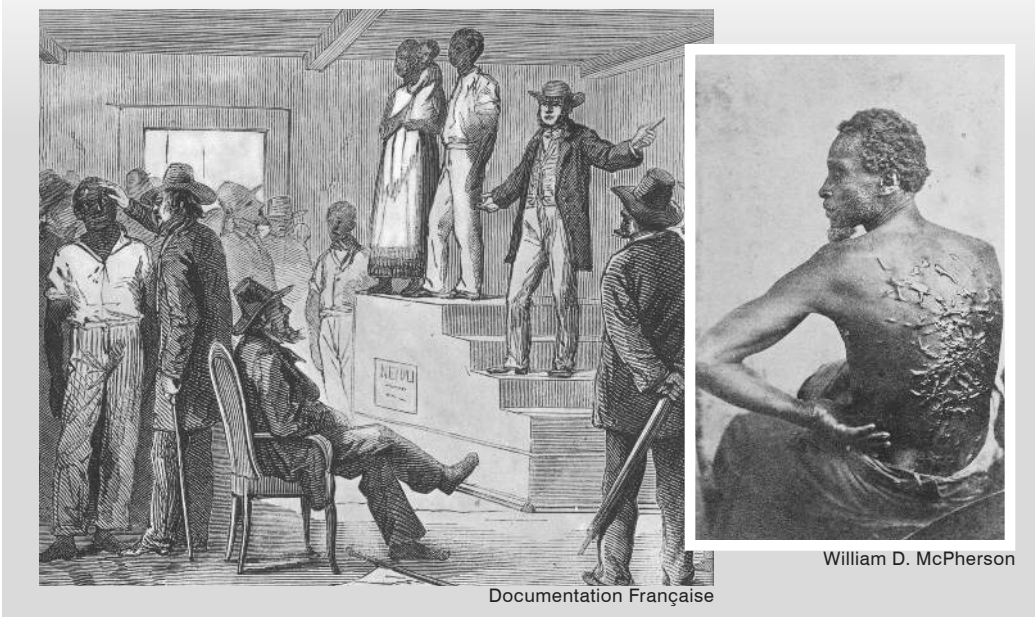
The religion of the slave was a contradictory phenomenon. It was not simply a reflection of white Christianity, but a unique, dynamic creation of black people on the terrain of American slavery. It preached endurance and patience as a way to survive the inhumanity of slavery, but also the idea that deliverance would one day come. It acted as a brake on the insurrectionary instinct of the slave, while at the same time being unable to fully extinguish the striving for freedom inherent in a people held in chains.

For slaves, gatherings for religious services were not only of religious significance; they were often political and social events. Indeed, for many generations, the church was the only allowed form of black social organization. Historically, even during periods of militant struggle, many black people remained tied to the church. It is significant that nearly every important black mass leader has been deeply religious or church-centered. But while the church has long been among the most pervasive organizers of the black masses, the religious beliefs of Nat Turner are hardly comparable to the reactionary godliness of today's black clergy. For a long time, the role of black church leaders has been to channel the anger and frustration of the black masses back into prayer meet-



Orville J. Victor

Above: 1863 engraving of Nat Turner planning slave rebellion. Bottom left: Slave auction in Richmond, Virginia, 1856. Bottom right: 1863 photo of Gordon, an escaped slave from Louisiana plantation, scarred from whipping, who later joined Union Army.



William D. McPherson

Documentation Française

ings and more schemes to reform racist U.S. capitalism, usually through the Democratic Party.

Nat Turner’s religion was based on a desire to drown the slave system in blood. His God was the Old Testament God of vengeance and retribution. For slaves, the story of Exodus, where Moses leads the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, symbolized not only freedom but also divine punishment for the wrongdoers through the plagues. Nat Turner captures this spirit in a passage attributed to him in Thomas Gray’s *Confessions*: “And now the Holy Ghost had revealed itself to me, and made plain the miracles it had shown me—For as the blood of Christ had been shed on this earth, and had ascended to heaven for the salvation of sinners...it was plain to me that the Saviour was about to lay down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and the great day of judgment was at hand.” Nat Turner’s rebellion was judgment day.

The Rebellion

Nat’s rebellion brought to life the worst nightmares of the slave-master class, revealing the inherently barbaric nature of slavery. For many months to follow, any rumor of a slave uprising sent the white masters and their families fleeing from their homes.

