

U.S. Imperialism Stokes Anti-Muslim Bigotry

Chauvinist Mania Over “Ground Zero Mosque”

NEW YORK CITY—American and immigrant Muslims are under siege as a rabid campaign mounts against plans to build an Islamic community center two blocks from the site of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. What is being pilloried as the “Ground Zero mosque” is, in reality, the proposed 13-story Cordoba House/Park51 community center, which includes a mosque along with a pool and many other facilities. Polls showed that Manhattan voters favored the city-approved plans for the Cordoba Initiative’s cultural center by a ten-percentage-point margin. But a Tea Party-style hate campaign got considerable traction in the outer boroughs of New York City and fueled a surge in anti-Muslim rallies nationally. New Islamic centers have been the targets of chauvinist protest in California, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Kentucky and Georgia, and on Staten Island and in Brooklyn in NYC.

In Manhattan, an “anti-mosque” rally mobilized several hundred near the proposed site on August 22, outnumbering counterprotesters. Far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders, who calls for deporting immigrants, banning the Koran and closing Islamic schools in the Netherlands, has announced he will attend a reactionary mobilization at the World Trade Center site on September 11, the same day that a Florida church plans to hold an “International Burn a Koran Day.” Wilders exemplifies the virulent anti-Islamic reaction sweeping Europe, where measures barring women from wearing the Islamic veil are being adopted in France, Spain and elsewhere, with Switzerland even banning the building of minarets on mosques following a hysterical fear-mongering campaign by ultra-right-wing politicians.

As proletarian fighters against racist capitalist rule, we staunchly oppose the persecution of any religious group and defend the right of the Cordoba Initiative to build its community center. We defend the separation of church and state and the First Amendment right of religious organizations to be free from government control, oversight and interference. At the same time, as atheist materialists we are firm opponents of religion itself—*all* religion—and the social and political reaction spawned by religious and national-chauvinist backwardness. Religious superstition and belief will fade away only as human want is conquered through socialist revolution and the creation of a communist society worldwide.

The outpouring of racist chauvinism in the U.S. underscores the urgency for trade unionists and all fighters for black and immigrant rights to forthrightly defend



Getty

Right: Victims of December 2009 NATO-led attack in Armul, Afghanistan. Obama voiced support for lower Manhattan Islamic center to promote aims of bloodsoaked U.S. imperialism in Muslim world.



Reuters



Getty

Anti-Muslim bigots rally near World Trade Center site in Manhattan, August 22, amid racist hysteria over proposed Islamic cultural center.

Muslim minorities, including against any fascist elements that emerge from the sewers of the “anti-mosque” campaign. The workers movement must oppose the whole construct of U.S. imperialism’s “war on terror,” which feeds the flames of bigotry by labeling people of Muslim faith or origin as “terrorists.” What is needed is a fight against the policies of the misleaders of the labor movement, who from the onset of the “war on terror” signed on as lieutenants for the capitalist rulers in the name of “national unity.”

This concocted “war,” fought with very real weapons, is being continued into its tenth year with fervor by Obama and his government. At home, the capitalist rulers waved the “bloody shirt” of the nearly 3,000 killed at the World

Trade Center on September 11 to implement repressive measures aimed first at immigrants from the Near East and South Asia. The government’s “anti-terror”

drive engendered an anti-Muslim lynch mob atmosphere that has returned with renewed fervor. As we warned from the outset, the USA Patriot Act, Maritime Transportation Security Act and other such measures threaten not only immigrants but black people and the entire labor movement. Abroad, Obama has made Afghanistan his preferred theater of imperialist carnage. Currently there are some 120,000 NATO forces, 65 percent of them American, wreaking havoc in Afghanistan. The troop “pullout” from Iraq leaves 56,000 U.S. “non-combat” personnel on the ground there along with thousands of mercenaries in Washington’s pay.

These brutal military occupations are far from the end of the story. As part of its series titled “The Shadow War,” the *New York Times* (14 August) reported: “In roughly a dozen countries—from the deserts of North Africa, to the mountains of Pakistan, to former Soviet republics crippled by ethnic and religious strife—the United States has significantly increased military and intelligence operations, pursuing the enemy using robotic drones and commando teams, paying contractors to spy and training local operatives to chase terrorists.” The article documents secret airstrikes in Yemen (where the “collateral damage” included numerous civilians and the Marib Province deputy governor) as well as operations in Somalia waged from Kenya.

U.S. imperialism’s occupation of Afghanistan, as well as all its depredations in Iraq and repeated drone attacks in Pakistan, serve not simply the quest to control oil supplies, as liberal-reformist opinion would have it, but to promote U.S. strategic interests worldwide against its imperialist rivals. These interests include not least the military encirclement of the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state, currently the imperialists’ key target for capitalist counterrevolution. *All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now! U.S. imperialists, hands off the world! For class struggle at home against the U.S. capitalist rulers!*

Washington’s “Good” Muslim

With the witches’ brew of midterm electioneering on the boil, Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich & Co. figure that it will

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Tea Party: Spearhead of Racist Reaction



PDC Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

Free Walter and Gwendolyn Myers! Free the Cuban Five!

We print below a statement issued on August 3 by the Partisan Defense Committee.

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the prosecution and imprisonment of Walter Kendall Myers and his wife Gwendolyn Myers. A retired State Department analyst, Mr. Myers pleaded guilty last November to charges of conspiracy to commit espionage. Gwendolyn Myers pleaded guilty to conspiring to gather and transmit defense information to Cuba, which has been under the gun sights of U.S. imperialism since capitalist class rule was overthrown some 50 years ago. At their sentencing on July 16, Walter Myers forthrightly announced, “We did not intend to hurt any individual American. Our only objective was to help the Cuban people defend their revolution.” United States District Judge Reggie Walton vindictively sentenced 73-year-old Walter Myers to life without parole, and the 72-year-old

Gwendolyn Myers to 81 months. This could well be a death sentence for Gwendolyn Myers, who has already suffered a heart attack since her June 2009 arrest.

From the interests of the working class and oppressed in the U.S. and around the world, what the Myers are accused of is not a crime. We defend them as part of our defense of Cuba, a bureaucratically deformed workers state. We demand their immediate freedom.

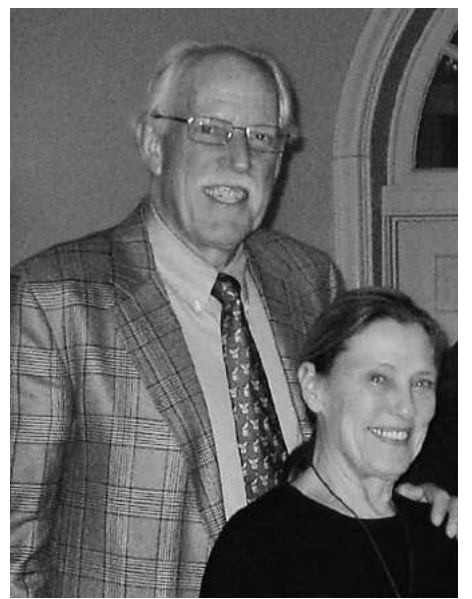
The federal prosecutors claimed that in the years leading up to his retirement in 2007, Walter Myers examined hundreds of intelligence reports dealing with Cuba, many classified or top-secret, and that information from these were passed on to Cuban authorities. According to the federal criminal complaint, Mr. Myers, a great-grandson of Alexander Graham Bell, was recruited to Cuban intelligence along with his wife after they made a trip to Cuba in 1978. Myers’ diary of that trip

recorded his growing bitterness over lack of decent medical care, oil company greed and indifference to poverty in the U.S. as contrasted with Cuba where efforts were underway to eradicate these evils.

The elimination of capitalist rule in Cuba in 1960-61 led to enormous gains for working people despite the rule of a bureaucratic nationalist caste led by Fidel Castro. The centralized planned economy guarantees everyone a job, housing, food and education. Cubans now enjoy one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Despite the crippling effects of the U.S. blockade, the free health care system is still far and away the best in economically underdeveloped countries. The revolution especially has benefited women: domination of the Catholic Church was broken, and abortion is a free health service. Infant mortality is lower than in parts of the First World, and Cuba has more doctors and teachers per capita than just about anywhere else in the world.

The U.S. ruling class has worked relentlessly to overthrow the Cuban Revolution and re-establish the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—from the 1961 Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) invasion to repeated attempts to assassinate Castro; from funding counterrevolutionary terrorists in Miami to the ongoing economic embargo. The U.S. rulers continue to harbor their trained terrorists, like Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, who engineered the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people. We say: Send Posada and Bosch back to Cuba to be tried by their victims!

We also defend and call for the release of the Cuban Five, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González—



A. Rea

Walter and Gwendolyn Myers

courageous men who warned Cuba of the plots by such U.S.-supported *gusano* counterrevolutionary terrorists—as well as Ana Belen Montes, a Defense Intelligence Agency officer sentenced to 25 years for passing military information to the Cuban government. Their actions that assisted the defense of the Cuban deformed workers state from the most dangerous imperialist power in the world are not only defensible but laudable.

The Partisan Defense Committee calls on the international workers movement to take up the defense of these prisoners: Freedom for Walter Kendall Myers and Gwendolyn Myers! Free the Cuban 5! Free Ana Belen Montes! Defend Cuba! Down with the embargo! U.S. out of Guantánamo Bay now! ■

“Anti-Terror” Entrapment Drop the Charges Against the Newburgh Four!

On August 22, the Partisan Defense Committee sent the following letter of protest to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the “anti-terrorism” prosecution of the “Newburgh Four.” James Cromitie, David Williams, Laguerre Payen and Onta Williams, black residents of Newburgh, New York, are the victims of a classic entrapment scam—a hallmark of the FBI’s post-September 11 “war on terrorism.” These prosecutions set up individuals, predominantly Muslim and often black, who are overheard voicing grievances with the rampant and official racism and xenophobia that pervades this society.

The bogus charges against the Newburgh Four include “conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction in the United States” and “conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles.” Even the federal prosecutor in the case has said, “These guys would never in a million years have gotten Stinger missiles or bombs” and has admitted these men have no ties to any

purported terrorist organization.

As has been the case with many of the “anti-terrorist” prosecutions carried out by the government, such as the frame-up arrests of seven black men in Liberty City, Florida in 2006, the “conspiracy” in question was the brainchild of an FBI informant, who lured the four men with promises of up to a quarter million dollars and a BMW car. A recent government memo, improperly withheld from the defense for months, reveals that security at Stewart Air National Guard Base were advised not to worry about a defendant seen surveying the area because he probably would try nothing without an FBI informant at his side!

The clear object of these prosecutions is to engender an atmosphere of paranoia and hysteria, especially targeting Muslims, blacks and immigrants, to better regiment the population. The Newburgh Four never should have been charged or spent a day in jail. We demand: Free the Newburgh Four: Drop the charges! ■



TROTSKY

Honor the Memory of Leon Trotsky!

This August 20 marks the 70th anniversary of the assassination of Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the October 1917 proletarian Russian Revolution. We reprint below excerpts from a speech by James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism, at a memorial meeting held in New York City eight days after Trotsky was murdered by a Stalinist agent in Mexico.



LENIN

Comrade Trotsky’s entire conscious life, from the time he entered the workers’ move-

ment in the provincial Russian town of Nikolayev at the age of eighteen up till the moment of his death in Mexico City forty-two years later, was completely dedicated to work and struggle for one central idea. He stood for the emancipation of the workers and all the oppressed people of the world, and the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism by means of a social revolution. In his conception, this liberating social revolution requires for success the leadership of a revolutionary political party of the workers’ vanguard....

Trotsky himself believed that ideas are the greatest power in the world. Their authors may be killed, but ideas, once promulgated, live their own life. If they are correct ideas, they make their way through all obstacles. This was the central, dominating concept of Comrade Trotsky’s philosophy. He explained it to us many, many times. He once wrote: “It is not the party that makes the program [the idea]; it is the program that makes the party.” In a personal letter to me, he once wrote: “We work with the most correct and powerful ideas in the world, with inadequate numerical forces and material means. But correct ideas, in the long run, always conquer and make available for themselves the necessary material means and forces.”

Trotsky, a disciple of Marx, believed with Marx that “an idea, when it permeates the mass, becomes a material force.” Believing that, Comrade Trotsky never doubted that his work would live after him. Believing that, he could proclaim on his deathbed his confidence in the future victory of the Fourth International which embodies his ideas. Those who doubt it do not know Trotsky.

Trotsky himself believed that his greatest significance, his greatest value, consisted not in his physical life, not in his epic deeds, which overshadow those of all heroic figures in history in their sweep and their grandeur—but in what he would leave behind him after the assassins had done their work. He knew that his doom was sealed, and he worked against time in order to leave everything possible to us, and through us to mankind. Throughout the eleven years of his last exile he chained himself to his desk like a galley slave and labored, as none of us knows how to labor, with such energy, such persistence and self-discipline, as only men of genius can labor. He worked against time to pour out through his pen the whole rich content of his mighty brain and preserve it in permanent written form for us, and for those who will come after us....

He was also a great man of action, to be sure. His deeds are incorporated in the greatest revolution in the history of mankind. But, unlike the opportunists and leaders of a day, his deeds were inspired by great ideas, and these ideas still live. He not only made a revolution; he wrote its history and explained the basic laws which govern all revolutions. In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, which he considered his masterpiece, he gave us a guide for the making of new revolutions, or rather, for extending throughout the world the revolution that began in October 1917.

—“To the Memory of the Old Man,” *Socialist Appeal*, 7 September 1940

WORKERS VANGUARD



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Keith Anwar

Keith Anwar, an ardent socialist and longtime supporter of the Spartacist League, died in Oak Park, Illinois, on July 5 of an especially aggressive liver cancer that had been diagnosed barely five weeks earlier. He was 58 years old. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Keith's wife, Connie; his two children, Brian and Tessa; his brother Bruce and sister-in-law Blandine; and to his many friends, co-workers and extended family. The speed with which this disease took Keith's life has left us all stunned and deeply saddened.

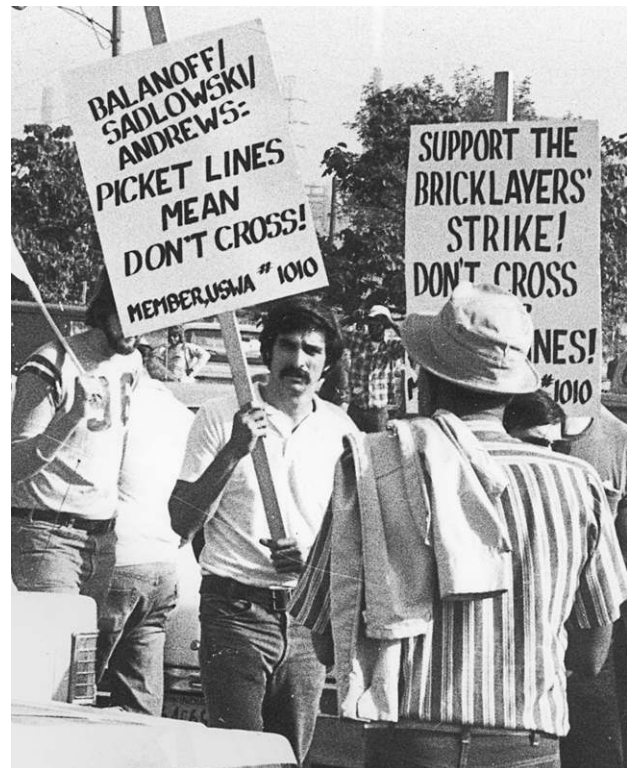
A memorial service held shortly after Keith's death drew close to 200 people, including family, Spartacist League members and supporters, former co-workers at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and local writers. Those who knew him well have recalled his uncompromising honesty, compassion and strength of character. As his son, Brian, poignantly pointed out at the gathering, "There are few men, few people that give more than they take. And that was Dad. He was more focused and hard-working than any person I've ever met."

