



AP photos

Iran in Turmoil

JANUARY 11—Since last June's re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad, which was riddled with fraud, Iran has been gripped with protests and attendant government repression. Amid this turmoil, the Obama administration, while preparing a new round of sanctions aimed at strangling the Iranian economy, continues to ratchet up its threats of military action against Iran's nuclear program. An article in the *New York Times* (6 January), based largely on information provided by Washington officials, reported that Iran has shielded "an increasingly large part of its atomic complex in networks of tunnels and bunkers" that, in the words of Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak, "cannot be destroyed through a conventional attack."

The *Times* revealed that the Pentagon "is racing to develop a deadly tunnel weapon" scheduled for deployment next summer. The 20-foot-long bomb, called the Massive Ordnance Penetrator, will pack tons of explosives—ten times more than its predecessor—and be designed for launch from the B-2 stealth bomber. Against such threats, the international proletariat must defend the development of nuclear weapons by Iran and demand: Imperialist hands off!

Within Iran, protests, some mobilizing tens of thousands of people, have re-erupted since early December. Under a brutal crackdown by security forces, last summer's wave of demonstrations was reduced during the fall to fewer than one major protest per month, often timed to coincide with religious occasions. Then, on December 7, tens of thousands of students rallied in Tehran and at universities around the country, clashing with riot police and Basij militias.

While the protest demonstrations have been politically subordinate to one side in what is essentially a falling-out between rival factions within the ruling clerical elite, the December 7 student demonstrations pointed to the politically heterogeneous nature of the opposition. Mir Hussein Moussavi, the main opposition

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party to Fight for Workers Revolution!

Tehran, December 27: Iranian cops en route to attack anti-government protest (left). Protesters erecting a road block (right).

candidate in the June presidential election, did not associate himself with the student demonstrations. Reportedly, few of the young protesters wore the signature green color of Moussavi's campaign, and some even burned pictures of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a taboo-defying act in a country where the "supreme leader" is considered to be answerable only to God.

The student demonstrations were followed by a series of mass protests coinciding with religious occasions. On December 27, at least eight people (including Moussavi's nephew) were shot and killed by security forces at mass demonstrations in Tehran and other cities coinciding with the Shi'ite holy day of Ashura.

As many as 2,000 people have reportedly been arrested since the start of the latest wave of demonstrations. Five of those arrested are accused of being members of the Mujahedin Khalq, an Iranian opposition group that until recently operated out of bases in Iraq; they face charges of *Moharebeh*, or waging war against God, which carries an automatic death sentence. The international workers movement must demand: Free all anti-government protesters!

Those arrested include 12 members of the Baha'i religious minority, bringing to 48 the number of Baha'is currently imprisoned in Iran. Seven Baha'i leaders, due to face trial tomorrow, have been hit with new criminal charges that carry a pos-

sible death penalty. According to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, more than 200 Baha'is have died at the hands of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while thousands have been fired from their jobs, had their property confiscated or been arrested.

In another sign of the stepped-up repression, a Kurdish political prisoner, Fasih Yasamani, was executed by hanging on January 6. Previously, another Kurdish prisoner was executed in November, and at least 17 other activists remain on death row. Yasamani was accused, on the basis of a "confession" obtained under torture, of being a member of the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), which is closely associated with the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey. When Barack Obama took office last year, one of his first acts was to brand the PJAK a terrorist organization, underlining, yet again, that the imperialist rulers who threaten war against Iran are deadly enemies of those oppressed by the Iranian regime.

We print below, edited for publication, a 3 October 2009 forum given in Toronto by John Masters, member of the Central Committee of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

* * *

Imperialist Hands Off!



U.S. Navy

Ships of U.S. 5th Fleet on patrol in Persian Gulf, November 2009.

Since the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a blatantly fraudulent vote last June, Iran has been swept by wave after wave of protests. Hundreds of thousands of student youth, women and workers have taken to the streets. Despite severe repression including beatings, murders and mass imprisonments, the protests have continued, the most sustained social upheaval the country has seen in the 30 years since the "Islamic revolution" of 1978-79.

That "revolution," which I'll talk about in some depth tonight, marked a watershed not only for Iran but for the whole Near East and the historically Muslim world. Millions rose up against the bloody Shah, a savage despot who had been placed in power by the CIA 25 years earlier. But the aspirations for social liberation of Iran's workers, women and oppressed minorities, like the Kurds, were

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On Matthias Rath and Deadly HIV Denialism

28 December 2009

Dear Comrades,

The Spartacist League/Britain's fine statement in defense of Simon Singh (WV No. 949 [1 January]) made reference to the notorious Matthias Rath. As documented by journalist Anso Thom, Rath brought his vitamin quackery to South Africa in 2004 with deadly results. Thom's account appears in a collection of essays published in South Africa under the title *The Virus, Vitamins and Vegetables: The South African HIV/AIDS mystery*. This book details the intimate connections between the Tripartite Alliance govern-

ment of former president Thabo Mbeki and a variety of international and home-grown quacks who denied that HIV causes AIDS. A Harvard School of Public Health study showed that 330,000 South Africans died of AIDS between 2000 and 2005 because a timely antiretroviral (ARV) treatment program was not implemented. Indeed, such was actively blocked by the ANC/SACP/COSATU government while merchants of death pushing herbal and "natural" cures were promoted.

According to Thom, Matthias Rath made millions selling "micronutrient" pills to cancer and heart disease sufferers in



HIV patients at Palmerton Clinic, Eastern Cape, 2004.

countries like the U.S., the UK and Germany. In 2004 his foundation set up shop in Cape Town with the help of local homeopath Anthony Rees. After finding that there wasn't much of a market for his cancer and heart disease quackery, Rath hooked up with HIV-denialist Anthony Brink. The Rath foundation proceeded to lay siege to one of the first programs in South Africa for distribution of ARVs run by Médecins Sans Frontières in the black township of Khayelitsha. Rath's foundation not only publicized that ARVs were toxic and handed out his supplements as a cure for AIDS, but also claimed to be conducting clinical trials. Victims of Rath's quackery told of being offered groceries and money to take Rath's supplements instead of ARVs.

Rath and Brink simultaneously waged a campaign of defamation against the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which had led the campaign against the Mbeki government's HIV-denialism and for free ARVs. Brink attempted to have TAC founder Zackie Achmat indicted for genocide at the international criminal court in the Hague because he was supposedly promoting the interests of big pharmaceutical companies! It was not until the TAC and others secured a court order preventing Rath from conducting any further unauthorized clinical trials that he fled South Africa. Nonetheless, the South African Traditional Healers Organisation continues to distribute Rath's propaganda against ARVs.

In the U.S., "alternative medicine" is quite trendy among petty-bourgeois types, some of whom believe they are tapping into "natural" and ancient health care wisdom that the greedy pharmaceutical companies and medical establishment want to suppress. Those who have the privilege of dabbling in such quackery without serious harm to their health (or wallet) might ponder the plight of millions in countries like South Africa who die entirely preventable deaths while resorting to such "natural" remedies. Lacking even basic sanitation or clean water, many have little choice but to turn to traditional healers who believe that bewitching is the cause of illness. Considering the hellholes called public hospitals in South Africa,

it is no wonder that even those with some access to scientific medicine find more comfort in the care of a witch doctor. Faced with the early stages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the Mbeki government decided to make a virtue of this terrible scarcity and backwardness rather than marshalling whatever resources they could to get and provide ARVs, demonstrating yet again how very cheap black life remains for the capitalist rulers of neo-apartheid South Africa.

A more far-sighted capitalist government in the neo-colonial world was that of Brazil, which beginning in 1996 produced generic ARVs and provided these for free. While the Brazilian government now boasts of having saved billions of dollars, we as Marxists are not indifferent to the fact that tens of thousands are still alive thanks to this program, and that many more have avoided infection due to the government's education campaigns. This is why our South African comrades call for free ARVs for all who need them as part of the struggle for free, quality health care for all.

Despite an official shift in the posture of the Tripartite Alliance government on AIDS, reflected in a World AIDS Day speech by president Jacob Zuma earlier this month, there are still millions who cannot access treatment because the government has not provided enough money to the public health system. The Young Communist League (YCL) recently called for Mbeki to be tried for genocide for his role in blocking AIDS treatment. The YCL is of course silent about the role of bourgeois-populist Jacob Zuma, who as Mbeki's deputy president publicly derided ARVs and promoted natural cures at a government HIV/AIDS candle-lighting ceremony in 2002. The YCL also conveniently ignores that its parent organization, the SACP, remained a part of the very government it now accuses of genocide. But one shouldn't expect too many scruples from these pro-capitalist SACP misleaders who have long shackled the working class by tying it to capitalist exploiters through the SACP/COSATU alliance with the bourgeois ANC.

Comradely,
Rosemary



TROTSKY

In Defense of Science

The reactionary climate of the post-Soviet world has provided a breeding ground for mysticism, superstition, political and social backwardness and all manner of anti-scientific quackery. In a 1925 speech before the Mendeleyev Congress, which took place amid celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky underlined the significance of scientific knowledge for mastering nature, differentiating between natural and social science in bourgeois society.

Against those who claimed that the "essence" of reality cannot be learned, Trotsky reasserted the basic materialist concept that the objective world is knowable.

Socialist society, in its relation to scientific and cultural inheritance in general, holds to a far lesser degree an attitude of indifference, or passive acceptance. It can be said that the greater the trust of socialism in sciences devoted to direct study of nature, the greater is its critical distrust in approaching those sciences and pseudo-sciences which are linked closely to the structure of human society, its economic institutions, its state, laws, ethics, etc. Of course, these two spheres are not separated by an impenetrable wall. But at the same time, it is an indisputable fact that the heritage embodied in those sciences which deal not with human society but with "matter"—in natural sciences in the broad sense of the term, and consequently of course in chemistry—is of incomparably greater weight.

The need to know nature is imposed upon men by their need to subordinate nature to themselves. Any digressions in this sphere from objective relationships, which are determined by the properties of matter itself, are corrected by practical experience. This alone seriously guarantees natural sciences, chemical research in particular, from intentional, unintentional, or semideliberate distortions, misinterpretations, and falsifications. Social research primarily devoted its efforts toward justifying historically arisen society, so as to preserve it against the attacks of "destructive theories," etc. Herein is rooted the apologetic role of the official social sciences of bourgeois society; and this is the reason why their accomplishments are of little value.

So long as science as a whole remained a "handmaiden of theology," it could produce valuable results only surreptitiously. This was the case in the Middle Ages. It was during the bourgeois regime, as already pointed out, that the natural sciences gained the possibility of wide development. But social science remained the servant of capitalism....

It is self-evident that if there are no limits to knowledge and mastery of matter, then there is no unknowable "essence."

Knowledge that arms us with the ability to forecast all possible changes in matter, and endows us with the necessary power of producing these changes—such knowledge does in fact exhaust the essence of matter. The so-called unknowable "essence" is only a generalization of our inadequate knowledge about matter. It is a pseudonym for our ignorance. Dualistic demarcation of unknown matter from its known properties reminds me of the jocular definition of a gold ring as a hole surrounded by precious metal. It is obvious that if we gain knowledge of the precious metal of phenomena and are able to shape it, then we can remain completely indifferent to the "hole" of the substance; and we gladly make a present of it to the archaic philosophers and theologians.

—Leon Trotsky, "Dialectical Materialism and Science" (1925)

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Helped Expose Frame-Up of Mumia Abu-Jamal In Honor of Veronica Jones

Veronica Jones, who courageously came forward with evidence of the innocence of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, died in early December at the age of 48. Jones was an eyewitness at the scene of the December 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, for which Mumia was falsely accused and sent to death row. At Mumia's 1982 trial, Jones, under pressure from the police, denied her original eyewitness account that she had seen two men run from the scene of the shooting. Neither of these could have been Mumia, who was found sitting on the ground profusely bleeding from a shot from a policeman's gun. At a 1996 post-conviction relief (PCRA) hearing for Mumia in front of "hanging judge" Albert Sabo, who had presided over the 1982 frame-up trial, Jones fought off relentless harassment from Sabo and the prosecution and stuck by her original eyewitness account. In a fury, the court had Jones *arrested on the witness stand* and dragged off to jail on the basis of a bench warrant issued more than two years before.

