

Exposed U.S. Imperialist Crimes

Hail Bradley Manning! Free Him Now!

After enduring nearly three years of detention, at times under torturous conditions, on February 28 Army Private Bradley Manning confessed that he had provided WikiLeaks a trove of military and diplomatic documents that exposed U.S. imperialist schemes and wartime

atrocities. Manning's guilty plea on ten of 22 counts against him could land him in prison for 20 years. But this pound of flesh is not enough for the imperialist rulers, who not only seek vengeance but are also determined to silence anyone perceived as an obstacle

to their designs for world domination. A day after Manning confessed, military prosecutors announced plans to try him on the remaining counts, including "aiding the enemy" and violating the Espionage Act. Trial is expected to begin in early June. If convicted on these

charges, Manning faces life in prison.

In lifting a bit of the veil of secrecy and lies with which the capitalist rulers cover their depredations, Bradley Manning performed a great service to workers and oppressed around the world.

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Getty

Working Families Foot the Bill

U.S. Health Care and the Elderly: Capitalist Cruelty

The squabbling by the Obama administration and Congressional Republicans over how to implement spending cuts—including the recent "sequestration" of funds for everything from the Pentagon to national parks—has dominated headlines. While Social Security and Medicaid were exempted from this round of cuts, there can be no doubt that these programs are in the sights of both the Democrats and Republicans. Barack Obama's health care "reform" of three years ago slashed Medicare payments by over \$700 billion, and in the recent deficit negotiations the president reportedly pushed for further cuts of \$400 billion to Medicare and other social programs. Both capitalist parties at bottom agree that the budget ax must fall primarily on society's most vulnerable: the aged, the poor, the disabled and the chronically ill.

Obama has repeatedly proposed cutting \$100 billion from Medicaid—the federal assistance program for the poor—which has become the main source of aid for the long-term care of the elderly and disabled. With encouragement from the White House, both Democratic- and Republican-controlled statehouses have been massively rolling back Medi-

caid benefits, eliminating coverage for many medical conditions and striking tens of thousands of people from the states' rolls. To cap spending on long-term care, 26 states—among them New York, California and Illinois—have petitioned Washington for approval to turn millions of Medicaid recipients over to private "managed-care organizations." Those outfits would be paid a fixed sum for providing a lifetime of (grossly inadequate) care.

These and future cuts in social programs will add enormously to the already crushing burden on families as they try to cope with providing care for aging parents or disabled family members. *The Elder Care Study* (2010) by the non-profit Families and Work Institute found that during the five years preceding the study, fully **40 percent** of the country's workforce had provided elder care to family members. On average, such care represents the equivalent of a part-time job and typically lasts for over four years. Although family caregivers often perform medical tasks such as administering IVs and injections, caring for wounds and operating dialysis or other specialized equipment, they normally receive no help from anyone except other relatives—no home visits by nurses, medical assistants or other health care professionals.

The percentage of adults providing personal care and/or financial assistance to an aged parent has more than tripled over the past 15 years, reflecting the



Reuters photos

Low-income Boston residents depend on weekly van for medical screening (above). People mass outside four-day free clinic in Los Angeles, September 2012 (below).



rapid increase in the country's elderly population. According to the 2010 census, the number of those 85 years and older increased by 30 percent during the previous decade. Many studies have documented the dramatic toll that the stress and anxiety of caring for aging parents

takes on adult children's health, from higher mortality risks and rates of hospitalization to greater incidence of chronic disease.

Overall, two-thirds of caregivers are women. As they marry and give birth

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Manning...

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All who oppose the imperialist barbarity and machinations revealed in the material he provided must join in demanding his immediate freedom. Also crucially important is the defense of Julian Assange against the vendetta by the U.S., Britain and their cohorts, who are attempting to railroad him to prison by one means or another for his role in running WikiLeaks.

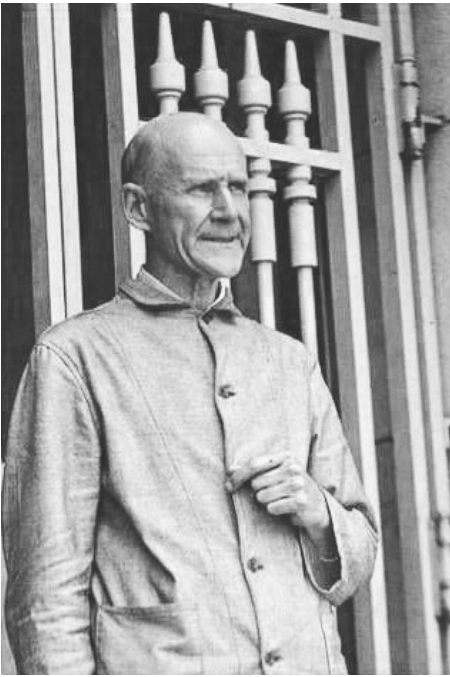
In a 35-page statement he read to the military court after entering his plea, Manning told of his journey from nearly being rejected in basic training to becoming an army intelligence analyst. In that capacity he came across mountains of evidence of U.S. duplicity and war crimes. The materials he provided to WikiLeaks included military logs documenting 120,000 civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan and a formal military policy of covering up torture, rape and murder. A quarter-million diplomatic cables address all manner of lethal operations within U.S. client states, from the “drug war” in Mexico to drone strikes in Yemen. He also released files containing assessments of detainees held at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. These documents show that the government continued to hold many who, Manning stated, were believed or known to be innocent, as well as “low level foot soldiers that did not have useful intelligence.”

The Pentagon declared war against WikiLeaks following the release of a video, conveyed by Manning, of a 2007 U.S. Apache helicopter airstrike in Iraq that killed at least 12 people, including two Reuters journalists. American forces are then shown firing on a van that pulled up to help the victims. Manning said he

was most alarmed by the “bloodlust they appeared to have.” He described how instead of calling for medical attention for a seriously wounded individual trying to crawl to safety, an aerial crew team member “asks for the wounded person to pick up a weapon so that he can have a reason to engage.”

By January 2010, Manning said, he “began to become depressed with the situation that we found ourselves increasingly mired in year after year” and decided to make public many of the documents he had backed up as part of his work as an analyst. Manning first offered the materials to the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Not getting anywhere with these pillars of the bourgeois press establishment, in February 2010 he made his first submission to WikiLeaks. He attached a note advising that “this is possibly one of the more significant documents of our time removing the fog of war and revealing the true nature of twenty-first century asymmetric warfare. Have a good day.”

The charge of “aiding the enemy”—i.e., Al Qaeda—is especially ominous. This used to mean things like military sabotage and handing over information on troop movements to a battlefield enemy. In Manning’s case, the prosecution claims that the very act of publicizing U.S. military and diplomatic activities, some of which took place years before, amounted to “indirect” communication with Al Qaeda. Manning told the court that he believed that public access to the information “could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general.” He hoped that this “might cause society to reevaluate the need or even the desire to engage in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations that ignore the



Illinois State Historical Library
Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs, imprisoned in Atlanta under Espionage Act for opposing World War I.

complex dynamics of the people living in the affected environment everyday.” But by the lights of the imperialists’ war on terror, any exposure of their depredations can be construed as support to the “terrorist” enemy, whoever that might be.

The Pentagon intends to call no fewer than 141 witnesses in its show trial, including four people to testify anonymously. One of them, designated as “John Doe,” is believed to be a Navy SEAL who participated in the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. “Doe” is alleged to have grabbed three disks from bin Laden’s Abbottabad, Pakistan, compound on which was stored four files’ worth of the WikiLeaks material provided by Manning. Also reportedly retrieved from bin Laden’s hard drives was a trove of American porn videos. Are Obama & Co. planning to put the owners of Vivid Entertainment in the dock as well?

Nor do charges under the Espionage Act have to have anything to do with actual spying. The law was one of an array of measures adopted to criminalize antiwar activity after U.S. imperialism’s entry into the First World War. It mandated imprisonment for any act deemed to interfere with the recruitment of troops. Among its first and most prominent victims was Socialist Party spokesman Eugene V. Debs, who was jailed for a June 1918 speech at a workers’ rally in Canton, Ohio, where he denounced the war as capitalist slaughter and paid tribute to the leaders of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Dozens of Industrial Workers of the World organizers were also thrown into prison. So broad was the law’s reach that Robert Goldstein, producer of the movie *The Spirit of ’76*, was convicted and originally sentenced to ten years on the grounds that the film’s depiction of the brutality of British soldiers during the American Revolution would undermine support for a U.S. war-time ally!

In the early 1970s, the Nixon government tried, unsuccessfully, to use this law to go after Daniel Ellsberg, whose release of the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* shed light on the history of U.S. imperialism’s losing war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. Obama has happily picked up Nixon’s mantle. Manning’s prosecution will be the sixth time the Obama administration has used the Espionage Act against the source of an unauthorized leak of classified information—more than the combined total under all prior administrations since the law’s

CORRECTION

The article “Britain 1919: Class Struggle, Racism and Labour Reformism” (WV No. 1018, 22 February) incorrectly stated that the French military occupation of the German Ruhr took place following World War II. It took place after World War I.

In Honor of International Women’s Day

In a pioneering Marxist study, August Bebel, a founding leader of the German Social Democratic Party, explained that women’s emancipation required their full integration into economic and social life. This will be possible only in a socialist society based on material abundance and scientific technique, as the household tasks of the family are carried out by social institutions and the role of women will no longer be defined primarily as breeders of the next generation.



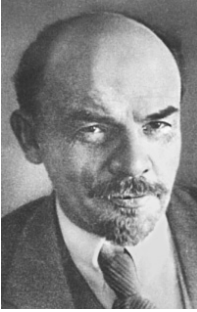
TROTSKY

One factor is of leading importance in the question of population in the future—the **higher, freer position which all women will then occupy**. Leaving exceptions aside, intelligent and energetic women are not as a rule inclined to give life to a large number of children as “the gift of God,” and to spend the best years of their own lives in pregnancy, or with a child at their breasts. This disinclination for numerous children, which even now is entertained by most women, may—all the solicitude notwithstanding that a Socialist society will bestow upon pregnant women and mothers—be rather strengthened than weakened. In our opinion, there lies in this the great probability that the increase of population will proceed slower than in bourgeois society....

