

Troy Davis Execution: Racist State Murder

Troy Davis is dead. At 11:08 p.m. on September 21, Davis, a 42-year-old black man, was murdered by the legal guardians of the capitalist ruling class. For 22 years, Davis fought to prove his innocence of the 1989 killing of off-duty police officer Mark MacPhail in Savannah, Georgia, only to spend the last moments of his life strapped to an execution gurney. For its part, the U.S. Supreme Court went through the charade of reviewing his petition for a last-minute stay of execution. As protests took place around the world, hundreds of Davis's supporters rallied outside the Jackson, Georgia, prison—officially known as the Diagnostic and Classification Prison—while millions followed the story on TVs, radios and cell phones, hoping for a semblance of justice for this black man caught in the American “justice” system.

The killing of Troy Davis was racist legal lynching! In place of hooded KKK nightriders were pin-striped prosecutors and black-robed judges, along with the Board of Pardons and Paroles, which turned down Davis's bid for clemency the day before the execution. In place of the lynch rope were needles dispensing the life-ending chemical cocktail. The substantial evidence of Davis's innocence meant nothing. A white uniformed enforcer of capitalist law and order had been killed, and this black life had to be taken in return. Here is a stark demonstration of the workings of the capitalist state—an instrument of organized violence to protect the class rule and profits of the tiny handful of capitalists against the workers and the oppressed. The death penalty is the ultimate sanction of a “justice” system that is not only stacked against workers and the poor but also, in this society founded on slavery and maintained on a bedrock of black oppression, racist to its core.

The story of Troy Davis's frame-up is a familiar one for black people in this country. In 1991, he was sentenced to death after a frame-up conviction based on questionable “eyewitness” identifications, dubious accounts that he confessed and testimony coerced by the cops. Not a shred of physical evidence linked him to the killing. Seven of the prosecution's nine witnesses have since recanted. The only holdouts were a man who may be the actual killer and another who first denied being able to identify the shooter, only to finger Davis at trial two years later.

What sets Davis's case apart were the worldwide calls to stop his execution, ultimately including even former FBI director William Sessions and former Georgia Congressman Bob Barr—both staunch proponents of capital punishment—as well as the Pope and ex-president Jimmy Carter. Protests were held in cities internationally following the signing of his death warrant on September 6. In the last days of his life over 600,000 people signed petitions on Davis's behalf. Just as a federal court judge last year



**September 21:
Protesters rally
outside Georgia
prison on day
Troy Davis
(inset) was put
to death.**



Georgia Department of Corrections (inset), Crawford/Atlanta Journal-Constitution

dismissed evidence of Davis's innocence as “smoke and mirrors,” the state authorities answered these calls for mercy with contempt.

Almost a century ago, Socialist leader Eugene V. Debs powerfully condemned the barbarism of the death penalty, writing in a May 1913 letter: “The taking of human life through criminal impulse or in an hour of passion by an individual is not to be compared to the immeasurably greater crime committed by the State when it deliberately puts to death the individual charged with such crime. Society may not consistently condemn murder as long as it is itself red-handed with that crime.”

As Marxists, we oppose the death penalty on principle and everywhere—from the capitalist U.S., Japan, Iran and Russia to the Chinese deformed workers state. This principle applies for the guilty as well as the innocent. We do not accord the state the right to decide who shall live and who shall die. **Abolish the racist death penalty!**

Legacy of Slavery

Other than the U.S. and Japan, every advanced capitalist country has eliminated capital punishment as part of its criminal code. The European bourgeoisies are brutally repressive. But the continued use of the death penalty in the U.S. speaks to the particular depravity of this

country's capitalist rulers. More fundamentally, capital punishment in the U.S. is rooted in the origins of its capitalist system, which was built on the backs of black slaves. Under the Slave Codes, blacks were killed with impunity for “crimes” ranging from insolence toward whites to rebellion against the slave masters.

This legacy can be seen today in the dungeons of death row. Of the more than 3,200 men and women there, over 40 percent are black, and another 12 percent are Latino. Among the 36 states that maintain the death penalty, California has the largest death row population. But capital punishment remains a largely Southern institution. Over 70 percent of executions since the Supreme Court reinstituted the death penalty in 1976 have taken place in the states of the former Confederacy—and more than half of those in Texas and Virginia. In Davis's Georgia, black males make up 15 percent of the population but constitute nearly half of those on death row.

Among those speaking out against the racist death penalty is the family of James Anderson, a black auto worker who was brutally murdered by white-supremacists in Jackson, Mississippi, on June 26 (see “Lynch Mob Murder of Black Worker,” WV No. 985, 2 September). In a letter to the Hinds County district attorney, Ander-

son's sister Barbara Anderson Young asked that he “not seek the death penalty for anyone involved in James' murder,” noting the family's religious opposition to capital punishment. She added, “We also oppose the death penalty because it historically has been used in Mississippi and the South primarily against people of color for killing whites.”

The cheapness of black life to the American ruling class is evident not just in who is sent to death row, but also in whose loss of life constitutes a capital offense. Although blacks and whites are murder victims in roughly the same numbers, 80 percent of those executed have been convicted of killing a white person. Just hours before Troy Davis was put to death, the state of Texas executed Lawrence Brewer, one of three racist thugs convicted for the gruesome 1998 killing of James Byrd, a black man who was decapitated as he was dragged to death from the back of a pickup truck. While Texas has carried out over 470 executions since 1976, Brewer became only the second white person ever executed in the state for the murder of a black person.

The discriminatory application of the death penalty was sanctified by the U.S. Supreme Court 24 years ago in the case of Warren McCleskey, a black prisoner who

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Troy Davis...

(continued from page 1)

was executed in Georgia in 1991. McCleskey’s attorneys presented the Court with an authoritative study detailing that black people in Georgia convicted of killing whites were sentenced to death 22 *times* more frequently than those convicted of killing blacks. In rejecting McCleskey’s appeal, the Supreme Court explicitly acknowledged that to accept this premise would throw “into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system.” In its callous pronouncement, the court expressed a basic truth. McCleskey was a victim of the racism that pervades the criminal justice system—who the cops stop on the street, who the prosecutors choose to indict, what charges and sentences are sought, who sits on juries, who gets paroled and who gets executed.

The buildup to Troy Davis’s execution sparked something of a public discussion on capital punishment in the bourgeois press, especially as it intersected the ascendance of Texas governor Rick Perry as a leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination. Earlier this month, Texas authorities had planned to execute four prisoners in the space of a week. Among those was Duane Buck, whose September 15 execution was stayed by the Supreme Court at the last minute.



October 1998:
NYC demonstration in defense of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Convicted of killing his former girlfriend and a friend of hers in 1995, Buck was one of seven black men sentenced to death based on the “expert” testimony of a Texas prison psychologist that because they were black they should be expected to engage in violent behavior in the future!

Death Penalty: Bipartisan Policy

At the September 7 Republican candidates’ debate, Perry received a wild ovation for having overseen 234 executions. He further burnished his credentials by assuring moderator Brian Williams that this body count never cost him a wink of sleep. In an editorial titled “Cheering on the Death Machine,” the *New York Times* (11 September) declared that Perry’s

“attitude about death may make sense in the hard-edged Republican primaries, but other voters should have serious doubts about a man who seems to have none.”

There is no question that the sinister Christian fundamentalist Perry is an outright reactionary, one of several in the Republican contest. But the Democrats—the other party of racist capitalist rule—are themselves no slouches in administering the rulers’ assembly line of death. Barack Obama, a supporter of the death penalty, refused to intervene as time ran out for Davis, with press secretary Jay Carney declaring: “It is not appropriate for the president of the United States to weigh in on specific cases like this one, which is a state prosecution.”

Obama was not so shy about “weighing in” on the case of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther spokesman and a MOVE supporter who was framed up and sentenced to death on false charges of killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1981. State and federal courts have repeatedly refused to hear the massive evidence of Mumia’s innocence, including another man’s confession to the killing. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Michael Smerconish, a right-wing Philadelphia journalist leading the calls for Mumia’s head, asked Obama about Mumia’s case. According to Smerconish, Obama replied by denying knowing much about the case while assuring him nevertheless that anyone convicted of killing a cop should be executed or imprisoned for life.

What to expect of the Democrats can be seen in the case of Shaka Sankofa, who was executed in June 2000 at the height of the presidential campaign in the face of international opposition similar to that which sought to stop Davis’s execution. As then-governor of Texas George W. Bush and his advisers weighed the political risks of stopping the execution—or not—his Democratic opponent, Al Gore, not only reaffirmed his commitment to the death penalty but gave the go-ahead to execute a likely innocent man, declaring that “mistakes are inevitable.” Eight years earlier, Bill Clinton interrupted his first presidential campaign by flying back to Arkansas, where he was governor, to oversee the execution of Rickey Ray Rector, a brain-damaged black man.

The liberals at the *New York Times* may be appalled that Rick Perry and the Republican right openly revel in state murder and indifference to the likelihood of killing innocent people. But Perry & Co. are only giving voice to what has been ruling-class policy—implemented by Democrats and Republicans alike—to massively bolster the repressive forces of the capitalist state. It was Clinton’s 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act that cut off the possibilities of presenting new evidence of innocence by eviscerating the right of federal *habeas corpus* to overturn state death sentences. By 2010, the prison population had reached 2.3 million people, over half of whom were black and Latino, the majority convicted on nonviolent drug charges. In the calculations of the American bourgeoisie, the urban ghettos, which used to provide a reservoir of unskilled labor for the auto plants and steel mills, are simply written off as an expendable population, revealing the racist rulers’ impulse to genocide.

While a widely cited poll shows that



TROTSKY

Labor Struggles and the Capitalist State

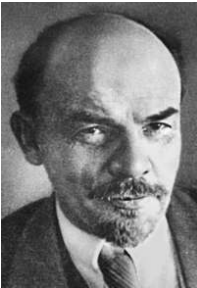
In fighting company union-busting, long-shoremen in Longview, Washington, are confronting anti-labor laws enforced by government agencies, the courts and the police. Drawing some lessons of the successful 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike, Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon pointed out that many workers were learning from their own experience that the state was not neutral but was an agency of the capitalist class in sup-

pressing labor struggles. He also explained that strike strategy and tactics must be guided by a realistic assessment of the actual balance of class forces in the concrete situation.

This spirit of determined struggle was combined at the same time with a realistic appraisal of the relation of forces and the limited objectives of the fight. Without this all the preparations and all the militancy of the strikers might well have been wasted and brought the reaction of a crushing defeat. The strike was understood to be a preliminary, partial struggle with the objective of establishing the union and compelling the bosses to “recognize” it. When they got that they stopped and called it a day. The strong union that has emerged from the strike will be able to fight again and to protect its membership in the meantime. The accomplishment is modest enough. But if we want to play an effective part in the labor movement we must not allow ourselves to forget that the American working class is just beginning to move on the path of the class struggle and, in its great majority, stands yet before the first task of establishing stable unions. Those who understand the task of the day and accomplish it prepare the future. The others merely chatter.

As in every strike of any consequence, the workers involved in the Minneapolis struggle also had an opportunity to see the government at work and to learn some practical lessons as to its real function. The police force of the city, under the direction of the Republican mayor, supplemented by a horde of “special deputies,” were lined up solidly on the side of the bosses. The police and deputies did their best to protect the strikebreakers and keep some trucks moving, although their best was not good enough. The mobilization of the militia by the Farmer-Labor governor was a threat against the strikers, even if the militia-men were not put on the street. The strikers will remember that threat. In a sense it can be said that the political education of a large section of the strikers began with this experience.

—James P. Cannon, “Minneapolis and Its Meaning,” *New International* (July 1934)



LENIN

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nearly two-thirds of the population continues to support the death penalty, there has been a drop in public support over the past several years. The fact that more than 130 people on death row have been proven innocent since 1973, including through DNA testing in recent years, has given sections of the ruling class some pause in the accelerated rush to execution, and juries have become a little more reluctant to issue death sentences. On March 9, Illinois became the fifth state since 2004 to eliminate the death penalty.

In their attempts to fine-tune the system of capitalist repression, liberals often promote the living death of “life without parole” as an alternative to state execution. A *New York Times* (12 September) editorial upholds life without parole as “a sound option” in capital cases even though it complains that this sentence is otherwise often misused. The *Times* pointed out that blacks make up 56.4 percent of those serving life without parole in the U.S. but only 37.5 percent of the country’s prison population. This statistic further underscores that there can be no fair or “humane” system of “justice” for minorities or for the working class as a whole in a society based on the exploitation of labor and maintained through the special oppression of black people.

