

**For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!**

# The California Budget Crisis and the Bankruptcy of American Capitalism



AP  
Above: Top California Democrats join with Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in Sacramento to announce agreement on deadly budget cuts, July 20. Right: California school employees protest in San Jose against slashing of education funding, August 5.



California School Employees Association

OAKLAND—On July 20, California's Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Democratic-controlled state legislature declared an agreement resolving the latest budget crisis, which had brought the state to the brink of total financial collapse. The \$26.3 billion shortfall is to be made up by gouging funding for welfare, health care and education. Hundreds of thousands of state workers have been handed unilateral wage cuts of 14 percent through mandatory three-day furloughs each month. A similar program is also being imposed on all employees of the University of California system, at the same time that funds for student grants are cut and tuition hiked.

Health care services for poor children, the elderly and AIDS patients have been slashed. Some 60,000 of the poorest children in the state will lose health coverage in October, while nearly 670,000 children may lose their health care by next July. Even the wantonly cruel "welfare to work" program was cut by millions, leaving little more than food stamps for poor mothers and their children. With nearly \$10 billion in cuts to public education, the jobs of thousands of teachers and school workers are to be axed, while already out-of-control class sizes balloon.

## Deadly Cuts Starve the Poor, Kill the Sick, Gut the Unions

Local services and infrastructure spending, such as for public housing, will also be cut; to balance its budget the state is demanding, for example, \$100 million back from the city of San Jose.

Signing off on the budget, Schwarzenegger wielded his pen to chop nearly half a billion dollars more in services for the poor, disabled and elderly in line-item vetoes. In a display of the vicious calculus of capitalist austerity and the murderous state repression that enforces it, the governor vetoed any cuts in funding to build a new death row at San Quentin, where prisoners will now be double-celled while they await death at the hands of the state's executioners.

Projecting that these budget cuts "would make California more like a struggling Third World state than 21st century America," an article in *Time* magazine (19 June) pointed out that this is hardly an isolated phenomenon: "States across the nation are suffering the effects of lost tax revenue in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. California's woes are similar and different in kind, played out on a grand scale in a state that boasts the world's eighth largest economy and a Hollywood star in the lead

role." Once the symbol of the "American Dream," with "rags to riches" myths spun out courtesy of Hollywood, California today is a microcosm of the larger financial meltdown of American capitalism, with the cost being extorted from the working class, blacks, immigrants and the poor.

The speculative binges of American capitalism, where profits extracted from the exploitation of labor were squandered in various get-rich-quick schemes as opposed to investment in industry or infrastructure, have played out with a vengeance in California. Silicon Valley was the birthplace of the speculative "dot.com" bubble, which went splat in 2000-01. The "Golden State" was also a leader of the housing construction boom, employing the labor of heavily immigrant construction workers to build these homes, which were made "affordable" to minorities and working people through subprime mortgage scams. That bubble burst in 2007, triggering the present international financial crisis.

California now has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country. The unemployment rate—officially 11.9 percent but over 20 percent when the actual number

of jobless and underemployed workers is calculated—rivals that of Michigan, which has been ravaged by tens of thousands of new job losses with the financial collapse of GM and Chrysler. The reduction in Pacific Rim trade has slashed the workload in the California ports, with an accompanying decline in domestic transport. While the devastation in human terms is enormous, for the Democratic and Republican rulers of the state it is measured only in lost revenue from sales, income and property taxes.

Though reflecting the overall international capitalist economic crisis, the California budget deficit is also derived from the continuing impact of the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, which put a cap on property tax increases. Prop. 13 was a de facto racist referendum against social programs seen as benefiting blacks, Latinos and other minorities. In the words of one of its white middle-class backers: "It's these social services that annoy the heck out of me—social services for the colored, the Mexicans and so forth. Who wants to pay it all in taxes that go for things like that?" Though billed as beneficial to homeowners, the actual major beneficiaries of Prop. 13 were large commercial property owners who have reaped annual windfalls of millions. Clauses mandating a two-thirds majority to raise taxes or to pass a budget were designed to ensure that it stayed that way, effectively giving veto power to a handful

*continued on page 8*



# Outrage

## Leonard Peltier Denied Parole

On August 21, the U.S. Parole Commission again turned down the parole request of Leonard Peltier, a prominent member of the American Indian Movement who was framed up on charges of killing two FBI agents during the federal assault on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975. The commission coldbloodedly declared Peltier would not be considered for parole for another 15 years! For the 64-year-old Peltier, who suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, partial blindness and a heart condition, this is a declaration by the racist rulers that this courageous man will die in prison.

Grotesquely, U.S. Attorney Drew Wrigley gloated, “Leonard Peltier is exactly where he belongs—federal prison, serving two life sentences.” Wrigley added the claim that Peltier “has neither accepted responsibility for the murders nor shown any remorse,” a standard ruse for denying parole to those imprisoned

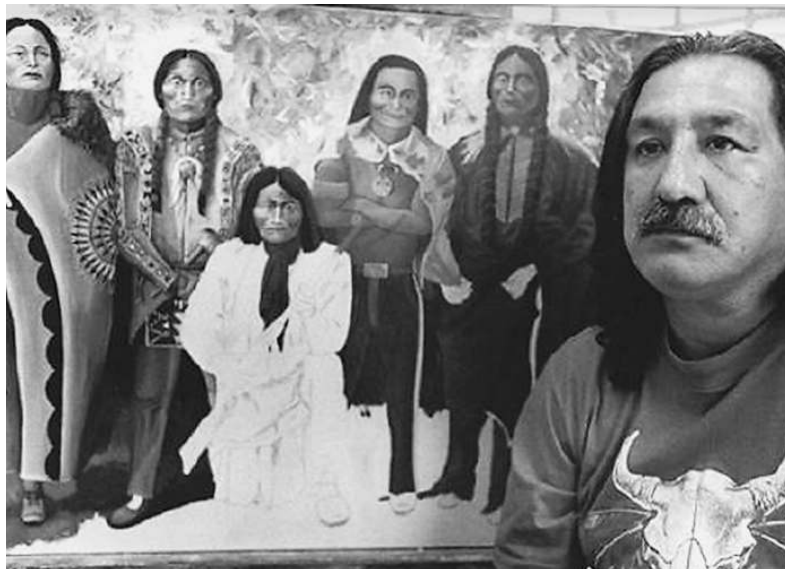
for crimes they did not commit. As the PDC pointed out in a June 29 letter to the Parole Commission demanding freedom for Peltier (see WV No. 940, 31 July):

“One court proceeding after another has laid bare the evidence of his innocence and of massive prosecutorial misconduct. In a 1985 appeals hearing, the government’s lead attorney admitted, ‘We can’t prove who shot those agents.’

“In 1986, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the trial jury could have acquitted Mr. Peltier if records improperly withheld from the defense had been made available.

“In November 2003, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals stated, ‘Much of the government’s behavior at the Pine Ridge Reservation and in its prosecution of Mr. Peltier is to be condemned. The government withheld evidence. It intimidated witnesses. These facts are not disputed.’

“In 2001, in response to requests under



Scott/Impact Visuals

**Leonard Peltier, an accomplished artist, in front of one of his paintings.**

the Freedom of Information Act and lawsuits, the U.S. government admitted it had withheld a staggering 142,579 pages of evidence of its secret COINTELPRO efforts to persecute and convict Mr. Peltier.”

Yet again, the depraved capitalist rulers have demonstrated there is no justice for fighters for the oppressed like Peltier. We join with millions worldwide in demanding: **Free Leonard Peltier now!** ■

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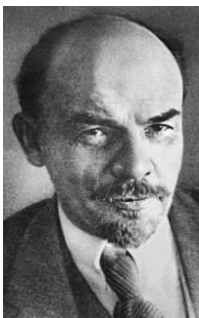
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TROTSKY

### Communism and Human Liberation

*The goal of Marxism is to open the road to a rationally planned international division of labor based on material abundance unattainable under the anarchic and irrational capitalist profit system. Writing in 1847 in “Principles of Communism”—an alternative draft for the Communist Manifesto—Friedrich Engels emphasized that future communist society will liberate mankind from its subordination to the division of labor and thereby from the antithesis between mental and physi-*



LENIN

*cal labor. The precondition to that is the forging of Marxist workers parties to fight for proletarian revolutions worldwide to rip the means of production out of the hands of the capitalist exploiters.*

The common management of production cannot be effected by people as they are today, each one being assigned to a single branch of production, shackled to it, exploited by it, each having developed only *one* of his abilities at the cost of all the others and knowing only *one* branch, or only a branch of a branch of the total production. Even present-day industry finds less and less use for such people. Industry carried on in common and according to plan by the whole of society presupposes moreover people of all-round development, capable of surveying the entire system of production. Thus the division of labour making one man a peasant, another a shoemaker, a third a factory worker, a fourth a stockjobber, which has already been undermined by machines, will completely disappear. Education will enable young people quickly to go through the whole system of production, it will enable them to pass from one branch of industry to another according to the needs of society or their own inclinations. It will therefore free them from that one-sidedness which the present division of labour stamps on each one of them. Thus the communist organisation of society will give its members the chance of an all-round exercise of abilities that have received all-round development. With this, the various classes will necessarily disappear. Thus the communist organisation of society is, on the one hand, incompatible with the existence of classes and, on the other, the very establishment of this society furnishes the means to do away with these class differences.

—Friedrich Engels, “Principles of Communism” (1847)

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# Mumia Is an Innocent Man! Free Him Now!

For nearly three decades, Mumia Abu-Jamal has been imprisoned on death row. An innocent man, Mumia is a former Black Panther Party spokesman and supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization. He was framed up and convicted on charges of killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. His conviction was based on lying testimony extorted by the cops, without a shred of physical evidence. His death sentence was secured on the basis of his political convictions and powerful indictments of racist America as a Panther. Since then, court after court has refused to even consider the mountains of evidence proving Mumia's innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot Faulkner.

On April 6 the U.S. Supreme Court summarily turned down Mumia's petition to overturn the frame-up conviction. *Ominously, it has not ruled on the Philadelphia district attorney's appeal to reinstate the death sentence*, which was overturned by U.S. District Court Judge William Yohn in 2001. Should the Supreme Court rule in favor of the D.A.'s appeal, it would place Mumia a big step closer to the death chamber.