The victimization of Veronica Jones was one glaring example of the lengths to which the courts, cops and prosecutors have gone to see Mumia dead or imprisoned for life. The capitalist state's frame-up machinery included cover-ups, the disappearance of evidence exonerating Mumia and the manufacture of such fake "evidence" as a purported confession uttered by Mumia as he lay near death shortly after the shooting—a tale that was concocted by prosecutors and cops two months later.

Since we first took up Mumia's defense in 1987, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the SL—have stressed that Mumia was a man marked by America's capitalist rulers because of his political views and especially because he is a black man who stood up to the racist oppressors. The cops and FBI had Mumia in their crosshairs from the time he was a leading activist in the Philadelphia Black Panther Party at the age of 15. They continued with their vendetta when Mumia became a popular radio and print journalist, known as the "voice of the voiceless" for his scathing exposés of cop terror, black oppression and the plight of the poor. He was then targeted for sympathizing with the MOVE organization when it was subjected to a murderous cop siege in 1978, which was followed by the infamous May 1985 bombing of the MOVE home, in which an entire black neighborhood was burned to the ground. When Faulkner was shot and Mumia—at the time a cab driver working in the area—was found on the scene, the cops saw an opportunity to silence him forever.

Veronica Jones was one of many witnesses coerced by the police into changing their testimony. Jones, who had been working as a prostitute, was in jail when two detectives visited her only days before Mumia's trial and threatened her with a long prison sentence on gun possession charges if she did not change her original account. Fearing that she would be separated for years from her three children, Jones relented. Nevertheless, she testified at the trial that weeks after the shooting,

CORRECTION

In “Protest Conviction of Aaron Harrison!—‘War on Terror’ Frame-Up of Black Longshoreman” (WV No. 949, 1 January) we wrongly wrote that the Bay Area’s December 6 Partisan Defense Committee Holiday Appeal benefit was held in Oakland. It was actually held in San Francisco.

police hauled her in and offered a deal similar to one they gave to Cynthia White. Also a prostitute, White, the prosecution's star witness, was the only one claiming to have seen Mumia with a gun in his hand, even though no other eyewitness recalled seeing her in the area at the time. At the 1982 trial, Jones testified: "They were trying to get me to say something that the other girl said...and they told us we can work the area if we tell them." Sabo had this testimony struck from the record.

In 1996, as she was threatened with arrest, Jones defiantly told Sabo's court: "You think that's going to make me change my story. It's not!" Returning to the hearing after her release from jail, Jones demonstratively sat with Mumia's supporters. Asked why she had come forward, Jones replied that she did not want her grandchildren to "think their grandmother was living a lie." She subsequently became a visible supporter of the fight to free Mumia. In November 2007, she wrote a protest letter to the NBC *Today* show, which was preparing a broadcast featuring Michael Smerconish and Maureen Faulkner, authors of a lying tract

mob and corrupt policemen because he interfered with the graft and payoffs made to allow illegal activity” such as prostitution, gambling and drugs. (Beverly’s affidavit, Mumia’s own declaration of innocence and other material are included in the 2006 PDC pamphlet, *The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal—Mumia Is Innocent!*)

Outrageously, Mumia's lead attorney at the time, Leonard Weinglass, refused to present this explosive proof of his client's innocence in court. This compelled Rachel Wolkenstein and Jonathan Piper, who are associated with the PDC, to resign from Mumia's defense team. Weinglass and co-counsel Dan Williams were fired by Mumia in 2001 after the publication of Williams' treacherous "insider's account" of the case, *Executing Justice*, which was written as a preemptive strike to discredit the Beverly evidence. Since that time, court after court has refused to consider the Beverly confession and other evidence of Mumia's innocence.

As Mumia pointed out in a 4 October 1996 column on Jones' arrest on the witness stand, "The courts are *their* courts—places where, as Judge Sabo so aptly put it,



Partisan Defense Committee contingent at April 2008 Mumia demonstration in Philadelphia.

titled *Murdered by Mumia*. Declaring that “I Veronica Jones firmly believe in my heart that Mumia Abu-Jamal is innocent,” she wrote, “What makes you any different from those that had me ripped off the witness stand in handcuffs and arrested (all in front of my children) in a Philadelphia courtroom back in October 1996 on some bogus charge—all because I came forward to tell the truth.”

After Jones' 1996 testimony, others came forward, confirming a massive operation of police coercion. In 1997, Pamela Jenkins, another prostitute, revealed that police had tried to force her into falsely asserting that she saw Mumia shoot Faulkner, despite the fact that she was not even at the scene of the shooting. Jenkins also testified that White had been a police informer and was threatened by the cops into perjuring herself at the 1982 trial. A 2002 sworn statement by Yvette Williams, who was in jail with Cynthia White, also stated that White was threatened by the police.

Jones' testimony added to the accounts of a number of other witnesses who said that they saw one or two black men flee the scene right after Faulkner was shot—a fact that the state did everything possible to disappear. Notably, her testimony corresponds with the subsequent confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed Faulkner. In a sworn 1999 affidavit, Beverly stated that he and another man had been hired to kill Faulkner, who “was a problem for the

‘Justice is just an emotional feeling’.” Sabo made this snide comment during Mumia’s 1995 PCRA hearings, when he ruled against virtually every defense motion and objection and even had attorney Rachel Wolkenstein briefly thrown in jail.

Today, as Mumia nears the end of his legal appeals, the forces of the capitalist state continue their vendetta against him. Last April, the U.S. Supreme Court turned down Mumia's petition to overturn his frame-up conviction while holding

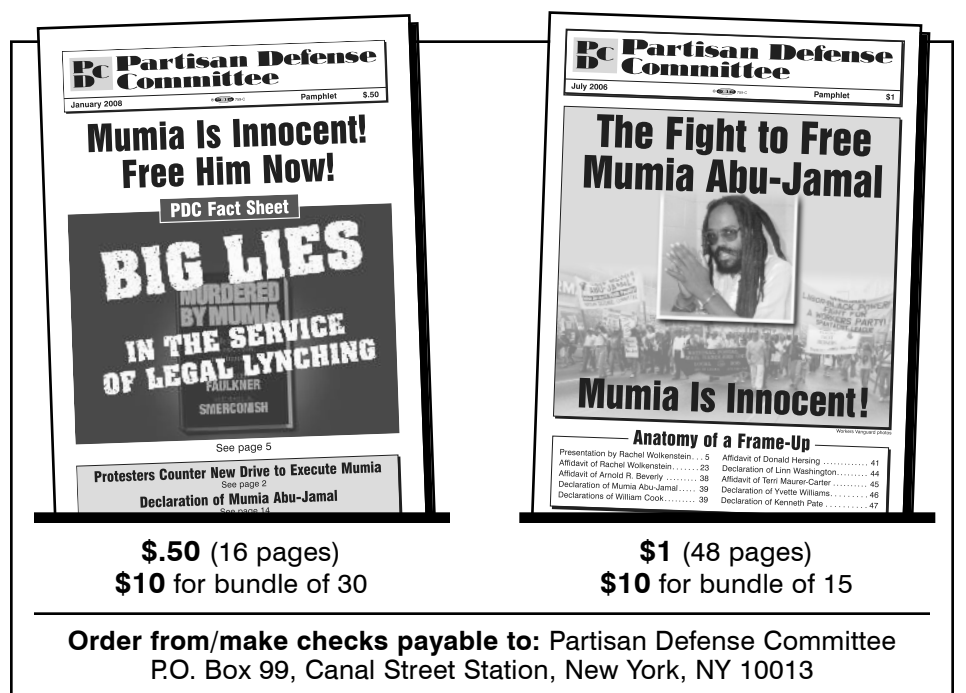


in abeyance the prosecutors' arguments to reinstate the death sentence, which had been overturned in 2001 by U.S. District Court judge William Yohn on the grounds of faulty jury instructions. Pennsylvania prosecutors are focused on an imminent Supreme Court ruling in the case of Ohio neo-Nazi Frank Spisak. Sentenced to death in 1983 for a killing spree at Cleveland State University, Spisak had that sentence overturned in 2006, because of faulty instructions to the jury that were strikingly similar to those issued at Mumia's 1982 sentencing hearing. Nineteen state attorneys general, including Pennsylvania's, filed a friend-of-the-court brief that seeks the reinstatement of Spisak's death sentence and explicitly links his case with that of Mumia.

A ruling against Spisak would mark a huge step toward reimposing the death sentence for Mumia. But even if the Court rules for Spisak and Mumia's death sentence remains reversed, Mumia's case would go back to the Philadelphia DA's office for a decision on whether to seek a new death sentence via a "trial" on the sentencing issue. Helping to prepare such an outcome is a film by black Republican Tigre Hill due to be released, titled *Barrel of a Gun*, which regurgitates the prosecutors' lying claim that Mumia had been itching to kill a cop since his teenage years in the Black Panthers.

There is no justice in the capitalist courts! This basic truth was spurned long ago by reformist “socialists” and assorted radical activists who subordinated the fight for Mumia’s freedom to appeals to bourgeois liberals who saw Mumia’s case as a blemish on the image of American democracy and its lying promise of “justice for all.” For years, they focused their demonstrations on the call for a new trial for Mumia—as though he could find justice in the capitalist courts. Now, with the judicial appeals in which they put their faith all but exhausted, many of these groups have petitioned Attorney General Eric Holder for a civil rights investigation into Mumia’s case. As we wrote in “Mumia Is an Innocent Man! Free Him Now!” (WV No. 941, 28 August 2009), “It would be hard to find a more savage indictment of the reformists’ fundamental belief in the ‘democracy’ of capitalist class rule” than this plea to the “warden-in-chief of the prison dungeons” to bring Mumia some justice.

While fighting to assist Mumia in
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Vancouver Olympics

State Repression Against Native Peoples, the Poor



Reuters



Canadian Press

Left: RCMP's Emergency Response Team, part of massive police/military mobilization for Olympic Games, patrols Athletes Village in Vancouver, October 2009. Right: Anti-Olympics protesters, 8 February 2009.

The following article is reprinted from Spartacist Canada No. 163 (Winter 2009/2010), newspaper of the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyste du Canada.

SPARTACIST CANADA

For 17 days in February, civil rights in Vancouver will be virtually erased as the city becomes an armed camp for the 2010 Olympics. Under the pretext of “fighting terror,” some 16,500 soldiers and police will descend on the city. Dubbed “Operation Podium,” this is the largest domestic “security” operation in Canadian history, combining various police forces, the Canadian and U.S. military and the CSIS secret police.

Numerous anti-Olympic activists and their families and friends have already faced harassment, including surprise visits by the cops at home, school and work. One professor at the University of British Columbia, Chris Shaw, was subjected to a campaign of RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] intimidation that included calls to his ex-wife, while cops followed one of his friends to a college exam. The cops are of course preparing to infiltrate protest groups and provoke confrontations, openly rebuffing the liberals

of the B.C. [British Columbia] Civil Liberties Association, who requested that the state refrain from such tactics.

Vancouver's city council under mayor Gregor Robertson (a former NDP MLA [New Democratic Party Member of the Legislative Assembly]) has passed a package of “temporary” Olympic by-laws that ban leafleting, unauthorized signage and megaphones. All protests must be preapproved and must take place in state-sanctioned areas cordoned off by cops. The provincial government's Bill 13 permits police to enter private residences to confiscate protest signs on display, threatening arrests and fines of up to \$10,000 a day. Ominously, Vancouver police have acquired a “sonic gun” that can blast crowds of people with up to 152 decibels causing disorientation, pain and potential hearing loss. Widely used for “crowd control” by U.S. occupation forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, a similar weapon was employed by the cops against protesters at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh in September.

The current repressive moves intersect and are amplified by the ongoing “war on terror.” Heavily censored CSIS/RCMP documents obtained by the media identify “several threats to Olympic security, including anti-globalization, anti-corporate and First Nations activists” (*Province*, 8 October 2008). The same report makes a deadly equation between leftist and Native activists and “international extremist organizations like al-Qaida.”

