

## Capital Punishment and the Capitalist State



Indymedia



Sygma

# Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

In 1976, the American Law Institute provided the U.S. Supreme Court with the “intellectual framework” to restart the state’s machinery of death—which had been idled since 1967 and officially put on hold by a 1972 Supreme Court decision. Over three decades later, in the fall of 2009, the Institute, in the words of the *New York Times* (2 January), “pronounced its project a failure and walked away from it.” This “project,” as it is so benignly called, provided judges, prosecutors and law professors with a “learned” rationale for the state-sanctioned murder of close to 1,200 people and for the continued incarceration in death row dungeons of more than 3,000 others, the majority of them black and Latino.

A study by the Institute discovered, as if it were news, that “capital punishment was plagued by racial disparities; was enormously expensive even as many defense lawyers were underpaid and some were incompetent; risked executing innocent people; and was undermined by the politics that come with judicial elections.”

Racial disparities? Raw racism has been at the core of the death penalty in the U.S. since the days of slavery. In 1986, a suit was brought before the Supreme Court by black Georgia death row prisoner Warren McCleskey. Drawing on an authoritative statistical study by law professor David Baldus, McCleskey’s lawyers provided raw figures showing, among other evidence of racial disparities, that black people in Georgia convicted of killing whites were sentenced to death 22 times more frequently than those convicted of killing blacks. In rejecting McCleskey’s appeal in 1987, the Supreme Court openly acknowledged that to accept his premise would throw “into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system.”

Incompetent, underpaid defense attorneys? Nothing new here. A study of death penalty cases in Texas, the kill-capital of

**Left: Anti-death penalty protest in Houston, Texas, October 2008. Right: Texas lethal injection chamber.**

the U.S., showed that one-quarter of those sentenced to death were represented by attorneys who had at some time been “reprimanded, placed on probation, suspended or banned from practicing law by the State Bar.” Innocence? That was ruled out by the Supreme Court’s 1993 *Herrera* decision, which held that executing an innocent man was not unconstitutional.

The decision of the American Law Institute to “walk away from”—but not oppose—the death penalty reflects increasing exposure of blatant frame-ups of the innocent and the barbarism of the state’s executioners. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, more than 130 of those sentenced to die at the hands of the state have been exonerated, over one-third of them in the past ten years. In 2000, after 13 Illinois death row prisoners were found to have been falsely convicted, Republican governor George Ryan first called a moratorium on executions and then commuted the death sentences of Illinois’ death row inmates. (Having faced blowback for this decent act, Ryan was sentenced in 2006 to six-and-a-half years in prison on mail and tax fraud and other charges.) Public exposure of grisly torture in death chambers—California executioners digging into the arms of Stanley Tookie Williams to find a vein for lethal injection or Florida death row inmate Angel Nieves Diaz writhing in agony as he was shot up with two doses of poisonous chemicals before dying—led to further temporary moratoriums in other states. The purpose was to allow the capitalist state time to find a more “humane” means of killing.

As Marxists, we oppose the death penalty on principle—for the guilty as well as the innocent. We do not accord the state the right to determine who lives and who dies. We welcome any measure against the death penalty or that curtails the reach of the state’s killing machine. But we also understand that this will not fundamentally change the violently racist and oppressive nature of capitalist class rule. It won’t change the reality of cops in

the inner cities gunning down black and Latino youth who have been written off as permanent “outlaws” by the rulers of this society. Nor will it alter the slower death of the growing ranks of poor and unemployed from homelessness, disease and poverty. We seek to arm the working class with the understanding that it will take nothing short of a proletarian socialist revolution to sweep away the barbaric institutions of the capitalist state, which—with the cops, courts, prisons and military at its core—is nothing other than an apparatus of organized violence for the repression of workers and the oppressed in defense of the power and profits of the capitalist rulers.

### Down With Capitalist Repression!

The decline of death sentences and executions at the state level has not done anything to lessen the commitment of the executive power of U.S. imperialism, now headed by Barack Obama, to the death penalty. In fact, the number of federal prisoners on death row continues to grow. Against complaints of trying Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the purported mastermind of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, in New York City, Obama declared: “I don’t think it would be offensive at all when he’s convicted and when the death penalty is applied to him” (*Daily News*, 18 November 2009).

Nor has the Supreme Court been the least bit deterred from pushing to execute the innocent. On January 19, the court vacated a 2001 decision by federal district court judge William Yohn that overturned the death sentence against Mumia Abu-Jamal and virtually wrote the script for its reinstatement by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Mumia is an innocent man who was framed up and falsely convicted for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia cop. The capitalist rulers want to kill or entomb Mumia for life because they see in this eloquent journalist, MOVE supporter and former Black Panther Party

spokesman the spectre of black revolt, of defiant opposition to their system of racist capitalist injustice. **Free Mumia now!**

Every court before which Mumia’s case has been brought has rejected the mountains of evidence of his innocence and the equally voluminous evidence that the cops, prosecution and judges conspired in framing him up. The reformists and liberals who for years have looked to these same courts for “justice” now turn to the Obama administration and Attorney General Eric Holder. Socialist Action leader Jeff Mackler put it baldly: “Today, having exhausted most all legal remedies, Mumia’s supporters are engaged in an important campaign to demand a Justice Department civil rights investigation into charges presented by his supporters that demonstrate illegal collusion between Pennsylvania prosecutors and the judiciary (*Socialist Action*, November 2009).

This hat-in-hand appeal to America’s top cop and the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism is a savage indictment of the reformists’ belief in the “democracy” of the capitalist state. Obama’s open support for the death penalty won him the backing of right-wing radio broadcaster Michael Smerconish, who has stood at the head of the crusade for Mumia’s death. Obama’s election was aimed at giving a face-lift to U.S. imperialism, and the message to black people is to shut up and eat it because the coming to power of America’s first black president shows that there is equality for those who “earn it.”

### The Death Penalty in America: The Lynch Rope Made Legal

Opponents of the death penalty often point to the fact that nearly every other advanced industrialized country has abolished capital punishment. Outside of Japan, no other major capitalist power has the death penalty as part of its criminal code. But that doesn’t stop these countries’ rulers from deploying other means of brutal repression and death at the hands of their cops and other state forces.

Historically, capital punishment is a barbaric relic of ancient religious codes of retributive justice. But its endurance in

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# Father of China's Missile Program

# Qian Xuesen: An Appreciation

When Qian Xuesen (Tsien Hsue-shen), the father of China's space program, died in October at the age of 98, his story dominated the news on the Chinese mainland. In contrast, Qian's death received subdued notice in the U.S., which had expelled him in the anti-Communist campaigns of the mid 1950s. A household name in China, Qian was widely regarded as a hero for his contributions to military defense and technological development, including China's nuclear capacity. His funeral, held at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing, was attended by some 10,000 people, including all the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), such as President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and former president Jiang Zemin. As Trotskyists—i.e., revolu-

tionary proletarian internationalists—we also salute Qian for his singular contributions to the defense of China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, against the imperialist powers, centrally the U.S.

The story of Qian's life and accomplishments is recounted in Iris Chang's compelling 1995 biography, *Thread of the Silkworm*. Qian was born to a privileged family in Hangzhou in 1911, the year the decrepit Qing Dynasty fell. He became part of a generation of intellectuals who were determined to bring China into the modern world, liberated from imperialist domination. To that end, he began his studies in railway engineering at Jiaotong University in Shanghai. The campuses were in upheaval, with students protesting both Japan's 1931 invasion of

Manchuria and Chiang Kai-shek's corrupt, brutal Guomindang (Nationalist) regime, which was reviled for its subservience to Japanese imperialism. After witnessing the impact of Japan's aerial bombardment of Shanghai in 1932, Qian turned to aeronautical engineering.

To further its own imperialist interests, the U.S. had established a scholarship program—funded by indemnities extracted from China after the crushing of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900—aimed at cultivating a layer of Chinese intellectuals. Qian Xuesen was chosen to receive a Boxer indemnity scholarship, arriving in the U.S. in 1935. Beginning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Qian transferred to Caltech in Pasadena the following year, where he began a long collaboration with his mentor, Theodore von Kármán, a giant in aeronautics.

Qian was himself a brilliant scientist, one of the founders of Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He made significant contributions to the U.S. imperialist military, including as part of the Manhattan Project, which developed the first atomic bomb during the Second World War. At the end of the war, he was part of a team that went to Germany to interrogate rocket scientists. There he saw concentration camps where slave laborers had assembled V-2 rockets and he interviewed the Nazi scientist Wernher von Braun, who would be welcomed with open arms to the U.S. where Qian would later be driven out. In 1949, Qian wrote a proposal for a winged space plane that, as *Aviation Week and Space Technology* wrote in 2007, inspired research that led to NASA's space shuttle.

Despite his prominence, Qian was subjected to racist abuse throughout his time in the U.S. In an incident he would recall with rage decades later, someone in a movie theater who did not want to sit near an Asian demanded that Qian be ejected from his seat. A factor in his leaving MIT in 1936 was the requirement that students at his level work in industry to gain practical experience. This was nearly impossible for Qian to do since the U.S. aircraft industry would not hire Asians. And even as Qian had security clearance at the Pentagon, he could not buy a house in Pasadena due to racist housing codes.

Qian became a target of the McCarthyite witchhunts that swept the U.S. after American imperialism launched its post-WWII Cold War drive against the Soviet Union. The anti-Communist hysteria reached a fever pitch following the CCP's seizure of power in 1949, which marked the overthrow of capitalist rule in China, and the outbreak of the Korean War the following year. Qian's security clearance was abruptly lifted in June 1950. He came under special scrutiny by the FBI after he refused to testify against a friend alleged to be the leader of an American Communist Party (CP) cell in Pasadena. Qian was interrogated by the FBI and accused of having been a member of the CP, which he denied.

Hounded by the Feds, Qian decided to leave for China for an extended stay but was stopped at the airport by INS immigration cops. He was arrested in September 1950 and imprisoned for two weeks. During that time he lost 20 pounds and was kept in isolation, deprived of sleep and denied visits from all but his family. The INS issued a deportation order against Qian, but he was simultaneously prevented from leaving. He was not alone in that legal limbo. As Iris Chang noted in *The Chinese in America* (2003), following the 1949 Revolution, "some 120 Chinese intellectuals were detained and not permitted to leave for years" on the grounds that their "knowledge might jeopardize national security." Nearly 50



Xinhua

years later, Chinese American scientist Wen Ho Lee was the target of another racist, anti-Communist witchhunt due to which he lost his job at Los Alamos and was thrown in jail on trumped-up charges of spying for China (see "'Chinese Spy' Hysteria Whips Up Anti-Asian Racism," WV No. 719, 17 September 1999).

Qian faced constant FBI surveillance and harassment. Forbidden to leave Los Angeles, he was followed on the street, his mail opened, his home watched and his phone calls monitored. In 1955 he wrote a letter asking the Chinese government's help to get him back to China. His wife addressed the envelope to her sister, disguising her handwriting to resemble a child's. Qian and his wife managed to elude the FBI and drop the letter in a mailbox at a coffee shop, from which it eventually reached Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. Following negotiations later that year between Washington and Beijing, which involved a swap for prisoners from the Korean War, Qian was deported and returned to China.

Immediately upon his return, Qian threw himself into scientific work on behalf of the People's Republic. The establishment of a planned, collectivized economy enabled China—a country with a heritage of deep rural poverty and backwardness—to make historic social advances. This is despite the fact that the workers state that issued out of the peasant-based 1949 Revolution was deformed from its inception under the rule of Mao Zedong's CCP. Qian played a significant role in China's technological development, due to his own research and especially his talent for organizing scientific work on a large scale. He was instrumental in developing the Dongfeng series of rockets and missile guidance systems as well as the launching of China's first satellite in 1970. China has since become one of three countries to carry out a manned orbital space flight.

Qian was also involved in China's development and testing of nuclear weapons. The CCP regime understood that developing a nuclear arsenal was crucial for military defense. Less than a decade after destroying Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic weapons, the U.S. considered using them during the Korean War, in which China's military intervention turned the tide against the imperialist forces. The fact that the Soviet Union had by then begun to develop its own nuclear weapons helped stay the imperialists' hand.

