

U.S. Murders Its Frankenstein's Monster Bin Laden

“War on Terror”: Marauding Abroad, Repression at Home

The May 1 assassination of Osama bin Laden in his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, was an act of imperialist arrogance typical of the U.S. “cops of the world.” The day before, the NATO imperialists had bombed the house of Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi’s son, missing Qaddafi, their intended target, but killing his son and three grandchildren. A few days later, a U.S. drone attack in Yemen killed two people in an unsuccessful attempt to take out Anwar al-Awlaki, one of at least four American citizens officially targeted for assassination by Washington.

The Obama administration did not even inform its Pakistani “allies” in advance of the incursion into their country by a military death squad. The raid was carried out by Navy SEAL commandos, a gang of specially selected and trained hitmen who shot and wounded bin Laden’s youngest wife and killed his son and three others. In murdering the Al Qaeda leader and dumping his body in the Arabian Sea, Washington destroyed its own Frankenstein’s monster. The U.S. had sponsored bin Laden and other Islamic reactionaries against the Red Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s as part of the decades-long imperialist drive to strangle the Soviet Union and foment capitalist counterrevolution.

Barack Obama, who came into office with broad support from the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy and the reformist left, is simply carrying out his duties as Commander-in-Chief. In escalating the bloody occupation of Afghanistan, he is doing what he promised to do if elected. Obama was more than willing to ignore other campaign promises in the interests of continuing the imperialist “war on terror.” His decision to maintain the U.S. concentration camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, as well as the system of kangaroo-court military commissions for accused terrorists, underlines the continuity of Obama’s policies with those of his Republican predecessor. Politicians and the bourgeois media are now engaged in a sick debate over how “effective” torture was in extracting information that helped track down bin Laden. Our position on those who have been tortured and brutalized—from Afghanistan and Iraq to Guantánamo—is simple: Free the detainees!

Seizing on the bin Laden kill, Obama appealed to “the sense of unity that prevailed on 9/11,” waving yet again the bloody shirt of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Obama got a quick spike in the polls. But

Imperialists Out of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya!



AP



Reuters

Left: Aftermath of murderous U.S. drone attack in northwestern Pakistan, November 2010. Right: April 30 NATO bombing of Tripoli residence of Libyan leader Qaddafi’s son, killing the son and three grandchildren.

the “spontaneous” rallies of jubilation outside the White House and World Trade Center site, replete with bloodthirsty chauvinism, quickly dissipated and got little traction among working people. It is not so easy this time to whip up a spirit of shared “national interest” among workers, who have been thrown out of their jobs and homes by the millions and have seen their hard-won medical and pension benefits slashed by the capitalist class represented by the Democrats and Republicans. A common response even among workers who bought into the mission to “get” bin Laden was: OK, you got him, now when can we get out of Afghanistan? Obama made clear on May 1 that he had no intention of changing course in Afghanistan or relaxing the “anti-terror” crackdown on the home front.

The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center was a heinous crime, with nearly 3,000 people from all walks of life wantonly killed. Unlike the World Trade Center, the Pentagon was and is the command and administrative center of the U.S. imperialist military and, being a military installation, the possibility of getting hit comes with the territory. That fact did not make the attack an “anti-imperialist” act. In any case, terrorism almost always gets innocent people, including the passengers and crews on the hijacked airliners and the maintenance staff and secretaries at the Pentagon.

A Spartacist League/U.S. Political Bureau statement on the World Trade Center

attack issued the day after (printed in WV No. 764, 14 September 2001) declared that those who perpetrated this act “embrace the same mentality as the racist rulers of America—identifying the working masses with their capitalist exploiters and oppressors!” The statement went on to warn:

“It’s an opportunity for the exploiters to peddle ‘one nation indivisible’ patriotism to try to direct the burgeoning anger

at the bottom of this society away from themselves and toward an indefinable foreign ‘enemy,’ as well as immigrants in the U.S., and to reinforce their arsenal of domestic state repression against all the working people.”

This is precisely what happened. Beginning with rounding up immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries for imprisonment and deportation, the U.S. government has shredded civil liberties and vastly expanded police powers, a particular danger to black people and to the labor movement as well. In December 2001, striking teachers in Middletown, New Jersey, were compared to the Taliban by the school board after they defied a back-to-work order. The following year, as West Coast longshoremen organized by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) were engaged in tough contract talks, the head of Homeland Security warned that strike action could be treated as a threat to “national security.” The government later imposed the Transportation Workers Identification Credential, making longshoremen, rail workers and truckers undergo immigration review and criminal background checks—an invitation to purge blacks and other minorities as well as union militants. The FBI has also extended the “anti-terror” dragnet to include antiwar activists and reformist leftists, many of whom had supported Obama’s election.

When U.S. imperialism launched its wars in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in

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Draz/SIPA

Bin Laden in 1989 directing CIA-backed mujahedin forces near Jalalabad, following Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.



War on Terror...

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2003, we, as revolutionary Marxists, stood for the military defense of those neocolonial countries without giving an iota of political support to the reactionary Taliban or to Saddam Hussein’s blood-soaked capitalist regime. We stressed that every victory for the imperialists encourages more predatory wars, while every setback serves to assist the struggles of working people and oppressed the world over.

We called for *class struggle against the imperialist rulers at home*, in counterposition to the labor bureaucracy, which treacherously signed on to the “war on terror” while sometimes complaining about how it was applied. It is the historic task of the proletariat, led by a revolutionary party, to sweep away the system of capitalist imperialism. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained in a May 1917 speech titled “War and Revolution,” this will lay the basis for the “socialist system of society, which, by eliminating the divi-

sion of mankind into classes, by eliminating all exploitation of man by man and nation by nation, will inevitably eliminate the very possibility of war.”

Bin Laden: Product of Anti-Soviet Cold War

The post-September 11 “global war on terror” is but one of the many facets of capitalist reaction that followed the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Proclaiming themselves the “world’s only superpower,” the U.S. rulers have launched one bloody military action after another. Even as it remains embroiled in the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. is stepping up murderous drone attacks in Pakistan while NATO escalates its bombing campaign on behalf of the pro-imperialist opposition in Libya.

Pakistani military leaders are fuming over the brazen disregard for their country’s national sovereignty manifested in the raid against bin Laden. U.S. officials, in turn, are demanding to know how bin Laden could have resided for years



Jane Therese

October 2001: Trenton, New Jersey, cops threaten passengers dragged off bus as “terrorist suspects” because they spoke “little English.”

in a garrison town dominated by military installations without the protection of powerful figures in the Pakistani military or security forces.

The fact is that bin Laden and his ilk were promoted not only by the Pakistani authorities but, in the first instance, by the U.S. For decades, the U.S. fostered the growth of Islamic fundamentalism as a bulwark against “godless Communism” and even secular nationalism. In 1950, John Foster Dulles, who would become Secretary of State in the Eisenhower presidency, wrote: “The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it.”

The origins of bin Laden’s Al Qaeda stem from the U.S.-backed war against the Soviet Union’s 1979 intervention in Afghanistan. In the biggest CIA covert operation in history, money and arms were funneled to the *mujahedin* (holy warriors) based in western Pakistan. The main conduit was Pakistan’s top intelligence agency, the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate), led by fervent Islamist Hameed Gul. By the CIA’s own estimate, as many as 70,000 Islamic fundamentalists recruited from more than 50 countries by the CIA and ISI were trained at Islamist schools, which still flourish in Pakistan.

Washington started funneling arms to the *mujahedin* soon after the Soviet-allied People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power in April 1978. As modernizing left nationalists, the PDPA attempted to implement a program for redistributing land, lowering the bride price, educating women and freeing them from the prison of the head-to-toe covering called the *burqa*. As the Islamic hierarchy launched a fierce insurgency, the Soviet Union intervened at the PDPA’s

request to prevent the collapse of its client regime. Beginning with Democrat Jimmy Carter and continuing under Republican Ronald Reagan, the U.S. seized on the Red Army intervention to launch a renewed anti-Soviet offensive across the globe, in particular waging a proxy war aimed at killing Soviet soldiers and officers in Afghanistan.

For Marxists, there was no question which side working people and the oppressed the world over had in this conflict. The threat of a CIA-backed Islamic takeover on the USSR’s southern flank posed pointblank the need for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. Moreover, the Soviet intervention and the possibility of a prolonged integration of Afghanistan into the Soviet system opened the perspective of social liberation for the Afghan masses, particularly women. This was, as we wrote at the time, the first war in modern history in which a central issue was the rights of women. While most professed leftists around the world echoed the imperialists in condemning the Soviet intervention, the international Spartacist tendency (now the International Communist League) uniquely raised the slogans: “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!”

Among those who flocked to enlist in the *jihād* against Communism was Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, the son of a construction magnate who had been a close friend of the former Saudi king, Faisal. In Ahmed Rashid’s *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (2000), bin Laden recounts that his “volunteers were trained by Pakistani and American officers. The weapons were supplied by the Americans, the money by the Saudis.”

The *New York Times* took note of this
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TROTSKY

In Commemoration of the Paris Commune

On the 140th anniversary of the Paris Commune, we honor the heroic proletarian militants who seized power in the French capital in March 1871, the first historical expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Two months later, amid a reactionary frenzy whipped up by the bourgeoisies of Europe, French troops drowned the Commune in blood, massacring tens of thousands and imprisoning or deporting tens of thousands more. In a 1927 American Communist Party pamphlet, Max Shacht-

man, quoting from Karl Marx’s 1871 The Civil War in France, outlined the bold measures taken by the Communards, despite shortcomings, to establish workers democracy and begin undertaking socialist measures. Among the Commune’s best militants were members of the International Workingmen’s Association (First International), of which Marx was a principal leader.

The Commune took hold of the old bureaucratic and militarist apparatus, the bourgeois state, and crushed it in its hands, and on its broken fragments it placed the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workingmen of Paris organized as the ruling class of France. With a single stroke it abolished the standing army of the Second Empire and the Third Republic and replaced it with the people’s militia, a force, directly responsible to the Commune, of all the men capable of bearing arms....

The ruling body was based upon a real proletarian democracy, providing for the recall of unsatisfactory representatives, abolishing special allowances, paying all state officials the wages of workers, and realizing that “ideal of all bourgeois revolutions cheap government by eliminating the two largest items of expenditure—the army and the bureaucracy.” The parliamentarism of the bourgeois society was smashed and the Commune transformed itself into a “working corporation legislative and executive at one and the same time,” and held itself up to the provinces of France as the mirror of their own future. Church and State were separated, ecclesiastical property was confiscated and all education secularized.

The pawned property and furniture of the workers were returned, the workers were relieved of the payment of the overdue rents, it abolished the sickening piety of charity and “relief,” and resumed the pay of the National Guard. Thru Frankel, the Internationalist delegate of labor, it took its first steps, however few and unclear, to destroy the system of capitalist production and socialize it by turning it over to the trade unions; to ameliorate the conditions of the workers; to enforce a “fair wage” proviso in Commune contracts and abolish the abominable system of fines and garnisheeing of wages by employers; it planned the institution of the eight-hour day. Its internationalist character was testified to by the Hungarian, Frankel’s presence as delegate of labor, Dombrowski and Wroblewski, the Poles, in the defense.

