

Iraq: Sham Elections, Savage Occupation

FEBRUARY 1—While U.S. jets screamed overhead, U.S. soldiers surrounded Iraqi polling places to make sure Bush's fake "election" on January 30 came off. The "election" was designed purely as a legitimizing cover for the continuing savage U.S. occupation. It was a despicable and cynical fraud, in which at least 44 Iraqis died in widely predicted violence. While we denounce criminal terror against innocent civilians, including those who came out to vote behind the American barbed wire, we recognize that every military blow struck against the U.S. and British occupiers, their allies and mercenaries is a blow against imperialist aggression. U.S. out of Iraq now!

It was grotesque to watch U.S. puppet and strutting thug Ayad Allawi, the former Ba'athist goon called "Saddam lite" by his own American handlers, mouth pieties about "free elections" in the midst of overwhelming U.S. military terror. Curfews were imposed and car traffic was banned anywhere near polls, whose locations were kept secret until the last minute, as were the names of most of the candidates for a meaningless "national assembly" to draft a meaningless "constitution" under the boot of the U.S. occupiers. But a few plastic ballot boxes and cardboard booths, with a compliant American press to burble about the "joy" of the day, were all Bush really wanted for his cynical photo-op, as supposed independent election observers "observed" safely far away in Jordan.

Meanwhile, the horror of war continues. New revelations of Iraq torture and Pentagon spy units burrowing into Iran have come out. Veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh points out that in Iraq "the number of tonnage dropped has grown exponentially each month. We are systematically bombing that country.... It's simply a turkey shoot" (*CounterPunch* online, 27 January).

The supposed "sanctity of the vote" means less than nothing to the U.S. president, who stole his first presidential election through disenfranchising black people. In terms of fake elections, he might have taken a lesson from the Nazis. Today, in the midst of all the imperialist crocodile tears over the Nazi death camp Auschwitz, let's recall that Hitler made concentration camp inmates vote. In the 12 November 1933 Reichstag elections, prisoners at Osthofen, Brandenburg and Oranienburg were given ballots. Hitler won. The Americans don't seem prepared to go door-to-door to check on who voted,



Mosul, January 8: U.S. troops brutalize a man accused of supporting insurgents in Iraq. He later died.

Zaklin/EPA

U.S. Out Now!

as the Nazis did—though staining the forefingers of those Iraqis who did venture out to vote does give new meaning to the term "marked man."

The Americans' cynical use of fake elections under battlefield conditions is not new. Resurrecting Reagan's gory 1982 electoral sham in El Salvador, Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld said last December, "I mean, my goodness, El Salvador had elections when people were being shot at and there was a civil war going on, and it worked fine" (*Wall Street Journal Online*, 10 January). The only "choice" allowed was either junta chief José Napoleón Duarte or death-squad torturer "Blowtorch Bob" D'Aubuisson. Meanwhile, a leftist military insurgency was raging, whose military victory, we said, "is an absolute necessity on the road to workers power in El Salvador." We wrote, in "Reagan's Junta Holds 'Elections by Death': "To talk of any kind

of elections while the junta's army is intact...is preparing a gigantic defeat for the Salvadoran masses. The heroic worker and peasant fighters are not shedding their blood to get more electoral farces but to break the chains of oppression that bind them" (*WV* No. 300, 5 March 1982).

During the Vietnam War in the 1960s, in South Vietnam the U.S. broke the monotony of regular military/CIA coups with occasionally letting its puppets stage "elections." One such typical foray in 1967 (when the U.S. had half a million troops on the ground) was "won" by former generals Thieu and Ky, as Buddhists and peace candidates were banned, newspapers were suppressed and voting took place only in areas under the Saigon government's control. Sound familiar? The next year a rather more significant event for the liberation of the Vietnamese people occurred: the Tet Offensive, begin-

ning the night of January 30, 1968, which shattered the myth of U.S. military "progress."

In Vietnam and El Salvador, military victory for the opponents of U.S. imperialism directly posed the possibility of lifting the yoke of imperialist subjugation and opening the road to social revolution, as occurred in Vietnam. Such is not the case in Iraq today. The clerical reactionary forces and Ba'athists now dominant in the "resistance" to U.S. imperialism are also enemies of the working class, women and minorities.

Wider War Threatened

The stage is set now for civil war within Iraq's borders and significant destabilization beyond. Iraq is not a nation but a patchwork of different peoples and ethnicities carved by the British imperialists out of the old Turkish Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. The Sunni Arab minority has historically dominated the Arab Shi'ite majority as well as a portion of the Kurdish nation (which also spans parts of Iran, Turkey and Syria). We warned: "Absent the working class emerging as an independent political force in a struggle against neocolonial rule, each of these populations can only come to power by oppressing the others and in alliance with U.S. imperialism" (*WV* No. 830, 6 August 2004).

The Sunni Arab minority is the big loser under the American occupation, and so will continue the insurgency against the foreign imperialist occupiers—as well as the criminal sectarian violence against the Shi'ites, the Kurds, and other peoples and tribes. Meanwhile, the Kurds want control of the oil wealth in their region and many Kurds have illusions that the American occupation will protect them against Arab reconquest. The fight for Kurdish self-determination is a just struggle, requiring the overthrow of four capitalist states. We call for a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan. But in Iraq today—and only in Iraq—the Kurdish question has become decisively subordinated to the American imperialist occupation, of which Kurdish political and military forces have become an integral part. The struggle for Kurdish independence can only go forward through intransigent opposition to the occupation and the

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Black History and the Class Struggle

BLACK WOMEN'S NARRATIVES OF SLAVERY, THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION...4



Support Redfern Aboriginal Militants!

The following article is reprinted from *Australasian Spartacist No. 189, Summer 2004/05, newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League.*

Australasian SPARTACIST

DECEMBER 7—In angry meetings in Queensland over the racist cop terror in Palm Island [where an Aboriginal man was killed in police custody last November], Aboriginal activists have been drawing parallels to the explosive February [2004] events in Redfern, Sydney. On the night of 15 February, residents in the area known as The Block defiantly defended their community from racist cop terror after a 17-year-old Kamilaroi youth was

killed at the hands of police. With great courage and acumen, Aboriginal youth and their supporters waged a nine-hour pitched battle against marauding cops. Since then, a police operation ordered by the [Premier Bob] Carr NSW [New South Wales] state Labor government has rounded up some 35 militants who are now facing charges. *We say there should be united-front protests and actions to defend the heroic Redfern and Palm Island militants. Trade unions, Aboriginal activists, leftists and immigrant youth must be brought together in struggle to demand: Drop all the charges!* On 24 August, a Spartacist League leaflet broadcast a call by the Partisan Defence Committee (a class-struggle defence organisation associated with the SL) for protest statements to be sent to the NSW Attorney-General

demanding the dropping of the charges. Since then, support for the Redfern defendants has broadened. Protest statements include those by well-known Aboriginal activists, by the prisoners' rights group Justice Action, and by the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP). A 7 December statement by longtime black activist, Jenny Munro, noted that "the local Aboriginal community do support those people arrested" and added her "voice to that of my husband Lyall's to say to those charged 'they are brave young people we are immensely proud of'." In a speech at a 24 September Sydney rally in defence of jailed trade-union leader Craig Johnston, Justice Action leader Brett Collins raised the case of the Redfern militants. An SL supporter was met with applause when he called for the dropping of charges against the black defendants at a 31 July refugee rights rally outside Sydney's Villawood immigrant detention centre. And earlier, in a small but important victory for all who solidarise with the Redfern struggles, the Police Association was defeated in its manoeuvres to stop a 31 March SL public forum in Melbourne "Defend Redfern Aborigines—Mobilise Union Power!", after unionists and leftists joined in a campaign of exposure initiated by the SL.

In a protest letter in defence of the Redfern militants, Sam Watson, in his capacity as a longtime prominent figure in the Brisbane Aboriginal community, stated that the killing "of TJ Hickey on the streets of Redfern on the 15th of February and the subsequent brutal repression of the Redfern indigenous community by the state Police, is a clear and terrifying statement that nothing has changed within this racist land and that indeed—the colonial genocide goes on!" Noting the killing of black children by the police and prison guards, Watson's 15 October letter pointedly stated that

"the courts and the parliaments have been parties to each and every attack on our people."

But while Sam Watson was a Socialist Alliance (SA) senate candidate in the recent federal elections and the FSP is a component of SA, SA has, to date, failed to in its own name publicly call for the dropping of charges against the Redfern defendants. Those groups and individuals that have taken up the defence of the Aboriginal militants must now redouble their efforts to publicise this case and broaden support for the defendants. A struggle to defend the Redfern and Palm Island militants is not only a way of solidarising with their struggles but a way to push back the tide of racist attacks being faced by Aboriginal people and non-white immigrants. While state Labor governments throughout the country administer brutal and daily racist cop terror, the bigoted federal Howard government is planning to make welfare payments for Aboriginal people conditional on their "behaviour." Under this openly racist, apartheid-style policy, payment cards may be used to set limits on what Aboriginal people can buy using government benefits! Meanwhile new details have emerged of the NSW state government's latest sinister plans to drive Aboriginal tenants off The Block in order to boost property prices in the Redfern-Waterloo area.

Key to defending the Redfern militants is the struggle to win union support for this cause. It is the organised working class—through its ability to shut down capitalist profit by withdrawing its labour—that has the social power to defeat campaigns of state repression. And the proletariat must champion the rights of the Aboriginal people in order to achieve the fighting unity necessary to confront an increasingly confident capitalist ruling

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TROTSKY

Sixtieth Anniversary of the Red Army's Liberation of Auschwitz

With much fanfare—and stunning mendacity—the Western imperialist press has trumpeted the sixty-year anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Nazi death camp, in what is now southern Poland. It was the Red Army of the Soviet degenerated workers state that marched through those gates on 27 January 1945, and played the decisive role in defeating the Nazis at the cost of some 27 million Soviet lives. The truth about the liberation of Auschwitz lives in the writings of



LENIN

Jewish Italian author and chemist Primo Levi, who survived a harrowing ten months in the camp (a section of which was called Buna-Monowitz). He was among 7,000 ill prisoners left to die when the German overseers fled days before the Red Army arrived.

In the sick bay of the Lager [camp] at Buna-Monowitz eight hundred of us remained. Of these about five hundred died from illness, cold and hunger before the Russians arrived, and another two hundred succumbed in the following days, despite the Russians' aid.

The first Russian patrol came in sight of the camp about midday on 27 January 1945. Charles and I were the first to see them: we were carrying Sömogyi's body to the common grave, the first of our room mates to die. We tipped the stretcher on to the defiled snow, as the pit was now full, and no other grave was at hand: Charles took off his beret as a salute to both the living and the dead.

They were four young soldiers on horseback, who advanced along the road that marked the limits of the camp, cautiously holding their sten-guns. When they reached the barbed wire, they stopped to look, exchanging a few timid words, and throwing strangely embarrassed glances at the sprawling bodies, at the battered huts and at us few still alive.

To us they seemed wonderfully concrete and real, perched on their enormous horses, between the grey of the snow and the grey of the sky, immobile beneath the gusts of damp wind which threatened a thaw.

It seemed to us, and so it was, that the nothing full of death in which we had wandered like spent stars for ten days had found its own solid centre, a nucleus of condensation; four men, armed, but not against us: four messengers of peace, with rough and boyish faces beneath their heavy fur hats.

They did not greet us, nor did they smile; they seemed oppressed not only by compassion but by a confused restraint, which sealed their lips and bound their eyes to the funereal scene....

