

Bishops, Bigots and Birth Control



The Foundry



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Obama Panders to Religious Reaction

The Catholic church's campaign to oppose cost-free health insurance coverage for contraception for women employed in its universities and hospitals is a frontal attack on the rights that women

gained in the wake of the social struggles for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. Cost has nothing to do with it. The same bishops who seek to achieve an exception to such coverage in the name of "religious freedom" cannot even obtain voluntary compliance from Catholics in this country, almost all of whom use effective birth control methods instead of Vatican roulette (the rhythm method).

The bishops quickly found allies from among the Republican candidates for the presidency—most notably Rick "Sanctorum," who runs as an open proponent of Catholic theology. Joining in were the right-wing Christian fundamentalists who currently constitute the core of that party, as well as Orthodox Jewish rabbis. Santorum has now made the virtually unprecedented declaration that separation of church and state in the U.S. is not "absolute." It needs to be noted that religious freedom in the U.S. is in fact based on the separation of church and state, not on the "freedom" of the clergy of whatever stripe to dictate their superstitious restraints on sexuality.

The attack on the availability of contraception is a part of the decades-long assault on women's rights, centrally on the right to abortion that was supposedly guaranteed by the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. It is an attack on the very way women live today. Ninety-nine percent of women with sexual experience have used contraception, with 69 percent of those using highly effective measures like the Pill. At the same time, almost half of the first births in this coun-

For Free Abortion on Demand! For Full, Free Access to Contraception!

Left: Clerics attack contraception in guise of religious freedom at February 16 House committee hearing. Right: Obama and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius offer olive branch to anti-woman reactionaries at February 10 press conference.

try are to unmarried women, and not a small number of those are unplanned. Additionally, the Pill is the treatment of choice for a variety of medical conditions.

The Catholic hierarchy's attack on contraception is one of myriad attempts to enjoin the sexual freedom of women and maintain them as breeding stock. Pending in over a dozen states are "personhood" bills that define human life as beginning at conception and, thus, threaten legalized abortion and contraception. Many states already have laws severely limiting access to abortion, with some requiring ultrasounds for any woman seeking the procedure. Planned Parenthood has been under siege for the "crimes" of making contraception available and providing some access to abortion to those without means.

But all is not well for the apostles of religious fundamentalism. A personhood bill that seemed a shoo-in was recently tabled in Virginia, and a similar bill failed

last year in a statewide referendum in Mississippi, normally a reliable outpost of racial and religious reaction. Recently the Susan G. Komen foundation, which is dedicated to eradicating breast cancer, reversed its decision to end its donations to Planned Parenthood following substantial public outcry and objections of some of its wealthy patrons.

The vast majority of women today are not about to accept being forced back into the pre-Pill 1950s, with its straitjacket of sexual "morality." Nonetheless, the notion that consensual sexual activity no matter how it is wrapped or stimulated is a private affair and should be free of state interference is hardly as American as apple pie. Laws against contraception remained on the books in many states well after the Pill was available by prescription. Until 1965, it was illegal for married people in Connecticut to use birth control. It took seven more years for single people

to legally use birth control in Massachusetts, and not only there. Bill Baird, a heroic fighter for women's right to abortion and contraception, spent three months in jail in Massachusetts for giving

a package of contraceptive foam and a condom to a Boston University student as a challenge to the law. Baird's case later went to the Supreme Court and helped lay the basis for the right to privacy—the main legal argument behind *Roe v. Wade* (see "Fifty Years After the Pill: Still a Long Way to Go," WV No. 968, 5 November 2010).

Democrats No Answer to Christian Right

The just outrage of most women over the fundamentalist barrage on their rights is likely to be reflected in the November presidential election in a manner that will not please the Republican candidate. As G.O.P. strategist Alex Castellanos told Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* (25 February), "Republicans being against sex is not good. Sex is popular." To be sure, at present the Republican primary scene has been peopled with seeming troglodytes, as exemplified by the quip from Rick Santorum's wealthy benefactor that in the good old days cheap birth control consisted of "gals" putting an aspirin between their

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Honor Malcolm X, Militant Voice of Black Struggle

Manning Marable's *Malcolm X*: A Liberal's "Reinvention"

See Page 6



Adelman/Magnum



Birth Control...

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knees. Santorum’s war on sex moved Dowd to write three days earlier: “Rick Santorum has been called a latter-day Savonarola. That’s far too grand. He’s more like a small-town mullah.” (Girolamo Savonarola [1452-1498] was a Dominican monk who, as the leader of a Christian state in Florence, led mobs in burning books and crusaded against vice and frivolity.)

As they openly dish out bigotry and contempt for working people, women and minorities, the Republicans are making it easy for the Democrats to strike their pose as the last refuge for labor and the oppressed. It is to be expected that the feminists, along with the sellout labor bureaucracy, will do their bit for the re-election of the Democrat Obama as Commander-in-Chief of the capitalist order.

It should be recalled that it was not a Republican president but the Democrat Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) who hyped the

virtues of Christian fundamentalism as a weapon to roll back the gains of the civil rights and other social struggles of the 1950s and ’60s. For America’s capitalist rulers, who had suffered a huge defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, the radicalism associated with the 1960s was a dangerous bubble. Above all, they feared that a recurrence of social protest could spill over into an aroused labor movement.

To counter “permissiveness” and restore confidence in the U.S. ruling class, in the 1970s a major ideological assault was launched, aimed at instilling an unquestioning acceptance of capitalism, God and family, including the desirability of dying for one’s country. It was under the “born again” Carter that the Hyde Amendment cutting off federal funding of abortions for poor women was enacted, coinciding with a rollback of black rights.

Since that time, bourgeois politics under both the Democrats and Republicans have moved even farther to the right, and today Obama & Co. occupy ground once claimed by mainstream Republicans.



TROTSKY

Marxism and the Emancipation of Women

In honor of International Women’s Day, March 8, we print below excerpts of an article by Clara Zetkin, who played a historic role in the international working women’s movement. Zetkin was a leading figure in the German Social Democratic Party and later the Communist Party as well as a personal friend of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin. Marking the 20th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx, her article underlines how Marx’s materialist

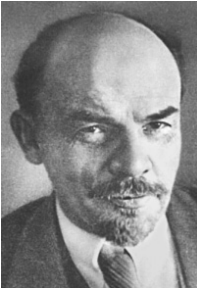
understanding of society laid the basis for a program of women’s liberation through proletarian revolution. Through developing the productive forces in a planned economy, the institution of the family, the central source of women’s oppression, will be replaced with collective childcare and housework as part of an egalitarian socialist society.

To be sure, Marx never dealt with the women’s question “per se” or “as such.” Yet he created the most irreplaceable and important weapons for the women’s fight to obtain all of their rights. His materialist concept of history has not supplied us with any ready-made formulas concerning the women’s question, yet it has done something much more important: It has given us the correct, unerring method to explore and comprehend that question. It was only the materialist concept of history which enabled us to understand the women’s question within the flux of universal historical development and the light of universally applicable social relationships and their historical necessity and justification. Only thus did we perceive its driving forces and the aims pursued by them as well as the conditions which are essential to a solution of these problems.

The old superstition that the position of women in the family and in society was forever unchangeable because it was created on moral precepts or by divine revelation was smashed. Marx revealed that the family, like all other institutions and forms of existence, is subjected to a constant process of ebb and flow which changes with the economic conditions and the property relationships which result from them....

Das Kapital shows most convincingly that there are incessant and irresistible historical forces at work in today’s society which are revolutionizing this situation from the bottom up and will bring about the equality of women. By masterfully examining the development and nature of capitalist production down to the most refined details, and by discovering its law of motion, i.e., the Theory of Surplus Value, he has conclusively proven in his discussions of women and child labor that capitalism has destroyed the basis for the ancient domestic activity of women, thereby dissolving the anachronistic form of the family. This has made women economically independent outside of the family and created a firm ground for their equality as wives, mothers and citizens. But something else is clearly illustrated by Marx’s works: The proletariat is the only revolutionary class which by establishing Socialism, is able to and must create the indispensable prerequisites for the complete solution of the women’s question. Besides the fact that the bourgeois suffragettes neither want nor are able to achieve the social liberation of women proletarians, they are incapable of solving the serious new conflicts which will be fought over the social and legal equality of the sexes within the capitalist order. These conflicts will not vanish until the exploitation of man by man and the contradictions arising therefrom are abolished.

—Clara Zetkin, “What the Women Owe to Karl Marx” (March 1903), reprinted in *Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings* (1984)



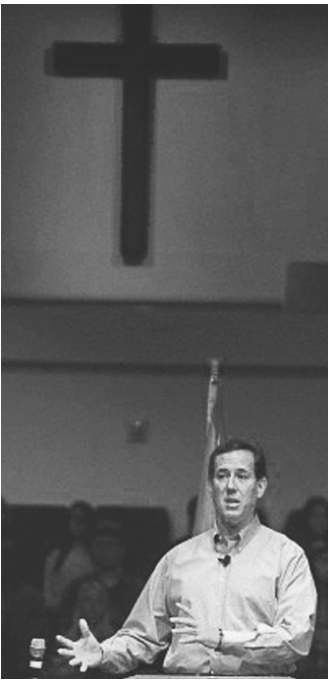
LENIN



Neaythons/Gamma-Liaison

Left: Democrat Jimmy Carter helped bring Christian fundamentalism into political mainstream in 1970s.

Right: Arch-bigot Rick Santorum campaigning in Florida, January 25.



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As Salon.com columnist Glenn Greenwald put it, “Because Obama has governed as a centrist Republican, these GOP candidates are able to attack him as a leftist radical only by moving so far to the right in their rhetoric and policy prescriptions that they fall over the cliff of mainstream acceptability, or even basic sanity” (London *Guardian*, 27 December 2011).

In response to the bishops’ outrage at being supposedly forced to fund “sin,” Obama renegotiated the terms, leaving the women workers of Catholic affiliates to find contraception elsewhere, supposedly via insurance companies. The “compromise” is patently at the expense of the women workers involved. Yet it hasn’t silenced such opponents as the attorney generals of Texas, Florida, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma and South Carolina, who jointly filed a suit in a U.S. District Court seeking to block even the compromised requirement that insurance plans cover contraception.

During last April’s budget fight, the Republicans fought to ban federal funding for Planned Parenthood and to reinstate a ban on the District of Columbia using its own money to fund elective abortion through Medicaid. The first was temporarily set aside, but the Obama White House okayed the ban on D.C. funding for abortions, particularly sacrificing the rights and health of black women. In fact, the Democrats have ensured that for most of the last 20 years the ban was in effect. Clinton signed the ban into law six times, and Obama and the Democratic-controlled House and Senate upheld it in 2009. As we noted in our article on the D.C. ban: “In regard to abortion, the ‘pro-choice’ Democrats’ strategy has been to keep it safe and legal for the wealthy, but to hell with the poor and minorities” (*WV* No. 979, 29 April 2011).

And to hell with young people. In December, Obama and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius overruled the FDA when that agency approved the “morning-after” pill for

over-the-counter sales to anyone, regardless of age. So now women younger than 17 must chase down a doctor immediately after intercourse and beg for a prescription. Obama claimed patriarchal privilege “as the father of two daughters” in justifying the ban, an obvious ploy to cater to Christian fundamentalist voters for this year’s elections. Above all, the Democrats want to avoid the “A-word” (abortion). Since *Roe v. Wade*, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, access to abortion has been rolled back to such an extent that nearly 90 percent of counties have no abortion facilities at all. On top of that, 36 states require minors to get parental consent.

Obama and the Democrats created a health “reform” package that insurance executive-turned-whistleblower Wendell Potter quipped might more aptly be called “The Insurance Industry Profit Protection and Enhancement Act.” In May 2009, speaking at the Notre Dame commencement, Obama proclaimed his support to a “sensible conscience clause” that would allow health care providers to withhold abortion or other services that conflicted with their religious beliefs. Forsaking any semblance of a genuine “public option” let alone the kind of “single-payer” system as exists in Canada and much of Europe, Obama also made clear that the plan would not cover “illegal” immigrants and their families and that no federal dollars would be used to fund abortions, in line with the reactionary Hyde Amendment.

