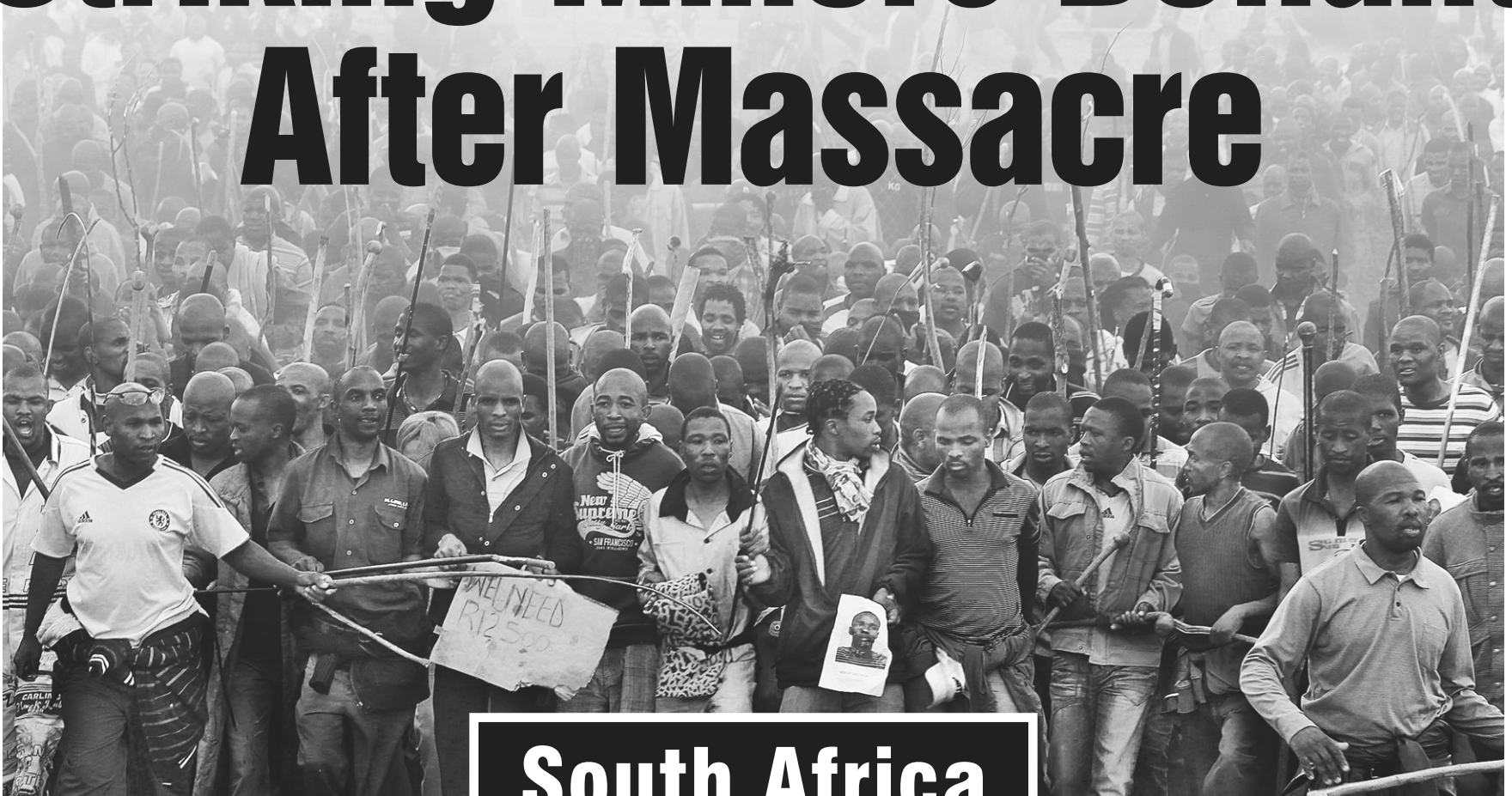


## ANC/SACP/COSATU Tops: Front Men for Mining Bosses

# Striking Miners Defiant After Massacre



Reuters

## South Africa

September 5: Thousands of strikers march near Lonmin's Marikana mine in largest outpouring since August 16 massacre by police.

SEPTEMBER 10—The leaders of South Africa's Tripartite Alliance government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), no doubt figured that the August 16 massacre of strikers at Lonmin's Marikana platinum mine would break the workers' resolve. They figured wrong. The 3,000 rock drill operators, organized mainly by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), defied a company ultimatum to return to work or face mass firings. One striker told CNN that the brutally exploited workers would hold out in their demand for a pay increase to honor their 34 slain comrades, "otherwise they will have died in vain."

The strikers' firm determination was evident on September 5 when several thousand marched through the streets of Marikana, a mining center in North West Province not far from Johannesburg, in the biggest mobilization since the August 16 bloodletting. Hundreds broke through cop barricades, pushed past half a dozen armored cars blocking the route and marched to the Lonmin mine in nearby Karee. They demanded that the company shut down all operations and made absolutely clear their intention to stop all scabbing.

In South Africa and internationally, outrage over the August killings was redoubled when the courts invoked a law from the white-supremacist apartheid era to charge 270 arrested strikers with the mur-

der of their comrades by the police. Feeling the heat, the government provisionally withdrew the murder charges, further fueling the militancy of the month-long strike, which has itself touched off other miners' strikes throughout the country. At the same time, other charges remain and many strikers are still detained. It is the urgent duty of miners and other trade unionists around the world to act in solidarity with the embattled Marikana strikers and demand: **Drop all charges! Free all arrested miners! Victory to the miners strike!**

In most of these battles, the workers have been pitted against not only the mining bosses but also the misleaders of the

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the largest component of the COSATU trade-union federation that is part of the ruling Tripartite Alliance along with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). This was seen earlier this year when workers shut down for six weeks the world's largest platinum mine, Impala Platinum (Implats) in Rustenburg, in defiance of the NUM bureaucracy. On August 22, workers launched a fight for better wages at the Royal Bafokeng platinum mine near Marikana and also demanded permanent posts for rock drillers who had been hired on a short-term basis by low-wage contractors (labor brokers). After only one

day, NUM leaders got them back to work without their demands being met. The next day, workers at Anglo American Platinum's Thembelani mine refused to go down the mine shaft until their wage demands were addressed, but that action too was quickly derailed by NUM bureaucrats.

But miners continue to defy these misleaders and the capitalist government they are beholden to. On August 29, 12,000 workers at Gold Fields' KDC mine downed tools and demanded the rescinding of deductions from their wages as well as the resignation of the local NUM leadership. Even though the national NUM office got strikers back to work a week later by suspending the local union leadership, yesterday another 15,000 launched a wildcat strike at another section of the mine demanding resignation of their own local NUM leaders, whom they accuse of falsely promising wage increases. At Anglo American Platinum (Amplats), the industry leader with about 40 percent of global supply, workers were reported to have selected delegates among themselves to make wage demands on their behalf in defiance of NUM officials.

Meanwhile, the state continues its repression of workers. On September 3, some 200 miners at the Gold One company's flagship mine east of Johannesburg, many of whom had been fired through cell phone text messages for striking last June, demanded their jobs back in a protest that was fired on by security guards. Thirteen strikers were arrested.

An August 23 leaflet on Marikana by Spartacist South Africa (printed in WV No. 1007, 31 August) declared, "Make  
*continued on page 8*



AFP

Miners salute fallen comrade at his funeral, August 31.



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Alexander Cockburn—a muckraking columnist and editor who delighted in skewering the establishment press—died from cancer on July 21 at the age of 71. Of Scottish descent and raised in County Cork, Ireland, Cockburn came to the U.S. in 1972 and began to write for the Press Clips column of the *Village Voice* the following year. Educated at Oxford, Cockburn shared the bourgeoisie’s social world but not its worldview. Time and again, his distaste for imperialist propaganda, sharp eye for hypocrisy and contrarian streak led him to ruffle the feathers of mainstream liberalism (and its reformist “socialist” apologists). It was especially for that capacity that we appreciated his writings, despite the gulf between his radical liberalism and our revolutionary Marxism.

In his search for dissenting perspectives and buried truths, Cockburn at times drew from our newspaper. Dennis Perrin, whose columns were printed in Cockburn’s *CounterPunch* publication, describes picking up Alex’s mail and finding among letters and bills “*Workers Vanguard*, the *American Guardian*, *Foreign Affairs*, and yes *The New Republic*.” In the wake of the 1979 Greensboro Massacre, in which five leftist anti-racist activists and union organizers were gunned down by the Ku Klux Klan, the Spartacist League initiated its first labor/black mobilization against Klan/Nazi terror. The action brought out some 500 people, mainly black auto workers, in downtown Detroit. Cockburn wrote in his Press Clips column:

“Courage would demand issuance of a call for anti-fascist demonstrations in every major city—like the one sponsored by the Spartacists in Detroit. But our liberals are too busy with Teddy [Kennedy].... Action against native fascism is left in the hands of the Trotskyists and other sectarians, who at least can understand the meaning of murder when they see it.”

He followed the maxim of his father, the noted journalist Claud Cockburn: “Never believe anything until it’s officially denied.” He also performed filial duty in describing

his father as “the greatest radical journalist of his age,” even though that journalism included hack service for the Stalinists as they crushed insurgent workers during the 1930s Spanish Revolution. While Alexander Cockburn enjoyed a certain status as an in-house critic to the liberal left, the leash only had so much slack before he would get pulled back with an abrupt snap. This became especially evident during the 1980s, as U.S. imperialism ramped up Cold War II against the Soviet Union.

He got into hot water in 1982 during the civil war in El Salvador, where Soviet- and Cuban-backed leftist insurgents fought a U.S.-backed death squad regime. We raised the call for military victory to the leftist insurgents and declared: “Defense of Cuba and the USSR Begins in El Salvador!” Cockburn also called for the insurgents’ victory in his *Voice* columns. The problem for him was that the bulk of the left was mobilizing behind the bourgeois-liberal demand for a “political solution”—i.e., a “peace” on the imperialists’ terms—complete with (failed) attempts to exclude our contingents from protests. To appease the anti-Spartacist cabal, Cockburn, even while describing our call for military victory as “unimpeachable,” sought to distance himself by calling us “assholes” with “more than a whiff of Marxism-Leninism-Bonkerism.” But as we wrote: “You can’t be both for battlefield victory to win war and for the popular front that wants a negotiated solution to stop it.”

In 1984, a witchhunt was launched against Cockburn for receiving \$10,000 from the Institute of Arab Studies to write

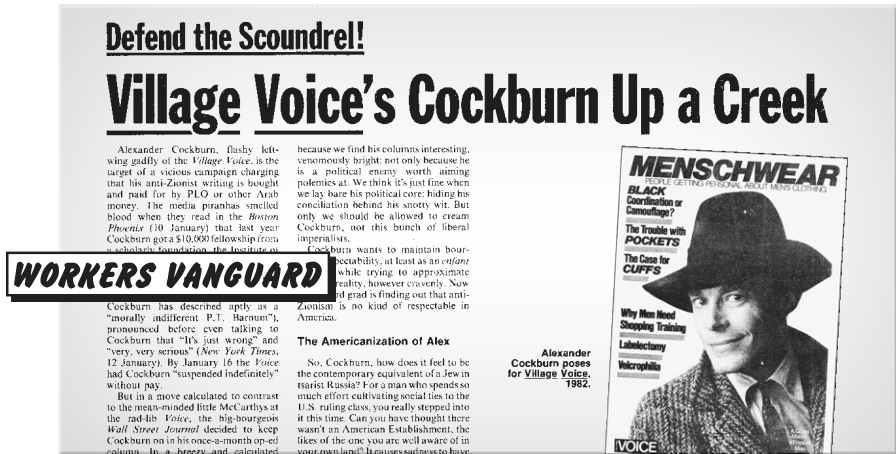
# A Radical Liberal Worth Arguing With

# Remembering Alexander Cockburn

book imprint, he continued to launch salvos against the inanities, absurdities and mendacities of the capitalist spin machine. While the Democratic establishment was in the midst of grooming Obama to be head overseer on the capitalist plantation, Cockburn called it straight: “You can actually see him trimming to the wind, the way you see a conjuror of moderate skill shove the rabbit back up his sleeve. Above all

he is concerned with the task of reassuring the masters of the Democratic Party, and beyond that, the politico-corporate establishment, that he is safe” (“Obama’s Game,” *CounterPunch*, 24 April 2006).

