

Great Power Duel in Georgia

Democrats, Republicans Saber Rattle Against Russia



Left: Hospital destroyed by Georgian shelling of Tskhinvali, capital of South Ossetia. Right: Russian troops arrive in Abkhazia, small province seeking secession from Georgia, August 10. Reuters



Russian, Georgian Workers: The Main Enemy Is at Home!

U.S. Bases Out of East Europe, Central Asia, Near East!

AUGUST 26—On the night of August 7, the Georgian government of Mikheil Saakashvili ordered its U.S.-armed and -trained army to invade South Ossetia, a small ethnically distinct province that effectively seceded from Georgia under Russian protection over 15 years ago. The next day, Russia counterattacked and, sweeping through central Georgia, came within 25 miles of its capital Tbilisi, thus demonstrating its intention to re-establish itself as the dominant power in the region. Russian forces have now withdrawn to a security perimeter in the area around South Ossetia and asserted their intention to maintain a permanent “peacekeeping” presence in the province.

The conflict between Russia and Georgia, the latter backed by the U.S., is nothing other than pure power-play politics on both sides. Thus our position is one of revolutionary defeatism: the class interests of the workers of Georgia and Russia lie in a struggle to overthrow their respective capitalist rulers through socialist revolution. The main enemy is at home!

The conflict in Georgia is in no way analogous to the Russian invasions of Chechnya in 1994 and again in late 1999 after several years of de facto Chechen independence. In both those cases, the imperialists did not intervene militarily and the conflict centered on defense of the national rights of the Chechen people against Russia’s murderous attempt to reassert its subjugation of the prov-

ince. We called for military defense of the Chechen forces and for defense of Chechnya’s independence. We forthrightly declared: Defeat Russian invasion of Chechnya! (see “Independence for Chechnya! Russian Troops Out Now!” WV No. 840, 21 January 2005).

The situation of the Georgian government vis-à-vis Vladimir Putin’s Russia today is vastly different. Saakashvili was groomed to be a puppet of U.S. imperialism from at least 1999, when he attended a State Department “leadership program” in Washington. He came to power in 2004 in one of a series of color-coded “revolu-

tions” financed and engineered by the U.S. in order to counter Russian influence in the region and install pliant pro-American regimes. Washington has been strident in pushing its West European allies to accept Georgia (and Ukraine) as full-fledged members of NATO, and Tbilisi has the distinction of being the only major city in the world linked to its international airport with a highway named after U.S. president George W. Bush! Saakashvili’s army has been built up and trained by the U.S. and its Israeli allies. And Georgia, with a population of fewer than five million, has a contingent of 2,000 troops in

Iraq—the third biggest after the U.S. and Britain—that was airlifted back to Georgia by the U.S. following the Russian counterattack.

The *New York Times* (13 August) claimed in a headline that Georgia had received “mixed U.S. messages” regarding its planned invasion of South Ossetia. But a photo in the same issue belied this claim. It showed five regional U.S. lackeys from Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania—long labeled “captive nations” of the “Soviet empire” by the U.S. imperialists—on an orchestrated solidarity visit to Saakashvili in Tbilisi four days after Russia counterattacked. The U.S. military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* (9 August) reported that a NATO military exercise in Georgia, including a thousand U.S. troops, was completed on the eve of the Georgian invasion. The Georgian army was also aided by Israeli military “advisers.” The well-informed Parisian satirical journal *Le Canard Enchaîné* (20 August) reported:

“The role of the American advisers was perhaps not limited to giving technical support to the Georgian artillery. If what is being said at the Joint Chiefs of Staff headquarters in Paris can be believed, it was following a suggestion by these U.S. officers that the Georgians, even before the advance of their troops, launched hundreds of surface-to-surface missiles at the Ossetian capital.”

Today, capitalist Russia is no longer the economic basket case it was in the years following the 1991-92 capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state. Enriched by petrodollars from the high price of oil, Putin has been able to rebuild Russia’s military and make it clear that he is

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August 12: After Russian entry into Georgia, U.S. imperialism’s satraps in the region—the presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia—share stage with Georgian president Saakashvili in Tbilisi in show of support.



On Sam Marcy and 1948 Wallace Campaign

Bay Area
12 August 2008

Dear comrades,

I appreciated *Workers Vanguard's* spread, "On Bourgeois 'Third Parties' and the 1948 Henry Wallace Campaign" (WV No. 918, 1 August). This is particularly timely, as the intro to the 1966 *Spartacist* article on the Wallace campaign points out, because of the numerous parallels between Wallace and the Greens' Cynthia McKinney. The article notes that the Workers World Party (WWP) has endorsed McKinney, but the roots of that tendency and its class-collaborationist opportunism actually date back to the Wallace campaign. The forerunner to

WWP began in 1948 as a minority within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Led by Sam Marcy among others, it advocated support to Wallace's capitalist Progressive Party. The 1948 fight with the Marcyites presaged the SWP's belated 1953 fight against Pabloite revisionism and its American variant, the Cochran-Clarke faction.

As the intro to the *Spartacist* reprint notes, in sorting out the various "independent" candidacies in the 1966 midterm elections, we "relied on the working-class Marxist analysis developed in part by James P. Cannon" who led the fight against the Marcyites in 1948. Cannon, in turn, acknowledged his debt to the Bolsheviks and Leon

Trotsky's 1928 criticism of the draft Comintern program and its scathing critique of Stalin's promotion of so-called two-class parties like the Guomindang and the American Farmer-Labor Party. As Cannon stated in his summary speech on election policy at the February 1948 SWP plenum:

"The maneuvers of the Bolsheviks were always within class lines. I don't know of any effort made by the Bolsheviks to maneuver within the parties of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary their whole tactical line, maneuverist as it was, was to make a sharp cleavage between the working class organizations and those of

the bourgeoisie. What was the meaning of the great slogan, 'All Power to the Soviets'? What was the meaning of the slogan, 'Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers'? Or later, Trotsky's slogan for France: 'A Blum-Cachin Government!' And still later the slogan: 'A CP-SP-CGT Government!' They were all *class* slogans designed to split the workers' parties entirely away from all collaboration with bourgeois politicians."

—*Education for Socialists*
(March 1971)

Best comradely regards,
Reuben Samuels

Chicago Cops Arrest Eleven After Funeral Drop All Charges!

We print below a protest sent by the Partisan Defense Committee to the Cook County State's Attorney Richard A. Devine on August 21.

The Partisan Defense Committee vehemently protests the 25 July police assault on the mourners of Bennie Ross in the primarily black neighborhood of Englewood.

Following the funeral for Ross, a neighborhood youth, mourners gathered on the basketball court behind Henderson Elementary School. Residents have described an outrageous police provocation whereby police converged on the scene, desecrated a makeshift memorial for Mr. Ross, hurled racist insults and pushed black youth off the court. When neighborhood residents gathered to protest this assault, the police proceeded to attack the protesters, and arrested eleven people on bogus charges of "mob action." Among those arrested were several known anti-police brutality activists, including Fred Hampton Jr., Chairman of the Prisoners of Conscience Committee

and son of Black Panther Fred Hampton slain by Chicago cops in 1969, as well as supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party. Activist Grant Newburger was subjected to a vicious beating by the cops.

On August 1, charges against five of the eleven were dismissed, but the prosecution still has the option to reinstate those charges. Frame-up misdemeanor charges of mob action remain against Hampton, Newburger, and activist Jeffrey Lyons as well as three juveniles. In a blatant attack on First Amendment rights, Newburger and Lyons face an additional and equally bogus charge of illegal use of a bullhorn.

Coming on the heels of a recent spike in police shootings this summer, the violent attack against the Englewood protesters poses a threat to black and working people and all of those who would raise their voices against racist cop terror. The bogus charges of mob action are nothing but a cover to alibi the unprovoked racist 25 July attack. We demand: Drop all the charges now! ■

CLARIFICATION

On Celia Hart and Chávez Referendum

In the article "ICL's Trotskyism vs. Socialist Action Reformism" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 917, 4 July), we implied that Celia Hart opposed Hugo Chávez's December 2007 referendum. We wrote:

"For her part, Celia Hart's stance toward Chávez and his regime is contradictory. On the one hand, she has associated herself with the 'Bolivarian Revolution' and has described Venezuela as 'advancing slowly toward socialism.' On the other hand, she criticized Chávez for 'asking for permission to make the revolution,' for example through last December's referendum on constitutional reforms. 'I've been a bit traumatized by all these referendums,' she said at the SA [Socialist Action] conference. 'Every time I hear the word 'referendum' I want to draw my revolver'."

In fact, Hart was a strong supporter of a "yes" vote and sought to give it a "Trotskyist" coloration. She wrote in her article "Leon Trotsky Says 'Yes' to Constitutional Reform—Last-Minute Trotsky Announcement Before the Dec. 2 Referendum in Venezuela": "The purpose of this hurried note is to declare that

the Trotskyists of the world, those who deserve to be taken into account, are FOR the 'Yes' vote" (*Labor Standard* online; translated from www.aporrea.org, 1 December 2007).

Hart expressed skepticism about making a revolution through a bourgeois electoral process and made criticisms of Chávez. But her bottom line was to take Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution" as good coin—her point was that Chávez should have gone ahead with his "reforms" without any referendum.

Our article "Venezuela: Break with Bourgeois Populism! For Workers Revolution!" (WV No. 907, 1 February) noted that while promising some social reforms, the December referendum was centrally aimed at strengthening the repressive powers of the Venezuelan capitalist state. As Trotskyists, i.e., genuine Marxists who fight for socialist revolution to smash the bourgeois state, we were for a "no" vote on Chávez's referendum. ■

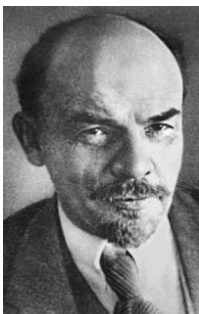
Bolshevik Policy on Self-Determination

Following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the outbreak of the Civil War, the social-democratic Mensheviks set up an "independent" bourgeois state in Georgia under the aegis of first German and then British imperialism. Bloodily suppressing the Georgian Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks used "independence" as a smokescreen for collaboration with the imperialists in their drive to overthrow Soviet rule in Russia and assist the counterrevolutionary White armies. Enter-

ing Georgia in early 1921 in defense of the revolution, the Red Army rapidly swept away the discredited Mensheviks and their imperialist patrons. As laid out by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in his 1922 work, *Between Red and White*, Soviet power laid the basis for transcending interethnic conflicts in the Caucasus.



TROTSKY



LENIN

We do not only recognise, but we also give full support to the principle of self-determination, wherever it is directed against feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. But wherever the fiction of self-determination, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, becomes a weapon directed against the proletarian revolution, we have no occasion to treat this fiction differently from the other "principles" of democracy perverted by capitalism....

The epoch of Tsarism was characterised by barbarous nationalist pogroms in the Caucasus, where the Armenian-Tartar butcheries were periodical events. Those sanguinary outbursts under the iron rule of Tsarism were the expression of centuries of internecine struggles of the Trans-Caucasian peoples.

The epoch of so-called democracy gave to the nationalist struggle a much more pronounced and organised character. In the beginning nationalist armies were formed, which were hostile to each other, and which often attacked each other. The attempt to create a bourgeois federal democratic Trans-Caucasian Republic proved a dismal failure. The Federation fell to pieces five weeks after its inception. A few months later the "democratic" neighbours were quite openly at war with each other. This fact alone settles the question: for if democracy was as incapable as Tsarism of creating conditions for a peaceful cohabitation of the Trans-Caucasian peoples, it was evidently imperative to adopt other methods.

The Soviet power alone has established peace and national intercourse between them. At the elections to the Soviets, the Baku and Tiflis workers elect a Tartar, an Armenian, or a Georgian, irrespective of their nationality. In Trans-Caucasia, the Moslem, Armenian, Georgian, and Russian Red regiments live side by side. They are imbued with the conviction that they are one army, and no power on earth will make them move against one another. On the other hand, they will defend Soviet Trans-Caucasia against any and every external foe.

