

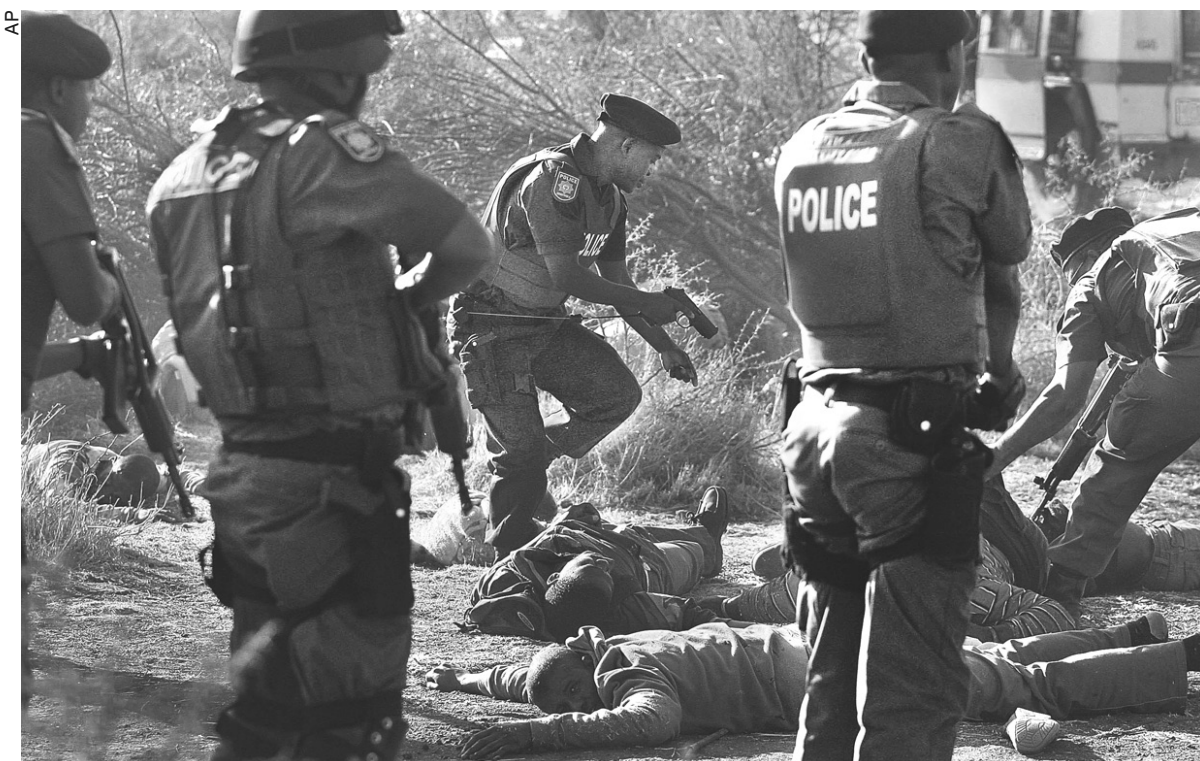
## South Africa: Massacre of Striking Miners

# Blood on the Hands of ANC/SACP/COSATU Government

The following leaflet was issued by our comrades of Spartacist/South Africa on August 23.

August 16, 2012, will go down in history for one of the bloodiest crimes *ever* committed against the workers movement in South Africa. About 100 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg, at the Marikana mine of the London-based company Lonmin—the world’s third-largest producer of platinum—the cops of the capitalist Tripartite Alliance government carried out a gruesome massacre of striking black mineworkers, killing at least 34 and injuring 78 others, many of whom remain in critical condition in hospital. The blood-drenched scenes aired on TV recall the most infamous apartheid-era slaughters: March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville; June 16, 1976, in Soweto. They provide a bloody, stomach-churning picture of the brutality inherent in this neo-apartheid capitalist system, where workers are gunned down like wild animals by police automatic rifles for the “crimes” of fighting against starvation and trying to defend themselves. Make no mistake: the blood of these massacred workers is on the hands of the *leaders* of the ANC/SACP/COSATU [African National Congress/South African Communist Party/Congress of South African Trade Unions]

**August 16:  
Aftermath of  
police killing of  
at least  
34 strikers  
outside  
Lonmin Platinum  
Mine near  
Rustenburg.**



Tripartite Alliance and their government, who have demonstrated yet again their reliability to the Randlord rulers and their imperialist senior partners.

As communists, who stand for working-

class emancipation from wage slavery and sweeping away this system to make way for a truly just society free of all exploitation and oppression, Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Com-

munist League, grieves along with the families of the victims, their comrades who survived the massacre and many others saddened by this tragic loss. The

*continued on page 10*

## Democrats, Republicans: Class Enemies of Workers, Oppressed

# Voter ID Laws: Racist Attack on Voting Rights

On August 15, Commonwealth Court judge Robert Simpson upheld Pennsylvania’s recently enacted strict voter ID law that mandates state- or federally-issued photo identification to cast a ballot. His opinion congratulated those challenging the law for “an excellent job of ‘putting a face’ to those burdened by the voter ID requirement.” But with the color of the “face” going unmentioned, he maintained that such requirements were

“reasonable” and “non-discriminatory.” Several weeks earlier, state Republican House leader Mike Turzai, while boasting of the accomplishments of the legislature, had let the cat out of the bag, proclaiming that voter ID “is gonna allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania.”

Under the guise of preventing voter fraud, what is unfolding is a naked assault by the Republican Party on

the right to vote, particularly of black people, in the upcoming presidential elections. (In 2008, 95 percent of the black vote went to Obama.) The racist impact of the voter ID laws introduced in 34 states in 2011 and in 14 additional states this year is evident. For example, the strict Indiana requirements, found constitutional by the Supreme Court in 2008, were projected to disenfranchise 19 percent of potential black and Latino

voters, as compared to 12 percent of whites. Others will be disenfranchised, too: one-third of women do not have easy access to documentation with their current legal name, and the homeless are likely to have substantial difficulty meeting the tightened residency requirements. A study by the Brennan Center for Justice estimates that these laws could deny suffrage to more than

*continued on page 7*



## A Marxist Critique of the “New Atheists”

See Page 8

# On Racist Attacks Against African Migrants in Israel

16 June 2012

Dear Workers Vanguard,

I wish to draw the attention of Workers Vanguard and the Partisan Defense Committee to the pogrom against African immigrants, principally from Eritrea and the Sudans, in Israel by racist Zionist mobs and endorsed at the highest levels of the Israeli government by Knesset Members. Ministers and Knesset Members have called these African immigrants “infiltrators” (a term historically first used to describe Palestinians who sought to re-enter Israel after being expelled in 1948) “rapists,” “carriers of AIDS,” and “cancer.”

One does not need to be a revolutionary Marxist to be appalled by this disgusting filth but one does need to be in order to understand that this is not simply the problem of a racist person, party, or even state. It is a symptom of decaying capitalism and the putrescence it conjures up in its death agony: racism, homophobia, fascism—in order to further divide and exploit the working-class and the oppressed and draw attention away from the utterly irrational and outmoded system of capitalism and imperialist domination. If Zionist Israel is more open, more frenzied in their racist ranting and wallowing in chauvinist filth, it is because the Israeli ruling-class knows that they stand on even less firm ground than those



Tel Aviv: African immigrants participate in human rights march, 9 December 2011. Sign in Hebrew reads: “We asked for shelter—we got jail.”

of their counterparts elsewhere. As WV wrote decades earlier [in “From the ‘Arab Revolution’ to Pax Americana” (WV No. 317, 12 November 1982)]:

“However, Israel is not a long-established nation-state and the existence of a Hebrew-speaking nation in the Near East has been and remains historically insecure. Despite their presently overwhelming regional military superiority, many Israeli Jews fear that some day they will be obliterated by the multitude of hostile and vengeful Arabs who surround

them. Israel is ruled by men who believe that history is *not* on their side. It is this which gives the Zionist state much of its paranoid destructive frenzy.... No chauvinism is more intense, no bigotry more blinding, than that of an oppressor people whose privileges and very existence are precarious.”

Zionism is caught between the contradiction of wanting a pure Jewish state with 100% Hebrew labor on the one hand, and on the other seeks to bind the Hebrew-speaking workers to the state by using super-exploited and vulnerable immigrant labor to handle the most dangerous and demeaning tasks, giving the illusion that Hebrew-speaking workers stand to benefit by living in a racist “Jewish state.” It is only by being broken from this deadly illusion can the Hebrew-speaking workers in Israel truly end their exploitation: by overthrowing the capitalist state which exploits and oppressed them and this can only be done by championing the causes of all those targeted by the Zionists and religious fundamentalists: immigrants, Palestinians, women, and homosexuals!

The Hebrew-speaking working-class must be won to the defense of immigrant and Palestinian rights! The immigrant population in Israel—African, Chinese, Thai, Romanian, and Filipinos—is burdened with the worst jobs and lowest pay, and subject to deportation if they even become pregnant! The children of immigrants in Israel have no legal protection and only international outcry has prevented their wholesale deportation. Yet they carry with them the traditions of labor struggles in their countries, which the official “Labor” Zionist parties and the Histadrut [labor federation] have tried to erase from the consciousness of the Hebrew-speaking working-class.

As revolutionary Trotskyists we must say: Israeli workers must defend African immigrants, Arab minorities! For workers defense guards to protect immigrant dwellings! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Stop the deportations! Down with Zionist chauvinism!

Comradely,  
Jonah

#### WV replies:

As longtime subscriber Jonah points out, black African immigrants in Israel are being subjected to a wave of race terror, including almost daily beatings and stabbings, which go largely unreported because the victims are afraid to go to the

#### CORRECTION

In “South Africa: Platinum Miners Fight Mass Firings” (WV No. 997, 2 March), the caption of a photo read: “Striking workers outside Implats mine.” This incorrectly implied that the photo was of miners during the strike then in progress; in fact, it was from an earlier strike at the mine, in June 2004.

police. On May 23, around 1,000 bigots demonstrated in Tel Aviv against African migrants, attacking a car filled with dark-skinned people and looting shops serving African migrants. That explosion of racist violence came days after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu railed that “infiltrators” were threatening “our national identity.” The interior minister howled: “This country belongs to us, to the white man.” There have also been a series of firebombings of the homes of African migrants.

To even cross into Israel, African migrants face a bloody trek across Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, where they are routinely shot down by Egyptian forces and subjected to extortion, kidnappings, beatings, rape and murder by Egyptian traffickers. Between 2007 and 2009, Egyptian border police killed at least 50 migrants. Such killings have continued since the 2011 uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak. Now Israel is sending troops across the border to intercept African migrants and hand them over to Egyptian authorities.

In his letter, Jonah raises the call for “full citizenship rights for all immigrants” in Israel. Indeed, migrants in Israel should have every right they can get their hands on. However, the question of citizenship rights for immigrants in Israel is bound up with the suppression of the national rights of the Palestinian people, a defining axis on which the Zionist state turns.

What does it mean to be a “citizen” of Israel? While the “Jewish state” proclaims itself the only “democracy” in the Near East, it accords far greater citizenship rights within the law to Israeli Jews than to Israeli Arabs, who additionally suffer rampant discrimination in housing, jobs, social services and virtually all aspects of life. At the same time, Sephardic Jews (i.e., those originally from Arab countries) and even more so Ethiopian Jews face deep-seated bigotry and chauvinism within the Zionist state. As for the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories, they are routinely denied entry into Israel, to say nothing of residency or citizenship rights, even if married to an Israeli citizen (who in most such cases is Arab). In contrast, a Jewish person from, say, Brooklyn can immigrate to Israel, where he will be accorded “full citizenship rights,” including the “right” to live on land in the West Bank or East Jerusalem that was confiscated from the Palestinians.

The very fact that in Israel there are over  
*continued on page 5*

## On Cuba and AIDS

5/26/12

Dear WV,

From a 5/8/12 New York Times article the low rate of AIDS in Cuba vs. the US:

“The population of Cuba is only slightly larger than that of New York City. In the three decades of the global AIDS epidemic, 78,763 New Yorkers have died of AIDS. Only 2,364 Cubans have. “Other elements have contributed to Cuba’s success: It has free universal basic health care; it has stunningly high rates of H.I.V. testing; it saturates its population with free condoms, concentrating on high-risk groups like prostitutes; it gives its teenagers graphic safe-sex education; it rigorously traces the sexual contacts of each person who tests positive. “By contrast, the response in the United States—which records 50,000 new infections every year—seems feeble. Millions of poor people never see a doctor. Testing is voluntary, and many patients do not return for their results. Sex education is so politicized that many schools teach nothing about protected sex; condoms are expensive, and distribution of free ones is haphazard.”

