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Cover design: Toni Gorton

Cover photo: Malcolm X leaving plane in London, England, after being barred from France, February 9, 1965. In November 1964, on the way back from his second trip to Africa and the Middle East that year, Malcolm had spoken to a packed house at Paris's large Mutualité meeting hall. He had been invited to speak there again in February at a meeting co-sponsored by organizations of African students and Afro-Americans living in France. (Credit: Topham/The Image Works).

THE CLINTONS' Antilabor Legacy: Roots of the 2008 World Financial Crisis" by Jack Barnes is our opening article in this issue of *New Internationalist*. It focuses on the consequences for the working class of the Democratic Party's antilabor shift on domestic policy in the closing years of the twentieth century, and the Democratic-Republican convergence on these issues during the presidency of William Clinton.

Waging a "war on terrorism" well before 9/11, the Clinton administration also laid the foundations of the imperialist bourgeoisie's efforts to "transform," restructure, and strengthen its military posture, both at home and abroad, following the collapse of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union and of the Warsaw Pact. Washington's initial steps included the passage of new laws eroding the constitutional rights of working people in the United States, from detention based on "secret evidence" to deportation without judicial review and appeal.

Prior to Clinton's election to the presidency in 1992, dominant sectors of the U.S. ruling class had molded him to lead Democratic Party liberals to the "center." Since

the mid-1970s, in contrast to the first quarter century following World War II, the employing class has had diminishing room for substantial economic and social concessions to working people. Clinton's job was to distance the party from the "New Deal"-style social welfare programs many workers identified with the Democrats, the party that had claimed credit for them ever since rising labor battles in the 1930s wrenched concessions from the patrician Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration during the Great Depression. From the New Deal through Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" in the mid-1960s, those programs had been the glue that held together the diverse Democratic Party coalition.

While draping itself in the Democrats' "progressive" mantle, the Clinton administration set out to change the party's complexion to such a degree that what had previously been its "moderate" "center" would become its broad majority and redefine what a liberal Democrat is. His apprenticeship for these tasks included officiating twelve years as governor of Arkansas, as well as chairing the National Governors Association in 1986-87 and then, in 1991, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which had been founded six years earlier to help push the party in that direction.

Two years into Clinton's presidency, in November 1994, a Republican majority was elected in the House of Representatives, a majority led by Georgia congressman Newt Gingrich. A bipartisan convergence quickened over the next few years. In August 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children—"welfare as we know it," in Clinton's infamous words—was wiped off the books. AFDC had originally been enacted in 1935 as part of the federal Social Security Act to protect children with no wage-earning parent. In 1996 Clinton, with bipartisan support,

also signed into law the “Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act” as well as the “Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act,” the biggest assault on the rights of the foreign-born since the end of World War II. Through across-the-board cuts in social welfare spending—together with the short-lived post-Cold War “peace dividend” and a tax bonanza from an end-of-the-century “tech” stock mania—Clinton and the Republican-led Congress engineered the first federal budget surplus in decades. From deficits that had peaked at 6 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product during the Republican administration of Ronald Reagan, Clinton ended his eight years with a 2.4 percent budget surplus.

CLINTON SUMMED UP his course in a 1996 speech to the DLC soon after being re-elected to a second term: “The issue is not what is liberal or conservative but what will move us [“us,” the new bipartisan majority] forward together. . . . For years politicians treated our [“our,” the employers and their government] most vexing problems here, like crime and welfare and the budget deficit, as issues to be exploited, not problems to be solved.” So out came the axe, a fitting tool for a “new Democrat” belt-tightening executive and executioner. (At the opening of the 1992 Democratic Party primaries, the Clintons took time off from stumping in the hotly contested New Hampshire race to fly back to Arkansas, not in order to commute the death sentence of brain-damaged prisoner Ricky Ray Rector but to demonstratively preside over his grisly execution.)

Clinton’s service to the capitalist rulers in carrying out this course during his eight years in the White House was given its due recently in a U.S. publication where good

marks for Democratic Party presidents are a rarity—the conservative *National Review*. In an obituary assessment of William F. Buckley (its founding editor and a longtime voice for the right wing of the Republican Party, who died in February 2008), John O’Sullivan, Buckley’s successor as editor in 1990, emphasized that with “the Cold War victory and *the entrenchment of Reagan’s domestic legacy under President Clinton*—whose presidency effected welfare reform, the expansion of NATO, NAFTA, budgetary surpluses, and other moderate elements in the GOP’s agenda—Bill [Buckley] had in effect achieved his political ambitions . . . more completely than any other major figure of his time” (emphasis added).

Given the decline in real wages, employment prospects, and job safety, as well as the rising insecurity inherent in the totality of the economic and social conditions facing working people during the opening years of the new millennium, neither Democratic Party contender in the 2008 presidential primaries—which are in full swing as this issue of *New International* is being completed—can simply retread the Clinton administration record and hope to win in November. Yet the axis of bourgeois politics has been shoved solidly enough to the “center” that both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, not to mention Republican John McCain, still acclaim the former Democratic administration and bipartisan Congress for their anti-working-class “welfare reform” and other legislation of those years.



In the pages that follow Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party and contributing editor of *New International*, also makes the case that the Clinton ad-

ministration was responsible for decisive steps enabling the U.S. rulers to erect the enormous edifice of household, corporate, and government debt, and its accompanying array of derivatives, that are at the foundation of the current world financial crisis. In face of sharpening interimperialist competition for markets and sources of low-cost labor and raw materials—as well as the declining profitability of any capital expenditures aimed at increasing industrial capacity and employing increasing numbers of workers in expanded production—the propertied families in the United States had no choice but to engage in this debt-propelled course.

Nobody knows, nor can know, how the global financial crisis will unfold over the next several years. A degree of stabilization was restored to the international credit system in March 2008 when the New York Federal Reserve Bank anted up \$30 billion to undergird potential losses by the bondholders of the failing Bear Stearns investment house, the fifth largest in the United States. The Fed's actions signaled to finance capital that the U.S. government would assume massive risk in order to prevent a spiraling debt collapse. But it is a simple fact, not prophecy, that as these words are being written in May 2008, we are still at the beginning of sharp hikes in interest payments on risky adjustable-rate mortgages in the United States—a swelling wave that will roll on well into 2010 and drag in its wake more loan defaults and foreclosures, as well as bigger loss write-offs by banks, hedge funds, insurance companies, and many other holders of mortgage debt and derivative contracts.

Countless bourgeois politicians and financial commentators have sought to pin the blame for the “mortgage crisis” on former Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan. In happier days, many of them had sung his

praises—some even crowned him “the maestro”—for his service to four Republican and Democratic presidents between 1987 and 2006. Greenspan’s latter-day detractors point to speeches he made in 2004 and 2005 extolling the “innovation [that] has brought about a multitude of new products, such as subprime loans,” which have made it possible for “once more-marginal applicants”—a bourgeois euphemism for working-class families with low incomes—to buy homes.

Greenspan has pricked the pretensions of these critics, however, by pointing to their class shortsightedness. In his 2007 memoir *The Age of Turbulence*, Greenspan makes no apologies. Whatever slips he may have made about a particular kind of mortgage, he says, it was “worth the risk” in order to boost home ownership. The “protection of property rights, so critical to a market economy”—that is, to the lords of capital—Greenspan emphasizes, “requires a critical mass of owners to sustain political support.”

To those who now rebuke him, Greenspan is saying: What plan do *you* have to conservatize working people? What plan do *you* have to try to persuade workers that they, too, are “property holders” with a stake in preserving the capitalist system? (Does this semi-lapsed protégé of Ayn Rand know his words echo those—from the other side of the barricades—of Frederick Engels, who together with Karl Marx founded the modern communist workers movement? In his 1873 pamphlet *The Housing Question*, Engels laid bare the workings of the capitalist system that make home ownership for workers “a fetter” that will “chain them once again to the soil” and “break their power of resistance.”)

But Alan Greenspan alone was not, and could not have been, responsible for the near-maniacal expansion

of mortgage holding in the United States, nor its inevitable bust. He certainly did not bring on deflating housing prices and unraveling mortgage crises in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, and elsewhere. No runaway Federal Reserve chairman—supposedly acting contrary to the course and interests of the class he serves—is responsible for capitalist debt excess.

Quite the opposite. During at least the last half of Greenspan's tenure, investment banks such as JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, and others were entering into increasingly complex derivative transactions using leverage in the range of thirty-to-one (that is, \$30 of payment obligations for every \$1 of their own holdings). And so-called hedge funds, private equity firms, foreign currency traders, food commodity futures hoarders, and other dealers in what Karl Marx dubbed "fictitious capital" were doing the same, often leveraged fifty- or even a hundred-to-one!

BY THE END OF 2007, the world market for such derivatives reached the unimaginable total of \$455 trillion. In 2007 alone the single most "popular" variety of these massively leveraged bets actually doubled—so-called credit-default swaps, a form of supposed "insurance" against nonpayment in these very risky deals. But as the direction of financial markets shifted at an accelerating pace in late 2007, the antidote became the poison.

As the U.S. rulers maneuvered over the past two decades to avert a deep economic slump, and simultaneously hold down prices and interest rates, their mounting debt has increasingly been bankrolled by governments and wealthy individuals around the world, who now for the first time in history hold more than half of all Treasury

bonds, the U.S. government's major credit instrument.

The wannabe capitalists dominating the Stalinist regime in China have been especially eager lenders to Washington and Wall Street. As of December 2007 they had bought up nearly \$500 billion in U.S. Treasury bonds—more than 20 percent of all such certificates outstanding worldwide, rapidly heading to surpass Japan as the number-one holder. The Beijing regime's policy is to help keep the U.S. dollar strong and maintain a competitive edge for Chinese manufactured goods in world markets—trading away improvements in the wages, social welfare, and living conditions of hundreds of millions of workers and peasants in China in order to boost export revenues that line the pockets of privileged bureaucrats and rising propertied layers in the new capitalist mandarinat. They've done so at the same time they are intensifying exploitation of natural resources and toilers across Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world to accumulate capital in China.

BY THE END OF 2008 U.S. imperialism will have spent some \$900 billion dollars on its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. On top of that, the U.S. rulers have waved the bloody shirt of 9/11 in order to nearly double their overall war spending (they call it a “defense” budget)—from \$308 billion in 2001 to nearly \$600 billion in 2008. How are these wars being paid for? Until now, at least, they've been financed in large part by Beijing.

In fact, for the first time in American history, the U.S. ruling class is waging a major multifront, multiyear war without patriotic appeals for “sacrifice”—without cutting back government domestic spending, imposing steep new taxes, or pressing “victory” bonds on working people and

the middle classes (Tokyo and Beijing are buying the “victory” bonds this time).

Today’s world capitalist financial crisis will bear down ever more heavily on the already declining living standards of the working class and other toiling producers. Crushing mortgage debt, foreclosures, utility cutoffs and—for the majority of workers—unsustainable rent increases come on top of many other accumulating blows. Average take-home pay of workers in the United States today, accounting for inflation, is below the level of the mid-1970s. Prices of basic necessities are jumping sharply. Interest payments of every variety are a growing burden.

Since 2000 the number of children living below the U.S. government’s own “poverty line” has been on the rise. Nearly 30 percent of families with a female head of household fall below that level. Among single mothers in the lowest economic brackets, the percentage who are *neither working nor receiving cash assistance* has risen from 20 percent before Clinton’s 1996 “welfare reform” to more than 30 percent today. The number of people relying on food stamps to put meals on the table is at its highest levels since the mid-1990s, before the Clinton administration excluded so-called legal immigrants—yes, “legal” immigrants—and others from eligibility.

Despite Washington’s deceptive “official” unemployment rate (which itself has been rising since mid-2006), the percentage of men aged 25–54 holding down no job in April 2008 was over 13 percent—more than double what it averaged prior to the early 1970s, when the post–World War II upswing in the curve of capitalist development came to an end. What’s more, even among those listed as “officially” unemployed, some 17 percent in early 2008 had been jobless for more than half a year. Nearly 5 million people were

involuntarily working part-time jobs, and 7.5 million had some combination of two full- or part-time jobs.



The ongoing U.S.-organized wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have both lasted much longer than Washington's engagement in World War II. And they will continue.

Not a single one of the Democratic or Republican presidential contenders supports the only course in the interests of working people in the United States and the world over: *immediate and unconditional withdrawal* of *all* U.S. troops from *both* Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as everywhere else U.S. forces are deployed.

All three candidates say the U.S. government should commit more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, and should have done so long ago. McCain, narrowing the opinion-poll gap with Obama and Clinton, is staking much of his campaign on presenting himself as the candidate whose vigorous support for the "surge" in Iraq and its extension to Afghanistan offers the best chance of bringing the largest numbers of U.S. troops home the fastest.



Much has been made of Barack Obama's March 2008 Philadelphia speech on "race." Democratic Party liberals (outside the Clinton camp) gushed over it. The Communist Party USA hailed it as "a speech for the ages."

Prominent conservative voices were divided. In the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and *National Review*, some praised Obama's talk as "subtle, serious, and patriotic" and as "a thinking man's speech." Patrick Buchanan, on the other hand—who smiles jovially on TV talk shows, while

baring his teeth elsewhere for the benefit of ultrarightist camp followers—responded with a syndicated column headlined, “A Brief for Whitey.” Obama’s speech, Buchanan said, “is the same old con, the same old shakedown that black hustlers have been running. . . . America has been the best country on earth for black folks. It was here that 600,000 black people, brought from Africa in slave ships, grew into a community of 40 million, were introduced to Christian salvation, and reached the greatest levels of freedom and prosperity blacks have ever known. . . . We hear the grievances. Where is the gratitude?”

That Obama can run for president in 2008 and present a talk such as he gave in Philadelphia registers how much has been accomplished by mass struggles in the streets for Black rights since the days when reactionary attitudes such as those of Buchanan were matters of government policy in much of the United States, enforced not only by cops and courts but, in many cases, by lynch mobs and racist night riders as well.

But Obama’s only message to working people of all hues is the long-standing bourgeois appeal to put aside class struggle in the name of a nonexistent class unity and Americanism. “We hold common hopes,” he said—not “we,” the big toiling majority in the world, but “we,” in Obama’s words, the “rich and poor.” “We are truly one,” he intoned. We “fight together, and bleed together under the same proud flag.” “We need unity . . . to solve a set of monumental problems . . . that confront us all.” “We have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.”

Yet none of this is true. Not one word. The rich and poor, the capitalist rulers and the working class, the oppressors and the oppressed are *not* one. *We* do *not* hold “common hopes”; *they*, the propertied ruling families,

“hope” to maintain their wealth and power off the exploitation of our labor for time immemorial. *Their* flag has become a hated symbol of hunger, economic and social degradation, and the bloody denial of national sovereignty to billions of our fellow workers and farmers the world over. It is we the toilers, not they the exploiters, who are sent to fight and die under that flag. For working people, there cannot and will not be “a more perfect union” with U.S. imperialism’s propertied families in power.



The opposite class standpoint from Obama’s is presented in *New International’s* feature article, “Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X” by Jack Barnes. It is a section of the book *Black Liberation and the Fight for Workers Power*, to be published later in 2008, whose contents Barnes describes in the article.

In addressing the impact of race in U.S. and world politics, Barnes says, revolutionary-minded working people must begin “with the historical record of the vanguard place and weight of proletarians who are Black—a place and weight disproportionate to their percentage among the toilers in this country—in broad, proletarian-led social and political struggles in the United States.”

From that starting point, Barnes focuses on the political evolution of Malcolm X—one of the last century’s most outstanding revolutionary leaders of the Black struggle and of working people the world over—during the last year of his life. Barnes challenges the view of those who insist that Malcolm remained a Black nationalist until his assassination in February 1965, even if no longer a “pure-and-simple” Black nationalist but one increasingly attracted to socialism as well.

“Why not just stick to the facts,” Barnes replies, “at least to Malcolm’s own words?”

Malcolm had long been an uncompromising opponent of imperialism. During the last year of his life, he became an outspoken opponent of capitalism, and he was becoming more and more interested in socialism. He had become a champion of the socialist revolution in Cuba and of its proletarian internationalist leadership. He hailed the revolutionary government in Algeria headed by Ahmed Ben Bella and other leaders who openly proclaimed their socialist course and convictions. Malcolm promoted the *Militant* newspaper and was deepening his political collaboration with the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, two communist organizations. . . .

What is so essential in understanding Malcolm X is that we can see the fact—not the hope, not the faith, the *fact*—that, in the imperialist epoch, revolutionary leadership on the highest level of political capacity, courage, and integrity converges *with* communism, not simply *toward* the communist movement. That truth has even greater weight today as billions around the world, in city and countryside, from China to Brazil, are being hurled into the modern class struggle by the violent expansion of world capitalism. From seeing in life how that process unfolds, we draw confidence in the prospects for world revolution, in the development of a genuinely worldwide proletarian revolutionary leadership.

The more-than-century-long political record of struggle by African-Americans, together with their social weight

and disproportionately proletarian composition, Barnes says, confirms the communist movement's recognition that, in the decades to come, workers who are Black will comprise a larger part than ever before in U.S. history of the vanguard battalions of the working class fighting along the road to a workers and farmers government. In the course of common struggles with other working people, including growing numbers of immigrants, political divisions promoted by the rulers along lines of race and national origin will be confronted and, with class-conscious leadership, overcome.

A socialist revolution in the United States, Barnes emphasizes, will open the possibility of *using* that new proletarian state power, "which is far and away the most powerful instrument fighting toilers can ever wield, to eradicate racism, national oppression, women's second-class status" and "lay the basis to establish human solidarity on new, communist foundations. *That's* the promise of the dictatorship of the proletariat: You've *won* it, now *use* it to *finish* the job."



Is it possible for workers and farmers in the United States to fight for and establish such a revolutionary government?

The answer is a practical political one, as explained in a new pamphlet released by Pathfinder Press as the finishing touches are being put on this issue of *New International*. Entitled *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* the pamphlet contains the presentation by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International* and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, that opened a five-day rolling forum during the 2007 Venezuela International Book

Fair in Caracas on the topic: “The United States: a possible revolution.” The pamphlet is a fitting companion to Pathfinder’s *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* by Jack Barnes.

Supporters of the communist movement organized to produce the new title, both in English and Spanish, in time to reach out with it as widely as possible in the week leading up to May Day—the international workers’ holiday that in recent years has been reborn as a day of struggle by a vanguard of working people in the United States. In 2006 and 2007 hundreds of thousands of workers took off from their jobs and poured into the streets of cities and towns to demand legalization of undocumented immigrants. And despite the fact that many organizers and backers of the prior actions actively opposed calling for demonstrations in 2008 and turned their resources toward voter registration instead, tens of thousands of working people once again stayed off work and joined protests around the country this year. The fight to achieve legalization is a life-or-death political question for the labor movement and for the entire working class in the United States.

“Yes, revolution *is* possible in the United States,” Waters replies to the question posed in the pamphlet’s title. What’s more, “revolutionary *struggle* by the toilers . . . is *inevitable*.” But what is *not* predetermined, Waters says, is “the outcome of these coming revolutionary struggles. That is where political clarity, organization, discipline, and the caliber of proletarian leadership become decisive. That is why what we do *now*, while there is still time to prepare—what kind of nucleus of what kind of revolutionary organization we build today—weighs so heavily.”

Each of the articles in this issue of *New International* deals with particular aspects of how to do just that: build-

ing proletarian parties politically prepared and tempered in struggle to carry out such a revolutionary course.



As readers will discover in “Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X,” Malcolm had become increasingly convinced of the political necessity of revolutionary-minded young people—in the United States, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere—“working together, sharing material, and learning from each other.” As Malcolm told a student audience at Oxford University in the United Kingdom a few months before his assassination, “the young generation of whites, Blacks, browns, whatever else” is living at “a time of revolution.” “And I for one,” Malcolm said, “will join in with anyone, I don’t care what color you are, as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.”

Efforts by communist and other revolutionary-minded young people from around the world to organize in that spirit over the past decade and a half—and their discussions and debates over how to do so effectively—are at the center of another article in this issue, “Setting the Record Straight on Fascism and World War II: Building a World Federation of Democratic Youth That Fights Imperialism and War.”

In April 2005 the leaderships of the Young Socialists and the Socialist Workers Party in the United States responded to a request from organizers of the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Caracas, Venezuela, in August of that year, for comments and suggestions from all participating organizations on the festival’s proposed agenda of events. The response from the Young Socialists urged festival organizers to focus the culmi-

nating day's events on defense of Venezuela against U.S. imperialist threats and pressure, instead of adopting a proposal initiated by youth leaders of Communist parties in Greece, Portugal, and elsewhere to change that day's theme to, "60 Years since Anti-Fascist People's Victory in World War II."

The counterposed agendas reflected conflicting views over the political course of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Leaders of Stalinist youth organizations were seeking to reverse the anti-imperialist political trajectory that had marked the 1997 and 2001 festivals in Havana and Algiers, and, as it turned out, the 2005 Caracas festival as well. The letter from the YS and SWP leaderships was an eye-opening education for a new generation of youth participating in the festival on the multiple class conflicts often obscured under the umbrella phrase, "World War II."



"The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor," a statement drafted by Jack Barnes, Steve Clark, and Mary-Alice Waters, was adopted by the July 2007 convention of the Socialist Workers Party. It presents a revolutionary working-class road to overcome the disastrous consequences for humanity of the contradictory relationship—the sharpening *conflict*, as well as mutual dependence—of land and labor throughout the millennia since the rise of private property.

Labor's transformation of nature, the socialists explain, creates all wealth and culture. Social labor's increasing productivity through the practical application of science and technology has the potential to lessen the burdens

and dangers of work, increase human welfare, and safeguard and enhance the natural environment. Yet under capitalism, which is the last of the world's exploitative property systems, that liberating potential is turned on its head. Labor is made into the greatest danger both to nature and to itself. As a result of capital's unceasing competition to maximize profits, that danger is not just ever-present, it is accelerating. The fruits of labor's exertion increasingly *worsen* the perils to workers' life and limb; *pollute* the soil, waters, and skies; and *threaten* humanity's very survival with the growing probability that the massive arsenals of nuclear weapons and delivery systems will sooner or later be used.

The SWP statement published here complements *New International* nos. 12 and 13, featuring "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun" and "Our Politics Start with the World." As a package, they explain why workers' line of march toward the *revolutionary political transformation* of existing social relations, and the transformation of ourselves in the process, must be at the center of a strategy to halt and reverse these ruinous consequences of the workings of capitalism. And they anchor this defense of land and labor in the political continuity of the modern communist workers movement since its origins in the mid-1800s.

The statement explains why bourgeois hysteria campaigns and catastrophism—from panics over flu epidemics and "mad cow" disease, to the human and other natural consequences of the dumping of carbon emissions into the earth's atmosphere—are aimed at preventing working people "from recognizing the actual source of these threats to civilization: the capitalist mode of production, its world imperialist order, and the way in which the rulers wring enormous wealth and power from nature and

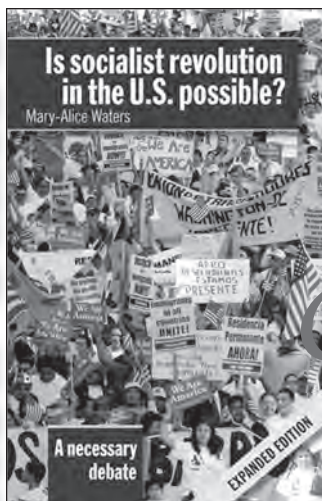
the exploited producers.”

The “green-red” politics of middle-class currents in the workers movement today, “like ‘peace’ politics and ‘pacifism,’ are expressions of *bourgeois* politics,” the statement notes. “They lead away from the fight for independent working-class political action and the conquest of power by workers and farmers—the only road to peace and the effective defense of labor and of the earth’s land, waters, and atmosphere. Concrete gains for working people can and will be won as by-products along that road of revolutionary struggle.”

Along *that* proletarian course, answers can and will be found by the working class and our allies to the major questions of U.S. and world politics confronting us the world over—imperialist wars, global financial crises, spreading hunger, inflation and joblessness, racist bigotry, the oppression of women, government assaults on workers’ political rights to organize and act, capital’s destruction of labor and nature, and more. We invite you to turn the page and join us in that march.

Steve Clark
May 2008

Revolution in the United States



Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

A Necessary Debate

MARY-ALICE WATERS

In two talks, presented as part of a wide-ranging debate at the Venezuela International Book Fairs in 2007 and 2008, Waters explains why a socialist revolution in the United States is possible. Why revolutionary struggles by working people are inevitable, forced upon us by the crisis-driven assaults of the propertied classes. As solidarity grows among a fighting vanguard of working people, the outlines of coming class battles can already be seen. \$7. Also in Spanish and French.

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

JACK BARNES

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had a worldwide political impact, including on working people and youth in the imperialist heartland. As the mass, proletarian-based struggle for Black rights was already advancing in the U.S., the social transformation fought for and won by the Cuban toilers set an example that socialist revolution is not only necessary—it can be made and defended. This second edition, with a new foreword by Mary-Alice Waters, should be read alongside *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* \$10. Also in Spanish and French.

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**THE CLINTONS' ANTILABOR LEGACY:
ROOTS OF THE 2008
WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS**



PHOTOS: AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



“The Clinton administration consolidated an anti-working-class shift in Democratic Party domestic policy that increased the political convergence of the two leading parties of the employing class.”

TOP: Clinton signs law “ending welfare as we know it,” Aug. 22, 1996, the rulers’ biggest single success in eroding the federal Social Security system won through struggles by working people during labor upsurge of 1930s and Black freedom movement culminating in 1960s. **BOTTOM:** Georgia Congressman Newt Gingrich at Sept. 1994 rally in Washington, D.C., for Republican congressional candidates. The new Republican majority elected that year embraced Clinton’s key legislative proposals.

THE CLINTONS' ANTI-LABOR LEGACY:
ROOTS OF THE 2008
WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS

by Jack Barnes

IT HAS BEEN SEVEN YEARS since William Clinton vacated the White House. To hear tell from Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, other leading Democrats, and the former president himself, almost all today's ills—from the war in Iraq, to harder times for working people, to high finance's orgy of destruction, and more—can be laid at the foot of George W. Bush and the Republican Party. In the 2008 Democratic primary electioneering, Bill Clinton has taken to modestly describing 1993–2001 as “the eight best years we’ve had in modern history.” (Yes, “we.”)

Currents in the workers movement such as the Communist Party USA, like most other middle-class radicals and self-described socialists, insistently peddle this same “Bush-is-the-problem” story. All of them would have us believe that the policies carried out since 2001, at home and abroad, were cooked up from scratch by the Republicans.

In trying to make this case stick, the Democrats and their advocates count on shortness of memory. But class-conscious workers don't have the brief historical atten-

tion span the Democrats count on. In reality, the Clinton administration consolidated an anti-working-class shift in Democratic Party domestic policy that increased the *political convergence* of the two leading parties of the employing class. The most important elements of domestic and foreign policy alike widely attributed today to the Bush administration had their origin during the Clinton-Gingrich-Rubin years.

The accuracy of that assessment is clear from the two items printed below.

The first was written in early 2001, without knowledge of what the Bush administration would do. It is taken from the 2001 edition of *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, based on portions of a talk presented at public meetings in Seattle and New York City in March 2001. The meetings celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Cuban people's victory over the 1961 U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs, the first military defeat of U.S. imperialism in the Americas.

The second I have edited for publication in this issue of *New Internationalist* based on several talks and reports at the end of 2007 and early 2008.

2001 ASSESSMENT

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON, the politician whom liberals, with a straight face, describe as “the first Black president,” is now, finally, out of office. From the beginning eight years ago, communist workers insisted that

Clinton was no friend of the working class, that he would be a war president, a prison president, a death-penalty president—in short, a president, like those before him, whose course at home and abroad was aimed at serving the class interests of the U.S. ruling families. The same we can say with confidence is true of Clinton's recent successor, George W. Bush, and of the Congress, then and now.

Just hours before Bush was sworn in on January 20, Clinton ordered U.S. warplanes to bomb civilian targets in southern Iraq. Then, less than a month later, Bush sent U.S. planes to hit neighborhoods on the outskirts of Baghdad, dropping twenty-eight cluster bombs. These weapons, which scatter thousands of small explosive devices, are designed and deployed with one and only one purpose in mind: to kill and maim, to mangle the flesh of the maximum number of men, women, and children. (The *Militant* was the only newspaper where you could have found out about the cluster bombs, unless you happened to catch the *Washington Post* on-line on February 26. The *Post* editors made sure the article never made it into the print edition.)

The assaults on Iraq by Clinton and Bush were a virtual replay of the January 1993 handoff from the elder Bush to Clinton. During the days prior to Clinton's inauguration, the outgoing Republican administration rained down bombs on Iraq, and the new Democratic administration followed suit the very next week. Ever since then, the U.S. and British armed forces have kept up the bombing of Iraq virtually nonstop—a state of war on Iraq has in fact never ended. Every week Iraqi civilians have been killed in such raids. More have been wounded, many of them mutilated for life.

Washington's use of the heinous cluster bombs against

the Iraqi people should remind us of something else in José Ramón Fernández's testimony.¹ The Cuban general reports there that the U.S. government supplied the mercenaries at the Bay of Pigs with napalm, which they used against the Cubans defending their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Citing a published account by one of the mercenary pilots, Fernández says the invaders' planes carried three tons of these weapons, which spray an incendiary jelly that clings to the flesh of human beings, burning and asphyxiating them to death. International rules of war signed by governments the world over, Fernández reminded the Havana court, forbid the use of "weapons, projectiles, and materials designed to cause that kind of harm contrary to the normal laws of humanity. But those were precisely the type of bombs used by the armed forces of the United States."

To the degree many of us are aware of the U.S. rulers' use of napalm, we often associate it exclusively with the

1. Earlier in *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, Barnes had referred to the July 1999 testimony by Brigadier General José Ramón Fernández before the Provincial People's Court of the City of Havana. The court was hearing a lawsuit filed by eight Cuban organizations to demand that the U.S. government be compelled to pay damages for the thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in physical destruction caused by Washington's decades-long efforts to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. Fernández commanded the main column of the revolutionary Cuban forces that defeated the U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. No longer on active duty in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, Fernández is vice president of the executive committee of the Cuban government's Council of Ministers.

Fernández's testimony is available in Pathfinder's *Playa Girón/ Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas* (Pathfinder, 2001).

monstrous suffering inflicted by Washington and its allies on tens of thousands of toilers during the Vietnam War. But it had also been used by U.S. imperialism against the Japanese in the Pacific, during Washington's barbaric razing to the ground of northern Korea a few years later, and against the Cuban people at the Bay of Pigs. (It was used by French imperialism during its unsuccessful wars to crush the Algerian and Vietnamese independence struggles, too.)

We can point to many other examples of these bipartisan war policies.

EVEN THOUGH Big Oil Bush may not quite match the record of his predecessor, the most pro-Israeli president since Harry Truman, his administration nonetheless will continue the course of the Clinton White House in supporting Tel Aviv's murderous assaults on Palestinians fighting for the return of their homeland.

Both parties will press their efforts in the Balkans—from Bosnia and Serbia, to Kosova and now Macedonia—to overturn the conquests of the Yugoslav Revolution, restore capitalist social relations there, integrate the components into the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and reinforce the weight of U.S. imperialism as the dominant “European” military power. The differences will be tactical, that is, over how to accomplish this most effectively.

Under Clinton the expansion of NATO extended the reach of Washington's armed might right up to the borders of the former Soviet Union. During the presidential campaign both Albert Gore and George W. Bush advocated further expansion, with the next countries in line—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—bringing impe-

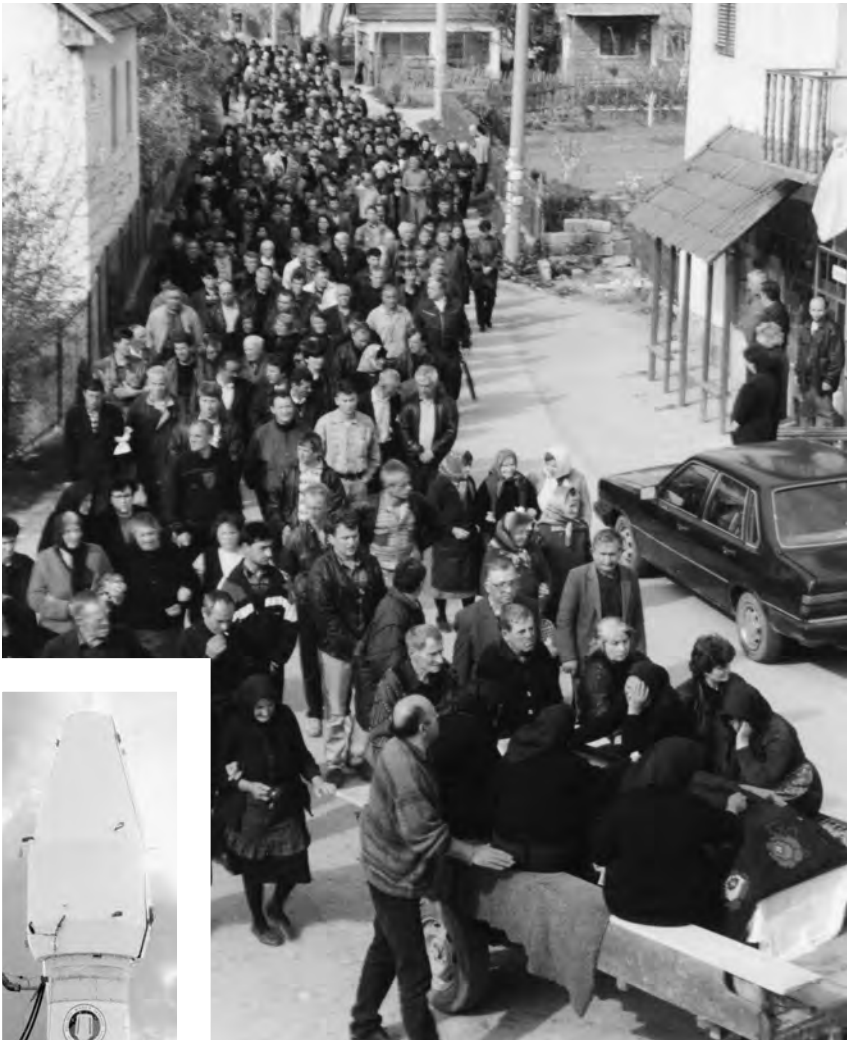
rialist military pressure even closer to the main urban centers in Russia.²

The Clinton and Bush administrations, with bipartisan backing in Congress, have pressed forward with plans for an anti-ballistic missile system. Washington aims to establish a U.S. nuclear first-strike capacity against all the other world powers with nuclear arsenals, from Moscow to Paris and London. As the U.S. rulers did with the founding of NATO in 1949, they intend *above all* to leverage military power to increase their political dominance vis-à-vis “Europe.”

