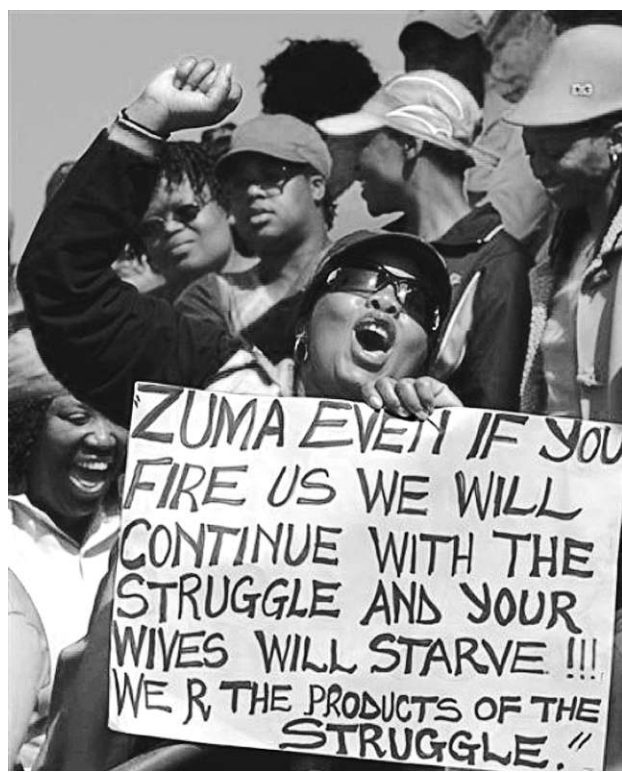


South Africa: Capitalist Government Shaken by Public Workers Strike



Reuters

Left: Striking public workers rally in Pretoria on August 10. Right: Teachers union protests in Soweto on August 20, two days after COSATU unions joined in nationwide strike.



AP

Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

SEPTEMBER 6—Teachers, nurses and other public service workers are furious over today's announcement that union bureaucrats have "suspended" their three-week nationwide strike for 21 days. Shutting down schools, hospitals and government offices, this battle brought the predominantly black working class into direct conflict with the capitalist government of the Tripartite Alliance—the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The union tops are desperately trying to get workers, who have been fighting for an 8.6 percent pay hike and a 1,000-rand (\$137) monthly housing allotment, to cave in to the government's terms of 7.5 percent and R800. Last week, workers defiantly rejected that same offer, which was drawn up after South African president Jacob Zuma returned from a trip to China and insisted on an end to the strike. In the Johannesburg area today, our comrades of Spartacist South Africa report, members of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union attending a union rally denounced the sellout, while at a mass meeting of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union,

local leaders were pelted with eggs by the membership.

Involving 19 COSATU unions and others grouped in the Independent Labour Caucus, the strike, which included white workers, was preceded by walkouts by the independent Public Servants Association on July 29 and 30 and on August 10, when COSATU unions also struck. Public sector workers bitterly recall that after going on strike for four weeks in 2007, many never received the full pay and benefits package promised at the time.

Government spokesmen lecture the workers that there is "no money" to meet their demands. Dripping with sheer class contempt, the London *Economist* (2 September) intoned: "The above-inflation pay increases that Cosatu has claimed over the past five years have swelled government expenditure and crowded out spending on worthier causes." This semi-official organ of British and American bankers portrays unionized South African workers as some kind of privileged layer.

The reality is that superexploited labor—black, Coloured (mixed race) and Indian—remains the bedrock of South African capitalism, 16 years after the end of white-supremacist apartheid rule.

Before the ongoing strike even started, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi parroted the capitalist rulers' poverty pleas in trying to head off the strike. Once the strike began, Vavi, under pressure from the base of the unions, mouthed some criticisms of the government and "corrupt" officials. But this was for the purpose of retaining his authority with a restive membership, the better to push through a sellout. Vavi's service to Zuma & Co. is a clear expression of the role of the COSATU bureaucracy, which heavily overlaps with the leadership of the SACP, as the labor lieutenants of the (overwhelmingly white) capitalist class. As the labor face of neo-apartheid capitalism, their job is to *contain* class struggle.

Class tensions in South Africa reached a boiling point in recent months amid growing disillusionment with Zuma,

who was billed as "pro-worker" by the COSATU and SACP tops. Transnet workers, who run the state-owned freight train network, pipelines and ports, won an 11 percent raise in May after a 17-day strike halted exports. In June, workers at the state-owned electricity generator Eskom also won a 9 percent wage increase and a 1,500 rand housing allowance after they threatened to turn the lights out during the World Cup. Following an auto assembly strike by 30,000 workers in August, some 7,000 members of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) in the tire industry and 40,000 more at gas stations, auto parts plants and dealerships are currently on strike, bringing production at several auto manufacturers to a halt. More than 8,000 union miners are also on strike.

Uniquely in sub-Saharan Africa, the South African proletariat is powerfully concentrated in mining, manufacturing and other industries. This gives it the potential to lead the oppressed and destitute

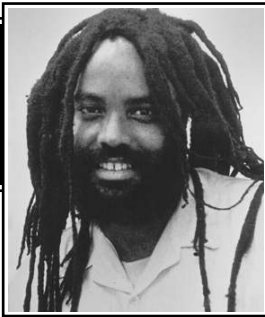
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Honduras: Massive Struggles Under Military Repression....3



From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

Punishing Lynne



Lynne Stewart, the activist lawyer, was recently sentenced to 10 years in prison.

This outstanding lawyer, a 70 year old grandmother, who is facing the serious threat of breast cancer, was originally sentenced to 2 years and 4 months, but the federal appeals court apparently felt that wasn't enough.

The same appeals courts that traditionally reverse the convictions of cops who torture or kill Black citizens, and who traditionally rely on the judgments of the trial courts, reversed Stewart's sentence as not tough enough.

So much for judicial tradition.

For Lynne's tradition wasn't that of the tony, tie and tails law firms of downtown Manhattan. She didn't represent the rich, the powerful, the well-heeled.

She represented the poor, the oppressed, the destitute and the dispossessed; the Black, the Latino,

the Arab, the damned; those whom Frantz Fanon famously called "the wretched of the earth."

A juxtaposition: Many, many lawyers on the Office of Legal Counsel, in the White House, the CIA, and the Defense Dept. violated criminal laws, the military legal code, the Geneva Conventions, and the Convention Against Torture (CAT) [not to mention the U.S. Constitution!] to aid and abet violations of law—for years.

Guess how many of them faced trial? Guess how many of them will in future?

How many of them will ever face prison?

None, None—and none.

For their crimes were on behalf of the powerful; the state; hence their immunity.

Or consider what is known in international law as the "supreme crime": wars of aggression.

Iraq will be a basket case for generations, thanks to

American arrogance and greed.

Will anybody be brought to book for this crime, that shattered a nation, that sent millions into exile, and killed perhaps a million men, women and children?

Don't hold your breath.

There are still black sites, secret prisons, where tortures happen daily. There is still extraordinary renditions—clear violations of the Convention Against Torture (CAT).

But politicians are doing it—not to "protect" the nation—but to secure elections. Torture for votes.

And a 70 year old grandmother, a lawyer, is sent to prison for 10 years—for violating a prison rule that is an unconstitutional relic of the so-called war on terror.

This is what an empire in decline looks like.

18 July 2010

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Send urgently needed contributions for Mumia's legal defense, made payable to "National Lawyers Guild Foundation" and earmarked for "Mumia," to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, P.O. Box 2012, New York, NY 10159.

If you wish to correspond with Mumia, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370.

Letter

On Nepal and Caste Oppression

July 31, 2010

To the editor:

Your statement in "India: Down With Government War on Maoists, Tribal Peoples!" (WV 962) that "[b]y 2006, Maoist forces [in Nepal]...controlled up to 80 percent of the countryside, where they enacted significant social reforms including...an end to the caste system" mars an otherwise fine and important article. It gives a deeply false picture of the nature of caste oppression in South Asia and of the social process that will be required to remove it.

Comradely greetings,
Alan and Sarah

WV replies: The formulation about ending caste oppression was indeed mislead-

ing. Multiple sources describe the impact of the Maoists' reforms in the countryside, notably for women. Maoist forces also made significant moves against the caste system, declaring that caste discrimination was banned in the zones they controlled. While the Maoists made incursions into the caste system, we understand that caste oppression is deeply intertwined with capitalist exploitation in South Asia and cannot be ended by fiat alone. It will take proletarian socialist revolution, combined with agrarian revolution in the countryside, to lay the material basis for ending the caste system, the oppression of women and all forms of social oppression, as laid out elsewhere in the article. ■

Spartacus Youth Club Events

TORONTO

Wednesday, Sept. 15, 6 p.m.

The Principles of Communism: Who We Are and What We Fight For

University of Toronto
Ontario Institute
for Studies in Education
252 Bloor St. West, Room 4420
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, Sept. 22, 6:30 p.m.

The Origins of Marxism

University of British Columbia
Student Union Building
Room 42V
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

NEW YORK CITY

Thursday, Sept. 23, 7:30 p.m.

Meet the Marxists at CCNY

La Pregunta Arts Cafe
1528 Amsterdam Ave.
(between 135th and 136th St.)

For more information:
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

CHICAGO

Wednesday, Sept. 15, 6:30 p.m.

The Fight to Build a Revolutionary Workers Party

University of Illinois at Chicago
African American Cultural Center
Gallery Room 207
Addams Hall
830 S. Halsted Street
(take Blue Line—UIC Halsted stop)
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

BAY AREA

Saturday, Sept. 25, 3 p.m.

Workers Vanguard Readers Circle

Racist Police Terror and the Killing of Oscar Grant

The Fight for Black Freedom and for Socialist Revolution

1634 Telegraph Ave., Oakland
(near corner of 17th and Telegraph and 19th St. BART Station; left-hand doorbell)
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

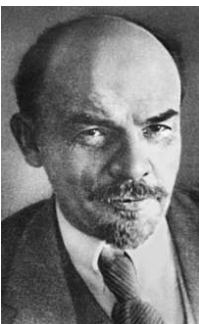
Visit the ICL Web Site:
www.icl-fi.org

For Proletarian Internationalist Struggle Against U.S. Imperialism!

As emphasized in a document adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International, communists in the U.S. have a special duty to fight against U.S. imperialism's military and economic rape of its colonies and neocolonies in Latin America and elsewhere. (The document refers to the Philippines and Hawaii, which were both colonial territories of the U.S. at the time.) In the advanced capitalist countries and in the countries under their boot, the prerequisite



TROTSKY



LENIN

for revolutionary struggle to overturn the imperialist order is the political independence of the proletarian vanguard from all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces.

One of the primary concerns of the United States section of the Fourth International, in the struggle against American imperialism, is the support of all genuinely progressive revolutionary movements directed against American imperialism in Latin America or the Pacific (the Philippines, Hawaii, Samoa, etc.) or against the Wall Street puppet dictatorships in those countries, while preserving its complete organizational and political independence, reserving and exercising the right to organize the working class in a separate movement and the right to present its own independent program as against the petty bourgeois, vacillating, and often treacherous program and activities of the nationalists....