The national pacification of Trans-Caucasia, which has been achieved by the Soviet revolution, is in itself a fact of enormous political and cultural significance. In it is expressed a real live internationalism, which we can safely put against the empty pacifist discourses of the heroes of the Second International, which are but a supplement to the chauvinist practices of its national sections.

—Leon Trotsky, *Between Red and White* (1922)

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The closing date for news in this issue is August 26.

No. 919

29 August 2008

Spartacus Youth Club Events

Class: The Struggle for a Revolutionary Party

Saturday, August 30, 3 p.m.

1634 Telegraph Ave., 3rd floor
(Near 17th and Broadway
by 19th St. BART)

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- For Black Liberation Through Workers Revolution—Finish the Civil War!
- Break with the Capitalist Democrats and Greens! No Support to Obama or McKinney!
- For a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party that Fights for All the Oppressed!

Berkeley

Thursday, August 28, 7:30 p.m.

Caffe Strada
2300 College Ave. at Bancroft

For more information: (510) 839-0851 • sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

San Francisco

Thursday, September 4, 7:30 p.m.

Cesar Chavez Student Center
Rosa Parks E, SF State University

Why Marxists Oppose Capitalist McKinney/Green Party Campaign

2 May 2008

A recent letter to WV (25 April 2008, No. 913) by R.S. speculated that Cynthia McKinney, not Ralph Nader, will likely be the Green Party's 2008 presidential candidate. R.S. went on to note that:

"A February 6 editorial by Workers World Party [WWP] enthuses that McKinney [etc.].... These reformists previously endorsed McKinney's successful campaign in 2004 to return to Congress on the Democratic Party ticket.

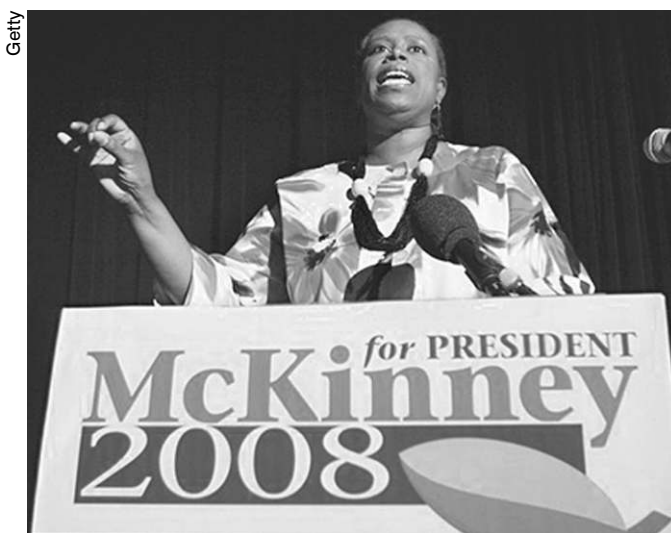
"Blacks don't have a lot of illusions in Ralph Nader, but some do in McKinney.... Of course, she...is running to hold the Democrats 'accountable.' The role of 'progressive' bourgeois politicians like McKinney is to head off and contain any potential social struggle, keeping it safely within the confines of the capitalist system."

These comments by R.S. echo present and past characterisations of McKinney by WV and the Spartacist League/US (Nos. 913 and 850). To note that McKinney's political role is as a shill who has been husbanded by the left wing of the Democratic Party to head off and contain effective social struggle is, of course, a principled stance and a crucial warning for those who would grasp desperately at blunt weapons that leave the workers' movement open to certain defeat. That reformist outfits such as WWP would take the class into such deadly traps is no surprise.

However, R.S.—and the Spartacist League (SL/US)—miss the point. Left unanswered is the question of how the class vanguard is to *intervene* to broach the social phenomenon around McKinney's constituency. This failure is a rank act of absenteeism by the League and leaves the League open to a correct characterisation as "sectarian" by its detractors.

In 2004 I called SL/US's attention to the need for the vanguard party to step into the breach and expose McKinney's political role by the traditional means of offering critical support in defense of her *right* to hold office, regardless of party, while warning the class that her politics is the politics of one of the two parties of capital and that her "solutions" are a

**July 18:
Former six-term
Democratic Party
Congresswoman
Cynthia McKinney
speaking in
New York City
after winning
Green Party
presidential
nomination.**



recipe for defeat. I personally know Cynthia McKinney's father, State Senator Billy McKinney, who is also her political advisor. She and her father have long taken the desperate course of running as Democrats because they can see no pragmatic political alternative. I was present when her mother Viola was knocked down to the pavement at the entrance to McKinney's 2004 primary watch by Government agents posing as reporters and her bodyguard bloodied. Careful observers need not look far to see why she and her father see no pragmatic alternative to the Democratic Party. Leaders who emerge from the African-American community as champions of their fellow minority citizens can find no succor in the revolutionary workers' movement because the movement rarely offers them solutions which they can offer to their constituency, outside of the occasional defense of victims whose political role is largely beyond question (Mumia Abu-Jamal, for instance) and the perennial attempts of honest revolutionaries to create transitional organs of social defense (the SL/US's Labor Black League for Social Defense is exemplary in this regard).

I think that historically the defense of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (a Jewish member of the French *general staff*!) by the international workers' movement in

1890s Europe offers us an essential parallel. The defense of Dreyfus reinvigorated the European socialist movement at a time of profound social reaction. It must be mentioned that the failure of the socialists to deal effectively with French anti-semitism during the Dreyfus Affair was also the occasion for the birth of Zionism, a reactionary movement to derail class-conscious Jews into desperate, dead-end nationalism that eventually brought us the Israeli genocide of the Palestinian People. Of the socialist leader Jean Jaurès, who took up the leadership of the socialist defense of Dreyfus, Leon Trotsky once remarked: "During the Dreyfus Case, Jaurès said to himself: 'Whoever does not seize the executioner's hand poised over his victim will himself become the executioner's accomplice'..." (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/profiles/jaures01.htm>).

The politics of McKinney, anymore than those of Dreyfus, is not the essential point. The point is to intersect the struggles of an oppressed minority to defend its dedicated leaders against government intrigue and racist backlash with the vanguard party's program for social revolution. In my opinion, the Spartacist League lost a crucial opportunity, in 2002 and again in 2004 and 2006, to intervene with its revolutionary program in the defense

of Cynthia McKinney as the European socialist movement did over 100 years ago in the post-1871 Dreyfus Affair.

B.B.
Atlanta

WV replies: The letter by B.B. expresses at bottom the perennial "fight the right" opportunism of the reformist left, though in less crass terms than appear in the pages of, for example, *Workers World*, which is openly campaigning for McKinney. As such, it provides us with an opportunity to elaborate on the treatment we have given to the McKinney/Green Party campaign and our fight for the political independence of the working class. We refer readers to our article "Democrats, Republicans, Greens: Class Enemies of Workers, Oppressed—For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!" (WV No. 917, 4 July).

From the standpoint of the interests of the proletariat and oppressed: McKinney, like the Democratic Party presidential candidate Barack Obama, is a *bourgeois politician*. This was the case when she served as a Democratic Congresswoman from Georgia, and is the case today as she campaigns as the small-time capitalist Green Party's official presidential candidate. B.B.'s attempted sleight of hand willfully conflating *defense* of elementary democratic rights of black elected officials when those are under threat with any manner of *political* ("critical" or otherwise) support to them is bogus from the standpoint of Marxist program and principle.

The Green Party's current niche in American electoral politics is to pressure the Democratic Party, the other major bourgeois party of racism and imperialist war. This was the case when petty-bourgeois lawyer Ralph Nader ran in 1996 and 2000 and David Cobb in 2004. McKinney's June statement on Barack Obama made this clear: "While congratulating Senator Obama for a feat well done, I would also like to bring home the very real need for change.... I encourage the Democratic Party and its new presumptive nominee, Senator Obama, to

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McKinney...

(continued from page 3)

embrace these important suggestions for policy initiatives.”

Even if the Greens genuinely sought to be “independent” of the Democrats and Republicans, we would still oppose them as a third capitalist party, just as Marxists in the U.S. opposed previous capitalist “third parties”—from Republican “Fighting Bob” La Follette who ran on the Progressive ticket in 1924 to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s former vice president Henry Wallace in 1948. The parallels between Progressive Party Wallace and McKinney are striking, and their purpose is the same: the candidates’ talk of “peace,” “justice” and a better deal for the little people is meant to corral dissatisfaction with the two main bourgeois parties into yet another *capitalist electoral vehicle*. It’s not surprising that the tendency within the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1948 that wanted to support Wallace was grouped around Sam Marcy, who later went on to form the Workers World Party, which has endorsed McKinney’s presidential run today (see letter, page 2). In fighting Marcy’s capitulation to bourgeois politics inside the SWP, James P. Cannon, in his summary speech on socialist election policy at the February 1948 SWP plenum, pointed out: “The maneuvers of the Bolsheviks were always within class lines. I don’t know of any effort made by the Bolsheviks to maneuver within the parties of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary their whole tactical line, maneuverist as it was, was to make a sharp cleavage between the working class organizations and those of the bourgeoisie.”

However, Cannon’s principled struggle was undermined in the course of the SWP’s degeneration from a revolutionary Trotskyist party into centrism, and then fairly quickly into reformism. It was one hallmark of the degeneration of the SWP that in 1965 they supported the supposedly “independent” black candidate Carl Stokes in his first run for mayor in Cleveland. Stokes was a well-known machine

Cops Attack DNC Protest, Arrest 100

Drop All Charges Now! Free the Arrested Protesters!

At an August 25 protest outside the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Denver, riot police wearing gas masks surrounded 300 protesters and others on the street, detaining them for nearly an hour before arresting some 100. Protesters, bystanders and journalists were blinded with pepper spray and struck with batons. Those arrested face charges including obstruction of streets or public passageways (i.e., jaywalking!) and interference and disobedience to a law-

ful order. *We demand: Free all those arrested! Drop all charges now!*

“Unconventional Denver,” an anarchist group that called the protest, as well as “Recreate ’68” and others have been ludicrously smeared in the bourgeois press as provoking the cop attack. On the contrary: Denver cops, courts and prisons were prepared well in advance for a crackdown, in order to keep the DNC “clean” for Barack Obama, the Clintons, the Kennedys, Biden, etc. A

warehouse was converted into a mass detention center for DNC protesters. Equipped with metal cages and stun guns, it has become known as “Gitmo on the Platte.” The roundup of harmless, liberal activists at the DNC comes at the same time that brutal repression is carried out against immigrants, such as the detention of nearly 600 at a factory in Laurel, Mississippi, also on August 25. *Free the detainees! No deportations! Hands off the DNC protesters!*

Democrat. He was a former assistant prosecutor and a member of the Ohio House of Representatives who sponsored a measure empowering the governor to send in the National Guard troops to clamp down on black unrest—which is exactly what he did as Cleveland mayor in 1968 in the Glenville area. He was the first black mayor of a major American city, winning election as a Democrat in 1967 and 1969, an exemplar of that wave of black Democratic Party machine politicians who were chosen to oversee the bourgeoisie’s crack-down on the black ghettos.

The role of black Democrats is different today only to the extent that class and social struggle has ebbed and even phony “radical” rhetoric is not currently necessary to squelch mass, militant upheaval. Masses of black workers and ghetto youth once found inspiration in the eloquence of Malcolm X, a truth-teller alienated from both capitalist parties, including the pacifist preachers of the Martin Luther King ilk. Condemning the con game of the Democrats and Republicans, calling them the wolf and the fox, Malcolm X was feared and despised by the liberals, both

black and white. While no Marxist, he was on more than one occasion to the left of those ostensible “socialists” busy tailing the liberal wing of the civil rights movement (see “Malcolm X: The Man, the Myth, the Struggle,” *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 10, February 1993).

That McKinney is painted as some sort of “left” alternative on offer to the black population says a lot about the present level of political consciousness and general dearth of class struggle—thus B.B. describes McKinney as one of the “dedicated leaders” of the black population. He alibis McKinney and other black bourgeois politicians by referring to their “desperate course of running as Democrats because they can see no pragmatic political alternative.” Such is the “politics of the possible” which has deepened in the post-Soviet period among the reformist left with its “death of communism” servility to the rule of the bourgeoisie. To such class-collaborationist schemes, we counterpose a *class-struggle* road to black liberation. As we explained in the Preface to *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised), “What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism” (September 1978):

“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.”

