

Health Care Tussle: Workers and Poor Lose

For Free, Quality Health Care for All!

Last week's 5-4 Supreme Court decision sanctifying the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (christened with racist intent by its opponents as Obamacare), while unanticipated by many, was hardly earthshaking. Chief Justice John Roberts, normally a member with Scalia, Alito and Thomas of the court's right-wing bloc, joined with the nominally liberal justices in issuing the majority decision. Although not a few Tea Party types now see him as a traitor, the decision simply asserted that the government has the power to levy taxes on the populace, a commonplace that does not suggest that Roberts was possessed by the ghost of Lenin.

With Republicans declaiming against

the act as an insidious introduction of "socialism," their Speaker of the House John Boehner promised to rally the electorate to destroy it, including even its popular components, such as barring denial of coverage for preexisting conditions and extending it to dependents up to age 26. For his part, Obama used the occasion of the Supreme Court ruling to modestly offer himself as a fighter for what is good for the American people,

untainted by the quest for political power. As we wrote when Obama announced this plan (WV No. 943, 25 September 2009):

"With the official unemployment rate crowding 10 percent—and double that when the underemployed and those who have stopped looking for work are added in—the number of those with no health insurance increases day by day. Obama invokes the plight of the uninsured, with promises of a level of

care not much above a pledge to pick up the dead bodies, in order to massively *cut health care costs*. Some \$600 billion in savings is to come from reducing government spending on Medicare and Medicaid. Also being eyed for the ax by the health reform executioners are the now non-taxable employer-paid health programs won through the hard-fought union battles of the past."

Today, liberal pundits and the AFL-CIO trade-union tops are seizing on the court decision to induct Obama into the pantheon of such Democratic Party "progressives" as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson. These efforts to resurrect the halcyon days when the Democratic Party was the putative champion of the working class and poor are but camouflage for

continued on page 2

Greek Elections: Workers Face More Austerity



Spartakist



Kljun/Guardian

Left: Greek Communist Party (KKE) banner at Athens protest appeals to the "people," May 14. Right: Soup kitchen line in Athens last February. Homelessness has skyrocketed, and one in three Greeks lives below official poverty line.

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 219 (Summer 2012), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

When the conservative New Democracy emerged as the winning party in the 17 June election, its leader Antonis Samaras proclaimed: "The Greek people today voted for the European course and that we remain in the euro" (*Guardian*, 18 June). Having barely scraped a victory, New Democracy will head a coalition government with the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which got a mere twelve per cent of the vote, and the smaller Democratic Left (Dimar). The new government can hardly lay claim to having a popular mandate—the aggregate vote for all three parties is

Down With the EU! For a Workers Europe!

less than 50 per cent of the votes cast, on a very low turnout. New Democracy and PASOK, who have alternated in government ever since the fall of the military junta in 1974, now take the reins. With Samaras as prime minister, Greece will once again be ruled by the same corrupt and vicious gang that has brought ruin to the Greek working people, shredding wages, pensions and services at the behest of the European Union, European Central Bank and IMF imperialist troika.

New Democracy's victory was greeted with relief by the imperialist rulers of Europe and the U.S., who feared a rejection of the austerity package and a meltdown of the single currency if Syriza, the

Coalition of the Radical Left, had won the election. Syriza's unexpected electoral success, especially in the May election, was an index of the desperation of the masses of workers and petty bourgeoisie, who revile the onerous conditions of the bank bailout demanded by the troika. But Syriza's programme accepts the

capitalist order and the EU, which is dominated by the imperialist bankers, while seeking only to ameliorate the terms under which the extortion is carried out. Syriza, which includes ex-Eurocommunists, Maoists and a clutch of reformist fake-Trotskyist groups, finished a very close second in the June election, with almost 27 per cent of the vote. The Stalinist Communist Party (KKE) saw its vote drop to 4.5 per cent.

Everyone knows that the Greek election has not solved the crisis in the euro zone, but has merely postponed it. While stock markets surged the morning following

continued on page 7

Trotskyist Group of Greece Statement:

Vote KKE! No Vote to Syriza!

See Page 7



Lynne Stewart Appeal Rejected

On June 28, the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the vindictive 10-year prison sentence against leftist attorney Lynne Stewart, who was prosecuted for defending an Islamic cleric imprisoned for an alleged plot to blow up New York City landmarks in the early 1990s. Stewart, along with her interpreter Mohamed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar, was convicted in February 2005 of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorism and to defraud the U.S. government. As we wrote at the time in *WV* No. 842 (18 February 2005): “The verdict gives the government a green light to prosecute lawyers for the alleged crimes of their clients, thereby shooting the basic right to counsel to hell.” Opponents of the “war on terror” assault on democratic rights must demand: ***Free Lynne Stewart now!***

Stewart was initially sentenced to 28 months in prison. The Obama administration appealed the ruling in order to vastly increase the sentence. Rather than expressing regret for representing her client, in a November 2009 interview

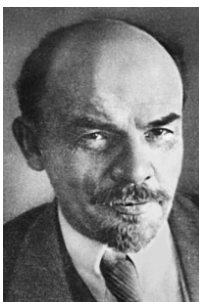
Stewart declared: “I would do it again.” In 2010, a federal court quadrupled the then 70-year-old cancer patient’s sentence to ten years, which her lawyer described last week as “a lifetime, her lifetime.”

In its ruling, the Second Circuit repeatedly cited Stewart’s “lack of remorse” as a key motivation for upholding the sentence. The court also cynically proclaimed that “permitting review of the defendant’s public statements” to justify this barbaric punishment—namely comments made after her original sentencing—“does not violate her right to speak under First Amendment principles.” As Stewart’s husband, Ralph Poynter, told *WV*: “They’re angry because she’s not bent or bowed.”

The Partisan Defense Committee has contributed to Stewart’s defense and encourages others to do the same. Donations can be sent to: Lynne Stewart Organization, 1070 Dean Street, Brooklyn, New York 11216. Letters can be mailed to: Lynne Stewart, #53504-054, FMC Carswell, Federal Medical Center, P.O. Box 27137, Fort Worth, TX 76127. ■

Socialist Revolution Is the Only Way Out

Writing during the Great Depression of the 1930s, Leon Trotsky underlined that only workers revolution can put an end to the privation and social regression endemic to the decaying capitalist profit system. The need to build revolutionary workers parties based on this understanding is graphically underscored by the current economic crisis, as the capitalists and their governments attempt to force greater austerity down the throats of working people.



LENIN

The first and most important premise of a revolutionary situation is the most intense sharpening of the contradictions between the productive forces and the property relations. ***The nation stops going forward.*** The arrest in the economic development and, even more, its regression signify that the capitalist system of production is definitely worn out and must give way to the socialist system.

The present crisis, which encompasses all countries and thrusts the economy back decades, has definitely pushed the bourgeois system to absurdity. If, at the dawn of capitalism, ignorant and starving workers broke machines, today it is the capitalists themselves who destroy machines and factories. The further maintenance of the private ownership of the means of production threatens humanity with degeneration and barbarism.

The basis of society is economic. That basis is ripe for socialism in a double sense: modern technology has advanced to a point where it can assure a high standard of living to the nation and to all humanity; but the capitalist property system, which has outlived itself, dooms the masses to ever-increasing poverty and suffering.

The fundamental premise of socialism—that is, the economic premise—has already been present for some time. But capitalism will not disappear from the scene ***automatically.*** Only the working class can seize the forces of production from the stranglehold of the exploiters. History places this task squarely before us. If the proletariat is, for one reason or another, incapable of routing the bourgeoisie and of seizing power—if it is, for example, paralyzed by its own parties and trade unions—the continued decay of economy and civilization will follow, calamities will pile up, despair and prostration will engulf the masses, and capitalism—decrepit, decayed, rotting—will strangle the people with increasing strength, and will thrust them into the abyss of a new war. ***Other than the socialist revolution, there is no way out.***

—Leon Trotsky, “Once Again, Whither France?” (March 1935)

Health Care...

(continued from page 1)

perpetuating the rule of decaying U.S. imperialism. From World War II, which established the military and economic dominance of the American empire, through the Korean and Vietnam wars and the more recent occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan—these Democratic Party “progressives” have engaged in whatever savagery was deemed necessary to maintain the supremacy of U.S. imperialism.

Reforms enacted under their regimes—from FDR’s “New Deal” to LBJ’s “Great Society” programs—had nothing to do with the virtues attributed to the Democratic Party. On the contrary, they were the by-products of mass social struggles, from the class battles of the 1930s that forged the industrial trade unions and the giant strike wave following World War II to the civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements.

Although modest in scope, these were nevertheless real gains for the working class, black people and the poor. Not so the Affordable Care Act. With its individual mandate requiring those not insured by their employers or qualifying for Medicare or Medicaid to buy health insurance or pay a substantial fine, the biggest beneficiaries of this “health care” bill will be the profit-gouging health insurance giants and pharmaceutical companies. The medical profession and hospitals will also be enlisted as the overseers of “cost containment.” The Hyde Amendment denying federal monies for abortion was reaffirmed by an executive order issued by Obama. In the bill, undocumented immigrants are proscribed from receiving any of the act’s benefits. Union workers with so-called “Cadillac” health plans will shoulder a portion of the costs of this “reform” through proposed new taxes.

The poorest layers of society were supposed to receive coverage under this law through an expansion of Medicaid. Now state governments, beginning with Florida and South Carolina, have announced that they will opt out of this expansion after the Supreme Court ruled that they cannot be penalized for doing so. It is no coincidence that this revolt begins in the states of the former Confederacy. The very fact that the U.S. is the only major industrial country on the face of the planet without a national health system is testament to the brutal racial oppression of black people.

The color bar has historically served to divide and weaken the working class, impeding the development of class consciousness and the formation of even a reformist workers party. The existence of such parties in Europe, together with the militant struggles and socialist aspirations of advanced layers of the proletariat, led to the creation of nationwide health care, pensions and other programs. In contrast, in the U.S. many such benefits were the product of individual union battles. Correspondingly, the dearth of strikes in recent decades has led to the butchering of health care, pensions and other union gains by the bosses. They have overwhelmingly gotten away with it thanks to the acquiescence of the trade-union bureaucrats, who

are committed to preserving the “competitiveness” of American capitalism.

Private-sector unions having been ravaged, including much of what existed of guaranteed health and pension benefits, Democrats and Republicans alike are carrying out wholesale attacks on such remaining plans for public workers unions. The capitalist politicians are whipping up a public outcry against these workers for supposedly living high off the hog at the taxpayers’ expense. In racist capitalist America, the reactionary myth that social programs are merely a drain on the income of hard-working people has long been wielded to shred benefits for the ghetto and barrio poor. Now these guns are being turned on what benefits remain for the working class as a whole.

Republicans promote the idea that the answer to societal decay is to further increase the massive transfer of wealth and income to the 0.01 percent of the population that constitutes America’s ruling class. The Democrats propose to put lipstick on the pig of social decay by “reforming,” i.e., decreasing, benefits available through such social programs as continue to exist. In either case, the result is the same: the continuing erosion of the living standards, and the very ability to live, of working and poor people in the U.S.

Free, quality health care for all is a burning need for the mass of the population. To win this demand would require a revival of working-class struggle. Such will not be forthcoming from the misleaders sitting atop the unions. Following the Supreme Court decision, AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka saluted Obama’s stand “for fairness and for working men and women,” declaring “the election this November provides a clear choice.” Subordinating the interests of the workers to their capitalist masters as represented by the Democratic Party has long been the name of the game for the union bureaucrats.

Last year, it was played to contain protest by tens of thousands of unionists, youth and others who had rallied in defense of Wisconsin’s public worker unions against Republican governor Scott Walker’s union-busting assault. Diverting this militancy into a recall campaign, the bureaucrats were handed a stinging rebuke when Walker beat his Democratic Party opponent for a second time. With union membership among Wisconsin state workers slashed by at least half since last year, Trumka declared that Walker’s “divisive agenda has been stopped cold”!

