

Mass Murder of Chiapas Peasants by PRI Death Squads

U.S. Imperialism's Bloody Hand in Mexico



Palmer/U.S. News & World Report

The Mexican state of Chiapas has seen an ominous buildup of military forces in the weeks since 45 Tzotzil peasants were slaughtered there by a death squad operating in the service of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) of President Ernesto Zedillo. Despite their hypocritical condemnations of the gruesome massacre, U.S. imperialism and its Mexican lackeys are up to their necks in the blood of these defenseless peasants. The killing spree lasted for six hours, while nearby state police ignored the gunfire and pleas for help. Women and children were shot in the back trying to flee, the injured finished off with machetes.

Even as the villagers in Acteal were burying their dead on Christmas Day, Mexican army units began sweeping into



Funeral for 45 Chiapas peasants slaughtered by death squad linked to PRI regime of Ernesto Zedillo (right). Democrat Clinton has escalated military aid to Mexico to enforce Wall Street dictates.

other peasant villages and setting up roadblocks, supposedly to "protect" the inhabitants and to look for "illegal weapons." Zedillo has ordered 5,000 more soldiers into Chiapas, adding to the 35,000 heavily armed troops who have occupied the state since the short-lived rebellion by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) four years ago. Patrolling in U.S.-

supplied Humvees with mounted machine guns, these units are mainly targeting communities of the doubly oppressed *indigenas* (indigenous Amerindian peoples) which, like Acteal, are known to be sympathetic to the Zapatistas. On January 12, troops fired into a demonstration in the Chiapas town of Ocosingo, killing one woman and injuring two young children.



Velasco/Reforma

Many of these peasants live in "autonomous" municipalities in declared opposition to the local PRI political bosses (*caciques*). There are widespread fears that the government's latest escalation of military repression is aimed at imposing a "peace of the graveyard" in Chiapas and in other embattled areas of the Mexican countryside. Hundreds of terrified indigenous people have fled their villages in the wake of the

bloodbath, adding to the flood of refugees in recent months who have sought sanctuary from army/death squad terror. With many of their husbands and sons in hiding, village women have courageously confronted troops trying to break into their homes.

The EZLN rebellion coincided with
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Mexican Trotskyists Protest Chiapas Massacre

The following is translated from a leaflet issued on 29 December 1997 by the Grupo Espartaquista de México and distributed at a New Year's Day demonstration in Mexico City protesting the recent massacre and commemorating the fourth anniversary of the Zapatista rebellion.

The Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), denounces the massacre of 45 defenseless indigenous people from the Sociedad Civil las Abejas' camp of

the "displaced" in Acteal, municipality of San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas, at the hands of a paramilitary group. On Monday, 22 December, some 60 paramilitary members—in the service of local landowners and livestock ranchers, and sponsored by the PRI municipal president—surrounded 21 women, 14 children, 9 men and one new-born baby and riddled them with bullets. Many of the injured survivors were finished off with machetes. This is the bloodiest provocation since 1994 against the indigenous people of Chiapas, sympathizers of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), by the armed bands connected with the local authorities of the PRI—which Ernesto Zedillo heads. Workers revolution will avenge those martyred by the Mexican bourgeois regime!

Taking advantage of the scandal over this butchery—which would leave Peruvian dictator Fujimori dying of envy—and as high officials in the Mexican government hypocritically declare that they will apply "justice" in Chiapas, more than 35,000 army troops have already been mobilized to take up a position and close in on Zapatista areas, awaiting the order for a final assault. With ultimate cynicism, Washington announced its "astonishment" at the slaughter and called for an "efficient investigation" from the executioners themselves. (The high-calibre weapons used in carrying out the slaughter are "exclusively for official use.") The truth is that the war of extermination against the indigenous peoples and the starvation to which millions of peasants throughout the country have been con-

demned are the result of capitalist exploitation and the yoke of U.S. imperialism, now carrying out its plunder through NAFTA. For this reason, the Mexican regime militarizes the entire country as it imposes its starvation plans—to head off massive protests by the proletariat and oppressed youth.

As a revolutionary Marxist organization, despite our profound political and strategic differences with the EZLN's petty-bourgeois guerrillaism and its political support to the PRD, the Grupo Espartaquista de México unconditionally defends the indigenous peoples of Chiapas and the EZLN fighters against bourgeois state repression. The Grupo Espartaquista is guided by Leon Trotsky's program of permanent revolution, which argues that in semicolonial countries like Mexico it is only through the seizure of state power by the working class—supported by the poor peasantry—that there can be a solution to the crushing problems of the masses: for an authentic agrarian revolution, emancipation of the workers and liberation from the imperialist yoke. As a section of the International Communist

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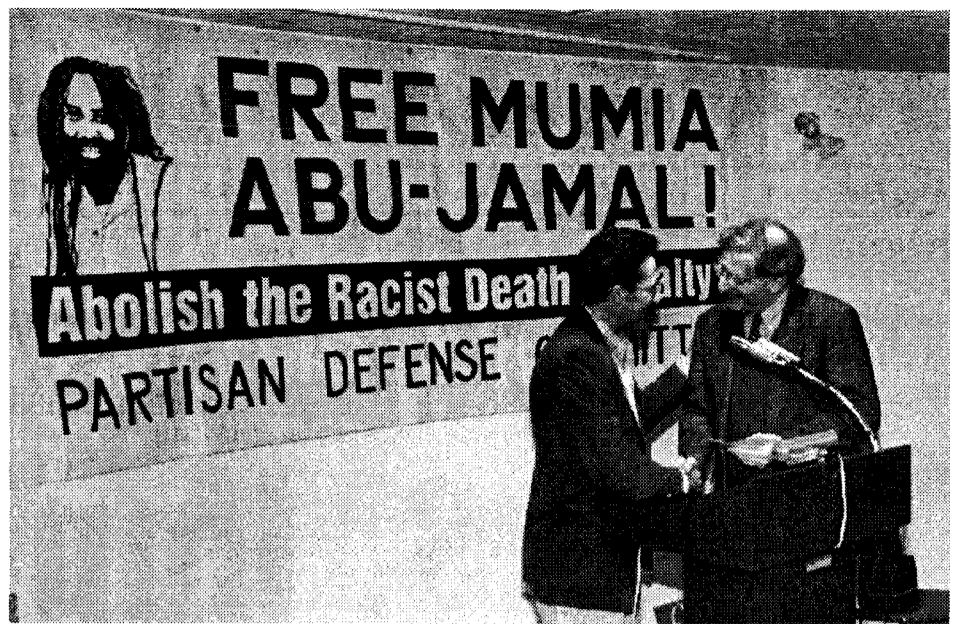
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Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! PDC Holiday Appeal Success

In December, the Partisan Defense Committee held its twelfth Holiday Appeal fund drive. Lively benefits held at local union halls in Chicago, San Francisco and New York raised over \$12,000, bringing together trade unionists, student youth, supporters of the Spartacist League and its affiliated Labor Black Leagues and other activists. In carrying out this yearly effort to raise money for the regular stipends sent to class-war prisoners and for extra funds for them and their families during the holiday season, the PDC is inspired by the class-struggle, non-sectarian defense tradition of the early International Labor Defense. As fliers to build for the Holiday Appeal benefits stated: "This is not charity—it's an act of solidarity with those behind bars!"

Participants at the benefits celebrated the release from jail last June of former Black Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) after 27 years in prison. PDC spokesmen underlined the urgent need to redouble efforts to free another former Panther leader targeted by the FBI's infamous COINTELPRO operation—and by the racist Philadelphia police—death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The New York City rally was addressed by Jamal's lead attorney, Len Weinglass, who reported on a recent trip to Denmark and an earlier one to cities in Germany, where he spoke about Mumia's case "each time to a full house with enthusiastic audiences." Weinglass noted a series of awards and honors received by Mumia lately: "He has been named honorary vice president of the second-largest bar



Gene Herson, with Leonard Weinglass at NYC benefit, donating his portion of "Anti-Klan Three" settlement to Mumia Abu-Jamal's legal defense.

association in the United States, the National Lawyers Guild. He has been named an honorary citizen of Palermo, in Italy. He's been given honors by a labor union in Berlin and elected vice president. And I've just returned from Denmark where a national foundation in Copenhagen awarded him \$7,500 as a fighter for freedom."

Jamal's appeal is now before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which has never reversed a death row conviction. As Weinglass reported:

"If we lose there, we fully anticipate that Governor Ridge will sign a death warrant. That will probably come sometime in the spring. We will then go into Federal Court.... So there's much work to be done. Your work has been fantastic up to this point; we have a base of support. We have mobilized a very conscious group that's working not only here but around the world. And with your help, hopefully, someday we'll prevail and someday it will be Mumia who will be speaking here about his brothers and sisters who are still in prison."

At the benefit, Weinglass was presented with a check for \$1,667 for Jamal's legal defense by PDC labor coordinator Gene Herson. This was Herson's share of a \$5,000 settlement won in a civil suit against the Chicago city administration. The "Anti-Klan Three" had sued for violation of their civil rights and wrongful arrest during a PDC-initiated protest against an attempted Ku Klux Klan march in downtown Chicago in June 1996. Herson said:

"Of course, we must provide the best possible legal defense, but the only way we are going to save Mumia is through a mass mobilization of the working class in this country and internationally. Everyone here tonight must understand this and must become not just organizers, but organizers of organizers—mobilizing the working class to secure *freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!*"

In our united-front efforts to mobilize the power of labor in the fight for Jamal's freedom, "we aim to suffuse the working class with the consciousness of its historic interests in fighting for all of labor and the oppressed against the *entire* capitalist system" ("Free Mumia—Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! For Non-

Sectarian, Class-Struggle Defense!" WV No. 679, 28 November 1997). At the same time, we welcome the diverse efforts, particularly since Mumia won a stay of execution in August 1995, that have been made by other organizations.

On December 6, Robert Meeropol addressed over 2,500 people at a Jamal defense rally in San Francisco initiated by Socialist Action. Meeropol is the son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were sent to the electric chair in 1953 in an anti-Communist, anti-Semitic witchhunt. Meeropol talked about how a courageous young Philadelphia journalist had given him an hour of radio time two decades ago to speak out about his parents' political execution and recounted how he and the journalist agreed that such a thing could happen again. That journalist was Mumia Abu-Jamal, who, in a cruelly ironic twist, is now himself facing execution for his political views. Also on December 6, a "People's Tribunal" in support of Jamal drew almost 700 people in Philadelphia, though it was blacked out by the city's two daily papers.

As the fight for Mumia's life and freedom gains strength, prison authorities have gone out of their way to isolate and silence him. Further evidence of this was recently brought out in a civil suit against Pennsylvania prison authorities. On December 8, a federal court heard arguments in Jamal's appeal concerning an earlier suit against the prison authorities' flagrant violation of his right to free speech and to legal counsel. In December 1996, Judge Donetta Ambrose had ruled that prison authorities had definitely and irreparably injured Jamal's legal defense through their systematic obstruction of his access to legal counsel by intercepting privileged correspondence with his attorneys and forwarding copies to the office of Governor Tom Ridge. Ambrose had nonetheless upheld the state's "right" to read Jamal's correspondence with his attorney in certain circumstances.

