

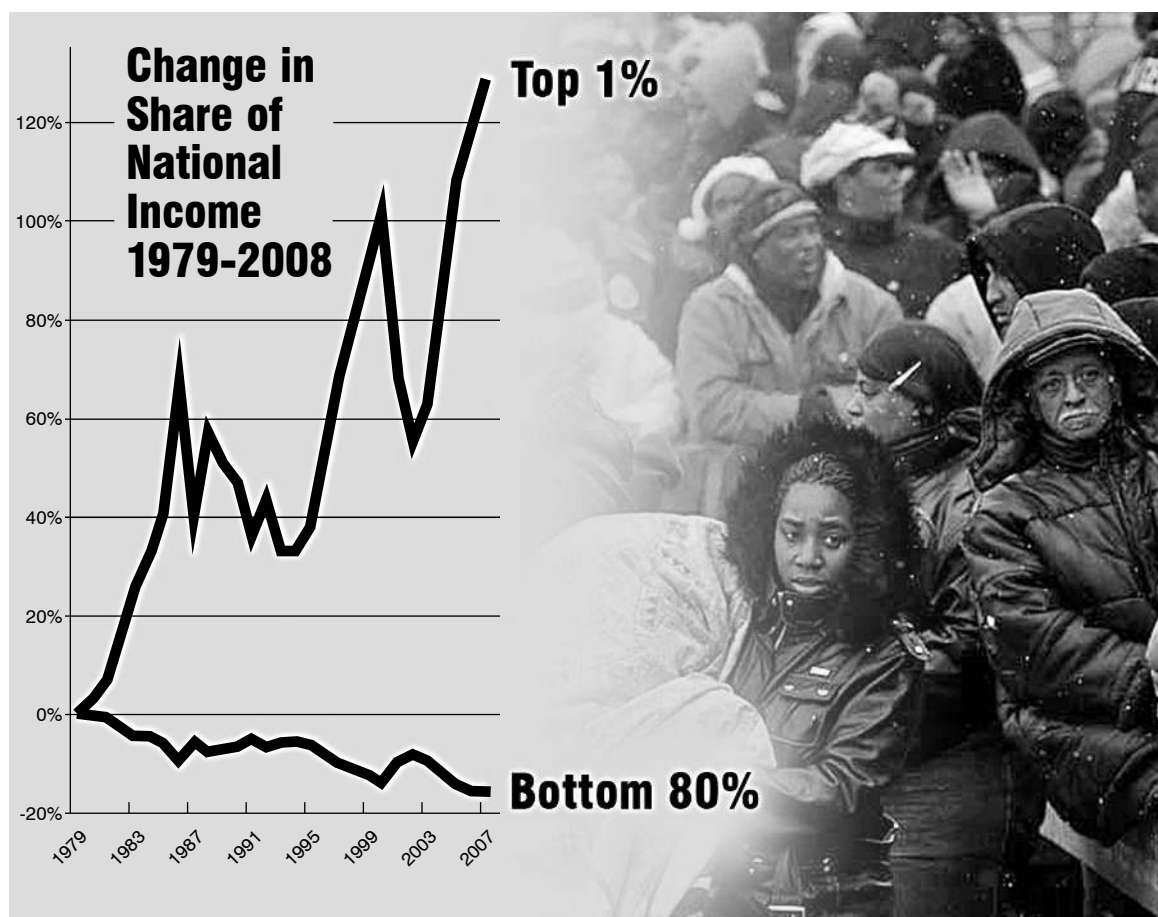
Capitalism in Crisis: Karl Marx Was Right

We Need an All New Ruling Class—the Workers!

In 2007-2008, the world was plunged into an economic crisis unrivaled since the days of the Great Depression. The con men on Wall Street whose financial swindles were central to this collapse were bailed out to the tune of trillions of dollars. The working class, black people, Latinos, the poor, the sick and the aged have been made to foot the bill, losing their jobs, homes, pensions and virtually anything else that makes life remotely livable. Today, one in six people in the U.S. are unemployed, with the average time out of work close to ten months. Forty-five million people are on food stamps, an increase of 34 percent over the past two years. Those who still have a job are being sweated to work harder for lower wages. In racist America, it's all the worse for black people and Latinos, who were among the main victims of the banks' subprime mortgage scams. One-third of black and Latino households have no net worth, with many underwater in debt. The capitalist authors of this ruin have, in the meantime, made out like bandits.

During the "jobless and wageless recovery" of the past two years, corporate profits have broken all historic records. This comes on top of the enormous enrichment of the wealthiest 1 percent of the population, who more than doubled their share of the national income in the past three decades. The government's "welfare for the rich" schemes have boosted financial speculation, artificially driving up the price of stocks, while the already rotting productive capacity of U.S. capitalism goes through the floor. With the U.S. economy overwhelmingly based on consumer spending—and with the vast majority having no money to spend—this whole house of cards is crashing down again as the economy spirals into a double-dip recession.

For over a month, the stock market has been on a wild roller-coaster ride of panicked buying and selling. Among the detonators of this panic were concerns that the Democratic president of the United States, Barack Obama, had lost control of the imperialist "ship of state" to a pack of deranged Republican Tea Party yahoos. Liberal Democrats and others raged that the Republicans were holding America "hostage" by refusing to raise



WV Chart adapted from Mother Jones, source: Congressional Budget Office

Along with enormous growth in wealth at the very top comes further immiseration of working people and the poor. Families waiting in Chicago last Christmas Eve for food and toy giveaway.

Chicago Tribune

the debt ceiling unless they got trillions in spending cuts and no rise in taxes for the rich. But it was the Democratic Party president himself who manufactured the myth that the "world's only superpower" was about to default on its debt like some impoverished Third World country. Even if they didn't have the money—which they do, and plenty of it—they "can always print money," as former Federal

Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan put it.

Obama's purpose in this charade was not much different from that of the Republicans, as he pushed for a "grand bargain" of massive austerity through slashing more than \$4 trillion from so-called "entitlement" programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security over the next decade. His sop of closing a few tax loopholes for the rich was about all the

making—than to further starve the poor, bust the unions and drive down wages. As the political servants of the same capitalist class, the Democrats are increasingly incapable of even putting a phony "kinder, gentler" facade on the cruel inhumanity of imperialist rule.

It Is Desperately Necessary to Fight!

While Congress was gridlocked over the "debt ceiling," the imperialist masters of the European Union (EU) were in emergency session to come up with another bailout of Greece—in reality, a bailout of the investments of French and German bankers on the backs of the Greek working class. Then it looked like Spain and Italy might go belly-up as rising interest on their government bonds was freezing them out of money to keep their economies afloat. After EU and IMF bailouts of Greece, Ireland and Portugal totaling hundreds of billions of dollars, the European Central Bank started spending tens of billions more to buy up the bonds of Spain and Italy and drive down interest rates, while the governments of those two countries announced even more savage austerity.

Meanwhile, Britain was exploding in anger ignited by the cop killing of a young black man (see article, page 16). From London to other cities, thousands took to the streets in an upheaval fueled by vicious spending cuts and job slashing. The London *Guardian Weekly* (19 August) warned: "Together, the global imbalances,

continued on page 12



WV Photo

July 30: CWA members rally in NYC a week before Verizon strike.

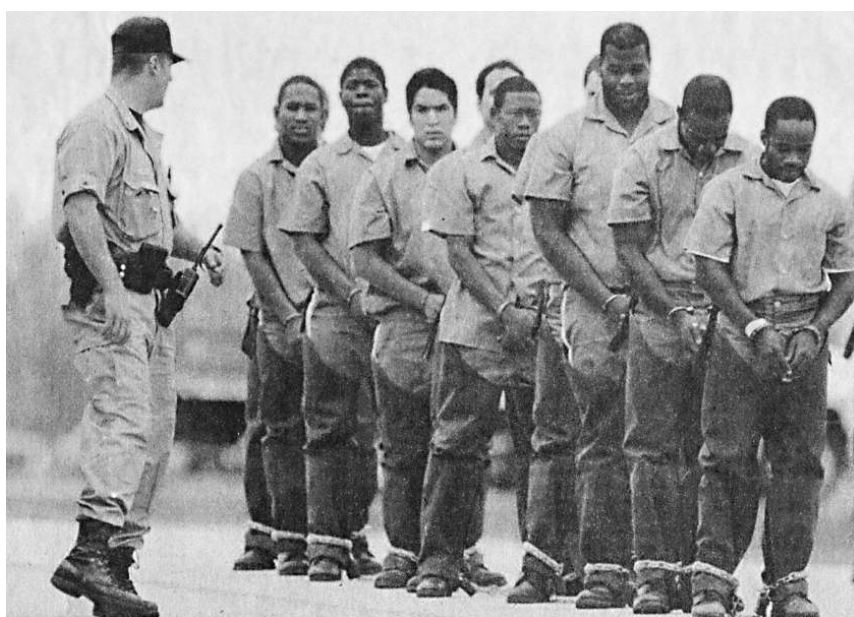


On the Race-Color Caste Oppression of Black People

May 23, 2011

As a long time reader of WV and a supporter of your program I would like to know if a greater clarification of the term colour caste with reference to afro-americans can be made. A search of your website did not reveal anything. The term caste was used by Marx and Trotsky and was exceedingly developed by Max Weber in his sociology. Caste is an ideological term that has been reified by Weber as the major descriptor of hierarchical societies as in India, class is a scientific concept based on the relationship to the means of production. A class analysis is easily applied to caste [in] India but there is no doubt that elements of castism do exist in western societies, an example England. Maybe this distinction between weberian castism and marxist class analysis could be explained more.

Comradely greetings,
David B., Australia



Left: Chain gang, December 1999. Right: Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. arrested in July 2009 for “breaking and entering” his own home.



AP photos

WV replies:

As we noted in the 1967 Spartacist document “Black and Red” (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, “Basic Documents of the Spartacist League”): “From their arrival in this country, the Negro people have been *an integral part* of American class society while at the same time *forcibly segregated* at the bottom of this society.” The black population in the U.S. does not constitute a separate class—i.e., a group defined by its relationship to the means of production—but faces special oppression. While black Americans span different classes, from the lumpenproletariat and the working class to the petty bourgeoisie and even a minuscule bourgeoisie, all blacks are stigmatized as blacks regardless of social status. This is why we describe the black population in the U.S. as an oppressed race-color caste.

One illustration of the caste oppression

of black people in America is their disproportionate representation in the prison population and on death row. The decades-long “war on drugs” is mainly a war on blacks, especially targeting ghetto youth. On the other end of the spectrum was the arrest of distinguished Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. on his own front porch by a white Cambridge cop who thought Gates was “breaking and entering.” Gates happens to be a personal friend of the current president of the United States but he can still be hassled, humiliated and perhaps much worse by any cop who feels like it.

A general social category can never substitute for an empirical analysis of a specific, historically derived formation. But of the available general sociological categories, caste is the best analogy for the position of black people in U.S. society, indicating two of its most fundamental characteristics: segregation from the

rest of society along with discriminatory integration into the economy. While there are striking similarities between the oppression of American blacks, Indian lower castes and untouchables, Japanese Burakumin and so on, their particular features are historically based and specific.

Black oppression in the U.S. stems from the institution of slavery in the 17th to 19th centuries on the agricultural plantations in the South, which was key to the development of American capitalism. To ensure a stable, self-reproducing supply of labor, slaveholders clearly demarcated a hereditary social group whose social isolation and inferior status would be enforced by custom and law. Thus the myth of an inferior “race” was created. The “markers” of African descent were used to transform enslaved blacks into a permanent and perpetually vulnerable group of outcasts.

The peculiar “principle” that in the U.S. determined who might be a slave (distinguishing it from slavery in other societies) was “hypodescent,” commonly known as the one-drop rule (one drop of “black” blood). Sexual relations were outlawed between blacks and whites, except for the planters, whose children with black women slaves were slaves and were “black” no matter what their complexion was. To this day, any visible degree of African ancestry remains a sign of presumptive former slave status.

Slavery was abolished as a result of the victory of the North in the Civil War, in which black troops played an important role. This was the real opportunity to smash the special oppression of black people in America. But the Northern bourgeoisie went on to make peace with the Southern planters and blacks were forced back to backbreaking labor on the land as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Following the end of Union Army occupation of the South, naked white-supremacist rule was restored. With the

Ku Klux Klan as the spearhead, the white propertied classes subjected blacks to legally enforced racial segregation, stripped them of all democratic rights and held them down through terror, especially lynching. Thus, while they were not returned to slavery, blacks in the U.S. were consolidated anew as a specially oppressed race-color caste.

Racist ideology contaminated not only working-class whites in the South but also the proletariat in the North. Today, the racial division of black and white is still the fundamental fact that defines American culture and shapes political discourse. Since the substantial entry of blacks into industry, particularly beginning with World War I, anti-black racism was added to, and took precedence over, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic bigotry, serving as the capitalists’ chief weapon in dividing and holding back the working class. Racial division is at the root of the political and social backwardness of the working class and, in general, of the reactionary features of U.S. society. It has been the most prominent factor inhibiting the development of even a reformist mass political party of the working class organized separately from the capitalist parties, such as exists in all other advanced capitalist countries.

We arrived at the characterization of an oppressed race-color caste in political combat against the conscious revision of Trotskyism by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the 1960s. With the upsurge of mass civil rights struggles, the SWP accommodated the liberal-pacifist leadership of the civil rights movement as well as black nationalism. The Revolutionary Tendency, the forerunner of the Spartacist League, fought against the idea that either pro-Democratic Party liberal reformism or black nationalism in any of its variants could be a solution to the struggle of American blacks.

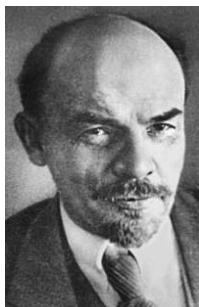
In 1955, Richard S. Fraser, a veteran



TROTSKY

Capitalist Crisis and Mass Misery

To highlight the brutal workings and irrationality inherent in the capitalist economic system, revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky pointed to the effects of the Great Depression in the U.S., then under Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt. Trotsky’s article, written in 1939, was initially published in excerpted form as an introduction to a selection of Karl Marx’s writings titled The Living Thoughts of Karl Marx.



LENIN

In 1930 began an ominous growth of unemployment, and in 1933 a more or less systematic aid to the unemployed, who received in the form of relief hardly more than one-half of what they had lost in the form of wages. The illusion of the uninterrupted “progress” of all classes has vanished without a trace. The *relative* decline of the masses’ standard of living has been superseded by an *absolute* decline. Workers begin by economizing on skimpy entertainment, then on their clothes and finally on their food. Articles and products of average quality are superseded by shoddy ones, and the shoddy by the worst. Trade unions begin to look like the man who hangs on desperately while going down in a rapidly descending escalator.

With six per cent of the world’s population, the United States holds forty per cent of the world’s wealth. Still, one-third of the nation, as Roosevelt himself admitted, is undernourished, inadequately clothed, and lives under subhuman conditions. What is there to say, then, for the far less privileged countries? The history of the capitalist world since the last war has irrefutably borne out the so-called “theory of increasing misery.” The increase in the social polarity of society is today acknowledged not only by every competent statistician, but even by statesmen who remember the rudimentary rules of arithmetic....