In Socialist society, where alone mankind will be truly free and planted on its natural basis, it will direct its own development knowingly along the line of natural law. In all epochs hitherto, society handled the questions of production and distribution, as well as of the increase of population without the knowledge of the laws that underlie them,—hence, unconsciously. In the new social order, equipped with the knowledge of the laws of its own development, society will proceed consciously and planfully.

SOCIALISM IS SCIENCE, APPLIED WITH FULL UNDERSTANDING TO ALL THE FIELDS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY.

—August Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism* (1879)



LENIN

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enactment in 1917. As we have repeatedly stressed, Barack Obama, who came into office with broad support from liberals and the left, is simply carrying out his duties as Commander-in-Chief, stepping up attacks on democratic rights to pave the way for further imperialist depredations and attacks on the workers and oppressed at home.

Noting his initial uncertainty about releasing the diplomatic cables, Manning remarked that he had “once read and used a quote on open diplomacy written after the First World War and how the world would be a better place if states would avoid making secret pacts and deals with and against each other.” He added, “I thought these cables were a prime example of a need for a more open diplomacy.”

Behind the imperialists’ diplomatic skullduggery—conducted at times with and at times against one another—is their drive to exploit the world’s workers and oppressed in accord with their distinct interests. The Obama administration’s vicious retaliation against both Manning and Assange shows that nothing in this regard has changed since revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in November 1917 described secret diplomacy as “a necessary tool for a propertied minority which is compelled to deceive the majority in order to subject it to its interests.” Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution, made this point in a statement he issued as Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the newly fledged Soviet workers state. Trotsky was announcing the publication and abrogation of secret treaties hatched by the prior tsarist regime as well as the bourgeois Provisional Government with their imperialist allies.

One of the first acts of the Soviet government was to issue a decree on peace removing Russia from the slaughter of interimperialist World War I and demanding of all belligerents a “just, democratic” peace without annexations or indemnities. The Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* soon began publication of treaties concluded during the war. Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party was driven by the perspective of world proletarian revolution. Indeed, the October Revolution was a beacon of liberation for the exploited and oppressed in the advanced capitalist countries and in the colonial and semicolonial world. Along with the Soviet government’s renunciation of predatory agreements reached by prior regimes, the publication of the treaties helped spark waves of struggle by those under the boot heel of the imperialists, whose dirty deals were now laid bare.

For proletarian revolutionaries, the materials provided by Manning are of real value in opening the eyes of the world’s working people to the systematic violence and lies that prop up capitalist rule. Opponents of imperialist occupations and war must be won to the understanding that it will require a series of socialist revolutions to put an end to the capitalist order. It is to provide the necessary leadership to the proletariat in this struggle that we are committed to forging Leninist-Trotskyist parties around the world. ■

Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.

For a Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!

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Opponents of the Revolutionary Internationalist Workers Movement

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Union Busting Grain Bosses Up Ante Against ILWU

MARCH 4—On February 27, the United Grain Corp. in the Port of Vancouver, Washington, locked out members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). Managers and other scab labor brought in by the professional strike-breaking company J.R. Gettier & Associates began loading grain on the ship in port while three other vessels lined up on the Columbia River. Scab tugs are on hand to get the ships in and out of the terminal. Standing behind this operation is the armed might of the U.S. Coast Guard, whose sights are aimed at any union protest that would interfere with the ships' passage. This is an open declaration of war against one of the few remaining bastions of labor power in this country!

For months, the grain bosses have been out to break the back of the ILWU, which has worked the terminals in the region since the 1930s. When union members voted down the "last, best and final" contract offer from the Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers Association in late December by a resounding 93.8 percent, the grain export goliaths told them to shove it. Either they were to work under the terms of this offer—which shreds union working and safety conditions and undermines the hiring hall and other gains won in hard-fought struggle—or they wouldn't work at all. The ILWU tops caved in to this ultimatum, banking on trying to use to their advantage the very laws whose purpose is to subordinate the unions to the interests of the bosses.

At the same time, the union bureaucrats looked for leverage by pursuing separate negotiations with the grain terminal owners TEMCO, a joint venture between the Minnesota-based Cargill and CHS Inc. On the same day the union was locked out by United Grain, the ILWU issued a



February 27: ILWU members locked out by United Grain picket at entrance to Port of Vancouver, Washington.

press release announcing that an agreement had been reached with TEMCO. Although few details have been released, according to the president of Vancouver ILWU Local 4 it extends work shifts to a deadly dangerous 12 hours and eliminates the union's supercargo clerks, who oversee the loading and unloading of ships. These jobs would be handed over to management, giving the company a greater whip hand over the workforce. Even leaving these and other concessions aside, the TEMCO agreement explicitly states that it "is subject to modification given the details of a final agreement between the ILWU and the Pacific Northwest Grain

Elevator Operators." In other words, however bad it is, the other grain companies can make it worse!

United Grain—whose Vancouver terminal has the largest grain storage capacity in the region, shipping out 16 percent of U.S. wheat exports—gave its answer by locking out the union. Claiming that it had employed a former FBI agent to investigate "suspicious incidents involving equipment failure and damage," the company fired a Local 4 official, charging him with efforts to "sabotage and destroy company property." United Grain's CEO declared, "Deliberate attempts by an ILWU leader to damage equipment, disrupt operations

and put co-workers at risk cannot be tolerated." Oddly, this alleged "sabotage" is said to have taken place over *two months ago*, on December 22. But only now are they trotting out this "investigation" by an agent well-schooled in the dirty trade of fabrications and other deadly set-ups. It is a convenient tale to further the aim of breaking the ILWU.

On the first day of the lockout, the ILWU shut down the whole Port of Vancouver, stranding a car carrier ship loaded with 1,800 Subarus. But that stopped the next day when an arbitrator for the Pacific Maritime Association ruled the walkout illegal. The rest of the port is now up and running with ILWU labor, even as grain is being worked by scabs. Once again, the ILWU bureaucracy looks not to mobilizing the social power of the union and its allies to meet this union-busting attack through, for example, building mass picket lines that no scabs would dare to cross. Instead, the union has just filed an "unfair labor practice" suit with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The injunctions and massive fines brought by the NLRB against the ILWU when it actually fought to defend itself against the EGT grain consortium in Longview, Washington, in 2011 should make it more than obvious that this agency's whole purpose is to enforce anti-union laws, not to be "fair" to labor.

After ILWU officials had agreed to the union working under the terms of the overwhelmingly rejected contract with the Grain Handlers Association, we observed in "Longshore Unions Under the Gun" (WV No. 1015, 11 January):

"There is no question of the stakes faced by the longshore unions, particularly now the ILWU. But one thing is for
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A month-long strike by school bus drivers and matrons organized in Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1181 ended abruptly in defeat on February 15 when the ATU tops sent the strikers back to work with nothing but empty pockets and empty promises. The 8,800 workers—black, white, Latino, Caribbean and East European—kept up picket lines in the bitter winter cold to thwart Mayor Michael Bloomberg's union-busting scheme to rob them of job protections won in their last strike, a bitterly fought three-month battle in 1979. The protections guaranteed that workers are hired according to citywide union seniority lists regardless of which bus company wins a city contract.

Bloomberg provoked the strike by putting bus contracts out for re-bid without the job protections. The city is gunning for the jobs and wages of unionized drivers and matrons, which now start at \$14 and \$11 respectively—and they have to rely on unemployment in the summer. In NYC, that means they're close to poverty. When more than 100 matrons showed up for work after the strike at one cockroach outfit in Red Hook, Brooklyn, the boss told them they were fired but could be rehired by another subsidiary if they quit the ATU. Hundreds more drivers and matrons were blocked from returning to work, as the bus companies kept scabs on the job and wrangled with the union about putting ATU members back on the buses. Many are threatened with losing their jobs at the end of the school year, with no assurance of re-hire when new contractors take over in September.

Bloomberg, the tenth-richest person in the U.S., is bludgeoning a workforce whose average wage is \$35,000 per year—way below what the legal minimum wage should be. But after all this is the same guy who recently let slip at a press conference that "nobody's sleeping on the streets" of NYC, which had even his own supporters rolling their eyes. With his

Union Tops Sell Out School Bus Strike



February 20: Owner of Brooklyn school bus firm tells more than 100 matrons they are fired as they returned after month-long strike.

mayoral "legacy" at stake as his third term draws to a close, Bloomberg sees crushing the bus workers as a pavestone toward busting the teachers and other big municipal unions—or at least leaving his successor better fixed to do so.

With the city administration playing hardball, five leading Democratic Party mayoral hopefuls, working in cahoots with the ATU leadership, intervened to end the strike by pledging to "revisit"

the dispute if elected. What their statement actually promised was that a Democratic mayor would protect jobs "within the bidding process" in a way that would be "fiscally responsible for taxpayers." This is just another formula for wage cuts, assuming that those who went on strike even keep their jobs. While the likes of Bloomberg revel in sticking it to the unions, the Democratic Party of capital wields the same knife, but with

pearly whites showing. For a vivid example, workers in New York need look no further than Albany, where Governor Andrew Cuomo has gone after public-sector unions and utility workers with a vengeance. This does not stop the labor bureaucracy from touting the Democrats as "friends of labor."

In the context of the current coast-to-coast onslaught against labor, the school
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Health Care...

(continued from page 1)

at an increasingly later age, more are becoming part of the “sandwich generation”—adults who are responsible for the care of both young children and elderly parents at the same time. Today, nearly 40 percent of women caring for elderly relatives are still raising children of their own, with many of those women also holding down a full-time job. In this capitalist class society, the enormous costs of providing elder care, which should be borne by society as a whole, fall on individual working-class and poor families and, above all, women.

For Free, Quality Health Care for All!