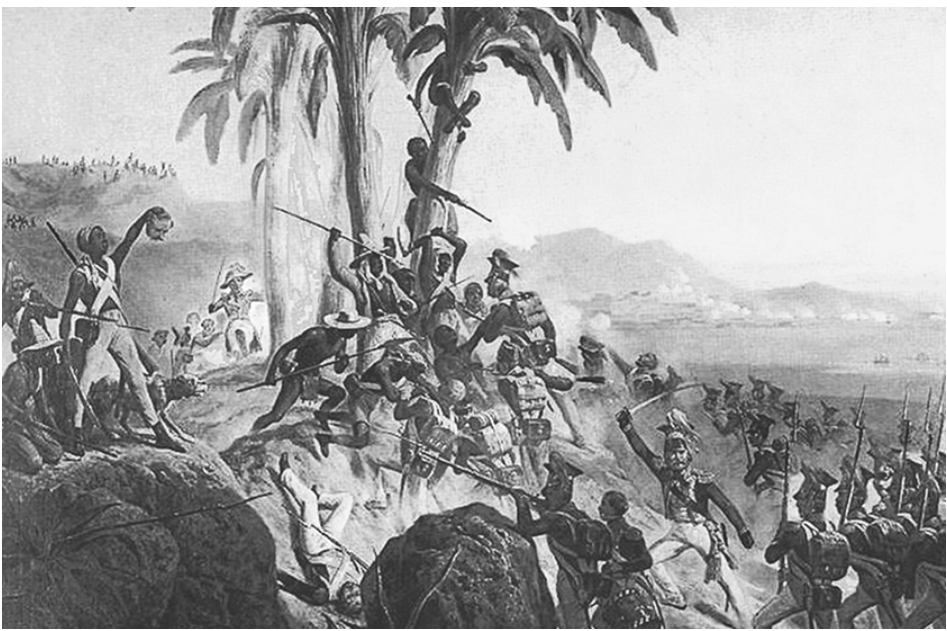


WV Photo
Charleston, South Carolina: Monument to Denmark Vesey, hanged for planning a slave rebellion in 1822.

The rebellion was not begun because of a particular incident or a particular horror Nat faced or witnessed as a slave. Rather, as Higginson writes, “Whatever Nat Turner’s experiences of slavery might have been, it is certain that his plans were not suddenly adopted, but that he had brooded over them for years.”

In February 1831, there was a solar eclipse, and Nat saw this as a sign. He managed to gather some muskets and set the date of insurrection for July 4, a day whose symbolism is obvious. But he was forced to postpone after he fell ill. On August 13, there was an atmospheric disturbance that apparently made the sun appear bluish-green. Turner took this as his final sign. He brought together his handful of confidants, no more than six: Henry, Hark, Nelson, Sam, Will and Jack. They deliberated for eleven hours. Higginson described that “two things were at last decided: to begin their work that night, and to begin it with a massacre so swift and irresistible as to create in a few days more terror than many battles, and so spare the need of future bloodshed.”

The rebellion began on August 22. The plan was that the seven of them would go out from plantation to plantation, kill all the whites they could find regardless of age or sex, recruit all the slaves they could to their rebel army and gather guns, muskets and other weapons for a drawn-out fight. It was a matter of military neces-



January Suchodolski
Haitian slave uprising against French colonial rule in Saint-Domingue, 1791. Haitian Revolution was world’s only successful slave revolt.

sity not to leave any of the slaveowners or their families alive to sound the alarm. The first house they went to was that of Joseph Travis, who had been Nat’s owner since 1830. The rebels, not wanting to reveal themselves too early, decided not to use muskets until they had gathered sufficient forces. They went to the bedroom where the master and his wife slept. Bringing down his axe, Nat struck the first blow against Travis, but it was dark and his aim was poor. Will had to complete the job and then kill the wife. After that, they moved on to the children, including a baby in its cradle that they had initially forgotten to kill.

I want to underline that this was not random, maniacal terror. It was part of an organized plan. For example, the rebels made a point of not attacking any farms owned by poor whites. As Higginson noted, “There was no gratuitous outrage beyond the death-blow itself.” This was not a war of blacks against whites, but of the enslaved against the enslavers. The slaves were property and all claims of ownership had to be destroyed. If left alive, that baby in its cradle could one day grow up and say: That slave is my property. Even the *Richmond Enquirer* at the time admitted that “indiscriminate massacre was not their intention, after they obtained foothold, and was resorted to in the first instance to strike terror and alarm. Women and children would afterwards have been spared, and men also who ceased to resist.”

This was a rebellion against the *institution* of slavery. In Gray’s *Confessions*, Nat Turner describes his owner at the time, Travis, by saying that he “was to me a kind master, and placed the greatest confidence in me; in fact, I had no cause to complain of his treatment to me.” This underlines that the issue was not the cruelties of a particular slave master, but the system of slavery itself.