The capitulation of the national bourgeoisie of the Philippines to American imperialist dominance, as well as the attempts by certain sections of the North American bourgeoisie to misuse the sentiment for national independence for their own reactionary ends, reveal the indispensability of proletarian class leadership of the colonial and semicolonial countries as the only assurance that genuine national independence will be fought for seriously and consistently and be achieved. At the same time, the Fourth Internationalists point out that none of the countries of Latin America or the Pacific which are now under the domination of American imperialism to one degree or another, is able either to attain complete freedom from foreign oppression or to retain such freedom for any length of time if it confines its struggle to the efforts of its own self. Only a union of the Latin American peoples, striving towards the goal of a united socialist America and allied in the struggle with the revolutionary proletariat of the United States, would present a force strong enough to contend successfully with North American imperialism.

—"Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism" (September 1938)

WORKERS VANGUARD



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

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EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Elizabeth Johnson

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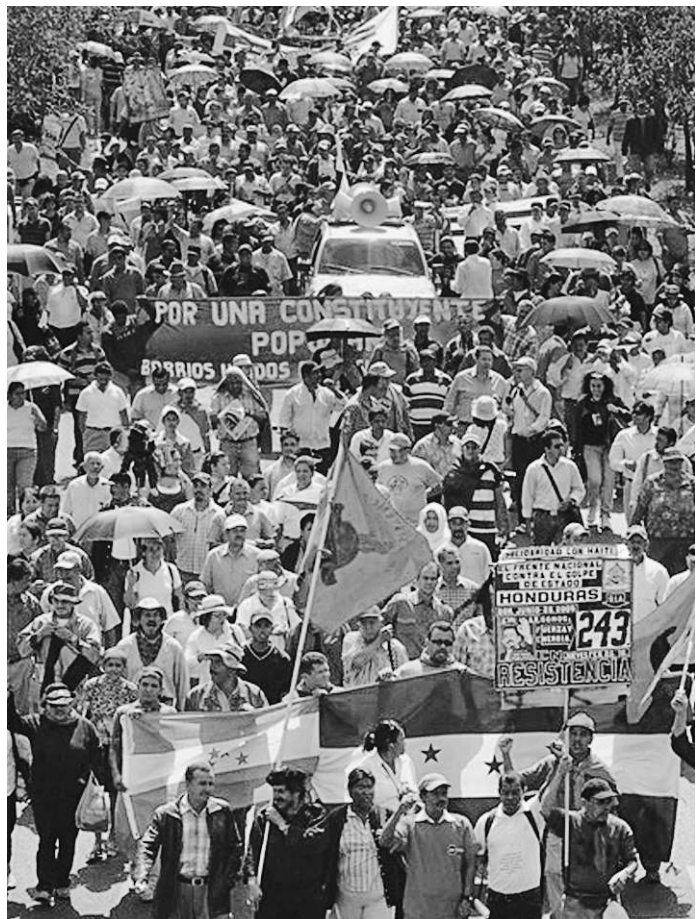
No. 964

10 September 2010

Honduras: Massive Struggles Under Military Repression



Left: Soldiers surround presidential palace in Tegucigalpa during 28 June 2009 coup against Manuel Zelaya. Right: Pro-Zelaya resistance members and teachers organizations march in capital, February 25.



Reuters

Forge an Internationalist Revolutionary Workers Party!

Sharp social struggles have rocked the impoverished U.S. neocolony of Honduras ever since the June 2009 military overthrow of bourgeois populist president Manuel “Mel” Zelaya. An estimated 50,000 people protested in the streets of the capital city of Tegucigalpa this May Day, and thousands throughout the country marched in protest on June 28, the anniversary of the coup. The 65,000-strong teachers union has been on strike since August 9, fighting against the government’s withholding over \$150 million from the union retirement fund and also against plans to privatize teacher training schools.

In solidarity with the teachers, union federations are calling for strikes on September 7 and October 12 as a step toward a general strike, demanding an increase in the minimum wage and opposing the privatization of public services. There have also been protests by peasants demanding cheap credit and defending a land reform decree issued under Zelaya. These courageous expressions of popular opposition to the coup regime are taking place despite severe repression by the military, police and shadowy death squads. Dozens of oppositionists have been murdered since the coup, and thousands have been arrested, kidnapped, tortured, raped or beaten.

Heavily boycotted elections in November 2009 installed Porfirio Lobo of the National Party as the new president, replacing Liberal Party coup leader Roberto Micheletti as civilian head of the military-backed government. After his January inauguration, Lobo amnestied the coup participants and booted Zelaya, who had reentered Honduras and received asylum in the Brazilian Embassy, into exile in the Dominican Republic. The Obama administration praised these efforts at “national reconciliation” and has lobbied hard for international recognition of the Lobo government. Meanwhile, as documented by numerous human rights groups, the “new” Honduran regime immediately intensified repression, particularly targeting trade

unionists, journalists and their families, as well as leaders and supporters of the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP)—a mass pro-Zelaya bourgeois populist movement that formed immediately after the coup.

The June 2009 coup by the Honduran military was instigated by U.S. imperialism and/or its Honduran lackeys. The Zelaya presidency had increasingly taken on a populist character after being confronted with social turmoil marked by strikes, land occupations and protests. Zelaya implemented various ameliorative reforms to head off social unrest, and in 2008 he allied with Venezuela’s populist president Hugo Chávez. These acts led to an intensified polarization in the bourgeoisie between Zelaya and his supporters on the one hand and the more hard-line oligarchs, the Honduran military and the U.S. imperialists on the other. Local business owners were particularly outraged when, in December 2008, Zelaya announced a minimum-wage increase of 60 percent. A nonbinding referendum on convening a constituent assembly, which Zelaya scheduled for 28 June 2009, became the pretext for the military coup and state of siege.

This was not just an intra-bourgeois squabble in which the working class had no side. It was necessary for the proletariat to oppose the coup—which threatened the ability of the working class to organize in its own interests and struck a blow at all the downtrodden—and to defend the reforms won under Zelaya. Without giving any *political* support to Zelaya’s bourgeois populist government, Marxists were duty-bound to *militarily* defend Zelaya and his supporters against the coup and to side with the masses on the streets, fighting for the proletariat to emerge under its own banner.

It is elementary for Marxists to defend bourgeois-democratic rights and other gains for workers and the oppressed when they come under attack. In Mexico in 2005, the right-wing National Action

Party (PAN) government under Vicente Fox moved to ban the presidential candidacy of Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the bourgeois populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). While this was a juridical measure and not a military coup as in Honduras, our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México opposed the attack, declaring:

“This attack would have represented a blow against the thin ‘democratic’ layer covering volatile Mexican capitalism and would have reinforced state tyranny. We Spartacists opposed the PAN’s attack against the elementary democratic rights of the entire population: essentially the right of people to vote for whomever they want.... We took this position without giving the PRD any political support and while making clear the PRD’s bourgeois and therefore inherently anti-worker nature.”

—“Mexico: López Obrador, Democratic Rights and the Tasks of the Working Class,” WV Nos. 853 and 855, 2 September and 30 September 2005

Defense of Honduran trade unionists and others caught in the vise of brutal repression is in the direct interests of the proletariat internationally. Workers and leftists in the U.S. have a special duty to defend the Honduran masses. Since the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. rulers have considered Central America and the Caribbean their own fiefdom. Despite some policy differences, the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations both helped set the stage for Zelaya’s ouster, with the Obama White House subsequently propping up the coup government and strongly backing the successor Lobo regime. The Spartacist League/U.S. fights to mobilize opposition to U.S. imperialism based on proletarian class opposition to both capitalist parties, Democratic and Republican.

Central America and Permanent Revolution

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, part of

the Central American isthmus that is divided into small, marginal states under the U.S. imperialist boot. Until well after World War II, Honduras was the quintessential “banana republic,” dominated by United Fruit and Standard Fruit. Today, however, the economy is no longer completely dependent on traditional agricultural exports. There is also a *maquiladora* light industrial export sector employing over 100,000 workers. To maintain its rule, the tiny and weak Honduran bourgeoisie relies on its bonapartist military officer corps and, crucially, on the backing of the American imperialists.

The role the Honduran rulers have played on behalf of U.S. imperialism in the region was clearly seen in the 1980s when U.S. military forces used Honduras—dubbed Washington’s “unsinkable aircraft carrier”—as its strategic base of operations against Sandinista Nicaragua and leftist guerrilla forces in El Salvador and Guatemala. U.S. imperialism’s dirty wars in Central America were part of its drive for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, a degenerated workers state, and to roll back the gains of the Cuban Revolution, with leftist insurgents declared to be Cuban and Soviet proxies.

Honduras was a staging ground for the U.S.-backed *contra* counterrevolutionaries who sought the bloody overthrow of Nicaragua’s left-nationalist Sandinista government. The 1979 Sandinista-led insurrection that overthrew the hated Somoza dictatorship shattered the capitalist state’s repressive apparatus as the National Guard fled into exile (along with some of the bourgeoisie). We fought to defend the Nicaraguan revolution, calling on the workers to complete it by expropriating the remaining bourgeoisie and to extend socialist revolution throughout Central America. After a decade of attacks by the *contra* murderers and a U.S. starvation blockade, the Sandinistas’ dead-end strategy of negotiating with the imperialists and allowing the local capitalists to retain

continued on page 4

Honduras...

(continued from page 3)

control of the economy demoralized the exhausted Nicaraguan masses. In 1990, a U.S.-supported bourgeois regime was elected, marking the reconsolidation of a capitalist state.

The U.S. also enlisted the Honduran military in its efforts to smash El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)—a large left-wing guerrilla insurgency that fought against the murderous U.S.-backed military junta. We called for military victory to the Salvadoran leftists and for workers revolution, declaring that defense of Cuba and the USSR began in El Salvador. But a military victory for the insurgents was obstructed by the popular-frontist FMLN leadership. Embracing a class-collaborationist alliance with a "progressive" wing of the Salvadoran bourgeoisie, the FMLN sought a "negotiated solution" with the death-squad regime. The leftist forces eventually signed a sellout, U.S.-brokered settlement in 1992, an abject accommodation to the post-Soviet "new world order." Today's Sandinista and FMLN leaders serve as openly bourgeois politicians at the head of their respective capitalist states.

In the last decade, in much of Latin America popular revulsion at the nakedly pro-imperialist "neoliberal" governments has been channeled into support for a new layer of bourgeois populists, from Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and Bolivia's Evo Morales to Zelaya in Honduras. However, this shift is not "anti-capitalist." While posing as defenders of the oppressed and exploited masses, these rulers seek to co-opt and contain discontent within a capitalist framework, which necessarily means subordination to the world imperialist system. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the October Revolution of 1917, wrote in "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940):

"Inasmuch as the chief role in backward countries is not played by national but by foreign capitalism, the national bourgeoisie occupies, in the sense of its social position, a much more minor position than corresponds with the development of industry. Inasmuch as foreign capital does not import workers but proletarianizes the native population, the national proletariat soon begins playing the most important role in the life of the country. In these conditions the national government, to the extent that it tries to show resistance to foreign capital, is compelled to a greater or lesser degree to lean on the proletariat. On the other hand, the governments of those backward countries which consider it inescapable or more profitable for themselves to march shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital, destroy the labor organizations and institute a more or less totalitarian regime. Thus, the feebleness of the national bourgeoisie, the absence of traditions of municipal self-government, the pressure of foreign capitalism, and the relatively rapid growth of the proletariat, cut the ground from under any kind of stable democratic regime."

