

# **Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.**



## **For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!**

# **For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!**

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# For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

# For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!

## Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.

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### I. The Spartacist League/U.S., Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

1. The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). As stated in the ICL's "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" (February 1998): "The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist tendency which is committed to the task of building Leninist parties as national sections of a democratic-centralist international whose purpose is to lead the working class to victory through socialist revolutions throughout the world." With our comrades around the world, we struggle to reforge Leon Trotsky's Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.

2. The program and strategy put forward by the Spartacist League for proletarian revolution in the American imperialist state are based on the principles of scientific socialism and historical (i.e., dialectical) materialism—a Marxist understanding of the specific, historically derived features of the present-day United States. Militarily the most powerful imperialist country in the world, the ambition of the supremely arrogant U.S. ruling class is to exercise complete

political/military global hegemony, an ambition which both conditions and is reinforced by the relative political backwardness of the American working class.

The U.S. is the only advanced capitalist country lacking a mass workers party representing even a deformed expression of the political independence of the proletariat. The central enduring feature of American capitalism, shaping and perpetuating this backward consciousness, is the structural oppression of the black population as a race-color caste at the bottom of society. Black oppression with its profound and pervasive ideological effects is fundamental to the American capitalist order. Obscuring the class divide, racism and white supremacy have served to bind white workers to their capitalist masters based on the illusion of a commonality of interest based on skin color.

The shell game through which the Democratic Party—the historic party of the Confederate slavocracy—is portrayed as the "friend" of blacks and labor has been essential to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. Our principal task in the U.S. is to break the power of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy over the labor movement. It is this bureaucracy—itsself a component part of the Democratic Party—which politically chains the proletariat to the bourgeoisie and is the major obstacle to revolutionary class consciousness, to the forging of a revolutionary workers party.

Thus the struggle to bring revolutionary consciousness to

**Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Workers Revolution!**

the working class—a precondition to socialist revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat—poses the strategic tasks of the fight for black liberation and the political and organizational independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, its parties and its state.

3. The proletariat is the only revolutionary class in modern society. Only the revolutionary conquest of power by the multiracial working class, emancipating the proletariat from the system of wage slavery, can end imperialist barbarity and achieve the long-betrayed promise of black freedom. We seek to build the Leninist vanguard party which is the necessary instrument for infusing the working class with this understanding, transforming it from a class *in itself*—simply defined by its relationship to the means of production—to a class *for itself*, fully conscious of its historic task to seize state power and reorganize society.

The struggle for proletarian power is the most ruthless and irreconcilable struggle in all history and requires that the revolutionary party be organized in accord with the principle of democratic-centralism. The party must unconditionally demand of all its members complete discipline in all public activities and actions of the organization. Such a party can only be forged by a *self-acting* and *critical-minded* membership which solves the problems confronting the party by collective thought, discussion and experience, requiring the widest party democracy. As James P. Cannon noted:

“Democratic-centralism has no special virtue per se. It is the specific principle of a combat party, united by a single program, which aims to lead a revolution. Social Democrats have no need of such a system of organization for the simple reason that they have no intention of organizing a revolution. Their democracy and centralism are not united by a hyphen but kept in separate compartments for separate purposes. The democracy is for the social patriots and the centralism is for the revolutionists.”

—“Leninist Organizational Principles,” 3 April 1953, *Speeches to the Party* (1973)

4. We live in the epoch of imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, an epoch of wars and revolutions in which the world economy comes into violent collision with the barriers imposed by the capitalist nation-state. “Marxism takes its point of departure from world economy, not as a sum of national parts but as a mighty and independent reality which has been created by the international division of labour and the world market, and which in our epoch imperiously dominates the national markets. The productive forces of capitalist society have long ago outgrown the national boundaries” (Leon Trotsky, Introduction to the German Edition, *The Permanent Revolution* [1930]).

5. American “democracy” has been purchased through brutal exploitation of the colonial and semicolonial masses around the world, generally through imposition of murderous anti-labor dictatorial regimes. America is ruled by the dictatorship of a single class, the bourgeoisie, alternately administered by the Democrats and Republicans, two wings



L.Y. Leonidov

**Bolshevik leaders V. I. Lenin and L. D. Trotsky (center) at celebration of the second anniversary of the October Revolution, 1919.**

of the same property party. The facade of democracy is designed simply to obscure the fact that the capitalist state is an instrument of organized force and violence—consisting at its core of the police, army, courts and prisons—for maintaining capitalist property and profits through the suppression of the working class and the oppressed and fending off foreign challengers. The proletariat cannot lay hold of this state machinery and use it for its own purposes, but must smash the bourgeois state and establish a workers state, laying the basis for the abolition of classes in an international communist world. *Our task, in the bastion of world imperialism, is to build the multiracial revolutionary workers party, section of a reformed Fourth International, which will lead the proletariat in the overthrow of the American capitalist order, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class and the establishment of a planned socialist economy.*

## II. We Are the Party of the Russian Revolution

1. As stated in the ICL’s “Declaration of Principles”: “We stand on the work of revolutionists such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Above all we look to the experience of the Bolshevik Party which culminated in the Russian Revolution of 1917, the only revolution

as yet made by the working class. This history illuminates where we come from, what we seek to defend and where we want to go."

In leading the small but young and militant working class of Russia to the taking of state power and the consolidation of its own class rule through workers councils (soviets), supported by the poor peasants and soldiers, the Bolshevik Party of V. I. Lenin and L. D. Trotsky delineated the strategy for proletarian revolution in the imperialist epoch. We seek to carry forward the international working-class perspectives of Marxism as developed in theory and practice by Lenin and Trotsky, as embodied in the decisions of the first four congresses of the Communist International and by the 1938 Transitional Program and other key documents of the Fourth International, such as "War and the Fourth International" (1934).

2. The October Revolution was the culmination of a wave of proletarian revolutionary ferment ignited by the unprecedented interimperialist carnage of World War I. The bourgeois order in the rest of Europe was saved by the treachery of the Social Democrats of the Second International—lackeys of capital who quickly moved to stifle the post-WWI revolutionary ferment, including by assisting in the military suppression of the insurgent workers in Central Europe. The immaturity and indecisiveness of revolutionary leadership outside Russia, particularly in Germany, led to the failure to realize opportunities for proletarian revolution. This, together with the pressure of imperialist encirclement on the isolated and economically backward Soviet workers state and the devastation of the most conscious layer of the proletariat in the Civil War that smashed the counterrevolutionary Russian and imperialist forces, set the stage for a *political* counterrevolution in 1924, what Trotsky called the "Soviet Thermidor."

While the social foundations of the workers state established in 1917 remained intact, by 1924 political power was transferred from the hands of the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of the conservative bureaucratic caste headed by J. V. Stalin. Under the false dogma of "socialism in one country," the Stalinist bureaucracy accommodated imperialism and betrayed the proletarian, revolutionary, internation-

alist perspectives of the Bolshevik Revolution. In opposition to Stalin's nationalist opportunism, Trotsky's Left Opposition was founded to defend the program of revolutionary internationalism.

After being expelled from the Communist Party (1927) and forcibly exiled from the Soviet Union (1928), Trotsky organized his followers into the International Left Opposition to fight within the Communist International for the return to the authentic revolutionary program of Leninism. When no party of the Comintern opposed Stalin's policies that allowed Hitler's Nazis to come to power in Germany in 1933 without a struggle, Trotsky declared that the Third International was dead as a revolutionary organization and called for a new, Fourth International.

The Stalinist program of class collaboration led to the defeat of incipient workers revolutions such as China in 1925-27, Spain in 1936-39, Italy in 1943-45 and France in 1968. In his works such as *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky warned that if the Stalinist bureaucratic caste was not ousted through a political revolution by the Soviet proletariat, the bureaucracy would devour the workers state itself. Having systematically destroyed the revolutionary internationalist consciousness of the Soviet proletariat, the Stalinist bureaucracy did finally devour the workers state, ushering in the imperialist-backed capitalist counterrevolution of 1991-92.

3. The Spartacist League is the continuator of the revolutionary heritage of the early Communist Party and James P. Cannon's Socialist Workers Party (SWP). A leader of the early American Communist Party who was won over to Trotskyism while at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, Cannon exemplified the best of the revolutionary wing of the early American labor movement, notably including as well Vincent St. John and other leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World. In his prime, Cannon had the evident capacity to lead the American socialist revolution to victory. Unlike adherents to the Left Opposition in other countries, the American Trotskyist movement had the advantage of originating from a relatively cohesive faction of leading cadre within the Communist Party and was nourished by close and direct collaboration with Trotsky. This,

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## An Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

*Spartacist*, the theoretical and documentary repository of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), is published under the direction of the International Executive Committee in four languages. *Spartacist* is included in all subscriptions to the ICL's press in the English, French, German and Spanish languages.

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**Left: James P. Cannon, early American Communist Party leader who was won to Trotskyism in 1928. Trotskyist movement in U.S. was nourished by years of direct collaboration with Trotsky, shown at right in 1931 with copy of newspaper of American Trotskyists.**

and its location in a country insulated from the real carnage of World War II, uniquely allowed for the continuous, independent existence of the American Trotskyist party, making Cannon's SWP a living link between the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky and later generations of revolutionary Marxists.

4. In 1934, in his article "War and the Fourth International," Trotsky foresaw the outbreak of a new inter-imperialist war and anticipated the possibility that one or more of the capitalist powers would seek a nonaggression pact or alliance with the USSR to further their own imperialist aims. Despite this, Trotsky stressed that the class contradictions between the Soviet Union and the imperialists were fundamental and raised the danger of an armed intervention against the Soviet Union. He made crystal clear the position of the Fourth International—unconditional military defense of the USSR against military attack from any quarter: "*Defense of the Soviet Union* from the blows of the capitalist enemies, irrespective of the circumstances and immediate causes of the conflict, is the elementary and imperative duty of every honest labor organization" ("War and the Fourth International").

In the immediate aftermath of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact, Trotsky wrote:

"We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy), and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

— "The USSR in War," September 1939

5. In World War II, as in all inter-imperialist conflicts, the Leninist position toward the imperialist combatants, regardless of whether they were momentarily allied with the Soviet Union, was revolutionary defeatism: irreconcilable

opposition to the imperialist slaughter and a recognition that the defeat of one's "own" bourgeoisie is a lesser evil. For their principled stand against the impending imperialist war, 18 leaders of the Socialist Workers Party were sentenced to jail on 8 December 1941, the first victims of the Smith Act.

The wartime alliance of the USSR with American imperialism after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 led the Communist Party/USA to indulge in an orgy of social-patriotic defense of the war aims of U.S. imperialism and its imperialist allies, glorifying Wall Street's quest for world domination as a "war of democracy against fascism." In contrast, the Trotskyists implacably opposed their own bourgeoisie while militarily defending the Soviet degenerated workers state against all the capitalist powers. Trotskyists also supported the independence struggles of nations oppressed by imperialism, except when they became subordinated to the imperialist combatants, as Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese nationalist army became subordinated to the Allied imperialists in their fight against Japan.

6. Within the SWP, the outbreak of World War II provoked a sharp challenge to its revolutionary program by a petty-bourgeois opposition, led by James Burnham and Max Shachtman, which repudiated defense of the Soviet Union. The factional struggle against that challenge, documented in Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism* and Cannon's *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, is part of our revolutionary heritage.

However, we are sharply critical of the "Proletarian Military Policy" (PMP), initiated by Trotsky and developed by the SWP (and even more so by the British Trotskyists). In a misdirected attempt to intersect proletarian anti-fascist sentiment, the Trotskyists called for trade-union control of military training, bending toward a reformist position on the class character of the state and conceding ground to the "anti-fascist" war propaganda of the "democratic" Allied imperialists. The working class cannot "control" the bourgeois army; rather, in a revolutionary situation, communists seek to split the army, breaking the ranks away from the officer corps by winning the mass of the soldiers to the

incipient proletarian revolution, and in the process smashing the institutions of the capitalist state.

7. Following World War II, which decimated the already fragile European sections of the Fourth International, a revisionist current led by Michel Pablo arose in the Trotskyist movement. Pabloism was chiefly characterized by its denial of the proletariat as the revolutionary class and correspondingly of the need for Trotskyist vanguard parties, positing instead that Stalinist, Social Democratic and bourgeois-nationalist forces could be pressured into adopting a "roughly revolutionary" perspective.

Pabloite revisionism destroyed the Fourth International in 1951-53. Cannon's SWP waged a principled fight against Pabloism, albeit belatedly, partially and on its own national terrain. The SWP split from Pablo's International Secretariat (I.S.) to form the International Committee (IC) along with the majority of the French Trotskyists, led by Pierre Lambert, and the majority of the British Trotskyists, led by Gerry Healy. But by 1963 the SWP had made its peace with Pabloism and it reunified with Pablo's I.S., forming the United Secretariat (USeC).

The immediate origins of the Spartacist League are in the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the SWP. Basing itself primarily upon the British Socialist Labor League document, "The World Prospect for Socialism" (1961), and three documents by the RT, "The Cuban Revolution" (1961), "In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective" (1962) and especially "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" (1963), the RT stood in solidarity with the IC. The RT arose in the struggle to defend the Trotskyist program against the SWP majority's Pabloite liquidationism, centrally manifested in its glorification of the petty-bourgeois Castroite leadership of the Cuban Revolution and its opportunist tailing of liberal and nationalist elements in the civil rights movement. The RT declared:

"13. Trotskyists are at once the most militant and unconditional defenders against imperialism of both the Cuban Revolution and of the deformed workers' state which has issued therefrom. But Trotskyists cannot give confidence and political support, however critical, to a governing regime hostile to the most elementary principles and practices of workers' democracy....

"15. Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the *proletarian* leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism."

— "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International"  
(June 1963)

Reflecting its Pabloite abandonment of a revolutionary perspective on the terrain of the American class struggle, the SWP refused to intervene into the mass civil rights struggles in the South which were becoming increasingly open to a revolutionary perspective. Against the SWP's initial support for liberal reformism and later capitulation to black nationalism, a central component of the RT opposition was the fight for a revolutionary integrationist perspective, linking the tumultuous battles for black equality to labor's fight against capital. Among the key founding documents of the Spartacist League was "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (1966).

In rapid motion to the right, the centrist SWP expelled the RT leadership and most of its supporters in a series of blatant political expulsions beginning in November 1963 and continuing through the spring of 1964. We sought to appeal these undemocratic expulsions and gain readmission to the SWP until the fall of 1965, when the SWP crossed the class line into pro-Democratic Party reformism with its class-collaborationist work in the anti-Vietnam War movement. At this time, we pulled out the remaining RT supporters in the San Francisco Bay Area.

8. In the early 1960s the RT had been attracted to the powerful anti-Pabloist and orthodox Trotskyist material produced by the rump IC of Gerry Healy in Britain. Despite Healy's engineering a criminal split in the RT in late 1962 through the agency of Tim Wohlforth, after our expulsions we pursued a course of unity with Healy's IC because of apparent programmatic congruence. At the 1966 IC conference in London, where unity was supposed to have been consummated, Healy expelled our delegation on bureaucratic organizational grounds because of our insistence on fighting within the IC for our political views. We noted that "Clearly, the I.C. felt unable to tolerate a disciplined but vigorous and independent tendency within its ranks.... Rigid bureaucracy in a workers' movement always reveals fundamental lack of confidence in party members and ultimately in the revolutionary capacity of the working class" (*Spartacist* No. 6, June-July 1966). The Spartacist League was founded in September 1966.

We had predicted that clear programmatic differences would soon emerge corresponding to the Healyites' organizational sectarianism, gangsterism and bureaucratic maneuvering. Indeed, the year following the 1966 IC conference, when the Chinese Stalinists polarized in an intra-bureaucratic squabble known as the "Cultural Revolution," Healy's IC behaved as perfect Pabloites, politically supporting the Maoist wing. We wrote: "These departures by the Healy group from revolutionary politics signal the transformation of the unclarified civil war between Healy-Banda-Wohlforth and ourselves into a clear-cut political struggle between counterposed tendencies" (*Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967). The Healyite political bandits soon went over to craven tailism of openly bourgeois forces, exemplified by Arab nationalism (which they baptized the "Arab Revolution") and subsequent massively corrupt relations with bourgeois Arab regimes.

9. In the first issue of *Spartacist*, the SL/U.S. outlined our perspective as a fighting propaganda group:

"We want to *influence* such radical and leftward moving groups or sections as aspire to Marxist clarity and direction. We frankly state in advance that the purpose of our action is to further a revolutionary regroupment of forces within this country such that a Leninist vanguard party of the working class will emerge. Secondly, we want to *win* individual supporters for our viewpoint from among radical youth, militants in the civil rights struggle, and seek to create modest nuclei within key sections of the working class."

— *Spartacist* No. 1, February-March 1964

10. The "Russian question" was a central axis of the intervention of the Spartacist League into the radical ferment of the 1960s and early 1970s, sparked by the losing imperialist war against Vietnam. What was at stake in Vietnam was a social revolution. Our call "All Indochina Must Go Communist!" cut against both liberal-pacifist illusions in the U.S. and the nationalist class collaboration of the



Young Spartacus

**1975 May Day demonstration in Bay Area. During Vietnam War, SL/U.S. called for military victory of North Vietnamese Army/South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, sought to mobilize American proletariat in labor strikes against the imperialist war.**

Stalinist leadership of North Vietnam (DRV) and the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF). Expressing its descent into unabashed reformism, the SWP issued liberal-pacifist appeals to "all men of peace" to stop the war and "bring our boys home." Applying the Stalin-inspired popular-front policy, the SWP pushed for a "single-issue broad-based coalition," ruling out in advance the Marxist analysis of war as necessarily resulting from the inner conflicts of capitalism which can only be genuinely opposed by revolutionary class struggle against the capitalist order; and, in contrast, maintained that all persons, from whatever social class or group, whether or not opposed to capitalism, can "unite" to "stop war." The reformists placed their hopes in an "antiwar" wing of the U.S. bourgeoisie which, following the consolidation of imperialist interests in the region with the anti-Communist bloodbath in Indonesia in 1965, simply wanted to cut its losses in the face of stinging American military defeats in Vietnam.

While giving no political support to the Stalinists of the NLF/DRV, we unconditionally called for their military victory and sought to mobilize the U.S. proletariat in class struggle against the imperialist war, raising the call for "Labor Strikes Against the War!" and for an "Antiwar Friday" one-day general strike. Our propaganda and agitation for political strikes against the war fell on fertile ground and by 1970 this was widely discussed. That was the year of three politically significant nationwide wildcat strikes: Teamsters, rail and post office. The National Guardsmen who murdered four antiwar protesters at Kent State were taken straight from strike-breaking duty against Cleveland Teamsters, the army was deployed to break the post office strike, and the rail strike immediately confronted federal intervention. Likewise, antiwar sentiment in the American armed forces was so deep as to reach almost mutinous proportions on the ground in Vietnam, underlining the duty of the proletarian party to educate and win soldiers to its revolutionary viewpoint.

The SL/U.S. actively intervened in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), especially in the wake of the May 1968 general strike in France, a strike which challenged the

predominant petty-bourgeois elitism of the New Left radical student movement and gave rise to pro-working-class currents. Through fighting for our Trotskyist program among diverse radical milieus, we won to our party the cadres necessary to undertake systematic implantation into industry and international extension.

11. From our inception, we struggled to reforge an authentically Trotskyist, democratic-centralist Fourth International. The main political report at our Third National Conference (1972) stressed: "The SL/U.S. urgently requires disciplined subordination to an international leadership not subject to the deforming pressures of our particular national situation." Two years later, in July 1974, the "Declaration for the Organizing of an International Trotskyist Tendency" announced the constitution of a nucleus for the early crystallization of the international Spartacist tendency, preparing the ground for the first international delegated conference, in 1979, of the iSt, which became the ICL in 1989. Asserting our commitment to international democratic centralism, this document took particular aim at revisionists who invoked reactionary legislation (such as the 1940 Voorhis Act) as an excuse for their anti-internationalist practices.