As they moved from plantation to plantation, the rebels’ forces swelled to about 70 fighters. Within about 48 hours, some 60 whites were killed without the loss of a single slave. Nat Turner then decided it was time to strike at the Southamp-

ton County seat, Jerusalem, and to raid its armory. The plan was to then retreat into the Dismal Swamp. There, the former slaves would have a defended position from which they could further recruit and launch attacks against the slaveowners. Higginson thinks the attack on Jerusalem could have succeeded if only Turner had not made the mistake of waiting too long outside the Parker plantation, three miles from the town. Some of Turner’s men wanted to stop there to recruit more slaves for the rebel army. Nat was hesitant, worried that it would take too long and that the slaveowners’ militias would surely by now be on the move. But he relented.

A small white militia encountered the rebels outside the plantation, confirming Turner’s fears. They fired a volley and the former slaves fired back, dispersing the white militia, which would have been crushed had it not been able to hook up with another militia from Jerusalem. The rebels were forced into an orderly retreat but were able to regroup their forces. The next day, however, they were defeated by a white militia that was twice their size and reinforced by three companies of artillery. The few remaining rebels agreed to split up and try to recruit more slaves to their army. They never reunited. Most were captured; bloody reprisal fell upon them.

Reaction

The fighting in the rebellion may have been local, but the impact of Nat Turner’s insurrection resounded throughout the South. The white militia that defeated Turner’s band was reinforced the next day by detachments from the USS *Natchez* and USS *Warren*, which were anchored at Norfolk, and by militias from counties in Virginia and North Carolina. There were rumors spreading that slave rebellions were erupting everywhere, including in the majority-black city of Wilmington, North Carolina.

The State of Virginia tried and sentenced to death 56 black people after the rebellion, reimbursing slave masters for their executed “property.” In the hysterical atmosphere that followed the upris-

ing, white mobs and militias scoured the countryside, killing black people with impunity. At least 200 blacks were killed after the crushing of the rebellion. In one particularly gruesome massacre, a company of militia from North Carolina killed 40 black people in one day. Those accused of participating in the uprising were beheaded, and their heads mounted on poles at crossroads to terrify slaves. To this day, part of Virginia State Route 658 is labeled “Blackhead Signpost Road” as a commemoration of this racist bloodbath.

The legal response to the uprising was likewise furious. Virginia and other slave states passed laws that made it illegal to teach not only slaves but also free blacks to read and write. Other laws greatly restricted the few remaining rights that free black men and women had in the South. These included the right to assemble and to bear arms. One of the laws passed restricted all black people—slave or free—from holding religious meetings without the presence of a white minister.

As for Nat Turner himself, he evaded capture until he was found by a white farmer two months later. The farmer reported that Nat handed over his sword to him like a captured soldier surrendering his weapon. But needless to say, the slaveowners did not consider Nat a prisoner of war. On November 5, he was tried for “conspiring to rebel and making insurrection.” He was duly convicted and sentenced to death. When asked by Thomas Gray if he regretted his action now that he was about to die, Turner defiantly responded, “Was not Christ crucified.” He was hanged on November 11 in Jerusalem, Virginia. His corpse was flayed, beheaded and quartered.

Impact

Nat Turner stands in the courageous tradition of freedom fighters like Gabriel Prosser and Denmark Vesey. Gabriel was a literate, enslaved blacksmith who planned a rebellion in the Richmond area in 1800. He was keenly aware of his environment, including the increasing tensions between the U.S. and France at the time; he thought a slave uprising in the U.S. could possibly get French aid. He was inspired by the French and Haitian revolutions. His intent was to lead a slave army into Richmond, but he was betrayed and captured. He, his two brothers and 23 other black men were hanged.

Denmark Vesey was born a slave in St. Thomas, a Caribbean island belonging to Denmark at the time. His slave master was a sea captain who took him to many countries, including Haiti. In late 1799, Denmark Vesey won a lottery in South Carolina and bought his freedom the following year for \$600. A highly literate and sophisticated man who spoke multiple languages, he began working as a carpenter and set up his own successful business after gaining his freedom. But he was never able to win his first wife’s freedom, as her owner refused to sell her, meaning that all his children would be held in bondage.

In 1818 he was also among the founders

continued on page 6

A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1.00

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 6

TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE AND THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

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

No. 6, January 1989
\$1 (32 pages)

A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1.50

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 22

Race and Class in American History

Colonial America, the Civil War and the Rise of U.S. Imperialism

No. 22, July 2012
\$1.50 (56 pages)

A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1.50

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 25

Racist Police Terror U.S.A.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

No. 25, July 2016
\$1.50 (64 pages)

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

24 FEBRUARY 2017

5

Quebec...

(continued from page 8)

the pretext for more general repression. Far from changing anything, Trudeau’s rise to power has only reinforced this repression. Indeed, he has carried out more citizenship revocations in the first ten months of his mandate than occurred in the preceding 27 years!