In the latest hearing, one of the federal appeals court judges, Richard L.

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TROTSKY

The National Question in the Imperialist Epoch

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union has led to growing inter-imperialist rivalries and a sharp resurgence of national chauvinism around the globe. In West Europe and the U.S., there has been intensified repression and terror against immigrants and national minorities. Meanwhile, military interventions and the imposition of International Monetary Fund dictates in the semicolonial countries underscore



LENIN

that the formal independence achieved by many former colonies after World War II has not freed them from the yoke of imperialist subjugation. As Leon Trotsky emphasized in 1934 in "War and the Fourth International," only through socialist revolution internationally can there be a just and democratic resolution of the national question.

Having used the nation for its development, capitalism has nowhere, in no single corner of the world, solved fully the national problem. The borders of the Europe of Versailles are carved out of the living body of the nations. The idea of recarving capitalist Europe to make state boundaries coincide with national boundaries is the sheerest kind of utopia. No government will cede an inch of its ground by peaceful means. A new war would carve Europe anew in accordance with the war map and not in correspondence to the boundaries of nations. The task of complete national determination and peaceful cooperation of all peoples of Europe can be solved only on the basis of the economic unification of Europe, purged of bourgeois rule. The slogan of the *United States of Europe* is a slogan not only for the salvation of the Balkan and Danubian peoples but for the salvation of the peoples of Germany and France as well.

A special and important place is occupied by the question of *colonial and semicolonial countries of the East*, which are even now fighting for the independent national state. Their struggle is doubly progressive: tearing the backward peoples from Asiatic, sectionalism and foreign bondage, they strike powerful blows at the imperialist states. But it must be clearly understood beforehand that the belated revolutions in Asia and Africa are incapable of opening up a new epoch of renaissance for the national state. The liberation of the colonies will be merely a gigantic episode in the world socialist revolution, just as the belated democratic overturn in Russia, which was also a semicolonial country, was only the introduction to the socialist revolution....

The national problem merges everywhere with the social. Only the conquest of power by the world proletariat can assure a real and lasting freedom of development for all nations of our planet.

—Leon Trotsky, "War and the Fourth International" (June 1934)

WORKERS VANGUARD



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

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CIRCULATION MANAGER: Mindy Sanders

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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 with a 3-week interval in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 41 Warren Street, 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 January 13.

No. 682

16 January 1998

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Social Democrats' Racist Campaign Fuels Nazi Terror

The following article is translated and adapted from Spartakist (No. 130, December 1997-January 1998), published by the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany, section of the International Communist League.

SPARTAKIST

Across "Fortress Europe," the capitalists have used terror against immigrants and other minorities as the battering ram for attacks on the living standards of the whole working class. This racism is being deliberately fomented by the ruling classes to poison the consciousness of the workers in order to divide them and deflect them from united struggle against these assaults. Fueled by these racist campaigns, in recent years there has been an ominous growth of fascism, especially in France and Germany. "Communists" and "Socialists" in Rome and Paris and Tony Blair's "New" Labour in London have placed themselves at the forefront of the bourgeoisies' drive for enforced austerity. With an eye to national elections in 1998, in Hamburg the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) ran a racist "law and order" campaign last fall against "foreign criminality." The *London Independent* (22 September 1997) called it "one of the most xenophobic election campaigns conducted by the left in post-war Germany."

This reactionary onslaught is a direct consequence of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe, brought about by the terminal bankruptcy of Stalinism. At the same time, this has unleashed and sharpened imperialist conflicts over the redivision of world markets and spheres of exploitation that had previously been suppressed to make common cause against the USSR. In order to compete internationally, especially against their American and Japanese imperialist rivals, the European bourgeoisies—with Germany in the lead—must sharply increase the rate of exploitation at home.

During the anti-Soviet Cold War, the SPD brokered relatively high wages and social benefits for its German working-class base in order to ensure class peace in NATO's frontline state. In 1989-90, as we warned then, the SPD was the "Trojan horse of capitalist counterrevolution" in the East German deformed workers state (DDR), while the former Stalinists and "born again" social democrats of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) sold out the DDR. Now that the Soviet bloc degenerated/deformed workers states have been destroyed, the bosses intend to destroy the "welfare state" in capitalist Germany as well. With its historical stranglehold on the trade unions, the SPD asserts it is better placed than Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) to ram cuts in wages and social spending down the workers' throats while dividing them by whipping up racism.

The background to the Hamburg elections was escalating state terror against immigrants and refugees across the country. Last July, the Social Democrats joined with the CDU to make the repressive "laws for foreigners" even more stringent. How these laws are implemented is demonstrated by the recent case of a Kurdish

refugee family deported back to Turkey with a suitcase which the cops had packed full of brochures of the outlawed nationalist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and pictures of PKK head Abdullah Ocalan. The BGS (federal border police) prevented the family from getting rid of the suitcase en route and handed the material directly to the Turkish police. After their arrival, the father was thrown into prison. In German states where the SPD is in power, deported Algerian refugees are handed directly over to the Algerian police before the plane even takes off.

SPD-Ruled Hamburg: Anti-Immigrant Police State

In power in Hamburg for 40 years, the SPD runs a notoriously racist administration and police. This past summer, the city administration adopted a new method to speed up deportations. They bought off a representative of the Gambian consulate to certify that black refugees, regardless of where they came from, were Gambian citizens and issue them passports so they could be quickly deported. On April 20, Hitler's birthday, cops raided the main railway station, indiscriminately arresting all the blacks they could find and locking them up in paddy wagons. When the people asked why they had been arrested, the cops replied, "We're celebrating a birthday today." The Hamburg port has ships

crammed full of refugees. When one fell overboard during a raid a year and a half ago, the police looked on without lifting a finger as he drowned. When a leader of the Black Student Organization filed charges against the cops for refusing to help the drowning refugee, he was barraged with countercharges from the police. Now, tuberculosis—whose current worldwide resurgence is the result of imperialist greed—has broken out on board the hideously overcrowded ships.

The SPD now governs in coalition with the bourgeois Green party, which demands "more police on the streets." What this means was graphically demonstrated after the elections by a mass "ticket control" of public transport in Altona, a major worker/immigrant district. Hundreds of ticket controllers took hours checking every single passenger while cops and BGS units with attack dogs made sure nobody left.

In this ugly racist climate, the Nazis felt the wind in their sails, calling on voters to "vote the original" instead of the SPD. Five fascist parties fielded candidates in the election, provocatively postering the city with their chauvinist filth. One of them, the German People's Union (DVU), fell just short of getting into the city legislature, but notably won votes and district council seats in working-class areas where many Turkish and Kurdish immigrants

live, which have been hard hit by unemployment. Nazis threatened to firebomb the office of the SPD's Juso youth group, dominated by the Linksruck tendency (connected to Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party in Britain and the U.S. International Socialist Organization). Scrapping plans for a mass race-hate rally on the eve of the elections, the fascists instead sent a squad of thugs to take over an SPD election meeting, ominously demonstrating their goal of again destroying—as they did in 1933—the trade unions and all working-class organizations. SPD mayor Henning Voscherau immediately abandoned the microphone to Nazi NPD führer Andreas Storr.

There are six million unemployed in Germany today, the highest level since World War II. The mass unemployment and social despair foster the Nazi murder gangs, while the Social Democrats offer nothing but chauvinist protectionism and racism. The fascists demand, "Jobs for Germans first." Explicitly avowing the same aim, SPDer Klaus Zwickel, head of the powerful metal workers union—which includes many immigrant workers—demands anti-immigrant "quotas." And SPD state president Stolpe of Brandenburg backed the anti-Semitic Gollwitz village administration when it refused to accept Jewish immigrants from Russia. Meanwhile, national SPD leaders like Gerhard Schröder call for "deportation of 'foreign criminals,'" screaming "Out, and fast." This strikes at the very heart of the integrated workers movement, criminalizing *all* immigrants *and* their children (whom the German bourgeoisie would prefer to deport en masse if they could). Thus they become fair game for the Nazi gangs, whose firebomb murders of immigrants and asylum-seekers since capitalist reunification in 1990 have made towns like Rostock, Solingen, Mölln and Lübeck synonymous with fascist terror.

For Worker/Immigrant Mobilizations Against the Fascists!

The Nazis were allowed to come to power in 1933 without a shot being fired, as the Stalinized Communist Party together with the Social Democracy paralyzed the best-organized workers movement in Europe. Against their suicidal policy of capitulation, the Trotskyists fought for the *united front* of workers organizations against the Nazis:

"No common platform with the Social Democracy, or with the leaders of the German trade unions, no common publications, banners, placards! March separately, but strike together! Agree only how to strike, whom to strike, and when to strike!"

—Leon Trotsky, "For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism" (December 1931)

In this tradition, the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) fights for *trade union/immigrant mobilizations*, including all the intended victims of fascism, to stop Nazi provocations. And, with Trotsky, we hold that the fight to stop the fascists—the genocidal shock troops held in reserve by the ruling class—is inseparable from the revolutionary perspective of the proletarian struggle for state power. Our task is to build the revolutionary internationalist party that raises the consciousness of the working class to achieve this historical necessity.

With this perspective, we intervened to



Spartakist contingent at July 1996 Berlin protest demands: "Stop the deportations! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!" Below: 1996 demonstration by Kurds in Hamburg, where SPD runs notoriously racist city administration.



stop the Nazis in Berlin-Hellersdorf in February 1997. In leaflets distributed at Berlin factories, schools and meetings, we carried out a political struggle before the eyes of the working masses and left-wing youth. We sought to arm the working class against the forces around the social-democratic PDS, which built illusions in bourgeois democracy and wanted to pressure the state to prevent a fascist provocation. Our goal was a proletarian-centered mobilization to stop the Nazis. The trade-union bureaucracy sabotaged participation by contingents of labor. Nevertheless, we were well prepared on the spot to split away and successfully organize those forces who wanted to *stop* the Nazis, making Hellersdorf a modest but politically significant victory.

The proletariat, with its strategic immigrant component, has the vital interest and social power to organize the unorganized; to fight for equal pay for equal work; for jobs for all through a shorter work-week at full, union-scale wages for all workers, including women and foreign workers; for full citizenship rights for all immigrant workers and their families. To achieve these demands requires *breaking* the working-class base from its racist social-democratic misleaders—the agents of the bourgeoisie in the workers movement—and its systematic mobilization for *proletarian revolution*. Down with the racist, imperialist “Fortress Europe” of Maastricht—For a Socialist United States of Europe! The sections of the International Communist League have intervened with this Marxist program in the powerful defensive struggles against the racist capitalist offensive across Europe. This stands in stark contrast to the various social-democratic and popular-front dead ends being peddled by the fake left, particularly the left reformists and centrists who claim to be Trotskyist.