This perspective of revolutionary integrationism—as opposed to liberal integrationism as well as petty-bourgeois nationalism and separatism—entails the understanding that black workers are destined to play a vanguard role in the American socialist revolution, including as leaders of the Leninist party at its head.

As for the Green Party, this (very white) petty-bourgeois capitalist party pushes among its “Ten Key Values” support of “independently owned and operated companies,” i.e., capitalism. The “values” also include, “without being naive about the intentions of other governments,” recognizing “the need for self-defense”—i.e., American imperialism’s military might! Such “defense of the fatherland,” the most powerful and bloodthirsty military power on the face of the planet, is consistent with McKinney’s record in Congress as well. Three days after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, McKinney—along with everyone else in Congress except Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee—voted for the resolution giving President Bush a blank check for war, which promptly translated into the brutal invasion of Afghanistan. Although a small “fringe” party in U.S. politics, the Greens in power in Germany, along with their Social Democratic Party cohorts, attacked working-class living standards. Green foreign minister Joschka Fischer deployed German

jets, tanks and troops for the 1999 U.S./NATO imperialist war against Serbia and in support of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

Domestically, McKinney’s record includes her August 1994 vote for the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, a Clinton administration measure that expanded the number of police and prisons, extended the federal death penalty and imposed mandatory sentencing. In 1998, along with much of the Congressional Black Caucus, McKinney voted *for* the House resolution supporting the 1977 frame-up conviction of former Black Panther Assata Shakur and demanding her extradition from Cuba. Like McKinney’s opposition to Pentagon “waste,” a focus of her long-term service on the House Armed Services Committee, these positions express loyalty to capitalist imperialism, to the patriotic sentiments of those like the Greens who want to “clean up” some of the “excesses” of the wretched system whose destruction requires nothing short of international socialist revolution.

Fake Left at McKinney’s Service

The record above is in no contradiction to the fact that McKinney stands on the left of the *spectrum of bourgeois politics* in the U.S. today. She is wont to adorn the platforms of various events organized by the reformist left. Donkey work on her behalf from the likes of Workers World is payment in return. Having joined a substantial element of U.S. rulers in concluding that U.S. imperialism’s interests are not best served by the Iraq occupation, McKinney finds it expedient to call for “our troops” to withdraw from Iraq, and even bemoans the Afghanistan occupation as well. She was a keynote speaker at the San Francisco May Day rally—one of whose central organizers was International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 Executive Board member Jack Heyman—that coincided with the West Coast port shutdown against the Iraq occupation and in defense of the union in the midst of contract negotiations. The rally, dominated by bourgeois politics, was politically no different from many liberal peace crawls. The port shutdown was a powerful display of union muscle that was nonetheless wrapped in red-white-and-blue American chauvinism by the ILWU International bureaucracy and subordinated to the union tops’ endorsement of Obama, with all mention of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan deep-sixed. (See “Labor: Break with Democrats, ‘National Unity’ Patriotism! ILWU Shuts West Coast Ports on May Day,” WV No. 914, 9 May.)

McKinney has similarly appeared at events sponsored by the Bay Area Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal (aka “the MOBE”), chaired by Jeff Mackler, who is also the leader of the reformist Socialist Action (SA) organization. SA and the MOBE have subordinated the fight for Mumia’s freedom to bourgeois liberals and capitalist politicians, just as SA and other reformist leftists subordinated the fight against imperialist depre-

FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL! ABOLISH THE RACIST DEATH PENALTY!

A former Black Panther, a MOVE supporter and a journalist known as the “voice of the voiceless,” Mumia Abu-Jamal was framed up for the 1981 murder of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death in 1982 explicitly for his political views. Earlier this year, the federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Mumia’s frame-up conviction. Mumia, an innocent man, now faces either a living death of life in prison or the death penalty.

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!

Make a contribution today, payable to “National Lawyers Guild Foundation” (earmarked for “Mumia”) and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.

Donations to the PDC earmarked “Mumia Legal Defense” as well as collections at PDC or other events for Mumia’s legal defense are receipted and transferred in full to the above NLG account as has been designated by Mumia’s lawyer for this purpose.

Organize protest! Pass motions in your unions, campus, community and religious organizations demanding Mumia’s freedom. Get your union or organization to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Mumia. Publicize Mumia’s case in your union or organization’s newsletter.

Get the facts! The PDC fact sheet pamphlet, *Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching* (available in English, German and French—\$.50 each, \$10 for 30) is a detailed refutation of the book *Murdered by Mumia* by right-wing journalist Michael Smerconish and Maureen Faulkner, whose lying tract is a rallying cry not only to execute Mumia but for the death penalty itself. The PDC’s other Mumia pamphlet, *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!* (\$1), lays out the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and provides additional detail on the explosive evidence that shatters the decades-long frame-up of this fighter for black freedom. Both these PDC pamphlets politically arm activists in the struggle for Mumia’s freedom.

PDC Button: “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!”—\$1 each. **PDC Video:** *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*—\$10 DVD, \$15 VHS. **Bundles of the 4-page brochure:** *Mumia Is an Innocent Man: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!*—\$2 for 25 copies. Order from/make checks payable to Partisan Defense Committee at our New York City address below.

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As a final footnote to the squalor of B.B.'s "pragmatic" road, McKinney and her vice presidential running mate, Rosa Clemente, have apparently run afoul of elements within the Colorado Green Party in the run-up to the DENVER Democratic National Convention (DNC). According to an August 14 statement signed by McKinney and Clemente, Colorado Greens opposed the participation of McKinney/Clemente in various events surrounding the DNC, including those featuring Workers World honcho Larry Holmes; the World Can't Wait outfit, initiated by the Revolutionary Communist Party; Pam Africa and the MOVE organization, among others. McKinney insists that she will participate nonetheless, "as we all attempt to hold the Democratic Party accountable for its complicity in all of the crimes of the Bush Administration." Or, more bluntly put, pushing the Democrats to adopt, as McKinney put it, her suggestions for "policy initiatives," under a (very) little pressure on the street.

The Dreyfus Affair: A False Analogy

B.B.'s attempt to conflate the questions of defense of democratic rights with political support led him to attempt an analogy between Cynthia McKinney and Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Here he has qualitatively overreached. The Dreyfus case in the 1890s provoked a serious social crisis in France. In 1894, French captain Alfred Dreyfus was tried for high treason and sentenced to life imprisonment in total isolation on Devil's Island, the penal colony off the coast of French Guiana. It took many years for the truth to come out: Dreyfus was totally innocent and false evidence had been used to convict him. From its first verdict to his unequivocal exoneration in 1906, the Dreyfus Affair not only split French public opinion in general but also polarized the French workers movement, with some socialists failing to understand the need to defend this Jewish military officer against bourgeois reaction and anti-Semitism.



California Department of Corrections

Overcrowded California prison. McKinney in 1994 voted for the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, a Clinton measure that expanded number of police and prisons, extended the federal death penalty and imposed mandatory sentencing.

Against these socialists, Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin argued that in such struggles it was necessary that the proletariat “take an active part in its solution and to accomplish the solution *in its own, proletarian way*” (“Political Agitation and ‘The Class Point of View’,” February 1902 [emphasis added]). Referring to the Dreyfus Affair and other cases, Lenin also made clear the nature of bourgeois democracy in his classic polemic against the social democrat Karl Kautsky, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918):

"The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with any profound political divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie." The learned Mr. Kautsky could have studied this 'law' of bourgeois democracy in connection with the Dreyfus case in republican France, with the lynching of Negroes and internationalists in the democratic republic of America, with the case of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain, with the baiting of the Bolsheviks and the staging of pogroms against them in April 1917 in the democratic republic of Russia."

There was another aspect to the Dreyfus Affair from which Marxists derive another principle, i.e., the impermissibility of the participation of revolutionary socialists in a capitalist government. As we explain in “Down With Executive Offices!” *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 60, Autumn 2007:

"To defuse the social crisis and liquidate the Dreyfus case, the new prime minister (*président du conseil*) called for the socialist Alexandre Millerand to be seated in a government of bourgeois Radicals and republicans, with the butcher of the Paris Commune, General Galliffet, as minister of war. Millerand obliged, entering the Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet as minister of trade and industry in 1899. Millerand's betrayal, supported by Jean Jaurès, divided the French Socialists. Characteristically, the Second International gave an ambiguous answer to ministerialism.... An amendment put forward by Guesde that sought to forbid participation under any circumstances was rejected. The revolutionary wing of Social Democracy including Lenin and

Luxemburg vehemently opposed Millerandism. Luxemburg wrote, 'The entry of a socialist into a bourgeois government is not, as it is thought, a partial conquest of the bourgeois state by the socialists, but a partial conquest of the socialist party by the bourgeois state' ['The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case,' 1899].'

The same *Spartacist* explains that at the Fifth Conference of the International Communist League, of which the SL is the U.S. section, we noted that the issue of Millerandism was not pursued to a satisfactory conclusion with the Third (Communist) International. We adopted a position against running for executive office as a way of recognizing and codifying what should be seen as a corollary to Lenin's *The State and Revolution* (1917) and *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, which were really the founding documents of the Third International. We noted:

"The fundamental line between reform and revolution is the attitude toward the bourgeois state, i.e., the reformist view that one can take hold of the existing state apparatus and administer it in the interests of the workers, versus the Leninist understanding that the capitalist state apparatus must be smashed through proletarian revolution. The problem with running for executive offices is that it lends legitimacy to prevailing and reformist conceptions of the state. There is a rotten history of social-democratic and Stalinist reformists administering the state in the interest of capitalism. The executive authority commands the 'armed body of men' who are the core of the state apparatus; the revolutionary shattering of that state inevitably entails reckoning with the executive. Even in the great bourgeois revolutions in England and France, the Cromwellians and Jacobins who established a base in parliament had to get rid of the king and set up a new executive organ."

Of course we defend black capitalist politicians against racist assault, but this has never meant political support. For example, when black Democrat Harold Washington was elected mayor of Chicago in 1983 and faced a vicious racist backlash, we wrote: “Washington has the right to take office with all the normal prerogatives. Blacks have a right to elect whoever they want to office” (WV No. 326, 25 March 1983). As opposed to many on the reformist left, at the same time we refused to give an ounce of political support to this longtime Democratic machine politician.

In McKinney's case, it was indeed a racist provocation when she was grabbed by a cop as she was entering a Congressional office building in the lead-up to the 2006 election. Outrageously accused of assaulting the cop, McKinney was then subjected to a grand jury investigation before the case was dropped. But the funding of McKinney's opponents by Zionist reactionaries and "cross-over" voting by Republicans in 2002 and her 2006 loss in the Georgia Democratic primary amid accusations of gerrymandering and voting "irregularities" are the nasty, corrupt, racist, sexist standard operating procedure of U.S. elections (hardly unknown on the Democratic Party side). While we are fully committed to defending McKinney's democratic rights, from our class perspective, this has not been and is no Dreyfus case.

And B.B. to the contrary, the politics of McKinney—i.e., the class line—*is* the essential point.

McKinney's blandishments to the oppressed and exploited, as contained in her Green Party acceptance speech, that "whatever it is that we want in the realm of public policy, we can get if we have the right elected officials in office," is a lie and a hoax. As we wrote in "Black Disenfranchisement and American 'Democracy'" (WV No. 833, 1 October 2004):

“While the ballot is a fundamental right, a right we tenaciously defend, fundamental change will not come through voting. It was not by the ballot that slavery met its demise; it was not by the ballot that Jim Crow was ended. Union rights did not come from Congress or the president. All the gains working people and black people have made came through their seizing them, by mass struggles on the battlefields, in the factories and on the streets, from the racist rulers.”