The workers would find plenty of allies if they waged some hard class struggle for health care, for black and immigrant rights and access to free abortion and contraception. But to wage such a battle means replacing the present sellouts—who peddle the lie that the workers have interests in common with their exploiters—with a leadership committed to mobilizing labor’s power in opposition to the capitalist class enemy. The workers need their own party, a multiracial revolutionary workers party that will fight to expropriate the health care industries as part of a fight to overturn the rotting American imperialist order through socialist revolution. ■



Getty

Supporters and opponents of Obama health care law outside Supreme Court hearings, March 26.

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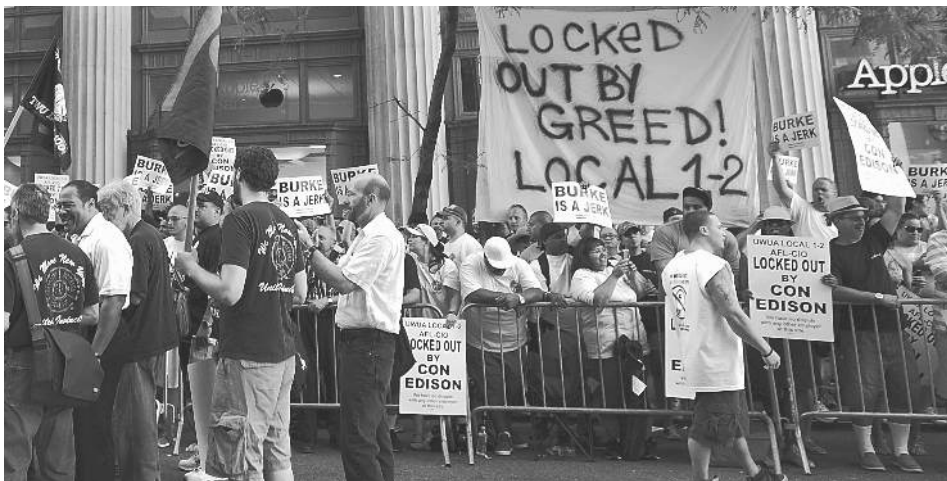
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Con Ed Locks Out Workers, Screws NYC

JULY 2—Consolidated Edison locked out 8,500 members of Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) Local 1-2 shortly after their contract expired at midnight on June 30. With Con Ed out to gut pensions and double health care premiums, Local 1-2 members had earlier authorized a strike. As the clock ticked down, the union president maintained he would not concede on pensions. When the union did not buckle at the negotiating table, the utility ordered workers off the job. Increasingly, companies are turning to lockouts—justified by the anti-labor *New York Times* as “a defensive measure against the threat of a strike” (1 July)—to attempt to bust unions. About 5,000 management employees are working as scabs.

In gunning for the union of this skilled and highly specialized workforce, the giant monopoly is imperiling the lives and health of city residents. With the city suffocating under a deadly heat wave, Con Ed is exposing the sick, the elderly and others to possible heat stroke and death.



WV Photo

July 3: Utility Workers rally with Transport Workers Local 100 contingent outside Con Ed headquarters.

Violent storms accompanying the heat in the mid-Atlantic have knocked out power and air conditioning to 3.9 million customers and done “catastrophic damage” to power grids. Con Ed is notorious for its

antiquated infrastructure that has repeatedly failed under high summer demand, including just last month. It is a testament to the hard work of UWUA members under hazardous conditions that there are

not even more service disruptions.

The union, which traces its roots back to a CIO organizing committee in 1938, unites electric, gas and steam plant workers with clerical workers. It derives significant social power from its key role in keeping the lights on in the center of U.S. finance capital. A successful fight by Local 1-2 members to defend their livelihoods would disrupt the current tide of lockouts, pension and benefit grabs and anti-union legislation that encouraged Con Ed to hardline it with the utility workers.

Solid picket lines reinforced by the ranks of city labor would be a good first step. Beware labor’s enemies, including federal mediators, whose purpose is to hamstring the union’s power, and capitalist Democratic Party politicians, such as former governor David Paterson, who brokered the 2008 Local 1-2 contract. His successor Andrew Cuomo has fueled the anti-union offensive, attacking state workers with a vengeance. ***Defeat Con Ed union-busting! Victory to the UWUA! ■***

Anti-Socialist Inequality Party

SEP Denies Racism in Trayvon Martin Killing

Outside of stone racists, Tea Party yahoos and those among the zoo of reactionaries contending for Republican presidential candidate, there were few who openly denied the bitter truth that 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed in cold blood by a racist vigilante simply because he was black. But cries from those like Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum that to portray Martin’s killing as a “racial issue is fundamentally wrong,” “disgraceful” and divisive found an echo from an organization that calls itself the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). A March 31 statement by the SEP’s presidential candidate Jerry White opined: “The killing of Trayvon Martin is not fundamentally about race.” White concludes by urging a “fight for socialism.” The notion that the socialist liberation of the working class means denying the reality of black oppression in this country—a cornerstone for the edifice of capitalist rule in America—is a grotesque but accurate measure of the political sensibilities animating the SEP.

A subsequent SEP article on its World Socialist Web Site titled “The Killing of Trayvon Martin and Racial Politics in America” (wsws.org, 5 April) by its National Secretary Joseph Kishore allows that “racial prejudice may [!] have played a role in the killing of Martin.” But he asserts that the eruption of massive protests had nothing to do with race, much less the daily reality of racist terror against black people in this society. That Martin’s killer, George Zimmerman, saw a young black man in a hoodie as a dangerous predator also is of no consequence to Kishore. Instead, he presents this cop wannabe as one of many “disturbed individuals” whose “violent actions” are the product of the “tensions building up in American society” as a result of the cur-

rent economic crisis. This is kind of like describing lynchings in the Jim Crow South as the product of the economic dislocations resulting from the destruction of slavery but...having nothing to do with race.

Kishore presents such arguments as a statement of supposed working-class opposition to the Democratic Party, which he proclaims is using “the killing of Martin to promote the reactionary politics of racial identity.” As evidence, Kishore points to an observation by Jesse Jackson that “racial profiling is all too common in the US, and has led to the killing of a young man.” Who other than an apologist for racism or perhaps an escapee from an asylum for the criminally insane could deny that this is an elementary statement of fact? The problem isn’t that Jackson, Al Sharpton and others of their ilk are fanning the flames of outrage against racist reaction in America. On the contrary, their purpose is precisely to contain such outrage and keep it safely in the channels of pro-Democratic Party electoralism.

The SEP and Victor Berger

In its articles on Martin, the SEP polemicalizes against the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and other leftists who did their bit in promoting the “change we can believe in” credentials of Barack Obama as U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief. But, far from exposing such pro-Democratic Party belly crawling, Kishore’s article opened the door for the ISO to try to present its organization as genuine fighters for “socialist equality,” including for black people.

In a letter attributed to ISO honcho Sherry Wolf that is posted on wsws.org (19 April), she thanked Kishore for his article, saying that she had circulated it to ISO members as a “useful example of lunk-headed indifference to racism in the name of socialism.” In reply, Kishore argued: “Socialists have never denied or ignored the existence of racism. However, the historic position of the socialist movement has been that the struggle against racism and all forms of oppression must be based on the fight to unite all workers, on the basis of their common class

interests, against the capitalist system.” In fact, to unite workers around their common class interests requires championing the rights of black people, immigrants and other minorities who are a vital part of the proletariat. As Karl Marx put it, “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.”

Any organization claiming a revolutionary perspective must take up the fight against the *special oppression* of black people in the U.S. The forcible segregation of the black population at the bottom of this society has been integral to capitalist rule in America since the days of slavery. Poisonous anti-black racism fomented by the bourgeoisie has long been a barrier to the proletariat developing a consciousness of itself as a class, crippling its struggles against the capitalist class enemy.

The position that Kishore puts forward is indeed “historic,” the history being that of the American Socialist Party, which included the likes of outright white supremacist Victor Berger. Even the best elements of the early socialist movement, such as Eugene Debs, who opposed all racial prejudice, treated the question of black oppression as simply part of the workers struggle against capitalism and no more. As James P. Cannon, a founder of the American Communist movement and later of U.S. Trotskyism, wrote in “The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement” (printed in *The First Ten Years of American Communism* [1962]): “The old theory of American radicalism turned out in practice to be a formula for inaction on the Negro front, and—incidentally—a convenient shield for the dormant racial prejudices of the white radicals themselves.”

This changed when the victory of the 1917 Russian Revolution, as Cannon put it, “began to thunder its demand throughout the world for freedom and equality for all national minorities, all subject peoples and all races.” The Communist International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party fought with the early American Communists to champion the fight for black rights. The Bolsheviks understood that, far from “dividing” the

working class as the SEP would have it, the fight for black freedom was critical to uniting the American proletariat in struggle for its own emancipation from capitalist wage slavery.

Since our inception, the Spartacist League has fought for the program of revolutionary integrationism: fighting to mobilize the multiracial working class against every manifestation of racial oppression as part of arming the workers for the struggle for proletarian socialist revolution. This is the only road to achieving genuine and full equality for the black masses through their integration into an egalitarian socialist society.

In contrast, the SEP’s conscious opposition to even the mention of racial prejudice in the Trayvon Martin case is no aberration. Such contemptible indifference to special oppression has been a hallmark of this organization and its predecessor, the Workers League (WL), for decades. This was put most crudely by former WL leader Tim Wohlforth who, in the early 1970s, told a group of young New Left Maoists: “The working class hates faggots, women’s libbers and hippies, and so do we!” Such views were indeed those of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy at the time under George Meany, who had nothing but racist contempt for the fight for black rights or those of anyone else. Yet, at the height of Vietnam antiwar protests and the upheavals in the black ghettos, the WL urged that Meany’s AFL-CIO form a “labor party” on a program that omitted any mention of the war or the fight for black liberation.

After current SEP head David North took over as WL leader, its press, the *Bulletin*, denounced the Spartacist League as having “a grotesque fixation with the issue of race.” This was its response to the 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization on 27 November 1982—initiated and led by the SL—which successfully drove a gang of Klan terrorists off the streets of Washington, D.C. Integrated unions in the D.C./Virginia

continued on page 10

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips alternate issues in June, July and August. Our next issue will be dated August 3.

SPARTACIST

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Stirring Up the South China Sea

U.S. Imperialism Tightens Military Vise on China

Concretizing a strategic military turn by U.S. imperialism, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced in Singapore in June that by 2020, 60 percent of U.S. warships, which are now evenly split between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, would be moved to the Asia-Pacific region. Panetta's trip to Southeast Asia followed visits to the region by Secretary of State Clinton and President Obama, who declared the shift to the Pacific a "top priority."

Despite occasional denials by administration spokesmen, the central target of the U.S. "pivot" toward the Pacific is China, the most powerful of the remaining countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown. The Pentagon itself makes this clear as it gradually discloses details of battle guidelines "designed to counter the military challenge from China" (*Financial Times*, 31 May). Known as the AirSea Battle fighting "concept"—an echo of the 1970s AirLand Battle doctrine adopted in the Cold War against the Soviet Union—the plan is meant to "cement US alliances and to counter 'anti-access, area-denial' weapons and capabilities," such as a new generation of anti-ship missiles being developed by China. According to one Pentagon document noted in the article, a serious attack on China's "anti-access, area-denial" defenses would mean "preparing for a large pre-emptive strike on military bases in mainland China."

Washington has over the last two years made a concerted series of moves aimed at extending and strengthening pressures against China, from resuming aid to Indonesia's Kopassus special forces and normalizing relations with Myanmar (Burma) to the stationing of Marines in Darwin, Australia, and joint maneuvers with U.S. client states. Reporting on a summit meeting between Japan and Pacific island countries that was also attended by a U.S. delegation, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (29 May) wrote that the region "is now in the middle of a power struggle involving Japan, the United States and Australia on the one hand and China on the other."

The tightening of the military vise on China has been combined with brazenly belligerent acts by the U.S. or its allies. In mid April, India successfully tested a long-range ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and giving India "complete coverage of targets in China" (*New York Times*, 19 April). The feat was widely applauded in the U.S. capitalist media, which spews endless lies and double-talk to condemn nuclear testing by regimes that Washington deems evil (North Korea, Iran). Just three days before the test, the U.S. and its Philippine



USS *Denver* at Philippines' Subic Bay in April during joint military exercises in South China Sea.

client state began joint military exercises in the South China Sea while Chinese fishing and maritime patrol vessels were in a standoff with a Philippine warship in the Sea's Scarborough Shoal.