So for us even the hour of liberty rang out grave and muffled, and filled our souls with joy and yet with a painful sense of pudency, so that we should have liked to wash our consciences and our memories clean from the foulness that lay upon them; and also with anguish, because we felt that this should never happen, that now nothing could ever happen good and pure enough to rub out our past, and that the scars of the outrage would remain within us for ever, and in the memories of those who saw it, and in the places where it occurred and in the stories that we should tell of it.

—Primo Levi, "The Thaw" (1963), in *Survival in Auschwitz and The Reawakening, Two Memoirs* (Summit Books, 1986)



The Australian

15 February 2004: Police in riot gear lay siege to Aboriginal community in Redfern, Sydney following death of Aboriginal youth Thomas "TJ" Hickey.

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

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The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/21 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is 1 February.

No. 841

4 February 2005

Just Out! Spartacist

(Spanish edition)

No. 33
January 2005

\$1 (64 pages)

Order now: \$1 for single issue; \$2 for subscription to *Espartaco*, publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, including *Spartacist* (Spanish edition).

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SPARTACIST

NUMERO 33 ENERO DE 2005 EDICIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

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Down With the "Anti-Terror" Witchhunt Against the Four S.F. State Students!

We reprint below a January 21 leaflet from the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club.

November 1, 2004 was the eve of the U.S. presidential election and the U.S. military forces were poised to level Falluja. At San Francisco State University four women students from predominantly Muslim countries (mainly Iran and Afghanistan) engaged members of the College Republicans in a heated argument over the U.S. colonial occupation of Iraq. The College Republicans responded by branding them as "terrorists" and hurling racist, anti-Arab epithets at the four women.

On November 3, the Republicans, wind in their sails, were celebrating Bush's electoral victory at their literature table. The four students had another argument with the Republicans that drew an audience. The Republicans again called the women "terrorists" and racist names. Out of this crowd, members of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Students Against War (SAW), joined by a number of pro-Palestinian students, initiated a demonstration to protest the College Republicans' slanderous accusations and the Bush electoral victory.

Following each incident, the women were subjected to a sinister slander barrage from the campus McCarthyites of racist right-wing ideologue David Horowitz's online *FrontPage Magazine*. *FrontPage* produced three inflammatory articles titled "Intifada Against College Republicans," "Jihad at San Francisco State," and "Palestinian Terror On Campus." After College Republicans fabricated stories of "terrorism" the four women were subjected to state surveillance by the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI.

Campus President Robert Corrigan threatened to punish the women if they did not (together with the Republicans) apologize for their behavior, in other words, for arguing their political beliefs and defending themselves against racist vilification.

Spartacus Youth Club members joined in a protest in defense of these women and intervened at a meeting where one of the women spoke. Centrally, we pointed out that charges of "terrorism" in USA-Patriot Act America are a threat in themselves. We warned against liberal illusions that the administration can be relied upon to end racism on campus. We stand in defense of these four coura-

No Administration Reprisals!

geous women against the racist provocateurs who wish to intimidate, vilify and silence them. We demand: *No administration reprisals! Down with the right-wing witchhunt!*

This witchhunt is a product of the bipartisan "war on terror." The Democrats and Republicans have both worked to gut our rights. Their first targets have been immigrants, especially those of

His ilk touts the myth that conservatives are persecuted on American universities. He has worked with Republicans to push the "Academic Bill of Rights," which attempts to provide a basis for a purge of the left from campuses. These are McCarthyite strategists; both their campaigns and their racist lies must be exposed. They seek to use the USA-Patriot Act as a weapon against critics of



Young Spartacus

SYC has vigorously defended victims of "war on terror" onslaught. September 2002: Bay Area SYC at protest against UC Berkeley administration's witchhunt against pro-Palestinian activists.

Near Eastern descent and Muslims. In this context, these false charges of "terrorism" have led to state surveillance and harassment and open the way to deportations and the disappearance of people.

Most of all they want to go after all those who wish to protest the American colonial occupation of Iraq and the massacre at Falluja, or those who voice outrage at the genocidal "collective punishment" of Palestinians by Israel's Zionist rulers. This is what is happening at San Francisco State, in New York at Columbia University, at York University in Toronto and elsewhere.

The forces behind this bogus "academic freedom" campaign include the minions of racist ideologue Horowitz, represented on this campus by the grossly misnamed "Students for Academic Freedom." The College Republicans' membership overlaps with this outfit. Horowitz and his ilk say that blacks, women, immigrants and all oppressed should be grateful for what they've got.

American imperialism, opponents of state repression, fighters for black liberation, fighters for women's liberation, and so on. They are working to get H.R. 3077 passed, legislation that would set up a government "advisory board" that would include national security types to act as thought police in federally funded programs in Middle Eastern Studies. *Down with H.R. 3077!*

In response, Students Against War (which includes ISO members) issued a petition with the demand that "there be no punitive action against these four women or any organization they belong to." But the core of the petition is a call on Corrigan to act as a regulator of political speech on campus. Such regulations would be used, in the first instance, to go after the left and minority students. Quoting a line from a 2002 letter by Corrigan that read "hate speech is not free speech," the petition stated that "signatories of this petition would agree with the president's sentiment." Such language renders the petition unsupportable. And this came *after* he threatened reprisals

against the four Middle Eastern students for expressing their political views.

It is important in fighting against such sinister forces to know who your friends and enemies are.

We give this warning: campus administrations are no friend of these, or any, students. We, along with General Union of Palestine Students [GUPS], protested when this same administration was cooperating with the FBI in 2001 as it was looking for school files on students. This is not a question for the administration to deal with. Administration restrictions or bans on freedom of speech or expression will be used *against* any who militantly fight against racist reaction. In Corrigan's arsenal, "hate speech" regulations are a threat to every critic of racist American imperialism on this campus; he will use them against us—as he did against GUPS (as in 2002, to put the group on probation for a year), as he did against the Pan-African Student Union and others. *Abolish the administration! For student-teacher-worker control of the university! Cops off campus! Down with administration/cop spying on campus!*

Our allies are the women and men of the multiracial working class, like the heavily immigrant San Francisco hotel workers who were recently out on strike fighting for their livelihoods. The Spartacus Youth Club seeks to win youth to the struggles of the working class and the fight against every manifestation of oppression, as part of a broader effort to build a revolutionary workers party that can overturn the profit system and private property—capitalism.

Standing in the way of revolutionary social change are those liberals who push Democrats, as well as reformists like the ISO. The social-democratic ISO prettifies bourgeois politicians and capitalist parties whether it is the Democrats, who support the colonial occupation of Iraq, or the Greens, who accept a system that inevitably breeds anti-immigrant chauvinism and war. The ISO has backed Ralph Nader, a *capitalist* politician who favors UN occupation of Iraq, which can only mean one thing—imperialist troops in blue helmets instead of red, white and blue tanks! The necessary means to fight against racist oppression is working-class revolution to smash the capitalist system, which is based on racist degradation.

We demand: *No administration reprisals! Down with the right-wing witchhunt!* ■

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

BOSTON

Wednesday, February 16, 6:30 p.m.
Socialist Revolution and the Capitalist State
Harvard University
Loker Common, Memorial Hall Basement
Information and readings: (617) 666-9453
or e-mail: bostonsyc@yahoo.com

TORONTO

Wednesday, February 23, 6:30 p.m.
Anti-Gay Bigotry and the Bourgeois Family: Labour Must Defend All the Oppressed!
York University, Student Centre
Room TBA
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail: spartacan@on.aibn.com

CHICAGO

Tuesday, February 15, 7 p.m.
For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!
University of Chicago
Cobb Hall, Room 202, 5811 S. Ellis Ave.
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
or e-mail: spartacist@iname.com

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, February 9, 4:30 p.m.
Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!
UBC, Student Union Bldg., Room 207
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
or e-mail: tilt@look.ca

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Black History and the Class Struggle

BLACK WOMEN'S NARRATIVES OF SLAVERY, THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

Most stories of black women's lives under slavery have never been told. Slave masters routinely brutalized black girls and women, justifying their dehumanizing treatment by labeling them "sexual savages." Stripped, beaten, raped and forced to work as "breed sows," black women suffered a double burden under slavery because of their sex. Men wrote the majority of published accounts of slave life, the most well known being the

BY CARLA WILSON

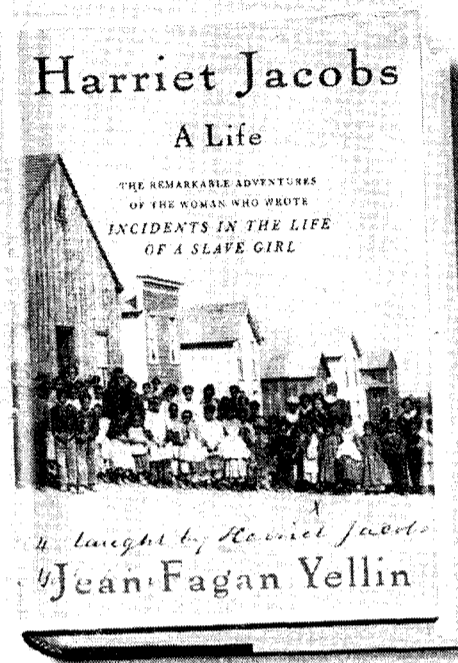
classic *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. These slave narratives were often produced under the guidance of the anti-slavery movement, using "moral suasion" against slavery to influence a church-going audience, and therefore avoided the topic of sexual oppression so as not to shock the Victorian audiences they approached for aid.

More than one hundred book-length narratives were written before the end of the American Civil War. The mere existence of former slaves' writings and oratory indicted the theories of racial and mental inferiority that justified the slave system. In this way, the act of exposing the horrors of slavery became vital to the struggle against it. During the 19th century, journalists, schoolteachers and local historians interviewed former slave women, and in the 1920s and 1930s more than two thousand former slaves were interviewed by the Works Progress Administration Federal Writers' Project and by researchers at Fisk and Southern Universities. Most of the Slave Narrative Collection was kept in typescript in the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress for nearly 40 years. This wealth of oral history was frequently dismissed as spurious, but after the civil rights movement, and even more recently,

Gilbert Studios



Harriet Jacobs in 1894. Jacobs' life spanned the Civil War, Radical Reconstruction and its betrayal. Right: 1862 edition of her autobiographical *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

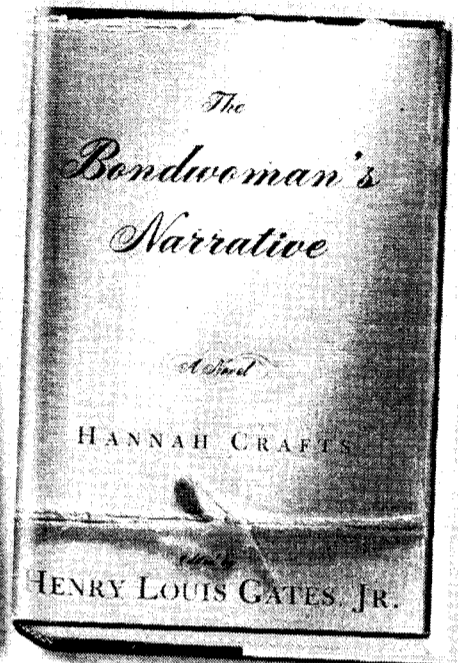


due to film documentaries like PBS's *Unchained Memories*, they have found wider interest.

Two valuable slave accounts by women document the period leading up to the Civil War and through the defeat of Radical Reconstruction. One is a work of immense historical research, thoughtfully written by retired English professor Jean Fagan Yellin. *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* (Basic Civitas Books, 2004) expands on the events and people that shaped Jacobs' own *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, *Written by Herself* (Harvard University Press, 1987). As recently as two decades ago, Jacobs' autobiographical sketch was considered an obscure work penned by white abolitionist and editor Lydia Maria Child. With Jacobs' authorship authenticated in the mid 1980s, hers became the first recognized slave narrative by a black woman.