Therefore, to save society, it is not necessary either to check the development of technique, to shut down factories, to award premiums to farmers for sabotaging agriculture, to turn a third of the workers into paupers, or to call upon maniacs to be dictators. Not one of these measures, which are a shocking mockery of the interests of society, are necessary. What is indispensable and urgent is to separate the means of production from their present parasitic owners and to organize society in accordance with a rational plan. Then it would at once be possible really to cure society of its ills. All those able to work would find a job. The work-day would gradually decrease. The wants of all members of society would secure increasing satisfaction. The words “property,” “crisis,” “exploitation,” would drop out of circulation. Mankind would at last cross the threshold into true humanity.

—Leon Trotsky, *Marxism in the United States*,
Workers Party Publications (1947)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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2 September 2011

Mississippi, U.S.A.

Lynch Mob Murder of Black Worker

In the early morning hours of June 26, seven white teenagers set out in two vehicles from the nearly all-white town of Brandon, Mississippi, with the expressed intent to find a black man to attack. Exiting the highway in Jackson, the largely black state capital, the racist thugs came upon James Craig Anderson, a 49-year-old black auto worker, in a motel parking lot. The teenagers robbed Anderson and beat him mercilessly, spewing racist epithets and chanting “white power.” Not content with this savagery, one of the teenagers, Deryl Dedmon, flooded the gas in his Ford pickup truck and drove it over Anderson, killing him instantly. Dedmon boasted to his friends later that morning, “I ran that n---r over!”

This lynching punctured yet again the myth of a racially harmonious “new South” that supposedly sprang from the civil rights reforms of the 1960s. The U.S. Justice Department boasts of laying to rest the “ghosts of Mississippi” by imprisoning a handful of octogenarian KKK killers for a few months before they die. But black oppression and murderous racist violence remain cornerstones of the American capitalist order, North and South.

Shortly after Anderson’s killing, Dedmon and one of his cohorts, John Rice, were arrested and charged with murder. Having been subsequently released on

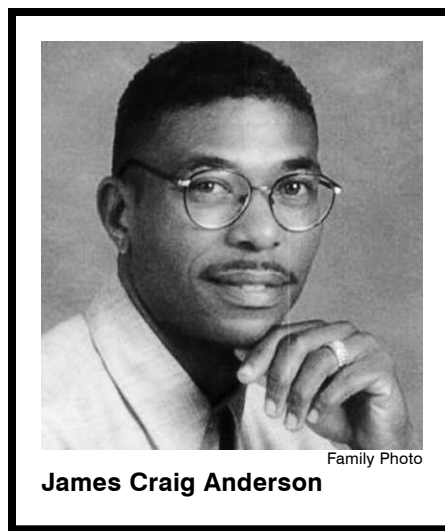
bail, Dedmon was returned to custody after police reviewed film taken by a motel surveillance camera overlooking the parking lot that recorded the killing. Rice was released on \$5,000 bail and now faces charges only of simple assault. Having by and large kept the horrendous killing under wraps, the capitalist media began to widely report the story only after news of the surveillance film became known.

Attempting to deflect anger over the lynching, Jackson NAACP president Wayne McDaniels declared, “We’re concerned about this being a hate crime, but we also need to exert some energy on black on black crime” (*Jackson Advocate*, 30 June)! This is a grotesque echo of the sermonizing of the Jesse Jacksons and Barack Obamas, who essentially blame black people for their own oppression. Sharply exposing the hypocrisy of such “blame the victim” garbage, a posting on the *Voice of Detroit* news Web site noted about the scum who killed Anderson: “To date, the Mayor of Jackson has not attacked the parents or blamed them for not watching their children better! There was no going to church and criticizing all white teens!... There was no telling them they were a disgrace to their race! No teen was told to pull up your pants!”

More than 500 people turned out in

Jackson on August 14 to protest the lynching. This was a notable demonstration in the Deep South, which is marked by the legacy of black chattel slavery. That legacy was stamped into the life of James Anderson, a churchgoing man who had a family with his male partner of 17 years. Anderson worked for seven years on the Nissan assembly line in Canton, Mississippi, where the predominantly black workforce makes \$4 per hour less than the mainly white workers at Nissan’s plant in Smyrna, Tennessee. Deep in the open shop South, these workers have no union. Particularly in the South, the capitalists have historically used racist discrimination, supplemented by official and extralegal terror, to divide the workers and keep unions out. While the AFL-CIO misleaders mouth words about organizing Southern plants, their acceptance of the capitalist profit system and reliance on Democratic Party politicians have led only to defeat for the workers.

Jackson today has a black mayor and black police chief, the county has a black D.A., and a “white power” terrorist has been charged with murder. These things would have been all but unthinkable half a century ago in Jackson, where in 1963 Mississippi NAACP organizer Medgar Evers was assassinated in front of his house, after which his killer ran free for



James Craig Anderson

three decades. But putting some black faces in government offices and police posts—or having a black president—does nothing to change the nature of the capitalist state as an apparatus of organized violence to repress the working class and enforce the oppression of black people, immigrants and other minorities. Over the last several decades, black Democratic Party mayors throughout the country have helped enforce the racist oppression against the black masses, acting as overseers for the white capitalist ruling class. There can be no justice for black people in this racist capitalist system!

The social power to smash the racist lynchers lies in the multiracial working class, mobilized independently of and in opposition to the capitalist Republican and Democratic parties. As a key and militant component of the proletariat, black workers will play a leadership role in the fight for a workers government that will finish the Civil War by eradicating exploitation and racial oppression, opening the road to freedom for all mankind. That struggle requires the leadership of a workers party marching under the banner: Black liberation through socialist revolution!■

member of the SWP, had made a unique Marxist contribution to the understanding of American black oppression in “For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle” (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5R, “What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism”). Fraser defended the view that the black question was one of racial, not national, oppression. Black people in the U.S. lack any material basis for a separate political economy. Whereas the oppressed nations and nationalities of Europe, for instance, were subjected to forced assimilation, American blacks have faced the opposite: forcible segre-

gation. This understanding mandated a program of revolutionary integrationism as the road to black liberation. Fraser explained:

“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 of the struggle for direct assimilation. All that we can add to this is that these goals cannot be accomplished except through the socialist revolution.”

While Fraser agreed in substance with the description of black oppression cap-

tured in the term “caste,” he rejected the use of this term as applied to the American black population. In this he followed the black sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox, who in 1948 exposed the use of the term “caste” by racist ideologues who were using it to justify Jim Crow segregation in the South. Despite the terminological difference, we stand on Fraser’s contribution that historically the basic thrust of mass black struggle in this country has been for social, economic and political equality and not for separation. While the proletarian vanguard must fight against every manifestation of black oppression, there can be no sepa-

rate solution to racial oppression short of the united struggle of black and white workers for integration in a socialist society.

Despite the increasing destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength in recent decades, black workers continue to be integrated into strategic, unionized sectors of the industrial proletariat and in the public sector. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multiracial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist party.■

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For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Labor Broker Parasites!

South Africa has been swept by a wave of strikes in recent months in the broadest labor upsurge the country has seen in years. Currently, municipal workers are waging a national strike, while cleaners employed mostly by low-wage contractors known as labor brokers have just settled a three-week strike. Other recently concluded strikes have hit gold and coal mines, paper mills and chemical plants, as well as companies in the steel and engineering sectors. These militant strikes are a gauge of the deep and explosive discontent in a country that has one of the widest disparities in the world between rich and poor. Some 57 percent of South Africans live on less than 325 rand (\$47) a month while company executives earn an average of 59 million rand (\$8.6 million) a year. The strike wave coincides with ongoing struggles in the townships over lack of “service delivery”—housing, electricity, plumbing, etc.

A common demand of the recent strikes has been for a ban on labor brokers, who pay wages lower than the already miserable norm for super-exploited, mainly black labor. These workers are also deprived of benefits and subject to arbitrary firing. Throughout the capitalist world, the bourgeoisie has increasingly imposed temporary and part-time jobs and other forms of “casualized” labor to attack wages and working conditions.

The following article is reprinted from *Spartacist South Africa* No. 7 (Winter 2011), newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

SPARTACIST SOUTH AFRICA

Labour-broking austerity has increasingly come under the spotlight in neo-apartheid South Africa as the biggest trade-union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and others have raised the demand for banning [labor brokers] in a number of strikes and appeals to the government. For the COSATU leadership, the point of these appeals is to promote illusions in the bourgeois African National Congress (ANC) and the ANC-led capitalist government which the COSATU bureaucracy, as a member of the Tripartite Alliance, is a component part of. They constantly plead that the ANC must crack down on labour brokers in order to carry out the supposed “decent work agenda” set at the ANC’s Polokwane Conference in December 2007.

These illusions only serve to undermine the fight against labour-broking slave labour—a fight which must be based on the workers’ only effective means of defence against capitalist immiseration: class struggle independent of and against the capitalists, their governments and political parties. It was the Polokwane Conference that elected Jacob Zuma as ANC leader, with the strong backing of COSATU, the reformist Stalinist-derived South African Communist Party (SACP) and the openly anti-communist bourgeois-nationalist ANC Youth League of Julius Malema. Since becoming ANC leader, and subsequently president following the



Above: Public sector workers march in Cape Town during national strike, August 2010.
Below: Cops attack Pretoria-area municipal workers strike rally, March 2011.



Masi Losi

April 2009 general elections, Zuma has predictably reneged on the rhetoric of “decent work” and “banning” labour brokers, instead preferring some form of regulation amenable to the bosses.

Capitalists and their governments engage the services of labour brokers as a cost-cutting measure, to maximise their profits. Labour broking and other forms of casualisation serve to undermine trade-union organisation, downgrade general conditions of employment and circumvent labour laws. The bulk of the jobs created in the last few years fall within this ambit of precarious, insecure work with longer hours, unsafe conditions and lower wages. For example, one of the main demands of the recent Food and Allied Workers Union supermarkets strike was higher wages for workers employed by labour brokers, who are paid between R1,800 and R2,500 per month as opposed to the R6,000 wage of permanent workers doing the same job (*Sowetan*, 4 April). This represents a 60 percent wage deficit. Other slave conditions under which these workers toil include non-payment of fringe social security benefits like pension, medical aid, bonuses, annual leave, sick pay,

injury at work and so forth.

Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), stands for smashing the parasitic labour-broker middlemen through *class-struggle means*. We fight for trade-union control of hiring and upgrading. Under capitalism, this is the only way to undercut the employers’ efforts to manipulate hiring as a tool to divide the working class along racial, ethnic, national and religious lines, or as a means of screening out pro-union militants. Only through the trade unions and other organisations of the working class is it possible to fight for fair, equitable and objective criteria for recruitment of new workers and combat discrimination and persecution.

These demands must be included as part of the struggle with the bosses over the terms of employment, and linked to a political fight against the pro-capitalist, nationalist politics of the current trade-union misleaders. A class-struggle leadership must be forged to mobilise the unions’ power in a broader struggle against capitalist misery, uniting workers, unemployed and other oppressed layers against the common enemy—to organise the unor-

ganised; defend immigrants, women workers and other more vulnerable sections of the working class; and fight the mass unemployment among especially black youth through a programme of jobs for all by dividing the available work among all labourers with no loss in pay. This all poses the question of the need for the working class to struggle for power.

Parasitic Middlemen

Labour broking is the practice of using employees supplied by a third-party company (the labour broker). Labour brokers sell their services to a client company which pays the broker for their labour needs. The labour broker pays the worker a meagre, unliveable fraction of the cost of labour that the worker provides to the client and then pockets the rest. The worker does not take part in the contract governing the terms of the labour he supplies.

The generally low levels of wages for South African workers are central to the super-exploitation of (mainly black) labour which colonialism and apartheid perfected and post-1994 neo-apartheid capitalism preserved. This means most workers can only make major purchases like housing, furniture or even decent schooling for their children through credit, by using their retirement benefits as collateral or by forming revolving credit schemes (*stokvels*) with fellow employees. Mandla Simelane, for example, is a machine operator at Transnet [national shipping and freight company] who makes R3,500 per month and hasn’t had an increase in his real income for seven years. He cannot use his medical aid scheme in private hospitals—conditions in public hospitals are appalling—nor can he access loans for housing. Thirteen percent of his wages goes to transport and he cannot support his wife and two kids with the remainder. As he explains it: “So I must rent my whole life...my life is for rent. I live in a cycle of debt. I cannot come off debt because I simply cannot afford simple living expenses on this salary. I live on loan sharks and they live on me. This is the life Transnet wants for all of us” (*South African Labour Bulletin*, August/September 2010).

The mechanisms for coping with low wages all require permanent employment, and so they are beyond reach for workers employed by labour brokers and other casual workers, forcing them to live from hand to mouth. The same issue of *South African Labour Bulletin* reported on the case of a Transnet worker who has been there for over 30 years, on “temporary” contract terms for the last 20, and making only R2,000 per month after deductions! Transnet is one of the “parastatals” managed by the ANC/Alliance government.

Labour brokers are used to undermine trade-union organisation and reverse previous gains. In some instances companies have retrenched [laid off] whole departments and rehired the same workers under labour brokers with less pay and fewer benefits. By using labour brokers, the bosses can get a legal cover to avoid being held accountable for conditions of employment. This nullifies the collective bargaining rights which organised work-

ers sacrificed so much to achieve as part of the struggle for trade-union recognition under apartheid repression. The central factor that makes it difficult to organise casual workers into trade unions is the lack of job security. Brokers can easily replace workers who join trade unions. As another attack on trade unions, labour brokers are used to provide scab labour during strikes.

Employment benefits and other working-class gains under capitalism are wrested and defended through class struggle, not some chamber bargaining or treacherous so-called “social contract” with the capitalists and their government. An example of the latter is the participation of COSATU and other trade unions in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), an institutionalised class-collaborationist structure involving trade unions, the capitalists and their government. NEDLAC is tasked with negotiating a deal to inform the pending legislation to either regulate or ban labour brokers. We are opposed to such sell-out “partnerships” with the capitalist enemy class. The idea that what is good for the capitalists is good for the workers, or that the bosses’ government can be pressured to serve the interests of the exploited, is a lie promoted by the trade-union bureaucracy to amnesty their betrayals and sabotage of working-class struggle. Workers need to understand that any gains they make face continual attacks under capitalism and can only be guaranteed by overthrowing the whole system based on production for profits through the exploitation of labour. A planned socialist economy, based on working-class state power, must be constructed on the ruins of the decaying capitalist system.

It is critical for full-time, unionised workers to fight for the more vulnerable casual employees to gain permanent employment at the same conditions and benefits as a measure of self-defence and class solidarity. The fight to defend brokered workers should be tied to a struggle to organise the unorganised and to defend immigrant workers and others of the most oppressed layers in the working class, who are disproportionately forced into casual jobs.

A series of striking workers have won gains for temporary workers in class battles against the capitalists and their government. An important victory in the fight against labour brokers was won by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) auto strike in August 2010 against the Automobile Manufacturers Employers Organisation (AMEO). AMEO was forced to agree to stop the use of labour brokers from January 2011 while allowing existing contracts to run their course. Similar gains were also won by NUMSA strikes on behalf of casual workers in the motor sector (which includes component manufacturers, petrol station attendants, panel beaters [body shop mechanics] and other workshop workers). These gains include payment of minimum rates in the industry, social security benefits like retirement, death, disability and medical aid. However, at these companies NUMSA members only managed to have employers agree to the gradual phasing out of the labour brokers.