Keith was a multifaceted, talented individual who dedicated his adult life to fighting against oppression and bigotry in its many manifestations. A trade-union militant and talented writer, he was a materialist, an atheist who believed that mankind made its own history. Keith understood the importance of building a revolutionary workers party, representing the interests of workers, black people and other minorities, as the necessary instrument to bring about a society where those who labor rule. Those who worked with Keith were aware of his fierce opposition to both capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

Keith came of age at a time of great radicalization and outpouring of opposition to U.S. imperialism's dirty war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. And like many young activists at that time, he joined Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Being the kind of guy who looked for answers and required some serious convincing, Keith took notice of *Workers Vanguard* while attending Brandeis University in the early 1970s and was won to the views of the Spartacist League. Keith moved to Chicago in the late '70s and landed a job at U.S. Steel's South Works, later becoming an apprentice millwright at Inland Steel, where he quickly became known as a fighter for labor by honoring a bricklayers strike.

In 1979, while employed at Inland and a member of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 1010, Keith refused to cross a picket of striking workers from sister Local 8180. The company reacted swiftly by firing him. A campaign to get Keith reinstated in his job, which was heavily featured in *WV* at the time, generated enormous support among steel workers in the Chicago-Gary district who understood that Keith had acted in defense of a tradition that helped build the industrial unions in this country: Picket lines mean don't cross!

The union took his case to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and won in 1982, when Inland was ordered to reinstate Keith with full back pay and seniority. Though this ruling was later overturned and Keith never got his job back, his refusal to cross picket lines



WV Photo
Keith honoring Bricklayers strike picket at East Chicago Inland Steel plant, June 1978.



Anwar Family

1952–2010

earned him a great deal of authority that lasted throughout his life. Keith's ties to USWA Local 1010 were instrumental in gaining the endorsement of a number of union officials for a labor-centered, united-front demonstration initiated by the SL that mobilized 3,000 people and prevented the Nazis from attacking Chicago's Gay Pride March in June 1982. The union's vice president, Cliff "Cowboy" Mezo, joined the mobilization and spoke at the rally. In 2001, Keith got a warm welcome from his former local as he was helping organize an anti-Klan mobilization in Gary, Indiana.

In 1986, Keith became a mechanic for the CTA and a member of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 308, where he again came to be known as a union militant and outspoken opponent of racism and bigotry in all forms. In 1987, bus driver Cassandra Seay and her mother were brutally beaten by the Chicago cops in their own home and slapped with trumped-up charges, including assaulting a police officer. Keith was in the forefront of rallying support in Local 308 for the defense of Seay, a member of ATU Local 241. It was through this successful campaign that the Chicago Labor Black Struggle League was formed, and Keith was one of its founding members. In the late 1980s, Keith helped organize an integrated team of transit workers to help a black co-worker move into a neighborhood that was just becoming integrated and where, the previous year, the home of a black couple who had moved in had been fire-bombed. The team of transit workers moved the family in and made a point to ostentatiously hang out on the front porch before leaving.

Upon hearing of Keith's death, ATU Local 308 passed a motion offering condolences and solidarity to his family, noting "his high integrity and the faithful service he rendered to humanity." Keith was instrumental in getting his union local to sign on in defense of class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal and to donate repeatedly to his legal funds in the fight for freedom. Keith also helped build the Partisan Defense Committee's annual Holiday Appeal benefits, successfully soliciting contributions from his union.

Keith was politically active for over 40 years. Swimming against the stream and fighting for what you know to be right and just can be a tough job, especially in this extended period of union defeats, lack of class struggle, and political and social reaction. In the last few years of his life, he stepped back from political work and focused on his writing, approaching it with the same professionalism and seriousness that he showed in other areas. In 2004, Keith edited a second edition of *Memories of Afghanistan*, the memoirs of his father, Mohammad H. Anwar, a modernizing Afghan intellectual of the last century. Keith wrote an afterword discussing the role of the U.S. government in fostering Islamic fundamentalism and tribal backwardness in Afghanistan. He focused on Washington's support to Osama bin Laden and other

reactionary *mujahedin* (holy warriors) following the 1979 entry of the Soviet Army into Afghanistan, where it fought on the side of social progress, particularly for horribly oppressed Afghan women.

Keith went on to become an active member of the Oak Park Writers Group, a network playwright at Chicago Dramatists and a member of the Dramatists' Guild. He authored several short plays, primarily political-social satires, which were given public readings by established actors. This past June, Keith won the 2010 Dionysos Cup at the Polarity Ensemble Theatre's Festival of New Plays for his script *Kabulitis*, which weaves together a story about a woman's decline into dementia and the brutal treatment of women in Afghanistan.

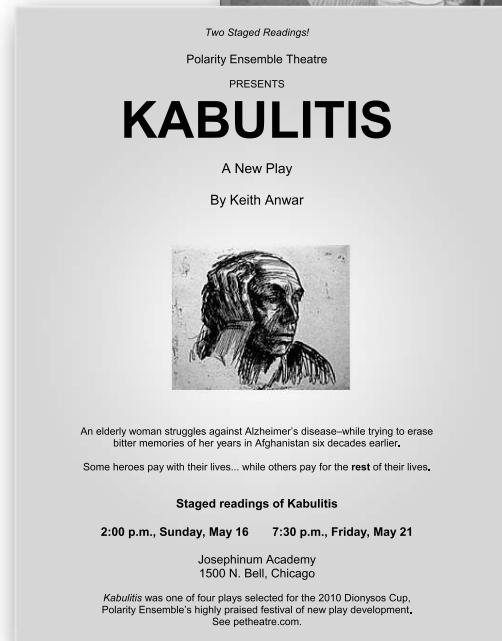
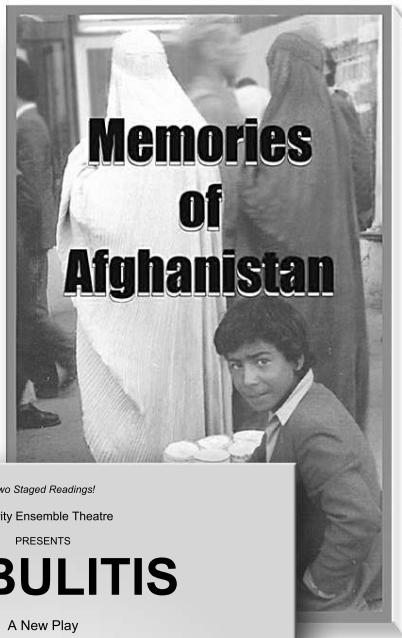
This touching drama of an elderly American woman in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease who is haunted by memories of Afghanistan was based on the experience of Keith's mother, Phyllis, who had joined her Afghan husband, Mohammed, in an ill-fated attempt to foster secularism and modernity in mid 20th-century Afghanistan. Phyllis was a longtime friend of the Spartacist League and a member from 1979 to 1982. As part of a 1980 national speaking tour titled "Women of the East—Proletarian Revolution or Slavery: Down With Islamic Reaction! Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" she vividly retold her experience as the first woman of her time to refuse to wear the tent-like veil on the streets of Kabul. At the risk of her life, she secretly taught girls at a school which was disguised as a hospital to fool the mullahs.

Keith never sought the spotlight, so it was easy to miss the depth of his work on so many fronts. He was comfortable in his own skin, confident in his worldview and his approach to life. An obituary for Keith in the *Chicago Tribune* (13 July) quoted a member of the Oak Park Writers

Group who remarked, "Keith was a lovely writer, but was just as proud of his work repairing trains." As his son, Brian, put it at the memorial meeting, "Dad had those kind of hands. Hands that could fix a motor, or write an award-winning play."

We will never forget that within Keith's stoic sensibility and sometimes brooding style, there was an inner core of tremendous passion, will and creative ability that brought joy and sustenance to his family and friends, creative and intellectual contributions to the world and an unyielding fight on behalf of the working class. These qualities made up a man whose life made a difference in this world. He will be sorely missed. ■

Keith Anwar edited the second edition of his late father's book, *Memories of Afghanistan*, and wrote the award-winning play *Kabulitis*, which weaves together a woman's decline into dementia and the treatment of women in Afghanistan, drawing on the experiences of his mother.



Young Spartacus

For the Right of Independence!

On June 21 students at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), one of the largest universities in the Caribbean with eleven campuses and an enrollment of 65,000, concluded their two-month-long strike against budget cuts, tuition hikes and plans to privatize university services. The strike electrified the island and was actively supported by key sectors of the Puerto Rican working class. It intersected seething anger over Puerto Rican governor Luis Fortuño's austerity campaign, including the firing of more than 28,000 public employees since 2009, union-busting attacks on collective bargaining rights and a drive to privatize public services. Comrades from the Spartacist League/U.S. traveled to San Juan during the strike to express our support for the students' struggle in this oppressed colony of U.S. imperialism and to introduce them to our revolutionary Marxist newspaper.

The student strike successfully beat back the Puerto Rican government's and UPR administration's worst attacks: the attempts to privatize sectors of the university and eliminate tuition exemptions for students receiving Pell Grants from the U.S. government and other financial aid. While agreeing not to summarily punish strikers, the Board of Trustees left open the threat of disciplinary action against strike leaders and announced plans to implement a new special fee of at least \$800 a year in January, which would increase the cost of tuition by about 50 percent. During the student assembly that ratified the settlement, students voted to strike again if the administration goes through with its plan to implement the new fee.

The Puerto Rican government was furious about the strike and viewed the outcome as a defeat. Shortly after the settlement was signed, Governor Fortuño's chief of staff dismissed the strike settlement, approved by the university administration and the students, as just "a piece of paper," in part because the students are reserving their right to strike again. In retaliation for the strike, the U.S. imperialist government—which has the whip hand over this island colony—briefly threatened to cut off some \$200 million in federal student aid, most of which goes directly to students to cover their expenses.

The right-wing Fortuño government is working in tandem with the Democratic Party administration of U.S. president Barack Obama. As the chief executive officer of the capitalist class in the U.S., Obama



University of Puerto Rico students block main entrance of Río Piedras campus in San Juan on first day of nationwide strike, April 21.

Student Strike Shakes Puerto Rico

No Reprisals!

is the overseer of the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico and the class enemy of workers around the world. Since he took office in 2009, Obama has been waging one savage attack after another against the U.S. working class, including the United Auto Workers and the teachers unions.

For its part, the UPR administration is pressing ahead on the lawsuit it filed during the strike against the student leaders. It has also initiated disciplinary actions against five strike leaders, including three members of the reformist socialist organization Unión de Juventudes Socialistas—Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores (UJS-MST). Moreover, the administration retaliated against the campus workers who supported the strike, announcing it would charge those who honored the picket line up to \$2,000 each for "days not worked." All these attacks are calculated attempts to discourage students from striking again and head off any acts of working-class solidarity. **Drop all charges! No reprisals against the strike leaders and the campus workers and**

professors who honored the picket lines!

The police brutality, notorious during the strike, has continued since the strike ended. On June 30, Puerto Rican police savagely beat students and their supporters who were protesting at the Capitol in San Juan. The gruesome images of students, particularly young women, with black eyes, cuts on their faces and bruises all over their bodies provoked a massive outcry across the island. Police superintendent José Figueroa Sancha grotesquely defended the violence meted out against the women, saying in a July 1 interview, "the women are the most aggressive ones in the group. This is an old strategy, a strategy of the guerrilla."

During our trip, one student striker told us that, on May 19, some students occupying the Río Piedras campus were debating whether to demand better wages and working conditions for cops in order to try to win their sympathy. He said this discussion came to an abrupt halt on May 20, when the police viciously attacked students, trade unionists and independen-

tistas at a strike support rally at the Sheraton Hotel (see "Puerto Rico: Hands Off Campus Strikers!" WV No. 960, 4 June).

The police are the armed fist of the capitalist state. Their reason for existence is to defend private property, smash strikes and terrorize and repress workers, immigrants, leftists and all the oppressed, all for the purpose of maintaining the capitalist system of exploitation. They are enemies of the working class. No amount of reforms, appeals to the conscience of the police or reshuffling top-ranking police personnel will ever change that. The nationalist delusion that striking students and the cops have a common interest because "we are all Puerto Ricans" serves only to obscure these divisions and undermine the painful lessons students got during the strike on the nature of the police.

For the Unity of the Working Class!

As the principal remaining colony of U.S. imperialism, Puerto Rico suffers under the weight of national oppression and crushing poverty. The unemployment rate is 17 percent and a staggering 67 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The working people on the island are exploited as a low-wage labor pool by U.S. capitalists seeking to maximize their profit margins. "Citizens" of the U.S. with no right to vote in federal elections and no representation in Congress, Puerto Ricans are politically dispossessed and discriminated against economically, racially and culturally.

As revolutionary internationalists, we oppose all the colonialist machinations of our "own" capitalist rulers, the common enemy of working people in the U.S. and the oppressed Puerto Rican masses. Our aim is to advance the revolutionary unity of the working class across international lines and open the way for socialist revolution throughout the Americas. We would favor independence for Puerto Rico as part of our fight against chauvinism in the United States and to undercut the bourgeois-nationalist leadership of the working class on the island. However, this is a democratic question. The sympathies of the population weigh heavily in determining how best to get the national question off the agenda and clear the road for revolutionary internationalist class struggle.

As Marxist revolutionaries we approach the question of national oppression as laid

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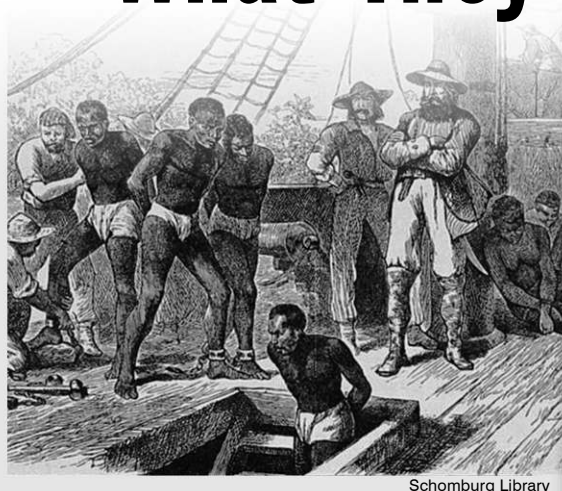
Andie Kang/Primera Hora

San Juan: June 30 police attack against student protest at Capitol (left) was protested by UTIER electrical workers union on July 18 (right).

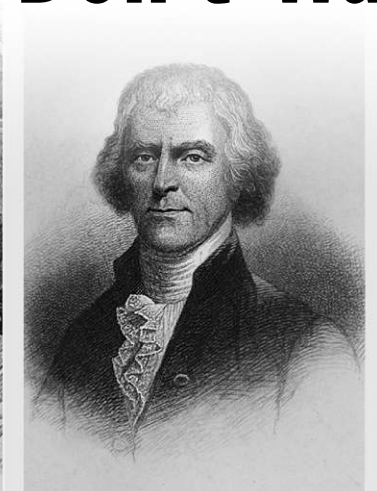


Indymedia

What They Don't Want You to Learn...



Schomburg Library



University of Chicago



Christian Schussele

Arizona Axes Ethnic Studies, Texas Whitewashes History

In May, Republican Arizona governor Jan Brewer signed a law that bans ethnic studies in public and charter schools, specifically targeting the Tucson school district's Mexican American studies program. This was the culmination of a years-long campaign by state school superintendent Tom Horne. The bill bans courses that "promote the overthrow of the United States government" or "promote resentment toward a race or class of people" and further strikes down any program that is "designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group" or advocates "ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals." Cynically couched in terms of prohibiting discrimination, the law explicitly allows for the ethnic and racial segregation of schools under the pretext of "academic performance, including capability in the English language, that may result in a disparate impact by ethnicity."

Tucson's ethnic studies program was a result of a 1974 court suit by black and Mexican American parents to desegregate the schools. To appease parents, the school district started black studies and Mexican American studies programs. The recent ban comes on the heels of Arizona's apartheid-style SB1070 law, the anti-immigrant pass law that mandates the cops to stop and question anyone they think might be an "illegal" immigrant. Further targeting the rights of both immigrants and black people, elements of the Republican right are calling to repeal the 14th Amendment, which grants citizenship to children born on American soil and was enacted in 1868 on behalf of freed slaves and their children.

