

Obama and Image Control

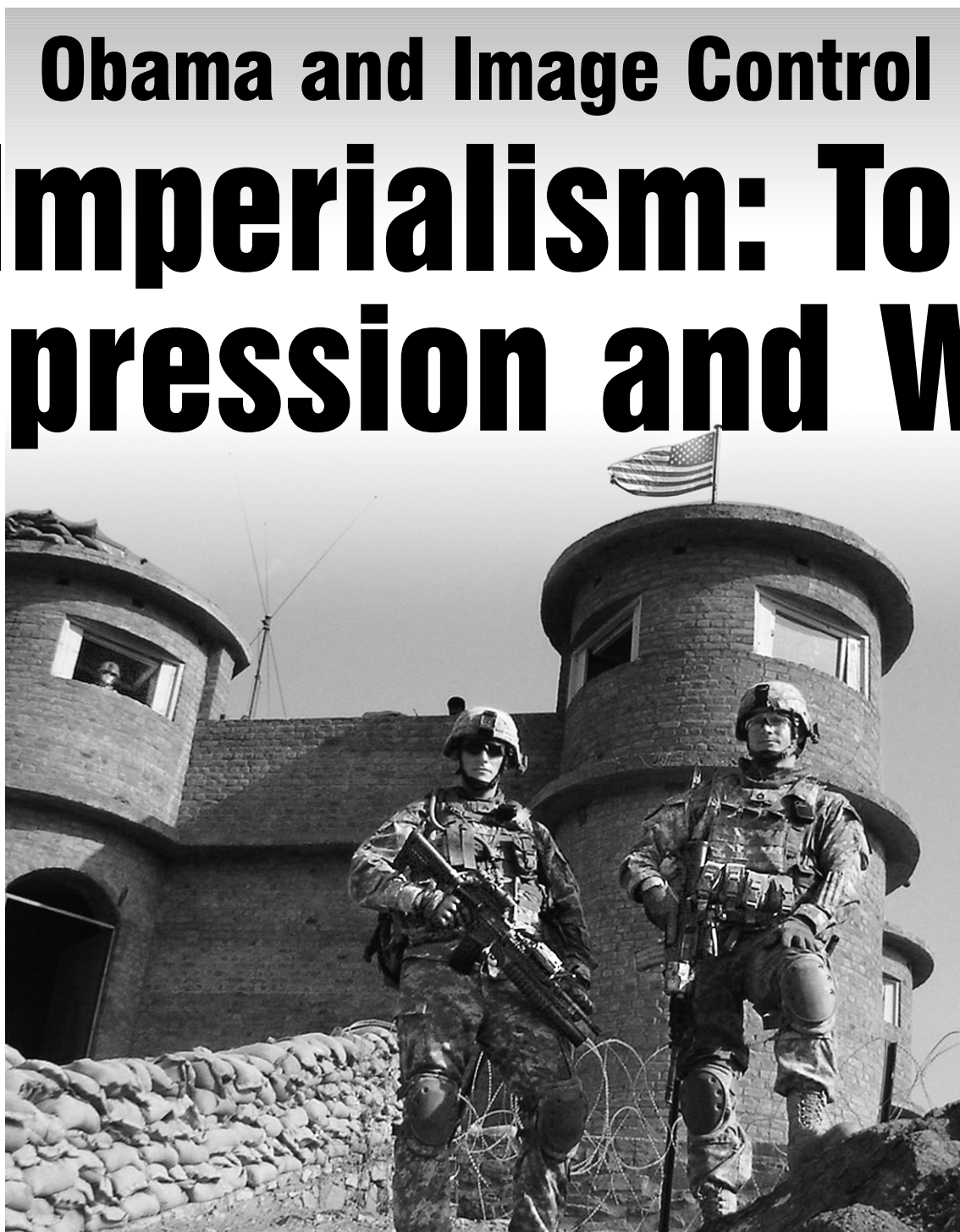
U.S. Imperialism: Torture, Repression and War

On April 16, the Justice Department released four declassified Bush administration memos that provide grisly details of what had already been perfectly clear: that torture of detainees by U.S. security forces was planned and approved at the highest levels of Washington. The (heavily redacted) memos, released as a result of a court suit by the American Civil Liberties Union, describe in gory detail the “techniques” that were given official imprimatur. These include depriving prisoners of sleep for up to eleven straight days and shutting them in a dark, cramped box crawling with insects. The memos also give official approval to waterboarding, a favorite torture method of the Spanish Inquisition. Among the victims are two detainees who were waterboarded 266 times.

Liberal pundits and bourgeois media commentators are wringing their hands at the revelations of officially sanctioned torture. President Barack Obama intoned that the U.S. was “losing our moral bearings” and vowed there would be no more torture. After initially saying that none of the torturers would be prosecuted, Obama later stated that it was up to Attorney General Eric Holder to decide whether some of the architects of the torture memos will face any prosecution.

In reality, the U.S. has tortured, is torturing and will continue to torture so long as the U.S. imperialist state exists. Capitalist society was, as Karl Marx eloquently described in *Capital*, born “dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” Modern imperialism continues the brutal practices of mass murder, torture and humiliation that accompany the exploitation of labor and the ceaseless struggle between competing imperialist forces to dominate the world.

U.S. imperialism marked its entrance on the world scene with the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the bloody suppression of a nationalist uprising in the Philippines, during which a U.S. general famously ordered his men to “kill everyone over the age of ten.” Generations of torturers and military henchmen in Latin America and elsewhere got their training at the U.S. military’s infamous School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia. As



U.S. Army

Above: U.S. military base at Bagram, Afghanistan, where hundreds are imprisoned. Below: U.S. prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. While Obama promises to close Guantánamo prison, he is continuing “war on terror,” doubling size of Bagram prison and maintaining indefinite detentions.



AP

we wrote in 2004 as the photos of torture at Abu Ghraib prison in U.S.-occupied Iraq came to light internationally:

“The photos only partially expose a small part of the terror and atrocities which in fact are meted out daily to U.S.

imperialism’s victims worldwide, as well as inside the U.S. itself. From the prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba to the death rows of Texas; from systematic mass murder and torture of Vietnamese liberation fighters in the CIA’s ‘Operation Phoenix’ program in Vietnam to the

death squads in Latin America; from Britain’s Long Kesh prison to the basements of French colonial Algiers; from Chile’s Santiago Stadium to Israel’s Ashkelon: an awful network of torture and death, going back in time, spans the world. These are not ‘aberrations.’ They are the conscious policies of imperialist and neocolonialist ruling regimes, who routinely and necessarily use terror and degradation as tools to maintain their power.”

—“U.S. Imperialism’s Torture, Inc.” (WV No. 826, 14 May 2004)

The International Socialist Organization (ISO), which enthused that Obama’s election is “a reason to believe that change is possible” (*Socialist Worker* online, 21 January), now writes: “Obama’s reversal of his earlier decision to grant immunity for the torturers is a critical first step in putting the torturers on notice—the architects as well as the bricklayers. If more of them ended up behind bars, their would-be imitators will be less confident” (*Socialist Worker*, 30 April). In fact, in decrying Bush’s *open* policy of torture—and posing the possibility of any prosecutions—Obama’s aim is to refurbish the image of U.S. imperialism after eight years under the Bush gang. As Obama himself put it, such “interrogation techniques...undermine our moral authority.”

What distinguished the oddly demented regime of George Bush and Dick Cheney is that it openly reveled in its barbarity and sought to give torture legal sanction. The recently revealed Justice Department memos, written by lawyers of the Office of Legal Counsel, were clearly crafted with the aim of providing “legal” cover to those carrying out the sadistic practices they described. For example, “stress positions”—such as “shackling,” in which a standing detainee’s

handcuffed wrists are “attached by a length of chain to the ceiling” to force “sleep deprivation”—were declared to in no way constitute “severe pain or suffering.” By putting U.S. imperialism’s grisly

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South Africa: Doctors Strike Defies Government.....3



On the Economy

28 January 2009

Comrades,

Enclosed find a copy of *The Furrow* for January 2009. Please note the article on Cuba. When I was at the John Deere Pavilion in Moline, Illinois recently I saw the publication (free for the taking) and the article. I thought it might be useful to you. Page 3 of the publication explains well what it is.

I also would like to make a few comments on Seymour's article in *WV* #927 [2 January] "Capitalist Economic Crisis:..." Over all I think it was a good article, and I have no serious problems with it. I did notice that in discussing the economic history he completely missed the so-called "farm crises" of the mid 1980's. This was the result of overextended Agricultural credit among other things. It had effects beyond the farm sector. Also there is an attempt to minimize the effect of deregulation, especially in banking, on the cause

of the current economic crises. True, this is bigger than the banking crisis, and the economic cycle is inherent in capitalism. However, each individual economic fluctuation has its own unique causes or triggers if you will. There is a lesson to be learned. The capitalists established regulations after the disaster of the great depression of the 1930's to prevent some of the speculative schemes that led them to disaster in the 1930's. These were made law. A later generation, notably the Reagan years and after saw any hindrance to capitalism as bad, hence the laws were repealed. The point is that you cannot reform or legislate your way out of the capitalist economic cycle. Even if you can control aspects of it for a time the interplay of politics and economics (or capitalist greed) will overcome-change the laws.

In Solidarity
Loren

Religion: Spiritual Bondage

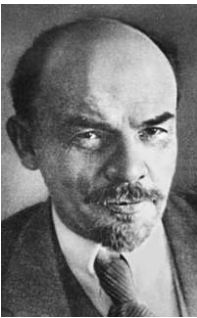
Writing in May 1918, Bolshevik leader Nikolai Bukharin outlined the Marxist approach to the struggle against religion and religious institutions, including by drawing on the experiences of the young Soviet republic that issued out of the 1917 October Revolution.

Religion must be fought, if not by violence, at all events by argument. The Church must be separated from the State. That means that the priests may remain, but should be maintained by those who wish to accept their poison from

them or by those who are interested in their existence. There is a poison called opium; when that is smoked, sweet visions appear; you feel as if you were in paradise. But its action tells on the health of the smoker. His health is gradually ruined, and little by little he becomes a meek idiot. The same applies to religion. There are people who wish to smoke opium; but it would be absurd if the State maintained at its expense, that is to say, at the expense of the people, opium dens and special men to serve them. For this reason the Church must be (and already is) treated in the same way: priests, bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, abbots and the rest of the lot must be refused State maintenance. Let the believers, if they wish it, feed the holy fathers at their own expense on the fat of the land, a thing which they, the priests, greatly appreciate.

On the other hand, freedom of thought must be guaranteed. Hence the axiom that religion is a private affair. This does not mean that we should not struggle against it by freedom of argument. It means that the State should support no church organisation. As regards this question, the programme of the Bolshevik Communists *has been carried out all over Russia*. Priests of all creeds have been deprived of State subsidy. And that is the reason why they have become so furious and have twice anathematised the present Government, i.e., the Government of the workers, by excommunicating all workers from the church. We must note this. At the time of the Tsar they knew well enough the text in the Scripture which says, "There is no power but from God," and "The powers that be are to be obeyed." They willingly sprinkled executioners with holy water. But why have they forgotten these texts at a time when the workers are at the head of the Government? Is it possible that the will of God does not hold good when there is a Communist Government? What can the reason be? The thing is very simple. The Soviet Government is the *first* Government in Russia to attack the pockets of the clergy. And this, by the way, is a priest's most sensitive spot. The clergy are now in the camp of the "oppressed bourgeoisie." They are working secretly and openly against the working class. But times have changed, and the masses of the labouring class are not so prone to become the easy prey to deceit they were before. Such is the great educational significance of the Revolution; revolution liberates us from *economic* slavery, but it also frees us from *spiritual* bondage.