People in this country—including immigrants—need **free quality health care** with no exceptions. Free abortion and contraception must be available to all, irrespective of age. These necessities will not be gained through playing the shell game by which the interests of workers and the oppressed are tied to the “lesser evil” Democratic Party of American capitalism. Such gains for women as have been wrested were not due to the electoral pressure politics of the bourgeois National Organization for

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

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The Spartacist League is the U.S. Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is February 28.

No. 997

2 March 2012

Gunning Down Blacks, Spying on Muslims

NYPD Racist Rampage

A spate of terror carried out by the New York Police Department against black youth in recent weeks gives a raw picture of life in Barack Obama's "post-racial" America. On February 2, cops gunned down Ramarley Graham, a black Bronx teenager. Graham had run when police tried to stop him, since the small quantity of marijuana he was carrying could have meant jail time. Cops from the Street Narcotics Enforcement Unit chased after Graham, smashed into his home, beat his grandmother and fatally shot him in the chest—another stolen life in the racist "war on drugs." He was the third person gunned down within a week by the NYPD.

Two weeks before, four cops savagely beat Jatiek Reed in broad daylight on a busy street in the Bronx. The gruesome scene, with this black youth lying helpless on the sidewalk as cops thrashed him with nightsticks and passersby screamed in protest, was filmed and posted on the Internet. Reed's mother told the press, "His whole back is black and blue like they were beating on a slave."

On February 6, some 500 people gathered in the Bronx to protest Ramarley Graham's execution. At the protest, Graham's older sister told the truth: "This is not just about Ramarley. This is about all young black men." Just the day before Graham's killing, cops in the Chicago suburb of Calumet City stormed into the home of Stephon Watts, an autistic black 15-year-old, and killed him with two bullets to the chest. The cops gave the usual lie that they shot in self-defense. Stephon's mother, Danelene Powell-Watts, a unionized auto worker, rightly called her son's death a "coldblooded murder."

Ramarley Graham's fate is the lethal result of the NYPD "stop and frisk" campaign, which last year alone victimized some **686,000 people**, the overwhelming majority of them black or Latino. Working to defuse anger over Graham's killing, a spokesman for black Democrat Al Sharpton's National Action Network declared, "The police are not our enemy; they are here to protect us, but the system is insensitive to our community and it needs to be overhauled" (*Amsterdam News*, 16 February).

The fact is that the NYPD is an army of occupation in the ghettos and barrios and the strikebreaking enforcer of capitalist "law and order" against the entire working class. No amount of "overhaul" or "sensitivity training" will ever change that. The brutalization and killings of minority youth are not an aberration but part of the everyday workings of the system of capitalist repression. The cops are paid to protect the interests of the tiny class of exploiters—the 0.01 percent—that lords it over working people and minorities. The same police force that shoots down inner-city youth hauled off the leader of the TWU transit union Local 100 when it defied the state's Taylor Law and went on strike in 2005.

Muslims Targeted

It is a clear and present danger to black people, immigrants and the labor movement that the powers of the NYPD, along with police agencies coast to coast, have been augmented under Washington's "war on terror." In NYC, this is exemplified by an elaborate campaign of espionage and surveillance against Muslims that was developed after the September 11 attacks.

In a plan designed and taught by CIA agents, policemen of Near Eastern and South Asian background along with Pakistani cab drivers (many of whom were blackmailed into becoming informants) have worked as "rakers" and "mosque crawlers." They've been trolling ethnic



Harbus/NY Daily News

February 6: Family of Ramarley Graham (inset) leads march to 47th Precinct in Bronx to protest his killing by cops.

bookstores and beauty shops in search of "suspicious activity" and loitering in restaurants, hookah bars and mosques, eavesdropping on conversations and listening to sermons. These spies became an integral part of the NYPD/CIA "Demographic Unit," which was partly modeled on how Israeli authorities operate against Palestinians in the West Bank. The NYPD also has a special program to spy on Shi'ite Muslims in a domestic application of U.S. imperialism's escalating threats against Iran. Now an uproar is building on campuses following revelations that New York police have been systematically spying on Muslim student groups at 16 universities in at least four states.

Shining some light on this racist campaign, Tim Robbins reported in the *Village Voice* (19 January 2011) that NYPD brass were showing officers *The Third Jihad*, a "documentary" that purports the existence of a 1,400-year-old Muslim conspiracy to take over the planet. The film features interviews with various officials, from the CIA and FBI to NYC police commissioner Raymond Kelly. The fantastical web of conspiracy it weaves includes groups like the Muslim Student Association, the Council on American-Islamic Relations and university Middle Eastern Studies departments. For good measure, the film's narrator smears Muslim women "whose highest aspiration is to send their children on Jihad missions."

Police spokesmen initially reacted to the revelations by dismissing the film as a "wacky movie" that no one watched. But it was later reported that the film was shown to 1,500 NYC cops as part of "counter-terrorism" training. While Muslims became a special target after September 11, 2001, the NYPD has a long history of "profiling" specific ethnic populations to carry out political witchhunts. As Sam Roberts of the *New York Times* reported in a January 3 blog, in 1919, two years after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, a New York State legislative committee headed by Clayton Lusk zeroed in on immigrants as part of "a sweeping investigation into organizations and individuals suspected of being socialist, communists or anarchists." The NYPD and state police prepared maps identifying "enclaves of Germans, Irish, Russian Jews, Austro-Hungarians, Syrians and blacks, among other groups."

Today, although "Muslim terrorists" have replaced "reds" as Public Enemy No. 1, black Americans are yet again in the cross hairs, appearing as the only native-born group on an NYPD report listing "ancestries of interest." *The Third Jihad* hones in on black American Mus-

lims when invoking the spectre of "home-grown terrorists."

The film also shows clips of liberal antiwar demonstrations, zooming in on a contingent of the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO). The implication that such protesters are accomplices or associates of terrorists is a threat to the entire workers movement. When it comes to repressing dissent, the fish truly stinks from the head. As part of the concocted "war on terror," the Obama White House has gone after leftists associated with defense of the Palestinians and signed a defense authorization bill allowing the military detention of U.S. citizens. Expanding police powers at home is but the domestic reflection of U.S. imperialism's murderous terror in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world.

No Illusions in Police "Reform" Schemes

At a February 3 protest against the Muslim surveillance program, black City Councilman Charles Barron raised the call, "Ray Kelly must go!" As a bourgeois politician with a radical veneer, Barron's role (when he's not praising the NYPD for doing an "excellent job") is to derail struggle against cop terror into schemes to get rid of the "bad apples" or otherwise "clean up" the department. He played this role in 2006 after the NYPD gunned down Sean Bell in a hail of 50 bullets, touching off thousands-strong protests. Barron declared that without an indictment against the cops who killed Bell, "there is going to be an explosion." Barron got the indictment he asked for and the cops were put on trial. The result was that Bell's killers walked free—in other words, business as usual. To the capitalist rulers and their courts, the cops were *doing their job*.



WV Photo

February 3: City Councilman Charles Barron pushes bankrupt police "reform" schemes at downtown Manhattan protest against anti-Muslim NYPD spying program.

Tailing behind Barron and other bourgeois reformers, the ISO hailed protests calling for Kelly's resignation as "positive first steps" ("Islamophobes in Blue," socialistworker.org, 6 February). The ISO whines that the police brass had no plans for "corrective training for officers" who watched *The Third Jihad*, intoning that "this isn't the first time that police have been subjected to these warped and racist views." The inane appeal for some consciousness-raising in the NYPD echoes calls raised by Sharpton and others for "sensitivity training" for cops. This has been implemented, and what it amounts to was seen in June 2009. At the same time that Sharpton and "militant" black preacher Herbert Daughtry were giving the cops training in "multiculturalism" at the Apollo Theater, police were tasing a black woman lying on a Harlem street in her underwear.

Offering a more left-sounding version of police "reform," the Party for Socialism and Liberation responded to the killing of Ramarley Graham by raising the call, "Jail all racist, killer cops!" For the police enforcers of capitalist rule, racist killing comes with the territory. As we noted after the 2009 police killing of Oscar Grant in Oakland, California, "Even if one cop were charged and imprisoned, it wouldn't stop police brutality and terror" ("Oscar Grant Killed in Cold Blood by BART Cop," WV No. 928, 16 January 2009). That atrocity touched off a series of large, angry protests, and due to its notoriety the courts made a rare move by finding Oscar Grant's executioner guilty of "involuntary manslaughter." Having been given this slap on the wrist, the killer cop walked out of prison after eleven months.

The reformists reinforce the lie that the interests of workers and the oppressed can be met under this murderous capitalist system if only enough pressure is brought to bear, particularly through the agency of the Democratic Party. In counterposition to those who channel anger over racist cop terror right back into the very "justice" system that upholds state violence, we wrote in the aftermath of the Sean Bell killing (WV No. 884, 19 January 2007):

"The fight for justice for the countless victims of cop terror demands the independent mobilization of the working class and the oppressed against the Democratic and Republican parties of capital. Integral to that task is combatting the illusions in American democracy—the political shell for the dictatorship of the U.S. capitalist class over the working class and the poor—that are reinforced by reformist 'leftists.' As Marxists, we fight to forge the revolutionary workers party that is essential to leading the multiracial proletariat in the overturn of the murderous capitalist system. Nothing short of a socialist revolution that smashes the capitalist state machinery and replaces it with a workers state—where those who labor rule—can disarm the killer cops and open the road to black liberation." ■

Karl Marx Was Right! World Economic Crisis— Workers Must Fight for Power



CP

Left: Locked-out members of Canadian Auto Workers and supporters picket Freeport-McMoRan copper and gold mine march in West Papua, Indonesia, October 10.



Reuters

Right: Striking workers from Electro-Motive plant in London, Ontario, January 2.

We reprint below a presentation on Marxist economics given by Tynan Madalena, editor of *Spartacist Canada's* *Young Spartacus* pages. The presentation was originally given to a 24 September 2011 Trotskyist League of Canada/Spartacus Youth Club day school in Toronto and published in *Spartacist Canada* No. 171 (Winter 2011/2012).

As the economic crisis that began in 2007-2008 continues around the globe, the post-Cold War myth that capitalism is the final stage in human progress and can continue to grow without limit is shattering before our eyes. In the United States, millions of workers have been thrown into the ranks of the unemployed, millions have lost their homes, hundreds of thousands of immigrants are deported every year, and youth are burdened with huge student debt with dwindling prospects of getting a job. For those who see no future under capitalism, Marx's analysis is an essential tool to understand the world we live in today—and change it.

Since this presentation was given, populist Occupy Wall Street protests against inequality and austerity spread further around the country. The Occupy organizers have argued that they have no clear political agenda, affiliation or even a fixed set of demands, but in fact they do have a program: liberal reform, especially of the financial sector, and “democratization” of capitalism. But capitalism *cannot* be fundamentally reformed. There is a fundamental *class divide* in society between the capitalists—the tiny number of families that own industry and the banks—and the working class, whose labor is the source of the capitalists’ profits.

In this election year, Occupy protesters and others will be told to swallow the poison pill of “lesser evilism,” as attempts will be made to corral them into support for Obama and the capitalist Democratic Party. Posturing as the “friends” of labor and the oppressed, the Democrats are in reality no less committed than the Republicans to the maintenance of capitalist exploitation and pursuit of bloody imperialist wars.

To students and young workers seeking a revolutionary program for the destruction of capitalism, as opposed to seeking only liberal reform, *Young Spartacus* offers Marxism. The Spartacus Youth Clubs train the next generation of revolutionary socialists—the future cadre of a multiracial workers party built in opposition to *all* capitalist parties and their sycophants. Led by such a party and armed with a revolutionary program, the working class can vanquish this system of exploitation and war, laying the basis for a global communist society of abundance and human freedom.

* * *

SPARTACIST CANADA



As stock markets crash and the world economy stands on the precipice of a second “Great Recession,” consider that the collapse of 2008-09, the worst global economic crisis since the 1930s, added 130 million people to the ranks of the chronically malnourished and hungry. That brings the total number to over one billion. In so many words, one-seventh of the human race is starving. One-seventh and counting.