On March 12, just a few months before Brewer signed the Arizona ethnic studies law, the Texas board of education issued new guidelines for its social studies curriculum that rewrite history from the most reactionary perspective, dismissing the separation of church and state and enshrining the greatness of the "free-enterprise system." In fact, throughout the guidelines, the term "capitalism" was replaced with "free enterprise" because of what one school board member said was its "negative connotation." Most grotesquely, the guidelines promote the Confederacy's blood-soaked defense of black chattel slavery in the Civil War, including heralding Stonewall Jackson as a role model for leadership and equating Jefferson Davis with Abraham Lincoln. All *mention* of the slave trade is removed, replaced with "Atlantic triangular trade"—sounding just like the slave traders for whom millions of slaves were

What Arizona, Texas schools want to hide: the horrors of the slave trade; that "founding father" (and slaveowner) Thomas Jefferson supported separation of church and state; that U.S. invaded Mexico in 1846 and stole half of country through the Mexican-American War.

just commodities. Texas is one of the largest buyers of textbooks in the country, and these guidelines will likely affect publications sold throughout the U.S.

The attacks on ethnic studies in Arizona and the falsification of historical reality in Texas show how education under capitalism acts as a pillar of the bourgeois system, reinforcing the ideology and serving the interests of the racist ruling class. We defend ethnic studies courses as part of our defense of all oppressed peoples and our fight for free, quality, integrated education for all, from preschool to postgraduate. Programs like ethnic studies are the result of social struggle—especially the civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements and other movements of the '60s and '70s—and not the largesse of the ruling class. Often designed to demobilize protest and to provide a sop to a layer of the black and Latino petty bourgeoisie, ethnic studies programs cannot end oppression. Racial and ethnic oppression are rooted in the structure and development of capitalism. It will ultimately require the overthrow of the capitalist system to end oppression—and for the real history of the struggles against oppression and exploitation to be taught.

It is particularly rich that it is Texas and Arizona—both stolen from Mexico in order to expand slavery—that are pushing these anti-Latino and anti-black "revisions." Horne specifically singled out one of the books used in Tucson schools, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, by renowned scholar Rodolfo Acuña. "The title of the book implies to the kids that they live in occupied America, or occupied Mexico," Horne complained to the *Los Angeles Times* (12 May). The history of the state of Texas goes back to the attempt of white Southerners to extend slavery into Mexican territory. In 1845 the U.S. annexed Texas, then invaded Mexico the next year. By the time U.S. troops left Mexico in 1848, half of Mexico's national territory—including most of Arizona—was in the hands of the U.S.

The South's desire to expand slavery was a key factor that led to the Civil War (see "Mexican-American War: Prelude to American Civil War," WV Nos. 933 and 934, 27 March and 10 April 2009). It took the Civil War to emancipate black people from chattel slavery. But the Civil War was not carried to its completion. While

black people were freed from slavery, after the defeat of Reconstruction they were stripped of political rights and economically subjugated. Black oppression remains the cornerstone of American capitalism. The Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Clubs fight for **black liberation through socialist revolution! Finish the Civil War!**

As anti-immigrant hysteria and blatant anti-black racism become even more common, it is clear why much of the bourgeoisie doesn't want this history taught—and is attacking even what minimal gains have been made. Still, much of the left appeals to the capitalists to serve the interests of the oppressed. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) complains that the same Arizona state government that created SB1070 is focusing on increasing anti-immigrant repression "instead of working on legislation to address the racism and inequity in the education system" (*Socialist Worker* online, 26 May). For the ISO, the problem is that the right-wing crazies in Arizona and Texas have wreaked havoc on education. *Socialist Worker* laments that "America's pupils are in desperate need of courses that have not been whitewashed by conservative ideologues."

It is not just "conservative ideologues" that whitewash the bloody past of U.S. imperialism. While the Republicans in Arizona and Texas are certainly on the warpath, they are not alone in touting lies about history. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama argued that "the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution." The Constitution *protected* slavery, subjugating the free-labor North to the Southern slavocracy until the Civil War smashed slavery once and for all (see "Slavery and the Origins of American Capitalism," WV Nos. 942, 943 and 944, 11 and 25 September and 9 October 2009). Now, Obama, the chief overseer of the entire racist plantation of U.S. imperialism, boasts that his administration deported a record number of "illegal" immigrants in its first year. The Democrats, like the Republicans, are a capitalist party, dedicated to maintaining the system of racist American capitalism.

The ideological onslaught, which aims to mandate the teaching of absurd lies about the blood-drenched history of American capitalism and to cover up op-

pressed peoples' struggles, accompanies the growing segregation of American schools. More than five decades after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling that formally ended Jim Crow segregation in public schools, Northern schools are more segregated than schools in the Deep South, with blacks and Latinos attending inner-city schools that are more and more like holding pens. Court-ordered schemes to desegregate the public schools, like the one in Tucson, that at least paid lip service to integration, are now being abandoned.

While increasingly concentrated in segregated schools and barred from access to a decent education, large numbers of black and Latino youth are condemned by the racist capitalist state to rising rates of incarceration and murderous police repression. Of the 2.3 million men, women and children behind bars, 70 percent are black or Latino. According to *Colorlines* (4 November 2007), Phoenix, Arizona, is one of the worst cities for police violence, with an average of more than one person killed per month by cops from 2000 to 2007. As we wrote in "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration" (WV No. 955, 26 March):

"Right now putrescent American capitalism has no need to educate working-class or poor youth; it has no room for those skilled black apprentices that filled the shipyards during World War II. Many of the black and Latino youth for whom the bourgeoisie cannot provide a future end up in prison."

This situation cries out for a class-struggle fight against racist oppression and in defense of all the oppressed. The power of the multiracial working class is one thing the bourgeoisie definitely doesn't want taught. As Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, all history is the history of class struggle. Because of its relationship to the means of production, the working class has tremendous social power. This power has been repeatedly demonstrated in Arizona, for example. From 1983 to 1986, thousands of predominantly Chicano and Native American miners battled the Phelps Dodge Corporation in southern Arizona. Phelps Dodge—which amassed its initial capital from the 19th-century slave trade—only defeated the workers with the help of massive state repression, overseen by Democratic governor Bruce Babbitt (see "Class War in Arizona Copper Mines," WV No. 357, 22 June 1984). Students and racial and ethnic minorities must unite with the working class in order to **make history**, overthrowing this racist, oppressive system once and for all. ■

Puerto Rico...

(continued from page 4)

out by V.I. Lenin, whose Bolsheviks led the revolutionary Russian proletariat to the conquest of power in 1917:

“The proletariat of the oppressor nations... must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right to self-determination. The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by ‘their own’ nation. Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words....

“On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity.... The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations persistently utilise the slogans of national liberation to deceive the workers.”

—“The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,”
January-February 1916

Standing in active solidarity with the oppressed colonial masses of Puerto Rico, we give no political support to nationalist bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces.

For Free, Quality Education for All!

In discussions with the students occupying the campus, our comrades emphasized the necessity of linking their struggle in defense of public education to the power of the working class, in Puerto Rico and in the United States. We pointed out that free, quality public education for all cannot be fully achieved under capitalism. By its very nature, capitalism is based on maximizing the profits for the capitalists at the expense of the interests of the workers and all the oppressed. The capitalists’ only interest in providing education and other social services to the working people is to secure their own profits. The only way to create a free, egalitarian society based on material abundance, where education is truly the right of all, is through socialist revolution to sweep away the decaying capitalist system in the belly of the U.S. imperialist beast as well as in the oppressed colonies and neocolonies. Our aim is to win students to the side of the working class by building a vanguard workers party that can provide revolutionary, internationalist leadership for that struggle.

By themselves, students lack social power. Nothing stops moving when the students don’t go to class. In contrast, the proletariat—those who work in the factories, mines, transportation and other industries and produce the wealth in society—has the power to hit the capitalists in the wallet by withholding its labor. One student recognized this fact, noting that after 43 days on strike, the students had not yet won anything. However, he told us, the public buildings workers union threatened to strike when the government announced layoffs, and one day later the government backed down.

Although limited by the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracies’ efforts to main-

as the only class with the objective interest and potential social power to fight the austerity measures, the student leaders have sought allies in the capitalist Puerto Rican colonial government. The purpose of the June 30 demonstration at the Capitol, which the police savagely attacked, was to read a declaration to the legislators demanding “that they promise to watch over the interests of the People” (“‘Retomarán’ el Capitolio,” www.upresunpais.org). But the Puerto Rican capitalists and the imperialist masters they depend on, not the students, are the “people” whose interests Puerto Rico’s bourgeois politicians watch over. This is true not only of Fortuño’s widely despised pro-statehood

ernment on ways to curb tax evasion and urging it to institute sliding-scale tuition rates, as the UJS-MST proposes in the leaflet they distributed during the strike (see “La evasión contributiva y la matrícula ajustada a los ingresos,” *Al Medio*, 16 September 2005).

For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico!

Although the two largest U.S. military bases, Vieques and Roosevelt Roads, have closed, the Coast Guard, National Guard and other U.S. troops still remain on the island. In addition, 1,192 federal law enforcement agents (including the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency and Immigration and Customs Enforcement) rain terror on the population, especially Dominican and other immigrants and poor and working people, as part of the U.S. government’s racist “war on drugs.” Throughout the history of U.S. colonial occupation, federal agents have viciously targeted Puerto Rican *independentistas* for imprisonment and political assassination, most recently in the FBI’s 2005 assassination of Los Macheteros cofounder Filiberto Ojeda Ríos (see “Protest FBI Killing of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos!” WV No. 856, 14 October 2005). We demand freedom for Puerto Rican independence activists Oscar López Rivera and Avelino González Claudio who are imprisoned in the U.S. *All U.S. troops and federal agents out of Puerto Rico now!*

Puerto Ricans have deeply contradictory feelings about independence—at this time, a large majority of the population does not call for it—and we do not advocate that independence be forced on them. With colonial “commonwealth” status comes the right to live and work on the mainland. Today half of Puerto Ricans reside there, and the desire to freely travel and work in the U.S. is one factor behind their ambivalence. While the island’s residents are deeply impoverished in comparison with the U.S. mainland, their standard of living is higher than the norm for the Caribbean. So, for example, one striker we spoke to at Río Piedras said that she would like to see an independent Puerto Rico, but doesn’t favor independence at this time for economic reasons. She pointed out that one of the reasons UPR students went on strike was to defend the right of students receiving Pell Grant money to continue paying no tuition. The U.S. federal Pell Grant is a minuscule crumb, but it makes access to higher education possible for thousands of Puerto Ricans.



Bettmann

Puerto Rican National Guard arrested more than 3,000 in crackdown on independence fighters in 1950.

tain class peace, working-class support was instrumental in deterring the government and university administration from breaking the strike. A coalition of Puerto Rican public employees unions carried out a one-day strike on May 18 in support of the students’ demands. When police blockaded the Río Piedras campus to starve out the strikers, workers tossed bags of food and bottles of water over the cops’ heads to the students occupying the campus. Together with parents and other strike supporters, at key points in the strike union members kept watch at the front gates of the campus to deter police provocations. These workers had a direct interest in the success of the strike, which meant the defense of their kids’ chance to get an education and, in the case of the campus workers, defense of their jobs.

Instead of looking to the working class

New Progressive Party (PNP), but also the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) that favors maintaining the current colonial status of Puerto Rico. Although the PPD hypocritically denounced the violent repression of June 30 and claimed to support the students during the strike, the previous PPD government carried out its own attacks against social struggles, among other things decertifying the Puerto Rican Teachers Federation union after its nationwide strike in 2008.

We are for open admissions to the university, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all students, including the undocumented immigrants from other Caribbean nations who are largely frozen out of access to an education at UPR. Increased access to education and other social gains will be won only through struggle, not by advising the Puerto Rican capitalist gov-

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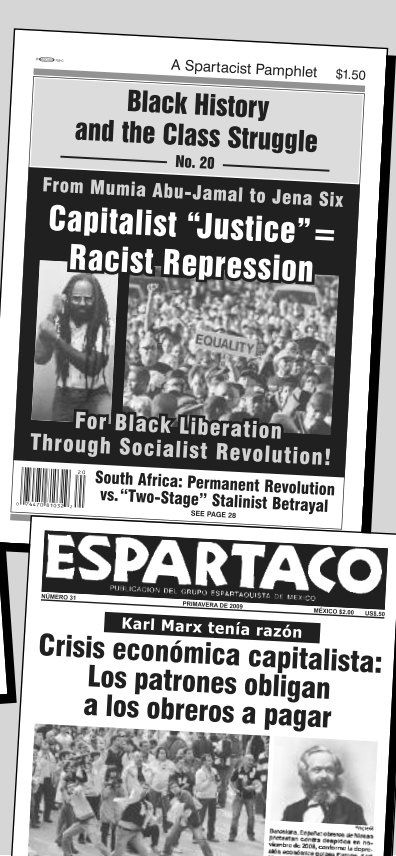
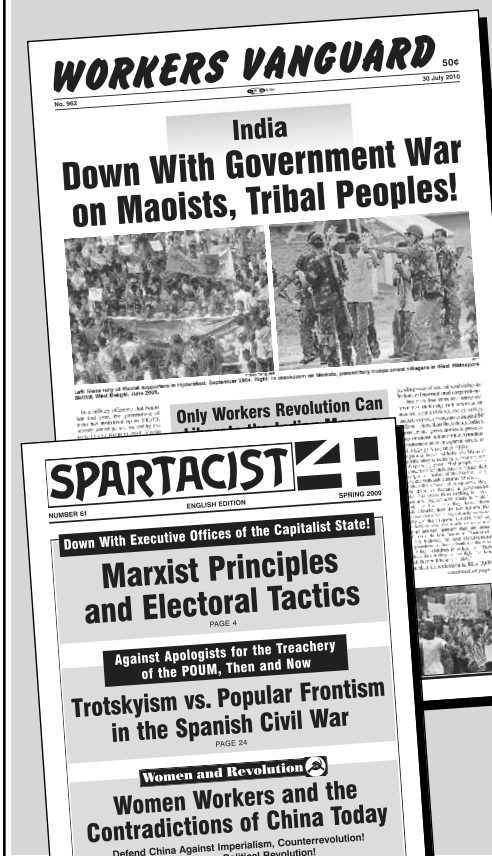
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The Puerto Rican population that lives in the U.S., much of it integrated into strategic sectors of the proletariat, provides a living link between the Puerto Rican masses and the proletariat in the United States. As we wrote in the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S., we do not know whether U.S. colonial oppression would be ended

“through a revolutionary socialist upheaval in the U.S. or through the militant proletariat in Puerto Rico inspiring struggle on the mainland. Our call for a socialist federation(s) of the Caribbean projects our general conception for workers rule in the area; however, we do not know at this point how this will transpire in the concrete. In any case, a victorious workers revolution in the U.S. would immediately free Puerto Rico and all other nations subjugated by U.S. imperialism and establish relations with them on the basis of their freedom to exercise their national self-determination.”

MAS, MST, OSI: Reformist Obstacles to Revolution

For Marxists, opposition to capitalist parties, including the bourgeois Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), is a matter of principle. While it has never controlled the government, the PIP bases its program on the maintenance of capitalism. The cutting edge of our program in Puerto Rico is against nationalist forces that seek to derail proletarian struggle through false “unity” between the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie and working class.

During our trip to Puerto Rico, one student aptly characterized the various ostensibly socialist groups at UPR as *independentistas* with a little socialism sprinkled in. One example is the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), a fake-socialist organization formed in 2008 by a fusion of members of Taller de Formación Política, a vaguely Trotskyoid academic collective, the nationalist Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT-Macheteros) and others. At its founding conference on 14 September 2008, MAS voted to support and actively campaign for the PIP in the elections.

