

The

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Internationalist



Defend the Palestinian People!



Laurent Rebours / AP

For an Arab/Hebrew Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

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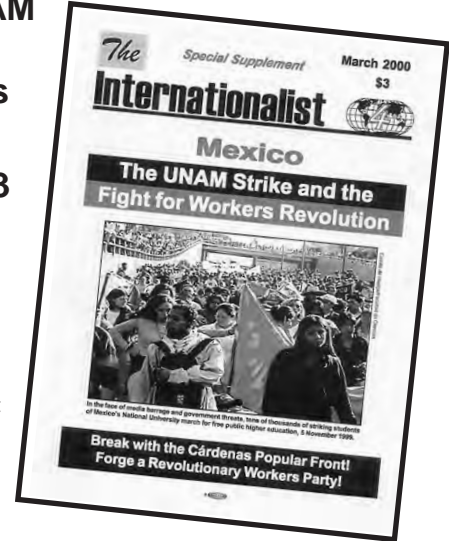
Front page photo: Palestinian child confronts Israeli tank in the Gaza Strip, 29 October 2000.

Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925).

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March 2000 US\$3

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The Internationalist

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for the Reforging of the Fourth International



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January-February 2001

Break with the Capitalist Parties – Democrats, Republicans, Greens!

Bourgeois Election Fiasco U.S.A.

The following article is expanded from a talk by Jan Norden at an Internationalist Group educational on 30 December 2000.

The recent U.S. presidential election campaign was a pretty tepid affair, until it was over. The differences in the campaign themes between self-proclaimed “compassionate conservative” George W. Bush and “New Democrat” Al Gore were minimal, at best: slightly different Medicare drug prescription plans, differences in degree of privatization of Social Security, a \$500 billion tax cut vs. \$1.6 trillion tax cut for the wealthy. Formally there were underlying differences over such issues as abortion (disguised as the “right to life” vs. the “right to choose”), gun control, and so on, but both Republicans and Democrats played these down in order to appeal to the “center.”

Both candidates strongly supported the racist death penalty, both backed the Persian Gulf War waged by George Bush, Sr., both were certified anti-Communist Cold Warriors. In fact, Bush and Gore were “cookie cutter” candidates from practically the same mold. They were both scions of political dynasties (Gore’s father was a long-time U.S. senator, Bush’s father was president after being senator, as was his grandfather). While Gore portrayed Bush Jr. as the candidate of Big Oil, Al Gore has major holdings in Occidental Petroleum whose properties include oil fields in Colombia, where the Clinton administration is escalating U.S. military intervention in a counterinsurgency campaign masquerading as a “war on drugs.”

The lack of sharp differences is typical for U.S. elections, where only occasionally do the twin capitalist parties present sharply different programs. The emphasis on personalities, the negative campaigning and hoopla are a reflection of broad agreement on fundamental class interests among different sectors of the bourgeoisie. Since they hardly even present an illusion of a real political choice, it’s not surprising that recent elections have been marked by falling rates of voter participation and a relative political “balance” between Democrats and Republicans in Washington. Around half of adults vote, in this case a little over 100 million out of 205 million, so that with a nearly even split the “winning” bourgeois candidate was supported by at most a quarter of the population. For most of



Reuters

Republicans and Democrats face off over who will be commander in chief of U.S. imperialism. Election fracas helps expose lie of bourgeois “democracy.”

the period since the Vietnam War, one party has controlled the White House while another controls Congress, leading to a general stalemate. In the 2000 election, prominent Wall Street spokesmen said that was exactly what they wanted.

Yet when there was a virtual photo finish in the November voting this year, with each candidate getting about 48 percent of the ballots cast, suddenly the capitalist parties were at each others’ throats. Through one legal maneuver after another, accompanied by blatant intimidation tactics, for weeks the outcome hung in the balance. The focal point was on three counties in Florida, and soon the major newspapers and TV networks had separate reporting teams for Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties filing stories day by day, if not hour by hour. The whole world learned a bizarre vocabulary about “dimpled,” “pregnant” and “hanging chads,” which are the holes punched out by voting machines, as well as “butterfly ballots,” “protests” and “contests” and other arcane terminology of electoral mechanics. The bourgeois parties comically discard historical positions, liberal Democrats coming out for “states’ rights” (long the watchword of conservatives) while Republicans champion federal intervention.

This had the effect of making American-style elections a laughing stock in the rest of the world, which is very beneficial since U.S. imperialism is constantly dictating to Third World countries and what Washington calls “rogue states” about how they must hold U.S.-style elections. And then, of course, they send in former president Jimmy Carter to make sure the right candidate is duly elected. Gleefully Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, Aristide in Haiti and Mugabe in

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Nancy Kaszerman/Zuma Press

**George W. Bush**

Zimbabwe talked of sending election observers to Florida to clean up the elections. Pompous pundits who act as unofficial spokesmen for Washington, such as *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, were wringing their hands about the U.S.' leading export, "democracy," being devalued.

And then the United States Supreme Court ended it all with a transparently partisan decision, stopping a Florida recount and thereby awarding the presidency to Bush Jr. even though Gore won the popular vote by more than half a million votes and probably won Florida as well. (By the way, a consortium of news media has been recounting the Florida ballots for more than a week, giving a slight lead to Gore according to the London *Observer*, but this has gone unreported in the U.S.) The Court ruling was a real Catch-22 – so blatantly arbitrary that you couldn't miss the absurdity of it: first they stopped the ballot counting to examine whether it was legitimate, then they declared it couldn't be legitimate because there wasn't enough time to complete the count before a deadline that the Republican-controlled Florida legislature had decreed in order to thwart the Democratic-controlled Florida Supreme Court.

Bush Steals Election "Fair and Square," Left Hops on Gore Bandwagon

Suddenly the nine black-robed justices no longer appeared as the august embodiment of a supposedly "blind" justice system but rather as the Republican National Committee in drag. Meanwhile, it was underlined that the president is not elected by "the people" but by a College of Electors which substantially over-represents conservative, rural areas. And just in case there was a hitch with the Supremes, the Republican-controlled Florida legislature was in the process of certifying its own slate of electors independently of how the vote count turned out. The more fervent Democrats yelped about a "Republican coup d'état." When a Democratic lawyer in the U.S. Supreme Court referred to the "right" of the people to elect the president, Chief Justice Rehnquist corrected him, pointing

out that there is no such right in the U.S. Constitution. This is true, and in fact many states didn't even hold elections for president until well into the 19th century.

In reality, the spectacle revealed how the U.S. system of bourgeois "democracy" is hardly representative and in fact elaborately rigged to prevent "excesses" of the plebeian masses from disturbing capitalist stability. The Democrats got the short end of the stick, but had it gone the other way (with a Bush majority in the popular vote and Gore ahead in the electoral college), they had a whole game plan to pull off the same kind of "coup" as the Republicans did. Now, since Bush "won" the election by a vote of 5 to 4 (the split among the Supreme Court justices, who are the only ones whose vote really counted), various "mainstream" media have been counseling the Republicans to keep to the center of the road and push "bipartisan" policies. But Republican hardliners are having none of it. They figure they stole the election fair and square (as a conservative ideologue said some years ago about how the U.S. created the Panama Canal Zone). And since they prevented Gore from stealing it back, as far as they're concerned, to the victor go the spoils.

Meanwhile, various supposed socialist outfits have been acting as cheerleaders for the Democrats. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) – a bunch of social democrats who claimed that the Soviet Union was "state capitalist" and hailed Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist countercoup in 1991 – had been pushing Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate, supposedly as a "challenge" to the "two parties of big business" and "a step in breaking the Republicrat stranglehold on American politics" (*International Socialist Review*, October-November 2000). That was up until election day. But on November 8, the ISO jumped on the Gore bandwagon. The next issue of *Socialist Worker* headlined, "Governor Death [that is, Bush] Tries to Steal the White House!" You couldn't ask for a better proof that their phony "socialist" rhetoric only served to cover up support for capitalist politicians.

The Nader fakers of the ISO weren't the only pseudo-socialists in the Democratic Party camp, of course. The



Tom Mihalick/AFP

Al Gore



Communist Party, as usual, supported Gore outright, just as they backed Democrat Lyndon Johnson against Republican Barry Goldwater in 1964 in the name of “fighting the right” even as LBJ was waging genocidal imperialist war against the Vietnamese Communists. The Socialist Workers Party gave soft support, backing NAACP calls for a federal Justice Department investigation of voter discrimination in Florida. (Will they now continue to call for that with Bush’s right-wing racist attorney general taking office?) At the same time, the SWP’s *Militant* goes on for paragraphs complaining about the “coarse tone” of the Democrats’ “factionalism” in the “personal, antiwoman assault unleashed against Florida secretary of state Katherine Harris” because a *Washington Post* columnist said Harris “applied her make-up with a trowel.” These feminist Castro cheerleaders show a touching concern for the Madame Nhu of the Bush administration. (Madame Nhu was a sinister anti-Communist and Rasputin-like figure in South Vietnam in the ’60s.)

The Workers World Party (WWP) founded by the late Sam Marcy went through the motions with their own slate (as did the SWP) on an utterly reformist program calling for “community control of the police – the right to hire, fire and discipline the cops” – as if capitalism would allow the exploited to “control” the armed fist of the exploiters! – and fed into the racist “war on drugs” hype by calling to “confiscate the billions of the proven drug criminals: money-laundering banks.” The WWP presidential candidate, Monica Moorhead, declared that if miraculously elected, their “main task would be to motivate and encourage millions of people” to fight for “all the rights which should already be guaranteed under the existing laws of this country” (*Workers World*, 16 November 2000). We’ve

referred to Workers World as sub-reformist. Here’s a prime example: their “socialist” candidate just calls to apply existing laws! Electoral cretinism is obviously a degenerative disease.

At the same time, the Marcyites declared that “an important progressive outcome of the election was that 2.6 million people refused to be frightened into voting for the lesser evil and stuck to their vote for Nader.” Yet barely a month after calling the Nader vote progressive, tailing after black Democratic protests over the Florida vote, WWP elections specialist Fred Goldstein wrote:

“By totally disregarding the fact that the Republican Party is generally to the right of the Democratic Party and is a haven for ultra-racists, right-to-lifers, anti-lesbian, -gay, -bi and -trans bigots, is rabidly anti-union and has a more right-wing social base than the Democrats, Nader was insensitive to the progressive sections of the movement.”
 –*Workers World*, 14 December 2000

Big “surprise” – Workers World has for decades been the “best builder” of protests for black Democrats like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, and as soon as election day is over they drop any pretense of independence from the Democrats. Now their efforts are focused on building a January 20 march on the inaugural to “protest the racist conspiracy on the part of the rightwing U.S. Supreme Court, the Bush Dynasty and the Florida legislature to steal the election.”

The Maoists of Bob Avakian’s Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) spice things up with a few dabs of leftist rhetoric, but their fundamental politics are just as reformist as those of the WWP, SWP and CPUSA. They talk of indicting “the system,” but they want to sidle up to the Democratic liberals in the name of “unity” against the Republican right. An article on

“The Mess of Election 2000 and the Myth of the Vote,” states: “Those who voted for Gore, and found their votes denied and/or uncounted, will only add that experience to their reasons to despise Bush. And all you have to do is remember how the Republican forces led the drive to impeach Clinton – and in particular the Christian Fascist forces who fueled that ‘inquisition’ – and this gives a pretty good indication that if Gore ends up the declared winner, some significant sections of the ruling class will regard him as a ‘thief,’ and approach his Presidency, too, as pretty much illegitimate.”

–*Revolutionary Worker*, 26 November 2000

The reference to “Christian Fascist” forces is the tip-off. There’s a famous principle of drama that if in the first act of a play a gun appears, by the third act there will be a body on the floor. Well, when Stalinists talk of the reactionary right as “fascist,” you know that next they will call for a class-collaborationist “popular front” with the bourgeois liberals to fight the “fascists.” Sure enough, in an article on “Venom in the Ruling Class” in its next issue, the RCP cites a November 1998 article on the Republican impeachment drive, where they wrote:

“There is no question whatever that the program and actions of the Christian fascists and those allied with them is something that must be decisively and urgently opposed. This is true not only in general but also specifically with regard to how they have framed the terms of the latest ‘Presidential crisis’....

“[W]e recognize, consistent with our outlook and principles, that there is a need, and a basis, for building a broad unity in struggle against what has been referred to as the politics of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy....

“And we believe that, together with building this political unity in struggle, there is also a need and a basis to forge broad unity, among diverse forces, around values and cultural expressions that promote and celebrate equality, between men and women, and between peoples and nations....”

–*Revolutionary Worker*, 22 November 1998

So, naturally, the RCP is also building the counter-inaugural protest, which amounts to “non-electoral” political support for Gore. The January 20 event is a classical popular-front march, U.S. style, in which left, labor and black organizations tie their followers to the Democrats. On the West Coast, the San Francisco Labor Council has endorsed the counter-inaugural protests, saying many people “believe Bush essentially stole the election with the complicity of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Republican-controlled Statehouse and Legislature in Florida, and to view his presidency as therefore illegitimate.” That’s a backhanded endorsement of Democrat Gore, and it’s right up the alley of the reformist pseudo-socialists. The 2000 elections offer a revealing study in the *tailist* nature of opportunism. The fake-lefts all started out pooh-poohing the fight, saying it was just a spat between Bore and Gush. But as soon as they figured out that the black Democrats, labor fakers and rad-libs were pushing it, they switched gears and started yelling “thief.” As always, the reformists dance to the liberals’ tune – it just takes them a while sometimes to figure out how since they’re trying to sell a bourgeois policy under a socialist label.

In contrast, the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International, gives no political support to the January 20 pro-Democratic Party inauguration protests. We fight for breaking from *all* the capitalist parties – Democrats, Republicans and red-white-and-blue Greens – and forging an internationalist, revolutionary workers party.

Fraud of Bourgeois Democracy

So that is the spectacle presented by the U.S. elections. What lessons should be drawn from it by communists? In the first place, this is a crystal clear example of the anti-democratic fraud of bourgeois elections, which amounts to allowing the masses once every four years to pull a lever for which capitalist shall rule over them.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels insisted long ago that universal suffrage is an instrument of bourgeois rule. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, “The executive of the modern state” – in other words, the government – “is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” And as Lenin hammered home in *The State and Revolution* (1917), at the core of the state are the special bodies of armed men, centrally the army and police, which are the apparatus of enforcement of the will of the ruling class. In this case, the capitalist rulers decided that after a certain point a stop had to be put to the contest in the interests of the “stability” of *their* state, *their* instrument of repression. So that was it. Vote counting was halted, the “democratic” charade was called off and a victor declared.

The vote of “the people” was canceled by a decree from the capitalist high court that is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, the notorious “millionaires’ club.” The Electoral College is utterly undemocratic, and was in fact designed to be so by the “founding fathers” of the American capitalist state. So was the famous tri-partite “division of power” between the executive (president), legislative (Congress) and judicial (courts) branches of government, whose aim was to tame the “popular passions.” The United States Constitution was written to protect the interests of the slave owners, bankers, merchants and industrial property owners against rebellion by poor and working people.

On the eve of World War I, the historian Charles Beard wrote *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913) in which he pointed out that the authors of the basic document of the U.S. government were slaveholders and plantation owners like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, and that those who were not directly part of the slavocracy, like Benjamin Franklin, were wealthy patricians. Beard was denounced by the *New York Times* at the time for writing that:

“Inasmuch as the primary object of a government, beyond the mere repression of physical violence, is the making of the rules which determine the property relations of members of the society, the dominant classes whose rights are thus to be determined must perforce obtain from the government such rules as are consonant with the larger interests necessary to the continuance of their economic processes, or they must themselves control the organs of government.”

Beard noted that *manufacturers* needed protective tariffs,

bankers wanted to stop the use of worthless paper money, *land speculators* sought protection as they seized Indian lands, *slave owners* needed federal armies against slave revolts, *bondholders* wanted taxation to pay their bonds, and it was these men of property who wrote the Constitution. Those not represented at the Constitutional convention were slaves, indentured servants, women and men without property, namely the working people who produced the wealth of the capitalists.

Beard was no Marxist but a Quaker pacifist and Jeffersonian democrat, and the nature of the Constitution as setting up a government of, by and for the capitalist class was determined not only by who was or was not among the authors. But the men who wrote in provisions that women, men without property, Indians and slaves were denied the vote, that slaves would be counted as 3/5 of a person for purposes of giving extra representation to their owners, were not bashful about stating their purpose. In fact, the motto of the Declaration of Independence, “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” was consciously changed in the Constitution to “life, liberty and property.” Plantation owner James Madison wrote in the *Federalist Papers* No. 10 that “those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society,” and the Constitution’s purpose was to check “a rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project.”

Alexander Hamilton, another plutocrat linked to banking interests, wrote in a *Federalist Paper* that the new Union would “repress domestic faction and insurrection.” The insurrection he had in mind was Shay’s Rebellion, an uprising by armed farmers protesting against plans to seize their farms for unpaid taxes. Hamilton wrote that “All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people.... Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the government.... Nothing but a permanent body can check the imprudence of democracy.” The Constitution did not provide for popular election for the Senate or the president, who were to be chosen by the state legislators (like the Florida legislature), while the Supreme Court would be chosen by the president.



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Karl Marx and his daughter Jenny in January 1869.

Thus from the outset, the institutional framework of U.S. capitalist rule has been marked by institutional bonapartism designed to “check the imprudence of democracy.” This has become accentuated in the epoch of imperialism as the ruling class requires a strong state to enforce its interests, both at home and abroad. As the “only superpower,” the U.S. proclaims its “super-sovereignty” over the whole planet. Congress routinely passes laws which it enforces beyond the borders of the United States, claiming the right to arrest drug “kingpins” anywhere, to pursue whoever it defines as “terrorists” into other countries, and so on. Meanwhile, the elections which are supposed to give democratic legitimacy to the empire are heavily determined by money. The 2000 election cost well over a billion dollars, with vast sums spent for TV advertising. Moreover, everyone who dropped out in primaries did so because of

lack of funds, including Steve Forbes, the publisher of *Forbes* magazine which proclaims itself the “capitalist tool.” All of the candidates – Bush, Gore and Nader – were millionaires, and all owned lots of oil stocks (Nader, like Gore, is an Occidental shareholder).

Black Disenfranchisement and the Legacy of Slavery

Secondly there is the question of *whose* votes weren’t counted. In Florida the media reported on Jewish retirees in West Palm Beach, including quite a few Holocaust survivors, who were led by a confusing ballot into punching a hole for clerical-fascistic Pat Buchanan who called Hitler a “man of great courage.” The Christian right, which has a hammer lock on the Republican Party, is shot through with anti-Semitism. While supporting Israel, this bunch is viscerally hostile to Jews, who generally vote Democratic, and had no qualms about sending in goon squads to Palm Beach and Broward Counties to intimidate the election commissions and ensure that 17,000 “undercounts” (where no vote for president was registered in a machine count) and almost 30,000 “overcounts” (where more than one presidential candidate was supposedly selected) would not be examined.

But neither the press nor the Democratic Party talked

much about the thousands of blacks, Latinos and immigrants who were kept from the polls by a variety of methods. Lousy election machines were put in black districts, interpreters were denied to Haitian immigrants but supplied to Cuban *gusanos* (counterrevolutionaries), black voters were often required to produce photo IDs while whites were not, black voters' names somehow didn't make it onto lists, and the state police even put up a roadblock on the approach to the largest black voting precinct in the state capital of Tallahassee to intimidate voters. Nor was Florida unique. In St. Louis hundreds of blacks were left standing in huge lines when the polls closed. This is no accident, for in Florida and elsewhere the election fraud was

all about race, as is almost always the case about any social issue in the United States. Reflecting the origin of American capitalism in slavery, the black question is *the* characteristic question of the American workers revolution.

Perhaps the most blatant case of discrimination was the last-minute striking of *tens of thousands* of blacks from the voting rolls who were supposed "felons." Florida, like most Southern states, provides that anyone convicted of a felony is disenfranchised for life. These laws were once part of a panoply of electoral devices to disenfranchise blacks after the end of the post-Civil War Reconstruction. Poll tax and literacy requirements were eliminated by the civil rights movement in the

1876

Karl Marx: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."

The presidential vote of the year 2000 inevitably recalled the 1876 election, the last time a candidate was named president who lost the popular vote. The press was full of stories about how a compromise was arrived at after a lot of wrangling in Congress, how the Republican Rutherford Hayes showed moderation in victory, how the Democrat loser Sam Tilden graciously conceded but felt cheated. What was barely mentioned was that the election was settled by the "Compromise of 1877," which sealed the end of Reconstruction by removing federal troops from the South and thus reestablishing political dominance by the plantocracy. Following the defeat of the Southern Confederacy in the Civil War (1861-65), Union troops occupied the former slave states. For two decades, newly freed blacks played a leading role in Southern legislatures while the former slave owners and Confederate officers were disenfranchised. This was considered an affront by white men of property, who sneered at "scalawags" (Southerners who worked with the Union army) and "carpetbaggers" (Northerners in the Reconstruction governments).

Charles and Mary Beard first wrote of the Civil War as the Second American Revolution. In fact, a serious attempt to radically reconstruct the former slavocracy posed the potential for social revolution throughout the country. But the former slaves, many of whom courageously fought for their freedom as Union troops, were only promised "40 acres and a mule." The plantations were not broken up and turned over to the blacks who labored on them, but instead were converted from slave production to sharecropping. The high point of Radical or Black Reconstruction was the election of hundreds of black officials, and soon this was under attack as former Confederate officers formed bands of lynchers that came to be known as the Ku Klux Klan. During the 1876 election these nightriders sought to terrorize the black population into not voting. Meanwhile, as industrialization progressed in the North and the continental railroads linked West and East Coasts, the victorious industrial bourgeoisie



Dorothy Sterling

KKK terrorized blacks in 1876 elections. Union troops were withdrawn in "Compromise of 1877," ending Reconstruction and introducing Jim Crow segregation.

which had won protectionist tariffs (to keep out European manufactures) by defeating Southern plantation owners (who wanted low tariffs to import machinery from Britain, the main export market for their cotton) began to fear the spectre of insurrection by an increasingly assertive working class.

The bourgeois Compromise of 1877 showed that black rights and workers' rights go hand in hand. Emboldened by the agreement to put an end to black Reconstruction in the South, the railroad companies in the North immediately got together to slash wages. This set off a storm of strikes and protests from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh west to St. Louis. When state militias proved unreliable in shooting down fellow workers and neighbors, federal troops were brought in. In Reading, Pennsylvania a National Guard company arrived fresh from executing the Molly Maguires (radical Irish coal miners in West Virginia) and proceeded to gun down rail strikers who had torn up tracks, jammed switches, derailed cars and set fire to cabooses. In Lebanon, Pennsylvania a Guard company mutinied; in Altoona, troops surrounded by strikers surrendered their arms and fraternized with the crowd; in the state capital Harrisburg, a crowd including a number of blacks met the troops from Altoona, who were marched like captives through the streets.

In several cities, the labor revolt was led by the Workingmen's Party, originally affiliated with Karl Marx's First International. In Chicago, Albert Parsons, a former

1960s, but the “felon” vote ban remains. With the phony “war on drugs” more than 4 million blacks have been deprived of the right to vote. This affects one quarter of all adult black men nationally. In Florida, some 525,000 people have had their right to vote cancelled, among them almost *one-third* of all black men. To make sure they were excluded, the State of Florida – that is, the Republican Party – hired a private company to send out notices to county boards of elections, eliminating as many as 5,000 blacks in a single county. Moreover, since the company used arrest records instead of convictions, and mixed felonies and misdemeanors, at least 8,000 blacks were struck off the rolls without a shred of “legality.” Since blacks voted

96 percent for Gore and Bush’s lead was at most a couple of hundred votes, that’s the margin of victory right there. But, significantly, not a word of protest from Gore.

In fact, the Democrats at one point ordered Jesse Jackson to *call off* black protests and to leave the state. Jackson compared the exclusion of blacks from voting in Florida to the denial of the right to vote that was protested at Selma, Alabama in 1965. In Alabama in 1965 the very right to register to vote was being denied. Actually, there has been a widespread effort to undo black voting rights in recent years. But what black Democrat Jackson is really complaining about is the fact that this exposes the fraud of his talk of “empowerment.” This

“scalawag” from Alabama, gave a fiery speech, after which a crowd marched on the rail yards; he was fired from his typesetting job, and a decade later was executed in reprisal for the Haymarket “riots” that fought for the eight-hour day. St. Louis was where the Workingmen’s Party had the greatest impact, calling a general strike that shut down industry. Hundreds of black steamboat men and Mississippi River roustabouts marched with white factory workers. A rally of ten thousand listened to communist speakers proclaim that the working people “will no longer submit to being oppressed by unproductive capital.” The historian David Burbank wrote in his book, *Reign of the Rabble*:

“Only around St. Louis did the original strike on the railroads expand into such a systematically organized and complete shut-down of all industry that the term general strike is fully justified. And only there did the socialists assume undisputed leadership.... No American city has come so close to being ruled by a workers’ soviet, as we would now call it, as St. Louis, Missouri, in the year 1877.”

Repression finally broke the strikes: a hundred strike supporters were killed, a thousand had been jailed. But perhaps the greatest weakness was the failure to solidify the unity of black and white workers. In St. Louis, when blacks called on the white workers to support their fight for racial equality the leaders of the Workingmen’s Party turned their back on them. As Marx had written in *Capital*, in the U.S. “every independent movement of the workers was paralysed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic.” As a result of the victory over slavery in the Civil War there soon arose the eight-hour day agitation. Marx concluded: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” This is as true today as it was then. In the aftermath of the defeat of the 1877 railroad strike, workers unions were brutally suppressed for almost two decades, while blacks were hit with the systematic discrimination known as Jim Crow, with poll taxes, literacy requirements and the like. The KKK rode supreme.

A century and a quarter later, older black voters in Jacksonville knew what they were facing last November 2 – they had seen it all before. They thought they had defeated Jim Crow with the civil rights movement of the 1960s, but racist reaction has not gone away. As Florida governor Jeb Bush moved to abolish affirmative action,



Ruins of Pittsburgh roundhouse in Great Strike of 1877. Elimination of black rights with end of Reconstruction led to assault on working class.

in January of 2000 there was a mass march of thousands of blacks on the capitol in Tallahassee. But that demonstration was dominated by the Democratic Party, with the active support of union bureaucrats and black misleaders, who sought to channel black outrage into a vote for Gore in November. The outcome of the election left many blacks in Florida and around the country extremely bitter. But as long as blacks and workers are chained to the racist, capitalist Democratic Party, the struggle against white supremacy cannot win. For oppressed black people in the U.S. to wipe out the legacy of slavery will require a Third American Revolution, a workers revolution led by a multiracial revolutionary workers party. The Internationalist Group fights for *black liberation through socialist revolution!*

Panicked supporters of U.S. puppet regime try to flee to American Embassy as Liberation Army troops take Saigon, April 1975. Long live Vietnamese victory over Yankee imperialism!



Neal Ulevich/AP

nebulous phrase was invented at a time when the Black Panther Party was talking of “black power,” and Jackson’s purpose was to pass off gaining riches and influence for a tiny layer of bourgeois blacks as a civil rights victory for the mass of black working people. Jackson used to campaign on the slogan, “The hands that picked cotton now pick the president.” What these elections graphically showed was that this is not true.

Elections 2000 and U.S. Imperialism

What do the 2000 elections portend? The heightened tensions between the partner parties of U.S. capitalism go back to differences arising from the Vietnam war. Although Democrat John Kennedy first sent American troops to Vietnam, liberal Democrats eventually took a bourgeois defeatist line on the war, trying to cut U.S. losses in Indochina in order to shore up American imperialist interests worldwide. With his “human rights” crusade, Democratic president Jimmy Carter (1977-81) led off the anti-Soviet Cold War II, which reached a crescendo over Soviet intervention against CIA *mujahedin* (Islamic holy warriors) in Afghanistan. But Republican hardliners have bitterly resented the U.S. flight from Indochina and Nixon’s forced resignation in 1974 to avoid impeachment. This resentment led to the Republicans’ 1995 shutdown of the federal government and their 1998 impeachment of Clinton. The fight over the 2000 election is a third act of this play, which has all of the “venom” of the War of the Roses between aristocratic factions in Britain in the 15th century immortalized in various of Shakespeare’s royal dramas.

This has been termed a “culture war,” but it is a classic response to humiliating imperialist defeat. Following German imperialism’s debacle in World War I, Hitler popularized the “*Dolchstoßlegende*,” the legend that defeat was the result of a “stab in the back” by Jews and socialists. Though the Nazis began with a bollixed “beer hall putsch” in 1923, this ultimately led to the Holocaust. In the U.S.’ case, after the Chinese Communists under Mao Tse-tung drove out the corrupt dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek in 1949, a bitter “who lost China” debate erupted in the American bourgeoisie. This fueled the dispute between Democratic president Truman and

General Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War, when the power-hungry general wanted to attack “Red China” directly, and the rise of anti-Communist witchhunting spearheaded by rightist Republican senator Joe McCarthy.

Right-wing Republicans blamed the defeat in Vietnam on the “enemy within,” including Democratic doves and hippie peaceniks. The visceral hatred of Clinton was driven by their view that a draft-dodging, pot-smoking antiwar protester had been elected president. (They call it a “culture war” because they hate the millions of “baby boomers” who elected Clinton as much as they hate him.) Never mind that what really defeated U.S. imperialism in Indochina were the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese army, who drew their strength from a social revolution against the colonialists, landowners and corrupt comprador bourgeois politicians. After the Jimmy Carter interlude, this right-wing revanchism led to the election of Ronald Reagan, the intensification of the anti-Soviet war drive – along with an all-out war on labor at home. This was followed by the destruction of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc, and the Persian Gulf War on Iraq that led George Bush Sr. to declare a “New World Order” and the American bourgeoisie to proclaim the “death of Communism.”

So why the persistence of this Republican resentment? Because despite unchallenged U.S. imperialist hegemony and the “longest peacetime economic expansion” in a century, the New World Order isn’t all it was cracked up to be. Despite its “stunning” success in the war on Yugoslavia, in which U.S. “smart bombs” pulverized Serbian dummy tanks but missed hundreds of real ones, Washington is bogged down in the Balkans, with no end in sight. The Chinese deformed workers state is still there, along with Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam. And while Clinton “stole” parts of the Republican platform, with the tremendous escalation of state repression and the vicious welfare “reform” that threw millions of mothers and children into even deeper poverty, the domestic agenda of the Christian right still hasn’t been realized.

Like Joe McCarthy before them, the Republican right-wingers tend toward bonapartism rather than fascism, using the state machinery to bash their opponents while piously intoning

paean to “smaller government” – that is, lower taxes for the rich. And until now they haven’t had all the levers of the federal government in their hands. Now that Republicans control the executive (the presidency), legislative (both houses of Congress) and judicial (Supreme Court) branches of government, their talk of the hallowed principle of “separation of powers” will go up in smoke. And all the talk of “bipartisanship” will go up in smoke. Meanwhile, there’s a whole move afoot to rehabilitate McCarthyism, arguing that the witchhunter from Wisconsin got a bum rap just like “Tricky Dick” Nixon.

But this goes far beyond squabbling in the ruling class. Although their hostilities are presently directed at their bourgeois rivals, both capitalist parties are preparing to intensify attacks on blacks and labor. As the last legislative act of 2000, Clinton and the Republican Congress approved a bipartisan bill with millions of dollars to hire 50,000 more cops nationwide, on top of the 150,000 hired with federal funds earlier in the Democratic presidency. There is a reason the capitalist parties are beefing up their repressive apparatus. They figure they may have to use it. After all the hype about unparalleled prosperity, Wall Street and Washington are worried about a “hard landing,” code words for a sharp economic recession. Profit rates, which have been averaging 10 to 20 percent of revenue in recent years, are rapidly falling. The stock market bubble based on information technology (IT) stocks burst earlier this year: the Nasdaq index, which is heavy on IT stocks, is down 45 percent, wiping out \$3 trillion in stock owners’ fictitious capital. The end had to come, as investors poured tens of billions of dollars into high-tech dot-com companies that never showed a profit. For those that did produce profits, like Microsoft, Intel or Sun, their stock market prices averaged 65 times annual earnings, compared to the traditional yardstick of roughly 15 times annual profits.

So much for the “new economy.” Meanwhile, the U.S. has been living on hundreds of billions of investment dollars from Europe which have flowed into the country to benefit from the strong dollar (compared to the weak Euro). The “current account” deficit, meaning the deficit in international trade and financial transactions, is now 4.5 percent of the entire U.S. gross domestic product. Not only are consumers importing Chinese-made toys and Japanese appliances like crazy, American corporations are living on borrowed foreign capital and borrowed time. And in the last four years, for the first time in history, U.S. private sector financial balances have gone sharply negative. *The Economist* has sounded the alarm because private sector debt is a record 150 percent of the GDP. For the last decade, American capitalism has held itself up as a model to the rest of the world. But when the dollar weakens against the Euro, as it has already started to do, “hot money” could flow out of the U.S. to Europe as quickly as it did out of Mexico in December 1994, and Wall Street will be in a heap of trouble.

Prior to the 1929 stock market crash, investors looking at the financial panics, hyper-inflation and mass unemployment in post-World War I Germany cheerfully told themselves, “It can’t happen here.” Well, it did. Today a U.S. economic crisis, even of mid-sized proportions, could have a huge international impact.

Most of the left in commenting on the U.S. election fiasco has done so in exclusively national terms, ignoring the impact on the rest of the world except the *Schadenfreude* (gloating) of those on Washington’s hit list of “rogue states.” But a weakening of American economic clout could spell big strategic trouble for U.S. imperialism. There have been several near-meltdowns in recent years (Mexico 1994, East Asia 1997, Russia 1998). So far Washington and Wall Street have been able to keep things from spiraling out of control. But if Federal Reserve Bank chairman Alan Greenspan can’t cow the herd of currency speculators any more simply by raising or lowering interest rates a few tenths of a percent, that’s a whole different ball game.

From Cold War II to Star Wars II

A lot of Washington’s clout in the recent period has been based on intimidation and the *appearance* of invincible strength now that the Soviet Union is gone. Counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc was the key event which set the stage for the present world situation. The 1990-91 Persian Gulf War would not have occurred as long as the USSR was backing Iraq. That war marked the end of the post-World War II period...and the opening of a new pre-war period. Initially, around the globe everyone capitulated to Washington. The Nicaraguan Sandinistas got voted out of office by “dollar democracy.” Salvadoran guerrillas gave up the struggle in a “negotiated settlement” that was a thinly disguised surrender. The Palestine Liberation Organization agreed to the Oslo “peace process,” which was all process and no peace, on the vague promise of sometime getting a Palestinian mini-state that would resemble a South African bantustan under apartheid. But now times are changing.

The current Palestinian revolt is the result of a population driven to desperation by the Zionist butchers and colonists. Meanwhile, Washington’s imperialist allies and rivals are getting itchy. Saddam demanded that he get paid in Euros instead of dollars for his oil exports to Europe, and this was agreed to by the United Nations. The European imperialists are now setting up their own military alliance, supposedly linked to NATO, but potentially a rival. The Clinton administration sought to keep its imperialist allies and rivals in line by sending U.S. troops to control NATO forces in the Bosnia and Kosovo protectorates. The Bush foreign policy team wants to pull American forces out and leave policing the Balkan powder keg to the Europeans. But this could backfire as the European Union becomes increasingly assertive economically and militarily.

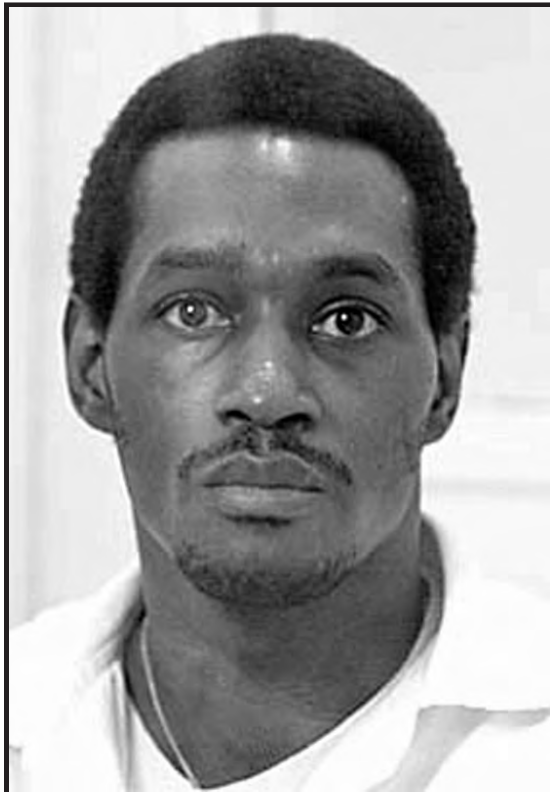
The Bush administration is banking on beefing up the U.S. military for war, not the so-called “nation-building” they deride as social work. For starters they may try to finish up where Bush Sr. left off by trying to topple Saddam Hussein in Iraq. But the centerpiece of their strategy, confirmed by the nomination of Donald Rumsfeld as war secretary, is to build the Star Wars program for space-based “defense” against a supposed threat of nuclear attack by “rogue states.” Military strategists are notorious for always planning to win the last war. In this case, General Powell (the new Secretary of State) and Vice President Cheney, the chancellor of Bush’s presidency, act

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Shaka Sankofa Executed by George Bush and Bill Clinton

Workers Revolution Will Avenge Sankofa

FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!



Shaka Sankofa

The following article was published as part of a July 2000 supplement to The Internationalist.

At 8:49 p.m. on June 22, Shaka Sankofa (Gary Graham) was murdered by the state of Texas. Born into an impoverished family in the Houston black ghetto, Shaka was railroaded by the Texas courts onto death row at the age of 17. His execution by lethal injection 19 years later was a blatant case of *capitalist state murder* of an innocent man. He was there because a black youth had to pay when a white man was killed in a supermarket parking lot. Witnesses who saw the killer close-up stated emphatically in sworn affidavits that it was not Graham. But their testimony was never heard by any court, even though it was available at the time. With minutes to go in the countdown to execution, the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington refused (by a 5-4 split vote) to hear an appeal based on this evidence of his innocence.

The execution of Shaka Sankofa was ruthlessly carried out in the face of a furious battle by death penalty abolitionists to save his life. In New York hundreds demonstrated in Times



Mumia Abu-Jamal

Square on the day of the execution. The Internationalist Group carried signs, “Stop the Execution – Free Shaka Sankofa!” “George W. Bush: Serial State Killer, Death Penalty Clintons: Mass Murderers in the Balkans,” “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! There Is No Justice for the Oppressed in the Capitalist Courts” and “Down with the Democrat and Republican Parties of Death – Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!” Over 1,000 people demonstrated outside the death chamber in Huntsville Prison in Texas. When the witnesses to the execution emerged, the crowd cried out “Shaka was innocent” and “Long live Shaka,” and burned an effigy of Texas governor Bush.

Like Malcolm X, George Jackson and other black radicals before him, it was in jail that Gary Graham became politicized. He adopted a black nationalist outlook, took the name of the famous Zulu warrior Shaka, and devoted the rest of his life to fighting against the death penalty and the racist system which spawned it. He went to his death defiantly, proclaiming,

“I’m an innocent black man that’s being murdered. This is a lynching that is happening in America tonight.... This is

what happens to black men when they stand up and protest for what is right and just... You can kill a revolutionary, but you cannot stop the revolution.... This is part of the genocide, this is part of the African holocaust, that we as black people have endured in America.... We will gain our freedom and liberation, by any means necessary.”

Sankofa fought to the end against his execution. It took a five-man “extraction team” to force him out of his cell and bring him to the execution chamber. His head was strapped to the gurney and his body was covered with a sheet, to hide evidence of the beating.

Shaka Sankofa was the victim of a barbaric system of racist injustice, in which the Supreme Court has upheld the death penalty while admitting the fact that it massively discriminates against blacks. The over 3,600 people on death row in the United States are overwhelmingly minority poor; the rich, who can hire good lawyers, are never there. The U.S. is one of only two countries in the world who order the execution of minors (Iran is the other). Today, the execution of Shaka Sankofa is an ominous threat to Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black radical journalist on death row in Pennsylvania who has become the focus of the struggle against the racist death penalty.

Democrats, Republicans – Capitalist Parties of Death

Sankofa’s execution made the death penalty an issue in the upcoming elections. Republican candidate Bush is notorious for presiding over the execution of 137 people in Texas, at last count, by far the fastest rate of any state in the U.S. Bush is personally responsible for killing Sankofa by refusing to stay the execution. Also guilty of the murder of this innocent man is Democratic president Clinton, whose 1996 “effective death penalty” law effectively denied Shaka a federal appeal when Texas courts refused to hear the witnesses who would have exonerated him. Demonstrators at the Republican convention in Philadelphia vow to “crash the party at the executioners’ ball.” In fact, *both capitalist parties wantonly carry out state murder*. They are the bosses of the racist killer cops who execute black and Latino youth in the streets with impunity.

The Republican convention that will nominate Bush for president is hosted by Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge, who poses as a “moderate” while signing more than 200 death warrants in his two terms, including Mumia. George W. Bush is Governor Death, executing an average of three inmates a month since taking office in 1995. Bush is a sadistic killer who revels in his crimes. When Christian fundamentalists and the Pope pleaded for clemency for “born again” prisoner Karla Faye Tucker, the Texas governor mocked her final appeal, imitating a whimpering voice begging for mercy.

For George W. Bush, the death penalty is the linchpin of a heavy-handed racist regime where state police party in Klan outfits, the Border Patrol runs roughshod over the Mexican *colonias* along the Rio Grande, and protesters are arrested for walking in front of the governor’s mansion. This repressive apparatus is needed to keep down the black, Latino and poor white population who suffer from some of the most miserable

wages, lowest literacy rates, highest unemployment rates, worst pollution and poorest health conditions in the country. The unemployment rate in South Texas is 14 percent and the minimum wage is under \$3 an hour. It was in the East Texas town of Jasper that in 1998 KKKers carried out the lynch-murder of James Byrd, dragging him to death behind a pick-up truck.

Liberal Democrats sometimes wag their fingers at Bush for his “callousness” over the death penalty. Among the witnesses who were present for Shaka Sankofa at his execution were black Democrats Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. But Jackson is the “spiritual advisor” of Bill Clinton, who has done more than anyone to expand the scope of state murder in the U.S. In campaigning for president by executing Shaka Sankofa, George Bush is imitating Clinton’s 1992 campaign, when the then governor of Arkansas made a display of ordering the execution of a severely brain-damaged black man, Ricky Ray Rector. As president, Clinton ordered the 1993 assault on the racially integrated Branch Dravidian religious commune outside Waco, Texas that killed almost 100 people, including two dozen children. Sharpton, in turn, has been drumming up votes for Hillary Clinton, who launched her Senate campaign declaring her support for the death penalty.

President Clinton recently made a show of postponing the first federal execution in decades, expressing his “concern” about the “disturbing racial composition” of the federal death row. The federal death row has a higher percentage of black prisoners than that of any state including Texas and Alabama. Yet Clinton pushed the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill, under whose provisions they were sentenced. In fact, three-quarters of those for whom Attorney General Reno authorized requesting the death penalty are minorities, with the largest number coming from Puerto Rico. The same 1994 legislation vastly expanded the federal death penalty to cover some 60 crimes, particularly under the government’s “war on drugs” which has targeted black ghettos and Latino barrios. Democratic presidential candidate Gore has declared himself a “strong supporter” of the death penalty and got into a sick debate with Bush over what to do about a pregnant woman on death row. (Gore’s “solution”: let her have an abortion and then execute her!)

After the Oklahoma City bombing, Clinton rammed through the 1996 Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act which drastically limited prisoners’ rights to judicial appeal of death sentences. Taken together with Supreme Court decisions upholding “states’ rights,” the hoary battle cry of Jim Crow racism, this means that prisoners condemned to death get at most one federal *habeas corpus* appeal, in which they cannot present evidence of innocence, only of violation of constitutional rights. It is Clinton’s draconian death penalty law that the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal confronts today. And Clinton has helped whip up the lynch mob frenzy against Jamal, speaking at the 1995 convention of the Fraternal Order of Police.

In the fight to free Mumia, it must be clearly understood that both the Democrats and Republicans are the enemy. The death penalty is not an aberration but a key component of American capitalist rule, which was built on the foundation



Internationalist Group at NYC protest of execution of Sankofa, June 2000. Reformists blamed Republicans only, IG declared: “George W. Bush: Serial State Killer, Death Penalty Clintons, Mass Murderers in the Balkans.”

of slavery and continues to rest on hideous racist oppression and brutal exploitation of the working people. Courts, cops and capitalist politicians are on the other side of a class war. In fighting to save Mumia and all death row prisoners from the executioner, we look not to the courts – which are hardly neutral but a cog in the machinery of state repression – but to the tremendous power of labor which can stop this State Murder Inc. in its tracks and bring down the capitalist system that rules by terrorizing its victims. While reformists and liberals call for a “new trial” for Jamal, we fight to mobilize workers power to free Mumia and abolish the barbarous racist death penalty. The way forward is to forge a revolutionary workers party – for black liberation through socialist revolution.

The Lynching of Shaka Sankofa

In his final words before the state killed him, Shaka vowed: “We’re going to end the death penalty in this country. We are going to end it all across the world.” What’s happening is “state-sanctioned murders, state-sanctioned lynching,” he insisted. “They know I’m innocent, but they cannot acknowledge my innocence because to do so would be to publicly admit their guilt.” Around the world, Shaka’s courageous

defiance in the face of the executioner inspired opponents of racist barbarism to seek the means to put an end to capitalism’s barbarous death penalty.

There was plenty of evidence of Shaka’s innocence. He was convicted on the testimony of a single witness who said she saw him 30 to 40 feet away, on a dark night, through her car windshield. No physical evidence linked him to the crime. The gun he carried was not the murder weapon. The victim, Bobby Lambert, was killed in the parking lot of a Houston supermarket. Two witnesses who worked at the supermarket stated they had seen the killer and it was not Gary Graham. Gary Graham is tall, just under 5 feet 10 inches; the man they saw was short, under 5 feet 5 inches. But they were never called to testify.

Shaka’s court-appointed lawyer was Ronald Mock. At the state prison in Livingston, there is a whole section of death row known as the “Mock Wing” because so many men he “defended” have ended up there. As Shaka’s lawyer, Mock carried out no investigation and put on no defense. The cops’ own reports included the two witnesses who said Graham was not the shooter. Out of eight eyewitnesses, only one later identified Graham, the one who was farthest away and caught only a fleeting glance of someone for a couple of seconds. Nearly two weeks after the crime, she could not pick his picture from a series of photos. Three members of the jury that convicted Graham later gave sworn statements that they would have decided differently if they had known about all the eyewitnesses and evidence.