12. It is the duty of proletarian revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class, whatever the distortions they have been subjected to as a consequence of the pressures of hostile class forces. The Spartacists maintained a Soviet-defensist position against the imperialist war drive of the 1980s, Cold War II. We hailed the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and opposed the counterrevolutionary power bid by clerical-nationalist Solidarność in Poland in 1981. In the face of impending capitalist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union, we followed Trotsky's injunction: "Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade" ("The Class Nature of the Soviet State" [1933]).

In 1989, we threw our forces internationally into the fight for a "Red Germany of Workers Councils," seeking to lead to victory an incipient proletarian political revolution in

East Germany in the face of the drive for counterrevolutionary annexation by West German imperialism, enthusiastically supported by the Social Democracy. Fearful of the East German proletariat, the DDR Stalinists, with a green light from Gorbachev, opted for capitalist restoration. The ICL opposed the capitalist reunification of Germany, fighting for revolutionary reunification through political revolution in the East and socialist revolution in the West. In 1991, we sought to mobilize the Soviet proletariat to defeat the Yeltsin-led and U.S.-backed forces of counterrevolution there.

Today, we continue to fight for unconditional military defense of Cuba, China, North Korea and Vietnam against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. Thus we oppose the AFL-CIO's anti-communist and protectionist campaign



Reuters

Tiananmen Square, May 1989: Entry of proletariat into student protests marked incipient political revolution against Beijing Stalinist regime. For a Trotskyist party in China—Reforge the Fourth International!



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against China, exemplified by the labor tops' Seattle anti-World Trade Organization mobilization. Similarly, we have denounced the "Free Tibet" movement as a stalking horse for capitalist counterrevolution in China. Unconditional military defense of the Cuban Revolution means we call for the U.S. to get out of Guantánamo and oppose U.S. imperialism's embargo of Cuba and ongoing military provocations aimed at fomenting counterrevolution. In Korea, we demand the withdrawal of all U.S. troops and raise the call for the revolutionary reunification of the peninsula through proletarian political revolution in the North and workers revolution in the South.

Large-scale strikes and resistance by the Chinese working class to the ravages of "market reforms" are an obstacle to the imperialists' drive for capitalist counterrevolutionary destruction of the Chinese deformed workers state. In pushing "free market" measures and pipedreams of coexistence with imperialism, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy is paving the way for capitalist counterrevolution and simultaneously preparing the ground for a new revolutionary proletarian explosion. The bedrock of the Trotskyist perspective for proletarian political revolution is unconditional defense of the deformed workers states against imperialism and internal attempts at capitalist restoration. The aim of political revolution is to defend and extend the gains of the proletariat embodied in state property and the planned economy. It is necessary to cohere Trotskyist parties in the deformed workers states to prepare and lead the workers' struggles to political victory. Proletarian political revolution in China would have tremendous international impact and implications in reversing the bourgeois onslaught since capitalist counterrevolution across East Europe and the former Soviet Union. At the same time, a revolutionary China of workers and peasants councils would face virulently hostile imperialist reaction. The International Communist League fights to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, to lead the proletariat in the overthrow of capitalist class rule internationally, smashing the imperialist system and laying the material basis for socialist economic development.

13. Despite Stalinist deformation, the planned, collectivized economy of the USSR was a great gain for the world working class. The destruction of the USSR through capitalist counterrevolution, the final undoing of the 1917 October Revolution, was a world-historic defeat for the proletariat. Throughout much of the former Soviet bloc, it has wreaked a historically unprecedented economic collapse that has decimated large sectors of the proletariat. It has opened up a new field for imperialist exploitation and interimperialist rivalries, leading inexorably to new wars for plunder, while emboldening the U.S. bourgeoisie in pursuing its unbridled appetites for world domination. It has thrown back proletarian consciousness internationally so that even advanced layers of the workers, as well as anti-racist fighters and others engaged in social struggle, do not identify their cause with the goal of socialism. It is our task to implant socialist consciousness among these layers.

Historical experience, not least the Stalinist degeneration of the workers state issuing out of the October Revolution which culminated in the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union in 1991-92, confirms the Marxist understanding that the creation of a classless, socialist society requires that the proletariat seize state power in at least



several of the advanced capitalist countries. In the face of the "death of communism" lie trumpeted by the imperialists and promoted, explicitly or implicitly, by every species of opportunism on the face of the planet, we reassert the revolutionary program of Bolshevism and the liberating ideals of communism. As we wrote in the "Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League" (1966):

"The victory of the proletariat on a world scale would place unimagined material abundance at the service of human needs, lay the basis for the elimination of social classes, and eliminate forever the drive for war inherent in the world economic system of capitalism. For the first time mankind will grasp the reins of history and control its own creation, society, resulting in an undreamed-of emancipation of human potential, the limitless expansion of freedom in every area, and a monumental forward surge of civilization."

### III. The American Imperialist State and the Tasks of the Revolutionary Party

1. The American nation-state originated in the era of mercantile capitalism as a settler colony of Britain. A sparse aboriginal population of hunter-gatherers and primitive agriculturalists was wiped out and/or driven away. Following the revolutionary war of independence (1775-83), the United States of America was formed as a bourgeois democracy for white, male property owners, with male suffrage subsequently extended to the white lower classes. Supporters of Great Britain established themselves in upper Canada (Ontario) and the Crown also retained lower Canada (Quebec).

From its early colonial origins, the United States was rent increasingly by two distinct socio-economic systems, based on black chattel slavery in the South and "free" wage labor (alongside an agrarian economy centered on small family farms) in the North. Southern plantation agriculture supplied the principal exports for the early American bourgeois state, providing the financial resources for the rapid growth of mercantile and industrial capitalism in the North. Simultaneously, the American state undertook a massive territorial expansion reaching to the Pacific coast. This "manifest destiny" was realized largely through the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and the later bloody conquest and annexation of half the territory of Mexico (Texas, 1835-45 and the Mexican War of 1846-48), prefiguring the latter's future as a U.S. neocolony.

The increasing conflicts of interest between the Southern plantation owners and burgeoning Northern capital culminated in the Civil War, the second American revolution, which ended with the destruction of the slavocracy. The Northern victory consolidated the American nation-state, created for the first time a strong central government and military apparatus and gave powerful impetus to the development of modern industrial capitalism.

2. Having attained, with the aid of heavy capital flow from England, an industrial capitalist economy of the first rank, American imperialism moved toward world power status at the end of the 19th century by provoking a war with Spain in which it acquired colonies and semicolonies in the Caribbean and Far East, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. A generation later, the United States emerged from the First World War (1914-18) as the

economically strongest country in the world. With the older imperialist powers, Britain and France, already significantly weakened, the massive devastation of Germany and Japan in World War II allowed a victorious American imperialism to attain a degree of dominance in the capitalist world surpassing even that attained by British imperialism in the mid 19th century. The new international monetary system was based on the dollar. And most of the countries of the Near East, Asia and Africa which gained political independence from the shattered European colonial empires fell under the sway of American neocolonialism, a form of imperialist subjugation first developed by Wall Street and Washington in Latin America during the 1920s and '30s.

Rather than direct physical/military occupation, the neocolonial countries were subjugated by their debts to the imperialist bankers, enforced if the imperialists deemed it necessary by direct bloody military intervention. Where possible, the U.S. attempted to rule through local reactionary puppets such as Batista (Cuba), Somoza (Nicaragua), the Pahlevi dynasty (Iran) and Suharto (Indonesia), to mention just a few. Financial aid, military aid, CIA support and staged military coups and/or direct intervention all served to bolster and maintain American imperial interests.

From its murderous "pacification" of the Philippines following the victory in the Spanish-American War, to its intervention in Nicaragua to suppress the Sandino rebellion in the 1920s and '30s, to the occupation of the Dominican Republic (1965), to Lebanon, Panama and Grenada, to its war on Iraq (1990-91), U.S. imperialism has left a grisly trail of carnage around the globe. The bloodiest and most prolonged of the direct military interventions have been in the post-World War II period, in Korea and Vietnam. Chunks of the former colonies had been ripped out of the sphere of capitalist exploitation, and could not simply be cowed by the imperialist bankers, at least while the USSR still existed. These were not simply colonial wars, but wars that posed for Marxists the Russian question squarely, in terms of military defense of the deformed workers states.

3. In order to establish and maintain a global imperialist alliance against the Soviet Union, which had emerged victorious over Nazi Germany as the second-strongest state in the world, the U.S. ruling class helped revive West European capitalism and tempered its conflicts of interests with West European states and especially Japan. As Germany and Japan rebuilt their industrial economies, they began to cut into world markets and even the U.S. domestic market. At the same time, the U.S. industrial plant, largely built during and immediately following World War II, was becoming increasingly obsolete. The competitive position of American capitalism was further eroded in the 1960s by the inflationary pressures of the long, losing colonial war in Vietnam.

On 15 August 1971 the dollar was effectively devalued, reintroducing conditions of international monetary anarchy into the world capitalist economy. Wage controls were imposed as the dollar was allowed to float against gold. The collapse of the so-called dollar-exchange standard along with other economic measures taken at this time (e.g., increased trade protectionism) signaled the end of American hegemony in the capitalist world, with the United States reduced to only the strongest of several competing imperialist states.

Following its stinging defeat in Vietnam, American imperialism undertook a campaign to refurbish its "democratic"



Workers Vanguard

**June 1999: Spartacist contingent at San Francisco protest against U.S.-led terror bombing of Serbia. Only proletarian revolution can end imperialist war.**

credentials under the guise of “human rights,” launching a renewed anti-Soviet offensive, “Cold War II,” under the Democratic Party administration of Jimmy Carter. This offensive was deepened and extended by Reagan and went hand in hand with a domestic agenda of social reaction centering on an assault on labor. The breaking of the 1981 PATCO air traffic controllers strike, facilitated by the treachery of the labor bureaucrats, opened up a concerted union-busting drive to enhance capitalist profitability, which succeeded in increasing the rate of exploitation of the American working class and improving the international competitiveness of U.S. capital.

4. Capitalist counterrevolution in the former “Soviet bloc” has sharpened interimperialist economic rivalries, prefiguring military conflict. A new world war would raise the spectre of thermonuclear holocaust, posing anything from the partial destruction of human civilization to the extinction of higher mammalian life on the planet. Though a rational human being would not consciously embark on a course leading to nuclear world war, the system of imperialism is not rational, and neither are the men who rule over us in its interests. As Trotsky wrote in “War and the Fourth International”: “All governments fear war. But none of the governments has any freedom of choice. Without a proletarian revolution, a new world war is inevitable.”

The American bourgeoisie amply demonstrated its ruthlessness in pursuing its appetites for world domination by its use of the only two atomic bombs it then had available against the civilian population of Japan in 1945. This racist atrocity was the opening shot of the first Cold War—a warning to the Soviet Union. Today, U.S. imperialism has a thermonuclear arsenal many thousands of times as powerful. Bourgeois pacifists who sow illusions in disarmament serve only to deflect the proletariat and radical youth from the need to defeat, disarm and expropriate the bourgeoisie. Leninists seek to utilize the military defeats and difficulties of our own ruling class to further our struggle for workers rev-

olution, striving to implement the Bolshevik slogan: “Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!” Not one person, not one penny for U.S. imperialist militarism!

5. Lenin explained in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) that the pronounced importance of the export of capital is a characteristic of imperialism. The productive forces of capitalism long ago outgrew the confines of the nation-state while at the same time, the imperialist powers, representing their own national interests, engage in ruthless struggle among each other to redivide markets and spheres of influence, leading to war. The phenomena associated with the currently fashionable term “globalization” are a partial return to the norms of the pre-1914 imperialist era. Only in the early 1970s did the ratio of world trade to global production reach the level it had attained in 1914 on the eve of the first great imperialist world war.

We reject the neo-Kautskyan concept of “globalization”—the theory that transnational corporations have transcended imperialist nation-states. As Lenin noted: “‘inter-imperialist’ or ‘ultra-imperialist’ alliances, no matter what form they may assume, whether of one imperialist coalition against another, or of a general alliance embracing *all* of the imperialist powers, are *inevitably* nothing more than a ‘truce’ in periods between wars” (*Imperialism*). In the mouths of centrists and revisionists, “globalization” is a program that despairs of class struggle and posits that modern capitalism has overcome its inherent tendency toward inter-imperialist war.

6. The collapse of the Soviet Union as a countervailing power blocking U.S. ambitions intensified the U.S. imperialists’ appetites for unbridled political/military control of the “Third World,” signaled by the devastation of Iraq in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The particularly predatory and aggressive character of U.S. imperialism is determined by America’s vast investment holdings worldwide. We unconditionally oppose all U.S. military intervention—and U.S. military bases—abroad, and defend the colonial, semicolonial and other smaller, less developed countries in the face of U.S./UN attack and embargo. During imperialist attacks on the Iraqi people, we declared, “Defeat U.S. imperialism!”

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Having used fratricidal nationalism as a battering ram to destroy the East European deformed workers states, the U.S./NATO imperialists, professing dismay at "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans, launched the first major war in Europe (Spring 1999) since the last World War. We oppose all imperialist intervention in the Balkans and called for the defeat of U.S./NATO imperialism and for the military defense of Serbia against imperialist attack. At the same time, we gave not one iota of political support to the reactionary nationalist regime of Milosevic. Marxists oppose the poison of nationalism and fight for the class unity of the workers of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo in overthrowing all the bloody nationalist regimes of the region. For a socialist federation of the Balkans!

7. Revolutionaries in the U.S. have a particular responsibility to actively assist the working masses of Latin America in struggle against American imperialism. We oppose the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a neocolonial regional economic bloc aimed at freezing out U.S. imperialism's rivals in Europe and Japan, as a "free trade" rape of Mexico. While American capitalists hope to flood the world market with cheap goods produced by their super-exploited Mexican wage slaves, the vast increase in the industrial proletariat in Mexico strengthens the very class that will dig capitalism's grave. The U.S. seeks to generalize NAFTA-type relations to all of Latin America. As such schemes serve to integrate even more closely the economies of the U.S., Canada and Latin America, they underscore the need for proletarian class unity in struggle. In line with this, we denounce the chauvinist-protectionist basis for the American labor bureaucracy's opposition to NAFTA.

8. As proletarian revolutionary internationalists, we oppose all forms of national, colonial or semicolonial oppression. We are for the democratic right of all nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to independence.

Standing in active solidarity with the oppressed colonial and neocolonial masses, Marxists give no political support to nationalist bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships, but fight for the perspective of permanent revolution. The theory of permanent revolution holds that in the economically backward countries, the bourgeoisies are too weak, corrupt and dependent on imperialism, too fearful of the working class and peasant masses, to resolve the bourgeois-democratic tasks, such as national liberation. These can be accomplished only through the proletarian conquest of power, necessarily placing the socialist tasks on the immediate agenda, and the fight to extend workers rule to the advanced capitalist countries.

9. We fight for the right of self-determination for Puerto Rico, the principal remaining colony of the U.S., and all other nations enslaved and subjugated by U.S. imperialism in the Spanish-American War and other conquests. We support the complete political freedom for advocates for independence to agitate and organize in favor of it. We demand freedom of all those who have been persecuted and jailed for fighting for Puerto Rican independence.

As forthright opponents of all forms of U.S. imperialist colonial oppression, we would favor independence for

Puerto Rico. At the same time, the sympathies of the population are a large factor for Marxists in determining how best to get the national question off the agenda and clear the road for revolutionary internationalist class struggle. In recent years, referendums in Puerto Rico have shown those in favor of independence to be in a minority, although referendums are not the main or only means of measuring the sympathies of the population; for example, the 1998 two-day general strike against privatization of the telephone company through sale to an American firm was a powerful demonstration of opposition to the island's national subjugation. These events indicate that the people of Puerto Rico have deeply contradictory feelings: on the one hand, a very strong sense of nationhood; on the other, a fear of sinking to the level of poverty of their independent Caribbean neighbors. We oppose any imperialist-backed attempts to forcibly impose national independence on Puerto Rico.

The axis of our fight on the mainland is for the right of self-determination for Puerto Rico, against national chauvinism and "English only" racism, against imperialist military and economic oppression, raising the demand that U.S. bases—which threaten not only the working people of Puerto Rico but proletarians throughout the region and especially in Cuba—get out of the Caribbean. Recruitment of Puerto Rican militants in the large diaspora on the U.S. mainland is part of our struggle to recruit the cadres to forge a Puerto Rican section of the ICL. The cutting edge of our program in Puerto Rico is against the petty-bourgeois left and bourgeois-nationalist forces who seek to derail proletarian struggle through false "unity" between the working class and the local bourgeoisie. The idea of a peaceful union of equal nations under imperialism is illusory; under capitalism, the division of nations into oppressing and oppressed is both fundamental and inevitable. Thus the struggle for genuine equality of

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Workers Vanguard

**NYC protest against arrest of anti-military protesters in Vieques, Puerto Rico, May 2000. For the right of independence for Puerto Rico!**

nations poses the overthrow of the capitalist system in both the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

The course of Puerto Rican independence is not preordained, whether through a revolutionary socialist upheaval in the U.S. or through the militant proletariat in Puerto Rico inspiring struggle on the mainland. Our call for a socialist federation(s) of the Caribbean projects our general conception for workers rule in the area; however, we do not know at this point how this will transpire in the concrete. In any case, a victorious workers revolution in the U.S. would immediately free Puerto Rico and all other nations subjugated by U.S. imperialism and establish relations with them on the basis of their freedom to exercise their national self-determination.

A workers government in the U.S. would also return to Mexico certain contiguous regions, predominantly Spanish speaking, of the Southwest which were seized from Mexico. This internationalist gesture would powerfully undercut the anti-Yankee nationalism that the Latin American ruling classes use to tie the workers to them and would be of significant value in extending support to proletarian revolution throughout Latin America.

10. As demonstrated in both World Wars I and II, the U.S. bourgeoisie has wielded the defense and promotion of "democracy" abroad as an ideological cover for its depredations and wars of conquest and plunder. Significant damage was done to this fiction by the Vietnam War, which produced a politically unacceptable rate of American military casualties. The resulting "Vietnam syndrome"—popular hostility to direct U.S. military intervention abroad—helped stay the bloody hand of U.S. imperialism for decades. For this, the world's toiling masses, and not least workers and minorities in the U.S., owe a great debt to the heroic Vietnamese, who defeated U.S. imperialism on the battlefield. The continuing impact of this blow to arrogant U.S. imperialism is seen in the fact that the military draft has not yet been reinstated and the rulers have avoided using ground troops in situations likely to result in significant losses.

11. American left liberals and much of the ostensibly revolutionary left supported or capitulated to "human rights"

anti-Sovietism and the subsequent capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR. These milieus have now become outright champions of imperialist intervention in the semicolonial world, foreshadowed by their response to the onslaught against Iraq: the liberals called for an embargo under UN auspices, while those reformists who did not openly endorse such measures cloaked their "opposition" to the war in "yellow ribbon" social-patriotism.

Particularly over the Balkans, Somalia, Haiti and Tibet, it has become the norm for liberals and much of the left to appeal for imperialist intervention—often taking the lead in such agitation—in the guise of promoting "human rights." Indeed, in conjunction with the U.S. intervention in Somalia, American imperialist ideologues advanced notions of "a new colonialism" for the benefit of the dark-skinned masses of the Third World. The notion that the American ruling class—with or without its United Nations fig leaf—can be a purveyor of "human rights" and "democracy" abroad is a grotesque and highly selective fraud.