The other story, *The Bondwoman's Narrative* (Warner Books, 2002), is a semi-fictional work that dates from the 1850s. Discovered at an auction by Harvard African American Studies scholar

British Library



Henry Louis Gates Jr., the only person to even bid on the manuscript, the book spent months on the *New York Times* best-seller list when it was published in 2002.

The fact that a black woman and former slave in the 19th century authored a novel has played a role in generating vigorous interest in this work of fiction. Its authentication meant that a black literary tradition existed much earlier than acknowledged. It also has much to do with the energetic quest for the identity of the author led by Gates, who rescued the book from historical oblivion.

The Bondwoman's Narrative represents an important work because it deals effectively with the role of sexual and physical oppression of black women under slavery. Moreover, unlike many published slave narratives, this book is a manuscript in the author's own handwriting, offering a unique window into the mind of a female slave. Caste, color and class—linked to widely-practiced miscegenation of master and slave—are at the core of this sentimental, gothic-style novel. An intriguing aspect of the story is the snobbery based on skin-color privileges and expectations of preferences in plantation life.

The main character of *The Bondwoman's Narrative* is Hannah, a North Carolina house slave serving as handmaid to a mistress passing for a white woman. She is well treated, observant and literate, attentive to every secret of her mistress. When Hannah's mistress passing as a white woman is about to be exposed as a fraud, Hannah convinces her to escape North. They fail, and land in prison. Once captured, they are left at the mercy of the executor of the estate of the racist master, who had killed himself after learning he married a black woman.

The executor is a singular force for evil in the tale—the blackmailer of the mistress as well as a slave speculator who trades on the value of light-skinned females, thought to be passing. As an estate manager, he searches through papers to expose the lineage of women and force them onto the "fancy market" in New Orleans' high-toned bordellos. Eventually, the mistress dies from shock when faced with being sold. Hannah is

then given to a government official's wife in Washington, D.C., whose ignorance and impetuosity strike a portrait in which the slave is in a more decisive role. Hannah is made to read letters and draft replies for her barely literate mistress. After shrilly demanding a new face powder be fetched from the store, the mistress finds it turns her face black. In the aftermath of this makeup malfunction, the mistress is ridiculed throughout Washington and leaves for the North Carolina plantation, where she punishes Hannah by throwing her in with the field slaves.

Hannah is confronted with being a field hand and taken as a sexual partner to a darker-skinned black man with several female mates. Earlier asked to assist fellow slaves seeking freedom in the North, Hannah had told them, "their scheme looked wild and unpromising and that I feared the result would be unfortunate." She counsels those in flight that they will only face bloodhounds and slave patrols, then bloody torture for their failure. In contrast, in reaction to her own dilemma, her response is swift: "To be driven into the fields beneath the eye and lash of the brutal overseer, and those miserable huts, with their promiscuous crowds of dirty, obscene and degraded objects, for my home I could not, I would not bear it." She flees within 48 hours of being sent into the fields and huts, passing for a white boy, then a white woman, en route to freedom in the North. The impetus for her escape underscores the influence of racial disdain within the slave community and the inculcation of racist dogmas employed as justification for the "peculiar institution."

Incidents in the Life of an Anti-Slavery Heroine

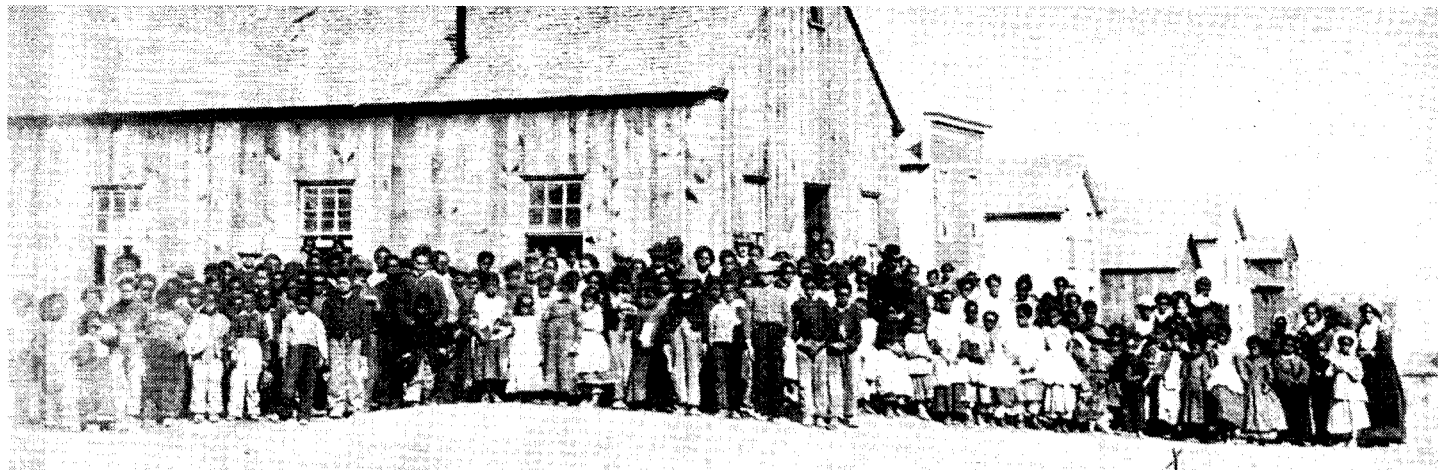
Yellin's *A Life* was heralded by less fanfare, but this biography powerfully reveals author and activist Harriet Jacobs as a remarkable fighter for the oppressed. Using a pseudonym, Linda Brent, Jacobs wrote her story while in domestic service with a prominent liberal New York family. Links between literacy, black self-sufficiency and political consciousness are key themes in Jacobs' evolution from fugitive slave, to author, to activist teacher of new freedmen at the Jacobs School for black Civil War "refugees" in Alexandria, Virginia. The story of Harriet Jacobs is the story of an active abolitionist fighter who lived through the Civil War, struggled to implement the promises of Radical Reconstruction and witnessed the betrayal of these promises.

Born in 1813, Harriet Jacobs did not know she was a slave until her sixth year, when her mother died and she was willed to an infant girl. Her father lived only six years longer and Jacobs fondly recalls that, although he was illiterate, he became a skilled carpenter, trusted enough by his owners to work on houses in the country and town. From him, she and her younger brother, John, learned to prize education and freedom. Jacobs' slave life in Edenton, North Carolina, reflected the

hierarchy of slave society—whites ruled over blacks, free black people ranked above slaves, but the status of slaves depended heavily on their masters, their skin color and their work as domestic labor or as field hands. Her parents were classified as mulattoes, and her grandmother, Molly, a slave who operated the town's Horniblow's Tavern, worked as a cook, seamstress and wet nurse, living freely on site. Harriet learned from her grandmother how to sew as a youngster, and her mistress taught her to read and spell—skills that would eventually help transform her life.

When Harriet turned twelve, her life altered dramatically when she and her brother were sold to Dr. James Norcom. At the same time, her father was moved out to a plantation far from Edenton. Harriet found herself left to the whims of Norcom, a sexual tyrant who stalked her in an effort to make her his concubine. "He told me I was his property; that I must be subjected to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men," Jacobs wrote.

Her account, published in 1861, revealed unspeakable acts of sexual coercion at a time when practically no one dared to speak of such things. She threw harsh light on the sexual brutality underlying reproduction of the slave system, where the violation of black women by white men stood side by side with the separation of families as a calculated,



Robert Langmuir Collection

1864: School in Alexandria, Virginia founded by Harriet Jacobs for former slaves.

measured provocation aimed not only at women, but at the black men who necessarily reacted with deep humiliation and rage. As labor historian Jacqueline Jones has observed in *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (Vintage, 1986): "Whites often intervened in more direct ways to upset the sexual order that black men and women created for themselves, thereby obliterating otherwise viable courtship and marriage practices.... Masters frequently practiced a form of eugenics by withholding their permission for certain marriages and arranging others." A master might prohibit a marriage for any highhanded reason, forbidding a male slave to seek a wife elsewhere, since their offspring would not belong to him but to the wife's slaveowner. Jacobs, for example, had fallen in love with a free black carpenter who proposed to marry her, but Norcom refused the lover's effort to buy her out of slavery. It is impossible to know how commonplace

Jacobs' story might have actually been.

For young Harriet, a desperate act of rebellion meant encouraging and accepting the advances of Samuel Tredwell Sawyer, a youthful white lawyer of the town's aristocracy who ranked above Norcom in social standing. She bore him two children over several years. As a pro-slavery advocate in the North Carolina legislature of 1830, he joined in pushing through a wave of repressive measures aimed at control of free blacks and whites as well. New laws imposed strict penalties against teaching slaves to read or write, the harboring of runaway slaves and aiding runaways or emancipating them.

Less than three weeks after the North Carolina legislature's measures passed, the Nat Turner Revolt occurred in 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia. Deeply religious from childhood, Nat Turner was a skilled preacher and possessed some influence among local slaves. He planned attacks with a band of approximately 60 followers. After killing the family of Turner's owner, the band spread the revolt, in two days killing a total of 55 white people. The revolt was soon crushed: 13 slaves and three free blacks were hanged immediately. Turner himself escaped into the woods, but was captured, hanged, skinned and a purse made of his skin. Dozens more blacks were also killed in retaliation. The news traveled sixty miles downstream to Edenton and the repression that followed was roused with fifes blaring and drums sounding as white mobs formed roving bands of armed slave patrollers imposing martial law.

Fearful that Turner's revolt would inspire others to arms, slave masters put Edenton under round-the-clock patrols, with house-to-house searches. Jacobs

recalls how the fear of Turner's revolt prompted slave owners to conclude "that it would be well to give the slaves enough of religious instruction to keep them from murdering their masters." Worried that any congregating of blacks meant seeds planted for insurrection, the slave masters reduced to rubble the meetinghouse blacks had built communally that served as their church; the congregation was forced to attend the white churches.

Harriet's own situation became more precarious as she grew sick and tired of trying to avoid sexual servitude under Norcom. Finally she fled to a crawlspace concealed beneath her grandmother's roof—a cell roughly seven feet wide, nine feet long and three feet high. There she would spend the next seven years, only leaving the house once. She subsequently escaped to the North in June 1842 and ended in the care of Philadelphia's Vigilant Committee, but as with many who traveled the Underground Railroad, she never divulged her route.

Abolitionist Fighter

Once in the free states of the North, Jacobs lived in constant trepidation, fearing Norcom and his heirs would seek to claim their "property." Her immediate focus was on finding her children, who had been sent North as servants to their father's kin. At first, Jacobs avoided the abolitionist circles, after an initial encounter in Philadelphia included a warning from Reverend Jeremiah Durham that she should avoid revealing her sexual history because some might treat her with "contempt." Later, she joined her brother, John S., who had escaped Norcom before her and had become a well-known anti-slavery activist. He

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Library of Congress

Fugitive slaves in 1862 crossing the Rappahannock River, Virginia.

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Just Out!