Why the Fake Left Can't Combat the Fascists

Across West Europe, virtually the whole spectrum of centrist groups have called on the working class to vote for the likes of Blair's “New” Labour in Britain, the German SPD, the French popular front headed by “Socialist” Lionel Jospin and including the Communist Party, and the Italian Ulivo (Olive Tree) popular-front government supported by Rifondazione Comunista. Thus do the centrists further electoralist illusions on the fraudulent basis that these reformist parties and cross-class coalitions represent the interests of the proletariat.

The mass reformist social-democratic or “Communist” parties are, in Lenin's words, “bourgeois workers parties,” that is, parties traditionally based on the proletariat but with leaderships which are thoroughly bourgeois in their outlook and program. The task of communists is to *split* these parties by exacerbating the fundamental class contradiction between the pro-capitalist leadership and the working-class base. Parliamentary governments formed by these parties are *capitalist* governments administering *capitalist rule*—regardless of whether they rule alone or in coalition.

Like Lenin and Trotsky, the ICL opposes in principle any coalition with



Emboldened by official state racism, fascist skinheads march through Munich under Nazi banners, March 1997. Arson attack on Lübeck refugee hostel in 1996 killed ten people.

capitalist parties (“popular fronts”)—whether in government or in opposition—and we oppose voting for reformist workers parties in popular fronts. When bourgeois workers parties enter class-collaborationist coalitions, the contradiction between the reformists' pro-capitalist politics and their false claims to represent the interests of the proletariat is suppressed. As Leon Trotsky asserted: “By lulling the workers and peasants with parliamentary illusions, by paralyzing their will to struggle, the People's Front creates favorable conditions for the victory of fascism” (“The New Revolu-

tionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Fourth International,” July 1936). Today in Germany, the left-reformist Linksruck tendency seeks to recruit anti-racist youth into the racist SPD. During the Hamburg elections, Linksruck took *direct responsibility* for state terror against immigrants and refugees when they campaigned for the racist Social Democrats with the front-page headline “Vote SPD with No Illusions!” That was the newspaper they distributed at a demonstration called under the slogan “Prevent the NPD March!” a week before the elections, organized by a coalition of fake-left groups including Linksruck, the right-centrist Revolutionary Socialist League (RSB) and the PDS. The SPD deployed 2,000 cops in full riot gear against the demonstrators, even as the NPD Nazis were busting up the SPD election rally that same day. But the various calls and propaganda for the anti-fascist protest were *silent* on the racist state terror instigated by the SPD. The demonstration served only to give an “anti-fascist” cover to the SPD. That could be seen clearly at an August 26 planning meeting, where an uproar broke out when Spartakist spokesmen pointed out that it is the politics of the Social Democracy and its reformist and centrist tails which give the fascists a green light.



Trade unionists march against threatened job cuts in Ruhr region, February 1997, only weeks before SPD tops sold out huge miners strike. Turkish and Kurdish workers are key component of proletariat in Germany.

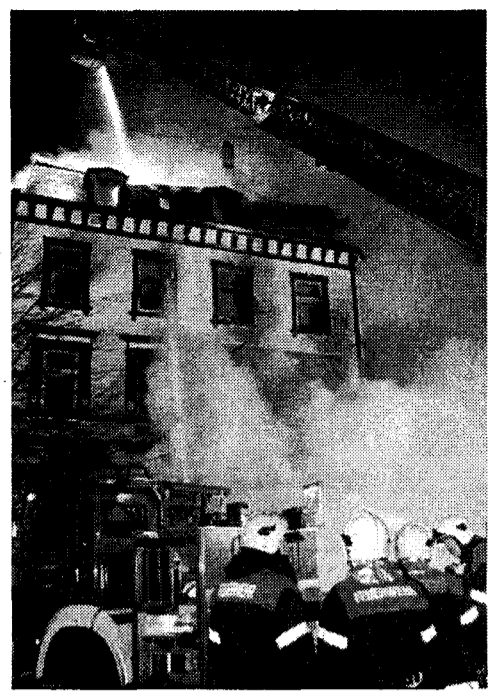
emboldened and strengthened. Subsequent events, not least the fascist disruption of the SPD rally in Hamburg, have proved our assessment: the Nazis are showing increasing boldness and have consciously taken aim at the workers movement.

Responsibility for the defeat at Munich also lies with the RSB, which helped organize the diversionary “anti-fascist” demonstration dominated by the Greens. At the protest, Nick Brauns, then in the

for hours. But the SPD-loyal *Linksruck* newspaper proclaimed “The Victory of Munich” in a banner headline in its April issue. Why? Because thousands of anti-racist protesters poured out into the streets. But they were *diverted* into impotent protest rallies kilometers away from the fascist provocation by fake leftists like Linksruck. And the SPD and DGB trade-union federation bureaucrats *dembolized* the unions. We were unique in warning at the time that Munich was a big defeat for immigrants, leftists and the entire working class, and that as a result Nazi terror would be significantly

emboldened and strengthened. Subsequent events, not least the fascist disruption of the SPD rally in Hamburg, have proved our assessment: the Nazis are showing increasing boldness and have consciously taken aim at the workers movement.

At the protest, Nick Brauns, then in the



DPA

RSB, appealed to “my ladies and gentlemen police officers” to stop protecting the fascists. The RSB has since split, losing most of its Munich local, including self-proclaimed “left oppositionists” Braun and Max Brym, who are now building a “left” caucus in the thoroughly reformist PDS. Having groveled before the SPD/DGB reformists in Munich in March, they now pose as opponents of the SPD—presumably because of its extremely racist election campaign. This is only a ruse, because the equally reformist PDS is in fact a *back door* to the SPD and *wants* to bring the SPD to power in hopes of one day entering the government itself. The fake leftists backing the PDS are simply part of the “syphilitic chain” supporting the SPD, which in turn serves the German bourgeoisie.

On November 8, the eve of the anniversary of the 1938 Nazi “Kristallnacht” pogrom which heralded the Holocaust, the Nazis again threatened a mass rally, this time in front of the Munich SPD headquarters. In response, the state banned *all* demonstrations. Brym revealed his touching faith in bourgeois legality by leading PDS protesters that day in reading passages from the German constitution aloud *to the police who surrounded them*. The “ladies and gentlemen” of the police confiscated the text and filed charges against Brym. We demand: Drop all charges against Brym! The left-reformist International Socialists went even further and hailed the ban pushed by the SPD, running the headline “Munich, 8 November: Nazi March Prevented!” (*Linke Offensive*, December 1997). The article maintained that, despite the last-minute defection of the SPD, an “alliance” of 40 organizations had been “strong enough to force the court to ban the Nazi march”—even though the “alliance” march had also been banned.

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

In the 1930s, the SPD's reliance on the “democratic” Weimar constitution and the Prussian police prepared the way for Hitler. Speaking of the armed fist of the

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Publication of the
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The Main Enemy Is at Home!

The Leninist Struggle Against Imperialism

We publish below, in edited form, an internal educational presentation given at a Spartacist League meeting in New York City earlier this month by comrade Mark Douglass of the New York SL and Spartacus Youth Club.

A study of V. I. Lenin's 1916 work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, is not only timely in light of the current collapse of the Southeast Asian "economic miracle," but crucial for arming our party in the more general context of the post-Soviet "New World Order." After being held up for years as a model of how countries of the so-called Third World can overcome backwardness and join the ranks of the developed world, the "Asian tigers" have begun a sharp financial descent whose casualties and potential casualties include the most powerful industrial and financial institutions of the region. Set against the backdrop of a lengthy recession in the region's dominant imperialist power, Japan, this has provoked speculation as to whether the crisis will be contained in Asia or will have a significant negative impact on the U.S. and European economies, ushering in a worldwide depression.

After the initial drop on the Hong Kong stock market, share prices on the New York Stock Exchange fell so sharply last October that trading was halted for the first time in 16 years. Bourgeois economists seized on a significant rebound of the markets the following day to convince themselves that this was simply a necessary and healthy "adjustment." Not only will the robust U.S. economy not enter a recession, said the more optimistic commentators, but its strength will prop up the world economy as a whole. Like Tolstoy's character Ivan Ilyich, the bourgeoisie nervously consoles itself that the illness is only minor and temporary when they sense something far more serious.

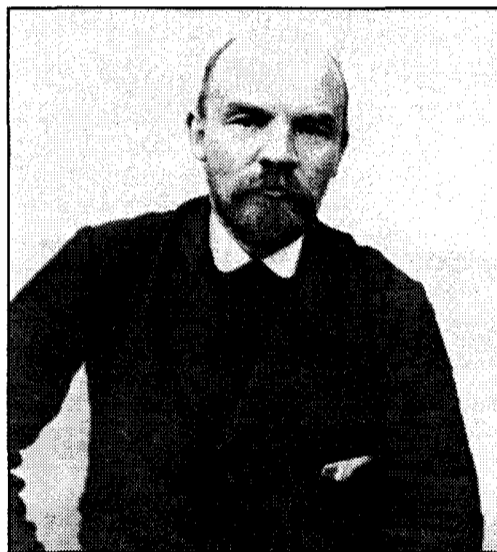
But as the Asian economic decline deepens, the behavior of the U.S. market was more aptly captured in a cartoon in the London *Economist* in which a broker bungee-jumps headfirst out of the window of a Wall Street firm. It is now generally accepted that the current crisis in East and Southeast Asia will not be resolved any time soon and that the recession in Japan will deepen. Whether or not the current collapse will lead

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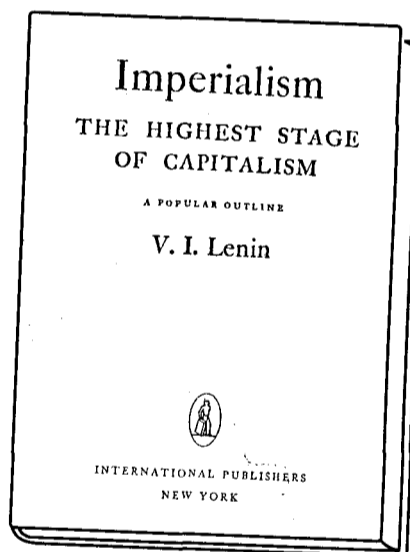


Textile workers in Bangladesh. Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin analyzed imperialism as stage of capitalism marked by dominance of finance capital and subjugation of colonial and semicolonial countries.

Salgado/Magnum



P.A. Otsup



directly to a worldwide depression is not yet clear. What is clear is that, rather than reflecting some temporary or superficial feature of capitalism, the current events reflect the fundamental workings of this economic system.