Qian joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1958, later becoming a member of its Central Committee. Over the years, he went along with every twist and turn of the bureaucratic regime, whose anti-Marxist policies were rooted in the false Stalinist dogma that socialism—a classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance—could be built in a single country. In the late 1950s, Mao carried out the disastrous Great Leap Forward—

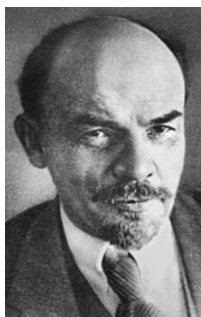
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## The Fight for Revolutionary Leadership in the Civil Rights Movement

*By the early 1960s, a large and growing current of young black militants was breaking to the left of the liberal reformism and pacifism of Martin Luther King. Before its expulsion beginning in late 1963, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), forerunner of the Spartacist League, fought within the rightward-moving Socialist Workers Party (SWP) against the tailism and abstentionism of the SWP leadership, which accommodated to King's liberal reformism as well as to a growing black nationalist trend. As represented in the following resolution submitted by RT supporters in the Young Socialist Alliance, the SWP's youth organization, we fought for a perspective of revolutionary intervention into the civil rights movement with the aim of forging a black Trotskyist cadre.*



TROTSKY



LENIN

(23) The rising upsurge and militancy of the black revolt and the contradictory and confused, groping nature of what is now the left wing in the movement provide the revolutionary vanguard with fertile soil and many opportunities to plant the seeds of revolutionary socialism. Our task is to create a Trotskyist tendency in the broad left wing of the movement, while building that left wing. Our ideas will *help* the movement, not *hurt* it. We must consider non-intervention in the crisis of leadership a crime of the worst sort....

(25) General demands in the south must be:

- A) For *organized* self-defense movements in southern cities—for the tactics of Robert F. Williams; against federal military intervention, which always supports the status quo.
- B) Against discrimination in unions and industries—especially companies with government contracts or subsidies.
- C) For drives for union organization.
- D) For independent political organization—make voter registration meaningful.

(26) The most oppressed stratum of the working class is in motion. It struggles bravely but blindly to remove the unbearable burden of capitalist exploitation from its shoulders. There is only one program which can point the way to the Negro masses north and south: Trotskyism, the vanguard consciousness of the proletarians of all the world. The American working class still idles in a false and quickly dissipating security; the doubly exploited Negro caste has special demands corresponding to its peculiar needs and the pervading crisis of leadership. These circumstances dictate special organizational forms which reflect the independent activity of the Negroes. It is essential that Trotskyists help crystallize and guide these transitional forms, preserving the independence of the black proletariat from bourgeois influences, and preparing the Negro people for the task which they will share with the white sector of the working class—the revolutionary transformation of society.

—"The Negro Struggle and the Crisis of Leadership" (18 August 1963), reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised), "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism" (September 1978)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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# Third World Cheerleading and Cynical Phrasemongering Haiti: IG Conjures Up Revolution Amid the Rubble

Confronting the massive toll of death and destruction in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, Marxists were obliged to underline the history of imperialist depredations that left the Haitian masses utterly exposed in the face of this natural disaster. *Workers Vanguard's* front-page article, "Haiti Earthquake Horror: Imperialism, Racism and Starvation" (WV No. 951, 29 January), also documented the role of the Haitian lackeys of imperialism, including the populist Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the former Haitian leader embraced by the reformist left internationally. We told the bitter truth: Haitian society had been pulped by the earthquake. The desperate conditions of Haiti today cannot be resolved *within* Haiti: "The key to the liberation of Haiti lies in proletarian revolution throughout the hemisphere, in which the mobilization of the sizable Haitian proletariat *in the diaspora* can play a key role."

We exposed the reformist "socialists" who cheered Obama's election as U.S. Commander-in-Chief and now plead for U.S. aid without the exercise of American military might, revealing their touching faith in the bourgeois state. Our article also attacked the grotesque and cynical phrasemongering of the centrist Internationalist Group (IG). In the IG's fantasyland, the earthquake placed workers revolution on the immediate agenda in Haiti: "This small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power, particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police" ("Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!" *Internationalist*, January 2010). To this end, the IG demanded that "all U.S./U.N. forces get out," claiming: "This huge military occupation is not intended to deliver aid, but to *put down unrest by the poor and working people of Haiti*" (emphasis in original). As we wrote in response:

"Notwithstanding the IG's deranged and grotesque fantasies, there are no good alternatives facing Haiti today. The U.S. military is the only force on the ground with the capacity—e.g., trucks, planes, ships—to organize the transport of what food, water, medical and other supplies are getting to Haiti's population. And they're doing it in the typical piggish U.S. imperialist manner. We have always opposed U.S. and UN occupations in Haiti and everywhere—and it may become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the near future—but we are not going to call for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on."

The IG seizes on this statement in a subsequent polemic posted on its Web site to revile the SL for nothing less than having "gone over from bending under pressure from the ruling class to outright apology for imperialism" ("Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti," 30 January). Not only does the IG lie about our position but, by omission, it lies about its own position, doctoring a quote from its earlier statement in order to disappear its call for a revolutionary uprising "particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police." The IG's squeamish self-censorship is simply further evidence that this oh-so-revolutionary rhetoric was nothing but vicarious bravado. Has the IG informed the Haitian workers and oppressed masses that now is the time for them to rise up in revolution and drive the U.S. troops into the sea? There is certainly no evidence of this on the IG's Web site, which has yet



Loomis/L.A. Times

**Port-au-Prince: Haitians search for survivors in aftermath of devastating earthquake, January 14.**

to even carry a French translation of their articles on the earthquake.

## "Democratic" Imperialism and the Aristide Connection

In fact, the IG's declarations are not intended for the Haitian masses but for the consumption of the domestic Third Worldist and reformist swamp the IG inhabits. Take, for example, the Workers World Party (WWP), which joins the IG in proclaiming "U.S. Troops Invade Haiti—Pentagon Sabotages Relief Effort, Escalates Suffering" (*Workers World*, 4 February). With greater honesty than the IG, WWP openly urges the Obama administration to engage in a purely humanitarian mission in Haiti. *Workers World* approvingly quotes Kim Ives of the weekly paper *Haiti Liberté* saying, "The earthquake was half a revolution, removing all the government buildings and virtually eliminating the repressive power of the state. That's why the U.S. is rushing in to replace that state power, to control Haiti's future and to prevent the people of Haiti from carrying out the other half."

It should be noted that Ives is a passionate supporter of Aristide, who was toppled from power in 1991 shortly after his election, reinstalled by Democratic president Bill Clinton in 1994 at the point of U.S. Marine bayonets, and removed from office a second time through a U.S.-led invasion force in 2004. We opposed both the 1994 and 2004 invasions and called for the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist troops. Aristide protégé René Préval is now president of Haiti. Our previous article documented the role played by Aristide, Préval & Co. as quislings for the U.S. imperialists in helping to police the impoverished Haitian masses. Yet in its two articles on the earthquake, the IG has only oblique and passing references to Aristide.

It is no accident that the IG largely sidesteps the issue of Aristide. In its second article, the IG warns darkly that the U.S. military may "go beyond the patrolling of Haiti" by the existing United Nations occupation force and "take over the government and impose something like a U.N. protectorate on Haiti." Put simply, this is a crass prettification of the imperialist occupation that resulted from the 2004 U.S.-led invasion. Haiti has been a UN protectorate in all but name for the

past six years: the imperialist occupiers have been the real state power there, lording it over the Haitian masses. Préval was hand-picked by Washington in large part because, as a representative of Aristide's "Lavalas" movement, he could hope to retain popular support and dampen unrest. Like Aristide, Préval is simply a toady of the imperialists. Exposing this reality is central to combating the widespread illusions among Haitian working people in the populism represented by Aristide. However, the IG's shrieking about the supposed imperialist "invasion" of a country already under imperialist occupation does just the opposite. It essentially portrays Préval and his predecessor Aristide not as quislings of the imperialist powers but as the embodiment of national independence. The pro-Aristide liberals make this explicit. A petition initiated by the

**Haitian workers in Miami protest jailing of refugees, 2002. As part of North America's multiracial proletariat, Haitian workers in the diaspora can play a vital role in the liberation of Haiti's impoverished masses.**



Canada Haiti Action Network on January 21, signed by Noam Chomsky, among others, declares:

"We demand that US commanders immediately restore executive control of the relief effort to Haiti's leaders, and to help rather than replace the local officials they claim to support....

"We call on the de facto rulers of Haiti to facilitate, as the reconstruction begins, the renewal of popular participation in the determination of collective priorities and decisions."

The petition goes on to call on the imperialists to bring back from exile "Haiti's most popular and most inspiring political leader, Jean-Bertrand Aristide."

The IG, the liberals and the reformists are perpetuating the fraud that Aristide

and Préval are capable of some modicum of independent functioning. Under the imperialist occupation of Haiti that began in 2004, disaster relief has not been implemented by imperialism's corrupt and ineffective agents in the Haitian government, who totally lack the requisite means and ability. Yet we don't recall the IG screaming about an imperialist invasion when the U.S. and Canada dispatched warships to Haiti after the country was devastated by four hurricanes in the summer of 2008.

To back up its current claims of an "invasion," the IG simply manufactures its own alternative reality, assuring us that "none" of the U.S. ships "carried cargo for Haiti" and that "U.S. military planes did not deliver anything." Yet, even the IG acknowledges that the UN has been feeding up to 310,000 people. In the IG's fantasy version of events, the question of how those hundreds of tons of supplies got to Haiti remains a mystery. The IG might also ponder why the "nuclear-powered aircraft carrier," the USS *Carl Vinson*, which the IG, in its diatribe against us, adduced as evidence of the U.S. presence in Haiti as purely and simply an invasion force, has already left Haiti along with a number of other U.S. warships.

In our article, we pointed out that U.S. authorities are building a concentration camp at Guantánamo where they can detain any Haitian refugees caught trying to flee the country by sea. At the same time, we noted that the Cuban deformed workers state, despite being under the guns of U.S. imperialism, had opened its airspace to American military planes in order to speed up aid efforts to Haiti. We challenged the IG to declare whether the Cuban government should be condemned for what, in the IG's twisted logic, can only be seen as support to an imperialist invasion of Haiti. So far, the IG has preferred to duck that question. Yet this issue has taken on considerable importance as the U.S. military camp in Guantánamo has emerged as a key logistical hub for U.S. Navy planes flying relief

supplies into Port-au-Prince. Because of the Cuban government's overflight permission, which Havana has extended until the end of February, U.S. military and civilian planes carrying relief supplies for Haiti from the U.S. can save considerable time by flying directly to Guantánamo.

## Nationalist Populism vs. Proletarian Internationalism

The cynicism of the IG's vituperations against our refusal to oppose the U.S. military providing aid to the Haitian people is revealed not least by the fact that the IG itself did not oppose the deployment of National Guard troops to New

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## Canada: Anti-Sex Witchhunt Targets Teachers

We reprint the following article from the Young Spartacus pages of Spartacist Canada No. 163 (Winter 2009/2010), newspaper of our comrades in the Trotskyist League of Canada/Ligue Trotskyste du Canada.

### SPARTACIST

CANADA

On October 3, Toronto high school teacher David Dewees calmly lay down on the tracks at the High Park subway station and waited for the approaching train to end his life. Two days earlier, Dewees had been charged with “invitation to sexual touching” and “luring” based on emails he purportedly sent to a couple of teenagers at a Christian camp where he had volunteered since 1997. Inflaming the crusade against Dewees, the *Toronto Star* had outrageously and falsely claimed that he had also been charged with sexual assault, while prominent *Star* columnist Rosie DiManno continued to smear Dewees after his death.

When this popular teacher was honoured by his former students at Jarvis Collegiate in a memorial at the High Park station, one of them rightly decried the press vendetta, saying Dewees “did not commit suicide, he was murdered by the media.” David Dewees is the latest victim of an anti-sex witchhunt that has seen countless people persecuted for things like sending emails that in any rational world would not be crimes at all. His tragic death throws a spotlight on the decades-long campaign to demonize and criminalize teachers and others who might in any way run afoul of the twisted “morality” of the ruling class.