12. Structural bonapartism (the "imperial presidency") is built into American democracy. One aspect is the U.S. quadrennial electoral system, which provides a great deal of stability for capitalist rule, unlike a parliamentary system where a ruling regime can be suddenly removed by a vote of no confidence. America's emergence as a world power created the need for a strong presidency, particularly when it is deemed necessary to launch a war or invasion without the bother of Congressional approval as mandated in the Constitution. Against the illusions promoted by all manner of opportunists that this "democratic" government can be pressured into acting in the interests of workers and the oppressed, we uphold the Marxist understanding elaborated in the SWP's founding "Declaration of Principles" (1938):

"The belief that in such a country as the United States we live in a free, democratic society, in which fundamental economic change can be effected by persuasion, by education, by legal and purely parliamentary methods, is an illusion. In the United States, as in all capitalist nations, we live, in actuality, under a capitalist dictatorship; and the possibilities for purely legal and constitutional change are therefore limited to those which fall within the framework of capitalist property and social relations...."

“Since the capitalist state is the political instrument of capitalist dictatorship, and since the workers can carry out socialization only through the conquest and maintenance of political power, the workers must, as the necessary political phase of the change of ownership and control of the productive mechanism, take control of state power through the overthrow of the capitalist state and the transfer of sovereignty from it to their own workers’ state—the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

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## IV. American Capitalism, the Working Class and the Black Question

1. The strategic tasks of the revolutionary vanguard in the United States are conditioned both by the development of the American capitalist state and by the particular features of the U.S. proletariat. Despite a history of bitter and convulsive struggles, the American proletariat as a whole has historically lacked even a rudimentary level of class consciousness.

2. The rapid industrialization in the North following the Civil War created a growing working class whose raw combativity was exemplified by the Great Rail Strike of 1877. Labor struggles in the late 19th century U.S. were among the most hard-fought and bloody in the Western world, often marked by pitched battles against the police and the bosses’ private armed forces, and occasionally the military forces of the bourgeois state.

However, the development of a strong, politically conscious workers movement, such as emerged throughout Europe during this period, was impeded by racial, ethnic and religious divisions. Until the substantial entry of blacks into industry during World War I, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic bigotry were the chief weapons of the capitalist rulers in dividing and holding back the working class. On the West Coast, virulent racism against Chinese and Japanese workers served the same purpose. In the 1890s, Friedrich Engels observed in a letter to a colleague in the U.S.: “Your bourgeoisie knows much better even than the Austrian Government how to play off one nationality against the other: Jews, Italians, Bohemians, etc., against Germans and Irish, and each one against the other, so that differences in workers’ standards of living exist, I believe, in New York to an extent unheard of elsewhere.”

Ethnic antagonisms between native and immigrant workers also helped frustrate the development of a significant socialist movement. The early American proponents of proletarian socialism were largely European immigrants who remained divorced from American society; as late as 1917, 40 percent of the Socialist Party membership was organized in foreign-language federations, many of which went on to become founding elements of the American Communist movement. Some prominent leaders of the early Socialist Party were open racists, while much of the base were small farmers and other middle-class elements embracing a vague form of populism. The notable exception to such an outlook within the workers movement was the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, which fought for integrated labor struggle and opposed anti-Chinese racism, leading bitter struggles by largely immigrant workers in the Northeast and itinerant workers in the West. However, the IWW remained remote from the main sectors of the industrial proletariat.

3. In the early 19th century, the defenders of black chattel slavery elaborated and propagated a white-supremacist ideology which contaminated not only lower-class whites in the South but also the emerging proletariat in the North. The Democratic Party, then dominated by the Southern slavocracy, gained support among the Irish Catholic immigrants who made up the bulk of unskilled urban workers in the North before the Civil War by combining a posture of hostility toward the Yankee ruling elite with racist demagoguery that the abolition of slavery would result in black freedmen taking their jobs and driving down wages.

Despite pervasive racist attitudes among all social classes in the North, the compelling historic interests of Northern capital, expressed in the founding of the Republican Party as explicitly anti-slavery, led to a war against the Southern slavocracy. The abolitionist movement, which rejected the prevailing racism, grew from the radical “fringe” of the larger anti-slavery movement, in which blacks such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman played an important role, to become a powerful force. The Civil War was the last great bourgeois-democratic revolution. The imperatives of the war, especially the recruitment of blacks into the Union Army, resulted in the abolition of black chattel slavery and the consequent destruction of the old Southern plantation agricultural system. There followed a turbulent decade of interracial bourgeois democracy in the South carried out by the freedmen and their white allies, and protected by federal troops, many of them black. This period, known as Radical Reconstruction, was the most egalitarian experiment in U.S. history.

4. While many freedmen desired to have the former plantations redistributed to those who tilled them, the American bourgeoisie was not interested in a thoroughgoing social reconstruction of the South. Northern capitalists looked at the devastated South and saw an opportunity not for building a radical democracy but for exploiting Southern resources, and the freedmen, profitably. The Compromise of 1877 sealed this betrayal of black freedom and with the withdrawal of the Union Army from the South, a new system of racist exploitation was established through the systematic repression of the freedmen’s fight for land, education and civil rights. The former slaves became tenants and sharecroppers toiling on land owned by the white propertied class, consisting of elements of the old slavocracy and a new Southern bourgeoisie with strong ties to Northern capital. Correspondingly, a rigid system of legally enforced racial segregation called Jim Crow was imposed and maintained by Ku Klux Klan terror and police-state suppression of blacks and anti-racist whites. Blacks were effectively completely disenfranchised through discriminatory laws backed up by racist terror. In 1896 the Supreme Court codified “separate but equal” segregation as the law of the land in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The Jim Crow system, which was law in the South but whose white-supremacist and segregationist spirit infected the whole country, dovetailed with the onset of capitalist imperialism in the U.S. and served abroad as a valuable weapon to fortify colonial oppression and exploitation.

5. The centrality of the fight for black freedom to proletarian revolution in the United States was first brought to the American labor movement by the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky. Declaring war on the pro-imperialist social-chauvinism of the Second International, the Comintern proclaimed itself “not only the organization of the

enslaved white workers of Europe and America, but also the organization of the oppressed coloured peoples of the world.” The Comintern recognized that “the history of the Negroes in America qualifies them to play an important part in the liberation struggle of the entire African race” (“Theses of the Fourth Comintern Congress on the Negro Question” [1922]). Thus, the struggles of American blacks against racial oppression resonate among black workers in Africa and Latin America. Similarly, the struggle against imperialism and racism in Africa resonates among American blacks as well.

Within the early American socialist movement, the aim of black equality was treated with, at best, benign indifference (Eugene V. Debs), ranging to outright white-supremacist hostility (Victor Berger). As James P. Cannon noted in “The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement” (*The First Ten Years of American Communism* [1962]):

“The influence of Lenin and the Russian Revolution, even debased and distorted as it later was by Stalin, and then filtered through the activities of the Communist Party in the United States, contributed *more than any other influence from any source* to the recognition, and more or less general acceptance, of the Negro question as a *special* problem of American society—a problem which cannot be simply subsumed under the general heading of the conflict between capital and labor, as it was in the pre-communist radical movement....

“Everything new on the Negro question came from Moscow—after the Russian Revolution began to thunder its demand throughout the world for freedom and equality for all national minorities, all subject peoples and all races—for all the despised and rejected of the earth.”

As it did on all questions, the Stalinization of the Comintern led to disorientation and betrayal on the black question. With the application of the false Menshevik dogma of “two-stage revolution” to the so-called “black belt” in the American South, the Sixth Congress of the Comintern (1928) promulgated the slogan of “self-determination” for the (non-existent) “Negro nation.” Despite this, in practice the Communist Party militantly championed the fight for black rights until the Comintern’s passage to reformism in the mid 1930s, under the banner of the class-collaborationist “people’s front,” led to its subordination to the Democratic Party of Franklin D. Roosevelt. During World War II, in line

with its support to the imperialist war effort, the CP explicitly opposed struggles for black equality.

6. The struggle for black freedom could not be contained, and indeed was powerfully driven by imperialist war and economic expansion of American capitalism. The industrial needs of both World Wars I and II, and the murderous lynching they faced in the Jim Crow South, led to mass emigration of blacks out of the South and into Northern and Western industrial centers, transforming former rural sharecroppers into proletarians in modern mass production industries. Following the strikes in the 1930s that formed the CIO, black workers were integrated into powerful industrial unions. Similarly, the urbanization and industrialization of the American South during and after World War II created large concentrations of black proletarians. By 1960, over 95 percent of Northern blacks lived in cities. In the South some 42 percent of the black population lived in urban centers, a marked change from 1890 when over 85 percent of blacks lived in rural areas.

The creation of a Southern black proletariat fundamentally eroded the Jim Crow system of segregation—a system based on police/Klan terror aimed at atomized rural sharecroppers. The industrialization of the South also proletarianized poor agrarian and middle-class whites, creating a clear identity of interest between white and black exploited industrial workers and establishing conditions for emergence of the class struggle and the struggle for black freedom. By the mid 1950s black anger at Jim Crow segregation gave birth to the civil rights movement—a movement whose core activists were, at the beginning, black proletarians, many of whom had been drafted into the U.S. military and served in World War II. Others had served in the Korean War, during which the U.S. military finally eliminated segregation of black troops, who previously had been overwhelmingly confined to non-combat units.

7. From its onset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership allied to Democratic Party liberalism. The aim of this liberal-pacifist leadership (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr.) was to pressure the Democratic Party administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson to grant formal, legal equality to blacks in the South. Walter Reuther’s United Auto Workers Union and A. Philip Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, assisted by elements of the decomposing American Social Democracy like Bayard Rustin and Michael Harrington, as well as by the Communist Party, worked to keep the civil rights movement within the confines of bourgeois reformism and the Democratic Party. Reliance on the federal government was the only alternative the liberals and reformists could offer to the segregationist cry of “states’ rights” which since the time of the slavocracy has served as the banner for social reaction and white supremacy.

The bourgeoisie eventually acquiesced to the demand for legal equality in the South, both because Jim Crow segregation had grown anachronistic and because it was an embarrassment overseas as American imperialism sought to posture as the champion of “democracy” in the Cold War, particularly in competition with the Soviet Union in the Third World.

At its base and in its early years, the mass of black and white activists who were the foot soldiers of the civil rights movement wrote a heroic chapter in the fight for black equality in racist America. Jim Crow did not die easily. The

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**National Guard mobilized against striking black sanitation workers in Memphis, 1968.**

protesting black masses faced vicious police repression and a bloody campaign of Klan terror. Federal troops were dispatched to Little Rock, Arkansas ostensibly to defend school integration, but in reality to suppress a potential mass black movement against segregation that could challenge the racist status quo. The issue was posed pointblank—reliance on the capitalist state or independent proletarian-centered struggle by the black masses.

8. Our perspective, based on the pioneering work of Richard Fraser in the Socialist Workers Party, notably his 1955 document "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle," is *revolutionary integration*. Counterposed to liberal integrationism—the false view that blacks can achieve social equality within the confines of racist American capitalism—revolutionary integrationism is premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. As we elaborated in "Black and Red," adopted at the founding conference of the Spartacist League/U.S. in 1966:

"The vast majority of black people—both North and South—are today workers who, along with the rest of the American working class, must sell their labor power in order to secure the necessities of life from those who buy labor power in order to make profit.... Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society.

"Yet the struggle of the black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.... Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution."

The black question is the strategic question of the American revolution:

"Any organization which claims a revolutionary perspective for the United States must confront the *special oppression* of black people—the forced segregation of blacks at the bottom of capitalist society and the poisonous racism which divides the working class and cripples its struggles. There will be no social revolution in this country without the united struggle of black and white workers led by their multiracial vanguard

party. Moreover, there is no other road to eliminating the special oppression of black people than the victorious conquest of power by the U.S. proletariat."

—Preface, *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised), "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism" (September 1978)

9. When the civil rights movement swept out of the South into the North, the bankruptcy of the reformist perspective of its liberal leaders was quickly revealed. The entry of the black masses of the Northern ghettos into the struggle for a fundamental change in their conditions of life—for real equality, for jobs, decent housing and adequate schools—collided head-on with the realities of American capitalism. As we stated at the time:

"The contracting market for labor and the ever-increasing squeeze on the rate of profit—that motor force of a capitalist economy—make reforms on the scale necessary to meet the needs of the Negro masses impossible, while in fact the economic aspects of continued racial discrimination in this country act as an internal prop to the rate of profit. Thus the Negro struggle as it develops a mass character poses a threat to the capitalist system itself and to all those deriving special benefits from it."

—"Negro Struggle in the North," *Spartacist* No. 2, July-August 1964

The bourgeoisie, willing to permit the gradual abolition of *legal* segregation and provide avenues for the upward social mobility of a small layer of blacks, at the same time unleashed a campaign of "white backlash" (racist defense of white supremacy) and police terror aimed at suppressing the struggle for black freedom. Vicious police repression and cop riots in major U.S. cities resulted in the spontaneous eruption of ghetto rebellions across the country and was reflected in widespread disaffection among black soldiers in the U.S. military.

The collision with the realities of capitalism led to a fracturing of the civil rights movement *and* the emergence of a more militant wing. Rejecting the legalism of the liberal civil rights movement leaders, these young black militants counterposed a strategy of an ill-defined "black power" militancy and civil disobedience. This polarization was powerfully reinforced by U.S. imperialism's Democratic Party-led prosecution of a bloody counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam.

Yet, while critical of the pro-Democratic Party pressure politics of the civil rights movement leaders, the young "black power" militants had no counterposed political strategy or program.

10. The intervention of proletarian revolutionists armed with a program of revolutionary integrationism could have been crucial to winning these civil rights movement militants to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and party. This was a central component of the RT's fight against the rightward-moving leadership of the SWP which abstained from intervention in the civil rights movement in accommodation first to the liberal-pacifist leadership of the civil rights movement and later to black nationalism. This accommodation was prefigured by the SWP's call for federal troops to be sent to Mississippi in 1955 as well as their support for federal troops to Little Rock in 1957.

By 1963, the SWP majority had explicitly renounced the fight for communist leadership of the black struggle, relegating itself to the role of a "socialist" vanguard of the white working class. Against this, the Revolutionary Tendency argued in its document "The Negro Struggle and the Crisis of Leadership" (August 1963):

"The rising upsurge and militancy of the black revolt and the contradictory and confused, groping nature of what is now the left wing in the movement provide the revolutionary vanguard with fertile soil and many opportunities to plant the seeds of revolutionary socialism.... We must consider non-intervention in the crisis of leadership a crime of the worst sort."

11. The newly won voting rights of blacks in the South, disenfranchised since the end of Radical Reconstruction, posed pointblank the question of an independent black/proletarian political axis. In our intervention into the civil rights movement, the Spartacist League raised the call for a South-wide Freedom Labor Party as an expression of working-class political independence and the need to mobilize the labor movement to fight for black emancipation. This was linked to a series of other transitional demands aimed at uniting black and white workers in struggle against the capitalist class enemy, like organizing the unorganized and a sliding scale of wages and hours to combat inflation and unemployment. We called for armed self-defense against racist terror and for a workers united front against government intervention, both in the labor movement and in the use of federal troops to suppress black plebeian struggles. This program is no less urgent today.

In light of the failure of labor to mobilize its social power in support of the civil rights movement, black militants who lacked a class perspective for fighting de facto segregation in the North in housing, education and jobs, gave up on the idea of a racially egalitarian society and acquiesced to segregation and racism as an unchangeable norm. Thus emerged a black nationalist tendency which called for "community control" of the ghettos, making a virtue of the segregation which was seen as unchangeable, and appealing for more black Democratic Party politicians, cops, judges and administrators. As seen in the 1968 New York City teachers strike, and other teachers strikes since, the call for community control of the schools also had a specifically anti-labor thrust, aimed at breaking the power of the teachers unions, which is why it has often been embraced by municipal and state governments.

12. Black nationalism is a petty-bourgeois ideology unable to generate a program for struggle and based on fic-

tion rather than material fact. Black people in the United States do not constitute a nation—i.e., there is no material basis for a separate political economy. As a result, the embrace of nationalist—or, more precisely, pseudo-nationalist—sentiments by any considerable section of the black masses or black political activists has generally represented a transitory mood.

At bottom black nationalism is an expression of hopelessness stemming from defeat, reflecting despair over prospects for integrated class struggle and labor taking up the fight for black rights. The chief responsibility for this lies on the shoulders of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, which has time and again refused to mobilize the social power of the multiracial working class in struggle against racist discrimination and terror.

The only genuinely mass-based nationalist movement, Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement in the 1920s, was conditioned by the betrayal of Reconstruction and arose in immediate response to the defeat of efforts to organize newly hired black workers in the North into integrated unions and to the race riots of 1919 and the growth of the Ku Klux Klan. In the 1960s, the most radical expression of the black nationalist sentiment which arose in response to the failure of the civil rights movement was the Black Panther Party, which defined itself as "revolutionary nationalist" and struggled, in a contradictory way, to remain independent of the bourgeois establishment.

13. The Panthers arose as part of the New Left radicalization of the 1960s. New Leftism grew out of an intersection of the earlier civil rights activism, which fractured the complacent conservative mood of the 1950s, with opposition to the Vietnam War. The heroic Vietnamese defiance of the mightiest imperialist power on earth inspired a worldwide radicalization of youth. In the U.S. young idealists, mainly students, began opposing the Democratic Party of escalating war crimes and increasingly transparent lies.

In an attempt to diffuse social struggle and quell the ghetto explosions, the Democratic Party administration of Lyndon Johnson began pouring money into the ghettos under its "War on Poverty" programs. These funds became the source of corruption for servile self-appointed black leaders who were derided by the Panthers as "poverty pimps" and "porkchop nationalists." The Panthers sought to challenge the racist status quo but, sharing the predominant anti-working-class outlook of the New Left, they looked to the lumpenproletariat, which they viewed as the future "shock troops" of the revolution.

The ferocious repression to which the Panthers were subjected by the bourgeois state, notably the FBI's murderous COINTELPRO ("Counter-Intelligence Program") operation, was a measure of the lengths to which this racist bourgeoisie will go to stamp out any perceived challenge by black radicals to the established capitalist order, i.e., any manifestation of the combination of black and red. With many of their members shot and dozens killed by the cops, and hundreds rounded up and jailed, the Panthers were overwhelmed by the fight for their legal defense. Isolated, with repression bearing down on them, the Panthers sought allies against repression in the class-collaborationist left, primarily the Communist Party, and embarked on the road back to ethnic Democratic Party machine politics. This prompted a split by a wing which claimed to remain faithful to a perspective of "urban guerrilla warfare."



Through the combination of murderous repression and efforts to co-opt a layer of black activists, the ruling class was able to stabilize society. Today, the core of the black wing of the Democratic Party—based on middle-class blacks who were the main beneficiaries of the civil rights movement—derives from this period. These former black radicals now serve to tie the mass of black workers and poor to the capitalist system of exploitation, impoverishment and racial oppression through the agency of the Democratic Party.

At the same time, the Democratic Party's "New Deal" coalition, forged under Roosevelt's administration in the 1930s, and extending from black union organizers in the North to white Southern sheriffs, was exploded by the mass struggles for black equality. In 1964, Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater—who voted against the Civil Rights Act—authored the Republican Party's "Southern Strategy," persuading racist Southern Democrats, the Dixiecrats, to defect. For the past 35 years, every presidential election has centered on race, with the Democrats desperately working to reverse the perception that they were beholden to "special interests" like blacks and labor. This was exemplified by Southern Democratic president Jimmy Carter, who made overt racist appeals to "ethnic purity," and by the 1992 electoral campaign of Bill Clinton which was premised on winning the white Southern vote.