My question to you is: do you guys have a mole working as a reporter for the Times?? What a great argument for socialism!

Fraternally,  
Jack L.

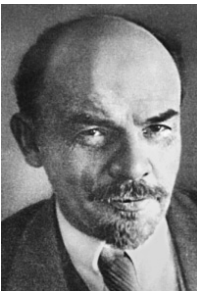
#### How Marxists Combat Religion

*Writing in 1909, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin presented the Marxist understanding that religious beliefs and backwardness can only be overcome by eliminating the material conditions that foster them.*

We must combat religion—that is the ABC of *all* materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do



TROTSKY



LENIN

so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*. The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching, and it must not be reduced to such preaching. It must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion. Why does religion retain its hold on the backward sections of the town proletariat, on broad sections of the semi-proletariat, and on the mass of the peasantry? Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressist, the radical or the bourgeois materialist. And so: “Down with religion and long live atheism; the dissemination of atheist views is our chief task!” The Marxist says that this is not true, that it is a superficial view, the view of narrow bourgeois uplifters. It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough; it explains them, not in a materialist but in an idealist way. In modern capitalist countries these roots are mainly *social*. The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour inflicts upon ordinary working people the most horrible suffering and the most savage torment, a thousand times more severe than those inflicted by extraordinary events, such as wars, earthquakes, etc.... No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labour, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this *root* of religion, fight *the rule of capital* in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.

—V.I. Lenin, “The Attitude of the Workers’ Party to Religion,” May 1909

## WORKERS VANGUARD



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No. 1007

31 August 2012

# Young Spartacus

## Defend the UC Davis “Banker’s Dozen”!

We reprint below an August 14 leaflet issued by the Bay Area Spartacus Youth Club.

In November of last year, the world watched as University of California Davis (UCD) cops attacked a group of seated Occupy student protesters with pepper spray, treating them with the disdain of an exterminator spraying cockroaches. On March 29, eleven students and one professor, most of them victims of the November police assault, were slammed with charges that could send them to prison for nearly eleven years and result in \$1 million in fines.

Last January, the UCD Occupy protesters had begun a sit-in at the campus branch of U.S. Bank against the “university’s privatization” and “its collusion with corporate profiteers.” After nearly two months of sit-ins and other actions by dozens of protesters, U.S. Bank closed its branch on February 28. It dropped its \$3 million deal with this public university after complaining that UCD did not dispatch campus police, or allow the bank to use its guards, to remove the protesters. Weeks after the bank closed shop the district attorney—who reportedly coluded with the same UCD cops who were involved in the November pepper-spray attack—charged the “Banker’s Dozen” with 20 counts each of “obstructing movement in a public place” and one count of “conspiracy.” **Drop all the charges immediately! Cops off campus!**

The outrage of the students is entirely justified. Once almost free, annual tuition and fees for California residents at the University of California have more than tripled over the past ten years to over \$13,000. Job prospects are dismal to say the least—according to a Rutgers University study, over 40 percent of 2010 college graduates couldn’t find employment by spring of 2011. The Spartacus Youth Clubs demand: Open admissions, no tuition and a state-paid living stipend for all! Nationalize the private universities! Abolish the student debt! Capitalist institutions like U.S. Bank are undoubtedly benefiting from the nationwide budget cuts and tuition hikes, which force students to shackle themselves to mountains of debt that will weigh them down



Occupy UC Davis sit-in outside U.S. Bank’s campus branch during January-February protests.

Jasna Hodzic/California Aggie

for decades after they graduate.

But it is the capitalist system as a whole, not individual banks, that is responsible for these attacks. The capitalists do not see education as a right; they see education in terms of investment vs. returns. Universities are training grounds for the administrative, technical and cultural personnel needed by the capitalist system. In general, the ruling class will spend only as much money on education as it thinks is necessary to maintain its profits. In the midst of the worst recession in decades, spending money to educate the sons and daughters of the working class and poor seems like a waste of money to these bloodsucking parasites whose tremendous wealth is based on the exploitation of the working class.

An April 23 “Statement by Some Banker’s Dozen Supporters” argues that the charges against the protesters are “an abuse of the legal system and a waste of our county’s already limited resources.” But this is exactly what the legal system is for: to protect the property rights and interests of the capitalists and their banks. The bourgeois state—which consists at its

core of the police, courts, prisons and military—is an instrument of capitalist rule, not a neutral arbiter standing above society.

The fundamental role of the administration is to serve as the representative of the capitalist class within the universities. It is not a matter of the “over influence” of money in politics or in education; the banks don’t have to bribe UCD Chancellor Katehi to serve them any more than a fish has to be bribed to swim. The administration and the state work together to quell protest against the depredations of this brutal and decaying system. That is why Katehi gave the green light to violently clear out the protesters in November and that is why she embraces the persecution of the Banker’s Dozen, making the chilling statement on April 27 that “the students involved in this case will learn from this experience.” Abolish the administration! For worker/student/teacher control of the campuses!

Many students, however, have illusions that the universities—and indeed capitalism itself—can be reformed into putting “people before profits.” These illusions can be as blinding as pepper spray and

just as dangerous. While the bosses have in times of class struggle been forced to offer cheap or even free higher education, these gains are always reversible as long as the capitalist system remains intact. In diametrical opposition to Occupy’s program of liberal, bourgeois populism, the SYCs seek to win young activists to the understanding that this system cannot be reformed. It must be smashed and replaced by a workers state.

The UCD protesters have shown courage and determination in the face of draconian state repression. But like all students, they have no direct relationship to the means of production and therefore no real social power. By contrast the working class—those whose labor produces and transports all of the goods and services in society—can bring the capitalist system to a grinding halt. The capitalists can send their cops to repress and terrorize the workers and students, but it is the workers whose labor keeps the factories running and the profits flowing. If students are to win their battles against the rulers’ assaults on public education, they must look to the proletariat. This struggle could find support among the workers, who are being ruthlessly squeezed in the vise of austerity.

As the youth auxiliary of the Spartacist League, the SYCs fight to win youth to the program of international workers revolution, which will replace the capitalist system based on production for profit with a centrally planned, collectivized economy. In such a system the resources of society will be rationally directed to provide for the needs of humanity, including universal employment and free, quality, racially integrated education for all. To do this, the efforts of workers and their student allies require the leadership of a revolutionary proletarian party, which is what we Marxists seek to build.

**Defend the Banker’s Dozen! Drop all the charges!** The next court hearing is currently scheduled for August 24 at the Yolo County Courthouse, 725 Court Street, Woodland, CA. To contribute to their legal fund, visit: [davisdozen.org](http://davisdozen.org). Send protest letters to: District Attorney Jeff W. Reisig, 301 Second St., Woodland, CA 95695, fax (530) 666-8423. ■

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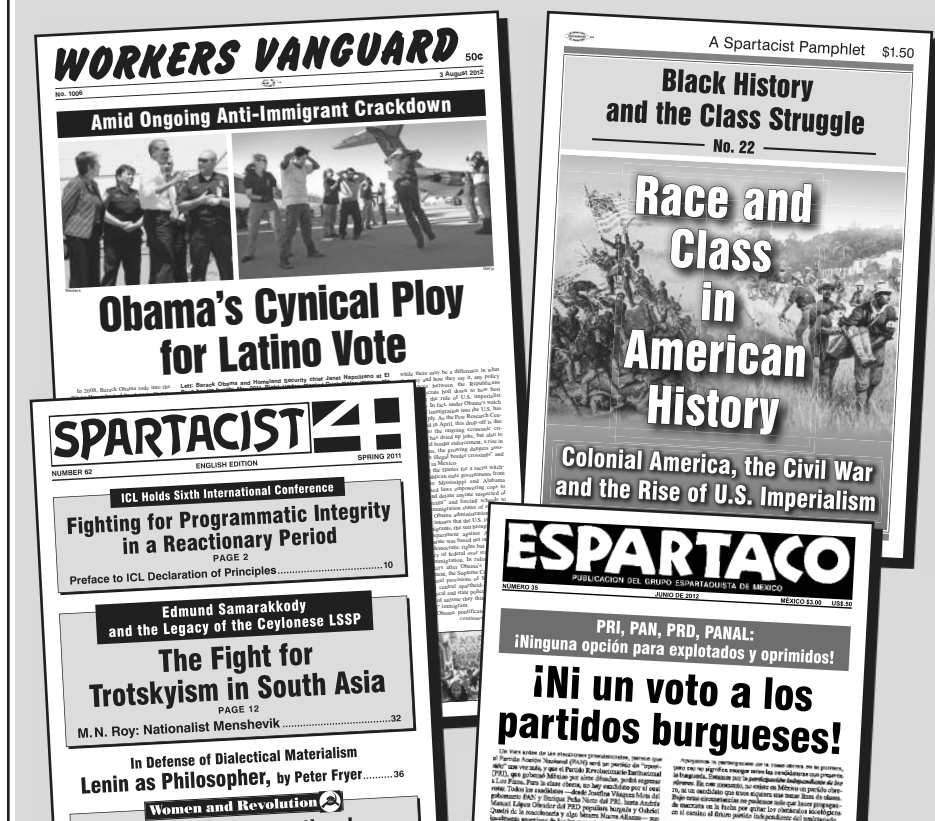
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## Quebec...

(continued from page 12)

solution is certainly not to be found in the electoral circus, nor can militancy alone provide a way forward. As we wrote three months ago, the student strike “has illustrated in a fundamental way the limitations of a struggle that has not been connected to the social power of the working class” [“Student Strike Shakes Quebec,” WV No. 1003, 25 May]. What is needed is a viewpoint broader than the immediate struggle in Quebec: a class-struggle, internationalist perspective that seeks to mobilize that social power.

The attacks on students in Quebec are part of a global capitalist assault on workers and the oppressed. From Greece to Spain, the U.S., Canada and beyond, the onslaught has been especially brutal since the latest capitalist economic crisis erupted in 2008. The fight for free education is an integral part of an international class struggle against the exploiters. And if there is one lesson to be drawn from the struggles to date it is that looking to “progressive” capitalist parties or the bosses’ social-democratic agents is a road to disaster. In the U.S., Obama continued the attacks (and the wars) of his predecessor George W. Bush; in France, the Socialist Party will continue the job-slashing and austerity seen under Sarkozy.

A defeat of the student strike would embolden the Québécois capitalists to push through their assault on social programs, the labor movement, youth and minorities. Both the Liberals and François Legault’s Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) openly call to “re-engineer” Quebec society to make the workers “more productive.” While its rhetoric is more duplicitous, the PQ would do more or less the same thing, as it did with its “deficit zero” attacks in the 1990s. Pushing reactionary “identity” politics, the PQ is also already making clear that it will fan the flames of the “reasonable accommodation” scapegoating of immigrants and ethnic/religious minorities, particularly Muslims. Whether under the Liberals, CAQ or PQ (or the latter’s QS and Option Nationale tails), youth and workers will lose.

### Québec Solidaire: A Pro-Capitalist Dead End

Primary responsibility for the current state of affairs lies with the trade-union bureaucracy and its decades-long alliance with the bourgeois-nationalist PQ. But also guilty is the reformist left—the Parti

Communiste du Québec, Gauche Socialiste, Socialisme International, La Riposte, Alternative Socialiste, etc. These groups have all helped to create, build and sow illusions in Québec Solidaire, a petty-bourgeois populist party whose purpose is and has always been to channel the anger of youth and workers back into the safe channels of bourgeois parliamentarism and Québécois nationalism.

The groups who support QS will tell you that having QS deputies in the National Assembly is a way to ensure gains for students and workers. This is an absolute falsehood! First off, as some of

thing other than an instrument of class domination by the exploiters. As Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin explained: “The working people are *barred* from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they *never decide* important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles” (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, 1918). The economic domination of capital can only be ended by a workers revolution and the subsequent reorganization of society in the interests of the vast majority.



Spartacist Canada

**Toronto: Trotskyist League of Canada at Quebec student strike solidarity rally, June 5.**

these groups themselves admit, QS does not even pretend to be a socialist organization; it has no organic links with labor; its whole political framework accepts the continued existence of capitalist exploitation. The QS election platform includes calls for national protectionism and other measures flatly contrary to the workers’ interests. Pledging to support a PQ government is only icing on the cake.