The rulers’ “war on terror” is not a “war” at all but a political campaign that aims to divide the working people against each other while strengthening the arsenal of state repression. In the first instance, it has seen a racist witchhunt of minorities, primarily Muslims but also Sikhs, Tamils and others. Ultimately, the central target of such police-state measures will be the organized working class, whose labour makes society run. The rights of labour and minorities must go forward together, or they will fall back separately!

Unlike liberal opponents of the Olympic crackdown, we Marxists understand that police violence and repression are not mistaken policies of a particular right-wing government or out-of-control state agency. One need only recall the killing by taser of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski two years ago by the trigger-happy RCMP to underline the fact that police

violence is no aberration but the day-to-day reality of the capitalist state. Under capitalism, the state—comprised at its core of the cops, courts, prisons and military—exists to protect the wealth and power of a tiny minority, the bourgeoisie, who exploit the working masses.

A taste of the potential power of the organized working class was given by striking B.C. paramedics when they set up picket lines that disrupted a high-profile Olympic security exercise for four hours on November 5. The union was protesting government strikebreaking legislation against their seven-month strike—legislation that was reportedly introduced at the direct behest of VANOC, the Olympic organizing committee. The paramedics’ picket lines were supported by unionized firefighters, who refused to cross them.



Lindsay/Vancouver Sun

Hundreds of striking paramedics and their supporters rally outside Richmond Olympic Oval, 18 September 2009.

This is the kind of social power that must be unleashed on behalf of the poor and all victims of capitalist repression.

Downtown Eastside: Poverty, Disease and Native Oppression

Vancouver, regularly touted as “the world’s most liveable city,” has sores to hide and real estate to sell. Behind the glitzy, cosmopolitan image of the city lies poverty so horrendous that it approaches Third World conditions. A priority for the capitalist class is to keep Vancouver’s homelessness, addiction, disease and discontent away from the Olympic cameras. In preparation for the Games, the homeless are being chased from parks and

thrown in jail, their property confiscated, as the city scrambles to hide its destitute thousands. And it’s not only happening in Vancouver. At a November 9 public forum on “Olympic Security Issues,” it was reported that hundreds of homeless people were, at that moment, being relocated from the Whistler area—the other main Olympic site—to Kamloops, hundreds of kilometers away.

Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside is the poorest urban area in Canada, directly abutting a bustling tourist area and mere blocks from both the financial district and the Olympic Village. Local politicians have been scheming for years to purge the area of its poor residents and now find a convenient pretext. AIDS researchers foresee an increase in HIV infection as addicts are driven away from the needle exchange and safe injection sites in the area. The Downtown Eastside already has North America’s highest HIV infection rates. Some 30 percent of drug users there have AIDS, while over half are infected with Hepatitis C.

The aboriginal population in the Downtown Eastside is proportionally seven times higher than in the city at large. For years, Native youth have been driven to the city by the grinding poverty of the reserves elsewhere in B.C. On the Mount Currie reserve, 30 minutes from the multimillion-dollar condos of Whistler, Native families live on a meagre \$165 a month. When they get to Vancouver, they face a wall of racism that ensures they remain poor and marginalized.

Indeed, the Canadian rulers have never had anything but contempt for the rights, health and lives of Native people. Canadian capitalism was founded on the destruction of the pre-existing aboriginal societies, which were devastated by disease, military conquest by European colonialism and eventual incarceration in reserves and prisons. The labour movement must defend Native rights! Only the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule can hold out a future for Native people.

Olympic Extravaganza Amid Capitalist Recession

The 2010 Olympics come amidst a world capitalist economic recession on a scale unseen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Unemployment in B.C. has doubled since January 2008. The Olympic torch run has passed through desperately poor Native communities and once-thriving working-class mill towns like

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California...

(continued from page 12)

who addressed the protest at UCLA on November 19:

"As socialists, we in the Spartacus Youth Club stand for free, quality, integrated education for all. We start from the understanding that to successfully fight the attacks on education, the attacks on working people, the racism and exploitation endemic to the system, you need a revolutionary program aimed at overturning the entire capitalist system. You can't win unless you know who your friends are and who your enemies are—and the Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are the enemies of the working people, of the workers and the oppressed! Obama is the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, director of mass murder in Afghanistan and Iraq. The UC Regents and the administration are likewise the vicious representatives of capitalism on campus. The illusions peddled by everyone from BAMN to Student Worker Front to PL [Progressive Labor Party] that the Democrats and the Regents are pressureable—these reformist pressure politics have derailed struggle for years. We say: Abolish the Regents and the administration! For worker/student/teacher control of the university! We fight for a revolutionary workers party that fights for workers revolution!"

At organizing meetings to build the various protests, our fight for such a perspective went decidedly against the grain of the protest organizers. For example, at a UCLA Fights Back coalition meeting, after an SYC member laid out our political program, a representative of the Student Worker Front, Jason Ball, went apoplectic, declaring that this amounted to a call to "smash the UCs"!

No, we want to "smash" race and class privilege in education. We think everyone should have access to the same quality education available to the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie. We call to nationalize the private universities and for a state-paid living stipend so working people and the poor can attend. We demand the expansion of remedial programs for students relegated to inner-city public schools, an end to the racist "tracking" system in the high schools and their genuine integration, including through the aggressive implementation of busing. Whether this is possible or not is in reality determined by the outcome of class and social struggle. Under capitalism, gains wrested from the ruling class through social struggle are limited and reversible. As communists, our goal is not what is possible within the framework of capitalist society, but the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist class rule and the establishment of a workers state as a transition to the construction of a classless, egalitarian society where scarcity has been eliminated and education is the right of all.

The pseudo-communists of Progressive Labor Party, on the other hand, are doing their part to defend the "politics of the possible." An integral part of the UCLA Fights Back coalition, they are building protests on the basis of liberal pressure politics like all the other reformists. Typically, despite formulaic injunctions to "fight for communism" in their newspaper,

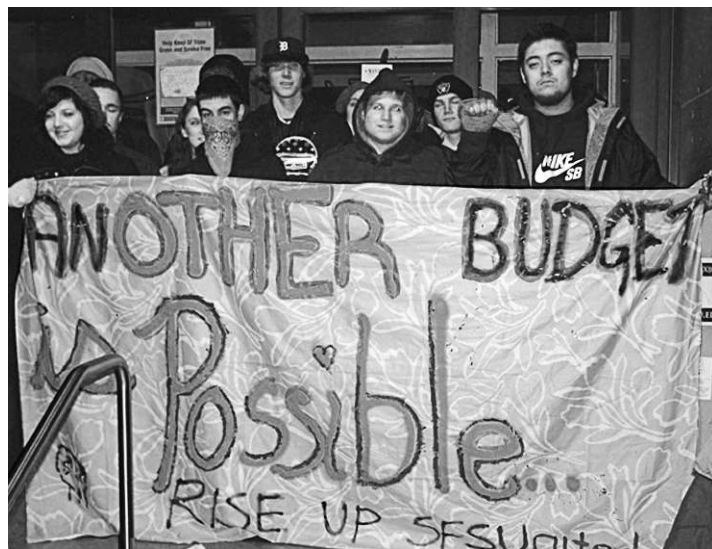
Challenge, on the ground when we argued for our Marxist program at a planning meeting, PL told us there would be time for discussion of communism later but not when a political protest was being planned!

Likewise, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Socialist Organizer (SO) are doing their level best to confine the protests to what is acceptable to the campus administration and bourgeois liberals. Although usually found mindlessly enthusing over any type of protest, they have actually criticized the occupiers from the right.

In an article titled "Where We Go Now at SFSU" (*Socialist Worker* online, 14 December 2009), the ISO proclaimed its "solidarity with and support for the occupation" but went on to complain:

"This action disorganized the General Assembly that had been planned for Wednesday, and had to be put off because of the occupation. Faculty and staff as well as students openly expressed their dismay at this unilateral overriding of the democratic process. Building a genuine democratic assembly that unites students, faculty and staff is a sometimes difficult, but definitely worthwhile and necessary project. The action on Wednesday set that project back."

What rattled the ISO's chain was that the "undemocratic" building occupation screwed up plans for the General Assembly, planned the same night, with the main demand that SFSU president Corrigan "attend... and answer to the student body"!



In fact, although the occupiers used more determined methods, they shared the same aim. On their blog, they also demanded that Corrigan "have an open discussion with students," promoting the illusion that Corrigan, whose job is to administer SFSU on behalf of the capitalist class that rules this exploitative, repressive society, would take the side of the students fighting budget cuts!

Following the September 24 Berkeley protest, a Socialist Organizer article railed against "impatient ultra-left students [who] are already arguing that the movement has to move on to 'more militant tactics' such as occupations" ("What Next After September 24?" *The Organizer* online, 4 October 2009). Calling building occupations a "distraction" and, grotesquely, "a pretext for the administrators and the police to



Intercontinental Press

May 1968: Workers at Renault plant near Paris vote down union bureaucrats' agreement with government. Proletarian struggle brought France to a halt.

repress the movement," SO took particular offense at the Santa Cruz occupiers' statement: "We do not seek structural reforms. We demand not a free university but a free society. A free university in the midst of a capitalist society is like a reading room in a prison." Actually, that's not a bad statement. But SO berated it as "bizarre," saying: "All activists with at

We fight against the use of the universities and schools as direct agents of U.S. imperialism: **ROTC, military recruiters off campus now!** Nonetheless, under capitalism, the capitalists and their agents run the education system to serve their interests, including propagating bourgeois ideology and training the next generation of administrators, CEOs, military officers and Dr. Strangeloves of U.S. imperialism. The working class is to get just enough education so the capitalists can extract profit from its labor power. Under American capitalism, which is rooted in the racial oppression and segregation of the black population at the bottom of society, the masses of blacks in the inner cities are increasingly considered a "surplus population," no longer needed as a reserve army of labor and thus not "worth" providing with even the basic means of survival, much less educating.

As the Russian revolutionaries Nikolai Bukharin and Evgeny Preobrazhensky wrote after the Russian Revolution in *The ABC of Communism* (1920):

"In bourgeois society the school has three principal tasks to fulfill. First, it inspires the coming generation of workers with devotion and respect for the capitalist regime. Secondly, it creates from the young of the ruling classes 'cultured' controllers of the working population. Thirdly, it assists capitalist production in the application of sciences to technique, thus increasing capitalist profits."

The campuses are not separate from the rest of bourgeois society, and cannot be wrested from the control of the rapacious capitalist class short of the overthrow of the whole system through a workers revolution.

A prominent demand at UCLA and other campus protests has been the call to "democratize" the Board of Regents. The UC Regents, who banned affirmative action even before anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 passed in 1996, are the capitalist watchdogs over the university. They are a rogues' gallery of many of the most powerful figures in the California capitalist class, from bankers and top executives to close friends of the governor, real estate moguls and more—including financier Richard Blum, husband of Democratic Party Senator Dianne Feinstein. It is laughable to think they can be "accountable" to anyone other than to the class they represent. **Abolish the Board of Regents and the administration! Those who work, study and teach at the universities should run them—for worker/student/teacher control!**

Compared to the "democratize the Regents" bleating of the liberals and reformists, statements by the occupiers sound much more radical. For instance, the occupiers of UCLA's Campbell Hall—which they renamed Carter-Huggins Hall in honor of the two Black Panthers murdered there 40 years ago—said in their statement, "We are under no illusions. The UC Regents will vote the budget cuts and raise student fees.... We know that the

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Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

TORONTO

Wednesday, January 20, 6 p.m.

**Reform vs. Revolution—
Smash the Capitalist State!**

University of Toronto
Sidney Smith Hall
Room 1080

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spartcan@on.aibn.com

Visit the ICL Web Site:
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Workers State!**

For Workers Political Revolution!

University of British Columbia
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trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

LOS ANGELES

Sunday, January 17, 2 p.m.