While the face of death row is now primarily black and Latino, fighters for labor’s cause have also been targeted for death by the capitalist state: the Haymarket anarchists, labor organizers who fought for the eight-hour day and were put to death in 1877; IWW organizer Joe Hill, executed in 1915; anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti, who died in the electric chair in 1927. This ruling-class venom toward those perceived as challenging their oppressive rule is seen today in the death sentence hanging over the head of Mumia, a prize-winning journalist renowned as a powerful voice for the oppressed.

Following the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, James P. Cannon, founder and secretary of the International Labor Defense, wrote: “It is the vengeful, cruel and murderous class which the workers must fight and conquer before the regime of imprisonment, torture and murder can be ended. This is the message from the chair of death. This is the lesson of the Sacco-Vanzetti case” (“A Living Monument to Sacco and Vanzetti,” *Labor Defender*, October 1927). This too must be the lesson of the case of Troy Davis, whose murder at the hands of the state will be avenged when a workers party leads all the exploited and oppressed in a socialist revolution that sweeps away the entire barbaric apparatus of capitalist repression. ■

Partisan Defense Committee
July 2006 Pamphlet \$1

The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Is Innocent!

Anatomy of a Frame-Up

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This pamphlet arms activists in the struggle for Mumia’s freedom by presenting the political basis of the state vendetta against Mumia and the explosive evidence which completely destroys the more than two-decades-long frame-up of this eloquent fighter for black freedom.

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Reformists Cheer Libyan “Rebels”—Flunkies for NATO

Imperialists Overthrow Qaddafi Regime

The following article is reprinted with a minor factual correction from Workers Hammer No. 216 (Autumn 2011), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

WORKERS HAMMER

The fall of Tripoli on 21 August marked the overthrow of the bonapartist bourgeois regime of Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi at the hands of the imperialist powers. Spearheaded by Britain and France and backed by the U.S., in March the world’s most powerful imperialist countries unleashed a massive military onslaught. The assault on Libya carried out by NATO was authorised by a United Nations Security Council resolution that claimed the operation aimed to “protect civilians.” NATO subjected Tripoli and other areas of Libya to unrelenting aerial bombardment while “special forces” carried out covert operations on the ground. According to a NATO statement, between 31 March and 31 August, the imperialist alliance carried out a “total of 21,090 sorties, including 7,920 strike sorties.” These deadly bombing raids did not stop with the fall of Tripoli—NATO planes continue to pound areas held by forces loyal to Qaddafi including Sirte and Bani Walid. Several attempts by the imperialists to assassinate Qaddafi have so far failed but an intensive man-hunt for him continues.

The imperialist bombardment posed pointblank the need for defence of Libya. In a statement we issued at the start of the bombing, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) called on workers around the world to take a stand for military defence of Libya against the imperialist powers, without giving any political support to Qaddafi’s capitalist regime. We noted that the imperialist intervention, which had the blessings of the sheikhs, kings and military bonapartists of the Arab League, would slaughter countless innocent people.

Prior to the imperialist attack, the conflict in Libya took the form of a civil war, overlain by tribal and regional divisions, between Qaddafi’s Tripoli-centred government and the imperialist-backed opposition forces concentrated in the east, a conflict in which Marxists had no side. But with the NATO bombing, the civil war became subordinated to imperialist military intervention. Our statement [published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 977, 1 April] urged: “Every step taken by the workers of the imperialist countries to halt the depredations and military adventures of their rulers is a step towards their own liberation from capitalist exploitation, impoverishment and oppression.



ZUMA

June 7: NATO terror bombing targets area of Tripoli including Libyan leader Qaddafi’s residence.

Defend Libya against imperialist attack! U.S. Fifth Fleet and all imperialist military bases and troops out of North Africa and the Near East!

Prime minister David Cameron greeted the overthrow of Qaddafi by praising the “rebels,” declaring that “free Libyan forces” are now in control in the country and that it is “now up to Libyans to shape their future.” News media endlessly retailed the image of the anti-Qaddafi “rebels” celebrating in the streets of Tripoli and elsewhere. But without NATO, the “rebels” could not have defeated Qaddafi’s army. The real value of the “rebels” to the imperialists was in providing a “humanitarian” and “democratic” cover for naked subjugation of a neocolonial country. Now these flunkies are setting up a puppet government in Tripoli led by the Transitional National Council, which is opening up Libya’s resources, especially its enormous reserves of oil and gas, to the imperialist vultures.

Defence of Libya against imperialist bombardment should be elementary, not only for proletarian opponents of capitalist rule but for anyone opposed to the strongest capitalist powers imposing their will on weaker countries through overwhelming military might. Not so for the bulk of the “socialist” left internationally, which served to line up workers and youth behind the imperialist murderers by championing the Libyan “rebels.”

The British reformists take their cue from the Labour Party, which stood four-square behind Cameron on the bombing of Libya. As shadow foreign secretary Douglas Alexander put it: “Labour has steadfastly supported the military action to protect the Libyan people” (*Independent*, 4 September). Following suit, the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL)

maintained its long track record of support to “democratic” British imperialism. In addition to a 23 March statement titled: “Why we should not denounce intervention in Libya,” the AWL published foam-flecked articles denouncing the Socialist Party, British section of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) for their stated opposition to the NATO intervention. But while these social-democratic organisations offered pro-forma opposition to the bombing, mobilisations against it were pathetically small because as cheerleaders for the Libyan “rebels” these leftists lined up with their “own” capitalist ruling classes and welcomed the overthrow of Qaddafi.

The Socialist Party proclaimed the downfall of the regime “a victory for the Libyan people,” but added a disclaimer that it was “also a success for imperialism” (socialistparty.org, 26 August). The SWP favoured imperialist intervention in Libya, but would have preferred an alternative to bombing. In March they advocated: “Instead of bombing Libya, Western governments could hand all the assets they have seized from Gaddafi’s regime to the revolutionary forces” (*Socialist Worker*, 22 March). On this the reformists got what they wanted: in March the British imperialist gangsters seized a huge haul of Libyan dinars, the assets of a sovereign country. On 31 August the Royal Air Force flew 280 million dinars (\$226 million) to the imperialist puppets in Libya, as a first instalment of the cash they had looted.

On the eve of the overthrow of Qaddafi, the SWP proclaimed: “Good riddance Gaddafi, but don’t trust the West” (*Socialist Worker*, 20 August) while the article underneath said: “The end of Gaddafi’s regime is a cause for celebration,” while absurdly moaning that the imperialist powers “hijacked the Libyan revolt.” Some hijack: the “rebels” were willing tools of the imperialists. They pleaded for military intervention and fed lurid tales to a pliant Western press of atrocities by Qaddafi’s forces, including mass rapes of women, for which no evidence has been found. During the bombing of Libya, the so-called Libyan “revolutionaries” colluded with NATO, acting as spotters on the ground, calling in air strikes and pin-pointing targets.

Bitter Fruits of Libyan “Revolution”

The anti-Qaddafi forces were whipped into shape by British and other imperialist “special” forces, the type of shadowy operatives who carry out hideous torture and massacres in Iraq and Afghanistan. An

article in the *Telegraph* (28 August) positively crowed that, months before the attack on Tripoli, groups of young males secretly travelled to Benghazi “to learn the art of insurgent warfare from an international

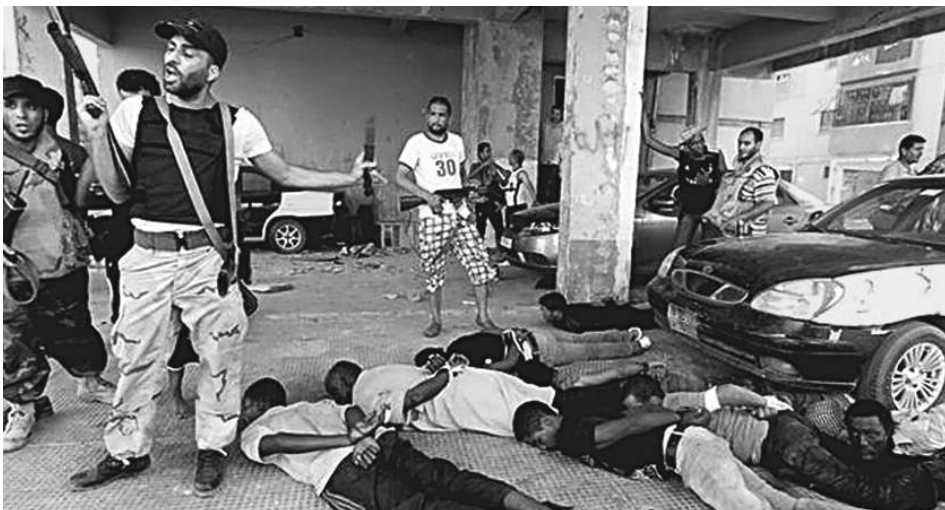
force of covert units composed of the British SAS [Special Air Service] and MI6 [spy agency] and troops from the French, Qatar and United Arab Emirates special forces.” The British imperialists “covertly supplied 1,000 sets of body armour, advanced telecommunications equipment and night vision goggles”; while “hundreds of weapons, tons of ammunition and communications equipment were smuggled into Tripoli and hidden in secret arms dumps.” On their return to Tripoli, the article claimed, the undercover agents convinced an officer in Qaddafi’s army, Mohammed Eshkal, to open the gates of Tripoli to the imperialists.

For Marxists, the question of extending military support in civil wars and other conflicts is determined by whether the victory of one side or the other would further the cause of the working class and the oppressed. We refused any support to the anti-Qaddafi forces, which we described as a cabal of pro-imperialist “democrats,” CIA stooges, monarchists and Islamists. Today there is a mounting body of evidence showing their reactionary character. “This is a bad time to be a black man in Libya,” reported Alex Thompson on Channel 4 News on 28 August, and the bourgeois press is awash with stories of racist atrocities against black African immigrants. Under Qaddafi there were an estimated one million undocumented immigrant workers in Libya, which has a population of six million and a workforce of 1.7 million. Immigrants were subject to racist discrimination and attacks, including anti-immigrant riots in 2000. Today dark-skinned males are being indiscriminately targeted by “rebel” forces as “pro-Qaddafi mercenaries,” which can mean summary execution. Writing in the *Independent*, Kim Sengupta described the bodies of 30 black men lying decomposing on the ground, noting that many of them “had their hands tied behind their back, either with plastic handcuffs or ropes.” Sengupta continued that “the mounting number of deaths of men from sub-Saharan Africa at the hands of the rebels—lynchings in many cases—raises disturbing questions about the opposition administration, the Transitional National Council” (*Independent*, 27 August).

Among Libya’s “revolutionaries,” murderous tribal and other divisions are evident. In July their commander-in-chief, General Abdah Fattah Younes, and two of his aides were murdered, by rival “rebel” factions by all accounts. The Obeidi tribe, of which Younes was a member, blames the Islamists for his death. Ali Senussi, a leader of the tribe, told reporters that if the rebel government does not bring those responsible to justice, “the Obeidis are promising this will not go unpunished” (*Christian Science Monitor*, 25 August). Many rebel commanders are former Libyan army officers; Khalifa Belqasim Haftar, a former commander and veteran of Qaddafi’s war against Chad, is also a CIA stooge.

The current rebel military commander in Tripoli, Abdel Hakim Belhaj, founder of the now defunct Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, has caused a furore in Britain by complaining that MI6 provided intelligence on him to the Qaddafi regime as a result of which he was imprisoned and tortured. During this time the British secret service worked with the CIA and with Qaddafi’s forces in the “extraordinary rendition” of prisoners. At the behest of MI6, Belhaj was kidnapped in 2004 in Bangkok and handed over to the CIA. From there he

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Reuters

August 25: Black men in Tripoli rounded up by imperialist-backed “rebels.” Many black African immigrants, accused of being “pro-Qaddafi mercenaries,” have been arrested, often executed.

140TH ANNIVERSARY LESSONS OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

We print below the second part of a class given by comrade S. Williams to the New York Spartacus Youth Club on the Paris Commune of 1871. Part One appeared in the Young Spartacus pages of Workers Vanguard No. 985 (2 September). At the educational, comrade Karen Cole discussed the work of the Women's Union for the Defense of Paris and Aid to the Wounded. On the facing page, we print her expanded remarks.

The first part of the class covered the background to the Commune, including the Franco-Prussian War, the end of Napoléon III's empire and the subsequent establishment and collapse of the Government of National Defense. On 18 March 1871, when Adolphe Thiers, elected head of the government by the reactionary National Assembly, sent troops to Paris to capture the cannons held by the National Guard, the workers carried out an insurrection. Shortly thereafter, the remaining elements of the bourgeois state and its supporters fled to Versailles; the Central Committee of the National Guard, despite having the leadership of the workers in Paris, called for elections.