The key to social revolution in Honduras and the rest of Central and Latin America



AP



Garrido/NY Times



La Tribuna



Libertad Digital

Bloody hands from 1980s death squads to 2009 Honduran coup (left to right): General Romeo Vásquez; coup regime adviser Billy Joya; U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens; State Department ghoul Otto Reich.

is that the proletariat emerge as the leadership of all the exploited and the oppressed, in political opposition to all wings of the capitalist class, "neoliberal" or populist. The example of the 1917 Russian Revolution, a stunning confirmation of Trotsky's theory and perspective of permanent revolution, points the way forward.

In seizing power under the leadership of Lenin's Bolsheviks, the working class took in its hands the historic democratic tasks previously associated with the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries and moved on to begin the socialist reconstruction of society. The Soviet workers and peasants government abolished

There can be no liberation from imperialist domination, no real alleviation of the masses' desperate poverty short of a workers and peasants government—i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasants. Especially in a tiny neocolonial country like Honduras, such a regime would have to fight to immediately extend socialist revolution throughout the Central American isthmus and to Mexico, with its powerful proletariat. This perspective must include the fight for proletarian revolution in the U.S. imperialist heartland, which, under a workers government, would provide massive economic and technological resources for

zuela offered to buy Honduran bonds worth \$100 million, with the proceeds to be spent on housing for the poor. Chávez also offered a \$30 million credit line toward farming and for four million low-energy light bulbs, while Cuba planned to provide more doctors and literacy teachers.

Honduran business interests opposed ALBA on the grounds that it would harm "free enterprise" and interfere with the U.S.-led Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which is the equivalent of the NAFTA "free trade" rape of Mexico for Central America and the Dominican Republic. Former conservative president Ricardo Maduro warned, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you." Indeed, the alliance with Chávez did not please the representatives of U.S. imperialism. According to a 20 April article posted on the North American Congress on Latin America Web site, then-U.S. ambassador Charles Ford asserted on Honduran TV that a large portion of remittances from Honduran immigrants in the U.S. was the product of drug trafficking! With remittances making up over 20 percent of the Honduran GDP, this outrageous accusation was a none too subtle threat to withhold aid and increase deportations of Hondurans.

Zelaya wanted to have some say in how and where the American military operated in Honduras. In 2006 Zelaya met with Bush about his plans to convert part of the Soto Cano military air base, which houses 550 U.S. troops in Joint Task Force Bravo, into a civilian airport. At the same time, it was announced that a new military base would be built and made "available" to U.S. forces in the Mosquitia region in eastern Honduras. In 2009 Zelaya signed on to the Mérida Initiative supposedly aimed at drug trafficking in Central America and Mexico.

In the U.S., the "war on drugs" is a vehicle for government repression, particularly targeting blacks as well as Chicanos and Latino immigrants. In Latin America, it provides a pretext for extending imperialist domination and propping up pro-U.S. regimes; for example, the U.S. military has had a longstanding presence in Colombia, next door to Chávez's Venezuela. Under the banner of the "war on drugs," Costa Rica recently authorized the entry of 46 U.S. warships and 7,000 Marines. In June, scores of people were killed in Jamaica as the U.S. demanded that the government assist in hunting down purported gang leader Christopher Coke. We say: Down with the "war on drugs"! All U.S. military forces and bases out of Latin America and the Caribbean!

The U.S. military buildup in the region also targets the Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers state. The elimination of capitalist class 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. We stand for the unconditional military defense of Cuba against U.S. imperialism and internal counterrevolution and call for U.S. out of Guantánamo. At the same time, we fight for a proletarian political revolution against the Castroite bureaucracy, which opposes the perspective of proletarian revolution in the Americas, favoring instead the quest for alliances with "friendly" bourgeois regimes.

U.S. Imperialism and the Honduran Coup

Polarizations in the Honduran bourgeoisie came to a head in March 2009



WV Photo

Spartacist contingent at 1981 Boston protest against U.S. support to military junta in El Salvador.

private ownership of land, calling on the poor peasants to complete the agrarian revolution against the landlords, and freed the country from the imperialist yoke. The workers state expropriated the capitalist class and took over the means of production and banking system, eventually leading to a collectivized, centrally planned economy. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky understood that to achieve socialism—a classless society of material abundance—required the extension of proletarian revolution throughout Europe and to other advanced industrial countries.

the alleviation of poverty and qualitative leaps in development throughout the Americas. What is urgently necessary is to build Leninist parties as sections of a reformed Fourth International, whose purpose is to lead the working class to victory through socialist revolutions throughout the world.

Under the Thumb of U.S. Imperialism

Manuel Zelaya is a wealthy landowner who was elected president in 2005 as a mainstream bourgeois politician of the Liberal Party, which has tended to alternate with the National Party in power. In the first six months of his term, Zelaya faced more social protest than had occurred in the previous ten years. In response, he sanctioned wage hikes and increased government subsidies to the poor, which in Honduras make up two-thirds of the population. Zelaya also sought to reduce gas prices and high national energy costs by putting fuel supply contracts out to international bid. This is hardly radical, but it provoked the ire of the Honduran and multinational fuel monopolies.

Facing shortages manipulated by the fuel companies, and with independent gas stations threatening to close and bus drivers promising to strike, in late summer 2007 Zelaya authorized direct fuel imports and vowed to build government-owned fuel depots. In January 2008 Zelaya joined Hugo Chávez's oil pact PetroCaribe, which allowed him to sign up for favorable terms for fuel. In August of the same year, with the global economic meltdown in full swing and oil prices at a high, Zelaya signed on to Chávez's ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas) trade and political alliance. In return, Vene-

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Public Office: 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318

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when Zelaya, soon after decreeing the minimum wage hike, announced a vote to gauge popular support for placing a referendum for a constituent assembly on the ballot for the November elections. The nonbinding poll was declared illegal by the courts, and the Congress, led by Roberto Micheletti, passed a law to prevent the referendum. Meanwhile, Zelaya asked the military to provide security and logistics for the balloting (the norm under the constitution, which is itself a measure of institutionalized military bonapartism in Honduras).

On June 24, after the head of the military, General Romeo Vázquez, refused to comply, Zelaya fired him. The next day, the Supreme Court ruled that Vázquez be reinstated. That same day, Zelaya led hundreds of supporters in Tegucigalpa to a nearby military base to recover boxes of blank ballots that his opponents meant to destroy. Coup rumors flew as the military deployed troops in the capital. In the early morning hours on June 28, the military kidnapped Zelaya, still in his pajamas, and flew him out of the Soto Cano air base to Costa Rica. Demonstrators that day braved the state of siege to protest outside the presidential palace. Large protests and strikes immediately followed.

In the weeks leading up to the coup, U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens and Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Shannon Jr. had met with Zelaya’s political and military opponents, purportedly to advise them to stay within constitutional bounds. (Llorens has some experience with coups—he was principal national security adviser to Bush on Venezuela during the failed U.S.-backed 2002 coup against Chávez.) The *New York Times* (30 June) quoted an unnamed U.S. official who said: “There was talk of how they might remove the president from office, how he could be arrested, on whose authority they could do that.” The article continued, “But the official said that the speculation had focused on legal maneuvers to remove the president, not a coup.”

While some Republican neocons openly supported the coup, the Democrats mainly struck a more critical posture, but with the same goal of achieving social stability in Honduras to better pursue untrammelled imperialist exploitation. The immediate public response of the Obama White House to the coup was studied neutrality, calling on “all political and social actors in Honduras to respect democratic norms.” Diplomatic pressure from Latin America and elsewhere led Obama to change his tune the next day: “We believe that the coup was not legal and that President Zelaya remains the President of Honduras.” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton qualified this by refusing to answer “yes” to a press conference question whether “restoring constitutional order” meant returning Zelaya to office. Zelaya repeatedly appealed to the Obama administration to do just that, without success.

Key Honduran coup plotters, and their advisers, have longstanding ties to the U.S. government and its bloody wars in Central America. General Vázquez twice attended the U.S. Army School of the Americas, notorious for instructing military officers in torture and other gruesome counterinsurgency techniques. Billy Joya, a key Micheletti adviser, headed the U.S.-trained Honduran Battalion 3-16—responsible for kidnapping, torturing and murdering hundreds of suspected leftists during the 1980s. U.S. figures who helped fuel the campaign against Zelaya included the sinister Otto Reich, former longtime head of the State Department’s Latin America desk who in the 1980s acted as Ambassador John Negroponte’s right-hand man in running the death squad and *contra* operations out of the embassy in Tegucigalpa. (Reich was also directly implicated in the short-lived 2002 anti-Chávez coup.)

In the Honduran coup’s aftermath, the Obama administration orchestrated “dialogue” with both parties, discussing Zelaya’s return under conditions acceptable to the coup regime. In late October 2009, Zelaya and Micheletti signed the “Tegucigalpa-San José Accord” in which



Tegucigalpa, August 27: Police fire tear gas at teachers’ protest. Defiant teachers continue protest outside Pedagogical University following cop attack.



Reuters photos

Zelaya agreed to drop his proposal for a constituent assembly in return for being allowed to serve out his last weeks in office in a “national unity” government that would amnesty the coup plotters. However, the coup regime balked at Zelaya’s return and stalled until the November elections. Widely boycotted, the elections were hailed by the U.S. and became the basis for pushing renewed diplomatic recognition of the Honduran regime.

The FNRP Opposition Movement

Unions have been prominent in the protests since the coup, offering a glimpse of the potential power of the Honduran proletariat. However, the working class has not appeared in its own name. Opposition to the coup politically coalesced around the pro-Zelaya populist nationalism of what is today called the National Front of Popu-

lar Resistance. The FNRP’s leadership includes union leaders, reformist leftists, feminists and black and indigenous rights activists. But as a July 12 FNRP communiqué lays out, first place in the National Front is reserved for Manuel Zelaya, “recognizing his leadership and placing him at the front of this project.” Pro-Zelaya dissidents from the Liberal Party also consider themselves part of the FNRP.

Class collaboration in the name of “democratic struggle” and “national liberation” has a long and disastrous history in Latin America and beyond. As we wrote in the International Communist League’s “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“The ‘anti-imperialist united front’ is the particular form that class collaboration most often assumes in the colonial and ex-colonial countries, from the liquidation of the Chinese Communist Party into Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang in the 1920s to decades of prostration of the South African ‘left’ before the African National Congress (ANC), which has become the imperialist-sponsored

Ousted Honduran president Zelaya welcomed by bourgeois populist Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez in Caracas, March 5.



front men for neo-apartheid capitalism. Today in Latin America, ‘anti-Yankee’ nationalism is the main tool whereby militant workers and insurgent peasants are induced to place their hopes in bourgeois ‘radicals.’ Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution is the alternative to placing confidence in fantasies resting upon the backward, imperialist-dependent bourgeoisie of one’s own oppressed country as the vehicle for liberation.”

In sharp contrast, various reformist left groups uphold a program that is entirely within the bounds of capitalist class rule. The day after Zelaya’s ouster, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) looked to pressure the Obama administration to act against the coup, proclaiming in an editorial that “global outrage against the coup could change the calculations in Washington.” Reinforcing the political subordination of the proletariat to its bourgeois class enemy, the PSL and much of the left internationally simply hails the FNRP and calls to reinstate Zelaya.