George W. Bush has murdered 137 people and keeps on killing with the impunity that comes from holding state power. This serial killer justified the execution of Shaka Sankofa, grotesquely claiming that his victim “has had full and fair access to state and federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court.” Yet the evidence of Sankofa’s innocence was never presented in any court. Why? His request for a new trial was denied because of a Texas rule which bars court review on any evidence of innocence brought forward more than 30 days after the trial conviction! From 1993, Shaka’s new lawyers sought a new trial to present the evidence hidden from the original jury 12 years earlier. To no avail.

The Supreme Court refused to hear appeals of prisoners challenging the 30-day rule (“states’ rights”). In 1994, the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals held a hearing on Sankofa’s *habeas corpus* appeal, and after two years of sitting on the case ruled that there was substantial evidence but it had to be reviewed first by the state court. Texas courts refused to hold a hearing, and Shaka’s lawyers went back to federal court in 1999 to get a stay of execution. In the meantime, Clinton’s 1996 Effective Death Penalty Act had become law, limiting prisoners to one federal *habeas* appeal. Now the circuit court ruled that the 1994 appeal had already used up Sankofa’s one appeal, so he had no more judicial recourse.

Mobilize Workers Power to Free Mumia Now!

The case of Shaka Sankofa dramatically shows how reformist groups like Workers World Party (WWP), the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) which organize protests demanding a “new trial” for



Brazilian CUT union federation banner at 22 November 1999 demonstration. LQB signs read: “Capitalism = Racism” and “Strikes and Work Stoppages to Free Mumia!”

Mumia Abu-Jamal are spreading deadly illusions in the capitalist state. Defense lawyers must use every legal avenue available to them, but to organize political demonstrations, teach-ins and meetings for a “new trial” fosters the liberal/reformist idea that the earlier frame-up trials were a “mistake,” that somehow if only the facts could be presented Sankofa and Jamal would be vindicated. Yet the entire *system* of racist injustice is stacked to railroad *millions* of black, minority and poor prisoners to jail and thousands to the execution chamber.

The courts are there not to decide right and wrong but to protect the interests of America’s racist capitalist ruling class. There are now well over *two million* people in prison in the United States, more than in any other country on earth, and more than four million under the control of the judicial system (including parolees). As class polarization intensifies in the U.S., as the number of millionaires tripled in the ’90s, “gentrification” pushes the poor out of their homes, college is for the rich – and for the poor there are sweatshops, minimum wage McJobs, homeless shelters and jail cells, lots of them. Cops pick out their black and Latino victims through “racial profiling” and “sting” operations, and as they are carted off to jail the privatized prison industry has become a capitalist “profit center.”

Revolutionaries tell the truth to the masses. And the truth is that while Jamal was convicted by “Hanging Judge” Sabo and Sankofa was executed by “Governor Death” Bush, this is the *normal* functioning of the capitalist *injustice* system. Both Republicans and Democrats defend the death penalty because, from the time of slavery on, it is a key element in defending bourgeois rule. We can only pry Mumia from the claws of the barbarous state murder machine by mobilizing a greater power that can bring the wheels of capitalism to a grinding halt: the international working class. It is the proletariat, whose labor is the source of the bourgeoisie’s profits, whose social and economic strength, led by a revolutionary workers party, can sweep away the bourgeois state and its legions of enforcers and flunkies.

No illusions in the racist courts, cops and capitalist politicians! From the Haymarket martyrs in the 1880s to IWW labor organizer Joe Hill to the heroic Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, “reds” and blacks have been the prime targets of legal lynching in the U.S. The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International have insistently called for and sought to organize powerful *international* working-class mobilization – demonstrations, work stoppages and strike action – to free

Mumia Abu-Jamal. Communist-led international labor defense fought to free the anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti in the late 1920s and prevented the execution of the black “Scottsboro Boys” in the early ’30s.

In April 1999, ILWU dock workers shut down West Coast ports for ten hours demanding freedom for Jamal, as did work stoppages a day earlier by teachers in the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro, initiated by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. This was followed up by new stoppages by Rio bank workers, teachers and a state-wide labor strike in November which all included the demand for Mumia’s freedom, again at the initiative of the LQB. These actions point the way, but they are only a beginning of the storm of proletarian revolutionary struggle that is urgently needed to definitively stay the executioner’s hand and liberate our brother Mumia.

Mumia’s case is at a critical point. He has exhausted appeals to the Pennsylvania state courts. His death warrant is still pending, awaiting the verdict on his *habeas corpus* appeal in federal court. While Republican governor Tom Ridge has twice signed death warrants for Jamal’s execution, Philadelphia’s former Democratic mayor Ed Rendell (now chairman of the national Democratic Party) was the district attorney who prosecuted Mumia in 1981. To win freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal – who was targeted by the FBI’s COINTELPRO provocations and is on death row because of the bourgeoisie’s pathological fear of black revolutionaries – we must combat reformist illusions in the capitalist courts and politicians.

The murder of Shaka Sankofa was a crime against black people and all those struggling against this racist capitalist system. The death of Shaka, defiant and fighting to the end, must strengthen the resolve to bring down the bourgeois executioners who murdered him. Turn the anger against this vicious murder into renewed energy in our fight to free Mumia and abolish the racist death penalty! ■

Defend the Palestinian People!



Reuters

Insurgent Palestinian youth confront Israeli army on the West Bank.

For an Arab/Hebrew Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Day after day for the last four months, thousands of Palestinian youths have gone out to the barricades and checkpoints that surround their cities and towns in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to confront the Zionist forces that imprison them. Launching stones with slingshots, they brave the fire of cold-blooded assassins of the Israeli army and fanatical Zionist settlers. Tanks against children, high-powered sniper rifles against rocks, Israeli helicopter gunships firing on Palestinian cars and homes – this is the bloody reality which the imperialist media even-handedly describes as a “conflict.” So far some 350 Palestinian Arabs have been killed and more than 12,000 injured in this one-sided slaughter.

The bravery of the Arab youths in launching a new *intifada* (uprising) is a courage born of desperation, of people who have nothing to lose. It is the valor of the Jews who, ignoring the impossible military odds, rose in the Warsaw ghetto revolt against Hitler’s Wehrmacht and the Nazi SS. Only today it is the self-proclaimed

“Jewish state,” which came into existence as a result of the genocidal Holocaust, that is engaging in “collective punishment” for rebellion, which sends out *Sonderkommandos* to shoot down an “enemy population” with impunity.

The Palestinian revolt was set off by the “visit” of right-wing politician Ariel Sharon to the religious site in the heart of Jerusalem that is known by Jews as the Temple Mount above the Western (“Wailing”) Wall. The same site is known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), and the area Sharon stode through was the esplanade in front of

the Al Aqsa mosque. Even the United Nations called this act a provocation. While Sharon protested that as a Jew he had the right to walk through the holy site, in fact he was accompanied by the entire leadership of the Likud party and 1,000 Israeli police and soldiers, with another 2,000 cops and troops posted throughout the Old City to put down the anticipated Palestinian protests.



Tsafir Abayov/Impact Visuals

Ariel Sharon during recent election campaign, January 2001.

This supposedly pri-

Zionist Murderers Kill Rami al-Durrah

AP



TV cameraman filmed the shooting of Muhammad (Rami) al-Durrah by Israeli soldiers, 30 September 2000. Left: Rami's father Jamal tries to protect his 12-year-old son. Center: He yells to gunmen to stop firing. Right: after Rami has been killed and his father severely wounded. Lying *New York Times* said he was "caught in crossfire."

vate affair was approved in advance by then prime minister Ehud Barak and top Israeli generals and secret police officials. The government had a specific purpose in approving Sharon's provocation: at the Camp David summit meeting in July with Bill Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat, the U.S. president presented on Barak's behalf a bogus "peace" plan that would exclude Palestinian sovereignty over the religious site and the rest of East Jerusalem. When Arafat balked at accepting this *diktat*, the talks were called off and Clinton denounced the Palestinians' unwillingness to "compromise." The purpose of Sharon's armed stroll was to drive home the Zionists' insistence that Jerusalem was the "indivisible, eternal" capital of Israel and their refusal to go back to the borders of 1967.

By focusing on the Jerusalem mosque, the Sharon provocation was perhaps intended to set off a religious war, and in some Palestinian sectors the revolt is referred to as the Al Aqsa Intifada. But the Islamic fundamentalists have played only a marginal role in the clashes, which have been led by youth and militia groups associated with Arafat's secular nationalist outfit, Fatah. And contrary to the Zionists' pretense that the Palestinian *rais* (leader) could turn the militancy on and off at will, the angry young militants denounced their own corrupt and impotent leaders for capitulating to Clinton and Barak.

At bottom, the current uprising is the continuation of the first *intifada* that began in late 1988 and lasted until the Palestinian-Israeli "peace" talks in Oslo, Norway in the early '90s. When the "peace process" broke down, the fighting resumed.

The first uprising convinced Israel's top generals and "Labor" politicians that occupation of the territories was becoming too costly, and that they should turn over policing of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The talks which led to the 1994 handshake by Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Arafat in the White House Rose Garden were intended by the Zionists to gain security for Israel under the slogan "land for peace." A Palestinian Authority (PA) was set up that was entirely dependent on Israel, the U.S. and Europe for its income, was divided into two distinct sectors (West Bank and Gaza) separated by Israeli territory, and received full control over no more than 9 percent of the Occupied Territories. This "authority" could do nothing to improve the lives of Palestinians and had only one function: under CIA supervision it built up a bloated police apparatus (seven different secret police organizations) tasked with jailing Muslim fundamentalists in order to stop terror bombing.

Yet terror bombing is exactly what the Zionists have done to Gaza, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin and other Palestinian cities over the last few months, on a vastly larger scale than the occasional Islamic Jihad car bomb in Tel Aviv. And with hardly a mention in the press, the entire population of Hebron has been hermetically sealed off for months, thousands locked down in their homes by an unending 24-hour curfew, as Zionist settlers maraud. As the Israeli army engages in wanton mass murder, a dozen Israeli soldiers and a couple dozen settlers have been killed in retaliation. In addition, several Jewish civilians were slain by Islamic fundamentalists, who consider every Jew a target, and by youths enraged by the monstrous Zionist massacre. This has been used by Israel's rulers to whip up a climate of "insecurity" that led to the landslide election on February 6 of the butcher Ariel Sharon as prime minister. Former general Sharon is a mass murderer who was responsible for the 1982 slaughter of over 2,000 Palestinians in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.

So-called liberal Zionists supported Barak during the elections and blamed the Palestinian revolt for having "doomed

Time



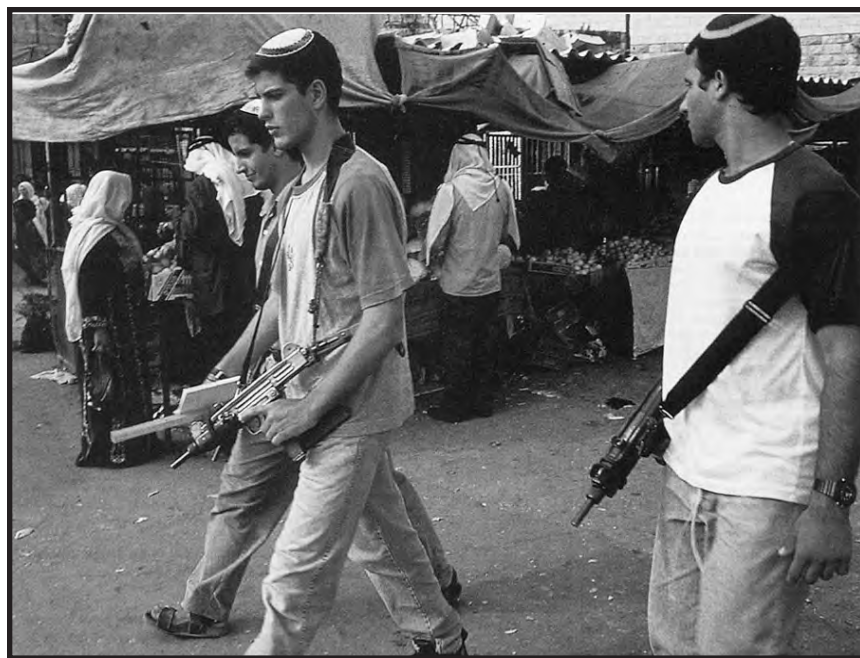
Left: Bodies of Palestinian refugees murdered in Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, September 1982.

Mr. Barak's peace policy" (*New York Times*, 7 February). They now call on Sharon to keep his promises about a "unity" government and urge him to "continue moving on the path of reconciliation with the Palestinians, set in train by his predecessors" (editorial in *Ha'aretz*, 7 February). But while Sharon campaigned on a phony platform of "peace and security," what he means by peace is something quite different. In 1982

he masterminded the Israeli invasion of Lebanon under the code name "Peace for the Galilee." In 1971, Sharon carried out a campaign called "Pacification of Gaza" which bulldozed thousands of Palestinian homes in the Gaza strip and deported thousands into the Negev desert. The unmistakable significance of the recent elections is that Israel is preparing for full-scale war on the Palestinian population, or as *Ha'aretz* delicately put it, "a broad-based armed confrontation."

On the Israeli side, everything has long been prepared. Since last summer, the Israeli army has done nothing but put into practice plans that were drawn up well over a year ago, supposedly to respond to a "declaration of independence" by Arafat. Army reservists have been notified that they may soon be called up. Already the former "Green Line" (the pre-1967 border) has been fortified with concrete barriers and fences and moved several kilometers into the West Bank. Sharon will soon start issuing ultimatums. If he orders a unilateral "separation," annexing the settlements to Israel, he will simply be implementing the policy Barak first threatened in response to the new *intifada* last October. "We are facing a real war," the head of the Settlers Council is quoted as saying. "A Likud official who is slated to be a minister told me this morning: 'Until now, this was child's play. Now, it's the real story'" (*New York Times*, 8 February).

In this threatened war, as in the present bloody confrontation, Marxists must defend the Palestinian people and stand solidly on the side of their revolt and resistance against the Israeli occupation forces, including the Zionist settlers. Class-conscious workers throughout the world must demand that Israel get out of all the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. We defend the Palestinian right to an independent state and full democratic rights for the Arab population of Israel, as well as the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the coun-



Ricki Rosen/Saba

Zionist settlers patrol Arab market in Hebron, West Bank, in 1994.

try they were driven out of in 1948 and 1967. At the same time we point out that a pseudo-state limited to the barren Gaza Strip and rocky West Bank can only be a glorified ghetto for the Palestinian population. Moreover, as internationalist communists we defend the right of self-determination as well for the Hebrew-speaking people, a democratic right which is *counterposed* to the inherently *anti-democratic* "Jewish state" of Israel. In the face of these competing national rights on the same territory, genuine liberation for the working people of both nations can only come about through *Arab/Hebrew workers revolution* and a *socialist federation of the Near East*.

The Oslo "Peace Process" Hoax

From the beginning, the "peace" negotiations initiated by the Zionist rulers and orchestrated by the U.S. were intended to subject Arabs to continued Israeli dominance, dividing them into isolated enclaves, separated by military highways, and leaving them with no means of self-defense against the Zionist military juggernaut. In the West Bank and Gaza, conditions have gotten steadily worse. The Israeli army pulled back to the outskirts of the cities and towns, so it wouldn't have to deal with daily clashes in the crowded streets. But the military vise is just as tight. The number of Zionist settlers has increased by almost half. And every time Israel's government was displeased, it would seal the Green Line, thus preventing Arab workers from commuting to jobs in Israel. The economic strangulation has led to a sharp drop in income, so that the average Palestinian family is now earning less than half what it did in 1994. To top it off, because the PA chairman signed agreements for Israeli troop "redeployments," the United Nations no longer considers the West Bank and Gaza occupied territories. Arafat became chief jailer and legalized the occupation!

The coverage in the Zionist and imperialist media is shot through with racism. They rail at Palestinian youth for refusing to reconcile themselves with their oppressors. Palestinian parents are denounced for supposedly sending their children out to be killed. This echoes the British and American colonialist refrain that for Asians "life is cheap." But who is doing the killing? The Israeli government argues "stones kill," and then sends army sharpshooters to assassinate children. A medical team of Physi-

cians for Human Rights (PHR) sent to Israel, Gaza and the West Bank at the end of October 2000 found that roughly 50 percent of fatal gunshot wounds were to the head, which “suggests that given broad rules of engagement, soldiers are specifically aiming at peoples’ heads.” Over half the fatalities in Gaza were killed by high-velocity weapons (sniper rifles), and almost 40 percent of those killed were under the age of 18. Palestinian ambulances were deliberately targeted by Israeli soldiers, and 17 were destroyed in 64 separate attacks. The so-called “rubber bullets” used against Palestinians are actually steel bullets with a thin rubber or plastic coating and are quite lethal.

Now the press is trying to make the new Israeli prime minister out as a man of peace. Every time the Sabra and Shatila massacre is mentioned, newspaper accounts add that an “official investigation” found General Sharon only “indirectly” responsible for the killing. The report, by an *Israeli* commission of inquiry, was a whitewash. The two refugee camps in Beirut were surrounded by the Israeli army. Sharon’s troops allowed the fascistic Christian Phalange forces to enter the camps. A 7 February report by the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights notes:

“Israeli searchlights illuminated the camps, while Israeli army personnel watched through binoculars as the death squads spread unchallenged through the camps. Whole families were murdered, many were raped and tortured before being killed. So many bodies were heaped into lorries and taken away, or buried in mass graves, that the exact toll will never be known, but Palestinian sources estimate at least 2000 people were killed.”

And this was not the only massacre staged by Sharon. In 1953 he founded and led the infamous Unit 101 which attacked the village of Qibya in Jordan. Under his command soldiers moved through the village blowing up houses, throwing hand grenades and firing into doorways and windows, killing 69 civilians, mostly women and children. Following the 1967 war, he drove 160,000 residents of East Jerusalem out of their homes, bulldozing houses, blowing up refugee camps, imprisoning hundreds of youth.

But Sharon is far from the only war criminal in the leadership of the Zionist state. His predecessor, former general Ehud Barak, led killer commandos under Sharon’s command. The reputed “dove” Shimon Peres was the prime minister who ordered the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon led by Sharon that killed more than 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinian refugees. And the supposed “prime minister of peace,” former general Yitzhak Rabin, carried out the massacres at Lydda and Ramleh in the 1948 war on the orders of Israel’s founding leader David Ben Gurion. Ben Gurion, Rabin, Peres and Barak were all leaders of the misnamed Israeli “Labor” Party, which is in fact a bourgeois party that founded and led the Zionist state for the first three decades of its existence. Sharon will govern as leader of the rightist Likud Party, whose founder Menachem Begin was responsible for the Deir Yassin massacre in 1948 that killed more than 250 unarmed Palestinians. That bloodbath was carried out in an attack that was authorized by the “Labor” Zionist leadership of the Haganah, forerunner of the Israeli army, and was part of its “Plan Dalet” aimed at emptying Palestine of its Arab population.

Both in numbers of Arabs killed by their leaders and in their policies in the Occupied Territories, the differences between “Labor” and Likud are virtually imperceptible to the Palestinians. Sharon in earlier stints in the Israeli cabinet, first as agriculture minister and then as housing minister, presided over the setting up of Zionist settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. But those settlements were first authorized by “Labor” and have continued apace under Barak, now totalling roughly 400,000 settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (almost half of them in areas annexed to “Greater Jerusalem”). Sharon has vowed that he won’t give up East Jerusalem or the Jordan River valley or the settlements to a Palestinian state. But Barak boasted that he didn’t give one square inch of territory to the Palestinians and “80 percent” of the settlements would be annexed to Israel. While reports “leaked” to the media claimed that he had proposed to give up “95 percent” of the West Bank to the PA, this was after subtracting the areas annexed to “Greater Jerusalem” and similar subterfuges.

The new prime minister of Israel is a vicious war criminal, no doubt about it. In response, various human rights groups and “peace” organizations in Israel are circulating a petition calling on international tribunals to arrest Sharon for violating the Geneva conventions on war. How absurd! They are appealing to the imperialist forces who in 1999 terror-bombed Yugoslavia in the name of “human rights,” who in 1991 carried out the Desert Slaughter of the Persian Gulf War, whose UN-authorized economic embargo has since killed a million and a half Iraqi children, and who have backed Israel for decades. Of course, it is no less absurd to look to the United Nations or the European Union or the United States to bring about a Palestinian state. Yet that has been the policy of Arafat and the PLO from the beginnings of an organized Palestinian independence struggle.

When you add it up, it’s obvious that far from Sharon being an exception, being a verifiable war criminal is an occupational *requirement* for leading Israel. This only underscores the fact that to bring them down what’s required is a revolution that does away with the racist state that they head. But such a revolution cannot be brought about simply by valiant youth throwing stones at tanks. Their actions may dramatize the tremendous disproportion in power between Israel and the still largely disarmed Palestinian population, but after a few weeks or months the media stop showing pictures and the killing goes on unnoticed.

What is required is a victorious fight for power, and the Palestinians cannot wage that struggle alone. As they have demonstrated repeatedly since 1948, the Arab bourgeois regimes are no allies of the Palestinian masses. In tacit (or in the case of Jordan’s King Abdullah, open) connivance with the Zionists they carved up the remains of Mandate Palestine, taking the parts that Israel didn’t yet have the strength to conquer. Jordan brutally suppressed the 1970 Black September uprising in the Palestinian refugee camps against the Hashemite monarchy, which Arafat himself refused to support as it was directed against a fellow Arab leader. Succeeding Lebanese regimes, both Christian and Muslim, have laid siege to the Palestinian camps, condemning their residents to a miserable existence. Gaza under Egyptian rule was just as much a prison

for its inhabitants as it has been under Israel.

Genuine peace in the land of Palestine will require a civil war in Israel, and in the surrounding Arab countries. The Israeli fortress must be taken from without and within, which can only be accomplished by a revolutionary working-class mobilization that breaches national divisions. There are plenty of fissures. The pressure of the first *intifada* took a deadly toll on Zionist unity in Israel. Right-wing Orthodox rabbis declared Rabin a “traitor” for initiating the Oslo “peace” talks, and a Zionist fanatic involved in fascistic circles carried out their implicit sentence by assassinating the “Labor” prime minister. A new round of clashes has again heightened tensions in Israel, so that a prominent rightist, Nadav Shragai, could write on the eve of the elections that it was necessary to “relegitimize the Zionist enterprise,” because a sense of “powerlessness” has “generated a mood of despair and a feeling that Israel has reached the end of the road,” and it was necessary to “restore the feeling that was once prevalent in Israel: the belief that the foundations of the Jewish state in the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people are just” (*Ha’aretz*, 30 January).

A prominent Russian Jewish writer, Israel Shamir, replied to Uri Avnery, guru of the left-Zionist “Peace Bloc” (Gush Shalom) and longtime proponent of a “two-state” policy:

“Face the harsh truth: the idea of two states in Palestine is, and has always been, a bluff. After being partitioned for only 19 years, Palestine has been united for 33 years....

“Mr. Avnery, have you visited Maalot or Ophakim lately? In those towns you hardly encounter anyone that you would consider to be a ‘Jew’. If you speak Ukrainian or Amharic, you might get by. The fact is that we have not two nations, but a variety of communities. The Moroccans of Ramle, the Russians of Ashdod, the software wizkids of Hertzliya Pituah, the millionaires of Caesarea, the settlers of Tapuah, the scholars of Mea Shearim, the Ethiopians of Ophakim, these wildly diverse communities constitute a Jewish nation only in the imagination of the Zionist establishment, the pre-’48 settlers and their aging children. ‘The first Israel’ has good reason for this flight of fantasy, as this minority still monopolizes power over the other communities and retains all its perks.”
—“The Future Is Now” (19 January)

Palestinian nationalists looking at Israel see only a Zionist monolith. This will no doubt be reinforced by the landslide for Sharon in the recent elections. But in addition to the rightward electoral shift there was a huge increase in abstention, by Israeli Arabs and by many Jews who could not stomach voting for Barak. There are numerous fault lines in the Zionist state: a secular majority, an ultra-Orthodox minority, Ashkenazi (European) and Mizrahi (Oriental) Jews, Arabs, Russian immigrants, Druzes, a growing population of immigrant workers (Filipinos, Romanians), some of them “legal” and others “illegal.” In the absence of a revolutionary party fighting for proletarian unity across communal lines, such contradictory forces will polarize to the right. But a class polarization is possible, even in Israel, but only through a sharp political struggle for communism against Zionist domination, as well as opposing the Arab nationalism that is a bourgeois ideology of despair for the oppressed Palestinians just as Zionism was for the oppressed Jews of Europe.

Two Peoples, One Land

One of the most prominent Palestinian critics of Arafat and the chaotic corruption of the Palestinian Authority is Edward Said, a professor at New York’s Columbia University. (There he has been the target of a nasty academic witchhunt and vilification by Zionist pundits for the “crime” of having thrown a stone at Israel’s northern border following Barak’s withdrawal last June after almost two decades of Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon!) Said was a member of the Palestine National Council (the “parliament” of the PLO) from 1977 through 1991, when he resigned because he considered the terms accepted by the PLO leadership for participation in the Madrid and later Oslo negotiations as “disastrous.” “The gains of the *intifada* were about to be squandered,” he wrote, while “Arafat and a few of his closest advisers had already decided on their own to accept anything that the United States and Israel might throw their way, just in order to survive as part of the ‘peace process’” (Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* [Random House, 1995]).

Said called the PLO leader’s policies “misguided,” the U.S.-orchestrated “peace process” “vulgar and distasteful,” the Palestinian negotiating team “weak” and “incapacitated.” He pungently declared that Arafat’s “capitulation” had converted him from “being the leader of his people’s quest for independence into Israel’s Buthelezi” (head of the South African sponsored Zulu bantustan) “or the head of a Vichy government” (the Nazi puppet regime in World War II France).

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Yet Said declared himself for “a two-state solution peacefully arrived at,” and ignored the fact that throughout his tenure in the Palestine National Council, the PLO was explicitly for a West Bank/Gaza mini-state, which could not be anything but such a bantustan or puppet regime.

The Oslo talks and the U.S.-sponsored negotiations were not just an Israeli imposition, or the product of betrayal or incapacity of the PLO leadership, as Said portrays it. The phony “peace process” expresses the logic of the bourgeois nationalist program of the PLO and all of its components, including petty-bourgeois “left” nationalists who in the past have cloaked their program in Marxist-sounding phrases and who today are part of the corrupt and capricious “Palestinian Authority.” Ever since the 1948 debacle, in which more than 80 per cent of the Arab population was driven from their land by the victorious Zionists, Palestinian nationalists have been well aware that their military and economic strength is vastly inferior to that of Israel. Though they may at times assume militant postures, they ultimately seek accommodation with the imperialists, competing with the Zionists for their favor. This is also true of the Islamic fundamentalist groups, which in fact were set up with the connivance of the Israeli secret services as a counterbalance to the PLO.

In a recent book with the prophetic title, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (Pantheon, 2000), Said takes a different tack. He now considers:

“The present crisis is, I think, a glimmering of the end of the two-state solution, whose unworkability Oslo, perhaps unconsciously, embodies. Israelis and Palestinians are too intertwined with each other in history, experience, and actuality to separate, even though each proclaims the need for separate statehood and will in fact have it. The challenge is to find a peaceful way in which to coexist not as warring Jews, Muslims, and Christians, but as equal citizens in the same land.”

Yet while Said now writes that “nationalism had become the dead end of our political life,” he remains a liberal and looks for peaceful coexistence on a purely democratic (bourgeois) basis. This is impossible under capitalism, which sets the two peoples at each other’s throats.

This can be shown by many examples, but in the parched lands of the eastern Mediterranean, separated by a desert from the “fertile crescent” of Mesopotamia (the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) and the heavily populated Nile, *water* is a key question. Since 1967, water in the West Bank has been under military control. Palestinians are forbidden to dig new wells, and 82 per cent of the water from West Bank aquifers (underground water sources) is reserved for Israel. On the West Bank itself, settlers consume an average of *six times* as much water as Palestinian villagers (*Journal of Palestine Studies*, Winter 2000). Thus the average Israeli consumption of water is 375 cubic meters per person per year while for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories it is 115 cm³. Israeli agriculture, which contributes 2 per cent of the gross domestic product, has one of the highest percentages of irrigated land in the world (roughly half the cultivable land), while in the Palestinian territories, where agriculture is 15 percent of the GDP, only 6 percent is irrigated.

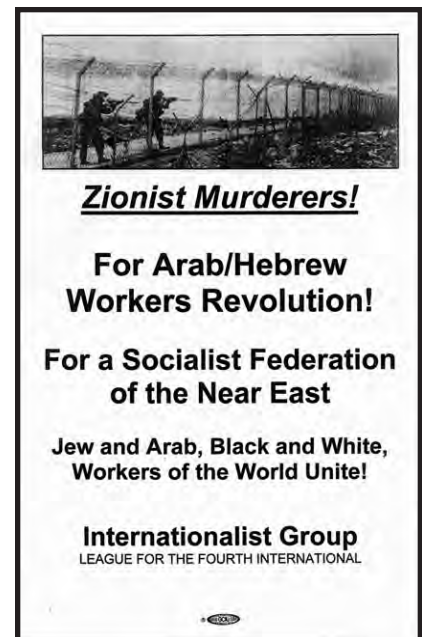
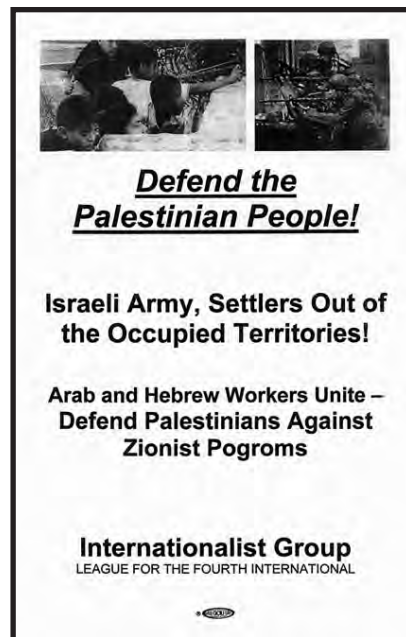
The Zionists focused on the question of water in Palestine long before the birth of Israel. In 1919, World Zionist Organization leader Chaim Weizman wrote to British prime minister Lloyd George to say, “The whole economic future of Palestine is dependent upon its water supply for irrigation and for electric power.” In his letter, Weizman advocated making the Litani River (now in Lebanon) the northern boundary of Palestine. At the end of the 1948 war, Israel bordered only a section of the Jordan River. By 1953 it was draining vast quantities of water from Lake Tiberias to irrigate the coastal plain and the Negev, without consulting Syria or Jordan. It also began diverting waters from the Jordan. When Syria began building storage dams on the Yarmuk River in the early ’60s, to prevent water from reaching Lake Tiberias where Israel would siphon it off, the Israelis launched attacks on the work sites. Lebanon also suspects Israel has been pumping underground water from the Hasbani River basin (David Paul, “Water Issues in the Arab-Israeli Conflict”).

It is not just Palestinian Arabs and Israel who are at loggerheads over water. When Turkey cut off the flow of the Tigris River to construct the giant Atatürk Dam, Syria responded by sponsoring the guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Turkey turned the water tap back on. Similar conflicts opposed Turkey and Iraq over the construction of dams that would cut the flow of water down the Euphrates, and thus drastically affect Iraqi agriculture. Iraq, in turn, has been draining the Basra Marshes, home of the Shi’ite Muslim minority which has long opposed the Sunni Muslim Ba’athist nationalist regime. The list could be multiplied endlessly. The same could be said about conflicts over the oil wealth of the Near East, which is concentrated in the hands a few ultra-reactionary Gulf emirates and the Sa’udi monarchy. Under capitalism, these vital resources will “belong” to the nation that controls them for exclusive exploitation by its rulers. Yet this will powerfully determine the prosperity or poverty of the inhabitants and neighboring peoples. Without its water supply, the West Bank will remain impoverished, yet the Israelis control the underground water, and postponed any agreement on this vital issue to the “final status” negotiations.

Only socialist international economic planning can overcome such conflicts.

Marxism and Interpenetrated Peoples

Various pseudo-socialist organizations have long tailed after the PLO, declaring that Palestinian nationalism is “progressive,” as they do with nationalist groups throughout the world. In Israel, the grouping associated with the late Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat actually supported the Oslo “peace” hoax. Thus an open letter by leading Mandelite Michel Warschawski to a friend in Israel’s “mainstream” peace movement quotes from an earlier letter written the day after the signing of the Oslo accords: “...the two of us are now committed to the same campaign: to bring about the full implementation of the Oslo agreement, in hopes that the new arrangements will prepare the ground for a true peace between Israel and the Palestinians. ‘In hopes,’ I say, because unlike you I do not rely on ‘historical necessity’ nor on Yitzhak Rabin and



Internationalist Group posters in protests against Israeli repression of Palestinian *intifada*, October 2000.

his government” (“Mutual Respect or Religious War,” *Workers Liberty* No. 68). Even today, Warschawski writes that the 1993 Washington declaration produced “certain, certainly not insignificant changes,” and argues:

“Yasir Arafat, and still more the hundreds of thousands of militants and combatants who support him, are not puppets of Israel. If they accepted the Israeli diktats, it was with the idea of obtaining, at the end of the interim period, the total end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and a sovereign state in the liberated territories, with Jerusalem as its capital. History will say if the method was good....”

—*International Viewpoint*, November 2000

It appears that history has spoken, and the verdict is negative.

On the other hand, today many leftists who are no less opportunist than Warschawski proclaim “Victory to the Intifada!” and correctly denounce Arafat for selling out to Israel. This is the case of the British group *Workers Power* (November 2000), which notes that “the continued existence of the Zionist state of Israel and the full democratic national right of the Palestinians to their own state are incompatible,” but while WP makes a ritual reference to the Jewish workers and Histadrut general strikes it says nothing about national or even democratic rights of the Hebrew-speaking population and raises no perspective of struggle for the Israeli working class. How then is the *intifada* to achieve victory? WP calls (presumably on the imperialists) to “break all diplomatic and trade ties with Israel,” and for “unconditional and immediate aid by surrounding Arab states,” that is, by the colonels, kings and sheiks.

In a similar vein, the League for a Revolutionary Party (LRP) in the U.S. calls for “Self-Determination for Palestine: All of Israel is ‘Occupied Territory!’” The LRP doesn’t even bother to mention Hebrew workers, declaring that “Israel serves as a heavily subsidized, heavily armed outpost for the United States” – in other words, an extension of imperialism.

The LRP, which termed the Soviet Union “statified capitalism,” comes from the tradition of Max Shachtman, who split from Trotskyism in 1940 refusing to defend the USSR on the eve of World War II, while the WP is derived from Tony Cliff’s tendency which refused to defend the Soviet Union in the Korean War and labeled the USSR “state capitalist.” What the LRP and WP have in common is that oblivious to the *class* line they tail after nationalism and ultimately line up with imperialism.

The most grotesque version of this line was put forward some years ago by the pseudo-Trotskyist current led by the late Nahuel Moreno in Latin America, who in his organ *Correo Internacional* (September 1982) declared that “there is no other way to destroy the Zionist state than throwing out the Zionists.” He made clear what he meant by this by adding that if anyone thought there were “non-Zionist Jewish residents” in Israel, “those imaginary inhabitants do not exist.” And to be doubly and triply clear, he added that destruction of the Zionist state “necessarily implies the removal of the present inhabitants,” for otherwise this would mean “accepting the accomplished fact of the Jewish occupation of Israel.” This is unadulterated anti-Semitism, which comes down to the call to “drive the Jews into the sea.” It is a great service to the Zionists, who claim this is the real position of anyone who opposes their “Jewish state.”

The ultimate logic of the Morenoite position is genocide, as is the case for all nationalism if taken to the extreme. Hitler’s Nazis were extreme German nationalists, and the Zionist fascists of Kahane Chai and Kach are not bashful about spelling out their plans to eliminate the Arab population of “Judea and Samaria.” Located on the West Bank where they have a good deal of support from ultra-rightist settlers, their main figure, Benjamin Kahane, son of the former head of the Brooklyn-based Jewish Defense League Meir Kahane, and his wife were ambushed at the beginning of this year.

The more “moderate” pseudo-socialist camp followers of

Palestinian nationalism simply deny that Israeli Jews have the right to self-determination, since Israel is an oppressor nation. Some try to give this a “theoretical” justification by claiming that Zionist Israel is a “colonial-settler state,” as the American Cliffites do in an article with that title in the *International Socialist Review* (December 2000-January 2001). This would equate Israeli Jews with white settlers in Rhodesia. But while the Zionist implantation in Palestine began as a colonization scheme, it ended up creating a Hebrew-speaking nation of four million people. And although Zionist Israel requires imperialist backing, it has its own national interests and has in the past broken with one Great Power sponsor to side with another, switching from the British to the Americans. Today it is indeed heavily subsidized by the U.S., but so are Egypt and Jordan.

At most the “socialist” supporters of Palestinian nationalism would grant the Hebrew-speaking population vague “democratic rights,” but not national rights, as a minority in a bourgeois, majority-Arab Palestine. This was the original position of the PLO as well as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) of Nayef Hawatmeh. But denying the right of national self-determination to the Hebrew population means to offer them no perspective but that of a discriminated-against minority. As Leninists, we defend the oppressed Palestinians against the Zionist oppressors, at the same time as we recognize the right of self-determination for *all* nations – that is, both Palestinian Arabs and the Hebrew-speaking population have a democratic right to an independent state.

This does not mean recognition of a right to exist of *Israel*, which was born out of a heinous crime against the Palestinian people, expelling the Arabs from their land and depriving them of their right to national existence by military force. The Zionist state is inherently discriminatory and oppressive toward non-Jews (such as the almost one-fifth of the Israeli population that is Arab or Druze). Thus even liberal Zionists like Uri Avnery oppose the Palestinian Arabs’ clear democratic right to return to the land from which they were driven, saying this would destroy Israel. Indeed. Whether Jews are defined in religious or ethnic terms, whether the regime is openly theocratic or has the trappings of bourgeois democracy, an explicitly “Jewish state” is necessarily anti-democratic, as were the “Christian” or “Aryan” states proclaimed by rightist authoritarians and fascists in Europe of the 1930s. Communists fight against the present Zionist state of Israel as we do also against the “Islamic republic” of Iran, which is necessarily discriminatory against Jews, Zoroastrians and other religious, ethnic and national minorities.

Moreover, since the right of self-determination is a *democratic* right, the exercise of this right becomes problematic where two nations occupy the same territory. While the origins of Israel are unique, as the product of a colonization project that cohered as a nation, the conflict posed by the existence in the same confined geographical space of Palestinian Arabs and the Hebrew-speaking people is not. Examples of “interpenetrated peoples” are to be found throughout the Near East, which has been at the crossroads of history, and in various parts of the former Ottoman Empire. Next door in Lebanon

there are Shi’ite Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Druzes, Aluwites, Maronite Christians, Greek Orthodox Christians, all organized on a communal basis. In Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran there are large Kurdish minorities.

Europe at the close of feudalism was dotted with such minority peoples, who were then subjugated by the ascendant capitalist nations by fire and sword, their rulers put to the stake as heretics, their languages wiped out. But in the imperialist epoch of decaying capitalism, it is no longer possible for the dominant bourgeoisies to “assimilate” such peoples through economic development. Under capitalist rule there is no way that competing rights of national self-determination for two peoples occupying the same territory can be democratically resolved. In an economic system based on competition and exploitation, one or the other will be oppressed. Control of scarce resources such as water and oil or vital transportation routes will determine who prospers and who lives in misery. Moreover, a forced separation, as Barak and Sharon now talk of, will be a brutal affair as the bloody national/ethnic conflicts that have ripped apart the former Yugoslavia demonstrate.

Thus in the case of interpenetrated peoples and nationally mixed populations the right of self-determination can only be equitably implemented under workers rule, where a collectivized economy and international planning make possible use of these resources for the common good. In that framework, we Trotskyists advocate an *Arab/Hebrew workers republic*. Separate national states would be difficult to organize in this tiny country where the shortest distance between two places almost always passes through territory occupied by another people (hence all the “by-pass roads”), where Jewish and Arab communities face each other across gullies and are fed by the same aquifers, where there has been a single economy and state power for more than four decades. The fate of the Arab and Hebrew nations in the land of Palestine is inevitably intertwined, “for better or for worse.”

Nevertheless, if the level of hostility is such that by democratic means one or the other people wishes to lead a separate national state existence, a revolutionary workers government would recognize this as their right, which, unlike under capitalism, could be accomplished (with difficulty) in a way that is not discriminatory toward one or the other community, in the framework of a *socialist federation of the Near East*. Yet such workers states could only be created through sharp struggle against Zionism and Arab nationalism, and to make possible such a federation and international division of labor requires the participation of Arab and Hebrew workers in revolutionary struggle throughout the region.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

While many reformist and centrist opportunists shamelessly chase after Arafat and other nationalist forces, the International Communist League and the Spartacist League in the U.S. long upheld a uniquely internationalist program on the question of Israel and Palestine. The SL first amplified and developed the Trotskyist understanding of the national question among interpenetrated peoples derived from the experience of

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Arab and Hebrew Workers Unite – For International Socialist Revolution!

Zionism, Imperialism and Anti-Semitism

Zionism as a political current arose as a reaction to the mounting persecution of Jews and its ideological expression, anti-Semitism, in Europe and the Russian Empire in the late 19th century. From the outset it was an ideology of despair, arguing that anti-Semitism was a constant over 2,000 years, following Jews wherever they settled since their dispersal (the diaspora) after the defeat of the Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire (66-135 AD). The Zionists held that resistance was impossible, and the only solution was for Jews to emigrate and set up their own state. But in contrast to other late 19th-century national movements, Zionists were not leading a Jewish nation with a common territory and economy, or even a common language and culture.

For a Jewish national state to come about it first had to take someone else's land. And since the world had already been carved up among the capitalist Great Powers, this required an imperial sponsor. The Zionist perspective has always implied a symbiosis with anti-Semites – from tsarist Black Hundreds to the Nazi genocidalists and the Reaganite Christian right in the U.S. – and an implacable war against socialist revolution. Zionism never offered to the Jewish people a future of emancipation and equality. This doctrine of Jewish nationalism proclaimed that Jews would never find a place in predominantly gentile societies, pointing to the Holocaust as the supposed proof. So it has created a precarious garrison state, permanently in a state of siege or at war with the surrounding Arab bourgeois states, a militaristic society in which the most reactionary elements come to the fore.

In contrast, the Bolshevik communists, among them many of Jewish origin, fought the pogromists tooth and nail while rejecting all varieties of Jewish nationalism. Against the bourgeois and chauvinist ideology of nationalism, they stood for the proletarian program of international socialist revolution to liberate



David Ben Gurion proclaims the state of Israel, May 1948. Photo behind him is of Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism.

all the oppressed. Following the 1917 Russian October Revolution, they put this into practice. Under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky the anti-Semitic mobs were crushed by the Red Army, the *numerus clausus* restricting the number of Jewish students and professionals was abolished and Jews played a prominent role in every sphere of the young Soviet state. If under Stalin a nationalist bureaucracy vilely appealed to anti-Semitism to justify murderous anti-Communist repression, this showed that the liberating impulse of the ascendant revolution had to be asphyxiated on the way to counterrevolution. With the restoration of capitalism in the early 1990s, there has been a resurgence of anti-Semitism.

Zionist Colonizers

In his 1896 tract, *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), the pre-eminent founder of Zionism, Hungarian journalist Theodor Herzl, put matters bluntly. Asking that “sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation,” Herzl declared: “The governments of all countries scourged by anti-Semitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain the sovereignty we want” – that is, to get rid of the Jews. How exactly?

“The Society of Jews will treat with the present masters of the land, putting itself under the protectorate of the European Powers, if they prove friendly to the plan. We could offer the present possessors of the land enormous advantages, assume part of the public debt.... The creation of our state would be beneficial to adjacent countries, because the cultivation of a strip of land increases the value of its surrounding districts in innumerable ways.”

In other words, “nation-building” as a giant real estate transaction. Zionism is a prime example of nationalism as the ideology of those aspiring to become a capitalist ruling class. But unlike 20th-century petty-bourgeois independence movements, its

Trotsky's Red Army Smashed the Pogromists

Leon Trotsky, founder of the Red Army, reviewing troops at the front before battle during the Civil War. Red Army crushed counter-revolutionary White Guard forces who unleashed murderous pogroms against Jews.



David King Collection

aims were to be achieved in concert with the colonialists. And there already were important Jewish capitalists: Herzl's pamphlet was conceived as a lecture to the House of Rothschild, the German-French-English banking family.

So where should this state be built? Herzl asked, "Shall we choose Palestine or Argentine? We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion." He also, for a time, considered Uganda. But "next year in Buenos Aires" or Kampala didn't have the same biblical resonance as "next year in Jerusalem," and so he set his sights on establishing a "new Zion" in Palestine. To convince the Powers to cede this territory, he appealed to their racist prejudice and offered the Zionists' services against colonialism's victims: "We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism." This enterprise would be undertaken along the lines of the British and Dutch East Indies companies, the Suez Canal Company and Cecil Rhodes' British East Africa Company:

"The Jewish Company is partly modeled on the lines of a great land-acquisition company. It might be called a Jewish Chartered Company, though it cannot exercise sovereign power, and has other than purely colonial tasks."

This was the origin of the Jewish Agency, which later functioned as a quasi-official adjunct of the British Mandate administration in Palestine.

The Zionists' implantation in Palestine started out as a colonization scheme, one among many. But unlike Rhodes and the other European colonizers, the Zionists had to go shop-



Arno Lustiger, *Rotbuch: Stalin und die Juden*

Red Army newspapers for Jewish soldiers. During 1918-21 Civil War, Jews massively joined Soviet forces to fight tsarist reaction. Titles, from top: *Red Army, The Free Soldier, Bulletin of Executive Committee of Jewish Soldiers of the 12th Army and The Yiddish Soldier.*

ping for an imperial sponsor. Following the founding of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) in 1897, Herzl traveled to Constantinople (Istanbul) the next year to meet German Kaiser Wilhelm II, then on a journey to the Orient to scout possibilities for extending the Reich eastward. German advisers were already reorganizing the army of the Ottoman Empire, and plans were well advanced for a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. Herzl proposed a chartered company under German protection. In return, “*I explained that we were taking the Jews away from the revolutionary parties.*” The anti-Semitic German emperor was sympathetic – the previous year he declared that he was “very much for the Yids going to Palestine, the sooner they leave for there the better.” But Germany’s imperialist ambitions were one thing, its actual sway another.