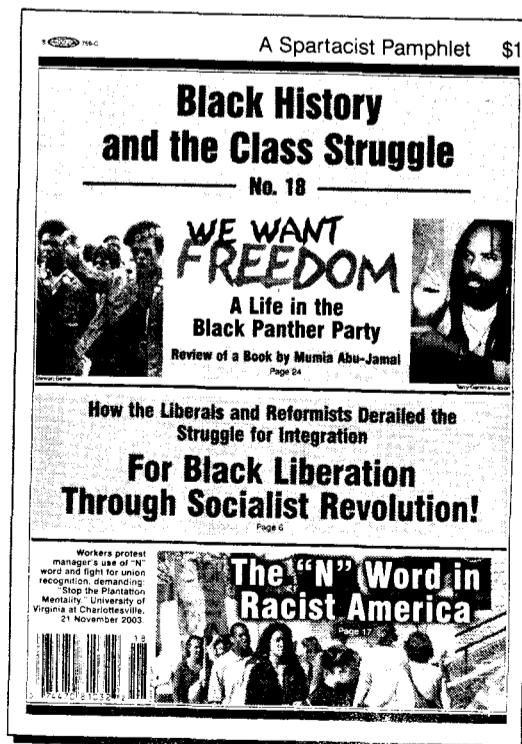
Contents include:

- From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal In the Shadows of Abu Ghraib Prison
- Finish the Civil War! Black Disenfranchisement and American "Democracy"
- How the Liberals and Reformists Derailed the Struggle for Integration For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!
- The "N" Word in Racist America
- A Life in the Black Panther Party *We Want Freedom* Review of a Book by Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Join the Labor Black Leagues!
- Racism and Anti-Woman Bigotry For Free Abortion on Demand!
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\$1 (48 pages)

Black History is sent to all *Workers Vanguard* subscribers.

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



A Hard Look at Recent Party Work and Current Tasks

The Spartacist League/U.S. held its 12th National Conference last summer in the New York City area. Attending were elected delegates and members from every SL local, members of the Spartacus Youth Club, and also members of the Labor Black Leagues, which are associated with the SL. The SL is the U.S. section of the International Communist League, to which it is subordinate. The conference was immediately preceded by a meeting of the ICL's International Executive Committee (IEC). Conference delegates heard politically rich greetings from representatives of every ICL section.

As the highest decision-making body of the SL/U.S., the National Conference is charged with reviewing the work and decisions of the organization since the previous conference, assessing the current political situation and our interventions into various milieus, charting the organization's tasks for the coming period and electing a new Central Committee to lead the work of the party between conferences.

This National Conference was particularly significant since it continued the work begun at the ICL's Fourth International Conference in the autumn of 2003 in critically assessing the internal fights and public interventions of our organization over the past period (see "The Fight for Revolutionary Continuity in the Post-Soviet World," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 58, Spring 2004). In the immediate aftermath of the International Conference, a member of the IEC posed the tasks facing us:

"We need to ensure that we don't lose our programmatic bearings by inventing a 'new world reality.' We need to examine particular political questions on the basis of the fundamentals of Marxist theory combined with our already developed positions, taking into account a concrete examination of the issue in question.... Moreover, we need to intervene in the world as much as possible to test our program and be able to make assessments of our work. This requires a knowledgeable and thinking cadre who speak up."

And the cadre certainly spoke up! The three-month period of pre-conference discussion produced an outpouring of documents by comrades critically evaluating past campaigns and aspects of our work, necessitating the production of seven internal discussion bulletins on top of many more international and SL/U.S. bulletins from preceding months.

The conference served to politically arm our organization by sharpening our interventions into struggles against U.S. imperialism and in defense of working people and the oppressed—politically combatting our opponents and winning new adherents to Marxism and the fight for socialist revolution. Shortly after the conference, we carried out a very successful *Workers Vanguard* subscription drive (see article in WV No. 836, 12 November 2004). More recently, the annual Partisan Defense Committee Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners drew record audiences and in particular highlighted the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal (see "Thousands Raised for Class-War Prisoners," WV No. 840, 21 January).

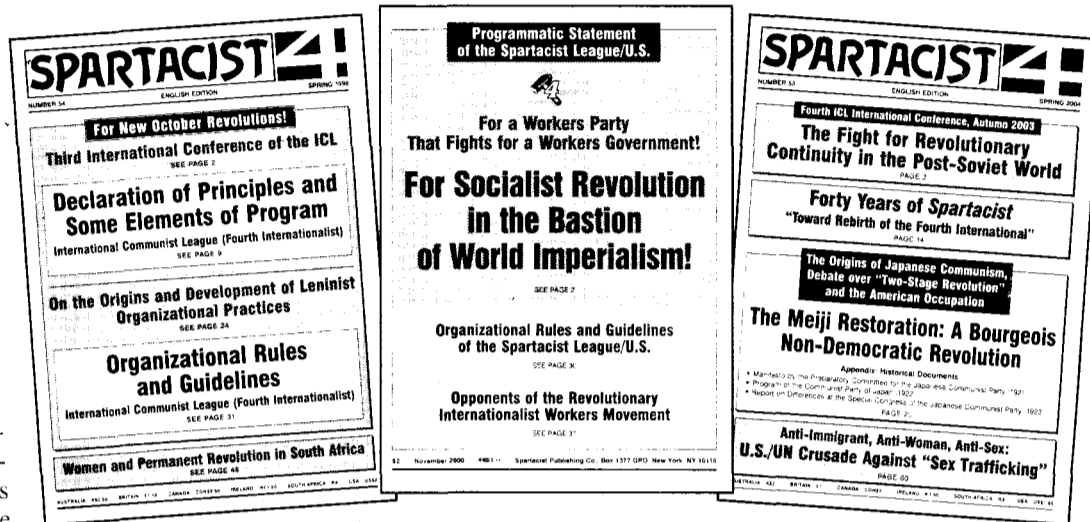
This was a delegated conference, for which one delegate represented five members of the SL. Elections for delegates took place on the basis of agreement with a written political position. A draft conference document titled "Reconstructing a Damaged Party" was submitted by the Central Committee. That document, as amended, as well as a separate

Spartacist League 12th National Conference

"Tasks of the Spartacist League/U.S." document, was adopted by the conference. Putting the party's problems and tasks in the political context of the post-Soviet world, the conference document asserted that the experience and aims of

we had previously produced. Thus, we published the series of articles on "Marxism vs. Anarchism" precisely because we anticipated and saw a resurgence of anarchist ideology among left-wing youth.

On the other hand, the leadership in the



ICL "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" (*Spartacist* No. 54), *Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.* and report on 2003 ICL International Conference (*Spartacist* No. 58).

the 1917 October Revolution must remain our guide, a compass against which to measure our positions.

The Fight for Revolutionary Continuity

The onset of the "post-Soviet" period required open and wide-ranging debate in our organization and its leadership. We are confronting a fundamentally changed world political situation, conditioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, we face genuine objective problems that no Trotskyist group has heretofore faced. The period of the collapse of the Soviet Union coincided with a shift in the resident central leadership of the SL/U.S. Under a different, somewhat insecure leadership, the difficulties in grappling with the new political terrain were magnified.

On the one hand, we recognized the retrogression of proletarian consciousness internationally—that militants no longer identify struggles against exploitation and oppression with the goal of communism—and that this regression required propaganda different from that

ICL and SL centers seized on instances of social protest to project opportunities for large-scale recruitment of youth and others, out of all proportion to the real situation. As the conference document put it: "Abstract recognition of the retrogression of consciousness and dealing with its concrete manifestations are not at all the same thing."

Most of our cadre joined in a period when Marxism was hegemonic on the left. Thus, the bulk of the leadership assumed we would recruit from the pseudo-Trotskyists and Maoists those people who thought they joined authentic Trotskyist or Marxist-Leninist organizations. Today, Marxism is no longer what motivates the overwhelming majority of young radicals, including those won to our ostensibly socialist opponents. However, we were still searching for some kind of genetically programmed Marxists. Lenin came from another school: he understood that the hegemony of Marxism among politically advanced workers and leftist intellectuals wasn't a natural condition of the mod-

ern world but had to be fought for.

What we are faced with is the hard task of explicating the basic principles and worldview of Marxism, as did Georgi Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labor group in late 19th- and early 20th-century Russia. Lenin himself came to political consciousness at that time, when his beloved older brother was executed for participating in a failed plot by revolutionary populists to assassinate the tsar. Lenin became a Marxist only through a prolonged period of internal development and struggle in which he transcended the revolutionary populist outlook and program then hegemonic among the Russian leftist intelligentsia.

A high point of the conference was an educational given by comrade Joseph Seymour on "How Marx Became a Marxist" (see part one of the educational in WV No. 840, 21 January). The class traced Marx's development from a radical bourgeois intellectual to a proletarian revolutionary communist. It was especially helpful in assisting comrades to understand that we now confront tasks in some ways akin to those of the Emancipation of Labor group which found it necessary to defend the scientific basis of Marxism against various expressions of left-radical bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology.

During Cold War II, beginning in the late '70s, our tendency resolutely and uniquely defended the Soviet Union and the East European bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary forces. In the name of "democracy" and "anti-Stalinism," the various pseudo-Trotskyist groups and almost all other self-described leftists enthusiastically supported those very forces, from Solidarność in Poland to Boris Yeltsin and his supporters in Russia. Their open support to counterrevolution was presaged by their cheerleading of the U.S.-backed Islamic *mujahedin* in Afghanistan.

Trotsky warned his supporters that in the wake of the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the *negative* confirmation of the Left Opposition's political line against Stalin and Bukharin would at best result in the recruitment of handfuls of militants, whereas a victory for the revolution would have radicalized masses internationally and led to the recruiting of many tens of thousands.

But while this lesson was stated by us in relation to the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state, it was not fully understood. Since the results of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe substantiated our political struggle during Cold War II against both the Stalinists and anti-Soviet "Third Camp" socialists, many comrades thought we would be able to confidently announce "we told you so" and reap immediate recruits from our opponents. And had the Russian workers fought in 1991-92, even short of victory, we *would* have been in a far better position to make that argument. However, counterrevolution triumphed and, not for the first time, revolutionaries were abused by history—an important objective source of the frustration and concomitant political and organizational departures by elements in our leadership, both internally and externally.

As detailed in the *Spartacist* article on the ICL Conference, matters came to a head in the summer of 2003. An internal fight broke out in the wake of the decision by some members of *Workers Vanguard* Editorial Board and Political Bureau,



9 February 2002: Oakland united front, initiated by Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League for Social Defense, was the first labor-centered mobilization in U.S. against USA-Patriot and Maritime Security Acts, in defense of immigrant rights.



Spartakist

East Berlin, 3 January 1990: Spartacist-initiated demonstration at Treptow Park against fascist desecration of memorial to Red Army liberators and in defense of DDR deformed workers state. ICL uniquely fought capitalist counterrevolution, provided Marxist analysis of world-historic defeat.

along with comrades in the International Secretariat (I.S.), to excise from the published version of a letter by the International Bolshevik Tendency (BT) a postscript grotesquely and falsely accusing SL/U.S. National Chairman James Robertson of "vulgar chauvinism." The smear—originated by renegades who fled our organization at the onset of the anti-Soviet Cold War II—was designed to invalidate our history and imply that ICL members are dupes and/or racists. By excising the "P.S."—an omission which the BT immediately exploited—WV essentially pled Robertson guilty as charged, putting into question the ICL's programmatic continuity and indicating agnosticism on our very existence.

The BT excision provoked outrage throughout the ICL, exposing political disorientation within the central administration of the ICL and SL/U.S., an administration that was becoming politically erratic and beginning to exhibit corollary bureaucratic practices. Increasingly, such practices began to erode our party's self-correction mechanism by stifling debate and discussion—not mainly through formal measures but rather through a marked tendency to elevate disputed questions, including minor tactical differences, into questions of principle and regime.