PART TWO

Thus it was that the Central Committee of the National Guard found itself at the head of Paris, with all the material apparatus of power centered in its hands. As Trotsky put it, it was a council of deputies of the armed workers and petty bourgeoisie. But the Central Committee of the National Guard did not see itself as a central, revolutionary authority. Marx

argued that, given that the bourgeoisie had only recently fled, was disorganized and had few troops, rather than calling elections to a commune the Central Committee "should have marched at once on Versailles," but "the right moment was missed because of conscientious scruples." That is to say, instead of destroying its enemies, the Central Committee sought to exert moral influence on them and the Versailles were left untouched. This allowed them to regroup and prepare to later smash the Commune.

Other cities of France had already had at least one uprising since September 1870. After March 18, communes formed in Lyons, St. Etienne and a center of heavy

industry, Le Creusot. However, the Central Committee and later the Commune Council were beholden to anarchoid ideas of "federation" and "autonomy" and as Trotsky noted, they attempted to "replace the proletarian revolution, which was developing, by a petty bourgeois reform: communal autonomy. The real revolutionary task consisted of assuring the proletariat the power all over the country. Paris had to serve as its base...to attain this goal, it was necessary to vanquish Versailles without the loss of time and to send agitators, organizers, and armed forces throughout France."

But despite these weaknesses the Paris Commune represented the nucleus of a workers state. As Marx and Engels noted, the proletariat could not "simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes"—the workers had to *shatter* the remnants of the bourgeois state and *replace* it with their own class dictatorship, the "dictatorship of the proletariat." And this is precisely what happened. On March 28, two days after the National Guard organized elections to the Commune, to the new Commune Council, the government of proletarian Paris met. Its first decree was the suppression of the standing army and the substitution for it by the armed people. It also transformed the state bureaucracy by lowering salaries and making all officials recallable at any time. A left-Proudhonist in the Commune, Jean-Baptiste Millière, described the Commune succinctly: "The Commune is not a Constituent Assembly. It is a military Council. It must have one aim, victory; one weapon, force; one law, the law of social salvation" (quoted in Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism* [1920]). Already in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels understood that it was necessary for the workers to run a state—i.e., the proletariat "organized as the ruling class." After the experience of 1848, Marx and Engels had understood that it was necessary to crush the bourgeois state machine, but what it would be replaced with remained abstract. Taking the Commune as a model, they acquired a clear understanding of what the "dictatorship of

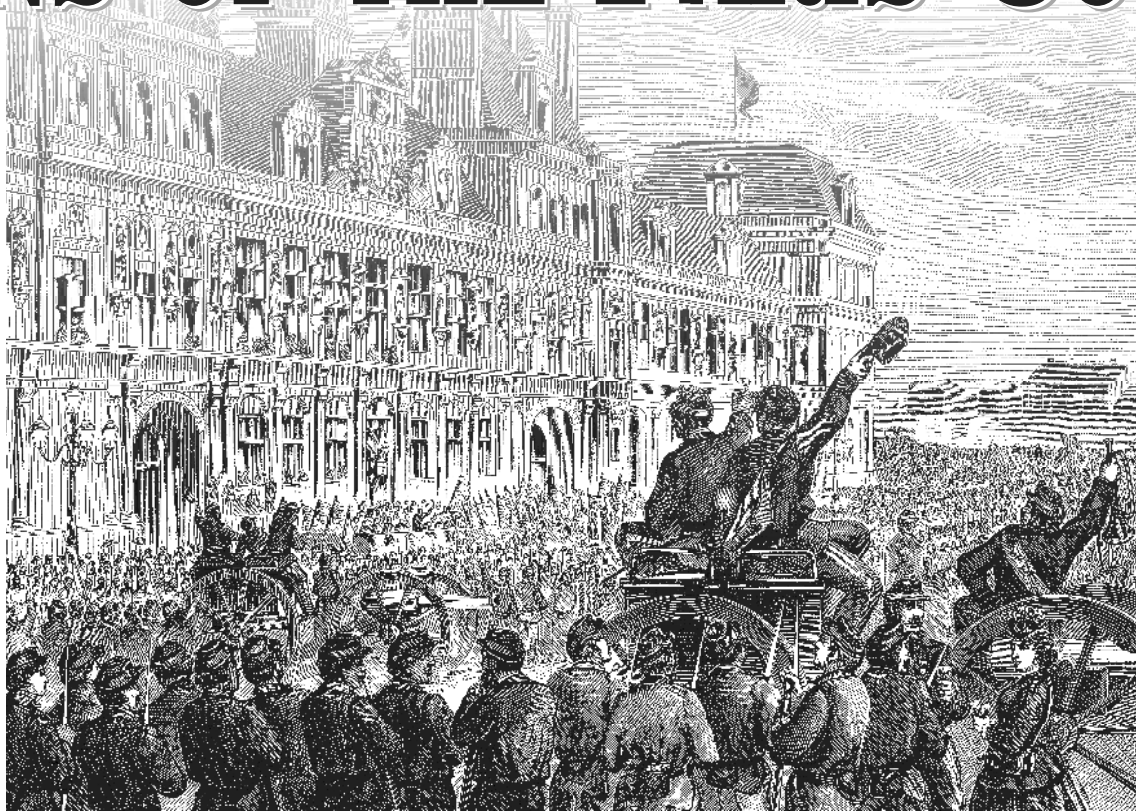
the proletariat" would look like.

I want to talk about what the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is. While the Commune was a *glimpse* of the future, a full-scale workers revolution was accomplished in fact only by the Bolsheviks in October 1917, when workers and soldiers, led by the Bolshevik Party, organized in councils—a bit like the Commune itself. They overthrew the capitalist class and founded the Soviet workers state, the most advanced social development in all of human history. Revisionists of all stripes distort the meaning of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" in order to paint the Commune in the colors of a peaceful *bourgeois* democracy, thus rejecting the fundamental lessons of the Commune *and* the Bolshevik Revolution. The original spokesman for this revisionism was Karl Kautsky, a leader of the German Social Democratic Party and the Second International, who abandoned fundamental Marxist internationalism

and supported his own ruling class during World War I. More recently, another revisionist, a now-deceased leader of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat, Daniel Bensaïd, recycled several of Kautsky's arguments (without crediting Kautsky) in a 2008 essay recently reprinted by *Tout Est à Nous! La Revue*, the publication of the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France.

To paraphrase, Kautsky argued that unlike the Bolshevik Revolution (which Kautsky opposed and considered a "putsch"), "The Paris Commune was a dictatorship of the proletariat, but it was elected by *universal* suffrage, i.e., without depriving the bourgeoisie of the franchise, i.e., '*democratically*'" (Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* [1918]). Similarly, Bensaïd argued that the "form" of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in the Commune remained "that of universal suffrage." That is to say, they both try to reduce the Commune "dictatorship of the proletariat" to a question of general "democracy" and "universal suffrage." As Marxists we understand that there is no such thing as classless "democracy." While we defend the greatest democracy under capitalism, "universal suffrage" is a form of *bourgeois* democracy, i.e., it is a form of class rule of the *capitalist class*. Both Lenin and Trotsky in their seminal responses to Kautsky (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* and *Terrorism and Communism*, respectively) noted that the bourgeoisie had already fled Paris at the time of the Commune elections and, while there were elections based on universal suffrage, these fundamentally reflected a *class* vote—that of the proletariat. What defined the Commune "dictatorship of the proletariat" was the suppression of the bourgeois standing army and the substitution for it by the armed workers.

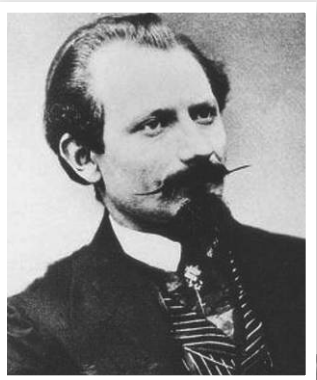
To paint the Commune in the colors of bourgeois democracy is to glorify capitalism and disappear the key Marxist lessons of the Commune. When looked at on a *national* scale, "universal suffrage" did *not* represent *working-class* interests. The reactionary National Assembly brought to



National Guard marches outside the Hôtel de Ville following proclamation of the Commune, 28 March 1871.

Paris Révolutionnaire

Pierre Petit



Military leaders of the Commune: Polish leftist immigrants Jaroslaw Dombrowski (left) and Walery Wroblewski. Below: Communards manning barricade.

Combier



REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN IN THE PARIS COMMUNE

power on February 8 was elected through “universal suffrage” and it sought to *crush* the Commune, which had overturned bourgeois class rule. In fact, at the time of the Commune there were some “socialists” who supported bourgeois democracy against the workers. One of these was a historic figure named Louis Blanc, who opposed the Communards because they were “insurgents against an Assembly most freely elected”! Such “bourgeois socialists” are the *true* predecessors of Kautsky and Bensaïd, not the Communards.

Who Was in the Commune and What It Accomplished

One of the main problems once the Commune came to power was the influence of petty-bourgeois and anarchoid leadership, which meant that the different elements of the Commune shrank from centralism and “authority.” As Trotsky put it, the Commune swarmed with “bourgeois socialists” and Marx complained that “the Commune wastes too much time over trifles and personal squabbles. One can see that there are influences at work other than those of the working men.” Nonetheless, the Commune, having seized state power, was driven by this logic to implement measures in the interest of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie, sometimes in contradiction to the formal programs of its participants.

Who were the deputies of the Commune Council? There was a range of figures, from a radical bourgeois Jacobin named Charles Delescluze to around 40 members of the First International, most of whom were influenced by Proudhon (who had died in 1865) and to a much lesser extent by Mikhail Bakunin. (Bakunin’s main contribution in 1870-71 was to try to lead an uprising in Lyons in late September 1870: there he declared the bourgeois state abolished, after which the state promptly crushed his uprising.) There were also some supporters of Auguste Blanqui in the Commune, as well as other diverse elements like the petty-bourgeois adventurer and slanderer of Marx, Félix Pyat, from whom the International had publicly disassociated itself in 1870.

Léo Frankel, a collaborator of Marx in the International, played an important role. Frankel, a jeweler by trade, was in the Commune and he motivated the most progressive reforms related to the working class that were instituted. He pushed for the abolition of night work for bakers and for workers cooperatives and trade unions to take over factories not in use. He argued for the Commune to not accept the lowest bidders, which forced wages down, arguing that the Commune should only buy from workers cooperatives. He lost that struggle, although the Commune Council did agree to establish a minimum wage.

There were also about a dozen supporters of Blanqui in the Commune Council. However, on March 17, just before trying to steal the National Guard’s cannons, Thiers preemptively arrested Blanqui (who by then was an old man) to prevent the Parisian workers from rallying around him. Blanquists were conspiratorial. Their view was encapsulated by a Blanquist leader in the Commune named Raoul Rigault who said, “Without Blanqui, there is nothing doing, with Blanqui, *everything*.” And they spent much of the revolution seeking to get Blanqui back. A venomous and hysterical attack that bourgeois historians continue to level against the Commune to falsely make the workers appear as bloodthirsty villains is their perfectly defensible arrest of some hostages, including the Archbishop of Paris, Georges Darboy, who they hoped to exchange for Blanqui. (Later, as the Versailles were crushing the Commune, Darboy and dozens of other hostages were shot.) In fact it was *Thiers* who sought to have the archbishop martyred for the counterrevolutionary cause. Darboy himself pleaded with Versailles to make the exchange and wrote, “It is known that

continued on page 6



sopos.org (inset), Le Monde Illustré

Women’s meeting in church of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois. Inset: Elisabeth Dmitrieff, Marxist leader of Women’s Union.

Both historians who defend the Commune and those who despise it have written much about the women who participated at every conjuncture in the Commune. In fact, depictions of women became metaphors for attitudes toward the Commune as a whole. To the bourgeoisie, Parisian women who supported the Commune were crazed viragoes who were “drunk with hate.” Depictions of bloodthirsty whores culminate in the bourgeoisie’s favorite image of the *pétroleuses*. Supposedly, these were the fanatical Communard women who in the last days, with their innocent children in tow, torched the great buildings of Paris. In reality, the bourgeoisie masks with these fabrications what *really* happened—the bourgeoisie drowned tens of thousands of proletarian men, women and children in a river of blood.

The most well-known female figure, the heroic Louise Michel, embodied the fervent determination of the Commune. Politically she was an anarchist, a follower of Bakunin. She was there on the morning of March 18, rousing Paris upon seeing Thiers’ troops in Montmartre. She volunteered to assassinate Thiers at Versailles, where the reactionary bourgeoisie

government resided. She even snuck there and brought back newspapers to prove to her comrades that she could pull it off. She was a nurse with the ambulance companies and a fighter at the Fort of Issy and on the barricades. Defiant at her trial after the crushing of the Commune, she remained politically active for the rest of her life. The French bourgeoisie has since sanitized her image to turn her into a harmless feminist.