At the height of the student strike, QS spokesmen joined in the “violence”-baiting furor against militant students. For our part, we have called throughout to defend all protesters against the repression of the Charest government and its police. It is also noteworthy that pretty much all of the reformist “socialist” outfits who back QS in Quebec support the social-democratic NDP [New Democratic Party] federally—the same New Democrats who have shown nothing but contempt for the students’ struggle!

One cannot “reform” away capitalist oppression or render the farce of the bourgeoisie’s parliament (or the “constituent assembly” that QS calls for) any-

Unlike the FEUQ and FECQ, the CLASSE student union does not directly promote the idea that the elections will “settle” the student struggle. But CLASSE too is incapable of stepping outside the framework set by the capitalist class. Its worldview is limited to a fight against so-called “neoliberalism,” which can only mean that in its eyes a “better” version of capitalism is possible. CLASSE focuses all of its attacks on Charest and the Liberals, leaving open the option of voting for the PQ, QS or Option Nationale as a “lesser evil.”

The recent CLASSE Manifesto revolves entirely around the need for more democracy, “a direct democracy,” “a democracy *for everyone*,” “new democratic spaces,” etc., etc. “We are the people,” it affirms. But speaking of democracy without asking *for what class*—the capitalists or the workers—inevitably reinforces illusions in the present system, which is a democracy for the rich, a *dictatorship* of the bourgeoisie.

The same illusions are sowed by groups who falsely claim to be Marxist. Alternative Socialiste, an ardent partisan of QS, salutes the student movement for “putting on the agenda the contestation of the neoliberal order” (alternativesocialiste.org, 8 August). For its part, the Maoist Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire (PCR), which claims to oppose both the PQ and QS, thunders on the front page of its *Drapeau Rouge* [Red Flag] (August-September 2012): “If We Want Democracy, We Must Change the System!” Calling for “people’s power,” the PCR also dissolves the *unique* social power of the proletariat into a class-collaborationist concept of “the people.”

### The Power of the Working Class

Many students have understood that they cannot win the battle for free tuition or even a freeze without the active support of broader forces, including the labor movement. This understanding lay behind CLASSE’s proposal for a 24-hour “social strike,” which the union bureaucracy predictably rejected. For CLASSE, the social strike was seen as a way to broaden popular support and put more pressure on Charest. But the working class isn’t just another “sector” of society—it is the *only* class with the power to bring the capitalist system to its knees.

A mobilization of the working class in defense of the student struggle remains essential to beat back this (or any) capitalist government. In 2003, union mobili-

zations and a few strikes managed to stop many of Charest’s attacks on the labor movement. At a much higher level, the May 1968 uprising in France, sparked by a student struggle, saw a general strike of the working class that could have overthrown French capitalism. Only the treachery of the workers’ leaders, centrally the reformist Communist Party of France, enabled the government to re-establish bourgeois order. May ’68 showed the enormous social power of the proletariat. Four years later, the Québécois workers demonstrated their own power in the May 1972 general strike against the jailing of union leaders.

The capitalist class—a tiny minority that owns all the means of production—derives its astronomical profits from the exploitation of labor. Workers have to sell their labor power to survive. When they are “lucky” enough to have a job, they toil away in the mines, factories, etc., adding the value of their work to what they produce, but only get paid what they are deemed to be worth on the labor market. This difference—between the value added by the workers and what they actually get paid—ends up in the capitalists’ pockets in the form of what Karl Marx termed *surplus value*. In other words, the workers produce the material wealth of capitalist society, but this is expropriated by a handful of ruling parasites.

When workers go on strike, this immediately hits the bottom line of the capitalist corporations. Thus the working class has the social power to attack the profit system at its very core. This is something that students, a petty-bourgeois layer with no direct relation to the means of production, lack entirely. An exploited class that makes just enough to live on and to produce the next generation of wage-slaves, the working class has no interest in the preservation of the capitalist system, but has a direct objective interest in its overthrow.

Students in Montreal don’t have to look far to find this social power. The area employs more than 200,000 people in the manufacturing sector alone, including workers in factories from Longueuil to St-Jérôme. Montreal has one of the largest concentrations of aerospace workers in the world. Tens of thousands more toil in transport—longshoremen, airport crews, transit workers—another key part of the capitalist economy. Beyond Montreal, there are huge proletarian concentrations in and around Trois-Rivières, Saguenay, the Abitibi and elsewhere. Cascades, Bombardier, SNC-Lavalin, Quebecor—these are the backbone of Quebec Inc., and all are powered by the sweat and blood of the proletariat.

### The Role of the Union Bureaucracy

The working class, in Quebec as elsewhere, has a direct interest in the elimination of tuition fees: it is the workers and their children who are overwhelmingly denied the fruits of higher education, fundamentally because the capitalists only want them to know what is necessary to do their work. The student strike has been widely popular among the workers, as shown by the labor contingents at various demos, the cheers and honks that have greeted protesters everywhere, even the money donated by various unions.

Yet in the six months of student protests and strikes, not a single strike in support of the students has been undertaken by the unionized working class anywhere in Quebec. Why? Because the union leaders uphold the capitalist system, backing the PQ in particular; they seek to contain whatever social struggles erupt, diverting them onto the shoals of nationalism and parliamentary reformism.

The unions are the basic organizations for defense of the workers against the bosses’ constant attacks. They enable workers to have relatively better wages and benefits, and protect them somewhat against arbitrary firing and general abuse. They must be built and defended.

## Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

### BAY AREA

**Thursday, September 6, 7 p.m.**  
**Introduction to Revolutionary Marxism**  
**A Presentation by the Spartacus Youth Club**

San Francisco State University  
Meet at Malcolm X Plaza  
(in front of Cesar Chavez Student Center)  
Information and readings: (510) 839-0851  
sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

### CHICAGO

**Thursday, September 6, 5 p.m.**  
**Meet the Marxists**

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Student Center East (750 S. Halsted)  
Floor 3 North, Prairie Room  
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441  
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

Visit the ICL Web Site:  
**www.icl-fi.org**

### NEW YORK CITY

**Thursday, September 13, 7 p.m.**  
**Meet the Marxists**

CCNY, NAC Room 1/209  
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.  
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
nysl@tiac.net

### TORONTO

**Wednesday, September 12, 6:30 p.m.**

**The Communist Manifesto: A Guide to Action**

U of T, Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2119  
100 St. George Street  
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
spartacan@on.aibn.com

### VANCOUVER

**Thursday, September 20, 6:30 p.m.**

**The Marxist Worldview: Dialectical Materialism Against Idealism and Religion**

UBC, Student Union Bldg., Room 42V  
Information and readings:  
(604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

But the present union leadership is an obstacle to mobilizing labor's power.

Most North American unions were built in the last century through hard class battles including strikes and plant occupations, facing massive repression from the police, army and company thugs. Countless workers were murdered fighting to forge unions, from West Virginia to British Columbia, Detroit to Murdochville. The key activists who led this fight were leftists, mostly self-described communists. Many of these militants were purged from the unions in the anti-Communist witchhunts of the 1940s and '50s. In their stead rose an openly pro-capitalist layer of bureaucrats who still run the unions today, including in Quebec.

Under imperialism, the system of modern capitalism where the world is divided among a few big powers and the dominance of finance capital ensures the flow of profits into the coffers of U.S., German, Japanese (and Canadian) banks, the capitalist class throws a few crumbs off its table to corrupt a layer of labor misleaders and turn them into willing "partners." Seeing the world through the same lens as the capitalists, the heads of the AFL-CIO, Canadian Labour Congress [CLC], [Quebec trade-union federations] FTQ, CSN, etc. are willing to sacrifice the interests of their members in pursuit of partnership with their own national bosses. In the U.S., they largely support the capitalist Democratic Party. In English Canada, the CLC tops wave the Maple Leaf, tying workers to their exploiters, centrally through the NDP. In Quebec, the heads of the FTQ, CSN, etc. utilize Québécois nationalism and support to the PQ to undermine the workers' consciousness and sabotage struggle in the name of "national solidarity." They are all, truly, in the words of American socialist Daniel De Leon, the labor lieutenants of capital.

## For a Revolutionary Internationalist Workers Party!

To resolve the intractable contradiction between the true, material interests of the working class and the deadly grip of the conservative union misleaders, a revolutionary agency must be forged: a vanguard workers party built around a



Paris, May 1968: Banner at mass demonstration reads, "Workers, students: United we will win."

program that is revolutionary and internationalist. As Lenin argued in his book *What Is To Be Done?*, such a party would fuse the most conscious elements of the proletariat with declassed intellectuals, including students, who dedicate themselves to the fight for workers revolution.

To transform the unions from narrow craft and industry-limited bargaining agents into organs of revolutionary struggle, the vanguard elements must fight to preserve the integrity and unity of the working class. They must combat all the forms of special oppression that divide workers along national, ethnic, language and gender lines.

Most Québécois workers continue to support the PQ, despite its many attacks on the working class over the years, while the bulk of student activists also back one or another nationalist party, whether the PQ, QS or Option Nationale. The hold of nationalism flows from and is constantly reinforced by the Anglo chauvinism that dominates the Canadian state. With workers in English Canada supporting the NDP or even the Liberals—parties with a long record of hostility to Quebec's national rights—the working class of Canada is deeply divided, undermining its ability to

fight the ruling exploiters. For this reason, we Marxists advocate Quebec independence. We do so as proletarian internationalists: getting the national question off the agenda would create better conditions for the workers to understand that their "own" national capitalists are not allies but class enemies.

Nationalism necessarily promotes racism. A particular flash point in Quebec has been the Liberals' Bill 94, which foments anti-Muslim bigotry by calling to bar women who wear the *niqab* or *burqa* from getting government services or being employed in the public sector. Amir Khadir, the QS deputy in the National Assembly, supported this reactionary bill, while the PQ goes even further, demanding a complete ban on Muslim headscarfs and Sikh turbans in the public sector.

A revolutionary workers party would oppose all forms of discrimination against such minorities, in particular the racist state sanctions against Muslim women. At the same time, it would combat the religious backwardness that consigns so many women to the hideous oppression symbolized by the veil. Such a party would champion women's right to abortion, equal pay for equal work and free 24-hour day care. It would also fight to mobilize the working class in defense of the black and Latino youth who are in the gunsights of the police in places like Montréal-Nord.

It is vital to oppose the divisions along linguistic lines promoted both by Anglo-chauvinist bigots and by Quebec nationalists who call to toughen the French-language Charter (Law 101). For example, the PQ seeks to compel everyone but anglophones to attend French Cégeps [junior colleges]. Marxists oppose all "official language" laws and any school system based on language or religion. We are for a single public, integrated and secular school system with bilingual or multilingual education wherever necessary. The working class can only be united by opposing *all* privileges for *any* nation or language.

## For a Marxist Perspective

Through their struggles, layers of student youth have learned firsthand some basic truths about capitalism. They have witnessed the repressive role of the bourgeois state, centrally including the cops

who have arrested over 2,500 students and their supporters. It is crucial that these and other lessons be assimilated and generalized by studying the historical experiences of the international workers movement and the program of revolutionary Marxism.

The best model for successful social struggle is the October 1917 workers revolution in Russia, which overthrew capitalism in the tsarist "prison house of peoples." A myriad of national and ethnic minorities were denied their rights under the tsar's brutal autocracy. Lenin's Bolshevik Party fought for the right to self-determination—i.e., to secession—for such nations, combating Great Russian chauvinism and winning support from the non-Russian minorities. The Bolsheviks denounced national exclusiveness and privileges for any nation or language, which serve only to divide the working class.

By abolishing capitalist private property, the Revolution gave the Soviet masses access to jobs, housing and free education. Despite its degeneration under the nationalist bureaucracy of Joseph Stalin starting in 1924, the Soviet Union was able to maintain a centralized planned economy and develop into a modern industrial power. Illiteracy was practically eliminated. Students from around the neocolonial world flocked to Moscow for the quality of its free education system. The Soviets were able to compete with the much more powerful U.S. imperialists in a decades-long arms race (provoked by the U.S.), and achieved such huge technological advances as the first artificial satellite and the first man into space.

All this and more showed the huge advantages of economic planning no longer directed by the drive for private profit. But these achievements were undermined by the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, and the Soviet Union was eventually destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. We Trotskyists fought for its unconditional defense against imperialism and counterrevolution, while seeking a proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy and establish workers democracy. This remains our stance toward the bureaucratically deformed workers states of China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea and Cuba. This stands in sharp contrast to the reformist left groups, including those who back Québec Solidaire as well as the Maoists and anarchists; indeed, most of them openly took the side of their own imperialists against the Soviet Union.