14. Mainstream black nationalists uphold the myth of "black capitalism." The idea that a significant black bourgeoisie could be consolidated in racist America is a reactionary utopia. In practice, it is an accommodation to the racist status quo—an aspiration to become capitalist exploiters of "their" people, claiming the ghetto as their exclusive market. The social base for such an outlook, which is thoroughly hostile to the needs and aspirations of black workers and the ghetto poor, is the black petty bourgeoisie. This layer, which continues to endure the daily humiliations of racism, has seen the openings they were afforded (e.g., affirmative action and administering inner-city "poverty" programs) slam shut, especially for their children. Consequently, many of the so-called "talented tenth" who benefited from the civil rights movement are now turning in despair from the goal of integration.

This was reflected in the popularity of Louis Farrakhan's 1995 Million Man March for "atonement," which forgave the oppressors and exploiters for their enormous crimes against black people, working people and the poor, while blaming the oppressed for their oppression. The march pushed black capitalism and combined the politics of petty-bourgeois black nationalist despair with heavy doses of anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, male-chauvinist demagoguery. The Spartacist League warned from the beginning that Farrakhan was bad news for black people, and our uncompromising opposition to the Million Man March, which was supported by many of the most reactionary bourgeois politicians, set us apart from most of the ostensible left, which fawned over Farrakhan.

15. The deindustrialization of the Northeast and Midwest beginning in the 1970s has been especially devastating for blacks, since unionized industrial jobs were central to the fragile economic base of the segregated black communities. This has been exacerbated by budget cuts at all levels of government and the slashing of social welfare programs, hitting particularly hard at the large sector of black workers

employed in public services and all but eliminating the slim lifeline formerly available to the unemployed ghetto masses.

The loss of unionized industrial jobs has been accompanied not only by a massive increase in homelessness and disease in the inner cities but also by skyrocketing incarceration of young black (and Hispanic) men carried out largely through the "war on drugs." This war on the ghetto masses is part of an all-sided intensification of state repression, capped by the speedup on death row ("legal lynching") and by "extralegal" street executions in the ghettos and barrios by marauding cops. When Congress passed the first "workfare" measure in 1988, signaling a wholesale onslaught on social welfare programs benefiting minorities and the poor, we noted that such policies amounted to what we called "Genocide U.S.A." This lends added urgency to our 1967 assertion in "Black and Red":

"For Negroes the fight for full employment at decent wages is not just the key to better housing, schools, etc., but a fundamental and necessary defense. If black people are forced out of any economic role and become lumpenized as a group they will be in a position to be used as a scapegoat and could be totally wiped out during a future social crisis—just as the Jews in Germany were—without affecting the economy. The fight must be fought *now* to maintain Negroes as part of the working class."

16. As Karl Marx wrote at the time of the Civil War, "Labor in white skin cannot emancipate itself where the black skin is branded" (Letter to François Lafargue, 12 November 1866, *On America and the Civil War*, Vol. 2, Saul K. Padover, ed.). In racist America, class exploitation has always been wrapped in the envelope of raw racism. Today, the desperate conditions of life—rotten schools and rotting housing, no health care, low-wage jobs—that were visited first on blacks and immigrant workers are increasingly a reality for the working class as a whole.

As long as workers are pitted against each other in competition for a limited pool of jobs, the necessary consequence will be a divided and weakened labor movement. We seek to unite employed and unemployed—black and white—workers in common struggle around common demands. We call for union hiring halls, with special union-run programs

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mobilization rode  
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New York City,  
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of exploitation and  
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aimed at reaching out to and training minorities, linked to the fight for jobs for all, demanding that the available work be divided at no loss in pay among all those capable of working. Against “workfare” schemes which undermine municipal unions by drafting the ghetto and barrio poor to work as slave labor in formerly unionized jobs, we demand equal pay for equal work—union wages with full union protection. We demand a massive program of public works at union wages—for quality, integrated housing and schools, for free quality health care for all, for the reconstruction of deteriorating urban infrastructure and social services.

There will be no effective resistance to the immiseration of American working people without the unity in struggle between the trade unions and the black and Hispanic poor. Despite the destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength, black workers, who have a significantly higher rate of trade-union membership than do white workers, continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat, which alone has the power to shatter this racist, capitalist system. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multiracial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party.

We seek to mobilize the labor movement to defeat attacks on social welfare programs and the racist rollback of affirmative action measures. However, our program is not the defense of the miserable status quo. At best, welfare relegates the least skilled section of the unemployed to impoverishment and exclusion from social production. Nor is affirmative action the solution to pervasive discrimination in employment and education; the imposition of quotas in particular is ultimately reactionary, far more likely to be used to restrict than advance minority admissions in higher education. We fight for open admissions and free higher education for all. We specifically oppose affirmative action or preferential hiring schemes in employment when they involve attacks on union seniority schemes and/or the intervention of the

employers or the capitalist state agencies in the trade unions.

We fight for free, quality, integrated education at all levels. In the mid 1970s we fought to defend busing programs which, however inadequate, were a step against racist segregation. Raising the call, “Implement the Busing Plan! Extend Busing into the Suburbs! Integrated Quality Education for All!” the Spartacist League agitated for the key integrated unions to organize labor/black defense of black schoolchildren who were being terrorized by racist mobs in the streets of Boston in 1974.

17. With its mass poverty, nationalism and racism, capitalism continually breeds the KKK/Nazi vermin who increase in times of economic despair and are emboldened by the capitulations of the labor bureaucracy in the face of capitalist attacks on workers and minorities. The fascists are the shock troops of capitalist reaction, held in reserve by the bourgeoisie as its last line of defense against a working-class challenge to its class rule. Crushing the fascists now, when they are still small, is a life-and-death question for labor, blacks and other minorities.

Through the tactic of the united front—unity in struggle combined with full freedom of propaganda—we fight for the perspective of labor/black mobilizations, centered on the social power of the trade unions, to stop KKK/Nazi terror, a perspective we have successfully implemented and which has been key in keeping the Klan out of the major urban areas in the past period.

On 27 November 1982, when the KKK announced it would march in Washington, D.C. for the first time since 1925 in a provocation targeting immigrants, and with fake leftists half-heartedly organizing a diversionary rally miles from the starting point of the Klan’s announced parade route, the party along with black unionists particularly from the longshore union brought out 5,000 demonstrators who sent the Klan running back into their holes. In New York on 23 October 1999, to stop a KKK race-terror rally outside a Manhattan courthouse, the Partisan Defense Committee mobilized some 8,000 demonstrators, largely trade unionists,

black and Hispanic, who drove the Klan nightriders off the streets of New York. The demonstration took place in the face of a concerted collaboration between the city government, the Democratic Party, including especially black hustler Al Sharpton and NYCLU head Norman Siegel, to block the anti-Klan protest and let the KKK rally take place. These efforts to block our mobilization failed miserably. What was seen on the streets of New York City that day was a graphic example of the power of the multiracial proletariat when it is organized independently of the capitalist rulers for its own class interests.

Our labor/black mobilizations have succeeded in making a small sector of the working class conscious of its potential social power and the necessity of mobilizing in its own defense and in defense of blacks and other oppressed sectors of this society as well as demonstrating the class nature and the role of the capitalist state. Under revolutionary leadership, such mobilizations can provide a bridge between the felt need for self-defense and the historic need to end the threat of fascism by sweeping away the capitalist system. We vigorously oppose calls on the capitalist state to pass laws against "extremists" (e.g., demands to "ban the Klan"). Such laws are overwhelmingly used to outlaw opponents of fascist terror.

We stand for labor-centered mobilizations to protest particular police atrocities. Key to this perspective is to combat illusions fostered by liberals and reformists that police brutality can be stopped or ameliorated through reformist/nationalist schemes like "community control," civilian review boards or more minority cops. Such mechanisms aim to "clean up" the cops' image and ultimately render the apparatus of state repression more effective. The police are the armed thugs of capitalism; they must be swept away through a proletarian revolution which smashes the entire repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

18. In our active fight to smash the color bar in this virulently racist society, communists stand in the forefront of the struggle for elementary democratic rights. We honor such militant fighters for black freedom and the right of armed self-defense as Robert F. Williams, Conrad Lynn and Malcolm X. However, we reject the sectoralist or "multi-vanguardist" notion that each layer of the oppressed must organize separately—and independently of the working class—around its own distinct interests, which accepts the capitalists' attempts to pit one oppressed group against another for an ever-shrinking piece of the pie. We uphold the Leninist principle of a centralized vanguard party as a tribune of the people, the embodiment of the proletarian program which fights on behalf of all the oppressed.

At the same time, we recognize that the special oppression of black people by both race and class mandates the need for special modes and forms of struggle. We seek to build transitional organizations of specially oppressed strata expressing both their special needs and their relationship to the broader struggle for proletarian power. Examples of transitional organizations for black struggle are to be found in the Labor Black Leagues associated with Spartacist League locals in New York, Chicago and the Bay Area. The Chicago LBL was founded on the basis of a successful campaign to defend a black woman transit worker victimized by the police. In 1993, the LBLs initiated the call for nationwide protests against racist discrimination at the Denny's restaurant chain.

Neither a substitute for nor an opponent of the vanguard party, the LBLs are linked to the party both programmatically and through their most conscious cadres. Thus the program of the Labor Black Leagues states: "For a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed! Finish the Civil War! Those who labor must rule!"

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## V. For a Workers Party That Fights For a Workers Government!

1. As Lenin explained in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902): "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness," a species of bourgeois consciousness which accepts the framework of capitalism and limits the struggles of the proletariat to questions of wages and working conditions and which reflects the social and political prejudices of the more backward layers of the working class. Socialist consciousness can only be brought to the working class from without, through the all-sided intervention of a democratic-centralist Leninist combat party, a fusion of intellectual and proletarian elements, which aims to imbue the working class with a Marxist understanding of its historic revolutionary mission of abolishing the rule of capitalism. Writing in 1899 ("Our Immediate Task"), Lenin explained:

"The struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the *entire class* of capitalists and against the government that supports that class. Only when the individual worker realizes that he is a member of the entire working class, only when he recognizes the fact that his petty day-to-day struggle against individual employers and individual government officials is a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and the entire government, does his struggle become a class struggle.... It is the task of the Social-Democrats, by organizing the workers, by conducting propaganda and agitation among them, to *turn* their spontaneous struggle against their oppressors into the struggle of the whole class, into the struggle of a definite political *party* for definite political and socialist ideals."

We stand on the Transitional Program, which seeks to link the daily struggles of the masses against the capitalists to the program for proletarian revolution through a system of transitional demands "stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

2. The only proletarian organizations thrown up by the class struggle in the U.S. have been the trade unions. The unions are currently dominated by the consciously pro-capitalist AFL-CIO bureaucracy, an imperialist-bribed labor aristocratic layer that looks at social reality through the same lens as the capitalist class, accepting and reinforcing the racial division that lies at the heart of American society. In the U.S., black rights and union rights march forward together or fall back separately. The unions present us with a dual aspect: on the one hand they are organizations of the working class, embracing millions of workers, whose destruction by the capitalists would constitute a decisive step back, but at the same time their leaderships—conservative,

Trotskyists led 1934 Minneapolis strikes which laid basis for the growth of Teamsters as a powerful industrial union.



Minnesota Historical Society

narrow and self-interested—impede the workers from resisting the attacks of capital and reaction.

Lenin explained in *Imperialism* that the underlying basis for labor reformism in imperialist countries is crumbs from the spoils of empire. In this bastion of the world imperialist order, the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy is particularly tightly wedded to the aims and ideology of the racist American imperialist state.

The trade-union bureaucracy is the chief obstacle to class struggle in the U.S. Through the instrument of the Democratic Party, they chain the workers to the capitalists and their state. In times of sharp class struggle or imperialist war, the labor bureaucrats become the open political police of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement. It is the task of the revolutionary party to educate the workers so that they can politically oust these misleaders and set the unions on the path of class struggle against the capitalists and their system.

3. Although the pioneer American trade-union organization, the Knights of Labor, was organized on industrial lines, it was superseded by the explicitly craft-based American Federation of Labor. Racial and ethnic divisions in the working class were furthered by the AFL bureaucracy who epitomized what Daniel De Leon described as “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.” Into the early years of the 20th century, unions accounted for at most 5 percent of the total labor force and were largely limited to native, white, skilled workers organized on a craft-union basis.

Significant gains made by labor during and immediately after the First World War were rolled back during the 1920s. Economic expansion coincided with political reaction, ushered in by an outbreak of bloody race riots in Northern cities against blacks who had migrated from the South and by a government witchhunt (the Palmer Raids) against radicals and immigrants launched in response to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. During the 1920s the white-supremacist, fascist Ku Klux Klan grew in numbers and political influence in the South and elsewhere, appealing also to anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic nativism.

Apart from the early heroic efforts of the IWW, industrial unionism (the conception of organizing all workers in an industry into one union, irrespective of trade) did not take off

until the rise of the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) in the 1930s. The Great Depression and the victory of fascism in Germany in 1933 radicalized the American working class. The working class concentrated in mass production industries unleashed a massive, powerful strike movement.

The mass industrial unions of the CIO were built by sweeping aside the old racial/ethnic job-trusting divisions. Though still a small minority in industry, black workers became a significant force in CIO unions like auto, steel and meatpacking. But blacks remained at the bottom of the economic ladder, “last hired, first fired.”

4. The tumultuous labor struggles which launched the CIO were accompanied by great political ferment in the working class, posing the question of independent labor political action. But the bourgeois Democratic Party, the pro-Democratic Party AFL-derived leaders of the CIO and the reformist CPUSA all strenuously mobilized against such a development. This was accompanied by energetic efforts by the capitalists to create a body of laws and measures (e.g., the National Labor Relations Act) aimed at legally subordinating the new unions to the bourgeois state.

The ties between the AFL and CIO bureaucracies and the Democratic Party were further strengthened during World War II, when the CPUSA cravenly sought to enforce class peace through a “no-strike pledge.” Immediately following the war, the working class launched the biggest strike wave in U.S. history. These economic demands were easily satisfied by the richest bourgeoisie in the world, which emerged temporarily hegemonic after its victory in WWII. At the same time, the bourgeoisie put forward further measures designed to cripple the power of the unions, e.g., the Taft-Hartley Act. The labor tops meekly acquiesced, promising at best electoral opposition. In fact, they then embarked on a government-orchestrated anti-red witchhunt. Motivated by patriotic calls to “stop the spread of Communism,” the intent was to break the back of the militant labor movement that had developed in the 1930s, cleaning out the reds, mainly the social-patriotic CPUSA, whom the capitalists had tolerated during the war. The red purge was the basis on which the AFL and CIO merged in 1955.

5. The pro-capitalist union tops who won their spurs purging reds from the unions went on to offer their services to the anti-Communist machinations of U.S. imperialism, actively serving as CIA conduits and agents. From hiring gangsters to physically smash militant pro-Communist labor organizations in Europe after World War II to the overturn of the Polish deformed workers state by the company union Solidarność, to its constant collusion in propping up brutal capitalist rule in Latin America to facilitate U.S. neocolonial plunder, the "AFL-CIA" has been up to its neck in direct participation in the dirty crimes of the American empire.

In the 1960s, the union bureaucrats, epitomized by AFL-CIO chief George Meany, were among the most ardent supporters of the counterrevolutionary U.S. war in Vietnam, occupying the far right of the Democratic Party political spectrum. The bureaucracy's abject surrender to capitalist wage controls during the Vietnam War and ongoing ties to an ever more conservative Democratic Party ushered in a period of retreat and defeat. Currently less than 10 percent of the industrial working class is organized in unions, nearly a fourfold drop from the end of World War II. A corresponding sharp decline in the living standards of unionized workers (and indeed all workers) was accompanied by a marked increase in the concentration of wealth. The experience of the past two decades in the United States amply confirms the Marxist understanding of the tendency under capitalism toward the immiseration of the proletariat.

6. It is worth noting one of the main historic differences between the European and American labor movements. In Europe, mass reformist parties have had a strong base in the working class for most of the 20th century and frequently have been successful in politically disarming the workers, channeling class conflict into parliamentary reform and electoralism.

In contrast, the labor leadership in the U.S. has, generally speaking, been a thin, brittle, anti-communist bureaucracy without any particular historical authority in the working class. Thus, in periods of sharp outbreaks of class struggle it has been unable to play the moderating role of its European counterparts. As a consequence, strikes in such periods in the U.S. have often been long and violent, accompanied by brutal and sometimes lethal intervention by local, state or federal authorities.

This feature of the American labor movement—the shallow authority of the official union leaderships and the resulting raw class struggle—has in the past catapulted reds into direct leadership of sections of the working class. This was the case in three major class battles of 1934, the Minneapolis Teamster strikes, the Toledo Auto-Lite strike and the San Francisco general strike, which were led respectively by Trotskyists, Musteites and Stalinists. Thus it is possible that the SL/U.S. could in the future find itself in a similar situation, underlining the importance of proletarian revolutionaries acquiring a solid base of working-class support in key industries.

7. The existing trade-union bureaucrats are the heirs of the Meanyite Cold Warriors. In pursuit of collaboration with the bosses and capitalist government, these union tops have persistently attempted to strip the unions of their class-struggle weapons. Surrendering to the capitalists before the battle is engaged, many labor tops assert that strikes are "outmoded," and look instead to binding arbitration, consumer boycotts, lobbying company boards of directors,

court suits, and "informational picket lines." The labor lawyer has become a permanent fixture of the labor movement. In cases when a strike is posed, often the greatest obstacle to militancy is the ranks' belief that the leadership will not fight to win. The sharp decline in union membership is the direct product of a "leadership" which has acquiesced to a generation of union-busting, to the killing and jailing of strikers, to wage givebacks and backbreaking and dangerous conditions. The bureaucracy has joined in on every union-busting ploy from two-tier contracts to "workfare," schemes which superexploit black and young workers and divide labor along lines of age and color.

Lately there has been a shift in the external face of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy exemplified by the forces grouped around AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, who also identifies himself as a leader of the Democratic Socialists of America. This shift has manifested itself in efforts to draw student youth behind the AFL-CIO (the Union Summer and anti-sweatshop campaigns), as well as efforts to organize unorganized workforces and a limited reversal of the previous anti-immigrant stance of the AFL-CIO. However, far from representing a shift toward class independence, this social-democratic-tinged layer of the labor bureaucracy is, if anything, more ideologically committed to state regulation and intervention in the affairs of the labor movement than the old-line "business-unionism" bureaucrats.

"No decisive gain of labor was ever won in a courtroom or by an act of Congress. Everything the workers movement has won of value has been achieved by mobilizing the ranks of labor in hard-fought struggle, on the picket lines, in plant occupations" ("Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win," *Workers Vanguard* No. 349, 2 March 1984). The SL fights for picket lines that nobody better try to cross. We fight to spread strikes, for sympathy strikes in defense of embattled workers, for elected strike committees to organize union militancy instead of throttling it. We fight to unchain labor's power in its own self-defense and in active defense of the black and immigrant populations particularly targeted by social reaction. We fight to advance and defend the economic interests, democratic rights and social conquests of the working class through a system of transitional demands that challenge the very framework of capitalism.

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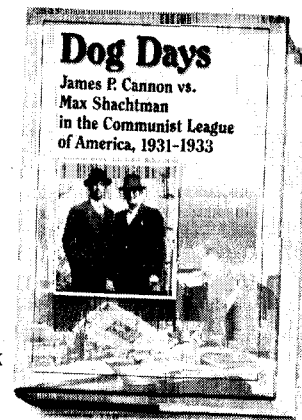
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8. The tendency toward the domination of the trade unions by a reactionary bureaucracy, the tendency of the unions to draw close to and subordinate themselves to bourgeois state power, derive directly from the monopoly nature of modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, which confronts the proletariat with a very centralized capitalist class that wields concentrated state power to advance its aims. As Trotsky noted:

“In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent that they are conscious of being, in action, the organs of proletarian revolution.”

— “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940)

The Spartacist League struggles for the complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state.