The relentless campaign by the cops, courts, prosecutors and judges to put Mumia to death or entomb him for life epitomizes the apparatus of state repression deployed by the rulers of this country against any perceived opponents. It throws a spotlight on the barbaric, racist death penalty, a form of institutionalized state terror directly descended in the U.S. from black chattel slavery. It goes to the core of the racist subjugation of black

people in this country, which is fundamental to the maintenance of American capitalism. It underlines that the fight for Mumia's freedom must be based on a class-struggle opposition to the racist U.S. capitalist system.

It is this understanding that has infused the work of the Partisan Defense Com-

mittee—a legal and social class-struggle defense organization whose views are in accordance with the Marxist principles of the Spartacist League—since it took up Mumia's case over 20 years ago. While fighting to assist Mumia in pursuing every legal avenue, we had no illusions that this outspoken fighter for the

oppressed could or would get any “justice” from the courts or any other agency of the capitalist state. Our fight has been to mobilize the multi-racial working class in the U.S. and working people internationally. The proletariat is the one force in this society that has the social power to effectively challenge the capitalist rulers.

Our fight to free Mumia and abolish the racist death penalty is rooted in the revolutionary perspective of winning the working class to the understanding that the bourgeois state is not some “neutral” agency that serves society as a whole but rather exists to defend the class rule and profits of the capitalist class against those they exploit and oppress. To put a final halt to the grisly workings of capitalism's machinery of death—be they guardians of death row or the cops who operate as “judge, jury and executioner” in gunning down minority youth on the streets—requires sweeping away this entire system, which is based on exploitation and oppression, through socialist revolution.

In contrast, the reformist left's defense of Mumia is, in the words of Bolshevik revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, defined by the “framework of bourgeois society and an adaptation to its legality—i.e., the actual training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state” (*Lessons of October*, 1924). For years the reformists have subordinated the fight for Mumia's freedom to peddling the most treacherous illusions in the capitalist courts with their calls for a “new,” “fair” trial. Now, with the judicial appeals in which they

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Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition at NAACP convention in New York City, July. Korotzer/Next Left Notes

## COINTELPRO Charges Dropped Against Four SF8 Defendants

Early this summer, the frame-up prosecutions of the San Francisco 8 (SF8) utterly unraveled. Rounded up in January 2007 by cops in California, New York and Florida, these eight former members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and Black Liberation Army (BLA) faced bogus charges of killing a San Francisco police officer in 1971. On July 6, the state abandoned its prosecution of Ray Boudreaux, Richard Brown, Hank Jones and Harold Taylor, confessing it had “insufficient,” i.e., *no* evidence to proceed. The case against Richard O’Neal was dropped

last year. *Despite lack of evidence, the state vendetta against Francisco Torres persists; the next pre-trial hearing is set for October 9.*

The victory for five of the SF8 is a genuine blow against the rulers and their state. It strikes back against murderous state attacks on fighters for black rights and opponents of U.S. imperialism and the government's attempts to smear opponents with the “domestic terrorist” label, to legitimize torture as a legally sanctioned “investigative tool.” For close to 40 years, police tried to pin the killing

of police officer John Young on these eight men. Torture, concealment, destruction of evidence and coerced testimony were at the core of the government's case, a vendetta concocted as part of the FBI's deadly Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of disruption, frame-up, terror and outright murder of Black Panthers and other leftists.

This included a 1973 interrogation by two San Francisco police inspectors of three Panther members, including one of the SF8, Harold Taylor. The other two were John Bowman, who died two years

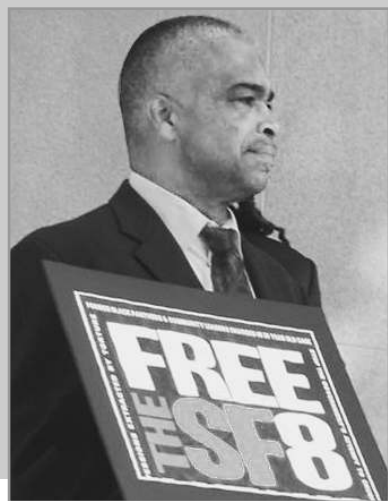
ago, and Ruben Scott. The three men were tortured for several days: they were stripped naked, blindfolded, beaten, covered with blankets soaked in boiling water, shocked with electric cattle prods on their genitals and anuses. In 1975, the charges against them were thrown out of court on the basis that their supposed “confessions” had been coerced through torture.

Thirty years later, the cops and government prosecutors tried again; again they were unsuccessful in obtaining indictments against any of these men, despite convening California state and federal grand juries, first in 2003-04 and then in 2005. Still, the frame-up was revived in 2007 when the SF8 were arrested on orders from the California State Attorney General. More than two years of court hearings produced no evidence tying these men to Young's killing. The “discovered” shotgun alleged to be the “missing murder weapon” was found not to match any weapons evidence. Similarly, DNA swabs taken from the defendants in June 2006 did not match any evidence from the scene of Young's killing. The prosecution refused to release fingerprint evidence that exonerated them. The judge ruled against releasing FBI wiretap surveillance of Black Panther phone lines based on an FBI “taint team” affidavit ludicrously asserting there had been no such surveillance of the SF8. Still, the state could not make its case.

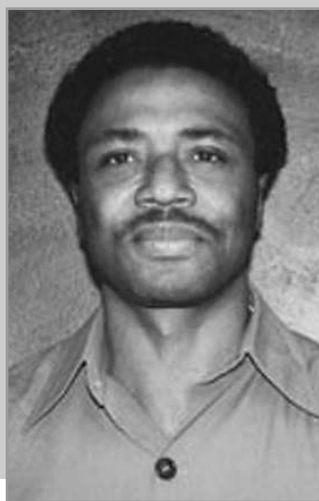
The SF8's 9 August statement read in part: “We and our support committee are claiming victory in this latest battle. As we go forward and prepare for the next one we ask that you lend your strength, your ideas and your spirit to win the dismissal of the charges against Francisco Torres. We also ask that you give your full support to the effort to gain release on parole by Jalil Muntaqim and Herman Bell.” Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) pled no contest

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## Drop the Charges Against Francisco Torres! Free Them All!



freethesf8.org photos



Left to right: Francisco Torres, Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom), Herman Bell. Torres still faces charges, while Muntaqim and Bell remain locked up based on prior frame-up convictions.



# Young Spartacus

## The United Front Tactic: Its Use and Abuse

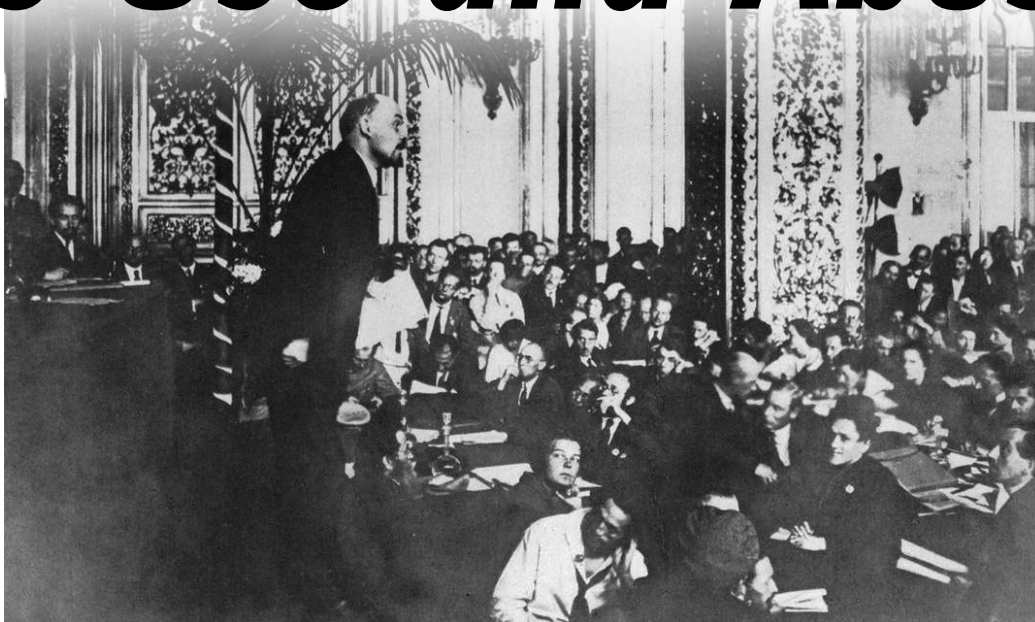
We print below a presentation by Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Joseph Seymour to the 13th National Conference of the SL/U.S. held this summer.

By  
**Joseph Seymour**

The tactic of the united front, as it was originally developed and expounded at the Third Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in June-July 1921, was intended for mass parties, in particular the nascent Communist Parties in Germany and France. It was aimed at winning over a section of the working-class base of mass reformist organizations led by the Social Democrats and, in France, the right-wing syndicalists. The united-front tactic was *not* considered applicable for relatively small Communist Parties, such as those in Britain and the United States.

Therefore, it's important to understand that our use of the united front is an *adaptation* of the tactic as it was originally conceived and implemented. This adaptation necessarily involves many differences, some obvious, others not so obvious. Thus the characteristic form of the original united front was a military action: a strike, a mass demonstration against government policies (sometimes involving a one-day general strike), defensive actions against the fascists. In contrast, the characteristic form of our united-front activities is a pre-planned political protest. Moreover, often these protests are based on demands that cannot possibly be achieved by the small left-wing propaganda groups participating in them, for example, a campus-based protest against the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Such activities are really a form of agitation, not a united-front action at all in the original sense of the term.

In this presentation I'm going to focus on the united-front tactic as it was origi-



V.I. Lenin addressing Third Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow, 1921.

nally developed and expounded by Lenin, Trotsky and the other leaders of the early Comintern. However, a useful approach in considering the applicability of the united front for a revolutionary Marxist propaganda group like ourselves was indicated six centuries earlier by the young English feudal warrior Henry Percy, otherwise known as Hotspur. As recounted in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 1*, Hotspur was discussing the united-front tactic with his ally, the old Welsh chieftain Owen Glendower. Glendower declaimed: "I can call spirits from the vasty deep." To which Hotspur replied: "Why, so can I, or so can any man; but will they come when you do call for them?" If the spirits don't come when we call them from the reformist swamp, we don't have a united front.

### Agitation and Propaganda

I think one source of confusion in our discussions on the united front has been terminological imprecision resulting in a lack of mutual understanding. That is, we use the same terms, but we mean different things by them. A key term in this regard is "agitation." The classic Marxist definition of agitation was provided by the early Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov, who differentiated it from propa-

ganda in this way. Propaganda is the explanation of many complex ideas to the few. Agitation is the explanation of a few basic ideas to the many. However, in our tendency agitation is often conflated with a call to action. The difference between propaganda and agitation in this case is viewed and presented not in terms of explaining complex versus basic ideas, but rather in terms of the immediate realizability of the latter.