The puritanical witchhunt against “sex offenders” waged by governments at all levels is a variant of the Christian fundamentalist crusades against “sin.” For anything from looking at a porn website or sending an email to having an entirely consensual sexual relationship with a student, teachers are treated as though they are child rapists and murderers. Many innocent people have been trapped in the state’s snare, framed up, fired and jailed. Their names are put on “sex offender registries” (in Ontario alone the list has some 8,500 names) and their careers are destroyed.

In this witchhunt, the powers of the state are augmented by the Ontario College of Teachers. Carrying out its own “investigations,” this august “professional body” posts the names of accused teachers on its widely feared online “blue pages,” exposing them to public scrutiny and humiliation. Meanwhile, students in teachers college are advised to avoid any conduct that might whisper of “impropriety,” and it is made clear that once they become teachers, their private lives are pretty much an open book.

Only a few weeks before Dewees’ death, Leslie Merlino, a Mississauga [Ontario] high school teacher, was sentenced to 12 months probation, convicted of sexual exploitation, breach of probation and failure to comply with a court order. In 2006 Merlino and a 17-year-old student began a relationship. Merlino was convicted of common assault, driven from her job and ordered to stay away from the “victim.” Refusing to bow to the court, they continued to see each other, and a short time later, when the (now former) student was 18, they vacationed in Quebec. Back in Toronto they were followed by the



ctvtoronto.ca



Lynett/National Post

**Popular teacher David Dewees, hounded to death by puritanical media frenzy. Right: Students at October 2009 memorial for Dewees in Toronto.**

cops and Merlino was arrested again, charged and jailed for two-and-a-half months. Now, in addition to a criminal record, Merlino’s DNA is on file and her name will be on the Ontario sex registry for 20 years.

The case of Brampton [Ontario] teacher Dina Calautti is another harrowing example of how easily a teacher’s life and career may be destroyed by this state inquisition. In 2007 she counseled a 17-year-old student who was depressed after breaking up with his girlfriend. Calautti ended the online correspondence after a week when she realized that the student’s romantic MSN messages could put her in danger. When the student’s father contacted police over the amount of time his son spent communicating with Calautti, she was suspended from her job and buried under a mountain of wild charges including sexual assault, sexual exploitation and Internet luring. At her trial Calautti, an enormously popular and dedicated teacher, was forced to plead guilty to the luring charge in order to avoid jail time.

### The Bourgeois Family, Private Property and the Capitalist State

The number of students and their teachers who have fallen for each other and acted on it over the years is legion. Who among us has not fantasized about a sexy schoolteacher during an interminable afternoon in class? But teachers are supposed to embody and enforce “appropriate” behaviour for their students, i.e., the mythical norm of one man on one woman for life. Merely the entire history of our species has shown that human sexuality does not conform to the moral codes imposed by this ruling class. To condemn as “exploitative” sex (or anything hinting of it) between hormonally charged youth and their teachers is a blatant attempt to control and criminalize completely harmless human behaviour.

The purpose of these moral crusades—which include drives against pornography, prostitution, youth sexuality and abortion—is to regiment the population and to bolster the repressive powers of the capitalist state. This state—including its cops, courts and prisons—is not a neutral arbiter, but the instrument for the suppression of the exploited by the exploiters. As such it plays a key role in enforcing the oppression of women (and youth) alongside organized religion and the patriarchal family, which remains the central instrument for the subjugation of women under capitalism. The family is critical for the ruling class to pass on its property to “legitimate” heirs and to instill obedi-

ence to bourgeois codes of morality.

We oppose all the laws which prohibit consensual sexual relations in the name of “protecting” youth, just as we demand that the sex registries, which are a witch-hunting prosecutor’s dream, be scrapped. We also oppose “age of consent” laws which falsely conflate consensual sex with violent crimes. We do not accord the capitalist state the right to decree the age at which youth can engage in sex. The guiding principle in all these matters should be that of mutual effective consent. This means nothing more and nothing less than mutual agreement and understanding, as opposed to coercion.

Unfortunately we are all but unique in defending the victims of this anti-sex hysteria, whether teachers hounded for private sexual acts or famed director Roman



AP

**Caught in U.S. anti-sex witchhunt. Tooele, Utah, 2007: Educator Leslie Baird was sent to jail for having sex with a 17-year-old student.**

Polanski, an innocent man who faces a renewed state vendetta for having had consensual sex with a precocious 13-year-old one day back in 1977 (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 944, 9 October 2009). That they have no other defenders on the left besides our organization is a measure of how deeply the so-called “socialist” groups have adapted to “family values” bourgeois reaction.

To support the capitalist state’s right to legislate morality is to support this decaying social order which produces genuinely horrific crimes against women and children. The state is a violent, unrepentant and chronic abuser of youth, and that includes the very real and horrific crime of sexual abuse. Stories emerging from the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre in Brampton, a new \$100 million superjail housing 102 youth, are bloodcurdling. Shortly

after it opened in May, inmates began launching complaints about abuse that included food deprivation, restrictions on family visits and full-body cavity searches under the ludicrous pretence of looking for missing DVDs.

At the same time, a racist “law and order” offensive is targeting mainly black, Native and other minority youth for cop violence. The Conservatives’ “anti-crime” law raised the age of consent from 14 to 16 while enforcing mandatory sentences for “gun crime” convictions that target black and South Asian youth. In the bourgeoisie’s eyes, teenagers are too young for sex, but not too young to be tried, sentenced and jailed as adults. Underlining both their thoroughgoing support for racist Canadian capitalism and the moral priggery that typifies these social democrats, the New Democratic Party backed the Tories’ reactionary law.

In Toronto, cop repression has been sharply ramped up under social-democratic mayor David Miller. In black and Asian neighbourhoods like Jane and Finch, where unemployment and poverty are rampant, the cops act as an occupying force, harassing and detaining youth at will. Meanwhile, armed cops patrol the corridors of 50 Toronto high schools. In October, one of these cops was caught on camera brutally beating a black student inside Northern Secondary School, sparking angry protest. Many minority parents have begun to speak out against cops in the schools.

### For a Revolutionary Workers Party, Tribune of the Oppressed

The working class must come to the defense of all victims of capitalist state repression, including teachers rounded up under anti-sex laws and students victimized by cop terror. Instead, in a 2005 policy document, the bureaucracy that runs the OSSTF high school teachers union actually encouraged the government to put cops in schools.

A class-struggle leadership of the unions would make a concerted effort to break the climate of fear, shame and stigma that surrounds teachers caught in the state’s puritanical web. This battle must include combating the pernicious religious moralism that permeates teachers colleges and the school system. At the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education a special “Catholic Teacher Education Program” trains hundreds of future teachers in the fine art of preaching anti-scientific “Gospel Values.” Such “values” include church doctrines that ban birth control and treat abortion as murder. Religious obscurantism serves to oppress women by preventing them from exercising control over their own fertility. We are for free abortion on demand! We call for an end to publicly funded Catholic schools and demand one secular school system.

The Spartacus Youth Clubs seek to train the future cadre of the Leninist vanguard party that alone can lead the working class in struggle to overthrow racist, capitalist rule. A workers state will enforce full democratic rights for gays and begin the task of liberating women from the oppressive confines of the family. Only world socialist revolution will lay the material basis to replace the institution of the family and open the door to an egalitarian future. In fighting to expose the material underpinnings of religious backwardness in bourgeois society, we look forward to the world described by Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, a world where people “will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it.” ■

# ISO Debates Pro-Capitalist Hunter Economics Club...and Loses

The December 3 event was billed as “Capitalism vs. Socialism: The Great Debate at Hunter College”—talk about false advertising! It featured economics professor Mark Weinstock and the International Socialist Organization’s Petrino DiLeo as well as three student panelists from the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and three from the Hunter College Economics Club. The ISO undoubtedly lost the debate. It was no small feat for “socialists” to go down in flames at a debate during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression when faced with arguments like “The U.S. is one of the most equal countries in the world!” and “Anyone sitting here can be a capitalist!” The ISO’s pathetic performance was a real indication of the deep historical trough following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union.

The word “Obama” did not escape the ISO’s lips once. Yet they complained that this government—whose CEO they toasted in Harlem on his election!—is bought and paid for by Wall Street. They ludicrously cited capitalist France and Canada as models of how to run the multi-billion dollar health care industry “for people, not profits.” They professed their deepest desire to see our tax money go to health care, not to the military. One ISO speaker ever so delicately suggested, “there is already something very strange about a system” that opens the borders for corporations to plunder poor countries while restricting immigration for working people. For the ISO, defending “socialism” amounts to acting like “responsible” advisers with modest suggestions on how to reform the bankrupt capitalist system. As



Monty Python’s “Upper Class Twit of the Year” race or “Capitalism vs. Socialism” debate at Hunter College?

## Eyewitness Report from the Slops of the Post-Soviet Trough

if the capitalist rulers were moved by anything but defending their rule and profits!

The ISO tried to motivate “socialism” by whining about light bulbs and planned obsolescence. They ludicrously debated whether a baby is generous or greedy before being socialized—talk about infantile disorders! In a scene strangely reminiscent of Monty Python’s “Upper Class Twit of the Year” race, the Economics Club student panelists ran circles around the ISO, while ISO members protested

their concern for humanity in ever-shriller tones. When Professor Weinstock baited the ISO that people who are really concerned about making change become “social entrepreneurs” in non-profits and don’t just sit around and talk, the ISO pleaded that they run around at a lot of protests!

In vain the ISO sought convergence with the Economics Club’s pro-capitalist toadies by disavowing the Soviet Union not once but three times, taking the side of

“democratic” U.S. imperialism against the former degenerated workers state. “That had nothing to do with socialism...Stalin’s brutal totalitarian dictatorship...mass slaughter...work camps...” and so on. (They dodged Professor Weinstock’s foam-flecked denunciations of Cuba entirely.) But Weinstock would hear nothing of it, growling that you can’t deny what socialism meant in the USSR, China and Cuba!

He could have added North Korea and Vietnam, which are also not capitalist. The October 1917 Russian Revolution was a beacon of hope for workers and the oppressed around the world. But the Soviet Union never achieved socialism: Marxists understand that socialism is based on a higher level of economic development than the most advanced capitalism and cannot be achieved in one impoverished, isolated country. Instead, the failure of the Russian Revolution to be extended internationally and the consequent restabilization of world capitalism gave rise to a privileged, parasitic caste atop the Soviet workers state. Despite its degeneration under the anti-revolutionary bureaucratic caste represented by J. V. Stalin, until the capitalist counterrevolution of 1991-92 the Soviet Union remained a workers state with a planned, collectivized economy far superior to capitalist Russia.

We Marxists fought to defend the gains of the Russian Revolution, to extend the revolution internationally, and for workers political revolution to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracy. In contrast, the ISO called the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union—which was a devastating defeat for working people and

*continued on page 6*

## More on Obama’s War in Afghanistan

The following letter from the New York Spartacus Youth Club appeared in the Hunter College *Envoy* (25 November-8 December 2009) in response to an article in which staff writer Sean McMahon, who had mistakenly believed himself to be a Marxist when he picked up a copy of *Workers Vanguard* on campus, expressed his dismay that we oppose both the occupation of Afghanistan and imperialist top cop Barack Obama. As McMahon wrote, “I got the impression that to the *Vanguard*, there was not only no honeymoon period between them and President Obama, but there may not have even been a courtship.” Good! We’re glad we were able to set him straight on some basic Marxism.

\* \* \*

It’s not every day that one can find such forthright admiration for the U.S. imperialist occupation of Afghanistan from a self-described “lefty” as expressed in Sean McMahon’s article “Obama’s War? No, America’s Responsibility” (October 14-27 [2009]). McMahon was responding to the Spartacist League’s article in *Workers Vanguard*, “Down With Obama’s War in Afghanistan” [WV No. 942, 11 September 2009] which calls for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S./NATO forces from Afghanistan and Iraq. McMahon argues that the United States has the “determination” to “see to it that Afghanistan becomes, if not a thriving democracy, at least a stable country not ruled by religious fanatics....” In fact, we understand that the *only* “determination” the U.S. has in the strategic region of Central Asia is to advance its imperialist interests. The corrupt regime that the U.S.

supports today is based on a coalition of former *mujahedin* militias, and the 2004 constitution effectively enshrines Islamic fundamentalist *sharia* law.