The SL opposes on principle all government intervention in the labor movement, starting with the whole corpus of capitalist anti-union “labor law” designed to bind the unions hand and foot to the bourgeois order, from the NLRB and Taft-Hartley to RICO and drug-testing. The labor bureaucracy uses these laws as an excuse to meekly assent to capitalist union-busting and strikebreaking, abandoning the power of the workers to confront the employers and instead turning to the capitalist courts. These laws and regulations can only be broken in militant class struggle that renders them dead letters.

The complex matrix of anti-union legislation is intended not only to hamstring union workers in direct conflict with the employers, but to regulate the unions’ internal life under the guise of combatting corruption and gangsterism and enforcing “union democracy.” Many unions are today under the direct, nominally transient, control of agencies of the U.S. Department of Justice and federal courts. Reliance on state intervention is routinely used by would-be oppositionists and out-bureaucrats seeking union office. In 1973, as the rest of the American left hailed the Mineworkers’ Arnold Miller and his so-called “Miners for Democracy,” we headlined: “Labor Department Wins Mine Workers’ Election” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 17, March 1973). Likewise we opposed the longtime efforts of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) to engineer a government takeover of the Teamsters. With the help of a court-enforced “consent decree,” the TDU finally managed to get its candidate, Ron Carey, elected president of the union, only to see him dumped by the federal government on the heels of the nationwide 1997 United Parcel Service strike.

Labor must clean its own house! We advocate the fullest internal democracy within the unions, including election of all union representatives and officers. Those who bring the class enemy’s government into the unions vitiate the very purpose of workers democracy—to cohere the most effective policy and leadership for defending the workers’ class interests.

We are unalterably opposed to organizing security guards, prison guards and cops—strikebreaking henchmen of the bourgeoisie—into the labor movement and demand and work for their ouster from the unions. We also oppose the unionization of representatives of management—foremen and bosses with the right to discipline workers under their supervision. We denounce the widely accepted practice of dues check-off, which involves the company in an area in which it has no business—union finances—holds the union hostage during strikes and lays the financial basis for the anti-democratic bureaucracy’s independence from the union members. The unions must collect their own dues through a network of militant elected shop stewards.

9. As much as the capitalists would like to abolish the class struggle of the proletariat, they cannot do so, as the capitalist system is beset with the historic contradictions first analyzed by Marx. The working class is inevitably drawn into battle. Thus, attempts to bypass the trade unions or to dismiss them as hopelessly dominated by reactionary bureaucrats reflect either a revolutionary impatience which abandons the struggle to win the masses to revolutionary class consciousness, or simply a petty-bourgeois disdain for the organizations of the proletariat. The main strategic challenge facing revolutionaries is the liberation of the workers from the reactionary influence of the trade-union bureaucracy, which means the struggle to win the workers in the unions to the banner of socialist revolution. We fight for the emergence of a class-struggle wing in the unions opposing the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy.

The methods of communist work in the existing trade unions are defined in James Cannon’s 1924 speech directed to the Communist Party’s miners’ fraction, “Our Aims and Tactics in the Trade Unions”:

“There is a constant danger of the work of our trade union comrades being influenced too much by expediency and so-called practicality. One-sided conceptions, purely trade union points of view, take the upper hand and the general class issues of the struggle are pushed into the background....

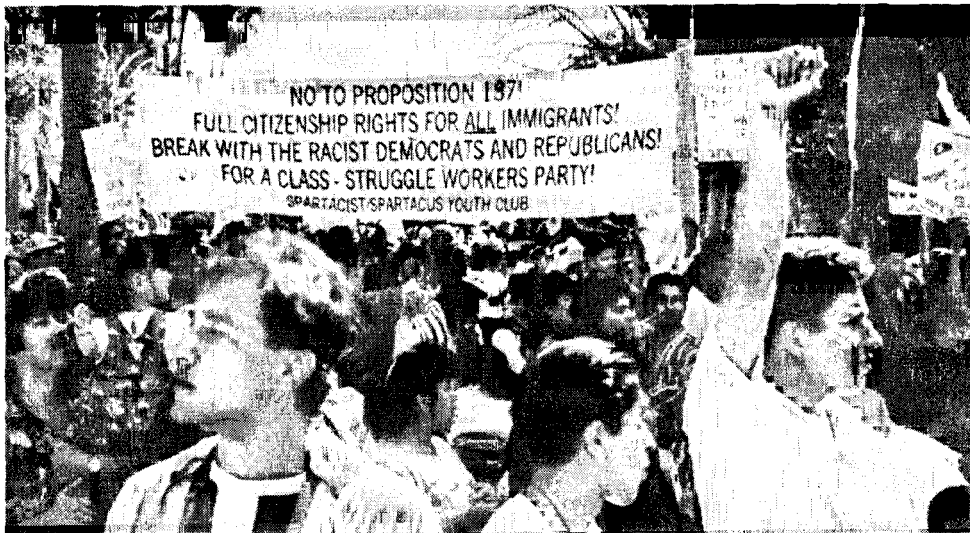
“We can sum up the whole question in a few words. We are not progressives, but revolutionists. Our role in the trade union movement is to organize the masses for the proletarian revolution and to lead them in the struggle for it. All of our daily work must be related to this, and subordinated to it. The test of our work can never be made by formal victories on paper, but by the development of class consciousness in the ranks of the workers, the degree of their organization on that basis and the increasing influence and leadership of our party. Strategic positions in the labor movement are of importance chiefly from the standpoint of enabling the party to advance and develop its work of revolutionizing the masses.”

10. Trade unions cannot substitute for a revolutionary party, whose intervention is required to transform them into fighting instruments against the capitalists. As elemental organs of economic self-defense of the proletariat, trade unions encompass the workers of a given economic unit or trade. Each union is therefore by its very nature the arena of an ongoing united front between the supporters of the revolutionary party and the reformist and non-party masses. Trotsky noted in the Transitional Program:

“The Bolshevik-Leninist...takes active part in mass trade unions for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their spirit of militancy. He fights uncompromisingly against any attempt to subordinate the unions to the bourgeois state and bind the proletariat to ‘compulsory arbitration’ and every other form of police guardianship—not only fascist but also ‘democratic.’ Only on the basis of such work within the trade unions is successful struggle possible against the reformists.”

11. The trade unions currently comprise less than 15 percent of the entire U.S. working class, concentrated in the more skilled and better-paid layers. Under conditions of mass struggle against capitalism we seek to create independent mass organizations appropriate to the tasks at hand. As Trotsky noted in “The Unions in Britain” (1933):

“We do not at all mean by this that the revolutionary party has any guarantee that the trade unions will be completely won over to the socialist revolution.... The bureaucracy is capable of retaining its positions a long time after the masses have turned against it. But it is precisely such a situation, where the masses are already hostile to the trade union bureaucracy but where the bureaucracy is still capable of misrepresenting the opinion of the organization and of sabotaging new elections,



Workers Vanguard

**80,000 marched in Los Angeles against anti-immigrant Prop 187, October 1994. Latin American immigrants bring militant traditions to workers' struggles in U.S.**

that is the most favorable for the creation of shop committees, workers' councils, and other organizations for the immediate needs of any given moment."

12. Against the pro-capitalist, pro-Democratic-Party trade-union bureaucracy, we advocate a workers party, an independent class party of the proletariat, which is the necessary instrument to achieve a genuine workers government, nothing less than the dictatorship of the proletariat. *Oust the bureaucrats! Break with the Democrats! For a workers party! For a workers government!*

The history of the United States is replete with examples of bourgeois "third" parties promising reforms—La Follette's Farmer-Labor Party, the Henry Wallace campaign, the California Peace and Freedom Party, the National Black Independent Political Party—all of them designed to channel social protest into the dead end of bourgeois electoralism, and usually back into the Democratic Party. Meanwhile, social-democratic reformists and centrists see a reformist labor party akin to the British Labour Party as the only permissible outcome to the struggle for a workers party in the U.S.

The nature of a workers party in the United States is not predetermined, but depends on the outcome of political struggle, including the intervention of proletarian revolutionaries. One thing is certain. The establishment of a class party of the American proletariat will not be a long-drawn-out evolutionary development, but will arise as a result of convulsive class battles posing the question of which class shall rule.

13. Given the abysmally low level of trade-union membership, particularly in the manufacturing sector, the transformation of the union movement into an instrument of militant struggle against the bourgeois order requires first and foremost a unionization drive. Except for a few heroic efforts undertaken by reds, the impressive unionization drive of the 1930s did not breach the Mason-Dixon Line separating North from South, the main bastion of racist reaction. The first CIO initiative to organize the South, in 1941, was scuttled by the labor bureaucracy to show their support to the imperialist war. A second attempt, launched in 1946 as "Operation Dixie," was shipwrecked on the shoals of the red purges, racism and the CIO bureaucracy's ties to the Democratic Party.

The flight of industry from the Northeast and Midwest to the "open shop" South directly poses a Southern unionization drive. Unionization of the South cannot be conducted on a

narrowly economist basis but, on the contrary, will have to directly confront the profound racial divide which depresses living standards of all Southern workers. On the one side, the entire black community will tend to rally behind racially integrated workers fighting the local white power structure. On the other side, the Southern branch of the American ruling class will resort to police, company goons and professional strikebreakers, and if necessary the Klan and its ilk, while using racist demagoguery to turn backward white workers against the labor movement. Thus, the defense of strike pickets and the need to defeat racist terror will be directly linked, posing in a concrete and immediate way the point stressed by Trotsky in the Transitional Program:

"Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army.... In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating *workers' groups for self-defense*."

14. There is a large Mexican-derived proletariat in California and the Southwest located near the vast *maquiladora* industrial zone lying just over the U.S./Mexico border. Recent strikes by Canadian and U.S. auto workers have graphically demonstrated how closely integrated the political economies of the U.S., Canada and Mexico have become. This poses to the proletariat the necessity for the closest collaboration in waging class struggle against the employers. The trade-union bureaucrats' protectionist outlook is poison to this perspective as it seeks to blame Mexican workers for the problems of workers in the U.S. Only an internationalist outlook—the Marxist understanding that the working class has no fatherland—can ignite the necessary struggle against the imperialist exploiters whose rivalries inevitably lead to colonial and inter-imperialist wars.

15. The relative political backwardness of the working class in the U.S. imposes on American communists a central task of explaining basic principles of scientific socialism as part of our intervention into major social struggles. Shackled by deep racial divisions and a labor bureaucracy subservient to the wealthiest imperialist state on the planet, the American working class is far removed from, if not openly hostile to, even a reformist/parliamentarist understanding of socialism. The bourgeoisie's "death of communism" triumphalism has deepened false consciousness among the working masses (although its impact in the U.S. was less dramatic than in

Europe, where the mass of workers subscribed to some version of socialism). However, as noted in the SWP's "Theses on the American Revolution" (October 1946): "Under the compulsion of objective necessity not only backward peoples but backward classes in advanced countries find themselves driven to clear great distances in single leaps."

## **VI. Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! Defend the Rights of Racial/Ethnic Minorities!**

### **1. As the ICL Declaration of Principles notes:**

"Modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, reaching into all areas of the planet, in the course of the class struggle and as economic need demands, brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labor, principally immigrants from poorer and less-developed regions of the world—workers with few rights who are deemed more disposable in times of economic contraction. Thus capitalism in ongoing fashion creates different strata among the workers, while simultaneously amalgamating the workers of many different lands."

Immigration into the U.S. has markedly increased over the last three decades. The most recent immigrants to the United States have come from Latin America (primarily Mexico), the Caribbean and Asia as well as East Europe. Hispanics now make up almost 12 percent of the U.S. population and Asian Americans nearly 4 percent. Future immigration will by no means necessarily continue at this level, but will depend on the outcome of political struggles: economic contractions engender moves to further tighten immigration laws and possibly even efforts at mass deportation of immigrants.

2. The oppression of blacks remains primary and fundamental to American capitalist society. This persisting racial caste division is illustrated by the far lower percentage of interracial marriages between blacks and whites compared to that between Asians or Hispanics and whites.

Sociologically, both Hispanics and Asian Americans constitute "intermediate" groups occupying a middle position between whites and blacks in American society. Yet the census statistics on the high median income of Asian Americans obscure the national and class differences within this population. For example, despite the myth of the Chinese as the "model minority," nearly one-third of the Chinese immigrant population is composed of service and manual workers. A significant proportion are new immigrants who tend to live in Chinatowns and work for low wages in dead-end jobs. In addition to this, a good many of the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants from China who have come to the U.S. over the last decade toil for sub-minimum wages in restaurants and sweatshops.

Likewise, the concept of a pan-Hispanic ethnic minority, encompassing wealthy Cuban businessmen on one end and undocumented Salvadoran day laborers on the other, is a statistical construct with little correspondence to socio-economic and political reality. The differences between Puerto Ricans, third- or fourth-generation Mexican Americans (Chicanos) and Mexican/Central American immigrants and the class differences within the various Hispanic communities are greater and more important than their shared language and sense of Hispanic identity.

3. While there is also substantial immigration of petty-bourgeois and professional elements from throughout the

world, newly arrived plebeian immigrants, particularly Hispanics, in their vast majority end up at the bottom of American capitalist society, working at jobs on the margins of the economy, or in low-wage jobs in labor-intensive industries. Currently, there are an estimated 5 million undocumented immigrants. Targets of vicious anti-immigrant chauvinism, they are denied social services and the most basic rights. Having no legal status, they are subject to instant deportation and separation of families and are the object of superexploitation by agricultural bosses and sweatshop owners.

The bourgeoisie has enacted new laws aimed at restricting immigrants' rights and toughening deportation statutes. Immigration and customs officials now have vast discretionary power to say who may or may not enter the country, with tightened scrutiny at legal points of entry, while the border with Mexico is being militarized. New "anti-terrorism" laws permit deportation of non-citizens by administrative fiat and even legal immigrants are now subject to deportation for trivial legal infractions. Other laws deny immigrants health and welfare benefits, and there are moves to deny undocumented immigrants' children the right to attend public schools. "English only" regulations challenge not only bilingual education programs but even the right to speak other languages in the workplace.

4. The Spartacist League demands full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We stand for full equality of all languages in all spheres of public life and defend bilingual education against "English only" bigots. We stand unalterably opposed to the bourgeoisie's anti-immigrant laws and regulations. Against the capitalists' attempts to use undocumented, low-wage immigrant workers as a club against the trade unions, we seek to mobilize the labor movement to fight deportations and INS raids through class-struggle means and to organize such workers into the unions with full rights and protections. It is particularly important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism in the working class and especially among black workers, while the immigrant-derived proletariat must grasp that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social reaction in this country. In this regard, our 1982 labor/black mobilization that stopped the KKK from staging an anti-immigrant march in Washington, D.C. is a model.

5. As a Leninist tribune of the people, we combat every manifestation of racism and bigotry, including the pernicious poison of anti-Semitism and anti-Asian and anti-Arab chauvinism spewed by black nationalist demagogues. Anti-Arab racism is chiefly fueled by the bourgeoisie's "anti-terrorist" hysteria and by the Zionist apologists for Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. In the face of escalating anti-Asian racism, a product of U.S. imperialism's growing trade war with Japan and of the labor bureaucracy's chauvinist-protectionist appeals, we seek to sear into the memory of the proletariat the horrendous incarceration of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II.

6. As proletarian revolutionaries in the United States, we have a particular obligation to defend the rights of the indigenous American Indian peoples, who face all-sided persecution and are often confined to abysmally impoverished reservations. A revolutionary workers government would ensure the social emancipation of Native American Indians, promoting their voluntary integration on the basis of full equality.

7. The vast numbers of immigrant workers now toiling in U.S. factories can be a powerful leaven to the class struggle





Workers Vanguard

**Spartacists hailed 1979 Soviet army intervention against woman-hating, CIA-backed forces in Afghanistan, organized international campaign for aid to embattled city of Jalalabad following treacherous 1989 withdrawal of troops by Soviet leader Gorbachev.**

here, as many of them come from countries with stronger traditions of labor militancy and anti-capitalist struggle. Likewise, these workers are a natural pool for recruitment to the revolutionary party and such recruits can constitute a nucleus for organizing Trotskyist parties in their native lands. For socialist revolution from the Yukon to the Yucatán and throughout the Americas!

## VII. For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

1. The Spartacist League reaffirms that the struggle against women's oppression is integral to the emancipation of labor itself. The oppression of women is rooted in the original division of society into classes. As Friedrich Engels explained in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the monogamous patrilineal family arose to "make the man supreme in the family, and to propagate, as the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own." As Lenin noted, "the abolition of private ownership of land and the factories...opens up the way towards a complete and actual emancipation of woman, her liberation from 'household bondage' through transition from petty individual housekeeping to large-scale socialized domestic services" (V. I. Lenin, "International Working Women's Day" [March 1921]).

Under capitalism, the institution of the family remains the central source of women's oppression. For the proletariat, the institutionalized family—buttressed and promoted by religion and the state—means the burden of raising the next generation of workers, caring for the sick and aged, and instilling bourgeois codes of "morality" and obedience to authority. Doubly oppressed proletarian women also play a key economic role as part of the reserve army of the unemployed, drawn into wage labor in boom times and wars and fired at the next downturn.

2. The right to abortion, achieved nationally in 1973 as the result of the social struggles which cracked the reactionary domestic climate of the post-World War II Cold War, came under attack almost immediately, first and foremost for poor and working women. More generally, the bourgeoisie, starting with the Democratic Carter administration, soon launched an anti-sex witchhunt aimed at "moral rearma-

ment" and social regimentation, the domestic reflection of a renewed war drive against the Soviet Union. The American imperialists cultivated religious reaction abroad (the Catholic church in Poland, Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan) and at home as a weapon in the anti-Soviet war drive. The climate of bourgeois triumphalism following capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in turn fueled an escalating offensive against the right to abortion and social programs benefiting poor and minority women in particular.

In the name of reactionary "family values," hundreds have been victimized and imprisoned in a fabricated hysteria over "child abuse" at day-care centers, buttressing the powers of the bourgeois state with new laws and an apparatus of sex cops. Gay people and abortion providers are subjected to murderous terror. Religion is a bulwark of reaction in general and of the institutionalized oppression of women in particular.

3. In seeking to forge a Leninist party as a tribune of the people championing the rights of all the exploited and oppressed, we fight for the workers movement to take up the struggle for women's rights. We call for mass mobilizations backed up by the social power of the labor movement to defend abortion clinics against rightist mobs. We place no reliance on the bourgeois state, the enemy of women's rights, to defend the clinics. We fight for free abortion on demand as part of the necessary struggle for free, quality health care for all, in order to ensure that legal abortion can become a reality for working, minority and immigrant women. We demand equal pay for equal work and call for free, 24-hour childcare.

We oppose efforts to regulate the manifold expressions of human sexuality. Our guiding principle is simply that of mutual effective consent. Down with reactionary "age of consent" and "statutory rape" laws which criminalize consensual sexual activity of youth! We oppose the reactionary crusade against pornography and the "date rape" hysteria, spearheaded by bourgeois feminists in league with puritanical bigots. Government out of the bedrooms!

Anti-gay bigotry flows from the stereotyping decreed by the sexual division of labor in the family. We fight for full democratic rights for homosexuals and oppose in particular the rabidly discriminatory measures which have accompanied the witchhunt against people with AIDS.



Workers Vanguard Photos  
**Philadelphia, August 1995: Social power of labor must be mobilized in fight to free death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.**

4. American feminism was born as a separate movement in its post-Civil War split with the abolitionists; its founders embraced white supremacy and campaigned against voting rights for black freedmen. Feminism is the anti-proletarian, anti-egalitarian ideology of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women who support the capitalist status quo and who seek only their own power and privilege within the old boys' club. The evolution of feminist ideology over the past period, from the radical sectoralism of the 1970s New Left to today's unashamed devotion to the capitalist state and U.S. imperialist militarism, only shows feminism's reversion to its historic norm.

