

## Defeat U.S. Imperialism Through Class Struggle!

# Down With U.S. War Moves in the Persian Gulf!

## Defend Iraq Against Imperialist Attack!

We publish below a February 24 statement by the Political Bureau of the Spartacist League/U.S.

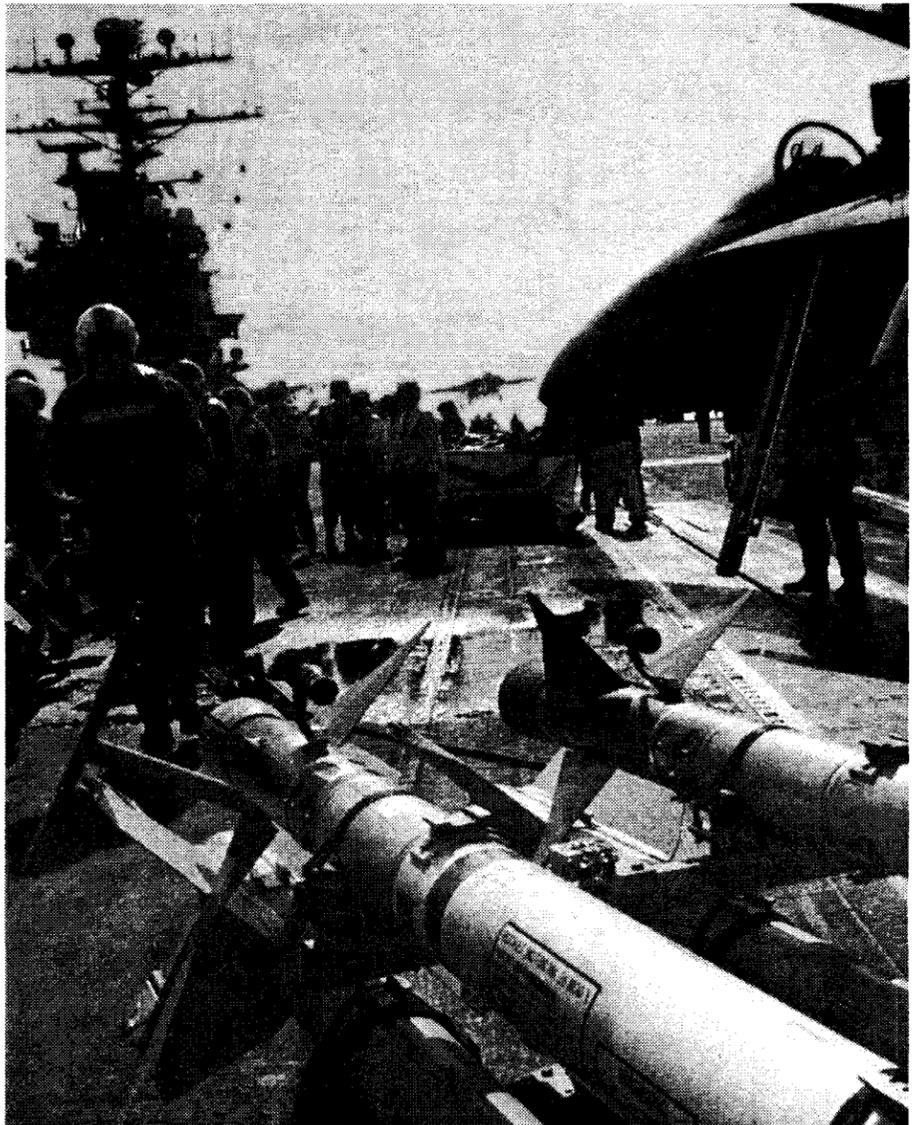
U.S. president Clinton yesterday announced conditional acceptance of the deal worked out by United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan and Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi leader has reportedly offered to comply fully with imperialist dictates for "weapons inspection," eliminating the pretext for Washington's threat to carry out a renewed round of mass murder against the Iraqi people. But the threat of a massive military slaughter is far from over. Clinton immediately warned Iraq of "serious consequences" if Washington does not

bellicose threats and the deployment of a huge armada are not about inspections or an alleged Iraqi arsenal of biological and chemical weapons or even about Saddam Hussein, who was installed in power with the help of Washington and London. As we wrote last issue, "Once again, the American ruling class is intent on butchering Iraqi men, women and children as a show of 'strength'—i.e., terror—to the rest of the world."

Behind the war buildup in the Gulf is the drive by U.S. imperialism to assert its "right" to ride roughshod over the colonial and semicolonial peoples of the world and to demonstrate to its imperialist rivals that the massive American arsenal of destruction continues to make it top dog. In a military conflict pitting U.S. imperialism against semicolonial Iraq, it is the duty of the proletariat internationally to stand militarily with the Iraqi people. The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the ICL, fights to forge a revolutionary party of the multiracial proletariat to **defeat U.S. imperialism through class struggle**. Workers revolution is the only road to peace!

Whether or not America's capitalist rulers decide *this time to yet again* rain death and destruction on Iraqi men, women and children does not change by one iota the rapacious and murderous character of this imperialist system. The liberals, pacifists and reformist "socialists" who are again, as they did at the time of the 1990-91 Gulf slaughter, pleading "No blood for oil" and begging the imperialist rulers to "let Iraqis live" betray thereby their illusions in the possibility of a "peaceful" and "humane" capitalism. Even under conditions of "peace," over a million Iraqis, including more than 600,000 children, have died in the past eight years as a result of UN sanctions. The UN is, as Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin called its League of Nations predecessor, an imperialist den of thieves, whose purpose is to police the oppressed of the world on behalf of the capitalist masters.

War is the continuation of politics by other means, wrote the German military strategist Clausewitz in the 19th century. Imperialist war is the concentrated expression of the "normal" brutal workings of the capitalist system, which daily condemns countless numbers of people around the world to death by malnutrition, lack of medical care and industrial "accidents." The threat to bomb Iraq into the Stone Age is of a piece with the use of the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund to impose misery and starva-



Massive military buildup in Persian Gulf is show of terror by U.S. imperialism. Below: Iraqis protest U.S./UN starvation blockade which has killed over a million people, mostly children.

Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie



tion on the workers of Southeast Asia, Mexico and elsewhere in order to keep interest payments flowing into the coffers of Chase Manhattan and Citibank.

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat, sharply intensified interimperial-

ist competition, leading to a renewed scramble among the three major powers—the U.S., Japan and Germany—to redivide markets and spheres of exploitation. In the drive to increase their profit margins, the capitalist rulers have also escalated attacks on workers, minorities

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## Spartacus Youth Club Protests

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get what it deems to be full "compliance."

Washington emphasized that it is not about to withdraw the massive array of firepower it has assembled in the Persian Gulf—over 300 warplanes, 32 ships and 30,000 troops. Should bombing and missile strikes go ahead, the International Communist League proclaims forthrightly, as we have in protest statements and demonstrations around the U.S. and internationally over the last two weeks: **Defend Iraq against imperialist attack! Down with the UN starvation blockade!**

The grudging American response to the latest deal exposes the utter cynicism of Clinton's pratings about desiring a "peaceful," "diplomatic" resolution to this crisis manufactured by U.S. imperialism. The



# The Spectre of Spartacism?

The following letter was submitted for publication on February 20 to the New York Times, which has not yet deemed it fit to print.

To the Editor:

The frenzied reaction of White House officials in the face of questions and opposition at the Ohio State town hall meeting—which would have been considered a tame day in the British Parliament—is a measure of the government's intolerance of any dissent against their plans to terror-bomb Iraq. Instead of a controlled meeting in the American "heartland" to support the bombing of Iraq, Clinton's war cabinet got an uncensored taste of public opinion questioning why the U.S. was going to blast away Iraqis for no credible reason.

So now the White House spin doctors are trying to turn the crowd at Ohio State—which ranged from war veterans to antiwar protesters—into "Marxists." A front-page article in today's *New York Times* (20 February) titled "Clinton Sets Out to Revive Support for Stand on Iraq" quotes an anonymous White House aide arguing that there wouldn't have been any opposition if there had been better White House advance people who "wouldn't have given tickets to the Spartacist League."

The Spartacist League forthrightly

opposes the U.S. war moves and imminent terror bombing of Iraq. Although we had no direct presence at the Ohio State town hall meeting, we stand with those who voiced their opposition to the bloody war plans of the U.S. government. At speakouts and protests around the country we have rallied in defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack and in opposition to the UN's starvation embargo which has killed over one million Iraqi people, including over 600,000 children. While standing foursquare on the side of the Iraqi people against U.S. attack, we say it is the business of the Iraqi working class to get rid of the capitalist regime of Saddam Hussein.

Behind the reaction of the White House to the Ohio State meeting lies the not-so-veiled threat of clamping down on any opposition. This is of a piece with the continued erosion of the most elementary democratic rights of the population directed at squelching any protest against the capitalist rulers' war on the working class, the poor, blacks, immigrants and others "at home." Just look at the government's vendetta aimed at destroying the powerful Teamsters union in the aftermath of last August's successful strike by United Parcel Service workers.

Since the destruction of the former Soviet Union, the U.S. rulers have been braying that "Communism is dead."

Thus, it is rather remarkable that the White House singles out the Spartacist League/U.S., a small Marxist political party, as the source of the opposition which met Clinton's war cabinet at Ohio State University. In our over 30-year existence in this country, we have openly disseminated our Marxist views that this

system based on the exploitation of the many by the few can only produce war, unemployment, racism, poverty and other brutal depredations for the majority of the population. Perhaps the U.S. rulers fear that this understanding might find real resonance among the working class and oppressed who are being increasingly ground down at home while being pressed to serve as cannon fodder for war abroad.

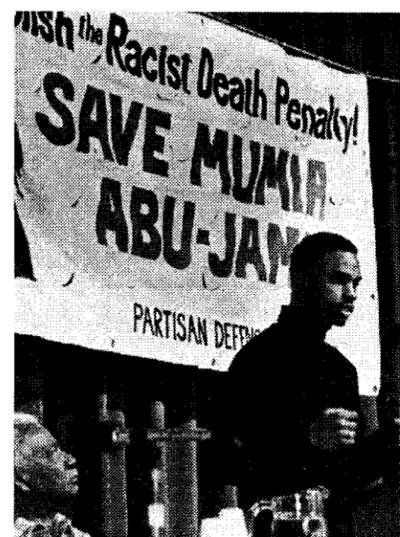
Sincerely,  
Len Meyers  
for the Spartacist League

## Free Jamal Hart!

On February 18, Jamal Hart, the 26-year-old son of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, received a mandatory prison sentence of 15-1/2 years for his conviction on bogus firearm possession charges. Hart is not eligible for parole. The transparent frame-up of Jamal Hart, a prominent participant in the campaign to free his father, continues the deadly state vendetta against Mumia. At the announcement of the verdict in a Philadelphia federal District Court, Jamal's half-brother Chris exploded in outrage: "You already railroaded my father, now you're railroading my brother." Chris was dragged from the courtroom and turned over to New Jersey authorities for prosecution on "drug charges."

While federal prosecutors argued that Hart should receive a 20-year sentence because of his alleged "consistent criminal behavior," even the trial judge was forced to observe that the prosecution and probation report "overstated Jamal's criminal history." In fact, Jamal Hart's passionate defense of his father put him in the cross hairs of the racist Philadelphia cops. Jamal Hart was a featured speaker at a number of rallies initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal. The front page of the *Philadelphia Daily News* pictured him with Jesse Jackson on 7 August 1995, the day a death warrant issued by Pennsylvania governor Thomas Ridge was stayed.

The targeting and monstrous persecution of Jamal Hart is another state provocation aimed at Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther, MOVE supporter and noted journalist, whose case has sparked an international outcry against the racist death penalty. In 1995, outside a fund-raiser for his father in New York City, Hart was harassed and baited by a gang of Philadelphia FOP bigots. Last October, Hart's car was stopped for allegedly rolling through a stop sign on a Philadelphia street. The arresting cops put a gun to his head, stomped on him while he was on the ground and then claimed to have found a .357 magnum



WV Photo

Mumia's son Jamal Hart at 1995 NYC rally initiated by Partisan Defense Committee.

in his waistband. The cop who "found" the gun was the same one who had taken down a report on the theft of this very same gun...three and a half years earlier. After Hart was released without bail, an official police "wanted" poster with Hart's photo and arrest information was circulated, making Hart fair game.