—Nikolai Bukharin, *Programme of the World Revolution* (1918)



LENIN



TROTSKY

Obama and Gun Control

2 March 2009

GREETINGS:

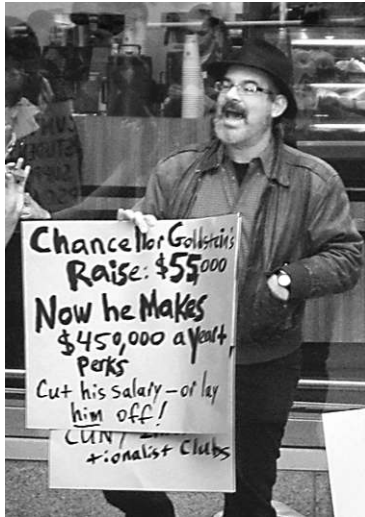
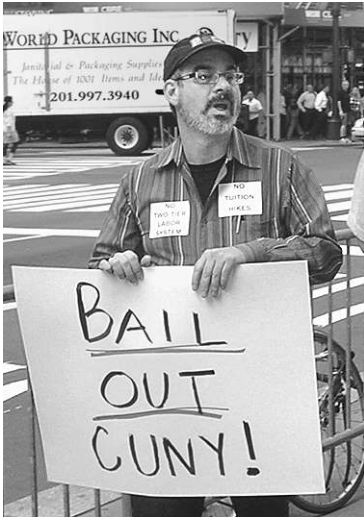
I noted a comment on Obama's COS [Chief of Staff] and VP Emanuel and Biden. As an NRA life member I would like to comment that you neglect Biden's and R. Emanuel's strong opposition to 2nd Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution. The right to workers' self defence as exercised thru the right to keep and bear arms has long been under attack by Obama, Biden and RE [Rahm Emanuel] who as B. Clinton's man pushed thru the phony "assault weapons ban." Note also G. Soros is a long time supporter of disarming the people. Disarming the citizens is one part of the billionaires' agenda that is way behind schedule. I think they expected to be much farther down the path by now and this is a serious obstacle to further planned oppression of the workers. Unfortunately, the reactionary Bush gang was able to cleverly use the pro gun vote to "win" two elections, as the NRA vote probably made the difference. The democrats learned the lesson the hard way and Obama, long a strong

antigun politician, was forced to pay lip service to the gun "lobby" (voters) even though I feel that now in power they will continue to push the disarmament agenda ...although I think they aren't really sure how to go about it especially given the Heller decision of the USSC [U.S. Supreme Court]. Too many people own firearms in this country for the politicians to put into effect any plan to take them away. It gets real problematical when a worker thru no fault of his own has no job, no money, no food, no house and still has a gun...note record sales of weapons and ammunition.... [ellipses in original]
Peter S.

WV replies:

We thank Peter S. for his letter. For more on our opposition to gun control, see "Revolution and the Right to Bear Arms—The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 43-44, Summer 1989). In that article, we noted: "The whole history of gun control is the story of the ruling class trying to *disarm* the population."

Two Pictures Are Worth 2,000 Words



Young Spartacus photos

Same politics, different hat: IG supporter Sándor John "explains" sign he carried last September (left). What about the other sign? Explanation pending.

21 April 2009

To the editor, *Workers Vanguard*:

The dishonesty of your recent polemic on protests at the City University of New York (*WV* No. 934, 10 April) is captured in your cynical use of a photo taken at the September 23 demonstration outside the CUNY Graduate Center. As I entered the demonstration, I was handed a poster reading "Bail Out CUNY;" at which point your photographer snapped her picture. She then watched me look down, read what it said, and place it on the ground. All of this took place in less than one minute. Moreover, in my speech that day I explicitly addressed *why* I did not carry that sign. True, having had their "gotcha" moment, your reporters did not stick around for the speeches. However, for the past five months they have been in possession of the *Class Struggle Education Workers Newsletter* (November-December 2008), which quotes from my speech as follows:

"Someone handed me a sign saying 'Bail Out CUNY.' It's certainly grotesque that CUNY gets cuts while Wall Street speculators get more than \$700 billion. But it's not that the ruling class is just somehow confused about 'priorities.' We have

to reject the whole framework. What we need is not this or that different bail-out but to *kick out* the capitalists whose wars abroad go hand in hand with a war on us and our right to education here 'at home.'"

So you know full well the real political story, but from your cynical standpoint, anything goes. Why? Because I am a supporter of the Internationalist Group. The rest of the "polemic" is in the same vein: an exercise in amalgams, distortions and puerility.

Sándor John

WV replies:

In reading Sándor John's letter, we cannot help but recall Richard Pryor's rendition of Chico Marx's line: "Who're you gonna believe, me or your lying eyes?" Regarding the opportunist shenanigans of the Internationalist Group at CUNY, including those of the ubiquitous John, we don't have much to add to what we wrote in "For Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!" That article noted that at a November 2008 rally, IG supporter John was holding another sign referring to CUNY Chancellor Goldstein that called to "Cut his salary—or lay him off!" Also picked up by mistake? ■

Letters Policy

Workers Vanguard welcomes letters from our readers. Opinions expressed in letters do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the *WV* Editorial Board. We reserve the right to respond to letters either at the time of publication or at a later point. We verify the authenticity of letters published in *Workers Vanguard*;

only letters received with contact information will be considered for publication. Letters can be published anonymously if the author so desires. In order to facilitate the printing of letters, which we do not edit, please keep them to 500 words or less. Letters can be sent to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 or e-mailed to vanguard@tiac.net.

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The closing date for news in this issue is May 5.

No. 936

8 May 2009

Neo-Apartheid South Africa: “Public Health” Hell



Above: Doctors protest outside George Mukhari Hospital in Ga-Rankuwa.



Gideon Mendel



Mail & Guardian

Left: Patients wait for treatment at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. Above: Strikebreaking health minister Barbara Hogan.

Doctors Strike Defies ANC/SACP/COSATU Government

MAY 4—Starting in the Pretoria area on April 16, doctors in at least 28 public hospitals throughout South Africa have carried out wildcat strikes, “go-slows” and protests against unbearably low pay and horrendous conditions. Pushed to the wall, the doctors, banned by law from striking, faced down the capitalist government of the African National Congress (ANC) and its Tripartite Alliance partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the COSATU trade-union federation. The government mobilized military medical personnel to try to break the strike and threatened hundreds of doctors with dismissal, including those who defied a back-to-work court order.

Strikers have now returned to work and the government has replaced the dismissal notices with final warnings. The doctors are demanding that the government finally begin paying up to 50-percent increases in salaries, as it agreed to do in settling a four-week public sector strike in 2007, and they are also calling for improvements in the hospitals. The doctors fight against all odds to do their jobs in a woefully underfunded system that is hell for patients and staff alike. The basic pay for public sector doctors is around 10,000-19,000 Rand (about \$1,200-2,300)

per month, with junior doctors and interns making substantially less.

A spokesman for the United Doctors’ Forum, a group formed during the strike, declared: “We will strike again if our needs aren’t met.... Our action may be illegal, but our reasons for doing so are very legitimate” (*Mail & Guardian*, 1 May). According to today’s *Sowetan*, the government is offering measly increases of 0.28 to 5 percent. A doctor at George Mukhari Hospital in Ga-Rankuwa township outside Pretoria told our comrades of Spartacist South Africa that while full doctors who were fired could easily find work elsewhere, striking interns, who by many accounts were the backbone of the strike, had no such assurance. With an all-black staff, this teaching hospital was the epicenter of the strike. The SSA stands in full support of the doctors and their demands. No firings! No reprisals!

Running point for the capitalist government were the misleaders of the COSATU-affiliated SA Medical Association (SAMA) and DENOSA nurses union, who denounced the strike from the outset. This betrayal demonstrates in practice the role of the COSATU tops and their SACP overseers in the Tripartite Alliance: to police the working class on behalf of the

capitalist rulers. The Alliance partners are reveling in the ANC’s victory—with nearly two-thirds of the vote—in the April 22 parliamentary elections, which clears the way for Jacob Zuma, tirelessly portrayed by the SACP/COSATU tops as the friend of trade unions and the black masses, to become president of South Africa. The bourgeois press is filled with jubilant statements about the “free and fair” elections, while virtually the entire political spectrum talks about a shift to the left. For the workers and the poor there is nothing to celebrate! The day after the election the ANC demonstrated how much of a “friend” this government will be by organizing military doctors to break the strike!

The Tripartite Alliance is a nationalist popular front binding the mainly black working class to its class enemy through the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. Since it first took office in 1994 following the demise of racist apartheid rule, this government has upheld the neo-apartheid capitalist order by breaking strikes and enforcing austerity. Under Nelson Mandela, the same government that decreed free health care for children under six ordered spending cuts that led to hospital wards being closed, medical equipment

being denied to staff and clinics being denied drugs. When nurses walked out in 1995 to demand better pay and working conditions, a number of SACP/COSATU bureaucrats branded their action a “counter-revolutionary strike.” Some 6,000 nurses were fired by the Eastern Cape provincial government headed by the late Raymond Mhlaba, who was SACP national chairman at the time. As Safety and Security Minister in 2007, leading SACPer Charles Nqakula set the army and cops against striking COSATU public employees.

Class-conscious workers must defend the doctors as the first line of defense in the fight for free, quality health care for all! As one striker put it, “It’s not just the pay but also the working conditions. There is such a shortage of doctors so we have too many patients to see. Then the hospitals run out of basic antibiotics and Panados [acetaminophen].” While strikers reportedly received verbal sympathy from nurses and cleaning staff, they were stabbed in the back by the union tops and left to strike on their own. There is a history of different sectors of the workforce being pitted against each other, including along “professional” lines. The attacks by the bourgeois government against nurses

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Death Penalty Appeal Denied Free Troy Davis!

On April 16, a federal appeals court in Atlanta turned down a petition for habeas corpus by Troy Davis, who was framed up and convicted in 1991 for the killing of a cop. Davis, who was just two hours away from execution last September, is again facing legal lynching.

In refusing to even consider the overwhelming evidence of Davis’s innocence, the federal court relied on Bill Clinton’s 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which virtually eliminated the right of habeas corpus appeal for those sentenced to death in state courts. This law has also been the pretext for the federal courts’ refusal to hear evidence of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal’s innocence. Davis has until May 16 to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, the same racist court that refused to consider his case last October. In the 1993 case of Leonel Herrera, the Supreme Court declared that execution of an innocent man did not violate the Constitution. The following May 2 protest letter was

sent by the Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—to Georgia governor George Ervin Perdue.

We are again writing to protest the threatened execution of Troy Anthony Davis. On April 16, in a two to one decision, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals grotesquely denied Davis’s appeal despite the massive evidence that he is innocent. His legal lynching is now stayed for 30 days, pending an appeal to the pro-death penalty U.S. Supreme Court.

Mr. Davis’s conviction was based on the testimony of “eyewitnesses” who were intimidated by policemen to falsely implicate him in the death of a white off-duty police officer. Seven of the nine prosecution witnesses have since re-

canted, several citing police misconduct. Evidence has shown that one of those still maintaining his original testimony is himself a suspect in the killing. The dissenting judge in the recent federal court decision said that the execution of Davis, “in the face of a significant amount of the proffered evidence that may establish his actual innocence,” was “unconscionable.”

Thousands of protests worldwide, including from Amnesty International and the Vatican, have railed against the execution of Troy Davis. The death penalty is cruel and barbaric. In the United States it is the racist legacy of centuries of slavery: it is the lynch rope made legal. We once again demand this racist atrocity be stopped and that Troy Davis be freed. ■



lawanddisorder.org

Troy Davis with his mother in 2002.

Labor Misleaders Push “National Security” Patriotism

“War on Terror” Crackdown on the Docks

OAKLAND—The government’s “war on terror” has hit hundreds of thousands of workers at ports from coast to coast with the national implementation of the Transportation Workers Identity Credential (TWIC), completed on April 14. A biometric ID card that was described by the *New York Times* (14 May 2006) as “an identity card equivalent of a maximum security prison,” a TWIC card is now mandatory to work on the docks. To qualify, all port workers had to submit to extensive criminal background and immigration checks. According to the *Journal of Commerce* (20 April), as of April 9 close to 38,000 port workers had been turned down. While some 18,000 succeeded in the appeals process, which can take months, another 10,000 reportedly gave up. For the thousands of overwhelmingly immigrant port truckers, as well as the black and Latino port workers targeted under the racist “war on drugs,” to even apply for a TWIC card runs the risk of possible deportation or being pursued as some kind of “fugitive from justice.”