McMahon bemoans that “the United States left Afghanistan to its own devices after training the mujahideen to fight the Red Army in the 1980’s....” What actually happened? The Soviet Union in 1979

talism had been overthrown. The Soviet Union embodied the historic gains of the October 1917 Russian workers revolution, not least for women. The intervention of the USSR on behalf of the modernizing secular government brought immense social progress. The amount of women in the workforce increased 50-fold, with half of all university students being

**Afghan women’s militia volunteers took up arms against CIA-backed Islamic cutthroats. Red Army intervention opened prospect of social emancipation for women.**



sent 100,000 troops in order to stem a U.S.-trained *mujahedin* insurgency against the left-nationalist, pro-Soviet government. We proudly declared, “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend social gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples!” This expressed our recognition that, despite its degeneration under a Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the Soviet Union remained a workers state, where capi-

women. The Afghan government also began mass literacy campaigns and provided medical care. But the Soviet forces pulled out from Afghanistan in early 1989 in an attempt to placate the U.S. ruling class. We bitterly denounced this betrayal which paved the way for a bloody onslaught against the Afghan peoples. The restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 was a historic defeat

for the world’s working class and the oppressed.

It’s no surprise that McMahon confuses himself for a “Marxist” on the basis of some online Facebook poll, considering that most fake-left groups, including the misnamed International Socialist Organization, sided with the U.S. imperialists and their reactionary CIA-funded *mujahedin*, who threw acid in the faces of young women learning to read. More recently, just weeks before Obama announced he was sending 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan, the ISO gushed that Obama’s election was “a reason to believe that change *is* possible” (*Socialist Worker* online, 21 January [2009]), building illusions once again in U.S. imperialism. The Democrats and the Republicans are the parties of the American capitalist class. Obama has worked tirelessly to break the back of the United Auto Workers union while giving *billions* to the banks. His “timetable” for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq is essentially the same as Bush’s, and since his election, anti-immigrant roundups have increased along with Predator missile strikes in Pakistan.

“Imperialistic” does not describe “certain facets of American foreign policy,” as McMahon writes. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. The blood-soaked U.S. imperialists have wreaked untold misery the world over. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class and, in this epoch of its decay, wars that divide and redivide the world’s markets. The only possibility of a future free of wars, misery and want rests in the victory of international socialist revolution. We in the Spartacus Youth Club, the youth auxiliary of the Spartacist League, seek to build a revolutionary workers party that can lead the struggle to sweep away this rotten system for good. ■

# Down With Chauvinist Compulsory English Policy! Spartacist Club Banned at London Campus

We reprint the following article from Workers Hammer No. 209 (Winter 2009-2010), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain.

The British state's "war on terror" is the domestic face of the bloody imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. At universities, this is reflected in government guidelines for "tackling violent

## WORKERS HAMMER

extremism," which place students and immigrant workers squarely in the cross-hairs of police repression. Exactly what this means was seen on 8 April 2009 when police arrested eleven Asian men, mainly students, on bogus "terrorist" charges. When the cops finally admitted they had no evidence and released the men two weeks later without charges, ten of them—all Pakistani nationals—were incarcerated by the UK Border Agency. Eight were forced to leave the country while two remain in jail fighting deportation.

A 4 December 2009 *Guardian* article titled "Terror Arrest Students Fight to Clear Their Names" describes how "men in combat uniforms grabbed Rizwan Sharif outside a Liverpool university last April, pointing a gun at his head." Another of those arrested, 25-year-old business student Janas Khan, told the *Guardian* his life had been ruined by the experience, commenting: "The whole thing is rubbish. There was no bomb factory, no link to al-Qaida and they know it."

It is in the vital interests of students, lecturers and campus workers to oppose the "war on terror" and anti-immigrant witch hunts on campuses. Under Labour's draconian new immigration rules, universities and teachers are compelled to act as auxiliaries of the immigration police by monitoring foreign students and reporting anything "suspicious" to the state. This has rightly outraged many lecturers. But while the lecturers union UCU states that



Workers Hammer

**Spartacists set up table in defiance of student union bureaucrats at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, October 2009.**

it is "absolutely opposed to this legislation," it urges its members to co-operate, stating that: "these duties are part of a legal obligation on universities" and "the union's protection of members cannot extend to endorsing a breach of the law relating to PBS [points-based system] or defending members who do so" ("Points-based Immigration," UCU briefing paper, February 2009).

Meanwhile, on 12 June 2009, immigrant cleaners at London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) employed by the contractor ISS were called to an "emergency meeting" and set upon by 40 immigration cops who were hiding in the room with the complicity of SOAS management. Nine cleaners were detained, most of whom were subsequently deported. This was a blatant attack on this workforce which had just won union recognition and the London Living Wage after going on strike. The Spartacist League protested this vicious

raid and called for full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

It is scandalous that the student union bureaucracy, including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), has long been colluding with the university administration to enforce a chauvinist compulsory English policy on student societies' literature that fits squarely in the framework of the government's 2006 "extremism" guidelines, targeting in particular Islamic societies. At the September 2006 freshers fair, student union bureaucrats led by then-prominent SWP spokesman Clare Solomon, imposed a rule that "all publicity must be in English," ludicrously passing this off as part of its "equal opportunities policy." This was subsequently amended to state that all literature must have a direct English translation. Ever since, we have campaigned against this attempt at censorship at interventions into campus events and at regular sales of our literature (including in Arabic, Chinese, Turk-

ish, Tagalog and other languages).

Escalating this chauvinist campaign, a 25 August 2009 email from Ben Sellers, current SOAS vice president for sports and societies, indicated the Spartacus Youth Group would not be allowed a stall at the 2009 freshers fair unless we agreed to censor our foreign-language literature. This is somewhat ironic at SOAS which boasts of being a "guardian of specialised knowledge in languages," offering "an unparalleled range of non-European languages" (soas.ac.uk)! As the SYG's email reply to the student union made clear:

"We oppose this policy as a matter of political principle because it discriminates against foreign students and is a tool for enforcing the capitalist state's racist 'War on Terror' on campus. This primarily targets Muslim students but is ultimately aimed at immigrants, workers and leftists such as ourselves. Therefore, we cannot and will not censor our foreign language literature.

"We believe that all students and students societies should be free to distribute literature in any language they wish and to express any political opinions that they choose to, including our opposition as revolutionary internationalist socialists to this chauvinist rule."

When the SYG set up a table outside the freshers fair making clear our opposition to racism and chauvinism, including the foreign-language gag at SOAS, it proved too much for the student union bureaucrats. A 20 October 2009 email from Ben Sellers preached: "This is not acceptable behaviour for the officers of a society, and as such I will not be accepting society paperwork from the Spartacus Youth Group for the coming academic year." This ban on our communist society is outrageous and students and workers on the campus have an interest in opposing this censorship. As for us, we will continue to oppose the "war on terror" witch hunt and demand: **Down with the chauvinist compulsory English policy for student societies at SOAS!** ■

## ISO Debates...

(continued from page 5)

the oppressed around the world—"a step sideways" (see "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class Theories'," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999).

A Spartacus Youth Club speaker said from the floor:

"We are communists, socialists—we use the two terms interchangeably. There's no difference between the two. Rather than a debate on capitalism versus socialism, this is more like a debate on capitalism versus warm and fuzzy reformed capital-

ism. [To the ISO:] You have actually taken your sub-reformist speech a peg lower than usual. I'm not going to address the pro-capitalists, I'm going to address the people in the audience who are on the side of the working class against the capitalist class. Now, the Spartacist League is in favor of building a workers party to fight for the dictatorship of the working class. Democracy is not a classless warm and fuzzy thing. It's which class rules—democracy for the working class or democracy for the capitalist class? "I want to touch on what the ISO, these State Department socialists, said: that the Soviet Union and China have nothing to do with socialism. The fact is, they spit on every country that has man-

aged to overthrow capitalism in history. They have sided with the camp of U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union, against China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam."

At this point a huge commotion ensued at the front of the room. The ISO managed to form a successful "united front" with the advocates of capitalism—against the communists. Amid the anti-free-speech petty bureaucrats' most unoriginal cries of "What's your question?" the SYC speaker pointed to the ISO panelists and said, "The answer they have is abject servility to the class enemy. So I don't have a question for them. What I'm trying to give is answers here." Predictably, the savants on both sides of the panel howled that they

did not want the Spartacists' answers.

Our speaker continued: "Now, the ISO, what they don't talk about is Obama. Just to wrap it up I want to talk about Obama, because nobody here talks about Obama. Obama is the capitalist class enemy." Both sides of the panel cried that they did not want to hear about Obama. Our speaker said to the students in the audience, "The ISO are cheerleaders for Barack Obama. You need to break with the Democrats and the Republicans and fight for a workers party that fights for socialist revolution. Being a cheerleader for the Democrats, trying to reform capitalism, will not work."

The ISO could not respond to our

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**Homeless people scavenge for food in garbage outside Moscow, 2003.**



Getty



## Letters

# MLK Did Not Lead 1966 March in Cicero

16 January 2010

Dear *Young Spartacus*,

It is no accident that there is a widespread myth that Martin Luther King led a civil rights march into Cicero in 1966 (cf., “Corrections,” WV No. 945, 23 October 2009). That myth has been deliberately propagated.

One source is a biography of King posted on the Web site of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute at Stanford University. The biographical article states: “King was stoned by angry whites in the Chicago suburb of Cicero when he led a march against racial discrimination in housing.” The institute’s director is Clayborne Carson, author of a number of works on King, as well as *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (1981). Another influential source of the myth is the award-winning 2004 documentary film *Citizen King*, which was produced, directed and written by Orlando Bagwell and W. Noland Walker.

It is difficult to imagine that those filmmakers—and the King scholar Carson—were unaware of the fact that King did not support the 4 September 1966 civil rights march in Cicero. In fact, all three worked on the award-winning public television documentary series *Eyes on the Prize*, one of the many works that have accurately recounted that history. Carson served as senior advisor to *Eyes on the Prize*, and Bagwell produced a number of episodes in the series. Walker served as production assistant on the episode that deals with King’s Chicago campaign, *Two Societies: 1965-1968* (1990).

*Two Societies* accurately presents dramatic footage of several protest marches in late July and early August into Gage Park and other all-white enclaves in Chicago’s Southwest Side, in which civil rights protesters were confronted by mobs of white racists. *Two Societies* then recounts King’s signing of an accord with Chicago mayor Richard Daley, after which, as the film’s narrator states, King “agreed to stop the marches, including the march into Cicero.” The film presents an interview with Robert Lucas, who was the leader of Chicago CORE. Lucas recounts that King called him shortly before the Cicero march to ask that he call it off. This is followed by footage of courageous civil rights demonstrators braving a gauntlet of rioting racists in Cicero.

In contrast, *Citizen King* goes to considerable lengths to create the false impression that King led the march in Cicero. This section of *Citizen King* is introduced by shots of street scenes in Cicero, starting with a close-up of a “Welcome to Cicero” street sign. The voice-over states: “Dr. King decided that he was going to march in Cicero.” The film then cuts to what are supposedly scenes of the Cicero march. In fact, what *Citizen King* shows are brief snippets from the actual Cicero march spliced into a lengthy pastiche of scenes from the protests in late July and early August, all apparently showing the Cicero march. We see King emerging from his car, supposedly to join the Cicero demonstration; actually, it was the 5 August protest in Marquette Park. We see cars being overturned and burned; this actually happened following the 31 July demonstration in Gage Park. In the middle of this deceptive montage, *Citizen King* cuts to an interview with a black former Chicago policeman, who declares, “One guy hit King with a brick in the Cicero march, and gashed him in the head.” This is followed by a film shot of King holding his head after being hit. However, that attack on King took place not in Cicero but at the 5 August protest in Marquette Park. Finally, driving home the false impression that all of these protest scenes took place in Cicero, the filmmakers follow them with an excerpt from an interview with King in which he explains the importance of fighting for integration in places like Cicero.