A 2008 article by Alma Torres of the social-democratic Organización Socialista Internacional (OSI), which has ties to the International Socialist Organization in the U.S., explained the PIP’s plans to develop capitalism in Puerto Rico. Torres detailed how the PIP seeks to break the islands’s economic dependence on the U.S. by soliciting investments from the World Bank, the IMF and the Interamerican Development Bank—all of which are tools of the U.S. imperialists. The article called for no vote to any of the parties running in the elections; however, this same article gives the OSI’s game away. The OSI offers to support the PIP if only the PIP includes in its platform the demand to raise the minimum wage: “If the PIP would propose an increase to the minimum wage, that would be a powerful reason for rethinking the possibility of campaigning for the PIP” (“Entre votar y quedarse calla’o ¿qué decimos los socialistas?” www.socialismointernacional.org, 2 November 2008).

The students at the June 3 UJS-MST forum we attended debated the question of independence for Puerto Rico. UJS-

MST speakers advocated independence as a necessary prerequisite to socialist revolution. In response, one striker argued that independence under capitalism would just mean more of the same. Another striker asked how the UJS-MST is going to tell the nearly 50 percent of Puerto Ricans who desire statehood that they can’t fight for socialism unless they first support independence?

The UJS-MST subordinates the interests of the working class and the struggle for socialism to the goal of making the Puerto Rican capitalists the “independent” rulers of the island. During the 2008 elections, the UJS-MST ran an article calling for a vote to the PIP with a disclaimer that this was not the line of their organization. After the PIP lost the elections, they ran another article bemoaning the PIP’s loss of representation in the Puerto Rican House of Representatives and Senate! (See “El MINH ‘negociará’ su respaldo a los colonialistas,” www.bandera.org, 15 September 2008 and “Pierden fanquicia electoral y representantes,” www.bandera.org, 16 November 2008.)

Defend the Cuban Deformed Workers State!

In contrast to other Latin American countries where the left typically enthuses uncritically over Fidel Castro, at the University of Puerto Rico both the MST and the OSI oppose the Cuban government from the right—a position that sometimes leads them to support the counterrevolutionary efforts of U.S. imperialism. Though scandalous, this is not illogical. Reformist organizations orient to bourgeois forces, seeking to pressure them to behave better. An anti-Cuba line is, accordingly, convenient for reformist leftists to espouse, since the Puerto Rican capitalist parties—the PNP, PPD and PIP—and the American rulers are hostile to Cuba on a class basis.

The Cuban Revolution drove the U.S. and Cuban capitalists off the island and resulted in enormous social gains, including full literacy, free health care and free higher education. In January 1959, Fidel Castro’s petty-bourgeois guerrillas overthrew the brutal neocolonial dictatorship of the U.S. puppet Fulgencio Batista. Their purely bourgeois-democratic aims—purging the state apparatus of Batista supporters, agrarian reform, greater national independence—brought them into direct conflict with U.S. imperialism and its Cuban lackeys. The U.S. imperialists responded to Castro’s program of land redistribution and the measures taken against Batista’s police torturers with brute economic pressure to bring Castro’s regime to heel.

Facing unrelenting pressure from the U.S. imperialists only 90 miles away, the Castro government sought the military protection of the Soviet Union. The Cuban economy continued to function under the imperialists’ assault only because the USSR came to its aid, taking Cuban sugar in exchange for oil and essential military products. In 1960-61, in response to U.S. economic warfare, the Castro regime

expropriated the holdings of the U.S. imperialists—National City Bank, United Fruit, Standard Oil, the sugar barons and the Mafia—as well as the Cuban bourgeoisie. The Cuban capitalists either fled into exile or were imprisoned.

Cuba became a bureaucratically deformed workers state in which capitalism had been overthrown, but political power was held by a parasitic bureaucratic caste that fundamentally shares the nationalist political program of “socialism in one country” of the former Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. In Cuba, this anti-revolutionary dogma is expressed in the fantasy that socialism can be built on



Wide World
Cuban militiaman guards U.S. oil refinery expropriated in 1960.

one island. The Castro regime has always been hostile to the program and perspective of international proletarian revolution. Instead, it has promoted “progressive” bourgeois formations from the Allende popular-front government in Chile in the early 1970s, which paved the way to a reactionary coup and a bloodbath of the workers, to the national-populist regime of Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez today.

Because the working class lacked the leadership of a sizable revolutionary Marxist political party and did not act as a contender for political power, the creation of a healthy workers state in Cuba was not possible. Instead of a regime based on workers democracy, the Cuban workers state was deformed from its beginnings by the total lack of workers’ and peasants’ control over the apparatus that administers the state and the economy. As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against internal capitalist counterrevolution and U.S. imperialist attack. At the same time, we fight for workers political revolution to oust the corrupt, anti-Marxist and anti-working-class Castro bureaucracy in Cuba and to establish workers democracy under the Leninist-Trotskyist banner of international socialist revolution. We take the same approach toward the bureaucratically deformed workers states of China, North Korea and Vietnam.

For its part, the OSI states in its declaration “¿Por qué lucha la OSI?” (“What Does the OSI Fight For?”): “The so-called ‘socialist’ countries like China, Cuba, and the former Soviet Union have nothing to do with socialism. They are state capitalist regimes in which the state bureaucracy exploits its working class just like the private and state bosses do here in Puerto Rico.” It is obscene for the OSI to equate Puerto Rico—a capitalist colony of U.S. imperialism—with Cuba and China, countries where the imperialists and the native bourgeoisies were driven out and the means of production remain largely collectivized even today, however bureaucratically mismanaged they are by the parasitic Stalinist regimes. The same anti-

revolutionary theory of state capitalism is what led the OSI’s international co-thinkers to hail the Soviet Union’s destruction (see “The Bankruptcy of ‘New Class’ Theories,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition], No. 55, Autumn 1999).

The UJS-MST uses a picture of Che Guevara on the masthead of its Web site. It claims to oppose the U.S. blockade against Cuba and to uphold Cuba’s right to defend itself against U.S. attack. But, in addition to military threats and economic strangulation, the imperialists also seek to foment counterrevolution in Cuba and the other deformed workers states by encouraging the growth of forces within those countries that promote the restoration of capitalism.

The Varela project, funded and supported by the U.S. State Department, the National Endowment for Democracy and the Catholic church, is an example. Named after a 19th-century Cuban priest, it was launched around the time of Pope John Paul II’s 1998 visit to Cuba and later promoted by former U.S. president Jimmy Carter—both of whom Castro treacherously welcomed to the island. Our opposition to the Varela project petition centered on its demands for “‘free elections and the right to private enterprise’—demands that amount to a call for ‘democratic’ counterrevolution, the ‘electoral’ rise to power of capitalist-restorationist forces financed by American imperialist largesse, which would be accompanied by a bloodbath of workers and Communists” (“Defend the Cuban Revolution!” WV No. 805, 6 June 2003).

The MST *supported* the U.S.-backed Varela petition. MST leader Luis Ángel Torres Torres described the Varela campaign as offering “democratizing possibilities,” adding that it “can serve as an example to other sectors and multiply the resistance actions against the state” (“El Proyecto Varela y la crisis Cubana,” www.bandera.org, 14 October 2002). This is exactly what the imperialists are hoping for.

In contrast to the narrow nationalism and the anti-communist, reformist politics of these organizations, we seek to win youth over to our internationalist, proletarian revolutionary program. Key to this is exposing illusions in bourgeois democracy, which is based on the exploitation of the working class and, in the United States, on racial oppression of black people and imperialist depredation around the world. For the multiracial proletariat in the U.S., the fight to defend Puerto Rico’s right to independence is integrally linked to its struggle against the American bourgeoisie. It is necessary as well to mobilize the working class in the U.S. and Puerto Rico in defense of the Cuban Revolution. Only world socialist revolution, laying the basis for international socialist planning, can open the road to qualitative economic development for the countries which are today under the imperialist boot. ■

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Shirley Sherrod Thrown Under the Bus

Obama: CEO of Racist American Capitalism

Shirley Sherrod's forced resignation from her USDA (Department of Agriculture) post on July 19 was but the latest slap in the face to America's black population by the Obama administration. Sherrod's departure also caused no small amount of distress for Democratic Party liberals, black spokesmen and the reformist left, all of whom had sold the lie that Obama's ascension to office marked a historic turning point in the struggle of the black masses against their oppression. Based on a phony report of supposedly racist remarks made by Sherrod at an NAACP event in March concerning a 24-year-old incident—a report issued by the notorious con man and Tea Party demagogue Andrew Breitbart—Obama's administration instantly swung into action, browbeating Sherrod by phone, while she was driving her car, into immediately submitting her resignation with her Blackberry.

The NAACP under its president Ben Jealous promptly endorsed this action. Having been chastised about its complaints of overt Tea Party racism, the NAACP took pains to remove any taint of supposed “reverse racism,” intoning: “Racism is about the abuse of power. Sherrod had it in her position at USDA. According to her remarks, she mistreated a white farmer in need of assistance because of his race. We are appalled by her actions, just as we are with abuses of power against farmers of color and female farmers.” A couple of days later, when the report was revealed to be a Tea Party fraud and the white farmer spoke out in Sherrod's defense, the administration and the NAACP raced to apologize to the one-time civil rights activist. Sherrod has since accepted their apologies while refusing the administration's offer of another government job.

The Tea Party is simply the most recent manifestation of good old American racist, nativist reaction. The Tea Party's roots go back to the racist backlash against the limited gains for blacks and women that resulted from the civil rights movement and other social upheavals of the 1960s. As we wrote in Part One of “Economic Crisis and the Capitalist State” (WV No. 961, 2 July):

“That backlash eventually took the form of opposition to ‘big government’—identified with court-ordered racial integration in the public schools, giving jobs to blacks and women under affirmative action programs and handing out welfare money to poor black women and their children (a demagogic lie since relatively few government funds went to the poor, black or white). This boiled over into the ‘tax revolt’ of the late 1970s...which propelled Ronald Reagan into the White House and began the ascendancy of the Republican right in national politics.”

For some time it has been the norm in bourgeois politics to portray programs offering even the tiniest amelioration of the black masses' wretched conditions as “reverse discrimination,” with the corollary that blacks are painted as “racist” for protesting discrimination and deprivation. Now, with a black man as president and in the context of the economic woes that are ravaging most Americans (and especially black people), and with no appreciable social struggle to try to offset



Ryan/NY Times

Evicted tenant with belongings on Milwaukee street last winter.

those woes, racist reactionaries feel less and less constrained to hide behind the fiction of “reverse discrimination.”

Shortly before the March 20 Congressional vote on Obama's health care bill, Tea Party protesters yelled the “N” word at civil rights veteran John Lewis and other black Congressmen and spat on another while confronting openly gay Congressman Barney Frank with homophobic slurs. Laura Schlessinger's recent efforts to capture the Guinness record for use of the “N” word on the radio; South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham's proposal to modify the 14th Amendment, which gave citizenship to black freedmen following the Civil War, so that U.S.-born children of immigrants are excluded from citizenship; the recent Tea Party anti-immigrant mobilization on the Arizona-Mexico border: all are testimony to the exacerbation of open racist/white chauvinism fueled by these types. To take as good coin reports of black “racism” from such sources is not that far from accepting a fascist

exposé of bloodless Christian babies found in the basements of synagogues.

It is no less guileless to accept Obama's pretense that he was unaware of the actions taken to dump Sherrod. He has bent over backward to address each and every complaint from these quarters, ditching the Rev. Jeremiah Wright for excoriating American racism at the beginning of his campaign and firing Van Jones, a black administration official who dared to proclaim the innocence of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, last year. Nor should one forget Obama's attempt, over a cold one, to educate Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. and the cop who roused him for attempting to enter his own home, in the Miss Manners approach to black-police community relations. That was an attempt to placate the nationwide outrage from law enforcement officials over the president's initial statement that the cop had acted stupidly. At least the relatives of Oscar Grant—a young black worker killed in cold blood



Reuters

April 2009: Racist yahoos, bible-thumpers at “Tax Day Tea Party” in Nashville.

by a white transit cop in Oakland in 2009—were spared Obama's revolting pieties.

There were outcries of protest over Sherrod's firing from those who have promoted Obama. Perhaps none of those were more apologetic for Obama's rush to judgment than that of black author and political commentator Earl Ofari Hutchinson. “If Obama talked candidly about race and tried to spark a dialogue on race as some clamor for him to do,” Hutchinson wrote in a 22 July Internet posting, “it would turn his administration into a referendum on race. This would turn the GOP and tea party counterinsurgency into a red hot fire. Obama's rush to judgment on Sherrod had nothing to do with fear and only tangentially with a terrible misread of the information about her purported racial statement. It had everything to do with the price of White House governance. The price is a politically constricted, race neutral presidency.” Thus black people are told that the price they must pay for Obama's ascendancy to the White House is, simply, to shut up and take it.

Few commentaries were more poignant than that of black *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert, who wrote in a 23 July op-ed piece titled “Thrown to the Wolves”: “Black people are in a terrible condition right now—economically, socially, educationally and otherwise—and there is no effective champion fighting for their interests. Mr. Jealous and the new edition of the N.A.A.C.P. have shown in this episode that they are not ready for prime time, and President Obama seems reluctant to even utter the word black. Or poor, for that matter.” The answer posed by Herbert was considerably less than inspiring: “There is no way we'll overcome those divisions if people who should know better keep bowing before and kowtowing to the toxic agenda of those on the right whose overriding goal is to foment hostility and hate.”

The liberals who promoted Obama for the presidency wish he would pay them more attention and hang with them, perhaps while shooting some hoops. The fake socialists, who touted him as an agent of positive change, want to force him to do the right thing. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) and other reformists are publicizing the “One Nation” march on Washington on October 2, a mobilization being heavily built by the pro-capitalist AFL-CIO union bureaucracy. The call for that action pompously proclaims that the march will “charge up an army of tens of thousands of activists who will return to their neighborhoods, churches, schools and, especially, voting booths, with new energy to enact our common agenda. And on the same day, the labor movement will walk door-to-door in targeted states around the country, bringing the same message to union members exactly one month before the fall elections.”

The ISO, in an article by Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor in *Socialist Worker* (28 July), intones: “Without a politically independent, activist challenge to the right-wing lies and distortions about racism—and the liberal acquiescence to them—the

Tea Party: Spearhead of Racist Reaction

right will continue to shape and dominate the debates and discussions about racism. And that will make it impossible to have ‘civil and human rights in this country’.” These fight-the-right sentiments were expressed in the same fashion by the same liberals and leftist groups two years ago during Obama’s campaign. This political stutter is no accident. The bourgeois liberals and their left hangers-on are the apostles of reforming the racist, blood-soaked American imperialist order, and they display the persistence of Pepe Le Pew in their pursuit of this fantasy.

To be sure, there seems to be no compromise or concession this president will not consider. But it is not his lack of spine that renders him bankrupt in dealing with the agonies faced by working and black people. Obama, America's first black president, was elected after decades during which social struggle withered and militant strike activity all but disappeared. According to him, the racial oppression of black people has been all but completely put to rest by the changes conceded to the civil rights movement during the Lyndon Johnson presidency. The only change Obama has offered in U.S. imperialism's wars of conquest has been to select a different one to focus on. Meanwhile those facing the vicissitudes of the grinding depression are offered nothing, while the bankers are assured of salvation.

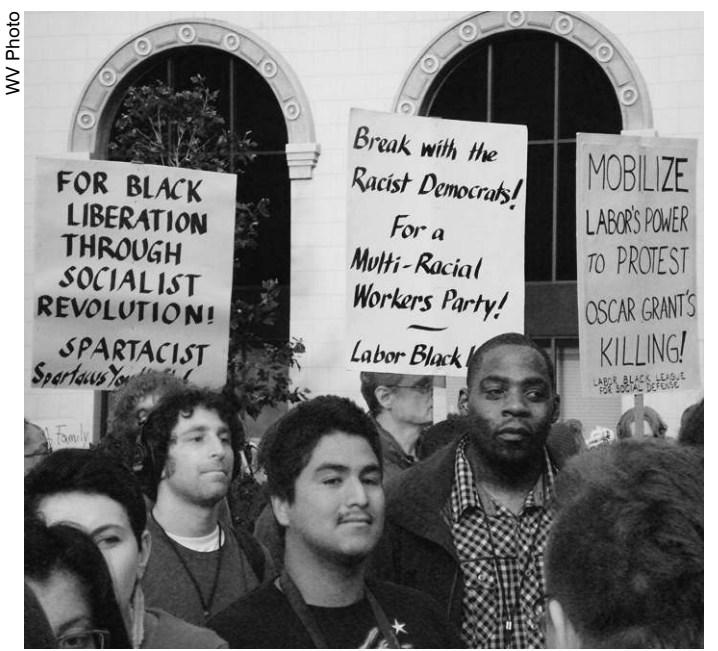
Obama may compare poorly to Frank-

lin Delano Roosevelt, although in reality the immediate impact of their respective anti-depression measures is comparable. Neither significantly addressed the plight of America's toiling and poor people, although Roosevelt's occasional demagogic critiques of the fat cats gave some solace to capitalism's unfortunate victims. Obama simply is what he is, his skin color notwithstanding: the overseer of the most deadly and exploitative imperialist order on the planet.

