BROTHERHOOD 966

Mass Upheaval Topples Hated Mubarak





AP photos

Military Takeover Props Up Capitalist Rule

FEBRUARY 14—For nearly 30 years, he governed Egypt with an iron fist. But on February 11, after 18 days of an unprecedented upheaval capped by a wave of strikes, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was finally forced to resign as president, handing power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Mass celebrations of millions of people from all walks of life erupted in Cairo's Tahrir (Liberation) Square and in cities throughout the country—jubilation over the seeming end of a venal and corrupt dictatorship that ruled under emergency law, imprisoning and disappearing its opponents in Egypt's vast torture chambers.

Inspired by the uprising in Tunisia, where protesters braved severe repression to topple the dictatorship of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, Egypt exploded beginning on January 25. Protesters courageously faced down a massive crackdown by the despised Central Security Forces that left at least 300 dead. Throughout the country-from the capital to Alexandria in the north and Aswan in the south, from industrial centers like Mahalla al-Kobra, Suez and Port Said to desert towns like Kharga in the Sahara and al-Arish in Sinai—demonstrators unleashed their fury at the regime by targeting police and security buildings as well as those belonging to the ruling National Democratic

Mubarak is toppled. But the central pillar of Egypt's bonapartist capitalist state apparatus, the military, is now directly in power. The military has announced the dissolution of Mubarak's sham parliament and the formation of a panel to amend a

Above left: Protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square celebrate Mubarak's ouster, February 11. Above right: Soldiers on guard in Tahrir Square, February 12, after military assumed power in defense of capitalist "order."

constitution that has never been worth the paper it was written on. As we warned in our last article on the protests in Egypt, "Make no mistake: there remains the dire threat that whatever happens to Mubarak, Egypt's bourgeois rulers will demand fierce military repression to restore and maintain capitalist 'order'" (WV No. 973,

4 February). Scuffles have broken out between protesters in Tahrir Square and soldiers trying to remove them. With rumors circulating that the regime will ban strikes, on February 14 the military issued Communiqué No. 5, which denounced strikes as leading to "negative results" and ordered workers to return to their jobs.



February 9: As workers struggles erupt throughout Egypt, Suez Canal Company workers in Ismailia City begin strike demanding resignation of boss, pay raise and social equality.

Bourgeois oppositionists—from liberal democrats like Mohamed ElBaradei and his National Association for Change, Kefaya's George Ishak and the Ghad party's Ayman Nour to the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood—have all embraced the military in the interest of restoring stability. The ubiquitous Egyptian flags waving in the protests, which drew virtually all layers of society other than the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie, reflected a deep-seated nationalist consciousness. Born of a history of imperialist subjugation, nationalism has long served Egypt's bourgeois rulers by obscuring the class divide between the tiny layer of filthy rich at the top and the brutally exploited and impoverished working class.

Today, this nationalism is most clearly expressed in the belief that the military is the "friend of the people." From the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser's 1952 Free Officers coup, which toppled the monarchy and ended the British occupation of the country, the army has been viewed as the guarantor of Egyptian national sovereignty. In fact, the military has been the backbone of one dictatorship after another since 1952. That year, it was mobilized by Nasser to shoot down textile strikers in Kafr Al-Dawwar near Alexandria. In 1977, it was mobilized by Anwar el-Sadat to "restore order" after a two-day countrywide upheaval over the price of bread. Just last week, the army facilitated murderous attacks by plainclothes cops and hired thugs of the regime against protesters occupying Tahrir continued on page 13

For a Revolutionary Workers Party! For a Workers and Peasants Government!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Honor Harriet Tubman, Abolitionist Hero

One of the many contributions of our comrade Martha Phillips was her research and presentation on Harriet Tubman, a hero in the fight to smash slavery ("Harriet Tubman: Fighter for Black Freedom," Women and Revolution No. 32, Winter 1986-87, reprinted in Black History and the Class Struggle No. 5, February 1988). Martha was tragically murdered in Moscow in February 1992 under suspicious circumstances, as she led our struggle to bring the authentic communism of Lenin and Trotsky to Soviet workers facing the ravages of capitalist counterrevolution. In honor of Martha Phillips, and to commemorate Black History Month, we print below selections from her salute to Harriet Tubman, which provides a succinct analysis of the intersection of race, sex and class in America.

"General Tubman," as John Brown

dubbed her, stood in the revolutionary insurrectionist wing of the abolitionist movement in the struggle against the Southern slavocracy. A fugitive slave, Tubman played a crucial role in the Underground Railroad and became known as the Moses of her people. In the Civil War, she was a scout and spy for the Union Army and led 300 black soldiers in a military action on South Carolina's Combahee River in June 1863. Tubman saw early on that the war for the union must become a war to free the slaves. But the promise of black freedom offered by the Union Army's victory over the South was subsequently betrayed by the Northern bourgeoisie, marked by the defeat of Radical Reconstruction. This betrayal was cruelly experienced by the impoverished Tubman, who suffered physical attack and brutal segregation and was com-

pelled to wage a decades-long battle for the pension that her Civil War service entitled her to. As Tubman acidly stated: 'You wouldn't think that after I served the flag so faithfully I should come to want in its folds."

To learn more about Martha Phillips, see Prometheus Research Series No. 6, "Selected Speeches and Writings in Honor of Three Women Leaders of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist): Martha Phillips, Susan Adams, Elizabeth King Robertson." To order, send check for \$7.00 to Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

The situation of the triply oppressed black woman slave more than any other cried out for liberation. Even the right to raise their own children was often denied to these women, whose masters could sell them or any member of their family at will. The life of Harriet Tubman illustrates in a particularly acute fashion the tremendous obstacles black women faced regarding even the elementary decencies of life. Despite her courageous work for black freedom...she lived in poverty all

Having completed their revolution against slavery—the last great bourgeois revolution—the Northern capitalists turned their backs on the blacks. Although they may have been opposed to property in human flesh, the robber barons of the late 19th century allied with Southern landholders for private property in the means of production. Even the most basic of political rights, the right to vote, was denied to all women at this time, both black and white. The capitalist reaction flowed from the inherent inability of a system based on private ownership of the means of production to eliminate scarcity, the economic source of all social inequality. Only abolition of private property will remove the social roots of racial and sexual oppression....

Marx said, "Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black



it is branded." The destruction of slavery

signaled the birth of the American labor movement, the rise of unions and agitation for the eight-hour day. Blacks today play a strategic role in the American working class. Over the years mass migration from the rural South into the cities, both North and South, has transformed the black population from a largely rural, agricultural layer into an urban, industrial group. As an oppressed race-color caste integrated at the bottom of the U.S. economy, blacks suffer from capitalist exploitation compounded with vicious racial oppression—for them, the "American dream" is a nightmare! In precise Marxist terms black people are the reserve army of the unemployed, last hired, first fired, a crucial economic component of the boom/bust cycle of the capitalist mode of production. Thus Marx's words are all too true today: the fight for black liberation is the fight for the emancipation of all working people. It is the race question—the poison of racism—that keeps the American working class divided. As long as the labor movement does not take up the struggle of black people, there will be no struggle for any emancipation—just as the Civil War could not be won without the freeing and arming of the slaves.

Today the oppressed and exploited must look to the red banner of socialist revolution for their liberation. The Spartacist League raises the slogans, "Finish the Civil War! Forward to the Third American Revolution!" to express the historic tasks which fall to the revolutionary party.■

Letter

Liebknecht and the Spartacists

30 January

To the Editor,

WV No. 972 (21 January 2011) appropriately marked January as the banner month of the 3Ls under the headline, "Honor Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht" by publishing Karl Liebknecht's 2 December 1914 statement motivating his lone vote that day in the German Reichstag (parliament) against its military budget for the inter-imperialist First World War. As WV noted, Liebknecht was prohibited from delivering his statement from the floor of the Reichstag, from entering it into the record, or from publishing it in the Kaiser's Germany.

I want to add that Liebknecht's statement has a special significance for us Spartacists. It did appear that same month as an illegal leaflet—the first of a series of newsletters that the supporters of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg began to issue clandestinely. These beacons of revolutionary internationalism were distributed throughout the Reich via underground channels, summoning German workers to civil war against the imperialist war. These newsletters mercilessly lashed both the overtly social-chauvinist majority of the Social Democratic Party and its centrist cover, provided by Karl Kautsky and Co.; they called for a new, revolutionary Third International; and hailed the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. These newsletters were known by the signature they came to bear, that



October 1918 issue of newsletter of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's Spartakusbund.

Spartacus—leader of the great slave revolt in ancient Rome. It was the popularity of these Spartakusbriefe (Spartacist Letters) that eventually gave the name of Spartakusbund (Spartacist League) to the group that initially formed around Luxemburg and Liebknecht in August 1914. All comrades today know that our forebears of the Revolutionary Tendency, expelled from the centrist Socialist Workers Party, honored this tradition in naming our press Spartacist in February-March 1964, and in taking the name of Spartacist League in September 1966. Less well known is that the name Spartacus first became an international symbol of the communist movement through the newsletters that began with Liebknecht's historic declaration of 2 December 1914.

> Communist Greetings, Victor G.

Spartacist League



Black History Month Forums

150 Years Since the Civil War

Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday February 19, 4 p.m.

322 W. 48th Street 1st Floor (between 8th & 9th Aves.) Take A, C or E to 42nd St.) For info: (212) 267-1025 nvsl@tiac.net

LOS ANGELES

Saturday February 26, 4 p.m. Mount Hollywood

Congregational Church 4607 Prospect Ave. (Vermont-Sunset Red Line Sta.) For info: (213) 380-8239 slsvcla@sbcglobal.net

BAY AREA

Saturday March 5, 2 p.m. Methodist Church

303 Hudson St., Oakland (5 blocks from Rockridge BART, enter on Manila)

For info: (510) 839-0851 slbayarea@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO

50 Years After SNCC and the Civil Rights Movement, Black Oppression Deepens-Still Separate, Still Unequal!

The Fight for Black Freedom in Racist America

Saturday, February 26, 4 p.m.

University of Illinois - Chicago; Student Center East, Rm. 605; 750 S. Halsted Street (Take Blue Line, UIC Halsted Stop); For info: (312) 563-0441; spartacist@iname.com

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The closing date for news in this issue is February 15.

No. 974 **18 February 2011**

2 **WORKERS VANGUARD**

Pandering to Reactionary Muslim Brotherhood

The ouster of Mubarak after years of dictatorship has lifted the lid on Egyptian society and its many contradictions. The tremendous mobilizations of unemployed youth, students, women and workers have created space for the left and working class to engage more openly in political activity—an opening that is directly threatened by the military takeover. At the same time, the upheaval has provided an opening for the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest opposition movement.

While many protesters say that they would oppose the Brotherhood coming to power, in the absence of a viable revolutionary proletarian alternative it could win a hearing among the desperate masses. This is not least because it provides clinics, schools, charities and other social services for slum dwellers that the bourgeois state fails to provide. A mass movement, the Brotherhood is heavily entrenched among professionals, students, peasants in rural areas and other pettybourgeois layers as well as the lumpenproletariat of the impoverished urban slums. In the last parliament, despite state repression and electoral rigging, the Brotherhood had 88 seats compared to the 34 seats for all other opposition parties combined.

Because of its historic hostility to workers struggles, the Brotherhood has not made significant inroads into the working class. But it has found allies in its attempt to win support among workers and youth. The opportunist Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group in Egypt—heavily promoted by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, a section of the international tendency founded by the late Tony Cliffhas been fostering suicidal illusions in the Brotherhood. The RS tries to invest these obscurantist clerical forces with "antiimperialist" credentials and has pursued alliances with them over several years. No one should be fooled by the Brotherhood's claim to fight against "all forms of injustice, tyranny, autocracy and dictatorship," as a statement of theirs published in the London Guardian (8 February) proclaims. Whether or not it is currently in any position to make a bid for power, the Muslim Brotherhood represents a deadly danger to the working class, the Coptic Christian minority, all secularists, gays and especially the brutally oppressed women of Egypt.

The RS is so fascinated by these reactionaries that it posted on its Web site a February 5 statement by the Brotherhood, complete with the Brotherhood's emblem of crossed swords. In a reminder of the criminal betrayal by the opportunist left internationally in the 1978-79 upheaval in Iran, when these groups supported the

Cliffites on Egypt



February 5 Muslim **Brotherhood** statement posted on Revolutionary **Socialists** organization Web site.

mullahs led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the RS today is championing anti-Semitic Islamic reaction in Egypt. Capitulation to Islamic forces or any other form of religious reaction is antithetical to secular humanism, not to mention the liberating goals of socialism.

In an article titled "Comrades and Brothers," published in Middle East Report (Spring 2007), Hossam El-Hamalawy, a self-described socialist journalist, boasts that the RS "pushed for close coordination" with the Brotherhood and praises its "brotherly spirit." The RS joined with the Brotherhood to form the National Alliance for Change in 2005, organizing joint demonstrations. El-Hamalawy notes: "The rapprochement between Islamists and the left continued when students from the Revolutionary Socialists' Tendency, Muslim Brothers and some independents formed the Free Student Union (FSU) in November 2005, with the aim of acting as a parallel organization to the government-dominated student unions."

The RS fatuously claims that the Brotherhood has "contradictions" that socialists can exploit. As our Canadian comrades wrote when the Cliffites used the same argument to support the introduction of sharia courts (!) in Canada, "The contradiction in religion lies in the fact that human beings created religions, only to have their creations rule over them like a Frankenstein monster. It is obscene to have to debate with ostensible Marxists whether clerical reaction should be supported. Marxists regard all modern religion as an instrument of bourgeois reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people" (see "Sharia 'Socialists'," WV No. 861, 6 January 2006).

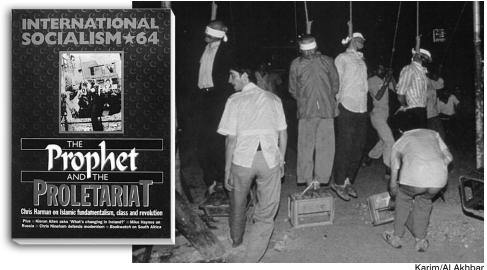
In March 2006, the RS issued a pamphlet by the Center for Socialist Studies, The Muslim Brothers: A Socialist Perspective. The pamphlet opens with a denunciation of the Egyptian Stalinists for characterizing the Brotherhood as "a political enemy of the left that must be fought at all levels." El-Hamalawy's 2007 article echoes this theme, stating: "Most independent leftist organizations in the 1980s and 1990s hewed to a line on political Islam similar to that of the Egyptian Communist Party," which translated into an alliance "with the Egyptian

hold of the Brotherhood and other reactionary religious forces.