In fact, much of the footage deceptively presented in *Citizen King* as showing the Cicero march was used in the earlier *Eyes on the Prize* episode, *Two Societies*, where it was correctly identified as showing the earlier protests.

The obvious effect is to blot out the memory of the march that actually *did* take place in Cicero. King called off the planned march into Cicero after signing a bogus “open-housing” agreement with Daley, that the mayor, the bankers and the realtors had no intention of implementing. Militants of CORE and others maintained the Cicero protest, marching under a hail of rocks and bottles. The fact is that the *real* Cicero march underlined the ignominious collapse of King’s Chicago campaign against housing discrimination. Even the biographical article cited above acknowledges that King’s

speaker. Just two days prior to the debate, Obama had announced he would send 30,000 more troops for the imperialist slaughter in Afghanistan. After nearly eleven months of celebratory, post-inaugural drunken stupor, the ISO had woken up with a tremendous hangover to crash out an editorial headlined, “It’s Obama’s War Now” (*Socialist Worker* online, 2 December 2009). It came nearly a year late, but they finally managed to choke out the words (and it wasn’t even posed as a question).

The ISO’s editorial hypocritically chides the imperialists for “historical amnesia about the bitter fruits of U.S. policy in Afghanistan since the 1970s.” But the ISO’s feigned amnesia about who *they* were sleeping with at the time did not play so well at the Hunter debate. After our intervention, we sold copies of our article “Charlie Wilson’s War Was the ISO’s War” (WV No. 921, 26 September 2008), informing students that the ISO cham-

pioned the CIA-backed *mujahedin* in Afghanistan as freedom fighters, while we supported the Soviet Army’s efforts to crush these woman-hating butchers and opposed the U.S. imperialists’ proxy war against the Soviet degenerated workers state.

The ISO easily lost the debate because their politics are premised on fighting for the reformist “improvement” of imperialism. The anti-communist advocates of capitalism easily triumphed over the anti-communist reformist “socialists” because the former could more effectively defend the camp in which both sides actually reside. We spent about three hours at this debate in what might be described as the slops of the post-Soviet historical trough—not our idea of an enjoyable way to spend the evening. But we stuck it out because we didn’t want students fed up with this depraved capitalist system to think that the ISO’s masquerade has anything to do with socialism. ■



Civil rights militants march in Cicero, Illinois, 1966, despite King’s attempts to call it off. PBS

Chicago campaign “resulted in no significant gains.”

It was in Chicago that the liberal premises of the civil rights movement came most clearly into explosive collision with economic and social reality. Blacks in Northern ghettos already had the formal rights won by the civil rights movement in the South—“equality under the law” and “one man, one vote”—but that did not prevent them from being forced to live as

second-class citizens. As was made abundantly clear in Chicago, King and the rest of the liberal civil rights leadership had no program to fight the causes of racial discrimination, which are deeply rooted in the economic and social structure of capitalist society. The myth that King led the march in Cicero helps to obscure that fact.

Comradely,  
Bruce André

## On California Campus Protests

25 January 2010

Dear Editor,

The otherwise fine California budget cuts article in the current *WV/Young Spartacus* (“Protests Against Education Cuts and Fee Hikes Sweep California”) No. 950, 15 January) contains a political misstatement. After pointing out that workers have the social power that students do not have, the article states:

“Students must therefore ally with the working class, not the other way around.”

The above statement implies that the workers have no need to ally with protesting students since they have no social power. The relation of workers to protesting students is contextual and not categorical precisely because students represent a sometimes volatile petty-bourgeois layer. In the last days of the Weimar Republic a mobilized working class needed to *crush* a student movement that in its overwhelming majority were fascist shock troops. But in *today’s context*, when students and labor are protesting against the racist state government and its draconian cuts, the second part of the above statement is wrong.

In early 20th century Russia, students were overwhelmingly children of the privi-

leged elite. Nevertheless, though their protests were over purely academic issues, when 183 student activists were drafted into the army, Lenin demanded:

“All conscious elements among all strata of the people must take up this challenge, if they do not desire to fall to the level of dumb slaves bearing their insults in silence. At the head of these conscious elements stand the advanced workers and the Social-Democratic organisations inseparably linked with them. The working class constantly suffers immeasurably greater injuries and insults from the police lawlessness with which the students have now come into such sharp conflict. The working class has already begun the struggle for its emancipation. It must remember that this great struggle imposes great obligations upon it, that it cannot emancipate itself without emancipating the whole people from despotism, that it is its duty first and foremost to respond to every political protest and render every support to that protest.”  
—“The Drafting of 183 Students into the Army” (February 1901)

Lenin mandated that the workers’ vanguard be a “Tribune of the People,” itself a motivating force for persuading students to ally with the proletariat.

With best comradely regards,  
Reuben S.

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# Death Penalty...

(continued from page 1)

the U.S. is rooted in the origins of American capitalism, which was built on the backs of black slaves. Under the Slave Codes, slaves were killed with impunity for “crimes” ranging from insolence toward whites to rebellion against the slave masters. It took a bloody Civil War to smash slavery. Only after that revolutionary victory were the freed black slaves recognized as persons, with full rights as citizens. In the ensuing period of Radical Reconstruction, the most democratic period in American history, more blacks per capita held political office than at any other time. But the promise of freedom for which 200,000 black troops fought so courageously was betrayed by the Northern capitalists.

All remaining Union troops were withdrawn from the South by 1877, and shortly thereafter a rigid system of legal segregation called Jim Crow was imposed and maintained by Klan terror and police-state repression. At the heart of the Jim Crow system was the lynch mob, whose purpose was to enforce the subjugation of black people through terror and murder. Although the number of those so hideously put to death will never be known, the Tuskegee Institute estimates that nearly 5,000 lynchings took place between 1882 and 1968. By the 1930s, extralegal lynchings were increasingly supplanted by legal lynching. From 1930 to 1967, more than two-thirds of those executed were black.

In an article titled “Black Man’s Burden: Race and the Death Penalty in America” (*Oregon Law Review*, Spring 2002), Charles Ogletree rightly argued that “the racially disproportionate application of the death penalty can be seen as being in historical continuity with the long and sordid history of lynching in this country.” Pointing to the fact that the Southern states that account for more than 90 percent of all executions today significantly overlap with those with the greatest number of lynchings and other extralegal terror during the Jim Crow period, he concluded: “Given the many similarities between the illegal but often officially sanctioned practice of lynching, and the current imposition of the death penalty, it seems at times that the only difference between lynching and capital punishment is the gloss of legality and procedural regularity that the latter enjoys.”

In 1967 executions were put on hold; five years later the Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was “wanton and freakish” and ordered states to rewrite their laws. This ruling came in the context of the tumultuous civil rights struggles, growing mass protests against U.S. imperialism’s dirty and losing war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants and, in 1970, a mounting strike wave. On the world stage, the images of black pro-



Indymedia



Johnson Family

**Video captured cold-blooded execution of Oscar Grant (inset) by BART cop in Oakland, 1 January 2009.**

testers demanding basic equality being viciously attacked by racist cops and mobs were an embarrassment to U.S. imperialism and its posturing as the champion of “democracy” in the Cold War, particularly in competition with the Soviet Union in the Third World. In this context, America’s rulers judged that it was time to refurbish their much-tarnished “land of liberty” credentials.

But this was a brief and unusual moment in U.S. history, a period when the capitalist rulers were trying to contain, co-opt and eventually destroy the mass civil rights movement and the burgeoning radicalization centered on the Vietnam War. And they succeeded. After the 1973 U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the antiwar movement disappeared. The civil rights movement, whose leaders banked on the courts and the Democratic Party for redress, was broken when it confronted the vicious segregation of blacks in Northern ghettos, which was based not on Jim Crow law but on the reality of American capitalism. Most of the more radical black militants who opposed the policies of the civil rights leaders were either cut down by the FBI’s COINTELPRO operation or co-opted into the Democratic Party.

By 1976, when the death penalty was reinstated, the winds of reaction against 1960s liberalism and particularly black rights were blowing hot. Busing for school integration was defeated through a combination of racist mobs in the streets and liberals in Congress. The nomination of “born again” Baptist Jimmy Carter to head the Democratic Party ticket in the 1976 elections was not accidental—Carter openly proclaimed the virtues of “ethnic purity.” A year later, the ten-year moratorium on the death penalty ended with the execution of Gary Gilmore. The racist “war on crime,” which was kicked off in the 1970s by Republican Richard Nixon, was augmented in the 1980s by the “war on drugs” under Ronald Reagan,

with the support of leading black Democratic spokesmen such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. This racist war led to a massive increase in black incarceration, with the U.S. now housing 2.3 million prisoners, the largest prison population in the world. One of every three black males born today can expect time in jail.

At the same time, as industry was being decimated in the late 1970s and ’80s, the prison population grew by a

their convictions and vastly expanded the federal death penalty, giving a green light to the execution machinery to go full speed ahead. And, indeed, the assembly line of death was kicked into high gear, reaching a high of 98 executions in 1999.

Written in this history, in the negative, is the fundamental truth of Karl Marx’s statement at the time of the Civil War: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” Fomenting racial and ethnic hatreds has long served America’s capitalist rulers in ratcheting up the exploitation of the working class as a whole, keeping the workers divided and obscuring the fundamental class nature of the capitalist system of exploitation. Writing off the lives of the ghetto poor as worthless is aimed at exalting those who will work at any wages and under any conditions. The results can be seen in the trail of broken unions, the slashing of wages, the increasing speedup and the general deterioration of living conditions for most working people. In all this, the rulers have been ably assisted by the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats, whose policies of class peace and promotion of the capitalist Democratic Party as a “friend of labor” have sapped the fighting strength of the unions.

The death penalty stands at the pinnacle of the American capitalist state’s



Korotzer/Next Left Notes

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition at NAACP convention in New York City, July 2009. Reformists crawl to Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism and his top cop, Attorney General Eric Holder.**

million—one place for every job lost on the assembly line. The lives of the majority of the black population, which once supplied a “reserve army of labor” for American capitalism, were now deemed by the rulers to be irrelevant to production for profit, while social programs seen as benefiting the ghetto and barrio poor were slashed, culminating in Democratic Party president Bill Clinton ending “welfare as we know it” in 1996.

That same year, Bill Clinton gave a major boost to the death penalty. His Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act gutted the *habeas corpus* right of state prisoners to have federal courts review

arsenal of repression. While the face of death row may now be mainly black and Latino, fighters for labor’s cause have also been targeted for death by the capitalist state: the Haymarket anarchists, abolitionists and labor organizers who fought for the eight-hour day, in 1877; IWW organizer Joe Hill in 1915; anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. This does not include the hundreds of working-class fighters who have died at the hands of the strikebreaking cops and scabs. But it was out of such struggles that the industrial unions in this country were forged in the 1930s, bringing into their ranks as militant fighters masses of black workers. Break-

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**Update: Supreme Court of Death Rules Against Mumia Abu-Jamal**



# Qian Xuesen...

(continued from page 2)

a utopian attempt to catapult China to the level of an advanced industrial society through the intense exertion of mainly peasant labor relying on primitive technology. Qian used his scientific credentials to assert in magazine articles that agricultural output could be increased by a factor of 20 using only water conservation, manure and labor. Thus he bears a share of responsibility for the immense famine that followed the collapse of the “Great Leap.”

Qian made it through the intrabureaucratic Cultural Revolution virtually unscathed, as those working on highly sensitive military projects were largely shielded by their isolation and value to the regime. With his prominent position in the CCP hierarchy, he was very outspoken in support of the crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen upheaval, an incipient proletarian political revolution against bureaucratic misrule.

The contradictions inherent in Stalinist rule were seen in Qian’s own views. Though he was a brilliant scientist, his intense nationalism led him to promote some bizarre pseudoscience (as did Mao and others in the bureaucracy), urging the government to devote more resources to acupuncture, the *qigong* “art of healing” and the study of ESP. In the late 1990s, having originally promoted the Falun Gong cult, Beijing cracked down on this anti-Communist outfit, which pushes *qigong* to get popular support for its aim of fomenting capitalist counter-revolution and spews vile racism and anti-woman, anti-gay bigotry.