Only the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule can put an end to poverty and all-sided oppression and open up new vistas for humanity. This is not just a task for Quebec, but for all of Canada, the U.S. and the entire world. The way forward for Quebec student radicals is to commit their energy to forging a binational, multiethnic Marxist vanguard party, part of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. We urge you to examine the principles, program and analyses of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste—section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)—and join us in this fight, which is essential to the future of mankind. ■

## Israel...

(continued from page 2)

300,000 migrant laborers, the vast majority deemed "illegal," is intimately tied to the oppression of the Palestinians. Non-Jewish migration to Israel began in earnest after the first *Intifada* (1987-93) and the signing of the 1993 Oslo "peace" accords. Israeli policy was consciously directed at replacing the labor of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories, overwhelmingly employed in low-wage menial and unskilled work, with that of foreign (i.e., non-Palestinian) migrants, who themselves are denied any and all rights. As a result, the Israeli bourgeoisie has all but excluded these Palestinians from the country's economy. At first, migrant laborers mainly came from East Europe and Asia. Since the mid 2000s, some 60,000 Africans fleeing conditions in Sudan, Eritrea and other sub-Saharan countries have arrived in Israel, where large numbers seek asylum.

When the international financial crisis hit and Israel's economy turned sour, migrants became an easy scapegoat for the Israeli bourgeoisie. And in typical Zionist-racist fashion Africans are the first targeted. In 2009, the government set up a new immigration police force known as the Oz unit, specifically to round up and deport the migrants. Over the past year, Israel sped up construction of both a border fence with Egypt and a massive new detention center in the Negev desert. In January, Israel's Knesset (parliament) amended the 1954 Prevention of Infiltration Law to allow authorities to jail migrants for three years, and in some cases indefinitely.

That law was initially aimed at Palestinian militants seeking to re-enter Israel after the Zionist-orchestrated mass expulsions of 1947-48. It is one example of how the measures directed against African refugees were prepared by decades of repression of the Palestinian people. Deprived of work and under constant threat of Israeli missile strikes, Palestinians in Gaza are imprisoned behind an electrified fence and subject to a starvation blockade in the West Bank; they are trapped by a Kafkaesque array of checkpoints and continually robbed of their land by settlers. According to the UN, there are over five million Palestinian refugees, the survivors and descendants of those driven out of their homes by successive Israeli wars (especially in 1948 and 1967).

The right of these refugees and their descendants to return to the towns and villages from which they were expelled will never be recognized by the Zionist state. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is one of interpenetrated peoples: two peoples fighting for control of the same piece of land. The national emancipation of the Palestinians, including the right of return to their homeland, requires workers revolutions to shatter the Zionist state from within and to sweep away the capitalist ruling classes of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, which themselves lord it over sizable Palestinian populations. The fight to forge Marxist workers parties is essential to unite the proletariat of the region, from Israel to Egypt and beyond, in the struggle for a socialist federation of the Near East. The national rights of both the Palestinian Arab and the Israeli Jewish peoples can be ensured only within that context. ■

## Trotskyist League of Canada Forums

### Lessons of the Struggles in Quebec

- Students: Ally with the Working Class!
- For Revolutionary Leadership!

#### TORONTO

Saturday, September 29, 7 p.m.

OISE, Room to be announced  
252 Bloor Street West  
(at St. George subway)  
For info: (416) 593-4138  
spartcan@on.aibn.com

#### VANCOUVER

Wednesday, October 3, 6:30 p.m.

Creekside Community Centre  
1 Athletes Way  
Multipurpose Room 1  
For info: (604) 687-0353  
trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

# Spain...

(continued from page 12)

percent. A 24-year-old miner declared: “Without mining, and with the current economic situation, I have no future” (*El País*, 11 July).

Spain is now at the center of the economic storm tearing apart the euro zone. In July this year, Spain was forced to seek a bailout of up to 100 billion euros for its banking system, which has been hit by the collapse of a housing and construction bubble. At the same time, the right-wing Popular Party (PP) government of Mariano Rajoy announced sweeping budget cuts and tax increases totaling 65 billion euros to meet EU diktats.

Rajoy’s measures are a continuation and expansion of the austerity imposed by the previous administration headed by José Luis Zapatero of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE). During his seven years in office, Zapatero slashed spending on social services and the salaries of public employees. He also introduced draconian legislation to increase labor “flexibility” by generalizing temporary contracts, by making it easier for bosses to lay off workers and by raising the retirement age to 67. But the savage attacks on the jobs and living standards of Spanish workers have only exacerbated the crisis, with the country in the grip of a double-dip recession and a sovereign debt crisis. The Spanish bourgeoisie and EU leaders are terrified that the euro zone crisis, which has already resulted in bailouts for heavily indebted Greece, Portugal and Ireland, is now threatening to bring down Spain, a country whose economy is larger than that of those three countries combined.

The decimation of mining communities in Spain, like the devastation wreaked on the working class in Greece, illustrates again that workers throughout Europe have a common interest in opposing the EU as a component of the struggle against their own capitalist rulers. As proletarian revolutionary internationalists, we are opposed on principle to the EU, a mechanism by which the combined capitalist powers impose austerity on their own working classes, and the dominant powers, led by Germany, subordinate the weaker ones. Our opposition to the EU flows from the basic standpoint of opposing capitalism and imperialism. To the bosses’ EU, we counterpose the call for the expropriation of the capitalist exploiters through workers revolution and the establishment of a Socialist United States of Europe.

## Union Tops Squander Workers’ Militancy

The Asturian miners have historically played a vanguard role in the Spanish working class. Their strike galvanized support among workers around the country and internationally and could have been the springboard for generalized working-



Spanish Civil War poster with image of Asturian miner. Above: Bourgeois-nationalist Luis Companys (center), head of 1936-37 popular-front Catalan Generalitat, in 1934. Popular-frontist leftists who supported capitalist governments betrayed Spanish workers revolution.

class struggle against capitalist austerity. To bring their protest to the Spanish government, miners marched more than 250 miles to Madrid. When they arrived in the capital on July 10, they were greeted by hundreds of thousands of people chanting: “Working-class Madrid supports the miners!” At a massive demonstration the next day in Madrid, the police charged demonstrators, arresting eight people and wounding 42. Delegations of miners from Chile, Poland, Germany and Britain visited their Spanish class brothers to solidarize with their struggle. British miners, veterans of the bitter strike of 1984-85, and others launched the Spanish Miners’ Solidarity Committee, raising several thousand pounds.

There is no shortage of working-class militancy in Spain, as evidenced by numerous union-centered mass demonstrations, a one-day general strike last March, work stoppages by Iberia pilots and other strike actions across the country. But officials of the two main union federations—the PSOE-led General Workers Union (UGT) and the Workers Commissions (CC.OO.), in which the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) has influence—worked overtime to keep the miners strike isolated in the remote coal mining regions of Asturias, León and Aragón.

In early June, an effective transport strike in Asturias briefly coincided with the miners’ struggle, producing a situation that the bourgeois newspaper *El País* (8 June) described as “social revolt.” However, the UGT/CC.OO. bureaucrats, committed to the defense of the interests of their “own” capitalist rulers, moved quickly to settle separately with the transport bosses. They agreed to a wage freeze this year and a pathetic 1.1 percent increase over the next two years while leaving the miners hanging. Characteristically, right after selling out the miners, the heads of the two federations went groveling to the

royal palace in Madrid to “pass on their concern” to King Juan Carlos.

By calling off the miners strike with nothing to show for it, the trade-union bureaucrats squandered the hard class battle waged by the workers, which will further embolden the bourgeoisie to carry out new attacks on the Spanish proletariat. During the strike, police arrested dozens of miners and their supporters. We say: Drop all charges! Free all those still detained now!

When the PSOE was trounced in the November 2011 elections, the United Left coalition (Izquierda Unida—IU), which is dominated by the reformist PCE and supported by the bulk of the Spanish left, was among the beneficiaries. The thoroughly parliamentarist IU, which postures as a “left” alternative to the PSOE, is a classic popular-frontist alliance. It encompasses the Communist Party, an array of bourgeois Republicans and nationalists and petty-bourgeois Greens.

The Spanish bourgeoisie’s current attacks on the working class were facilitated by the prior betrayals of the trade-union bureaucrats and their reformist tails, most notably during the December 2010 work stoppage by air traffic controllers in the USCA union (see “Defend Air Traffic Controllers!” WV No. 971, 7 January 2011). When USCA members brought the airports to a halt by staging a mass sick-out, the PSOE government invoked martial law measures not used since the end of the Franco military dictatorship in the mid 1970s. Air traffic controllers were forced back to work by armed police and threatened with charges of sedition. This outrage should have been met by massive protests by the unions. Instead, the UGT and CC.OO. bureaucrats denounced the air traffic controllers, justifying their class treason with the claim that USCA is not a union and that its members are pampered and highly paid. The United Left’s parliamentary deputy Gaspar Llamazares denounced the controllers’ action as “an abuse of power.” Today, Llamazares pleads with the Rajoy government for “dialogue” with the miners.

## Revolutionary Struggle and Popular-Front Betrayal

Today’s reformist misleaders of the Spanish working class are the political heirs of the social-democratic and Stalinist class traitors who rallied to the defense of the bourgeois order during the Spanish Civil War, liquidating a proletarian revolution and opening the road to the bloody 40-year reign of General Francisco Franco. With the January 1930 fall of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and of the monarchy a year later, a period of revolutionary turmoil opened up in Spain.

Only proletarian revolution could begin to address the problems facing the country—such as the wretched conditions of the peasantry, the domination of the state by the Catholic church, the hideous oppression of women and the national subjugation of Catalonia and the Basque country. The bourgeois Republicans who



Tomás

took over from Primo de Rivera and Alfonso XIII launched ferocious attacks on the working class. In this, they were aided by the social democrats of the PSOE who joined the government in 1931, with “left” PSOE leader Largo Caballero serving as minister of labor.

In October 1934, enraged by the entry of a clerical-fascist party into the Republican government, workers in Asturias, led by the miners, staged an insurrectionary general strike, routing the state forces. The workers soon established themselves as masters of the region, organizing and controlling production and distribution of consumer goods. Barracks were stormed and arms were distributed to the workers. General strikes followed in Madrid, led by the PSOE/UGT under immense pressure from the working class, and in Barcelona. However, these insurrectionary strikes were betrayed, and the Asturias uprising remained isolated. The role of the anarcho-syndicalists was particularly grotesque: the refusal of the CNT labor federation to join the general strike in Catalonia was one of the main reasons for the defeat. The Asturias insurrection was eventually crushed by troops sent by the Republican government under the command of General Franco.

The 1934 uprising was a harbinger of the Civil War, which erupted in July 1936. When Franco placed himself at the head of a military coup aimed at crushing the Spanish proletariat, workers commandeered weapons from barracks, arrested military officers and seized factories. This incipient proletarian revolution was ultimately defeated, not by Franco’s troops and the small bands of fascist hoodlums, but by the treachery of the workers’ own leaders. The social democrats, Stalinists and anarchists joined with bourgeois Republicans in popular-front governments in Madrid and in the Catalan Generalitat in Barcelona. The popular front killed insurgent workers, disarmed militants and gave the factories back to the bourgeoisie and the land back to the landowners, liquidating the proletarian revolution in the name of defense of bourgeois “democracy.”

Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky, summing up the experience of the Spanish Civil War, noted:

“Two irreconcilable programs thus confronted each other on the territory of republican Spain. On the one hand, the program of saving *at any cost* private property from the proletariat, and saving *as far as possible* democracy from Franco; on the other hand, the program of abolishing private property through the conquest of power by the proletariat. The first program expressed the interests of capitalism through the medium of the labor aristocracy, the top petty-bourgeois circles, and especially the Soviet bureaucracy. The second program translated into the language of Marxism the tendencies of the revolutionary mass movement, not fully conscious but powerful. Unfortunately for the revolution, between the handful of Bolsheviks and the revolutionary proletariat stood the counterrevolutionary wall of the Popular Front.”

—“The Lessons of Spain: The Last Warning,” 17 December 1937

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: [www.icl-fi.org](http://www.icl-fi.org) • E-mail address: [vanguard@tiac.net](mailto:vanguard@tiac.net)

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

Chicago.....Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441  
[chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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  
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Public Office: Sat. 1-5 p.m., 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

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[trotskyist\\_vancouver@shawcable.com](mailto:trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com)



# Voter ID Laws...

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five million eligible voters.