In his better moments, Cockburn took on not only the Democratic establishment but also its fake-socialist water boys. In 2009, he exposed Jeff Mackler of Socialist Action as the moving force in cancel-



**WV No. 346 (20 January 1984) defended Cockburn, target of witchhunt for taking “Arab money” for planned book on Israeli invasion of Lebanon.**

when we lay bare his political core: hiding his conciliation behind his snotty wit. But only we should be allowed to cream Cockburn, not this bunch of liberal imperialists” (WV No. 346, 20 January 1984). As it turned out, Cockburn landed on his feet, retaining a column in the *Wall Street Journal* and later writing for the *Nation*. In a 1986 *Nation* column Cockburn thanked *Workers Vanguard* for publishing a map of the U.S. showing the severity of sodomy laws in each state (see WV No. 408, 18 July 1986), writing “I didn’t know the Sparts were into that kind of thing.”

As the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy approached its ultimate crisis, leading to the destruction of the Soviet workers state in 1991-92, Cockburn began lurching to the right. His positions, always idiosyncratic, became more erratic. In 1990, he supported imperialist sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq as a lesser evil to war, a stance also adopted by the International Socialist Organization, among others. Cockburn eventually became a staunch critic of the sanctions, which in the space of a decade killed at least a million and a half Iraqis. In his later search for allies in the fight against U.S. intervention, Cockburn turned to the right-wing libertarians, including the Ron Paul crowd. Ever quirky, to the end he refused to give credence to the overwhelming evidence of global warming.

Nevertheless, from the pages of the *CounterPunch* newsletter, which he co-edited, along with its later Web site and

ing an antiwar picket against Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Recalling a similar incident in 1988, Cockburn described Mackler as “longer of tooth, but no closer to socialism.”

Just weeks before his death, Cockburn recounted how the reformist left liquidated into the petty-bourgeois, populist Occupy Wall Street, writing that self-proclaimed “Leninists threw aside their Marxist primers on party organisation and drained the full anarchist cocktail.” He wrote, “If ever I saw a dead movement, it is surely Occupy,” and called on “those veteran radicals” who had proclaimed “a religious conversion to Occupyism, to give a proper account of themselves” (“Biggest Financial Scandal in Britain’s History, Yet Not a Single Occupy Sign; What Happened?” *CounterPunch*, 6 July 2012). Always a radical liberal, Cockburn never lost hope that such hopeless types would recant in the face of his polemic.

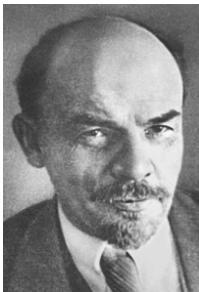
When Cockburn was on the ropes at the *Village Voice* in 1984, we offered him a spot writing columns for WV. We noted, “Since our wage scale will hardly keep you in cologne, if you come to work for us you can take Arab money so long as you tell us about it.... (In fact, if you work for us you will need Arab money.)” We also observed: “If a man is to be judged partly by the enemies he makes, it must be said that Cockburn has many of the right ones.” We will surely miss Alexander Cockburn, always quotable and often right. ■



TROTSKY

## For Trade-Union Independence from the Bourgeois State

*The police massacre of striking miners in South Africa has touched off massive anger at the Tripartite Alliance government of the African National Congress, Communist Party and COSATU union federation. Revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky highlighted the need to struggle against the growing together of the trade unions with the capitalist state in one of his last writings before his assassination by a Stalinist agent in August 1940.*



LENIN

There is one common feature in the development, or more correctly the degeneration, of modern trade union organizations throughout the world: it is their drawing close to and growing together with the state power. This process is equally characteristic of the neutral, the Social Democratic, the Communist, and “anarchist” trade unions. This fact alone shows that the tendency toward “growing together” is intrinsic not in this or that doctrine as such but derives from social conditions common for all unions.

Monopoly capitalism does not rest on competition and free private initiative but on centralized command. The capitalist cliques at the head of mighty trusts, syndicates, banking consortiums, and so on, view economic life from the very same heights as does state power; and they require at every step the collaboration of the latter. In their turn the trade unions in the most important branches of industry find themselves deprived of the possibility of profiting from the competition among the different enterprises. They have to confront a centralized capitalist adversary, intimately bound up with state power. Hence flows the need of the trade unions—insofar as they remain on reformist positions, that is, on positions of adapting themselves to private property—to adapt themselves to the capitalist state and to contend for its cooperation.

In the eyes of the bureaucracy of the trade union movement, the chief task lies in “freeing” the state from the embrace of capitalism, in weakening its dependence on trusts, in pulling it over to their side. This position is in complete harmony with the social position of the labor aristocracy and the labor bureaucracy, who fight for a crumb in the share of superprofits of imperialist capitalism. The labor bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the “democratic” state how reliable and indispensable they are in peacetime and especially in time of war. By transforming the trade unions into organs of the state, fascism invents nothing new; it merely draws to their ultimate conclusion the tendencies inherent in imperialism....

It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses, not only against the bourgeoisie, but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: **complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state.** This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.

—Leon Trotsky, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940)

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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14 September 2012

WORKERS VANGUARD

# Bitter Defeat of Illinois Caterpillar Strike

## Bosses Declare Class War, Union Tops Fold

In a bitter and ominous defeat for labor, on August 17 a 15-week-long strike against the Caterpillar corporation by 780 members of International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) Local Lodge 851 in Joliet, Illinois, ended when workers narrowly voted to accept a draconian contract. With profits at an all-time high, and growing, the construction and mining equipment giant demanded blood, and got almost every drop. Workers hired at the plant before May 2005 will have their wages frozen, while workers hired after that will receive a minuscule one-time 3 percent raise in the six years of the contract. Health care premiums will double, the defined-benefit pension plan will be eliminated, and seniority rights will be weakened. At an August 19 union meeting, several workers told *Workers Vanguard* salesmen that they were angry about the level of scabbing during the strike. Many have criticized their union representatives for negotiating a rotten contract.

Compounding a decades-long war on labor, resulting in a decline in both the incomes and general well-being of working people, the magnitude and scope of contract concessions demanded by the bosses have accelerated since the beginning of the Great Recession. Strikes have been infrequent (there were only 19 major walkouts in 2011), and those that did not suffer outright defeat served, with rare exception, only to mitigate the extent of the damage. Routs such as the one at Caterpillar are increasingly the rule. Robert Bruno, a professor at the University of Illinois, pointed out that Caterpillar broke the link between a company's profit and what it pays its workers. He predicted, "Other companies now will follow suit" (*Chicago Tribune*, 18 August).

The labor movement has been crippled by union leaders who, parroting the bosses, have told their members that sacrifice is needed to assure the continued existence of American industry against foreign competition. This chauvinist appeal has been used to sell givebacks in health insurance coverage, work rules, seniority rights and wage scales. In the 1980s, the corporations mounted an assault on the wages of younger union members by introducing a lower entry-level tier. Wages have since been reduced to near Walmart levels by the infamous "two-tier" system, leading many embittered younger members to call into question the value of unions at all. Caterpillar in 2006 was among the first in major industry to introduce a two-tier wage system that *permanently* relegates a section of the workforce to the bottom. However, it was the 2008 auto contracts

forced upon workers at GM, Ford and Chrysler by UAW top Ron Gettelfinger and the newly elected president Barack Obama—part of the bailout of the auto bosses—that opened the floodgates for two-tier agreements in other union contracts throughout this country.

It used to be commonplace to reassure angry workers that when things got better their sacrifice would be rewarded. That was then. Alongside large-scale and long-term unemployment, corporate profits have, on the average, risen at an annual rate of 4.8 percent over the past three years. Caterpillar is simply rolling in dough, amassing a record \$4.9 billion in profits last year, and it topped that rate with a cool \$1.7 billion in profits during the second quarter of this year. This is coming right out of the hides of the workers. In the midst of the strike, the Joliet plant manager, Carlos Revilla, claimed that the top-tier workers were paid 34 percent above "market level" and declared: "Paying wages well above market levels makes Joliet uncompetitive" (*New York Times*, 22 July). In brief, the bosses are aiming for one tier—the lowest wage they can get away with paying.

So much for the fabled goose that lays eggs of gold. As Karl Marx pointed out, the growth of wealth and profits at one pole of the capitalist system (the owners of the means of production) necessitates the growth of misery and want at its other pole (the working class). The left-leaning British *Guardian* (27 July) offers this grim assessment of the plight of workers: "Human agency consists of two choices: take it or leave it. To want more say in what you do for a living, for how much and under which conditions, and to want the same for others, is crazy." With considerably less empathy, the *Wall Street Jour-*

*nal* (17 August) article on the Caterpillar contract said it straight out: "The vote to return to work is the latest sign that unionized employees have little power to buck employers' demands for concessions."

Such obituaries were common in the years prior to and at the onset of the Great Depression. In the early 1930s—as now—there were legions of the unemployed supposedly eager to snatch up the jobs of the employed if these dared to resist the bosses' demands. The labor statesmen of those days agreed to concession after concession and union membership plummeted. But in grinding down those they exploit, the capitalists sow the seeds of class struggle. Seemingly out of nowhere in 1934, massive citywide strikes in Toledo, Minneapolis and San Francisco—all led by reds—erupted. In the years that followed leading up to World War II, there were thousands of strikes and the giant industrial unions of the CIO were forged. Social Security and unemployment benefits, designed to placate the workers, did little to quench the fires of labor militancy.

By 1934 the ferocity of the Depression had abated little. Although there was an uptick in hiring, unemployment continued at record levels. Nevertheless, workers increasingly looked for union organization to end their atomization and desperate circumstances, in the process gravitating toward those with experience in the class struggle for guidance. The historic 1934 Minneapolis truckers strike, which led the way for nationwide expansion of the Teamsters union, was centrally led by Trotskyist militants. As James P. Cannon recounted in *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944):

"Trotskyism introduced into all the plans and preparations of the union and the strike,

from beginning to end, the class line of militancy; not as a subjective reaction—that is seen in every strike—but as a deliberate policy based on the theory of class struggle, that you can't win anything from the bosses unless you have the will to fight for it and the strength to take it."

The essence of this message resonated throughout the country. Using the means at their disposal—from facing down the scabs and their armed guardians, the police, to seizing the plants—the workers shut down production. Nothing came out of the struck factories and no one went in to replace the strikers. For the most part, the bosses were forced to accede to the workers' main demands. Throughout this tumultuous period, the union tops, with few exceptions, maintained their ties and allegiance to the Democratic Party, which no less than the Republicans is a party of the capitalist class. But the workers' increasing militancy challenged labor's ties to the Democrats, with many considering moving to form some sort of labor party.

The reformist Communist Party, which led thousands of the most militant workers and influenced a number of unions, sidetracked that impulse by all but explicitly throwing its support to Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1936 presidential election. This was the American version of the Stalinist "popular front" policy, which sought to find allies for the Soviet Union among the "good" imperialists. Within five years, U.S. workers were drawn into the interimperialist World War II, killing their class brothers on the battlefields of Europe and Asia, just as two and a half decades before their fathers and uncles were mobilized through patriotic calls to join in the fratricidal carnage of WWI.

At the end of World War II, the victorious U.S. imperialists launched the Cold War against the USSR, the homeland of proletarian revolution. Simultaneously they employed their "America first" supporters in the trade-union bureaucracy to drive the reds out of the union movement. That helped set off, from the mid 1950s to today, a fairly steady decline in membership to the current dismal levels.

The grinding exploitation of the profit-driven capitalist system will again goad the workers into action. To end capitalism's depredations, such militancy requires a class-struggle leadership to forge a revolutionary proletarian party to overturn through socialist revolution the American imperialist behemoth, the main enemy of all the world's working and oppressed people. ■



Minkanic/Chicago Tribune

Caterpillar machinists gather outside IBEW union hall in Joliet to vote on contract, August 17.

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WV Photo

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## A Marxist Critique of the “New Atheists”

Part One of this article appeared in WV No. 1007 (31 August).

With the decline of religiosity and the authority of the Christian churches in the working class in late 19th-century Europe, a current of bourgeois intellectuals sought to justify the capitalist system on supposedly scientific (material-

### PART TWO

ist) grounds. An influential expression of this current in Britain as well as the United States was “social Darwinism” as expounded by T.H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer. They held up the “survival of the fittest” as the primary engine not only of evolutionary “progress” but also of human society. The bankruptcy of small, family-owned businesses and farms was likened to the extinction of species of birds or mammals that had failed to adapt to a changing natural environment. For Huxley and Spencer, a worker who became a foreman was analogous to a strong male tiger besting a weaker rival in fighting to mate with a tigress.

In the present-day English-speaking world, a somewhat similar intellectual niche is occupied by sociobiology. It is, as they say, no accident that leading “new atheists”—Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris—are strong proponents of this doctrine and its offspring, evolutionary psychology. Adherents of sociobiology have made outrageous claims regarding supposedly innate racial and sexual differences. Steven Pinker, a member of the advisory board of Harris’ Project Reason Foundation, praised the “clear historical discussion” of IQ in Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein’s grotesque, pseudoscientific tract asserting black inferiority, *The Bell Curve* (1994). (For a debunking of this racist tract, see “The ‘Bell Curve’ and Genocide U.S.A.,” WV No. 611, 25 November 1994; reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12, February 1995.) Similarly, when Larry Summers, then president of Harvard, infamously declared in January 2005 that women have less innate aptitude for the hard sciences, Pinker declared that there was “enough evidence for the hypothesis to be taken seriously.”