Imperialism & War

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

Information and readings: (213) 880-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

Student Vanguardism vs. Revolutionary Working-Class Perspective

Eclectic groupings of self-proclaimed anarchists, pseudo-Marxists and liberals promote building occupations as a more effective tactic to change the way the university is run. Various blogs proclaim the need to "occupy everything" and "reclaim space" and echo a popular chant of the protests, "Whose university? Our university!" However, 24-hour occupation or not, universities are capitalist institutions.

Training a New Generation of Communist Fighters

We print below, slightly edited for publication, an excerpt from the speech given by Spartacus Youth Club representative Tony Duran at the Partisan Defense Committee's Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners in Los Angeles on December 13. The Partisan Defense Committee is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League.

The SYC wants to train a new generation of revolutionaries in the tradition of the Trotskyist Fourth International:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program

SYC Speech at Los Angeles Holiday Appeal

on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

—Leon Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (1938)

The Spartacus Youth Club speech at the November 19 UCLA Regents protest garnered much applause when students heard our advocacy of free, quality, integrated education for all. In fact, as I concluded my speech, I received a couple of text messages from a friend. The first one read, "I heard you speak." The second said, "You had them until Obama"! Our opposition to Obama hit a nerve with many of the students who

have illusions in him.

When Obama was elected we said that this was nothing to celebrate for the working class, speaking the truth to the masses no matter how bitter. Reformists like the International Socialist Organization were busy "meeting people where they are at" in their present consciousness, at parties organized to celebrate an end to eight years of Republican rule. In this country, the main obstacle to revolutionary consciousness is illusions in the Democrats pushed by these reformists and trade-union bureaucrats. The SYC does not fear obstacles and is not interested in seeking the line of least resistance; we will meet these illusions head on and aim to break workers

and students from this false and deadly consciousness.

The Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, which overthrew capitalism in Russia, was not a Russian peculiarity. It was the revolutionary Marxist program of the Bolsheviks that was able to lead the Russian working class and oppressed masses, when they rose, against the capitalist system and for socialist revolution. The SYC seeks to train a new generation of young communist fighters in this tradition. You better believe that, armed with this revolutionary Marxist program, this new generation of communist fighters will be prepared and bold when the hour for action arrives! **Break with the Democrats! For a revolutionary workers party! Forward to a socialist revolution!**

California...

(continued from page 5)

crisis is systematic. It reaches beyond the Regents, beyond the criminal budget cuts in Sacramento, beyond the economic crisis, to the very foundations of our society." That's true. But the question posed is what political program is needed if you are going to wage a genuine fight to get rid of this system. In other words, the question posed is revolution versus reform.

An article in the London *Guardian* titled "A Communist Revival?" (8 October 2009) points to the UC Santa Cruz occupations as indicating "the return of communism, in its original sense." In their statement "Communiqué from an Absent Future," the Santa Cruz occupiers describe the need for imbuing the occupations with "a truly communist content." In fact, what they put forward amounts to little more than New Leftist "it's right to rebel" radicalism. Thus, they point to the mass protests in Greece against the cold-blooded killing of a 15-year-old student by the cops, arguing that "the rioting was the obvious means to enact the destruction of an entire political and economic system." But "rioting" has never ended capitalism and it never will; what's required is working-class action under the leadership of a revolutionary internationalist party. Anything else comes down to the same old pressure politics.

Our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece fought for the defense of the anarchist and other youth against state repression, demanding the immediate release of all those arrested in these pro-

Rally at UC Berkeley during two-day strike of UPTe workers, 18-19 November 2009.



tests and that all charges be dropped. As they wrote in a leaflet distributed to a massive one-day general strike:

"The protests against the cop terror need an organized expression—one that welds the anger of the youth protesters with the social power of the proletariat. The working class must be mobilized not only to defend youth protesters against the violence of the cops, but as part of a struggle against the capitalist system itself.... Although anarchists may seem 'militant' to some youth, they are opposed to building the one instrument that is indispensable for getting rid of the capitalist exploiters and their state—a Leninist vanguard party."

—"Greece Rocked by Protests," WV No. 927, 2 January 2009

While anarchists claim that their aim is to "smash the state," they are opposed to replacing it with a workers state. History has proven time and time again that anarchists invariably end up on the side of reformists in defense of capitalism, as in the Spanish Civil War (see "Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 61, Spring 2009).

A group centrally involved in leading the occupations at SFSU is Student Unity and Power (SUP), which includes many self-proclaimed anarchists. SUP mainly embraces a rehashed version of student vanguardism similar to what was touted by the New Left in the 1960s. Student vanguardism is premised on the notion that students are inherently revolutionary or can enact revolutionary change. SUP is fond of using the example of France 1968—a student-sparked but working-class-led incipient revolution. Although betrayed by the Stalinist and social-democratic trade-union misleaders, the mobilization of the French working class in revolutionary struggle in '68 blew a hole in the student-vanguardist view of many New Leftists who had previously written off the working class as "conservative" and "bought off." When the proletariat rebelled, it brought France to a halt.

During the recent occupation, students around SUP had banners calling for "working class unity" and for "class war." But this is just window dressing. According to SUP, "California's budget cuts can only be defeated by a militant student resistance movement, building awareness and uniting both student bodies in a statement of solidarity with the education sector as a whole" ("Who We Are," *Student Unity & Power*, 21 September 2009). Students are a petty-bourgeois layer who have no relation to the means of production in capitalist society and are thus divorced from the levers of social power. In contrast, the strength of the working class to fight capitalist attacks lies in its access to the means of producing wealth—its ability to withhold its labor power—as well as its numbers and social organization. Students must therefore ally with the working class, not the other way around.

Dead-End Pressure Politics

The fake socialists can't even choke out the demand for free tuition. In contrast, the demands of the December 9 student occupation at SFSU included "that education from kindergarten to PhD, be free of charge," and "that the university system be run by the students, faculty and staff, not administrators." Solidarizing with campus workers, they also called to end the furlough program and layoffs. Nonetheless, these apparently more militant student occupations fundamentally share the reformists' view that the racist American ruling class can be pressured to serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. Take, for example, another demand of the SFSU occupiers: "that prisons are closed and defunded." The prison system (along with the army, cops and courts) is an integral part of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, whose purpose is the forcible suppression of the working class, the oppressed and any perceived

challenge to their class rule. This apparatus of violence can be destroyed only in a workers revolution—certainly not through student occupations!—and must be replaced by proletarian organs of power.

Likewise, the occupiers' demand "that the imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Gaza are ended, and that money is used to feed and clothe the poor" is a rehash of the timeworn reformist plea, "money for jobs and education, not for war," which is based on the delusion that spending money on war instead of human need is just a question of misplaced priorities by the capitalist rulers. The truth is that imperialist war is not a policy, but a necessary outgrowth of capitalism and the defense of imperialist interests abroad.

These demands are cut of the same cloth as the call put out by various liberals and reformists to "tax the rich" as a supposed solution to the budget crisis. This slogan was emblazoned on the T-shirts of members of the International Socialist Organization at an October 24 "Mobilizing Conference to Save Public Education" at UC Berkeley that drew 800 participants from various campuses. A month before, the ISO had an article in their paper titled, "Is It as Simple as 'Tax the Rich?'" (*Socialist Worker*, 8 September 2009) that answered, "Yes. It is. It's that simple." Also seeking to advise the financiers of American imperialism, Socialist Organizer suggested: "There are many alternatives to the cuts: UC Regent and CSU trustee executive salaries could be slashed immediately; new building construction and other non-essential projects could be put on hold; reserve funds could be used; the rich could be taxed their fair share; Obama's bailout money and/or war spending could go to saving state services" ("What Next After September 24?" *The Organizer* online, 4 October 2009).

At SFSU, the ISO is active in a coalition called SFSUUnited, whose banner at recent protests read, "Another Budget Is Possible"—another attempt to tinker with the capitalist system to make it "fairer." The group Speak Out Now/Revolutionary Workers Group (SON/RWG) waxes on about the need to create a "true stimulus" and fills its paper with pie charts and graphs to show where the bourgeoisie's money could be going! In a 15 March 2009 article titled "Education Is a Right—Not a Privilege," they state: "We have the numbers to force the state and the bosses to spend the money on the needs of the majority" (*Speak Out Now*). Such pressure politics are an ideological support to the capitalist system, spreading illusions that it can provide for the needs of working people and the oppressed through the "lesser evil" capitalist Democratic Party, a political dead end for those who want to see real social change. In fact, after protests broke out on campuses across the state, Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Against Apologists for the Treachery of the POUM, Then and Now

Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War

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did propose “another budget”—one that cut welfare and Medicaid instead of cutting funds for public universities. (For more on the California crisis, see “The California Budget Crisis and the Bankruptcy of American Capitalism,” WV No. 941, 28 August 2009.)

Break with the Democrats!

Not surprisingly, just a little over a year ago many of these same organizations were crawling over each other for a front-row seat on Barack Obama’s Democratic Party election bandwagon. Progressive Labor actively participated in Obama’s campaign (*Challenge*, 26 March 2008; see “Obama, Clinton: No Friends of Workers, Blacks, the Oppressed,” WV No. 913, 25 April 2008). Eric Gardner and his UCLA Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) staged a “No to McCain Rally” on the eve of the elections, and BAMN greeted Obama’s impending election with gushing praise, saying: “Barack Obama’s victory in the November elections must be recognized as far more than a question of the victory of one very gifted, moderately progressive black American or of his moderately progressive party.... It would represent, even taking into account all necessary qualifications, truly a victory of reason against unreason” (“The Obama Era—Renewal of King’s Dream or the New Jim Crow?” *Liberator*, January 2009). Declaring a “reversal” of “conservative dogmas and prejudices” (“What’s at Stake in the Battle of the Budget?” *Socialist Worker* online, 3 March 2009), the ISO greeted Obama’s federal budget proposals by arguing they would “increase spending on programs for the poor, set a goal of ‘universal’ health care coverage, expand access to higher education.” What a joke!

The election of Obama as CEO of American capitalism was to provide a much-needed facelift for U.S. imperialism to further its predatory interests abroad and grind down the working class, blacks and immigrants at home. While handing out billions to bankers and auto bosses, Obama has appealed to everyone else to embrace a “spirit of sacrifice.” His education policy is a continuation of the hated Bush regime’s, based on the anti-education No Child Left Behind Act. Obama is pushing through the privatization of public schools and union-busting through “merit pay” and charter school expansion. Meanwhile, he repeats the disgusting tirade that crumbling schools and poverty are “no excuses” for the black masses and that “hardships will just make you stronger.”

As we wrote after the arrest of black Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr.: “The myth that black oppression exists in people’s minds, rather than being inherent to American capitalism, serves to blame the oppressed for their oppression. Ghetto schools are nothing but holding pens for

minority youth with no future in society because, especially with the deindustrialization of this country, black ghetto youth are not wanted or needed by America’s capitalist rulers. The daily reality of black life in America can be measured by the nearly one million black men and women who are incarcerated in the country’s jails and prisons.”

—“Obama’s ‘Change’ Is More of the Same,” WV No. 940, 31 July 2009



Harlingue-Viollet

Adult literacy class in the Soviet Union, early 1920s. Bolshevik Revolution opened the road to unprecedented social progress.

Our fight against the racist purges of the universities and every manifestation of racial oppression in bourgeois society is part of our program of revolutionary integrationism, which is based on the understanding that full political, social and economic equality for black people requires the destruction of the capitalist system in which black oppression is rooted. The fight for black freedom must be central to the fight to free the working class as a whole from the chains of capitalist exploitation. Black workers, who constitute one of the most conscious and militant layers of the American working class, will play a leading role in this struggle.

The main obstacle to building the revolutionary workers party necessary to lead such a revolution is the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, which, through its support to the Democratic Party, politically ties workers to their class enemy—politics that the reformist left tails. The interests of workers and the oppressed are irreconcilably counterposed to those of the capitalists. But for today’s union leaders, the militant struggle that was required to forge the trade unions in the first place is anathema. Instead, the trade-union leaders pursue a policy of class collaboration, preaching reliance on their Democratic “friends” in government. In fact, the big-time, big-sellout trade-union misleaders, like the United Auto Workers’ Ron Gettelfinger, have shoved down the

throats of the organized working class the lie that they must sacrifice hard-won gains for the capitalists’ bottom line in the current economic crisis.