Muslim Brotherhood: A Reactionary Mass Movement

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, when there was widespread disappointment at the failure of the weak secular nationalist parties to secure Egypt's independence from British colonialism following the 1919 uprising. Under the slogan: "The Koran is our constitution," al-Banna preached a fundamentalist Islamism and aimed at establishing a theocratic state in Egypt. The organization rapidly grew, branching across the Islamic world from Algeria and Jordan to Pakistan.

The Brotherhood became a tool for the monarchy against its political opponents, sponsoring assassinations and mass violence against Communists and the bourgeois-nationalist Wafd party and providing shock troops to break workers strikes. After the army seized power in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser briefly embraced the Brotherhood before ruthlessly suppressing it. Anwar el-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak alternately repressed and demonized the Brotherhood or tolerated it. Sadat released Islamists jailed by Nasser and funded, armed and trained them as an effective antidote to Communists and other leftists. Emboldened by the state, Islamists turned university campuses into



Left: Cliffite leader Chris Harman's 1994 paean to "anti-imperialist" Islamic reaction. Right: 1980 executions in Iran, as "revolutionary" Khomeini regime unleashed terror against workers, leftists, women, national minorities.

secular intelligentsia—and with Mubarak's regime."

We Marxists reject this bankrupt reformist framework, which posits that the only two "choices" for the working class in Egypt are to capitulate either to the "secular," military-backed bourgeois nationalist regime or to political Islam. In fact, these are alternative ways of propping up capitalist class rule, the system which ensures vast wealth for its rulers and dire poverty for the urban and rural masses. We look instead to the revolutionary mobilization of Egypt's proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, in a fight for socialist revolution, which alone can address the fundamental problems facing the masses. We oppose the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, which bolsters their credibility and also fosters illusions in the "secular" credentials of the bourgeois nationalists while buttressing the repressive powers of the capitalist

The RS's criticisms of the Stalinists for reliance on the state are a cover for its accommodation to the Muslim Brotherhood. For our part, we understand that bourgeois rule in semicolonial countries like Egypt, which groan under abject poverty and subjugation to imperialism, reinforces social backwardness and the

terra islamica. "They banned, clubs in hand, anything that fell foul of their norms," writes Gilles Kepel in The Prophet and the Pharaoh (1993). "Couples were physically attacked for violations of upright Islamic morals; films could not be shown; concerts and evening

dances could not be held." In 1992, fundamentalists shot dead Egyptian intellectual Farag Foda, a secular opponent of Islamic reaction. "The killing of Farag Foda was in fact the implementation of the punishment against an apostate which the imam [referring to the president] has failed to undertake," declared the government-sponsored religious body Al Azhar to justify this heinous crime. Renowned novelist Naguib Mahfouz, whose books were deemed "blasphemous" by fundamentalists, was stabbed in 1994, five years after a leading Islamic cleric had said he deserved to die. In 2000, Islamic fundamentalists ignited riots in Cairo in opposition to the publication of a novel that they considered "heretical" (see "Banquet for Seaweed," WV No. 770, 7 December 2001).

From Iran to Afghanistan

The RS portrayed the Muslim Brotherhood as necessary allies in the struggle to bring down the Mubarak regime. The continued on page 5



1953: U.S. president Eisenhower meets in White House with group of Muslim delegates, seeking to build anti-Communist alliance during Cold War. Muslim Brotherhood leader Said Ramadan is second from right.





Left: Police attack woman garment worker during protests in Dhaka, 30 June 2010. Right: Garment workers in Dhaka marching for rise in minimum wage hold banner reading, "Accept All the Just Demands of the Garment Workers," 28 July 2010.

Women Garment Workers Fight Starvation Wages

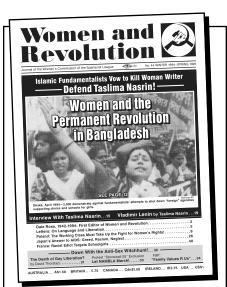
The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 213 (Winter 2010-2011), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

On 12 December 2010, police in Chittagong, Bangladesh opened fire on garment workers protesting starvation wages, killing at least three. The killing occurred during several days in which tens of thousands of workers, who are mostly women, blocked roads near the capital, Dhaka, and besieged factories in the southern Export Processing Zone, protesting the refusal of factory owners to honour a wage increase agreed following an earlier round of class struggle last summer.

Workers Hammer

Two days after the police killings, a fire in the Ha-Meem clothing factory in Ashulia near Dhaka killed between 26 and 31 workers and injured at least 100 more. That the exact number of dead in both the fire and the police killings is not clear speaks volumes about the value placed on workers' lives in this wretchedly impoverished South Asian country.

The ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh employs around 3.5 million workers and accounts for 80 per cent of the country's export earnings, some £7.7 billion [\$12 billion] last year. It provides



Women and Revolution No. 44 (Winter 1994–Spring 1995)

\$1 (40 pages)

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the country's second largest source of income after remittances from Bangladeshis working abroad, millions of whom are forced to toil in the most dangerous and lowest paid jobs in the Near East and Europe to support their families at home. Bangladesh's garment industry has grown dramatically over 25 years, supplanting the traditional exports of jute and tea, and consolidating a female proletarian layer with significant potential social power. Bangladesh's clothing factories supply major Western clothing brands, including Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Gap and Wal-Mart, while paying the lowest wages of garment workers in the world. The legal minimum wage won last summer (but not generally paid out by the factory bosses) is 3,000 taka [\$42] a month, far below subsistence and coming in the context of sharp rises in food prices.

Garment factory fires like that in December—virtually mass murder by factory owners—are anything but rare. The Bangladesh *Daily Star* (27 February 2010) published a partial list of garment factory fires since 1990, including eight in which at least 20 died. In describing conditions typical of these atrocities, the International Labor Rights Forum wrote of a fire last year at the Garib & Garib Sweater Factory in Dhaka in which 21 workers died:

"Lasting nearly two hours, the fire consumed the oxygen in the air, suffocating the workers. The smoke could not get out because the factory's windows were sealed with heavy metal shutters. Workers could not escape because exits were locked. Security personnel had reportedly locked two of the factory's main gates when the fire broke out to prevent theft by garment workers leaving the factory."

- Fighting Poverty Wages in Bangladesh (SweatFree Communities, December 2010)

Recent years have seen explosive waves of labour protest and strikes by Bangladeshi garment workers who are engaged in a battle for survival in conditions of near-slavery, often forced to work more than 12-hour days, seven days a week to fill orders, in hazardous conditions. Trade unionists, even where allowed to function legally, are banned outright from organising in the factories, and are frequent targets of arrest, torture and killings by state forces. Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organisation, documents at least seven garment workers killed in 2010 by government forces and 2,528 injured in the course of protests (odhikar.org, 1 January). They cite 259 arrests of workers' leaders in 2010 including garment workers' leader Mushrefa Mishu, who has been held in custody since the mid-December strikes and is seriously ill. Trade unions internationally must demand in solidarity: Free Mushrefa Mishu and all other detained worker activists!

Several trade unions internationally have issued statements of support for the embattled Bangladeshi workers. Workers Uniting, formed by trade unions including Unite in Britain and the United Steelworkers in the U.S. and Canada, took out a full-page advertisement in a Bangladeshi newspaper, the *Daily Ittefaq*, last July



Garment workers leader Mushrefa Mishu.

which was reproduced and mass distributed in Dhaka and Chittagong by the Textile Garment Workers Federation. It proclaimed: "Workers Uniting supports the very modest demand of Bangladesh's garment workers for a minimum wage of at least 5,000 taka [\$71] a month." Derek Simpson, outgoing leader of Unite, condemned the global "race to the bottom" in sweatshop wages, saying that "these women in Bangladesh are having to work for as little pay as the employers can get away with."

Statements of international solidarity from the trade-union bureaucracies are a welcome change from protectionist campaigns against foreign workers such as when Simpson backed the wave of chauvinist strikes on Britain's building sites for "British jobs for British workers." Genuine proletarian internationalism, summed up in the *Communist Manifesto* slogan "workers of the world unite," is a call for unity in class struggle *against* the capital-

ist rulers in each country and is counterposed to the politics of the reformist tradeunion bureaucracy which is loyal to its "own" bourgeoisie. Simpson's professed opposition to the "race to the bottom" in wages would ring hollow to Bangladeshi immigrant workers in Britain, who are among the poorest sections of the proletariat in the country. Far be it from the union bureaucracy to mobilise the social power of this powerful union in a classstruggle fight to defend jobs and wages against vicious capitalist austerity. By and large the union bureaucracy has supported the racist "war on terror" directed against Muslims which was launched under "their" Labour government.

The statements of solidarity with workers in Bangladesh by the trade-union bureaucracies include wretched appeals to their "own" capitalist rulers. The Workers Uniting statement pledges: "The AFL-CIO will ask our government to work together with the government of Bangladesh to guarantee that Bangladesh's workers have the right to freedom of association, to organise independent unions and to bargain collectively." In Britain. Unite backs the "Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops" campaign organised by War on Want which appeals to the British government to "regulate the business practices of UK retailers to ensure that overseas workers are guaranteed a living wage, decent working conditions and the right to join a trade union" (waronwant.org).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are not workers organisations but are funded by capitalist governments, churches and business enterprises and appeals by the trade-union leaders to NGOs on behalf of the garment workers only serve to give a humanitarian gloss to imperialist exploitation in the world's poorest countries (while salving liberal consciences by promoting the mythical power of the consumers in the West). But the brutal capitalist exploitation that is endemic in the garment industry-from Bangladesh to the Philippines to Indonesia—will not be ended by appeals to the "good conscience" of the imperialist butchers in Britain and the U.S., but through class struggle that targets the profits of the manufacturing capitalists in every country.

The capitalists will do what they need to do in order to increase their profit margins—by intensifying exploitation of workers at home and/or by exporting their capital, thus moving jobs to countries where labour costs are cheaper. In opposition to protectionism, the labour movement must fight for international workingclass solidarity, linking the economic and other struggles of workers in the U.S. and Britain with those of workers around the world, particularly in Third World countries such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. What is ultimately necessary is the sweeping away of the global capitalist order through a series of socialist revolutions that establish an *international* planned economy.

Women's Liberation and the Program of **Permanent Revolution**

For us revolutionary Marxists, the young women garment workers in Bangladesh are not mere victims in need of charity from the West, but are the backbone of a multi-billion pound industry that is vital to the economy of Bangladesh. Driven from the villages by desperate poverty, Bangladeshi women workers face brutal forms of exploitation, but they also stand to gain a new consciousness and for the first time in their lives participate in organised struggle against oppression as a class. In this hideously poor country that remains largely rural, the proletariat is small relative to the rest of the population but has tremendous social power and is a crucial link in the chain of the world economy.

The venal ruling class of Bangladesh is tied to the imperialist powers by a thousand and one threads, not least to British imperialism, the former colonial power that exploited and dismembered the subcontinent. A WikiLeaks report in December revealed that British police forces, starting when Labour was in government, have been training the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion that is notorious for torture and killings of Bangladeshi workers' leaders, tribal activists, leftists and other political opponents of the government.

The horrific conditions of life in Bangladesh are a product not only of imperialist exploitation but of the tyranny of religious obscurantism. Whether under the Awami League, the Bangladesh National Party or military rule, Islamic strictures lead to brutish treatment of women who are secluded from social life and treated as chattel property of fathers and husbands. A job in the garment factories, however dangerous and poorly paid it may be, is one of the few socially acceptable ways for a woman to earn a living and to achieve a degree of independence. But to address the most basic democratic



Women's organizations protest government's declaration of Islam as state religion, 1988. Banner reads: "No to Playing Politics with Religion."

questions facing women workers in Bangladesh—who are subject to exploitation by employers, murderous state repression by the police, the danger of rape, as well as malnutrition for themselves and their children—requires a revolutionary socialist programme.

In 1994 the courageous Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin was hounded out of the country by rabid Islamic fundamentalists incensed by her fight for the rights of women including to contraception and abortion. But the anti-woman hordes mobilised by the mullahs were not unopposed: in June 1994, 500 women garment workers in Dhaka armed with sticks mobilised in defence of Nasrin and against a strike call by fundamentalists, the aim of which was to pressure the government to arrest and execute Nasrin (see "Women and the Permanent Revolution in Bangladesh," Women and Revolution No. 44, Winter 1994-Spring 1995).

The emancipation of women as part of the liberation of the downtrodden of the entire subcontinent requires a struggle for permanent revolution—the perspective fought for by Lenin and Trotsky in the great October 1917 Revolution in Russia: the workers seizing power at the head of the oppressed masses, agrarian revolution to liberate the peasantry, the socialisation and rational reorganisation of the economy in the interests of human needs not profit, and the fight to extend socialist revolution internationally, especially to the imperialist heartlands.■

Cliffites...

(continued from page 3)

lesson to be drawn from subordinating the class interests of the toilers for the sake of maintaining an alliance with religious reactionaries has been written in blood by history. The International Communist League (then known as the international Spartacist tendency) warned from the outset of the 1978-79 Iranian upheaval that, absent a decisive break by the working class from the Islamic forces, the struggle would have a disastrous outcome.

In sharp contrast to the rest of the left's capitulation to mullah-led reaction, our program was summed up in the slogans: "Down with the Shah! No support to Khomeini! For workers revolution in Iran!" We warned that Khomeini in power would reimpose the veil, suppress national minorities and seek to crush the left and the workers movement as ruthlessly as did the Shah. Tragically, the Iranian masses paid the price. Khomeini's seizure and consolidation of power led to the execution of thousands of leftists, Kurds, women, homosexuals and opponents of theocratic rule in what was a historic defeat for the powerful Iranian proletariat.

During the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War of the 1980s, the U.S. imperialists massively armed and organized the

Afghan mujahedin "holy warriors" against the Soviet Union, using as a pretext the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. We hailed the Red Army, whose intervention opened the way to the liberation of the Afghan peoples, especially the miserably oppressed women. We called to extend the gains of the 1917 October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. In the first war in modern history in which women's emancipation was a central issue, the Red Army battled the murderous imperialist-armed and -financed Islamic fundamentalists, who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and killed schoolteachers who taught young girls to read (see "The Russian Question Point Blank," Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 29, Summer 1980). We denounced the Kremlin Stalinists' 1989 withdrawal of Soviet troops as a betrayal of women and the oppressed Afghan peoples.

From their inception as a political tendency in Britain in the 1950s, the trademark of Tony Cliff and his followers was pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism, encapsulated in their slogan "Neither Washington nor Moscow." In Afghanistan in the 1980s, this merged with their tailing of Islamic fundamentalist forces. They lusted for the bloodying of the Soviet Army and prettified the *mujahedin* cutthroats as fighters against imperialism. The U.S. Cliffites of the International Socialist Organization declared: "Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (Socialist Worker, May 1988). The Soviet pullout was indeed the precursor to the final collapse of the USSR itself. And, to be sure, the Cliffites cheered the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state—a historic defeat not only for the peoples of the former Soviet Union but also for the international working class.