Friends of *Spartacist South Africa* and *Workers Vanguard* in the industry reported that employers in the motor sector have since tried to renege on phasing out labour brokers and hiring casual workers on a permanent basis. Instead of mobilising the social power of the union members which won this concession to begin with, the NUMSA bureaucrats have taken the matter to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). This slavish dependence on the bosses’ courts is a cowardly diversion from class struggle which demoralises the workers and paves the way for defeats. The only language the capitalists understand is the one that hits their profits.

It is not in the interests of workers employed in the auto industry to be divided into separate, therefore weaker bargaining units (auto for car manufactur-

Zimbabweans in De Doorns, Western Cape, driven from their homes by anti-immigrant attacks targeting farm workers, November 2009.



ers; motor sector for component manufacturers and others; rubber for tyre manufacturers). These divisions only serve to undermine the collective strength of these workers. When the component manufacturers were on strike in September 2010, for example, auto workers belonging to the same union had to be sent home because they could not work without components, when in fact all should have gone out together in the same strike. The

leaders, what is decisive is an organised political opposition to the union tops’ class-collaborationist reliance on the bourgeois state and its politicians.

A class-struggle-based fight to smash labour broking is counterposed to, and not complementary to, the reliance on the capitalist state pushed by the pro-capitalist COSATU leadership. The union members who demand the banning of labour brokers in their strikes—strikes forced on



August 2010: Workers demanding pay raise demonstrate at Johannesburg headquarters of Transnet shipping company.

tyre and rubber strike from 30 August 2010 had the same potential of stopping car manufacturing.

We stand for *industrial unionism*, which means that all workers in the same industry should belong to one union and be covered by the same collective bargaining unit. Workers in the same industry are also divided up into different unions organised by different federations according to political affiliation. There should be one union per industry regardless of the political affiliations. The strength of the working class is in their numbers, organisation and discipline.

In May 2010 the Transnet strike by the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (affiliated to COSATU) and the United Transport and Allied Trade Union (affiliated to the Federation of Unions of South Africa) brought both exports and imports to a grinding halt. This strike won permanent jobs for some 1,000 of the more than 5,000 contract workers at Transnet. During this strike workers were wary of their sell-out leaders, warning: “The strike is ours, not our leaders. They give us feedback after negotiations and if we reject it they must go back. The leaders don’t get to decide, we do” (*South African Labour Bulletin*, August/September 2010). While this is an expression of the union membership’s genuine mistrust of their

the union leaders against their will—are fighting for their elementary class interests against a concerted capitalist ruling-class assault. The reformist COSATU leadership is a component of the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government whose job is to uphold the rule and profits of those bosses against the workers. [COSATU head Zwelinzima] Vavi and Co.’s pleas to the anti-working-class Zuma government to implement legislation banning labour

brokers are meant to retain their role as loyal (if occasionally “critical”) partners in class collaboration, to more effectively control and sell out their working-class base.

The COSATU tops push the utopian notion that the government can be persuaded to act in the interests of the workers instead of the capitalists. This lie is based on a wrong and reformist view of the bourgeois state—a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole capitalist class—as a neutral arbiter between the historically irreconcilable interests of the working class and their bourgeois exploiters. The Namibian case is an example of the futility of reliance on the bourgeois state, showing once again that all bourgeois reforms are easily reversible. The Namibian government passed a new Labour Act in 2007 that banned the practice of labour broking. When a labour broker company challenged this provision in the High Court, the court first upheld it, before, in December 2009, the Namibian Supreme Court overturned the ban on labour brokers. Its justification was that the ban violated the constitutional right to “practise any profession, or carry on any occupation, trade or business”—for the capitalists and their state, the bottom line is the “right” of capital to exploit labour.

The COSATU bureaucracy has in the past used the same con game of betraying legitimate working-class struggles by channelling them into appeals to the ANC-led capitalist government. Examples of this include demands by the majority black working class to close the apartheid wage gap; opposition to the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policies adopted by the ANC government in 1996, which led to privatisations and retrenchments. During the 2007 and 2010 public sector strikes, the COSATU leaders initially promised to call secondary solidarity strikes by the strategic mining, industrial and commercial trade unions, which have the social power to shut down the economy and stop the capitalists’ profits. But both times they cancelled these solidarity strikes.

Their threats to call a general strike against labour brokers have remained just that—an empty threat—as the COSATU leaders were more concerned with ensuring ANC victory in the local government elections. In another recent act of class treason in the service of the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) bureaucracy suspended a threatened 13 May national strike by their 220,000-members-strong union to avoid embarrassing the ANC five days before the 18 May local elections. In the eyes of the COSATU bureaucracy, the workers are voting cows for the ANC’s chronically corrupt (like any capitalist government) black elite gravy trainers. Even when they do happen to call such token actions, their aim is not to fight to win but to blow off steam from their angry and restless base. Instead of opposing attacks on their members, their main complaint is usually about not being “consulted” by their Alliance partners.

continued on page 6

Just Out!

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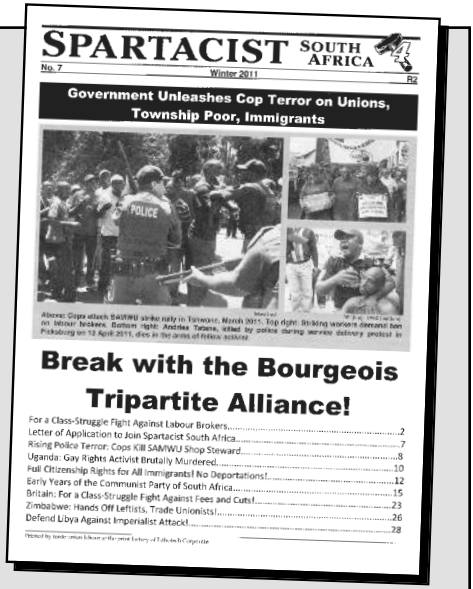
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(continued from page 5)

The hypocrisy of calling on this state to ban labour brokers is underlined by the fact that the Zuma government is one of the biggest users of labour brokers in the country. Top ANC honchos—such as president Zuma’s son Duduzane; former economic adviser in the presidency and prominent ANC member Moss Ngoasheng; and former public service director general Robinson Ramaite; amongst others—make profits as owners of or shareholders in labour-broking companies. Meanwhile, while occasionally talking tough about the need for an all-out ban, Vavi and other union leaders have repeatedly indicated their willingness to compromise and accept some kind of “regulation” of the labour-broker bloodsuckers.

South Africa is one of the countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world, and this is not because of this or that government policy that can be changed through pressure. Well over a century ago, Karl Marx described in *Capital* how the maintenance of the “industrial reserve army” of unemployed was an integral part of capitalism, serving to degrade working conditions and to lower wages for all workers. As Marx explained:

“The over-work of the employed part of the working-class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition



Eric Miller

Launching of COSATU trade-union federation in Western Cape, March 1986.

ist exploiters. This is bourgeois-nationalist poison that needs to be rooted out of the labour movement if the working class is to be able to fight, not only as a class in itself, but as a class for itself conscious of its historical task as the gravedigger of capitalist wage slavery.

An article in the May-July 2010 issue of the Democratic Socialist Movement’s (DSM) paper *Izwi Labasebenzi* (Xhosa/Zulu for Workers Voice) exposes the parasitic nature of the labour-broking blood-

suckers. They are aimed at forming a “new” reformist party, which would just continue the working class’s subordination to nationalism and the racist capitalist state under a new label.

In early 2009 the CWI’s leading section, Peter Taaffe’s Socialist Party in Britain, scandalously supported the wave of virulently chauvinist strikes which swept construction sites at Britain’s oil refineries and power plants. The strikes covered themselves in the bloody Union Jack and demanded “British jobs for British workers,” a slogan long associated with the fascists. The CWI whitewashed these reactionary mobilisations, lyingly claiming that they were not anti-immigrant, and a Socialist Party supporter even played a key role in the strike committee at the Lindsey refinery! (See “Down With Reactionary Strikes Against Foreign Workers!” *Workers Vanguard* No. 930, 13 February 2009.)

As experience proves, labour brokers attack both local and foreign workers, thereby providing a strong objective need for united class struggle against the common capitalist enemies. Local workers must recruit immigrants to their unions with the same rights and working conditions as the only way to combat the employers’ divide-and-rule schemes. For instance, the National Union of Mineworkers—COSATU’s biggest affiliate—has a membership reflecting the heavy concentration of immigrant workers in that strategic industry. This is despite the ANC-led government’s 2003 Immigration Act prohibiting employment of “novice” immigrants in the mines, which has limited the number of immigrant workers entering this industry. Foreign workers bring rich struggle traditions from their own countries to supplement those of their local comrades. South African workers should demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!* We fight for the working class to take up this demand as part of our perspective of fighting for a *socialist federation of Southern Africa* extending beyond and against the existing



Beukes/SAPA

Communist Party leader Blade Nzimande (left) with South African president Jacob Zuma at COSATU national congress, September 2009.

exerts on the former, forces these to submit to over-work and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working-class to enforced idleness by the over-work of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching the individual capitalists.”

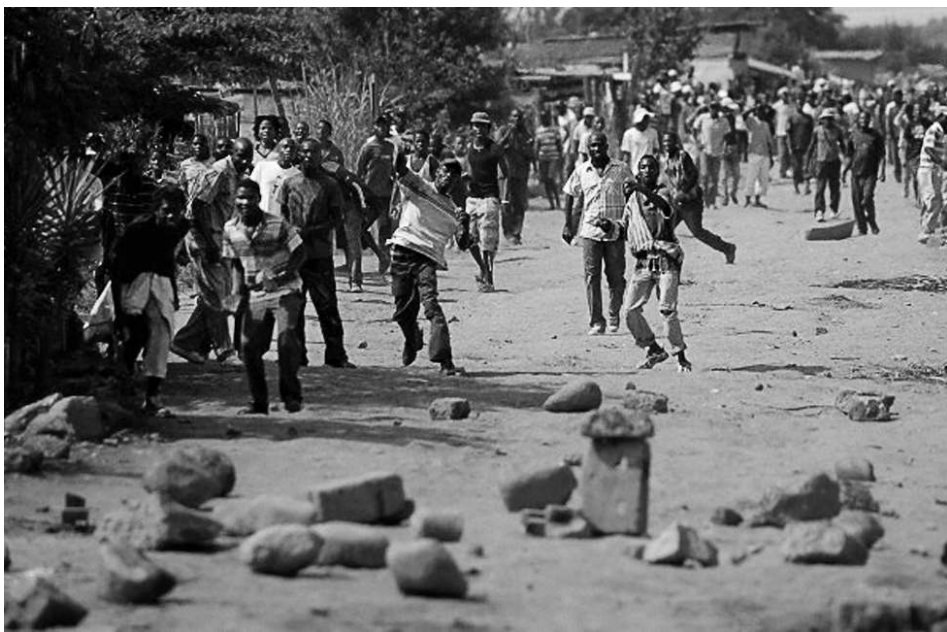
Defend Immigrant Workers!

The use of labour brokers overlaps with labour practices that border on outright criminality by the racist (and still overwhelmingly white) South African bosses. While a norm against blacks under apartheid, since 1994 these have disproportionately hit immigrant workers. There are commonly reported cases of employers, especially in the farms, employing workers escaping poverty and other life-threatening situations in neighbouring countries, only to call the police to arrest and summarily deport them when pay day arrives. They are sometimes paid in food rations instead of money. Their wages are always much lower than local workers.

A study by researcher Jean Pierre Miso of the University of the Witwatersrand’s Forced Migration Studies Programme found that labour brokers may have been directly responsible for inciting the November 2009 anti-immigrant attacks at De Doorns in the Western Cape. Both South African and Zimbabwean contractors (brokers) were supplying local farmers with workers. South African contractors complained of income losses due to competition from their Zimbabwean counterparts. They pressured local ANC leaders and incited local residents to attack and chase Zimbabweans away.

The COSATU tops’ promotion of “Buy South African” protectionism fuels anti-immigrant poison and perpetuates the lie that South African workers share common interests with their country’s capital-

suckers and criticises the COSATU tops’ “posturing.” But it is notable (and not surprising) that they don’t say *a single word* about the need to organise the largely unorganised casual workers and defend immigrants. The DSM and its international collaborators of the Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) are notorious for adapting to backward consciousness. They have repeatedly supported “strikes” by cops, prison guards and other armed thugs of the capitalist state, who they consider “workers in uniform.” For years the DSM was buried inside the bourgeois-nationalist ANC, before more recently leaving the ANC to tail after the nationalists of the Pan Africanist Congress. The DSM reformists’ current calls to “break” the Tripartite Alliance and form a “new workers’ party” are not about fighting for the independent class interests of



Reuters

March 2010: Township residents outside Pretoria protest miserable housing, lack of rail services.

colonialist-imposed borders, which have no national legitimacy for the African peoples who were colonised.

Intensified Exploitation in the Post-Soviet World

The increased use of labour brokers is part of a broad range of increased austerity measures—including wholesale privatisations of public enterprises, retrenchments, outsourcing, two-tier wage schemes, short time and other attacks on labour—which have been aggressively pursued by the international capitalist rulers especially in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. In the western European imperialist countries such attacks have seen the dismantling of the social welfare state, as the bourgeoisies of these countries see no need to continue paying for these concessions to the working class of their own countries. This increased exploitation allowed the capitalists to heap up enormous profits, squeezed from the blood of the working class and the poor. This is one reason, among many others, why we say the capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union represented a world-historic defeat for the international proletariat.

In South Africa, the fall of the Soviet Union—which had provided the main financial, military and diplomatic aid to the ANC/SACP-led anti-apartheid forces—created the conditions for the negotiated settlement with the white rulers. Concluding in 1994, this sell-out deal was a betrayal of black freedom which led to the establishment of the neo-apartheid order. The ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance regime was put in power (at first in a short-lived coalition with their erstwhile jailors from the white-supremacist National Party) to defend the interests of the still dominantly white capitalist class against the majority black poor masses.

The use of contract labour and temporary employees in this country proliferated with the passing of the Labour Relations Act of 1995 by the Alliance government. The COSATU leaders were part of the negotiation process that passed this legislation which, for the first time, recognised labour brokers as employers of the workers they hire on behalf of the so-called “client” companies.

Adding insult to injury, the government is now pursuing the so-called youth unemployment wage subsidy, which would further segment the labour market by replacing older permanent employees with even more poorly paid and super-exploited young workers with no rights. In the last decades, we have seen fierce battles fought by youths and workers against similar attacks. For example, in 2006 French youth went into the streets to protest the CPE law aimed at slashing wages and job security for youths, getting support from a series of one-day general strikes by the main union federations. In 1999 Mexican students at UNAM university, mainly from working-class backgrounds, fought a protracted and bruising battle against the assault by the country’s capitalist rulers on their right to education.