Under cover of the “war on terror,” the bourgeois state seeks above all to divide sections of the oppressed against one another by pushing the lie that the greatest danger they face comes from the “Islamist threat.” In fact, the biggest terrorists on the planet are the imperialists. The capitalist rulers may have shed some crocodile tears in the wake of this tragedy, but not a day goes by without them massacring innocent people in the Near East, Africa and Afghanistan. Canada has always zealously carried out its role as a junior imperialist partner of the U.S. Its intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Libya in 2011 and its deployment of troops to Iraq have directly contributed to the deaths of thousands of people. *Down with the “war on terror”! Canadian, American, coalition troops out of the Near East!*

Trudeau immediately came to the defense of “Canadian values,” echoing those who seek to whitewash racism in Canada by claiming that it is worse in Quebec. J.J. McCullough, Anglo-chauvinist columnist at *Loonie Politics*, wrote of English Canadians:

“They complain about the exaggerated deference the province gets from Ottawa as a ‘distinct society’ and ‘nation-within-a-nation,’ and its various French-supremacist language and assimilation laws, which they blame for creating a place that’s inhospitable, arrogant and, yes, noticeably more racist than the Canadian norm.”

—Washington Post, 1 February

Statistics from 2014 show that Ontario is the province that has by far the highest rate of “hate crimes.” Sikhs in Vancouver, Native people in Winnipeg and blacks in Toronto experience the racist oppression of “multicultural Canada” practically every day of their lives. The fact is that English Canadian capitalist society is just as racist as that in Quebec—but with the addition of the Anglo-chauvinist national oppression of the Québécois that is a foundation stone of Canadian capitalism.

From the start, the politics of “multiculturalism” instituted by the progenitor of the current Trudeau—and always sup-

ported by the pro-capitalist NDP social democrats—have had the aim of denying the national rights of Quebec, forcibly contained within Confederation. At the same time, they serve to set Québécois workers and ethnic minorities (and anglophone workers in Quebec) against one another. Ethnic minorities, who constitute an important part of the Québécois proletariat, have no interest in the main-



Getty

Toronto, June 2010: Police brutally attack G20 Summit protesters, particularly targeting Québécois demonstrators for arrest and beating.

tenance of Quebec’s national oppression. The separation of Quebec would in fact be a huge blow against the rapacious Canadian imperialists, exploiters of the English Canadian and Québécois workers and countless others in neocolonial countries (notably in the mining sector). But Quebec independence under capitalism will not resolve the other questions of social oppression that suffocate workers and the oppressed. What is needed is the fight for the working class to seize power from the bourgeoisie, here and throughout the world. *Quebec workers and immigrants share the same interests. For a workers republic of Quebec!*

The fight for national emancipation, not to speak of socialism, is constantly sabotaged by the Québécois bourgeois nationalists and their lackeys on the left, who are no less to blame for the horrors of January 29. The anti-Muslim poison that they spread sows racial divisions between “old stock” Québécois and immigrants,

so it’s not surprising that the far-right rabble has been inspired. The Liberals launched the debate about the “crisis of reasonable accommodation” in 2006. But it was the Parti Québécois [PQ] and its proposed “Charter of Values” in particular that encouraged the racists to carry out their assaults in broad daylight. Since then, the Liberals have taken up the torch again with their own racist Bill 62.

After the killings in Quebec City, Amir Khadir tried to shift responsibility onto the naughty Americans, saying, “I hold Mr. Trump partly responsible” (Radio-Canada, 29 January), effectively denying the role of his own petty-bourgeois organization, Québec Solidaire [QS]. But QS has also added its voice to the racist chorus, proposing its own misnamed “Charter of Secularism,” which upheld the denial of public services to women wearing the *niqab* [full-face veil]. Amir Khadir also supported a motion put forward by the PQ calling for a ban on voting if one’s face is covered. Although the veil is a symbol and an instrument of women’s oppression, it is necessary to oppose the racist ban on the veil and other measures that target Muslims.

Since the bourgeois parties, supported by QS, have put their racist policies to the fore, fascist and far-right organizations such as La Meute, Atalante Québec, Odin’s Soldiers and the Fédération

des Québécois de Souche have grown significantly and do not hesitate to show themselves publicly. Only the multiethnic working class has the social power and the objective interest to defend the Muslim minority against the racist rabble that is becoming more prominent. But the absence of the necessary mobilization by the organized labour movement is due to its leaders, who sow illusions in Quebec’s bourgeois state.