However, Michel was not central to the formation of the Women’s Union for the Defense of Paris and Aid to the Wounded. The Women’s Union was one of the most politically advanced expressions of revolutionary working-class consciousness in the Commune. It was able to lead and organize the widespread popular ferment among women because its precepts reflected the revolutionary proletarian perspective of the Marxist wing of the First International. The Women’s Union became the recognized intermediary between women in the city and the Commune government. No other group had such sustained citywide influence, from its founding in April to the end of the Commune on the barricades.

Elisabeth Dmitrieff along with Nathalie Le Mel were the leading forces behind the Women’s Union. Twenty years old, the Russian Dmitrieff was sent to Paris by Marx shortly before the Commune arose. She stepped forward to become a main advocate for women and to propagandize for a socialist perspective. Nathalie Le Mel, an active member of the First International and a former militant strike leader in the bookbinders union, worked alongside her.

On 11 April 1871, the *Journal Officiel* of the Commune devoted much of its front page to an appeal by “a group of citizens” to the democratic-minded women of Paris. The appeal called for the women to attend a meeting that evening with the purpose of forming “a women’s movement for the defence of Paris.” It also expressed the need for “the active collaboration of all the women of Paris who realize...that the present social order bears in itself the seeds of poverty and the death of Freedom and of Justice; who therefore welcome the advent of the reign of Labour and of

Equality.” The appeal further stated that it was not just the Versailles government that was guilty of betraying Paris, it was equally “the privileged...who have always lived on [the people’s] sweat and grown fat on [the people’s] misery.” The civil war was “the final act of the eternal antagonism between right and might, between work and exploitation, between the people and its executioners!”

At its first meeting, the Women’s Union sent a proposal to the Executive Commission of the Commune soliciting material aid to set up facilities in each *arrondissement* (city district) town hall and to subsidize the printing of circulars, posters and notices for distribution. The Executive Commission immediately began to implement the meeting’s proposal by printing the entire text of the Address of the Union in the *Journal Officiel* on April 14, with a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting.

The Address illustrates the view of the Women’s Union on the source of women’s oppression. The designation *ouvrière* (worker) was placed under the name of six of the seven signatories to indicate their working-class origins. It referred to the Commune as a government whose ultimate objective was the abolition of all forms of social inequality, including discrimination against women. Most significantly, it described discrimination against women as a means by which the ruling classes maintain their power:

“That the Commune, representing the principle of the extinction of all privileges and of all inequality, should therefore consider all legitimate grievances of any section of the population without discrimination of sex, such discrimination having been made and enforced as a means of maintaining the privileges of the ruling classes.

“That success of the present conflict whose aim is...ultimately to regenerate Society by ensuring the rule of Labour and Justice, is of equal significance to the women as it is to the men of Paris.”

—quoted in Eugene Schulkind, “Socialist Women During the 1871 Paris Commune,” *Past & Present* (February 1985)

Every member of the Women’s Union had to contribute ten centimes and to acknowledge the authority of the Union’s Central Committee. The *arrondissement* committees set up by the Women’s Union had rotating presidents aided by a board, which was subject to recall by members. The *arrondissement* committees’ functions included providing non-religious personnel for welfare institutions, such as orphanages and hostels for the elderly.

The Women’s Union also intervened in the political clubs that had taken over churches and had become mass “speakers” and organizing centers for Parisian women and men. With women mounting the church pulpits, these gatherings gave voice to widespread hatred of the church. At one meeting a woman suggested that the bodies of 60,000 Parisian priests (her

continued on page 7



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“Une Pétroleuse”: Portrayal of Communard woman as haggard arsonist. Reactionaries hated the Commune, hated that women played a prominent role.

NO. 28 SPRING 1984

Women and Revolution

Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League • v. 12 • 3

In Honor of the Women of the Paris Commune

International Women's Day 1984
See Page 3

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Paris Commune...

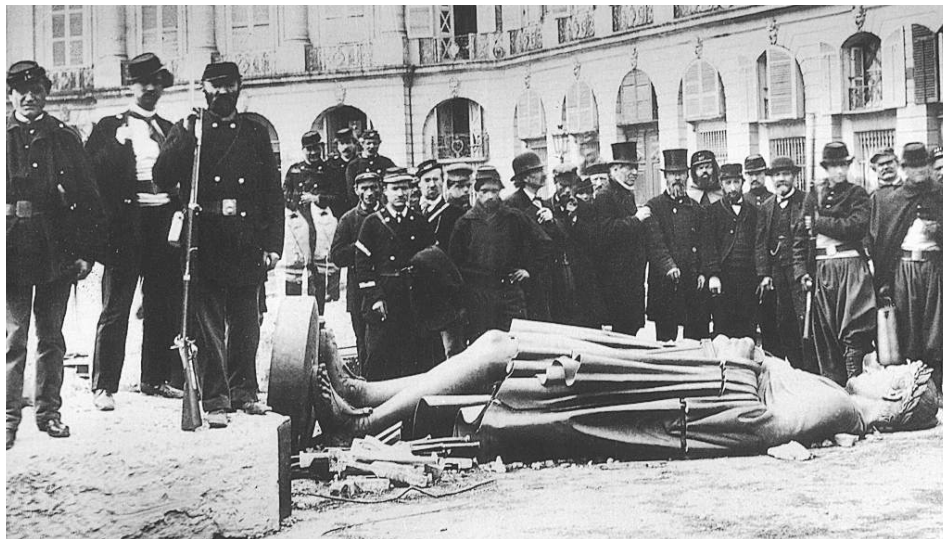
(continued from page 5)

Versailles does not want either an exchange or a reconciliation.”

Reforms carried out by the Commune included the separation of church and state, expropriation of church properties and free public education. The Commune also effectively implemented a program of “full citizenship rights for immigrants,” with the prominent participation of a number of foreigners including the Poles Jaroslaw Dombrowski and Walery Wroblewski, who were some of the Commune’s most effective military leaders, and Léo Frankel, who I just mentioned, who was born in Hungary and worked with the German workers movement. Women also played an important role in the Commune. The Women’s Union for the Defense of Paris and for Aid to the Wounded was founded by Elisabeth Dmitrieff (see article, page 5). She was sent to Paris by Marx and knew him and his daughters. With Frankel’s support her union made clothes for the National Guard in order to engage women and keep them on the side of the revolution. Louise Michel, perhaps the most well-known woman of the Commune, organized a corps of ambulance nurses, tending the wounded even under fire and saving injured Communards from the vicious nuns who ran hospitals in those times.

Marx insisted that a tremendous failing of the Commune was that it did not seize the banks. On March 20, in need of cash, the Central Committee of the National Guard went to the Rothschilds to open a line of credit at their bank. The latter “loaned” the new workers government of Paris a million francs. However, in the Bank of France there were billions of francs, gold bullion, treasury bonds and titles of all kinds. Without the bank, all the capitalists would have been on their knees before the Commune. Lissagaray, one of the key historians of the Commune, who later worked with Marx in London, noted, “Since the 19th March the governors of the bank lived like men condemned to death, every day expecting the execution of the treasure. Of removing it to Versailles they could not dream. It would have required sixty or eighty vans and an army corps.” It was the Proudhonists in the Commune who, bowing before the sanctity of private property, would not touch the Bank of France.

That said, as I noted, some of the Commune’s politics were in direct counterposition to the formal program of some of its participants. In organizing large-scale industry and manufacture, the Commune was taking steps of *socialization* directly



Roger-Viollet

Communards and National Guardsmen stand over remains of Vendôme Column, symbol of the first Napoléon’s military conquests, razed on 16 May 1871.

contrary to the Proudhonist program that advocated small property-holding. The Blanquists believed in conspiratorial methods and building a secret organization, yet in actuality their declarations during the Commune called for a free federation of Communes—a large, national organization.

Perhaps the most symbolic act of the Commune, which also often meets with the ire of bourgeois historians, was the razing of the Vendôme Column. In a party-like atmosphere, tickets were sold to the public spectacle of toppling this monument to the first Napoléon’s military conquests. On May 16 the Commune destroyed it as a symbol of their opposition to bourgeois militarism. The artist Gustave Courbet was the most well-known advocate of its dismantling. Another long-lasting symbol, which has its origins in the Commune, is the song of the international workers movement, the “Internationale,” written after the Commune’s defeat by the worker-poet Eugène Pottier, who also sat on the Commune Council. As Lenin put it, the Commune was a “festival of the oppressed,” and in fact, many Communards were gathered at an outdoor concert under the warm spring sun on May 21 when the Versailles came sneaking into the city to begin their systematic slaughter.

Disorganization and Bloody Defeat

The military interventions of the Commune were hampered both because it lacked serious military leadership and because there was an ongoing rivalry with the National Guard, which only gave up partial power to the Commune. There was never a clear centralized command of the armed forces. When the Communards failed to march immediately to Versailles on March 18, Thiers and the forces of counterrevolution began to regroup.

Starting in early April 1871, the Versailles shelled Paris constantly and through a deal with Bismarck, they managed to have him set free 60,000 imprisoned French soldiers, increasing the loyal troops surrounding Paris. After a series of very poorly led sorties against the Versailles, between early April and early May, a turning point came on May 9 when the Communards lost the Fort of Issy—a



Le Monde Illustré

Communards fight to the bitter end among tombs of Père Lachaise cemetery, night of 27 May 1871.

key fort between Paris and Versailles. After Issy, the Fort of Vanves fell. Finally on May 22, the gate to the city of Paris at St. Cloud was left undefended and a spy traitor signaled to the Versailles troops, who began to filter into the city.

In the weeks before that, the army of the Commune had been totally disorganized. There was little effective leadership or discipline and, faced with constant bombardments from Versailles, there was an increased pressure for some kind of strong, centralized, dictatorial leadership.

On May 1, elements of the Commune, harkening back to the old French bourgeois revolution under the Jacobins, formed successive “Committees of Public Safety.” A split in the Commune occurred between a minority, including some supporters of the International, and a majority. Trotsky noted that the Committee of Public Safety was dictated by the need for “red terror” and described the various measures passed in an attempt to defend the Commune. But he also noted that “the effect of all these measures of intimidation was paralyzed by the helpless opportunism of the guiding elements in the Commune, by their striving to reconcile the bourgeoisie with the *fait accompli* by the help of pitiful phrases, by their vacillations between the fiction of democracy and the reality of dictatorship.” Finally, in late May, as the Versailles captured more and more of the city, the Commune disintegrated entirely. Delescluze, the old, sick Jacobin elected to lead the last Committee of Public Safety, went to fight at a barricade where he was killed.

After the Versailles entered the city, the Communards fought desperately. But street by street the Commune was crushed. Men, women and children were indiscriminately massacred. Some of the last fighting occurred in the workers’ districts

on the heights of Belleville and Ménilmontant. The “Wall of the Communards” (*Mur des Fédérés*) in Père Lachaise cemetery was where 200 Communards who fought to the bitter end were put up against the wall and executed. Today, we still march to this place to commemorate our own fallen comrades. Tens of thousands of Communards were massacred by the Versailles in that last week in May—at least 30,000 people. In one prison so many were executed that blood flowed in its gutters.

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October 1917: How the Working Class Took Power

OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), Room 8201
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Many of those who didn't die in the initial massacre suffered fates worse than death. Some were taken to Versailles, jeered at and spit on, kept in the open or in dungeons where they died of hunger and thirst, cholera or gangrene. Some were sent to prison barges and kept tied up in tiny cells. Others, after being tried, were deported to New Caledonia, a desolate colony in the Pacific Ocean to the east of Australia, where, if they survived the voyage where they were kept in cages below deck, they also met grisly fates, from malnutrition to malaria to overwork in prison camps. In a particularly vicious and vindictive act, the artist Courbet was held responsible for the demolition of the Vendôme Column and made to pay hundreds of thousands of francs for its reconstruction. To avoid bankruptcy, he had to paint constantly, but the money received for each painting sold went directly to pay the state. Finally, he fled to Switzerland and died penniless in 1877. In a paean to reaction, on top of one of the hills where the Communards fought, Montmartre, a huge white church was erected and in Paris today you can still see this basilica from miles around, a symbol of the counterrevolutionary French bourgeoisie and religious triumph.

While both the Commune and the Bolshevik Revolution, the "dictatorship of



Illustrated London News, V. Kozlinsky (right)

Prisoners executed by Versailles troops. The Commune was first expression of dictatorship of the proletariat. 1921 Soviet poster reads: "The Dead of the Paris Commune Have Risen Again Under the Red Flag of the Soviets!"

the proletariat," are portrayed lyingly in bourgeois history as vicious and bloodthirsty, the real bloodthirstiness can be seen in the bourgeois ruling class' treatment of the Communards after the Commune's defeat. It also shows how correct the Bolsheviks were and the importance of revolutionary leadership in fighting to *win*.

