

Afghanistan

Obama Escalates Occupation, As Promised All U.S./NATO Troops Out Now!

On December 1 at West Point, President Barack Obama announced a further escalation of the U.S./NATO occupation of Afghanistan through the mobilization of 30,000 U.S. troops at “the fastest possible pace.” No one could miss the irony when, nine days later in Oslo, Norway, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In

his acceptance speech, Obama invoked the virtues of a “just war” in defense of a barbaric occupation that has resulted in the deaths of untold thousands of Afghans and the pounding of villages through aerial bombardment. Obama also took the occasion to rattle sabers at capitalist Iran and the North Korean deformed workers

state for their work toward developing nuclear capability in defiance of imperialist threats and sanctions.

The Nobel Peace Prize itself does not have any history of nobility. Past U.S. recipients include Vietnam War criminal Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter, who in 1978 directed the CIA to begin a pro-

gram of massive military and financial support to the fundamentalist *mujahedin* cutthroats in Afghanistan who killed Soviet troops fighting on the side of the modernizing nationalist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime. The *mujahedin* forces, who
continued on page 2

South Africa

Fight for a Black-Centered Workers Government!

We reprint the following article from Spartacist South Africa No. 6 (Summer 2009/2010), newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

The African National Congress (ANC) wasted no time after sweeping the April parliamentary elections to demonstrate that the new government under Jacob Zuma would crack down on strikes and township protests. The day after the elections, military personnel were called on to break a strike by doctors demanding overdue pay hikes and more funds for the overburdened, hellish public health system. Municipal workers who struck this winter for a rise in their paltry wages were attacked by cops firing rubber bullets and thrown in jail. Protesters throughout the country demanding houses, roads and sewage systems for their impoverished townships have met with similar treatment.

Like the “neoliberal” Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela before him, the populist Zuma is doing his job as chief of the *capitalist state*—an apparatus of organised violence, based centrally on the police, military and prisons, that is wielded on behalf of the filthy rich ruling class against the overwhelmingly black masses they exploit and oppress. This bourgeois *class dictatorship*, which continues to defend a system of white privilege, is cloaked by the “non-racial democracy” that was installed in 1994, when white-supremacist apartheid rule was replaced by a government led by the ANC and its Tripartite Alliance partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

As revolutionary Marxists, Spartacist South Africa, section of the International



Striking construction workers march in Johannesburg outside Soccer City stadium, 8 July 2009.

Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), declared that no party in the April elections represented the interests of the working class and the poor. The SACP

and COSATU bureaucracy worked overtime to get out the vote for the ANC, tirelessly portraying Zuma as a “friend” of the workers as opposed to the leaders of

the Congress of the People (C.O.P.E.), who split from the ANC to the right after Mbeki was ousted as president last year. But as we wrote in *Workers Vanguard* No. 933 (27 March 2009), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.: “Despite the ANC’s ‘pro-worker’ and ‘pro-poor’ rhetoric, the ANC and C.O.P.E. are both bourgeois-nationalist—i.e., capitalist—parties” that “represent the interests of the aspiring black bourgeoisie and the predominantly white capitalist ruling class.”

At the core of the recent spate of strikes and protests is the explosive anger at the base of society over the failure of the Tripartite Alliance, after 15 years in power, to fulfill expectations of social and economic equality for the majority. Township protesters complain that they voted for a better life but what they have is getting worse. Striking postal workers demanded the closing of the apartheid wage gap. Adding to longstanding mass unemployment, the world recession has thrown hundreds of thousands more out of work.

A new study shows that the chasm
continued on page 7

Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!



Left: Communist Party general secretary Blade Nzimande with South African president Jacob Zuma (at right) at COSATU national congress, 21 September 2009. Right: Police terror against protesters in Cape Town in July.



Afghanistan...

(continued from page 1)

threw acid in the faces of those who dared teach schoolgirls to read, included those who went on to found the Taliban and Al Qaeda—Washington’s Franken-stein’s monster.

In jacking up U.S. forces in Afghani- stan, Obama is doing exactly what he promised in his 2008 campaign. As we wrote at the time of his election, Afghan- istan is “Obama’s preferred theatre of imperialist carnage” (“Fight for a Revolu- tionary Workers Party!” WV No. 924, 7 November 2008). Meanwhile, the slaugh- ter under the U.S. occupation of Iraq con- tinues unabated. Upon assuming power, Obama also stepped up bombing attacks by pilotless drones in neighboring Pak- istan. Now, as Jeremy Scahill reports in “The Secret US War in Pakistan” (*Nation*, 23 November 2009), U.S. operations in Pakistan include a secret program in which a division of the infamous Black- water mercenary outfit working under the Joint Special Operations Command plans “targeted assassinations of suspected Tali- ban and Al Qaeda operatives, ‘snatch and grabs’ of high-value targets and other sensitive action inside and outside Pak- istan.” Noting the escalation of drone bombing raids since Obama’s inaugura- tion, Scahill writes, “The Obama admin- istration has now surpassed the number of Bush-era strikes in Pakistan.”

The occupation of Afghanistan by U.S., British and other NATO forces, with its attendant atrocities, has fueled bitter resentment among the Afghan peo- ples. Washington’s quisling Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, is widely dis- credited, not least due to last year’s



Reuters photos
Above: Barack Obama with Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo, December 10. Right: Villagers mourn victims of December 8 NATO attack in Armul, Afghanistan.

rigged “election” that left him in office. As civilian deaths mount ever higher and detainees continue to be brutalized in the notorious Bagram prison, resistance to the U.S./NATO occupiers is gathering strength. Obama agreed to his military commanders’ demand for more forces. However, the latest escalation has caused quivers particularly among Obama’s fellow Democrats, reflecting worries in the ruling class—shared by U.S. allies, some of which are threatening to pull out—that Afghanistan is becoming another endless quagmire. Opposition to the oc- cupation continues to grow in the U.S. population, which has been battered by the economic recession that has thrown millions out of their jobs and homes.

As revolutionary Marxists, our starting point is proletarian class opposition to the U.S. rulers and the capitalist-imperialist



system as a whole. Insofar as the forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan aim their blows against the imperialist occu- piers, we call for their military defense despite our political opposition to Islamic fundamentalism and bourgeois national- ism. We demand the immediate, uncondi- tional withdrawal of all U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan! Hands off Pakistan and Iran! Defend North Korea! The same capitalist rulers in Washington who rain death and destruction on the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan have seized on the recession to dole out hundreds of billions to the bloodsucking banks and to rip up union contracts while bailing out the auto giants. **For class struggle against the U.S. rulers at home! For a workers party that fights for socialist revolution!**

The liberal left cried “betrayal” over Obama’s West Point speech. But Obama is loyally serving the interests of the rul- ing class, which wanted a facelift for U.S. imperialism after eight years of the inter- nationally despised, wacky Bush regime. It was so-called “socialists” who betrayed the working class and oppressed by build- ing liberal “Anybody but Bush” antiwar coalitions and then hailing the election of Obama as a harbinger of “change.” The Workers World Party (WWP) proclaimed Obama’s election “a triumph for the Black masses and all the oppressed” (*Workers World*, 20 November 2008), while the International Socialist Organi- zation (ISO) enthused in *Socialist Worker* (21 January 2009): “Obama’s victory convinced large numbers of people of some basic sentiments at the heart of the great struggles of the past—that some- thing different is possible, and that what we do matters.”

What the reformists do is preach the liberal lie that the wars, exploitation and oppression that are integral to the capital- ist system can be stopped by exerting pressure on the rulers to change course— “democracy” from below. Thus the ISO cosponsored with the Socialist Alternative reformists a “Seattle Inauguration Day Celebration” that pathetically begged: “We Voted Barack, Now Get Out of Kabul and Iraq!” Now that Obama has done exactly what he promised over Afghani- stan, the reformists have ditched their pom-poms, for the moment. Wringing its hands over the Afghanistan troop surge, *Workers World* (2 December 2009) writes that “the administration will have to rely most heavily on its vicious political ene- mies within the ruling establishment, while alienating its strongest rank-and- file supporters.” This complaint dovetails with the worries of Congressional Demo- crats that the surge, combined with the effects of the recession at home, might ruin their chances in the 2010 midterm elections.

In “Answering Obama’s Afghanistan Deceptions” (*Socialist Worker* online, 8 December 2009), the ISO “discovers” the war lies that are used to justify the buildup of troops, complaining that a “skeptical attitude toward the use of U.S. military power is what most of his sup- porters expected of an Obama presi- dency.” Then there is the Maoist Revolu-

tionary Communist Party (RCP), which, after spending years howling to “Drive out the Bush regime,” now lectures its readers to “face reality” about Obama and “judge him by what he’s actually doing, not his false narratives, his empty promises, and his double-talk” (*Revolu- tion* online, 13 December 2009).

Lying is what imperialist politicians do. Their whole system of “democracy” is based on the deception that the gov- ernment serves “the people.” The fact, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained more than 150 years ago, is that the bourgeois government serves as the executive committee for managing the affairs of the ruling class as a whole. Bourgeois democracy—paid for with the toil and blood of millions of the imperial- ists’ colonial and neocolonial victims— serves as a cover for the dictatorship of the capitalist class over those they exploit and oppress.

Falling in line behind “democratic” imperialism, the bulk of the reformist left eagerly enrolled in the imperialists’ Cold War drive to destroy the Soviet degener- ated workers state. This included leading cheers for murderous, reactionary forces like the Afghan *mujahedin*. To this day the RCP is quite proud of standing with those who fought against the Soviet Army’s intervention on behalf of the PDPA, which sought to ameliorate the conditions of women who were subjected to the bride price and *burqa* and terror- ized for seeking an education. No less enthusiastic was the ISO, which went on to hail the counterrevolutionary destruc- tion of the Soviet Union itself in 1991-92.

The RCP concocted and still claims a mythical “third force”—unnamed “revolu- tionary Maoists” (*Revolution* online, 13 December 2009). Bunk! There were *two sides* in the civil war in Afghanistan: the Soviet Army and the U.S.-backed Islamic reactionaries, whose rebellion against the PDPA regime threatened the USSR’s southern flank. We Trotskyists took a clear side, proclaiming: Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of October Revolu- tion to Afghan peoples! We denounced Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s with- drawal of troops in 1988-89—an abject capitulation to imperialism that paved the way for the final undoing of the Soviet workers state itself. For the RCP and Maoists elsewhere, it was the Soviet Union that was the “main enemy,” as Mao Zedong earlier declared when the Chi- nese Stalinist bureaucracy forged its anti- Soviet alliance with U.S. imperialism. (Begun by the RCP’s revered Mao, this treacherous alliance was continued by Deng Xiaoping, reviled by the RCP as a “capitalist roader.”)

The ISO social democrats and RCP Maoists contributed what they could to the destruction of the USSR and the res- toration of capitalism there. This was a world-historic defeat for the proletariat and the oppressed internationally, includ- ing by removing what was the main coun- terweight to the bloody ambitions of U.S. imperialism. The capitalist-imperialist sys- tem will continue to wreak havoc and death until it is overthrown through a series of workers revolutions.