The potential loss of voters who in the main are likely to go for Obama greatly exercises Democratic Party supporters. They have rightly pointed out that there is no evidence of any significant fraud by voters in this country and have launched a bevy of suits challenging these laws. At the same time, Barack Obama and the Democrats have helped set the stage for this offensive against voting rights, not least by peddling the myth that racial oppression is a relic of the past long since overcome. Such arguments are the basis for suits filed by several Republican-controlled states to annul key provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that came out of the civil rights movement.

There is no question that the voter ID laws delight the Tea Party yahoos, who are prone to deny that Barack Obama is a U.S. citizen or that black people are part of the species *homo sapiens*. Following a recent decision by Ohio officials to effectively



AP  
**Rally against Pennsylvania voter ID law at Capitol in Harrisburg, July 24.**

shorten early voting hours in urban areas, a Republican county chairman commented in PC code: “I guess I really actually feel we shouldn’t contort the voting process to accommodate the urban—read African-American—voter turnout machine.” Many of the recently enacted voter ID bills echo “model legislation” distributed by the

American Legislative Exchange Council, which also has pushed the “stand your ground” laws promoting racist vigilantism. This right-wing think tank is bankrolled by the Koch brothers who loomed large in Wisconsin governor Scott Walker’s attack on the public workers unions there, as well as by other reactionary fat cats and mainstream corporations (AT&T, Bank of America and others).

Vote stealing is bipartisan and as American as apple pie. The election of John Kennedy in 1960 by the narrowest of margins is widely attributed to voting “irregularities” perpetrated by the Democrats in Chicago and Texas. It is almost certain that Al Gore lost in 2000 because black votes in several Florida counties were disappeared. In neither case did the swindled party protest with great vigor. Both the Republican and Democratic parties are bourgeois parties committed to the maintenance of capitalist rule and have little desire to disturb the orderly succession to the imperial presidency.

The ballot is a fundamental right that must be tenaciously defended. Depriving the oppressed of basic democratic rights underscores and reinforces their vulnerability in the face of reaction. After the smashing of the Southern slavocracy in the Civil War, the liberated slaves were extended their rights as citizens, including to vote and to hold office, rights that were enforced by Union troops in the South. The last of these troops were withdrawn as part of the 1877 Compromise in exchange for the Democrats dropping any challenge to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes becoming president. With the Democratic Party as its architect, the system of Jim Crow took hold in the South, forcibly segregating black people at the bottom of society. Not a few were murdered during the civil rights movement for fighting against segregation and to regain the right to vote. In this period, the Republicans began their drive to supplant the Democrats as the foremost party of racist reaction.

Since then, the gains of the struggles for civil rights have steadily been eroded, as has the general well-being of black people, whether the president was a Republican or a Democrat. A number of Supreme Court decisions in recent decades have ruled that unless the government directly proscribes black people as a group, its actions and legislation cannot be deemed racist unless one can prove intent. At the same time, massive numbers of blacks have been ensnared in the racist criminal justice system, especially under the “war on drugs.”

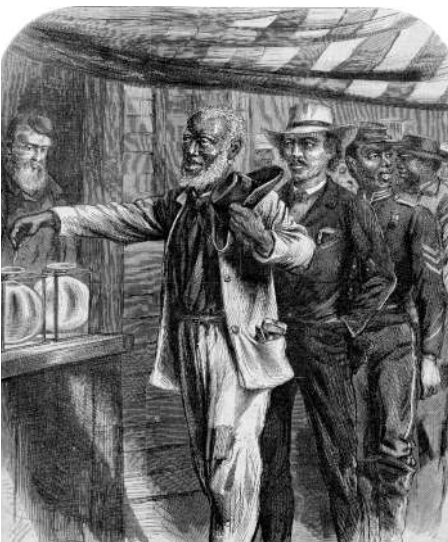
Democrats often were more zealous than their Republican counterparts in pushing for sterner drug laws and longer

ary party in Spain, as part of a reformed Fourth International, will require learning the lessons of the 1930s and completely breaking with the popular front, including its most “left-wing” expression.

## The “Left” Tails of PSOE/IU

Since the death of Franco and the re-establishment of bourgeois parliamentarism in Spain in the late 1970s, the Spanish left has acted as a tail, either of the PSOE or of the United Left, or sometimes of both. A case in point is Corriente Marxista Internacional, which supports the late Ted Grant and which recently split from Alan Woods’ International Marxist Tendency. The Grantites are doing what they can to keep the proletariat in the embrace of the discredited social democracy, urging in their newspaper *El Militante* (February 2012) “a real turn to the left” by the PSOE to “recover the trust of the millions of workers who turned their backs on us in the last elections.” They further advise the PSOE to “distance itself clearly from antisocial policies such as those which the PP has been implementing,” as if it was not the PSOE itself which had launched the austerity drive against the working class.

While seeking to revive the fortunes



Harper's Weekly  
**“The First Vote”: Blacks casting ballots during 1867 state elections in the South.**

sentences, most notably and notoriously the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who proclaimed that “dope” was more of a threat to black people than was the Jim Crow-era lynch mob “rope.” Today, 13 percent of all black men have felony convictions, with most of these denied the franchise by law. The Spartacist League stands opposed to any and all restrictions on the rights of citizens, including felons, to vote, and in favor of the extension of full citizenship rights to all immigrants—including the right of franchise. We also call for the decriminalization of drugs.

What has been put in place by the vote can be undone by the vote. And although the right to vote is important, fundamental change requires class and social struggle. It was the Union victory in the Civil War that ended chattel slavery; it was the giant labor battles of the 1930s that won organizing rights; and it was the mobilization of thousands upon thousands of fighters against segregation that brought Jim Crow to an end. And it will not be the ballot that abolishes this racist, capitalist order. That will require forging a revolutionary workers party to overturn it through socialist revolution.

Chattel slavery was the foundation stone of the American capitalist system. Its continuation is buttressed by the race/caste oppression of black people that has served to divide the working class, with the result that the U.S. remains the only advanced industrial nation without even a reformist labor party. At the same time, black workers are a strategic component of the working class. The joining of the fight for black freedom to the struggle against all exploitation and oppression is the Achilles’ heel of the U.S. imperialist system.

Americans are not greatly energized

of the PSOE, the Grantites also tail after the United Left. One follower of *El Militante*, Santiago Jiménez, is also the IU mayor of Villaverde del Río (Sevilla). As such, he is in charge of administering capitalism at the municipal level—its repressive apparatus as well as its sewers, i.e., he is a “sewer socialist.” This activity is entirely consistent with the Grantite program, which is defined by the pursuit of reforms within the framework of bourgeois democracy and electoralism.

*En Lucha/En Lluita*, Spanish associates of the British Socialist Workers Party, enthuse over the petty-bourgeois “Indignados” movement and call to “strengthen the bridges between the workers’ and the social movements” with the Indignados “at the head” (*En Lucha*, 16 July). However, at least a section of the Indignados movement, which is hostile to the organized working class, has come out in opposition to the miners strike on the grounds that coal mining is bad for the environment and “generates noise” (madrid.tomalaplaza.net, 31 May). *En Lucha* also tails after the United Left. In the November 2011 general election, *En Lucha* ran a few candidates on an “Anticapitalist” ticket, while calling for a vote to the IU elsewhere (i.e., almost everywhere).

by the opportunity to elect their leaders. In the last thirteen presidential elections, the highest turnout was 63 percent of the voting-age population in the 1960 contest that resulted in JFK’s victory. In midterm Congressional elections over the same period, the highest turnout was 48 percent in 1966. It is not unreasonable to assume that more than a few citizens tend to think that it makes little difference who wins. That is in fact the case. Marxist leader V.I. Lenin succinctly described bourgeois elections in his 1917 work, *The State and Revolution*, as a chance for voters to “decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people.”

Contrary to popular perception, the election of FDR did nothing to alleviate the devastation of the 1930s Great Depression that persisted until the onset of World War II revived the economy. Neither has the election of Barack Obama done anything to ameliorate the miseries accompanying the “Great Recession,” even as he lavished billions on the bankers responsible for the ruin. Nevertheless, black people remain in his camp because they see the calumnies heaped on him by the “Anyone but Obama” crowd as, at base, racist (which they often are). Far from combating racial oppression, Obama’s preoccupations have been shredding democratic rights under the “war on terror” and deporting record numbers of immigrants. Not coincidentally, in states with large Latino populations like Florida and Texas, voting restrictions were enacted in part to counter fantasized voter fraud by “illegals.”

In protesting the judicial decision on Pennsylvania’s voter ID law, AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka fulminates that such laws “undermine our democracy.” Trumka’s actual concern is that they undermine the Democratic Party, but neither is the U.S. “our democracy.” Capitalism, in both its “democratic” and totalitarian wrappings, has produced two world wars and the Great Depression and has long outlived any progressive role. Given the rotten record of whatever Commander-in-Chief is in office, it normally falls to the liberals, the trade-union tops and the reformist socialists to exhort working and poor people to run to the polls to vote against the greater evil—invariably the Republican candidate. The simple fact is that it is never in the interests of the exploited and the oppressed to vote for the Democrats, Republicans or any other capitalist party. Continuing to spread illusions in the lesser bourgeois evil only delays the fight to forge the revolutionary socialist party that will consign bloody capitalist imperialism to the ashcan of history. ■

What was missing in Spain in 1936 was a revolutionary workers party like Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party, which led the proletarian revolution of October 1917 in Russia. That there was no such party was conditioned by the political capitulation of Andrés Nin and Juan Andrade, who broke with the Trotskyist Left Opposition in Spain in the 1930s in order to pursue unprincipled blocs and maneuvers, finally fusing with the right-centrist Workers and Peasants Bloc to form the POUM. The POUM joined the bourgeois popular front and the capitalist Catalan government in 1936 (see “Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War,” *Spartacist* [English edition] No. 61, Spring 2009).

When workers in Spain began to stir in the 1960s, the Asturian miners again were in the vanguard, launching in 1962 a general strike that would be the Franco regime’s first defeat by the proletariat. After Franco’s death in November 1975, the reformists again rode to the rescue of the capitalists when a powerful wave of strikes threatened to shake the bourgeois order to its foundation. The PSOE and the PCE once again formed popular-frontist alliances with bourgeois forces in the name of a “transition” to (bourgeois) democracy, presided over by King Juan Carlos. The forging of a revolution-

# Dialectical Materialism vs. Bourgeois Rationalism

## A Marxist Critique of the “New Atheists”

In recent years, atheism has gained a certain currency among liberal-minded members of the American petty bourgeoisie. Atheist and secular humanist clubs have been formed not only on college campuses but also in small towns in the South. Atheist activism is also found in rather unlikely social milieus. At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Sgt. Justin Griffith and a few cothinkers have established the Military Atheists and Secular Humanists and extended the organization to other military bases.

### PART ONE

Griffith and others objected when in the fall of 2010 the Ft. Bragg commanders sponsored an on-base event by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. In response, Griffith proposed to organize an atheist event featuring such speakers as Richard Dawkins, a British evolutionary biologist and author of *The God Delusion* (2006), the best-known exposition of what is called the “new atheism.”

Sgt. Griffith’s views and activities highlight a seemingly contradictory situation. Adherents of the self-styled Christian right regard proponents of atheism as an abomination, a dire and insidious threat to the supposedly unique greatness of the American nation. On the other side, most atheists and other freethinkers in the U.S. today view themselves as good citizens and upholders of the American way of life and traditional political system. A 20,000-strong “rally for reason” in Washington, D.C., earlier this year was heavily promoted by Dawkins as a means to further the acceptability of “freethinkers” in political life.

What we have here is a particular manifestation of the changed political-ideological contours of the post-Soviet world. Since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, atheism is no longer so strongly identified in popular consciousness with communism or other forms of left-wing social radicalism. The intellectual promoters of the “new atheism,” which emerged in the mid 2000s, are and have always been hostile to Marxism. Dawkins as well as Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris, two other leading “new atheists,” are prominent exponents of “sociobiology,” a form of biological determinism used to justify reactionary garbage such as male dominance and black inferiority.

During the Cold War, a shared enmity toward the USSR and Communism muted the hostility of religious-minded rightists to irreligious liberal intellectuals. But especially over the last two decades,

Christian fundamentalists, believing that international Communism was vanquished with the fall of the Soviet Union, have turned their fire against the secularist “enemy within” and the entire tradition of Enlightenment humanism and scientific rationality.