Build a Revolutionary Party to Fight for a Workers Government

For the black majority the apartheid state was like a giant labour broker responsible for miserable working and living conditions characterised by slave wages; migrant labour from Bantustans and neighbouring countries living in single-sex hostel dwellings barely fit for animals; pass laws for black urban influx control; denial of trade-union and political rights; etc. The introduction of labour broking and other increased casualisation coincided with increased expectations for social justice and redress amongst the poor majority following the end of white minority political rule. But since taking power 17 years ago, the capitalist government of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance has single-mindedly pursued policies of social decay for the majority of the population. The occasional criticisms by

With Company Out for Blood Union Tops Call Off Verizon Strike

After 15 days on strike at Verizon locations from Massachusetts to Virginia, some 45,000 members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) were sent back to work by union officials on August 22 without a new contract. The work stoppage—the largest in the U.S. since the 2007 General Motors strike—pitted repair technicians, FiOS installers and call-center workers against a telecom giant out to squeeze them for \$1 billion a year in concessions: health care, pensions, work rules, job security, sick leave, even the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Union workers showed their determination and readiness to fight, dogging scab installers and bosses masquerading as repair techs on their rounds. But just as installation and repair orders were beginning to pile up, the CWA and IBEW tops capitulated and called off the strike after buying Verizon's empty promise that it would negotiate seriously—even though the company had not backed down on any of the issues in dispute.

In the midst of the strike, Verizon, which has made \$19 billion in profits over the last four years alone, put out an ad sneering, “They claim we want to strip away 50 years of contract negotiations. THEY’RE RIGHT.” The company prepared for a showdown months in advance, including plans to fly in large numbers of management scabs. With Verizon out for blood, the CWA/IBEW bureaucrats, who were backed into a fight they did not want, folded at the first opportunity, to the bitter frustration of many workers.

For years, Verizon has maneuvered to isolate and weaken the CWA and IBEW. Mergers, acquisitions and the sales of operations, together with jobs lost to attrition and technological advances, have reduced the unionized workforce to 30 percent of the company, concentrated in FiOS fiber-optic and traditional copper landline services. A key reason the courts deregulated the old AT&T monopoly some three decades ago was to dismember its unionized workforce and open the door to non-union outfits. In recent years, Verizon's non-union workforce has mushroomed, with over 83,000 in the Wireless division alone. The CWA and IBEW tops have relied on empty contractual promises from management, especially a “neutrality” clause supposedly

assuring company non-interference in unionization efforts. Having agreed to “neutrality” in a 2000 strike settlement, Verizon has systematically harassed union supporters and closed union shops.

Failing to organize the legion of non-union workers in Verizon's highly profitable Wireless division, the union bureaucrats during the strike mustered token pickets at Wireless stores. These pickets did not appeal to Wireless workers to join the strike but were aimed instead at mobi-

CWA and IBEW misleaders undermined the strike by bowing to court injunctions limiting pickets and appealing to the false “friends” of labor in the capitalist Democratic Party to pressure Verizon management. Throughout the strike, the CWA/IBEW tops pitched the battle as a fight for “middle-class jobs,” obscuring the class line between labor and capital. What does a striking worker have in common with a middle-class management scab!



Reuters

NYC: Strikers outside Verizon headquarters, August 8.

lizing “public opinion” against the company. Even so, the CWA reported a flurry of calls from non-union workers wanting to join the union. There needs to be a *class-struggle fight to organize the unorganized*. Labor's power resides in its collective organization and ability to cut off the flow of profits. The unions can defend themselves only by using their own weapons: mass picket lines, international labor solidarity actions, labor-based mobilizations for health care and other necessities.

Like all labor struggles, the Verizon strike laid bare the class line dividing society: the workers who are forced to sell their labor power in order to survive and the capitalists who reap fabulous profits from exploiting that labor. The

The AFL-CIO bureaucracy has long peddled the lie that any worker with a decent union wage is “middle class.” Now they're really pushing it as Democratic Party politicians from the White House on down prate about saving “middle-class jobs” in the run-up to the 2012 elections. Even as the AFL-CIO gears up to re-elect Barack Obama, the White House is pushing for trillions in cuts to social programs for working people and the poor. Obama's health care “reform” last year, with its taxes on “Cadillac” health plans held by union workers, meant that companies like Verizon would try to saddle their workers with the added costs. The Democratic Party accepts the unions' money and staffers for its elec-

tion campaigns. But the Democrats represent the capitalist class no less than the Republicans. They made this clear yet again during the strike when the Obama administration launched an FBI investigation against supposed “sabotage” of Verizon property by union members.

With scab management cars clipping and injuring union members on the picket lines, police—including special “anti-terror” units in New York City—escorted strikebreakers into work and arrested striking workers. The cops, embraced by the labor bureaucracy as “fellow unionists,” have no place in the labor movement! Verizon has issued over 100 disciplinary letters against strikers, barring them from returning to their jobs. All labor must demand: Drop all the charges! No reprisals—full amnesty for all strikers!

Faced with the outsourcing of call-center and troubleshooting jobs to the Philippines, Mexico and India, union officials pushed appeals to Verizon “to create good, American jobs.” Fact: Verizon's strikebreaking efforts were “Made in the U.S.A.” The scabs crossing the picket lines on the Atlantic seaboard were “fellow Americans.” There is no question that Verizon and other corporations have used outsourcing as a way to weaken or bust the unions. But the answer is not the labor bureaucracy's class-collaborationist chauvinism, which poisons workers' consciousness by promoting the lie that workers in the U.S. share common interests with their red-white-and-blue exploiters. In February 2010, a call by the CWA for “California work for California workers” took on a chauvinist cast as work shifted across the border to Mexico. A class-struggle labor leadership would support workers' struggles internationally to organize into unions against the capitalists, of all flags.

Crass flag-waving is hardly surprising coming from the CWA bureaucracy, which has long embraced the aims of U.S. imperialism. In particular, the CWA tops ran point for the imperialists in the Cold War against the Soviet Union by sponsoring and braintrusting the American Institute for Free Labor Development, which worked with the CIA to destroy militant, left-led unions, especially in Latin America.

As we wrote eight years ago, when Verizon workers were facing the exact same issues as today:

“Labor needs a leadership that understands that the ‘partnership’ of labor and capital is a lie, that stands for the complete independence of the working class from the capitalists' government and political parties. Forging such a leadership through sharp class struggle will be a crucial step in building a workers party that fights for a workers government, which would expropriate the capitalist class and build a planned economy. When those who labor rule, technological advances would not mean workers being thrown onto the scrap heap but would mean reduced workdays, better working conditions and more leisure, and the wealth of society would be used for the benefit of all.”

—“Verizon: For a Solid Strike to Stop Union-Busting!”
WV No. 807, 1 August 2003 ■

COSATU and to a lesser extent the SACP are only aimed at covering up their complicity and keeping disaffected workers within the political fold of bourgeois nationalism. *Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!*

Immiseration of the working class is inherent in capitalism, especially in its epoch of imperialist decay. Prior to 1994, there is a very rich history of class struggle, mainly by COSATU unions, against casualisation. These included fighting to ban overtime work, the fight for a 40-hour working week without loss of pay and a demand to make all casual workers full-time after three months of continued employment.

But the growing social and political power of COSATU following its founding in the 1980s was paralysed by its increasing political subordination to the ANC. In the absence of the intervention by a Leninist-Trotskyist party armed with

a programme for proletarian power, none of the political currents within COSATU, including the so-called “workerist” opposition, were able to make the leap to a perspective of struggling for proletarian leadership of the anti-apartheid struggle. By the time of the 1994 sell-out deal, the COSATU bureaucracy was integrated into the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance and jumped at the opportunity to join the capitalist government, sending 20 of their leaders into parliament under the ticket of the ANC. This further cemented the subordination of the working class to bourgeois nationalism.

Workers must refuse to pay for the economic crisis of the capitalist system of their exploiters. In the fight for employment and decent living standards for all, a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class should put forward a set of transitional demands to provide a bridge from the current struggles and conscious-

ness to the fight for workers power. Such demands were formulated by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, in the 1938 Transitional Programme—the founding document of the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.

Trade unions and other mass working-class organisations should fight for a *sliding scale of wages*. “This means that collective agreements should assure an automatic rise in wages in relation to the increase in prices of the consumer goods,” wrote Trotsky. In the fight against unemployment, working-class organisations should fight for a *sliding scale of working hours*, demanding the division of available work amongst available labour without loss of pay. These demands should lead to only one revolutionary conclusion, in Trotsky's words: “If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from calamities gener-

ated by itself, then let it perish.”

This is the only programme that can guide the fight for a class-struggle leadership in the unions. This task is inextricably linked to the struggle for a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party—the instrument needed to lead the proletariat to victory in a socialist revolution. Such a party must be forged in political combat against reformist organisations like the SACP, fighting to win class-conscious militants from the working class base of these organisations to a genuine communist programme. A revolutionary vanguard party must take its cue from the words of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in their March 1850 “Address of the Central Authority to the [Communist] League”:

“For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of the existing society but the foundation of a new one.” ■

Young Spartacus

140TH ANNIVERSARY LESSONS OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

As part of the training of young revolutionaries, the Spartacus Youth Clubs strive to critically learn from past victories and defeats of the working class. The Paris Commune of 1871 is nearly peerless in the lessons it has for revolutionary Marxists. We print below a slightly edited class on the Commune given by S. Williams, a member of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, to the New York SYC.

PART ONE

140 years ago, on 18 March 1871, the working class of Paris rose up and established its own, short-lived workers state in one city. Although much of the capitalist government and army had already fled Paris, the workers swept away what remained and they began to rule. This lasted only for some weeks, until late May 1871. The Commune was the first taste of what Engels, in his 1891 introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France*, called the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Lenin closely studied the Commune: He edited and put out the second edition of *The Civil War in France* in Russian. He drew on the lessons of the Commune in *The State and Revolution*, written in the run-up to the October Revolution of 1917, and in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, written after the revolution. Like Lenin, we must gain a critical understanding that, unlike the victorious Russian Revolution, the Commune had no effective leadership and ended in slaughter.

Background to the Commune

The idea of a "commune" dates to the Middle Ages. During feudal times, as cities grew into centers of exchange, city dwellers (e.g., artisans, merchants, and the growing bourgeoisie) would sometimes seek a charter for freedom from feudal tribute, which allowed them to have a kind of autonomous city government "in common" (or a *commune* in French). Later, during the bourgeois French Revolution, a



Musée Carnavalet

Women on barricades during Paris Commune.

"commune" arose in Paris between 1792-93. It was the base of support for the most radical Jacobin, Maximilien Robespierre, and was called the "Insurrectionary Commune." It supported universal male suffrage and was based on the city's armed citizens. In 1871, workers looked back at these earlier examples as models. In *The Civil War in France*, Marx wrote, "It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks the modern State power, has been mistaken for a reproduction of the mediaeval Communes." The 1871 Commune was new because of its revolutionary *proletarian* nature.

To understand the figures who played a role in relation to the Paris Commune, we must first look at earlier revolutions, in 1848, when uprisings against monarchic and feudal reaction swept across continental Europe. In France, a monarch named Louis-Philippe d'Orleans had ruled in the interest of the financial and industrial capitalists since 1830. In February of

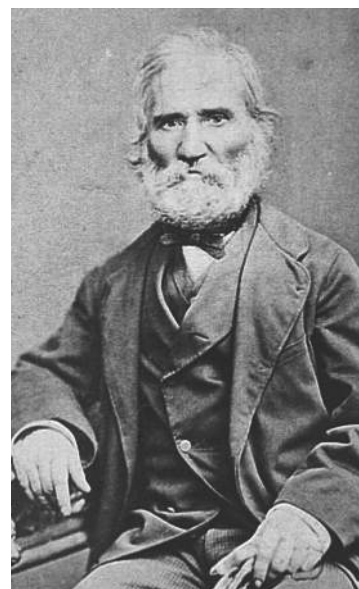
1848, there was a mass uprising against this Orleanist monarchy, which was overthrown and a bourgeois Provisional Government, including a few representatives of the socialists and workers, took power. Under pressure from the workers, the Provisional Government instituted something called National Workshops that were a kind of make-work/welfare for the Parisian unemployed. The main leftist opposition to the Provisional Government was led by Auguste Blanqui, whose supporters later played a role in the Commune. In April of 1848, the Provisional Government held elections to a Constituent Assembly (which Blanqui opposed). The majority of the French population, the reactionary peasantry, mainly voted for a right-wing coalition of bourgeois-supported monarchists called the Party of Order. One of its leaders was a man named Adolphe Thiers, who was later the butcher of the Commune. In June of 1848, the democratically elected Constituent Assembly declared that the national workshops would be abolished, leading to a workers uprising in Paris. In a foretaste of what would happen with the defeat of the Commune, the June 1848 workers uprising was brutally suppressed by the Assembly and thousands of workers and oppressed were killed.

Not just in France, but across Europe, the working class emerged as an independent class force in 1848, and the bourgeoisie showed that it had become counterrevolutionary as a class. In previous centuries, during the great bourgeois revolutions, the bourgeoisie had *overthrown* feudal monarchies. But in 1848 they *allied* with reactionary feudal elements to crush the workers. Prior to 1848, Marx and Engels—who later participated in the 1848 revolutions—had envisioned the possibility of the proletarian party allying itself with a bourgeois republican opposition in the course of a bourgeois-democratic revolution (at least in France and Germany). However, in drawing the lessons of 1848, Marx and Engels emphasized in their famous 1850 address that the workers party had to act independently of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie,

and they made their point that for a workers party the "battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence."

Just prior to 1848, Marx and Engels had been instrumental in forming an organization called the Communist League, which was a small group of communist revolutionaries whose program was the *Communist Manifesto*. But a few years after the 1848 revolutions, the Communist League fell apart. By the time of the Commune in 1871, Marx and Engels were leaders of what was called the International Working Men's Association, or the First International, which had formed in 1864, reflecting the reactivation of the workers movement in Europe after its defeat in the 1848 revolutions. Unlike the cadre organization of the Communist League, the First International was made up of many ideological currents, both revolutionary and petty-bourgeois.

The ideology of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was very strong in the French branch of the International. He was an ideological father of anarchism—a petty-bourgeois ideology reflecting the interests of small artisans and not the industrial proletariat. The Proudhonists were "mutualists" who didn't believe in strike action or participation in "political" struggle. They thought society should be made up of small prop-



no credit

Auguste Blanqui

erty holders, and they fought for "Mutual Aid Societies" to provide cheap or free credit, viewing "economic struggle" as their weapon. Blanqui (who did not join the International) was also very influential in the French workers movement. Engels called him a "revolutionary of the old generation" because his ideology had its origins with the radical Jacobin communists from after the French Revolution of 1789. Blanqui believed in the politics of secret conspiracy, i.e., organizing a small minority through secret cells that would then spring up and try to make a revolution through an armed uprising. Blanqui (with about a thousand others) tried this in 1839. The predictable result was that they and others went straight to prison.

The First International also included

International Institute of Social History (inset), Dietz Verlag Berlin



As a young revolutionary, Friedrich Engels (inset) participated in uprising of workers and artisans at Elberfeld, Germany, in May 1849.