Across the European Union, 23 million workers are out of work. In Spain, which was recently rocked by general strikes and enormous protest movements, youth unemployment is over 44 percent. In Greece, hundreds of thousands of jobs are gone, homelessness is through the roof, and many people, especially pensioners, line up at soup kitchens in order to survive.

Every so-called bailout for every financial crisis across the eurozone—from Greece to Ireland to Portugal—brings with it unrelenting attacks on the living standards of the masses, who seethe with discontent. The IMF, the European Central Bank, the governments of Germany, France and the United States all chauvinistically chastise the peoples of these countries in crisis as living beyond their

means or lazy. In reality, the financial powers are only bailing out themselves—their own failed banking systems—on the backs of workers and the poor.

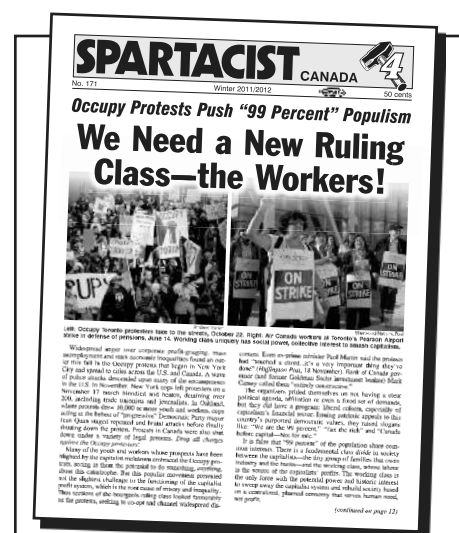
Here in North America, we hear a lot of talk about an economic recovery. It is a jobless recovery, a wageless recovery, a fragile recovery, a “still nascent” recovery. At the end of July, the American government revised its statistics: the 2008 recession was deeper than reported, and the “recovery” was even more dubious than reported. As for the Canadian economy, we recently learned that it shrank by 0.4 percent in the second quarter of this year. Scotiabank released a report two weeks ago forecasting another drop in the third quarter which could be as great as 2.5 percent. “Canada could be among the first of the world’s advanced economies to fall into a technical recession,” warned the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]. That’s rich. We’ve had a jobless, wageless, fragile, still nascent recovery, but don’t worry, the coming recession is going to be only a “technical” one!

In human terms, one in six Americans is now unemployed, with the average time out of work close to ten months. Forty-five million people are on food stamps, and that has increased more than 30 percent during the two years of this specious recovery. Since the housing bubble burst in the U.S., there have been over seven million home foreclosures. Enforcing them is a brutal act of state repression: the police come to a home, haul the furniture and other possessions onto the street and lock the family out. The bourgeois media would have you believe that the worst was over by 2008. The truth is that 932,000 of those foreclosures came in the first quarter of 2010, and that was an increase of 16 percent over the previous year. And under racist American capitalism, blacks and Latinos, one-third of whose households have no net worth, always suffer disproportionately. In some largely black and Latino neighbourhoods of South Chicago, as well as across the Detroit metropolitan area, one of every 20

households was in foreclosure.

In Canada, well over a quarter million manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2002. This underscores the decades-long deindustrialization of North America, represented in the rusted wreckage of steel mills and the shells of auto plants. As Karl Marx put it: “Thus the forest of uplifted arms demanding work becomes ever thicker, while the arms themselves become ever thinner.”

At the same time, corporate profits have reached record levels. Ed Clark, chief executive officer of the Toronto-Dominion Bank, whose profits recently rose to a staggering \$1.45 billion, recently joined billionaire capitalist parasites Warren Buffett and George Soros in advocating higher taxes for the rich. Their only concern, of course, is to better preserve the capitalist system, including by giving it a facelift—though that did not prevent right-wing demagogues from labeling Buffett and Soros “socialists.” As they say, truth is stranger than fiction.



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It should come as no surprise that the Conservatives, now with a majority government, are moving rapidly against the unions. The government ended a lockout by Canada Post [the postal service] this spring by legislating wage levels that were even lower than the employer's final offer. Recently, two different unions at Air Canada were threatened with strikebreaking legislation.

The bailouts of the banks—in some cases to the tune of trillions of dollars—were enacted uniformly by every government in the imperialist West and Japan at the expense of the working class. These measures point to an elementary truth of Marxism-Leninism: that the executive of the modern state is but a committee for deciding the common affairs of the ruling class as a whole. Or look at Export Development Canada's agreement to lend \$1 billion to the Vale mining conglomerate. This came after a year-long strike at Vale's Sudbury nickel mines, during which the company claimed that funds simply weren't available to meet the union's modest demands.

Various reformists and even self-professed Marxists claim that the way forward is to look for "concrete" solutions "in the here and now," i.e., liberal palliatives. The problem is that any reform wrested from the capitalists today will only be taken away tomorrow—and today the rulers aren't even offering the pretense of reform. The reformists especially drag out their cant about "real world" solutions when they want to express disdain for the theory and program of revolutionary Marxism, which they dismiss as "abstract."

In fact, the reformists' perspective is *counterposed* to the only road that can end the hunger, poverty and social degradation that are intrinsic to capitalism. Vladimir Lenin, who along with Leon Trotsky led the October Revolution of 1917, warned: "Champions of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realise that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is kept going by the forces of certain ruling classes" ("The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism," 1913). Lenin stressed that "there is *only one* way of smashing the resistance of those classes, and that is to find, in the very society which surrounds us, the forces which can—and, owing to their social position, *must*—constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organise those forces for the struggle." As scientific socialists, we fight for workers revolution to establish an international, centrally planned economy based on satisfying human want.

Marxist Theory and the Class Struggle

Lenin called Marxist theory the "granite foundation" of the Bolshevik Party. Without revolutionary theory, he explained, there can be no revolutionary movement. The core of Marxism is the labour theory of value, elaborated by Marx in the first volume of *Capital*. Not a breeze to read. But when it comes to the theory that all value in a capitalist economy derives solely from, or is indeed synonymous with, labour, whether or not someone wants to learn this hinges to a great extent on their sympathies for the working class. It was Marx's commitment to the modern industrial proletariat that allowed him to unlock the secret of value that underlies commodity circulation. As we Spartacists say, program generates theory.

Capitalist production developed from commodity circulation. People have always had to come together to produce for their needs. However, as the techniques of production developed and diversified, people no longer produced goods solely for their own groups, but for trade with others through the medium of exchange. Thus Marx called commodities a relationship between people expressed as a relationship between things.

Obviously, there would be no need for someone to trade their product for something they already had. In order to be exchanged, two commodities must have different uses to satisfy different wants. At the same time, they must on some level be equivalent: they must possess equal value, otherwise there would be no basis for each person to voluntarily give up their product for someone else's. The great discovery of Karl Marx was that the basis for this equivalence is that all commodities are the product of labour, labour in the most abstract and general sense.

Go to an economics lecture at a uni-

versity and you may learn that people

exchange things solely because they have different uses. But why not just get it yourself? The answer is that it has to be produced: it takes work to acquire it. A slightly more sophisticated version of the same bourgeois argument is that you can't get it yourself because it is scarce. That reflects a certain truth. However, it is a rigid, static view of the truth that is conditioned by the values of the bourgeoisie, which is an idle class. Anyone who works readily understands that all commodities are scarce until they are brought into existence by labour.



Signs at October 5 Occupy demonstration in New York City express populist illusions in bourgeois democracy.

It has never been the case that people have produced commodities on a level playing field. Capitalism did not begin with a clean slate, but was built up on the previously existing systems of feudalism and slavery. Large sections of the ruling classes of these societies capitalized their wealth, whereas the slaves remained dispossessed and the peasants were often brutally robbed of what little they had. Through market competition, the larger, more efficient producers drove the smaller, weaker ones out of business, bought out their capital and conquered their share of the market. Those who were amassing the wealth became capitalists—the bourgeoisie. Those who had nothing left to sell but their own sweat and blood were the workers—the proletariat.

It's often said that workers sell their labour. In fact, they are not permitted to do even that. The prerequisites for labour in an industrial society—machines and factories, the core of which can be scientifically termed the means of production—belong to the capitalist. The worker cannot work without first receiving permission from the capitalist. What the worker actually sells is therefore not his labour, but rather his potential to labour. That is what Marxists call *labour power*.

Labour power is bought, sold and consumed. It is a commodity, but there is something peculiar about it. The price of any commodity is based roughly on its value, or the amount of labour necessary for its reproduction. What is the value of labour power? The cost of reproducing the ability of the worker to perform his labour. That consists of food, shelter, clothing, some means of relaxation and of acquiring the skills necessary for doing the job. And finally, enough to support a family so that the working class can continue to

exist from one generation to the next. Taken together, the labour required for these measures constitutes the value of labour power. The gist of capitalist exploitation is that the proletariat generates far more value than is required for the production and reproduction of its labour power. In other words, the peculiarity of the commodity of labour power, its unique attribute, is that it is a source of value. The difference between the total value the worker adds to the product and the value of labour power is called *surplus value*. Exactly how much of the total value goes to the capitalist and how much goes back

to the labourer? This is determined by living factors, by a contest of forces—in other words, by the class struggle. Take Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold. Their operation in Indonesia faced a strike last July. Reuters news agency, which is anything but Marxist, made the following calculation: the workers' wages were \$1.50 an hour, the price of gold, \$1,500 an ounce; therefore, the gold output lost during the eight-day strike could have covered three times the workers' annual wages.

To begin to determine the rate of exploitation of these miners—otherwise known as the rate of surplus value—you would need to know the value of the machinery and fuel used up during production and subtract it from the total product. Otherwise, you could not verify the total amount of value the workers add to the product through their labour. However, the fact stands that these gold mines yield 137 times the workers' annual

wages each year, and Indonesian mines are not famous for being high-tech. Since based on our present knowledge we are confined to being somewhat less than scientific, let's just say that someone is being taken advantage of here, and it's not the capitalist.

There can be no fair division of the social product between the worker and the capitalist. As Trotsky explained: "The class struggle is nothing else than the struggle for surplus-product. He who owns surplus-product is master of the situation—owns wealth, owns the state, has the key to the church, to the courts, to the sciences and to the arts" ("Marxism in Our Time," 1939). There can be no such thing as equality, fairness, freedom or democracy between the slaves and the slave masters.

Exploitation and Capitalist Crisis

So what are social classes? Lenin defined them as "large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently"—only consequently—"by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it" ("A Great Beginning," 1919).

Social class does not derive from a state of mind, nor is it even fundamentally a question of the rich and the poor. For example, a skilled unionized worker in a modern factory in an imperialist country may under exceptional cases make over \$100,000 per year. Yet because labour productivity is so high, his or her rate of exploitation is likely much higher than that of far more oppressed and impoverished labourers in a semicolonial country. Moreover, a unionized worker in the trades may make as much as or more than a yuppie supervisor in an office. Nevertheless, the worker still has an economic interest in overthrowing his capitalist exploiter, while the supervisor is an accessory to capitalist production and thus bound to it materially and, you could say, spiritually.

Just about anyone can criticize capitalism from the standpoint of reason or morality. Yet Marx criticized capitalism from the standpoint of *maximizing labour productivity*, which is generally promoted by capitalism's ideological defenders as its strong point. Marx proved that capitalist production increasingly puts the brakes

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Honor Malcolm X, Militant Voice of Black Struggle

Manning Marable's *Malcolm X: A Liberal's "Reinvention"*

Malcolm X was one of the most courageous political voices of the second half of the 20th century. At the time of his assassination in Harlem's Audubon Ballroom in 1965, when he was not yet 40 years old, he was the most admired and respected, the most hated and feared, black man of his generation. He spoke truths that other black leaders refused to say. Rejecting the pacifism of the liberal civil rights establish-

PART ONE

ment, he was the voice of self-defense for black people. While Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph and others looked to Democratic politicians like John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to grant black rights, Malcolm forthrightly denounced the Democratic Party, North and South, as racist to the core.