After the Commune's defeat, Marx gained a great deal of attention for his

book *The Civil War in France* and differences sharpened amongst the different political currents in the First International (especially with Bakunin) over who could claim the most authority and responsibility for the Commune. By 1872, the First International had effectively fallen apart. In a letter to Friedrich Sorge in 1874, Engels wrote that he optimistically hoped that the next international would "be directly Communist and



will openly proclaim our principles." But it was not the next international, the Second, which ended up openly waving the banner of communism, it was Lenin's Third International, which was proclaimed in 1919, a result of the victory of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. From the Commune to the Russian Revolution, that is our continuity, the precursor to the banner of the Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

Revolutionary Women...

(continued from page 5)

count) should be used instead of sandbags for constructing barricades.

On April 16, the Commune authorized conversion of abandoned workshops into worker-owned cooperatives. Immediately after the enactment of this decree, all types of labor associations in Paris were invited by the Commission of Labor and Exchange to assist in planning its implementation. The Commune invitation was addressed to unions and associations "of both sexes" and explicitly called on "women citizens, whose devotion to the Social Revolution is so invaluable, not to disregard the all-important question of the organization of production."

Léo Frankel, a Hungarian Marxist and member of the First International, led the Commune's Commission of Labor and Exchange. He was the main link between the Commune leadership and the Women's Union, providing it with money and assistance. The Commission of Labor and Exchange let the Women's Union substitute its own plan for women's cooperatives for the one the Commission had already drafted, prior to the creation of the Union. A committee of nine representatives from labor organizations, including Nathalie Le Mel from the Executive Commission of the Women's Union, met in mid May to coordinate their efforts.

The Women's Union advertised for women to meet and form associations to run workshops in all the traditional women's trades, such as the needle trades, feather processing, artificial flowers and laundry. In a plan submitted to the Commission of Labor and Exchange, the Women's Union elaborated on what it envisioned as the goals of the Commune. It stated that the "Revolution of 18th March represents the point in history at which the proletariat will have...brought to fruition the age-old struggle for social equality," and continued, "to establish firmly the foundations for the new political organization that is its necessary prerequisite, the Commune must complete the partial victory of the People, not by limiting itself to the urgent needs of military defence, but by embarking unequivocally on the path of social reform" (quoted in Schulkind, "Socialist Women During the 1871 Paris Commune"). There is evidence that work-

shops were formed to produce munitions, sandbags and uniforms.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's reactionary views toward women dominated the French section of the First International. Proudhon had preached the triple inferiority of women for supposed physical, intellectual and moral reasons. He used pseudoscientific claptrap to "prove" that the subordination of women was inevitable. So it is all the more remarkable that the Commune threw off this backward philosophy in favor of the fight for the complete equality of men and women. This is not to say that there still wasn't much backward thinking among the Parisians as a whole. But in spite of the influence of anti-women bigotry, the Commune gave women positions of responsibility, appointed them to administer welfare institutions, sent them on liaison missions to provincial cities and included them on commissions to reform education and open new schools for girls, such as a school for industrial design.

In May, placards appeared calling for peace with Versailles, signed by an anonymous group of women citizens. Two days later, the Women's Union responded with its own posters, denouncing the "anonymous group of reactionary women" who had written such a "shocking proclamation." It wrote in the name of "social revolution, the right to work, and equality and justice" and excoriated these women for calling for conciliation with the "cowardly assassins" of Versailles. The wall posters also affirmed the view of the Women's Union that the civil war was a class conflict.

A final tragic note is that on the day before the Versailles troops entered the city to crush the Commune, the Women's Union was launching the Federal Chamber of Working Women to reorganize women's work based on federated laborers' associations. Instead, the Women's Union organized women for the barricades, where many soon faced their final hour.

A few months after the massacre of the Commune, Léo Frankel wrote in a republican newspaper a passionate denunciation of those who opposed women's equality:

"Women are deprived of their rights by the claim that their mental and physical faculties are inferior to those of men because nature designed women to be mother, wife and housekeeper. Thus, in all our laws and in all our institutions, women are considered as inferior to men, as being servants of men. "All the objections produced against equality of men and women are of the same sort as those which are produced

against the emancipation of the Negro race.... Firstly people are blindfolded and then they are told that they have been blind since birth."

—quoted in Schulkind, "Socialist Women During the 1871 Paris Commune"

In a letter to Dr. Ludwig Kugelmann dated 17 April 1871, Marx argued against the defeatist position that one should only take up arms when victory is certain. He strongly made the point that political leadership is key. The Marxists Léo Frankel and Elisabeth Dmitrieff intervened into the short-lived Commune with a revolutionary proletarian program. Conscious of their goal of an egalitarian classless society, they helped lay the basis

for future working-class struggles. Marx wrote:

"World history would indeed be very easy to make if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favourable chances. It would, on the other hand, be of a very mystical nature, if 'accidents' played no part. These accidents themselves fall naturally into the general course of development and are compensated again by other accidents. But acceleration and delay are very dependent on such 'accidents,' which included the 'accident' of the character of those who at first stand at the head of the movement....

"Whatever the immediate results [of the Commune] may be, a new point of departure of world-historic importance has been gained." ■

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Fake Trotskyists in Camp of Counterrevolution

Hue and Cry over China's Role in Africa

In August 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Angola to witness a major agreement between the government of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the American oil giant Chevron. Clinton took the occasion to pledge further U.S. investment, which came on top of an earlier promise by Washington to help build two hydroelectric plants. For Angola's bourgeois-nationalist MPLA, these deals marked something of a turn by the U.S. imperialists. For nearly 30 years after winning independence from Portugal in 1975, Angola was wracked by a devastating civil war. For much of that period, the U.S. gave military and financial support to guerrilla forces allied with apartheid South Africa fighting a reactionary war to unseat the MPLA, which was backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba. Furthermore, U.S. capitalists had shown little interest in investing in Angola following the official end of the civil war in 2002.

There was a clear purpose to the friendly face Clinton offered the MPLA government. The year before her visit, Angola had become Africa's largest trade partner with China, the most powerful of those countries today where capitalist rule has been overthrown. Providing nearly 15 percent of China's petroleum, Angola has surpassed Saudi Arabia as the largest oil exporter to China. In return, Beijing has provided low-interest loans that have been used to build hospitals, schools, irrigation systems and roads. Similar deals have been struck from Sudan and Algeria to Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, providing oil and metallic minerals for mainland China's booming industries.

For the U.S. and other imperialist powers, which suffered a historic defeat with the 1949 Chinese Revolution, these are not welcome developments. Carried out by a peasant-guerrilla army led by Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the 1949 Revolution established a workers state, although one that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. The creation in subsequent years of a centrally planned, collectivized economy laid the basis for enormous social progress for workers, peasants, women and national minorities. Ever since 1949, the imperialists have sought the counterrevolutionary overturn of CCP rule and the return of China to untrammelled capitalist exploitation. To this end they have pursued military pressure and threats, supported internal anti-Communist movements and "dissidents" and, over the last 30-plus years, penetrated the Chinese mainland economy courtesy of the CCP regime's "market reforms."

As Chinese trade and aid agreements with African countries began to proliferate five years ago, imperialist spokesmen sounded the alarm. World Bank head Paul Wolfowitz lashed out at the very favorable loans offered by China's state-owned banks, which, he declaimed, did not meet "social and environmental standards." This from a man who a few years earlier had been a leading architect of the Bush administration's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq! Chiming in with a throwback to the anti-Soviet Cold War, a headline in Britain's *Daily Mail* (18 July

2008) screamed: "How China's Taking Over Africa, and Why the West Should Be VERY Worried."

The blowback touched off a debate among academics and government officials in China on its role in Africa, within the bounds, to be sure, of overall policy set by the Beijing Stalinist bureaucracy. An article titled "The Practice of China's Diplomatic Concept of 'Harmonious World'—An Analysis of Sino-African Relations in

mercantile stage. Imperialist subjugation, far from modernizing such societies, has reinforced their backwardness and immiseration. Noting that China's investments in Africa are motivated by very different purposes, Ge Zhiguo called on Beijing to reform some of its own policies to counter resentment among Africans over the treatment of workers in China's enterprises and the undercutting of local businesses by Chinese entrepreneurs.

in backing the anti-Soviet forces in Angola—while militarily and politically supporting "friendly" bourgeois rulers in Africa and elsewhere who brutally repress workers and the rural and urban poor.

China's role in Africa is *contradictory*, reflecting the contradictions besetting China itself as a bureaucratically ruled workers state in an imperialist-dominated world. To defend and extend the gains of the Chinese Revolution requires a proletarian political revolution to oust the CCP bureaucracy and replace it with a regime of workers democracy committed to the fight for world socialism.

China Is Not Capitalist

Forming the left flank of the imperialists' anti-China campaign are such "socialists" as the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), led by Peter Taaffe, and the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel. A 30 March 2008 article titled "China in Africa" by the CWI's German section, Socialist Alternative (SAV), denounced China as "just another player" in the "game" of exploiting African countries. The SAV declared that "China, like other imperialist countries, only seeks to exploit their resources and markets as effectively as possible." In the USec's *International Viewpoint* online (January 2007), Jean Nanga, described as a "Congolese revolutionary Marxist," similarly condemned China's supposed "global ambition" as "motivated by capitalist interest."

That the CWI and USec have shamelessly enrolled in the anti-Communist crusade against China is no surprise. Prostituting themselves to bourgeois "democracy," the USec and the CWI's predecessor hailed all manner of imperialist-backed counterrevolutionaries that were arrayed against the former Soviet and East European deformed workers states, e.g., Polish Solidarność and the reactionary rabble on Boris Yeltsin's Moscow barricades in August 1991.

Directing its Stalinophobia against China, the USec has championed such pro-imperialist "dissidents" as Nobel "Peace" Prize recipient Liu Xiaobo, a fan of the U.S. wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan (see "Hong Kong: Fake Trotskyists Hail Imperialist Running Dog Liu Xiaobo," WV No. 981, 27 May). Meanwhile, the CWI, as our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain noted, has cheered anti-Communist riots in Tibet and openly defended "democratic" capitalist Taiwan, which has long been supported by U.S. and Japanese imperialism as a dagger aimed at the People's Republic of China (see "China Is Not Capitalist," *Workers Hammer* No. 202, Spring 2008). Peter Taaffe likes to pontificate that the "transition" toward full-blown capitalism "has not yet been fully completed" ("Halfway House," *Socialism Today*, July/August 2011). This is just a bit of cosmetic cover for the CWI's concrete and consistent support to the forces of capitalist counterrevolution.

The furor over China's role in Africa began to seriously mount in 2006 in response to the Darfur conflict in western Sudan, which resulted in mass slaughter and the driving of some two million people from their homes. The proximate cause of that conflict was the unleashing



Xinhua

Above: Work crew at one of 30 geothermal wells drilled in Kenya by a Chinese state-owned oil company, September 13. Below: Chinese-built Merowe Dam provides Sudan with stable electrical power supply.

EPA



Recent Years" by Ge Zhiguo rightly condemned "the West's longstanding policies toward Africa," which have not only "not given Africa prosperity and stability" but have also "caused many African countries to sink into long-term chaos and ethnic violence" (*Gaoxiao Sheke Dongtai* [Social Sciences Perspectives in Higher Education], third issue in 2007; this and other translations are by WV).

From King Leopold's killing fields of the Belgian Congo to Britain's concentration camps in Kenya and U.S. support to apartheid South Africa, the record of the Western imperialists in Africa is one of mass murder, slave-like labor and brutal repression of independence movements and workers struggles. Indeed, the precursor to such barbarism was the enslavement of Africans in capitalism's early

As Trotskyists, the International Communist League stands for the unconditional military defense of China against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. We support China's right to trade in order to procure what it needs to further its development. We recognize, however, that China's investment and aid programs are determined not by proletarian internationalism but by the CCP bureaucracy's narrow nationalist interests, which are rooted in the Stalinist dogma of "building socialism in one country" and its corollary, "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism (now called the "harmonious world" policy). Opposed to the perspective of international proletarian revolution, the CCP regime has accommodated imperialism—including, as will be discussed below, by joining with the U.S. and South Africa

of *janjaweed* militias, based on nomadic Muslims, by the Khartoum government against guerrilla forces based on a farming population that was also Muslim. In the U.S., a campaign by Christian rightists, Zionists and a number of prominent liberals demanding imperialist intervention to “save Darfur” demonized China, which has invested heavily in Sudanese oil production and developed close ties with the al-Bashir regime, providing it with military hardware. Joining in with this cabal, the SAV’s 2008 article wailed, “The Chinese regime, which imports 8 percent of its oil from Sudan, has shown during the recent conflict that it cares a lot about its profits and far less about the fate of the local population.”