So in 1901 Herzl dispatched a Constantinople banker to convince Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid to grant him Palestine as an autonomous territory under Ottoman suzerainty (overlordship) in exchange for paying off the tottering empire’s foreign debts and building a Turkish navy. When this plan fell through, in 1903, Herzl traveled to St. Petersburg where he met with the Russian interior minister, V. Plehve. This was the notorious Russifier who only a few months earlier instigated a bloodbath of Bessarabian (Moldavian) Jews in Kishinev! Plehve declared himself a “convert” to the Zionist cause, and promised to supply a charter for Jewish settlement in Palestine... 15 years later. Herzl died in 1904, but a decade later, at the height of World War I, the Zionists finally got their chance.

As the imperialists sent millions of workers to die in the trenches in their contest for world domination, WZO leader Chaim Weizman and Baron Lionel Rothschild convinced British prime minister Arthur Balfour (a certified anti-Semite who had earlier opposed Jewish immigration to Britain) to support their cause. On 2 November 1917, he issued the famous Balfour Declaration in a letter to Lord Rothschild stating “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...” The date, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution that established workers rule in Russia, was not accidental. The Declaration was intended to gain American Jewish support for Britain’s post-war imperial aims, and to induce Russian Jews to keep Russia in the war. The first aim succeeded, but the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky pulled Russia out of the imperialist slaughter and thereby helped put an end to it, as the imperialists now feared above all the spectre of red revolution.

Despite assuring the Zionists of British support for a “Jewish homeland” in Palestine, Balfour had earlier promised to support the Arabs’ fight for independence from Ottoman rule, including in Palestine. This was explicitly stated in correspondence with Hussein ibn Ali, the Hashemite *sharif* of Mecca, who rose up in revolt against the Ottomans in 1916. Hussein’s son Faisal raised a Bedouin force in western Arabia and together with the British adventurer T.E. Lawrence (the “Lawrence of Arabia” lionized in myth and movie) fought under Colonel Allenby’s army as it marched on Damascus. But London had meanwhile negotiated a deal with Paris, spelled out in the secret 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty, to carve up the region

into British and French spheres of influence. Following the Roman imperial maxim *divide et impera* (divide and conquer), the imperialists promised independence to both the Arabs and the Zionists, and granted it to neither.

Zionists Hobnob with Pogromists

From the very outset, modern anti-Semitism and Zionism have been twin responses of capitalist reaction to the threat of revolution. The signal event which gave rise to both was the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II by populist revolutionaries. The Russian imperial authorities immediately unleashed pogroms (murderous racist mob assaults) on Jews in the “Pale of Settlement,” the area of European Russia, Poland and Ukraine to which Jews were restricted since the late 1700s. The spread of the pogroms, which intensified the oppression of the desperately impoverished plebeian Jewish masses, reflected growing tensions between traditional Jewish village merchants and moneylenders and a growing Russian/Ukrainian/Polish rural petty bourgeoisie following the tsar’s 1861 emancipation of the serfs. As capitalism spread through the Russian empire, it produced mounting popular discontent which the tsarist secret police sought to divert by fabricating the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* at the turn of the century, purporting a Jewish plot to rule the world. A little later, tsarist-led mobs (the “Black Hundreds”) attacked Jewish ghettos beginning in Kishinev, Moldavia (then called Bessarabia) in 1903.

Almost simultaneously with the assassination of the Russian tsar, in West Europe German imperial chancellor Otto von Bismarck embraced Christian anti-Semitic demagogues and decreed “anti-socialist laws” banning the Social Democratic Party in 1878-79 following attempts on the life of Kaiser Wilhelm I. In Austria, where Theodor Herzl was a prominent journalist, the anti-Semite Karl Lueger was elected the Social-Christian Party mayor of Vienna in 1895, waging a bitter struggle against the “Jewified Social Democracy.” The wave of anti-Jewish hysteria reached a crescendo with the Dreyfus Affair in France which lasted a decade, beginning in 1894 when a Jewish general staff officer was scapegoated on charges of high treason (supposedly for being pro-German) and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil’s Island off South America.

The attempts to scapegoat and persecute Jews produced an outpouring of opposition from socialists, led by Jean Juarès, who mobilized together with radical intellectuals, most prominently novelist Émile Zola, to defend Alfred Dreyfus (who was finally cleared more than a decade later). France was on the verge of civil war. In Russia and Poland socialist-led workers organized squads to defend Jewish neighborhoods against pogroms led by the Black Hundreds in 1905. But Zionist founder Herzl sought to wheedle a deal with Plehve, the “butcher of Kishinev,” and *opposed* any resistance to European anti-Semitism. In fact, Herzl counseled the Austrian prime minister to *accept* the installation of the anti-Semitic demagogue Lueger as mayor of Vienna. Over the Dreyfus Affair, Herzl *denounced* socialists who fought against the anti-Semites as “destroyers of the present civil order,” and in his diaries he stigmatized Jews who allied with them as “no longer Jews” and “no Frenchmen either”!



Ze'ev Jabotinsky (left), leader of the "Revisionist" wing of Zionism, supported Herzl's dealings with tsarist police minister Plehve, the instigator of 1903 Kishinev pogrom. Following 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Jabotinsky made deal with Symon Petlyura, head of the Ukrainian counterrevolutionary government (Rada), whose troops were notorious for staging anti-Semitic pogroms.

In the very first entry of his *Diary*, Herzl wrote that, seeing a Parisian mob howling for the death of Dreyfus, "I recognized the emptiness and futility of trying to 'combat' anti-Semitism." Thus from its inception, Zionism fed off defeat and gave succor to the deadliest enemies of the Jewish people. Herzl and his successors were fully conscious of this. Indeed, in *Der Judenstaat* Herzl blamed the Jews for anti-Semitism:

"The Jewish question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers. Where it does not exist, it is carried by Jews in the course of their migrations. We naturally move to those places where we are not persecuted, and there our presence produces persecution... The unfortunate Jews are now carrying the seeds of anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America."

"I believe that I understand anti-Semitism," added Herzl, who considered pogroms a natural and inevitable result of the presence of a "foreign" element. In fact, Zionism promotes the same racist nationalist outlook as the anti-Semites who seek "national unity" against the "enemy within" – and not just against Palestinian Arabs. For the last half century, hardline Zionists have grotesquely blamed the Jews of the diaspora for the Nazi Holocaust simply because they failed to leave Europe.

Herzl's hobnobbing with tsarist police minister Plehve was so outrageous even to Zionists in Russia that it provoked an uproar at the 1903 WZO congress. The only one to defend him was Ze'ev Jabotinsky, later the founder of "Revisionist" Zionism, so-called because it "revised" the WZO's conciliatory posture toward the British Mandate administration of Palestine. During this same period, Jabotinsky declared that "self-defense is just of no use" against pogromists and denounced the 1905 mutiny of the crew of the battleship *Potemkin* because it would lead to a pogrom. Tsarist secret police (Okhrana) official Sergei Zubatov, in turn, used the Zionists to counter Marxist influence among the workers. Meanwhile, WZO officials continued congenial private meetings with tsarist prime ministers Count Witte in 1905 and Stolypin in 1908.

The Zionists' cordial relations with counterrevolutionary butchers continued right through the Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917. Perhaps the most notorious incident was



Jabotinsky's 1921 secret pact with Symon Petlyura, head of the defeated Ukrainian nationalist government, the Rada (council). In the Civil War against the young Soviet republic that raged in the Ukraine during the period 1918-20, tsarist White Guard and Ukrainian Rada soldiers murdered an estimated 28,000 Jews, while right-wing Polish nationalists under Marshal Pilsudski slaughtered thousands more. Throughout the former Jewish Pale, the mass of the Jewish peasantry, workers and urban petty bourgeoisie embraced the Red Army, organized and led by Leon Trotsky. Counterrevolutionaries spread anti-Semitic propaganda against the Bolsheviks featuring "the Jew Trotsky." Petlyura's forces carried out almost 900 separate pogroms – this is the man with whom ultra-Zionist Jabotinsky negotiated a pact!

According to Lenni Brenner (*The Iron Wall, Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* [Zed Books, 1984]), who recounts this affair, "What Jabotinsky proposed was that the Ukrainian army be accompanied by an armed Jewish police force," which would supposedly protect any Jews captured by the counterrevolutionary pogromist troops. When word of the secret pact with Petlyura came out, it was a scandal in Russia. The Jewish section of the Communist Party, the *Yevsektzia*, headlined: "The Zionists Are Plunging a Knife into the Revolution's Back; Jabotinsky Has Aligned Himself with Petlyura to Wage War Against the Red Army." Even the WZO executive demanded an explanation; instead, Jabotinsky resigned from the WZO. Rada leader Petlyura was killed in Paris in 1926 in revenge for the thousands of Jews murdered in the pogroms. Still, the Revisionist Zionist leader told a Polish Jewish Communist journalist that he didn't "believe Petlyura himself was anti-Semitic," as he "came from a healthy peasant stock."

Zionist Collusion with Italian Fascists and German Nazis

"The anti-Semites will become our most dependable friends, the anti-Semitic countries our allies," Herzl confided to his diary in 1895. His followers, both among the purportedly socialist "Labor" Zionists led by David Ben Gurion and



Nazi sympathies for Zionism: At the end of 1933, Goebbels' newspaper *Der Angriff* (The Assault) published 12-part series favorable to Zionism under the title "A Nazi Travels to Palestine." The author, an SS officer, spent six months in Palestine at the invitation of Zionist organizations.

Jabotinsky's "Revisionist" Zionists, carried out this perspective to the letter. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 1930s, when Zionists were positively clambering over each other in desperate attempts to make deals with fascist regimes. The telltale affinities and sordid negotiations have been extensively documented. Some of the more notorious cases detailed in Lenni Brenner's *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (Lawrence Hill, 1983) include:

- In September 1926, WZO president Chaim Weizman visited Mussolini, who offered to help the Zionists build up their economy in Palestine. Another WZO leader met the Italian fascist *Duce* (leader) a year later, declaring "true Jews have never fought against you."

- In the early 1930s, "Revisionist" Zionist Jabotinsky looked to Mussolini for patronage. His brownshirted Betar youth groups paraded in imitation of the Italian fascist black-shirts, and in 1934 Mussolini allowed them to set up a squadron at a fascist academy in Civitavecchia. In 1935 Jabotinsky wrote, "the Italian brand of Fascist ideology is at least an ideology of racial equality." The same year Mussolini, speaking to the future chief rabbi of Rome, praised "your fascist, Jabotinsky." In 1936 *Il Duce* personally reviewed the Betar brownshirts.

- Jabotinsky's representative in Palestine, Abba Achimeir, regularly wrote a column, "Diary of a Fascist," in the Revisionist paper. He had a terrorist group, the Brith Ha-Biryonim, the equivalent of Mussolini's *squadristi*, modeled on the ancient *sicarii*, the Zealot assassins who mainly attacked other Jews during the Judean revolt against Rome (65-135 AD).

- Whipping up Revisionist youth for a showdown with the "Labor" Zionists, Achimeir complained they were "molasses," not "capable of murder after the manner in which Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered." In June 1933, two of his followers assassinated the political secretary of the Jewish Agency in Tel Aviv, Chaim Arlosoroff.

The Revisionists' excuse for terror against the rival "Labor" Zionists, and Arlosoroff in particular, was that Ben Gurion's emissaries were negotiating with Hitler's Nazis, which they were indeed.

- In May 1933, a Zionist representative negotiated a deal with the Nazis to allow the export to Palestine of one million Reichmarks from German Jews, which would be used to buy land for Jews Hitler would soon be pushing out of Germany. This was then extended in negotiations with Arlosoroff, and that August the Nazis announced an agreement with the Zionists to send 3 million Reichmarks (US\$1.2 million) of Jewish wealth to Palestine. (In exchange, the Labor Zionists would seek to tone down calls for a boycott of German goods.)

- This turned into an ongoing "transfer (*ha'avara*) agreement" between Hitler's government and the Zionists' Anglo-Palestine Bank. German Jews could export up to 50,000 Reichmarks per emigrant, who could then pick up the cash in Palestine (minus a cut for the Nazis). The US\$40 million thus netted was vital for the Zionist enterprise, representing 60 percent of capital invested in Palestine between August 1933 and the outbreak of World War II in September 1939.

- The German Zionist Association (ZVfD) repeatedly sought the patronage of the Hitler regime. In a June 1933 secret memo to the Nazi Party (which was not published until 1962), the ZVfD sought "a solution in keeping with the principles of the new German State of National Awakening On the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race, we wish so to fit our community into the total structure so that for us too, in the sphere assigned to us, fruitful activity for the Fatherland is possible.... We, too, are against mixed marriage and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group.... In solving the Jewish problem according to its own lights, the German Government will have full understanding for a candid and clear Jewish posture that harmonizes with the interests of the state."

- While all German Communist and Social Democratic papers were banned, the Zionists continued to put out the *Jüdische Rundschau* (Jewish Observer), which published excerpts from a Hitler speech saying he hoped to find a basis for "a better attitude to the Jews," a Nazi press official's statement that the racial laws were "both beneficial and regenerative for Judaism as well," and essays declaring, "We who live here as a 'foreign race' have to respect racial consciousness and the racial interest of the German people absolutely." Stefan Zweig, one of the editors of the *Rundschau*, published one of his pre-WWI poems, "Singing Blood," in order to show that Zionism had always been racist.

- Elements in the SS showed some sympathy toward the Zionists. After all, the Nazis chanted "*Juden raus*" (Jews out!) and the Zionists also wanted the Jews out, to leave for Palestine. Reinhardt Heydrich, the future bloody "Protector" of the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, declared: "We must separate Jewry into two categories...the Zionists and those who favor being assimilated. The Zionists adhere to a strict racial position and by emigrating to Palestine they are helping to build their own state.... Our good wishes together with our official good will go with them."



While trade unions and leftist parties were banned soon after Hitler took power, and thousands of Communists and Social Democrats were thrown in concentration camps, Nazis allowed Zionist organizations to function openly. Above: Betar, youth group of Jabotinsky's "Revisionist" Zionists, paraded in paramilitary uniforms in Berlin in 1936 (above) and 1934 (below).

- In February 1937, the "Labor" Zionists' militia, the Haganah, received permission from Berlin to negotiate with the Nazi Sicherheitsdienst (SD), the security service of the SS. A Haganah agent met with his SS interlocutor, one Adolf Eichmann, offering to provide intelligence to the Reich as long as this was consistent with the Zionists' aims. (They were competing with the Mufti of Jerusalem, the Muslim leader who sold his services to the Germans.)

- That October Eichmann himself visited Palestine at the Zionists' invitation. Decades later, in Argentina, the Nazi declared himself "very impressed by the way the Jewish colonists were building up their land.... In the years that followed, I often said to Jews with whom I had dealings that, had I been a Jew, I would have been a fanatical Zionist."

- As late as 1944, as Eichmann was loading hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews into boxcars for shipment to the death camps in Poland, a Hungarian Labor Zionist, Rezső Kasztner, negotiated with SS officials to save a select group of Jews. After an initial "trucks for Jews" deal fell through because another Zionist official involved was arrested by the

British, Kasztner arranged with Eichmann for a train-load of 1,700 selected Jews to leave for Switzerland in exchange for Zionist aid in preventing resistance to the mass deportations to Auschwitz.

When Mossad agents finally arrested Eichmann in Argentina in 1960, they knew their man well – he had been their negotiating partner for years.

Zionism and "Democratic" Imperialism Against Jewish Refugees

The fact that the Kasztner Affair (see "Zionist Complicity in the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry," page 30) was not an act of despair or an isolated action by a single craven individual is demonstrated by a statement by the head of the Jewish Agency, later to become Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion:

"If I knew that it was possible to save all the children of Germany by transporting them to England, and only half by transferring them to the Land of Israel, I would choose the latter, for before us lies not only the numbers of these children but the historical reckoning of the people of Israel."

Tom Segev, celebrated as one of Israel's "new historians," wrote in his book, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (Henry Holt, 1991): "The saving of the Jews in Europe did not figure at the head of the list of priorities of the ruling class. It was the foundation of the state which was primordial in their eyes." (Segev evidently shares that view, for he grotesquely praised the Israeli Supreme Court as "courageous" for its verdict exonerating Kasztner.) Ben Gurion himself said as much, remarking: "It is the job of Zionism not to save the remnant of Israel in Europe but rather to save the land of Israel for the Jewish people and the *yishuv*" (the Jewish community in Palestine).

The fact is that throughout the existence of Hitler's Third Reich, for all their denunciations of fascist barbarism, *the "democratic" imperialists kept their doors shut to Jewish refugees and the millions threatened with deportation to death in the extermination camps.* And while using the Nazi genocide to build support for founding a Jewish state in Palestine, the Zionists of all tendencies *did not fight the closed door policy* preventing Jews from obtaining refuge in the United States, Britain or France. In early 1938, as anti-Semitic attacks mounted in Nazi Germany, American president Franklin D. Roosevelt called an international conference on refugees held later that year in Evian, France. But U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull was careful to underline that "it should be understood that no country would be expected or ask to receive a greater number of immigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation" (quoted in Saul Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945* [Wayne State University Press, 1973]).

In November 1938 Hitler's Gestapo carried out an anti-Semitic pogrom often referred to as *Kristallnacht*, for the glass of shattered store windows, an image that minimizes the bloody

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Zionist Complicity in the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry

The “Kasztner Affair” is particularly revealing because of the aftermath in Israel, when the Israeli high court admitted the facts of his collusion with the Nazis and *defended* this Zionist collaboration with the destruction of Hungarian Jewry. The sordid story was publicized in Israel by the Communist Party and journalist Uri Avneri, and was later recounted in detail by right-wing Zionist *New York Post* journalist and Hollywood screenwriter Ben Hecht in his 1961 exposé *Perfidy*.

In 1953 the Ben Gurion government prosecuted a right-wing pamphleteer for libel because he had accused Rezső Kasztner (also referred to as Rudolf Kastner in some documents), an official of the Jewish Agency, of collaborating with the German occupation authorities organizing the Holocaust. In the course of the trial, Kasztner admitted that as an official of the Jewish Rescue Committee he had obtained permission for a train with selected Jews to go to Switzerland in exchange for hard cash; that among those he had picked for what became known as the “VIP train” were dozens of his relatives and hundreds of residents of his hometown of Cluj; that he later testified at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials to save the SS officer in charge of the financial arrangements involved from hanging (he later became a wealthy grain merchant).

The VIP train included a number of prominent “Labor” and “Revisionist” Zionist activists, as well as wealthy Hungarian Jews. Testimony confirmed that one of Kasztner’s associates spread around phony postcards purportedly from Jews who had been on previous transports to Poland claiming they were only being sent to a labor camp in Hungary. Kasztner had also betrayed some Hungarian Zionist partisans who had been parachuted into central Europe by the British to organize Jewish resistance as the Horthy dictatorship was replaced by direct German occupation in March 1944. With his authority as emissary of Ben Gurion, he talked two of them into giving themselves up to the Germans, who then deported them to Auschwitz (although one escaped). In his 1955 verdict on the case, the Israeli trial judge found that Kasztner had not been libeled:

“The masses of Jews from Hungary’s ghettos obediently boarded the deportation trains without knowing their fate. They were full of confidence in the false information that they were being transferred to Kenyermeze [a work camp in Hungary].

“The Nazis could not have deceived the Jewish masses with such great efficiency had they not disseminated their false rumors through Jewish channels....

“Those of the Jews who tried to warn their friends of the truth were persecuted by the Jewish leaders in charge of the local ‘rescue work.’...

“Dozens of thousands of Jews were guarded in their ghettos by a few dozen police. Yet even vigorous young Jews made no attempt to overpower these few guards and escape to nearby Romania. No

resistance activities to the deportations were organized in the ghettos.

“And the Jewish leaders did everything in their power to soothe the Jews in the ghettos and to prevent such resistance activities.

“The same Jews who spread...the false rumor of Kenyermeze, or confirmed it, the same public leaders who did not warn their own people against the misleading statements, the same Jewish leaders who did not organize any resistance or any sabotage of deportations...these same leaders did not join the people of their community in their ride to Auschwitz, but were all included in the Rescue train.

“The Nazi organizers and the perpetrators of extermination allowed Rudolf Kastner and the members of the Jewish Council of Budapest to save themselves, their relatives and friends. The Nazis did this as a means of making the local Jewish leaders, whom they favored, dependent on the Nazi regime, dependent on its good will during the time of its fatal deportation schedule. In short, the Nazis succeeded in bringing the Jewish leaders into collaboration with the Nazis at the time of the catastrophe....

“The Nazis drew a lesson from the Warsaw ghetto and other belligerent ghettos. They learned that Jews were able to sell off their lives very expensively if honorably guided.

“Eichmann did not want a second Warsaw. For this reason the Nazis exerted themselves to mislead and bribe the Jewish leaders.

“The sacrifice of the vital interests of the majority of the Jews, in order to rescue the prominents, was the basic element in the agreement between Kastner and the Nazis. This agreement fixed the division of the nation into two unequal camps: a small fragment of prominents, whom the Nazis promised Kastner to save, on the one hand, and the great majority of Hungarian Jews whom the Nazis designated for death, on the other hand. An imperative condition for the rescue of the first camp by the Nazis was that Kastner would not interfere in the action of the Nazis against the



Arrival of transport with Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz, 1944.



Budapest Jews after liberation by Red Army, 1945.

other camp and would not hamper them in its extermination. Kastner fulfilled this condition. He concentrated his efforts in the rescue of the prominents and treated the camp of the doomed as if they had already been wiped out from the book of the living.”

—quoted from a pamphlet by the British Anti-Zionist Organization/Palestine Soldarity (1981)

But who was really on trial here was not Kasztner but the Israeli government itself, and within hours it appealed the verdict to Israel’s Supreme Court.

The Israeli Communist Party wrote of the trial verdict, “All those whose relatives were butchered by the Germans in Hungary know now clearly that Jewish hands helped the mass murder.” A leading political journalist in the liberal *Ha’aretz* wrote, “Kasztner must be brought to trial as a Nazi collaborator.” The mass circulation *Ma’ariv* attacked the government, asking: “What is going on here? The Attorney General has to mobilize all the government power, appear himself in court, to justify and defend collaboration with Himmler!” Most dramatically, the trial judge’s conclusions were confirmed by none other than Adolf Eichmann. In a 1955 interview with a Dutch journalist, which was not published until after Eichmann’s capture in 1960, the organizer of the deportation to death of the Hungarian Jews stated:

“In obedience to Himmler’s directive I now concentrated on negotiations with the Jewish political officials in Budapest... among them Dr. Rudolph Kastner, authorized representative of the Zionist Movement. This Dr. Kastner was a young man about my age, an ice-cold lawyer and a fanatical Zionist. He agreed to help keep the Jews from resisting deportation – and even keep order in the collection camps – if I could close my eyes and let a few hundred or a few thousand young Jews emigrate illegally to Palestine. It was a good bargain. For keeping order in the camps, the price... was not too high for me....

“Dr. Kastner’s main concern was to make it possible for a select group of Hungarian Jews to emigrate to Israel....

“As a matter of fact, there was a strong similarity between our attitudes in the SS and the viewpoint of these immensely idealistic Zionist leaders.... As I told Kastner, ‘We, too, are idealist and we, too, had to sacrifice our own blood before

we came to power.’

“I believe that Kastner would have sacrificed a thousand or a hundred thousand of his blood to achieve his political goal. He was not interested in old Jews or those who had become assimilated into Hungarian society. But he was incredibly persistent in trying to save biologically valuable Jewish blood – that is, human material that was capable of reproduction and hard work. ‘You can have the others’ he would say, ‘but let me have this group here.’ And because Kastner rendered us a great service by helping keep the deportation camps peaceful, I would let his groups escape. After all, I was not concerned with small groups of a thousand or so Jews....

“That was the ‘gentleman’s agreement’ I had with Kastner.”

—*Life*, 5 December 1960

Three years later, in 1958, the Israeli Supreme Court issued its verdict exonerating Kasztner on all counts. The Court *agreed with the essential facts* about Kasztner’s actions, and declared them *morally justifiable*. This confirms that he was in fact carrying out official Zionist policy in collaborating with the Nazi exterminators. And to justify this piece of infamy, the highest court of Israel had to slander the vast majority of Hungarian Jews. The Supreme Court decision stated:

“What point was there in telling the people boarding the trains in Cluj, people struck by fate and persecuted, as to what awaits them at the end of their journey.... Kastner spoke in detail of the situation, saying, ‘The Hungarian Jew was a branch which long ago dried up on the tree.’ This vivid description coincides with the testimony of another witness about the Hungarian Jews, ‘This was a big Jewish community in Hungary, without any ideological Jewish backbone.’...

“I fully agree...that, ‘The Jews of Hungary, including those in the countryside, were not capable, neither physically nor mentally, to carry out resistance operations with force against the deportation scheme.’...

“What good will the blood of the few bring if everybody is to perish?”

With that disdainful comment, the self-proclaimed Jewish state declared its complicity in countenancing the slaughter of some 450,000 Hungarian Jews.

In appealing the original verdict in the Kasztner case, the Israeli attorney general argued:

“Kastner did nothing more and nothing less than was done by us in rescuing the Jews and bringing them to Palestine.... You are allowed – in fact it is your duty – to risk losing the many in order to save the few.... It has always been our Zionist tradition to select the few out of many in arranging the immigration to Palestine. Are we therefore to be called traitors?”

In fact, the Zionist movement from its inception collaborated with the anti-Semites. The heirs of Theodor Herzl turned their backs on the Jewish masses in German-occupied Europe, even turning them over to the Nazi exterminators. And in the Kasztner affair, this crime against Jews was officially endorsed by the Israeli government and Supreme Court. ■



As Zionists accepted immigration quotas, Trotskyists called for U.S. to open borders to Jews and all victims of Nazi terror.

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nationwide assault on Jews. There was a worldwide outcry of indignation as 50,000 Jews were dispatched to concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald (where Communists and other leftists were held). In the U.S. Congress, several bills were introduced to allow the emergency immigration of refugees. They all failed. Rabbi Stephen Wise, leader of mainstream American Zionism, urged Jewish organizations to “refrain from publicity” while the bills were under consideration. In contrast, a 19 November 1938 statement by the Socialist Workers Party, then the Trotskyist party in the U.S., demanded “Let the Refugees into the US!” and declared: “The Brown-shirted monsters do not even bother to conceal their aim: the physical extermination of every Jew in Great-Germany.” SWPers demonstrated outside the German consulate in New York with signs demanding “Unrestricted Entry to Nazi Victims!”

As the war clouds of the coming imperialist conflagration drew up, the plight of Jewish refugees from Hitler’s terror was symbolized by the odyssey of the steamship *St. Louis*, which was refused entry to the U.S. With 943 German Jewish passengers on board (all but 200 of whom had U.S. immigration quota numbers), the ship docked in Havana, Cuba in May 1939. But Cuban authorities refused to let them land. Washington refused to intervene since it would not permit them into the U.S. As the Cuban president demanded \$1 million for maintenance and “guarantees,” the representative of the American Jewish organizations’ Joint Distribution Committee refused to “kick in” even half that amount. A leader of the “Joint” complained of a Nazi plot to “send unfortunate people who cannot support

themselves to places where they are not wanted and then having those people seem poor, penniless, useless persons (because they can’t work) and make them the nucleus for spreading anti-Semitism into every quarter of the world” (quoted in Herbert Druks, *The Failure to Rescue* [Robert Speller, 1977]). Faced with an impasse, the captain of the *St. Louis* set sail for Hamburg, eventually discharging passengers in Belgium.

During World War II, as reports began circulating of the machine-gunning and gassing of thousands of Jews and then the genocidal slaughter of Jews in the Nazi concentration camps, the “democratic” imperialists kept silent for months about this monstrous crime. The Soviet government issued a detailed report in January 1942 denouncing the operations of the SS *Einsatzgruppen* (extermination squads). But despite many reports of hundreds of thousands of Jews being killed, the U.S. did not officially acknowledge the mass murder until almost a year later. Although the State Department suppressed reports of the killings and refused to pass them on to Jewish organizations, U.S. Zionist leaders had already received such information. But as Rabbi Wise wrote in a letter to Franklin Roosevelt, “I succeed, together with the heads of other Jewish organizations, in keeping them out of the press.”

Why the silence? The Zionists said they feared that releasing the information would create such an outcry among Jews that they would demand special action to stop the massacre. This, they claimed, would hurt the Allied “war effort” by making it seem a “Jewish affair” and thus fueling anti-Semitism, and by distorting strategic military aims!

Not only did they initially suppress information of the Holocaust in progress, even after the facts were known the Zionists pointedly did *not* push for the U.S. to rescue Jewish refugees. They organized an American Jewish Conference at New York’s Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in late summer 1943 which called for a “Jewish commonwealth” in Palestine, and the opening of Palestine to unlimited Jewish immigration under Jewish control. Those who declared that “the immediate problem is rescue” were beaten back, and ultimately a meaningless paper resolution about the refugees was tacked on for appearances’ sake. When a “Rescue Resolution” was nevertheless introduced in the U.S. Congress, the mainstream Zionist leaders attempted to add an amendment calling for a Jewish state in Palestine, and after that fell through “they worked behind the scenes to frustrate the legislation” (David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* [Pantheon Books, 1984]). Wyman summed up:

“An unavoidable conclusion is that during the Holocaust the leadership of American Zionism concentrated its major force on the drive for a future Jewish state in Palestine. It consigned rescue to a distinctly secondary position.”

An official War Refugee Board was eventually set up in early 1944, but lacking sufficient funding it accomplished little. Altogether, official statistics indicate that under 165,000 Jews reached the United States between 1933 and 1943, many if not most of them before the war. After WWII, no more than 20,000

European Jews were let into the U.S. When a “Displaced Persons Bill” was finally passed in 1947 with the onset of the anti-Soviet Cold War, some 70 percent of the places were awarded to former residents of the Baltic states and “agriculturalists” – code words for former Nazi collaborators in East Europe – while only 2,500 out of 220,000 admitted to the U.S. under this law were Jews.

In justification for their glaring abandonment of the Jews facing extermination by the Nazis, the Zionist leaders plead despair, “the black realization that we are helpless,” arguing that Hitler’s annihilation of

the Jews could not be stopped and that fighting for opening the U.S. to Jewish immigration was a hopeless cause because of domestic anti-Semitism. This is subterfuge: the real reason for their betrayal of the European Jews was that their sole concern was to build a “Jewish state” in Palestine. For decades, up through the war, this meant that they sought superior “human material,” the select few, not the old and the infirm. When the time came for the postwar push to found Israel, the Zionist leaders finally had a use for the survivors of the Holocaust, to capitalize on Western sympathy by sending them to Palestine in the most dramatic way possible.

Zionists Exploit Holocaust Survivors for PR Stunts

The Soviet Army finally halted the genocidal slaughter of European Jewry by smashing the Nazis’ barbaric murder machine. In *The Reawakening*, Italian Jewish writer Primo Levi described the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army and the extraordinary passage through the Soviet Union of a convoy of thousands of Holocaust survivors on their way home to Italy and other countries. But in West Europe, tens of thousands of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were still confined in former concentration camps. These were now euphemistically called “displaced persons” camps, and the inmates wore the same striped uniforms as before. Some 18,000 Jews died of starvation and disease in Bergen-Belsen, while 60 to 100 died *every day* in 1945 in Dachau *after* the Allied imperialists’ victory.

The inmates of the DP camps were by no means all supporters of Zionism, and the Joint Distribution Committee running the camps in the U.S. occupation zone was helping Jews to resettle



Women’s barracks at Nazis’ Auschwitz extermination camp after liberation by Soviet Army, January 1945.

Central State Archives of the October Revolution

in Europe. Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer wrote, “It is likely, in fact, that if the DP population had been given equal opportunities to go to Palestine or to America, half of them would have joined Diaspora Jewry in America” (*The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* [University of Toronto Press, 1979]). But they were prevented from doing so by those governments *and by the Zionists*. “I fear the danger of the Communist vermin uniting with the Joint [Distribution Committee],” said Ben-Gurion, who regularly referred to the Jewish Communists of East Europe as “the dregs of Judaism.” Ben-Gurion laid down the law: “The Jewish Agency does not deal in aid and reconstruction in the Diaspora; it works to strengthen the Zionist movement in Palestine” (quoted in Segev, *The Seventh Million*).

In order to build pressure for the immediate emigration of one million Jews from Europe to Palestine, the Zionists staged a series of spectacular ship voyages, most famously that of *Exodus 1947*, which arrived in Haifa in July of that year. The idealized story was turned into a saga in the novel *Exodus* by Leon Uris, which became a prime recruiting tool for Zionism. The reality was far from heroic. “From the very start, it was intended as a public-relations tool for the Zionist movement,” writes Tom Segev. Everything was done to awaken sympathy. Hundreds of pregnant women and infants were loaded onto the ship; when the first baby was born on board, the news was telegraphed around the world. Even the ship’s name was solely for PR purposes: it was only in English, and a photo of the vessel was later doctored to make it look as if it had been in Hebrew as well. The purpose was to *break British limits on Jewish immigration* in order to lay the basis for the Zionist state.

About half the *maapilim* (illegal immigrants) seized by the

British and held in detention camps were eventually allowed to enter Palestine as part of the monthly quota of immigrants. "Most of the *yishuv* remained indifferent to the plight of the *maapilim*. Only a small number attended demonstrations against their deportation. Even fewer contributed to funding the struggle: a special collection proclaimed for this purpose had failed," noted Segev. Meanwhile, relations between the Jewish Agency and the British immigration authorities remained correct. "The reason was that smuggling people into the country was no longer the operation's major goal. The major purpose of illegal immigration after the Holocaust was the operation itself – as a weapon in the struggle for the creation and control of a Jewish state."

These desperate Jews were to end up in Palestine *and not in Britain or the United States*. Once again, the Zionists' interests coincided with those of the anti-Semites. When U.S. president Truman, his sights set on the American Jewish voting potential, called for 100,000 Jewish refugees to be resettled in Palestine, the British Labour Party government was furious. Foreign minister Ernest Bevin scoffed that the U.S. government "didn't want too many Jews in New York" (quoted by Dan Kurzman in *Genesis 1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* [New American Library, 1970]). Nor did the British government want them in London, and the Zionists didn't want them anywhere but landing on the docks in Haifa. At the same time, the Soviet government under Stalin was coming over to support the founding of the Zionist state, and the Palestinian Stalinists now also backed Jewish immigration intended to swamp the Arab majority.

Before, during and after World War II, the Trotskyists alone fought consistently against the anti-Semites *and against the Zionists* to open the doors to immigration by Jewish refugees to the United States. The SWP's *Militant* (19 September 1942) cited reports from the Warsaw Ghetto of "the greatest atrocities... in connection with the renewed campaign to exterminate all Jews," noting that "this report has been suppressed by the State Department." After the war, a two-part article in the *Militant* (10/17 November 1945) analyzed "How Allies Betrayed the Jewish Refugees." An article on "The Fearful Plight of Jewish Victims" declared:

"By centering attention on Palestine as a 'homeland' for the Jews, however, the Zionists play directly into the hands of the Allied imperialists. The Zionists divert attention from Washington's callous indifference to the terrible plight of the Jews in Europe and the refusal of Wall Street's government to permit immigration to the United States. The Zionists thus allow Truman to find an easy escape by paying lip service to free immigration to Palestine while keeping the gates of America closed."

–*Militant*, 1 December 1945

Zionist Israel: Death Trap for Arabs and Jews

In the early years after the founding of Israel, many American and some European leftists were sympathetic to the Zionist state. Then after the 1967 "Six-Day War" (in which Israel conquered East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula) and the 1973 "Yom Kippur War" (when the

Zionist army seized the Golan Heights from Syria), there was a sharp turn and many on the left equated Israel with imperialism, or considered it an outpost of Western imperialism. This oversimplified the relation between Zionism and imperialism by eliminating any possibility of conflict, and served as the underpinning for a program of tailing after Arab nationalism. What is true is that the Zionists always sought – and Israel could not exist without – an imperialist sponsor. *Which* imperialist sponsor was a matter of dispute among the Zionists and varied according to shifting power relations among the Western powers.

Thus the fascistic "Revisionist" Zionists of Jabotinsky opposed the "democratic" British colonial rulers while seeking the backing of fascist Italian imperialism. The "Labor" Zionists of Ben-Gurion sought to infiltrate the state apparatus of British Mandate rule, while endlessly trying to negotiate sordid deals with the German Nazi imperialists. During 1946-48, the "mainstream" Zionists clashed with Britain, even to the point of bombing rail lines, but only because they had switched allegiances to U.S. imperialism, which was replacing Britain as top dog in the Near East and elsewhere. In 1956, Ben-Gurion joined Britain and France as the former colonialists sought to undo Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal – for which they were slapped down by Washington. After this fiasco, the heirs of both Ben Gurion (Barak and Peres) and Jabotinsky (Netanyahu and Sharon) have oriented to U.S. imperialism.

But this does not exclude past or future conflicts with Washington, such as stealing American uranium (the U.S.S. *Liberty* affair) or purloining U.S. intelligence (the Jonathan Pollack affair). While the Zionists have had unwavering support from the Democratic Party since World War II, Republican administrations in Washington and the European imperialists have often been more attentive to the sensitivities of Arab rulers. Today, Arafat and his lieutenants are pushing the deadly illusion that Republican president Bush Jr. will be more sympathetic to the Palestinians. But as they maneuver between the imperialist powers and factions, *both* Arab and Jewish nationalists *necessarily* sacrifice the interests of the toiling masses of the nation they claim to represent.

Proletarian revolutionaries defend the oppressed Palestinian people against the Zionist oppressors, and the Hebrew workers against their Zionist exploiters. As this short history shows, in implementing their program for a Jewish bourgeois state, *the Zionists committed horrendous crimes against the Jewish working people*, whom they heartily despised. Herzl described in advance how his counterrevolutionary movement would use "Labor" Zionism during the early years of Palestine colonization:

"The emigrants standing lowest in the economic scale will be slowly followed by those of a higher grade. Those who at this moment are living in despair will go first. They will be led by the mediocre intellects which we produce so superabundantly and which are persecuted everywhere."

To this day you do not see the Rothschilds or Bronfmans living in Israel: while financing and politically leading the Zionist movement, the Jewish capitalists are players on the imperialist chessboard, where they are ever ready to sacrifice

Jewish Communist Heroes of the Fight Against Nazi Terror

Military Heroes of the Soviet Union



David Dragunsky



Matvei Weinrub

In the late 1930s there were numerous Jewish officers in the highest levels of the Soviet military, reflecting the important role they played in the Red Army during the 1918-21 Civil War. Thus they were also heavily hit by Stalin's 1938 purge of the Soviet general staff. Among them was Jan Gamarnik, deputy commissar for defense of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, by the end of World War II there were no less than 200 Jewish generals in the Soviet Army, and numerous Heroes of the Soviet Union. Among them were David Dragunsky, who as commander of the 55th Armored Brigade participated in the libera-

Photos: Arno Lustiger, *Rotbuch: Stalin und die Juden*



Yevsei Weinrub



Liliana Litvak

tion of Berlin and Prague from the Nazi regime.

Matvei Weinrub, commander of the armored corps of the 8th Army, took Odessa from the German army; his unit liberated several Nazi extermination camps and reached the Reichstag in Berlin on 30 April 1945. His brother Yevsei, commander of the 219th Armored Brigade, received the Order of Lenin for his role in liberating Berlin.

Liliana Litvak was the best-known woman fighter pilot in the Soviet Air Force, known as the "White Rose of Stalingrad" for her many air battles with Luftwaffe planes she fought there. She was shot down over Krasny Lutch in the Donets Basin in 1943.

The Red Orchestra – Heroic Soviet Spies



Leopold Trepper



Sophie Poznanska

While the Zionists were endlessly seeking to make deals with the Nazis for "transfer arrangements" to bring a few select individuals and capital to Palestine, tens of thousands of Jewish Communists heroically fought against the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy and against Wehrmacht and SS occupation forces in East Europe.

The most successful Soviet intelligence network in German-occupied Europe was the group known as Die Rote Kapelle (The Red Orchestra). Led by Leopold Trepper, who had played a key role in organizing Communist workers in Palestine in the early 1920s, the Red Orchestra sent

Photos: Leopold Trepper, *The Great Game*



Hillel Katz



David Kamy

urgent warnings to Moscow of the impending attack by the German army in June 1941. Trusting in his pact with Hitler, Stalin ignored the warnings and brought the Soviet Union to the brink of destruction.

Among the numerous Jews who participated in the network were Sophie Poznanska, arrested in Brussels in 1942; Hillel Katz, arrested by the Gestapo in Paris in December 1942; and David Kamy, arrested in Brussels in 1941.

Altogether 217 people were arrested in connection with the Red Orchestra, of whom 143 were executed, murdered during interrogation, died in concentration camps or committed suicide.

Jewish pawns. The “socialist ideals” of the *kibbutz* movement (Zionist collective agricultural settlements) were the false consciousness peddled to East European Jewish toilers to turn them into colonizers expropriating Palestinian Arabs under the watchwords of “conquest of land” and “conquest of labor.” Now that their job is done, they are replaced by the “iron wall” of Jabotinsky (to exclude Arabs from “Eretz Israel”) and the “iron hand” of Rabin (in putting down the first *intifada*).

In *Der Juden-staat*, Theodor Herzl wrote that “the Jews, once settled in their own state, would probably have no more enemies.” And again, “if we only begin to carry out the plans, anti-Semitism would at once stop and forever. For it is the conclusion of peace.” *Zionism will stop anti-Semitism?! On the contrary, Zionism both feeds off and creates anti-Semitism.* Zionism does not mean peace but endless war. Herzl’s nationalist fantasy is a cruel hoax on the Jewish population of Israel, for what they have achieved is a state surrounded by hostile and far more numerous neighbors. This condition will persist as long as capitalism and imperialist domination prevail in the region. As Abram Leon, the young Belgian Jewish Trotskyist who was murdered at Auschwitz, wrote in his

book, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Analysis*:

“It is only when the process of the formation of nations approaches its end, when the productive forces have for a long time found themselves constricted within national boundaries, that the process of expulsion of Jews from capitalist society begins to manifest itself, that modern anti-Semitism begins to develop....

“The Jewish bourgeoisie is compelled to create a national state, to assure itself of the objective framework for the development of its productive forces, precisely in the period when the conditions for such a development have long since disappeared.... Zionism wishes to resolve the Jewish question without destroying capitalism, which is the principal source of the suffering of the Jews.”

A month before he was assassinated by Stalin’s agent in August 1940, Trotsky wrote a prophetic fragment on the prospects of Jews in Palestine which was later found among his papers:

“The attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine can now be seen for what it is, a tragic mockery of the Jewish people.... The future development of military events may well transform Palestine into a bloody

Zionist Terror and the “Ingathering” of Iraqi Jews

Following the founding of the state of Israel, its Zionist rulers urgently sought to fill up the land whose Palestinian Arab people had been driven out in the 1948 war. With the pool of European Jewish survivors of the Nazi Holocaust drained, Israeli agents fanned out across the Near East to organize the “ingathering” (*aliya*) of the Oriental Jews. This was largely organized by the Mossad Le Aliya Bet (Institute of Illegal Immigration), which later became part of the Israeli foreign spy agency Mossad. Their first major target was Iraq.

The 130,000 Iraqi Jews were the oldest Jewish community in the world, tracing their origins to the Babylonian exile following the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrian king of Babylonia, in 598 BC. They were concentrated in the capital, Baghdad, where Jews once outnumbered Arabs, and Jews held dominant positions in banking, retail commerce and other key economic sectors. Israel sent in arms and military operatives to funnel Jews out to Iran and then to Tel Aviv. But only a few thousand members of this prosperous, well-established community were prepared to leave all their worldly possessions behind. So after some months of dithering, the Mossad LeAliya Bet undertook more energetic measures.

On the last day of Passover (Pesach) 1950, as tens of thousands of Iraqi Jews promenaded along the banks of the Tigris, a small bomb was thrown from a passing car outside a Jewish coffee shop. No one was hurt. In the ensuing panic, there was a rush to government offices of Jews asking to emigrate to Israel; altogether about 10,000 signed up. The Iraqi government only required that they sign a form renouncing citizenship. But as the shock wore off, the flood turned into a trickle. Then a second bomb exploded, outside the U.S. Information Center where many Baghdad Jews came to read the papers. But after a while, that panic died down too.

So in January 1951, a third bomb went off, outside the Mas’uda Shem-Tov synagogue, the registration point for would-be emigrés. This time a Jewish boy was killed. Shortly after, the Iraqi parliament passed a law confiscating the property of all Jews who renounced their citizenship. Convinced that they were facing an anti-Semitic onslaught and spurred on by Zionist appeals, Iraqi Jews headed for the exit. Meanwhile, planes from Israel began arriving in large numbers, three or four a day. After a few months, only 5,000 Jews were left in Iraq.

Yet some time later it was revealed that it was not Islamic anti-Semites who were behind the terror attacks that panicked Iraqi Jewry but Mossad operatives. *The Zionists bombed the Jewish synagogue.* This was not mere speculation, but was confirmed by Iraqi Jewish witnesses, associates of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency who saw Iraqi files, revelations of the Israeli agents whom the Mossad later acknowledged were theirs, the publications of Oriental Jews in Israel, and the chief rabbi of Baghdad. The story was detailed in the book by Manchester *Guardian* correspondent David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch* (Faber and Faber, 1977).

Shortly after the first bombing, in the summer of 1950, a Mossad agent, Yehudah Tajar, was recognized by a Palestinian refugee and arrested in Iraq. This soon led to further arrests. A young Jew broke down during interrogation and led police from synagogue to synagogue showing where Haganah arms caches (including 400 grenades, 200 pistols and several dozen sub-machine guns) were hidden. Members of the Zionist underground were tried, accused of carrying out the various bomb attacks in order to scare Iraqi Jews into fleeing: two were sentenced to death, the rest to long prison terms.

A laudatory book about the Mossad, *Israel’s Secret Wars* (Grove Press, 1991), written by another *Guardian* correspon-

trap for several hundred thousand Jews. Never was it so clear as it is today that the salvation of the Jewish people is bound up inseparably with the overthrow of the capitalist system.”

Today, the nuclear-armed Zionist rulers have used their military superiority to create a death trap for the Palestinian Arabs. But their aura of invincibility is a mirage. As the phony “peace process” breaks down and Jewish casualties begin to mount, the Zionist consensus could crack. The numerous fault lines within Israeli society could produce an earthquake, and should their imperialist backing be called into question, the Zionists could find they have been living in a fool’s paradise. But for this to lead toward an internationalist outcome rather than a descent into all-sided nationalist/religious barbarism requires the forging of a revolutionary Arab/Hebrew workers party.