While the campus unions brought members out to the protests, the leaders made sure they were not mobilized as workers whose interests were at stake, but as atomized individuals in a supporting role to the student protesters. Neither were there

mobilizations of other unionized workers, who have an interest in educating their sons and daughters. While the Alameda Labor Council “sanctioned” (on paper) the November 18-19 UPTE strike, they did nothing in the concrete to bring out Bay Area labor to the pickets. Likewise with the Communications Workers of America—UPTE’s parent union—nada!

At the UCs, campus workers are divided into several unions, including CUE, UPTE, AFSCME (which includes food service and maintenance workers) and the United Auto Workers (graduate student instructors). One out, all out—for the mobilization of all campus unions to fight budget cuts! For one campus union! On the second day of the UPTE strike at UC Berkeley, unions negotiated with student activists to hold teach-ins on campus, behind the picket lines! The

only way to shut down the campus is to make sure it’s not business as usual—picket lines mean don’t cross!

The Road Forward

To drive back the ruling class’s assaults, students and minorities must be mobilized behind the power of the multi-racial working class. As the Spartacus Youth Club’s predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist Youth, stated:

“It is wrong...to pretend that the fight against budget cuts can be won within the framework of that issue alone and involving only teachers and students. Revolutionaries must point out that *there is no* ‘program for the budget cuts’ as such, but that a fight against these cuts can only be successful if linked to the struggles of the working class against capitalism—through a vanguard party. At the same time, we do not sit back and ignore these struggles—we support and initiate demonstrations against the cuts and for free higher education with stipend, seeking to use these times when students are aroused, and thus more open to political ideas, to win individual student militants to the working-class struggle against capital, based on the full program of revolutionary Marxism.”

—“Budget Cuts Hit Campuses—Only Workers Can Smash Phase III!” *Revolutionary Communist Youth Newsletter* No. 17, May-June 1973

In our interventions into campus protests, the SYCs seek to win students and youth to the perspective of building a revolutionary workers party. Our model is the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky that led the workers to power in the Russian Revolution of October 1917, shattering capitalist rule. Despite its subsequent degeneration under Stalinist bureaucratic misrule, the Soviet Union remained a workers state until its destruction through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. The overturn of capitalism made possible enormous economic and social gains for working people in the USSR, including in education. The essential precondition for human emancipation from starvation, exploitation, ignorance and inequality is a planned, socialized economy on a global scale. Only in this way can the accumulated knowledge and culture of civilization be truly appropriated by those who are today deprived of that right. ■

Olympics...

(continued from page 4)

inal people in the cops’ crosshairs, while in Athens in 2004 it was the Roma (Gypsy) population under the jackboot.

Many critics of the Olympics seek to take advantage of the fact that the eyes of the world will be on Vancouver to highlight the horrors perpetrated against the poor. But the program on offer from most activist groups amounts to pleading with the capitalists to adjust their priorities. One Downtown Eastside activist was quoted: “Our government is spending about \$6 billion on games.... That money could provide over 30,000 homes for people who are homeless in Canada. Or it could be used to completely wipe out poverty and homelessness in BC” (Carnegie Community Action Project press release, 7 February 2009). Indeed it could, but it is a complete fantasy to think that the capitalist rulers can be pressured to reorder their system in the interests of working people and the poor.

Capitalism is rooted in the grinding exploitation of the workers by a ruling class whose only interest is the pursuit of profit. The boom-bust cycle intrinsic to the capitalist economy periodically produces mass immiseration, while the capitalists always maintain a reserve army of the unemployed and destitute as a means of keeping downward pressure on wages. There is no way to end poverty and homelessness short of sweeping away this barbaric social system through workers revolution.

The social-democratic NDP, official opposition to the ruling B.C. Liberals, has spoken out against Olympic security

spending and the attacks on civil liberties. But its pretense to defend the poor and oppressed is sheer hypocrisy. Despite its links to the labour movement, the NDP’s program has always been to defend capitalism, as was shown clearly when the New Democrats ruled B.C. during the 1990s. It was an NDP government that ordered the largest military operation in RCMP history at Gustafsen Lake in 1995 in order to evict a handful of Native activists from a “private” ranch, turning it into a war zone.

Even as the capitalist state ramps up its war on the poor, the fake Trotskyists of the Fightback group [affiliated with Alan Wood’s International Marxist Tendency] are single-mindedly occupied with their “Take Back the Party” campaign aimed at bolstering the NDP by giving it a “left” facelift. In a November 25 statement, they write: “Fightback has long warned that the right-ward drift of the NDP leadership in BC would hurt the party in the polls.” In contrast, we Trotskyists seek to break the workers from the deadening grip of social democracy, starting with the most advanced layers.

These Olympics shine a spotlight on the repressive nature of the capitalist state, which cannot be “cleaned up,” reformed or pressured into acting on behalf of the workers and the oppressed. It must be shattered by workers revolution. Stopping racist state terror, defending the rights of Native people and the poor—all this and more requires the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party that fights to expropriate the capitalist class and build a new, socialist society where a centrally planned economy will produce for human need, not the profits of a tiny minority. ■

Veronica Jones...

(continued from page 3)

every legal avenue available to him, we have insisted from the beginning that no reliance must be placed on the rigged scales of a “justice” system that, with the cops and prosecutors, lies at the core of the racist capitalist state, or on the capitalist politicians—whether Democratic, Republican or Green—who serve that state. We have long publicized Mumia’s case and initiated and intervened into protests on his behalf, calling to free Mumia and abolish the racist death penalty. In doing so, we have put forward a class-struggle strategy premised on the understanding that the working class, whose labor makes the wheels of capitalist society turn, has the potential power to shake and ultimately overturn the capitalist system of repression. At the same time, as we wrote in WV No. 941:

“The fight to mobilize the social power of the working class in struggle for

Mumia’s freedom faces many obstacles. Integrated unions representing millions of workers have gone on record in support of Mumia. But these millions have not been mobilized *in action* to combat this racist frame-up. The responsibility for that lies with the pro-capitalist trade-union misleaders, who overwhelmingly refuse to call their members into action to defend their economic interests, much less in defense of a black political prisoner. The bureaucracy’s class-collaborationist policies, which have tied the working class to its capitalist class enemy, have dissipated the fighting strength of the unions. The pathetic reformist and liberal petitioners of Obama and Holder similarly do their best in reinforcing belief in the inherent benevolence of the capitalist state.”

We honor Veronica Jones for her defiance of the executioners in black robes. As revolutionary Marxists, our task is to forge a vanguard party that can make the working class conscious of its historic interest to be the instrumentality to shatter the power of the racist capitalist rulers and their state, opening the road to a socialist society where black oppression and the whole machinery of capitalist state terror will be relics of a barbaric past. ■

Iran...

(continued from page 1)

cruelly dashed when the Islamic hierarchy under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini placed itself at the head of the anti-Shah upsurge and ascended to power.

The huge clerical caste of mullahs and their allies among the traditional bourgeoisie in the bazaars were a *backward-looking* force opposed to all social progress. Immediately on taking power, the clerical regime viciously attacked the working class and oppressed. Women were forced back under the *chador*, the stifling head-to-foot black veil that symbolizes their subordination. Kurdish militants were massacred by firing squads. The workers councils that were thrown up in the course of the upheaval were replaced by Islamic councils subordinated to the regime. Soon, Iranian youth were sent to die by the hundreds of thousands in a years-long border war with neighboring Iraq that was reactionary on both sides.

The 1979 “revolution” was a *defeat*, and the Iranian masses are paying the price to this day. Yet, criminally, the rise to power of a movement based on the mosque and bazaar was *directly aided* by the then large and influential Iranian left and cheered on by pseudo-socialist groups abroad. These groups claimed you had to support the religious forces because they were “leading a mass movement.” No matter that Khomeini et al. made their aims clear from the very start: enslaving women, stoning homosexuals and “adulterers” to death, persecuting religious minorities like the Baha’i, reversing the partial land reforms that had weakened the power of the mosque. For the reformist left, questions of class and program were, and are, irrelevant because immersion in the “movement” of the day is the



U.S. imperialist occupiers in Khost Province, Afghanistan, December 2009.

ary 1979), published by the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, gushed: “Victory in Iran: Iranian Masses Show the Way for Workers Around the World.” The British-based group around Alan Woods and the late Ted Grant—today represented by Fightback in Canada—even claimed in their theoretical journal that the mullah movement could smash capitalist class rule and establish a workers state. I lived in England at this time and recall a public meeting organized by the British affiliate of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec). One of their leaders, who had visited Tehran, boasted that he joined in chants of “Allah Akbar” (“God is great”) during demonstrations in the city.

Iran had long had one of the strongest self-proclaimed communist movements in the Near East. The pro-Soviet Tudeh Party dominated in the working class. In the 1970s, tens of thousands of youth were won to other left-wing groups, from the Maoist Peykar to the guerrillaist Fedayeen and more. But without exception these groups acted to subordinate working-class struggles to the Muslim hierarchy. In the wake of the mullahs’ victory, these leftists were hunted down, jailed and exe-

the current regime. While he was prime minister from 1981 to 1989, untold thousands of leftists, Kurds and women’s rights activists were slaughtered in the prisons and buried in mass graves. A decade later, in 1999, militant student protests were drowned in blood by the “reform” government of then-president Mohammad Khatami, now a Moussavi ally. Also aligned with Moussavi is another former president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. A notoriously corrupt capitalist, Rafsanjani may well be the richest man in Iran.

Abroad, the protests are being cheered by everyone from royalist supporters of the former Shah to bourgeois democrats and the remnants of the left. The workers and oppressed of Iran have no interest in supporting *either* of the cabals fighting over how best to pursue the mullahs’ bloody rule. We say: Down with the butcher Ahmadinejad and the whole Islamic Republic! No support to Moussavi’s “Green Movement,” a deadly trap for Iran’s youth, women and workers! We fight to win elements among the new generation of Iranians to the struggle to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party armed with a program to liberate the masses through workers socialist revolution.

Down With Imperialist Threats Against Iran!

I want to turn now to the threats to Iran from U.S. imperialism and its allies, including Canada. A week ago, just after Iranian leader Ahmadinejad addressed the United Nations, U.S. president Barack Obama announced the supposed discovery of another Iranian nuclear development site near the mullahs’ holy city of Qom. Obama declared that Washington would not allow Iran’s nuclear development, calling it a grave threat to “world peace.” To call this hypocritical is a vast understatement. By orders of magnitude, the United States is the greatest purveyor of war in the world today. It is also the only country ever to use atomic weapons on a civilian population, killing 200,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In contrast, Iran’s rulers are merely tinpot dictators.

It’s an open secret that the U.S. and other imperialist powers have staged numerous provocations in the hope that Iranian retaliation would serve as a pretext to attack the country. They’ve been steadily beefing up military forces in and around the Persian Gulf, including positioning U.S. aircraft carriers near the Iranian coast, as well as developing the so-called “missile defense program.” Last year, BBC news reported that the U.S. had readied plans for attacks on Iran, to be triggered either by “confirmation that Iran was developing a nuclear weapon” or “a high-casualty attack on US forces in neighbouring Iraq...if it were traced directly back to Tehran.”

As revolutionary opponents of U.S. and Canadian imperialism, we unequivocally condemn these provocations as well as the imperialist sanctions against Iran implemented through the United Nations. These are the opening shots in war, as the case of Iraq demonstrates. *One and a half million* Iraqis were killed and the country devastated by the UN sanctions that preceded the 2003 U.S. invasion. Since its creation at the end of World War II, the UN has always been a fig leaf for naked imperialist aggression against semicolonial countries.