When Hart appeared for trial in state court, federal marshals summarily announced the case was being taken over by the feds. Had Hart been convicted in state court, he is likely to have only received probation. The feds' move against Hart is but one example of the ominous expansion of federal jurisdiction over a vast array of crimes, almost all of which carry mandatory penalties enormously greater than those specified by corresponding state laws, and indicates that the vendetta against Mumia extends well beyond local jurisdictions.

Even on death row, Mumia Abu-Jamal remains one of Philadelphia's "most wanted" by the cops and the racist capitalist state. In the face of this flagrantly vindictive persecution we demand: Free Jamal Hart! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty!



TROTSKY

### Pacifism, Marxism and Imperialist War

*The American rulers' aim of mass murder against the Iraqi people, intended as a show of terror to the rest of the world, is a harbinger of a future full-scale imperialist war. In the face of these war moves, various pseudo-socialists seek to pressure U.S. imperialism to be more "humane" and "peaceful." Against such liberal-pacifist appeals, we call for defense of Iraq and the defeat of U.S. imperialism through workers revolution.*

*In the years before inter-imperialist World War II—as the social-democratic Second International and Stalinist Third International promoted illusions in the League of Nations, predecessor to the United Nations—Leon Trotsky fought to build the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution and emphasized that the struggle against war could only be carried through by sweeping away imperialist capitalism.*

We revolutionary Marxists reject absolutely those prescriptions against war that are issued by the leaders of the Second and Third Internationals. They preach "disarmament" and "accord" through the League of Nations. This means that they believe in the possibility of changing the nature of capitalism through peaceful reforms, since the armed struggle between capitalist states applies just as much to the nature of capitalism as the competition between individual capitalists or their trusts. There are people who call themselves Socialists or Communists who characterize the capitalist state as a thoroughly imperialist set-up but at the same time believe in the League of Nations, that is, in the stock exchange of the imperialist states.

For Marxists the struggle against war coincides with the struggle against imperialism. The means for this struggle is not "general disarmament" but the arming of the proletariat for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a workers' state. Our slogan is not the League of Nations, but the Soviet United States of Europe and of the entire world!

—Leon Trotsky, "To Young Communists and Socialists Who Wish to Think" (July 1935)



LENIN

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Jacob Zorn

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

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No. 685

27 February 1998

## Black History Month

### Mobilize the Integrated Power of Labor to Fight for Black Freedom!

**Break with the Democrats—  
For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

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# Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

## Amistad, Capitalism and the Slave Trade



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Slaves seized control of Spanish ship *Amistad* in 1839, demanding freedom. Right: Joseph Cinque, leader of the rebellion.

No one who has seen Steven Spielberg's *Amistad* can ever forget its portrayal of the Middle Passage, the grim voyage across the Atlantic of imprisoned Africans being sent into slavery in the Americas. Chained, stripped naked, packed into a dark hold, the captives scream, starve and die, as a few jolting moments of celluloid show what history books cannot say in pages of facts and statistics. A whip strips the flesh off a man, his blood splattering those who are

movie rests on some fundamental historical falsehoods. The small liberties Spielberg takes with the facts—for example, Roger S. Baldwin was no unknown real estate lawyer, but the son of a Connecticut governor and grandson of a prominent Revolutionary War patriot—are not important; it's the larger lies that count.

(Coach House Press, Liverpool, 1992), Tony Barley notes:

"By the 1850s, wealth from banking, from emigration, from imported timber, sugar, and cotton (together with riches from a score of other imported commodities), had taken the place of slave-trade profits, but the banking sector and the sugar-trade had been sustained by slavery, and

before 1840—and had nothing to do with slavery in this country" (*New York Times*, 20 December 1997). The court system served the interests of the Southern planters. In 1841, the Supreme Court was headed by Justice Roger B. Taney of Maryland. This was the same Taney who, 16 years later, read out the infamous 1857 Dred Scott decision that blacks were "beings of an inferior order" with "no rights which any white man was bound to respect." Scott was returned to slavery after suing for his freedom on the grounds that his master had taken him to Illinois and Wisconsin, where slavery was illegal.

The *Amistad* captives were freed because they had not been born slaves. "We are rightly and justly inspired by their passionate struggle for freedom from Spanish and U.S. shackles, and their victory," wrote black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal in a commentary on Spielberg's film (*WV* No. 684, 13 February). "For Africans born in the U.S., however, it brought them no closer to freedom." Indeed, the *Amistad* ruling changed nothing for the three million black slaves laboring in the brutal Southern cotton and tobacco fields. In the film, we never even see the plantation slaves; Spielberg doesn't show their pain and despair as their families are torn apart and they are sold "down the river."

With several characters' hints of war and a final shot of Union and Confederate soldiers meeting in battle, the film implies that the 1841 *Amistad* decision was an immediate precipitant of the

*continued on page 4*

### A Film Review by Amy Rath

forced to watch. A despairing young mother jumps overboard, clutching her baby. When the ship runs short of food, dozens of men and women are chained to weights and thrown into the ocean. Amid this horror, the dignity and courage of Cinque (played by Beninese actor Djimon Hounsou), leader of the slave rebellion, shines like a beacon.

*Amistad* is a powerful anti-slavery film based on the true story of an 1839 mutiny aboard a Spanish slave ship, *La Amistad*. En route to a sugar plantation in Cuba, over 50 newly enslaved Africans seize control of the ship, killing most of the crew and demanding that the two remaining alive sail them back to Africa. The ship instead ends up off the shores of Long Island, where the rebels are captured by the U.S. Navy and imprisoned in Connecticut on charges of murder, mutiny and piracy. After two years of court cases, in which the Africans' defense was taken up by American abolitionists, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that they are not legally slaves and are thus immediately free. Along the way, we see some famous figures from American history, such as former president John Quincy Adams (in a splendid performance by Anthony Hopkins); abolitionist Lewis Tappan, a founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society; and John C. Calhoun, a Congressman from South Carolina who had been vice president under Adams. Probably more than any other politician at the time, Calhoun spoke for the Southern slavocracy, and South Carolina was later dubbed the "soul of secession."

The movie ends with the British Navy blasting to smithereens the notorious slave fortress of Lomboko in Sierra Leone, where Africans were imprisoned to be sold to slave-traders. Such an end is gratifying to the gut-wrenching loathing of slavery the film inspires. But the



Andrew Cooper

Steven Spielberg's *Amistad* searingly portrays horrors of Atlantic slave trade.

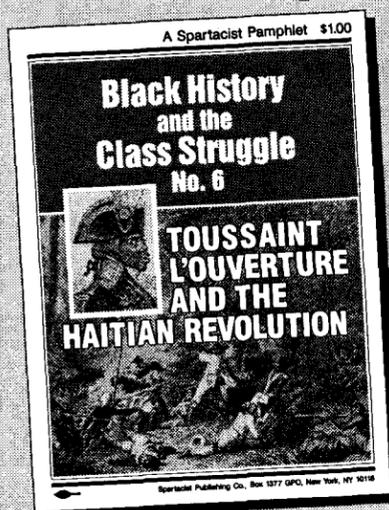
As captured by its mawkish invocation of the Declaration of Independence (written by slaveowner Thomas Jefferson), the film falsely portrays the American government as open to anti-slavery arguments. In fact, as William W. Freehling documents in *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (Oxford University Press, 1990), from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, the weak government in Washington was mostly dominated by the slaveowning South.

The Supreme Court's decision in favor of the *Amistad* captives reflected not its commitment to the "inalienable rights" of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," as Adams' speech in the film would lead you to believe, but the "free trade" interests of the American slavocracy and British merchants. When the Civil War broke out, Britain's official neutrality was simply a cover for support to the Confederacy against the Union; the South grew the cotton which fed the profits of Britain's largest industry, textiles. And until its abolition in 1807, profits from the British slave trade provided much of the capital used to develop Britain's mills and thriving ports like Liverpool. In *Myths of the Slave Power: Confederate Slavery, Lancashire Workers and the Alabama*

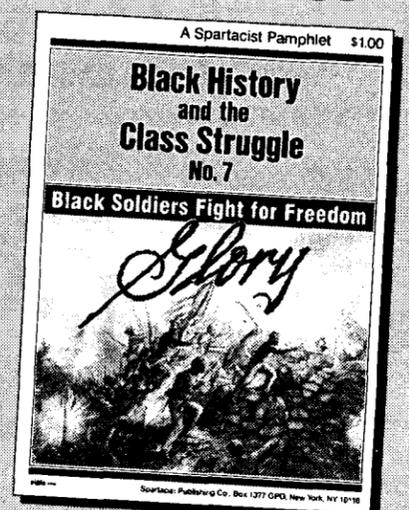
of course, the American cotton-trade was still dependent upon slave labour."

As historian Eric Foner commented, "The truth is that the *Amistad* case revolved around the Atlantic slave trade—outlawed by international treaty long

### Black History and the Class Struggle



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# Amistad...

(continued from page 3)

American Civil War. In fact, the two decades between these events were marked by fierce debate throughout American society, increasingly centered on the issue of slavery vs. free labor and fueled by the growing divergence of interests between the industrial North and the plantation South. North and South clashed over westward expansion and whether new states would be admitted as slave or free; over free trade vs. a national tariff protecting Northern manufactured goods from European competition; over states' rights and the power of the federal government.

The Confederate volleys fired at Union-held Fort Sumter in 1861 were the opening shots in a war which precipitated a social revolution and marked an irreconcilable break with the preceding period of compromise. In an article titled "The Civil War in the United States," Karl Marx wrote later that year: "'The South' is neither a territory closely sealed off from the North geographically, nor a moral unity. It is not a country at all, but a battle slogan." Marx continued:

"The present struggle between the South and North is...nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labour. The struggle has broken out because the two sides can no longer live peacefully side by side on the North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system over the other."

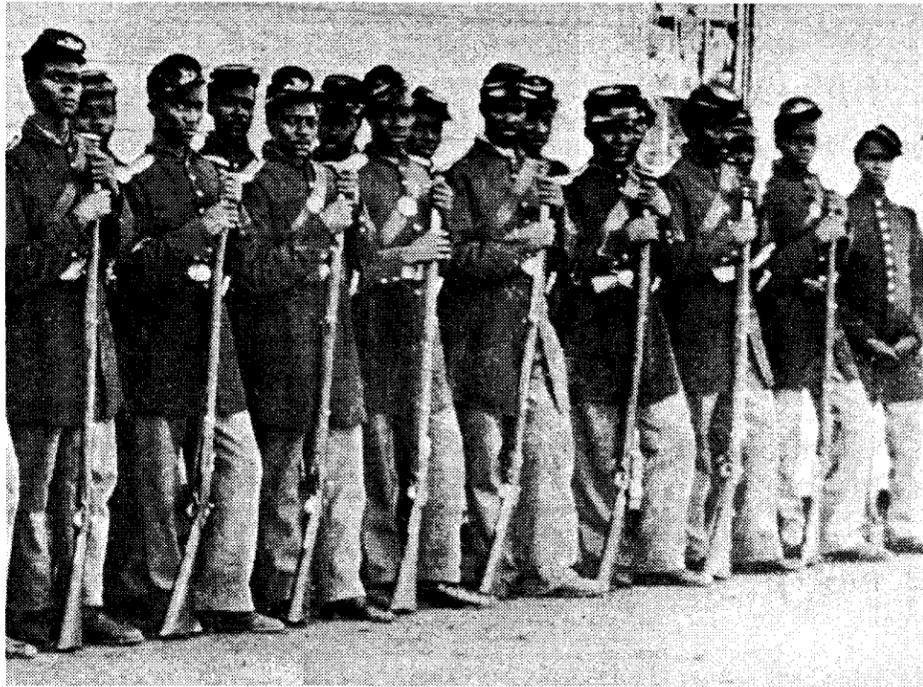
And it was the participation of 200,000 black soldiers in the Union Army which was one of the most decisive factors in the North's victory against the slavocracy.

## The Middle Passage and the Atlantic Slave Trade

Spielberg's movie is dead accurate in its portrayal of the brutality of the slave trade. For example, the deliberate drowning of dozens of captives—mocked as unbelievable by the prosecutor in the film—is known to have occurred on other slave ships. In *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (Hill and Wang, 1993), Peter Kolchin describes another such instance: "In 1781, running short on water, the captain of the *Zong* ordered 132 Africans thrown overboard, because his insurance covered death from drowning but not from starvation."