Israel, the Zionist state born through robbing the Palestinian Arabs of their land and country, was a product of the Holocaust. Its future rulers used the “opportunity” of the monstrous crimes against the Jewish people to establish their “right” to rule a tiny corner of the Near East. From the beginning of the phony “peace process,” Israel’s rulers have

demanding of Arafat that he sell out the impoverished Palestinian Arab masses compacted in their refugee camps as they sold out the impoverished Jewish ghetto masses and Holocaust survivors in order to secure the rule of a racist Zionist master class. Arafat’s very weakness makes it harder for him to accomplish his assigned tasks on behalf of imperialism and the Zionist occupiers, although he is certainly trying.

To liberate the hundreds of thousands of impoverished Palestinian toilers and unemployed who have lived for half a century in crowded, miserable refugee camps, the Israeli Arab youth and their parents who have spent all their lives under the boot of Zionist control, the “Oriental” (mostly Arab) Jews confined to slum-like towns ringing Israeli Arab settlements, the Russian immigrants placed in settlements deep in the West Bank and used as shock troops in the racist war on the Palestinians, the Israeli workers facing destitution as wholesale privatization dismantles industries and state services, and to do away with the scourge of anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism – this requires proletarian unity of the Arab and Hebrew workers in common struggle for a socialist federation of the Near East. ■

dent, Ian Black, together with Israel’s premier “new historian,” Benny Morris, notes:

“Some Iraqi Jews maintained, then and for years afterwards, that the attacks on the Jewish targets, especially on the Mas’uda Shem-Tov synagogue, were organized by the Mossad and/or the Mossad LeAliya Bet in order to persuade hesitant Iraqi Jews that it was in their interest to leave their growingly anti-Semitic homeland and emigrate to Israel.”

Black and Morris quote Wilbur Crane Eveland, “a former advisor to the CIA who was in Iraq at the time,” as saying:

“In an attempt to portray the Iraqis as anti-American and to terrorize the Jews, the Zionists planted bombs in the US Information Service library and synagogues, and soon leaflets began to appear urging Jews to flee to Israel.”

Ten years later, Tajjar was released after the Mossad, using its close ties to the Iranian SAVAK secret police, warned Iraqi leader Qassem of a Nasserite plot against him. After his return to Israel, the Zionist intelligence agencies formed a committee to hold an inquest. The committee reported it was “convinced that the order [to throw the bombs] had not come from any agency in Israel,” report Black and Morris, and that “even if there was a grain of truth in the view of the witnesses,” that Jews had thrown the bombs, “no orders to commit these acts were given” – i.e., at most it was some local operatives slipping the leash.

To accept the word of the Mossad and Shin Bet (Israel’s domestic spy agency) on such a matter is absurd, akin to believing the CIA’s claims that it had nothing to do with the overthrow or assassination of Salvador Allende in Chile, or saying the Okhrana did not instigate pogroms in Russia because this is not mentioned in files selected by the tsarist secret police. The fact that Black and Morris, claiming authority because of their privileged access to secret documents, peddle this cover-up shows that they are whitewashing the Zionist spy agencies.

In fact, Tajjar himself provided information about the

emigration of the Iraqi Jews, while *Black Panther*, a publication of leftist Oriental Jews in Israel, quoted an Iraqi lawyer living in Tel Aviv who noted that within hours after the first bomb explosion outside the coffee house clandestine leaflets were circulating about the dangers and urging Jews to flee to Israel. Even the chief rabbi of Iraq, Sassoon Khedduri, pointed to the suspicious coincidences:

“By mid-1949 the big propaganda guns were already going off in the United States. American dollars were going to save the Iraqi Jews – whether Iraqi Jews needed saving or not. There were daily ‘pogroms’ – in the *New York Times* and under datelines which few noticed were from Tel Aviv. Why didn’t someone come to see *us* instead of negotiating with Israel to take in Iraqi Jews? ...

“Zionist agents began to appear in Iraq – among the youth – playing on a *general* uneasiness and indicating that American Jews were putting up large amounts of money to take them to Israel, where everything would be in apple pie order....

“The government was whipsawed...accused of pogroms and violent action against Jews.... But if the government attempted to suppress Zionist agitation attempting to stampede the Iraqi Jews, it was again excused of discrimination.”

And even Black and Morris are forced to admit, basing themselves on Mossad reports, that “many of the Iraqi Jewish immigrants in Israel, who lived for long periods in shabby tent camps with poor services,” continued to believe that Zionist agents had thrown the bombs “in order to encourage the emigration from Iraq.”

Expressing their bitterness over having been reduced from riches in Iraq to indigence in Israel, some of those Iraqi Jews who were “ingathered” by these means called the execution of the Zionist agents in Iraq “God’s revenge on the movement that brought us here.” ■

Communism vs. Stalinism, Zionism and Arab Nationalism

Arab/Hebrew Workers' Struggles Before the Birth of Israel

The victory of the 1917 Russian October Revolution heralded the end of the first imperialist world war and electrified radicalized workers from Europe to America. It also sent shock waves through the colonies and semi-colonies enslaved by the imperialist powers. The Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky called for a democratic peace without annexations, based on the right of self-determination for all nations and abrogating the imperialists' secret diplomacy in which they carved up the spoils of war.

Within days of taking power, the Soviet government began publishing the secret treaties, among them the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement in which the British and French rulers conspired to rob the Arab masses of the independence they had been promised. The first installment was introduced by a note from the commissar of foreign affairs, Trotsky, declaring:

"Laying bare to the whole world the work of the ruling classes as expressed in the secret documents of diplomacy, we turn to the toilers with the challenge which constitutes the unchangeable basis of our foreign policy: Workers of all countries, unite!"

A month later, the Soviet Council of People's Commissars issued a letter, "To All Muslim Toilers of Russia and the East" (7 December 1917), calling on Persians and Turks, Arabs and Hindus, to overthrow the imperialist robbers and enslavers of their countries.

The Bolsheviks' support for the freeing of colonized peoples from the imperialist yoke was a key element that distinguished the Communist (Third) International from the social-democratic Second International. The social democrats were at best indifferent to (and wary of) colonial struggles for liberation, while the most reformist elements openly supported the "civilizing mission" of "their own" bourgeoisies. In contrast, the Manifesto of the First Congress of the Comintern (1919), written by Trotsky, proclaimed: "Colonial slaves of Africa and



Arab and Jewish workers in the Haifa rail workshops, around 1925 as they fought together against Zionist Histadrut demanding single union for all railway workers.

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Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation!" By the next year, Trotsky's Manifesto of the Second Comintern Congress declared that not only must the revolutionary workers act as emancipators but the oppressed peoples of the East were being drawn into battle:

"The toilers of the colonial and semi-colonial countries have awakened. In the boundless areas of India, Egypt, Persia, over which the gigantic octopus of English imperialism

sprawls – in this uncharted ocean vast internal forces are constantly at work, upheaving huge waves that cause tremors in the City's stocks and hearts....

"The road from the first stumbling baby steps to the mature forms of struggle is being traversed by the colonies and backward countries in general through a forced march, under the pressure of modern imperialism and under the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat."

At the same time, the imperialists sought to shore up their rule. Three days before the Soviets took power in Russia, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration endorsing the Zionist goal of establishing a Jewish "homeland" (state) in Palestine. This was aimed at winning Jewish support for the war and undercutting revolutionary antiwar forces, and at securing a vital point of support for Britain's plans for postwar imperial domination in the pivotal Near East. One of the main bargaining points of Theodor Herzl, the founder of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), in his constant quest for imperialist backing, was that the Zionist enterprise of founding a Jewish state in the Near East would undercut the struggle for socialist revolution. Longtime WZO leader Chaim Weizman, who was to become the first president of Israel, declared "the Jewish state will stem Communist influence."

Lacking a national "fatherland," many Jewish intellectuals and workers were attracted to the internationalist program

of communism. In turn, the most vociferous anti-communist reactionaries denounced socialism as a “Jewish conspiracy,” pointing to the German Jewish origins of Karl Marx. In 1920, Winston Churchill, then British war secretary, denounced Trotsky and “his schemes of a world-wide communistic state under Jewish domination.” At the same time, noting “the fury with which Trotsky has attacked the Zionists generally, and Dr Weizman in particular,” Churchill proclaimed: “The struggle which is now beginning between the Zionist and Bolshevik Jews is little less than a struggle for the soul of the Jewish people” (quoted in Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators: A Reappraisal* [1983]).

At that time and up until the second imperialist world war, Zionism was a distinctly minority current among Jews throughout the world. In West Europe and the United States, despite anti-Semitic discrimination the Jewish population was generally assimilationist and participated actively in national political life. In East Europe, which was heavily ghettoized and rife with nativist anti-Semitism, Jewish leftists played a major role in Communist and socialist parties. In the Soviet Union, Stalin crudely appealed to anti-Semitism in purging Trotsky and other oppositionists of Jewish origin, including Stalin’s one-time bloc partners Zinoviev and Kamenev; even so, the Jewish intelligentsia formed a key element of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Following the 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union, millions of Polish, Ukrainian and Baltic Jews were saved from death at the hands of the Nazi fascists by escaping behind the Red Army lines.

It took Hitler’s Holocaust with its genocidal mass murder of over six million Jews to give mass appeal to the Zionist plan for a Jewish state in Palestine. And it was Stalinism, a nationalist perversion of Bolshevik internationalism, that by lining up the exploited behind “their own” bourgeoisies

enabled Zionism to carry out its poisonous work of setting Jewish and Arab workers at each others’ throats.

Since the founding of the Zionist state of Israel in 1948, achieved by bloody massacres and the wholesale expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their native land, many on the left have dismissed calls for Arab/Hebrew workers revolution and tail after Arab nationalism. *Yet in almost three decades of British colonial rule, despite the hostility of the Zionists and Arab reactionaries, there were repeated examples of joint struggle by Arab and Jewish workers.* Throughout the Near East, Jewish and other national/ethnic minorities played a key role in the founding and building of Communist parties. Following World War II, there was a powerful upsurge of potentially revolutionary workers struggles. Railway workers marched through Tel Aviv chanting, “Arab and Jewish workers are brothers.” In early 1926, Communist-led Egyptian workers and students staged a general strike against British colonial overlordship; in Palestine a few weeks later Arab and Jewish workers struck against the British Mandate administration. And in 1948, as the Zionists were proclaiming the state of Israel, an uprising to drive out the British and their puppets broke out in Iraq, led by the Communist Party whose top leaders included many Kurds, Armenians, Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims, and a young Jewish secretary general.

Put down with brutal repression by the bourgeois rulers, those struggles and the communist militants who led them were condemned to defeat by Stalinism, which tied them to Arab kings, sheikhs and colonels...and in Palestine to the Zionist butchers. What was required for victory were genuinely communist parties, forged on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, the internationalist program confirmed by the Bolshevik October and *betrayed* by Stalin’s nationalist class collaboration.

1920s: Palestinian Communists Organize Arab and Jewish Workers

At the end of World War I, particularly following the occupation of Damascus by an Arab army in 1918, there was an explosion of nationalist fervor. A police account of the talk in the Cairo coffee houses reported: “Its general tendency is that the Bolsheviks are coming to take Egypt and it will be a fine thing for Egypt when they do. Then if a poor man wants money, he will just take it from the rich.” By the early 1920s, Communist nuclei were established in several Near Eastern cities, often led by immigrants and members of national minorities. The core of the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon were Armenian students of the social-democratic Hentchak party, who in 1925 split to form the Spartak Group, named after the leader of the Roman slave uprising, Spartacus.

In Egypt, the Socialist Party was founded in 1921 by a Russian Jew, Joseph Rosenthal. A report of the British political police declared, “The Communist movement...in Egypt is a one-man show...and the one man is Rosenthal.” They were wrong about that. He was soon replaced by Mahmud Husni

al-Arabi, who in 1922 returned from Comintern training in Moscow to found the Communist Party of Egypt. Reinforced by Arab workers from unions set up by Rosenthal and by Greek intellectuals linked to the French Clarté group, the fledgling Communist Party led workers in Alexandria, Egypt in seizing the Egyptian Oil plant and the Filatures Nationales textile factory in February 1924 ejecting the owners. After lengthy negotiations, the strike was settled, but al-Arabi and his CP comrades were thrown into jail where they languished for years.

In Palestine, the beginnings of a Communist Party were cohered from among Hebrew immigrant workers who had been attracted by the left wing of “labor Zionism,” organized in Poale Zion (Workers of Zion). Upon arriving in the “promised land,” many became disenchanted by the reality of the colonization program. A Socialist Workers Party (MOPS) was founded in 1920, having only partially broken with Zionism (Poale Zion itself was then negotiat-

ing with the Communist Third International). But when the MOPS called on Jewish and Arab workers to demonstrate for a Soviet Palestine in Jaffa on May Day 1921, it was driven out of the march by police and the Zionist “labor” organization, the Histadrut. The Zionists’ anti-Communist exclusion wound up provoking a clash of Arabs and Jews and ultimately led to the deportation of 15 MOPS leaders. The next year, a clandestine Palestine Communist Party (PCP) was founded, and after a ten-month split over the issue of what stance to take toward Zionism, it finally adopted a firm anti-Zionist program.

During the 1920s and ’30s, the PCP struggled under heavy repression, its ranks continually depleted by deportations and the emigration of Jewish Communists, many of whom went on to play valiant roles in the Communist International only to be liquidated in the Stalinist purges. The new party reoriented its agitation toward the indigenous Arab population of Palestine. Karl Radek, then head of the Eastern section of the Comintern in Moscow, wrote to the third congress of the PCP in 1924:

“Until now the Party was composed of immigrant Jews. In the future it must become a party of Arab workers to which Jews can belong who have acclimated and rooted themselves in the Palestinian conditions, people who know Arabic.”

—quoted in Joel Beinin, “The Palestine Communist Party 1919-1948,” *MERIP Reports* No. 53, March 1977

That same year (1924), the Palestinian CP supported Arab *fellahin* (peasants) who fought the Haganah (the Zionist militia formed by the Histadrut) in resisting their expulsion from the village of Al-Fula after it had been bought by the Jewish Agency. In 1925-26, the PCP gave internationalist support to a revolt by Druze Arabs in Lebanon and Syria.

At the same time the PCP organized a trade-union unity league (Ichud) around Communists who had been expelled in 1924 from the Histadrut for their class opposition to Zionism. The Tel Aviv branch of Ichud was headed by Leopold Domb-Trepper, who was later to lead the “Red Orchestra” (*Rote Kapelle*) network for Soviet military intelligence which heroically provided the Red Army with vital information from German-occupied Europe during World War II.

The main aim of the Histadrut (General Confederation of Hebrew Workers) was the Zionist “conquest of labor,” meaning the creation of a Jewish proletariat (in the process displacing Arab workers) to be exploited by a Jewish bourgeoisie. This is in sharp contrast to a labor union, whose declared task is to defend the workers against the bosses, however much that is undermined by pro-capitalist leaders. The Histadrut is a corporatist body explicitly tied to the Jewish Agency, which during the British Mandate was officially integrated into the colonial government, in charge of immigration as well as having a formal role in land and labor policies. The Histadrut’s political vehicle was and is the “Labor” Party (Mapai), which despite its name is a bourgeois Zionist party with close ties to the upper echelons of the Israeli army. The Histadrut also ran and runs substantial capitalist businesses, from construction companies which built British military camps to transportation companies that run the buses. On

labor questions, the Histadrut acted as a giant Jewish job trust against Arab workers.

Nevertheless, during British Mandate rule the Histadrut constantly had to face the fact that most of the workforce—in some sectors the large majority—were Arab workers. Mainly the Zionists sought to separate the Jewish workers by expelling Arab labor. Sometimes Jewish workers dominated the skilled and white collar jobs while Arab workers provided the hard manual labor. In a few cases, Jewish and Arab workers worked side by side. But wherever there were mixed workforces, in order to raise wages to hold Hebrew workers with a European standard of living, the Histadrut tops couldn’t completely avoid joint struggle by Arabs and Jews. They followed such actions with minute attention, seeking to prevent or limit the growth of predominantly Arab unions, particularly under Communist leadership. They even set up a bogus Arab labor front, which Jewish officials kept on a tight leash. *Always* the “Labor” Zionists opposed a common union of Hebrew and Arab workers, despite insistent requests from workers of both ethnic groups. But the Zionists did not always succeed in preventing working-class unity.

In the early 1920s, Hebrew train engineers, Arab track workers and mixed crews in the rail shops in Haifa joined in common struggle against the railway bosses. The Haifa shops were the largest concentration of Arab industrial workers in Palestine and also a hotbed of leftist Jewish workers. In 1922, the Histadrut blocked a demand for a strike of Jewish and Arab workers. The next year, the Union of Railway, Post and Telegraph Workers (URPTW) called on the Histadrut to restructure, separating its other functions from the trade union and organizing the latter on an “international” basis. Arab workers and Jewish Communist workers stepped up pressure on the URPTW to break its Zionist ties. Meanwhile, in early 1924 the Histadrut declared the PCP an enemy of the Jewish people because of its denunciation of Zionism. Jewish CPers were expelled, first from the leadership and then from the rail union itself. But as the Communists were ejected, support grew for Left Poale Zion.

A January 1925 rail union council directly opposed Mapai leader David Ben Gurion, who made a personal appearance, by voting to open the URPTW to all workers regardless of race, religion or nationality and electing an executive with equal numbers of Jews and Arabs. By the end of 1925, the URPTW had almost 1,000 members, slightly more than half of whom were Arab workers; in Haifa, a strong majority were Arabs. This infuriated the Histadrut leadership, which initially talked of splitting the union. At the same time, skilled Arab railway workers who considered the URPTW leadership double-dealing Zionists set up their own union which became the core of the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS). Ultimately, a general decline in the workforce and labor militancy took its toll, and by 1927 the URPTW was again largely Jewish. Yet the desire for common struggle continued. PAWS rail workers proposed to the URPTW forming a Joint Committee with equal representation, which was set up at the end of 1927.

1929: Zionist Pressure Sets Off Communal Riots, Stalinists Invent Anti-Imperialist Revolt

But the Zionist presence in Palestine was rapidly growing under the protection of the British colonial rulers. As a result of the WZO's colonization schemes, the Jewish population in Palestine had risen from 20,000 in 1880 to 85,000 in 1914. During the war their number fell to 60,000. From the end of World War I to 1931, another 117,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration's call for a "Jewish home" in Palestine was written into the League of Nations' "mandate" for British rule, and the first British High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, was a Zionist, while the British colonial secretary was the pro-Zionist Churchill. Jewish immigration quotas were set at 16,500 a year, and Zionist land purchases (accompanied by expulsions of Arab peasants) proceeded apace. Yet despite official encouragement, conditions were such that many Jewish immigrants returned to Europe; in 1927 emigration exceeded the new arrivals. Meanwhile, hostility was growing among Palestinian Arabs, who could see clearly that the Zionists intended to drive them out in the course of founding a Jewish state.

Following a new surge of immigration, in August 1929 Arab anger exploded. During the preceding months, followers of hard-line "Revisionist" Zionist Ze'ev Jabotinsky engaged in provocative demonstrations in Jerusalem, seeking to expand the area set aside for Jews to pray at the "Wailing Wall." This site is considered holy by both Jews and Muslims: for the former, it is the Western Wall (*Kotel Maarivi*) of the Temple destroyed by the Romans in the time of Herod; for the latter, it is the place where Muhammad mounted his steed (*Al Boraq*) to ascend to

heaven. In response, the Mufti (head of the Muslim community) of Jerusalem, Hadj Amin al-Husseini, sought to whip up Islamic fervor, accusing the Jews of intending to seize the explanade above the Wall, Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), one of Islam's holiest sites. (The same site is called the Temple Mount by Jews, in reference to the biblical Second Temple said to be buried beneath the Al Aqsa mosque.) As his followers staged provocations, Jabotinsky declared to the Zionist world congress in Zurich that "Zionism is not only the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine, but the creation of room for millions in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River."

In mid-August 1929, several hundred supporters of the paramilitary youth group of Jabotinsky's "Revisionist" Zionists, Betar, marched behind the blue-and-white Zionist flag through the Arab quarter of Jerusalem to the Wailing Wall with concealed weapons and explosives, chanting "The Wall belongs to us!" and singing "Judah was born in blood and fire, in blood and fire it will grow." The reactionary grand rabbi Abraham Kook blessed this provocation, praising the Betarim for being "ready to sacrifice to redeem the holy site." The following week, responding to the Mufti's call for a *jihad* (holy war) against "the Jews," groups of Arab peasants emerging from Friday prayers at the Al Aqsa mosque attacked the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem, as well as Jews living in Hebron and Safed. Some 133 Jews were killed in this gruesome pogrom; 116 Arabs were later killed, mainly by British police but also by Zionists. The August riots had a reactionary, anti-Jewish communal (rather than anti-colonial)

Stalinists claimed 1929 outbreak of communal rioting in Palestine was anti-colonial uprising. Arab fellahin were driven by anger over Zionist land purchases, yet Islamic leaders directed violence at Jews, claiming "The [British] government is with us." Right: article from German Communist Party's *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*, September 1929.



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character. At the same time the *fellahin* (peasants) were clearly driven by anger over land purchases and fears of Zionist domination, grievances that were manipulated into religious/ethnic riots.

This excruciating situation cried out for clear revolutionary leadership with close ties to both Arab and Hebrew working people. The PCP sought to spark a movement against the Zionist land purchases which were driving out Arab peasants, taking the lead of demonstrations in June and the beginning of August 1929. Yet despite its efforts to recruit Arabs under the watchword "Out of the Jewish ghetto," the Communist Party was still overwhelmingly Hebrew in composition. The PCP's immediate reaction was to denounce the riots as simply pogroms. After fleeing on a Haganah bus from the exposed village outside Jerusalem where its clandestine HQ was located, the Communist Party leadership joined the Haganah in patrolling Jewish quarters, placing its modest arsenal at the disposal of the Zionist militia which had bloodily suppressed Arab *fellahin* and attacked the PCP only a few years earlier. The PCP's panicked reaction was a capitulation to Zionism. *Arab/Hebrew workers defense* against pogroms was called for, but not cooperation with the Zionist military apparatus that worked hand-in-glove with the British colonial rulers and indiscriminately attacked Arabs.

Still, the Communist Party was virtually the only common organization of both Jewish and Arab workers. A PCP central committee resolution from September 1929 stated:

"The Party alone stood for the interests of the working class as such. Untiringly it sought, in pamphlets, handbills, illegal assemblies, and even demonstrations (in the face of official terrorism, on August 1st) to impress on Jewish and Arab workers alike: Do not fight one another, but unite against British imperialism and its Zionist and feudal Arab bourgeois adherents.... The last appeal of the C.P., on the day when the revolt began, was approved by 99 percent of the workers at the Haifa railway shops, including many Jewish workers and even Socialists."

—*International Press Correspondence (Inprecor)*, 4 October 1929

The resolution reported cases of Jewish workers being saved by Arabs and vice versa, but an absence of mass fraternization and common struggle against British imperialism.

In contrast, from Moscow the Stalinist authorities portrayed the intercommunal rioting in Palestine as a peasant revolt against imperialism. A resolution of the Comintern executive, "On the Insurrectionary Movement in Arabistan" (29 October 1929), declared breathlessly:

"Notwithstanding the fact that in its initial stage it came under reactionary leadership, it was still a national liberation movement, an anti-imperialist all-Arab movement, and in the main, by its social composition, a peasant movement.... Without doubt this bourgeois-democratic revolution will turn into a socialist revolution."

—quoted in Jane Degras, *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents*. Vol. I

While adopting a radical tone, the Kremlin made sure to denounce "the thesis advanced by some, about the proletarian character of the revolution" in the Near East as being "completely out of accordance with the historical reality" and

"reflect[ing] the Trotskyist ideology of permanent revolution." But the main purpose of the resolution was to condemn "the right deviation in the CP of Palestine," declaring: "The party failed to notice that the religious national conflict was turning into a general national anti-imperialist revolt." The PCP was taken to task for "scepticism and passivity on the peasant question" for not seeing the mythical peasant revolt, but also for failing to call for "Arab-Jewish workers' detachments," which were not impossible in places such as Haifa.

The PCP was certainly taken by surprise by the August 1929 outburst, and its initial capitulation to the Zionists was no doubt partly due to being "composed in the main of Jewish elements" and having "no contact with the Arab masses," reflecting a "failure to steer a bold and determined course toward the Arabization of the party from top to bottom," as the Comintern resolution claimed. Indeed, a year earlier the PCP leadership expelled a minority that called for a fight against Zionism and support for Arab national liberation. A Communist Party in a colonial country must rest on the exploited indigenous masses, not immigrant settlers and workers of European origin, or it would inevitably become politically deformed, as experience from South Africa to Algeria showed. Even an official British inquiry (the Shaw Commission) recognized that behind the religious frenzy, the Arab unrest had been fueled by the Mandate government siding with the Zionists whose land purchases were driving Arab peasants off their land.

But the Comintern's claim that this was an anti-imperialist or anti-British revolt was pure fantasy. In fact, the peasants seldom attacked the colonial power, and the Arab leadership ordered them not to touch the British or Christians. Muslim crowds chanted "the government [is] with us." Moreover, the Jews who sustained the bloodiest attack (in Hebron, where 60 were killed by Islamic mobs "singing in religious ecstasy while they slit abdomens and struck off the heads of little children," as the PCP earlier reported) were an *anti-Zionist* Orthodox community long established in that West Bank town isolated from Jerusalem and the Zionist concentration along the Mediterranean. But the Stalinists were not concerned about social reality in Palestine: their aim was to purge the PCP leaders as rightist "Bukharinites."

To drive the point home, the entire party membership was reregistered on the basis of agreement with statements including, "Do you accept that the August uprising was the result of the radicalization of the Arab masses, which was only tainted by nationalist elements due to external factors (the British, Zionists...)"? The entire leadership of the party was replaced by the Kremlin, the old Jewish leaders were summoned to Moscow and a group of young Arab communists, just returned from training in the Soviet Union, was installed in their place. The bureaucratic imposition of a line flatly contradicting reality led to the resignation of most of the PCP's Jewish members. But the purge did have the effect of shifting the PCP's focus away from the left wing of "Labor" Zionism and giving it a new image as an Arab party. This was reinforced in 1931 when Mandate police arrested the PCP's Arab leaders and put them on trial, winning them considerable sympathy.

“Anti-Imperialist United Front”...with the Mufti of Jerusalem

The Palestine Communist Party's disorientation over the August 1929 communal riots was in good part due to the zigzagging political line it received from the Stalinized Comintern. Under the leadership of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the Communist International was founded in 1919 on the watchword of world socialist revolution. The resolution on the national and colonial question issued by the Second Congress of the Comintern (August 1920) emphasized that communists must “maintain the independence of the proletarian movement,” stressed the need to “struggle against the pan-Islamic and pan-Asiatic movements” which strengthen “the nobility, the large landlords, the priests, etc.,” and sharply denounced Zionism, “which, under the pretence of creating a Jewish State in Palestine in fact surrenders the Arab working people of Palestine, where Jewish workers form only a small minority, to exploitation by England.”

The denunciation of Zionism reflected the intervention of Frumkina, a delegate of the Communist Bundists, who had split to the left from the Jewish Bund when the latter sided with the Mensheviks and White Guard counterrevolution against the Bolshevik-led Soviet regime. Her remarks were directed at the delegate of the “socialist Zionist” group Poale Zion at the Congress, Cohn-Eber, who raised the grotesque demand for “the opportunity to immigrate and to colonize this country” (Palestine) while declaring his preference for “the modern capitalist economic forms” of the Jewish bourgeoisie over the “feudal forms” of the Arab *effendis*! A delegate of the Jewish Section of the Russian Communist Party (the *Yevsektzia*), Mereshin, strongly endorsed Frumkina's attack on Zionism and added that experience had shown that under the “republican-democratic” bourgeois order there were no means of securing democratic rights for all peoples in areas of mixed population. Only proletarian rule could achieve true equality.

But Lenin's theses on the national and colonial questions had significant weaknesses, notably in calling for “a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries.” This left open the possibility of not just common *actions* against imperialism but a *political alliance* with bourgeois nationalists in the colonial countries. These weaknesses were magnified at a Comintern-called Congress of the Peoples of the East held in Baku a month later, where Zinoviev, ignoring the strictures against pan-Islamism, called for a *jihad* (holy war) against imperialism.

Subsequently, the Communist International's Fourth Congress in 1922 passed a resolution on the “Eastern Question” calling for an “anti-imperialist united front” with bourgeois nationalists. Turning the ambiguities of the Second Congress theses into a slogan, this was used as a cover for the Chinese Communist Party's entry into the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT). This policy was pushed in the mid-'20s by Stalin and Bukharin following the purge of Trotsky and the decreeing of the nationalist dogma of “building socialism in one country.”



Jerusalem Mufti with Arab Higher Committee, 1936.

Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti*

This contradicted the program of the October Revolution and everything Marx ever wrote about the international character of socialism. In practice, it fueled bourgeois tendencies in the Soviet Union (Bukharin urged kulak peasant proprietors to “enrich yourselves”), while promoting alliances with bourgeois nationalists abroad. The deadly consequences of the Stalin/Bukharin line were shown in China when KMT leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek turned on his CP “allies” in April 1927, slaughtering tens of thousands of Communist workers in Shanghai and throughout southern China.

Under pressure from a kulak “grain strike” at home and seeking to cover his Chinese fiasco, Stalin broke with Bukharin. At the 1928 Sixth Congress of the Comintern he declared that a period of capitalist “stabilization” in the mid-'20s was over and proclaimed a “Third Period” of sharp revolutionary struggles not only against imperialism but also supposedly against reactionary nationalists in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Yet although the Comintern's “Third Period” line was generally ultraleft and its line on August 1929 was swathed in radical verbiage, in reality it was once again tailing after the chauvinist Mufti. A PCP pamphlet compared the rioters to the biblical Maccabees who rose up against the Hellenic kingdom of the Syrian Seleucids in the 2nd century BC: “The Maccabees and the partisans of the Mufti fought in the name of religion and fanaticism, but their true aim was liberation from oppression and the foreign yoke” (quoted in Alain Greilsammer, *Les communistes israéliens* [1978]).

Half a century later, the same arguments were used by various self-proclaimed communists and pseudo-Trotskyists to justify support to Khomeini and his mullahs in the name of an “Iranian Revolution.” Iranian leftists, workers, women, Kurds and other national minorities paid the price for this opportunist capitulation. Authentic Trotskyists fight for the program of *permanent revolution*, for smashing imperialism through socialist revolution led not by muftis and mullahs but by revolutionary workers parties at the head of all the oppressed! ■

The August 1929 events continue to be a point of bitter controversy decades later. Zionists of all stripes consider them simply pogroms. Reflecting latter-day Stalinist reformism, an East German socialist scholar argued in a 1983 essay that not only was the Comintern wrong about the facts, “the revolutionary potential of the Arab worker and peasant masses was greatly overestimated,” and the central demand should have been national independence rather than talk of fighting the bourgeoisie (Mario Kessler, *Antisemitismus, Zionismus und Sozialismus* [1994]). Leon Trotsky, responding later (1932-33)

to queries on the Jewish question, wrote that it appeared that in the 1929 events Arab “national liberationists (anti-imperialists), reactionary Mohammedans and anti-Semitic pogromists” were all present, but lacking sufficient information he could not say “in what proportions” (Leon Trotsky, *On the Jewish Question* [1970]). Certainly, to formulate and fight for a program for revolutionary struggle in such a difficult situation, where ethnic/communal division intersected colonial oppression, required a solidly internationalist communist leadership – precisely what Stalin’s Kremlin did not and could not provide.

1936-39: Arab National Revolt and Stalinist Popular Front

Unlike in 1929, when popular discontent of the Arab masses was channeled into communal riots, and short-lived nationalist protests in 1933, a full-scale anti-colonial revolt took place in Palestine from 1936 to 1939. Yet while the Palestinian Communists braved colonial repression, the by-now reformist policy of the Comintern once more led them into the embrace of the Jerusalem Mufti. Both during the six-month Arab strike in 1936 and in the subsequent guerrilla fighting following publication in mid-1937 of the British Peel Report – which called for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states – the PCP’s policy was total support to the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), led by the Mufti Husseini. The key demands of the revolt (an end to Jewish immigration, a ban on further land sales to the Zionists, and establishment of a “representative national Palestinian government”) posed a struggle against British colonialists and their Zionist allies. Communists would have militarily supported the revolt against colonial subjugation, while giving no political support to its leaders and fighting for a program of revolutionary class struggle to smash imperialism.

The 1936 “general strike” was actually a Palestinian Arab national strike. Fighting was touched off by a band of followers

of Sheikh al-Qassam (killed by the British police a few months earlier) calling themselves the Holy Martyrs, who attacked a convoy of cars and executed two Jews in mid-April. The next day, two Arab orange grove workers were killed in retaliation. Anti-Arab mobs rioted in Tel Aviv demanding “we want a Jewish army” and attempting to march on the predominantly Arab city Jaffa next door. Zionists assaulted Arabs in the street and picketed businesses that employed Arab workers. A chronicle of the revolt states:

“Palestinians were alarmed at the racial overtones of the recent events. They were being blatantly attacked by foreigners who were not only living in their country but were publicly stating their plans to take it over.... Now the foreigners were forming an army, sanctioned by the British authorities, who in the meantime were controlling the country.”

–Barbara Kalkas, “The Revolt of 1936: A Chronicle of Events,” in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, ed., *The Transformation of Palestine* (Northwestern University Press, 1971)

In the next few days, “national strike committees” were formed in almost all the Arab cities and towns, mostly by

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British troops arrest Arab rebels who occupied Old City of Jerusalem in 1938. While Stalinists adopted program of Jerusalem Mufti, Trotskyists would defend anti-colonial revolt while calling for Arab/Hebrew workers revolution.

small businessmen and professionals. Wary of the strike, the notables, *effendis* (large landowners) and religious leaders in the AHC moved quickly to take it over. Although the focus of the revolt's demands was the mandate government, the strike itself consisted largely of an economic boycott of the British and of the Jewish community. The attempt to shut down the railroads was to be accomplished by sporadic attacks on trains by guerrilla bands in the hills rather than by action of the Arab and Jewish railroad workers. While disrupting the Palestinian economy and causing problems for the British colonial rulers, the strike had the unintended effect of bolstering the autonomy of the Zionist *yishuv* (national community). The Zionists built strategic roads, ended the citrus groves' dependence on Arab labor, extended their own commercial networks and greatly strengthened their military forces, which were now officially enrolled as auxiliary police troops by the British.

Zionists have long portrayed the 1936-39 Arab revolt as "religious fanaticism" and "general xenophobia" aimed at helping "a dangerous gang of hooligans into power" (quoted by the Histadrut operative Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* [1956]). In fact, religion played a far smaller role in the rebellion than in 1929. The masses in the streets were not Islamic peasants but urban young men, the *shebab*, led by the Istaqlal (Independence) party, a new nationalist group enrolling both Christian and Muslim Arabs in the towns and cities. Yet rather than mobilizing working-class action against the repression by the British and their Zionist auxiliaries, the PCP simply adopted the AHC's nationalist program. While formally calling on Jewish workers to "join the strike," the Stalinists did *not* call

for the peasants and agricultural laborers to rise up in agrarian revolution against the *effendis* and the Zionist citrus grove owners, nor did they call for *workers* (Arab and Hebrew) to shut down all transportation, oil refining, industry and government offices in a struggle for Palestinian independence and workers revolution. Yet these were not impossible goals.

This was shown by events in the preceding years. While the Arab/Hebrew workers' solidarity of the mid-'20s had been sidelined by communal rioting in 1928-29, it soon reappeared. By November 1931, joint strikes by Arab and Jewish taxi, bus and truck drivers paralyzed road transport in Palestine for nine days. In April 1932, Arab seamen in Haifa struck and were joined by Jewish longshoremen, mainly from the Left Zionist Hashomer Hatzair, who refused to scab. Over resistance from the Histadrut and the Arab Executive, a joint strike council was formed. Starting in 1934 there were mass assemblies of hundreds of Arab and Jewish rail workers, leading to a one-day strike at the Haifa mechanical workshops in May 1935. The strikers formed a council of all rail workers and sent a deputation of four Arab and four Jewish workers to negotiate with the government bosses, winning some of their demands. Railway workers were not unique. A couple of months earlier, in February-March 1935, hundreds of Arab and Jewish workers mounted a partially successful three-week strike at the Haifa refinery and pipeline head of the Iraq Petroleum Company. Both Zionist and Arab nationalists were hostile to joint workers struggles, blaming them on the Communists.

The year 1936 saw general social unrest throughout the Near East. In Egypt, the election of the bourgeois-nationalist

Wafd (Delegation) party in May was quickly followed by a series of militant strike struggles. Inspired by the strike waves that swept across France, Belgium, Spain and Greece that spring and summer, textile, streetcar, oil and sugar refinery workers in Alexandria and Cairo occupied plants and workshops for union demands. An Anglo-Egyptian treaty for “independence” was negotiated by the Wafd, but this conservative party of landowners and bankers, fearful of a radicalized working class, left the key Suez Canal Zone in British hands and granted London the right to intervene militarily. In Syria, a 50-day national strike (January-March 1936) led to talks with the Popular Front French government of Léon Blum a few months later. The Syrian-Lebanese Communist Party politically backed the Syrian National Bloc in the name of “unity” with the “national bourgeoisie.” CP leaders even accompanied the National Bloc delegation to Paris for negotiations that produced a treaty promising independence...later.

This policy, which was also reflected in the PCP’s line on the Palestine revolt, corresponded to the Kremlin’s new “general line” of reformist class collaboration. After its “Third Period” line led to disaster in Germany, where the Stalinists concentrated their fire on the Social Democrats (labeling them “social fascists”) and didn’t lift a finger to stop Hitler’s march to power, Moscow now rushed to embrace the bourgeoisie in the name of a “People’s Front Against Fascism.” At the 1935 Seventh Congress of the Comintern, when Georgi Dimitrov formally announced the new popular-front policy, a Palestinian CP delegate declared their main task was to “create an Arab national popular front against imperialism and Zionism.” Of course, “the party must undertake active work among the Jewish working masses to wrest them from the influence of the counterrevolutionary party of the Zionist capitalists,” he added. But all talk of workers revolution was dropped and they simply called “to involve the [Jewish] workers in the national liberation struggle of the Arab masses.” At the same Congress, PCP leader Musa (Ridwan al-Hilu) portrayed the Jewish minority as the main enemy: “The Jewish national minority is, in short, the colonizing and ruling nation, supported by English imperialism.”

Putting into practice the popular-front program of bourgeois reformism, the Communist Party shamelessly tailed after the Arab High Committee. PCP militants joined the staffs of the AHC and regional leaders of the revolt. The PCP press reprinted Islamic appeals and praised the “very reasonable proposals of [Mufti] Hadj Amin al Husseini” – who so very “reasonably” called only for a “representative government” – i.e., “home rule” under the British empire, *not* independence. But as Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer noted, “the Jews were unable to accept the very principle that the fate of the country should be decided by the population inhabiting it,” since this would frustrate their plans for a Jewish state in Palestine (“The Arab Revolt of 1936,” *New Outlook*, July-August 1966).

Communists were subjected to mass arrest, brutally beaten and tortured. A Jewish woman communist was burned on the soles of her feet, then hung up naked from an iron rod for four hours and threatened with rape, but she refused to betray her comrades. At the beginning of the strike, the PCP was able to

hold a joint Arab and Hebrew labor demonstration on May 1 in Haifa. Arab boatmen managed to evacuate hundreds of Jewish families from Jaffa (*Inprecor*, 6 June 1936). Yet the PCP politically subordinated itself to the bourgeois Arab nationalists. So instead of calling for joint labor action, it called on Jewish workers to sow panic by placing bombs in Jewish workers clubs! Lacking Communist leadership, Arab rail workers only walked out for ten days, fearing that Jewish workers would take their jobs even though Arabs constituted 80 percent of the railway workforce. Jaffa port workers struck, but Arab longshoremen on the Haifa docks did not. The strike was eventually called off in October 1936, just in time for the citrus harvest, when the British Colonial Office offered to send a mission, the Peel Commission, to investigate.

No sooner had the Peel Commission turned in its report, in August 1937, than the revolt broke out again. The Commission noted that the Balfour Declaration had set the rights of Palestinian Arabs and Jews against each other, and proposed partition of the Mandate territory, with the Jewish population in an enclave on the Mediterranean coast. Arab leaders rejected partition, while the World Zionist Organization decided to bargain for a bigger slice of the country. During the 1936 strike, several thousand Arab guerrilla fighters had taken to the hills. Now there were many more, and by mid-1938 most of the non-Jewish areas – including the Old City of Jerusalem, the Galilee, Hebron, Beersheba and Gaza – were in the hands of Arab rebels. Outnumbered, the British decided to enroll the Zionist militias *en masse*. In addition to the Auxiliary Police Force set up in 1936, paramilitary field units were organized in 1937 and in 1938 the Jewish Settlement Police incorporated the mainstream Zionist underground army, the Haganah. The *yishuv* now had an armed force of 21,000 troops officially incorporated into the colonial state machinery. Meanwhile, the military apparatus of Jabotinsky’s “Revisionist” Zionists, the Itzel (or Irgun) launched a campaign of indiscriminate terror against Arabs.

After importing enough troops, the British broke the uprising militarily in late 1938. But discontent among Palestinian Arabs remained. As a result of the world capitalist economic crisis and Hitler’s coming to power in 1933, refugees swelled the Jewish population in Palestine from 175,000 to over 300,000 in three years. By 1939, the *yishuv* was almost 500,000 strong, highly militarized and economically organized as a separate unit; what began as a colonization enterprise cohered as a nation. The Arab population could clearly see that they faced a “Jewish homeland” that was dispossessing them of their lands and would soon be in a position to prevent an independent Arab Palestine, as in fact occurred in 1948. Mindful of the need for Arab allies on the eve of World War II, London promised in a 1939 White Paper to end Jewish immigration (after another hundred thousand were admitted) and to promise independence (after ten years and conditional on Jewish consent!). This sop became a dead letter after the war as a weakened British imperialism could no longer dominate the region.

The defeat of the revolt dispersed the Palestinian Arab leadership. The Mufti sought refuge in Berlin, becoming a puppet of the Nazi regime. Several hundred PCP supporters were

locked up in a concentration camp near Beersheba. Despite its pioneering work in building Arab/Hebrew workers solidarity in the mid-'20s, the PCP's zigzagging line of tailing bourgeois nationalist forces both in 1929 and 1936-39 meant that it played no independent role as a working-class vanguard. Stalin's reformist popular-front policies tied CPs around the world to "their own" bourgeoisies, and in the case of colonies to their colonial masters. In Palestine, where there were two competing nationalisms, the Stalinized Communist Party capitulated first to one, then to the other, and eventually fell apart into its national components.

Following the defeat of the Arab revolt and the consolidation of the Jewish *yishuv*, the PCP split in 1939, with a Jewish minority tailing after Zionism while the official party became increasingly Arab nationalist. Not long after the beginning of the Palestine revolt in 1936, the underground CP set up a Jewish section as regular communication between communities under conditions of martial law proved impossible. The propaganda of the two sections soon diverged in emphasis – in Hebrew

the PCP called for an end to bloodletting, and in Arabic for joining the Arab liberation movement.

After a while, the Jewish section decided to enter Zionist organizations, including the Mapai (Ben Gurion's "Labor Zionist" party), the Histadrut "unions" and even the Haganah underground army. It justified this capitulation to Zionism as doing "legal work" in "mass organizations" and "adapting the forms of struggle in the Jewish sector to the level of political maturity of the *yishuv*." The "socialist Zionists" of Hashomer Hatzair and Left Poale Zion were prettified as "the revolutionary fraction of the workers and the youth," with whom an "anti-partition front" could be made. But some Jewish comrades balked at agitating for "*aliya*" (Jewish immigration) and "security for the *yishuv*," complaining that joining the Haganah as it was shooting Arabs for British colonialism was "negative" and "immoral"! When the leadership called the Jewish section to order, its leaders simply proclaimed themselves the PCP and called their own congress.

Class Struggle by Arab and Jewish Workers During World War II

The Second World War presented a new test and a new opening for proletarian revolutionists in the Near East. Previously a largely agricultural backwater, Palestine became a key staging area in the war between the fascist Axis powers and the "democratic" colonialists. Several hundred thousand British and French troops poured into the Syria-Lebanon-Palestine region; war industry was rapidly built up. Tens of thousands of Jewish and Arab workers were employed on the railroads, in oil refineries, in metal factories and as civilian labor in the military camps. Next door in Egypt, textile, rail and oil industries were booming. The traditional Egyptian nationalist leaders were discredited by the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, while their Palestinian counterparts had been dispersed following the defeat of the 1936-39 revolt. As the region was sucked into the vortex of world politics, small communist groups were able to get a mass hearing as never before. Yet shifting from one imperialist bloc to another, having become nothing but border guards for the USSR, the by now reformist Stalinists *blocked* a fight for international socialist revolution.

The signing of the Stalin-Hitler (Molotov-Ribbentrop) pact in August 1939, on the eve of World War II, threw CPs throughout the world into confusion. The disorientation was acute coming after the Popular Front period when they dropped all pretense of class politics in order to politically bloc with the "anti-fascist" sectors of the imperialist bourgeoisies. Suddenly they were supposed to oppose the new imperialist war while apologizing for Hitler. Having received their marching orders, the Stalinists dutifully did an about-face. From proclaiming on 1 August 1939 that "International Fascism wants to occupy the Middle East and Palestine. . . all patriots will defend their homeland," the PCP executive declared only a few weeks later that the "Hitler against whom [British prime minister] Chamberlain is now fighting is no longer the same Hitler who intended to fight the Soviet Union"! As the Jewish Agency ordered Palestinian

Jews to join the British Army (almost 120,000 signed up for military service), the PCP called for "active opposition to enlistment." But the CP's "anti-imperialist" turn was only an interlude.

When Hitler's Wehrmacht launched Operation Barbarossa against the USSR on 22 June 1941, suddenly everything changed



Alex

Volunteers of Jewish Brigade of British Army parade in Tel Aviv, 1940. Stalinists, Zionists and Arab nationalists all supported British imperialists in WWII.

SUNY



Arab workers in British Army camps. Stalinists scabbed on 1943 camp workers' strike saying it hurt the "war effort."

again. Certainly every class-conscious worker was duty-bound to defend the Soviet Union – despite its bureaucratic degeneration and Stalin's betrayal of the October Revolution – against German imperialism's counterrevolutionary attack. But having definitively abandoned communist politics, Stalinists now effusively embraced "their own" bourgeoisies; colonial subjects were ordered to support their rulers. Having declared "we oppose the slogan of defending the homeland" through June 1941, by that fall the CP organ *Kol Haam* (Workers Voice) raised the slogan: "Join up *en masse* with the British Army, comrades in arms of the Red Army!" The demand for "independence for Palestine" was dropped. Under instructions from the Kremlin, the 1940 split between the PCP executive and its former Jewish section (which had opposed the call for Palestinian independence) was buried in August 1942 as a "reunited" CP went "all out for the war effort."