The ability to frankly assess our work and correct our mistakes is a critical weapon for Leninists to maintain the integrity of the revolutionary program against the pressures of reactionary capitalist society. It provides the party with the capacity to test its leadership, strategy and tactics in light of experience and our revolutionary principles. Ultimately, this is expressed in the right to form factions when serious questions of program and principle need to be thrashed out. Such struggle is crucial to maintaining our revolutionary continuity with the early American Trotskyists, from whom we derive, and with Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks.

The Russian Question and the Fight for New Octobers

We have often described ourselves, in the words of James P. Cannon, founder of American Trotskyism, as "the party of the Russian Revolution." At the crucial hour, in stark contrast to most of the left, the ICL stood at our post in defense of the gains of the October Revolution. Amid the incipient proletarian political revolution in East Germany (the DDR) in 1989-90, we threw all our resources into this struggle, fighting against capitalist reunification and for a "Germany of workers councils." Of four reporters to the main conference session on "Reconstructing a Damaged Party," one concentrated on the lessons of our intervention into the DDR where, for the first time in our history, we intervened directly in world-historic events.

We also fought against capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, establishing a station in Moscow. This work cost the life of our comrade Martha Phillips. The aftermath of Yeltsin's August 1991 counter-coup, in the absence of working-class resistance, saw the final undoing of the workers state issuing from the October Revolution. We published our

seminal article, "How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled," which explained why Trotsky's prognosis that capitalist restoration would require a civil war had not materialized.

Yet the ICL failed to conduct a synthetic assessment of either our intervention in the DDR or the work of Moscow station. The failure to critically evaluate these interventions helped set a pattern over the next period that major party interventions did not have to face real scrutiny inside the organization. The ICL Conference devoted considerable attention to correcting and honing our understanding of the situation in China—the "Russian question" today. The International Secretariat is orchestrating a full assessment of our work in the DDR and in Russia, beginning with a three-part educational review in all the sections. This is key to strengthening the party in our fight for unconditional military defense of and proletarian political revolution in China and the other remaining deformed workers states—Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea.

Communist Intervention in Bush's America

The conference took place months before the U.S. presidential elections, when "Anybody but Bush" sentiment had become dominant among the left and activist youth milieus. Addressing the high level of polarization in the American electorate, despite the few substantive policy differences between the Republicans and Democrats, a leading comrade warned in a letter quoted in the conference document:

"If we simply focus on the narrow programmatic differences between the Democrats and Republicans, then we cannot address the intense mutual hostility of their supporters. And if we simply focus on the hatred felt by many black working people for the Republicans, we are likely to exaggerate the differences between the GOP and the Democrats."

The document notes that while such groups as the Communist Party and Democratic Socialists of America openly support the Democratic Party, Workers World Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party "channel opposition to the crimes of the imperialist rulers into liberal antiwar, pro-civil liberties coalitions (ANSWER, NION) whose bottom line is 'anybody but Bush.' We have found that many self-described anarchist youth, lacking any class understanding, see no reason in principle not to support the Democrats."

Delegates spoke to how the call raised by SL/SYC contingents in the Iraq antiwar protests to "Break with the Democratic Party of War and Racism—For a Workers Party That Fights for Socialist Revolution!" attracted militant youth repelled by the protest organizers' liberal pressure politics. Our call to defend North Korea and its right to nuclear weapons was also polarizing, as many "antiwar" Democrats railed that Bush's obsession with Iraq was steering attention away from going after the North Korean deformed workers state. Most protesters, however, did not automatically see how our call to "Defend Iraq Against U.S. Attack," i.e., standing for the defeat of U.S. imperialism, was

counterposed to such pacifist slogans as "no to war"—a slogan pushed by the liberals and reformists in order to pressure the capitalist parties to adopt more pacific, "humane" policies.

Much of the political discussion on our propaganda and intervention into the antiwar and anti-globalization milieu took place at the Youth Commission at the conference, composed of SYC members from around the country. The SL was represented by a delegation elected by the conference. The gathering revealed a growing youth component of our common movement, including the recruitment of a number of minority and working-class youth over the last few years: it voted to expand the national Youth Commission in charge of producing the *Young Spartacus* pages that appear in WV every month. The Commission also discussed the then-upcoming protests against the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, addressing the need to politically take on the reformist left's pandering to the "Anybody but Bush" sentiment.

At the final session of the conference, a senior party comrade and veteran youth activist spoke to the need for a "carnivorous leadership of the youth": "It's very good for a party leadership to have some carnivores on their trail. And in order to become a youth organization that wants to get the party leadership, you have to publish a newspaper, get an office, collect money—youth never have any problems about collecting money when they've got a reason for it—go on national tours, set up local branches, participate in campus struggles, and all the other things you have to do to get the party leadership."

Iraq War and Occupation

A separate conference agenda point was devoted to the Iraq war and occupation. Prior to the conference, a dispute

broke out over what slogans best encapsulated our proletarian internationalist defense of the Iraqi peoples against U.S. occupation. This discussion was driven by a number of important factors, including the ethnic/religious divisions (Sunni, Shi'ite, Kurd) within Iraq, which was arbitrarily carved out by the British imperialists following World War I, and the fact that many of those who are fighting the American occupation forces appear to be reactionary Islamic fundamentalists who also attack other ethnic/religious groupings in the country.

Much of the debate revolved around how one can make clear that every blow struck against the American-led occupation is in the interests of working people across the world while also underlining our opposition to the reactionary social and political positions of those now fighting the U.S. Some comrades tended to underestimate the reactionary politics of the "resistance," while others tended to over-emphasize it at the expense of the primary issue, opposition to the American occupation.

By the time of the conference the differences had narrowed considerably, though the debate helped to sharpen our line and hone our propaganda. The conference affirmed as our central slogan complex, "U.S. and Allied Forces Out of Iraq Now! Down With the Colonial Occupation! For Class Struggle Against U.S. Capitalist Rulers at Home!" In order to make clear our side in the occupation, as we did during the war with our call to defend Iraq against imperialist attack, we also raise the slogan "Defend the Iraqi Peoples Against U.S. Imperialist Butchers!"

While affirming that we will continue to raise the call for a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan, we noted that at this particular juncture, in Iraq—and only in Iraq—the Kurdish question has become decisively subordinated to the colonial occupation, in the sense that the Kurdish political parties and their military forces are an integral part of the occupation forces.

Fighting Domestic Repression

In our conference deliberations, we tried to clearly face the political reality in which we function and the problems—ranging from critical to trivial—we have encountered. As Marx put it, "the point is to change" the world and to change it you've got to recognize it. The conference document dealt with the intensified bourgeois reaction in the U.S. that "took full flight after the September 11 attacks. Perceiving few obstacles in the way of its global ambitions, U.S. imperialism has extended its military power to Central Asia and the Near East while

continued on page 8

No. 31, Summer 2003
50¢ (24 pages)
Class-Struggle Defense Notes No. 31 reprints in its entirety the *amici curiae* (friends of the court) brief filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals by the PDC and the Spartacist League in defense of Jose Padilla.

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Conference...

(continued from page 7)

carrying out a series of repressive measures domestically that spell a qualitative diminution of democratic rights."

The document also dealt with a major problem with our propaganda in the immediate aftermath of September 11, when our party press failed for a full month to publicly state that Marxists draw a distinction between attacks on institutions like the Pentagon—which directly represents the military might of U.S. imperialism—and random and criminal terror against innocent civilians, as in the case of the World Trade Center. Unlike the World Trade Center, the Pentagon is the command and administrative center of the U.S. imperialist military, and as a military installation the possibility of getting hit comes with the territory. That recognition does not make the attack an "anti-imperialist" act, nor does it change the fact that terrorism almost always gets innocent people—in this case, the passengers on the plane as well as the maintenance workers, janitors and secretaries at the Pentagon.

The party can be proud of the steps we have taken in fighting the government's assault on the rights of the population. In February 2002, the Partisan Defense Committee and Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense initiated a labor-centered united-front protest in Oakland, California in defense of immigrant rights and against the USA-Patriot and Maritime Security Acts. That was the first union-centered protest in defense of immigrant rights in the U.S. after the September 11 attacks.

In 2003, the PDC and SL filed "friends of the court" briefs on behalf of Jose Padilla, an American citizen seized in Chicago by the government as an "enemy combatant" (see *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* No. 31, Summer 2003). The detention of Padilla without any charges or access to legal counsel or recourse represents an attack on the very right of citizenship, concretizing what we have stressed from the beginning of the "war on terror": that the measures enacted first against immigrants would not be so limited but would be used against citizens as well, particularly the black population, and in the long run the left and labor movement. Legal and social defense will continue to loom large as a task of our common movement in the period ahead.

The Fight to Free Mumia and Abolish the Racist Death Penalty

One of the conference reporters angularly characterized the problems with the SL/U.S. work over the last period as "stodgy demoralized sectarianism alternating with get-rich impressionism." For example, our sectarian position to not sell at the 1999 Seattle protests—painting all the protesters with the brush of the AFL-CIO labor tops' grotesque anti-Chinese, anti-Communist protectionism—cost us precious political capital.



Lenin and Trotsky in Red Square on second anniversary of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

The decision to boycott the protest against the World Trade Organization meant that we left the field free for our reformist political opponents and lost an important opportunity to engage with and learn more about the youthful anti-globalization and anarchist milieu.

At roughly the same time, when we applied the united-front tactic in the 23 October 1999 labor/black united-front mobilization against the Ku Klux Klan in New York City, this success was followed by a highly unrealistic, exhausting campaign to recruit large numbers of "young black workers." October 23 was an important *defensive* struggle, initiated by the PDC and heavily built by the SL and SYC, in which some 8,000 people turned out to stop the fascists. The resident party leadership, however, confused this successful defensive action with a generalized leap in proletarian consciousness, especially among New York's black working class. The fact that only two months after the anti-Klan mobilization, New York City's transit workers stood down from their strike threat in the face of company/government union-busting moves should have been cause to review the post-October 23 policy.

Reviewing this work cast light on our struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther, supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization and award-winning journalist who has been on death row since 1982 on false charges of killing a policeman. First taking up Mumia's cause in 1987, the Partisan Defense Committee did trail-blazing work to publicize his case and his powerful writings, helping to expose the racist railroading of Mumia by the cops, District Attorney's office and courts. The PDC initiated united-front defense rallies for Mumia, seeking in particular to mobilize labor support for him and demanding abolition of the racist death penalty. For a time, PDC counsel served on Mumia's legal defense team.

Our work was crucial in making Mumia known to a national and international audience, including trade unions.

In the summer of 1995, after a death warrant was signed against him, a powerful movement demanding that Mumia's life be saved erupted across the U.S. and around the world. His scheduled execution was stayed by the courts in August of that year. And while we succeeded in our efforts to galvanize much larger social forces to fight on behalf of Jamal, we recognized that those same forces were far removed from our communist outlook and would inevitably seek to marginalize our involvement in this struggle.

L. Y. Leonidov

24 "new trial" rally, and correctly underlined that this provided a left cover for those who did not want to call for Jamal's freedom. However, rather than commending the ILWU stop-work action as an important statement of the kind of social power needed for Jamal's defense, we effectively equated the action with Heyman's pandering to the call for a "new trial."

A resolution passed at the conference underscored the need for our work and press to highlight the fight for Mumia's freedom. This is all the more urgent today given that few youth know who he is, much less see the significance of his struggle in the fight against black oppression. The success of the recent PDC benefits is testimony to both the appeal of Mumia's case among many black, youth and trade-union activists and the sense that much more needs to be done in the fight for his freedom.

Intervening in American Society: Black and Union Work

Among the decisions of the conference was to form a national Black Commission, whose purview will include the *Black History and the Class Struggle* pamphlet series. This Commission will also monitor national developments of importance in the fight for black rights, including in the South, and coordinate the work of the Labor Black Leagues, which work in conjunction with most of our party locals.