A 2007 study, *Family Caregivers: What They Spend, What They Sacrifice*, by hospice provider Evercare estimated that caregivers incurred out-of-pocket expenses averaging over \$5,500 per year. Low-income families in particular can scarcely hope to recover from such costs. The study noted: “The lowest income family caregivers have the highest burden of care in terms of both the number of hours they spend helping their family member and in their actual proportion of income spent on care.”

In fully one-third of working families faced with the demands of elder care, one or both parents are forced to reduce the number of hours worked—or to quit working entirely—thus deepening their financial distress. The impact on caregivers leaving the workforce is devastating, as it means not only lost wages but also diminished Social Security benefits for their retirement years. Various studies have estimated the average lifetime financial loss to be from \$300,000 to over \$650,000. A downward spiral is unfolding: As the current generation of caregivers forego opportunities to save for retirement, they increase the financial burden that they likely will impose one day upon their own children.

The total monetary value of unpaid work that family members perform in caring for the elderly far exceeds the amount that the U.S. spends on home health care and nursing home care. In short, the responsibility for caring for the country’s aging population is overwhelmingly borne by working people. If families are unable to provide that care, then the aged have no choice but to just hurry up and die!

That cruel calculus makes perfect sense in terms of the functioning of the capitalist system. For the owners of banks and industry, government spending on caring for the aged is an unnecessary overhead expense that ultimately lowers the overall profit rate. As Karl Marx explained, profits derive from the *exploit-*



Minnesota Historical Society

tation of labor: Workers, who have to sell their labor power to survive, add value to what they produce, but they only get paid a sum that allows them to continue to toil and to raise a new generation of workers. The difference between the value added by the workers and what they actually get paid ends up in the capitalists’ pockets in the form of surplus value. However, the aged and infirm do not labor and therefore do not generate surplus value. In the interest of maximizing profits, the engine that powers the capitalist system, public spending on the aged and disabled should logically be cut to the bone.

Those welfare programs that exist have been achieved as a result of mass social struggles. In 1934, the year before the passage of the Social Security Act, there were three victorious citywide organizing strikes: one led by Communists in San Francisco, the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters strikes and a general strike led by left-wing socialists in Toledo. In fact, Social Security and other New Deal programs were part of an effort by the bourgeoisie to head off growing leftist political radicalization and the burgeoning labor struggles in the 1930s. Medicare as well as Medicaid and other “war on poverty” programs were enacted to buy social peace during the turbulent 1960s, a period marked by the civil rights upsurge and the Vietnam antiwar movement.

In the U.S., every president since Ronald Reagan has trimmed spending on Medicare, the federal health insurance program for those aged 65 and older as well as younger people with disabilities. The slashing of the social safety net—given added impetus by the capitalist counter-revolution that destroyed the Soviet Union in 1991-92—has been accompanied by a vicious anti-union offensive. The dearth of strikes in recent decades has helped

pave the way for the exploiters to butcher health care, pensions and other union gains with impunity. Free, quality medical care is today a burning need for the mass of the population. The labor movement would galvanize broad support if it were to take up this fight as part of a struggle for jobs and decent pensions for all.

To wage such battles poses the need to oust the pro-capitalist trade-union leaders, who peddle the lie that the workers have interests in common with their exploiters. They must be replaced with new leaders based on a program of class



Social Security Administration

Left: Unionists battle cops during 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters Strike. Above: Roosevelt signs Social Security Act, August 1935.

ones. Yet even as families were finding it more difficult to cope with elder care, the ruling class had not the slightest intention of taking on that role. Throughout the 19th century, state and local governments maintained some bare-bones assistance (termed “outdoor relief”) for the impoverished in the interest of social stability. As one historian explained, “The poor were seen as a threat to civil order, and those in a position of authority sought an effective way of relieving (and calming) them” (Thomas Streissguth, *Welfare and Welfare Reform* [2009]).



72-year-old checkout clerk at Ohio Wal-Mart, 2006.

struggle in opposition to the capitalist class enemy and its political parties, the Democrats and Republicans. The two parties play a time-honored game of “hard cop, soft cop” in which the Republicans demand draconian cuts in social programs and the Democrats posture as friends of working people while implementing much the same austerity agenda as the Republicans. The working class needs its own party: a workers party that fights for a workers government, which would expropriate the productive wealth of the capitalist class and build and develop a planned economy.

Discarding Those They Cannot Exploit

The responsibility of caring for the older generation in this country has always fallen primarily on younger family members. In the overwhelmingly rural America of the 18th and early 19th centuries, when extended families tended to live in close proximity and women did not work outside the home, kinship networks were in some ways better equipped than today’s families to handle such care. In addition, elder care then was typically less onerous. Before the development of antibiotics in the mid 20th century, the aged often died precipitately of infectious diseases rather than suffering for extended periods with debilitating or chronic illness as is now common.

Urban and industrial growth increasingly undermined the ability of families to care for the elderly, not least because urban families were smaller than rural

Except for the favored few who received some financial assistance, the policy for those elderly who had no family to provide support was so-called “indoor relief”: They were simply locked up in poorhouses. These dreadful institutions were direct descendants of the English workhouses that had existed since the 16th century essentially to punish the poor for their lamentable state. Far from seeking to ameliorate the condition of the infirm and disabled, the purpose of institutionalizing them was to isolate them and remove them from view. The American bourgeoisie of the 19th and early 20th centuries subjected the most needy of the elderly population to inhuman, prison-like conditions: overcrowded cells swarming with vermin, noxious air that was often barely breathable, rampant disease.

By the mid 19th century, scores of Protestant evangelical and other reform societies had set up charities to enable those who could become productive members of society (and lead virtuous Christian lives) to escape the corrupt influence of the poorhouse. Often, the aged—who, it was assumed, could no longer be productive—were specifically excluded from these uplifting endeavors. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor piously resolved “to give no aid to persons who, from infirmity, imbecility, old age, or any other cause, are likely to continue unable to earn their own support” (quoted in Carole Haber, *Beyond Sixty-Five: The Dilemma of Old Age in America's Past* [1983]).

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By the late 19th century, sectors of the poorhouse population were increasingly transferred to newly created, specialized institutions—orphans to orphanages, the insane to insane asylums and the homeless to flophouses. The poorhouses were essentially transformed into “homes for the aged and infirm,” as many began calling themselves. By the early 1920s, more than 70 percent of the country’s poorhouse inmates were over the age of 55, and most were seriously disabled.

With the passage of the Social Security Act, the bourgeoisie seized the opportunity to do away with the poorhouses, the Dickensian horrors of which had become a national embarrassment. No less important to the Franklin Roosevelt administration was the argument that a system of small pensions would be a cheaper way of providing minimal elder care than maintaining the poorhouses, which were swarming with victims of the Great Depression. Thus, the law prohibited Social Security payments to the elderly inmates of public institutions. Almost overnight, a new industry was born as the direct legacy of the poorhouses: privately owned, for-profit nursing homes.

The Nursing Home Pestilence

Providing professional care for elderly people in this country is big business, and it will become even bigger with the baby-boomer generation entering retirement age. At the center of that business are for-profit nursing homes, often run by giant corporations. As is true of all capitalist enterprises, nursing homes must drive down expenses in the pursuit of profits. Many nursing homes avoid admitting elderly patients who are afflicted with dementia or other chronic diseases—precisely those who need care the most—due to the high cost of looking after them.

Likewise, nursing homes minimize the number of registered nurses employed, almost never hire on-staff doctors and pay the direct-care staff (almost always non-unionized) a wage they could earn at McDonald’s. Often, even in the better nursing homes, there is not enough staff to ensure that residents are properly fed. What they do not stint on are tranquilizers and other drugs that allow them to cut corners in attending to residents. As one academic researcher told the *New York Times* (23 September 2007), nursing home chains “have made a lot of money by cutting nurses, but it’s at the cost of human lives.”

This also exacts a toll on the remaining nurses and other staff. Nursing homes are stress-filled, physically demanding workplaces where non-fatal injury rates are greater than in the construction, meatpacking and mining industries. Inadequate training and equipment, higher patient loads and mandatory overtime feed the problem. Nursing home workers, who are predominantly women, need to be organized into the trade unions that represent nurses and other health care



Cooke/Time Life

Residents of poorhouse in Fort Wayne, Indiana, line up for meal, 1949.

workers. Backed by the industrial unions, whose role in production gives them far greater potential social power, this fight must be part of a broader campaign to organize all the unorganized, a struggle that is crucial to reversing the decades of attacks on labor.

With employers taking aim at wages, benefits and working conditions, unionized nursing home workers have engaged in several strikes in recent years. One involving 600 workers at five Connecticut nursing homes operated by HealthBridge began last summer after the bosses froze pensions and imposed other takebacks. The company responded to the strike with naked union-busting: Scabs were brought in as permanent replacements and a RICO lawsuit was filed claiming that the activities of the union, which is affiliated with the SEIU 1199 service workers, amounted to “a shake-down by a lawless enterprise.” On March 3, union members returned to the job, three months after a federal judge ordered management to take them back under the terms of their existing contract. Following in the footsteps of many other businesses attempting to void labor contracts, the five HealthBridge nursing homes have filed for bankruptcy.

The struggle for decent wages and working conditions is directly linked to the quality of care. For decades, Congressional committees, journalists and academic researchers have documented the indifference, abuse and outright cruelty of the nursing-home owners toward residents. As a result, the industry is one of the most regulated in the country. Yet nursing homes that provide low-quality care or mistreat their residents face no real consequences because Congress is not about to appropriate the funds for the necessary inspections or to pursue sanctions against those that are non-compliant. Families that try to bring wrongful death lawsuits in egregious

cases of neglect are often stymied by a complex web of corporate ownership put in place to shield nursing-home operators from legal responsibility.

Even a generation ago, when defined-benefit pension plans were included in many union contracts, the exorbitant cost of quality nursing homes put them largely out of reach of the working class. Nationally, the average cost of a semi-private (shared) room in a nursing home is today almost \$75,000 per year—in New York, it is over \$120,000. The elderly will typically soon exhaust their life savings paying for care and, once they are indigent, apply for meager government assistance under Medicaid.

As is true throughout the U.S. health care system, there is a two-class system of nursing homes in which the well-to-do get near-adequate (sometimes even high-quality) care while everyone else receives outrageously dreadful treatment. Many nursing homes will only accept residents who can afford to pay the cost and shun those who are on Medicaid, which typically pays about 30 percent less than what residents would pay out-of-pocket for the same care.

Low-budget nursing homes that cater to impoverished Medicaid recipients, especially those located in poor black and Hispanic communities, are often simply foul-smelling hellholes. According to a 2005 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, at least one in six nursing homes provides such poor care that residents are at risk of physical harm. Such conditions often persist despite the best efforts of health care workers, who seek to provide quality care in defiance of the rapacious nursing-home bosses. In the case of Hurricane Sandy, it was the staff, often putting in 36-hour shifts, that carried out the emergency evacuations of dozens of stricken New York City nursing homes. There was no good reason why people could not have been evacuated in an orderly fashion before the storm hit. It was penny-pinching by Mayor Michael Bloomberg that left the elderly in harm’s way.

Under capitalism, nursing homes hardly even begin to address the social need for elder care. Only about one person in eight aged 85 or over is placed in a nursing home. Of course, many prefer staying with their families, especially with what is on offer at most old-age facilities. The whole setup is focused on profiteering. By raking in about \$160 billion per year while holding down costs, private nursing homes have been quite successful in maximizing their shareholders’ return on investment. This industry provides an object lesson in how the capitalist system is incompatible with satisfying basic human needs.

For Socialized Elder Care!

In the early 19th century, the utopian socialist Charles Fourier observed that the status of women serves as a hallmark of overall emancipation in any society.

A not-unrelated hallmark is how society treats its elderly and disabled. The prize-winning 1983 film *The Ballad of Narayama* depicts a primitive 19th-century Japanese village so impoverished that the elderly were expected to die voluntarily so that a new generation could survive. Amid brutal images of near-starvation, the film contrasts the dignity of the protagonist’s ascent of Mt. Narayama to die there of exposure.

In capitalist America, that contrast is cruelly inverted. Modern industrial society is fully capable of providing quality health care for all, including for the aged, disabled and chronically ill. Yet the bourgeoisie’s treatment of the elderly population denies many—especially working people, minorities and the poor—even basic human dignity. In a study published last October, *Home Alone: Family Caregivers Providing Complex Chronic Care*, the AARP and the non-profit United Hospital Fund offered “recommendations for action” that are premised on younger family members’ responsibility for long-term care of the elderly. The study simply lists various ways that “family caregivers” could be provided with additional “training and support.” And no politicians in Washington are offering anything remotely resembling an improvement in the conditions of the elderly.

We have written extensively about the Marxist program of replacing the institution of the family—the main source of women’s oppression under capitalism—with socialized childcare and housework. In “The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 59, Spring 2006), we described how V.I. Lenin’s Bolshevik Party, after leading the working class to power in Russia in 1917, sought to free women from the drudgery of housework by setting up communal childcare facilities, dining halls and laundries, as well as by introducing paid maternity leave and free health care. Such measures represent the concrete expression of our slogan: For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!

Socialized elder care, like socialized childcare, would represent a significant step toward replacing the institution of the family. Yet elder care is fundamentally different from childcare in that it addresses a process of increasing, not decreasing, dependence. That calls for flexible institutional solutions corresponding to the successive stages of decline in old age. Different levels of group care for the aged, requiring increasing levels of medical supervision, would be necessary, from assisted living and nursing facilities to long-term hospitalization.

The aged in today’s society overwhelmingly wish to remain in their homes as long as possible. A workers state would establish communal facilities attractive to the aged who require care. The needs of the aged who remain attached to their homes could, through state support, be largely met in the same way as for the rich today: by bringing nursing services into their homes on a daily basis. A wide-ranging effort would be undertaken to provide housing, transportation, custodial care and the many other needs of older people that working families today attempt to meet.

We Marxists are for socialized medicine—the expropriation of the pharmaceutical, health care and insurance companies, including the parasitic private nursing home industry—as part of the fight for a workers government. To this end, a workers party is needed to lead the proletariat in the fight to overturn the capitalist order through socialist revolution, ushering in a society based on production for need, not for profit. A rational, internationally planned economy would lay the basis for a qualitative development of the productive forces, opening the road to the elimination of poverty and the creation of an egalitarian socialist society. Based on material abundance, the future communist society would adopt the rule, as Karl Marx declared in his 1875 “Critique of the Gotha Program”: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!” ■



December 2012: Nursing home workers in Newington, Connecticut, on strike against HealthBridge corporation.

New Issue of *Black History and the Class Struggle*

The following article was written by our comrades of Spartacist/South Africa, Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) as the Introduction to the new issue of *Black History and the Class Struggle* (No. 23, February 2013). We have not included references to articles contained in the pamphlet.

28 JANUARY—The 16 August 2012 massacre of 34 striking Lonmin platinum miners at Marikana was the worst instance of lethal police violence in response to struggle since the end of white-supremacist apartheid rule in 1994. Carried out under the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government led by the African National Congress (ANC), this massacre was meant to be a bloody warning to those amongst the oppressed who dare to stand up against their miserable conditions of existence. But the plan backfired as the police slaughter fuelled a wave of wildcat strikes across the industry and beyond, shaking the fragile foundations of neo-apartheid capitalism. The miners, who had been making as little as 4,000 rand per month (US\$440), demanded a R12,500 minimum wage. After they won most of that amount for the majority of Lonmin workers, that demand became the battle cry for many other workers who are sick and tired of waiting for the promised better life for all.

The massacre and the strike wave it spurred ripped a huge tear in the fabric of this society. There is wide and deep discontent at the pace of change over the nearly 20 years of rule by the Tripartite Alliance—the ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) misleaders, along with the COSATU bureaucracy as a whole, acted as strikebreakers at Lonmin and at other “illegal” strikes, helping spur the growth of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). The ferment and political volatility in the mines have not dissipated, as the causes of last year’s strikes centring on starvation wages and terrible conditions of employment remain unresolved. This is likely to be a lightning rod for more struggles ahead.

Like atrocities in the last days of the apartheid era, the Lonmin massacre failed to break the fighting spirit of the striking workers. But militancy on the trade-union level is not capable in and of itself of breaking the overwhelmingly black working class from bourgeois consciousness, which in South Africa is mainly expressed through the politics of nationalism. The rise of powerful trade unions of black workers in the 1980s was a factor in bringing an end to the apartheid regime, but the leadership of the SACP and the emerging COSATU union federation derailed any fight for workers rule by selling the lie that the ANC and its partners are the leaders in the fight for national

liberation. A revolutionary leadership is required to break the hold of such deadly illusions among the combative proletariat.

So long as capitalism remains in power, a decent life for the masses can never be won and any gains secured by class struggle remain highly reversible. Nor is there any genuine solution to the masses’ entrenched poverty within the confines of South Africa. Mainly owned by British and U.S. capital, this country’s mining industry—the core of the economy—is subject to the ebbs and flows of the imperialist-dominated world market. Indeed, the economic position of the platinum miners has been undermined by the narrowing of the market for this metal, whose main use is in auto production, due to the ongoing world capitalist contraction. Such facts underscore that the struggle of the working class against capital must be an international struggle reaching into the imperialist centres, which are themselves class-divided and multiracial societies.

Mine capitalists have started this year with a backlash, threatening to lay off tens of thousands of workers. In Carleton-

ville, west of Johannesburg, Harmony Gold locked out its 6,000 mostly migrant workers returning from the holidays, closing hostels and forcing workers to sleep out in the open. Owners are demanding prior assurances that it would be “profitable and safe” to reopen the mine, in other words, workers should commit never to strike again. At Anglo American Platinum (Amplats), miners responded with strike action to the company’s announcement that it would close down four shafts, threatening 14,000 jobs mainly in the Rustenburg area, centre of the platinum industry. The employer was forced to back off from its decision and agree to negotiate with workers’ leaders. This confirms again that *class struggle* is the only reliable weapon in the hands of the working class. Later it was announced that management decided to delay the implementation of its plan.

The coldblooded murder of workers at Lonmin was the most horrific moment of the 2012 mining wildcat strike movement, which began in late January at Impala Platinum. The massacre showed, in blood,

the absurdity of reformist arguments that the ANC/Alliance government is “class contested terrain.” Those like the SACP misleaders and apologists who portray the Alliance as a “people’s government” on the “peaceful road to socialism” are practicing deceit. It is a bourgeois government pledged to maintaining capitalist private property.

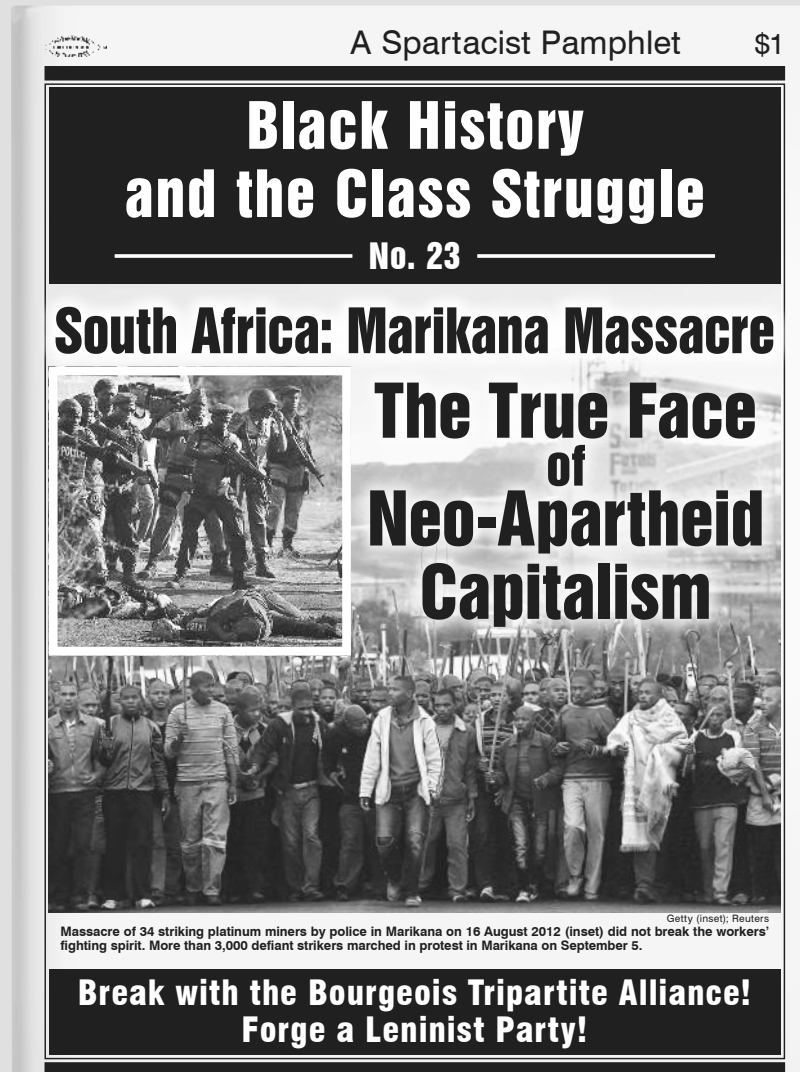
This is further shown by the regime’s apartheid-style demolition of houses occupied mainly by black people in predominantly Indian Lenasia, south of Johannesburg, and by the ruthless attacks on recent strikes by farm workers in the Western Cape. Three of those workers have been killed by police and private security guards, and scores of others injured or arrested. Workers have reported police raids in the wee hours of the morning accompanied by beatings and random shootings, injuring women and children in their homes. The “new,” “democratic” South African state is a direct continuity of the old apartheid.

The farm workers ignored authorities’ attempts to play divide-and-rule among coloured [mixed-race, partly Malay-derived], black and immigrant workers. The workers maintained their unity and class integrity in struggle against their common class enemy to ameliorate their slave-like labour conditions. But instead of organising the powerful harbour, transport and other workers in solidarity with the farm workers, COSATU leaders have done everything in their power to stop the strikes. COSATU has historically neglected organising efforts among these isolated and miserably exploited workers, who make as little as R69 per day. To this day, only a small minority belong to unions. The R150-a-day minimum wage the workers have demanded is still far below what they need to survive.

Underlying the farm workers strikes is the burning issue of the land, a question which is at the centre of the dispossession of the non-white majority in this country. The white minority, which forms less than 10 percent of the population, owns more than 70 percent of urban and arable rural land. Most farming is done by large, mechanised and capital-intensive agribusiness employing agricultural proletarians. We are for the expropriation of the large, white-owned farms and for their transformation into collective and state farms under workers rule. Farm workers are going to be central in achieving this goal, which is indissolubly bound up with the socialist revolution to be led by the mainly urban proletariat.

Amid Rising Mass Anger, State Repression Intensifies

The explosive anger at the base of society has triggered an increase in the state’s violent suppression of protest, further helping to peel away the democratic facade of the post-apartheid capitalist state. In January, police minister Nathi



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Left: Anglo American platinum miners march in Rustenburg one day after company fired 12,000 strikers, October 2012. Right: Farm workers demand hike in miserable wages as strikes swept Western Cape, December 2012.

Outrage Over Grisly Cop Killing of Mozambican



Daily Sun

South Africa



Reuters

The horrific killing of 27-year-old Mozambican taxi driver Mido Macia by cops in the Daveyton township outside Johannesburg on February 26 has sparked outrage in South Africa and beyond. The video still at left shows Macia shackled to the back of a police van. Charged with a parking violation, he was dragged hundreds of yards to the police station, where he died of head injuries and internal bleeding. “They killed one of our brothers like he was a dog,” said one of those

protesting the killing in Daveyton two days later (photo at right).

This gruesome killing by black cops shows yet again that the role of the police under the bourgeois African National Congress (ANC) is the same as under apartheid, when mainly white cops were notorious for such barbarity. With this latest atrocity exposed to the world, eight Daveyton cops have been charged with murder. But the same police commissioner, Riah Phiyega, who

sheds crocodile tears over Mido Macia’s killing told cops who slaughtered striking platinum miners in Marikana last August, “Don’t be sorry about what happened.” The ANC-led capitalist government has increasingly given the cops free rein against striking workers, immigrants and the township poor. As part of the struggle against police terror, class-conscious militants must demand: Cops, prison guards, security guards out of the unions!

Mthethwa announced that 704 people were arrested for “public violence” in December alone. Militants who take part in strikes or township protests demanding electricity, water and other basic services are viciously attacked by police, sometimes with live ammunition, and arrested. We demand the dropping of all charges and the immediate, unconditional freedom of those jailed for protesting against this racist, neo-apartheid capitalist hell-hole. *An injury to one is an injury to all!*

The organised working class must wield its social power on behalf of all the oppressed, particularly the desperate unemployed in the townships. In doing so, it must fight against anti-immigrant attacks, which are often fuelled by petty-bourgeois elements in the townships who see shopkeepers from Somalia, Pakistan or elsewhere as competitors. From the Rustenburg platinum mines to the Western Cape vineyards and orchards, recent strikes have shown a high degree of unity in struggle by South African and immigrant workers. Spartacist/South Africa and the ICL demand: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

Recent proposed legislation attacking democratic rights includes the Protection of State Information Bill, which requires prior approval for the publication of material deemed sensitive by the state, and the Traditional Courts Bill. The latter gives traditional leaders, headed by tribal chiefs, unchallenged legal power over 17 million rural black inhabitants, who are balkanised according to tribal background. Chiefs would get enhanced legal authority for making laws, deciding cases and handing down punishment. The burden would be disproportionately felt by women, who are viciously oppressed by backward practices like *lobola* (bride price) and marriage-by-capture, a form of kidnapping. Under the bill, women would not be allowed to represent themselves but must be represented by their husbands or other male family members. The bill is a rehash of British colonial and later apartheid laws that, in relegating blacks to the bottom of society, designed a separate legal system enshrining the power of traditional leaders.

ANC at Mangaung: The Business of Running Capitalism

At the ANC’s recent Mangaung national elective conference, Jacob Zuma convincingly defeated supporters of his deputy Kgalema Motlante to retain the ANC presidency. The conference also confirmed the expulsion of the hypocrite populist and former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, who is himself a small-time capitalist. Spartacist/South

Africa opposes all factions of this party of the class enemy. For the exploited and oppressed masses, whether Zuma or Motlante won would have changed nothing.

For the first time, prominent COSATU leaders were included in the ANC’s National Executive Committee (NEC), its highest decision-making body between conferences, where they will have to take direct responsibility for the policies of

this many business concerns, Ramaphosa is a prominent shareholder at Lonmin. Just 24 hours before the killing of workers at Marikana, he sent e-mails to Lonmin management and police minister Mthethwa describing strike activities as being “plainly dastardly criminal” and calling for “concomitant action” to be taken.

Spartacist/South Africa and the ICL have been unique among leftists inter-

guards in trade unions. COSATU includes the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) as well as cops organised by the SAMWU municipal workers and other unions, and the SACP recruits police into its own organisation. We oppose the inclusion of cops or security guards—the armed protectors of bourgeois rule and profits—in the unions and the broader working-class movement. After witnessing the wanton butchering of his comrades, and himself suffering torture in police custody, one Marikana striker said of the cops that “they are like dogs to me now.... I do not trust them anymore, they are like enemies” (*Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer*, 2012). The single experience of these workers has taught them more than the reformists have been capable of learning throughout their whole miserable history.

Talk about “democratic control of the police,” “winning over the police” or “raising the consciousness of the police” has nothing to do with revolutionary Marxism and everything to do with reformism. As Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky argued repeatedly, there is no such thing as a class-neutral “democracy”: the capitalist state is an apparatus of repression based on armed bodies of men—principally the army and the police—that protects the interests and property forms of the ruling class. The working class cannot simply lay hold of this state machinery and wield it for its own purposes. The capitalist state must be smashed through socialist revolution and replaced by a workers state.

The DSM intervened in the Rustenburg strikes to channel working-class militancy into bourgeois parliamentary reformist schemes. In December, the DSM announced the launch of the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP). The projected programme of this party is thoroughly reformist. The press release announcing it consists solely of bread-and-butter

continued on page 8



Reinhardt Hartzenberg

SACP 90th anniversary dinner, Durban, 30 July 2011. From left to right: KwaZulu-Natal premier Mkhize, SACP chairman and ANC general secretary Mantashe, ANC president Zuma, SACP general secretary Nzimande, COSATU general secretary Vavi, COSATU president Dlamini.

the capitalist government. This is what the COSATU and SACP leaders’ perpetual call to “swell the ranks of the ANC” means. Since becoming president, Zuma has been careful to integrate SACP leaders into his government, in the process succeeding in silencing even their most superficial criticisms. Now he looks set to do the same with COSATU. Zwelinzima Vavi and Irvin Jim, leaders of COSATU and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) respectively, who both declined nomination to the NEC, use the appearance of distance from the ANC hierarchy to occasionally mouth some criticisms of the government while in practice adhering to the entire programme of class collaboration.

The Mangaung conference also elected trade unionist-turned-billionaire-capitalist Cyril Ramaphosa as Zuma’s second-in-command. While leading the NUM in the 1980s, Ramaphosa became the protégé of the head of the Oppenheimer family, the dominant owner of Anglo American, the country’s leading mining company. He soon became the chief architect of the sellout deal that set the stage for the replacement of the apartheid government by the ANC-led Alliance. Today, among

nationally for our consistent, principled political opposition to the ANC/SACP/COSATU nationalist popular front. This is in stark contrast to reformists like the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), which not only supported the ANC in the 1994 elections but joined this bourgeois party as a so-called Marxist Tendency.