So here you had the spectacle of Jewish and Arab "Communists" campaigning for enlistment in the British colonial army, as did Zionists of all stripes, while Arab nationalists enrolled in British colonel Glubb's Arab Legion! The "left labor" Zionists of Hashomer Hatzair and Left Poale Zion joined with the PCP in organizing a Palestinian Committee to Help the Soviet Union, known as the V (for Victory) League. Every major political force in Palestine except for the friends of the pro-Nazi Mufti joined in supporting the British Empire. In Egypt, leading pro-Communist intellectuals (many of them Jewish) joined a "Democratic Union" which had been set up in 1939 to create an "anti-fascist" alliance. Yet the Arab masses seethed with hatred for their colonial overlords. In Cairo, thousands of Arab workers and poor were demonstrating in the streets with cries of "Come on Rommel!" Nationalists in the Egyptian Army, the core of the future "Free Officers" who rose up against King Farouk in 1952, sought contact with the pro-Nazi regime of Rashid Ali in Iraq, and the Egyptian government itself didn't declare war on Germany and Italy until February 1945.

In this explosive situation there was an opportunity for

genuine communists to intervene on the program of proletarian opposition to both imperialist camps, as the Bolsheviks stood for in the first imperialist world war. This alone was capable of revolutionizing the Arab masses, who knew well the perfidy of their British masters and would not support them even against the genocidal fascist imperialists. The potential for workers revolution was palpable. Despite the enormous difficulties posed by Zionist colonization, *repeatedly during World War II Arab and Hebrew workers joined in struggle against the colonial rulers.* This continued after the war up to the eve of the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, when the Zionists "solved" the "Arab problem" through mass expulsion of 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their native land. Meanwhile, throughout the Near East *Jewish Communists played a leading role together with Arabs, Kurds, Armenians and other minorities in building multinational Communist parties in the Arab countries.* This is the revolutionary potential that the Stalinists

sabotaged with their treacherous class collaboration, and which the Zionists would write out of history.

With World War II, the potential for joint Arab/Hebrew workers struggles grew enormously. Previously largely compartmentalized, for the first time large numbers of Arab and Hebrew workers were laboring alongside each other. The urban Arab workforce increased from roughly 40,000 to 130,000, of whom 100,000 were manual workers. As in the past, rail workers were in the forefront: "The war and immediate post-war years would witness not only an unprecedented degree of cooperation between the Arab and Jewish railway unions but also unprecedented militancy," writes the historian Zachary Lockman in *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (University of California Press, 1996). Arab and Jewish rail workers in the Haifa shops put forward joint demands in 1940, Lockman reports, and "workers' frustrations finally erupted in the form of a three-day strike of all the Haifa workshops workers in December 1942, in defiance of an official prohibition of strikes in essential industries."

A particular focus for common struggle was the British military camps, which 15,000 Jewish and 35,000 Arab workers were hired to build and maintain. As their meager wages were eaten up by wartime inflation, camp workers were rife with discontent. Moreover, the Histadrut had only weak support among the Jewish workers, most of whom were *mizrahim* (of Near Eastern origin) while the Zionist establishment was run by *ashkenazi* Jews of European descent. The Left Zionist Hashomer Hatzair and the Palestine Communist Party were both active among camp workers, as was the Arab nationalist union PAWS. Under pressure on its left, the Histadrut unilaterally called a one-day strike in early May 1943. Some thousands of Arab workers joined the Jewish strikers. The "Labor" Zionists' strike call was clearly a maneuver, but one that a revolutionary leadership would have capitalized on by

mobilizing a powerful Arab/Hebrew strike that could have cracked the hold of Ben Gurion and his lieutenants on Jewish workers. Instead, the PCP leadership under Musa *denounced* the camp workers' strike for undercutting the war effort!

In this, they were clearly following the Moscow line: the Communist Party supporters in the U.S. adamantly enforced a wartime no-strike pledge and the CP denounced striking coal miners as "treasonable" and a "pro-Nazi fifth column." The PCP was simultaneously tailing after conservative Palestinian Arab nationalists, as the Palestinian Arab Workers Society also opposed the camp workers' strike. But Jewish PCPers were under pressure from the Histadrut to support the strike. Thus the camp workers' brief strike became the pretext that again split the Palestine CP along national lines. A younger layer of Arab CPers (including Emile Habibi, Bulus Farah and Tawfik Tubi), mainly of Christian background, set up a National Liberation League (NLL), while Jewish CPers split in two: the rump PCP led by Shmuel Mikunis and Meir Wilner, and the former Jewish section, now calling itself the "Communist Educational Association," who were clearly influenced by Earl Browder's similar move to dissolve the CP in the U.S.

At the same time (May 1943), Stalin formally dissolved the Comintern, declaring that the workers' "sacred duty" was "aiding by every means the military efforts of the governments" of the "anti-Hitler coalition" – i.e., forming a "holy" union with the "democratic" imperialists. In Palestine, both sides in the split of the PCP draped themselves in their respective national colors. The young Arab intellectuals published a leaflet declaring: "The Palestine Communist Party is an Arab national party which includes in its ranks Jews who accept its national program.... The dissolution of the Comintern and the expulsion from the party's ranks of the Zionist locals will lead to a reinforcement of the party and will facilitate its struggle for the liberation of our Palestinian fatherland." The formation of the NLL reflected the Stalinists' tactic in various colonial countries during World War II of rebaptising themselves as national liberation fronts – for example, the Viet Minh (League for the Independence of Vietnam).

In response, Jewish party leaders under Mikunis published a manifesto that, after ritually declaring the PCP to be an "internationalist, Arab and Jewish party," proclaimed that it

fought "for the vital interests of the masses of the *yishuv*" (the Zionist-controlled Jewish quasi-state). This was the Zionist foot in the door. By mid-1944 the PCP was asking to be admitted to the Histadrut. A year later, at a congress in September 1945, the party declared: "The PCP supports the establishment of the Jewish national home in Eretz Israel." The Stalinists now claimed to be for a "bi-national" state. But like the Hashomer Hatzair and other "Labor left" Zionists who also called for a federation of Jewish and Palestinian Arab national communities, they fell into line when the Zionist bourgeoisie cracked the whip. Following the November 1947 vote of the United Nations for the partition of Palestine, supported by the Soviet Union, the PCP renamed itself the Communist Party of Eretz Israel (Makei), adopting the Zionist name for Palestine. (This was later changed to Maki, taking out the "eretz" to make it look less blatantly Zionist.)

The class-collaborationist politics of Stalinism, expressed in the anti-Marxist slogan of "socialism in one country," led to the demise of the Communist International and the splitting apart of the Palestinian CP along national lines, as each segment tailed after the nationalist chauvinism of "its own" bourgeoisie while sabotaging common Arab/Hebrew labor struggle which had the potential for breaking the Zionists' stranglehold over Jewish workers. To realize this potential required an internationalist Bolshevik-Leninist leadership.

The dissolution of the Comintern and the course of Stalinism in Palestine confirmed what Trotsky had predicted in 1929, when he wrote in his critique of Stalin's nationalist dogma:

"The new doctrine proclaims that socialism can be built on the basis of a national state *if only there is no intervention*. From this there can and must follow (notwithstanding all pompous declarations in the draft program) a collaborationist policy toward the foreign bourgeoisie with the object of averting intervention....

The task of the parties in the Comintern assumes, therefore, an auxiliary character; their mission is to protect the USSR from intervention and not to fight for the conquest of power."

Trotsky added prophetically, "then the International is partly a subsidiary and partly a decorative institution, the Congress of which can be convoked once every four years, once every ten years, or perhaps not at all" (Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*).

Post-War Workers Upsurge

The Second World War brought matters to a head. There *was* foreign intervention, in the form of the June 1941 German invasion of the USSR, which together with Stalin's sabotage of the Red Army (liquidating its generals, refusing to prepare for the German attack and then blocking resistance in the first days of the invasion) almost destroyed the Soviet Union in 1941-42. The program of internationalist communism was junked and hundreds of thousands of Communists were "liquidated" (murdered), while Stalin revived tsarist symbols. Yet the Soviet peoples held out despite staggering losses (27 million dead) and the Red Army turned the tide of battle at Kursk (1943). In the West, the masses of workers fighting against the brutal fascist occupation forces

gravitated to the Communist parties. Although the CPs waged the Resistance under the banner of bourgeois nationalism, the imperialists saw their growing strength as a mortal threat.

As World War II drew to a close, the victories of the Soviet Army brought prestige to Stalinist parties around the world, including in Palestine. Jews saw the Soviet Union as the one country that gave refuge to those fleeing the Nazi genocide. Militant sectors of the Arab working class coalesced around the Communist-led National Liberation League. Meanwhile, layoffs were looming as war industry wound down, threatening both Arab and Jewish workers with postwar unemployment. This led

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Egypt: Stalinism Against Arab Workers' Struggles

In Egypt, with by far the biggest population and largest economy in the Near East, the World War II years saw a rapid industrialization. The uniforms of the British Army were woven and stitched in Egyptian textile and apparel factories, where Communist influence was growing rapidly. The original Egyptian Communist Party had been crushed by repression following the bloody defeat of the 1924 Alexandria general strike. In the mid-1930s, a group of mainly foreign intellectuals set up an anti-fascist organization; among them were three Egyptian Jews, Ahmad Sadiq Sa'd, Raymond Douek and Yusuf Darwish. By the early '40s, this trio had recruited two Egyptian workers, Yusuf al-Mudarrik and Mahmud al-'Askari, and formed the "New Dawn" group named after their magazine. Al-'Askari was the leader of the textile workers union in the Cairo industrial area of Shubra al-Khayma, which had developed a syndicalist working-class radicalism in opposition to the bourgeois-nationalist Wafd. In 1942-43 a number of Cairo-area unions joined the New Dawn circle, which held clandestine Marxist study sessions for worker cadres (Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* [Princeton University Press, 1987]).

The war years were a period of great ferment with numerous leftist grouplets springing up including the Marxist League, Citadel, Iskra, People's Liberation, Red Star and the Communist Party of the People of the Nile Valley (a group of tax agency employees!). The largest of these groups was the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation, formed in January 1943 by Henri Curiel along with a group of Egyptian air force mechanics led by Sayyid Sulayman Rifa'i. Da'ud Nahum, leader of a commercial workers union, later joined and in 1947 the EMNL coalesced with the Iskra group of Hillel Schwartz and People's Liberation led by Marcel Israel. (Curiel, Nahum, Schwartz and Israel were all Egyptian Jews.) A vivid but uncritical account of this period is given by Gilles Perrault in his book, *A Man Apart: The Life of Henri Curiel* (Zed Books, 1987). New Dawn originally focused on working-class organizing, while the "national-liberationist" EMNL put out more Marxist propaganda. Both circles were winning labor support, including tramway, steamboat, water works and oil refinery workers, pharmaceutical warehousemen and others.

At the end of WWII, war production ground to a halt and layoffs spread. Fearing a workers upheaval, the Egyptian royal government resorted to repression. In December 1945, troops and police occupied the Shubra al-Khayma textile district. When the workers struck in protest against the military and layoffs, union leaders were jailed, the union was dissolved and 600 strikers were arrested. Simultaneously, the British asked to renegotiate the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty on the basis of maintaining the military "alliance." Cairo students called a demonstration on 9 February 1946 demanding full independence and evacuation of the British troops. Police stopped them on a bridge over the Nile, killing several. A National Committee of Workers and Students (NCWS) was then formed which called a general strike for February 21. On that day a crowd of up

to 100,000 gathered in the capital, including 15,000 workers from Shubra. British armored vehicles fired point blank on the crowd, killing 23 demonstrators. When another general strike was called for March 4 as a memorial to the martyrs, a clash in Alexandria between a crowd and British troops left 28 protesters dead and hundreds wounded.

The Egyptian capital and the Nile Delta were seething. The palace brought in a hard-line prime minister. Shubra textile workers went on strike again in May. Two national union federations, both led by Stalinist factions, announced their merger, putting immediate British withdrawal at the top of their demands. A second general strike called for June 25 failed, due to sabotage by unions led by the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood. This set the stage for a crackdown in July 1946, as the government picked up hundreds of leftist, labor and student leaders, accusing them of spreading communism "especially among our quiet and gentle working classes." Headlines denounced the "Jewish Communist Millionaire" Curiel (his father was an estate owner). But while the repression took its toll, it did not end working-class unrest.

"From January 1945 to December 1946, two hundred and twenty-six strikes were recorded in Shubra," writes Gilles Perrault. "Shubra was the revolutionary centre from which poured in February 1946 the squads of workers who went to the aid of Cairo's students. The Egyptian working class had their eyes glued to it." Perrault talks of the formation of "factory councils, modelled on the Russian soviets." Yet despite the revolutionary ferment and insurgency against a corrupt monarchy propped up by the hated British Army, this did not lead to insurrection, nor was a proletarian communist party forged in the tumultuous working-class struggles. Why? Repression is not a sufficient answer: the reason is political. The ostensibly communist groups were bound hand and foot by their Stalinist program to the nationalist bourgeoisie, so much so that *they never even openly proclaimed themselves communist*. Politically they were a "left" tail on the Wafd.

By 1945, New Dawn had formed a Workers Committee for National Liberation (WCNL), which called for "liberation of the popular classes" from "the yoke of imperialism and the oppression of internal exploitation." The EMNL, in turn, advocated a broad front of the workers with other "patriotic classes," including the "national bourgeoisie." In the unions they led, the WCNL and EMNL presented a minimum program for immediate evacuation of the British, 40-hour workweek, freeing workers jailed for union activities, etc. They did not fight on a class program but on a national and bourgeois-democratic platform. At different points, both the WCNL and EMNL led the textile workers, but neither called for expropriation of the weaving and spinning mills, many of which were property of the Egyptian-owned Misr Bank. That would be attacking the "national bourgeoisie," supposedly their ally according to the Stalinist-reformist scheme of "two-stage revolution."

Thus the militancy of the leftist-led Egyptian workers movement, which held such promise at the end of World War

II, dissipated and its would-be communist leaders were sacrificed on the altar of Arab nationalism. Following the jailing of leftist leaders in 1946, the masses were prey to bourgeois-nationalist forces ranging from the Wafd to the rightist Muslim Brotherhood. The pro-Stalinist Egyptian groups amalgamated into a Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL) in early 1947. With the breakdown of negotiations with the Labour Party government in London for British withdrawal, worker protests flared up anew. A strike wave centered on spinning and weaving mills in the Cairo district of Mahalla al-Kubra lasted from September 1947 right up until the government declared war on Israel on 15 May 1948.

Following Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko's May 1947 UN speech accepting partition of Palestine, the DMNL dutifully came out in support of the Zionist state-to-be. As clashes between Zionist and Arab militias in Palestine escalated in early 1948, the Egyptian Communists devoted their paper, *al-Jamahir* (The Masses), to opposing the impending war and calling for a "united front against imperialism." Jewish members distributed the paper on the streets of Cairo without problems. "The people didn't want the war and they saw no need for it," commented a DMNL leader. Like the other British-allied Arab bourgeois states, the reactionary Egyptian regime dispatched its army to put up a show of "anti-Zionism" while participating in the carve-up of the Palestinian Arab people.

When King Farouk sent the Egyptian Army in a disastrous expedition against Israel on May 15, his main aim was to provide the pretext for crushing the labor upsurge. On May 13, martial law was declared and workers' struggles stopped cold. More than 100 Communists were arrested and thrown into a concentration camp at Huckstep (a former U.S. air base left over from WWII) along with Zionist Jews, Wafdists and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood – some 3,000 in all. Police repression, far worse than in 1946, kept the lid on for a time. The regime also used anti-Semitism against the heavily Jewish Egyptian Communists, accusing them of being enemy agents, and stoked the fires of xenophobia. But once again, repression was not decisive.

Following every twist and turn of Moscow's foreign policy, the Kremlin's loyal Egyptian supporters had successively called for anti-fascist unity (1935-39), opposition to the imperialist war (1939-41), support for the anti-Nazi coalition (1941-45), opposition to Zionism (1945-46) and support for the founding of the Zionist state (1947-48). By this point, their heads were spinning and their numbers dwindling. The Egyptian Stalinists opposed Farouk's military intervention and courageously faced the ensuing repression, but their followers, having been fed nothing but a steady diet of nationalism, deserted them in droves. When the Wafd came back into office in 1950, the Stalinists formed a "National Front" with the bourgeois nationalists, sending letters from the concentration camps calling for a vote for the Wafd.

Soon the impoverished masses were back in the streets of Cairo railing against the corrupt monarchy and its "moderate nationalist" Wafd front men. Had the Egyptian leftists sought to build internationalist socialist consciousness among the working masses they led, then once the period of repression

and war hysteria had passed, cadres steeled in the struggle could have led a proletarian mobilization against the tottering semicolonial puppet regime. Instead the ensuing plebeian upheaval was dominated by nationalist politics which opened the door for the disgruntled "Free Officers" under General Naguib and Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser to seize power in 1952. Thereupon, even though the DMNL praised the Revolutionary Command Council (which included a number of their longstanding military contacts), some 250 Communists were locked up once more, particularly the worker cadres, and more than two dozen Jews among them were deported.

The book *Class Conflict in Egypt, 1945-1970* (Monthly Review Press, 1973) by Mahmoud Hussein, though written from a Mao-Stalinist, nationalist perspective, accurately observed of the Egyptian Communists:

"During the periods of patriotic upsurge, which generally occurred under a Wafdist government, they would engage in public activity among the students and the workers – with meetings, demonstrations, the organizing of trade unions into local patriotic committees, and participation in the electoral campaign which brought the Wafd to power in 1950. Such action was never associated with the initiative of the revolutionary masses or its most radical and advanced elements but rather was limited to the level of the vaguest popular aspirations, not yet liberated from the framework of bourgeois reformist ideology.... "They knew that a Wafdist government afforded them much more leeway than any other government. Since their political outlook was determined, not by the requirements of the revolutionary mass movement, but by their possibilities for maneuver within the structure established by the chief contending political forces, the Communists remained permanently imprisoned within this structure."

When the Egyptian Stalinists themselves sought to explain their failure to capitalize on the postwar labor upsurge, they did so in nationalist terms, many of them pointing to the large numbers of Jews among their leaders and ranks. As the DMNL splintered, one group calling itself the Communist Party of Egypt, led by former Parisian students Fuad Mursi and Ismail Sabri Abdallah, banned Jews and women from its membership. (Mursi and Abdallah went on to become ministers in Nasser's government.) In 1952, the French Communist Party implicated Henri Curiel in the "Marty affair," accusing Curiel (who had been expelled to France) of contact with a Trotskyist and Zionist sympathies. This came at the time of the frame-up trial of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia and after that of Laszlo Rajk in Hungary – both Communists of Jewish origin accused of "Titoist-Trotskyist tendencies" and having Zionist contacts. Simultaneously there was the trial of Jewish doctors in Moscow accused of plotting to kill Stalin.

As the Stalinists in Egypt and internationally devoured their own in an orgy of anti-Semitism, spurred on by local nationalists and Western intelligence agencies, the fundamental fact is inescapable: *what determined the defeat of the potentially revolutionary postwar Egyptian worker unrest was the Stalinists' own nationalist class collaboration.* ■

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to an upsurge of labor militancy in Palestine and elsewhere in the Near East. Although this was generally led by Stalinists, the considerable presence of national and ethnic/religious minorities in the leadership of the emerging CPs in the Arab countries showed the potential for international socialist revolution. This was a mortal threat to the Arab and Zionist nationalists, to the imperialists...and to the Stalinists, who sabotaged this potential with their nationalist, anti-communist politics.

In **Egypt**, an explosive upsurge of labor struggles swept through the Nile Delta. In Cairo, insurgent workers united with students in a 1946 general strike, demanding the British evacuate the country (see "Egypt: Stalinism Sabotages Workers' Struggles," page 50). In **Iraq**, protests against the puppet government over the continued presence of British military bases led to a full-fledged revolt in 1948.

In **Palestine**, things were also boiling. Most histories, written by the victors, focus on the triumphant Zionists, culminating in the founding of the state of Israel in May 1948. But they were not the only force present, nor was the Jewish population totally under their thumb. Zachary Lockman notes that "in the final three years of British rule in Palestine the railway and postal workers would play a leading role in mobilizing other Arab and Jewish workers across communal boundaries in defense of their common economic interests" (*Comrades and Enemies*). Unfortunately, there was no revolutionary workers party that could mobilize Arab and Jewish workers in defense of their broader class interests, both political and economic. Instead, the several fragments of the Palestine Communist Party capitulated to Arab and Zionist nationalists. The Zionists were a formidable foe, with strong positions in Palestine and considerable influence in key imperialist centers. But it was the Stalinists' reformist-nationalist political line that blocked the most advanced Palestinian workers, Arab and Hebrew, from joining with their class brothers and sisters elsewhere in the Near East in common struggle against the imperialists.

Almost immediately after the end of the war, unrest broke out in the British military camps where over 30,000 workers faced layoffs. Since Britain continued to maintain a quarter million troops in Palestine, the camps were not about to be shut down. As in 1943, the conservative Arab nationalist union PAWS led by Sami Taha initially boycotted the struggle, but in August 1945 a Communist-led Arab Workers Congress (AWC) was formed by supporters of the National Liberation League (Arab former members of the PCP). The NLL fused its own union league in Haifa with the Jaffa, Jerusalem and Gaza branches of the PAWS, which they had won away from Taha. The next month, the AWC and the Histadrut led a seven-day strike at a camp on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Lockman reports that Arab and Jewish workers set up joint pickets at the camp gates and marched through the streets of Tel Aviv chanting slogans (in Arabic and Hebrew) including, "Long live unity between Arab and Jewish workers" and "Arab and Jewish workers are brothers." The Hebrew-language daily *Ha'aretz* reported:

"Masses of people crowded both sides of the streets to watch this extraordinary sight of Jewish and Arab workers marching through the heart of Tel Aviv."



הפגנה של הפועלים היהודים והערבים השובתים בתל אביב

אתמול בשעות הבוקר התגייסו כאלפי פועלים יהודים וערבים וצענו במרכז המלאכה של הצבא במגרשי התעריף כדי להביא למימוש שבתם לאחר ש"הנהלה סירבה להכיר בארגונם ולהחזיר את הפועלים המשוחררים. השובתים ליד שטחי התערוכה והמתדרות שודרו שורות, לאחר שהשמיעו קריאות מחאה נגד הנהלת המפעל המתנשטת בארץ. נאמו להפגנה יחד רחוב בריהוטא והידיהם שילטו עם תחבורת שונת. ההפגנה התקיימה לאחת ולפני הצנזרים נשמעו קריאות בקריאת ובצעדיה: "תחיי אחרות קרועל התחיי הערבי", "הטועל העברי והטועל הערבי אחים", "תחיי המלחמה המשנתפת והצודקת של טועלי התעריף", "תחיי ההסתדרות העברית וההסתדרות הערבית".

עם התקדמות ההפגנה לאורך רחוב בן יהודה לעבר אילני המוסטו נשמעו קברי החתובות והמוני אדם לצאת מבנות הבליז רגיל הוה של פועלים יהודים וערבים צועד דים בסך בתל אביב. הפגנתם התקיימה על ידי תועה הטועל של המתדרות העובדים. משם המשיכו עם רחוב מקתן ישראל, לעבר "בית הור" מקום הנחלת

במדר המלאכה. משלחת של טועלים התייבה לפגו אחד הקצינים של הכפרו. הקצין סטר לזכרי המשלחת. כי מנהל הפועלים המאיר יאנג נסע למנישה עם המכונה עליו ומוכן לחזור השובה בשעות אחר הצהריים. הפגנתים נשארו במקום, לחכות לשובו של המאיר יאנג.

שבתות פועלי מרחם ערביים בירושלים

בי"ט טועלי מחס ערבים בירושלים הכריזו אתמול שבתם בררסם המכת תנאי עבודתם. הם הפסיקו את העבודת בי"ט מקומות. בין דרישותיהם: 8 שעות עבודה, תרמת שכר העבודה, חופש שנתה וחופש תמים וחופש מחלה. הם מיטקסו מאה מה לקת העבודה המשלתית להתקרב לטבתם אולם בשטחם לא תמלאת. משמרת של השובתים נצבר ליד מקומות העבודה.

תערוכת הספר העברי בתל אביב

1500 סטר שיצאו בי"ט. הקונאות ספ" רים תלקס 35000 ספרים עבריים שיצאו בארץ בי"ט השנים האחרונות) והצגו את מול לראוה בתערוכת הספר העברי בתל אביב שאורגנה ע"י אגודת הספרים ומח"ל למת התרבות של הור"ו הצללוה. השוח

Ha'aretz, 25 September 1945 Demonstration of Striking Jewish and Arab Workers in Tel Aviv

[Excerpt]

Yesterday morning, approximately 1,300 Jewish and Arab laborers who worked in various military camps in the Convention Fields in Tel Aviv announced a strike after management refused to acknowledge their organization and reinstate their fired colleagues.

At 7:30 a.m. all the workers gathered in front of the convention gates and formed up in rows. After sounding protest calls against the factory management for trying to dismiss their organization, they marched through Ben-Yehuda Street, with signs in their hands with different slogans. The march continued slowly with the protesters shouting in Arabic and Hebrew: "Long live unity between Jewish and Arab workers," "Jewish and Arab workers are brothers," "Long live the just common struggle of the camp workers" and "Long live the Jewish and Arab organizations."

In April 1946, the Histadrut and AWC launched a country-wide strike of Socony Vacuum oil company workers that lasted 12 days, overcoming the PAWS' attempt to undercut the walkout. At the same moment, postal, telephone and telegraph workers staged a walkout which quickly turned into a de facto general strike of government employees. It was begun by Arab and Jewish workers in the Tel Aviv post office on April 9, whose militancy was infectious. The next day postal workers throughout Palestine were on strike. The government quickly made concessions, and the Histadrut tried to call off the walkout. But the workers overwhelmingly voted down the management offer and continued the strike. On April 14, Arab and Jewish railway workers also went out, paralyzing the country's rail system. Soon thousands of government office employees (mainly Arabs), who had held several short protest strikes the year before, stopped work, along with the public works department and port workers. By mid-April, 23,000 government employees were on strike and it looked like other sectors might join in.

A joint leaflet of the NLL and PCP called on refinery workers, military base workers and municipal workers to join the general strike against the imperialist government. But both the Histadrut and PAWS – that is, Zionist and Arab nationalists – opposed expansion of the strike. The former worried that it could hurt their campaign to get the British to allow more Jewish immigration, the latter were under pressure from the Jerusalem Mufti not to go too far in cooperating with Jews. By the end of the month the workers had gone back after winning many of their demands, including wage increases and cost-of-living allowances. The right-wing Hebrew daily *Ma'ariv* denounced the strike as detrimental to the Zionist cause; the conservative Arab nationalist *Filastin* criticized the PAWS for collaboration with the Zionists. For its part, the left-labor Zionist Hashomer Hatzair said it showed the potential for Arab/Jewish cooperation, and the NLL/PCP declared the strike “a blow against the ‘divide

and rule’ policy of imperialism, a slap in the face of those who hold chauvinist ideologies and propagate national division.”

That it was, but a single blow could not cripple imperialism and this “slap in the face” would not defeat the chauvinists. Still, common strike action continued. In January 1947, the AWC and a left-wing-led Jewish workers committee sparked a strike of hundreds of employees of the Haifa refinery. That March, some 1,600 workers of the Iraq Petroleum Company led by the AWC struck, despite sabotage by the PAWS. A Palestine-wide one-day strike of 40,000 military camp workers went off without a hitch. Arab camp workers wanted to call an unlimited strike, but they were blocked by the Histadrut executive which, as one official put it, “feared a strike of the Jewish and Arab workers, a strike which would be anti-Jewish in its political and security character” – in other words, it would be a threat to the Zionists. Alarmed, the British settled before the strike date.

1948: The Year of the *Naqba* (Catastrophe)

Common Arab/Hebrew workers struggles were a mortal threat to the Zionists, and as the battle over Palestine heated up, the chauvinists staged a bloody provocation in order to bury working-class solidarity in a flood of nationalist hysteria. During 1946-47, the underground Jewish military forces began a drive for partition. The Haganah, linked to the Histadrut and the official “Labor” Zionist leadership of the *yishuv*, concentrated mainly on building up a regular military force with troops who had been part of the Jewish Brigade of the British Army and arms that had been pilfered by Jewish workers from the British military camps. The military arm of the right-wing “Revisionist” Zionists, the Irgun (Itzel), engaged in escalating terrorist attacks, such as the July 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem that killed a number of British military staff officers. At the local level, in mixed cities the Zionists were pushing for separation of Arabs and Jews. The Arab leadership under the Mufti, in turn, called for a boycott of Jewish businesses. As tensions increased there were almost daily intercommunal clashes in the mixed towns.

While the Zionist leaders bitterly opposed common Arab/Jewish union organization as a threat to their program of “conquest of labor,” the bourgeois Arab nationalists were also threatened by intercommunal workers unity. Although the Histadrut always portrayed the leader of the PAWS, Sami Taha, as an obedient agent of the Mufti Husseini, the joint strikes by Arab and Jewish workers in 1946-47 led Husseini loyalists in the Arab High Committee to denounce Taha. When a PAWS conference made a vague reference to “socialism” as its goal, declaring that “Arab Jews are our fellow citizens and brothers in nationality,” and the PAWS leader began talking of creating an Arab labor party, the Husseiniites decided to eliminate him. In September 1947 Taha was assassinated outside his home in Haifa.

At the end of November 1947 the United Nations voted for a partition of Palestine, awarding the Jewish *yishuv* 55 percent of the territory although Jews constituted only one-third of the population, living mainly in the cities, and occupied only 6

percent of the land. This produced a wave of outrage among the Arab population. An Arab general strike and riots broke out in Jerusalem. The Irgun launched a series of “retaliatory” terror attacks indiscriminately targeting the Arab civil population. The Haganah also carried out unprovoked “counterattacks,” for example against the Ramallah bus station and the village of Khisas in the Galilee (in which a dozen villagers were killed). On December 29, the Irgun staged a bomb attack in Jerusalem’s Old City that killed or wounded 44 people. The next morning, Irgun terrorists threw bombs from a car into a crowd of hundreds of Arabs standing outside the main gate of the Haifa oil refinery seeking jobs as day laborers; six were killed and scores wounded. Minutes later, enraged Arabs from the crowd charged into the refinery and together with some refinery workers began attacking Jews; by the time police and troops arrived, 41 Jewish workers had been killed and 49 wounded.

But Arab/Hebrew workers solidarity didn’t simply go up in flames amid the murderous intercommunal hysteria. As news of the bomb attack on the Arab workers outside the refinery reached the nearby Palestine Railways workshops, Arab unionists risked their lives to defend Jewish co-workers. The shop chairman of the Jewish workers rail union, a supporter of Hashomer Hatzair, wrote in a report that “we have seen with our own eyes” how the AWC and PAWS activists and leaders “are standing the test today against a furious and incited mob and even endangering themselves.” As frenzied rage threatened to produce a bloodbath, he reported how “many of the veteran [Arab] workers made immense efforts to prevent the outbreak of violence. Without a shadow of a doubt we must acknowledge gratefully that it was their great courage that saved us from the fate of the refinery workers on that day” (quoted in Deborah Bernstein, *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine* [State University of New York Press, 2000]).

The hideous massacre at the Haifa refinery was the largest and most brutal massacre of civilians in Palestine up to that point. A committee of inquiry appointed by the Jewish com-

munity of Haifa concluded the killings of the Jewish workers were unpremeditated and had been precipitated by the Irgun attack. The Jewish Agency called the Irgun bombing an “act of madness,” *but secretly authorized retaliation*. The next day, the Palmach (the elite military strike force dominated by *left-wing* “Labor” Zionists) assaulted the village of Balad al-Shaikh near Haifa where a number of Arab refinery workers lived, killing 60 men, women and children in cold blood and destroying dozens of houses. The intended effect of this slaughter was to drive Jews and Arabs apart. The initial Irgun provocation and the “Labor” Zionist “retaliation” were aimed at a key workplace known for joint Arab/Jewish workers struggles: many of the Jewish workers at the refinery were members of the leftist Hashomer Hatzair who had shown solidarity with Arab co-workers; many of the Arab workers supported the AWC led by the Communist NLL. *For Israel to be born, such Arab/Hebrew workers solidarity had to be destroyed.*

And it was, through terrorizing and wholesale expulsion of the Arab population. Under the impact of the Haganah attacks, by late January 1948, some 20,000 Arabs had fled from Haifa. In April, the Haganah launched “Operation Scissors” in Haifa, part of the Zionists’ “Plan D” (or Plan Dalet), which called for expulsion of the Arabs from mixed districts and various all-Arab neighborhoods. Following the Zionist conquest of Haifa on April 21-22, the vast majority of the remaining 50,000 Arabs fled the city. Elsewhere, reports Lockman:

“AWC activists helped organize local self-defense units in Jaffa and Gaza to protect poor urban neighborhoods, but these were swept away in the chaos that was engulfing Arab Palestine. With their leaders and activists dispersed and much of their mass base transformed into refugees, the NLL and the AWC largely ceased to function. . . . The new Arab left which had emerged in Palestine during the war and which had contributed so much to the development of the Arab trade union movement was thus swamped by the rising tide of intercommunal tension.”

—*Comrades and Enemies*

Even as they prepared to pull out of Palestine, the British imperialists did their bit to crush Arab Communists by banning the NLL/AWC paper, *al-Ittihad*. As war broke out between Israel and the Arab states in May 1948, Palestinian Communists from Hebron, Gaza and other parts of the former British mandate now controlled by the Arab armies were locked up in the Egyptian village of Abu Ageila. When the Zionist forces seized the village, they simply transferred the PCP militants from an Egyptian to an Israeli concentration camp where they were still in jail a year later (S. Munier, “Zionism and the Middle East: The Aftermath of the Jewish-Arab War,” *Fourth International*, October 1949). At the same time, Egyptian Communists (many of them Jewish) were held in another concentration camp in the Sinai desert. And in Iraq, the entire leadership of the Communist Party was executed. The bourgeois regimes of the Near East, Zionist and Arab alike, carved up the Palestinian people and repressed the Communists.

For Palestinian Arabs, 1948 was the year of *Al-Naqba* (The Disaster). Even historians and sociologists not totally blinded by Zionist myth, who have documented the numerous examples of Arab/Hebrew workers solidarity in Mandate Palestine, see the outcome as an unstoppable “descent into mad-

ness” (Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*). Deborah Bernstein categorically declares, “Class interests could not and did not transcend national interests” (*Constructing Boundaries*). Did not, yes; “could not” is another matter. Looking only at tiny Palestine in the fateful year 1948, the relentless Zionist build-up with its powerful imperialist backers overpowered Palestinian Arab resistance and those sectors where workers’ struggles transcended communal boundaries. But Palestine is not some isolated region at the end of the world; on the contrary, it is located at the center of a region that has been a flashpoint of imperialist conflict. At no time was this more evident than in the period 1945-48.

The roiling strike struggles just across the Suez Canal in Egypt and the revolt by workers and students in Iraq which took place simultaneously with the Zionist drive to establish their state could have intersected the Arab/Hebrew workers’ struggles in Palestine. But their revolutionary potential was decisively *blocked* by the Stalinists’ tailing after the competing nationalisms. Carrying out their class-collaborationist programs, the Iraqi CP *opposed* a fight for socialist revolution or even a republic, while the Egyptian Communists *opposed* demands for expropriation of the textile plants. Then, following the dictates from Moscow, they all *supported* the establishment of Israel.

In Palestine, Lockman writes:

“The vision of Arab-Jewish worker solidarity and of peaceful coexistence which had once motivated so many people could not survive the atrocities and the mutual dehumanization which were the inevitable by-products of the ferocious intercommunal warfare which engulfed Palestine in the months that followed. Even less could it survive the actual physical displacement of much of Palestine’s Arab population.”

In fact, “peaceful coexistence” of these two nations and nationalisms under capitalist rule in the crowded space of Palestine was no more possible than Stalin’s pipedream of “peaceful coexistence” of the Soviet Union with the imperialists. For there to be any kind of harmonious development benefiting both the Arab and Hebrew peoples of Israel-Palestine, it was and is necessary to tear down the communal boundaries and defeat the competing bourgeois nationalists. The Zionist state of Israel cannot peacefully coexist even with a Palestinian capitalist pseudo-state, which can be nothing but a jail for the Arab population.

An equitable resolution to the competing rights of national self-determination is only possible under Arab/Hebrew workers rule as part of a broader socialist federation of the Near East. Although they were in no position to challenge the Stalinists of the Palestine Communist Party and National Liberation League, a tiny group of Palestinian Trotskyists had been active during and following World War II and called for an internationalist fight against the Zionist takeover. A resolution of the Revolutionary Communist League of Palestine stated on the eve of the proclamation of the state of Israel:

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

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

The resolution denounced the Stalinists’ embrace of Jewish and Arab nationalism:

“Instead of being the vanguard of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab and Jewish masses, the Palestine Communist Party became the ‘Communist’ tail of the ‘left’ Zionists... The Arab Stalinists, the ‘National Liberation League,’ did not fare any better than their Jewish counterparts. They were in a pretty fix having to justify the Russian support of the Jewish state. The Arab workers could not be expected to accept this line.”

And the RCL resolution correctly called for revolutionary defeatism on both sides of the 1948 war between the Arab bourgeois states and Zionist Israel:

“This war can on neither side be said to bear a progressive character.... *It weakens the proletariat and strengthens imperialism in both camps....*

“Therefore, we say to the Palestinian people in reply to the patriotic warmongers: *Make this war between Jews and Arabs, which serves the end of imperialism, the common war of both nations against imperialism.*”

The Palestinian Trotskyists’ resolution called for Arab/Hebrew workers unity:

“In this spirit we say to the Jewish and Arab workers: The enemy is in your *own* camp!

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

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

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

But what the resolution did not make explicit was a call for basing the struggle by Jewish and Arab workers against imperialism on a program for socialist revolution. This is key, for so long as the struggle is posed in purely bourgeois-democratic terms, the rights of two nations in the same territory are counterposed. They cannot be reconciled under capitalism, which inevitably fosters national oppression. Who will control the water, the oil wealth, the fertile agricultural lands, the lines of communication and access to the sea? Who gets the jobs? For now it is the Zionists. Ultimately, such conflicts can only be equitably resolved on the basis of a planned collectivized economy, the result of international socialist revolution.

Is such a program viable in a region so poisoned by national hatreds, assiduously fostered by the bourgeois nationalist rulers? The history of Arab and Jewish workers’ struggles in Mandate Palestine and the Communist parties in the Arab world built by cadres of diverse national, ethnic and religious origins shows that the elements were there to break the nationalist stranglehold. But not in isolation. Had there been workers revolutions in postwar Europe, the events of 1948 in Egypt, Iraq and Palestine could have had a very different outcome.

In Italy, workers led by the Communist Party practically took over the northern half of the country as they brought down Mussolini’s fascist regime. The French Communist Party was in a position to take hold of Paris. The Greek Communists led guerrilla struggles both during and after the war. But on Stalin’s orders these countries were assigned to the Western imperialists’ “sphere of interest.”

In West Europe the Stalinists dutifully handed over their weapons to the victorious imperialist Allies, while their Near Eastern comrades pushed nationalism instead of communism. The victory of the Zionist butchers in Israel was made possible not just by the 1947 Soviet vote for partition in the UN and the Czech guns supplied by the Stalinists which arrived in March 1948 (and were immediately used against Arab villagers in Palestine), but more fundamentally by the Stalinists’ anti-communist, nationalist program of “socialism in one country,” the antithesis of the Bolsheviks’ battle cry for world socialist revolution. Today the perspective of Arab/Hebrew workers revolution is the only way to avoid a bloody descent into barbarism in the Near East. The key is revolutionary political leadership. The history of Palestinian and Near Eastern workers struggles – which Stalinists, Zionists and Arab nationalists would all like to keep buried – underscores the urgent need to forge genuinely Bolshevik parties in the region as part of a reforged Trotskyist Fourth International. This is what the League for the Fourth International fights for today. ■

Glossary

effendis: Arab notables and officials

fellahin: Arab peasants

Haganah: Zionist armed force in Palestine controlled by Ben Gurion’s “Labor” Zionists; core of future Israeli army.

Hashomer Hatzair: kibbutz movement of “left Labor” Zionists, originally for “bi-national” federated state, eventually supported founding of Israel.

Histadrut: Zionist organization which poses as trade union; includes “labor” sector as well as being owner of numerous capitalist companies.

Irgun/Itzel: militia of “Revisionist” Zionists founded by Jabotinsky; carried out numerous anti-Arab massacres.

Left Poale Zion: party originating in Russia calling for “proletarian Zionism”; supported founding of Israel.

Palmach: Zionist military strike force controlled by “left Labor” Zionists; responsible for some of the worst anti-Arab massacres.

yishuv: Jewish community in Palestine

Next Issue

- **Deir Yassin and Lydda: How Zionists Expelled Palestinian Arabs in 1948**
- **Trotskyists vs. Shachtman on Israel and 1948 War**
- **Why Was 1948 Iraq Revolt Defeated?**

Defend Palestinian People...

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the early Communist International. A two-part article on the "Birth of the Zionist State: A Marxist Analysis" published in 1973-74 stated:

"When national populations are geographically interpenetrated, as they were in Palestine, an independent nation-state can be created only by their forcible separation (forced population transfers, etc.). Thus the democratic right of self-determination becomes abstract, as it can be exercised only by the stronger national grouping driving out or destroying the weaker one.

"In such cases the only possibility of a democratic solution lies in a social transformation.... Under capitalism the right to self-determination in such a context is strictly *negative*: that is, against the abuses of national rights of either the Arabs or the Hebrew-speaking population. Thus, had there been an independent armed force of the Palestinian Arabs in the 1948 war, Marxists could have given it military support in the struggle against the expansion of the exclusionist Zionist state and the onslaught of the Arab League armies, which together suppressed the national existence of the Palestinian Arabs. Likewise, had there been an irredentist onslaught of the Arab states which threatened the survival of the Hebrew nation in Palestine, Marxists would have taken a position of revolutionary defensism of the survival of that nation."

Following an extensive discussion the SL issued a motion beginning:

"The democratic issue of self-determination for each of two nationalities or peoples who geographically interpenetrate can only conceivably be resolved equitably within the framework of the proletariat in power."

—*Workers Vanguard* No. 45, 24 May 1974

For three decades, the SL/ICL represented the continuity of Trotskyism internationally. But following the counterrevolutionary victories in East Europe, centrally East Germany and the Soviet Union, a defeatist program came forward in the organization. This led to the expulsions of long-time Spartacist cadres in several countries who formed the Internationalist Group and joined with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in founding the League for the Fourth International. The IG/LFI stands on the programmatic achievements of the ICL and continues the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International, a fight that the ICL has abandoned in practice. Thus in an article on the new *intifada*, the "new" *WV* wrote: "While today the possibility of revolutionary working-class struggle may seem no less a pipe dream than the biblical injunction of 'turn swords into ploughshares,' there is a rich history to be plumbed by would-be revolutionaries, including incipient workers revolutions in Iran in 1953 and Iraq in 1958-59" (*WV* No. 744, 20 October 2000).

This openly defeatist outlook shows that for the ICL today, the program of workers revolution has become a pacifist pipedream, and their injunction to "plumb" the history of revolutionary struggle in the Near East is not accompanied by a program of struggle derived from that history. This is of

a piece with their new view that working-class consciousness took a qualitative leap backwards following the demise of the Soviet Union, and hence, they claim, the crisis of revolutionary leadership is no longer the crisis of humanity, as the founding document of Trotsky's Fourth International, the Transitional Program, starkly states. For those to whom the Bolshevik program of world socialist revolution does *not* appear as a swords-into-plowshares utopia, what are some of the key lessons to be drawn concerning the Near East?

Israel possesses powerful military forces including more than 200 nuclear weapons. While Zionist fanatics dream of a Greater Israel extending to the Euphrates, and key Sharon associates talk of bombing the Aswan dam and Teheran (leading Sharon's prospective cabinet to be known in shorthand as the "Aswan-Teheran" government), this is all the more reason why it is vital to defeat the Zionist garrison state from within. Arab and Hebrew communists must join in demanding the release of Mordechai Vanunu who courageously revealed to the world the existence of this atomic arsenal in the hands of Zionist butchers who are perfectly capable of incinerating the world. Trotskyists would call to mobilize defense of Israeli soldiers who refuse to act as assassins in repressing the Palestinian youth.

They would also fight to mobilize joint Arab/Hebrew workers defense in the face of pogromist attacks on Arabs, like those in the Nazareth and Umm al-Famm region in mid-October, where police and Zionist mobs shot 13 Arabs in cold blood, a crime that was then defended by the racist district police chief. (In fact, some Israeli Jewish leftists patrolled to defend an Arab neighborhood in Haifa against a threatened right-wing demonstration last October, according to a report by a local follower of British "Trotskyist" Ted Grant.)

Palestinian nationalists who today see Israel as nothing but a solid Zionist bloc have the same outlook as the European Zionists who in the early 20th century could see in the gentiles nothing but a solid anti-Semitic bloc. Seeing no allies and no possibility of resistance, the Zionists could only flee (in shameful collusion with the fascists who were glad to see them go). But where shall the Palestinians flee? We have pointed out how the Zionist project of building a "Jewish state" in Palestine was inimical to the interests not only of Arabs but also of millions of Jews (see "Zionism, Imperialism and Anti-Semitism," on page 24 of this issue). We have also detailed the history of joint struggle by Arab and Hebrew workers throughout the British Mandate. Indeed, such struggles continued right up to the eve of the birth of Israel, and the Zionists deliberately attacked working-class sectors known for their common struggles in order to drive the Arab workers out (see "Arab/Hebrew Workers' Struggles Before the Birth of Israel," page 38).

But a perspective for socialist revolution in Palestine cannot be limited to this tiny corner of the Near East. In fact, the entire region is rife with revolutionary potential. While we disagree with his liberal bourgeois program, Palestinian critic Edward Said makes an important point in his latest book on *The End of the Peace Process*. There he notes that following

the debacle of the 1967 Arab-Israel war:

“The great irony is that every Arab regime of consequence is still essentially unchanged today, thirty years after the greatest collective defeat in Arab history. True, nearly every government has switched its allegiance to the United States and formerly belligerent Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestine Liberation Organization have signed peace agreements with Israel. But the structure of power in the Arab world has remained in place, with the same oligarchies, military cadres, and traditional elites holding precisely the same privileges and making the same general kind of decisions they did in 1967.”

In fact, the Near Eastern region probably has the greatest concentration of decrepit *ancien régimes* of any area of the globe today. It is not hard to envisage a wave of revolution sweeping away the bankrupt ruling dynasties, cliques and dictators.