The conference agreed on the need for



PDC banner at San Francisco "new trial" demo for Mumia Abu-Jamal, 24 April 1999.

However, this correct observation became a rationale for increasingly withdrawing from political combat with groups such as Socialist Action and the Workers World Party who tailored their appeals to liberals who were agnostic on Mumia's innocence and thus would not rally around a call to free him. Accordingly, the reformists purposefully subordinated the call to *free* Mumia to the demand for a "new trial." Our disengaging from political combat with these forces meant we were not as effective as we could have been in exposing their demobilization of support for Mumia.

We correctly decided against endorsing protests which were called around the "new trial" demand, such as the "Millions for Mumia" demonstrations on 24 April 1999. But we wrongly concluded that we were precluded, on grounds of political principle, from marching in these demonstrations. We should have made clear our political opposition by organizing "Free Mumia" contingents in the demonstrations organized by liberals and reformists. Instead we refused to march in these demonstrations at all, even while organizing full mobilizations of our members to attend them to sell our paper. This policy wrongly equated endorsement of an action, which implies political agreement with the demands, with organized participation in the event itself.

Our policy of not marching on 24 April 1999 played a role in our attitude toward a stop-work meeting called by the West Coast ILWU longshore union in defense of Jamal the same day as those marches. We noted the move by ILWU Local 10 bureaucrat Jack Heyman to organize a union contingent that included the slogan to free Jamal at the same time that he motivated the ILWU to endorse the April

more articles in *WV* on the fight against black oppression, and many delegates spoke to the need to continue addressing the increased acceptance of the "N" word particularly among black ghetto youth, an expression of internalized oppression based on their enforced segregation at the bottom of society.

The Black Commission, which met during the conference, voted to encourage the Labor Black Leagues to add a demand to their ten-point program expressing opposition to laws against prostitution as well as the other "crimes without victims," such as pornography, gambling and drugs. This demand, subsequently adopted by the LBLs, is particularly important in addressing the contradiction that much of the black population—which often constitutes the most militant fighters in the workers movement—is politically advanced in awareness of the draconian state repression and brutal oppression that characterizes American society, but at the same time tends to be politically backward on social questions like abortion and gay rights, due in part to the continuing, weighty influence of the black churches.

Another issue that received considerable attention was how we conducted our debate with the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) in May 2003. The LRP leadership cadres are the direct descendants of Max Shachtman, who split from the Trotskyist movement in 1940, refusing to defend the Soviet Union. But their views were also centrally shaped by the 1960s New Left, and thus their politics are defined not simply by "State Department socialism," but also by cheerleading for petty-bourgeois "Third World" nationalism abroad and

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WV Photo

San Francisco, January 2003: Spartacist-initiated Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent protests buildup for Iraq war.

Redfern...

(continued from page 2)

class. Many of the most politically conscious Maori, Asian, Arab and Turkish workers living in racist White Australia identify with the struggles of Aboriginal people. Meanwhile leftist and worker militants in the neocolonial countries of Asia and the Pacific see in the brutal oppression of Aboriginal people a mirror of their own subjugation under U.S., Japanese and Australian imperialism. To unite across race lines in this country and to win the trust of, and hence a crucial fighting alliance with, the workers of the Asia-Pacific region, the proletariat must show determined opposition to the racist campaigns of the White Australia capitalist rulers.

No Illusions in the Capitalist State!

In response to incessant cop brutality, some left groups and Aboriginal leaders have raised calls for some form of "civil-

ian review" of the police or for governments to "empower" and resource policing of areas like The Block by elders in the black community. For example, a 25 August letter to the *Koori Mail* by the FSP proposes "the establishment of independent elected civilian review boards" as a "mechanism of accountability" of the police. But the police, along with the military, courts and prisons are at the core of the capitalist state which was created, exists, and is replenished for the very purpose of enforcing the rule of the racist exploiting class over the workers and dispossessed. While it is possible, through social struggle, to win temporary concessions from the capitalists such as wage increases or greater access to social services, the bourgeoisie are no more going to cede control of their armed thugs, the police, than they are going to hand over power to the toiling masses. Any pretence of "civilian review" of the cops invariably serves to simply legitimise the police by propagating the deadly illusion that they are serving and being directed by the whole community.



Sydney: Spartacus Youth Club supporters join Redfern march in memory of TJ, February 2004.

Similarly, any "community policing" of areas like The Block that is set up and financed by the ruling class will be used by it to legitimise racist repression and make complicit some Aborigines in the oppression of their own people. And the only elders whom the bourgeoisie would "empower" to police their communities would be those that the capitalists seek to buy off or those who have already shown themselves willing to be allies of the racist rulers—like the people who have accepted invitations to join Howard's hand-picked Aboriginal "advisory" council or Mick Mundine, who has welcomed racist cop raids targeting The Block.

What is needed is a program of union/black/minority action against racist terror as part of a class-struggle fightback against the all-sided capitalist attacks on the unions, the poor, women, Aborigines and immigrants. To realise this perspective requires a political struggle to break

(in the first instance, the most class-conscious) workers from illusions in the potential reformability of the capitalist state and to expose the Laborite misleaders who tie the working class to the bosses' state. We need an authentic Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the proletariat and its allies in a socialist revolution to sweep the racist capitalist system into the dustbin of history. On the way to this goal we need to defend all those who have courageously stood against the atrocities of racist capitalism: *Drop the charges against the Redfern and Palm Island black militants!*

* * *

Fax protest statements demanding the dropping of charges against the Redfern defendants to the NSW Attorney-General, Robert Debus on 011-612-9228-3166. Fax copies to the Partisan Defence Committee on 011-612-9281-2185. ■



Australasian Spartacist

Opposition to racist cop presence in Redfern emblazoned on part of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra, Australia's capital. Aborigines set up Tent Embassy in 1972 as a protest against Australian government's denial of land and other rights.

Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

Kurdish nationalists who collaborate with U.S. imperialism.

For the first time in centuries, Shi'ites will rule an Arab country, which is a reason al-Sistani and many other Shi'ite leaders pushed for the elections. This has Sunni Arab rulers apoplectic that a Shia "Crescent" will run from Iran through Iraq to Lebanon, via Syria. Notably, the oil wealth of Saudi Arabia is concentrated in Shi'ite areas, as is the largest concentration of oil wealth in Iraq (apart from Mosul), not to mention the oil wealth controlled by Iran's Shi'ite theocracy. Now, why would the Bush administration, which considers the Iranian Shi'ite Islamic regime at the pinnacle of the world "axis of evil," maneuver the elections in Iraq to bring the Shi'ites to power, thus strengthening Iranian influence in the region? Answer: the Bush administration doesn't know where it is, much less where it is going. Attempting to disprove new revelations by Seymour Hersh (*New Yorker*, 24 January) that U.S. commandos have already been dropped into Iran, Cheney told MSNBC's Don Imus, "We don't want a war in the Middle East if we can avoid it." Where do these lunatics think Iraq is, Greater Texas? ■

France, Germany and Britain are worried about Bush waging another war in the Near East. They have substantial economic investments and trade deals with Iran and are urgently negotiating to get the Ayatollahs to forswear development of nuclear weapons. Cheney's disavowal of war plans against Iran was anything but. Stating that "Iran is right at the top of the list" of world trouble spots, Cheney dropped that "the Israelis might well decide to act first and let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterwards." The Zionist neocons in the Bush administration have long had their sights on "regime change" in Iran as part of their overall plan to redraw the map in the interests of Israeli

security and American imperialist interests. As we reported in "Mullahs, Monarchists, Neocons and Zionists" (WV No. 820, 20 February 2004), Pentagon planners Richard Perle and Douglas Feith first schemed a new Near East plan many years ago in a position paper they drafted in 1996 for incoming Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In 2002, Perle prepared a slideshow for Pentagon chiefs that explained U.S. goals for bringing "democracy" to the region as follows: "Iraq—a tactical goal, Saudi Arabia—a strategic goal, and Egypt—the great prize."

No wonder then that the entire Arab world and "old Europe" are on edge. Growing discontent within the American military and a real shortage of troops will not necessarily stop a zealously ideological Christian fundamentalist White House, no doubt anxious to hasten Armageddon, from widening the war in the

establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East. This is the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. This means combining the struggle against the occupation with a struggle against all manner of bourgeois nationalism and religious fundamentalism, and poses the urgent need to forge Marxist parties to lead the struggles for workers rule. International extension of the revolution to the rich centers of imperialism—chiefly the United States, Germany and Japan—is not only essential for worldwide egalitarian socialist economic planning, but taking power out of the hands of the war-crazed U.S. imperialist rulers is essential for the future of life on the planet!

Imperialist War and Workers Revolution

The imperial ambitions so blatantly displayed in Bush's second inaugural speech were couched in bizarre Christian

the inaugural address, "and its fire-and-brimstone rhetoric seems to have been aimed at having the same effect on some of the world's leaders."

The template for the U.S. imperial presidency was set a long time ago. And though this ruling class may currently have a Christian wacko at the helm, nonetheless the power behind the ship of state is the relentless U.S. capitalist drive for profits, which in a world economy necessarily results in imperialism, the inevitably bloody expression of capitalism at its highest stage. Imperialist aggression and war are not "policies" that can be ended within the framework of capitalism—the entire system must be overturned.

Rejecting this Leninist understanding of imperialism, the reformist organizers of the antiwar movement, like Workers World and the International Socialist Organization, peddled the lie that the capitalist system can be reformed to work in the interest of human needs. They built antiwar demonstrations designed to appeal to liberal Democratic politicians who argue that the Iraq war is damaging to the interests of the U.S. On January 12, 16 Congressional Democrats issued an open letter to Bush calling for "immediate steps to begin the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq." These Democrats are getting themselves in position to play the same role they did before the war: to corral antiwar sentiment into the safe fold of the capitalist Democratic Party.

The fight against imperialist war must become a fight against the entire capitalist system which breeds it, and against both U.S. capitalist parties, Democrats as well as Republicans, who take turns presiding over an increasingly cruel and divided society. Largely because of its pro-capitalist misleadership, the working class, which alone has the ability to overthrow capitalism and open the road to human progress again, has been absent far too long as a contender for political and social power. Our task, as a small Marxist international organization, is to fight to reestablish the understanding that the road to human freedom lies through working-class socialist revolution. ■

A polling station in the northern city of Samarra blown to rubble in lead-up to January 30 "elections."



region—and certainly not from launching murderously destructive bombing raids on Iran. *U.S. keep your bloody hands off Iran!*

Democratic rights for all the peoples of Iraq, and across the Near East more broadly, cannot be achieved under capitalism, but require the overthrow of bourgeois rule in the region and the

fundamentalist rhetoric. They were also inspired by Zionist neocon ravings, as former Soviet dissident and right-wing Israeli minister Natan Sharansky is now being touted by both the born-again president and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. A London *Guardian* (22 January) writer quipped that Bush's speechwriter suffered a heart attack while working on

Narratives...

(continued from page 5)

often shared platforms with abolitionist Frederick Douglass and also worked on the *North Star*. Eventually becoming a frequent letter contributor to the *New York Daily Tribune*, she gained courage to write her autobiography and later served as a correspondent for William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*, as part of activist circles in Rochester, New York and Boston. Her views were no doubt shaped by her involvement with organized reformers from the anti-slavery and women's rights struggles in Rochester.