The bankruptcy of feminism, nationalism and other sectoralist (bourgeois) outlooks is glaring in the case of black working women, subjected to racial, sexual and class oppression. Black feminists can offer no solution for triply oppressed black women workers, because such reformists are beholden to the Democratic Party, which pushes the same "family values" reaction as the right-wing Republicans or the Nation of Islam. With an authority derived from generations as one of the few social organizations allowed in the black community, the church (mainly in the form of Christianity) serves as an instrument of social control and a political transmission belt to the bourgeois Democratic Party. For our part, we recall that the vanguard of the abolitionist movement against slavery—John Brown, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and the Grimké sisters—stood for the commonality of all the oppressed. As Frederick Douglass proclaimed, "Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color." In our struggle for socialist revolution to eliminate black and women's oppression, we stand on the tradition of these radical democratic revolutionaries.

5. The emancipation of women requires a socialist revolution and the creation of a planned economy in which women will have full access to participation in the productive forces of society, and the institution of the family will be replaced with collective childcare and housework. Understanding that the liberation of women is the task of the proletarian party as a whole, our perspective is to build a women's section of the vanguard party aimed at extending its influence to layers of working-class and minority women and drawing them into the revolutionary movement. In this spirit we published the journal *Women and Revolution* for 25 years,

until its suspension as an independent publication in 1997 as a necessary measure to consolidate scarce party resources. The carryover of *Women and Revolution* pages to *Spartacist* reflects not only our continuing commitment to the above invoked duty of the proletarian party on this question, but the fact that *Women and Revolution* had increasingly become the journal of our whole international. This in turn is reflected in the publication in our sectional presses of *Women and Revolution* pages and continued coverage of issues that concern the woman question as an integral part of *Workers Vanguard*.

## VIII. Open the Road to the Youth!

1. The oppression of youth is likewise derived from the institution of the family. The family, religion, the media and the educational system are principal means for instilling bourgeois "morality" and socially regimenting young people. We oppose all laws which enable the bourgeois state to regulate the consensual sexual activity of youth and to exercise social control under the guise of "protecting children." Working-class, particularly minority, youth face far higher levels of unemployment, fewer job protections and lower wages, increasingly institutionalized through multi-tier wage systems. Underlining the worsening conditions for young workers is the fact that for the first time since World War II, working-class youth can no longer expect a higher standard of living than that of their parents. We call for the full integration of young workers into the trade unions with equal protection, wages and benefits.

Youth serve a particular role as the cannon fodder for the wars and other military adventures of the imperialist rulers. Our opposition to the bourgeois army and to conscription is antithetical to that of petty-bourgeois pacifists or those who seek an exemption from an obligation imposed on working-class youth. Even in the absence of the draft, as at present, black, Hispanic and white working-class youth are forced into the military through economic conscription—for lack of jobs. At the same time, the disproportionate presence of such youth in the armed forces is an Achilles' heel for the U.S. military machine. We oppose all racial, class and sexual discrimination within the military, and if conscription is imposed we oppose all student deferments and other

manifestations of class bias. We don't volunteer for the bourgeois armed forces, but, if drafted, our comrades serve in the army with the rest of their generation, seeking to educate and win soldiers to our revolutionary viewpoint. On campuses we struggle against the recruitment and training of the bourgeois officer corps (ROTC) and the recruitment drives of the imperialist intelligence agencies such as the CIA and NSA.

2. While maintaining elite schools as preserves for their offspring and to train a new generation of managers and technicians, the ruling class spends on educating those they exploit and oppress only what they can realize back in profit and what they have conceded as a result of hard class battle. The loss of industrial jobs over the past two decades has gone hand in hand with attacks on public education. The bourgeoisie sees no need to educate a generation of working-class and minority youth for whom it has no jobs or future outside of unemployment, prison or early death. Public high schools are little more than holding pens for working-class and minority youth with "security" increasingly under the direct control of police departments. Exorbitant tuition hikes at public universities and community colleges and the destruction of affirmative action for college admissions effectively constitute a deliberate purge of poor and minority youth from higher education, which is still widely perceived as the best escape hatch from a life of impoverishment.

We oppose the racist assault on affirmative action programs and stand against all race, sex and class discrimination in the schools. We fight for free, quality, integrated education for all. To provide real access to higher education, we call for nationalizing the private universities, and for open admissions and free tuition with a state-paid living stipend for students. We demand full remedial programs at the universities and an end to "tracking" in the high schools, which pushes working-class and minority youth away from courses that would prepare them for college.

3. The struggle to win a new generation of youth, students as well as young workers, to the principles and program of Trotskyism is key to the building of a revolutionary workers party as a part of a reformed Fourth International. A particularly volatile layer of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, students can play an active role in "radical" politics on either the right or the left. Through the Spartacus Youth Clubs, we seek to win students and youth to the side of the working class and its communist vanguard. The SYCs are the basis for the rebuilding of a nationwide transitional organization which, as the youth section of the SL/U.S., is organizationally independent of and politically subordinate to the party. As we noted in "Youth, Class and Party," the 1971 founding document of the Revolutionary Communist Youth (now the Spartacus Youth Clubs), our aim is to "provide a valuable training ground for young radicals who will fulfill themselves as professional revolutionaries within the vanguard party."

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## **IX. For Class-Struggle Defense Against Bourgeois Repression!**

1. Despite the hypocritical preachings of "democracy for all," the only rights to which the bourgeoisie is unalterably committed are those which enforce its property relations—the right to hold private property, to own the basic means of

production, to employ wage labor, etc. Those specifically proletarian rights which may exist under bourgeois democracy—like the right to picket, to strike, to organize unions—are wrested from the bourgeoisie and maintained only through the independent action of the proletariat. Even broader democratic rights (free speech and assembly, trial by a jury of one's peers, etc.) are secured under capitalism, especially for working people and the oppressed, through social struggle and are eminently reversible in the absence of such struggle.

Many of the legal rights supposedly enshrined in the U.S. Constitution were given some meaning for the population as a whole as a result of the social struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, as the capitalist state attempted to contain, co-opt and eventually destroy the mass civil rights movement and a burgeoning radicalization centered on opposition to the Vietnam War. The subsequent driving down of real wages, the devastation of unionized industrial jobs and the wholesale destruction of social programs which provided a minimal "safety net" for the poor have led to a massive redistribution of income in favor of an already wealthy handful.

Aware that the vast growth in inequality is engendering a buildup of social tinder and great working-class anger, the capitalists have vastly augmented their arsenal of repression, turning local police forces more and more into coordinated and heavily armed paramilitary units. Accompanying this buildup in repressive power, a battery of new laws and judicial rulings have been shredding constitutional rights and constricting even further the activities of the trade unions. Above and beyond the immediate aim of suppressing the class struggle, such measures are extremely useful to the ruling class in regimenting the population for imperialist war.

2. We stand on the defense work of the early Communist Party, conducted under the banner of the International Labor Defense led by James P. Cannon. The ILD established the principles of non-sectarian defense work in causes such as the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti, who were anarchists and labor martyrs. The guiding strategy of the ILD was to put "all faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the justice of the courts."

We defend all class-war prisoners against state repression in the spirit of the IWW call, "An injury to one is an injury to all!" To this end, the SL established the Partisan Defense Committee in the tradition of the early ILD. The PDC is a non-sectarian, class-struggle social and legal defense organization in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

3. We oppose every move to expand and intensify the repressive powers of the capitalist state. In particular, we demand "Abolish the racist death penalty," a barbaric "punishment" rooted in the United States in black chattel slavery. We do not accord to the state the right to decide who shall live and who shall die. Our struggle against the death penalty is highlighted by our years' long effort to win freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

We emphatically defend the right to bear arms, a right increasingly under attack particularly by liberals, who have been pushing for ever more stringent gun control in order to ensure the state's monopoly over armed force. In our denunciation, unique on the U.S. left, of the federal government's murderous assault on the home of Idaho fascist Randy Weaver, we noted that it was "a sample of the treatment meted out by the cops in the ghettos and barrios of every

city in America. It is the working people, blacks and other minorities who are the main victims of 'gun control' laws and the trigger-happy badge-toting gunmen who enforce them" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 579, 2 July 1993). It is notable that stricter gun control measures were initially enacted in response to the Black Panther Party's ostentatious assertion of the right to bear arms in the late 1960s.

4. As communists, we are the most consistent defenders of democratic rights for the population as a whole. Against sectoralists and reformists of all stripes, we recognize that democratic rights are indivisible. We actively protested the bombing of the black MOVE home in Philadelphia in 1985 as well as the government's incineration of the racially integrated Branch Davidian religious commune near Waco, Texas in 1993.

The Spartacist League opposes the outrageous intrusion of the government into private life, and demands an end to all laws against consensual "crimes without victims," such as gambling, prostitution, drug use and pornography. The anti-drug witchhunt has led directly to staggering increases in the percentage of incarceration of the population, particularly among blacks. The Democratic Party, and black elected officials in particular, have been instrumental in the anti-drug crusade, supported by large sections of the workers and oppressed who wrongly believe that repression is a means for combatting the social pathology of widespread drug addiction. We oppose drug-testing in the workplace, by which employers weed out militants and cow the entire workforce. Our defense of the right to privacy applies even in the case of a sex witchhunt targeting imperialist commander in chief Clinton. We defend the right to assisted suicide posed in the defense of Dr. Kevorkian.

5. We oppose any and all efforts to restrict the proletariat's right to organize and strike. We vigorously defend the right of a revolutionary workers party to organize. To this end, we have waged a series of successful lawsuits, most notably against the FBI's Domestic Security/Terrorism Guidelines. We know the capitalist state will take whatever measures it can to suppress the communist vanguard. We noted in "Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League" (1969):

"The SL is a legal organization and we intend to exercise every prerogative and privilege of bourgeois democracy. Our

legality is precious to us; this is one reason why the SL is virtually the only radical organization with an untarnished record for defending other radicals who are victims of persecution and frame-up."

## X. In Defense of Science and the Enlightenment

1. When it was an ascending class, the bourgeoisie embraced the Enlightenment in its struggle against the old feudal order and its ideological bulwark, the church. Yet soon after the capitalists triumphed, they turned about and encouraged organized religion as one more means to prop up their class rule. Today, late in the epoch of imperialist decay, the bourgeois ideologues of the most powerful capitalist countries on the planet explicitly reject Enlightenment rationalism, embracing irrationality as a weapon against the proletarian revolution. In particular, any idea of subjecting class society to scientific scrutiny is rejected out of hand.

The most reactionary forces wallowing in medieval superstition make use of the most modern technologies such as the Internet to purvey their wares. The U.S., one of the most advanced capitalist nations in the world, is also deeply mired in religious obscurantism and general social and political backwardness. In the absence of an established church, the Anglo Protestant moral values of the WASP ruling class must be enforced by law and social custom. The material crux of these values is the need for a disciplined workforce. The Protestant work ethic, which stigmatizes poverty as "moral failure," reflects the needs of the capitalist labor market.


2. California, famous for its high-tech industries, exemplifies the values of "post-industrial" America: the capitalists spend more money on prisons than on higher education. What remains of education is under concerted attack by religious obscurantists and bigots, who attempt to regiment all aspects of public and private life. This is accompanied by an increasing religious presence in public life, including prayer in public schools. Three-quarters of a century after the famous Scopes Trial in which a teacher of evolution was subjected to criminal prosecution, Darwin's theory of evolution is still not taught in many public schools, while the biblical superstition of "creationism" is passed off as science. In counterposition, we are vigorous defenders of the separation of church and state and upholders of secular public education. We oppose state funding of denominational or private schools.

3. As Marxists it is necessary for us to defend our dialectical materialist worldview and combat the widespread religious obscurantism, mysticism, anti-scientific prejudice, pseudo-science and general moods of despair that infect wide circles of the petty bourgeoisie and working class. At the same time we recognize that under the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, science and technology are centrally deployed to advance the bourgeoisie's untrammelled pursuit of profit. Turning science and technology to the benefit of humanity requires wresting the means of production from the hands of the capitalist imperialist rulers. The advance to socialism is predicated on a vast expansion of mankind's productive forces. Only in this way can the needs of the billions of toilers now consigned to dreadful and stultifying poverty begin to be met.

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Workers Vanguard

**New York Spartacist League contingent at February 2000 protest against acquittal of cops who gunned down black African immigrant Amadou Diallo.**

In this regard, it is necessary to wage a political battle against the environmental movement, particularly the “radical” Green preachings of economic primitivism which are at bottom neo-Malthusian. We understand that the resources of this planet are limited, but no rational allocation of them is possible under the irrational, profit-driven capitalist system. As we have noted:

“Control over major ecological problems such as air and water pollution can be achieved only within the framework of an *internationally planned, socialist economy*. This in turn requires *workers revolutions* to take away the factories, transport systems, oil fields, mines and other means of production from the privately owned and profit-maximizing corporations and banks which now dominate the world economy.”

—“Eco-Radicalism and Bourgeois Politics,”  
*Workers Vanguard* No. 695, 28 August 1998

## XI. For a Proletarian Vanguard Party! Reforge the Fourth International!

A one-sided view of the American capitalist system—an overestimation of its power and awestruck prostration before it—has often been the source of great disorientation. “The hopeless contradictions of American capitalism, inextricably tied up with the death agony of world capitalism, are bound to lead to a social crisis of such catastrophic proportions as will place the proletarian revolution on the order of the day” (SWP “Theses on the American Revolution”). This statement, written as triumphant U.S. imperialism arrogantly proclaimed an “American Century” following World War II, retains its full validity amid a burgeoning international financial crisis, growing divisions among the major capitalist powers and virtually constant imperialist military aggression. We fight for new October Revolutions.

In the final analysis, every species of opportunism is reducible to a lack of confidence, of theoretical and programmatically grounded conviction, in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat. The proletariat’s historic mission of overthrowing bourgeois rule and eradicating all manner

of exploitation and oppression is not a moral imperative but rather derives from the very workings of the capitalist system. Capitalism has concentrated workers in large factories and created great urban concentrations. In so doing, the bourgeoisie has created the instrument of its own destruction as an exploiting class. The working class cannot emancipate itself from the yoke of wage slavery without at the same time emancipating society at large from exploitation, from all class distinctions. But the crisis of capitalism will not in and of itself catapult the proletariat to power. Reformist treachery, in both its Stalinist and social-democratic variants, has already derailed numerous powerful opportunities for revolution. *The World Prospect for Socialism* (1961) powerfully underlined the necessity to forge a revolutionary proletarian party to resolve the crisis of leadership:

“The history of the last 40 years has driven home the lessons so often repeated by Lenin and Trotsky, that there are no impossible situations for the bourgeoisie. It survived the challenge of revolution and economic depression between the wars by resort to fascism. It survived the Second World War with the complicity of the Stalinist and Social Democratic leaderships—which ensured that the working class would not make a bid for power—and used the breathing space to elaborate new methods of rule and strengthen the economy. Even the most desperate situations can be overcome if only the active intervention of the workers as a class for themselves, with a party and a leadership with a perspective of overthrowing capitalism, is not prepared in time.”

As Trotsky noted in the 1940 *Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution*:

“The great historical problem will not be solved in any case until a revolutionary party stands at the head of the proletariat. The question of tempos and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy. The conclusion is a simple one: it is necessary to carry on the work of educating and organizing the proletarian vanguard with ten-fold energy. Precisely in this lies the task of the Fourth International.”

—Adopted at the Tenth National Conference of the SL/U.S. in June 1999; final draft with editorial changes and amendments approved by the Central Committee in June 2000.

# Organizational Rules and Guidelines of the Spartacist League/U.S.

## Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

### INTRODUCTION

The Organizational Rules and Guidelines of the Spartacist League/U.S. contained in this bulletin were adopted by the Tenth National Conference of the SL/U.S. on 26 June 1999. As a section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), the SL/U.S. is bound by the international Organizational Rules and Guidelines adopted by the ICL in February 1998 (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998).

The Organizational Rules and Guidelines printed here are revised from the Organizational Rules and Guidelines accepted in draft form by the Eighth National Conference of the SL/U.S. on 20 September 1987 with additions and editorial changes ratified by the Central Committee on 6 October 1990. In its final form, including minor corrections and changes made through 17 March 1991 under the supervision of the Political Bureau, those rules were printed in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9 Supplement.

Prior to the Second National Conference, the Spartacist League did not have its own written organizational guidelines. From our inception as an independent organization following the expulsion of our predecessor, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in December 1963 and continuing through the founding conference of the Spartacist League in September 1966, we simply stated that we were guided by the best standard practice and historical precedents of the Communist (Leninist) and Trotskyist movements, qualified to the extent of their particular relevance. Provisional Organizational Rules and Guidelines were adopted at the Second National Conference of the SL/U.S. on 31 August 1969 and extended at the Fifth National Conference on 25 June 1977 (see *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part II).

As the Organizational Rules and Guidelines have been implemented in the course of the work of the organization, various points of unclarity have arisen, as has the need for certain amplifications. Those which have come to light have been addressed in these Organizational Rules and Guidelines. Such rules always reflect the living reality of an organization with new demands and new problems. Therefore, given the flux of the revolutionary Marxist movement, one can hardly believe that the statutes printed here can be the last word.

The Organizational Rules and Guidelines of the SL/U.S. are in accordance with the thrust of the 21 Conditions of

Adherence adopted at the Second Congress of the Communist International and stand on the foundation of the "Guidelines on the Organizational Structure of Communist Parties, on the Methods and Content of Their Work," adopted at the Third Congress of the Communist International. (For an overview of the historical development of the ICL's organizational practices, see "On the Origins and Development of Leninist Organizational Practices," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998.)

In the "Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League," adopted at our founding conference (see *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part I), we spell out the guiding criteria of our organizational practice:

"The organizational principle of the Spartacist League is *democratic centralism*, a balance between internal democracy and functional discipline. As a combat organization, the revolutionary vanguard must be capable of unified and decisive action at all times in the class struggle. All members must be mobilized to carry out the decisions of the majority; authority must be centralized in its selected leadership which interprets tactically the organization's program. Internal democracy permits the collective determination of the party's line in accord with the needs felt by the party's ranks who are closest to the class as a whole. The right to factional democracy is absolutely vital to a living movement. The very existence of this right helps to channel differences into less absorbing means of resolution."

One of the striking features of the SL from its inception has been the explicit recognition of the right of factional division within the organization. The underlying principle is that intraparty struggle is both necessary and permitted among members, subject to reasonable regulation. However, one can struggle inside the organization or outside of it, but not both; those who wish to propagandize their differences or mobilize outside the organization cannot be members at the same time.

Much of our practice in this regard comes by way of the negative example of the SWP in the years that the RT, as a minority within that party, sought to combat the degeneration of the once-revolutionary SWP into centrism (and rapidly thereafter into reformism). In abiding by the formal organizational rules of the party, the RT impelled the revisionist Majority to bring the SWP rules into line with its rightward-moving political practices. Thus the RT was expelled under the following syllogism: (1) factions are permitted in the SWP; (2) factionalists are disloyal people; (3) disloyal people are expelled. (The SWP's 1965 resolution, "The Organizational Character of the Socialist Work-

ers Party," authorized in the same motion as the RT's expulsion and written as an explicit justification for it, provided the basis for the subsequent elimination of all factions. See "The SWP: A Strangled Party," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 38-39, Summer 1986.)

In the course of the fight to exercise our factional rights as members of the SWP, comrades in the RT wrote "For the Right of Organized Tendencies to Exist Within the Party" as a rebuttal to an SWP Political Committee motion

seeking to victimize the Minority. The document, printed in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 4, Part I, is a historical example of the mechanisms through which a disciplined tendency tried to coalesce and struggle within an ostensibly revolutionary organization. Additional material on the exclusion of the RT supporters from the SWP in 1963 is contained in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 4, "Expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party," Parts I and II.

—6 July 1999

## Article I. Name

The name of the organization shall be the Spartacist League of the United States, hereinafter referred to as the SL/U.S.