Following his election, we wrote in “Obama: CEO of Bankrupt American Capitalism” (WV No. 930, 13 February 2009): “The bourgeoisie will hardly spend money on improving the condition of the masses unless it is forced to do so. Especially since the counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union in 1991-92, capitalists internationally have sought to increase their competitiveness against their rivals by taking an ax to whatever gains workers have been able to achieve.” Shortly before, Obama had given an interview to the *Washington Post* (16 January 2009), which reported his intention “to rein in health-care costs, stabilize Social Security and prevent the Medicare program from bankrupting the government.”

It is Obama's job as chief executive of the U.S. capitalist state to administer the race/caste oppression of black people that is built into this country's economy and is invaluable to the rulers as an obstacle to

Oakland, July 8:
Spartacist
supporters at
protest against
verdict in racist
cop killing of
Oscar Grant.



unified struggle against the predatory capitalist order. That order must be combated by working-class and social struggle. It must be overthrown through proletarian socialist revolution. But it must be remembered that during the massive strikes of the 1930s and the social struggles of the 1950s and '60s, the predecessors of today's liberals and reformists no less than now plied their trade: the binding of the outraged masses to the reform pretenses and candidates of the Demo-

cratic Party, then and now the other main party of the bosses' rule.

It requires the forging of an internationalist, revolutionary Trotskyist working-class party to relentlessly expose the treachery of the would-be reformers of capitalist anarchy and to lead the working class and dispossessed to consign imperialism to the graveyard of history. And in this country, the main banner of such a party must be: Finish the Civil War! For black freedom through socialist revolution! ■

Mania...

(continued from page 1)

help the Republicans win back control of the House and Senate to march at the head of the anti-Muslim frenzy. Up to a fifth of Americans appear to have bought the tale that Barack Obama is a secret Muslim, which is about as much an affront to the racists as his (very real) black skin. In the *New York Times* (21 August), liberal columnist Frank Rich caught the manufactured quality of the hoopla over a “mosque” being built on “the ‘hallowed ground’ of a shuttered Burlington Coat Factory store one block from the New York Dolls Gentlemen’s Club,” where strippers have backed the building of the community center. Rich noted that the yahoos “have never attacked the routine Muslim worship services at another site of the 9/11 attacks, the Pentagon.”

Both the Democratic and Republican parties are split on the “anti-mosque” furor. New Jersey Republican governor Chris Christie, taking a brief break from bashing the teachers unions, has joined some Democrats in refusing to condemn the Cordoba community center. Meanwhile, Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, whose Senate seat is being contested by a Tea Party Republican, has lectured that the center’s founder, Feisal Abdul Rauf, should build the community center “somewhere else.” Reid was echoed by Democratic New York governor David Paterson, who is aiming to offer state property far from “Ground Zero” as an alternative site. NYC mayor

Michael Bloomberg has strenuously backed the Islamic center, but he has little to lose. He has had high voter approval ratings, he's not standing for reelection and he's richer than Croesus, which has helped him do things like change parties and extend term limits. But just a few years ago, Bloomberg saw to it that Yemeni immigrant Debbie Almontaser was fired from her job as principal of the Khalil Gibran International Academy in Brooklyn in the heat of a media frenzy falsely branding her a Muslim fundamentalist.

Barack Obama's backing of the Cordoba center particularly galvanized the forces of right-wing reaction. Sections of the ruling class fret that the outbreak of open anti-Islamic bigotry is undermining American interests in the Near East and especially Afghanistan. As Frank Rich put it in his *Times* column: "How do you win Muslim hearts and minds in Kandahar when you are calling Muslims every filthy name in the book in New York?"

On August 13, Obama stated at a White House Ramadan ceremony that he defends the planned Islamic center in lower Manhattan, although in now-typical fashion he backpedaled the next day after getting flak from some Democrats as well as Republicans. Obama has reason to go to bat for Feisal Abdul Rauf. Painted by the Fox News rabble as a “terrorist supporter,” the Sufi imam has served U.S. imperialism under both Bush II and Obama, repeatedly traveling to the Near East to preach the virtues of American “democracy.” In 2008 he signed on to a report with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State in the Bush administration, declaring that the “war on terror” had not been adequate in improving U.S. “security.” In 2003, he addressed a New York FBI meeting to give agents “sensitivity” training after they were criticized for abusing Arab Americans in the post-September 11 witchhunts!

Abdul Rauf is Washington's go-to "good" Muslim, to be called upon when the bourgeoisie wishes to cover its imperialist depredations with talk of tolerance, liberty and other supposed "American values." The imam is currently on a three-country tour of the Persian Gulf sponsored by the U.S. State Department. His appearance in this area serves to shore up America's Arab client states against the reactionary Iranian regime. Washington has repeatedly targeted Iran with economic sanctions and has provocatively set up "missile defense" batteries in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and

the United Arab Emirates.

The same Obama administration that today intones pieties about “religious freedom” threatened last November to seize mosques and other U.S. properties, including a 36-story Manhattan skyscraper, held by the Iranian-backed Alavi Foundation on the grounds that the money it obtained for developing the properties violated U.S. laws banning trade with Iran. We oppose the government’s moves against the Alavi Foundation, which pose grave implications for the rights of freedom of religion and association. We oppose as well the whole framework of sanctions against Iran, behind which is the threat of war. *U.S. hands off Iran!*

Defeat Imperialism Through Workers Revolution!

Following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we dubbed the forces around Osama bin Laden Washington's Frankenstein's monster. Bin Laden was among the many beneficiaries of the massive U.S. aid given to Islamic *mujahedin* cutthroats who were embraced by the imperialists for their murderous anti-Communism. These "holy warriors" fought against the modernizing left-nationalist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) beginning in 1978 and subsequently against Soviet troops after they came to the aid of the embattled PDPA in 1979. The Soviet military intervention opened the possibility of social liberation for the Afghan masses, particularly women, while the threat of a CIA-backed Islamic takeover on the USSR's southern flank posed the need for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state.

We Trotskyists proclaimed: *Hail Red Army! Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!* The Soviet withdrawal in 1988-89 was a political betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracy under Mikhail Gorbachev, opening the door to capitalist counter-revolution in the USSR itself in 1991-92. In the bloody years after the *mujahedin* finally took Kabul in 1992, re-enslaving Afghan women and reducing the capital, Kabul, to rubble, the Taliban emerged as the leading force in Afghanistan. U.S. imperialism supported the Pakistani-backed Taliban from 1996 until they drove them from power in the 2001 U.S./NATO invasion. With no more need for its former clients, Washington withdrew its support for the Taliban, bin Laden & Co. On 11 September 2001, bin Laden bit back.

The International Communist League fought to the end in defense of the Soviet Union against the forces of capitalist counterrevolution. In today's world, where the destruction of the Soviet Union removed what had been the main deterrent to U.S. imperialism's bloody global ambitions, we rededicate ourselves to the fight to construct workers parties of the Bolshevik type in the struggle for new October Revolutions. As we wrote in "Down With Obama's War in Afghanistan!" (WV No. 942, 11 September 2009):

“The horrors produced by U.S. imperialism’s ‘holy war’ against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, as well as the present occupation of the country, show once again that the capitalist system is a barrier to social progress and a breeding ground for barbaric reaction. Our purpose is the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party that fights for the defeat of U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution.” ■

CORRECTIONS

The article “Italy: Unions Must Defend and Organize Immigrant Workers!” (WV No. 961, 2 July) contained a factual error due to a mistake in the translation. In discussing a roundup of workers, we wrote that “police ‘evacuated’ some 100,000 workers, locking them up in hundreds of Centers for Identification and Expulsion (CIE).” In fact, 1,100 workers were “evacuated” and hundreds of them locked up.

In the article “In Honor of Comrade Joe Verret” (WV No. 962, 30 July), we incorrectly attributed to comrade Verret authorship of the Spartacist League leaflet “Moscow Trials in New Orleans.” It was in fact written by another comrade.


Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.

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**Programmatic Statement
of the Spartacist League/U.S.**



**For a Workers Party
That Fights for a Workers Government!**

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

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of the Spartacist League/U.S.**

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Palestinians...
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force for “democracy” anywhere in the world. The disinvestment that did occur largely took the form of overseas corporations signing over their interests to local subsidiaries, which often treated their workers even more brutally. Indeed, 1989 saw strikes by black oil and rubber workers in South Africa against such disinvestment schemes. As we wrote in “Black Workers Strike Against ‘Divestment’ Union-Busting” (Workers Vanguard No. 486, 29 September 1989), “The only kind of ‘divestment’ that will benefit the exploited and oppressed will be proletarian revolution, and the expropriation of these riches by a black-centered workers government as part of a socialist federation of southern Africa.” That remains no less true today, as ANC leaders like Jacob Zuma continue to serve as black front men for a neo-apartheid capitalist system whose fundamental character, including enormous disparities between racial groups, has remained intact.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

The Spartacist League and other sections of the International Communist League intervened into the recent protests against the Zionist attacks on the flotilla to express our solidarity with the Palestinian masses and to put forward the only perspective—international socialist revolution—that can put an end to Palestinian national oppression. The myriad peoples of the Near East will not know peace, justice or prosperity until bourgeois rule in the region is overthrown through a series of socialist revolutions. As revolutionaries in Britain, solidarity with the oppressed in neocolonial countries means first and foremost opposing our own ruling class and fighting to bring down British imperialism through socialist revolution at home.

The hideous oppression of the Palestinians today, including the siege of Gaza, is an expression of the barbaric rule of capitalist imperialism and Zionist nationalism. For more than 60 years, Palestinians have suffered under the jackboot of Zionist Israel—an oppression that has intensified since the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the USSR, which acted as a counterweight to U.S. imperialism internationally, deprived the late Yasir Arafat’s Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) of crucial diplomatic and financial support, paving the way for the ignominious 1993 U.S. imperialism-sponsored Oslo “peace” accords, establishing the Palestinian Authority as the Zionists’ police auxiliaries in the Occupied Territories. In an article headlined “Israel-PLO Deal for Palestinian Ghetto” we wrote that this deal “does not offer even the most deformed expression of self-determination” and “would place the PLO’s seal on the national oppression of the long-suffering

Banner at June 5 London protest expresses politics of Israel “boycott, divestment, sanctions” movement, which breeds illusions in “democratic” imperialists.



Palestinian Arab masses” (Workers Hammer No. 137, September/October 1993 [reprinted from WV No. 583, 10 September 1993]). It was this betrayal by the secular-nationalist PLO that paved the way for the rise of reactionary Islamic groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad among the Palestinians.

Since Oslo, one “peace” accord after another has been heralded as opening the door to Palestinian national emancipation. In reality, Zionist oppression of the Palestinians has only intensified, leading to ever deadlier cycles of terror against the Palestinian population. Israel’s rulers have increasingly driven the Palestinians into bantustan-like enclaves demarcated by a heavily guarded wall and sliced up by Zionist settlements, checkpoints and bypass highways. Gaza is little more than a concentration camp: an impoverished, devastated strip where 1.5 million Palestinians are trapped, surrounded by the sea, an electrified fence and a wall sealing its border with Egypt. All Zionist troops and settlers out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem!

Both the Palestinian and Hebrew-speaking nations have the right to self-determination, but because the two nations are geographically interpenetrated, self-determination for one can only be achieved by denying it to the other. Under capitalism, every “solution” to the Palestinian national question either perpetuates the oppression of the Palestinian Arab people or envisions a reversal of the terms of oppression, denying the legitimate national rights of the Hebrew-speaking people. In situations of interpenetrated peoples, a democratic solution to the national question can be achieved only through socialist revolution, because only the proletariat in power has an interest in resolving national antagonisms and can begin to meet the material needs of all working people.

We make a distinction between the Hebrew-speaking nation living in Israel and the Zionist state. This is counterposed to the view of the Zionists, and

indeed of the Islamic fundamentalists, who equate the Zionist state with the Hebrew-speaking people. The Zionist state is not only a catastrophe for Palestinians—it is also a deathtrap for Jews. Some 25 per cent of citizens live in poverty and income disparities are higher than in Egypt and Jordan. Sephardic Jews, though overwhelmingly under the sway of right-wing and religious parties, suffer widespread discrimination and poverty. The Palestinian Arabs, nominally “citizens” who constitute 20 per cent of Israel’s population, are consigned to segregated, impoverished areas and low-paid, unskilled jobs.

Israeli society is not a seamless reactionary mass. Despite widespread support in Israel for the Gaza blockade, there have been demonstrations against the brutal killings on the flotilla, including a 6,000-strong rally in Tel Aviv on 5 June. It is the false consciousness of religion and Zionist nationalism and racism—in the face of pervasive anti-Semitism—that is the glue binding the Hebrew-speaking proletariat to its Israeli ruling-class enemy. As long as Zionist oppression of Palestinians continues, Israeli Jews will continue to be a target of hatred and outrage by the more than 100 million Arabs who surround them. It is only the working class of Israel—Hebrew and Arab—that has the capacity to destroy the Zionist citadel from within.

As Marxists, we fight to bring the class question to the fore. The only road to social and national liberation for the Palestinians—including the right of all refugees and their descendants to return to their homeland—and all the other peoples of the Near East lies through common class struggle by the Arab, Hebrew-speaking and other working classes of the region. For the Palestinians, this means recognising the right of the Hebrew-speaking people to national self-determination. In turn, breaking the Hebrew-speaking workers from their Zionist rulers requires that they champion the national rights of the Palestinians. We have no illusions that winning the Hebrew-speaking proletariat to this perspective will be an easy task. Indeed, it will likely require the victory of socialist revolution in one of the other Near Eastern states to break the Hebrew-speaking proletariat from Zionist chauvinism. This task is not made easier by the criminal indiscriminate terror bombings carried out by Islamic forces against Israeli civilians, which drive the Hebrew-speaking population further into the arms of the Zionist rulers.

At the same time, the solidarity of the Arab masses with the oppressed Palestinian people must be directed towards proletarian revolution against their own Arab rulers, who, whether bourgeois nationalists or Islamic traditionalists, are fundamentally the political agents of Western imperialism. If this does not happen, the intense and justifiable hostility against Israel and its American protector will serve to further strengthen the forces of Islamic fundamentalism, which posture as the “radical” opposition to the mainly pro-Western Arab regimes. We look to the proletariat of the region more widely,

such as in Egypt, which has been a centre of working-class strikes and protests over the past several years. With some 50 per cent of the Palestinian population living outside the Occupied Territories—in Jordan, Lebanon, Israel—the national liberation of the Palestinians demands a perspective of socialist revolution throughout the Near East, including within Israel, the most powerful and economically advanced country in the region. It is vital to forge revolutionary Marxist parties throughout the Near East to unite the proletariat—Arab, Persian, Kurdish and Hebrew, Sunni and Shi’ite, Muslim and Christian—in struggle against imperialism and to smash the Zionist garrison state from within and sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Syrian Ba’athist bonapartists and the capitalist rulers of Lebanon through socialist revolution. For a socialist federation of the Near East!