In drawing down the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan (while stepping up drone bombardments and "targeted" killings in Pakistan and Yemen), the Obama administration set the stage for the "pivot" toward the Asia-Pacific. This marks a return to the strategy adopted by the U.S. rulers following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92. The fall of the Soviet Union removed what had been the imperialists' supreme military target and the only real counterweight to their domination of the world, allowing the U.S. to pull back military forces in Europe and redeploy toward the western Pacific Rim.

While the September 11 terror attacks diverted U.S. attention to Afghanistan and other targets of the "war on terror," that concocted "war" itself served to expand and strengthen the imperialists' military arc around China, whose Stalinist leaders endorsed the "anti-terror" campaign. U.S. bases were established in Central Asia, while India and Mongolia were drawn into closer cooperation with Washington. Beginning in 2002, some 1,000 U.S. Marines and Special Forces have been dispatched to the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, the location of a protracted Muslim insurgency, where they rotate through to this day.

The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), stands foursquare for the military defense of the bureaucratically deformed workers states

rulers and their predatory military adventures, a struggle that must be consummated through the revolutionary overturn of the capitalist-imperialist world order.

Our military defense of the workers states against the class enemy is unconditional—that is, it is not dependent on the policies pursued by the ruling Stalinist regimes or by the particular circumstances of the conflict. At the same time, as Trotskyists the ICL maintains our opposition to those regimes, which undermine the workers states by politically suppressing the working class and seeking to accommodate the imperialists, who will stop at nothing to secure their rule and profits.

China's Military Advances

The Pentagon's accelerated shift toward East and Southeast Asia is driven in large part by the major leaps China has made in its defense capability over the past period, a welcome development that occurred mostly as U.S. forces

were bogged down in the Afghanistan and Iraq quagmires. In building up military forces in the coastal region facing Taiwan and enhancing its nuclear capability, China has won a greater degree of protection against imperialist brinkmanship.

In 1996, the U.S. sent two aircraft carrier groups to waters off Taiwan in response to Chinese military exercises coinciding with Taiwan's presidential election campaign. This provocation by the Clinton administration, the largest U.S. naval deployment in the Pacific since the Vietnam War, brought to mind the imperialists' "gunboat diplomacy" in the 19th century as they carved up and

—China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba—against the imperialists and against internal counterrevolutionary forces. Just as workers must defend the trade unions against the attacks of the exploiters, despite a union leadership whose support to the capitalist order cripples labor struggle, so too must the social revolutions from China to Cuba be defended against the imperialists, who seek to revive the decaying capitalist profit system by turning those countries back into fields for the most brutal exploitation. We demand the removal of all American bases and troops from Asia as part of the struggle to mobilize the U.S. working class against its "own" capitalist



Chinese submarine during fleet review celebrating 60th anniversary of People's Liberation Army Navy, April 2009.

AFP

For Revolutionary Internationalist Defense of China, Vietnam!

lorded it over China. It also spurred Beijing to ramp up defense spending, which it continued to do throughout its economic boom of the last decade.

China now possesses or is rapidly developing land-based ballistic and cruise missiles, jets with anti-ship missiles, conventionally and nuclear-powered submarines, long-range radars and surveillance satellites and space weapons. U.S. analysts describe this array as a potential “game changer” that “could force the U.S. Navy to pull its carriers and other surface combatants far back from China’s coasts” (Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* [2011]). The American imperialists are determined to counter this development as part of their effort to remain the world’s overwhelmingly dominant military force.

Our defense of the workers states includes support to their development of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Having first successfully tested a nuclear bomb in 1964, China initially possessed liquid-fueled ballistic missiles that were vulnerable to destruction by first-strike launches. But in recent years it has developed solid-fueled ICBMs, capable of striking the U.S. mainland. Some of these are not in fixed silos but are mobile, making them all but impossible to take out. China will reportedly soon deploy submarine-launched missiles that could also reach the U.S. The People’s Republic has thus achieved a crucial deterrent to attack by U.S. imperialism, the only state power to have used atomic weapons, incinerating 200,000 civilians in Japan in 1945. While President Harry Truman and other U.S. officials considered using this weapon of mass destruction against the Chinese in the failed attempt to “roll back Communism” during the Korean War, they were constrained by the possession of the bomb by the USSR. By the 1970s the Soviet Union had reached rough nuclear parity with the U.S., which China is nowhere near attaining.

Stalinist Accommodation to Imperialism

While impressive and necessary, China’s military and economic advances cannot ultimately guarantee the survival of the workers state in a world dominated by imperialist powers bent on its destruction. The overthrow of capitalist rule by the 1949 Revolution liberated the workers and peasants from imperialist subjugation and the tyranny of the Chinese bourgeoisie. The collectivization of the economy set the stage for a tremendous leap in the masses’ conditions over their previous miserable existence and created a significant industrial base (at first with substantial Soviet aid), a necessary foundation for the military defense of the revolution.

However, unlike the proletarian October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, which created a workers state based on workers, peasants and soldiers soviets (councils), the 1949 Revolution was the result of a peasant-based guerrilla war led by Mao Zedong’s Chinese Communist Party (CCP), ushering in a workers state that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. The CCP’s political framework is the profoundly anti-Marxist dogma of “socialism in one country,” proclaimed by J.V. Stalin in late 1924 as the watchword of the bureaucracy that usurped political power from the Soviet proletariat. Overturning the internationalist program and principles that guided the Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the Stalinist bureaucracy renounced the fight for world socialist revolution, pursuing instead the utopian quest for peaceful coexistence with imperialism.

Covering one-sixth of the earth’s surface and possessing abundant mineral wealth, the Soviet Union advanced eons over the old, deeply backward and impoverished society ruled by the tsars, growing into an industrial and military powerhouse second only to the U.S. Yet it could not on its own surpass the economic level of the advanced capitalist countries, much less achieve socialism—a society of material abundance premised on the collectivization and qualitative development of the



advanced productive forces that are today centered in the imperialist countries.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), his classic analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet Union under Stalin, Trotsky noted both the advantages of a planned, collectivized economy in mobilizing industry for military defense and the limitations that sprang from the isolation of the workers state. He wrote:

“The economic successes of the Soviet Union make it possible for her to fortify herself, advance, arm herself and, when necessary, retreat and wait, in a word, hold out. But, by its very nature, the question, Who shall prevail—not only as a military, but still more as an economic question—confronts the Soviet Union on a world scale. Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap commodities in the baggage trains of capitalist armies would be incomparably more dangerous.”

Trotsky’s political conclusion was the need for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union and for proletarian political revolution to oust the privileged, parasitic bureaucracy and restore workers democracy and proletarian internationalism. He starkly posed the alternatives: “Will the bureaucrat devour the workers’ state, or will the working class clean up the bureaucrat?” This question is posed with no less urgency today for China and the other remaining deformed workers states.

Even at its peak, the Soviet Union’s total output was no more than a third of that of the U.S. Finally, after decades of imperialist pressure and bureaucratic misrule, the Soviet workers state succumbed to capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. This was a historic defeat for the working people of the world, giving renewed life to the decaying capitalist system and leaving U.S. imperialism as the world’s unchallenged military behemoth. China today remains far below the economic level attained by the former Soviet Union, weighed down in particular by its huge rural hinterland.

Pursuing their own variant of “socialism in one country,” the Beijing Stalinists believe that they can avoid the fate of their Moscow counterparts in part by pursuing greater integration into the world economy, steadily developing economically and militarily, while maintaining an iron political grip over the combative working class. Throughout the last five years of world capitalist economic crisis, China has experienced massive economic growth, due primarily to the state-owned banks and industry. But in the long run, the current regime’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” will be no more able to overcome the historic legacy of China’s backwardness and resolve the problem of scarcity than Mao Zedong’s “egalitarian” autarky.

The CCP’s strategy is premised on illusions in peaceful relations with the imperialists and in the stability of the capitalist world market—a fantasy belied by the very workings of that market, not least the current deep recession. Beijing believes

that its enormous cache of U.S. treasury bonds constrains American belligerence. But by acting as the main U.S. creditor, the Chinese government contributes directly to Washington’s astronomical military spending, which surpasses that of the next 14 largest-spending countries combined. The primary focus of that military machine is now squarely set on China.

Along with military encirclement and the promotion of internal counter-revolutionary forces, the imperialists are stepping up economic pressure, from the anti-China protectionism pushed by Democratic and Republican politicians and the trade-union officialdom to trade pacts with U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific region. While Beijing seeks to offset hostilities with its neighbors through greater economic ties, the U.S. is pursuing the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade



A-bomb devastation of Hiroshima, 6 August 1945. U.S. imperialists’ nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki incinerated 200,000 civilians.

agreement with Australia, Vietnam and six other countries, on the heels of the recently sealed U.S.-South Korea Free Trade Agreement. The restoration of full U.S. diplomatic relations with Myanmar is also a wedge against China, which has hydroelectric and pipeline projects in that country.

What’s at Stake in the South China Sea?

In a paper announcing the U.S. turn toward the Asia-Pacific, Hillary Clinton declared the imperialists’ commitment to “ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region’s key players” (read: China), countering North Korea’s supposed nuclear “proliferation efforts” and “defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea” (“America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, November 2011). Clinton detailed the steps taken by the U.S. to reinforce its alliances in the region, including with the Philippines, where U.S. warships will increase their “visits” in the next period. In response to U.S. machinations, General Ma Xiaotian,

deputy chief of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) general staff, bluntly warned: “The South China issue is not America’s business.”

The U.S. officially denies any intention of going to war over territorial disputes in the South China Sea, saying that all parties should abide by international law. The U.S., it should be noted, has never bothered to sign the international treaty governing maritime disputes, figuring that its overwhelming military might and regional alliances override any such formalities.

The South China Sea is a strategically important waterway through which half of the world’s merchant tonnage passes, including some 80 percent of both China’s and Japan’s crude oil imports. Either wholly or in part, ownership of the South China Sea’s shoals and reefs is contested by the Chinese and Vietnamese workers states and by capitalist Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan. China currently controls the Paracels, which are close to its southeast coastline, and a good part of the more distant Spratlys. The South China Sea has always provided rich fishing grounds, accounting today for some 10 percent of the world’s annual catch. Its waters are also believed to cover enormous untapped oil and natural gas reserves. China’s estimate of the amount of oil equals 80 percent of Saudi Arabia’s proven reserves.

The South China Sea connects with the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Malacca, a narrow channel between Indonesia and Malaysia that is a potential chokepoint for China’s oil and iron ore imports. Hinting at American intentions to dominate this vital passageway in her *Foreign Policy* piece, Hillary Clinton lauded the expansion of the U.S. alliance with Australia “from a Pacific partnership to an Indo-Pacific one.”

In any military conflict between China or Vietnam and the U.S., the Philippines or any other capitalist country, it is the duty

of workers internationally to stand for the defense of the workers states. Vehemently opposed to this position is the bulk of the U.S. left—from the International Socialist Organization to various Maoist remnants and the ultra-Stalinist Progressive Labor Party—which declares that China is a capitalist or even imperialist country or is irreversibly on that road. These groups are either silent on U.S. machinations in the South China Sea or, in the case of the quirky Socialist Workers Party of Jack Barnes, echo bourgeois propagandists in describing the conflict as one between “rival powers” that are being rocked by “the deepening worldwide crisis of capitalism” (*Militant*, 30 April).

For its part, the Workers World Party (WWP) protests growing U.S. belligerence, correctly noting that “Washington and Wall Street will be satisfied with nothing less than the complete recolonization of China” (“U.S. Remains Hostile to China,” *Workers World*, 31 May). But its defense of China is from the standpoint of support to a section of the Stalinist

continued on page 6

China...

(continued from page 5)

bureaucracy (represented in the WWP's eyes by ousted Chongqing party leader Bo Xilai) that is supposedly committed to defending state property against those aiming for greater concessions to international capital. That stance led the WWP to hail the bloody suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, an incipient political revolution.