## Article II. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Spartacist League/U.S. is to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is part of the International Communist League's goal to achieve communism over the whole earth by class-struggle centered means that are at once *proletarian*, *revolutionary* and *internationalist* as defined by the ICL's "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" (February 1998). This is necessarily consistent with our international political forebears, foremost Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

## Article III. International Affiliation

International affiliation is undertaken to promote the reforging of a democratic-centralist Fourth International, of which the SL/U.S. aspires to be the disciplined section in the United States.

1. As a section of an international organization, the SL/U.S. is subordinate to the rules and decisions of International Conferences and of the International Executive Committee (IEC), and must comply with the initiatives of its International Secretariat or bring our objections to the IEC. We recognize that we are bound by the international "Organizational Rules and Guidelines" adopted by the Third International Conference of the ICL in February 1998.

2. Members of the IEC have the right to attend with voice and consultative vote all meetings of bodies of the SL/U.S.

3. International affiliation, or change thereof, may be decided by the National Conference, or by the Central Committee (CC) subject to review at the next National Conference. Provision must be sought for the deciding body to directly hear the views of the international body.

## Article IV. Membership

1. Membership in the SL/U.S. is open to persons who agree with its Statement of Purpose and who accept its program, decisions and rules. A member of the SL must belong to and personally participate in one of the party organizations.

2. Every member shall belong to a local body. Exceptions to this policy may be made only by the Political Bureau (PB). Member-at-large status is anomalous and thus shall be discouraged. Members-at-large (MALs) who are new shall normally be admitted as candidates and remain such until

they can belong to a local body. MALs shall be directly responsible to the PB for the conduct of their political work.

3. Every member shall pay a monthly sustaining pledge. A progressive taxation scale (including appropriate deductions as specified by party financial guidelines) shall be established by the CC and adjusted from time to time as found necessary, as a minimum pledge. Any individual exception from this standard below the minimum must be approved by the national treasurer, subject to approval by the PB. Sympathizers should be encouraged to make regular sustaining pledges to the SL/U.S.

4. Pledges are due by the last day of each month. Any member more than one full month in arrears in sustaining pledge ceases to be in good standing. Only members in good standing may vote or hold office in the SL/U.S. Any member more than three full months in arrears in sustaining pledge shall be dropped from the SL/U.S. after notification.

5. Substantial material support to cults, religions or comparable fads, or proselytizing for them, is incompatible with SL/U.S. membership.

6. Members will not in their personal appearance, habits, conduct or lifestyles be either a serious or chronic detriment to the SL/U.S.

7. Applications for membership shall be in writing and shall be endorsed by two full members of the SL/U.S. Each new member shall pay an initiation fee of \$10 which shall be forwarded to the Central Office (CO). This fee is waived for reapplicants.

8. Individual applicants for membership shall be voted on by the Local Committee (LC) in their locale. In those areas where an Organizing Committee (OC) exists, applicants shall be voted on by the Political Bureau (PB) with the recommendation of the OC. Where no SL/U.S. local body exists, the PB alone shall vote on membership; the applicant, if accepted, will be given the status of member-at-large (MAL).

9. Action on membership applications shall take place in the absence of the applicant.

10. Applicants for membership shall serve a period of candidacy, normally of three months, during which the applicant may be dropped at any time by the admitting body. At the end of the set period, the candidate will either be accepted into full membership, continued for another period as a candidate or dropped. For admission to full membership candidates should be able to demonstrate a comprehensive basic understanding of the political positions of the SL/U.S. During the period of candidacy, members shall not have a decisive vote in the national decisions of the SL/U.S. or on questions of membership or discipline.

11. When applicants have had immediately prior, verifiable membership in another radical cadre organization, or are members of a transitional organization of the SL/U.S., the period of candidacy may be waived or reduced.

12. The CC is empowered to accept groups or organizations of individuals, eligible under Section 1 of this Article, as members en bloc, and to assign them to the proper local bodies.

13. Persons who have been expelled or dropped from the SL/U.S. or have resigned from it may not be readmitted without the approval of the PB. Normally such persons, if readmitted, will serve longer periods of candidacy than others. When the period of candidacy is completed, the PB, upon recommendation from the LC or OC to which the candidate belongs, may accept the candidate as a full member, drop the candidate from membership or further extend the period of candidacy.

14. A member desiring to transfer from one locality to another must apply to the LC to which the member belongs for permission. The LC must send a statement of financial standing to the LC of the locality to which the member moves. Notification of the transfer must also be sent to the CO. If no LC exists in the old locality, the PB shall pass on the transfer, with the advice of the OC where such exists. If no local body exists in the new locality the member will become a member-at-large.

15. Members seeking to take vacations must secure the agreement of the LC to which the member belongs. Members on vacation retain their membership rights insofar as such members are recallable at any time.

16. Leaves of absence (LOA) may be granted to members temporarily unable to carry out regular political activity due to ill health or other reasons. The maximum leave time permitted a member in any one continuous interval is six months. Any political work undertaken while on leave must be under the jurisdiction of the appropriate party body. Members on LOA do not have a vote in any body of the organization; they shall pay a regular monthly sustaining pledge according to the pledge scale set by the CC.

17. Those members with many years in the Marxist movement who by reason of chronic infirmity or the debilities of old age are unable to meet the obligations of membership may by mutual agreement be transferred to the status of consultative member. Consultative members must personally participate in a local party organization to the extent that they are able, and shall have the right to participate fully in the internal life and public work of the SL/U.S. without, however, possessing a decisive vote on any body. Consultative members shall pay a regular monthly sustaining pledge according to the pledge scale set by the CC.

18. Applications to transfer to or from the status of consultative member shall be voted upon by the PB, possibly upon recommendation of a local body. Consultative member status is subject to annual review by the PB. If a mutually agreeable disposition is not arrived at, the matter will go to party trial as specified in Article XIV of these Rules.

## Article V. National Conference

1. The highest expression of the political and organizational will of the U.S. section is the National Conference,

the delegated and decision-making national meeting of the membership. The sectional conference is, however, subordinate to International Conferences and to specific decisions of the IEC. National Conferences will be called by the CC, as a norm every two years. Any departure must be justified by the CC in writing. National Conferences may also be initiated by a majority of full members of the SL/U.S., voting in their local bodies. The CC shall have responsibility for at least the organizational and technical aspects of any National Conference.

2. The period of organized pre-Conference discussion for a CC-called Conference is defined by issuance of the Conference Call, which shall contain or be accompanied by a statement or documents setting forth the main substance proposed for Conference discussion and decision, as well as organizational provisions—delegate ratio, locale, etc. In convening a National Conference, the CC will be guided by preceding practice as documented by past conference calls, modified by the requirements of the current situation.

3. Regularly called Conferences will normally be preceded by a 90-day discussion period as defined above. More frequent or urgent National Conferences may have to have a reduced pre-Conference discussion period. The PB may set a deadline for acceptance of pre-Conference discussion articles for the Internal Bulletin.

4. The CC shall levy a compulsory membership assessment to help finance the National Conference.

5. The election of Conference delegates shall take place in LCs and OCs. The ratio of delegates to full members (who are in good standing at the time of voting) shall be set by the CC in the Conference Call. Only full members of the SL/U.S. in good standing and who have paid their Conference assessment may vote for and run as delegates. However, consultative members, although unable to vote for delegates, may in all other respects participate in the Conference process and may stand for election as proxy delegates by local bodies. To qualify as a full member that comrade must both have been admitted to full membership prior to the meeting at which delegate voting takes place and have been admitted to candidate membership prior to the date that the Central Committee declares the opening of pre-Conference discussion. Local bodies may elect alternate delegates in numbers not exceeding the number of regular delegates.

6. MALs who are full members and who have attended a majority of regularly scheduled pre-Conference discussion meetings in a nearby local may vote for delegates in that local and may stand for election as proxy delegates by local bodies; the same applies to members present in a local other than that in which they are normally resident.

7. Where there are more nominees for delegate than there are delegate slots for the given political position, the voting shall be conducted successively until a majority of votes for each delegate has been obtained. In the event that candidates do not obtain a majority of votes for all delegate slots, a second vote among those not elected shall be taken (perhaps dropping those nominees who had obtained the fewest votes).

8. If a local body is unable to send to the Conference the full number of delegates it is entitled to, it may appoint proxy delegates from other areas.



9. It is impermissible for locals, factions or anyone else to place binding instructions on delegates as to positions or votes to be taken at National Conferences.

10. In case of factional division, the election of delegates in the local bodies shall be on the basis of straight proportional representation. Factional division must be based upon counterposed written declarations of position voted against one another. After the vote for defining positions, those who voted for each position shall caucus separately to select their delegates, following which the local as a whole shall certify the results and issue delegates' credentials. The general formula for electing delegates is set forth in the Appendix.

11. In a factional situation, if one or more comrades in a given LC who hold a position in common with those in other LCs do not qualify for even a partial delegate, or are otherwise unable to send some or all the delegates they are entitled to, they may assign their membership votes to those in other LCs so that their views may be represented at the Conference.

12. Party Conferences traditionally extend fraternal delegate rights to the members of the outgoing Central Committee and Central Control Commission. It is politically appropriate that the seeking of full rather than fraternal delegate status by CC members be inverse to their CC category.

## Article VI. Central Committee

1. The Central Committee shall be the highest continuing body of the SL/U.S. The National Conference, which stands higher, is a specific, discontinuous event. The CC shall have final authority between Conferences over all SL/U.S. members, fractions and committees, local and national, and over all SL/U.S. publications, public or internal, local or national. All decisions of the CC are subject to review and ratification by the National Conference.

2. The CC shall be elected by the National Conference and shall consist in size of such full, alternate and perhaps candidate members as set by the National Conference. The number of full members shall be an odd number. If conflicting political divisions are present, the Conference will use proportional representation with the limitation that a Conference majority is entitled to a minimum of three-fifths of the CC seats.

3. Full and alternate CC members should be persons of proven political capacity who are at the disposal of the SL/U.S. for relocation or other assignments if called upon. Candidate CC members should be persons who show evidence of and willingness to meet such qualifications.

4. Full and alternate CC members shall have the right of access to any party body, excluding certain central party bodies under special circumstances.

5. Decisive votes on the CC are cast only by comrades sitting as full members. Alternate and candidate members of the CC have the right to voice and consultative vote on the CC.

6. In no sense is the CC a federated group of representatives from different semi-autonomous localities. The CC is the centralized national collective which leads the entire SL/U.S. between National Conferences. Hence the CC must include elements creating a strong and balanced leadership that is authoritative, possesses a division of labor among the central leaders, yet has sufficient spread into the principal localities and areas of work.

7. There is no special discipline of higher bodies separating them from or counterposing them to other members of the SL/U.S. While it is preferable, for example, that the CC have an opportunity to discuss new questions first, members of the CC are not prohibited from discussing disputed political questions with other party members or communicating such information to them. Individual members of higher bodies are expected to show judgment and responsibility based upon consideration of what is best for the organization as a whole.

8. The CC may select from the alternate list to fill vacancies among full members. The CC may co-opt members to itself in the event its list of alternates and candidates is exhausted, or to maintain the proportional political representation established at the preceding Conference, or to give political representation to newly joined groups or tendencies, or to otherwise strengthen the party.

9. The CC directs all the work of the SL/U.S., decides all questions of policy in accord with Conference decisions, elects National Officers and may appoint subcommittees, commissions, and regional and special bureaus.

10. The CC shall regulate internal written and oral discussion of conflicting positions in accordance with the principle that a living, continuous internal life is vital to the SL/U.S. Hence any limitations on discussion must be justified in each particular circumstance. A major limitation often found necessary is that questions fought out and decided by the National Conference may not be immediately thrown open for renewed discussion.

11. With the passage of time and possible new developments around the disputed issue, the CC may choose to authorize new discussion, moderated for example by organizing it in purely literary form and limiting length of contributions. In any case, all political subjects of interest to the SL/U.S. are open during established pre-Conference discussion periods.

12. CC regulation of discussion also requires the technical centralization of written internal discussion, which shall take place exclusively in bulletins and mailings for which the CC has given prior authorization.

13. During its regular term of office the CC shall normally meet at least three times, including immediately after and before successive National Conferences. The CC shall be convened by the PB or at the demand of a majority of CC members. Every member of the CC shall be given due notice of the time and place that such a plenum will be held.

14. Informal meetings of members of the CC or meetings for which notification to all members has not been given are purely consultative in character; the results of such discussions must be communicated to the PB, which will where appropriate forward any recommendations to the CC as a whole.

## Article VII. Central Control Commission

1. A Central Control Commission (CCC) of not less than three members shall be elected as follows: The National Conference shall elect at least two members of the CCC. One member, who shall be a member of the CC, shall be designated by the CC. Members of the CCC have the same rights of access to any party body as alternate members of the CC.

2. The CCC shall have full authority to investigate any individual or circumstance affecting the SL/U.S. it may deem necessary and shall be responsible for periodic audits of the National Treasury and other national SL/U.S. departments and institutions. The CCC shall have the power to delegate any of its authority to representatives.

3. The CCC may initiate any investigation it deems necessary, and must undertake an investigation requested by the Political Bureau.

4. The CCC, upon completion of its investigation in each case, shall present its findings and recommendations to the PB for action.

5. In those cases where the CCC finds it necessary to intervene, its authority shall supersede any local investigation or trial.

6. It is obligatory on every member of the SL/U.S. to furnish the CCC, or its authorized representatives, any information they may require, other than material exchanged within a tendency or faction or material exchanged entirely privately between two individual SL/U.S. members.

### Article VIII. Political, Regional and Special Bureaus

1. The CC shall elect from among its full members a Political Bureau to serve as its resident executive subcommittee, and may elect alternate members of the PB as it deems necessary. The number of full PB members shall be an odd number.

2. The PB shall act on behalf of the CC between its meetings and shall be responsible for such work as is delegated to it by the CC. Among the normal functions of the PB are the supervision of the CO and National Officers, direction of national publications and appointment of the national staff. All decisions of the PB are subject to review and ratification by the CC and the National Conference.

3. There shall be approximately the same proportional representation on the PB as on the CC if there have been conflicting political divisions at the last Conference.

4. The PB shall meet as necessary and shall send minutes of its meetings to all full, alternate and candidate members of the CC.

5. The PB may appoint an Organization Bureau to oversee questions of personnel resources.

6. Regional or other special bureaus or commissions of the CC may be created as needed and are subject to the authority of and regulation by the PB between CC meetings.

### Article IX. Standing Committee

1. The Central Committee at its option may establish a Standing Committee to be elected by the Political Bureau from among the members of the CC able to discharge the required functions.

2. The Standing Committee of the PB undertakes certain administrative responsibilities. Its decisions are either unanimous and therefore operative or, failing unanimity, the disputed issue is either moot or, if so decided by Standing Committee majority, reverts to the PB or CC.

### Article X. National Officers

1. The National Officers of the SL/U.S. shall be directly responsible for their work to the PB and shall be elected by the CC from among its full members. Normally the CC shall elect a National Chairman, National Secretary and such other National Officers as it deems necessary.

2. The National Chairman shall be the principal political spokesman of the SL/U.S. and shall be the convener of the CC and the PB.

3. The National Secretary shall be responsible for the administration of the Central Office.

4. Other National Officers may include a Deputy National Chairman; a Director of Party Publications, who shall be responsible for all public propaganda of the SL/U.S. emanating from the Central Office; and a National Organizational Secretary, who shall be responsible for the administration of the local and organizing committees and MALs.

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5. In the case where the National Chairman is not resident in the Center, the Deputy National Chairman shall assume the responsibilities of the National Chairman. If there is no Deputy National Chairman, those responsibilities will be assumed by the National Secretary.

6. Any National Officer who, for whatever reason, travels outside the United States, ceases for that period of time to act in his capacity as National Officer.

### **Article XI. Local, District and Regional Organization**

1. The Local Committee shall be the basic unit of the SL/U.S. Five or more members in a locality may upon application to the PB be chartered as an LC. The criteria guiding the PB in granting charters should center upon the demonstration of the applicants' sustained organizational and political stability as an OC.

2. An LC has the prerogatives, consistent with its expected ability, to do the political and organizational work of the SL/U.S. within its jurisdictional scope. Hence an LC may issue leaflets and newsletters in the name of the SL/U.S., pass on membership applications and hold public meetings. Its charter from the national organization may be revoked only for cause.

3. An LC shall be administered in a regular fashion. Each LC shall elect an organizer and such other officers and working committees as are required to carry out the LC's responsibilities, including financial, secretarial and educational functions and the circulation of the SL/U.S. press. LCs must hold regular meetings, of which minutes shall be sent to the CO. Normally an LC will elect an executive committee to act on the LC's behalf between local meetings and undertake such other work as is assigned by the LC. Local elections should take place no less often than twice a year.

4. Where three or more members exist in a locality they may, upon application, be recognized by the PB as an Organizing Committee. OCs shall meet regularly and send minutes of all their meetings to the CO. OCs may, with the guidance of the CO, issue public SL/U.S. leaflets and may recommend to the PB applicants for membership.

5. If a chartered LC ceases to demonstrate sufficient organizational or political stability, the Political Bureau may put that LC in receivership to the PB, during which time the LC may conduct no public work except under the guidance of the CO and must refer its recommendations on all membership questions to the PB for decision.

6. Local and Organizing Committees will be responsible for collecting sustaining pledges and forwarding them to the CO. Payment of sustaining pledges is a matter of the individual member's responsibility; there will be no collective local pledge. The sustaining pledge will normally be the only regular payment the members make to the SL/U.S. Locals will normally finance their activities by retaining a portion agreed to by the National Treasurer, subject to approval by the PB, of the sustaining pledges collected locally.

7. LCs, OCs and MALs will receive free of charge bundles of SL/U.S. literature and publications for sale, in such quantities as are agreed to by the CO. In return the CO will receive the entire proceeds from all sales of the press.

8. Where more than one LC exists in a locale or where a single LC has grown unwieldy, a district organization may

be set up, subject to the approval of the PB. A district organization shall include a District Executive Committee (DEC), elected no less often than annually by the entire district membership meeting in District Conference, and such officers as the DEC may select. Between District Conferences, the DEC shall be the highest body within the district organization. District Conferences shall take place no less often than four times a year.

9. In geographically larger areas regional organizations may be set up, subject to the approval of the PB. Between delegated Regional Conferences, the Regional Committee shall be the highest body within the regional organization. Regional Conferences shall take place no less often than annually.

### **Article XII. Fractions**

1. For the purpose of carrying out day-to-day work in particular arenas, members of LCs and OCs shall be organized into fractions which are under the authority of and responsible to the LC or OC.

2. Where such fractions exist, every party member in that arena shall normally be a member of that fraction.

3. Fractions shall meet on a regular basis and shall make regular reports to the LC or OC responsible for the work.

4. The PB may deem it necessary to create a national fraction to coordinate work among local fractions in the same arena. The national fraction is under the authority of and responsible to the PB.

5. Fractions are working bodies of the party for particular areas of external work. They are not the vehicles for discussion of general party matters, which shall be taken up in local or higher party bodies.

### **Article XIII. Transitional Organizations**

The SL/U.S. may find it necessary to develop specific transitional organizations to intersect strata of working people with special needs and problems or for special areas of work. These organizations will be autonomous SL/U.S. affiliates, politically subordinate and organizationally independent. The details of relations between the SL/U.S. and transitional organizations will be generally modeled on those set forth in "Youth-Party Relations," adopted in September 1971 (see *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part III).

### **Article XIV. Discipline**

1. Members will carry out the program and policies of the SL/U.S. in all aspects of their public political life. All decisions of higher bodies of the SL/U.S. are binding upon the members and subordinate bodies of the SL/U.S.

2. Political collaboration with non-members of the SL/U.S. must be formally authorized by the SL/U.S. body having jurisdiction.