Internationalism Is Key

The strong performance of the U.S. economy in recent years and the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union led bourgeois economists to project a new stage of

capitalism in which the periodic and devastating crashes described by Karl Marx well over a century ago are effectively controlled, leading to more or less steady growth. Since Marx exposed the insoluble contradictions inherent in capitalism, many a bourgeois spokesman has claimed this to be a feature only of the capitalism of Marx's time. From Keynesian economics to "braking mechanisms" on the stock exchanges, the bourgeoisie has desperately sought the magic bullet which will

prevent the damned "periodic crises" analyzed by Marx. Now, as so often in the past, bourgeois economists are scrambling in a desperate attempt to salvage theories that new events have shown to be utterly bankrupt.

Early in this century, German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky tried to deny that the workings of the capitalist economic system necessarily lead to colonial subjugation and inter-imperialist war. As the leading theoretician of the Second International, Kautsky was sometimes known as the "Pope of Marxism," but he moved right in reaction to the defeat of the 1905 Russian Revolution and the congealing rightism of the German Social Democracy, occupying a centrist position between the party leadership and the left wing of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Kautsky argued that imperialism was not a necessary product of capitalism at its highest stage of development and claimed that the competing interests of massive capitalist enterprises, monopolist cartels, could be resolved peacefully through agreements to jointly exploit the world.

A significant part of Lenin's *Imperialism* is a polemic against Kautsky's theory. The development of monopolies tends to suppress competition within individual countries. But Lenin documented how worldwide competition on an unprecedented scale between these enormous trusts and cartels led to a scramble by the various imperialist bourgeoisies to carve the world up into markets and spheres of exploitation under the domination of one or another power, leading ultimately to a war which engulfed the whole world in 1914-18. Today, as in Lenin's time, this competition pushes toward inter-imperialist war.

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union has significantly altered the world which we as a revolutionary party seek to intervene in and change. Far from eliminating the contradictions of capitalism, the post-Soviet world is characterized by more and more frenzied competition between the world's dominant imperialisms—the U.S., Japan and Germany. The U.S.-led anti-Soviet coalition which tended to dampen such inter-imperialist competition has given way to a mad scramble to redivide the world. Just as U.S. imperialism incinerated Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 as a warning of the impending Cold

Dietz Verlag Berlin



Der Hauptfeind steht im eigenen Land!

Es ist seit 10 Monaten, seit dem Angriff Oesterreichs auf Serbien, täglich zu erwarten war, ist eingetreten: der Krieg mit Italien ist da.

Jede Stromschnelle werden die italienischen Streitkräfte. Aber sie sind nicht als die Vorbereitungen der deutschen und österreichischen Kriegshäher, jene Kampfgruppen am Kriegsausbruch. Welche Streitkräfte Gruppen!

German soldiers at the Marne River at outbreak of World War I, August 1914. Revolutionary socialist Karl Liebknecht authored statement of proletarian opposition to the imperialist war, "The Main Enemy Is at Home!"



War to the Soviet Union, the slaughter of over a hundred thousand Iraqis in 1991 was meant to assert Washington's unquestioned dominance as the "one super-power" in the "New World Order." But while the end of World War II signaled the emergence of the U.S. as the dominant imperialist power, the end of the Cold War sees a growing challenge to this position by the Japanese and German imperialists.

Writing in the years leading up to World War II, Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, had the following to say about the tasks of revolutionaries:

"The first prerequisite for success is the *training of the party cadres* in the correct understanding of all the conditions of imperialist war and of all the political processes that accompany it. Woe to that party that confines itself in this burning question to general phrases and abstract slogans! The bloody events will crash over its head and smash it.

"It is necessary to set up special circles for the study of the political experiences of the war of 1914-18 (ideological preparations for the war by the imperialists, misleading of public opinion by military headquarters through the patriotic press, the role of the antithesis defense-attack; groupings in the proletarian camp, the isolation of the Marxist elements, etc. etc.)"

—"War and the Fourth International" (June 1934)

That the Bolshevik Party had infused its members with this understanding of the first inter-imperialist world war was a prerequisite for their irreconcilable opposition to it. Had they not stood firm during the onslaught of patriotism which swept over the working class at the beginning of the war, there never would have been a Russian Revolution. Kautsky, on the other hand, found himself on the wrong side of the barricades—amnestying his "own" bourgeoisie. Like the Bolsheviks in World War I and the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party in World War II, our party must understand the nature of imperialism and the wars which flow from it so that we can mobilize to oppose these needless slaughters with a fight for proletarian power. To this end, I want to look more closely at the fundamental premises presented by Lenin in his writings on the subject.

Monopolies and Finance Capital

The starting point for Lenin's study was the emergence of large capitalist enterprises which more and more dominated huge sections of the economy. While the ideologues of capitalism pointed to free competition as the hallmark and strength of this system, Lenin described a reality that looked different. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 1873, a lengthy period ensued in which the richest capitalists began extending their investment and control throughout a particular industry and into many different industries. These cartels were the precursors of the massive corporations that are today mistakenly termed "multinationals."

The depression of 1900-03, like every depression, drove large numbers of capitalists into bankruptcy. The cartels proved to have an advantage in surviving the

wild fluctuations of the capitalist business cycle. While the cartels had not been sufficiently built up by 1873 and largely failed during the economic crisis of that year, they soon established themselves as a permanent and dominant feature of the capitalist economic system. Part of the advantage that the cartels had over their competitors flowed from economy of scale; they were able to buy what they needed in larger quantities and thus get them cheaper. Having more capital, these companies were also able to employ more advanced technology. Of course, larger companies had always been able to produce their products more cheaply for these reasons. In fact, this is why they began to monopolize huge sections of the market to begin with.

Cartels had two advantages over their

monopoly, the anarchy of production is increased in the system as a whole. As Lenin remarked in his book,

"The disparity between the development of agriculture and that of industry, which is characteristic of capitalism in general, is increased. The privileged position of the most highly cartelised, so-called *heavy* industry, especially coal and iron, causes 'a still greater lack of co-ordination' in other branches of industry."

Moreover, monopolies and cartels are still subject to the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, thereby leading to periodic sharp cutbacks in investment, production and employment.

Another feature that emerged at the turn of the century was the joint-stock company. Heightened competition meant that only those with access to large



Protest in South Korea against austerity dictated by U.S.-dominated IMF. Asian financial crisis could spark outpouring of struggle by combative working class.

predecessors. By investing in a number of different industries, the cartel was better able to weather recessions and depressions, offsetting losses in one branch of operations with gains in others. In addition, by having more leeway to sell products for a certain period at a loss and by moving to control all branches of a given industry—including the sources of raw materials—the cartel was able to employ all sorts of methods to drive its competitors out of business.

So one of the characteristics of imperialism was the domination of the market by huge business enterprises. As Russian Bolsheviks Nikolai Bukharin and Evgeny Preobrazhensky put it in *The ABC of Communism* (1922), "Free competition" has been replaced by the domination of capitalist combines, by the rule of syndicates and trusts." The dominance of these massive companies has continued to deepen since Lenin's time. At present, 300 firms control fully one-quarter of the productive assets of the world.

It was argued by some that the dominance of a small number of huge companies would add an element of planning to the capitalist economy, counteracting the anarchy of production described by Marx. But while planning is instituted to a certain degree in the various branches of industry controlled by a particular

amounts of capital would survive. The solution was the creation of corporations which traded shares on the stock market. Rather than "democratizing" capitalism, as some of Lenin's contemporaries maintained, this allowed the capitalists to greatly increase the available capital under their control. Since a capitalist normally needs to own no more than one-third of the shares of a corporation to prevent the myriad other scattered shareholders from exerting any real control, he can triple the amount of capital at his disposal by issuing shares.

With the emergence of monopolies, banks began to occupy more and more of a central role in the economy; before that, they had primarily played the role of middlemen in business deals. The monopolies deposit enormous amounts of capital in banks, which in turn lend the money to other capitalists. As the banks make larger and larger profits from the interest paid by debtors, they themselves begin investing directly in industry. This capital, controlled by the banks and invested in industry, is called finance capital. The dominance of finance capital is the primary feature of imperialism.

In the epoch of imperialism, larger banks are constantly gobbling up smaller banks, thus increasing the amount of capital they control. Industry becomes

increasingly dependent on the banks for the massive amounts of capital needed to operate and expand. Not surprisingly, the banks take a greater interest in the day-to-day operations of the companies in which they invest. Monopolies become closely linked to the banks through bank officials sitting on corporate boards of directors, family ties between bankers and industrialists, and other means. What emerges is a financial oligarchy which combines gains from industrial investments, interest from loans, commissions from stock sales and so on.

As we noted in the recent *WV* series on "Wall Street and the War Against Labor," in the so-called bank-based economies of Japan and Germany the merging of the banks and industries described by Lenin is almost complete. In Japan, financial, industrial, distribution and commercial capital is organized in tightly integrated groups today called *keiratsu*. And in Germany, the three biggest banks have representatives on over 40 percent of the supervisory boards of share corporations.

In the U.S., this merging of the banks with industry was somewhat obscured by laws enacted before and during the Great Depression which restricted certain banking activity. But the peculiarities of banking laws in individual countries has not qualitatively altered the close relationship between financiers and industrialists, expressed not least in intermarriage. In any case, such laws as existed in the U.S. were sidestepped in numerous ways when they conflicted with the plans of the large banks. And over the last 20 years, one regulation after another has been dropped in an attempt to make American banks more competitive with Japanese and German banks.

Imperialism and Social-Chauvinism

In the early days of capitalism, Britain—the most industrialized country—exported its manufactured goods to the rest of the world. But by the beginning of the 20th century, the dominant capitalist countries had also begun to export significant portions of the finance capital they had accrued. Cheap raw materials, cheap labor and cheap land made investment in backward countries a potentially profitable venture. Thus began the explosion of competition between the imperialist powers for the division of the world. Possession of colonies ensured access to raw materials and reserves of cheap labor. In his book, Lenin documented how the enormous expansion of European colonialism coincided with the emerging dominance of monopoly capitalism. Direct military control of dependent countries was the best way for the capitalists to ensure that their massive investments were protected.

In asserting that the monopoly capitalists could come to a peaceful agreement to collectively exploit the world, Kautsky denied the national character of the bourgeoisie, a view today taken up by David North's Socialist Equality Party and other proponents of the theory of "globalization" (see "How David North Embraces Karl Kautsky: The 'Global Economy' and Labor Reformism," *WV* Nos. 660, 661, 662 and 664; 24 January, 7 February, 21 February and 21 March 1997). The so-called multinationals extend their influence across many countries and continents, but they are ultimately dependent on their own bourgeois state. Ford's investments in Brazil, for example, are certainly protected by the Brazilian army and police. But, at the end of the day, it's the U.S. armed forces that Ford and other American capitalists rely on to protect their profits and enforce their dictates abroad, as has been demonstrated all too often in Latin America over the last century. The endless attempts to smash the Cuban Revolution for having dared to expropriate U.S. companies have not been carried out primarily by the United Fruit Company, but by the CIA and the military, agencies of the U.S. state, which serves as the executive committee of the American

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Frederick A. Praeger



Centrist Karl Kautsky (left) covered for social-chauvinist leaders of German Social Democracy. Right: Social Democratic leader Friedrich Ebert, shown reviewing troops as president of bourgeois republic following World War I.