The original Comintern documents on the united front linked agitation with propaganda while clearly differentiating both from involvement in struggle. Thus the July 1921 document "On Tactics" stated: "From the day of its foundation the Communist International has clearly and unambiguously stated that its task is not to establish small Communist sects aiming to influence the working masses purely through agitation and propaganda, *but to participate directly in the struggle of the working masses, establish Communist leadership of the struggle, and in the course of the struggle create large, revolutionary, mass Communist parties.*"

—*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* (1980)

Or again in the same document: "The Communist Parties can only develop through struggle. Even the smallest Parties should not limit themselves to propaganda and agitation."

I'll try to expound this concept in terms of our own organization by a hypothetical example. Let's say that a number of undocumented Latino immigrants working in hotels and restaurants in San Francisco are seized by federal agents and deported. Some of these immigrant workers are members of the hotel and restaurant workers union. A WV article focusing on this incident concludes with the position that as a general policy the labor movement must oppose deportations and support full citizenship rights for all immigrants. That's agitation. Let's continue and say that we have some supporters in the San Francisco hotel and restaurant workers union. They judge that many workers in the union are sufficiently incensed by the deportations that they're willing to engage in a protest action. So our supporters put up a motion at a union meeting for a one-day protest

strike opposing deportations and for immigrant rights. That's a call to action. We should consistently use the term agitation in its original Plekhanovite sense, clearly differentiating it from propaganda on the one side and from calls to action on the other.

### The United Front at the Third Congress

The Third Congress of the Communist International, held in mid 1921, recognized and addressed the temporary restabilization of the bourgeois order in Europe following the revolutionary turbulence of the immediate post-World War I period. In particular, revolutions in Germany and Hungary and an incipient revolution in Italy had been defeated by the forces of bourgeois reaction, abetted, especially in Germany, by the Social Democratic leaders. In 1998, comrade Reuben Samuels gave an educational on the Third Congress in which he summarized the conditions confronting it:

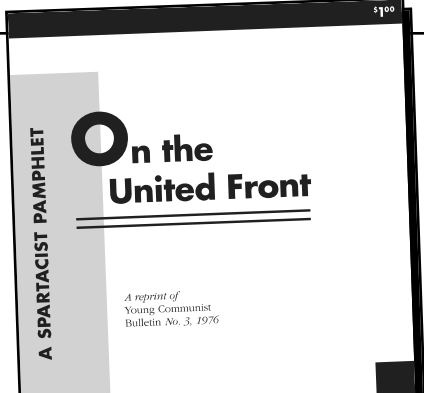
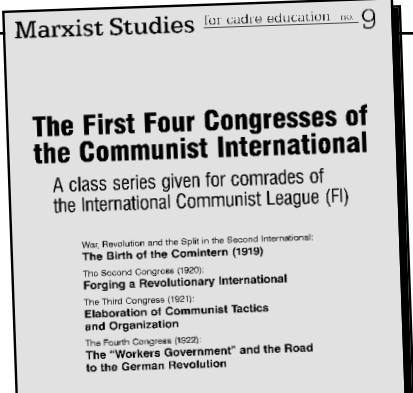
"The defeats of this period demonstrated both the immaturity of the newly formed communist parties and the ability of the Social Democracy—despite its role in WWI mobilizing the proletariat for the imperialist slaughter, and despite its vanguard role in the imperialist expeditions against the Soviet Union—to maintain its base among the organized working class in the advanced industrial countries."

—"The First Four Congresses of the Communist International," *Marxist Studies for Cadre Education*, No. 9 (2003)

One way of looking at the policies developed and adopted at the Third Congress, centrally the united-front tactic, is that they represented a *more advanced* stage of party building—they sought to gain the support of a *less politically advanced* layer of the working class. The main theme of the Comintern documents on tactics at this time was that a majority of the organized working class could not be won to the Communist movement simply through propaganda and agitation, that is, on the basis of ideas. For that, the Communist Parties have to demonstrate in practice leadership of day-to-day economic and political struggles, often of a defensive character, for partial demands.

However, a corollary of this position is that a minority of the working class, in fact a numerically significant minority—the most politically advanced elements—can be won over by propaganda and agitation to communism, in particular, through polemical attacks on the reformists and centrists. By 1921, the Communist Parties in Germany and France and some other European countries—Czechoslovakia, for example—had succeeded in attracting the main body of such politically advanced workers. They were now faced with a *different* task, one of gaining the support of a section of the workers who still adhered to the reformist parties and affiliated trade unions.

These workers pretty much knew what the Communists were about in terms of doctrine, policies and practices. The problem was not lack of familiarity on

 <p><b>On the United Front</b></p> <p>A reprint of Young Communist Bulletin No. 3, 1976</p>	 <p><b>The First Four Congresses of the Communist International</b></p> <p>A class series given for comrades of the International Communist League (FI)</p>
<p>A Spartacist pamphlet originally printed in 1976 as <i>Young Communist Bulletin</i> No. 3</p> <p><b>\$1</b> (16 pages)</p>	<p><i>Marxist Studies</i> for cadre education No. 9</p> <p><b>\$4</b> (78 pages)</p>
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their part. Rather, these workers rejected what the Communists stood for. In large measure, they subscribed to bourgeois-democratic ideology, centrally the identification of democracy with a parliamentary-type government elected through universal and equal suffrage. In many cases, they viewed the Communists as irresponsible hotheads who would lead the workers following them into adventurist actions that would be smashed by the forces of the state and right-wing paramilitary groups.

However, some of these workers were willing to collaborate with the Communists on the basis—but only on the basis—of mutually agreed upon terms. The December 1921 “Theses on the United Front” describes the mindset of such workers:

“Considerable sections of workers belonging to the old social-democratic parties are even now unwilling to accept the attacks of the social democrats and the centrists on the Communist vanguard. They are even beginning to demand an agreement with the Communists, but at the same time they have not outgrown their belief in the reformists and large numbers of them still support the parties of the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals. They do not formulate their plans and aspirations all that clearly, but in general the new mood of these masses comes down to a wish to set up a united front and make the parties and unions of the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals fight alongside the Communists against the capitalist attack.”

The Amsterdam International was the trade-union grouping affiliated with the Second International.

There are two basic conditions for the united-front tactic to be effective. One, its aims have to involve issues, such as resistance to wage cuts, that reformist-minded workers would struggle for *independently* of the offer of collaboration by the Communists. Two, the Communist Party has to have sufficient social and political weight to substantially affect the outcome of such struggles. As Trotsky explained in his March 1922 piece, “On the United Front”:

“Wherever the Communist Party already constitutes a big, organized, political force, but not the decisive magnitude; wherever the party embraces organizationally, let us say, one-fourth, one-third, or even a larger proportion of the organized proletarian vanguard, it is confronted with the question of the united front in all its acuteness.”

—*The First 5 Years of the Communist International*, Volume 2

He contrasted such parties to those that were qualitatively smaller: “In cases where the Communist Party still remains an organization of a numerically insignificant minority, the question of its conduct on the mass-struggle front does not assume a decisive practical and organizational significance.” Later in this presentation I’ll discuss the tactics worked out by the Comintern leadership for those parties, particularly in Britain and the United States, that in Trotsky’s words

were still a numerically insignificant minority.

The united-front tactic was intended as a two-edged sword. If the reformist leaders agreed to a united-front action, the Communists would be able to demonstrate in practice that they were the most effective and militant leaders of elemental working-class struggles. In doing so they would gain a more sympathetic hearing from reformist-minded workers for their broader program and goals. If the reformist leaders rejected the offer of a united front, then the Communists could say to the workers who followed them: “See, out of hostility to Communism, your leaders are depriving you of a strong and willing ally in your own struggles against the capitalists and their state apparatus.” As Trotsky put it: “It is necessary that the struggling masses should always be given the opportunity of convincing themselves

movement was divided along political lines. Most of our sections are in countries—the U.S., Canada, Britain, Germany, Australia—where there are unitary trade unions encompassing workers of all political persuasions. But we also have sections in countries—France, South Africa, Mexico—where there are competing union federations affiliated with different political parties.

## The United Front in France and Germany

Our policies toward the political organizations of the working class are significantly *different* than toward the economic organizations of the working class. A political party consists of a voluntary selection of individual activists based on a comprehensive program for organizing or reorganizing society. We seek to create a politically homogeneous revolutionary

After the war, the CGT polarized between an avowedly reformist right wing around Jouhaux and an amorphous left wing consisting of pro-Bolshevik militants, old-line syndicalists and anarchists. Faced with the increasing prospect of losing out to the forces of the left, the Jouhaux group split the organization in late 1921. The right-wing union federation, which retained the old name, had about 250,000 members. The left-wing organization, called the CGT-Unitaire (CGTU), led by an unstable bloc of fledgling Communists, syndicalists and anarchists, claimed 350,000 members. So to be effective, workers struggles over wages, conditions and layoffs had to involve united action between the Communists and their left-wing allies in the CGTU and the reformists in the CGT.

The situation in Germany was more complicated because the political division

**New York City, April 1927: Union Square demonstration, organized by Communist Party-affiliated International Labor Defense, to free class-war prisoners Sacco and Vanzetti.**



that the non-achievement of unity in action was not due to our formalistic irreconcilability but to the lack of real will to struggle on the part of the reformists.”

The January 1922 Comintern appeal, “For the United Proletarian Front!” argues: “No worker, whether communist or social-democrat or syndicalist, or even a member of the Christian or liberal trade unions, wants his wages further reduced. None wants to work longer hours, cold and hungry. And therefore all must unite in a common front against the employers’ offensive.”

—*The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents* (Vol. 1, 1919-1922), selected and edited by Jane Degras (1956)

To understand the central importance of elemental wage struggles in motivating and implementing the united-front tactic, one has to recognize that in Germany, France and a number of other European countries at this time the trade-union

vanguard party. The course of doing so often involves splitting reformist and centrist parties. Thus the French Communist Party was created in 1920 by splitting a left-wing majority from the reformist Socialist Party. Similarly, the German Communist Party was transformed in the same year from a relatively small organization, with about 80,000 members, into a mass party by splitting a left-wing majority from the centrist Independent Social Democratic Party.