As opposed to the reformists who lull the workers and oppressed with the prom- ise of capitalism reformed, we revolution- ary Marxists reaffirm our fight to build a workers party modeled on Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, which led the work- ers to power in the October Revolution of 1917. **For new October Revolutions! ■**

CORRECTION

In “Swine Flu Ravages Aborigi- nal Population” (WV No. 942, 11 September 2009), a photo caption wrongly stated that a young Aus- tralian Aboriginal girl had died of “swine flu.” In fact, the cause of her death is not known. What is known is that she was repeatedly turned away from the hospital, “neglected,” as her grieving mother said, because “she was a little black girl.”



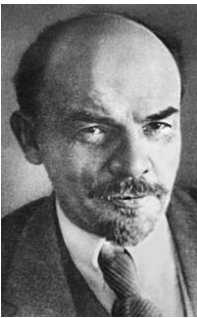
TROTSKY

1871 Paris Commune—when the Parisian proletariat briefly held power before being drowned in blood—Lenin underlined the necessity of proletarian revolution overthrow- ing the bourgeois order and smashing the machinery of the capitalist state, replacing it with a workers state.

Marx’s critico-analytical genius saw in the practical measures of the Commune the **turning-point** which the opportunists fear and do not want to recognise because of their cowardice, because they do not want to break irrevocably with the bourgeoisie, and which the anarchists do not want to see, either because they are in a hurry or because they do not understand at all the conditions of great social changes. “We must not even think of destroying the old state machine; how can we do without ministries and offi- cials?” argues the opportunist, who is completely saturated with philistinism and who, at bottom, not only does not believe in revolution, in the creative power of revolution, but lives in mortal dread of it (like our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries)....

We, however, shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class-conscious prole- tariat will be with us in the fight—not to “shift the balance of forces,” but to **overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy** bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

—V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Ray Bishop

EDITOR: Alan Wilde

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Elizabeth Johnson

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Barry James (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Helen Cantor, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, Michael Davison, George Foster, Liz Gordon, Walter Jennings, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour

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

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

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

The closing date for news in this issue is 15 December 2009.

Defend Simon Singh! Defend Scientific Medicine!

The following statement was issued on December 14 by the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League. It was distributed that evening at a talk by Simon Singh titled “Science and the Battle for Free Speech” at Imperial College London.

We Marxists defend Simon Singh, the renowned science writer, against the outrageous libel action by the British Chiropractic Association (BCA). At issue is an April 2008 article by Singh, titled “Beware the Spinal Trap” published in the *Guardian* which challenged a statement by the BCA that chiropractic could help treat a number of childhood ailments including colic, ear infections and asthma. Singh said “there is not a jot of evidence” for this claim and asserted that the BCA “promotes bogus treatments.” Libel suits against scientists and science journalists are becoming increasingly common. In 2007-08, the *Guardian* and journalist Ben Goldacre, author of the book *Bad Science*, fought a libel case against vitamin pill magnate Matthias Rath who published advertisements in South Africa denouncing AIDS drugs as ineffective while promoting his own supplements. Although Rath was forced to drop the case, the *Guardian* only recovered part of the whopping £500,000 legal fees it incurred.

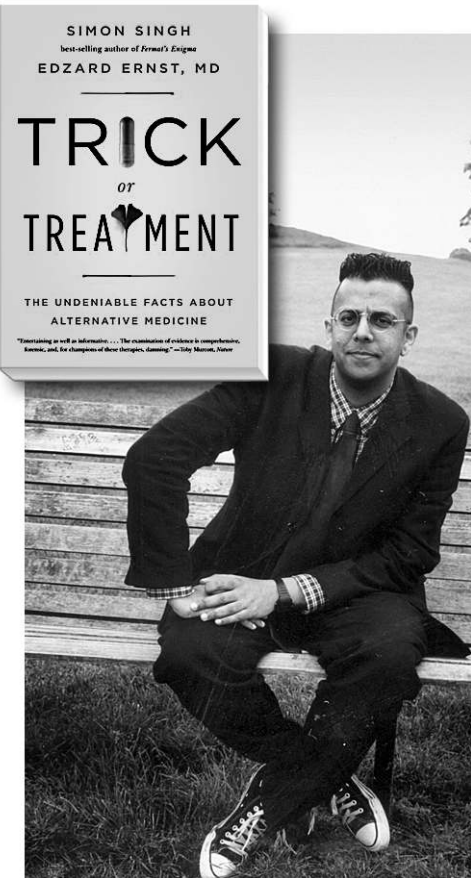
In the reactionary political climate of today’s post-Soviet world, we Marxists find ourselves defending the basic principles of materialism, secularism and the rational humanism of the 18th-century Enlightenment. Against this ideological background, snake-oil treatments, commonly referred to as alternative “medicine,” are growing in popularity and many are even being funded by the state. The British government spent £20 million of taxpayers’ money on the refurbishment of the Royal London Homeopathic “Hospital,” while accident and emergency units are being closed down.

Science-based medicine and quack ther-

apies are irreconcilable. While some popular treatments may be relatively harmless and may sometimes have a placebo effect, more often they are dangerous both in themselves and because they divert patients from needed medical treatment. This is borne out in the book Singh co-authored with Edzard Ernst titled *Trick or Treatment? Alternative Medicine on Trial* (Corgi Books, 2008) an authoritative study of acupuncture, homeopathy, chiropractic therapy and herbal medicine. The authors concluded that “In fact, not only are such treatments unproven, but over and over again we have seen that alternative medicine is also potentially dangerous.” Regarding chiropractic therapy, they said it “might offer some marginal benefit, but only for back pain—all its other claims are unsubstantiated.”

The libel writ from the BCA quickly followed the publication of *Trick or Treatment?* The *Guardian* had offered the BCA space for a response to Singh’s article. But the BCA declined, preferring instead to hide behind the English libel laws. The BCA writ has sparked a public campaign and over 20,000 people have signed a petition calling for reform of the libel laws because they “discourage argument and debate” and have no place in scientific disputes.

English libel laws, which are enforceable in other countries, are so favourable to the claimant that London has been dubbed “a town named sue.” The English libel system has no relationship to the question of truth. Indeed it is nothing more than a protection from the truth for the rich and well-born. Unlike in the U.S. for example, where the accuser must prove that the statement in question is false, in England the burden of proof is on the defendant. With the costs of litigation 100 times higher than in most other European countries, more often than not cases are never taken to court but succeed in their dirty work simply by intimidating journalists, newspapers and other publishers.



simonsingh.net

As Simon Singh says: “Any publisher has to make a calculation on whether to defend a writ not on whether they have a strong case but on whether they can afford the extraordinary costs of running a case to court” (*Scotsman*, 11 December 2009).

The British capitalist system is to blame for the inadequate education system that results in widespread ignorance of the principles of science among the population, and for failing to provide decent healthcare for the mass of the working people. In these circumstances many people turn to remedies that promise miracles.

It is scandalous that in the 21st century Prince Charles, heir to the throne of the mediaeval institution of the monarchy, received £900,000 from the Department of

Health to promote “alternative therapies,” which are international multibillion-dollar businesses, while Simon Singh has had to fork out £100,000 (thus far) fighting the BCA libel suit. The libel laws are used to defend the interests of big business. We also defend Dr. Peter Wilmshurst, a consultant cardiologist at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, who criticised the research data used to promote a new heart implant and was sued by the manufacturer. He faces financial ruin as a result of a libel suit by U.S. company NMT Medical.

Marxism has as its foundation the gains of the Enlightenment and bourgeois revolutions which freed scientific and social development from the shackles of feudalism. The triumph of capitalist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 has ushered in a period of theoretical, political, social and not least sexual reaction. There has been a growing assault on science, including from Christian fundamentalists seeking to undermine the teaching of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Particularly in this context it has become necessary to reassert the basic premises of historical materialism and the corresponding programmatic principles of Marxism.

The libel laws in this country are part of a system, including the institution of Parliament, that exists to keep the working class “in its place.” We look forward to the day when the libel laws and the system of lies they uphold—including feudal relics such as the monarchy, the House of Lords and established churches—will be swept away by socialist revolution. A future international planned socialist economy will provide free, good quality healthcare for all and sweep away the material basis for the persistence of dangerous anti-scientific quackery. In a world communist society—where social classes and all forms of oppression are part of a distant, barbaric past—mankind will finally be able to put into place the power of science in the service of all humanity. ■

Revenge for Exposing Death Row Frame-Ups Illinois: Hands Off Northwestern Innocence Project!



November 1998 conference on death penalty at Chicago’s Northwestern University Law School featured 30 people who had been released from death row after proving their innocence.

We print below a December 3 Partisan Defense Committee letter to Illinois’ Cook County State’s Attorney protesting the prosecutors’ outrageous effort to subpoena student records from the Medill Innocence Project at Northwestern University’s journalism school. As the PDC letter explains, for many years the school’s faculty, students and staff have been instrumental in lifting the lid on a series of frame-ups of innocent people in the grips of the Illinois prison system. In 1996, Medill students working under professor David Protess won national recognition after they dug up critical evidence

clearing the “Ford Heights Four,” four black men who had languished in prison for 18 years, falsely convicted of the 1978 murders of a white couple. Then in 1999, Protess’s students blew open the frame-up of innocent death row inmate Anthony Porter, after which Protess set up the Innocence Project as a permanent feature of the journalism school.

After the exoneration of Porter in 1999, Republican governor George Ryan imposed a moratorium on executions in Illinois. In 2003 he emptied death row, pardoning four innocent men and commuting the death sentences of all the other

167 inmates. Ryan’s wholesale clemency order was met with howls of protest from the Democratic machine of Chicago mayor Richard Daley, who had presided over many of those frame-ups as Cook County State’s Attorney in the 1980s. It was none other than Barack Obama, then a State Senator from Chicago’s South Side, who promoted a package of death penalty legislative “reforms” so that the state’s discredited killing machines could go back into operation. As Marxists, we welcomed Ryan’s clemency order curtailing the death penalty, which we oppose on principle, and explained: “To get rid of the

barbaric state machinery of capitalist rule requires the forging of a workers party, in opposition to the Democratic and Republican parties of capital, to lead the multi-racial proletariat to power” (“Illinois Governor Empties Death Row—Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!” WV No. 796, 31 January 2003).

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee vigorously protests your office’s effort to force the Medill Innocence Project at Northwestern University’s school of journalism to turn over student grades, e-mails, academic records, investigative materials, and course syllabi. This is a transparent effort to intimidate the Innocence Project faculty and students for their efforts to expose frame-ups of innocent men and women in the Illinois prisons.

For more than a decade, Medill journalism faculty and students have been instrumental in exploding frame-ups in a number of high profile cases in Illinois, including that of death row inmate Anthony Porter in 1999, which ultimately led Republican governor George Ryan to commute the sentences of all the inmates on the state’s death row.