However, the most immediate threat to workers and the oppressed remains the racist bourgeois state, and ultimately its forces of repression. On the one hand, the strengthening of “security measures” was not long in coming after the murderous attack, as the police immediately took advantage of the situation to increase their presence around the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec and other centres of Muslim worship in the province. On the other hand, the state is using the events to reinforce its repressive measures against freedom of expression and “thought crimes” among the entire population. Under the pretext of temporarily silencing some far-right fanatics and their spewing on Facebook, these laws against “hate speech” and defamatory libel will ultimately target the workers movement by strengthening the repressive arsenal of the capitalist state.

The bourgeois state is in no way an ally of the Muslim community, as shown by the police surveillance and arbitrary detentions it regularly imposes in the name of “fighting terrorism.” The opposite is true, as shown immediately after the killing by the brutal arrest of Mohamed Belkhadir, who was trying to help victims of the slaughter and was later paraded as a “Muslim terrorist” suspect. *Police out of the mosques! The workers movement must defend the Muslim minority!*

The interests of the bourgeoisie and its institutions are diametrically opposed to those of the workers, the Muslim minority and the other layers of the oppressed. The multiethnic working class needs its own party which will act as a tribune of the people, fighting all forms of oppression under capitalism—be it national oppression or the oppression of immigrants, indigenous peoples, women and all the victims of this barbaric system. The Trotskyist League is dedicated to the construction of such a party, which will lead the working class in a struggle to sweep this system of racist exploitation into the trash can of history. ■

Nat Turner...

(continued from page 5)

of a congregation of what was known as the “Bethel circuit” of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first independent black denomination in the U.S. The church was destroyed by state authorities in 1822 after Vesey’s execution. After the Civil War, it was rebuilt in 1865 by, among others, Vesey’s son. It was no accident that the white-supremacist murderer Dylann Roof picked that church as the site of his massacre of nine black people in June 2015.

Vesey was intent on leading a war against slavery. In 1819, he was closely following Congressional debates on the status of Missouri, which seemed to put slavery on the defensive. He began plans for a revolt with a close circle of friends, which quickly drew in growing numbers. He used his position as a lay preacher to

discuss insurrection plans during religious classes. He set the original date for the rebellion for 14 July 1822, Bastille Day, which marks the launch of the French Revolution. But he was betrayed and captured. Vesey and five others were convicted and sentenced to death; he was hanged on July 2. Soon afterward, another 30 black people were also executed.

These planned uprisings terrified the slaveowning class, whose system was based on open violence; in turn, Gabriel and Denmark Vesey understood that nothing but all-out war—i.e., violence—would bring that system down. That’s the context that Nat Turner’s rebellion must be seen in. His insurrection was the coming to life of Gabriel Prosser’s and Denmark Vesey’s plans. His cry was not only for his freedom, but for war against slavery. His impact extended far beyond those all-too-brief 48 hours.

A particular target of Virginia’s and other Southern politicians following Nat Turner’s rebellion was the abolitionist movement, which was blamed for “inspiring” the uprising. A “Vigilance Association” in Columbia, South Carolina, offered a \$1,500 reward for the capture of any agitator convicted of distributing abolitionist literature, while North Carolina and Georgia put a bounty of \$5,000 on the head of the abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison. At the same time, Nat Turner’s rebellion forced increasing rifts within the abolitionist movement. Would they defend the slave rebels’ violence? Garrison, a committed pacifist, declared that he was “horror-struck” by

the insurrection. On the other hand, Higginson described Nat Turner’s rebellion as “a symbol of retribution triumphant.”

Within the South, the years after the uprising saw a greater drive to defend slavery. The slaveowning states saw any criticism of slavery as an intrusion on their “way of life.” Among the most vocal in that regard was John C. Calhoun, U.S. vice president at the time and later the Senator from South Carolina. Whereas previous politicians such as Thomas Jefferson described slavery as a “necessary evil,” Calhoun praised it as a “positive good.” He denounced the language of the Declaration of Independence—that all men were created equal—as “the most false and dangerous of all political errors.”

He was an ardent supporter of nullification—the right of states to not enforce federal laws they dispute—and “states’ rights,” which were the watchwords of slavery and continue to be watchwords of racist reaction.

Above all, Nat Turner’s uprising was a precursor of the Civil War. We often make the point that John Brown’s Harpers Ferry raid, which was aimed at sparking a general slave rebellion, was really the first shot of the Civil War. It was. By that same token, Nat Turner’s rebellion was the “First War”—as many former slaves in Southeastern Virginia had put it—that laid the groundwork for the coming war of liberation.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Spartacus Youth Club Class

NEW YORK CITY

Women’s Oppression and the Struggle for Workers Revolution

Tuesday, February 28, 7 p.m.