However, we advocate and, when appropriate, seek to build industrial unions and factory committees encompassing *all* workers employed therein, regardless of their *political* views and affiliations. We aim to gain the political support of the majority of union members in order to replace the incumbent reformist or (in the U.S.) liberal labor bureaucrats, while preserving these organizations intact. But the incumbent bureaucrats will not necessarily play by those rules of the game, especially when they are losing it. That’s what happened in France in 1921.

In the pre-World War I era, the main trade-union organization in France, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), was a bastion of left-wing or revolutionary syndicalism. The CGT was proudly and willfully independent of the Socialist Party and to no small degree hostile to it. Syndicalist militants viewed that party, with good reason, as a predominantly petty-bourgeois organization permeated by parliamentarist careerism and intellectual dilettantism. However, in the last few years before the war the political distance between the CGT and Socialist Party was appreciably narrowed when a new, more right-wing leadership around Léon Jouhaux took over the former. With the outbreak of the war, Jouhaux and other CGT leaders joined with Socialist Party leaders in a so-called “sacred union” of national defense. Jouhaux himself became a government official.



between the Communists and reformists was intermeshed with different forms of working-class economic organization. The Social Democrats retained control over the main trade-union organization, the Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (ADGB). This was literally a union of trades, based on occupations, not on industrial or other economic units. For example, the machinists union consisted of machinists in different factories while not including non-machinists in these factories. While the Communist Party sought to work in the ADGB, the Social Democratic officialdom was able to use bureaucratic methods to prevent the Communists from wielding authority in the unions, corresponding to their influence in the ranks.

However, the revolutionary turbulence of late 1918-1919 gave rise to another form of mass working-class organization, factory councils. These embraced all workers in the enterprise and were more representative of the ranks than the unions. Council representatives had to be wage-earning workers in that enterprise, thus barring paid union functionaries. By late 1922, the Communist Party had gained sufficient authority to organize a national

*continued on page 6*



La Bataille socialiste

**Congress of CGT union federation at Lille, France, July 1921: Divisions between supporters of left and right wings, including over Communism, were hardened at the conference during which participants at times came to blows. By end of 1921, the CGT had split.**



## United Front...

(continued from page 5)

congress of several thousand factory councils. Thus the united-front tactic often involved calls for united action between the Communist-led factory councils and the Social Democratic-dominated unions.

A good example, albeit in the negative sense, of how the united-front tactic played out on the ground involved a railway workers strike in early 1922. The German railways were state-owned. As part of a fiscal austerity program, the government announced that 20,000 railway workers would be laid off. This provoked a strike by an independent railway union, that is, one not affiliated with the ADGB. The government, headed by the Social Democratic president Friedrich Ebert, declared the strike illegal. In response, the Communist Party issued an appeal for all workers organizations to defend the right to strike and mobilized its own forces in support of the railway workers. When the Social Democratic Party and ADGB leaders refused to support the strike, the railway union executive ordered its members back to work. However, the Communists' policies and activities increased their political authority among a strategically important section of the working class while discrediting the Social Democrats.

### The United Front and the Post-Soviet Period

It's obvious that the use of the united-front tactic in elemental, day-to-day struggles of labor against capital by the early European Communist Parties is not relevant for us today, nor will it be tomorrow. However, there are other important differences that are much less obvious. One such difference is the role of freedom of criticism or, more precisely, of criticism. In his 1922 piece Trotsky identified freedom of criticism as a negative condition of the united front, that is, something the Communists would not stop doing:

"We broke with the reformists and centrists in order to obtain complete freedom in criticizing perfidy, betrayal, indecision and the half-way spirit in the labor movement. For this reason any sort of organizational agreement which restricts our freedom of criticism and agitation is absolutely unacceptable to us."

Remember, we are considering mass Communist Parties that had the capability to make their criticisms of the reformist organizations *known* to the latter's members and supporters. The German Communist Party in the early '20s had dozens of daily newspapers, read by hundreds of thousands of workers, including a fraction of the members and supporters of the Social Democracy. The German, French and other European Communist Parties had parliamentary deputies and members of local government councils. They had trade-union officials and representatives on factory committees. In practically every factory in Germany, France and some other countries—such as Italy and Czechoslovakia—Communist workers were continually arguing politics with social-democratic, syndicalist or anar-

chist co-workers. There was no lack of political engagement and debate between the Communists and other tendencies in the workers movement.

The SL/U.S. faces a very different situation vis-à-vis our somewhat larger reformist opponents—the social-democratic International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Stalinoid Workers World Party and Party for Socialism and Liberation, and the Maoist-Stalinist Revolutionary Communist Party. The leaders and cadre of these organizations do not want to engage in political combat with us and do not feel any need to do so. Quite the contrary. They seek to cordon off their newer, younger members and contacts from "the Sparts." The ISO, for example, bar us from their public talks. In response, there's been a tendency to use the united-front tactic to get around the unwillingness of our reformist opponents to engage us in political debate. We can argue about the effec-

early 1920s, the British and American CPs encompassed thousands of experienced worker militants and had in their top ranks some widely known and respected workers' leaders, such as Tom Mann in Britain and William Z. Foster in the U.S.

In the case of both the British and American parties, Lenin played a central role in working out the appropriate tactics. The basic axis of the united-front tactic is the offer by the Communists of joint struggle with the reformist organizations, including their current leaderships. In Britain, this was expressed through critical electoral support to the Labour Party and also the offer by the Communists to join the Labour Party. As such, the Communists would act openly as an organized faction on the basis of a revolutionary program. At the same time, as members of the Labour Party, Communists would help to build it, for example

evade that this time and simply point out that the Labor Party slogan is the current American version of the issue of the united front. It's posed in the absence of a massive political expression of reformism or Stalinism in the United States; rather, with the organization of industrial unions with a deeply committed pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, it is toward them that the issue of proletarian unity and the process of communist triumph in struggle is centered on the Labor Party question."

Jim also emphasized that actual motion toward such a labor party, or even substantial sentiment in favor of it, would only be generated by a qualitatively higher level of working-class struggle than existed at the time or even during the big strikes that built the mass industrial unions in the 1930s. Absent such a convulsive upsurge in working-class struggle, our advocacy of a union-based party in opposition to the Democrats is a *subordinate aspect* of our more fundamental propaganda for the



WV Photo

**Washington, D.C., 1982: Thousands of protesters charge up Capitol Hill after stopping Ku Klux Klan march. SL-initiated united-front mobilization enlisted a section of Southern union movement in response to threat from KKK.**

tiveness of the tactic for this purpose.

But what is not arguable is that this was *not* the original purpose of the united-front tactic. Its aim was not to create an additional arena of debate with the reformists over doctrine and program but to engage them at an altogether different level. Thus the December 1921 "Theses on the United Front" stated: "The Communist Parties of the world, having secured complete organizational freedom to extend their *ideological influence* among the working masses, are now trying at every opportunity to achieve the broadest and fullest possible unity of these masses in *practical activity*." [emphasis in original]

I'm going to conclude by discussing the tactics worked out by the Comintern leadership for the smaller Communist Parties in Britain and the United States, for which the united front was not applicable, that is, they lacked sufficient weight to initiate and organize mass working-class actions. At the same time, these were not propaganda groups either. In the

through winning over more politically backward workers who still supported the Liberals and Tories.

In the U.S., the only mass working-class organizations were (and still are) the trade unions. Hence the Communist demand that the unions form a political party opposed to the Democrats and Republicans in which the Communists would participate. I'm not going to address whether many, perhaps most, American Communists misunderstood the tactic as calling for and being willing to build a new reformist party similar to the British Labour Party. That question is not germane to the purpose of this presentation. What is germane is an understanding that the advocacy of a trade-union-based party was the American analogue of the united-front tactic.

During the early 1970s we had an extensive internal discussion on the labor party question. The substance and conclusions of the discussion were synthesized in a presentation, "A Talk on the Labor Party Question," in 1972 by comrade Jim Robertson, that was republished in the Spartacist pamphlet *On the United Front* (January 1996). He explained:

"In the last debate in New York, I spent all my time on the decisions of the Third and Fourth Congresses. I'm going to

dictatorship of the proletariat (expressed using the term "workers government").

This approach to the labor party question has, I think, a general relevance for the SL/U.S. in the current period. There's been a lot of talk about whether or not we have a perspective. I think we do have a perspective but not in the way the term has been used. Our perspective should be to produce more and better propaganda in the Plekhanovite sense of explaining many complex ideas to the few. Let's stop with the get-rich-quick schemes already. When, in the future, opportunities for organizational breakthroughs arise, we'll all know it. Doubtless, these will involve both objective problems and internal differences, possibly fights, but that's not what has been happening in our tendency since the fall of the Soviet Union.

What has happened, I think, is a deep-going subjective drive to achieve organizational breakthroughs in order to demonstrate (mainly to ourselves) that we are *not* historically irrelevant, since everyone else in the world thinks we are historically irrelevant. We are historically relevant but we don't have to and cannot now demonstrate that through substantial organizational breakthroughs or some other kind of external success. That's just objective reality. ■

### Spartacus Youth Club Events

#### BAY AREA

Thursday, September 3, 6:30 p.m.

#### Meet the Marxists

San Francisco State University  
Cesar Chavez Student Center  
Rosa Parks F

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

#### LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, October 7, 6 p.m.

#### Meet the Marxists

UCLA, Haines Hall A78  
For more information: (213) 380-8239  
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

#### VANCOUVER

Thursday, September 17  
6:30 p.m.

#### The Marxist Perspective: The History of Class Struggles

University of British Columbia  
SUB Room 42T

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

Visit the ICL Web Site:  
**www.icl-fi.org**

### Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Club Forum

## Capitalism in its Death Agonies— America Needs Socialist Revolution!

Saturday, September 12, 5 p.m.

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Student Center East, Room 713  
750 S. Halsted St. (UIC/Halsted stop on CTA Blue Line)

#### CHICAGO

For more information: (312) 563-0441  
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

(continued from page 3)

## Reformists Beg Capitalist State for “Justice”

“Inasmuch as there is no other court to which Abu-Jamal can appeal for justice, I turn to you for remedy....

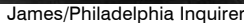
“I am aware of the many differences that exist between the case of former Senator Ted Stevens and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Still, I note with great interest the actions you have taken with regard to Senator Stevens’ conviction to assure that he not be denied his constitutional rights.”

This became an all-out lobbying effort at the centennial convention of the NAACP in New York in July, where Obama and Holder were keynote speakers. Standing outside the convention, the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC) raised a banner pleading: “Obama & Holder/We Need You Now!/Free Mumia.”