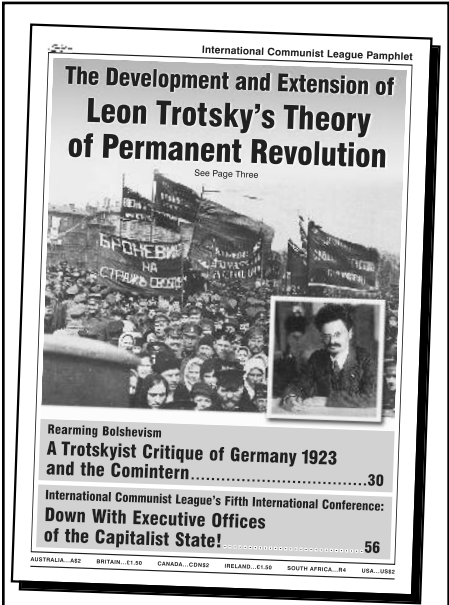
Dressing up nationalist populism with some “Trotskyist” clothing, the Mexican Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS) and its international organization, the Fracción Trotskista (FT), sometimes lay claim to the perspective of permanent revolution. But they distort the very essence of permanent revolution, which is premised on the proletariat leading all the oppressed in revolutionary struggle, independent from and in opposition to the national bourgeoisie. Instead, they complain that the bourgeois populists have failed to sufficiently lead an “anti-imperialist” struggle against the United States.

At an international FT gathering last

month, one of its spokesmen talked of “the need to build a revolutionary political alternative” to the “strategies” of the bourgeois populists, based on “the independent organization of the workers” (*La Verdad Obrera*, 26 August). At the same time, the speaker complained that not only Brazil’s Lula and Argentina’s Kirchner but “also governments friendly to Zelaya, like Chávez in Venezuela and Correa in Ecuador, did nothing but make declarations—refusing to push for a mass movement in Latin America in order to defeat the coup-plotters!”

This is a whitewash of these bourgeois regimes. Chávez, Lula and their ilk live in *deadly fear* of the proletariat emerging as an independent force against oppression and imperialism, because that would challenge their own class rule. Populists seek to maneuver among the various imperialist powers, something Chávez can more easily do because of Venezuela’s oil revenues. But whatever their rhetoric and policies, as administrators of capitalist wage slavery, they are ultimately incapable of breaking with the imperialists—they can only renegotiate the terms of their own subordination.

Zelaya’s FNRP supporters say that he has “evolved.” But he was and remains a bourgeois politician—no less the class opponent of the victory of the workers and the urban and rural poor than neoliberal politicians. And regardless of Zelaya’s personal participation, the bourgeois-nationalist program of the FNRP is antithetical to working-class political independence. Throughout Latin America, what is needed are Trotskyist parties built in political struggle against the widespread illusions in populism and nationalism. The struggle for a Socialist Federation of Central America is closely linked to working-class struggle in Mexico, the Caribbean, South and North America. In the United States, the key to building a revolutionary workers party is to break the chains forged by the pro-imperialist trade-union bureaucracy that bind the working class and minorities to the parties of capital, particularly the Democratic Party. **For workers revolution throughout the Americas! ■**



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China: Labor Struggles in the “Socialist Market Economy”



Left: Workers strike for higher wages at Honda’s Foshan auto parts plant in Guangdong Province, June 7. Right: The same day, workers striking at Taiwanese-owned rubber factory in Jiangsu Province clash with police.



Right: The same day, workers striking at Taiwanese-owned rubber factory in Jiangsu Province clash with police.

Defend the Chinese Deformed Workers State Against Imperialism, Capitalist Counterrevolution!

For Proletarian Political Revolution!

This past spring, China experienced a major strike wave involving young migrant workers employed mainly in factories owned by Japanese, other foreign and offshore Chinese capital. It was centered in the southern coastal province of Guangdong, the main region in the country producing light manufactures for export. Three dozen strikes took place in that province in the span of a month and a half. The upsurge of labor militancy extended to other indus-

PART ONE

trial regions. For example, workers at a Taiwanese-owned rubber plant near Shanghai clashed with police; around 50 workers were injured. In most cases, the strikes were settled quickly with wage increases and other gains for the workers. Recognizing in its own way the significance of these developments, the *Economist* (31 July), a house organ for American and British finance capital, headlined an editorial: “The Rising Power of the Chinese Worker.”

The strike wave began in mid May at a Honda plant in Foshan that produces transmissions for the company’s four auto assembly plants in China. As a result of the work stoppage, which lasted nearly three weeks, production in all of these plants came to a halt. The strike, which ended with a wage increase averaging 30 percent, was viewed as an important victory for the workers.

Strikes are not uncommon in China. However, they are usually very short-lived, quickly settled and/or quickly suppressed. And they are almost never reported in the government-directed media for fear that doing so would encourage other workers to engage in similar actions. That is just what happened in the case of the Foshan Honda strike, as the conflict between Chinese workers and the Japanese auto giant became a focus of domestic as well as international attention. Subsequently, the authorities reverted to a policy of clamping down on news of labor unrest.

Organization and leadership of the strikes were provided by worker activists outside the bureaucratic structures of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the official union federation, tied to the ruling Communist Party (CCP). One strike leader, Li Xiaojuan, a 20-year-old woman worker at the Foshan Honda plant, wrote an open letter on behalf of the negotiating committee that declared:

“We must maintain a high degree of unity and not let the representatives of Capital divide us.... This factory’s profits are the fruits of our bitter toil.... This struggle is not just about the interests of our 1,800 workers. We also care about the rights and interests of all Chinese workers.”

— quoted in *Financial Times* (London), 10 June

The strike wave in the capitalist sector of its industrial economy underscores the fundamental social contradictions of China as a bureaucratically deformed workers state. As Trotskyists (revolutionary Marxists), we strongly supported the strikes and emphasized that the rights and interests of Chinese workers require a leadership with a comprehensive program of class struggle at the political as well as economic levels:

“Chinese workers need a class-struggle leadership to advance their struggle to wrest as much as possible from the capitalist companies that are exploiting them, fight the ravages of inflation and improve their working and living conditions. Workers in state-owned industry also need such a leadership to protect and advance their living standards and to fight against bureaucratic abuse.”

— “Militant Strike Wave in China,” WV No. 961, 2 July

The contradictions besetting the Chinese deformed workers state will ultimately be resolved either by a proletarian political revolution, opening the road to socialism, or capitalist counterrevolution and imperialist re-enslavement.

A Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State

The People’s Republic of China emerged from the 1949 Revolution—a social revolution of world-historic sig-

nificance in which the peasant-based forces led by the Communist Party of Mao Zedong defeated

the U.S.-backed puppet regime of Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang. Hundreds of millions of peasants rose up and seized the land on which their forebears had been exploited from time immemorial. The subsequent creation of a centrally planned, collectivized economy laid the basis for enormous social gains for both urban workers and rural toilers. The revolution enabled women to advance by magnitudes over their previous miserable status, which was rooted in the old Confucian order and marked by such practices as forced marriage and concubinage. A nation that had been ravaged and divided by foreign powers was unified and freed from imperialist domination.

However, the workers state that issued from the Revolution was deformed from its inception under the rule of Mao’s CCP regime, the political apparatus of a privileged bureaucratic caste resting atop the workers state. Unlike the Russian October Revolution of 1917, which was carried out by a class-conscious proletariat guided by the Bolshevik internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky, the Chinese Revolution was the result of peasant guerrilla war led by Stalinist-nationalist forces. Patterned after the Stalinist bureaucracy that usurped political power in the USSR beginning in 1923-24, Mao’s regime and those of his successors, including Hu Jintao today, have preached the profoundly anti-Marxist notion that socialism—a classless, egalitarian society based on material abundance—can be built in a single country. In practice, “socialism in one country” has meant accommodation to world imperialism and opposition to the perspective of international workers revolution that is essential for the advance to socialism.

After a brief interregnum following the death of Mao in 1976, his successor, Deng Xiaoping, scrapped centralized economic planning and began implementing a number of market-oriented policies and practices. In the late 1990s, the regime headed by Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji privatized a large number of



Ship under construction in Chongqing, February 2009. China’s stimulus package has massively increased production in state-owned industries and boosted investment in infrastructure.

small- and medium-sized state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Under “market socialism,” China has attracted large-scale investment, mainly in manufacturing, by Western and Japanese corporations and by the offshore Chinese bourgeoisie in Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere, with the CCP regime acting as labor contractors. On the mainland, there has also emerged a sizable class of indigenous capitalist entrepreneurs, many with familial and financial ties to the CCP officialdom.

One consequence of these developments is the widespread belief in the Western world, extending across the political spectrum, that China, although still ruled by a party calling itself “Communist,” has become capitalist. In reality, China remains a bureaucratically deformed workers state. The core of the industrial economy—steel and non-ferrous metals, heavy electrical equipment, telecommunications, oil extraction and refining, petrochemicals—continues to be based on state-owned enterprises. Outside of the foreign and offshore Chinese capitalist sector, almost all productive investment is channeled through the government and state-controlled banks. The *Economist* (10 July) pointed out that although China’s large banks “make money and have the trappings of public companies, the state owns a majority stake and the Communist Party appoints the top brass.”

The *non*-capitalist character of China's economy has been clearly demonstrated by the 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 plummeting. The sudden collapse of its export markets in North America and West Europe was a heavy blow to China's economy. The rate of growth of the gross domestic product fell from near 13 percent in 2007 to under 7 percent in the last quarter of 2008. Since then, however, while the capitalist world has remained mired in a deep downturn, economic growth in China has

skyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and internal counterrevolution.

In answer to the aspirations of the Chinese workers and rural toilers for democratic rights and a government that represents their needs and interests, we stand for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and replace it with a government elected by workers and peasants councils and committed to revolutionary internationalism. Such a government would fight against bureaucratic arbitrariness and corruption. It would expropriate the new class of domestic capitalist entrepreneurs and renegotiate the terms of foreign investment in the interests of the working people. It would create a centrally planned and managed economy under conditions of workers democracy—not the autarkic, bureaucratic commandism of the Mao era, when “egalitarianism” meant an equalization of poverty. While struggling to provide at least a basic level of economic security for the whole population, a genuine communist leadership would understand that achieving material prosperity for all hinges on the struggle for socialist revolution in the centers of world capitalism.

The Honda Strikes

Migrant workers in China's capitalist-owned factories are often forced to work 60 to 70 hours a week at wages barely above subsistence levels. The brutal conditions they endure were graphically exposed last spring by the widely publicized suicides of workers at the huge Foxconn industrial complex, employing more than 300,000, in Guangdong. At least a dozen workers have killed themselves since the beginning of the year. Owned by a Taiwanese company, Foxconn is the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, making products for Apple, Dell and Hewlett-Packard. A Hong Kong-based businessman who toured the site described conditions on the factory floor as "almost militaristic and kind of scary" (*Financial Times*, 11 June). Popular out-



Corbis

**People's
Liberation Army
marches
through Beijing,
June 1949.**

revived rapidly, reaching almost 12 percent in the first quarter of this year before edging down slightly in the second quarter. Noting one significant effect of the skyrocketing levels of investment by state-controlled companies, the *New York Times* (29 August) reported that “the proportion of industrial production by companies controlled by the Chinese state edged up last year, checking a slow but seemingly inevitable eclipse.”

However much the Beijing Stalinists try to accommodate world imperialism, the U.S. and other major capitalist powers are determined to reverse the 1949 Revolution, reimposing semicolonial subjugation on China and reducing its economy to a giant capitalist sweatshop. Toward that end, they are utilizing economic penetration, increased military pressure from without and political subversion internally, for example, by the reactionary Buddhist forces in Tibet. The U.S. continues to provide capitalist Taiwan with advanced weaponry while itself extending its military reach in Central Asia and other areas near China. As Trot-

rage over the suicides at Foxconn doubtless contributed to widespread sympathy and support for the strikes at Honda and other capitalist-owned firms.