Our proletarian internationalist perspective is counterposed to those reformists who tail Islamic fundamentalism, such as the SWP. Socialist Worker (10 January 2009) ran an article titled “Hamas’s History of Resistance,” enthusing over Hamas as the “bearer of a tradition of Palestinian resistance.” Islamic fundamentalists like Hamas and Islamic Jihad are vile anti-Jewish and anti-Christian religious bigots who seek to enslave women and extirpate any manifestations of social progress. Hamas is descended from the clerical-



South African gold miners at union rally, 1983. Black workers’ struggles against apartheid regime showed potential for proletarian revolution.

fascist Muslim Brotherhood, which became particularly prominent in Egypt in the late 1940s. Under the slogan “communism = atheism = liberation of women,” the Muslim Brotherhood mobilised a terror campaign against Communists and other secular forces. Hamas preaches the social segregation of women, the wearing of the hijab (Islamic headscarf) and anti-woman sharia law. Far from embodying a “history of resistance,” Hamas was initially supported by Israel as a counter-

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ILWU Ship Boycott: Token of Solidarity with Palestinians

OAKLAND—Outraged by the Israeli army's May 31 massacre of nine volunteers aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, a Turkish ship carrying aid to besieged Palestinians in Gaza, some 800 protesters converged at the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) terminal here in the early morning of June 20. The purpose of the protest was to boycott a container ship of the Israeli-owned Zim lines, the *Zim Shenzhen*. Longshoremen of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 honored the picket line. In the end, the ship sat at berth for 12 hours before being unloaded.

Although the protest was largely symbolic, it was a genuine act of solidarity in defense of the Palestinians. In response, Israeli consular officials dispatched a delegation to a subsequent Local 10 executive board meeting to defend the attack on the "Freedom Flotilla." This effort was rightly shot down, and the executive board reaffirmed its opposition to the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

The impetus for the Oakland picket, called by the Labor/Community Committee in Solidarity with the People of Palestine, was an appeal by Palestinian unions for labor solidarity actions following the murderous attack on the *Mavi Marmara*. Swedish dock workers had called for a week-long labor boycott from June 23-29 of all trade with Israel. During that week, they refused to handle ten cargo containers being shipped to or from Israel. Longshoremen at the Port of Cochin, India, refused to work cargo from a Zim ship that had been unloaded in Sri Lanka and then shipped to Cochin in a feeder vessel. The Oakland port protest, which was endorsed by the Oakland Education Association and publicized by the San Francisco and Alameda Labor Councils, followed an ILWU Local 10 executive board resolution "condemning this Israeli attack" and calling for "unions to protest by any action they choose to take."

Supporters of the Spartacist League joined the Oakland picket as an expression of our commitment to the defense of the Palestinians against Zionist state terror, which is armed and bankrolled by U.S. imperialism. We are for time-delimited actions of labor solidarity like union boycotts called around concrete demands in defense of workers and the oppressed. We also support standing boycotts of military shipments to Israel, which would be a real blow against the Zionist



Bill Hackwell

Above: June 20 Oakland port picket against *Zim Shenzhen* ship, part of international labor boycott of Israeli shipping. Below: Ship being unloaded the next day, 12 hours after it arrived in Oakland.



WV Photo

butchers and, even more crucially, their bloody imperialist patrons. Our purpose in raising the call "Labor: Hot Cargo Military Goods to Israel!" as one of our signs expressed at the Oakland protest, is to strengthen the fighting power and class consciousness of the working class in solidarity with the exploited and oppressed of the world and in opposition to capitalist class rule here in the belly of the U.S. imperialist beast.

In the context of worldwide protest against Israel's bloody assault on the flotilla of humanitarian aid to Gaza, a solid week-long, coastwide ILWU boycott of the Zim shipping conglomerate would

have had tremendous impact. But this was not the purpose of the organizers of the Oakland protest, centrally the reformists of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and its ANSWER coalition and the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee (TWSC), mainly represented by ILWU Local 10 bureaucrats Jack Heyman and Clarence Thomas. Instead, they sought to give a labor veneer to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, which appeals to the imperialists to act on behalf of the Palestinians through trade and other sanctions against Israel. As a July 9 LabourNet article by Greg Dropkin noted, Clarence

weight to the secular-nationalist PLO. Carrying out attacks on secularists and Communists, the Islamists engaged in neither political nor military struggle against Israel.

With the beginning of the first *Intifada* in 1987, the Islamists feared that if they stood aside they would lose their following. Hamas was founded in the spring of 1988 as an Islamist political movement with an armed wing. Hamas sought to fuse the national struggle, previously a secular movement containing a leftist component, with reactionary Islamic fundamentalism. It was only in the autumn of 1989, after discovering that Hamas had killed two Israeli soldiers, that Israel broke relations with the group.

The Arab bourgeois regimes have always been enemies of Palestinian national liberation. When the Arab armies went to war with Israel in 1948, it was not to "liberate" Palestine but to carve it up among themselves. Between 1948 and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the West Bank and Gaza were occupied by Jordan and Egypt respectively. And the Palestinians there remained politically dispossessed and

subject to brutal repression. In the decade following the 1967 war, nearly 50,000 Palestinians were slaughtered by Arab governments, including some 10,000 militants killed by the Jordanian monarchy in the 1970 Black September massacre.

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, which laid the basis for the liberation of the tsarist empire's many subjugated peoples, was a beacon of liberation for the oppressed throughout the world, inspiring anti-colonial revolts throughout the Near East. This legacy continued despite the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR. In 1958, Iraqi workers led by the multinational Iraqi Communist Party—which included Muslims, Jews and Christians, Arabs and Kurds—fought to make a revolution and came to the brink of power. However, this and other revolutionary opportunities were betrayed by the Kremlin and the Stalinist-led Communist parties, subordinating the proletariat to an alliance with "progressive" bourgeois nationalists, who, once in power, launched a blood-bath against the Communist-led workers.

What is necessary is the forging of

revolutionary Marxist parties throughout the Near East, built in opposition to all forms of nationalism and religious fundamentalism, and committed to the struggle for socialist revolution, which, on an international scale, can finally open the door to human equality and liberation. The conquest of power by the proletariat in the Near East does not complete the socialist revolution, but only opens it by changing the direction of social development. But that social development can be consolidated only through the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced, industrialised imperialist countries.

Defence of those subjugated by the imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in Britain, the U.S. and other imperialist centres, pointing towards a proletarian struggle for power. The Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League, is committed to the fight to forge a multi-ethnic revolutionary workers party to lead the proletariat in the struggle to sweep away British imperialism through socialist revolution. ■

Thomas "set out the current strategy" at the Oakland picket, arguing that "the thing that is going to make Israel and the United States both understand" that the blockade of Gaza can't continue "is the whole question of commerce and trade." Thomas went on to promote a three-pronged strategy of "Boycotts, Sanctions, and Divestment."

As opposed to time-delimited labor boycotts, open-ended boycotts of states like Israel are not only ineffective but also could prove harmful to the working class in the boycotted countries. As the article on the BDS campaign (see page 16) by our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain explains, such appeals for open-ended boycotts promote suicidal illusions in the "democratic" pretensions of the imperialist rulers. If successful, the campaign would actually be a blow against the only force that can be mobilized to smash the Zionist state from within: the Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers of Israel.

The motions passed by the San Francisco and Alameda Labor Councils publicizing the Oakland protest supported the call by the United Nations and Amnesty International for an "investigation" of the massacre on the *Mavi Marmara*. This is in line with the entire BDS campaign, which invokes the UN as an ally against the Zionist rulers. Whatever criticisms of Israeli policy are occasionally expressed in UN resolutions, opponents of Zionist terror must place no reliance on this imperialist den of thieves and their victims. The UN time and again has acted to deepen the oppression of the Palestinians. It presided over the 1947 partition of Palestine, and it was UN "peacekeepers" who disarmed PLO fighters in Lebanon in 1982, setting up the massacre of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by forces acting on behalf of the Israeli army.

The Ship That Hadn't Come In

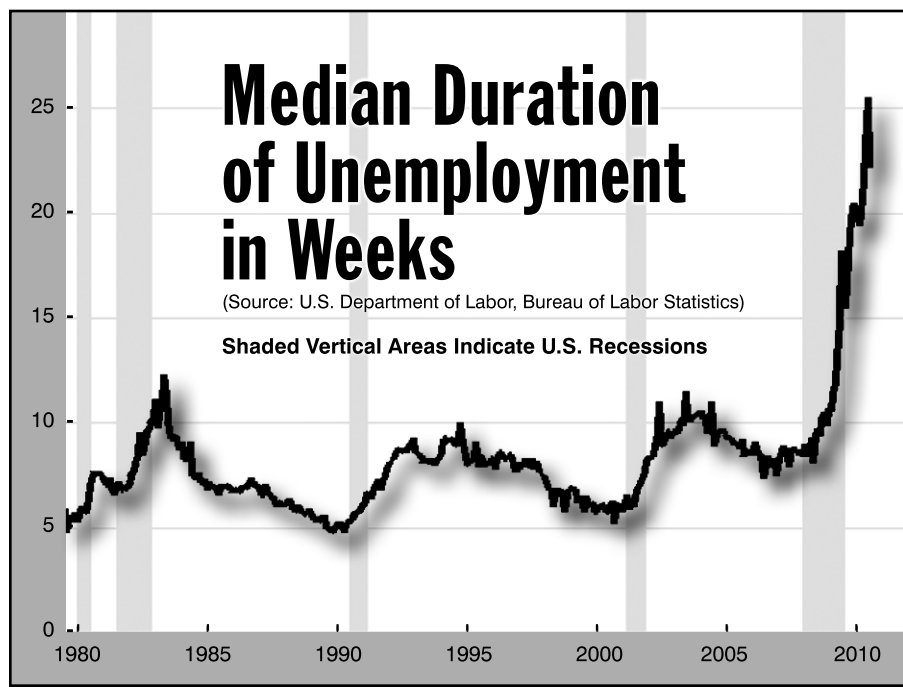
The majority of the protesters who came out for the 5:30 a.m. picket thought that they were there to stop the Israeli ship from being worked. In fact, the *Zim Shenzhen* was scheduled to arrive at the Oakland port at 2 p.m. according to information readily available on the Zim Web site, which lists the schedule of its ships months in advance. When it became clear after a couple of hours that there was no Israeli ship at the terminal, a fact the organizers tried to dodge until it became obvious, disappointed protesters started to leave in increasing numbers. Organizers appealed for them to stay, aiming for a ruling by an arbitrator that the situation posed a "health and safety" threat to longshoremen, which, by the terms of the ILWU contract, would mean longshoremen could refuse to cross the picket line without penalty.

The union argued to the arbitrator that it would be a threat for Oakland cops to force an opening through the picket line, as demanded by employers. In April 2003, Oakland police assaulted longshoremen who honored a picket line set up to protest the Iraq war. The cops fired wooden bullets and other "non-lethal" projectiles at ILWU members and antiwar protesters, 41 of whom were injured, some seriously. Two dozen were arrested and then dragged through the courts on bogus charges that were eventually dropped. This time around, the arbitrator ruled that there was a "health and safety" issue, and longshoremen left with the promise of partial pay for the day. The picket line then quickly dispersed, with the organizers urging protesters to return at 4:30 p.m. for the afternoon dispatch.

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Liberals Push Regulation Hoax

Economic Crisis and the Capitalist State



Long-term unemployment in U.S. has skyrocketed in current recession. Right: Crowd lines up to enter Chicago job fair in February.

Part One of this article, which we conclude below, appeared in WV No. 961 (2 July).

PART TWO

President Barack Obama hailed the financial regulation bill passed by Congress last month as promising “greater economic security to families” by ensuring a “safer financial system” that is “far less prone to panic and collapse.” Talk of “economic security” rings pretty hollow when some 26 million people in this country are out of work or forced to accept part-time work, and the number of long-term unemployed is at a record level. The White House has also been loudly trumpeting the “success” of the multibillion-dollar government bailouts of GM and Chrysler. These deals were certainly suc-

cessful for the auto bosses: the pro-capitalist leadership of the United Auto Workers capitulated to the bailout’s condition that new workers get only half the wages made by the existing workforce. This measure massively increases the rate of exploitation of auto workers and strikes a direct blow at what was once the country’s most powerful industrial union. Meanwhile, budget-slashing state and local governments have eliminated 102,000 jobs in the last three months.

Working people are being made to pay for the economic crisis that was triggered by wanton capitalist speculation. Nearly 528,000 homes were seized by banks and other lenders in the first six months of this year, a rate that is on track to eclipse the 900,000 homes repossessed last year. A report by the Department of Agriculture last fall stated that almost 25 percent of children in the U.S. suffer from “food

insecurity”—they either go hungry or eat unhealthy food because that is all their families can afford.

The banking “reform” increases the number of financial regulatory agencies and widens their jurisdiction. But neither this law nor the measures being implemented by European capitalist governments will head off future financial crises. Recurrent economic crises are a consequence of the fundamental workings of the capitalist system of production for profit, not accidental occurrences caused by insufficient regulation. What happened on Wall Street in the fall of 2008 was substantially similar in its basic dynamic to what happened in the London stock exchange in 1720 when a speculative bubble involving shares of the South Seas Company burst, touching off an enormous banking crisis.

Wall Street is hardly crying over the “reform.” The law does not even set a minimum requirement of how much capital banks must hold compared to how much they lend out—the so-called “leverage ratio.” The firms whose collapse triggered the financial crisis were in some cases leveraged up to 40-to-1—about eight times the corresponding ratio for most hedge funds, which are notorious for engaging in speculation. The new law will likely require that currency and interest-rate swaps be bought and sold on public exchanges, supposedly to introduce more market stability. But trading of more exotic and risky derivatives, like the credit-default swaps that played a major role in the economic crisis, will largely remain in the shadows.

The push to pass legislation increasing regulation of the financial industry goes back to last December, when popular anger exploded over reports that Wall Street executives had allotted them-

selves some \$30 billion in year-end bonuses. Lashing out at “fat cat bankers,” Obama embraced the regulatory proposals of former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, who has campaigned against increased financial concentration and risk-taking by the biggest banks. While Volcker is today widely hailed by Democrats, he gained his political authority in the Republican Reagan administration in the early 1980s, when he slashed runaway inflation by tightening the money supply, deliberately provoking a sharp economic downturn.

What Obama called the “Volcker rule” would prohibit commercial banks from owning hedge funds and from engaging in “proprietary trading”—that is, trading on financial markets with the banks’ own money as opposed to seeking commissions from trades. But the law’s formal restrictions on proprietary trading will have little concrete impact given the difficulty of singling out such trades. Goldman Sachs recently reported an almost \$2 billion quarterly loss by its equity trading desk. How would regulators decide if those stock market bets should be considered speculation with Goldman’s own funds or a response to customer demand?

Financiers will always find ways to circumvent limits on speculation. To get around restrictions on owning hedge funds, former investment banks such as Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley could simply give up their federal bank charters, which they acquired in late 2008 in order to qualify for low-interest loans from the Federal Reserve.

Violent and acute crises, often triggered by financial panics and followed by prolonged depressions, have been endemic to the capitalist system from its very beginning. In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848),



July 21: Obama signs financial “reform” bill. “We can live with this,” declared one Wall Street banker when law’s details were revealed.

Break with the Democrats!

For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed to “the commercial crises that by their periodic return put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on trial, each time more threateningly.” The current crisis—the deepest since the Great Depression of the 1930s—was in good part prepared by the bursting of the bubble of investment in computer and telecommunications stocks less than a decade ago, which touched off a recession. Following that collapse, speculative investment increasingly shifted to the housing market, fueling that bubble. (For a development of the Marxist understanding of capitalist economic crises, see the 2009 Spartacist pamphlet, *Karl Marx Was Right—Capitalist Anarchy and the Immiseration of the Working Class*.)

The bursting of the dot-com and housing bubbles and the crises they generated were direct products of the capitalist system of production for profit. Capitalists invest in expanding productive capacity on the assumption that the additional output—autos, houses, Internet services, etc.—can be sold at the existing rate of profit, at least. However, during periods of expansion the average rate of profit tends to fall. Even if productivity rises and wages do not, increased profit per worker does not offset increased capital per worker. This situation eventually creates a crisis of *overproduction*, as capitalists produce more goods and services than can be sold at a satisfactory rate of profit. Marx explained in *Capital* (Volume III):

“There are not too many necessities of life produced, in proportion to the existing population. Quite the reverse. Too little is produced to decently and humanely satisfy the wants of the great mass....