Its heroic and noble spirit of sacrifice has been left as a revolutionary legacy to the new generations of the avenging proletariat. The Commune was a dim glass in which was reflected the rise of that greater and more powerful dictatorship of the proletariat, the successful proletarian revolution in Russia.

—Max Shachtman, 1871: *The Paris Commune* (1927)



LENIN

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Philly MOVE Massacre 13 May 1985



UPI

Racist capitalist rulers wage war on the home front: Police bombing of MOVE commune in Philadelphia killed eleven MOVE members, including five children. An entire black neighborhood was destroyed in the ensuing inferno.

Canadian Elections: Imperialist War and War on the Workers

TORONTO—The May 2 Canadian elections saw the right-wing Conservative (Tory) Party of Stephen Harper returned to office with a substantial majority, setting the stage for another four years of anti-working-class austerity attacks. The social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) of Jack Layton surged into second place, displacing the Liberal Party, which had by far the worst showing in its history.

Most of the NDP's gains came in Quebec, where the party had never before had any substantial support. The New Democrats won over so-called "soft nationalists" through pledges to expand the use of French in the federal public sector and reopen negotiations on the constitution, which successive Quebec governments have refused to sign since it was adopted in the 1980s. While the Tories and Liberals were reduced to a rump in the province, the bourgeois-nationalist Bloc Québécois, which had won the majority of Quebec seats in six straight federal elections, collapsed from 49 seats to a mere four.

The capitalist media hailed the New Democrats' rise in Quebec, saying, in the words of one right-wing pundit, "Better socialists than separatists." The NDP has a long and sordid record of upholding flag-waving "Canadian unity" against the national rights of the Québécois. And far from being "socialists," they ran an unabashedly pro-capitalist campaign focused on "support to small business" that was almost indistinguishable from that of the Liberals. As for the supposed eclipse of "separatism," the bourgeois-nationalist Parti Québécois (PQ) remains far ahead in the polls leading up to the next Quebec provincial election.

Following the election, an editorial in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (3 May) saluted both the Tory victory and the NDP's advance in Quebec but expressed concern at the continued national divide in Canada. "Not since 1917 has a majority government been so underrepresented in Quebec," it noted, adding:

"And with the Parti Québécois well-placed to take eventual power in Quebec City, we are entering a new phase in Canada's dealings with Quebec. Mr. Layton and Mr. Harper will be fierce opponents in the House of Commons. On national unity, they must speak, as much as possible, with one voice."

Against the "national unity" pushed by the bourgeois rulers and their social-democratic agents, it is necessary to fight for a program of proletarian class struggle that defends all the oppressed, including by advocating independence for Quebec. We reprint below an April 19 statement on the elections by the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League.

* * *

Days before the minority Conservative government was brought down last month, triggering the present election, parliament voted unanimously to support the military assault on Libya. The parliamentary parties may spar over budgets or the lies and obfuscation that are the stock in trade of capitalist politics, but *all* of them—the New Democrats included—spoke as one in supporting this new imperialist war on a neocolonial country.

The same parties are also united in ensuring that the working class bears the ravages of the worst capitalist economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Workers coast to coast have been devastated by job losses and anti-union attacks. Pensions, wages and the right to strike are under the gun; massive cuts to health care and other social services loom

if the capitalists get their way. At the same time, the racist rulers seek to divide the working class, whipping up anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim hatred, especially through the so-called "war on terror."

This one-sided class war didn't start with the Harper Tories. The Liberals carried out the most sweeping assaults on social programs in Canadian history in the 1990s and early 2000s. As for the social-democratic NDP, it has propped up Liberal and Tory regimes alike, thus taking responsibility for austerity cutbacks and massive hikes in military spending. Two years ago, Jack Layton obscenely told workers to have the "courage" to "take a pay cut so your friends at the plant can keep their job" (*Toronto Star*, 23 January 2009). Today, the New Democrats



Above: Canadian Hornet fighter jet in Sicily, part of NATO force targeting Libya, March 24. Below: Trotskyist League of Canada at Toronto union demonstration, April 9.



vow to balance the federal budget by 2014 while promising to spend just as much on the military as the Tories.

The capitalist order means bloody imperialist occupations and wars from Afghanistan to Libya and poverty and misery for working people at home. A successful fight against this ruinous social system requires a leadership that understands that the interests of the working class and the capitalist class are counterposed and irreconcilable. With its hands on the means of production, the working class uniquely has the social power and interest in sweeping away this deeply inhumane system.

What is needed is a class-struggle workers party committed to smashing capitalist rule and instituting a rationally planned, socialist economy based on meeting human needs, not private profit. Such a party can only be built through political struggle against the NDP and the trade-union bureaucracy, whose quest for "partnership" between labour and capital has shackled the workers to the enemy class and sapped their fighting power.

Class struggle against the capitalist rul-

Prime Minister Stephen Harper addressing Canadian troops in Kandahar, Afghanistan, March 2006.



ers at home is inseparable from the struggle against imperialism abroad. While giving no political support to Libya's capitalist strongman Qaddafi, the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League, stands for the military defense of that semicolonial country against imperialism and the opposition forces who are acting on the imperialists' behalf. We demand that all NATO forces, including Canadian ships and planes, get out of the region, and we demand the immediate withdrawal of all U.S., Cana-

ardently championed the cabal of pro-imperialist "democrats," CIA stooges, monarchists and Islamists that comprise the Libyan opposition. They have done so in the name of a so-called "Libyan revolution." But what kind of "revolutionary" appeals to the imperialists to impose a "no-fly zone" and launch air strikes in their country, as the opposition leaders did from early on? The reformists' belated objections to Canadian and other imperialist military intervention aren't worth the paper they're written on.

We stand with V.I. Lenin, leader of the world's first successful workers revolution in October 1917 in Russia, who explained nearly a century ago that capitalist parliaments are "*instruments for the oppression* of the workers by the bourgeoisie." "Important questions under bourgeois democracy," Lenin emphasized, "are decided by the stock exchange and the banks." This holds true whoever is on the parliamentary benches: Tories, Liberals or NDP social democrats.

We Trotskyists would of course never accord any political support to the Conservatives or Liberals, who represent the ruling class of "united" Canada, or to the small-time capitalist Green Party. Similarly, we give no support to the Bloc Québécois, a party of the bourgeoisie in Quebec. The parasitic capitalist class that these parties represent accrues its profits through savage exploitation of the working class and is the most bitter and direct enemy of all the oppressed.

Nor is there any basis for workers and oppressed minorities to give the NDP even the most savagely critical support today. While linked to the unions through the labour bureaucracy, the NDP is what Marxists term a *bourgeois workers party*, whose thoroughly pro-capitalist program of maintaining the present system is sometimes packaged in "social justice" rhetoric. Whenever they have ruled provincially, as in Ontario and B.C. [British Columbia] in the 1990s or Manitoba and Nova Scotia today, the New Democrats administer capitalism against the interests of workers and the oppressed.

Down With Anglo Chauvinism—Independence for Quebec!

Harper opened the election campaign with a vicious diatribe against a supposed "socialist-separatist" coalition government that would include the Bloc Québécois. This was an echo of the anti-Québécois chauvinism he unleashed against the short-lived Liberal-NDP coalition supported by the Bloc in late 2008. We declared in a 22 December 2008 statement that the Liberal-NDP coalition was "an *enemy* of the interests of the working class." At the same time we sharply denounced the wave of anti-Quebec bigotry, emphasizing:

"As opponents of the chauvinism of 'our' capitalist rulers—and of all forms of nationalism—Marxists advocate independence for Quebec. We seek to get the national question off the agenda, to create conditions where it can be clear to the workers in both English Canada and Quebec that their own capitalist exploiters are the enemy, not each other. Absent this, chauvinist bigotry against Quebec and the national antagonisms that this generates will continue to divide the working class, undermining its ability to struggle against capitalist exploitation. The palpable anger among working people against the massive job losses must be directed

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COMMEMORATING THE WAR THAT SMASHED SLAVERY FINISH THE CIVIL WAR!

Below we conclude this article, Part One of which appeared in WV No. 979 (29 April).

PART TWO

Racist hostility toward blacks figured prominently in the labor and socialist movements of the late 1800s/early 1900s, with the exception of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). But it was not until the 1920s that American Marxists actively took up the fight for black liberation, as part of the fight for communism. James P. Cannon, a founding American Communist and foremost leader of American Trotskyism for its first 30-plus years, makes *very* clear how exactly this came about. He writes:

“The American communists in the early days, like all other radical organizations of that and earlier times, had nothing to start with on the Negro question but an inadequate *theory*, a false or indifferent *attitude* and the adherence of a few individual Negroes of radical or revolutionary bent.... *Everything new and progressive on the Negro question came from Moscow*, after the revolution of 1917, and as a result of the revolution—not only for the American communists who responded directly, but for all others concerned with the question.”

Further:

“Even before the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were distinguished from all other tendencies in the international socialist and labor movement by their concern with the problems of oppressed nations and national minorities, and affirmative support of their struggles for freedom, independence and the right of self-determination. The Bolsheviks gave this support to all ‘people without equal rights’ sincerely and earnestly, but there was nothing ‘philanthropic’ about it. They also recognized the great revolutionary potential in the situation of oppressed peoples and nations, and saw them as important allies of the international working class in the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. “After November 1917 this new doctrine—with special emphasis on the Negroes—began to be transmitted to the American communist movement with the authority



Beinecke Library

Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay speaking on racial oppression in U.S. at Communist International's Fourth Congress in Moscow, 1922.

of the Russian Revolution behind it. The Russians in the Comintern started on the American communists with the harsh, insistent demand that they shake off their own unspoken prejudices, pay attention to the special problems and grievances of the American Negroes, go to work among them, and champion their cause in the white community.”

—James P. Cannon, *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962)

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was the most important event of the 20th century and is our model for a successful proletarian revolution. As Cannon said, it “took the question of the workers’ revolution out of the realm of abstraction and gave it flesh and blood reality.” It demonstrated that the bourgeois state could not be reformed to serve the interests of the working class but had to be smashed and replaced by a workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. It showed the need for a disciplined vanguard party based on a clear revolutionary program. The Bolsheviks’ fight around the American black question is but one example of the hard, programmatic struggle that they waged to forge truly revolutionary Leninist vanguard

parties around the world that could serve as tribunes of the oppressed and fight for international proletarian revolution.