Der Spiegel

Imperialism...

(continued from page 7)

capitalist class as a whole.

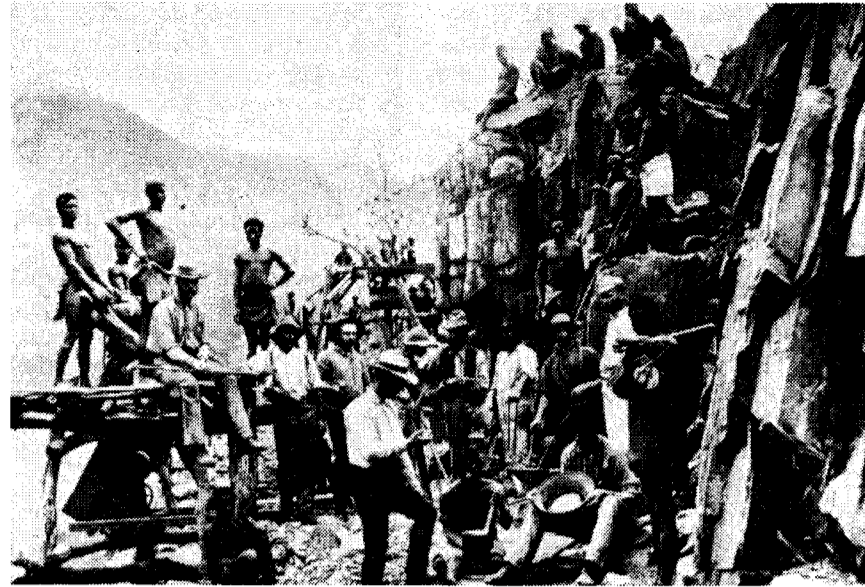
The imperialist state strives to secure control of world markets and spheres of exploitation for its capitalists, engaging in trade wars and other forms of competition. Various capitalist concerns and state powers can and will enter into agreements to divide up the world's markets. But these agreements are necessarily temporary, based on the relative economic and military strength of the imperialists involved, which changes as capitalism develops unevenly from one industry to another and one country to another. Thus every division of the world presupposes a redivision at some future date. Peace under imperialism is nothing more than a truce between wars, as has been shown by two world wars and innumerable lesser conflicts this century.

In his initial attempts to explain the growth of opportunism in the workers movement at the beginning of the century, Lenin identified it as a product of petty-bourgeois influence bearing down on the proletarian party. With the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 and the German Social Democracy's vote for imperialist war credits, Lenin recognized that opportunism could no longer be regarded as a marginal phenomenon. He came to the conclusion that this opportunism was brought into the workers movement by a labor bureaucracy supported especially by the better-off sections of the working class—the "labor aristocracy"—who benefited from the exceptional profits gained by the imperialist bourgeoisie from the exploitation of the colonies and semicolonies.

In August 1914, the German Social Democracy proclaimed, "In the hour of danger we shall not desert our Fatherland," giving the Kaiser its seal of approval to send millions of workers to their deaths. Lenin responded in "The Tasks of Revolutionary Social-Democracy in the European War" (September 1914):

"The conduct of the leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, the strongest and the most influential in the Second International (1889-1914), a party which has voted for war credits and repeated the bourgeois-chauvinist phrases of the Prussian Junkers and the bourgeoisie, is sheer betrayal of socialism....

"The betrayal of socialism by most lead-



Radio Times Hulton
1892 cartoon depicts British colonialist Cecil Rhodes in the conquest of Africa. Rhodes built his fortune through brutal exploitation of black workers, as in gold mine in Transvaal region of South Africa, above.

ers of the Second International (1889-1914) signifies the ideological and political bankruptcy of the International."

In contrast to the chauvinist capitulation of the majority of the Second International, Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought for intransigent revolutionary defeatism: "From the viewpoint of the working class and the toiling masses of all the peoples of Russia, the defeat of the tsarist monarchy and its army, which oppress Poland, the Ukraine, and many other peoples of Russia, and foment hatred among the peoples so as to increase Great-Russian oppression of the other nationalities, and consolidate the reactionary and barbarous government of the tsar's monarchy, would be the lesser evil by far."

The Trotskyists in World War II

Twenty years later, in outlining the stance of Bolshevik-Leninists toward the impending Second World War, Trotsky explained in "War and the Fourth International": "Lenin's formula, 'defeat is the lesser evil,' means not defeat of one's country is the lesser evil as compared with the defeat of the enemy country but that a military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement is infinitely more beneficial to the proletariat and to the whole people than military victory assured by 'civil peace'."

The Fourth International charted the same course of irreconcilable opposition

Punch

to the second imperialist world war that Lenin had to the first, forthrightly advancing the slogan raised by German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht during World War I: *The main enemy is at home!* While opposing all the imperialist powers, the Fourth International called for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state.

Unlike the slavishly pro-war Stalinist Communist Party, which denounced trade unionists who engaged in strikes as "fifth columnists," the then-Trotskyist SWP fought for class struggle in defiance of the labor tops' "no strike" pledge and against Jim Crow segregation of blacks and the incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps. Against the Stalinists, the Trotskyists asserted that U.S. imperialism's war against Hitler's Germany (and, centrally, Japan) was no more a "war for democracy" than was the Kaiser's war against tsarist Russia waged to protect Germany's "development toward liberty," as the Social Democratic leaders declared at the time of World War I.

As the German military strategist Clausewitz observed, war is a continuation of politics by other means. The supreme objective of the foreign policy of an imperialist state is the protection of its bourgeoisie's existing markets and the conquest of new ones in which it may invest its finance capital. For this reason, to Marxists the fact that Germany invaded France first and the French bourgeoisie was forced to enter a war that might or might not have come at the most opportune time means nothing. The objectives of the French, German and other bourgeoisies in the war, as in the period before the war, were to protect their own markets and to conquer those of the rival bourgeoisies. All other concerns were subordinated to this goal.

I was struck when reading Lenin's *Imperialism* how much direct relevance it has in today's world. In the period since Lenin wrote this book, the workers of Russia rose up under the leadership of the Bolsheviks and took state power; the Stalinist bureaucracy usurped political power from the working class and began to act as gravediggers of revolution; a second and even more devastating world war took place for the redivision of the world; Stalinist regimes came to power through social revolutions in large sections of the world; the colonial countries almost all gained formal political independence and the U.S. became the dominant imperialist power. Of these events, only the Russian Revolution, its subsequent degeneration and the creation of deformed workers states in East Europe, Asia and Cuba posed any really new tasks beyond those laid out by Lenin in 1916.

The understanding of Stalinism and the tasks of revolutionaries vis-à-vis the Soviet degenerated workers states was one of Trotsky's significant and unique contributions to Marxism. While the Sta-

linists had usurped political power from the working class, they rested parasitically on the collectivized and planned economy which had issued out of the October Revolution. As our tendency subsequently elaborated in analyzing the 1959-60 Cuban Revolution, the bureaucratically deformed workers states which emerged following World War II were qualitatively similar to the Soviet Union after its degeneration under Stalinism.

No amount of Stalinist platitudes about "peaceful coexistence" would or will prevent the capitalists from pursuing their drive to overturn the collectivized economies and to dominate the world's markets for the export of capital. The imperialists did not rest until capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union and East Europe and they will not be satisfied until they see counterrevolution in China and the remaining deformed workers states. Trotskyists fought for unconditional military defense of the degenerated/deformed workers states and for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies. This program remains urgent today, in the wake of the USSR's destruction, as capitalist counterrevolution threatens China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

In preparing the cadres of the Fourth International for the impending war, Trotsky emphasized in his writings leading up to World War II that an attack on the Soviet Union would likely come during the war. When war did break out in Europe in September 1939, it provoked a petty-bourgeois opposition within the SWP led by Max Shachtman and James Burnham, who reneged on their duty to defend the Soviet Union, capitulating in the first instance to a frenzy of liberal anti-Communism in response to the Hitler-Stalin pact. Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism* and SWP leader James P. Cannon's *Struggle for a Proletarian Party* document the fight to defend the revolutionary program of the Fourth International against these renegades from Marxism.

Like their Shachtmanite forerunners, the "third campists" of Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party and U.S. International Socialist Organization make a mockery of Lenin's understanding of imperialism. Thus they claim that missile testing carried out in the Taiwan Straits by the Chinese deformed workers state in 1996 was an act of imperialist aggression—against capitalist Taiwan, with its thinly veiled police-state regime run by the bloody Guomindang. Cliff embraced social-democratic anti-Communism in 1950 in refusing to defend the Soviet Union, China and North Korea against imperialism during the Korean War, labeling the Stalinist bureaucracies "state capitalist" ruling classes as a cover for his flight from Marxism. Having sided with every imperialist-sponsored force against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Cliffites cheered the restoration of capitalism in the USSR

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and now long for bloody counterrevolution in China, North Korea and Cuba.

National Independence and Permanent Revolution

Lenin's extensive writings on the national and colonial questions, his insistence on the need to uphold the right of national self-determination and to fight for emancipation of the colonies from imperialism, were complemented and deepened by Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. As the current financial crisis in South Korea and Southeast Asia underscores, only through the seizure of power by the proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, can the colonial and semicolonial countries free themselves of the yoke of imperialist subjugation.

Where Lenin stressed that opposition to colonial and semicolonial exploitation was integrally linked with the struggle for proletarian revolution in the imperialist centers, the latter-day Kautskyans who talk of "globalization" use this to amnesty the treachery of the pro-capitalist labor misleaders, claiming that "runaway shops" and so on have led to a situation in which American trade unions are powerless to resist attacks on jobs, wages and union conditions. For their part, the AFL-CIO bureaucrats try to line up workers in the U.S. behind their "own" imperialist rulers and blame workers in other countries for plunging living standards here. But as the recent UPS strike showed, the American working class has no lack of social power, but rather lacks a revolutionary leadership to mobilize that potential power against the capitalists. And imperialist investment abroad has led to the creation of a young and combative proletariat in countries like Indonesia and South Korea.

A look at South Korea illuminates the way in which imperialism simultaneously arrests development in the colonial or neocolonial countries and provides the basis for their liberation through the creation of a powerful working class. With South Korea serving as a strategic military staging area during the Cold War, the U.S. and Japan tolerated the development of huge industrial/financial conglomerates, the *chaebol*, by the bourgeoisie there. With the end of the Cold War, the imperialists are asserting their dominance over the South Korean bourgeoisie in a big way. Using the financial crisis as a pretext, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is smashing all barriers to foreign investment and paving the way for Japanese and U.S. imperialists to buy out South Korean companies at bargain-basement prices.