But for such an upheaval to mobilize the tremendous power of the working class and the oppressed peasant masses, it must be based on an internationalist program of proletarian revolution. The Near East is an overwhelmingly Arab region, but it also includes, in addition to the Hebrew people in Palestine, Kurds, Turks, Persians, Armenians, Turkomans and a host of religious/ethnic communities, including Coptic Christians and black Nubians in Egypt. In fact, many of the early leaders of the Communist parties in the region came from such minorities. Revolutionary vanguard parties must be cohered that can lead the working people of all these groups and peoples in a common struggle against capitalist imperialism.

With its reformist program of “two-stage” revolution, Stalinism abandoned the struggle for international socialist revolution and replaced it with tailing after whatever bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist current was then dominant. This had disastrous consequences in Palestine, where it led to repeated splits of the Communist Party along national lines; in Egypt, where it led to defeat of a powerful strike wave and opened the door to Nasserite Arab nationalism; in Iraq, where it spelled defeat for the 1948 CP-led workers uprising against British colonial domination; in Iran, where it meant tying the powerful oil workers to the weak nationalist Mossadeq regime that was toppled by the CIA in 1953 palace coup.

Genuinely communist parties in the Near East must be based on the Trotskyist program of *permanent revolution*, the program realized by the Bolsheviks in the tsarist empire in 1917, giving rise to the multinational Soviet workers republic. In the present imperialist epoch, the weak national bourgeoisies are incapable of achieving the fundamental tasks of the classical bourgeois revolutions, including agrarian revolution, democracy and national liberation. Tied by a thousand threads to the forces of domestic reaction and thoroughly subordinated to imperialism, the native capitalist classes face a sizeable proletariat and vast impoverished peasant populations. To bring the working people to power and emancipate the downtrodden requires the leadership of revolutionary workers parties that can place themselves at the head of all the oppressed. Upon taking power, the working class will from the outset combine

the resolution of urgent democratic questions with the socialist measures necessary to secure its rule and promote economic development.

Such parties must make special efforts to win women cadres to mobilize the explosive potential of the deeply oppressed female population. This fight will directly counterpose the communists to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists of all sorts. In Algeria, following the victory of the war of independence, women fighters who had played a leading role in the struggle were demobilized and sent home where they were subjected to patriarchal and religious oppression. Among Palestinians in the deeply conservative Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, “honor killings” of women deemed to have “shamed” their families are still frequent. The party that forthrightly denounces this terrible blight will face ferocious opposition, but it will win the allegiance of the most oppressed and potentially revolutionary sector, who as the Bolshevik experience in Soviet Central Asia shows will be some of the most courageous and determined fighters for communism. Trotskyists proclaimed “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” against the CIA-backed *mujahedin*, and today champion the cause of Afghan women who have suffered most from the victory of the *mujahedin* over the Soviet-backed Kabul government.

Given the ethnic and religious mosaic of the region, a Marxist attitude toward religion will be of great importance. While waging a *class* war against imperialism, the communists give no quarter to calls for a *jihad* (holy war) which only feed the flames of Islamic reaction. It will be urgently necessary above all to spread the revolution to the imperialist centers, first and foremost to Europe, which under workers rule can provide the necessary state aid and technological and military backing to carry the revolution forward. That socialism can only be international is a key lesson from the demise of the USSR. Imperialist military intervention and economic pressure on the young Soviet Union combined with the isolation that resulted from the failure of the European workers revolutions of the early 1920s led to the consolidation of a conservative nationalist bureaucratic caste that undermined the proletarian foundations of the USSR. This ultimately led to the capitalist counterrevolution of 1991-92, a historic defeat for the world working class that led to the ill-starred Oslo “peace process” and an intensification of the terrible oppression of the Palestinian people.

Palestinian workers and youth with nothing to lose but their chains, dispersed throughout the region in a cruel diaspora, also include many potential cadres who have the most cosmopolitan experience of any people in the region. Communists of Jewish origin who wage a determined struggle against Zionism will be able to play a vital role in developing communist parties side by side with their Arab comrades. Together they can enrich culture, develop the resources of the region and truly make the desert bloom. Today a symbol of the bankruptcy of all nationalism and the bloody oppression of capitalism in decay, the Near East can become a cockpit of socialist revolution for the emancipation of the working people throughout the world. ■

Mexico

**Down with the PRI/PAN/PRD,
Parties of Repression and Exploitation!**

**Not One Vote for the Bourgeois Parties!
Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front!**

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

On 2 July 2000, right-wing candidate Vicente Fox was elected president of Mexico with 43 percent of the vote, surpassing the standard bearer of the long-governing “state party,” Francisco Labastida (37 percent), and overwhelming the bourgeois nationalist Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (17 percent). Fox’s victory marked the end of 71 years of domination by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), whose semi-bonapartist regime had long been decaying, and the continuity of the economic policies of recent PRI governments, which carried out wholesale privatizations and attacks on the working class. The following leaflet was issued prior to the election by the Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, and is translated from the *El Internacionalista* supplement of June 2000.



La Jornada

Presidential candidates (from left): Vicente Fox (PAN), Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (PRD) and Francisco Labastida (PRI).

The presidential elections are approaching in an atmosphere of generalized crisis. On the electoral level there may be a close race between the candidates of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), National Action Party (PAN) and Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). What worries the ruling class most is not so much who will win the July 2 elections, but what might happen afterwards. The bosses are fully aware that no one represents the working class in this bourgeois political game. Yet in an atmosphere of “instability” at the top, they fear that any spark could touch off an explosion of social discontent.

The PRI *ancien régime* (old regime) fears the “rabble,” as do the back-up teams for the Mexican bourgeoisie. They are obsessed by the spectre of a social revolution that would

overthrow this rotten capitalist system with its unbridled corruption, brutal repression and exploitation. But to make the exploiters’ nightmare – and the dream of the exploited – become a reality, what’s needed is a revolutionary workers party. The Grupo Internacionalista, section of the League for the Fourth International, seeks to forge this proletarian party in the heat of the struggles of the oppressed.

Since the end of the ’70s, most of the Mexican left has devoted itself to parliamentary “struggle” against the PRI regime. Their perennial campaign is captured in the slogan, “Not one vote to the PRI!” While directly supporting Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’ PRD with its nationalist airs, this means allying themselves, albeit informally, with the ultra-reactionary PAN.

In contrast, the Grupo Internacionalista has warned against the danger represented by the “popular front” around Cárdenas, a class-collaborationist alliance that chains the workers to the bourgeois “opposition,” undermining the class struggle against the hated PRI regime and the capitalist system it protects. Even the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas and the various guerilla groups active among the peasantry in central-southern Mexico adjust their activity to the electoral cycle and the popular-frontist campaign.

The pernicious role of *cardenismo* was clearly seen throughout the ten-month strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). PRD members on campus first tried to sabotage the strike from within and then dedicated themselves to organizing strike-breaking. Meanwhile, the PRD government of the Federal District (Mexico City) sent riot cops against the students in coordination with the Interior Ministry’s new Federal Police.



Battle between strikers and scabs at National University (UNAM), 1 February 2000. After trying to sabotage student strike from within, Cárdenas' PRD sent riot cops against strike while its student supporters led scabbing.

Now, in the midst of the electoral campaign, Cárdenas is coming to University City (the UNAM campus) to seek support. Many students who were beaten by club-wielding police under orders from the Cárdenas government will express their angry rejection of this bourgeois politician and his strike-breaking party. This rejection must be deepened and channeled into *class-struggle* politics, calling to *break with the Cárdenas popular front and forge a revolutionary workers party*.

Not One Vote to the Bourgeois Parties!

The electoral merry-go-round of bourgeois politics is in high gear. On the surface, the campaign has been heavily "Americanized": each party has its own political marketing team, carries out endless surveys and spends millions on televised propaganda. Yet this spectacle hides a country boiling over with social tensions and struggles. All three of the main bourgeois parties declare themselves sure of victory, but each one is actually in trouble.

The regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which has governed the country with an iron fist since 1929 as the guardian of national and imperialist capital, is visibly tottering. Its candidate, Francisco Labastida, has mobilized the enormous resources of the PRI-government. The "alchemists" [vote-fraud specialists] and experts in computer system breakdowns are ready. [In the 1988 presidential elections the government claimed that vote-counting computers "crashed."] The government's "Progresá" pork-barrel program is doling out crumbs. But the run-down party machinery has lost much of its power

to bring out large numbers of hangers-on. Moreover, it would find it difficult to orchestrate a Fujimori-style hijacking of the elections in broad daylight.

The right-wing, clericalist National Action Party is on the rise among sectors of the middle class. Its candidate, Coca-Cola capitalist Vicente Fox, waves the flag of the Virgin of Guadalupe from the Cristero clericalist revolt [of the 1920s] and is amply bankrolled by ultra-reactionary business groups. Even the bishops are getting into the act, telling people who to vote for. Yet the PAN is almost nonexistent in the southern part of the country and it lacks an apparatus for holding power (in fact, the PAN doesn't even control the presidential campaign, which is run by the "Friends of Fox").

The bourgeois nationalist Party of the Democratic Revolution of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has provided big capital with guarantees of its "reliability," brutally repressing the UNAM student strikers and clubbing discontented workers. This has discouraged the PRD's own base to such an extent that bourgeois sectors which previously wanted to keep the PRD "in reserve" no longer see its services as so necessary. Illustrious liberal intellectuals have gone over smoothly from *cardenismo* to *foxismo*, and now rub elbows with the reactionary clericalists of Opus Dei.

Despite their tactical differences, the three parties and their satellites such as the PT ("Labor" Party), PVEM (Green Ecology Party), PARM (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution), PSD (Party of Social Democracy), PCD (Party of the Democratic Center), etc. are all bourgeois parties, which defend the interests of capital. They are all junior partners of imperialism, participating in the capitalist onslaught against the working class which has accelerated at a dizzying speed since the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe. In Mexico, the intensification of exploitation has produced a drastic decline in workers' standard of living.

Today the buying power of the minimum wage is *less than one fourth* what it was in 1979 and about *half* its level in the '30s. Widespread poverty has become the true face of the country – and the situation is getting worse. Official figures show the number of Mexicans living in conditions of extreme poverty has grown by over 50 percent over the past ten years. Hunger is spreading throughout the countryside, which has been depopulated due to the pillage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the U.S.

Corruption has always been a crucial element of the PRI regime, but it is no longer the grease allowing the cumbersome state machinery to function. Instead, it has turned into massive looting of government assets by cliques linked to the government. Under former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the phone and banking industries were privatized – creating a layer of Mexican multimillionaires – and turnpikes were built with sweetheart contracts. Today, under president Ernesto Zedillo, the stratospheric bank losses caused by the 1994-95 economic crisis have been nationalized and the Southern Border Highway has been built – along with more military barracks in Chiapas to attack the Zapatistas (and enrich the president's brother).



PRI rally in Yucatán, June 2000, with dozens of washing machines to be handed out to supporters.

The Fobaproa debt bailout program (now called IPAB, the Institute for the Protection of Bank Savings) exemplifies the rats-fleeing-a-sinking-ship atmosphere of the PRI's *fin de régime*. Following last year's audit of federal finances by the Canadian financial specialist Michael Mackey, it became clear that the bailout will cost over US\$100 billion. Among the debts taken on by the state are those of the Fox family's boot factory as well as the agricultural investments of Labastida's brother. The PRD wants to pass itself off as incorruptible, but the fact is, *Cárdenas' supporters voted for the 1999 budget* which included the enormous IPAB payments (and slashed the UNAM budget, which sparked the student strike against the imposition of tuition). Endorsing this untrammled pillage was the price for obtaining federal funds for the PRD government in Mexico City.

The masters of high finance declare that any of the presidential candidates will suit them just fine; the International Monetary Fund has granted a new loan, as a sign of approval for the government's economic policy and to make sure the next government will follow it. As this seal of good conduct from the capitalist overlords confirms, whoever wins the electoral "contest" will maintain this semi-colonial capitalist system that condemns the exploited masses of Mexico to a life of misery. But rebellion continues to arise among the oppressed. It must be organized and armed with revolutionary, proletarian class consciousness. The next Mexican revolution will not be nationalist but instead part of the international socialist revolution, extending to the heart of American imperialism.

Break with the Cárdenas Popular Front! Break the PRI's Corporatist Stranglehold!

The fate of the PRI-government, the pillar of a decomposing semi-bonapartist regime that indissolubly links the party and state apparatus, will be decided not at the ballot box but in the streets. The collapse of this regime could touch off a social explosion. Nearly 15 years of anti-worker austerity, dictated by Washington and Wall Street and imposed by the PRI, have spawned widespread social discontent. At the same time, the traditional mechanisms of corporatist control over the Mexican labor movement have weakened considerably due to the growing integration of the Mexican and U.S. economies, and the search for cheaper and more efficient mechanisms of social control.

This is where the *Cárdenas popular front* has a role to play. In the mid-'80s, the crisis of the imperialist debt led to a free fall of workers' living standards and pauperization of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. A wave of workers struggles broke out (Cananea miners, Sicartsa metalworkers, Volkswagen, Ford), student and teacher protests (the 1986-87 UNAM movement against tuition, the strike by the CNTE dissident teachers' movement in 1989), together with upheavals in the countryside which culminated in the Zapatista uprising in 1994. The Mexican bourgeoisie desperately needed a new fire extinguisher to put out the flames of potentially explosive social struggles.

The bourgeoisie was not miserly with repression. Salinas began his six-year term by going after the powerful oil workers leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia, *La Quina*; Zedillo began his with the destruction of the Ruta 100 Mexico City bus workers union (SUTAU). But along with violence, a key element for maintaining social "peace" was the formation of a popular front around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Its purpose was to bind to the bourgeoisie those sectors of the working class which had escaped from the straitjacket of the PRI's corporatist labor apparatus, made up of mainly of Fidel Velázquez's CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) as well as other PRI federations (CT, CROC, CROM).

For a whole decade, this class-collaborationist coalition faithfully played its role as an escape valve for social discontent. Despite the fact that Cárdenas had backed military repression against the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), the EZLN insurgents enrolled in the 1994 Cárdenas electoral campaign. While Subcomandante Marcos was waging cyberwar with his electronic missives, Cárdenas brought the Zapatistas "back into the fold" for the bourgeois political game. This was followed by the farce of negotiations [between the government and the EZLN] leading to the threadbare, never-implemented San Andrés Accords. To fight the regime's policy of attrition, the working class must be mobilized to demand the withdrawal of the Mexican army, along with their murderous police and paramilitary gangs, from Chiapas as well as Guerrero and Oaxaca [states targeted by counterinsurgency operations].

After being elected governor of the Federal District in 1997, Cárdenas and his PRD took charge of instruments of state repression. But this did not put an end to their role as rallying point for a popular front aimed at undermining social struggles. During the UNAM strike, for example, they pushed one "proposal" after another for surrender: the University Council proposal, the proposal of the "eight emeritus professors," the proposal of "the five schools," and finally the proposal of the rector of repression, Juan Ramón de la Fuente, which served as the justification for the UNAM head's strikebreaking plebiscite and the arrest of a thousand student strikers by the Federal Police. Meanwhile, first under Cárdenas and then under Rosario Robles, the PRD government of Mexico City set the riot police against the students (4 August, 14 October and 11 December 1999), teachers (25 May 1999), slum-dwellers (14 June 1999), and Chapingo university workers (28 January 2000).

Throughout the strike, the Grupo Internacionalista insisted that in order to win it was necessary to mobilize the work-

ing class in a powerful joint strike against the government's privatization onslaught. We sought to put this perspective into practice, and succeeded in initiating the formation of worker-student defense guards with the participation of hundreds of members of the SME electrical workers union along with members of the STUNAM (National University workers union) and SITUAM (Metropolitan University workers union). The regime also understood the key importance of the workers unions, and did everything to prevent the unification of their struggles with the student strike.

The axis of the Cárdenas popular front is the subordination of the so-called "independent unions" to the bourgeoisie through a class-collaborationist alliance. This includes, among others, the leaders of the SME, STUNAM, SITUAM and the dissident teachers of the CNTE. The popular front was seen in action in a meeting between Cárdenas and thousands of Mexico City workers on June 19 at Mexico City's Tasqueña Grand Forum. There were numerous STUNAM leaders (with general secretary Agustín Rodríguez at the presiding table), the flight attendants with their leader Alejandra Barrales, various CNTE locals, former Ruta 100 workers as well as electrical, telephone, Metro and Federal District municipal workers, all together in support of Cárdenas, candidate of the "Alliance for Mexico."

Now Agustín Rodríguez has announced that STUNAM will join with the Auxilio UNAM campus police, which carried out the 1 February 2000 provocation against student strikers at the Prepa 3 high school, to act as bodyguards for Cárdenas during his visit to University City. The Grupo Internacionalista demands the expulsion of all Auxilio UNAM members from STUNAM.

The subordination of workers leaders and organizations to Cárdenas & Co. has played a key role in derailing recent union struggles. At the Grand Forum Cárdenas promised that if he is elected president, he will eliminate the practice of government takeovers of struck enterprises. This anti-union measure was used by the government against the recent Aeroméxico flight attendants' strike. But instead of refusing to work under this government takeover, the union leadership submitted to the dictatorial measure, thereby gutting the strike, while pretending a Cárdenas victory would set matters straight.

During the recent mobilization of the dissident teachers, the "alliance" with the PRD led the CNTE to call off the sit-in, which had paralyzed the center of Mexico City for several weeks without the teachers winning anything at all. Juan Pérez, leader of the Michoacán state section of the National Education Workers Union (SNTE) – a section closely linked to the PRD and which split from the CNTE in December 1999 – pushed hard for abandoning the sit-in. As he explained to *La Jornada* (11 June 2000), he considered it necessary "to revise the ways and means of struggle" in clearly political terms, so as not to "drive everyone crazy in a city of 20 million inhabitants who elect their own local government" (controlled by the PRD, of course).

In a situation of rapid decomposition of the PRI's once almighty labor apparatus, the workers must break the corporatist stranglehold which for decades has kept them under the yoke of the bourgeoisie. The opportunity is clear: the CTM, which at one time claimed 5.5 million members, no longer has even

half a million according to official statistics – and many of those counted are fictitious members. In his speech at the Grand Forum, Cárdenas attacked *charrismo* [the system of labor control by PRI "union" chieftains, called *charros* (cowboys)], but he only proposed the elimination of the provision for government takeover of struck enterprises and Federal Labor Code Section B [restricting strikes by government workers]. That is, he vowed to keep nearly intact the legislation which the capitalist government uses to straightjacket workers unions.

Amid the disintegration of the PRI regime it is urgent to elect *workers committees independent of state control and of all the bourgeois parties* (including the PRD) to throw out the *charros* and lay the basis for genuine unions as workers organs of struggle. These committees should adopt a thorough-going program of class struggle. We must demand the *immediate expulsion of all police from the unions*: as official thugs of the bourgeoisie, they are class enemies and have no place in any working-class organization. Faced with repression and scabbing, *workers defense committees* must be formed, the beginnings of which were seen in the UNAM strike. To defeat the Zedillo government's privatization campaign, aimed above all at the electrical and petrochemical industries, *factory occupations* and *workers control* must be prepared.

The power of unionized workers must be mobilized to *organize class-struggle unions in the maquiladoras* [factories of the free trade zone], where a labor force of young workers, many of them women, struggles to defend itself against police control. Struggles are under way against the Congeladora del Río packing plant in Irapuato (Guanajuato) and to form an independent union against the Duro manufacturing company in Río Bravo (Tamaulipas), which the PRD seeks to co-opt. As was the case in the UNAM strike, in each of the recent union struggles it has been urgent to fight for a *political* break from Cárdenas & Co., for the political independence of the proletariat and the forging of a workers party to fight for socialist revolution.

An authentically Leninist and Trotskyist party must know how to put the proletariat at the head of all the oppressed in the struggle for a *workers and peasants government*. Such a government, the dictatorship of the proletariat, would immediately undertake socialist tasks and would extend the revolution across the borders, above all towards the powerful U.S. proletariat, the Achilles heel of American imperialism. By means of the human bridge made up of millions of immigrant workers living in the U.S., this push could contribute powerfully to the struggle against racist oppression and to an internationalist political perspective.

Down with the PAN and Clerical Reaction! Free Abortion on Demand!

The PAN has gained popularity among the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia over the past months. Even some "historic leftists" have chosen to support the campaign of Vicente Fox as the only "real" alternative to a PRI victory. Particularly notorious has been the case of liberal writer Jorge Castañeda, one of the high-profile *cardenistas* who only yesterday devoted themselves to organizing the fancy discussion brunches of the San Angel Group [of leftish intellectuals]. Today he preaches

that people must cast a “useful vote” for Fox to “throw the PRI out of the government.”

In its electoral campaign, the PAN tends to put a “moderate” face on its ultra-reactionary viewpoint. Fox’s folksy demagoguery has led him to label his program “center-left” and to claim that he defends secular education. This is far from the truth. Historically, the PAN has been the party of clerical reaction. Founded in the late 1930s, it brought together self-proclaimed *cristeros* [supporters of the Catholic clerical-led revolt who fought against the secular Mexican constitution under the battle cry of “Long live Christ the King”], members of the fascistic “Sinarquista” movement, and reactionary church-aligned elements of the bourgeoisie. To head his education program, Fox appointed a member of Opus Dei, the right-wing clerical group historically linked to the Franco dictatorship in Spain.

Despite all his demagoguery, Fox cannot hide his real political predilections. Waving the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, he has repeatedly called for “upholding” the memory of the Cristero revolt – adding to the chorus of the reactionary Mexican clergy which demands that the *cristeros* be considered “heroes of the fatherland.” In the midst of the Catholic hierarchy’s jubilant triumphalism over the canonization of 28 “*cristero* martyrs,” Fox seeks to gain support for his campaign by whipping up social backwardness.

Today, Fox takes up the anti-worker and anti-Communist banner of the *cristeros*. It’s no coincidence that he rubs shoulders with his reactionary crony Lech Walesa (as he did last October at the Ibero-American University), leader of the reactionary Solidarnosc “union” which, backed by pope Wojtyla and the CIA, led the counterrevolution in Poland. Shaking Walesa’s hand and making him an icon of the struggle for liberty (as in the television commercials in which the PAN puts an equal sign between Communism and the hated PRI regime), Fox follows in the footsteps of his predecessor, [1988 PAN presidential candidate] Manuel Clouthier, known for his links with the Nicaraguan contras.

The reactionary politics of the PAN are exemplified by its flat-out opposition to the rights of women and homosexuals. Together with its partners in Pro Vida [the ultra-right “Pro-Life” organization], the PAN declares its categorical opposition to legalizing abortion. The monstrosity of this position was demonstrated in Mexicali, where the PAN administration of the state of Baja California Norte mobilized high government and church officials to stop 14-year-old Paulina Ramírez Jacinta from obtaining an abortion after she was raped. Although abortion is legal in that state in cases of rape, the clergy harassed Paulina and her mother so much that they gave up on the abortion.

It is highly instructive to analyze how the clerical apparatus functioned in this case. In 1998, the PAN attempted to illegalize all abortions, but the state legislature rejected the initiative. Now the PAN is using coercion to impose the ban in practice. In the case of Paulina, functionaries of the state attorney general’s office authorized the abortion but required that it be carried out in a state hospital. But the doctors at the state hospital refused to do the procedure for reasons of “con-

science.” The state attorney general summoned Paulina and her mother to his office to try to make the girl change her mind, then took her in his car, accompanied by his bodyguards, to see a priest who threatened the girl and her mother with the wrath of god. Finally, the hospital director told them that the operation (in reality a simple procedure) could cause Paulina’s death.

In PRI governments the state bureaucracy is intertwined with the party, while in states ruled by the PAN, the government apparatus is intertwined with the clergy. In Nuevo León the PAN-controlled legislature voted to ban abortion under any and all circumstances. The PRI boasts of its birth control programs (which include the forced sterilization of Indian women), while it is responsible for the death of hundreds of women every year due to complications from the tens of thousands of illegal abortions performed each year. But the PRD also refuses to legalize abortion. In an interview with the *La Jornada* supplement on women, *Triple Jornada* (5 June), Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas limited himself to proposing a “national consultation” to decide on abortion legislation.

In the spring and summer of 1999 the PRD parliamentary fraction in the Federal District Legislative Assembly (ALDF) presented an initiative to “reduce the penalties” for practicing abortions in three circumstances (extreme poverty of the woman, involuntary artificial insemination, severe genetic defects). While this initiative continued to class abortion as a crime, it was withdrawn a few days after it was presented “due to protests from the PRI, PAN and PVEM (Green Party) legislative coordinators” (*Triple Jornada*, 3 May 1999).

While the PAN seeks to penalize abortion under all circumstances, communists fight for women’s unrestricted right to *free abortion on demand*, with high-quality medical care. Even though this is a simple democratic demand, the case of Paulina demonstrates that what is involved is a confrontation with powerful reactionary forces which deny women’s interests in the name of “Christian family values.” Under this same watchword, PAN governments savagely attack homosexuals, contributing to the climate of persecution in which at least 190 homosexuals have been murdered so far this year (*La Jornada*, 8 June), in many cases by the judicial authorities themselves. PAN governments have banned miniskirts in Guadalajara, censored Wonderbra advertisements, persecuted gays in Tijuana, banned a photo exhibition in Mérida because it included nudes, and have banned “table dancing” in Monterrey as an attack on “morals and public decency.”

As Karl Marx stressed, the proletariat cannot liberate itself without revolutionizing all of society. Lenin insisted that the workers party must be the “tribune of the people,” defending all the oppressed. The anti-abortion campaign of Pro Vida and the PAN is necessarily accompanied by a whole series of male-chauvinist prejudices which must be combated. To denounce the use of condoms, as did the last PAN candidate for Federal District governor, is to advocate a virtual death sentence for thousands of people in the face of the AIDS epidemic. Class-conscious workers must fight for a free, high-quality public health system.

Communists fight for the full integration of women into



Meeting of National Front of Resistance Against Privatization of Electrical Industry called by SME electrical union, March 1999. Popular front ties workers to Cárdenas' bourgeois PRD.

social labor, with equal pay for equal work and full union benefits; against the pregnancy tests demanded by the *maquiladoras* and against the firing of pregnant women; for free quality 24-hour childcare; full rights for gays and lesbians and against all government intervention in people's consensual sexual relations, including minors. Government and church out of the bedroom! We fight for *women's liberation through socialist revolution*, a revolution that would lay the economic basis for socializing household labor and free women to participate in the building of a new society.

For Proletarian Internationalism! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Nationalism, as Lenin emphasized, is always a bourgeois program. In the case of the PRD, with its pretensions of a "democratic revolution," this did not prevent Cárdenas from personally giving his guarantee to Wall Street investors that their money would be safe. He doesn't even pretend to oppose NAFTA, saying only that "certain aspects of the Agreement need to be renegotiated" (*La Crónica*, 25 February).

Nationalism is also the common denominator of most of the Mexican left. A perfect example of this is the ("unregistered") electoral campaign of the Socialist Coalition made up of the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS) and the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS), one of the last fragments remaining from the disintegrated Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT). [The POS and LUS are, respectively, followers of the late pseudo-Trotskyist leaders Nahuel Moreno and Ernest Mandel.] The coalition's presidential candidate is Manuel Aguilar Mora, who was one of the main PRT leaders in 1988, when these fake Trotskyists cheered "Viva Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas," then the candidate of the National Democratic Front.

In an article in *El Socialista/Umbral* (first fortnight of March 2000), Aguilar Mora called on the SME electrical workers union, the National Front of Resistance Against Privatization of the Electric Industry "and all popular sectors"

to undertake "the re-conquest of Mexico for the Mexicans" so as to build a "dignified legacy of our people for their children." Such nationalist verbiage seeks to put forward a policy of class collaboration with popular "sectors" in the nation's capital. Although he scolds Cárdenas, the main component of the Resistance Front, besides the SME, is Cárdenas' PRD. To pretend that such a front can fight to defend the workers' interests is to sow dangerous illusions in the bourgeoisie.

Workers and students who are looking for a genuine class-struggle alternative should remember the role played by these Rectoría "socialists" [Rectoría is the UNAM administration] during the National University strike. Joining the "moderates" of the PRD, POS student activists called for ending the strike already in July 1999. The work of undermining the strike led these inveterate popular frontists to join the PRD's strike-breaking. To justify this, *Umbral* (January-March 2000), the newspaper of the LUS, blamed the Strike General Council (CGH) for the repression the strikers suffered at the hands of the bourgeois state and

praised the "good sense" of Rosario Robles' city administration in the face of "provocations" by the student "ultras" [i.e., the left wing of the CGH]. Some socialists these are, who consider it a provocation to refuse a plan of surrender which failed to meet a single one of the CGH's demands!

The Socialist Coalition calls for a "National Front against Repression and Privatizations," with the obvious purpose of broadening the Resistance Front promoted by the SME. In nearly identical terms, the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS [affiliated with the Argentine PTS, a split-off from the Morenoites]) calls on the Resistance Front to "raise its voice in these elections so as to combat, on this terrain as well, the regime of the negotiated transition." For these fake Trotskyists, popular frontism is a vocation. Their crowning demand is for a "revolutionary constituent assembly," which they compare to the Aguascalientes Convention held in 1914 [during the Mexican Revolution]. As we have stated in the past, it was on the basis of this "democratic" slogan that the LTS fervently hailed the counterrevolution in East Germany and the USSR.

In our pamphlet "Which Way Forward for the UNAM Strike?" we showed that the leadership of the CGH was also popular-frontist. While angry at Cárdenas over the repression, these disappointed popular frontists posed the struggle in merely democratic terms, thereby seeking to make it acceptable to a sector of the bourgeoisie (*El Internacionalista*, 3 August 1999). Despite numerous joint marches, they never posed *extending the strike* to the SME, CNTE, SITUAM, STUNAM, etc. This was their counterpart to the policy of isolation carried out by the pro-PRD union bureaucracies, leading the strike to a dead end and leaving it defenseless in the face of state repression.

The Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), affiliated to the International Communist League (ICL), says it opposes nationalism and fights "For the Political Independence of the Proletariat!" (the title of a June 2000 *Espartaco* supplement). They note that the Third World nationalists have allied with



Grupo Internacionalista banner calls to break with Cárdenas popular front, forge a revolutionary workers party, October 1999.

imperialist elements “under the general rubric of defending ‘national sovereignty.’” Yet during the same period when Cárdenas, the SME bureaucracy and the same Third World nationalists presented the struggle against privatization of the electrical sector as defense of “national sovereignty,” the GEM posed achieving “national sovereignty itself” as a task of the socialist revolution (*Espartaco* supplement, 18 January 1999). Trotskyists, however, have always fought for *international* socialist revolution.

The GEM’s slogan of “No illusion in the bourgeois-nationalist PRD” is purely passive and idealist, and presents no program for combating the class collaboration that this ideology incarnates. The fact that the GEM avoids this at all costs was perfectly clear during the UNAM strike. The GEM’s obvious debacle in the strike has led it to a new crisis, in which it lost its main spokesman, who was in charge of “reorganizing” the group after the expulsion of the comrades who later formed the Grupo Internacionalista/Internationalist Group. Meanwhile, the GEM’s political degeneration continues.

Now they have a new argument for the supposed non-existence of a popular front in Mexico: “In Chiapas, the PAN and PRD are presenting a joint election slate. Some ‘popular front’ which unites with the historic party of Catholic reaction!” If this demonstrates anything, it is that the GEM itself has “some illusions” in popular fronts, which it identifies with the left. Was there perhaps no popular front in France in the late 1930s because Daladier, head of the bourgeois Radicals, signed the Munich Pact with Hitler in 1938, banned the CP and installed a dictatorial government which directly paved the way for the Vichy regime? In South Africa, the nationalist popular front around Mandela took power thanks to a pact with the party of apartheid. And in Italy in 1944-45, the Communist Party called for forming a front with “honest fascists.”

At the same time, by claiming that the corporatist CTM “unions” are workers organizations, *the GEM acts as apologists for this apparatus of state control over the workers.* They even compare the PRI *charros*, who “use their thugs and goons

to maintain their privileges,” with the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. They obscure the difference between a direct instrument of the *bourgeois state*, the CTM, and the bureaucracy that governed a bureaucratically degenerated *workers state*, the USSR. The CTM is and has been for decades an official sector and pillar of the PRI, the state party of the Mexican bourgeoisie whose semi-bonapartist regime depends on iron control over the workers and peasants.

The GEM resorts to a transparent trick: Lenin insisted on the need to work in unions led by reactionaries; thus, one must work in the CTM and because of this, they go on, the CTM must be a workers union. Trotsky himself stressed that in cases where there is no alternative, it is necessary to do work in fascist “unions” – but this does not turn them into genuine workers unions. Revolutionaries also carry out work in the conscript army, but this does not change the class nature of the armed fist of the bourgeois state. All of this has been “forgotten” by the “CTM socialists” of the GEM. But in their amnesia, they

forget to mention that for a decade the GEM and ICL fought the Cárdenas popular front; they now omit the fact that in the past they called to “*elect workers committees* – independent of the bourgeois parties, including the PRD – to *break the corporatist stranglehold of the CTM*” (*Espartaco* No. 7, Winter 1995-96).

To cover its rampant revisionism and the ICL’s betrayal, the GEM has worked out a new justification for defending the puppet of the popular front government of the city of Volta Redonda, Brazil, who is the source of the lies hurled by the GEM against our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionista do Brasil. They now pretend that the Zubatovist [“police socialist”] unions in tsarist Russia were simply unions with a more right-wing leadership, thus grossly distorting Lenin’s position. They do this to justify their *political bloc with pro-police provocateurs and popular frontists* against the Brazilian Trotskyists who have fought head on to demand that the courts get their hands off the labor movement and to throw cops out of the unions, and who because of this have been the target of repeated court suits and gangster attacks.

As Trotskyists, we fight for *agrarian revolution*, for breaking the imperialist yoke and for the democratic tasks which in this imperialist epoch can be carried out only through the seizure of power by the proletariat at the head of the peasantry, women, students, and all the oppressed, which from the beginning requires taking on directly socialist tasks. We fight to forge the nucleus of the indispensable Leninist-Trotskyist workers party, which can only be built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, world party of the socialist revolution. ■

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Philly to L.A.: Republicans, Democrats Attack Workers, Minorities

Break with All the Capitalist Parties — Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

**Ralph Nader's Red-White-and-Blue Greens:
Pressure Group on the Democrats**

The following article was distributed by the Internationalist Group as a leaflet at protests against the August 2000 Republican Party convention in Philadelphia.

From Philadelphia to Los Angeles, the political convention season is in full swing. Democrats and Republicans are staging multi-million dollar made-for-TV extravaganzas to whip up enthusiasm for their respective candidates and get apathetic voters to participate in the electoral farce in November. Every four years the bourgeois parties go through this ritual to give a pseudo-democratic façade to capitalist rule in the United States. They try to mask the fact that less than half the electorate votes, that Bill Clinton was “elected” imperialist commander-in-chief with less than a quarter of eligible voters, that millions of immigrants (both documented and undocumented) don't even have the right to vote, that most primary candidates dropped out because they ran out of cash, while Big Oil and Wall Street are pouring big bucks into “The Buying of the President, 2000.” This is the “democratic” legitimization of U.S. imperialism — which will rain bombs on Iraq and Serbia, send troops to Colombia, squeeze superprofits out of neocolonies and strongarm Washington's imperialist allies and rivals.

This year the Republicrat conventioners will be accompanied by thousands of demonstrators outside in the streets denouncing “corporate control” of the political process. Demonstration organizers vow to continue the “spirit of Seattle,” where tens of thousands of protesters besieged meetings of the World Trade Organization last November (N30). After a repeat in Washington, D.C. at the World Bank/International Monetary Fund meetings in April (A16), this “democracy road show” is hitting Philly and L.A. this summer. At the Republican convention in Philadelphia (R2K), the Unity 2000 umbrella coalition brings together AFL-CIO labor officialdom, “free



TV news photographers caught Philadelphia police as they brutally beat Thomas Jones, July 12.

Tibet” anti-Communists, gun control advocates, “mainstream” social-democrats, assorted liberals and reformist left groups for a July 30 parade calling vaguely for “NO to business and politics as usual and YES to new priorities.” A slightly more militant coalition of “direct action” liberals, leftists and anarchists is calling for an August 1 event for “global justice” featuring civil disobedience and highlighting opposition to the “prison-industrial complex.” Similar coalitions (minus labor) will demonstrate outside the Democratic convention in Los Angeles (D2KLA).

As they prepared to showcase Philadelphia for national prime time TV, local authorities had a scare when a television news crew filmed Philly cops as they yanked a black man, Thomas Jones, out of a squad car and mercilessly beat

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

AP



The queen of racial profiling at work. Christine Whitman, then New Jersey governor, frisks innocent black man during 1996 police sweep in Camden.

the hapless carjacker. As the scene was broadcast around the country, showing a swarm of up to 16 cops landing 59 blows, everyone recalled the videotaped beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles eight years ago. Simultaneously, AP circulated a 1996 photo showing New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman frisking a black “suspect” just across the Delaware River in Camden. A week later, Amtrak cops shot and killed a homeless black man in Philadelphia’s 30th Street station. City officials had visions of riots; commentators recalled how Philadelphia police bombed the black MOVE commune and burned down a whole black neighborhood on Mother’s Day, 1985. But Unity 2000 organizers did their bit to “cool things out” by not taking up Jones’ case. They have also remained noticeably mute about Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical black Philadelphia journalist on death row.

The reasons for this silence are not hard to find. Among the sponsors of the protest coalition are many liberal supporters of Philadelphia’s black Democratic Party mayor John Street. They consider it an “achievement” that more than a third of Philly police are now black, and many of those who viciously beat Thomas Jones were black cops. The “unity” coalition has also failed to denounce the still pervasive poverty in many black neighborhoods. And it uttered not a peep when Street announced that all 61 owners of the Osage Avenue homes the city rebuilt after the MOVE bombing would have to move out, supposedly for code violations but actually because the city wanted the real estate. Meanwhile, police and city officials were issuing threats left and right. Street promised a “very ugly response” to civil disobedience. Cops admitted to spying on protest organizers, and an abandoned jail has been reopened. Plans were leaked to seize up to a thousand children of parents

arrested for civil disobedience. The kids could then be taken away because of alleged “child abuse.” But the ACLU gave the city a clean bill of health.

Many demonstrators will come to denounce brutal exploitation in sweatshops, the barbaric and racist death penalty, the oppression of women, and many crimes of the partner parties of U.S. capital. But behind the outsized puppets and the multi-hued “diversity” of the loose alliance, there is a serious political line. For those who dominate these demonstrations, their criticism of “super-rich multinational corporations” and an “undemocratic political system” is not a “soft” way of opposing capitalism. Rather, they are pushing a mixture of Democratic Party liberalism and bourgeois populism. In opposing “globalism,” they’re for national protectionism to “save American jobs,” even though they may present it in eco-friendly earth tones. At present, they do not feel at home under the Clinton/Gore “New Democrats,” and some are talking up the presidential candidacy of Ralph Nader and the Green Party. But Nader’s Greens are a bourgeois party in the tradition of “third party” movements like William Jennings Bryan’s Populists at the turn of the last century and Robert LaFollette’s Progressives in the 1920s. Their aim is to pressure the Democrats to the left.

As communists we fight for *international socialist revolution* in opposition to the bourgeois liberalism of the demonstration organizers and the popular-front politics of their reformist left tails. We denounce the fact that in Seattle and D.C., their national populism has led them into a de facto alliance with the fascistic Pat Buchanan, who is campaigning for the right-wing Reform Party presidential nomination. Some, such as Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa Jr., openly embraced this nativist Mexican-basher and gave him a platform to spout “yellow peril” anti-Communism against China. Others tried to ignore Buchanan’s presence, but they couldn’t renounce him because their politics threw these strange bedfellows together.

Liberal Democrats and union bureaucrats joined in virulent China-bashing recalling the rhetoric of McCarthyism and Reaganism in the heyday of the anti-Soviet Cold War. In sharp contrast, the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International, defends the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution against capitalist encroachment, fighting for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist regime that is endangering the bureaucratically deformed workers state and opening the door to counterrevolution, not least by joining the WTO. We combat the protectionist poison spewed out by the anti-Communist, pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, which sets U.S. workers against their Chinese, Mexican or Brazilian class brothers and sisters. The answer to the imperialist “free traders” is not mythical “fair trade” but common struggle by the international working class for socialist revolution against world capitalism.

Nader’s Greens: Bourgeois “Third Party” No Answer for Workers, Minorities

Liberals, reformists and anarchists all agree that from Seattle to D.C. to Philly and L.A., “a new movement is being born,” as a call by the August 1 Direct Action Coalition began. But what is this supposed “movement”? As we pointed out in

Reuters



Philadelphia cops arrest demonstrators at Republican convention, August 1 (above). Internationalist Group banner at Philly protest for Mumia Abu-Jamal (right).

our article, “Not Nationalist Protectionism vs. ‘Globalization,’ For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Imperialism!” (*The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000), a key role in organizing these protests has been played by the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America, DSAers in the labor bureaucracy (most notably AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney), liberal ecology groups and activists of the “fair trade” protectionists associated with Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen organization. As the election campaign mounts, Green Party presidential candidate Nader and the labor fakers are wrapping themselves in the American flag.

And not only them. A leaflet for a protest against The Gap calls it an “evil multinational corporation that exploits labor in foreign lands.” An anti-sweatshop picket at a Jersey mall included among its participants a group calling itself “All-American Anarchists.” And a special section on “The Birth of a Movement” in the erstwhile rad-lib *Village Voice* (25 July) features a front page headline “The New Face of Protest” with a drawing of “radicals” with American-flag bandanas. The lead article quotes Global Exchange organizer Kevin Danaher saying of the 1960s “movement,” “We were unnecessarily anti-American.” No danger of that today, and that is why the “new movement” ends up side by side with the likes of “America Firster” Pat Buchanan. Trotskyists, in contrast, oppose *U.S. imperialism* and fight for the *class* unity embodied in the slogan, “Workers of the world, unite!”

With polls showing Nader pulling 5 to 7 percent of the vote nationally and up to 9 percent in the key state of California, liberal Democrats are now wringing their hands about the Greens siphoning off votes from Gore in November. They are particularly worried that the well-known corporate muckraker could gain support from sections of the union movement. “Nader Talks, Labor Listens and Many Democrats Worry,” headlined the *New York Times* (23 July). When the House of Representatives passed Clinton’s bill for permanent normal trade relations with China in June, United Auto Workers leader Stephen Yokich issued a statement saying the UAW was “deeply disappointed” in Gore, and that it’s time for labor to



The Internationalist

“focus on supporting candidates, such as Ralph Nader” who don’t follow the dictates of “big money.” At the same time, Teamsters president Hoffa said Nader was close to labor’s positions on many issues and called for him to be included in televised presidential debates (along with Buchanan).

Liberal economist Paul Krugman accuses Nader of “general hostility toward corporations” (*New York Times*, 23 July). But Ralph Nader is no fire-breathing radical nor a labor candidate, far from it. Despite his austere image (boasting that he lives on \$25,000 a year, doesn’t own a car or have a credit card), Nader is a millionaire with \$3.8 million in stock holdings, including in major corporations he has lambasted. In fact, he explicitly defends capitalism. Asked by a caller on CNN’s *Talk Back Live* (5 July) program, “Are you a Marxist?” Nader replied: “No, I believe in democracy. I believe in competition. I think big corporations are destroying capitalism. Ask a lot of small businesses around the country how they’re pressed and exploited and deprived by the big business predators.” Posing as a defender of Main Street against Wall Street, denouncing the “government of the Exxons, by the General Motors, for the DuPonts,” in calling for a “new progressive movement” Nader looks back to the Democratic Party of “Harry Truman and FDR.”

Nader is appealing to those disenchanting liberals who feel abused by Clinton and Gore, offering his Green Party as an instrument to pressure the Democrats to pay attention to their traditional base. An article in *The Nation* (17 July) quotes Nader saying to labor officials, “Go to the Democrats and say, ‘You cannot win without us. You struck us down on NAFTA, you’ve struck us down on the WTO, you strike us down on trade with China, and you’re going to lose our support.’.... You need to say, ‘Our steel and auto workers are going to stay home, just like they did in ’94, when the Republicans won the House,’ and then add the following: ‘We are seriously considering publicly endorsing the Nader candidacy.’” This is exactly what the statement by UAW president Yokich did, not to break from the Democrats, which they are hardly going to do, but to put the arm on them.

AP



Medea Benjamin, red-white-and-blue senatorial candidate of Ralph Nader's Green Party for California. At N30 Seattle protests against World Trade Organization, Benjamin says, she protected Nike and wanted anarchists arrested.

On the reformist left, the Communist Party U.S.A. predictably calls for supporting Democrats Gore and Hillary Clinton. CPUSA chairman Sam Webb criticizes Nader for "doing a disservice" by "directing his strongest criticism at Gore and the Democrats" (*People's Weekly World*, 28 July). But a number of social-democratic outfits have climbed on Nader's bandwagon. Among these left Nader fakers are the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Socialist Alternative (formerly Labor Militant). The ISO, in particular, is thumping for the Greens, claiming that Nader's campaign represents a "radical third-party alternative not controlled by any section of the capitalist class" (*International Socialist Review*, August-September 2000). ISO flack Joel Geier throws in some fig-leaf *caveats*, saying the campaign is "a hybrid halfway house" and "not yet (!) an independent working-class party." At the same time, they argue that the "logical conclusion" of Nader's "anticor-

porate politics" is "opposition to the capitalist system." On the contrary, what this shows is that *the logical conclusion of the ISO's social-democratic politics is open support to a bourgeois candidate and party.*

These followers of the late Tony Cliff, who argued that the Soviet degenerated workers state was "state capitalist," have always placed themselves on the other side of the class line. Their political tendency was born at the outbreak of the Korean War, when Cliff was expelled from the Fourth International for refusing to defend North Korea against the UN/U.S. imperialist forces. From Islamic "holy warriors" in Afghanistan to the CIA-financed Solidarnosc "union" in Poland, the Cliffites repeatedly sided with U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union in the Cold War. When George Bush the elder's man Boris Yeltsin seized power in Moscow in August 1991, the ISO *hailed* this counterrevolutionary power grab, writing: "Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991). But Soviet working people are not rejoicing. By supporting a millionaire bourgeois politician and purveyor of anti-worker protectionism, the ISO is only dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's" of its reformist politics.

Nader's Greens bring to mind the Henry Wallace Progressive Party in the 1948 elections, which appealed to Roosevelt New Deal Democrats for whom Harry Truman was too right-wing to stomach. When calls arose to support the Wallace third party movement, the founder of American Trotskyism James P. Cannon pointed out:

"The next time, the role played by Roosevelt – which was a role of salvation for American capitalism – will most likely require a new party. In the essence of the matter that is what Wallace's party is. Wallace is the, as yet unacknowledged, candidate for the role of diverting the workers' movement for independent political action into the channel of bourgeois politics dressed up with radical demagoguery which costs nothing. That is what we have to say, and that's what we have to fight – vigorously and openly, with no qualifications at all. ... "Our specific task is the class mobilization of the workers against not only the two old parties, but any other capitalist parties that might appear."