The strike at the Honda transmission plant in Foshan was initiated by a 24-year-old worker, Tan Zhiqing, from the interior province of Hunan, a major supplier of migrant labor. A spirit of rebelliousness is celebrated in the popular culture of Hunan, Mao Zedong's birthplace. Seeing his real earnings shrinking because of inflation, Tan decided to quit Honda and seek higher pay elsewhere. He had earlier approached local ACFTU officials about pressuring management to increase wages but got no response from them. In late April, he and a friend and co-worker named Xiao Xiao submitted a standard one-month-in-advance notice of their intention to leave the company. Tan subsequently told a reporter from *China News Weekly* (2 June): "Since I was going to quit anyway, I thought I might as well do something for the benefit of my fellow-workers."

Toward that end, he and Xiao organ-



Robert Haidinger

Above: Sleek modern office buildings in Shanghai's Pudong district. Below: Migrant workers at construction site in city of Fuzhou live with families in converted shipping containers.



Getty

ized secret meetings with a small number of co-workers to plan a work stoppage. On May 17, Tan pushed the emergency button, stopping the assembly line where he was working, and some 50 workers walked off the job. At first, most workers were hesitant to go on strike for fear of reprisals. Production resumed temporarily when management agreed to negotiate with workers' representatives who were elected from the different departments. A turning point came on May 21-22 when the company offered a wage increase of less than 10 percent of what the workers were demanding and then fired Tan and Xiao. The strike now resumed in earnest, with much greater support and resolve. Strikers routinely sang the national anthem and also an official song of the Chinese military, "Unity Is Strength," here referring to workers instead of soldiers.

Other management policies intended to weaken the strike also backfired. A large section of the workforce is comprised of teenage trainees from technical schools whose wages were much lower than those of regular workers. In late May, the company demanded that the trainees sign a "memorandum of undertaking" pledging "never to lead, organize, partake in go-slows, stop work or strike." Not only did most refuse to sign but, as the *China News Weekly* (2 June) reported,

the trainees “were the staunchest supporters of the strike.”

From the outset, the local ACFTU bureaucrats were sidelined during the strike. One of the workers' demands was "a reorganization of the local trade union: re-elections should be held for union chairman and other representatives." Union officials sat in on the negotiations, purportedly to "mediate" between the two sides. Some union functionaries were evidently rankled by their visible loss of authority. On May 31, a large squad of ACFTU goons assaulted striking workers. The next day, however, union officials issued a public apology while downplaying the incident and claiming it was a result of "mutual misunderstandings." In mid June, the head of the Guangdong province ACFTU promised that the Foshan Honda plant would be a "pilot site" in "allowing members to genuinely elect a union chair."

Within days after the Foshan strike ended, workers at two other Honda parts plants went out. One of these strikes was settled quickly. However, the strike at Honda Lock turned into a bitter conflict, the outcome of which was very different than that at Foshan. Using desktop computers, activists uploaded video of security guards beating workers. In this case, both the Honda management and

continued on page 8

The image displays two book covers side-by-side. The left cover, titled '中国战斗的罢工浪潮' (China's Striking Wave of Class Struggle), features a black and white photograph of a group of people, likely workers, in a protest or strike. The right cover, titled '原则宣言和纲领要素' (Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program), has a grey background with white text. Both covers include the Spartacist Publications logo at the top.

China...

(continued from page 7)

CCP authorities, at least at the local level, took a harder line. The company recruited “replacement workers” (scabs) and threatened to fire those strikers who refused to accept the wage increase offered. Journalists seeking to report on the strike were taken away from the plant by local police.

CCP Regime’s Response to Strikes

The initial extensive coverage of the Foshan Honda strike in the domestic media was accompanied by an equally unusual candor about the country’s increasing social inequalities. Citing a leader of the ACFTU, the official English-language *China Daily* (13 May) reported that the share of the country’s gross domestic product going to workers’ wages fell from 57 percent in 1983 to 37 percent in 2005. An editorial in the *Global Times* (2 June), a *People’s Daily* spin-off, stated:

“Admittedly, in the three decades of opening-up, ordinary workers are among those who have received the smallest share of economic prosperity.... “The temporary stoppage of production lines in the four Honda factories, at a time of increasing market demand for the Japanese-brand cars, highlights the necessity of organized labor protection in Chinese factories.”

More recently, an ACFTU spokesman laid out an official policy of promoting “the direct election of grassroots trade union leaders” (*People’s Daily* online, 31 August).

Clearly, influential elements in the bureaucracy are concerned about the danger (to themselves) of growing labor unrest in the private sector. Even before the strike wave, a number of provincial and municipal governments had raised the legal minimum wage, in some cases as much as 20 percent.

Despite increasing economic inequality, one should recognize that workers in China, including migrants in the capitalist sector, have generally experienced a substantial improvement in living standards during the decades of the “reform” era. It is also true that the closing and privatizing of many state-owned enterprises over the years have produced severe economic uncertainty for workers who have seen their previously guaranteed social benefits cut and who lack the education and skills to find new work. But with the export sector booming, between 2004 and 2009 the average real monthly wage of migrant workers increased by more than 40 percent. That workers at Honda used cell phones and the Internet to coordinate strikes at different plants indicates that they have access to modern technology—a world away from the experience of their parents, not to speak of their grandparents on the rural communes of the Mao era.

Because the strikes were in capitalist enterprises, they did not constitute the kind of direct challenge to the ruling bureaucracy that strikes or other labor protests in strategic sectors of the statified economy, such as steel production, oil extraction and the railway system would pose. To a certain extent, the CCP regime

could posture as a paternalistic defender of Chinese workers against unbridled exploitation by Japanese, Korean and off-shore Chinese capitalists. In mid June, China’s premier Wen Jiabao intoned that “the government and all sectors of society should treat migrant workers as they would their own children.”

The fact that Honda is a Japanese company was likely an important factor in the authorities’ initial tolerance for the strike and the extensive domestic media coverage. The Beijing Stalinist leaders seek popular legitimacy by, above all,

nese workers at these two auto giants expressed support for their Chinese class brothers, this would have strengthened their bargaining power and undercut the anti-Japanese nationalism promoted by the Beijing regime.

At the same time, the unity between different strata of workers—trainees from technical schools and full-time employees—displayed during the Foshan Honda strike could provide a positive and powerful example for the Japanese labor movement, with its hierarchical division between the permanent employees of the

greatly strengthen the social forces of capitalist restoration, much more so than in the case of Hong Kong. Opposing the Stalinists’ efforts to accommodate the Taiwan-based Chinese bourgeoisie, we stand for *revolutionary reunification*: proletarian political revolution on the mainland and proletarian socialist revolution in Taiwan resulting in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

A Tight Labor Market and a New Proletarian Generation

The strike wave that began in the spring took place in the capitalist sector of China’s economy. However, favorable conditions for these workers’ struggles have been the result in good part of the workings of the core collectivized sector of the economy. When the world capitalist market tanked in the fall of 2008, an estimated 20 million workers were laid off from the export-producing factories in coastal China. Most returned to the rural villages.

One of the main effects of the government’s stimulus program has been a substantial expansion of employment opportunities in the country’s interior. As export production revived, beginning last summer, the inflow of migrants seeking work in coastal China was less than in the past. Glenn Maguire, Asia chief economist for the French bank Société Générale, observed that this development “suggests that the stimulus packages have been incredibly successful at creating jobs” (Reuters, 1 June). A survey by the ministry of labor estimated that in the Pearl River Delta manufacturing center in Guangdong, job vacancies exceeded applicants by 9 percent in the first quarter of the year. The tight labor market has increased the bargaining power of workers at the individual and the collective level. An executive at a Guangdong-based electronics company noted the changed situation: “When you fined workers nobody would dare to object because if you said anything you were out. But now every time a certain number of workers oppose some management move, my company will adjust it” (*Financial Times*, 4 June).

In addition to conjunctural factors, the long-term demographic trend is beginning to impact the labor market. For the past several decades, the CCP regime, seeking to curb population growth, has limited urban families to one child and rural families to two. As a consequence, the population between the ages of 15 and 24—the pool from which almost all migrant workers are drawn—has remained basically unchanged for the past five years and is projected to fall by almost 30 percent over the next ten years. Many bourgeois commentators foresee the beginning of the end of “cheap labor” in China.

But it is not only objective conjunctural and demographic factors that underlie the increased assertiveness and social power of China’s workers. The strike wave signals the entry of a new proletarian generation onto the social scene, one whose outlook and attitudes differ significantly from those of their parents.

The young peasant men and women who flooded into the cities in the 1980s and ’90s came from very poor, economi-

Street scene in Guangzhou shows new generation of China’s migrant workers.



appealing to Chinese nationalism, evoking the historical memory of the country’s semicolonial subjugation prior to the 1949 Revolution. An important source of the CCP’s historical authority was its mobilization of the peasant masses in resisting the Japanese imperialists’ invasion and occupation of China in the 1930s-’40s. Even today Japan, rather than the United States, is the main target of both popular and officially sponsored Chinese nationalism.

On the other side of the Sea of Japan, the leading bourgeois newspaper *Nikkei* complained that “in the strike at the Honda-supplier, the authorities took a neutral stance from beginning to end.” In this respect, the strikes in China contrast sharply with the bloody state repression of labor struggles against Japanese companies in the semicolonial countries of Southeast Asia. For example, soldiers and police recently attacked workers at a Toshiba plant in Indonesia. In the Philippines, a union leader at the Japanese company Takata was murdered in early June in the course of a struggle for union recognition.

The strikes at the Chinese Honda and Toyota factories underscore the need for unity between the proletariats of China and Japan—a prospect that is completely outside the nationalist worldview of China’s Stalinist misrulers. Had the Japa-

big corporations and the large number of temporary workers. This division poses directly the need for a political struggle against the lackeys of the bourgeoisie in the top leadership of the unions in Japan. For example, the most powerful unions in strategic industries such as auto and electronics allow only full-time employees to join.

The workers’ suicides at Foxconn and strikes at a number of other Taiwanese-owned enterprises point to the substantial presence of offshore Chinese capital in the mainland industrial economy. The island statelet of Taiwan, where the bulk of Chiang Kai-shek’s defeated forces fled in the late 1940s, is the base of the main body of the Chinese big bourgeoisie. Unlike mainland capitalist entrepreneurs, the bourgeoisie on Taiwan possesses its own counterrevolutionary political organizations. Moreover, the Taiwan-based bourgeoisie operates under the direct military protection of American imperialism.

The Beijing Stalinists have long promoted reunification with Taiwan under the formula, “one country, two systems,” the same formula used to incorporate the capitalist enclave of Hong Kong (a former British colony) in 1997. The incorporation of Taiwan into the People’s Republic under that formula is not on the immediate historical agenda. But should such a development take place, it would

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cally primitive conditions. Working in a factory or construction site, however harsh the conditions, was the only way they could improve their lives. For most of them, the goal was to save enough money so that they could return to their native villages and build new homes, buy equipment for their family farms or open small businesses.

The present generation of migrants has come of age in a society that is far more developed, even in the countryside, but also much more unequal. Their aspirations and expectations are correspondingly different. In response to a survey of 5,000 second-generation migrant workers conducted by the General Labor Union in the Guangdong city of Shenzhen, almost all said that they were unwilling to return to their home villages and become farmers. Cha Jinhua, described as a Guangdong-based labor activist, explained: “We’re different from our parents’ generation. Their wishes were simple—earn some money and return to their home towns. We want to stay in the cities and enjoy our lives here. But we demand respect” (*Financial Times*, 1 June).

