

India: Deadly Rape Sparks Mass Protests



Hindustan Times

New Delhi, December 21: Protest outside president's residence following gang rape of young woman.

The heinous gang rape and mutilation of a 23-year-old paramedical student in Delhi on December 16, who later died of her injuries, sparked a momentous wave of protests against the oppression of women in India. Demonstrations erupted in many of India's cities, including Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai, Bangalore, Panaji and beyond. Significantly, demonstrations were also held in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, where women face conditions similar to those in India.

The epicenter of the protests was Delhi, which prides itself on being part of the "new" India, where shopping malls and night clubs exist side by side with massive slums. In fact, the capital has the highest recorded incidence of rape of any major city in India. Demonstrations by students and other youth continued for days, courageously defying repression by the police who attacked with water cannons, tear gas and *lathi* (bamboo sticks).

Anger among women intensified with an outburst of grotesque anti-woman chauvinism that sought to blame the victim for the crime. M.L. Sharma, a lawyer for one of the five accused, stated that "respectable" women do not get raped, while the Indian president's son, Abhi-jeet Mukherjee, baited the demonstrators for being "painted" and "dented," i.e., "Westernized" and not young. A leader of the fascistic Hindu-chauvinist Rash-

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

triya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) declared that sexual crimes "hardly take place in Bharat but occur frequently in India" (*Wall Street Journal*, 8 January). The RSS is connected to the Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which openly espouses *Hindutva* ("Hinduness"), a toxic mix of nationalism and religious obscurantism, to stoke violent pogroms, particularly against Muslims.

The term "Bharat," the Hindi word for India, harks back to an imagined past of idyllic rural life—as opposed to urban India, which is supposedly blighted by decadent Western influence, especially on women. The reality of life for most people in Indian villages is extreme poverty and brutal caste oppression. In the countryside, rape of *dalit* (so-called "untouchable") women is considered a matter of caste privilege by "upper" caste men, who use rape as a weapon in the subjugation and humiliation of the woman and of her entire caste. A March 2006 study of violence against *dalit* women by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights reported that out of 500 women studied, 116 had been raped or gang-

raped; among the perpetrators, "dominant caste landlords emerged as the most prominent group."

Police often assist vigilante groups which conduct raids on entire *dalit* villages, burning homes and raping women. The scope of such violence is captured in a November 2012 incident in Tamil Nadu, where 148 *dalit* houses were torched by a 2,500-strong mob because of a non-*dalit* woman who had married a *dalit* man in secret. Police also rape and murder with impunity as part of the military offensive in areas such as Chhattisgarh in eastern India, where it is directed against a Maoist insurgency based on the *adivasi* (tribal) people. In Kashmir, the occupying Indian Army uses murderous violence, including rape, to subjugate the Muslim population, with the perpetrators exempted from prosecution by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. In 1991 in Kunan Poshpora, units of the Indian Army gang-raped nearly 100 Kashmiri women, aged 13 to 80, in a single night.

In many ways, the Delhi rape victim symbolizes a layer of young urbanized women who have been drawn into higher

education and into the workforce as part of India's recent economic growth. Her father migrated to Delhi three decades ago from rural Uttar Pradesh, one of the poorest states in India. His daughter recently qualified as a physiotherapist and, like countless others, worked in a call

center and liked Western clothes. Breaching taboos, she went to the movies the night she was attacked with a companion who is from a Brahman caste, whereas her family comes from an agricultural caste.

The increase in violence against women in Indian cities is part of a reactionary backlash against this layer of young women, who have some possibility of upward social mobility and are relatively privileged compared to the impoverished masses. In the "new" India, women who wear high heels and short skirts, or who think they have the right to choose their own friends and even marry outside their own caste, are perceived as a threat to traditional morality, the institution of the family, Hindu religious domination and the caste system that is endemic to rural life.

The issue of women's liberation is explosive in India and indeed in the whole subcontinent. The fight for the most basic needs of women—for literacy, education, contraception, an end to forced marriage and a way out of grinding poverty and hideous caste oppression—means a struggle to root out the very deepest foundations

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The Central Park Five and Racist Capitalist Injustice

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India...

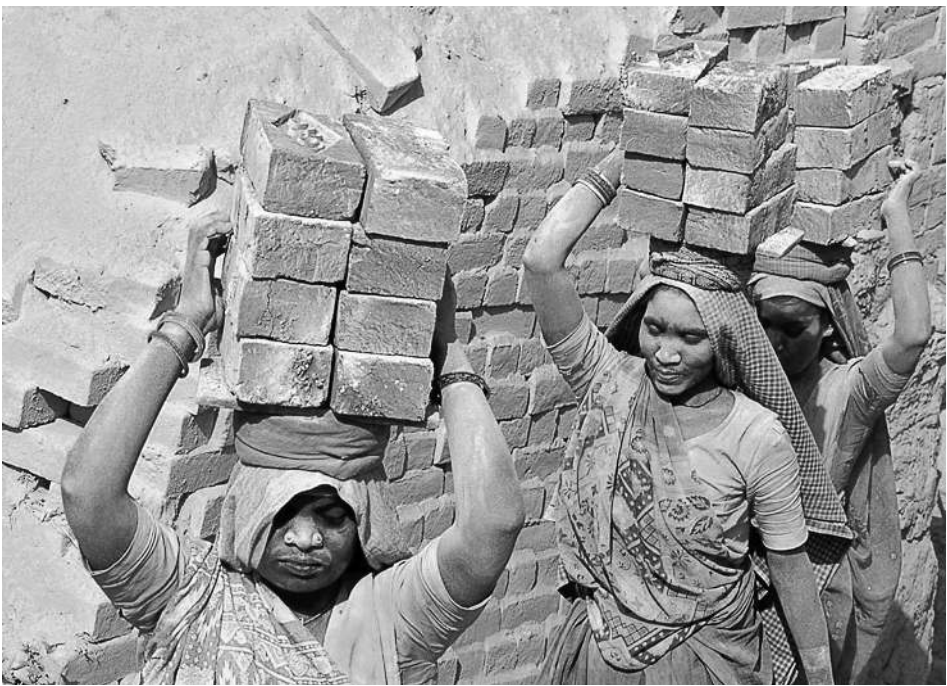
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of capitalist society. India’s burgeoning economy has created untold wealth for a few, while further immiserating the vast majority of the population. In the countryside, millions are being driven off the land and into the cities to live in unspeakable squalor in sprawling slums. These social conditions in India underscore that women’s liberation poses nothing less than the need for socialist revolution.

Cops: Deadly Enemies of Women and All the Oppressed!

The antirape protests represented a cry of rage against the treatment of women in India. At the same time, many of the demands raised have a reactionary “law and order” thrust, which were echoed by the reformist left. A case in point is the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI[M]), which called to strengthen the hand of the capitalist state, namely the cops and courts. Having grotesquely sent a message of condolence for a policeman who died during the vicious cop repression of the Delhi protests (since removed from its Web site www.cpim.org), the CPI(M) in a January 4 statement urged the government-appointed Verma Committee to introduce “rigorous life imprisonment till death” for rape and to “recruit many more women police personnel.”

Coming from the party that admin-



Reuters

Women laborers at brick kiln in village in north India, 2008.

istered the capitalist state in West Bengal for decades, siding with the cops is hardly news. In 2006, the CPI(M)-led government carried out a campaign of bloody repression against poor peasants in Singur and Nandigram on behalf of Tata Motors, one of India’s largest capitalist conglomerates (see “The Political Bankruptcy of Indian Stalinism,” WV No. 993, 6 January 2012).

We oppose any increase in the repres-

sive powers of the capitalist state that may be introduced under the pretext of protecting women. Make no mistake, bourgeois measures to make it easier to obtain convictions for rape will be used primarily to convict *dalits*, Muslims and the poor in general, who are often punished for rape and other crimes committed by members of dominant castes and the police.

The perspective peddled by feminists and the reformist left of looking to the capitalist state to guarantee the protection of women invariably finds expression in demands for more or better-trained cops on the streets. The fake-Trotskyist New Wave Group, affiliated with the Morenoite International Workers League, published a January 19 statement proposing “more representation of women in police” (www.litci.org). Similar rhetoric pushing “extensive gender and sexuality sensitization programmes for the police and judiciary” (www.radicalsocialist.in, 20 January) comes from the Radical Socialist group, affiliated to the former United Secretariat. Particularly in India, illusions that the police will protect women from rape are obscene, and can be deadly: women are as likely to be raped by the cops as by anyone else. Police stations are notoriously dangerous for women who go there alone.

The explosive nature of any attempt to fight against the oppression of women in India gives the lie to the liberal pipe dream of effecting a gradual transition to equality for women through reliance on the state and its laws. Indeed, women’s equality is already enshrined in the Indian constitution, for all the good that does. The burning issues facing women pose questions that only proletarian revolution can answer.

The literacy rate for Indian women as a whole is scandalously low at 48 percent (compared to 73 percent for men). According to a UNICEF study, **90 percent** of marriages are arranged (across all major religions and castes). The divorce rate is 1.1 percent, compared to nearly 50 percent in the U.S. Particularly onerous on women is the ancient and widespread practice of dowry—an amount of money, goods or property the bride’s family is forced to contribute to her marriage. The dowry system renders girls a financial burden on the family, thus it fuels selective abortions (for those who can afford both the test and the abortion). Given the lack of availability of abortion services for most women, female infanticide is common. “Dowry deaths”—i.e., murders of wives by husbands or mothers-in-law—are on the rise. The official figure for dowry deaths in 2008 is 8,172, but according to the International Society Against Dowry and Bride-Burning the actual figure could be three times as high. Of course, the practice of dowry has been prohibited by law since 1961—so much for the liberal notion that rape and violence against women can be ended by legislation.

Also rampant throughout South Asia is “honor” killing—women murdered by their own relatives for transgressing the strictures of acceptable sexual behavior,

particularly sexual relations outside of marriage or cross-caste relationships. In some cases, rape victims have been murdered. Frequently in India, rape victims are coerced into marrying the rapist to preserve “honor.” Common among Hindus as well as Sikhs and Muslims, honor killings are the most brutal form of family control over women’s sexuality.

This notion of honor is based on the assumption that women are nothing but chattel, the property of their fathers and husbands, to be disposed of at will. As Friedrich Engels, in his classic work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), observed: “In order to make certain of the wife’s fidelity and therefore of the paternity of the children, she is delivered over unconditionally into the power of the husband; if he kills her, he is only exercising his rights.” The family is the central pillar of women’s oppression and, along with religion, a key prop to the capitalist order.

The emancipation of women, which is strategic to liberating all of the downtrodden of India and the subcontinent as a whole, requires the program of **permanent revolution**. The working class, leading the peasantry and all the oppressed masses, must seize power through socialist revolution, reorganize society on the basis of collectivized property and extend the revolution internationally, especially to the imperialist centers. The historical model for this is the great October 1917 Revolution in Russia led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky. The fight for women’s liberation is strategic to this perspective.