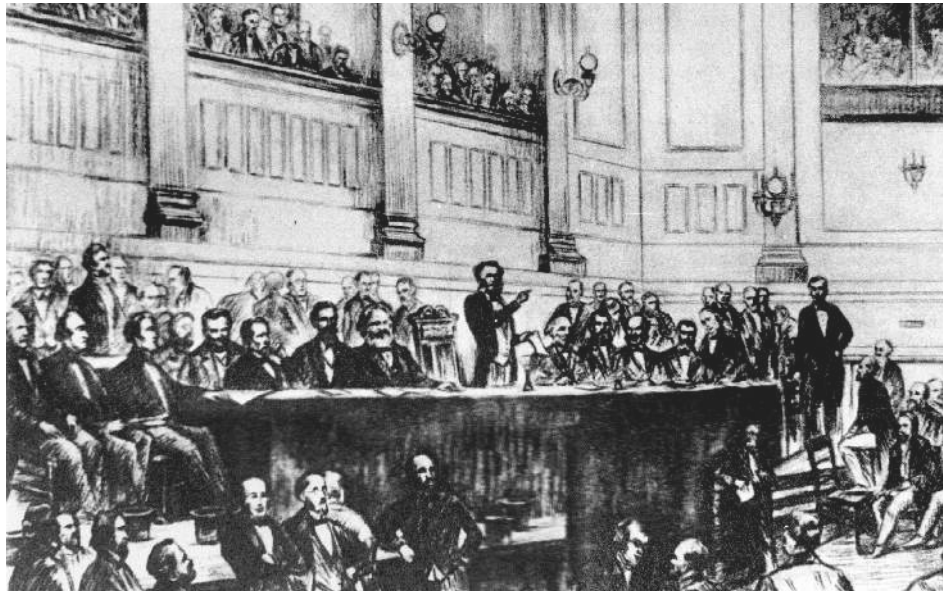
some English trade unionists. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, the trade unions were a mass movement in England, albeit with bourgeois-democratic politics. In the International, there were also some German former members of the Communist League and an eclectic mix of others, including some Italians and Poles. Mikhail Bakunin, the anarchist, allied with the First International in 1868-69, although at the same time he secretly kept up his own parallel organization, the International Social-Democratic Alliance, which was a source of constant tension with Marx and Engels. The Bakuninists, like the Proudhonists, looked toward the petty bourgeoisie as the source for social change, not the working class. Bakunin believed that the bourgeois state could simply be abolished, and he opposed the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as well as any “authority.” As Engels later put it, for Bakunin “authority = the state = evil in the absolute.” Like Proudhon, Bakunin rejected “political struggle” in favor of “economic struggle.” To learn more about these questions: Joseph Seymour wrote a terrific series on the early communists and the 1848 revolutions in *Young Spartacus* (1976-1979), called “Marxism and the Jacobin Communist Tradition.” Also, the Spartacist pamphlet *Marxism vs. Anarchism* has nice details about Proudhon and Bakunin.

Paris and Industrial Development

In the period after the 1848 workers uprising, the industrial proletariat grew quickly in Western Europe through the growth of industry itself: In the 20 years between the defeat of 1848 and the Commune, industrial production and foreign trade in France doubled. In 1840 there were very few rail lines outside of Britain and the U.S., but by 1870 there were about 11,000 miles of rail in France, thousands of miles of telegraph lines, and industrial shipbuilding had massively expanded. Gold flowed into Europe from the California gold rush. Finance capital grew with the founding of giant French banks like Crédit Lyonnais and Crédit Foncier, which financed the massive industrial expansion and huge building projects.

Although the character of the Parisian working class remained largely artisan or organized in small workshops (one reason Proudhon had such influence), the growth of a significant industrial proletariat in France (to a small extent in Paris) was a change relative to the time before 1848, when Marx and Engels thought that the proletariat, particularly of France and Germany, needed more time to develop economically as a class. As Engels noted in his introduction to Marx’s *The Civil War in France*: By 1871, large-scale industry had already “ceased to be an exceptional case even in Paris, the centre of artistic handicrafts,” and Marx “quite rightly says” that the civil war “must necessarily have led in the end to communism, that is to say, the direct opposite of the Proudhon doctrine.”

Corresponding to this industrial growth, the urban population expanded quickly. The population of Paris more than doubled between 1831 and 1872. In the 20 years before the Commune, a government official named Baron Haussmann carried out a massive urban project in Paris. Prior to Haussmann, much of Paris did not appear as it does today, but rather resembled most medieval cities: tiny alleyways, uneven houses crammed together in the city center, poorly-lit streets that were dirty and crime-ridden, and the working-class and plebeian population was afflicted by all sorts of diseases. The “respectable” middle class was terrified of the city center, which was also the historic center of revolt against the ruling class. Haussmann razed this part of the city, replacing it with “Grand Boulevards” that were wide, with large intersections at angles that would make it easier to move troops and suppress barricades. Haussmann



E. Schumann

Founding of First International, 1864. Workers of the world, unite!

himself said, “We ripped open the belly of old Paris, the neighbourhood of revolt and barricades, and cut a large opening through the almost impenetrable maze of alleys, piece by piece....” The workers were pushed out of the city center and into the hills of the city, like Belleville and Montmartre, which later became the stronghold of the Commune.

The Franco-Prussian War

The event that precipitated the formation of the Paris Commune was the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. During most of the 19th century, Germany was

1851. A year later, he declared the Second Empire, crowning himself Emperor Napoléon III. In reference to the two Napoléons in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx derisively wrote: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.”

On 19 July 1870, Napoléon III declared war on Prussia and the Franco-Prussian War began. In a declaration on the war, Marx’s “First Address on the Franco-Prussian War” (19-23 July 1870), the



Library of Congress

France’s crushing defeat by Prussian forces at Battle of Sedan in September 1870 sparked protests by workers throughout France, demanding an end to the monarchy and calling for a republic.

not a unified country. In the 1848 revolution, Marx and other socialists fought for the unification of Germany. However, when the German bourgeoisie allied with feudal reaction in 1848, the outcome was that there remained many small German-speaking states, some of which were dominated by local nobility and some of which were under foreign control. The strongest German state was Prussia, ruled by the Hohenzollern monarchy. In the mid 1860s, under King Wilhelm I, a strong German chancellor named Otto von Bismarck emerged. Fighting against Denmark and Austria (successively) for control of German-speaking provinces, Bismarck accelerated a process of German unification embodied in the founding of the North German Confederation in 1867. To complete German unification, Bismarck had to challenge French domination to the west: He essentially provoked Napoléon III into declaring war against Prussia by threatening to put a king from the Prussian nobility on the Spanish throne. (France would have been surrounded by pro-Prussian regimes.)

Louis Napoléon (the nephew of the first Napoléon) came to power as a result of the crushing of the French proletarian uprising in June 1848. He had been president of the Republic from 1848 to 1851, but he carried out a coup and abolished the National Assembly in December of

International sided militarily with Germany from a revolutionary-internationalist standpoint. He argued that it was a defensive war and supported the unification of Germany, while politically opposing Bismarck and Napoléon III. Marx also warned that “if the German working class allow the present war to lose its strictly defensive character and to degenerate into a war against the French people, victory or defeat will prove alike disastrous.”

But within weeks, Prussia easily occupied parts of France. A decisive blow came when French troops were crushed in a battle on 1-2 September 1870 in the city of Sedan in eastern France, where over 80,000 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, including Napoléon III. When news was received of the defeat and capture of Napoléon III, there were protests by workers throughout France against Napoléon’s monarchy, for a republic, and in opposition to capitulating to the Prussians. On the morning of September 4, workers in Paris invaded the parliament at the Palais Bourbon. The masses physically drove out the legislative deputies. Léon Gambetta, a bourgeois republican politician, was forced by them to announce the abolition of Napoléon III’s Empire and to proclaim the Third Republic. The workers carried off some deputies to the Parisian seat of government, called the Hôtel de Ville, where the Government of National Defense was set up.

But from that day, September 4, the “Government of National Defense” was “in dread of the working class.” Its leadership was made up partly of “notorious Orleanists [bourgeois monarchists], partly of middle-class Republicans, upon some of whom the insurrection of June, 1848, has left its indelible stigma” (Marx, “Second Address on the Franco-Prussian War,” 6-9 September 1870). Despite their name, the group of bourgeois politicians in the “Government of National Defense” had little intention of fighting the Prussians and principally wanted to keep a workers revolt down. As Jules Favre, the foreign minister at the time, later said: The Government of National Defense had seized power in order to “repel the forces of anarchy and to prevent there being a shameful revolt in Paris.”

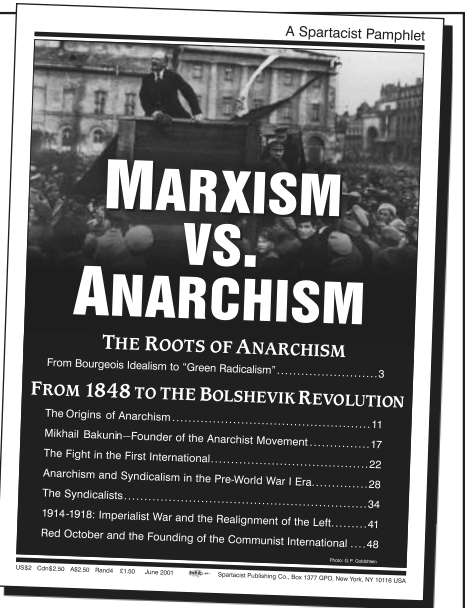
Days after the French defeat at Sedan in early September 1870, the First International issued Marx’s “Second Address on the Franco-Prussian War,” which hailed the formation of the French republic and denounced the Prussian invasion of France. The International demanded that the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, where a German dialect is spoken but which have long considered themselves French, not be annexed to Germany. Marx also warned against the danger of the French workers rising up, because he thought it would be premature (although when the Commune later occurred, Marx, Engels and the International were the first to champion its cause). That said, the heterogeneous forces in the International did not all have the same attitude: Marx and Engels were critical of the French section of the International, which issued a “chauvinistic” declaration to the “German people” in the name of “French people,” i.e., on a bourgeois-nationalist (not a working-class-internationalist) basis. This continued to be a political weakness of the elements who later led the Commune. As Lenin remarked: Combining “patriotism and socialism” was “the fatal mistake of the French socialists”; the French *bourgeoisie*

continued on page 10

This pamphlet presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the origins of anarchism and the views of its leading figures through the 1871 Paris Commune and the split in the First International and discusses the impact of the 1917 October Revolution. The first article addresses radical youth today who, in an ideological climate conditioned by the so-called “death of communism,” are drawn to all variants of anarchism, Green radicalism and left liberalism. The pamphlet is dedicated to the fight to win a new generation to revolutionary Marxism.

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Commune...

(continued from page 9)

should have borne “the responsibility for the national humiliation—the task of the *proletariat* was to fight for the socialist emancipation of labour from the yoke of the bourgeoisie.”

Paris Under Siege and Armistice

After 4 September 1870 the French continued to fight the Prussians but under very half-hearted bourgeois leadership. Soon, the Prussians surrounded Paris. The city was under siege and within weeks hunger reigned. By October 1870 not only the working masses but also the bourgeoisie had resorted to eating horse-meat. (The working class had begun to eat it during the industrial depression of 1866.) By mid November, pets were being eaten, and some even ate rats and carrier pigeons. The writer Victor Hugo was given parts from deer and antelope from the zoo. Heating oil also became scarce and the Parisian workers and poor were soon freezing. To top it off, by early January 1871 the Prussians were ceaselessly bombarding the city.

During this period, in the fall and winter of 1870-71, there were further revolts by working-class elements, along with a few lame military attempts by the bourgeois government to attack the Prussians. On 31 October 1870, news arrived in the cities that the second French army was defeated at Metz, and Thiers went to Paris to negotiate an armistice with Bismarck. But the French workers opposed an armistice, and on October 31 they revolted in several cities. In the course of the Paris uprising, radical leaders including Blanqui took members of the Government of National Defense hostage. The socialists made the government promise to call elections to a Commune, but it was a false promise. They had agreed only in order to quell outrage and buy time for pro-government soldiers to surprise and disarm the workers who had been holding the Government of National Defense hostage. After the failed uprising, while the siege of Paris continued, the government began secretly negotiating with the Prussians.

Finally, by late January 1871 much of the French population was exhausted. On January 28, Jules Favre from the Government of National Defense went to Versailles to negotiate an armistice with the Prussians. The terms of the armistice were steep: The payment to Prussia of a 200 million franc indemnity with the first payment to begin in two weeks; immediate surrender of most of the forts around



Studio Henri, Saint-Brice

Bread line on the Boulevard Montparnasse during siege of Paris, 1870-1871.

Paris; handing over the guns and ammunition of the army (but not of the National Guard); the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany; and the holding of elections to a National Assembly.

The elections to the National Assembly were held on 8 February 1871. The Assembly was dominated by monarchists elected by the conservative peasants in the countryside. (The Assembly and its supporters were referred to as the “rurals” by the insurgent workers in the French cities.) Adolphe Thiers—who in 1848 was a leader of the Party of Order that massacred the workers—was made head of the government by the reactionary National Assembly. Since the Prussians were still at Versailles, the National Assembly met at the southwestern city of Bordeaux. A month later, on March 1, the Prussians marched symbolically down the Champs-Élysée and soon after, withdrew from Versailles while continuing to occupy land to the east of Paris and in northern France as security for the payment of war reparations due to them.

The National Guard

I want to digress for a moment to talk about the National Guard. The National Guard in Paris was a distinct force from the French army. The existence of the National Guard dates back to the very beginning of the 1789 French Revolution, when it formed as a bourgeois citizens’ militia. During the brief restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, the National Guard was abolished, but was re-established in 1830. After that, the class composition and the size of the National Guard fluctuated according to the political circumstances. In the course of the 1848 Revolution, for example, it grew from a small, conservative, bourgeois force to 250,000 people, with a large majority being poor and working-class battalions. After the

defeat of 1848, it again became a small bourgeois body. On 4 September 1870, when the Third Republic was declared, the Parisian police fled and the National Guard was the main armed force left in the city. So in the winter of 1870-71, during the siege by the Prussians, the workers of Paris in the National Guard were armed,



Illustrated London News

4 September 1870: Workers at the Palais Bourbon, Paris, urge Léon Gambetta to declare the Third Republic.

because there was no other force that could fend off the Prussians. The National Guard again grew, to over 300,000 people. During the siege, all available resources in the city were mobilized to manufacture munitions and, through a subscription set up by Victor Hugo, workers put in money to pay for the manufacture of cannons.

In late January 1871, after the armistice with the Prussians was signed,

the French bourgeoisie had only 15,000 regular loyal army troops—the rest were Bismarck’s captives. Meanwhile, there were 300,000 armed workers in the Paris National Guard and quite a few of them were “reds.” Under pressure from the French bankers, in order to get money from them to make the first payment to the Prussians under the terms of the armistice, Thiers had to disarm the Parisian workers. As he later said, “Businessmen were going around repeating constantly that financial operations would never be started up again until all those wretches were finished off and their cannons taken away.”

The workers in the National Guard immediately began organizing in opposition to the January 1871 armistice. National Guard battalions began to form electoral committees on a left-wing Republican basis for the February 8 elections. When the monarchists won the National Assembly elections, the National Guard called further meetings and continued to organize the Parisian workers for about a month between early February and early March. Thiers appointed a brutal army officer as “general” of the National Guard. On 3 March

Spartacist League/SYC Forums

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

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San Francisco State University
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sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

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TORONTO

Wednesday, Sept. 14, 6 p.m.
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(416) 593-4138 • spartcan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Friday, Sept. 23, 2:30 p.m.
UBC, SUB Room 42T
(604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Trotskyist League of Canada Forums

Trotskyist League/SYC Day School

**Karl Marx Was Right
The World Economic Crisis—Profits Rise,
Millions Starve**

**South Africa Eyewitness:
Permanent Revolution vs. Class Collaboration**

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OISE (Ontario Institute for
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252 Bloor St. West,
Room 8180

World Economic Crisis: Profits Rise, Workers Starve

**For a Class-Struggle Defense of
Jobs, Unions, Social Programs!**

VANCOUVER

**Saturday
October 1, 2 p.m.**

For info: (604) 687-0353 • trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Roundhouse Community Centre
Multimedia Room
181 Roundhouse Mews
(Yaletown-Roundhouse SkyTrain station)

Join the Spartacus Youth Clubs!