Most recently, the Innocence Project has exposed new evidence pointing to the innocence of Anthony McKinney, who is still in prison for a 1978 shooting of a security guard. Seething over this blow to the state’s frame-up machinery, your office responded by subpoenaing academic records from the Innocence Project under the pretext of attacking the students’ “bias, motive and interest”!

This blatant attempt to chill the Innocence Project’s journalism and investigations presents a dire threat to anyone who would dare to expose and protest state frame-ups and the machinery of repression, including the racist death penalty.

The PDC vehemently demands: **Hands off the Medill Innocence Project!** ■

Critical Notes on the “Death of Communism” and the Ideological Conditions of the Post-Soviet World

We print below, slightly edited for publication, a 14 March 2009 document by Spartacist League Central Committee member Joseph Seymour. The document was a contribution to discussions and debates preceding the 13th National Conference of the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). For a report on the conference, see “Dog Days of the Post-Soviet Period” (WV No. 948, 4 December 2009).

By Joseph Seymour

At our International Executive Committee plenum in early 2008, there was a discussion of and, I believe, inchoate differences over the content of the term “death of communism,” which is key to understanding the political-ideological conditions of the post-Soviet world. At the time I argued:

“An important question in the discussion of the work in South Africa and Mexico... is whether and in what sense these countries and other countries—China’s been mentioned, Greece—are an exception to what we call the ‘retrogression of consciousness’ and the ‘death of communism’ ideology. But the concept of an exception implies a norm. So what’s the norm? The overwhelming majority of our tendency is located in the advanced capitalist-imperialist countries of West Europe and North America.... It’s here that we every day, pervasively, encounter the ‘death of communism’ ideology. And I think that this has conditioned a certain skewed and deformed understanding of the radically changed ideological and political contours and divisions throughout the world. “Almost every time we use the term ‘death of communism’ we link it to bourgeois triumphalism. We’re not talking about the triumphalism of the bourgeoisie of India or Egypt or Brazil. We’re talking about the triumphalism of the Western imperialist, centrally American, bourgeoisie. But a disbelief in the possibility of a future international communist society—and that’s the crux of the ‘death of communism’—in Third World countries is not and cannot be identified with American imperialist triumphalism and domination. What you have rather is the rise of fairly significant, with a broad base of support, political-ideological movements which claim to be *opposed* to American imperialist triumphalism. The obvious example is, of course, nationalist populism in Latin America exemplified by Hugo Chávez. But you also have the same phenomenon in a very right-wing way which is the rise of anti-Western Islamic fundamentalism in the Near East. Osama bin Laden, Hugo Chávez, Tony Blair, Bill Clinton all represent the ‘death of communism’ in different ways in different national contexts.”

The crux of the “death of communism” is just that: a *disbelief* in the historical possibility of a global communist civilization in the Marxist sense. This is a *basic common ground* shared by diverse political tendencies with often strongly antagonistic attitudes toward Western imperialism, parliamentary democracy, a capitalist market economy and other divisive issues (e.g., environmental degradation) separating left and right in the conventional usage of these terms.

To make sure we all understand the terms of discourse, I’ll briefly restate the main features of a fully communist society on a global scale. Economic scarcity has been overcome, thereby leading to the elimination of wage labor (“from

each according to his ability; to each according to his needs”). Alienated labor has been replaced by creative, scientific and cultural work (Marx once pointed to composing music as an example of the latter). The state has withered away so that, in Engels’ words, the governing of men has been replaced by the administration of things. Racial, national and ethnic affiliation has disappeared through widespread interethnic procreation and global mobility (“the international soviet shall be the human race”). The family has been replaced by collective institu-

tions for housework and the nurturing and socialization of children.

tions for housework and the nurturing and socialization of children.

The overwhelming majority of self-considered leftists over the age of, say, 40 or 50 regard a future society described above as utopian. The overwhelming majority of younger leftists, represented, for example, in the “social forum” milieus, are effectively ignorant of and indifferent to the Marxist concept of a global communist civilization. Their concerns are *defensive and minimalist*—supporting the democratic rights of oppressed peoples (e.g., the Palestinians), halting the dismantling of the “welfare state” in West Europe, preventing the further degradation of the environment (global warming).

I’ll recast my argument by referencing Lenin’s *The State and Revolution*. When this work was published in 1918 and in subsequent decades, the basic difference between revolutionary Marxists and other left tendencies concerned the subject matter

discussed in Chapter I (“Class Society and the State”). In it Lenin summarily states:

“The theory of Marx and Engels of the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter *cannot* be superceded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of ‘withering away,’ but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution.” [emphasis in original]

In the post-Soviet period, the most fundamental difference between ourselves and other left tendencies concerns the subject matter discussed in Chapter V (“The Economic Basis of the Withering

ists cannot readily understand the ideas expounded above because they don’t think about them.

American Imperialist Triumphalism Is Not the Problem

While clarity on the question of the “death of communism” will not resolve our problems, continued unclarity will continue to aggravate our problems. The failure to recognize the most fundamental difference between ourselves and the rest of the left—that we do *not* share the same ultimate goal—has been an important underlying factor in recurrent political problems in the party.

While he was still *Workers Vanguard* editor, Jan Norden [currently of the centrist Internationalist Group] consciously and consistently regarded the “death of communism” as primarily an expression of American imperialist ideological triumphalism. Hence his belief that the 1994 Zapatista-led uprising of impoverished Indian peasants in southern Mexico was a powerful counterblow weakening, at least in Latin America, the ideological effect of the fall of the Soviet Union. Since Norden’s defection from our organization in 1996, there has been a tendency in our party to lump together under the heading of “the regression of consciousness” (a term I coined in the fight with Norden) a disbelief in a future communist society, Western imperialist triumphalism and traditional social-democratic reformism. Some comrades have argued that our basic difference with the rest of the left is over the reformability of the capitalist state, as if we were still back in the days of Lenin versus Kautsky in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution.

A standard formulation in both our public literature and internal discourse is that the effect of the “death of communism” is “uneven” internationally. The term “uneven” implies that the effect can be quantitatively measured on a linear scale: quite high in the U.S. and France, much lower in Mexico and South Africa. As a one-time student and then teacher of academic economics, I think of a bar graph measuring and comparing, for example, per capita national output in different countries. But the differential effect internationally of the “death of communism” *cannot be understood* in that way. We are confronted with *different forms not different levels* of post-Soviet ideology.

Consider Russia in this respect. In explicating the concept of the “death of communism,” we frequently use the formulation that the former Soviet Union is viewed at best as a “failed experiment.” That is generally true in West Europe and North America. It is less true in much of the Third World. And it is *not at all true* in Russia. Quite the opposite. The politically dominant section of the new Russian capitalist class, represented by Vladimir Putin, views the former Soviet Union as the most successful experiment ever, so to speak, of Russian-centered state-building. In 2005, Putin declared that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century” (quoted in Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War: Putin’s Russia and the Threat to the*



Sygma



WV Photo



Left: Boris Yeltsin waves Russian flag on barricades of capitalist counterrevolution in Moscow, August 1991. ICL distributed tens of thousands of leaflets headlined, “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” Below: Spartacists protest Yeltsin visit, New York City, 1992.

Away of the State”), which is summarily explained in the following passage:

“The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high stage of development of communism at which the antithesis between mental and physical labour disappears, at which there consequently disappears one of the principal sources of modern *social* inequality—a source, moreover, which cannot on any account be removed immediately by the mere conversion of the means of production into public property, by the mere expropriation of the capitalists.

“This expropriation will make it *possible* for the productive forces to develop to a tremendous extent. And when we see how incredibly capitalism is already *retarding* this development, when we see how much progress could be achieved on the basis of the level of technique already attained, we are entitled to say with the fullest confidence that the expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in an enormous development of the productive forces of human society.” [emphasis in original]

The post-Soviet generation of leftist activ-

West [2008]). I assume a similar attitude toward the former USSR is widespread throughout Russian society at large.

In the past few years, the Putin regime and the Russian elite more generally have sought to restore Stalin’s historical reputation as the premier leader of a Russian-dominated world power in the 20th century. The Russian ambassador to NATO displays a picture of Stalin in his office. A popular TV show, “The Name of Russia,” ranks Stalin as one of the country’s five greatest historical figures (*Economist*, 27 November 2008). In 2007, an officially sponsored educational guide, *A Modern History of Russia, 1945-2006: A Teachers’ Manual*, compared Stalin favorably with Peter the Great: “Stalin followed Peter the Great’s logic: demand the impossible...to get the maximum possible.” It continues:

“He [Stalin] is considered one of the most successful leaders of the USSR. The country’s territory reached the boundaries of the former Russian Empire (and in some areas even surpassed it). A victory in one of the greatest wars was won; industrialisation of the economy and cultural revolution took place successfully, resulting not only in mass education but also in the best educational system in the world. The USSR became one [of] the leading countries in science; unemployment was practically defeated.”

—quoted in Lucas,
The New Cold War

Hardly the description of a “failed experiment.”

In a way it is more difficult for us to address the form taken by the “death of communism” in present-day Russia than in West Europe and North America. In the latter countries, the former Soviet Union is still primarily identified with “socialism,” not “Russian imperialism.” Stalin is viewed and generally vilified as a disciple of Marx and Engels. In Russia, Stalin is viewed and frequently extolled as the successor of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. For many Russians, communism has not died because it never lived in the first place.

Even before the severity of the current world economic downturn became evident last fall, “free market” triumphalism had ceased to be an important current in the climate of bourgeois opinion even in the U.S. Today, prominent and respected spokesmen for American finance capital such as former Federal Reserve head Paul Volcker foresee a deep and prolonged global downturn. Comparisons with the Great Depression of the 1930s are becoming commonplace. The Tory mayor of London commented that reading the London *Financial Times* these days is like spending time with a millennial suicide cult. Nonetheless, no current of bourgeois opinion is now concerned with the prospect of imminent socialist revolutions anywhere



Willy Römer

or the revival of mass communist parties claiming the Marxist-Leninist tradition.

**Of Ends and Means:
A Historical Journey**

In Chapter V of *The State and Revolution* in the section on “The Higher Phase of Communist Society,” Lenin wrote:

“From the bourgeois point of view, it is easy to declare that such a social order is ‘sheer utopia’ and to sneer at the socialists for promising everyone the right to receive from society, without any control over the labour of the individual citizen, any quantity of truffles, cars, pianos, etc. Even to this day, most bourgeois ‘savants’ confine themselves to sneering in this way, thereby betraying both their ignorance and their selfish defence of capitalism.”

By the term “bourgeois savants,” Lenin meant those intellectuals who avowedly supported and justified the capitalist economic system. He did *not* include in this category the ideological spokesmen for the Socialist (Second) International, such as Karl Kautsky, who considered himself an orthodox Marxist.

Whether by 1917-18 the right-wing leaders of the mass social-democratic parties (e.g., Friedrich Ebert in Germany, Albert Thomas in France, Emile Vandervelde in Belgium) subjectively still believed in a future socialist society is another question. In all likelihood they did not. But neither did they publicly repudiate the traditional goal of the socialist movement as a utopian project.