On the 20th anniversary of Malcolm's assassination, *Young Spartacus*, newspaper of the Spartacist League's youth organization at the time, wrote:

"At a critical moment in contemporary American history Malcolm X was *the* voice of black militancy. His importance and appeal lay, in particular, in his intransigent opposition to the 'white man's puppet Negro 'leaders';' as he called them. Martin Luther King told the world that black people loved the white oppressor and would answer the racists' bombings and beatings with Christian forgiveness.... The idea that blacks had to prove to the 'good white massa' that they were peaceable folk and god-fearing Christians enraged Malcolm to the depths of his being. It was degrading. Like the sheep reminding the wolf when it's time for dinner. Malcolm X cut through the sanctimonious claptrap and foot-shuffling hypocrisy of the 'respectable' black leaders like a sharp knife going through a tub of butter."

—"Malcolm X: Courageous Fighter for Black Liberation," reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2 (1985)

In the decades since his assassination, Malcolm X has been claimed by people espousing almost every sort of politics. As early as November 1965, Rustin, a social democrat who for decades embodied the "moderate" black leadership that Malcolm X castigated as doing the bidding of the white rulers, asserted: "Malcolm was moving toward the mainstream of the

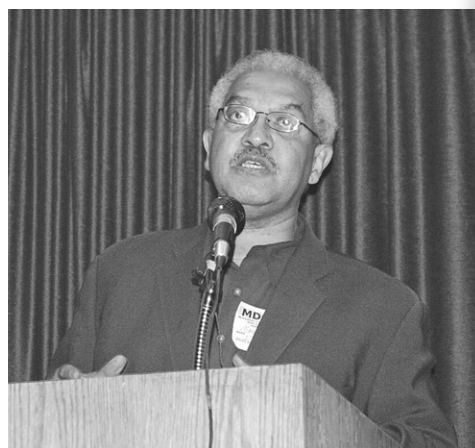
A Review by J. L. Gormoff

civil rights movement when his life was cut short," although he "still had quite a way to go" (*Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* [1971]). *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* by Manning Marable is the latest in this genre.

For more than a decade, Marable, a professor at Columbia University and a leading liberal black intellectual, had been working on this biography; he died just before Viking published it last spring. The book is now out in paperback. Marable

the black liberal establishment. In fact, Malcolm X admitted that he did not yet know what his overall political philosophy was at that point. Marable's purpose is the same one that liberals and social democrats have always pursued: to counsel against militant struggle by black people and youth and to imbue them with faith in the lie that they can achieve social equality within the confines of the American capitalist system.

In our obituary in *Spartacist* No. 4,



Good/Next Left Notes

Manning Marable, opponent of militant struggle, addressing Movement for Democratic Society at February 2007 New York City conference.

promised that his book would shatter everybody's view of Malcolm X. While his research has yielded some interesting details that fill in Malcolm's life, the book mainly covers ground dealt with more convincingly in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, published shortly after his assassination.

What Marable's book does offer is truly a "reinvention" of the political views of Malcolm X, a contradictory figure. Marable does his best to recast Malcolm as moving toward conventional liberal protest politics. As he puts it, at the time of his death Malcolm was approaching "the idea that perhaps blacks could someday become empowered within the existing system." Marable casts Malcolm X in today's terms as "a multicultural American icon" and "a man who emphasized grassroots and participatory politics." As Marable would have it, he cultivated "alliances with Third World nations" so that "black Americans could gain leverage to achieve racial empowerment." Beneath the trendy terminology, there is politics: Marable's book packages Malcolm X for the era of Barack Obama.

As is well known, after Malcolm broke with Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (NOI), he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. There he was welcomed by Muslims of all races, leading to his renunciation of all racism. This was an important step. But for Professor Marable and many others before him, it was important because it presaged Malcolm's supposedly being reborn as a liberal integrationist. In other words, since Malcolm had supposedly broken from the NOI's black nationalism, then he must have been moving closer to

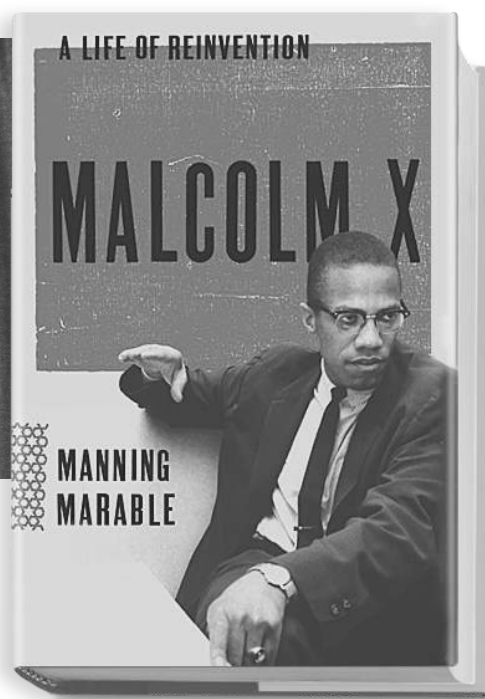
was ultimately evolving into an integrationist, liberal reformer." He calls this "not only wrong, but unfair to both Malcolm and Martin." Yet in the very next paragraph, Marable claims of Malcolm that "at the end of his life he realized that blacks indeed could achieve representation and even power under America's constitutional system."

Marable's evidence is, first, what he terms "black encouragement." He draws a line from the "Black Power" movement that began in the mid 1960s to black politicians from Chicago mayor Harold Washington in the 1980s and Jesse Jackson up to Obama himself. (Marable references Obama no less than four times in the epilogue.) Second, Marable approvingly looks upon the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism. This was a ludicrous appeal to the UN—that den of imperialist thieves, their accomplices and their victims—to turn itself into a force against racial oppression. Though Marable doesn't quite sign on to Obama's view that American society is "post-racial," he speculates that if Malcolm X were alive today he would "have to radically redefine self-determination and the meaning of black power." Whatever Malcolm X might have thought had he lived to see it, it's clear that for Professor Marable, Obama's empowerment signified black power.

Manning Marable was a social democrat—in other words, a reformist "socialist"—of some distinction. He had been a founding vice chair of the Democratic Socialists of America. Later he was an initiator of the Committees of Correspondence, a lash-up of various social democrats and former members of the Communist Party. In the late 1990s, he was a founder of the Black Radical Congress. Whatever their differences, the perspective of all these groups has been to try to pressure the Democratic Party—currently the ruling party of American capitalism—to the left in order to serve the interests of workers, minorities and the poor.

Of course, Marable voted for Obama in 2008, calling this Wall Street Democrat "a progressive liberal" who "has read left literature, including my works, and he understands what socialism is" (*Socialist Review*, December 2008). Barack Obama is a servant of the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression and thus a committed enemy of socialism, which means the revolutionary working-class overthrow of the class he represents. He campaigned to become the first black Commander-in-Chief by explicitly praising the anti-Soviet Cold War and the presidential record of Ronald Reagan in carrying that out.

The main way that millions of youth, black and white, have learned about Malcolm X is through his *Autobiography*, a product of collaboration between Malcolm and black writer Alex Haley (who would go on to write the best-selling *Roots*). The *Autobiography* was recently named by *Time* magazine as the 13th most influential nonfiction book written in English since 1923. Marable was particularly disdainful toward Haley and the *Autobiography*. In a 2009 interview, he denounced Haley as "deeply hostile to Malcolm X's politics" because he "was a Republican, he was opposed to Black nationalism, and he was an integrationist" (*International Socialist Review*, January-February 2009).



May-June 1965 (reprinted on page 7), we termed Malcolm X a "heroic and tragic figure" and summarized:

"Malcolm could move men deeply. He was the stuff of which mass leaders are made. Commencing his public life in the context of the apolitical, irrational religiosity and racial mysticism of the Muslim movement, his break toward politicalness and rationality was slow, painful and terribly incomplete. It is useless to speculate on how far it would have gone had he lived.... At the time of his death he had not yet developed a clear, explicit, and rational social program. Nor had he led his followers in the kind of transitional struggle necessary to the creation of a successful mass movement."

Never breaking from black nationalism, Malcolm X was far removed from our revolutionary Marxist worldview. For us, his significance was his ability to cut through the self-serving hypocrisy of bourgeois political discourse and expose the racism and oppression at the heart of this society. At his most effective, he mercilessly attacked the idea that black people seeking freedom should link their cause to the Democratic Party. He identified with the black masses who were being held in check by "preachers and the educated Negroes laden with degrees" (*Autobiography*) and exposed these leaders' subordination to the Democrats. This lesson remains no less crucial today and is for us the enduring legacy of Malcolm X.

"Reinvention" and Reconciliation

In the epilogue to his book, Marable criticizes "a tendency of historical revisionism," namely, attempts "to interpret Malcolm X through the powerful lens of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr: that Malcolm

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Marable promised to present the *real* Malcolm, the one Haley had supposedly hidden. But on the whole, his book rehashes material that is already known. Much of the controversy about Marable’s book among black commentators has centered on its “exposé” that Malcolm, when he was a young hustler and petty criminal, supposedly engaged in “homosexual encounters” for money, or that later on Malcolm and his wife, Betty Shabazz, had marital problems. The furor about these “revelations” (which have been around since at least the early 1990s) only underscores how distant these talking heads are from even the memory of black struggle.

Black Oppression in Capitalist America

What does come through strongly in Marable’s book is a picture of how deeply torn Malcolm X was between the Nation of Islam, with its rejection of political and social struggle, and his passion to join the battles taking place to finally free black people and complete the unfinished promise of the Civil War.

Black oppression has always been central to the American capitalist system. The Civil War (1861-65) destroyed the slave system in the South. But the Northern bourgeoisie, acting on its class interests, went on to make peace with the Southern planters, and blacks were forced into backbreaking labor on the land as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Following the end of Union Army occupation of the South during Reconstruction, naked white-supremacist rule was restored. By the late 19th century, the white propertied classes had imposed and legally enshrined Jim Crow segregation, enforced by what was virtually a racist police state, and further backed by night-riding Klan terror and lynching. Black people were consolidated anew as a specially oppressed race-color caste, forcibly segregated at the bottom of the social and economic structure of American capitalism.

In the “Great Migration” that started during World War I, millions of black people moved to the North in search of greater freedom and to escape dire poverty. In the Northern cities, they became increasingly integrated into the industrial economy while facing segregation in housing and throughout social life. In World War II black servicemen served in separate units. But many came home vowing to get some of the “democracy”



Gordon Parks

Malcolm X speaking at Harlem rally, early 1963.

they supposedly had fought for.

By the 1950s, when the civil rights movement arose, the mechanization of agriculture had undermined the viability of Southern subsistence farming by sharecroppers. A significant black proletariat existed in Southern cities like Birmingham, Alabama, in industries like steel. Furthermore, in its pursuit of the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the U.S. government was finding the overt, official discrimination against black citizens and the images of brutal sheriffs and racist mobs an acute embarrassment internationally. In 1954, the Supreme Court issued its famous *Brown* decision that overturned school segregation, without creating any way to actually integrate schools (or anything else in American society). More and more working people and students were becoming involved in protests against segregation in the South, which were ruthlessly suppressed.

From the outset, the civil rights movement was dominated by a black middle-class leadership allied to Democratic Party liberalism. Its aim was to pressure the federal government to grant formal legal equality to the Southern black population. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., with his Christian religious appeals to the conscience of those in power, became the exemplar of this wing of the movement. Riding on their coattails, along with the reformist Communist Party, were

the leaders of the very right-wing social democracy in the U.S., such as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin. These were Manning Marable’s ideological forebears. By pledging nonviolence, King and the other “mainstream” civil rights leaders were pledging the movement’s allegiance to the white power structure, promising that it would not go beyond the bounds set for it by the liberal wing of the ruling class. Advocacy of nonviolence dovetailed with the belief that black people could achieve equality and justice by relying on the government and “working within the system.”