These abolitionists were part of a broad, bourgeois social radicalization among the 19th-century heirs to the Enlightenment, Protestant religious ideals and the American Revolution. Although opposition to slavery was by no means as widespread in the 1830s as it was to become immediately before the Civil War, nonetheless many prominent men, such as the wealthy Tappan brothers of New York and Gerrit Smith, the biggest landowner in the North, had joined the movement by the middle of the decade. Garrison understood that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document but thought that the institution could be done away with peacefully through "moral suasion." The movement split in the 1840s around the questions of women's rights and how to end slavery. Garrison believed the pro-slavery U.S. Constitution should be abolished and that the North should expel the South. Another wing, represented by eminent men like the Tappan brothers, excluded women from office within their organization, was against women's rights and wanted to orient struggles toward political work in Congress. On the left wing of the abolitionist movement were militant ex-slaves, free blacks and white abolitionists—revolutionary fighters like Frederick Douglass and John Brown who became convinced that the fight must be against the whole system of slavery, by armed force, including arming black slaves. Douglass and the insurrectionist wing were thoroughgoing egalitarians and, therefore, were also the most consistent supporters of women's rights.



Library of Congress

John Brown, courageous fighter against slavery.

The Jacobs' move to Rochester coincided with her brother John's hiring by the abolitionists' Anti-Slavery Office and Reading Room. Jacobs stayed with her brother's friends, Isaac and Amy Post, frequent hosts to executive sessions of the Western New York State Anti-Slavery Society. A major feature of their work in the winter of 1849 was mounting protests against school segregation. At the time, the threat of a national compromise over slavery also loomed, as abolitionists countered pro-slavery arguments against expanding slavery to territories seized in the 1848 Mexican War. Nonetheless, Congress passed the Compromise of 1850, which maintained slavery in these areas.

Measures included a more brutal version of the Fugitive Slave Law, which made it a crime for federal marshals not to arrest an alleged runaway slave and for anybody to assist a runaway, while also denying a suspected runaway any legal rights.

Amid this climate, Jacobs finally got her freedom when her close friend and employer negotiated the purchase of her freedom for three hundred dollars. She concludes her autobiographical account a freedwoman. According to Yellin, the draft text ended with a tribute to John Brown, but Lydia Maria Child, her editor,



Brown Brothers

The capture of Nat Turner after defeat of heroic slave revolt.

convinced Jacobs to drop it. Was this editorial measure a reflection of continuing debate among the pacifist Garrisonians over what course to take in the unfolding conflict?

It was certainly to Jacobs' credit, and an indication of her political allegiances, that she recognized the significance of Brown's October 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). In the battle that followed, Brown was wounded and ten of Brown's men—including two of his sons—were killed. Militarily defeated and hanged in punishment, Brown's political mission to destroy slavery by force of arms was spectacularly brought to conclusion by more than 200,000 freed slaves who fought in the Civil War.

At the outset, the "war between the states" was being fought only to "preserve the Union," and President Abraham Lincoln only opposed the extension of slavery. Karl Marx understood that the Civil War was at root a "conflict between the system of slavery and the system of free labor." Abolitionists sought to transform the war into a war of emancipation. Frederick Douglass insisted: "Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service, and formed into a liberating army, to march into the South and raise the banner of Emancipation among the slaves." It took two years of ignominious defeats led by politically unreliable Union Army generals to convince Lincoln of the necessity of freeing the slaves. After it became clear that the North could not win in any other way, he declared on 22 September 1862 all slaves in the Confederacy would be free on the first of January, 1863. Almost as important as freedom itself was the government's decision to form regiments of black soldiers. About 180,000 black soldiers served in the Union Army and as many as 29,000 men joined the Union Navy. This helped to turn the tide of battle. The Civil War and Reconstruction broke the class power of the slave South. It was the last great bourgeois revolution, the second American Revolution; the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were the legal codification of the revolutionary gains won at rifle-point by the interracial Union Army. The war and its aftermath ushered in the most democratic period for black people in U.S. history, underlining that a truly egalitarian radical vision of social reconstruction ultimately could not be fulfilled by a capitalist ruling class.

Civil War Years

Harriet Jacobs' role in the anti-slavery struggles and in the emerging Freedmen's Bureau was that of a political field worker. In October 1861, after Union

General William Tecumseh Sherman led his troops in an attack on Confederate Fort Walker on Hilton Head Island, a decisive step was made in the Civil War. Sherman's army drew behind it hundreds of former slaves who set up camps on the Sea Islands along the Carolina Coast. Union authorities set up a Department of the South, taking over some 195 plantations, employing 10,000 former slaves to raise cotton and auctioning land off to Northerners and a few freedmen with a bit of money.

Sherman's occupation of Port Royal,

fering people!" By midsummer, the federal superintendent in Alexandria was replaced, with improvements instigated from her collaboration with the Freedmen's Association.

In the summer of 1864, as Union Armies drew closer to taking Richmond, black "refugees" were drafted in response to threats on Alexandria, joining Union forces to defend the city against the Confederacy. Jacobs and her daughter Louisa organized the first commemoration of British West Indian Emancipation, featuring the presentation of a flag to the Colored Hospital—named L'Ouverture for the Haitian liberator—that had recently opened as a receiving place for the Colored Division of the Ninth Army Corps. She presented the flag to the surgeon in chief, addressing herself to black men in Union blues:

"Soldiers, what we have got came through the strength and valor of your right arms. Three years ago this flag had no significance for you, we could not cherish it as our emblem of freedom. You then had not part in the bloody struggle for your country, your patriotism was spurned; but to-day you are in arms for the freedom of your race and the defence of your country—to-day this flag is significant to you. Soldiers you have made it the symbol of freedom for the slave."

The Alexandria celebration was among many commemorations at which black fighters began to forge a sense of struggle not only for an end to slavery, but also to claim equal rights as American citizens.

Through the remaining days of the war, Jacobs volunteered in Alexandria as a visiting relief worker in the camp and in the hospitals. Freedmen there had already begun building a school and meeting-house, which she pushed to find funding for at the first congress of the Women's National Loyal League. Jacobs coordinated aid with the goal of opening a free school under black leadership, volunteering her daughter Louisa and Virginia Lawton, the daughter of old Boston friends, as two "colored teachers." Jacobs School's doors opened to seventy-five students in January 1864. Given her name recognition among readers of *Incidents*, the school was featured in the reform press, with Alexandria becoming a regular stop on tours of the conquered South. A photo of Jacobs among her charges was carefully taken to publicize the ability of former slaves to become exemplary citizens. At the time, the photo hung prominently in the offices of the *Freedman's Record*. By the end of March 1865, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau, putting it in charge of relief and oversight for former slaves in the South.

Radical Reconstruction Overturned

Harriet and Louisa Jacobs later went to Savannah, where, Yellin notes, "both control of the schools and control of the land were at stake." Against local government resistance, they opened the Lincoln School, a black-run institution, and attempted to set up an orphanage and home for the elderly. Military rule ended just before Jacobs and her daughter arrived and, though posing as a protector, the Union Army also would be wielded to aid the city's powerful elite and stymie black efforts at freedom. The land question features in many of Jacobs' dispatches because the land with freedmen's settlements where schools were located was soon turned over to their old masters. Louisa's Lincoln School survived, but by January 1866, all freedmen were ordered to sign contracts for their labor.

The brief labor contracts, Jacobs wrote, "are very unjust. They are not allowed to have a boat or musket. They are not allowed to own a horse, cow, or pig. Many of them already own them, but must sell them if they remain on the plantations." The black population was disarmed. Backed by the Freedmen's Bureau, "free labor" meant that most blacks worked in cotton production, suffering working conditions akin to slave exploitation of prewar years. In exchange for backbreaking field work, the freedmen gave the former masters two-thirds of the crop, kept a third, then

saw rations and rent deducted, resulting in a cycle of debt bondage.

However, Reconstruction posed a possibility of socially revolutionary transformations in the South: the regional ruling class, based on land and slaves, had been militarily defeated; under the occupying Northern power, black men and women, formerly slaves, exercised political rights for the first time in the South. Before the defeat of Reconstruction, many political offices in the South were held by black men.

Reconstruction not only brought about voting rights for black men and even many poor illiterate Southern white men but also ushered in the establishment of the South's first public schools, liberalized the South's barbaric penal code and reformed the planters' property tax system. These measures allowed for real prospects for schooling, land and jobs for black freedmen. But northern capitalists betrayed the promise of Reconstruction, allowing it to be physically smashed, aided by forces such as the Ku Klux Klan. In 1877, the last of the Union troops were withdrawn from Southern occupation, marking a compromise that put Rutherford B. Hayes in the White House. From this defeat of Reconstruction grew the postwar Southern system of sharecropping, poll taxes, chain gangs, lynch law and "separate but equal"—i.e., unequal—Jim Crow facilities.

During Reconstruction, Jacobs and other female abolitionists working as teachers risked their lives to participate in



Soldiers of the 107th U.S. Colored Troops at Fort Corcoran, near Washington, D.C. Black soldiers were key to Union victory in the Civil War.

freeing black people from the chains of bondage—their fight for free quality education was put front and center. But the sharpest debate raged over the question of land ownership. Freedmen and destitute white Unionist Southerners wanted the secessionists' estates confiscated, as at Port Royal, and distributed to them. Triumphant Northern rulers, however, would not permit an attack on "property rights," particularly as Northerners and Northern banks were grabbing up a good deal of Southern property. Intensive exploitation of black agricultural labor was allowed as the only way to rebuild the Southern economy, rather than industrial development or capital investment in modernization of agriculture.

This failure and betrayal of Recon-

struction perpetuated the oppression of blacks as a color caste at the bottom of American capitalist society. This racial division, with whites on top of blacks, has been and continues to be the main historical obstacle to the development of political class consciousness among the American proletariat. It will take a third American Revolution, led by a multi-racial workers party against capitalism itself, to break the fetters on blacks, women and all the oppressed.

Jacobs served with valor in the anti-slavery battles through Radical Reconstruction, but her story also fell victim to its defeat. At the time of her death in 1897, her name was barely remembered in the Boston abolitionist circles she once frequented. Even in her obituary, the Jacobs

School and her relief work during the Civil War and Reconstruction were completely omitted. As the years passed, the memory of Jacobs faded and photos and records of her Alexandria school were lost. Even her book came to be seen as Child's.

Anyone who has ever wondered how black people managed to struggle and survive the hideous tortures meted out during slavery and afterward would gain a lot from reading these books. They offer inspiration to a new generation of fighters facing the daunting task of toppling the dominance of capitalist exploitation and sexual oppression today. Though the Civil War smashed slavery, the dreams of men and women like Jacobs remain to be realized. Finish the Civil War—For black liberation in a workers' America! ■

Conference...

(continued from page 8)

tailoring black nationalism while accommodating white racism at home. Delegates were angry at the decision of several comrades in the central party leadership to take the "high road" with the LRP in our debate presentation. Thus, we did not

tune *Jade* in solidarity with the Liverpool dock workers strike in Britain. While we actively participated in the subsequent defense of the picketers, the ILWU and the Inlandboatman's Union against the port bosses, we dismissively declared in WV No. 681 (2 January 1998) that "ILWU officials refused to picket out the *Neptune Jade* because they fear retaliation by the PMA [the employers' Pacific Maritime Association]. Covering for the bureaucracy's capitulation to the bosses' rules, the protest organizers substituted a demonstration organized by leftists for a real picket line." As the conference document notes, "While this picket line was not officially sanctioned by the union, it allowed longshoremen to refuse to cross the line (under a contractual agreement that the situation created a 'health and safety hazard'). In fact, the ship was never unloaded in Oakland (or Vancouver or Japan) and was reportedly eventually sold in Taiwan with all its cargo on board."