At the beginning of the German Revolution, in November 1918, the centrist Independent Social Democratic Party presented a series of conditions (demands) for a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) on the basis of the then existing workers and soldiers councils. The first of these was: “Ger-

Above: Armed workers occupy Berlin newspaper district, January 1919. Above right: Communist leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered that month as SPD traitors Scheidemann, Noske and Ebert (right) drowned workers revolution in blood.



Robert Sennecke

many should be a socialist republic.” To this the SPD leadership responded: “This demand is the goal of our own policy. However, the people must decide on this through the constituent assembly” (quoted in John Riddell, ed., *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power: Documents, 1918-1919: Preparing the Founding Congress* [1986]). In attacking the Bolshevik Revolution and the nascent Communist International, the social-democratic leaders primarily condemned the dictatorship of the proletariat as a violation of democracy, which they identified with a parliamentary-type government elected by universal and equal suffrage.

Here it is useful to look at *Lenin’s Moscow*, a memoir written in the late 1940s-early 1950s by Trotsky’s colleague and friend Alfred Rosmer. Rosmer had been an anarchist and then a leading revolutionary syndicalist intellectual in France before adhering to the newly formed Communist International. In this memoir, Rosmer recounts the initial reaction to Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* among both “orthodox” social democrats like Kautsky and Jean Longuet (Marx’s grandson) and among anarchists:

“It was an extraordinary book and it had a strange destiny. Lenin, a Marxist and a social democrat, was treated as an outcast by the theoreticians of the socialist parties which claimed to be Marxist. ‘It isn’t Marxism,’ they shrieked, ‘it’s a mixture of anarchism and Blanquism.’ One of them even found a witty turn of phrase and called it ‘Blanquism with *sauce tartare*.’ On the other hand, for revolutionaries situated outside the mainstream of orthodox Marxism, for the syndicalists and anarchists, this Blanquism, sauce and all, was a pleasant revelation. They had never heard such language from the Marxists they knew.”

Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) was the last major representative of the Jacobin communist tradition that originated with Babeuf’s Conspiracy of Equals in the latter days of the French Revolution. The Babouvist conception of communism (developed in a pre-industrial society) was one of distribution and consumption rather than production and the overcoming of economic scarcity. However, in labeling Lenin a “Blanquist,” Kautsky, Longuet, et al. were not referring to that aspect of the Jacobin communist outlook. By Lenin’s “Blanquism” they meant the insurrectionary overthrow of the capitalist state organized and led by a revolutionary vanguard party.

As Rosmer pointed out, *The State and Revolution* was well-received by many anarchists and syndicalists, some of whom thought that Lenin was moving from Marxism toward their own political camp.

However, more doctrinally knowledgeable anarchists understood that while Lenin agreed with them on the need for the insurrectionary overthrow of the bourgeois state, he still maintained, indeed emphasized, the Marxist program of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transition to a fully communist society. In this regard, Rosmer cites an imprisoned German anarchist, Erich Mühsam, writing in 1919:

“The theoretical and practical theses of Lenin on the accomplishment of the revolution and the communist tasks of the proletariat have provided a new basis for our action.... There are no more insurmountable obstacles to a unification of the whole revolutionary proletariat. It is true that the communist anarchists have had to yield on the most important point of disagreement between the two great tendencies of socialism. They have had to abandon Bakunin’s negative attitude to the dictatorship of the proletariat and accept Marx’s opinion on this point.”

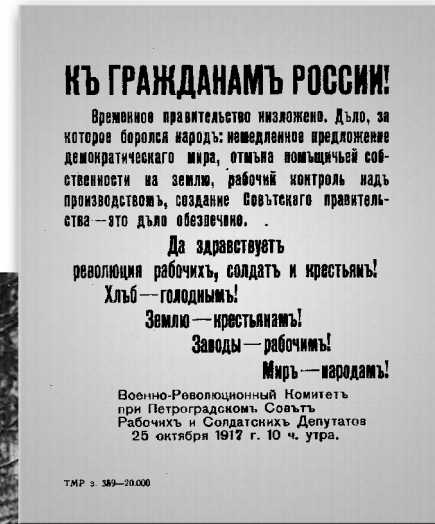
For Mühsam, the “disagreement” between Bakunin and Marx over the dictatorship of the proletariat concerned the means to achieve a shared ultimate goal: a classless, egalitarian and stateless society.

We all know that in a political polemic the ideas and positions that are *not* argued against are in their own way as important as those that are argued against. One does not argue against positions that one’s opponent does not hold and especially where there is a common ground. For example, in polemicizing against black liberals and leftist radicals in the U.S. we do not refute the false notion expounded by some right-wing racists that blacks are “inferior” to whites. In 1918-20, Lenin and Trotsky each wrote a book-length polemic against Kautsky. Nowhere in either *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* or *Terrorism and Communism* do they argue against the position that a communist society in the Marxist sense is utopian since Kautsky did not hold such a position.

Let’s fast forward to the late 1930s, when the international Communist movement had become completely Stalinized. Specifically, let’s consider the young Maxime Rodinson, a French Jewish intellectual who later became a prominent left-wing scholar writing on the Near East and Islamic society. In a 1981 essay, “Self-Criticism,” he recalled the mindset that caused him to join the French Communist Party in 1937 (he left in 1958):

“Adherence to Communism entailed, and still entails, commitment to a struggle that is supposed to enable humanity to accomplish an essential and eminently beneficial leap: to put an end to a system that permanently produces poverty and crime, that subjugates and condemns millions of people throughout the world to an

continued on page 6



Petrograd, 1917: Leaflet issued by Petrograd Soviet’s Military Revolutionary Committee announces overthrow of bourgeois Provisional Government and victory of workers revolution. Below: Red Guards, soldiers and sailors in front of Smolny Institute, headquarters of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

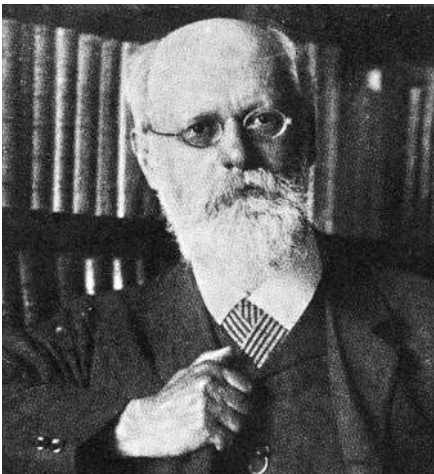
Pyotr Otsup



Critical Notes...
(continued from page 5)

atrocious life, or even to death. The intent is to create a liberated humanity in which all can blossom to the full extent of their best potential, in which the collective of free beings will control the administration of things and will lay down the minimum of rules indispensable for harmonizing relations among human beings.”
—Cult, Ghetto, and State: The Persistence of the Jewish Question (1983)

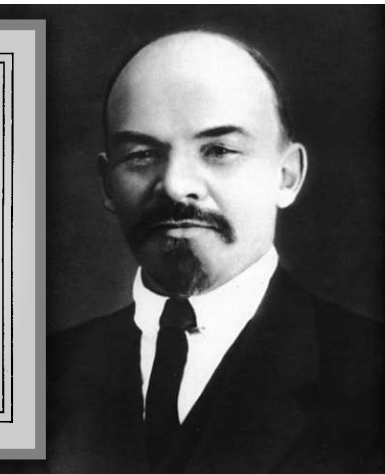
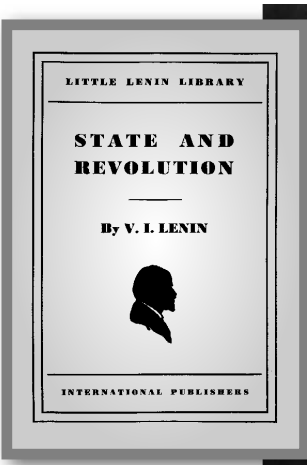
As an intellectual, Rodinson could articulate the liberating goals of Marxism better than the many millions of young workers who joined the Communist parties in France and Italy, India and Vietnam and elsewhere during the Stalin era. Nonetheless, many of these workers—not all, to be sure—were also motivated by a future vision of all-sided social liberation. They did not view the Communist parties only as political agencies to defend and further their economic and other social (e.g., national) interests within the existing capitalist-imperialist system. In general, politically advanced workers and leftist intellectuals who supported the mass social-democratic parties did not share the Marxist conception of a genuinely communist society. But they, too, aspired to a radically different and better society than their own. In 1961, the



Verlag Kurt Desch

over Clause IV in 1959-60, Miliband wrote: “In the face of the violent resistance [by the party’s working-class base] this encountered, the proposal had to be dropped.” By the 1980s no one would still have used the term “parliamentary socialism” to encapsulate the program or even official doctrine of the British Labour Party. And in 1995, Clause IV was dropped from the party’s formal program at a special conference despite opposition from some of the big unions. In the early to mid 1960s, there was a leftward radicalization among student-youth and some older intellectuals in the U.S. One institutionalized expression of this was the annual Socialist Scholars

Lenin’s The State and Revolution (1917) defended Marxist understanding of the state as instrument of class rule against social-democratic revisionists such as Karl Kautsky (left).



W. Plier

No. 25 (Summer 1978). In his presentation on “socialist man,” Deutscher addressed a number of issues that the post-Soviet generation of leftist activists do not think about at all.
Huntington Versus Fukuyama Revisited

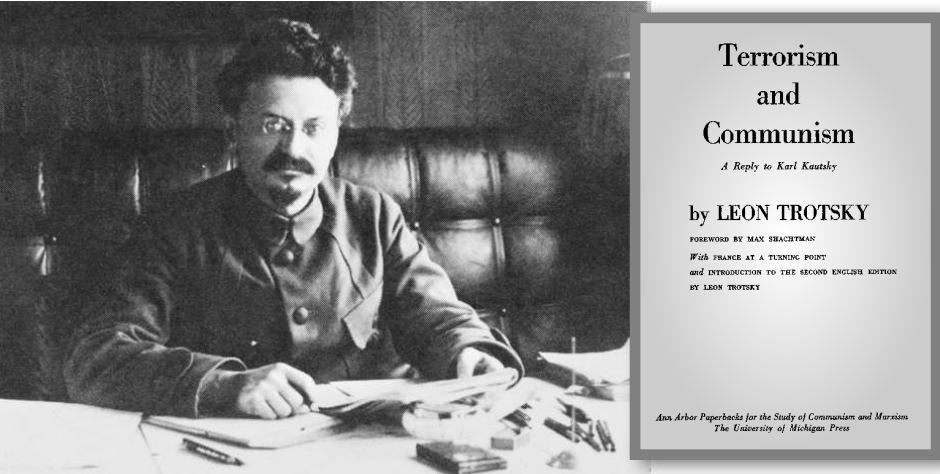
My thinking about the “death of communism” and the ideological conditions of the post-Soviet world was initially mainly developed in the course of informal discussions with Norden between 1991 and his departure from our organization in 1996. As previously noted, Norden identified the “death of communism” primarily as an expression of American imperialist triumphalism. Thus he often linked the term to George Bush’s formula of a “new world order” proclaimed at the time of the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq. Norden believed that the recognition by the main body of our tendency’s leadership that the character of the post-Soviet period was marked by a historic retrogression in the political consciousness of the working class internationally was a capitulation to the pressures of American imperialist triumphalism.