The U.S. and Israel have repeatedly

threatened military action against Iran’s nuclear program. In the face of such threats, we say that Iran *needs* nuclear weaponry and adequate delivery systems for deterrence. In today’s world, possession of nuclear arms has become a guarantee of national sovereignty. Neighboring Iraq’s lack of “weapons of mass destruction,” including nukes, emboldened the U.S. to invade and occupy the country, leading to the carnage of the last six years. In the event of a military attack on Iran by U.S. imperialism, or by Israel—the only nuclear-armed country in the Near East—or any other force operating as proxy for the imperialists, our stand as Marxists would be *revolutionary defensism*. We would call for the military defense of Iran against imperialism while giving absolutely no political support to the reactionary Tehran regime, just as we did concerning Saddam Hussein’s Iraq at the time of the U.S. invasion.

Washington and its allies have naturally sought to intervene in the political turmoil within Iran. Obama declared that he was “appalled and outraged” by the regime’s crackdown. After 30 years of oppressive mullah rule, there are doubtless many in Iran who have illusions in Western bourgeois democracy. Some might even see the “democratic” imperialists as a potential ally—we’ve seen examples of this on protests called by Iranian exiles here and elsewhere. These illusions have been furthered by the facelift given to U.S. imperialism with the election of Obama in place of the war-crazed Bush gang.

Whether administered by Democrats or Republicans, U.S. imperialism is the deadliest enemy of working people around the globe; and Canada, far from being a “peacekeeper,” acts as Washington’s loyal junior partner-in-crime. It was the CIA, in collusion with the British, that organized the 1953 coup that overthrew then-prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq to reverse his nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The imperialists then put the Shah back in power and backed his blood-drenched regime until the bitter end. We say: Down with the imperialist occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq! U.S. out of Pakistan and Central Asia! Imperialist hands off Iran!

For Permanent Revolution in Iran!

I now want to turn to the theoretical and programmatic underpinnings of our revolutionary perspective for Iran. Our model is the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. The program of *permanent revolution*, first developed by the Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky for the Russian Revolution, also points the road to national and social liberation in countries like Iran, where economic and social development has been stunted by the global domination of the imperialist powers.

The October Revolution showed that only the working class, leading the peasant and urban plebeian masses, can liberate the societies of countries of belated capitalist development. In the imperialist epoch of decaying capitalism that began more than a century ago, all wings of the bourgeoisie in such countries are too dependent on their ties to the imperialists, too fearful of independent working-class action to play any progressive role. They are incapable of solving the bourgeois-democratic tasks associated with the great European revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries such as agrarian revolution, national independence, democratic freedoms and women’s rights.

As Trotsky explained, the working class must rally the oppressed masses including by raising democratic demands such as for a revolutionary constituent assembly, fighting for agrarian revolution to give land to the peasants, for the rights of women and national minorities. In seizing state power and establishing their own dictatorship, the workers will be compelled to institute socialist measures, such as expropriating the means of production and establishing a planned economy. But these revolutions will survive and flourish only if they are extended to the heartlands of world imperialism, the advanced



Iranian workers protest against newly enacted anti-labor laws at May Day demonstration in Tehran, 2006.

be-all and end-all of politics. And in this case the “movement” was one of black reaction.

Uniquely, our organization, then known as the international Spartacist tendency, warned that the triumph of Khomeini’s forces would lead to a regime no less bloody and despotic than the Shah’s. We said: “Down with the Shah—Don’t bow to Khomeini! For workers revolution!” We emphasized the fight for women’s liberation, a life-or-death question in this part of the world, where women have long been treated as human chattel, and said: “No to the veil! For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!” We called for the right of self-determination—to national independence—for the minority nationalities in Iran’s “prison house of peoples.” For our principled revolutionary stance, our comrades around the world were vilified and physically attacked not only by clerical thugs but by reformist leftists acting at their behest.

Here are some examples of what the reformists said at the time. The Canadian International Socialists ran a headline in their press saying: “The Form—Religion, The Spirit—Revolution” (*Workers Action*, February 1979). The *Militant* (27 Febru-

cuted. The remnants who made it into exile have overwhelmingly retreated from politics or been rendered cynical.

Now a new generation is taking to the streets against what they rightly call the “new dictator.” Fully 70 percent of Iran’s population is under 30. These youth have little knowledge of or identification with the political program and liberating ideals of Marxism, or how this program was perverted by the Stalinists and other reformists in 1978-79 in the name of collaboration with a wing of the capitalist class. The worldwide retrogression of consciousness that followed the destruction of the Soviet Union, the world’s first workers state, in the early 1990s means that young activists and workers in struggle do not generally identify their aspirations with the fight for workers revolution. This has a double impact in Iran, where the 1979 defeat is also widely, if wrongly, seen as a failure of the communist project.

Thus far, the Iranian upheaval has been under the sway of “reform” clerics centered on Hussein Moussavi and his “Green Movement of Hope.” (“Green” as in Islam, not environmentalism.) But Moussavi, one of the founders of the “Islamic Republic,” is no less a butcher than his rivals in

Exposed Extent of Zionist Nuclear Arsenal

Vanunu Arrested: Let Him Leave Israel

On December 29, Israeli police arrested Mordechai Vanunu, the brave whistle-blower of Israel's hidden massive nuclear arsenal, as he was meeting with a Norwegian woman at a Jerusalem hotel. He was hauled into court and reportedly placed under house arrest. Despite Vanunu having served every minute of his 18-year prison sentence, the government—using a State of Emergency statute passed in 1945 when Palestine was under British Mandate—has committed him to imprisonment within Israel's borders. He is barred from leaving the country, talking to non-Israelis, going near airports, ports, embassies, and is under 24-hour surveillance. Vanunu's attorney has protested that Vanunu was "arrested for a relationship between a man and a woman.... He is not being accused of giving any secrets."

The vindictive Zionist state will not rest until Vanunu is permanently silenced for having revealed 24 years ago that Israel's capitalist rulers had enough nuclear weapons and delivery systems to not only incinerate every Arab capital but to bomb major cities in the Soviet Union as well. In 1986, Vanunu, a former technician at the Israeli nuclear weapons facility in Dimona, was kidnapped in Italy by the Mossad secret police, thrown into a desert prison in Ashkelon and sentenced to 18 years by a secret military court for revealing to the London *Sunday Times* that Israel had amassed upwards of 200 nuclear warheads. Vanunu's disclosures were a service to all humanity.

Israel's possession of nuclear weapons had been an open secret for years, but these were believed to be

a small arsenal of bombs. In fact, Israel had stockpiled the world's sixth-largest nuclear arsenal. This arsenal was built up with the active support of the French and then the U.S. imperialist powers, as part of their war drive against the Soviet degenerated workers state.

Vanunu was born to a Sephardic Jewish family that emigrated from Morocco to Israel, where he experienced discrimination at the hands of the European-derived Ashkenazi establishment. As a student at Beersheba's Ben-Gurion University, Vanunu joined protests against Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and actively fought for the rights of Palestinian and Bedouin students. Fed up with the Zionist garrison state, Vanunu left Israel in January 1986 and later converted to Christianity while he was in Australia. In a 1990 decision affirming Vanunu's guilt, three Supreme Court judges of the Israeli semi-theocratic state pronounced him "a loner...[who] could not find his place in Israeli society."

Vanunu has been given the kind of treatment the Zionist rulers reserve for those they deem "subhuman"—the Palestinians imprisoned within the electric fences that surround Gaza, those confined behind the three-story-high concrete walls and checkpoints of the West Bank and the thousands who languish in Israel's prison torture chambers. Vanunu spent over eleven years in solitary confinement in a six by nine cell in a high-security complex built for Palestinians.

When he walked out of his desert dungeon in 2004, Vanunu was not a free man, but he was resolute. Upon his release, he said he was "proud and happy to do



Reuters

Mordechai Vanunu defiant as he leaves prison after serving an 18-year sentence, April 2004.

what I did." He said that despite the "very cruel and barbaric treatment" meted out by the Israeli security authorities they "didn't succeed to break me, you didn't succeed to make me crazy."

Vanunu continued to defiantly denounce the Israeli doomsday machine. In an August 2004 interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now!* he said: "I'm very happy and glad that I...let all the world and the Israeli people see the true face of Israel who used to remind the world 'holocaust, holocaust' every hour, every day, but in fact Israel [has] a holocaust factory." Three months later, Vanunu was arrested again.

The International Communist League and the Partisan Defense Committee have actively fought for Vanunu's freedom, and against the continued attacks and onerous restrictions placed on him. He should not have spent even one day behind bars. Mordechai Vanunu warned the world that the Zionist rulers are not only willing to plunge the world into a thermonuclear holocaust, but have the means to do so. Hands off Mordechai Vanunu! Let him leave Israel!



University of Pittsburgh Press

Nationalist Jangali leaders meeting with Bolshevik emissaries at Anzali, Gilan Province, Iran, 1920.

capitalist countries of the West and Japan.

These considerations pertain with full force in the Near East. As Trotsky noted in the *Third International After Lenin*, "The further East we go, the lower and viler becomes the bourgeoisie, the greater are the tasks that fall upon the proletariat."

Probably in no other country of the East has the prospect of proletarian revolution been more directly linked to the Russian Revolution than in Iran. As early as 1905, the first Russian Revolution—a "dress rehearsal" for 1917—stirred a massive response to the south in Iran. Though class relations were less developed in the Persian empire, with the proletariat still tiny, what became known as Iran's "Constitutional Revolution" led to sweeping social struggle. While dominated by rich merchants and the high clergy (ulema), the revolution generated a plebeian uprising centered in Iranian Azerbaijan. But by 1909 the merchants and ulema formed a joint government with representatives of the Shah.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution again produced mass upheavals in Iran, which were initially suppressed by the occupying British army. This period saw the formation of the Adalat (Justice) Party, progenitor of the first Communist Party of Persia and again centered in Azerbaijan. Mass protests against the British spread

across the country, especially in the northern province of Gilan. When the British were forced to withdraw in 1920, a pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic nationalist movement called Jangali welcomed the arrival of Soviet troops and set up a self-styled "Gilan Soviet Republic." The nascent Persian Communists initially supported Jangali in a coalition government, but this soon led to debate and reconsideration.

The establishment of the "Gilan Soviet Republic" came on the eve of the Second Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), founded by Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party in the wake of the October Revolution. Developments in Iran provided something of a laboratory condition for discussions on the national and colonial questions at the Congress, in particular on the relationship between bourgeois-nationalist movements and nascent Communist parties in underdeveloped countries.

In his "Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," Lenin demanded "a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries." He continued: "The Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in the colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries,

the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, i.e., those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations."

Lenin's somewhat algebraic formula reflected the fact that the question of relations between Communist and bourgeois nationalist forces in semicolonial countries had yet to be subjected to a decisive historical test. (Russia, while economically backward, was itself an imperialist power.) Founding Iranian Communist Ahmed Sultanzadeh intervened at the Congress to add a cautionary warning that was to prove prescient, and not only for Iran. He said:

"It seems to me that the point in the theses that envisions supporting the bourgeois-democratic movement in the backward countries can apply only to countries where this movement is still embryonic. If we were to proceed in accordance with the theses in countries where we already have ten or more years of experience behind us or where bourgeois democracy is a prop and a foundation of the state, as in Persia, that would mean driving the masses into the arms of the counterrevolution. We must create and support a purely communist movement counterposed to the bourgeois-democratic movement."

A few months later, the coalition between the nationalists and Communists in Gilan effectively disintegrated, and soon after a Russian Cossack adventurer, Reza Khan, encouraged by the British, staged a coup in Tehran. A few years later this counterrevolutionary Cossack proclaimed himself the Shah, founder of the new, "eternal" Pahlavi dynasty. The Gilan experience demonstrated the limitations in which Communists could work with bourgeois-democratic and nationalist movements. A military united front between the nascent Communist Party and Jangali against the British was certainly principled, helping to force a British withdrawal and establish a bridgehead for the Bolshevik Revolution into Iran. But the *political* alliance between the forces in a common government was disastrous, for once the British occupation forces

were removed, the programs of the Communists and nationalists were shown to be completely incompatible.