A March 30 statement by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) reports that hundreds of longshoremen who have been denied a TWIC card are currently out of a job with no access to unemployment insurance, with their appeals caught up in the Kafkaesque bureaucratic maze of the Transport Security Administration (TSA). An unknown number of longshore and other port workers are permanently gone, branded as a “threat to national security” for offenses ranging from drug possession with intent to distribute to fraud to being an “illegal” immigrant. Yet the response of the ILWU International was to call for “improving the TWIC program and port security” by providing more “staffing and resources to properly administer the TWIC program” in order to expedite the process. This is like calling for more “staffing and resources” to enforce the pass laws in apartheid South Africa!

When the Bush administration, with the fervent support of the Democrats, first enacted the USA Patriot Act and the Maritime Transportation Security Act as part of the so-called “war on terror,” the

assaults on the democratic rights of *all of us*.... But what America’s racist rulers can get away with will be determined by class struggle. We must fight *now* to defend our rights and jobs, and the rights and jobs of our immigrant brothers and

otherwise, of the capitalist state—laws that are ultimately aimed at the working class! The whole purpose of TWIC is government-enforced labor discipline against the unions. The day after the TWIC program was implemented at the Oakland port, armed Coast Guard officials went on the docks to demand that longshore workers show them their TWIC cards. Given that these longshoremen already had to show their TWIC cards to security guards (who outrageously are members of the ILWU) to even enter the terminal, this was simply a show of force aimed at demonstrating the military muscle that will be mobilized to police the workforce on the docks.

During the ILWU’s 2002 contract battle, the head of Homeland Security phoned the union’s International president to warn that a strike would be treated as a threat to “national security,” while the Bush administration trained military personnel to work the cranes on the ports. With the implementation of TWIC, it’s not just threats but official policy, and one enforced by the Democratic Obama administration.

TWIC is another strikebreaking weapon in the bosses’ arsenal, as any involvement in a “transportation security incident”—which includes “transportation system disruption or economic disruption in a specific area”—is grounds for being permanently disqualified from working on the docks. The ILWU bureaucracy congratulated itself for ensuring that a “work stoppage, or other nonviolent employee-related action” not be included in this category. The hard-fought and bloody battles against strikebreaking cops that laid the basis for founding the ILWU give the lie to the bureaucrats’ myth of “non-violent” struggle. In a year that marks the 75th anniversary of the 1934 San Francisco longshore strike that won the union hiring hall, wresting control of who works out of the hands of the employers’ corrupt “shape-up” agents, it is now the forces of the capitalist state that are determining who can and cannot work on the docks.

“War on Terror”: Racism and Union-Busting

This is not the first time that the government has used “national security” to purge the ILWU and other unions. In 1950, just weeks after the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. government instituted a port security program to drive Communists, Trotskyists, socialists and other labor militants out of the unions. By the end of 1956, Coast Guard screening had denied security clearances to 3,783 waterfront and maritime workers; 243 of them were members of ILWU Local 10, and two-thirds of those were black.

The “war against terrorism” is a political construct whose purpose domestically has been to massively increase the police



WV Photo

Bay Area longshoremen were at core of February 2002 united-front, labor-centered mobilization initiated by Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League in defense of immigrant rights and against government’s “war on terror.”

Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense and the Partisan Defense Committee issued a call for a labor-centered, united-front protest. ILWU Local 10 was one of the early endorsers of this protest and black longshoremen were at the core of the 300-strong demonstration in Oakland on 9 February 2002, which declared: “Anti-Terrorist Laws Target Immigrants, Blacks, Labor—No to the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act! Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!” The LBL/PDC call for the protest urged:

“We call on the powerful multiracial unions in the Bay Area to mobilize against the government’s war on America’s integrated working class, on black people and on immigrants. Every bombing raid and missile attack on Afghanistan came together with new deadly

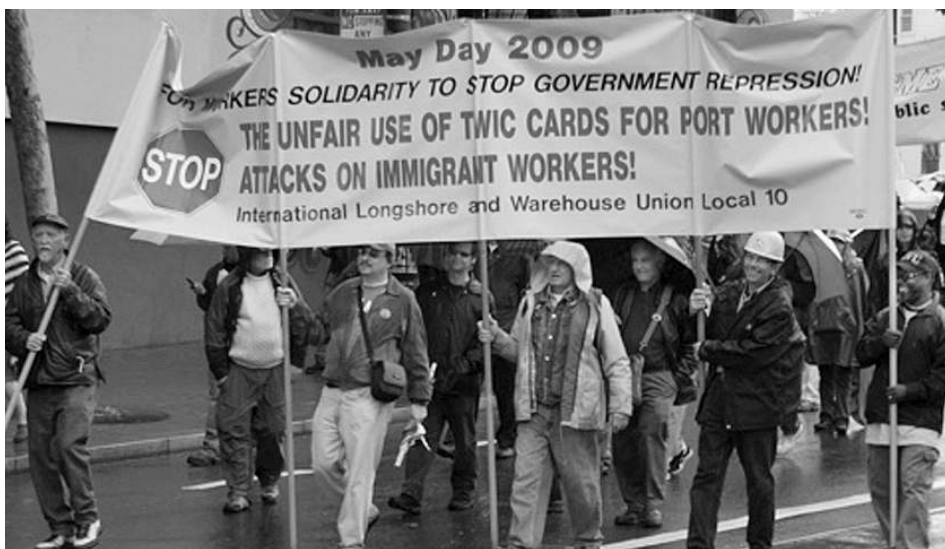
sisters. A united demonstration of the power of our class, together with youth, black and immigrant organizations, can spike the bosses’ racist ‘national unity’ campaign.”

—“Down With the Anti-Immigrant Witchhunt!” WV No. 773 (25 January 2002)

This protest was an exemplary action that, on a small scale, illustrated the class-struggle, internationalist program that is vital if the unions are going to be mobilized in a genuine fight in defense of themselves, immigrants, black people and all those in the government’s cross hairs. Advancing the class consciousness and solidarity of the multiracial working class must begin with workers’ understanding of their common interests as a class in opposition to those of the political parties and state agencies of the capitalist class enemy. This stands in complete counterposition to the program of the union misleaders, who shackle the working class to its exploiters, particularly through support for the Democratic Party, and who openly embrace the “national security” interests of the U.S. imperialist rulers as their own.

TWIC: Enforcing Labor Discipline on the Docks

In a “2008 Presidential Questionnaire” directed to Barack Obama and other Democrats, the ILWU tops pledged the union’s service in the “war on terror,” declaring that the “ILWU workforce should be utilized as the first line of defense against maritime terrorist activities, and recognized as a natural ally by law enforcement.” It is not the job of the workers to enforce the laws, “security” or



Indymedia

ILWU Local 10 banner at San Francisco May Day rally. Longshore union bureaucrats call for “fair” implementation of government-enforced labor discipline.

Down With TWIC and the Maritime Transportation Security Act!

powers and repressive apparatus of the capitalist state. And under the provisions of TWIC, the purge of the unions is fed by another such “war”—the racist “war on drugs.” Any worker who has been convicted within the last seven years, or released from prison in the last five years, for offenses such as possession of drugs with intent to distribute, identity fraud, robbery and unlawful possession of firearms are denied cards and therefore their livelihoods. In a country whose prisons are overflowing with young black and Latino men, most of them rounded up for drug offenses, the target of these “security” proscriptions is all too obvious. It doesn’t matter if you “served your time,” you remain branded an outlaw and are now a supposed threat to “national security,” in a society where the unemployment rate for ex-convicts is a staggering 75 percent. In 2006, some 70 mostly black Chicago rail workers were fired under Homeland Security regulations barring ex-felons from working such jobs.

Members of the International Longshore Association in Charleston, South Carolina, told WV that TWIC has even been used at that port to go after “dead-beat dads,” “welfare cheats” and other supposed miscreants. We call for the decriminalization of drugs and the full restoration of all citizenship rights to ex-convicts.

An early example of the enforcement of “port security” was seen in the brutal police attack on two black longshoremen, Jason Ruffin and Aaron Harrison of ILWU Local 10, in August 2007. Returning to work at the Sacramento port after a lunch break, Ruffin and Harrison were stopped by security guards who demanded to search their car, citing maritime security regulations. When the two ILWU members called the Local 10 business agent for advice, the guards called in the cops. Dragged from their car, assaulted, maced and handcuffed, Harrison and Ruffin were thrown in jail on charges of trespassing and resisting arrest. A trial of the two longshoremen this January resulted in a hung jury but the state is continuing its vindictive prosecution, retrying these ILWU members whose only “crime” was trying to return to work and asking their union for help in doing so! Drop the charges against Harrison and Ruffin!

Under TWIC, any undocumented worker whose job requires access to the ports, which includes many of the port truckers, will be thrown out of work and face possible deportation. America’s capitalist rulers are practiced hands at fomenting racial and ethnic hostilities to divide the working class and build up the repressive powers of the capitalist state. The fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and for black rights is key to the elementary defense of the unions against the government’s “war on terror” dragnet on the docks. Instead, the union misleaders have criminally joined the racist rulers’ “national security” crusade against foreign-born workers.

ILWU Tops Enlist in the Racist “War on Terror”

The ILWU International bureaucrats’ March 30 statement, “Comments for Improving the TWIC Program and Port Security,” expresses concern that the “delays and backlogs being suffered by port workers are creating strong, negative opinions against TWIC.” To restore faith in the “war on terror,” these sellouts argue that ILWU members who have “unfairly” been ensnared in the TWIC application process should be provided an escort onto the docks while they await their cards. The statement goes on to declare:

“It is unjust and un-American to administer the TWIC program in a way that denies port employees, whose applications have already been approved, access to their jobs because inadequate government staffing and funding prevent timely delivery of their TWIC card.... Denial of escort to American longshoremen becomes grossly offensive and unconscionable when so many others, including truck drivers and ship’s crews, mostly foreign nationals, regularly receive escorting privileges.”

This grotesque red-white-and-blue chauvinism is an attack not only on the immi-



Molloy/Oakland Tribune

Striking port truckers protest scab trucks at Oakland port in May 2008.

grant, non-union port truckers but also on the very existence of the ILWU itself, reinforcing its increasing isolation as the last bastion of union power on the West Coast ports. Rather than fighting to organize the truckers, the longshore and Teamsters union bureaucrats have long pointed to them as the real “security threat.”

Left-talking ILWU Local 10 bureaucrat Jack Heyman is providing a (barely) left gloss for this “America first” patriotism, just as he did during the port shutdown against the occupation of Iraq last May Day, which the ILWU tops made into a show of their loyalty to U.S. imperialism and support for Barack Obama. This year, Heyman was one of the initiators of a call for another May Day work stoppage. An April 24 leaflet by the “Port Workers May Day Organizing Committee” called to “defend our members who are unfairly denied work” and to protest “the unfair implementation of TWIC cards for port workers.” What about those who have been “fairly” denied work and those, e.g., “un-American” undocumented workers and others, branded as “security threats”?

The answer can be found in Heyman’s article, “Civil Liberties and Labor Rights of Port Workers Are Being Thrown Overboard” (*Daily Breeze*, 11 April). Complaining that “in some ports, truckers are allowed access with an escort but longshoremen are not,” Heyman goes on to take aim at “foreign” as opposed to “American” seamen, writing: “Seamen on foreign flag vessels that constitute 95 percent of ocean-borne shipping don’t need TWIC cards, but seamen on American-registered vessels do!” Himself an integral part of the union bureaucracy, Heyman’s usual role is to provide a veneer of left-sounding “militancy.” But his carping about the port truckers and foreign seamen is simply a blatant echo of the ILWU International’s chauvinism.