The appeal for Obama to “free Mumia” is all the more grotesque considering that he *supports* the death penalty. His credentials in this regard have been promoted by Philadelphia’s right-wing radio broadcaster Michael Smerconish. The co-author of the book, *Murdered by Mumia*, which

"I was also thrilled to have the chance to question him on a subject in which I've invested almost 20 years of time and energy—Mumia Abu Jamal.

Reporting on the lobbying effort at the NAACP convention, an article in



the *Amsterdam News* (16-22 July), explained “hope is based on the premise that having a Black attorney general, a Black president...will give Abu-Jamal’s plight stronger consideration.” The self-proclaimed “communists” of WWP took a second to no one in championing Obama’s election as “a triumph for the

In fact, after eight years of the widely despised Bush regime, Obama's election has provided a much-needed facelift for U.S. imperialism to more effectively lord it over the world's working and oppressed masses. In the U.S., the inauguration of America's first black president is a powerful propaganda weapon for the U.S. rulers. The message to black people and the oppressed is to shut up and eat it because the election of a black man as president proves the "American dream" works! This was exactly Obama's message in his speech to the NAACP convention. "No excuses. No excuses," he intoned, channeling Booker T. Washington, who over a century ago preached accommodation to the racist status quo by telling the impoverished

The reformists and liberals were successful in getting the NAACP to pass a resolution calling on Holder to investigate Mumia's case. It would be more than welcome if the NAACP put its considerable resources in a genuine fight to free Mumia. But this is not the political purpose of the WWP et al.'s petition for a civil rights investigation, which disappears the fact that Mumia is innocent and pushes illusions in the "fairness" of the American "justice" system. This was captured by NAACP chairman Julian Bond in an interview with Amy Goodman that aired on July 20. Bond argued that Mumia has "had trouble" bringing "doubts" about his case "before a tribunal that can say, you know, these things are true or they're not true. And we think he needs that chance. We think he needs that chance before the state of Pennsylvania decides to snuff his life out." I.e., notwithstanding the NAACP's opposition to the death penalty, the key thing is to let Mumia have another day in court before the rulers "snuff his life out."

Black oppression is structurally embedded in American capitalism and will not be overcome short of socialist revolution. In our struggle to free Mumia and abolish the racist death penalty, we seek to win the working class to the under-

The stakes are high and the situation is grim, but any real fight for Mumia's freedom must be based on a class-struggle opposition to the capitalist rulers, who have entombed this innocent black man in prison for more than half his life. ■

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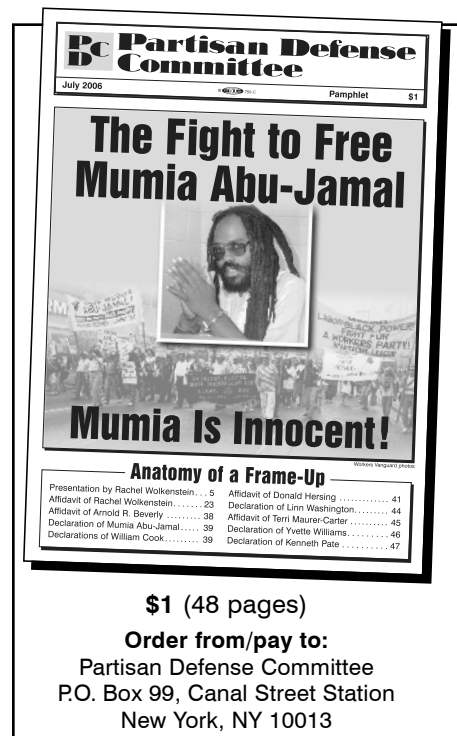
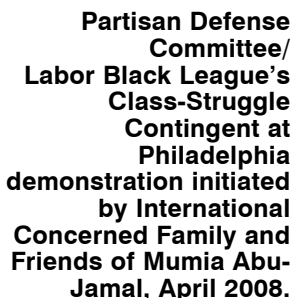
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Left: Job-seekers throng Los Angeles job fair, June 4. Right: Thousands at the Forum in L.A., many of whom lined up overnight, receive free medical care on August 11 provided by volunteers of Remote Area Medical, an organization that originally provided health services to underdeveloped countries.



# California...

(continued from page 1)

of politicians—in the current pass, Republicans—to block the passage of any budgets or taxes.

Today, immigrants and black people are being hit particularly hard. As the economy spirals downward, immigrant labor, whether in construction or in the sweatshops of the Los Angeles region, is being increasingly driven out, while the anti-immigrant witchhunt continues under the Obama White House. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) raids on factories under the Bush regime, rounding up and deporting immigrant workers, have been replaced by “desktop raid” computer checks of Social Security numbers. The result has been an increase in the number of deportations, with some 215,000 people deported so far this year, more than *double* the figures for the same period in 2007 under Bush.

More than 200 unionized immigrant workers at the Overhill Farms food processing plant in Vernon, a suburb of Los Angeles, lost their jobs in May following such a check. As described by the *Los Angeles Times* (12 June): “There were no frantic scenes of desperate workers fleeing *la migra* through the gritty streets of the industrial suburb southeast of downtown Los Angeles. For more than 200 Overhill workers, however, the effect was devastating: All lost steady jobs last month and now find themselves in a precarious employment market, without severance pay or medical insurance.” *Down with all I.C.E. raids—stop the deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Organize the unorganized!*

In the Bay Area, the city of Oakland, with its substantial black and Latino population, never recovered from the last “jobless recovery,” or, more to the point, from the destruction of most of the area’s manufacturing base in the deindustrialization of America in the 1980s. According to the 2000 census, some 20 percent of all

households in the city live on less than \$15,000 a year. Nationwide, the official unemployment rate among blacks has risen from 8.9 percent in the first quarter of 2008 to 14.5 percent in July. But these figures are no real measure of the joblessness and destitution in this country’s inner cities, where blacks have long been the uncouted “surplus population” of American capitalism.

## Obama’s “Economic Recovery” Fraud

Only a few short months ago, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) was celebrating the end of “the conservative dogmas and prejudices that drove government policy during more than a quarter-century of right-wing dominance—tax cuts are good, ‘big government’ is bad, welfare is worse” (*Socialist Worker* online, 3 March). The cause for this jubilation was Democratic president Barack Obama’s federal budget proposals, which the ISO editorial declared would “increase spending on programs for the poor, set a goal of ‘universal’ health care coverage, expand access to higher education.” The ISO’s delusions to the contrary, the fact that the already paltry sums spent on such programs are being cut even further in states across the country is more than testimony to the cynical fraud of Obama’s economic “stimulus package.”

A Wall Street Democrat, Obama increased the federal deficit by a trillion dollars to bail out the bankers, auto bosses and other sinking titans of American capitalism. The message for everyone else was “sacrifice”—a program enforced by the venal sellouts who head the unions in this country. Like the leaders of the United Auto Workers, who forked over gains won through decades of hard struggle in order to bail out the Big Three auto producers, the heads of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), representing many of California’s city and government workers, also accept that the working class must play its part in paying for the economic meltdown.

In the midst of the California budget crisis, the unions who run and maintain the BART transit system in the Bay Area were locked in a contract battle with the transit bosses, who are demanding \$100 million in concessions. The BART unions have a lot of social power, with the ability to shut down a transit system with some 350,000 daily riders. The multi-racial membership of BART’s unions is a living link to masses of black and immigrant poor. Championing demands addressed to their needs—from the fight for free, mass transit to free, quality health care for all—would win the BART unions plenty of allies.

But this is the polar opposite of the strategy of the pro-capitalist trade-union misleaders. When Oscar Grant, a young black man, was killed on New Year’s Day by a BART cop in a train station, the misleaders of BART’s unions did not even issue a statement of protest, much less mobilize their members, in opposition to Grant’s coldblooded execution. Doubtless this is because BART’s killer cops are organized in a “union” affiliated with

the SEIU. The cops are enforcers of capitalist class rule against working people and the oppressed and have no place in the workers movement. *Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!*

A real fight in defense of BART’s workforce and the Bay Area’s black and minority masses would pose a direct challenge to the economic and political prerogatives of the capitalist ruling class. Instead, in a cringing display of their fundamental belief in the capitalist profit system, the BART union misleaders have danced to the bosses’ tune by shouldering their “share” of responsibility. When the membership of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555, representing BART drivers and station agents, twice voted down a massive giveback deal, the big guns of the California Federation of Labor and the local labor councils, as well as black Democratic Party Congresswoman Barbara Lee, were brought in to enforce class peace. Hours before the ATU ranks were set to strike at 12:01 a.m. on August 17, a new version of the same sellout was announced by the ATU tops. Another vote is now scheduled for August 25.

Here is an object lesson in the role of the trade-union bureaucrats as the “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class”—a role that is today expressed in the union tops’ prostration before the Obama administration. When the capitalist rulers declare “there is no money,” the labor tops salute and offer to sacrifice their members’ wages and work and living conditions, accepting without question that the bank vaults of the capitalists, where there is plenty of money, are sacrosanct private property. By the same token, they turn their back on the fight for black rights and the defense of immigrants, who have been first on the chopping block of capitalist austerity.

The bankruptcy of capitalism now on naked display poses the very survival of the working class. To combat unemployment, it is necessary to shorten the work-week at no loss in pay and spread the available work around, as part of the struggle for jobs for all. Wages must rise with prices to guard against the ravages of inflation. There must be a massive program of public works at union wages to rebuild the crumbling infrastructure and schools and to build decent public housing. To unmask the exploitation, robbery and fraud of the capitalist owners and the swindles of the banks, workers should demand that the capitalists open their books, making clear to all the squandering of human labor which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits.

All must have full access to medical care at no cost. Benefits for the unemployed must be extended until they have jobs, with all pensions completely guaranteed by the government. Such demands, the elements of which were laid out in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International, will not be granted by the rapacious capitalist rulers. The capitalist state exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. It cannot be reformed

or wielded to serve the interests of working people. The catastrophe of joblessness, threatening the disintegration of the working class, can be effectively fought only by a workers movement led by those committed to the struggle for socialist revolution and the establishment of a workers government where those who labor rule.


If the unions are to be organizations of struggle by the working class against the ravages of capitalism, there must be a political struggle against the labor bureaucrats who subordinate the class interests of the proletariat to those of its exploiters and their political parties. The labor traitors have tied the hands of the unions for decades through their alliance with the capitalist Democratic Party. What is needed is to forge a class-struggle leadership of the unions that can arm the workers to carry out the necessary battles against American capitalism. This in turn will be part of building a multiracial revolutionary workers party dedicated to the overthrow of this decaying capitalist-imperialist order.