Malcolm X denounced these misleaders from the perspective of black nationalism. Strongly influenced by the struggles in colonial and neocolonial countries for emancipation from imperialist subjugation, Malcolm viewed the American black struggle as one of the liberation of an oppressed nation inside an imperialist metropolis. In one of his most influential speeches, “Message to the Grass Roots” (November 1963), he espoused “revolution” and defined it in these terms: “Revolution...is based on land. A revolutionary wants land so he can set up his own nation, an independent nation.” For Malcolm, nationalism was the key dividing line between his ideology and that of the liberal leaders marching for integration: “These Negroes aren’t asking for any nation—they’re trying to crawl back on the plantation.”

Black nationalism is premised on the false idea that the doubly oppressed black population in the U.S. constitutes a separate nation. As a doctrine, nationalism can sometimes attract militants who are deeply alienated from this racist society and have no illusions that it can be reformed. Historically, it has meant for many of its proponents that black Americans should be given their own country, with some saying it should be situated in the so-called Southern “black belt,” where black people were the majority. To others, it meant a homeland “back” in Africa.

However, in the 1960s the term “black nationalism” became a synonym for various forms of racial separatism *within the existing American capitalist state*. (For Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam, this had taken the form of a religious sect.) Under the rubric of “community control,” the main body of young self-styled black “nationalists” sought to become government-funded overseers of the ghettos. Such types were denounced as “pork-chop nationalists” and “dashiki Democrats” by the militants of the Black Panther Party, which was founded in 1966 in Oakland, California. Considering themselves “Marxist-Leninists” along the lines of the Stalinist Mao Zedong, the Panthers advocated the right to armed self-defense and raised calls such as “black power.” The Panthers sought to establish a paramilitary organization in the ghettos co-existing with and restraining the racist police. This effort, while heroic, resulted in their murderous repression given the existing balance of political forces.

Overwhelmingly, the thrust of black people’s struggles has been for social equality in this society, not separation. At bottom, black nationalism is an expression of hopelessness stemming from defeat, reflecting despair and the belief that the labor movement will never take up a fight for black rights. Black nationalism rejects the basic truth that the fundamental division in capitalist society is that between the bourgeois ruling class, which owns the means of production, and the working class, whose labor is exploited by the capitalists for profit. Moreover, the idea that the U.S. ruling class can be shamed or coerced into ceding a black homeland inside these borders is fantastical. Just as unrealistic is the notion that the bulk of the U.S. black population should renounce their claims to this country, which along

continued on page 8

Of all the national Negro leaders in this country, the one who was known uniquely for his militancy, intransigence, and refusal to be the liberals’ front-man has been shot down. This new political assassination is another indicator of the rising current of irrationality and individual terrorism which the decay of our society begets. Liberal reaction is predictable, and predictably disgusting. They are, of course, opposed to assassination, and some may even contribute to the fund for the education of Malcolm’s children, but their mourning at the death of the head of world imperialism had a considerably greater ring of sincerity than their regret at the murder of a black militant who wouldn’t play their game.

Black Muslims?

The official story is that Black Muslims killed Malcolm. But we should not hasten to accept this to date unproved hypothesis. The New York police, for example, had good cause to be afraid of Malcolm, and with the vast resources of blackmail and coercion which are at their disposal, they also had ample opportunity, and of course would have little reason to fear exposure were they involved. At the same time, the Muslim theory cannot be discounted out of hand because the Muslims are not a political group, and in substituting religion for science, and color mysticism for rational analysis, they have a world view which could encompass the efficacy and morality of assassination. A

1965 *Spartacist* Malcolm X Obituary

man who has a direct pipeline to God can justify anything.

No Program

The main point, however, is not who killed Malcolm, but why could he be killed? In the literal sense, of course, any man can be killed, but why was Malcolm particularly vulnerable? The answer to this question makes of Malcolm’s death tragedy of the sharpest kind, and in the literal Greek sense. Liberals and Elijah have tried to make Malcolm a victim of his own (non-existent) doctrines of violence. This is totally wrong and totally hypocritical. Malcolm was the most dynamic national leader to have appeared in America in the last decade. Compared with him the famous Kennedy personality was a flimsy cardboard creation of money, publicity, makeup, and the media. Malcolm had none of these, but a righteous cause and iron character forged by white America in the fire of discrimination, addiction, prison, and incredible calumny. He had a difficult to define but almost tangible attribute called charisma. When you heard Malcolm

speak, even when you heard him say things that were wrong and confusing, you wanted to believe. Malcolm could move men deeply. He was the stuff of which mass leaders are made. Commencing his public life in the context of the apolitical, irrational religiosity and racial mysticism of the Muslim movement, his break toward politicalness and rationality was slow, painful, and terribly incomplete. It is useless to speculate on how far it would have gone had he lived. He had entered prison a burglar, an addict, and a victim. He emerged a Muslim and a free man forever. Elijah Muhammed and the Lost-Found Nation of Islam were thus inextricably bound up with his personal emancipation. In any event, at the time of his death he had not yet developed a clear, explicit, and rational social program. Nor had he led his followers in the kind of transitional struggle necessary to the creation of a successful mass movement. Lacking such a program, he could not develop cadres based on program. What cadre he had was based on Malcolm X instead. Hated and feared by the power structure, and the focus of the paranoid feelings of

his former colleagues, his charisma made him dangerous, and his lack of developed program and cadre made him vulnerable. His death by violence had a high order of probability, as he himself clearly felt.

Heroic and Tragic Figure

The murder of Malcolm, and the disastrous consequences flowing from that murder for Malcolm’s organization and black militancy in general, does not mean that the militant black movement can always be decapitated with a shotgun. True, there is an agonizing gap in black leadership today. On the one hand there are the respectable servants of the liberal establishment; men like James Farmer whose contemptible effort to blame Malcolm’s murder on “Chinese Communists” will only hasten his eclipse as a leader, and on the other hand the ranks of the militants have yet to produce a man with the leadership potential of Malcolm. But such leadership will eventually be forthcoming. This is a statistical as well as a social certainty. This leadership, building on the experience of others such as Malcolm, and emancipated from his religiosity, will build a movement in which the black masses and their allies can lead the third great American revolution. Then Malcolm X will be remembered by black and white alike as a heroic and tragic figure in a dark period of our common history.

—*Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965

Malcolm X...

(continued from page 7)

with the working class as a whole they helped to build, and emigrate to Africa. The Marxist program for black liberation is that of revolutionary integrationism: the struggle against all forms of racist discrimination and violence and for the integration of black people into an egalitarian, socialist society. As a race-color caste whose special oppression is integral to the workings of the American capitalist economy and every social institution, the black population cannot win equality except through socialist revolution. Black oppression and its legitimization through racist ideology are priceless tools for the exploiters in keeping working people divided, blinded and unable to organize to overthrow our common enemy. There can be no revolutionary workers party built in this country that does not grasp the strategic character of the fight for black emancipation. In building such a party, black workers are determined by history to play a vanguard role. This view stands flatly counterposed to both liberal integrationism and black nationalism.

Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam

The contours of Malcolm’s life are well known. As “Detroit Red,” Malcolm was a street hustler and petty criminal during the 1940s in Boston and Harlem. He converted to the Nation of Islam while in prison in Massachusetts, changing his name from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X. The Nation was a small sect under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad that combined religious superstition and black nationalism. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Malcolm became its most visible and effective spokesman. He made the group known by his denunciations of the “respectable” civil rights leaders. He organized several mosques, including in Harlem, the primary center of black politics and culture in the U.S. As activists were beaten and murdered, Malcolm was the only prominent black leader who asserted that black people should not beg to be integrated into American society. His denunciations of the liberal sellouts struck a chord among the ghetto poor and working-class blacks. But the Nation accepted the idea that America was a white man’s country and *opposed* integration.

Marable describes the political roots of the Nation of Islam in the movement founded by Marcus Garvey in Jamaica in 1914. Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association grew rapidly in the U.S. during the 1920s, when it seemed to many that no black struggle for social integration and equality could succeed. This was a heyday of the KKK, exemplified by the 40,000 robed and hooded Klansmen who paraded openly in Washington, D.C., in 1925. Jim Crow segregation was the law of the South and was enforced by terror,

Marcus Garvey (inset) was leader of separatist Universal Negro Improvement Association, shown on parade in Harlem in 1924.

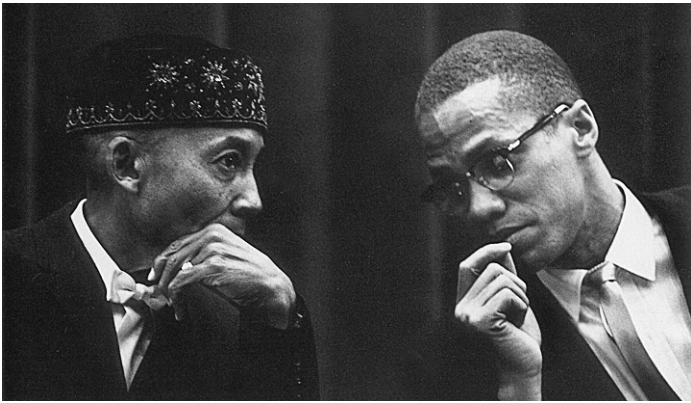
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legal and extralegal, as black men and women were lynched for not “knowing their place.” Anti-Communist red scares were viciously waged in response to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The period was marked by aggressive union-busting, with notorious frame-ups of labor militants and prosecutions of unions under “criminal syndicalism” laws. Labor radicals and other immigrant workers were rounded up and deported. Garvey’s political philosophy was for complete black separation from whites, including the demand for an independ-

destruction of Marcus Garvey’s organization, its appeal was decisively undercut when working-class struggle exploded in the 1930s. Black workers played a vanguard role in heroic strikes which organized industrial unions in the CIO—inclusive unions that sought to organize all workers in a given industry, breaking down craft categories and organizing skilled and unskilled workers across ethnic and racial divisions. As the working class emerged fighting out of the doldrums of the Great Depression, the illusory solace offered by Garvey’s brand of black



Eve Arnold

Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad with Malcolm X in 1961.

ent black state in Africa. He emphasized the development of black-owned businesses—i.e., a black middle class that would profit from its monopoly of the patronage of black consumers. Marable notes Garvey’s continuity with the conservative, business-oriented philosophy of Booker T. Washington, pointing out that both Garvey and Washington were “accommodationists” who accepted segregation and did not challenge black disenfranchisement or separate schools for blacks and whites. While other factors contributed to the

nationalism tended to lose its appeal. The Nation of Islam, which sprang up later, was primarily a religious organization. But its ideology was similar to Garvey’s. Explicitly disavowing organized political activism, the Nation espoused separate “development” of blacks in “white” America. Dedicated cadres of Garvey’s movement, Malcolm’s parents relocated repeatedly, from Philadelphia to Omaha, Nebraska, and elsewhere before settling in Lansing, Michigan, where Malcolm Little was raised. By the early 1960s the Nation had begun to grow rapidly, attracting converts from diverse backgrounds. Malcolm X was personally responsible for a huge number of recruits, not only to Temple (later Mosque) No. 7 in Harlem, which he headed for years, but in many other cities, traveling the country as the NOI’s National Minister.

Despite its opposition to participation in organized protest, its religiosity and its advocacy of black capitalism, the NOI was viewed as some kind of radical organization. In this racist country, black radicals or those perceived as such will always be a target for the political police (who especially fear the intersection of blacks and communism). The FBI and the New York police red squad were all over the NOI, employing constant surveillance and infiltration as well as provocations seeking to fan the flames of jealousy and distrust among its leaders. The sect was denied legal protections afforded other religions, and salesmen of its newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, were harassed by the cops. One of the strengths of Marable’s book is its use of police records to demonstrate the extent of state surveillance,

harassment and provocation of black militants, including Malcolm X.

The Crucible of the Civil Rights Struggles

The civil rights movement helped to undermine the reactionary Cold War consensus of the 1950s. Seen as a struggle against entrenched racial oppression and for equality, it drew many thousands of workers and youth into the streets of cities and towns in the South and inspired solidarity worldwide. As the struggle sharpened and racist atrocities against blacks multiplied, NAACP organizer Robert F. Williams in North Carolina undertook armed self-defense. Williams was suspended from the NAACP, and in 1961 government repression drove him to flee the country to Cuba, where the revolution had just expropriated the capitalists in the face of U.S. imperialist hostility. In Louisiana, the Deacons for Defense, many of whom were Korean War veterans, organized to protect civil rights demonstrators.