Such fake-left organisations as the DSM, Keep Left! (supporters of the late Tony Cliff) and the Workers International Vanguard Party (formerly League) support the membership of cops and security

Spartacist League/SYC Forum



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Bus Strike...

(continued from page 3)

bus workers showed real audacity in going out on strike. But they lacked the social weight to defeat Bloomberg on their own. It was urgently necessary to mobilize the rest of New York City labor in defense of ATU Local 1181. The popularity of the strike among working parents indicated a real basis to do this. While Bloomberg wrapped his union-busting in “concern” for special-needs students, most every parent understands that seniority-based job protections mean that such students ride buses run safely for years by the same trusted union drivers and matrons. As one striking driver told WV, “We are their parents for a few hours each day.”

We wrote at the outset of the strike: “With the city rulers putting the squeeze on working people throughout NYC, every public worker, every trade unionist and everyone who struggles to make ends meet has a stake in the outcome of the strike” (“Victory to NYC School Bus Workers Strike!” WV No. 1016, 25 January). Our article suggested:

“A good step would be for other unions, beginning with Transport Workers Union



WV Photo

ATU school bus strikers marching from downtown Brooklyn to Manhattan’s City Hall, February 10.

(TWU) Local 100, the UFT [teachers] and Teamsters, to swell the ATU picket lines and help extend them to every depot gate. The school bus drivers and matrons have some 300,000 potential allies in city unions who are working without a contract or under a contract extension.”

But the ATU tops sabotaged any such action. They even had their own union mechanics crossing picket lines to maintain

buses. Never enforcing solid picket lines made it easy for the city’s labor bureaucrats, who play a key role in the Democratic Party, to hang the bus workers out to dry. Buses driven by Teamsters and non-union drivers continued to roll right through picket lines during the strike. Scattered photo-op appearances by officers of Transport Workers Union Local 100 and

South Africa...

(continued from page 7)

economic demands with not even a reference to women’s oppression, much less any call for socialist revolution. Instead, they peddle reformist schemes of cleaning up capitalist municipal governments by leading “a campaign for the recall of all incompetent and corrupt councillors to replace them with WASP representatives” (socialistworld.net, 20 December 2012). This programme is not that of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, which led the October Revolution of 1917, the only successful workers revolution in history, but of social-democratic gradualism in the spirit of the classic British Labour Party. Thus the DSM’s British comrades claim that “socialism” will be introduced by nationalising industry through the mechanism of an “enabling bill” passed by the bourgeois Parliament.

A recent survey reporting on the deepening rift between the COSATU leaders and the rank and file states that a significant number of shop stewards want COSATU to leave the ANC and form a workers party, also expressing no confidence in the SACP. We encourage and welcome workers’ desire for independence from the bourgeois ANC as the beginning of wisdom. But the key question is *what programme* such a workers party would be based on. Reformists push a “workers party” as a con game, seeking merely a vehicle to better pressure the capitalist rulers, or even administer the state on their behalf. We strive to forge a party that stands for proletarian class independence from, and opposition to, the bourgeois state and all its political parties and fights for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Class and Race in South Africa

Some worker militants who have broken from the NUM are calling for “nonpolitical” unions. While this is understandable

given the history of betrayals by the NUM leaders allied to the ANC, it is impossible to divorce union struggle from political struggle. This is especially clear in a country like South Africa, where the superexploitation of mainly black labour is the living legacy of apartheid and centuries of colonial oppression.

In a 17 January press conference widely broadcast on TV, AMCU president Joseph Mathunjwa warned against “illegal, unprotected strikes,” insisted that workers must follow prescribed arbitration procedures and called for government intervention to settle disputes at Amplats. This shows clearly that the AMCU leadership does not oppose the established procedures for class collaboration and views the world through the same lens as the rest of the trade-union bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, the class-collaborationist Democratic Left Front, which is tied to imperialist-funded “social movements,” seeks to channel workers’ anger into the dead-end of pressuring the Farlam Commission of Enquiry, which was established by the government to whitewash its crimes at Marikana and to let the outraged public blow off some steam. We reject the double standards of people who claim to support struggling miners while at the same time preaching illusions in the institutions of the government that mowed them down like wild animals.

Trade-union consciousness is completely inadequate for the tasks necessary for the emancipation of the non-white majority. Parallel to starvation wages, there are problems of vulnerable workers employed by labour brokers, poor black communities in urban areas and especially in the rural reserves, and impoverished coloured townships as well. It is crucial that militant workers and youth assimilate the history of the genuine communist movement. Lenin’s Bolshevik Party was a steadfast champion of all struggles against oppression in the tsarist empire, the “prison house of peoples.”

The Bolsheviks fought against Great Russian chauvinism and for the liberation of oppressed peoples using the *methods of proletarian class struggle*.

This Leninist understanding is all the more critical for South Africa, where class exploitation has always been integrally bound up with the national oppression of the non-white masses. In the mid 1930s, Leon Trotsky wrote to his followers in South Africa that in the event of a proletarian revolution there:

“But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the state. “Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change not only the relation

small contingents of teachers and public school workers at a Sunday march across the Brooklyn Bridge were all the “solidarity” the city labor chiefs could muster.

Demoralized by their own union leaders, some bus workers wonder why they hit the picket lines in the first place and might question the need for a union at all. This is what the bosses want workers to think. Unions are the basic defense organization of the working class against the bosses. The problem is their miserable sell-out misleaders. If unions serve no purpose for the rank and file, then why are the capitalists so eager to destroy them? They know that union wages remain higher, union working conditions better and union jobs safer. Despite historically low union organization levels, it remains the case that many workers would give their eyeteeth to join one.

The class-collaborationist labor tops suck the fighting strength out of the unions by looking for allies in all the wrong places—particularly the labor boards, courts and politicians of the capitalist class enemy. In the course of labor’s battles against the arrogant exploiters, a new leadership must be built, based on a program of class struggle and opposition to the capitalists’ political parties and state agencies. ■

an automatic rise in wages in relation to the increase in prices of consumer goods. This is a burning issue in South Africa, where, in addition to skyrocketing food and fuel prices, the masses are faced with the Eskom electrical company’s demand for annual 16 percent tariff hikes until the year 2018, as well as the threatened imposition of “e-tolling” on the highways.

To address unemployment, the trade unions should fight for a *sliding scale of working hours*, i.e., the division of work amongst available labour without the loss of pay. This would help to bind together the working class and the unemployed masses, who in South Africa are main-



AP

Neo-apartheid capitalism: Miners’ shantytown near Rustenburg.

and between classes, but also between races, and will assure to the blacks that place in the state which corresponds to their numbers, insofar will *social* revolution in South Africa also have a *national* character.”

Our perspective for a black-centred workers government flows from this understanding of the *class content* of the struggle for the emancipation of the black majority. History shows that the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist leaders of struggles for national liberation, once in power, become the agents of the same imperialist overlords, oppressing their “own” people. The “national liberation” rulers killed Marikana workers to protect the profits of Lonmin, which is based in London, capital city of the British former colonial masters of South Africa.

To answer the crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality plaguing this country, which no capitalist regime can solve, we turn to Trotsky’s 1938 Transitional Programme, founding programme of the Fourth International. The programme puts forward transitional demands that provide a bridge from workers’ current struggles and consciousness to the fight for workers power. These include the demand for a *sliding scale of wages*, which means that collective agreements should assure

tained mainly by workers who themselves make only starvation wages. The crying need for a massive public works programme—building affordable houses for the millions who need them, hospitals, schools, roads, etc.—would provide the jobs that apologists for the ANC-led regime say are nowhere to be found.

All these demands point to the need for a black-centred workers government that would expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class. With mining and banking dominated by finance capital based in London and New York, the fight for socialist revolution in South Africa is completely bound up with the struggle for workers power in the imperialist centres. Under a revolutionary leadership, workers who see the failure of capitalism to meet even the most basic human wants will be won to the understanding that the bourgeois order and its system of production for profit must be overthrown and replaced with a collectivised economy, where production is based on social need. This is the perspective of Spartacist/South Africa. Those who want to play a role in the emancipation of the workers and toilers should examine the revolutionary programme of the International Communist League. ■

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No. 8 Winter 2012 R2

Smash Neo-Apartheid Capitalist Misery Through Socialist Revolution!

We Need a Leninist-Trotskyist Vanguard Party!

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Anti-Semitic Provocation in Warsaw

The following is translated from a February 2013 supplement of Platforma Spartakusowców, published by our comrades of the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski.

FEBRUARY 17—Many black-and-white posters portraying Adolf Hitler have been displayed on advertising columns in the center of Warsaw since at least late December. Hitler’s image was brought back to Warsaw as “art.” It is presented as an advertisement for Maurizio Cattelan’s “exhibition,” organized by the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, under the honorary patronage of the Italian Embassy and the City of Warsaw. A photo of Cattelan’s wax figure of Hitler kneeling that was made in 2001 was used for the poster. Hitler’s figure is “one of the major pieces” of the event and has been displayed since mid November at 14 Prózna Street, in a passage with a locked gate leading to the courtyard of a devastated prewar building in the former [Jewish] ghetto. The kneeling wax figure can be seen only from a distance, from behind, through a hole in the locked wooden gate. The figure has been described in the media as a “praying Hitler” supposedly asking for “forgiveness.” One can read that Cattelan’s installation was erected at the Prózna Street building as “an artistic commentary on the Catholic credo: what, in fact, does love your enemies mean?” (www.csw.art.pl, Maurizio Cattelan, AMEN).

Whatever the stated intentions of its creators, objectively the display of Hitler’s wax figure and its portraits in Warsaw are an anti-Semitic provocation, serving as an icebreaker for Nazi terror. A good answer to this media garbage was given by a passerby walking on Prózna Street, quoted by the *Jerusalem Post* (26 December 2012). She wondered: “‘Why did the artists decide to put a praying child here?’... When she heard that the ‘child’ was in fact Hitler, she said angrily: ‘Hitler did

not have the right to ask for forgiveness.’”