It took a social revolution, the Civil War, to smash chattel slavery in this country. And it will take a third American revolution, a socialist revolution, to emancipate the proletariat from exploitation, to accomplish the liberation of the black population, to smash from within the imperialist colossus that is the main enemy of the world's working class and oppressed masses. It is with such a program that we seek to answer B.B.'s question of "how the class vanguard is



Elana Levy

Former Black Panther Assata Shakur speaking from exile in Havana, Cuba, 1998. That year, McKinney voted for Congressional resolution calling for Shakur's extradition to U.S.

to *intervene*,” which requires not conciliation of the “progressive” upholders of the capitalist order, but rather their exposure as class enemies. Our aim is to fight to build a class-struggle workers party that fights for a workers government. This is tied to the struggle to oust the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class—the trade-union bureaucracy, which is the chief vehicle through which the working class is tied to their class enemy. Being “pragmatic” means accommodating the system of capitalist private property that is responsible for monstrous oppression and brutal exploitation throughout the world. ■

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Socialist Party Champions Former H-Block Warden Turned Security Guard

We reprint below a letter published by the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League, in Workers Hammer No. 203 (Summer 2008).

Dublin
26 May 2008

Dear Workers Hammer,

Over the last few months a number of articles have appeared in the newspapers of both Irish and British reformist organisations about a hunger strike by “airport workers” in a legal battle against the leadership of UNITE, the trade union that

WORKERS HAMMER

organised them. The articles describe how these “workers” have been betrayed by the union leadership, and now face legal bills arising from the period when they were being organised into the union. This all sounds like the sort of fights workers have faced time and time again. However, it is only further on into the articles that the reader finds out these are not “workers” but security guards from Belfast airport demanding the union pay their £70,000 legal bills. Security guards are not workers but hired company thugs! It is an outrage that UNITE was organising these thugs in the first place. It would also be an outrage to use genuine workers union dues to pay their bills!

The most vocal defenders of these security guards in their battle against UNITE is Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party. The Socialist Party has long proclaimed these guards “workers,” in fact it played a central role in organising them into the trade union. To add insult to injury, these reformists are now calling on trade unionists around the world to support the bosses’ hired thugs. Knowing full well that security guards are not necessarily popular with workers, they have been circulating a petition which simply refers to them as “workers” and “shop stewards,” omitting what they really did for a job. Lying and hiding basic truths is nothing new to social democrats like the Socialist Party, who are committed to trying to convince workers that the capitalist state can be made to act in their interests.

Even more disgusting, they and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), have also completely disappeared the fact that, prior to patrolling Belfast airport, one of these “workers” was a prison warden at the infamous H-Block/Maze prison! According to the *Belfast Telegraph* (13

Security Guards Out of the Unions!

April), Madan Gupta was for years part of the murderous regime that beat and tortured [Irish] Republicans. He was an overseer during the Hunger Strike in 1981! By championing such thugs, the Socialist Party and SWP are spitting on the memory of heroic men like Bobby Sands and the nine others who died on hunger strike that year.

The Socialist Party’s support to security guards is of a piece with their notion that cops and prison guards are part of the workers movement. This includes elements of the Northern Irish security apparatus such as H-Block prison wardens. As Marxists we have a duty to expose and politically combat these cowardly frauds. This is part of the struggle to achieve clarity in the workers movement, in particular on the nature of the capitalist state, which at its core consists of cops, prisons and courts. Prison guards and cops in capitalist countries are not workers, but the hired

ity of Catholics and many Protestants, erupted in 1968 demanding an end to the daily discrimination of the Catholic minority, the Orange state and their Loyalist terror groups responded with increasing violence. By 1969 the British government decided to “stabilise” the situation by pouring in thousands of imperialist troops onto the streets of Belfast and Derry. Soon, the army and the RUC were filling internment camps with hundreds of “suspected Republicans” without even the facade of a trial. Innocent civilians were gunned down on the streets—on one day alone paratroopers murdered thirteen in Derry, the infamous Bloody Sunday massacre in 1972.

In contrast to the reformists, the ruling capitalist class makes no apologies for its state and the actions it takes to defend it. To this day, the British ruling class has refused to admit that the troops murdered innocent civilians on Bloody Sunday. The

Irish states quickly introduced new laws banning prisoners from running for election—making it clear to all that bourgeois “democracy” is nothing more than a veneer. A veneer that the likes of the Socialist Party hold in the highest of regard.

Because reformists hold that the capitalist state can change its spots and that socialism can be achieved without any need for a workers revolution, i.e., the smashing of the capitalist state and the need to establish a workers state, they must deny the very class nature of this state. By lying to workers that their interests can be served within capitalism, they provide cover for the bourgeoisie. The Socialist Party holds that once the reformists win a majority vote in Britain, laws can be passed in Her Majesty’s Parliament bringing about workers rule. That is, a bourgeois government—for any government administering the capitalist state is bourgeois—will bring workers rule to Britain! The idea that the gentlemen from the City [London financial district], and their friends in Sandhurst [military officer academy], will simply step aside because of a plebiscite and a piece of legal paper, is muck the Socialist Party consistently tries to rub in the eyes of the working class.



PA



Press Eye

Long Kesh/the Maze prison (left), British imperialism’s notorious torture camp where Bobby Sands (far right) died on hunger strike in 1981.

thugs of the capitalist state. The state is not some neutral arbiter above all classes, as the reformists would like to portray it, but simply the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Cops and security guards are used against workers during class struggle, beating pickets and protecting scabs. Indeed, around the world airport security is at the very front-line of the imperialists’ ongoing “war on terror” targeting, in particular, Muslims. As usual, the Socialist Party cares little for the plight of the besieged Asian communities in Britain or the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, seeking instead to rally the working class to the defence of the very cops, security and prison guards that are used to beat, torture and imprison them.

There are few places in the Western world where the precise nature of the state and its “special bodies of armed men” is clearer than in Northern Ireland. Since its inception in 1921 as an Orange statelet, the local capitalist class and their British imperialist masters in London maintained their rule through naked anti-Catholic terror. The heavily armed RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] and “B-special” auxiliaries tortured and murdered with impunity, in particular targeting Republicans or anybody that dared question Orange rule. When a mass civil rights movement, supported both by the major-

fact that the slaughter of the unarmed civilians is on film, and dozens of eye witnesses have testified, is irrelevant to the arrogant imperial masters. Their message to the population is quite clear: we rule! This is the same message sent out when cops executed Jean Charles de Menezes in July 2005 in London, and repeated in every denial of any wrongdoing. And it was the gruesome message that Thatcher’s government sent to the world when it provoked the Hunger Strikes in 1981. After years of protests against the brutal and demeaning regime under vicious wardens, Republican prisoners led by Bobby Sands insisted on regaining the status of political prisoners, as indeed they plainly were, including the simple rights to wear their own civilian clothes and to organise educational pursuits. The British state saw an opportunity to provoke the threatened hunger strike. It not only refused to listen to the demands, calling Bobby Sands and the others “common criminals” but began reneging on earlier agreements. Thatcher looked on gleefully as Bobby Sands, aged 27, and the others suffered slow, painful deaths.

At the height of the hunger strike, Sands was elected to the House of Commons and, fellow hunger striker, Kieran Doherty to the Dáil [Irish Parliament] as part of mass protests against the system slowly killing them. Both the British and

It is their reformist programme that inevitably leads the Socialist Party to become craven apologists for cops and prison guards. Their disgustingly chauvinist line on members of the brutal security apparatus in Northern Ireland is nothing new. They have rightly earned themselves the title “Her Majesty’s Socialists” among leftists and Republicans in Belfast and Dublin. The Socialist Party on both sides of the Irish Sea has for decades been proud to refuse to call for British troops out! They defend the “right to march” of the Orange Order, whose annual “marching season” consists of months of anti-Catholic provocations. In 1995, the Socialist Party infamously hosted Loyalist UVF killer Billy Hutchinson, who had been convicted of the murder of two innocent Catholics.

Of course, the Socialist Party is not so “touchy-feely” when it comes to the Catholic minority and Republicans in the North. [Socialist Party leader] Joe Higgins, ex-TD (MP) in Dublin, regularly used the Irish Dáil to denounce Republicans and anybody standing up to Loyalist terror. Higgins seized on the brutal killing of a young Catholic father, Robert McCartney, by members of the IRA, to compare the IRA to Hitler’s SS (see *Workers Hammer* No. 190, Spring 2005)! And

continued on page 11

WORKERS HAMMER
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Mumia Abu-Jamal must be freed now!

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On the Civil War and Slavery

PL vs. Karl Marx (and Abraham Lincoln)

Progressive Labor Party (PL), which originated as a left split from the Stalinist Communist Party in the early 1960s, evolved into an increasingly eccentric outfit that combines “Fight for Communism!” rhetoric with anti-Marxist, grossly opportunist and often socially retrograde practice. This spring, PL announced that they would “actively participate” in Barack Obama’s Democratic presidential campaign, justifying their support to this black capitalist politician, who is campaigning as a more effective Commander-in-Chief for U.S. imperialism, by pointing to the enthusiastic response to his campaign by a layer of liberal youth. As we commented in *WV* No. 913 (25 April):

“Not content with this reformist/Stalinist liquidation into the campaign for a representative of the class enemy, PL adds a grotesque twist, comparing Obama’s followers to the Hitler Youth: ‘Many earnestly hoped for the better world Nazi imperialism claimed to offer. And Hitler, after all, professing “socialism,” was able to rally many well-meaning people seeking change’ (*Challenge*, 26 March). This is the same group that grotesquely ran on the back page of its paper, *Challenge* (3 January 2007), a doctored photo of Obama in a Klan suit! After deploying its members into such reactionary outfits as church groups and the imperialist volunteer army, and (again) into ‘active participation’ in Obama’s campaign (and now vicariously into the Hitler Youth), one can only wonder what PL will do next.”

One no longer has to wonder. The 4 June issue of *Challenge* featured on its back page a bizarre (even by the standards of PL) article, “Civil War’s Hidden History: Women Workers Battled Gov’t, Bosses,” saluting the July 1863 New York City anti-draft riots—five days of furious racist terror against black people and supporters of the war against chattel slavery. PL’s article is a review of *A People’s History of the Civil War*, a 2005 book by David Williams. Williams is a professor of history at Valdosta State University in Georgia who has written several books attempting to minimize the question of slavery, declaring that the Civil War was simply a “rich man’s war” waged by competing “oligarchies” and glorifying “antiwar” activity against both the Union Army and the Confederacy. In its glowing review—which, unlike Williams’ book, does not even *mention* slavery!—PL declares: “Williams’ thesis is that class struggle—the consolidation of finance capital vs. the response of working folks—comprises the source of the conflict.” Hailing “resistance” to the *revolutionary war* waged by the Union Army that smashed black chattel slavery in the South, PL writes:

“In Port Washington, LI [Long Island], women led 1,000 protesters with a banner NO DRAFT, attacked the draft commissioner and broke up the draft box. In NYC, women took part in draft rebellions, grabbed stones and used their stockings as sling-shots.

“These inspiring stories of our history comprise a small part of Williams’ research on how the onset of the war and starvation of soldiers and their families was deliberate by Lincoln and his Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton.... Legislation passed during Lincoln’s watch fed only the hunger of the growing wealthy class for land and centralized banking.”

PL thus disappears the Emancipation Proclamation, the executive orders issued by Lincoln on 22 September 1862 and 1 January 1863, that declared freedom for all the slaves of the Confederacy. While the Civil War began in 1861 over the question of whether slavery was to be extended to the territories and new states

of the West, the Emancipation Proclamation committed the North to the abolition of slavery and revealed clearly the revolutionary character of the war. In the 1862 elections, following the adoption of an abolitionist program by Lincoln’s Republican Party, the Democratic Party—the party of the Southern slaveholders and their sympathizers in the North—won the governorship of New York. As Karl Marx pointed out in “The Election Results in the Northern States” (18 November

beating any blacks they could find, the mobs sacked and burned dozens of black dwellings. At least a dozen black people were murdered. The Colored Orphan Asylum, housing over 200 black children, was burned to ashes. Also targeted were prominent abolitionists like Horace Greeley and those who were known to associate with or provide housing and employment to blacks. While some blacks were able to organize armed self-defense, thousands desperately fled the city. The



July 1863: Racist mobs destroyed Colored Orphan Asylum during NYC anti-draft riots. PL described Civil War “draft rebellions” in NYC as “inspiring”!