In response to an emerging mass movement that showed increasing willingness to openly defy the Jim Crow police state, dominant sections of the Northern bourgeoisie saw that it was time for the South to adopt the same formal democratic norms as the rest of the country. It is to this wing of the bourgeoisie that the leaders of the civil rights movement handcuffed the fight for black freedom. The civil rights struggles won partial gains for black people in the South, such as access to public facilities, voting rights and a degree of school integration. But these gains did not challenge capitalist class rule. And when the movement came North and tried to take on the conditions of the segregated inner cities—widespread poverty and unemployment, racist cop brutality, inferior housing and schools, etc.—it foundered. These conditions of oppression and capitalist immiseration could not be ameliorated by more speeches or new laws. Beginning with Harlem in 1964, the Northern ghettos exploded, registering the depth of anger and disappointed hopes.

It was in the period of the civil rights movement that Malcolm X came of age politically, and this would throw him into an irreconcilable conflict with the NOI. The Nation’s philosophy of black business helped enrich Muhammad (supposedly God’s messenger) and his family, but offered no solution to black oppression. The NOI was a religious movement in a political time; for all its inflammatory rhetoric, it stood aside from the struggle for civil rights, preaching individual religious enlightenment and renunciation of “sinful” conduct.

For Malcolm X, this religious ideology, which he deeply believed, became a wrenching contradiction with his passionate commitment to fight white supremacy, injustice and hypocrisy. He felt the pressure from young people who thought he ought to join them in militant action, stating in the *Autobiography*: “I felt that, wherever black people committed themselves in the Little Rocks and Birmingham and other places, militantly disciplined Muslims should also be there.” But for the NOI to have participated in struggles for integration would have violated their precepts and their very reason for existence.

Malcolm X gave voice to young activists’ increasing dissatisfaction with the housebroken civil rights leaders. Where liberals swooned as Reverend King intoned “I have a dream” at the 1963 March on Washington, Malcolm X termed the event “a circus, a performance that beat anything Hollywood could ever do.” This was more than irreverence, it was an attack on the pro-Democratic Party politics of the organizers. He named the individual black leaders, closely tied to the Kennedy administration, who worked overtime to keep any militancy out of the march.

For Marable, the March on Washington was a marvelous mass movement that nobody in his right mind could have resisted: “The supposedly ‘Uncle Tom’ leaders like Rustin, Randolph, and King had mobilized a quarter of a million people,” he writes. Marable goes on to

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Left: Police attack civil rights march in Birmingham, 1963. Right: Robert F. Williams (center), shown with other members of Monroe, North Carolina, NAACP in 1957, organized armed self-defense against KKK terror.



John Herman Williams

say: “Malcolm argued that the Kennedy administration decided to ‘co-opt’ the demonstration.... Malcolm’s thesis was that the civil rights leaders were so craven and bankrupt that they were duped by whites in power. This version of events was a gross distortion of the facts—yet it contained enough truth to capture an audience of unhappy black militants.” The facts are that what could have been an angry outpouring was turned into an appeal for conscience and reconciliation. John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which had begun to reject the preachers’ allegiance to nonviolence, was prevented from delivering even a mild criticism of the Democrats. (Lewis later became a Democratic Congressman.)

Malcolm Breaks with Elijah Muhammad

Malcolm had by this time become increasingly alienated from Elijah Muhammad. He was shocked by the stories that could not be suppressed of the NOI leader’s sexual relations with young women who were his secretaries. But fundamentally the sources of friction were political: Malcolm chafed at the Nation’s aloofness from political activity, while Elijah Muhammad increasingly resented and feared Malcolm’s popularity.

The conflict came to a head after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Muhammad, not wanting to attract attention, ordered his supporters to say nothing whatsoever about the assassination. But Malcolm famously declared that

Kennedy’s assassination was a case of the “chickens coming home to roost,” adding that “chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they’ve always made me glad.” This disobedience infuriated Elijah Muhammad, but won Malcolm increased authority among the more militant black activists.

At that time, the most militant and politically conscious activists sympathized with the Cuban Revolution and solidarized with other struggles for national and social liberation. Few of them shed any tears for U.S. imperialism’s slain Commander-in-Chief, the man who had ordered the CIA-organized Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 and had sent the Green Berets into South Vietnam. So when Malcolm made his “coming home to roost” comment, many black militants applauded, even if they were not themselves ready to go that far.

Marable’s tactic of falsification by omission is especially clear in his treatment of the 1960-61 Cuban Revolution, which had created a workers state, although one that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. Marable recounts Malcolm’s strong sympathy and support for the revolution and the government of Fidel Castro, who had won plenty of support among American blacks when he decided to stay in Harlem’s Hotel Theresa on a trip to address the United Nations. But nowhere in Marable’s book is there any mention of the Democrat Kennedy’s relentless efforts to overthrow the Cuban government, including engaging the Mafia in an attempt to assassinate Castro.

Elijah Muhammad purged Malcolm from the Nation and NOI leaders relentlessly denounced him, including Malcolm’s former protégé, Louis X (today the reactionary demagogue Louis Farrakhan), who proclaimed him “worthy of death.” Marable’s book describes the NOI’s vendetta against Malcolm, relying heavily on an interview with Farrakhan and presenting the latter’s version of the events leading to the 1965 assassination.

That Malcolm felt liberated by his split from Elijah Muhammad was underlined by his telegram to American Nazi leader George Lincoln Rockwell, which Malcolm read out to a rally in Harlem on 24 January 1965. The NOI’s racial separatism had led it to recognize “common ground” with fascists and other segregationists, as

Marable documents. Malcolm’s message read:

“This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad’s separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of nonviolence, and who believe in asserting our right of self-defense—by any means necessary.”

Between his split from the Nation and his murder, Malcolm lived barely a year. Much of this was spent abroad, including his pilgrimage to Mecca. Although he founded two organizations in rapid succession—the Muslim Mosque Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity—they had no real program beyond the eclectic views expressed in his speeches. While eventually millions would become aware of his impact, the organizations he founded probably never included more than a few hundred. Yet his impact on black activists and the nascent New Left radicalism was undeniable.

Malcolm X’s speeches and his *Autobiography* were hugely influential for thousands of militants who would never have dreamed of attending a meeting of the Nation of Islam. His appeal lay precisely in his debunking of liberal hypocrisy on the part of the Democratic politicians and especially his exposure of the mainstream civil rights leaders as servants of the system.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



AP

Martin Luther King Jr. (second from left) and other civil rights luminaries at White House with John F. Kennedy, 28 August 1963, the day of the march that Malcolm X called the “Farce on Washington.”

Birth Control...

(continued from page 2)

Women but rather through mass struggle. What is needed is a fight to build a workers party based on the understanding that the working class shares no interests with its capitalist exploiters. Acting as a tribune of the people, a class-struggle workers party would champion the liberation of women, the emancipation of the black population from its race-caste oppression and the elimination of all social inequality in the fight for socialist revolution.

Capital, Church, Family: Unholy Trinity

The great French utopian socialist Charles Fourier observed: “Social progress and changes of period are brought about by virtue of the progress of women toward liberty, and social retrogression occurs as a result of a diminution in the liberty of women” (*The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*). Writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution, when priests were driven out of the churches and sometimes executed, Fourier would see in the U.S. today a profound retrogression. On a world scale, the counterrevolutionary overthrow of the October Revolution in the USSR in 1991-92 fed the bonfires of social reaction.

Religious fundamentalism is by no means restricted to the Islamic world. From Santorum’s obsession with sex and

Satan to Obama’s pious quotations of Christian scripture at the National Prayer Breakfast—itself an annual affront to the separation of church and state—American bourgeois politics have been and continue to be increasingly saturated with God. This type of rampant religiosity is often a characteristic of decaying societies.

Religion—especially but not only the Roman Catholic church—is the strongest ideological force against birth control and abortion in its upholding of the sanctity of the family. Woman-hating strictures against contraception and abortion, poisonous bigotry against gays, witchhunting of “deviant” sex, relentless pressure on

youth to somehow refrain from giving in to their raging hormones—all these emanate from and reinforce the institution of the family as well as religion, buttressing the rule of an exploiting class. As communists, we oppose attempts to fit human sexuality into legislated and decreed “norms.” We say: Government out of the bedroom! The guiding principle for sexual relations between people should be that of effective consent—that is, nothing more than mutual agreement and understanding as opposed to coercion. Defend the separation of church and state!

The family is not an immutable, timeless institution but rather a social relation

subject to historical change. In his classic 1884 work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Friedrich Engels traced the centrality of the family back to its role in ensuring “legitimate heirs” for the patriarchal inheritance of property, which required women’s sexual monogamy and social subordination. The revolutionary overthrow of the imperialist-dominated world order by the proletariat will lay the material basis to free women from age-old family servitude and reorganize society in the interest of all. The social functions of the family—housework, child rearing, preparation of food, etc.—will be replaced by collectivized institutions.

Even under conditions of dire scarcity, imperialist invasion and civil war, the Bolshevik Party under Lenin and Trotsky strove to implement such collectivization in the early Soviet workers state. It is the goal of the International Communist League to build Bolshevik-type workers parties around the world to lead the fight for new October Revolutions. As we wrote in “In Defense of Science and Technology” (WV No. 843, 4 March 2005): “Communism will elevate the standard of life for everyone to the highest possible level. By eliminating scarcity, poverty and want, communism will also eliminate the greatest driving force for the prevalence of religion and superstition—and the attendant backwardness, which defines the role of women as the producers of the next generation of working masses to be exploited.” ■



WV Photo

1998 NYC protest against bombing of Birmingham, Alabama, abortion clinic.

South Africa...

(continued from page 12)

But the national organiser of AMCU has denied having anything to do with the strike, responding, “How can we want to be part of the strike?” (*Business Report*, 17 February). And who ever heard of over 17,000 workers being “intimidated by a small number of troublemakers,” as the NUM officials claim?!

The NUM leaders rant against “non-recognised unions” and “unscrupulous forces” in order to deflect from their own class-collaborationist betrayals. It is these betrayals which have led the union rank and file in Rustenburg to revolt against their misleaders. Rather than doing anything to mobilise the desperately needed solidarity with the Implats strikers, the NUM bureaucracy has openly sided with the company. Their accusations of “intimidation” and complaints that strikers are “preventing” people from going to work are clearly an invitation for the bourgeoisie and its government to violently attack the sacked workers. NUM leaders have treacherously called for increased “security” for those wanting to scab on the strike—a call which, not surprisingly, has now been taken up by the Implats CEO!

It is crucial for union militants who want to fight against the NUM leadership’s sellouts to clearly understand and break from the broader reformist politics which are at the root of these betrayals. The NUM and COSATU bureaucracies are a key component of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance, a bourgeois alliance through which the workers are chained to their own capitalist exploiters and the reformist leaders of the SACP and COSATU assume direct responsibility for administering racist neo-apartheid capitalism. The “new” South Africa is now the most unequal society in the world. The apartheid wage gap has not closed, but become a gaping chasm. At the same time as the attacks on union members’ livelihoods and general social misery are increasing, the COSATU union bureaucracy has itself become integrated into the new black elite and “gravy trainers” who have been showered with privileges by the (still mainly white) capitalist rulers in return for upholding their class rule against the (mainly black) working-class base. This is the basic cause of the increasingly harsh clashes between the union tops and their membership.

These clashes have not been limited to the NUM, as a long line of wretched betrayals by the union bureaucracies have fuelled the union members’ anger toward their leaders. In 2000 the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) bureaucracy openly sided with the Volkswagen bosses, who fired 1,300 workers in retaliation against a wildcat strike which 4,000 NUMSA members had waged in defence of their shop stewards. Prominent roles in this betrayal were played by current COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi and NUMSA leader Irvin Jim. In 2003 a big chunk of Chemical, Energy, Paper, Print, Wood and Allied Workers Union broke with their leaders over the support of the ANC capitalist government to form the General Industrial Workers Union (GIWUSA). In 2010 public sector workers clashed with their leaders who,

after refusing to follow through on threats of solidarity secondary strikes by the more strategic unions in mining, manufacturing and commerce, bureaucratically strangled the strike, going behind the membership’s back to seal a sellout deal.