South Korea's capitalists are too weak and subordinate to the imperialists to chart an independent course. But both the domestic and imperialist bourgeoisies are rightly fearful of the South Korean proletariat, with its recent history of militant struggle, which has the power to defeat the IMF's austerity measures. The question is whether the workers' discontent will be channeled into nationalism and class collaboration or into a struggle for proletarian power. Trotskyists call for revolutionary reunification of Korea through socialist revolution in the South and proletarian political revolution in the North. Across Southeast Asia there is a burning need for revolutionary leadership. In the coming period, it is a priority of our international to cohere revolutionary internationalist cadre as the nuclei of Leninist-Trotskyist parties there.

Interimperialist Rivalries Heat Up

America's success in achieving imperialist hegemony at the end of World War II was soured by the emergence of the Soviet Union as the number two military power and the creation of deformed workers states in East Europe, China and North Korea. After briefly toying with imposing a draconian economic regime known as the Morgenthau Plan on Germany, akin to the punitive Versailles



United Press

U.S. troops outside Manila during Spanish-American War. Over half a million people were slaughtered during American conquest of Philippines between 1899 and 1902.

Treaty imposed by the victors after World War I, the U.S. rulers opted instead to rebuild the country as a bulwark against the Soviet bloc. Likewise, the U.S. decided to rebuild the Japanese economy in light of the 1949 Chinese Revolution and the Korean War. When the postwar trade rules were set at Bretton Woods in 1945, the United States was indisputably the leading imperialist power, producing two-fifths of the world's marketable products. By the end of the 1960s, however, Japan and Germany were making huge inroads into world markets—including the American market. The position of U.S. imperialism was further weakened in this period by the inflationary pressures generated by its long, losing colonial war in Vietnam. The devaluation of the dollar and the institution of fluctuating exchange rates on 15 August 1971 marked the end of the Bretton Woods system, and of unquestioned U.S. imperialist hegemony.

The unprecedented profits of American corporations in recent years have come primarily from massive attacks on the working class to increase the rate of exploitation. Simultaneously, the U.S. rulers have railed against "unfair trading practices," particularly by Japan, in order to demand that the Japanese bourgeoisie provide a guaranteed market for more expensive and poorer quality U.S. goods. For its part, the Japanese ruling class has sought to maintain its competitive edge by shifting production to low-wage plants in Southeast Asia and attacking wages and job security of Japanese workers. Over the last 20 years or so, Japanese capitalists have increasingly come to rely on part-time workers, for whom pay is lower and benefits are nonexistent. To give an example of this, from 1980 to 1985, the number of temp agencies in Tokyo went from 1 to 150.

Two critical pillars of the economic system set up at Bretton Woods were the IMF and the World Bank. Far from supplanting the power of the nation-state as some "globalization" theorists claim,

these have served primarily as tools of their most powerful contributor—U.S. imperialism. As Japanese and German imperialism continue to reassert themselves, the U.S. has had a harder time getting its rivals to pour huge sums of money into programs designed first and foremost to benefit American capitalists. Thus, Germany and Japan openly challenged the U.S.-engineered "bailout" of



VAAP

Russian factory workers at May Day demonstration in 1917 carried Bolshevik slogans, including banner reading, "Long Live the Third International!"

Mexico a few years ago. For its part, Washington refused to join in the IMF bailout of Thailand recently pushed through by Japan—even while insisting on a role in drawing up the austerity measures imposed as part of the "rescue" package.

Germany has sought to consolidate its power as the top dog in Europe, while Japan is out to recreate its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere from the days before World War II.

In all these countries, the social-chauvinist labor bureaucrats assist the imperialists by trying to mobilize the working class behind their own exploiters. Our task is to build revolutionary workers parties that fight all forms of chauvinism and nationalism, which only further the interests of the capitalists in their drive to squeeze more profits from the workers. As in the past, chauvinism and protectionism lead not to greater job security but to the sacrifice of millions of workers as cannon fodder in the bourgeoisies' war for world domination. We are just beginning to see the sort of pressures that will come to bear on our party as interimperialist rivalries sharpen. Following in the footsteps of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, we understand that only through steadfast opposition to the respective imperialist bourgeoisies in each country can we build the sections of a reborn Fourth International needed to lead the workers in revolutionary struggle to smash this system of exploitation. ■



WV Photo

Spartacist contingent at 1991 protest in San Francisco against U.S. imperialism's war in Persian Gulf.

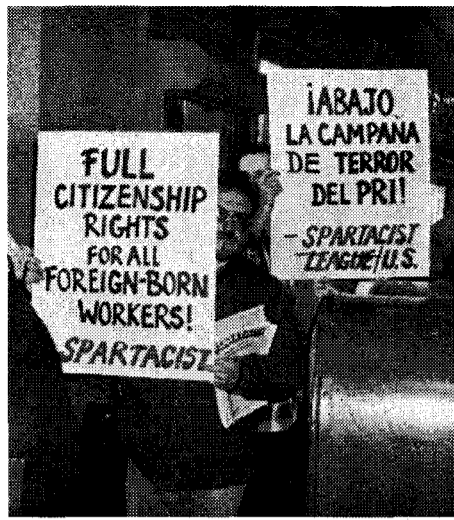
Mexico...

(continued from page 1)

the imposition of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on New Year's Day, 1994. The Spartacist League/U.S., in a 1991 joint statement with our comrades of the Trotskyist League of Canada and the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), denounced NAFTA as an imperialist "free trade" rape of Mexico (WV No. 530, 5 July 1991). This has been amply confirmed in the intervening years, as the impoverishment of Mexico's workers and peasants has dramatically worsened, while military repression aimed at preventing any challenge to the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist patrons has sharply intensified. As pro-EZLN protesters surrounded the Mexico City stock exchange on January 5, they carried a banner reading: "The power of money is stained with the blood of the Indians of Chiapas."

Shortly after the EZLN rebellion broke out, the Pentagon delivered huge quantities of military equipment to the Mexican armed forces and deployed thousands of U.S. troops, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and CIA agents on the Guatemalan side of the Chiapas border. As we warned in a headline last year (WV No. 664, 21 March 1997), "U.S. 'Drug War' Means Imperialist Terror." Under cover of its global "war on drugs," Washington has been arming its butchers in Mexico—and throughout Latin America—to the hilt to carry out bloody repression against insurgent peasants and striking workers.

This is now being hinted at even by that imperialist mouthpiece, the *New York Times*. A 29 December 1997 article reports that the CIA trained its own clandestine unit of "anti-drug" commandos in the late 1980s. More recently, the Clinton administration has been training thousands of Mexican officers and soldiers at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (This is in addition to the Mexican and other Latin American military butchers



WV Photo

Spartacist sign in Spanish at January 12 NYC protest against Chiapas massacre reads, "Down With the PRI's Terror Campaign!"

regularly "graduated" from the School of the Americas—more accurately known as the "School of the Assassins"—at Fort Benning, Georgia.) Noting that "the United States is providing the Mexican military with extensive covert intelligence support and training hundreds of its officers to help shape a network of anti-drug troops around the country," the *Times* added that "there was nothing to stop the transfer of American-trained army officers to similar special forces units that might be deployed against leftist insurgents in southern states like Guerrero and Chiapas."

Washington's increasingly blatant military intervention in Mexico has been accompanied by militarization of the border, aimed at keeping out immigrants fleeing starvation conditions. Meanwhile, concerned about growing discontent with the thoroughly corrupt PRI regime, the U.S. imperialists have urged Zedillo to loosen his party's six-decade monopoly of political control and to institute other cosmetic reforms. Washington greeted last summer's electoral successes by the bourgeois opposition parties, not only the right-wing National Action Party (PAN)

but the "left" nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Following the Chiapas massacre, Zedillo ordered the arrest of the local PRI *cacique* and some 40 others and got his hardline interior minister and the PRI governor of Chiapas to resign.

Despite Cárdenas' occasional populist/nationalist rhetoric, the PRD is a thoroughly capitalist party which defends the interests of the Mexican bourgeoisie and is committed to enforcing Wall Street's austerity dictates. While echoing condemnations of the latest massacre in Chiapas, the PRD supported the army's onslaught against the Zapatistas in 1994. As the new mayor of Mexico City, Cárdenas has made his foremost priority a "war on crime," unleashing increased cop terror against workers and the unemployed in the capital's plebeian quarters. What this means was seen when an elite police unit killed and dismembered three youths in Mexico City in early September, shortly after Cárdenas' election.

In a statement denouncing the Acteal massacre (see "Mexican Trotskyists Protest Chiapas Massacre," page 1), the GEM warned against widespread illusions in the PRD, counterposing the need for a revolutionary-internationalist party of the working class forged on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution and proletarian class independence. Such a revolutionary party would seek to mobilize the *power of the proletariat* against the Mexican bourgeoisie's bloody assault in Chiapas. It is only through struggle around such burning political issues—in direct opposition to the PRD—that the working class can become conscious of its historic role, putting itself at the head of all the oppressed in the struggle for socialist revolution.

Here in the "belly of the imperialist beast," the SL/U.S. fights to mobilize the working class in opposition to Washington's imperialist adventures down the line. Against the chauvinist protectionism pushed by the pro-capitalist AFL-CIO tops, we fight for international workers solidarity, for common class struggle by

workers in Mexico and the U.S. This means a fight to mobilize the U.S. labor movement to combat anti-immigrant racism and to demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. The millions of Mexican and Central American workers in the U.S. can serve as a living bridge between the struggles of the Latin American proletariat against the depredations of Wall Street and the fight for socialist revolution here. Key to this is the forging of a multiracial proletarian vanguard party as part of a reformed Fourth International. ■

Chiapas...

(continued from page 1)

League, the GEM fights to link this proletarian revolution in Mexico to the struggle of the powerful North American working class for socialist revolution in the United States, "the belly of the beast." We fight for proletarian internationalism and for socialism on a worldwide scale.

It is necessary that the workers break with any illusions in the existing parties of the bourgeoisie (PRI, PRD, PAN) and that they build their own party. This is a burning question in Mexico today. Now that the PRD has taken charge of the Mexico City government, there are illusions that the PRD deputies and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas are going to resolve things and obtain "justice." But the PRD is a bourgeois-nationalist party which defends the capitalist system. The parties of the bourgeoisie will never dissolve its armies and police, since they are the core of its state. Neither will they "disarm" the white guards of the local *caciques* [strongmen] and *latifundistas* [landowners] who terrorize the peasants and indigenous peoples. Only victorious socialist revolution will bring justice to the oppressed and victims of bourgeois repression, and do away with the misery, exploitation, discrimination and racism which are engendered by capitalism. Army out of Chiapas! For proletarian revolution throughout the Americas! ■

PDC...

(continued from page 2)

Nygaard stated: "I have a hard time fathoming why the Department of Corrections would send this letter all the way to the governor's office. It talks of the defense strategy. I was appalled that this could leak out to the very people who could one day be sitting across the table from [Abu-Jamal] at some further proceeding" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 December 1997). While the earlier ruling by Ambrose and the questions posed by the federal appeals court judges are important challenges to the state's gross interference in Jamal's legal defense, there are countless examples of why Mumia cannot expect justice from the racist "justice" system.