1862), New York City was “actively engaged in the slave trade until recently, the seat of the American money market and full of holders of mortgages on Southern plantations, [and] has always been decidedly ‘Democratic’.”

In response to the Emancipation Proclamation, “antiwar” Northern Democrats escalated racist hysteria among workers and immigrants, with Democratic politicians and newspapers declaring that the freed slaves would “steal the jobs” of white workers. After Lincoln in March 1863 issued the Enrollment Act of Conscription to supplement the ranks of the Union Army, Irish and other immigrant workers and poor were whipped into a racist frenzy. When results of the draft lottery were announced on 12 July 1863, tens of thousands began rampaging in the streets. While a clause of the draft order allowing those who could pay \$300 to avoid military service provoked resentment, the riots were directed against the black population. Chasing and

most significant urban rebellion in U.S. history up to that point, the riot was put down with the assistance of thousands of federal troops ordered into the city by Lincoln. PL, grotesquely, is “inspired” by this racist, counterrevolutionary rebellion.

PL today places itself on the opposite side of the barricades from Karl Marx. Their sympathy with the draft riots spits on the history of the 200,000 blacks who volunteered and fought in the Northern army and navy to destroy slavery. In Europe, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels urged and organized international working-class support to the Union cause from the beginning. In his “Address of the International Working Men’s Association to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America,” written in November 1864 after Lincoln’s re-election, Marx wrote: “We congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved watchword of your first election, the triumphant war-cry of your

re-election is Death to Slavery.” Marx promoted Northern victory both as a struggle to abolish the barbaric slave system and as a precondition for the development of the class-consciousness of the proletariat in the U.S. Marx declared:

“While the working men, the true political powers of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned labourer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labour, or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation; but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war.

“The working men of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Anti-Slavery War will do for the working classes.”

Marx famously restated this position in 1867 in the first volume of *Capital*: “In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralysed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.”

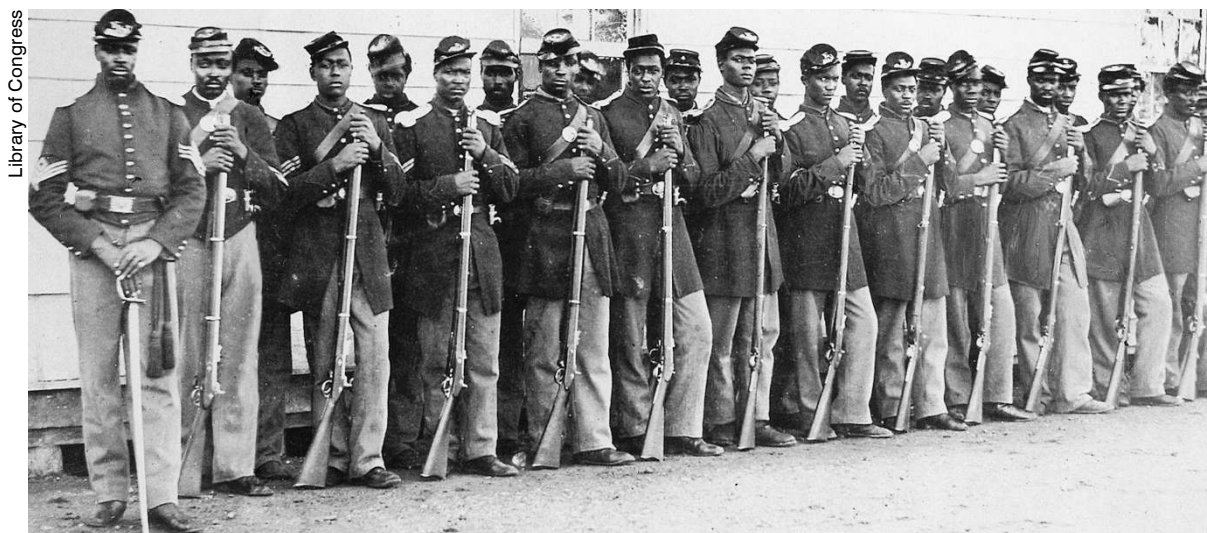
PL’s grotesque article promised a forthcoming “part two,” which has yet to appear. Instead, *Challenge* has since published three letters on the subject. A 2 July letter by “Red teacher” reiterated the conclusion of the original article, declaring of the Civil War: “Workers were convinced to fight an intra-capitalist war, then, just as they are convinced to fight in the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq today. The rulers spread lies, myths, patriotic emotions and other weapons to confuse workers about what is in their own class interest. The struggles described in the article reflect examples of workers who were not accepting the ruling class lies.” A letter by “A Red Historian” (30 July) tries to clean up some of this malodorous crap, condemning the draft riots as “an attempt at anti-abolitionist counter-revolution, in which many racist Irish workers were involved in mass assaults on black people,” and referring positively to Marx, Engels and Lincoln.

PL’s nauseating “debate” on the draft riots and whether or not to have supported the war against slavery flows from their anti-materialist, anti-Marxist ideology and program. PL historically has promoted itself as anti-racist for its activities in fighting the Klan and Nazis. We have always criticized PL’s impotent tactics of small-group confrontations that reject the Marxist strategy of mobilizing the working class in major cities in united-front labor/black mobilizations to sweep the fascist killers off the streets. PL antics usually result in getting its members knocked on the head by cops and arrested. But at least PL used to express anti-racist views and even tried to implement them. Now PL openly supports the Democratic Party of racism and imperialist war through their “active participation” in the campaign of Barack Obama, who preaches that the solution to black oppression was “embedded” in the original U.S. Constitution, which embraced slavery.

The Civil War was the last progressive war of the American capitalist class. The destruction of slavery was in the class interests of the Northern bourgeoisie as

continued on page 9

**Company E,
4th U.S. Colored
Infantry at
Fort Lincoln.
Nearly 200,000
black troops
volunteered for
Union Army,
helping to turn
tide in Civil War
and defeat
Southern
slavocracy.**



Georgia...

(continued from page 1)

prepared to challenge the U.S. in reasserting Russia’s role as the great power in the region. On August 26, Russia formally recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another secessionist province.

Russia’s humiliating slap down of Washington’s Tbilisi client provoked a frenzy of vituperation in U.S. imperialist circles. Bush ludicrously intoned that invading a foreign country “is unacceptable in the 21st century”—this only days before the U.S. occupiers carried out a bloody massacre of some 95 Afghan civilians, including 50 children! The U.S. then finalized a long-planned deal to install an anti-missile “defense” system in Poland, the first in a former Soviet bloc nation, and to deploy American troops there to operate the system. So much for Washington’s claims that such an anti-missile defense is aimed not at Russia but Iran, which has neither intercontinental ballistic missiles nor nuclear warheads!

Capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union paved the way to the emergence of a “one superpower world,” emboldening the U.S. imperialists—no longer challenged by Soviet military might—in their military adventures abroad. The U.S. has since established bases across Central Asia and elsewhere on Russia’s periphery, aimed at the encirclement not only of capitalist Russia, which is still the second largest nuclear power, but also of China, the largest and most powerful of the remaining bureaucratically deformed work-

ers of Georgia may be the [sic] one of the most significant event[s] to occur in Europe since the end of communism” (*Washington Post* online, 18 August). Biden’s tirade is of a piece with Obama’s July 24 Berlin speech, where he upheld the U.S. anti-Soviet crusade as a model for reasserting Washington’s global interests today.

Indeed, Obama’s cautious and uneven opposition to the Iraq war and occupation, which is cheered by the reformist left, is directed at restoring U.S. imperialism’s ability—weakened by the Bush administration’s disastrous policies in Iraq—to project its military and diplomatic power globally. Obama made this clear in an article on “Renewing American Leadership” in *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2007), where he calls for a “responsible end” to the U.S. occupation of Iraq in order to redeploy and significantly escalate American military forces and operations around the world. Obama is foursquare behind the murderous occupation of Afghanistan and calls for deploying an additional 10,000 U.S. troops there. It is no accident that Obama’s foreign policy consigliere is one Zbigniew Brzezinski, a veteran of Cold War II who was a central figure in the Democratic Carter administration as it launched an anti-Communist “human rights” campaign against the Soviet Union. This included massive support to Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan against the Soviet Army, which intervened there in late 1979 in defense of the USSR’s southern flank and on the side of elementary human progress.

Deep hatred for the Bush gang among



WV Map, Sources: adapted from UN Cartographic Section, U.S. Department of State, and Baku-Ceyhan Campaign

off the agenda, to counterpose to all variants of bourgeois nationalism an appeal to the workers for international unity in their class struggle.

Revolutionary Russia was subjected to a three-year-long Civil War by imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary White reactionaries and direct imperialist military intervention by 14 capitalist armies. Those countries—like Georgia, Poland, Finland and the Baltic states—that remained capitalist after achieving independence from Russia became bulwarks of reactionary terror against the working class and beachheads for imperialist intrigues against the Soviet state.

In his 1922 pamphlet, *Between Red and White* (also known as *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia 1918-1921*), Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky exposed the myth of “democratic,” “independent” Georgia promoted by the imperialists and their social-democratic henchmen at the time and rehearsed by the bourgeois media today, citing the Mensheviks’ own words. In December 1918, the Georgian Menshevik Topuridze assured the Allied imperialists: “I assume that our republic will co-operate with the Allied countries in their fight against the Bolsheviks, with all the means at its disposal.” In another example, he recounted the brutal suppression of a peasant uprising in Ossetia, quoting Menshevik leader Valiko Djugeli, who delighted at the slaughter: “Ossetian villages are burning all around us.... We will be cruel. Yes, we will.” “I begin to understand Nero and the great fire of Rome,” Djugeli recalled another Menshevik telling him after “gazing upon the bright flames.”

When the Mensheviks, who had opposed the proletarian revolution in Russia, took power in Georgia in early 1918 they drove the Georgian Communists underground. “Independent” Georgia immediately invited in the German imperialist army and, following Germany’s defeat in World War I, handed the reins to the British imperialists. Working with Armenian and Georgian nationalists, the British imperialists engineered the overthrow of the Baku Soviet of 1918—based on Azeri, Armenian, Georgian and Russian oil workers—which was the center of Bolshevik power in the Caucasus. The 26 Bolshevik leaders of the Soviet were later captured and executed in September 1918 at the behest of the British. Trotsky dedicated his pamphlet to these heroic Com-

munists and to the hundreds and thousands of others who were persecuted and slaughtered by the Georgian and other bourgeois regimes in the Caucasus.

In February 1921, as a Communist-led uprising broke out in Georgia, the Red Army finally moved in and swept out the imperialist-backed Menshevik government, ushering in workers rule and bringing genuine national liberation. As Trotsky explained in his pamphlet:

“We do not only recognize, but we also give full support to the principle of self-determination, wherever it is directed against feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. But wherever the fiction of self-determination, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, becomes a weapon directed against the proletarian revolution, we have no occasion to treat this fiction differently from the other ‘principles’ of democracy perverted by capitalism.”

For Marxists, the right of national self-determination is not an absolute principle. In the case of Georgia 1921, it was subordinated to defense of the proletarian revolution. Similarly in 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, the question of the rights of small nations occupied by one or another imperialist power was subordinated to the principle of revolutionary defeatism against all the imperialist combatants. Thus the revolutionary Serbian Social Democrats rightly refused to call for Serbian self-determination after the country was overrun by the Austro-Hungarian empire.