Norden’s approach to this question was influenced by the views of a right-wing (then neo-conservative) American intellectual, Francis Fukuyama, who declared that the collapse of the Soviet bloc signaled the “end of history.” An oversimplified version of Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis became widely known among what can be called the educated American public, the kind of people who subscribed to the New York Review of Books and occasionally read Foreign Affairs. I don’t know if Norden actually read Fukuyama. I did and I also read those right-of-center American bourgeois ideologues, notably Samuel P. Huntington and Zbigniew Brzezinski, who strongly disagreed with Fukuyama’s rosy vision of the post-Soviet world. I’m reviewing this debate because it’s useful in understanding the relationship of the “death of communism” to the various currents of post-Soviet bourgeois ideology especially in (but not limited to) the Western capitalist countries.

Fukuyama took the term and concept of the “end of history” from German philosopher Georg Hegel. Hegel used that expression to describe the world-historic consequences of the 1806 battle of Jena in which the army of Napoleonic France defeated the Kingdom of Prussia. In the aftermath the French occupied and governed western and southern Germany. Hegel was one of a small number of prominent German intellectuals who supported and collaborated with the Napoleonic regime that he considered to be historically progressive. Hegel’s concept of the “end of history” had both a negative and a positive component. The negative component was that the dominant ideology of late feudal Europe—monarchical absolutism sanctioned and supported by the Christian churches—had lost its former power to shape the future course of history. The positive component was that the liberal principles of the French Revolution as understood by Hegel (and represented for him by Napoleon) had become all-conquering in the realm of ideas and over time a new sociopolitical order would be established throughout Europe in conformity with the new zeitgeist (spirit of the age). Likewise, Fukuyama’s version of the “end of history” had negative and positive components. The negative component was,

of course, the “death of communism”: “While communist power persists in the world, it has ceased to reflect a dynamic and appealing idea. Those who call themselves communists now find themselves fighting continuous rearguard actions to preserve something of their former position and power. Communists now find themselves in the unenviable position of defending an old and reactionary social order whose time has long since passed, like the monarchists who managed to survive into the twentieth century.”
—The End of History and the Last Man (1992)

Fukuyama here expressed a common coin among all currents of post-Soviet bourgeois ideology. It was the positive conclusions he drew from the collapse of the Soviet bloc that was the crux of his “end of history” thesis. He maintained that the sociocultural values and corresponding economic and political institutions of the Western capitalist world would eventually prevail on a global scale: “It is against this background that the remarkable worldwide character of the current liberal revolution takes on special significance. For it constitutes further evidence that there is a fundamental process at work that dictates a common evolutionary pattern for all human soci-



Brown Brothers
Terrorism and Communism (1920), written by Leon Trotsky at height of Russian Civil War, polemicized against anti-Bolshevik pamphlet of the same name written by Kautsky, who made common cause with imperialism in the name of “democracy.”

left social-democratic British intellectual Ralph Miliband published a book highly critical of the Labour Party titled Parliamentary Socialism: A Study of the Politics of Labour. The book came out in the immediate aftermath of a failed attempt by the party’s right-wing leaders to scrap Clause IV of Labour’s 1918 constitution. Clause IV was generally seen as Labour’s maximal program: “To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.” In describing the battle

Conference in New York City. In 1966, the organizers of the conference invited Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher to give a presentation on “socialist man.” At the time, the cultural and psychological character of a truly socialist society, how people would think and act, was a matter of intense interest among young leftist intellectuals not only in the U.S. but throughout the world. For example, in the early 1960s Che Guevara was writing about eliminating alienated labor in “socialist” Cuba. For a retrospective analysis of Guevara’s thoughts on this question, see “‘Radical Egalitarian’ Stalinism: A Post Mortem,” in Spartacist



AP

French workers demonstrate in Marseille against economic crisis, March 2009. Banner reads: “They Are the Crisis, We Are the Solution!”



No. 61, Spring 2009, \$1.50 (64 pages) No. 55, Autumn 1999, \$1.50 (56 pages)
Make checks payable/mail to Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

South Africa...

(continued from page 1)

between the wealthy at the top and the masses at the bottom has become the largest in the world, surpassing that in Brazil. The wealthiest are overwhelmingly white and enjoy First World living conditions, while blacks as well as coloured [mixed-race] and Indian toilers are at Third World levels. This is a damning indictment of the SACP/COSATU misleaders, who promised the masses that the alliance with the bourgeois ANC would bring social transformation and equality. The result instead was neo-apartheid capitalism. While the political superstructure underwent a major change with the end of the apartheid system of rigid, legally enforced racial segregation and subjugation, the foundation of the capitalist economy remains the superexploitation of mainly black labour.

As the black majority’s anger over their unbearable conditions continues to build, the Zuma government has made clear its intention to beef up the state’s arsenal of repression against labour and the poor. On the opening day of the COSATU national congress in September, Zuma lectured delegates about “violent strikes.” In a speech a week later, he supported giving cops more leeway to “shoot to kill,” supposedly to fight South Africa’s “abnormal criminal problem.” Zuma’s reprimands, echoed by COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, did not go down well at the COSATU congress. Leaders of the SAMWU municipal workers and SATAWU transport workers unions criticised the top COSATU leadership for failing to condemn police attacks on their strikes this year. But these same unions include cops and security guards whose job is to defend capitalist rule and profits by violently repressing workers and the poor. SSA demands: Cops and security guards out of the unions!

To justify their class-collaborationist alliance with the bourgeois ANC, the SACP and COSATU tops speak of a “developmental state” under the ANC in which the working class must fight for “hegemony.” This claptrap was answered almost 140 years ago by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Summing up the lessons of the 1871 Paris Commune, the founders of scientific socialism insisted that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes” (1872 preface to a German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*). The capitalist state must be smashed through socialist revolution and replaced with a workers state—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Based on this fundamental Marxist understanding, SSA fights for a black-centred workers government that would expropriate the capitalist bloodsuckers and build a society where the wealth created by labour is used for the benefit of all. Socialist transformation, extending throughout Southern Africa, would depend above all on the victory of proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries of the U.S., West Europe and Japan, where the workers are ruthlessly exploited and, in times like the current economic crisis, thrown onto the scrap heap. It will take an international socialist planned economy, based on the highest level of technology, to lift the urban and rural masses out of poverty and backwardness and create a classless society of material abundance—the beginning of communist society.

Nationalism and Class Collaboration

Squalor in black and coloured townships; miserable wages for factory workers, miners, teachers and municipal workers; jails jam-packed with black and coloured youth and deaths in police custody rising steadily; the criminal neglect of health care in the midst of the AIDS pandemic and other rampant diseases: all are signs that the masses’ aspirations for social equality and a decent life have

not even begun to be met. An education specialist at the Development Bank of Southern Africa gave one stark measure of persistent, deep racial inequality: While one in ten white children get A-level passes in their matriculation [high school graduation] exams, the number for black learners is *one in 1,000*. Underlining that blacks continue to be treated as second-class citizens, recently the newly appointed vice-chancellor of University of the Free State pardoned the so-called “Reitz Four,” inviting them to return to the university in what was grotesquely called an act of “racial reconciliation.” The four white racist students had been kicked out last year following outrage over a video they made of black campus workers being fed urine-laced food and enduring other humiliations, part of a racist campaign resisting integration of campus residences.

The achievement of national liberation for the oppressed majority is inseparable from the emancipation of the overwhelmingly black working class from the chains of capitalist exploitation. It is the proletariat, which can stop the flow of capitalist profits by withdrawing its labour, that has the social power to lead the unemployed and all the urban and rural poor in overthrowing the murderous capitalist profit system.

A prerequisite for such revolutionary struggle is the political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. In struggling for this basic Marxist principle, we say that the Tripartite Alliance must be broken along *class* lines. The



Robert Botha

January 2000: After more than 4,000 workers at Volkswagen plant near Port Elizabeth staged wildcat strike in defense of suspended shop stewards from NUMSA metal workers union, the SACP-dominated NUMSA bureaucracy mobilized to break the strike. Over 1,300 workers were fired and 200 armed cops occupied surrounding townships to suppress resistance.

Tripartite Alliance is a nationalist popular front—the South African variant of a governmental coalition binding a reformist workers party to the bourgeoisie. The SACP and COSATU tops perpetuate the illusion that the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be expressed in a common programme, like the “national democratic revolution.” This is the essence of their class collaborationism. In fact, the class interests of the exploited are irreconcilably counterposed to those of their exploiters.

In the early days of the “new South Africa,” telling the truth about the bourgeois class nature of the ANC was fighting words. After 15 years of neo-apartheid capitalism, many working-class militants—including inside the SACP—now will admit that the ANC is a bourgeois party. The critical question is, what programmatic conclusions does one draw from this. Some reformist dissidents use this to argue that the SACP should adopt a more “independent” posture in order to gain more influence within the Tripartite Alliance, thus giving a “left” cover for maintaining the subordination of the working class to its capitalist exploiters in the nationalist popular front. This is counterposed to the programme of class independence of the workers from the bourgeoisie and its parties, which means recognising that the ANC is a party of the class enemy. We seek to win advanced workers to this programmatic understanding, which is needed to politically arm them to fight against the betrayals of the SACP and COSATU tops.

There is growing disgruntlement at the



Gideon Mendel

Coloured (mixed-race) seasonal farm workers in Western Cape province, April 2007. Black and coloured masses live in poverty under neo-apartheid capitalism.

base of the SACP over the more forward role their leaders are playing in the Zuma government. Many are angry that Blade Nzimande took a post as Higher Education Minister in direct violation of the SACP constitution, which specifies that the party’s general secretary must serve full-time as an official of the SACP. (Of course, serving as ANC government ministers has been the rule for leading SACPers ever since the late Joe Slovo was Housing Minister under Mandela.) Nzimande has also been ridiculed for his R1.1 million BMW, which many see as exposing the hypocrisy of SACP leaders

workers to a Marxist worldview.

Nationalism is a bourgeois ideology that obscures the fundamental class divide in society by preaching the common interests of all who were oppressed under white racist rule. Thus, everyone from government ministers on the gravy train to black mothers in desolate villages struggling to keep their families fed are told to unite in the “broad church” of the ANC, which the SACP falsely portrays as the party of national liberation.

In South Africa, where the capitalist class is white (now including a handful of others) and the working class is overwhelmingly black, class divisions are hugely distorted by the lens of racial colour. The SACP uses this historic characteristic of South African society to openly and shamelessly advance its popular-front alliance with the ANC. The confusion of race and class fostered by nationalism is seen in the widespread misidentification of all poor and oppressed people—from township unemployed to petty shopkeepers—with the working class, which is defined by its key role in the process of production.