The Great Migration and Black Proletarianization

The defeat of Reconstruction reconsolidated blacks as a race-color caste. But it was the Great Migration of blacks to the North and to the urban centers of the South that established blacks as a strategic component of the proletariat. I recommend this new book by Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. For those too young to remember, the book gives a vivid picture of the wretched racist conditions of the South, as well as the struggles blacks faced in the North. It follows three different individuals who personify the different directions that this migration took: one who went from Florida to Harlem, one from Mississippi to Chicago, and one from Louisiana to California. It's a quite literate book; every chapter starts with a poem or quote from a famous black writer. The title, “The Warmth of Other Suns,” comes from a poem by Richard

Wright. Let me read the one by Langston Hughes called “One-Way Ticket”:

“I pick up my life
And take it with me
And I put it down in
Chicago, Detroit,
Buffalo, Scranton,
Any place that is
North and East,
And not Dixie.
“I pick up my life
And take it on the train
To Los Angeles, Bakersfield
Seattle, Oakland, Salt Lake—
Any place that is
North and West,
And not South.
“I am fed up
With Jim Crow laws,
People who are cruel
And afraid,
Who lynch and run,
Who are scared of me
And me of them.
“I pick up my life
And take it away
On a one-way ticket—
Gone up North,
Gone out West,
Gone!”

Before World War I, something like 90 percent of all blacks lived in the South, and they were mostly rural. Wilkerson estimates that six million black people left the South in the decades from 1915 to 1970. That's a lot of people! In 1910, Chicago had a black population of about 2 percent. California in 1900 had only about 11,000 black people, which was less than 1 percent. When I first read statistics like this, they were hard to wrap my mind around because I had grown up in the 1960s, when the heavy battalions of labor, from longshoremen to auto to steel, were heavily black.

This migration and the migration to the urban centers of the South, along with the struggle for industrial unionization in the '30s, integrated blacks into the labor movement, although still at the lowest rungs and at the dirtiest and hardest jobs. Often blacks played a leading role in these labor struggles. Proletarianization gives you social power—at least, *potential* social power.

Race-Color Caste

Now there was an ambiguity which ran through both the Communist Party and later the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in its revolutionary heyday as to whether the black question was a national question, or embryonic national question, and whether the slogan of self-determination was appropriate. Leon Trotsky himself tentatively advanced this position in the 1930s, coming at the question from his understanding of the national question in Europe. Like the early Communist International's intervention, Trotsky was primarily concerned that the American Trotskyists have a serious orientation to the black question and not capitulate to backward consciousness.

In practice, the SWP didn't act like the black question was a national question and was guided by an integrationist, class-struggle perspective. The party was able



UPI



State Archives of Florida

Left: Evicted Southern sharecroppers, 1939. Right: Passengers in segregated railroad depot in Jacksonville, Florida, waiting to catch trains to North, 1921.

BLACK LIBERATION THROUGH SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

to recruit several hundred black workers during World War II by acting as the most militant fighters against racist oppression in the factories, armed forces and American society at large. The SWP's courageous work, carried out in the face of government repression, was in stark contrast to the Communist Party, which, in line with its support to the Allied imperialist "democracies," explicitly opposed struggles for black equality during the war.

Dick Fraser joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934. He was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party. He began a study of the black question in the late 1940s in response to the loss of hundreds of black worker recruits with the onset of the Cold War against the Soviet Union. He concluded that the problem was not with the SWP's practical, day-to-day work fighting discrimination and victimization of blacks but with the party's inadequate theoretical understanding. As Fraser wrote: "It is the historical task of Trotskyism to tear the Negro question in the United States away from the national question and to establish it as an independent political problem, that it may be judged on its own merits, and its laws of development discovered" ("For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle" [1955], reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised]).

Fraser began from the premise that black people, whom he described as "the most completely 'Americanized' section of the population," were not an oppressed nation or nationality in any sense. Crucially, black people lacked any material basis for a separate political economy. Whereas the oppressed nations and nationalities of Europe were subjected to forced assimilation, American blacks faced the opposite: forcible segregation.



Detroit News

Striking auto workers in Detroit, 1945.

Hence, in the struggle against black oppression, the democratic demand for self-determination—separation into an independent nation-state—just didn't make sense. As Fraser wrote in his 1963 piece "Dialectics of Black Liberation" (reprinted in *Revolutionary Integration: A Marxist Analysis of African American Liberation* [Red Letter Press, 2004]): "The Black Question is a unique racial, not national, question, embodied in a movement marked by integration, not self-determination, as its logical and historical motive force and goal. The demand for integration produces a struggle that is necessarily transitional to socialism and creates a revolutionary Black vanguard for the entire working class."

He had earlier noted in "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question": "The goals which history has dictated to [black people] are to achieve complete equality through the elimination of racial segregation, discrimination, and prejudice. That is, the overthrow of the race system. It is from these historically conditioned conclusions that the Negro struggle, whatever its forms, has taken the path for direct assimilation. All that we can add to this is that these goals cannot be accomplished except through the socialist revolution."

In *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Wilkerson makes a point that confirms Fraser's point about blacks being the most American of Americans. She poses the Great Migration as a sort of internal immigration. But when she posed this analysis to

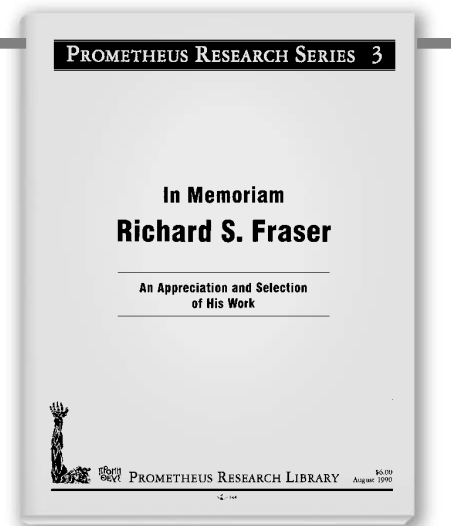


Fraser family

Richard S. Fraser (1913-1988) pioneered Trotskyist understanding of black oppression in the U.S. *Prometheus Research Series* No. 3, containing selection of his writings, is available for \$7 from Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

the over 1,000 black people that she interviewed for this book, "nearly every black migrant I interviewed vehemently resisted the immigrant label." They insisted that "the South may have acted like a different country and been proud of it, but it was a part of the United States, and anyone born there was born an American." Further, that "for twelve generations, their ancestors had worked the land and helped build the country." Indeed, black people's labor has been central to building this country, but it will take a socialist revolution by the multiracial working class for them to realize the fruits of their labor.

Fraser lost the fight in the Socialist Workers Party on the black question. But his work found resonance in the Spartacist League. Despite political differences with him, he was invited to the SL/U.S. National Conference in 1983 and spoke



without the intervention of a revolutionary party.

Contradictions in SNCC

Let me say a little more about my experiences in Mississippi in 1965 and how I saw this period. I certainly wasn't in the Spartacist League; I was unfamiliar with any left group except the Communist Party, which my parents had been members of and which I rejected as very "old school." My point is that I came back from Mississippi frustrated and confused by my experiences in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). This period is often portrayed in triumphalist fashion: MLK and the good fight against legalized segregation, etc., etc. At first I assumed that my project in Gulfport was particularly disorganized, but in retrospect I could see that SNCC was *politically* coming apart at the seams.

Now SNCC had started as the youth extension of MLK's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. As black liberals, their initial goal was formal, legal equality, or "northernizing the South." The political strategy was to seek the support of the liberal establishment and try to get the federal government to help black people. That's really what all this "pacifism" was about—appealing to the Northern Democrats and being respectable. But after some hard experiences in the South with cops, Klan, Democrats, etc., SNCC had moved to the left.

When I was in Mississippi, there was a lot of talk about going to the North to confront black oppression there—segregated housing, unemployment, rotten schools, police brutality. The American bourgeoisie might go along with getting rid of *legal* segregation, but black equality? An end to black oppression? No way—too central to the American capitalist system! And there was no consensus in SNCC on how to deal with capitalism. The only two answers I heard in the SNCC of that time were back to MLK liberalism or an incoherent black nationalist separatism. Without the intervention of communists, most SNCC radicals were not able to make the leap to proletarian socialism.

I want to deal with the contradictions that I saw in SNCC. First of all, when I was in Mississippi, the Los Angeles Watts upheaval broke out. Martin Luther King said that "as powerful a police force as possible" should be brought to L.A. to stop it. SNCC activists on my project cursed King's name because it was clear that he was calling for pacifism for us and guns for the National Guard to put down black people in the ghettos.

Then we heard that our project might be attacked by the KKK. So people on my SNCC project proposed talking to the FBI about it. Being a red-diaper baby, I was horrified and opposed to this. I had seen my mother kick an FBI agent in the shins when he tried to barge into my parents' house. But it was decided, and we all went down there together. The people on my project had assumed the FBI agent would be a Northerner, but he was a real Southerner with a heavy drawl. When he asked for our address, I was shaking my head and trying to get them to stop, but

they gave it to him. Soon thereafter we heard through the grapevine that our house was in danger of being bombed! I wasn't surprised and went around saying "I told you so" for days.

Worried about the threats, we moved out of our house for a while. With another young white woman, I went to stay with a very friendly black family. When night fell, they urged me and the other woman to sleep in one of the bedrooms. They kept insisting that there would be "no violence, no violence." When I looked around the room, I could see that every guy there was holding a rifle or a shotgun. They kept saying that there would be "no violence from the Klan." I just thought, "Well, this is the kind of 'non-violence' I'm for!" The Spartacist League, as you can read in the document "Black and Red," was certainly for armed self-defense in the South. From my own experience, I think there was a lot more of it actually going on than people realize today.

Then we had a community meeting and were going to talk about the work we were doing. I suggested that we talk about this new thing called the Vietnam War. I sure got landed on for that! First, I was told that we were conducting a single-issue campaign around civil rights. When that wasn't too convincing, I was told that "blacks were very patriotic" and wouldn't appreciate criticism of American foreign policy. Later when I heard Muhammad Ali saying "No Viet Cong ever called me n---r" and saw that black people hated the war in Vietnam, I was sorry we hadn't brought it up.

I never got to meet the longshoremen I mentioned who threatened to strike if the lunch counters didn't get integrated. They were just the power in the background, but I was impressed with them. SNCC didn't know what to do with them, but it seemed to me that there must be some left group out there who knew how to organize the power of labor. In the Spartacist League's successful anti-Klan united fronts, I saw that power consciously mobilized in the fight for black freedom.

Several times people on my project asked me questions about Marxism; I would try to answer but I just didn't know enough. That's why it was such a crime and a betrayal that the SWP didn't intervene. The Spartacist tendency originated in the early 1960s as a left opposition, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), in the SWP. A central axis of the political fight was for an active intervention into the Southern civil rights movement based on the perspective of revolutionary integrationism—i.e., linking the struggle for black democratic rights to working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation. The SL was small, predominantly white, and the main body of young black activists moved rapidly toward separatism.

Northern Ghetto Upheavals

With the civil rights movement unable to change the hellish conditions of black life in the North, there was a rising level of frustrated expectations. There were a whole series of ghetto upheavals in the mid to late '60s that were repressed with extreme police/National Guard violence. As we wrote in "Black and Red": "Yet despite the vast energies expended and the casualties suffered, these outbreaks have changed nothing. This is a reflection of the urgent need for organizations of real struggle, which can organize and direct these energies toward conscious political objectives. It is the duty of a revolutionary organization to intervene where possible to give these outbursts political direction." In line with this policy, at the time of the 1967 ghetto rebellion in Newark, New Jersey, we put out a very short agitational leaflet (less than a page, if you can believe) titled "Organize Black Power!" which you can see in *Spartacist Bound Volume* No. 1.