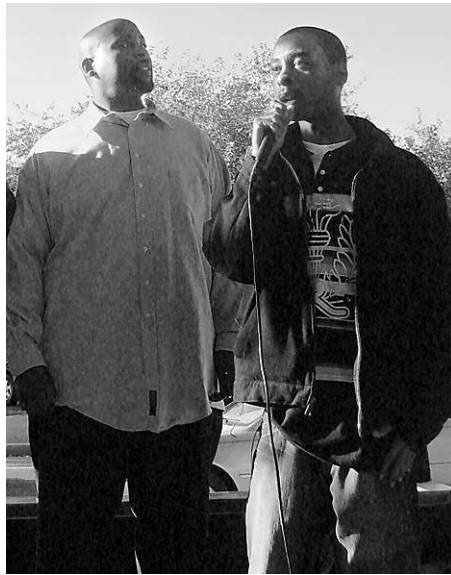
Heyman’s article concludes: “These Keystone Kops’ scenarios show the absurdity of this program and why it should be scuttled.” Opposition to TWIC is not a question of its bumbling or capricious implementation, it is a fundamental issue of defense of the unions, immigrants, black people and all those lined up in the sights of the government’s “anti-terror” laws. What Heyman points to as an example of opposition to TWIC is a petition circulated in the Portland ILWU local that urges “the United States Government to protect its citizens’ rights and end the Transportation Worker Identification Card.” Both in hanging immigrants out to dry and in embracing the U.S. government as the instrument for protecting longshoremen against that government’s own laws, this is simply the mirror image of the bureaucracy’s patriotic salute of “national security.”

For the ILWU and other longshore unions to wage a real fight against TWIC and the racist, union-busting “war on terror” laws, the obvious starting point must be **opposition** to the very state that is enforcing these laws. It means championing full citizenship rights for all immigrants and fighting to organize

foreign-born workers, many of whom bring lessons of militant class struggle from their own countries. In a country built on the subjugation of black people, where racist reaction has long served to ratchet up the exploitation of the working class as a whole, the fight for black freedom is directly linked to the fight to break the chains of capitalist wage slavery and the state forces and laws that maintain it. But to wage that kind of struggle, the unions must be led by a different kind of leadership, one rooted in a program of class struggle, as opposed to the present misleaders whose policies of class collaboration increasingly subordinate the unions to the capitalist state.

For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!

It would have been a powerful statement if the ILWU had shut down the ports on May Day in opposition to TWIC and



WV Photo

ILWU members Jason Ruffin (speaking) and Aaron Harrison at 4 October 2007 protest against their arrest.

in defense of immigrant rights. But that was not even what Heyman was building. In any event, his call for a port shutdown never got off the ground...because the Pacific Maritime Association wouldn’t give its permission. Available jobs were dispatched from the Local 10 hall and the American President Lines and Transbay port terminals were worked. Only a handful of longshoremen came out to the protest in defense of immigrant rights (a cause that Heyman outrageously affronts with his appeal for the “fair” implementation of TWIC and complaints about port truckers and foreign seamen).

On May Day, Heyman was handing out a new leaflet dated May 1. Signed by himself and another ILWU Local 10 member, it proclaims that the April 24 leaflet put out by the Port Workers May Day Organizing Committee “didn’t properly put forward the tasks we face.” Heyman’s May 1 “Oops!” went on to explain that “it is necessary to emphasize how we’ve opposed the phony patriotic notion that ‘we’re the first line of defense’ pushed by the maritime bosses, their government and even some [!] union officials. They try to set U.S. and ‘foreign’

workers against each other but we have actively defended international seamen in American ports and dockworkers in other countries.” “Phony patriotic notion”?! There is nothing phony about it, and it’s in line with Heyman’s own rants against “foreign” seamen in the *Daily Breeze*. Heyman’s May 1 leaflet is a piece of fancy footwork coming from a man who knows a thing or two about deception. In the leaflet, Heyman claims that Local 10 will be marching “behind a banner calling ‘For Workers Solidarity to Stop Government Repression’ against immigrants and port workers.” Conveniently omitted is the fact that one of the *main* slogans on the banner reads, “Stop the Unfair Use of TWIC Cards for Port Workers!”

Hoping for another photo op to promote Heyman’s credentials as a class-struggle militant, Internationalist Group (IG) leader Jan Norden flew in for the “port shutdown.” Last year, the IG was in the forefront of enthusing for the May Day port shutdown, which was against the occupation of Iraq (but not Afghanistan, the preferred war of the Democrats). That shutdown pointed the way to the kind of working-class action that is needed against the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. But the pro-capitalist politics of the ILWU leadership undermined this action. At the 2008 San Francisco May Day rally, which was politically dominated by speakers from the Democratic and Green parties, a statement was read out from International president Bob McEllrath heralding longshore workers as “loyal to America” as opposed to “foreign corporations that control global shipping.” The statement declared, “We’re standing up for America, we’re supporting the troops.” Such vile “America first” chauvinism was a pledge of allegiance to the bloody U.S. occupiers against the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan.

For his part, Heyman put forward a soft-core version of the same politics as his counterparts in the ILWU bureaucracy. As we wrote in “ILWU Shuts West Coast Ports on May Day” (WV No. 914, 9 May 2008):

“While an April leaflet by Heyman denounced ‘phony appeals to patriotism,’ he has made clear his own appeal to patriotism. At an April 29 press conference sponsored by the Oakland Education Association, Heyman declared: ‘We want the troops home. That’s what our members said at a meeting we had back in February and it was our Vietnam vets who brought the point home, very close to their hearts. And they said enough is enough, people are dying over there for nothing. It’s not a war about democracy, it’s for oil and empire’.”

The IG covered for Heyman, who in turn covered for the rest of the ILWU bureaucracy, who were busy saluting the flag. In the *Internationalist* (May 2008), the IG trumpeted that the port action “raises the challenge ahead: *to go from resistance to a struggle for power*” (emphasis in original). As we wrote in response in the WV No. 914 article: “To struggle for power assumes that you oppose the existing power! As Trotskyists (i.e., genuine Marxists), our purpose is to arm the proletariat with the consciousness and leadership necessary for combat with the forces of the capitalist class. This means taking on the class-collaborationist politics of the trade-union bureaucracy (as well as the politics of those who falsely claim to offer a revolutionary alternative).”

The worldview of the labor tops, including left-talkers like Heyman, is defined by what is “practical” or possible under capitalism. Ours is a different purpose: to build a workers party to give a conscious class-struggle leadership to struggles against U.S. imperialism and its bloody depredations against the peoples of the world and the working class and oppressed at home. Grounded in a program of revolutionary internationalism, such a party will fight not only for the immediate interests of the working class but for its liberation, and the emancipation of all of humanity, from the very real terror of capitalist class rule, by bringing to power the socialist rule of the multiracial proletariat. ■

Australian Socialist Alternative: God-Deluded Opportunists On Marxism and Religion

We reprint below, in slightly edited form, an article from *Australasian Spartacist* No. 204 (Autumn 2009), newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

**Australasian
SPARTACIST**

For youth repelled by the exploitative capitalist system and beginning to explore socialist ideas, organisations claiming the mantle of Marxism might seem a bewildering assortment. Reading an article in *Socialist Alternative* (Oct-Nov 2008) titled “The Real Story of What Marxists Think of Religion,” you could forgive such potential revolutionaries their confusion. Eulogising religion as having the potential to be a “platform for resistance to oppression,” Socialist Alternative (SAlt) [linked with the International Socialist Organization in the U.S.] contend that Marxism isn’t opposed to religion at all! “What!?” such youth might exclaim, “What happened to Marxism being scientific and atheist?”

Perhaps it was one such individual who wrote to *Socialist Alternative* (November 2008), calling on SAlt to stop sugar-coating religion and observing that “Islam like Judaism and Christianity are tools of the oppressors.” The letter provoked a venomous response. Three replies, including from SAlt cadre, published in the “Dec 08-Jan 09” issue denounced the correspondent as on the “elitist, atheist ‘God Delusion’ bandwagon” and “filled with Islamophobic shit” having “sucked up... the anti-Muslim mind poison, sugar-coated in leftism fed to you by the ruling class.” While we are not uncritical of the original (edited) letter and have no way of knowing fully what the writer stands for, SAlt’s unhinged response, like their article penned by Patrick Weiniger, is a bald-faced repudiation of Marxism.

As Marxist revolutionaries who want to change this world and end human exploitation and oppression, we’re firmly on the side of science, which studies the natural world and validates theories by observation and experiment, as opposed to religion which asserts blind faith in an unreal, supernatural power controlling events. We are, in the words of Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin, “absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion.” At the same time we oppose all forms of religious persecution and oppression. Thus our comrades in the U.S. have opposed the arrest of Mormons for practising polygamy (see *WV* No. 916, 6 June 2008). Comrades in France and elsewhere have protested government moves to ban the Islamic *hijab* or headscarf in schools, noting that such persecution can only reinforce the grip of religion by driving women out of secular society.

We stand opposed to the imperialist impoverishment and exploitation of the masses of the neocolonial world, but this does not mean that we are cultural relativists who prettify the horrible status quo in such countries. Thus we oppose hideous “customs” such as female genital

mutilation or the head-to-toe veil. While recognising that people should be able to hold their religious beliefs without interference from the state, we oppose religion dictating the policy of the state.

Upholding the liberating ideals of the Enlightenment and Marxism, we revolutionaries fight for the complete separation of religion and state! In fact, the full separation of religion and state has nowhere been fully realised by the bourgeoisie for the simple reason that religion has great value for the ruling class in its struggle against the proletariat. With its deep social roots, religion serves to buttress the

support for the war on Afghanistan and the war on refugees.

In fact SAlt’s “socialist alternative” has never extended beyond trying to pressure the pro-imperialist Labor Party. Thus, in the 2007 elections they championed a vote for the bourgeois Greens (an act of class treachery) as a means to apply pressure on Rudd’s Labor Party. For our part we Spartacists declared the elections a bipartisan war on workers and minorities, and called for “No vote to ALP! No vote to bourgeois Greens!”

Under the cover of fighting against the “war on terror,” SAlt poisonously insinu-

nism is dead’.... It’s a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*The Socialist*, September 1991).

SAlt: Haunted by the Spectre of Marx

As if to justify their anti-Marxist conciliation of religion, SAlt quote Karl Marx, who explained:

“*Religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.”

SAlt piously claim, “Those who wish to present Marx as anti-religious trot out only the last sentence.” One only need quote Marx’s very next lines to expose this self-serving lie:

“The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to *call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.*”

—“Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” (1844)

Declaring “Marx was a democrat before he became a socialist,” SAlt do their best, through selective quoting, to devolve him into a “harmless” modern-day bourgeois-liberal democrat.

To expunge the taint of atheism from their fake brand of “Marxism,” under the heading “Islamophobia” SAlt pick on two prominent authors who are self-identified atheists. First they cite reactionary journalist Christopher Hitchens as “living proof that being an atheist does not make you more left-wing.” In fact Hitchens’ pro-imperialist warmongering over Iraq owes more to the classless pontificating about “tyranny” versus “democracy” fundamental to SAlt’s worldview than to his non-Marxist critique of religion. Hitchens, once a member of SAlt’s forebear, the anti-communist Cliffite International Socialists, long ago took the logical step to bourgeois reaction.

The other target of SAlt’s anti-atheist vitriol is Richard Dawkins, evolutionary



Robert B. Luce, Inc.

Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai with Central Asian women, drinking wine in defiance of teachings of Koran.

institution of the family, the main source of women’s oppression, and ruling-class authority. All modern religion acts as an instrument of capitalist reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people.

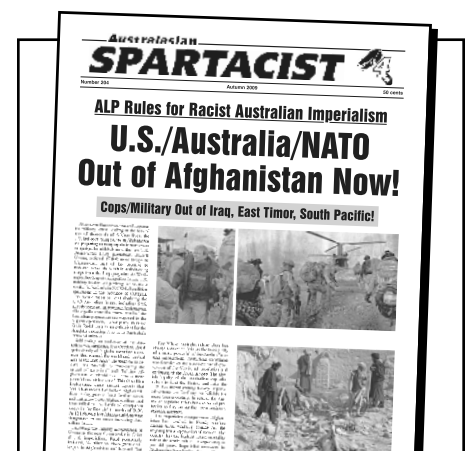
Our goal is to build a revolutionary party that can lead the working class in its historic task of overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with socialism. Only then will religion, which enforces mindless subordination to “higher authority” and is responsible for so much guilt and misery, quickly wither through education once its state props are kicked away.

Down With Anti-Muslim Racism!