Another issue addressed by the delegates was the need for systematic education in the fundamentals of Marxism, which the "Tasks" document underlined. Responding to widespread demand for more Marxist education of our newer members and cadre, a group of comrades set up an informal Education Commission at the conference, whose meetings were flooded with delegates and guests.

A Step Forward

In a vibrant if somewhat chaotic process, delegates submitted numerous amendments to the main conference and "Tasks" documents. Amendments were voted up or down by the delegates, with some substantial controversy on a few of them. The amended versions of the conference and "Tasks" documents were adopted unanimously. Delegates decided to continue the discussion begun at the ICL Conference on whether or not Marxists should run for executive office (e.g., mayor, governor, president) in bourgeois elections, and the section of the document on this question was removed.

In a final session, closed to all but elected and fraternal delegates, the conference discussed a slate for Central Committee, which had been proposed by the outgoing Central Committee and then amended by a Nominating Commission based on the recommendations of individual delegates. After debate and further nominations, a new CC was

elected and met following the conference to elect national officers and the Political Bureau, a resident body subordinate to the CC, and to assign comrades to various commissions.

The 12th National Conference represented a significant step forward. It reaffirmed the importance of maintaining our international flagship publication and central tool for intervention in the U.S., the bi-weekly *Workers Vanguard*. Our test now is how we deal with questions, opportunities and dangers as they arise, including those we cannot now predict.

Our opponents may well be tempted to take heart (and some cheap shots) from our own frank assessment of the party's problems. Unfortunately for them, the purpose of our rigorous internal accounting and making such public corrections as we deem necessary has to do with the fact that we are serious about our tasks and historic responsibility, including undertaking more effective combat against our opponents. Comrade Lenin did not spare Bolsheviks from withering criticism when departures within the party threatened to undermine its revolutionary purpose.

For our opponents, "sectarianism" is an all-purpose epithet aimed at denigrating the struggle to forge a revolutionary

party that embodies and applies the lessons of past proletarian struggles. Comrade Trotsky, vilified as sectarian by those "socialists" who had made peace with their own bourgeois rulers, wrote in a 1935 article, "Sectarianism, Centrism, and the Fourth International":

"Reformists and centrists readily seize upon every occasion to point a finger at our 'sectarianism.' Most of the time they have in mind not our weak but our strong side: our serious attitude toward theory; our effort to plumb every political situation to the bottom, and to advance clear-cut slogans; our hostility to 'easy' and 'comfortable' decisions, which deliver from cares today, but prepare a catastrophe on the morrow. Coming from opportunists, the accusation of sectarianism is most often a compliment."

We have made our share of errors. And we have fought to rectify and reconstruct. As the ICL Conference document stated:

"What is critical is that future workers revolutions must have a Bolshevik political arsenal: their cadres must be educated in the experiences of the Bolshevik Revolution, the early Communist International, Trotsky's Fourth International and our own ICL. New gains will be won only by those who prove able to fight to defend past gains. The ICL tenaciously fights to uphold the banner of new Octobers." ■

The Development of the Monist View of History



Georgii Valetinovich Plekhanov

Plekhanov, founder of Russian Marxism, faced task of explaining basic Marxist worldview.

thoroughly enough lambaste the LRP for, e.g., their opposition to busing to achieve school integration, though our speakers from the floor at the debate did this.

At its meeting, the Trade Union Commission stressed the need for increased attention to the party's trade-union fractions and discussed the work of our locals, analyzing the successes and problems. The Commission took up the Million Worker March, called by the more left-wing trade-union leaders to corral dissatisfied workers to vote for the Democrats. As well, the Commission reviewed our propaganda on labor struggles, raising several questions that require further discussion and recommending one correction.

Thus, on the recommendation of the Commission, the conference adopted a correction to a sectarian error concerning a September 1997 "community picket line" at the Port of Oakland that aimed to stop the unloading of the scab ship *Nep-*

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

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

Boston

Box 390840, Central Sta.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 666-9453

Chicago

Box 6441, Main PO
Chicago, IL 60680
(312) 563-0441

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
222 S. Morgan
(Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 380-8239

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
New York, NY 10008
(212) 267-1025

Public Office:

Sat. 1-4 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland

Box 29497
Oakland, CA 94604
(510) 839-0851

Public Office:

Sat. 1-5 p.m.
1634 Telegraph
3rd Floor

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Box 77494
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Toronto

Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, ON M5W 1X8
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Racist Outrage: Cops Awarded Millions for Beating Black Youth

Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES—The capitalist courts have in effect issued an all-points-bulletin to their racist thugs in blue: Beat blacks with impunity, win millions of dollars! On January 18, a civil jury in Los Angeles awarded Jeremy Morse, the then-Inglewood cop who was videotaped leading a viciously racist attack on black teenager Donovan Jackson-Chavis on 6 July 2002, \$1.6 million for “wrongful termination,” saying the city’s decision to fire him amounted to “reverse racial discrimination”! Morse’s partner on the scene, Bijan Darvish, who was suspended for ten days, was also awarded \$811,000 for “unfair discipline.” And in a vindictive move aimed at silencing any victim who would dare speak out against racist police brutality, Jackson-Chavis is now being threatened with prosecution for perjury for allegedly giving conflicting testimony about the incident that sparked criminal charges against the two officers. This is a racist outrage!

The jury, deciding a case centered in the city of Inglewood, where 47 percent of the population is black, had not one black person on it. They awarded the over \$2.4 million based on the “pain and suffering” Morse and Darvish experienced (!) and the potential loss of future earnings. “It seems they’re getting millions of dollars for beating someone,” said Nancy Goins, Jackson-Chavis’ aunt. Indeed, this award clearly gives the green light for further racist cop terror. Morse has a documented history of brutal beatings: one of several out-of-court settlements that the city of Inglewood reached with one of his victims involved a man who went into a coma after being placed in a choke-hold by Morse two weeks before the beating of Donovan Jackson-Chavis! While Jackson-Chavis reportedly has reached a tentative settlement with the city of Inglewood, the payoff to Morse and Darvish can only serve to embolden the cops whose job it is to repress the seething black and Latino ghetto masses through violence. It sets a precedent, making it even more difficult for victims of cop brutality to pursue any redress in the courts, even with damning video evidence.

Multiplied nearly a hundredfold, the



Inglewood, California, 6 July 2002: Cops beat 16-year-old Donovan Jackson.

awarding of millions to Morse and Darvish is reminiscent of the \$35,000 racist bounty awarded to Orange County child-killer cop Anthony Sperl as “workers’ compensation” for “psychological damage” after he killed Patrick Mason, a five-year-old black child, by shooting him in the chest in his own apartment bedroom 20 years ago. We noted at the time of Patrick Mason’s killing that “the gestapo police forces of Los Angeles and Orange County” are “trained in the My Lais of Vietnam.” They know their job is to terrorize black people, “and the victims had better not squawk about it” (WV No. 339, 7 October 1983). Today, the racist, marauding cops and prison guards trained in torture on the streets and in the prisons of America are using their “expertise” in the torture chambers of U.S. imperialism in Iraq.

The civil lawsuit alleged that Morse and Darvish—both white—were punished more severely than a black officer, Willie Crook, who also struck Jackson-Chavis and was suspended for four days. Morse’s attorney claimed that the city of Inglewood did this to appease blacks who felt Morse and Darvish’s actions were racially motivated. As if it weren’t racially motivated for a bunch of cops—black or white—to harass a black man about his car tags in a gas station and brutally attack his developmentally disabled son for nothing more than coming out of

the snack shop at the wrong time. At least one of the cops involved called Jackson-Chavis a “n-----.” Jackson-Chavis was struck repeatedly on the face, head and eyes, and then body-slammed to the ground and maliciously choked with a silver chain he was wearing until rendered unconscious. Mitchell Crooks, who filmed the assault from a motel across the street, captured Morse lifting the limp, unconscious body of the handcuffed youth off the ground, viciously slamming his head onto the trunk of a police car and punching him in the face. Out of revenge for Crooks’ capturing the battering on film and turning it over to the media, L.A. County District Attorney Steve Cooley had Crooks arrested!

Shortly after the beating, the L.A. County grand jury returned indictments against both Morse and Darvish. Morse was charged with “assault by a peace officer under the color of authority,” while Darvish was accused of filing a false police report. Not surprisingly, Darvish was quickly acquitted, and Morse was tried twice with both juries deadlocking and mistrials being declared. From the beginning, black people were barely represented on the juries, with only one being allowed on during the first trial. The District Attorney announced last February that he would not prosecute Morse a third time, saying that he did not believe 12 jurors could agree on whether Morse broke the law. Last year, an “impartial arbitrator” found Morse did not use excessive force and recommended that the city of Inglewood compensate Morse with full back pay.

As L.A.’s Democratic Party bosses like Mayor James Hahn and councilmen Antonio Villaraigosa and (ex-LAPD chief) Bernard Parks continue to push for more police to wage war on the ghettos and barrios, it is no wonder that widespread hatred of the cops in largely black areas of Compton, Inglewood and South-Central Los Angeles helped to sink last November’s ballot Measure A. The measure would have raised the county sales tax to hire more cops. A string of police abuse cases dating from before the 1991 Rodney King beating through last

year’s flashlight beating of Stanley Miller in Compton is well remembered by the black population.

Speaking at a January 21 protest against the verdict, prominent black Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters declared, “There are good cops and bad cops. We are not going to roll over for the bad cops.” This is not a question of “good” or “bad” cops. What the award to Morse and Darvish demonstrates is that there is no justice for black and working people in the capitalist courts. By the standards of bourgeois legality, the cops who beat Jackson-Chavis broke no laws. What they did was part of the job they are paid to do.

Racist cop brutality and killings are inherent in capitalist society because it is the job of the cops—whether white, black, Latino or Asian—to “serve and protect” the interests of the racist, capitalist rulers. And in the U.S., where racial oppression is fundamental to the American capitalist order, the primary targets are often blacks and minorities. The police, like the prisons and courts, are at the core of the capitalist state, which is an instrument of organized violence whose purpose is to maintain the class rule of the capitalist exploiters against all those they oppress. While Los Angeles has seen some successful union organizing drives and a number of hard-fought strikes in the last 15 years, particularly involving the immigrant and Latino proletariat of the area, it is a historically anti-union city where the racist cops have never had to go toe-to-toe against the mighty power of the multiracial labor movement. As a consequence, the police are notoriously bonapartist.

We in the Spartacist League fight to build the revolutionary workers party needed to instill within the American proletariat the consciousness that the cops engaged in the daily racist occupation, beating, torture and terrorizing of blacks and Latinos in America’s ghettos and barrios work for the same capitalist state that seeks to bust the unions and break strikes. They work for the same state whose military is engaged in the racist, neocolonial occupation of Iraq—in the name of the “war on terror”—with the concomitant killing and torture of Iraqis. Led by such a party, the working class must be mobilized in defense of its own interests and those of all the oppressed.

At the time of the assault on Jackson-Chavis, we pointed out in “Black Democrats Smother Outrage” (WV No. 785, 9 August 2002) that the attack

“came in the midst of a contract battle pitting the powerful ILWU longshore union against the shipping bosses out to gut the union. An ILWU strike would demonstrate the social power of the labor movement, a power that needs to be mobilized in defense of the ghettos and barrios against the marauding racist cops. But the labor movement is hamstringed by the union tops, whose program is one of class peace and collaboration with the bosses, in particular through their support to the Democrats....

“The working people need their own party—one that champions the rights of black people and all the oppressed; a workers party committed to the fight for workers revolution.... Only then will cop terror and racist oppression be forever done away with.” ■



Los Angeles, April 1983: Spartacist League protests racist cop killing of five-year-old Patrick Mason.