But moral outrage, however justified, does not explain the events of history nor provide the lessons for future struggle against exploitation and oppression. The Atlantic slave trade—developing out of a well-established slave trade on both the West and East coasts of Africa—came into being to supply the colonies of the New World with a labor force. In particular, the African slaves were employed on the vast sugar plantations throughout the Caribbean, which made the islands among the most profitable colonies in the world. In North America, the bulk of labor needs through most of the 17th century was met by indentured servants, mainly white, who were treated little better than slaves. (There were many, complex reasons why the Native Indians were not forced into servitude, including mass death from European diseases.)

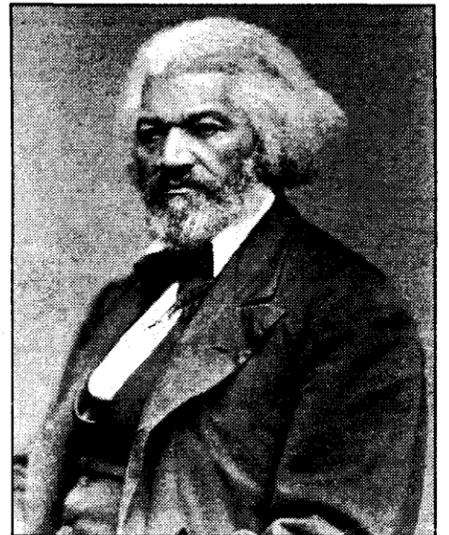
The social system of slavery, its restric-



Library of Congress

tion to blacks and its ideological reflection in the racist worldview of the slaveholders developed as the cultivation of Southern tobacco and cotton with slave labor proved profitable (sugar cane cannot grow in most areas of North America). The invention of the cotton gin in 1783 solved the problem of deseeding short-staple cotton, the only cotton that can be grown on the American mainland, and opened the way for cotton to become the main export of the United States. This clinched a common economic interest

agitate for an end to the slave trade in order to cut off the supply of labor to the French colonies. As it waged war against Napoleon on the continent and at sea, Britain sought to secure naval control of the Atlantic against France and the U.S. Indeed, Britain ruled the seas and dominated world commerce throughout much of the 19th century. Lord Palmerston, British foreign secretary at the time of the *Amistad* events, described the role of the Royal Navy: "These half-civilised governments all require a dressing down



Frederick Douglass House

**Black troops in Union Army played decisive role in defeat of Southern slavocracy in Civil War. Right: Frederick Douglass, revolutionary abolitionist.**

and the *Class Struggle* No. 6). In abolishing slavery through a social revolution surging up from the very bottom of society, it struck fear into the slavemasters and men of property. America's rulers responded to the Haitian Revolution with the same treatment U.S. imperialism metes out to Castro's Cuba today.

The U.S. immediately sent arms to put down the black uprising, as George Washington declaimed, "How regrettable to see such a spirit of revolt among the Negroes." In 1806, under Thomas Jefferson, the U.S. imposed a trade embargo against Haiti; economic sanctions isolated the young black republic and contributed to its impoverishment. In 1825, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton declared, "We receive no mulatto consuls or black ambassadors from [Haiti]. And why? Because the peace of eleven states will not permit the fruits of a successful Negro insurrection to be exhibited among them." It was not until after the Civil War, when the great black abolitionist Frederick Douglass was appointed to serve as U.S. Consul in Port-au-Prince, that the U.S. finally recognized the Haitian government.

## The Struggle for Black Freedom in the United States

While John Quincy Adams did play a part in the struggle against slavery in the United States, it was confined mainly to debates in Congress and reflected the North's overall acquiescence to political compromise with the Southern slavocracy. The real heroes of the anti-slavery struggle were the thousands of militant abolitionists, men and women, white and black, who risked their lives to take on the "Slave Power" in the U.S. Many of them were escaped slaves, like Douglass and Harriet Tubman, a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

By the 1850s, the revolutionary-democratic wing of the abolitionist movement—personified by Douglass and John Brown—recognized that it was going to take a bloody civil war to crush the slave

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Leslie's Illustrated Weekly

**Federal troops unleashed on great rail strike of 1877, the same year that Northern bourgeoisie sealed defeat of Reconstruction, betraying promise of black freedom.**

between the plantation owners of the South and the Northern bankers and merchants who profited from the export of King Cotton and its manufacture into goods.

The Atlantic slave trade as practiced by the *Amistad* and *Tecora* in the film was banned by the U.S. in 1808, and by many other countries in the same period. (Of course, it continued anyway, carried on by ships—including American ones—sailing under the flags of Portugal and Spain.) Seeking to defend Britain's mercantile domination of the Caribbean, Prime Minister William Pitt had begun to

every eight or ten years to keep them in order" (Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* [Simon and Schuster, 1997]).

But the interests of the European and American merchant trade and the plantation owners were not the only forces at play in this period. Inspired in part by the watchwords of liberty and brotherhood of the French and American Revolutions, the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 overthrew slavery there and established a black republic, touching off a wave of slave revolts in the Caribbean and galvanizing blacks in the American South. Historians Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese describe how,

"One after another, the southern states closed the [slave] trade after the Revolution in response to the moral pressure of the time and, probably much more important, to the panic engendered by the great revolution in Saint-Domingue [Haiti] and the renewed awareness of the explosive potential of heavy ratios of blacks to whites and of African-born to American-born slaves."

—*Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (Oxford University Press, 1983)

As we wrote in "Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution": "The Haitian Revolution was a beacon in the fight against slavery and for national independence throughout the 19th century" (WV Nos. 446 and 447, 12 February and 26 February 1988; reprinted in *Black History*

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# Young Spartacus

## Spartacus Youth Clubs Protest U.S. War Moves

As the U.S. imperialists arrayed their armada of death in the Persian Gulf, the Spartacus Youth Clubs held campus speakouts across the country last week calling to "Defend Iraq Against U.S. Imperialist Attack!" From New York University (NYU), Columbia and Harvard to the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley and Los Angeles, we called for revolutionary opposition to U.S. war plans, with placards demanding: U.S./UN/NATO Out of the Persian Gulf! Down With the UN Starvation Blockade of Iraq! Defeat U.S. Imperialism Through Class Struggle at Home! International Communist League comrades also held speakouts and participated in protest demonstrations in London, Paris, Toronto and elsewhere.

Democratic president Clinton's threatened terror bombing was not some aberration but a direct product of the imperialist system, where America's capitalist rulers seek to project their military might in order to secure spheres of exploitation. At Berkeley on February 18, an SYC speaker pointed out:

"We recognize that neither the Republican nor Democratic Party is the party of 'peace,' as both serve the interests of the capitalist ruling class. In 1991 it was Bush and the Republicans, today it is Clinton and the Democrats. Their imperialist wars and massacres are not simply a question of misguided policy—they are the essence of the racist capitalist economic system. To fight simply in the name of 'peace,' or to merely put pressure on the Democratic Party of war and racism, is to ignore the fundamental class nature of the state. The state is, at its most basic level, special bodies of armed men that defend the property of a handful of capitalist exploiters. Anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home!"

In reporting on our demonstration at NYU, the daily *Washington Square News* (19 February) quoted an SYC spokesman: "The United Nations has been enforcing a blockade against Iraq since the Gulf War, starving it and condemning it to misery. Sanctions are an act of war, and sanctions have probably killed more people than the actual Gulf War." Our speaker also pointed out: "While we oppose imperialist war moves against Iraq, we give absolutely no political support to the capitalist regime there, which has secured its rule through anti-Communist

### "Defend Iraq Against Imperialist Attack!"



Young Spartacus photos

**SYC fights to win youth to revolutionary perspective against imperialist war. Campus speakouts (clockwise from above): University of California, Berkeley; New York University; University of London.**

massacres, anti-working-class repression and bloody subjugation of the Kurdish people." We raised the call: Down with the Oil Sheiks, Emirs, Kings, Colonels and Zionist Rulers—Workers to Power! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Also active on the campuses in organizing protests against the threatened attack on Iraq was the International



Workers Hammer

Socialist Organization (ISO), with its pathetic pleas to Clinton, "Don't bomb Iraq!" The reformist ISO's touching faith in the ability to pressure Clinton's Democrats to pursue a more "peaceful" imperialist policy was made abundantly clear at its February 19 protest, at NYU, where the ISO objected to an SYC chant denouncing the Democratic Party of racism and war.

That same day, the ISO sent a sales team to the SYC speakout at Columbia but refused our invitation to address the crowd. The clash of opinion and test in action of the various forces claiming to be socialist is a crucial element in raising the consciousness of working people and youth. But this is exactly what the ISO doesn't want. All too frequently, the ISO resorts to physical thuggery to resolve the glaring contradiction produced by its socialist pretensions and its abjectly reformist practice. At San Francisco State University last week, four ISOers surrounded a female SYC member and threatened to break her ankles if she spoke to any of them again! When the SYC energetically protested this cowardly threat, we found many students repulsed by the ISO's vile antics.

In the tradition of revolutionary Marx-

ism, we say: Not one man, not one penny for the imperialist military! After being driven off many campuses during the Vietnam War protests of the 1960s and '70s, the Reserve Officer Training Corps has been reinstated to help bolster skilled cadre for the imperialist military. At UCLA last year, ROTC staged a "mock occupation," replete with armed, black-booted thugs invading the campus. At our February 19 speakout at UCLA, a speaker from the Los Angeles SYC noted:

"We oppose the use of the universities for military training and recruitment, and so we demand: ROTC off campus! The nucleus of the military is the officer corps which regiments and polices the ranks. ROTC is designed to provide specialized training for the next generation of imperialist butchers, to produce an educated officer caste which will plan and execute the capitalists' war drives while working-class and minority youth are hurled to the front lines to serve as cannon fodder in their wars of profit."

As long as capitalism exists, there will be imperialist wars. The Spartacus Youth Clubs seek to win youth who oppose the brutal exploitation and terror of this capitalist system to join the side of the working class in the struggle for communism. Join us! ■

### Spartacist Forum

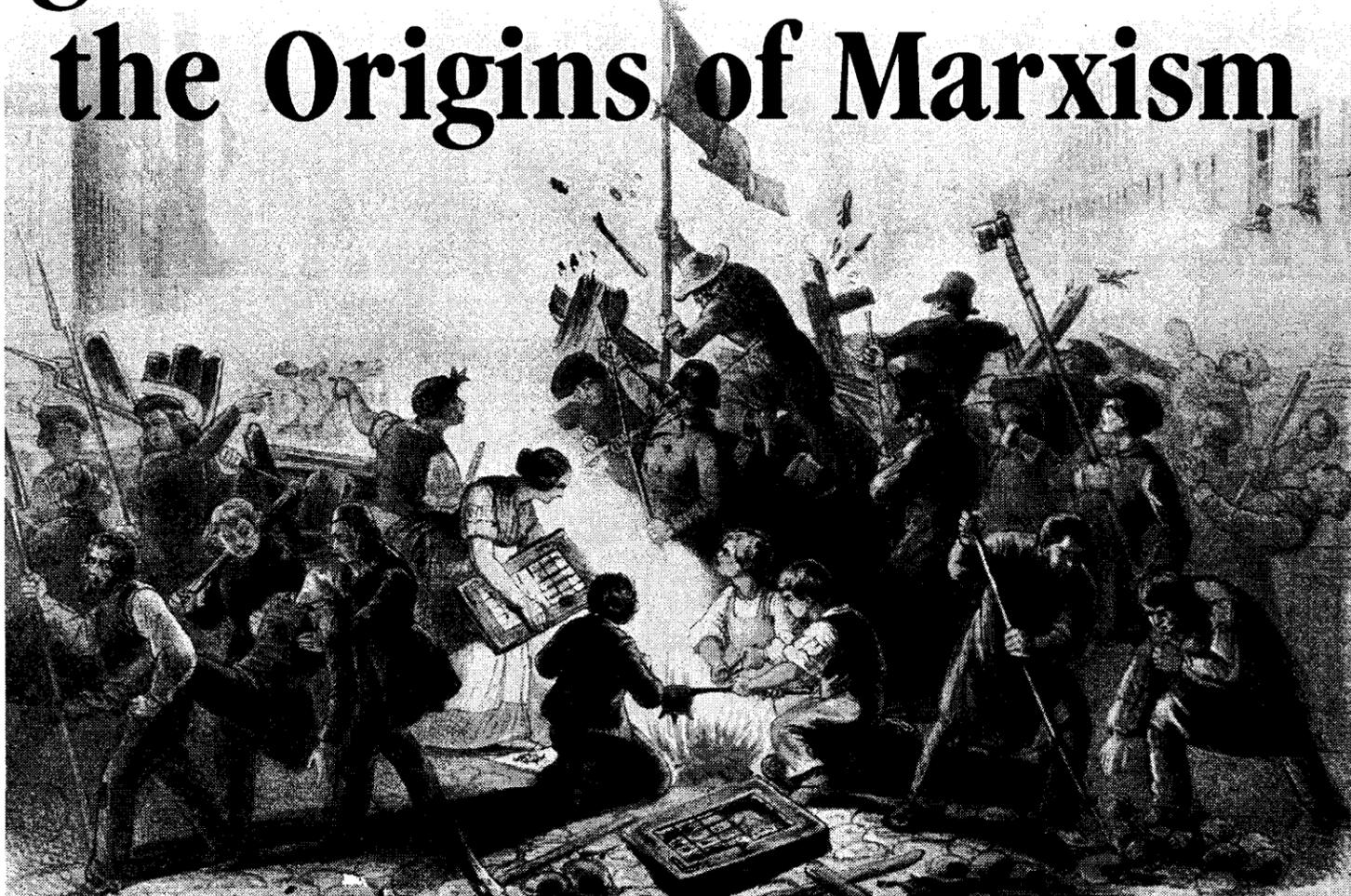
#### China on the Brink: Workers Political Revolution or Capitalist Enslavement?