More immediately, a U.S. anti-ballistic missile system will target China and North Korea, two countries in Asia where the imperialist yoke was thrown off and capitalist social relations overturned half a century ago. Washington already has hundreds of nuclear-tipped missiles targeted on these two countries. In addition, the U.S. rulers seek to instill terror into the government of any semicolonial country—Iraq, Iran, India, Pakistan—that has built missile-based defenses that could be used

2. In 1999, while Clinton was still in office, three former members of the Moscow-dominated Warsaw Pact, dissolved in 1991, had been admitted to NATO: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Talks were already under way on admitting several other former Warsaw Pact members or governments that had emerged from the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In 2004 NATO voted into membership the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia; and Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia. Membership discussions are at various stages with the former Soviet republics of Georgia and Ukraine; with the former Yugoslav republics of Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro; and with Albania, which left the Warsaw Pact in 1962 following the Sino-Soviet split.

M. DESPOTOVIC



AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



“Waging a ‘war on terrorism’ well before 9/11, the Clinton administration laid the foundations of the imperialist bourgeoisie’s efforts to ‘transform,’ restructure, and strengthen its military posture both at home and abroad.”

TOP: Aiming to overturn conquests of Yugoslav Revolution, between 1992 and 1999 U.S. and other NATO powers flew some 200,000 air sorties over Yugoslavia, including a devastating 80-day bombing campaign in 1999. In the photo, a funeral procession for machine tool factory worker killed in April 1999 bombing of Nis, in Serbia. **BOTTOM:** U.S. Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) on Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean, 1999. Washington achieved its first successful ABM test interception in June of that year.

against future imperialist aggression. The plans already begun under Clinton for an Alaska-based Theater Missile Defense system will serve as the starting point for more extensive Star Wars proposals by the Bush administration, whose ultimate goal will be a submarine-based and space-based attack platform to go after missiles in the boost phase.

FINALLY, WITH PARTICULAR REGARD to today's celebration of the victory of the Cuban defenders at Playa Girón, we must point to the overwhelming bipartisan support for Washington's ongoing, more than forty-year-long economic, political, and military aggression against the Cuban Revolution. During his final months in office, Clinton signed an agricultural appropriations bill that—in addition to again, and once again, lining the pockets of agribusiness and capitalist farmers at the expense of working farmers—contained a rider making long-standing administrative restrictions on travel to Cuba federal law. Now U.S. residents who visit Cuba face criminal, in addition to civil, penalties.

Among other acts of hostility to the Cuban Revolution during his eight years—acts too numerous to review—Clinton in 1996 signed into law the “Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act,” also known as the Helms-Burton Law, which tightened the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba. Four years earlier, as the Democratic candidate for President in 1992, he led the charge in championing another reinforcement of Washington's economic war against Cuba, the misnamed Cuban Democracy Act or Torricelli Act, which the still-serving Republican president then signed. The new Bush administration, in both word and deed, is now carrying out its

own campaign pledge to continue along this course.³

The war against working people at home by the employers and their two parties has deepened on many fronts, as well.

The landmark of this assault, both for the Clinton administration and the Republican-controlled Congress, was the so-called Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This legislation eliminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children and put a lifetime limit of five years on welfare payments any particular family could receive. Clinton's "reform" was more than an incarnation of his brutal reactionary

3. In one of the most demonstrative acts of aggression against the Cuban people in the last fifty years, the Clinton administration was also responsible for railroading to prison five Cuban revolutionaries living in south Florida—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González. The five were arrested and framed up in September 1998, when the FBI announced to much fanfare that it had discovered a "Cuban spy network" in Florida. After seventeen months in federal detention, most of it in solitary confinement, the five were put on trial. In June 2001, shortly after the Clinton-Bush handover, each of them was convicted on charges of "conspiracy to act as an unregistered foreign agent." Hernández, Guerrero, and Labañino were also convicted of "conspiracy to commit espionage," and Hernández of "conspiracy to commit murder." The five were given sentences ranging from fifteen years to double life plus fifteen years.

Contrary to claims by the Clinton administration that the five revolutionaries were carrying out "espionage," they had in fact accepted assignments to keep the Cuban government informed about counterrevolutionary groups in the United States planning terrorist attacks against Cuba. The case of the five has generated a broad international campaign denouncing the draconian sentences and harsh conditions of their imprisonment and demanding their release.

campaign pledge four years earlier to “end welfare as we know it.” It was the biggest single success of the rulers so far in beginning to erode the federal Social Security system—a conquest won by working people through the struggles that built the industrial unions in the 1930s, and substantially extended under the pressure of the mass campaigns of the civil rights movement and mass Black protests of the 1960s.

Shortly before leaving office, Clinton boasted that 8 million people nationwide had been slashed from state welfare rolls—a 60 percent drop. What the bourgeois supporters of this legislation don’t trumpet so loudly, however, is that the vast majority of these individuals, if they’ve been able to find work at all, have been pressed into jobs at minimum wage or close to it, with few if any health or pension benefits. And that’s been during the high point of the upturn in the capitalist business cycle. As the first targets of the legislation’s five-year limit are cut off permanently from welfare payments in the months ahead, they will find themselves in the midst of the layoffs and rising unemployment we’ve already described.

IT’S USEFUL TO REMEMBER that Clinton’s welfare legislation—not just its basic provisions, but even its *name*—was taken over lock, stock, and barrel from a plank in the so-called Contract with America promised by the Newt Gingrich–led Republican majority that swept into Congress in 1994.

Clinton’s 1996 act was the first time in nearly two-thirds of a century that an entire category of working people—single mothers and their children—have been eliminated from the kind of protections Social Security has guaranteed for retirees, children, workers injured or thrown out

of a job, and others vulnerable to the instabilities and devastations inherent in capitalism, both in good times and bad. What's more, this is a section of the working class that is expanding in the United States: nearly a third of all children today are born to women who begin raising them in so-called single-parent households, which currently make up roughly half of all family units.

Like the change in the composition of the working class with the growing weight of immigrant workers, this change in the family structure is irreversible—a product of the greater economic independence women have achieved as a result of their increasing integration into the workforce, and of the social gains of struggles for women's liberation. The poverty and social crisis this also entails for millions of working-class women and children registers the inevitable consequences of class relations under capitalism and the fact that it will take a socialist revolution to open the door to the transformation of these oppressive social relations.

The new Bush administration, despite its election campaign rhetoric, is no more likely than its predecessors to attempt a head-on assault against the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling decriminalizing abortion. At the same time, the very workings of the capitalist system will combine with the consequences of the rulers' assault on the living standards of working people to continue reducing access to abortion procedures. With not a single medical facility today providing abortions in a third of all cities and nearly 90 percent of the counties in the United States—90 percent!—the extra costs associated with travel alone mean that working-class women are at a disadvantage. Never mind the numerous other obstacles enacted by various state governments imposing age restrictions, “consent” by parents, increasing waiting peri-

ods, and mandatory “counseling” about “alternatives.”

With support from both parties in Congress, Clinton signed into law legislation that expanded mandatory federal prison sentences and increased their length, reduced protections against arbitrary search and seizure by the cops and courts, increased property seizures *before* trials, and financed a record increase of more murderously armed police on the streets.

BOTH CLINTON AND BUSH can lay justified claim to the shameful designation: the “death-penalty president.” Clinton advocated and signed legislation significantly expanding the number of federal crimes punishable by death, as well as the Comprehensive Terrorism Protection Act, which denied the right of death-row prisoners to submit more than one habeas corpus petition for federal court review of their cases. For his part, while Bush was on the presidential campaign trail in 2000, the state of Texas, of which he was governor at the time, carried out the legal murder of the largest number of prisoners ever in any state in a single year in American history; what’s more, those forty were only a quarter of the executions carried out during Bush’s six years in the statehouse.

During the eight years of the Clinton presidency, between 1993 and 2001, the number of people locked behind bars in U.S. prisons jumped by 42 percent. While the United States has 5 percent of the world’s population, today it has 25 percent of the world’s prisoners.⁴ As

4. A study released in February 2008 reported that more than one in every 100 adults in the United States are confined in a jail or prison—and 750 per 100,000 in the population as a whole. Although the United States has a population of 300 million and

throughout history, the overwhelming majority of those incarcerated are toilers, falling most heavily on those who are Black, Latino, or Native American. Today fully one of every three young males who are Black is either in prison, on parole, or on probation. Lockdowns and solitary confinement, with all their dehumanizing effects on the human spirit—designed to inoculate you from believing you have any worth—have increasingly become the norm.

The number of privatized “services”—even privately owned prisons—continues to increase, and now we are witnessing the growth of prison labor for hire. The *Wall Street Journal* a few days ago featured an article on the expansion of programs to hire out inmates in state-operated prisons. Pointing to the emergence of what it calls “the convict version of Kelly Girls,” the article was headlined: “Prison as Profit Center: Inmates’ Labor, Expenditures Enhance the Bottom Line; Temp Agency Behind Bars.”

In Oregon prisons, the article explains, “employers offer no retirement, vacation, or health benefits; nor do they pay for Social Security, workers’ compensation, or Medicare. . . . [H]iring inmates can cut an employer’s payroll costs by 35%.” As a result, it adds, “businessmen now all but beg for prison labor.” Just like the good old days—New Economy chain gangs.

Prisons certified by the federal Prison Industry Enhancement program, the article continues, get a bonus;

China more than 1.3 billion, U.S. jails and prisons hold more inmates—even in absolute numbers (the U.S. has 2.3 million). Russia is second to the United States in per capita imprisonment, with 628 per 100,000. As for other imperialist powers, the United Kingdom holds 143 prisoners per 100,000; New Zealand 197; Australia 130; Canada 108; Germany 88; France 91; and Japan 63.

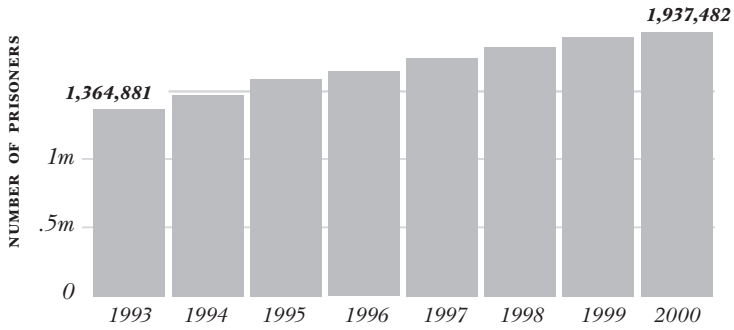
they are allowed to sell the products of prison labor in interstate commerce. Prisoners covered by this U.S. government “incentive” program must “be allowed to keep at least”—in other words, *no more than*—“20% of what they earn. The rest of their wages can be withheld to pay income taxes, child-support obligations, room-and-board charges, and payments due to victim-assistance funds.”

IN 1996 CLINTON signed into law the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, adopted by a Republican Congress. That law expands the powers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to round up and deport those charged with being “illegal” immigrants without the right to judicial review or appeal. Simultaneously the White House and Congress funded the expansion of the hated *la migra* into the largest federal cop agency, one that has stepped up factory raids and deportations to record numbers in recent years.

Far from aiming to stem the inflow of labor from the Americas and elsewhere, the rulers intend for their repressive measures to heighten insecurity and fear among immigrants, hoping to maintain them as a superexploitable labor pool and discourage involvement in unionization efforts, as well as struggles against social injustice or other political fights.

Under the Star Chamber provisions of the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, the U.S. government has held some two dozen people without bail in “preventive detention” on the basis of “secret evidence.” Most are immigrants from Arab or other majority Muslim countries accused of links with “terrorist organizations”—the code word the U.S. rulers increasingly use to rationalize both assaults on democratic rights at home and

U.S. prison population jumps more than 42% during Clinton presidency



Figures include federal and state prisons and city and county jails.



AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

“From the beginning communist workers insisted that Clinton would be a war president, a prison president, a death-penalty president—a president whose course at home and abroad was aimed at serving the class interests of the U.S. ruling families.”

TOP: Clinton signed legislation expanding mandatory federal prison sentences and increasing their length; comparable laws were adopted by many states. Workers who are Black made up 46% of prisoners by 2000. The 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act signed by Clinton authorized “preventive detention” based on “secret evidence.”

BOTTOM: Omaha, 1997. Some of 100 packinghouse workers rounded up in immigration raid at two Greater Omaha Packing Co. plants. Clinton expanded federal powers to deport individuals without right to judicial review.

military strikes abroad. Altogether some 20,000 people are being held in U.S. jails awaiting the outcome of threatened deportations—a 245 percent increase just in the five years since adoption of the anti-immigrant legislation.

Last year, once again with bipartisan backing, the Clinton administration cynically exploited its half-year-long refusal to return six-year-old Elián González to Cuba—his country—in order to burnish the image of the INS and establish legal precedents reinforcing the agency’s powers that are exempt from judicial review. The April 2000 raid by heavily armed commandos of *la migra* to take the child from a home in Miami not only bolstered the powers of the Border Patrol but dealt a blow to the Fourth Amendment rights of all U.S. residents to be safe in their homes from arbitrary searches and seizures.

DURING HIS CLOSING DAYS in office Clinton issued a presidential directive establishing the post of “counter-intelligence czar,” and Bush just this week made an appointment to the new top-level spy position. According to press accounts, the post is “designed to facilitate a level of cooperation never seen before among the FBI, the CIA and the Pentagon, and will, for the first time, engage the rest of the government and the private sector as well.” *The private sector as well?* What “private sector” police agencies are included? What strikebreaking rent-a-cops will now have more federal cover and encouragement?⁵

5. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the Bush administration and Congress extended the Clinton White House’s encroachments on political rights. The government has expanded its wiretapping of phones and interception of e-mail and internet communications; tracking

The “czar” will be responsible to a board consisting of top CIA, FBI, Pentagon, and Justice Department officials and will in turn chair a National Counterintelligence Policy Board also involving officials of the State Department, Energy Department, and White House National Security Council. The former top CIA official who developed the so-called Counterintelligence for the 21st Century plan explained to one publication that “CI-21” will prioritize “the ‘crown jewels’ of American prosperity and national security,” and told the *Washington Post* that it aims to defend “not only critical government assets but also the computer infrastructure used by government and private industry alike.”

One reporter for the big-business press covering the new position wrote that it will force “the American public to rethink long-accepted notions about what constitutes national security and the once-clear boundaries between domestic law enforcement, foreign intelligence gathering and defense preparedness.”

In short, the counterintelligence czar will draw together Washington’s “anti-terrorist” operations from Iran, Korea, and Cuba, to the immigrant family living down the block. It will draw together the U.S. rulers’ “war on drugs” from the new U.S. military bases in Colombia and Ecuador to working-class neighborhoods and factory locker rooms across North America. It will centralize the U.S. government’s informers, wiretapping, postal mail and e-mail snooping, and other secret police operations against both “enemies” abroad and the labor movement

of domestic and international financial transactions; monitoring of airline passenger lists; and spying on political groups and individuals organizing opposition to Washington’s policies at home and abroad.

and social protest organizations at home.

Whether the charge be “endangering national security” or “giving away business secrets,” the U.S. rulers will work to find a frame-up that sticks.

I raise the Clinton and Bush administrations’ new counterintelligence czar not because there is reason to anticipate some tidal wave of repression right around the corner. But the U.S. rulers are already shifting gears from the last decade. They know they will face more and bigger battles as international capitalist competition drives them to slash wages, extend the workday, intensify speedup, cut social security protections, and crush the unions—around the world. And they are preparing to defend their class interests.

2008 AFTERWORD

IN THE TWO DECADES prior to Clinton’s inauguration in January 1993, capitalism had been hit by two deep recessions, in 1974–75 (the first synchronized slump in the imperialist countries since the Great Depression) and again in 1981–82, with an explosive burst of inflation in between. Working people faced steeply rising prices, meat and gasoline “shortages,” and mounting joblessness. Even using Washington’s own deceptive statistics

This afterword is based on a December 1, 2007, talk by Jack Barnes—“Our Transformation and Theirs: From Subprime to Subhuman, the Real Perspective under American Imperialism”—presented to a meeting of some 400 people in New York City, as well as reports by Barnes to the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party that same weekend and in early February 2008.

(to which I'll return), inflation figures topped 13 percent in 1979, short-term interest rates peaked at more than 16 percent in May 1981, and the official unemployment rate nearly reached double digits in 1982–83.

During the Clinton years, as I described in *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, the employing class in the United States moved aggressively to counteract downward pressure on its profit margins “by cutting real wages and benefits, speeding up production, lengthening the work-week, increasing part-time and temporary labor, and reducing government-funded social security programs.”

At the service of U.S. finance capital and its bondholders, Clinton doggedly pursued a federal “budget surplus,” as well. The Democratic administration reaped the so-called “post–Cold War” peace dividend—temporary reductions in military spending made possible by the end of the Soviet Union and collapse of the Warsaw Pact, as U.S. imperialism prepared a transformation of its global military “footprint.” Clinton cut the number of U.S. active duty troops by almost 25 percent over his eight years in office and, as a proportion of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP), trimmed the size of Washington’s war budget by 37 percent.

But the Democratic White House didn’t use the savings for “the people.” In what we might call a domestic “class-war dividend,” it reduced federal expenditures on Social Security and other social payments, education, veterans benefits, public transportation, scientific research—every major category of government spending except health and Medicare (organized as a boon to insurance companies, HMOs, and medical businesses), agriculture (more fat subsidies for capitalist farmers and agribusiness), and “justice” (billions for additional and more heavily armed cops, and for courts, prisons, surveillance modernization, and death chambers).

The upswing in the business cycle during that period was a lengthy one by past standards, lasting ten years. But it was not “based on a historic acceleration of capacity-expanding capital investment,” we pointed out in *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*. “It was not based on drawing more and more workers into plants, mines, and mills and massively increasing the production of salable goods.” Instead, “the long upturn in the United States was the product of piling up an enormous mountain of debt and a giant increase in speculative derivative ‘debt instruments’”—one that we now know continued to inflate over the seven years since Clinton passed the baton to Bush.

Despite the “bourgeois triumphalism of much of the 1990s,” this debt explosion was inexorably increasing “the vulnerability of world capitalism to sudden and destabilizing shocks,” we said. And that, it turned out, put it mildly!

To help us gain a better understanding of the roots of the current global financial crisis and its consequences for working people worldwide, it’s useful to take a closer look at several points touched on briefly or indirectly in *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* that are being posed for the working class today with increasing sharpness.



(1) Long before U.S. capitalism’s financial house of cards began trembling in late 2007, the Clinton administration had laid the legislative foundations for the crisis by helpfully eliminating regulations bankers and other moneyed interests deemed “inconvenient.” In 1999 Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, formerly co-chairman of Goldman Sachs, and his deputy Lawrence Summers pre-

sided over repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, which the U.S. rulers had been forced to impose in 1933 in response to the wave of bank failures early in the Great Depression. The ruling class had used Glass-Steagall, among other measures, in order to stabilize the capitalist system by establishing a legal separation between, on the one hand, commercial banks (which make profits by taking in checking and savings deposits from individuals and businesses and lending those funds to businesses, home buyers, and others at higher interest rates) and, on the other hand, insurance companies, stock brokerages, and investment banks (the last of which make profits by raking in fees in return for their “services” to companies and governments in raising capital by issuing bonds, stocks, and increasingly other highly leveraged “financial products”).

The Financial Services Modernization Act, which Clinton signed into law in November 1999, facilitated the breaching of that wall, accelerating and magnifying the results of the workings of the laws of capital. Mergers of deposit banks, investment banks, brokerages, and insurance companies proliferated. Above all, the floodgates opened to a massive expansion of so-called derivatives, “securitized” debts, “off-balance-sheet” banking operations—in short, complex bets that the capitalist financial boom and mammoth acquisition of U.S. Treasury debt by the governments of China, Japan, and other countries would go onward and upward forever. Smaller and smaller amounts of collateral—sometimes little or no collateral—stood behind ever more leveraged loans, with less and less provision of any kind for the skyrocketing risk.

A case in point is Citigroup, the largest U.S. bank. The Clinton administration’s Financial Services Modernization Act became law shortly after Citigroup had been formed in 1998 through the merger of Citicorp (then

“The Clinton administration laid the legislative foundations for the 2008 financial crisis by eliminating regulations in place since the Great Depression deemed ‘inconvenient’ by bankers and other moneyed interests.”



ABOVE: *Time* magazine in February 1999 saluted Clinton’s Treasury secretary Robert Rubin (left), his soon-to-be successor Lawrence Summers (right), and Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan for their successes in preventing “a global economic meltdown.” At the same time, the accelerating mountain of debt and derivatives their policies facilitated—hailed by Summers as “the foundation for a 21st century financial system”—instead laid the foundation for the 2008 world financial crisis, the worst since the global depression of the 1930s.

the largest U.S. commercial bank), the giant Travelers insurance company, and the Salomon Smith Barney investment house. It was a blissful marriage, but without repeal of Glass-Steagall, an annulment would have been legally required within two years. In July 1999 Rubin turned the reins of Clinton's Treasury over to Summers. And in October Rubin, shamelessly, took an initially \$40-million-per-year job as chairman of Citigroup's executive committee! Not for nothing did many tag the new law the "Citigroup Authorization Act."

Rubin, by the way, still occupied that position as of May 2008, after Citigroup had taken write-offs and losses of more than \$40 billion—yes, billion—over the previous fifteen months as a result of derivatives and other "debt instruments" gone sour. So much for the "magic" of a Goldman Sachs bond trader in face of the law of labor value!



(2) The Clinton administration actively worked to keep world gold prices low, thus helping to maintain a "strong dollar," relatively low interest rates, and at least the appearance that inflation was being held in check.

Clinton's "financial team" organized to promote the so-called gold carry trade. That is, imperialist governments and financial institutions lent gold from their vaults at cheap rates to major "bullion banks" (such as JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and Deutsche Bank). These banks then sold the borrowed gold, reinvested the returns at higher rates, and gambled that the price of gold would go down by the time they had to buy back the precious metal to pay off their loans. So long as the carry trade worked (that is, so long as gold prices did not rise at

an accelerating pace), the U.S. government achieved its goals and the bullion banks, as well as the largest gold-mining trusts, made out like bandits.

The Clinton White House also kept gold prices down by encouraging its rival imperialist governments and the International Monetary Fund to publicly sell off their own bullion reserves. It did so cynically, sermonizing that the proceeds could then be used for “debt forgiveness” to “help Third World countries” burdened by onerous interest payments. Testifying before Congress in April 1999, then Deputy Treasury Secretary Summers said that income from such gold sales could be used to support “the world’s poorest countries, especially those burdened by unsustainable debt.” He pledged that such gold sales could “be conducted in a manner that limits any adverse impact on gold holders, producers, and the gold market.”

The upshot of this Clinton administration scam was not long in coming. In May 1999, at what were already the lowest world gold prices since the mid-1970s, Gordon Brown, the United Kingdom’s treasury minister—today its prime minister—announced that London would soon begin selling fully half its gold reserves. Contrary to Summers’s assurance that such sales could be “conducted in a manner that limits any adverse impact,” Brown’s announcement set off such panic on world markets that gold prices dropped by another 10 percent over the next few weeks to a twenty-year low of \$253 per ounce, at which price he promptly sold more! As for helping “the world’s poorest countries,” it’s enough to recall that among the top global gold exporters are semicolonial countries such as Peru, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Papua New Guinea, Chile, Ghana, Mali, and Tanzania, as well as South Africa—whose revenues from mining and exporting gold and

other precious metals were devastated!

Over the next few years, the central banks of the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Canada *did* sell more than half their gold reserves—at historically low prices—and substantial reserves were sold by other central banks too. The U.S. Treasury, meanwhile, sold virtually none of its own gold reserves—which, at nearly 9,000 tons, are by far the world's largest hoard (more than a quarter of official world gold reserves). Beginning in 2002 gold prices began a slow, and in a few years accelerating, climb. By May 2008 the value of Washington's reserves had more than tripled from \$67 billion to nearly \$225 billion.

Now that's a plan to help "the world's poorest countries"! And to get the best of your fellow imperialist "friends," to boot!



(3) To help mask the rising social toll of the profit system, the Clinton White House simply erased millions of jobless workers from the government's monthly unemployment figures.

Clinton learned this disappearing act from a previous Democratic administration. During John F. Kennedy's first year in office in 1961, he had grown anxious about the political kickback from a sharp rise in joblessness that year. So he appointed a committee to look for a solution—not a solution to put people back to work, but to do better at keeping up appearances. A few years later the federal government slapped a label on workers who had been unable to find jobs for so long that they had stopped looking. Calling them "discouraged workers," it no longer counted them as being unemployed. *Voilà!* The "unemployment rate" dropped overnight!

Clinton, who also confronted high joblessness at the opening of his first term, took things a step further. Although since the 1960s “discouraged workers” had no longer been counted as unemployed, they were nonetheless included as part of the overall labor force. Evidently that still revealed too much of the actual situation facing working people. So in 1994 the Clinton administration decided that only workers who had been looking for a job for less than a year would be counted as part of the workforce!

That’s how Clinton, with the wave of a statistical wand, disappeared millions more jobless workers. And they keep being disappeared to this day.

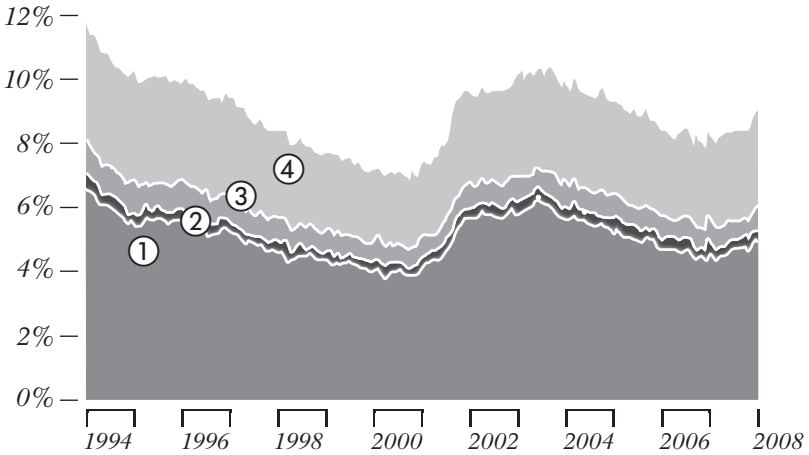


(4) Finally, the Clinton administration granted a permanent profit bonanza to the employing class by rejiggering the basis on which annual cost-of-living adjustments are calculated in wage payments and Social Security and other benefits to tens of millions of workers and working-class families in the United States. This is a decisive question for working people, as shown by the fact that real wages in this country today—even by government statistics—are some 10 percent lower than they were thirty-five years ago in 1973.

In 1997 the Clinton administration, acting on proposals by a bipartisan commission it had convened, ordered that the government’s main yardstick of inflation—the Consumer Price Index (CPI)—henceforth be figured in a way that substantially reduced official price figures. This magic was produced by two tricks in particular.

First, Clinton’s commission claimed to have unearthed an astounding oversight in the way inflation figures had

How the unemployed are “disappeared”



- ① U.S. government’s “official” unemployment rate. This is the percentage of workers counted as part of the civilian labor force who Washington reports are unemployed.
- ② “Discouraged workers”—Washington’s term for unemployed workers who’ve looked for jobs over the past year but have been unable to find work for so long they haven’t bothered to search during the previous month. As a result of a statistical sleight of hand implemented by the Clinton administration, workers who had not looked for work during the past year were simply dropped from what Washington counts as the labor force—thus making roughly half of all “discouraged workers” disappear from government figures.
- ③ “Marginally attached workers”—Washington’s term for unemployed workers who’ve looked for jobs over the past year but who have not done so during the previous month for any reason. “Discouraged workers” are a relatively small subcategory of “marginally attached workers.”
- ④ Workers working part time who want a full-time job.

been figured since such statistics had begun being kept decades earlier. In the past, if the price of steak went up, for example, that increase had been reflected in CPI figures. But it suddenly dawned on the commissioners that when steak gets too pricey, “people” simply start buying hamburger instead. So the cost of hamburger should replace the price of steak in the CPI. Shazam! No inflation in meat costs! And as one cynical commentator noted, “The new system now promises you hamburger, and then dog food, perhaps, after that?”

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION also introduced what it called “hedonics”—from the same root as the word “hedonism”—into calculations of inflation. Lo these many decades, the commissioners discovered, statisticians had been overlooking that the “pleasure” working people and others derive from the goods we buy increases as new models are introduced. Cars may become more expensive, but now we can lock or unlock them as we walk across the parking lot. And as we’re sending off the next payment for that new computer, we should keep in mind that its speed and memory have expanded—so it’s actually getting more and more fun, as well as less and less expensive per laugh!

What’s the bottom line? Whereas the U.S. government’s official annual inflation figure in late 2007 was deduced to be 3.2 percent, it would have been 7 percent—*more than double*—calculated by the methods used by every administration prior to the change imposed by Clinton and the Republican-led Congress. And that means hundreds of billions of dollars in extra profits for the employing class—who are now paying much less in cost-of-living adjustments to workers in wage agreements and for Social

Security, health, workers comp, and other benefits.

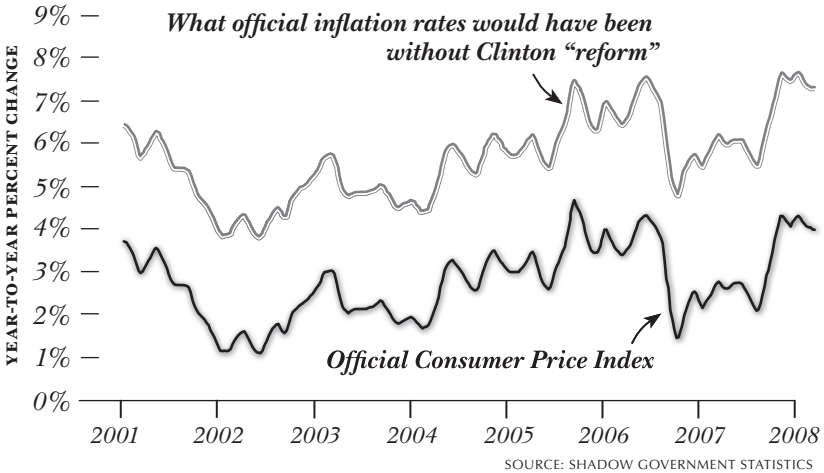
What does that mean in the everyday life of the working majority in the United States? In early 2008, less than half a year after the official inflation figure just cited, the U.S. government announced that its so-called Consumer Price Index was now running a bit higher, at a 4 percent annual rate. But a closer look at that very same price data (even using the government's own crooked methods) reveals that the costs of necessities such as groceries, gasoline, and health care had risen by an average of more than 9 percent over a year earlier. That included a 13 percent hike for milk and other dairy products, 7 percent for bread and cereals, 8 percent for hospital care (who believes it was only that much?), and a whopping 33 percent both for gasoline and for home heating fuel.

Yet the Social Security administration announced that in 2008 the some 50 million people receiving retirement benefits will receive a "cost of living" increase of 2.3 percent in their monthly checks—a measly \$24 a month for the average recipient. And tens of millions of other working people will be lucky to get an inflation adjustment of any kind in their take-home pay.

These Clinton administration changes came on top of the statistical swindle inaugurated two decades earlier, when gasoline and food prices, especially, skyrocketed during the mid- and late 1970s. Washington, in its bipartisan wisdom, at that time conveniently decided that federal monetary policy would be better served by a figure that "smoothed out" price fluctuations that are supposedly out of the ordinary. So in addition to the inflation figures the government had been calculating and releasing for decades, it began issuing what it called "core inflation" figures—which left out energy and food costs!

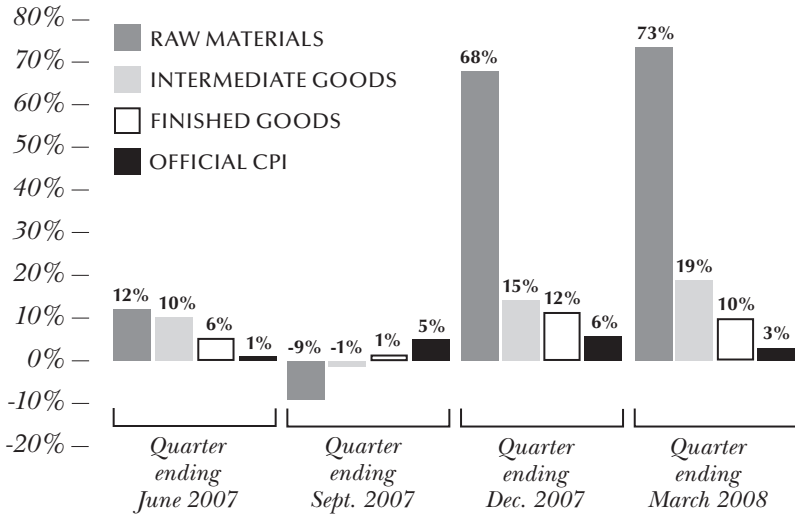
Not surprisingly, whenever there's a spike in prices on

Effects of Clinton's inflation index "reform"



Wholesale prices skyrocket

Quarterly price increases April 2007–April 2008



TOP: Employing class reaps billions from reduced cost-of-living adjustments in wages and Social Security benefits due to Clinton's inflation index "reform." **BOTTOM:** Grossly understated character of "official" price statistics is also revealed by Washington's own figures on sharply rising raw-material and other wholesale prices from April 2007 to April 2008.

grocery lines and at gas pumps, capitalist politicians and government spokespersons start talking up “core inflation.” A recent cartoon depicted a filling station proprietor trying to calm down an enraged driver at the pump: “Yes, it’s an outrage. But it’s not a *core* outrage!”



When the Financial Services Modernization Act was adopted in 1999, Clinton’s new treasury secretary Lawrence Summers hailed it as “the foundation for a 21st-century financial system.” Indeed it was!