–James P. Cannon, "Election Policy in 1948"

That is the task that the Internationalist Group fights for today as well.

Forge a Multi-Racial Revolutionary Workers Party!

In Seattle and D.C., the anti-WTO/IMF demonstrations were overwhelmingly white in composition. This was particularly evident in Washington, a 70 percent black city, where black cops confronted middle-class white youth. Cheerleaders for the "new movement" ascribe this to lingering "identity politics" in the black community (which "politically correct" liberals used to support). But in fact, black nationalist politics are far less prevalent today than a decade ago. The fact is that the anti-"globalization" demonstrations have not fought for a program defending the interests of the oppressed black, Latino and immigrant population. And in the name of

Correction

The IG leaflet "Break with All the Capitalist Parties—Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" (July 2000) originally stated, incorrectly, that Socialist Action supported Nader, and gave the new name of the Labor Militant group (which did support Nader) as Socialist Appeal when it should have said Socialist Alternative. These mistakes were corrected in a second edition of the leaflet, reprinted above.

class-collaborationist “unity” they have allied with the black capitalist politicians like Street who are the bosses of the black cops and who preside over the continued poverty of inner-city ghettos and barrios.

The fight for the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal can powerfully cut across this racial divide, but only if it is fought on a clear *class* basis. Reformists like the Workers World Party who organize meetings and marches calling for a “new trial” for Jamal, instead of insisting that Mumia be freed, are pandering to Democratic liberals and appealing to the capitalist courts that have jailed *millions* of black youth over the last decade. The ISO’s taking up of the program for a *moratorium* on executions, instead of insisting on *abolishing the racist death penalty*, has the same effect. At the same time, black nationalist demagogues like Louis Farrakhan and Khallid Muhammad – spokesmen for “black capitalism” who want to exploit a captive ghetto market (even providing black security guards for government housing projects) – are also an obstacle to a multiracial class struggle against the capitalist courts and cops.

In Washington, at the same time as the April protests against the IMF and World Bank, black residents were facing evictions organized by the black Democratic city “government” which does the bidding of the Republican racists on the House D.C. Committee. A real struggle against capitalism must mobilize against the plantation overseers like John Street (and Wilson Goode, who authorized the police bombing of the MOVE commune). It must fight to oust the labor misleaders who are today playing footsie with Ralph Nader in order to pressure the Democrats. In fact, the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy has bound the working class to the Democratic Party for decades, providing cash and endless man-hours on phone banks and clamping down on labor action in order not to embarrass their capitalist “allies.” According to AFL-CIO chief Sweeney, *one-third* of the Democratic delegates at the L.A. convention are union members (*Los Angeles Times*, 20 July).

The fight to free Mumia directly intersects the struggle for working-class political independence from the capitalist parties. Labor reformists at a May 12 conference in Oakland initiated by the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal called on unions to pressure their delegates at the Democratic convention to ask for a “new trial” for Jamal and to oppose former Philadelphia D.A. and mayor Rendell as Democratic National Committee chairman! How grotesque! As the recent execution of Shaka Sankofa underlines, the whole history of Mumia’s persecution should make it clear that anyone fighting to free this courageous “voice of the voiceless” and fighter for the oppressed must demand a clear break from all the parties of capital. To lead the fight to put an end to racist police brutality, it is necessary to build a multi-racial revolutionary workers party that acts as a proletarian “tribune of the people,” in Lenin’s words, championing the cause of all of the oppressed.

Such a party can only be built in the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution. ■

Bourgeois Election Fiasco...

continued from page 11

as if they are intent on winning the anti-Soviet Cold War. As inter-imperialist skirmishing increasingly resembles the period leading up to World War I, the Pentagon seems determined to follow the path of the French general staff under Marshall Foch, who combined a toothless “strategy of the offensive” with a supposedly impregnable line of forts to withstand German artillery.

Liberal critics have pointed out that building a Maginot Line in the sky wouldn’t head off a serious nuclear attack from Russia, as dozens of the hundreds of missiles would inevitably get through the leaky net. But then, Star Wars has nothing to do with defense. It is a plan to give U.S. imperialism a *first-strike capability*, that is the ability to knock out any potential threat from a nuclear-armed opponent, so that it can then use this superiority to *blackmail* the rest of the world. Who in their right mind thinks North Korea, Iran or Iraq are going to try to nuke the United States? The Pentagon “missile defense” is immediately aimed at China, Washington’s current prime target and by far the largest of the remaining deformed workers states, which has only a few dozen nuclear missiles. If Beijing’s Stalinist rulers don’t open the doors wide enough for capitalism in the negotiations for entry into the World Trade Organization, then Washington is threatening to enforce its “open door” policy for counterrevolution with military means.

Star Wars II is also directed against the European NATO “allies,” as was the Persian Gulf War. The vast bulk of the Persian Gulf oil goes to Europe, not the U.S., and Bush Sr., like his son W. a veteran oil man, was intent on keeping Washington’s hand on the spigot. The French and British both have token nuclear forces about the size of China’s, and if amid heightened inter-imperialist rivalry the U.S. rattled some missiles to back up its trade demands, a space-based “defense,” however leaky, might help intimidate them. Of course, they have an easy way around this – to ally with now-capitalist Russia, with its still enormous nuclear weapons stockpile and several thousand missiles. That is what Russian leader Vladimir Putin is offering, and what German chancellor Schroeder and French president Chirac have been toying with.

Bush wants to fortify the U.S.’ “back yard” in Latin America, to use his fellow rancher and former Coca-Cola exec, Mexican president Vicente Fox, to deal with irksome nationalists like Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. U.S. intervention in Colombia could quickly escalate under the Bush/Cheney administration. It was the Republican Congress which first called for the “Plan Colombia” with its \$1.3 billion in counterinsurgency aid disguised as fighting a “war on drugs.” Hundreds of U.S. “trainers” are already in Colombia, in numbers similar to U.S. forces in South Vietnam in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, the new administration has to spurn North Korean offers to recognize U.S. hegemony in the North Pacific, since cordial relations with the Kim Jong Il regime would undercut the rationale for its space “defense” program. The Vietnamese

Communist Party general secretary angered Clinton by reminding him that it was the U.S. that invaded Vietnam, but Vietnam won the war. And from the Bay of Pigs to the bizarre case of “raft child” Elián González, Democrats and Republicans are united in virulent hatred of the Cuban Revolution.

As U.S. rulers seek to maintain an overextended *pax americana*, the stage is set for bloody imperialist adventures on the road to World War III. But as former Stanford University academic and CIA advisor Chalmers Johnson noted in a recent interview (*Der Spiegel*, 6 November 2000):

“At some point the Americans will lose their dominance, but as long as it continues they will want to play the role of a substitute Rome.... The ‘*pax romana*’ was to a certain extent more the expression of a civilization than of an empire. But with the exception of rock music fans, there are few people who would identify the U.S. with the concept of civilization.”

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The question is how to fight the imperialist machine of war, racism and brutal exploitation. The vast majority of the left is currently pushing the “spirit of Seattle,” claiming that a new movement has arisen out of the November 1999 demonstrations against the World Trade Organization and their sequels (Washington, April 2000; Republican and Democratic conventions, August 2000; Prague, September 2000). We have emphasized that the political core of this heterogeneous “movement” against “globalization” is bourgeois nationalism. In the imperialist countries, this means protectionist poison setting U.S. workers against their class brothers and sisters in Europe, Asia and Latin America (see “Not Nationalist Protectionism vs. ‘Globalization’ – For Socialist Revolution to Sweep Away Imperialism!” *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000). This was the basis for the rotten bloc of reformist leftists with China-bashing “AFL-CIA” Cold Warriors and fascistic elements like Buchanan. Electorally, the Seattle “movement” built support for Nader’s bourgeois Greens and for Gore’s Democrats in November.

A key task is to break the chains binding the working class to the capitalist Democratic Party and forge a revolutionary workers party. Some \$56 million in union funds were channeled to the Democrats. One-third of Democratic convention delegates were union members and one in ten was a member of a teachers union. A layer of union activists hooked up with Nader, including many around the stillborn “Labor Party” with its politics of national chauvinism. In New York a phantom “Working Families Party” was set up to corral votes for Al Gore and Hillary Clinton from those who couldn’t bring themselves to vote Democratic. The existence of these outfits is a sign of the widespread discontent among working people with Clinton’s “New Democrats,” whose “achievements” consist of implementing parts of the Republican program. They are all pressure groups on the Democratic Party, trying to push it back toward traditional liberalism. They are not a “step in the right direction” but roadblocks to the necessary political mobilization of the working people together with black, Latino, Asian and other minorities on a revolutionary *class* basis.

We seek to forge an *internationalist* workers party. Nader

is aggressively nationalist, as were the Seattle and D.C. protests. They have no program for the huge immigrant population which makes up some of the most combative sectors of the working class. Today the U.S. population has the highest percentage of immigrants since the 1920s. More than half the population of New York City is foreign-born. Whether legal or “illegal,” these millions of proletarians have no political rights, which puts them at the mercy of sweatshop bosses, and are frequently the scapegoats for racist reaction. Clinton just signed a budget bill denying residency to Salvadorans and Haitians, while Nicaraguan rightists and Cuban *gusanos* get automatic residency – which didn’t win Gore the *gusano* vote, despite his pandering to Miami counterrevolutionaries over the Elián affair.

While various immigrant rights groups call for “amnesty,” which accepts the racist immigration laws, the Internationalist Group demands *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* – everyone who has made it here can stay here, with the same rights as everyone else, and *stop the deportations!* We fight to *mobilize labor to stop the migra (INS) raids*, to put an end to star chamber deportation trials in which immigrant defendants are not even told the charges against them. The IG also fights to defend bi-lingual education and opposes chauvinist “English only” and other anti-immigrant laws. A revolutionary workers party must fight as well to defend the Palestinian people against Zionist terror and to mobilize labor action against the Colombia war. It must demand an end to the deadly sanctions on Iraq, which have killed more than 1.5 million Iraqi children, and defend the Cuban deformed workers state against the imperialist stranglehold and internal counterrevolution. It must denounce the imperialist wars such as the 1990-91 Desert Slaughter and 1999 war on Yugoslavia and every bloody attack by the biggest terrorist and enemy of human rights in the world, U.S. imperialism.

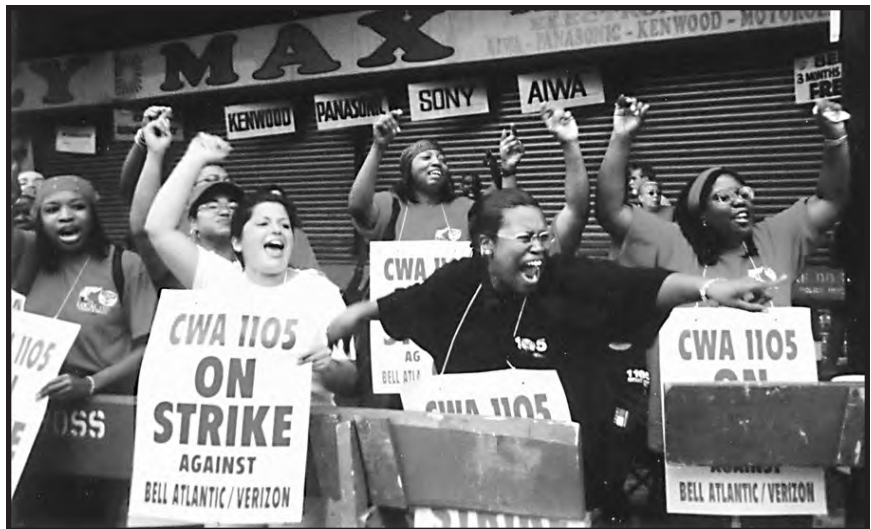
The fight against black oppression must be in the forefront of a class-struggle program. First and foremost is the fight against racist police brutality and the death penalty. Texas governor Bush executed more people than the rest of the states combined in year 2000 (45 out of 88). After almost two decades on Pennsylvania’s death row, revolutionary black journalist and former Black Panther spokesman Mumia Abu-Jamal is in grave danger. Lame duck Republican governor Tom Ridge would love to improve his chances for an eventual slot in the Bush administration by killing this courageous spokesman for the oppressed. But reformists like the WWP, ISO and RCP would subordinate the fight to save Mumia to bourgeois liberals by calling for a “new trial” for Jamal and for a “moratorium” on the death penalty instead of demanding outright, “*Free Mumia! Abolish the racist death penalty!*” As we fight against legal lynching by judges in black robes, it is necessary to *organize worker/black mobilizations* against the executioners in blue uniforms and to *smash the KKK lynchers in white sheets*. At the same time, we oppose the attacks on affirmative action and fight for full equality for homosexuals and *defense of gay rights* against every attack.

Women’s gains will also come under heavy fire with a

racist advocate of “Christian family values” like John Ashcroft in control of the “Justice” Department. But again, the Democrats are no alternative. Jimmy Carter eliminated government funding of abortions for poor women in the 1970s, and Bill Clinton has sought to avoid head-on collision with the “right-to-lifers” over such issues as late-term abortions. What the anti-abortion rightists were unable to ban by law they have gone after with intimidation and murder. Numerous abortion doctors and nurses have been shot and clinics bombed. More than four-fifths of all counties in the U.S. today have *no* abortion provider, and some whole states only have one or two! Under Bush, feminist liberals who pushed for the federal “clinic defense law” are liable to find the feds arresting *them* instead of the anti-abortion bigots. The Internationalist Group stands for *free abortion on demand with high-quality free medical care for all. We call for militant, mass defense of the clinics* and for mobilizing the power of labor to disperse the “god squads.” The IG also fights for the full integration of women into social labor by winning *free, 24-hour day care, and for equal pay for equal work.*

As the economy heads down there has been a rash of announcements of layoffs, plant shutdowns and liquidation of whole companies. With unsold cars piling up in the dealers’ lots, tens of thousands of auto workers are being sent home (GM alone laid off 77,000). After lax year-end sales, national merchandisers like Bradlees and Montgomery Wards are going out of business. Motorola is closing its last cell phone manufacturing plant in the U.S. to move all its production to Mexico, while Converse sneakers is shutting down its U.S. and Mexican plants to move its manufacturing entirely to Asia. The response to this must not be nationalist protectionism but internationalist class struggle bringing together U.S., Mexican and Asian workers in a fight against their common enemy. And after a long period of losing labor battles, a number of recent strikes have made limited gains, including the 1997 Teamsters strike against UPS and last summer’s CWA strike against Verizon phone company (formerly Bell Atlantic).

But the power of labor is hamstrung by the ties to the Democrats. In New York City, teachers are working without a contract because the teachers federation tops didn’t want to hurt Hillary Clinton’s chances of being elected senator by walking out during the election campaign, and because they fear a frontal collision with hard-nosed Republican Rudy Giuliani (whom UFT leader Randi Weingarten and various other NYC labor leaders gave de facto support to in the last election). Instead there should be preparation for a hard strike in defense of public education, which is under attack from the White House on down. Any strike action in Bush’s America will have to gird for all-out class struggle or face the prospect



Verizon phone strike (August 2000) highlighted intersection of class, race and women’s oppression. Workers party must defend all the oppressed.

of drawn-out defeat, as happened to the Detroit newspaper strikers. But from old-line hacks to “reformers” who got into office by appealing to the bosses’ government, the sellout labor bureaucracy is so wedded to class collaboration that they don’t know how to run a serious strike if they wanted to, which they don’t.

A revolutionary workers party can only be forged on the basis of a Marxist program that draws the lessons of past struggles, won and lost. It must be a Leninist party that acts as a “tribune of the people,” championing all the oppressed; a party built by cohering a nucleus of cadres who steel themselves as professional revolutionaries by applying those lessons in the class struggle. It must be a Trotskyist party, a party of irreconcilable revolutionary opposition which fights the popular-front class collaborators at every turn. George W. Bush will not be defeated by cozying up to Gore-Clinton or Democratic and Green party liberals who represent the enemy class. While revolutionaries in the U.S. have gone through a prolonged dry spell, we must never forget the strategic importance of our position in the heart of the hegemonic imperialist “superpower.” Without proletarian revolution here in the belly of the beast, no revolution anywhere in the world will be secure. But a revolutionary reconstruction of the United States in the framework of international socialist revolution can bury forever the bitter heritage of slavery and open the doors to a communist future in which the free development of each is truly the condition for the free development of all.

In this country, all shades of opportunism reflect the pressure of arrogant Yankee imperialism. But the old miners’ song “Which Side Are You On?” puts it well: “Their flag it is red, white and blue, but ours is red as blood.” Communists proclaim that *working people have no fatherland*. What is indispensable for the international proletariat is a *world party of socialist revolution*. The Internationalist Group seeks to build that party in the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. We urge you to join us in this struggle. ■

Trotskyists Fight for Class-Struggle Program at Brazil Labor Congress

The following resolutions were presented by the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Caucus, affiliated with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil) to the 7th Congress of Brazil's Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) labor federation, held last August at Serra Negra in the state of São Paulo. Reflecting the struggle led by our comrades of the CLC against the revoking of the six-hour day by the National Steel Company (CSN) last April, leading to the firing of LQB spokesman Cerezo (see "Brazilian Steel Company Assault on Six-Hour Day," *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000), four CLC delegates were elected from the metal workers union to the Rio de Janeiro state CUT congress and two delegates to the national CUT congress.

Elected on the revolutionary program of Trotskyism (the CLC program is printed in *The Internationalist* No. 4), CLC delegates presented the motions to the state congress in July, where the resolutions received support at several workshops and were officially forwarded to the national CUT congress. There the CUT bureaucracy, linked to the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT—the reformist Workers Party of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva), ruled that the CLC motions and *all* resolutions from the state of Rio de Janeiro could not be voted on at the national congress.

The resolutions are translated from issue No. 5 (August-September 2000) of the LQB's newspaper, *Vanguarda Operária*.

Cops Out of the Unions and CUT!

Police repression has been a constant throughout the history of movements of labor and the oppressed. The basics of the class struggle have provided bloody proof that any alliance with police of any kind is fatal. The cops cannot "join with" their victims, since they are the bourgeoisie's main weapon for repressing the exploited and oppressed, an essential condition for capitalism's survival.

In Brasília, the police under governor Joaquim Roriz murdered a worker who was participating in a strike [of Federal District employees] against starvation wages and terrible living and working conditions. Nor do not forget those who carried out the massacres of Candelária, Vigário Geral, Acari, Diadema, Cerro Corá, Eldorado dos Carajás, Cidade de Deus and so many others.

In São Paulo, up to July 2000 some 45 massacres have been carried out, with a total of 144 dead, most of them black and poor. In Rio de Janeiro, the racist police constantly carry out racist "exterminations," invading ghettos and *favelas* [slums], leaving a trail of blood and victims, including women, children and youth.

In Bahia, during the commemoration of the "500th Anniversary of the Discovery of Brazil," the Military Police under Antônio Carlos Magalhães [a leader of the Brazilian

right and president of the Senate] violently attacked Indian demonstrators and others protesting the "discovery" farce, wounding approximately 65 and jailing 150 – an assault that was strongly denounced in much of the international press. As part of their daily work of sinister atrocities against the oppressed and exploited, the São Paulo state Military Police of Governor Mário Covas violently attacked the state teachers' strike, wounding several people, destroying the strikers' encampment and arresting union leaders.

The landless peasants' movement has had the highest number of victims at the hands of the federal, state and municipal police forces.

Yet despite these denunciations, which are but a drop of water in the ocean of police murders, torture and corruption, there are those on the "left" who defend alliances with police and sometimes back cop repression as in the case of Porto Alegre deputy mayor José Fortunati (PT – Rio Grande do Sul), who puts forward apologies for the state's Brigada Militar (*Folha de São Paulo*, 31 January 2000), calling for more weapons and better equipment for these militarized police so they can perfect their machinery of death against the oppressed and exploited. In a broadcast on the TV Bandeirantes chain, during the São Paulo teachers' strike in May, PT mayoral candidate Marta Suplicy distanced herself from "radicals" by defending the use of the Metropolitan Guard to "clear" Paulista Avenue of street merchants and take down the teachers' strike encampments.

Other "radical" leftists defend Zubatovism (police unionism), "strikes by our brothers the police," "dissolution of the Military Police" with cops to be "elected" and "controlled" by the population, and other absurdities. Yet none of these proposals, which at best are reformist in nature, can "humanize" the police.

Another fallacy is the argument, widely used on the left, that many cops are recruited from working-class families. As Trotsky warned on this question: "Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker" ["What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat," January 1932]. Repression is not a question of individuals or tactics, nor of who currently holds office, from the lowest to the highest levels of government. The police are a fundamental part of the state, together with all the laws, the courts, etc. It is a function of the capitalist state, which in Friedrich Engels' famous definition is reduced to "special bodies of armed men" to defend the bourgeoisie. We demand the expulsion of every kind of police and security guard from the CUT and all the unions, and an end to union support for "strikes" by the cops, the armed fist of racist capitalism against the workers and oppressed.

Down with capitalist repression! Immediate freedom for all imprisoned militants from movements of the workers and oppressed!

Defense of Women's Rights

Defense of women's rights is crucial for the workers movement as a whole. The situation of women shows the degree of progress or reaction in a society. A horrible case is what is occurring in Afghanistan, where the victory of the anti-Soviet reactionaries financed by the CIA brought, among other things, the illegalization of education for girls, the firing of all women teachers and the slavery of forced use of the veil. Around the world, women suffer discrimination. In Brazil, oppression is symbolized by the lack of basic rights and forced sterilization of black and poor women.

We fight for free 24-hour child care centers; the end of all discrimination against women and homosexuals; equal pay for equal work; free abortion on demand; high-quality, free medical care for all; union control of hiring and training, with special attention to traditionally excluded sectors (women, blacks, youth). The struggle against oppression can win only as a struggle against capitalism.

For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

Photo by Sebastião Salgado of Afghan women in head-to-toe veil (burqa), 1996.

Mobilize the Power of the Working Class to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now!

We demand immediate freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black journalist known as the "voice of the voiceless," condemned to death in the state of Pennsylvania (USA). Defense of this courageous fighter against oppression has become the international symbol of the struggle against the racist death penalty.

On 22 June 2000, Shaka Sankofa (Gary Graham) was executed in Texas, a victim of the racist death penalty promoted by U.S. bourgeois justice. Shaka Sankofa fought 19 years to demonstrate his innocence. He was accused and condemned for murder with no material proofs, based on the testimony of a single witness who supposedly saw the killer from a dark place at a distance of over 30 feet. Several witnesses who denied that Sankofa was the killer were never heard by the court. Sankofa was the victim of Yankee legal lynching and racist

terror. He is one more among the 135 people, largely black like him, sent to death by Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush in his five years as Texas governor. At the same time, the courts' refusal to hear witnesses corresponds to the "Effective Death Penalty" law promulgated by Democratic president Bill Clinton.

Sankofa was executed by lethal injection...; this is yet another warning and shows how the U.S. bourgeoisie courts a certain part of the electorate by means of the racist death penalty. Insisting on his innocence, in his last moments of life Sankofa said: "This is nothing more than pure and simple murder.... Nothing more than state-sanctioned murder, state-sanctioned lynching, right here in America." The execution of Sankofa shows how the Yankee bourgeoisie proceeds with its raging racist terror and constitutes a warning that we must go forward with the campaign to free Jamal now.

We will not forget Shaka Sankofa and the victims of racist terror! Down with capitalist justice and the racist death penalty!

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, seção da Liga pela Quarta Internacional

Nº 5 agosto-setembro 2000

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Dança dos bilhões em Wall Street, vaga de lutas na América Latina Pelo internacionalismo revolucionário, não ao frentepopulismo nacionalista

No período recente os contradições da economia capitalista mundial, sob o governo de Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), e a crise da América Latina, em especial a crise brasileira, se agravaram. O imperialismo, sobretudo o norte-americano, intensificou sua estratégia de dominação global, buscando a integração de todas as regiões do mundo por meio de um sistema de livre comércio...

Não ao protecionismo nacionalista contra a "globalização".
Lutar pela revolução socialista para acabar com o imperialismo.

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

agosto-setembro 2000

Lições da greve de 1990 na CSN Terror do estado burguês contra a luta operária

"Captura e neutralização"

"CAPTURA E NEUTRALIZAÇÃO" As greves operárias em 1990 foram derrotadas porque as lideranças sindicais não foram capazes de romper com a "neutralização" operária. O estado burguês conseguiu capturar e neutralizar a luta operária...

Os patrões demitem Cerezo, porta-voz da LQB, por dirigir a resistência
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In the face of new attacks from those who are pushing for Mumia's execution, it is urgent to continue mobilizing the labor movement and the oppressed around the world to demand: Freedom now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Down with the racist death penalty!

CUT congresses must urge affiliated unions to carry out campaigns in their newsletters and graphic materials explaining Jamal's situation and stressing the campaign for his immediate freedom! The CUT must also devote part of its financial resources to producing its own graphic materials on the case, including radio and TV spots; direct messages to the unions that they shall include the demand for Jamal's immediate freedom in their demonstrations, strikes, occupations and protests, as the bank workers of Caixa Econômica Federal and Banco do Brasil did in Rio de Janeiro last year; and orient and organize a general work stoppage of the affiliated unions – as the Rio state teachers union did on 23 April 1999 – if a new death warrant is signed against Jamal.

Popular Frontism and the Struggle for the Revolutionary Independence of the Proletariat

The workers of Brazil, like those throughout Latin America and all capitalist countries, face a savage attack. The bourgeoisie which celebrated the supposed "death of communism" is now targeting union conquests and the democratic rights of the working masses. The government of [Brazilian president] Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the state governments, including those the PT is part of, have imposed brutal cuts in real wages, leading to a series of strikes and mobilizations in recent months. In Rio Grande do Sul, the government of Olívio Dutra of the supposed PT left wing insisted on paying teachers 130 reais [about US\$65], less than the miserable minimum wage! Yet these workers struggles remain isolated, even when they occur in the same sector, as was the case with the teachers' strikes in Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Pará, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro, the continuing university strike, and recent stoppages in public and private schools in the city and state of Rio. The members of the Landless Peasants Movement (MST) are being attacked by the police, who defend the landowners, among them large estate owner Cardoso, yet the workers movement does not mobilize its enormous power against this. Ritual marches, like the July 25 "Cry of the Excluded," only highlight the lack of a real joint struggle of the working people of the cities and countryside.

Partial and isolated struggles, attacked with the full force of the state, are condemned to failure by the flagrant refusal of the unions' leaders to undertake the necessary class-struggle fight against the bosses' assault on jobs and wages. The responsibility for this lies with the union bureaucrats, from the Força Sindical labor federation which is openly linked to the employers, to the CUT bureaucracy, which bows to capital's orders. In the case of our federation, this subordination is expressed in the politics of the "popular front" led by the PT of Lula, which ties the workers movement to sectors of the bourgeoisie.

This is the same class-collaborationist policy which led to the defeat of the working class in Chile under Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular in the '70s, resulting in the Pinochet coup which cost tens of thousands of Chilean workers and leftists their lives.

In Brazil, popular frontism opened the road for the 1964 military coup. And in the period after the fall of the military dictatorship [in 1985], this policy of class collaboration has been the crucial obstacle to the struggle for the emancipation of the workers and all the oppressed. From the Frente Brasil Popular in 1989 to the "Union of the People" with Leonel Brizola's PDT [the bourgeois populist Democratic Labor Party] in '98 and today's alliance which extends even to the large landowners of the PFL [the rightist Party of the Liberal Front], popular frontism continues to disperse, defeat and paralyze the power of the proletariat. To avoid new defeats and open the road to victory, it is urgent to break with popular frontism and fight for the independence of the proletariat, forging a genuine revolutionary workers party which fights for a workers and peasants government as part of the world-wide struggle for socialism.

The various left tendencies in the CUT present different variants of popular-front politics. This is expressed in the slogan "*Basta FHC*" (Enough of Cardoso) put forward by Articulação [headed by Lula, the dominant social-democratic tendency in the PT and CUT] and the PCdoB [the Stalinist Communist Party of Brazil], as well as "*Fora FHC*" (Cardoso Out) pushed by the PSTU [United Socialist Workers Party, followers of the late pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno] and its Movement for a Socialist Caucus together with Socialist Union Alternative and other "opposition" groups. Their common line is to avoid fighting the capitalist system itself and give support, in one or another form, to the bourgeois and popular-frontist "opposition."

It is urgent to carry out a consistent fight against popular frontism. In Rio de Janeiro, the PT left (Força Socialista, Articulação de Esquerda) criticizes Anthony Garotinho [the state governor, a leader of the populist PDT elected with the support of Lula's PT]. Yet the fact is that Benedita da Silva [the deputy governor of Rio] collaborates with him and is part of his government. As for the PSTU, it just declared its support to Benedita in the name of the "Union of the Left," in other words a mini-popular front.

The popular frontists denounce "neo-liberalism" and "globalization," when in reality the source of the attack against the working people is not merely the ruling classes' current policy but the capitalist system of the masters of Wall Street and their junior partners in semi-colonial countries like Brazil. The same reformist forces wave the banner of "national sovereignty" in order to ally with bourgeois politicians like [Minas Gerais governor] Itamar Franco – who together with [former president] Collor de Melo privatized the National Steel Company (CSN) – with his short-lived proposal for a moratorium on foreign debt payments, when the only real answer is a struggle for the international socialist revolution which would abolish the imperialist debt.

There is talk of a struggle for a 36-hour work week. Yet when there was a fight to defend the six-hour day at CSN, which was won in the 1988 strike, it was stabbed in the back by the Força Sindical bureaucracy and abandoned in practice by the CUT. To ask for a minimum wage of R\$177 (US\$100) a month, as do the PT and CUT leaders together with the PFL, is not to combat grinding poverty but merely to beg for crumbs. What is needed is a class-struggle fight against starvation

wages and for the sliding scale of wages and the sliding scale of hours, to divide the work among all the workers. To win victory, the fight against racial oppression and the oppression of women must be armed with the program of black liberation and women's liberation through socialist revolution. What is needed is a transitional program which passes from the defense

of workers rights under attack to a class-struggle offensive aimed at overthrowing capitalism throughout the world.

The CUT must break with the bourgeoisie!

For worker-peasant-student mobilizations to sweep away the starvation plans of Cardoso, the International Monetary Fund and the popular front!

No Evidence? So What, "We're Going to Fire Him"

Popular Front in Brazil Steel Town Goes After Reds

City bosses in Brazil's steel town of Volta Redonda launched a new attack against our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), seeking an openly political suspension and firing of LQB militant Geraldo Ribeiro, a spokesman for the Class Struggle Caucus (CLC).

Last April, the National Steel Company (CSN) peremptorily fired LQB leader Cerezo for his role in the fight to defend the six-hour day won in the historic 1988 steel strike. Then in October, the Popular Front coalition that governs this company town sought to extend the political purge to the municipal workforce, suspending comrade Ribeiro from his job in a municipal print shop. Municipal secretary of administration Hudson Braga declared in the main local newspaper, "we're going to fire him" (*Diário do Vale*, 23 October 2000).

The pretext for this political witch hunt was the false accusation that a year previously, Ribeiro had punched a workmate's timecard for him. The city government established a "commission" which "investigated" the case for a full year. Result: no proof whatsoever of the alleged "crime."

What was really behind this was explained in a CLC bulletin (October 2000):

"Several of those involved in carrying out the persecution of Geraldo are members of the *Guarda Municipal* (municipal police). The president of the commission is the commander of the Guarda Municipal and is certainly seeking vengeance for the campaign Geraldo led in 1996 to expel *guardas* from the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union. Another, also a *guarda*, is head of the personnel department which shares responsibility for the disciplinary action. And the person calling for the punishment is a well-known strikebreaker who in the past was stopped by strike pickets led by Geraldo."

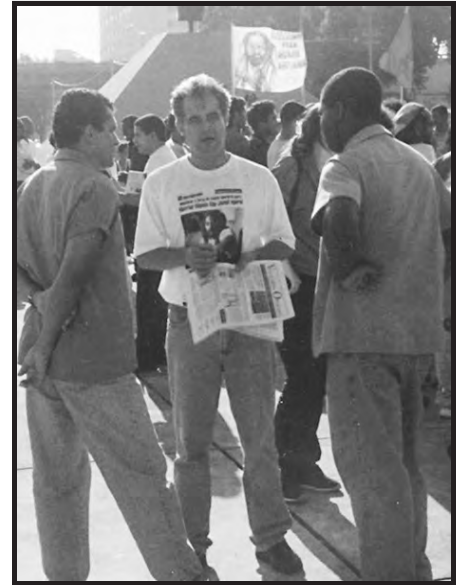
The bulletin notes that the city authorities, together with the pro-police provocateur Artur Fernandes, have carried out an unending series of police/judicial and gangster attacks against the LQB and CLC in reprisal for the campaign against the cops and "our unmasking of the acts of racism and anti-woman discrimination, acts of oppression which show the bourgeois nature of all popular fronts."

When the city's kangaroo-court commission finally released its official decision, it stated in classic Catch-22 style: "After examining the testimony, this Commission concluded that due to the absence of proofs, this violation can no longer be characterized as being of a 'grave' nature leading to the firing of the employee. However, the denunciation and deposition of the Chief of the Division of Pay and Attendance, who holds a position of authority in the Administration, cannot be dis-

regarded." Thus they decreed a two-week suspension, which was followed by Braga's declaration that "we're going to fire" Ribeiro. As the CLC bulletin noted: "This is an excellent example of how the bourgeoisie itself shows the class nature of all its 'justice' and 'morality.' They openly state that if the worker tells the truth and the boss lies, it makes no difference since one is a worker and the other a boss.... Yes, gentlemen of the Popular Front, it's a struggle of class against class!"

Even the bourgeois press raised its eyebrows at the absurdity of the decision, which one regional daily called "peculiar, to say the least," adding that it "smells of political persecution" (*O Dia*, 20 October 2000). It noted Geraldo's role as a CLC activist, as did *Diário do Vale*, which ran several articles on developments in the case and quoted Ribeiro pointing out that the cops sought vengeance "because he was president of the Municipal Workers Union when the municipal *guardas* were expelled."

With legal counsel from the CUT labor federation, Ribeiro sued the city and won: the suspension was overturned in a decision which noted the lack of any proof against him. Yet the threat to carry through this political purge remains. As the CLC bulletin stressed, the Popular Front authorities see Ribeiro as an obstacle to the layoffs demanded by the drive against public workers' jobs throughout Brazil, an "offensive ordered directly from the Planalto (presidential palace) and president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, which goes together with his repression against landless peasants and activists of the workers movement, stemming from the starvation plans of the International Monetary Fund. To defeat these attacks, what's needed is a class-struggle fight and the forging of a revolutionary workers party." ■



Geraldo Ribeiro

Vanguarda Operária

Stay Tuned – New ICL Line Change Coming

Stalinists *Led* the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky

**Key Issue in East Europe and USSR Yesterday,
China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam Today**



Hungarian workers toppled Stalin statue in 1956 political revolution. Workers uprising, vowing to defend socialized property, led to split in the Stalinist bureaucracy. Most of Communist Party membership went over to the insurgents.

AUGUST 21 – For the past four years, the Spartacist League and International Communist League (SL/ICL) have vituperated against the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International (IG/LFI) for our exposure of their anti-Marxist claim that *the Stalinist bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in East Germany* (the DDR). We pointed out that the ICL had adopted, after the fact, the position of various pseudo-Trotskyist Stalinophobes who used this as “theoretical” justification for sidling up to the bourgeoisie and its direct agents who actually did lead the counterrevolution in the DDR (Kohl’s Christian Democrats and Brandt’s Social Democrats), the Soviet Union (Bush’s man Yeltsin) and East Europe (such as Solidarnosc, the Polish company union for the Vatican and CIA).

The SL/ICL’s new line was generated in its factional frenzy leading to the 1996 expulsion of several leading comrades, who then founded the Internationalist Group. In the July 1996 document published by these comrades, we noted that this line “portray[s] the Stalinist bureaucracy as spearheading

the destruction of the proletarian property forms on which it was an excrescence. In reality, this is the line that ‘Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through.’ The Spartacist tendency has always fought this kind of equation between the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and that of direct representatives of the capitalist class.”

For four years, issue after issue of the SL newspaper *Workers Vanguard* have repeated this line of a supposed Stalinist-led counterrevolution. In fact, the ICL viewed it as so important that they even wrote it into their revised “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program,” saying: “The Kremlin abetted by the East German Stalinists led the counterrevolution in the DDR” (*Spartacist* No. 54, Spring 1998). A major article on China in *WV* (No. 715, 11 June 1999) generalized it to the USSR and all of East Europe, saying flatly: “In the end, it was the Stalinists who led the counterrevolution.” In the same issue, a lengthy polemic against the Internationalist Group over China declared “we warn the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today is the Stalinist regime

itself. Not so the IG.”

WV was responding to our article, “Where Is China Going? Workers Political Revolution vs. Capitalist Counterrevolution” in *The Internationalist* No. 6 (November-December 1998), where we wrote:

“The leading force for bourgeois counterrevolution in China today is the *bourgeoisie* and powerful capitalist-restorationist forces inside and around the bureaucracy who are allied with it. Likewise, it was the German bourgeoisie of the Fourth Reich and its social-democratic running dogs who led the drive for capitalist reunification that obliterated the DDR in 1990....”

We noted that “the Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy has gone further than the government of any other deformed workers state in fostering market reforms that fuel capitalist forces,” which are now consolidating their power and influence. “But while the bureaucrats have provided the openings and opportunity for this process, the capitalists do not trust them. The bourgeoisie understands all too well that the governing layer in China is still dependent upon the economic structure of a workers state.” We quoted there from Trotsky’s November 1937 article, “Not a Workers’ and Not a Bourgeois State?” where he wrote:

“The struggle for domination, considered on a historical scale, is not between the proletariat and the bureaucracy, but between the proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is only the transmitting mechanism in this struggle.”

Rendering Revisionism More Precise

In verbal exchanges with the Internationalist Group, SLers loudly insisted over and over that from Berlin to Beijing the Stalinists led and were leading the counterrevolution. Then in late July of this year, something strange occurred in Mexico. As a militant of the Grupo Internacionalista was explaining to a contact the parallels between the ICL’s line on China and that of another pseudo-Trotskyist current, a supporter of the Grupo Espartaquista (GEM), the ICL’s Mexican group, piped up to deny that this is their line. “The bureaucracy as such is not leading the counterrevolution,” he said. When we pointed out that this contradicted their published position, he repeated: “The bureaucracy paved the way for counterrevolution, it is not itself leading it.” A little later our comrades encountered other GEM supporters, who admitted they had made “*una pequeña precisión*,” they were rendering their position “slightly more precise.”

A week later in Philadelphia, the Internationalist Group ran into a Spartacist League sales team. At the end of the day a half-hour discussion took place between IG and SL supporters, in which the SLers refused to say that the Stalinists were “leading” the counterrevolution in China. Instead, they said that the bureaucracy “opened the door” and “paved the way” to capitalist restoration. The bureaucracy doesn’t have the cohesion of a class, such as the bourgeoisie or proletariat, that could lead a revolution or counterrevolution, they added. When we pointed out that they were repeating, word for word, what the IG/LFI had written and what they had previously vociferously denounced, they replied, “it’s not a matter of a formulation.”

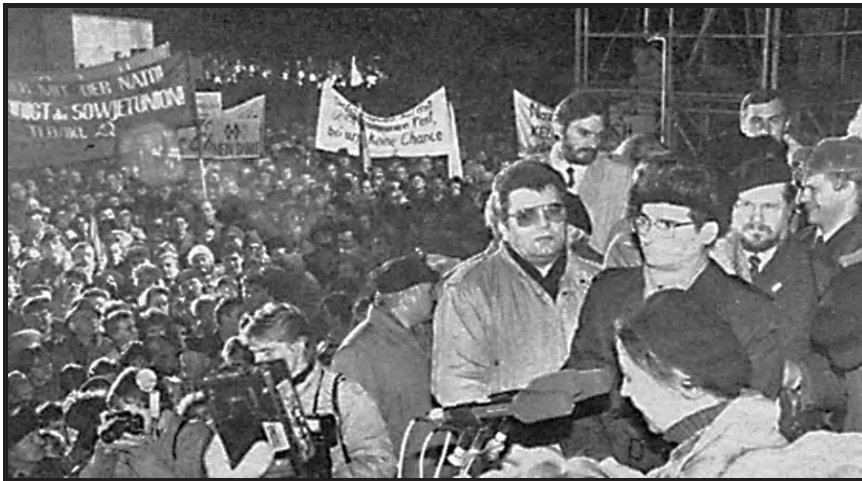
What was gold for the ICL yesterday, suddenly becomes fool’s gold today. Just a “formulation” which was being made “more precise”?! The ICL can’t figure out who led the counterrevolution in East Europe and the USSR and who is leading the counterrevolution in China today, affecting the fate of 1.2 billion people, one-fifth of the world’s population? This is no trivial matter. For any genuine communist, it’s vital to understand the difference between the traitorous misleaders of the working class (the Stalinists, social democrats and various reformist and centrist pseudo-socialists) and the *class enemy* (the bourgeoisie). What does the ICL’s talk of political revolution in China mean if they can’t tell Chinese workers where and how to direct their blows? And who will take them seriously, let alone follow them, when they keep changing the line of fire and calling one about-face after another?

We pointed out that this “formulation” was the theoretical linchpin of ICL spokesman Al Nelson’s attack on long-time WV editor and ICL executive committee member Jan Norden over Germany, leading up to the June 1996 expulsions. Nelson wrote that “Norden can’t seem to grasp” that “the SED [the East German Stalinists’ Socialist Unity Party] was *leading* the counterrevolution” in the DDR. “In a way Nelson was right,” responded a current member of the editorial board of *Workers Vanguard* during the exchange in Philadelphia. In a way?! How could the SED lead the counterrevolution, we challenged, when the entire SED Politburo from Erich Honecker on down ended up in the jails of the German Fourth Reich?

A recent SL recruit said the Kremlin led the counterrevolution because the Soviet Army controlled the military forces in the DDR. An IG spokesman replied by asking, if the Soviet Army was leading the counterrevolution, why didn’t the ICL call for withdrawal of the Soviet troops? In fact, our comrade noted, several groups falsely claiming to be Trotskyist took exactly the line of the present-day ICL, that the Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution, and used this as justification for calling for removal of the Soviet troops. The ICL at the time opposed this because it correctly understood that this would open the door to the imperialists.

What about in the Soviet Union, we asked, did the Stalinists lead the counterrevolution there? No, said ICLers, it was a different situation. We pointed out that their new line change contradicted their own revised Declaration of Principles. Perhaps they would now issue a version 2.1? This was met by silence from the assembled SLers. We pointed out that they had not responded when we said the ICL’s line of the bureaucracy leading the counterrevolution was Shachtmanite, and their silence showed they knew this was true. More silence. We pointed out that this was not about word games; that their repeated line changes reflected a different policy. Again, not a peep.

This silence was curious indeed coming from the SL whose practice has been to stage “scream-ins,” trying to talk over and shout down our comrades. The exchanges in Mexico City and Philadelphia referred to here involved quite a few ICL members and were witnessed by others. It is possible that the ICL will try to slip in its latest line “rectification” unnoticed, without calling attention to it. But if it does, every



If Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution in East Germany, why did ICL join Stalinist SED leaders in speaking at 3 January 1990 anti-fascist mobilization at Treptow Soviet War Memorial, East Berlin?

ICL supporter will know that the leadership is covering up the fact that they vociferously argued one line against the IG/LFI and now they have adopted another line. Many ICLers may cynically pass this off, but others may have some “stomach aches” digesting this latest turnaround.

The Dual Nature of the Stalinist Bureaucracy

The theoretical and programmatic ramifications of the ICL’s line are far-reaching. This revision of Trotsky’s analysis of the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy negated what the SL/ICL had written on the “Russian question” for three decades, and was sharply counterposed to its own intervention fighting counterrevolution in the DDR and the USSR during 1989-92. It would also deeply disorient forces fighting for workers political revolution against encroaching capitalism in the bureaucratically deformed workers states today, first and foremost China, along with Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

In our July 1996 document on the expulsions from the ICL, titled *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, we emphasized:

“The Stalinist bureaucracies, a parasitic intermediate layer, *undercut the defense* of the workers states by their treacherous policy of conciliating imperialism and politically suppressing the workers, and thus *prepared the way* for counterrevolution. In this way the Stalinists *play a counterrevolutionary role*, even more so in their international policies. But the actual overthrow of the bureaucratically deformed workers states and installation of capitalist rule was *led* not by the bureaucracies but by the direct agents of capitalism.”

There should be no mistaking the seriousness of this question. Indeed, WV No. 651 (13 September 1996) wrote that the IG “fume[s] over a statement that the East German Stalinist ‘SED in 1989-90 was leading the counterrevolution,’ claiming that this denies Trotsky’s position on the dual nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy.” On the contrary, said WV, the IG’s position was “an outright revision of the Trotskyist understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy.” This was its “proof” for the claim that the IG represents “Pabloism of the Second Mobilization.”

Yet today the SL/ICL is junking the position which it had previously declared the *sine qua non* of Trotskyism.

Trotsky’s actual position on the nature of Stalinism was summed up in his crucial work, “The Class Nature of the Soviet State” (October 1933). For many years the SL/ICL cited this article against myriad Stalinophobic opponents. Trotsky wrote that what is crucial is the specific class basis on which a bureaucracy arises: “The bureaucracy is indissolubly bound up with a ruling economic class, feeding itself upon the social roots of the latter, maintaining itself and falling together with it....

“The further unhindered development of bureaucratism must lead inevitably to the cessation of economic and cultural growth, to a terrible social crisis and to the downward plunge of the entire society. But this would

imply not only the collapse of the proletarian dictatorship but also the end of bureaucratic domination....

“[W]hether we take the variant of further successes of the Soviet regime or, contrariwise, the variant of its collapse, the bureaucracy in either case turns out to be not an independent class but an excrescence upon the proletariat. A tumor can grow to tremendous size and even strangle the living organism, but a tumor can never become an independent organism. “[The bureaucracy] defends the proletarian dictatorship with its own methods, but these methods are such as facilitate the victory of the enemy tomorrow. Whoever fails to understand this dual role of Stalinism in the USSR has understood nothing.”