We Marxists have been forthright in our opposition to the racist “war on terror,” opposing the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan abroad and the vile racist scapegoating of Muslims at home. Struggling in the interests of the whole working class, and against Laborite nationalism, we are for a class-struggle fight to defend the rights of Muslims and all immigrants and minorities. As for SAlt, for all their “militant anti-racist” posturing, come election day they fall into line behind the Labor Party [ALP] and racist capitalist rule. For example, in the 2001 elections SAlt advocated to “grit our teeth” and vote for the ALP, even as the ALP was demanding “security abroad, security at home” and trying to outdo the then-Howard government in

ate that any criticism of Islam equals support for racist anti-Muslim persecution. In fact, from their written repudiation of the Marxist attitude toward religion to braying about their attendance at Muslim prayer meetings, SAlt foster backward consciousness among the masses, conciliating both religion and religious leaders such as the Muslim clerics involved in recent protests against Israel’s murderous attacks on Gaza. This is no surprise as they and their forebears have long portrayed Muslim fundamentalism as “anti-imperialist” and even “revolutionary.” Their outlook is both a product of their liberal opportunism and a direct outgrowth of their anti-communist hostility to the former Soviet Union and other societies where capitalism has been overthrown. It has led them to politically embrace such vile reactionary forces as the Vatican-backed Polish Solidarność (Solidarity) and the Islamic fundamentalist Afghan *mujahedin*.

To the extent that SAlt have influence, their program has actually helped create today’s post-Soviet reactionary political climate marked by all-sided capitalist brutality and heightened religious obscurantism. In August 1991 when Boris Yeltsin’s imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution staged a coup in Moscow, every capitalist ruling class around the world celebrated. Then part of the International Socialists, SAlt cadre joined in the jubilation declaring that “Commu-



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biologist and writer of popular science. SAlt quote from *The God Delusion* where Dawkins gives a straightforward list of atrocities committed in the name of religion, including the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition. SAlt assert, “Dawkins argues that religion is to blame for war. This patently false idea provides a cover for imperialism.” Never mind the fact that Dawkins protested Britain’s involvement in the invasion of Iraq. False consciousness like religion and nationalism certainly *is* a powerful tool to inspire division in the working and oppressed masses, and in this epoch of imperialist reaction often provides the trip wire for the bloodiest conflicts.

Indonesia 1965-66 is but one chilling illustration. More than a million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese were massacred when the Indonesian generals unleashed Islamic fundamentalist reactionaries to crush the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). In the face of this terror, the workers and peasants of Indonesia were politically, organisationally and militarily disarmed by the PKI program of “national unity,” a popular-frontist alliance of bourgeois nationalists, Islamic groups and the PKI (see “Lessons of Indonesia 1965,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999). The Australian and U.S. imperialists were up to their necks in these atrocities, promoting the mobilisation of Islamic reac-

**Gdansk, Poland:
Lech Walesa being
blessed in 1980 by
Solidarność
“spiritual adviser,”
anti-Semitic priest
Henryk Jankowski.
Time magazine
cover story on “Holy
Alliance” between
Pope and Reagan
for capitalist
counterrevolution.**



Der Spiegel

Socialists Fight for Religious Freedom,” cadre Diane Fieldes writes: “In some of the southern republics of the USSR in the early 1920s as many as 15 per cent of party members were believers in Islam” and declares, “Muslims were encouraged to join the Communist Party.”

Far from conciliating religion, Soviet policy in Central Asia recognised that the path to overthrowing the entrenched power of religion, in lands almost entirely devoid of a working class, mandated admitting a fraction of the *most conscious* members of society, outside the Europeanised elite, into the Communist parties.

from the *kadis*’ sphere. Next, the government invited dissatisfied parties to appeal the *kadis*’ decisions to a Soviet court. In this manner the Soviets earned the reputation of being partisans of the oppressed, while the *kadis* were exposed as defenders of the status quo.”

After only a few years the *kadis* were forbidden to enforce any Muslim law which contradicted Soviet law. Soviet representatives attended all *kadi* proceedings and their approval was required for all court decisions. In the mid-1920s, when the *wafks* (endowment properties), which had supported the *kadis*, were expropriated and redistributed among the peas-

ist attack and broke from Trotsky’s Fourth International, reneging on their revolutionary duty.

Motivated by hostility towards the Soviet Union, throughout the 1980s, as then-members of the Cliffite International Socialist Organisation, SAlt cadre supported the CIA-bankrolled Islamic Afghan *mujahedin* cutthroats against the Soviet Red Army, alongside Washington and its union-busting Hawke/Keating Labor government ally in Canberra. This was a war directly over the status of women—the tribal chiefs and mullahs went to war when the Afghan government attempted to open up education for girls and to reduce the bride price. Standing upon our unconditional military defence of the USSR, the Spartacist League took the side of social progress. We said: “Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!”

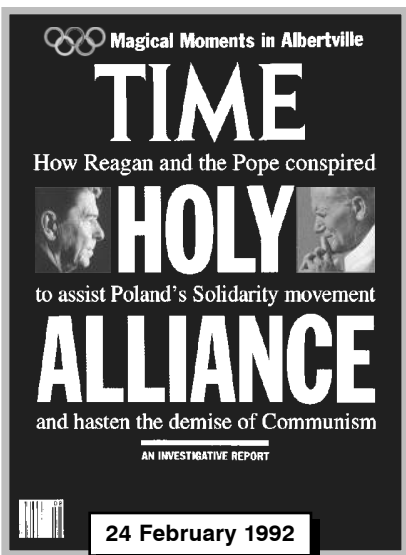
Driven by their hostility to the Soviet Union, SAlt also hailed Polish clerical-reactionary, anti-woman, anti-Semitic “union” Solidarność, backed to the hilt by the CIA and the Catholic church, throughout its rise in the 1980s. When in September 1981 Solidarność came out for capitalist restoration we said: “Stop Solidarity’s Counterrevolution!” Later Solidarność’s program triumphed in the form of the devastating 1989 capitalist counter-revolution in Poland, which ushered in mass unemployment and the brutal rollback of women’s rights, particularly abortion rights.

Weiniger’s article concludes by denouncing a July 2008 Sydney demo protesting homophobia and opposition to effective birth control by the Catholic church. This demonstration, which we Spartacists attended, was called by the reformist Democratic Socialist Perspective in response to the visit of Pope Benedict during “World Youth Day,” which saw hundreds of thousands of “pilgrims” descend on the city in a “celebration” of religious obscurantism. Unable to utter a word of protest against the reactionary, anti-woman Catholic church, SAlt instead are outraged that some protesters “thrust” condoms at pilgrims en route to pray at the Pope’s feet, lamenting that this could only serve to “isolate” the left from these “potential allies.” While SAlt wring their hands about the sensibilities of Catholic pilgrims, we Marxists say: Free contraception and abortion on demand for all! For the separation of church and state!

For a Multiracial Leninist Vanguard Party!

Religion at best serves to propagate and enshrine mind-numbing delusions, to lessen the pain of existence. Religious

continued on page 9



Spartacists called for workers to power as the Shah's bloody regime fell in Iran. U.S. International Socialist Organization's Socialist Worker hailed mullahs' "revolution."

THE FORM-RELIGIOUS THE SPIRIT-REVOLUTION!

Iran is a fabulously wealthy country. It earns billions of dollars each year through oil. It earns millions more from natural gas, of which it holds the world's second largest reserves. Yet its people are among the world's poorest.

Socialist Worker
January 1979

tionaries against “godless communism” and providing the Indonesian generals with a hit list of some 5,000 Communists to exterminate. In helping to orchestrate this massacre the imperialists were applying an imperative noted in 1950 by then-U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles: “The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it” (cited in Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*).

Hostile to the lessons of Indonesia 1965, the anti-communist opportunists of SAlt criminally encourage workers down the same blood-drenched popular-frontist path. A letter by Weiniger and Colleen Bolger published in *Socialist Alternative* (Dec 08-Jan 09) excitedly reported on the “Socialism and Islam” session they attended at a Socialist Party of Malaysia (PSM)-hosted conference last November. Enthusing that “we got to debate how the Left should relate to Islamic parties in a largely Muslim country,” they lauded the PSM for “eschewing sectarian dismissal of Muslim political forces.” No doubt they also support the PSM standing in the Malaysian elections last year under the banner of the main bourgeois opposition, which includes Islamic fundamentalists.

SAlt Slander the Bolsheviks

SAlt would have us believe that their chasing of religious “allies” has the endorsement of the Bolshevik Party that led the October 1917 Russian Revolution establishing the world’s first workers state. In a September 2006 article, “Why

As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky explained:

“We will admit into our ranks those comrades who have yet to break from religion not in order to reconcile Marxism with Islam, but rather tactfully but persistently to free the backward members’ consciousness of superstition, which in its very essence is the mortal enemy of communism.”

—“Tasks of Communist Education” (1923) in *Problems of Everyday Life*

SAlt lyingly infer that the Bolsheviks abandoned the bourgeois-democratic separation of church and state by claiming the young Soviet state accommodated *sharia* law, the 1,300-year-old body of Muslim canon law regulating every aspect of life including enforcing capital punishment for homosexuality and “honour killings” of women and girls accused of “improper” relations with men. According to Fieldes: “A parallel court system was created in 1921, with Islamic courts administering justice in accordance with sharia law alongside the soviet system. Thousands of Muslim schools were set up with government encouragement.” In truth, as we wrote in “Early Bolshevik Work Among Women of the Soviet East” (*Women and Revolution* No. 12, Summer 1976):

“...the Soviet government waged a campaign to build the authority of the Soviet legal system and civil courts as an alternative to the traditional Muslim *kadi* courts and legal codes. Although the *kadi* courts were permitted to function, their powers were circumscribed in that they were forbidden to handle political cases or any cases in which both parties to the dispute had not agreed to use the *kadi* rather than the parallel Soviet court system. As the Soviet courts became more accepted, criminal cases were eliminated

antry, the *kadis* disappeared completely.

Scandalously, in 2005 SAlt’s political cointinkers in Canada, the International Socialists, supported government proposals to establish *sharia* tribunals for family law, as part of the capitalist state. Our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste actively protested against these moves. Such courts could only deepen the isolation and oppression of Muslim women (see *Spartacist Canada* No. 147, Winter 2005/2006).

Support to Counterrevolution = Support to Anti-Woman Reaction

Despite the Soviet Union’s degeneration under a nationalist parasitic bureaucratic caste, which usurped political power from the Soviet proletariat in a political counterrevolution beginning in 1923-24, the proletarian collectivised property forms created by the 1917 October Revolution remained until capitalist counter-revolution in 1991-92. It was the elementary duty of revolutionaries to defend the gains of the revolution by fighting for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state and for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist misleaders who paved the way for capitalist restoration. We apply the same program to the deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba today.

SAlt’s political origins go back to the late Tony Cliff and his followers who bowed to the pressure of anti-communist Cold War hysteria during the Korean War. Capitulating to the British bourgeoisie and the then-ruling British Labour Party, they refused to defend the Soviet Union, China and North Korea against imperial-

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Immigrants...

(continued from page 12)

non-citizens were held last year?

America’s undocumented immigrants, mostly from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, do some of the dirtiest, most backbreaking, most dangerous jobs in this capitalist economy. Having no rights, these workers can be exploited by the capitalists to the limit of physical endurance, hired and fired to meet cyclical and seasonal needs. It is a testament to their militancy and class consciousness that a sizable number of these workers are union members and often involved in organizing battles. Immigrant workers, many with experience in social struggle in their countries of origin, can serve as a human bridge linking up workers in the U.S. with their class brothers and sisters internationally while at the same time breaking down the parochialism of U.S. workers. As we wrote in the International Communist League’s “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“Modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, reaching into all areas of the planet, in the course of the class struggle and as economic need demands, brings into the proletariat at its bottom new sources of cheaper labor, principally immigrants from poorer and less-developed regions of the world—workers with few rights who are deemed more disposable in times of economic contraction. Thus capitalism in ongoing fashion creates different strata among the workers, while simultaneously amalgamating the workers of many different lands. Everywhere, the capitalists, abetted by aristocracy-of-labor opportunists, try to poison class consciousness and solidarity among the workers by fomenting religious, national and ethnic divisions. The struggle for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism is thus a vital task for the proletarian vanguard.”