What Trotsky observed in *The Revolution Betrayed* in regard to Stalin's regime is certainly no less true for the CCP today: The privileged, parasitic bureaucracy "has ceased to offer any subjective guarantee whatever of the socialist direction of its policy. It continues to preserve state property only to the extent that it fears the proletariat." For the Chinese bureaucracy, there is indeed much to fear from the working class in both private and state-owned enterprises, as seen in repeated waves of strikes and large-scale protests in defense of their livelihoods, not to speak of turmoil among peasants angered by official corruption.

Opposition to imperialist maneuvering in East and Southeast Asia is fundamental to any revolutionary perspective. Nationalist wrangling over ownership of the South China Sea's uninhabited rocks and islets is another matter entirely. As revolutionary Marxists, we take no side in these territorial disputes and condemn in particular the criminal squabbling over fishing and exploration rights that have pitted the Stalinist regimes in Beijing and Hanoi against each other. The squabbling led to outright military clashes in 1988 and 2011 as well as smaller police actions, such as in the Gulf of Tonkin in 2005, when the PLA Navy shot and killed nine Vietnamese fishermen. Under the rule of



Danang, Vietnam: USS Blue Ridge enters Tien Sa port at invitation of Vietnamese government on April 23 amid rising tensions with China.

be a "mutual security concern," the U.S. and Japanese sections of the ICL wrote in a joint statement: "Taiwan has been since ancient times a part of China, and we Trotskyists will stand with China in the event of any military conflict with imperialism over Taiwan" (WV No. 844, 18 March 2005). Opposing the CCP's "one country, two systems" policy of reunification with Taiwan while maintaining capitalist property there, we call for the revolutionary reunification of China through political revolution against the Stalinist regime on the mainland, socialist revolution in Taiwan to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and the expropriation of the Hong Kong capitalists.

China as well as North Korea are directly threatened by the ramped-up U.S.-Japan military alliance. Japan, for example, has been key to establishing a U.S. theater missile defense system

called on Vietnam and other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to put aside their disputes over the South China Sea in favor of unity against China. Under Aquino's predecessor, Gloria Arroyo, the Philippines dropped out of an agreement for a joint development project with China and Vietnam after news of the deal touched off a nationalist anti-Chinese outcry.

Last November, Hillary Clinton pledged that the U.S. would bolster the Philippines' naval capacity on the basis of the Mutual Defense Treaty enacted in 1951, two years after the overthrow of capitalist rule in China. Japan, which sent three warships to the Philippines on a "goodwill visit" in May, has agreed to train and equip the Philippine coast guard, while South Korea will assist in modernizing the military. In April, the Obama administration approved the *tripling* of military sales to the Philippines compared to last year. This is a clear danger to the workers, peasants and Moro Muslims, who have suffered brutal repression at the hands of the Philippine armed forces.

In a June visit to the White House, Aquino made a direct pitch for a greater U.S. military presence in the former American colony to counteract China's "intentions," winning a pledge that the U.S. will help build a special facility and train personnel to monitor maritime movements in the South China Sea. In addition to more joint maneuvers, Manila has given the go-ahead for the U.S. to once again use the giant Clark and Subic Bay air force and naval bases, which were closed down in the early 1990s.

Various "socialist" organizations have given aid to the anti-China drive by whipping up nationalist hysteria over the Scarborough Shoal. Low turnouts for protests in Manila showed that the masses were not buying Aquino's attempt to divert attention from their unbearable social and economic misery into a crusade against China. But this was not for lack of effort by the social-democratic AKBAYAN. Numbering among its leaders Aquino's chief political adviser and other government officials, AKBAYAN organized a May 11 march on the Chinese consulate as part of a "global day of action against China's bullying in the West Philippine Sea." Last year Walden Bello, an academic darling of the reformist left internationally, joined another AKBAYAN lawmaker in proposing that the disputed maritime territory be renamed the "West Philippine Sea," the name that government spokesmen are now using.

As for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its April 21 statement demanded that the U.S. stop its "interventionism in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific" while simultaneously demanding that "capitalist" China "stand down" and pull back its patrol ships, asserting Philippine "national sovereignty and territorial integrity" in the disputed areas. Behind the Maoist CPP's militant posturing is a class-collaborationist program that ties the fortunes of the deeply impoverished workers and peasants to a non-existent "progressive" wing of the national bourgeoisie. Thus what drives the CPP's rural

guerrilla warfare is the hope that peace negotiations will result in a bourgeois coalition government that would supposedly expand democracy and carry out land reform and industrialization.

Under any form of capitalist rule, the Philippines will remain a deeply impoverished society under the thumb of the imperialists and in the oppressive grip of the Catholic church. The Filipino working class must be broken from nationalist class collaboration and won to the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution: the seizure of power by the proletariat at the head of all the urban and rural poor and the extension of socialist revolution internationally, crucially including the imperialist heartlands.

Chinese, Vietnamese Stalinist Backstabbing

Of particular danger to the world proletariat is U.S. imperialism's attempt to seize on disputes in the South China Sea in order to secure Vietnam as an ally against China. The U.S. suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, capped by the frantic helicopter flight of American agents and their local puppets out of Saigon in April 1975. With the military defeat of the U.S. and its murderous capitalist henchmen in South Vietnam, the country was reunified as a bureaucratically deformed workers state, a victory for the workers of the world.

Twenty years later, the U.S. normalized relations with Vietnam. And as Hanoi pursued its own program of "market reforms," the U.S. began to develop military ties with Vietnam, marked by repeated visits of American warships. The Vietnamese regime has recently stated its intention to make Cam Ranh Bay—a deepwater anchorage astride the South China Sea maritime routes and a major base of operations for the U.S. during the Vietnam War—available to the U.S. and other foreign navies.

Two years ago, Vietnam used its chairmanship of the ASEAN consortium, which does not include China, to put the South China Sea on the organization's agenda, leading to Hillary Clinton's declaration at the July 2010 ASEAN Regional Forum that freedom of navigation in the area was a U.S. "national interest." Later that year, a Vietnamese diplomat told the International Crisis Group, an imperialist advisory body, that the Chinese did not take Vietnam seriously before Clinton's statement, but "they listen to us now."

In late June the Vietnamese government declared sovereignty and jurisdiction over the Paracel and Spratly islands, leading to a countermove by China to raise the administrative status it gives the islands. With Vietnam conducting air patrols over the Spratlys, China has just begun "combat ready" patrols in the area. Beijing's insistence that China rightfully possesses the islands and almost the entire South China Sea is based on claims dating back to at least the 15th century. In the *Atlantic* (June 2012), U.S. military analyst Robert Kaplan reports that a Vietnamese official answered such claims by stating that when China occupied Vietnam six centuries ago, it didn't occupy the Paracels and Spratlys. "If these island groups belonged to China," the official asked, "why didn't the Ming emperors include them in their maps?"

The grotesque, retrograde nationalism by both Stalinist regimes can only undermine the defense of the social gains of the revolutions that overthrew capitalist rule. Indeed, when the Vietnamese government spurred weekly anti-China protests last summer in Hanoi, anti-Communist Vietnamese émigrés in Seattle, Paris and other cities joined the campaign by staging their own demonstrations. Hanoi put a stop to the protests in August, fearing that they were preventing attempts to negotiate with Beijing.

Vietnamese nationalist antipathy toward China, a central feature of popular consciousness based on centuries of oppression at the hands of dynastic Chinese rulers, has been massively reinforced by the

continued on page 11



Manila, Philippines: Anti-China rally called by social-democratic AKBAYAN party outside Chinese consulate, May 11.

workers and peasants councils, China and Vietnam would cooperate in developing the area's natural resources and in mutual defense against imperialism.

Defense of China against imperialism must include opposing U.S. military aid to Taiwan, which is ruled by the bourgeois class that fled the 1949 Revolution. On May 18, Congress approved the sale of 66 F-16 fighters to Taiwan. Just hours later, the Defense Department released its annual report to Congress on China, which noted that "the PLA continued to build the capabilities" to deter Taiwan from declaring independence, to deny effective U.S. intervention in a crisis in the Taiwan Strait and to defeat Taiwanese forces in the event of military conflict. Ever since 1950, when at the outbreak of the Korean War the U.S. sent the Seventh Fleet to the waters separating Taiwan from the Chinese mainland, Washington has seen the island as its "unsinkable aircraft carrier," i.e., a dagger aimed at the Chinese mainland.

Japanese imperialism also has committed its forces to backing up capitalist Taiwan in a military conflict with China. After the U.S. and Japan issued a February 2005 statement declaring Taiwan to

targeting the two workers states. The SL/U.S. and the Spartacist Group Japan call to smash the counterrevolutionary U.S.-Japan alliance through workers revolution on both sides of the Pacific.

Anti-China Frenzy in Philippines

The hottest recent dispute in the South China Sea began in April when the Philippines sent a (U.S.-supplied) frigate to board Chinese fishing vessels, on which "illegally harvested" corals were said to be found. China then dispatched two Maritime Surveillance craft to the area. Previously planned U.S.-Philippine military exercises, including some 4,500 U.S. Marines, took place in late April—at the very height of the standoff—near the Palawan islands, which are located close to Scarborough Shoal. Both China and the Philippines began to pull back their ships and boats with the onset of the typhoon season.

The Benigno Aquino government in Manila has tried to stir up a nationalist anti-China crusade over the Scarborough Shoal—called Panatag in the Philippines and Huangyan in China—and play the incident to bargain for more aid from its Washington patron. The Philippines has

Trotskyist Group of Greece Statement:

The following is a translation of a leaflet that has been distributed by our comrades of the TGG.

The Greek section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) calls on workers, minorities and all opponents of capitalist austerity to vote for the candidates of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) on June 17. The central issue for the working class in Greece today is rejection of the devastating attacks dictated by the troika [the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund] and imposed by the Greek bourgeoisie. A massive vote to the KKE—which opposes the EU—would deliver a slap in the face to the imperialists and their Greek lackeys and could give a boost to the defensive battles of workers across Europe.

The KKE rightly stands against Syriza's perspective of keeping "Greece in the EU and NATO and the capitalist relations of production untouched" (KKE Web site, "Between Two Tough Battles," 23 May). Despite intense pressure for unity, the KKE has rejected Syriza's appeal to form a "left" (bourgeois) government. Syriza stands in favor of the imperialist EU and the euro, while claiming it can "renegotiate" the austerity package. As proletarian internationalists, we oppose the imperialist EU on principle (as well as the single currency) as part of our perspective for the Socialist United States of Europe.

Vote KKE! No Vote to Syriza!

A socialist society cannot be achieved within the borders of Greece alone.

The KKE correctly notes that the central force within Syriza, the "Coalition of the Left" (SYN), voted for the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, is a supporter of the EU and "joined the anti-communist campaign against the USSR" ("Between Two Tough Battles," 23 May). Today, the pseudo-Trotskyist groups who also hailed counterrevolution in the Soviet Union—including the Socialist Workers Party (SEK) and Xekinima—place themselves to the right of the KKE, whom they denounce for rejecting Syriza's call to join them in government. We say: Down with the EU! No vote to Syriza!

Our call for a vote to the KKE in this election is an application of the tactic of critical support outlined by Lenin in *"Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder* in 1920. While supporting KKE candidates, we have fundamental differences of program. Our program is proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist. In contrast, the KKE panders to Greek nationalism, the chief obstacle to building a revolution-

ary party in Greece. Their perspective of "people power" liquidates the proletariat—the only class with the power to overthrow capitalism—into "the people" and obscures the *class* line, the central division in capitalist society. The KKE's populism—expressed as "the people" against "the monopolies"—is counterposed to the class independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie.

The violent racist attacks on immigrants by rampaging mobs of Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) fascists pose the urgent need to mobilize contingents of workers to defend immigrants and to sweep the fascist vermin off the streets. The KKE has the social weight in the trade unions to do this, but its nationalist populism is a barrier to it. Rather than mobilizing workers and immigrants against Golden Dawn, which represents a threat to the whole of the organized working class, the KKE appeals for votes from among the same backward layers of the population who voted for the fascist scum, demanding: "The working people who voted for Golden Dawn must correct their vote" (KKE

Press Office statement, 2 June).