The Spartacus Youth Clubs intervene into social struggles armed with the revolutionary internationalist program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. We work to mobilize youth in struggle as partisans of the working class, championing the liberation of black people, women and all the oppressed. The SYCs fight to win youth to the perspective of building the Leninist vanguard party that will lead the working class in socialist revolution, laying the basis for a world free of capitalist exploitation and imperialist slaughter.

What We Fight For

1 Mobilize students behind the social power of the multiracial working class! Picket lines mean don't cross! For union-minority job recruitment and training programs! For union hiring halls! Down with union-busting "workfare" schemes! Jobs for all at union wages! Organize the unorganized! Unionize the South! Down with multi-tier wages, which pit younger and older workers against each other! Cops, prison guards, security guards out of the unions! Keep the bosses' government and courts out of the unions!

2 Black oppression is the bedrock of racist American capitalism. Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution! For mass labor/black mobilizations to stop the fascists and race-terrorists! No to gun control! For the right of armed self-defense! No reliance on the capitalist courts or politicians! Fascist terror is not a question of "free speech." Stop the Nazis! Stop the KKK!

3 For free, quality, integrated public education for all! Nationalize the private universities! Down with the racist purge of higher education—defend affirmative action, no to tuition hikes! No to budget cuts! For an end to tracking! For open admissions, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all students! Abolish the administration—the universities should be run by those who work and study there! Down with police occupation of public schools! Cops off campus!

4 For women's liberation through socialist revolution! For mass, labor-backed mobilizations to defend abortion



SYC at demonstration in defense of public education at New York City's Hunter College, March 2010.

clinics! Down with parental consent laws and "squeal rules"! For free abortion on demand! For free, quality 24-hour child-care! For free, quality health care for all! Equal pay for equal work! Down with anti-gay laws! Down with reactionary age of consent laws! Full democratic rights for homosexuals! Government out of the bedroom! Down with the anti-sex witchhunt! Down with all laws against consensual activities, called "crimes without victims," like pornography, gambling, drug use, prostitution and "statutory rape"!

5 Down with racist anti-immigrant laws! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Organize foreign-born workers into the unions! No deportations! No to racist "English only" laws! Down with anti-Hispanic, anti-Arab, anti-Asian, anti-Semitic and all racist bigotry!

6 Down with the "war on terror," which is a war aimed at immigrants, labor, the left and minorities! Free all the detainees! Abolish the racist death penalty! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Free all class-war prisoners! There is no justice in the capitalist courts! Defend victims of racist cop terror and police frame-up! No illusions in civilian review boards or "community control" of the police! For labor mobilizations against racist cop

terror! Down with the "war on drugs," a racist war by the ruling class against black and Hispanic youth! The capitalist state—at its core consisting of the cops, courts, prisons—is the executive committee of the ruling class, an instrument of organized violence by the capitalists against the workers and the oppressed. It must be smashed through workers revolution!

7 Defend separation of church and state! Defend science against superstition and mysticism! Keep religion out of the schools! No prayer in the schools! Down with the teaching of creationism! For the teaching of evolution! No government funding for religious, private or "charter" schools!

8 Defeat U.S. imperialism through workers revolution! U.S. and allied forces out of Iraq, Afghanistan now! Down with the neocolonial occupations! For class struggle against U.S. capitalist rulers at home! No illusions in the UN—a den of imperialist thieves, their victims and their lackeys! All U.S./UN/NATO troops out of the Balkans, Haiti! For the right of independence for Puerto Rico! U.S. troops out of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean! U.S. imperialist butchers: hands off the world! No to the draft! Not one man, not one penny for the imperi-

alist military! Drive ROTC, CIA and police recruiters off the campuses!

9 For international working-class solidarity! Down with the chauvinist poison of protectionism! Workers of the world, unite! For unconditional military defense of the deformed workers states of Cuba, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos against capitalist counterrevolution and imperialist attack! For workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats and establish regimes of workers democracy, based on the power of workers councils, and revolutionary internationalism!

10 Break with the racist, warmongering Democratic and Republican parties of capitalism! No support to any capitalist parties, including Greens! For a revolutionary, multiracial workers party that fights for socialist revolution! Look to the example of the heroic, Bolshevik-led workers of 1917 Russia! For new October Revolutions! For the international rule of the working class!

15 May 2011

The Spartacus Youth Clubs are the youth groups of the revolutionary Marxist Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).



Young Spartacus Madison, Wisconsin, rally against union-busting at the State Capitol, 5 March.

from the 28 January, from the very day of the capitulation."

In early March, the elections to the Central Committee of the National Guard were announced with bright red posters all over Paris, urging citizens to organize in their neighborhoods and districts (called *arrondissements*). In response to the National Guard organizing campaign, the reactionary National Assembly claimed there was "incendiarism and pillage" in Paris. After the Prussians left Versailles, the French government moved *there* from Bordeaux, not to Paris, for fear of the plebeian masses. The Assembly then also took retaliatory measures against the workers and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities. It abolished the National Guard's pay, which was one of the few sources of income for most Parisians. The Assembly also supported the landlords who demanded the payment of all back rent due from the time of the siege, which impacted a wide swath of the population. It also demanded that all back bills had to be paid *with interest* over the next four months, which particularly impacted petty-bourgeois store owners.

These measures provoked broad outrage, but the spark leading to the workers uprising in Paris occurred in the wee hours of the morning on 18 March 1871. Thiers, lacking troops, sent army battalions sneaking into the city to steal the

National Guard's cannons. Symptomatic of the lack of conscious organization in the National Guard, the cannons had been left unguarded. When milkmaids began arriving at dawn and saw the army trying to carry off one of the cannons, paid for by the workers themselves, the women alerted the National Guard and physically

stopped the soldiers, scolding them for acting against the Republic. The National Guard began to assemble and appealed to the rank-and-file army soldiers, who went over to their side. When General Lecomte, their commanding officer, gave orders to fire on the unarmed population, the soldiers refused, and the general



Paris, 18 March 1871: National Guard takes back the cannons. The National Guard appealed to rank-and-file army soldiers, who refused to fire on masses, signaling the start of Paris Commune.

and another commanding officer were arrested by the soldiers and the National Guard. Soon, all across Paris the army disobeyed orders and fraternized with the Parisian masses. Later in the day, a bourgeois politician who had supported the brutal suppression of the June 1848 workers uprising, Clément Thomas, was recognized in the street. He and General Lecomte were both put up against a wall and shot by the insurgents.

After the March 18 uprising and army mutiny, the governor of Paris fled to Versailles and the Central Committee of the National Guard began to rule, immediately implementing measures favorable to the working masses. On March 21, they suspended the sale of objects from pawn shops (pawning possessions had been one of the few ways poor Parisians had survived the siege). They reversed some of the reactionary decisions of the National Assembly, allowing more time for overdue bills to be paid and prohibiting evictions for unpaid rent. Despite the power in their hands, the Central Committee began to push for elections to a commune, having illusions that it would be possible to negotiate the elections with the bourgeois mayors of the Paris *arrondissements*, who all supported Thiers. After some days, most of the bourgeois mayors and their supporters fled to Versailles and joined forces with the National Assembly.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Crisis...

(continued from page 1)

the manic-depressive behavior of stock markets, the venality of the financial sector, the growing gulf between rich and poor, the high levels of unemployment, the naked consumerism and the English riots are telling us something. This is a system in deep trouble, and it is waiting to blow.”

In Europe, austerity has been met with strikes and protests, at times massive, in defense of workers’ livelihoods. But the workers’ struggles are hamstrung by their reformist misleaders, who accept the inevitability of capitalist austerity while merely pleading that the blows be softened.

In this country, tens of thousands of unionists and their supporters came out in protest early this year against Wisconsin Republican governor Scott Walker’s union-busting law tearing up the collective bargaining rights of public workers unions. With public workers unions everywhere threatened with obliteration, the Wisconsin protests inspired workers across the country who saw them as the beginning of a fightback against the one-sided class war targeting organized labor. But the bureaucratic misleaders of the AFL-CIO worked overtime to squelch any move toward actually using labor’s strike weapon, channeling the anger of the ranks into support for the Democratic Party with a petition campaign to recall Walker and a number of Republican state legislators.

The decades of betrayals by these labor fakers have encouraged the U.S. rulers in the arrogant belief that they can get away with doing anything to the working class, the poor and most everyone else without provoking any social struggle. But the rulers and their labor lieutenants cannot eliminate the class struggle which is born of the irreconcilable conflict of interests between labor and its exploiters. The same conditions that grind down the workers can and will propel them into battle against the capitalist class enemy. This was seen in the midst of the Great Depression, when, at a brief upturn in the economy, workers began to engage in hard-fought battles to organize industrial unions in this country.

The sit-down strikes, mass pickets and other actions that built the CIO were ignited by the 1934 San Francisco general strike and mass strikes in Toledo and Minneapolis the same year. All of those strikes were led by reds. It was to head off the threat that class battles would challenge capitalist rule that New Deal social programs such as Social Security were implemented. Following World War II, Cold War red purges in the unions drove out socialists and Communists, including the Stalinists who had channeled workers’ discontent into support for Roosevelt’s Democratic Party.

Today, there are no longer avowed socialists with a significant base in the unions. But even in the absence of militants inspired by such political convictions, radical leaders will arise and they will be no less militant. Renewed labor

battles will lay the basis for reviving and extending the unions, with a new, class-struggle leadership coming to the fore. For the workers to prevail against their exploiters, they must be armed with a Marxist political program that links labor’s fight to the struggle to build a multiracial workers party that will do away with this entire system of wage slavery through socialist revolution. *Fight, don’t starve! Those who labor must rule!*

The Bourgeoisie: An Unfit Ruling Class

In the *Communist Manifesto*, written more than 150 years ago, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels identified the key contradiction of capitalist society, which lies at the root of repeated economic crises. On the one hand, under capitalism production is socialized. But the means of production remain the private property of a few, who appropriate the wealth that is produced by workers’ collective labor.

The boom-bust economic cycles are direct products of the capitalist system of

world in the barbarism of World Wars I and II, as well as waging countless wars in colonial and semicolonial countries.

The utter irrationality of capitalism reached new depths in the epoch of imperialism. While industrial capitalists continued to concentrate on the production of goods for sale (commodities), the machinations of the giant financial institutions took on unheard-of proportions. As revolutionary Marxist leader V.I. Lenin explained in his 1916 study *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*:

“Although commodity production still ‘reigns’ and continues to be regarded as the basis of economic life, it has in reality been undermined and the bulk of the profits go to the ‘geniuses’ of financial manipulation. At the basis of these manipulations and swindles lies socialised production; but the immense progress of mankind which achieved this socialisation, goes to benefit...the speculators.”

A case in point is the U.S. bourgeoisie, which for decades has shunned investment that would expand and modernize its decaying industrial capacity or repair the

the cause of repeated imperialist wars to redivide the world, it is impossible to cohere a stable pan-European bourgeois state. A European imperialist ‘superstate’ can be achieved only by the methods of Adolf Hitler, not those of Jacques Delors, the French social-democratic architect of Maastricht.”

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

Only the conquest of state power by the proletariat can lay the basis for a *socialist* United States of Europe and a rationally planned economy.

As proletarian revolutionary internationalists, we have always opposed the EU as an imperialist trade bloc. Dominated by capitalist France and Germany, the EU’s purpose is to increase their competitive edge against their imperialist rivals in the U.S. and Japan through the increased exploitation of the working class of the EU countries. As the price of entry, the weaker EU states were locked into the euro. Now they are going down, scrambling to meet their debt obligations by driving the working class into the ground. It couldn’t have been otherwise.

In 1848, Marx and Engels indicted the bourgeoisie as “unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society” because “it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery.” If the bourgeoisie of that time was unfit to rule, the imperialist rulers today have long passed their sell-by date.

An Empire in Decline

Beginning with the 1898 Spanish-American War, the capitalist rulers of the rapidly developing U.S. set out to conquer the world, seizing Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines for their own plunder. When they emerged as the dominant imperialist power following World War II, the U.S. imperialists boasted of the beginning of the “American Century.” But by the 1970s, they were seeing their dominance challenged by the rising economic might of Germany and Japan. With its treasury drained by the long, losing war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants, the U.S. was no longer the world’s undisputed capitalist powerhouse. This was signaled by the devaluation of the dollar on 15 August 1971.

To reverse its declining fortunes, the U.S. ruling class launched a campaign to increase profitability through the increased exploitation of the working class—closing auto and steel factories, moving production to low-wage plants in the “open shop” South and to neocolonies in Latin America and Asia, increasing productivity through speedup and the institution of “two-tier” wage and benefits packages for younger workers. A key turning point was the smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers union in 1981. It was Democratic president Jimmy Carter who drew up the plan to crush PATCO, which was implemented by his Republican successor, Ronald Reagan. The AFL-CIO bureaucrats let Reagan get away with it,



AFP

Athens, June 28: Greek workers protest government attempt to make workers pay for capitalist crisis.

production for profit. Capitalists invest in expanding productive capacity on the assumption that the additional output—autos, houses, etc.—can be sold at the existing rate of profit, at least. However, during periods of expansion the average rate of profit tends to fall. This situation eventually creates a crisis of overproduction, as capitalists produce more goods and services than can be sold at a satisfactory rate of profit. Thus there is the repeated spectacle of masses of workers losing their jobs and being thrown into destitution because *too much* has been produced. As described by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*:

“Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce.... And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones.”

Marx and Engels underlined that the rise of capitalism and the destruction of the feudal order represented a historic advance in the development of the productive forces—science, industry and technology. Yet capitalism in turn became a fetter on the further development of those productive forces. Out of the destitution and destruction produced by capitalism’s inevitable economic crises, the means of production came to be monopolized by fewer and bigger conglomerates. Their ever-growing need for investment funds and other financing led to the domination of finance capital, that is, of banking goliaths.

By the late 19th century, capitalism reached its ultimate, imperialist stage. The capitalists in the advanced industrial countries were driven to wage wars to redivide the world in order to plunder markets and secure spheres of exploitation in less-developed countries. In their competition for world domination, the imperialist powers engulfed the peoples of the

country’s crumbling bridges, roads, power lines and levees. Instead, it has squandered much of the economic surplus appropriated through the exploitation of labor on a succession of speculative binges. And in fact it was rampant financial speculation in the housing industry that triggered the current economic crisis.

In Europe, such financial swindles have sharply accentuated the contradictions inherent in the European Union, an unstable consortium of rival capitalist states. At the heart of the EU’s contradictions is the fact that the maintenance of a common currency requires a common state power. That is simply not possible under capitalism. The International Communist League long ago debunked the illusion that the EU could lay the basis for a capitalist United States of Europe. In a statement on the Maastricht Treaty, which laid the basis for the euro, the ICL wrote:

“Since capitalism is organised on the basis of particular national states, itself

A Spartacist Pamphlet

Karl Marx Was Right

Capitalist Anarchy
and the
Immiseration of the
Working Class

For Workers Revolution!
For an International Planned
Socialist Economy!