Obama’s Friends in the Union Leadership

Having wooed Latino voters with promises of immigration “reform,” Obama has announced his intention to give a major speech on immigration policy later this month. What he has in mind was shown at a recent town hall meeting in California, where he scolded an imaginary undocumented immigrant: “This is not going to be a free ride. It’s not going to be some instant amnesty. What’s going to happen is you are going to pay a significant fine. You are going to learn English.”

Less than a week later, offering their services as labor police for the capitalist class, the heads of the AFL-CIO and rival Change to Win union federations unveiled a “unified framework for comprehensive immigration reform legislation.” The joint press release quotes Eliseo Medina of the Service Employees International Union: “Today’s unified agreement is a major step forward that will, combined with the continued leadership of President Obama, Vice President Biden and bipartisan leadership in Congress, profoundly improve the future of all workers and build a stronger American economy for our children and grandchildren.”

We oppose all the bourgeoisie’s anti-immigrant laws and regulations and de-

mand full citizenship rights for all immigrants. We defend bilingual education against “English only” bigots and stand for full equality of all languages in all spheres of public life. Should anything like genuine amnesty for undocumented immigrants be proposed, we would be in favor of it, as an elementary democratic gain, though limited and partial, for immigrant workers and the proletariat as a whole. However, all the immigration “reform” proposals now being debated are a cruel hoax for undocumented immigrants and their supporters. The “unified” “reform framework” proposed by the AFL-CIO and Change to Win shows the “framework” they share with the bosses: “Rounding up and deporting the 12 million or more immigrants who are unlawfully present...is not a realistic solution.” According to the union tops, any “adjustment process” to the status of undocumented immigrants “must be designed to ensure that it will not encourage future illegal immigration.”

Perpetually in the political tow of the capitalist Democratic Party, the labor “leaders” now dream of “working together” with Obama in the interests of U.S. capitalism, which they falsely claim coincide with the interests of the working people. Like Ron Gettelfinger—the UAW auto union head who earlier ran to Washington along with the bosses of the Big



Striking UFCW grocery workers rally in Los Angeles, December 2003. Often bringing with them a history of labor militancy, immigrant workers can help revitalize the U.S. labor movement.

Three to offer every kind of rotten give-back of the UAW members’ jobs, wages and conditions—today the top bureaucrats of both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win want to advise the capitalist masters on more effective ways to turn the immigration spigot on and off according to what is profitable for the bourgeoisie.

Indeed, in a 21 April editorial, “Immigration and the Unions,” the *New York Times* wrote approvingly of the responsible, statesmanlike posture of the union bureaucrats toward government immigration policy. The union bureaucrats see no fundamental conflict of interests between labor and capital. But there is a contradiction

Workers occupy Republic Windows plant in Chicago last December. After sit-in lasting six days, the largely immigrant and black workers won their demand for severance pay.



between their reactionary ideology—premised on promotion of U.S. imperialist interests abroad and defense of the profits of American capitalists at home—and the fact that they sit atop mass organizations of the proletariat. Thus they want to be seen as fighting for immigrant workers, an increasingly crucial component of the unions’ membership.

The AFL-CIO first shifted its stance on immigration in 2000, in response to the fact that a section of the bourgeoisie was dependent on low-cost immigrant labor and to the fact that their own dues base was shrinking. In 2003, they launched a so-called “immigrant workers freedom ride,” whose purpose was to build support for the Democrats. After the mass 2006 May Day demonstrations, the two federations offered competing class-collaborationist “reform” proposals. Their latest plan is more of the same—it accepts that immigration must be controlled and the border sealed off. To regulate immigration they urge an “independent commission that can assess labor market needs on an ongoing basis,” leaving open the possibility of themselves participating directly in such a commission as an adjunct to the repressive forces of the capitalist state. The bureaucrats’ sought-after partnership with the state also finds expression in efforts to organize cops, prison guards and border agents, who are paid to repress working people, immigrants and minorities and have no place in the labor movement. Indeed, the joint statement opines that “border security is clearly very important, but not sufficient”!

The labor bureaucrats’ joint plan accepts and defends the capitalist profit system, aspiring to “build a stronger American economy” and “encourage just and humane economic integration.” While the joint plan has dropped Change to Win’s earlier support for expanding the “guest worker” programs, it calls to “improve the administration of existing temporary worker programs.” These programs are the modern equivalent of indentured servitude, tying immigrants’ visas directly to their employers. The joint plan is

designed to reduce immigration during times of high unemployment, while its “worker authorization mechanism” reads like an expanded TWIC proposal (see article, page 4). Written from the viewpoint of what is best for U.S. imperialism, the proposal is shot through with chauvinist language about “our nation’s values,” which goes hand in hand with “America first” protectionism—the policy of allying with one’s “own” government to intervene against foreign competitors and “save” national industry.

The bureaucrats’ ties to the Democratic Party have long served to chain the working class to its exploiters and preserve the rule of racist American capitalism. What is necessary is a political struggle within the union movement against the craven, pro-capitalist policies of the bureaucratic tops and the forging of a class-struggle union leadership. This is part of the struggle to forge a workers party that fights for a workers government. *Break with the Democrats! For a revolutionary workers party!*

Reform vs. Revolution

The fundamental dividing line between us and the rest of the left is program: reform or revolution. The reformists acquiesce to what is “possible” and practical under capitalism. They grotesquely hailed the election of Obama as a “triumph for the Black masses and all the oppressed,” as *Workers World* (20 November 2008) put it. Now, they are seeking to pressure Obama to do “right” by immigrants. In March, the liberal Southern California Immigration Coalition (SCIC), which includes the International Socialist Organization (ISO), Freedom Socialist Party and Workers World Party’s (WWP) Bail Out the People Movement, held a pro-Democratic Party demonstration in Los Angeles. The call to action carried the slogans “Ayer Votamos y Hoy Marchamos [Yesterday We Voted and Today We March]! Full Legalization NOW! Stop the ICE Raids! YES WE CAN!” and included a picture of Obama with the caption, “Hope.” The leaflet proclaimed, “Let’s hold Obama accountable!” According to

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8

WORKERS VANGUARD

a report on WWP’s Web site (April 24), the SCIC plans “to draft a more progressive counterproposal than those that are currently being introduced in Congress.” Not to be outdone, the ISO gushes over a similar meeting in the Bay Area to create “an alternative to the ‘mainstream’ version of comprehensive immigration reform” (*Socialist Worker*, 15 April).

The reformists seek to pressure the Democrats to adopt more “enlightened” policies. Ours is a fundamentally different purpose: to build a workers party that fights for a socialist revolution to expropriate the capitalist class and establish a workers state with a planned, collectivized economy. For us Marxists, the question of immigrant rights is a political question, not an economic one determined by the boom-bust cycles of the capitalist economy. As we wrote in “How the Fake Left Amnesties the Democrats” (WV No. 873, 7 July 2006):

“Our aim in intervening on behalf of immigrants, both at the massive demonstrations and within the working class, is to win workers to the understanding that they must oppose the whole capitalist system. We do not seek to tinker with the system, looking for an alternative immigration policy. We will support such reforms as are offered. But, our bottom line is that we will worry about the ebbs and flows of the world economy when the proletariat under revolutionary leadership runs it. We are not responsible for, nor do we seek to advise, the bourgeoisie on its immigration or other policies. We seek to organize the social power of the proletariat to smash this system and establish proletarian rule.”

For a Class-Struggle Fight for Immigrant Rights!

Amid the protectionist uproar pushed by the Teamsters bureaucracy (and their claims of “unsafe” Mexican trucking), Obama and the Democratic Congress passed legislation in March that killed a 2007 pilot project that had allowed some 100 Mexican trucks to travel in the U.S. to deliver their goods. In fact, what is happening in this country—mass layoffs and unemployment and increasing protectionism and chauvinism by the union bureaucrats—can also be seen in virtually all major capitalist countries. East European workers are returning home in droves from West Europe, while in Japan the government is literally paying immigrants to permanently leave. Meanwhile,



Spartacist banner at immigrant rights demonstration in Los Angeles, April 2007.

violent attacks against immigrants have become more prevalent in the U.S., West Europe and South Africa. Earlier this year, British construction workers staged a series of reactionary, protectionist strikes against foreign workers calling for “British jobs for British workers.” Our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain opposed these strikes, calling instead for “Jobs for all! Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Unions must defend immigrant workers!” (See “Down With Reactionary Strikes Against Foreign Workers!” WV No. 930, 13 February.)

There can be no compromise between the internationalist program that the proletariat requires to fight for power—and even to wage defensive struggles in the imperialist epoch—and the acceptance of the national chauvinism that splits the working class, breeds anti-immigrant bigotry and serves only the bourgeois masters. The international character of the working class gives it potentially enormous power, if mobilized across national and other divisions, to coordinate its struggles. The existence of numerous plants in Mexico owned by U.S. corporations poses the possibility and necessity of joint labor action by workers on both sides of the border. This is exactly what the union bureaucrats refuse to do out of loyalty to the capitalist system. A class-struggle

strategy, in stark contrast, means mobilizing the unions’ social power to fight for the desperate needs of the working and poor masses independently of and against the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

To the U.S. capitalists, Mexico and other countries are a vast reservoir of cheap labor to be tapped, including to drive down wages in the U.S. for all workers. Defense of immigrant rights is thus crucial to reversing the decades-long decline of the trade unions. Against the capitalists’ attempts to use undocumented immigrant workers as a club against unions, we call on the unions to fight deportations and I.C.E. workplace raids through class-struggle means and to organize the foreign-born into the unions with full rights and protections. The bosses seek to pit workers against each other in competition for a limited pool of jobs in order to divide and weaken the labor movement. The only way to fight unemployment is through united working-class struggle to demand jobs for all, a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and a sliding scale of wages to offset inflation. This poses a fight against the whole capitalist system—for socialist revolution in the U.S., Mexico and throughout the Americas.

Opposition to anti-immigrant racism in the U.S. also is directly intertwined with the struggle against black oppression, the cornerstone of American capitalism. It

is particularly important to combat anti-immigrant chauvinism among U.S.-born black and white workers, while immigrant workers must understand that anti-black racism remains the touchstone of social reaction in the U.S. This is the key to organizing the open shop South, where the racist color bar has historically been used to keep black people down and trade unions out. The importance of working-class unity in struggle was shown by the organizing victory in the Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, in December 2008. For years, management attempted to inflame racial and ethnic divisions. If black and immigrant workers had not worked together, the organizing effort would have fallen apart.

For the capitalists, immigrants are an easy target, especially at times of severe economic crisis. During the mass unemployment of the 1930s Great Depression, nearly half a million Mexicans from the U.S. Southwest, including people who had U.S. citizenship, were deported. During the same period in France, the number of foreign workers—mainly Italians, Poles and Algerians—was reduced by half a million, equal to 5 percent of the total labor force. Some left because they couldn’t find jobs, but many were rounded up and deported.

At the same time, there is also a long history of international working-class solidarity in the labor movement. The International Workingmen’s Association (also known as the First International), an alliance of representatives of different working-class political tendencies, was founded in 1864 following discussions between British and French workers concerned with the use of foreign workers to break strikes. Karl Marx would quickly become the preeminent figure in the International’s General Council. In 1866, the First International prevented an attempt by London master tailors, who were big capitalists, to replace journeymen tailors in London by recruiting journeymen in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Marx noted that as a result of these efforts, “the London masters’ manoeuvre was foiled; they had to surrender and meet their workers’ just demands” (“A Warning,” 4 May 1866). We stand on the program of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who raised the call, “Workers of the world, unite!”■

Marxism and Religion...

(continued from page 7)

institutions help enforce the worst prejudices, oppression of women, and subjugation of youth and, along with the institution of the family, serve as a prop for the capitalist system of private property. Often, where material want is greatest, such as societies based on subsistence agriculture, organised religion exercises a monopoly over social welfare. For example, Catholic medical centres throughout regions of Africa, Asia and South America are often the sole provider of health-care services, but they use their resources

to implement the Vatican’s prohibition of the use of condoms, an elementary public health measure in societies ravaged by AIDS. The historic task of the international working class is to make the productive resources of the world available to all, based on need, not profit. Only worldwide proletarian revolution can lay the basis for the end of material want, the foundation of religious superstition.