## Down With the Racist War Against Immigrants and Blacks!

Over the past few decades, California has been a virtual petri dish for right-wing ballot initiatives particularly targeting immigrants and blacks—while also taking aim at others deemed “outcasts” and “deviants,” such as gay people who want to get married. The passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 was the harbinger of a broader right-wing tax revolt across the country. This was codified at the federal level with the presidential election of former California governor Ronald Reagan in 1980, whose “supply side economics” slashed taxes for the rich and upper-income suburbanites while stealing money from welfare mothers and inner-city schoolchildren.

Prop. 13 was also the harbinger of a series of deeply reactionary propositions taking aim at immigrants, blacks and working people. Among these was 1994’s Prop. 187, which cut off all education,

Programmatic Statement  
of the Spartacist League/U.S.



For a Workers Party  
That Fights for a Workers Government!

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

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

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Opponents of the Revolutionary  
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health care and other social benefits for “illegal” immigrants (most of these provisions were later overturned by the courts). Two years later, the passage of Proposition 209 outlawed even token affirmative action programs that gave blacks and other minorities limited access to higher education and government jobs and contracts. The slashing of such social programs has been matched in inverse proportion by increasing state repression and terror aimed at containing the seething anger and discontent of those who have been cast on the scrapheap of American capitalism.

The U.S. leads the world in the number of people who are behind bars—many of them targets of the racist “war on drugs”—and California leads the nation. Since the early 1980s, the state’s prison population has jumped from 20,000 to 167,000. A big boost came with the passage of the 1994 “three strikes you’re out” Prop. 184 (heavily funded by the California prison guards association), which mandates life sentences for a third felony offense no matter how minor. An example is Curtis Wilkerson, who is now in jail for life for his “third strike”—stealing a pair of socks.

California’s prisons are now so overcrowded that a federal three-judge panel recently ruled that they violated the constitutional amendment against “cruel and unusual punishment.” In 2005, a U.S. district judge found that one California prisoner a week died due to lack of adequate medical facilities. But a budget-cutting proposal to cut money from prisons through the early release of 27,000 elderly and sick inmates to non-prison hospitals, and allowing other “nonviolent” inmates to serve their last year of time under house arrest, has provoked howls of protest from right-wing Republicans.

A 20 August column titled “Priority Test: Health Care or Prisons?” by *New*



California Department of Corrections

Overcrowded conditions at California State Prison—Los Angeles County, 2006.

*York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof decries the fact that California spends over six times more locking up each prisoner in overflowing and decrepit jails than it does per child in the Oakland school district. Kristof asks, “Would we rather use scarce resources to educate children and heal the sick, or to imprison people because they used drugs or stole a pair of socks?” It is indeed a measure of the increasing depravity of American capitalism that it will spend exponentially more imprisoning people than educating them or providing even a modicum of health care to keep them alive. But it is a calculus based on what the U.S. bourgeoisie sees as necessary to preserve American capitalism.

When it comes to the education of those they exploit, the capitalist rulers expend only as much as they can realize back in profit. And if educating the sons and daughters of white workers has increasingly become an expendable overhead,

the children of black people are deemed an *expendable population* by America’s rulers. Once a reserve army of labor to be maintained, albeit minimally, for the American bourgeoisie today the black ghetto poor are not worth “wasting money” on to keep alive, much less educate. The American working class cannot liberate itself without at the same time leading the fight to smash the chains of black oppression.

For a Workers Government!

The budget-slashing offensive by California’s Republican and Democratic Party rulers has provoked predictable cries from the reformists to “tax the rich.” A 26 July article on the Web site of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) opines that “the budget crisis would be relatively easy to solve under a different economic system.” Leaving unnamed what such a system would be, the PSL goes on to offer its own accounting advice for resolving the budget crisis, “even under capitalism,” through greater taxes on corporations and the rich as well as imposing a “moratorium” on debt service to the banks. They even go so far as to name the sums that could be saved through such endeavors. The aim of such reformist pipe dreams is to conceal the reality that the bourgeois state and its political representatives exist to defend capitalist rule and profit, not to provide for the well-being of the working class and the poor.

Not to be outdone, the International Socialist Organization came up with a scheme whereby Obama could preserve the military might of U.S. imperialism and still find lots of spare cash for social programs: “Cut the military budget in half, and the U.S. could create a generous social safety net and *still* be the largest military power in the world” (*Socialist Worker*

online, 3 March)! It would be hard to find a more cringing statement of the reformists’ fundamental faith in the capitalist state, to say nothing of social-patriotic chauvinism against the Iraqi, Afghan and other oppressed peoples of the world who are on the receiving end of U.S. imperialism’s military might.

Like the trade-union bureaucrats, whom they serve as water boys, these putative “socialists” promote politics that are determined by what is practical and possible under capitalism. In opposition to the capitalists and their reformist agents, Trotsky argued:

“If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.”

America’s capitalist rulers arrogantly presume they can get away with starving the poor, killing the sick and aged and further impoverishing working people and the oppressed without provoking any social protest. This calculation, which owes much to the role of the trade-union bureaucracy in enforcing class peace and suppressing labor struggle, is nonetheless foolish. While the capitalist rulers bray that Marxism has proved to be a “failed experiment,” they cannot eliminate the class struggle, which is born of the irreconcilable conflict of interests between labor and capital.

People cannot stand having no future for themselves or their children, or being oppressed like slaves, with poverty, disease and homelessness threatening millions. There is tremendous pressure building at the base of this society, which can and will explode. Harnessing and directing this anger toward the eradication of a system based on exploitation and rooted in racial oppression is, at bottom, a question of leadership. The key to unlocking the social power that lies in the hands of the multiracial working class is to break the chains forged by the trade-union misleaders that have shackled labor to its exploiters. To fight the economic catastrophe threatening the working class and the increasingly vicious oppression of blacks and immigrants requires forging a multiracial revolutionary workers party. Such a party would not only fight to defend the interests of workers, blacks, immigrants and others against the ravages of capitalism, but would lead the struggle to expropriate the parasitic bourgeoisie through socialist revolution and the establishment of a workers government where those who labor rule. ■



Wilson/NY Times

Homeless encampment: A modern “Hooverville” in Fresno rail yard in March.

SF8...

(continued from page 3)

to charges of conspiracy to commit voluntary manslaughter. Herman Bell pled guilty to lesser charges of voluntary manslaughter. Under the terms of these plea deals, Bell and Muntaqim were given no additional jail time, would not testify against any other of the SF8 and their pleas could not be used as evidence against the others. This would return them to prisons in New York where they are serving 25-to-life sentences on separate charges of killing two NYPD cops in 1971. The two men, together with Albert “Nuh” Washington, who has died, were known as the “New York 3.”

Central to the New York 3’s 1975 frame-up conviction was the coerced testimony of torture victim Ruben Scott, who subsequently recanted. Long-suppressed documents showed that two women witnesses were jailed for 13 months and threatened with the loss of custody of their children in order to coerce their testimony. That testimony was rewarded by not only allowing them custody of their children, but also with a rent-free apartment and a \$150 a week stipend for several years. During the 1980s, it was

revealed that the FBI had concealed significant exculpatory evidence, including a ballistics report that proved the key piece of “physical evidence” at trial—a .45 calibre pistol in Bell’s possession at the time of his arrest—was not the weapon used to kill the cops (see *The COINTELPRO Papers*, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall [1990]).

Referring to the 1973 arrests and torture of the three Panthers used to go after the SF8, former Black Panther and death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal stated ([www.prisonradio.org](http://www.prisonradio.org), 23 May 2006): “Long before the words Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib entered common American usage as reference points for government torture, there were several young black men who knew something about the subject.” He added, “The roots of Guantánamo, of Abu Ghraib, of Bagram Air Force Base, of U.S. secret torture chambers operating all around the world, are deep in American life, and its long war against Black life and liberation.”

Indeed, the relentless persecution of these men is among the many atrocities committed under the government’s decades-long COINTELPRO operations. In 1968, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover vowed, “The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be made to understand that

if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries.” In order to persecute or outright kill Black Panthers, the FBI revived COINTELPRO, a counterintelligence program originally implemented in 1956 against the Communist Party. The government then unleashed the most savage and systematic campaign of domestic racist state terror in modern American history: some 233 of 295 COINTELPRO actions against black organizations took place against the Panthers. Thirty-eight Panthers were killed and hundreds more railroaded into prison hellholes for scores of years. Among those still in America’s dungeons are Mumia Abu-Jamal, Ed Poindexter, Mondo we Langa, Sundiata Acoli. Assata Shakur, who fled the country in 1979, is living in exile in Cuba. Many others died behind prison walls. Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) spent 27 years behind bars for a murder the FBI and California state officials knew he did not commit. In that case, foreshadowing the frame-up of the SF8, the FBI claimed to have “lost” wiretaps proving that Geronimo was at an Oakland Panther meeting, 400 miles away from L.A. where and when the murder was committed. Geronimo was finally released in 1997 when an Orange County Superior Court

judge ruled that he had been denied a fair trial due to the prosecution’s withholding of vital evidence from the defense.

As we wrote over 30 years ago: “Unlike various New-Left-liberal guilt-tripping groups like the International Socialists and the Revolutionary Union [forerunner of the Revolutionary Communist Party], the Spartacist League never hid criticisms of the Panthers’ nationalist ideology and adventurist tactics. We attempted to win these potentially valuable cadre through political struggle to a working-class orientation as the only road to black liberation. At the same time we have always stood in the forefront of those forces fighting for the freedom of Black Panther Party political prisoners victimized by the racist capitalist state” (WV No. 88, 5 December 1975). We continue to do so today—from our 22-year fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal’s freedom to our active participation in the struggle to free the SF8. We know well that the bourgeoisie does not grant general amnesties in the class war; freedom for all class-war prisoners can be won only as part of the struggle for workers revolution to overthrow this brutal racist capitalist system. **Drop the charges against Francisco Torres now! Free Jalil Muntaqim and Herman Bell! ■**

China...
(continued from page 12)

be based on collectivized property. In fact, the non-capitalist character of China has been clearly demonstrated during the current severe global economic downturn.