Trotsky wrote these lines only a few months after Hitler had taken power in Germany, a world-historic defeat for the proletariat which had been made possible by Stalin’s disastrous line declaring the reformist Social Democrats to be “social-fascist” and refusing to form a united front with them against the actual fascists. On the eve of World War II, as the fate of the Soviet Union hung in the balance, a petty-bourgeois opposition in the Trotskyist movement led by Max Shachtman and James Burnham abandoned the Fourth International’s position of unconditional military defense of the USSR. Murry Weiss, a spokesman for the Trotskyist majority led by James P. Cannon, wrote in answer to the “Third Camp” minority:

“[I]t was this slight misconception as to who was the main enemy that helped to bury the German revolution.

“For the Marxists, the main enemy of the Russian working class, as well as the international working class, is the *class* enemy.... The Bolshevik-Leninists in the U.S.S.R. will be the best fighters and because of that they will tell the Russian workers the truth: In order to win this war against imperialism we must overthrow the traitor Stalin and appeal to the revolutionary working class of the world to come to our aid.” –“Marxist Criteria and the Character of the War,” [SWP] *Internal Bulletin*, February 1940

From the Soviet Union under Stalin to China under Mao’s heirs today, the indispensable instrument to lead workers politi-

cal revolution to oust the traitorous Stalinist bureaucracies is a Trotskyist (Bolshevik-Leninist) party. This is indissolubly bound up with forging such parties in the imperialist centers and the semi-colonial countries, reforging a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International to sweep away imperialism through international socialist revolution.

From “Feudalism” to Shachtmanism

WV No. 715 wrote on China, “The IG is fond of screaming how we have changed our line on every question under the sun.” Now they are doing it again, precisely over China. The ICL has changed its line on a whole number of key questions recently, usually in direct response to the LFI. In our July 1996 document we noted: “whether for simple factional animus or reflecting a deeper shift in the party, the ICL has now not only revised its own Leninist organizational norms and parts of its recent history, it has begun to adopt revisionist positions at the formal programmatic level. Most significantly, in the Germany dispute, the ICL has rejected important aspects of Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism.” Since then the ICL has changed its line on the colonial question, the popular front, permanent revolution, the general strike and labor mobilization against imperialist war, the nature of corporatist “unions” as well as the key thesis of the Transitional Program, writing off long-held Trotskyist and characteristically Spartacist positions.

For decades, the SL held that Leninists fight for independence for all colonies, as Lenin, Trotsky, the Third and Fourth Internationals insisted. Beginning in 1998, the SL declared “we do not presently advocate independence for Puerto Rico,” calling only for its “right” to separation from U.S. imperialist domination. From 1988 to 1997, the ICL called on workers and the oppressed in Mexico to “break with the Cárdenas popular front.” This key position of the GEM appeared in every issue of its newspaper. Then, as Cárdenas was about to be elected head of the Mexico City government and it was more crucial than ever to combat the popular front, the ICL dropped this line, concluding that Mexican workers are so besotted with nationalism that there is no point in calling for them to break from the class-collaborationist “alliance” with the bourgeois nationalist opposition party. Subsequently it declared a popular front impossible in any country without a mass workers party, thus contradicting Trotsky’s writings on India and China in the 1930s as well as the Spartacist tendency’s own writings on popular fronts from the anti-war movement in the U.S. to Bolivia, El Salvador and many other countries.

In some instances, as now appears to be the case over the nature of Stalinism, the ICL bombastically proclaimed a line only to withdraw it later when it couldn’t defend it under polemical fire. Thus in Mexico, the ICL declared “IG ‘Disappears’ Permanent Revolution” (WV No. 663, 7 March 1997) and “IG Discards Permanent Revolution” (WV No. 672, 8 August 1997) because we denounced their fantasy that workers revolution in Latin America must be for “the destruction of feudal peonage in the countryside” and of the “heritage of Spanish feudal colonialism.” We pointed out that the hoary myth of Latin American “feudalism” was invented by the Stalinists to

justify their program of “two-stage revolution.” After a year of lambasting the IG on this score, suddenly in December 1997 the ICL leadership discovered that, *mirabili dictu*, there was no feudalism in present-day Mexico after all and the Spanish colonial heritage was one of “mercantile capitalism.”

With egg on their faces, ICLers declared that this was merely an “analytical” difference. In fact, there are direct programmatic consequences for any tendency which fights for agrarian revolution in Latin America (which the ICL has no intention of doing). As for the ICL’s revisionism on the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, this has already had programmatic consequences on China. The article in *Spartacist* (No. 53, Summer 1997) calling for an independent “Soviet Tibet” was no fluke, although the ICL later withdrew this call. It came amid a crescendo of “free Tibet” propaganda and reflected the view that the Stalinists were “leading” counterrevolution in China. This was precisely the argument made by pseudo-Trotskyists like Workers Power who called for independent “soviet republics” in the Baltics in 1990 just as the fascistic Lithuanian Sajudis was demanding independence from the USSR.

In our article “Where Is China Going?” we noted: “in defending the right to independence of an entirely mythical ‘soviet Tibet’ and in claiming that the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] formally voted to carry out the restoration of capitalism, the ICL press was directly reflecting the pressure and views of ‘its own’ imperialist bourgeoisie” (*The Internationalist* No. 6). After quoting the last half of this sentence, WV responds: “Actually, it is the view of a significant wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie that the Beijing bureaucracy is a battering ram for capitalist restoration.” Thus they *confirm* our charge, essentially saying, so what? So what is that to claim the Stalinists are *leading* the counterrevolution is factually wrong, contradicts Trotsky’s analysis of the nature of Stalinism and leads to the dangerously wrong perspective of a “cold” counterrevolution “led” by the Stalinist bureaucracy in its entirety.

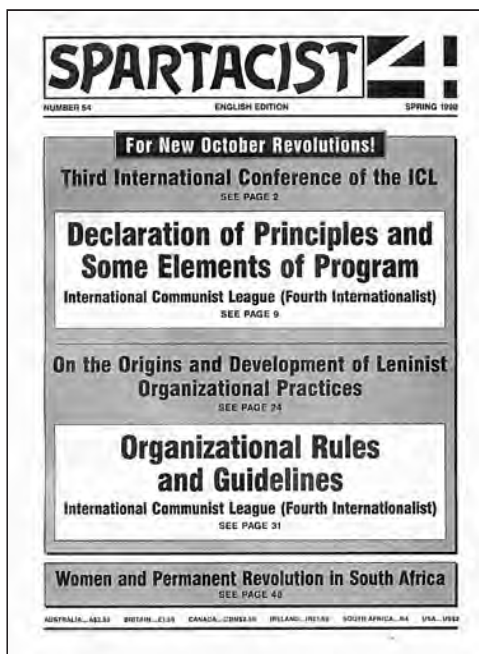
This anti-Marxist perspective is explicitly stated in some, but not all ICL articles on China. WV No. 675 (3 October 1997) linked this to a supposed vote by the Stalinist CP to “liquidate state industry.” WV No. 725 (10 December 1999) starts off with the view that joining the World Trade Organization would be the death knell of China’s socialized economy: “China’s entry into the WTO would mean eliminating what remains of the state monopoly of foreign trade, a key component of the collectivized economy created by the 1949 Chinese Revolution.” As we have written, China’s joining the WTO would greatly escalate pressures for restoration of capitalism. But it would sharply *pose the fight*, not end it. The ICL’s fantasy of Stalinist-led counterrevolution is the classic posture of those preparing to abandon defense of the deformed workers state before the final battle. This is not Trotskyism but proto-Shachtmanism.

Third Campism of the Second Mobilization

In our earlier article on China, we noted: “Taken together with their recent flip-flop over Tibet, one might be tempted to ask: is there a ‘two-line struggle’ (to use a Maoist phrase) going on inside the ICL over China? Rather, this is another

zig-zag of a degenerating centrist tendency.” No doubt the ICL leadership will explain another line “adjustment” as a sign of an internal corrective process, while seeking to minimize its import publicly and perhaps launching some new (or recycling an old) slander against the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International to divert attention from the enormity of their “mistake.” Certainly any revolutionary party can and will make mistakes. But the sheer number of the ICL’s recent “corrections” and uncorrected line changes should lead would-be revolutionary militants to inquire what is behind this. Marxists must begin by asking whose class interests the different policies represent.

Centrism, as Trotsky noted, is not a static or stable condition but an intermediate state, characterized by constant shifting and “organic amorphousness” (“Centrism and the Fourth International,” February 1934). There is also the key question of the *direction* of movement, typically of erstwhile revolutionary groups sliding into opportunism, occasionally of split-offs from reformism veering to the left under the impact of great upheavals (such as the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution or Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933). While various reformist/



Coming next, version 2.1?

centrist pseudo-Trotskyist currents characterize the SL/ICL as hardened “sectarians” and “ultra-lefts”— as do the misnamed Bolshevik Tendency, the Mandelites and others — we have insisted that the ICL is moving unevenly *to the right*. The SL’s reaction to the anti-WTO/IMF/World Bank protests in Seattle and Washington, D.C. is a barometer: first insisting that the SL wouldn’t even sell its press in Seattle, then prettifying the D.C. protests to say that the youth present were untainted by anti-Communism.

This qualitative degeneration of the political tendency which for three decades upheld revolutionary Trotskyism was

set off by the destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states. This led the ICL to write (in its new Declaration of Principles, version 2.0) that although Trotsky stated in the 1938 Transitional Program that the world political situation is “chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat,” this statement “predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness.” So according to the ICL, the key thesis of the founding program of the Fourth International is *out of date*, and the backward consciousness of the proletariat, not the leadership, is now key. Over China, WV No. 715 writes that “Stalinism has done everything in its power to wipe out anything that smacks of socialist consciousness in the working class,” suggesting that it has been successful in doing so. WV takes *The Internationalist* to task for referring to the need for a proletarian political revolution in China to link up with the (presumably non-existent) “socialist workers of Vietnam and North Korea.”

While falsely claiming that the IG is “Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats” in China, the reality is that *the ICL is writing off the Chinese working class as a revolutionary force*. Compare the article on “Where Is China Going?” in *The Internationalist* No. 6 with the ICL’s propaganda. While the ICL still ritually calls for workers political revolution (as did the “Bolshevik Tendency” on the USSR until August 1991), nowhere in the lengthy two-part China article in WV Nos. 714-715 (or in a dozen articles before or since) does it give any but the most minimal programmatic content to this slogan. In contrast, our article puts forward a series of transitional demands for mobilizing Chinese workers against encroaching counterrevolution and building a Trotskyist party in sharp class struggle.

The ICL’s snowballing line changes, corrections, corrections of corrections and revisions of revisions oscillate around a descending line heading from revolutionary Trotskyism toward reformism. We have characterized its present position as left centrism, but this is no final resting place. We have shown how the SL/ICL has taken on different aspects of left social-democratic currents, from De Leon’s abstract propagandism to Serrati’s refusal to build revolutionary leaderships in the colonial countries to Kautsky’s posture of “passive radicalism” on the eve of World War I. The various strands of left social democracy and its accompaniment, anarchosyndicalism, proved incapable of carrying out workers revolution, and their protagonists degenerated into reformism or simply disappeared from the stage of history.

The ICL’s recent line of a counterrevolution led by the Stalinists is a retrospective backing off from the Trotskyist program it correctly fought for in the DDR and USSR in 1989-92, and a bridge to abandoning defense of the remaining deformed workers states by claiming that a “cold” counterrevolution already took place. It is the same line as that taken in August 1991 over the Soviet Union by various pseudo-Trotskyists including Workers Power in Britain and Altamira’s Partido Obrero in Argentina who subsequently formally abandoned defensism (WP decided that the bourgeois state had never been overthrown in East Europe, PO has since declared China capitalist).

As we have demonstrated the falsity of its arguments, and what they would mean in practice, the ICL has constantly tried to shift the debate. We pointed out that if the SED Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution, what were the Spartakist Workers Party and Spartakist-Gruppen doing up there as speakers at the 3 January 1990 anti-fascist mobilization at the Soviet war memorial together with the SED leadership? The ICL responded by declaring that the SED became the leaders of the counterrevolution *after* Treptow. When we asked, if the SED tops led the counterrevolution, how come they all ended up in the Fourth Reich's jails, the ICL changed tack again, declaring that it was the *Kremlin* Stalinists who led the counterrevolution.

Now it is apparently preparing to drop the argument altogether, in good part for its own internal reasons. The ICL's Mexican section, the GEM, is clearly in crisis, as could be expected from a group that essentially sat out the ten-month UNAM student strike, with occasional forays onto campus to make sales and pronouncements and never fighting for revolutionary leadership to integrate the students' strike into a powerful working-class struggle. Today GEM supporters argue different lines on whether the Stalinists led the counterrevolu-

tion in the DDR and USSR, and finally announced that they are having internal discussion to figure this out. Meanwhile, they say that even though the claim that the Stalinist bureaucracy is leading the counterrevolution in China is "incorrect," they have to argue the old line until the new one is published.

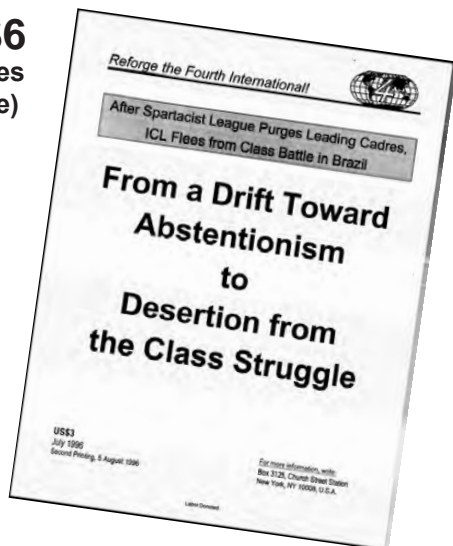
The Spartacist League/U.S. certainly ought to be in a deep crisis after arguing a proto-Shachtmanite line for four years, then suddenly being struck dumb in Philadelphia and becoming tongue-tied in subsequent encounters. But by now SLers have become well-versed in the art of vehemently arguing both sides of a line. While this is the professional specialty of lawyers and bourgeois politicians, as well as reformist pseudo-socialists of all stripes and the centrists who chase after them, it is deadly for revolutionists. As James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism, wrote about the Shachtmanite minority that abandoned unconditional defense of the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II:

"The leaders of the opposition, and a very large percentage of their followers, have shown that they are capable of changing their opinions on all fundamental questions of theory and politics over night. This only demonstrates quite forcibly that their opinions in general are not to be taken too seriously."

—*The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*

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Postscript

In response to the Internationalist Group polemic printed above, which was published as a leaflet and on our Internet site, the ICL brought out an answer titled "IG: Still Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 746, 17 November 2000). This has now been published in several languages, including a special supplement in Mexico. True to the new *WV*'s apparent motto, "the more straw men the merrier," the article continues to invent positions for the IG that are the direct *opposite* of what is stated in our press. Yet amid the mountains of obfuscating verbiage, as predicted, they did slip in their latest line change on the nature of Stalinism.

After abundant hemming and hawing, *WV* notes "there is a crucial difference between the act of counterrevolution itself and the lead-up to it. In that sense, the Beijing regime is not committed to capitalist restoration and sectors of it might balk at the consequences...." This is a sharp about-face from the position that for four years was the *leitmotiv* of polemics by the SL/ICL against the IG and League for the Fourth International, namely that the Stalinists supposedly "led the counterrevolution" in East Germany. That Stalinophobic position was a whitewash of the bourgeoisie and directly contradicted the ICL's own intervention in the DDR and USSR during 1989-92.

Yet this "corrective" ties them up in new contradictions. Is it only the Beijing bureaucracy that gets cold feet at the moment of truth? Caught between Trotsky and Shachtman, the ICL has executed a dizzying series of zigzags on their path from revolutionary Marxism toward a left version of social democracy. For lack of space, our reply to *WV*'s revision-of-a-revision cannot be printed in this issue. It will be published in the next issue of *The Internationalist*. Meanwhile, readers may consult our Internet site (www.internationalist.org) or write to the IG for a copy. ■

Congo Holocaust...

continued from page 88

Congo, as in Russia, mass murder had a momentum of its own." At one point he even grotesquely compares Léopold's rule with that of Lenin! Not coincidentally, Hochschild's other recent book is titled *The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin*. Behind Hochschild's absurd equation of colonialism and communism lies the imperialists' obsessive nightmare of former colonial slaves embracing communism, of the revolutionary junction of red and black.

Actually, Léopold's brutal slave labor system was a product of *capitalist colonialism*, in which the American bourgeoisie had a direct interest. And not just the U.S. ruling class in general, but the Hochschilds in particular. The author of *King Leopold's Ghost* comes from a family with major mining interests in Africa, including Congo, a family which grew fabulously wealthy off the super-exploitation of black African labor. Moreover, his father Harold was up to his neck in the machinations of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in post-colonial Africa, helping install pliant pro-Western regimes throughout the continent. Naturally, Hochschild mentions none of this in his book. But more on that below.

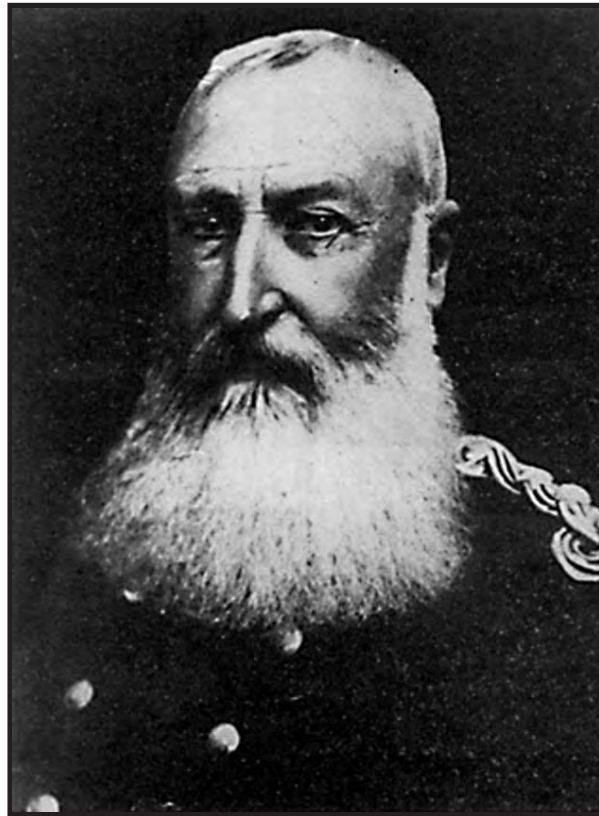
A Belgian King and His African Slave Colony

Anglo-American awareness of Léopold's brutality in the Congo dates from 1904, when Edmund Morel founded the Congo Reform Association. Morel was an agent for a British shipping company that carried cargo between the Congo and the Belgian port of Antwerp. He noticed that his company's ships unloaded enormous quantities – considerably greater than recorded in the manifests – of ivory and rubber in Belgium, and returned to the Congo loaded mainly with guns. Morel suspected that Léopold's private army was forcing Africans into slavery to gather the rubber and ivory, and that Léopold was carefully disguising his slave system as trade, in order to reap super-profits for himself.

Morel's suspicions were confirmed by gathering reports of witnesses, the most important of whom was Roger Casement, an Irishman employed in the British foreign service, who became consul to the Congo in 1900. While in Africa Casement, then a secret advocate of freedom for his native Ireland, developed an affinity for the African victims of European colonialism. By the time he reached the Congo, he

already had a history of protesting colonial atrocities, but he was unprepared for what he witnessed at his new post. On the peoples living in the million-square-mile fertile basin of the mighty Congo River, an area the size of West Europe, *King Léopold was wreaking nothing less than a holocaust.*

Léopold II was only the second ruler of Belgium, which for centuries had been a disputed wedge of territory between France and Holland. It became an independent state after the French-



Corbis-Bettmann

King Léopold II, butcher of the Congo.

and Dutch-speaking (Flemish) population revolted against the rule of Holland in 1830. However, the great European powers nominated a German royal, Léopold of Saxe-Coburg, to be king of the Belgians; his descendents have ruled Belgium to this day. The second Léopold was preoccupied from an early age with accumulating greater wealth and power than was offered him by his "*petit pays, petit gens*" (little country, little people, as he dubbed Belgium and the Belgians). He devised several schemes for acquiring colonies, but, inspired by the explorations of Henry William Stanley, eventually set his sights on the Congo basin in west-central Africa.

Taking advantage of the lukewarm reception given to the commoner Stanley by the rulers of his native Britain, Léopold bought Stanley's services. Stanley had been 1,500 miles up the Congo River from its mouth at the Atlantic Ocean. When he met

Léopold in 1878, he could report to his new master the vital information that the central Africans had no strong state and were easily defeated in battle.

Stanley returned to the Congo as Léopold's agent the following year, establishing base camps and fortified positions, and slaughtering countless Congolese in the process, thereby establishing the *modus operandi* of Léopold's African enterprises. By subterfuge and by secret agreements with the great powers (the most important of which was with the United States), Léopold in increments secured for himself the whole of what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. That is, Léopold made himself absolute ruler of the Congo Free State (L'État Indépendant du Congo); by design, its riches would accrue to him alone, or to those whom he designated his agents or permitted to be shareholders. Léopold's Congo would not be a Belgian colony.

From 1885, the year he founded his Congo "state," until 1908, the year the great powers, partly prompted by an Anglo-American public outcry, forced him to give it up, Léopold made the Congo a living hell for the Congolese. His object

was to accumulate wealth, which he found immediately in ivory (elephant tusks) and later in the vine rubber of the Congo forests. Using terror and hostage-taking, Léopold's few Belgian employees recruited tribesmen into the Force Publique. This army grew to number 19,000 African soldiers and consume half the budget of the Congo state. Commanded by Belgian officers, its soldiers were subject to immediate execution for refusing an order. Force Publique units and private militias were charged with forcing the Congolese to work for Léopold – to carry supplies, clear paths, build roads, base camps, and a rail link around Congo River rapids above the port city of Matadi.

Above all, the slaves were made to gather ivory and rubber. Those who refused to work were tortured and shot. Those who refused to carry out an order to torture and shoot were tortured and shot. Women were taken as hostages to force sons, husbands, and fathers to work; while in captivity they were raped by Belgians and exchanged as slaves. Villages and crops were burned, livestock was confiscated, babies were bayoneted, the sick were drowned, men were whipped, chained together, castrated or, in what became the most widely known of Léopold's crimes, Africans' hands were cut off. The depravity of Léopold's men was limitless. They paid bonuses to soldiers according to the number of hands they gathered. (The hands were often smoked to preserve them for accounting.) Hochschild refers to one Belgian overseer, Léon Rom, who used the heads of the men, women and children he murdered to decorate his house.

So intense was the savagery of the Belgians, and so defenseless were the Congolese, that the only effective rebellions were made by members of the armed Force Publique. Numerous units of these wretched murderer-slaves turned on their overseers and formed rebel armies. Auguste Achte, a French missionary who encountered one such Force Publique unit, discovered that the men had killed their European officers after being repeatedly flogged and tortured by them. One officer whom they executed had personally shot 60 soldiers for refusing to work on a Sunday. For the duration of Léopold's absolute rule in the Congo, his agents would scramble to put enough loyal soldiers in the field to suppress rebellions of the Force Publique – some of which lasted for years and involved thousands of insurgents.

Léopold attempted to insulate his Congo-hell from European and American scrutiny, and to cover his true activities with lies, maintaining that he was "civilizing" the Africans and fighting Muslim slave traders. Yet his crimes were so great and numerous that even his most dutiful Congo agents could not prevent visitors from witnessing atrocities. Some Congo visitors – notably Swedish, French and British missionaries, Belgian Socialist Émile Vandervelde, and two African Americans, historian George Washington Williams and explorer William Sheppard – were horrified by what they saw. Often their testimony was gathered by Edmund Morel and Roger Casement.

From the year of its founding, Morel and Casement's Congo Reform Association created a public outcry in Britain against Léopold. The British imperialists were initially ambivalent toward it. They had acceded to Léopold's Congo adventure

as a hedge against the African designs of their German rivals, but were always unhappy with the Belgian king's monopoly on Congo loot. Now they began to turn on Léopold. Sensing his vulnerability, the king attempted an alliance with American capitalists. Where he previously sought advice from the British-allied Morgan bank, he now turned to Morgan rivals such as Rockefeller and Guggenheim, inviting them to invest in the Congo rubber bonanza. His agents bribed journalists and Congressmen.

Yet the Congo Reform Association was making inroads into American public opinion as well, notably aided by Mark Twain's 1906 pamphlet, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, which savaged the king and his brutal crimes. (See "Mark Twain and the Onset of the Imperialist Epoch," *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997.) Morel had published his book, *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Flourishing on the Congo*, the same year.

The U.S. government had actually been the first to recognize Léopold's private state. But now the American capitalist class, led by Massachusetts senator Henry Cabot Lodge and the imperialist newspaperman William Randolph Hearst (who instigated the 1898 war that allowed Washington to seize Spain's colonies), threw in with the British government. Cynically manipulating the outrage stirred by Morel and Casement's revelation, the Anglo-American imperialist alliance helped bring Léopold's Congo autocracy to an end. The king was forced to sell out to the Belgian government in 1908; the "reformed" Congo became a Belgian colony whose enterprises – marginally less murderous but still based on forced labor – freely accepted Anglo-American capital investment.

Léopold died in disgrace in 1909. In his 30-year involvement in the Congo he murdered perhaps every second Congolese – estimates range between *eight million and ten million people dead*. Yet for almost a century this genocide of black people has been conveniently buried by the racist imperialist rulers.

Capitalist Slavery or Socialist Revolution

Before Léopold ever dreamt of his Congo empire, Marx remarked in *Capital* that "the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production" had already been characterized by "the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins..." The first centuries of Europe and North America's brutal relationship with the African continent indeed consisted principally in the slave trade. By the 19th century however, the agricultural slavocracies in the Americas no longer needed to steal Africans into slavery, and slavery was not suited to meet the capitalist class's ever-rising demand for industrial labor. Thus, after having kidnapped by unimaginably fiendish means uncounted millions of Africans – millions of whom died in transit, or were tortured, beaten, or worked to death – the European powers moved in the late 19th century to abolish the remnants of the African slave trade, which was then being carried on mainly by competing Muslim slaveherders.

The representatives of the great powers, meeting at Berlin in 1884 to divide Africa among them, found it useful to pose as abolitionist humanitarians. An Anti-Slavery Conference was held in Brussels in 1889 and 1890, to the delight of Léopold II. As they made ready to pounce on Africa, to gouge out and carry off its natural wealth, and to turn it into a great killing field in the process, the European powers cast themselves as civilizing philanthropists. In 1876, barely 10 percent of Africa was colonized. By 1900, 90 percent of African territory was in the hands of the colonizers – mainly Britain (Egypt, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, the Rhodesias, South Africa, Bechuanaland) and France (Algeria, Tunisia, French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, Madagascar). Other territories were occupied by Portugal (Angola, Mozambique), Germany (South West Africa, Cameroon, Tanganyika), Belgium and Spain. By 1912, when France seized Morocco and Italy seized Libya, only Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Liberia remained independent. After the first imperialist world war, Britain and France seized Germany's colonies.

In the United States and in Western Europe, the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries did create – at enormous human cost – what is called modern civilization, by enabling massive capitalist industrial development and establishing a system dominated by a small number of powerful bourgeois nation-states. Yet the period of classical bourgeois national development set in motion ferocious international struggle among competing capitalists. By the late 19th century the growth of giant monopolies in banking, transportation and every important industry was accompanied by a frenzy of empire building. Genocidal mass murder in Africa has been a key part of world capitalism's development into imperialism. The Western powers that grew fat from such monumental crimes fought two world wars to divide up the world and decide who would enslave and decimate colonial peoples. In both, the sovereignty of "poor little Belgium" was used as a war cry by the "democratic" imperialists.

It is hardly necessary today to point out that in the mad scramble for empire, colonialism did not "civilize" Africa or any other place seized by the great powers. The imperialists did not bring with them any measure of the bourgeois democratic political liberties won in Europe by the bourgeois revolutions there. Rather, in the lands they conquered, the imperialists practiced or encouraged the most barbaric forms of despotism, impeding national development and decimating the indigenous populations by disease, starvation, overwork and murderous repression. It was the obligation of proletarian revolutionaries in the imperialist countries to resolutely oppose colonialism. Yet in its slide into reformism, the social-democratic Second International was divided on the colonial question. At the International's 1907 Congress in Stuttgart, a resolution rejecting colonialism in general barely passed; another (barely defeated) motion proclaimed "the congress does not reject colonial policy in principle and for all time, since it could operate as a civilizing factor under a socialist regime." This was years after Léopold's Congo atrocities had been exposed!

From the standpoint of the world's toilers, the single

bright outcome of the first imperialist world war was the Bolshevik Revolution led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky. In November 1917, the workers and peasant-soldiers of Russia seized control of the collapsing empire of the tsars from the Russian and foreign capitalists. The proclamation of a government of soviets (workers councils), a proletarian dictatorship, inspired the oppressed of every land, and struck fear in every capitalist government. While the reformist Second International collapsed during the world war, each party supporting "its" imperialist bourgeoisie, the Bolsheviks fought all the imperialist robbers and championed the liberation of the colonial masses. The imperial powers invaded the young Soviet republic and surrounded it with an economic *cordon sanitaire*. After being smashed by the Red Army inside Russia, and facing a worldwide economic crisis, the imperialists and their bankers – President George W. Bush's grandfather Prescott Bush among them – helped finance growing fascist movements to fight the threat of workers revolution.

The pressure the capitalists exerted against the Russian Revolution was partly successful, in that it gave rise to a defeatist bureaucratic faction inside the Bolshevik Party – led by Stalin – that desired to make peace with the capitalist West. The Stalinists strangled the party of Lenin and Trotsky and massacred hundreds of thousands of worker Communists, the remaining Bolshevik leadership from 1917, and virtually the entire Red Army command. Yet despite the cancer of Stalinism, the Soviet workers state, with its planned economy, was able to defeat the Nazis in World War II, emerging in 1945 with the most powerful army in the world. This power was squandered as Stalin blocked revolution in West Europe, Greece and elsewhere. As independence movements surged across Africa in the 1950s and early 1960s, the Stalinists did little materially to aid these revolts. Yet the very existence of the Soviet and Chinese workers states, however bureaucratically degenerated and deformed, was proof that the grip of capitalist domination and colonial servitude could be broken.

The independence movements faced colonial powers that emerged from World War II nearly bankrupt and heavily indebted to the U.S. The European colonizers intensified their extraction of the great mineral wealth of Africa with new rapacity, nowhere more so than in the Belgian Congo. From 1945 to the early 1960s, these "democratic" empires responded everywhere to African demands for freedom with machine-gun fire, once again turning the continent into a human slaughterhouse. The French colonists were particularly brutal, wiping out 90,000 in Madagascar in 1947 and initiating a savage war in the Maghreb (North Africa) that would ultimately claim the lives of 1 million Algerians. The renewed campaign of repression was partly underwritten by U.S. imperialism, as American lend-lease war materiel and Marshall Plan resources were massively diverted to the battle to keep Africa from "going Communist." In exchange, the French, Portuguese, Belgian and British exploiters reluctantly allowed American capital to penetrate more deeply into their colonial enterprises.

Yet even as the old colonial powers were drowning African rebellions in blood with U.S. aid, American and British rulers



Congolese youth with hands destroyed by Léopold's soldiers.

were preparing for “decolonization.” The British came to an accommodation with their former prisoners, Nkrumah and Kenyatta, whereby British enterprises in the Gold Coast and Kenya were protected in exchange for political independence. The CIA, through various front groups such as the American Committee on Africa and liberal operatives such as Allard Lowenstein, attempted to court the African National Congress and Pan-Africanist Congress in South Africa. Part of the mission of triumphant postwar U.S. imperialism was to represent the United States as the most powerful ally of the struggle for democracy and African independence. Their true aims were (and remain) to expand U.S. capital's share of the African pie, and to prevent at all costs the rise of revolutionary socialism in Africa. Just as the old European colonialism carved up Africa under banners of abolition of slavery and “civilization,” postwar American imperialism marches to the battle cry of “human rights” and “democracy.”

Praise from the Fraternity of Imperialist Scribblers

Enthusiastic reviews of Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* appeared in the most important publications of the imperialist powers: the *New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, *Le Monde* and the *Daily Telegraph* showered the work with accolades like “superb,” “splendid,” “haunting.” The book was widely praised as scholarly and lucid. However, had Hochschild's journalistic reviewers done their homework, they might have discovered that *King Leopold's Ghost* is a cut-and-paste jumble of the published research

of others. He has relied mainly on Jules Marchal's ongoing history of the Congo (including *L'État libre du Congo: paradis perdu; l'histoire du Congo 1876-1900* [Borgloon, Belg., 1996] and *E. D. Morel contre Léopold II: l'histoire du Congo, 1900-1910* [Paris, 1996]). Hochschild adds little scholarship to Marchal's account, but does add his anti-Communist opinions.

Newsday and the *Financial Times* even brought in leftist reviewers Scott McLemee and Tariq Ali to supply the proper tone of outraged humanitarianism. The former pseudo-Trotskyist Ali praised “this amazing book,” declaring “Hochschild has produced a history like none other.” David North's “World Socialist Web Site” hailed it for going “to the essence of the economic and political systems established in colonial Africa.” Yet tellingly, the fanatically racist magazine of the far right, *American Spectator*, gave it a glowing review as a “moving and important book about wickedness triumphant and defeated,” declaring that “Léopold merits a place among the great modern enemies of civilization.” Indeed, the claim that the “old wickedness” – early European colonialism – is past and defeated is a key to this orgy of appreciation in the media.

Right and “left” cheerleaders of the present-day New World Order join in applauding Hochschild for “exposing” the hundred-year-old crimes of the Belgians in the Congo, in order to prepare for new imperialist wars waged in the name of “human rights.” The “leftists” are the modern heirs of the pre-WWI social democrats who looked to imperialism to “civilize” its colonies. For his part, Hochschild, who once wrote for the rad-lib magazine *Ramparts* and used part of his mining fortune to bankroll *Mother Jones*, is today a prominent member of the “democratic” fraternity of imperialist pundits.

In an interview about his book, he declared that “fascism, communism and colonialism” were the three “evil” and “totalitarian” systems of the 20th century. The interviewer drew the direct connection to the war on Yugoslavia, remarking “The Congo Reform Movement shares a sobering similarity with the recent movement to prevent genocide in Kosovo.” Hochschild enthusiastically agreed, praising this “great movement,” which bombed children's hospitals in Belgrade and trains and buses in Kosovo in the name of “preventing genocide,” as a “struggle for human rights” (AlterNet Independent News and Information, 24 September 1999).

Hochschild's obsession with equating colonialism with communism, Léopold with Lenin, is not a quirk but a central message of *King Leopold's Ghost*. The book is of a piece with the *Black Book on Communism*, a post-Cold War opus intended to inoculate society against Bolshevism, even though according to the bourgeoisie communism is supposed to be dead and gone. Yet the Bolshevik victory in November 1917 inspired colonial revolt, and the imperialists were keenly aware that the existence of the Soviet Union was a key factor in making the post-WWII independence movements possible. Confirming this in the negative, ever since the demise of the USSR there has been a push to reimpose outright colonial domination of the neo-colonial countries – e.g., bringing back British troops to Sierra Leone.

“Human Rights” and the Hochschilds: Look Who’s Calling Léopold Evil

As Karl Marx pointed out in a series of New York *Tribune* articles later collected as the pamphlets “Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century” and “The Story of the Life of Lord Palmerston,” both monarchical and republican bourgeois governments must lie about their motives and veil their activities in secrecy, for behind the high-flown phrases is downright *thievery*. This is doubly true of capitalism’s “great families,” who accumulated their fortunes as robber barons in the 19th century. Consequently, the account of the Hochschild empire given below is unfortunately incomplete.

In 1886, Adam Hochschild’s grandfather Berthold was a high officer in Metallgesellschaft AG of Frankfurt, Germany, a giant metals trading monopoly which is still today in the Fortune 500. Berthold emigrated to the United States to help establish an American affiliate. After securing loans from the Morgan banking house, he and a few associates founded the American Metal Company in 1887. American Metal, allied with one of the most powerful banks in the world, soon became the largest of several Hochschild family operations. Other Hochschilds emigrated from Germany to South America and established mining empires there. In Bolivia, for example, a Hochschild was one of the three “tin barons” whose holdings were expropriated following the “National Revolution” of 1952.

The company also established manufacturing enterprises that produced metals- and chemicals-related products. American Metal, later under the names American Metal Climax or AMAX, accumulated holdings in Colorado, Utah, Appalachia, Canada, Mexico and South America, Australia, and Europe, eventually establishing scores of affiliates which it owned or controlled. During the first imperialist world war (1914-18), American Metal – in whose parent company the Kaiser was a large stockholder – supplied Germany with metals vital to war production, such as nickel. When the United States entered the war against Germany, the U.S. Alien Property Custodian temporarily took possession of a controlling share of the company. Following the war, American Metal formally severed its ties with Germany and under the patronage of ascendant U.S. imperialism continued to grow through 1920s prosperity, 1930s depression and the second imperialist world war in the 1940s.

In the ’20s, Berthold handed over the reins of American Metal to his son, Adam’s father Harold Hochschild. Under Harold’s direction the company traded metals like its former parent Metallgesellschaft, established or invested in mines of all kinds in every part of the world, and owned ships, smelters and refineries to transport and treat the ore that was taken out of them. The core of the Hochschild empire was its vast holdings in sub-Saharan Africa. The starting point for Hochschild in Africa was the copper belt of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), a slave colony owned until 1924 by Cecil Rhodes’s British South Africa Company, and only thereafter by the British government. There Hochschild established the Rhodesian Selection Trust Group (RST) which together with the South Africa-based Oppenheimer interests divided the spoils of the region’s entire copper ore industry. Hochschild

owned 10 percent of RST outright; an additional 43.5 percent was owned by American Metal, which Hochschild directly controlled until the late 1950s (Nicolas de Kun, *The Mineral Resources of Africa* [Elsevier, 1965]; W. Alphaeus Hunton, *Decision in Africa: Sources of Current Conflict* [International Publishers, 1957]).

Through RST affiliates and alliances, the Hochschilds invested in diamond mines in French Guinea and in the British colonies of Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Bechuanaland (now Botswana), where they owned nickel mines as well. Their South Africa-based operations included the O’okiep Copper Company, gold and uranium mines in Transvaal province, and the lead-zinc-copper Tsumeb mine in South-West Africa (Namibia), a former German colony occupied by British South Africa in 1919. According to Kwame Nkrumah (*Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* [International Publishers, 1966]), in the 1960s American Metal Climax was also a huge supplier of Congo uranium to the U.S. government. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki atom bombs were built with 80 percent Congo uranium.

From the outset the Hochschilds’ labor practices were severe even by the cruel standards of colonial Africa. After Cecil Rhodes’s conquest of what became Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the British forced the Matabele and Mashona peoples into the gold mines and beat to death those who refused. When in 1896 the Africans revolted, the British authorities massacred them. By the time the Hochschilds arrived in Northern Rhodesia to exploit the copper belt, former tribespeoples had been under the lash for a generation. At Roan Antelope and Mufulira mines in 1935, where Hochschild mine supervisors meted out frequent beatings, Africans were paid the starvation wage of 22 shillings (perhaps \$3) per month – less than half the wretched pay Africans received in the South African gold mines! The first recorded copperbelt strike came that year. The unarmed African strikers gathered before the offices of the Roan Antelope, and there Rhodesian authorities shot 28 of them, killing six on the spot.

For decades the Hochschilds reaped super-profits, compliments of the system of naked racist terror that prevailed in the British African colonies. Masses of black miners were paid slave wages as they produced the fabulous wealth that kept the young Adam Hochschild in the lap of luxury in New York.

The Hochschilds and the CIA

While in 1945 Britain still had a great empire and imperial know-how, only America had imperial wherewithal: a vast amount of capital and a gigantic military apparatus. The more far-sighted exploiters in Washington, New York and London understood that in Africa, U.S./British imperialist domination hinged on their ability to carry out political decolonization while maintaining control over their enterprises. Harold Hochschild was among this group. To protect the family’s holdings and defend U.S. interests in the anti-Soviet Cold War, he helped found the African-American Institute, the CIA’s African front group. His purpose was to install a pro-imperialist regime in any African state which gained its independence. “Father was chairman of the board, as he usually was of anything he became involved with,” noted Adam in his 1986 memoir, *Half the Way Home: A Memoir of Father and Son*.



Colonial powers posed as “civilizers,” yet carried out genocidal mass murder of Africans from dawn of capitalism to its highest stage, imperialism.

Our knowledge of Harold Hochschild’s CIA service derives from Adam’s memoir, in which he attempts to demonstrate that as a young rebel he rejected the imperialist ways of his father. This he does while singing his father’s praises. In this muddle, he does, however, reveal that in the 1950s the family’s Adirondack estate, “Eagle Nest,” hosted such toilers in imperialism’s vineyard as Cold War architect George Kennan, outright CIA agents and their political assets, such as family friend and “socialist” cold warrior Norman Thomas, and a parade of Russian tsarists. He also admits that his father’s CIA front group coaxed American students to visit Africa. About his own activities the author is predictably circumspect. Thus he keeps *King Leopold’s Ghost* entirely free of even the slight, sanitized tidbits about the Hochschilds’ role in Africa that are present in the memoir, or in *The Mirror at Midnight*, Adam’s musings on his travels in South Africa.

He does make one slip, however. He writes in his introduction, “I knew almost nothing about the history of the Congo until a few years ago....” A “few years” turns out to be four decades. He continues, in typically deceptive fashion: “I had been writing about human rights for years, and once, in the course of half a dozen trips to Africa, I had been to the Congo.” The reader is led to think that he has traveled to the Congo to write about human rights, but let’s read on: “That visit was in 1961. In a Léopoldville apartment, I heard a CIA man, who had too much to drink, describe with satisfaction exactly how and where the newly independent country’s first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, had been killed a few months earlier.”

It turns out that not only has Adam known about the Congo for 40 years, he has been privy to very special knowledge. In his 1978 book *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, former CIA Angola Task Force chief John Stockwell maintained that he himself did not know details of the CIA-engineered murder of radical Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba until the 1970s. He further maintained that until the U.S. Senate’s 1974 Church Committee hearings, only Larry Devlin, the hard-drinking mastermind of the CIA’s Congo operations, and Joseph Desiré Mobutu (or Mobutu Sese Seko, as he was later known), the bloody dictator whom Devlin helped install in Lumumba’s place, knew the whole truth of the murder.

Yet Hochschild knew. He was told, in 1961, in Léopoldville, perhaps by Devlin himself – and not because CIA agents are in the habit of revealing their crimes after a few drinks to innocent “human rights” scribblers, as Hochschild would have us believe. His 1961 visit to Léopoldville, in the aftermath of the precipitous Belgian evacuation of the Congo, coincided with a campaign of bloody terror that the U.S. imperialists were unleashing against Lumumba’s movement, which they feared could lead a social revolution of the wretched Congolese masses. In his memoir, Adam casually mentions that after his first year at Harvard he “went along with Father on one of his business trips to Africa,” in which they “visited several offices of a new organization Father had helped start, the African-American Institute. The Institute had somehow acquired a great deal of money....” CIA money, to be exact.

Slavery Under the Banner of Freedom

The struggle of the world’s oppressed masses today is centrally a struggle against the U.S.-dominated capitalist-imperialist world order. Anyone whose profession it is, in the name of “human rights,” to repeat the lies about democracy of Clinton, Bush and Blair, and to support the terror they impose on the people of Yugoslavia, Somalia or Iraq, is an enemy of that struggle. At the dawn of the 20th century, Mark Twain remarked that the “matron named Christendom” returned from depredations in Africa and Asia with her “soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies.” A century later, the author of *King Leopold’s Ghost* mouths the same pious hypocrisies while U.S. corporations take home the “boodle.”

Eight to ten million black people killed by Léopold in his Congo hell were only a small part of the death toll of colonialism. Across the Congo River, the French applied the same brutal methods in their Congolese and Equatorial African territories. The U.S. imperialists have contributed their share to the racist slaughter: among their victims, two million Koreans killed in the Korean War, including gunning down defenseless refugees at No Gun-ri; three million Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians killed in the Indochinese wars, where villages were routinely napalmed; and of course, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the firebombing of Tokyo. Yet these war criminals pose as champions of “human rights” and “democracy”!

The international working class shall honor the victims of slavery, colonialism and imperialism and avenge the martyred Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba through international socialist revolution that will sweep away forever the scourge of colonialism and imperialist enslavement. ■

“Human Rights Imperialism” and the Congo Holocaust

By R. Titta

When the United States preaches to the world about freedom and democracy, it means it's preparing for war. Recall Jimmy Carter's anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade – the "moral rearmament" of U.S. imperialism after its humiliating defeat in Vietnam – which prepared the launching of Cold War II over Afghanistan. Or more recently Bill Clinton's invasion of Haiti billed as "nation building," and his bombing of Yugoslavia in the name of "stopping genocide."

This old game goes back to the dawn of the imperialist era in the late 1800s and is played by bourgeois statesmen and "opinion makers" alike. In supporting U.S. hegemony over Latin America, U.S. academics used to propagate the "black legend" about the horrors of Spanish rule (all of which are true, but they conveniently left out the horrors of U.S. slavery and genocide against the native peoples of North America). In competing with its imperialist rivals in the period leading up to World War I, Washington would periodically denounce colonial butchery, the rape of the Congo being tops on its list. Meanwhile the U.S. was subjugating the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico – the largest remaining colony in the world today.

As anti-colonial revolts spread through Africa in the 1960s, the United States again pointed an accusing finger at the horrendous cruelty of Belgian rule in the Congo. Yet it was the U.S. government that organized the assassination of Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba. Now, at the begin-

From King Léopold to the Murder of Lumumba



AFP
Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba (right) after his arrest in Stanleyville (Kisangani) in 1960. U.S. ordered his assassination.

ning of the 21st century, another president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Laurent Kabila, is murdered as Washington pushes to assert its control over this long-suffering country that is strategically important to the U.S. for its size and central location on the continent (Congo borders on nine countries), as well as for holding 85 percent of the world's cobalt along with other strategic metals.

In the midst of a new scramble for Africa, a much-acclaimed book by Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998) is published, retelling the story of one

of the vilest crimes of European colonialism: the genocidal conquest of the vast basin of the Congo River in Central Africa by the king of tiny Belgium, Léopold II. So why this new denunciation of the Belgian king? This is not some academic study or populist muck-raking. It is part of the U.S. bourgeoisie's ideological offensive, preparation for intervention in Africa as Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* was a primer for Clinton's war on Yugoslavia. It is phony "anti-imperialism" for the post-Cold War period of the supposed "death of Communism."

The key is Hochschild's repeated equation of Léopold's Congo with the Soviet Union, while simultaneously equating Lenin's Bolsheviks with Stalin's gulag: "Shooting or jailing political opponents at first helped the Communist Party and then Josef Stalin gain absolute power." And again: "In the

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**Workers Revolution Will Avenge Shaka Sankofa
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