Myth of Islamists' Anti-Imperialism

Keeping pace with the rise of political Islam in the wake of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, in 1994 the British SWP published a major article in International Socialism titled "The Prophet and the Proletariat" by the late Chris Harman, a leading Cliffite theoretician. Harman coined the opportunist slogan "With the Islamists sometimes, with the state never" and treated Islamic fundamentalist "mass movements" as radical petty-bourgeois nationalist formations which "have taken up anti-imperialist slogans and some antiimperialist actions."

The notion that the Islamists are antiimperialist flies in the face of history. During the Cold War, the American imperialists consciously sought to harness the deeply anti-Communist Islamic reactionaries as a force against the Soviet Union as well as secular nationalist regimes. In Egypt, Islamic reactionaries worked hand in hand with the imperialists and the Saudi monarchy to destabilize the pro-Moscow

Brothers were put on the CIA payroll. And for the anti-Soviet operation in Afghanistan, the CIA's largest covert operation ever, the Brotherhood provided a major contingent of the mujahedin, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, now a high-ranking leader of Al Qaeda. Today, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made clear that U.S. imperialism can do business with the Brotherhood in post-Mubarak Egypt.

Tailing the Muslim Brotherhood today certainly does not prevent the Cliffites from keeping open the option of capitulating to "secular" Arab nationalism. An article in the British Socialist Worker (5 February) notes that "Nasser's brand of secular Arab nationalism still has many supporters inside Egypt" and eulogizes the bourgeois strongman Nasser as an antiimperialist, writing: "As president between 1956 and 1970 he stood firm against imperialism and transformed Egypt."

Here the Cliffites are retailing the illusions in Nasser and the mythical "Arab Revolution" that the Stalinists fostered for decades. In reality, Nasser came to power largely with the aim of crushing the struggles of the combative working class. Neither the "secular" nationalism of Nasser nor Islamism can overcome the depredations of imperialism or provide solutions to any of the fundamental problems besetting the working class and oppressed in Egypt today. What's needed is a revolutionary workers party to lead the proletariat in a struggle for socialist revolution against the military bonapartists, the religious fundamentalists and all bourgeois political forces, opening the road to the emancipation of women and the liberation of all the oppressed and exploited.■

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Young Spartacus

France, May 1968

Prerevolutionary Situation Betrayed by Communist Party

the LTF's newspaper Le Bolchévik (Nos. 185 and 186, September and December 2008). Part One, which appeared in WV No. 972 (21 January), focused on the period ending in mid May, when the general strike that had been sparked by the brutal repression of student protests

We print below the second

part of a forum given by our

comrades of the Ligue Trots-

kyste de France, translated and

adapted for publication from

spread throughout the country.

LEBOLCHEVIK &

By the end of May 1968, France was so paralyzed by the general strike that the bourgeoisie quickly decided to open negotiations, which took place at the employment ministry on the Rue de Grenelle in Paris. In 2008, the French Communist Party (PCF) issued a special edition of their newspaper L'Humanité about May '68. It included an interview with Georges Séguy, a PCF leader and secretary-general of the CGT trade-union federation in 1968, who said, "In the first ten minutes of the Grenelle meeting, we were able to raise the SMIC [minimum wage] by 35 percent, and the minimum wage for farm workers by 55 percent." Thus Séguy confirmed what Trotsky said in "Once Again, Whither France?" (March 1935): "The

PART TWO

general Marxist thesis 'Social reforms are only the by-products of the revolutionary struggle' has, in the epoch of the decline of capitalism, the most immediate and burning importance. The capitalists are able to cede something to the workers only if they are threatened with the danger of losing everything." In spite of the concessions that Séguy greatly exaggerated as "enormous," the CGT did not sign off on the negotiations but called to continue the strike. For several reasons.

The PCF, which led the CGT union federation, was perfectly aware that the working class was not ready to go back to work so easily, for so little, because the PCF and the CGT were present in most of the occupied factories. This detail shows how well the Stalinists knew their business: on day one of the occupation at the Renault plant in Billancourt, the most important factory in the country, the PCF sent a member of the Political Bureau,

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24 May 1968: Workers from Citroën plant at Quai de Javel in Paris vote to continue strike.

Claude Poperen, to stay in the plant to get a sense of the pulse of the working class. The PCF and the CGT had lots of experience betraying the workers—Benoît Frachon, a negotiator at Grenelle, had been a negotiator before, at the Matignon negotiations during the 1936 general strike. The PCF knew "how to end a strike," like in 1936 when they diverted the workers struggles into support for Léon Blum's popular-front government, which was an alliance between bourgeois and reformist socialist parties to manage capitalism. In 1968, without the prospect of a new popular-front government that would try to contain the workers' militancy and their hopes for change, it would have been very damaging for the PCF to call them back to work in exchange for such minimal concessions.

Another reason for the PCF to refuse to sign off on the agreement was that the rest of the left was increasingly maneuvering for a popular front without them. The PCF sought to use the Grenelle negotiations to pressure its putative partners to understand that, without the PCF, it would be impossible to find a "solution" to the strike that

would serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. French president Charles de Gaulle appeared on TV on May 24, calling for a referendum on unspecified reforms and threatening to resign if it failed. He intended this to be a referendum on his continued rule. His announcement flopped. Everybody knew the referendum would be boycotted or would fail. The question of power began to be posed more and more clearly. The Paris préfet (a regional official from the national government) at the time, Grimaud, tells in his book how some in de Gaulle's entourage raised the question of replacing de Gaulle. The bourgeoisie and the politicians saw that the government was tottering and looked for parliamentary and institutional answers, and accelerated their maneuvers.

During the Grenelle negotiations, which went on from May 25 to the morning of the 27th, the non-Communist left, with the enthusiastic support of pseudorevolutionaries (the Pabloite Parti Com-

muniste Internationaliste and Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire, Voix Ouvrière [VO], and Pierre Lambert's Organisation Communiste Internationaliste), organized a rally in Charléty Stadium in Paris to which the PCF was not invited. Held on May 27, this gathering

brought out tens of thousands of people. Pierre Mendès-France did not speak, but his presence was notable and noted, with part of the crowd chanting his name when he appeared. (Mendès-France was a bourgeois politician from the Radical Party who had won the leadership of the Parti Socialiste Unifié, a left social-democratic party. He was popular in 1968 because he was known for opposing the Algerian War.) On the morning of May 28, the left bourgeois politician François Mitterrand, who would later become leader of the Socialist Party, held a press conference in which he put himself forward as a candidate for the presidency—which he considered "vacant"—while holding open the door to Mendès-France for prime

The Charléty maneuver enraged the PCF and CGT because they understood perfectly well what was up: the anti-Communist, pro-U.S. social democrats wanted to have their own popular-frontist solution without the PCF. The PCF had no intention of being taken for a ride. To make very clear that no one was getting around them, the PCF and CGT called for workers demonstrations on May 29. Politically, the PCF and CGT bureaucrats had a hold over their ranks, who accepted their perspective of a "people's government" (although they probably had a different interpretation of what it meant, especially since the CGT had committed to taking part in it). The front page of L'Humanité on the 29th, addressing the demonstrations, headlined "The Workers' Demand: A People's Government of Democratic Union with Communist Participation!" Which is very clear, to say the least.

The May 29 demonstrations were some of the largest during May-June '68. They had a dual purpose: to try to shake Gaullist power a little more, so de Gaulle would resign, and to convince the left that its response could only be parliamentary, but not without the PCF. As Séguy said in 1972: "With the regime seeming shaky to us, we really and very sincerely wanted to revive unity. But once again our proposal encountered nothing but widespread evasion on the part of those to whom it was addressed." In fact, the PCF attempted to work out a popular-front alliance in a meeting with the Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste on the afternoon of May 28, after Mitterrand's press conference. This came to nothing. During this meeting, Waldeck Rochet, the secretarygeneral of the PCF, asked, "Will there be any Communist ministers?", to which Mitterrand replied, "At least one." One can imagine how that sat with Waldeck Rochet.

What Should Revolutionaries Have Done?

In May 1968 we had no organization in France. But our American comrades wrote an article on the French May events in Spartacist (English-language edition) No. 12, September-October 1968, that has stood the test of time remarkably. We printed it in French in our 1988 pamon the strike committees. You have to



May 27 rally at Charléty Stadium in Paris, where part of crowd cheered capitalist politician Pierre Mendès-France (below center) as social democrats sought to build popular-front alliance without Communist Party.

> phlet on May '68. In this pamphlet, retrospectively, we advocated a slogan for the month of May calling for a government of the PCF and the unions based

> > **WORKERS VANGUARD**

Young Spartacus

remember, in that period the workers were demonstrating behind the PCF's slogan for a "people's government," which they understood in a largely parliamentary framework. Calling for a PCF-union government would have been a means of transcending this parliamentary framework: how could the CGT union federation, how could the strike committees participate in a parliamentary government? This would have been a powerful perspective to put against the PCF's popular-front plans, in order to turn the PCF's base against its leadership by explaining that the PCF leaders were maneuvering for an alliance with the bourgeoisie instead of turning the strike committees into organs of workers power. The French Trotskyists put forward a similar slogan in 1946, for a government of the PCF, CGT and SFIO (the French Socialist party), in a terribly unstable situation when the PCF was participating in a popular-front government.

The question of turning the strike committees led by the bureaucrats into true embryos of workers power would have

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

SOUS-PRÉFECTURE DE DIEPPE

Le Sous-Préfet de Dieppe

Le Sous-Préfet.

P. NAUTIN.

peut bénéficier d'une attribution

de dix litres de carburant.

that the PCF did in 1968, i.e., that the bourgeois state can serve the interests of the working class. While the PCF thinks this can be done by having lots of members in parliament, LO and the Pabloites want to use pressure from the masses to make the bourgeois state serve the workers. This sweeps into the trash one of the main lessons Marx and Engels drew from the revolutions of 1848 and especially the Paris Commune: the working class cannot confine itself to laying hold of the machinery of the bourgeois state, but must smash it.

Strike Committees

Trotskyists would have fought for elected strike committees instead of committees appointed by the bureaucrats. We would have called for the strike committees to oversee the distribution of food and other supplies themselves, as well as resuming those services and utilities that the Stalinists wanted to turn over to the bourgeois state. By linking this to the Stalinists' attempt to come to an agreement with bourgeois parties and politicians, Trotsky-

Document from state official authorizing CGT union to distribute gas. Truck from Petit-Quevilly city government with food for striking workers. Communist Party, CGT tops tied strike committees to capitalist government.

been key for a revolutionary party in May-June 1968. This would have made the question of the state central—that the state is not neutral but serves the interests of the bourgeoisie. The capitalist state is the cops, the army, the prison guards and the judges. Its job is to protect the tiny minority that owns the means of production against the vast majority—the proletarians, who have nothing to sell but their labor power, and all the oppressed. The main task of the government that administers the state, whether on the national or the municipal level, is to bring that power to bear in order to maintain the capitalist order.

So Séguy, while implicitly recognizing that the CGT and the PCF were in control and were deciding what would and would not happen in the country's economy, bent over backwards to get the workers to rely on the bourgeois state. The PCF directed the strike support committees I mentioned earlier, which organized food and other supplies, to the mayors' offices and put them under the mayors' authority, that is, under the authority of the capitalist state. (These were often PCF mayors, but not always.) The mayors are the representatives of the bourgeois state closest to the population, under the authority of the *préfet*. Hence our position of refusing to run for executive offices like mayor or president: we want the working class to learn that its ultimate goal must be to destroy the bourgeois state, not run it. (See "Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics," Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 61, Spring 2009.) Fostering the worst illusions among the working class, the PCF explicitly told workers not to organize and run society themselves.

Now, 40 years later, VO's successor Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and the Pabloites both spout the same reformist illusions

ists could have exploited the contradictions that existed in the PCF and CGT, setting the base against the top, showing workers who wanted to fight for socialism that their leadership's intent was not to achieve socialism, but to manage capitalism. So there would be a political struggle between a revolutionary perspective that the working class has the power to run society for its own needs and to do that it must destroy the bourgeois state and the opposing view of the reformists, who, at bottom, respect the capitalist order, private property and the bourgeois state. Strike committees, workers councils

and soviets are not revolutionary in themselves. Only a revolutionary leadership gives a revolutionary character to these organs of working-class power. Under the PCF's leadership, these committees looked to the bourgeois state, to the mayors' offices. Revolutionaries would have fought for them to have their own centralized organization, relying on the working class itself rather than organs of bourgeois power like the municipal governments. We would have sought to prepare workers politically, by every means available, to understand the need to act independently of all bourgeois forces, to organize workers militias to defend their positions, and to prepare to seize power and destroy the capitalist state.

It is easier to understand this point if you look at the situation in Russia in late July 1917, when the leaders of the soviets (the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries) were throwing Bolsheviks in jail. Lenin, who had fled to Finland to avoid arrest, thought that the workers should build new organs to move toward seizing power because he could see that, under the leadership of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, the soviets had tended to become a mere extension of bourgeois

power. As it happened, the Bolsheviks subsequently won leadership of the soviets.

Revolutionaries' struggle needs to be based on a transitional program, leading the workers to the understanding that, in order to run society in their own interests, they have to be prepared to overthrow the bourgeois state. Trotsky explained in the Transitional Program (1938):

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.'

Vital Questions: Immigrants, Women, Youth

Revolutionaries putting forward a transitional program in 1968 would have faced some other key questions: immigrants, women and youth. There were almost three million immigrants in France in 1968, mostly Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese and Algerians. Back then, there were a lot of young male workers, either single or with family still in the old country-practically none were second generation. They lived in terrible conditions, in flophouses or shantytowns (200 still existed at the time), working mainly in construction and in industries that employ metals. A total of 85 percent of immigrant workers had no job skills, and many professions were forbidden to them by law. There were about 500,000 immigrant workers in construction, 370,000 in industries employing metals and in steel, 260,000 in agriculture. Women were often cleaning ladies. The proportion of immigrants varied widely in different sectors of production.

Immigrants were generally not allowed to engage in political activity. They couldn't get elected as union reps without six to 24 months of seniority. Immigrant workers very often had work contracts lasting no longer than six months, which prevented them from ever being integrated in the unions. The Portuguese had spent 35 years under Salazar's dictatorship. If they engaged in political activity in France, they were deported and wound up in the prisons of Portugal or in Portuguese colonies in Africa. Dozens of Portuguese workers who played an active role in the May '68 strike disappeared afterward. Algerian workers were just coming off a victorious war of national liberation. They reportedly took a very active part in the strike from day one. Now they were fighting alongside French workers against the same capitalist class that had slaughtered their brothers during the Algerian War. To cement class unity, there should have been calls for full citizenship rights for all who were in France, with a fight for the same political and social rights that French workers had and to do away with all discrimination on the job, in housing and in education.