May 2008

Building a PROLETARIAN PARTY



The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions

JACK BARNES

Building the kind of party working people need to prepare for coming class battles through which they will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all society. A handbook for those seeking the road toward effective action to overturn the exploitative system of capitalism and join in reconstructing the world on new, socialist foundations. \$24. Also in Spanish, French, and Swedish.

Their Trotsky and Ours

JACK BARNES

To lead the working class in a successful revolution, a mass proletarian party is needed whose cadres, well beforehand, have absorbed a world communist program, are proletarian in life and work, derive deep satisfaction from doing politics, and have forged a leadership with an acute sense of what to do next. This book is about building such a party. \$16. Also in Spanish and French.



The History of American Trotskyism, 1928–38

Report of a Participant

JAMES P. CANNON

“Trotskyism is not a new movement, a new doctrine,” Cannon says, “but the restoration, the revival of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practiced in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International.” In twelve talks given in 1942, Cannon recounts a decisive period in efforts to build a proletarian party in the United States. \$22. Also in Spanish and French.



What Is To Be Done?

V.I. LENIN

The stakes in creating a disciplined organization of working-class revolutionaries capable of acting as a “tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.” Written in 1902. In *Essential Works of Lenin*, \$12.95

In Defense of Marxism

Against the Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in the Socialist Workers Party

LEON TROTSKY

Writing in 1939–40, Leon Trotsky replies to those in the revolutionary workers movement beating a retreat from defense of the Soviet Union in face of the looming imperialist assault. Why only a party that fights to bring growing numbers of workers into its ranks and leadership can steer a steady revolutionary course. \$25. Also in Spanish.



The Struggle for a Proletarian Party

JAMES P. CANNON

On the eve of World War II, a founder of the communist movement in the U.S. and leader of the Communist International in Lenin’s time defends the program and proletarian course of Bolshevism. A companion volume to Leon Trotsky’s *In Defense of Marxism*. \$22. Also in Spanish.

The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party

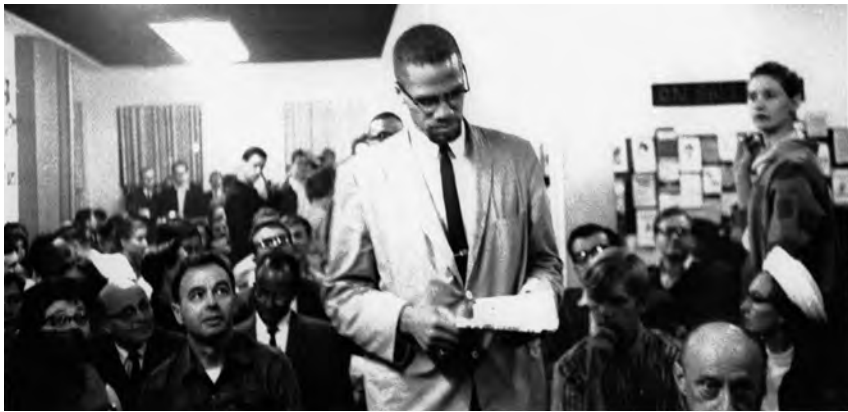
JAMES P. CANNON AND OTHERS

At founding gatherings of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938–39, revolutionists in the U.S. codified two decades of experience in building a communist party. They charted a working-class course in resisting the coming imperialist war, fighting fascism and Jew-hatred, the struggle for Black rights, forging an alliance with exploited farmers, and the battle to transform the unions into revolutionary instruments of struggle by working people. \$24.95

**REVOLUTION, INTERNATIONALISM
AND SOCIALISM:
THE LAST YEAR OF MALCOLM X**



BETTMANN / CORBIS



HARRY RING / MILITANT

“Malcolm followed the logic of his convictions and did not flinch when that meant abandoning long-held notions. He worked with all those who had demonstrated they were ‘true revolutionaries.’”

Malcolm hailed leaders of Algeria’s revolutionary government he met in Africa. **TOP:** Oran, Algeria, January 16, 1964. Banner at rear says: “Socialism is the soul of the revolution.” Portrait is of Ahmed Ben Bella, president of the workers and peasants government. **BOTTOM:** New York City, May 1964. Malcolm X walking to podium prior to speaking at Militant Labor Forum in Greenwich Village, sponsored by supporters of the socialist newsweekly, the *Militant*, which published the speech.

REVOLUTION, INTERNATIONALISM,
AND SOCIALISM:
THE LAST YEAR OF MALCOLM X

by Jack Barnes

“As a result of the social weight, disproportionately proletarian composition, and vanguard political experience of the oppressed Black nationality in the United States, workers who are African-American will make up a larger component of the fighting leadership of the workers movement in the class battles ahead, including the struggle against imperialist war, than during the labor radicalization of the 1930s.

“Their struggles, past and present, also set a powerful example for growing numbers of immigrant workers confronting chauvinist or racist discrimination, and often shedding their own backward, anti-Black prejudices in the course of common battles.”

‘Their Transformation and Ours’

New International no. 12

WHEN A CUBAN-AMERICAN supporter of the revolution in Cuba who lives in South Florida first saw *Our History Is Still Being Written* last week, she asked why Pathfinder’s editors had singled out three Chinese-Cuban generals to interview. “And why call them

The following reports, presented by Jack Barnes to meetings of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee in January and March 2006, have been expanded and edited for publication. Barnes is national secretary of the SWP.

Chinese-Cubans?” Cubans of Chinese descent, she added, consider themselves Cuban, not Chinese-Cuban. For Blacks it’s the same. “They think of themselves as Cubans, not African-Cubans.”¹

When she started reading the book, however, she liked it a lot and became convinced how politically useful it is both in the United States and Cuba. Her response to the book itself seemed to contradict her first reaction to the title, as well as the underlying political prejudices. Good!

That reader was expressing a view widely held in Cuba. It reflects a political insularity in the broad revolutionary cadre there, a slowness in recognizing that the historical consequences *on a global scale* of the African slave trade, chattel slavery, slave revolts, and anti-Black racism have left a social and political legacy among Blacks worldwide and affected capitalist society as a whole. That legacy cannot simply be wiped clean by the political conquests of the dictatorship of the proletariat, however sweeping and unique those conquests in Cuba may be.

From the origins of the revolutionary struggle in the early 1950s to today, the movement led by Fidel Castro has acted decisively against racist actions and bigotry, in word and deed. Communists in Cuba recognize an important social and political fact about the forging of the Cuban nation. In Cuba the wars for independence from Spain in the nineteenth century—unlike the American Revolution and Civil War against the secessionist slave

1. At the time this report was given in January 2006, Pathfinder Press had just released, in English and Spanish, *Our History is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, by Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong.

states in the United States—were integrally combined from the outset with the struggle to abolish slavery and all forms of indentured servitude. Combatants who were Black, as well as thousands of Chinese toilers, participated in Cuba’s independence army and acquitted themselves with honor at every level, both rank-and-file combatants and officers up to General Antonio Maceo.

None of that, however, erases the fact that there *are* millions of very dark-skinned African-Cubans, and that they confront a social and political legacy that is not identical to that of other Cubans. Close to half a century after the victory of the Cuban Revolution, this legacy is still registered in housing and employment patterns, composition of the prison population, and other social markers.

WHILE THE CONCRETE HISTORY of Chinese-Cubans is different from that of Black Cubans, some of the same political considerations apply. Among Cubans with Chinese forebears, there continues to be a social awareness of their roots that is very much alive. And there continues to be pride in those roots and in their rich cultural heritage. In fact, the proposal for this book and its character as an interview with three generals of Chinese ancestry came not from Pathfinder but from Gustavo Chui.

It wouldn’t be surprising if the assumptions of many Cuban-Americans lag behind what they are reading and are politically attracted to in the pages of *Our History Is Still Being Written*. Our understanding of where the Cuban Revolution came from, and where it’s going, is enriched by Chui’s description of his youth, including the complexities of the “Chinese consciousness” he was surrounded by as he grew up and the anti-Black racism that existed among many of Chinese origin in Cuba. Our understand-

ing of the revolution is enriched by Chui's story of how he was won to the revolutionary struggle in the 1950s. The same is true for the accounts by Armando Choy and Moisés Sío Wong. Each of them from a Chinese-Cuban family of shopkeepers, but at the same time each from a slightly different social stratum. Throughout the book, working people can see how each of these young Cubans discovered his own worth and what he and others like him are capable of. Working people can see the communist conclusions Chui, Choy, and Sío Wong were led to by their experiences in the clandestine struggle and revolutionary war, as well as in the building of a new Cuba.

What did the victory of the Cuban Revolution open up for all those who are victims of long-standing discrimination institutionalized under capitalism? For oppressed nations and nationalities? For women, the oppressed and majority sex? What does any socialist revolution open up? Above all, it opens the possibility of *using* the state power of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is far and away the most powerful instrument fighting toilers can ever wield, to advance the battle to eradicate racism, national oppression, women's second-class status.

These forms of oppression maintained and perpetuated as part of the reproduction worldwide of capitalist social relations are carried over and reshaped from modes of production that dominated earlier periods in the history of class society. While they warp and come into conflict with the "most efficient" workings of the laws of capitalism, the bourgeoisie finds ways to politically and socially incorporate them to deepen divisions among working people and reap the profits of super-exploitation. Far from being quickly eradicated by the revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class, the consequences of all these degrading social relations

inherited from class-divided society are more persistent and long-lasting than had generally been anticipated by earlier generations of socialist and revolutionary militants. What the conquest of workers power does is make available to a mass vanguard of the proletariat the most effective political weapon in history—one they can use to battle all forms of oppression and lay the basis to establish human solidarity on new, communist foundations. *That's* the promise of the dictatorship of the proletariat: You've *won* it, now *use* it to *finish* the job.

IF THE FOUNDING LEADERS of the modern communist movement recognized that classes, the family, and religion could not be abolished but would *wither away* as socialism developed, how could it be any different for the historic forms of oppression carried over from class society? What's more, the withering away is not simply a passive process. There's nothing automatic about it. Like everything else in human history, it is the product of practical social activity, of revolutionary mobilization, leadership, and mass struggle. And the pace and thoroughness of this struggle can determine not only whether the proletarian dictatorship advances, but whether or not it becomes so corroded, weakened, and vulnerable over time that it is corrupted from within and ultimately defeated and destroyed.

There are no guarantees beforehand. When the dictatorship of the propertied classes is overturned, however, and power is conquered by the toilers, the relationship of forces is qualitatively transformed to the advantage of all those fighting to eradicate capitalist exploitation and oppression root and branch. *If vanguard workers who are Black cannot be won to recognizing that the proletarian dictator-*

ship is the most powerful instrument to open up the final and lasting fight for Black freedom, then how can communists expect them to fight heart and soul to make a socialist revolution in this country? Why should they? Yes, they will fight as part of the working class to free the toiling majority of humanity from capitalist exploitation. But they and their allies don't expect to find the continuation of racist oppression at the end of the road! Otherwise they'd be living and fighting in denial of who they are. And socialism would be a hopeless goal.

The same is true for women and all oppressed layers and allies of the working class.

Trotsky's 1933 discussion

Given his experience side by side with Lenin as a leader of the Bolshevik Party, the Soviet Union, and Communist International, Leon Trotsky couldn't think any other way. These were his political assumptions in 1933 during discussions with Arne Swabeck, a leader of the party who was visiting Trotsky after he had been expelled from the Soviet Union by the regime of Joseph Stalin and was living in exile in Turkey.

The transcript of that 1933 discussion, along with other material, is available in a small book with the title *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, first published as a pamphlet some forty years ago. But much about how that book was prepared and edited—beginning with its title—hinders rather than helps the reader listen to and understand what Trotsky was saying. Title notwithstanding, it is not a book about Black nationalism. In fact, Trotsky never mentions Black nationalism a single time, either in the 1933 discussion or in the later exchange with party cadres from 1939 also included in the book.

Trotsky talks about the Black struggle in the United States and the place and weight of workers who are Black in forging the vanguard of the working class along the line of march to the dictatorship of the proletariat. That's what the book is about. High among our editorial priorities is introducing and publishing these discussions in a new book in a manner that does justice to their content.

It was Trotsky, basing himself on the political conquests of the Communist International, who first explained to us scientifically that it was Blacks' awakening to their self-worth, not their oppression, that would open new prospects for revolutionary struggle. He told Swabeck:

The Negroes will, through their awakening, through their demand for autonomy, and through the *democratic* mobilization of their forces, be pushed on toward a class basis. The petty bourgeoisie will take up the demand for equal rights and for self-determination but will prove absolutely incapable in the struggle; the Negro proletariat will march over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution.

The meaning comes through loud and clear, even translated into English from the German-language notes taken by Arne, whose first language was Danish!

Twice in this country in the twentieth century, we've seen in practice how the Black proletariat had to "march over the petty bourgeoisie"—white and Black, including the trade union officialdom, with all their limitations and hesitations—in order to advance the struggle against Jim Crow segregation and other institutions of racist discrimination.

The first time was during the great labor battles and political radicalization that gave birth to the social movement centered on establishing the CIO industrial unions. Workers regardless of skin color often fought shoulder to shoulder for union rights and other social goals. These interconnected working-class struggles gave such momentum to the fight to bring down Jim Crow that the impetus outlasted the broad retreat of the labor movement following World War II. As for the second time, some of the people in this room lived through the Black rights battles of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s and took an active part in them. (At its high point, Radical Reconstruction in major parts of the former slaveholding South was a plebeian forerunner of these proletarian battles.)

The culmination of marching “over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution,” of course, still lies ahead.

TROTSKY’S STARTING POINT in the discussions with Swabek was the enormous obstacle to revolutionary unity of the working class posed by racist oppression and anti-Black racism and prejudice in the United States. As a result of such oppression, Trotsky pointed out, no “common actions [take] place involving white and black workers,” there is no “class fraternization.” “The American worker is indescribably reactionary,” Trotsky said. “This can be seen in the fact that he has not yet even been won to the idea of social insurance.” And, Trotsky added, “The Negroes have not yet awakened, and they are not yet united with the white workers. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the American workers are chauvinists; in relation to the Negroes they are hangmen as they are also toward the Chinese, etc. It is necessary to make them understand

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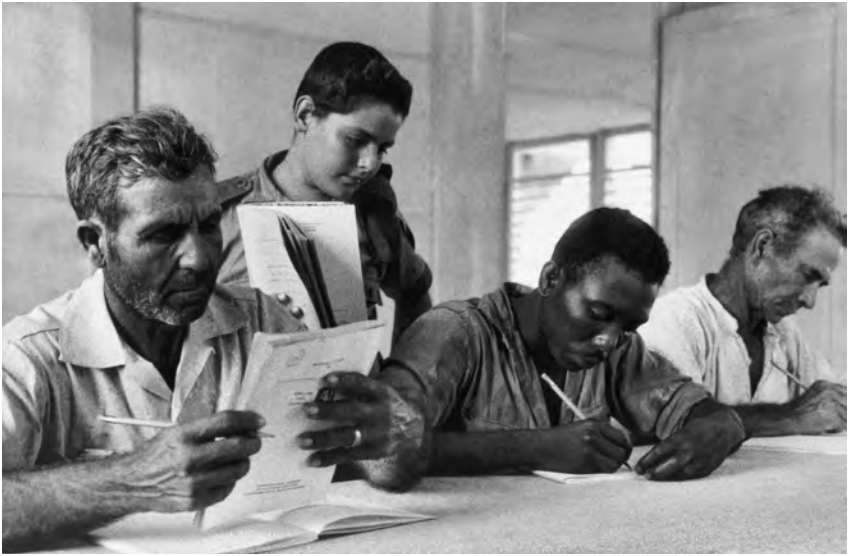
© 1865. 1865. 1865. —Shute et al. H. Wain—(The 1865 File)

“Revolutionists start with the historical record of the vanguard place and weight of workers who are Black in broad social and political struggles in the United States.”

NANCY BROWN / MILITANT



TOP: Blacks voting for first time in Virginia during post-Civil War Radical Reconstruction when “Blacks provided leadership in substantial parts of the South both to freed slaves and to exploited farmers and workers who were white.” **BOTTOM:** Machinists in Washington, D.C., on strike against Eastern Airlines, 1990. As a result of labor and civil rights battles, the industrial work force is one of the most desegregated sectors of U.S. society.



GRANMA



BOHEMIA

“The Cuban Revolution opened the possibility for working people to use the dictatorship of the proletariat—the most powerful instrument toilers can wield—to accelerate the battle to eradicate racism, national oppression, and women’s second-class status.”

TOP: Student volunteer teaching agricultural workers to read and write during 1961 campaign that wiped out illiteracy in Cuba. **BOTTOM:** Fidel Castro (front, second from left) following 1949 meeting at University of Havana of National Progressive Bloc, an antiracist organization. The movement led by Castro has consistently acted against racism, in word and deed.

that the American state is not their state and that they do not have to be the guardians of this state.”

Those conditions, of course, have changed substantially as a result of working-class struggles since 1933. They began shifting in the mid-1930s as a product of the labor battles that built the CIO, growing opposition to fascism and the spreading imperialist world war, and motion toward independent working-class political action. These changes accelerated with the conquests beginning in the 1950s of the mass civil rights movement and Black liberation struggles, which had their roots in the massive urbanization, migration to the North, and shifts in the composition of the industrial workforce that began prior to World War II. As a consequence of these struggles, and as a component of them, workers in the United States *did* fight for an important form of social insurance: Social Security. And as a result of the labor battles of the 1930s and civil rights struggles of the 1950s and '60s, they came to see an expanded version of that Social Security, including Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs, as *rights*.

With the rise of industrial unions, more and more workers who are Black, white, Asian, and Latino—native-born and immigrant—today *do* work alongside each other in many workplaces, and *do* engage in common actions and class fraternization. But the fight to combat racism and overcome national divisions in the working class, through mutual solidarity, affirmative action, and other means, remains central to forging the proletarian vanguard in this country.

Trotsky, in this exchange of views with Swaback, went on to point out that during a major rise of revolutionary struggle and proletarian class consciousness in the United States,

it is then possible that the Negroes will become the most advanced section. . . . It is very possible that the Negroes will proceed through self-determination to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of giant strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers. They will then be the vanguard. I am absolutely sure that they will in any case fight better than the white workers.

But this can only happen, Trotsky emphasized, “provided the Communist Party carries on an uncompromising, merciless struggle not against the supposed national prepossessions of the Negroes but against the colossal prejudices of the white workers”—prejudices brought into the working class by the bourgeoisie and the imperialist masters—“and makes no concession to them whatever.”

This is what Trotsky had learned from Lenin, the central leader of the Bolshevik Party and Communist International, and from his own revolutionary experiences in the tsarist prison house of nations. Trotsky had deepened this understanding through his discussions with delegates from the United States to the initial congresses of the Communist International. And this is what he worked with the Socialist Workers Party leadership and the rest of the world communist movement, from 1929 until his death, to apply in practice.

Malcolm X’s political evolution

It was this communist continuity that gave our movement the confidence in the early 1960s to recognize the revolutionary significance of the political development of Malcolm X while he was still a leader of the Nation of Islam and to impose no preconceived limitations on his evolution.

In January 1965 I and another leader of the Young Socialist Alliance conducted an interview with Malcolm for the *Young Socialist* magazine.² “How do you define Black nationalism, with which you have been identified?” was one of the questions we asked him. And Malcolm answered:

I used to define Black nationalism as the idea that the Black man should control the economy of his community, the politics of his community, and so forth.

But when I was in Africa in May [1964], in Ghana, I was speaking with the Algerian ambassador who is extremely militant and is a revolutionary in the true sense of the word (and has his credentials as such for having carried on a successful revolution against oppression in his country). When I told him that my political, social, and economic philosophy was Black nationalism, he asked me very frankly: Well, where did that leave him? Because he was white. He was an African, but he was Algerian, and to all appearances, he was a white man. And he said if I define my objective as the victory of Black nationalism, where does that leave him? Where does that leave revolutionaries in Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania? So he showed me where I was alienating people who were true revolutionaries dedicated to overturning the system of exploitation that exists on this earth by any means necessary.

2. The interview appeared in the March-April issue of the *Young Socialist*, shortly after Malcolm’s assassination on February 21, 1965. It has been kept in print ever since and is available in *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* (Pathfinder, 2002).

So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of Black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as Black nationalism? And if you notice, I haven't been using the expression for several months.

Well, in fact, we *hadn't* noticed. This was a real interview, with a real back and forth, a real exchange. It wasn't an interview where we asked certain questions because we already knew the answers. We asked questions because, to the best of our ability and objectivity, they were the right questions. And the answers added very substantially to our knowledge, and to the knowledge of others who read the interview. Anyway, Malcolm wrapped up this particular exchange by acknowledging: "But I still would be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the overall philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of the Black people in this country."³

LATER IN THE INTERVIEW, we asked Malcolm his "opinion of the worldwide struggle now going on between capitalism and socialism." And he responded, among other things, that "it's only a matter of time in my opinion before [capitalism] will collapse completely." In the article "Two Interviews," published in the *Militant* in February 1966 on the first anniversary of Malcolm's assassination, I described Malcolm's reaction when I took him the edited interview to review prior to publication in the *YS*. When Malcolm got to his answer to that question on capitalism and socialism, his face opened with a wide smile and he

3. *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, 2007 printing, pp. 119–20.

told me: "This is the farthest I've ever gone. They will go wild over this." I asked Malcolm if he wanted to tone down the answer, and, as I wrote in the 1966 article, "without hesitation, he answered no."⁴

Malcolm also told me about the young revolutionaries he had met in Africa and Europe during his recent trips there. He said he would give me a list so we could send them copies of the issue of the *Young Socialist* that included the interview. I mentioned to Malcolm that I might be going to Algeria later that year heading up the Young Socialist Alliance delegation to the World Festival of Youth and Students, scheduled for Algiers in late July and early August. Unlike previous such festivals organized by the world Stalinist movement, this one for the first time was being held not in Eastern or Central Europe, but right in the midst of an ongoing revolution. The YSA was looking forward to it, anticipating a wider composition and greater anti-imperialist possibilities. I told Malcolm we might be able to meet some of his young contacts there, and he said that would be a good experience, since "they have a hard time believing that revolutionaries exist in the United States." (How many times have we heard the exact same thing from Cuban revolutionists and others who have come to respect us!) Malcolm said he would find time to prepare the list, and we agreed that I'd pick it up from him after the *YS* had been printed.

Malcolm was enthusiastic about the prospect of the young people he had met receiving copies of the *Young Socialist* containing the interview and meeting leaders of the Young Socialist Alliance. He looked forward to young revolutionaries working together, sharing material, and learning from each other. He was convinced that for all

4. *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, pp. 127, 137.

involved it would broaden our scope, as he used to say.

As it turned out, Malcolm was assassinated a few weeks after our second meeting, just as the *YS* was coming off the presses. And then, in June 1965, the workers and peasants government in Algeria led by Ahmed Ben Bella was overthrown. Our delegation was heading down the Italian peninsula to get a ship to Algiers—we had gotten as far as Rome—when the coup occurred and the festival was canceled. So we were not able to follow through on this particular pledge to Malcolm.

In a more important sense, however, we did fulfill that pledge and continue to do so. We keep Malcolm's words in print, along with the words of other revolutionaries, including those of African descent who are chronologically Malcolm's heirs such as Maurice Bishop and Thomas Sankara. We keep producing the *Militant* and have now begun its Spanish-language edition—a newspaper Malcolm considered such an important source not only of accurate information but of revolutionary political analysis for fighters. And we keep reaching out with these materials to collaborate with revolutionary-minded working people and youth both in this country and around the world—from the Americas, to Africa, to the Pacific and Asia, to Europe; from Venezuela and China, to France and Equatorial Guinea. That kind of political work among revolutionaries never ends, even when we run up against unanticipated obstacles. We simply find other ways to do it.

Since Malcolm was killed in February 1965, nobody can prove where he would have gone next politically. But those in my generation and others in the Socialist Workers Party leadership were convinced by Malcolm's course that he was moving toward becoming a communist. Politically he was converging with the SWP.

We just assumed Malcolm was dead serious when he

said he no longer thought his political views could be summarized and described as “Black nationalism.” The days were long gone when anybody could put words in Malcolm’s mouth. Less than two months prior to his death, he told a radio interview that before he had broken with the Nation of Islam in early 1964, he’d often said things that weren’t his views but those of Nation leader Elijah Muhammad. “They weren’t my statements, they were his statements, and I was repeating them.” But now, Malcolm said, “the parrot has jumped out of the cage.”⁵

What Malcolm had to say about Black nationalism in the *Young Socialist* interview was part of our political convergence, since nobody can become a communist and at the same time remain a nationalist in your “overall philosophy.” You can be a communist and at the same time champion and lead a struggle for national liberation, a struggle against national oppression. That’s for sure. But you can’t remain a nationalist politically and organize a movement to advance the working class and its allies, of all nations, along the line of march toward the dictatorship of the proletariat.

WHY? Because nationalism—and here we’re talking about the nationalism of the oppressed—is *not* the generalization of the line of march of a class. It is *not* a movement, not the social and political movement of *a class*. There is no predetermined class direction, let alone class dictatorship, in the logic of its evolution. It has no stable program. A program has a concrete practical tra-

5. “Our People Identify with Africa: Bernice Bass Interview, December 27, 1964,” in *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, (Pathfinder, 1989), 2006 printing, p. 99.

jectory that represents the historic interests of a social class. There are no classless programs. But Black nationalism has no political trajectory that advances the interests of working people, whatever their skin color. Black nationalism is an ideology, the ideology of an oppressed nation or nationality, one that is substantially proletarian, at certain stages of its political awakening. To the degree it has a class character, it can only be bourgeois. That's not an epithet; it's a scientific description. Trade union consciousness, too, is bourgeois. At the same time, the age of bourgeois revolutions has been put behind us by the historic consolidation of imperialism.

Communism, however, is *not* an ideology, in the sense Marx and Engels used that word.⁶ As the pioneers of the modern revolutionary workers movement taught us at its origins nearly 160 years ago, “communism is not a doctrine but a *movement*.”⁷ On the field of practical activity,

6. In an 1893 letter, Engels wrote: “Ideology is a process which is, it is true, carried out consciously by what we call a thinker, but with a consciousness that is spurious. The actual motives by which he is impelled remain hidden from him. . . . Because it is a mental process, he sees both its substance and its form as deriving solely from thought—either his own or that of his predecessors. . . . What has above all deluded the majority of people is this semblance of an independent history of political constitutions, legal systems and ideological conceptions in each individual sphere.” In reality, Engels continued, every such “ideological conception” is “ushered into the world by other, ultimately economic causes” and, at the same time, “will react in its turn, and may exert a reciprocal influence on its environment and even upon its own causes.” See “Engels to Franz Mehring,” July 14, 1893, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (hereafter MECW), vol. 50, pp. 164–65.

7. Frederick Engels, “The Communists and Karl Heinzen,” in MECW, vol. 6, p. 303.

on the field of class combat, communists are “the most advanced and resolute section” of the working class, as the founding document of our movement explains. We consciously “point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.” We “always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.” From the standpoint of program and theory, communists have “the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.”⁸

THIS WAS THE DIRECTION the majority of central SWP leaders in the mid-1960s believed Malcolm X was headed. And we were convinced that this political evolution had been making him more effective, not less effective as a leader of the fight for Black liberation. (Even though his immediate audience would continue to narrow in the United States. Neither Malcolm nor anyone else can evade shifts in the relationship of class forces.) Knowing what we knew about Malcolm, and knowing what we know about Marxism, why would a communist draw any other conclusion?

Why would any revolutionary-minded—and revolutionary-stomached—worker, farmer, or young person who looked to Malcolm for leadership stop listening to him because Malcolm had come to a broader and richer understanding of the capitalist roots of exploitation and racist oppression? Why would they lose interest in what

8. “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in MECW, vol. 6, p. 497. An edition of the Communist Manifesto is also published by Pathfinder Press.

he had to say because the economic, social, and political answers he presented were more concrete, more directly tied to the historic line of march of working people the world over? Or because he wanted to work together politically with young people, regardless of race or sex (or creed of forbears), attracted not only to his own example but to the Young Socialist Alliance?

Black liberation and proletarian dictatorship

All this leads to the proposal that we give priority to producing a book on the Black struggle and the march toward the proletarian dictatorship, with an up-to-date political introduction. A book that pulls together: (1) the discussions with Trotsky and related items from our communist continuity going back to the Third International, the continuity Trotsky was drawing on; (2) sections of party reports and resolutions since the SWP's turn to industry in the late 1970s, applying this continuity to the dynamics of the class struggle in which our class is living and working today; and (3) an accurate appreciation of the example and leadership of Malcolm X, which was so important to the preparation of the generations of party cadre, beginning with the generation that joined in the sixties, who led the turn to the industrial working class and unions.

First and foremost, of course, such a book will be the record of the programmatic and strategic conclusions communists have drawn from decades of practical activity in the fight for Black rights, as part of our overall participation in the U.S. class struggle. Even limiting ourselves to the past sixty-five years, this activity includes:

- our support during World War II for federal action against lynchings and against racist discrimination in war production industries and the armed forces;

- our participation in the Black rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, including the movement in response to the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955, the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955–56, the Freedom Rides to desegregate interstate buses and bus terminals, the lunch-counter sit-ins, the “kissing case” and support for self-defense efforts in Monroe, North Carolina, in face of racist night riders, support for the Deacons for Defense in Louisiana and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama, and other struggles and mobilizations of those years;
 - the welcome we gave to the pride and confidence among Blacks emerging from these mass proletarian struggles;
 - our support for any authentic, even if initial steps toward independent Black political action, from the Joseph King campaign in Chicago in the 1950s,⁹ to the Freedom Now Party in the 1960s, to the National Black Independent Political Party in the 1980s;
 - our participation and leadership in the Boston and Louisville busing and school desegregation struggles in the 1970s;
 - our support for and leadership of various struggles by women who are Black for liberation from sexist prejudice and oppression;
 - our political response over the past few decades to the Grenada revolution and Maurice Bishop, to Thomas

9. The 1958 campaign of Joseph King, a leader in Chicago’s Black community, was organized jointly by the SWP; the Washington Park Forum, a predominantly Black organization influenced by the Communist Party; and others. “The unions should help build a party to fight for the emancipation of the human race,” King said at the time. “The capitalists can’t do that.” The campaign helped win some Communist Party supporters away from the CP’s support to capitalist politicians in the Democratic Party.

Sankara and the revolution in Burkina Faso, to the African National Congress–led struggle against apartheid in South Africa;

- our understanding, in word and deed, of the importance of the fight against racism and for affirmative action in the transformation of the unions and building of a revolutionary workers party in the United States;

- our involvement in innumerable defense cases, fights against cop brutality, and other local and national struggles;

- our initiative to publish *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution* by Víctor Dreke, and our success in organizing a powerful speaking tour in 2002 by that Cuban revolutionary leader from Boston and New York to Atlanta and Miami;

- the leadership time and effort we’ve recently put into participation in the Equatorial Guinea book fair and related events, and the regional gatherings and campus meetings following up on that trip; and much more.

We need such a book very much today because of what’s happening in politics and the class struggle. We need it to educate our own cadres and reach out to the same working people and youth we’re selling *Militant* subscriptions to.

How much we need it was called to our attention recently by a couple of letters Mary-Alice [Waters] received from one of the five imprisoned Cuban revolutionaries—René González.¹⁰ René wrote that he had recently been

10. In September 1998 the FBI announced ten arrests, saying that it had discovered a “Cuban spy network” in Florida. In June 2001, five defendants—Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, and Ramón Labañino—were each convicted of “conspiracy to act as an unregistered

given a book that another inmate had praised to the skies as “anti-imperialist.” When René read it, however, he said he “discovered it was a litany of anti-semitism, racism, demagoguery, chauvinism and individualism. It certainly had some anti-corporate and isolationist rhetoric, but it came from some sort of fascist, narrow nationalism.” So René asked: “What are the roots and development of that way of thinking? Is it related to the outcome of the Civil War? Any ties to the KKK? What about the religious right? Why that grudge against a corporate establishment that, in the end, serves them well? Do they have anything to do with the white supremacist militias?”

These are important political questions, ones the communist movement has had experience addressing in class combat as well as in words over the past century. We’ve written about them extensively—from reports and resolutions distributed by the Communist International in its early years; to articles by Trotsky on fascism and how to fight it; to writings on American fascism by Jim [Cannon], Farrell [Dobbs], and Joe [Hansen] that we’ve collected in several Education for Socialists bulletins; to books from recent decades such as *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* and *Capitalism’s World Disorder*, as well as various issues of

foreign agent.” Guerrero, Hernández, and Labañino were also convicted of “conspiracy to commit espionage,” and Hernández of “conspiracy to commit murder.” Sentences ranged from fifteen years to a double life term plus fifteen years. The five revolutionaries—each of whom has been named “Hero of the Republic of Cuba”—had accepted assignments to keep the Cuban government informed about counterrevolutionary groups in the United States planning terrorist attacks against Cuba. The case of the five has generated a broad international campaign denouncing the harsh conditions of their imprisonment and demanding their release.

New International. The matters raised by René are wide-ranging politically, and they pose the need to understand the origins and concrete history of Black oppression in the United States and the social weight of the Black population—its disproportionately large proletarian composition, its political record in mass social struggles by toilers in city and countryside across the United States, and thus its vanguard place in the historic battles of the working class. With that in mind, Mary-Alice, in her reply to René, recommended that a good starting point would be the writings by Marx and Engels on the U.S. Civil War and its aftermath, adding that she would send him a copy of Marx and Engels on the United States.

“You will find their writings on the Civil War especially helpful in thinking about the questions you raise in your letter to me,” Mary-Alice wrote. “Marx and Engels followed the unfolding of the second bourgeois revolution in the U.S. with keen attention and insight. What they explain about the delayed development of a hereditary proletariat in the U.S. (as compared to Europe) due to the existence of slavery, the defeat of the post-Civil War Radical Reconstruction, and the availability of free land (and failure to distribute much of it to the freed slaves) remains decisive to understanding the U.S. class struggle up to today.”

It was that exchange of correspondence that spurred Mary-Alice to propose that we act now to prepare this book. Currently we have nothing similar on this central question of U.S. and world politics that comrades can read, study, and *use* as a political weapon in our campaigning and mass work.