For evangelical preachers like Pat Robertson, it was no longer Karl Marx but rather Charles Darwin who was the main inspirer of the enemies of the “American Christian nation” (see “Hail Charles Darwin!” WV No. 854, 16 September 2005). In an essay explaining the origins of the “new atheism,” Victor Stenger, one of its leading figures, complained about “Christian attempts to force others to behave according to their beliefs; to set public policy based on faith rather [than] reason; and to transform America into a theocracy” (“What’s New About the New Atheism?” *Philosophy Now*, January/February 2011).

### Then Came 9/11

The core canon, so to speak, of the “new atheism” consists of five works: Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*, Harris’ *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004), Dennett’s *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2007), Christopher Hitchens’ *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007) and Stenger’s *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* (2009). While the similarities among the five authors are more important than their differences, there are dif-

ferences in emphasis, that is, in their main concerns and foils.

Dawkins, Dennett and Stenger were primarily responding to the political ascendancy of the Christian right under the Republican administration of George W. Bush. Reactionary religious forces received a major boost from the “faith-based” Bush regime, whose often demented policies flowed from America’s continued position, based on its overwhelming military strength, atop the world order even as its economy stagnated. Dawkins & Co. were reacting in particular to the campaign to make creationism (“intelligent design”) an officially recognized alternative to Darwinian evolution. Their books mainly polemicize against arguments that aspects of the natural world (the origin of the cosmos, the origin and diversity of living organisms, human consciousness) cannot be explained except by the existence of a transcendent supernatural power.

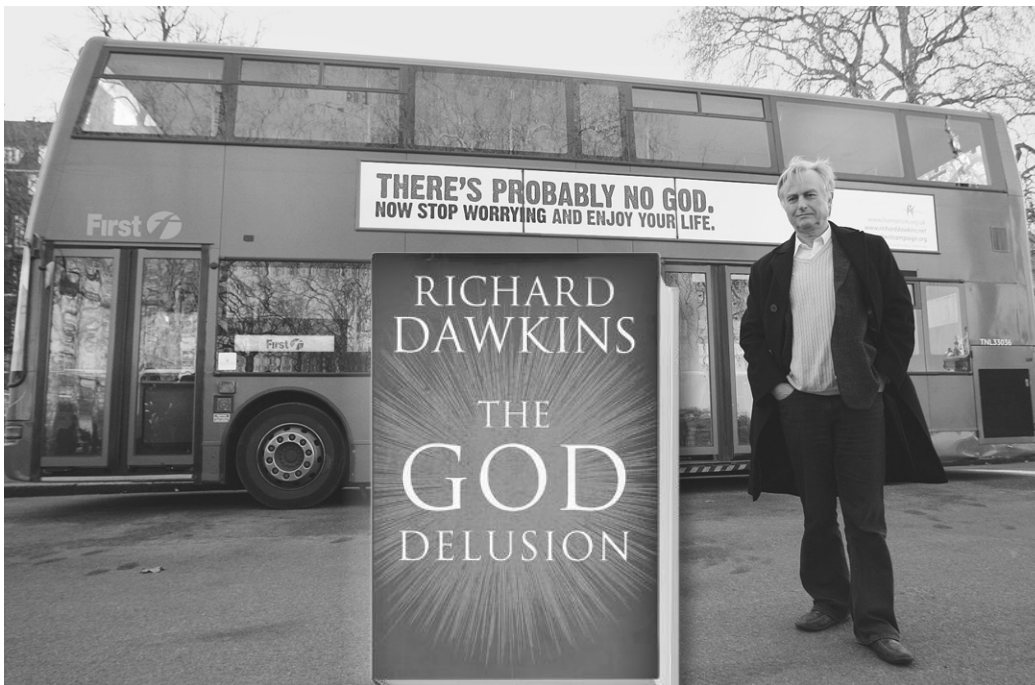
The main concerns of Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens were different. They were basically responding to the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in September 2001 by Islamic fundamentalists. Their books would not have been written (at least in their main content) had that event not occurred. Hitchens also edited the 2007 *The Portable Atheist*, which for the most part consists of representative irreligious thinkers, beginning with the materialist philosophers of Greco-Roman antiquity. Four of the final six selections are specifically directed against Islam.

Harris and Hitchens represent that current of liberal intellectuals who supported the global “war on terror” on the grounds that Islamic jihadism had become a mortal threat to Western civilization. Harris was positively apocalyptic: “A future in which Islam and the West do not stand on the brink of mutual annihilation is a future in which most Muslims have learned to ignore most of their canon, just as most Christians have learned to do.” The British-born Hitchens, who died last year a U.S. citizen, was notorious for slinging mud on behalf of the Bush administration during the Iraq war, captured in his trashing of the antiwar country music band Dixie Chicks as “f---ing fat slags.” Having spent some of his youth in the International Socialists (now Socialist Workers Party), Hitchens went on to wave the Union Jack during Britain’s squalid war with Argentina over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in 1982 on his way to becoming a full-bodied pro-imperialist pig.

As Jeff Sparrow aptly put it in “The Weaponization of Atheism” (*CounterPunch*, 9 April), “the New Atheism was turbocharged by 9/11.” That goes for Dawkins as well as Harris and Hitchens. Dawkins, who along with numerous bourgeois liberals opposed the invasion of Iraq, has been on his home turf a voice of the Islamophobia that has been whipped up by and helped drive the “war on terror.”

Dawkins outraged Muslim groups in Britain two years ago by insultingly likening the Muslim women’s *burqa* to a trash-bin liner. The *burqa* is indeed both a symbol and instrument of women’s oppression. But Dawkins’ fulminations against Islam are those of a British chauvinist and shot through with class bias. While correctly denouncing “faith schools” for propounding anti-scientific nonsense, Dawkins reserves his main fire for Muslim schools, where children are “having their minds stuffed with alien rubbish,” not those following Church of England precepts (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 2011). Nor is the Anglican state church on the receiving end of the ridicule that Dawkins likes to dish out against Catholic dogma. As any Irishman could tell you, such ridicule is mighty common fare in the land of the bloody butcher’s apron (Union Jack).

Reading Dennett, Harris and Hitchens, one is reminded of the old watchword of British colonialism: “the white man’s burden.” These intellectuals promote the notion that the U.S. and West European states could and should use military force to bring the benefits of “secular democracy” to the benighted peoples of the Islamic world. Thus do the “new athe-



Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, in front of London bus with atheist publicity campaign ad, 2009.



“New atheist” response to September 2001 attacks adopted anti-Muslim slant, echoing American “anti-terror” campaign. Left: Image from Stenger’s Web site. Right: U.S.-led attack on Afghan town, 17 February 2010.





ists,” from different points on the bourgeois political spectrum, act as apostles for Western (Christian) imperialism.

A Historical Materialist Understanding of Religion

Despite his reputation as “Darwin’s Rottweiler,” Dawkins is remarkably tolerant toward the Church of England, which has been described as “the Tory party at prayer.” In a recent televised “debate,” he told the Archbishop of Canterbury that he preferred to call himself an agnostic rather than an atheist and that he was “6.9 out of seven” sure of there being no god, evoking gasps on Twitter. Writing in the 1920s about Henry Brailsford of the Independent Labour Party, a self-described agnostic, Marxist revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky observed:

“This word is sometimes used in Britain as a polite, emasculated, drawing-room term for an atheist. Even more often, it characterizes a diffident semi-atheism—i.e., that variety of idealism which on the question of God, to use parliamentary language, abstains from voting. And so we see here the force of cant, of conventionality, of the half-truth, the half-lie, of philosophical hypocrisy.”

Combating religious obscurantism is an integral part of the struggle by the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, to forge a revolutionary workers party that can provide political leadership of the working class, beginning with its most advanced elements. In the words of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin:

“The philosophical basis of Marxism, as Marx and Engels repeatedly declared, is dialectical materialism, which has fully taken over the historical traditions of eighteenth-century materialism in France and of [philosopher Ludwig] Feuerbach (first half of the nineteenth century) in Germany—a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion.”

At the same time, we oppose all forms of religious persecution and oppression and defend the separation of church and state—a fundamental gain of the American Revolution that is increasingly honored in the breach by the U.S. capitalist ruling class. Our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain fight for the abolition of the state churches as well as the monarchy and the House of Lords as part of their struggle for a socialist federation of the British Isles.

Karl Marx’s attitude toward religion is popularly identified with the phrase “the opium of the people.” However, the passage in which this phrase is used is rarely quoted in its entirety. And when it is, it is usually interpreted in a sense contrary to Marx’s intent:

“*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.  
“To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears*, the *halo* of which is religion.” [emphases in original]  
—“Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law: Introduction” (1843-44)

Marx’s aim here was not to convince the faithful to abandon their religious beliefs. He was addressing contemporary exponents of Enlightenment rationalism, in particular his fellow left Hegelians Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. The latter maintained that belief in Christianity, since it is based on the illusion of a benevolent and omnipotent supernatural being, could be dispelled by rational argumentation. Marx understood that religious beliefs—especially divine intervention in one’s earthly life and heavenly bliss in an afterlife—served as a solace for the exploited and oppressed masses. They are responding to the privation and injustice they suffer in class-based society while feeling powerless to change their objective condition.

Religion, therefore, will not disappear unless and until these conditions are overcome in a future communist society—an



Cristiano Banti

Seventeenth-century scientist Galileo was persecuted by Inquisition for maintaining that the earth orbits the sun.

egalitarian and harmonious society in which economic scarcity has been eliminated through the further progressive development of scientific knowledge and its technological application in a world planned economy. As Marx explained in *Capital*, Volume I:

“The religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to Nature.  
“The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. This, however, demands for society a certain material ground-work or set of conditions of existence which in their turn are the spontaneous product of a long and painful process of development.”

For early man, religion was a response to a feeling of helplessness in the face of the often destructive forces of nature. Scientific studies of pre-class, pre-literate societies have shown a causal connection between religious beliefs and practices and the struggle to wrest a livelihood from the natural environment. One of the founding fathers of modern anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski, observed that appeals to supernatural forces take place at the point where existing techniques cease to be reliably effective:

“In a maritime community depending on the products of the sea there is never magic connected with the collecting of shellfish or with fishing by poison, weirs, and fish traps, so long as these are completely reliable. On the other hand, any dangerous, hazardous, and uncertain type of fishing is surrounded by ritual. In hunting, the simple and reliable ways of trapping and killing are controlled by knowledge and skill alone; but let there be any danger or uncertainty connected with an important supply of game and magic immediately appears.”  
—“Culture,” *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (1931)

With the emergence of class-based society, religion underwent a significant change in character and function. Religious doctrine was manipulated and enforced by the dominant (property-owning) class and its priestly agents to sanctify wealth and power, while offering solace to the exploited classes. Thus, Lenin wrote with respect to the Russian Orthodox state church:

“What a profitable faith it is indeed for the governing classes! In a society so organised that an insignificant minority enjoys wealth and power, while the

masses constantly suffer ‘privations’ and bear ‘severe obligations,’ it is quite natural for the exploiters to sympathise with a religion that teaches people to bear ‘uncomplainingly’ the hell on earth for the sake of an alleged celestial paradise.”  
—“Political Agitation and ‘the Class Point of View’” (February 1902)

On the History of Atheism

Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, all currents of thought in Europe, however antagonistic, were confined within the bounds of Christian doctrine (leaving aside the small Jewish communities and Muslim Spain). Those considered disdainful toward religious authority were condemned for “impiety,” a term that implied lack of reverence, not outright denial of a supreme being. It was in the 16th century that the term and concept of atheism (derived from ancient Greek philosophy) became a factor in the European intellectual universe. For example, in 1611 Cyril Tourneur, a playwright in Renaissance England, published a work titled *The Atheist’s Tragedy*, a subject that would have been inconceivable a century earlier.

The new intellectual challenge to traditional Christian belief coincided with and was conditioned by the birth of modern science. A liberal intellectual historian, Jonathan I. Israel, observed: “It was unquestionably the rise of powerful new philosophical systems, rooted in the scientific advances of the early seventeenth century and especially the mechanistic views of Galileo, which chiefly generated the vast *Kulturkampf* between traditional, theologically sanctioned ideas about Man, God, and the universe and secular, mechanistic conceptions which stood independently of any theological sanction” (*Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* [2001]).