**For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!**

Saturday, March 14, 4 p.m.  
Hollywood United Methodist Church  
6817 Franklin Avenue  
(Highland Ave. exit off 101 Frwy.)

LOS ANGELES For more information: (213) 380-8239

## Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism



F.G. Nordmann

Workers' barricades in Berlin, 1848. Fearing the rising proletariat, the bourgeoisie refused to carry through the Revolution of 1848. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels outlined the role of the proletariat as the gravedigger of class society.

We publish below the concluding part of this series, which is based on two presentations given by Spartacist League Central Committee member Joseph Seymour during an SL internal class series last summer on the origins of Marxism. The first five parts were published in WV Nos. 673, 674, 675, 683 and 684 (5 September, 19 September and 3 October 1997, 30 January and 13 February 1998).

### PART SIX

Karl Marx first enters political history as a contributor, staff writer and finally editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* in the early 1840s. He was at that time in the political mainstream of the Young Hegelians, being a radical democrat but not a communist. There was a circle of left Hegelian communists, centered in Berlin, who called themselves *die Freien* (the Free). They included, among others, the young Friedrich Engels and a young Russian nobleman, Mikhail Bakunin. Marx rejected the communism of "die Freien" as theoretically vacuous and given to empty phrasemongering. In a letter to Arnold Ruge, he joked that he had thrown out more contributions by them than had the government censor. Nonetheless, the views that Marx did publish in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, his own and others, proved too much for the Prussian authorities to stomach, and the paper was officially suppressed in early 1843.

Unable to publish his views in Germany, Marx emigrated to France in the fall of that year. On arriving in Paris, he moved into a kind of commune for German radicals which included a leader of the Paris branch of the League of the Just. Marx attended meetings of the League and also of its French counterparts. This experience had a profound effect on him, as he recorded at the time in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*:

"When communist artisans associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc.

is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need—the need for society—and what appears as a means becomes an end. In this practical process the most splendid results are to be observed whenever French socialist workers are seen together.... The brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies."

In late 1843, Marx declared himself in favor of communism and proletarian revolution. There are two points I want to emphasize in this regard. First, Marx's transition from radical democrat to communist was conditioned by his actual encounter with a communist workers movement in France; it was *not* a self-contained intellectual development. Second, Marx's theoretical and political views in 1843-44 were very different—I would say fundamentally different—than in 1847. In the first period he still operated within the theoretical framework of Hegelian philosophy in its left interpretation. Communism was for Marx what absolute knowledge was for Hegel: the final stage in the self-development of man's intellectual maturation, in which all previous contradictions are resolved. Thus he writes in his 1844 *Manuscripts* that communism is

"the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being—a return accomplished consciously and embrac-

ing the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution."

Communism is here presented as a synthesis of certain abstract categories, such as existence and essence, which were regarded as antagonistic in Hegelian and earlier philosophies. There is no consideration of the historical and economic preconditions for communism. There is no consideration of the actual socioeconomic structure of European society, its class divisions, the state of the class struggle, the consciousness of the proletariat and the like. Furthermore, the notion that history sets men riddles to solve implies that history has a consciousness of its own ends, a view that Marx would soon totally reject.

Similarly, Marx's view of the proletariat in this period is framed by a left-Hegelian outlook. In his 1844 "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction," (Marx and Engels,

Collected Works Volume 3 [1975]), he writes:

"The emancipation of the German is the emancipation of the human being. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat. Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality."

The proletariat is here regarded as a kind of ready-made instrument to realize the goals set for mankind in Hegel's philosophy. In a sense, the proletariat is for Marx at this point what the state was for Hegel: the material manifestation of reason in the contemporary world.

### The Impact of Feuerbach

In the development of Marx's thought toward historical or dialectical materialism, two other left Hegelians played crucial, albeit very different, roles: Ludwig Feuerbach and Friedrich Engels. Prior to Feuerbach all Hegelians accepted the axiom that what is rational is real. The left Hegelians maintained that since the Christian church, the Prussian monarchical state and, for some, the capitalist market economy were not rational, these institutions were soon fated to disappear.

Feuerbach challenged the central premise of Hegel's teleological idealism: the notion that the self-development of spirit governs the actual conditions of mankind. He argued that Hegel's spirit is simply a metaphysical version of god, to which real living men are supposed to be subordinate. Men are not subordinate to thought as an independent entity, said Feuerbach, rather thought serves the interest and needs of men: "The new philosophy deals with being as it is for us, not only as thinking, but as really existing being.... It is the being of the senses, sight, feeling and love" (quoted in David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* [1969]).

Feuerbach's general worldview is essentially similar to that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, though there was no direct influence. Like Rousseau, Feuerbach believed that man is naturally good and has

Historia Photo, Bad Sachsa



Progress Publishers



Georg Hegel (far left) and Ludwig Feuerbach, the first of Hegel's followers to criticize his idealist philosophy from a materialist standpoint.

a natural affinity with other members of his species. Indeed, the term "species" is central to Feuerbach's conceptual framework. What property was for Rousseau, religion is for Feuerbach: that point where mankind turned down the path of error leading to all the wretchedness and evils of the modern world.

In Feuerbach's view, men ascribe to a supernatural entity called god the actual and potential powers which they themselves possess. Men ascribe to an otherworldly place called heaven the happiness and social harmony which is possible on earth. Feuerbach advocated what he called the "religion of humanity." He called on all men to give up their illusion in an otherworldly god as well as their individual egoism and live for the collective well-being of the human species. "Only community constitutes humanity," he insisted, "that the thou belongs to the perfection of the I, that men are required to constitute humanity" (quoted in John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841* [1980]).

Feuerbach was an extremely contradictory thinker in that he was simultaneously more advanced and more backward than Hegel. He rejected Hegel's idealism in favor of a thoroughgoing materialism. But in doing so, he also rejected Hegel's understanding of the dialectical development of man's social nature. Instead, Feuerbach reverted to a crude version of Enlightenment materialism based on the notion of an unchanging human nature.

In later years, Marx would point to both the progressive and retrogressive influence of Feuerbach on German intellectual life. In the 1860s, he wrote to the German workers' leader and radical J. B. Schweitzer: "Compared with Hegel, Feuerbach is certainly poor. Nevertheless he was epoch-making *after* Hegel because he laid stress on certain points which were disagreeable to the Christian consciousness but important for the progress of criticism, points which Hegel had left in semi-obscurity" (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* Volume 20 [1984]). However, a few years later Marx commented in a letter to Engels: "The gentlemen in Germany (with the exception of theological reactionaries) believe Hegel's dialectic to be a 'dead dog.' Feuerbach has much on his conscience in this respect" (*Collected Works* Volume 42 [1987]).

The difference between Marx's dialectical materialism and Feuerbach's naturalistic materialism is clear in their respective views of religion. Here is Marx's justly famous position on this question:

"Religious distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.

"To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions.*"

—"Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction"

The key phrase here is a "state of affairs which needs illusions." For Feuerbach and the entire tradition of Enlightenment rationalism, there are no conditions which need illusions. Illusions are deemed always and everywhere unnecessary and harmful, and can always be dispelled by scientific evidence and rational argument.

Marx understood that life, alas, is not so simple. Religion is what Engels later called false consciousness. False consciousness is a distortion or denial of objective reality necessarily conditioned by a given stage of social development. All ruling classes operate with some form of false consciousness. Thus slaveowners in the American South believed that blacks were innately inferior to whites. And they had to believe that in order to own and operate their slave plantations. White slaveowners could no more be convinced



Friedrich Engels

Dietz Verlag Berlin

of racial equality through rational argument than they could be convinced to emancipate their slaves and devote their own lives to the well-being of humanity. Therein lay the basic fallacy of a "religion of humanity" which would be embraced by the oppressors as well as the oppressed, the exploiters as well as the exploited.

### Marx's Early View of the Proletariat

Feuerbach's influence on Marx was partial and transient. But in 1845 Marx entered into a political and intellectual partnership with Friedrich Engels which would last for four decades and alter the course of world history. As previously noted, Engels was initially part of "the Free," a coterie of extreme left-Hegelian radicals. Like Marx, his political and theoretical views underwent a significant change when he was forced to leave the hothouse atmosphere of German academia and confront the real world of the class struggle. In 1843, Engels was sent by his father to learn the family business in a textile factory in Manchester, England. He thus acquired firsthand experience of an advanced industrial capitalist economy and of a mass movement of the industrial as well as artisan proletariat, the British Chartist movement.

It was Engels who introduced Marx to the importance of bourgeois economic theory (mainly British) in understanding the class structure of modern Europe and the struggle between labor and capital. However, I want to discuss another aspect of Engels' contribution to the development of scientific socialism because it is not generally recognized. As I've already indicated, upon becoming a communist Marx still viewed the proletariat through the prism of left-Hegelian idealism. In his first published work as a communist, the "Introduction" to his critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, he described the proletariat as

"a class with *radical chains*, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no *particular right* because

no *particular wrong* but *wrong generally* is perpetrated against it... which does not stand in any one-sided antithesis to the consequences but in all-round antithesis to the premises of the German state; a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society."

Here the revolutionary role ascribed to the proletariat is presented entirely in negative terms, as the antithesis of existing society. Such a view was by no means unique to Marx but was then current in the left wing of the Hegelian left. For example, Edgar Bauer, a leading figure in "the Free," wrote at that time that the "poor, working and laboring classes of humanity" were destined to "destroy the present condition of the world" and "establish a new form of life" (quoted in Nicholas Lobkowitz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* [1967]). For Marx at this point, just as for Edgar Bauer, there was no consideration of the *objective* condition of the proletariat in Germany, its relative social weight, its relation to other, more numerous classes such as the peasantry, its political consciousness.