At the New York benefit, Labor Black League member Betty G. spoke powerfully about the pervasive racist cop terror in capitalist America. In describing the role of the LBLs in helping to build the future revolutionary workers party, she

stressed the importance of the LBLs' ten-point program for integrated, revolutionary working-class struggle:

"When I was asked to speak, I took a look at the ten-point program that has arisen out of the class struggle over the past years. I thought of the things we see on a daily basis that make this program so important—the growing list of victims of police brutality: Shane Daniels, Anthony Baez, most recently Abner Louima. I'm a teacher of students who come right out of the ghetto and barrio, and I hear on a daily basis about the attacks of police against them. I read in their journals, 'I never again want to see another one of my friends stopped for no reason by the police.' We defend victims of cop terror and racist police frame-up. That is one of the principles of the Labor Black Leagues.

"When I first became associated with the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee, it was after about 30 years of working in the labor movement. Part of the attraction of the SL and the Labor Black Leagues is their unyielding commitment to class independence. I've learned that the Bolshevik Revolution would not have happened if it hadn't been for a strong party of the most conscious members of the working class, to

lead the rest of the working class. That is how we see ourselves in the Labor Black Leagues. And the fulfillment of the working class' historic mission to free us from the yoke of capitalist oppression may really happen if we can follow these principles." ■

Confab...

(continued from page 3)

Critics," *Workers Hammer* No. 151, July/August 1996).

The ICL's intervention at the Cape Town conference was directly counterposed to the anti-internationalist opportunism being purveyed by the various participating groups. Our floor speakers at two public meetings were the only ones to so much as raise the need for socialist revolution! Our comrades also set up a literature table, selling over 90 pieces of ICL material in seven languages, includ-

ing "Revolutionary Regroupment or Centrist Alchemy?" (*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 53, Summer 1997), a polemic against an earlier "regroupment" farce in London a year ago. (One of the sponsors of the London conference, the Workers International League, has now announced in a 16 December 1997 letter to subscribers that it has "dissolved to allow the two groupings that had emerged during approximately a year of internal differences to go their separate ways.")

In contradistinction to the fake leftists of all stripes who capitulated to the imperialists and their social-democratic lackeys, the ICL fought to the end to defend the gains of the Russian Revolution. Today as before, we seek to reforge an authoritative, democratic-centralist Fourth International to lead the proletariat to victory over the decadent world capitalist system. ■

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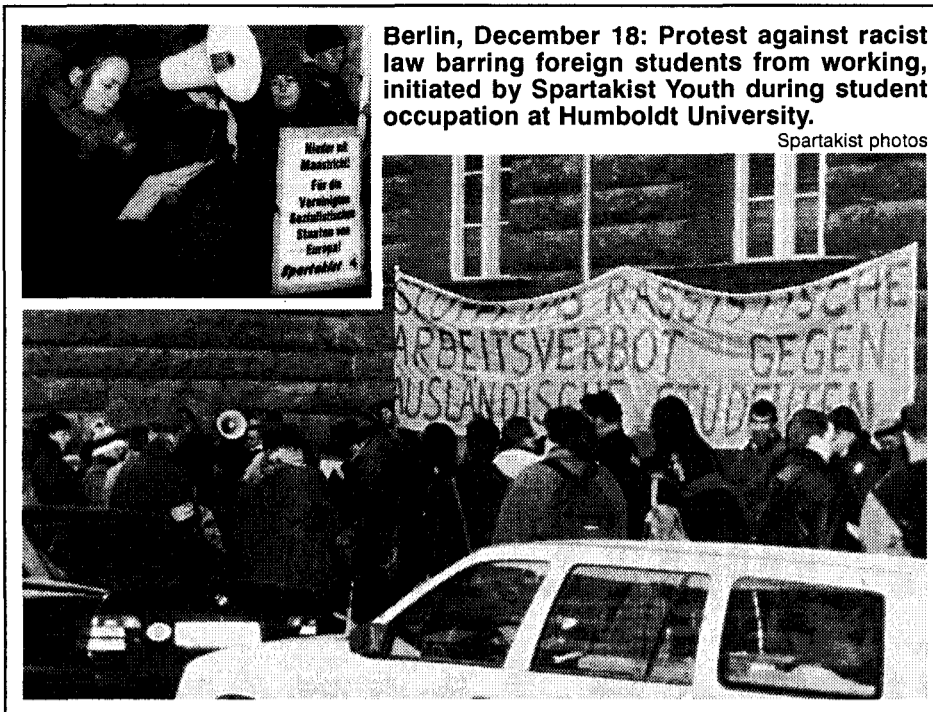
(continued from page 5)

bourgeois state, Trotsky noted in his 1932 article "What Next?":

"The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless.... The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker. Of late years these policemen have had to do much more fighting with revolutionary workers than with Nazi students. Such training does not fail to leave its effects. And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain."

The Weimar police were integrated almost intact into the Third Reich and later into the machinery of Nazi genocide.

Last May Day in Leipzig, the German Workers Power Group (GAM) gave a textbook example of what centrism means. The Nazis, intending to capitalize on their ominous victory in Munich, planned another provocation on the outskirts of Leipzig, at a monument to Prussian soldiers who died fighting Napoleon. The DGB then canceled all regional May Day rallies in Saxony and called a central rally for downtown Leipzig. The GAM enthused: "Building on this, we must intervene to use these forces to drive the rightist mob off the streets" (*Arbeitermacht*, May 1997). That is a lie. The DGB rally, with the racist Zwickel as a keynote speaker, was scheduled to take place hours after and kilometers away from the Nazis' planned genocidal provocation. Its purpose was to *prevent* a workers united-front action. The DGB, SPD and PDS called on the



Berlin, December 18: Protest against racist law barring foreign students from working, initiated by Spartakist Youth during student occupation at Humboldt University.

Spartakist photos

state to ban the Nazi provocation, which it did. The result: 4,500 cops, called in by the SPD mayor, arrested more than 100 anti-Nazi youth, while protecting 50 Nazis.

Calls on the bourgeois state to "ban" the fascists only encourage it to increase its police-state powers, the full force of which are inevitably brought down upon the workers movement and immigrant organizations. As Trotsky wrote to his Dutch supporters in January 1936 ("Bourgeois Democracy and the Fight Against Fascism"): "That is why the slogan for the disbanding and disarming of the fascist gangs by the state (and voting for similar measures) is reac-

tionary through and through (the German Social Democrats cry: 'The state must act!')."

To call for a vote today for either the SPD or the PDS is to betray the class interests of the proletariat and to bind it to its class enemy; it means enlisting in the campaign of racist anti-immigrant hysteria which is fueling the growth of the Nazis. In the 1930s, popular-front governments in Spain and France led straight to the victory of fascism and to imperialist world war. As Trotsky wrote in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International: "People's Fronts on the one hand—fascism on the other; these are the

last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution." It is precisely because the fake lefts have bound themselves hand and foot to the Social Democracy and the popular front that these groups are politically incapable of fighting the fascist menace.

Today the West European bourgeoisies prefer to rely on their social-democratic lackeys and the popular front to keep their stranglehold on the working masses. They cultivate the Nazis as a reserve army, i.e., as an insurance policy in case of the resurgence of a revolutionary workers movement. But the Nazi Holocaust and the war against the Soviet Union show the insane, barbaric methods the imperialists are prepared to use in defense of their crisis-racked system of exploitation when their present instruments no longer suffice. In forging the revolutionary vanguard, the strategic task of breaking the German working class from Social Democracy retains all the importance today that it had in Trotsky's time. We struggle for a new revolutionary leadership of the labor movement and for reforging a genuine Leninist-Trotskyist international party which struggles for new October Revolutions worldwide. This requires a ruthless fight against our centrist and left-reformist opponents, who remain the principal obstacles to realizing this task. As Trotsky stated in the Transitional Program on the eve of World War II:

"Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. It is now the turn of the proletariat, i.e., chiefly of its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." ■

Homeless...

(continued from page 12)

(only to have their bedrolls and textbooks trashed by the cops in the recent sweeps). Rents in San Francisco—for decades among the highest in the country—have soared by over a third in less than two years. With vacancy rates of less than 1 percent, the average two-bedroom apartment now rents for \$1,660 per month; even rooms in the skid-row Tenderloin now go for \$400 a month. Rents are also rising across the bay in Oakland and down to San Jose, encompassing the area's historic working-class and black concentrations.

Meanwhile, subsidized housing in the ghettos and barrios is being systematically destroyed as a result of conscious government policy. The nasty racist edge of this campaign is seen in San Francisco, where the black poor are being driven out of town as overwhelmingly minority public housing projects are torn down in favor of "mixed income" units. And, as it has for the last two decades, "gentrification" continues to eat away at affordable housing in historically black neighborhoods like the Western Addition.

As the bourgeoisie strives to increase profits by driving down the cost of labor, leading to a widening chasm between the very rich at the top and much of the rest of the population, ever larger sectors of the working class are faced with immiseration. Meanwhile, millions remain without any jobs. Capitalism *requires* a "reserve army" of the unemployed, to exert downward pressure on wages and to be called on during times of economic expansion. These days, bourgeois econo-

mists and media define a 5 percent unemployment rate as "full employment." And these statistics don't include those who have given up looking for work or who are deemed "unemployable" after their (usually six-month) benefit period expires. Nor do they include the more than 1.5 million people—overwhelmingly black and Hispanic—rotting in prison hell. The prison population has risen in direct correlation with the decline of industrial jobs over the past 15 years.

For a Fighting Workers Party!

The bourgeois rulers are consciously creating the conditions for a massive growth in the numbers of homeless people. The growing lines at soup kitchens and the millions sleeping and dying on the streets throughout the country are a criminal indictment of the capitalist system and an unmistakable sign of its decay. What's urgently needed is a class-struggle fight for *jobs for all*. Equally urgent is the need for *free, quality medical care* and *quality, integrated housing for all*. But providing these burning social necessities is *incompatible* with the capitalist profit system. If capitalism could provide full employment at decent pay, there would not be a "homeless problem."

To begin to mobilize the labor movement to fight the immiseration of workers and the degradation of the chronically unemployed in the ghettos and barrios requires breaking the stranglehold of the labor tops, who politically subordinate the unions to the class enemy through their allegiance to the capitalist Democrats. Brown was elected mayor in 1995 with the enthusiastic support of the union bureaucracy and its fake-left hangers-on, including the Communist Party and the

Committees of Correspondence. As California State Assembly Speaker, he helped enact cuts in social services in tandem with a series of Republican governors. Brown personifies the class contempt and hatred of that thin layer of blacks who have "made it" in capitalist America for the vast majority of black people who are ground down, forcibly segregated at the bottom of this racist society.