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Bethmann

1934: “Hooverville” shantytown in Seattle (left); new pit opened in Soviet Union’s Kuznetsk coal field. USSR’s planned economy boomed as capitalist U.S. was mired in the Great Depression.



Anatoly Skurikhin

crucially by refusing to call out other unions to shut down the airports. This defeat helped usher in a wave of broken unions and busted strikes.

Like Obama today, Reagan manufactured a debt crisis in order to destroy social programs. The “war on poverty” programs enacted to buy social peace in the inner cities following the mass ghetto upheavals of the 1960s were increasingly shredded. But it took Democratic president Bill Clinton to finally eliminate “welfare as we know it.” Acting on Reagan’s racist demagoguery about black “welfare queens” living off the back of “hard-working taxpayers,” Clinton abolished Aid to Families with Dependent Children for impoverished single mothers and their families.

Reagan had run a huge deficit spending program, slashing taxes for the rich while borrowing massively from Japanese and German bankers as well as oil-rich Arab sheikdoms. The overriding purpose was a huge military buildup for U.S. imperialism’s Cold War drive against the Soviet Union. Despite its bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin, the Soviet workers state continued to embody the main social gains of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The imperialists were determined to reconquer this vast territory—one-sixth of the planet—for their exploitation.

In 1991-92, the capitalists achieved their counterrevolutionary aim of destroying the world’s first workers state. Coming into office on the back of this “victory,” Clinton promised that the “peace dividend” would revitalize the economy by reducing the massive government debt. But the “dividend” was largely channeled into an orgy of speculative investment in telecommunications and Internet services, the so-called dot-com boom of the mid-late 1990s. That bubble burst in 2000-2001, ushering in another recession.

Clinton’s neoliberal Democrats were followed by the Republican neo-cons of the George W. Bush administration. These nuclear cowboys invaded Afghanistan and Iraq to send a message to the rest of the world that the U.S. remained militarily the top dog on the planet. These wars and occupations were financed through foreign borrowing, while the filthy rich got a tax cut that outdid even the free lunch they got under Reagan. Then the housing-price bubble of the early-mid 2000s burst in 2007-2008, touching off a global financial crisis. Today, we have Barack Obama lamely responding to Standard & Poor’s reduction of its AAA rating of U.S. treasury bonds by declaring that the U.S. has “always been and always will be a triple A country.” The stock market responded by taking a \$2 trillion nosedive.

After the Soviet Union’s counterrevolutionary destruction, it appeared that the U.S. imperialists were successful in the quest they had begun almost a century earlier to be the masters of the world. But even as the U.S. has achieved unrivaled military supremacy, its domestic industrial base has continued to corrode. To some in the haughty U.S. ruling class, the decline of the country’s economic might is bereft of any explanation—besides being contrary to “God’s will.” In consequence, a wing of the American bourgeoisie has seemingly gone totally insane.

Even by the lights of their own party’s establishment, the current crop of Republican presidential candidates has gone off the deep end. On the campaign trail in Iowa, Texas governor Rick Perry accused the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, of treason for “printing more money to play politics,” threatening “we would treat him pretty ugly in Texas.” Perry, a dangerous reactionary, is here going after a Republican appointee of the Bush administration whose “soft money” policy has in fact been a boon for the bourgeoisie. By driving real interest rates down below zero, the Fed is essentially paying financial capitalists to borrow from the government—and then invest the money for a profit!

A week before Perry entered the race, he was the star of a 20,000-strong Christian fundamentalist revival meeting where he asked God to save the U.S. economy. Rival presidential candidate Michele Bachmann fervently believes that she and other good Christians are to be gathered in the air to sit at the right hand of God during what some call the coming “Rapture.” In their deranged worldview, Perry and Bachmann have much in common with the mad miracle monk Rasputin, who advised the Russian tsarina in the dying days of the brutal and rotted-out Tsarist Empire. Obama hopes to ride back into the Oval Office as the “sane” alternative, one who can more effectively implement a bipartisan drive to slash every remaining social program that reflects an impulse not to see masses of starving, homeless people in the streets.

There is no question that the current Republican candidates are lunatics. But their lunacy is the reflection of the dangerous irrationality of the U.S. imperialist order. Just as the decadent, crazed and corrupt court of the tsars was swept away by the Russian Revolution, we Marxists are determined to build the revolutionary internationalist party that can lead the workers in overthrowing the decaying rule of American capitalism.

For an International Socialist Planned Economy!

The reformist left pleads that the government “tax the rich” to provide the money for jobs, education, welfare for the poor and other beneficial programs. This refrain was recently taken up by multi-billionaire Warren Buffett in a *New York Times* (14 August) op-ed column titled “Stop Coddling the Super-Rich.” In response, a Fox TV business analyst denounced Buffett, one of the world’s wealthiest financial profiteers, as a “socialist”! Actually, it is the fear that the masses might revolt that concerns Buffett, who opined: “Americans are rapidly losing faith in the ability of Congress to deal with our country’s fiscal problems. Only action that is immediate, real and very substantial will prevent that doubt from morphing into hopelessness. That feeling can create its own reality.”

Amid a sea of millions of unemployed, the corporations and banks are sitting on mountains of cash. But you aren’t going to get your hands on it by appealing to the tax authority of the capitalist state, whose purpose is to guarantee and defend the

interests of the bourgeoisie. To resolve their debt crisis, state and local governments are slashing pensions for retirees to pay off bondholders. To “make the rich pay,” the working class has to smash the rule of the bourgeoisie!

In an ideological climate conditioned by the imperialists’ proclamations that the destruction of the Soviet Union proved Marxism to be a “failed experiment,” the prospect of proletarian socialist revolution might appear implausible. But the collectivized economy in the Soviet Union worked! Despite its isolation in a world dominated by imperialism, the Soviet Union, arising from deep backwardness and the destruction of world war, civil war and imperialist intervention, became an industrial and military powerhouse.

Now, two decades after counterrevolution destroyed the Soviet degenerated

China’s Stalinist regime undermines the social gains of the 1949 Revolution by conciliating imperialism and promoting “market reforms” that strengthen internal counterrevolutionary forces. In its “partnership” with world capital, the Beijing bureaucracy is subsidizing American imperialism through its huge investment in U.S. treasury bonds, which, among other things, are used to finance the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. At the same time, we understand that the defense and international extension of the remaining gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution require a proletarian political revolution to replace the Stalinist bureaucrats with a revolutionary internationalist leadership and a regime of workers democracy.

Moscow, December 1917: New sign over bank nationalized following October Revolution reads, “Second Branch of the People’s Bank of the Russian Republic.”

VAAP



workers state, many in Russia hark back to when they were guaranteed a job, education, housing, health care and vacations, regretting that they were taken in by the myth of capitalist “democracy.” What undermined the collectivized economy, and ultimately laid the basis for the destruction of the Soviet Union itself, was the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, which robbed the workers of their political power and vainly sought to appease the imperialists by selling out workers’ struggles in other countries.

Today, the deep economic crisis in the capitalist countries contrasts sharply with the situation in China, where the industries central to production are collectivized. At the same time that the U.S. and European governments have been bailing out the financial capitalists while making the workers pay, Beijing has massively channeled investment into developing infrastructure and productive capacity. Faced with a growing number of strikes and protests, the regime has increased the income of workers and peasants. However,

As we wrote in our article “Wall Street Nightmare Stalks Working People” (WV No. 921, 26 September 2008):

“You can solve a lot of problems with ‘domestic cash transfers’—make life livable for workers, blacks, Latinos, jobless, homeless, welfare mothers, drug users, etc. And we communists intend to do so. But you have to first smash the power of the bourgeoisie. For that you need to build a workers party, one that doesn’t ‘respect’ the property values of the bourgeoisie, a party that says to the exploited and oppressed: we want more, we want all of it, it ought to be ours, *so take it*. And when we have the wealth of this country, we will begin to build a planned socialist economy on an international scale. Then we can right some historical wrongs and crimes and pay off some debts left over by our rulers, like some tens of billions of dollars to the Vietnamese and others whose countries have been maimed under the passing treads of American tanks. As for ‘compensation’ to the people who have driven the United States to ruin, we can offer to those who don’t get in our way that they will live to see their grandchildren prosper in a truly humane society.”■

England...

(continued from page 16)

Qaddafi's deputy foreign minister urged Cameron to step down on the grounds that "violent repression of peaceful demonstrations by police" showed that "Cameron and his government have lost all legitimacy" (London *Daily Telegraph*, 11 August). At the outset of the bombing, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) issued a statement calling on workers around the world to take a stand for military defence of semicolonial Libya against the imperialist attack (printed in WV No. 977, 1 April).

The flames that engulfed English cities lit up the grotesque class inequality and racist oppression that are endemic to British capitalism. While venal Conservative and Labour spokesmen pontificate against the evils of "looting," everyone knows that the capitalist rulers are guilty of looting the country's wealth. The City of London is an international citadel of finance capital whose gleaming office towers represent the opulence that is generated by the grinding exploitation of the working people. Not far from the City are some of the poorest districts in London, where a large percentage of minorities are concentrated. When boom turned to bust, the banks were bailed out (and the gigantic bankers' bonuses were protected) at massive cost to the taxpayers. Now, at Cameron's instigation, local councils have begun proceedings to evict families of "rioters" from public housing, while work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith proposed withdrawing benefits from those convicted.

"There Is Nothing Here for Us"

The rioting spread so dramatically because, on top of decades of grinding poverty affecting whites as well as blacks and Asians, the working people are being fleeced to pay for the current economic crisis. Nearly a million people aged 16 to



Cops arrest man in South London as revolt spreads in city's impoverished neighborhoods, August 8.

tan Police—truly one of London's most dangerous armed gangs—which has been exposed for receiving hefty sums of cash (in plastic shopping bags) from the gang of Rupert Murdoch & Co. Intimately connected to these outfits, Tory and Labour politicians howl against the "criminality" of anyone who helped himself to a pair of sneakers or a bottle of water. The politicians' hypocrisy is indeed rich in light of the recent scandal over Members of Parliament (MPs) making taxpayers shell out for the upkeep of their second homes, not to mention the cost of your "duck island" or cleaning out the moat at your country estate!

People accused of involvement in "rioting" are being thrown into prison on ludicrously trivial charges. Two white youths were sentenced to four years in prison for having (jokingly) summoned friends on Facebook to a "riot" that never happened. In Brixton, a black neighbourhood in South London, one person got a six-

gests, as an immediate measure, that the government *give the "looters" £10,000 each and let them go!*

Rioting, however, can do nothing to eliminate the grinding poverty of Britain's working class. As the Spartacist League/U.S. wrote when Los Angeles exploded following the 1992 acquittal of the cops who beat black motorist Rodney King nearly to death, the looting there was "indeed understandable, but won't do anything to eliminate the entrenched poverty of America's inner cities.... *The point is not to seize articles of consumption but to expropriate the means of production. And that takes a leap in consciousness and organization to do away with the capitalist order*" (WV No. 551, 15 May 1992).

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), followers of the late Tony Cliff, ludicrously equates looting with the expropriation of the means of production—i.e., the seizure and collectivisation of industry, the banks, etc., by the proletariat. The SWP writes: "Karl Marx was exactly right when he talked about expropriating the expropriators, taking back what they have taken from us. That's what looting by poor working class people represents and in that sense it is a deeply political act" (*Socialist Worker*, 13 August). The idea that looting offers a solution to the grinding poverty, racism and oppression besetting black and Asian communities shows that the SWP will mindlessly cheerlead for anything that moves, no matter how far removed from socialist consciousness it may be. But the bottom line for these reformists is to refurbish Labour's image, which they do with calls to "Jail the Tories, not young people" (*Socialist Worker*, 20 August) and by hailing what they call a "rising against Tory Britain" (*Socialist Worker*, 13 August).

Riots are an expression of despair, often including ugly incidents of indiscriminate attacks on individuals. The killing of three young Asian men in Birmingham by a car driven straight at them is a heinous crime. The racial tensions between blacks and Asians during the riots were an outgrowth of the "divide and rule" policies the British rulers apply to divide the proletariat and weaken its struggles, as they did historically to maintain their Empire. In an effort to defuse those tensions, Tariq Jahan, father of one of the victims, courageously appealed for calm, saying, "I lost my son. Blacks, Asians, whites—we all live in the same community." He added: "Step forward if you want to lose your sons. Otherwise, calm down and go home—please."

There is an urgent need for the working class and oppressed to struggle against the relentless attacks on their livelihoods. The question is how. The current deep-going economic crisis is part and parcel of the normal workings of the capitalist system. There will be no end to the misery, poverty and repression that afflict the vast majority of the population short of the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order and the establishment of rule by the working class. The SL/B seeks to forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party—a Leninist-Trotskyist party—based

on a programme for international socialist revolution.

Mobilize Workers' Social Power!

Britain is the latest country in Europe to be swept by major unrest, reflecting seething anger among the working classes against relentless attacks on their living standards. Particularly in Greece, the working class has waged major class battles, including several general strikes in recent years, but the impact of these struggles has been undermined by the reformist misleaders of the working class, who accept the need for austerity as a solution to the economic crisis. In Britain, the fact that the pent-up fury against the government's attacks on the working class is being dissipated in outbursts of rioting testifies to the low level of class struggle over the past two decades. This is due in no small part to the failure of the trade-union bureaucracy to mount any effective struggle against austerity and job cuts, allowing the capitalist rulers to ride roughshod over the working people.

Trade-union membership in Britain today is concentrated among low-paid workers in the public sector, with minorities heavily represented. The membership of the rail unions in London Underground and the national railway network, as well as the civil service and postal unions, is multiethnic. Together, these unions have considerable social power. Transport workers in London for example, have the power to bring the city to a halt, including its precious financial district. But mobilising that power requires a political struggle against the reformist trade-union bureaucracy, which is tied to the Labour Party and to the racist capitalist order.

It is through the intervention of Marxists into class and social struggles that a revolutionary workers party will be forged. Such a party would champion the interests of all the oppressed, fighting against racism and other manifestations of chauvinism. An integral part of building this party is the fight for a class-struggle leadership in the trade unions. In Britain today, such a leadership would appeal to disaffected youth by waging a fight for jobs, through demands such as a shorter working week with no loss in pay. A class-struggle leadership would demand union control of hiring and union-run job training and skills programmes to recruit minority youth into the workforce and into the unions. The task of a Leninist party is to bring about the necessary change in consciousness in the proletariat, leading to the understanding that a society run in the interests of the working people—with jobs for all and a decent standard of living—cannot be achieved within the framework of capitalism.

From the point of view of Britain's working class and oppressed minorities, it makes little difference whether the government is Tory or Labour, historically the social-democratic vehicle that tied the working class to the capitalist order. When the riots erupted both parties (as well as the Liberal Democrats) vied to be seen as the best defenders of the police. Not a single Labour MP—neither the so-called "lefts" nor the handful of black MPs—condemned the cops who killed Mark Duggan. Far from it: Labour spokesmen attacked the government from the right, denouncing the planned cuts to the police budget. Labour Party leader Ed Miliband said, "Police on our streets make our communities safer and make the public feel safer" (BBC, 11 August).