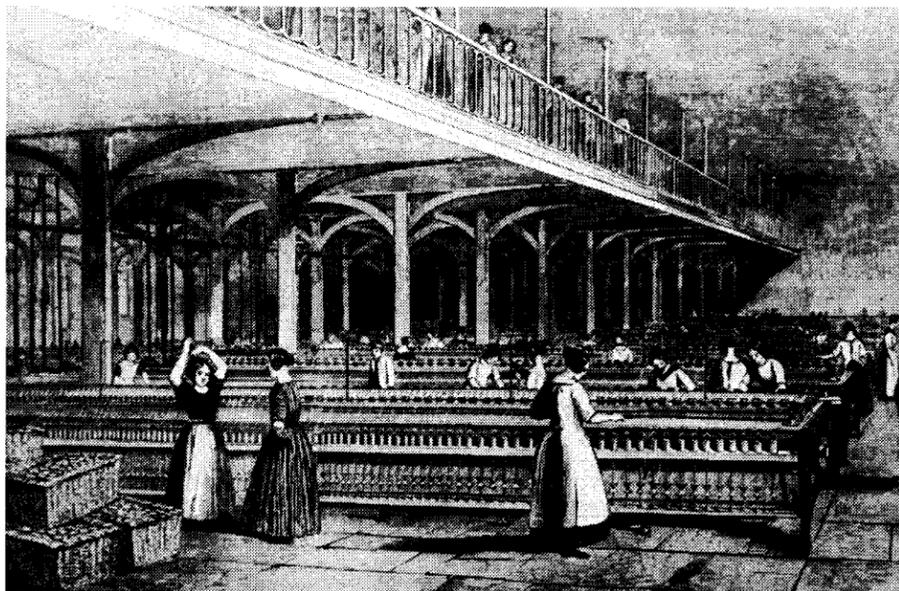
In fact, the term "proletariat" is quite ambiguous as applied to Germany in the 1840s. Only a minority of wage laborers worked in factories. The majority worked in small shops. Many owned the tools of their trade and intended to go into busi-

ness for themselves. Thus aspiring and potential members of the petty bourgeoisie made up a sizable proportion of the German proletariat. When the political situation opened up for a time during the Revolution of 1848, the mass of the German working class did *not* embrace the communist cause but rather supported economic policies, such as trade protectionism, intended to *arrest industrialization* and preserve a small-scale manufacturing sector. It was not until the 1870s that the socialist program acquired mass support among the German proletariat.

To better understand why Marx's initial attitude toward the proletariat was left-Hegelian, not materialist, it is useful to consider a contemporary young European radical intellectual, Alexander Herzen, the founder of Russian populism. Herzen, then living in St. Petersburg, read Hegel and left Hegelians like Cieszkowski. He dubbed Hegelian philosophy "the algebra of revolution." But since there was no proletariat to speak of in Russia at the time, Herzen assigned to the peasantry the revolutionary role of overthrowing the tsarist autocracy and, on the morrow, establishing a new socialist society. Had a left-Hegelian intellectual lived in the American South of the time, he doubtless would have seen in the black slaves the force destined to emancipate not only themselves but all of humanity.

### Class Struggle and Communist Consciousness

Engels' experience in England was of critical importance in moving from left-Hegelian idealism to a materialist and dialectical understanding of the proletariat. Because British Chartism was a genuine mass workers movement, it reflected



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British textile mill in mid-1800s. Rapid growth of industrial proletariat shaped the development of scientific socialism by Marx and Engels.

ness for themselves. Thus aspiring and potential members of the petty bourgeoisie made up a sizable proportion of the German proletariat. When the political situation opened up for a time during the Revolution of 1848, the mass of the German working class did *not* embrace the communist cause but rather supported economic policies, such as trade protectionism, intended to *arrest industrialization* and preserve a small-scale manufacturing sector. It was not until the 1870s that the socialist program acquired mass support among the German proletariat.

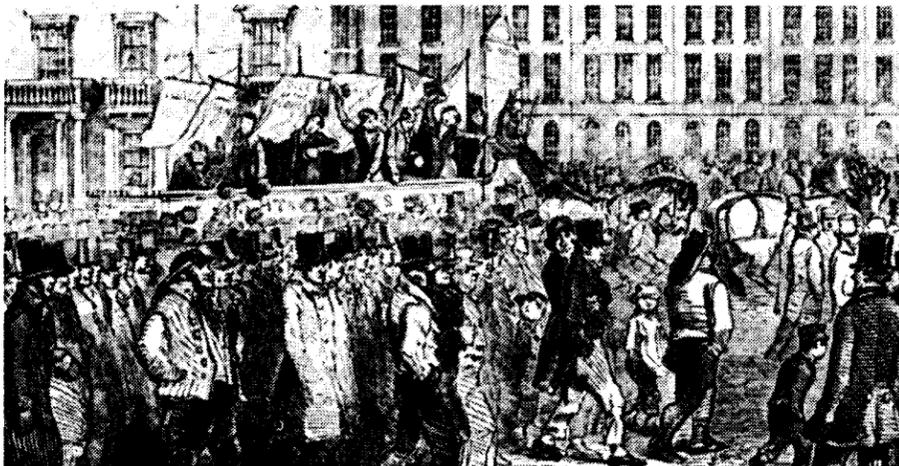
To better understand why Marx's initial attitude toward the proletariat was left-Hegelian, not materialist, it is useful

the political *heterogeneity* of the actual proletariat, with factions ranging from moderate reformers on the right to Jacobin communists on the left. Many workers were devoutly religious, respectful toward the monarchy and supportive of the British empire, while others were "red republicans" who commemorated the French Revolution. Workers with such different outlooks might well be employed in the same factory and even work side by side.

The revolutionary capacity of the proletariat is not simply given by the condition of exploitation but is a product of its historical development in which consciousness plays a central role. It may seem odd and unnecessary to quote at length from a work as famous and widely read as the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, but it is not generally appreciated or recognized how different the treatment of the working class is in the *Manifesto* than in Marx's first writings as a communist. Here the analysis of the proletariat is genuinely materialist and dialectical, sketching out the interrelation between its objective and subjective development:

"The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of

continued on page 8



Illustrated London News

Chartist demonstration in London, 1848. Engels was actively involved in British Chartism, the first mass movement of the industrial proletariat.

## Enlightenment...

(continued from page 7)

production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

"At this stage the labourers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition....

"But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more.... The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts....

"Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers."

It was in the *Manifesto* that Marx for the first time defined the *main obstacles to communist consciousness* among an industrial proletariat which no longer had illusions about restoring small-scale artisan production:

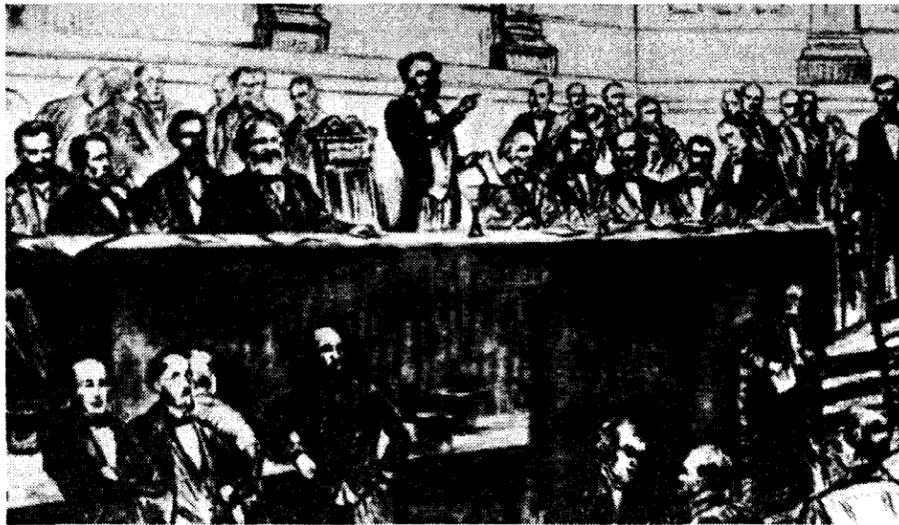
"The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole."

One hundred and fifty years later this is still a pretty good definition of the difference between us communists and all other working-class tendencies.

### Marxism Is Not Teleology

I want to conclude by discussing a common misconception about Marxism. The reason that it's common is that it represents the convergence between the falsification of Marxism by bourgeois ideologues and by Stalinist ideologues. This is the notion that Marx held communism to be the necessary final stage of social development, that Marxism is a socialist version of Hegelian teleology. Thus the Scottish Hegel scholar J.N. Findlay asserts: "There is certainly also a strong strain of teleological idealism in the supposedly scientific materialism of Marx."

While Stalinist intellectuals would never have described Marx as a teleological idealist, in substance that is how they presented his views. The English-language *Collected Works* of Marx and Engels was edited by a team of high-level Soviet,



E. Schaumann

**Marx at 1864 inaugural meeting of International Workingmen's Association in London. The First International marked the recovery of European workers movement after defeated Revolutions of 1848.**

British and American Stalinist academics and intellectuals. The preface to Volume 5, which contains *The German Ideology* and was published in 1976, informs us "that the development of the class struggle must necessarily lead to a communist revolution carried out by the proletariat." What makes this statement especially ironic today is I'm dead certain that all of those Soviet academics involved in this project who are still alive now think that communist revolution is a utopian fantasy and that capitalism is forever.

From their first writings to their last, Marx and Engels rejected the idea that proletarian revolution leading to communism was guaranteed in advance, so to speak, by some impersonal and transcendent law of history. Their first joint work, *The Holy Family*, written in 1845, states:

"History does *nothing*, it 'possesses no immense wealth,' it 'wages no battles.' It is *man*, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; 'history' is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve *its own* aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims."

*The Holy Family* was and remains an obscure and little-read work. But one of the most famous passages in Marx's most famous work, the *Communist Manifesto*, states that while the class struggle is inevitable its outcome is not:

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

During the late 19th century, a vulgar misinterpretation of Marx's theory of historical development gained widespread currency. According to this notion, Marx supposedly held that all peoples had to go through certain fixed stages of development: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism. In the 1870s, a Russian populist intellectual, M.K. Mikhailovsky, denounced Marx for maintaining that Russia had to go through

a prolonged period of capitalist development before reaching socialism.

In a letter to a Russian populist journal, Marx repudiated any such position and any such methodology. He criticized Mikhailovsky for metamorphosing "my historical sketch of the genesis of capital-

labour, the most complete development of man." Marx went on to dismiss Hegelian-type teleology as "a general historico-philosophic theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical" (Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence* [1965]).

Engels, who survived Marx by 12 years and died in 1895, was a keen student of the developments in modern technology; he was one of the first people in London to get a telephone. By the late 1880s, Engels recognized that new military technology meant that a major European war would be qualitatively more destructive than in the past. He predicted:

"The only war left for Prussia-Germany to wage will be a world war, a world war, moreover, of an extent and violence hitherto unimagined. Eight to ten million soldiers will be at each other's throats and in the process they will strip Europe bare than a swarm of locusts. The depredations of the Thirty Years' War compressed into three to four years and extended over the entire continent; famine, disease, the universal lapse into barbarism...."

—Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* Volume 26 (1990)

With the development and deployment of nuclear weapons, it is obvious that an all-out war between capitalist states



Novosti

**1917: Revolutionary soldiers march through Moscow under the banner of Communism. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia marked the first successful conquest of political power by the proletariat.**

ism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself, in order that it may ultimately arrive at the form of economy which ensures, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social

would likely destroy civilization and might well lead to the annihilation of the human race. There is no god, there is no natural law, there are no laws of history which ensure the victory of communism or even the survival of mankind. That's up to us, nothing and no one but us. With that uncomfortable truth, I'll conclude. ■

## Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

### NEW YORK CITY

Alternate Thursdays. Next class, March 12, 8 p.m.: *South Africa and the Lessons of the Russian Revolution: For Workers Revolution to Smash Neo-Apartheid Capitalism*. NYU Loeb Student Center, South Lobby Theater Information and readings: (212) 267-1025

### BOSTON

Selected Monday evenings, 7 p.m. Next classes, March 2: *Financial Crisis in Southeast Asia: Imperialism and the New World Disorder*; March 16: *Anti-Labor Attacks, Cop Terror and the Capitalist State*. Harvard University Memorial Hall, Room 303 Information and readings: (617) 666-9453

### Trotskyist League/ Ligue trotskyste Events

### TORONTO

Alternate Tuesdays, 7 p.m. Next classes: March 3: *The Leninist Struggle Against Imperialism*; March 17: *The Family and Women's Oppression*; March 31: *The Fight for a Leninist Vanguard Party Today*.