The KKE admits that: "During the 1950's and 1980's, the KKE formed 'left' alliances" and claims that it "has drawn valuable conclusions from its experience regarding the policy of alliances and it does not intend to repeat similar mistakes" ("Between Two Tough Battles," 23 May). These were not mistakes but betrayals that flow from their Stalinist program. Despite the KKE's refusal to participate in a coalition government at the present time, they have not broken politically with the program that led them to join bourgeois governments in the past.

Our international tendency actively fought, to the limit of our resources, for defense of the Soviet Union against counterrevolution. We also stood for a proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, whose politics of "socialism in one country" and of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism undermined the defense of the USSR and ultimately led to the triumph of counterrevolution in 1991-92, a defeat for the world's working masses.

With this call to vote for the KKE we are mass-distributing the article, "Banks Starve Greek Working People" [*Workers Vanguard* No. 1002, 11 May], to introduce to a wider audience our broader political views. We seek to coalesce into a political formation those forces who agree with the politics expressed there.

—5 June 2012

Greece...

(continued from page 1)

the election, by mid-afternoon they were plunging again as the cost of Spain's sovereign debt reached record levels and talk of a bailout for Spain was rife.

None of the fundamental problems confronting Greek society have been addressed and the country remains deeply polarised. On the back of a violent campaign of racist terror against immigrants and attacks on leftists, the fascists of Golden Dawn achieved an ominous seven per cent. For the past three years, Greece has witnessed massive social protest, drawing in broad layers of the society. There have been countless one- and two-

WORKERS HAMMER

day general strikes. In one important proletarian struggle, Greek steel workers at the Elliniki Halyourgia plant outside Athens have been on strike for over 200 days (see article, page 9). Such protests are likely to intensify when the government implements further attacks on the working class.

While there is widespread opposition in Greece to the austerity, polls consistently show strong support, including among the working class, for remaining in the euro and the EU. Many workers, undoubtedly including supporters of the KKE, voted for Syriza, hoping for some respite from the relentless attacks on their living standards. The bourgeoisie waged a scare campaign over the supposedly dire consequences of a Greek exit from the euro zone. In a country where hunger and terrible poverty are a living memory for many people, fears that the conditions of life could become worse are very real.

As Marxists we oppose the EU on principle as the vehicle with which the European capitalists jointly exploit the European workers and the more powerful imperialist powers subordinate the weaker capitalist countries. Any struggle against austerity and against the bloodsucking Greek bourgeoisie must, of necessity, also be a struggle against their EU imperialist masters. Noting that Greece might be bet-

ter off out of the euro zone, our German comrades wrote last year that there is "no way out for debtor countries like Greece under the set-up dictated by the German bourgeoisie." But our comrades warned, "while this might provide relief from the downward spiral, leaving the euro zone will not insulate the Greek proletariat from the world economic downturn and capitalist devastation" [WV No. 992, 9 December 2011].

Greek Trotskyists Said: Vote KKE! No Vote to Syriza!

Our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece gave critical support to the Communist Party in this election. In contrast to Syriza, the KKE campaigned for exit from the EU and NATO. Moreover, the KKE firmly refused to enter any coalition with bourgeois parties, despite enormous pressure to join a "unity of the left" coalition with Syriza. The KKE correctly denounced Syriza's support to the imperialist EU—a decisive question in the election. The KKE also correctly lambasted Syriza, along with the motley crowd of Greek fake-Trotskyist groups, for their support to capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In giving critical support to the KKE we gained a wider hearing for our Trotskyist views. Our comrades in Greece mass distributed the leaflet headlined "Vote KKE! No Vote to Syriza!" (reprinted above)—to students, striking workers, members of the KKE and other left parties. The leaflet was accompanied by a Greek translation of the article: "Banks Starve Greek Working People" [WV No. 1002, 11 May] which counterposes the revolutionary Trotskyist programme of the ICL to the reformism of the Greek Stalinists. Their recent left rhetoric notwithstanding, the KKE remains a parliamentarist and reformist party. Their frequent evocation of "the people" is injurious to class consciousness and testifies to the KKE's deeply nationalist and class-collaborationist programme.

The KKE's reformism is clearly seen in its response to the growth of the fascists of Golden Dawn. The TGG leaflet denounced the Stalinists' refusal to mobilise the working class to combat

Golden Dawn. In cities across Greece, racist gangs assault immigrants and leftists with impunity, encouraged by the widespread support the fascists enjoy among the police and army officers. On 7 June, a Golden Dawn thug, Ilias Kasidiaris, assaulted female KKE deputy Liana Kanelli on live television, after throwing a glass of water over another woman—Syriza's Rena Dourou. Other KKE members have been assaulted in the street by fascist thugs. Yet, in a press interview following the attack on Kanelli, KKE general secretary Aleka Papariga ruled out any mobilisations to stop Golden Dawn's attacks. Rather she vied with them for votes from backward workers, saying:

"We make things very clear: the answer to 'Golden Dawn' cannot be either 'an eye for an eye,' or a policy of revenge. The response should be given above all, by the people in the elections. Of course we do not blame those who voted for the 'Golden Dawn' for the activities and the orientation of this party. Nevertheless they should realise that they have the weapon of the vote and should marginalise 'Golden Dawn' because that is what they deserve."

—kke.gr, 7 June

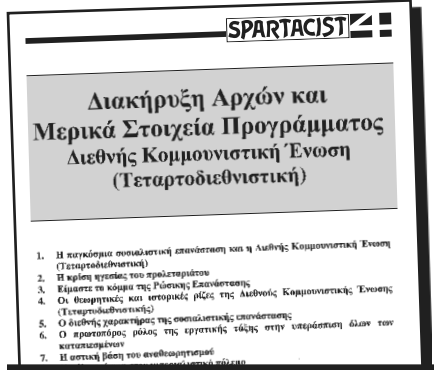
The idea that voting is the solution to attacks by fascists is parliamentary cre-

tinism. Fascists cannot be "defeated" at the ballot box. Golden Dawn are not primarily an electoral phenomenon, but racist terrorists. The Golden Dawn thugs are heirs of the fascist gangs that carried out the white terror against KKE members in the 1940s—the Nazi-loving Security Battalions and the "X" group of General Grivas. Golden Dawn leader Michaloliakos is a protégé of George Papadopoulos, who headed the military junta that seized power in 1967.

To justify its criminal passivity in the face of Golden Dawn, the KKE misleads the working class, denying the need to crush the fascist bands in the egg. Golden Dawn poses a deadly threat to immigrants and ultimately to the whole of the workers movement. There is an urgent need to stop them by united-front mobilisations of the organised workers movement and immigrants. The fascists seek nothing less than the physical destruction of the unions and workers parties. These race terrorists must be crushed while they are weak. Otherwise they will grow bigger and bolder in this period of reaction. More broadly, fascism will ultimately be swept away with the overthrow of capitalism,

continued on page 8

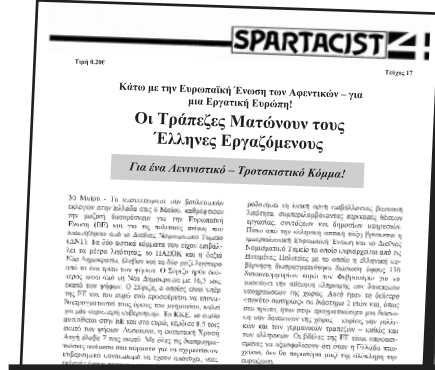
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Greece...

(continued from page 7)

the system that breeds the horrendous crises on which the fascists thrive.

The KKE’s nationalist populism is clear from its programme, which proclaims: “KKE, a profoundly patriotic party, is the genuine and worthy inheritor of the national, democratic and revolutionary traditions of the Greek people” and calls for a “national defence policy which safeguards Greece’s security” (kke.gr). Support for patriotism and national defence is incompatible with the claim that the KKE “fights against every manifestation of fascism, nationalism, chauvinism and racism” and is counterposed to the Marxist slogan “workers of the world unite” that is printed on the masthead of its newspaper. The KKE’s nationalism is also antithetical to the struggle for a Socialist United States of Europe—the only programme that expresses the interests of the working classes across Europe, both in the imperialist countries such as Germany, France and Britain and in dependent countries like Ireland and Greece.

KKE’s Record of Betrayal

Despite the KKE’s current refusal to join a coalition government, it remains wedded to the programme of class collaboration—which has led in the past to alliances with and participation in governments of the bourgeoisie. The KKE’s history is littered with betrayals of the interests of the working class. In 1936, as the Greek proletariat was in deep revolutionary ferment, the KKE sought to induce the supposedly “progressive” wing of the Greek bourgeoisie—the Venizelist Liberals—to join it in a popular-front coalition against the right. Predictably, the anti-Communist Liberals made a bloc with the right against the KKE. The failure of the KKE to fight for workers power, instead pursuing an alliance with the Liberals, paved the way for the brutal dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas.

Towards the end of World War II, the Communist-led partisans of ELAS, who had fought heroically against the Nazi occupiers and their Greek quislings, had liberated the country and had power in their grasp. But the opportunity for the workers to seize power and settle accounts with the collaborationist Greek bourgeoisie was surrendered by the KKE leadership. In 1944, the KKE joined the “national unity” government of George Papandreu (senior). It then ordered ELAS fighters to surrender their weapons, thus allowing the bourgeoisie, supported by the British, to re-establish its rule in Greece. In this betrayal, the KKE leadership acted in accordance with Stalin, who had agreed with Churchill that Greece would be part of Britain’s sphere of influence in the post-war settlement. Salvaging capitalist rule in Greece is the bitter fruit of the Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country,” which means renouncing world revolution.

The KKE’s “reward” for its help in rescuing bourgeois rule in Greece was to



KKE banners on the Acropolis, February 11.

be ruthlessly persecuted in a campaign of white terror. When civil war ensued, the workers and peasants led by the KKE were defeated by the combined forces of Greek reaction in league with British and later U.S. imperialism. In the aftermath of the 1946-49 civil war the KKE was prohibited, but in the 1950s its cadres were active in the United Democratic Left (EDA), participating in elections as part of the popular-frontist Liberal Democratic Union with the Liberals and with Papandreu. In 1989 the KKE, then part of the Synaspismos coalition together with the old “Eurocommunist” wing of the party, formed a government with New Democracy, a betrayal that led to a split by a large section of its youth.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party in Greece!

In the weeks before the 17 June election, many people in Greece expressed astonishment that Trotskyists were giving critical electoral support to a Stalinist party. That this should be such a surprise is an indictment of the anti-Communist, social-democratic “family” of fake Trotskyists in Greece who besmirched the name of Trotskyism and hailed counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. We in the ICL, in contrast, fought to the end—in East Germany and later in the Soviet Union itself—for the programme of authentic Trotskyism. A central component of that programme is military defence of the degenerated and deformed workers states against imperialism and internal counter-revolution, and the struggle for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies, whose conciliation of imperialism undermined the defence of the workers states and ultimately led to counterrevolution.

The panoply of fake-Trotskyist and other reformist organisations in Greece salivated over the prospect of a victory for Syriza and the formation of a capitalist government “of the left.” Nestled inside

the pro-EU Syriza coalition are groups such as *Marxistiki Foni* (Marxist Voice), associated with the International Marxist Tendency, and the International Workers Left (DEA), Greek cothinkers of the U.S. International Socialist Organization. The latter’s Antonis Davanellos gushed in an interview with [American] *Socialist Worker* (“A New Stage of the Resistance in Greece,” 23 May):

“We have an incredible situation. This is not revolutionary, not pre-revolutionary, but we are confronting the fact that in a month’s time, SYRIZA will be the leading party in the country. So we will be called on at that point to form a government that can transform things for the people of Greece.”

The Committee for a Workers’ International’s Xekinima organisation campaigned for “a government of the left” and sent its Irish member of the European Parliament, Paul Murphy, to Athens to campaign for votes to Syriza.