The bourgeoisie had been pitting various communities against each other for a

very long time. But as May '68 unfolded, the divisions between the different ethnic sectors of the proletariat largely broke down. In construction in particular, immigrants were in the vanguard: French workers represented a labor aristocracy who didn't want to strike, whereas threequarters of the unskilled workers were immigrants. Although the presence of the CGT or the PCF was often seen in this period as a protection against the worst manifestations of racism, with the PCF there actually was some chauvinism in May-June 1968. When strike support money was distributed, the Algerians had to fight to have their families back in Algeria taken into account.

After May '68, deportations of immigrants took place (officially 215 through December 1968), especially of Spaniards (Spain was under Franco), and of Algerians known as opponents of Algerian ruler Houari Boumedienne. There were important protests against this, mainly taken up by liberal intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as Alain Krivine's Pabloites, although the immigrant question was not a significant part of their intervention into the events of May '68.

Ten years ago, when the left was running articles on the 30th anniversary of May '68, we wrote, "For all the 'Trotskyist' groups that have wasted paper spreading inanities about May '68 recently, not one even mentions the question of immigrant workers. But this question was already strategic, even at that time" (Le Bolchévik No. 147, Autumn 1998). And that's still true. On the 40th anniversary they still have nothing to say about immigrant workers. The conclusion we drew on that score in the 1998 article is also still valid: "The fact that the far left raised the immigrant question scarcely or not at all in May '68 represents a capitulation to social-chauvinism and its own bourgeoisie. In a country just emerging from a dirty colonial war [in Algeria] in which the reformist leaderships of the working class, under the cover of 'Republican values,' defended their own imperialism, this question was key to the proletarian unity needed to overthrow the bourgeoisie."

The working class as a whole must defend the rights of immigrants and minorities, otherwise it leaves itself open to being weakened, divided and set back under the bourgeoisie's attacks. The struggle against this division must be linked to the understanding that the overturn of capitalist society is the only means of doing away with racism once and for all.

The woman question was also central. Women represented a significant portion of the working class in 1968. There were about 1,800,000 women workers, constituting almost 22 percent of the working class. The vast majority of them were unskilled. In other words, they were at the bottom of the ladder, performing, like immigrant workers, many of the most arduous, unskilled and lowest-paid jobs. And they had very few rights. Abortion was totally illegal under a 1920 law. (Even continued on page 8



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May 1968...

(continued from page 7)

today this right is limited by bourgeois morality, by all the difficulties immigrant women face and because of the "conscience clause" that doctors can invoke to refuse to perform abortions.) The ban on contraception had been lifted in 1967, but access to it remained very limited. The law forbidding a woman to even open a bank account without her husband's permission wasn't changed until 1965. The terms of divorce were very unfavorable for women and had not changed much since the Napoleonic Code. Questions of sexuality were completely taboo. Coeducation did not exist. In May '68, women workers overwhelmingly struck and occupied their factories.

A revolutionary party would have sought to address problems specific to women. It would also have fought in the working class as a whole against the bourgeois prejudices peddled by the workers' misleaders. In his recent book, L'Insubordination Ouvrière dans les Années 68 [Worker Insubordination in the '68 Years], Xavier Vigna gives the example of the needle trades in Lorient, a port in Brittany, where the women of one factory got several neighboring factories to come out on strike and led a march to the CGT union local to take part in union activities. However, when it came to engaging in talks and negotiations, these were handled by a man who worked at the military shipyard. Vigna gives two examples of occupations (at the SNECMA aircraft plant in Gennevilliers and a clothing factory in Lille) where it was decided that the women would occupy the plant during the day and the men would do it at night. This was probably the case in most plants, reflecting the bourgeois family norm that women should be at home in the evening. In an interview in L'Humanité's supplement on May '68, Gisèle Halimi, who became a founder of the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (MLF, Women's Liberation Movement), tells how, full of hope for the cause of women, she ended up setting up chairs and cooking meals at the Censier campus.

In a prerevolutionary situation like 1968, the intervention of a revolutionary party would have had a resounding echo among women, including petty-bourgeois women. Calls for the right to abortion and contraception and "equal pay for equal work" would certainly have done a lot to



Workers gather outside factory during upheaval. Gains for women, including right to abortion, were a by-product of the struggles of May 1968.

win women over to the perspective for a socialist society and the need for workers revolution. At the same time, raising such demands in the many demonstrations and on the picket lines could have raised the consciousness of the working class as a whole by breaking out of the confines of strictly economic demands.

A revolutionary party would have explained how women's oppression stems from private ownership of the means of production. Marx and Engels identified the family as the principal source of women's oppression because of its role in the inheritance of property, in particular of the means of production. Sexual monogamy on the part of women—as well as their social subordination—is required in order to determine without doubt the paternity of the heir. We say that the social institution of the family must be replaced (that differentiates us from bourgeois feminists). This can be accomplished only after a socialist revolution, as a planned economy will free men and women from domestic chores with 24/7 day care, quality collective laundries and dining, etc.

Just as with the immigrant question, it's appalling to see how absent this question is from the propaganda put out by the left in 1968, although women's oppression at the time was egregious and women had a massive presence in the strikes. This left the road open for bourgeois feminists, who went on to found the MLF in 1970. A lot of the women who ended up in the MLF after 1968 could probably have been won to the only program that can really lead to women's liberation: socialist revolution. Once the MLF was created, pseudo-revolutionaries like the Pabloites would "discover" the woman question and start tailing the bourgeois feminist

Students were the spark that lit the fire. Among workers, it was often the younger ones, both men and women, who spearheaded strikes and occupations. The family is the basis not only for women's oppression, but also for the oppression of youth. And the Gaullist regime was very hardline and moralistic about "family val-

ues." Questions of sex were taboo in Gaullist society, as I said before—there was no coeducation and homosexuals had no rights. Minors who wanted birth control still had to get their parents' permission. Young people were subject to parental authority and had very few rights. There was mandatory 16-month military service. Any propaganda against the bourgeois army and the draft would have had a lot of impact, especially when de Gaulle was contemplating turning to the army to crush the working class.

A revolutionary party would have sought to win student youth to join the cause of the proletariat, the only force capable of ending all forms of oppression. By building a revolutionary youth organization independent of the party but sharing the same program, it would have been possible to recruit youth, the flame of the proletarian revolution.

To wrap up my remarks about intervening on these pivotal questions I'll quote the Transitional Program, which explains:

"Opportunist organizations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the women workers. The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class; consequently, among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice."

[TO BE CONTINUED]



Banner from Turgot High School at May 13 rally in Paris. Youth rebelled against oppressive climate of Gaullist France.

Letters to Young Spartacus

On Obama's War on **Public Education**

January 19, 2011

Dear WV Editor,

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I found the article in WV #967 "Obama's War on Public Education" did a very good job of covering in-depth the attack that "education reform" represents both for poor and working class, mainly black, youth and the teachers that teach them. One point that I would make more strongly is that charter schools often use their special status not only to attack teachers unions and racial integration, but also as a way to increase the level of repression on students. Since these schools are not publicly run all decisions regarding code of discipline, student and teacher speech, dress code, length of school day, etc. are decided privately; as there is no publicly elected school board. Granted that the oppression of students can be done through the normal channels of the "democratic" public school system, but charter schools help to speed up this process.

Comradely, Ken

22 January 2011

I have some issues with the article "Obama's war on public education" in WV #967 which is an otherwise exemplary piece of propaganda. The article needed to discuss the woman question and the nuclear family, the primary means of oppressing women. The woman question is especially important when discussing the black question. Also, the plight of immigrants is mentioned in the article along with the defense of bilingual education, but not the SL's other demands defending immigrants.

This article does not mention that

women are specially oppressed or explicitly call for woman's liberation: Can you give a (working class) sister a break? The bourgeois propaganda, laws, and actual functioning institutions around schools and youth are heavily parent/family orientated. However, the only reference to woman's oppression in the article is with regard to sexual discrimination.

Schools are race, class AND sex biased. The ruling class "answer" to struggling mostly female run households is to use the law against the male parents to pay alimony. Also, both conservatives and many moralistic black liberals blame the single parent (read female) run households for the lack of advancements of the kids in these households. This cries out for free 24-hour childcare and free abortion on demand.

The 24-hour childcare and free abortion demands should always accompany the demands for open admissions, etc. as it's hard to go to school, especially as a teen, when you have kids. I would also add free abortion on demand and contraception to calls for free quality health care as well. Another point that could have been mentioned is that teaching abstinence, the lack or inadequacy of sex

education, the lack of birth control at most schools, and lack of free abortions on demand makes teens have unplanned children.

Talking about the nuclear family as the primary means of oppressing women as well as the prime focus of capitalist education is on the nuclear family, etc. would be more effective propaganda. Doesn't most religious obscurantism teach the subservience of women?

To illustrate the peculiarity of U.S. education and religious obscurantism, the public Ohlone Community College in Fremont (25 mi. South of Oakland), California requires students to pay a fee for health insurance. This is an extremely limited insurance which protects you if you get injured on campus only. The college will, however, waive the fee for students who use prayer to heal themselves! In revolutionary Russia militant atheism was taught in the schools.

Some other needed demands which were laws in the Soviet Union are paid leave for child rearing and getting one's job back guaranteed. The fact that schools have a heavily woman workforce brings up the woman question which these workers face. Teaching is a job which requires

Capitalism Has Nothing to Offer Youth

On January 21, the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, held its 25th annual Holiday Appeal benefit for class-war prisoners in New York City. A Spartacus Youth Club member gave the following speech, which has been slightly edited for publication.

It is important for revolutionary youth to take up the cause of the class-war prisoners because, as the old Industrial Workers of the World saying goes, "They are in there for us and we are out here for them." Even if we do not share the same politics, we stand on the same side of the class line. If the working class is to move forward, it is essential that we defend our class brothers and sisters.

Around the world, the capitalists' attempts to make the working class pay for the bosses' recession have come down on youth especially hard. In the U.S., 43.8 percent of black teens are now unemployed as well as 23.5 percent of white teens.

Obama continues his frontal assault on education, seeking to smash the teachers unions and privatize schools through the charter school movement. Higher education is becoming even more unreachable as capitalist governments from New York to London to Puerto Rico are raising tuition rates as part of broader "austerity measures," i.e., attacks on the working class as a whole.

The capitalist class continues to uphold the bourgeois family, meaning one man on one woman for life. Maintaining this family structure requires the brutal repression of women and youth, as we saw in the case of Tyler Clementi, the Rutgers student who jumped off the nearby George Washington Bridge rather than face the torment of being a young gay man in America. Just weeks later, two young men in the Bronx were savagely beaten because they were suspected of being a couple.

Add to this the racist war on drugs, which continues to target black and minority youth. According to the *New York Times* one out of every nine black men between 20 and 34 is currently behind bars or on parole. The majority of these cases involve "drug-related offenses."

Perhaps nothing explodes the "end of racism" myth more graphically than the fact that the police continue to gun down black and Latino youth no less under Obama than under any other administration. Witness Angel Alvarez and Luis Soto, who were shot down by the cops just blocks away from here. It is clear that capitalism has nothing to offer youth today. It is a brutal, exploitative and decaying system that must be completely uprooted and overthrown.

If we are to succeed, the youth must learn that the struggle to put an end to racism, sexism, starvation, exploitation, imperialist war, rampant disease and mass imprisonment is a *class struggle*. It is the struggle of the workers, who seek better wages, benefits, equality, etc., against the

SYC Speech at New York Holiday Appeal

capitalists, who seek to squeeze every last ounce of profit out of the skins of the workers.

Hand in hand with this understanding comes the realization that if students want to put an end to capitalism, they cannot do it alone. They must be allied with the working class, because only the working class has the power to shut down production and bring the whole struggle to its victorious conclusion.

It is also essential that the youth internalize the lessons that previous generations have learned in the class struggle. Central to these lessons is that the capitalists' courts are *never neutral*. They are the exclusive instrument of the capitalist state, whose interests are *diametrically opposed* to the interests of the workers. From this understanding springs the



Young Spartacu

Spartacus Youth Club at October 2010 Oakland rally for Oscar Grant, young black man killed by cops in 2009.

capitalist system to a grinding halt. Right now, the students at the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico are on strike against a tuition hike. The students are maintaining their strike in spite of violent repression from the cops and private security guards. The student action is courageous; however, the success of the student strike will hinge on whether or not it is joined by the workers. It was only through the *united* action of the students and workers that the campus strike last spring was victorious.

These struggles are not new by any means! And just as capitalist repression has a long and bloody history, the working-class struggle to abolish oppression has a long and powerful history as well! The high point of this was the Russian Revolution, when the working class, under the leadership of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, actually ripped state power out of the hands of the capitalists and established the first *workers* state in the history of the world.

It is important for revolutionary youth to remember that we are not alone! We are not the first people who have felt this way! Others started this fight long before we were born, and it is up to us to continue it in the future and bring the class slogan: There is no justice in the capitalist courts! If you are looking for proof of this slogan, look no further than the cases of the class-war prisoners. These courageous men and women are living the reality of this slogan every day.

Our class understanding of the state and its courts sets us apart from the rest of the left. A good example of this was seen last semester at CCNY, the college just across the street. The International Socialist Organization, or ISO, held a video showing of a new documentary about death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. The ISO is in a campaign to pressure Obama to start a civil rights investigation into Mumia's case. The Spartacus Youth Club was able to intervene at this event and point out, among other things, that Obama is the class enemy! He is the top cop of the capitalist state, whose job it is to maintain the racist capitalist system, which means getting rid of people who are perceived as threats to the capitalist order, like Mumia. When I asked the ISOers why they thought that Obama, who is explicitly pro-death penalty, would lift a finger to free Mumia, the ISO had no response.

Reformists like the ISO see the injustices against Mumia and the other class-

war prisoners as an embarrassment to the capitalist state. They seek to build illusions in the capitalist courts and attempt to appeal to the capitalist rulers' imaginary sense of justice. We know that the capitalists want anything but justice for the working class. While we support the pursuit of all legal means to free Mumia and all the class-war prisoners, we understand that ultimately it is only the working class who has the power to free them from the capitalists' death grip.

Our class perspective also informs our position on military recruiters on campus. We have always opposed the recruiters because we understand the U.S. Army to be the tool of imperialist domination. This is why we protested their presence last semester at CCNY, and our relatively small team of demonstrators found considerable support among the other students. Liberals, however, have in recent years based their opposition to recruiters on the fact that the U.S. military discriminated against homosexuals, not because it is a tool for mass murder and imperialist plunder. These same liberals will find themselves ideologically disarmed this next semester, as the U.S. military is now an "equal opportunity employer." While we always opposed "don't ask, don't tell" as part of our defense of basic democratic rights for homosexuals, it was never the basis of our unconditional opposition to the imperialist military.