University of Toronto International Student Centre 33 St. George Street (north of College Street)

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138

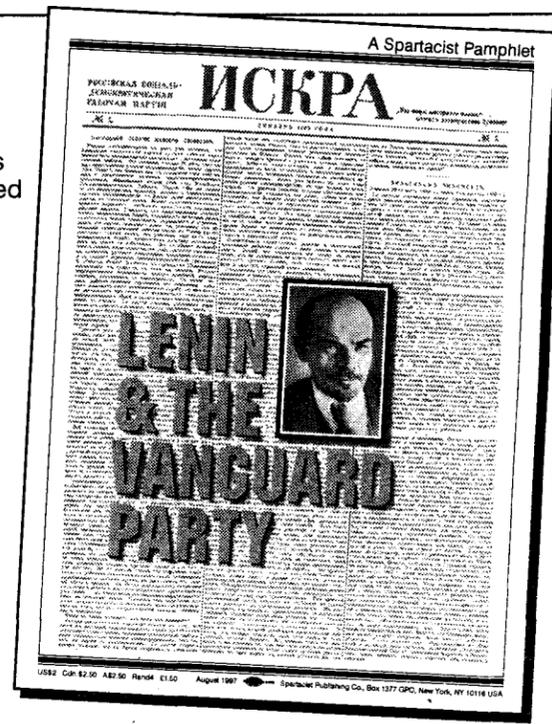
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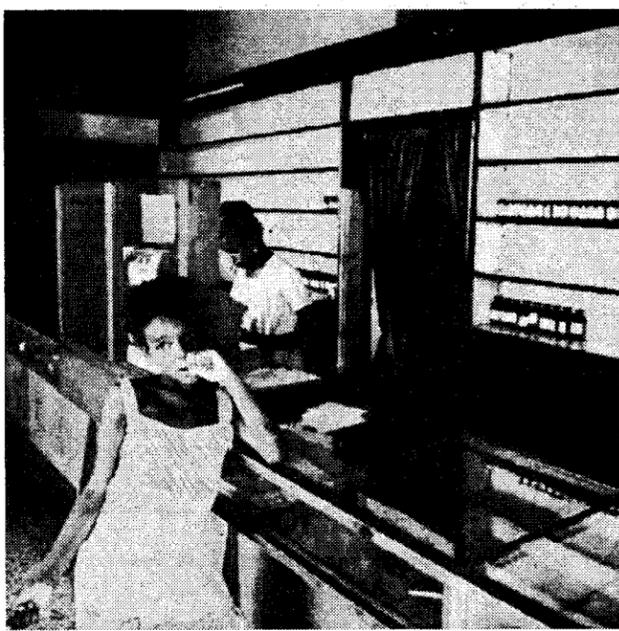
# Castro...

(continued from page 12)

in one country" was a lie in the Soviet Union—which encompassed one-sixth of the globe—"socialism" on one small Caribbean island was far more so. The anti-working-class Havana regime has blocked the possibilities to extend social revolution outside Cuba's shores—from Castro's embrace of Chile's popular-front government in the early 1970s, which paved the way for a bloody military dictatorship, to his admonition a decade later to the petty-bourgeois Nicaraguan Sandinistas not to follow the "Cuban road" of expropriating the bourgeoisie. To place the working class in political power and open the road to socialist development in Cuba requires a supplemental *political* revolution led by a Trotskyist party.

It was only under exceptional circumstances that Castro's petty-bourgeois forces were able to smash capitalist property relations. With the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, the narrow historical opening in which such forces were able to overturn capitalism has been closed. This underscores the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution for semicolonial and backward countries: that national liberation and agrarian revolution can only be achieved through the seizure of power by the working class, which must proceed toward the socialist reorganization of society, fighting to extend proletarian revolution to the advanced capitalist countries.

The collapse of the Soviet Union cast Cuba into a deep crisis from which it has not emerged. In 1990, as he was pushing toward capitalist restoration in the USSR



Canadian Press

**Empty pharmacy in Havana. Ever-tightening U.S. embargo has increased deprivation for Cuban masses.**

population now dependent on tourism for their livelihoods. The rest have to get by on a diet of rice and beans.

While the harsh economic rigors of the "special period" imposed after the collapse of the Soviet Union—and the loss of some \$4 billion annually in aid—have eased somewhat, this has been accompanied by galloping inequality in Cuban society. The average Cuban worker paid in pesos earns the equivalent of about \$6 a month, but a taxi driver can make \$50 a day. Women and blacks have been among those hardest hit by the "dollarization" of the economy. Black Cubans are far less likely to have relatives in the U.S. who send them greenbacks. Meanwhile, thousands of women desperate to feed themselves and their families have been forced into prostitution at the edges of the booming tourist industry. Up to 400,000 people have migrated from the provinces to

CIA papers released last year documented not only the numerous assassination attempts against the Cuban leader himself, but also plans for U.S. forces to shoot down civilian aircraft or sink boatloads of Cubans bound for Miami and then blame the atrocities on Cuba in order to justify an American military attack. And since taking over the White House, Clinton has twice tightened the economic embargo aimed at squeezing Cuba into submission, which was first imposed in 1962 under another Democratic president, John F. Kennedy.

While such measures play well with die-hard reactionaries like South Carolina Senator Jesse Helms and the hard-bitten *gusano* rabble in Miami, significant sections of the U.S. bourgeoisie now favor the development of capitalist market forces to destroy the Cuban Revolution from within. The Bay of Pigs fiasco continues to haunt America's capitalist rulers—witness the release of a 36-year-old CIA document which describes the operation as "unmitigated and almost willful bumbling and disaster" (*New York Times*, 22 February). When *gusano* godfather Jorge Mas Canosa died last fall, the *New York Times* (25 November 1997) used the occasion to argue that "Helms-Burton has done more harm to the United States than to Mr. Castro." Even Helms has now endorsed a legislative proposal to loosen the embargo by allowing U.S. companies to sell food and medicine to Cuba. Opponents of sanctions today include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and hundreds of other corporate spokesmen. Various reformist "socialists" who focus solely on opposition to the embargo effectively tail such bourgeois forces.

The ex-Trotskyist and now eccentrically reformist SWP of Jack Barnes seeks to attract radical-minded youth by posing as the "best defenders" of the Cuban Revolution. But far from advancing a program to defend the gains of the revolution, the Barnesites are simply press agents for the Castro bureaucracy which is pushing Cuba to the brink of capitalist restoration. Typically, the SWP's *Militant* (9 February) headlined its report on John Paul II's visit, "Confident Revolutionary

Gov't Hosts Pope in Cuba"! Avoiding even a hint of criticism of the dyed-in-the-wool Polish counterrevolutionary, the SWP lambasted the "big-business media" for daring "to portray the Pope's visit as a blow to the Cuban revolution."

Such treachery masquerading as pollyannaish idiocy is nothing new for the SWP, which proclaimed that the U.S. had "lost" the Cold War after the USSR had collapsed! About the only times the Barnesites have disagreed with "comrade Fidel" was when they stood to his right in championing capitalist-restorationist forces arrayed against the Soviet degenerated workers state, including Pope Wojtyla's favorite "union," counterrevolutionary Polish *Solidarność*. The SWP also hailed Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter-coup in 1991, which ushered in the destruction of the Soviet Union. Now the Barnesites are helping grease the way for the restoration of capitalism in Cuba.

Seemingly on the other end of the spectrum from the adulatory SWP is the social-democratic International Socialist Organization (ISO), which opposes the Castro regime from the standpoint of virulent anti-communist hostility to the Cuban workers state itself. The ISO's British mentor, Tony Cliff, broke from Trotskyism at the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 over his refusal to defend the North Korean deformed workers state against imperialist attack. The Cliffites' American forebear was Max Shachtman, who repudiated the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union at the start of World War II and went on to earn the epithet "State Department socialist" by endorsing the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion.

This characterization applies perfectly to the Cliffites, who cheered Polish *Solidarność* and hailed Yeltsin's counterrevolution as the "New Russian Revolution." Now the Canadian *Socialist Worker* (28 January) gives full vent to the Cliffites' hatred for the Cuban Revolution, exulting how the Pope's call for freeing counterrevolutionary "political prisoners" in Cuba "met with enthusiasm from tens of thousands who listened to him." And, as we reported in "ISO: Gusano Socialists?" (WV No. 606, 16 September 1994), a few years back the Canadian Cliffites hailed a counterrevolutionary riot in Havana as a sign that "Cuban workers and peasants have begun to break the hold of a repressive regime" (*Socialist Worker* [Canada], September 1994). The same issue of their paper echoed the *gusano* scum in claiming that Cuban "refugees" are "desperate for a taste of freedom." As we have noted before, the Cliffites' "third camp" is nothing other than the camp of "democratic" imperialism!

The Cuban Revolution today stands at a crossroads. Revolutionaries in the U.S. have a special duty to defend Cuba against capitalist restoration and rapacious American imperialism. This is integrally tied to the struggle for socialist revolution to sweep away the racist capitalist U.S. rulers. The Spartacist League is dedicated to building the Leninist vanguard party needed to lead that struggle to victory. ■



Gamma-Liaison

**Lech Walesa with Vatican sponsors of *Solidarność* counterrevolution in Poland.**

itself, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev cut back the amount of oil that the Soviet Union sold to Cuba and drastically raised the price to world market levels while slashing the price that Moscow paid for Cuban sugar. Following Gorbachev's ouster, the pro-imperialist Yeltsin regime canceled all economic and military aid, leaving Cuba completely isolated against U.S. imperialism.

In response, the Castro regime has gone ever further down the road of capitalist "market reforms." The country now has \$5 billion in foreign investment, and one American businessman told *Time* magazine (25 August 1997), "It is actually easier to do business in Cuba than in the free world." A recent article in *Time* (26 January) reported:

"Today Havana blooms with chicly renovated hotels, neon signs, crowded restaurants and nightclubs. The U.S. dollar has swallowed the Cuban peso. Farmer's markets and mom-and-pop entrepreneurs fuel a production boom of sorts. Cars outnumber bicycles again in Havana, and many of them are 1990s Nissans, not 1950s Chevys. Foreign investors not only share ownership of new projects but also own some outright and ship much of their profits home."

The newfound prosperity described by *Time* is largely reserved for the small minority of the 10 percent of the Cuban

Havana and other tourist areas in search of dollars in recent years.

The "market reforms" have not only deepened racial divisions in the country but have also sown desperation and demoralization among much of the population while fueling the forces of capitalist restoration. Castro's accommodation of the Vatican only further strengthens internal counterrevolutionary forces. The Cuban Communist Party (CCP) helped organize large outdoor audiences to hear the Pope rant against abortion, contraception, atheism and materialism, while Castro warned CCP members to "not express the slightest manifestation of disgust at any phrase that displeases us or seems unjust." While the Catholic church doesn't have the social or political weight it had in Poland even before the counterrevolution there, it nonetheless provides a focus for reactionary opposition to the regime.

## Cuban Revolution at the Crossroads

Over nearly four decades, U.S. imperialism has tried every "dirty trick" in the CIA's books to undermine and overthrow the Castro regime, from the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to a *gusano* provocation in Cuban airspace two years ago.

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# Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

and immigrants in their own countries, ratcheting up the rate of exploitation, slashing social programs, stepping up racist repression. In statements issued by other national sections of the ICL denouncing the threatened bombing of Iraq, our comrades have stressed the need to mobilize the proletariat of each country in struggle against its enemy, its "own" national bourgeoisie.

The outlines of the world political situation are more and more coming to resemble those before the first inter-imperialist world war of 1914-18. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, whose final undoing is the work chiefly of the social-democratic and Stalinist misleaders, pointed the way out of this system of exploitation, racism and war. Amid the slaughter of World War I, as the social-democratic Second International wallowed in national chauvinism, Lenin's Bolsheviks persevered in forging a workers party committed to the program of world socialist revolution. In his 1915 pamphlet, *Socialism and War*, Lenin wrote:

"Without a series of revolutions, what is called a democratic peace is a philistine Utopia. The purpose of a real programme of action can be served only by a *Marxist* programme which gives the masses a full and clear explanation of what has taken place, explains what imperialism is and how it should be combated, declares openly that the collapse of the Second International was brought about by opportunism, and openly calls for a Marxist International to be built up without and against the opportunists."

The threat to blow away countless Iraqi civilians as a display of America's military might, like the enormous "desert slaughter" perpetrated seven years ago, is a harbinger of future, even bloodier conflicts—ultimately including the spectre of nuclear war—if capitalism is not swept away.

## Big Lies for Mass Murder

The Ohio State "town hall" meeting which turned into a public relations fiasco



New York City, February 17: Reformist left pleads to murderous U.S. ruling class to be more "peaceful"; Spartacists fight for class struggle to defeat U.S. imperialism.