Imperialist Subjugation, Patriarchy and Caste

India does have a significant proletariat—in auto plants, mines, steel plants, railways, textiles and machine manufacturing. The Indian capitalists and the imperialist powers to which they are beholden are well aware of the potential power of the working class. Last year, workers who carried out a series of bitter strikes at Maruti Suzuki, India’s largest auto maker, in Gurgaon near Delhi, were hit with severe state repression.

The labor of the proletariat produces the wealth that enriches the Indian ruling class and the international bankers. But this potential power is hamstrung by the existing leaders of the working class. A working class that is divided by caste, religion and ethnicity is further fractured into competing unions affiliated to political parties. What is essential is forging a revolutionary Marxist leadership that fights for proletarian unity and class independence. The class-conscious proletariat must take up the struggle for the emancipation of women and place itself at the head of all the oppressed, winning the rural masses to its side by championing agrarian revolution to overthrow the landlords and capitalists.

India is a classic example of “combined and uneven development.” More than six decades after independence, and despite its economic “miracle,” it remains predominantly rural—out of a population of 1.2 billion, a staggering 72 percent live in villages where conditions are wretched. Caste oppression is enforced through the *panchayat* system of village councils that dictate what is acceptable in all aspects of social relations. These councils have the authority to punish anything from cross-caste marriages to violations of dress codes for women. Women’s liberation and the destruction of the caste system are inextricably bound together.

The persistence of rural backwardness is the legacy of British colonial rule, which exploited, retarded and dismembered the country. India’s transition from precapitalist society did not lead to the dissolution of patriarchal and caste relations because colonial domination preserved, manipulated and reinforced them. The British East India Company seized Indian territory by taking advantage of strife between local princes and fanning ethnic, religious, tribal and caste antagonisms. Colonial plunder enriched the ruling class in

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TROTSKY

The Early Communist Party and the Fight for Black Liberation

In the face of the traditional indifference to black oppression among American socialists, the Bolsheviks struggled to convince Communists in the U.S. to recognize the special oppression of black people as a matter of strategic importance. In 1920, at the Second Congress of the Communist International held in Soviet Russia, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin personally urged that American Communist John Reed speak on

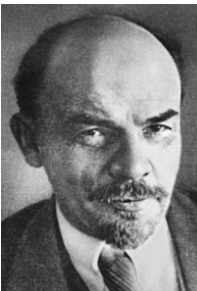
the “Negro Question.” Reed’s speech and the Communist International’s fight against special oppression are carried forward in the Spartacist League program.

If we consider Negroes an enslaved and oppressed people, we confront two problems: on the one hand, that of a strong racial and social movement; on the other, that of a powerful proletarian labor movement that is rapidly gaining class consciousness. Negroes have no demands for national independence. All movements among the Negroes aiming for separate national existence fail, as did the Back to Africa movement of a few years ago. They consider themselves first of all Americans at home in the United States. That makes it very much simpler for Communists.

For American Communists the only correct policy toward the Negroes should be to see them primarily as workers. Despite the Negroes’ backwardness, the tasks posed for agricultural workers and tenant farmers in the South are the same as those we must solve with respect to the white agricultural proletariat. Communist propaganda work can be carried on among Negroes working in industry in the North. In both sections of the country every effort must be made to organize Negroes into common labor unions with the whites. That is the best and fastest way to break down race prejudice and foster class solidarity.

But the Communists must not stand aloof from the Negro movement for social and political equality, which is spreading quickly among the Negro masses today as race consciousness grows rapidly. Communists must use this movement to point out the futility of bourgeois equality and the necessity of social revolution—not only to free all workers from servitude but also as the only means of freeing the Negroes as an enslaved people.

—John Reed at Second Congress of the Communist International, Session 4, 26 July 1920, reprinted in John Riddell (ed.), *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!* Volume One (1991)



LENIN

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In the Service of Opportunism Cliffites Disappear Their Support to Egypt’s Morsi

“The victory of Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, is a great achievement in pushing back this counterrevolution and pushing back this coup d’etat. For now, this is a real victory for the Egyptian masses and a real victory for the Egyptian revolution.”

—Revolutionary Socialists founding member Sameh Naguib, quoted in *Socialist Worker* (U.S.), 9 July 2012

* * *

“Today all the masks fell from Mohamed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood organisation, who trade in revolution and for whom the revolution is nothing but a means to reach the seat of power. They and the remnants of the old regime are two sides of the same coin, which is tyranny and enmity towards the people.”

—“Statement by Egypt’s Revolutionary Socialists in response to president Morsi’s constitutional declaration,” 24 November 2012

* * *

How do the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists (RS), aligned with the SWP) as well as their somewhat estranged American cousins of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) explain this “victory” turning into its opposite within the space of some five months? They don’t. With anger at the murderous regime erupting in the streets, the supporting role of the RS in the Islamist victory, including its formal endorsement of the Brotherhood’s candidate in the 2012 elections, is now conspicuously absent from the RS’s narrative of “the revolution that—unfortunately—placed Morsi on the seat of power” (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 30 January).

It is grotesque that ostensible Marxists would *ever* support religious fundamentalists, who want to turn the clock back on human progress to the benighted past of the seventh century. The Brotherhood would groove on the violent smashing of the unions and the spectacle of all women donning the *niqab* (full-face veil). Predictably, in power the Islamists moved to arrest strike organizers and trample on the rights of women and Copts. Crackdowns were unleashed on mass protests roiling the country, first sparked by a presidential power grab in late November and again beginning on January 25, the anniversary of the upheaval that ousted the hated dictator Hosni Mubarak. In clashes across Egypt last week, police fired wildly at protesters, beat them and lashed out with deadly force, leaving over 50 people dead and hundreds injured. Among the victims



28 May 2012 statement by Revolutionary Socialists endorsing Muslim Brotherhood candidate Morsi.

is a member of the Revolutionary Socialists, 17-year-old Ahmad Sami, who was shot dead in Port Said, one of three Suez Canal provinces placed under martial law and a curfew.

Although the call for a vote to Morsi caused some anguish among its membership, the RS along with its Cliffite co-thinkers in the SWP went to great lengths

phobia” were hurled at critics. After the elections, the Islamist government was hailed as a “transitional stage” for “our revolutionary project.”

Such arguments are not just some simple mistake now best forgotten. From its formation in 1995, the RS courted the Muslim Brotherhood and invested these clerical reactionaries with “anti-imperialist”



Cairo, January 29: Protesters confront Morsi’s riot police near Tahrir Square on fifth day of massive anti-regime demonstrations.

to defend this crime as “a blow against the old regime” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 2 June 2012). Endless nonsense was churned out comparing the Brotherhood to mass reformist workers parties, for which the tactic of critical electoral support can sometimes have relevance. Timid demurs from the no less opportunist ISO were dismissed, and charges of “Islamism-

credentials. In doing so, it drew inspiration from the late SWP leader Chris Harman’s *The Prophet and the Proletariat* (1994), which retailed all manner of supposedly promising “contradictions” within the Brotherhood and like-minded deadly enemies of workers, women and religious minorities. The watchword was: “With the Islamists sometimes, with the state never.”

Since losing its enthusiasm for the president, the RS has flirted with the National Salvation Front, a lash-up of Morsi’s bourgeois rivals, such as liberal democrat Mohamed ElBaradei, Nasserite nationalist Hamdeen Sabahi and former Mubarak foreign minister Amr Moussa. On January 26, the RS issued a statement that calls on “revolutionary youth in the Front to fight for the cleansing of its ranks” of the most inconvenient bloc partners, namely the despised “remnants of the old regime” like Moussa. Far less discerning is ISO hack Ahmed Shawki, who offered that “the forces united in the National Salvation Front represent, in many inchoate ways, the emergence of the second stage of the Egyptian revolution” (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 12 December 2012).

As we observed in “Pandering to Reactionary Muslim Brotherhood” (WV No. 974, 18 February 2011): “Tailing the Muslim Brotherhood today certainly does not prevent the Cliffites from keeping open the option of capitulating to ‘secular’ Arab nationalism.” By the same token, the present turn away from the Brotherhood does not prevent them from continuing to capitulate to political Islam, including the more hardline Salafists.

Last week, the Front joined the Salafists in pushing for a “national unity” government to restore stability. Even as he warned of dire consequences if the protests were not ended, Morsi’s defense minister, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, intoned: “The army’s deployment in Port Said and Suez provinces aims to protect the vital strategic interests of the state, at the forefront of which is the vital Suez Canal” (*Irish Times*, 29 January). Whether the Morsi regime remains intact or is replaced by another form of capitalist class dictatorship, deepening economic desperation and harsher imperialist-dictated austerity measures backed by the repressive state apparatus awaits the mass of the population.

To reverse the miserable conditions of life in neocolonial Egypt the proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, must emerge as a contender for power in its own name. Right after the popular uprising that toppled Mubarak, which was capped by a wave of strikes, we noted: “The indispensable instrument for the working class to take the lead is a proletarian revolutionary party, which can be built only through relentless struggle against all bourgeois forces, from the military to the Brotherhood and the liberals who falsely claim to support the struggles of the masses” (WV No. 974, 18 February 2011).

Apostles of Defeat

Particularly since the fall of Mubarak, the RS has become a pole of attraction for young activists who have displayed heroism on the streets. But the program of the Revolutionary Socialists is to subordinate the working masses to whatever capitalist force looks more popular at any given moment, notwithstanding their special fascination with the Islamists. Two years ago, when the military was directly taking power, these reformists fed rampant illusions in the army, which is at the core of the repressive machinery of the capitalist state.

While allowing that the ruling Supreme

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Lynne Stewart’s Life in Danger

In order to receive urgently needed medical treatment for cancer that has spread to her lungs and back, 73-year-old radical lawyer Lynne Stewart requires immediate release from the federal dungeon in Texas where she is serving a ten-year sentence. The authorities have denied Stewart’s request to be transferred to the New York City hospital that previously treated her. **Free Lynne Stewart now!**

Stewart was already battling breast cancer when she entered prison in 2009 after being convicted in 2005 for her zealous defense of her client, a blind Egyptian cleric imprisoned for an alleged plot

to blow up New York City landmarks in the early 1990s. In 2010, a judge quadrupled her original 28-month sentence at the instigation of the Obama administration. As we noted then, “The resentencing is for all intents and purposes a death sentence” (WV No. 962, 30 July 2010). Convicted along with Stewart were her translator, Mohamed Yousry, who has finished his sentence, and her paralegal, Ahmed Abdel Sattar, who is locked up for 24 years. **Stewart, Yousry and Abdel Sattar should never have been charged and should not have spent a minute in jail!**

The capitalist rulers have had it in for

Stewart for her decades of vigorous legal defense of radicals, black militants and the poor. Indeed, the resentencing was explicitly based on her “lack of remorse” as well as draconian “anti-terror” guidelines that are part of a wholesale assault on civil liberties. Ralph Poynter, Stewart’s husband, has related that even in prison she has remained unbowed and given assistance to other prisoners appealing their sentences.

Stewart also witnessed the death of a prisoner on dialysis while helping her try to get to the nurses’ quarters; the prisoner’s pleas for help had been ignored.

Afterward, Stewart told her husband, “I do not want to go that way” (takingaimradio.com, 6 November 2011). Stewart’s daughter, Dr. Zenobia Brown, has noted that it took almost four months before Stewart was able to see an oncologist after the return of her cancer was detected.

A January 21 letter by the Partisan Defense Committee to prison authorities demanded “that Lynne Stewart be released forthwith to receive all necessary medical care and be with her family.” We encourage others to send letters of protest to: Warden Joe Keffer, FMC Carswell, Federal Medical Center, P.O. Box 27137, Fort Worth, TX 76127; Charles E. Samuels, Jr., Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons; and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

The Central Park Five and Racist Capitalist Injustice

For black and Latino youth in New York City, the walk home from school, an errand run to a corner grocery or even standing in front of one's own residence carries the risk of being stopped, shoved up against a wall and interrogated by the cops. Some are then thrown into the "system"—arrested, handcuffed, either coerced into pleading guilty or standing trial in the rigged "justice" of the racist capitalist courts, only to emerge from prison years later, with no hope of a job, public housing or any other social service necessary for survival. A sudden movement, word of protest or facial expression not to the cops' liking can be a death sentence on the spot. Although most are able to walk away, it is just a rain check until the next humiliating encounter.

This scene played out nearly 700,000 times last year under the ruthless "stop and frisk" operations of NYC mayor Bloomberg and his top cop Raymond Kelly. So widespread are the NYPD's brutality and violations of civil rights, the cops cost the city some \$100 million in lawsuits during fiscal year 2011. Such claims jumped by over 20 percent last year. The most prominent case pending is a \$250 million federal civil rights lawsuit filed ten years ago by the "Central Park Five"—Yusef Salaam, Antron McCray, Raymond Santana, Korey Wise and Kevin Richardson. In 1989, at the ages of 14 to 16, they were falsely charged, convicted and condemned to sentences ranging from seven to 13 years for the brutal assault and rape of a 28-year-old bank executive out for a nighttime run in Central Park. With the 2002 confession of the actual rapist, Matias Reyes, which was confirmed by DNA, the Central Park Five were finally exonerated after serving their entire sentences.

The recent documentary, *The Central Park Five*, by Sarah Burns, her husband David McMahon and father Ken Burns, powerfully exposes how the cops and prosecutors—and bourgeois journalists who joined the racist pack howling for blood—had every reason to know that the five teenagers had nothing to do with the jogger's rape. The film demonstrates how the racist show trial devastated their lives and those of their families. Raymond Santana noted that he was "at that point of coming into who I was...but I never really got there." They were repeatedly denied parole for refusing to admit to the rape.

Sometime after 9 p.m. on 19 April 1989,



Dolores Wise (left), mother of framed-up youth Korey Wise, at rally outside Manhattan Supreme Court, October 2002.



Jim Estrin

Defendants at pretrial hearing for 1989 rape of jogger in Central Park.

Trisha Meili went for her regular run around the reservoir in Central Park. A little earlier, a group of some 30 black and Latino teenagers from Harlem, the Five among them, had entered the north end of the park. In the course of less than an hour, some of the group attacked joggers and bicycle riders. An apparently homeless man was brutally beaten. Some of the youths were picked up and initially held for questioning regarding the assaults. At no time did they cross paths with Meili. When her horribly beaten body was discovered in another part of the park, the calculus of the NYPD cops was simple: black youths, white rape victim, crime solved.

The documentary shows how the cops and prosecutors knew very well there was no DNA or other evidence to link the Five to the rape. Since DNA testing turned up only one semen sample, the cops knew it was not a "gang rape," as they luridly described it. The documentary's footage of the crime scene showing the narrow path of worn grass where Reyes had dragged the jogger's body clearly ruled out more than one attacker. Although the victim lost 75 percent of her blood, there was none found on any of the youths. Cops also concealed from the defense that a similar rape had occurred two days earlier in the park, for which Reyes was later convicted.

The heart of the prosecution's case was coerced "confessions" extracted through threats, false promises of leniency and assurances that they could go home once ratting the others out. Even in the confessions, obtained through up to 30 hours of interrogations, not one of them ever admitted to actually raping the jogger. Instead, they told of being part of a group attack in which others committed the rape. As graphically captured by the documentary, in the basic details as to the location, description of the woman, number of people involved and weapons used, the stories were so disparate from each other—and the known facts—as to demonstrate that they were nothing but the product of scared, tired and hungry kids trying to tell the cops what they wanted to hear so they could go home.

To cover for the NYPD's crimes, the Bloomberg administration has launched a vendetta against the filmmakers. Lawyers for the City have issued subpoenas demanding they turn over all unused footage of their interviews with the five men. The filmmakers have refused to cave in,

citing New York State shield laws protecting journalists from compromising their sources. When the City ranted that the shield law was inapplicable as the documentary wasn't journalism but "advocacy," Ken Burns tartly replied: "We made a film about the facts of the case and that is these men were wrongly convicted, and had years of their lives stolen." He poignantly added, "One of the things that was stolen from these men was their humanity. In the media they were turned into wild beasts, a wolf pack, and we wanted to return their humanity."

A Toxic Cocktail

For years before 1989, New York had been synonymous with urban decay, graphically shown by the smoldering ashes of South Bronx tenements, graffiti-covered subway cars, litter-ridden streets, citywide electrical blackouts, crumbling bridges and, above all, record levels of crime. While the Park Avenue bourgeoisie glided above the fray, shuttling from Wall Street to Lincoln Center to cocktails at the Waldorf and back to fundraisers at the Met, working people and the ghetto poor were reeling. Hundreds of thousands of jobs in manufacturing, longshore, printing, garment, food and beverage production had been lost since the 1960s. Successive city administrations had taken the ax to just about every beneficial social program or municipal service—libraries, medical clinics, after-school programs, firehouses. Free tuition at the celebrated city university system was eliminated, ushering in a racist purge of the colleges.

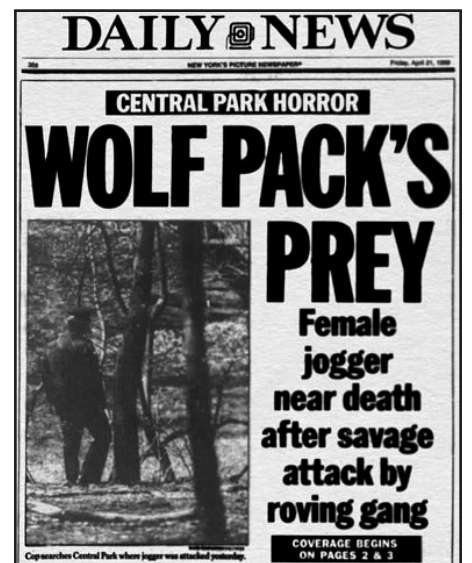
The stock market boom of the 1980s brought a vast expansion of jobs in financial and corporate services—bankers, accountants, lawyers, advertising and insurance—as well as low-wage jobs to service them. In contrast to an earlier generation of financial barons who lived in Connecticut and Long Island, the new wave of Wall Street bankers and yuppies were staying put. Emptied factories were converted into million-dollar lofts, and high-rise luxury buildings sprang up across Manhattan. Toney new restaurants, discos and exclusive health clubs became the playgrounds for the new rich. Stretch limos, in which Wall Street traders could sip champagne and snort cocaine, careened past poor black kids being busted for smoking a pipe of crack on streets filled with thousands upon thousands of homeless. Discontent seethed—and was kept in check by racist

cop terror and the pitting of one sector of the working population against another.

Ed Koch, a voice of white petty-bourgeois rage against blacks and labor (see box), had run NYC for 12 years at the time Meili's unconscious body was discovered. The Koch years laid a trail of horrors, beginning with the many black people killed by the cops—among them 67-year-old Eleanor Bumpurs, 25-year-old artist Michael Stewart and 17-year-old black honor student Edmund Perry. In 1987 alone, the killer cops gunned down 24 people, all but three black or Hispanic. Lynch mobs took the lives of transit worker Willie Turks in Gravesend, Brooklyn, in 1982 and 23-year-old Michael Griffith in Howard Beach, Queens, in 1986.

These atrocities were repeatedly met by outrage and protest. Positioning themselves at the head of the anger were the demagogic nationalist preachers Herbert Daughtry and, most prominently, Al Sharpton, who in the mid 1980s wore a wire for the Feds investigating maverick black elected officials. Sharpton and Daughtry played a critical role in redirecting the rage against cop and other racist terror into intercommunal hostilities.

The case of the Central Park jogger was like lighter fluid added to the racist fear and hatred toward the besieged black population. From the moment the victim was taken to the hospital, *all* black and Latino youth, not just the Five, were being demonized in the press. The *New York Times* (21 April 1989) ran the headline, "Youths Rape and Beat Central Park Jogger," while the right-wing gutter rag *New York Post* screamed: "Wolfpack Rapes



21 April 1989: New York gutter press whips up racist hysteria demonizing Central Park Five.

Jogger." The press dutifully ran with the cops' claim that the detained youths boasted that their rampage through the park was a new form of ghetto amusement known as "wilding." Four months later, a gang of white punks in Bensonhurst blew away 16-year-old Yusef Hawkins, who was in "their" neighborhood to visit his white girlfriend. The neighbors excused this coldblooded murder by pointing to the Central Park rape.

It also quickly became a clarion call for racist legal lynching. A *New York Post* (26 April 1989) editorial demanded, "Channel Your Outrage: Demand the Death Penalty." Donald Trump paid \$85,000 for full-page ads in the city's four major newspapers declaring: "Bring Back the Death Penalty, Bring Back Our Police." Trump demanded, "Let our politicians give back our police department's power to keep us safe. Unshackle them from the constant chant of 'police brutality' which every petty criminal hurls immediately at an officer who has just risked his or her



WV Photo

Racist Koch Croaks



AP

Harlem, 1980: Mayor Koch praised “restraint” of cops after they busted heads of black residents protesting closing of Sydenham Hospital.

At long last, on February 1 Ed Koch finally breathed his last wheezy breath. The former New York City mayor was immediately beatified by the capitalist press. Admirers and former foes alike offered tributes, among them black Democratic operative Al Sharpton. President Obama gushed that he was “an extraordinary mayor.” On the other side, hundreds of thousands of blacks, Latinos and workers who suffered through the Koch years would love nothing more than to mark his passing by dancing the hora on his grave.

As we wrote in “Racist Pig Ed Koch” (WV No. 351, 30 March 1984) during his second term as mayor:

“Koch is a monster who loves to hurt the poor, the minorities. He is a virulent nationalist, a right-wing extremist who believes in genocide. He gets Harlem and the South Bronx confused with the West Bank. He treats blacks and Hispanics like Arabs, and turnstile

jumpers like PLO ‘terrorists.’ The only difference between him and the gang of fascist killers in Israel led by JDL *Führer* Meir Kahane... is that Koch made it up the greasy pole of a bourgeois-democratic society.... Otherwise, he’s as chemically pure a fascist as you get.”

Koch wasn’t just another big city mayor inflicting austerity and pain on the laboring and suffering population—he positively grooved on it. A liberal

Democratic Party Congressman, Koch was elected mayor in 1977 by appealing to the white “ethnic” vote. He lurked outside subway stops to greet prospective voters, “Hi, I’m Ed Koch, I’m for capital punishment.” A raving Zionist, Koch believed Jews deserved special privileges. He ostentatiously celebrated Purim in 1984 by marching through the streets of Queens alongside Ariel

Sharon, the butcher of more than 1,000 Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila. Upon his re-election in 1985, Koch declared that “while it was the people who elected me, it was God that selected me” (*New Yorker*, 23 March 1987).

For Koch, the high point of his tenure was the eleven-day transit strike in 1980, during which he was conspicuous in whipping up white middle-class animosity against the heavily black transit workers union, greeting yuppies traipsing across the Brooklyn Bridge in Brooks Brothers suits and Adidas running shoes at 8 a.m.

Koch and his cops carried out a war against the homeless, hot dog vendors, newsstand operators and those protesting gentrification. Presiding over black misery, in 1980 Koch’s cops carried out a brutal attack on Harlem residents protesting the closing of Sydenham Hospital, a lifeline for thousands of Harlem’s poor. Mocking the black activists, Koch donned an Afro wig and did a minstrel jig at that year’s “Inner Circle” ball. His handpicked medical examiner, Elliot Gross, routinely destroyed evidence and falsified autopsy reports to exonerate the killer cops who were gunning down black people.

Koch’s admirers and liberal hagiographers both like to cite his trademark greeting, “How’m I doing?” Now, as far as we’re concerned, never better.

life to save another’s.” Our article “Stop Legal Lynching!” (WV No. 477, 12 May 1989) denounced the racist lynch-mob atmosphere surrounding the case; however, it also wrongly took as good coin the news accounts that the “attackers were the hard core of a larger bunch of marauders” who had been in the park that night.

In 1994, George Pataki’s support of the death penalty played a large role in his election victory over the incumbent, Democratic governor Mario Cuomo, who had repeatedly vetoed death penalty legislation. The next year, the New York legislature voted to bring back capital punishment, which was later ruled unconstitutional by the Court of Appeals in 2004.

Amid a tightly contested mayoral primary race with black Democrat David Dinkins, Koch seized on the jogger case to once again play to the racist vote. Deemed better able to keep a lid on the NYC tinderbox, Dinkins was elected mayor in 1989 after reassuring Wall Street that the unions and minorities “will take it from me.” He did his best to live up to that promise, but was nonetheless dropped by the city rulers as too beholden to the black population. Dinkins lost the 1993 election to Rudolph Giuliani, whose campaign whipped up a racist riot of 10,000 cops who stormed City Hall denouncing the mayor as a “washroom attendant” and “crack addict.” Dinkins’ enduring legacy for the city was his appointment of Ray Kelly as police commissioner.

“Putting the Criminal Justice System on Trial”

The documentary opens with a statement from Koch made shortly after the Five’s arrest: “I think that everybody here—maybe across the nation—will look at this case to see how the criminal justice system works.... This is, I think, putting the criminal justice system on trial.” From their liberal perspective, the filmmakers consider Koch’s statement to be ironic—the wrong men were convicted, so the system failed its “trial.” A similar take comes from the Workers World Party, which describes the frame-ups of the Central Park Five and the Scottsboro Boys—nine black youths falsely accused of raping two white women in the 1930s—as “powerful reminders of what can happen when the justice system is manipulated, the truth is ignored, and racism dominates” (www.workers.org, 14 December 2012).

In fact, racist frame-ups are not “what can happen” but *endemic* to the very workings of American capitalist justice.



Wilford Harewood

February 1987: Protest outside Bronx courthouse against 1984 police killing of black grandmother Eleanor Bumpurs.

The cops, prosecutors and courts are core components of the capitalist state, whose function is to repress workers and oppressed minorities in defending the class rule, profits and property of the capitalist class. The oppression of black people is integral to American capitalism, serving to divide the working class and drive down wages for all. The institutions of the state cannot be anything but racist to the core.

Indeed, for the capitalist rulers, the justice system passed Koch’s trial with flying colors: it did exactly what it is meant to do. The Central Park case ended in conviction and played a major role in feeding a climate in which ghetto youth are demonized as inveterate criminals, who can only be safely housed in prisons. This war on black people was replicated in cities across the country, as ghetto residents, once a reservoir of unskilled labor for auto and steel plants that had since been shuttered, became a “surplus” population in the eyes of America’s capitalist rulers.

The “war on drugs,” launched by the Reagan administration in the early 1980s, took aim at black people with a brutal vengeance. Reagan’s foot soldiers were Jesse Jackson and other black Democrats. In New York City, Sharpton joined the cops on the street in whipping up a pogrom against Arab shopkeepers supposedly selling “drug paraphernalia.” The anti-drug crusade brought draconian mandatory minimum and “three strikes” sentencing laws, expanded use of the

death penalty and a deep erosion of the rights of those accused of crimes. Over the last four decades, the prison population has more than quadrupled to over two million, the majority black and Latino.

Today, billionaire mayor Bloomberg acts as if the city is just a playground for himself and his Wall Street cronies. The working people who create the wealth in this society are looked down upon as mere vassals. Although less overtly racist than Koch and Giuliani, Bloomberg

has heaped on the cruelties of life for the black and Latino masses to an extent that his predecessors could envy. The NYPD’s “stop and frisk” offensive has led to tens of thousands being saddled with records, many for simply possessing small amounts of marijuana. More than half of black city residents old enough to work had no job at all last year, and the number of homeless children, disproportionately black, is at a level not witnessed in NYC since the Great Depression.

Society’s masters expect that the case of the Central Park Five will end up being little more than a footnote, something for them to shrug off as the cost of getting caught doing their business. At the time the Five were exonerated, we wrote in “NYC: Racist Frame-Up of Black, Latino Youth,” (WV No. 790, 1 November 2002): “No amount of money can mend what has been done to their young lives, or to their families. But we welcome any money the five can wrench out of the racist city fathers—selling off Trump Plaza and giving them the proceeds would be a start.” Even if it were to come to pass, such a minimal measure for the Five would do absolutely nothing to alter the daily dehumanization of black people in New York and other cities across the country. True justice for McCray, Santana, Wise, Richardson, Salaam as well as the millions of black youth who walk in their shoes will come only when the multiracial proletariat rises up to smash this capitalist system and establish a workers government. ■

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Thousands march to the Memorial to the Socialists in eastern Berlin every January to honor Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, founders of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). The two great revolutionists were assassinated in 1919 by Freikorps officers at the behest of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) government of Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann and Gustav Noske amid the suppression of the Spartakist uprising. After the death of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin in January 1924, this annual demonstration commemorated the “Three L’s.” Now organized by the Communist Platform of the Left Party along with the former West German Stalinists, it survives the 1990 capitalist counter-revolution in East Germany (DDR) to the consternation of the German ruling class and anti-communists everywhere.

RIO sought to build its bloc after elements of youth organizations connected to the SPD and the Left Party called for an alternative “Rosa & Karl” demonstration in the former West Berlin. The organizers of that event, which drew about 500 people, didn’t want to be associated with flags of the DDR and Soviet Union, portraits of Stalin, Mao and Lenin or symbols of the Kurdish and Palestinian national liberation movements.

Its instigators were the deceptively named “Anti-Germans”: pro-Zionist, pro-imperialist provocateurs who purvey the Big Lie of “collective guilt.” This convenient alibi for the German bourgeoisie that brought the Nazis to power maintains that all Germans, including workers, are responsible for the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes. “Anti-German” thugs have repeatedly physically attacked leftist meetings and individuals defending the



rights of the Palestinians. They are virulently hostile to the workers movement and out to destroy it.

Significantly, the call for the “Rosa & Karl” demonstration did meet opposition within the social-democratic youth organizations. Several groups defied the decision of their leaderships and instead took part in the “Three L’s” demonstration. None of the recipients of the open letter opted to bloc with RIO. But marching behind them was a disparate collection of social democrats and organizations with Trotskyist pretensions, including the Workers Power group from which RIO split. Also in tow were some Pabloites intent on building yet another lash-up modeled on the French New Anti-Capitalist Party, who tailed after the anti-communist campaign of the “Anti-Germans” by carrying the banner “Neither Stalin nor Noske.”

The SpAD supplement included the January 1990 call by the Trotskyist League of Germany (TLD) and the Spartakist Groups for the “Three L’s” demonstration in the DDR (reprinted in *WW* No. 994, 20 January 2012). The TLD and the Spartakist Groups fused soon thereafter to form the SpAD. The 1990 call vehemently condemned the SPD as the Trojan horse of counterrevolution. The SPD used its traditional influence in the working class to push capitalist reunification of East and West Germany. For their part, the Stalinist predecessors of today’s Left Party, who retained great influence among workers of the DDR, fostered illusions in the SPD and sought them out as partners, betraying widespread sentiment among the working class to struggle for a real socialist society. The International Communist League fought tooth and nail against capitalist *Anschluss* and for revolutionary reunification—proletarian political revolution in the East and workers revolution in the West.

The reply of the SpAD to RIO was snapped up by demonstrators. A youth from Dresden with a Stalinist background was surprised to learn that Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union and still defend China and the other bureaucrati-

cally deformed workers states. Others were happy that the SpAD had denounced “Anti-German” maneuvers to wreck the “Three L’s” demonstration. The SpAD explained that Trotskyism is not a left version of anti-revolutionary social democracy but represents the revolutionary continuity of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

* * *

To the Revolutionary Internationalist Organization:

We received your invitation to join a “commemoration contingent” for the Bolshevik-Leninists [the Trotskyist Left Opposition in the Soviet Union]. We will not participate in your contingent. The call by social-democratic youth organizations for the “Rosa & Karl” demo, which is heavily influenced by the “Anti-Germans,” is an anti-communist provocation poorly disguised as anti-Stalinism. Your call also capitulates to social-democratic anti-communism. The SpAD and Spartakist Youth will take part in the “Three L’s”

demo with our own contingent, under our banner "For the Reforging of the Fourth International!"

As revolutionary Trotskyists, we don't agree with the positions expressed in your Open Letter and various articles. You say not one word about the more-than-dubious character of this "Rosa & Karl" demo, which clearly reflects the politics of the "Anti-Germans," who have implanted themselves in the social-democratic youth organizations. Already at the "Three L's" demo in January 2012, a small group of "Anti-Germans" staged a provocation with their banner "No, No—That's Not Communism!" that was aimed at the contingents of Turkish/Kurdish leftists. Later, they posted photos of these leftists on the Internet, clearly playing into the hands of the repressive state apparatus. It is no accident that the "Rosa & Karl" bloc has made the slogan on this banner their main rallying cry, and the Berlin Jusos [SPD youth group] refer positively to this "action."

The pro-Zionist and pro-imperialist “Anti-Germans” are racists who hate Muslims. They are inspired by the state’s reactionary “war on terror” and have distinguished themselves with past provocations in which they beat up leftists and liberals. They are tolerated by the reformist leaderships of the SPD and Left Party and used as a battering ram against the left. The “Anti-Germans” applaud the imperialists’ work: they enthuse over the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, are in the front line of the warmongering against Iran, etc.

These cheerleaders for George W. Bush, the butcher of the Balkans [German Chancellor Gerhard] Schröder (SPD) and Benjamin Netanyahu's Zionist state of Israel have no place in the workers movement and on the left.

ou concur with the “Anti-German” worship efforts when you comment on our 17 December *Indymedia* article “Social Democratic LL Demo” [referring to the traditional march] that pictures of Lin and Mao at the demo are “against the wishes of the organizers.” By contrast, solidarity is with the Turkish/Kurdish workers and leftists, who are persecuted by the bourgeois state here and in Turkey. Unlike the “Anti-Germans,” they are a crucial part of the workers movement in this country and often stand in a more important tradition of class struggle, which is another reason that the “Anti-Germans” get them. We Spartakists oppose censorship in the workers movement! We argue against the reformist Stalinist politics of Turkish and other organizations—such as the promotion of building “socialism in one



6

country” and the treacherous popular-front policy. It is through sharp *programmatic* debate that revolutionary Trotskyism can win out in political struggle.

We also reject your characterization of the Bolshevik-Leninists as a “revolutionary current” “that opposed capitalism and Stalinism, and hence was persecuted by capitalist and Stalinist regimes.” By disappearing Trotsky’s programmatic demand for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, which in spite of its bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin remained a workers state, you implicitly equate the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state—as well as the deformed workers states—with capitalism, spreading reformist confusion. In the “Social Democratic LL Demo” article, you equate capitalist regimes with workers states when writing:

“Their reason for the parallel event with the name ‘Rosa and Karl’ is that the pictures of Stalin and Mao, which are shown every year at the LL demo...supposedly stand ‘for the failure of state socialist projects in the last century.’ What this totally ignores is that the political balance of the Social Democracy in the last century was no less problematic.”

Do we really need to remind you that the SPD leadership around Ebert/Scheide-
mann/Noske gave the order to assassinate
Liebknecht and Luxemburg? They knew
exactly what they were doing. As Noske
said, “Someone has to be the bloodhound.”
The politics of the SPD leadership were
not simply “problematic” but were a key
element in heading off revolution in 1918-
19 and again in 1923 in the service of the
bourgeoisie [see “A Trotskyist Critique
of Germany 1923 and the Comintern,”
Spartacist (English-language edition) No.
56, Spring 2001]. Social Democratic poli-
tics bear a central responsibility for the
fact that German imperialism was able to
resurrect itself, almost entirely annihilat-
ing the Jews of Europe and helping drown



Spartakist

January 1990: Spartakist contingent at 250,000-strong “Three L’s” demonstration in East Berlin.

the world in blood for a second time in the interimperialist Second World War.

Your reformist appetites bring you to a point where you can't even distinguish between the class character of capitalist rule under a social-democratic government and that of the Soviet degenerated workers state. So what defines your "commemoration contingent?" We think it is its closeness to anti-communist Social Democracy, which ever since the October Revolution has hated the Soviet Union more than its own bloody bourgeoisie. You sell the *form* of your contingent as a united front, with freedom of propaganda and criticism. But the *content* of your "commemoration contingent" is totally counterposed to the purpose of the united front, which is to unite the working class in action against the class enemy: class against class. You bow to the anti-communism of Noske's successors and cannot discern where the fundamental class line is. You have this in

common with the other pseudo-Trotskyist organizations that you invited to join your “commemoration contingent.”

When the question was one of proletarian political revolution or capitalist counterrevolution, all these organizations chose the side of counterrevolution—starting with the rise of *Solidarność* in Poland, followed by the DDR in 1989-90 and the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Thus, in the winter of 1990 the SAV [Socialist Alternative, part of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International] in the DDR demanded, "SPD, go on the offensive" and in 1991 the international of the GAM/Workers Power, your former mother organization, was literally on Yeltsin's barricades with the counterrevolutionary rabble. The dubious BSA (today PSG [Party for Social Equality]) could be found in the front lines of the anti-Stasi witchhunters alongside the SPD and the petty-bourgeois Citizens' Movement, which fused with the Greens. The deeply

divided “United Secretariat,” whose members at the time were in the VSP, liquidated into the United Left, which for its part joined a short-lived electoral alliance with the pastors of the SDP (SPD offshoot in the DDR) and, later, a section of the [Christian Democrat] CDU. Only the SpAd and our comrades of the International Communist League fought to defend the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states against the counterrevolutionary machinations of Solidarność, the SPD in the DDR and Yeltsin, and to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracy through a proletarian political revolution.

Our tradition is that of the then-revolutionary Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., which sent the following telegram to Stalin in 1941, shortly after the attack on the Soviet Union by fascist Germany:

"Trotskyists all over the world, now as always, are solidly for the defense of the Soviet Union. In this hour of grave danger to the achievements of the October revolution, we demand that you release all Trotskyist and other pro-Soviet political prisoners who are now in jails and in concentration camps, to enable them to take their proper place in the front ranks of the defenders of the Soviet Union."

Likewise, today we Trotskyists of the ICL stand for the military defense of the remaining deformed workers states—Cuba, China, Vietnam, North Korea and Laos, and for proletarian political revolution to bring down the Stalinist bureaucracies, which endanger the defense of these countries with their pursuit of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.

In the DDR, the SPD was the Trojan horse of capitalist counterrevolution. It is necessary to break politically with social-democratic reformism, whether it take the form of the SPD or of the Left Party. The pseudo-Trotskyists, including your organization, are a political obstacle to this aim. Reforge the Fourth International! ■

India...

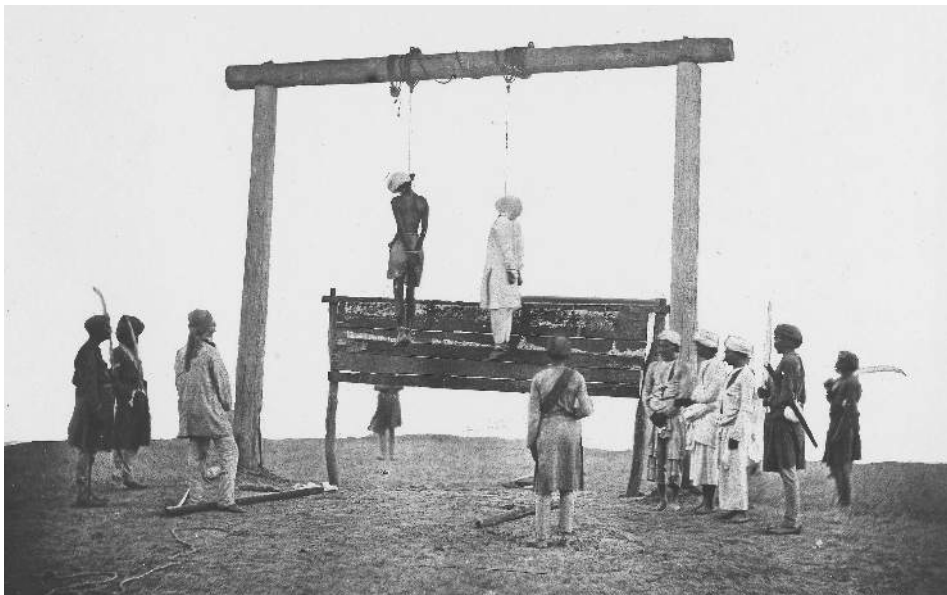
(continued from page 2)

Britain and caused the collapse of entire branches of the Indian economy, including its irrigated agriculture. The peasantry was burdened with taxes owed to both the local landlords and the colonial state. To collect the taxes, the landlords and their middlemen wielded extortion, violence and cruelty against the poor throughout the countryside.

When the conquest of India was completed, the British rulers raised a native army, recruited predominantly from the higher castes. This situation lasted until the 1857 Sepoy uprising, which sparked what Marx called “the first Indian war of independence.” Subsequently, the composition of the army was changed. But divide-and-rule remained the governing principle, which Marx described at the time of the revolt as “the great rule by which Great Britain, for about one hundred and fifty years, contrived to retain the tenure of her Indian Empire.”

Since independence in 1947, capitalist India has been dependent on imperialist finance capital, and will remain so, notwithstanding the myths about it becoming a superpower. Meanwhile, the native capitalist rulers have used the caste system to maintain Hindu domination. Beginning in the days of Mohandas ("Mahatma") Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the era that bourgeois liberals today hark back to as the golden opportunity to establish "secular democracy," the Congress Party has manipulated caste divisions and communalism in the service of Hindu chauvinism. Congress represented the interests of the urban traders, professionals and above all the rich farmers. The Indian nationalism espoused by Congress always contained a strong element of Hindu and Hindi-language chauvinism.

Gandhi, an idol of liberals, was steeped in caste prejudice and anti-woman bigotry. In the context of the horrific bloodshed that accompanied the partition of India, Gandhi advised young women facing rape to bite their tongue and hold their breath



Felice Beato

Two Indian soldiers (sepoys) hanged for participation in 1857 rebellion against British colonial rule.

until they died. In our article “Stalinist Alliance with Churchill Betrayed Indian Revolution” (WV No. 970, 3 December 2010), we explained: “Gandhi’s job was to extract as much as possible from the British, in the common interests of saving capitalism, while keeping the burgeoning and now increasingly militant struggles of the workers and peasants at bay. The textile magnate Ambalal Sarabhai put it succinctly when he said Gandhi ‘was the best guarantee against communism which India possessed.’”

Out of fear that the “untouchables” might unite with Muslims and act as a parliamentary counterweight, Congress co-opted *dalit* leader B.R. Ambedkar to head up the drafting of the constitution, which banned “untouchability” but left the caste system intact. Seats in parliament were reserved for “untouchables” and “tribals” (*dalits* and *adivasis* today). Later, as a minimal reform, a percentage of jobs in public employment were reserved for *dalits* and lower-caste members. Coming to regret his involvement in drafting the constitution, Ambedkar summed up independent India: “The same old tyranny, the same old oppression, the same

old discrimination which existed before, exists now, and perhaps in a worse form."

The vile Hindu chauvinism peddled by Congress sparked intense pogroms against

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It is telling that as the forces of the capitalist state were rounding up anarchist activists and smashing the metro strike, Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) leader Alexis Tsipras was on an international tour to meet with representatives of the imperialist rulers in Germany and the U.S. Tsipras, who rose to prominence after Syriza came in second in the last elections, was clearly seeking to reassure the imperialists that Syriza represents absolutely no threat to their interests in Greece. In a speech to the Brookings Institution, a U.S. bourgeois think tank, Tsipras said: “Those who engage in scare-mongering will tell you that our party will come to power, rip up our agreements with the European Union and the IMF, take our country out of the euro zone. My party, Syriza, doesn’t want any of these things” (*Dow Jones Business News*, 25 January).

While the KKE tops have made a point of opposing the EU and of rejecting the call to join a capitalist government of the left with Syriza, their consistent refusal to defend anarchists against capitalist state repression is a clear example of their fundamental loyalty to bourgeois democracy. Far from standing up to the recent propaganda campaign by the government and bourgeois press branding everyone on the left, and even Syriza, as defenders of “terrorism,” the KKE has echoed the bourgeois denunciations of violence. It has also condemned anarchists for occupying offices of the Democratic Left—one of the ruling parties.



the anarchist activists and the PAME protesters!

In a January 29 statement, the New Left Current (NAR), which emerged from a 1989 split in the KKE and is the biggest force inside Antarsya, correctly noted that the reformist labor bureaucracy of the GSEE and ADEDY union federations failed to organize united struggle by all the unions to defend the striking metro workers. NAR calls for coordinated action by the whole of the working people in a front “for anti-capitalist overthrow” of the policies of the government. Yet its statement says nothing about who or what is to replace the existing government. And when it says that Syriza will be judged on its response to the current struggles, it is obviously leaving the door open for a left capitalist government led by Syriza.

Such a leadership would mobilize around transitional demands such as a shorter workweek with no loss of pay, and a massive program of public works to provide jobs, the indexing of wages to inflation, and that the capitalists open

The following article, translated from German and adapted for *Workers Vanguard*, is taken from *Spartakist* No. 196 (January 2013), newspaper of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, German section of the International Communist League. It is based on a forum by our comrade Sylvia that was held in September 2012.

I lived in Greece for a couple of years. Homelessness, previously rare, has grown tremendously since then. Youth unemployment now stands at around 50 percent and, while this has been a factor of life in Spain for years, it hadn't been that way in Greek society. Whenever I'm in Athens, I always revisit the districts where I've lived to take a look at the shops and the people. In November 2011, about a quarter of the stores had shut their doors—a bakery or a pet store—but in July-August it was at least a third, on many blocks even half the stores.

All this is taking place at the behest of the Troika, a group consisting of the EU, IMF and the European Central Bank (ECB). The Troika's aim is to make sure the Greek working class pays the German and French banks and insurance companies. When then-prime minister George Papandreou suggested holding a

Politically, the situation in Greece is extremely polarized. While participation in the elections has steadily fallen over the years—in 2004 it was 76 percent, now it is 62 percent—political discussions take place everywhere in the streets, whether you're going out for a coffee or buying cigarettes. People are very politicized, very furious and most of those who voted for Syriza in 2012 did so because they regarded it as a lesser evil.

The deepening crisis is fueling the flames of nationalism, chauvinism and racism. People are looking for scapegoats, and hunting down immigrants has reached incredible proportions since the June elections. The fascists of Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) got around 7 percent of the vote in both elections. They have a lot of support in the army and the police. The Greek paper *To Vima* (11 May 2012) found out that approximately half the police force voted for Golden Dawn in the May elections. Golden Dawn is of the same ilk as the notorious Nazi-loving Security Battalions and the “X” group of General Georgios Grivas—counter-revolutionary terror bands that murdered Communists in the Second World War and the ensuing Greek Civil War.

It was with horror that I learned from our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece about the explosion of terror against immigrants, “illegals,” non-Greeks. Fascist terror against immigrants goes hand in hand with state repression. The state has set up camps and is carrying out mass arrests in an operation cynically titled “Xenios Zeus” (Zeus as protector of guests and hospitality). In early August, 2,000 immigrants were arrested in Athens and similar actions were carried out in major cities like Patras and Thessaloniki. By the end of August, over 12,000 immigrants had been arrested or imprisoned. The Greek police’s “Special Units for the Restoration of Public Order” went into the cities and arrested people, working hand in glove with the largely fascist citizen militias that exist in some towns.

In August, there was a TV report about a guy who shot two Albanian people. Normally, someone suspected of manslaughter or murder is put into investigative detention. Not here. At the same time, there are commercials on TV showing supposedly happy “illegals” with shopping bags in detention camps, who are then deported. In July, a Golden Dawn fascist physically assaulted a representative of Syriza and

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a KKE member of parliament on a TV panel discussion. This, of course, provoked widespread furor. Syriza protested immediately and organized some demos. We went to one that was organized by the SEK, the Greek fraternal organization of Marx 21 in Germany, i.e., the Cliffites. The demo was relatively small, attended almost solely by their own members. They demanded a state investigation into the ties between the fascists and the police. That is, they promote the illusion that the capitalist state can do away with the fascists.

But what is urgently necessary are defense actions to smash the fascists. These must be carried out with the broadest participation of the working class, joining together with the victims of the assaults. In areas with a high percentage of immigrants, workers defense groups must put an end to the attacks. Itself a prime target of fascist terror, the KKE possesses, through its trade-union formation PAME, the roots and authority in the working class to stop the Nazis by linking up with all those organized in the unions in united-front actions. But its reformist program of class collaboration prevents the KKE from doing this. The KKE’s reaction to the fascist assault on its own MP was to call upon those who had voted for the Nazis to instead vote for the KKE. This is incredible, but it truly encapsulates the KKE’s nationalism, populism and electoral cretinism. What is required is a revolutionary Leninist-Trotskyist party based on the working class. This party must be a tribune of all the oppressed as opposed to wooing votes on the basis of nationalism.

For a Socialist Federation of the Balkans!

The Greek working class is relatively small but militant. This underlines the need for it to seek allies outside the country, for instance, its class brothers elsewhere in the Balkans as well as in Turkey and Germany. But when you preach nationalism

Alex Tsipras (left), head of Syriza, meets with European Parliament president Martin Schulz, Brussels, September 2012.



it with you. It is very difficult to find someone who considers socialism and opposition to national oppression more important than the boundaries of a capitalist Greece, which were drawn up through a series of wars and expulsions. This shows that nationalism is one of the core questions.

Down With the Imperialist EU!

Unfortunately, solidarity actions with the Greek populace are few and far between in Germany. This can be attributed partly to the fact that the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Left Party, as well as the trade unions they lead, support the EU—a truly classic example of class collaboration. Thus, former chancellor Helmut Schmidt of the SPD warned of a return to nationalism should the EU come apart, while Sarah Wagenknecht of the Left Party stated that the euro had to be defended. In this manner, any possible protests of the German working class are to be channeled into support for the bourgeoisie. We of the ICL oppose the EU on principle, fighting for its destruction through international class struggle. Our starting point is what is in the interests of the working class on this question. We are for the United Socialist

The present crisis illuminates the age of imperialism. You can see how countries are ever more tightly integrated into the world market, finance capital is exported and industry is concentrated in monopolies. At the same time, capitalism rests upon nation states that come into conflict with one another in the worldwide pursuit of profits and new spheres of exploitation. Thus, the nation state constitutes a fetter on the further development of the productive forces. For the working class and the oppressed there is only one way out—socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie and establishes an international planned economy under workers rule. Every battle against the austerity measures, whether in Greece or in Spain, is a Europe-wide and an international struggle. Resistance to the EU is only the starting point. Since the cause of the crisis lies in the system of world capitalism, the solution is its overthrow.

The German bourgeoisie is unyielding in its demand that its austerity diktats be realized. If this causes its foreign markets to collapse, the German ruling class will have shot itself in the foot since its economy is so highly export-oriented. Even within the central axis of the EU—France and Germany—there are differences. While France is suffering from a trade deficit of 32 billion euros, Germany has amassed a 73 billion euro export surplus relative to the other euro zone countries.

The SPD and trade unions have contributed to the austerity diktat by promoting the protectionist scheme “Standort Deutschland.” Among its spawn is “Agenda 2010” with its massive cuts in wages, expansion of contract labor and the like. Other European capitalists can see how these increased the rate of profit for the German bourgeoisie and consider them worth copying in their own countries. Conversely, the assaults on the Greek working class provide a model for attacks elsewhere.

Fake Trotskyists Tail Syriza

While supporting the capitalist EU, Syriza campaigned against the Troika’s austerity memorandum and argued for renegotiating the conditions that were set. Syriza chair Alexis Tsipras has promised economic and political stability and is in favor of working with the Troika to provide Greek banks with new capital. Many reformist groups in and outside Greece have signed up as water boys for Syriza, e.g., the Grantites of Marxistiki Foni and the Cliffites of the Democratic Workers Left (DEA), who are linked to

the International Socialist Organization in the U.S.

The DEA portrayed its support to Syriza as proletarian internationalism and said, “We are confronting the fact that in a month’s time, Syriza will be the leading party in the country. So we will be called on at that point to form a government that can transform things for the people of Greece” (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 23 May 2012). Then there is the Antarsya coalition, in which the Cliffite SEK as well the OKDE-Spartakos of the Pabloite United Secretariat (USec) participate. Antarsya ran its own candidates in the elections. Their intent was to pressure Syriza and use it to strengthen the “resistance.” Leading British SWPer Alex Callinicos said: “Antarsya has made it clear that it sees itself working alongside and in dialogue with those who support Syriza. The stronger its voice is, the greater the pressure will be on Syriza” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 2 June 2012). Particularly charming was that the USec, the “International” of OKDE-Spartakos, didn’t even support the candidates of its own section in Greece but rather those of Syriza!

All these reformist groups are not about socialism but rather are fighting for a “government of the left” with better policies, which is nothing but a capitalist government. At their core, such politics are pro-EU and pro-capitalist. Illusions in a left capitalist government are an obstacle to leading the working class on the path to revolution, for which the political independence of the working class is indispensable. Racism, poverty, exploitation and imperialist dominance cannot be ended through reformist pressure politics but only through the seizure of power by the working class. And for this what is needed is an authentic Leninist-Trotskyist party.

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

We gave critical support to the KKE in the June elections. Our starting point as Marxists is that the working class cannot achieve significant victories through bourgeois elections, but we do utilize them as an opportunity to attain a hearing among broader masses of workers. For this, we also employ tactics like critical electoral support.

On the other hand, reformists, whether supporters of the DEA, Antarsya or the anarchists, fundamentally share a bourgeois conception of elections. While the reformists believe that a better system can be attained through elections, the anarchists think that if people didn’t vote the system would break down. I was there and assisted our comrades of the Greek section in their critical support campaign. We had some discussion with people from Antarsya, but it was amusing to talk with the anarchists in their center “Notios.” They’d probably never voted before in their lives, but now they were tying themselves in knots and admitted that they were going to vote for Antarsya or Syriza—but really only as “lesser evils”!