However, the aspirations of young migrant workers to build good lives for themselves in the cities directly confront the legally based household registration or *hukou* system. Workers as well as members of the petty bourgeoisie who have an urban household registration have social benefits that are denied to those with a rural *hukou*. And the latter includes the grown children of migrants who, while born in the cities, are registered as members of a rural household. Holders of an urban *hukou* have priority for employment in state-owned enterprises, which generally provide much better social benefits, such as subsidized housing, and greater job security. In general, migrants pay more for inferior medical care and public schooling for their

children. Furthermore, as we observed in “Women Workers and the Contradictions of China Today” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 61, Spring 2009):

“The migrant population is itself divided between those who have legal status and those who do not. Almost all migrant workers in factories and other major enterprises like Wal-Mart have temporary urban residency permits. However, there are millions of ‘undocumented’ migrants—no one knows exactly how many—who eke out an existence as casual laborers, housemaids and nannies, street vendors and the like.”

We have long called for the abolition of the *hukou* system and for migrants to have the same rights and access to jobs as legally registered urban residents. In championing the rights of migrant workers, a class-struggle labor leadership would help unite the struggles of workers in state-owned industries against bureaucratic mismanagement and cuts in benefits with those of workers exploited in capitalist enterprises.

Labor Struggles in Guangdong: Yesterday and Today

The parents and older brothers and sisters of the workers involved in the recent strike wave also fought for a better life in the capitalist-owned factories and construction sites of coastal China. And there are important elements of continuity as well as differences across the generational divide.

A few years ago, Ching Kwan Lee, an academic of leftist sympathies, published a book based on her fieldwork in two very different regions of China in the early 2000s: *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China’s Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (University of California Press [2007]). The “rustbelt” in the subtitle is the northeastern province of Liaoning, which suffered economic devastation and mass unemployment when many large SOEs were downsized and smaller ones were priva-

tized or closed outright in the late 1990s. The “sunbelt” refers to Guangdong.

In regard to the latter region, Lee emphasized the importance of labor laws and their *non*-enforcement in conditioning workers’ struggles. Almost all strikes and other industrial actions were preceded by complaints to local officials that the employer had violated the law with respect to wages (unpaid or below the legal minimum), overtime, social benefits or safety. She cited a case where complaints to the Labor Bureau by a small number of workers’ representatives were repeatedly ignored. Only when all of the workers in the factory went on strike did the Bureau intervene to arrange mediation.

Lee concluded that “migrant workers, feeling deprived of the socialist social contract available to state-owned enterprise workers, see the Labor Law as the only institutional resource protecting their interests vis-à-vis powerful employers and local officials.” One woman worker told her: “Once we saw the terms of the Labor Law, we realized that what we thought of as bitterness and bad luck were actually violations of our legal rights and interests.” A construction worker made similar comments in explaining the struggle against an employer who had forged workers’ signatures on labor contracts and denied workers access to the contracts’ terms:

“For two weeks, we had only one meal each day and we read everything on the Labor Law and labor dispute arbitration in the bookstore. Before this, we had no idea what the law said about us migrant workers. For many years, we had only heard about the labor contract, but we did not press the company hard enough when they refused to give us a copy.... Since we started this struggle with the company, many workers have begun to read newspapers. Some even cut out labor dispute stories for circulation in the dormitory.”

The prevailing attitude among workers was that the labor laws, if enforced, would

substantially improve their conditions of life. But they were *not* enforced by local officials, many of whom were corrupt and openly colluded with the employers. A lawyer specializing in getting compensation for workers injured on the job recounted that a judge once told him: “Lawyer Zhou, if the court adheres to all the laws and regulations of the provincial government, all these factories would move elsewhere and the local economy would collapse. Who would be responsible then? You?”

To what extent is Lee’s observation from the early 2000s, that knowledge of the labor laws encourages and shapes workers’ struggles, applicable to the recent strike wave? From afar one cannot give a definitive answer. However, in the judgment of most observers, an important contributing factor to the upsurge of labor militancy was the new labor law adopted in 2008, which strengthened workers’ formal rights vis-à-vis the employer. Obviously, the CCP leadership did not intend this legislation to be an incitement for workers to go on strike. Rather, it sought to pressure capitalist firms to ameliorate the conditions of exploitation so as to minimize labor unrest.

The relation between workers’ struggles and the labor laws is contradictory. Workers have been emboldened to undertake strikes and other actions in defense of their legally recognized rights. At the same time, a belief that the laws are good but local officials are bad can foster illusions in the benevolent nature of the central government/party leadership. China’s premier likes to be called “Uncle Wen,” as he cultivates an avuncular image. It serves political stability if the workers’ anger is directed at low-level functionaries who can easily be sacrificed to assuage popular sentiment.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

New Orleans...
(continued from page 12)

and schools. To enforce this program, the New Orleans Police Department did what it always does—and then some—by terrorizing the black population. And the attacks on the black poor went hand in hand with a concerted effort to bust the city’s unions.

One of Nagin’s first acts after the floodwaters were drained in 2005 was to fire all 8,000 public school employees. Unionized teachers, the vast majority of them black, were thrown on the scrap heap in an all-out drive to replace public schools with charter schools. Today, 70 percent of schools in New Orleans are charter schools, a far higher rate than any other city in the country. Obama’s education secretary Arne Duncan—the spearhead of the administration’s attacks on public schools and teachers unions—ghoulishly crowed: “The best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina.” Also under the ax is the public University of New Orleans, where students demonstrated on September 1 against deep budget cuts. Students were viciously attacked by cops, who arrested two protesters on felony charges. We demand: Drop the charges against the protesters!

The capitalists took the “opportunity” created by Katrina to carry out longstanding plans to gut public housing in New Orleans, even though much of it was little damaged by the flooding. In 2008, local and federal housing officials teamed up to

demolish four of the city’s largest public housing complexes, destroying more than 3,000 apartments that had been occupied before Katrina. Billionaire investor Warren Buffett was given the green light to build a for-profit housing development on the site of the former St. Bernard projects. Today, the city has a deliberately manufactured shortage of low-income housing, with a waiting list of 28,000 tenants for subsidized housing. On top of that, a federal judge ruled last month that a government program of financial aid for property owners to rebuild homes damaged by the hurricane had systematically discriminated against black people.

Conditions in the largely black Lower Ninth Ward, where more than three-quarters of the pre-storm population have not returned, were recently described by journalist Brendan McCarthy in a gut-wrenching report in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (29 August): “There is one sentiment shared among all: the neighborhood has been forgotten.... Snakes, stray dogs, rabbits, roosters, rats and cats roam the streets. The mosquitoes are ferocious. The neighborhood has no supermarket, no police substation, no pharmacy, no doctor.” Only one of the five schools in the area has reopened; the nearest hospital is on the other side of town. One dismayed resident told McCarthy: “There’ll probably be big condos here in five years.”

Meanwhile, the notorious New Orleans cops have been so flagrantly kill-crazy since Hurricane Katrina that newly elected mayor Mitch Landrieu was compelled to call on Obama’s Justice Department “to conduct a full review of the city’s Police Department” (*New York Times*, 26 August). The feds are investigating eight criminal cases involving accusations of “police misconduct.” These include the notorious shooting of six people at the Danziger Bridge, six days after the hurricane, two of whom were killed (see “Homicidal New Orleans Cops,” WV No. 959, 21 May). Two others are known to have been shot and killed by the NOPD, while at least eleven black men were hunted down by white “militia” patrolling the Algiers district with the support of

the cops. These are among the “official” stories; it is unknown how many other atrocities—by cops or by racist white vigilantes—will come to light, if they ever will.

Whatever the outcome of these investigations, the purpose of such “reviews” is to refurbish the credentials of the forces of “law and order” and make them more effective in repressing the workers and the oppressed. Landrieu, and the local bourgeoisie he represents, simply want to make New Orleans “safe” for more capital investment and the lucrative tourist trade. New Orleans chief of police Ronal Serpas chimed in that a Justice Department investigation was “exactly what needed to happen.”

The anger of black workers and others in the face of the atrocities perpetrated by the bourgeoisie in New Orleans needs a *class* expression—i.e., integrated proletarian struggle against the racist capitalist order. In the aftermath of Katrina, we raised a series of demands that the unions should fight for, such as: a massive program of federally funded public works to rebuild New Orleans and the rest of the devastated Gulf Coast; union jobs at union wage scales; workers committees that could veto shoddy designs and construction before they endangered more lives. Such a campaign could have been an important step in the long-needed unionization of the South and, more generally, the revival of the declining union movement. But to unleash labor’s social power requires a fight to replace the labor bureaucracy with a class-struggle leadership that breaks the unions’ political ties to the capitalist state and bourgeois parties.

The workings of the capitalist economy have hit the New Orleans area hard. In the mid 1970s, the New Orleans ILA longshoremen’s union had some 7,000 members, with warehouses and food-processing plants along the waterfront providing many other union jobs. Today the ILA, once the center of labor and black power in the city, has fewer than 400 members. Earlier this year, the head of the Port of New Orleans crowed

that port labor is now only half unionized. This summer, the bosses at Avondale Shipyard on the edge of New Orleans announced the closing of the facility, the largest manufacturing employer in Louisiana. This threatens to eliminate a multiracial workforce of 5,000 unionized workers, along with many jobs at smaller facilities supporting the shipyard.

What has happened in New Orleans is a stark indictment of the barbarous, irrational capitalist system and its insatiable drive for profit. The brutal racial oppression that found such naked expression at the time of Hurricane Katrina is fundamental to American capitalism and will not be eliminated short of the revolutionary overturn of that system. As we wrote in “New Orleans: Racist Atrocity”:

“The situation cries out for a socialist planned economy, in which natural resources and the technological and productive forces of society would be marshaled *on behalf of human needs*, not profit. What is urgently required is to build a workers party that can lead a workers revolution to rip power from the hands of the capitalist class and its political agents, right-wing Republican and liberal Democrat alike.” ■

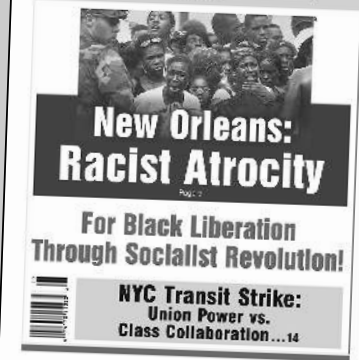
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South Africa...

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masses in sweeping away capitalist rule and paving the road to a socialist federation of Southern Africa. Mining companies, banks and other corporations that are the core of South Africa's economy also dominate countries to the north, including desperately poor Mozambique, where skyrocketing prices for bread and electricity have sparked widespread protests, which were met with murderous state repression last week. In South Africa, immigrants from Mozambique, Zimbabwe and other countries have been the target of mob violence and state repression. There is a renewed threat of mass deportations as the South African government moves to lift a special dispensation for Zimbabweans. It is absolutely essential for the trade unions to defend foreign workers, an elementary act of class solidarity.

We reprint below a leaflet, slightly edited, on the public workers strike issued by Spartacist South Africa on September 2.