While Dawkins, Dennett and Harris steer clear of Pinker’s more outrageous claims, they all indulge in some variant of biological determinism, the view that genes dictate behavior. In *The Selfish Gene* (1976), the book that first brought him to prominence, Dawkins wrote that

a society based simply on a genetic “law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live. But unfortunately, however much we may deplore something, it does not stop it being true.” Such statements earned Dawkins sharp criticism in *Not In Our Genes*, a work of prominent scientists attacking the racist, pseudoscientific field of sociobiology, particularly its defense of bogus studies upholding the inheritability of IQ.

Even as he distanced himself from the racist arguments about IQ, Dawkins’ foam-flecked review of *Not In Our Genes* accused its authors of presenting a “bizarre conspiracy theory of science” simply for having argued that scientific research (like

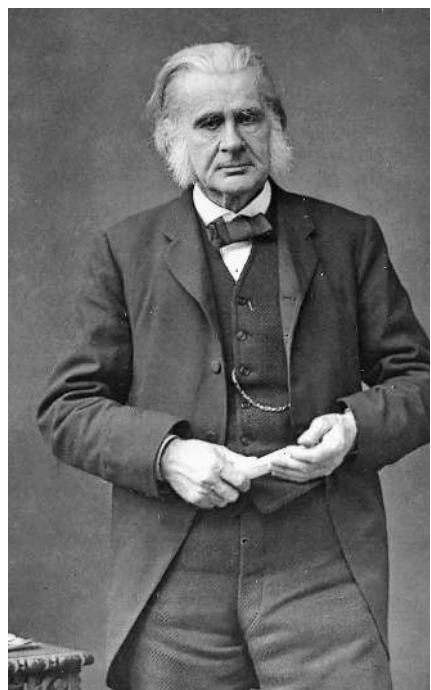
indulge their pseudo-materialist itch is in discussing the basis of religious belief. Asking in his book *Breaking the Spell* why religion “means so much to so many people, and why—and how—does it command allegiance and shape so many lives so strongly,” Dennett answers with a confused and confusing hodgepodge, jumping back and forth between the animism of primitive hunter-gatherer bands and the Christian churches in present-day America. He relates later religious doctrine to universal psychological behavior that supposedly originates with our early hominoid precursors, such as the need for young children to accept the authority of their parents. One could just as well argue

arose as an adaptation of Catholicism in 16th- and 17th-century Europe along with the growing economic weight of the capitalist merchant class. This fact, which is accepted by far more than just Marxists, has no value in Dawkins’ realm of “memetic” fantasy.

### Nationalism Trumps Religion in the Modern World

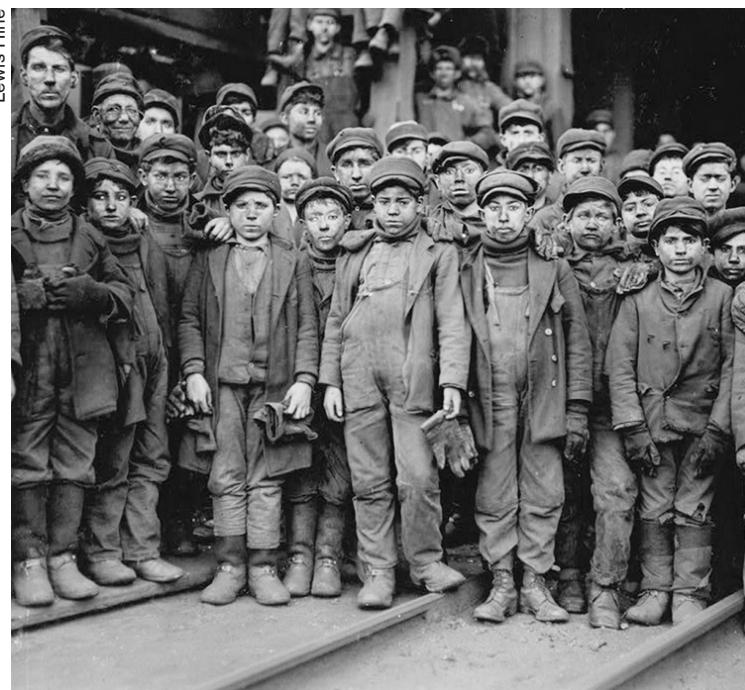
By focusing on the crimes perpetrated in the name of religion, the “new atheists” disregard and therefore implicitly deny that national chauvinism is the main source of popular ideological support for wars, oppression and social injustice. Racism, too, is given short shrift. In *The End of Faith*, Sam Harris argues:

“Religion is as much a living spring of violence today as it was at any time in



W&D Downey

Left: T.H. Huxley, 19th-century pioneer of “social Darwinism,” which justified capitalist immiseration. Right: Child labor at Pennsylvania coal mine, 1911.



Lewis Hine

everything in class society) may be influenced and at times distorted by ideological biases. In *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981) and other works, the late, renowned paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould exposed in great depth how “scientific” racism based on consciously or unconsciously twisted data is used to justify the lording of one class, sex or race over another (see “Science and the Battle Against Racism and Obscurantism,” WV No. 797, 14 February 2003). Gould was also among those evolutionary biologists who refuted the fallacy that Darwinian evolution by natural selection can be applied to human *social* development.

Where Dawkins and Dennett really

that a child’s awareness of the relation between cause and effect (e.g., kicking a ball with the front of one’s foot makes it move forward) predisposes him to scientific rationality in later life.

In *The God Delusion*, Dawkins contends that religious behavior can be called “a human universal” demanding “a Darwinian explanation.” His “explanation” is the absurd notion of a religion “meme,” an obscurantist term defined as a unit of cultural inheritance. This concoction is presented as an analogue of the gene, supposedly replicating, mutating and responding to selective pressure. Dawkins asserts that “memetic natural selection” offers “a plausible account of the detailed evolution of particular religions” without indicating why one religious “meme” might be selected over another, or even the rules whereby such “memes” are transmitted. Here Dawkins has crossed over into the realm of vulgar pseudoscience. Unlike memes, genes actually exist—they can be sequenced, spliced, transplanted and traced. Memes are pure idealist sophistry.

Sociobiology purports to provide a materialist explanation for the inequalities, injustices, ideological currents and brutalities of modern society while rejecting the historical (dialectical) materialist understanding that these are fundamentally rooted in class divisions and class struggle. V.I. Lenin observed in “The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism” (March 1913) that “man’s *social knowledge* (i.e., his various views and doctrines—philosophical, religious, political and so forth) reflects the *economic system* of society” (emphasis in original). Protestantism, for example,

the past. The recent conflicts in Palestine (Jews v. Muslims), the Balkans (Orthodox Serbians v. Catholic Croats; Orthodox Serbians v. Bosnian and Albanian Muslims), Northern Ireland (Protestants v. Catholics), Kashmir (Muslims v. Hindus), Sudan (Muslims v. Christians and animists), Nigeria (Muslims v. Christians), Ethiopia and Eritrea (Muslims v. Christians), Sri Lanka (Sinhalese Buddhists v. Tamil Hindus), Indonesia (Muslims v. Timorese Christians), and the Caucasus (Orthodox Russians v. Chechen Muslims; Muslim Azerbaijanis v. Catholic and Orthodox Armenians) are merely a few cases in point. In these places religion has been the *explicit* cause of literally millions of deaths in the last ten years.” (emphasis in original)

In fact, in the modern world religion is a subordinate aspect of nationalism, the predominant bourgeois ideology. A basic common bond linking all bourgeois politicians—from social democrats to fascists—and all bourgeois intellectuals—from secular humanists to religious fundamentalists—is elevating the interests of their nation-state above all other interests.

Since the 18th century, almost all major wars (excluding some civil wars) have been fought on the basis of national, not religious, divisions. Indeed, coreligionists have often been pitted against one another. In both the First and Second World Wars, young American men who were Protestants, Catholics and nonbelievers fought and sought to kill young German men who were Protestants, Catholics and nonbelievers. And vice versa. The primacy of national identity over religious affiliation is also evident in wars in the Islamic world. In the almost decade-long war between Iraq and Iran in the 1980s, Arab

Alcock/Chicago Sun-Times



Rebecca Goldstein

Sociobiology proponent Steven Pinker praised “discussion” on IQ in *The Bell Curve*, which asserted inherent black inferiority and called to slash funds for ghetto schools. Left: Inner-city Chicago high school.

Shi'ite Muslims fought against Persian Shi'ite Muslims.

The “new atheists” ascribe a religious character to what are actually national conflicts. Like Harris, Dawkins contends that religious fanaticism is the main factor underlying the “Israeli/Palestinian wars” and the Northern Ireland “troubles.” The state of Israel was founded in 1948 by Jewish settlers from Europe who were perforce culturally European and in most cases physically distinguishable from the indigenous Arab population of Palestine. The Zionist rulers cohered a new nation in the Near East with its own distinct and unique language, modern Hebrew. A large fraction of the Israeli population does not believe in or practice Judaism as a religion. Such non-believing Israelis are for the most part just as virulently hostile to the dispossessed and oppressed Palestinian Arabs as are their religious-minded fellow nationals.

Superficially, the communalist conflict in Northern Ireland does appear to be based on religious divisions, since the antagonistic parties are conventionally called “Protestants” and “Catholics.” In this case, religious affiliation has been an important factor in defining divergent national identities. Nonetheless, there are atheist and other non-believing “Protestants” and “Catholics” in Northern Ireland. What then is the source of the conflict?

In the 17th century, successive English governments promoted settlement in northern Ireland by Protestants (Calvinists), mainly from Scotland, to strengthen their colonial rule over the native Irish inhabitants. The latter retained adherence to the Roman Catholic church. In that era, the language of the Irish people was still Gaelic, not English, a national (not religious) factor differentiating them from the Scottish-derived community in the northern part of the island. In the 18th century, many members of that community emigrated to Britain’s North American colonies, where they were conventionally called “Scots-Irish,” indicating their primary as well as secondary country of origin.

The British bourgeoisie’s rule over its Irish colony was based on its profit-accumulating, imperialistic interests, as the Spartacist League/Britain noted in writing about Queen Elizabeth’s visit to the Republic of Ireland last year (“Down With the Monarchy and the ‘United Kingdom!’” *Workers Hammer* No. 215, Summer 2011). The article stressed “intransigent opposition to all forms of nationalism—first and foremost the dominant English chauvinism” and concluded: “Our programme is for workers revolutions to overthrow all the capitalist regimes in Britain and in Ireland, North and South. The myriad forms of national oppression will be resolved when workers revolution has swept away capitalist rule on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea.”

## Oppenheimer, Heisenberg and the Bomb

Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Victor Stenger all cite with approval an aphorism by prominent American physicist Steven Weinberg: “Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it, you’d have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, it takes religion.” As Marxists, we do not share in this moralistic framework. But even on its own terms the statement is wrong, implying that “good people” have never committed atrocities when motivated by nationalism but only when motivated by religious fanaticism.

An instructive counterexample was provided by two world-class physicists during the Second World War: J. Robert Oppenheimer in the U.S. and Werner Heisenberg in Germany. Oppenheimer, a left-leaning intellectual whose relatives, friends and colleagues included supporters and sympathizers of the Communist Party, was the chief scientific administrator for the development of the atomic bomb (the Manhattan Project). In leading



Henry Doyle

**National oppression of Ireland: Massacre of Irish royalists by English parliamentary troops at Drogheda, 1649 (left); protesters confront British paratroopers in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1971 (right).**

Belfast Telegraph



the work, he was motivated by conventional national loyalty. Also, like many other scientists involved in the Manhattan Project, he was driven by hatred of fascism (falsely conflated with support to the Allied imperialists) and fear that Nazi Germany would first develop and use nuclear weapons to win the war.

Germany surrendered two months before the A-bomb was first successfully tested at Los Alamos, New Mexico, on 16 July 1945. The decision was then made to drop the two bombs the U.S. had available on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No one thought that Japan had the capability of building such a bomb, and a few top U.S. government officials and military men (e.g., General Dwight Eisenhower) expressed reservations about using atomic bombs against the Japanese

who loyally served the Nazi regime through the war. He was not an adherent of fascist ideology and did not join the Nazi party. He was not an anti-Semite and had closely collaborated with Jewish physicists before Hitler came to power in 1933. During the Nazi regime, he defended the scientific validity of the theoretical work of Albert Einstein and other Jewish physicists against the demented advocates of “German physics.” Heisenberg served under the Third Reich out of conventional German patriotism. In her memoirs, his widow offered the following explanation of her husband’s mindset: “Heisenberg loved the country of his childhood and youth; he did not believe that the picture that was now looming so appallingly was the true countenance of Germany. Within himself he carried the picture of another

physicists “were spared the decision as to whether or not they should aim at producing atomic bombs.” But he did not indicate that he and the others would have refused to do so out of moral scruples.

The bourgeois-rationalist “new atheists” do not acknowledge the pernicious role of national chauvinism in the world today because they are themselves loyal to protecting the power and position of their “own” capitalist nation-states. While religion has served as an ideological pillar for ruling classes since the advent of class society, bourgeois society cannot exist without basing itself on nation-states. Each of these states serves a nationally delineated capitalist class, which requires state power—i.e., armed bodies of men—to protect its rule and property against challenges from both the working class and capitalist rivals in other countries. Each bourgeoisie portrays itself as representing the entire people, holding that the workers and oppressed social groups share a common interest in preserving and bolstering the national economy and armed forces.

The aims of socialism are counterposed to all variants of nationalism. As Lenin stated:

“Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the ‘most just,’ ‘purest,’ most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism, the amalgamation of all nations in the higher unity....

“The proletariat cannot support any consecration of nationalism; on the contrary, it supports everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers; it supports everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations.”

—*Critical Remarks on the National Question*  
(October-December 1913)

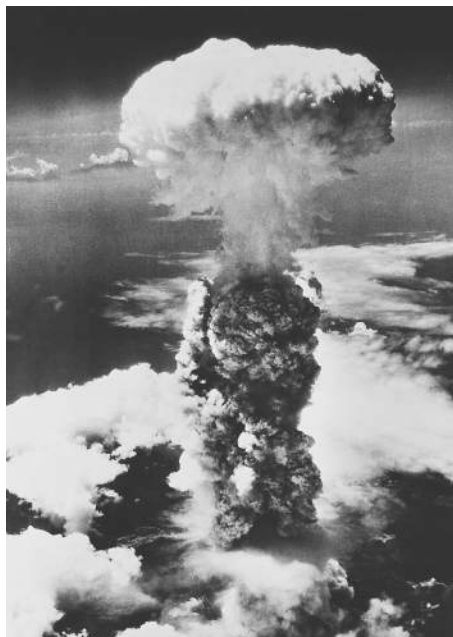
Patriotic jingoism in the imperialist (advanced capitalist) states expresses the predatory appetites of the ruling bourgeoisies. Nationalism in the impoverished and oppressed semicolonial countries expresses *both* the aspirations of the weaker, dependent bourgeoisies to exploit their own working people and their manipulation of the masses’ legitimate hatred of imperialist subjugation. Marxists support the just struggles of oppressed countries against imperialist domination. But in doing so we *oppose nationalist ideology*, calling instead for the internationalist class unity of the workers in oppressed and oppressor countries against the ruling classes of both.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



U.S. Department of Energy

**Left: Robert Oppenheimer with General Leslie Groves, military head of Manhattan Project. Right: Atomic bomb explosion over Hiroshima, August 1945.**



Corbis

civilian population. But Oppenheimer did not. He justified the mass murder of defenseless men, women and children in the name of liberal idealism. The very destructiveness of these weapons, he contended, would lead to a new, benign world order of peace and international cooperation. In a speech given when he resigned as head of the Manhattan Project in October 1945, Oppenheimer pontificated:

“If atomic bombs are to be added as new weapons to the arsenals of a warring world, or to the arsenals of nations preparing for war, then the time will come when mankind will curse the names of Los Alamos and Hiroshima.

“The peoples of the world must unite, or they will perish. This war, that has ravaged so much of the earth, has written these words. The atomic bomb has spelled them out for all men to understand.... By our works we are committed, committed to a world united, before the common peril, in law and in humanity.”

—quoted in Richard Rhodes,  
*The Making of the Atomic Bomb*  
(1986)

This is the language of bourgeois secular humanism in the imperialist epoch. It should be noted that the U.S. dropped the bombs as a message of U.S. military superiority, intended not for Japan and its imperialist rulers, who by that time were all but defeated militarily, but for the Soviet Union, a degenerated workers state.

Werner Heisenberg was one of a small number of top-level German physicists

Germany for which he thought he had to persevere” (Elisabeth Heisenberg, *Inner Exile: Recollections of a Life with Werner Heisenberg* [1984]).

In 1942, at a high-level conference on armaments attended by Albert Speer and other directors of the German war economy, Heisenberg explained the technical possibility of constructing an atomic bomb (“as large as a pineapple”) that could destroy a city. When Speer questioned him about the feasibility of producing such weapons, Heisenberg expressed uncertainty that it could be done in time to affect the outcome of the war. Speer decided not to pursue such a project. After the war, Heisenberg wrote that German

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# For Workers Solidarity Around the Pacific Rim!

## U.S.-South Korea Trade Pact Targets China, Korean Workers

Last November, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 in the small port town of Longview, Washington, were locked in a battle for the very existence of their union against the giant grain-exporting conglomerate EGT. That same month, more than 40,000 trade unionists and others mobilized in Seoul, South Korea, in a massive protest against ratification of the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KorUS FTA), which went into effect in March this year. For U.S. grain exporters like EGT, the agreement promises a profit bonanza. With the treaty's elimination of South Korean tariffs on two-thirds of U.S. farm products, the U.S. government predicted a \$1.9 billion growth in American agricultural exports.

U.S.-based Bunge, the dominant partner in EGT along with South Korea's STX and Itochu of Japan, salivated over the prospect. "Bunge CEO Sees High Grain Prices Into Fall," declared a Fox Business news headline (26 April). The trade agreement was designed to secure U.S. imperialism's plunder and subordination of South Korea, the world's fourth-largest grain importer, which already gets 80 percent of its corn from the U.S. The KorUS FTA threatens to wipe out what remains of South Korea's farm sector. The payoff for American agricultural giants will come through the increasing immiseration of South Korea's working people enforced by that country's capitalist regime. And behind South Korea's capitalist rulers stands a U.S. military presence—today numbering 28,000 troops—that dates back to the 1950-53 Korean War.

EGT's efforts to bust the ILWU were backed by the full force of the capitalist state, from local and regional cops and courts to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and, in the end, an armed Coast Guard flotilla. EGT did not succeed in driving the ILWU out of its Longview terminal, but the union is now saddled with a deeply concessionary contract including 12-hour shifts and the serious undermining of the union hiring hall and other hard-won gains. In announcing the first ship to be loaded under the settlement with EGT, ILWU International president Bob McEllrath heralded it as evidence of the "partnership between the ILWU and EGT" and the beginning of "many years of safe, productive operation at the facility, and stability in the Pacific Northwest grain export industry." As we wrote in "Lessons of the Battle of Longview" (WV No. 996, 17 February):

"But the whole battle at Longview gives the lie to the bureaucracy's promotion of a 'partnership' between the longshoremen and the EGT owners, a lie that is at the heart of the virtually unchallenged offensive by the bosses and their state that has gutted the unions in this country. 'The 'stability' of the multibillion dollar U.S. grain industry, the biggest and most profitable in the world, means skyrocketing food prices and the starvation and death of millions around the globe. The world's grain supply is controlled by a handful of agribusiness giants, including U.S.-based Cargill and Archer-Daniels-Midland. At home, their profits are created through the increasing exploitation of the working class, which is why EGT was out to bust the ILWU at its Longview terminal."

Now, with the union in the midst of negotiations over the master grain handlers agreement in the Pacific Northwest, all the grain export bosses will be aiming to boost their profit margin by taking it out of the hide of the ILWU. The

most elementary precondition for mobilizing the fighting strength of the union to take them on is the understanding that employers are not the "partners" of longshoremen but their *class enemy*. That in turn means opposing the capitalists' depredations against workers and oppressed peoples of the world.

While the ILWU International leaders speak hypocritically of international working-class solidarity, their defense of "our grain industry" is a body blow against

economically backward countries. Rivalry, dominance and subjugation are in the very nature of relations between nations in the modern imperialist epoch.

Today's industrial economies are far from the domains of "free market competition" conjured up by bourgeois economists. The very process of capitalist competition has led to the domination of monopolies—giant cartels and trusts. The huge amounts of capital needed for profitable investment mean that banks and other financial enter-

example of "free trade," imperialist style. While the protectionist AFL-CIO misleaders opposed NAFTA as detrimental to "American" industry, we accurately denounced it as the "free trade rape" of Mexico by U.S. imperialism. The economic devastation NAFTA wreaked on the workers and peasants of Mexico was briefly encapsulated by liberal journalist David Bacon in the Web publication *truthout* (11 October 2011):

"Mexico lost a million jobs just in the first year the treaty took effect. Because the treaty allowed US grain companies to dump corn in Mexico, 1.3 million farmers lost their livelihood as well. Pork dumping cost another 120,000 jobs. Eliminating its domestic content laws cost the jobs of thousands of auto parts workers. 'Six million people from Mexico came to live and work in the US as a result of this displacement.'"

The KorUS FTA is the U.S.'s second most comprehensive FTA after NAFTA. Unlike Mexico, South Korea has a modern industrial base that competes with the imperialists in some global markets and has its own investments abroad. But at the same time, South Korean capitalism remains dependent on both imperialist finance capital and U.S. military protection. Besides imposing trade conditions on South Korea that favor the U.S., the treaty also aims to counter inroads into South Korea by Japan, its former colonial master and Wall Street's principal imperialist competitor in Asia. In the first half of 2012, Japan's annual rate of direct investment in South Korea nearly doubled over the same period in 2011.

The South Korean government of Lee Myung-bak's New Frontier Party and most of the country's ruling class supported the agreement on the grounds that it would lessen dependence on trade with China and deepen South Korea's alliance with the U.S. against North Korea, which, like China, is a bureaucratically deformed workers state. The treaty's bourgeois opponents, led by the main opposition Democratic United Party, argued that without revisions, the pact could encroach upon South Korea's economic sovereignty.

Under a 2010 Supplemental Agreement, resolving an issue that had previously blocked the trade pact's ratification by the U.S. Congress, South Korea will cut its tariffs on U.S. auto imports in half for the next five years, while the U.S. will maintain its tariffs on imported South Korean cars. A South Korean delegation to Wash-



White House

Obama and South Korean president Lee Myung-bak at press conference in Seoul, March 25.

the interests of the workers and oppressed across the globe. A resolution passed at the recent ILWU convention opposes "free trade" agreements like the KorUS FTA and the broader Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) currently under negotiation, from the American chauvinist perspective that they cost "millions of U.S. jobs." What this means in practice is a "partnership" with U.S. capitalists to boost their profits by pitting U.S. workers against their working-class brothers and sisters abroad. Far from fighting unemployment, which is rooted in the capitalist system, such economic protectionism poisons the struggle of U.S. workers against their exploiters at home.

Had EGT succeeded in loading the first ship using scab labor under Coast Guard protection last February, the ILWU's fight would have depended crucially on the refusal of dockworkers in the destination port of Kunsan, South Korea, to unload the scab cargo. The ILWU's only true allies are the workers of the world. Forging unity across national lines requires U.S. workers to oppose their "own" rapacious imperialist rulers. The Spartacist League/U.S. and the International Communist League's sections in Asia—the Spartacist Group of Japan and Spartacist League/Australia—oppose the KorUS FTA from this revolutionary perspective of proletarian internationalism. *For international proletarian solidarity! Down with the KorUS FTA!*

### U.S. Imperialists and South Korea

The so-called "free trade" pacts negotiated by Washington have nothing to do with equitable trade and distribution of the world's resources. On the contrary, they are aimed at advancing the economic and political dominance of America's capitalist rulers against their rivals through the further subjugation of dependent and

prises are dominant. The need to maintain high rates of profit, especially through exploiting cheap labor in more backward countries, and to obtain raw material and sell manufactured goods drove the countries where capitalist production first developed—centrally the European powers, the United States and Japan—to send out their armies in competition with each other. Though most of the colonies they seized are now nominally independent, the small handful of imperialist countries still dominates the world economy. They not only engage in countless wars against neocolonial peoples but twice in the last century engulfed the world in conflagrations—World Wars I and II—in which they battled each other to redivide the world.

The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) provides a graphic



AFP

June 28: Thousands of construction workers stage rally in Seoul at launch of national strike.

ington objected that the supplemental deal was struck when military tension on the Korean Peninsula was at a high point following an alleged North Korean attack on South Korea’s Yeonpyeong Island in late November 2010. The delegation protested that “the vast majority of Korean people believe that the outcome of the supplemental deal is an unacceptable humiliation and an overly high price to pay for the Americans’ role in providing national defense.”

U.S. Sets Sights on China

As the South Korean group “Occupy FTA” accurately observed on its Web site (4 November 2011), “The Korea-US FTA is not just an economic agreement. It will further integrate South Korea into the US-led world order politically and militarily.” Behind the trade pact lie greater stakes than squeezing more U.S. profit out of South Korea. Its main aim is to strengthen the U.S. imperialists’ hold on their South Korean client state as an anti-Communist bulwark against North Korea and, more critically, China.

The U.S., which has been tied down in brutal neocolonial occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, is planning over the next several years to redeploy more than half its military forces to the Pacific, continuing to pursue the military encirclement of China (see “U.S. Imperialism Tightens Military Vise on China,” WV No. 1005, 6 July). In addition, Washington is working to build up an anti-China economic and political bloc in the region. A 2006 report of the U.S. Congressional Research Service titled “The Rise of China and Its Effect on Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea: U.S. Policy Choices” advised among other things that Washington “actively counter-balance the rising economic influence of China and the trading networks it is building by pursuing free trade agreements and closer investment relations with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.”

In February 2006, the month following the report’s final update, the Bush administration initiated the KorUS FTA. The U.S. has since signed separate trade deals with 20 countries, and current negotiations for the much larger Trans-Pacific Partnership draw in countries around the Pacific Rim. Japan has expressed interest in the TPP but has thus far been denied participation in the meetings.

In World War II, the U.S. and Japanese rulers fought to determine which of these two gangs of robbers would dominate Asia and the Pacific, with China as the main treasure. But this prize was snatched from the clutches of victorious U.S. imperialism by the 1949 Revolution, in which a peasant-based uprising led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) drove out the imperialist overlords and their local henchmen and overthrew capitalist-landlord rule. Despite its deformation from birth by the political rule of a parasitic bureaucratic caste under Mao’s Stalinist regime, the Chinese Revolution was an important victory for the working people of the world, establishing the collective property forms of working-class rule essential to building an egalitarian socialist society. Since that time, the capitalist powers have been intent on overturning the revolution by one means or another.

The key prerequisite for socialism is the elimination of economic scarcity. This, in turn, requires the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat internationally, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries, in order to develop and expand modern industrial production worldwide. This aim was the fundamental premise of the October Revolution of 1917, when Russian workers under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party established their own class rule based on workers councils (soviets) in a country still heavily mired in economic backwardness.

But in China from the outset, the deeply nationalist Maoist regime embraced the utopian-reactionary dogma of building “socialism in one country,” which was adopted by J.V. Stalin in late 1924 in the course of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. With the Soviet proletariat isolated by the failures of revolutions in Germany and elsewhere in Europe after

World War I, encircled by hostile imperialist powers and suffering widespread want and exhaustion following the destructive Civil War, a privileged bureaucratic caste was able to wrest political control of the workers state from the workers themselves. The resulting anti-working-class bureaucratic regime—a parasite on the socialized property forms established by the revolution—actively opposed revolutions in other countries in a futile attempt to conciliate the imperialists.

So, too, have the Chinese Stalinists in power, for whom Stalin’s regime has served as a model. The CCP bureaucracy has suppressed the exercise of political power by the Chinese proletariat, which is critical to the healthy operation of a planned economy as well as to the international exten-



Captain C.W. Huff/National Archives

Seoul, 1950. U.S. imperialists slaughtered over three million people, reduced Korean Peninsula to rubble in three-year war.

sion of the revolution. Instead, in order to gain the wherewithal for technological and industrial development, the Beijing regime under Deng Xiaoping and his successors has acted as labor contractors for international capitalists, offering up Chinese workers for exploitation in designated sectors of the economy. This in turn has both fostered the growth of internal forces of capitalist restoration and encouraged imperialist economic penetration.

Contrary to the claims of many self-proclaimed socialists, China today is not capitalist but continues to be a deformed workers state, with heavy industry, the land and the core financial system remaining collectivized state property. Because economic decisions are not driven centrally by the rate of profit, the country has been sheltered from the full destructive anarchy and extreme ebbs and flows of the capitalist world market. In the face of the global recession, the Chinese government has been able to undertake a level of national “stimulus” investment in infrastructure inconceivable in the capitalist world, maintaining a healthy rate of economic growth.

U.S. Troops Out of South Korea!

Korea was a colony of imperialist Japan from 1910 until Japan’s 1945 defeat in WWII. In the aftermath of the Japanese surrender, worker/peasant uprisings spread throughout the country, including under U.S. occupying forces in the south. In the north, Korean Communist partisans under Kim Il Sung backed by the Soviet Red Army took power, establishing a deformed workers state similar in kind to Stalin’s USSR.

In the Korean War, the U.S. and its puppet forces slaughtered *three and a half million* Koreans in order to smash the revolution underway on the peninsula and “roll back” the Chinese Revolution. Massive intervention by Mao’s People’s Liberation Army drove the invading imperialists back to the 38th parallel, where the war ended in a truce. The capitalist ruling class of South Korea owes its very existence to the U.S. imperialist military, whose massive presence is a dagger aimed at North Korea and China as well as the militant South Korean working class.

For some two decades after the Korean

War, South Korea remained a backward, peasant-based society, while in Soviet-aided North Korea, which had been literally bombed to rubble by the U.S., planned development brought modern industry, infrastructure and relative prosperity. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 cut North Korea off from its principal economic partners and left it isolated under a decades-long imperialist embargo. This precipitated an economic crisis greatly worsened by a series of natural disasters as well as by the misrule of the Pyongyang bureaucracy, which has taken on an extreme expression of a Stalinist cult of personality and the nationalist pipe dream of economic “self-sufficiency.” In line with Washington’s policy of using its control of food stocks

the struggle to mobilize the U.S. working class against its rulers and their predatory military adventures.

In the U.S. and other capitalist countries, defense of the workers requires a political struggle to replace the “labor lieutenants of capital” with a new leadership based on a program of class struggle. In the deformed workers states, the defense and extension of the revolutionary gains requires workers political revolutions to oust the bureaucratic misrulers and establish the rule of workers councils based on defense of the existing socialized property forms and working-class internationalism.

Class Struggle in South Korea

The growth of massive, modern industry in South Korea created a powerful proletariat, which waged explosive class battles in the 1980s in the face of a brutal military police state, forging trade unions in key sectors of the economy. The gains of those struggles have been under assault particularly since the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, when the country underwent austerity and economic restructuring under the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, greatly increasing its dependence on foreign investment and exports. From a high of almost 20 percent in 1989, union affiliation has dropped by half. Temporary or contract workers represent up to 70 percent of all workers according to a South Korean union official.

South Korean workers, who have carried out the kind of mass strike action and plant occupations that have long since been buried by the American union misleaders, could teach workers in the U.S. a thing or two about class struggle. But militancy is not enough. Workers in South Korea are also hamstrung by misleaders, whose class collaboration takes the form of nationalism, drawing on the country’s history of domination by foreign powers. Both of the principal union federations—the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) forged by the proletarian battles of the 1980s and the older and more conservative Federation of Korean Trade Unions—push support for the political representatives of the capitalists.

In a political bloc with liberal bourgeois forces, the KCTU opposes the KorUS FTA on the basis of South Korea-first bourgeois nationalism, championing the “ability of governments from relatively less developed countries to pursue independent policies to meet economic and social needs and sustainable social and economic development” (kctu.org/9928). To think that a *capitalist* South Korea will ever either be “independent” or “meet economic and social needs” of the masses is a pipe dream. The South Korean capitalist class will always ally with the imperialists in its attempt to crush Korean workers North and South, however much it may resent mistreatment by its foreign masters. Nationalism is an obstacle to

*continued on page 11*

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

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# South Africa...

(continued from page 1)

no mistake: the blood of these massacred workers is on the hands of the *leaders* of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance and their government, who have demonstrated yet again their reliability to the Randlord rulers and their imperialist senior partners.” As under apartheid rule, the role of the capitalist state in “democratic” South Africa is to defend the rule and profits of the South African bourgeoisie—and its senior partners on Wall Street and in the City of London—against the oppressed black, coloured (partly Malay-derived, mixed-race population) and Indian toilers.

The fundamental racial divide between the white minority that lives in First World conditions and the mass of the populace living in Third World poverty continues to exist—and, in fact, has deepened under the Tripartite Alliance. The “new” South Africa has now surpassed Brazil as the country in which the chasm between the wealthy at the top and the masses at the bottom is the largest in the world. Here is the bitter fruit of the SACP’s 80-plus years of subordination to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC in the name of the “national democratic revolution.” The workers killed in Marikana, like the many who were assassinated in the heroic struggles against apartheid, will be avenged when the working class, leading all the oppressed, sweeps away neo-apartheid capitalism and establishes a *black-centered workers government*.

### Cops’ Killing Spree Exposed

Shortly after the Marikana massacre, South African president Jacob Zuma declared that he had instructed the police “to do everything possible to bring the situation under control and to bring the perpetrators of violence to book” (*New York Times*, 16 August). The cops had no difficulty divining the “perpetrators” Zuma had in his crosshairs. ANC mining minister Susan Shabangu assured a meeting of mining executives that the government was “determined to isolate bad elements” such as the Lonmin strikers.

In the aftermath of the massacre, considerable evidence has surfaced proving that trigger-happy cops hunted down and killed strikers in cold blood. Academic researcher Peter Alexandra, survivors of the shooting and other sources report that police erected a barrier of razor wire and barbed wire around the workers’ meeting place, leaving only one exit, where armored

cars were parked. When cops began to shoot at the trapped workers, some ran toward the exit and were mowed down, in scenes filmed by television cameras.

An investigation by Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Greg Marinovich indicates that only a minority of those killed died in the events that were filmed. Other workers ran from the exit and hid in an outcropping of rocks. Cops used tear gas to flush them from their hiding places and, as the workers appeared, shot them like wild beasts. One of the strikers told the Johannesburg *Star* (5 September): “People were shot for fun while down on their knees with their hands up in the air and begging for their lives.” The gut-wrenching footage of South African cops using high-calibre assault rifles to gun down striking miners armed with lit-

taken to Andrew Saffy Hospital, which is owned by Lonmin. A striker recounted (Associated Press, 5 September): “Police then went to the hospital and dragged him away. They beat him up and they killed him. We found him in the mortuary.”

The Marikana massacre is a bitter illustration of the fact that the police—black and white—are paid enforcers of racist capitalist rule. In South Africa and elsewhere, the International Communist League demands: *Cops and security guards out of the labor movement!*

### Neo-Apartheid Capitalism: Bosses Profit, Workers Starve

Mining has powered the South African economy from the late 19th century under British colonial empire-builder Cecil Rhodes up through the apartheid

Marikana are employed by labor brokers at lower wages than their co-workers and with no medical, pension or other benefits. In *Spartacist South Africa* No. 7 (Winter 2011), our comrades called for “smashing the parasitic labour-broker middlemen through *class-struggle means*.” Their article stressed: “The fight to defend brokered workers should be tied to a struggle to organise the unorganised and to defend immigrant workers and others of the most oppressed layers in the working class” (see “For a Class-Struggle Fight Against Labor Broker Parasites!” WV No. 985, 2 September 2011).

Originating as a split from the NUM in 1998, the AMCU has been growing especially among the lowest-paid sections of the mining workforce. In “The Rise and Rise of AMCU” (miningmx.com, 2 August), a



Peter Magubane

**Apartheid 1968: Gold miners’ barracks in Johannesburg (left). Neo-apartheid 2012: Miners’ shantytown near Rustenburg mine (right).**



AP

tle more than homemade wooden spears evoked the 1879 slaughter at Ulundi carried out by British colonial forces, who mowed down similarly armed Zulu warriors by the hundreds using Gatling guns, an early type of machine gun.

There are also widespread reports of beatings and torture of miners arrested following the cop massacre. One of them recalled that at the police station he was made to stand against the wall with his hands above his head while police beat him in the ribs with a club. He witnessed others having their fingers stomped on with boots. One strike leader, Noki Mgcineni, was shot in the foot and was

Afrikaner regime installed in the 1940s to today, under neo-apartheid capitalist rule. While the economy has somewhat diversified in the last half century, mining still accounts directly or indirectly for well over a quarter of the country’s economic activity and employs half a million workers.

South Africa produces the vast majority of the world’s platinum, the key ingredient for emissions-capping catalytic converters in automobiles. However, with the global auto industry caught in the doldrums of the world capitalist recession, the previously high prices for the metal, which led to a profit boom in recent years, have plummeted more than 25 percent in the past year. This is a major factor behind the bosses’ campaign to drive down their main cost, labor. The class battles at Lonmin’s Marikana complex, where workers are fighting for a steep hike in their miserably low wages, follow months of attempts by platinum mining companies in South Africa to close mines or otherwise cut back operations.

Platinum mining is particularly labor-intensive and dangerous. Rock drillers toil in some of the deepest mines in the world at temperatures approaching 115 degrees in cramped, damp, poorly ventilated areas where rocks can fall at any time. Drill operators, who perform the most grueling and dangerous work, are mostly migrants, mainly from the Eastern Cape but also from other South African provinces and neighboring countries like Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In the shantytowns, where they live in makeshift tin shacks, outside toilets are shared among up to 50 people. There are few water taps, raw sewage leaks from burst pipes, and children scavenge in rubbish dumps.

Government statistics tracking mine fatalities—on average one miner in South Africa dies every three days in underground accidents—deliberately understate the dangers by not including those miners who contract tuberculosis, silicosis and other work-related diseases. These victims of brutal exploitation are simply sent back to their homes in rural areas or in neighboring countries to die.

A third of the underground workers at

mining trade journal noted that the NUM was originally born out of the lowest job categories of miners, mainly from gold mines, with 60 percent of its members coming from outside South Africa. These were mostly illiterate migrant laborers. But now that number has dropped to below 40 percent, with an increasing portion of the NUM membership consisting of white-collar mining staff.

In the aftermath of the Lonmin massacre, NUM bureaucrats, SACP spokesmen and other Alliance leaders were calling for state repression against the AMCU. In a 24 August statement, the COSATU leadership claimed to see a “co-ordinated political strategy to use intimidation and violence, manipulated by disgruntled former union leaders, who have been discredited, expelled for ill-discipline, in a drive to create breakaway ‘unions’ and divide and weaken the trade union movement.”

This treacherous violence-baiting has been echoed around the world by reformist “socialists” that have long been in the camp of the bourgeois ANC. In the U.S., the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) snidely posed whether “the AMCU or any other force deliberately led workers into a situation hoping for a massacre” (*Liberation*, 4 September). The PSL’s political cousins in the Workers World Party (WWP) posted a statement, “Police Massacre Striking Miners” (workers.org, 20 August), that hails the SACP, NUM and ANC for their reaction to the police massacre, favorably quoting a statement by the SACP Central Committee bemoaning “the tragedy” at Marikana. But that SACP statement *does not denounce the police for gunning down the strikers!* Instead, it directs its fire at the “violence associated with AMCU.” The WWP favorably cites an August 20 NUM statement (“Behind the Lonmin Violence”) while editing out a portion that “appeals to all workers to go back to work and for the law enforcement agencies to crack down [on] the culprits of the violence and murders”!

Denouncing the backstabbing by the NUM/COSATU tops, the Spartacist South Africa leaflet stated: “We defend AMCU against state repression, and we defend the right of the mineworkers to be rep-

## Spartacist League/SYC Forums

### Who Owns America? A History of the U.S. Ruling Class

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# For International Solidarity with South African Miners!

On August 30, some 100 protesters marched outside the South African Consulate in New York City to denounce the August 16 police massacre of 34 striking mineworkers and the arrest of some 270 workers at Lonmin Platinum's Marikana mine in South Africa. This united-front protest, initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee, demanded: "Free Jailed Miners—Drop All Charges! Victory to the Striking Miners!" In an effort to generate support for the embattled miners, the PDC—a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—appealed to trade unions and leftists as well as black and immigrant organizations with diverse political viewpoints for unity in action.

Some of those who endorsed the demonstration represent unions that have been under attack in the U.S., like Dan Coffman, president of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 21 in Longview, Washington, which fought against the multinational EGT's union-busting drive, and Kevin Gundlach, president of the South Central Federation of Labor in Wisconsin, which has been under state government attacks.

Other endorsers included Steve Hedley of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union in Britain; Kenneth Riley, president of International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 in Charleston; the New York City chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Kareem Lover of Harlem's Circle of Brothers; the International Haiti Support Network; the Occupy Wall Street Labor Outreach Committee; and black academic Cornel West. Among those attending the protest were the Internationalist Group, which endorsed and spoke, and the League for the Revolutionary Party. One of the speakers was Matthew Swaye, a young activist of Stop

Stop and Frisk who has been targeted by the NYPD for filming cops going after black and Latino youth.

Kevin Harrington, vice-president of Transport Workers Union Local 100 in New York, brought solidarity greetings, and a number of transit workers were present. He remarked that the attack on South African mineworkers is against "the right of workers to organize and is an attempt to smash trade-unionism," adding that such attempts are also "alive and well in the U.S."

An SL spokesman noted: "This massacre exposes the truth that the blood of black workers is just as cheap today under the neo-apartheid capitalism of the 'new South Africa' as it was under apartheid." He commented that the Tripartite Alliance government "only offers a continuation of capitalist exploitation and oppression. Similarly, in the U.S. the bourgeois parties—Democrats, Republicans and Greens—represent the interests of the capitalist exploiters. We say: Break with the parties of capital! What's necessary is an internationalist multiracial workers party!"

A PDC speaker remarked: "August 16, 2012, will go down in history for one of the bloodiest crimes ever committed against the workers movement in South Africa.... The 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."

The Marikana slaughter recalls the most infamous apartheid-era slaughters—Sharpeville 1960 and Soweto 1976—which caused massive international outrage. However, in response to this latest massacre the AFL-CIO tops and much of the left have

resented by AMCU if that's what they desire." In general, revolutionaries favor organizing workers in one union in a given industry as a means of maximizing the strength of the working class against the capitalist oppressor. However, we do not condemn all splits within the trade-union movement out of hand; these need to be judged on a case-by-case basis. For example, the breakaway of the CIO from the craft-union-based AFL in the 1930s in the U.S. laid the basis for the organization of the mass production workers.

In South Africa today, the NUM's class treachery is fundamentally responsible for undermining workers' unity in the mining industry. Many of the lowest-paid workers have sought redress by joining the AMCU. To be sure, new unions are not in and of themselves an answer to the attacks mounted by the bosses. What is necessary is the forging of a class-struggle leadership in the unions, based on unswerving independence from the bourgeoisie and its state. This is bound up with the fight to forge a revolutionary vanguard party.

## ANC Squabble: Fat Cats vs. Wannabes

Many in the top echelons of the COSATU bureaucracy have become integrated into the post-apartheid black elite, a thin layer that has been showered with privileges by the (still mainly white) capitalist rulers in return for upholding their class rule against the (mainly black) working class. The black "gravy trainers" are exemplified by Cyril Ramaphosa, an ANC leader and former NUM general secretary. Ramaphosa was a leading negotiator for the "power sharing" deal that, after years of massive struggles by the working class and the township poor, replaced apartheid rule in 1994 with the ANC-led government. Today Ramaphosa

is one of South Africa's richest men, with an industrial empire worth some \$250 million—including a partial ownership stake in Lonmin. When Ramaphosa offered a few slivers of that wealth to pay the funeral costs of the slain Lonmin miners, one striker said, "They should have used it to increase our wages."

The capitalist ANC has enjoyed the overwhelming political loyalty of the black majority because it is seen as the party that brought liberation from white minority rule. A *Mail & Guardian* (31 August) article noted that former president Thabo Mbeki urged the capitalists to support the ANC because "people trust us, we fought for them.... They will be patient." After 18 years of neo-apartheid administered by the Tripartite Alliance, the patience of much of the country's dispossessed masses has run out. The current wave of strikes is but the latest outpouring of union struggle and comes on top of steadily growing township protests, in which blacks demanding decent houses, electricity, running water and toilets are regularly met by police firing rubber bullets.

The massive anger at the base of society is reflected in a distorted way in bitter divisions at the top of the ANC and the Alliance. With populist appeals to disillusioned workers and youth, former ANC Youth League (ANCYL) president Julius Malema has emerged as the most outspoken representative of anti-Zuma forces in the ANC. Four years ago, he was among the foremost promoters of Zuma's ascendancy in the ANC. Now, having been expelled from the party earlier this year, he goes around denouncing ANC and NUM leaders as "bloodsuckers." As always, he spews racialist demagoguery in order to divert workers from a *class* understanding of the neo-apartheid order. Marxists give no political support to *any*



WV Photo

**New York City: August 30 PDC-initiated protest outside South African consulate.**

alibied the perpetrator—the Tripartite Alliance government of the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party and the COSATU union federation—which sent its police to protect the mine owners' profits. A statement by the AFL-CIO called "for calm to return to the platinum mine...so that miners can return to work." We say: Victory to the miners' strike, which has continued and grown after the vicious attacks by the police!

Other demonstrations and acts of protest took place internationally. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers sent a letter to South African president Jacob Zuma recalling its support to the anti-apartheid struggle and commenting: "We did not organize against such tyranny only to see such blatant attacks on workers unfold under the government of the ANC." During a protest organized by labor and community activists on August 25 at the South

African Consulate in Toronto, a comrade of the Trotskyist League of Canada called for cops out of the unions and for a black-centered workers government in South Africa. In London on August 31, the Spartacist League/Britain protested outside the England-South Africa cricket match along with representatives of the Foil Vedanta Campaign, an organization fighting against destruction brought about by the British-Indian mining giant Vedanta. In highlighting the criminal history in Africa of the London-based Lonmin company, an SL/B speaker stressed the significance of "solidarity from workers in Britain, not least the black and Asian population from former British colonies."

In leaflets and chants, our comrades have raised the call: An injury to one is an injury to all! For international labor solidarity with the striking miners! ■

of the politicians of the capitalist ANC, regardless of their particular policies.

Malema, who heads four companies, sports Gucci suits and has a penchant for luxury cars, has nevertheless gained a lot of popularity by calling for nationalization of the mines. As the SSA has written:

"The Malema/ANCYL nationalisation policies are *bourgeois* reform schemes which would not end the superexploitation of the mineworkers. Their policy document proposes joint share holdings between the current mine owners and the government (with a majority share for the latter), meaning that the bourgeois state becomes a partner in directly exploiting the workers."

— see "Populist Demagogue Malema and the ANC," WV No. 1006, 3 August

Counterposed to bourgeois "nationalization" schemes, the SSA fights for a black-centered workers government that will expropriate the mines, banks and industry without compensation, linking that struggle to the fight for workers power in the imperialist countries. Seizing the mine shafts, machinery and mountains of finance capital—now mainly in London, New York and other banking centers—that the mining bosses have heaped up through more than a century of superexploitation of mainly black labor will be a necessary step in liberation from capitalist oppression.

However, the proletariat cannot realize this potential when it is chained to its exploiters through the Tripartite Alliance, a nationalist popular front—the South African variant of a governmental coalition binding reformist workers organizations to the bourgeoisie. Through such class-collaborationist coalitions, Stalinist Communist parties have derailed working-class revolutions from China in 1927 to France and Spain in the 1930s and Italy and Greece following World War II.

The Tripartite Alliance was the key agency by which South Africa's capitalist rulers diverted the huge confrontations in the 1980s between the apartheid regime and the oppressed masses. The SACP, the leading political force in COSATU, bears central responsibility for sacrificing a rising wave of black labor militancy on the altar of nationalist class collaboration. Writing after the 1994 elections, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president, we warned: "The ANC-led nationalist movement cannot achieve any semblance of 'liberation' for the nonwhite masses since it is committed to maintaining South African capitalism, which has always been based on the brutal exploitation of the black toilers" ("South Africa Powder Keg," *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12, February 1995). This truth is hammered home every day in the mines, factories and townships.

The liberation of the black and other non-white masses can never be achieved short of the overthrow of South African capitalism. South African workers, who are exploited by a capitalist class whose holdings extend throughout southern Africa, have the social power to liberate not only the downtrodden masses in their own country but those of the entire region groaning under neocolonial misery. As part of a socialist federation of southern Africa, a black-centered workers government would expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class, thus laying the material foundations for social equality. But this perspective can be fully realized only through the extension of socialist revolution to the most advanced capitalist countries and the establishment of a collectivized, planned world economy. What is necessary is to break workers from the Tripartite Alliance and to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead the fight for proletarian rule. ■

# New Jim Crow...

(continued from page 12)

which resulted in the end of the Jim Crow system of legal segregation in the South. Taking the place of naked white supremacy were racist government policies, such as the 1970s “war on crime” and the subsequent “war on drugs,” which were sold to the population in coded language. She also makes a connection between black people being “trapped in jobless ghettos” and being “hailed off to prison in droves.” But while Alexander provides effective and compelling anecdotes and statistics detailing the second-class status of the millions ensnared in the prison system—what she calls the “New Jim Crow”—her wet noodle of a prescription is “movement building” to pressure the government for reform.

This liberal strategy has time and again misled those who seek to fight the evils of the racist capitalist system into reliance on the very government and political parties that oversee that system. Not surprisingly, Alexander’s approach is echoed by the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) and other left groups that have embraced her as their latest muse. In *Socialist Worker* (19 October 2011), the ISO crows that its Campaign to End the New Jim Crow coalition will push for “a fundamental shift from a punitive model to a healing and transformative model of justice.”

We await the ISO’s prediction of when pigs will fly. Organized violence in furtherance of the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie is the very purpose of the state machinery—the cops, courts, prisons and military. The ISO’s shameless sowing of illusions to the contrary is a measure of the fidelity of these “socialists” to the capitalist order. For her part, Alexander asserts that over the last three decades “the nature of the criminal justice system has changed.” Not at all.

The simple truth is that the mills of capitalist “justice” will continue, as always, to grind out victims for the penitentiary from among the castoffs of a system rooted in exploitation and racial oppression, and that the state will use its repressive force—including deadly force—against those victims. As Marxists, we support struggles for whatever reforms can be wrested from the capitalist rulers, including not least the fight to abolish the racist death penalty. But justice will be done only when the capitalist order—with its barbaric state institutions—is shattered by a proletarian socialist revolution that establishes a planned economy with jobs and quality, integrated housing and education for all, thus smashing the basis for black oppression.

## The Perpetuation of Caste Oppression

The ISO brags that its Campaign to End the New Jim Crow will jump-start a “movement that challenges the racist ideologies which have helped produced [sic] these conditions.” But black oppression is not the product of bad ideas. It is *materially rooted* in and central to American capitalism, which was built off the blood and sweat of black labor, from chattel slavery to the assembly line.

The enduring color bar has proved invaluable to the capitalist masters in dividing workers and weakening their struggles against the bosses. It has also served

to retard the political consciousness of the American proletariat by obscuring the irreconcilable *class* divide between labor—white, black and immigrant—and its exploiters.

Originally, the myth of an inferior race was created to ensure a stable, self-reproducing supply of labor on the Southern plantations, where slavery was the central productive relationship. The “markers” of African descent were used to transform blacks into a permanent and perpetually vulnerable group relegated to subordinate status based on their skin color.

The Civil War smashed the slavocracy. But the promise of black equality was soon betrayed as the Northern bourgeoisie, driven by its profit motive, reconciled with the former slaveowners. The Compromise of 1877, under which the last Union troops were withdrawn from the South, brought a close to Radical Reconstruction, the most democratic period ever for black people in the U.S. There

regated at the bottom. The Spartacist League advances the program of revolutionary integrationism: Fighting against all forms of discrimination and segregation, we understand that the liberation of black people can be achieved only through integration into an egalitarian socialist society. This Marxist perspective is counterposed to both liberal integrationism, which holds that black equality can be achieved within the confines of American capitalism, and black nationalism, which despairs of the possibility of overcoming racial divisions through united class struggle.

## The Civil Rights Movement and Its Demise

The anti-Marxist ISO seems to have discovered “racial caste” since reading *The New Jim Crow*, headlining its review of the book in *International Socialist Review* (September-October 2010) “How the Racial Caste System Got Restored.” But for the ISO, and Alexander, the term caste



Evicted sharecroppers along Highway 60, Missouri, 1939.

would be no “40 acres and a mule” for the emancipated slaves, who were driven back onto the land as sharecroppers and tenant farmers.

As the U.S. developed into an emerging imperialist power, the Jim Crow system was codified throughout the South, leaving its imprint on the rest of the country as well. When blacks escaped their miserable conditions in the South, which were enforced by police-state control and Ku Klux Klan terror, by flocking to Northern industrial cities, they became a crucial part of the proletariat. At the same time, they faced all-sided segregation and discrimination, backed up no less by the state’s repressive apparatus.

The legacy of the defeat of Reconstruction is that the black population in the U.S., although not returned to slavery, was solidified as a *specially oppressed race-color caste*. To this day, black people face discrimination, in different degrees, regardless of social status, wealth or class position. The caste oppression of black people is shown not just by the mass incarceration of ghetto youth. For example, even Henry Louis Gates Jr., although a noted professor and personal friend of Obama, was arrested for trying to enter his own house three years ago.

Our Marxist understanding of race-caste oppression flows from the fact that black people have historically been a vital part of the American economy while at the same time in the mass forcibly seg-

is reserved for those directly subjugated by a particular “system of control”—identified today as simply mass incarceration—that can be eradicated within the framework of capitalism. This turns the nature of black oppression on its head.

The ISO and Alexander’s singular focus on mass incarceration as the embodiment of racial oppression has a purpose: it poses the fight for black freedom as a matter of “dismantling” that system, much as the civil rights movement dismantled Jim Crow. But mass black incarceration is both a symptom and a means of enforcing the special oppression of black people that is fundamental to American capitalism (see “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Black Liberation and the Fight for a Socialist America,” WV No. 955, 26 March 2010; reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 21, February 2011). While the liberal-led civil rights movement could successfully challenge de jure segregation in the South, it could not challenge de facto segregation and black inequality in the U.S. as a whole.

In the face of mass protest, the bourgeoisie eventually acquiesced to legal equality in the South. Jim Crow had grown anachronistic—the mechanization of agriculture had largely displaced sharecropping. At the same time, blacks had become a significant part of the working class in Southern as well as Northern cities, such as in the steel industry in Birmingham, Alabama. Jim Crow also was an embarrassment overseas as U.S. imperialism postured as the champion of “democracy” in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the industrial and military powerhouse of the non-capitalist world.

One factor helping to fuel the ISO’s dreams of building a popular movement for prison reform is that there are voices among the bourgeoisie complaining that the constant expansion and maintenance of the vast complex of prisons is just too costly, particularly at a time of massive budget shortfalls. But even if some sentences are scaled back and the prison population trimmed, it will no more achieve equality for black people than did the abolition of official Jim Crow.

Indeed, the civil rights movement was defeated in the mid 1960s when it came North, where it ran straight up against the conditions of black impoverishment and oppression woven into the fabric of American capitalism: mass unemployment, rat-infested slums, crumbling schools, rampant police brutality. These conditions could not be eradicated by Congress passing a new civil rights act.

The civil rights struggles in which the black masses courageously confronted the white-supremacist police states of the South profoundly shook U.S. society. In the mid 1960s, the fight for black freedom intersected growing opposition to U.S. imperialism’s counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam, helping fuel broader political radicalization. The role of Martin Luther King Jr. and other liberal black misleaders was to channel social protest back into the fold of the Democratic Party, enforcers of racist capitalist rule no less than the Republicans. Under both parties, the federal government mobilized its police and judicial machinery to assassinate and imprison black militants. In his 1967 book *Where Do We Go From Here?* King urged America’s rulers to “seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice which are the fertile soil in which the seed of Communism grows and develops.” King bemoaned the “sad fact” (for him) that many had been driven to “feel that only Marxism has the revolutionary spirit.”

The ISO and sundry other reformist outfits cover up for King by deceitfully portraying him as increasingly “revolutionary” in the period before his April 1968 assassination. In a *Socialist Worker* article (19 January 2009) on King’s 1967 book, the ISO’s Brian Jones reverently claims: “In that last year of his life, he campaigned for radical, social-democratic reforms that are *still* far beyond what the Democratic Party is prepared to accept.” Alexander likewise cites the “revolutionary potential” of the “human rights movement” that King championed at the end of his life. Lamenting that King’s “poor people’s movement” never came to fruition, the ISO and Alexander see this as a model for protesting “the New Jim Crow.” King spoke out in moral opposition to the war in Vietnam and went to Memphis in April 1968 to support black union members. But while various leftists portray such activity as a turn to the working class, the fact is that King remained a pro-Democratic Party reformer and *opponent* of militant struggle against capitalist rule.

## Black Democrats and the “War on Drugs”

The ISO’s call for a “new civil rights movement” has also been raised by the likes of Democrats Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, given particular impetus with the execution of Troy Davis last September and again with the murder of Trayvon

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trotskyist\_vancouver@shawcable.com

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### Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 13

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New York, NY 10116



Martin by a racist vigilante in Florida earlier this year. Both cases touched a raw nerve with black people. As they always have, Jackson and Sharpton acted to quell this outrage by funneling it into electoral politics and appeals to the federal government for “justice.” The ISO sang the same tune, arguing after the Trayvon Martin murder for “federal investigations of local police murder and brutality cases” (socialistworker.org, 30 July).

Alexander writes that some “black activists” were “wittingly or unwittingly... complicit in the emergence of a penal system unprecedented in world history.” With Sharpton and Jackson it was very wittingly, as they both spent years championing the “war on drugs,” a fact that goes unmentioned in her book. As noted in Christian Parenti’s *Lockdown America* (1999), Jackson long ago called for the appointment of a “drug czar” and more funding for local police, ranting that “drug pushers are terrorists.” He got what he wanted, today bragging on his Web site that he advocated the drug war way before it “became accepted public policy.” Sharpton, for his part, led “community” vigilantes against reputed pushers in the 1980s. And both Jackson and Sharpton have for years fulminated against guns in the ghettos. Seizing guns and other means of self-defense is as much a driving force of the NYPD’s racist “stop and frisk” policy as the “drug war.”

While we would favor any measure mitigating the drug laws, no amount of tinkering will change their reactionary nature or racist enforcement. We call for the *decriminalization of drugs*, just as we call for abolishing all other laws against “crimes without victims”—prostitution, gambling, pornography, etc. By taking the profit out of the drug trade, decriminalization would also reduce the associated crime and other social pathology that have led much of the black population to support drug law enforcement. Upholding the right to self-defense, we strenuously oppose the capitalist rulers’ attempts to disarm those they exploit and oppress. No to gun control!

The ISO’s dream of a “new civil rights movement,” one that can “fix” a “broken

no credit

NYC protest against state’s Rockefeller drug laws in June 2003.



system,” is premised on the tired liberal notion that the Democratic Party can be pressured into acting in the interests of working people and the oppressed. The ISO may now be somewhat embarrassed about it, but they were among those who enthused the loudest over Obama’s victory four years ago. Brian Jones wrote in *Socialist Worker* (6 November 2008) on election night: “Huge numbers of people are energized by the fact that, yes, we can elect a Black president. What we get from this president depends mostly on what happens to this energy, and less on the president himself.”

What working people, blacks and other minorities “got” from the Obama White House was a continuing assault on union gains, mounting job losses, deepening immiseration, the evisceration of civil liberties under the “war on terror” and record numbers of deportations. Despite much talk of shifting tactics, the Obama administration has committed *more*, not less, money and resources to drug law enforcement, which will only deepen the misery. Meanwhile, U.S. imperialism has rampaged around the world from Iraq to Afghanistan to Libya.

Black radical academic Cornel West, who wrote a foreword to *The New Jim Crow*, is trying to keep the hope alive, calling in a *New York Times* (25 August 2011) op-ed piece for support to “progressive” bourgeois politicians. West con-

cluded, “Like King, we need to put on our cemetery clothes and be coffin-ready for the next great democratic battle.” He’s right about one thing: the coffin is exactly where the road of Democratic Party pressure politics leads.

A Class-Struggle Perspective

In the ISO’s articles promoting a “new civil rights movement,” the working class barely registers on the radar screen. This is in keeping with their tailing of Alexander, who writes at length about the repressive measures adopted in the 1970s that mainly targeted black people but has not a word to say about the many thousands of workers, black and white, who engaged in hard-fought strikes in that period.

Black workers, who have for years had a higher rate of union membership than white workers, have been particularly hard hit by the onslaught against the labor movement kicked off by the 1981 smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers union and the deindustrialization that has devastated cities across the Midwest and Northeast. The war on labor has been accompanied by an ongoing wholesale assault on the gains of the civil rights struggles, from busing for school integration to affirmative action in the universities. Even voting rights are increasingly under attack, as seen with the rash of voter ID laws and the massive disenfranchisement of felons.

As the last hired and first fired, black people were always overrepresented in America’s reserve army of unemployed, to be tapped when the economy needed them and discarded when it soured. But the country’s rulers increasingly see the black ghetto poor as expendable, with the prison cell substituted for the paycheck. The ongoing economic crisis has only compounded this situation. In mid June, over half the blacks in NYC who were old enough to work had not held a job since the start of the year. As Karl Marx put it in *Wage Labour and Capital* (1849): “Thus the forest of uplifted arms demanding work becomes ever thicker, while the arms themselves become ever thinner.”

With the black ghettos simply written off, the bourgeoisie’s drive to imprison ever-increasing numbers of black youth reflects a sinister impulse to genocide. The great black comedian Richard Pryor once commented about the prisons, “Go in there looking for justice, and that’s all you find—just us.” If anything, that reality is even more staggering today. This lends added urgency to the observation in our seminal 1967 document “Black and Red”: “The fight must be fought *now* to maintain Negroes as part of the working class.”

Despite bearing the brunt of racist cutbacks and job losses, black workers continue to be a strategic component of the U.S. proletariat, which has the social power and historic interest to sweep away the decrepit capitalist system and its murderous police and prison apparatus. The all-sided attacks of the last four decades underscore the point made by Karl Marx at the time of the Civil War: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” By the same token, the failure of the union misleaders to mobilize labor’s power to combat black oppression has only further encouraged union-busting.

Under revolutionary leadership, black workers, who form an organic link to the downtrodden ghetto masses, will play a vanguard role in the struggles of the entire U.S. working class. It is the purpose of the Spartacist League to build a workers party that links the fight for black freedom to the struggle for proletarian state power. ■

Pacific Rim...