Stalinism and Iranian Communism

The rise of Stalinism in the USSR had a direct and very negative impact on the communist movement in Iran. In 1923-24, amid a wave of demoralization that followed the defeat of revolutionary opportunities in West Europe, a nationalist bureaucratic caste under J.V. Stalin became dominant in the Soviet Union. Abandoning the revolutionary internationalism that animated the October Revolution, by late 1924 Stalin began propagating the anti-Marxist dogma that "socialism" could be built in one country. This led to a search for "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialists, and eventually to complete abandonment of the fight for socialist revolution. Trotsky and other Bolshevik cadres formed the Left Opposition to oppose this, remaining true to proletarian revolutionary Marxism.

During the 1920s and 30s, the Iranian Communists engaged in heroic underground work under the Shah, for example leading a general strike in the oil fields of southwestern Khuzistan in 1929. But the formation of the Tudeh Party in 1941 by left-wing intellectuals formerly associated with the Persian Communist Party took place under the anti-revolutionary, class-collaborationist perspective of the Stalinized Comintern. Tudeh insisted that, because of Iran's economic backwardness, the proletariat could not take power in its own name. They argued that there must be a "two-stage revolution," the first stage of which would be led by the "progressive" or "anti-imperialist" bourgeoisie and limited to solving democratic capitalist tasks. Socialist revolution, they claimed, would come in the distant, unspecified future. This "two-stage" line was repeatedly put to the test over the ensuing decades, with disastrous results for Iran's toiling masses.

By 1946, Tudeh claimed tens of thousands of members and some 400,000

continued on page 10



15 December 1978

Depopulation leaders had formed Hindu militant groups like the *Kashmiri Awaza Sena* (Kashmiri Voice Army) and the *Awaza Sena* (Voice Army) to fight against the Muslims. The *Kashmiri Awaza Sena* was formed by the *Kashmiri Pandits* and the *Awaza Sena* was formed by the *Kashmiri Muslims*. The *Kashmiri Pandits* were the main target of the *Awaza Sena* attacks. The *Kashmiri Pandits* were the main target of the *Awaza Sena* attacks. The *Kashmiri Pandits* were the main target of the *Awaza Sena* attacks.

15 December 1978

During 1978-79 political upheaval in Iran, Spartacists advanced proletarian revolution while pseudo-socialists such as the U.S. International Socialist Organization hailed Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution," even as his regime murdered leftists and national minorities. Center: Executions in Kurdistan, 1979.

Reza/Sipa



Iran is a fabulously wealthy country. It earns billions of dollars each year through oil. It earns millions more from natural gas, of which it holds the world's second largest reserves. Yet its people are among the world's poorest. The vast majority of Iranians have gained absolutely nothing from all that wealth.

Socialist Worker
January 1979

lines, with a motto: "spend, spend, spend. It is the way we turned Tehran into a town, who fill the streets with expensive floods, who can blow road arteries, who are entered to in the c

(continued from page 9)

workers in affiliated unions. Its strength was concentrated in north Iran since it had consciously discouraged organization in the south, then controlled by Britain. This was in line with Stalin's subordination and suppression of class struggle in the "democratic" imperialist countries and their colonies in World War II. Nonetheless, there is no question that by the end of the war Iran had entered a pre-revolutionary situation in which Tudeh could have taken power. The Tudeh-led unions effectively made up the government in north Iran—collecting taxes, providing security and judicial functions, issuing travel permits, etc. The presence of the Soviet Red Army, which entered this part of Iran in 1941, provided an enormous impetus to social upheaval. But this was not the revolutionary army of Lenin and Trotsky, and Tudeh was not a revolutionary party.

As a pressure tactic to wrest oil and gas concessions from the Iranian government, Stalin helped establish a “Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan” under the leadership of a bourgeois-nationalist figure, and Tudeh and its affiliated unions entered the governing party there. This was a class-collaborationist popular front par excellence, stretching all the way from mullahs and tribal leaders to Stalinist union organizers. While the Democratic Republic carried out some significant reforms in its one year of existence—for example, women got the right to vote for the first time—the regime kept agrarian reform very limited in order to maintain the alliance with bourgeois forces linked to the landlords.

The Soviet Stalinists did not want a social revolution in Azerbaijan on the USSR's southern border, for this would pose pointblank the question of political power in Tehran and upset Stalin's game plan for "coexistence" with Anglo-American imperialism. Azerbaijan was to be bartered for a supposedly friendly regime in Tehran. An agreement was signed for the withdrawal of Soviet troops in exchange for a joint Iran-Soviet oil company. An unwritten clause was that Tudeh would use its great authority in the proletariat to enforce class peace.

That clause was soon activated. On the heels of a successful strike by oil work-

ers in Khuzistan, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company tried to whip up antagonisms between Arab and Persian workers in order to break the pro-Tudeh unions. In self-defense, a general strike was called for July 1946. In the wake of bloody street fighting, Tudeh militias took over the key city of Abadan. At that point, Tudeh sent its general secretary and the secretary of the union federation to call off the strike, even though the workers' demands had not been met.

As a reward, three Tudeh members were brought into the bourgeois cabinet. But they were purged only two months later, and the central government arrested hundreds of Tudeh activists, occupied its headquarters and banned its press. Having broken the back of the party in the capital, the government then launched an invasion of Azerbaijan, where the Soviet-allied government surrendered without a fight. The opportunity for an Iranian socialist revolution was sacrificed on the altar of Stalin's search for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism.

Even after this, Tudeh retained great authority among the masses. In 1950, the *New York Herald Tribune* reported that over a third of the Iranian population “either favor the local communist party or prefer it to the ruling oligarchy.” Soon, the oil nationalization crisis under the regime of Mossadeq would again create an opportunity to overthrow that oligarchy—but Tudeh again betrayed the aspirations of the masses.

Mossadeq and the 1953 CIA Coup

Mossadeq, a wealthy landowner and member of the Iranian aristocracy, rose to power in the same period as Nehru in India, Sukarno in Indonesia and Nasser in Egypt. The bloodletting of the imperialist adversaries in World War II provided an opening for the colonial masses to rise up and make a bid for national independence. But these nationalist movements frequently saw in the United States a potential ally against the older colonial powers like Britain, France and the Netherlands.

Mossadeq's National Front was a thoroughly bourgeois party with both secular and religious wings—over a third of its first parliamentary delegation were mullahs. It was thus an unstable bloc of the traditional clerical-dominated bourgeoisie of the bazaar and the modern state-subsidized technocratic bourgeoisie, tem-

porarily united by opposition to the British and the demand to nationalize the oil industry. And *both* wings assiduously courted American imperialism.

While the Stalinists were initially hostile to Mossadeq's National Front, deriding it for "dancing to the tune of imperialistic America," they also led mass demonstrations and strikes demanding oil nationalization. Faced with the wave of militancy, the Shah appointed Mossadeq prime minister in April 1951 and he nationalized the oil industry a month later. In response, the world oil cartel refused to buy Iranian oil, depriving the country of its main source of export earnings and strangling the economy.

Despite Mossadeq's pro-American proclivities, it was the duty of revolutionaries to defend the oil nationalization against imperialist retaliation, just as Trotsky supported the more radical expropriation of British oil interests in Mexico in the 1930s. An independent proletarian class policy would have meant defending such anti-imperialist *acts* while giving abso-



EPA

Police enforcing Islamic dress code in Tehran, 23 April 2007.

lutely no political support to the bourgeois-nationalist, anti-working-class regime that carried them out. Mossadeq sought to suppress the continuing wave of strikes and did not touch the barbaric feudal social relations in the countryside. But amid the social turmoil, by 1952 Tudeh decided to throw its lot in with Mossadeq's party and backed his return to power. When the right-wing clerical forces split and went over to the royalist opposition, Tudeh called mass protests that outnumbered those of the National Front by a factor of 10 or 15 to one.

By August 1953, almost every observer commented that Tudeh could have taken power if they so desired. But the Stalinists looked to Mossadeq to carry through the “democratic revolution”—Mossadeq instead called on the army to suppress Tudeh. In the course of this, the army went over to the mullah-royalist bloc, which, working closely with the CIA, proceeded to overthrow the regime and reinstall the hated Shah.

The long-term effect of the August 1953 coup and the repression that followed was to deepen the party's opportunism, paving its way to become shock troops for clerical reaction in the late 1970s. By then, with the Shah's regime unraveling, Tudeh was painting the Islamic clergy in "anti-imperialist" colors. Thus they again blinded their working-class base to the grave dangers they faced in the event of a mullah victory, setting

the workers up for brutal suppression. In fact, in the early years of the mullah regime, Tudeh cadre went so far as to fight shoulder to shoulder with the regime's murderous *pasdaran* and fascist *hezbollahi* thugs in killing other leftists.

The 1979 “Islamic Revolution”

By the 1970s, a kaleidoscope of new groups with stances at least nominally to the left of Tudeh began winning support among Iranian youth. But none of these groups transcended the “two-stage revolution” schema. The Fedayeen, for example, called for unity of all anti-Shah forces regardless of their class character or political program:

“We must use the intellectuals, the petit-bourgeoisie, together with any other anti-dictatorship elements, be they progressive or reactionary, for the mobilization of the toiling masses, namely, the main force for a people’s democratic revolution.”

—Bizhan Jazani, *Iran...The Socio-Economic Analysis of a Dependent Capitalist State* (1973)

For its part, the HKS (Socialist Workers Party), a pseudo-Trotskyist outfit associated with the USec, also portrayed Khomeini as an “anti-imperialist” and supported his rise to power. The HKS even tried to present its credentials as a loyal social-democratic adjunct to the mullah dictatorship by running in the August 1979 election for the regime’s “Assembly of Experts,” a body whose explicit purpose was to help institutionalize the Islamic Republic. One month later, the HKS along with all other left and secular organizations was declared illegal, its press banned and its leaders thrown in jail.

Everywhere, the dogma of “two-stage revolution” has produced only disaster for the working people. But Stalin and his cronies at least claimed they were giving support to modernizing bourgeois forces. For example, during the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, Stalin and his henchmen directed the Chinese Communist Party to subordinate itself to the bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang of Chiang Kai-shek, arguing that this was a step toward consummating the supposed “first stage” of the revolution. This was justified by the fact that the Guomindang was seen as a bourgeois-nationalist modernizing party that, for example, decried the binding of women’s feet. The result of this Stalinist betrayal was the slaughter of tens of thousands of Communists and workers in Chiang’s Shanghai massacre of April 1927.

But what claim to modernism could the caste of mullahs in Iran possibly have had? The reactionary character of the Islamic opposition was manifest from the outset, above all by its position on the woman question.

During the 1978-79 events, we intervened wherever we could among the substantial Iranian exile left milieus, waging the necessary urgent and sharply polemical struggle for a proletarian perspective. I recall mass demonstrations of tens of thousands in London, where religious thugs and British fake-leftists united to try and exclude us because of our warnings against Islamic reaction. A comrade recently described to me how in France, which also had a large exile milieu, he and a companion used to distribute our press every week to mass Iranian leftist gatherings at the Cité Universitaire in Paris. As the weeks passed, religious forces steadily increased their presence, until finally they became dominant.

[illegible]

The hegemony of the mullahs over the anti-Shah upheaval was far from pre-ordained. The last few months of 1978 saw a major strike wave, most importantly by the strategic oil workers. Big wage settlements did nothing to stem the upsurge, which paralyzed the economy. Initially these strikes were *not* subordinated to the Islamic opposition and did *not* support the call for an Islamic Republic. From his exile in France, Khomeini sent a top aide to try and get the strikers to disband their independent strike committees and subordinate themselves to the “Islamic movement.” Criminally, the Iranian left did nothing to stop this—to the contrary, they also worked to amalgamate the left and right oppositions to the Shah in the name of “unity.”

As we warned in a major article titled “Down With the Shah! Down With the Mullahs!” (WV No. 219, 17 November 1978):

“There is no common denominator between the demands of the mullahs and those of the strikers.... The mullahs’ opposition to the shah is a reactionary one, no matter how it plays on the crimes of the shah’s dictatorship. The fanatical hatred of social advances since the time of the prophet Muhammed (the seventh century A.D.!) has its parallels in the military-based regimes of Pakistan or Libya and in the region-wide revival of religious obscurantism and its vicious oppression of women.”