Most dangerous of all is the reformist left’s embrace of the cops as fellow workers. Black cops under apartheid were despised because they were correctly seen as serving the interests of the oppressor. But Alliance apologists say that under the ANC-led “democratic” government, the police serve the people. So a white cop may still be a racist Boer, but a black cop is your “comrade.” Meanwhile, they’re both attacking strikes and firing rubber bullets at township and student protesters.

The Debate About Race

Against a backdrop of strikes and township struggles, the Tripartite Alliance has seen sharpening divisions at the top, mainly pitting elements on the ANC’s right wing against the SACP/COSATU bloc. Former Intelligence chief Billy Masetlha condemned the growing influence of SACP and COSATU leaders at the top of the ANC. Speaking from a bourgeois perspective, he correctly pointed out to the *Mail & Guardian* (9 October 2009) that the ANC “was not founded on a socialist agenda.” Earlier, ANC Youth League (ANCYL) leader Julius Malema sought to take advantage of the unease at the SACP’s base by condemning Blade Nzimande as a fake working-class leader.

continued on page 8

Just Out!

Spartacist South Africa

Newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Issue No. 6 (16 pages)

US\$1 R2

Subscription (4 issues)

US\$4 R10

Make checks payable/mail to:

Spartacist Publishing Co.

Box 1377 GPO

New York, NY 10116

SPARTACIST SOUTH AFRICA
No. 6 Summer 2009/2010 R2
Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!
Fight for a Black-Centred Workers Government!



In South Africa:

Spartacist, PostNet Suite 248
Private Bag X2226
Johannesburg 2000

South Africa...

(continued from page 7)

Malema also made several appeals to the ANC’s plebeian base by pointing to the perpetuation of white privilege, touching off a wide debate in South Africa on the question of race.

In the main, Malema voices the interests of the emerging black bourgeoisie. While spewing reactionary demagoguery about sex under the pretext of fighting “imperialist” concepts, Malema complains about the Zuma government giving whites, coloureds and Indians key economic portfolios. While not naming names, an SACP Central Committee discussion document for an upcoming SACP policy congress responded by criticising a “new anti-left tendency” in the ANC espousing “narrow ‘Africanist’ ideology.”

Despite differences in rhetoric and (sometimes) policy, both sides uphold ANC nationalism. For the SACP and the ANC mainstream, this comes wrapped in the doctrine of “non-racialism,” a vague concept mainly defined in opposition to the racially exclusive citizenship and property rights that were the rule under British-dominion and apartheid rule. As Govan Mbeki, a historic leader of both the SACP and the ANC, explained: “The ANC is struggling to form one people, to be represented in one parliament in one country.... The ANC is seeking to forge one nation, building a non-racial democracy in a unitary state” (quoted in Michael MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa* [2006]).

“Non-racialism” promotes the notion that national liberation and social equality for South Africa’s vast majority can be achieved under capitalism. The bankruptcy of this perspective is exposed every day in every way. The stark truth is

had been the main sponsor of the ANC and SACP in the international arena and had given military support to their guerilla actions, largely symbolic, against the apartheid state. With the end of the Cold War, the ANC/SACP quickly came to terms with Western imperialism and its South African junior partner. Nelson Mandela himself assured the capitalists that an ANC-led regime would defend private property. In 1990, even before the ANC came into power, the SACP sent its leader Joe Slovo and NUMSA metalworkers union chief Moses Mayekiso to break a strike by workers at Mercedes-Benz in East London who had occupied their plant. Once in power, the Tripartite Alliance imposed austerity and continued to break strikes, from the 1995 nurses strike and the 2000 VW strike to this year’s strikes by courageous public hospital doctors.

It was the elementary duty of Marxists to defend the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress and the Azanian People’s Organisation against murderous apartheid repression. At the same time, genuine Marxists give no *political* support to such petty-bourgeois and bourgeois parties. Writing after the 1994 elections, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa’s first black president, the ICL declared: “The ANC-led nationalist movement cannot achieve any semblance of ‘liberation’ for the nonwhite masses since it is committed to maintaining South African capitalism, which has always been based on the brutal exploitation of the black toilers” (“South Africa Powder Keg,” *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12, February 1995).

Against all forms of nationalism, we counterpose the fight for a black-centred workers government as part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa. It will take a workers government centred on the black majority to break the power of the

Bitter fruits of class collaboration. Right: Thousands of workers and Communists were slaughtered following Chiang Kai-shek’s coup in China, 1927. Below: Remains of Communist Party headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia, in October 1965, as some one million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese were massacred.



no credit



Militant

chal practices oppressive to women: these desperately needed measures require the socialist transformation of the economy and society under the dictatorship of the proletariat, fighting to promote socialist revolution internationally.

As Trotsky stressed in an April 1935 letter to his South African comrades: “Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change not only the relation between the classes, but also between the races, and will assure to the blacks that place in the state which corresponds to their numbers, insofar will the *social* revolution in South Africa also have a *national* character.” He continued:

“The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*. The Comintern [Communist International], beginning in 1924, transformed the program of national liberation of colonial people into an empty democratic abstraction which is elevated above the reality of class relations. In the struggle against national oppression different classes liberate themselves (temporarily) from material interests and become simple ‘anti-imperialist’ forces.”

Under the direction of the Stalinised Comintern, the forebears of the SACP adopted the dogma of “two-stage revolution,” which they translated as the “national democratic revolution” that would somehow “grow over” into the socialist revolution. The “two-stage” schema tells workers and the oppressed to subordinate their interests to those of the “progressive” bourgeoisie in the first stage of the revolution, while the second stage—socialism—is relegated to the distant future. In fact, the second stage never comes. From China in 1925-27 to Indonesia in 1965, the “first stage” has ended in the slaughter of Communists, militant

workers and peasants. In South Africa, it means the subordination of the SACP to the ANC. The only “growing over” we have seen is some top “Communists” and union leaders becoming millionaires.

The Left and “Nation Building”

In reviving the call for a black-centred workers government, we note that Spartacist South Africa incorrectly stopped using this slogan after 2001. We remarked in “South Africa: For a Black-Centered Workers Government!” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 911, 28 March 2008) that “this deprived us of a crucial weapon in combating the illusion that the ‘national democratic revolution’ has achieved a ‘rainbow nation’ based on the ANC’s celebrated doctrine of ‘non-racialism.’” Exemplifying those who purvey such illusions, the Workers International Vanguard League ludicrously claimed that our call “plays into the hands of those who still seek to divide the formerly politically oppressed along ethnic lines” (see our 1998 pamphlet *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists* No. 1, “A Reply to the Workers International Vanguard League”).

Everyone with eyes to see knows that tribal and ethnic divisions in the townships and villages that were consciously fostered by the apartheid regime are thriving under the “new dispensation,” where those at the bottom continue to be pitted against each other in a desperate struggle for survival. As the enforcer of austerity, the Alliance government cannot help but perpetuate these divisions and engage in divide-and-rule tactics. ANC veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle and black capitalist Tokyo Sexwale, who is currently the Minister of Human



AP

17 November 2009: Zimbabwean immigrants outside De Doorns, the Western Cape, after being driven from their homes by anti-immigrant attacks.

that 15 years after the demise of apartheid, *whites—joined by a handful of blacks—are still on top and the black masses on the bottom*. “Non-racialism” provides an increasingly flimsy cover for the neo-apartheid capitalist order that is administered by the Tripartite Alliance government.

The continuation of “racialised inequality,” as the SACP document delicately puts it, is not due to the so-called “1996 class project,” which the SACP invokes in order to blame the [Thabo] Mbeki camp for the masses’ misery. The “class project” really began at the ANC’s founding in 1912 by tribal chiefs and others in the black elite. The ANC always represented the interests of an aspiring black bourgeoisie, although there was no meaningful layer of black capitalists until recently. When the ANC consummated its aspirations to share power with the white ruling class in 1994, it was the logical outcome of its programme.

A key factor in the negotiated settlement with the apartheid government was the demise of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state that

Randlords, expropriate capitalist property and begin the socialist reconstruction of society, finally opening the road to the liberation of the non-white masses. Such a government would not be racially exclusive but would unite the many black tribal- and language-based groups along with the coloured and Indian populations while providing ample room and full democratic rights for those whites who would accept a government centred on the black toilers and join in building a society based on genuine equality.

The call for a black-centred workers government is an application of Leon Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution. Trotsky explained that in the colonial and neocolonial world, where capitalism developed belatedly, the democratic tasks associated with the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries can be achieved only through proletarian revolution. Adequate housing for the millions in the townships, squatter camps and villages, electricity and water for the entire population, free quality education, the eradication of *lobola* (bride price) and other traditional patriar-

International Communist League pamphlet comprising three articles from ICL press: “The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution,” “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern” and “Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!” These articles together constitute an introduction to the historically founded principles and program of Trotskyism (i.e., genuine Marxism).

\$2 (56 pages)

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

International Communist League Pamphlet

The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution

See Page Three

Rearming Bolshevism
A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern.....30

International Communist League’s Fifth International Conference:
Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!.....56

AUSTRALIA...NZBRT...CANADA...CORDES...IRELAND...C100...SOUTH AFRICA...USA...1002

Cop Vendetta Against Chicago Bus Driver

Hands Off Ricardo Mendoza!

CHICAGO—On November 7, Chicago police arrested bus driver Ricardo Mendoza on bogus felony charges of disorderly conduct and obstructing justice, with a judge requiring him to post a \$50,000 bond. Earlier, unmarked police SUVs repeatedly circled past Mendoza's house, according to his union, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 241. What was Mendoza's "crime"? He had been brutally beaten by an off-duty cop two months before.

On September 12, Sgt. Thomas O'Grady attacked Mendoza as he was driving the 62 Archer bus in Chicago's Loop business district. The cop, who claimed that Mendoza's bus cut him off while he was riding a bicycle, climbed onto the bus in a fury and punched Mendoza in the face, breaking his glasses. It was not until O'Grady stormed onto the bus a second time that two uniformed officers who happened to be on board finally physically restrained him. Mendoza was treated at the Northwestern Memorial Hospital emergency room and referred to a specialist for his eye injuries. He has not been able to work since the assault. As usual, the cop who committed the assault goes unchanged.

Soon after, Mendoza filed a \$1 million federal civil rights lawsuit against the City of Chicago and O'Grady, who was reportedly on desk duty at the time while under investigation for an earlier incident. ATU Local 241 officials held a press conference in defense of their union brother, at which union president Darrell Jefferson said: "We think the attack against Mr. Mendoza was brutal, violent, uncalled for and a violation of his civil rights." Mendoza deserves every penny he can get.

It was only after Mendoza filed his civil suit that charges were brought against him, with prosecutors claiming that he had exaggerated the severity of the beating he suffered. The prosecution of Mendoza is an attack on transit and city workers as a whole, as was made clear by Police Superintendent Jody Weis, who applauded the charges for sending "a powerful message to anyone attempting to cheat the criminal justice system, especially public employees." Labor must

demand: Drop the charges now!