Despite their radical and often white-baiting rhetoric, most of the black nationalists quickly re-entered the fold of mainstream bourgeois politics. They offered themselves to the white ruling class as overseers of the ghetto masses. They became administrators of the various poverty

continued on page 10

Young Spartacus



AP photos

Egypt and the Near East

Permanent Revolution vs. Arab Nationalism

We print below an edited and slightly excerpted New York Spartacus Youth Club forum given on March 9 at the City College of New York (CCNY).

Major events are rocking the Near East and North Africa. What we have to offer is a revolutionary internationalist program, captured in the placard here that says, “Down With the Oil Sheiks, Emirs, Kings, Colonels and Zionist Rulers—Workers to Power! For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!” This talk is going to motivate that perspective, which is a Marxist perspective. It is going to primarily focus on Egypt, the history of the Palestine/Israel question and the long and brutal role that imperialism has played in this region.

Recently Obama, the current U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief, has been praising the fight for “democracy.” But during the upheaval in Egypt, Obama expressed support for Hosni Mubarak’s regime, especially the “reforms” promised by Vice President Omar Suleiman, who has long played a key role in Washington’s “war on terror” torture program. The U.S. has poured \$1.3 billion a year into arming the Egyptian military, as it does to prop up bloody dictators worldwide. After Mubarak resigned, Obama

Left: Striking Suez Canal Company workers in Ismailia City demand resignation of boss, pay raise and social equality, February 9. Right: Protesters atop military vehicle in Cairo, January 29. Sign reads, “Down With Mubarak.”

said that the U.S. stands for “a credible transition to a democracy.”

What U.S. imperialism means by “democracy” are the corpses of more than one million Iraqis who died as a result of the 2003 invasion and occupation, as well as the imperialist barbarism inflicted by U.S./NATO forces upon the peoples of Afghanistan. Last week, NATO aircraft shot down nine young boys collecting firewood in Afghanistan. The sheiks, despots and strongmen that litter the Near East, along with the Israeli rulers, act as U.S. imperialism’s agents. Take a recent back-page ad in the *New York Times* for *Our Last Best Chance* by King Abdullah of Jordan. The ad quoted Bill Clinton, who as president bombed and starved Iraq for eight long years, praising the Jordanian monarch—the same monarch who today suppresses protests against his rule. So don’t be fooled by these imperialist war criminals, whether in Democratic or Republican clothing. Now they are threatening Libya and have already implemented sanctions; we say imperialists hands off! [See “Defend Libya Against Imperialist Attack!” WV No. 977, 1 April.]

It’s against these imperialists’ agents that the masses in Tunisia and Egypt have been revolting, fed up with unemployment, rising food prices and the widespread corruption of the Arab capitalist rulers and their families and cronies. Inspired by the protests in Tunisia, protesters in Egypt courageously faced down a massive crackdown that left hundreds dead. After nearly 30 years of governing Egypt with an iron fist, Mubarak stepped down following 18 days of unprecedented upheaval throughout the country, with demonstrators unleashing their fury at the regime by targeting police and security buildings as well as those belonging to the ruling National Democratic Party. These protests were significantly topped off by a wave of labor strikes.

I’m sure that everyone saw the mass celebrations of millions of people that erupted in Cairo’s Tahrir Square and in cities throughout the country over what seemed like the end of a brutal dictatorship that ruled under emergency law, imprisoning and disappearing its oppo-

nents in Egypt’s vast torture chambers. But while Mubarak is no longer in power, the central core of Egypt’s bonapartist capitalist state apparatus, the military, is now directly in power. A doctor in Cairo was quoted as saying, “They cut off the head, but the body is still moving.”

The military announced the dissolution of Mubarak’s sham parliament and the formation of a panel to “amend” the equally sham constitution. They have denounced the continuing strikes as leading to “negative results” and ordered workers to return to their jobs. Two weeks ago it was reported that soldiers beat protesters and burned down a reconstituted tent camp in Tahrir Square. In capitalist society, which is divided into antagonistic social classes whose interests are irreconcilably opposed, the question of the state is a crucial one. Together with the police, courts and prisons, the army is at the core of the capitalist state, which is an apparatus for the violent suppression of the working class and the oppressed. Above all, the drive to “restore stability” in Egypt is aimed at the working class.

The strikes launched by tens of thousands of workers amid the anti-Mubarak protests continued after Mubarak’s fall. These included some 6,000 workers on the Suez Canal, through which 8 percent of world trade travels, although Canal pilots continued to work, which meant ships kept moving. Thousands of textile and steel workers also went on strike in Suez, which saw some of the most militant protests. In the wake of Mubarak’s fall, strikes spread to steel workers outside the capital, postal workers, textile workers and thousands of oil and gas workers.

What is necessary in this situation is for the working class to emerge as an independent force and lead the struggles of the region’s unemployed youth, urban poor, peasants, women and other oppressed sectors fighting for freedom. Why the working class? Because this is the one class with the social power and historic interest to overthrow capitalism. In fighting for economic demands, such as against poverty-level wages, the working class is demonstrating the unique position it holds in making the wheels

of the capitalist economy turn. This social power, to stop and take over those wheels, gives the working class the potential to lead all the impoverished masses in struggle against their unbearable oppression.

The Trap of Egyptian Nationalism

There is a lot of empty, classless talk about how “we are all Egyptian” (I guess minus Mubarak) and the “people’s revolution.” Other than the upper echelons of the Tunisian and Egyptian bourgeoisies, these upheavals have been characterized by an outpouring of all social classes. In demonstrations, Egyptian flags have been everywhere. What this reflects is a nationalist consciousness that is also expressed in widespread illusions that the army is a “friend of the people.” These illusions are a deadly danger to the working people and the oppressed.

From the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Free Officers’ coup in 1952, 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 that time. In 1952 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. Today, despite claiming that it did not oppose the anti-Mubarak demonstrators, the military arrested hundreds and tortured many. We say: **Down with the emergency law! Free all victims of state repression!**

There has also been a lot of talk about the Facebook and Twitter “revolution,” which I guess the military is now a part of since they post communiqués on their Facebook page. But, as a young comrade said at a recent event, “The working class needs a vanguard party, not a Facebook profile!” One of the technologically savvy youth leaders, Google exec Wael Ghonim, was arrested for using Facebook to organize the early protests. He epitomizes the logic of a bourgeois-nationalist program: Upon his release, he kissed his captors, praised the “sincerity” of the military and told striking workers that now is not the time to fight for \$100 a month if you only make \$70. He is speaking for the capitalist class and fighting for its interests.

Nationalism arose in connection with the development of capitalism, which strove to establish unified national markets. While nationalism in Egypt is fueled by a history of imperialist subjugation,



WV Photo

Spartacist placard at NYC protest against Mubarak regime, January 29.

it has long served the bourgeois rulers by obscuring the class divide between the tiny layer of filthy rich at the top and the brutally exploited and impoverished workers and peasants at the bottom. Nationalism is a key obstacle to revolutionary proletarian consciousness. We oppose those fake socialists who promote bourgeois nationalism.

The Egyptian youth who initiated the “January 25 Revolution” have been hailed by one and all, including bourgeois oppositionists and 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 have been animated not only by their own grievances but particularly by the struggles of the Egyptian proletariat. I mentioned the recent strikes, but what rarely gets reported is that, over the last ten years, the Egyptian workers have engaged in over 3,000 strikes, sit-ins and other actions, involving over two million workers. These strikes were carried out in defiance of the corrupt leadership of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, which was established by Nasser in 1957 as an arm of the state.

The petty bourgeoisie is an intermediate class comprising many layers with disparate interests, from students to peasants. It 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 the militant youth who showed incredible courage in taking on the Mubarak regime, those committed to fighting on behalf of the oppressed must be won to the revolu-

and combined development, which is the only way to break the chains of political despotism and economic and social backwardness. The victorious working class would fight to extend its revolutionary victory to the centers of world imperialism, laying the basis for an international planned economy that would end scarcity. Elementary democratic tasks such as legal equality for women, complete separation of religion and state, agrarian revolution to give land to the peasants—as well as ending joblessness and grinding poverty—cannot be achieved without the overthrow of the capitalist order. The indispensable instrument for the working class is a proletarian revolutionary party, which can be built only through relentless struggle against all bourgeois forces: the military, the Muslim Brotherhood and the bourgeois liberals like ElBaradei, who all falsely claim to support the struggles of the masses.

Despite limited land reform carried out in the ’50s and early ’60s by nationalist regimes in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, the pattern of land ownership in the region still resembles what it was a century ago. Wealthy landowners possess large tracts of the best land while millions of desperate peasants, unable to scratch out a living on tiny plots of arid land, have settled in the vast shantytowns that ring Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. Cairo professionals have cell phones and computers and large numbers of Egyptian workers are concentrated in modern, foreign-owned auto plants. Meanwhile, you have barefoot villagers in the Nile valley tilling their fields with tools that have scarcely changed since the age of the pharaohs. With nearly half the population living on \$2 a day or less, popular hatred for Mubarak was definitely driven by the estimated \$70 billion fortune amassed by his family. Inhuman poverty and squalor compete with grotesque displays of wealth.

While Egypt is a regional power in its own right, it is nonetheless a neocolony whose brutal and murderous bourgeoisie is tied by a million strings to world imperialism, which benefits from the exploitation, oppression and degradation of the neocolonial masses. Beginning with Sadat’s rule in 1970, Egypt has also 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.

Conditions like those in Egypt are what Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution, described as uneven and combined development, in which modern industry has been superimposed on largely peasant-based societies. This was also true of Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution. Though itself an imperialist power, Russia at the time, unlike the more advanced capitalist countries of West Europe, had not had a bourgeois-democratic revolution and remained mired in social and economic backwardness. Emerging late in the capitalist era, the weak and corrupt Russian bourgeoisie was dependent on Western capital and feared the proletariat far too much to mobilize them for an onslaught against the tsarist autocracy. The autocracy ruled over a vast “prison house of peoples” and

Federal Assault Charges for Pie Throwing

Michigan

The Partisan Defense Committee—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—sent the following letter to Assistant U.S. Attorney Hagan Frank on 3 May 2011.

The Partisan Defense Committee vigorously protests the prosecution of Ahlam Mohsen and Max Kantar for the “crime” of throwing an apple pie in the face of Michigan Democratic Senator Carl Levin. It is outrageous that Mohsen spent even one night in jail for what was obviously a harmless prank as a form of political protest.

On August 16, 2010, Mohsen pied Levin at an event in Big Rapids, Michigan after Kantar read a statement protesting Levin’s continued support of the U.S.’s occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and U.S. support to Israel. They were arrested and Mohsen was held for over a week in Mecosta County Jail. Mohsen was not released until her exorbitant bond of \$250,000 was reduced. Then in December, both activists were indicted on federal assault charges. Ludicrously, one of these charges made reference to a U.S. Code section prohibiting the attempted murder of public officials while the official is engaged in his “official duties.”