The more we work together with other revolutionaries, including Cuban comrades; the more we not only fight shoulder to shoulder alongside them, but share lessons

from the hard-fought battles of our class the world over—the more we learn from and influence each other politically. René and others of the Cuban Five appreciate not just the books we help provide them, but the exchange of ideas and views. That’s something not easy to come by; it’s much harder to get than the books themselves. They know that such exchanges help arm them for the political work they are conducting day in and day out inside the walls and bars. And they make sure we know that the books we send, as well as the *Militant*, get around in the prisons. No sooner do they finish a book than they pass it down the line, so other brothers can read it too. That’s one of the ways the prison library grows informally—in addition to books the prison librarian adds to the official acquisitions.

II

I WANT TO take the remainder of my time to come back to the discussion we’re having here on the Black struggle. It’s useful to take a look at the draft “Where We Stand: Young Socialists Platform” that party leaders in the YS have made available to the National Committee for this meeting. Reports earlier today from the national Young Socialists meeting indicate that YS members rose to the occasion and had a serious, initial political discussion of it. As Olympia [Newton] and Mary-Alice explained earlier, we’re not organizing a National Committee discussion of the draft platform here, or soliciting suggestions for it from NC members. That’s a job that party leaders in the Young Socialists helped initiate this weekend and

From the initial summary remarks on January 23, 2006.

will be continuing along with other YS members in the months to come.

But the opening sentence in the section of that draft on “Vanguard role of Black nationality” provides a useful concrete example of a central point we need to clarify here. That section opens with these words: “Blacks in the United States are an oppressed nationality.”

**Vanguard weight of toilers who are Black:
the historical record**

That’s correct, of course. But it’s not the place for communists to begin. It doesn’t help us understand the weight, the history, and the place in the United States of workers who are Black in relation to the working-class vanguard and its advance along the political line of march toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of starting with Blacks as an oppressed nationality, let’s start with the historical record of the vanguard place and weight of proletarians who are Black—a place and weight disproportionate to their percentage among the toilers in this country—in broad, proletarian-led social and political struggles in the United States.

This goes back to the closing years of the U.S. Civil War and especially to the postwar battle for Radical Reconstruction, in which Blacks provided leadership in substantial parts of the South both to freed slaves and to exploited farmers and workers who were white.¹¹ It continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the labor battles that built the United Mine

11. See the section on Radical Reconstruction in Jack Barnes, “The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States,” in *New International* no. 4 (1985), 2008 printing, pp. 274–81.

Workers—at a time when most unions were not only organized along craft lines but either excluded Blacks or segregated them in separate locals. It continued among struggles by sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and other rural toilers, both Black and white, in the 1920s and through the Great Depression.

Workers who were Black were in the front ranks of many battles that built the CIO industrial unions in the 1930s. They were in the vanguard of working people during World War II who refused to subordinate or postpone struggles for justice in the name of “the patriotic war effort”—fighting discrimination in the war industries, protesting Jim Crow conditions in the armed forces, and demanding that the Roosevelt administration and Democratic Congress pass federal legislation to stop racist lynchings.¹² They were in the forefront of those who opposed that imperialist war. And many of us at this meeting know firsthand the lasting social and political impact on the working class and labor movement today of the mass civil rights movement and rise of the Black liberation struggle from the mid-1950s through the early 1970s.

We’re not speculating about the future. We’re pointing to a historical record. It’s a matter of fact. It’s a startling

12. C.L.R. James et al, *Fighting Racism in World War II* (Pathfinder, 1980). Drawing on weekly coverage in the *Militant* newspaper, the book also records the aggressive public efforts by the Communist Party in the United States to pressure Blacks, unionists, and others among the oppressed and exploited to subordinate their struggles to patriotic support for the U.S. imperialist government in World War II. See the article elsewhere in this issue, “Setting the Record Straight on Fascism and World War II: Building a World Federation of Democratic Youth That Fights Imperialism and War.”

record, it seems to me—one that should bowl you over when you first hear it. The same cannot be said of the big majority of oppressed nations or nationalities in general in other parts of the world. But this *is* the historic record of the *Black* nationality in the United States. This *is* its specific political character since the eradication of chattel slavery and the beginning of the expansion of a modern hereditary proletariat in the United States.

It is this dynamic that Trotsky, already more than seven decades ago, was pointing to when he said it is possible “that the Negroes will become the most advanced section” of the working class, and “will proceed through self-determination to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers.” It was for that reason that he was “absolutely sure that they will in any case fight better than the white workers” on the whole. And it was that same record of struggle that eleven years earlier had led the Communist International to also point out—in its resolution on “The Negro Question” adopted by the 1922 Fourth Congress—that “the history of the Negro in America fits him for an important role in the liberation struggle of the entire African race.”

Two views of Malcolm X

Two divergent views of Malcolm’s political evolution and its significance—if only slightly diverging at the beginning—coexisted in the Socialist Workers Party for almost two decades after his assassination. The difference was not over our movement’s recognition of the importance of the rise of nationalism among Blacks in the United States as a product of the struggles and conquests of the 1960s and 1970s. As I said in a tribute to Malcolm X at the March 1965 memorial meeting organized by the

Militant Labor Forum, the SWP and YSA led the way in teaching “the revolutionary youth of this country to tell the difference between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressor, to teach them to differentiate the forces of liberation from the forces of the exploiters; to teach them to hear the voices of the revolution regardless of the forms they take.”¹³ We were well known in the 1960s and 1970s for our political battles on these questions with opponents, including the Communist Party, which dismissed Black nationalism as a “capitulation to racism,” or “racism in reverse.”

Party leaders from my generation, however, as well as Farrell [Dobbs], Joe [Hansen], and many others, believed that Malcolm had thought out, knew exactly what he was saying, and *meant it* when he said in the *Young Socialist* interview that he was “reappraising [his] definition of Black nationalism,” that he truthfully no longer believed “we [can] sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as Black nationalism,” and that he hadn’t been “using the expression for several months.” Just as he had thought out, knew exactly what he was doing, and *meant it* when he proposed giving the Young Socialist Alliance a list of names and addresses of young people he had met in Africa and Europe and held us responsible to use the names appropriately and hold up our end of the bargain.

George Breitman, however, disagreed. Breitman, who was a member of the SWP National Committee at the time, deserves credit for the work he did in editing many of Malcolm’s speeches for publication, with care and integrity. But he believed it was important to insist that Malcolm X

13. Jack Barnes, “He Spoke the Truth to Our Generation,” in *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, p. 149.

was a Black nationalist until the day he was gunned down. And that Malcolm, had he lived, would have remained a Black nationalist for as far into the future as it made any sense to think about. In fact, Breitman devoted an entire chapter of the book *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* to a more-or-less open polemic with what Malcolm had said in the *YS* interview.

The Last Year of Malcolm X is a useful book, clearly written and easy to read. It documents quite a bit about Malcolm's political development during that last year. But the chapter I'm referring to, entitled "Separatism and Black Nationalism," is dedicated to establishing that Malcolm could not have *meant* what he *said*.¹⁴ After quoting in full Malcolm's answer to the question about Black nationalism in the *YS* interview, Breitman wrote:

It was not until after the publication of the *Young Socialist* interview a few days after Malcolm's death that anyone looked back to see when Malcolm had stopped calling himself a black nationalist. It was at the end of May, right after his first trip abroad in 1964. On his return from that trip, Malcolm spent the whole month of June organizing the OAAU [Organization of Afro-American Unity] in New York. When he had formed the Muslim Mosque, Inc., in March [1964], he had said it was black nationalist. He did not say this about the OAAU at its first meeting on June 28, 1964. Nor did the "Statement of Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro-American

14. "Separatism and Black Nationalism" in George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (Pathfinder, 1967), 2008 printing, pp. 64–82.

Unity,” which he made public at that meeting, make any reference whatever to black nationalism. . . . Early in 1965, Malcolm announced that the OAAU was preparing a new program. . . . But the “Basic Unity Program” did not call the OAAU black nationalist; it never even mentioned the expression.

None of these facts helped settle the question for Breitman, however. He continued:

Is it correct to still speak of Malcolm as a black nationalist when we know that he had stopped calling himself that and was questioning the adequacy of black nationalism as “the solution to the problems confronting our people”? The answer is yes, if we continue to use the definition of black nationalism attempted earlier in this chapter.¹⁵

Breitman insisted that “Malcolm became a black nationalist while he was in prison in the late 1940s—it was the starting point for all his thinking, the source of his strength and dynamism. And he remained a black na-

15. Earlier in the chapter, Breitman had written that Black nationalism “can be seen as approximately the following: It is the tendency for black people in the United States to unite as a group, as a people, into a movement of their own to fight for freedom, justice and equality. Animated by the desire of an oppressed minority to decide its own destiny, this tendency holds that black people must control their own movement and the political, economic and social institutions of the black community. Its characteristic attributes include racial pride, group consciousness, hatred of white supremacy, a striving for independence from white control, and identification with black and other non-white oppressed groups in other parts of the world.”

tionalist to his last hour, however uncertain he became about what to call himself or the program that he was trying to formulate.”¹⁶

BREITMAN CONTINUED, saying “light can be shed on Malcolm’s reappraisal” if we understand that Malcolm was moving beyond what “can be called pure-and-simple” Black nationalism. “The pure-and-simple black nationalist,” Breitman said, “is concerned exclusively or primarily with the internal problems of the Negro community, with organizing it, with helping it to gain control of the community’s politics, economy, etc. He is not concerned, or is less concerned, with the problems of the total American society, or with the nature of the larger society within which the Negro community exists. [Hardly a very dialectical picture of U.S. capitalist society! Neither today nor ever in U.S. history has there been a self-enclosed “Negro community” that “exists” within “the larger society.” Nor is there any such “white community.” We’re talking about class relations and their inextricably interconnected racial and national divisions, not nested Russian dolls! —*J.B.*] He has no theory or program for changing that society; for him that is the white man’s problem.”

That’s how Malcolm started out, Breitman said, in-

16. When a second selection of Malcolm X speeches was published in 1970 under the title *By Any Means Necessary*, Breitman repeated these views in his introductory note to the *Young Socialist* interview. “The most significant part of this interview was Malcolm’s answer to the question asking how he defined black nationalism,” Breitman wrote. “It showed that Malcolm had been grappling with the problem of black nationalism—not in the sense of rejecting it, but of reappraising it, in order to discover how it fitted into his overall philosophy and strategy.”

cluding for several months during the initial transition period following his break from the Nation of Islam in early 1964.

According to Breitman, as a result of Malcolm's travels to Africa and the Mideast later in 1964, as well as other experiences, he "moved beyond pure-and-simple black nationalism—toward black nationalism plus." And then Breitman posed the obvious question: "Plus what?" Over the next few paragraphs, he attempts an answer to that question through a series of successive abstract, supra-class approximations: Black nationalism "plus radicalism." Black nationalism "plus fundamental social change." Black nationalism "plus the transformation of the whole society." And he concluded:

Malcolm still was looking for the name, but he was becoming black nationalist plus revolutionary. . . . What he was questioning about black nationalism was not its essence but its pure-and-simple form. He was questioning this because it "was alienating people who were true revolutionaries"—in this case, white revolutionaries. A pure-and-simple black nationalist wouldn't care what effect he had on whites, revolutionary or not. Malcolm cared because he intended to work with white revolutionaries; he knew their collaboration was needed if society was to be transformed.

Malcolm was beginning to think about the need to replace capitalism with socialism if racism was to be eliminated. He was not sure if it could be done, and he was not sure how it could be done, but he was beginning to believe that that was the road to be traveled.

His uncertainty about the right name to call

himself arose from the fact that he was doing something new in the United States—he was on the way to a synthesis of black nationalism and socialism that would be fitting for the American scene and acceptable to the masses in the black ghetto.

It's important to notice one thing before going any further. By the time of the *Young Socialist* interview, Malcolm had not only stopped using the term "Black nationalism." He also talked a lot less about "white revolutionaries." Malcolm said that the Algerian ambassador he had met in Ghana was a revolutionary, a "true revolutionary." That was the bottom line. And the fact that this revolutionary happened not to be Black helped Malcolm come to the conclusion to stop using the term Black nationalism to describe his own views. Nor did Malcolm speak of the Socialist Workers Party or Young Socialist Alliance as "white revolutionaries," nor of young people he had met in Africa and Europe as "black revolutionaries," "Arab revolutionaries," or "white revolutionaries." He just spoke of them as *revolutionaries*.

Malcolm X wasn't "on the way to a synthesis of black nationalism and socialism that would be fitting for the American scene and acceptable to the masses in the black ghetto." By the way, Breitman never claimed that was the goal of the Socialist Workers Party. But why not? Why not, if a "synthesis of black nationalism and socialism" would be "fitting for the American scene"? Did Breitman think proletarian revolutionaries who were Black made an error in joining the Socialist Workers Party? If not, why block off the possibility of that same political evolution for Malcolm X?

Why not just stick to the facts, at least to Malcolm's

own words? Malcolm had long been an uncompromising opponent of imperialism. During the last year of his life, he became an outspoken opponent of capitalism, and he was becoming more and more interested in socialism. He had become a champion of the socialist revolution in Cuba and of its proletarian internationalist leadership. He hailed the revolutionary government in Algeria headed by Ahmed Ben Bella and other leaders, who openly proclaimed their socialist course and convictions. Malcolm promoted the *Militant* newspaper and was deepening his political collaboration with the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, two communist organizations. In fact, most of the “true revolutionaries” Malcolm admired and worked with were communists: in Cuba, in Algeria, those he called the “MLFers”¹⁷—the YSA and SWP. Those are facts.

WHAT IS SO ESSENTIAL in understanding Malcolm X is that we can see the fact—not the hope, not the faith, the *fact*—that, in the imperialist epoch, revolutionary leadership on the highest level of political capacity, courage, and integrity converges *with* communism, not simply *toward* the communist movement. That truth has even greater weight today as billions around the world, in city and countryside, from China to Brazil, are being hurled into the modern class struggle by the violent expansion of world capitalism. From seeing in life how that process unfolds, we draw

17. In informal conversation with members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, Malcolm X often called them “MLFers,” since he had met many of them at the Militant Labor Forum in New York, where he spoke three times in late 1964 and early 1965.

confidence in the prospects for world revolution, in the development of a genuinely worldwide proletarian revolutionary leadership.

What comes out of such a convergence is not a “synthesis” of nationalism and communism, not a synthesis of an ideology and the line of march of a class. What comes out of it is a communist movement that not only strengthens its own political continuity but transforms the channels through which that continuity flows, becoming more inclusive, more diverse in its experience, cultural breadth, social understanding, political intelligence and savvy, and—above all—combat capacity.

Malcolm and the communist movement

The *Militant* was the paper of record for Malcolm’s speeches, including during the final period when he was still in the Nation of Islam. (*Muhammad Speaks* had ceased being this.) Our movement and our press were known for having recognized the political logic of Malcolm X’s course in early 1963. Already at that time, Malcolm would sometimes buy the *Militant* on his way into a meeting where he was speaking.

I remember selling the *Militant* along with other party and YSA comrades from Chicago and Detroit at a meeting where Malcolm spoke in late 1963, together with Rev. Albert Cleage; Gloria Richardson, a militant Black rights leader from Cambridge, Maryland; and others. It was the concluding rally of the Grass Roots conference held at a big Baptist church in Detroit.¹⁸ The meeting was overwhelmingly Black in composition, and the situation

18. “Message to the Grass Roots” opens the first selection of Malcolm’s speeches, *Malcolm X Speaks* (Pathfinder, 1965), published just a few months after his assassination.

was a little tense when we began selling. Then Malcolm came by. He saw the *Militant*, asked someone in his defense team to get him a copy, gave us a nod, and walked into the church. After that, the tensions relaxed and sales picked up quite a bit.

Later, following Malcolm's break with the Nation, we began collaborating with members of his general staff—Reuben Francis, James Shabazz, and others. They knew the *Militant* was just about the only place anyone could get regular, reliable information about what Malcolm was saying and doing. And they said so.

Malcolm spoke at Militant Labor Forums three times between April 1964 and January 1965. Major excerpts from all three talks are reprinted in *Malcolm X Speaks*, and portions of the question-and-answer period from the first forum appear in *By Any Means Necessary*. This was unusual for Malcolm. Because although he had spoken to numerous campus audiences around the United States and elsewhere, including while he was still in the Nation, these three forums were the only times he had agreed to be on the platform at a meeting of a revolutionary political organization outside Harlem. (He appeared with Progressive Labor Party leader Bill Epton once or twice at PL-sponsored meetings in Harlem.)

The first forum, "The Black Revolution," was in early April 1964, just before Malcolm's first trip to Africa and the Middle East. It was held at the Palm Gardens meeting hall in Manhattan. The second forum, "On the Harlem 'Hate Gang' Scare," was in late May, shortly after Malcolm's return from that trip. If you were able to go back and dig up a leaflet for that forum, which was held at our headquarters at 116 University Place, you wouldn't find Malcolm listed as a speaker; you'd find James Shabazz. But James called us at the last minute and said that Malcolm

had requested to speak. James asked if we had any objection if Malcolm replaced him on the program. We didn't. In opening his talk there, Malcolm said he hadn't known about the forum until James told him about it that afternoon, "and I couldn't resist the opportunity to come."

Malcolm spoke at the third Militant Labor Forum, also held at Palm Gardens, in early January 1965, not long after returning from his third Africa trip and a couple weeks before the *YS* interview. "It's the third time that I've had the opportunity to be a guest of the Militant Labor Forum," he said. "I always feel that it is an honor and every time that they open the door for me to do so, I will be right here. The *Militant* newspaper is one of the best in New York City. In fact, it is one of the best anywhere you go today," adding that he had seen copies in Paris and various parts of Africa. "I don't know how it gets there," he said. "But if you put the right things in it, what you put in will see that it gets around."

Malcolm actually looked different at different times during his political evolution over the last year before the assassination. He no longer needed the austere suits that were the badge of ministers in the Nation of Islam. His beard grew. His face softened. He wore clothing, still respectful and dignified, that he felt like wearing. He was stripping away everything that was gloss, everything that was revolutionary theater, everything unnecessary to simply say what needed to be said, work as hard as he could, and collaborate with revolutionaries, "true revolutionaries," in order "to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth," as he put it. You're living "at a time of revolution"—that was Malcolm's message to youth and working people over and over again in 1964 and 1965.

When you read Malcolm's talks and interviews from this period, you'll also find the evidence there to clear

up another of the numerous myths about him: that while he was a great speaker, a great propagandist, a great explainer of what so many people wanted to say about themselves and what they are capable of accomplishing, that Malcolm was never an organizer—or, at least, he never had a chance to become an organizer. But just from his own words alone, you'll see that's not true. Malcolm was all of the above, but he was simultaneously a skilled revolutionary organizer. What was cut short was the possibility of his putting those skills to further and broader work. The enemies of the proletariat understand that fact better than "pro-Malcolm X radicals."

DURING THE FINAL MONTHS of his life, Malcolm was moving away from using religious phrases and stances, too. He explained in the clearest language possible exactly what he was doing, what he was seeing, what he was coming to understand and to believe. He was an uncompromising anti-imperialist, an enemy of racism, an opponent of capitalist exploitation, and an internationalist. He was on the road to becoming a communist. That was our view. Why would we conclude anything else? Why would we place limitations on Malcolm—on Malcolm of all people!—that we wouldn't place on anyone else? Why would we say he was moving toward a "synthesis" of Black nationalism and communism? That's not what Malcolm said. All the evidence is to the contrary.

Malcolm insisted he had stopped calling himself a Black nationalist because Black nationalism was inadequate to explain what experience had taught him needed to be done to transform the world, a world that had in many ways in the imperialist epoch become a "white world." But Malcolm knew that Black men and women

were inextricably connected to *that* world by a million threads. It was unimaginable without that interaction. Once you stopped hunkering down, there were no separate white and black worlds in any way, whether in place or in time. Most importantly, there was—and remains—a single capitalist state.

While nobody won to communism remains a Black nationalist, at the same time you don't stop being Black! You don't stop having pride. You don't stop marveling at how much of the truth about Black people has been kept out of "histories." That had better be understood too! Nobody is going to trust a socialist who is Black who acts as if they've forgotten they're Black. And with good reason. They may get along for a while in capitalist society and begin thinking they're not Black. But as Joel [Britton] once warned regarding illusions in the labor officialdom, "then there's the rude awakening." Every time there's a retreat in the class struggle, they'll be *reminded* they're Black. They'll be reminded by Caucasians who are convinced *they* are "white"—"God's color." And this will remain true not only between now and a victorious socialist revolution, but during the initial transition period of the proletarian dictatorship, as well. So these are realities of class-divided society it's best that a communist not forget or deny, but instead integrate into a proletarian internationalist strategy of how our class can lead all the oppressed in fighting effectively to win.

RECOGNIZING AND EMBRACING the world-class political leadership of revolutionists who are Black—whether an African-American such as Malcolm X, or leaders such as Maurice Bishop and Thomas Sankara—doesn't lead militant workers and youth in the political direction of

nationalism or pan-Africanism. Otherwise, why would the communist movement put such leadership time and resources into keeping their words in print? Why would we give such high priority to getting those books and pamphlets into the hands of working people in the United States and the world over, as part of our overall political arsenal?

We do so because reading and studying what Malcolm, Bishop, and Sankara had to say—each of them concretely and differently—helps us and others better understand the necessity of revolutionary workers parties, of *proletarian* internationalism, and of a *world* communist movement. What leaders such as these have been saying and doing over decades converges with the activity of communists worldwide and helps set up the next stage of human history.

The race question, the color question is on the rise in many parts of the world. It's coming more to the fore in Latin America, in those countries where there was significant chattel slave labor in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It's a weighty political question in Brazil, in Colombia, in Venezuela, in Peru, in substantial parts of Central America and the Caribbean, and elsewhere. It converges with the struggles of the indigenous populations, the populations of pre-Columbian origins. It strengthens prospects for revolution across the Americas. It strengthens possibilities for the development of revolutionary leadership in Africa in new ways. It enriches the challenges and opportunities to build revolutionary proletarian parties throughout much of Europe and the "Anglosphere."¹⁹

19. The "Anglosphere" is a term used by some bourgeois commentators to refer to the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—what Marxists would call the

The history of the past century has taught us that in order to defend and extend the international revolution for national liberation and socialism, the establishment and extension of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working class needs a genuine *world* leadership. It needs a leadership today that is more multinational, that has a larger component that is Black than during the opening half of the twentieth century. It needs a leadership that includes women in numbers and in ways never before seen in the workers movement—and never before possible.

We're not utopians. We're not oblivious to history and to the stubborn consequences of class exploitation and oppression, of uneven development of capitalist social relations on a world scale. In fact, we understand that these legacies are the very channels—longer lasting than we want or hope—through which the modern class struggle flows. We know revolutions will conquer with communist leaderships short of a “perfect” social composition (whatever that is imagined to be), short of the kind of human solidarity and unity that can only begin to be forged once the toilers have conquered power.

But we also know that the revolutionary workers movement cannot conquer without reflecting in our ranks and in our leaderships how far our class and its allies have come in history in carving out a vanguard of political equals. Without registering the gains of struggles by the oppressed and exploited. Why would anyone simply assume today that all the “Lenins” of the twenty-first century will be Caucasian? That's a political question, not

imperialist countries where English is the main language—and the values, institutions, and standards of conduct these “English-speaking peoples” are alleged to hold in common.

a moral question. It's a concrete and historical question. Even more important, when millions no longer care what "color" Lenin is, then the working class will be much, much closer to building the kind of revolutionary parties and world movement we need to fight effectively and win. (Anyway, the ultraright always knew that Lenin wasn't white. Even a passing glance at a photo of that "slant-eyed commie" settled that!)

Modern land and labor league

At the big public meeting here in New York two days ago, I encouraged participants to visit the exhibition on "Slavery in New York" at the New York Historical Society. I mentioned that the exhibit describes, among many other things, the New York Manumission Society founded in 1785. I noted that John Jay—president of the Continental Congress for several years during the American Revolution, and later governor of New York and Chief Justice of the United States—was a founder of the society and had included in its constitution the following words: "The benevolent Creator and Father of men [has] given to them all an equal right to Life, Liberty and Property."

I contrasted this favorably to Thomas Jefferson's decision, in drafting the Declaration of Independence a decade earlier, to alter those words—much used by bourgeois opponents of monarchical tyranny and feudal reaction at the time—and replace them with the more intangible phrase: "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." With the exception of members of the family of his mistress Sally Hemmings, none of the other slaves owned by Thomas Jefferson were freed by him, even in his will; 130 were sold at auction when he died. So that puts into perspective Jefferson's practical understanding

of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The banner “Life, Liberty, and Property” was much more in the interests of *all* working people. It was the dispossession of independent toiling producers by capital that left us with no other choice but to sell our labor power to an employer in order to survive and thus gave rise to our class, the hereditary proletariat. They took away our free use of tools. They drove us off the land, and out of independent crafts and trades. They deprived us of means of production. They took over the commons. And it was the brutal denial of *both* liberty and property—even the *right* to hold property, much less the opportunity to do so—that marked chattel slavery and many other forms of bonded labor. In the chapters of *Capital* on “So-Called Primitive Accumulation,” Marx describes in some detail how, as a result of these combined processes, the capitalist mode of production came into the world “dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt.”²⁰

ONCE WE’VE ESTABLISHED a workers and farmers government and expropriated the capitalist class, working people will be plenty competent to take care of our own “pursuit of happiness.” Contrary to the bourgeois misrepresentation of communists as utopian social engineers, proletarian revolutionists—like most other workers—firmly believe that many things in life are best left to the individual. The right to privacy is real. We think the state, including a workers state, should keep its nose out of our “pursuit of happiness.” Good fences *do* make good neighbors sometimes, at least metaphorically; they don’t need

20. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Pelican Books, 1976), p. 926.

to be big fences, but fences just the same.

Neither the proletarian dictatorship, nor the communist society it is a bridge toward, has anything to do with some great collective barracks of humanity. That's not what communism is about. To the contrary, as the Communist Manifesto explains, "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."²¹

Today, more than 130 years after Marx identified the class forces capable of making the third American revolution—a socialist revolution—that same alliance remains central to the task: free labor, free farmers exploited by capital, and the men and women freed from the defeated slavocracy. Those forces remain at the heart of building a modern land and labor league,²² the revolutionary pro-

21. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in MECW, vol. 6, p. 506.

22. The Land and Labour League was launched by a conference of workers in London, England, in October 1869. It was organized at the initiative of the leadership of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA, the "First International"), of which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were central leaders. Writing to Engels about the founding of the new organization—which aimed to unite industrial workers in the cities with farm laborers and other rural working people in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales—Marx said that "here, the workers' party makes a clean break with the bourgeoisie" politically. Marx joined the Land and Labour League, and a number of its leaders were members of the IWMA General Council. By late 1870, however, bourgeois forces gained dominance in the league's leadership, putting the organization on a course away from the IWMA and from its own founding declaration "that nothing short of a transformation of the existing social and political arrangements [can]

letarian party that can do the job. Amid the powerful nationwide strikes sparked by rail workers in 1877, Marx wrote to Engels:

This first eruption against the oligarchy of associated capital which has arisen since the Civil War will of course be put down, but it could quite well form the starting point for the establishment of a serious labor party in the United States. . . .

The policy of the new President [of withdrawing Union troops backing Radical Reconstruction governments across the South] will turn the Negroes into allies of the workers, and the large expropriations of land (especially fertile land) in favour of railway, mining, etc., companies will convert the peasants of the West, who are already very disenchanted, into allies of the workers.²³

As we explained in the 1984 SWP convention report, “The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States”:

This was not to be. The economic and political reserves of the rising U.S. industrial bourgeoisie were far from exhausted; over the next half century the United States would become the world’s

avail, and that such a transformation [can] only be effected by the toiling millions themselves.”

23. Marx to Engels, July 25, 1877. In *Marx and Engels on the United States* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), p. 272. A different translation can be found in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 45, p. 251.

mightiest imperialist power. Moreover, the defeat of Radical Reconstruction—what Farrell Dobbs calls the “worst setback” of our class in the history of this country²⁴—was a much more devastating blow to Blacks and other U.S. working people than Marx had anticipated. The U.S. working class remains deeply divided by the national oppression of Blacks that was reinstitutionalized on new foundations in the bloody aftermath of 1877. U.S. labor’s first giant step toward the formation of major industrial unions did not come for another six decades, and the formation of a labor party anticipated by Marx . . . remains an unfulfilled task of our class to this day.

Nonetheless, Marx could not have been more correct about the alliance of social forces that will be central to a successful revolution in the United States. Nor could he have been more correct about who had increasingly become the common class enemy of U.S. workers and farmers, Black and white, with the betrayal of Radical Reconstruction.²⁵

That remains the prognosis for the American revolution, for the conquest of power and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the United States, to this day.

24. See the chapter on “Indigenous Origins” in Farrell Dobbs, *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the United States, The Early Years (1848–1917)* (Pathfinder, 1980), 2007 printing, particularly pp. 69–70.

25. *New International* no. 4, 2008 printing, pp. 280–81.

III

DURING one of the breaks, a comrade from Iceland brought to my attention a section from *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* called “Proletarian and Petty-Bourgeois Nationalism.” He asked if I could discuss it in the summary, in light of what we’ve been talking about here in relation to the Black struggle, Black nationalism, and the weight of workers who are Black in the fight for the proletarian dictatorship

The section is from the April 1979 National Committee report, published under the title “A New Stage of Revolutionary Working-Class Politics.” It opens by saying that the turn to industry, and the shifts in politics and the working class that made the turn both necessary and possible, put the party “in a good position today to clarify our understanding of Black nationalism. There’s no reason today to revise our view that nationalist consciousness deepens among Blacks as the class struggle deepens.”

The report goes on to explain the pitfalls in how comrades sometimes attempt to distinguish various political currents in the Black struggle—drawing an inaccurate distinction between “cultural” and “political” nationalism, for example. Closer to being accurate, but still wide of the mark, we sometimes used expressions like “consistent and inconsistent nationalism,” the report said. “Malcolm X was consistent in fighting for the interests of the Black masses, we pointed out. That pushed him toward the class struggle, toward anti-imperialism, and toward a bloc with revolutionary socialists. That wasn’t a fluke; it was the logic of the consistent pride, self-confidence, and self-assertiveness of an oppressed, overwhelmingly

proletarian nationality.”

That still seems correct to me, as far as it goes, but it’s not yet a clear class explanation.

“The Black population is not homogeneous,” the 1979 report went on to say. “And the pressures on it originate from different classes. It has petty-bourgeois layers, including many at the head of Black organizations. Black nationalism can be an expression of proletarian consciousness, or it can be petty-bourgeois.

“What is consistent Black nationalism? Proletarian nationalism.

“What is inconsistent Black nationalism? Petty-bourgeois nationalism.”

This passage from twenty-five years ago is not as accurate or precise as what we’ve been discussing at this meeting of the National Committee and what we’ve been saying for some time. But both the passage from *Changing Face* and what we’re discussing here are consistent with how revolutionists have *acted* politically in the class struggle for half a century and more.

Consistent Black nationalism does *not* lead to socialism, however. That’s not true. As Sam [Manuel] pointed out in the discussion, who’s to say that Louis Farrakhan is not a “consistent Black nationalist”? Or that Elijah Muhammad was not a “consistent Black nationalist”? One thing’s for sure, from Malcolm’s own account, the political views he had come to by late 1964 were not the product of “consistent Black nationalism.” In fact, to come to those views, Malcolm said he had to pull back from considering himself a Black nationalist.

Even more important, there is no such thing as “proletarian nationalism.” The only consciousness that is *proletarian* is *class consciousness*, leading to the liberation of the working class through the fight for the dictatorship

of the proletariat. While that proletarian struggle takes place country by country, against particular national ruling classes and their states, it is part of the worldwide battle for socialism waged by an international class, the working class. That is the material basis of proletarian internationalism, which is inseparable from communism.

From nationalism to communism: a class break

What we were attempting to explain in the 1979 report, as a political guide to *what to do*, was not accomplished by referring to proletarian nationalism versus petty-bourgeois nationalism. We were trying to account for the conflicting *political conduct* of various individuals and currents that call themselves Black nationalists, or had done so at one time. In whose class interests do they fight? Do they seek to advance the interests of the big working-class majority of the oppressed Black nationality? Are their deeds, how they live their lives, their political trajectory consistent with those goals?

When Malcolm left the Nation of Islam in early 1964, it wasn't just a moral break over Elijah Muhammad's hypocritical conduct toward women in the organization—although that was much more important to Malcolm and his deep commitment to integrity than it's often credited with being. Malcolm's departure from the Nation wasn't even just a *political* break. Yes, both the moral and political dimensions were important to Malcolm's decision, as he told the *Young Socialist*. "I felt the movement was dragging its feet in many areas," he said in the interview. "It didn't involve itself in the civil or civic or political struggles our people were confronted by. All it did was stress the importance of moral reformation—don't drink, don't smoke, don't permit fornication and adultery. When I found that the hierarchy itself wasn't

practicing what it preached, it was clear that this part of its program was bankrupt.”²⁶

But Malcolm also made a *class* break. And he deepened his orientation to the working class, and toward the revolutionary proletarian movement, over the next eleven months of his life. Malcolm did not fear to go where the political logic of uncompromising struggle against oppression and exploitation took him, regardless of earlier notions and beliefs.

Regardless of where in the world he found himself.

Regardless of whether it led him across color lines.

Regardless of whether it led him across religious lines.

(Neither the leadership of Algeria’s National Liberation Front nor of the revolutionary Cuban government pretended to be guided by religion. Quite demonstratively the opposite. And Malcolm knew this well.)

And regardless of widespread political prejudice—that is, red-baiting—against those he increasingly recognized as allies, as fellow revolutionists. (That did not include the Stalinists or social democrats.)

Malcolm passed all these tests. And it was this class political trajectory that led him to the conclusion to stop using the term Black nationalism to describe his revolutionary course. It was this that led him to insist that any such political course—what at this stage he called an “overall philosophy”—needed to be one that transcended race and its reflection in politics in the imperialist world.

During that last year of his life, Malcolm had as yet no precise explanation for the *Militant*’s revolutionary caliber, for its trustworthiness and integrity in printing his speeches, for its accurate coverage of developments in U.S. and world politics that could be found nowhere

26. *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, 2007 printing, p. 118.

else. He had as yet no precise explanation for the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, some of whose cadres and leaders he had come to know, to respect, and to trust. These were organizations the majority of whose members were white, but with whom he could work as fellow revolutionists and as political equals—whether with a brother like Clifton DeBerry,²⁷ or with numerous others of us who weren't "brothers" in that sense.