Vavi and Co. make a lot of noise about “fighting corruption,” but this is just intended to divert attention from the biggest swindle of the “new” South Africa—the fact that the same Randlord capitalist rulers, along with their imperialist backers, continue to reap fabulous profits from the superexploitation of mainly black labour. The biggest political corruption is that perpetrated by Vavi and the other reformist misleaders, who sacrifice the working class’s needs in the interest of South African capitalism. In fact, corruption and graft are inseparable from neo-apartheid capitalism, with the black elite enriching themselves through controlling state institutions and acting as front men for the dominantly white capitalist ruling class. Even in the 1980s, the apartheid rulers saw the need to counter the liberation struggle by fostering the development of a black elite to act as a *buffer* between the privileged white

the capitalist government and its armed thugs—who *at this very moment* are mobilising to smash the workers’ pickets—means accepting the same dead-end reformism and class collaboration that has brought the NUM bureaucrats into such sharp conflict with the workers they are supposed to represent. The capitalist state is not a neutral arbiter between the capitalist exploiters and their working-class wage slaves, but an apparatus of organised violence—based centrally on the police, military and prisons—that is wielded on behalf of the filthy rich ruling class against the majority black masses they exploit and oppress. *Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!*

For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Implats Strikebreaking!

The Implats wage-slave owners have taken full advantage of the opportunity created by the NUM leaders’ abandonment of their members to open the floodgate of attacks. They dismissed workers without paying them a cent of their final settlement payouts like pension or

doing the countless service delivery protests of mostly unemployed township residents to cop repression, in addition to selling out their own members on a regular basis. In contrast, a class-struggle leadership would link the social power of the unions to the anger in the townships and squatter camps, fighting for demands like *jobs for all* through dividing up the available work at no loss in pay; *affordable, quality housing; free, quality education with a living stipend for all; free, quality health care; and public transport* through a massive public works programme; *full citizenship rights for all immigrants and organising the unorganised*. This would be a powerful blow against the recent upsurge of anti-immigrant attacks in townships throughout the country, which have pitted the poor against the most vulnerable and desperate in a struggle over pitiful crumbs from the capitalists.

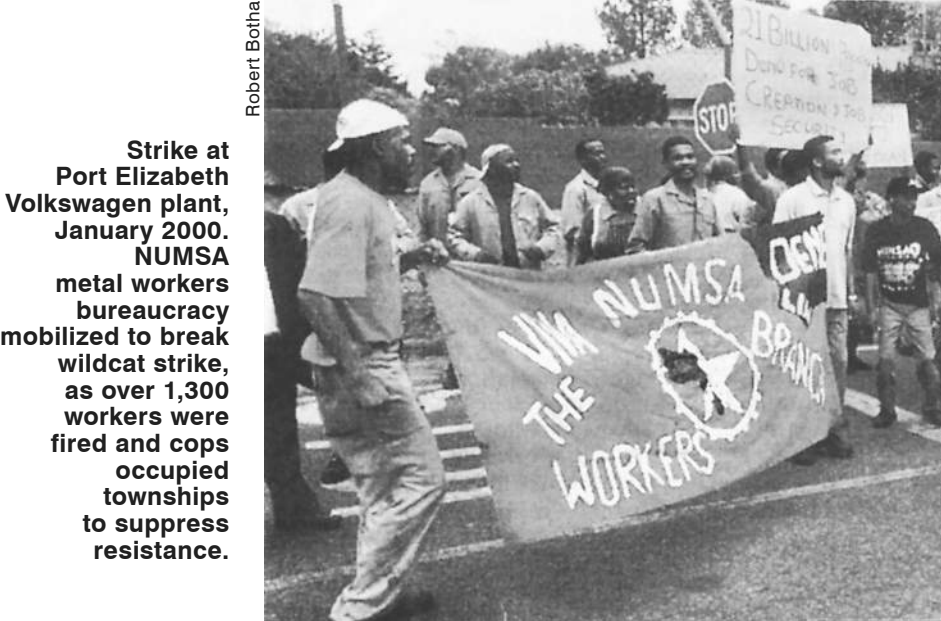
Immediately after carrying out the mass firings, Implats announced that it would begin rehiring striking workers on a case-by-case basis at downgraded conditions. This is a tactic to not only break the strike, but also slash wages and weed out suspected union militants. Some of the sacked workers we talked with had been working for the company almost 40 years and are only a few years away from retirement—for them this deal could be flat-out robbery. While the workers have vowed not to accept anything short of reinstatement under their previous conditions and terms of employment, the NUM leaders have assisted the Implats bosses’ blatant strike-breaking maneuver by trying to convince striking workers to apply for rehiring.

This is a tactic which the bosses are increasingly using to break strikes. As the bourgeoisie’s paper *Business Day* (8 February) put it in an article about the trend of mass firings and rehiring: “This enables the company to stop a strike swiftly and decrease its workforce, and cut costs.” In May 2011, the world’s third-largest platinum producer, Lonmin, fired 9,000 workers—who were also NUM members—and then offered to rehire them as “new” employees. This followed an industrial action started following a union branch leadership dispute. At Lonmin the NUM bureaucracy also treacherously sided with the bosses against the union’s own members, with NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka grotesquely declaring, “Unfortunately, the company cannot have such people and has to let them go.” Recently, some 300 bus drivers for the Gautrain service were sacked in Johannesburg following a wildcat strike, with the bureaucracy of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union siding with the company against striking workers.

Expropriate the Mines! For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

The mining sector has seen a substantial amount of labour unrest in the past period and the bureaucrats are fearful that such an environment can threaten “business as usual.” As the largest affiliate of the biggest union federation COSATU, the NUM is a key strategic union that—with its hands on the economy’s central resources of gold, diamonds, platinum, coal and electricity generation—has the social power to bring the economy to a standstill. With a bold, revolutionary leadership pursuing an independent working-class policy, this power could also be used to rip the mines and mining capital out of the hands of the bloodsucking mining bosses like Implats, and to begin running the economy on a socialist basis, with the aim of serving the needs of the working people. Expropriating the mines could have a huge impact in helping to lift the majority out of misery and poverty, but for this it must be linked to establishing workers control and economic planning throughout the country through a *black-centred workers government*. This has nothing in common with bourgeois nationalisation schemes like those advanced by Julius Malema and the bourgeois-nationalist ANC Youth League.

The fight for a black-centred workers government requires a revolutionary van-



Strike at Port Elizabeth Volkswagen plant, January 2000. NUMSA metal workers bureaucracy mobilized to break wildcat strike, as over 1,300 workers were fired and cops occupied townships to suppress resistance.

minority and impoverished black majority. The trade-union bureaucracy is now an integral part of this black elite as well as the ruling Tripartite Alliance. From former union leaders like Cyril Ramaphosa, Gwede Mantashe and others who have become capitalists or top ANC/government officials, to endless stories of union bureaucrats looting union pension funds—the sellout tops have enriched themselves by betraying their members.

It is necessary to build a class-struggle leadership to replace the current crop of sellout bureaucrats and unleash the potential power of the NUM and other unions of industrial workers in an all-out struggle against capitalist misery. The starting point for this is the need to break the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance along class lines, and for proletarian independence from the capitalists, their state, and all their political parties—including in particular the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. Dismissed workers at Implats told us that their interim committee was trying to meet with the minister of mineral resources, Susan Shabangu, to ask for her mediation, and now there are also reports of the committee appealing to the police for “mediation.” Such reliance on

unemployment funds. Coupled with other attacks like shutting the canteen, using cops to evict workers from the hostel and no wages because of dismissals, it is clear that the bosses’ strategy is to starve these workers into submission. Striking workers reported that police thugs in unmarked uniforms were deployed to evict the 5,000 workers who were sacked in the first wave of dismissals. Between 350 and 400 workers have been arrested and are facing court dates at different times, including over 100 who will appear in court on March 8. *Drop all the charges!*

Most of the workers who have been evicted or threatened with eviction are migrant labourers from other parts of South Africa and neighbouring countries like Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland, with no families in the area that can offer them alternative accommodation. Among the first victims of evictions were the widows of mineworkers who died on duty in these mines. These women end up being trapped in these labour compounds because they do not have money to return to their families as it often takes two years or more to receive payments owed to their late husbands.

The desperate plight facing the dismissed mineworkers and their families points to the urgent need to link up the wage demands and union struggles in defence of the workers’ immediate economic interests with a fight against the capitalist misery and oppression which hit broader layers of society. The potential for this is palpable in Rustenburg, which is one reason for the massive state mobilisation to smash the strike. Residents in the squalid squatter camps near the Rustenburg mines have demonstrated in support of the Implats workers. On February 17, thousands of unemployed residents of Brits, which is also in North West province, marched to the headquarters of Xstrata mines demanding sharing of wealth and jobs.

The NUM and COSATU bureaucracies’ class collaboration and reliance on the capitalist state has also meant aban-

Spartacist South Africa

Newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

Issue No. 7 (28 pages)
US\$1 R2
Subscription (4 issues)
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Crisis...

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on historical development, at the same time as it creates its own gravedigger, the proletariat.

Day in and day out, the proletariat continues to produce. It cannot use its own labour to get ahead as a class, because it is only paid what is necessary to allow it to continue producing. Everything necessary to get ahead goes to the capitalists. As Marx put it: “If the silk worm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker.”

As capitalism develops, the bourgeoisie amasses more and more capital. Technology advances. Machinery becomes more and more sophisticated and extensive and labour productivity rises. The capitalist devotes an increasingly large ratio of his wealth toward acquiring machinery, and a correspondingly declining ratio toward employing workers. In Marx’s words, the organic composition of capital increases. The effect of this is contradictory. On one hand, the rate of exploitation increases. On the other hand, the rate of profit decreases. That’s the dilemma the capitalist faces. Even if he ratchets up the rate of exploitation, the rate of profit still tends to go down. That is why the capitalist has no future. Let’s take a closer look.

Say you’ve got your engineering degree and you’re looking for a job in your field. Off you go to the Celestica factory at Don Mills and Eglinton to pave the information superhighway, one transistor at a time, for \$11.75 an hour on six-month contracts with no benefits. (And your boss can call you a few hours before your shift starts to tell you to stay home without pay.)

So there you are with your co-workers paving the information superhighway with these transistors; array enough together in the right way and you get a flip-flop, an edifice of the binary logic used on a grand scale in computers. It’s nowhere near as glamorous as it sounds in *Wired* magazine or those trendy post-Marxist academic seminars. Away you work. Eventually, the company replaces the soldering irons that each of you uses with a wave solder machine. A chunk of your co-workers gets laid off. You’re producing way more circuit boards than before, only your wage is the same. Since most of your friends were laid off, the company’s spending on wages has gone way down. The rate of exploitation overall has increased astronomically. Good times for the capitalist, right? Not so fast.

At first, the company will have an advantage over its competitors. Soon, however, that new machinery will become the standard across the industry. Even though the rate of exploitation has gone up, the rate of profit will go down. It all comes

back to labour being the sole source of value. One capitalist can sell another capitalist a machine, but that exchange does not increase the total amount of value in the economy. The value just changes hands. It’s only once the capitalist purchases labour power, and consumes it by having the worker do his job, that any new value is added to the economy. The lower the ratio of the capitalist’s wealth that is spent on wage labour, the lower is the ratio of surplus value to his total expenses. More and more of his wealth gets tied up in replacing and maintaining machinery—what Marx evocatively termed “dead labour.”

As I said, the rate of exploitation is going up, but the rate of profit is going down. The capitalist does not resign himself to that fate peacefully, however. He panics and slashes wages like a madman, doing whatever he can to transfer the burden of his decaying system onto the backs of the people he exploits. When that capitalist can no longer produce at a competitive rate of profit, he simply ceases to produce. He throws his workers onto the street. Like Malcolm X said of the slave master, he worked them like dogs and dropped them in the mud. Production is in chaos. The empty factories rust.