Brown's reformist supporters touted his lying promise to maintain the city's social "safety net" in the face of welfare cuts, even as he campaigned as the man who could "get things done" for the financial district and won the backing of the police establishment with his "law and order" stance. Predictably, as mayor, Brown has delivered a steady diet of racist cop repression, cutbacks and union-busting. But the reformist left is paralyzed by its perspective of pressuring the capitalist Democratic Party to ameliorate the desperate conditions of life produced by this system of exploitation for the working class and the poor. Under former mayor Jordan, groups like the Workers World Party might protest when City Hall went after the homeless or Food Not Bombs. But there has been barely a peep from the reformists over Brown's even more outrageous attacks on the homeless.

Brown has been able to deliver for the bourgeoisie because of the treachery of the union tops—centrally the heads of the ILWU longshore union and the Transport Workers Union (TWU)—who backed him for office and continue to serve him by suppressing any challenge to his attacks. Following his election, Brown helped bludgeon the heavily integrated Teamsters Local 350 garbage workers into ending their strike by threatening to use city workers as scabs. And he has particularly gone after the heavily black MUNI transit union, TWU Local 250A, which represents a critical link between San Francisco's embattled black poor and the social power of the working class. For years, there has been a vicious, racist campaign by the media and City Hall to blame the drivers, who have been subjected to speedup and hazardous working conditions, for the dilapidated state of the grossly underfunded transit system.

Soon after his election, Brown appointed personal hatchet man Emilio Cruz to go after the drivers. In his first

nine months as MUNI general manager, Cruz has fired dozens of workers, while provisions written into last year's union contract have drastically intensified speedup. When angry union members threatened a sick-out last April, eventually winning the reinstatement of a fired veteran black woman driver, the union officials stepped in to quash the potential wildcat.

In September, a strike by BART commuter rail workers gridlocked the San Francisco Bay Area for a week. Inspired by the UPS strike which had just ended, the BART strike included a demand for equal pay for equal work, particularly speaking to the needs of blacks, Latinos and immigrants facing discrimination. But the strike was *derailed* by the union tops, represented by the likes of San Francisco Labor Council secretary Walter Johnson, who eagerly welcomed the intervention of Brown and other Democratic Party "friends of labor" (see "Union Tops Scuttle Fight for Equal Pay for Equal Work," *WV* No. 674, 19 September 1997).

The labor bureaucracy's alliance with the Democratic Party disarms workers and the oppressed in the face of the bourgeoisie's class war. Break with the Democrats! A political fight must be waged to unleash the social power of the working class by ousting the labor traitors in favor of a class-struggle leadership. Defense of the livelihoods of working people, and especially of the doubly oppressed black and Hispanic masses, requires a revolutionary leadership of the working class—a Leninist vanguard party—which will champion the cause of all the oppressed as part of the fight to overthrow the entire capitalist profit system.

As an immediate measure, a revolutionary workers government would expropriate the rich landlords and requisition the bourgeoisie's lavish mansions to provide emergency housing for all. As Friedrich Engels, who with Karl Marx pioneered modern communism, wrote well over a century ago in *The Housing Question* (1872): "As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself." ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Booming Profits...and More Misery for the Poor

War Against the Homeless in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO—Mayor Willie Brown has launched a vicious new assault on the city's growing homeless population. Police are seizing the shopping carts in which homeless people carry around their few possessions and hauling their clothes, medicine, blankets—everything they own—to the city dump. The Department of Parks and Recreation has torn down 700 homeless encampments in order to “clean up” Golden Gate Park, a premier attraction in the city's tourist-dependent economy. At one end of the park, a hurricane fence has been erected to keep out all but “families with children”—a big step back to the turn of the *last* century, when “public” parks were reserved as playgrounds for the rich. Now, to conduct night searches for more bodies to roust, Brown is threatening to borrow *heat-seeking helicopters* from the Oakland Police Department! What's next—Agent Orange and napalm?

Black Democrat Brown was elected in 1995 with the backing of everyone from the trade-union officialdom to downtown financiers to the racist killers of the SF Police Department. Brown promised to stop “Operation Matrix,” a program of vicious harassment and arrests of the homeless implemented under his predecessor, Frank Jordan, a former police chief. But now the “liberal” Brown is carrying out policies which Jordan could only dream of. Arrests for sleeping and “camping” in public have doubled under Brown. District Attorney Terence Hallinan, idolized by the reformist left as a “progressive,” recently vowed to make so-called “quality of life” offenses carry jail time and boasted, “We'll make it so uncomfortable they have to leave” (*San Francisco Examiner*, 6 November 1997).

With up to 15,000 people now homeless in San Francisco, Brown offers only to supplement the city's pathetic stock of shelters with a few rented firetrap slum hotels. Meanwhile, the brutal, racist cops are unleashed on any who would protest the plight of the homeless. Last March, a demonstration organized by liberal and religious activists protesting the planned



Macor/SF Chronicle

Arrests of homeless people for sleeping and “camping” in public have doubled under SF Democratic mayor Willie Brown.

demolition of some 500 vacant housing units on the former Presidio army base—coveted prime real estate—was met with the mass arrest of 83 people. Dozens more protesters were arrested two months later. And for years, supporters of “Food Not Bombs” have been targeted for arrest simply for providing meals to the indigent.

The city rulers are well aware that a whole new wave of minorities, immigrants and other impoverished working people will be thrown onto the streets as a result of the axing of welfare. Since Democratic president Clinton signed legislation ending “welfare as we know it” almost a year and a half ago, two million women and children have already been

thrown off public assistance. Millions more will lose this meager lifeline as new time limits on benefits run out over the next few years. While particularly targeting immigrants and the black ghetto poor, the anti-welfare law is aimed at driving down the wages and living standards of all working people.

This government, which rules on behalf of the tiny class of capitalist exploiters, is consciously driving ever greater numbers into sheer destitution, a policy which amounts to *starving the poor*. As both federal and state governments implement draconian measures to deny “illegal” immigrants even a modicum of social services, nearly one million “legal” immigrants—over 400,000 in California alone—have had food stamps ripped away under Clinton's “welfare reform.” Desperate immigrant families are “joining the long line of needy people forced to devote more time and more energy into stretching food dollars and filling stomachs” (*New York Times*, 8 December 1997). Increased demands for emergency food assistance were reported by 86 percent of cities surveyed last month. In New York City, 73,000 people are turned away by such food providers every month as supplies run out. In an article headlined “New Face in Line at Soup Kitchen: Working Poor,” the *Los Angeles Times* (27 December 1997) described the plight faced by ever more working people in the “boom economy”:

“In Phoenix, the unemployment rate is 3 percent, a level economists define as virtually full employment. But in Phoenix's food pantries and soup kitchens, the city's rosy economic picture looks considerably more gray: four out of five of those seeking emergency food aid report that they are working—and poor.”

This winter, the deadly spectre of homelessness looms for thousands of poor

families as they use their rent money to compensate for the loss of food stamps.

Impoverished Workers and Social Decay

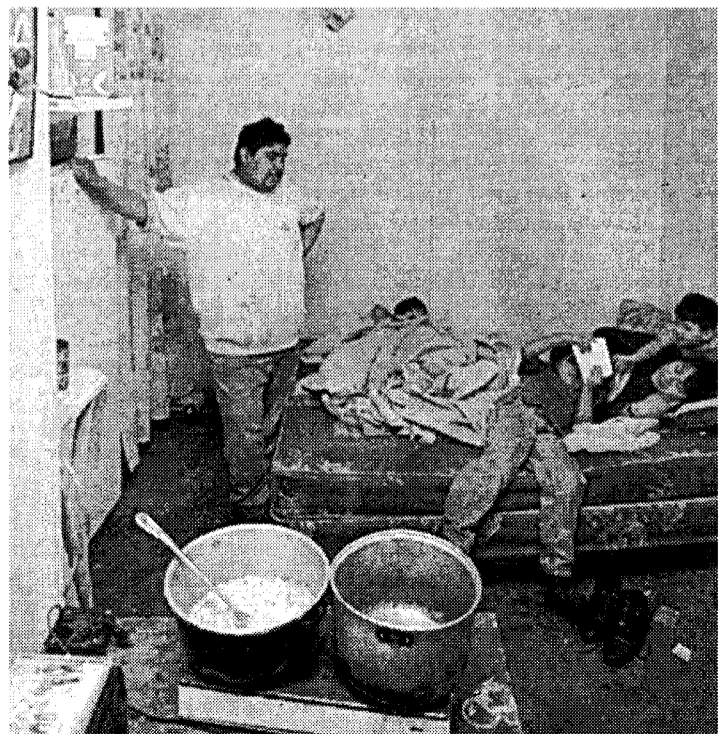
The growing homeless population is a direct product of the drastic lowering of the living standards of the working class over the last 20 years. When Republican president Reagan got away with crushing the PATCO air traffic controllers strike in 1981, it was a signal that the craven union tops would do nothing to defend labor against the capitalists' attacks. Now, emboldened by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and faced with growing competition from their imperialist rivals, America's capitalist rulers have intensified their incessant efforts to bolster profits while maintaining social discipline at home. Especially in the wake of last summer's successful UPS strike, which rekindled capitalist fears of resurgent working-class struggle, the bourgeoisie is pursuing a conscious policy of subordinating the organized working class through government intervention in the unions and increased pressure on the labor bureaucracy to police the workers—as well as outright repression. These attacks can only escalate as the fallout from the Asian financial crisis hits the U.S. economy.

While the big business press venomously brands the homeless as “criminals” and “drug addicts,” those thrown onto the streets include increasing numbers of people who have been laid off or driven into poverty by illness because their jobs or pension plans didn't include medical insurance. Many, like the immigrant workers who line up in San Francisco's Mission District for menial day labor, are simply unable to pay astronomical rents on part-time or minimum-wage income. Reflecting the racial oppression inherent in American capitalism, these layers are disproportionately black and Hispanic and, increasingly, immigrant. With its demand to upgrade part-time workers into full-time jobs, the UPS strike evoked wide support among workers and minorities struggling to keep from falling through the bottom of the economy.

The capitalists cynically scream about putting welfare recipients “back to work” as a justification for their union-busting, slave-labor “workfare” schemes. But even in what the ruling class touts as a “strong economy,” only half of those axed from the welfare rolls have found jobs, and only 48 percent of those jobs are considered “full time.” As the *New York Times* (30 December 1997) pointed out, this could mean as little as 33 hours a week at less than \$6 per hour, for an annual income \$2,500 below the official poverty level for a family of three.

Many of the homeless in San Francisco are mentally ill people who have been increasingly dumped on the streets as mental hospitals and wards shut down due to cutbacks in health care which began under Democratic governor Jerry Brown in the 1970s. Some are college students who try to meet the rising costs of tuition by living in Golden Gate Park

continued on page 11



Conrad/NY Times

Working families are increasingly forced onto the streets or into squalid hovels like this one in New York City.