The Marxist program aims at the eradication of religion, not by force of arms or law, but scientific mastery of nature. This is not a recipe to tolerate ignorance or superstition, but on the contrary an obligation to actively expose and refute religion as an obstacle to the satisfaction of human needs. As Lenin wrote:

“The dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels...applies the materialist philosophy to the domain of history.... We must combat religion—that is the ABC of all materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*.” —“The Attitude of the Workers Party to Religion” (1909)

It will take a proletarian revolution to smash the power of capital and open the road to the egalitarian socialist society based on the material abundance needed to sweep away the basis of religion. This requires the building of a Leninist vanguard party which can lead the working class at the head of all the oppressed. Its cadres will be the most advanced fighters, including in defence of science and in opposition to religious superstition. Lenin explained:

“So far as the Party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a pri-

vate affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs.” —“Socialism and Religion” (1905)

This Leninist perspective stands diametrically opposed to SAlt’s accommodation to organised religious movements as allies-in-waiting.

Addressing the French public in 1767, Voltaire wrote, “Anyone who has the power to make you believe absurdities has the power to make you commit injustices.” SAlt oppose Marx’s program, not out of ignorance, but as a consequence of *their* anti-communist program, which re-

jects the Marxist principle that *only* the working class has both the interest and the social power to overthrow capitalism and build a classless society.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club are dedicated to freeing the oppressed from religion’s yoke. As we say in the article “Marxism and Religion,” reprinted in our pamphlet *Enlightenment Rationalism and the Origins of Marxism*:

“In order to win over a new generation to the struggle for socialism, based on a materialist conception of society, socialists must ceaselessly combat religion and other forms of idealism which look to the supernatural, explaining that freedom from oppression lies in this world, not another.”■

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Marxism and Religion

Enlightenment Rationalism AND THE Origins of Marxism

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Torture...

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acts back behind closed doors, Obama seeks to return to the bourgeois norm.

Obama’s “War on Terror”

Obama has been showered with praise for his vow to close the U.S. prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, within a year. But in reality, the Obama administration is simply continuing the Bush regime’s policies under a different name, with the “war on terror” now branded “Overseas Contingency Operations.” Significantly, the Obama administration has endorsed indefinite detention, a hallmark of police-state dictatorships and the centerpiece of Bush’s war on democratic rights. Many of the Guantánamo detainees will not be released—they will be transferred to detention centers in Bagram, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Obama government invoked the long-standing legal doctrine of “state secrets,” a favorite of the Bush regime, to quash a lawsuit brought against a Boeing subsidiary by victims of the CIA’s policy of “extraordinary rendition,” in which the U.S. transfers prisoners to countries where torture has always been openly practiced.

At least 112 people are known to have died in U.S. custody (the actual number is doubtless much higher), including at least eleven who were killed through blunt trauma or asphyxiation. One of those was an Afghan man named Dilawar—depicted in the powerful 2007 documentary “Taxi to the Dark Side”—who died after having been beaten so badly by U.S. forces in Bagram that his legs were “pulpified.” For his part, Obama is doubling the size of the Bagram prison, where more than 600 detainees are already confined. And when a federal court judge last month granted *habeas corpus* rights to a handful of prisoners in Bagram, the Obama administration appealed the ruling, arguing, just as the Bush regime had before, that the courts had no jurisdiction over these prisoners. We say: **Free all the detainees!**

Since its launch, the “war on terror” has served as a pretext for imperialist intervention abroad, and it is no different today. The bloody U.S. occupation of Iraq continues while at least 21,000 more U.S. troops are being shipped to Afghanistan

U.S. imperialism’s legacy of torture and slaughter. Drawing depicts atrocities during U.S. occupation of Philippines following 1898 Spanish-American War (right). Viet Cong fighter being waterboarded by U.S. soldiers during Vietnam War (below). At Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, U.S. prison guard Charles Graner brutalizes detainees (below, right).



UPI



Washington Post

sor of journalism at UC Berkeley, wrote in the *New York Review of Books* (9 April): “The US Congress, already in possession of a great deal of information about the torture conducted by the administration ... passed the Military Commissions Act of 2006 and in so doing attempted to protect those responsible from criminal penalty under the War Crimes Act. Democrats, who could have filibustered the bill, declined to do so.” Now, after initially promising to do away with Bush’s “military commission” kangaroo courts for Guantánamo prisoners, the Obama administration says that it may rely on them after all in order to be able to secure convictions by using hearsay and evidence obtained under torture.

foot cell were blacked out, and he could only leave his cell wearing blinkered goggles and headphones. This was punctuated by blasts of harsh light and loud, pounding noise. A motion filed by Padilla’s lawyers in 2006 described that Padilla was “hooded and forced to stand in stress positions for long durations of time” and “threatened with imminent execution.” He was also injected with drugs believed to be LSD or PCP. Nonetheless, Padilla was convicted in a show trial and sentenced to 17 years and four months in prison. **Free Jose Padilla now!**

The defense brief for the modern-day Torquemadas has already been written by the *New York Times*. In a 22 April article, the *Times* claimed that in 2002 the Bush administration united around a program of “brutal methods of interrogation.” “This extraordinary consensus was possible,” according to the *Times*, “because no one involved...investigated the gruesome origins of the techniques they were approving.” The supposed “origins”? With consummate hypocrisy, the *Times* announces: “Government studies in the 1950s found that Chinese Communist interrogators had produced false confessions from captured American pilots not with some kind of sinister ‘brainwashing’ but with crude tactics,” which the *Times* claims were the basis for the Bush administration’s torture program. According to the anti-Communist, pro-imperialist mouthpieces of the *Times*, the criminals, torturers and murderers during the 1950-53 Korean War were not the U.S. imperialists who invaded the peninsula, reducing it to rubble and slaughtering some *three million* people, but the courageous Chinese and Korean Communists who fought to expel them. This comes from the same newspaper whose “embedded” reporter, Judith Miller, was in the forefront of selling the government’s “weapons of mass destruction” lies to justify the invasion of Iraq.

To be sure, it is a measure of how degenerate U.S. bourgeois society is that the “value” of torture is now publicly debated in the press, with many pundits and politicians openly justifying the inhuman treatment of humans. With Orwellian doublespeak, the *Times* calls torture “harsh interrogation techniques” and describes waterboarding as “simulated drowning” (there is nothing “simulated” about it). Mark Danner, in a 30 April piece in the *New York Review of Books*, advises that “what is needed” is a “broadly persuasive judgment...on

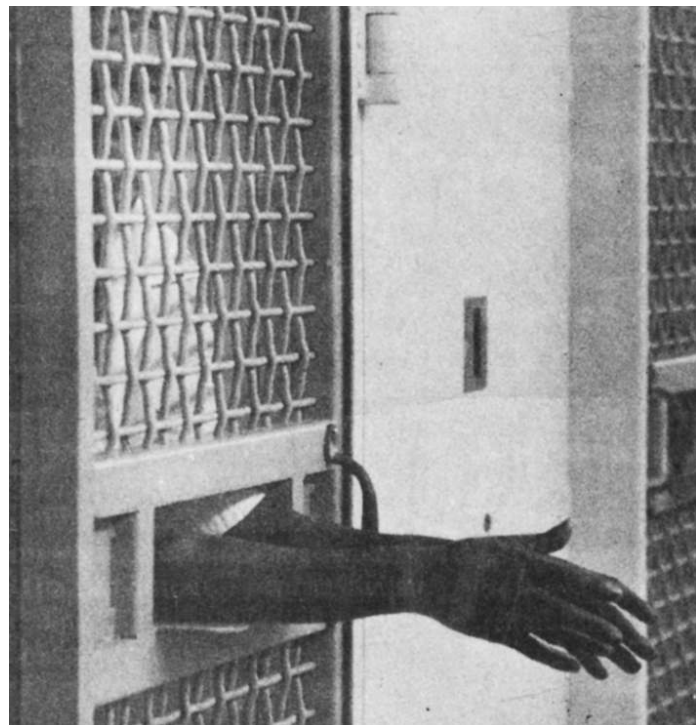
whether or not torture made Americans safer. This is the only way we can begin to come to a true consensus about torture.” Even supposed “Marxists” have weighed in with their own “judgment.” In a 24 April article on its Web site, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) grotesquely advises the bourgeoisie that the recently released memos “suggest” that torture is “largely useless.”

The torture and brutality meted out to America’s victims abroad finds its reflection in the horrific treatment of the more than two million human beings locked up in America’s prisons. It is no accident that Charles Graner, one of the sadistic torturers at Abu Ghraib, had been a prison guard in the U.S. A powerful article by Atul Gawande in the *New Yorker* (30 March) reports that by the end of the 1990s there were some 60 “supermax” prisons in the U.S. holding at least 25,000 inmates in total isolation, itself a form of torture. Gawande documents the chilling effects of extended solitary confinement and consequent sensory deprivation on prisoners, who are, in effect, deliberately driven mad.

Human beings should not be treated like beasts. We communists denounce torture, imperialist war and repression as barbaric. Our goal is the liberation of the working class and all humanity, and we repudiate such methods—as did the Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution of 1917, in which Marxism has found its highest expression in practice thus far. It was with the aim of ridding the world of capitalist barbarism that the Bolshevik Party led that successful workers revolution, and that is the reason why bourgeois rulers everywhere, backed by their social-democratic hangers-on, despise the October Revolution and the Soviet workers state it created. As we wrote in “U.S. Torture Machine” (WV No. 863, 3 February 2006):

“The world bourgeoisies and their mouthpieces loathe the fact that Lenin and the Bolsheviks applied the measures not only necessary to attain state power but essential to defend and consolidate working-class rule. In the name of ‘democracy,’ the capitalist powers subjected the Russian Revolution not merely to the hammer and tongs of military encirclement and invasion, provocations and isolation, but to mountains of slander as well.”

That article explained that even in the heat of the brutal Civil War that followed the October Revolution, the Soviet Cheka (Extraordinary Commission to Combat



Louisiana Weekly

Prisoner peers out from cell in Louisiana’s notorious Angola state prison, a former slave plantation— not so former.

to bolster the 40,000 already there. In Pakistan, over 700 people have been slaughtered by U.S. drone attacks, with some 150 having been killed since Obama took office. **U.S. out of Iraq and Afghanistan! Hands off Pakistan!**

Democratic Party politicians were up to their necks in helping to set up the Bush administration’s torture program. In September 2002, top Republican and Democratic Congressmen, including current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, were given a “virtual tour” of CIA detention sites that included descriptions of waterboarding and other “enhanced interrogation” methods. As Mark Danner, a profes-

It isn’t just foreign “terror suspects” who have been subjected to torture. In 2002, Jose Padilla, an American citizen, was picked up at Chicago’s O’Hare airport, declared an “enemy combatant” and disappeared into a Navy brig in South Carolina. In 2003 and 2004, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee filed *amici curiae* (friends of the court) briefs against Padilla’s indefinite detention. When charges were finally brought against Padilla in November 2005, his lawyers revealed that for three years and eight months he had been tortured by extreme sensory deprivation—the windows of his tiny nine-by-seven-

South Africa...

(continued from page 3)

and doctors alike underscore the need for one union for all medical employees, from doctors to orderlies to cleaners.

Due to atrocious conditions and meager pay, there are more South African doctors working outside the country than in the public sector at home. Every year, doctors and nurses leave the public health system in droves for the private sector, where surgeons, for example, make *eight times* the salary of government surgeons. There are 4,000 unfilled doctors’ positions in public hospitals, while the nursing shortage is around 40,000. In rural areas the doctor-to-patient ratio is as low as three for every 100,000 people.

Junior doctors and interns describe working 80-hour weeks, with 10-to-14-day work cycles, in massively overcrowded hospitals where many of the sick have to return home without treatment after waiting long hours. Doctors at the Red Cross Children’s Hospital in Cape Town have taken to wearing black to protest the fact that sick children wait up to 12 hours to see a doctor. While much of the bourgeois media denounced the strike, even as it feigned sympathy for the doctors’ plight, a Johannesburg *Star* (30 April) editorial stated: “Government doctors believed they had a point in striking that went beyond the demand for a pay rise, and we cannot disagree.”