A more recent example is the 1999 U.S.-led war against Serbia, carried out by the Democratic Clinton administration in the name of stopping “ethnic cleansing” in Kosovo. Much of the reformist left internationally beat the drums for “human rights” imperialism on behalf of “poor, little Kosovo,” with some even supporting direct imperialist intervention. We historically defended the right of self-determination of the Kosovo Albanians, including the right to form their own state or to integrate into a “greater” Albania. But in the buildup to and during the U.S./NATO war, this question had become subordinated to our position of revolutionary defensism: military defense of Serbia without any political support to the revanchist regime in Belgrade. That remained the case when NATO forces supplanted the Serbian army as the effective state power in Kosovo following the 1999 war. As we wrote in “Balkans Tangle” (WV No. 755, 30 March 2001): “With Kosovo now a NATO protectorate,



APR

August 23: Graves are prepared the day after U.S.-led airstrikes killed over 90 civilians, most of them women and children, in Afghan village of Azizabad, Herat province.

ers states. We call for unconditional military defense of China—and the other deformed workers states of Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam—against imperialism and internal counterrevolution and demand: *U.S. bases out of East Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Near East!*

The Caucasus and Central Asia are also pivotal for U.S. and West European access to Caspian and Central Asian oil and gas. The huge 1,100-mile-long Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, one of three built to supply West Europe while skirting Russian territory and possible Russian control over the oil flow, passes through Georgia. The European powers, especially France and Germany, have their own ax to grind in the region. Both countries have opposed the entry of Georgia into NATO, while French president Nicolas Sarkozy, as current head of the European Union, presided over the initial ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia. Meanwhile, European “military observers” are part of a UN “peacekeeping” force that has been in Georgia since 1993 along the border with Abkhazia. *UN out of Georgia now!*

Democrats, the Other Party of U.S. Imperialism

The two presumptive candidates to the post of imperialist Commander-in-Chief, Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, rushed to condemn Russia. Both called for putting Georgia on a “fast track” to NATO membership. Democratic Senator Joseph Biden demonstratively visited Georgia only days before his selection as Obama’s running mate. On his return, Biden declared: “I left the country convinced that Russia’s invasion

workers and minorities, in the U.S. and internationally, must not obscure the fact that the Democrats are the other party of imperialist war and racism. We oppose political support to any capitalist politician—McCain, Obama or the Greens’ Cynthia McKinney. We stand for the complete political independence of the working class. Our aim is the forging of a revolutionary multiracial workers party that fights to overturn the capitalist system through workers revolution and to establish a workers government. *All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!*

Leninism and the National Question

In hyping Georgia’s “democratic” pretensions against supposedly unceasing aggression by a timeless “Russian imperialism,” the bourgeois media have been replete with historical references to the “progressive” Menshevik Georgian regime of 1918-21. The *New York Times* (10 August) referred to this as “when Bolshevik troops crushed Georgia’s thrilling, and brief, first experiment with liberal rule.” From the standpoint of the proletarian revolution, the suppression of Menshevik Georgia, which was neither “democratic” nor “independent,” was absolutely correct and necessary.

Following the proletarian seizure of power in the October Revolution of 1917, Lenin’s Bolsheviks immediately carried out their commitment to grant the right of self-determination to the myriad peoples oppressed under the tsarist prison house of peoples. The Leninist position on the national question was premised on the full equality of all nations and peoples. The aim was to get the national question



Available in Russian

Byulleten' Spartakovtsev Supplement
No. 20, March 2007

Why We Fought to Defend the Soviet Union

Translated from WV Nos. 809 and 810,
12 and 26 September 2003

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there can be no independent struggle for the national rights of ethnic Albanians or any other national minority in the region which does not first and foremost seek to expel the imperialist ‘peacekeepers’.”

Kosovo’s sham “declaration of independence” from Serbia this February was essentially a diplomatic provocation against Serbia and Russia—paving the way for the conflict in Georgia—and a further incitement against the besieged Serbian minority in Kosovo. We defend the national rights of the Serbs in northern Kosovo, opposing their forcible incorporation into an Albanian Kosovar state. As Marxists, we oppose the poison of nationalism and fight for the class unity of the workers throughout the Balkans in overthrowing all the bloody capitalist regimes of the region. We say: *Down with the imperialist occupation of Kosovo! All U.S./UN/NATO troops out of the Balkans now! For a socialist federation of the Balkans!*

The Impact of Capitalist Counterrevolution

Particularly in areas of heavy national interpenetration, such as the Caucasus and the Balkans, only under proletarian rule could there be a just and equitable resolution to the conflicting national aspirations of the numerous peoples. The Bolsheviks, in order to accommodate the myriad peoples at different levels of national consolidation, established a variety of Soviet republics, Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics for nationalities, Autonomous Oblasts and Nationality Okrugs for various tribes. In Georgia, Abkhazians and Ossetians had autonomous regions, as did other formerly oppressed peoples such as the Chechens, Tartars and the Bashkirs in the Urals.

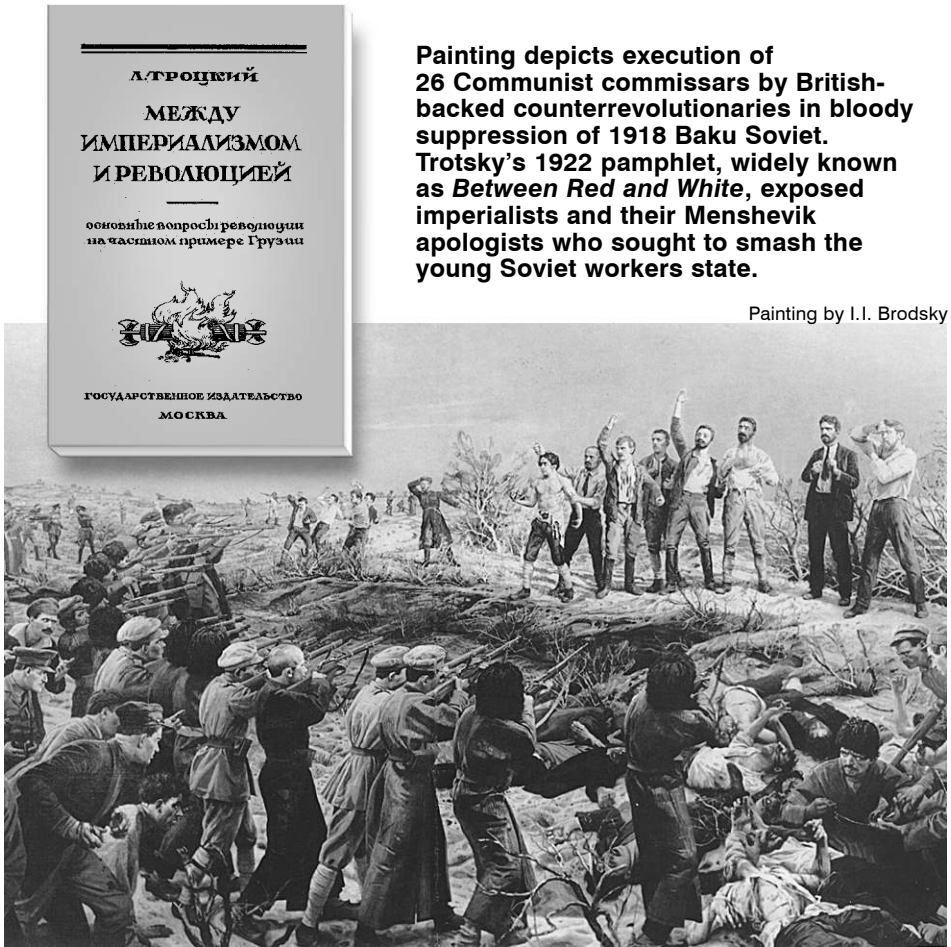
Many of the Bolsheviks’ policies were reversed with the growth of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy that came to power with the political counterrevolution that began in 1924. The dogma of “socialism in one country” proclaimed by Stalin later in 1924 was to become synonymous with the sellout of countless revolutionary opportunities abroad in the coming decades, while fostering the recrudescence of Russian chauvinism in the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the collectivized economy of the multinational Soviet workers state laid the basis for the equitable resolution of national conflicts and an enormous leap in social progress. This was reflected in the high levels of education and cultural development and the advancement of women and widespread ethnic intermarriage. Moreover, the Soviet state implemented policies aimed at advancing the most backward regions of the USSR. Georgia was a case in point. An article by Göran Therborn in *New Left Review* (July-August 2007) titled “Transcaucasian Triptych” pointed out that in the decades after 1921:

“Soviet industrial developmentalism—factories, roads, railways, schools, hospitals, scientific institutions—was to trans-

form the socio-economic landscape of the Caucasus, and a modernizing Tbilisi became the industrial, administrative and cultural hub for the South Caucasus as a whole....

“As one of the prime beneficiaries of the Soviet system, Georgia was one of the main losers from the break-up of the USSR.”

Decades of Stalinist mismanagement, lies and bureaucratism prepared the way for the counterrevolutionary breakup of the USSR in 1991-92. The imperialists encouraged the growth of bourgeois-nationalist movements, particularly in the more prosperous non-Russian republics



in the Baltics and in Soviet bloc states like Poland, and used these as a battering ram for counterrevolution. The restoration of capitalism in East Europe and the former Soviet Union led to an unprecedented immiseration of the working masses in those countries and exacerbated communalist hatreds. The final undoing of the October Revolution was a world-historic defeat for workers and the oppressed around the world.

To the bitter end, the ICL carried out its Trotskyist obligation to defend the gains of the October Revolution. We hailed the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan against CIA-backed Islamic insurgents. When the imperialists bankrolled the clerical-nationalist Solidarność “union” in Poland as a spearhead for capitalist restoration throughout the Soviet bloc in the early 1980s, we called to “Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!” When Russia’s Boris Yeltsin, working hand in

in the words of Civil War historian James McPherson, “became in effect armed auxiliaries of the Democratic party” (*Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* [1982]). The white-supremacist and segregationist spirit of the South infected the whole country. It dovetailed with the entry of American capitalist imperialism on the world scene at the end of the nineteenth century and served abroad as a valuable weapon to fortify colonial oppression and exploitation.

Black oppression today remains a central pillar of American capitalism, but black workers are also a strategic component of the working class who will play a vanguard role in the emancipation of the working class as a whole. The key to this perspective is the forging of a revolutionary workers party in opposition to both partner parties of racist American capitalism, the Democrats and Republicans, and all capitalist parties. In contrast to PL, which capitulates to the racist capitalist system, we seek to build a Leninist party that will act as a tribune of the people. *Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

glove with the Bush Sr. White House, launched a pro-imperialist coup in August 1991, the ICL responded with the call, “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” (reprinted in Spartacist pamphlet, *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled*, August 1993). We urged the multinational Soviet proletariat to return to the internationalist road of Lenin and Trotsky and to forge an authentically Bolshevik party to lead the fight for proletarian political revolution and to smash the forces of capitalist counterrevolution. Our statement, translated into Russian, was distributed in the tens of

Painting depicts execution of 26 Communist commissars by British-backed counterrevolutionaries in bloody suppression of 1918 Baku Soviet. Trotsky’s 1922 pamphlet, widely known as *Between Red and White*, exposed imperialists and their Menshevik apologists who sought to smash the young Soviet workers state.

Painting by I.I. Brodsky

been to paint various Stalinist and neocolonial bourgeois-nationalist regimes as “anti-imperialist.” In fact, WWP’s “anti-imperialist” posturing has always gone hand in hand with tailing “progressive” (i.e., Democratic) capitalist politicians in the U.S. WWP rejects the class line in favor of the capitalist “lesser evil.”

What support to Putin’s Russia means on the ground can be seen in the grotesque position of the Russian Taaffeites. Since the counterrevolution, these reformists have lined up with the most retrograde chauvinist forces in Russia, including the fascist National Bolshevik Party. While, typically, the CWI issued a sanitized statement for international consumption (“Georgia/Russia Conflict Brings Disaster for Working People of Region,” 11 August), in Russia the group portrays the war against Georgia as a just war for Russian statehood and calls for “people’s militias” to fight for Mother Russia:

“The reaction of ordinary people, who all across the country are enlisting in volunteer brigades, is entirely clear. If there are those who *want* to come to the aid of fraternal peoples (and the mass volunteer movement is inspired precisely by this—after all, the degenerates who simply want to ‘shoot it up’ aren’t that many) then it would be entirely logical for precisely these people to replace conscripted soldiers. But a people’s militia is dangerous for the authorities and capital, since a people’s militia, on the strength of its elemental proletarian instinct, could act against not only external, but also internal enemies.”
—“Turn the Guns on the Brass!”
www.socialism.ru (11 August)

By all accounts such “people’s militias” did follow Putin’s forces into Georgia, where they reportedly killed, looted and burned down the homes of ethnic Georgians. Without giving support to either side in this conflict, Marxists uphold the right of all communities to defend themselves against pogromist terror.