WV Photos

lar to that needed to produce food supplies and other basic products, eliminating Iraq's ability to produce them would require leveling the country's entire economic infrastructure. Furthermore, the U.S. and Britain have long supplied the Iraqi regime with such materials, as recently as 1992. During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Washington approved sales to Baghdad of the germs that cause anthrax, botulism, gas gangrene and other diseases. The U.S. leads the world in manufacturing and stockpiling chemical and biological weapons, not to mention a nuclear arsenal capable of destroying humanity many times over. And only the U.S. has used nuclear weapons, when it incinerated over 200,000 Japanese and Korean civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Republican Congressional leaders have tried to one-up the Democratic president by demanding that the aim of any military action be to topple Saddam Hussein. "Time To Off Saddam?" asked *Time* (16 February). It is a measure of the imperialist arrogance of America's capitalist rulers that they openly moot the assassination of foreign leaders. But the ground invasion likely needed to "off" Saddam Hussein would risk massive American casualties, something the U.S.

almost two years ago ended in the execution of as many as 80 conspirators.

## Near East Cockpit

What is really behind the U.S. military buildup in the Gulf is the growing competition among the imperialist bourgeoisies. This is particularly evident in the Near East, where the U.S. vies with other capitalist powers for control of oil fields and pipeline routes. The destruction of the USSR has not only heightened these tensions in general but particularly so in this region, as vast natural gas and oil reserves in the former Soviet Central Asian republics are opened to capitalist exploitation and Russia joins with France, Germany and other powers in seeking to expand oil operations to Iran and Iraq. It is no accident that the last U.S. buildup in the Gulf, in November, began only days after the French oil giant, Total, joined with Russia's Gazprom and a Malaysian firm in signing a \$2 billion contract with Iran to pump offshore natural gas.

In 1990-91, Washington not only managed to strong-arm other capitalist governments to join its war "coalition," but had them foot the bill for the onslaught. Today, among the major imperialist powers, only Britain (joined by Canada and Australia) has fulsomely backed Clinton's moves. Among the cynical calculations at work here is that Britain, after the U.S., is the world's largest arms exporter: the murder of its former colonial slaves in Iraq is seen as a way to showcase its goods and boost international sales.

The extent to which the imperialists are beginning to openly clash was seen in U.S. threats last fall to embargo Japanese cargo vessels in American ports in a trade dispute. Now the *New York Times* (22 February), under a headline denouncing Tokyo as the "New Villain in Asia Crisis," quotes leading U.S. government spokesmen lecturing imperialist Japan as though it were an American semicolon and warning that it is fomenting "protectionist pressure"—i.e., sharpened trade war. Germany reluctantly endorsed the latest plan to bomb Iraq only after the U.S. threatened to pull its "peacekeeping" troops out of the Balkans. And following Annan's deal, a German (Social Democratic) spokesman said bluntly: "This deal must be accepted. The Americans would find themselves in dangerous isolation if, pointing to some trifling detail or another, they insisted on a military strike."

At the same time, there are significant differences within the American ruling class itself over Near East policy. Many American corporations have chafed at the prospect of their international competitors closing deals with Iran and Iraq while U.S. firms are constrained by economic sanctions. An editorial in *Business Week* (16 February) declared bluntly, "Bombs Can't Make Up for a Bankrupt Mideast Policy."

This also reflects widespread frustration, from the Clinton White House on down, with America's chief ally in the Near East, Zionist Israel. As usual, the Zionist rulers enthusiastically support U.S. threats against an Arab regime. But the Netanyahu government's provocative flouting of the U.S.-sponsored "peace process" with Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority threatens to derail Washington's designs in the region. Even normally

pliant Arab client states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia have opposed the U.S. over Iraq. Referring to the Pentagon's euphemism for civilian casualties, one Jordanian woman legislator remarked bitterly, "I feel insulted and baffled when I hear these American generals talk of 'collateral damages' as though it is a few pieces of furniture that will be damaged" (*New York Times*, 20 February). At the same time, the Arab bourgeois regimes fear the rise of Islamic fundamentalist movements, which have been fueled by the growing impoverishment of the worker and peasant masses combined with the patent bankruptcy of "secular" Arab nationalism and Stalinist reformism. Tapping into "anti-Zionist" and "anti-American" sentiment, the fundamentalists promote vile anti-woman and anti-Semitic reaction.

At the time of the 1990-91 Gulf War, the U.S. tried to whip up support by shedding tears for the multibillionaire oil sheiks of "poor little Kuwait" and hypocritically proclaiming the rights of the Iraqi Kurdish minority brutally subjugated by Saddam Hussein. Even then, when the treacherous Kurdish nationalist misleaders took Washington at its word, not for the first time, and tried to stage an uprising in northern Iraq, the U.S. effectively invited the Iraqi strongman to put it down. Today, White House spokesmen do not even talk about Iraq's Kurdish population. Meanwhile, U.S. ally Turkey, which has slaughtered hundreds of thousands in a war of annihilation against Kurdish nationalists within its own borders, has subjected Iraqi Kurdistan to one bloody invasion after another in recent years. Yet now even Turkey has expressed opposition to a new U.S. military assault, fearing that this could weaken Saddam Hussein's hold and encourage Kurdish separatism.

While calling for military defense of Iraq against an imperialist attack, we oppose any political support to Saddam Hussein's capitalist regime. He came to power through anti-Communist massacres with the blessing of the imperialist capitals, and he has stayed in power through savage anti-working-class repression and brutal oppression of the Kurdish people (see "Iraqi Rulers' Bloody Road to Power," *WV* No. 511, 5 October 1990; "Saddam Hussein's War on Kurds, Leftists," *WV* No. 517, 4 January 1991). It is the task of the Iraqi proletariat, leading all the oppressed—women and ethnic, national and religious minorities—to oust Saddam Hussein's bloody regime. Ours is the perspective of permanent revolution, the understanding that social justice and national emancipation for the workers and the myriad national minorities of the region will only come about by sweeping away all the murderous colonels, sheiks and Zionist rulers through proletarian revolution, linked to the struggle for workers power in the imperialist centers. Israel out of the Occupied Territories! Turkey out of Kurdistan! For a socialist republic of united Kurdistan in a socialist federation of the Near East!

## Reformists Beg Clinton for "Peace"

At speakouts and protests across the country, we have fought for the Marxist understanding that the struggle to defeat U.S. imperialism means fighting for socialist revolution against this



DPA

Turkish troops stand over slaughtered Kurdish guerrillas. U.S.-backed regime has waged war of annihilation against Kurdish nationalists.

when Clinton's spokesmen were barraged with chants, jeers and embarrassing questions manifested the absence of even a threadbare ideological fig leaf for the threatened terror bombing of Iraq. Having proclaimed that "communism is dead," the U.S. rulers no longer have that ideological standby to justify imperialist military adventures. Instead, the White House has thrown up a smokescreen of cynical and contradictory lies. Claims that air strikes were needed to open up Iraq's "presidential palaces" to UN inspectors were a farce from the beginning. Even before Annan had gone to Baghdad, Saddam Hussein had opened up those areas to UN teams. U.S. plans for a four-day, around-the-clock onslaught were drawn up months ago, complete with a "body count" target of 1,500 Iraqi dead.

Moreover, American spokesmen conceded that an air assault would not be capable of eliminating Iraq's supposed chemical and biological warfare capacity. And since the technology for making such weapons is very rudimentary, simi-

ruling class has feared ever since its humiliating defeat by the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants. Such a military operation could have explosive consequences throughout the Near East, as well as within the U.S. military itself, which is overwhelmingly composed of black, Hispanic and other working-class youth with little ideological motivation for conquering and occupying Third World countries.

There is another reason why the U.S. didn't "finish the job" in 1991 by getting rid of the Iraqi leader. As the British *ITN World News* (17 February) reported: "Policy makers fear that if they fatally weaken Saddam Hussein, the country could fragment" with the Kurdish north and Shi'ite south breaking away, destabilizing the entire region. Washington has favored a military coup to install a more amenable junta of colonels—just as Saddam Hussein himself came to power. But the CIA and British MI6 are hardly likely to enlist any Iraqi military officers in another such venture after their last bungled attempt

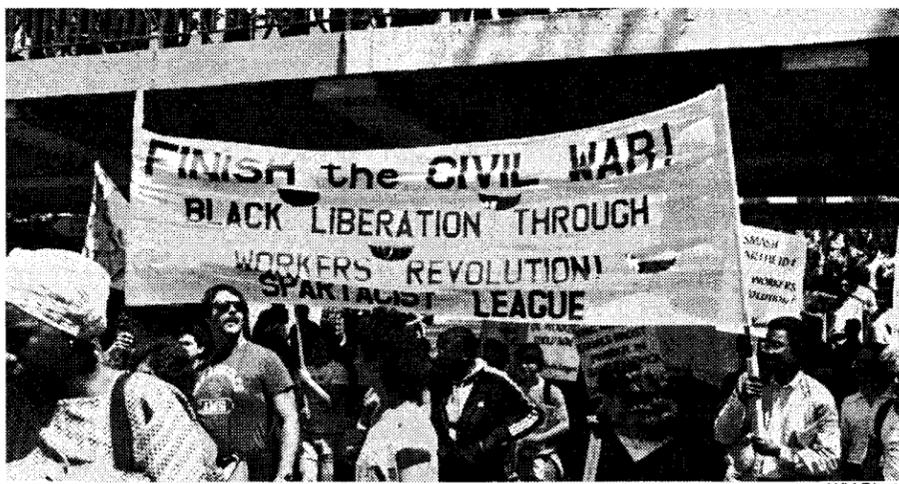
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system and break the chains of black oppression. When Brown and his men seized the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859, they were aiming to gather the forces to begin a guerrilla war against the Slave Power. The federal government hanged Brown for his insurrectionary action. For the majority of the Northern capitalist class, represented by Abraham Lincoln, the aim of the Civil War was not to end slavery but to put down the secession of the South and establish its class rule from coast to coast.

When the war came, Douglass tirelessly organized around the calls to allow black soldiers to fight and to immediately declare the emancipation of the slaves. The Republican Party was split on these issues, but battle losses gave the radical wing of the party a political advantage. "With every reverse to the national arms," declared Douglass in 1863, "with every exulting shout of victory raised by the slaveholding rebels, I have implored the imperiled nation to unchain against her foes, her powerful black hand" (see "John Brown and Frederick Douglass: Heroes of the Anti-Slavery Struggle," WV No. 319, 10 December 1982; reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 1).

The Civil War was the second American Revolution, the last of the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions. It took four years and the deaths of some 600,000 Americans—more than have died in all other U.S. wars—to at last break the Slave Power. The North's victory in 1865 ushered in the most democratic period of U.S. history. Enforced by the occupying Union Army and directed by the left wing of the Republican Party, Reconstruction opened up a vista of equality for blacks, who for the first time were able to go to school, to vote, to run for office. The establishment of public education and other measures vastly benefited poor whites in the South as well.

The promise of black equality was betrayed by the Northern capitalists. The Compromise of 1877, under which the last Union Army troops were withdrawn



WV Photo

**It took the Civil War to wipe out chattel slavery. Socialist revolution will put an end to wage slavery and racist oppression.**

from the South, closed the door on the tumultuous era of Radical Reconstruction. The Northern capitalists were certainly not about to take any action which would threaten the dominance of private property, North or South. Even minimal land distribution to the freedmen was stopped and the large plantations maintained, with the former slaves becoming impoverished sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Instead of policing Reconstruction in the South, federal troops were used, for example, to suppress the 1877 railway strike, the first major national strike. Aside from its radical wing, the Republican Party was interested solely in pursuing the economic advantages of the victory over the Confederacy, not in advancing black rights. By the end of the century, the vicious segregation of the Jim Crow legal codes was imposed. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie moved from the consolidation of power nationally to the pursuit of imperialist power abroad.

### For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Spielberg wants us to buy the lie that a good lawyer is all you need for freedom, claiming that the story of *Amistad* "is about American history not just African history.... The courtroom was really the heart of it" (*Newsweek*, 8 December 1997). Slavery was smashed not in the courtroom but on the battlefield, just as

all social progress is the product of the class struggle.

A climax of the movie is Cinque's dramatic outcry in the courtroom, "Give us free!" But the freedom won by Cinque and his comrades begs the question of the subsequent history of exploitation and oppression. A social revolution broke the chains of chattel slavery, only to be replaced by capitalist wage slavery. With their migration to the Northern cities, particularly around the time of World Wars I and II, black workers became integrated into the capitalist economy while remaining forcibly segregated at the bottom as a doubly oppressed race-color caste. The color bar remains a fundamental dividing line in American class society, key to both obscuring and reinforcing the irreconcilable class divide between capital and labor.