Malcolm had no explanation for any of this. But he was curious. Why did he come to the Militant Labor Forum the first time in April 1964? Why did he come to speak at a public meeting "downtown," as he put it—something he had never done before in New York? I think he was curious. *Politically* curious. He wanted to meet the organizers and see the audience. What kind of people were they? What kind of organizations? How would they act? How would they organize the meeting? How would they chair it? How would they organize defense?

These were not small questions. And pursuing the answers drew Malcolm to work with these revolutionaries in more and more uncharted waters.

What Malcolm discovered, combined with what he already knew about the *Militant*, was enough for him to ask to come back and speak after returning from his first Africa trip. It was enough for him to accept an invitation to speak again at a forum in January 1965. Enough to grant an interview to the *Young Socialist* magazine. Enough to propose giving YSA leaders a list of his young contacts in Africa and Europe to write to and collaborate with.

27. Clifton DeBerry (1923–2006) was a union militant and Black rights fighter, a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party, and the SWP candidate for president of the United States in 1964.

Enough to give serious consideration to a YSA-organized campus speaking tour later in 1965. Enough to demonstratively place a stack of *Militants* for sale each week in the OAAU headquarters. And to ask Clifton DeBerry to be one of those giving a class to leaders of the OAAU.

As Malcolm developed politically following the break with the Nation, he began moving away from ideology—that is, away from false consciousness, which was the only “program” possible in an organization such as the Nation. He began rejecting the Nation’s “program” piece by piece. He began looking toward developing a program for liberation that could win, in the world as it exists—not a black world or a white world, but a dialectically interconnected world, with powerful states.

TO UNDERSTAND where Malcolm was heading, however, don’t turn to the OAAU’s “Statement of Basic Aims and Objectives” from June 1964, or even to its “Basic Unity Program,” which was to be announced at the meeting in Harlem where he was assassinated in February 1965. Malcolm’s developing program was the generalization of how he acted, and what he had to say in his speeches—speeches Pathfinder Press has kept in print, and that anybody can read and study.

The program was still very much a work in progress when Malcolm was killed. It was still more tactics than strategy. It was open to different interpretations. It didn’t yet provide those who looked to Malcolm with a coherent world outlook or a regular political rhythm of activity, of things to do to advance those perspectives. As Malcolm said in the *YS* interview just a few weeks before the assassination: “I still would be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the overall philosophy”—the program, the strategy, the

revolutionary practice—“which I think is necessary for the liberation of the Black people in this country.”

What was key for Malcolm in the months before his assassination were the practical things—*they* were the theory whose footsteps could actually be seen in the profane world. What he was doing. What he was clarifying and explaining. What he was demonstrating by deeds—by where he went, by the cautions he rejected about what “not to do.”

Malcolm *did* follow the logic of his revolutionary convictions and discoveries, however. He didn’t flinch when that trajectory meant dashing preconceived notions he had held much of his adult life. As his anti-imperialist and internationalist convictions deepened, he had to confront the fact that humanity is not majority Black. And he didn’t play cute tricks. He wasn’t a demagogue. He didn’t simply say, well, humanity is majority nonwhite, as if that solved the contradiction. Malcolm also faced up to what must have seemed another substantial obstacle: the fact that most revolutionaries in the twentieth century are neither Islamic nor religious in any way. Malcolm didn’t move sideways to avoid these hurdles; he leaped right over them. The important thing about the Algerian he had met, Malcolm told us, was that he was “extremely militant” and he was a revolutionary, “a true revolutionary.”

That’s how Malcolm worked with “the *Militant* people,” with the “MLFers,” as James and Reuben would say when they came down to 116 University Place to talk. That’s how Malcolm worked with members of an organization that was majority Caucasian in racial composition, 100 percent nonbelievers, and communists to boot. Because we were revolutionaries. Because of where we were going politically. That’s where he wanted to go too. It was a *political* convergence. A revolutionary course toward the fight for state power was not much of a leap for Malcolm at that stage.

If we can understand this, then we're armed to organize and to act on what we know about the historical record of political combat by workers who are Black, and thus their vanguard place and weight among the most capable, militant, and fearless fighters for the proletarian dictatorship in the United States. We're prepared to recognize that what Trotsky was explaining to SWP leaders in 1933 and 1939 was not Black nationalism, but what the dictatorship of the proletariat opens up for Blacks and other oppressed layers among the broad forces that dare "to storm the heavens," as Marx said. We can understand why we are right that the Black question, that Black militancy and Black pride, will come to the fore any time there is a major upsurge in the class struggle, and any time the proletariat advances.

And we will understand why those who deeply aspire to wipe every hated, bloody form of racist oppression and superexploitation off the face of the earth—as much as, if not more so, than anyone—are those who want the dictatorship of the proletariat as a powerful weapon in their hands.

That's what the Socialist Workers Party stands and fights for.

IV

BASED ON the discussion so far at this meeting, I'm convinced we don't yet have clarity on several important aspects of what the National Committee discussed and adopted at our January meeting about the Black struggle and the fight for the dictatorship of the

From remarks by Jack Barnes on March 20, 2006, to a meeting of the SWP National Committee.

proletariat. Let's review these points, so we can encourage some further discussion and determine whether we have enough clarity on them in the National Committee to print them for the party and then for the working-class public.

More than a fight against racism in general

First, we have to separate out the Black liberation struggle in the United States from battles against racist bigotry in general and for immigrant rights. And this includes struggles to advance the rights and conditions of immigrants from Haiti, from the English-speaking Caribbean, and from Africa. There are many points of intersection, of course, and, when they combine, the power and solidarity of these interrelated battles reverberate internationally. But the Black struggle in the United States is more than simply one instance, even the politically weightiest instance, of a worldwide struggle against the legacy of African chattel slavery and racist oppression of those with black skin.

James [Harris] took issue during the discussion with remarks by Maggie [Trowe] that branches often don't pay sufficient political attention to sales and political work in the Black community. James said that at least with regard to sales of our press, he didn't think that was accurate. If you looked at the *Militant* subscription base in most areas, James said, you'd find a disproportionately high percentage of subscribers who are Black given their percentage in the population.

That might be true, but it doesn't address the political question that Maggie was posing, at least as I understood it. Let's take Miami, for example. You can drive around the area where the branch headquarters is located, and where a number of comrades live, and think



FLAX HERMES / MILITANT

“Many of us know firsthand the lasting social and political impact on the working class and labor movement today of the mass civil rights movement and rise of the Black liberation struggle from the mid-1950s through the early 1970s.”

TOP: Freedom Riders in Birmingham, Alabama, during campaign to desegregate interstate bus service, 1961. **BOTTOM:** San Francisco, April 15, 1967. Powerful struggle for Black rights underlay and had a decisive impact on character of movement against Washington’s war on Vietnam.

you've ended up in Port-au-Prince. There are lots of Black faces. There are countless manifestations of the consequences of racism, superexploitation, and discrimination against immigrants. But we can do lots of sales and political work there without ever getting anywhere close to Liberty City, Overtown, or other parts of the Black community in Miami. That was Maggie's point, I believe. Where do we concentrate our sales and subbing in Miami? And I'm sure the relevance of that point is not limited to Florida.²⁸

The Black question in the United States is not rooted simply in skin color or African origins. Haitian-Americans and African-Americans don't share a common political history, a common record of vanguard struggle in this country. As we discussed yesterday, Blacks in the United States can trace their heredity back ten to twenty generations in North America—through chattel slavery, the Civil War against the slavocracy, the rise and fall of Radical Reconstruction, Jim Crow oppression and terror, near peonage and battles to stay on the land, massive urban and Northern migration, unionization battles and other proletarian-led social struggles, the Black rights movement, the organization of armed self-defense, and other vanguard—exemplary—political and social fights. That can't be said, in the same way, of those from Haiti, or the English-speaking Caribbean, or Africa. And that fact has social and political implications for the vanguard

28. During discussion at a later National Committee meeting in May 2006, James Harris said that he had been stunned when he returned to Los Angeles in March and checked the figures on the number of subscriptions sold to Blacks during the winter campaign. He concluded that Maggie Trowe's remarks had been more accurate than his response.

of the working class, as well as practical consequences for our work.

In a political sense, the Black struggle in the United States is a different question from struggles by those of more recent immigration. For a lesson in how different, read the front page of the paper this morning. The article, headlined “Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn,” reports, among other things, that 72 percent of male high school dropouts in their twenties who are Black are jobless (compared to 34 percent of dropouts who are white), and that 60 percent of male dropouts who are Black have spent time in prison by their mid-thirties. Those figures come from several recent studies, and there’s every reason to believe they are at least roughly representative of the actual situation. These conditions affect the long-term population that’s Black in this country in ways that are substantially different from first- or second-generation immigrants, including those of African ancestry.

Yes, it’s important that we carry out political work among Haitian workers in Miami, Washington, D.C., New York, Boston, and other areas where there are concentrations. Yes, we want to attract Africans living in the United States to the communist movement, and we have an added political tool—above and beyond our overall Marxist political arsenal—in our books and pamphlets by Thomas Sankara.

But it’s possible to do all these things and not touch the question of advancing our participation in the struggles of workers and youth who are African-Americans. *To do that* takes political consciousness. It takes habits of discipline, political objectivity, and revolutionary centralism. And it takes an understanding of the strategic and programmatic questions we’ve been discussing at the last two National Committee meetings.

A number of comrades have commented at both these meetings that workers who are Black respond with interest not just to headlines and articles on the fight against anti-Black racism, but to those on union questions, defense of political rights, immigration, women's liberation, the U.S. war against Iraq, the Cuban Revolution, the class struggle in Venezuela, and so on. If that weren't true, then nothing we're saying would make sense politically. But it is true, for all the reasons we've been discussing about the historical record of struggle by workers who are Black.

A U.S. question and a world question

As comrades from Canada have raised in the discussion, the situation there is different. A much larger percentage of the population that is Black are relatively recent immigrants.²⁹

Throughout the history of the Communist League and its predecessors in Canada, comrades have been involved in resistance to anti-Black racism, cop brutality, and other struggles. They increasingly keep running into militant workers who are Black—on and off the job, in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and elsewhere. Over the past couple of years, as comrades have described here, they've sold books and subscriptions and developed relations with a layer of workers from Sudan who were leaders and cadres of the strike by UFCW-organized packinghouse workers in Brooks, Alberta.

The question we've been discussing, however, is very specific.

Politically, the Black question in Canada is an exten-

29. According to 2001 Canadian government figures, of the more than 660,000 Blacks in Canada, only 10 percent had parents who were both born in Canada.

sion of the Black question in the United States. That's true, above all, because the Black struggle in this country since the 1950s has had such a powerful political impact on those of African origin (and other targets of racism) everywhere in the world—from Canada, to the Caribbean and Latin America, to Western Europe, to Africa itself. The impact in many ways has been even more direct in Canada due to the geographical and cultural closeness of the two countries.

I remember when I was in the Chicago branch in the early 1960s we'd often go up to Detroit on regional trips. In the course of comrades' week-to-week activity there, they always knew workers and students who were Black from Windsor and elsewhere in Ontario. People involved in Black rights activity and other political work went back and forth across the border all the time, and still do. Many Blacks in Canada were deeply influenced politically by Malcolm X and by political developments in the U.S. class struggle. All that continues to be the case.

The Black question in Canada is also an American question for another reason too—its origins. After losing the war in the first American revolution, the British army organized an amazing military and social feat. Earlier in the conflict they had promised emancipation to any slave or indentured person in the thirteen colonies who took up arms against the rebels, and thousands did. In 1783, after their defeat, the British forces evacuated more than 3,000 Blacks from the port of New York and resettled them in Nova Scotia. That was the first substantial Black population in Canada, and many of their descendents remain there. More than 13,000 Blacks live in Halifax and—unlike in the rest of Canada—more than 90 per cent are native-born. Other descendents emigrated from Nova Scotia to elsewhere in Canada or abroad.

In face of anti-Black racism, of course, all those of African origin in Canada—whether born in Halifax or Windsor; or in Kingston, Jamaica; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Accra, Ghana; or Dakar, Senegal; whether they speak French, English, or another language—come to recognize that they are simply considered Blacks in the eyes of bigots. The same is true of immigrants of African origin in the United Kingdom and continental Europe, as well as in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Nationality is a social and political question, a historical question, not a biological one. In Sudan, Sudanese may consider themselves Arab or African, Muslim or Christian. Some give priority to a tribal identification, while others consider themselves first and foremost to be Sudanese. In North America or Europe, however, regardless of their pigmentation, they are simply considered Black. This is not a science of the rainbow. It's the class reality of social and political life in the imperialist world order.

That's important. The fight against Black oppression, as the Communist International recognized more than eighty years ago, is a world question. But the common history of struggle that marks the Black nationality in the United States gives it a unique place in the revolutionary fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat in this country, and—because of the power of U.S. imperialism—in the worldwide struggle for socialism as well.

Radical Reconstruction

During the discussion, a comrade used a shorthand formulation that I've heard before: that the Black nationality in the United States “was forged by the defeat of Radical Reconstruction.”

That's not accurate.

If Radical Reconstruction *had not been defeated*, of

course, and if the fight for “forty acres and a mule” *had succeeded*, then it wasn’t foreordained that the freed slaves would have emerged as an oppressed nationality by the late 1800s. That’s true. They would have been part of a vast proletarian social movement of workers, free farmers, and former slaves.

But what forged the Black nationality in the United States was not what I indicated Farrell had accurately called “the worst setback” in the history of the U.S. working class! The Black nationality was forged not by a defeat but by the capacities, the vanguard class-struggle activity, and the social and political consciousness of the emancipated slaves. It was forged as they *used* their freedom to transform themselves from slaves into vanguard proletarian political actors, into broader makers of history.

The smashing of Radical Reconstruction was a bloody counterrevolution carried out by armed rightist gangs such as the Ku Klux Klan, Knights of the White Camelia, and others. Following adoption of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, federal troops were stationed throughout the South in order, among other things, to enforce the citizenship and voting rights of freed slaves under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.³⁰ By the mid-

30. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, guaranteed U.S. citizenship to the freed slaves. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, stated that: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” In response to struggles by Blacks and other working people since the end of World War II, the “due process” and “equal protection” clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment have been used as the basis by the courts and Congress for legislation and rulings protecting the civil rights of Blacks, immigrants, and women.

1870s these federal forces initially began being ordered not to intervene to defend elected Reconstruction state governments, and by 1877 the troops were withdrawn altogether.

That defeat not only closed the door to any further radical, popular extension of the American bourgeois revolution deepened by the Civil War and the elimination of slavery; it threw the gears into reverse for nearly a century.

Don't forget, we have always recognized the Civil War as the second American revolution. By the late 1800s, however, it was already too late in the United States for any additional successful advances of the bourgeois revolution. With the growth of capitalist monopolization and the rising dominance of finance capital, the United States emerged as an imperialist power by the closing years of the century. What is called in the United States the Spanish-American War was the world's first imperialist war. From that point forward, further advances in the struggle for Black rights—despite repeated defaults and betrayals by the class-collaborationist officialdom of the unions and misleaders of social democratic and Stalinist organizations—have been inextricably bound up with the line of march of the working class toward the conquest of power and establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

Record of accomplishments

Coming out of the Civil War, toilers who were Black fought to stop the reimposition of slavery-like contract gangs in the fields across the South. They fought for land. They waged battles during Radical Reconstruction for schools, for suffrage, for cheap credit and agricultural extension services, and other needs of the toilers as a whole. They

organized armed resistance to violent rightist assaults on the Reconstruction state governments.

Small farmers and wageworkers who were white became involved in these struggles too. The social conquests of the most advanced Reconstruction regimes, as in South Carolina, were extremely popular among toilers, whatever their skin color. Many working farmers and wageworkers in the mountains and elsewhere throughout the South had never supported slavery. They resisted the Confederacy during the Civil War, including sometimes by refusing conscription and payment of special taxes. After the war, they recognized they had never *had* local governments like many that arose during Reconstruction. They had never *had* governments that provided free public education, that helped them obtain low-interest loans, that set up agricultural schools and sent itinerant farming consultants into rural areas. All this was very popular.

After the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, Blacks waged countless skirmishes—during the 1880s and 1890s, and on into the twentieth century—against the imposition of Jim Crow segregation and racist terror across the South. They fought to hold onto their land. And they have been in the vanguard of all the proletarian-led social and political struggles of the twentieth century that we've pointed to.

This *record of struggle* is what forged the Black nationality. It was the product of a positive political conquest, not a great historic defeat. The Black nationality was carved out of these *accomplishments*, not out of its own *oppression*. It was a registration of consciousness of their political *worth*. We have to recognize both pieces of what happened. We need to understand the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, which laid the basis for the bloody imposition of Jim Crow

terror and segregation. But we must also see the struggles before, during, and since Radical Reconstruction that forged a nationality that has produced generation after generation of vanguard militants in social and political struggles in this country.

THE CAPITALIST RULERS try to hide the history of Radical Reconstruction, just as they try to hide the history of labor battles in this country. (And the publication of *Our History Is Still Being Written* should remind us of how they also hide the true story of the accomplishments and oppression of immigrant Chinese labor in this country.) Most of us were taught little more in school about Reconstruction than tales about the scandalous “scalawags” from the South and notorious “carpetbaggers” from the North. They want to hide the truth because it explodes every racist and anti-working-class notion about what Blacks can accomplish, about the potential of fighting alliances with toilers who are white, and much more.

For that falsification to begin to be undone on a broad scale, it took not only the rise of a mass proletarian movement led by Blacks, but also a book entitled *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.³¹ It was written by a historian born in the South named C. Vann Woodward and published in 1955—just as the mass civil rights struggles were getting under way in Montgomery, Alabama. That little book, in fact, was adopted by many civil rights militants and used by them to prove that social relations in the South after the Civil War had not always been as they became under Jim Crow segregation.

31. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, 2002).

Once you've read *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, then you're ready to go back and take on board W.E.B. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction*,³² with all its detailed descriptive power, as well as its "third period" Stalinist exaggerations, such as depicting the Reconstruction governments as the dictatorship of the proletariat. If you construe DuBois's phrase "Black Reconstruction" to mean "disproportionately Black-led Reconstruction," however, then the title of the book offers a largely accurate description of what actually unfolded.

Anyway, we need to be clear and precise when we talk about the forging of the Black nationality. We need to go back and read carefully what we've written about Radical Reconstruction in the *New Internationalist* and elsewhere. Because what toilers in this country, Black and white, accomplished during those years is one of the great pledges of what truly mass proletarian and popular movements can achieve when working people establish governments that act in the interests of the exploited and oppressed.

32. W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1935, 1998).

BLACK LIBERATION AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions

JACK BARNES

Toilers who are Black have been in the vanguard of mass social struggles from Abolitionism and Radical Reconstruction after the Civil War; to organizing battles of agricultural and industrial workers in the 1930s; through the fight for Black rights in the '50s and '60s. That fact tells us a great deal about the leadership workers who are Black will give to the class-struggle transformation of unions and formation of a labor party. And in building the kind of revolutionary party working people need to take power from the exploiters and establish a workers and farmers government in the U.S. \$24. Also in Spanish, French, and Swedish.



Malcolm X Speaks

Speeches from the last year of Malcolm X's life through which readers can follow the evolution of his views on racism, U.S. intervention in the Congo and Vietnam, capitalism, socialism, political action, and more. \$20. Also in Spanish.

Malcolm X Talks to Young People

“The young generation of whites, Blacks, browns, whatever else there is—you’re living at a time of revolution,” Malcolm told young people in the United Kingdom in December 1964. “And I for one will join in with anyone, I don’t care what color you are, as long as you want to change this miserable condition that exists on this earth.” Four talks and an interview given to young people in Ghana, the UK, and the United States in the last months of Malcolm’s life. \$15. Also in Spanish.



Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination

Drawing on the rich lessons of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, Trotsky explains why uncompromising opposition to racial discrimination and support for the right to national self-determination for Blacks are essential to unite the working class to make a socialist revolution in the United States. \$15

The First Ten Years of American Communism

Report of a Participant

JAMES P. CANNON

Among his many first-hand accounts, Cannon explains how the Communist International under Lenin’s leadership organized to win the young Communist Party in the U.S. to uncompromising support for struggles of the oppressed Black nationality—the only road to uniting workers of all skin colors “in a common revolutionary struggle against the present social system.” \$22

OTHER TITLES

The Last Year of Malcolm X: Evolution of a Revolutionary
George Breitman \$15

By Any Means Necessary
Malcolm X \$16

Independent Black Political Action: The Struggle to Break with the Democratic and Republican Parties \$8

February 1965: The Final Speeches
Malcolm X \$19

**THE STEWARDSHIP OF NATURE ALSO
FALLS TO THE WORKING CLASS**

IN DEFENSE OF LAND AND LABOR



ZOE HARE



DAVID R. METRAUX

“Under capitalist social relations, human hardship from natural occurrences falls in starkly different ways on different social classes. In New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, life or death, a home still habitable or forced diaspora—a few feet above or below sea level marked the class divide.”

New Orleans, three months after Hurricane Katrina hit. **TOP:** Garden District. **BOTTOM:** Lower Ninth Ward.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF NATURE ALSO FALLS TO THE WORKING CLASS

In Defense of Land and Labor

Statement of the Socialist Workers Party

LABOR'S TRANSFORMATION OF NATURE is the source of all wealth, all advances in social productivity, culture, and conservation. It is the very foundation for the ongoing existence of our species.

At the same time, from the earliest stages of class-divided society, the propertied classes have organized labor to advance their private gain. They have done so with no concern for the social consequences of their methods. The exploiters use labor as an expendable beast of burden, while they simultaneously deplete the soil, destroy forests through slash-and-burn or other farming methods, wipe out animal life through overhunting and overfishing, and

This statement was drafted by Jack Barnes, Steve Clark, and Mary-Alice Waters. It was discussed and adopted by delegates to the July 5–7, 2007, convention of the Socialist Workers Party held in Oberlin, Ohio, and subsequently discussed by a leadership conference of Communist Leagues from a number of countries. The statement has been edited for publication in light of those discussions. It is a companion piece to “Our Politics Start with the World,” which is featured in issue no. 13 of New International and referred to throughout this statement.

poison streams, ponds, and other bodies of water.

Thus, over the thousands of years since the rise of private property, the relationship between social labor and the natural environment has been marked by the mutually contradictory poles of transformation and destruction. It has been, and remains, a relationship determined by social contradictions, not by natural laws.

Since the rise of industrial capitalism in the mid-1700s, the productivity of social labor has increased at a quickening pace, and with the consolidation of the imperialist world order at the opening of the twentieth century, the degree of labor's alienation from nature and from its own fruits has become greater than ever before in history. The stakes for the earth's toilers in eradicating that separation by putting an end to the dictatorship of capital increase daily.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—which are developed and *used* by social labor—have established the knowledge and the means to lessen the burdens and dangers of work, to advance the quality of life, and to conserve and improve the earth's patrimony.

It is possible today to end once and for all the material, social, and political conditions that have ravaged the lives of countless generations of slaves, serfs, bonded labor of all varieties, peasants, and rural and urban workers and their families.

It is possible to end the treatment of toilers past their prime laboring years as used-up tools, whose demands for food, clothing, shelter, and health care are a regrettable deduction from profits.

It is possible to end the unsustainable *private* obligations imposed on individual families for the welfare of

the young, the elderly, the ill—all of which are *social* responsibilities that pay tribute to human solidarity.

It is possible to end deaths, maimings, and disease from overwork, hunger, and lack of sanitation.

It is possible to end the slaughter of untold hundreds of millions due to wars of conquest, enrichment, and domination by the ruling classes.

It is possible to end capital's ever-extending exploitation of nature and labor, with its devastating toll on the constantly growing numbers of working people in the semicolonial world who are being drawn into the capitalist mode of production.

Yet under capitalism—the last of the world's exploitative property systems—this liberating potential is turned into its opposite. So long as labor remains an inextricable component of the ruthlessly acquisitive, unplanned, and violent operations of the market system, increased productivity simultaneously reproduces *the social relations* of production specific to capitalism—social relations that perpetuate workers' own exploitation and oppression. As a result of the unceasing competition among capitalists to maximize profits, the product of labor's exertion ends up *worsening* the perils to workers' life and limb; *polluting* the soil, waters, and skies; and *endangering* civilization's very survival from the use of massive arsenals of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

Capitalism's oppressive social relations, at the same time that they become dominant over more and more of the globe, also further expand the propertied classes' unfettered appropriation and pollution of "the commons" enfolding the earth: its atmosphere. This is part of the price toilers continue to pay for the inevitably increasing world disorder of imperialism, marked by social breakdowns, financial crises, unrelenting inflation, contrac-

tions in the employment of land and labor, reduction of the social wage, spreading wars, constriction of democratic rights, and the growth of Bonapartist rightist and fascist forces.

The employers' ceaseless "productivity drive"—that is, speed-up, job combinations, and other "cost-cutting" measures—increasingly injures and kills working people in factories, mines, and fields across the United States and worldwide. In the imperialist countries of North America, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, the stepped-up export of capital and the never-ending search for new sources of lower-cost labor power to exploit at home and abroad are accompanied by racist, nationalist, and anti-immigrant campaigns carried out by currents inside and outside bourgeois parties and governments. At the same time, the capitalists' profit-fueled, deflation-driven manufacturing competition exacerbates conflicts among the dominant imperialist powers, degrades conditions of life and work for toilers in semicolonial countries, and hastens the despoiling of the earth's air, soil, rivers, lakes, and seas.

HUMAN HARDSHIP from natural occurrences, including calamitous "acts of god," falls in starkly different ways on different social classes under capitalism. The effects are ruinous for working people in city and countryside, striking with exceptional ferocity against the toilers of the oppressed nations of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The undersea earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean in late 2004 wrought devastation from flooding beyond the power of human beings to avert. But it wasn't the sea or the shifting of the earth's tectonic plates that were to blame for the deaths of more than 225,000 people.

That was not inevitable! It was the capitalists' production priorities together with the social conditions imposed on toilers living in coastal areas. With profit rates always at stake, accelerated exploitation comes before warning systems and evacuation paths.

It wasn't a heat wave in France that was responsible for 15,000 deaths—15,000!—most of them among the elderly, in August 2003. It was working people's housing conditions, poverty, inadequate emergency medical care, and the callous indifference of a government representing the propertied families, who were uninterested and unwilling to interrupt their annual vacation month.

It was the vast capitalist deforestation of Haiti and the toilers' miserable housing that accounted for the deaths of more than 2,500 people in 2004 and left thousands more homeless from mudslides and floods.

Nor do the spreading food riots in the opening months of 2008—from Indonesia to Pakistan and Egypt, from Haiti to numerous parts of sub-Saharan Africa—find their roots in calamities of nature. Not even the big-business media pretends the reason is primarily bad weather. With contemptible imperial arrogance, it claims that one of the main factors is that many more people in China and India are beginning to eat better!

But rising meat consumption is not why the world price of rice shot up nearly 150 percent in the twelve months between early 2007 and 2008. That's not why wheat prices nearly *quadrupled* since early 2006. That's not why the price of corn and soybeans both have *tripled* since 2006. The truth is that plentiful food—grains, meat, fruits, and vegetables—can be cultivated to provide nutritious and affordable meals for every human being on earth and many more, *if* agriculture, food processing, distribution, and trade were organized not on a profit basis, but by

the associated producers.

In early 2008, while hundreds of millions tried to survive on a daily handful of rice or corn, giant food commodities traders—through the Chicago Board of Trade and other major capitalist exchanges—were hoarding stocks of corn, wheat, and soybeans equal to *half the amount in all storage silos in the United States*, as well as enormous worldwide supplies of rice. Even in the United States itself—where the median daily calorie intake is a *multiple* of that in China, India, and most of Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean—major retail outlets such as Wal-Mart and Costco began limiting the purchase of rice per customer.

This is not precautionary hoarding to prepare for times of drought, flood, or famine. This is hoarding by finance capital to reap windfall profits off the toil and misery of billions of working people. At the same time, enormous superprofits have also been reaped by giant world grain and seed trusts owned by U.S. and other families: Monsanto's profits were up 108 percent from a year earlier in the first quarter of 2008; Cargill's by 86 percent; Archer Daniels Midland's by 42%; and Bunge's by 1,964 percent (yes, *twenty-fold*. That's not a typo!).

FINALLY, the social disaster that followed Hurricane Katrina in 2005—ravaging low-lying parts of New Orleans inhabited largely by working people, most of them Black, as well as elsewhere along the Gulf Coast—shined a spotlight worldwide on the “values” of U.S. imperialism's ruling families and the state that serves their class. The moneyed rulers had known for decades that flood levees would give way when a strong hurricane hit near the city, yet they refused to dip into the surplus value they wring

from the unpaid labor of working people in order to rebuild and reinforce the seawalls. Workers across the region, despite the acts of solidarity they displayed toward each other throughout the crisis, bore the deadly consequences of wretched housing; lack of emergency flood protection, transportation, and evacuation procedures; and longtime, morale-sapping cop corruption and brutality so endemic to life under the city fathers.

Despite the rulers' sentimental pretense of "rebuilding" New Orleans, toilers there continue to bear the brunt of capitalist greed and indifference to this day. Life or death, a home still habitable or forced diaspora—a few feet above or below sea level marked the class divide.

Long after the "Freedom Tower" replacing the World Trade Center has been completed, long after the concrete and steel skeletons from 9/11 are a distant memory, long after massive new rents are being collected across Lower Manhattan—New Orleans will still not have been "rebuilt."¹ Not under capitalism. Not ever again the city we knew.

The tideland called New Orleans shows the future "free enterprise" has in store for the toilers.

1. As this issue was prepared for press in the opening months of 2008—two-and-a-half years after the catastrophe—the population of New Orleans remained an estimated 35 percent below its level in July 2005; there were some 100,000 fewer jobs; entire neighborhoods still looked like moonscapes, with average rents nearly 50 percent higher than before the storm; nearly 15,000 families were still living in deteriorating federal emergency trailers; only 19 percent of pre-Katrina public buses were running; only three of seven general hospitals had reopened; almost 40 percent of public schools and 60 percent of pre-Katrina child care centers remained closed; and not a single building at the city's only Black public university had been restored.

In late 2006 a number of daily newspapers carried obituaries of a prominent U.S. geographer named Gilbert White. “Floods are ‘acts of god,’” White had written in 1942, “but flood losses are largely acts of man.” White’s studies documented the fact that throughout most of the world the poorest layers of the rural and urban populations live on or near flood plains, either to scrape out a living or because better-protected areas are reserved for the propertied classes.

“Instead of simply building dams, levees and other controls that can actually encourage development in vulnerable areas, society should reduce risks by steps like discouraging such development,” one of the news accounts said, paraphrasing White. It continued: “‘The basic problem is how to get people off the flood plain,’ he said. ‘And after all these years, here we are with Katrina.’”

“Perhaps we may envisage a new kind of army,” White had said in his 1942 article, a global “peace force, of young people recruited and trained under international direction for the task of building healthy and prosperous communities.”

A worthy proposal. One deserving of the response, paraphrasing Ernesto Che Guevara: *To have an army of revolutionary rebuilders, you must first make a revolution.*² To forge a “new kind of army” of “young people recruited and trained for the task of building healthy and prosperous communities,” working people must first have a

2. In August 1960 the Argentine-born leader of the Cuban Revolution, Ernesto Che Guevara, himself originally a physician, told a group of young medical students and health workers in Havana that “to be a revolutionary doctor . . . there must first be a revolution.” In *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* (Pathfinder, 2000), 2007, printing, p. 52.

revolutionary ethos, élan, discipline, and determination that is conquered only in the course of a successful fight for power. Without the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, for example, the mass campaign that marshaled the enthusiasm and capacities of more than 100,000 youth in 1961 and wiped out illiteracy in a single year, transforming that generation of young people in the process, would have been unimaginable.

So long as the extraction of surplus value in warlike competition for profits dictates the production and distribution of wealth, land will remain private property and rental housing for the toiling majority will be built where the propertied classes don't want to live. It will be constructed where workers can "afford" the rent, including often on flood plains.

Only the leadership of a workers and farmers government, conquered in revolutionary struggle, can lead working people to even *face* confronting the vast worldwide pathologies of capitalism, let alone bring to bear their creativity, energies, discipline, and solidarity to cure them.

Labor's transformation of nature

The capitalist system, and the propertied families who benefit from it in imperialist centers and semicolonial countries alike, will inevitably continue to ravage humanity and the planet we inhabit. It cannot be stopped without uprooting capitalism itself. Explaining this is part of preparing the working class and its vanguard to advance with determination along the historic line of march toward the dictatorship of the proletariat and the worldwide struggle for socialism. Workers must convince our toiling allies, young people attracted to the working-class struggle, and the vast majority of propertyless humanity to commit themselves without reservation to that line of march.

The modern communist workers movement, from its birth in the mid-nineteenth century, has recognized that the transformation of nature by social labor is the source of all material wealth and of the possibility for human progress. Every use-value—every item created to feed, clothe, shelter, educate, entertain, or meet other human needs—is the product of this ongoing relationship between land and labor. Labor alone “is not the only source of material wealth,” wrote Marx in 1867. “Labor is the father of material wealth, the earth is its mother.”³ Denial of this reality, he pointed out several years later, ends up falsely “ascribing *supernatural creative power* to labor.”⁴

All social production to meet human needs, all economic activity, from the very dawn of society, is built on this foundation. The *capitalist* mode of production dominant for the last few hundred years, however, takes on its own particular lawful historical forms and tempos, with ruinous consequences for the producers of wealth themselves. Under capitalism neither nature, tools, nor machinery; neither science, knowledge, nor technique add *directly* to the value created by workers and appropriated by the exploiting class. The store of value is increased only through the *transformation* of land and other natural resources by human labor, the *use* of tools and machines by workers, the toilers’ *application* of science, knowledge, and technology.

By incorporating the two primary sources of wealth—labor-power and land—Marx observed, “capital acquires a power of expansion that permits it to augment the ele-

3. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (1867) (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 134.

4. “Critique of the Gotha Programme” (1875) in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (hereafter MECW), vol. 24, p. 81.

ments of its accumulation beyond the limits apparently fixed by its own magnitude.”⁵ In fact, capital is *forced* to extend its reach over nature and labor by the cutthroat competition of the system itself and by the workers’ fierce resistance bred by this exploitation. In just a few hundred years, capitalism—initially germinated in a few parts of Europe—has employed that “power of expansion,” reinforced by military might, not only to engulf the vast majority of the earth but to contaminate its lands, seas, and atmosphere and to extend finance capital’s armed dominion into space.