Once the slave escapes his master, he is no longer a slave; once the serf gets his plot of land, he is no longer a serf. But even after the proletarian punches his time card for the final time and quits (or loses) his job, he remains a proletarian. The modern slave, the wage slave, is slave to the entire capitalist class. The proletariat cannot escape this exploiting class but must overthrow it in its entirety, worldwide, and in so doing liberate everyone who is oppressed by capitalism.

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

What has been placed on the agenda is proletarian revolution, even if this seems far off today. We look above all to the legacy of the Russian Revolution. As Trotsky noted about the early years of the Soviet Union:

“Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not on the pages of *Das Kapital*, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth’s surface—not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity. Even if the Soviet Union, as a result of internal difficulties, external blows and the mistakes of its leadership, were to collapse—which we firmly hope will not happen—there would remain as an earnest of the future this indestructible fact, that thanks solely to a proletarian revolution a backward country has achieved in less than ten years successes unexampled in history.”

—The Revolution Betrayed (1936)

We Trotskyists fought against the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR, and

against its final counterrevolutionary collapse in 1991-92. Nevertheless, that collapse did occur, and the ideologues of the bourgeoisie have done everything they can to bury the lessons of the October Revolution, which remains our model.

The key political instrument for victory is the revolutionary vanguard party as developed by Lenin. Trotsky explained: “The class, taken by itself, is only material for exploitation. The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when from a social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*. This cannot take place otherwise than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious” (“What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat,” 1932). We seek to win the working class, starting with its most advanced layers, to understand the necessity of sweeping away capitalist rule and establishing what Marx called the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is the only road to communism, a global high-tech society of material abundance where classes, the state and family no longer exist, and where thereby social inequality based on sex is eradicated and the social significance of race, nation and ethnicity abolished.

Where to get started? We come full circle to the question of what to do concretely in the here and now. We can now approach that question scientifically, from the standpoint of the historic interest of the proletariat as a class. We can avoid the pitfall of do-gooder moralism, of becoming, as Lenin warned, “the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics,” whether in the form of right-wing religious demagoguery or social-democratic opportunism.

The class consciousness of the proletariat and its will to struggle have been greatly undermined by the social-democratic misleadership of the labour movement, exemplified by the New Democratic Party. Three years ago, the now-deceased NDP leader Jack Layton—who, unlike the reformist left, we do not eulogize—called on workers to have the “courage” to “take a pay cut so your friends at the plant can keep their job.” This is one of many reasons why we said “No vote to the NDP” in the May federal election, and we say so again for the upcoming Ontario election.

The NDP is based not merely on a bad set of ideas. It is rooted materially in the trade-union bureaucracy of English Canada. That bureaucracy expresses the interests of a stratum of the working class that Marxists term the labour aristocracy. Where does the labour aristocracy come from? It lives off scraps from the superprofits the capitalists in imperialist countries tear out of the semicolonial coun-

tries. Thus, to Marxists, it was no surprise that the NDP voted with both hands for NATO’s war on Libya. The NDP is what Marx’s close collaborator Friedrich Engels called a *bourgeois workers party*: it may be linked to the organizations of the working class, but it is thoroughly pro-capitalist in its leadership and outlook.

What is needed is something completely different: a class-struggle workers party that understands that the interests of the capitalists and the workers have nothing in common. Such a party would be, in Lenin’s words, a tribune of the people, which understands that the working class can only emancipate itself by ultimately abolishing all forms of oppression.

A revolutionary workers party would intervene into the class struggle as the most historically conscious and advanced element of the proletariat. It would advocate Quebec independence to oppose the dominant Anglo chauvinism and get the stifling national question off the agenda, making way for a higher level of class struggle. It would champion free abortion on demand and fight for the perspective of women’s liberation through socialist revolution, including among the more backward layers of the proletariat. To combat mass unemployment, it would demand the sharing of available work, with no loss of pay, and a massive program of public works.

To unmask the exploitation, robbery and fraud of the capitalist owners and the swindles of the banks, a class-struggle workers party would demand that the capitalists open their books. Raising the call for the expropriation of branches of industry vital for national existence, it would explain that this must be linked to the fight for the seizure of power by the working class, as against the reformist misleaders for whom the call for nationalization is merely a prescription for bailing out bankrupt capitalist enterprises. As Trotsky argued in opposition to the capitalists and their reformist agents in the Transitional Program (1938):

“If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.”

That is the task to which we of the Trotskyist League and the Spartacus Youth Clubs are dedicated. In the trough of the reactionary political period following the destruction of the Soviet Union, it’s a task with few immediate rewards. But let’s be sober and scientific about this—there is an overhead to historical progress. And on the grounds of that necessity, we urge you to join us in that struggle. ■

guard party basing itself on the complete political and organisational independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. We fight to build such a party in intransigent struggle against the pro-capitalist politics of the SACP and COSATU misleaders, winning militants from the working-class ranks to a genuinely communist programme. The class-collaborationist policies of the SACP and COSATU leaders subordinate the independence of the workers to their capitalist class enemies through the alliance with the bourgeois-nationalist ANC. These labour reformists shamelessly exploit the weight of national oppression of the black majority in order to sell the workers this treacherous alliance with a party of the class enemy. This is what the programme of “swelling the ranks of the ANC” and “the ANC’s leading role in the National Democratic Revolution”—supported by the misleaders of both COSATU and SACP—is all about.

The continued degradation of the black majority is not just a trade-union question that can be resolved through fighting for better wages and other improvements in the conditions of employment. It is inherent in the very structure and development of the South African capitalist system, under which the national oppression of the overwhelming majority of the

population—the black masses—came to be carried out not by a foreign colonial power, but by a native white bourgeoisie tied closely to the Anglo-American imperialists. The white supremacist system of apartheid, whose underlying class and social structure remains in place today, was in a sense a form of colonial oppression within one country. And the purpose of this “colonial” subjugation is for the local capitalists and imperialists to extract profits from the superexploitation of the black proletariat.

The peculiar development of South African capitalism, resulting in the almost complete overlap of *race and class*, provides a certain paradigm, or model, for the applicability of Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. The capitalist class is dominantly white while the working class is overwhelmingly black. The democratic task of liberating the black majority from its enslaved and degraded condition is inextricably linked to the need to overthrow the capitalist system. A black-centred workers government would not be racially exclusive—there would be an important role and full democratic rights for coloureds, Indians and other Asians, and those whites who accept a government centrally based on the black working people. In this sense, a black-centred

workers government represents liberation for the oppressed coloured and Indian minorities as well.

A black-centred workers government here must be linked to the toilers throughout the region in a socialist federation of Southern Africa, and it would fight like hell to extend workers power to the advanced capitalist countries—especially to the imperialist centres in the U.S., Western Europe and Japan—where the

workers are currently being ravaged by the capitalist economic crisis and vicious austerity attacks. On the basis of international socialist planning, we can build a truly humane society where the brutality and exploitation associated with the rule of the mining magnates and imperialist bloodsuckers are a relic of the past. *For a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party as a section of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution!* ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Strikers Defy State Repression, Betrayal by Union Tops



Reuters



Theminkosi Dwayisa

South Africa

Platinum Miners Fight Mass Firings

FEBRUARY 25—The following article is reprinted from a 21 February supplement to *Spartacist South Africa*, newspaper of the South African section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). Our comrades have distributed over 1,300 copies of the supplement to striking mineworkers who are locked in a fierce battle over wages and working conditions at an Implats platinum mine some 60 miles northwest of Johannesburg.

The strikers are fighting not only the bosses and the capitalist state but the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers and the COSATU trade-union federation. Four days ago, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi showed up outside Implats' Number Six shaft to demand that strikers get "Back to Work or Else," as the headline in South Africa's *Mail & Guardian* (24 February) put it. Vavi, who had recently tried to stop a strike by the SADTU teachers union in Eastern Cape province, menacingly reminded the mineworkers of his role in siding with the Volkswagen bosses in Uitenhage in 2000 when he told workers to end their "illegal" strike. Such treachery is part and parcel of the COSATU bureaucracy's participation in the capitalist Tripartite Alliance government along with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

* * *

SPARTACIST SOUTH AFRICA

In a vicious strikebreaking attack, Impala Platinum (Implats), the world's second-largest platinum producer, sacked a total of 17,200 striking underground workers between late January and early February. The workers, employed at Implats' mines in Rustenburg, North West province, have refused to buckle in the face of this massive intimidation by the bosses. They have overwhelmingly rejected the company's attempt to break the strike by "rehiring" the dismissed workers at poorer conditions.

With the wildcat strike almost a month old and causing a loss in production estimated at R1.2 billion [\$154 million], the forces of the capitalist state are being mobilised on an unprecedented scale to attack the workers and restore the flow of

Left: Strikers and township residents confront police near Impala Platinum's Rustenburg mine, February 16. Right: Striking workers outside Implats mine.

profits to the Implats bosses. Last week, police helicopters and tanks with water cannons were brought in to quell the upheaval, which had extended to include solidarity protests by the community of nearby Freedom Park. A satellite police station was torched, roads blockaded, and even the army had to be mobilised to prevent workers from shutting down one of the mine shafts. Hundreds of striking workers have been arrested in recent weeks. An article on the *Platinum Weekly* website (17 February) summed up the platinum bosses' attitude with the headline, "Anarchy! This Is WAR..."

The entire labour movement has a vital interest in the victory of the striking Rustenburg mineworkers—their immediate reinstatement and granting of full wage demands including the R9,000 across the board minimum, with all other previously won working conditions and wage increases honoured, and the scrapping of all criminal charges and other reprisals for actions in defence of the strike. If the Implats bosses are allowed to get away with this assault—the scale of which is unprecedented in recent decades—it will only embolden the capitalist bosses and their government to launch a broader offensive against organised labour. What's needed is hard class struggle against the strikebreaking of the Implats bosses and the capitalist state, mobilising the social power of union workers throughout the mining and manufacturing sectors in labour solidarity: *An injury to one is an injury to all!*

Mineworkers Revolt Against NUM Misleaders' Collusion with Bosses

From the beginning of the struggle, the workers at Implats have had to go up against the bureaucracy of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)—the largest and most powerful affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the only recognised trade union at Implats. The strike in late Janu-

ary by 5,000 rock drill operators was triggered when those workers discovered that the company had secretly given an 18 percent wage increase to workers in the so-called "miners" pay category, who are already paid much higher wages than the rock drillers and others in lower categories. This divide-and-rule deal was hatched by the Implats bosses right at the end of a long, bitter round of wage negotiations lasting from May to October 2011, during which the company pleaded bankruptcy to extort concessions from the union on the increases in the workers' miserably low wages (meanwhile, Implats has now reported a 67 percent increase in headline earnings for the 6-month period ending in December 2011!).

When the workers approached their union, NUM officials said they did not negotiate the secret deal but were merely informed by management about the 18 percent increase for "miners" only. The company claimed it negotiated the deal with NUM officials. In any case, the union members were angry that their

leaders had kept the deal a secret, strengthening their suspicion that the NUM tops were colluding with management behind their backs. Workers who spoke to *Spartacist South Africa*

reported a long history of frustration with NUM officials who consistently fail to represent their grievances, either "sweeping them under the carpet" or keeping them their business with the bosses and failing to report to members. When NUM leaders attempted to end a wildcat strike at Implats in 2009, they were stoned by workers and an NUM deputy president apparently lost an eye in the process.

When they went on strike in 2012, union members elected an interim committee to represent them in their further dealings with the company, vowing that they do not want anything to do with NUM officials. But the company has refused to meet with this committee, claiming that there is no one to negotiate with in order to justify strong-arm tactics like the mass firings to break the strike. Both the company and NUM officials have been peddling the line that the strike was incited by a competing union—the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which split from the NUM in 1998—which they claim is challenging the NUM's jurisdiction and "intimidating" the Implats workers into striking.

continued on page 10



Bloomberg

February 21: Top COSATU bureaucrat Zwelinzima Vavi shows up in Rustenburg to tell defiant miners to end strike.