It should be noted that one of the factors prompting China to increasingly turn to Africa for petroleum was a rabidly anti-Communist campaign, led largely by the American labor bureaucracy, that succeeded in quashing the China National Offshore Oil Company’s planned acquisition of U.S.-based Unocal in 2005. Earlier that year, the CWI’s U.S. affiliate, also called Socialist Alternative, enlisted in the anti-China effort by cosigning a leaflet demanding that Harvard University divest from PetroChina, another Chinese state-owned enterprise, and Unocal.

Anti-China tirades by liberals and ostensible socialists might play well in London, Paris and other imperialist centers, where the bulk of the left pushes the lie that China is capitalist or is irreversibly on that road. But that message is not so eagerly embraced in Africa, where Chinese aid in building hospitals, schools and other infrastructure contrasts sharply with the legacy left by the real imperialists: extreme poverty, social backwardness, tribal and ethnic warfare. The carving up of Africa by the European powers at the 1884-85 Berlin Conference was a signal of the emergence of modern imperialism. As V. I. Lenin explained in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), the advanced industrial countries were increasingly compelled to export capital to the more backward countries in the search for raw materials and cheap labor. The resulting interimperialist competition led to two world wars and countless colonial adventures, at the cost of untold death and destruction.

The fundamentally different purpose of China’s investments in Africa can be seen in the value of the commodities they generate. All commodities—from mined products to factory-produced goods—embody both use value (as desirable objects of consumption) and exchange value (broadly reflected in market prices). Under capitalism, the owners of industrial plants and other means of production amass profit by hiring labor to produce commodities, with the purpose of increasing exchange value. China’s overseas investments, which are financed by several of the mainland’s state banks, are driven not by the profit motive but by the need for raw materials for its collectivized industries at home—i.e., to extract use value.

U.S. State Department official Princeton Lyman, who is decidedly not a Marxist, acknowledged as much in a 2005 presentation to the Congressional U.S.-China Commission, stating:

“China utilizes a variety of instruments to advance its interest in ways that western nations can only envy. Most of China’s investments are through state-owned companies, whose individual investments do not have to be profitable if they serve overall Chinese objectives. Thus the representative of China’s state-owned construction company in Ethiopia could reveal that he was instructed by Beijing to bid low on various tenders, without regard for profit. China’s long term objective in Ethiopia is in access to future natural resource investments, not in construction business profits.”

The mere fact that China engages in world trade does not make it capitalist or imperialist. It is because Chinese investment is *not* driven by the capitalist profit motive that its effects are so radically different from those produced by imperialist exploitation of Third World countries. Martyn Davies, director of the China Africa Network at South Africa’s University of Pretoria, lauds the Chinese

as “the biggest builders of infrastructure” in Africa (“The Next Empire?” *Atlantic*, May 2010), a sentiment echoed by American academic Deborah Brautigam in her overwhelmingly favorable 2009 book on China’s role in Africa, *The Dragon’s Gift* (Oxford University Press).

Pressures of the World Market

China’s need to import raw materials became acute around a decade ago when, due to its soaring economic growth, the mainland could no longer provide the bulk of oil and metallic minerals to meet in-

Following this catastrophe, the CCP leadership conducted an internal study aimed at figuring out how to avoid a similar fate while hewing to its nationalist Stalinist program of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” One of the regime’s conclusions was that the Soviet Union had spent too much of its resources trying to compete with the imperialists militarily and in other ways. China, it was determined, would instead expand and deepen its ties to the world capitalist market. Beijing is now such a “responsible” partner in the world market that the Chief Econo-



Mariner Books

Above: Chained Congolese men, victims of Belgian King Leopold II’s murderous colonial plunder. Below: British colonial forces terrorize Kenyan villagers in 1953 in suppression of Mau Mau rebellion.



Bettmann

dustrial needs. By virtue of its “going global” policy, China by 2009 was importing 52 percent of its oil and 69 percent of its iron ore.

China’s situation contrasts with that of the Soviet workers state, which issued out of the 1917 October Revolution led by the Bolshevik Party. After the failure of proletarian revolutions in more advanced European countries, especially Germany, a conservative bureaucratic caste led by J. V. Stalin usurped political power beginning in 1923-24. Severely marked by the backwardness inherited from tsarism and the devastating effects of imperialist war and civil war, the Soviet Union possessed abundant iron ore, oil, timber and other raw materials. Stalin & Co. used that fact as an argument for the reactionary-utopian notion that socialism could be achieved in Soviet Russia alone. This threw overboard the basic Marxist understanding that achieving socialism—a society of material abundance—requires workers rule internationally, particularly in the industrially developed countries.

Based on its planned economy, the Soviet Union underwent phenomenal growth in the 1930s while the rest of the world was mired in the Great Depression. But through its own resources and efforts, the USSR could not reach, much less surpass, the technological level and labor productivity of the advanced capitalist countries. Decades of imperialist military and economic pressure, combined with bureaucratic mismanagement and Stalinist sellouts of revolutionary opportunities internationally, fatally weakened the Soviet workers state, which was destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92.

mist at the World Bank, one of the main institutions enforcing imperialist dictates, is Justin Yifu Lin, one of China’s leading economists!

In “going global,” Beijing has increasingly backed military intervention in the Third World by the United Nations, a den of imperialist thieves and their victims. This represents a turn from the policy the CCP regime adopted when China was admitted to the UN 40 years ago. As Stefan Stähle noted in “China’s Shifting Attitude Towards United Nations Peacekeeping Operations” in the academic journal *China Quarterly* (September 2008):

“At first, China completely rejected the idea of UN peacekeeping. Beijing regarded all UN interventions as being manipulated by the superpowers, not least because China had been the target of the first US-led enforcement action authorized by the United Nations in 1951 [*sic*, should be 1950] during the Korean War.... Since 1981, however, when China began to open up to the world, Chinese diplomats have voted in favour of all those missions which carried out traditional peacekeeping tasks or managed transitions.”

In plain English, “peacekeeping tasks” translate to bloody repression and the imposition of imperialist diktat. China has criminally lent its own military and police forces to such “peacekeeping,” from Haiti to Sudan. As Chris Alden noted in *China in Africa* (Zed Books, 2007), “The majority of Chinese peacekeepers, in fact, are based in Africa, making China the largest contributor of all the permanent member states of the UN Security Council to peacekeeping operations.” As proletarian internationalists, we demand that China end its participation in UN military missions.

As China’s economy continues to grow

while the imperialist countries are mired in a seemingly endless depression—the latest demonstration of the crisis-ridden nature of the system of production for profit—it might seem that Beijing has indeed found a way around the pressures that ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. But such an idea is based on fallacious belief in the stability of the world capitalist order and the benevolence of China’s imperialist trading partners, which dominate the world market.

In China itself, the country’s stunning economic growth serves to *exacerbate* class and social tensions. Particularly due to “market reforms,” an enormous divide has been created between corrupt government officials, capitalist entrepreneurs and privileged petty-bourgeois on one side and the hundreds of millions of proletarians—in both state-owned and private enterprises—and poor peasants on the other. A wave of strikes last year in auto plants and other private enterprises was but one component in the explosion of what the CCP regime calls “mass incidents”—work stoppages, assemblies of petitioners, protests against corruption, etc. The number of such incidents reached 180,000 in 2010, doubling since 2006.

Sooner or later, the Stalinist regime will bring China to the brink, posing the threat of capitalist counterrevolution. At the same time, the antagonism between the bureaucracy and China’s toiling masses is preparing the ground for a proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist regime. The Chinese proletariat needs the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist party that combats the apostles of “democratic” counterrevolution, not least those who parade this program in “socialist” and even “Trotskyist” garb, and breaks the working class from Stalinist nationalism. Guided by such a leadership, a China of workers and peasants councils would promote proletarian revolution internationally. Under workers rule, the industrial and technological capacity in Japan, the U.S. and West Europe would be harnessed for the all-around development of China as part of a world socialist order.

“Non-Interference”: Support to Bourgeois Rule

In responding to the charge of Chinese “neocolonialism” in Africa, many academics and government spokesmen in China point to Beijing’s policy of “non-interference” in other countries’ internal affairs. Writing in an academic journal, Liu Naiya enthused over China’s aid to former colonial countries in Africa as “a ‘gift’ to African nationalism from a socialist country. In other words, it is a rational political investment—a great demonstration of the brotherly friendship of international communism” (“Mutual Benefit: The Essence of Sino-African Relations—A Response to the Charge of ‘China’s Neocolonialism in Africa,’” *Xiya Feizhou* [West Asia and Africa], August 2006).

CCP spokesmen like to point to the aid and diplomatic support that China early on gave to some of the movements in Africa that fought for independence from colonial rule. And there is no doubt that Chinese aid and investment have spurred development in many African countries. But this is a far cry from socialist internationalism. China’s business agreements come with the “political condition” that Beijing do nothing to upset its bourgeois trading partners. Thus the Chinese Stalinists help *prop up* the capitalist order that keeps the masses of African workers and peasants in abject poverty. The CCP’s willingness to shore up reactionary bourgeois regimes was demonstrated as early as the 1954 Asian-African Solidarity Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, where Zhou Enlai propounded the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,” including a pledge to refrain from pressuring other countries to change their economic systems. The “anti-imperialist” rationale for this class-collaborationist program was exposed as threadbare by the Mao regime’s simultaneous policy of peaceful coexistence with Japan, the imperialist powerhouse of Asia.

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China...

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A common reference in arguments supporting Beijing’s policies is the building of the Tanzania-Zambia railway by Mao’s China in the early-mid 1970s. This was a significant development that entailed an enormous outlay of self-sacrificing labor by Chinese workers. But the CCP simultaneously gave political support to Tanzania’s Nyerere regime, which repressed basic trade-union struggles by impoverished workers.

In this, the Chinese Stalinists showed their political kinship with the Kremlin bureaucracy. Soviet aid was critical in the construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt, which was completed in 1970. Along with this aid came Soviet military advisers, and more. In fact, Moscow gave Egypt’s bourgeois bonapartist Nasser regime more advanced military hardware than it gave to North Vietnam in its heroic fight against U.S. imperialism! Meanwhile, the Soviet-aligned Sudanese Communist Party subordinated itself to the bourgeois-nationalist strongman Nimeiry, betraying a revolutionary opportunity that ended in a massacre of Communists in the early 1970s. Following the same class-collaborationist program, the South African Communist Party (SACP) has for over 80 years submerged itself in an alliance with the African National Congress (ANC), today helping to enforce the dictates of neo-apartheid capitalism as part of the ANC-led bourgeois government.

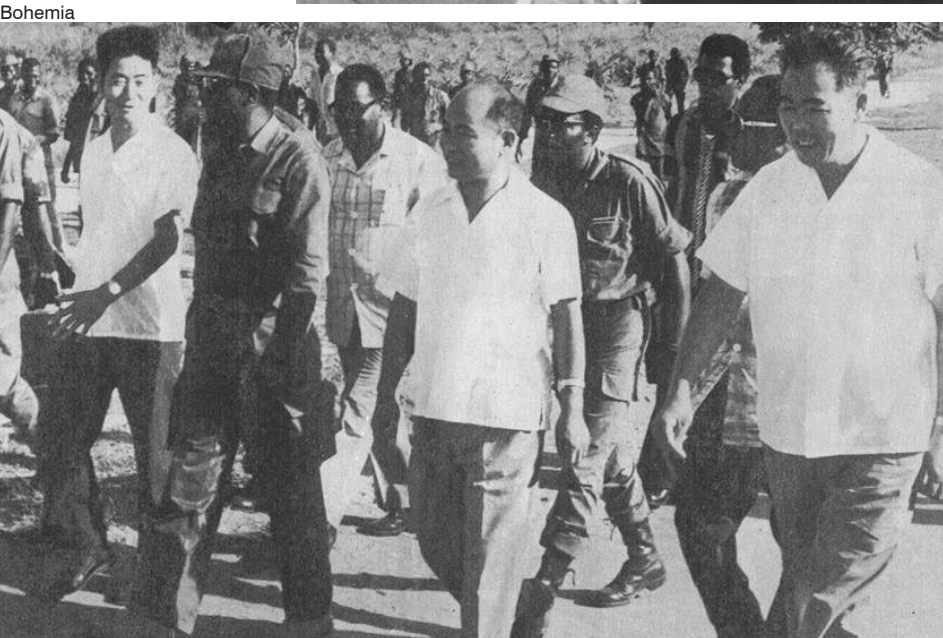
Revolutionary Marxists recognize that a *workers state* might be compelled to strike trade deals and diplomatic agreements with capitalist states. But this must not be confused with the task of the *communist party* to lead the struggle for proletarian revolution. In Lenin’s time, the Soviet workers state signed the 1922 Rapallo treaty with capitalist Germany, an agreement that included military cooperation. Simultaneously, the Bolsheviks were the leading force in the Communist International, seeking to forge Communist parties that could successfully lead the workers, not least in Germany, to the proletarian seizure of power.