As veteran Trotskyist Richard Fraser, who devoted much of his life to the study of the fight for black freedom in America, wrote in "The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution" (reprinted in "In Memoriam—Richard S. Fraser," *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3 [August 1990]):

"The race concept itself arose out of the need to demarcate the Negroes as slaves and to build upon that difference in skin color a wall separating them from the rest of society. Without racial separation in the United States, there would be no possibility of maintaining the discriminatory social and economic practices which are

fundamental to the economic and social well-being of American capitalism....

"Although [prejudice] is directed immediately against the Negro, its object is the working class as a whole. Through discrimination and segregation, Negro labor is degraded and its wage falls to the bare subsistence level. But this sets the pattern and controls the conditions of labor as a whole."

"Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded"—that statement by Karl Marx at the time of the Civil War resonates loudly today as the capitalist rulers' brutal attacks on the black population are wielded to drive down the wages and erode the living conditions of all working people. The fight for black freedom requires a third American Revolution, a proletarian revolution, to break the chains of wage slavery and finish the tasks of the Civil War through the full integration of blacks into an egalitarian socialist society. The power to do that lies in the hands of the multiracial working class—of which black workers are a powerful component. The means to mobilizing that power lie in building a revolutionary internationalist leadership of the working class.

Liberals like Spielberg cannot tell the truth about the struggle to end slavery because they see it as a moral quest for "freedom" and "democracy." This fits neatly with Democratic president Clinton's cynical charade of "healing" the racial divide in America even as he condemns millions of black women and children to starvation by ending "welfare as we know it."

All the same, it's hard not to like *Amistad*. With racist filth like *Gone with the Wind* and *Birth of a Nation* hailed as among Hollywood's greatest films, it's gratifying to see a film that shows blacks fighting for their freedom. We highly recommend the film *Glory*, a moving account of the heroic black Massachusetts 54th regiment in the Civil War which doesn't contain the fundamental falsification of the American ruling class which flaws *Amistad*. However small the consequences of their victory, at least the *Amistad* fighters did win. The question urgently posed today is that of shattering this capitalist system—to which racist oppression is fundamental—through victorious proletarian socialist revolution. ■

capitalist system. Addressing 300 people at a February 19 protest meeting at New York University, a Spartacist League floor speaker declared:

"There is a banner of revolutionary struggle in the belly of the beast of U.S. imperialism that says forthrightly, unequivocally that we defend Iraq against imperialist attack. We do not counsel the United Nations on how to better carry out its colonialist policies in the Third World. We do not call for different compositions of inspectors to violate the sovereignty of Iraq. We say: U.S., UN, NATO, all of them—Out of the Persian Gulf! Lenin had it right: the United Nations is a den of imperialist thieves and their victims. We say: Down with the UN starvation blockade of Iraq!

"We have to say: Defeat U.S. imperialism through class struggle at home! That's why we say: Break with the Democratic Party of war and racism! For a workers party that fights for a socialist revolution! As internationalists, we side with the toilers of the Near East in saying: Down with the oil sheiks, emirs, kings, colonels and Zionist rulers! Workers to power! Israel out of the occupied territories! For a socialist federation of the Near East! The U.S. imperialists who waged the war in Vietnam, who waged one war after another for capitalist profits, must be brought down through workers revolution."

This revolutionary perspective stands in sharp contrast to reformist groups like the Workers World Party (WWP) and International Socialist Organization (ISO), which have engaged in liberal-pacifist hand-wringing, begging the U.S. imperialists to "end the sanctions" and "don't bomb Iraq." For its part, while specializing in ultra-revolutionary rhetoric, the Progressive Labor Party rejects even the elementary duty of calling for the defense of semicolonial Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack.

WWP's abject liberalism and its belief

that there can be a "peaceful" wing of U.S. imperialism is captured by the fact that its chief public spokesman against the threatened bombing of Iraq is none other than Ramsey Clark. Clark was attorney general in the Democratic Party administration of Lyndon Johnson when it was raining napalm down on the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants. As head of the Justice Department, Clark was the boss of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI as it was carrying out its murderous COINTELPRO operation against black radicals. Following the 1967 Detroit and Newark ghetto rebellions, Clark instructed Hoover to "use the [FBI's] maximum resources, investigative and intelligence" to look for "a scheme or conspiracy by any group of whatever size, effectiveness or affiliation to plan, promote or aggravate riot activity" (quoted in Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers* [1990]).

The ISO, which took its cues from the imperialists and their AFL-CIO labor lieutenants throughout the Cold War, promoted the vilest anti-Communism and hailed one counterrevolutionary movement after another aimed at the destruction of the Soviet Union. Likewise, they echo the imperialist masters over Iraq. At the time of the 1990-91 Gulf War, the ISO parroted George Bush's rantings that Saddam Hussein was "another Hitler." Today, in the face of the most ruthless imperialist power on the face of the earth mobilizing for war against Iraq, an ISO flyer at San Francisco State University complains, "With all of the ruthless leaders in the world, why is Clinton so focused on Saddam Hussein?"

Along with the rest of the left, the ISO today intones against the U.S./UN sanctions against Iraq. This comes pretty cheap at a time when even a goodly

section of the capitalist class itself is opposed to sanctions. Back in 1991, the ISO dropped its paper "opposition" to the embargo when, along with Socialist Action, the Socialist Workers Party and others, it endorsed a "Campaign for Peace" march in Washington which explicitly called for UN sanctions—i.e., starving the Iraqi people into submission—as an "alternative" to war.

While in the U.S. the ISO appeals to liberal bourgeois sentiment, in Britain its parent organization, Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party (SWP), pleads with Clinton's chief ally, Labour prime minister Tony Blair, to "stop this war." This is not surprising, since the SWP enthusiastically supported Blair's election last year. Amnestying the British bourgeoisie, in an article titled "Killing for US Power and Oil," the SWP approvingly quotes Labour "left" Tony Benn saying: "This is an American war against the Iraqi people supported by a British government not elected to wage war" (*Socialist Worker*, 21 February). The centrist Workers Power was equally ecstatic over Blair's election, calling on the Labour government to implement a "human rights oriented foreign policy."

To a man, these reformists and centrists promote the liberal lie that imperialism is just a policy which can be changed through pressuring the capitalist state. But as Lenin stressed in polemicizing against similar views advanced by German Social Democrat Karl Kautsky, imperialism is "the highest stage of capitalism," marked by the concentration and domination of finance capital, the pre-eminence of the export of capital and competition among the advanced capitalist countries to control markets and spheres of exploitation. War is a neces-

sary product of the capitalist system.

The International Communist League adheres to Lenin's injunction that revolutionaries "will not deceive the people with admitting the idea that a peace without annexations, without oppression of nations, without plunder, and without the embryo of new wars among the present governments and ruling classes, is possible in the absence of a revolutionary movement" (*Socialism and War*, July-August 1915). We fight for socialist revolution in the U.S. and internationally as the only way to put an end to war and imperialist oppression. This requires building revolutionary working-class parties like Lenin's Bolsheviks, in the U.S. and around the world, and the reforging of Trotsky's Fourth International of world socialist revolution. ■

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## Defend Cuba—For Workers Political Revolution!

# Castro Welcomes Pope of Counterrevolution

The enthusiastic welcome with which the Stalinist regime of Fidel Castro greeted Pope John Paul II on his recent visit is a sharp warning of the dangers confronting the Cuban Revolution from both within and without. In embracing this architect of capitalist counterrevolution in Poland, Castro made eminently clear his willingness to cut a deal with imperialism which would liquidate the collectivized economy on which the Cuban deformed workers state is based. Only weeks after the Pope left Havana, the Cuban regime demonstratively acceded to a Vatican demand to release scores of "prisoners of conscience" from Cuban jails.

Virtually from the moment the corrupt, U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship was overthrown in January 1959, Cuba has faced unrelenting hostility from U.S. imperialism—economic strangulation, CIA "destabilization" and coup attempts, outright military invasion. To this day, more than 2,000 U.S. troops remain stationed at the Guantánamo military base on Cuba's eastern tip. And in 1996, the Clinton administration tightened the embargo with the signing of the Helms-Burton Act, which threatens punitive measures against foreign companies investing in Cuba. The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, calls for defense of Cuba against imperialist intrigues and internal counterrevolution. As proletarian internationalists in the belly of the imperialist beast, we demand: U.S. out of Guantánamo! Hands off Cuba! Down with the starvation blockade!

Particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union, once Cuba's chief international ally, the Castro regime has increasingly opened the country to imperialist economic penetration—courting foreign investment, "dollarizing" the economy by legalizing the holding and exchange of U.S. currency, turning over ever-larger sectors of the collectivized economy to capitalist "market forces." Almost four



Cuban Stalinist leader Fidel Castro bows to Pope John Paul II, patron of capitalist counterrevolution.

years ago, Castro proclaimed that in order to achieve "reconciliation" with U.S. imperialism, "We would be prepared to sacrifice our particular political preferences, such as socialism, in favor of integration, peace and social justice."

It is in this context that the Pope's visit to Cuba took place. We warned at the time this visit was first announced over a year ago that "any involvement in Cuba by the Pope, the patron of Solidarność counterrevolution in Poland, can only be for the purpose of fomenting capitalist restoration" ("Castro Courts Pope, Capitalist Rulers," WV No. 656, 22 November 1996). Castro hails John Paul II for calling for an end to the U.S. embargo. But in this the Vatican is simply voicing the policy of all the West European imperialist powers, and growing sections of the American ruling class, who believe that Washington's current belligerent policies are not the most effective way of strangling the Cuban deformed workers state.

More urgently than ever, defense of the Cuban Revolution is integrally linked to

the Trotskyist call for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy in Havana and institute a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. This requires above all the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party to mobilize the Cuban working masses in struggle. Just as we fought tooth and nail against capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe, today we fight against capitalist restoration in Cuba. Cuba cannot long survive as an isolated deformed workers state 90 miles from the most powerful imperialist country on earth. The fate of the Cuban workers state is bound up with the struggle for proletarian power throughout Latin America and internationally, especially in the U.S.

### "Socialism" on One Island?

The Castro bureaucracy's current policies are rooted in the very origins of the Cuban deformed workers state. When Castro's petty-bourgeois guerrillaist "26th of July Movement" marched into Havana

on New Year's Day 1959, it had no intention of expropriating the domestic capitalist class or the vast U.S. imperialist holdings. However, large numbers of Batista's cronies among the Cuban bourgeoisie fled to Miami with whatever loot they could carry. And when the U.S. spurned Castro's overtures and tried to bring the new regime to heel with brute economic pressure, he responded by turning to the Soviet Union and carrying through sweeping nationalizations of the U.S.-owned sugar plantations, banks and other firms. By early 1961, the holdings of American corporations and the Mafia—as well as the Cuban bourgeoisie—had been expropriated and the Cuban capitalists were either in exile or in prison.

What emerged was a *deformed workers state* along the lines of what existed in the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Stalinist political counterrevolution of 1923-24. The

Castroite guerrillaists became a Stalinist ruling caste resting on socialized property forms. The working class was denied political power and the new bureaucratic regime espoused the Stalinist-nationalist dogma of "socialism in one country."

Castroism was hailed by revisionist leftists around the world—notably the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which was then in the process of abandoning Trotskyism and the lessons of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—as a new model for revolution, particularly in the "Third World." From its inception as the Revolutionary Tendency inside the SWP, the Spartacist League, while standing for intransigent defense of the gains of the Cuban Revolution, insisted that the revolution was deformed from the beginning and fought to replace the Castroite bureaucracy with the rule of workers councils (soviets). As we wrote in the 1963 document, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International":

"Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat."

—Marxist Bulletin No. 9,  
"Basic Documents of the  
Spartacist League"

Under a planned, collectivized economy, and with heavy Soviet aid, Cuba was able to take incredible strides forward, eliminating unemployment, providing free education and health care and enormously improving the living standards of the population. But if "socialism

*continued on page 9*



Sherbell/Saba



WV Photo

U.S. imperialism's military outpost at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Spartacist contingent at 1994 NYC demonstration calls for defense of Cuba against internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack.