

The U.S. Capitalist Class, Past and Present

Who Owns America

We print below a presentation, edited for publication, by Spartacist League spokesman Jacob Zorn at a September 22 forum in Chicago.

While I was working on this forum, I spent quite a bit of time procrastinating. The most successful way I discovered of doing this was to watch the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. Of course, each party lies about capitalism against the backdrop of the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression, now in its fifth year. The Republican Convention was an orgy of reaction. I think it says something that the governor of New Jersey was the human face of the Republican Party. Their slogan, “We built this,” was rich given their open hostility to unions and to working people. The Democratic Party, on the other hand, talked a lot about the bad things that Romney would undoubtedly do. But as the flyer to this forum states, we oppose any support to the Democrats. We advocate a revolutionary workers party.

It’s notable that the Democrats, in their posturing, claim to fight for the “Middle Class First,” as the placards read when Bill Clinton spoke. This is one way this party of capitalism obfuscates the true nature of the social system. However, the idea that the main conflict in capitalist America is between the “rich” and the “middle class” is echoed by the trade-union bureaucracy as well as much of what passes for a left.

The American capitalist class is the most powerful, arrogant and bloodthirsty in the world. At the same time, the United States is unique among advanced capitalist countries in that most of its people do not think in terms of class. There is no party that even claims to be a party of the working class. Many people argue that there aren’t really any classes in the U.S. By contrast, for example in Latin America, everybody knows about big, powerful families like the Garza Sadas and Slims in Mexico or the Cisneros in Venezuela. In the U.S., to be sure, nobody denies that there are rich people and poor people. However, it is common to argue that one’s economic position is fluid, that people can rise as well as fall and that there is no permanent class system. Instead, people talk about the so-called middle class and the “American dream”: the chance to advance into the middle class with the help of education, hard work and maybe some luck.

A good example of how this attitude is reflected among the left was seen in the Occupy protests a year ago, when thousands of protesters in New York, Oakland and elsewhere braved police violence. This movement, like all populist movements, dissolved the working class into what one of Occupy’s early declarations termed “all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world.” Fake socialist groups lapped up the liberal politics of Occupy. For example, Work-



December 2009: President Obama and Treasury Secretary Geithner (on Obama’s right) with CEOs of JPMorgan, American Express and other top banks in White House meeting.

ers World Party called these protests a “fledgling revolution” and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) stated that Occupy had “fundamentally shifted the political landscape in the U.S.”

The term that Occupy popularized is the 99 percent—that is to say, everybody

who still is on the faculty at UC Santa Cruz and wrote a very useful book called *Who Rules America*—more recently criticized Marxism as “too narrow a base for understanding the complexity and variety of power structures against time and places,” especially, he continued, for

Fight for Workers Rule!

suffering from the capitalist crisis. I think it’s useful to quote what our paper, *Workers Vanguard* [No. 989, 28 October 2011], said at the time:

“It is false that ‘99 percent’ of the population share common interests. There is a fundamental *class divide* in society between the capitalists—the tiny group of families that own industry and the banks—and the working class, whose labor is the source of the capitalists’ profits. The working class is not just one more victim of capitalist austerity within the ‘99 percent.’ It is the only force with the potential power and historic interest to sweep away the capitalist system and rebuild society based on a centralized, planned economy.”

Class Divisions

Occupy was a rehash of the ideas popularized more than a decade ago in a book by two “post-Marxist” academics: *Empire* by Italian philosopher Antonio Negri and American academic Michael Hardt. Hardt and Negri claimed that the working class had been subsumed in what they called the multitude, an amorphous term encompassing almost everybody on the planet—industrial workers, peasants, smallholders, engineers, janitors, homeless beggars, corporate managers, prisoners and prison guards. Hardt and Negri themselves were rehashing the idea—popularized by the New Left in the 1960s—that changes in the economy had rendered Marxist, that is to say class-based, politics obsolete or “outmoded.”

One of the intellectual fathers of the New Left was an interesting sociologist, C. Wright Mills. He chose the term “power elite” over the term “ruling class” because for him “‘class’ is an economic term; ‘rule’ a political one.” For Mills, economic power did not necessarily translate into political power. Another professor of that period, G. William Domhoff—

Let me give an example. Many of you are familiar with the struggle by longshoremen in Longview, Washington. Members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union braved state repression and stood firm, surviving attempts by the EGT grain conglomerate to bust their union. The EGT capitalists own the means of production. Workers create value that is sold in the form of commodities, which longshoremen play a vital role in circulating. And the capitalists try to get workers to produce as much as possible for as little as possible, hence, EGT’s desire to bust the longshoremen’s union. As the Longview battle underscores, under capitalism there is a constant struggle between these two classes over the terms and extent of exploitation.

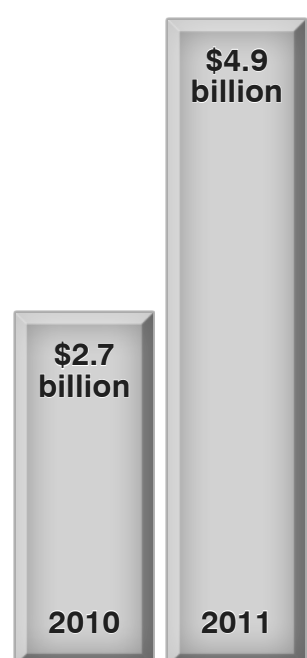
Keep in mind that the capitalists are a tiny minority. They are the ruling class because they not only own and profit from the means of production but also control the state in order to maintain their power and profits, as the police attacks and harassment of the Longview workers starkly demonstrated. The state comprises armed bodies of men—the army, police, prisons and courts—who keep the ruling class in power. What happened in Longview was no aberration. There is no shortage of similar events in American history. For example, almost a hundred years ago in April 1914, armed troops acting at the behest of the Rockefeller family killed more than a dozen men, women and children when they fired on a camp of striking miners in Ludlow, Colorado.

The Myth of the 99 Percent vs. the 1 Percent

Our goal is for the working class to take power, to become the ruling class, through socialist revolution that smashes the capitalist state, as the Bolshevik Revolution did in Russia in October 1917.

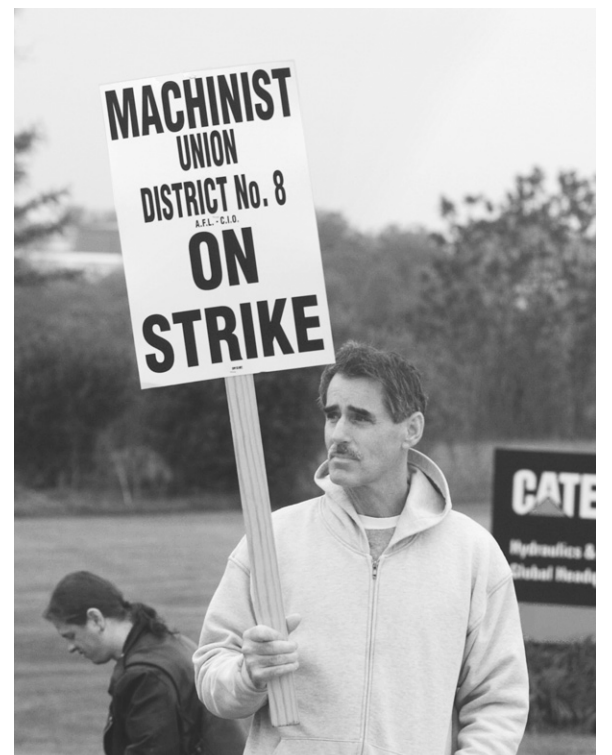
continued on page 7

Caterpillar After-Tax Profits



Source: Caterpillar

Rolling in record profits, Caterpillar demanded massive concessions from unionized workforce. Union tops caved in to company in August, ending bitter 15-week strike.



AP





Partisan Defense Committee

CLASS-STRUGGLE DEFENSE NOTES

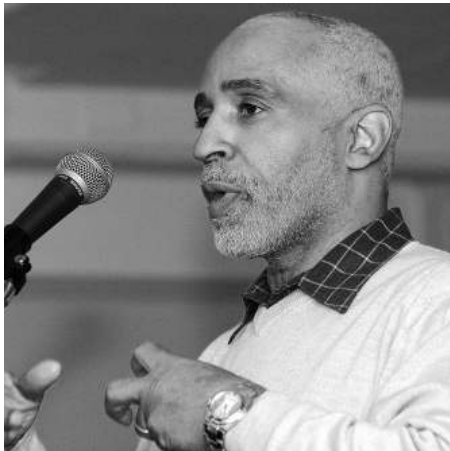
The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.

Defend Jazz Hayden!

The following statement was issued by the Partisan Defense Committee on September 10.

The Partisan Defense Committee condemns the arrest of Joseph “Jazz” Hayden, an outspoken opponent of the NYPD’s racist stop-and-frisk campaign and advocate of rights for ex-prisoners. On 2 December 2011 the police stopped Hayden and unlawfully searched his car. He was arrested on two counts of possession of a weapon for having a penknife and a miniature commemorative baseball bat replica in his car. The 71-year-old Hayden is facing a possible 14 years in prison.

Hayden’s arrest was a blatant act of retaliation for his documentation of police harassment of Harlem youth and posting his flip-camera videos on his allthings-harlem.com/copwatch Web site. He had filmed these same two cops in a stop-and-frisk incident earlier in the summer. The arresting officers told him they knew exactly who he was. Hayden’s arrest was intended to silence and intimidate those



Getty

Joseph “Jazz” Hayden addressing 2004 NYC meeting for ex-felons’ voting rights.

who oppose the rampant repression of New York City youth at the hands of the police.

We join the many others in demanding that charges be dropped against Jazz Hayden. ■



TROTSKY

Human Culture: A Marxist View

Speaking in Moscow in 1926, Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the October Revolution of 1917, stressed that the working class in power would need to acquire and build from the cultural achievements of previous class societies.

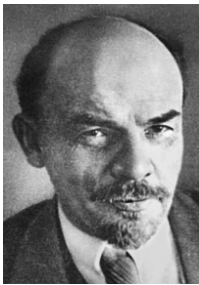
Culture is everything that has been created, built, learnt, conquered by man in the course of his entire history, in distinction from what nature has given, including the natural history of man himself as a species of animal....

In the process of adapting itself to nature, in conflict with the hostile forces of nature, human society has taken shape as a complex organization of classes. The class structure of society has determined to a decisive degree the content and form of human history, that is, its material relations and their ideological reflections. This means that historical culture has possessed a class character.

Slave-owning society, feudal serf-owning society, bourgeois society, each engendered a corresponding culture, different at different stages and with a multitude of transitional forms. Historical society has been an organization for the exploitation of man by man. Culture has served the class organization of society. Exploiters’ society has given rise to an exploiters’ culture. But does this mean that we are against all the culture of the past?

There exists, in fact, a profound contradiction here. Everything that has been conquered, created, built by man’s efforts and which serves to enhance man’s power is culture. But since it is not a matter of individual man but of social man, since culture is a social-historical phenomenon in its very essence, and since historical society has been and continues to be class society, culture is found to be the basic instrument of class oppression. Marx said: “The ruling ideas of an epoch are essentially the ideas of the ruling class of that epoch.” This also applies to culture as a whole. And yet we say to the working class: master all the culture of the past, otherwise you will not build socialism.

—Leon Trotsky, “Culture and Socialism” (1926), printed in *Labour Review* (Autumn 1962)



LENIN

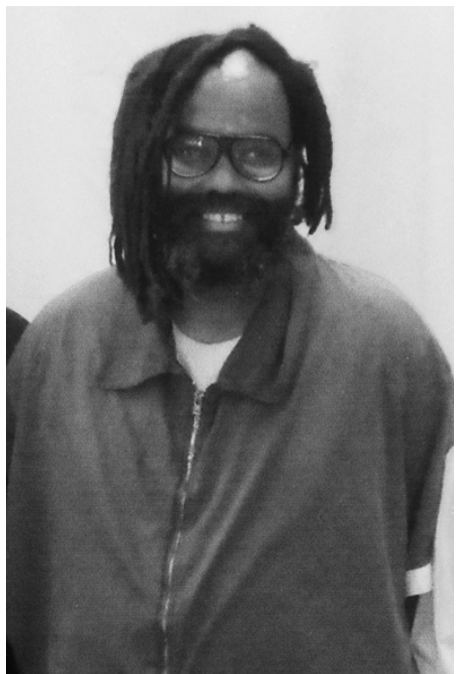
Court Throws Out Mumia’s Challenge to Life Without Parole

On August 23, class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed a *pro se* motion challenging a secretive court order that sentenced him to life without parole. The sentence, pronounced ten days earlier and mandated by Pennsylvania statute, was expected following Mumia’s removal from death row in December 2011, after the Philadelphia district attorney’s office ended its campaign to legally lynch him (see “Drive to Execute Mumia Halted,” WV No. 993, 6 January). Mumia’s legal papers sought to vacate the illegally imposed sentence, citing violations of Pennsylvania’s own rules of criminal procedure. More significantly, Mumia’s motion raised a challenge to his sentence of life without parole as cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, citing his “almost thirty years in solitary confinement on death row under an illegal and unconstitutionally-imposed death sentence.” On October 1, Philadelphia judge Pamela P. Dembe threw out Mumia’s motion.

Yet again the racist rulers have dispensed with even the pretense of due process in Mumia’s case. The courts had imposed the life sentence without notice to defense attorneys or a formal hearing, trampling on Mumia’s fundamental rights to be present and to be heard. Although the 30-year drive to execute Mumia ran aground, he is now condemned to a living death, entombed in the dungeons of Pennsylvania. Class-conscious workers and fighters for black equality must continue to demand freedom for this innocent man.

Mumia’s motion also raised a general challenge to the constitutionality of life without parole, as well as the practice of isolating those on death row in solitary confinement. As we wrote in “Abolish the Racist Death Penalty” (WV No. 1009, 28 September):

“In our opposition to the death penalty, we are equally committed to the abolition of life without parole, the prisons and all the barbaric institutions of the capitalist state. Our purpose is to arm the working class with the understanding that the cops, courts, prisons and military make up the apparatus for the vio-



CSDN

lent repression of the working class and oppressed in defense of the power and profits of the capitalist rulers.”

Beginning with Mumia’s frame-up and conviction three decades ago on false charges of killing a Philadelphia policeman, the cops and courts have relentlessly tried to silence this “voice of the voiceless,” a leading member of the Black Panther Party in his youth and later an eloquent journalist and supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE group. It should come as no surprise to anyone who has followed Mumia’s torturous journey through the bourgeois courts that it is Judge Dembe who signed the resentencing order and denied his challenge. The same judge rejected the evidence that Mumia’s original trial judge, Albert Sabo, was biased and racist, despite a sworn affidavit that Sabo was overheard saying, “I’m going to help them fry the n----r.” Dembe also rejected the confession of Arnold Beverly that it was he, not Mumia, who shot and killed Police Officer Daniel Faulkner.

As the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee have insisted all along: There is no justice in the capitalist courts. Free Mumia now! ■

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Publication title: *Workers Vanguard*.
2. Publication no.: 09-8770.
3. Filing date: 24 September 2012.
4. Issue frequency: Bi-weekly, except skipping 3 alternate issues in June, July, August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December.
5. No. of issues published annually: 22.
6. Annual subscription price: \$10.00.
7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007-4104.
8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007-4104.
9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher—Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007-4104; Editor—Ray Bishop, 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007-4104; Managing Editor—Laura Zamora, 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007-4104.
10. Owner: Spartacist Publishing Co. (Unincorporated Association), 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007-4104.
11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
12. Tax status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates): Not applicable.
13. Publication title: *Workers Vanguard*.
14. Issue date for circulation data below: 14 September 2012.
15. Extent and nature of circulation: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: a. Total number of copies (Net press run): 8,728; b. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail): (1) Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1,330; (2) Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 0; (3) Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers,

street vendors, counter sales, and other outside USPS: 4,825; (4) Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 342; c. Total paid distribution [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)]: 6,497; d. Free or nominal rate distribution: (1) Outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 124; (2) In-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0; (3) Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS: 107; (4) Distribution outside the mail: 0; e. Total free or nominal rate distribution [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: 231; f. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): 6,728; g. Copies not distributed: 2,000; h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g): 8,728; i. Percent paid (15c divided by 15f times 100): 96.57%.

No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: a. Total number of copies (Net press run): 10,000; b. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail): (1) Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1,218; (2) Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 0; (3) Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other outside USPS: 6,398; (4) Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 335; c. Total paid distribution [Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)]: 7,951; d. Free or nominal rate distribution: (1) Outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 125; (2) In-county copies included on PS Form 3541: 0; (3) Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS: 107; (4) Distribution outside the mail: 0; e. Total free or nominal rate distribution [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: 232; f. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): 8,183; g. Copies not distributed: 1,817; h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g): 10,000; i. Percent paid (15c divided by 15f times 100): 97.16%.

16. This statement of ownership will be printed in the 12 October 2012 issue of this publication.

17. Signature and title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: (Signed) Ray Bishop (Editor), 24 September 2012. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

WORKERS VANGUARD

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



DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: Ray Bishop

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Michael Davissou

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Tricia Seneca

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Laura Zamora (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, George Foster, Walter Jennings, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alan Wilde

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

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

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

The closing date for news in this issue is October 9.

No. 1010

12 October 2012

Grain Export Bosses Gunning for ILWU



Grain terminal in Smith Cove, Seattle.

Vladimir Menkov

The owners of the grain export terminals in the Pacific Northwest are gearing up for a showdown with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). Negotiations over the master grain handlers agreement, which had been set to expire on September 30, were extended until mid October. But the companies are clearly out for blood. The Portland *Oregonian* (25 September) cited reports from the director of the Columbia River Steamship Operators Association that “managers of four Portland-area terminals and two near Seattle are hiring security forces and making arrangements with nonunion labor” to keep grain shipments moving “in anticipation of locking out striking longshoremen.” Backing up the bosses, the Coast Guard promised that “if there are any indications that protests may occur on the water, the Coast Guard will be on the water to ensure safety of all users.”

Underscoring the arsenal aimed at the ILWU, on September 28, the same day the contract was extended, the union’s International president, Robert McEllrath, was convicted in a retrial on charges stemming from the union’s fight last year against a union-busting offensive by the giant EGT grain export conglomerate in Longview, Washington. McEllrath’s conviction was the latest installment in a vindictive campaign of persecution by the cops, courts and prosecutor’s office against ILWU members, particularly those from its Longview Local 21. One Local 21 member, Sonny Halladay, is now serving 60 days in jail, coerced into copping a plea to several misdemeanor charges for fear of being nailed on bogus felony charges. When the word got out that McEllrath had been sentenced to one day in jail and an 89-day suspended sentence, ILWU members in many West Coast ports walked off the job in protest, with work halted at the Oakland port for two hours.

In their battle with EGT, longshoremen and their allies throughout the region mobilized in early September 2011 in the kind of class-struggle labor actions

that built the unions in this country. They backed down an army of cops who had earlier attacked ILWU mass pickets, including manhandling McEllrath. Tons of grain shipped by rail into the EGT terminal were found dumped on the tracks. But this initial militancy ran straight up against the class-collaborationist policies of the ILWU International bureaucracy, which pitched the fight against EGT not as part of the class war between the workers and their exploiters but as a defense of “our grain industry,” i.e., the profitability of American agribusiness.

EGT did not succeed in driving the ILWU out of its Longview operation. This was a not insignificant achievement when unions like Wisconsin public-sector workers are being mowed down by the capitalist union-busters. The union also prevailed in its demand that EGT pay into the ILWU/Pacific Maritime Association health and welfare fund as well as pension plan. But this came at a not insignificant price, with a deeply concessionary contract including 12-hour work shifts and the serious undermining of the union hiring hall and other hard-won union gains. In preserving jobs it has held for over 80 years in Longview and its coastwide organization, the ILWU lived to fight another day. But fight it must, or the EGT contract will become the standard for the ILWU’s bulk grain handling work in the region.

Going into negotiations, the Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers Association pointed to the “much more advantageous” conditions secured by EGT, arguing that “leveling the playing field and avoiding extreme competitive disparities among Northwest grain shippers and ports is vital.” These companies are literally rolling in dough. Among them, U.S.-based Cargill raked in over two billion dollars in profit last year alone, while profits at CHS, a Fortune 500 company, rose a whopping 91 percent. Like the recent savaging of union workers’ wages, pensions and working conditions at Caterpillar, which is reaping record profits, this shreds the

myth that workers who sacrifice in “hard times” will be rewarded when things get better. The bosses, as always, are aiming to take more out of the hides of the workers. And now the grain export giants are grabbing the union-busting guns to do so.

Behind the grain bosses stand the container shipping companies in the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), whose contract with the ILWU is up in 2014, shortly before the expansion of the Panama Canal is scheduled for completion. Playing to fears that the companies will send their container ships directly to the East Coast, the PMA bosses will be aiming to squeeze concessions out of the ILWU in the name of maintaining the West Coast’s “competitive edge.”

Better to Fight on Your Feet Than Die on Your Knees!

The stakes in the battle against the Northwest grain terminal owners are high. At the same time, the ILWU has immense potential social power. It is the height of harvest season, and grain is rolling into the region’s terminals, which handle nearly half of U.S. wheat exports and one-quarter of other grain and soybean exports. As was seen in Longview last September, the power of the union lies in its ability to stop these shipments. That means going up against the battery of anti-labor laws outlawing mass pickets, “hot-cargoing,” solidarity strikes and other actions that are crucial weapons of labor in the class war. In the event a battle is joined, solidarity action by other workers in the vast grain cargo chain, not least by rail workers who drive the trains, will be vital.

The most elementary precondition for mobilizing the fighting strength of the union and its allies is the understanding that the employers are not the “partners” of longshoremen but their *class enemy*. But the ILWU bureaucracy continues to sing the same song of its partnership with the employers. In an article in the September issue of the ILWU’s *Dispatcher* titled “Grain and Greed in the Northwest,” Leal

Sundet, an ILWU Coast Committeeman and co-chair of its grain negotiating team, promotes the union’s role in making the Northwest “one of the most productive grain export regions in the world.” Said productivity, which generates golden profits for the grain export magnates, is based on the exploitation of longshore and other labor. The bosses are out to ratchet this up by shredding union gains.

Waving the red, white and blue, the article attributes the grain bosses’ offensive to “multinational greed.” Busting unions to jack up profits is as American as apple pie. The U.S. grain industry is the biggest and most profitable in the world. The profits of these monopolies are secured through driving up food prices as high as possible, at the human cost of the starvation and death of millions across the globe. The ILWU could—and needs to—win crucial allies from workers in other countries, particularly in East Asia, the largest booming market for U.S. grain exports. But the prospect of such solidarity is poisoned by the union leaders’ defense of the very grain industry that uses food as a weapon against the workers and oppressed masses of the world.

ILA Caves

Most recently, the leaders of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA), which organizes East Coast and Gulf Coast ports, made their own pledge of allegiance to the national interests of American capitalism by agreeing to a 90-day extension of their master contract, which had been set to expire the same day as the ILWU’s grain agreement. In the words of the federal mediator called in to head off a showdown, the ILA and U.S. Maritime Alliance, which is demanding massive concessions, agreed to this extension “for the good of the country.” Looming even larger from the vantage point of the trade-union bureaucracy was the impending presidential election.

Like the rest of the AFL-CIO officialdom, the ILA and ILWU have thrown their support behind Democratic president Barack Obama. Playing on justifiable fears of the in-your-face Republican union-busters, the bureaucrats sell the Democrats as the only alternative for the working class. But the tattered myth that the Democrats are some kind of “friends of labor” could have really gone up in smoke in a confrontation between the ILA and the shipping bosses. Just as Obama’s Coast Guard and other Homeland Security forces had been mobilized to put down any battle to stop the first ship from being loaded at the EGT terminal in Longview, there is little question that the Democratic Party president would have come down on the side of the shipping bosses by invoking Taft-Hartley against the union. So the ILA leadership pulled back, sacrificing the union’s critical leverage at the height of the Christmas goods shipping season—the most lucrative of the year—as a gift to Obama.

Simultaneous strike action by the ILA in the eastern and southern ports and by the ILWU in the Pacific Northwest could have electrified all of labor. These are two of the

continued on page 11

Workers Vanguard Subscription Drive

August 16 to October 10			
Local	Quota (in points)	Week 5 (Sept. 27-Oct. 3)	%
Bay Area	450	402	89%
Chicago	375	420.5	112%
Los Angeles	275	283.5	103%
New York	800	668	84%
At Large	200	154	77%
National Total	2,100	1,928	92%

WORKERS VANGUARD 50¢

Imperialists' Hands Off Syria!



Marikana Miners Win, Strike Wave Spreads

South Africa



Subscribe Now!

☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

1010

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Defend Gains of Cuban Revolution!

Cuba: Socialized Medicine and the Fight Against AIDS

During the 19th International AIDS Conference held in Washington, D.C., in July, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the U.S. government was committed to achieving “an AIDS-free generation.” With the numbers of those living with AIDS in the U.S. and internationally continuing to climb, Clinton remarked: “If we want to save lives, we need to go where the virus is and get there as quickly as possible.” She doesn’t have far to travel. In the conference’s host city, the rate of HIV infection has increased 22 percent in the last six years. Some 3 percent of the population of D.C. is infected—a rate higher than Ethiopia’s and almost on a par with Nigeria’s. More than 4 percent of the black population of the U.S. capital is living with HIV, largely stemming from high rates of injection drug use, homelessness and incarceration.

Data released during the conference by the Centers for Disease Control speaks volumes to the U.S. government’s criminal lack of care for those infected. Only a quarter of the 1.1 million people living with the disease in the U.S. are receiving treatment to keep their viral load suppressed. An estimated one in five of people with HIV are not even aware of their infection.

While the profit-gouging pharmaceutical companies that funded the conference gave a platform to multibillionaire “philanthropist” Bill Gates, they were certainly not about to feature representatives from a nearby country with one of the smallest epidemics and most effective HIV/AIDS treatment programs in the world: Cuba. To hear how Cuba has been successful in this regard, one had to attend a fringe event organized by Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee, which was addressed by Cuba’s leading AIDS doctor, Jorge Pérez.

A *New York Times* (7 May) article by Donald G. McNeil Jr. titled “A Regime’s Tight Grip on AIDS” detailed Cuba’s extensive HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs based on its system of free universal health care, contrasting this to the woeful state of care in the U.S. One effect, McNeil notes, is that Cuba’s infection rate, 0.1 percent, is one-sixth that of the U.S. and one-twentieth of Haiti. Despite poor natural resources and a 50-year, suf-



Reuters

AIDS patient getting treatment at sanatorium outside Havana, 2005.

focating U.S. embargo, Cuba has managed to produce the antiretroviral drugs it needs and provides a free and expansive treatment program including HIV testing, condom distribution and sex education.

Cuba’s renowned health care system is a result of the overthrow of capitalist rule in the period following the 1959 defeat of the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship at the hands of Fidel Castro’s petty-bourgeois guerrilla forces. Facing fierce U.S. hostility, the new regime signed trade agreements with the Soviet Union and went on to expropriate U.S.-owned properties. By October 1960, all of banking and 80 percent of industry had been nationalized. This marked the liquidation of the capitalists as a class and the creation of a workers state, although one that was deformed from its inception by the rule of a bureaucratic caste led by Fidel and now Raúl Castro. Politically suppressing the working class and opposing the perspective of international proletarian revolution, the bureaucracy acts as an obstacle to further advance toward socialism—an egalitarian society based on material abundance.

While Cuba remains underdeveloped

and beset by material scarcity, the overthrow of capitalist rule has resulted in massive social gains. The collectivization of the means of production and the establishment of central economic planning and a state monopoly over foreign trade provided jobs, housing and education for everyone. Soviet aid—both military and economic—was indispensable for this development. Cuba has one of the highest literacy rates in the world and a renowned health care system that sends tens of thousands of doctors around the world to help mostly poor patients in need. Infant mortality in Cuba is lower than in the U.S. and Canada. Abortion is a free, readily available health service. In the 1970s, the country’s network of free public universities, including medical schools, was extended to all of its 14 provinces. Such advances are unattainable in underdeveloped countries in the grip of imperialist domination.

Cuba’s Treatment Programs

In 1983, two years before the first case of HIV appeared in Cuba and when very little was known about the disease, the country had already set up the National Commission on AIDS to educate the population. When it was understood that HIV could be transmitted through blood, all blood products were destroyed, at considerable financial cost. HIV-testing of all blood became national policy in 1986. This prevented the deaths of people receiving blood transfusions at a time when thousands of hemophiliacs and others in countries like the U.S. died from contaminated blood.

The HIV virus arrived in Cuba with the return of the heroic soldiers who had fought to defend Angola’s newly secured independence from Portugal against reactionary local forces backed by U.S. imperialism and apartheid South Africa. For 15 years beginning in 1975, several thousand Cuban troops served in Angola, driving out South African military forces and thereby also securing the independence of Namibia. This material support was packaged with the Cuban Stalinists’ political support to the bourgeois nationalist MPLA, which to this day rules Angola as corrupt stooges for the imperialist oil companies.

The first Cuban AIDS patients—the majority of whom were heterosexual men—were quarantined in a sanatorium in Havana province in 1986 under an “emergency response” policy of mandatory treatment. By 1989, patients were allowed to go home to be with their families on the weekend as long as they returned. Given that HIV cannot be transmitted by casual contact, quarantining proved to be unnecessary as a public health measure. In 1993, the policy was further amended to make the program fully ambulatory—i.e., HIV-infected persons could choose to move to a sanatorium or live at home. Due to the favorable environment, food and institutional support at the sanatoriums, many patients voluntarily continued to stay there, as others have also chosen to do to this day.

Cuba was thrown into a prolonged economic crisis in the 1990s following the cutoff of aid by the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy in the late 1980s, shortly before the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state. The economic crisis exacerbated shortages and remaining social inequality in Cuba, which was now even further isolated than before. Nevertheless, as Dr. Pérez, who ran the main sanatorium for 12 years, noted, “when the country was at its worst economically and people were



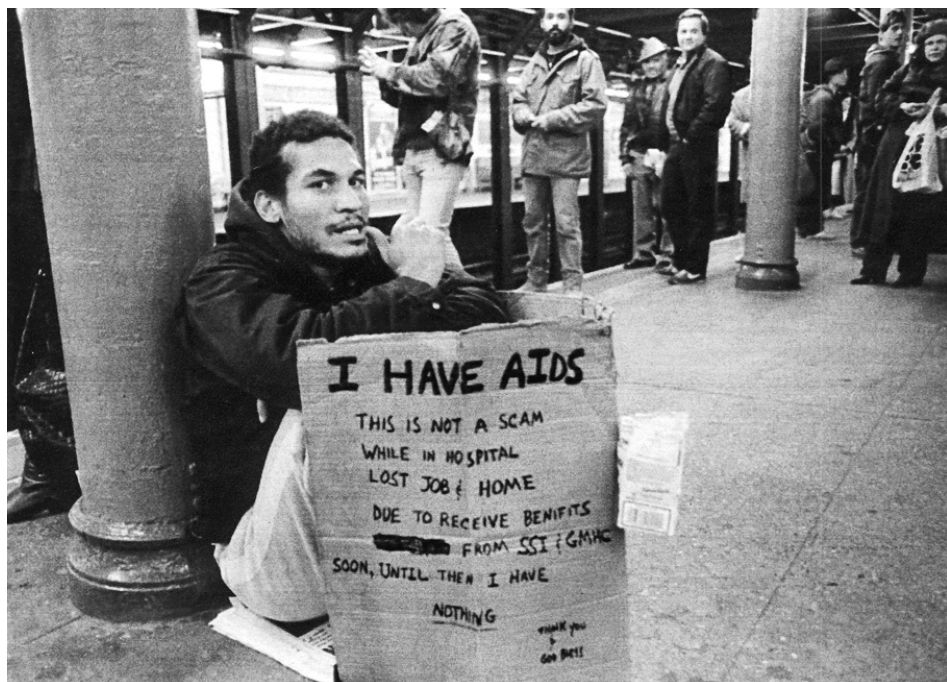
Wide World

Cuban militiaman guards U.S. oil refinery expropriated in 1960.

living on almost nothing, our patients had a 5400-calorie diet” (*MEDICC Review*, April 2011).

In 1996, Cuba purchased antiretroviral drugs for children with AIDS and their mothers, at a cost of \$14,000 per person per year. By the late 1990s, the country had started developing its own generics, and by 2001, the full “cocktail” of anti-retroviral drugs was available. Since then, HIV-positive patients have had full access to such medicine. Only 38 children had ever been born with HIV in Cuba, largely due to the quality of prenatal care.

Today anyone diagnosed with HIV is required to attend a multi-week course that includes information about safer sex practices, proper medication, proper diet and nutrition. Participants receive their



Donna Binder

NYC, 1980s: Lack of medical care combined with policy of neglect fueled AIDS epidemic in U.S., abandoned many of those infected.

full salaries for the duration of the course. Furthermore, all teenagers are educated about sex and sexually transmitted diseases. This is a far cry from the U.S., where many youth receive puritanical “abstinence-only” miseducation, putting them at a greater risk of both unwanted pregnancy and acquiring sexually transmitted diseases.

Cuba’s brief quarantine policy served as a rallying cry for anti-Communist charges of “human rights” abuses. The sheer hypocrisy of that campaign was shown by the fact that at the same time, the U.S. was refusing entry to over 200 HIV-positive Haitians fleeing political repression and abject conditions in their home country. Haiti’s subjugation to imperialism, enforced by repeated invasions and occupations, constantly reinforces its deeply entrenched poverty. Today Haiti, where AIDS is the leading cause of adult deaths, has the highest rate of HIV in the Western Hemisphere.

In the early 1990s, the excluded HIV-positive Haitians were incarcerated in the notorious U.S. detention center in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. On hearing that President-elect Bill Clinton had no plans to break the ban against those with HIV entering the U.S., the prisoners launched a hunger strike, and eleven attempted to escape into Cuba proper. A U.S. federal judge described the “cruel and unusual punishment” at Guantánamo:

“They live in camps surrounded by razor barbed wire.... They are guarded by the military and are not permitted to leave the camp, except under military escort. The Haitian detainees have been subjected to pre-dawn military sweeps as they sleep by as many as 400 soldiers dressed in full riot gear. They are confined like prisoners and are subject to detention in the brig without hearing for camp rule infraction.”

—“Mother Courage and the Costs of War,” *Partner To The Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader* (2010)

U.S. imperialism’s horrific abuse of HIV-positive Haitians mirrored its malign neglect of AIDS sufferers on the home front. When AIDS was first identified in the early 1980s in the U.S., religious and social bigotry contributed to it being initially branded as a “gay disease.” When it began to spread especially in the ghettos, it was stigmatized as a “poor black disease” as well. Meanwhile, the capitalist rulers were spending only pitiful amounts for treatment and to research the disease.

In 2001, the U.S. dismissed a Cuban offer to staff an ambitious international program to treat HIV in exchange for funding and supplies of drugs, which the island is prevented from importing due to the U.S. embargo. In 2011, the Obama administration blocked \$4 million in funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, destined for Cuba’s National HIV/AIDS Program. The U.S. embargo has also impeded Cuba’s ongoing efforts to develop an HIV/AIDS vaccine.

Socially retrograde policies have marked the U.S. government’s AIDS programs into the present. The Obama



Corbis

Above: Cuban doctors treating cholera victims in Gonaïves, Haiti, in November 2010, ten months after devastating earthquake. Below: Cuban and Angolan soldiers during weapons practice near Cabinda, Angola, February 1976.



AP

White House has adopted and pursued the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) established by George W. Bush in 2003. Many HIV-infected individuals abroad have received antiretroviral therapy under the program, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, the program funded religious organizations to push reactionary moral codes, e.g., sexual abstinence and monogamy. As one American health specialist in Rwanda commented: “The administration may have managed to generate more, not fewer, AIDS cases by pushing this largely religiously-driven policy” (“PEPFAR’s Shortcomings: What Is to Be Done?” *Huffington Post*, 31 July). “Faith-based” programs get a third of PEPFAR financing. But the bulk of the lucre goes to the U.S. pharmaceutical giants.

Contradictions of Cuban Stalinism

It is the qualitative superiority of a collectivized economy over the anarchic, profit-driven capitalist system that has allowed Cuba to deal with AIDS on a rational, scientific basis and to achieve great gains in education and other areas. An overturn of the collectivized property forms would be a historic step backwards, not only for Cuba’s working people but for the toilers throughout the world.

Retrogression has certainly defined the former Soviet Union, where capitalist restoration has brought massive economic and social immiseration. The obliteration of the public health system has contributed to a historically unprecedented drop in life expectancy. Tuberculosis, which had been effectively eradicated in the USSR, returned with a vengeance, particularly with increased incarceration in overcrowded, unsanitary prisons. And in its wake came HIV/AIDS. The rise of HIV in Russia is mainly due to growing rates of injecting drug use, which in turn is closely linked to the sharp increase in poverty. A Russian TB doctor quoted in *Partner to the Poor* put it eloquently in

1998: “I have spent my entire medical career caring for prisoners with tuberculosis. And although we complained about shortages in the eighties, we had no idea how good we had it then. Now it’s a daily struggle for food, drugs, lab supplies, even heat and electricity.”

As we said in regard to the Soviet degenerated workers state, it is the fundamental duty of the proletariat internationally to defend the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialism and domestic counterrevolutionary forces. But we give no political support to Cuba’s Stalinist bureaucracy, which promotes the fallacy that socialism—a society of material abundance—can be achieved in one country (let alone an island). In practice, this has meant opposing the fight for workers revolutions in the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America, to say nothing of the U.S. and other imperialist centers, and instead fostering deadly illusions in “pro-

gressive” bourgeois regimes—e.g., Salvador Allende’s Chilean popular front in the early 1970s and today’s Venezuela under Hugo Chávez. To defend and extend the social gains in Cuba requires a struggle for a proletarian political revolution that creates a regime based on workers democracy and committed to the fight for world socialism.

In the Stalinist tradition, the Castroite regime has glorified the role of the nuclear family in Cuba. This has been accompanied by the persecution of gays, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. The Batista-era criminalization of homosexuality was not repealed until 1979, and the penalization of “flaunting” in public, a measure used by the cops to harass gay men, was not repealed until 1987. Since that time, there has been a certain increase in official tolerance of gays, as seen for example in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Since the 1990s, men who have sex with men have been the ones most affected by the disease. Health care programs have been adapted to emphasize safer sex and to promote greater acceptance of homosexuality. Nevertheless, the *machismo* that remains widespread on the island as elsewhere in Latin America reinforces homophobia. And it sure doesn’t help that both under Fidel and Raúl Castro, Catholic popes have been hosted in Cuba, where they have spread their counterrevolutionary religious poison.

Cuba today is increasingly racked by the severe limitations of an isolated workers state facing a relentlessly hostile U.S. imperialism. Cuba’s stagnant economy has never fully recovered from the severe crisis that followed the cutoff of aid from the former Soviet Union. Over the past two years, Havana has moved toward implementing a certain amount of “market reforms”—the standard means by which Stalinist regimes, which exclude the working class from political power, try to correct the imbalances in bureaucratically mismanaged planned economies.

Within the confines of Stalinist rule, neither the advocates of market reforms/ decentralization nor those who would return to a more rigidly centralized economy can provide a way out. The way forward lies in the Cuban workers sweeping away the Castroite bureaucracy through a political revolution. Our article “Cuba: Economic Crisis and ‘Market Reforms’” (WV No. 986, 16 September 2011) put things squarely:

“A Cuba ruled by elected workers and peasants councils—open to all parties that defend the revolution—would be a beacon for working people throughout Latin America and beyond. The ultimate answer to Cuba’s economic backwardness and the only road to a future of material abundance, social equality and personal freedom is international proletarian revolution—not least in the U.S. imperialist bastion—leading to rational global economic planning and an egalitarian socialist order. The necessary corollary to this perspective is the forging of a Trotskyist party in Cuba, part of a reborn Fourth International, to lead a proletarian political revolution to victory.”■

Marxist Bulletin 8-

CUBA AND MARXIST THEORY

Selected Documents on the Cuban Question

Marxist Bulletin No. 8

Cuba and Marxist Theory

Selected Documents, 1960-1966

The fight of the Revolutionary Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party and the development of the Spartacist League's characterization of Cuba as a deformed workers state. Includes preface from 1973.

\$1.50 (48 pages)

Order from: Spartacist Pub. Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

The Declaration of Principles of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist international which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution.

Chinese	\$1	Japanese...	\$2
English	\$2	Polish	\$1
French	\$2	Portuguese	\$1
German	\$2	Russian	\$1
Greek	\$1	Spanish..	\$1.50
Indonesian	\$1	Tagalog	\$1
Italian	\$1	Turkish	\$1

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO,
New York, NY 10116

SPARTACIST 4!

NUMBER 54 ENGLISH EDITION SPRING 1999

For New October Revolutions!

Third International Conference of the ICL

SEE PAGE 2

Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

SEE PAGE 9

SPARTACIST 4!

NUMERO 29 AGOSTO DE 1998 EDICION EN ESPAOL

¡Por nuevas revoluciones de Octubre!

III Conferencia Internacional de la LCI

PAGINA 2

Declaración de principios y algunos elementos de programa

Liga Comunista Internacional (Cuartinternacionalista)

PAGINA 10

Gore Vidal: An Appreciation

The author Gore Vidal died on July 31 of complications from pneumonia; he was 86 years old. He left a rich body of work: novels, plays, essays, movie scripts, countless interviews and public talks as well as two memoirs. He was a man who understood that this country has a history, and he put his considerable talents to use in exposing and demolishing the mythologies, hypocrisies and outright lies designed to present America as the culmination of the quest for heaven on earth.

In an interview with the *Progressive* (August 2006), Vidal described himself thus: “I’m a lover of the old republic and I deeply resent the empire our Presidents put in its place.” He was a radical egalitarian in the age of imperialism, an enemy of bigotry and religiosity and impeccable on matters of sex and morality and women’s equality. Gore Vidal was a superb writer and quite simply the greatest American essayist since Edmund Wilson. As Marxists, we keenly appreciate his body of work. While our parallel attitudes on many social and historical issues came from very different vantage points, they often put us on common ground—from an appreciation of the centrality of the Civil War in U.S. history, to sex and religion.

Born at West Point in 1925 and raised among the rich and famous, Gore Vidal

grudgingly conceded its role in scandalizing the novel and more: “Mr. Vidal later claimed that the literary and critical establishment, The New York Times especially, had blacklisted him because of the book, and he may have been right.” We believe Vidal would get a chuckle out of the fact that the *Times* blew it when publishing the obituary, making no less than three whopping factual mistakes, including one on his sex life, which required an embarrassing correction (3 August).

As Vidal explained, “I exist to say, ‘No, that isn’t the way it is,’ or ‘What you believe to be true is not true for the following reasons.’ I am a master of the obvious. I mean, if there’s a hole in the road, I will, viciously, outrageously, say there’s a hole in the road and if you don’t fill it in you’ll break the axle of your car” (“The Scholar Squirrels and the National Security State: An Interview with Gore Vidal” by Jon Wiener, *Radical History Review* No. 44, 1989).

Vidal was also radicalized by the post-World War II McCarthyite witchhunt and the blacklisting of leftists, particularly in the entertainment business in which he worked during that time. In the interview with Wiener, he recounted: “I decided that I would do an anti-McCarthy play on Philco-Goodyear Playhouse: something

over the nature of the beast. As he told the *Progressive*: “I have been saying for the last thousand years that the United States has only one party—the property party. It’s the party of big corporations, the party of money. It has two right wings: one is Democrat and the other is Republican.”

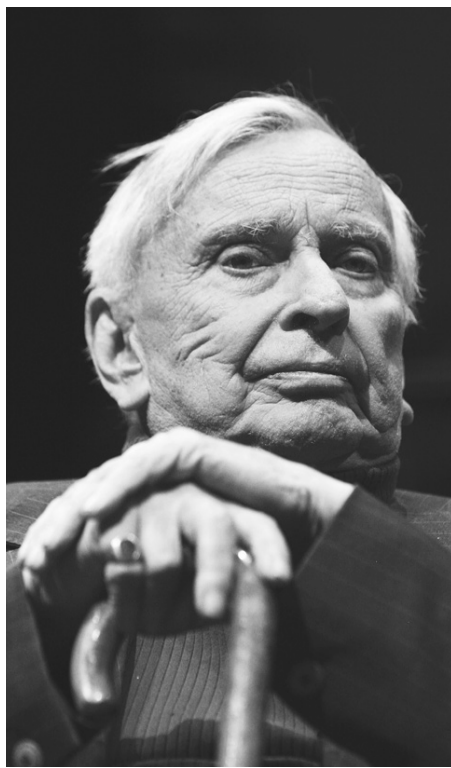
As a truth-teller, Vidal made his share of enemies. After his death, one David Greenberg wrote a vile piece headlined: “Stop Eulogizing Gore Vidal: He Was a Racist and an Elitist” (*Slate Magazine*, 2 August), which rides to the defense of the Zionist neocon *Commentary* crowd, circa 1986-87. At that time, Vidal had had the temerity to tangle with part of the Zionist lobby devoted to pressuring Congress on Israel’s behalf. The *Commentary* Cold Warriors—editor Norman Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter—responded with an attack baiting Vidal as an anti-Semite. Podhoretz had established his reputation as a racist back in the 1960s with his essay “My Negro Problem—And Ours” and was outspoken in his bigotry against homosexuals.

Vidal skewered the Podhoretz/Decter team in the *Nation* (22 March 1986): “Joyously they revel in the politics of hate, with plangent attacks on blacks and/or fags and/or liberals, trying, always, to outdo those moral majoritarians who will, as Armageddon draws near, either convert all the Jews, just as the Good Book says, or kill them.” Commenting on Podhoretz’s proclamation that for him the “Civil War is as remote and as irrelevant as the War of the Roses,” Vidal noted, “I realized then that he was not planning to become an ‘assimilated American,’ to use the old-fashioned terminology; but, rather, his first loyalty would always be to Israel.” Podhoretz whined that Vidal’s essay was “the most blatantly anti-Semitic outburst to have appeared in a respectable American periodical since World War II” (*Commentary*, November 1986).

It was at this time that we took up the cudgels in defense of Vidal against the witchhunters and established a modest correspondence with him. Our main article in defense of Vidal, titled “Gore Vidal: Bad Boy of the Bourgeoisie,” was published in *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 40, Summer 1987. We quoted Vidal’s statement:

“We stole other people’s land. We murdered many of the inhabitants. We imposed our religion—and rule—on the survivors. General Grant was ashamed of what we did to Mexico, and so am I. Mark Twain was ashamed of what we did in the Philippines, and so am I. Midge is not because in the Middle East another predatory people is busy stealing other people’s land in the name of an alien theocracy. She is a propagandist for these predators (paid for?) and that is what all this nonsense is about.”

In August 1987 he wrote to us to applaud



Getty

Gore Vidal, April 2007.

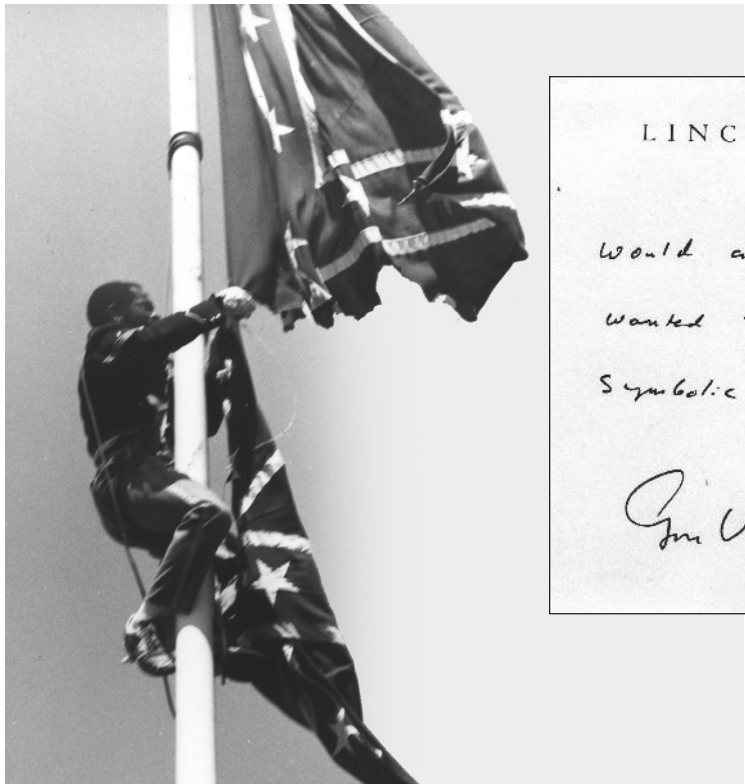
our article as “the clearest and most detailed so far—not to mention informatory: I learned a good deal.”

Vidal had come to know the social reality of this country. That’s why, from the centrality of the Civil War in American social and political life to the racist horrors perpetrated at the time of Hurricane Katrina, he was so eloquent. Recalling watching “the catastrophe that has left most of New Orleans under water” from his home in Italy, he observed in *Point to Point Navigation*:

“The Italians are astonished at the casualness with which the American government goes about saving those clinging to life atop the roofs of buildings. Tact keeps the local press from noting what every American knows: those who have been abandoned by lifesavers belong to our permanent underclass: the African Americans.”

We hated a lot of the same people for about the same reasons. Our special debt to Vidal is for the seven novels—from *Burr* (1973) to *Lincoln* (1984) and *Empire* (1987) through to *The Golden Age* (2000)—that constitute the “Narratives of Empire” collection. Vidal told the truth, and that is both rare and subversive. And, he embraced life, not what he referred to as the “death cult” of Christianity and other religions, nor the stultifying, hypocritical conformity of the holy family. There is more truth in Vidal’s fiction than in many celebrated works of “history.” The Prometheus Research Library, archive of the Spartacist League Central Committee, long ago made Gore Vidal a subject category and collected his writings to educate comrades with provocatively good reads.

Gore Vidal is buried side by side with his partner of 50 years, Howard Austen, near the grave of his first love, Jimmie Tribble, who was slain in World War II. We will miss his creative spark, but his legacy will continue to enrich us. ■



WV Photo

After Spartacist supporter tore down Confederate flag in San Francisco Civic Center, April 1984, Gore Vidal autographed title page of his novel *Lincoln* for us: Lincoln “would also have wanted the flag’s symbolic removal.”

was very much aware that there is a ruling class in the U.S. “But,” he noted, “it’s the best-kept secret in the United States” (*Vanity Fair*, June 1987). His maternal grandfather, Thomas Pryor (T.P.) Gore, was a longtime Senator from Oklahoma. His father, Eugene, founded three airlines and served under Franklin D. Roosevelt as director of the Bureau of Air Commerce. His mother, Nina, divorced Eugene in 1935 and married Hugh D. Auchincloss, the stepfather of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

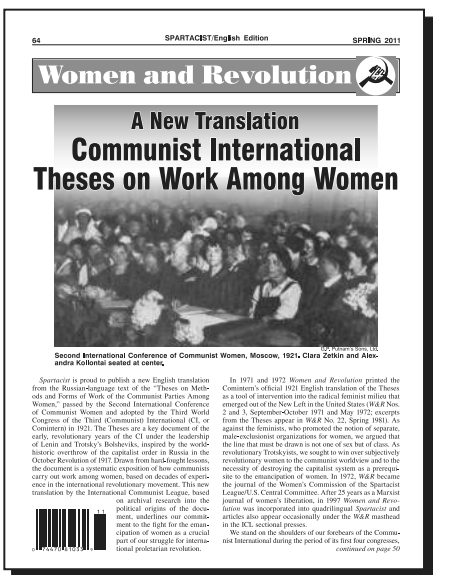
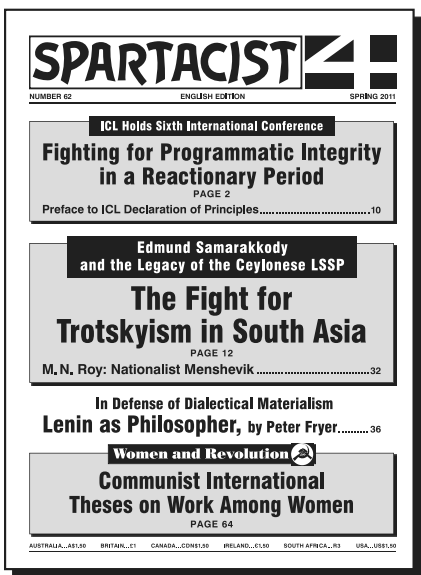
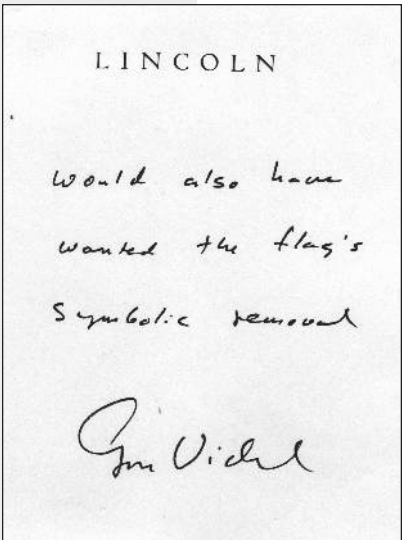
Vidal went to the right schools: St. Albans School in Washington and then Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. He joined the Army in World War II at the age of 17, serving as first mate on a freight supply ship in the Aleutian Islands. He did not go on to university. As he noted in his second memoir, *Point to Point Navigation* (2006): “After nearly three years in the army, the thought of four years at Harvard was unbearable.... I would ‘live by writing,’ I said. And so I did.”

He was radicalized initially by the outpouring of homophobic censure that greeted his early novel, *The City and the Pillar* (1948). Vidal claimed that his next five books were blacked out by the *New York Times* as well as by *Time* and *Newsweek*. In its obituary, the *Times* (1 August

called ‘A Sense of Justice.’” Vidal also turned his go-for-the-jugular wit and serious study of history to religion. Referring to his novel about the “apostate” Roman Emperor, *Julian* (1964), he remarked: “I’ve always been anti-Christian, but I wanted to know why. So I investigated the cult, a radicalizing thing to do since I come from that tradition.”

In 1968, when Vidal says he was caught in the Chicago police riot at the Democratic Party Convention, he “came out, as it were, into radical politics.” But he was not a Marxist. From his youth, he had been determined to be a politician. He ran unsuccessfully for office in the early 1960s (and later in 1982) as a Democrat. He became co-chairman, with Benjamin Spock, of what would become the People’s Party (affiliated with the Peace and Freedom Party). He was involved in that effort from 1968 to 1972, the year that Democratic Senator George McGovern, a Vietnam War “dove,” mounted a presidential campaign only to get trounced by Richard Nixon. Vidal told Wiener, “I quit when McGovern, in the primaries, was saying everything we were, and rather better.”

Despite his own campaigns and acquaintance with much of the Democratic Party glitterati, Vidal did not gloss



English edition
No. 62, Spring 2011 • \$1.50 (64 pages)

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Who Owns America...

(continued from page 1)

Only in this way will the resources of society be able to be used for the benefit of the population and not the profit of a small, parasitical class.

During the Occupy movement, it was not uncommon for so-called Marxists to prettify it by claiming that even if Occupy lacked an explicit class-based perspective it had an implicit one. Paul LeBlanc, a longtime reformist, most recently of the ISO variety, wrote in *Socialist Worker* (26 April): “The fundamental perspective of the Occupy movement has been to replace the power of the wealthy and oppressive 1 percent with the power of the 99 percent, the great majority of whom are working class whether blue collar, white collar or unemployed.” He continued, “This power shift from the wealthy few to the great majority of people is a revolutionary goal.” In fact, the Occupy rhetoric of the 99 percent is counterposed to a class perspective.

The ruling class is much smaller than 1 percent and the proletariat, while vastly greater than the capitalists, is smaller than 99 percent. Further, it’s necessary to point out that the very concept of 99 percent is not very useful. Usually the way this figure is used is to refer to people’s income.

Capitalists, in fact, do not live off paychecks but returns from their investments—that is, their capital. In 2010, Mitt Romney and his wife had an income of more than \$21.6 million, but exactly



WV Photo

Left: October 2011 NYC protest. Right: Populist Democrat William Jennings Bryan in 1890s. Occupy’s “99 percent” populism promotes lie that workers, cops, small businessmen share common interests.



Doubleday

criminals. There are the ever-growing unemployed, who Marx called the reserve army of labor. The 99 percent also includes direct agents of the state—cops, security guards, judges, prison guards—as well as office workers, technicians, managers, computer programmers, teachers, college professors and other members of the intelligentsia. There are also a few small farmers, especially in New Jersey, where I live. And finally there are actual workers.

Talk of the 99 percent obscures the political importance of the working class. Notwithstanding changes in industrial technique, the proletariat remains central

quest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation.”

Throughout most of the 19th century, capitalism remade Europe. Starting with Britain, capitalism went beyond its mercantile roots and became industrial. Capitalism was progressive in relation to feudalism because it enormously raised the productive forces of society. So much so that for the first time there was a material basis for envisioning an end to scarcity

part in the general—both theoretical and practical—affairs of society.” At the same time, private ownership of the means of production, which is central to capitalism, became a barrier to the continued development of societies’ productive forces. Capitalism also created the working class: the force with the power and interest to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism.

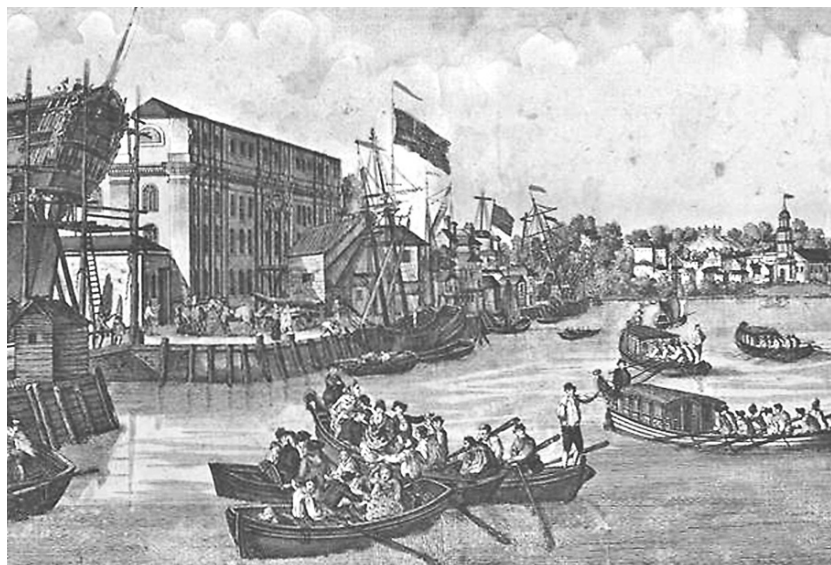
Unlike Europe, the United States does not have a feudal history. The British colonies in North America were from the get-go integrated into British mercantile capitalism. Unlike Cromwell in England or Robespierre in France, the American revolutionaries did not need to create a new social system. Rather, they did not like the constraints that the British placed on their ability to develop.

The American bourgeoisie developed much more rapidly than in Europe. Primitive capital accumulation in the U.S., including taking the land from Native Americans and profiting from black slaves, ended much more recently. Indeed, much of the wealth of colonial America came from slave-grown tobacco. In the North, merchants sold food and other products to the slave-based “sugar colonies” in the British Caribbean and imported slave-made sugar. A major cause of the American Revolution was the attempt by the British to restrict the colonists’ ability to import and export slave-made commodities.

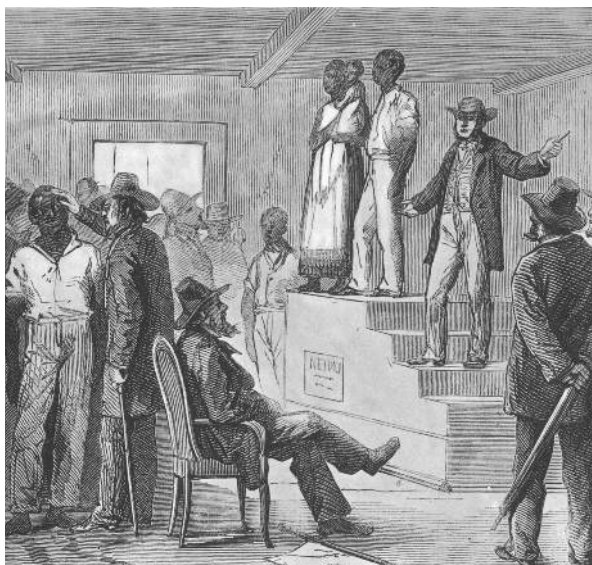
After independence, the merchant capitalists shared power in the new republic with the owners of slave plantations. These merchants profited from exporting slave-made agricultural products, first tobacco, later cotton. They also imported products from Europe and sold them to the slave South. Chattel slavery formed the bedrock of American capitalism.

By the mid 19th century, industrial capitalism was challenging mercantile

continued on page 8



New York Public Library



Documentation Française

Bustling New York Harbor, 1775; slave auction in Richmond, Virginia, 1856. Prior to Civil War, Northern merchant profits were heavily tied to Southern slave-based economy.

none of this came in the form of wages or salaries. As an aside, there is quite a bit of confusion over what wealth actually is. Many people, including workers, own a house or a little stock in the form of a pension or a 401(k) plan. As the last several years show, the value of these things can be erased almost overnight.

In any case, when we talk about wealth, it is about the productive wealth of society. This type of wealth is passed down from generation to generation. By contrast, income is quite precarious. Income ends when an individual dies, gets laid off or otherwise can’t work. In the 1930s, Ferdinand Lundberg, a radical journalist, wrote a book called *America’s 60 Families* that traced how this wealth is controlled and passed down among the bourgeoisie.

There are more than 200 million adults in the U.S., so by definition the top 1 percent comprises more than two million people. It’s everybody who made more than \$352,000 in 2010. Most of these are well-paid professionals or businessmen who live much better than most Americans. But the actual ruling class is much smaller, a fraction of this 1 percent.

As I mentioned, not all of the remaining 99 percent of the population consists of workers. This multitude contains all sorts of people who don’t share common interests. The most impoverished and oppressed sections of the population, who have no connection to production, are the people who Karl Marx called the lumpen-proletariat, such as homeless people or

to a revolutionary perspective today. It continues to occupy a unique role in the heart of the process of production, and it is through the exploitation of the working class that the capitalists derive profit. Concentrating workers in large factories and great urban centers, the capitalists have created the instrument of their own destruction as an exploiting class. For the working class to emancipate itself, it must abolish all exploitation, leading to a society without class distinction. This requires a revolution that establishes a workers government to expropriate the capitalists, because capitalism cannot be fundamentally reformed.

Chattel Slavery and Early American Capitalism

Although for many people capitalism seems natural, it is a historically recent development. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the bourgeoisie in different European countries—beginning with the Dutch and the English and then culminating most spectacularly with the French—overthrew the feudal order and made itself the ruling class. This coincided with what Marx called primitive capital accumulation. In other words, the capitalists plundered and stole wealth that they used to kick-start capitalism. As Marx explained in *Capital* (Volume I):

“The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the con-

and class divisions. As Friedrich Engels put it in his book *Anti-Dühring*: “Only the immense increase of the productive forces attained by modern industry has made it possible to distribute labour among all members of society without exception, and thereby to limit the labour-time of each individual member to such an extent that all have enough free time left to take

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

CHICAGO

Wednesday, October 17, 4 p.m.
Marxism and the Fight for Socialist Revolution

University of Illinois at Chicago
African American Cultural Center
Gallery, Addams Hall, Room 207
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Tuesday, October 23, 7 p.m.
The State and Revolution

CCNY, NAC Room 1/211
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

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

TORONTO

Wednesday, October 24, 6:30 p.m.
Egypt and Permanent Revolution

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

VANCOUVER

Thursday, November 1, 6 p.m.
Economic Crisis Rips Europe: Down With the EU! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

UBC, Irving Barber Learning Centre
Room 157
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Who Owns America...

(continued from page 7)

capitalism in America. Big mercantile families looked down on these rising industrialists, in part because many industrialists had originally been artisans or were more involved in the actual production of goods. But it also reflected the fact that these two sections of the bourgeoisie fundamentally disagreed over slavery.

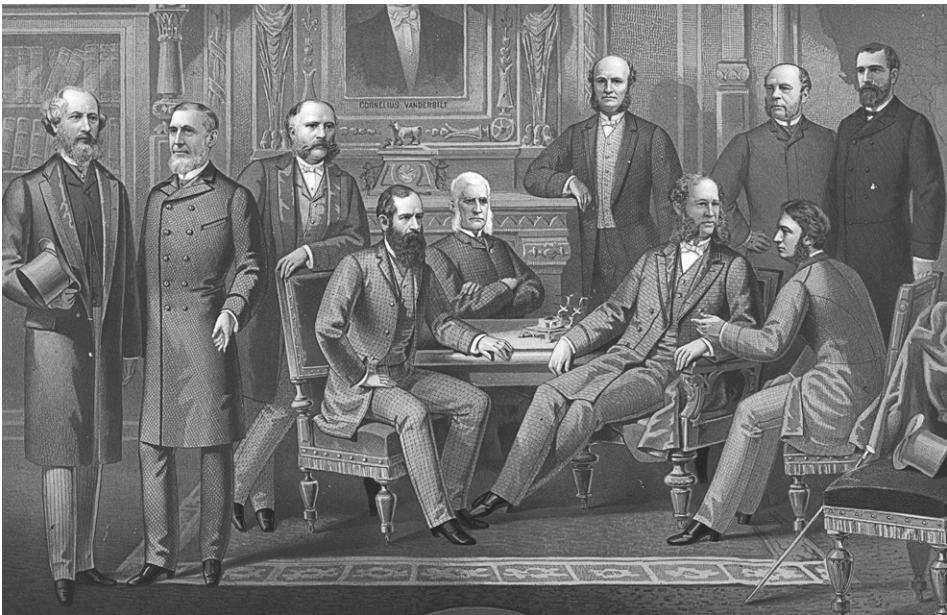
Many merchants were pro-slavery. Industrialists tended to oppose slavery or at least wanted to check its growth, favoring the new Republican Party while the merchants supported the Democratic Party. The dispute was over what social system was going to dominate the U.S.: a modern capitalist system, based on exploiting free labor, or an agricultural slave system.

The Civil War resolved the issue. This was America’s great bourgeois revolution, not the 1776 Revolution. The Civil War smashed the Southern slave system, destroyed the slave-owning class there and opened the road to the development of industrial capitalism. It smashed slavery, but the promise of full liberation for black people—a promise made explicit by some of the more radical bourgeois leaders during the postwar Reconstruction period—was not fulfilled. Even though black people became integrated into American capitalism, they remained forcibly segregated at the bottom. This is why we call today to *finish the Civil War through a third, socialist, American revolution.*

The Consolidation of the Bourgeoisie

The modern American bourgeoisie really has its origins after the Civil War. Some statistics: In 1869, there were almost twice as many factories in the United States as in 1859. In 1873, there was four times as much capital invested in manufacturing as in 1865. In 1866, London and New York City were connected by telegraph cable. The year before, there were 35,000 miles of railroad track in the U.S.; by 1873, there were more than 70,000 miles of track. This reflected the rise of American industrial capitalism and the American bourgeoisie.

Who was this bourgeoisie? Well, as the statistics indicate, one representative section was the railroad companies. Without railroads, a modern capitalist country was impossible, especially in a country so big. And so a group of swashbuckling pirates filled the breach to develop the railroads. The attitude of the railroad capitalists of the late 19th century was very similar to the Internet start-up capitalists a century later. Actually provid-



Above: 19th-century robber baron Jay Gould (seated at left of table) with other “kings of Wall Street.” Below: State militia fires on workers in Baltimore during Great Rail Strike of 1877.



ing railroad service was far down on the list of their priorities. They raised capital by ripping off their investors—one favored method was issuing too much stock (called “watering” the stock from the practice of giving cattle lots of water before selling them so they would weigh more). The railroad magnates ripped off consumers, and they ripped off the government, and they ripped off each other. In at least one case, different capitalists fought pitched battles over control of the railroads. Some of these capitalists are still famous to this day—for example, Jay Gould.

It’s not for nothing that the capitalists of this period were called “robber barons.” They undertook all kinds of dodgy schemes to get rich. One famous, if comparatively mild, example was the so-called “Hall Carbine Affair.” During

the Civil War, J.P. Morgan—then known as the son of banker Junius Spencer Morgan—was involved in a scheme to buy several thousand defective rifles from the U.S. government. In order to raise the money to buy these rifles, Morgan and his partners arranged to sell them to the U.S. government as new rifles at several times the original price. In other words, the government bought its own rifles, giving a large profit to Morgan and his partners. This would have been farce if it were not tragedy, especially for the Union soldiers who had to use the guns.

The 1870s to the 1890s—the Gilded Age—was very important for the American ruling class. The bourgeoisie lost interest in its plans to modernize the South and abandoned the black population to race-terror and discrimination. Some capitalists were also looking to turn a good profit in the South. The evolution of the Republican Party reflects this change. It went from being an anti-slavery party before the Civil War and advocates of Reconstruction after the war to being the party of the most powerful section of the big bourgeoisie.

The shift was also reflected on the legal level. During Reconstruction, Congress approved the Fourteenth Amendment, which declared everybody born in the U.S. a citizen, regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude. The Amendment also states that all citizens have the right to “due process” and “equal protection of the laws.” In 1886, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations had the same Fourteenth Amendment rights as people did. A decade later, in the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, the Court essentially ruled that the Amendment did not apply to black people at all, consolidating legal Jim Crow segregation.

The capitalists became self-aware of their role in society and determined to maintain that role. The bourgeoisie consolidated as a *national* class, emerging out of local elites. This reflected the creation of a national market; industrialists, merchants and bankers in one part of the country dealt with their counterparts elsewhere. They often owned factories, banks or railroads throughout the U.S. In this period, more

and more capitalists moved to Manhattan, even if they had made their fortunes elsewhere, because it was the meeting ground of the bourgeoisie. Among them were the Armours from Chicago, Andrew Carnegie from Pittsburgh, John D. Rockefeller from Pennsylvania, Maximillian Fleischmann from Cincinnati and Meyer Guggenheim from Colorado.

Part of the self-awareness of the bourgeoisie was the creation of important social networks. In New York City alone, there were dozens of exclusive clubs. These included the Union Club, the Union League, the Manhattan Club, the Knickerbocker Club, the Calumet, the Metropolitan, the Tuxedo, the New York Yacht Club and the Racquet Club. The average wealthy New Yorker belonged to five of these clubs. J.P. Morgan belonged to 19.

Then there were cultural institutions, such as the Metropolitan Opera, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Philharmonic. These were run by donations from the bourgeoisie. Even today, one of the major benefactors of the Metropolitan Opera is the billionaire and Tea Party backer David Koch, who donated \$2.5 million in 2010 alone. There were also private boarding schools and elite universities—particularly Harvard and Yale—that rose to prominence, not to mention the endless balls, dinner parties and other forms of socializing.

If this appears frivolous and wasteful, it was very important to cohering the American capitalist class by linking together capitalists from across the country and from different industries. Not every capitalist knew every other capitalist, but none was far removed from any other, which facilitated trust and a good working relationship. It also created a veneer of culture and refinement—which is often referred to as “class”—something the American bourgeoisie didn’t really have before this point. It emphasized the “right” and calling of the bourgeoisie to run society by helping distinguish it from the rest of the population, who did not have the culture that their “betters” had. On a more practical level, such networks allowed the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie to get to know one another. As Lundberg documents, just as with medieval dynasties, the American bourgeoisie formed alliances through marrying one another. This served to more closely concentrate the wealth of this class.

Class Battles and Labor Statesmen

The bourgeoisie was also compelled into action by awareness of threats to its own rule. In Europe, the “spectre of communism” threatened capitalism, as was most spectacularly demonstrated by the 1871 Paris Commune, when French workers briefly seized power. In the U.S. at the time, industrial workers began to organize and fight for their interests. The first national strike took place in 1877—the Great Railroad Strike. In the same year, the bourgeoisie abandoned its prior commitment to “reconstructing” the South, shifting its focus to maintaining its rule over the country.

In a series of labor battles over subsequent decades, the bourgeoisie resorted to the power of the state against the workers. Between 1880 and 1930, the courts issued some 4,300 injunctions against unions. Between 1869 and 1892, employers used Pinkerton thugs in 77 different strikes; over roughly the same time, state militias were deployed against striking workers 150 times. As a result, strikers were more likely to be killed or injured in the U.S. than in almost any other advanced capitalist country. As the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* put it in 1887, after the explosive growth of the first national labor movement:

“As the Knights of Labor grew in membership, and the number of boycotts increased, merchants and manufacturers began to feel that they had a common interest in preventing the growth of any such irresponsible power; they had a common interest in maintaining industrial order and independence which was more important than any temporary advantage to be obtained over a commercial rival.” Given the amount of strikes and work-

Spartacist League/SYC Forums

Elections 2012:

Wall Street Democrats vs. Wall Street Republicans

We Need an All New Ruling Class—the Workers!

LOS ANGELES

Saturday
October 13, 3 p.m.

Metropolitan Community Church
4953 Franklin Avenue
(four blocks west of Vermont)

For info: (213) 380-8239 • slsycla@sbcglobal.net

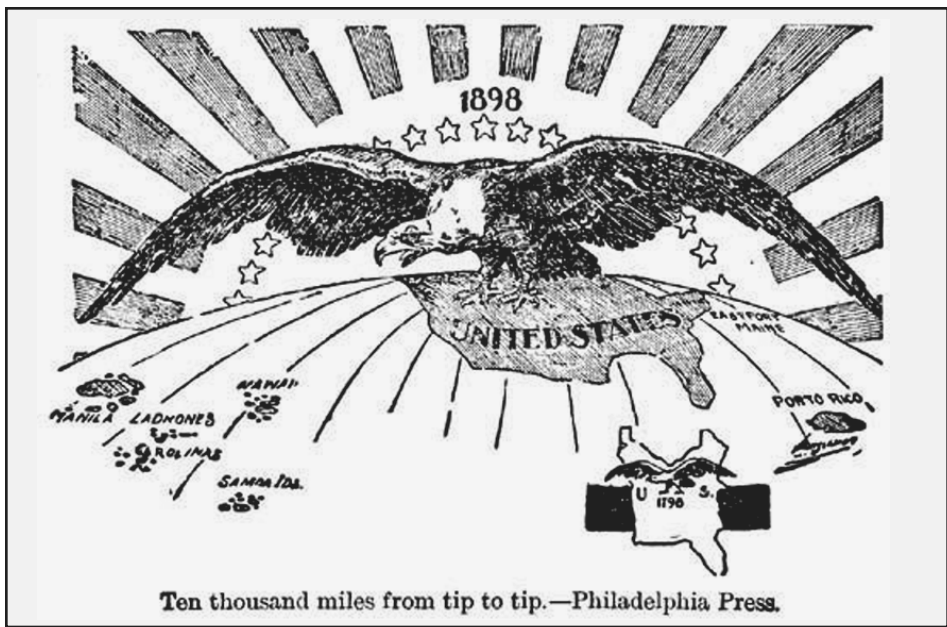
Miners Strikes Shake Neo-Apartheid South Africa

Down With ANC/SACP/COSATU Capitalist Alliance!
For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

OAKLAND

Saturday
November 3, 2 p.m.

Berkeley Korean United Methodist Church
303 Hudson St., Lower Level
(5 blocks south of Rockridge BART
at College and Manila Avenues, opposite Rockridge Library)
For info: (510) 839-0851 • slbayarea@sbcglobal.net



1898 political cartoon following U.S. victory in Spanish-American War celebrated U.S. status as imperial power.

ers' militancy in the late 19th century, one could be forgiven for predicting that the U.S. labor movement would become the strongest in the world. Why did this not happen? It was in part because the bourgeoisie was always willing to use brutal repression. But the bourgeoisie also exploited ethnic, linguistic, religious and, later, racial divisions in the working class. As Jay Gould bragged: "I can hire one half of the working class to kill the other half."

Much of the blame for the low class consciousness of American workers falls on the trade-union bureaucracy. Most early unions represented a narrow group of skilled white workers, mainly native-born but also some Protestant immigrants. Under the tutelage of Samuel Gompers, head of the cigar makers union and later the founder-leader of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), union leaders ignored immigrant and unskilled workers, the majority of the class. They refused to organize black and immigrant—especially Chinese—workers. Gompers also pioneered the so-called non-partisan approach: instead of a party that reflected the *class* interests of workers—even if in a deformed way—the AFL supported whatever bourgeois candidate promised more. Needless to say, Gompers and his ilk were contemptuous of political struggle and sworn enemies of socialism. They wanted to work within the capitalist system.

The Dominance of Finance Capital

After the Civil War, the tremendous expansion of industry required capital. And for this, banks were crucial. One of the original purposes of investment banks was to provide American companies access to foreign—particularly British—capital.

The 1870s and 1880s set the stage for the ascendancy of finance capital and the emergence of modern imperialism. The nation-state system, which had served as a

crucible for the rise of the capitalist class, came ever more sharply into conflict with the needs of an *international* economic order that capitalism itself had brought about. The rapid development of American capitalism meant that the bourgeoisie went from being progressive to being reactionary in the span of a generation.

The growth of finance capital led to American investments abroad, which entailed exploiting and oppressing the peoples of the colonial and semicolonial world, particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. In 1898, the U.S. obtained colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Over the next period, the United States invaded many Central American and Caribbean countries, some of them repeatedly. U.S. troops were sent to Nicaragua three times between 1909 and 1933. In the first half of the 20th century, the capitalist Great Powers, having divided the world through bloody imperialist conquest, embarked on a series of wars to redivide it, seeking to expand their colonial holdings and spheres of influence at each other's expense. Entering the interimperialist World War I in its third year, the U.S. emerged from the carnage stronger than its rivals in Europe.

When the U.S. was first becoming an imperialist power, the capitalist class was stressing the need for stability and common action. The swashbuckling pirates of the robber baron stage of capitalism were not so fit for the imperialist epoch. Through manipulation, reasoning and force, big capitalists organized what they called "trusts"—companies whose owners were interlocked. Again the banks were crucial, since they were able to gain control of various important companies. The banks didn't necessarily own all of the companies, but because they controlled incoming capital, they were able to sway their owners.

In the 1930s, Lewis Corey (a radical who, a decade earlier, had been a founder of the Communist Party under the name Louis Fraina) called this process "Morganization." J.P. Morgan gained control of huge portions of the railroad industry and shipping. He bought out other important capitalists—such as Andrew Carnegie—and formed the largest steel company in American history, U.S. Steel. Morgan or those he controlled held 341 directorships in 112 corporations, with an aggregate capitalization of over \$22 billion.

Another example is the Rockefellers. Originating with a petroleum company, Standard Oil, John D. Rockefeller expanded his holdings. In 1890, besides his petroleum interests, he had some \$14 million in railroad investments, \$2.8 million in mining, \$2 million in other industries and more than \$1 million in banking. He owned mines, paper mills, nail factories, timber mills, banks, insurance companies, orange groves, soda factories, steamship lines, real estate companies.

In other words, he owned lots of means of production. So much so that he could not manage it on a day-to-day basis. The concentration of wealth created the need for a whole array of assistants: technicians, engineers, attorneys, accountants,

managers and supervisors. This stratum is part of the petty bourgeoisie and comprises a section of what is considered the "middle class." The petty bourgeoisie, while large, has no independent social role to play in capitalist production. Its upper layers tend to support the capitalists, and its lower layers are often sympathetic to the workers.

Despite Horatio Alger's novels and the occasional "self-made" man, the capitalists were a class that passed its wealth down from generation to generation. In 1892, two-thirds of the millionaires in New York City had inherited their fortunes. Sixty-one percent of wealthy New Yorkers in 1828 were still represented, either personally or through their heirs, among the city's millionaires in the 1890s.

It was obvious that American capitalists formed a *ruling class*. They didn't just own the wealth of society, but they controlled the state, and, usually, the politicians and the government. Anything that threatened their profits was smashed. One example was the Populist movement. Populists had demanded reforms (the nationalization of the railroads and banks as well as monetary and tax reforms) that they saw as in the interests of "the people" versus the moneyed interests. This notion is kind of the root, at least intellectually, of both the 1960s New Left and the Occupy movement. The Populists lumped together all "producers"—workers along with small businessmen and farmers. Even though populism did not fundamentally threaten the existence of capitalism, the bourgeoisie reacted with fury. When he was NYC police commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt advocated that the Populists be treated "as the Commune in Paris was suppressed, by taking ten or a dozen of their leaders out, standing them...against a wall and shooting them dead."

The 1896 campaign of the populist Democratic Party candidate William Jennings Bryan was a thorn in the side of the large capitalists, who flooded the coffers of the Republicans with millions of dollars. A key figure was Mark Hanna, a Republican operative who spearheaded the use of money to, in effect, buy candidates and elections. The underlying concept of Super PACs is not something new. It's not a perversion of American democracy, but a continuation.

Candidates of both parties have long depended on large corporate donations.



J.P. Morgan leaving White House circa 1914.

Lundberg describes how both Morgan and Rockefeller essentially controlled politicians at all levels, up to the president, in order to assure favorable policies. And the government repaid these contributions, with interest.

Growing Inequality and the "American Century"

By the late 1920s, the top one-twentieth of 1 percent, which was less than 40,000 people, owned 30 percent of U.S. savings. Then came the Great Depression. Since a large portion of the bourgeoisie's wealth was maintained in stock, the crash of 1929 hurt the balance sheets of the wealthy. Four-fifths of the Rockefeller fortune disappeared. Corporate profits were \$10 billion in 1929, but in 1932 there was a loss of \$2.3 billion.

Don't sing any sad songs for the bourgeoisie. The Rockefellers were still unimaginably wealthy. And as always, the bourgeoisie tried to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis. Unemployment soared. More than eleven million Americans—25 percent of the workforce—were unemployed in 1932. Take U.S. Steel, which in 1929 had 225,000 full-time workers. By the end of 1932, it

continued on page 10



Class divide during Great Depression. Above: Intermission at Metropolitan Opera in New York City, 1934. Below: 1930s breadline at approach to Brooklyn Bridge.



A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1.50

Black History and the Class Struggle
No. 22

Race and Class in American History

Colonial America, the Civil War and the Rise of U.S. Imperialism

No. 22 \$1.50 (56 pages)

Black History is sent to WV subscribers.

Make checks payable to:
Spartacist Pub. Co., Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116



AP



Dawn Des Brisay

7 September 2011 battle against union-busting in Longview: ILWU members protest in Vancouver, Washington; ILWU International president Robert McEllrath under arrest.

ILWU...

(continued from page 3)

most powerful unions in the country. But the ILA caved. This came on the heels of the two unions promising “mutual support” when they announced the formation of a Maritime Labor Alliance (MLA) between the ILWU, ILA and four other maritime unions in mid September. It was clear from the start that this alliance was far from a vehicle for uniting port workers in struggle against the employers. On the contrary, the main battle cry of the press release

announcing the formation of the MLA was to “vigorously protect our jurisdictions.” A recent example of what this means can be seen at the Portland port, where the ILWU has been going after the equivalent of two container maintenance jobs that have been held by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) for over 30 years. In its bid for these jobs, the ILWU filed a joint suit with the PMA bosses against the Philippines-based ICTSI shipping company, which now runs the terminal that employs these workers.

Such jurisdictional fights to grab a shrinking number of maintenance-related

jobs are the bureaucrats’ answer to the projected loss of traditional longshore jobs due to the increasing automation of work at the ports. This means driving other unions like the IBEW and International Association of Machinists, whose members currently do maintenance and mechanical work at some terminals, off the ports. All of the port unions should be fighting together for jobs at the highest union pay, benefits and working conditions, and for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work around. While pitting union against union, the ILWU and the ILA are them-

selves increasingly isolated outposts of organized labor at the ports, surrounded by tens of thousands of low-wage, non-union workers, from trucking to the vast inland warehouse empires and intermodal rail facilities. The crucial battle to preserve and extend the unions’ strength is to *organize the unorganized!*

As we wrote in “Lessons of the Battle of Longview” (WV No. 996, 17 February):

“Let those union militants and their allies who fought so courageously draw the lessons to prepare for future battles. If the unions are to be instruments of struggle against the bosses, they must break the chains forged by the labor misleaders that have shackled the workers to the interests of the capitalist exploiters and their political parties. The continued existence of the ILWU as a powerful industrial union cries out for a class-struggle fight to unionize the masses of unorganized workers, such as the port truckers, which would require combating anti-immigrant chauvinism and organizing them at full union pay, benefits and working conditions....

“The red-white-and-blue bureaucrats must be ousted in a fight for a class-struggle leadership, one whose banner will be the red flag of working-class internationalism! Such a leadership will arm the workers for some hard-fought battles against the capitalist exploiters and lay the basis for forging a multiracial workers party, one that will fight for a socialist revolution to uproot the whole system of wage slavery, racial oppression, poverty and imperialist war.” ■

Assange...

(continued from page 12)

pressing the U.S. to stage a military attack against Iran’s nuclear programme, showing yet again that Iran *needs* nukes to deter attack by the U.S. or its Israeli proxy. And while Hague told Ecuador: “The UK does not accept the principle of diplomatic asylum,” the British imperialists have no problem with such asylum when it serves anti-Communist China-bashing. When Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng sought refuge in the U.S. embassy in Beijing in April this year, Hague rushed to lecture the Chinese government on its “abuse of power,” while the European Union urged China to use the “utmost restraint” in dealing with Chen.

“Socialists” Aid Witchhunt

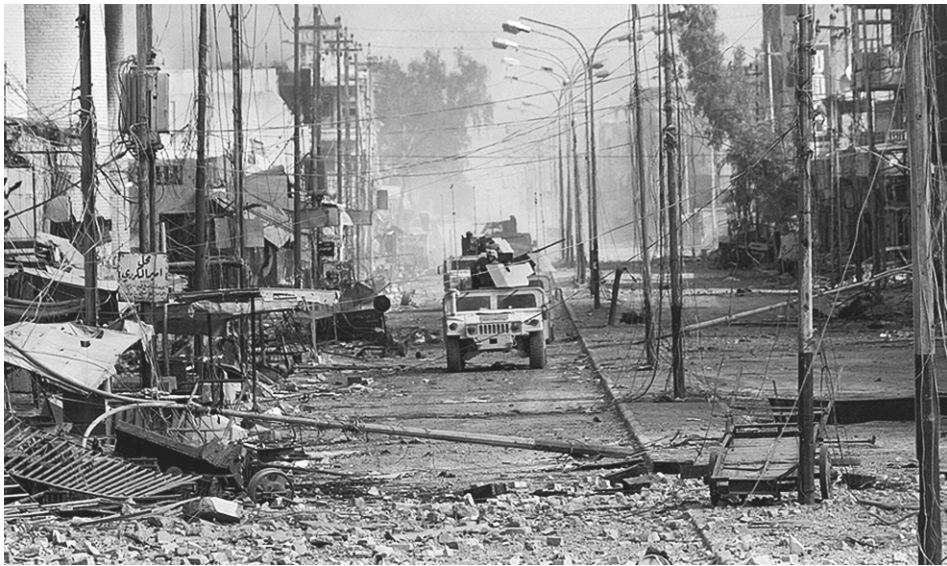
The rape allegations made against Assange by two women in Sweden are simply not credible. Both women approached Assange at separate times and, by their own accounts, had *consensual* sex with him. Neither claimed at the time that she had been the victim of a rape or sexual assault. One of the so-called “victims” organised a barbecue for Assange the day after the supposed “assault.” The other went to the police after exchanging emails with the first woman, and then apparently to see if Assange could be forced to take a sexual health test after a condom allegedly broke during sex. Prosecutors in Sweden initially opened, then dropped, then reopened an investigation into the accusations. Assange—who has not been charged with any offence—has

repeatedly offered to be interviewed by Swedish authorities either in London or by video link, but the Swedes have steadfastly refused.

The capitalists and their hired scribblers in the media—the so-called “liberal” press—have cynically seized on the rape accusations to smear Assange and to discredit WikiLeaks. “Considering he made his name with the biggest leak of secret government documents in history, you might imagine there would be at least some residual concern for Julian Assange among those trading in the freedom of information business. But the virulence of British media hostility towards the WikiLeaks founder is now unrelenting,” wrote Seumas Milne (*Guardian*, 21 August). To the British press, Milne noted, Assange “is nothing but a ‘monstrous narcissist,’ a bail-jumping ‘sex pest’ and an exhibitionist maniac.” This venom is spewed at someone “who has yet to be charged, let alone convicted, of anything.”

The reformist left have joined in the witchhunt of Assange, treating the rape allegations as good coin, as was seen when the bourgeois press unleashed a vicious backlash against MP [Member of Parliament] George Galloway. He made the unexceptionable statement in an online video broadcast that “even taken at its worst, if the allegations made by these two women were true, 100 percent true, and even if a camera in the room captured them, they don’t constitute rape. At least not rape as anyone with any sense can possibly recognise it.” Salma Yaqoob, a leader of Galloway’s Respect party, condemned his remarks as “deeply disappointing and wrong” and later resigned from Respect.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) also took aim at Galloway, who was their coalition partner in Respect before a split in 2007. In an article in *Socialist Worker* (1 September) leading SWPer Judith Orr chastised Galloway for his assertion that Assange was guilty of nothing more than “bad sexual etiquette.” Orr objects to Galloway’s statement, saying: “Part of the fight for women’s liberation has been for us to no longer to [sic] be seen as sex objects.” The SWP’s concern for women’s liberation rings hollow, to put it mildly, given its long record of pandering to Islamic reactionaries such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. For sure George Galloway, who also panders to Islamic reaction and opposes abortion, is hardly a champion of women’s rights. But this was not a problem for the SWP when, in order to form the Respect coalition with Galloway in 2004, these opportunists buried the question of women’s oppression (and gay rights) in order to avoid alienating the



AFF

Fallujah, Iraq, devastated by occupation troops in November 2004. Imperialists target Assange and WikiLeaks for lifting lid on such war crimes.

mosques. Now the SWP cynically invokes women’s rights while in reality providing a cover to the witchhunt against Julian Assange, whom the imperialist rulers have declared a public enemy.

The Socialist Party joined the vendetta against Assange, including in an editorial comment from its Swedish sister group, Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna, which opposes Assange’s extradition to the U.S., but tacitly supports his extradition to Sweden. The article says: “Internationally, the case centres around US imperialism’s need to punish WikiLeaks and no doubt the Swedish state and government would happily assist the US in getting Assange extradited. However, the case is also about serious allegations of rape, which must be investigated” (*Socialist*, 30 August). The International Socialist Group in Scotland (a split from the SWP) brands Assange a rapist before he has even been charged, let alone convicted. An online piece by Sarah Watson declares: “Assange committed rape and should face trial in Sweden” (internationalsocialist.org.uk, 22 August).

We are opposed to government interference in people’s private, sexual lives, as well as to any categorical criminalisation of a sex act, such as the reactionary “age of consent” laws. As a guiding principle, we advocate the concept of effective consent—that is, mutual understanding and agreement. To conflate consensual sex with rape is to trivialise the brutal crime of rape. The reformist left share a touching faith in the capitalist state, which they entrust to regulate the sexual activity of youth, as well as to “protect” women and children.

The state in Sweden, as in Britain, is certainly not known for its sympathetic

treatment of women who have been raped. An article titled “We Are Women Against Rape But We Do Not Want Julian Assange Extradited,” written by members of Women Against Rape (*Guardian*, 23 August), expressed a healthy scepticism over the sudden concern for “rape” victims in the Assange case. The article noted:

“When Julian Assange was first arrested, we were struck by the unusual zeal with which he was being pursued for rape allegations. “It seems even clearer now, that the allegations against him are a smokescreen behind which a number of governments are trying to clamp down on WikiLeaks for having audaciously revealed to the public their secret planning of wars and occupations with their attendant rape, murder and destruction.”

Julian Assange is a bourgeois liberal who vainly seeks to rid the imperialist system of its worst excesses through exposure of its crimes. In trying to take down Assange, WikiLeaks and Bradley Manning, the U.S. and British imperialists are sending a message that any exposure or even accurate reporting of the imperialists’ crimes and atrocities will be punished by life in prison, or the death penalty. It is in the interests of the working class and all the oppressed to fight the witchhunt of Assange, which is an attempt to criminalise dissent and to silence opponents of imperialism’s wars and occupations as well as domestic repression carried out in the name of fighting “terrorism.” We Marxists seek to impart the understanding that imperialist war, with all its savagery, is inherent to capitalist class rule. Only when capitalism is destroyed root and branch through workers revolution will humanity finally be rid of such horrors. ■

WORKERS HAMMER

Bogus rape claims and imperialist vendetta

Hands off Julian Assange!

Lonmin massacre: ANC-led government has blood on its hands

Miners win bitter strike in South Africa

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

£3/1 year—Britain, Ireland (Europe outside Britain and Ireland: £5; Other: £7)
US\$10/1 year

Order from/make checks payable to:
Spartacist Publications
PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY, Britain
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

WORKERS VANGUARD

Bogus Rape Claims and Imperialist Vendetta

Hands Off Julian Assange!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 220 (Autumn 2012), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

Following two years under house arrest in Britain, in mid-June Julian Assange, the founder and editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks, sought refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy in London. Assange is facing extradition to Sweden on trumped-up allegations of “sexual molestation” and “rape”—which boil down to charges of unprotected sex in what were by all accounts consensual relations—but he rightly fears that this is simply a pretext to facilitate his extradition to the U.S. By granting him political asylum, Ecuador threw a monkey wrench into the process of handing Assange over to the U.S. imperialists, who are intent on exacting retribution against Assange and WikiLeaks for having lifted the lid, however slightly, on the hideous crimes of U.S. and British imperialism.

In April 2010, WikiLeaks posted a video online which showed a U.S. Apache helicopter gunning down and killing at least 12 civilians in Baghdad in 2007, including two Reuters journalists, while the pilots gloated over the carnage. The release of the video was followed by the publication of hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables as well as classified documents recording the murder, torture and rape carried out by the imperialists in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the leaks contained little in the way of revelations, the British and U.S. capitalist rulers were enraged at any light being shed on



Getty

August 19: Julian Assange addressing supporters from balcony of Ecuadorian embassy, London.

their machinations. Contrary to Sweden’s “human rights” facade, WikiLeaks drew attention to its militaristic role, not least in Afghanistan where it has maintained a military presence for over ten years.

If sent to the U.S., Assange could face charges including “espionage,” which carries a potential death penalty. U.S. Army Private Bradley Manning has been in military prison for more than two years in

torturous conditions, accused of “aiding the enemy”—a capital offence—for leaking classified documents to WikiLeaks. If Manning was indeed the source of the information, then he has provided a useful and courageous service on behalf of imperialism’s victims. We say: **Free Bradley Manning now! Hands off Julian Assange—let him go to Ecuador!**

The British government, caught off guard by Ecuador’s granting asylum to Assange, reacted with fury. Attempting to intimidate tiny Ecuador into handing over their quarry, swarms of cops surrounded the embassy while the Foreign Office threatened to revoke Ecuador’s diplomatic immunity and to storm the building in order to arrest Assange. This arrogant imperialist threat to breach internationally recognised diplomatic protocol comes from the same government which screamed bloody murder against Iran when protesters, furious at British imperialism imposing financial sanctions on that country over its nuclear enrichment programme, briefly took over the British embassy in Teheran last November. Back then, foreign secretary William Hague waxed eloquent on the sanctity of embassies, castigating the Iranian government for a “grave breach of the Vienna convention which requires the protection of diplomats and diplomatic premises under all circumstances” (*Guardian*, 29 November 2011).

The Iranians certainly have cause for anger—among the WikiLeaks exposures were cables showing that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Arab states have been

continued on page 11

Free Bradley Manning!

U.S. Army private Bradley Manning, currently detained at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, awaits a February court martial on nearly two dozen charges that include “aiding the enemy,” identified as Al Qaeda. The 24-year-old Manning, who was stationed in Baghdad as an intelligence analyst in 2009-10, was detained in May 2010 under allegations that he gave WikiLeaks the much-publicized video of an Apache helicopter gunning down two Reuters journalists and the Iraqis who tried to rescue them, with the pilots gloating over the carnage. Manning is also accused of distributing more than 250,000 State Department cables as well as military reports detailing the torture of Iraqis and documenting the killing of some 120,000 civilians in imperialist-occupied Iraq and Afghanistan. He faces penalties of up to life in military custody or even execution.

On July 27, Manning’s attorney David Coombs filed a motion to dismiss all charges on the grounds of unlawful pre-trial punishment. During his prior nine-month detention at the Quantico Marine brig in Virginia, Manning was placed in solitary confinement under “prevention of injury” (suicide watch) status despite repeated protests by brig psychiatrists. He was forced to sleep with a “tear-proof

security blanket” that caused rashes and rug burns while not protecting him from the cold. Forbidden from exercising in his cell, he was granted only 20 minutes of sunshine daily, during which he was shackled.

When Manning pointed out the absurdity of the suicide watch restrictions, he was vindictively forced to repeatedly stand naked at parade rest in view of multiple guards and suffered other penalties. Finally, in April 2011, he was transferred to Fort Leavenworth, where he is allowed to socialize with prisoners, walk around unshackled and keep personal and hygiene items in his cell.

By the time Manning reaches his February trial, he will have spent 983 days in pretrial confinement, awaiting “his day” in a court that has essentially declared him guilty while banning evidence that may prove his innocence. In July, the court refused to admit government “damage assessment” reports that would help him to refute the inflammatory charge that the WikiLeaks postings aided Al Qaeda. At the same hearing, the court refused to admit United Nations torture investigator Juan Méndez as a witness, the latest move by Manning’s persecutors to cover up the fact that his confinement has amounted to torture.

In a September 26 speech streamed into a UN panel discussion from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange described Manning’s time in captivity, emphasizing that this is part of the U.S. government’s attempt “to break him, to force him to testify against WikiLeaks and me.” Assange denounced the White House for “trying to erect a national regime of secrecy” by targeting whistle-blowers as well as the journalists to whom they pass information.

Indeed, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (27 September) reported that declassified U.S. Air Force documents confirm that the military has designated Assange and WikiLeaks as “enemies” of the state—the same legal category as Al Qaeda. The documents reveal that any military personnel who contact WikiLeaks or its supporters may be charged with “communicating with the enemy,” which carries a maximum penalty of death. Assange’s U.S. attorney, Michael Ratner, stressed the danger his client faces: “An enemy is dealt with under the laws of war, which could include killing, capturing, detaining without trial, etc.” The Obama administration has brought criminal charges against six government and military whistle-blowers, more than all the previous presidents in U.S. history combined.



Bradley Manning escorted out of courthouse in Fort Meade, Maryland, June 25.

If Bradley Manning was indeed the source of the leaks, he performed a valuable service to the working class and the oppressed worldwide by helping lift the veil of secrecy and lies with which the capitalist rulers try to cover their depredations. By persecuting Manning and WikiLeaks, the White House is sending the message that any such exposure will bring the most severe punishment. This only underscores that it is in the vital interests of the working class, in the U.S. and internationally, to take up the fight for Bradley Manning’s freedom. ■