* * *

2 September 2010—For more than two weeks, a strike by some one million public sector workers has rocked the country. Nurses, teachers and others have shut down big sections of public services, taking militant action and braving severe state repression to make sure the strike is solid. Under the leadership of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the Independent Labour Caucus, the

ing the World Cup. After that, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi admitted that the COSATU leadership was willing to settle, and COSATU unions even scabbed on a two-day strike by the Public Servants Association. ***For industrial unions—one industry one union! Picket lines mean don't cross!***

But the anger of their membership forced the hand of the COSATU tops, who are obviously reluctant to mobilise the full power of their base because they are a component part of the capitalist Alliance government. COSATU called a secondary strike by all its affiliate unions on 2 September, a call which was also supported by the metalworkers union affiliated to the National Council of Trade Unions. The leadership then postponed it and tried to end the strike when a new offer was tabled by the government. But the membership of the largest COSATU unions has defiantly rejected the offer and it looks like the strike will continue.

Including over 300,000 members of the powerful National Union of Mineworkers and other COSATU unions in the private sector, a secondary strike would hit the heart of the economy and bring the capitalists' profits to a grinding halt. This would be a powerful display of labour solidarity, with resonance beyond the country's borders with workers internationally facing huge attacks as the capitalists seek to make them pay for the economic crisis. ***Victory to the public sector strike!***

As a hand-made placard by one striker put it in a play on [state-owned broadcaster] SABC's World Cup slogan, "Feel It—It's War." This is a *class war*, and the bosses are mobilising all the forces of

immigrant mob violence. The power of the unions must be mobilised in defence against this state terror. ***For full citizenship rights for all immigrants!***

Along with state repression, the government and bourgeois media are conducting a massive propaganda campaign to break the strike. In an attempt to whip up public anger against the strike, they accuse striking nurses of "endangering lives" and attack striking teachers for disrupting the education of learners. This is cynical hypocrisy from a government responsible for the massive under-funding of the public health system which has resulted lately in a rash of infant mortalities because of lack of sterilisation and other basics, and which has exacerbated the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which kills up to a thousand people a day. Staffing and supply shortages have regularly disrupted treatment—in 2007, only 34 percent of those requiring ARVs [antiretroviral drugs] actually received them, and last year the public sector ARV programme had a 1 billion rand shortfall. Before that, the notorious denialism of President Thabo Mbeki (with Zuma as his Deputy) caused the needless deaths of an estimated 300,000-plus people. The public schools are so under-funded that learners still have to attend classes under trees.

It's notable that despite the media campaign, the strike remains widely popular among working people and the poor, who are the ones hit the hardest by the disruption of public services. What's urgently needed is a class-struggle fight for the burning demands of the masses which can unite all the oppressed behind the social power of the unions: For free ARVs for all who need them, *now!* For free, quality health care for all and free education with a living stipend through to university!

Against the demagoguery which is regularly used by ANC leaders to whip up anti-union sentiment among the unemployed, labour must fight to unite the employed and unemployed in mutual solidarity by fighting for *jobs for all* by dividing the available work among all with no loss in pay. These and other urgent necessities like decent, affordable housing require a fight against the capitalist system which perpetuates poverty and misery, for a black-centred workers government to expropriate the capitalists and run society in the interests of the majority.

The central political obstacle to such a struggle is the working class's subordination to the capitalist class through the SACP/COSATU alliance with the bourgeois nationalist ANC. The Tripartite Alliance is a nationalist popular front—the South African variant of a governmental coalition binding a reformist workers party to the bourgeoisie. The SACP and COSATU tops perpetuate the illusion that the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be expressed by a common programme, like the "national democratic revolution." In fact, the class interests of the exploited are irreconcilably counterposed to those of their exploiters. Class divisions are hugely distorted by the lens of racial colour in South Africa, which the SACP and COSATU tops use to openly and shamelessly advance their popular-front alliance with the ANC.

Since it first took office in 1994 following the demise of racist apartheid rule, this government has upheld the neo-apartheid capitalist order by breaking strikes and enforcing austerity. The SACP and COSATU leaderships' adherence to



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Johannesburg, August 19: SADTU teachers union member wounded by rubber bullets fired by cops at strikers.

the Alliance means betraying the interests of the workers and oppressed. When nurses walked out in 1995 to demand better pay and working conditions, a number of SACP/COSATU bureaucrats branded their action a "counterrevolutionary strike." As Safety and Security Minister in 2007, leading SACPer Charles Nqakula set the army and cops against striking COSATU public employees. More recently the COSATU tops supported government strikebreaking against the wildcat strikes by doctors at public hospitals in May 2009, one of the first acts by the newly elected government under Zuma.

Today, while mouthing support for the strike demands as "legitimate," a 22 August statement by the SACP trashed the strike and joined in slandering union militants as "violent," chiming in with the bourgeois lies painting the strikers as responsible for the wretched conditions in public health care and education. In marked contrast to its denunciations of the striking workers, the same statement politely calls "on our comrades in the police and other law enforcement agencies to conduct themselves with maximum restraint"! This has caused anger among the SACP base and union militants, with some expressing worry that with SACP leaders occupying such a prominent place in Zuma's government they are being co-opted. The task of forging a revolutionary party in South Africa requires breaking the working class base of the SACP from its pro-capitalist programme and leadership.

It's necessary to understand that the betrayals of the SACP leadership are not an aberration but flow fundamentally from the reformist program of the SACP based on the illusion that the capitalist state can be somehow "transformed" to serve the interests of workers and the oppressed. In reality, this always means taking responsibility for administering the state machinery of capitalist repression and subordinating working class interests to their exploiters, as shown by the appeal in the same 22 August statement: "Above all, we call on all of our formations not to play into a right-wing neo-liberal agenda that seeks to break the organic and strategic unity between Alliance partners, between organised workers and wider popular forces, and between unions and our democratic state."

Recently, a number of COSATU leaders have postured as more critical of Zuma,



Theminkosi Dwayisa

Partners in bourgeois Tripartite Alliance: ANC president Jacob Zuma (left), SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi.

strikers are demanding an 8.6 percent wage increase backdated to 1 April, a housing allowance of R1000 per month, and a one-year contract. These demands are a matter of survival for many workers. With real unemployment over 35 percent and almost 1 million jobs lost since the start of 2009, many public workers support up to ten other family members from their meagre salaries.

The public sector strike coincides with strikes by SAMWU [South African Municipal Workers Union] in the water department and NUMSA in tyre and rubber manufacturing, which both are demanding living wages. The background for the strike's militancy is widespread anger at the base of society over the deepening inequality and desperate conditions of the oppressed black majority which continue to define neo-apartheid capitalism sixteen years after the government of the African National Congress and its Tripartite Alliance partners, the South African Communist Party and COSATU, came to power promising a "better life for all."

Beginning a month after the finish of the soccer World Cup, the strike punctures the bourgeois nationalist hype of a "rainbow nation" with "unity" between the exploiters and exploited. The bosses and their government are particularly outraged about this, ranting against the unions for damaging the "image" of the country and supposedly frightening off imperialist investment.

Before the strike, the union leaders bent over backwards to prevent an embarrassment of the Alliance government under Zuma, who the COSATU bureaucracy falsely promoted as a friend of workers and the poor. First they reached an agreement that guaranteed no strikes dur-

their class rule against the strike. The army has been deployed to the hospitals for scab-herding and intimidating the unions; police have regularly and brutally attacked picket lines with water cannons and shot strikers with rubber bullets; in the first two weeks of the strike, over 180 workers were arrested and tried in summary fashion by "dedicated courts" modelled on those set up during the World Cup. Drop all charges against striking workers and release them now! The unions must demand: ***No reprisals against the strikers!***

The strike demonstrates again the Marxist understanding that the core of the state—the cops, the courts, prisons and army—is an armed apparatus that the ruling class uses to maintain power. However, the COSATU and other union bureaucrats as well as the SACP leadership treacherously treat the cops as a bona fide component of the workers movement. After more than 100 strikers were arrested on 23 August, Vavi urged members of the cop "unions" Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) and the South African Policing Union "not to allow the employer to use them to crush the strike" (*The Southern Times*, 27 August). But this is exactly the job of the capitalist police, who are hired thugs of the bosses! We demand: ***Police, security, prison and border guards—out of the unions!***

Whether they're black or white, the cops are integral to enforcing the oppression of the black majority which remains at the foundation of South African capitalism under neo-apartheid. The same cops that attack the picket lines are regularly used to repress service delivery protests by the unemployed and poor in the townships, and for raids, harassment and deportation—these attacks also fuel anti-

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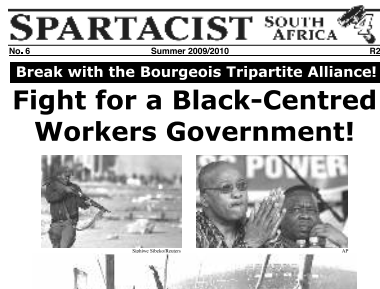
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NYPD Kills...

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racist media campaign included descriptions of his “profanity” and use of “rap lyrics” on Twitter to portray him as a gang member. Cops raided the two men’s homes in search of “evidence,” as if anything could justify pouring dozens of bullets into them. The bourgeois press gleefully referred to this *one-sided*, all-out assault as a “Wild West-style shoot-out.” The *New York Post* ran a headline on August 20 that read: “Punk Had 21 Shots Coming: Cops.” The cops and their media vultures made their message clear: if you are young and black or Latino, it’s always open season. In fact, the cops’ barrage of bullets was intended to prevent Alvarez from surviving to tell of the hellish nightmare. “They took my grandson. It’s unjustified,” cried Myrna Soto. Indeed it is, as is every racist cop shooting in this country.

The killing of Soto and attempted killing of Alvarez are by no means an aberration. We will not forget Sean Bell, also killed in a hail of 50 cop bullets, and Amadou Diallo, shot at 41 times and killed by the police, as well as countless other victims of police terror. These killings are part and parcel of the police violence that is systematically employed against the black and Latino populations under racist American capitalism, where young men and women are treated as criminals under the guise of the “war on drugs” and “war on crime.” Racist state repression has only intensified under the bipartisan “war on terror,” which is camouflage for the imperialist rulers to ride roughshod from Iraq to Afghanistan and wage war at home against immigrants, black people and the rights of the population as a whole. Astounding numbers of black youth are unemployed or incarcerated in prison hellholes. Black oppression, deriving from the legacy of chattel slavery, is the cornerstone of American capitalism. We fight to win the entire working class, including white workers and Latino and other immigrants, to the fight for black liberation, which is strategic to the American revolution.

The election of Barack Obama was celebrated by many in Harlem who believed that it would mean an easing of racial oppression and economic suffering. The truth is that the only thing that has changed with Obama is the name of the overseer in the White House. The Obama

administration and the Democratic Party have done nothing to advance the position of working people because that is not their job. Their job is to serve the financial interests of the bourgeoisie, which benefits from the oppression of workers, blacks, Latinos and immigrants. While cops rampage through the streets of decaying urban centers, there has also been increasing repression of immigrants, through deportations, beefing up border control and the passage of the Arizona anti-immigrant pass law. Obama opposes this apartheid-style law only in order to replace it with a more palatable federal version. Black rights and immigrant rights go forward together or backward separately. Black workers and the entire working class must stand for *full citizenship rights* for

the city for three days, for which NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg called them “thugs.” In the end, the transit workers were sold out by their pro-Democratic Party leadership. To unleash the tremendous social power of labor requires a political struggle within the unions to build a class-struggle leadership by fighting to oust the pro-capitalist labor misleaders who subordinate the interests of working people to the bosses’ capitalist parties, Democratic and Republican alike.