A revolutionary regime would also seek to use overseas assets as a weapon of proletarian-internationalist strategy. Leon Trotsky addressed this in regard to the Chinese Eastern Railroad, which had been built by tsarist Russia to further the plunder of China but remained under Soviet ownership following the October Revolution. In 1929, two years after slaughtering tens of thousands of Chinese Communists and other militants, Chiang Kai-shek’s regime provoked a military conflict with the Soviet Union, then under the Stalinist bureaucracy, over control of the railroad. In “Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition” (September 1929), Trotsky fought against those who treated Soviet policy in this regard as “imperialist.” He

Right: Mao welcomes Nixon to Beijing in 1972 as China seals anti-Soviet alliance with U.S. imperialism. Bottom: Chinese advisers with Angolan FNLA leader Holden Roberto (second from left), who joined with UNITA in 1975 in CIA-funded war against Soviet-backed MPLA.



Magnum



Bohemia

pointed out: “We regard the Chinese Eastern Railroad as one of the weapons of the world revolution, more specifically, of the Russian and Chinese revolutions.... So long as we have the possibility and the power, we shall protect it from imperialism, in preparation for handing it over to the victorious Chinese revolution.”

Trotsky continued that “the character of this type of socialist enterprise” and its administration and working conditions “would have to be such as to raise the economy and culture of the backward countries with the aid of the capital, technology, and experience of the richer proletarian states to the mutual benefit of both sides.” Projecting how a proletarian dictatorship in Britain would handle the former imperialist rulers’ concessions in India, he wrote:

“The workers’ state will be bound to transform them not only into vehicles of India’s economic upbuilding but also of her future socialist reconstruction. Naturally, this policy, equally indispensable for consolidating socialist England, could be carried through only shoulder to shoulder with the vanguard of the Indian proletariat and it would have to offer obvious advantages to the Indian peasants.”

CCP’s Anti-Soviet Treachery

The perspective outlined by Trotsky is diametrically opposed to the nationalist, *anti-revolutionary* program of the Chinese Stalinists. This was glaringly seen in the criminal alliance Mao’s regime forged with U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union, castigated and slandered by Maoists as “social-imperialist” and the “main enemy” of the world’s peoples.

One of the fruits of this betrayal was the devastation of Angola from decades of war. After winning independence from Portugal in 1975, the country was thrown into a civil war between three nationalist guerrilla forces: the MPLA, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). Initially, as Marxists we gave no support to any of the contending sides, all of which were petty-bourgeois nationalist movements aspiring to congeal a bourgeois regime. However, that situation soon changed.

Aided by the Soviet Union, the MPLA gained control of most key areas, including the capital Luanda, and declared Angola a “people’s republic.” In response, the U.S. forced the unification of UNITA and the FNLA and supplied them with arms, while South Africa and Portugal

added hundreds of their own troops to the effort to overthrow the MPLA. The civil war was thus transformed into a proxy war between U.S. imperialism and the Soviet degenerated workers state. Marxists had a clear side in this conflict: for the military victory of the MPLA. Mao’s China, however, actively *supported the CIA-funded FNLA/UNITA*, even sending military instructors to train the anti-Communist cutthroats. Testifying to China’s role, U.S. officials noted that Washington was able to cut back “aid to the anti-communist movements, because we were satisfied to let the Chinese do the work in the field” (quoted in *Le Monde*, 5 December 1975). So much for “non-interference”!

As South African troops led a blitzkrieg toward Luanda, China’s official *Peking Review* (21 November 1975) issued a high-level policy statement condemning the “expansion and crude interference of the Soviet Union,” refusing to even mention the invasion by the apartheid armed forces! Soviet aid, combined with later intervention by heroic Cuban troops, eventually turned the tide and drove back the imperialist proxies and their South African advance guard. But the civil war dragged on. Bridges were destroyed by bombs, rural roads and fields were planted with land mines, and urban infrastructure all but collapsed, enormously compounding the country’s pre-existing deep backwardness.

The Angolan masses paid in blood for the treachery of the Chinese Stalinists, who have been able subsequently to take advantage of the destitution of Angola and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa to which they themselves contributed. More fundamentally, with its material aid to reactionary, imperialist-backed anti-Soviet forces from Southern Africa to Afghanistan in the 1970s-80s, the CCP contributed to the destruction of the USSR itself, a catastrophic defeat for workers and the oppressed the world over, including in China.

For Proletarian Internationalism!

Directed by the Beijing bureaucracy’s narrow national interests, overseas state investment often pits Chinese firms and managers against the workers they employ. Along with the Chinese-financed mines, oil facilities and construction projects that have sprung up throughout Africa has come evidence of workers abused through discriminatory hiring practices, low wages and outright union-busting. One study cited by Deborah Brautigam in *The Dragon’s Gift* found that Chinese con-

struction firms in Namibia violated minimum wage laws and “affirmative action” training requirements while also failing to pay social security and other benefits. Chinese workers in Africa have waged their own battles against mistreatment. According to Brautigam, when some 200 Chinese construction workers in Equatorial Guinea went on strike in March 2008, a clash with local security forces resulted in two workers being killed.

A fact virtually ignored by both the bourgeois and the “left” press is that many of the worst attacks on African workers are carried out by private Chinese entrepreneurs who, with Beijing’s approval, have attached themselves like leeches to China’s investment program. In 2010, two Chinese supervisors at the Collum Coal Mine in Zambia shot 13 miners during a wage protest. The following year, Zambian authorities decided not to press charges, touching off widespread anger among Zambians. The mine, which the press described as “Chinese-owned,” was not a state-owned entity but the property of a private investor, operated by his four younger brothers.

Marxists support workers fighting for union rights and decent wages and benefits, including their struggles against Chinese management. At the same time, it is necessary to combat nationalist demagogues and trade-union misleaders who seize on the abuses of workers to jump onto the imperialists’ anti-China bandwagon. For example, the COSATU union federation in South Africa, part of the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and SACP, has long vituperated against Chinese clothing imports driving out local manufacturers.

Such protectionism promotes the lie that the (overwhelmingly black) South African proletariat has a common “national interest” with the (overwhelmingly white) South African capitalist class, revealing the bankruptcy of the COSATU bureaucrats’ claims to stand for international working-class solidarity. It also feeds the drive for counterrevolution in China, strengthening the hand of the imperialists whose military and economic might pose formidable obstacles to proletarian revolution in South Africa and elsewhere. Defense of China and the other deformed workers states—Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos—is of vital importance in the fight for a socialist future in Africa, for which the combative and strategically concentrated South African working class holds the key. You can’t win new gains if you can’t defend old ones!

Marxists must also combat the chauvinism that permeates the Chinese state bureaucracy and its representatives overseas. With budgets and deadlines determined by Beijing, Chinese companies often employ workers from China rather than hire locally. Defending such practices, the general manager of the state-owned China National Overseas Engineering Corporation declared: “Chinese people can stand very hard work. This is a cultural difference. Chinese people work until they finish and then rest.” Zambian workers, he complained, were “like the British”: “They have tea breaks and a lot of days off. For our construction company that means it costs a lot more” (quoted in Chris Alden, *China in Africa*). Such comments speak volumes about the contempt that Chinese bureaucrats hold toward both African and Chinese workers.

Inheriting the overseas operations of Chinese state enterprises, a government of workers and peasants councils in China would make special efforts to hire and train local workers, with union rights and with pay and benefits above local scale. Such a regime would also make short shrift of the bourgeois elements who have arisen in China as a result of “market reforms” and have found a place in Africa as well. Above all, it would follow the lead of the early Soviet workers state in promoting the victory of workers rule throughout the planet. It is to carry out the task of forging the Leninist vanguard parties necessary to lead that struggle that the ICL fights to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. ■

斯巴达克派

SPARTACIST

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WORKERS VANGUARD

ILWU...

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the “local community” and a “foreign corporation.” But the Longview “community” includes the cops who are busting unionists’ heads, and the U.S. components of the EGT conglomerate are no less committed than their foreign partners to keeping the port union-free. The ILWU has the potential to win this struggle precisely because it is *not* local but coastwide. As the shipping industry’s *Journal of Commerce* (19 September) acknowledged: “It is this unchallenged jurisdiction at West Coast ports that makes the ILWU one of the most powerful unions in the United States. In the container sector, shipping executives know a dispute at one port can lead to the ILWU shutting down their operations on the entire coast.” If the union is going to stand down EGT, it has to be prepared to continue playing to its strengths: its collective organization and its ability to stop the flow of goods.

International working-class solidarity could be decisive, especially if scab grain starts being shipped out. The *Journal of Commerce* observed: “The bigger concern



Brock Lile

September 7: Unionists who mobilized to stop grain shipment face off against cops. ILWU is in crucial fight for its future.

for EGT, however, could be the close connections the ILWU maintains with dock-worker unions in Asia, where most of its grain will be exported. The ILWU and its Asian counterparts in the past have coordinated job actions on both sides of the Pacific against vessels involved in labor disputes at U.S. and Asian ports.” The ILWU augmented its power, as did the

250-member Panama Canal pilots union, when the pilots affiliated with the ILWU on September 17. But when ILWU leaders rail against EGT as a “foreign” threat to U.S. shippers, they line up behind the profitability of ILWU members’ red-white-and-blue exploiters and undermine international labor solidarity.

The ILWU Ladies Auxiliary has played

Libya...

(continued from page 3)

was flown to Tripoli where he was interrogated, including by British forces, and tortured. Now that Belhaj is in cahoots with the imperialists, he has made assurances that the fact he was imprisoned and tortured in the past “will not stop the new Libya having orderly relations with the United States and Britain” (guardian.co.uk, 4 September).

Workers Power: Once More unto the Breach...

Among the most avid supporters of the “rebels” on the Labourite left, Workers Power admits that “a major part of the rebel leadership was willing to hand over larger parts of the economy to imperialist multinationals,” while sections “with Islamic roots plan to include elements of Sharia into the legal system.” But never mind that: “It would be ridiculous to give up on the Libyan revolution because of the crimes of its leadership or the manoeuvres of the imperialists in Washington, London or Paris.” For Workers Power, the imperialist-backed “rebels” provide an opening for “a struggle for consistent democracy and internationalism” (“Should Socialists Support the Libyan Revolution?” 22 August).

Workers Power’s blatant pro-imperialism seemingly caused some dissent within its membership and led to the expulsion of Chris Newcombe. In a public statement dated 28 August he declared that he is forming a faction in opposition to the Workers Power leadership. Opposing support to the “rebels,” Newcombe asks:

“Given that the rebel TNC has totally aligned itself with the imperialist aggressors, what possible basis is there for revolutionaries among the rebel forces to strike even a military front with its leadership and forces loyal to it? Should they not, rather, immediately turn their guns on these pro-imperialist traitors?”

Newcombe adds that anyone reading articles on Libya by Workers Power’s League for a Fifth International (L5I) may “ask themselves whether the League has in fact reversed the polarity of its programme, rejecting the AIUF [anti-imperialist united front] in favor of a pro-imperialist united front” (WP-L5I Left Opposition internet posting, 28 August).

Workers Power has a record of marching in lockstep with imperialism. In 1995, under the guise of providing humanitarian aid for workers in Bosnia, Workers Power refused to defend the Bosnian Serbs against imperialist bombing. Four years later, during the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia, led by then Labour prime minister Tony Blair and Democratic U.S. president Bill Clinton, this arch-Labourite organisation joined in the imperialists’ war cry over “poor little Kosovo,” supporting the Kosovo Liberation Army which was a stalking horse for the imperialist attack

on Serbia. Despite a veneer of opposition to the bombing, Workers Power marched alongside the Alliance for Workers Liberty in a 10 April 1999 rally in London dominated by NATO and Albanian flags and placards screaming, “NATO Good Luck” and “NATO Now or Never.”

Capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union, an enormous defeat for the working masses of the entire world, emboldened the imperialists to aggressively assert their might over weaker countries through an increasing number of bombings, wars and occupations, exemplified by the slaughter of Afghans and Iraqis in which U.S. and British imperialism have taken a leading role. The social-democratic “left” helped pave the way for these atrocities by hailing the counterrevolutionary forces, from Polish Solidarność to Boris Yeltsin’s Russian “democrats.”

In Third World countries, the pseudo-Trotskyists invoke the “anti-imperialist united front” as a cover for supporting bourgeois regimes. This includes support to the reactionary “Islamic Revolution” of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in 1979. In the Arab world, both Stalinists and pseudo-Trotskyists hailed the so-called “Arab Revolution” represented in the 1950s by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and in the 1970s by Qaddafi in Libya. Support to Arab nationalism has led to the bloody defeat of workers movements throughout the Near East, not least in Egypt, where Nasser rewarded the Communists for their support by imprisoning, torturing and killing them.