299 Broadway, Suite 1618, Manhattan

Information and readings: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

Visit the ICL website: www.icl-fi.org

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

1106

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

Yiannopoulos...

(continued from page 8)

a campaign against “illegal” immigrant students by demanding the withdrawal of federal funds from “sanctuary campuses” and the prosecution of university officials. His partner in this witchhunt is David Horowitz’s “Freedom Center.” A racist ideologue and rabid Zionist, Horowitz has a long track record of provocation—from calling to purge leftist and liberal professors, to grotesque smear campaigns against pro-Palestinian students.

More than 2,000 people came out to protest Yiannopoulos at Cal, and in the end his event was shut down by Black Bloc demonstrators. Yiannopoulos *should be* protested, exposed and refuted as part of defending the ever-dwindling free speech rights of all those targeted by this provocateur and his band of campus witchhunters. But those who shut down the meeting, amid bonfires and shattered glass, fell right into Yiannopoulos’s trap, handing him the flag of “freedom of speech” to wave like a bloody shirt.

Portraying himself as the victim of “totalitarian” liberals and leftists, Yian-nopoulos whined that “the Left is absolutely terrified of free speech and will do literally anything to shut it down.” On Twitter, Trump threatened, “If U.C. Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view—NO FEDERAL FUNDS?” The media railed against anarchist Black Bloc “violence,” a chorus joined by none other than the International Socialist Organization (not a first). Opining that “this small group of adventurists was doing about as much to provoke the police to attack as I’ve ever seen,” a member writing for *Socialist Worker* online (8 February) praised the cops for showing “remarkable restraint”!

In fact, the cops originally fired pepper balls and rubber bullets at the protesters. Now they are working with the FBI in a witchhunting investigation into the protest. Thus, far from a victory against the forces of reaction and repression, the result of shutting down this creep was to strengthen them. However dim and misguided the anarchists’ actions were, we nonetheless call to defend the Black Bloc and other anti-Yiannopoulos protesters who get snared in the FBI and cops’ manhunt.

Free Speech, Racist Ideologies and Fascist Terror

In the weeks leading up to the Cal protest, a letter from faculty members appealed to UC Berkeley chancellor Nicholas Dirks to cancel Yiannopoulos’s event, arguing that it would “violate the codes of conduct that operate to keep the campus a harassment-free space.” Anyone who has set foot on American campuses in the past few decades knows they are

far from “harassment-free” oases—much less havens of radical liberalism, not to say Marxism. With the shredding of affirmative action programs and skyrocketing tuition fees driving out black, Latino, working-class and poor students, colleges and universities are increasingly becoming “free spaces” for right-wing and retrograde elements who think they can act with impunity.

Liberals and putative leftists appeal to campus administrations to enforce restrictive “speech codes” and “sensitivity training” as the means to supposedly combat racism, sexism and anti-gay bigotry. Slogans like “Hate Speech Is Not Free Speech,” which was chanted at the Cal protest, amount to pleading with the capitalist rulers and their campus representatives to regulate what people can say. In fact, Zionist forces have repeatedly wielded claims of



Byer/Sacramento Bee

Anti-fascist protesters assist a demonstrator stabbed and critically wounded during neo-Nazi mobilization in Sacramento, California, June 2016.

“hate speech” to try to shut down student organizations defending the Palestinian people by grotesquely equating criticism of Israel with “anti-Semitism.” Policing speech serves to strengthen the forces of repression, like the cops in riot gear at the Cal Yiannopoulos protest, which can and will be used against leftists, blacks and immigrants. Calls to restrict speech also help pave the way for the likes of Yiannopoulos and Horowitz to posture as defenders of “freedom of speech.”

Groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party as well as the anarchists argue that Trump, Yiannopoulos and Horowitz are fascists. This characterization only serves to disarm people in the face of the genuine Nazis and other race-terrorists who have been emboldened by Trump’s victory. Fascism is not a question of speech. Fascists are paramilitary action gangs whose purpose is the obliteration of the workers movement and racial genocide. And in America, that means they have black people in their sights. Home-grown American fascism, the KKK, was born out of the bloody reaction in the South following the defeat of the slavocracy in the Civil War. No less than the Klan, the fascist vermin crawling in the “alt-right”

today represent a threat to the very right of black people to exist. The fascists must be crushed in the egg by mobilizing the power of the multiracial working class to smash them in an elementary defense of itself and all the oppressed.

Yiannopoulos, Horowitz and their ilk are not fascists. They are reactionary provocateurs and ideologues. The filth that they spew is fed by the reality of capitalist class rule in America, which is rooted in the vicious racial oppression of black people, as well as anti-immigrant racism and sexist bigotry. Contrary to the “fight the right” protests against Trump, which look to the Democrats to save the day, the Democrats are as much the defenders of this capitalist order as are the Republicans.