Meanwhile the Antarsya coalition, which includes the Greek Socialist Workers Party (SEK—affiliated with the British SWP) and the OKDE-Spartakos group, affiliated with the self-styled Fourth International, ran candidates in the election in its own name. That Antarsya’s purpose was simply to pressure Syriza to the left from the outside was made clear in numerous declarations, including the following from Alex Callinicos in the 2 June [British] *Socialist Worker*:

“Antarsya has made it clear that it sees itself working alongside and in dialogue with those who support Syriza. The stronger its voice is, the greater the pressure will be on Syriza to stand firm in the face of the forces trying to impose austerity as Greece’s permanent condition.”

Notwithstanding Antarsya’s nominal opposition to the EU, in the wake of the elections these reformist leftists see the narrow defeat of Syriza as a call to redouble their efforts in building a resistance movement against the new government centred on the Syriza opposition in parliament. Indeed, Syriza is being touted as a model for workers and the oppressed across Europe in their struggles against capitalist austerity.

Whether they seek to pressure Syriza from the inside or outside, these reformists stand exposed for their support to a formation that is for maintaining the capitalist EU—or in other words, for the continued subordination of dependent countries like Greece to the imperialists. The historic dependency of backward Greek capitalism on the imperialists and the savage attacks the Greek capitalists will continue to carry out against the working class and oppressed cannot be ended through the reformist pressure politics espoused by the SEK, DEA, Xekinima, OKDE-Spartakos and *Marxistiki Foni*. The only way forward is the struggle for power by the working class in its own name. This requires a Leninist-Trotskyist party based on a programme for socialist revolution that expropriates the capitalist class and sweeps away the capitalist state, replacing it with a work-

ers government. The international nature of the capitalist crisis drives home that such working-class struggle must extend internationally, including to the imperialist centres.

Flowing from their open or backhanded support to Syriza, the reformist left has also been united in condemning the KKE for refusing to join Syriza in forming a capitalist government of the left following the May elections. There is more than a hint of anti-Communism in their shrill denunciations of the Stalinist KKE for sectarianism, which is hardly surprising given that these are the same organisations that cheered the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. We might point out that at least the KKE hates capitalism: the SWP [British Socialist Workers Party] and its Egyptian cothinkers gave critical support to the Muslim Brotherhood, which loves capitalism!

These so-called Trotskyists swim with petty-bourgeois political currents, sowing illusions in the possibility of a more humane and democratic capitalism. Both DEA and Xekinima present their support to the pro-EU Syriza as some kind of working-class internationalism, while denouncing the KKE for nationalism because it correctly opposes Syriza’s support to the capitalist EU. Thus the CWI [Committee for a Workers’ International] writes in “Euro Crisis Deepens” (socialistworld.net, 21 May):

“The KKE, on the other hand, opposes the euro and the EU and attacks Syriza for its attitude toward the EU and the euro. Politically, this is one of the justifications they use for not joining a left front with Syriza.... Opposition to the EU and the euro on a nationalist basis means they are trapped in a capitalist framework. What is necessary is an internationalist socialist approach that links together the struggle of the Greek workers with the working class in other EU countries.”

It is simply ludicrous for Xekinima and DEA to argue that they are for linking the struggles of the Greek workers with those of workers of other EU countries when they support a coalition that is, at most, for renegotiating the terms of subordination of countries like Greece to the dictates of the imperialists. Pro-EU groups such as the CWI must accept their share of responsibility for the grotesque nationalism that is inflamed by the EU itself. The relationship of dependence within the EU has heightened great power chauvinism in the dominant powers, such as Germany, and led to a corresponding rise of nationalism in indebted countries such as Greece. The result is a dramatic growth of fascist and xenophobic forces throughout Europe.

In contrast to these organisations with their anti-Communist hostility to the KKE and the workers it leads, our comrades of the TGG sought to gain a hearing for our programme among a key section of the working class through the tactic of critical support for the KKE. As we explained in “Banks Starve Greek Working People”:

“The KKE has the allegiance of the most militant sections of the Greek working class. Its trade union organisation, PAME, purports to offer a ‘class-oriented’ opposition to the sell-out bureaucrats in GSEE and ADEDY, whom it correctly denounces for class collaboration with the bosses and their government. However the KKE cannot offer a way forward for the working class beyond the cycle of one-day general strikes, which amount to a militant form of lobbying parliament. The KKE does not have a programme for the working-class seizure of power. It is wedded to nationalism which is the main obstacle to building a revolutionary workers party in Greece. A strategic task in building a revolutionary party is to win the working-class base of the KKE to the internationalist programme of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks.”

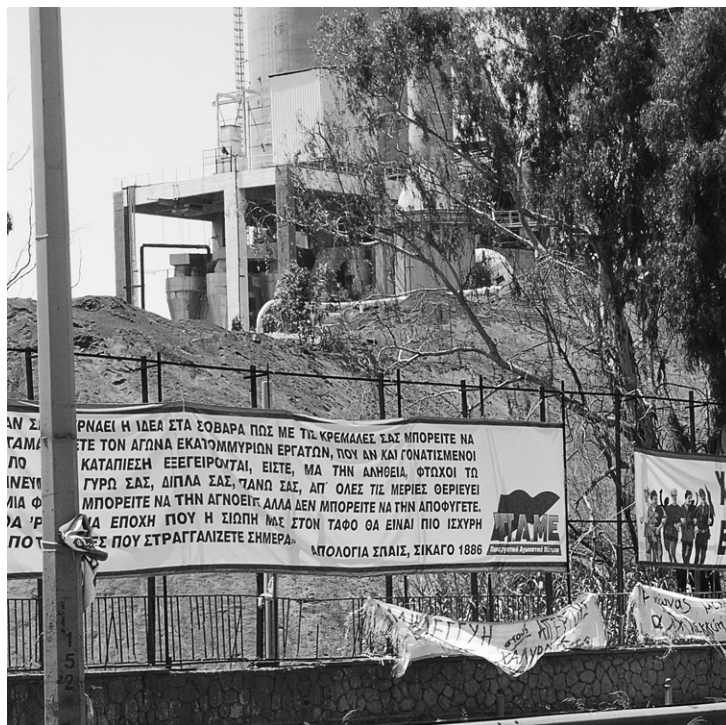
Through the TGG’s campaign for critical support to the KKE, more than a few workers and youth took note of the fact that the TGG does not share the petty-bourgeois, anti-Communist prejudices of other organisations claiming to be Trotskyist in Greece. This is a small but important first step in the struggle to bring the programme of authentic Bolshevism to the most politically advanced layers of the working class. ■



Golden Dawn fascists celebrate after elections, Thessaloniki, June 17.

On Strike for Over 200 Days

For International Solidarity with Greek Steel Workers!



Workers Hammer



Eurokinissi

Left: All Workers Militant Front (PAME) union federation banners in front of the struck Elliniki Halyvourgia steel plant. Above: Strikers protest at Labor Ministry, Athens, February 2.

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 219 (Summer 2012).

Workers at the Greek steel plant Elliniki Halyvourgia have been on strike for nearly eight months. Since October last year, they have been fighting against an attack by their employer, Nikos Manesis, who is attempting a drastic cut in wages. He has also fired over 100 workers under new anti-union laws introduced as part of the conditions of the EU/IMF [European Union/International Monetary Fund] loans. The steel workers are part of the small but strategic Greek proletariat. According to *Guardian* journalist Jon Henley, this steel factory made iron rods and girders that helped build the Athens Metro, the Olympic stadium and the bridge linking the Peloponnese to mainland Greece (guardian.co.uk, 14 June). It is in the vital interests of all workers in Europe to stand in internationalist solidarity with these courageous workers in their class battle. A victory for the steel workers would be a blow to the Greek capitalists and the imperialist EU and IMF.

The strike was declared illegal by the courts on 5 June, but the strikers remain solid. A team of comrades visited the pickets on 9 June. We reprint below an edited version of their report.

* * *

Yesterday afternoon we visited the picket line at the Halyvourgia Steel Factory in Aspropyrgos, a seaside town outside Athens. The strike there has been the subject of a great deal of press coverage and is something of an epicentre for class struggle in Greece and around Europe. Comrades had made an earlier trip to the picket lines and the most recent issue of *Le Bolchéviek*, newspaper of our French section, has a statement of solidarity with the strike. The surrounding town is, in a word, desolate. The small town centre was empty.

The workers were picketing outside the factory gates. There are PAME slogans, signs, and banners along the highway, on the gates, and across nearby overpasses. PAME is a formation within the trade-union movement that is in political solidarity with the Greek Communist Party, the KKE. A sign in German from the metalworkers union proclaims solidarity with the strike, saying “Your fight is our fight.” Ominously, there is also one instance of fascist Golden Dawn graffiti near the plant. There are security agents patrolling the property. Ten or so work-

ers were stationed inside the main gates, blocking the entrance to the factory. They were reading *Rizospastis*, the KKE’s daily newspaper. All of the workers were men, and their ages ranged from 30s-60s. We were told that during the week, there are many more workers on the picket line, including women.

We introduced ourselves as Trotskyists from the ICL who were visiting to show our support for the strike. The workers were very friendly. Union officials at the plant allowed us to distribute our article “Banks Starve Greek Working People” [WV No. 1002, 11 May]. We also left copies of our statement calling for critical support to the KKE in the election. We showed them *Workers Vanguard* (published by the Spartacist League/U.S.) with a recent article on the Hamilton, Ontario, steel lock-out (WV No. 976, 18 March). One union official we spoke to is a 30-year veteran of the plant who is responsible for distributing the weekly strike pay. A striker read the title of our article—“Greek Trotskyists Say: Vote KKE! No Vote to Syriza!” (reprinted on page 7)—in a sarcastic tone. Another worker asked us to read the letter in *Le Bolchéviek*. The workers nodded their agreement during the sections on international solidarity, but stopped paying attention once we got to a quote from Trotsky.

Background to the Strike

There are some 380 workers at the steel plant who have been on strike for 224 days as of today. The trade union called the strike and PAME stepped in. The plant is owned by the Greek capitalist Nikos Manesis, who owns a similar plant in Volos. The strike began last autumn after Manesis demanded five-hour workdays and a 40 per cent cut in wages. He claimed that the factory was in financial trouble, and that this would be a stop-gap measure. According to the strikers, the union counter-offered to maintain an eight-hour day and take a temporary 40 per cent pay cut, to be repaid when the plant became profitable again. But Manesis rejected this and announced that he would fire the legal maximum of 5 per cent of the workforce every month if the union didn’t accept. The workers went on strike, and Manesis has fired over 100 workers so far. In mid-January, when the union met with the Greek labour minister, Manesis fired five workers when the meeting was announced, another five when they entered the ministry building,

and another five when the meeting was postponed. Another striker told us that one of their main demands is for all the fired workers to be rehired. Meanwhile, workers in the Volos plant were forced to accept the company’s offer, causing tension between the two groups of workers.

We were also told that earlier this year, a number of workers at Aspropyrgos signed a statement, prepared by the company’s lawyers, stating that they wanted to return to work. This was used as the basis for a law suit against the union. However the union was able to convince the majority of the workers to take back their statements. These workers said they didn’t know their statement would be used in court, and signed a counter-statement declaring they supported the strike. The strikers told us they receive weekly financial support from their union, plus food and clothing for their kids from supporters. Six workers don’t take the money because they don’t want to ask, and there are a number of others who have been cut off for refusing to take back their anti-strike statements. A number of workers are chosen each month to monitor the steel furnace to keep it from exploding. These workers are paid, but are not considered scabs by the workers and are supported by the union. PAME and the KKE provide food and other material help to the strikers and their families. Last Christmas, a PAME official delivered one lamb to the family of every striking worker.

The State Is Not Neutral

There have been several attacks on the strike by scabs, but so far the union has

repulsed all of them. The union official told us that a number of scabs went to the police chief for protection, but he told them that if he protected them he would also have to protect the striking workers if they asked. Of course, the state is far from neutral in this protracted and popular struggle. The union and three individual workers are facing a law suit, for not carrying out the strike vote in accordance with the law. A few days ago the courts declared the strike illegal and this led to another attack by scabs. For defending their picket line, some workers have been charged with assault and are awaiting trial.