Tottenham's black Labour MP, David Lammy, ranted to the press about the "totally unacceptable" behaviour of the rioters, voicing only the mildest criticisms of the cops who gunned down Mark Duggan. Nevertheless, Lammy, who symbolises a very small layer of middle-class blacks, was subjected to an outrageous racist tirade by reactionary historian David Starkey on BBC television. Black MP for Hackney Diane Abbott, once regarded as a Labour "left," chimed in with the "law and order" brigade, calling for curfews to help "regain control of the streets." Labour's backing for the



Derry, 1972: British troops occupying Northern Ireland round up "suspects" in crackdown against Catholic minority.

24 are unemployed. Youth joblessness overall has reached almost 20 per cent and is almost 50 per cent for black youth. Official figures for riot-affected areas such as Hackney, East London, show 44 per cent of children living in poverty.

A growing number of youth are being cast out of productive economic life and dubbed Neets—"not in employment, education or training." The government tripled tuition fees in higher education and abolished the Education Maintenance Allowance, a small stipend that enabled poor youth to attend college, sparking militant student protests last December. Faced with cutting its budget by 75 per cent, Haringey local council, which covers Tottenham area, closed most of its youth clubs. One youth remarked, "At least we had somewhere to go. Now we walk down the streets, we get pulled over by police. There is nothing here for us" (London *Guardian*, 29 July).

There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts!

In looking at the British "justice" system today, one does not have to be a Marxist to see what class it serves. No one has been arrested from the Metropoli-

month sentence for stealing bottles of water worth £3.50. In Manchester an alcoholic who had just been released from prison and had only £4 in his pocket was sentenced to 16 months for taking a box of doughnuts from Krispy Kreme. The truth is that in poor neighbourhoods such as Tottenham, there isn't much to steal.

The blatant class bias of capitalist "justice" in Britain today recalls the 17th-century English poem protesting the enclosure (i.e., theft) of common lands that were being privatised by the rising bourgeoisie:

"They hang the man and flog the woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leave the greater villain loose
Who steals the common off the goose."

Or, as Friedrich Engels, co-author with Karl Marx of the *Communist Manifesto*, aptly wrote in his 1845 book, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, the majority of offences against property arise from some form of want because "what a man has, he does not steal." With the masses being driven to rioting by the increasingly abject conditions of their lives, the Spartacist League/Britain sug-

racist cops is not new: When he was London mayor, Labour’s Ken Livingstone was unwavering in his support for the police who in 2005 brutally killed Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes, deemed a “terrorism suspect.” Mark Duggan was killed under the Metropolitan Police’s “Operation Trident,” which supposedly targets “gun crime” among blacks. This operation was begun under Labour home secretary David Blunkett, in consultation with William Bratton, the former police chief of New York and other major U.S. cities whom David Cameron proposes to employ in London.

Minorities and the 1984-85 Miners Strike

The link between class struggle against the capitalist state and the fight against racial oppression seems remote today, but this was not always the case. It is not an accident that the last major assault by the state on Britain’s predominantly black and Asian inner-city areas took place in 1985, the same year as the defeat of the heroic miners strike. For more than a year of bitter class war, miners and their families had defended themselves against an army of police sent by Margaret Thatcher’s Tory government to occupy the coalfields. In the course of the strike, powerful bonds were forged between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and black and Asian minorities. While blacks and Asians saw in the (predominantly white) miners union a powerful force battling against the state and became enthusiastic supporters of the strike, many miners became convinced of the importance of combating racial oppression.

The defeat of the NUM dealt a severe blow to the workers movement in this country, the effects of which—from accelerating deindustrialisation to gutting the unions—are still felt today. For minority communities, the strike’s defeat also had grave ramifications. In the space of a few weeks, the cops staged racist provocations that sparked explosions of anger in major black and Asian neighbourhoods. A police provocation in September 1985 in Birmingham’s Handsworth was followed weeks later by the police shooting of a black woman, Cherry Groce, in Brixton, sparking a revolt there. Shortly afterwards, Liverpool’s Toxteth area also erupted. When the police invaded Broadwater Farm on 7 October 1985 in the aftermath of the racist cop killing of Cynthia Jarrett, they got more than they bargained for. As residents defended their communities in a raging battle lasting several days, one cop was killed. For this, three innocent youth—Winston Silcott, Engin Raghıp and Mark Braithwaite—served years in prison as the result of a police frame-up.

Following the revolts in Handsworth and Brixton, the SL/B noted that in the aftermath of the miners strike, Thatcher was intent on teaching a bloody lesson to the black and Asian population that had warmly supported the miners, warning that this would mean escalating racist attacks. The article stated:

“The Spartacist League has fought to tap the sense of unity between minorities and trade union militants kindled in the miners strike, as part of our perspective of building the multiracial revolutionary workers party which will be a tribune of all the oppressed. We have fought to mobilise the integrated Birmingham labour movement for defence of the Handsworth community against the cop terror. The same is needed in Brixton

Correction

In “Greece: Mass Anger over Savage Austerity” (WV No. 983, 8 July) the caption of a photo of Communist-led partisans in December 1944 stated, “Greek Stalinists went on to disarm workers, enter capitalist government.” In fact, the Stalinists had joined the capitalist government in September 1944 and resigned from it in early December.



John Harris/IFL

September 1984: Cops and picketers clash during heroic British coal miners strike (top); Spartacist League/Britain at Brighton march calls for class-struggle solidarity against union-busting Thatcher government.

Workers Hammer



and elsewhere. Protest strike action by London’s heavily black and Asian Tube and bus workers, for example, could make the racist bosses put a halt to their reign of terror in Brixton. But that takes a political struggle against the racist, pro-capitalist labour misleaders.”

—*Workers Hammer* No. 73, October 1985

It wasn’t mainly the repression by the viciously anti-union Thatcher government that ensured the defeat of the miners strike. The Labour Party leadership under Neil Kinnock and the Trades Union Congress bureaucracy were openly hostile to the strike. Particularly responsible for the defeat were the “left” trade-union leaders who failed to strike alongside the miners. This includes the dockers union leaders, who sent their members back to work twice during the miners strike. A few years later, the dockers union itself was decimated. The trade-union “lefts” were wedded to the Labour Party, to “gradual change” through Parliament, and hence to the capitalist order.

When the black Labour leader of Haringey council, Bernie Grant, voiced the simple truth that the cops who invaded Broadwater Farm got “a bloody good hiding,” he was widely denounced, including by the Labour leadership. Grant later apologised, but he remained popular among blacks until his death in 2000. Although he was regarded as a troublemaker by the Labour Party leadership, Grant served Labour’s purpose, notably in 1993 when he helped prevent an explosion of rage from “getting out of hand” following the death of Jamaican woman Joy Gardner at the hands of cops who had seized her for deportation. Above all, Grant played his part in fostering illusions among black youth in Labour, the party that had introduced racist virginity tests for South Asian women entering Britain when it was in office in 1974-79.

The unfettered financial boom that characterised the Thatcher years went hand in hand with the destruction of manufacturing jobs, which continued throughout Labour’s years in office. Among those thrown onto the dole queues were the descendants of immigrants from former Caribbean and Indian colonies brought over to do low-paid work in times of labour shortage, particularly after World War II. Not only the former coal and steel

producing areas but also the textile manufacturing towns of Oldham and Bradford, which employed thousands of Asian workers, became wastelands of chronic unemployment and poverty.

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Today Labour is lurching towards right-wing populism, which is inherently racist, competing with the fascist English Defence League (EDL) for the allegiance of backward white workers. In recent years, Labour leaders and trade-union bureaucrats have embraced the slogan “British jobs for British workers,” historically a rallying cry of the fascists that became prevalent during reactionary strikes against foreign workers on construction sites in 2009. The reformist Socialist Party (SP), section of Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International, wholeheartedly supported these strikes. We categorically denounced these actions and underlined the need for defence of immigrant workers. We pointed out that a class-struggle leadership in the unions would start from an internationalist framework, organising immigrant workers into the unions and collaborating with workers across national boundaries.

In keeping with its long record of supporting the police and prison guards, the SP echoed the Labour leaders during the hoopla over the recent riots, sympathetically quoting a spokesman from the Metropolitan Police Federation bemoaning the low morale among cops due to the government’s intended cuts (socialist-party.org.uk, 8 August). Harassment by cops—lyingly depicted by the SP as fellow workers—has now reached the point where black people are **26 times** more likely than whites to be stopped and searched by police in England and Wales, according to a study by London School of Economics and others.

The number of deaths, particularly of black people, in police custody is staggering. In March, reggae artist Smiley Culture (David Emmanuel) died during a police raid at his Surrey home, with the cops making the incredible claim that he stabbed himself to death. The same month, Kingsley Burrell Brown died from injuries sustained in the course of being committed to hospital under the Mental Health Act by police in Birming-

ham. Last month, 21-year-old Demetre Fraser supposedly “committed suicide” by jumping from the 11th floor of a high-rise block in Birmingham when confronted by police. In a single week in August, three people died at the hands of police: 27-year-old Dale Burns died in Cumbria when police subjected him to shocks from a Taser gun and pepper spray; black 25-year-old Jacob Michael died after being pepper sprayed in Cheshire; 53-year-old Philip Hulmes died in police custody in Bolton.

The racist backlash against “looters” has emboldened the EDL, which smelled an opportunity to mobilise vigilantes in some of the riot-hit areas. Under previous Labour governments, the EDL had drawn strength from the “war on terror” that primarily targeted Muslims, as well as from the relentless anti-immigrant campaigns. The EDL is a deadly threat to blacks as well as to Asians, against whom it has staged numerous racist provocations in the past and threatens to do again in East London on 3 September. And make no mistake: these fascists pose a direct threat to the entire working class, as potential shock troops to be deployed against rising class struggle. It is the task of the workers movement to stop them in their tracks.

As distinct from the liberals and reformists who lead Unite Against Fascism, we oppose calls on the capitalist state to “ban the fascists.” It is not hard to see why. In response to the planned EDL march in East London and an anti-fascist counter-demonstration, Home Secretary Theresa May has banned *all* demonstrations in five London boroughs for a period of 30 days. As *Workers Hammer* No. 209 (Winter 2009-2010) declared, EDL provocations “must be met with massive protest centred on the trade unions mobilised for defence of Muslims, immigrants and all the intended victims of the EDL scum.” The article continued:

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

Out of the social struggles that will inevitably be waged by workers and minorities will arise a new generation of militant leaders. What’s needed is a party dedicated to the task of leading the working class to power. This requires socialist revolution to overthrow the entire capitalist order. Fundamental change in the interests of the working people can only come about through revolutionary internationalist class struggle, which must shatter the framework of capitalism worldwide. Socialist revolution will lay the basis for rationally planned economies based on production for need, not for profit, and for a qualitative development of the productive forces, opening the road to the elimination of poverty and the creation of an egalitarian socialist society. ■

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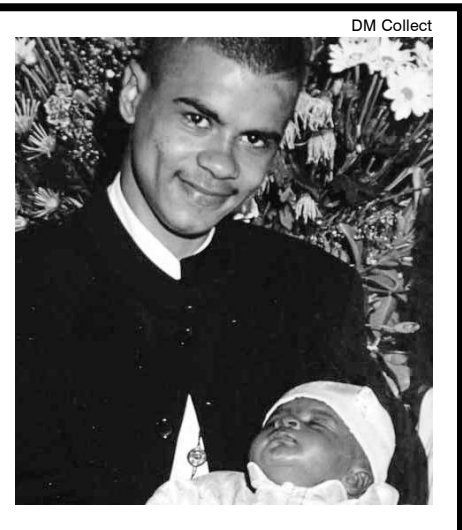
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Capitalism Loots Wealth Made by Working People

English Cities Erupt Over Racist Cop Killing, Austerity



August 8: Youth in East London confront riot cops on third night of upheaval following racist police killing of Mark Duggan (inset). Reuters

LONDON—On 4 August, the cops shot and killed a young black man, Mark Duggan, in Tottenham, North London. Contrary to police disinformation circulated at the time, Duggan did not fire any shots. But that did not stop the press from branding the victim as a “gang member” killed in a “shootout” with police. The family of Mark Duggan, a father of four, were given almost no information about his death. Instead they were told to wait for the results of an inquiry by the Independent Police Complaints Commission, known among blacks as the police cover-up commission. Two days after Duggan was gunned down, his family members took part in a protest of some 300 people at a Tottenham police station demanding information, but none was given. Reportedly, police attacked a young woman demonstrator, knocking her to the ground.

There is a limit to the endurance of minority youth, who have been treated like criminals since the time they could walk. For black and South Asian youth in this country, degradation at the hands of the cops, including the relentless use of “stop and search,” is calculated to underline the message: you have no rights whatsoever. The killing of Mark Duggan was one atrocity too far. Anger exploded. Tottenham erupted in flames in scenes reminiscent of the riots in Tottenham’s Broadwater Farm housing project in

1985, which followed the police killing of a black mother.

Little of substance has changed in the lives of black people since that time. This time around, the revolt in Tottenham ignited a mass of social tinder at the bottom of British capitalist society. Rioting spread like wildfire to other areas of London and to parts of Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. Black, Asian and white youth took to the streets to give the finger to the police, the government and a society in which they manifestly have no stake. For four days, riots by the impoverished and dispossessed swept cities and towns. Britain was exposed to the world as the racist, class-divided hellhole it is.

The arrogant rulers of decaying British capitalism have long regarded workers and the poor, and especially their black and Asian components, as merely an “underclass” deserving neither of education nor training, worthy only of state repression. In an attempt to deny that the cause of the riots is entrenched economic hardship, exacerbated by his government’s savage budget cuts, Conservative (Tory) prime minister David Cameron blamed the riots on “moral decay” and “criminality pure and simple,” insisting

that they “were not about poverty.” Vowing to hunt down and jail “suspects,” Cameron seized the opportunity to massively strengthen repression. A vast police dragnet has so far arrested some 2,000 people, on any and every pretext, using information gleaned from trawling social networking sites and CCTV footage (and of course hacking phones). Television news has shown endless footage of gangs of cops brutally smashing down doors of people’s homes to arrest “suspects.”

Shredding any semblance of “due process,” the police are charging suspects before compiling evidence and opposing bail for the majority of those arrested. Cases involving minor offences that would normally result in a reprimand and would not even go to the lower magistrates’ courts are being referred to the Crown courts, which have greater sentencing powers. The vast majority of those arrested are being jailed, regardless of the alleged offence or of any previous convictions. Such a blanket policy of incarceration will vastly increase the numbers of people with criminal records which, for many youth, particularly blacks and Asians, is enough to ensure that they never work in their lives.

The draconian measures meted out in the aftermath of the riots are an escalation of the type of harsh repression meted out to students protesting against education cuts last year. The message from the capitalist rulers to the working class and the oppressed is clear: meekly accept the relentless attacks on jobs and living standards, or else! It is in the direct interests of the working class, especially the trade unions, to oppose these police-state measures and to demand that all charges be dropped against those arrested. ***We demand: Immediate release of all those arrested and jailed for “looting”!***

Prominent politicians are calling for the use of plastic bullets and other weapons that the British state has historically deployed against the oppressed Catholics of Northern Ireland. The same capitalist ruling class that is brutally cracking down on dissent and opposition at home is engaged in imperialist subjugation abroad. Under the Labour Party government, British imperialist armed forces were in the forefront of the bloody occupations of neo-colonial Afghanistan and Iraq. Under the present Tory-Liberal coalition government, British imperialism is playing a leading role in the NATO terror bombing of oil-rich Libya. Mocking Cameron’s lying claim that NATO bombs are “protecting civilians” and upholding “democracy,”

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