As Marxists we understand that social struggle is inevitable. Witness the widespread outrage in Tunisia, or in Europe at the recent round of "austerity measures." In London, students took to the streets by the tens of thousands to protest the tripling of their tuition. At the same time as the British ruling class is engaged in the largest attacks on the working class in years, Prince William and Kate Middleton are enjoying a rather different type of engagement, busy with the preparations of their outlandish royal wedding. Camilla and Prince Charles drove into one of these student demonstrations. When the students found out who was in the car, they surrounded the vehicle shouting, "Off with their heads!"

Class struggle is inevitable. What is not inevitable is who will win. For the working class to seize power from the hands of its oppressors and hold on to it requires the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party. As an older comrade said to me, "Marxism does not hover above the earth as a separate entity in space. Marxism exists only in human beings."

And that is why, if you feel the way we do, if you understand that capitalism needs to be overthrown, if you want to fight for the emancipation of these prisoners and the emancipation of all of humanity, then join us in the struggle to overthrow this racist, sexist, bloody, oppressive capitalist system once and for all! Free the class-war prisoners! No illusions in the capitalist courts! Onward to a socialist future!

a bachelors degree and special training yet is paid less than comparable male dominated jobs with similar requirements.

Given the historic sexism amongst blacks even among black militant groups, sexism needed to be in the article. Let's not forget the "Million MAN (emphasis added) March." There is also "machismo" among Latinos and "macho" blacks. Especially black women workers face triple oppression. This has been mentioned in other articles but not this one.

The article mentions a fight against the wretched conditions in which "families live in fear of immigration raids...," yet does not call for full citizenship rights. I've seen some of the European ICL-FI sections say that immigrants are a specially oppressed group. This is true everywhere. The undocumented are super exploited with wages below minimum wage. Also, the threat of deportation is significant and only faced by these workers.

As one rapper said, most Americans believe that Central America is somewhere near Kansas. The U.S. needs a massive literacy and general education program for adults as has been done after the October, Cuban, and other anti-capitalist revolutions. A healthy workers' state needs informed inhabitants.

Fraternally, Irving Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

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Egypt After Mubarak
For Permanent Revolution
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UBC SUB. Room 42V

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353 trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

18 FEBRUARY 2011 9

A Marxist Analysis of the Mexican Revolution of 1910

This part concludes this article, translated from Espartaco No. 12 (Spring-Summer 1999), published by the Grupo Espartaquista de México. Part One appeared in WV No. 973 (4 February).

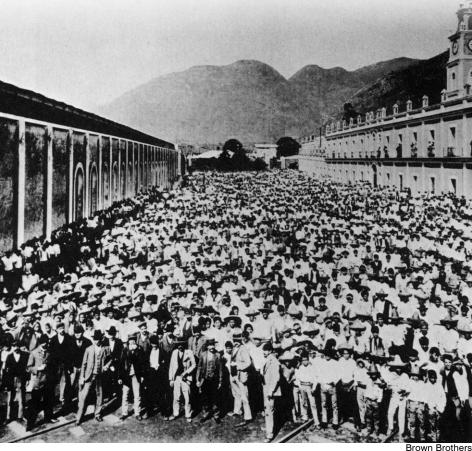
ESPARTACO

When the Mexican Revolution broke out, the proletariat consisted of some 600,000 workers but was very dispersed and atomized throughout the country, particularly in the mines, on the railroads, in the textile industry and various artisanal trades. The list of organizations affiliated with the Casa del Obrero Mundial [House of the World Worker], founded only in September 1912, shows the stillrudimentary composition of the proletariat. Besides electricians and streetcar drivers, the majority of the list consisted of guilds such as bakers, drivers, tailors, leather workers, bricklayers, shoemakers, carpenters, etc. There was also some urban industry, such as textiles, but not nearly as modern or concentrated as in western Russia. Also, because of the limited migration of European workers, socialist thought was not as widespread here as in Chile and Argentina in the Southern Cone of the hemisphere.

Consequently, anarchism (imported from Spain) flourished and gained authority in the young working class. The anarchism of the Flores Magón brothers had emerged as a radical-liberal tendency in the ranks of the bourgeois opposition to

$PART\ TWO$

Porfirio Díaz. During the Porfirian dictatorship, anarchist publications such as El Hijo del Ahuizote [Son of the Scourge], Revolución and Regeneración helped to organize sectors of society unhappy with the regime. From 1906 to the 1910 uprising led by Francisco Madero, the anarchists focused their strategy on the formation of guerrilla cells in the north. They even established a utopian anarchist "Socialist Republic of Baja California" in 1911, which was immediately crushed after an agreement between Díaz and Madero was reached. Díaz's constant repression of Ricardo Flores Magón's group, which eventually had to hide in the U.S., pushed the group to the left, and it began to build workers' cells. During the Revolution, anarchist groups founded the



Río Blanco textile workers during 1908 strike organized by anarchist Flores Magón brothers.

vate property and for no support for the bourgeoisie. But its ideas and proclamations were extremely contradictory. In spite of its influence on the incipient unions, Magonist anarchism did not represent the historic interests of the working class; it had more to do with a type of petty-bourgeois "utopian socialism" that reflected the desperation of the artisans and the middle classes ruined under the Porfiriato.

The acid test of the Mexican Revolution showed the total bankruptcy of anarchism and its inability to draw an independent class line. Some anarchists in the Casa del Obrero (such as Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama) went over to the ranks of Zapatismo. But the majority of the anarchist leaders, such as Antonio I. Villarreal, who went from the ranks of the PLM to being governor of [the northern state of] Nuevo León and a mouthpiece for the bourgeois forces of Venustiano Carranza, reached agreement with Carranza and engaged in demagoguery to convince a sector of the working class to participate in Carranza's infamous "red battalions" [armed forces arrayed against peasant insurgents].

by Carranza in his 1913 Plan de Guadalupe, guaranteed "social peace" in the capital for Alvaro Obregón while he pursued Pancho Villa. In the end, the Casa del Obrero leadership accepted without complaint Obregón's order to dissolve their organization when it was no longer useful to him. Most of these anarchists would later have careers as union bureaucrats in the new Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM, Mexican Regional Workers Confederation), subservient to the bourgeois regime.

Here it is interesting to refer to the position of the centrist Internationalist Group (IG), a handful of deserters from Trotskyism who were expelled from our organization in 1996. The IG attempts a retrospective embellishment of the antirevolutionary role of anarchism which, inciting the backward consciousness of the working class, mobilized it to *actively* support the suppression of the revolution under the Carranza's orders. The IG writes:

"The anarchists withdrew into passive opposition to all sides. General Obregón, meanwhile, wooed the Casa del Obrero on behalf of the mistrusted landownergeneral Carranza.... When Obregón appealed for the formation of Red Battalions of workers to fight Villa, the union bureaucrats finally agreed (despite continued opposition in the ranks)."

-The Internationalist, April-May 1997

In the IG's centrist laundry room, the anarchist bureaucrats of the Casa del Obrero seem like confused, passive victims of Obregón's intrigues. The IG uses the same lying description of "paralyzed" victims that [IG leader Jan] Norden used to clean up the image of the Stalinists of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), who in 1990 led the counterrevolution and presented the East German workers state as a gift to imperialism.

As we have written, anarchism showed its complete bankruptcy during the Mexican Revolution. With their petty-bourgeois perspective, the pages of *Regeneración* and Magón's correspondence were filled with bitter recriminations against the working class for being responsible for its destiny. Magón wrote to Gus Teltsch in 1921: "Man is a very stupid animal...as long as he has a crust of stale bread to put

in his mouth, he thinks he lives in the best world, and everything is going well." Years earlier, Magón even celebrated with strange justifications the imperialist slaughter of the First World War:

"Millions of men dead? Even better! The people are such imbeciles that they need these terrible blows, these formidable shocks, to wake up. Let us not give in to whining and sentimentality in the face of this spectacle of desolation and ruin. Let us accept with fortitude this result of human stupidity, and to those who wish to hear us, let us say: Brothers, here is the result of your obstinate refusal to heed our good counsel.... Long live the war! Let the horrible spectacle of death, the desolation, the hunger, the ruin, shock the peoples who are lethargic with the narcotic of flags, fatherlands and religions!"

-Regeneración No. 201 (undated)

Even earlier, the anarchist PLM went so far as to define a chauvinist, anti-immigrant, protectionist vision in its program. Regarding Chinese workers, the 1906 PLM Program stated: "Generally willing to work for the lowest pay, submissive, with paltry aspirations, the Chinese is a great obstacle to the prosperity of other workers. His competition is disastrous and we must avoid it in Mexico."

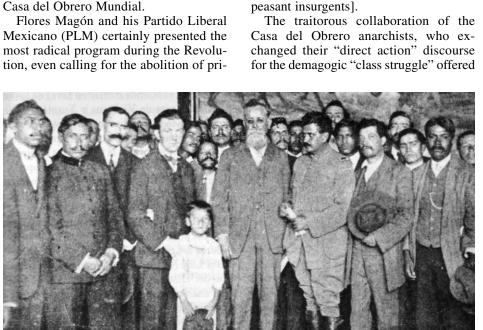
It was Villa and the northern governors who took anti-Chinese chauvinism to its ultimate consequences. One can see this brutal aspect of the Villista troops in Friedrich Katz's well-documented biography Pancho Villa, in which the historian exposes the visceral hostility of the Villistas toward Chinese immigrants, whom they plundered and murdered in the cities Villa's forces occupied. The anti-Chinese chauvinist poison went hand in hand with the moth-eaten anti-Semitism propagated in Mexico since the Inquisition. It is no accident that today's "Chinatown" in Mexico City occupies only half a block of Dolores Street.

The lack of an authentic revolutionary internationalist leadership during the Mexican Revolution would be felt again when the working class began to radicalize against Carranza, as demonstrated by an electricians general strike in Mexico City in 1916. One can understand the limited anarcho-liberal vision of Magón and many of its unresolvable contradictions, which led him to sordid extremes like the anti-Chinese chauvinism of his party. But it is pathetic that today reformist groups like the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS, Socialist Workers Party), heirs of the political chameleon Nahuel Moreno, and the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS, League of Socialist Unity), heirs of the pseudo-Trotskyist Ernest Mandel, which along with others promote nationalism, venerate Flores Magón and refer to him uncritically as a "fighter for the liberation of the proletariat" (El Socialista-Umbral No. 238, 1 May 1998).

The Petty-Bourgeois Vision of the Nationalist Left

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 is a clear example of one of those revolutions in which the proletariat, still socially weak, was incapable of acting as an independent contender for power and carrying out its revolutionary tasks. Generalizing from the experience of the Chinese proletariat's bloody defeat, thanks to Stalin's betrayal, in the Second Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927 at the hands of the bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang of Chiang Kai-shek, Leon Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

"Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch, the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are



Hemeroteca Nacional

Representatives of anarchist-led Casa del Obrero Mundial meeting with Venustiano Carranza (center), who as Mexico's president issued 1913 "Plan de Guadelupe" in bid to guarantee social peace.

mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people. And if this is not yet the case? Then the struggle for national liberation will produce only very partial results, results directed entirely against the working masses.'

Later, he continued:

"A backward colonial or semi-colonial country, the proletariat of which is insufficiently prepared to unite the peasantry and take power, is thereby incapable of bringing the democratic revolution to its conclusion.'

As subsequent history would show, what Trotsky wrote is completely applicable to the Mexican Revolution, whose results were partial and "directed entirely against the working masses." This can be seen from the beginning in the Zapatista demand that "the land belong to the tiller"-a demand for which hundreds of thousands of peasants rose in rebellion and died. The land was completely stolen by the victorious bourgeois faction: almost all the land seized in the revolution was returned to the landowners or appropriated by elements of the new military caste. (Such a return of lands to the owners of the landed estates did not occur, for example, in France under Napoleon after the Great French Revolution, nor even under the restorationist monarchists that succeeded him.)

Besides the key agrarian question that the Mexican Revolution failed to resolve, there is the issue of imperialism and national liberation, which could not be resolved under bourgeois leadership, or under peasant leadership for that matter. The United States was able to increase its control over the Mexican economy, and the shackles of imperialism continued to tighten on the country, giving rise to the present situation.

With the bloody triumph of Carranza and Obregón's bourgeois wing, ferocious repression was unleashed in the cities. Not surprisingly, many workers and anarchist leaders of the "red battalions" who returned from fighting the peasant armies were shot as soon as they began to demand that Carranza's promises be kept. The old death penalty, which had been decreed in 1862, was restored along with other brutal punishments to be applied against the workers movement. A common practice of this new regime was to first send the army against strike picket lines and then, after carrying out repression, to concede a few of the workers' demands...over their leaders' corpses. This type of political practice, directed entirely against the working class, as Trotsky wrote, was crystallized in the famous Carrancista Constitution of 1917, which gives the bourgeois state the role of inspector and supreme arbiter in the life of the unions.

To achieve its consolidation, the bourgeois regime of Carranza's successor Obregón, which had support among the petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals, began to use nationalism and an opportunistic anticlericalism as ideological battering rams in order to justify its continuing repression of workers struggles and regional uprisings of land-hungry peasants. In 1938, the nationalist regime of General Lázaro Cárdenas decreed the expropriation of the petroleum industry and carried out some land distribution, mainly as an escape valve for the pressure of peasant unrest that had been set loose by the





Left: Peasant guerrillas, 1914. Right: Pancho Villa, in presidential chair, with Emiliano Zapata in 1915 after their peasant forces seized Mexico City.

church in the reactionary clerical Cristero movement. Cárdenas also used the land distribution as a way to deactivate workers struggles, offering pieces of land so that dissatisfied workers could become small peasant landowners.

With these measures and because of his occasional friction with imperialism, Lázaro Cárdenas gained popularity with the masses and gave a strong boost to nationalism. The Cárdenas regime was able to subordinate the most important workers unions to the PRM (predecessor of the PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party). This was thanks to the treason of the Stalinist Mexican Communist Party (PCM, founded in 1919), which, following the traitorous, class-collaborationist line of Stalin's popular front, used its influence in the unions to support [the reformist] Lombardo Toledano and [quindenas and capitulated to the nationalism that was in vogue. This had its most wellknown intellectual expression in the works of José Revueltas, a dissident member of the Stalinist PCM, and, later, those of the onetime pseudo-Trotskyist Adolfo Gilly. Influenced by the Stalinist schema of "revolution in stages" and "socialism in one country" and adding his own special philosophical gibberish, Revueltas extolled the terrible backwardness in the Mexican countryside in order to paint the economy during the Porfiriato as merely "semi-feudal." He then characterized the Revolution of 1910 as a successful bourgeois-democratic "antifeudal" revolution, which is false.

In the imperialist epoch of capital, as we have noted, it is impossible for the national bourgeoisie to carry a democratic revolution to victory and solve such

bourgeois-democratic revolution has such an advanced and progressive character, it owes this more than anything else to the working class."