The most glaring contradiction was in the issue of China’s military defense,



Basic Books photos  
**Qian Xuesen in a group photo at Shuangchengzi missile test site in October 1960, before launching of R-2 rocket. Right: Chinese intermediate-range ballistic missile.**

which is undermined by the Stalinists’ pursuit of “socialism in one country,” whose corollary is the quest for accommodation with imperialism and opposition to the struggle for world socialist revolution. This was graphically displayed by the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, when the Moscow and Beijing bureaucracies fell out in pursuit of their own nationally defined interests. Where the Kremlin criminally backed capitalist India in its border war with China in 1962, Mao’s regime went on to forge an alliance with the U.S. against the Soviet Union in the 1970s and ’80s. Thus the CCP contributed to the final undoing of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, a historic defeat for the world’s proletariat and oppressed masses that removed the only significant military counterweight to U.S. imperialism.

The imperialist bourgeoisie, which has never reconciled itself to “losing” China,

pursues a multifaceted strategy for capitalist restoration: economic penetration via Beijing’s “socialist market economy,” promotion of counterrevolutionary forces like the Dalai Lama, and direct military pressure, as seen, for example, in U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. The struggle for a world socialist order crucially includes the unconditional military defense of the remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—against imperialist attack and domestic counterrevolution. Thus we support the development of the Chinese and North Korean nuclear arsenals. At the same time, we fight for proletarian political revolutions to sweep away the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes of workers democracy committed to proletarian internationalism.

As communists fighting in the belly of the U.S. imperialist beast, we hold a



place of honor for Qian Xuesen and the many other scientists and workers who, under extremely difficult conditions, made heroic efforts to build China’s nuclear capacity. In the midst of the Sino-Soviet split, we underscored the historic importance of this development, writing in “Bureaucracy and Revolution in Moscow and Peking” (*Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965):

“China’s development of the A-bomb must be greeted by all revolutionary Marxists as a welcome strengthening of Chinese defenses at a time when the Chinese Revolution is not only being aggressively threatened by U.S. imperialism but when it is also being systematically betrayed by the Soviet bureaucracy in the search for ‘peaceful coexistence.’ However, the main point is that every increase in the ability of the Chinese to hold the U.S. at bay militarily is an increase in time to prepare the proletarian revolution—above all in *America*—the only final safeguard to all gains thus far made by the international working class.”■

ing the chains forged by the trade-union misleaders that have shackled the working class to the class enemy means fighting to build a new class-struggle leadership. It will be out of hard-fought class battles that the vital instrument for getting rid of this decaying system of exploitation, racial oppression and death will be forged—a multiracial workers party to lead the fight for a socialist America. Such a party must be rooted in the understanding that the fight for black freedom is central to the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.

## Abolish the Death Penalty Everywhere!

More than 150 years ago, Karl Marx attacked the London *Times* for upholding capital punishment as a necessary defense of “civilization”:

“It would be very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to establish any principle upon which the justice or expediency of capital punishment could be founded, in a society glorying in its civilization. Punishment in general has been defended as a means either of ameliorating or of intimidating. Now what right have you to punish me for the amelioration or intimidation of others?... Now, what a state of society is that, which knows of no better instrument for its own defense than the hangman, and which proclaims through the ‘leading journal of the world’ its own brutality as eternal law?”  
—“Capital Punishment”  
(January 1853)

When capital punishment was reintroduced in the U.S., amid an anti-crime hysteria, we noted in “Abolish the Death Penalty” (WV No. 117, 9 July 1976): “The Marxist attitude toward crime and punishment is that we are against it.... Socialists do not proceed from the standpoint of punishing the offenders. Such a vindictive penal attitude is fundamentally a religious rather than a materialist conception of social relations.” Marxists fight for the creation of an international socialist society based on material abundance. Only then will the material conditions exist for the eradication of crime—which is born of deprivation and otherwise is a small-time reflection of the theft and terror on which capitalism is based—and for eradication of the need for a repressive state apparatus. Such a society cannot come into being without the victory of

socialist revolutions internationally, especially in the advanced capitalist countries.

Today, the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state leads the world in executions. This is one of the hideous expressions of Stalinist rule—not only in China but also in North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—which is based on the reactionary utopia of building “socialism in one country”—i.e., opposition to the struggle for international socialist revolution. A brittle caste that parasitically sits atop the workers state, the Stalinist bureaucracy uses the death penalty and other forms of repression to maintain social order. We fight for the unconditional military defense of the Chinese deformed workers state. But the fact that 1,700 human lives were snuffed out through capital punishment last year in China only underlines the need for a proletarian political revolution to overthrow the ruling bureaucracy and establish working-class soviet democracy, based on the program of proletarian revolutionary internationalism.

## The “Budget” of Crime and Punishment

In the U.S., public support for the death penalty has been shaken, falling from a high of 80 percent in 1994 to 65 percent today. States like New Jersey and, more recently, New Mexico have abolished the death penalty, as juries have become increasingly reluctant to impose a death sentence. Here the calculus of state-sanctioned killing runs up against the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. A 2009 year-end report by the Death Penalty Information Center noted: “The costs of the death penalty became an increasingly important issue as states faced severe budget deficits. High expenses with no measurable benefit were frequently cited in legislative debates about the death penalty.” The report also cited the increasing introduction of life-without-parole sentences—which the *Dallas Morning News* gleefully, and correctly, called “death by prison”—as a central factor in the decline of death sentences to their lowest in a decade.

Pointing to New Mexico Democratic Party governor Bill Richardson’s statement that cost of the death penalty was “a valid reason” for its repeal, an article by

the reformist Workers World Party (WWP) notes: “One way to save hundreds of millions every year is to end the very expensive and wasteful death penalty and use those millions for job programs, education and health care. Every cost study in the U.S. shows that the death penalty is far more costly than life in prison” (*Workers World*, 13 January). That WWP advises the capitalist rulers on reducing the overhead of state repression and death is simply one of the more outrageous expressions of “money for jobs, not prisons” reformism.

While the price of death at the hands of the state may be a factor in curtailing its present use, sectors of the bourgeoisie have also been screaming over the inordinate costs of the bloated prison system. Yet even in the context of a declining crime rate, and with no immediate prospect of upheavals in the inner cities, they continue to throw more people behind bars and keep them there. A recent article in the *New York Times* (30 January) noted that despite a New York State law liberalizing the release of old or sick inmates who are physically incapable of committing a violent crime, few have been let go even though each inmate costs the state \$150,000 a year.

Nor do the rulers tinker lightly with their machinery of death. The *Workers World* article, titled “Death Penalty Changes Spur Optimism,” points to the recent Supreme Court decision granting a new evidentiary hearing for Georgia death row prisoner Troy Davis. This was a real victory. Davis, a black man falsely accused of killing an off-duty cop, has three times come within hours of being executed despite the fact that seven of the nine witnesses who testified he was the killer have since recanted.

The sanctimonious declaration by Supreme Court Justice Paul Stevens that “the substantial risk of putting an innocent man to death clearly provides an adequate justification for holding an evidentiary hearing” may sound enlightened. But one need only look to the fact that a few months later the Court ruled against the appeal of Kevin Cooper despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence, including a 103-page statement by five judges in California’s Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This was quickly followed by

the Supreme Court’s move to have a death sentence reinstated against black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Reformists like WWP seek to tinker with capitalism because they imbue this system of exploitation and oppression with inherent democracy and rationality. Marxists, whether on the question of the death penalty, life in prison or imprisonment in general, do not offer advice on how to administer the capitalist state. We are opposed to the bourgeoisie’s entire machinery of repression, including the vast enhancement of repressive tools adopted under the “war on terror,” which has been wholeheartedly embraced by the Obama White House. Following the first U.S. execution since 1967, we wrote in “State Butchers Gilmore” (WV No. 141, 21 January 1977):

“The reinstitution of the death penalty is not just another legal argument lost before an increasingly reactionary Supreme Court. It is one among many proofs of the failure of capitalism in its death agony to fulfill its promise of a decent life.... Only the victorious proletarian revolution that overthrows the bourgeois state will abolish the death penalty for good and smash the prisons, in the course of rooting out the whole vicious cycle of crime, punishment and repression caused by capitalism.”■

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Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In fact, in language similar to what we say regarding Haiti, the IG declared: “Revolutionary communists would certainly not stand in the way of troops actually providing aid or helping rescue survivors” (“New Orleans Death Trap: Thousands of Black Poor Left to Die,” *Internationalist*, September 2005). As far as the IG is concerned, it’s okay for U.S. military forces to provide aid to survivors of a natural disaster in the U.S., but not in the Third World.

Nor did the IG call for a workers revolt amid the devastation left in the wake of Katrina. Rather they took a page from Martin Luther King Jr. and called for a “march on Washington,” fatuously declaiming: “The sight of thousands of unemployed homeless camped out on the ellipse and the mall in full view of Bush’s White House and the Capitol, recalling the hunger marches of the early 1930s, would send shivers down the spine of the ruling class.”

In its response to us, the IG dismisses out of hand our reference to Leon Trotsky’s 1938 article, “Learn to Think,”

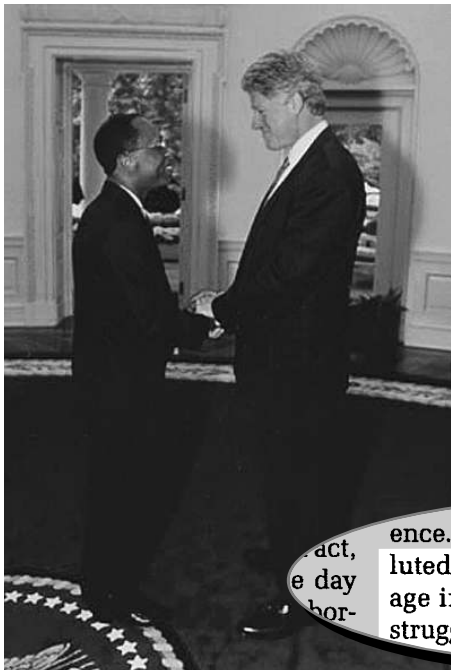
aimed at urging woodenheaded simpletons to learn to think. This is clearly too profound for the opportunists of the IG. By the IG’s logic, workers in the U.S. should be actively blocking any aid being shipped to Haiti by the U.S. military.

Adaptation to Third World populist nationalism is what lies behind the IG’s conjuring up fantasies of proletarian revolution in Haiti. The IG shrieks: “Haiti has now joined a growing list of places where, according to the SL, there is no working class. It started off with Bolivia in 2005, then came Oaxaca in 2006, now Haiti in 2010.” Well, it actually started much earlier than 2005. For example, in 1985, when current IG *líder máximo* Jan Norden was still editor of *Workers Vanguard*, we wrote in “South Africa: Razor’s Edge” (WV No. 376, 5 April 1985):

“South Africa is the one place in sub-Saharan Africa where there is the possibility for a workers state, because here the black population has been partially absorbed, at the bottom, into a modern industrialized society which can, based on the revolutionary reorganization of society, provide a decent life for its citizens.”

This, precisely, is the rather elementary point for Marxists, that socialist revolution requires an industrial proletarian concentration that is sufficient for overturning capitalist class rule and establishing a workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. And if such is not the case? “Then the struggle for national liberation will produce only very partial results, results directed entirely against the working masses” (Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* [1930]). This is clearly evident in Haiti, where bitter and bloody popular uprisings in recent decades have led to nothing more than the installation of bourgeois-populist regimes ultimately backed by the might of U.S. imperialism.