“Too many means of labour and necessities of life are produced at times to permit of their serving as means for the exploitation of labourers at a certain rate of profit.”

Marx and Engels explained that the only way to end the boom-bust cycles inherent to capitalism is for the working class to take control of the means of production through socialist revolution and institute a planned, collectivized economy.

The Threatening Debt Crisis

Last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that the combined cost of bailing out the world financial system had reached almost \$12 trillion, equivalent to about one-fifth of the annual economic output of the entire planet. As a result of governments around the world injecting capital into banks, soaking up bad investments and guaranteeing problem loans, there has been a massive transfer of debt from the private to the public sector. The IMF recently projected that within four years the amount of government debt in the advanced capitalist countries will reach 110 percent of their collective GDP. This has nervous investors pondering which governments may prove unable to bear the burden.

For now, the U.S. Treasury continues to find takers for government securities at historically low interest rates. But this cannot last indefinitely. Early last year, we wrote in “Obama: CEO of Bankrupt American Capitalism” (WV No. 930, 13 February 2009):

“How much more can the U.S. government borrow before its creditors conclude that Washington is so overburdened with debt that it is no longer a reliable client? Most Keynesian economists—and the Obama administration—apparently think the answer to that question is: More, much more. They point to the fact that U.S. Treasuries continue to be seen as a ‘risk-free’ investment, allowing the U.S. government to borrow at almost zero interest....

“More fundamentally, the dollar continues to be the major reserve currency throughout the capitalist world and also for China. Foreign capitalist powers and the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy are inhibited from a major sell-off of dollars because this would lead to a rapid devaluation of their own financial reserves. Nonetheless, what was an unstable situation before the current crisis has become much more so.”

A prominent Keynesian standard-bearer is liberal economist Paul Krugman, who has campaigned for greatly increased deficit spending, arguing that any adverse consequences are necessarily far in the future. In his 5 February *New York Times*

column, Krugman wrote: “The long-run budget outlook is problematic, but short-term deficits aren’t—and even the long-term outlook is much less frightening than the public is being led to believe.... If anything, deficits should be bigger than they are because the government should be doing more than it is to create jobs.”

Echoing Krugman’s call for government intervention to save capitalism from itself is the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO). As Congress was preparing to pass Obama’s “stimulus” package shortly after his inauguration, the

lar levels of debt without crisis” (*New York Times*, 9 April). Just one month after that was written, Greece’s debt woes came within a hair’s breadth of triggering a Europe-wide financial meltdown.

The instability of the capitalist financial system is such that much lower debt levels than Greece’s today have often sufficed to set off catastrophic debt crises. A recent book by former IMF economists Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff, *This Time Is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly* (2009), shows that of the more than 30 sovereign defaults by

German chancellor Angela Merkel and British prime minister David Cameron at G20 summit in Toronto, June 27. Below: French workers rally in Nantes as part of nationwide protest against government attack on pensions, June 24.



Reuters

ISO’s *Socialist Worker* (24 February 2009) editorialized that Obama was “absolutely correct to say, as Congress considered the legislation: ‘At this particular moment, with the private sector so weakened by this recession, the federal government is the only entity left with the resources to jolt our economy back into life. It is only government that can break the vicious cycle where lost jobs lead to people spending less money, which leads to even more layoffs.’ But to have that effect, government spending will have to be much greater.”

The liberal Krugman and the social democrats of the ISO treat deficit spending as if it is a costless way to finance social programs beneficial to working people, a kind of free lunch. However, the owners of money capital do not purchase U.S. Treasury bonds out of largesse but in order to increase their wealth through a future stream of interest payments. The larger the government debt relative to total output, the larger the share of total income that goes to the propertied class in the form of interest, a kind of welfare for the rich. A study by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) indicated:

“With such a large increase in debt, plus an expected increase in interest rates as the economic recovery strengthens, interest payments on the debt are poised to skyrocket. CBO projects that the government’s annual spending on net interest will more than triple between 2010 and 2020 in nominal terms, from \$207 billion to \$723 billion, and will more than double as a share of GDP, from 1.4 percent to 3.2 percent.”

—*The Budget and Economic Outlook: Fiscal Years 2010 to 2020* (January 2010)

While some sections of the ruling class push deficit spending, others worry that increased government debt will cause a sharp rise in inflation and thus erode the real market value of their bond holdings as well as the interest they derive from them.

Krugman concedes that U.S. debt levels are high and rising but, citing Greece’s public debt of 113 percent of GDP, argues that “other countries have dealt with simi-

lar levels of debt without crisis” between 1970 and 2008, more than half occurred at debt levels of less than 60 percent of GDP.

Myths of Financial Regulation

Liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith, in his classic history of the stock market crash of 1929, bemoaned what he saw as Wall Street’s irrational refusal to rein in speculative financial booms before they went bust, going so far as to declare: “Here, at least equally with communism, lies the threat to capitalism” (*The Great Crash, 1929* [1997]). Galbraith’s history shows that government regulators in the lead-up to the crash did not even try to dampen the speculative frenzy. As long as the bubble continued, it was fabulously profitable for the capitalists. And besides, who would want to take the blame for touching off a collapse?

Under the impact of the Great Depression, Congress passed a precursor of the “Volcker rule,” the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, which prohibited commercial banks from trading in stocks and bonds. An enduring myth is that Glass-Steagall provided a backstop against financial crises and that its 1999 repeal under the Clinton administration is to blame for the current recession. Glass-Steagall’s formal prohibition on securities dealings did not prevent banks from starting in the mid 1980s to “securitize” their loans (pooling them and issuing securities based on the pool). This was a way for the banks to get the loans off their balance sheets and thus circumvent capital reserve requirements, freeing them to make new loans. Alan Greenspan, who as Fed chairman from 1987 to 2006 was Washington’s regulator-in-chief, hailed such “innovation” for supposedly reducing financial instability by spreading risk among many investors.

In the years preceding the current crisis, debt-securitization markets were the source of 60 percent of all credit in the U.S. After investors lost huge sums on pools of subprime mortgages, entire swaths of the so-called “shadow banking system” collapsed. Now the Fed is virtually the only buyer of mortgage-backed secu-

rities—the sector of the securitization market that in the U.S. dwarfs all others—with holdings totaling over \$1.1 trillion.

Krugman has been a persistent champion of extending federal supervision to the “shadow banking system”—hedge funds, private equity funds and the like. Yet in the lead-up to the current crisis, federal regulators were *complicit* in using this very system to *conceal* bankers’ speculative risk-taking. As Lehman Brothers hurtled toward collapse in September 2008, regulators from both the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the Securities and Exchange Commission turned a blind eye as executives window-dressed their accounts to hide their dangerously high level of debt. The New York Fed under Timothy Geithner, now Obama’s Treasury secretary, further helped Lehman artificially bolster its balance sheet by temporarily holding billions of dollars in “toxic” assets.

Krugman’s answer to such behavior was that Congress needed to enact “rules that would force action even by regulators who don’t especially want to do their jobs” (*New York Times*, 5 April). The liberal Krugman sees the government as an impartial arbiter, ultimately serving the common good (with the possible exception of some recalcitrant regulators, who need to be read the riot act). In contrast, Marxists understand that the capitalist government serves as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie as a whole, defending its class rule by employing the armed might of the state—police, army, courts and prisons—against the workers and the oppressed.

A key element in ensuring the stability of the capitalist order is the belief by the working class that the system’s most clearly destructive features such as mass unemployment can be eliminated through reforms. In the absence of a mass reformist workers party in this country, the Democratic Party is offered as the vehicle through which the capitalist state can be pressured to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed.

This false consciousness is promoted not only by the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy but also by the reformist left. Virtually every liberal and reformist organization openly or tacitly supported Obama’s election as a harbinger of “change.” Now, after the bailout of the banks and auto companies, the escalation of the murderous occupation of Afghanistan, the stepping up of repression as part of the “war on terror,” Obama’s “leftist” cheerleaders appear to be curbing their enthusiasm. A 27 January *Socialist Worker* editorial lamented:

“Obama had the opportunity to change the direction of U.S. politics and society—and the popularity to accomplish it. Even those on the left, like us at *Socialist Worker*, who were skeptical of Obama’s promises concluded that the multiple crises facing the White House would compel the president to move away from the free-market, neoliberal policies that characterized not only Bush, but the Clinton administration before him....

“On the contrary, instead of using economic policies to counteract the worst mass unemployment since the 1930s, Obama rushed to aid the banks.”

Nothing other was to be expected from Obama and his clique of Wall Street advisers and operatives. But for the ISO, Obama turned out to be a “disappointment” because “the biggest forces in the Democratic Party’s base have completely failed to hold Obama’s feet to the fire.” In other words, the trade-union tops and other big players in the Democratic Party failed to exert sufficient pressure. The ISO sees its task, as always, as building a “grassroots” movement to pressure Washington, this time based on “the growing anger with the Obama administration among precisely those who supported it most enthusiastically.”

The shell game through which the Democrats are sold as the “friend” of labor and blacks has been central to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. Breaking the allegiance of labor, blacks and the oppressed to the Democratic Party is key to transforming the working class from a class *in* itself—the object of capitalist exploitation—to a class *for* itself—conscious of its revolutionary purpose as

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Economy...

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the agency for the eradication of the capitalist order. This task is integral to building a workers party that will lead all the exploited and the oppressed in the fight for a workers government.

China's Growth Amid World Recession

At home with American bourgeois liberals, the ISO denounces the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state (as well as those of North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam) as a "state capitalist" society. This is but a "theoretical" cover for the ISO's treacherous support to capitalist counter-revolutionary forces parading under the banners of bourgeois "democracy" and "human rights."

Despite the inroads of "market reforms," the core of China's industrial economy—steel and non-ferrous metals, heavy electrical equipment, telecommunications, oil extraction and refining—continues to be based on state-owned enterprises. Outside of the foreign-owned sector, almost all productive investment is channeled through predominantly state-owned banks.

The *non*-capitalist character of China's economy has been clearly demonstrated by the striking effectiveness of the government's almost \$600 billion stimulus program—mainly investment in infrastructure and expanding bank lending—introduced in the fall of 2008 as the First World capitalist economies were plunging downward. The sudden collapse of its export markets in North America and West Europe was a heavy blow to China's economy, whose rate of growth fell from 13 percent in 2007 to under 7 percent in the last quarter of 2008. Since then, however, economic growth has accelerated, reaching almost 12 percent in the first quarter of this year before slacking off somewhat in the second quarter.

As Part One of this article stated, we



Bloomberg

High-speed railway under construction near Shanghai. Collectivized core of Chinese economy laid basis for massive infrastructure development program introduced in late 2008.

times over by the unbridled extension of bad loans and speculative investments.

Though Greece represents a mere 2 percent of European gross domestic product (GDP), fear that its government might default on its debt generated global shock waves because it raised the prospect of default by economically stronger EU countries, such as Spain. Some \$2.6 trillion of public and private debt from Greece, Spain and Portugal is held by financial institutions outside those countries, with French and German banks particularly exposed. Accounting for two-thirds of that debt, Spain has been mired in recession, with an unemployment rate of 20 percent, one of the highest in the EU. The EU's current travails were foreshadowed by crises that broke out in Central and East Europe last year, when Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, Serbia, Belarus and Romania all needed bailouts from the IMF and EU to avert defaults.

Big-time investors and government officials fear that as the debt of countries along Europe's southern tier loses value, which could happen suddenly and massively in the event of a default on govern-

by European banks; to date, the ECB has moved almost \$80 billion worth of shaky sovereign debt off the banks' balance sheets and onto its own. Karl Otto Pöhl, former head of the German central bank, let the cat out of the bag when he declared that the bailout "was about protecting German banks, but especially the French banks, from debt write offs" (*Spiegel* online, 18 May).

With the ECB/IMF rescue plan, the European bourgeoisies are buying time, but at the expense of deepening contradictions that are inherent in the capitalist system. Across Europe, governments are seeking to head off debt crises through savage austerity measures, such as cutting the pay of public sector workers, reducing pensions and raising taxes. In Britain, Conservative prime minister David Cameron has launched an austerity drive that, if implemented, would slash some **600,000** public sector jobs.

These attacks have not gone unanswered by the working class, as we pointed out in Part One of this article. Following a spate of massive strikes that caused one-day shutdowns in a number of European countries, a "European day of action" has been called for September 29, including a one-day general strike in Spain. Nevertheless, Europe's capitalist rulers show no signs of relenting. Yet slashing state expenditure and private consumption in countries already reeling from an economic slowdown risks provoking sharp recession. This would further undermine the ability of those countries to pay off their debts, ultimately *increasing* the threat of a full-blown financial crisis.

The EU and Deepening Interimperialist Rivalries

The debt crisis in Europe points up the contradiction that has existed since the 1979 creation of the European Monetary System, which required that member countries keep their currency exchange rates within a narrow band relative to other European currencies. That system included countries that were historically inflation-prone and whose currencies had persistently depreciated, such as Greece, as well as others—above all, Germany—that had strong, persistently appreciating currencies.

The establishment of the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1999 created a single currency, the euro, for most of western and southern Europe (Britain being the main exception). In this set-up, one monetary policy was deemed applicable to all, with control of the Eurozone's money supply in the hands of the ECB. If Greece were still using the drachma, its old national currency, it would likely try to get out from under its debt load by pursuing inflationary measures combined with currency devaluation, reducing the world market price of its exports and providing a boost to its main industry, tourism. Instead, the Greek bourgeoisie is seeking to pay off the country's entire debt by extracting real wealth from the working class and other toilers.

The euro crisis is an expression of the fact that, beginning in the late 19th century, the productive forces of capitalism outgrew the limits of the bourgeois nation-state. This is a fundamental

feature of imperialism, the most advanced stage of capitalist development, in which a handful of advanced countries compete globally for control of markets, raw materials and access to cheap labor. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained in his classic 1916 work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, imperialism is characterized by the growth of monopolies and the consolidation of giant financial institutions "having at their command almost the whole of the money capital of all the capitalists and small businessmen and also the larger part of the means of production and sources of raw materials."

Sharp tensions among the imperialist powers emerged at the June G20 summit meeting in Toronto ostensibly over how to address the economic crisis, but at bottom reflecting deeper conflicts. German chancellor Angela Merkel roundly rebuffed Obama's call, supported by French president Nicolas Sarkozy, that Germany come to the aid of manufacturers internationally by increasing government spending, stimulating private consumption and relying less on exports. Merkel countered that she had no intention of "artificially reducing Germany's competitiveness," while her finance minister took aim at (unnamed) countries that had "become addicted to borrowing."

Obama promised in his January State of the Union address to create two million jobs in the U.S. by doubling exports over the next five years. In a world economy that is stagnant at best, a significant increase in exports can be achieved only at the expense of the American bourgeoisie's competitors. While the U.S. ran a trade deficit of almost \$375 billion last year, the German export powerhouse had a \$185 billion surplus. What made the German bourgeoisie the number one capitalist exporter was its success in driving down workers' wages. Unit labor costs in Germany fell an average of 1.4 percent per year between 2000 and 2008, twice the rate of decline in the U.S. That enormous increase in the rate of exploitation was the fruit of measures pushed through, with the active support of the trade-union bureaucracy, by the Social Democratic Party/Green coalition that governed Germany from 1998 to 2005 (see "Financial Crisis Rocks Imperialist EU," WV No. 960, 4 June).

The European Union is in its central axis a bloc between the German and French ruling classes to pursue their economic interests vis-à-vis their powerful American imperialist rival on the one side and the smaller and weaker European states on the other. The ruling classes of the economically weaker players that joined the European Monetary Union committed to accepting the discipline laid out in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht (e.g., limits on budget deficits) because they benefited from the cheaper loans, larger inflows of capital and freer trade within Europe that the euro brought with it. But, as the current economic crisis has revealed, while EU/EMU member states are nominally partners, they are also, like all capitalist countries, in competition with each other. Today, the rulers of countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal discover that, if they are to close their gaping balance of payments deficits, they must compete head-to-head with the German export juggernaut. Fat chance!