We approach bourgeois elections from a revolutionary standpoint. Of course, we’re willing to employ the talk shop of parliament as a platform, but we make clear to the masses that the core of the state is special bodies of armed men like

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Athens, October 2012: Anti-austerity protesters on eve of visit by German chancellor hold banner reading “Merkel Out!”

like the KKE, then you’re undermining this international solidarity. This is one of the reasons we regard nationalism as the main ideological obstacle to the struggle for socialism in Greece. One example: the region in the north of the country around Thessaloniki is called Macedonia in Greek. Following the destruction of the Yugoslav deformed workers state at the beginning of the 1990s, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia sought to include “Macedonia” in its name, triggering a gigantic wave of chauvinism in Greece. The KKE wrote at the time: “We don’t let any foreign nationalist lay claim to even a centimeter of Greek soil” (KKE pamphlet “Positions on the Balkans,” February 1992).

We of the ICL are unambiguously for Macedonia’s right to self-determination, including the right of Macedonians in Greece to secede and join Macedonia. The Greek bourgeoisie fears that this part of “their” country called Macedonia could be taken away from them if Macedonians were granted the right to self-determination. In discussions you see just how touchy the Macedonia question is, no matter what the political coloration of your discussion partners might be. Either they become enraged, or they won’t talk about

States of Europe. The EU is an instrument of the European capitalists for the exploitation of the working classes of Europe, led mainly by the axis of the German and French imperialist powers.

The euro is a monetary instrument of the EU. Through it, Greece has no control over its currency. It cannot devalue its currency to improve its competitiveness and keep debt under control. Perhaps Greece would be better off without the euro, although a Greek currency wouldn’t protect the working class from capitalist devastation either.

The EU arose in the fifties as an economic alliance of the imperialists against the Soviet Union. The Soviet state, created in the October Revolution of 1917 through the expropriation of the capitalist class and the collectivization of the means of production, remained a workers state despite its subsequent bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin. We Trotskyists offered unconditional military defense against the imperialists and against internal counterrevolution while fighting for proletarian political revolution to overthrow the Stalinists. Our defense of the Soviet Union is one reason why we were against the European Union from the outset.

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Greece...

(continued from page 9)

the police, the army and prisons. This core is not subject to election and is not reformable. Marx concluded that the state had to be smashed and destroyed in the course of a revolution if the capitalist system was to be overthrown. Reformism helps keep capitalism alive. Our campaign offering critical support provided us with the opportunity to talk with members of the KKE, and naturally with other leftists as well, about the KKE’s program and our own.

Generally, it’s difficult to approach KKE members at major demonstrations and forums. It’s a very well-organized reformist, Stalinist mass party. A genuine phenomenon: being face-to-face with a Stalinist party with hundreds of thousands of supporters twenty years after counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe, a party deeply rooted in society and the historic party of the Greek working class. They have a daily paper, many members of parliament and have the trust of the most politically advanced workers in Greece. Anyone who’s been in Greece and seen a KKE demo—well, it’s very impressive how well organized they are. And we were able to come into much more contact with them as a result of our campaign. In any case, we’re almost the only leftists to approach the KKE and talk with them since other leftists won’t debate the KKE out of anti-Communism.

The basis for our critical support was the KKE’s refusal to join with Syriza in building a coalition of the left. The British SWP and SEK immediately termed the KKE’s position “sectarian”—a very popular term of reproof. Additionally, the KKE was for canceling the Greek debt and had for some time called for withdrawal from the EU and NATO. We put out a flyer “Vote KKE! No Vote for Syriza!” (see WV No. 1005, 6 July 2012). Had the KKE won the elections, it would have been a black eye for the EU and the Greek bourgeoisie.

The Greek section’s campaign was supported by an international team of comrades from the U.S., Britain, France and Germany. Critical electoral support, of course, means that we’re also critical. Central to our criticism is the KKE’s nationalism, expressed for example in their terming



Athens, January 9: Police arrest anarchists occupying offices of Democratic Left party in protest against repression.

themselves patriots and continually talking about the “people.” This is an anti-Marxist concept because “the people” also includes the class enemy of the Greek workers, the Greek bourgeoisie, while excluding their most important allies, such as the Turkish or German proletariat.

In discussions with KKE members they say, “Of course, the Greek bourgeoisie isn’t part of the people.” Nonetheless, it’s a concept that is diametrically opposed to a class understanding. At the same time, the slogan “Workers of the World, Unite!” always appears on the title page of the KKE paper *Rizospastis*. This is, of course, a contradiction. The KKE argues for making use of Greece’s resources in the interests of the Greek people, an expression of the Stalinist program of building “socialism in one country.” The concept of socialism in Greece alone, with an economy largely based on tourism and ownership of an international merchant fleet, is a bit ridiculous. This is even more so the case when you consider that it didn’t work out in one of the most resource-rich countries on earth, namely the Soviet Union.

The Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky was internationalist through and through, and this enabled it to lead the multinational working class of tsarist Russia to power in the

October Revolution of 1917. It was clear to the Bolsheviks that the revolution could not be maintained over the long term, nor could socialism be constructed, as long as the Soviet workers state remained isolated. Socialism is based on abundance for all, which will be brought about through the all-sided development of the most modern forces of production, socialist planning and an international division of labor. For the Bolsheviks, the October Revolution was to be the first in a series of revolutions around the world, and they founded the Third (Communist) International as the instrument for the working class to conquer power in other countries.

Due to the sustained isolation, poverty and backwardness of the newly founded Soviet Union, a bureaucratic caste arose that usurped power in a political counterrevolution in early 1924. The theory of building “socialism in one country” promulgated by Stalin in late 1924 codified the conservatism of this bureaucratic layer. This layer feared the proletariat, against whom it defended its privileges, and sought to make peace with the imperialist powers. Simultaneously, its privileges were derived from the collectivized economy of the Soviet Union, where the capitalist class had been expropriated. At every turn, the Left Opposition led by Trotsky battled the degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. In the Trotskyist analysis, the Soviet Union became a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. The imperialists confronted the Soviet Union with unyielding hostility despite all its attempts at appeasement.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

Virtually every fake Trotskyist current on the planet is represented in Greece, and their rotten politics have given Trotskyism a bad name—it is often seen as anti-Communist and social-democratic. When we were doing elec-

tion campaigning at 6 a.m. in Athens’ port of Piraeus, someone turned and asked, “How come Trotskyists are supporting the Stalinists?” and he started a debate. Our Greek group doesn’t share the petty-bourgeois, anti-Communist prejudices of other leftists. And in order to make a revolution in Greece and the rest of the Balkans, you must break the working class from its false leadership and win it to a genuinely Leninist-Trotskyist party.

Other questions played a large role in the founding of our Greek section in 2004. The woman question is a truly central one for Greece. One example is the bride price, which was officially done away with only in 1986. Greece is not a secular country, there are Orthodox priests running around everywhere, all the time—I even observed a woman confessing on the street. Another example: the schools are blessed every year. When the government is sworn in, a priest is present. The questions of the church, capitalism and women’s oppression go hand in hand. One can fight for the liberation of women only if one fights to overthrow capitalism, and one cannot overthrow capitalism if one doesn’t fight for women’s liberation.

The Balkans are a veritable mosaic of national minorities, and if you lack a program to address the national question, then you really can’t be a proletarian revolutionary. Hence, this was an important point in the founding of our Greek section. You really need an internationalist perspective, otherwise all there will be is national oppression and the spilling of blood, only a fight for a Greater Bulgaria or a Greater Greece, which is counterposed to socialism and all-sided liberation, i.e., to the interests of the multinational working class of the Balkans.

The other important question is Cyprus. We struggle against the all-pervasive anti-Turkish chauvinism in Greece. Turkey is, after all, the historic enemy of the Greek bourgeoisie, but the Turkish proletariat is not the enemy of the Greek working class. On the contrary, it is really its most important ally. Thus, we call for the withdrawal of all troops from Cyprus—Greek, Turkish, British and UN. In contrast, the Greek left, including the KKE, tells you only how bad the Turkish troops are.

The KKE’s program contains a whole series of reformist demands right down to nationalist positions in defense of Greece’s boundaries, but it also contains a lot of rhetoric that suggests socialism sometime in the future. However, the Greek CP lacks any program that would link up the necessary struggle for people’s daily needs with the struggle for the conquest of power by the working class. And this is really the main task of a revolutionary Trotskyist party, preparing our class and leading it to power. Our role as a small international propaganda group is to lay the basis for the construction of such a party, a party that will be part of the reformed Fourth International, which we fight for here in Germany as well. ■

Spartacist

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Egypt...

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Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) “has no intention of abandoning the basic tenets of capitalism in Egypt,” Mostafa Ali, an RS founding leader, touted the SCAF’s openness to “pressure” from the masses: “Despite its repressive measures, the Supreme Council understands that the January 25 uprising has changed Egypt once and for all in certain ways. The generals understand the depth of revolutionary feelings among the poor, and they therefore have no intention of trying to return to the way the regime operated before January 25” (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 31 May 2011). In fact, after it took over from Mubarak, the SCAF strengthened the police powers of the state and put the clamps on social unrest.

In a subsequent interview, Ali’s RS cohort Hossam el-Hamalawy explained the real story: “In February or March if you would have chanted against the army generals in a protest you could have been lynched by the people themselves—not by the military police—I mean by the people. Many people believed the lies and the propaganda of the army at the time about them protecting the revolution” (newsocialist.org, 10 December 2011). To swim against the stream, to debunk such lies, to insist on the political independence of the proletariat is precisely the task of Leninists. The Cliffites offered the very opposite: crude tailism in the service of dissolving the working class into “the people.”



AFP
30 November 2012: Anti-Morsi demonstrators at Tahrir Square evoke secular-nationalist regime of military strongman Gamal Abdel Nasser.

The seeds for the Cliff tendency’s tailing of political Islam were planted in 1950 when these renegades broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International. Bending to the pressures of Cold War hysteria, Tony Cliff and his supporters capitulated to British imperialism and refused to defend the Soviet Union, China and North Korea against imperialist attack during the Korean War. Notably, it was a Labour government that had dispatched British troops to Korea. Ever since, the Cliffites have been hostile toward all those countries where capitalism has been overthrown. (See “The Bankruptcy of ‘New Class’ Theories—Tony Cliff and Max Shachtman: Pro-Imperialist Accomplices of Counterrevolution,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 55, Autumn 1999.) Such a position allowed the SWP to comfortably inhabit the swamp of Labourism in Britain. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, a world historic defeat for the proletariat, was grotesquely celebrated not only by the imperialists but also by the SWP and ISO. “Untainted” by any association with communism, Cliff & Co. figured they could cash in, not least by redoubling their efforts in tailing after resurgent political Islam. For this task they were well prepared, having in 1979 bowed



AP, Socialist Worker online (inset)
Port Said, January 28: Funeral procession for protesters gunned down by security forces the previous day. Ahmad Sami (inset), 17-year-old RS member, killed by police on January 26.

to Iran’s Khomeini, who considered the Soviet Union the greatest of all “great Satans,” and cheered the CIA-backed *mujahedin* against the intervention of the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan on the side of social progress and in defense of the USSR’s southern flank.