-José Revueltas, "La Revolución Mexicana y el Proletariado" ("The Mexican Revolution and the Proletariat"), 1938

This "objectivist" vision of the weight and role of the working class is typical of the revisionist current of Michel Pablo, which developed in the ranks of the Fourth International in the 1950s. (Perhaps that was why, at the end of his life, Revueltas considered joining the Pabloite United Secretariat of the late Ernest Mandel.) Trotsky polemicized strongly against the false position that the proletariat could effect revolutionary changes "solely by its presence" or its combativity. Trotsky affirmed that the fundamental condition for the proletariat to intervene as a revolutionary force is that it has the consciousness of its historical tasks and a communist leadership. Revueltas was hostile to this Marxist-Leninist perspective.

The Stalinist position of seeking a nonexistent "progressive" sector of the bourgeoisie, and its vision of the proletariat as a mass whose weight is revolutionary in and of itself, was consistent with the type of party that Revueltas wanted to build: not a Leninist vanguard party but rather an amorphous party of "the whole class." In fact, the core of Revueltas' critique of the Stalinist PCM was to reproach it for not having succeeded in becoming a party of "the whole class," that is, a mass party. It is no accident that the majority of members who, with Revueltas, broke with the PCM to found the socalled "Liga Espartaco" in 1960 ended up joining the PRI, attracted by its "mass influence" and nationalist rhetoric. This summary of Revueltas' work merits a correction in reference to what we wrote in the first issue of Espartaco (Winter 1990-91), that "our tendency has taken up again the key point of Revueltas' break with Stalinism." In reality, Revueltas never transcended his Stalinist political framework.



Political execution during Mexican Revolution.

tessential pro-government bureaucrat]

increasing popularity of the caudillo Cár-

burning issues as the agrarian question. The millions of landless peasants, including indigenous people, throughout the country are the strongest possible refutation of the Stalinoid vision of Revueltas, who embellished the meager achievements of the Mexican Revolution.

Inspired by the Stalinist concept, Revueltas feverishly looked for a "progressive" sector of the bourgeoisie, which he claimed to have found in Carranza's forces. In his 1962 essay "Un Proletariado Sin Cabeza" ("A Proletariat Without a Head"), in which he supposedly differentiates himself from the PCM, Revueltas writes a defense of Carranza:

> "Thus, carrancismo is actually more radical, more 'advanced' than maderismo, because the bourgeois-democratic ideology must widen its field of criticism.... Not only does Carranza promise from the beginning to establish a new organic legal statute for the country, but he also announces the beginning of the social revolution.'

Revueltas' anti-Marxist revisionism is accompanied by his position on the role of the working class:

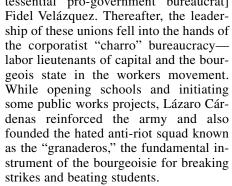
"Even when the proletariat does not carry out a leadership function in a bourgeoisdemocratic revolution like that of 1910. on its own, solely by its presence, it provokes a series of historical and revolutionary consequences. There is an immanent force in the proletariat that on its own becomes evident and leads to results within history.

"This occurred with the proletariat in the Revolution of 1910. And if this

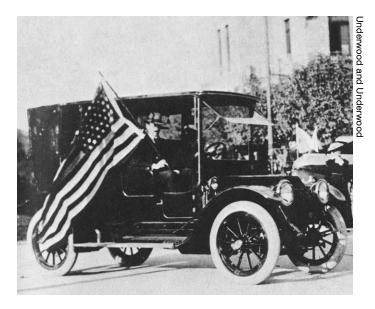
Gilly and the Pseudo-Trotskyist Left

The book La Revolución Interrumpida (The Interrupted Revolution) by the former pseudo-Trotskyist Adolfo Gilly is the bible of the revisionist left. In a merely formal way, Gilly accepted a key tenet of permanent revolution—that the stage of classic bourgeois revolutions had ended a long time ago—only to write that in the Mexican Revolution the peasantry played the socialist role that the working class could not undertake. For Gilly, the Mexican Revolution was an "interrupted revolution" because the radical peasant leaders like Zapata and Villa were assassinated. Thus, while the revolution was "temporarily" interrupted, Gilly finds that the bourgeois government of Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s took up socialist principles once again. This supports the bourgeois myth of the revolution that never ends and therefore justifies, from a supposedly Marxist viewpoint, subordination to Cardenismo and the current capitulation of the left to the PRD [the bourgeois-populist Party of the Democratic Revolution].

continued on page 12



The reformist left failed to resist the



U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, shown riding through Mexico City, supported 1913 overthrow of liberal president Francisco Madero.

Mexico...

(continued from page 11)

Taking his liquidationist logic to its ultimate consequences, Gilly became an official in the current [Mexico City] government of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The same fate awaited his old Mandelite party, the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT, Revolutionary Workers Party), which liquidated into the PRD and the Zapatista EZLN.

A current archetype of the reformist left's capitulation to the influence of bourgeois nationalism, also inspired by Gilly's "interrupted revolution," is the Partido Obrero Socialista. For the Morenoite POS as well, the Mexican Revolution could have continued...including even to socialism, if Zapata and Villa had not been assassinated. The POS writes:

> "While Madero and his followers planned to throw Díaz out of power to establish, mainly, a bourgeois-democratic system based on the principle of no reelection and effective suffrage, hundreds of revolutionaries worked clandestinely to overthrow the dictator and generate a social revolution, which in essence would have socialist objectives....

"Anarchists, Zapatistas and Villistas understood this desire perfectly well, and not always agreeing on how to achieve it, nevertheless fought in the same trench.... "With this unprecedented event, and because of the objectives that inspired the Zapatista and Villista armies, the Mexican Revolution seemed to be headed toward a socialist revolution, which would finally destroy the bourgeoisie as the ruling class and establish a workers and peasants government. Nevertheless, in spite of the social conquests expressed in the Constitution of 1917, because the working class did not lead the revolution and because there was no revolutionary party to lead it, the Mexican Revolution fell into the hands of the national bourgeoisie, and at that point another dictatorship began to take shape: the *priato* [decadeslong rule of the PRI]."

El Socialista No. 182, November 1993

These last references to the lack of a revolutionary party and the working class are merely demagogic, serving as the POS's red loincloth to cover its true nationalist and reformist program for the class struggle. It is sufficient to see what they wrote the previous year in referring to the capture of Mexico City by Zapata and Villa in December 1914:

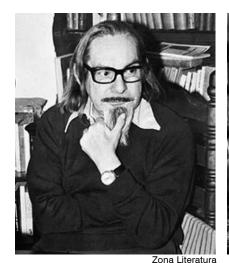
"Without knowing it, the Mexican peasants were placing themselves at that moment in the vanguard of the world revolution. It is a fact that has been preserved in the historical memory of the masses, an event that we must always remember, since it demonstrates the possibility that an organized and decisive people can put the bourgeoisie and the government in check and take power in this country."

-El Socialista No. 166, November 1992

Like Gilly, the POS considers that the peasantry was-even without knowing it —the vanguard of the world revolution, and that the Magonista anarchists, along with Zapata and Villa, could have been the equivalent of a revolutionary party of the working class in the struggle for socialism...if they had just had a little more time. Nothing could be further from the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution!

The POS view of the Mexican Revolu

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Guillermo Sologurer

The late José Revueltas (left) and Adolfo Gilly, leftist writers who wrapped nationalist myths about Mexican Revolution in pseudo-Marxist garb.

tion is in accordance with its current reformist program and the patriotic language that fills the pages of El Socialista. If the peasantry was, according to the POS, "the vanguard of the world revolution" in 1914, it is logical that these reformists called for a vote for the EZLN in 1994. And if for the POS the anarchists, Zapatistas and Villistas were the vanguard of the world revolution, today they welcome without embarrassment any classcollaborationist front that emerges in this country-from its joint campaign with the PRD to "struggle" against NAFTA (El Socialista No. 182, November 1993) to its political support for the EZLN, the CND [pro-EZLN National Democratic Convention], El Barzón [a middle-class movement of bank debtors], etc., and its current petition campaign begging the Senate and the House of Representatives not to privatize the electric industry. The illusion of the POS that the bourgeois state can be reformed is shown in its call for the "democratic restructuring of judicial power" ("Draft Program of the Socialist Coalition, POS-LUS," 1998) and in its treasonous calls on the bourgeois state to intervene into the unions. In 1997, for example, the POS called for "imprisonment without bail for union leaders who sell sweetheart contracts to businesses" (El Socialista No. 225, February 1997). The conscious workers movement should sweep away these types of fake "socialist" parties.

The LTS and IG: **Centrist Confusionism**

The centrists of the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS, League of Workers for Socialism), a 1988 split from the POS, differ from their parent party only because they want the end of the PRI to come through the advent of a "[revolutionary constituent] Assembly that develops out of the overthrow of the hated PRI regime" and struggles against imperialism (Estrategia Obrera No. 7, September-October 1998). But in Mexico the semibonapartist bourgeois regime adopted a thin cover of bourgeois democracy which, although unstable, allowed the PRI to govern for decades with the politics of "the carrot and the stick." The PRD has shored up illusions in this discredited bourgeois parliamentarism, and today it governs Mexico City, several municipal governments around the country and the

states of Baja California and Zacatecas. Calling here for a constituent assembly a new parliamentary body—only serves to sow more illusions in the bourgeois PRD.

The fact that the LTS fetishizes bourgeois democracy is clearly seen in its assertion, in the same issue of its newspaper, that it would be a "Provisional Workers and Peasants Government" that would convene this assembly. As Trotsky noted in the Transitional Program:

"This formula, 'workers' and farmers' government,' first appeared in the agitation of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was definitely accepted after the October Revolution. In the final instance it represented nothing more than the popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat.

But for the LTS, the purpose of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be to convene...a bourgeois parliamentary body! Trotsky never proposed the constituent assembly as a possible organizational form of the dictatorship of the prothat Villa and Zapata were murdered.

The Internationalist Group is not very different from the LTS. The IG's rejection of the perspective of permanent revolution is evident in the way it obscures the differences between the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the working class the only class with the social power and consistent historic interest to lead the fight against the rule of capital. In spite of its Trotskyist pretensions, every time the IG tries to paraphrase or put into practice the perspective of permanent revolution, it jumbles together workers with other oppressed sectors. The IG takes this centrist confusionism onto the historical plane. Trying to distinguish itself from Gilly on the Mexican Revolution, the IG finally bows to him:

'In its successive incarnations (PNR-PRM-PRI), this regime has presented itself as the 'party of the Mexican Revolution.' This is an enormous historical falsification. In truth it is the party of the firing squad against the revolution, the party of the northern ranchers who assassinated the radical peasant and plebeian leaders Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa, and put an end to the revolution before it could become a full-fledged social revolution."

The Internationalist, April-May 1997

Here we see how the IG, like the LTS, leaves the door open to the implication that if Zapata and Villa had not been murdered, the Mexican Revolution could have continued and eventually become a "fully developed social revolution." The IG consciously uses this vague, classless phrase only to distinguish itself slightly from its pseudo-Trotskyist cousins.

But like good centrists, the IG tries to cover its tracks with apparently orthodox formulations. In the same article, it writes: "The Mexican Revolution was

Lázaro Cárdenas utilized nationalism as ideological weapon to subordinate working class to bourgeois regime in 1930s.



letariat. This is an invention of the fake Trotskyists, who distort the Bolshevik call for a workers and peasants government, converting it into a call for a government to reform the bourgeois state.

The centrists—revolutionary in word, reformist in deed-frequently borrow small pieces of the genuine Marxist program to hide their real appetites. Thus, the LTS writes: "The main tasks of the Revolution of 1910 that were left unfinished, such as giving land to the peasants, national independence to break the yoke of imperialism and elementary democratic demands, can only be fully and effectively accomplished under a government of the victorious working class" (Estrategia Obrera No. 2, December 1996). However, this is nothing more than a fig leaf to hide the LTS's illusions in the bourgeoisie. Trying to polemicize against Gilly and his old party, the LTS winds up kissing his hand:

> "The PRT, far from raising a consistent Trotskyist strategy to fight for the program of the second Mexican Revolution, to conclude the anti-capitalist revolution begun in 1910 (interrupted by the triumph of the Carranza wing over the peasant armies of Villa and Zapata, imposing the reactionary Constitution of 1917 on the masses), ends up joining the Cárdenas government."

-Estrategia Internacional No. 10, November-December 1998 (emphasis ours)

In the end, the LTS accepts Gilly's revisionist schema by which the Mexican Revolution, "anti-capitalist" in its inner dynamic, was "interrupted" by the fact

frustrated, above all, because of the absence of a proletarian vanguard with a program for workers revolution, the only way to complete the agrarian revolution and liberate the country from the yoke of imperialism." In spite of the IG's demagogic references to Trotskyism, its mystification of the peasant leaders and its defense of the anarchist bureaucrats of the Casa del Obrero Mundial are not isolated errors. With its frenetic passion to dilute the proletariat in an amorphous mass of "discontented sectors," the IG's rejection of permanent revolution becomes even clearer in its attempt to discover a nonexistent popular front around the PRD of Cárdenas in order to capitulate to this bourgeois formation.

As we explained in Espartaco No. 10 (Autumn-Winter 1997), a popular front is a bourgeois formation that ties the reformist organizations of the working class to the bourgeois parties. In Mexico, however, the subordination of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie has been particularly open, with the union movement directly tied to the bourgeoisie through bourgeois nationalism and its corporatist shackles. The dominance of this nationalism explains why mass reformist workers parties did not develop here and the pseudosocialist left never overcame its marginalization in the workers movement.

In its insistence that a popular front exists in Mexico, which it uses as a lying argument that the Spartacists "abandoned" the struggle against the PRD, the IG presents as conclusive proof a para-

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Egypt...

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Square. Despite claiming that it did not oppose the anti-Mubarak demonstrators, the military arrested hundreds, torturing many. Down with the emergency law! Free all victims of bonapartist state repression!

Together with the police, courts and prisons, the army is at the core of the capitalist state, an apparatus for the violent suppression of the working class and the oppressed. Above all, the drive to "restore stability" is aimed at the working class. Amid the anti-Mubarak protests, tens of thousands of workers launched strikes, which continue to this day. These have included some 6,000 workers on the Suez Canal, through which 8 percent of world trade travels. However, Canal pilots continued to work, ensuring movement of ships. Thousands of textile and steel workers went on strike in the industrial city of Suez, which saw some of the most militant protests. According to the London Guardian (28 January), protesters there "seized weapons stored in a police station and asked the policemen inside to leave the building, then burned it down." Cairo public transport workers continue to strike, while, in the wake of Mubarak's fall, strikes have spread to steel workers outside the capital, postal workers, textile workers in Mansoura and other cities as well as thousands of oil and gas workers.

In fighting for economic demands against poverty-level wages, casual work and constant humiliation at the hands of the bosses—the working class is demonstrating the unique position it holds in making the wheels of the capitalist economy turn. This social power gives the working class the potential to lead all the impoverished masses in struggle against their abject condition. In a country where nearly half the population lives on \$2 a day or less and where such misery is enforced through police-state repression, the democratic aspirations of the masses are intertwined with the struggle against their economic conditions.