Anyone who wants to see the real face of fascism should look no farther than the murderous assault on anti-fascist protest-

ers in Sacramento last June by the white supremacists of the Traditionalist Workers Party and the Golden Gate Skinheads. Dressed in swastika T-shirts and giving “Seig Heil” salutes, these race-terrorists came armed to carry out, in their words, a “fight to the death.” Eight anti-fascist protesters were viciously stabbed and slashed, with several hospitalized. Having faced knife-wielding Klansmen in Anaheim, California, a few months earlier, Progressive Labor Party reported that its members came armed with long poles to fend off and beat the fascists in Sacramento. That was smart. However, the end result of the demonstration overall was unfortunately not a victory. In the aftermath, the white-supremacist stormtroopers gloated that they had prevailed in grievously bloodying several protesters.

Expressing solidarity with these Nazis was suit-and-tie fascist *führer* Richard Spencer, head of the innocuous-sounding National Policy Institute, whose avowed aim is the creation of a white “ethno-state” in North America. At a meeting to celebrate Trump’s election at the Ronald Reagan building in D.C. in November, Spencer and his followers were videoed giving a Nazi salute as he declared: “Hail

Trump! Hail Our People! Hail Victory!” This was followed by the Nazis of the Daily Stormer website threatening to march through the streets of the small town of Whitefish, Montana, on Martin Luther King Day armed with “high-powered rifles.” Enraged by a town proclamation denouncing Spencer, who lives part time in Whitefish, the Nazis particularly targeted Jewish residents.

Among those in the Daily Stormer’s sights is none other than Milo Yiannopoulos, whom they describe as the “single greatest threat our movement has at this time.” Complaining that Yiannopoulos is “taking our brand, our symbols, and turning them against us for a neocon-Jew conservative agenda,” they threatened: “Real Nazis are going to show up at every show and confront him.” These fascist stormtroopers know the difference between their program of racist murder and a reactionary creep who grooves on racist provocations. And anyone who wants to stop the genuinely fascist vermin that are crawling out from between the toes of the Trump administration had better know it too.

The race-terrorists must be smashed through the mobilization of the social power of the working class standing at the head of all the opponents and intended victims of the fascists. We are proud of our record of initiating and carrying out successful united-front, multiracial mobilizations, based on the power of the trade unions, which *stopped* cold the Klan and Nazis in cities like Boston, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Philadelphia and elsewhere.

As for the likes of Yiannopoulos, our aim as communists is not to ban his meetings or shut them down, but to protest and expose his reactionary ideology. In the early 2000s, when David Horowitz launched his McCarthyite “Freedom Tour” promoting the despicable lie that black people benefited from slavery, the Spartacus Youth Clubs initiated united-front protests exposing this racist ideology from UCLA to UC Berkeley and the University of Chicago.

Black oppression is the bedrock of American capitalism and anti-black racism is the touchstone for all manner of social reaction. Our protests against Horowitz sought to win a new generation of youth to an understanding that the fight for black freedom in this country is central to the liberation of the working class and all the oppressed from the bondage of capitalist class rule.

We seek to forge a revolutionary workers party that acts as the tribune of the people, fighting every manifestation of the tyranny and oppression of this decaying capitalist order. It is by joining the fight to build such a party that radical students, young workers and others will find their place in the struggle for genuine equality and human freedom in a socialist America. ■

Spartacist

Black History Month Forums

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Race, Class and American Populism

Democrats, Republicans: Class Enemies of Workers and the Oppressed For a Revolutionary, Multiracial Workers Party!

BAY AREA

Sunday, March 5 2 p.m.

Oakland Public Library—Main Branch, 125 14th St. Bradley C. Walters Community Room (downstairs) (between Oak and Madison, 8 min. walk from Lake Merritt BART) For info: (510) 839-0851 • slbayarea@fastmail.net

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, March 4 4:30 p.m.

Metropolitan Community Church, 4607 Prospect Ave. (One block east of Vermont, near the Vermont/Sunset Red Line Metro Station) For info: (213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, February 25 3 p.m.

322 West 48th Street, First Floor, Manhattan (Between 8th and 9th Avenues—Take A, C or E to 42nd Street) For info: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Website: www.icl-fi.org • Email address: vanguard@tiac.net

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

Chicago.....

Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 12-3 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, Manhattan

Oakland.....

Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@fastmail.net
Public Office: Sat. 1-4 p.m., 1904 Franklin (Buzzer #407)

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Montréal.....

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

Toronto

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

Vancouver.....