THE EVER-INCREASING SPEED and ceaseless spread of means of communication more and more bind the toilers of the entire world to a single global market. Fishermen in remote seaside villages in India today use cell phones to seek out the best prices for their catch along coastal markets. Instead of reducing their labors, however, the pace and duration of their toil are increased, as they stretch out the day to sail to ports where they can get the highest return. Traditional barriers, which retard the formation of uniform prices and profit rates in many oppressed nations, are being dissolved by the universal acid of capital.

The toilers’ lives and livelihoods become more vulnerable to price swings, to the speedup of labor, to the extension of the workday. More vulnerable to the whipsaw of the capitalist business cycle and deadly consequences of sudden international banking and financial crises—seemingly so far away, having so little to do with working people’s lives.

5. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 752.

While revolutionary democrats, still in their mid-twenties, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were already seeking to understand the devastating consequences for humankind of the capitalists' ceaseless compulsion to shorten the turnover time of capital and intensify labor to that end. There inevitably comes a point in capitalist development, they wrote in 1846, when productive forces are brought into being that "are no longer productive but destructive forces."⁶

WRITING TWO YEARS EARLIER, the young Engels observed, "To make land an object of huckstering—the land which is our one and all, the first condition of our existence—was the last step towards making oneself an object of huckstering." And describing the conditions he witnessed in 1844 during a trip to Manchester—then "the second city of England" and "first manufacturing city of the world"—Engels noted "the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health. . . . Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*."⁷

In 1847 German workers in the secret European revolutionary society, the League of the Just, recruited Marx and Engels. The world's first modern revolutionary working-class organization, the Communist League, was soon founded, ending the League's conspiratorial

6. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (1846), in MECW, vol. 5, p. 52.

7. Frederick Engels, "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy" (1844), in MECW, vol. 3, p. 429. *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (1845) in MECW, vol. 4, pp. 354–55.

methods, openly proclaiming its existence and goals, and publicly soliciting new members in active support of those aims. By that time Marx and Engels had begun to place their uncompromising scrutiny of capitalism's irreformable evils on a scientific and materialist foundation, to present it practically from the point of view of advancing the historic trajectory of the working class toward the revolutionary conquest of political power.

"The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together," they wrote in 1848 in the Communist League's founding program, a document soon known to the world as the Communist Manifesto. "Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?"

And what earlier society could have had any inkling of capitalism's destructive results for land, limb, and the solidarity of social labor?

The Manifesto, in presenting ten initial measures of a workers government in capitalist countries—"the proletariat organized as the ruling class"—placed at the top of the list "abolition of property in land" (including the seas, waterways, atmosphere, and we can add the skies and space itself). The program called for "extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan," as well as the "combination of ag-

riculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.”⁸

Over the next several decades Marx and Engels, increasingly the central leaders of the revolutionary workers movement, repeatedly explained the indissoluble marriage of capitalism’s profit-driven exploitation of labor and of nature—in their correspondence, popular articles and speeches, political writings and critique of bourgeois political economy, and in resolutions of the International Working Men’s Association. Above all they put forward a program and strategy for the working class and its organizations, fighting along the road toward political power, to combat this plunder. The class-conscious vanguard of the workers movement, they explained, must get down in written form, and be guided by, the cumulative record of the lessons of struggles that yield steps forward against capital’s despoiling of nature and the indignities and numberless forms of exploitation that warp the lives of the working class.

Capitalism, Marx observed in 1867, advances the growth of humanity’s wealth only “by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.” Factories become the site of the “systematic robbery of what is necessary for the life of the worker while he is at work, i.e. space, light, air and protection against the dangerous or the unhealthy concomitants of the production process.” As for capitalist agriculture, he said, “as in urban industry, the increase in the produc-

8. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (1848) in MECW, vol. 6, pp. 489, 504, 505. Also available in an edition published by Pathfinder Press.

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AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Capitalism, Marx observed, advances the growth of humanity’s wealth only “by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.”

TOP: Gonaïves, Haiti, September 2004, after Tropical Storm Jeanne hit the island. More than a century of capitalist deforestation and soil erosion magnified mudslides and flooding, killing more than 2,500.

BOTTOM: Effects of imperialist exploitation can be seen in aerial photo of border between tree-barren Haiti (left) and forested Dominican Republic (right). **MIDDLE:** Twelve workers were killed in Jan. 2008 explosion at Imperial Sugar Co. mill in Port Wentworth, Ga. Capital, Marx wrote, “takes no account of the health and length of life of the worker.”

AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



GETTY IMAGES



“Grain shortages and soaring prices of 2008 aren’t caused by ‘calamities of nature.’ Hoarding by international commodities traders means finance capital reaps windfall profits off the toil and misery of billions of working people.”

TOP: Mahalla, Egypt, April 2008. Riot police attack demonstrators protesting rising prices and shortages of food. **BOTTOM:** Commodities traders bid up soybean prices in option pit at Chicago Board of Trade, March 2008. These prices had tripled since 2006.

tivity and the mobility of labor is purchased at the cost of laying waste and debilitating labor-power itself." Such advances are "a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil."⁹

CAPITAL, MARX WROTE, "takes no account of the health and the length of life of the worker, unless society forces it to do so"¹⁰—that is, forces it to do so through trade union struggles and, above all, independent working-class political action. Neither in England nor anywhere else, he said, has limitation of the working day ever "been settled except by *legislative interference*. Without the working men's continuous pressure from without, that interference would never have taken place. But at all events, the result was not to be attained by private settlement between the working men and the capitalists"—by what is today called collective bargaining between the employer and the workers or their union. "This very necessity of *general political action*," Marx emphasized, "affords the proof that in its merely economic action capital is the stronger side."¹¹

Labor, Marx explained, is "a process between man and nature." Human beings, ourselves "a force of nature," set in motion "arms, legs, head and hands," in order to transform nature. The worker "acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature."¹² (Since "changed men" are products of

9. *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 553, 638.

10. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 381.

11. Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit* (1865), in MECW, vol. 20, p. 146.

12. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 283.

changed circumstances, Marx had written twenty years earlier, and since “it is men who change [those] circumstances,” it follows “that the educator must himself be educated.”¹³)

Under capitalism, Marx pointed out, labor—a *social relation among human beings* that, through our transformation of nature, creates all value—takes on the appearance of a *relation among things*, a monetary relation among commodities—objects that are bought and sold on the market. This is what Marx referred to as the fetishism of commodities and capital.¹⁴

In fact, the act of labor itself is commodified under capitalism: in order to survive, workers must sell our ability to do productive work—our power to labor—to a boss or middleman on the “labor market,” in return for a wage. Instead of applying labor to transform nature in order *to produce useful goods to meet social needs* of the population, the propertied families and rent collectors consume labor power and raw materials to turn out goods in order *to buy and sell commodities at a profit* for themselves. The fact that these products, to one degree or another, meet a social need is relevant to the employing class only to the extent

13. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach” (1845), in MECW, vol. 5, p. 7.

14. “The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists . . . simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves. . . . It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. . . . I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.” (*Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 163–65).

it allows these goods to be marketed for monetary gain. Marx points out that capitalism—the production and reproduction of social relations that require wage-labor’s exploitation and oppression—*creates* and *shapes* what are then seen as “social needs.”¹⁵

Capital’s ‘unforeseen effects’

The unintended, uncontrolled, and unforeseen consequences inherent in production for private profit were underlined by Engels in his 1876 draft article, “The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man.” In this concise summary of the inextricable interconnection of nature and labor, Engels wrote:

[T]he animal merely *uses* external nature, and brings about changes in it simply by its presence; man by his changes makes nature serve his ends, *masters* it. This is the final, essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it

15. Marx writes that “once the satisfaction of a certain sphere of needs has been assured *new needs* are set free, created. Therefore when capital pushes labour time beyond the level set for the satisfaction of the worker’s natural needs, it impels a greater division of social labour—the labour of society as a whole—a greater diversity of production, an extension of the sphere of social needs and the means for their satisfaction, and therefore also impels the development of human productive capacity and thereby the activation of human dispositions in fresh directions.” In Karl Marx, *Economic Manuscript of 1861–63*, in MECW, vol. 30, p. 199.

This is the source of the myriad forms of advertising and promotion that inundate our lives under capitalism. Their development is unstoppable as long as capitalist relations of production are dominant. The accelerated proliferation of advertising is as much a necessity of the capitalist mode of production as any of the other results of the law of labor value.

is labor that brings about this distinction.

Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory it takes its revenge on us. Each of them, it is true, in the first place brings about the results that we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. . . .

What cared the Spanish planters in Cuba, who burned down forests on the slopes of the mountains and obtained from the ashes sufficient fertilizer for one generation of highly profitable coffee trees—what cared they that the heavy tropical rainfall afterwards washed away the now-unprotected upper stratum of the soil, leaving behind only bare rock! In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the first, the most tangible result; and then surprise is even expressed that the more remote effects of actions directed to this end turn out to be of quite a different, mainly even of quite an opposite, character.¹⁶

As in all of Marx and Engels's writings and activity, this article did more than analyze the relationship between land, labor, and capital. The *point*, Engels wrote, was to *change* those relations:

Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over

16. Printed as an appendix to Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) (Pathfinder, 1972), 2007 printing, pp. 235, 238–39. “The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man” is also available in MECW, vol. 25, pp. 452–64.

a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood, and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to know and correctly apply its laws. . . .

[B]y long and often cruel experience and by collecting and analyzing the historical material, we are gradually learning to get a clear view of the indirect, more remote social effects of our productive activity, and so the possibility is afforded us of controlling and regulating these effects as well.

However, to effectuate this regulation requires something more than mere knowledge. It requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and with it of our whole contemporary social order.¹⁷

In an 1856 speech to a banquet in London celebrating the fourth anniversary of *The People's Paper*, a working-class newsweekly, Marx noted that despite “industrial and scientific forces, which no epoch of the former human history had ever suspected,” with the rise of capitalist social relations “everything seems pregnant with its contrary.”

Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labor, we behold starving and overworking [human labor]. The new-fangled sources of wealth, by some strange weird spell, are turned into sources of want. . . . At the same pace that mankind masters nature,

17. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, pp. 236, 237.

man seems to become enslaved to other men or to his own infamy. Even the pure light of science seems unable to shine but on the dark background of ignorance. All our invention and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other hand; this antagonism between the productive powers and the social relations of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted.

Some parties may wail over it; others may wish to get rid of modern arts, in order to get rid of modern conflicts. . . .

On our part, we do not mistake the shape of the shrewd spirit that continues to mark all these contradictions. We know that to work well the new-fangled forces of society, they only want to be mastered by new-fangled men—and such are the working men. They are as much the invention of modern time as machinery itself. . . . They will then, certainly not be the last in aiding the social revolution produced by that industry, a revolution, which means the emancipation of their own class all over the world . . .¹⁸

Our politics start with the world

A century and a half later, those “new-fangled” men and women—the international working class, whose ranks and social weight are growing on every continent and in every country—remain the only social force capable of

18. Karl Marx, “Speech at the Anniversary of *The People’s Paper*” (1856) in MECW, vol. 14, pp. 655–66.

resolving the crises produced by capitalism. Organizing to achieve its emancipation “all over the world” offers the only road forward to those determined to combat capitalism’s degradation of nature and labor.

“Workers of all countries, unite!”—putting flesh on that call is possible only as the economic, social, and cultural conditions of toilers increasingly converge. Billions of human beings the world over remain condemned by imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation to live with woefully insufficient food, electrification, drinkable water, sanitation, shelter and clothing, transportation, and schooling, as well as denial of readily available means to prevent and cure communicable diseases. As emphasized in “Our Politics Start with the World,” a report by Jack Barnes adopted by the Socialist Workers Party’s 2001 convention, V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party he led understood ninety years ago that international political solidarity and collaboration could be advanced only

if more and more working people across the globe were taking an active part in social and political life, and could thus recognize toilers engaged in such social activity elsewhere as their brothers and sisters, not simply see them as “the other”. . . . At the opening of the twenty-first century, these questions, and others like them, remain at the center of building proletarian parties and a world communist movement. They remain central to the possibilities for concrete political collaboration and joint activity by working people in the battle for national liberation and socialism. . . .

Marxists start from the historically demonstrated capacity of human beings to transform nature, to raise the productivity of social labor, and to

advance the accessibility of civilization and culture to more and more of the world's toilers.¹⁹

How social labor is organized to transform nature—to whose benefit, to what social and economic ends—depends on the class relations of production. It depends on which class rules, which class holds state power. A 1993 talk by Jack Barnes published in *Capitalism's World Disorder* addressed this fundamental point. “Environmental pollution is a social question, a class question,” Barnes observed.

Workers must not fall into accepting the common view—that is, the bourgeois view—that the environment . . . is a “scientific” question, a “natural” question, that somehow hovers above classes and outside the class struggle. That is how many middle-class opponents of nuclear energy, and of nuclear weapons, for example, often present those questions. Many who call themselves environmentalists say the problem is “consumerism,” or industrial development per se. But the workers movement has to explain the source of ecological destruction and why the answer lies along the revolutionary line of march of the working class. . . .

The working class must also reject all forms of fake science, exaggerations, catastrophism, and crankism. There is a decades-long record of such frenzied prophecies—the impending exhaustion of fossil fuels and other natural resources, the “limits

19. Jack Barnes, “Our Politics Start with the World,” in *New International* no. 13 (2005), pp. 18–19, 34–35.

to growth,” and so on. These originate in sections of the bourgeoisie and are then picked up and propagated by petty-bourgeois reformers. They feed into the conspiracy nostrums that are floated in the working class and labor movement, taking workers’ eyes off the true source of such social ills: the capitalists and their profit system. . . .

[I]f we translate everything commonly thought of as an environmental issue into how to advance the protection of the working class, and how the working class can extend that protection to all, then we can hardly ever go wrong. With that approach, we will increase the possibilities for concrete solidarity in fighting against ecological abuses and outrages.

The labor movement should expose the differential effects of pollution on the working class, including the even more devastating consequences for sections of the working class that are the poorest and most vulnerable, as well as those that are Black, Latino, or foreign born. . . . The workers movement must take the lead in actively exposing the destruction and dangers produced by capitalism and in organizing opposition to them.

This communist course, Barnes concludes, enables us to explain how “the sources of all wealth—land and labor—are increasingly the victims of the domination of capital. And, most importantly, why the working-class-led struggle for a socialist revolution opens a way forward on this front as well.”²⁰

20. Jack Barnes, *Capitalism’s World Disorder* (Pathfinder, 1999), 2004 printing, pp. 298–302.

As Cuban Gen. Armando Choy concludes in *Our History Is Still Being Written*, “Yes, a better world is possible. But only with a socialist revolution.”²¹

Capital’s laws, bourgeois panic-mongering, proletarian insecurity

In the mid-nineteenth century some 85 percent of energy for human use was produced by burning wood, charcoal, and crop residue. Today some 85 percent of energy supplies comes from fossil fuels—primarily coal, oil, and natural gas. The production and use of these resources in pursuit of profits has always been detrimental not only to the health of the workers involved but simultaneously to the natural environment in which we live and labor.

A transition to other energy sources can and will be neither smooth nor rapid. The dog-eat-dog laws of rival capitals ensure that every “energy policy” implemented by corporations and bourgeois governments will serve the interests of maintaining capitalist rule—not the economic, social, and cultural needs of the earth’s population, nor the health and safety of the workers involved. Communists oppose anti-working-class “solutions” promoted by big business and various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois reformers. We expose and counter their reactionary notion, for instance, that “too large” a population of toilers—as well as too much consumption and too high living standards for many of them—is a threat to a “livable” world.

The capitalist rulers warn workers and farmers throughout the semicolonial world that they must forego the level

21. Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, *Our History Is Still Being Written* (Pathfinder, 2005), p. 166.

of economic development and living standards existing in the imperialist countries—development achieved in no small part by superexploiting the toilers and plundering the resources of these very same oppressed peoples. “The ecological consequences are unsustainable!” impatient toilers are scolded. This is another of finance capital’s smokescreens masking the reasons for the widening gap in economic, social, and cultural conditions between earth’s great toiling majority, on the one hand, and, on the other, the bourgeoisie and professional middle classes in the imperialist centers and in the more economically advanced semicolonial countries.

In the United States and other imperialist countries, politicians and other bourgeois voices tell working people “we” must tighten “our” belts in order to stem environmental destruction. They tell us “we” must accept higher prices for fuel and other necessities, including regressive “carbon taxes” on gasoline, home heating oil, and commercial travel. “We” must recycle, turn off the lights, lower the thermostat, go without air conditioning, ride a bike, change our showerhead, join a carpool, flush the toilet less, plant a tree.

But there is no “we” that embraces both working people and those who grow wealthy off the exploitation of our labor: the ruling families and their rentier tagalongs among the middle class and professionals. Such “solutions” not only inaccurately place the blame on individuals and families and promote the sale of “green” and “organic” products and services at premium prices. Above all, they are part of the drive by the capitalist rulers to boost their profit rates at the expense of the working conditions, wages, living conditions, trade union solidarity, and genuine social security of workers and farmers, all of which have been under relentless assault since the mid-1970s.

Apologists for capitalism often point with satisfaction to rising life expectancy in the United States and other countries. What they conveniently ignore is the intensification of labor and stretching out of work time that squeeze and drain life for more years from ever-larger layers of the working class. Annual hours of work are rising, not falling, for workers in the United States. Four out of ten workers in private industry now have no paid sick days and one-quarter no paid vacation, including the vast majority of low-wage workers. Less than half the U.S. workforce is covered by employer-provided pensions, while Washington and capitalist politicians have pushed up from 65 to 67 the Social Security “retirement age,” the age before which you cannot receive the full benefits due you. And they will push it up further and further.

IN THE ABSENCE of any government-funded national health care system in the United States, coverage by employer-provided health insurance has plunged from nearly 70 percent in 1979 to just over half the workforce today. Inflation-adjusted pay for a majority of workers has been stagnant or falling for more than three decades, while actual money wages are dropping for tens of millions. Meanwhile, the yoke of debt and interest payments carried by working-class families—on cars, credit cards, furniture, homes, college loans, medical bills—is both larger and more onerous than ever before.

In the name of unleashing “market forces” to save the planet, growing sectors of finance capital are competing to boost profits at the expense of rivals at home and abroad. The bourgeoisie’s exalted economists are fond of calling this process “creative destruction,” but its out-

come is far less creative than destructive for the toiling classes (if not for the income of “economists”).

There is an expanding—and lucrative—global exchange in “carbon credits,” “carbon futures,” “carbon swaps,” “weather derivatives,” and other forms of “green” fictitious capital. The rapidly expanding global market in carbon credits alone is estimated to have reached more than \$40 billion in 2007, quadruple the level just two years earlier.²² “Cap and trade” schemes are the heart of the United Nations’ sham Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. Its defenders themselves acknowledge that even if adhered to in full for the coming century, that treaty would postpone their projected global warming by only a few years. In reality, the pact is honored in its breach both by its imperialist signatories across Europe and in Japan, and by its imperialist boycotters in the United States, Australia, and since 2007 Canada. In 2006, for example, press accounts revealed that emissions caps for most European Union states had been set so high that capitalists in those countries were peddling “excess” carbon credits

22. The Ohio-based American Electric Power Co. (AEP)—which burns more coal and spews more CO₂ than any other company in the United States—has found a cheap way to “earn” its “carbon credits.” Instead of investing in new coal plant technology, AEP, at a fraction of the cost, is paying to put plastic tarps over pools of rotting cow manure in the United States! Decomposing manure produces methane, a greenhouse gas. The methane will then be burned, emitting less potent carbon dioxide. Owners of the giant utility expect to earn credits for some 0.6 million of the 145 million metric tons of CO₂ their power plants discharge each year. “In the new math of the ‘carbon market,’” says the *Wall Street Journal*, “that emission reduction will translate into a wad of currency.” Prepare for what is logically the next “carbon credit” scheme—bovine fart futures!

at a sweet return on world capital markets.

Capital even rakes it in as companies peddle “carbon offsets” to guilt-ridden “consumers,” supposedly to counteract their gasoline, heating oil, and electricity “footprints” dollar for dollar: commercial confessors offering modern-day indulgences to middle-class SUV owners and frequent flyers!

Meanwhile, finance capital continues to reap super-profits from the sale of coal, oil, and natural gas, while opening lucrative new “green” markets in wind power, solar power, carbon sequestration, “hybrid” vehicles, “clean coal,” and—increasingly once again—uranium mining and nuclear power. General Electric, Conoco-Phillips, Alstom, Duke Energy, General Motors, Exelon, Alcan, PepsiCo, Archer Daniels Midland, British Petroleum, DuPont, PNM Resources, Royal Dutch Shell, PG&E, Dow Chemical, Siemens, Caterpillar, Rio Tinto Mining—these are just a few of the front-runners in the rush to profit from “green” initiatives.²³ Among the victims of the capitalists’ “productivity drive” to capture a growing share of elevated fuel prices are workers killed, maimed, and sickened in mines, factories, and other workplaces not only in the United States but in *every* country of the world except Cuba.

Nor is ethanol a solution. (Leave aside that neither its combustion nor its production contribute anything mean-

23. Before its demise in 2001, Enron was a leading campaigner for the Kyoto Treaty, saying in one internal memo that the pact “would do more to promote Enron’s business than will almost any other regulatory initiative.” In 1998, when the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established its annual Climate Protection Award, Enron was among the nineteen initial winners.

ingful to reducing greenhouse gases.) Cuban president Fidel Castro could not be more correct in condemning the diversion of corn and other food crops into fuel production, pointing to the destructive consequences for working people the world over. So long as finance capital dominates world markets, however, what farmers plant and harvest will be determined by which commodities fetch the highest price and largest returns. As throughout the history of capitalism, compounded many times over in the oppressed nations, wealthy farmers and international capital devote growing acreage to profitable “export crops” or “cash crops” at the expense of producing food and fiber needed by working people—and at the expense of the fertility of the soil, the quality of the air and water, the hygienic production and processing of nutritious food, and the health and safety conditions of farm labor.

IN THE UNITED STATES, as a growing percentage of the corn crop goes into ethanol production (up from 11 percent in 2004, to an estimated one-third in 2007, and still rising), corn prices have tripled over the past two years from roughly \$2 a bushel (which they’ve averaged for several decades) to more than \$6 a bushel in early 2008. As noted earlier, owners of giant “agribusiness” monopolies such as Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill exploit this situation to jack up grain prices and fatten their coffers; they then deceptively point the finger of blame at farmers for the sharp increase in food prices. Corn prices won’t simply go up and up and up, however. As increasing acreage is planted with corn in the United States and elsewhere, at some point the corn market mania will burst and prices fall, sending many thousands more working

farmers to ruin in the United States, Mexico, and the world over.

Under the banner of protecting the environment and reducing greenhouse gases, bourgeois proponents of “organic farming” argue that nitrogen fertilizers are produced using natural gas, a fossil fuel, and should therefore not be used. But the crisis for humanity in much of the world, above all sub-Saharan Africa, is depleted soil and declining crop yields as a result of the *lack* of nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorous fertilizers. In Africa south of the Sahel desert region, where impoverished farmers cannot afford costly inputs, fertilizer use is less than 10 percent of the world average, and some 75 percent of farmland is severely degraded, lacking nutrients essential for crop production. Grain yields average one-third the world average.²⁴ From the standpoint of CO₂ absorption, it’s worth noting, clear-cutting by desperate farmers seeking fuel and richer soil to till simply adds to the massive destruction of the world’s forests being driven to new lengths by Weyerhaeuser, International Paper, Georgia-Pacific, and other giant lumber trusts—from North America to Europe, China, and beyond.

Communists reject the fraud that presents as “fact”

24. Farmers in the southern African country of Malawi nearly tripled their production of corn in 2006 and 2007 after the government there rejected longstanding pressure from the U.S. and British governments and the World Bank to eliminate subsidies for the purchase of nitrogen fertilizer and high-yield seeds. After restoring subsidies (peasants were entitled to buy two bags of fertilizer and three kilos of seed), the harvest increased to 3.4 million metric tons by 2007 from 1.2 million in 2005—not only reducing hunger in Malawi but enabling hundreds of thousands of tons to be exported to meet food needs in other African countries.

that chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, or genetically modified grains and other crops, in and of themselves, are inimical to human welfare and social progress. Such claims are based not on scientific evidence but on the bourgeois ideology and prejudices of middle-class liberal and radical reformers. To cite Marx's words, proletarian revolutionists are not among those who "wail over" or "wish to get rid of modern arts, in order to get rid of modern conflicts."

NOR DO WE PANDER to the ecological panic-mongering of bourgeois "environmentalists" or the Stalinist, social democratic, and centrist organizations in the working-class movement that adapt to the demagoguery of the liberal capitalist politicians in whom they rest their hopes: "The polar ice cap is disappearing! The Gulf Stream will stop and Europe will freeze over! Rising sea levels will displace billions! Mass extinctions will wipe out flora and fauna!"

It's important to recall that in the 1960s broad currents of bourgeois opinion and its handmaidens among the "scientific" establishment, lent credence to "population bomb" alarms by these same circles that starvation would reduce the United States to 23 million people by the millennium—by the year 2000!—and that odds were good "that England will not exist in the year 2000."²⁵ And in the 1970s the influential bourgeois Club of Rome, in its report *The Limits to Growth*, used "computer models" to warn that if consumption trends continued, the earth

25. Paul Ehrlich, "Eco-Catastrophe," in *Ramparts*, September 1969; Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 27.

would run out of mercury by 1985, zinc by 1990, and copper, lead, and natural gas by 1993—never mind the millennium!

**‘Green’ is no alternative
to a revolutionary working-class program**

Since the rise of the world capitalist order, humanity has faced—and increasingly continues to face—questions of life or death in stemming capital’s accelerated destruction of labor and nature and its effects on hundreds of millions of toilers. The stakes for the world’s working people are enormous. Grave and growing dangers to life on earth are posed by the existence of massive conventional and strategic weapons arsenals, and by the inevitability of nuclear arms proliferation on a scale completely new since Washington’s heinous 1945 incineration of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

But “green-red” politics, as a number of middle-class currents in the workers movement describe their program and activity today, is not a proletarian course. “Green” politics and “environmentalism,” like “peace” politics and “pacifism,” are expressions of *bourgeois* politics. They lead toward class-collaborationism. They lead away from the fight for independent working-class political action and the conquest of power by workers and farmers—the only road to peace and to the effective defense of labor and the earth’s land, waters, and atmosphere. Concrete gains for working people can and will be won as by-products along that road of revolutionary struggle.

Bourgeois hysteria campaigns—“catastrophism”—are both endemic to and necessary for the maintenance of capitalist social relations, all the more so as economic and social crises mount. Since the rulers can offer neither scientific explanations nor lasting solutions to the

horrors and brutalities their system spawns, they foster suprarational and supernatural explanations in order to steer working people into believing these devastating social phenomena are inexplicable. The propertied ruling families try to prevent us from recognizing the actual source of these threats to civilization: the capitalist mode of production, the world imperialist order, and the enormous wealth and power the rulers wring from nature and the exploited producers. Their aim is to instill fear and paralysis among working people and insecure layers of the middle classes, the better to rationalize inequitable “sacrifices” needed by the employers to increase their accumulation of capital and boost their profit rates. The better to whip up nationalist sentiment for trade wars, scapegoating of racial and national minorities, anti-immigrant and “English-only” bigotry, and eventually bloody pogroms. The better to promote patriotic support for increasing militarization, tendencies toward Bonapartism, and bloody imperialist wars.

Through such efforts the rulers aim to promote fear and quiescence. They aim to encourage feelings of isolation and dependency. They seek to undermine the recognition that we are part of a powerful worldwide class and to sap the strength and solidarity flowing from the confidence that we have worth. Such apprehensions and panic are rooted in exactly the same social relations that provide fertile ground for the “conspiracy” demagoguery used by the Stalinists, social democrats, and other petty-bourgeois radicals to cover up and divert attention from the disastrous results of their own counterrevolutionary misleadership of the working class and oppressed. The specter of “plots” by the Nazis, “plots” by the Mikado, “plots” by the Jews, “plots” by the Trotskyites, “plots” by the CIA has been combined repeatedly with slanders,

frame-ups, amalgams, and assassinations of revolutionaries to explain away many inconvenient facts. That is the true paternity of the “9/11 truth brigades” and other conspiracy buffs today, however unconscious some of the offspring may be of that parentage. And their ranks overlap and converge with the braying catastrophists of ecological doom as well as libertarian and nationalist “antiwar” rightists.

Political disorientation and demoralization have not been the only costs to working people of exaggerations, half-truths, and outright lies parading as “science.” In the early 1970s, for example, a ban was won in the United States and other imperialist countries on the use of DDT as an agricultural pesticide; it had been killing substantial numbers of birds. This successful campaign was warped and twisted by bourgeois and middle-class environmentalists into an international crusade to bar DDT’s use even in small quantities as an indoor spray to kill mosquitoes that spread malaria. Some one million people die from malaria each year, 80 percent of them children (three children every two minutes), and the disease has recently been shown to increase the virulence of the HIV virus among those suffering from AIDS in Africa and elsewhere. Yet, as a result of decades of scaremongering, it was not until late 2006—after thirty-five years of untold numbers of victims—that the UN-sponsored World Health Organization finally lifted its total ban, belatedly acknowledging that DDT is the most effective antimalarial insecticide for indoor use (until equally potent and environmentally safer means of eradication are developed and proven effective). After the reintroduction of DDT spraying in South Africa following a four-year ban, for example, there was an 80 percent drop in the incidence of malaria—80 percent!

Capital's debasing of the means of production into simultaneous means of destruction is not the product of technology, synthetic chemicals, or bioengineering. It is the product of the drive by the exploiting classes and their armies, cops, and courts to defend, extend, and increase the accumulation of capital and reproduction of capitalist social relations to maintain their own class rule. It is only by *resolving* the "modern conflict" between capital and labor—leading the toilers to the conquest of power and the establishment of workers and farmers governments—that the creative and productive potential of humanity's transformation of nature will be set free, enabling us to control the avoidable dangers that such transformation entails.

What is to be done?

Communists understand that all politics, including working-class politics, is conducted in historical time: months, years, decades, and centuries. Not in the tens of thousands and millions of years of geological time, over which nature fluctuates in patterns beyond human command.

Much of the northern hemisphere wasn't livable for human beings until the retreat of the glaciers only 11,500 years ago. Less than a millennia ago several thousand Norse colonists cultivated crops and bred livestock in Greenland, before their settlements were slowly made uninhabitable by advancing glaciers and freezing temperatures with the onset of what's often called the "Little Ice Age" from 1300 to the mid-1800s. Since then the tendency has been one of warming in the Northern Hemisphere, a trend that continues to this day.

The geological, solar, and other natural factors responsible for long-term climate change—including the

earth's orbit, tilt, and wobble, variations in irradiance of the sun, tectonic shifts, volcanic activity—will continue independent of human intervention. In the course of geological time the glaciers will advance and retreat, again and again and again. What's of pressing concern to the working-class movement are those social and political factors that conscious planning and human activity *can* and *do* affect, including preparations to minimize the human consequences of natural catastrophes. *What is to be done?*

Despite efforts to persuade us otherwise by the employing class and the government and political parties of the bourgeoisie (to whom the union officialdom tethers itself), job safety, consumer protection, and environmental protection are inextricably tied together. The fight in the mines, factories, fields, and other workplaces to protect life and limb of the working classes and broader public is the germ of struggles for workers control of industry and for independent working-class political action. It is the germ of advances in labor solidarity leading the way toward a workers and farmers government and a giant leap in human solidarity.

The bosses try to convince us that we should not be in favor of rigorous regulation and enforcement of consumer and environmental protections because they decrease the “competitiveness” of “our” industries and “our” companies and cost workers jobs. The bourgeois figures and professionals who lead established consumer and environmental groups reinforce the prejudice that these are “middle-class” issues by placing much of the blame for abuses on the working class—both what we do on the job, and what we buy at the gas pump or cash register. But the bourgeois politics of NIMBY—“not in my backyard”—channels the wastes of industrial and



TAMAR ROSENFELD / MILITANT

“Job safety and consumer and environmental protection are inextricably tied together. The fight in the mines, factories, and fields to protect life and limb of the working classes and public is the germ of struggles for workers control of industry.”

TOP: New York City, April 2008. Mass held at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in memory of 26 construction workers killed in accidents. Deaths in the first three months of 2008 were more than the total for all of 2007.

BOTTOM: Striking coal miners fired from Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, return to work, July 2004, after company was forced to rehire them. The strike and union organizing drive began in response to firing of a worker who took action to enforce safety regulations underground.



IFAD



ALAMY IMAGES / STEVE MORGAN

“Bourgeois ‘organic farming’ ideologues oppose use of nitrogen fertilizers on grounds they harm the environment. But the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa, where crop yields are one-third of world average, flows from the fact that farmers can’t afford nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorous fertilizers to reverse soil depletion.”

TOP: Women gathering firewood for fuel in northwest Somalia, where class relations and legacy of colonialism accelerate deforestation and soil erosion. **BOTTOM:** Peasant woman in Malawi with fertilizer and seed. Rejecting pressure from World Bank and imperialist powers to eliminate farm subsidies, the Malawi government made available two bags of fertilizer and three kilos of seed to each producer. Farmers tripled corn output in 2006 and 2007.

agricultural production into the skies, streams, rivers, and soil where workers, farmers, Blacks, immigrants, and other exploited and oppressed layers of the productive population live.

OUR FIGHT FOR SAFETY on the job is inseparable from social and political struggles by vanguard workers and the union movement to combat the exploiters' contamination of the food we eat, shoddy and dangerous manufacture of goods we need, and fouling of the earth, waters, and skies. Through organizing to impose workers control over the industries where we create wealth expropriated from us by the ruling capitalist families, we can fight not only for our unions to exercise veto power over safety, health, and the pace of work on the job. We can simultaneously demand that employers open their books, so working people can lift the veil from the "business secrets" behind which capital covers up its profiteering and its outrages against labor and nature.