But the strikers remain defiant and the militancy of this strike has really galvanised popular opinion in a time of horrific austerity. The union official told us a number of stories about solidarity, both from within Greece and around the world. He showed us pictures drawn by schoolchildren who supported the strike. A mainstream Italian news network has filmed at the plant and there have been a number of solidarity visits. A wealthy Greek woman has periodically delivered carloads of groceries and donated 600 euro [\$746].

We highlighted the need to oppose nationalism and defend the rights of minorities, including national minorities, in Greece. We inquired about reports that Golden Dawn had visited the pickets and were told that several Golden Dawn supporters showed up anonymously with boxes of food and supplies; one of them took the microphone and quickly announced that Golden Dawn supported the strike. Not surprisingly, some workers were upset by this and complained about it to the union officials.

The workers understand that this strike is very important in Greece and internationally. They recognise that they have become a model for other struggles, and they do not want to cave in, despite the extreme hardship of such a long strike. A worker told us that there is no way he can go back to work without victory, after over 200 days on the picket line. He said, “If I go back to work now, how will I be able to look at my children?” Despite this commitment, conditions are very difficult. Now that the state has declared the strike illegal there will be more pressure and more attacks by scabs and the police. It is vital to approach unions internationally now for letters of solidarity. As we left the plant, I told the union official that the ICL sends its greetings and wishes the workers victory in their struggle. Tears came to his eyes and he embraced me.

Contact Information

- The address for solidarity letters is: 17th Km NEOAK Elleniki Halyvourgia Aspropyrgos 19300, Greece Fax number: 011-30-210-557-8360 Telephone: 011-30-210-557-0829
- Donations in support of the steel strikers should be sent to: National Bank of Greece IBAN: GR 40 0110 2000 0000 2006 2330 152 BIC/Swift Code: ETHNGRAA Account holder: Dimitris Liakos

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Egypt...

(continued from page 12)

to left-nationalist leader Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser and his program of nationalizations, which his regime combined with brutal repression. While this vote expressed a desire on the part of many working people to reject both the military and the Islamists, it equally illustrated the political subordination of the proletariat to its capitalist class enemy. The deep reservoir of nationalist consciousness—seen in last year’s protests in the ubiquitous presence of the Egyptian flag and the refrain that the military was “at one with the people”—has long served Egypt’s rulers by obscuring the class divide between the tiny layer of filthy rich capitalists at the top and the brutally exploited workers and peasants at the bottom.

Egypt is the most populous Arab country. It has one of the largest, most combative and potentially most powerful working classes in the region. Despite the military’s hold on power, Egypt remains a deeply unstable society. After weeks of endless campaigning and pressure to vote, more than half the electorate did not bother to participate in the SCAF’s electoral charade. The material conditions of life for the overwhelming majority of the population have actually worsened as food prices and unemployment rise sharply. The hated police, including the Central Security Forces, remain untouched and will soon be redeployed onto the streets to enforce “law and order.” Both the military and the Brotherhood have made clear their intent to restore “stability,” including by clamping down on strikes.

The situation cries out for building an internationalist workers party. As we wrote after Mubarak’s fall (“Egypt: Military Takeover Props Up Capitalist Rule,” WV No. 974, 18 February 2011):

“Elementary democratic rights such as legal equality for women and the complete separation of religion and state; agrarian revolution to give land to the peasants; ending joblessness and grind-



Squatter camp along Cairo-Alexandria train route, May 2012. Some 40 percent of Egypt’s population survives on \$2 a day or less.

ing poverty: the basic aspirations of the masses cannot be met without the overthrow of the bonapartist capitalist order. The indispensable instrument for the working class to take the lead is a proletarian revolutionary party, which can be built only through relentless struggle against all bourgeois forces, from the military to the Brotherhood and the liberals who falsely claim to support the struggles of the masses. Such a party must act, in the words of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, as a ‘tribune of the people,’ fighting against the oppression of women, peasants, Coptic Christians, homosexuals and ethnic minorities.”

Bowing Before the Brotherhood

Those groups claiming the mantle of socialism in Egypt stand as an obstacle to the struggle for working-class power, by dissolving the distinct class interests of the proletariat into the need for the unity of “the people” in order to “continue the revolution.” Chief among those groups is the Revolutionary Socialists, a tendency associated with the late Tony Cliff and with ties to both the American International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the Brit-

ish Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Particularly since last year’s uprising, the RS has emerged as the most influential “far left” group in Egypt, with its statements and articles translated and read by leftist organizations around the world.

The RS caused some anguish among its own members when it formally endorsed the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Morsi in the second round of the presidential elections. The basis for this capitulation to the deadly enemies of women, workers and religious minorities was laid at the RS’s founding in the 1990s, when it opposed other leftists’ hostility to political Islam. The RS claims that the Brotherhood, because of its mass base, has “contradictions” that socialists can exploit (see “Pandering to Reactionary Muslim Brotherhood,” WV No. 974, 18 February 2011). On May 28, the RS issued a statement calling for “a national front that stands against the candidate of the counterrevolution,” Shafiq.

This was followed by a June 4 statement titled, “To Comrades,” which acknowl-

edges that the May 28 declaration “provoked a negative response among a number of RS members.” Nonetheless, the RS continued to defend supporting the Brotherhood on the basis of defeating the “counterrevolution.” Yet on June 4 the RS issued a different statement (reprinted in the 8 June issue of its paper, *The Socialist*) calling to boycott the elections if the “Political Exclusion Law”—passed by parliament earlier this year barring senior officials of the Mubarak regime from running for office—was not implemented. Since the main candidate associated with Mubarak was Shafiq, this line was just a backhanded form of support to the Brotherhood. (The law was not implemented.)

In its statement “To Comrades,” the RS described the Brotherhood as “an organization filled with class contradictions concealed behind vague religious slogans.” No! This is a religiously based bourgeois organization. And nothing about its religious program is “vague.” The stifling stench of Brotherhood influence has long pervaded Egypt. There is no law compelling women to wear the headscarf, yet the overwhelming majority do so out of social pressure imposed by the Muslim Brotherhood and the more hardline Salafists. Egypt’s Coptic Christians are justly terrified about the Brotherhood victory. And women face an even darker period ahead. To get a taste of what the Islamists have in store, one can look at two bills put forward in the now-dissolved parliament. One, introduced by a Salafist, sought to re-legalize the horrendous practice of female genital mutilation, which is rampant regardless. Another sought to lower the age of marriage for girls to 14.

The RS tried to justify its egregious endorsement of the Brotherhood by the line that the “*feloul*”—i.e., “remnants” of the Mubarak regime—must be defeated at all costs. But while the RS today blusters on about the dangers of the military rulers, when the army was deployed on the streets of Cairo shortly before Mubarak’s resignation the RS joined in the nationalist celebration. Amid prevalent illusions in the

SEP...

(continued from page 3)

region, particularly from longshore with its heavily black membership, helped build the mobilization. They recognized that stopping the fascists was not just a defense of black people and minorities but also of the entire labor movement against its most deadly enemies. Not the Northites, who condemned the mobilization as “A Revisionist Frenzy Over Klan” that elevated “race” over “class.”

The Civil Rights Movement

It is absolutely true that the ISO’s calls for a “new civil rights movement” are aimed at refurbishing the credentials of Jesse Jackson and other black Democrats, whose purpose is to re-elect Obama. But

the SEP itself peddles its own version of Obama’s “end of racism” myth. For the SEP, to raise the question of racism over the killing of Trayvon Martin is to “subordinate political thinking to an unchanging template of racial politics,” adding “as though nothing had been accomplished by the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s” (“Behind the Right-Wing Racial Politics of Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton,” wsws.org, 1 May). This position invests the civil rights movement with essentially eliminating discrimination against black people, a convenient alibi for the SEP’s retrograde views. Although it defeated Jim Crow segregation in the South, when the civil rights movement came North it ran up against the mass unemployment, poverty and rampant police brutality in the black inner cities that are part of the very fabric of American capitalism.

The leadership of the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King—who looked to the Democratic Party and capitalist state for redress—would not and could not wage the necessary struggle against these conditions. Today the SEP tries to present MLK as some kind of anti-capitalist fighter, crediting him with the understanding that “the oppression of blacks was fundamentally a question of class.” Despite its admonition that King was “not a revolutionary socialist” (no kidding), the SEP’s whitewash of him is the same myth peddled by the ISO. It simply comes from a different vantage point, one based on the revolting argument that “attempts to present racism as the ‘core’ of American society are false and reactionary.”

The lengths to which the SEP will go to present its own “false and reactionary” view of American history can be seen in Jerry White’s February 13 election platform. The words “black people” and “racism” are never mentioned. Instead, White rhapsodizes that: “This country was founded on the principle that ‘All men are created equal.’” That was the stated principle but what was embedded in the United States Constitution was slavery. It took a bloody Civil War to smash the Southern slavocracy, but you wouldn’t know it from reading White’s platform, which reduces the Civil War to the pledge that “government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” The abolition of slavery merits no mention.

Political Bandits

In 1970 we recalled Lenin’s term “political bandits” to describe the SEP’s forebears, the Workers League and Gerry Healy’s International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) to which it was affiliated. Such an organization will fly any flag as long as it is perceived as advancing its own episodic, and often grotesque, opportunist appetites. When called for, they had the ability to wield

Marxist orthodoxy, which was but a mask for violations of any and all known Marxist principles.

For years, Healy’s ICFI was the bought-and-paid-for PR agency for various Near East despotic regimes. When these crimes against the working class were exposed, his loyal lieutenants, including David North, cried that it was all Healy’s doing. But none of them raised a peep when the money was still pouring in. Indeed, the *Bulletin* joined in publishing an article hailing the murder of 21 Iraqi Communist Party members in 1979. Healy’s ICFI provided many such services and was handsomely rewarded by the rulers of countries including Iraq, Kuwait, Libya and Abu Dhabi. After Healy was ousted, North proclaimed himself the new leader of the ICFI.

After years of pandering to the AFL-CIO tops, North used the occasion of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the former Soviet Union to declare that the unions are “direct instruments of imperialism” and must be destroyed. Doubtless, he was buoyed in this pronouncement by the role his organization had played in supporting the imperialist-backed forces of counterrevolution that destroyed the former Soviet workers state. At the same time, years of crawling before bourgeois-nationalist regimes in the Near East were reversed with North proclaiming that any and all struggles for national self-determination must be vigorously opposed.

So should you run across an Internet tome taking up the world economic crisis on the SEP’s wsws.org that sounds vaguely like “orthodox” Marxism: beware! Devoid of any class basis or connection to reality, North and his gang can and will say or do anything. Today, they are slyly giving aid and comfort to the racist enemies of those outraged by the killing of Trayvon Martin. We can only speculate about whose or what interests are served by the Northites. One thing is for certain, it is not the interests of the multiracial working class here or internationally. ■

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chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles.....Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York.....Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland.....Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 1-5 p.m., 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

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military, they complained in a 1 February 2011 statement, “This army is no longer the people’s army.” The army of the capitalist regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak was *never* “the people’s army.” The RS even promoted illusions in the police, rejoicing in a 13 February 2011 statement that “the wave of social revolution is widening every day as new sections join the protests, such as policemen, *mukhabarin* [intelligence agents] and police officers”!

As Marxists, we reject the RS’s reformist framework, which posits that the only two “choices” are to capitulate to either the “secular,” military-backed forces, such as Shafiq, or to Islamists like the Brotherhood. In fact, these are alternative ways of propping up capitalist rule. In contrast to the RS’s endorsement of the Brotherhood, our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece gave critical support to the Communist Party (KKE) in the recent Greek elections (see front-page article). To put it simply, the KKE, a working-class party, despite its Stalinist class collaborationism drew a crude class line against the imperialist European Union in these elections and claims to hate capitalism. The reactionary Brotherhood, as even the Cliffites admit, loves capitalism!

The Incoherence of Incoherence

What RS members actually did on election day one can only divine. However, the RS’s cothinkers in the British SWP fully supported its call for voting for Morsi. Anne Alexander wrote in a 16 June *Socialist Worker* article, “Voting for Mursi and against Shafiq is an important step in building a revolutionary movement beyond the elections.” For a view of how supporting Islamist forces might pan out, one might look at Tunisia, the birthplace of the “Arab Spring” and historically the most secular society in North Africa. Under the “moderate” Islamist Ennahda government, the Salafists have been burning down offices of the UGTT trade-union federation and carrying out a reign of terror against women on the campuses. In Egypt, the Salafists already have been on a rampage, burning down casinos, bars, liquor stores and suspected brothels and exerting intense pressure on women to don the head-to-toe *niqab* (veil).