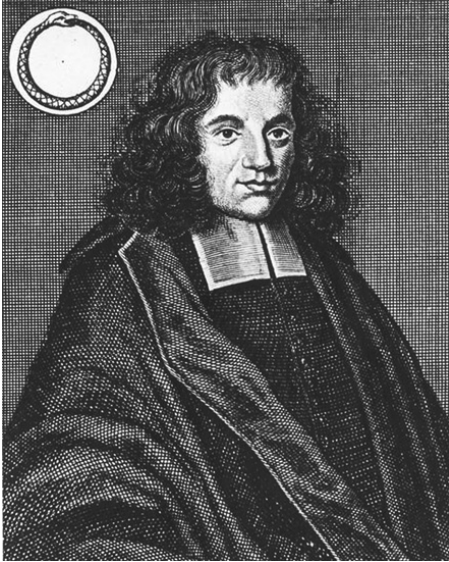
There has been a decades-long debate among intellectual historians as to the extent of actual atheism in the Renaissance and early Enlightenment. Underlying this debate are a number of factors. To openly profess atheism was to invite torture and execution by the state authorities that enforced Christian orthodoxy. As late as the 1690s in Scotland, a university student, Thomas Aikenhead, was hanged for the capital crime of “blasphemy.” Evidence of this “crime” was verbal discussions he reportedly had with fellow students. In some cases, the personal writings of those accused of atheism were burned

at the stake along with their authors. Few clandestine or posthumous manuscripts explicitly arguing against the existence of god in any sense have been found.

The accusation of atheism was promiscuously applied to anyone who questioned or challenged the locally dominant Christian orthodoxy. In fact, Catholics and Calvinists engaged in mutual recriminations that the rival doctrine logically led to atheistic conclusions. In many (possibly most) cases, the ideas of those accused of atheism who did reject Christianity corresponded more closely to deism, pantheism, agnosticism or an eclectic amalgam thereof.

An additional complicating factor was that the term atheism was used in two different senses. “Practical” atheists, who were assumed to be very numerous, were those who lived as if there were no god. They therefore supposedly engaged in all manner of vice and crime to satisfy their worldly desires without fear of eternal damnation. “Speculative” atheists, who were assumed to be very rare, were those who denied the existence of a supreme being on intellectual grounds. When heterodox thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza emphatically repudiated the charge of atheism, they were in part denying that they were morally depraved egoists indifferent to the needs of their fellow man.

Whether a particular heterodox thinker was a self-considered and consistent athe-



Friedrich Roth-Scholtz

Dutch materialist philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

ist is not a historically important question. What is significant is that the *concept* of atheism became an important and integral part of intellectual discourse in early modern Europe and in Britain’s American colonies. Moreover, almost all thinkers who rejected Christianity maintained that the betterment of mankind depended on the extension of scientific knowledge, not divine revelation.

The interrelationship between philosophical materialism and the new world of scientific discovery and experimentation was exemplified by Spinoza who, whatever the ambiguities of his actual thought, was viewed as the intellectual fountainhead of atheism in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. After he was expelled from the Jewish community in Amsterdam in the 1650s as a heretic, Spinoza earned his living by making high-quality lenses for microscopes and telescopes. In that capacity, he entered into a working relation with Christian Huygens, one of the greatest physicists of the era.

Spinoza maintained that there was no supernatural being or power separate from and transcending the material world. The material world was eternal (it had no beginning) and was governed by immutable laws. There was no spiritual component in human beings and therefore no immortal soul. Some scholars, such as Jonathan Israel, have argued that Spinoza was in effect an atheist. However, most intellectual historians and philosophers categorize him as a pantheist, that is, one who identifies god with nature. Why so? Spinoza believed that the natural world was imbued with a benevolent harmony that, if understood, would lead to

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Bolshevik poster shows Central Asian woman rejecting the veil as part of Soviet workers state’s struggle against religious and social oppression.



South Africa...

(continued from page 1)

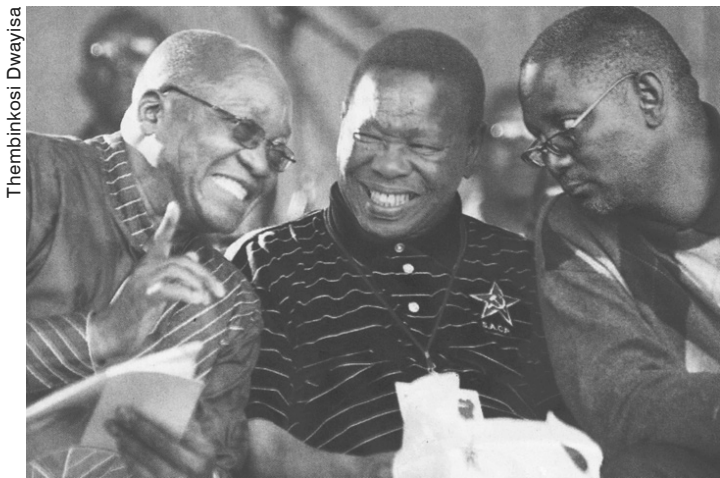
pain and suffering of this gruesome mass murder must be burnt into the memory of the working class—here and internationally—and all other opponents of capitalist oppression, as a reminder of the lengths to which the bourgeoisie and its repressive state machine will go to protect their class rule and profits. It will require iron determination, consciousness of the proletariat’s independent interests and world-historic tasks, and a tested, uncompromising, revolutionary leadership, to rip power out of their bloody hands. *Workers revolution will avenge the victims of the Lonmin massacre! Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party!*

This slaughter was clearly premeditated and deliberately carried out by the capitalist state. In the week leading up to it, the capitalist media mouthpieces, together with the Lonmin owners and government ministers, whipped up a hysterical frenzy denouncing the mineworkers as violent “thugs” and calling for a clampdown to end their “illegal”

strike. By the day of the massacre, the police commanders were speaking of a “D-Day” which would crush the strike. The hill next to one of the mine shafts, where thousands of striking workers had gathered, was cordoned off with barbed wire by the cops. This was accompanied by a massive mobilisation of repressive force, including police units mounted on horseback, armoured vehicles, SANDF (army) soldiers, and a deployment of up to 3,000 police thugs in the Marikana area. The aim was clearly to teach the striking miners a bloody lesson, especially as “payback” for the two police officers and two security guards killed during the week-old strike. That the cops were out for bloody revenge is absolutely clear from the comments made by Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega (recently appointed by President Jacob Zuma) following the massacre, telling the cops she commands that they should not regret what happened (*Sowetan*, 20 August).

In a despicable attempt to cover up for their bloody crime, the leaders of the Tripartite Alliance—echoed by virtually all the bourgeois media, speaking in unison—are now trying to place the blame for the “senseless violence”...on

ANC president Jacob Zuma (left) with SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande and COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi.



the striking mineworkers who were massacred! From COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, to the SACP’s Blade Nzimande, to ANC president Zuma, this is the line of *all* the Alliance leaders. The aim of this campaign was spelled out clearly in a grotesque whitewash penned by the *City Press* editors, who wrote: “But this happened in a democratic state. And while the nervous and jittery police who pulled the trigger must answer for their actions, it is important to remember that the strikers were armed to the teeth and

behaved in a threatening manner. The lines between innocent and guilty are not drawn as sharply as those at Sharpeville in 1960 or at Soweto in 1976” (“Marikana. Tragic, But It’s Not Sharpeville,” 19 August). The truth is that the blood of black workers is just as cheap today as it was under apartheid rule.

For Workers Defense Guards!

Much is being made of the fact that the striking miners had weapons such as homemade spears, pangas, and even a

Atheists...

(continued from page 9)

harmonious relations among men. He was an early and outstanding representative of Enlightenment rationalism: the view that the well-being of humanity should be based on knowledge of and conformity with the laws of nature.

Significantly, the first published work (in 1770) openly expounding atheistic materialism was titled *System of Nature, or, the Laws of the Moral and Physical World* by its author Baron d’Holbach (Paul Henri Thiry) and his collaborator Jacques-André Naigeon. These French *philosophes* believed that underlying *all phenomena*, including human thought and action, was matter in motion. They maintained that this matter in motion was governed by immutable laws that were in principle knowable through scientific investigation and experimentation. A present-day scholar, Alan Charles Kors, commented on the social implications of Holbach and Naigeon’s atheistic materialism:

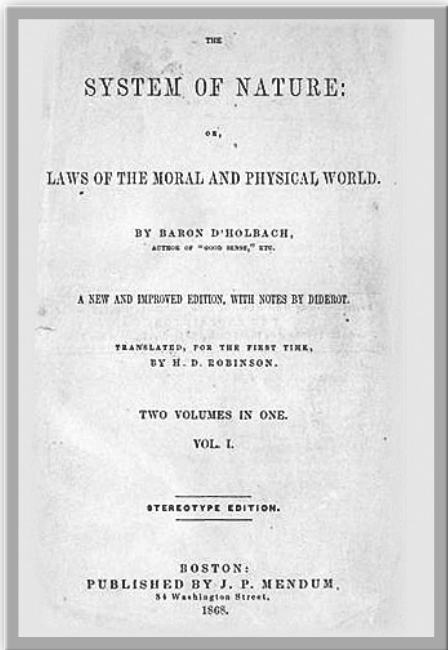
“They believed that whatever the purposes to which theism and immaterialism had been put historically, these views ultimately arose from the natural desires of mankind to allay and deflect the helplessness that was felt in the presence of the awesome powers of the whole—nature—relative to the part—man. The tragedy of mankind, for them, lay not in those desires, but in the dysfunctional mode of their expression.”

—Michael Hunter and David Wootton, eds., *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (1992)

Atheism and Bourgeois Society

For a century after Holbach and Naigeon’s seminal work, atheism remained the province of a small minority of the intellectual elite. Those bourgeois intellectuals who propagated atheism, such as Feuerbach in mid 19th-century Germany and Charles Bradlaugh in Victorian England, gained political notoriety precisely because of how exceptional their beliefs were.

Atheistic materialism could and did acquire a mass following among exploited



workers only when industrial capitalism had developed to a point that overcoming economic scarcity became a realistic historic prospect. Although particularly in Britain religion would continue to play a significant role in the labor movement, in Europe the de-Christianization of the proletariat was an integral aspect of the development of progressive working-class consciousness and organization, at the trade-union and the political level. Beginning in the last decades of the 19th century, mass parties were formed expressing the aspiration of the most advanced elements of the working class for a socialist reconstruction of social and economic life based on material plenty for all.

In Germany, the Austro-Hungarian state and tsarist Russia, Marxism was the official doctrine of the workers movement. Not only leftist students but also politically advanced and thoughtful young workers acquired a materialist worldview by studying such works as Friedrich Engels’ *Anti-Dühring* and Georgi Plekhanov’s *The Development of the Monist View of History*. Even in countries such as France, where Marxism was not the official doctrine of the workers movement, its principal leaders



Alexander Roslin

French philosophe Baron d’Holbach, author of first published work openly expounding atheistic materialism in 1770 (left).

(e.g., Jean Jaurès in the pre-1914 Socialist Party) were usually rational humanists who were hostile to the established churches. Conversely, right-wing bourgeois parties (e.g., the English Tories) appealed to the authority of traditional and often state-sponsored religion—and continue to do so.

The persistence and extent of religious belief and anti-materialist ideology ultimately reflect the condition of the class struggle, in particular the political consciousness of the working class. The late J.D. Bernal, a Marxist and prominent British biologist, commented in *Science and History* (1954):

“The very persistence of the struggle, despite the successive victories won by materialist science, shows that it is not essentially a philosophic or a scientific one, but a reflection of political struggles in scientific terms. At every stage idealist philosophy has been invoked to pretend that present discontents are illusory

and to justify an existing state of affairs. At every stage materialist philosophy has relied on the practical test of reality and on the necessity of change.”

As a British intellectual, Dawkins recognizes that religiosity is much more important in American society and Christian fundamentalists are more politically influential than is the case in Europe. However, his attempts at explanation are in the main fatuous, claiming, for example, that rival denominations employ the “aggressive hard-sell techniques of the marketplace.” One of the “hypotheses” he provides in *The God Delusion* points in the right direction, but not for the reason he gives: “America is a nation of immigrants,” who, “uprooted from the stability and comfort of the extended family in Europe, could well have embraced a church as a kind of kin-substitute on alien soil.”