In an attempt to whip up public anger against the strike, government spokesmen accused the doctors of “endangering lives.” This from a government that under former president Thabo Mbeki denied that HIV causes AIDS and held back the provision of antiretroviral medication (ARVs) to the sick, causing the needless deaths of an estimated 300,000-plus people. The AIDS pandemic has hit South African women particularly hard, with the largest cohort of AIDS sufferers being women in their 20s. The government’s criminal policies on AIDS also helped spur the spread of tuberculosis, including



Nurses during 1995 wildcat strike carried signs reading “Away with Mandela,” as a number of SACP/COSATU bureaucrats branded their action a “counter-revolutionary strike.” Eastern Cape government fired 6,000 nurses after strike.

its drug-resistant strains, throughout the population.

The government eventually discarded its AIDS denialism and began rolling out ARVs, which has saved untold numbers of lives while also allowing the implementation of programs to prevent the transmission of HIV to newborns from their mothers. But the lack of government funding and the abject condition of public health infrastructure leave most with no access to such drugs. Only 34 percent of those requiring ARVs in 2007 actually received them. Last November the Free State province announced a “moratorium” on giving ARVs to new patients because it had run out of money, leading to some 30 deaths per day over several months. This decrepit system is overseen by the strikebreaking health minister Barbara Hogan, who is held up as a hero by the ANC-loyal Treatment Action Campaign and others who opposed Mbeki’s AIDS denialism. We demand free ARVs for all who need them, *now!*

A stark measure of the enduring racial divide under neo-apartheid capitalism is the contrast between the relatively efficient, state-of-the-art private health facilities available to the people who can

afford them, mainly whites, and the minimal, crumbling, dangerous public facilities that most of the black and Coloured (mixed-race) population relies on. According to a Human Rights Commission report, the private health care sector spends R43 billion servicing seven million people while the public sector spends R33.2 billion on *38 million* people. Meanwhile, the government reinforces superstitious beliefs by legitimizing “traditional healers” and helping to subsidize tribal kings and chiefs. The inaccessibility of decent health care for poor people leaves them with nowhere to turn but to dangerous quack “remedies,” including for AIDS. As part of the struggle for genuine social equality, we call for nationalizing the private hospitals and clinics and for massive investment in health care in the townships and rural areas.

How cheap black life is still held in the “new” South Africa can be seen in the Eastern Cape, where hospitals with overflowing morgues have been handing stillborn babies over to their mothers in cardboard boxes, telling them that there is a new rule that they need to bury the remains themselves (Johannesburg *Times*, 19 April). Last month newspapers re-

Counterrevolution and Sabotage) issued instructions that “any verbal abuse, rudeness, injustice or impropriety” shown toward the incarcerated “is a blot upon the Soviet power” and raised the call: “No tortures and torments!”

Obama’s “Socialists”

One liberal pundit after another, concerned that American “democracy” has been tarnished by Bush’s open program of torture, has demanded “independent” investigations and possible prosecutions. Such liberal outrage has been echoed by the reformist left, who now see in Obama a “friend” who can be pressured to do what is right. In fact, Obama is a Wall Street Democrat who bails out the banks while busting unions, who administers imperialist war and occupation abroad and carries out class



Woodcut from *Praxis Rerum Criminalium*
16th-century depiction of water torture in West Europe.

war against the workers and oppressed at home.

In an article titled, “Will Bush Gang Be Prosecuted for Torture?” (*Workers World*, 30 April), the Workers World Party (WWP) states: “There would be widespread support here and worldwide for prosecuting Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and company for their many war crimes, including the torture of prisoners.” A 24 April article on the ISO’s Web site by Jeremy Scahill, author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, demands: “What is actually needed is an independent prosecutor—someone like [U.S. Attorney] Patrick Fitzgerald—to treat this as the major-league, far-reaching crime investigation that it should be seen as.”

Scahill’s piece, which the ISO printed without comment, concludes by referring readers to an online petition that states in part: “We urge Attorney General Eric Holder to appoint a non-partisan independent Special Counsel to immediately commence a prosecutorial investigation into the most serious alleged crimes” of the Bush regime. The petition even advises that prosecutions would not be “extraordinarily lengthy or costly” because “substantial evidence of the crimes is already in the public domain”! The petition was signed by various Democrats and Greens and the ANSWER Coalition, which is led by PSL, and the World Can’t Wait (WCW) outfit, which was initiated by the Revolutionary Communist Party. Indeed, WCW complained in a 24 April headline on its Web site: “Bush Memos Reveal Policy of Cruelty: Obama Refuses to Enforce the Law.”

The reformist left promotes the illusion that imperialist militarism is merely a bad policy that can be eliminated from the capitalist system if sufficient pressure is applied. But the drive toward war and

repression is as inextricably rooted in the capitalist system as the drive to increase profit. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, marked by the domination of the globe by a small, exclusive club of the capitalist great powers that lord it over the weaker, dependent nations. No amount of pressure can transform the nature of capitalist imperialism.

The reformist “socialists” stand in opposition to the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. The truth is that the victims, at home and abroad, of the U.S. capitalist state will never know justice until capitalist rule is overthrown through socialist revolution. Only then can the imperialist war criminals and sadistic torturers be tried by their victims.

A 17 April press release by WCW stated: “Your government refuses to bring war criminals and torturers to account.

ported the story of Ntombizodwa Mali, a Western Cape woman who was turned away by three clinics when she sought treatment for her critically ill one-year-old grandson. He died as she carried him on her back, having walked for hours to reach the clinics. Local ANC politicians took advantage of the tragedy to campaign for votes at the baby’s funeral (!), promising they would “investigate” why the clinics turned her away. Mali later said in disgust, “The only time we see politicians is during election time; they promise us all sorts of things, after that we never see them again.”

At the root of the masses’ miserable living conditions—mass unemployment, homelessness, poverty, cop violence, hellish “health care”—is a capitalist economic system that continues to be based on superexploited, mainly black labor and white privilege. The SACP and COSATU misleaders politically chain the workers and poor to this murderous system through their ties to the bourgeois ANC, which they falsely portray as the embodiment of national liberation.

Spartacist South Africa fights to break the proletariat and oppressed masses from the Tripartite Alliance and to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the struggle for socialist revolution—for a *black-centered workers government*. This is the only way to open the road to genuine social and national emancipation. As we wrote in “South African Elections: No Choice for Workers, Poor” (WV No. 933, 27 March): “The neo-apartheid capitalist state must be smashed and replaced with a workers state that expropriates the banks, mines and factories and creates a planned economy where production is for social use, not private profit.” Under the rule of the working class—extending throughout southern Africa and into the advanced capitalist countries of North America, Europe and Japan—the world’s scientific and industrial resources will be used to build a decent life for all and the scourges of poverty, hunger and criminal medical neglect will be seen as the relics of a barbaric past. ■

Will you remain silent or get informed, take a stand and build a movement to stop torture and demand accountability for war crimes?” This is *not* “our” government, it is not the government of America’s working people and the oppressed. The capitalist state exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie against those they exploit and oppress, and in carrying out torture, war and repression, the capitalist state is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. The capitalist state, which at its core consists of the cops, prisons and military, must be shattered through a socialist revolution and replaced with a workers state in which those who labor rule. This perspective demands the building of a workers party—independent of and opposed to both the Democratic and Republican parties of capital—to lead the struggle for workers power. ■

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Labor Tops Offer to Help Bosses Control Immigration

Economic Crisis: Immigrants Under the Gun



Lenny Ignelzi



Getty

Left: Obama's Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano touring the Otay Mesa port of entry in Southern California in early April. Right: Men seized as they tried to cross U.S.-Mexican border languish in Arizona holding cell.

With the economy spiraling downward, immigrants in America face rising unemployment and state repression as the capitalist rulers seek to deflect social discontent by scapegoating immigrant workers for capitalism's crisis. The ongoing crack-down against the 12 million so-called "illegal" immigrants who live here has resulted in deportation of hundreds of thousands of people and fueled a rising tide of racist chauvinism. Now, signaling their commitment to stepped-up immigration enforcement, President Barack Obama and the Congressional Democrats approved more money and personnel for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E., the hated *la migra*) in February. There is even a proposal for the Border Patrol to spray stretches of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo riverbank with a poisonous defoliant, raising memories of the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Fewer immigrants today are coming to the U.S. and those who do are finding fewer jobs. Remittances to Mexico fell in 2008 for the first time on record, declining 3.6 percent, part of a worldwide trend as immigrants from developing countries lose jobs. In 2008, the number of Latino immigrants employed or seeking work in the U.S. fell for the first time since 2003. In the face of the all-around misery being inflicted on working people by the workings of the capitalist economy, trade-union tops have responded to layoffs by supporting poisonous protectionist measures, including the "buy American" clause in Obama's "rescue" package for American industry, and thereby helped to drive a wedge between native-born and foreign-born workers.

Over the past decade the U.S. has more than doubled the personnel patrolling the border while funding for border "security" has been nearly tripled. At the end of March, in the name of fighting "drug violence" in Mexico, the Obama administra-

tion laid out a sweeping plan to further militarize the border, including the possible mobilization of National Guard troops. Right before Obama's first trip to Mexico, Alan Bersin was tapped to fill the post of "border czar"; while working for the Clinton White House, Bersin implemented "Operation Gatekeeper," with its 12-foot-high walls sealing off San Diego from the Mexican border. Down with the racist "war on drugs"!

Last year, I.C.E. carried out two of the largest immigration raids in U.S. history against individual factories. Now the Obama administration plans to widen the scope of such raids by carrying out undercover investigations and audits of employer records, supposedly so it can prosecute employers who "knowingly" hire undocumented workers, on top of rounding up thousands upon thousands more immigrants. Meanwhile Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has directed agents to apply greater "scrutiny" to the selection and investigation of targets as well as the timing of raids. As governor of Arizona, Napolitano empowered local law enforcement, including Maricopa County sheriff Joe Arpaio, notorious for his use of chain gangs, to terrorize immigrants.

In February, President Obama signed

No Deportations! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

off on a stimulus package that explicitly requires recipients of bailout funds to hire "Americans" over foreigners with special visas, known as H-1Bs. Bank of America and Merrill Lynch, among others, have said that provision led them to rescind job offers to some graduating foreign students. In addition, the federal government is now cracking down on supposed violations of the visa program. In February, federal agents arrested eleven people in California and five other states on charges of H-1B visa fraud. Legislation that would impose similar restrictions on all U.S. employers is expected to be introduced in Congress this month.

It is in the urgent interest of the labor movement to mobilize in defense of immigrant workers, who form a key and vibrant component of the U.S. working class. The social power of the union movement must be mobilized to fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! **Down with the I.C.E. raids! No deportations!** But instead of championing these elementary measures of self-defense against increasing exploitation and union-busting, the patriotic misleaders of the AFL-CIO and Change to Win union federations have just put forward a joint "framework" for immigration "reform," asking for greater partnership in tinkering

with the bourgeoisie's mechanisms for capitalist profiteering and anti-immigrant repression.

While Obama looks for a "human rights" bonanza with his ballyhooed plan to close Guantánamo (while seeking to transfer most of its helpless, tortured, incommunicado prisoners to other facilities), the construction of new federal detention centers for immigrants continues unabated; a new facility is slated for the Los Angeles area that will hold up to 2,200 immigrants. In the meantime, I.C.E. is holding L.A.-area detainees in the basement of the downtown Federal Building in overcrowded, filthy conditions. According to a lawsuit filed by the ACLU, detainees are forced to sleep on the floor, there is no access to medical care, and rights such as access to mail and one's attorney are routinely violated. In immigration court, even permanent residents don't have to be proven "guilty beyond a reasonable doubt" and can be deported for the same alleged crimes they were already acquitted of in criminal court. A statistical reflection of the legal persecution of immigrants is the fact that Latinos now constitute by far the largest number of those sentenced in federal courts—a whopping 40 percent in 2007.

On April 3, the *New York Times* wrote about the death of Ahmad Tanveer, an immigrant detainee from Pakistan held in the Monmouth County Correctional Institute in New Jersey. Tanveer died in custody under mysterious circumstances on 9 September 2005 and I.C.E. never even reported his death. Another detainee wrote a letter to a local group that corresponds with inmates, describing Tanveer's chest pains and pleas for medical attention that went unheeded. Who is to say how many more detainees have died, unnamed and unaccounted for, in the detention hellholes, where half a million

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