Elementary democratic rights such as legal equality for women and the complete separation of religion and state; agrarian revolution to give land to the peasants; ending joblessness and grinding poverty: the basic aspirations of the masses cannot be met without the overthrow of the bonapartist capitalist order. The indispensable instrument for the working class to take the lead is a proletarian revolutionary party, which can be built only through relentless struggle against all bourgeois forces, from the military to the Brotherhood and the lib-



February 12: Army officer tries to quell crowd in Tahrir Square, one day after Mubarak's departure.

erals who falsely claim to support the struggles of the masses. Such a party must act, in the words of Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin, as a "tribune of the people," fighting against the oppression of women, peasants, Coptic Christians, homosexuals and ethnic minorities.

The liberation of the productive forces from the chains of imperialism and its economic and political agents in the Egyptian bourgeoisie can come only through the conquest of power by the proletariat standing at the head of all the oppressed. This was accomplished for the first and only time with the victory of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Led by the Bolshevik Party, the working class overthrew bourgeois rule, freeing the country from the imperialist yoke, abolishing private ownership of land and freeing the myriad oppressed nations and peoples of the former tsarist empire. The achievement of these democratic tasks was combined with the expropriation of the means of production by the workers state, laying the basis for the development of a collectivized planned economy.

For Permanent Revolution!

Egypt is a country of combined and uneven development. Alongside modern industry there is a vast landless peasantry under the thumb of ruthless landlords. The country has a small layer of technologically savvy and highly educated youth together with a literacy rate of only 71 percent (59 percent for women). Medieval minarets and modern buildings vie in Cairo's skyline, while on its streets modern cars jostle for space with herds of goats and sheep and donkey-drawn carriages. Inhuman poverty and squalor compete with grotesque displays of wealth.

The obscenely affluent enclave of Zamalek looks across the Nile at the Imbaba slum, where children drink from open sewers and at times get eaten alive by dogs and rats. Popular hatred for Mubarak was driven in no small part by the enormous fortune amassed by his family, estimated as high as \$70 billion.

A regional power in its own right, Egypt is nonetheless a neocolony whose brutal and murderous bourgeoisie is tied-and cannot but be tied-by a million strings to world imperialism, which benefits from the exploitation, oppression and degradation of its masses. For decades, the main prop of the Mubarak regime was U.S. imperialism, for which Egypt is a linchpin for its domination of the oil-rich Near East. Beginning with Sadat's rule, Egypt has been a strategic ally of Zionist Israel and in recent years has aided in the starvation blockade of the Palestinians in Gaza, including by sealing the border in Sinai.

Throughout the upheaval against Mubarak, the Obama administration seesawed between expressing support for his regime—especially the "reforms" promised by his vice president Omar Suleiman, who has long played a key role in Washington's "war on terror" rendition and torture program—and mouthing criticisms of the government. The U.S. has poured in \$1.3 billion a year to arm the Egyptian military. After Mubarak resigned, Obama intoned that the U.S. stands "ready to provide whatever assistance is necessary—and asked for—to pursue a credible transition to a democracy."

To get a taste of what Washington means by democracy, one need only look further east, to the corpses of more than one million Iraqis who died as a result of the 2003 invasion and occupation, as well as to the imperialist barbarism inflicted by U.S./NATO forces upon the peoples of Afghanistan. One need only look at the sheiks, despots and strongmen that litter the Near East, who along with the Israeli rulers act as U.S. imperialism's agents. When Obama says he wants an "orderly transition of power" in Egypt, he means he wants a "stable" Egypt, with the military fulfilling its role in the region on behalf of the U.S.

Authentic national and social liberation requires mobilizing the proletariat in revolutionary struggle against the imperialists and the domestic bourgeoisie. A proletarian revolution in Egypt would have an electrifying impact on workers and the oppressed throughout North Africa, the Near East and beyond. Over one-quarter of all Arab speakers live in Egypt, a country of over 80 million that has the largest proletariat in the region. Already, protests have erupted from Morocco to the U.S. client states of Jordan and Yemen in solidarity with the Egyptian masses and in opposition to those countries' own despotic rulers. In Algiers on February 12, some 35,000 cops descended upon a protest of 10,000 demanding the resignation of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, arresting hundreds.

In Gaza, thousands mobilized after Mubarak's resignation, waving Palestinian and Egyptian flags and desperately hoping that a new Egyptian regime would ease their starvation. Prior to February 11, both Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank had labored to suppress any solidarity demonstrations. A socialist revolution in Egypt would open a vista of national and social liberation for the oppressed Palestinian masses, and, extending a hand of working-class solidarity to the Hebrewspeaking proletariat of Israel, would help lay the basis for shattering the Zionist garrison state of Israel from within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution.

Crucially, a proletarian revolution in Egypt would immediately face the need to extend to the advanced capitalist countries of West Europe and North America, which would lay the basis for the elimination of scarcity by establishing an international planned socialist economy. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution, underlined in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

"The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle on a national and international scale....

"The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the continued on page 14

graph from an article in *La Jornada* (2 May 1997), which reports:

"The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) yesterday released its final list of candidates for the House of Representatives to fill the seats assigned to the party based on the proportion of votes for the entire country. It consists of leaders of university unions, the SNTE and the FAT; also peasant organizations such as CIOAC, UNTA and CODUC; ex-CNC members; the UCD; leaders and activists from El Barzón and popular urban organizations.... In the leading places, more than 50 percent are not PRD members."

And the IG fervently concludes: "Yes, there is a popular front in Mexico!" This jumble that the IG makes of the proletariat and the peasantry with organizations of renters and bank debtors recalls the old Stalinist concept of a "bloc of four classes." As Trotsky himself explained in his devastating "Critique of the Draft Program of the Communist International" (printed in *The Third International After Lenin*), following the defeat guided by the Comintern in China in 1925-27:

"Those organizations which in capitalist countries label themselves peasant parties are in reality one of the varieties of bourgeois parties. Every peasant who has not adopted the proletarian position, abandoning his proprietor psychology, will inevitably follow the bourgeoisie when it comes to fundamental political

issues.... The celebrated idea of 'workers' and peasants' parties' seems to have been specially created to camouflage bourgeois parties which are compelled to seek support from the peasantry but who are also ready to absorb workers into their ranks."

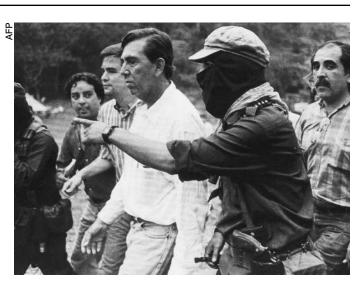
Or, as Lenin once expressed it, urging the proletariat to organize separately from the peasantry:

"We stand by the peasant movement to the end; but we have to remember that it is the movement of another class, *not the one* which can and will bring about the socialist revolution."

—"Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the Workers' Party" (1906)

Against the efforts of the fake socialists and centrists who embellish bourgeois democracy and the current level of consciousness of the working class, we communists struggle for the political independence of the proletariat to advance the cause of socialism. This will happen in Mexico by building a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party to sweep away the deep nationalism in the workers organizations that poisons and divides their struggles and to break the chains of the bourgeois state's corporatist control of the unions—a legacy of Cardenismo.

An essential part of this struggle is winning the sectors oppressed under capitalism to the program of workers revoluMasked Zapatista guerrilla leader Subcomandante Marcos with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leader of bourgeois-populist PRD at time of EZLN uprising.



tion. The struggle for the liberation of women is especially important in a society like Mexico, where the oppression and enslavement of women are strongly rooted and are buttressed by nationalism and the church. With a large percentage of the proletariat made up of women, especially but not exclusively in the northern part of the country in the *maquiladoras*, the proletarian revolution cannot triumph unless the working class wins the confidence of women workers, by acting as a tribune of the people.

The task we face is, as Trotsky noted,

"a succession of social revolutions, transferring power to the hands of the most resolute class, which afterwards applies this power for the abolition of all classes" ["The Revolution in Spain," January 1931]. The revolutionary-internationalist task Trotsky refers to is still before us today, and it is from the point of view of permanent revolution that we must evaluate the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Only then will the working class be able to take the correct path toward victory. Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party! For new October Revolutions!■

Egypt.

(continued from page 13)

world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.

Break with Bourgeois Nationalism!

The present situation in Egypt provides an extraordinary opening for Marxists to put forward a series of transitional demands that link the current struggles of the working class and the oppressed to the conquest of proletarian power. But virtually the entire left internationally has offered nothing but empty cheerleading for what they dub the "Egyptian Revolution." This is exemplified by Workers World Party in the U.S., which, as the military took control of the country on February 11, headlined: "WWP Rejoices with the Egyptian People."

In Egypt, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group, which is inspired by the late Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party in Britain, issued a statement on February 1 calling on Egyptian workers to "use your power and victory will be ours!" But this is not an appeal for the working class to fight for power. On the contrary, the RS dissolves the power of the working class into the classless demand for "all power



Left: State-owned TV manufacturing plant, 1963. Right: Textile factory workers demonstrate at their factory in Mahalla al-Kobra, 2008. While women have faced increased oppression fueled by religious reaction in recent decades, they have emerged as a leading force in strikes.

hailed by one and all, from bourgeois oppositionists to the state-run media that had, until the fall of Mubarak, denounced them as foreign agents. Among these mainly petty-bourgeois youth, a good number had been animated not only by their own grievances but particularly also by the restive Egyptian proletariat, which for the last decade has engaged in a wave of struggle that included over two million workers participating in over 3,000 strikes, sit-ins and other actions. These were carried out in defiance of the corrupt

most advanced workers with declassed

In opposition to a proletarian revolutionary perspective, the reformists of the United Secretariat (USec) present bourgeois democracy as the pinnacle of struggle. In a January 2011 article posted on the Internet titled, "In Tunisia and Egypt the Revolutions Are Underway," the USec demands "opening a process of free elections for a constituent Assembly," presenting this as part of a "programme of a democratic government that would be at the service of the workers and the population."

There will be no government that "would be at the service of the workers and the population" without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. As Lenin wrote in his December 1917 "Theses on the Constituent Assembly": "Every direct or indirect attempt to consider the question of the Constituent Assembly from a formal, legal point of view, within the framework of ordinary bourgeois democracy and disregarding the class struggle and civil war, would be a betrayal of the proletariat's cause, and the adoption of the bourgeois standpoint." We are for the workers and peasants driving out government rulers appointed from above. We demand an end to the ban on political parties and call for a revolutionary constituent assembly based on universal suffrage. The achievement of this demand requires a popular insurrection to overthrow the military regime. At the same time, Marxists must fight for mass, inclusive working-class organizations as embryonic organs of proletarian state power.

Our purpose is to win the oppressed and downtrodden to the side of the working class, counterposing its social power and leadership to all wings of the Egyptian national bourgeoisie and struggling to break the masses from illusions in bourgeois democracy. Throughout the strikes carried out over the past decade and during the current upheaval, workers formed strike committees and other bodies to coordinate their actions. These organs of struggle directly pose the need for trade unions independent of the capitalist state and all bourgeois forces. Today, there is a palpable basis to advance a perspective of building broader

organizations of the working class. These include joint strike committees, drawing in workers from different striking plants; workers defense guards, organized independently of the military, to defend against the regime's thugs and strikebreakers; popular committees based on the working class to take charge of distribution of food and goods in the face of shortages and black market corruption.

The emergence of such organizations, culminating in workers councils, would pose the question of which class rules society. Acting as a pivot around which millions of toilers are united in their struggles against the exploiters, workers councils, such as the soviets that arose during the Russian Revolution, would be organs of dual power, vying for power with the bourgeoisie. It is only when the working class comes forward as a serious contender for power that the conscript base of the army, overwhelmingly drawn from the working class and peasantry, can be split from the bourgeois officer corps and won to the side of the proletariat.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

While protests in Egypt have centered on secular and democratic demands, images of the protests show repeated sessions of prayer—not only Islamic but also a Coptic prayer in Tahrir Square on Sunday, February 6, "The Day of the Martyrs." Religion is omnipresent in Egypt, promoted by Islamists, the Coptic church and the government, whose line can be summed up as: if they can't have food, let the people have God. This deep religiosity weighs like a stone on women, whose conditions of life have worsened over the last several decades. Any socialist organization that does not take up the fight for women's liberation in Egypt is a sham and an obstacle to human liberation.

The women who came out to Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt were more often than not wearing the headscarf. More than 80 percent of women in Egypt wear the headscarf-not by law but by force of a social norm based on obscurantism-much to the consternation of many of their mothers, who decades earlier fought to take it off.

Women's oppression goes to the heart of Egyptian society. Together with the prevalence of religion, it is rooted in the country's backwardness, which is reinforced by imperialist subjugation. Egyptian law codifies this oppression. The Constitution declares, "The State shall guarantee coordination between woman's duties towards her family and her work in the society" and "the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)." Polygamy is legal, as is repudiation (in which a man can divorce his wife by simply saying, "I divorce you"). Abortion is illegal, with very few exceptions, and by law a woman is subordinate to her father or husband. Egyptian law treats adultery by a man and by a woman as two very different things, the latter being far graver.

Though illegal, female genital mutilation is rampant, and equally so among Muslims and Christians. According to the



The Nationa

Squalid conditions in Imbaba, one of many slums in Cairo.

to the people" and the call for a "popular revolution." While declaring "Down with the system!" the RS identifies that system as the Mubarak regime rather than the capitalist order. Left out of the statement is even the mere mention of the word "socialism." Nor is there a hint of opposition to the liberal bourgeois democrats like ElBaradei, the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood (see article, page 3) or the pervasive nationalism that serves to bind the exploited and the oppressed to the Egyptian bourgeoisie. In fact, the RS appeals to crass Egyptian nationalism, declaring, "Revolution must restore Egypt's independence, dignity and leadership in the region."

Amid rampant illusions in the military, the RS complained, "This army is no longer the people's army." The army of the capitalist regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak was never "the people's army." Now these reformists are even promoting the despised police, rejoicing in a February 13 statement that "the wave of social revolution is widening every day as new sections join the protests, such as policemen, *mukhabarin* [intelligence agents] and police officers"! So deep are the RS's illusions in the benevolence of the capitalist state that they embrace the butchers, rapists and torturers of the regime, the very forces that have long terrorized the population, that murdered at least 300 protesters in recent weeks and that helped organize the February 2 assault on Tahrir Square.

Working Class Must Take the Lead

The Egyptian youth who initiated the "January 25 Revolution" have been leadership of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, which was established by Nasser in 1957 as an arm of the state.