America’s capitalist rulers have long thrived by sowing ethnic, religious and racial animosities—“Anglo-Saxon” against Irish, Protestant against Catholic immigrant, and, above all, white against black—in order to divide workers, weaken their struggles and retard the understanding of their common class interest. This is a major reason why the U.S., uniquely among advanced capitalist countries, has never seen the development of a workers party, even of a reformist sort, such as the British Labour Party. The lack of independent class political organization has in turn served to reinforce religion’s hold among those exploited and oppressed by the capitalist system. Religious belief and affiliation are especially strong not only among immigrants but also in the black population, for whom the churches have been the only organizations with a continuous existence dating back to the days of slavery.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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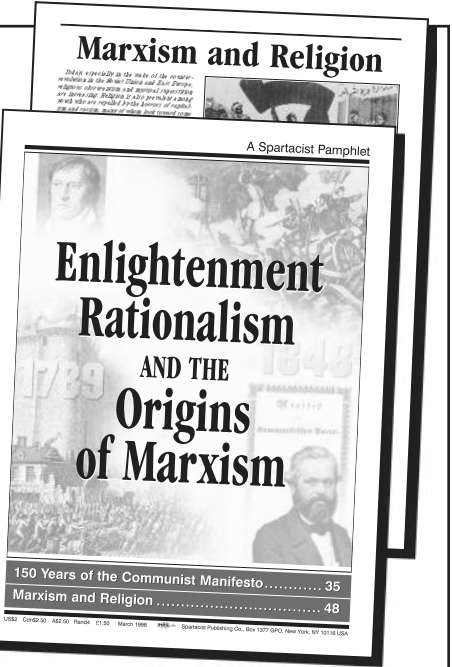
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few guns. To listen to the sanctimonious bourgeois editorialists and Alliance tops talk, the Zulu, Xhosa, and other native African warriors who were mowed down by the guns of British and Dutch colonisers should also have accepted part of the blame for the “senseless loss of life,” because they tried to fight back with spears and other primitive weapons! We stand forthrightly for the right of *armed self-defence* of the working class against the bloody violence of the capitalist state, the bosses’ security guard thugs and other professional strikebreakers. *For workers defence guards to protect the picket lines!* As the bloody massacre showed, the workers and oppressed have to be *better prepared* and *better organised* in the face of this brutal killing machine.

We reject with utter contempt the bourgeois propaganda lumping together the workers massacred on August 16 with the two cops and two security guards who were killed during the preceding week, allegedly by striking mineworkers. We do not pretend to know the precise circumstances surrounding these deaths, but one thing is for sure: we shed no tears over the death of the bourgeoisie’s professional strikebreakers. This propaganda campaign is part of the ongoing repression against the striking mineworkers who survived the massacre. Some 260 workers who were arrested on August 16 are still being held in custody, denied bail, and are facing charges that include public violence, and even murder and attempted murder for the killing of these cops and security guards. Workers in South Africa and internationally must protest this bloody massacre and the continued repression: *Drop all charges against arrested Lonmin striking workers!* Notwithstanding the

surrounding mine” (*Mail & Guardian* online, 14 August)! NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka appeared on TV the same week, denouncing the striking workers as “thugs” who could not be negotiated with but must be met with force. Baleni and other NUM leaders came out in defence of *the cops* after the bloody massacre!

To divert from their wretched, class-collaborationist betrayals of the mineworkers in their own union—betrayals now sealed with the blood of the 34 massacred workers—the NUM tops have sought to lay the blame on a rival union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which has been making inroads especially among the lowest-paid sections of the mineworkers. The extent of AMCU’s representation among workers at Lonmin remains

partite Alliance tops are calling for state repression against AMCU in the aftermath of the massacre, including a call by the SACP leadership in North West to arrest the leaders of AMCU. We defend AMCU against state repression, and we defend the right of the mineworkers to be represented by AMCU if that’s what they desire. But the answer to the betrayals by the leaders of the NUM and other COSATU unions cannot be to simply leave and set up separate unions, which tends to weaken and divide the workers. The *base* of these unions must be set against the sellout *tops*. What’s needed is a hard struggle to oust the current, pro-capitalist leaders and replace them with a class-struggle leadership, fighting for industrial unions to unite all workers for maximum power to fight the bosses. This is bound up with the fight for a revolutionary vanguard party, which is necessary to put an end to capitalism through workers revolution.

The Lonmin massacre underlines in blood the truth of what Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote in *State and Revolution* (1917): “The state is an organ of class *domination*, an organ of *oppression* of one class by another.” The bourgeois state cannot be reformed or pressured into acting on behalf of the working people and the oppressed. Both black and white cops carried out the massacre of striking black mineworkers, highlighting the nature of *all* cops as professional strikebreakers and hired guns of the capitalist class. We say: *Cops and security guards out of the unions!* This *neo-apartheid* capitalist state continues to enforce the brutal oppression of the black majority and defend the rule and profits of the overwhelmingly white capitalist class. It must be overthrown through workers socialist revolution and replaced by a workers state.

This basic Marxist understanding of the capitalist state is in stark contrast to the reformist leaders of the SACP and COSATU, who consider the cops their “comrades,” and to their left hangers-on who posture as “socialist” critics of the Tripartite Alliance leaders, only to peddle a different variant of reformist politics. For example, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, South African section of Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International), issued a statement protesting the Lonmin massacre that denounces the NUM leaders for “betraying every key

principle of the workers’ struggle.” This is rich, coming from a group that pushes the grotesque line that cops are “workers in uniform”! True to form, the DSM statement goes on to scold the Lonmin strikers for “killing first two security guards, on Saturday, and then two police officers on Monday. This did not move the workers’ struggle forward but divided it” (“For a General Strike to End the Marikana Massacre,” 17 August). Thus the DSM fake socialists do their bit to chime in to the violence-baiting campaign against the striking workers, and advise them to submit to the bourgeois state.

NUM president Senzeni Zokwana went to address the striking workers at Lonmin, trying from inside an armoured police Nyala [personnel carrier] to convince them to end the strike. Not surprisingly, they shouted him down and he retreated to behind the police lines, showing graphically the seething discontent the workers feel toward their treacherous misleaders. This discontent has been building for years, as a result of the huge gulf between the “better life for all” that was promised when the Tripartite Alliance came to power, and the continued, desperate reality of neo-apartheid capitalist misery. The wretched conditions in the shacks around Lonmin and other mines in the “platinum belt” are a grim testament to this.

The reformists of the Stalinist-derived SACP, which recently elected Zokwana chairman, have for years churned out bogus “theories” about the different “stages” of the “National Democratic Revolution” with the aim of justifying their alliance with the bourgeois-nationalist ANC and their role in administering capitalism in the Tripartite Alliance. As we have repeatedly warned, the Stalinist “theory” of “two-stage revolution” is a bloody lie: the second “stage” is always the bourgeois-nationalists turning on and slaughtering communists and workers. Lonmin is a deadly warning! Trade-union militants from COSATU and SACP members who genuinely want to fight for communism must be broken from the pro-capitalist programme of these organisations and won to a policy based on the independence of the working class from *all* bourgeois-nationalist forces. That includes former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, a populist demagogue who has gained a lot of popularity among the mineworkers. While Malema today poses as a friend of the workers, he is a *bourgeois* politician who stands for the maintenance of this bloody capitalist system and only a few years ago vowed to “kill” for Zuma.

Working-class independence from bourgeois nationalism is at the core of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. The national oppression endured by the black majority, imperialist domination, and many-layered oppression and backwardness characteristic of capitalism in South Africa can only be overcome through workers revolution, extending internationally. We need a *black-centred workers government*, part of a *socialist federation of Southern Africa*, which fights like hell to link up with workers revolution in the imperialist centres and create an international socialist planned economy. Then bloody horrors like the Lonmin massacre will belong to the past, part of a dark chapter in human history. This is what we fight for. ■



AFF

**On day of massacre, Lonmin miners demonstrate for monthly wage of 12,500 rand and improved work conditions.**

loss of their comrades the Lonmin workers have courageously vowed to continue their fight until their demands are met. The Lonmin bosses are holding the threat of mass dismissals over the striking workers’ heads, demanding that they return to work immediately. We stand in solidarity with these workers’ demands for a living wage of R12,500 [\$1,490] per month and improved conditions of employment. This week, strikes have spread to other mines in North West province, where workers are also demanding R12,500. Solidarity strikes in the mining industry and elsewhere are urgently needed to support the Lonmin workers and stand up against the government’s bloody anti-worker terror.

### NUM Misleaders Called for Blood of Striking Mineworkers

Despicably, the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) were among those calling loudest for a crack-down on the mineworkers strike in the week leading up to the August 16 massacre. Just a few days before, NUM general secretary Frans Baleni ranted, “[We are] alarmed that the escalating violence has been allowed to continue unabated by the law enforcement agencies in that area in North West Province,” and called for “the deployment of a special task force or the SANDF to deal decisively with the criminal elements in Rustenburg and its

unclear, with contradictory reports from different sources. Certainly, NUM members were among the workers massacred in the state repression Baleni had called for. They, as well as many others who had left the NUM and went looking for another representative out of desperation, had gone into revolt against the NUM leadership. Similar developments have already been seen at Impala Platinum, where a bitter strike in February had to face down both state repression and betrayals of the NUM bureaucracy (see article reprinted in *Spartacist South Africa* No. 8, Winter 2012 [and WV No. 997, 2 March]).

Following years of betrayals, the disgruntled mineworkers at Lonmin decided to make their demands themselves. These demands included a wage increase from R4,000 to R12,500 per month and decent conditions of employment. The NUM bureaucrats and their apologists denounce these wage demands as “unrealistic,” showing how much they identify with the mine bosses, having become integrated in the privileged black elite who act as frontmen for the Randlords. Baleni earns a salary of R77,000 per month! Cyril Ramaphosa, a former NUM general secretary and a leading negotiator of the 1994 sellout deal with the white rulers, is a shareholder at Lonmin who recently bid R19.5 million for a buffalo!

The NUM bureaucrats and other Tri-

## United-Front Demonstration Initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee

# Protest Massacre of South African Strikers! Free Jailed Miners—Drop All Charges! Victory to the Striking Miners!

Outside South African Consulate in NYC  
Corner of East 38th St./1st Ave.

Thursday, Aug. 30, 4:30-6 p.m.

For more information or to endorse contact: PDC • Phone: (212) 406-4252  
E-mail: [partisandefense@earthlink.net](mailto:partisandefense@earthlink.net) • [www.partisandefense.org](http://www.partisandefense.org)

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

**Students: Ally with the Working Class!**

## Lessons of the Struggles in Quebec



Montreal, July 22: Slogans at student protest include “The university is not a business!! Enough with the oligarchy!” (left) and “Neoliberals Out” (right). Student leaders push illusions in reformability of capitalism.

Spartacist Canada Photos

### Young Spartacus

We print below the translation of a French-language Spartacist Canada supplement issued on August 20, which our comrades distributed at a large student demonstration in Montreal on August 22.

The student strike and mass defiance

of the Liberal government’s repressive law (Law 78) have produced the most sustained social struggle in Quebec since the 1970s. Premier Jean Charest called the September 4 elections in large part to “solve” this crisis. This may very well work, even if the Liberals lose the vote. After months of exhausting struggle, intense police repression, media

slanders and no tangible results, many students are now voting to go back to class. The Parti Québécois [PQ] is calling for a “truce” so as to not disturb the elections—actually a cynical excuse to re-establish “social peace.” The pro-PQ leaders of the FEUQ and FECQ student federations are campaigning to “get out the youth vote.” And Françoise David of

Québec Solidaire (QS) has now explicitly pledged to support a possible minority PQ government—with PQ leader Pauline Marois already promising to increase tuition “with the cost of living.”

Youth who have mobilized and fought courageously for more than six months must ask themselves: What next? The

*continued on page 4*

## Spanish Miners Strike Betrayed



Corbis



Reuters

Left: Asturian miners at July 19 mass demonstration against austerity cuts and job slashing, Gijón, Spain. Above: General secretaries of union federations, UGT (right) and CC.OO. (left), meet with Spanish King Juan Carlos, Madrid, August 7.

After 67 days of bitter struggle by Spanish miners to defend their jobs, union leaders called off the strike on August 3. Centered on the northwestern region of Asturias, the strike was sparked by government plans to slash subsidies to the coal mining industry. The miners

built barricades at the entrance of mines and used logs and burning tires to cut off road and rail transport. When riot police and the Guardia Civil descended on the mining towns, firing rubber bullets and tear gas, miners fought back with improvised rocket launchers and homemade

shields. Other strikers occupied the mines deep underground.

The ending of the coal subsidy, part of the savage austerity demanded by the European Union (EU) to cut the country’s fiscal deficit, threatens the very future of coal mining in Spain. In addition

to the 8,000 jobs of the miners, the cuts threaten an additional 30,000 jobs dependent on the industry. The country already has the highest rate of unemployment in Europe—just under 25 percent, with youth unemployment over 50

*continued on page 6*

**Down With the Capitalist EU! For a Workers Europe!**