Expressing typical Polish-nationalist insolence, the “exhibition” curator, Justyna Wesołowska, told a journalist from *Jewish News One* (a TV channel in Brussels, Belgium): “It is really rather funny. For me it’s very positive that locally we are receiving only positive reactions” (www.jn1.tv, 4 January). They ignored the fact that in 2010 in Milano, Italy, an earlier version of the same poster with a kneeling wax Hitler, ostensibly advertising Catellan’s exhibition, was banned. After days of debate, Milano’s town hall decided to stop the posters from being distributed. The Jewish community welcomed the decision to ban the posters. “The ad wounds our sensitivity and that of many people, overriding the sarcastic message of Hitler begging forgiveness,” said community leader Roberto Jarach (www.lagazzettadelmezzogiorno.it, 15 September 2010).

It is worth quoting a statement by the Simon Wiesenthal Center. It called the “intentional placement of the statue in the area in which tens of thousands of Jews were murdered and from which hundreds of thousands of Jews were deported to their death by the Nazi regime headed by Hitler, a senseless provocation which insults the memory of the Nazis’ Jewish victims.” Moreover, the “installation is a manifestation of a total lack of sensitivity to Nazi crimes in Poland, and especially those committed against Polish Jews. As far as the Jews were concerned, Hitler’s only ‘prayer’ was that they be wiped off the face of the earth.... Thus a ‘praying’ Hitler purposely placed in the center of the area of the Warsaw Ghetto is a total distortion of the history of World War II and the Holocaust” (www.wiesenthal.com, 27 December 2012).

Another example of the insolence of Polish nationalists is a protest statement, posted on the right-wing Internet site *wPolityce.pl* (29 December 2012),

which does not mention Jews at all! Titled “Taxpayer!... The Criminal Hitler Has Returned in Hundreds of Posters!”, this statement displays photos of the poster with Hitler, photos of some stone plaques commemorating mainly the fallen soldiers of the [Polish nationalist] Home Army (AK) and a plaque commemorating the fallen Catholic victims of a Nazi concentration camp. They also criticize “playing with ‘questions about the meaning of the Catholic credo.’” As if the Catholic church had not collaborated with the Nazis, they lament: “As if that German criminal [Hitler] had anything in common with the Christian faith, as if he had not persecuted priests, both in Germany and also, on a much wider scale, in Poland and other occupied countries. As if his crimes hadn’t come exactly from rejecting God, from the Germans perceiving themselves as supermen.” The authors of that statement prefer to keep silent on the priest Jozef Tiso, who headed the fascist regime loyal to Hitler in neighboring Slovakia. Or on the support that the fascist dictator of Croatia, Ante Pavelic, got from the Vatican and the local Catholic church. Or on the support that many top priests in Germany and the Vatican, etc. gave to Hitler’s crusade against godless “Jew-Communism,” as expressed for instance in the slogan on German army belt buckles: “Gott mit uns!” (God with us!).

In fact, there is one thing the whole political spectrum of right-wing groups, including those running the city and national government, have in common: they are all happy to see Poland cleared of Jews. As they came to power during the capitalist counterrevolution led by Solidarność in 1989-90, many of them espoused anti-Semitism, along with national chauvinism and anti-woman Catholic bigotry. The capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the USSR opened up a long period of reaction, with annual fascist vet-

erans’ marches in Lvov, Riga, etc. In 1943, the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising looked to the Soviet Army as their potential liberator, and some participants looked to the socialist revolution in Europe as the only hope for the remaining Jews in East Europe. In fact, it was the Soviet Army that liberated the country from the Nazis. But socialist revolution was betrayed long before the war by the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, with its doctrine of “socialism in one country.” In 1948, these bureaucrats supported the creation of a capitalist Israel and Jewish emigration, and they periodically led anti-Semitic witchhunts at home. In Poland, the background for anti-Semitic witchhunts and pogroms was the traditional anti-Semitism of the dominant Catholic church. Such anti-Semitism hasn’t disappeared.

As revolutionary Marxists, we do not look to the capitalist state or local authorities to ban Nazi propaganda. Such bans are always primarily directed against the workers movement. Thus we opposed the recent legal ban of media featuring “fascist, communist or other totalitarian symbolism”—a ban that lasted from 8 June 2010 to 3 August 2011 (see “Down With Anti-Communist Law in Poland!” WV No. 958, 7 May 2010). It is in the interest of the working class to act against Nazi provocations, since the ultimate target of fascist terror is the organized working class. What is needed are mobilizations of organized workers leading all the oppressed minorities—Jews, Roma, homosexuals—and other intended victims of Nazi terror. We need to build Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties to lead future October Revolutions that would overturn the genocidal capitalist order, build a new society of workers democracy based on a planned economy and fully avenge the victims of the Nazi Holocaust in Germany, Poland and other countries. *Down with the anti-Semitic provocation of “praying Hitler” in Warsaw!* ■

ILWU...

(continued from page 3)

sure: playing by the bosses’ laws is a losing game. The whole reason these laws exist is to outlaw labor from mobilizing its social power based on its collective strength to stop the flow of goods and shut down production. But this truth is obfuscated by the bureaucrats. Instead, they have whipped up fear that if the union goes on strike, the law would permit the companies to permanently hire the scabs. By these lights, it is better to accept a company lockout that supposedly precludes such a union-busting outcome. “It’s not the bosses’ laws, but the relative strength and determination of the opposing forces that decide who wins and who loses in any strike, as in any conflict. By working the rejected contract terms, the ILWU is creating ‘facts on the ground’ that will be harder to reverse.”

The whole aim of the Vancouver lockout is to force the union to sign on to the concessions in that contract or be busted. Indeed, the spokesman for the Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers Association is

gloating that the number of managers and other scabs used to work the first ship shows that the task can be done with fewer workers than the longshore union dispatched under their previous contract. Now the ILWU International is pleading with the grain bosses to return to the bargaining table. A letter from Leal Sundet, co-chair of the union’s grain negotiating team, pointed to the TEMCO agreement as evidence of “the union’s commitment to reaching a deal that maintains American industry standards and working conditions while addressing the concerns that elevator operators bring to the table.”

ILWU International president Robert McElrath (whose home local is Local 4) promoted the union’s deal with TEMCO as having been “achieved because American companies, farmers and workers recognize a common interest in our country’s resources and economic well being. That common interest is not reflected in the grain companies that have unilaterally implemented a contract that under-

mines American working standards at their competing facilities.” The ILWU tops’ chauvinist appeals to the union’s “common interests” with the U.S.-based grain bosses against their foreign-owned competitors are deadly dangerous for workers. Such expressions of red-white-and-blue patriotism shackle the interests of the union to the profitability of American imperialism and are poison to the struggle of workers around the globe against their common class enemies.

International labor solidarity is especially vital to longshore workers, whose very jobs depend on world trade. A January press release from the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) reported on the solidarity with the ILWU expressed by members of the Japanese Seamen’s Union crewing a grain ship at the United Grain terminal in Vancouver: “As union members themselves, who are among 4.5 million workers united as affiliates of the ITF, they knew the players involved as well as the high stakes for workers.” Imagine if the Japanese Seamen’s Union had declared

that its interests lay in defending the Mitsui owners of United Grain in order to advance the “economic well being” of Japanese imperialism!

The world’s grain supply is controlled by a handful of agribusiness giants, including U.S.-based TEMCO. Their profits are secured through driving up food prices worldwide at the human cost of the starvation and death of millions across the globe. At home, they are purchased through jacking up the exploitation of the working class, which is why all of the grain companies are out to break the back of the ILWU. What the grain bosses get away with will set the stage for the shipping bosses of the Pacific Maritime Association, whose contract with the ILWU is up in 2014.

Two roads lie before the ILWU. There is the bureaucrats’ promotion of the lie of a partnership between labor and capital, which has seriously undermined the union’s strength and now threatens its potential destruction as an industrial union. Or there is the class-struggle road of mobilizing the power of the working class in necessary battles against the capitalist class enemy. It is in the crucible of such struggle that a new leadership of the unions will be forged. This is not simply a question of militancy but of a leadership that will arm the working class with a revolutionary understanding of the nature of capitalist society and of its own power and historic interests as a class fighting for itself and all the oppressed. That struggle requires a political expression—a revolutionary workers party whose purpose is not simply to defend the working class against the scourge of its own devastation but to rid the planet of the source of that devastation, capitalism itself, and the state power that preserves it. ■

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Wednesday, March 13, 7:30 p.m.

– FORUM –

**Forty Years Since Roe v. Wade
Capitalism’s War on
Women’s Rights
For Women’s Liberation Through
Socialist Revolution!**

San Francisco State University
HSS Building, Room 304
(near corner of 19th Ave. & Holloway Ave.)

Information: (510) 839-0851
sybayarea@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK

Tuesday, March 19, 7 p.m.

**The Russian Revolution
of 1917:
From the February
Revolution to the July Days**

CCNY, NAC Room 1/211
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.

Information and readings:
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

TORONTO

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

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

University of Toronto
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2115
100 St. George Street

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

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

Mexico...

(continued from page 12)

Porfirio Díaz, ousted by the Mexican Revolution in 1911]. The state intends to use brutal repression to maintain “order” in the face of the misery caused by “labor deregulation,” the “opening up of the economy” and urban and rural poverty. To make this even clearer, Peña Nieto announced in December that a central feature of his new security strategy is the creation of a national gendarmerie. According to Spanish newspaper *El País* (18 December 2012), this will be “modeled on the Spanish Guardia Civil,” the brutal militarized police dating from the Franco dictatorship that is regularly deployed against demonstrators, leftists, unionists and Basque and Catalan nationalists. Although Peña Nieto hypocritically claims that, at some unknown time in the future, he will withdraw the army from the streets, his new “strategy” boils down to permanent, large-scale militarization and renewed repression against the populace as a whole, directed in particular against social and union activists.