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

24 FEBRUARY 2017

7

Milo Yiannopoulos: Right-Wing Provocateur Targets Campuses

Milo Yiannopoulos revels in being an in-your-face pig. A leading voice of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim reaction, he has smeared Black Lives Matter as a “terrorist organization,” condemned transgender people as “mentally ill,” launched a mob of racist Twitter trolls against black *Saturday Night Live* comic Leslie Jones, celebrated the sexual harassment of women as something they enjoy and described abortion as “one of the great horrors of civilization.” Most recently, in what he calls his “Dangerous F---t” tour, Yiannopoulos has been on a nationwide campaign on campuses inciting bigotry and spewing provocations against anyone he considers an affront to “Western culture.”

Described as “a crusader in a righteous cause, opposing the cultural tyranny of the Left,” Yiannopoulos and the Republican frat rats sponsoring him aim to intensify an atmosphere of intimidation and ideological conformity on campus. Parading in flamboyant attire, the openly gay Yiannopoulos is promoted as the “hip” face of the “alt-right,” which includes forces ranging from racist ideologues to outright fascists. His powerful connections lead straight into the White House, particularly with Trump’s chief advisor, Steve Bannon, the



Anadolu

Protest at UC Berkeley against reactionary provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos, February 2.

former boss of *Breitbart News* and poison pen of “white nationalism.” Not surprisingly, his appearances attract bona fide fascists.

Now, many of his allies are railing against Yiannopoulos for speaking positively about consensual gay relationships

between teenagers and older men, about the only unobjectionable thing he has said. The Conservative Political Action Conference has rescinded his speaking engagement, and he has resigned as a senior editor of *Breitbart News*. As Marxists, we oppose “age of consent” laws, which give the cap-

italist state the authority to determine at what age youth can engage in sex—the only guiding principle should be mutual effective consent. It is a measure of what a hot button intergenerational sex is for the forces of reaction that some of them have pulled the plug on Yiannopoulos, who otherwise has served as an asset in promoting their racist agenda and bashing protesters on campuses around the country.

Outside Yiannopoulos’s event at the University of Washington on January 20, an anti-racist protester was shot in the stomach by a Trump supporter and critically wounded. The cops let the shooter walk free, claiming he had fired in self-defense. A week earlier, Yiannopoulos had been scheduled to speak at UC Davis together with his “Pharma Bro,” Martin Shkreli. A former pharmaceutical company CEO, Shkreli is infamous for hiking the price of an essential drug for AIDS and cancer patients from \$13 to \$750. The Davis event was called off by the campus Republicans, who claimed protesters were endangering the lives of the cops who were mobilized to defend the event.

On February 1, Yiannopoulos was scheduled to appear at UC Berkeley to kick off

continued on page 7

Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste Statement

Fascist Terror Attack on Muslims in Quebec

The following statement, translated from French, was issued on February 8 by the Central Committee of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

The Trotskyist League condemns the barbaric 29 January attack in which six were killed and some 20 injured in a shooting at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec. The victims, all Muslims, were gathered for evening prayers when a fascist terrorist named Alexandre Bissonnette broke into the mosque and opened fire on the crowd. The attack came amid a racist campaign against Muslims waged by the bourgeoisie in Canada and Quebec. This poison is frequently transmitted on air by Quebec City’s “trash radio,” which is notorious for spewing a flood of hatred against “Muslims invading Quebec.” The tragedy also comes in an international context marked by the rise of right-wing populism, notably the rise to power of Donald Trump in the United States, elected on the basis of a racist fear campaign against Muslims and Mexicans, as well as the recent successes of the National Front in France.

All these elements certainly inspired the killer, but the fundamental truth is that this horrible event reveals yet again



AFP

Left: Funeral for three of the six victims of January 29 fascist attack on Quebec City mosque. Right: Vigil in support of Muslim community, Montreal, January 30. Sign reads: “Let’s Unite Against Hate!”

the real nature of this inhumane capitalist society. The slaughter is the product of the *inherent racism* of the class-divided Canadian and Quebec societies, racism that is necessary to maintain the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie.

The day after the attack, thousands rallied to show their support for the Muslim community. For their part, bourgeois politicians gave proof of their repug-

nant hypocrisy by adding their voices to the demonstrations of solidarity. Justin Trudeau cynically declared to the House of Commons:

“Last night’s horrible crime against the Muslim community was an act of terror against Canada and against all Canadians. We will cry together. We will defend ourselves and always be with you.”

—*La Presse*, 30 January

But what really horrified him about this

attack is that the image of a multicultural, democratic, anti-racist and anti-Trump Canada has taken a big blow. The bourgeoisie and its representatives don’t give a damn about murdered Muslims.

It’s now more than a decade since the Canadian capitalist state launched its “war on terror,” which targets the Muslim community in particular and has become

continued on page 6



Reuters