Paul Krugman thinks he has a solution, one that is also embraced by a number of European social democrats. According to Krugman, "to make the euro work, Europe needs to move much further toward political union, so that European nations start to function more like American states" (*New York Times*, 15 February). We long ago debunked the illusion that the EU could lay the basis for a capitalist United States of Europe, writing in a statement by the International Communist League:

"Since capitalism is organised on the basis of particular national states, itself the cause of repeated imperialist wars to re-divide the world, it is impossible to cohere a stable pan-European bourgeois state. A European imperialist 'superstate' can only be achieved by the methods of



Left: German Trotskyists raise call "For a Socialist United States of Europe!" at 1982 demonstration in Bonn. Right: At February 2008 Berlin protest against Turkish attack on Iraqi Kurds, placard at left reads: "Down With Racist Fortress Europe! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!"



Spartakist photos

stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and internal capitalist counterrevolutionary forces. At the same time, we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy and place power in the hands of workers and peasants councils committed to the struggle for a world socialist order. If the proletariat of the capitalist world is to advance its struggles against the rapacious exploiters, it must embrace the fight to defend the remaining deformed workers states, and the social gains embodied in them, against the common class enemy.

Europe in the Global Capitalist Crisis

Like the financial crisis that was sparked by the unraveling of the U.S. subprime mortgage sector, the crisis that shook the European Union (EU) this spring originated in a relatively tiny segment of the global economy: Greece. In both cases, the effect of the financial collapse at the origin of the crisis was magnified many

ment bonds, banks across Europe could be saddled with crippling losses. Such fears came to a head in early May as the value of sovereign bonds of the most vulnerable European countries plunged. As happened in the U.S. following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, short-term credit markets began to freeze up. The German government, having for months rejected pressures from France and other European countries to agree to a bailout plan, suddenly relented. On May 10, after working frantically into the early morning hours to hammer out an agreement before the financial markets opened, officials announced an almost \$1 trillion loan package by the EU and IMF to help the Greek and other troubled EU governments avoid default.

At bottom, the EU rescue package is—no less than Washington's bank bailout—a case of bourgeois governments using taxpayers' money to line the pockets of financial capitalists. As part of the rescue plan, the European Central Bank (ECB) committed to buying Greek bonds held

ILWU...

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Spartacist League supporters also participated in the much smaller afternoon picket line. SSA had cancelled its order for an evening crew to work the Zim ship. But when the ship finally arrived after 5:30 p.m., a protest organizer announced that it was being tied up to the docks. Someone yelled out to ask who was doing the work. The question was ignored, and no wonder, since it was *ILWU linesmen* who were working behind the picket line. The ship was unloaded the following morning by an ILWU crew.

We do not fault the longshoremen who tied up the ship. For all the hoopla, the fact of the matter is that little to no effort was made to mobilize ILWU members for what some on the left are trumpeting as a “historic” labor action. Most ILWU members were not even aware that this protest was taking place. Those ILWUers who refused to cross the morning picket line had not been dispatched to work the Zim ship for the simple reason that it hadn’t even arrived. Confronted with the picket, these workers were either sold illusions in their class enemy by the promoters of the “boycott, sanctions and divestment” movement or just walked away with the promise of some of their wages. As a former ILWU Local 6 member argued on the Advance the Struggle Web site:

“The claim that the rank-and-file stopped an Israeli ship in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle is misleading. Pro-Palestinian activists set up a picket line with the intent of invoking an arbitrator to send



Spartacists at June 20 Oakland picket.

the longshore workers home for ‘health and safety’ reasons according to their contract. Which worked, but NOT based on any agency on the part of the workers.”

For International Labor Solidarity!

Many speakers at the June 20 picket invoked a 1984 action by ILWU Local 10 members who refused to unload South African cargo aboard the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* in solidarity with the fight of the black population of South Africa against the apartheid regime. We saluted the longshoremen who stood firm for ten days despite the refusal of the ILWU tops to give the action official union backing, leaving the longshoremen to go it alone. At the time, *Workers Vanguard* supported

Local 10 executive board member Stan Gow, who fought for a solid union picket line to stop all work on the South Africa-bound *Kimberley* and to shut down the port against any retaliation by the shipping bosses. Helping the ILWU tops head off any such action were a couple of left-talking operators on the Local 10 executive board, including Howard Keylor, a supporter of the misnamed “Bolshevik Tendency.” At the June 20 protest, Keylor promoted himself as the author of the 1984 action. (For an honest and synthetic account of this action, see “The Truth About the 1984 *Nedlloyd Kimberley* Boycott,” WV No. 873, 7 July 2006.)

The ILWU Local 10 bureaucracy has a long history of spouting fine words of

“solidarity” that cover for inaction or betrayal of the class interests of the workers in practice. Heyman and Thomas, who have long been fixtures in the bureaucracy, merely give this game a “militant” veneer in their role as the labor face of the Bay Area radical-liberal milieu. At a June 5 Bay Area protest against the Israeli assault on the *Mavi Marmara*, Heyman argued that “pressuring the Obama administration for justice is illusory” and counterposed mobilizing workers power to appeals for “consumer boycotts.” But it was precisely appeals to the imperialists to rein in their Zionist allies that were behind the June 20 protest picket, of which Heyman was a central organizer. Rather than advancing class-struggle action by longshore and other workers in defense of the Palestinians, these politics contributed to the token nature of the Oakland port protest.

International labor solidarity is key to defending the struggles of the working masses and oppressed peoples of the world against their brutal subjugation by the imperialists and their local henchmen. Not only would such solidarity by U.S. trade unionists strengthen the power of the workers overseas in the fight for the socialist overthrow of their capitalist rulers, but also it would advance the class struggle in this country against the main enemy, U.S. imperialism. This perspective means fighting for a new leadership of the unions—one rooted in a program of proletarian internationalist struggle, not pandering to the class enemy—as part of the struggle to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party. Only such a party can lead the struggle for the socialist liberation of humanity.■

Adolf Hitler, not those of Jacques Delors, the French social-democratic architect of Maastricht.”

—“For a Workers Europe—For Socialist Revolution!”
WV No. 670, 13 June 1997

As Marxists, we oppose the European Union, an imperialist trade bloc and a vehicle for European capitalist classes to cooperate against the working class and oppressed minorities of each country. Our opposition is based on proletarian internationalism and is counterposed to the nationalist protectionism pushed by the reformist leaders of the working class. As our 1997 statement declared:

“In the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, Marx and Engels noted that the capitalist system had created a world market, laying the basis for proletarian internationalism. Only the taking of state power by the working class, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in at least several advanced industrial countries, can achieve a rationally planned economy, placing the productive capacity of Europe at the service of the working people of the world. Only on this basis can we speak of a *Socialist* United States of Europe.”

Expropriate the Expropriators!

Massive government intervention into the economy has done nothing to resolve the underlying debt crisis, which threatens to erupt anew in myriad ways. Banks have still not accounted for a lot of bad debt, including from those mortgage-backed securities that have not been taken over by the government. A number of “zombie” banks are technically insolvent but have been kept alive by government support. Now banks face a further tidal wave of losses as new categories of bad debt come to the fore—such as commercial real estate loans, to which regional banks are particularly exposed. And such losses could well be dwarfed by the chain reaction set off by a default (even if partial) by Greece or other debt-ridden countries.

Last year Krugman proposed that a way to reinforce the financial system was to “temporarily nationalize the most troubled banks” in order to give them “a large injection of capital from taxpayers” before returning them to private ownership (*New York Times*, 19 October 2009). The ISO also called to nationalize the banks, proclaiming, moreover, that this would be “an important step on the road to socialism.” The ISO’s Fred Moseley



WV Photo

April 2008 Philadelphia demonstration for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

wrote in *International Socialist Review* (March-April 2009):

“When a financial crisis threatens, or begins, there seem to be only two options: bail out the financial capitalists in some way or suffer a more severe financial crisis.... “The only way to avoid this cruel dilemma is to make the economy less dependent on financial capitalists. And the only way to accomplish this greater independence from financial capitalists is for the government itself to become the main provider of credit in the economy, especially for home mortgages, and perhaps also for consumer loans, and maybe even eventually for business loans. In other words, finance should be nationalized and operated by the government in the interest of public policy objectives.”

Make the economy less dependent on financial capitalists by turning the banks over to the likes of Timothy Geithner? In Italy, the fact that the bulk of the banking system was nationalized in the 1930s and remained largely government-owned until well into the 1990s did nothing to prevent extravagant risk-taking by financial capitalists. In the early ’90s, a severe financial crisis caused by a wave of bad loans brought down dozens of Italian banks, which together accounted for fully 11 percent of the country’s lending.

The ISO’s schema closely parallels that put forward by French Socialists under François Mitterrand, who came to power in 1981 in a popular-front coalition with the Communist Party and the bourgeois Left Radicals. Promising a “great peaceful revolution,” in 1982 the Mitterrand government took over 100 percent of the capital of all the large private banks—a total of 36—as well as of a number of

industrial groups, giving the government direct control over about 50 percent of the country’s industrial investment and virtually all credit. Within a year, as France struggled through the global economic downturn, the Mitterrand government launched an austerity program including a wage freeze, cuts in social programs and mass layoffs. An academic history of those years concluded: “Nationalisation enabled French industry to modernize and restructure in a blunt, indeed brutal manner. The success of the 1982 nationalisation programme was confirmed by the

popularity of these firms when privatised by the 1986-88 government of Jacques Chirac,” the right-wing premier at the time (Alistair Cole, *François Mitterrand: A Study in Political Leadership* [1994]).

In the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, written in the midst of the Great Depression, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky wrote: “Only the expropriation of the private banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state will provide the latter with the necessary actual, i.e., material resources—and not merely paper and bureaucratic resources—for economic planning.” Trotsky insisted that “*the state-ization of the banks* will produce these favorable results only if the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers.”

Achieving that task—the conquest of state power by the proletariat—requires a social revolution. The necessary instrument to lead such a struggle to victory is a vanguard party of the proletariat modeled on the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. Through intervening into class and social struggle and fighting for the Marxist worldview, the International Communist League seeks to provide that instrument through the reorganizing of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.■

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For Proletarian Internationalism, Not Appeals to Imperialism!

Defend the Palestinians Against Zionist State Terror!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 211 (Summer 2010), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

WORKERS HAMMER

Particularly since the Zionist rulers' massacre on the Gaza aid flotilla, many defenders of the oppressed Palestinians have renewed their calls for "boycotts, disinvestment and sanctions" (BDS) against Israel. As revolutionary internationalists, we support time-limited trade union actions against the Israeli state. An example is the Swedish dock workers' action boycotting Israeli ships and goods coming from or destined for Israel from 22 to 29 June in protest against Israel's attack on the "Freedom Flotilla." In general, we are in favour of the trade unions refusing to handle *military* goods being shipped to Israel, which would be a blow not only against the Zionist rulers but also against the British, U.S. and other imperialist ruling classes.

But while we support the proposed action of the Swedish dockers, we oppose the political strategy of the reformist union bureaucracies that initiated it. While raising the supportable demand for lifting the blockade of Gaza, the call for the Swedish workers action also demands that "Israel pays respect to international law" and calls for "a general blockade of Israeli goods until the rights of the Palestinian people are guaranteed and the blockade of Gaza is lifted." In a similar vein, a recent statement signed by British union leaders Tony Woodley, Dave Prentis, Billy Hayes, Bob Crow and Mark Serwotka says: "We call on the British government and the European Union to suspend the EU-Israel association agreement and to end their support for the blockade and collective punishment of the men, women and children of Gaza. We call for support for a policy of boycott of Israeli products, disinvestment from Israeli companies and sanctions against Israel until justice for the Palestinian people has been achieved" (*Guardian*, 5 June).

We are politically opposed to standing boycotts and to campaigns for disinvestment and sanctions against Israel, which are counterposed to the international working-class struggle on which the liberation of the Palestinians is premised. BDS campaigns serve to promote illusions in the benign nature of other capitalist powers—not least British imperialism—relative to Israel. If successful, boycott campaigns would hurt the working class of Israel, both Hebrew-speaking and Arab, causing mass layoffs and weakening its social power, which can and must be mobilised to smash the Zionist state from within through socialist revolution.

The reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) supports the strategy of BDS and



London, June 5: Thousands protest Zionist massacre on *Mavi Marmara*, demand end to blockade of Gaza.

On Boycotts, Disinvestment and Sanctions

explains its broad aims in an article titled "The Fight Against Israeli Apartheid" in *Socialist Worker* (19 June) which says:

"The BDS strategy is to seek international support and solidarity until Israel complies with international law: that means Israel must end the occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza and apply its own laws equitably and universally to Jew and to Arab alike.

"BDS is about building an international movement to isolate Israel economically, culturally and academically. It is about persuading artists, writers, and performers not to work in Israel—following the examples of Gil Scott-Heron, Elvis Costello and others. It is about identifying Israeli products that are imported into Britain—not just those produced by settlements on illegally confiscated Palestinian resources—and pressing importers and outlets not to stock them. It is about gathering from supermarket shelves all products illegally produced in the West Bank and presenting them to the managers to help them avoid prosecution for selling stolen goods."

The article notes that "BDS is NOT about boycotting individual Israeli scholars or academics," but is an "institutional boycott." In the face of a vicious Zionist outcry against British unions which had called for academic boycotts of Israel in

2006 we wrote: "The Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Group call for the defence of the UCU [University and College Union] and other unions and organisations against the Zionist backlash and recognise that the boycott campaign is motivated out of solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians" (*Workers Hammer* No. 196, Autumn 2006). At the same time, we noted that:

"The university unions' boycott, which is part of the wider divestment campaign against Israel, represents an appeal to the supposed morality of British and European academic institutions and funding bodies to sever any links with the brutally oppressive and murderous Israeli regime. The problem with this is that the universities in Britain are no less attached to the British state than they are to the Israeli state in Israel. And the British imperialist state is no less bloody than the Israeli state."

From India to Kenya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Northern Ireland, British imperialism has left a trail of carnage around the globe throughout its history. The present bloody mess in the Near East is itself the legacy of the "divide-and-rule" machinations of British imperialism when it was the dominant world power.

Appealing to the blood-soaked British imperialists, *Socialist Worker* (5 June) put forward a call that "We must force Britain to break all links with Israel, including shutting down its embassy." The notion that the British government, corporations or campus administrations (or for that matter, the EU or the UN) can be "persuaded" to promote economic and social justice is ludicrous. But the programme of the SWP rests on the myth that British imperialism can be pressured into acting on behalf of the oppressed and perpetuates the very illusions in imperialist "democracy" that Marxists seek to destroy. As we said in "Zionist Backlash over 'Boycott Israel'" (*Workers Hammer* No. 196, Autumn 2006):

"Why not call for a boycott of all British consumer goods, protesting the British rulers' brutality against the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, not to mention British imperialism's role in the subjugation of Iraq and Afghanistan? Not only does this promote illusions in the 'democratic' and 'civilised' nature of other capitalist powers and corporations which the campaign seeks to dissuade from doing business with Israel, such a campaign is actually anti-working class."

Boycotts and Apartheid South Africa

The "boycott, disinvestment and sanctions" campaign is consciously modelled on the campaign for disinvestment from and sanctions against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s. Writing in the *Guardian* (10 January 2009), Naomi Klein argued that "The best strategy to end the increasingly bloody occupation is for Israel to become the target of the kind of global movement that put an end to apartheid in South Africa." The disinvestment campaign against South Africa in Europe and North America was centrally promoted by the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC). It was based on a claim that South African capitalism could be fundamentally reformed through pressure from "democratic" imperialist powers such as the U.S. and Britain. In fact, it was not disinvestment, but the mass social struggles of the black and other non-white toilers, centred on the working class, which brought an end to direct white-supremacist rule in South Africa. The significant wage gains won by black class struggle and the instability caused by a growing strike movement deterred investment in South Africa.

At the time, our organisation uniquely told the truth: that disinvestment was *at best* an empty moral gesture; that if foreign companies did withdraw substantial productive assets this would hurt black workers and weaken the powerful black union movement; and, most crucially, that it was obscene to look to U.S. imperialism and its British junior partner as a

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