In the end, it was the workers strikes that sounded the death knell for the Pahlavi dynasty, not the martyrs who claimed to die for Allah. But without an authoritative Leninist vanguard party to lead the working class, these struggles only ended up serving as a battering ram to bring to power the deeply anti-proletarian Shi’ite clergy.

What of the working class in the current protests? There have been a number of strikes and sit-ins in recent years, for example to demand unpaid wages, and individual workers have no doubt participated in the protests. But there is no sign that any section of the Iranian working class has intervened to assert its *independent* class interests against the Islamic regime. Two statements by workers groups in Iran, widely circulated on the Internet, are indicative. One, signed by “Laborers of Iran Khodro,” the largest automotive company in the Near East, called for a 30-minute protest strike in “solidarity with the movement of the people of Iran.” Another, by the Vahed Syndicate, representing Tehran bus workers, similarly expressed support for “the movement of Iranian people to build a free and independent civil society.”

For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Iran remains a hellhole for women. After coming to power, the theocratic rulers reimposed the compulsory *hijab* (headscarf) for women in public. Those who flouted the edict were subjected to 74 lashes or a year’s imprisonment. A man’s testimony was deemed worth twice that of a woman. Lashings and amputations were applied by the courts, and women convicted of adultery could be subject to stoning. Child marriage was reintroduced, while laws encouraged polygamy and prevented women from leaving abusive husbands. The husband’s right of unilateral divorce was reinstated.

Nevertheless, modern practices have seeped into Iran. While child marriage was reintroduced, the average age of first marriages for women has continued to rise from about 19 before 1979 to 24 today. Literacy rates now exceed 95 percent for both sexes, and the majority of college students are women. But despite these trends, women constitute only 15 percent of the formal-sector paid labor force. The 2006 Iranian census revealed that only 3.5 million Iranian women were salaried workers, compared with 23.5 million men.

During an earlier wave of protests in Iran six years ago, we wrote an article laying out our perspective for women’s liberation through socialist revolution:

“In the countries of the East, the question of women’s oppression is one of the most powerful motor forces of socialist



Above: Red Army soldiers celebrating first anniversary of Russian Revolution in Moscow under banner hailing “Communism,” November 1918. Right: Baku Women’s Union in Soviet Azerbaijan marched with banner linking “liberation of women” with “liberation of the world’s toilers,” 1920.



revolution. Indeed, when the Bolsheviks arrived in Central Asia in the years following the October Revolution, it was among women that they found the main point of support for their program and won their key cadres. The same holds true for Iran. A Leninist-Trotskyist party, championing women’s rights against the age-old stranglehold of religion and the family, will find its most loyal and courageous fighters among women.”
—“For Workers Revolution in Iran!” WV No. 807 (1 August 2003)

Those are some crucial elements of our proletarian revolutionary program for Iran. What about the reformist left? These forces are repeating the treacherous policies of 30 years ago by lining up behind one or another wing of the ruling clergy. The remnants of Tudeh openly called to vote for Mousavi, an individual whose hands are covered with the blood of their own comrades. The Iranian Revolutionary Marxists’ Tendency, associated with Alan Woods & Co., appealed in a June 16 open letter to Mousavi: “You must either side with the people who voted for you or with the *vali-e faghih* [the Supreme Leader] (and the repressive apparatus of the state). Being at the service of the people would mean that you should cut your links with the whole state apparatus.” The idea that Mousavi and his cohorts could be “at the service of the people” is a cruel hoax and illusion.

In North America, some left groups have sided with the pro-Ahmadinejad wing of the clerics, claiming that in this way they are opposing U.S. imperialism. The Vancouver-based MAWO [Mobilization Against War and Occupation] group, the political bandits who produce the World Socialist Web Site and the U.S. Workers World Party all have a pronounced pro-regime tilt, and in some cases give Ahmadinejad open support against his rivals. Thus a *Workers World* article (17 June 2009) claims that “The Iranian people have benefited enormously from their revolution and cannot easily be turned back” and that Ahmadinejad’s “side is more anti-imperialist.”

This is an utter crock. For all their demagoguery (and vile anti-Semitism), Ahmadinejad and the other Iranian rulers

worked *alongside* U.S. imperialism in supporting the repressive “war on terror” and in the early stages of the occupation of Iraq. At the same time, the regime has been busy privatizing whole sectors of the Iranian economy while presiding over mass unemployment and growing poverty.

The best known Iranian exile left group is probably the Worker-Communist Party of Iran (WCPI), which over the past few years has split into three competing “parties” with barely distinguishable differences. Unlike Tudeh, the WCPI denounces both wings of the clerical regime. But they also have a long history of appealing to the imperialist powers—far greater enemies of the world’s oppressed than the ayatollahs of neocolonial Iran—as potential allies against the Islamic rulers.

In a June 22 Web posting, the WCPI boasted that party leader Hamid Taqvaei “wrote to heads of states and the UN Secretary General on behalf of the people of Iran calling on governments ‘to immediately break all political ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran, shut down its embassies and consulates and ensure its expulsion from the United Nations and other international institutions’.” More recently, a WCPI protest outside the UN

called upon the imperialist governments to arrest Ahmadinejad. The reactionary nature of such appeals to “democratic” imperialism played out in Iraq in 2003, when the WCPI *supported the imperialist occupation of that country*, calling only to replace U.S. troops with “the intervention of the United Nations.” This is the same UN whose starvation sanctions led to the death of one and a half million Iraqis.

The WCPI does prominently raise the key issue of women’s rights and opposes the veil. Yet following the Soviet Union’s intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 against a CIA-backed Islamic fundamentalist insurgency, the WCPI viewed the Red Army as just as reactionary as the *mujahedin* holy warriors. They joined most of the left in refusing to support the Soviet intervention, justifying this by the false claim that the Soviet Union became “state capitalist” by the mid 1920s.

We Trotskyists unconditionally defended the Soviet degenerated workers state against imperialism and internal counter-revolution, while calling for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. We said “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” and called for extending the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. We pointed out that the Red Army intervention was objectively in defense of the Soviet Union and a blow against the imperialist-backed Islamic fundamentalists who threatened to return women to virtual slavery. At the same time, we warned that the Kremlin bureaucracy could well end up selling out to the imperialists. Indeed, the Kremlin’s withdrawal from Afghanistan in the late 1980s paved the way for the victory of the CIA’s cut-throats, with hideous consequences for Afghan women, and gave a giant impulse to the forces of capitalist restoration that triumphed in the Soviet Union.

We wrote the following in our International Declaration of Principles, adopted in 1998 (reprinted in *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“The 1979 ‘Iranian Revolution’ opened up a period of ascendant political Islam in the historically Muslim world, a development which contributed to and was powerfully reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Khomeini’s seizure and consolidation of power in Iran was a defeat akin to Hitler’s crushing of the German proletariat in 1933, albeit on a narrower, regional scale.”

It is necessary to learn the lessons of history and begin anew the struggle for Marxist clarity and leadership. The only road to genuine social and economic modernization, to liberating Iran from imperialist subjugation, freeing women from enslavement, winning the right of self-determination for the Kurds and the other oppressed nationalities, lies in the smashing of capitalist class rule. The Iranian masses urgently need an international, working-class revolutionary party capable of leading this struggle. To forge such a party, leftist militants must understand the roots of the betrayals by those misleaders who helped prepare a historic defeat by embracing the forces of Islamic reaction as a “progressive” alternative to the Shah. Down with Ahmadinejad—No support to Mousavi! Imperialist hands off Iran! For workers revolution! ■

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Protests Against Education Cuts and Fee Hikes Sweep California



Young Spartacus

Protest outside the Board of Regents meeting at UCLA, 19 November 2009.

In the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, universities across the country have been hit with increasingly devastating blows: tuition has skyrocketed, budgets are being slashed and faculty and workers are being laid off in droves. In California, the world's eighth-largest economy, there have been nearly \$10 billion in cuts to education. These attacks are aimed against the working class, blacks, immigrants and the poor, who have been priced out of university education or on the receiving end of racist purges with the elimination of affirmative action programs. In 2008, black students were only 1 percent of the undergraduates at UCLA!

Young Spartacus

Last November, the Board of Regents of the elite University of California (UC) raised tuition by 32 percent, so attending the University of California will now cost triple what it did a decade ago. By next fall, tuition alone will cost more than a whopping \$10,000 a year for in-state students, slamming the door shut to "public" higher education for thousands of youth. At the California State Universities (CSUs) and community colleges, fees have gone up by 30 percent this year. At the same time, these colleges, where there are substantial numbers of black and minority students, are reducing enrollment—according to the CSU Trustees' plan, by 40,000 students over the next two years! Ballooning class sizes, axing student aid and cutting "unprofitable" department programs are also part of the package. Even if you can get into the California system, graduating will be harder and your debt higher. Today, paying back student loans has become a new form of indentured servitude.

Campus workers, some of whom are not unionized, are also being hit hard. Two thousand UC workers have already been laid off, and those who kept their jobs have been forced to accept wage cuts

Students Must Mobilize Behind the Social Power of the Working Class! Break with the Democrats!

and mandatory furlough days. The university has threatened "temporary layoffs" against the CUE (Coalition of University Employees) and UPTE (University Professional and Technical Employees) unions, whose contracts expired in 2008. As part of their overall union-busting scheme, the university bosses have especially targeted union activists for layoffs. While faculty and university employees are being told there is "no money," administrators and staff executives are generously lining their pockets with bonuses and kickbacks. Mark Yudof, the widely hated UC president, makes more than \$900,000 a year, and UC chancellors rake in as much as \$450,000 a year plus their campus mansions.

In response to cuts in education, large, integrated protests have erupted around the country, most dramatically on campuses across California. Last September 24, over 5,000 people protested at UC Berkeley in the biggest demonstration on that campus in years. On November 19, the day the Regents met at UCLA to approve the 32 percent fee hike, some 2,000 students along with contingents of unionized workers protested; at UC Berkeley, students joined with UPTE in a two-day strike and walkout, followed by an occupation of Wheeler Hall on the third day. Hundreds also protested or carried out occupations at UC Santa Cruz and UC Davis. The occupations were met with an army of riot gear-equipped cops. At UC Berkeley demonstrators were bludgeoned with batons, while at UCLA at least one student was shot directly in the chest with a taser gun. In all, more than 110 protesters were arrested (see "Police Assault UC Protesters," WV No. 948, 4 December 2009). **Cops off campus!**

In December, students at UC Berkeley reoccupied Wheeler Hall to transform the "dead week" before finals into a "live

week." Students at San Francisco State University (SFSU) occupied the Business building and renamed it for Oscar Grant, a young black father executed on New Year's Day 2009 by a Bay Area Rapid Transit cop. Cops raided both buildings in the middle of the night, arresting 26 at SFSU and 66 at UC Berkeley. After a protest at the chancellor's house at Berkeley, another eight were arrested on multiple charges, including attempted arson and felony vandalism. Ominously, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger accused the students of a "type of terrorism." **Hands off the protesters!** As the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club wrote in a December 21 protest letter to the university administrations and

the Alameda County D.A., "these arrests again make clear the class nature of the campus administration, who are the representatives and enforcers of bourgeois rule on campus. *We stand in solidarity with the protesters and demand that all protesters be released and all the charges be dropped now!*"

A statewide and a national call have been issued for a March 4 "Strike and Day of Action to Defend Public Education" to protest cuts, layoffs, fee hikes and the shrinking numbers of blacks and minority students on the campuses. Various coalitions are calling to make March 4 a major walkout, including with appeals to unions. The SYCs will intervene into this protest, as we have at previous ones, with a class-struggle program that points the way toward overthrowing the very system that is responsible for the attacks on education: capitalism.

For Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!

Our revolutionary perspective was laid out by a Spartacus Youth Club spokesman *continued on page 5*



Lara Brucker/Daily Californian

Police attack demonstrators at UC Berkeley during occupation of Wheeler Hall, 20 November 2009.