"If we translate everything commonly thought of as an environmental issue into how to advance the protection of the working class, and how the working class can extend that protection to all," to recall the guideline cited earlier, "then we can hardly ever go wrong."²⁶

The proletariat is an international class; our oppressed and exploited allies span the continents. Thus, protection of the working class and extension of that protection to all start with the world. Not only has any narrowing of the gap in life expectancy between the imperialist countries and the rest of the world largely ground to a halt since 1990, but the gap has widened to a chasm for many of the

26. Barnes, *Capitalism's World Disorder*, p. 301.

poorest countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

The workings of the capitalist system worldwide deny the most basic human needs to billions: lack of immunization results in up to 3 million childhood deaths each year; 40 percent of the earth's population subsist on less than \$2 a day; the same percentage has no access to modern sanitation, and more than 15 percent no source of drinkable water; nearly a billion, by "official" United Nations figures, are malnourished. At least one-third of humanity have no access to such elementary (and inexpensive) nutrients as iodized salt, vital to mental development in children, while a condition as simple to prevent and remedy as diarrhea remains among the two leading causes of child deaths worldwide and kills several million of all ages each year. Meanwhile the Bush administration boasts of the billions Washington is spending on world AIDS programs, with many Democrats grandstanding for even more—while the White House and Congress under both imperialist parties boost the profits of giant pharmaceutical companies by requiring that no funding go to the purchase of generic anti-HIV drugs.

These are among the reasons the Socialist Workers Party, in our campaigning and ongoing propaganda, demands: Eliminate all tariffs on products coming into the United States. Cancel the foreign debt of semicolonial countries. Support the efforts of the nations oppressed by imperialism to acquire and develop the energy sources necessary to expand electrification—a prerequisite for economic and social advances. Oppose the drive by Washington and its imperialist allies to prevent those nations from developing nuclear power and other sources of energy needed to bring much of humanity out of darkness.

As we explain in "Our Politics Start with the World":

“Given the unmet energy needs of billions across the globe, especially in semicolonial countries; the rising extraction and refining costs of the world’s oil resources; and accumulating and accelerating damage to the earth’s atmosphere from the burning of oil, coal, and other fossil fuels, nuclear reactors *will* be used to generate a growing percentage of the world’s electrical power in the twenty-first century. That’s for sure, and necessarily so.”

AT THE SAME TIME, the convention report emphasizes that, “Since the mid-1970s, the Socialist Workers Party has opposed the production and use of nuclear power in the United States. We’ve held this position because the owners of capital and their government are incapable, by the laws that drive their system, of placing human beings above profits in addressing the questions posed by the operation of nuclear power plants: the design and operation of nuclear reactor cores to prevent meltdowns, the manufacture and redundancy of secure containment vessels, and the disposal of radioactive and other toxic waste products.”

Barnes explains that the “competition of capitals, the drive to maximize profits, spurs technological innovation under capitalism and will continue to do so for so long as this social system exists.” But “these same laws of capital accumulation press the employing class to subordinate (and often suppress) scientific and technological developments that would benefit competitors—and the producers—in order to maximize individual profits. In the process, capitalists display wanton disregard for the health and safety of workers and for the broader population. Nor do they care one whit about the long-term or short-term consequences for the natural environment.”

For that reason, the report says, the pressing political question confronting the working class and our toiling allies “is how long will the design and construction of containment vessels, the monitoring of reactor operations, and disposal of atomic waste products—with all the consequences for public health and safety—be carried out by governments beholden to the imperialist ruling families and other capitalist exploiters. How long before these vital matters, including the eventual transition away from nuclear power toward other, safer energy sources yet to be developed, will be organized by workers and farmers governments acting in the interests of the great majority of humanity. The stakes in the resolution of that question—an outcome that will be settled in historic class battles—could not be clearer.”²⁷

As part of our broader program and strategy, communist workers, in order to defend the toiling population, advance immediate demands on the capitalist government and big business. These include demands particularly targeted at the combined defense of nature and labor:

- The working class must break from the twin parties of capital—the Democrats and Republicans—and build a party of labor based on a fighting union movement, a labor party that speaks and *acts* in the interests of working people here and abroad. Given the evolution of the capitalist world order at the opening of the twenty-first century, labor more than ever must act on Marx’s guidance almost 150 years ago that we need to take “*general political action* [because] in its merely economic action capital is the stronger side.”²⁸ Every fundamental economic and so-

27. Barnes, “Our Politics Start with the World.” In *New International* no. 13, pp. 34–39.

28. *Value, Price and Profit*, in MECW, vol. 20, p. 146.

cial question confronting working people the world over has to be fought out and won in the political arena.

- Support workers' struggles to organize trade unions and to mobilize and extend union power to defend ourselves and other working people from the bosses' assaults. We need solidarity and strength, not isolation and vulnerability.

- Exercise workers control in the plants, mines, and other workplaces in order to enforce health and safety and to stop the production of pollution and of shoddy and unsafe goods for sale to the public.

- Nationalize the giant oil monopolies, other energy companies, and utilities. Make all their transactions transparent and run them under workers control. That is the only way to enforce job safety and control all technical processes in order to provide affordable electricity, heating, and air conditioning for working people and halt the poisoning of the air, water, and soil.

- Enforce controls of emissions of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases by industry and agribusiness. Washington must implement such controls irrespective of the actions of any other government, anywhere in the world. Just as the revolutionary workers movement from its origins opposed every move by capital in town and country either to enclose and monopolize common lands for private profit, or to dispose of toxic wastes at no cost and without regard for consequences, we condemn the dumping of greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere—our commons.

- The federal government must guarantee the costs of production to working farmers. This includes access to government-financed affordable credit. Halt farm foreclosures. Farmers must be guaranteed use of the land they rent or hold title to, without fear of eviction.

- No cuts in present or future Social Security retirement benefits, Medicaid programs, workers compensation, or income for disabled workers. Roll back the rising retirement age. Place no restrictions or penalties on retirees working if they choose to do so.
- Provide universal, government-guaranteed health care and retirement income for the working class for the lifetime of each of its members.
- For full cost-of-living escalators to protect workers' wages and all health, retirement, and other social benefits from the ravages of finance capital's inflation. The unions must initiate committees to join with working people in cities, towns, and on farms to establish the true inflation rate in their regions. This is the only way to put an end to the government's rigging of "official" price statistics to grossly understate, and in some cases entirely exclude, rising costs of food, fuel, medical care, college education, interest rates on debt, and other basic necessities that comprise the overwhelming bulk of expenses of the families of every worker and working farmer.
- To meet rising unemployment, shorten the workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work. For a massive, federally funded public works program to put millions to work at union scale. Build high-quality housing and safe and convenient public transportation affordable by working people, as well as schools, child care centers, recreational facilities, and other infrastructure to improve the living conditions of working people and protect the natural sources of all physical wealth and social advancement.

The Cuban Revolution: what workers power opens up

With the exception of revolutionary Cuba, there is no country where working people have a government and revolutionary leadership that organize and mobilize to advance

our class interests and those of the oppressed and exploited around the world. There is no other revolutionary-led workers and farmers government capable of organizing the toilers to prevent *social* catastrophes resulting from the competition-fueled drive by the employing class to accumulate capital—catastrophes that can thus be avoided. None that isn't so bureaucratized as to preclude a revolutionary response to *natural* disasters and the resulting environmental degradation—minimizing deaths, destruction, and other class-differentiated effects through class-conscious social planning and action.

When the Bolshevik-led toilers of Russia conquered power in October 1917, the new revolutionary government under Lenin's leadership *did* chart a course in defense of both labor and nature—in the young workers and peasants republic itself, as well as through its proletarian internationalist efforts to advance revolutionary struggles for socialism and national liberation worldwide. Among its first decrees were regulations establishing workers control “in all industrial, commercial, banking, agricultural and other enterprises” in order to combat capitalist sabotage, maintain discipline in the workplace, increase the productivity of social labor, and improve the health, safety, and living conditions of the working class and peasantry.²⁹ The “Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People” in January 1918 proclaimed that the new government's laws on workers control had “the purpose of guaranteeing the power of working people over the exploiters [and taking] a first step towards the complete conversion of the factories, mines, railways, and other means of production and transport into the prop-

29. See, for example, “Draft Regulations on Workers' Control” (1917) in V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 26, pp. 264–65.

erty of the workers' and peasants' state."³⁰

At the same time, in face of imperialist military assault and a bloody civil war instigated by the defeated landlords and capitalists, the Bolshevik-led government launched the most sweeping program of forest conservation anywhere on earth. In order to advance the worker-peasant alliance and increase agricultural production, the government established genetics laboratories and the world's largest seed bank, organizing dozens of scientific expeditions to Asia, Africa, North and South America, and the Middle East to collect plant species and variations for crossbreeding and, where practical, cultivation. The knowledge obtained was made available without restriction for use by toilers and scientists worldwide.

ALL THESE GAINS and others, on every front of economic, social, and cultural life, were slammed into reverse at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, as an increasingly privileged bureaucratic caste—whose most prominent and brutal representative was Joseph Stalin—carried out a political counterrevolution against Lenin's communist course.³¹

30. V.I. Lenin, "Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People," Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 26, pp. 423–24.

31. In 1939, rejecting proposals by public health officials in the Soviet Union for strengthened anti-pollution legislation, Andrei Vyshinsky, chief prosecutor during Stalin's infamous Moscow frame-up trials of 1936–38, responded: "We have the Stalin Constitution [of 1936]. That is sufficient to ensure that our public hygiene and public health are the best in the world."

Nikolai Vavilov, who had organized the international seed bank project in Lenin's time, was arrested in 1940 and condemned to a forced-labor camp for leading the opposition among Soviet

A revolutionary road in the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat was reopened some three decades later when, in 1959, the workers and farmers of Cuba, under the leadership of the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army led by Fidel Castro, overthrew the U.S.-backed tyranny of Fulgencio Batista. They brought to power a government whose socialist leadership helped them at every step to extend their mobilizations, put an end to U.S. imperialist domination, and advance their own class interests in city and countryside. In the months following the triumph, this revolutionary course included organizing the toilers to face down resistance from bourgeois figures and currents within that new government itself. During the years that followed, Cuban revolutionists reached out in solidarity and fought shoulder to shoulder with toilers the world over engaged in battles against oppression by imperialism and exploitation by landlords and capitalists.

As the Socialist Workers Party reaffirmed in adopting “Their Transformation and Ours”: From 1959 to today, every organization claiming to be revolutionary and proletarian “has had to meet—and continues to have to meet—the ‘acid test’ of the Cuban revolution . . . recognizing the place of the communist *leadership* in Cuba and acting on that understanding.”³²

The proletarian internationalist course of the Cuban

scientists to the Stalin regime’s destruction of the scientific practice of genetics under the influence of the plant-breeder Trofim Lysenko; Vavilov died in prison in 1943. Altogether some eighty biologists, agricultural specialists, and others who resisted Lysenko’s crank views were arrested, jailed, executed, or died in prison camps. Hundreds more were driven from research or teaching jobs in the Soviet Union.

32. In *New Internationalist* no. 12, p. 83.

leadership extends to their approach, in practice, to labor and nature. A graphic example is how the Cuban people have organized to prepare for, withstand, and rebuild in face of frequent hurricanes—sustaining few deaths and minimizing destruction, in contrast to countries with qualitatively greater material wealth such as the United States. The Cuban government has also mobilized internationalist volunteers to go abroad—to Pakistan, Haiti, Honduras, Grenada, South Africa, and elsewhere—to assist people recovering from the capitalist-caused social consequences of earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, epidemics, and other natural disasters. (Cuba’s offer in 2005 to immediately send 1,500 volunteer doctors and other medical personnel, trained and experienced in emergency work, to aid victims of hurricane and flood damage along the U.S. Gulf Coast was summarily rejected by Washington, the very power responsible for the devastation of toilers across that region.)

This revolutionary course stands in radical opposition not only to the conduct of the imperialist ruling classes and the bourgeoisies of the most economically developed semicolonial countries. It is also the opposite of that of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and across Eastern and Central Europe that collapsed at the end of the 1980s and opening of the 1990s. These state apparatuses, and the counterfeit “Communist” parties that governed them for decades, were alien to the working classes both at home and abroad; they advanced and defended the caste interests of nationalist-minded, privileged social layers; and they opened up those countries more and more to capitalist penetration.

The same holds true for the Stalinist regime in China today, as it accelerates its drive toward state-guided capitalism at home and deeper integration into the im-

perialist world market and political order. A few of the myriad possible examples serve to indicate Beijing's counterrevolutionary course with regard to defense of labor and nature:

- In 2006, by official Chinese government figures, 4,746 coal miners were killed on the job in China, an average of thirteen every day. Another 3,800 died in 2007.

- Seven of the world's ten cities cited by the World Health Organization for the most polluted air are in China. Beijing is expanding and accelerating degradation of the soil across China, as well as the massive industrial pollution of vast stretches of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers and other waterways.

- Chinese President Hu Jintao's decision during a February 2007 trip to Africa (where Beijing has already "invested" \$8 billion and is mobilizing much more) to cancel a visit to Zambia's copper belt, fearing protests by workers against low pay and miserable job conditions at Chinese-run mines, including one where fifty-one miners were killed in a single 2005 explosion.

In sharp contrast, the Cuban government and leadership have consistently worked to expand agricultural and industrial production in ways that not only guard but promote the health and safety of workers and farmers in Cuba and elsewhere in the world. They have done so under onerous conditions, including the ongoing, nearly fifty-year-long U.S. economic war and embargo, and the Special Period of the 1990s following the abrupt ending of trade relations by the successors of the collapsed Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Acting in the interests of the toilers, not under the lash of profit maximization, they give priority to avoiding or correcting practices that pollute the air and waters, despoil forests, meadows, and wetlands, and contaminate or degrade the

soil, as well as those that harm human life and limb.

Cuban revolutionists have successfully prepared to defend their own revolution by fighting with determination and self-sacrifice for others the world over. “Whoever is incapable of fighting for others will never be capable of fighting for himself,”³³ Fidel Castro told a rally of half a million people in Havana in December 1988, a few months after the triumph at the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale by Cuban volunteer combatants and Angolan troops over the invasion forces of South Africa’s white supremacist regime. Insisting on Cuba’s right, and the right of any oppressed country, to obtain and deploy the means necessary to defend its national sovereignty, the Cuban government has, at the same time, rejected any development of nuclear weapons in Cuba. The revolutionary political consciousness and military preparedness of Cuban working people and youth remains the bulwark on which they rely to stay the hand of U.S. imperialism.

In stark contrast to Beijing’s ruthless disregard for the welfare of workers and the environment as it repatriates wealth from China’s expanding projects across Africa and elsewhere, volunteer Cuban doctors, health specialists, teachers, engineers, sports trainers, and other technicians in semicolonial countries around the world impose nothing on host peoples by diktat and squeeze no material benefits from those they are assisting. What distinguishes the Cuban workers state from any other society on earth is above all its proletarian property relations and revolutionary political leadership—not its medical, pedagogical, agronomic, or engineering techniques.

The reason Cuba’s exemplary efforts to defend land and

33. Fidel Castro, “We Staked Everything in Angola” (1988), in *Our History Is Still Being Written*, p. 178.

“Revolutionary Cuba is the exception. No other country is capable of organizing the toilers to prevent social catastrophes. The revolutionary leadership acts in the interests of the toilers, not under the lash of maximizing profits.”



GETTY IMAGES



GRANMA

TOP: Cuba, Sept. 2004. Over 1.3 million people were evacuated to safety in advance of arrival of Hurricane Ivan. Not a single death from Ivan occurred in Cuba, while 57 were killed in the U.S. alone, as well as many more throughout the Caribbean. **BOTTOM:** Havana, 2004. Workers tending organoponic garden. These urban farms, initiated in early 1990s as working people mobilized to confront the food crisis of the Special Period, remain essential to Cuban agricultural production today.



BOHEMIA

“In the future, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men.”—Karl Marx

Havana, Cuba, August 1960. Working people surround coffins representing U.S. companies in Cuba just nationalized by the workers and farmers government. Working people carried out the expropriations in face of sabotage by property owners and the U.S. imperialist government of land reform that nationalized millions of acres of privately owned plantations and ranches. In a massive celebration, the coffins were carried in procession and dumped in the sea.

labor are possible is explained in *Our History Is Still Being Written* by Cuban General Armando Choy, who is responsible for guiding the massive government-led effort there to clean up Havana Bay and its almost 30-square-mile tributary basin. Such projects are a priority in Cuba, Choy explains, “because our system is socialist in character and commitment, and because the revolution’s top leadership acts in the interests of the majority of humanity inhabiting planet earth—not on behalf of narrow individual interests, or even simply Cuba’s national interests.”³⁴



Nearly a century and a half ago, Marx wrote in *Capital*—a book he prepared as a handbook for revolutionary-minded workers—that in the future, from “the standpoint of a higher socioeconomic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations.”³⁵

But labor cannot “bequeath” the earth “in an improved state to succeeding generations” so long as the capitalists hold state power, own and control the means of production, and allot society’s human and natural resources on the basis of a cutthroat rivalry to maximize profits. Under those conditions, labor’s *conflict* with na-

34. *Our History Is Still Being Written*, p. 146.

35. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3 (1894), (London: Penguin, 1981), p. 911.

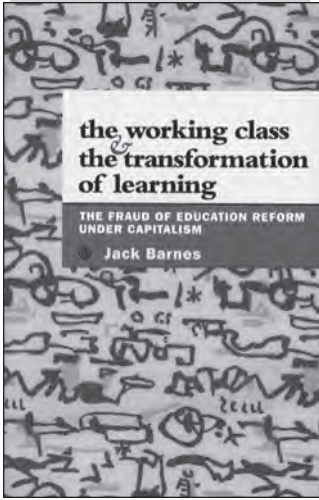
ture will increasingly, and at some point catastrophically, prevail over its capacity to symbiotically transform nature. Just as the proletariat is the only social force that can stop imperialism's inexorable march toward fascism and war, the stewardship of nature *also* falls to the working class.

It took a massive revolutionary war in the United States to overcome the bloody resistance of the slavocracy, and a post-Civil War revolutionary social movement of reconstruction to eradicate the system of "private property of one man in other men." And it will take a socialist revolution to overturn the destructive social order that dominates this country and the earth today—a social order that will be defended by the ruling capitalist families ultimately utilizing the most brutal methods at their command. It is this revolutionary working-class program and strategy that the communist movement puts into practice in mass work in the class struggle at home and abroad, and presents and develops, in concrete and changing forms, in the *Militant*, in the *New International*, in books and pamphlets by revolutionary leaders around the world, and in socialist campaigning, agitation, and propaganda.

Our purpose is to prevent the otherwise inevitable consequences of the worldwide operation of capital—to make possible, for the first time in history, social relations that are based on human solidarity and that serve our interaction with and protection of the natural sources of all well-being and culture. What more powerful reason for workers, farmers, and youth to commit their lives and futures to advancing the historic line of march of the international working class. What more powerful reason to join in building a proletarian party capable of leading the working class and its allies in making a socialist revolution.

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JACK BARNES

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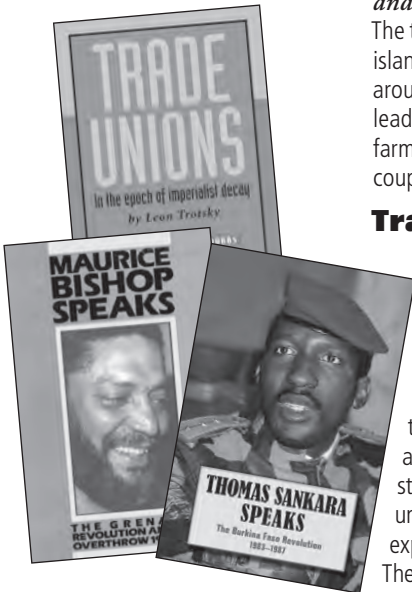
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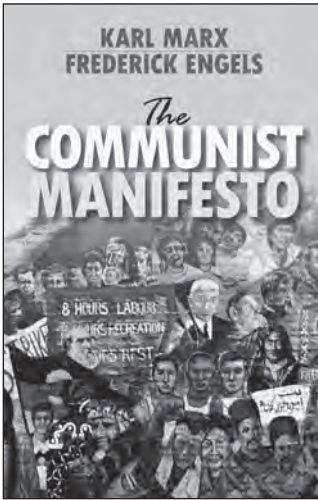
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LEON TROTSKY

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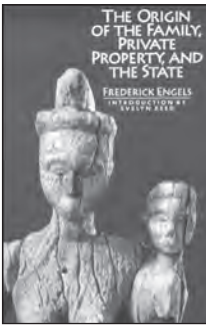
LABOR'S TRANSFORMATION



The Communist Manifesto

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Founding document of the modern workers movement, published in 1848. Only when the working class has conquered power from the capitalist exploiters will humanity discover what immense “productive powers slumbered in the lap of social labor.” \$5. Also in Spanish, French, and Arabic.



Labor's Role in the Transition from Ape to Man

Frederick Engels

Human beings' mastery of nature, Engels writes in this 1876 article, “consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to know and correctly apply its laws.” Doing so, however, “requires a complete revolution in our hitherto existing mode of production, and our whole contemporary social order.” Published as an appendix to Engels's classic book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. \$18

Critique of the Gotha Program

by **Karl Marx**

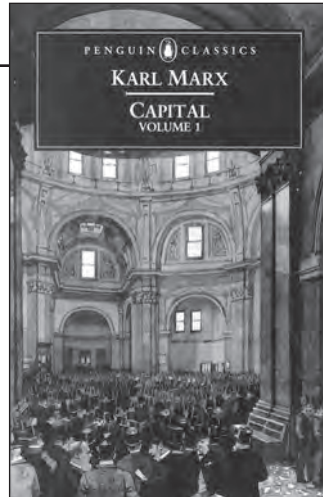
“Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values as labor, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power.” In *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24, \$35

OF NATURE

Capital

Karl Marx

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Leon Trotsky



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Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, Fidel Castro, Doug Jenness

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**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT
ON FASCISM AND WORLD WAR II**

BUILDING A WORLD FEDERATION
OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH
THAT FIGHTS IMPERIALISM AND WAR



There were sharply counterposed responses within the working-class movement to U.S. imperialism’s nuclear annihilation in August 1945 of hundreds of thousands of Japanese and Korean toilers resident in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

TOP: *Daily Worker*, newspaper of U.S. Communist Party, hailed the “super-duper week” of the two bombings. **BELOW:** The *Militant* said this war crime had sent waves of revulsion through toilers the world over, and called on workers in the U.S. to redouble efforts to organize a revolutionary socialist party.

INTRODUCTION

THE LETTER PRINTED HERE was sent by the national leadership of the Young Socialists in the United States to the leadership committees organizing the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students in April 2005. That international gathering of anti-imperialist youth, which drew some 17,000 delegates from 144 countries, took place in Caracas, Venezuela, August 7–15, 2005.

As the opening paragraphs explain, the letter was written in response to a request for discussion on alternative proposals for the festival program. The Young Socialists argued against turning the final day of the festival into activities commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Instead, they strongly urged that the program be organized to keep the focus of the festival on solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Venezuelan people.

When delegates came together in Caracas four months later, that is what happened. The week-long festival culminated in a two-day Anti-Imperialist Tribunal whose closing session, addressed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, drew thousands of participants. A simultaneous

forum across town, entitled “1945–2005: 60 Years after the Anti-Fascist Victory of the Peoples, We Continue the Struggle against Imperialism and War,” attracted a few hundred people.

The letter from the Young Socialists is of broader interest for the clarity with which it separates “myth from reality about the causes and the outcome of World War II.” It explains the contradictory character of the several-wars-in-one subsumed within what is called “World War II,” and points to the central lessons of the class struggle in the United States during those years. As the letter describes, these were issues on which the two most important currents in the U.S. workers movement, the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party, took diametrically counterposed class positions. The letter offers readers of *New Internationalist* an introduction to communism versus Stalinism in the unfolding class battles at the center of World War II.

The Young Socialists letter was drafted by Argiris Malapanis, Olympia Newton, and Jacob Perasso, in collaboration with Socialist Workers Party National Committee member Steve Clark. It was originally published in the May 23, 2005, issue of the *Militant*, along with the related article by Clark, “An Injury to One Is an Injury to All,” also reproduced here. In Caracas itself, many hundreds of copies of a special *Militant* supplement containing the letter—in English, Spanish, and French—were snapped up by festival participants eager to delve into the real history of the class struggle during World War II so often denied them.

Mary-Alice Waters
May 2008

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON FASCISM AND WORLD WAR II

Building a World Federation of Democratic Youth That Fights Imperialism and War

April 9, 2005
New York

TO THE WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH AND
THE VENEZUELA NATIONAL PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR
THE 16TH WORLD FESTIVAL OF YOUTH AND STUDENTS

Dear Comrades,

This letter is in response to your letter in mid-March, addressed to all the partners of the festival movement, requesting feedback on the guidelines of the program for the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students. We've already indicated our strong support for other aspects of the program, but we do want to say a few words about the new proposal contained in that letter, that is, the proposal to dedicate August 14—the culminating, thus most prominent, day of political conferences and seminars—to the theme: “Anti-Fascist People’s Victory—60 Years after, We Continue the Struggle against Imperialism and War.”

At the second International Preparatory Meeting in

Hanoi in February, the Venezuela National Preparatory Committee, the host committee, proposed a schedule devoting that final day of festival conferences to Venezuela. Delegates from the Communist Youth of Portugal, supported by several other delegates from Europe, proposed altering that schedule by combining the Venezuela theme with closing events on the final day of the festival. Several delegates who spoke (from the Socialist Youth League of Japan, Young Socialists of New Zealand, and Union of Young Communists of Cuba) expressed concerns and indicated they thought the proposal by the Venezuela NPC was stronger. The proposal by the Portuguese comrades was not adopted but taken under advisement for future consideration.

We too are convinced that the aims of the Caracas festival—built around its slogan: “For Peace and Solidarity, We Struggle against Imperialism and War!”—are better served by maintaining Day 8 as an opportunity for the host country to give delegations a concrete feel for the deep-rooted anti-imperialist struggle there, whose defense in face of Washington’s accelerating threats grows more pressing by the day. Renaming the theme of the wind-up day along the lines proposed in the March letter weakens the worldwide effort to unite the broadest layers of students and youth around the very real struggles we confront today. Venezuela is a special target of U.S. imperialism’s confrontationist course, and this poses additional dangers for the people of Cuba and throughout the Americas. Focusing the concluding day of festival conferences on support to Venezuelan national sovereignty in face of these threats will represent a powerful political statement by all the delegations to the host country and to the world.

We hope that for these reasons the revised schedule

will be reconsidered, and that we will return to the program dedicating Day 8 to Venezuela.



There is value, of course, in separating myth from reality about the causes and the outcome of World War II on the sixtieth anniversary of its end. Unless this is done, we are disarmed in face of the chauvinist campaign of the imperialist powers to advance their political and military aims today. Even more, unless we draw the accurate lessons from this history, we will be condemned to repeat the errors that have cost the world's toilers so dearly. There are a number of political points we are developing at public forums and other meetings in the United States that we believe are central to this discussion.

The sixtieth anniversaries of the so-called Victory in Europe Day (“V-E Day”) and Victory over Japan Day (“V-J Day”) are already being exploited by the rulers in the United States and other imperialist countries as an opportunity for an orgy of chauvinist propaganda. Similar to what they organized during and after the fiftieth anniversary activities a decade ago—using “patriotic” spectacles, TV documentaries, movies such as *Saving Private Ryan*, and books such as the modestly titled *The Greatest Generation*—the U.S. rulers this year are seeking to rationalize their assaults against Afghanistan and Iraq and prepare for future wars by waving the bloody shirt¹ of “the victory of democracy over fascism” in 1945.

1. The phrase “waving the bloody shirt” in the United States signifies a demagogic appeal designed to stir up old political enmities.

The U.S. government's "World War II 60th Anniversary Committee," announced in 2004 by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, is organizing and cosponsoring activities across North America, Europe, and the Pacific to "acquaint or reacquaint all Americans with the significance of World War II to our nation and the world." Calling the war "the pivotal event of the 20th Century," the committee's brochure asserts that "the enduring legacy of World War II is reflected in the faces of those who served, the alliances that were formed, the many technological advances . . ."—ask the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki!—" . . . and the continued rise of democratic reform throughout the world."

The committee recently announced that during President George W. Bush's May 6–10 European trip, he will visit the Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten in order to "honor the shared sacrifice of millions of Americans and Europeans to defeat tyranny, and mark the growth of democracy throughout the continent." President Bush, they noted, will also travel to Moscow "to participate in another World War II commemoration ceremony and to meet President Putin. The President will conclude his trip with a visit to T'bilisi, Georgia, to underscore his support for democracy, historic reform, and peaceful conflict resolution."

THESE IMPERIALIST-ORGANIZED "commemorations" falsify history. They cover up the crimes against the greatest victims of World War II: the toilers of the Soviet Union, working people in the imperialist countries of both the Allied and Axis alliances, and peasants and workers throughout the colonial world.

The imperialist victors, above all Washington and Lon-

don, downplay and at the same time attempt to justify their decision—for the first time in modern warfare—to carry out the systematic mass murder of civilian populations, both in Germany and Japan, as a “necessary” and “legitimate” method of war. The British air force firebombed Hamburg and other German cities in 1943. U.S. and British planes did the same to Dresden in 1945. In these raids Allied forces deliberately targeted working-class housing, suffocating or incinerating several hundred thousand German civilians. Washington’s firebombing of Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, and dozens of other cities in the opening months of 1945 killed more Japanese civilians than were massacred in the subsequent atomic horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.²

(Washington has not yet repeated its barbaric and inhuman use of nuclear weapons, but it emulated what was done to the people of Dresden and Tokyo across broad swaths of Korea and Vietnam. And the U.S. rulers, in the bloody effort to hang on to their domination, are preparing a “transformed” armed forces today to repeat this as often and “effectively” as necessary.)

It is impossible to assess either the causes of World War II, or its consequences for the exploited and oppressed the world over, without recognizing that it was actually three wars in one.³

2. See “U.S. Firebombing of Tokyo in 1945 Killed 100,000” in March 28, 2005, issue of the *Militant*.

3. See “World War II: Three Wars in One” by Dan Roberts, *International Socialist Review*, summer 1959, major excerpts of which were reprinted in the April 25, 2005, issue of the *Militant*. Also see *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* (2004 printing, pp. 109–11) and *Capitalism’s World Disorder* (2004 printing, pp. 423–31) by Jack Barnes; *Socialism on Trial* (2006 printing, pp. 59–85) and *The So-*

1. Interimperialist holocaust to redivide the world

First, it was an interimperialist slaughter—the second in a quarter century waged over the redivision and plunder of the world. The victory in that war by Washington, London, and their allies over Berlin, Tokyo, and Rome did nothing to weaken, let alone eliminate, the worldwide system of imperialist oppression and capitalist exploitation, which is the social root of the march toward depression, fascism, and war that has continued to confront humanity to this day. U.S. finance capital used the war to consolidate its position, economically and militarily, as the world’s mightiest (and, we should add, final) dominant imperialist power.

There were sharply opposed views within the working-class movement toward that second interimperialist war and its outcome. The Communist Party and its youth group in the United States, for example, like its sister parties around the world, supported Washington’s war and welcomed the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. For two days in a row, the *Daily Worker* featured editorial cartoons celebrating the knockout punches being dealt the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the people of Japan. They hailed “the old one-two,” referring to the U.S. nuclear bombing and the Soviet Union’s declaration of war against Japan that same month. Those blood-drenched days of August, in the words of a *Daily Worker* headline, were “The Super-Duper Week.”

cialist Workers Party in World War II (2002 printing, pp. 245–65) by James P. Cannon; *In Defense of Marxism* (2006 printing, pp. 41–64) by Leon Trotsky; and *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939–40)* (2006 printing, pp. 221–65). All the above books are published by Pathfinder Press.



PHOTOS: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Washington and London’s “war against fascism” was an imperialist war, waged with methods intended to deal devastating blows to working people and the oppressed at home and abroad.

TOP: Dresden, Germany, February 1945. Working people prepare to bury the bodies of some of the tens of thousands of civilians incinerated in U.S. and British firebombing. **BOTTOM:** On orders from U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt, over 100,000 Japanese-Americans were forcibly relocated in internment camps hundreds of miles from their homes. Their houses, farms, and businesses were often confiscated. Photo is Manzanar camp in foothills of California’s Sierra Nevada mountains.



PHOTOS: ARGIRIS MALAPANIS / MILITANT

The 2005 World Youth Festival in Caracas, Venezuela, gave thousands of young people opposed to imperialism an opportunity to share experiences and exchange views about social and political struggles the world over.

TOP: Members of U.S. delegation denounce Washington's attacks on Cuba and Venezuela. **BOTTOM:** Some 1,800 young people were part of Cuban delegation to Caracas festival.

The Socialist Workers Party and young socialists opposed Washington's imperialist war aims and efforts and had a different response to the atomic annihilation of the people of those two Japanese cities. The *Militant* denounced the crime against humanity, and its issue of August 18, 1945, carried the banner headline, "There Is No Peace!"⁴ The accuracy of that historical fact has been amply confirmed in blood since the end of World War II by imperialist-organized wars, military interventions, or rightist coups in Greece, China, the Philippines, Korea, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Iran, Guatemala, Egypt, Cuba, Congo, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Syria, Chile, Nicaragua, Grenada, Panama, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq, to name just a few of the better-known cases.

2. Defense of the Soviet Union

Second, World War II also encompassed a historic war to defend the Soviet Union, to preserve the state property, economic planning, and related social conquests that workers and peasants fought and died for as they made the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution of October 1917. That revolution, unlike the U.S. Defense Department's false claim about their victory in World War II, truly was "the pivotal event of the 20th Century." It changed the relationship of class forces on a world scale. The Red Army's early 1943 victory over the invading forces of German imperialism at Stalingrad—at the cost of the lives of some one million Soviet soldiers and civilians—was a turning point not only in the struggle to defend the USSR but against

4. "There Is No Peace!" is an August 1945 statement of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee. Major excerpts were reprinted in the April 11, 2005, *Militant*.

imperialist oppression and domination worldwide.