The unions representing Chicago transit workers—including ATU Locals 241 and 308 (which represents rail workers)—have a long and proud history of action in defense of their members against police repression. In 1985, bus driver David Johnson was shackled to his hospital bed when then-state's attorney, now-mayor Richard Daley pressed for frame-up felony charges against him for a tragic

to report a cop who called her a "stupid black bitch." Both ATU locals went on record in Russell's defense and, after drivers in uniform turned out in force for her court dates, the charges were dropped.

It is important that ATU Local 241 stood behind Mendoza—and it must continue to support him. A union motion passed on October 5—before he was arrested—is available on the Local's Web site. It solicits statements of solidarity



WV Photo

ATU militants led successful defense of Chicago bus driver Cassandra Seay (center) against 1987 cop frame-up.

and unavoidable accident when a carload of youths cut off the bus he was driving on Lake Shore Drive. Over 700 outraged transit workers marched in the streets outside police headquarters, forcing Daley to drop the charges.

In 1987, seven racist cops savagely beat and kicked black bus driver Cassandra Seay and her mother Callie Bryant in their home, sending Seay to the hospital for over a week. When the cops pressed trumped-up charges, including assaulting an officer, the ATU locals turned out in force and overflowed the courtrooms at Seay's trial, and she was ultimately acquitted. In 2002 and 2003, there was a rash of cop attacks against bus drivers, including Arlene Russell, who faced bogus charges of battery after she tried to call the Office of Professional Standards

from labor, community and civil rights organizations. It also calls for "the police officer who attacked our brother to be promptly prosecuted, as would any other person under the law." On the part of transit workers, this sentiment is understandable. But the reality is that prosecutions of cops, including those who commit such heinous crimes as the 1999 killing of Amadou Diallo in NYC in a hail of 41 bullets, almost always fail, because by the standards of bourgeois legality the officers are just doing the job they are paid to do in racist capitalist America. The cops, the prosecutors who frame their victims and the courts that put the stamp of legal approval on police brutality are part of the capitalist state that exists to protect the rule and profits of the exploiting capitalist class.

Critical Notes...

(continued from page 6)

revealed to be exactly that" (*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* [1996]). To be sure, Huntington agreed with Fukuyama that there would never again be powerful states or an international political movement having mass support that claimed to represent a *universal* alternative such as communism to Western-type capitalism and "democracy." But he maintained that much of the world—in particular Russia, the Islamic

East and China—would be dominated by anti-Western governments and political movements based on national and religious-cultural values and traditions:

"In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities....

"The West is and will remain for years to come the most powerful civilization. Yet its power relative to that of other civilizations is declining. As the West attempts to assert its values and to protect its interests, non-Western societies confront a choice. Some attempt to emulate the West

and to join or to 'bandwagon' with the West. Other Confucian and Islamic societies attempt to expand their own economic and military power to resist and to 'balance' against the West. A central axis of post-Cold War world politics is thus the interaction of Western power and culture with the power and culture of non-Western civilizations."

The Huntington/Fukuyama debate underscores the need for us to differentiate between belief in the "death of communism," which is pervasive and still current, and the limited and short-lived American imperialist triumphalism in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union.

Brief Concluding Thoughts

A very important question confronting us can be formulated in this way: is it possible that a spontaneous upheaval, involving a substantial section of the working class, against a right-wing government can lead to a prerevolutionary and even a revolutionary situation (i.e., organs of dual power) even though the mass of workers and other toilers involved do *not* aspire to socialism? I think the answer is yes. While we have not experienced such a development, we should not rule it out. For now, our primary task is to propagate a Marxist worldview with the expectation of recruiting relatively small numbers of leftist intellectuals and advanced workers. To paraphrase John Maynard Keynes: when the facts change, so will our perspectives. ■

To the detriment of the union and its members, the pro-capitalist ATU tops make a practice of fostering illusions in the courts and cops of the capitalist state. At a press conference in front of police headquarters after Mendoza's arrest, Local 241 president Jefferson called on "Jody Weis and Mayor Richard Daley to intervene and to protect the rights of Mr. Mendoza." The cops who beat and are now terrorizing Mendoza work for Mayor Daley, whose capitalist Democratic Party machine has overseen cop terror in "Segregation City" for the better part of the last century. The labor movement must rely on its own power, not the forces of bourgeois "law and order."

The assault on Mendoza and his subsequent arrest come amid all-sided attacks on the ATU and other transit unions by the Daley machine. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) is threatening to rip up the ATU's contract in February and lay off close to 2,000 union members, almost 20 percent of the workforce, unless the workers agree to unpaid furloughs and pay cuts. The CTA also intends to slash service on two-thirds of its bus routes. A display of union muscle protesting the vendetta against Mendoza would give the cops pause before they again beat on a bus driver, and it could help prepare the way for the kind of struggle needed to turn back the layoffs and service cuts.

Out of the fight to defend Cassandra Seay in 1987-88, the Labor Black Struggle League was founded in Chicago. In 2002-03 the LBSL, which is based on a class-struggle program and is fraternally allied with the Spartacist League, was also active in mobilizing to defend Arlene Russell and other drivers facing bogus charges, writing in its newsletter:

"In this climate, the racist cops think they have a green light to run over the rights of, and brutalize, anyone unfortunate enough to cross their path.... There will be no end to police brutality except through socialist revolution. What we desperately need is a militant, multiracial workers party to fight for the rights of all the oppressed and to fight for a workers government."

The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, wrote a November 16 letter protesting the cop vendetta. ATU Local 241 is calling for resolutions of support for brother Mendoza. Statements can be sent to: Anita Alvarez, Cook County State's Attorney, 69 W. Washington St., Suite 3200, Chicago, IL 60602. Fax: (312) 603-4708. Copies should also be forwarded to Local 241. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

- ☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History* and *the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail
- ☐ New ☐ Renewal
- ☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)
- ☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)
- ☐ I would like to contribute \$ _____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

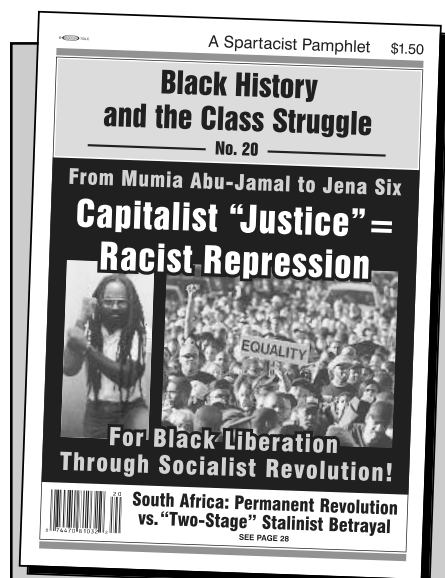
Address _____

City _____ State _____ Apt. # _____

Phone (_____) _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116



No. 20 \$1.50 (56 pages)

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

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO New York, NY 10116

Drugs...

(continued from page 12)

The most celebrated provision is the “judicial diversion” option given judges to prescribe “treatment” in lieu of prison, provided the accused first pleads guilty and the judge doesn’t consider incarceration necessary to “protect the public.” While these drug treatment programs allow for the release of some prisoners from the dungeons of New York State, these programs are mandatory. A perceived violation of the treatment program’s stipulations will land a person back into prison, which makes this program an extension of the state’s parole system.

At the same time, the law restores mandatory 15-to-life sentences (eliminated in 2005) for anyone who sells drugs worth \$75,000 in a six-month period, and adds for the first time a mandatory two-to-nine-year sentence for anyone over 21 who sells any outlawed substance (including marijuana) in any quantity to someone under 17. Paterson also made it clear that only a small number of those imprisoned under the Rockefeller laws will be eligible for early release—1,500 at most.

The oppression of black people is a key prop of American capitalist rule. Blacks in the U.S. are an oppressed race-color caste integrated into the American capitalist economy while overwhelmingly



Whittaker/NY Times

Converted gymnasium in overcrowded California State Prison in Sacramento. The “war on drugs” has condemned millions to prison hell.

segregated at the bottom of American society—the last hired and first fired. Fueling the mass incarceration of blacks has been the deindustrialization of the U.S. In the mid 1960s, manufacturing, with its large component of black workers, employed 24 percent of the labor force. By the early 2000s, this was reduced to only 11 percent, and the number keeps falling. The loss of unionized industrial jobs has devastated cities

across the Midwest and Northeast, while the pro-capitalist union tops have caved in to one attack after another and one austerity measure after another by the bosses. Deeply racist at their core, the rulers’ anti-drug laws have also been used to discipline and fire union militants and intimidate workers more widely.

In the calculations of the American bourgeoisie, the urban ghettos, which used to provide a reservoir of unskilled labor for the auto plants and steel mills, are simply written off as an expendable population. Unable to provide jobs from which they can extract profit, the capitalists see no reason to spend on education, food or shelter for the impoverished ghetto masses—only prisons. And for many black and Latino youth in the ghettos and barrios, the only jobs on the horizon are in the illegal economy of the drug trade.

Accompanying all this was the whipping up of hysteria that demonized the ghettoized poor black population as criminal “superpredators.” The plethora of drug laws was an outgrowth of the web of legal repression under the “war on crime”—launched by Republican president Richard Nixon—which the American capitalist government implemented to target black militants and the ghetto poor fol-

lowing the ghetto upheavals of the mid-to-late 1960s. The American ruling class strategy for reinforcing and stabilizing its political control was recorded by Nixon’s chief of staff H. R. Haldeman, who wrote in his diary: President Nixon “emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to” (quoted in Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* [2000]).

The “war on drugs,” launched by Republican president Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s, was a bipartisan attack among whose most vociferous supporters were black Democrats and hustlers like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. During the Clinton presidency, 673,000 people were sent to prison, surpassing the total under both Reagan and Bush Sr.

From its inception, we denounced the “war on drugs” as a war on black people. Although it was liberal Republican governor Rockefeller who led the charge in New York State, it was liberal Democratic Party governor Mario Cuomo who added more prison beds in New York than all the previous governors in the state’s history combined. Obscenely, Cuomo got the \$7 billion to build these prisons from funds out of the state’s Urban Development Corporation. This policy of draining Urban Development for building prisons gave new meaning to the old adage that urban renewal meant black removal.

In partly eliminating mandatory sentencing, Paterson’s law may help decelerate but won’t stop the disparate imprisonment of blacks, which is systemic in American capitalism. The courts are as much a part of the capitalist state, which exists to protect the class rule and property of the capitalist rulers, as the cops who brutalize ghetto youth on the streets and prosecutors who frame them up. As black comedian Richard Pryor observed about the prisons before the implementation of these mandatory sentencing schemes, “Go in there looking for justice, and that’s all you find—just us.” This will continue to be the grim reality for black people and minorities in America until the racist capitalist system is shattered through proletarian socialist revolution.■



Jet

Admitted FBI fink Al Sharpton marking crack house in 1986. Sharpton’s “anti-drug” campaign fed into rulers’ racist “war on drugs.”