Steeped in anti-Communist violence, the Muslim Brotherhood provided a major contingent of those *mujahedin*. During the first Cold War, the U.S. imperialists had made common cause with these Islamic reactionaries and the Saudi monarchy in efforts to destabilize the nationalist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, which was allied with Moscow. Before its overthrow by Nasser’s Free Officers Movement in 1952, the Egyptian monarchy turned to the Islamists to slaughter Communists and other political opponents as well as to break workers strikes. Nasser himself briefly embraced the Brotherhood as a club against the workers movement before ruthlessly suppressing it. His successor, Anwar el-Sadat, unleashed the Brotherhood with knives in hand to crush the Communists on the campuses in the 1970s, while Mubarak alternately suppressed them and tolerated their growth for his own purposes.

Before Morsi’s election, the Islamists had already waged vicious campaigns against the RS. In late 2011, the newspaper of the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party ran a front-page article violence-baiting the RS, while the Salafist Al-Nour Party accused it of “anarchy” and being on the CIA payroll—an incitement to imprisonment or worse. In Tunisia today, the Salafists are notorious for physically attacking striking workers and anti-government protesters.

Even as the Cliffites welcomed the ascendancy of the fundamentalist butchers, many other supposed leftists expressed concern over the fate of the “Egyptian Revolution.” But the reality is that the January 2011 uprising was *not* a revolution. The Mubarak regime was toppled, but capitalist class rule remains, as do its pillars, the army and religious reaction. The liberation of the Egyptian masses cannot be carried out by, or in alliance with, the capitalist exploiters, military or Islamic clergy. Such requires the seizure of power by the working class, fighting to extend its victory throughout North Africa and the Near East and to the imperialist centers. This program of permanent revolution is based on the understanding that in countries of belated capitalist development the bourgeoisie is too weak, backward and dependent on imperialism to achieve modernization and all-round development.

Political Bandits Exposed

Fraudulently posing as “orthodox” Marxist critics, David North’s World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) has recently issued a barrage of polemics against the RS and SWP over Egypt. This is pretty cheeky coming from these political bandits. As has been well-documented, including by themselves, the Northite outfit’s direct predecessors (led by Gerry Healy of the British Workers Revolutionary Party, with North as one of his U.S. Workers League lieutenants) did not prettify reactionary Middle East despots free of charge—they did so in return for cold, hard cash.

While serving as press agents for the likes of Muammar el-Qaddafi and Iraq’s Ba’ath regime, Healy & Co.—including North—hailed the 1978 execution of 21 members of the Iraqi Communist Party (CP). The CP had been the mass party of the proletariat with a militant tradition. In our article “Healyites: Kill a Commie for Qaddafi,” we observed, “The Stalinist cadres in the Iraqi army, despite their class-collaborationist politics, are a hun-

AFP
Photo distributed in January 1980 by CIA-backed mujahedin cutthroats in Afghanistan shows murder of high school teacher near Kandahar.



dredfold more courageous than Qaddafi’s yellow journalists in Clapham High Street [Healy’s headquarters]” (WV No. 230, 27 April 1979).

The Northites certainly had no beef with political Islam when the imperialists fostered it as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. Indeed, Healy/North backed every force that was hostile to the USSR, including the Islamic reactionaries pitted against the Red Army in Afghanistan. Similarly over Iran, the Northites were indistin-

guishable from the Cliff tendency and almost the entire rest of the left in enthusing over Khomeini, headlining their *Bulletin* newspaper: “Long Live the Iranian Revolution!” (16 February 1979).

We said: “Down with the Shah! No support to the mullahs! For workers revolution in Iran!” The Healy/North hirelings duly slandered us: “If the antics of the Spartacist [sic] were directly orchestrated by the FBI and the CIA, they could not be more provocative,” (*Bulletin*, 1 May 1979). Tragically, horribly, our warnings against the left’s embrace of Khomeini and the mullahs as “anti-imperialist” were proved correct. The opening act of the “Islamic revolution” was a reign of terror against the left, the workers movement, women and religious and ethnic minorities.

As for its polemics, the WSWs arguments are made, as the Northites like to say, in “utterly bad faith.” One arrow always in the Northite quiver is smearing their political opponents. In the article “Egyptian Liberal, Pseudo-Left Groups Demonstrate against Mursi” (23 October 2012), the WSWs echoes the Salafist accusations against the RS: “The CTUWS [Center for Trade Union and Workers Services] is sponsored by the AFL-CIO, and *like the RS, the April 6 Movement and other pseudo-left groups, has close ties to Washington*” (emphasis

ours). There is no further elaboration of this claim of RS “ties to Washington.” We warn the workers movement again: beware this outfit that will fly any flag to attack any target.

At the time of the “Islamic revolution,” we predicted that the anti-Marxist methodology that led to supporting Islamic reaction in Iran would also lead to “supporting the Khomeinis of Egypt” (WV No. 229, 13 April 1979). The SWP, RS and ISO are now proof positive. ■

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Tuesday, February 19, 7 p.m.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution: A Marxist Analysis of Black Oppression

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

TORONTO

Wednesday, February 13, 6:30 p.m.

Marxism and the National Question: Independence for Quebec!

University of Toronto, Sidney Smith Hall
100 St. George Street, Room TBA

Wednesday, March 13, 6:30 p.m.

For Free Abortion on Demand! Women’s Oppression and Revolutionary Marxism

University of Toronto, Sidney Smith Hall
100 St. George Street, Room TBA
Information and readings:
(416) 593-4138 • spartcan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Thursday, February 28, 7 p.m.

Down With Tories’ War on Women’s Rights! For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

UBC, Irving Barber Learning Centre
Room 460
Information and readings:
(604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

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

WORKERS VANGUARD

Down With the Capitalist EU! For a Workers Europe!



Reuters

Left: Riot police attack trade unionists from Communist-led PAME protesting outside Labor Ministry in Athens, January 30. Right: Athens metro workers burn strikebreaking “civil mobilization” order, January 25.



AP

Greek Workers Battle Austerity, State Repression

FEBRUARY 5—In the early morning hours of January 25, Greek riot police stormed the main train depot of the Athens metro system, breaking up an occupation by striking workers who had courageously defied the government and courts by keeping the metro shut down for nine days. Strikers were served with orders to return to work or face imprisonment and firing under a government “civil mobilization” order issued the day before. “Civil mobilization” was invoked again today to break a seamen’s strike, which has for six days paralyzed ferry service between the mainland and Greece’s many islands. A form of martial law for so-called peacetime emergencies, it is an open declaration of war on the working class. Its name harks back to the civil mobilization decrees for forced labor that the Nazi occupiers issued during World War II, which were turned into a dead letter in Greece by mass protests and general strikes in 1943.

As soon as the widely-despised coalition government of the right-wing New Democracy (ND), the bourgeois Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the Democratic Left announced the “civil mobilization” order against the metro workers last week, bus and trolley workers began a four-day-long solidarity strike, holding out in defiance of court orders deeming their strike illegal. The public power workers also organized a 24-hour strike in solidarity with the metro workers on January 31. The government is now planning to ban such solidarity strikes.

In breaking the metro workers strike and now taking aim at the seamen, the Greek government has made it perfectly clear that it intends to crush all resistance to the increasingly savage rounds of austerity measures. The government crackdown on the unions comes on the heels of the arrest of 100 anarchist activists in Athens in December and January, and a bourgeois propaganda campaign to smear the entire left as “terrorists.” Bonapartist pronouncements are the order of the day, with the Minister of Public Order Nikos Dendias ominously stating that “the country must finally settle its accounts with the post-1974 era.” This is a reference to the period following the fall of the bloody

military junta that ruled from 1967-74, that is, the beginning of the current period of bourgeois democracy in Greece.

The wave of strikes sweeping Greece has been sparked by the implementation of a further \$17.25 billion in killer cuts to wages, benefits and social services. This is the price that the imperialist masters of the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) demanded the Greek working people pay in exchange for billions more in bailout money for the bloodsucking banks of the EU and the Greek bourgeoisie. With massive unemployment and poverty ravaging the country, the metro workers and other public sector workers now face pay cuts of up to 25 percent, having already lost on average nearly half their income through successive rounds of cuts since the start of the economic crisis. Even as wages are repeatedly slashed, inflation keeps rising, and the government levies more and more taxes on the necessities of life, like heating oil. Athens and Thessaloniki have been blanketed with toxic smog this winter because people have

been forced to burn wood to stay warm.

The fascist menace of Golden Dawn continues to grow—its sympathizers claimed yet another victim with the racist murder of 27-year-old Pakistani immigrant worker Shehzad Luqman on January 17 in Athens. The police, many of them supporters of Golden Dawn, also terrorize immigrants and foreigners. On February 1, the Athens police chased a Senegalese immigrant onto metro tracks where he was electrocuted. They later tear-gassed people protesting this crime. Since Greece completed its border fence with Turkey in December, more than 20 desperate immigrants have drowned in the Aegean Sea trying to reach Greek islands off the Turkish coast as an entry point to the EU.

As the worldwide capitalist financial crisis continues and the economic and military ravages of imperialism drive millions more to leave their home countries in search of an escape from abject poverty, it is crucial for the workers movement to take up the fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Fur-

thermore, it is a basic measure of self-defense of the unions and the working class in Greece, with its heavy immigrant component, to mobilize in mass united-front actions to crush the fascist scum of Golden Dawn. As our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece explained in their November 2012 leaflet “Capitalists Bleed Greek Working Class” (reprinted in WV No. 1013, 23 November 2012):

“What is necessary is to fight to remove the political obstacles to mobilizing the power of the trade unions against Golden Dawn. The KKE [Communist Party of Greece] has the social weight in the trade unions to take the lead in doing this, but its promotion of illusions in bourgeois democracy and its nationalist populism are barriers. The reformist organizations that compose groups such as Antarsya also reinforce the political obstacles, in particular by tailing the pro-EU Syriza coalition, which promises to provide immigrants more ‘humane’ conditions of imprisonment and to put more cops on the streets to fight ‘crime.’”

A January 19 demonstration in Athens was organized by KEERFA, an “anti-fascist front” led by the Socialist Workers Party (SEK), which is affiliated with the British SWP and part of the Antarsya coalition. However, the SEK’s pretensions to be fighters against fascism were exposed by a grotesque article called “Patriotism and Internationalism” (*Workers Solidarity*, 9 January), which argues that nationalism and internationalism are “synonymous and interdependent.” The SEK perpetuates the lie that there is a common national interest between the exploiters and the exploited: “The national (identity) connects him [the worker] with all his fellow countrymen with whom he fights to resolve the different national issues.”

Genuine Marxists are staunch opponents of nationalism, a bourgeois ideology that serves to tie workers to the class enemy. In Greece, nationalism means the oppression of national minorities such as the Macedonians, Vlachs, Pomaks, Turks and Albanians. Our comrades of the TGG fight for full democratic rights for the national minorities, for the right of self-determination for the Macedonian

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Trotskyist Group of Greece

Athens, January 19: Anti-fascist demonstrators protest racist murder of Pakistani immigrant Shehzad Luqman.