The bourgeois-nationalist regimes of Nasser and Qaddafi inevitably failed to address the felt needs of the masses. To the “anti-imperialist united front,” we counterpose the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution, which holds that in the neocolonial countries, the proletariat must lead all the oppressed masses in a struggle for socialist revolution against their “own” bourgeoisie, as part of an internationalist strategy for proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries.

We have always politically opposed Qaddafi’s capitalist regime, a dictatorship that has brutally suppressed anyone suspected of opposing his rule. At the same time, we have consistently defended Libya against imperialist attacks. During the 1986 U.S. bombing of Tripoli under U.S. president Ronald Reagan our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. sent a team to Tripoli to express our solidarity with the neocolonial victims of imperialism. The same year we wrote:

“For the ‘crime’ of defying American imperialism and for being a military client of the Soviet Union, Libya’s Qaddafi was chosen by Reagan early on to take the rap for all the world’s terrorist incidents. For over five years the U.S. has conducted a vendetta against this small desert country with a population of under 4 million.”

—*Workers Vanguard*, No. 411,
12 September 1986

In fact, when Qaddafi first came to

power in 1969, he was fanatically anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. But with U.S. imperialism targeting Libya—and him personally for destruction—he became increasingly reliant on Soviet arms to defend his country. The destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92 removed what had been the main impediment to imperialist depredations around the world. Following the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, Qaddafi renounced Libya’s nuclear weapons programme and welcomed imperialist inspectors to verify this. In 2004, then Labour prime minister Tony Blair brokered a rapprochement with Qaddafi and over the last decade his regime closely collaborated with Washington and London in the “war on terror,” while policing the Mediterranean to help the imperialists to keep African immigrants out of Europe.

Myth of the “Arab Revolution”

On Qaddafi’s downfall, the SWP hoped that his removal might yet invigorate the “Arab Revolution” and warned: “Don’t let west hijack Arab Spring” (*Socialist Worker*, 27 August). An “Arab revolution” by definition cannot be a class revolution of the workers in the Arab countries against their bourgeois rulers. It flies in the face of the need for the political independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois forces and is an obstacle to the working class developing basic class consciousness.

A fundamental difference between the events in Libya and the popular upsurges in Tunisia and Egypt is that in the latter two countries there is a powerful, concentrated working class. The proletariat is the only force that has the potential social power and class interest to lead all of the impoverished and oppressed in socialist revolution

a prominent role in protesting EGT’s union-busting. Alliances with working-class women and the unemployed played an important role historically in union organizing and strike battles. The ILWU’s multiracial membership—majority black in the Bay Area and Latino in L.A.—gives the union the potential to forge strong bonds with the ghetto and barrio masses. But to galvanize such support behind the unions requires a labor movement that links its struggles to the fight for black freedom and immigrant rights and defends all those thrown onto capitalism’s scrap heap.

The backstabbing role of the Trumka AFL-CIO leadership epitomizes the policies of the U.S. labor bureaucracy, which is wedded to the continued rule of capital and preaches reliance on the bosses’ state and political parties, especially the Democrats. Labor needs a leadership based on a class-struggle program and committed to the *independence* of the working class from the class enemy. Such a leadership would support the building of a workers party to lead all the exploited and oppressed in the fight for a workers government, destroying the capitalists’ repressive state machinery root and branch. ■

to overthrow all the murderous regimes of the region. But to achieve this task, the working class must emerge as a revolutionary force under its own class banner. The task of genuine Marxists is to combat illusions in an “Arab Revolution” (Mark II) and all manifestations of nationalism, which in Egypt leads to the masses placing their trust in the army. It is also vital to dispel illusions in “democratic” imperialism, which will be used by the capitalist rulers to derail struggles against dictatorship. The NATO bombing of Libya, as well as the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, is a reminder that “democracy” is only a mask to conceal the true nature of imperialism which has an inherent drive to subjugate the neo-colonial countries.

What’s needed are revolutionary workers parties to lead the proletariat in a struggle for socialist revolution against the military bonapartists, the religious fundamentalists and all bourgeois political forces, opening the road to the emancipation of women and the liberation of all the oppressed and exploited.

As our comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. wrote (*Workers Vanguard* No. 976, 18 March):

“The Libyan proletariat has clearly been devastated in the current conflict, as migrant workers—a major component of the working class in that country—have fled the chaos, armed violence and racist attacks en masse. The future of the Libyan masses will be decided by working-class struggle that extends beyond the national terrain to include the proletariats of Algeria, Tunisia and, especially, Egypt. That requires the forging of revolutionary working-class parties as part of a genuine Trotskyist Fourth International, which would link the fight for socialist federations of North Africa and of the Near East to the struggle for proletarian revolution in the imperialist centers.” ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

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Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

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

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Police Assaults, Arrests, Injunctions Defend Longview ILWU Against Bosses' Cops and Courts!

SEPTEMBER 27—Six days ago, the small town of Longview on the Columbia River in Washington State was occupied by an army of police from throughout the surrounding area. Armored SWAT vehicles and rifle-wielding cops in riot gear flooded the streets and closed down roads leading to the town's port. Around the port rail tracks outside EGT Development's newly built grain terminal, which is being run with scab labor, were some 50 protesting members and supporters of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21. As a train carrying grain appeared, cops swarmed the tracks, handcuffing and arresting ten protesters, including Local 21 president Dan Coffman and wives and mothers of longshoremen. One 57-year-old woman had her rotator cuff torn. When two Local 21 officers rushed to her aid, they were hurled to the ground and cuffed, their faces shoved into the gravel and their eyes directly and repeatedly sprayed with mace. Now they're charged with assaulting the police!

This massive display of force by the cops is the latest chapter in the ILWU's struggle against the multinational EGT conglomerate, which is dead set on breaking the union's 80-year hold on work at Pacific Northwest grain terminals. Like every conflict between labor and capital, the confrontation in Longview is a hard-nosed struggle between class forces whose interests are irreconcilable. Which side prevails is determined by the relative strength of the opposing forces. Repeatedly, Local 21 has mobilized militant labor action to stop trains from bringing grain shipments into the terminal. On September 8, the union came out on top when it brought its power to bear as several ports across Washington were idled and picket lines in Longview reinforced. Before the day was over, police and private security had reportedly turned tail and EGT was howling about all the grain strewn on the tracks.

The ILWU and its allies are up against EGT and its allies—the cops, the courts and capitalist government agencies like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The giant grain exporter wants to establish the \$200 million, state-of-the-art Longview terminal as a prime location for shipments to growing markets in Asia. If EGT gets away with refusing to hire Local 21 members as its lease with the Port of Longview obliges it to do, it would embolden other employers up and down the coast to gun for the ILWU. In the face of this deadly threat to the ILWU's future, the rest of the labor movement must rally to the defense of Local 21.

The cop rampages, including a September 7 assault on ILWU International president Robert McEllrath, amply demonstrate the role of the police: to protect the property and profits of the capitalist class through brute force. Following the union victory on September 8, Longview police and Cowlitz County sheriff's deputies unleashed a campaign of terror and intimidation. Trade unionists, among them Local 21 leaders, were accosted in their homes and cars, arrested and jailed by gangs of cops for non-violent misdemeanor citations

that ordinarily would not merit arrest, let alone jail. To date, at least 135 ILWU members and supporters have been arrested in connection with union protests.

McEllrath, who had a warrant for his arrest stemming from the union's actions on September 7-8, turned himself in to Cowlitz County authorities yesterday and was released after being given a citation. Officials from both the ILWU and the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), which is based on the East and

arrest. This was a sharp statement against the cops' "made for TV" assaults, in which individual unionists are picked up and hauled off. Some 30 police officers in full riot gear were assembled inside, but the unionists, who waited around for a half hour, were just told to go home. Then, a couple of hours later, the vicious roundups resumed with the arrest of Local 21 vice president Jake Whiteside in front of his children in a church parking lot.

The day before the march, Sundet had



Wagner/Daily News

September 21: ILWU Local 21 executive board member Kelly Muller being pepper-sprayed and thrown to the ground by cops. A dozen unionists and family members were arrested as EGT union-busters moved grain into Longview terminal.

Gulf coasts, accompanied McEllrath in solidarity and, according to the ILWU, longshoremen all along the West Coast stopped work for 15 minutes.

A federal civil rights lawsuit filed on September 22 by the ILWU against Sheriff Mark Nelson and Police Chief Jim Duscha details one brutal arrest after another. Describing an attack on a Local 21 member and former union official outside her home, the suit states that the cops "grabbed her, threw her down onto her stomach, shoved her onto the hood of her car and handcuffed her with her hands behind her back. Then, before putting her into the police car, two officers proceeded to slam her body onto the side of her car and then onto a wooden fence even though she was already handcuffed." A member of another ILWU local, who is also a minister, was dragged from his home by cops, one of whom brandished a semi-automatic weapon, and taken to a crowded school parking lot where he was handcuffed and arrested in front of his wife and children. Even people just driving vehicles or wearing clothes identifying them as ILWU supporters have been followed and roughed up. This criminalization of longshoremen smacks of the arrests, beatings and worse that the cops mete out to black people every day in America's urban ghettos.

On September 16, some 200 union members and supporters, led by Coffman and ILWU Coast Committeeman Leal Sundet, marched to the Cowlitz County Hall of Justice to offer themselves up for mass

sent Sheriff Nelson a letter voicing unionists' anger at the arrests and police brutality, pointing out that those being rounded up were the same ones who had dispersed on his orders from the port railroad tracks on September 7 and were not arrested at the time. The letter nailed the sheriff as "EGT's propagandist" for carrying out a "sensationalized media campaign to mischaracterize union members as lawless criminal aggressor thugs." Among the lies planted in news outlets was the accusation that union members pepper-sprayed policemen when, as the letter states, "it was the other way around."

Sundet's letter made an appeal to the sheriff to "remain neutral" in this conflict, and now the union has launched a petition campaign to recall Nelson. The notion of police "neutrality" is a suicidal illusion. The cops are the hired guns of the capitalists. As one old labor saw goes, there is more education at the end of a policeman's nightstick than in four years of college. During the 1934 West Coast waterfront strike, seven union men were killed, including two gunned down by San Francisco cops on "Bloody Thursday," July 5, which sparked a citywide strike that led to the founding of the ILWU. Unions in the U.S. were built in the course of just such bitter battles against the capitalist state—the cops, courts and military like the National Guard—and its strikebreaking auxiliaries, from the Pinkertons to the Ku Klux Klan. The struggle to organize

unions and win real gains is a history of laws broken and injunctions defied.

The Constitution of Bay Area ILWU Local 10 codifies an important corollary lesson coming out of such hard-fought strikes: "No member of the State Militia, or officer or agent of a corporation or association of employers, or a deputized city, county or state police officer, shall be permitted to hold membership in this Union." But the enlistment of port security—the "ILWU Watchmen"—in Bay Area Local 75 is a direct violation of this prohibition. Security guards at the Los Angeles/Long Beach port and elsewhere are also in the ILWU. EGT's own private security force has served as the prosecution's main witnesses against the ILWU. Neither the cops and prison guards nor private security guards have any place in the labor movement!

While the ILWU and every other union might have to fight some battles in the courts, there should be no illusion that the "justice" system is anything but a tool of the capitalist ruling class. In fact, the federal district court where the ILWU lawsuit against the police was filed is the same one coming down like gangbusters on the union. At the request of the NLRB, most of whose members are Democratic Party appointees, this court had earlier issued an injunction prohibiting the ILWU from aggressive picketing. The union was then found in contempt of court for the September 7-8 protests, with the judge giving the company and police carte blanche to come up with figures to set fines against Local 21, which according to the NLRB may reach nearly \$300,000.

The NLRB, whose purpose is to demobilize labor struggle and maintain class "peace" on behalf of the bosses, is building a case for slapping the union with additional penalties for the September 21 protests.

As we wrote in "ILWU Fights Deadly Threat" (WV No. 986, 16 September), "it's been clear from the beginning that EGT wants a non-union facility" in Longview. The company has tried to disguise its union-busting as a "jurisdictional dispute" between the ILWU and scabs in Operating Engineers Local 701, who are working the Longview terminal. Criminally, AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka has sided with the company by promoting this lie. The Trumka bureaucracy wants to squelch the ILWU's battle for fear of undermining the Democratic Party and its leader, Barack Obama, whose 2012 presidential campaign is in trouble.

There have been a number of statements and resolutions from the ILA and other unions in the U.S. in support of Local 21, as well as from dock workers unions overseas and Japan's Doro-Chiba rail workers union. The 24,000-member, Portland-based Joint Council of Teamsters No. 37 has voiced its support for the Longview longshoremen. At the same time, it is Teamsters-affiliated Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen members who are crossing picket lines by driving trains into EGT's Longview terminal. There's a word for this: *scabbing!*

Some ILWU officials have presented the Longview struggle as a fight between

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