(continued from page 7)

the struggle of the working class for its own class rule internationally, which will make possible the cooperation and planning that are essential to meet the needs of the world’s peoples.

Ending the grinding exploitation of South Korean workers, liberating the country from imperialist domination and defending North Korean workers from imperialist-backed counterrevolution can be achieved only through a program of *revolutionary reunification*—socialist revolution to overturn capitalist rule in the South and workers political revolution in the North—linked to the fight for workers rule in Japan, the U.S. and other imperialist centers.

“National Unity”: Poison to Working-Class Struggle

The United Auto Workers (UAW) tops in the U.S. saluted the KorUS FTA after the signing of the 2010 Supplemental Agreement, trumpeting that Korean markets would now be opened up to American-made vehicles. These are the same bureaucrats who leapt at the chance to help Obama shove his 2009 union-busting bailout of U.S. automakers down their members’ throats, with its massive cuts to wages and benefits. In the case of the Korean FTA, the UAW officialdom has embraced unity with the bosses on the basis of “free trade” because the agreement benefits GM, Ford and Chrysler. In the early 1980s, the same chauvinist, pro-imperialist outlook led UAW bureaucrats to mobilize Detroit autoworkers to bash Japanese imports with sledgehammers, demanding more trade barriers.

For his part, ILWU International president McEllrath wrote Democratic Party

House leader Nancy Pelosi to oppose the pact, complaining that the FTA “awards special rights to foreign investors, allows banks to practice the same disastrous policies that resulted in the current economic downturn, opens domestic environmental laws to foreign challenge, increases the trade deficit, and costs jobs.” McEllrath’s letter urged support for the TRADE Act, which would uphold “Buy America” laws in cases where a trade agreement would otherwise override them. For the ILWU bureaucracy, whose members’ jobs depend on world trade, to line up with the protectionist chorus against the incursion of foreign imports is, on the face it, not only absurd but self-defeating. But it is a real measure of the loyalty of these labor bureaucrats to the profitability of American capitalism, profits extracted through the increasingly brutal exploitation of labor.

Both the ILWU and UAW leaderships have endorsed Obama for president, just as they did in 2008. The Democratic Party president, whose NLRB brought suits carrying hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines against the ILWU during its battle against EGT and who mobilized the armed might of the Coast Guard against the union, is still being sold as the only supposed “friend of labor” option. But while the Republicans openly revel in union-busting and racist reaction, the Democrats are no less a party of Wall Street. The difference is in how they serve the same interests. The Democratic Party’s pretense to be the friend of workers, blacks and immigrants is a lie designed to keep them tied to the system that perpetuates their exploitation and oppression.

The product of the bureaucracy’s allegiance to the Democrats can be seen in the growing masses of unemployed workers, in busted unions and in the misery of the ghettos and barrios. The workers need their own party, a multiracial revo-

lutionary workers party, in order to mobilize in struggle together with their true allies—the oppressed black and immigrant masses here, their Korean, Chinese, Mexican and Japanese brothers and sisters abroad—to put an end to Wall Street rule and establish a workers government and a planned, socialist economy.

Capitalism brought into being a world market and global division of labor that are the prerequisites for using the resources of the planet for the benefit of humanity. But that potential collides head-on with the private ownership of the means of production, based on the nation-state, that is the very foundation of capitalist production for profit. While production is socialized in giant industrial enterprises, its fruits are expropriated in the form of profit by a tiny minority, the capitalist class. And while so-called multinational enterprises have extended their reach into countries and continents around the world, to defend the profits they extract requires the armed force of a capitalist state. The globe has been divided up among the most developed, strongest capitalist powers, which compete with each other over who gets to loot the rest.

In its relentless search for profit, capitalism continually brings into being new sections of the *international* working class, while also throwing millions onto the scrap heap. As the collective producer of the wealth, the international proletariat has both every interest in reorganizing society on a new foundation, putting the world’s productive machinery at the disposal of the working people, and the objective capacity to do so.

A socialist world order might well count on the high productivity of U.S. agriculture to eliminate world hunger, the steel mills and heavy machinery production of China and South Korea to construct the world’s bridges, railroads and ships, and assembly plants from Korea

to Mexico and Brazil to produce automobiles. An international planned economy will apply the powerful resources of developed countries like the U.S., Japan and Germany to bring, over time, every country up to the same advanced level and continue to develop from there, making possible the final elimination of social classes, inequality and exploitation. The alternative under the continued domination of imperialism is to see the world driven to destruction through more capitalist economic crises and war.

To defeat the repressive forces of the capitalists and bring the working class to power requires first and foremost the forging of revolutionary Trotskyist parties that champion this perspective of international socialist revolution. As Karl Marx said more than 160 years ago: Workers of the world, unite! ■

Available in Korean on the ICL Web Site

북한에 대한 제국주의 도발들을 타도하라!

Down With Imperialist Provocations Against North Korea!

Reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 970 3 December 2010

중국 기형화된 노동자 국가를 방어하라! 티벳에서의 반혁명적 폭동들

Defend Chinese Deformed Workers State Counterrevolutionary Riots in Tibet

Reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 911 28 March 2008

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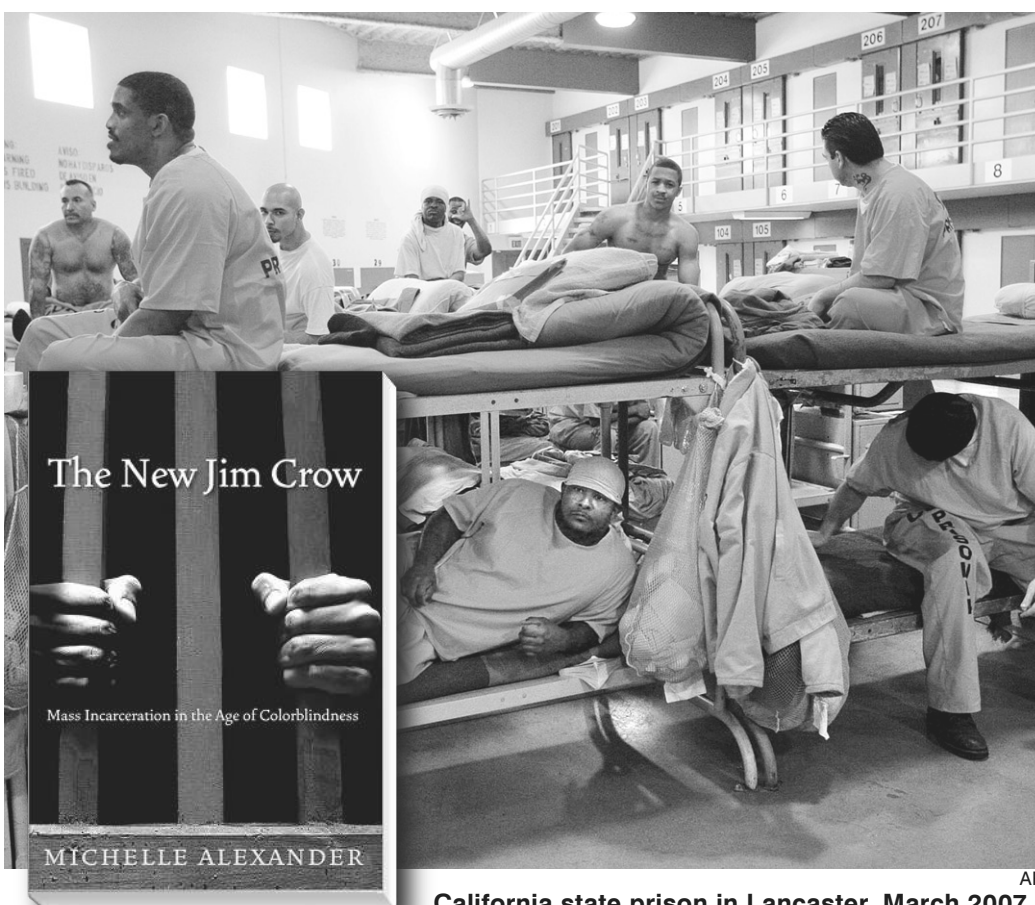
# WORKERS VANGUARD

## *The New Jim Crow* and Liberal Reformism

# Mass Incarceration and Black Oppression in America

Over 40 years ago, Black Panther militant George Jackson wrote in a letter from a California prison: “Blackmen born in the U.S. and fortunate enough to live past the age of eighteen are conditioned to accept the inevitability of prison. For most of us, it simply looms as the next phase in a sequence of humiliations” (*Sole-dad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, 1970). Since then, incarceration on a scale unexampled in the annals of American history has taken root, with black men by far the largest group in the prisons and jails, which hold some 2.3 million people. Many are victims of the bipartisan “war on drugs,” which has fueled a vast expansion of both police powers and the prison population. Taken together, the total of those locked up or on parole or probation is greater than the population of any U.S. city other than New York.

Over the past year, prisoners from California to North Carolina have engaged in hunger strikes against the appalling conditions in America’s overcrowded dungeons, fighting to wrest some vestige of humanity from their jailers. Eventual release is not the end of the abuse, as basic constitutional rights, including the right to vote and to bear arms, are stripped away and one door after another is slammed shut—jobs, public housing, social services—except the one leading back inside prison walls. In addition to the threat of incarcer-



California state prison in Lancaster, March 2007. AP

ation, black youth daily face harassment and brutalization at the hands of the cops. In 2011 alone, nearly 700,000 people, 87 percent of them black or Latino, were victimized by the New York Police Department’s “stop and frisk” offensive. Tens

of thousands in NYC have been saddled with criminal records for simply possessing small amounts of marijuana.

By vividly depicting the devastating “collateral consequences” of the caging of black America, Michelle Alexander’s

2010 book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* has tapped into deeply felt anger at the shattered lives and become a bestseller. A liberal civil rights lawyer, Alexander writes that she has been newly awakened to “the role of the criminal justice system in creating and perpetuating racial hierarchy in the United States.” Acknowledging that she is a part of a thin layer of more privileged blacks who benefited most from the civil rights movement, Alexander to her credit argues strongly against the prevalent disdain for the impoverished ghetto masses among blacks of her social standing.

*The New Jim Crow* also cuts against the myth that the U.S. has become a “colorblind” society, a central theme of the 2008 Obama campaign. Indeed, for “post-racial” liberals, his capturing the White House was proof positive of the dawning of a new era, never mind the cop terror and prison hell, unemployment, home foreclosures, desperate ghettos and prison-like inner-city schools that define life for masses of black people in capitalist America, now with its black overseer. Despite expressing some disappointment in the current administration, Alexander clings to the message of “hope,” titling one section of her book “Obama—the Promise and the Peril.”

Alexander details the racist backlash to the struggles of the civil rights movement, *continued on page 10*

## Victory to Chicago Teachers Strike!

SEPTEMBER 11—Some 30,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) went out on strike yesterday morning, the first school strike in Chicago in 25 years. Pickets in red CTU shirts massed at hundreds of public schools to fight the union-busting attacks that have been a centerpiece of Democratic mayor Rahm Emanuel’s administration. Over 10,000 strikers and their supporters flooded the streets around City Hall and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) headquarters, chanting “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Rahm Emanuel’s got to go!” and “We need teachers, we need books! We need the money Rahm Emanuel took!” The strike is being met with wide enthusiasm in Chicago, with parents and students turning out to join the picket lines.

A year ago, Emanuel unilaterally canceled a pay raise and heavily pressured the CTU tops into agreeing to a longer school day. Now he is trying to remove all protections that union members have

against discipline and firings by the school administration and its principals. While teachers are rightly infuriated by Emanuel’s bullying, there are widespread illusions in his former boss, Barack Obama. Make no mistake: Obama is the main promoter of such “reforms” and continues to wage war against teachers unions across the country. It is no accident that Paul Ryan today stands solidly with Rahm Emanuel against the union. The Democratic and the Republican parties are simply different wings of the bourgeoisie and are equally committed to making workers pay for the chaos caused by the capitalist system.

The Service Employees union tops have agreed to provide janitorial services and student aides to keep 144 schools open as day-care centers. All public schools in Chicago should be shut down, and that takes union solidarity. *Picket lines mean don’t cross!* The cops are anything



WV Photo

September 10: Thousands of striking teachers and their supporters marched through streets of downtown Chicago on first day of strike.

but labor’s friends—their social function in the service of the capitalists is to take down picket lines. The CPS is also wielding its expanding number of non-union charter schools as a club against the CTU. The union should answer this challenge by mobilizing during the strike to organize all teachers, whether in parochial or charter schools, into the CTU.

As we wrote in “Chicago Teachers: Strike to Win!” (WV No. 1006, 3 August): “To beat back the union-busters, teachers must turn to their union allies in the schools and city—such as the transit workers and firefighters embroiled in their own contract disputes—not Democratic Party politicians who falsely parade themselves as ‘friends of labor.’” ■