In the years leading up to World War II, U.S. capitalism faced the decision of whether to seek to crush the Soviet workers state before or after establishing its dominance over its imperialist rivals in Europe and Asia. U.S. and British imperialism chose to take on Berlin and Tokyo first, hoping the Soviet Union would be so devastated by the German imperialist invasion that it could be brought down in the war's aftermath. Once the Axis had been defeated, Washington, London, and other imperialist powers lost little time in launching a global crusade against "communism" at home and abroad. Among their central aims was to roll back the October Revolution and restore the dominance of capitalist social relations throughout the USSR. This was registered in the rapidity with which the U.S. rulers shifted between 1945 and 1947 from an alliance with the Soviet Union to the escalated buildup of a military machine equipped by the late 1950s with sufficient nuclear capacity to kill humanity many times over.⁵

The Soviet toilers' successful defense of their conquests was achieved despite the reversal of the Bolsheviks' proletarian internationalism over the years following Lenin's incapacitating stroke in 1923. The bloody consolidation of Joseph Stalin's bureaucratic regime, and its self-serving Russian nationalist policies, corroded the foundations of the Soviet workers state and demoralized the vanguard of the working class internationally (ultimately leading to the collapse of the Stalinist apparatuses across Eastern and Central Europe and in the USSR itself between

5. See *Capitalism's World Disorder* (pp. 111–20) and "Washington's Third Militarization Drive" by Mary-Alice Waters in *New International* no. 7 (2007 printing, pp. 299–345).

1989 and 1991). The Moscow-imposed ultraleft “Third Period” course of the German Communist Party at the opening of the 1930s—refusing to fight for working-class unity, for a united front with the Social Democratic Party to defeat the rise of Nazism—set up the workers for the disastrous ascendancy in 1933 of Hitler’s National Socialist movement. In the most demoralizing blow of all, the Nazi regime established itself without the workers movement firing a shot.

STALIN’S SUBSEQUENT LURCH to imposing a Popular Front strategy on Communist parties across Europe and worldwide—subordinating the class interests and organization of labor and its allies to programmatic and even governmental alliances with imperialist parties deemed “antifascist” or friendly to Moscow’s conjunctural diplomatic needs—closed off revolutionary prospects in France and Spain, opened the way to fascist regimes there, and thus made the onset of a second, even more devastating interimperialist slaughter inevitable by the close of the 1930s.⁶ This Popular Front policy, as it was called, is often associated with the name of Georgi Dimitrov, who presented the report on it adopted by the 1935 congress of the Communist International.

These obstacles to defense of the Soviet Union were compounded manifold by the trials and executions of

6. For further reading on the historic defeats of the working class resulting from the Stalin-led Comintern’s ultraleftism and subsequent swing to Popular Frontism, see *Fascism: What It Is and How To Fight It* by Leon Trotsky, as well as “Once Again on the Causes of the Defeat in Spain” in *The Spanish Revolution (1931–39)*. Both are published by Pathfinder.

the top command of the Red Army during the Moscow frame-up trials of the late 1930s.⁷ The beheading of the Soviet Union's armed forces, with tens of thousands of officers purged, was followed by the demoralizing and demobilizing political consequences of the Stalin-Hitler Pact signed in August 1939, including Stalin's refusal to acknowledge Berlin's preparations to invade the USSR until well after Wehrmacht Panzer divisions had smashed their way across its borders in June 1941.

It was not until the 1959 victory of Cuban workers and peasants over the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship that a revolutionary internationalist leadership once again came to power, one that recognized that defense of the toilers' gains depends not only on their political consciousness, military readiness, and armed mobilization, but is also indissolubly linked with advancing revolutionary struggles by the oppressed and exploited the world over. As the program of the Communist Party of Cuba adopted at its First Congress in 1975 explained, the defense of the revolutionary conquests of the Cuban people starts with "subordination . . . of the interests of Cuba to the general interests of the struggle for socialism and communism, of national liberation, of the defeat of imperialism and

7. Throughout the 1930s the Stalinist regime in Moscow organized the systematic murder of revolutionists not only in the Soviet Union but in Spain and elsewhere across Europe, culminating in the assassination of Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in Mexico in August 1940. In doing so, they stilled the voices of those who were presenting a communist course on the questions discussed in the letter reprinted here when there was still time for something to be done by the workers movement to reverse the disastrous policies that resulted in defeat after defeat, made the onset of World War II inevitable, and blocked the implementation of a revolutionary line of march during the war itself.

the elimination of colonialism, neocolonialism and all forms of exploitation and discrimination.” That is the policy Cuban revolutionists have followed from Vietnam to the Middle East and southern Africa, from Grenada and Nicaragua to Venezuela and elsewhere today.

3. Anticolonial revolutions

Third, within what is generally called “World War II” were the exploding wars of national liberation by colonial peoples across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, and Europe itself. Foremost among these national liberation struggles was the nearly decade-long resistance by the people of China against occupation by imperial Japan. That was a struggle of such magnitude and blood that protests demanding of Tokyo a public apology, justice, and restitution continue to rage today.

Other colonial peoples, too, took advantage of the conflict among their respective imperialist overlords (both in the Axis and Allied blocs) to advance their battles for national sovereignty, independence, land redistribution, and labor rights. As the war headed toward its conclusion, these movements were strengthened and inspired by the victory of the Soviet Union, as well.

Especially where the imperialist slave masters were among the Allied powers (the reality in the big majority of cases), freedom fighters pressed forward their battle against colonial or neocolonial domination despite charges—inspired both by the imperialist colonizers, and by the Soviet government and its political followers—that they were “splitting” and “sabotaging” the struggle against fascism. Independence fighters in India continued their mobilizations against British colonial rule throughout the war, as did Indonesian forces battling their Dutch overlords. Puerto Rican Nationalists, Irish Republicans,

and Quebecois independence supporters all refused conscription to serve as cannon fodder in the armies of their oppressors.⁸

During the war neocolonial governments across the Americas divided. Most backed the Allied forces—including the regimes of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil. Others, at least during the opening years of the war, remained “neutral” in sympathy with the Axis—including the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay.

In the wake of the war, following the defeat of the Japanese occupiers, national liberation forces in Indochina and Indonesia continued the fight to expel the “victorious Allies,” the French and Dutch governments, which sought to reimpose colonial rule. The Chinese people, one-fifth of humanity, made a powerful revolution and, in the course of the Korean War in the early 1950s, overturned the rule of the landlords and capitalists across the country. At the same time, the massive “Bring Us Home!” demonstrations by U.S. GIs across Asia and Europe in late 1945 and early 1946 blocked the U.S. rulers from their postwar plans to use these troops to intervene against colonial peoples in China and elsewhere in Asia, against European workers, as well as at home against the strike wave sweeping the United States at the same time.⁹

8. See “Washington’s Fifty-Year Domestic Contra Operation” by Larry Seigle in *New Internationalist* no. 6 (2007 printing, pp. 289–93). See also “The Struggle in India” in *Fighting Racism in World War II* (2007 printing, pp. 246–51); *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* (pp. 427–28); *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II* (pp. 261–65); *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939–40)* (pp. 242–47, 252–54).

9. See “1945: When U.S. Troops Said ‘No!’” by Mary-Alice Waters in *New Internationalist* no. 7 (pp. 357–85).

In the early 1950s, the Korean people, having rid their land of Tokyo's hated boot, fought Washington to a standoff and liberated half their country from imperialist domination. In 1954 the National Liberation Front was born, led by Algerians who had been through the school of war as "French" troops in World War II. And the massive decades-long struggle by African-Americans in the United States against the entrenched system of Jim Crow segregation was the blood brother of these struggles *within* the U.S. imperialist colossus itself. From the late 1950s through the mid-1970s, one country after another on the African continent—from Tanzania to Algeria, from the Congo to Mozambique, and dozens of others—won political independence from London, Paris, Brussels, and Lisbon. During that same period, Guyana, Trinidad, Barbados, Suriname, and other British and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean gained their independence as well.

IN THE VERY FIRST DAYS of 1959, in a giant step forward for popular humanity, Cuba became "the first free territory of the Americas." The victory of the Rebel Army and a political general strike and uprising across the island opened the door to socialist revolution in the Western Hemisphere and gave an impulse to revolutionary struggles by workers and peasants across the Caribbean and Central and South America. And, in the aftermath of the 1988 defeat of apartheid's invasion forces in Angola at Cuito Cuanavale, with decisive help from Cuban internationalist volunteers, Namibia won its freedom in 1990 and the system of white supremacy was toppled in South Africa itself by 1994.

These national liberation struggles against both Axis

and Allied imperialist powers, which began accelerating in the midst of the Second World War and exploded in its wake, have been the most powerful single motor force of the world revolutionary movement since the latter half of the twentieth century—a confirmation of the anti-imperialist focus around which the forces building the world youth festival in Caracas are united.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

The class struggle in the United States during World War II is among the chapters richest in lessons for working people and the oppressed. As the U.S. rulers cranked up the war effort, they targeted the constitutional rights and space for political action of the labor movement, communists, Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, Puerto Rican independence fighters, Japanese-Americans, and others. As sections of the exploited and oppressed continued to press their demands during the war, their efforts to do so were publicly and aggressively opposed by the Communist Party in the United States and those influenced by its Popular Front line of subordinating the struggles of working people to support for the U.S. imperialist government in the war. Those who refused to simply bend their knee were branded as “splitters,” “appeasers,” “disrupters,” and often outright “agents of Hitler and the Mikado.”

- On December 8, 1941, eighteen leaders of Minneapolis Local 544-CIO and of the Socialist Workers Party were convicted in federal court, and given sentences ranging from twelve to sixteen months in prison, on frame-up charges of “conspiring to advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government.” These were the first convictions under the notorious Smith “Gag” Act, newly signed into law by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The

indictments and prosecution were aimed at breaking the class-struggle vanguard of the labor movement that was leading opposition to Washington's preparations to drag workers and farmers into the imperialist slaughter of World War II.

Despite the fact that the Smith Act was aimed at the entire labor movement, especially communists and socialists, the Communist Party used its press and podiums to urge everyone it could influence to support the government frame-up, charging that the Local 544 and SWP leaders, through "their fifth column service to Hitlerism," were "spreading disunity in labor's ranks." The CP went so far as to prepare evidence for federal prosecutors, sending a dossier to the Justice Department entitled "The Fifth Column Role of the Trotskyites in the United States."¹⁰ Eight years later, eleven leaders of the Communist Party itself were convicted under the very same Smith Act, most of them railroaded to federal prison for five years. The Socialist Workers Party actively campaigned in their defense, covering the trial regularly in the pages of the *Militant*.

- In an effort to weaken the rising industrial union movement, Washington imposed a wartime wage freeze and won a no-strike pledge from class-collaborationist labor officials, who threw themselves into the imperialist war effort of the employing class. In 1943, in defiance of these antilabor measures, members of the United Mine Workers union, whose president was John L. Lewis, went

10. See "Anatomy of a Frame-up" in *Teamster Bureaucracy* by Farrell Dobbs (2007 printing, pp. 264–81, 355–82) and "Washington's Fifty-Year Domestic Contra Operation" in *New International* no. 6 (pp. 254–64, 279–89). Also see the accompanying article in the current issue by Steve Clark (see page 223).

on strike over the coal operators' efforts to increase hours and freeze pay.

When the Roosevelt administration threatened to send in troops to break the strike, the miners responded: "You can't mine coal with bayonets!" The Communist Party, through the *Daily Worker*, not only opposed the UMWA strike but called for the "Lewis line" of defying the no-strike pledge to be "utterly defeated."¹¹ Nonetheless, the miners won, opening the road to the strike wave that exploded in 1945 and 1946.¹²

- The federal government resisted and sought to undermine the March on Washington Movement, which organized throughout the war years against Jim Crow segregation in the armed forces, against racist discrimination in munitions industries and society as a whole, and against the Roosevelt administration's refusal to introduce federal antilynching legislation into Congress. The Communist Party opposed the March on Washington Movement. CP leader Benjamin Davis insisted in 1942 that "the winning of this war is *the primary issue* before the Negro people." Davis charged that leaders of the movement were working "against the war and against the best interests of the Negroes," exploiting the "just

11. See "Washington's Fifty-Year Domestic Contra Operation" in *New International* no. 6, especially pp. 277–78, 285.

12. When the UMWA miners threatened to go back out at the opening of the great strike wave of 1945, the *Daily Worker* wrote in its March 12 issue: "The coal miners will have to learn this bitter lesson, that so long as they permit John L. Lewis in their name to sabotage the war effort, to lead them into strikes at the height of the war, to carry on civil warfare against the President, and to conspire to defeat America's foreign policy, just that long also will the miners suffer substandard conditions of wages and labor."

demands of the Negro people.”¹³

In November 1942 U.S. postal authorities began withholding delivery of issues of the *Militant* newspaper from the mails. In March 1943 the Postmaster General revoked the *Militant's* second-class mailing rights on the grounds, among others, that its articles included “stimulation of race issues” in wartime. The Communist Party supported the revocation of these mailing rights.¹⁴

- Several years before the war, the U.S. government incarcerated Pedro Albizu Campos and other Puerto Rican Nationalist leaders on trumped-up charges of conspiring to overthrow the government and “inciting rebellion” against the United States. Scores of Puerto Ricans were also jailed for resisting the wartime draft. Albizu Campos and the other Nationalist leaders rejected the government’s degrading “offer” to free them if they would suspend proindependence activity during the war.

As this resistance was being organized both on the island and in the United States, the Communist Party publicly urged Puerto Rican fighters to suspend the struggle for independence during the war, comply with the draft to advance Washington’s military efforts, and—in the words of CP leader Earl Browder—put an end to their “intransigent and unreasoning hostility toward the United States.”¹⁵ (The CP and its sister parties in the United King-

13. See *Fighting Racism in World War II* (pp. 196–97, 213–21, 252–61).

14. See “Washington’s Fifty-Year Domestic Contra Operation” in *New International* no. 6 (p. 272), *Fighting Racism in World War II* (pp. 273–81), and *Teamster Bureaucracy* (pp. 358–62).

15. Earl Browder, *Teheran: Our Path in War and Peace* (New York: International Publishers, 1944), pp. 57–58. See also “Washington’s Fifty-Year Domestic Contra Operation” in *New International*

dom, Canada, and elsewhere adopted the same stance toward resistance by Irish and Quebecois independence fighters during the war.)

- The U.S. government in 1942 rounded up 112,000 Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast and held them in barbed-wire-ringed concentration camps for much of the duration of the war. When they were released, thousands found that their farmland, tools, and often even homes had been confiscated and sold to new, non-Japanese-American owners.

Already, in the aftermath of Tokyo's bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Communist Party had deregistered its Japanese-American members, saying that "the Party was the best place for any Japanese fifth columnist to hide and we don't want to take any chances."¹⁶ When Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 was issued establishing the concentration camps, the CP hailed it as "a sensible program" and instructed its former members not only

no. 6, pp. 289–91; Oscar Collazo, *Memorias de un patriota encarcelado* [Memoirs of an imprisoned patriot] (Fundación Francisco Manrique Cabrera: San Juan, 2000), pp. 233, 246; A.G. Quintero Rivera, *La lucha obrera en Puerto Rico* [Workers struggles in Puerto Rico] (CEREP: San Juan, 1972); Carlos Rodríguez-Fraticelli, "Pedro Albizu Campos: Strategies of Struggle and Strategic Struggles" in *Puerto Rican History and Politics*, Winter 1991–92, pp. 29–30; and the Marisa Rosado biography of Pedro Albizu Campos, *Las llamas de la aurora* [The flames of dawn] (San Juan, 1998).

16. Cited by Karl Yoneda, Resolution to Northern California District Convention of the Communist Party USA, January 29–30, 1972. Quoted in "American Concentration Camps: Racism and Japanese-Americans during World War II" by Patti Iiyama in the *International Socialist Review*, April 1973; reprinted in the April 18, 2005, issue of the *Militant*.



Despite appeals to “patriotism” and calls to subordinate their struggles to the “war effort,” as World War II dragged on working people in the U.S.—and around the world—continued to fight their “own” imperialist exploiters and oppressors.

TOP: Coal miners on strike in Pennsylvania, January 1943. Workers defied Communist Party slanders, as well as Roosevelt administration threats to use the army as strikebreakers. **MIDDLE:** A national march on Washington for Black rights planned for mid-1943 received enthusiastic support from tens of thousands before being cancelled under intense government pressure. **BOTTOM:** Mass marches throughout India in 1942 demanded independence from British colonial overlords.

to go into the camps peacefully but to lead others to do so—as their contribution to the war effort.

The Socialist Workers Party condemned the camps from the outset as a violation of the rights of Japanese-Americans, “driving them from their homes” and “terrorizing them.” The federal executive order, the SWP said, was “an indiscriminate and brutal witch-hunt . . . having the character of a racial pogrom.”¹⁷

As these examples show—and there are others too numerous to recount—never before or since has there been a more pressing need than during World War II to champion and act on the historic battle cry of the working-class movement: “An injury to one is an injury to all!”



Among the many forces worldwide who are united around the anti-imperialist aims of the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas, there is undoubtedly a broad range of views about what there is to commemorate, much less celebrate (and what there is *not*) on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. We do not expect our opinions to be embraced by everyone building the festival. We are convinced, however, that any effort to impose a particular assessment of these historical questions on the movement as a whole causes division and disunity in building the festival and in the uncompromising and unqualified anti-imperialist course all of us have voted to put at its center.

17. “American Concentration Camps,” reprinted in the *Militant*, April 18, 2005. See also the comments by the Communist Party’s longtime general counsel, John Abt, in the accompanying article by Steve Clark.

In line with the slogan of the Caracas festival, we continue to strongly believe it would be better to conclude the discussions there on Day 8 by uniting participants around activities in defense of Venezuela's national sovereignty in face of U.S. imperialism's mounting threats.

We urge our meeting in Portugal to return to the original program proposed at the Hanoi meeting.

Fraternally,
Argiris Malapanis
Olympia Newton
Jacob Perasso
Young Socialists

cc: Union of Young Communists of Cuba

Using the Smith “Gag” Act of 1940 for the first time, in 1941 the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt framed up and convicted 18 leaders of truck drivers Local 544-CIO in Minneapolis and the Socialist Workers Party. Their “crime” was politically opposing the drive by Washington and union bureaucracy to organize labor behind U.S. imperialist war aims.



TOP: The Minneapolis 18 surrender to federal marshals to begin serving their sentences, December 1943. The U.S. Communist Party supported—and its leaders aided—the federal prosecutors in the Minneapolis case.

BOTTOM: In 1949 the CP was itself victimized under the Smith Act. The Socialist Workers Party came to the CP’s defense. SWP leader and former Minneapolis defendant Farrell Dobbs—who had served over a year in Sandstone Federal Penitentiary in northern Minnesota—covered the trial of the CP leaders day after day for the *Militant*.

'AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL'
A COURSE WORTH DEFENDING
IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

By Steve Clark

IT WASN'T UNTIL 1949, with the first Smith Act indictments of the Communist party, that I read the documents against the Minnesota Trotskyists and saw that the cases against the two organizations were virtually identical," said John Abt in his 1993 autobiography, *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer*.¹⁸ "The Communists had made a terrible mistake in not defending the SWP."

Abt was the longtime chief counsel of the Communist Party USA and a CP cadre going back to the 1930s. He was commenting on the CP's course with regard to the 1941 federal government frame-up, on charges of conspiracy "to advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government," of leaders of Minneapolis Local 544-CIO—leaders of the great over-the-road organizing campaign that turned the Teamsters into a powerful, industrially organized union—and of the Socialist Workers Party.

18. John Abt, *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 88–90.

Eighteen union and SWP leaders were found guilty—the first convictions under the notorious Smith “Gag” Act—and sentenced to between twelve and sixteen months in prison. In the eyes of the U.S. government, their real crime was campaigning in the union movement to mobilize opposition to Washington’s drive to mobilize working people behind its imperialist war effort in World War II.

ABT DOES NOT QUESTION the Communist Party’s “unqualified support” to that interimperialist slaughter. Such a policy “was unquestionably, then and in retrospect, the correct policy,” he says. The CP “played an honorable role in mobilizing public support for the antifascist cause and in defeating detractors from the Right.

“However,” Abt adds, “it must also be acknowledged that we were not without blinders in our enthusiasm. In 1941, the federal government launched a prosecution of a group of Trotskyists who were active in the Teamsters’ union in Minneapolis. They were charged with violating the Smith Act, a little-known and heretofore unused law, which forbade ‘conspiracy to teach or to advocate the overthrow’ of the U.S. government by force and violence.”

The defense campaign to block the convictions, and later to free the imprisoned leaders, won broad support within the labor movement in the United States and beyond. But nothing but opposition—and slanders—from the Communist Party.

In face of this antilabor frame up, Abt says, the CP “remained silent, while individual leaders spoke of a ‘fifth column’ at work in the Twin Cities. At the time, I accepted the Party estimate of the case, but paid little attention to

it and did not read the legal documents, briefs, opinions, and appeals. Little did we know that in the postwar period the Smith Act would become the primary legal weapon to attack our Party and imprison its leaders.”

Abt recalls that “many years later, in the eighties, I was in a meeting with the CPUSA national board; under discussion was an SWP appeal for support in its lawsuit against the government for political harassment.¹⁹ I referred to the Party’s mistake in the 1941 case and said that those who now opposed supporting the SWP lawsuit were repeating the same error.

“A longtime Party leader from Michigan replied, ‘Ah, that was entirely different. They were interfering with the war effort.’

“Dogma reigned,” Abt says, “and the Party again refused to defend the SWP against government persecution.

“The Party has never engaged in any self-criticism—presumably the Leninist corrective—of that episode or other unworthy policies that we advocated, e.g., support for the relocation camps for Japanese-Americans, in our ardor for the anti-fascist war effort.”

How accurate is Abt’s memory that the Communist Party “remained silent” about the 1941 Smith Act trial, “while individual leaders spoke of a ‘fifth column’”? A 1975 account by another longtime CP supporter confirms

19. The significance of the 1987 victory in the SWP’s fourteen-year legal battle against the FBI, CIA, and other government spy agencies is described in “Washington’s 50-Year Domestic Contra Operation” by Larry Seigle in *New Internationalist* no. 6. Excerpts from trial testimony by SWP leaders, as well as the full 1986 federal court decision, are published in *FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit against Government Spying* (New York: Pathfinder, 1988).

that Abt, to say the least, is guilty of selective, and self-serving, memory.²⁰

Philip J. Jaffe, former national secretary of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, describes in detail the documents the Communist Party turned over to the cops in 1941 to aid the prosecution of the union and SWP leaders. Jaffe reports that in the late 1950s, Earl Browder, who was general secretary of the Communist Party at the time of the Minneapolis frame-up, gave him a copy of the entire dossier prepared by top CP leaders for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Jaffe begins by describing the Communist Party's public campaign hailing the federal indictments. The *Daily Worker* immediately published an article stating: "The leaders of the Trotskyist organization which operates under the false name of 'Socialist Workers Party' deserve no more support from labor . . . than do the Nazis who camouflage their Party under the false name of 'National Socialist Workers Party'."²¹

Jaffe continues: "The fourteen documents marked Exhibit A, B, C, etc., consisted of two pamphlets, 'War and the 4th International,' dated 1934, and 'Manifesto of the 4th International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian Revolution,' dated 1940;²² four complete issues of the

20. Philip J. Jaffe, *The Rise and Fall of American Communism* (New York: Horizon Press, 1975), pp. 24–28.

21. Jaffe, p. 50. As part of the Communist Party's campaign to slander the Socialist Workers Party and aid the federal frame-up of central SWP leaders, the *Daily Worker* falsified the full name of the Nazi party—which was the National Socialist *German* Workers Party [emphasis added], not the National Socialist Workers Party.

22. "War and the Fourth International" (June 1934) and "Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the

International Bulletin for Members Only, dated August and September 1942; and several pages from the monthly, *Fourth International*, and from the weekly, *The Militant*, for the year 1942. In some of the exhibits the pertinent wording was underlined in red. In addition to the documents, there was an original twenty-four-page typescript, many of the pages single-spaced, entitled, ‘The Fifth Column Role of the Trotskyites in the United States.’”

JAFFE QUOTES a few sentences, headed “In Conclusion,” from the last page of the 24-page manuscript. That passage, he says, typifies “the nature of the entire assembly of exhibits and summaries” cobbled together by the CP leadership for U.S. imperialism’s star chamber proceedings.

The paragraph reads: “Being a sabotage organization, concentrating upon the disruption of the war effort, the Trotskyites do not require a large organization. On the contrary, a smaller group is more easily controlled and efficient for their purposes . . . The dangerous efficiency of this small group is shown by the fact that it succeeded in obtaining aid for the convicted Minneapolis traitors from the AFL and CIO unions representing 1,000,000 workers [exhibit M] . . . This core of saboteurs is small, but its underground influence is large. Remove the core and you wreck a strong fascist weapon in America.”²³

In 1949 the U.S. government convicted eleven Communist Party leaders under the Smith Act and sentenced

Proletarian World Revolution” (May 1940) are available respectively in the 1933–34 and 1939–40 volumes of *Writings of Leon Trotsky*, both published by Pathfinder Press.

23. Jaffe, p. 51.

most of them to federal prison for five years. Federal prosecutors did so using the identical Smith Act provisions they had relied on in 1941 to frame up and convict leaders of the Midwest Teamsters battles and of the Socialist Workers Party.

“Trial of C.P. Threatens All Labor’s Rights,” was the lead, three-column headline on the January 24, 1949, issue of the *Militant*, which reported on the opening day of the trial. “Atmosphere of Police Terror Marks Thought-Control Case,” read the subhead.

The reporter was Farrell Dobbs, who covered the trial for the *Militant* throughout the year, direct from the federal courthouse at New York City’s Foley Square. Dobbs was a central leader of the Midwest Teamsters battles of the 1930s, the Socialist Workers Party’s 1948 presidential candidate, and the party’s national secretary from 1953 to 1972. He was also one of the eighteen union and SWP leaders imprisoned under the Smith Act for twelve months in 1944–45.

“CP Trial Verdict Hits Rights of All,” was the full-page lead headline on the *Militant* when the CP leaders were convicted in October 1949.

“Friday, Oct. 14, 1949, will go down as a black-letter day for civil rights in America,” opened the front-page *Militant* editorial. “The conviction on that day of 11 Communist Party leaders in the political trial at Foley Square struck a hammer-blow against the democratic liberties of the whole working class.”

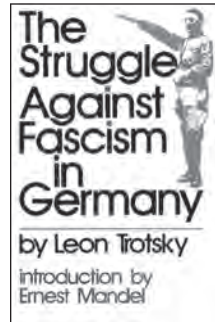
The convictions, the editorial said, underlined the burning need for a united front “to halt the offensive of the witch-hunters.”

FASCISM: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO FIGHT IT

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM IN GERMANY

Leon Trotsky

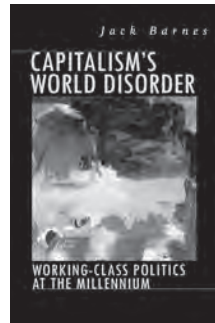
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Labor's Giant Step

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS OF THE CIO: 1936-55

Art Preis

Until union coal miners went on strike in 1943—defying intense pressure to “sacrifice” for the imperialist war effort—“The ruling class looked on the war as their supreme opportunity to destroy union contractual conditions and even unionism itself,” writes Preis. “Instead, the miners’ victory opened a whole new wave of labor struggle.” One of many battles described in this account of labor and political struggles in the 1930s and ’40s that built the industrial unions. \$30

WORLD WAR II

Teamster Bureaucracy

Farrell Dobbs

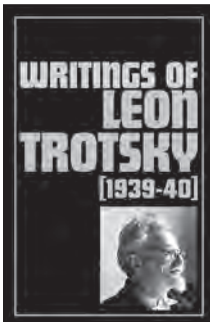
How the class-struggle Teamsters leadership in the Upper Midwest organized to fight union busting, racism, and colonial oppression, as they opposed the mobilization of labor behind U.S. imperialist war aims in World War II. How Washington—backed by top AFL, CIO, and Teamsters officials—acted to gag class-conscious workers. \$19



Washington's 50-year Domestic Contra Operation

Larry Seigle

As the U.S. rulers prepared to smash working-class resistance and advance their interests through the interimperialist slaughter of World War II, Washington's political police apparatus as it exists today was born. This article explains the political battles within the workers movement over how to combat government and employer attacks against the working class and unions, the Black rights movement, Puerto Rican independence fighters, opponents of U.S. wars, and others. In *New Internationalist* no. 6. \$16. Also in Spanish.



Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939–40)

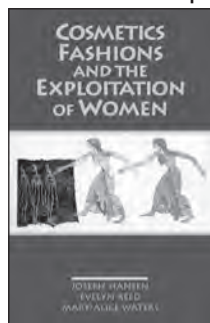
“The life of Europe and all mankind will be determined for a long time by the course of the imperialist war and its economic and political consequences,” wrote communist leader Leon Trotsky in May 1940. In face of this, he said, communist workers continue to “fulfill our basic task: to carry on constant, tireless preparation for the revolution—in the factories, mills, villages, barracks, at the front, and in the fleet.” \$35

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New International

A MAGAZINE OF MARXIST POLITICS AND THEORY



NEW INTERNATIONAL NO. 12 CAPITALISM'S LONG HOT WINTER HAS BEGUN

Jack Barnes

and *"Their Transformation and Ours,"
Resolution of the Socialist Workers Party*

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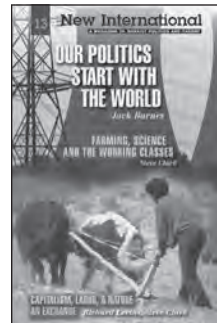
and draw satisfaction from being "in their face" as we chart a revolutionary course to confront it. \$16

NEW INTERNATIONAL NO. 13 OUR POLITICS START WITH THE WORLD

Jack Barnes

The huge economic and cultural inequalities between imperialist and semicolonial countries, and among classes within almost every country, are produced, reproduced, and accentuated by the workings of capitalism. For vanguard workers to build parties able to lead a successful revolutionary struggle for power in our own countries, says Jack Barnes in the lead article, our activity must be guided by a strategy to close this gap.

Also includes: "Farming, Science, and the Working Classes" by Steve Clark and "Capitalism, Labor, and Nature: An Exchange" by Richard Levins, Steve Clark. \$14



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Jack Barnes

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IMPERIALISM'S MARCH TOWARD FASCISM AND WAR

Jack Barnes

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CHE GUEVARA, CUBA, AND THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Articles by Ernesto Che Guevara, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, Carlos Tablada, Mary-Alice Waters, Steve Clark, Jack Barnes

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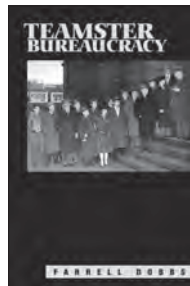
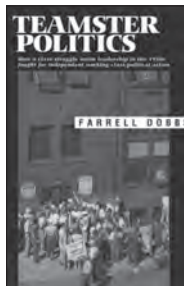
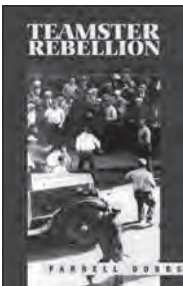
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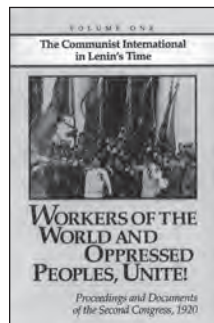
In the early 1920s Lenin waged his last political battle in the Communist Party leadership in the USSR to maintain the course that had enabled workers and peasants to overthrow the tsarist empire, carry out the first socialist revolution, and begin building a world communist movement. The issues posed in this fight—from the leadership's class composition, to the worker-peasant alliance and battle against national oppression—remain central to world politics today. \$21. Also in Spanish.



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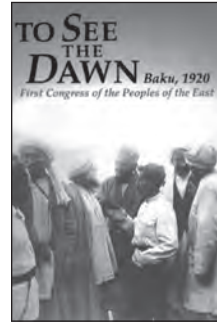
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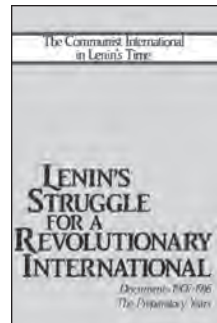
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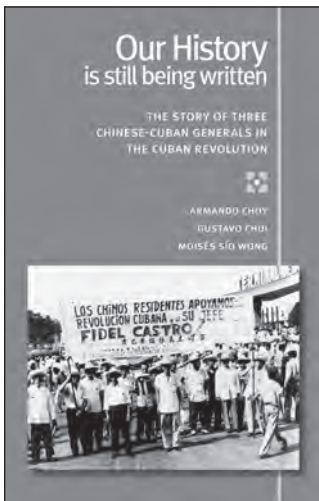
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The Cuban Revolution and



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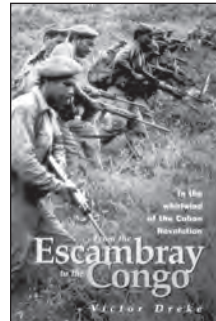
Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong talk about the historic place of Chinese immigration to Cuba, as well as more than five decades of revolutionary action and internationalism, from Cuba to Angola and Venezuela today. Through their stories we see the social and political forces that gave birth to the Cuban nation and opened the door to the socialist revolution in the Americas. We see how millions of ordinary men and women changed the course of history, becoming different human beings in the process. \$20. Also in Spanish and Chinese.

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Victor Dreke

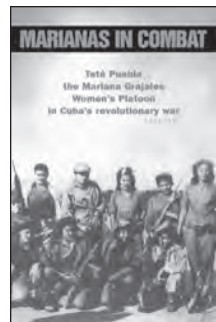
The author describes how easy it became after the Cuban Revolution to take down a rope segregating blacks from whites in the town square, yet how enormous was the battle to transform social relations underlying all the “ropes” inherited from capitalism and Yankee domination. Dreke, second in command of the internationalist column in the Congo led by Che Guevara in 1965, recounts the creative joy with which working people have defended their revolutionary course—from Cuba’s Escambray mountains to Africa and beyond. \$17. Also in Spanish.



Marianas in Combat

Teté Puebla

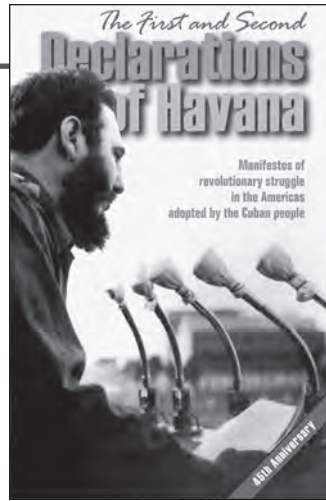
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