“Attempted murder” of Frank Sinatra by slapstick comedian Soupy Sales in 1960s.

What’s next, declaring Soupy Sales to have been a terrorist, or charging Sara Lee with material support to terrorism? This is nothing but an attempt to squelch political dissent and send a chilling message to anyone who protests U.S. imperialism and the carnage it has visited on the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Under the pressure of facing these extreme charges, both Mohsen and Kantar pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault of a public official with their sentencing scheduled for June 20th. They could spend up to a year in jail and face up to \$100,000 in fines. We demand that all of the charges against these two activists be dropped!



Leon Trotsky in jail after 1905 Revolution in Russia.

tionary internationalist program of Trotskyism. Such elements will be crucial to forging a revolutionary party, which, like Lenin’s Bolsheviks, will be founded through a fusion of the most advanced workers with declassed intellectuals won to the side of the working class.

In Egypt, this party must fight for the program of permanent revolution. What do we mean by permanent revolution? This theory embodies the experience of the 1917 Russian Revolution. What we are talking about is the seizure of power by the working class in countries of uneven

a mass of impoverished peasants. At the same time, foreign capitalist investment had given rise to a small but combative industrial working class that was concentrated in modern large-scale industry.

The Russian Revolution was a confirmation of permanent revolution: the working class overthrew bourgeois rule, freed the country from the imperialist yoke, gave land to the peasants and freed the many oppressed nations and peoples of the former tsarist empire. The achievement of democratic tasks was combined with socialist tasks, such as the expropriation of the means of production by the workers state, which laid the basis for the development of a collectivized planned economy. The destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 was a world-historic defeat for working people and the oppressed and enormously strengthened the forces of capitalist reaction on a global scale.

What you learn when you study the Russian Revolution is that the victory of the revolution was possible only because of the Bolsheviks’ irreconcilable struggle against all variants of bourgeois nationalism, populism and liberalism. They struggled against the Menshevik opportunists, who tailed the liberal bourgeoisie, and also against the peasant-based Socialist Revolutionary Party, which was hostile to proletarian class rule. As Lenin put it, “Unity is a great thing and a great slogan. But what the workers’ cause needs is the *unity of Marxists*, not unity between Marxists, and opponents and distorters of Marxism” [“Unity,” April 1914]. Later I will get to the opponents and distorters of Marxism today who tail the liberal and not-so-liberal bourgeois forces of our day.

So in summary, achieving genuine national and social liberation requires mobilizing the proletariat in revolutionary struggle against both the imperialists *and* the domestic bourgeoisie. A proletarian revolution in Egypt resulting in a workers and peasants government would have an electrifying impact on workers and the oppressed throughout North Africa, the

Near East and beyond. Over one-quarter of all Arabic speakers live in Egypt, a country of over 80 million that has the largest working class in the region.

The Near East: Yesterday and Today

Now you can’t understand the Near East today without understanding that the region was literally carved up following World War I [1914-18] by the British and other colonial powers that drew the borders of Iraq and other countries of the Near East. Winston Churchill, that imperialist pig and major player in this chapter of history, said during WWI, “I think a curse should rest on me because I am so happy. I know this war is smashing and shattering the lives of thousands every moment—and yet—I cannot help it—I enjoy every second I live.” Following the

continued on page 8

Letter

On Evan Emory Article

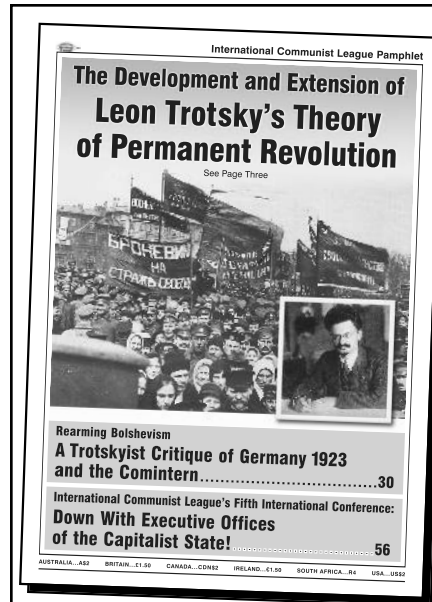
25 April 2011

Hello, Spartacist League,

I wanted to express thanks for your excellent article titled “Michigan Bigots Hate YouTube, Sex, Children” (*Workers Vanguard*, 25 April). It is in keeping with the many articles you have published over the years expressing your sensible support for consensual sex and opposition to state meddling in private mat-

ters where it has no business sticking its nose in. The tone too of your article is commendable—anger and outrage, rather than a mere pro-forma expression of principles. When it comes to such questions, the hypocrisy of the ruling class is boundless, especially in view of the barbarism of its domestic and foreign policies. Kudos!

David Thorstad



\$2 (56 pages)

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AFP

Left: Palestinians expelled from their homes in Haifa, 1948. Right: Amman, Jordan, in 1970 as King Hussein's regime slaughtered 10,000 Palestinians in Black September massacre.

Der Spiegel



Near East...

(continued from page 7)

mass slaughter of the war, the imperialists divvied up the loot. There was a sense of unity between the Arabs of Palestine, including what is today Jordan, and the Arabs of what is now Syria and Lebanon. They were divided into separate countries. In what is now Iraq, Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims and Kurds and Turkmens wanted to live separately. They were forced to live together. The point was to carve up the region in such a way that ethnic and religious strife would perpetually plague it. This new Near East was duly approved by the League of Nations, which Lenin called a "den of thieves." It served, as the United Nations does today, as a fig leaf for imperialist interests.

Even before WWI was finished, the British and French imperialists divided up the spoils of their impending victory in the secret Sykes-Picot Treaty of 1916. The publication of that document by the Soviet workers state exposed the imperialists' machinations and had an electrifying effect across the region. The Bolshevik Revolution, and its extension to largely Muslim Central Asia in the course of the bloody three-year Russian Civil War [1918-20] against the imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary White armies, triggered a series of national revolts and popular uprisings in the Near East, which was occupied by the British and French imperialists from Egypt through the Fertile Crescent to Iran. In Egypt, as strikes and demonstrations swept the country in 1919, one observer reported that "news of success or victory by the Bolsheviks" in the Russian Civil War "seems to produce a pang of joy and content among all classes of Egyptians." Also in 1919, open rebellion broke out in the Punjab in India; hundreds were shot down by British troops. The same war criminal Winston Churchill wrote to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs at the time, "The ruin of Lenin and Trotsky and the system they embody is indispensable to the peace and revival of the world." I hope you have gathered by now that imperialist "peace" is anything but peace.

In this climate of social upheaval coming off WWI, Communist Parties were formed in Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Persia, which is Iran today. However, the working class in the Near East at

that time was small and the Communist Parties were politically inexperienced. So as a result of both internal weaknesses and external repression, most of these parties had effectively disappeared by the late 1920s.

By the time Communist Parties re-emerged in those countries beginning in the mid 1930s, the now-Stalinized Communist International had long since ceased to be an instrument for world socialist revolution. The defeat of the German revolution in 1923, which was a decisive factor in the isolation of the Soviet Union, and the virtual exclusion of the Trotskyist Left Opposition at the rigged Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924, which coincided with Lenin's death, marked the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor. This was the period in which

an instrument for world proletarian revolution into a border guard against imperialist attacks on the Soviet Union. The program and strategy that ensued was class collaborationism, which, following the triumph of Hitlerite fascism, was codified by 1935 as "the people's front against fascism." In the colonial world in the lead-up to World War II [1939-45], the Stalinist Communist Parties were transformed into open supporters of the "democratic" imperialists who oppressed the worker and peasant masses.

A series of Arab nationalist regimes came to power coming off the defeat in the 1948 War with Israel, which had thoroughly discredited the imperialist-backed Arab regimes. Arab nationalists used Israel as an external enemy to direct the masses' anger and frustrations away

imperialist national bourgeoisie. But history shows that the "second stage" consists of killing communists and massacring workers. From the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 and Spain in 1936-37 to Iran and Iraq in the 1950s and Indonesia in 1965-66, two-stage revolution has been a recipe for bloody defeats for the working class. [See the Spartacus Youth League pamphlet *The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited*, 1975.]

Millions of workers who looked to the Communist Parties for leadership in these countries were betrayed by their Stalinist misleaders. In Egypt, such betrayal was sold as support for Nasser's "Arab Socialism." But "Arab Socialism" was a myth. What it amounted to was capitalism with heavy state investment. The role Nasser saw for the workers was captured by his statement, "The workers don't demand; we give." To curb the combative proletariat, Nasser instituted several reforms, raising wages and reducing unemployment. Eventually, state investment dried up and there was no longer much to "give." But these reforms created strong illusions in Nasser, which are still prevalent today.

Nasser's hand-picked successor, Anwar el-Sadat, brought Egypt fully into the fold of American imperialism in the '70s. After Sadat came to power, the Communist Party sought to reorganize. Sadat responded by unleashing the Muslim Brotherhood to effectively crush them. He expelled Soviet advisers and instituted the "open door" policy of economic liberalization, cutting food and other subsidies. Mubarak and his neoliberal program of mass privatizations took this further and deeper. Contrary to popular illusions, Mubarak did not represent a break from Nasserism, 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 Nasser was a genuinely popular bonapartist ruler, Mubarak was widely despised.

Israel and Palestine

Now I want to talk some about the Israel/Palestine question, which is also key to understanding this region. Earlier I mentioned the 1948 War, which resulted in the consolidation of the state of Israel, a creation that arose out of the intersection of the Nazi Holocaust and the dissolution of the British Empire. The expulsion of nearly a million Arabs from Palestine—most of them to squalid refugee camps where they and their descendants live to this day—was also accompanied by a mass migration, which was driven by both the Arab regimes and the Zionists, of the so-called Oriental or Sephardic Jewish population from the Arab countries to Israel. We defend the national rights of the dispossessed Palestinian people against the Zionist butchers and demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli troops and fascist settler auxiliaries from the Occupied Territories. But we do not thereby deny the right of the Hebrew-speaking nation to exist.

Under capitalism, when two peoples lay claim to the same land—and in this case a very small sliver of land—the right of self-determination can be exercised only by the stronger national grouping driving out, oppressing or destroying the



National Geographic

British troops enter Baghdad, March 1917. Near East was carved up by British and French imperialists after defeat of Ottoman Empire in WWI.

political power was usurped from the proletarian vanguard by a conservative bureaucratic caste whose chief spokesman was Stalin.

The Stalinist bureaucracy repudiated the Bolshevik program of international socialist revolution in adopting the nationalist dogma of "socialism in one country." This was a flat denial of the Marxist understanding that a socialist society could only be built on an international basis, through the destruction of capitalist imperialism as a world system and the establishment of a world socialist division of labor. Under Stalin's rule, the Communist International was transformed from

from their own capitalist oppressors. We defend the Palestinians against the Zionist rulers and their U.S. backers and we also defend them against the Arab capitalist rulers who have played their own bloody part in subjugating and massacring the besieged Palestinian population spread throughout the region. We will not forget the Black September massacre of 10,000 Palestinians by the Jordanian monarchy in 1970. Over and over again history has shown that the Arab bourgeois states are no less an enemy of Palestinian liberation than the Zionist rulers.