Anger over the cops’ brutal shooting has been derailed primarily by former FBI fink and black Democratic Party hustler Al Sharpton. Sharpton and his National Action Network immediately organized an “Anti-Violence Summit.” Outraged residents of Harlem had to stomach



NYC, April 2008: Protesters at Queens County Courthouse denounce acquittal of cops who killed Sean Bell in hail of 50 bullets on his wedding day.

all immigrants and mobilize against racist and chauvinist anti-immigrant attacks. *An injury to one is an injury to all!*

In response to the racist cop shooting in Harlem there should have been massive labor-centered protests on the streets to unite the social power of the working class with the anger of the ghetto and barrio masses. New York City is a union town with a multiracial working class—black, white, Latino, Asian and immigrants from around the world. Transit workers, city and hospital workers have the social power to bring the financial capital of U.S. imperialism to a screeching halt. In 2005, striking transit workers gave the city a taste of labor power by crippling

Sharpton’s whitewash that the shooting was just “some overreaction” and his diatribes about people needing to “talk and discuss how we can come to terms with violence” and how he did not fight “to give you the right to be a hoodlum and a thug.” Sharpton sure is fighting like hell—on behalf of the racist hoodlums and thugs of the NYPD, who also spoke at this meeting! These “anti-violence” campaigns steer the blame for racist oppression away from the bourgeois state and put the onus on the victims. Such campaigns are also coupled with calls for gun control, which would mean the monopolization of guns in the hands of the racist capitalist state.

The cops are the armed fist of the rul-

ing class, whose profits are derived from the exploitation of labor and the racist oppression of blacks, Latinos, immigrants and all minorities. Their purpose is to safeguard the bosses’ profit system through brute force: breaking strikes, rounding up ghetto and barrio youth, repressing social protest. The cops can’t be reformed—not with more black and Latino cops, not with civilian review board “watchdogs,” not with “community control” schemes. There will be no end to police brutality without getting rid of the capitalist state—the entire apparatus of cops, prisons, courts and armies—through workers revolution. What is needed is to mobilize the power of the multiracial working class in struggle against the capitalist exploiters and their state terror, in defense of immigrants and people living in the ghettos and indeed against the whole capitalist system.

Harlem and other urban centers in the U.S. are plagued with the likes of Sharpton and occasionally “radical” phrasemongering Democrats like NYC City Councilman Charles Barron. The role of these so-called “leaders” is to contain social unrest within bounds safe for the racist capitalist rulers. A few New York black and Latino Democrats, including Barron, have launched a “Freedom Party” that is not a political break with the capitalist Democrats; it was formed only to protest against the exclusion of “blacks and Latinos from the State’s (and City’s) power positions.” In fact, numerous black Democrats have been employed as governors (including current NY governor David Paterson), mayors and police chiefs of major cities in this country. Their job has been to keep working and black people down, to oversee cop terror and administer the slashing of social programs. Their value to the racist rulers is embodied in the statement by black former New York City mayor David Dinkins: “They’ll take it from me.”

The fight for justice for the countless victims of cop terror demands the independent mobilization of the working class and the oppressed against the Democratic and Republican parties of capital. The Spartacist League fights to forge the revolutionary workers party that is essential to lead the multiracial proletariat in the overturn of the murderous capitalist system. Nothing short of a socialist revolution that smashes the capitalist state machinery and replaces it with a workers state—where those who labor rule—can end capitalist class rule, racist oppression and cop terror once and for all. ■

reacting to the anger and pressure from their membership with some leaders threatening that Zuma could be removed the same way that Mbeki was. Speaking at a rally of NUMSA workers on 28 August, Vavi declared, “We will not make a mistake again of voting into power our political butchers” (*Business Day*, 30 August)—pretty cynical when you think of how prominent Vavi was in selling Zuma to the workers. But despite some left-sounding rhetoric, the COSATU bureaucracy’s posturing has nothing to do with a policy of class independence of the proletariat from bourgeois nationalism. Rather, what they’re talking about is using the working class as a *pressure* on the ANC to adopt policies and leaders which are supposedly “pro-worker.” This was expressed by a West-

ern Cape provincial leader of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), addressing a strike rally on 24 August in Cape Town: “Some people say ‘phantsi ANC’ (away with the ANC), but the problem is not the ANC. The problem is leaders we elect.... We’re telling him [Zuma] he must beware” (www.iol.co.za, 25 August).

Worker militants must be broken from bourgeois nationalism of all kinds and won to a revolutionary workers party based on political *opposition* to the ANC. Otherwise it is *guaranteed* that the working class will continue to be misled by the pro-capitalist tops into supporting its “political butchers.” As we wrote three years ago in analysing the lessons of the 2007 public sector strike: “The point is

not to reform the ANC by futilely searching for a ‘pro-worker’ alternative to Mbeki. An ANC run by Jacob Zuma would be just as anti-working-class as the current ANC” (see *Spartacist South Africa* No. 5, Spring 2007 [or WV No. 895, 6 July 2007]). At the root of the masses’ miserable living conditions—mass unemployment, homelessness, poverty, cop violence, hellish “health care”—is a capitalist economic system that continues to be based on superexploited, mainly black labour and white privilege.

Spartacist South Africa fights to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the struggle for socialist revolution—for a *black-centred workers government*. This is the only way to open the road to genuine social and national emancipation.

Such a government would not be racially exclusive, but would unite the many black tribal and language based groups along with the Coloured and Indian populations while providing ample room and full democratic rights for those whites who would accept a government centred on the black toilers. As part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa, a black-centred workers government would fight to extend revolution to the imperialist centres of the U.S., West Europe and Japan. It will take an international socialist planned economy to lift the urban and rural masses out of poverty and create a classless society of material abundance—the beginning of a communist society. This is the essence of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. ■

Spartacist League/U.S. and Trotskyist League of Canada Forums

Militant Strike Wave in China The Chinese Tinderbox

Defend the Chinese Deformed Workers State!
For Proletarian Political Revolution
to Oust the Bureaucrats!

CHICAGO

**Saturday
Sept. 11, 5 p.m.**

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

University of Illinois
at Chicago
Student Center East
White Oak Room
750 S. Halsted Street
(take Blue Line—
UIC Halsted stop)

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Labor Must Defend Immigrant and Black Rights

**Black Liberation Through
Socialist Revolution!**

NEW YORK CITY

**Saturday
October 9, 5 p.m.**

For more info: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

322 W. 48th Street
1st floor
(between 8th and 9th Avenues
take A, C or E to 42nd St.)

For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

**Down With Harper’s War
on Women’s Rights!**

For Free Abortion on Demand!

TORONTO

**Saturday
Sept. 25, 7 p.m.**

For more info: (416) 593-4138 • spartcan@on.aibn.com

OISE (Ontario Institute for
Studies in Education)
252 Bloor St. West, Rm. 5170
(at St. George subway)

WORKERS VANGUARD

Five Years After Katrina New Orleans Racist Hell



Brandon/Times-Picayune



Getty

Left: Days after Hurricane Katrina, Lance Madison was arrested at Danziger Bridge, where cops shot six people, killing two. Right: Five years later, Press Park housing projects, flooded by Katrina, are still rotting away.

The government's response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 constituted a racist atrocity in which the horrors visited upon the black and poor people of New Orleans exposed the raw reality of race and class in capitalist America. There remains a wellspring of bitterness, especially among the black population, at the recollection of desperate families clinging to the roofs of their homes vainly appealing for aid, of dying victims left without food or water in the sweltering Superdome, of cops and National Guard troops shooting down "looters"—that is, survivors foraging for food. Responsibility for the

crimes committed against the population of New Orleans must be placed squarely at the feet of the Democratic and Republican bourgeois politicians—from the Louisiana statehouse to the White House—who oversee the murderous racist capitalist system.

At the time, we wrote in "New Orleans: Racist Atrocity" (WV No. 854, 16 September 2005):

"It is not just that the victims in New Orleans were primarily black and poor, but a spotlight was thrown on the desperate conditions faced by black people across the country. New Orleans has its own peculiarities, including geog-

raphy. But across the U.S., the mass of black people is forced to live in inner cities that are little more than rotting shells—from Newark and Camden to Detroit and Gary. No jobs, no health care, schools that are little more than prisons. This country's racist rulers see no reason to spend money to maintain a layer of the black population that is increasingly seen as a surplus population."

As a U.S. Senator in 2005, Barack Obama grotesquely declared that "the incompetence" of government officials at the time of Katrina was "color-blind." As president he intones in a speech in New Orleans on the fifth anniversary of the

disaster: "We are helping to make New Orleans a place that stands for what we can do in America." What the capitalist rulers did, in the words of then-New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin, was use the hurricane as an opportunity to eliminate the "problems that we had with blight, with crime, and...with the public school system." In plain language, that meant: Get rid of the city's black and poor population by tearing down public housing projects, blocking the rebuilding of neighborhoods like the Lower Ninth Ward and shutting down public hospitals

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Remember Luis Soto! Free Angel Alvarez!

The following leaflet was issued by the New York Spartacist League on September 2.

On August 8, NYPD cops turned a crowded block in Harlem into a shooting gallery when they surrounded two young Latino men, Luis Soto and Angel Alvarez, and fired 50 bullets from their semiautomatic 9mm handguns. "The police tried to kill me!" Alvarez told his sister from his hospital bed after 23 bullets were removed from his 23-year-old body. They succeeded in killing 21-year-old Soto. A friend of Alvarez, an eyewitness, reported that Alvarez and Soto were fistfighting when a mix of uniformed and plainclothes "police gunned down both of them. Never one time did you hear, 'Freeze,' did you hear, 'Stop.' Not 'NYPD.' Not nothing. All you heard was shots." The racially mixed working-class neighborhoods of Harlem are ordinarily laced with police, and were especially so that night, as there had been a block party earlier in the day. Any festivity is sure to be under massive patrol, to remind you that your every move is under the eye of a baton or a bullet. The cops shot wildly into a crowd of hundreds who were still out for the party. In addition to Alvarez and Soto, three other people were hit. Later that day, in Washing-

NYPD Kills Again



Fremson/NY Times

Memorial for Luis Soto outside his Bronx apartment building.

ton Heights, cops stormed and maced crowds at the Dominican Day Parade.

After the shooting, the cops' initial accounts of the night were a pack of lies.

First it was reported that Alvarez shot Soto and one of the cops at the scene. The reality is that both, along with everyone else shot that night, were hit by cops' bul-

lets. Despite eyewitness accounts to the contrary, the cops claim that Alvarez fired shots from a .38-caliber gun at them. Alvarez's hands were never tested for gunpowder residue. A detective from the NYPD testified in court that he "could not conclude the .38 caliber revolver was actually fired at the time." Critically wounded, Alvarez was initially held on charges that included attempted murder, attempted first-degree assault and various weapons offenses. But when Alvarez appeared in court on August 16, the prosecution had nothing but a charge of weapons possession. Lacking the flimsy strand of evidence needed to get an indictment, prosecutors invoked a rarely used preliminary hearing to keep Alvarez jailed for an additional 45 days without bail, while two grand juries "investigate" how to pin him with attempted murder. The D.A. wants to send him to prison for the rest of his life for the crime of surviving a racist cop street execution. Alvarez should not have spent a day in jail. We defend the basic democratic right to bear arms: No to gun control! **Free Angel Alvarez! Drop the Charges Now!**

Even in death, Luis Soto, the victim of this racist atrocity, is being vilified. A

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For Labor Protests Against Racist Cop Terror!