Harrison...

(continued from page 12)

experiences with the West Sacramento cops. But the frame-up was so blatant that Jason Ruffin was acquitted at his retrial in October. The cops and prosecution were gunning to convict Harrison.

The racism and union-busting that are integral to the “anti-terror” laws were played out in the courtroom. The one black person in the jury pool for Harrison’s trial was excluded by the prosecutor, who later justified his pre-emptory dismissal on the grounds that the woman was “too emotional” in her description of the humiliating treatment she and her family had received at the hands of the cops. At the sentencing hearing on December 8, the prosecution objected to any statement that race had anything to do with the cops’ assault on Harrison and Ruffin.

To be a young black man in racist America is to be branded as a criminal, a verdict reinforced by the wholesale roundup and imprisonment of young black, and also Latino, men under the racist “war on drugs.” Now, under the provisions of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program, port workers are branded as a “threat to national security” for offenses ranging from drug possession with intent to distribute, to fraud, to being an “illegal immigrant.” With the implementation of TWIC, tens of thousands of port workers have lost their jobs. Disproportionately, these are black and Latino workers as well as the largely immigrant port truckers.

That Harrison and Ruffin stood firm in the face of this relentless and vindictive

prosecution is a statement of their commitment to defending their union and themselves against being branded as criminals. They stood on the front lines in defense of the ILWU and other port workers who are lined up in the crosshairs of the “port security” laws. Dripping with venom toward the union, the prosecution tried to argue that Harrison had been pressured by the “militant wing” of the ILWU to fight the frame-up charges. Pointing to the two rallies organized by ILWU Local 10 and other unionists in defense of Harrison and Ruffin during their preliminary hearings, the prosecution all but declared the union’s defense actions as some kind of mafia-style conspiracy to influence the jury. In fact, such mobilizations on behalf of victimized workers are part of the historic traditions of the labor movement.

The only conspiracy here was the standard one of the American “justice” system between the prosecution, the judge and the cops. There was not a shred of evidence that Harrison resisted or obstructed the police. As his lawyer pointed out, Harrison at no time objected, complained or otherwise reacted to being assaulted with pepper spray, which required paramedics being immediately called to treat him, or to having his shoulder so injured by the cops that he was off work for two months. The judge charged that the jury would have to find Harrison guilty if they believed he hadn’t immediately done what the police told him to. During sentencing, the prosecution—echoed by the judge—invented a new “crime,” the “crime of obstinacy.” The ominous message, not a new one in capitalist America, is that a cop’s word *is* “the

law,” giving the thugs in blue free rein to criminalize anyone who doesn’t obey.

This was exactly the line of the cops who arrested black scholar Henry Louis Gates last summer and charged him with disorderly conduct when he refused a cop’s order to get out of his own home! But while the charges against this eminent black professor were eventually dismissed, such was not the case for a black longshore worker.

At the December 6 Partisan Defense Committee Holiday Appeal benefit in Oakland in solidarity with class-war prisoners, the speaker from the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense underlined the importance of the Harrison and Ruffin case:

“The government’s ‘war on terror’ has long had the ILWU in its sights. The prosecution of Harrison and Ruffin demonstrates the bipartisan ‘war on terror’ to be a union-busting war on blacks and labor as well as immigrants. It also exposes the treacherous support by the ILWU tops for the maritime security measures that allow the government to ride roughshod over and fire dock workers. *Down with the maritime security measures!*”

Echoing the capitalist Democratic Party that they slavishly support, the ILWU misleaders criminally joined in the chorus for increased “port security.” In March, the ILWU International even issued a statement calling for more “staffing and resources to properly administer the TWIC program.” Last summer, *after* countless longshore workers had already lost their jobs to “port security,” the ILWU Longshore Division Caucus voted to “seek the abandonment of the TWIC program.” But this too came cloaked in “national security” patriotism, with arguments that

TWIC “does not actually improve port security” and “improperly inserts the employers (many of them foreign) into a United States government program” (*Dispatcher*, July/August 2009). For years, the ILWU and Teamsters bureaucrats have pointed to the overwhelmingly immigrant, non-union port truckers as the real “security threat” at the ports. This is not only an outrageous attack on the port truckers but on the very existence of the ILWU, reinforcing its increased isolation as the last bastion of union power on the West Coast docks.

For the ILWU and other longshore unions to wage a real fight against TWIC and the racist, union-busting “war on terror” laws, the starting point must be opposition to the very state that is enforcing these laws, now with Barack Obama as Commander-in-Chief. This means championing full citizenship rights for all immigrants and fighting to organize foreign-born workers, like the port truckers, many of whom bring lessons of militant class struggle from their countries of origin. As the persecution of Harrison and Ruffin underlines, this also means championing the fight for black freedom, which is itself directly linked to the fight to sweep away capitalist wage slavery and the state forces and laws that maintain it.

But to wage that kind of struggle means breaking with the class-collaborationist policies of the union misleaders which increasingly subordinate the unions to the capitalist state and forging a new leadership rooted in the program of class struggle. Down with the “war on terror”! Break with the Democrats! For a revolutionary internationalist workers party that fights for a workers government!■

New York Tinkers with Rockefeller Laws

Down With the Racist “War on Drugs”!

January 26 marks 31 years since the death of Nelson Rockefeller, longtime New York governor. Many recall that this famous scion of the family whose name is synonymous with capitalist greed died of a heart attack while having sex with his 27-year-old mistress. Rockefeller, who ordered the killing of prisoners during the 1971 Attica prison revolt, is more widely remembered as the architect of New York’s draconian drug laws. Enacted in 1973, these laws mandated that possession of small amounts of cocaine or heroin be punished with minimum sentences of 15 years to life in prison—even for those with no prior record.

As a result of these laws, some 200,000 men, women and children were condemned to decades of prison hell. Today, nearly 90 percent of those incarcerated in New York on drug charges are black or Latino. The Rockefeller laws became a model for drug laws across the country that imprisoned hundreds of thousands more in the racist “war on drugs.” The number of incarcerated in the U.S. has grown eightfold since 1970, with 2.3 million behind bars today—70 percent of them black or Latino.

In April 2009, New York governor David Paterson signed into law modifications to New York’s drug laws (which had earlier been “reformed” in 2005), doing away with some mandatory sentences and allowing judges to order treatment as an alternative to prison in some cases. These new laws reflect a trend in a wing of the bourgeoisie that sees the constant expansion and maintenance of the vast complex of prisons as too costly. Among them is former New York State Senator John Dunne, who was a sponsor of the Rockefeller laws. Dunne declared that these laws were a failure that “handcuffed our judges” and “filled our prisons to dangerously overcrowded conditions.” Also among them is General Barry McCaffrey, a war criminal who in 1991

For the Decriminalization of Drugs!

ordered the slaughter of retreating Iraqi troops during the first Persian Gulf War. In 1999, when he was President Clinton’s drug czar, he stated: “We can’t incarcerate our way out of [the drug] problem.” Last May, President Obama’s drug czar, R. Gil Kerlikowske, told the *Wall Street Journal* that it was time to shelve the

made up 30 percent of the national prison population. Today, as a result of the “war on drugs,” blacks, though only 13 percent of the U.S. population, make up over 50 percent of prison inmates, eight times the rate of imprisonment for whites. According to a 2007 Justice Policy Institute report, black men are sent to prison on drug

convicted of violent crimes. The federal drug laws for crack and cocaine possession are blatantly racist—punishments for possession of crack are far more severe than those for powder cocaine. Crack is the cheaper version of the same substance cocaine is derived from, and is therefore used as a substitute for cocaine in the ghettos.

We are in favor of any alleviation of Rockefeller and other drug laws. We recognize that such reforms certainly mean a lot to those few already behind bars who will gain earlier release and to others who will be spared a lengthy prison term for something that should not be considered a crime in the first place. But no amount of tinkering will change the reactionary nature of these laws or their racist enforcement by the cops, prosecutors and courts of the capitalist state. The Spartacist League calls for the *decriminalization of drugs*. Drug use is a private, individual matter. For those who wish, any associated psychological or medical problem that may arise from their use should be treated by qualified medical personnel; in other words, it should be a medical issue, not a criminal one involving the police, prisons and courts. By taking the profit out of the drug trade, decriminalization would also reduce the crime and other social pathology associated with it. We oppose all laws against “crimes without victims”—such as drug use, prostitution, gambling and pornography—which are at bottom designed to maintain social control. All laws such as the Rockefeller drug laws should be completely abolished!

When Paterson signed the new drug laws, anti-drug-law activists declared that the “Rock has been dropped,” as if the Rockefeller laws had been repealed. Paterson’s law eliminates mandatory sentences for most—but not all—first-time drug offenses and many second-time ones.

continued on page 11



Andrew Lichtenstein

Protest against the Rockefeller drug laws, New York City, June 2003.

phrase “war on drugs.” “Regardless of how you try to explain to people it’s a ‘war on drugs’...people see a war as a war on them.”

As a 2009 report by the New York Civil Liberties Union put it, the Rockefeller laws are “New York’s Jim Crow Laws.” In the 1950s, when Jim Crow segregation was still legal in the South, black people

charges at ten times the rate of white men, even though their drug use is approximately the same.

Between 1994 and 2003 the average time served by blacks for drug crimes grew by 62 percent, compared to 17 percent for whites. On average, black men and women spend nearly as much time in prison on drug charges as whites

Protest Conviction of Aaron Harrison!

“War on Terror” Frame-Up of Black Longshoreman

In a blow against unions, blacks, immigrants and all those targeted by the government’s “war on terror,” Bay Area black longshoreman Aaron Harrison was found guilty on November 16 on frame-up charges of obstructing a police officer. Harrison was sentenced to one year’s probation, slapped with a fine and 30 days of a work project (like highway cleanup), community service or home detention.

In August 2007, Harrison and fellow black longshoreman Jason Ruffin were driving back into work at the Stevedoring Services of America terminal in Sacra-

mento after a lunch break. They were stopped by port security guards demanding to search their car, citing the maritime security regulations that are part of the government’s “anti-terror” laws. They had never been confronted with such a demand before in the Bay Area ports where they normally work. Harrison called the business agent from International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 for advice. Enraged that these young black men had the temerity to call their union, the security guards called in cops from the notoriously racist West

Sacramento police. They pepper-sprayed Harrison in the face, forced the two longshoremen from their car, handcuffed them and threw them in jail on charges of resisting or obstructing a police officer and trespassing (the latter charge was later dropped).

The relentless prosecution of Harrison and Ruffin demonstrates the lengths to which the government will go to enforce its “port security” laws, which have massively strengthened the state’s police powers on the docks. When the first trial of the two Local 10 longshoremen ended



WV Photo

Aaron Harrison at October 2007 protest against his arrest and that of co-defendant Jason Ruffin.

in a hung jury last January, the court separated their cases. The prosecutors tried to weed out from the jury anyone with pro-union sympathies or anyone with negative

continued on page 11