Support to Arab nationalism by the Stalinist Communist Parties has led to the bloody defeat of workers movements throughout the Near East, not least in Egypt. Nasser, a bourgeois nationalist, came to power in 1952 with the support of the Egyptian Stalinists. He sought to appeal to the U.S. but was rebuffed, so he turned to the Soviet degenerated workers state for financial, military and political aid. Upon coming to power, Nasser sought to crush the combative Egyptian working class, which was heavily influenced by the Communist Party. But even as he was imprisoning, torturing and killing Communists, 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," which meant postponing the socialist revolution to an indefinite future while in the first "democratic" stage the proletariat is subordinated to an allegedly anti-

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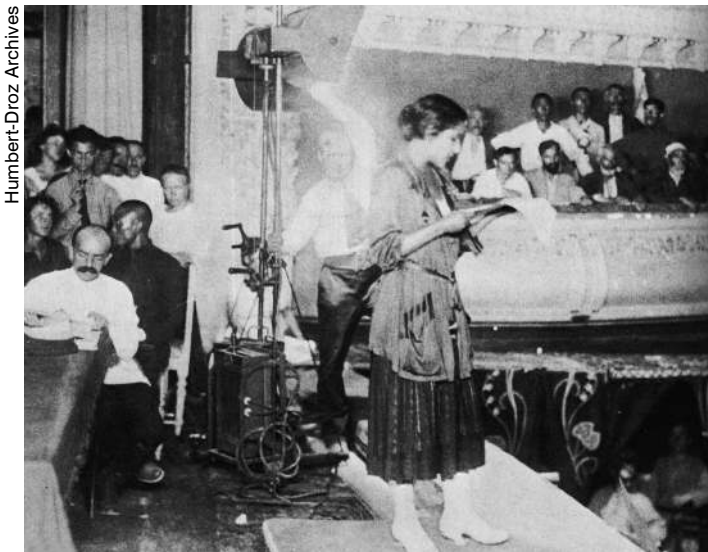
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weaker one. This is what Israel, backed by tons of aid from the U.S., does to the Palestinians. In such cases, the only way to assure the right of national self-determination for both peoples lies in overturning capitalist rule and instituting the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the only class that has no interest in perpetuating national antagonisms. We fight to break the Hebrew-speaking workers from the poison of Zionist chauvinism and we fight to break Arab workers from the sway of petty-bourgeois nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism.

To have a future free of bloodshed, what is necessary is Hebrew and Arab workers revolution against the murderous Israeli capitalist rulers and all the Arab regimes. We do not pretend that this will be easy, but it is historically possible and necessary. While there are certainly not many cracks in the Zionist citadel today, it is nonetheless a class-divided society. Some 25 percent of its citizens, disproportionately Arabs, live in poverty, and income disparities are higher in Israel than in Egypt or Jordan. Sephardic Jews, though overwhelmingly under the ideological sway of right-wing and religious parties, suffer widespread discrimination and poverty.

Our Leninist program advocates the right of all nations to self-determination, that is, the right to form independent nation-states, which is a basic democratic right. We do not make a distinction on this point between oppressed nations, which get the right to exist, and oppres-

Najiya Hanum, Turkish delegate to 1920 Congress of the Peoples of the East in Soviet city of Baku, addresses struggle for women's emancipation in Muslim East.



Humbert-Droz Archives

riences my grandparents had gone through, and that no matter where Jews went in the world the only safe place free from persecution was Israel. In essence, I was taught that I was part of the oppressed people, and I was viewed that way in school. Actually, in ninth grade I had this terrible science teacher who made us get into groups by race. I didn't want to stand with the white kids because, of course, they were oppressor peoples, and I didn't know what to do. Then a black student who I was friends with said, "She's from Israel and that's near Africa so she's standing with us." And that's what I did. I stood with the black students. A year or so later, I became best friends with an

["Critical Remarks on the National Question," October-December 1913]. This really differentiates us from the slew of other groups that falsely call themselves socialists.

WWP, ISO Tail Arab Nationalism, Anti-Women Reaction

In contrast to our revolutionary program, which is based on and confirmed by the lessons of history, virtually the entire left internationally has offered nothing but empty cheerleading for the "Egyptian Revolution." This is exemplified by the Workers World Party [WWP] 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 promoted by the International Socialist Organization [ISO, a group active at CCNY], issued a statement on February 1, in which the RS dissolved the power of the working class into the classless demand for "all power to the people" and the call for a "popular revolution." Left out of the statement is even the mention of the word "socialism." This same group also appeals to crass Egyptian nationalism, declaring, "Revolution must restore Egypt's independence, dignity and leadership in the region."

The RS also fosters suicidal illusions in the Muslim Brotherhood. They try to invest these clericalist forces with "anti-imperialist" credentials and have pursued alliances with them over several years. We know that, whether or not it is currently in a 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 the brutally oppressed women of Egypt. This is the same Brotherhood that, following the 1948 War, incited mobs that pillaged Jewish businesses, burned synagogues and slaughtered dozens of Jews. Henri Curiel and other leaders of Egyptian Communism were targeted.

The growing influence of these same forces is rightly feared by women in the region, including in Tunisia, where, as a recent article in the *New York Times* [20 February] described: "Tensions mounted here last week when military helicopters and security forces were called in to carry out an unusual mission: protecting the city's brothels from a mob of zealots." Tunisian society is relatively secular in contrast to Egypt and other countries in North Africa and the Near East. For example, many women do not wear the veil and abortion laws are relatively liberal. While the imperialists have used the "war on terror" to prop up "secular" dictators like Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt, in reality the imperialists have long fostered the growth of Islamic fundamentalism as a bulwark against Communism and even left-bourgeois nationalism. This is no less true of the Arab rulers, who brutally repress the fundamentalists with one hand while promoting them with the other. In a 1994 interview, Ben Ali himself stated, "To some extent fundamentalism was of our own making, and was at one time encouraged in order to combat the threat of commu-

nism. Such groups were fostered in the universities and elsewhere at that time in order to offset the communists and to strike a balance."

Now I want to end this talk with the woman question, as yesterday was International Women's Day. It is also around the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City, which caused the deaths of 146 garment workers, many of them immigrant Jewish women, who could not escape the burning building because the bosses had locked the doors to the stairwells.

Today in Egypt, 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 where more than 20,000 workers went out. It was the women workers who led the strike, walking out as the men continued working. They started chanting outside the plant, "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.

At the same time, women's oppression really is at the heart of Egyptian society. Together with religion, it is rooted in the country's backwardness, which is reinforced by imperialist subjugation. Forty percent of all women in Egypt are illiterate. Although illegal, female genital mutilation is rampant and equally so among Muslims and Christians. According to the United Nations, 96 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone genital mutilation. Women who protested in 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—which is much to the consternation of many of their mothers who courageously fought decades earlier to take it off.

As we wrote in a recent WV article, "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" ["Egypt: Military Takeover Props Up Capitalist Rule," WV No. 974, 18 February]. 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" [reprinted in *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 60, Autumn 2007].

When International Women's Day was celebrated on March 8, 1917, in Russia, women textile workers led a strike of more than 90,000 workers. This signaled the end of tsarist rule and the beginning of the Russian Revolution, which culminated months later in the seizure of power by the working class led by the Bolshevik Party. Today we stand in the communist tradition of the Bolshevik Party and for workers rule from Egypt to the U.S. Join us! ■



Heritage

Soviet premier Khrushchev (left) with Egyptian bourgeois-nationalist leader Nasser, recipient of massive Soviet aid in late 1950s, 1960s.

sor nations, which, according to some, do not. There is a widely held position that all Jews in Israel today represent an "occupation." There is a group called the League for the Revolutionary Party that is active at CCNY. They are crass apologists for Arab nationalism. They argue an idea that is widespread on the left that there are "good" people, that is, the oppressed—one could say the "occupied" people—and "bad" people who are the oppressors and do not even have the right to exist. To speak of an "occupation" as a whole implies that the programmatic consequence is "get rid of them," which has its own genocidal logic. In contrast to petty-bourgeois moralism, we advance a revolutionary internationalist solution in which all peoples have a right to exist.

When I was growing up as an Israeli American kid, I was taught by my parents all about the Holocaust, the horrific expe-

Egyptian student who, along with her brother, shattered my world by informing me that Israel was oppressing the Palestinians. So, I had gone pretty quickly from the "oppressed" peoples to the "oppressor" peoples. Learning the truth about what was happening to the Palestinians—that the Zionist rulers' mentality toward the Palestinians is like the Nazis' mentality toward the Jews—changed my whole view of the world. But it was only the Marxist program that decisively enabled me to break from the poison of bourgeois nationalism, which is very deeply ingrained in the consciousness of this region.

In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin argues that the revolutionary party must be a "tribune of the people," the defender of all the oppressed, not just the working class. That means defending the rights of oppressed minorities such as the Coptic Christians in Egypt. It means fighting for free abortion on demand. It means defending the rights of homosexuals against backwardness and religious and moralistic bigotry. And it means fighting anti-Semitism, which is rampant in Arab countries. Often the word "Jew" is used instead of "Zionist," and still prevalent are centuries-old anti-Semitic themes that the Jews are plotting world domination, the Jews are the embodiment of all evil, and so on.

Capitalist rule fuels these national, ethnic and religious divisions that drive the constant bloodshed that defines the Near East. Marxists seek to shift the axis of struggle from Israeli against Arab to class against class. We stand with Lenin, who wrote: "Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilized brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism"



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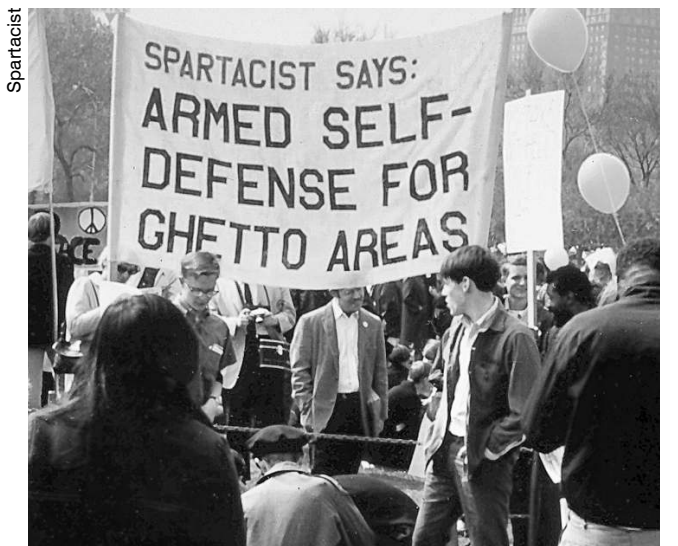
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Left: SNCC leader Willie Ricks speaking on street in Atlanta, Georgia, winter 1963-64. Right: Spartacists at mid 1960s civil rights demonstration in New York City.

Civil War...

(continued from page 5)

programs and members of the entourage of local black Democratic politicians.