To see this, one can compare the effects of the economic stimulus programs in the U.S. and China. Despite the \$800 billion stimulus package enacted by the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, output and employment have continued to fall. The gross domestic product is nearly 4 percent below what it was a year ago, while industrial production has been cut by 13.6 percent over the same period. Official optimism that the economy is bottoming out, propagated by the Obama White House, points to the fact that in July employers eliminated “only” a quarter of a million jobs, somewhat less than the average job loss over the previous several months.

By contrast, China’s stimulus program, centered on investment in infrastructure by state-owned enterprises and government bodies and expanding loans by state-controlled banks, has effectively offset the massive decline in export earnings. The annual rate of growth of gross domestic product increased to 8 percent in the second quarter up from 6 percent in the previous quarter. Richard McGregor, a China watcher for the London Financial Times (9 August), commented: “Beijing has managed to pull the Chinese economy out of a ditch with a massive fiscal and monetary stimulus.”

Nonetheless, the global economic downturn has sharply worsened conditions for those migrant workers from the countryside who have toiled in factories owned by foreign and offshore Chinese capitalists producing light manufactures for export. Many have had to return to their villages, at least temporarily, including Uighurs from Xinjiang. Impoverished Uighur and also Han youth in the villages and cities of Xinjiang cannot now improve their conditions by securing employment in the capitalist-owned factories producing for export. In this sense, the basic contradictions of the world capitalist system and the accommodation to that system by the Beijing Stalinist regime have aggravated the national conflict between Uighurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang.

In their own way, the imperialist bourgeoisies recognize that China continues to embody the social and national gains of the 1949 Revolution. The country is not theirs as it was in the past. The ultimate goal of the U.S., European and Japanese imperialist powers is to restore capitalism in China and once again reduce the country to semicolonial subjugation. In pursuing that goal, the imperialists have encouraged and supported reactionary nationalist forces linked to religion among the non-Han peoples—Tibetans, Uighurs—in the western borderlands of China. Thus the national conflict between Uighurs and Han in Xinjiang must be



Sabrie/NY Times

In the wake of communal violence, Uighurs and Han Chinese in mixed neighborhood sign up for joint self-defense group.

viewed within the broad framework of imperialist hostility to the Chinese deformed workers state.

Stalinist Misrule and the National Conflict in Xinjiang

The specific character of the national question in Xinjiang has significantly changed as a consequence of developments since the 1949 Revolution. At that time, 75 percent of the region’s population were Uighurs, less than 7 percent were Han Chinese. Today, of the 21 million people in Xinjiang, 45 percent are Uighurs and 40 percent are Han. Moreover, the Han population is concentrated in the cities and even in 1949 made up a majority in Urumqi, the provincial capital.

Initially, the migration of Han into the relatively impoverished backwater province of Xinjiang resulted from deliberate government policy and special incentives. However, for the past decade or so, Xinjiang had experienced an economic boom, even by China’s standards, centrally based on the exploitation and development of its oil and natural gas fields. According to official figures, the region’s gross domestic product doubled between 2004 and 2008 from \$28 billion to \$60 billion. This boom has attracted Han Chinese of all classes, from capitalist entrepreneurs to unskilled laborers, pursuing their own economic interests. That is, the changing demographics are not solely determined by the policies and intent of the CCP regime, though Uighurs complain that they continue to be excluded even from unskilled work.

At the same time, the pervasive use of market relations in the economy and the large private sector have increased the gap between the growing number of Han Chinese and the indigenous peoples in the country’s western borderlands. Especially in private enterprises, but also in the state sector, hiring often is based on nepotism, other personal connections or outright discrimination in favor of Han Chinese. But even if competition in the labor market were decided solely by individual capacity, Han Chinese would still have an advantage over Uighurs; they are far more skilled and literate, in particular fluent in Mandarin, China’s lingua franca.

Thus, the past decade’s economic boom in Xinjiang appears to have aggravated rather than lessened Uighur resentment against Han Chinese as a socially privileged and politically dominant nationality. Two China correspondents for the London Financial Times (7 July) report:

“The redevelopment of old towns and the influx of richer Han Chinese radically changed local economic structures, costing many Uighurs their traditional jobs.... “This has happened while Xinjiang’s economy has been growing at more than 11 per cent a year for the past six years, above the national average. The wealth created by this rapid growth has been concentrated in the pockets of new immigrants, increasing the gap between rich and poor, Han and Uighur, some locals complain.”

Enmity between Uighurs and Han Chinese has centuries-old, historical roots.

But that enmity has been intensified by the effects of Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, particularly in the last two decades. At the same time, it is important to recognize that Uighurs, like other workers and rural toilers throughout China, have benefited enormously from the progressive social and economic development of the post-1949 People’s Republic. Since the Revolution, infant mortality in Xinjiang has continually declined while life expectancy, less than 30 years in 1949, rose to 67 years by 2000.

However, today’s young Uighur men and women are much less likely to compare their conditions of life to those of their parents and grandparents than to those of the Han newcomers. And by those standards they are clearly disadvantaged. To be sure, the Stalinist regime has made an effort to recruit more Uighurs and other national minorities into the higher reaches of the social order. Thus Uighur students are given additional points on the standardized examinations that are a screening mechanism for admission to university. But such measures have a tokenistic character given the reality that the mass of Uighurs are on the bottom of a newly reconfigured society in their own homelands.

The Chinese Stalinist leaders, who strive above all to maintain social “order,” recognized the danger to themselves in the growing hostility of the poorer Uighurs toward the better-off Han. But instead of moving to raise the Uighur populace to the level of the Han within Xinjiang, the CCP regime had recourse to the safety valve of internal migration to the factories and construction sites of coastal China.

Beginning in 2002, the government instituted a labor export program for Uighur youth from low-income families. That program offered substantial advantages for those participating in it: incomes two or three times what they could earn at home, training in modern industrial equipment, Mandarin-language classes and free medical care. But state coercion

in the form of stiff fines also was used against those Uighurs who, despite such material incentives, refused to leave their homes to work in strange cities thousands of miles away.

An estimated 1.5 million people from Xinjiang, mainly Uighurs, work elsewhere in China. But that safety valve is now being shut off by the effects of the global capitalist downturn. Reports indicate that both Uighur and Han perpetrators and victims of last month’s riots in Urumqi were mostly unemployed or seasonal migrant workers.

What then is to be done? A workers and peasants government in China, issuing out of a proletarian political revolution, would establish a rationally planned and centrally managed economy based on state-owned enterprises. (This would not preclude the use of market mechanisms for certain purposes nor a limited role for the private, including foreign-owned, sector.) Only such a system would be able to narrow the present and widening socioeconomic gap between Uighurs and Han in Xinjiang. What is required is expending and directing sufficient resources to educate and train Uighurs in the use of modern industrial technology on the same footing as Han Chinese. In the final analysis, however, to achieve a level of material abundance for the benefit of all of China’s peoples requires aid from a socialist Japan or a socialist America, underlining again the need for international proletarian revolution.

Key to achieving genuine national equality in Xinjiang is reversing the Stalinist policy of forced Sinification, in particular the effort to marginalize the Uighur language in favor of Mandarin. The CCP boss of Xinjiang, Wang Lequan, declared that minority languages like Uighur are “out of step with the 21st century” (New York Times, 10 July). Wang is here speaking the language of the Mandarinate of old imperial China translated into the Stalinist nationalism and Han chauvinism of today. Since 2002, Mandarin has been the only language used in courses at Xinjiang University for at least the first two years of course work. At the same time, children from lower-class Uighur families have had little opportunity to achieve fluency in Mandarin. Under a workers and peasants government, there would be genuine bilingualism at all levels of education from preschool to university. Uighurs would be able to use their own language as well as Mandarin in all economic and political institutions, whether dealing with factory managers or government officials.

Such a language policy is mandated by the principles of proletarian internationalism—i.e., equality of all peoples in all spheres of life. The example to which we look is that of the Bolshevik regime led by Lenin and Trotsky that issued out of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Tsarist Russia was aptly described by Lenin as a “prison house of peoples.” Upon coming to power, the Bolsheviks implemented the policies for which they always fought: the equality of all peoples, ethnicities and languages, including the right of self-determination for the myriad nations



Riboud/Magnum

Peasant denounces landlord at People’s Tribunal following 1949 Chinese Revolution.

Chinese-Language Pamphlet No. 8

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oppressed under the tsarist empire.

In China, the Han majority comprises some 90 percent of the population. Only a Leninist-Trotskyist party committed to proletarian internationalism can effectively combat Han chauvinism, including by mobilizing the Han proletariat in the struggle for the equality of all of China's peoples. And only such a party can combat the efforts of reactionary Uighur nationalists and Islamicists, supported by the imperialists, to exploit the just grievances of the Uighur masses against Chinese Stalinist misrule for counterrevolutionary purposes.

### World Uighur Congress: An Agency of Imperialism

There is historical irony and deep political significance in the fact that both Uighur Islamicists and the leading figure in the World Uighur Congress were originally sponsored and promoted by the Chinese Stalinist leadership. In the 1970s and '80s, China was engaged in a strategic alliance with U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union, a policy initiated by Mao Zedong. In the context of that reactionary alliance, the Beijing regime trained and dispatched religious-minded, young Uighur men (who were Sunni Muslims) to join the CIA-backed *mujahedin* cutthroats fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Thus, the Chinese bureaucracy criminally bolstered American imperialism in weakening and undermining the Soviet Union, thereby furthering imperialism's counterrevolutionary drive against the USSR. We Trotskyists hailed the Red Army's intervention into Afghanistan, not only as an elementary expression of our unconditional military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state but also as the only means for social progress to be realized in benighted Afghanistan, not least for its horribly oppressed women.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the main body of militant Islamicists, represented by Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, turned against their former U.S. masters. Similarly, Uighur jihadists who had fought in Afghanistan redirected their fire at the Chinese Communist government. Following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, *Jane's Security News*, which is linked to British intelligence, commented in this regard: "Chinese strategy on this front [Afghanistan], however, had a negative fallout for Beijing as the returning Uighur jihadis fuelled the already-simmering insurgency for an independent Muslim Eastern Turkestan in Xinjiang."

Most of the Uighur jihadists did not, in fact, return to China. However, the exiled Islamicists may well have ties to small, shadowy Uighur terrorist groups like the East Turkestan Islamic Movement operating in Xinjiang. Indeed, the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR has led to a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism throughout Central Asia. For its part, the Chinese Stalinist government has signed on to the global "war on terror," again emboldening the imperialists in Washington, who are now seizing on the communal riots in Xinjiang to promote their counterrevolutionary aims against China.