At bottom, the petty bourgeoisie—an intermediate class comprising many layers with disparate interests—is incapable of advancing a coherent, independent perspective and will necessarily fall under the sway of one of the two main classes of capitalist society: the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Among these militant youth, who showed incredible courage in taking on the Mubarak regime, those committed to fighting on behalf of the downtrodden must be won to the revolutionary internationalist program of Trotskyism. Such elements will be critical to forging a revolutionary party, which like Lenin's Bolsheviks will be founded through a fusion of the



Farmer in the Nile Delta.

United Nations, 96 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone genital mutilation. "Honor killings" are also rampant among Muslims and Christians, although statistics are impossible to find as these murders are either unreported or reported as suicides. A brief glance at Egyptian films and television will show such barbarism to be a highly valued and well-respected tradition. Egyptian law has mitigating exceptions to punishing murder, allowing judges to reduce sentences for men who kill women as a result of "crimes of passion."

The courageous Egyptian socialist and feminist Nawal El-Saadawi has written numerous works on the oppression of women in the Near East. In her 1980 classic, The Hidden Face of Eve, she spoke of the entrenched obsession with "honor":

"Arab society still considers that the fine membrane which covers the aperture of the external genital organs is the most cherished and most important part of a girl's body, and is much more valuable than one of her eyes, or an arm, or a lower limb. An Arab family does not grieve as much at the loss of a girl's eye as it does if she happens to lose her virginity. In fact if the girl lost her life, it would be considered less of a catastrophe than if she lost her hymen.'

At the same time, women are a crucial part of the working class, where they have played a leading role in the strikes over the last decade, especially in the textile industry. One of the most dramatic of these was the December 2006 textile strike in Mahalla al-Kobra. More than 20,000 workers went out. And it was the women workers who led the strike, walking out as the men continued working. Protesting outside the plant, they started chanting, "Where are the men? Here are the women!" This had the intended effect, as the men joined them, launching one of the biggest strikes Egypt had seen in years.

The Egyptian woman may be the slave of slaves, but she is also a vital part of the very class that will lay the material basis for her liberation by breaking the chains of social backwardness and religious obscurantism through socialist revolution. As Trotsky stressed in a 1924 speech, "Perspectives and Tasks in the East," "There will be no better communist in the East, no better fighter for the ideas of the revolution and for the ideas of communism than the awakened woman worker."

The Bankruptcy of **Egyptian Nationalism**

Egyptian rulers have long played on the fact that, uniquely in North Africa and the Near East, the country's modern borders are similar to its ancient ones. This supposedly supports the claim that the



Algiers, February 12: Protesters shout anti-government slogans. Regime mobilized tens of thousands of cops who overwhelmed demonstrators, arresting hundreds.

Egyptian nation goes back to the dawn of civilization. In reality, Egyptian nationalism is the product of the modernizing work of early 19th-century Albanian Ottoman ruler Mohammed Ali, who created the first secular schools, established the first national army and laid the basis for the emergence of a domestic bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, Egypt remained in thrall to the European colonial powers.

The strength of Egyptian nationalist mythology is also seen in the adulation of the rule of left-nationalist strongman Colonel Nasser, including by many on the left. Central to the deep popular faith in the military is the fact that Nasser's regime marked the first time that Egyptians ran the country since the Persian conquest in 526 BC. Since Nasser took power in 1952, every Egyptian ruler has come out of the military.

The Egyptian army is also the only Arab army to have inflicted a black eye on the Israeli military, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (after suffering a humiliating defeat in 1967). In speaking of how the army is "no longer the people's army," the Revolutionary Socialists group wrote in its February 1 statement, "This army is not the one which defeated the Zionist enemy in October 1973" (the war actually ended in a stalemate). In fact, the 1973 war, like the 1967 and 1948 wars, was nothing more than a battle between two regional powers for their own interests, in which the proletariat had no side. In contrast, the international working class was duty-bound to militarily defend Egypt against imperialist attack during the 1956 war launched after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal.

As for Israel, there is no question that the Zionist state is the brutal enemy of the Palestinian masses, and we demand the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli troops and settlers from the Occupied Territories. But so are the Arab rulers, who have the blood of tens of thousands of Palestinians on their hands. The social and national liberation of the Palestinians requires not only the sweeping away of the Zionist state but also the overthrow of the capitalist Arab rulers in Jordan, where half the population is Palestinian, and elsewhere in the region. We understand that it will be no easy task to break the Hebrew-speaking proletariat from the grip of Zionism. But any view of Israel that rejects the perspective of Arab/ Hebrew workers revolution dooms the Palestinian masses to their national oppression.

Support to Arab nationalism has led to the bloody defeat of workers movements throughout the Near East, not least in Egypt, where Nasser came to power with the support of the Egyptian Stalinists. Upon coming to power, Nasser sought to appeal to the U.S. but was rebuffed; he then turned to the Soviet degenerated workers state for financial, military and political aid. At the same time, to consolidate his rule, he suppressed the Communists, imprisoning, torturing and killing

them. But even as he brutalized them, the Communist Party continued to support Nasser, liquidating into his Arab Socialist Union in 1965.

Behind this abject capitulation was the Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution," postponing the socialist revolution to an indefinite future while in the first "democratic stage" the proletariat is subordinated to an allegedly "antiimperialist" national bourgeoisie. History shows that the "second stage" consists of killing communists and massacring workers. Millions of workers who looked to the Communist parties for leadership in Iraq, Iran and elsewhere were betrayed by their Stalinist misleaders. In Egypt, such betrayal was sold as support for Nasser's "Arab Socialism."

In fact, "Arab Socialism" was a myth, amounting to capitalism with heavy state investment. It was designed to suppress the proletariat, which had engaged in substantial struggles in the post-World War II period, including against British occupation. The role Nasser saw for workers was captured by his statement: "The workers don't demand; we give." In exchange for the proletariat's passivity, Nasser instituted several reforms, raising wages and reducing unemployment. But eventually, state investment dried up, and there was no longer much to "give."

After Sadat came to power in 1970, the Communists sought to reorganize. Sadat responded by unleashing the Muslim Brotherhood to effectively crush them. He also expelled Soviet advisers (after having used Soviet weaponry to fight Israel in the 1973 war) and instituted the "open door" policy of economic liberalization, cutting food and other subsidies as a way to address economic stagnation. This was taken further and deeper by Mubarak and his neoliberal program of mass privatizations. Contrary to popular illusions, Mubarak did not represent a break from Nasserism, but rather its legacy. Under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt remained subjugated to the imperialist world market and its dictates. The real difference between Nasser and Mubarak is that while the former was a genuinely popular bonapartist ruler, the latter was widely despised.

If the powerful and combative Egyptian proletariat is to come to the fore at the head of the oppressed and fight for its own rule, it must be broken from its nationalist illusions. What is urgently posed today is the building of a workers party, section of a reforged Trotskyist Fourth International, that will fight for a proletarian Egypt, part of a socialist federation of the Near East.■

14th Amendment...

(continued from page 16)

in the mass they remain to this day.

With the mass migration of blacks into Northern industrial centers, they became a crucial component of the proletariat, although as the "last hired, first fired." While the mass struggles of the civil rights movement broke the back of the Jim Crow system, what legal equality was gained did not and could not address the material roots of black oppression in the American capitalist system: segregation in ghetto hellholes; desperate poverty; mass unemployment, particularly for black youth.

As against both liberal integrationists and black nationalists, our struggle for black liberation is based on the program of revolutionary integrationism. While opposing every manifestation of racial oppression, fighting in particular to mobilize the social power of the multiracial labor movement, we underline that full equality for the black masses requires that the working class rip the economy out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and reorganize it on a socialist basis. This will lay the groundwork for the integration of black people into an egalitarian socialist society based on a collectivized economy, with jobs and quality housing, health care and education for all.

As the Labor Black Leagues, initiated by and fraternally allied to the Spartacist League, state in their program: "We fight to win the entire working class, including white workers as well as the growing number of Latino and other immigrants,

to the fight for black liberation, strategic to the American revolution. Black and working-class militants must stand for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and in their defense against racist and chauvinist anti-immigrant attacks. An injury to one is an injury to all!" The Spartacist League is fighting to build a multiracial

workers party that will champion the cause of all the exploited and oppressed in the fight for a socialist America. Only then can the wealth produced by labor be deployed for the benefit of society as a whole, laying the basis for eradicating all inequalities based on class, race and national origin. ■



Teamsters sanitation workers in Alameda County, California, protest lockout, July 2007.



For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government! **For Socialist Revolution** in the Bastion of World Imperialism! Organizational Rules and Guidelines of the Spartacist League/U.S. Opponents of the Revolutionary Internationalist Workers Movement Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY **\$2** (40 pages) Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co. Box 1377 GPO New York, NY 10116

WORKERS VANGUARD

Immigrant Rights, Black Rights Go Hand in Hand

14th Amendment: Gain of Civil War Victory Over Slavery

As they run around the country waving their little pocket Constitutions, the Republican right, including Tea Party adherents, have launched an assault on the fundamental right of citizenship. These "strict constructionists," who claim every word in the Constitution is nearly as sacrosanct as those in the King James Bible, are calling to amend or repeal the Fourteenth Amendment, which bestows citizenship on all persons born in the U.S. The racist yahoos are most immediately threatening immigrant men and women and also their children, with those born in the U.S. reviled by these bigots as "anchor babies." But make no mistake: The attack on the Fourteenth Amendment, one of the gains of the Civil War that destroyed black chattel slavery, underscores that anti-immigrant chauvinism threatens black people as well.

The in-your-face racism of the Tea Party types allows the Democratic Party—the other party of racist capitalist rule—to more easily posture as the friend of immigrants, even as the Obama administration carries out a coldly efficient deportation campaign. Over the past two years, Obama's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported nearly 800,000 immigrants, setting new records. While scolding Arizona Republican governor Jan Brewer for signing into law the state's apartheid-style anti-immigrant pass law, the Obama administration metes out essentially the same treatment. Its "Secure Communities" program uses the cops to harass anyone who doesn't look "American" and to sweep up immigrant workers. Maria Ledezma knows as much. Ledezma, who herself was brought to Arizona from Mexico as a toddler, was deported from Phoenix to the Mexican border town of Nogales. Sobbing as she explained her forced separation from her three daughters, all U.S. citizens, she said, "I never imagined being here. I'll bet right now that my girls are asking, 'Where's Mom?""

From moves in state legislatures to restrict who qualifies for "citizenship," including by creating two tiers of birth certificates, up to the White House, the attacks on immigrant rights are truly imbued with

"bipartisan spirit." It is no accident that this occurs in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, with immigrants charged with "stealing jobs" and grabbing government handouts. This is but one of the myriad ways the capitalist rulers whip up ethnic and racial hostilities to divide the working class and weaken its ability to struggle. The labor movement must see the struggle against anti-immigrant and anti-black racism as central to its own cause. No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

ant" without filing charges or allowing him a trial, in which the government would have to prove his "guilt." As the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee wrote in an *amici curiae* brief on Padilla's behalf (printed in the PDC's *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* No. 31, Summer 2003):

"The Executive's declaration that its 'war against terrorism' forfeits constitutional protections for designated individuals echoes the regimes of shahs and colonels and presidents 'for life' from the Near East to Africa to Latin America, to justify the mass imprisonment and unmarked

Florida, over 30 percent of black men cannot vote. We demand: *Full voting rights for prisoners and felons!*

The attack on the Fourteenth Amendment speaks to the inextricable link between the fight for black freedom in this country and the defense of immigrant rights. This was captured in the negative by Danny Verdin, Republican majority whip for the South Carolina state Senate and a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, in explaining his intention to introduce state citizenship laws. Pointing to the coming April commemoration of Confederate troops firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston at the start of the Civil War, Verdin proclaimed: "South Carolina may have been out front leading 150 years ago at Fort Sumter; but we are happy to work collaboratively on this to cure a malady."

Passed during the period of Radical Reconstruction following the defeat of the Southern slavocracy in the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment for the first time enunciated the concept of national citizenship, which it defined as applying to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof." This overturned the infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* decision in which the Supreme Court ruled that blacks, slave or free, were not citizens according to the Constitution, declaring that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

According to the Fourteenth Amendment, states could not "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." However, this blow to the slave masters' doctrine of "states' rights" was almost immediately followed by a Supreme Court ruling that the protections contained in the amendment were not binding on the individual states, leaving in place a patchwork of widely varying local laws. At the same time, the victory of the North had consolidated the American nation-state, creating for the first time a strong central government and military apparatus. With the rapid development of a national capitalist economy, the U.S. soon emerged as an imperialist power, waging wars and military occupations abroad.

With the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, marked by the removal of remaining Union Army troops from the South under the Compromise of 1877, a new system of exploitation enforced by racist repression was established. Legally freed from slavery, blacks were subject to the tyranny of the defeated slaveowners and their Ku Klux Klan henchmen. The former slaves became tenants and sharecroppers toiling on land owned by the white propertied class, consisting of elements of the old slavocracy and a new Southern bourgeoisie with strong ties to Northern capital. In the 1896 case of Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Court codified "separate but equal" segregation, which remained the law of the land for the next seven decades. Black people were consolidated anew as an oppressed race-color caste at the bottom of American capitalist society, where continued on page 15



Police round up immigrants in Phoenix, April 2010.

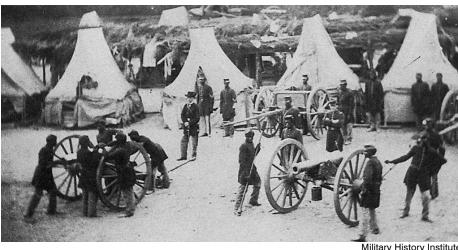
At this stage, moves to abrogate the Fourteenth Amendment may not go very far. But there has been a very real and concerted attack on fundamental rights of citizenship under the so-called "war on terror." As we warned, the "anti-terror" witchhunt that first took aim against people from predominantly Muslim countries soon targeted black people, the labor movement and the rights of the populace as a whole.

In 2002, the government seized U.S. citizen Jose Padilla and locked him up for years as an "unlawful enemy combat-

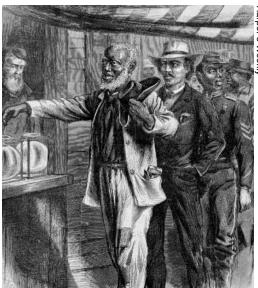
graves of political dissidents. Like them, the Executive is proclaiming the *right to disappear* citizens of its choosing."

Extending this authority, last year the Obama administration gave legal sanction for the targeted assassination of a U.S. citizen living abroad—Muslim cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, accused of being an Al Qaeda operative.

Meanwhile, an estimated 5.3 million Americans are denied the right to vote because of laws that prohibit voting by people with felony convictions, including some 1.4 million black men. Thus, in



Gun crews of "Corps d'Afrique" battery at Port Hudson, Louisiana, 1863. Entry of 200,000 black troops was key in Union victory over slaveholding South in Civil War. Right: Southern black men voting in 1867 during Reconstruction.



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