In the aftermath of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe, all the old crap of the pre-World War I era has returned. Ethnic cleansing, daily terror against immigrants and minorities—these are part and parcel of the triumph of the “national principle” which the imperialists pushed throughout the Cold War as a weapon against the Soviet Union. Only when the class principle—i.e., the program of world socialist revolution—prevails over the “national principle” can there be an end to imperialist war, exploitation and oppression.

Washington’s imperialist triumphalism in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union has been eroded. With the global economy on the decline, tensions between the U.S. and European powers are likely to grow. The U.S. imperialists find themselves in a quagmire in Iraq and increasingly in Afghanistan. Their ambitions in the Caucasus have been openly challenged by Russia. But a wounded imperialist beast with the world’s largest nuclear arsenal is an extremely dangerous creature. This underlines both the urgency and seriousness of the task faced by Marxists: the reforging of Trotsky’s Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, to lead the proletariat in sweeping away imperialist barbarism. ■

Civil War...

(continued from page 7)

the precondition to consolidating a unified, modern capitalist nation-state. But while a modern capitalist state was consolidated, the bourgeoisie did not fulfill the promise of liberation embodied in the Second American Revolution. As capitalism rapidly developed in the post-Civil War decades, the Northern industrial bourgeoisie became alarmed at a developing and combative working class. By 1877, Northern capitalists had abandoned Radical Reconstruction—the most egalitarian period in American history, when freed blacks exercised full political rights—and cemented ties with the ex-slaveholders of the South.

A new system of racist exploitation was established in the South through the systematic repression of the freedmen’s fight for land, education and civil rights. A rigid system of legally enforced racial segregation called Jim Crow was imposed and maintained by police-state repression and the terror of the Ku Klux Klan, which,

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Hunger Crisis...

(continued from page 12)

under capitalism, food is sold on the market in order to make a profit. Like any other business, agribusiness seeks to monopolize and control the market to keep prices as high as possible and maximize profits.

That starvation has become the increasingly common condition of a large portion of humanity is rooted in the very logic of the capitalist system. As Lenin explained in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916):

“It goes without saying that if capitalism could develop agriculture...if it could raise the living standards of the masses, who in spite of the amazing technical progress are everywhere still half-starved and poverty-stricken, there could be no question of a surplus of capital.... But if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism; for both uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premises of this mode of production.”

The country most cited as the “success” story for the development of commercial agriculture in the face of imperialist competition is Brazil. Starting in the 1960s, Brazil used state credits and tax breaks to create a livestock sector based on nationally produced grain, becoming in 1980 the world’s main supplier of soybean meal for cattle feed. Yet this “success” was achieved through the destruction of local food production, massive eviction of peasants from their land and ongoing destruction of the Amazon rain forest. After several decades of such “success” under capitalism, fully one-tenth of the Brazilian population suffered from malnutrition. Today, 3 percent of the Brazilian population controls some two-thirds of all arable land, while five million rural families remain landless.

The current food crisis cries out for an internationally planned socialist economy based on the most advanced levels of technology. Such an economic system would enormously increase agricultural output throughout the world while also greatly reducing transport costs, thereby facilitating a rational international division of labor. But how can a worldwide society of economic abundance be achieved? Only through proletarian socialist revolutions, above all in the advanced capitalist-imperialist countries of North America, West Europe and Japan where the productive wealth and technological resources of the world are now concentrated. Only then can production and distribution be based on social need rather than profit.

Tortilla Protests in Mexico, Strikes in South Africa

In Mexico early last year, the soaring price of the main staple food, tortillas—which are made with corn—provoked a series of demonstrations, including a protest in Mexico City of 100,000 people called by the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (National Union of Workers) and composed largely of labor and peasant organizations. A major factor in the impoverishment of the Mexican masses was the imposition in 1994 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which we Marxists have opposed as the “free trade” rape of Mexico by the U.S. imperialists.

In a 27 January 2007 leaflet titled “Mobilize the Working Class Against Hunger and Repression!” (reprinted in WV No. 886, 16 February 2007), our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League, raised a series of transitional demands seeking to link the immediate struggles and consciousness of the masses to the program of socialist revolution. The GEM demanded the expropriation of the corn magnates without compensation as part of a call for the working class to fight against the capitalist class as a whole. The GEM called for “labor strikes that demand a subsidy for tortillas so everyone can have them” which,



Hicks/NY Times

Men and women scavenge for food in garbage dump in Port-au-Prince, capital of Haiti.

together with the call for “the distribution of food for all under control of the trade unions, organizations of poor peasants and the urban poor,” aimed at ensuring food distribution among the workers and the poor. The leaflet declared: “The only way to end hunger is to seize the means of production from the capitalists through proletarian revolution and its extension internationally.”

In an underdeveloped capitalist country like Mexico, the national ruling class depends overwhelmingly on credit and investment from its imperialist masters. Because bourgeois populists, like the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in Mexico, stand for the continuation of capitalism and defend the rule and interests of a wing of the national bourgeoisie, they inevitably reject in deeds the democratic demands they at times promise.

The road to national and social emancipation in countries of combined and uneven development (where modern industry exists alongside backward, traditional economy) was charted by Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, which was verified by the experience of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The only path forward is the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, above all of the peasant masses. This would place on the order of the day not only democratic but also socialist tasks, such as collectivizing the economy, giving a mighty impulse to the international socialist revolution. Short of the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced, industrialized imperialist centers, socialist construction will be arrested and ultimately reversed.

While in most countries the recent food-price protests were spontaneous upheavals of the urban and rural poor, in South Africa mass anger over price hikes for food, transport and electricity has been channeled into protests organized by the powerful Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). These included a series of one-day strikes in the country’s various provinces in July, culminating in a one-day nationwide work stoppage on August 6 that effectively shut down Johannesburg and other major cities as bus and taxi drivers joined the strike. Tens of thousands of trade unionists and township poor participated in protest rallies in Pretoria, Cape Town and elsewhere. Both the provincial and nationwide strikes had strong support from mine workers—a large percentage of whom are immigrants—who constitute that section of the working class producing South Africa’s main exports.

The COSATU bureaucracy felt pressure to call the protest strikes because its members are among those hardest hit by the skyrocketing prices of food, fuel and electricity. However these protest strikes were *not* directed against the capitalist government that enforces the brutal exploitation and immiseration of the predominantly black workers, rural toilers and township poor. Quite the contrary. The strikes and rallies were held with the explicit support of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and

were intended as a pressure valve to let off some steam and channel the discontent of the workers and poor into support for the ANC’s new, more populist leader, Jacob Zuma.

The leadership of COSATU is largely in the hands of the reformist South African Communist Party (SACP), which plays a major role in the government in its bloc with the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. COSATU itself also participates in the government, which is commonly called the Tripartite Alliance. We describe the Alliance as a nationalist popular front through which the SACP and COSATU misleaders tie the working class to the mainly white capitalist class and their black front men, who are committed to maintaining neo-apartheid capitalist rule.

While the strikes and rallies were initially called over the escalating cost of food, fuel, transport and utilities, shortly before the first of the provincial strikes the COSATU tops announced that they were complying with a court injunction limiting the official demands to protest against the massive increases in electricity rates by the state-owned power company, Eskom, and any job losses resulting from the rotating power outages. In fact, this was a state-sanctioned COSATU “general strike.” Despite the official line, stickers, posters and banners at the Pretoria rally sought to address the broader crisis for the millions facing hunger across South Africa. “Away with high food prices,” was one of the most prominent slogans.

Spartacist South Africa, section of the ICL, intervened in the strikes and rallies, putting forward our revolutionary program. Along with *Workers Vanguard* and *Spartacist South Africa*, our comrades also distributed at the August

6 protest a leaflet issued in May as a wave of pogromist attacks against immigrants swept the country (see “South Africa: Mobilize Trade Unions Against Anti-Immigrant Terror!” WV No. 915, 23 May). The leaflet called for “Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!” and declared:

“It is the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance government that oversees neo-apartheid capitalism, under which the overwhelming majority are locked in grinding poverty and black people remain on the bottom. The poor in this country, and hundreds of millions around the world, are faced with starvation from rising food prices, which are at bottom caused not by shortages but by price-gouging and other capitalist profiteering.”

Above all, we explained to strikers and demonstrators that the working class, especially its most politically advanced and organized sector, must break with the Alliance in order to fight for a black-centered workers government that would seize the means of production from the conglomerates that dominate neo-apartheid capitalism. Only such a government can bring decent living conditions and national liberation to the exploited and oppressed black, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian masses. Among other measures, a proletarian regime would expropriate the large, white-owned commercial farms and promote collectivized and state-owned agriculture under the control of farm workers. The collectivization of agriculture is especially necessary to achieve social equality for the downtrodden immigrants from Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa who make up a good part of the farm labor force.

South Africa is key for the sub-Saharan African population. The black population in South Africa has been partially absorbed into the bottom of a modern industrialized society that can, based on the revolutionary reorganization of society, provide a decent life for all who live there. Our call for a black-centered workers government is part of our struggle for a socialist federation of Southern Africa that would begin to lay the material foundations for social equality throughout the region. This can be fully realized only through the extension of socialist revolution to the most advanced capitalist countries and the establishment of a collectivized, planned world economy.

Biofuel and Other Rackets

The record food prices crushing the world’s poor are occurring at a time of booming global agricultural output. Last year’s total cereals crop of 1.7 billion tons was the largest in world history; it was 89 million tons more than 2006, another

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Spartacist League/U.S.

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, September 6, 3 p.m.

Mount Hollywood
Congregational Church
4607 Prospect Avenue

(one block east of Vermont, a few blocks
from Vermont/Sunset Red Line Station)
(213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

SAN FRANCISCO

Saturday, September 13, 5 p.m.

Centro del Pueblo
474 Valencia St.

(one block from 16th St. BART)
(510) 839-0851 • slbayarea@sbcglobal.net

**Trotskyist League of Canada/
Spartacus Youth Club**

TORONTO

Saturday, September 27, 7 p.m.

OISE (Ontario Institute
for Studies in Education)
Room TBA

252 Bloor Street West

(at St. George Subway)

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VANCOUVER

Saturday, October 4, 2 p.m.

Roundhouse Community Centre
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bumper crop year. What then explains today’s sharp increase in food prices?

A confidential study by the World Bank last April, “A Note on Rising Foods Prices” by Donald Mitchell, was leaked to and published by the London *Guardian*. Its summary conclusion:

“The World Bank’s index of food prices increased 140 percent from January 2002 to February 2008. This increase was caused by a confluence of factors but the most important was the large increase in biofuels production in the U.S. and EU [European Union]. Without the increase in biofuels, global wheat and maize stocks would not have declined appreciably and price increases due to other factors would have been moderate.”

The study estimated that 75 percent of the price increase between 2002 and 2008 was due to the massive diversion of food grains and cooking oils into biofuels.

In the U.S., the biofuels bill passed by Congress in the summer of 2005 mandated the use of ethanol in motor fuels, granting generous subsidies and tax credits for its production, on top of pre-existing tariffs on the cheaper and more efficient ethanol produced in Brazil from sugar. The bill passed with strong bipartisan support, including from Barack Obama, an early champion of the biofuel racket. His state, Illinois, is a leading corn producer, and he has received support from ethanol magnates. The biofuel bonanza has, in part, been sold as a means of achieving “energy independence” from Near Eastern oil as part of the reactionary “war on terror.” Most biofuels are also touted for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but a study in *Science* (4 January) noted that the main biofuels “have greater aggregate environmental costs than do fossil fuels” and concluded that “multibillion-dollar subsidies for U.S. corn production appear to be a perverse incentive from a rational cost-benefit perspective.”