3. Any member or body of the SL/U.S. may bring charges against any member for violation of the program, decisions or rules of the SL/U.S. The charges must initially be presented in writing to the highest body of which the accused is a member. That body may constitute itself as the trial committee or may refer the charges to a lower body of which the accused is a member. If a higher body decides to intervene directly, the trial shall be so transferred. Charges may be dismissed at any time by the body having jurisdiction at that time.

4. No body shall meet as a trial committee unless all members have been informed in advance of the business at hand. The accused must be given notice of the trial date and a copy of the charges at least seven days preceding the trial. Failure to appear or to send a letter of defense shall, in the absence of excuse for such failure, be grounds for conducting the trial *in absentia*.

5. The disciplinary measures which are normally available in the event the accused is found guilty are, in increasing order of severity: censure, reduction to candidate for a period, suspension—partial or complete, and expulsion.

6. The accused or accuser may appeal the decision (dismissal of charges, guilt or innocence, or the severity of discipline) of any body to the next higher one, up to and including the IEC and International Conference, whose decision shall be final. In the meantime, pending appeal, the current decision remains in force. An appeal must be filed within 15 days after the action being appealed.

7. In some circumstances trials are pointless, irrelevant or dangerous. Such cases may include those where the accused admits the accusation, where the accused is not in good standing, where the accused has quit the SL/U.S., where the accusation involves crimes according to bourgeois legality, where attempted penetration by class enemies is involved. In such cases other means than a formal trial should be employed.

#### Article XV. Miscellaneous

1. Additional regulations that fall within but are not spelled out by the SL/U.S. Organizational Rules may be made by the CC. Necessary modifications of the SL/U.S.

Organizational Rules may be made by the CC in order to protect the security and functioning of the SL/U.S. under different or altered circumstances. Otherwise, amendments to these Rules may be made only by the National Conference. All members of the SL/U.S. shall be provided with a copy of the Rules.

2. LCs and other bodies may adopt such by-laws supplemental to these Rules as they deem desirable, providing such by-laws are not in conflict with these Rules or the decisions of higher bodies.

3. At all meetings of the SL/U.S. *Robert's Rules of Order (Revised)* shall govern the proceedings, except where they are in conflict with the SL/U.S. Rules.

4. All decisions of the SL/U.S. shall be by simple majority vote. No second shall be required for motions in any body of the SL/U.S. The chairman of all meetings and committees has a right to voice and vote. The nay vote shall be taken first in calling the question (i.e., to end a discussion and proceed to a vote). Motions presented by an individual comrade become the property of the body.

5. Full members of a higher body shall have the right to attend and speak at all meetings of lower bodies within the jurisdiction of the higher body.

6. All elections to party bodies will be voted by secret ballot, unless a motion to vote by acclamation passes unanimously. A nominee to a party body who declines the nomination may be renominated and must then accept.

7. Visiting members of the ICL will normally be extended the privileges of attendance, voice and consultative vote at meetings of bodies equivalent to those on which they sit in their own locales.

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### APPENDIX

The following is a general formula for electing delegates to a National Conference. In a situation where factional division exists, this formula is more or less the only way that the vote of every full member of the SL/U.S., down to the smallest fraction specified by the delegate ratio, will count. However, if you as a dissident have support amounting to less than one-half of one delegate vote throughout the entire national organization, you can have no decisive vote at the ensuing National Conference. For example, if the ratio of delegates is 7:1, you will have to find three other comrades to support your position. In that case, all such views will necessarily be subject to discussion and vote.

The Conference Call will specify the ratio of members to each delegate such that  $m$  members shall have one delegate vote ( $m$  will always be an odd number).

If  $n$  members vote for a written declaration, counterposed to another such declaration if there is factional division in the organization, then a certain number of delegates will be elected on the basis of that declaration. Separate elections are held by those members voting for each declaration.

The number of delegates for each declaration is computed as follows: Divide  $n$  by  $m$ . The result will be  $d + x/m$  where  $d$  is a whole number and  $x$  is a remainder less than  $m$ . Note that since the delegate ratio is odd,  $2x$  will always be either more or less than  $m$ , never equal.

Where  $2x > m$ , an additional delegate casting  $x/m$  dele-

gate votes will be elected. Where  $2x < m$ , those full delegates with the highest personal votes (or those selected by other means) shall have a Conference vote of  $1 + 1/m$  to complete the full voting weight of those within the local committee voting for a common position.

Here is an example:

1.  $m = 7$  (i.e., the delegate ratio is 7:1).

2. The local has 64 members who vote on two counterposed declarations.

3. 25 members vote for declaration A, 37 vote for declaration B, 1 abstaining, 1 not voting.

The 25 members voting for declaration A elect four delegates. Three have full votes, one has  $4/7$  vote. The 37 members voting for declaration B elect five delegates, three with full votes, two with  $8/7$  vote each. The computation is as follows:

Declaration A:  $25 \div 7 = 3 + 4/7$  (Therefore  $x = 4$ . Since 2 times 4 is more than 7, an extra delegate is elected with  $4/7$  fractional vote.)

Declaration B:  $37 \div 7 = 5 + 2/7$  (Therefore  $x = 2$ . Since 2 times 2 is less than 7, the extra fraction—in this case  $2/7$ —will be spread as evenly as possible among those delegates with the highest votes.)

Note that this system of exact proportional representation also applies in the event of three or more counterposed factions in the organization. ■

# Opponents of the Revolutionary Internationalist Workers Movement

The fight to transform the working class from a class *in* itself—the object of capitalist exploitation—to a class *for* itself—conscious of its revolutionary purpose as the agency for the eradication of the capitalist order requires battling the false consciousness which ties the proletariat to its “own” bourgeoisie. Within the workers movement it is not only the trade-union bureaucracy which serves to reinforce the rule of capital but also the reformist pretenders to Marxism as exemplified in the U.S. by groups such as the International Socialist Organization, the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Action, Workers World Party, Socialist Alternative and remnants of the Communist Party. Others such as Progressive Labor cloak the same liberal-reformist politics with “fight for communism” rhetoric. Centrist organizations like the tiny Internationalist Group, composed of renegades from our organization, invoke Trotskyist orthodoxy in words while in deeds their appetites lead them to accommodation to alien class forces.

Polemical combat to expose the pretensions to Marxism of other tendencies in the workers movement is crucial to removing the obstacles on the road to proletarian socialist revolution. As fighters for new October Revolutions we are informed by Trotsky’s distillation of the universally applicable lessons of the 1917 Russian Revolution—the only successful proletarian seizure of power—articulated in his book *Lessons of October*. Here, Trotsky succinctly summarized the differences between Bolshevism and Menshevism:

“The fundamental controversial question around which everything else centered was this: whether or not we should struggle for power; whether or not we should assume power. This alone is ample proof that we were not then dealing with a mere episodic difference of opinion but with two tendencies of the utmost principled significance. The first and principal tendency was proletarian and led to the road of world revolution. The other was ‘democratic,’ i.e., petty bourgeois, and led, in the last analysis, to the subordination of proletarian policies to the requirements of bourgeois society in the process of reform. These two tendencies came into hostile conflict over every essential question that arose throughout the year 1917.”

For the radical movement, the impact of the Russian Revolution—including the events leading up to it and the revolutionary years following it—was decisive. Before 1917 the anarcho-syndicalists could, roughly, be defined as the maximalists on the left. Occupying the center was the orthodox wing of the Second International as exemplified by Karl Kautsky with the revisionist wing of the Social Democrats, personified by Eduard Bernstein, constituting the right wing of the workers movement.

While affiliated to the Second International up to World War I, the Bolshevik Party was forged in the furnace of the tsarist empire as an instrument of struggle for proletarian power. As Lenin noted in *“Left-Wing” Communism*, the Bolsheviks went through 15 years of “rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement—legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles

and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms. In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades and methods of struggle of *all* classes of modern society, a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the severity of the tsarist yoke, matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate ‘last word’ of American and European political experience.”

The Bolsheviks broke with the Second International which disintegrated with the onset of World War I with each component supporting their “own” bourgeoisie’s imperialist war aims. The pseudo-Marxist rhetoric of the Kautskyan center simply provided the cover for this gross opportunism and social-patriotism. Only a small minority of the Second International opposed voting for war credits to the capitalist rulers in WW I. This tendency, particularly centered in the Slavic countries and the Balkans—the Bulgarian “Narrow” Socialists and the Serbian Social Democrats—as well as the Liebknecht/Luxemburg wing of the German Social Democracy, stood with the Bolsheviks in calling for proletarian opposition to the imperialist slaughter. This polarization laid the basis for the formation of the Third (Communist) International following the 1917 Revolution.

When the fledgling Russian workers state was a beacon of liberation, and at the height of the international revolutionary upheavals spurred by the Russian Revolution, the best of the anarchist and syndicalist movements—those like James P. Cannon, Victor Serge, Andrés Nin, Alfred Rosmer and Harrison George—came over to Lenin and Trotsky’s Third International. Anarchism became a negligible force on the left and Bolshevism emerged as the hegemonic force in the left wing of the workers movement.

The isolation of the Soviet Union, the failure of a revolutionary opportunity in Germany in 1923 and the general restabilization of the capitalist order in Europe led to the degeneration of the Russian Revolution with a political counterrevolution installing a bureaucratic caste headed by J.V. Stalin in power, initially in a triumvirate with Zinoviev and Kamenev (whom Stalin later had put to death as part of the mass purges of the Bolshevik Party). Under the banner of building “socialism in one country,” which turned the Communist parties internationally into border guards for the Kremlin’s foreign policy of conciliating capitalist imperialism in the name of “peaceful coexistence,” Stalin destroyed the Third International. This anti-revolutionary course was made programmatically explicit with the adoption of the “popular front” strategy of alliances with the “democratic” imperialists at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935.

The ignominious role played by the German Social Democracy—which continued to command the allegiance of millions of German workers—in allowing Hitler’s Nazis to come to power without any resistance fully demonstrated

again their complete bankruptcy. Although the German Communist Party had also refused to mobilize the proletariat to crush the fascists in the egg, Stalinism was given a new lease on life with the victory of the Soviet Union over Hitler's Nazis in World War II. The creation of deformed workers states in East Europe and, especially, the later indigenous revolutions in China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam served to continue to maintain the sway of Stalinism among the working class and radicalizing youth. The final proof of the total bankruptcy of Stalinism only came with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states in East Europe. Those who today espouse Stalinist ideology are minuscule and widely regarded as grotesque. Concomitantly there has been a recrudescence of miscellaneous anarchist tendencies among radicalizing youth. Part of our task in winning a new generation to revolutionary Marxism, the communism which animated Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, is to bring home the essential lessons of the international workers movement throughout the 20th century.

Trotsky fought to the end of his life against those renegades who went over to the side of world imperialism and abandoned the defense of the gains of the Russian Revolution which remained despite its Stalinist degeneration. Under the pressure of bourgeois anti-Sovietism, in the 1980s virtually every organization on the left went over to cheering the forces of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe. (An exception could be made for the pro-Moscow Communist parties. Yet while they may not have joined this chorus for counterrevolution, their longstanding politics of class collaboration were the basis for the undermining of the Soviet Union, not least through actively sabotaging opportunities for proletarian revolution in the imperialist West.)

All of our party's activity is directed to organizing, training and steeling the proletarian vanguard party necessary for the seizure of state power. In contrast, the politics of the reformists and centrists consist of oppositional activity completely defined by the framework of bourgeois society. The latter was sharply characterized by Trotsky as "the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state." Such accommodation to capitalist class rule by organizations nominally claiming adherence to Marxism is, if anything, more decisively pronounced today in a world defined by the final undoing of the Russian Revolution and the triumphal assertion by the imperialist rulers that "communism is dead."

Having made common cause with capitalist imperialism against the workers states in the Soviet Union and East Europe in the name of "democracy," the reformist and centrist organizations are now even more shameless in their embrace of the aims and interests of their "own" capitalist rulers whom they forthrightly parade as agencies for advancing "human rights" and "democracy" around the globe. This was dramatically seen during the U.S.-led NATO imperialist war against Serbia in the spring of 1999. In the crucible of the first major war in Europe since World War II, the left in the U.S. and Europe championed the aims, if not necessarily the methods, of the NATO imperialists. With positions ranging from overt calls for the entry of ground troops into Serbia (often under the fig leaf of the United Nations or the European OSCE) to calls for the imperialists to send "aid"

not bombs, they all joined in the imperialist war cry over "poor little Kosovo" while rejecting the military defense of Serbia whose very right to national existence was under attack by the imperialist powers. During the Balkans War, the Spartacist League raised the call: "Defeat U.S. imperialism through workers revolution! Defend Serbia against U.S./NATO attack!" while not giving an ounce of political support to the capitalist Milosevic regime.

The grotesque promotion of the "human rights" credentials of bloody American imperialism—the greatest enemy of the working people and oppressed throughout the world—has been the continuing theme of the reformists lining up behind the AFL-CIO bureaucracy in the protests against the World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund. While thousands of youth poured out to these demonstrations looking for a means to combat sweatshops, poverty, child labor and the myriad other brutal depredations of imperialist exploitation around the globe, the purpose of the labor bureaucrats with the reformist left in tow is in fact to corral these youth *behind the interests of U.S. imperialism* in its escalating trade wars against its imperialist rivals and in its drive for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Chinese deformed workers state.

The unconditional military defense of the gains won in the 1949 Chinese Revolution—which ripped the country out of the hands of imperialism, destroyed the rule of the rapacious landlords and capitalists, and established collectivized property—against capitalist counterrevolution is the central question posed today for the working class internationally. The triumph of counterrevolution in China would immeasurably strengthen the hand of capitalist imperialism while throwing the Chinese working class and peasant masses into a maelstrom of mass poverty, unemployment and untold immiseration. One need only look at the former Soviet Union, where life expectancy has dropped by 10 years, for a measure of the devastating effects of capitalist counterrevolution.

Guided by the anti-revolutionary nationalist logic of "building socialism in one country," the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy is opening the door to imperialist penetration. The Chinese proletariat must be led by a revolutionary-internationalist Bolshevik party in struggle to oust the bureaucracy through proletarian political revolution, not only to preserve the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution but to extend them through working-class revolution internationally, particularly in the imperialist countries.

As Trotsky wrote in *In Defense of Marxism*: "It is the duty of revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class even though it may be distorted by the pressure of hostile forces. Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones." But just as they did during Cold War II against the Soviet Union, the left now stands on the side of imperialism *against* the interests of the working class not only in China but internationally.

What distinguishes our organization from all manner of reformist and centrist organizations can be reduced to one word, the *state*. The understanding that the capitalist state—which at its core consists of the cops, the military, the prison system and the courts—is the instrument for organized violence to ensure the rule of one class, the capitalists, over another class, the proletariat, is elementary for Marxists. All historical experience has shown that the working class cannot reform the state and use it in its own interests but must

smash it and create its own state, a workers state.

In opposition to this fundamental understanding, the reformists and centrists portray the capitalist state as a "neutral" body which can be pressured to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed. In the face of escalating police brutality, they sow illusions that civilian review boards or other schemes for police "reform" can fundamentally change the nature of the police into something other than the armed thugs of the capitalist state. To the thousands of youth and others who have taken up the fight for black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, they push the illusion that he can get a "new trial" and "justice" from the very capitalist state that framed him up and sentenced him to death for his political opposition to racist American capitalism. In the unions, they appeal for the intervention of the union-busting, strikebreaking agencies of the class enemy to bring "union democracy."

The complete and unconditional independence of the proletariat from all the parties and agencies of the capitalist class enemy is the most elementary principle of Marxism. In his "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (an unfinished manuscript which was found on Trotsky's desk following his assassination by a Stalinist agent in August 1940) Trotsky underlined the conditions faced by the trade unions internationally on the eve of World War II, writing:

"There is one common feature in the development, or more correctly the degeneration, of modern trade union organizations throughout the world: it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power.... The labor bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the 'democratic' state how reliable and indispensable they are in peacetime and especially in time of war. By transforming the trade unions into organs of the state, fascism invents nothing new; it merely draws to their ultimate conclusion the tendencies inherent in imperialism."

In the United States, the shackling of unions to the capitalist state *and its agencies* finds its central expression in the allegiance of the proletariat to the Democratic Party promoted by the trade-union bureaucrats who are themselves core components of the Democratic Party. The shell game through which the Democrats are sold as the "friend" of labor and blacks has been central to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. By the same token, breaking the allegiance of the working class to the Democrats is a central strategic task in forging a workers party that can lead the fight for socialist revolution in the U.S.

Lacking a revolutionary perspective, the reformist left is inexorably led to the gates of the Democratic Party, reinforcing its influence. This has many expressions, from overtly calling for votes for Democratic candidates to somewhat more masked appeals to "fight the right" (i.e., the Republicans) to working hand in glove with the labor bureaucracy. Deriving from the reformist view of the "neutrality" of the capitalist state, and in the absence of a mass social-democratic party in this country, the Democratic Party is offered as the vehicle through which the capitalist state can be pressured to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed.

The other central and defining question in the fight for the proletarian conquest of state power in the U.S. is the fight for black liberation. At the time of the American Civil War, Karl Marx wrote: "Labor in the white skin cannot be free where in the black it is branded." Racial oppression, the forcible

segregation of the majority of the black population at the bottom of this society, is an enduring feature of American capitalist society in which the color bar was instituted as a fundamental dividing line aimed at obscuring the irreconcilable class divide between labor and capital. The fight for black freedom is correspondingly central to unlocking proletarian class struggle against capitalist exploitation and oppression in this country. Again lacking a proletarian revolutionary perspective, the reformist left veers between backing the idea of liberal integrationism—the illusion that black equality can be realized within the framework of racist American capitalist society—or capitulating to black nationalism which also accepts the enduring rule of the American bourgeoisie.

While currently there is a wide chasm between our proletarian revolutionary internationalist program and the abjectly reformist/liberal politics of the rest of the left in the U.S., during times of heightened social struggle these organizations can and will posture to the left. Even at present, they are capable of putting out theoretical journals which serve to mask their abject reformism in the cloak of Marxism. Moreover, with supporters in the unions, they can and do play a role in trying to give a more "left" face to the labor bureaucracy. There is more of a role for these putative leftists to do this today given that the AFL-CIO is now headed by right-wing social democrats who posture as a "new face" for the American labor movement.

Political combat to expose the fake left's socialist pretensions is vital to winning the advanced layers of the proletariat as well as among youth and intellectuals to the cause of building a Leninist vanguard party as the necessary instrumentality to the fight for proletarian state power. Papering over political differences or slander and distortion of political views can only serve to obstruct this perspective. We oppose violence and exclusionism within the left and the labor movement as a cowardly substitute for political struggle, anathema to the process of programmatic clarification. We are also unmitigatedly opposed to any attempt to bring the bourgeois state into the affairs of the workers movement.

The revolutionary party is the collective memory of the working class. The Spartacist League maintains bound volumes of our publications, *Workers Vanguard*, *Women and Revolution* and *Spartacist*. The Spartacist League/U.S. also maintains the Prometheus Research Library, a working archive of American and international Marxist history whose purpose is to collect, preserve and make available the historical record of the international workers movement and to assist in Marxist scholarship. The PRL's own publications make available rare materials that are an indispensable part of the documentary history of the Trotskyist movement.

Guided from our inception by the same revolutionary program and principles, we do not hide our political past and, in fact, use it as a measure of the correctness of our political program and appraisal of events. We publish our *Hate Trotskyism*, *Hate the Spartacist League* series to make available to our readers our opponents' most representative polemics against us. We encourage our members to read the newspapers and publications of our political opponents in order to make most clear why there must be an intransigent struggle between the Trotskyist program of socialist revolution and all manner of reformism and centrism, whose fundamental politics attempt to give brutal capitalist exploitation a more "humane" face. ■

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