Far more important than the Uighur Islamicist terrorist groups is the World Uighur Congress because of the support it receives from U.S. and also German imperialism. The WUC receives funding from the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, a notorious CIA conduit. The organization's leading light is one Rebiya Kadeer, who dubs herself "the Mother of the Uighur nation." Kadeer began her career in China as a successful and wealthy capitalist, becoming a member of the National People's Congress, the rubber-stamp parliamentary body of the CCP regime. However, in 1997 this poster girl for China's new capitalist class fell from political grace after her husband, who had fled to the U.S., made offensive broadcasts over the official government Voice of America radio station. Two years later, she was arrested and charged with "providing secret

information to foreigners" as she prepared to meet a delegation of U.S. Congressional staff. She was imprisoned until 2005. After her release, she moved to Washington, D.C., operating in the bastion of world imperialism. On more than one occasion, Kadeer was granted an audience by George W. Bush, who duly called her an "apostle of freedom."

The communalist riots in Urumqi occurred a little over a year after Tibetan mobs, led by Buddhist lamas, engaged in murderous attacks on Han Chinese residents in the capital, Lhasa (see "Counterrevolutionary Riots in Tibet," WV No. 911, 28 March 2008). Much of the Western bourgeois media has drawn a parallel between the two events, while hypocritically condemning the Chinese Communists for their brutality toward the country's national minorities.

There are similarities but also important differences between the anti-Han riots in Tibet last year and last month's communal violence in Xinjiang. The similarity lies in the reactionary, imperialist-backed nature of the exiled forces that claim to represent the Tibetan and Uighur peoples. The difference lies in the actual influence these forces exercise on the ground in the borderlands of western China.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 after the suppression of a lama/aristocrat uprising organized and armed by the CIA. Since then he has been elevated, so to speak, by his imperialist masters as the supreme incarnation of opposition to the Chinese Communist government. The Dalai Lama is a political personage of some importance on the international scene. The WUC's Rebiya Kadeer has made every effort to identify herself and her cause with Tibet's "living god," who contributed a brief introduction to her autobiography. Nonetheless, prior to last month's communal violence in Xinjiang, few people paid attention to Kadeer and her cohorts except for their CIA handlers.

In Tibet, the effect of the CCP regime's policies has been to reconstitute a numeri-



Corbis

**Workers in state-owned wind turbine factory in Urumqi. The core sectors of the Chinese economy remain collectivized.**

Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S. The ISO claims China has never been a workers state but has been "state capitalist" since 1949. This "theory," which they also applied to the former Soviet Union, is a fig leaf for decades of anti-Communist practice on behalf of imperialism. The ISO howled alongside the imperialists against the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan. When Soviet forces pulled out of Afghanistan in 1988-89, in a futile attempt by the Kremlin bureaucracy to appease the imperialists, the ISO gloated: "We welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (*Socialist Worker*, May 1988). Three years later, the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the ISO's former parent group, exulted: "Communism has collapsed.... It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing" (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 31 August 1991).



Reuters

**World Uighur Congress head Rebiya Kadeer (left) at press conference in Washington, D.C., with Republican Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (center) and Democrat William Delahunt, July 10.**

cally large and relatively wealthy Buddhist priest caste. The lamas are in the forefront of both internal reaction and imperialist provocations, such as last year's riots. By contrast, Beijing's policy in Xinjiang has been to suppress the emergence of a socially and politically influential Islamic clerical caste. Mosques must be registered with the state and imams require government approval. There does not now exist an organized network of Islamic clerics that could act as an effective link between the imperialist enemies of the People's Republic of China and the disaffected Uighur masses. On the available evidence, what happened in Urumqi last month was mainly a spontaneous eruption of ethnic hatred, fueled by relative economic deprivation, on the part of Uighurs involved.

### Reformists and the Xinjiang Riots

Joining the imperialist drive for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Chinese deformed workers state are reformist "socialists" such as the International

as the key barrier to counterrevolution, writing in an earlier article (10 February): "The CCP government, in spite all of its contradictions, remains the most important obstacle to the return of China to its previous state of semi-colonial slavery."

In reality, the continued rule of the CCP undermines defense of proletarian state power in China. Contrary to the PSL's claims, the bureaucracy continues to preserve state property not out of a subjective identification with socialism but, as Trotsky wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) in regard to the Soviet Union, "only to the extent that it fears the proletariat"—i.e., to protect its privileged position as a parasitic caste atop the workers state.

### For International Proletarian Revolution!

The CCP regime denounces the World Uighur Congress as "separatist." Actually, Kadeer & Co. do not now openly call to detach Xinjiang from China and establish an independent state, though that is manifestly what they're aiming for. The Uighur jihadists do call for an independent "Islamic East Turkestan." As proletarian internationalists, we do not consider the present state boundaries of China to be sacrosanct. But all of the forces advocating or supporting an independent Xinjiang today are in the camp of capitalist counterrevolution. Moreover, the demand for an independent Xinjiang, even if couched in the most "democratic" language, would be viewed by everyone in the region as a program to drive out the Han people.

One cannot envision a progressive solution to the national conflict in Xinjiang except in the context of a proletarian political revolution throughout China. This would open up historical possibilities that do not now exist: regional autonomy in some form, even an independent state allied to China.

The Chinese Stalinist regime of Hu Jintao declares a "harmonious society" to be the goal of its policies and practices. It is a fundamental premise of Marxism that a harmonious society can be achieved only through overcoming economic scarcity leading to material abundance. Despite China's rapid economic growth since the 1949 Revolution, it is still a relatively poor country by international standards. Per capita gross domestic product is one-tenth that of the United States and one-seventh that of Japan.

Ultimately, the survival and advancement of China's revolutionary gains hinge on the fight for socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries of Japan, North America and West Europe, the only road toward the all-round modernization of China as part of an international planned economy. A proletarian political revolution producing a China of workers and peasants councils would be a beacon for the oppressed working masses of Asia and the entire world. That is the perspective of the International Communist League. ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Defend Chinese Deformed Workers State! For Workers Political Revolution!

# Communal Violence in Xinjiang



AFP



Reuters

**Ethnic conflict in Xinjiang, July: Injured Han Chinese women in hospital (left); Uighurs behind roadblock in their neighborhood (right). Below: Chinese troops on a main street in downtown Urumqi.**

Early last month a violent national conflict erupted in Urumqi, the provincial capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in western China. It began on July 5 when hundreds of Uighurs—a Turkic-speaking, traditionally Islamic people—went on a murderous rampage against their Han Chinese neighbors. Han mobs then retaliated in kind. The Chinese government now sets the number killed at 197, most of them Han Chinese, while some 1,600 were injured. To halt the interethnic bloodletting the government authorities utilized massive police force with 20,000 troops patrolling both Han and Uighur neighborhoods.

From the outset the Beijing regime has claimed, without convincing evidence, that the riots in Urumqi were masterminded by the anti-Chinese nationalists of the World Uighur Congress (WUC), an imperialist-sponsored group based mainly in the U.S. and Germany. Needless to say, the WUC presents a completely different picture from that of the Chinese government of the events leading to the riots. It contends that on July 5, a peaceful protest by Uighurs, mainly university students, was set upon by the police who opened fire on the demonstrators without any provocation. For its part, the Chinese government says that the repressive measures it took were a response to, not the cause of, the violence. We are quite distant from the situation, and each source—whether it's the Chinese government, the WUC or the imperialist media—has its own motive in presenting what happened. What is clear is that however the events on July 5 may have begun, they soon degenerated into communalist violence. Even the London *Economist* (11 July), a house organ for Anglo-American financiers, stated: "The violence in Xinjiang was crude, racist stuff on both sides, with the Han Chinese suffering the brunt of it."

The trigger for the riots in Urumqi was



AFP

an event that occurred thousands of miles away in the southeastern Chinese coastal province of Guangdong. In late June, Uighur migrant workers living in a dormitory at a toy factory owned by Hong Kong capitalists were attacked by Han workers. At least two Uighur workers were killed and scores injured. The attack, which lasted for hours, was apparently provoked by a false rumor circulated by a disgruntled former worker that six Uighur men had raped two Han women. After news of what happened reached Xinjiang, Uighurs were enraged over inaction by Chinese authorities and demanded a full government investigation. These complaints against the Chinese government, which seem to be justified, in no way excuse the murderous rampage by Uighurs in Xinjiang against their Han neighbors.

Xinjiang, with its wealth of natural resources, especially large deposits of oil and natural gas, is of great strategic economic importance to China. The country's president, Hu Jintao, judged the communalist violence in Urumqi to be of such political importance and urgency that he cut short his participation in the G8 sum-

mit in Italy and returned to Beijing. What is the broad political significance of the national conflict between Uighurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang? To answer that question it is necessary to understand the class nature of the Chinese state and its relationship to world imperialism.

### The Class Character of the Chinese State

The 1949 Chinese Revolution, marked by the military victory of Mao Zedong's peasant-based armies over Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang, destroyed capitalist-landlord rule and liberated the country from imperialist subjugation. The revolution brought enormous social gains to China's workers, peasants and deeply oppressed women. However, the People's Republic of China, ruled by the Communist Party (CCP), emerged as—and continues to be—a bureaucratically deformed workers state patterned on the former Soviet Union under J. V. Stalin. A parasitic, nationalist bureaucratic caste rests atop a collectivized economy.

Like their Soviet Stalinist forebears, Mao and his successors, including the

current regime, have preached the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that socialism could be built in a single country. Marxists define socialism as a classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance, which could be built only on the basis of international planning, crucially requiring the overthrow of capitalist rule in the advanced capitalist centers of North America, West Europe and Japan. In practice, the Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country" has meant accommodation to world imperialism and opposition to the perspective of international workers revolution.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution. In answer to the aspirations of the Chinese workers and rural toilers, and also national minorities like the Uighurs, for democratic rights and a government that represents their needs and interests, we stand for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and establish a government based on elected workers and peasant councils that is committed to revolutionary proletarian internationalism.

For the past several decades, the Beijing Stalinist regime has utilized extensive market mechanisms in the economy while encouraging large-scale investment by Western and Japanese corporations and the offshore Chinese bourgeoisie in Taiwan and Hong Kong. A sizable class of capitalist entrepreneurs—many of them former government functionaries and the children of current functionaries—has also developed on the mainland. As a consequence, there is now a widely held belief, across the entire political spectrum, that once-"Communist" China has become capitalist or is rapidly and irreversibly doing so. That belief is false. The core of the Chinese economy continues to

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