The same applies in contemporary Bolivia, where measures by the imperialists and the domestic bourgeoisie, centrally the shutting down of the nationalized tin mines, led to the material devastation and atomization of the once powerful mining proletariat. The 2005 “Bolivian revolution” that the IG and other fake leftists enthused over was in fact a plebeian upheaval that resulted in the coming to power of bourgeois populist Evo Morales. And while Mexico does have a powerful industrial proletariat, the struggle in Oaxaca, one of the most economically backward parts of the country, was limited to teachers and sectors of the petty bourgeoisie such as students and peasants. We pointed out: “Although the struggle in Oaxaca could serve as a spark to ignite workers struggle, in itself it does not pose a ‘revolutionary danger’,” as the IG would have it (“Down With Bloody State of Siege in Oaxaca!” WV No. 880, 10 November 2006). At bottom the IG’s glorification of the struggle in Oaxaca reflects its opportunist tailing of the popu-



National Archives

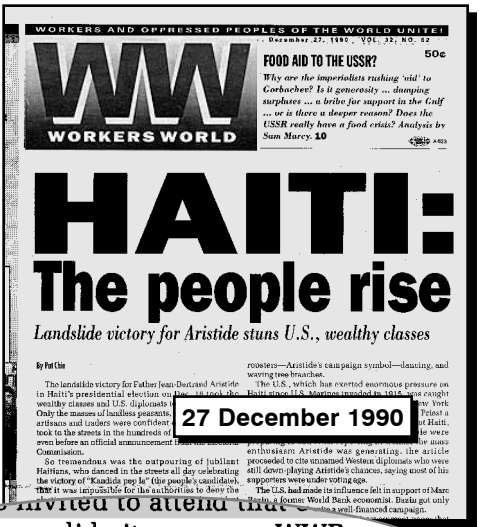
Reformist left embraced bourgeois populist Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Left: Aristide with Clinton in October 1994, after U.S. invasion reinstalled him as president of Haiti.

list milieu around the bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution.

The IG notwithstanding, the virtual absence of an industrial proletariat in Haiti, even before the devastation wreaked by the earthquake, is an obvious fact. Despite some modest economic development over the past few years, mainly centered on the garment industry, the financial trade magazine *TendersInfo* (5 October 2009) reported last fall: “The country now has 25 garment factories that export primarily to the United States and employ more than 24,000 workers, mostly women.” By comparison, the garment industry in Bangladesh consists of 4,500 factories employing more than 2.5 million workers. Of course, Bangladesh is a much bigger country than Haiti. However, even as a proportion of GDP, the economic weight of the textile industry in Bangladesh is almost twice that in Haiti.

However, this does not mean that the masses in Haiti are consigned in perpetuity to imperialist oppression. Again, as we pointed out in our last article, there is a sizable Haitian proletariat in the diaspora, which went unmentioned in the IG’s revolution-mongering around the earthquake. These workers can be a vital link to class struggle by the powerful North American proletariat. But to infuse the multiracial U.S. working class with an understanding of its role as the gravedigger of U.S. imperialism requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist labor misleaders who chain the working class to its capitalist exploiters, centrally through political support to the Democratic Party.

And here is where the soft opportunist underbelly of the IG’s Third World cheerleading is most exposed. At the time of the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, we called for military defense of that country while stressing the need for class struggle against the American ruling class at home. At the same time, we highlighted our call at the time of the Soviet intervention beginning in December 1979 to “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” In contrast, when the IG initiated a November 2001 Hunter College rally in New York to protest plans by the administration to drive out undocumented immigrant students, IG speakers did not so much as mention the Soviet intervention, for fear of offending those anti-Communist leftists at the rally who had been on the imperialist side against the Red Army in Afghanistan (see “IG Disappears Red Army Fight Against Islamic Reaction in Afghanistan,” WV No. 772, 11 January 2002). While disappearing the one force capable of effecting a social revolution in Afghanistan, the IG idiotically raised the call for proletarian revolution in Afghanistan, where there is absolutely no industrial proletariat, writing in the *Internationalist* (September 2001): “Genuine communists defend semi-colonial countries against imperialist attack as we fight for socialist revolution against their bourgeois and, in the case of Afghanistan, feudalistic leaders.”



ence. In a solidarity message, WWP saluted Father Aristide for his “great courage in bringing the flood of the mass struggle into the election campaign.”



IG’s line on troops providing aid following Hurricane Katrina disaster. Non-U.S. residents need not apply.

sneering: “WV throws in a quote from Leon Trotsky about not interfering with soldiers extinguishing a fire or rescuing drowning people during a flood. But Trotsky was explicitly talking of a ‘national’ army, not an imperialist invasion force.” No. In fact, Trotsky was speaking here of not opposing on principle aid by an imperialist power to a national struggle in a semicolonial country. Trotsky’s example that “the workers would not interfere with soldiers who are extinguishing a fire” was meant to be a self-evident statement

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10

WORKERS VANGUARD

# Britain...

(continued from page 12)

Workers Party (SWP). Demonstrations organised by UAF are not intended to stop fascist provocations: the UAF slogan “Stop the BNP” in reality often means that the state should ban the BNP. We oppose calls on the capitalist state to ban the fascists, which will invariably be used against the left. The role of the capitalist state—in particular its police, prisons and courts—is to maintain order within the framework of private property relations and therefore it embodies the chauvinism that is inherent in capitalist society.

## Anti-Fascist Myths Glorify Bourgeois “Democracy”

The standard reformist answer to fascism is to unite all “democratic” forces into a cross-class coalition. This is today embodied in UAF, whose strategy consists of using bourgeois “democracy” as a bulwark against the fascists. But the counterposition between bourgeois “democracy” and fascism is false. Parliamentary democracy, imperialism’s preferred method of rule, is merely the best disguise for the dictatorship of the capitalists. Fascism in power is another form of the dictatorship of finance capital, one which the bourgeoisie only resorts to under extreme circumstances such as when its rule is threatened by the proletariat mobilised for revolution.

In the post-Soviet climate, the fact that the capitalist ruling classes currently face no threat from the insurgent proletariat means that fascist organisations across Europe have increasingly focused on parliamentary activity. Thus in France in 2002 when Le Pen’s National Front fascists scored big gains in the presidential elections they did so primarily as an *electoral party* and in Italy Gianfranco Fini’s formerly neo-fascist party mutated into an electoral party that merged with Berlusconi’s Freedom People movement in March 2009.

Our demand that fascist provocations must be *stopped* rests on the understanding that there is *nothing to debate* with fascists. What’s to debate with supporters of the Holocaust, for example? The fascists’ methods of “debate” are the fire-bomb, the lynch rope and other murderous weapons. However today reformists and liberals are rushing headlong to debate the fascists. Leading the pack is *Searchlight* editor Nick Lowles, who proclaimed a “new reality” in July 2009, a month after the BNP won two seats in the European Parliament. Lowles argues that:

“Searchlight comes from a proud tradition of No Platform, a belief that fascism should not be allowed to air its politics of hate publicly. We have always opposed legitimising fascism through public debate and where fascists try to incite hatred within communities through provocative marches and actions, we have backed mobilisations against them.

“While I still adhere to this in principle I also believe that we have to accept a new reality. Firstly the BNP has MEPs and whether we like it or not Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons will appear more regularly on television. No platform agreements between political parties were already breaking down before the election, with only Labour holding to them, and this process is likely to quicken now.”

—“The Way Forward,” *Searchlight* (July 2009)

Related to this, Lowles argues in the same article: “To fight the BNP effectively we must move away from city and town centre events to focusing on the very communities where the BNP is drawing its support”—in other words more electioneering among the racist BNP voters. The SWP’s strategy of “use your vote” means voting Labour (or some alternative), absolving the Labour government of its role in putting the wind in the sails of the fascists.

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in *Weekly Worker* (15 October 2009) mocks any demonstrations against the fascists as “mindless ‘fash-bashing’” and an article by Eddie Ford denies that the EDL is fascist, insisting they are but “a motley and ugly” alliance of “nationalist, far-right and lumpen elements, such as intoxicated football hooligans and semi-

criminal riff-raff,” a description which sounds like any gang of fascist scum. The CPGB equates any opposition to the fascists with the SWP’s reformism, but its criticism of the SWP for grovelling appeals to the state to ban the fascists is a cover for the CPGB’s line, which amounts to *doing nothing* to combat the BNP or the EDL. Rather than protesting against Griffin outside the BBC, the CPGB suggested that “the establishment make room for the Marxist left on its platforms” (*Weekly Worker*, 1 October 2009).

SWP honcho John Molyneux argued in a letter to *Socialist Worker* (13 June 2009) that the SWP shouldn’t make a “fetish” out of not debating the fascists.



Workers Hammer

**March 2005 protest against planned extradition of Babar Ahmad, victim of Labour government’s “anti-terror” witchhunt.**

Meanwhile, according to the SWP’s Pre-conference Bulletin No. 1 (October 2009):

“A discussion has been taking place in the party about our stance on No Platform for the BNP. While our commitment to denying the fascists a platform is not in doubt, there have been calls from comrades centrally involved in Unite Against Fascism to scrap our opposition to debating with the BNP leadership in the media.”

The SWP leadership has decided not to debate Griffin, at least for now.

When the EDL began mobilising in major city centres in the summer of 2009, UAF was lukewarm about mobilising any kind of counter-demonstration. A petition on UAF’s Web site (25 September 2009) called on the home secretary, local council and police to ban the 10 October EDL demo in Manchester. According to Permanent Revolution’s Web site (permanentrevolution.net, 11 October 2009), when this was denied UAF sought permission to rally on the other side of the city. However, the cops placed the UAF demo near the EDL mob of 500-700 thugs and “kettled” [tightly surrounded] the anti-fascist demonstrators. UAF deliberately called its demonstration for noon, two hours after the EDL provocation began. *Socialist Worker* (17 October 2009) reports that the North West TUC [Trades Union Congress] urged people to stay “away from the UAF protest.”

Workers Power defends the position “no platform for fascists,” saying: “Communists see fascist organisations as instruments of civil war against the working class. Their aim is to smash the workers movement.” They conclude: “We believe they [the fascists] have to be stopped from organising their forces. This is the policy of ‘no platform.’ Wherever fascists seek to grow and develop their influence and support, communists seek to organise united action of workers, youth and anti-racists to stop them” (workerspower.com, 29 September 2009). What Workers Power doesn’t say is that upholding the slogan “no platform for fascists” in no way precludes—indeed is often synonymous with—calling on the state to ban the fascists. Workers Power attacks UAF for its failure to physically stop the fascists in the streets, saying: “Though UAF sees the need to protest against the BNP, it suffers from having to limit its arguments and tactics to what the capitalist politicians and figures on the right wing of the labour movement will accept.” The problem with UAF is not that it lacks militant tac-

tics, but its reformist programme, which Workers Power shares.

## Reformists Seek Unity Behind Chauvinist “British Jobs” Crusade

Nowhere is the political bankruptcy of the Labourite left more evident than in their pleas for unity with the leadership of the reactionary strikes for “British jobs for British workers.” Both the SWP and Workers Power look to the Socialist Party and RMT [Rail, Maritime and Transport union] leader Bob Crow, who led the No2EU coalition at the time of the European Parliament elections, to form a new electoral vehicle for the 2010 general

election. No2EU was founded on support to the “British jobs for British workers” strikes and protests that began at Lindsey oil refinery in January 2009.

The Socialist Party’s claim that these strikes were not aimed at foreign workers is a whitewash. At a protest in Newark, Nottinghamshire on 24 February 2009 a section of the demonstrators chanted “foreigners out” while another anti-immigrant strike in May in Milford Haven, South Wales resulted in some 40 Polish workers losing their jobs. According to the *Guardian* Web site (21 May 2009), the strike was settled when “the Dutch-based employer, Hertel, agreed to withdraw 40 Poles and replace them with UK staff at the terminal owned by ExxonMobil and Total.” The Socialist Party proclaimed the outcome as yet another “victory” and blatantly admitted that the British workers “were not opposed to laggards [insulation workers] from Poland getting work on the site as long as local laggards were given the opportunity of the work first as under the union agreement” (*Socialist*, 28 May-3 June 2009).

No2EU’s election strategy consisted of feeding at the same trough as the BNP, aiming to compete for the racist vote. In November the Socialist Party and Bob Crow formed a new coalition for the 2010 election. Its leadership also includes Brian Caton—leader of the Prison Officers Association, part of the armed fist of the capitalist state—who is now a proud member of the Socialist Party. Given its history as No2EU and its leadership, this “new” coalition could be nothing other than a vehicle for chauvinism, class collaboration and betrayal. But Workers Power criticises this cabal because they will not *form a party*, and therefore “will not stop the Tories but, on the contrary, demoralise working class activists and deliver the more backward and disorganised parts of our class over to the British National Party, which can pose as ‘anti-establishment’ unopposed by a genuine, radical party of the left.”