The Black Panthers represented the best of a generation of black activists who courageously stood up to the racist ruling class and its kill-crazy cops. They scared the ruling class. In 1968, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover vowed, "The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries." This was a blunt statement which was soon put into effect! Under the ruthless COINTELPRO government pro-

Panthers looked to black ghetto youth as the vanguard of black struggle. The underlying ideology of the Panthers was that the most oppressed are the most revolutionary. But, in fact, the lumpenproletariat in the ghetto, removed from the means of production, has no real social power. On another level, despite a lot of very dedicated black women members, the Panthers partook of the black nationalists' contempt for women. From Stokely Carmichael's gross statement about the position of women in the movement being "prone," to Eldridge Cleaver's rantings about "pussy power," to Farrakhan, the nationalists seek to keep women "in their place," often opposing birth control and abortion as genocide. We stand for

Higher education is becoming a privilege of the rich, with massive fee hikes. I saw more black students at the University of California when I was a student than I do now. Obama may intone that this country has come "90 percent of the way" to ending racism. Perhaps for the very thin layer of black people, like Obama and Oprah Winfrey, who benefited from the civil rights movement, got high governmental posts or made millions of dollars, it looks that way. But for the vast majority of black people, day-to-day life has gotten a lot worse!

Then there is government repression: the "war on drugs," which is a war on black people; the "war on terror," which is a war on civil liberties; three-strikes laws; mass incarceration of blacks and Latinos; mass deportations of immigrants; FBI harassment and grand jury subpoenas against Midwest leftists; the jailing of radical lawyer Lynne Stewart for ten years; the Muslim Student Union at UC Irvine up on criminal charges for interrupting the speech of the Israeli ambassador; in L.A., outrageous criminal charges against non-violent acts of civil disobedience in support of immigrant and workers' rights. The Obama administration has one-upped the Bush administration in its war on civil liberties, and that takes some doing!

A liberal columnist writing in the *Los Angeles Times* (12 February) commented, "From the hysterical reaction of two local prosecutors, you'd think Southern California suddenly had become Paris in 1848—or, maybe, contemporary Cairo." I wish! But parochial as it is, beaten down as it is, the working class of this country is part of the international proletariat and has and will respond to struggles around the world.

America's capitalist rulers need their witchhunts as a means to keep those consigned to the bottom of this society "in their place." Above all, they must suppress the social power of the multiracial working class, for in its hands lies the potential to end the barbarism of capitalist exploitation. Workers have the power to stop the wheels of industry and, through socialist revolution, to reorganize society with a planned socialist economy.

The American labor bureaucracy has certainly done a stellar job for the bosses

in selling out and holding down class struggle for a very long three decades. So today we meet young people who are interested in Marxism but have never seen a picket line. But capitalism produces class and social struggle by its very nature and by the contradictions inherent in it, often where we least expect it and whether the labor bureaucracy likes it or not. I certainly did not expect that the Near East and North Africa would explode this year. Nor did I expect that there would be mass marches of workers in Wisconsin, of all places, albeit still very much under the sway of the Democrats and bourgeois pressure politics. You can certainly see the anger of the U.S. working class and the contradictions building. Long periods of passivity followed by explosive class struggle is actually sort of a norm for the American working class.

What we can and must do now is develop a multiracial and multiethnic cadre that can lead such struggles in the future when the working class moves into action. We need a revolutionary proletarian party based on the understanding that the workers share no common cause with their imperialist masters. You will not get this understanding from labor misleaders or the reformist left, endlessly pushing lesser-evilm and the lie that the capitalists can be made to change their priorities through a little protest and pressure. After all, lesser-evilm just means that when the Democrats get into office, they can do greater evil with lesser resistance! You're certainly not going to get a Marxist program from groups like the International Socialist Organization, which shows its true colors by having victory parties for Obama's election when they're not busy prettifying the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

In conclusion, we fight to build a multiracial workers party that will champion the cause of all the exploited and oppressed in the fight for a socialist America and world. 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, sex and national origin. We urge you to join us in the struggle for international proletarian revolution. ■



WV Photo

Spartacist League/Labor Black League built October 1999 NYC labor/black mobilization against KKK.

gram, 38 Panthers were assassinated and hundreds were railroaded to jail. It is not an accident that the 17 class-war prisoners who receive Partisan Defense Committee stipends include three who are framed-up former Black Panthers: Mumia Abu-Jamal, America's foremost political prisoner, brilliant journalist known as the "Voice of the Voiceless," whose freedom we have fought for over many years; as well as Ed Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa.

Unfortunately, the Panthers, along with most of the New Left, rejected the organized working class as the agent of black freedom and socialist revolution. The

free abortion on demand and women's liberation through socialist revolution.

As we later wrote in the SL/U.S. Programmatic Statement [November 2000] about black nationalism in all its diverse political expressions: "At bottom black nationalism is an expression of hopelessness stemming from defeat, reflecting despair over prospects for integrated class struggle and labor taking up the fight for black rights. The chief responsibility for this lies on the shoulders of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, which has time and again refused to mobilize the social power of the multiracial working class in struggle against racist discrimination and terror." And, I would add, today refuses to mobilize class-struggle resistance against the increased immiseration of the entire working class in the midst of the worst depression since the 1930s! We say: Break with the Democrats, for a revolutionary workers party! For a class-struggle leadership of the unions!

A Proletarian Revolutionary Perspective

The last 30-some years have consisted of all-out union-busting, a determined, and so far successful, effort to drive down the real standard of living for the working class and roll back many of the gains of the civil rights movement. To the extent that schools were ever desegregated, they are now being re-segregated and are as "separate and unequal" as ever. The big advance is that the really segregated schools are named for Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks. Under Obama, "school reform" amounts to a massive assault on public education carried out through brass-knuckle attacks on teachers unions.

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War on Terror...

(continued from page 2)

history in its obituary of bin Laden. But what really caught our eye was the following editorial gem from the International Socialist Organization (ISO):

“One inconvenient truth you won’t hear much about in the media’s celebration of bin Laden’s death is the fact that the U.S. government helped him form al-Qaeda. “When the former USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the U.S. saw an opportunity to turn the country into a battlefield in the Cold War.... “The U.S. ignored progressive and secular forces in Afghanistan, instead funneling support to fundamentalist groups that were not only anticommunist, but notorious for their brutality.... These were the rebels who Ronald Reagan praised as ‘freedom fighters’.”

—*Socialist Worker* online, 3 May

An inconvenient truth that you are definitely unlikely to hear from the ISO is that these anti-communist social democrats were themselves firmly in the camp of Washington’s “freedom fighters,” howling along with the imperialists that the Soviets should get out of Afghanistan. When the Kremlin bureaucracy announced in 1988 that it was pulling out the Soviet troops, the ISO wrote that “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). For Trotskyists, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan was a *historic betrayal* that paved the way to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union itself, which the ISO, true to form, hailed as well.



WV Photo

**April 1989:
At Washington, D.C.,
abortion rights
demonstration,
PDC raised funds
for victims of
U.S.-backed Islamic
reactionaries.**

As for bin Laden, after having joined hands with the U.S. in the “holy war” against Communism, he became incensed by the deployment of U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia during the 1991 “Operation Desert Storm” against Iraq. Al Qaeda went on to launch a series of attacks on U.S. facilities overseas, setting the stage for 11 September 2001.

Defeat U.S. Imperialism Through Socialist Revolution!

In a starry-eyed response to the killing of bin Laden, Phyllis Bennis of the liberal Institute for Policy Studies wrote in a May 2 article titled “Justice or Vengeance?”: “The president’s speech last night could have aimed to put an end to the triumphalism of the ‘global war on terror’ that George W. Bush began and Barack Obama claimed as his own. It could have announced a new U.S. foreign policy based on justice, equality, and respect for other nations. But it did not....

“It’s ineffably sad that President Obama, in his claim that bin Laden’s death means justice, didn’t use the opportunity to announce the end of the deadly U.S. wars that answered the attacks of 9/11. This could have been a moment to replace vengeance with cooperation, replace war with justice.” It is not surprising that the ISO reproduced this piece on its Web site without comment. For years, the ISO, the Workers World Party (WWP), the Party for Socialism and Liberation and others tried to build an “antiwar movement” whose basic premise was “Anybody but Bush” in the White House. The plain fact is that the Obama White House has, as promised, carried on and escalated the “war on terror” initiated under George W. Bush, causing some consternation among the ISO, WWP and other opportunist groups that had celebrated Obama’s election. Writing in the *New York Times* (8 May), conservative columnist Ross Douthat ob-

Connecticut...

(continued from page 12)

McDowell and Kelley Williams-Bolar not as criminals, but as people trying to do right by their kids against a system that considers them expendable. Around the country, working-class parents—black, white, immigrant—try by one means or another to get their kids into the few decent schools in the rotting public education system. In San Francisco alone, the parents of some 300 children were forced to pay up to \$5,000 for bending the rules. The grotesque persecution of Kelley Williams-Bolar and Tanya McDowell sends a special message to the overwhelming majority of black people, forcibly segregated at the bottom of this capitalist society, of what’s in store for them if they try to break their kids out of their assigned ghetto schools. The old Jim Crow laws enforcing formal segregation are gone. But in their place are

regulations like residency requirements for public schools that serve the same purpose. Segregation is enforced by the racist courts and cops, like the ones who prowl the leafy streets of Connecticut’s WASP villages looking for “out of place” black drivers. Even minimal steps to redress school segregation, such as school busing, were long ago abandoned by the ruling class. Four of Connecticut’s urban areas are among the top ten in the nation in growth in income inequality, according to a Federal Reserve Bank of Boston study of 1989-2004. And as night follows day, Connecticut has one of the biggest achievement gaps between black and white students of any state in the U.S. Residency requirements combined with education funding based on local property and other taxes guarantee that richer kids will get good schools and poor kids will be isolated in lousy ones, especially in the ghettos and barrios. At bottom, the capitalists see no reason to throw money at educat-

ing the mass of black and Latino youth, whom they write off as a “surplus” layer with no prospect of getting jobs requiring any kind of skills. During the first year of the current economic crisis, there were almost *one million* homeless schoolchildren in America. Year after year, minority youth are put through crumbling schools that mainly serve to “train” them for a future in prison. “We can’t spend our way out of it,” Barack Obama told the *Today* show last fall. In fact, the capitalist class that Obama represents has starved public schools of funding for years. And the Obama administration has waged war against the teachers unions, which cynically are blamed for the woeful state of the public schools. Massive doses of money—for teachers, books, computers, repairs—would be a start in redressing this situation. There is an urgent need for free, quality, integrated education for all; for decent, integrated housing; for jobs for all! But as we wrote

served that the killing of bin Laden “operationalized Bush’s famous ‘dead or alive’ dictum” and highlighted the continuity in foreign policy under both Republicans and Democrats. Citing the war in Libya, the escalating drone strikes in Pakistan and the “policy of targeted assassination” of U.S. citizens, Douthat wrote: “Imagine, for a moment, that these were George W. Bush’s policies at work.... Imagine the outrage, the protests, the furious op-eds about right-wing tyranny and neoconservative overreach. Imagine all that, and then look at the reality. For most Democrats, what was considered creeping fascism under Bush is just good old-fashioned common sense when the president has a ‘D’ beside his name.”