This year, an estimated one-third of the corn crop produced by the U.S., by far the world’s largest exporter of corn, is being withdrawn from the food market to be used for biofuel production. In turn, this deliberately provoked shortfall in the food grain harvest is driving up the prices of other grains as they are used to replace corn—or as their cultivation is cut back to free up land for growing corn. The UN’s Special Reporter on

the Right to Food earlier this year denounced using food crops to produce biofuel as a “crime against humanity.”

That crime has paid off handsomely for U.S. capitalists in the form of record profits. The family-owned agribusiness giant Cargill is so awash in earnings that the personal fortunes of the two family heirs more than doubled last year to \$4.4 billion each. In the first three months of this year, the net income of grain conglomerate Archer Daniels Midland



Getty

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama at ethanol plant in Iowa. Obama has close ties to ethanol industry.

(the country’s largest ethanol producer) soared 42 percent, while seed and herbicide giant Monsanto has reported earnings up almost 300 percent. That didn’t stop Congress, with liberal Democrats in the lead, from passing a new farm bill this spring containing huge subsidies to wealthy farmers and agribusinesses.

West European imperialists are just as involved as their U.S. counterparts in the worldwide biofuel scramble and in colossal land grabs for biofuel cultivation at the expense of food. If the Americans have devastated the rural and urban poor in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, the Europeans are responsible for seemingly endless lines for previously available basic foodstuffs in much of East and South Asia and Africa. It is not corn that has been shifted to biofuel cultivation in Malaysia, for instance. It is palm oil, an

important source of calories in Asia, that has been diverted to produce biodiesel, particularly for use in Europe. In Indonesia, the world’s largest producer of palm oil, where 110 million people live on less than \$2 a day, the sharp rise in the price of cooking oil is devastating. “The Other Oil Shock: Vegetable Oil Prices Soar” headlined the *International Herald Tribune* (19 January). The article pointed out that edible oil prices have increased more than any other category of food prices.

While U.S. agribusiness moguls are shifting production into corn-based ethanol to replace gasoline in automobiles, European countries have been subsidizing biodiesel (though some have cut back as the exaggerated claims of biofuels’ environmental benefits have been exposed). In addition, Germany now has 1,800 combined heat and power plants using palm, soy and rapeseed oil, and Britain has similar plants in the works. Since European agriculture does not grow all of the feedstocks necessary for biofuels used in the EU, parts of Africa and countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, India and the Philippines are being enlisted to provide such feedstocks at the expense of food.

The worldwide scramble for biofuels takes place in the context of competition between the main imperialist states. Finance capital flows into the construction of fully integrated biofuel networks, involving cultivation, shipping, processing and distribution. Substantial sums go to countries that sign special deals or have preferential trade access to the U.S., the EU or Japan. The competition for feedstock resources is an element of the imperialists’ moves to redivide control of the world’s semicolonies.

Also contributing to the skyrocketing prices for foodstuffs has been a shift of speculative money capital into primary products of all kinds. Commodities as diverse as crude oil, gold, lead, uranium, cattle and cocoa were trading at or near record prices earlier this year. The slide of the dollar against other world currencies has buoyed the prices of raw commodities in dollar terms. This, in turn, prompted a wave of buying by large banks, hedge funds and other financial institutions seeking “hard assets” as a hedge against inflation—or as simply

speculation on further price increases. One hedge fund manager told a May 20 Senate hearing that such “institutional investors” had poured some \$55 billion into speculative commodities trades in just the first 52 trading days of this year. He asked rhetorically: “Doesn’t it seem likely that an increase in demand of this magnitude...could go a long way in explaining the extraordinary commodities price increases in the beginning of 2008?”

In contrast to the capitalist biofuel producers, the People’s Republic of China, the world’s third-largest producer and consumer of ethanol, has an official policy of prohibiting biofuel production from competing with food cultivation. Initially, China produced significant quantities of ethanol from corn, but this drove up domestic corn prices. Worried that surging food prices might cause urban proletarian unrest, the Chinese government in December 2006 decreed that biofuel production would not be undertaken by utilizing arable lands and food grains. Instead, China has moved to produce ethanol from stale grains in the national reserve and from non-grain crops. A Chinese official declared: “In China the first thing is to provide food for its 1.3 billion people, and after that, we will support biofuel production” (Fengxia Dong, “Food Security and Biofuels Development: The Case of China” [October 2007]). This is just one illustration of how China is a fundamentally different type of society from the capitalist countries.

China is not a capitalist but a workers state, albeit one that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. The overthrow of capitalist rule in China by the 1949 Revolution, leading to the building of a collectivized economy, represents a historic gain for the working class internationally. While the U.S. and other imperialists aim to destroy the Chinese workers state and restore bourgeois rule, we stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialist attack from without and counterrevolution from within. At the same time, we call for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic and nationalist Stalinist bureaucrats and to establish a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Northern Ireland...

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when working-class youth and Republicans bravely fought off riot cops for hours to prevent a Loyalist mob marching through the streets of Dublin, Higgins was quick to join every bourgeois politician in the Dáil to denounce the anti-Loyalist protest as a “sectarian riot” (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 866, 17 March 2006).

The Socialist Party is the antithesis of the revolutionary workers party, that is a Bolshevik party, that the Spartacist League is fighting to build. We demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the 5,000 British troops in Northern Ireland. We stand for the defence of the viciously oppressed Catholic community in Northern Ireland against Loyalist/state terror. At the same time, we oppose Sinn Féin’s nationalist perspective of a capitalist united Ireland in which Protestants would become an oppressed minority, a prospect that only serves to consolidate the Protestants behind Loyalist bigots, laying the basis for communalist terror, which is antithetical to a polarisation along *class* lines. In this situation of interpenetrated peoples and fratricidal nationalism, there can be no equitable solution short of the destruction of capitalism and the institution of workers rule. Our perspective is proletarian and internationalist: for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism and the clericalist state in the South—which is hideously oppressive of women, Travellers and workers—and the sectarian Orange state.

At a recent Socialist Party meeting in Dublin hosting Peter Taaffe, a speaker for the ICL laid out our perspective while exposing the anti-revolutionary pro-

gramme of their international, the Committee for a Workers’ International, from their support for “workers in uniform”—including an ex-H-Block prison warden—to their scabbing on the Chinese deformed workers state (see *Workers Hammer* No. 202, Spring 2008). Many Socialist Party members in the audience, including one who was a security guard, vented their fury at our insensitivity to the plight of these thugs, in particular the lowly security guard, and our call to oust them from the unions. Taaffe’s summary, in particular in response to the ICL, was a ten-minute lesson in just how dirty a business reformism is. After explaining that, as a result of the betrayals of New Labour, it is the task of the Socialist Party to build a “new mass workers party” which is explicitly not revolutionary (i.e., Old Labour), he went into a long rant on the glorious struggles of the British prison officers. He painted a picture of the Socialist Party’s new mass

Workers Hammer



Spartacist contingent in June 1981 London protest demands: “Smash Britain’s Torture Camps—Troops Out Now!”

workers party: column after column of uniformed prison officers at the head of the working class! The Socialist Party actually dreams of building a “workers party” based on the brutally racist, BNP [fascist]-ridden, thugs from Wormwood Scrubs and the Metropolitan Police!

Such a reactionary, Labourite perspective, and such deadly illusions in the capitalist state need to be vigorously combated within the workers movement! **Cops, prison wardens and security guards out of the unions!** The Spartacist League seeks to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, a party that will act as a tribune of the people, fighting to mobilise the working class against every manifestation of injustice, racist oppression and state tyranny: **Down with the racist war on terror! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For free abortion on demand!** What is necessary is a revolutionary party that fights for the understanding that, as

Lenin explained, “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes”; that the liberation of the working class cannot come about “*without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class” (*The State and Revolution*). These words were written on the eve of the Russian Revolution, the first, and to date, only successful proletarian revolution. Under the leadership of the Bolshevik vanguard party, the working class smashed the capitalist state and established a workers state, consisting of the “special bodies of armed men” necessary to defend the revolution against the deposed ruling class. That revolution makes clear the kind of party the working class needs to once-and-for-all throw off their chains. And it is our task to build this vanguard party!

Comradely,
Derek M.

Behind the Hunger Crisis: Capitalist Profits



Reuters



Per Bjorklund

Cape Town, South Africa, August 6: Members of COSATU trade-union federation protest high food, fuel and electricity prices (left). Mahalla, Egypt, April 7: Cops attack demonstrators protesting high food prices and demanding release of over 150 arrested the previous day during suppression of planned textile workers strike.

Imperialism Starves World's Poor

The astronomical price of food on world markets threatens to condemn additional millions of the world's poorest and most vulnerable to death by starvation. The overall price of cereals on international markets increased 92 percent in the year ending in April. In the first five months of this year, the world price of rice, a staple for more than half the planet's population, more than

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doubled. As prices peaked, the total bill paid by people in underdeveloped countries for imported food was almost double what it was in 2000. Today, the world's poorest people spend 50 to 80 percent of their total household income on food.

Even before the current crisis, an estimated 850 million people suffered from chronic malnutrition, over half of them children. Today in impoverished Haiti, many residents of the vast slums like Cité Soleil survive on cookies made of dried mud mixed with sugar, salt and vegetable oil. In Egypt, at least eleven people died on breadlines in March and April—some were killed when fights erupted among frantic customers, others were pushed beyond exhaustion by the endless wait for food. In Afghanistan, a country devastated by U.S./NATO military occupation, grain prices reached such heights that many farmers have switched to growing wheat instead of raising poppies for the heroin trade.

In a number of countries, the surging food prices have sparked riots and demonstrations, sometimes backed up by striking workers. In northern Egypt, rioting broke out after a planned strike on April 6 at the Mahalla al-Kobra textile mills, the country's largest industrial complex, was headed off by a massive show of police force. For two days, thousands clashed with police, who fired on protesters, leaving three dead. In Bangladesh, an explosion of rage by some

20,000 textile workers in Fatullah, south of the capital, culminated in a strike on April 15 by thousands of garment workers, many of them women, in the capital city, Dhaka. A sweater machine operator, who earns \$30 a month, declared: "With our poor salary, it is now impossible to buy three meals a day" (Agence France-Presse, 12 April).

In April, the Haitian prime minister was sacked after more than a week of rioting in which at least six people died. At the same time, several days of food riots in Yemen left at least a dozen dead, as tanks were deployed against street barricades, and police stations and military vehicles were torched.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the food crisis has been compounded by years of drought, brutal communalist wars and the AIDS epidemic. Unions in Burkina Faso called a two-day general strike in April to protest soaring food and fuel prices; this came after widespread riots in February in which official buildings were burned and government representatives stoned. In Senegal, rioters last November torched municipal buildings and attacked the former headquarters of the ruling party, while in Mauritania rioters were dispersed by the police, leaving one dead. In February, at least six people were killed in protests in Mozambique, while in Cameroon the death toll in anti-

government riots reportedly numbered at least one hundred.

Because they perpetuate the conditions of economic impoverishment and cultural backwardness, the imperialist powers are ultimately responsible for the horrific conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. The wholesale economic devastation of the African continent has been deepened by the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92. The existence of the Soviet Union, which acted as a counterweight to U.S. imperialism, had allowed maneuvering room for "Third World" capitalist rulers, who garnered economic and military aid by offering themselves as clients to Moscow or Washington (see "Imperialism Starves Africa," WV No. 561, 16 October 1992, reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 10, February 1993).

With the world capitalist economy now entering a recession, global prices for agricultural products and a number of other commodities have slipped from their record highs. This is true of oil, whose skyrocketing price helped drive up the cost of fertilizer, fuel and many other goods and services. But this will not alleviate widespread hunger in Third World countries. Hundreds of millions of workers, peasants and urban poor will still not have the money to buy sufficient food for their families. A global recession will increase mass unemployment and drive down wages even as it dampens the current inflation of food prices.

The excruciating fact is that the terrible famines which are endemic to the capitalist Third World are not the result of food shortages. Figures published by the UN World Food Programme indicate that the amount of food currently produced is more than one and a half times what is needed to provide every person on earth with a nutritious diet (Tony Weis, *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming* [2007]). But food is distributed according to the ability to pay. As with all commodities

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