The American Cliffites of the ISO found the RS line calling for a vote to Morsi “surprising,” adding that its May 28 statement “raises many troubling questions.” But their differences are purely tactical. In “Egypt’s Election Dead End,” the ISO’s Alan Maass complains that the Brotherhood “vacillated during the 2011 rebellion” and “has again and again proved unwilling



Albaz/Egypt Independent

Dakahliya, Egypt: Delta Bus workers on strike for higher wages outside company headquarters, March 4.

to defend the revolution” (socialistworker.org, 31 May). While Maass adds that the Brotherhood is an “enthusiastic supporter of free market policies” and “is conservative, on the whole, on many social issues,” the ISO’s class-collaborationist “alternative” was to tail the bourgeois Nasserist politician Sabahi.

The ever so mild criticisms by Maass drew howls from the RS’s Mostafa Ali and others, as seen in posts on the ISO’s Web site. In a June 3 post, Ali chastised Maass for “one-sidedly” using “the Brotherhood’s commitment to capitalism as a barometer for making decisions on whether to vote for them or not.” Ali assured readers that since the first round of the elections, “we can now count on millions to pressure the Muslim Brotherhood at every step of the way.” The next day, ISOer Bill Crane declared in responding to Maass: “The leaders of the Brotherhood, despite their reactionary policies, have a direct interest in preserving gains of the revolution such as political democracy and an end to state repression.”

This line echoes that of opportunist left organizations in Iran and internationally to push support for Ayatollah Khomeini’s rise to power in the 1978-79 “Islamic revolution,” which ended the bloody reign of the U.S.-backed Shah. Pointing to the social power of the Iranian proletariat, we raised the call: Down with the Shah! No to the Mullahs! Workers to power! For their part, the ISO and SWP were among the biggest cheerleaders for the Islamic reactionaries, with the ISO headlining one article: “The Form—Religious, The Spirit—Revolution” (*Socialist Worker*, January 1979). When the Islamists came to power, they carried out murderous repression against

women, homosexuals, religious, ethnic and national minorities, as well as slaughtering the leftists who had promoted them as an “anti-imperialist” force.

The RS’s support to the Egyptian Brotherhood can be similarly suicidal. Late last year, Islamists launched a vicious campaign against the RS, which was seized on by state security forces and propagated in much of the bourgeois media. The Muslim Brotherhood’s newspaper ran a front-page article baiting the RS as violent, while the Salafist Al-Nour Party accused the organization of “anarchy” and of being funded by the CIA—an open call for imprisonment and worse. Yet the RS continues its peculiar fascination with the Islamists, and not just the Brotherhood. In a blog post about his group’s recent participation in Salafist-organized protests, RS leader Hossam el-Hamalawy glowingly described how the RS is “reaching out to and earning the respect of the most revolutionary wing of the Salafist movement.”

A June 5 “open letter” to the RS by the reformist International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods worries that endorsing the Brotherhood will “damage the reputation and influence of the Revolutionary Socialists among the workers and broader masses.” Like the ISO, the IMT promoted the Nasserist candidate Sabahi, who, according to a 1 June article by Woods, “shows the enormous potential for the future victory of the Left in Egypt.” Support to such bourgeois forces is second nature to the IMT, which includes sections that have for years been part of capitalist parties like the Pakistan People’s Party.

Support to Arab nationalism has led to the bloody defeat of the workers move-

ment throughout the Near East, not least in Egypt, where Nasser came to power with the support of the Stalinists only to later brutally suppress them. In Egypt and throughout the Near East, it was the utter bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism and the Stalinist policy of subordination to such forces that led to the growth of political Islam, which feeds off the misery and poverty of the masses.

In its material justifying the vote to Morsi, the RS essentially presents the Brotherhood as an organization in constant conflict with Egypt’s rulers. Under Nasser, Anwar Sadat and Mubarak, the Islamists were at times repressed, tolerated and even fostered. In the early 1970s, Sadat unleashed the Brotherhood, with knives in hand, to crush the Communists on the campuses. Mubarak, for his part, found it useful to tolerate the Brotherhood in order to present his regime as the only thing standing in the way of Islamic rule.

At bottom, there are two alternatives for Egypt’s toiling masses: either impoverishment and intense social oppression, under one form or another of bourgeois rule, or working-class rule and the extension of socialist revolution throughout North Africa and the Near East and to the imperialist centers. As Leon Trotsky explained in developing his theory of permanent revolution, in countries of belated capitalist development, the bourgeoisie is too weak, backward and dependent on imperialism to achieve the modernization and all-round development of those societies. As we wrote in “Egypt: Military and Islamists Target Women, Copts, Workers” (WV No. 994, 20 January):

“The liberation of the Egyptian masses requires the overthrow not simply of the military but of the capitalists, landlords, Islamic clergy and imperialists who profit from the grinding oppression of the populace. The power to do this lies in the hands of the working class, whose consciousness must be transformed from that of a class in itself, fighting to improve its status within the framework of capitalism, to a class for itself, realizing its historic potential to lead all the oppressed in a revolutionary struggle against the capitalist system.”

The capitalist economic crisis that has ravaged the lives and livelihoods of working people from North Africa to Europe, North America and Japan only further underscores the necessity for a perspective that is at once revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist. To realize this perspective, the crucially necessary factor is proletarian leadership. The task is to build revolutionary workers parties based on political independence from all bourgeois forces and committed to the fight for a world socialist order. ■

China...

(continued from page 6)

CCP Stalinists’ repeated backstabbing of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, a product of the anti-Soviet alliance struck by Mao with the U.S. In the late 1950s and ’60s, antagonism between the Moscow and Beijing Stalinist regimes—marked, for example, by the Kremlin’s refusal to back China in its 1959 border war with India—developed into a full-blown split. Mao was soon proclaiming “Soviet social imperialism” to be an even greater danger than U.S. imperialism, neatly dovetailing with the American rulers’ strategic goal of destroying the Soviet degenerated workers state. The Sino-Soviet border became one of the most heavily militarized in the world.

While much of the New Left was enthusing over Mao’s calamitous “Cultural Revolution,” the Spartacist League preciently warned that the CCP bureaucracy’s anti-Soviet line meant that “the danger of an imperialist alliance with China against the Russians cannot be dismissed” (“Chinese Menshevism,” *Spartacist* No. 15-16, April-May 1970). The article concluded:

“Trotskyism...is now the only tendency which stands for communist unity against imperialism. The cliques running the Soviet Union and China, each committed to the basic Stalinist policy of ‘Socialism in One Country’ (one’s

own country), must be thrown out by political revolution, and their counter-revolutionary policies replaced by a firm commitment to revolutionary proletarian internationalism.”

The alliance was sealed with Richard Nixon’s 1972 visit to China, where he met with Mao as U.S. bombs were raining down on the heroic Vietnamese. In 1979, just four years after the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution, China invaded Vietnam, suffering a stinging defeat at the hands of its battle-tested fighters. China’s scurrilous attack, in which it acted as a cat’s paw for the defeated U.S. imperialists, came in the wake of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping’s visit to the U.S., part of his pursuit of foreign capitalist investment in China. His regime went on to give material support to the reactionary *mujahedin* cutthroats fighting against Soviet Army forces in Afghanistan, one of the many ways that the CCP from Mao’s time on contributed to the downfall of the Soviet workers state. Stalinist treachery has now come full-circle with Vietnam’s rapprochement with U.S. imperialism, today as before the main enemy of the working people of the planet.

Reforge the Fourth International!

The ICL, which fought to the end in defense of the Soviet Union against capitalist counterrevolution, uniquely upholds the Trotskyist program in defending the remaining deformed workers states as part of our fight for new October Revo-

lutions. As Trotsky made clear in “The USSR in War” (September 1939), for the Fourth International, which was founded a year earlier, the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is “subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR,” and preserving that state property “is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.”

The destruction of the Soviet Union threw back proletarian consciousness, although unevenly, around the world, resulting in a historically low level of identification with communism as the program for the liberation of humanity from want, oppression and war. Yet the very workings of the capitalist system sow the seeds of class and social struggle, glimpses of which are seen today in workers struggles in Greece and elsewhere against the austerity dictates of the bankers and their governments.

What must be done is the forging of proletarian vanguard parties as sections of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. As the ICL’s U.S. section, the Spartacist League’s task is to build a revolutionary workers party in the belly of the imperialist beast. When the workers seize the industrial wealth that is now being squeezed out of the working class for the profits of the bosses, we will begin to build a planned socialist economy on a world scale. Then some historical crimes can be made right

and some debts finally paid—like tens of billions of dollars to the Vietnamese and others whose countries have been maimed by American tanks and bombs—and the military machinery used by the imperialists to defend their profits through blood and terror will be destroyed once and for all. ■

斯巴达克派

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11

Egypt



Left: Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi with Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, head of ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Cairo, June 30. Right: Morsi's supporters pray in Tahrir Square while awaiting election results, June 22.

Military Rulers Give Presidency to Muslim Brotherhood

In the early weeks of 2011, the world watched extraordinary scenes of millions of Egyptians, from virtually all social classes, protesting throughout the country, braving police assaults and bullets. Mobilized under the slogan, “The people demand the fall of the regime,” they succeeded in driving out the hated dictator, Hosni Mubarak, but the result was the military taking power in its own name. As the last year and a half progressed, the euphoria over the “Egyptian Revolution” increasingly gave way to the cold reality of bloody military rule, greater economic hardship and the ascendance of Islamist reactionaries: the Muslim Brotherhood and the even more right-wing Salafists.

In mid June, Egyptians were faced with an election that posed a “choice” between presidential candidates embodying the two most powerful and best-organized forces in the country: Ahmed Shafiq, a former Air Force commander and Mubarak’s last prime minister, who stood as the military’s representative, and Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. While many liberals and supposed leftists complained that this election was a blow to the “democracy” established by the “Egyptian Revolution,” the outcome flowed from the politics of national unity against Mubarak that drove the protests, in which the working class never emerged as a factor in its own right but was subordinated to bourgeois political forces.

On June 24, Morsi was declared the winner. Facing threats of corruption charges, Shafiq and most of his family

“Revolutionary Socialists” in Bed with Islamic Reaction



left the country. Essentially, the military allowed the Brotherhood to take the presidency as a front for the continuing rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). Anticipating a Brotherhood victory, the SCAF moved on the eve of the elections to further tighten its bloody grip on society. It dissolved the Islamist-dominated and essentially

powerless parliament elected six months ago, following a court ruling pointing to electoral “irregularities.” Military police were granted the power to arrest civilians, including striking workers. While a subsequent court ruling overturned that and other measures, the reality is that the military was trying to formalize what already exists: more than 10,000 civilians have

faced military tribunals since February 2011.

Bourgeois pundits and “socialist” leftists in Egypt and abroad freely throw around the term “revolution” to describe last year’s uprising, with groups like the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists (RS) calling to defeat the “counterrevolution” by embracing the reactionary Brotherhood. Throughout the streets of Cairo, billboards and banners put up by various political forces, including the military, sing the praises of the “January 25 Revolution.” Graffiti hails the “martyrs of the revolution,” the nearly 1,000 people killed during the uprising and the many more slaughtered by the military since.

But the truth must be told: *this was no revolution.* Thousands upon thousands courageously took to the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and smaller cities, driven by grinding poverty and the intense desire to throw off dictatorial rule and the many-sided oppression endemic to Egyptian capitalism. But all they were offered by the political forces leading the upheaval was another form of capitalist class dictatorship. While workers have engaged in strikes and factory sit-ins over the last decade, reaching a climax in 2011, the working class has not entered the political fray under its own banner, fighting for its own class interests.

In the first round of the presidential elections, much of the working-class vote went to Hamdeen Sabahi, who finished third with nearly 21 percent of the vote. Sabahi garnered much support by harkening back

continued on page 10