The notion that a mass workers party should accommodate would-be BNP voters expresses Workers Power’s commitment to a social-democratic “party of the whole class.” This view, which is common to all Labourite organisations including the Socialist Party and SWP, sees the workers party as an analogue of the trade unions, embracing the most advanced as well as the most backward layers of the working class, in which the backward

layers usually dominate. In contrast, the Leninist vanguard party that we seek to build necessarily excludes from its ranks all chauvinists and bases itself on the most advanced layers, fighting every manifestation of backwardness, chauvinism and prejudice, leading the entire working class and acting as a “tribune of the people.”

The protectionist poison expressed in the “British jobs” strikes is inherent to the programme of social democracy. To workers facing ruin by the capitalist economic crisis, it substitutes class collaboration for class struggle, lining workers up behind their own capitalist rulers. Protectionism is common among “left” union leaders, including former NUM leader Arthur Scargill, militant leader of the heroic 1984-85 miners strike, who expressed his support for the “British jobs” crusade in a 4 November interview with Indymedia Ireland. Asked about the Lindsey oil refinery strike Scargill said: “You can’t have a situation [where] you can just move migrant labour, migrant capital into a society without it having devastating effects on the whole society,” while emphasising that: “I’m not talking about immigration [and] I’m not talking about asylum seekers! I’m talking about migrant labour being moved by capitalism.”

Our proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist programme is flatly counterposed to nationalist protectionism. We insist that until the working class takes state power, we will not be in a position to worry about the ebbs and flows of labour migration or the world economy more generally. We have noted that in cases such as the Lindsey strike, the bottom line for the trade-union movement must not be *whom* the contractors hire, but at *what rate of pay*. The way to undercut attempts by the bosses to “level down” the wages and working conditions, including safety standards, of all workers, by playing off one nationality against the other, is for the unions to demand: **Full union pay for all work at the prevailing rate, no matter who does the job! Equal pay for equal work!** This poses the need for international collaboration among construction workers across European countries.

Twelve years of Labour rule has meant an even more rapid de-industrialisation than under Margaret Thatcher. The chronic job losses have been devastating for the working class. Entire areas of the country, from the former coal-mining and steel-producing areas of England, Scotland and Wales to the desolate former textile towns such as Bradford and Oldham offer little hope of a decent job. The situation cries out for a socialist revolution and a planned economy to regenerate social and economic life. There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycle of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and establishes a planned, socialised economy. The greatest obstacle to this is the social-chauvinist Labourite leadership of the working class who are loyal to British capitalism. We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, forged in opposition to Labourism, to overthrow the racist capitalist order and replace it with working-class rule. ■

**WORKERS HAMMER**  
Trade unions/minorities must stop racist provocations!  
**Fascists feed on Labour government racism**

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## Britain: Fascists Feed on Labour Government Racism

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 209 (Winter 2009-2010), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

### WORKERS HAMMER

The British National Party (BNP) was awarded a badge of bourgeois respectability when the BBC defied a storm of protest to host its leader Nick Griffin on *Question Time* in October 2009. Having won two seats in the European Parliament and obtained over 900,000 votes in local elections in June, the BNP thugs intend to increase their vote in the 2010 elections. The televised “debate” took place largely on the BNP’s terrain of virulent anti-immigrant racism, with representatives of all parties arguing over who is to “blame” for immigration. Labour was represented by none other than justice minister Jack Straw, who in 2006 fanned the flames of anti-Muslim racism with a provocative public declaration that he “prefers” Muslim women not to wear the *niqab* (veil) when coming to his constituency office (see “Britain: Racism and the Islamic Veil,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 886, 16 February 2007).

Responsibility for the current rise of the BNP lies squarely with the Labour governments of the last twelve years, which have relentlessly pursued the racist “war on terror” against Muslims and vied with the BNP for being “tough” on immigrants. The BNP is also thriving on attacks on immigrants, who are being scapegoated for the loss of jobs brought on by the capitalist economic crisis. Among those rounded up for deportation in a racist dragnet by the state were cleaners at London’s School of Oriental and African Studies and construction workers at the London Olympics site. The BNP are also reaping gains out of the reactionary crusade against foreign workers that began at Lindsey oil refinery in January 2009 under the slogan of “British jobs for British workers” (see “Down With Reactionary Strikes Against Foreign Workers!” *WV* No. 930, 13 February 2009). Responsibility for this lies with the Socialist Party [of Peter Taaffe, affiliated with Socialist Alternative in the U.S.] and the trade-union bureaucracy, who led this campaign. We say: Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers! No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For trade-



London: Protest against fascist BNP leader Nick Griffin appearing on BBC’s *Question Time* program, October 22.

union/minority mobilisations to stop fascist provocations!

No one should be fooled by the BNP’s posture as a parliamentarianist outfit: the BNP is and has been a fascist organisation since its inception. Fascists are paramilitary shock troops for all-sided reaction, particularly racist terror against immigrants and minorities, and smashing the organisations of the working class. As Trotsky explained in *Whither France?* (October 1934):

“Finance capital is obliged to create special armed bands trained to fight the workers.... The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery.”

Griffin was convicted in 1998 of inciting racial hatred for articles that denied the Nazi Holocaust. The Nazi regime was unparalleled in its barbarity. The Holocaust was the systematic extermination of six million Jews, as well as homosexuals, Gypsies and millions of Slavs. Hitler’s Nazis placed themselves at the head of European reaction. From 1918 to 1923, Germany came to the brink of revolution a number of times, but the proletariat was defeated. For the failure of the Russian Revolution to spread to the rest of Europe, humanity was made to pay with Nazi terror and the Holocaust.

In the inter-war period of economic and social crisis in Europe, where the facade of parliamentary democracy could

no longer deceive and contain the militant working class, the bourgeoisie looked to fascist reaction to smash the workers organisations. But this did not make the Allied imperialist “democracies” anti-fascist fighters. Contrary to the myth of the “democratic war against fascism,” we uphold the Trotskyist position on WWII of revolutionary defeatism for *all* the imperialists—Allied and Axis powers—and for unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. It was the Soviet Union that smashed the Nazi war machine, at a cost of over 20 million Soviet lives.

### Trade Unions/Minorities Must Stop EDL Provocations!

We warned last issue that “the election of BNPers Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons to the European Parliament gives respectability to the fascist stormtroopers and will lead to increased attacks on the streets, posing *real and present danger* to minorities, gays and leftists” (“The Bankruptcy of Labour,” *Workers Hammer* No. 208, Autumn 2009). This warning has been borne out: since the summer an outfit calling itself the English Defence League (EDL) has staged numerous, high-profile demonstrations in several cities, including Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and London. EDL marches are racist provocations, targeting Muslims in particular, using outrageous slogans such as “Muslim bombers off our streets.” These provoca-

tions must be met with massive protest centred on the trade unions mobilised for defence of Muslims, immigrants and all the intended victims of the EDL scum.

All evidence points to the fact that the EDL is a fascist organisation. The EDL was set up by BNP members (or recent ex-members) and organised through networks of football “casuals” who have long been linked with the fascists. In Luton, the EDL targeted Muslim organisations who protested against a parade in March 2009 by the Royal Anglian Regiment on their return from Iraq. The EDL were particularly incensed at placards describing British soldiers as “butchers of Basra.” This is a rather benign description of British Army brutality in a city where in 2003 Baha Mousa was horrifically put to death in the custody of the Queens Lancashire Regiment, having suffered 93 separate injuries.

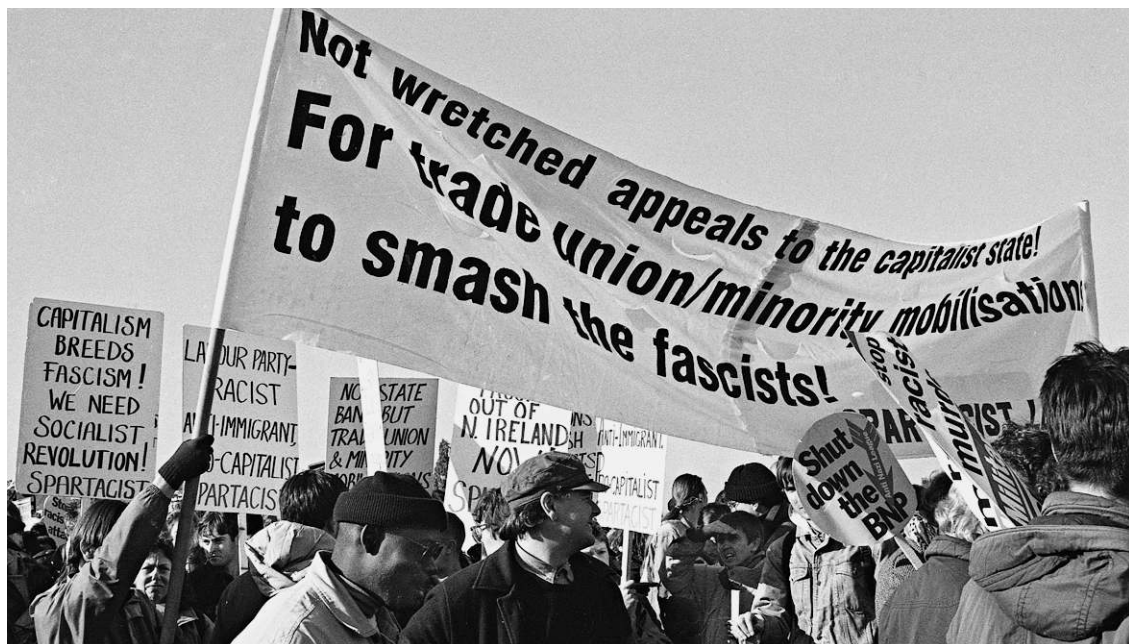
The EDL is linked to a number of fascist organisations such as “Stop the Islamisation of Europe” and its mobilisations have targeted mosques, such as in Harrow, London. Britain’s fascists have historically had links to the anti-Catholic Ulster Loyalist paramilitaries. At a November 2009 demonstration in Glasgow by the Scottish Defence League the Loyalist slogan “No surrender to the IRA!” was chanted. Today, according to the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*, the BNP has its call centre in Northern Ireland. The EDL makes a point of thrusting a couple of mixed-race faces to the fore when facing the press but its claim that it is not racist is hogwash.

It is in the interests of the multiethnic working class as a whole to combat these racist terrorists. We call for trade union/minority mobilisations to stop fascist provocations. At the same time, as Marxists we make clear that the decaying capitalist system breeds the social conditions in which the fascists thrive and therefore the struggle against fascism is inseparable from the fight for socialist revolution.

The BNP führer used the BBC debate to engage in open gay-bashing, declaring that he finds the idea of two men kissing “creepy.” Recent months have seen a dramatic rise in murderous homophobic attacks. On 13 October 2009 Ian Baynham died of severe injuries received in a homophobic attack in London’s Trafalgar Square; on 25 October James Parkes, a 22-year-old gay man (who is a trainee cop) suffered multiple skull fractures when he was attacked by up to 20 people as he left a gay night club in Liverpool, while two transsexual women were also murdered—Andrea Waddell in Brighton in October and Destiny Lauren in London in November. In response to the rise in homophobic attacks and in memory of the victims of the fascist firebombing of a gay bar in London’s Soho ten years ago, thousands held vigils in London, Liverpool and other cities at the end of October.

Our call for trade union/minority mobilisations is counterposed to wretched appeals to the capitalist state to halt fascist provocations. Mobilising the social power of the trade unions to defend immigrants and minorities requires a political struggle against the reformist trade-union bureaucracy and is counterposed to the “anti-fascist” strategy of Unite Against Fascism (UAF), built by the Socialist

*continued on page 11*



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Spartacist League/Britain contingent at 16 October 1993 anti-fascist demonstration in London.