In truth, Democratic politicians barely worked up a whimper in protest against the foreign adventures of the Bush gang, while the reformists’ “antiwar” movement dissipated more and more the closer it got to the 2008 elections. Sowing the illusion that the Democrats in office could be pressured to carry out a humanitarian foreign policy and to meet the needs of working people at home, the reformists serve, to the extent their forces allow, to reinforce the ties binding workers, minorities and youth to the other party of U.S. imperialism. For the working class to take the offensive against the depredations of its rulers—at home and abroad—will require a new leadership, a workers party of the Bolshevik type that fights for a workers government. Our task is to build such a party in the “belly of the beast” of U.S. imperialism, to fight for the only answer to exploitation, repression and imperialist war: international socialist revolution. ■

Canadian Elections...

(continued from page 3)

against the capitalist rulers, not into chauvinism and nationalism.” —*Spartacist Canada* No. 160, Spring 2009 “Canadian unity” nationalism is particularly promoted in the labour movement by the NDP, which, for example, upholds the Clarity Act, a law effectively outlawing Quebec’s democratic right to self-determination, i.e., to independence. This serves to drive Québécois workers into the arms of their own class enemies, represented by the bourgeois-nationalist Bloc and Parti Québécois. Only by championing the national rights of the oppressed Québécois can Marxists lay a basis for winning the Quebec workers to a perspective of internationalist class struggle.

Down With Canadian Nationalism! For an Internationalist Revolutionary Workers Party!

Labour’s capacity to fight the capitalists’ attacks is hamstrung by the union misleaders who tie workers to the so-called “national interests” of capitalist

Canada and promote the NDP and even the Liberals (or in Quebec, the Bloc and PQ) as “progressive.” Canadian Auto Workers leader Ken Lewenza, who two years ago agreed to unprecedented wage and benefit cuts at Chrysler and General Motors, perfectly epitomizes these labour traitors. Today, Lewenza’s “defense” of unions consists of convincing the capitalist class that unions are really in *their* interests because they “play a constructive and valuable economic role” in negotiating cutbacks “which share the pain and preserve needed jobs” (*National Post*, 9 April). To Lewenza, the unions are a bulwark against struggles that might challenge this system. Without unions, he broods, “Who knows where and how the simmering fury of exploited, poor people would then bubble up?” These misleaders—agents of the ruling class inside the workers movement—must be thrown off. The fight to rebuild the trade unions as instruments of proletarian struggle is closely tied to the need for a multiracial, binational revolutionary workers party. That requires, above all, a political struggle against the social-democratic NDP and for a new class-struggle leadership of the unions. Against the bourgeoisie, which manipulates all manner of racism and bigotry in order to poison class struggle, such a party will be

a genuine tribune of the people, fighting to defend the rights of minorities and immigrants, and championing the struggle for women’s liberation. The Communist Party of Canada (CPC) and the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada, two remnants of Canadian Stalinism, are also running candidates in this election. Both parties are notorious for their promotion of Canadian nationalism, from protectionist calls for Canadian-owned industry, to the CPC’s call for an “independent Canadian foreign policy.” It is a *lie* that Canadian capitalists are better than American (or Japanese or German), or that protectionist tariffs and a Canadian boss will protect jobs and stop plant closures. Such nationalist schemes retard united, internationalist class struggle, pitting workers in this country against their class brothers and sisters abroad. While opposing the NATO attack on Libya, these Stalinist-nationalists propound the worst illusions that capitalist Canada can be pressured to be a force for “peace.” Neither draws even a crude class line against the bourgeoisie; thus they merit not even the most critical support from class-conscious workers. There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational

capitalist ruling class and replaces it with a planned, socialized economy. Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, scarcity and imperialist war. It is to this end that the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste devotes all our resources. ■

SPARTACIST

CANADA

No. 160 Spring 2011 60 pages

Mass Upeaval Topples Hated Mubarak

**Egypt:
Military Takeover
Props Up Capitalist Rule**

Left: Protesters in Egypt's Tahrir Square celebrate Mubarak's ouster, February 11. Right: Soldiers on guard in Tahrir Square, February 12, after military secured power in defense of capitalist rule.

**For Permanent Revolution in
North Africa, Near East!**

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 159 (2nd Quarter), a magazine of the Workers Vanguard Co. For nearly 30 years, we've exposed Egypt with an iron fist. In the February 11, 2011, issue, we exposed the capitalist class in Egypt's House of Representatives, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and the military. We've shown how the capitalist class in Egypt has used the military to suppress the people's struggle for socialism. We've shown how the capitalist class in Egypt has used the military to suppress the people's struggle for socialism. We've shown how the capitalist class in Egypt has used the military to suppress the people's struggle for socialism.

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Sheer Racist Depravity

Homeless Mom Faces 20 Years for Putting Kid in Good School

Connecticut

It was a crime to teach slaves to read in the Old South. Today, 150 years after the opening shots of the Civil War, it is still considered a crime to try to get a decent education for a poor black child. Tanya McDowell, a black homeless mother, was arrested on April 14 for enrolling her five-year-old son, Andrew Justin Patches, in kindergarten in Norwalk, Connecticut. Because she was not considered a Norwalk resident, McDowell is accused of “stealing” the public school’s services. She faces up to **20 years** in prison on felony charges of first-degree larceny and having to pay “restitution” of over \$15,000. We demand that these outrageous charges be dropped!

The racist persecution of McDowell is shot through with Kafkaesque cruelty. Apparently police were tipped off by a lawyer for the Norwalk Housing Authority as it was evicting McDowell’s babysitter from her housing project. The babysitter’s “crime” was to permit the homeless mother to use her address, which allowed McDowell to register Andrew at the Brookside Elementary School. Although McDowell



April 27: Tanya McDowell speaking outside state superior court in Norwalk.

ell alternately stays in a Norwalk emergency shelter, a van or a friend’s house, Norwalk authorities officially considered her a resident of Bridgeport, a wasteland of boarded-up brick factories populated by impoverished former workers. This is the real crime in the eyes of the bourgeois Norwalk city fathers: Tanya McDowell

and her son actually tried *to get out of* Bridgeport’s rotten schools instead of staying “in their place.” What’s next: pass laws like in apartheid South Africa?

The mere mention of Bridgeport evokes disdainful shudders in nearby Darien, New Canaan and other manicured enclaves of Fairfield County’s Gold Coast, home

to some of the wealthiest tax dodgers, Wall Street financial manipulators and profit-drenched exploiters in the world. These types got a big bailout, thanks to Barack Obama, after their fraudulent schemes helped dump the country into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. In the *New Haven Advocate* (27 April), Nick Keppler commented ironically that “there’s one shifty cheat, lying low in a land saturated by financial intrigue, who must repay what her scheme cost society”: a homeless person in trouble over “tricky paperwork and the bending of legalities” who “does not warrant a bailout.”

Tanya McDowell’s arrest is part of the brutal enforcement of racial inequality by the government, from Washington, D.C., down to the smallest one-cop town. Only a few months ago, black mother Kelley Williams-Bolar of Akron, Ohio, was convicted of the same “crime” (see “Black Mother Jailed for Getting Kids into Decent School,” WV No. 977, 1 April). The great abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery, said that in the eyes of the slaveholders, to educate a man “would forever unfit him to be a slave.” We recognize mothers like Tanya

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Federal Appeals Court Orders New Sentencing Hearing

Mumia Abu-Jamal Is Innocent—Free Him Now!

On April 26, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit turned down for a second time the Philadelphia district attorney’s appeal to reinstate the death penalty for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a supporter of Philadelphia MOVE and a former Black Panther who was railroaded to death row in 1982 for a crime he did not commit. The court ordered the state of Pennsylvania to convene a new sentencing hearing within 180 days solely to determine whether Mumia should be resentenced to death or remain in prison for life. The Philadelphia D.A. intends to appeal the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court. Mumia, who has been in prison over half his life, remains on death row.

The Third Circuit ruling came in response to a January 2010 order by the U.S. Supreme Court to consider reinstating Mumia’s death sentence, which had been overturned in 2001. While the new ruling removes the threat of an immediate reimposition of the death sentence, it provides no justice for Mumia, a political prisoner who should never have spent a day in prison. His conviction for the 1981 killing of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner was based on lying testimony extorted by the cops, a “confession” manufactured by the police and prosecutors and phony ballistics “evidence.” His death sentence was secured after prosecutors cited political statements he made as a teenage leader of

the Philadelphia Black Panthers. The courts have steadfastly refused to hear the overwhelming evidence of Mumia’s innocence, including Arnold Beverly’s confession that he was the one who shot and killed Faulkner (see the 2007 Partisan Defense Committee fact sheet “*Murdered by Mumia*: Big Lies in the Service of Legal Lynching”).

At issue in the Third Circuit ruling are the sentencing form and jury instructions at Mumia’s 1982 “trial,” which, the court ruled, did not allow jurors to freely consider mitigating circumstances weighing against a death sentence. While this ruling went against the prosecution, those fighting for Mumia’s freedom must have no illusions in the “fairness” of a legal system that has conspired against Mumia since Day One of his ordeal. The 2001 decision by federal judge William Yohn that overturned Mumia’s death sentence simultaneously upheld every aspect of his frame-up conviction. As for the Supreme Court, its 2009 decision summarily turning down Mumia’s petition to overturn his conviction essentially put an end to his legal efforts to win freedom, consigning him to execution or life in prison hell.

The Spartacist League and Partisan

Defense Committee, which first took up Mumia’s case in 1987, have always supported the use of every possible legal avenue available to Mumia while fighting against illusions in the courts of the capitalist class enemy. Our fight has centered on the need for mass protest based on the power of the working class in the U.S. and internationally—the one force with the social power to give pause to the capitalists’ legal lynching machine. When Mumia faced a death warrant in the summer of 1995, worldwide protests that included trade unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers played a crucial role in staying the executioner’s hand.

The cops, courts and prosecutors have never let up in their vendetta against Mumia, an award-winning journalist renowned for his searing exposés of cop brutality and racist oppression. Seeking to spike early efforts on Mumia’s behalf, two decades ago a Philly Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) leader railed that Mumia’s supporters were “a misfit terrorist group” that deserved the “electric couch.” In 1995 a mob of cops screaming for Mumia’s execution besieged Philadelphia hospital workers union Local 1199C, which had dared to rent its hall for a fundraiser for



WV Photo

Mumia. Just last month, the F.O.P. lashed out at the American Federation of Teachers after its California state affiliate passed a resolution denouncing Mumia’s continued imprisonment and calling for the courts to hear the evidence of his innocence.

In seeking to execute this innocent man, the capitalist rulers are sending a message to the working class and all who would fight against exploitation, oppression and imperialist war that they, too, are in the state’s gun sights. The fight to free Mumia, as with all struggles against racial oppression, can go forward only when they are based on a clear understanding of the class forces involved. **Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■**