As we have stressed in the past, the aim of the Mexican rulers’ “war on drugs” is to strengthen the repressive powers of the capitalist state. We call for the decriminalization of drugs. Decriminalization would

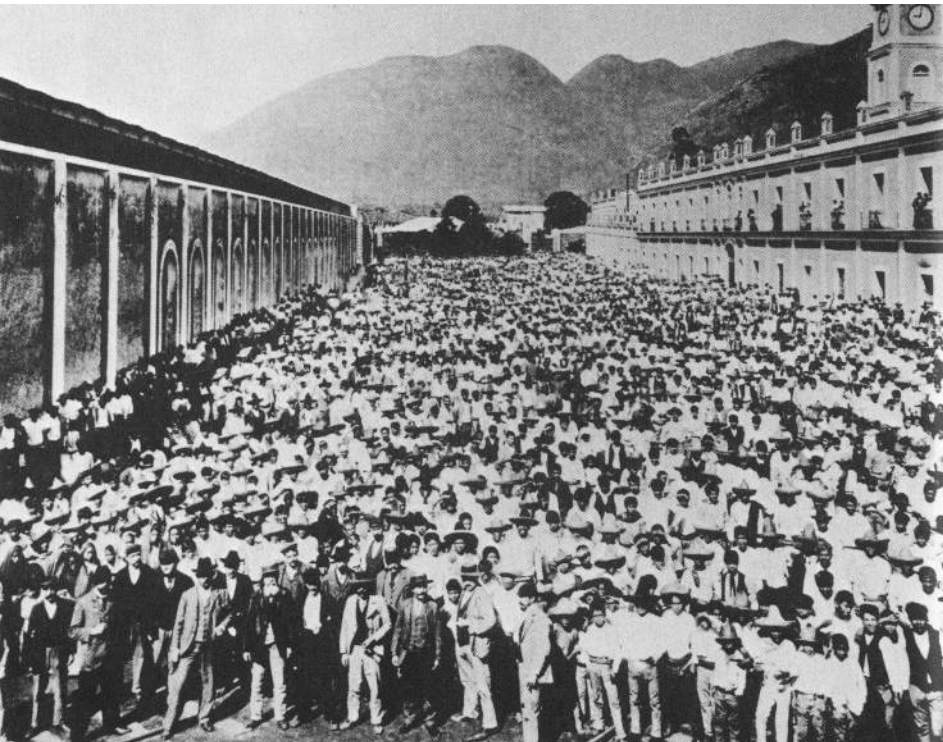
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reduce crime and other social pathologies associated with drug trafficking by eliminating the enormous profits that stem from its illegal and underground nature. We also oppose measures by the bourgeois state to restrict or forbid people from bearing arms, which impinges on their rights and guarantees that criminals and the state maintain a monopoly on weapons (see “Bourgeois Hypocrisy and Gun Control Schemes,” WV No. 1015, 11 January).

The Mexican capitalists and their government are bent on making workers pay the price for the international economic crisis. In carrying out their new campaign, the bosses feel encouraged by the lack of response from the powerful unions in the country, whose leaders tail either the PRI, the PRD or, more recently, Morena [Movement for National Regeneration, led by former PRD presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as AMLO]. All of these are bourgeois parties. From the murderous repression of the popular movement in Oaxaca in 2006 to the destruction of the SME [electrical workers union] in 2009 and the 2012 labor reform, the pro-PRD union tops, not to mention their pro-PRI counterparts and the SNTE, essentially have not lifted a finger to stop the attacks that have destroyed what remained of labor’s gains.

Down With the “Education Reform”!

A new target of the bosses’ offensive, this time in the form of “education reform,” is the SNTE—the biggest union in Latin America, with over a million members. By broadening the provisions of the “Alliance for Quality Education” signed by the gov-

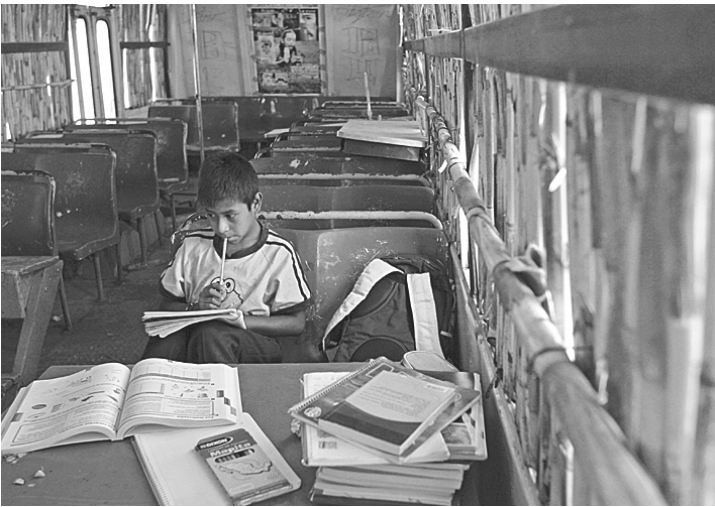


Brown Brothers

ernment and the SNTE leadership itself in 2008, the current reform would impose continual evaluations of teachers. It would do away with permanent positions by linking employment and promotion of teachers to those evaluations and would also eliminate union control over hiring.

Under capitalism, education is based on the needs of the ruling class and reflects the racist and class-divided nature of society. The bourgeois rulers allocate resources to education only to the extent that this serves their purpose in training the future technical, administrative and ideological personnel needed to run capitalist society. Beyond that, they couldn’t care less about the education of the masses of exploited and oppressed people, particularly poor and indigenous peasants.

Mexican boy sits in an old bus converted to a schoolroom in village of Pueblo Nuevo, Oaxaca, September 2009.



Reuters

While urban public schools present a pitiful image, rural ones are much worse. Given the lack of supplies, furniture and often even buildings, it is not uncommon for teachers to give classes to malnourished children in the open air. As far as indigenous children and teenagers go, even when their teachers speak their language, books in languages other than Spanish are almost nonexistent. For the right of indigenous peoples to receive education in their own languages! No privileges for any language! As communists, we fight for free, quality education for *all*—in the cities and the countryside. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to put

an end to the bourgeois system of exploitation—dedicated to enriching a handful of capitalists—through a socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie and establishes a collectivized, planned economy to satisfy the needs of the population. It is typical of the bourgeoisie to blame the workers for the shortcomings of public services when the fundamental problem is lack of resources. The lie goes: If they really cared about what they do and about the well-being of the population, nurses, for example, would somehow overcome the shortage of beds, supplies and medicines. Similarly, it is claimed that if a teacher really wanted to teach, he or she could do so without desks, books or other supplies, let alone computers. This comes on top of a propaganda campaign launched

by the government and the bourgeoisie to depict SNTE teachers as a “privileged” group on account of the few benefits that they still enjoy. Like many others, the CNN Expansión (11 September 2012) Web site concludes: “Teachers Wages Exhaust Budget.” This is simply an insult to teachers at public elementary and junior high schools, who start off with a salary of about 8,000 pesos [\$600] a month *if they have a permanent position*—that’s what they call “privileged.” Without a permanent position, teachers earn a starvation salary depending on the hours they teach. The bourgeois nationalists of the PRD and Morena have no qualms about laying bare the true purpose of the “education reform.” Jesús Zambrano, leader of the PRD—a party that supports the “reform”—claimed that the union “clique” became “the main obstacle to improving the quality of education and an obstacle to democratic development in general and inside the unions in particular.” Meanwhile, Morena, while purporting to oppose the reform, complains that it is not forceful enough against the union. Martí Batres, a Morena leader, ranted in December that the reform was nothing more than a media “trick” to give the impression of attacking the union leadership. According to him, “the SNTE is not affected by the education reform, because it doesn’t touch their leadership or their financing” (Aristegui Noticias Web site, undated). We oppose this reform as an attack on the SNTE, on the gains obtained by



Charles Reginald

1907 strike by Río Blanco textile workers. Four years later, dictator Porfirio Díaz (above) was overthrown during opening phase of Mexican Revolution.

the teachers and on free public education. [Now-deposed SNTE leader] Elba Esther Gordillo, a/k/a “La Maestra,” is accustomed to working hand in hand with the capitalist state to carry out murderous attacks against dissident CNTE teachers, such as when she supported the fierce repression in 2006 against Section [Local] 22 in Oaxaca. She now finds herself in the crosshairs of her former allies [see article on page 12]. What must be clear, however, is that the intervention of the capitalist state in the unions has nothing to do with “democratization.” Its purpose is to further tie up the unions, if not to destroy them outright, and wipe away any remaining union benefits. The workers movement must clean its own house: the brutal and groveling pro-boss bureaucracy led by “La Maestra” must be expelled from the union leadership by the organized teachers themselves.

Historically, teachers have been very militant, constituting an important link between the urban proletariat and the peasantry. However, despite being organized in unions that are part of the workers movement, teachers do not have a direct relationship to the means of production and thus lack social power. (Like other professionals they are part of the intelligentsia, a sector of the petty bourgeoisie.) Teachers need the concrete solidarity of the sections of the industrial proletariat that do have social weight. The working class must flex its muscles against the bosses’ new attacks, against the education and labor reforms.

Like the rest of the supposedly “independent” unions, the dissident teachers organized in the CNTE, which for decades has fought to “democratize” the SNTE in opposition to the venal national leadership, have always been subordinated to the PRD/Morena. These politics can only lead to defeat and never to true union democracy. It is revealing that the leadership of the SNTE and the

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CNTE (as well as Morena) are taking the same actions to oppose the “education reform”: appealing to the capitalist courts for protection against the government. In fact, the CNTE accused the SNTE leadership of “ripping off” their strategies and slogans” (*La Jornada*, 12 January). To unleash the social power of the working class it is necessary to fight for a class-struggle union leadership. The starting point is fighting for the political independence of the workers movement, which in the concrete means breaking from bourgeois nationalism and any illusions in the PRD, AMLO and Morena.

Oil, Populism and Imperialism

The new “structural reforms” explicitly aim at further opening up the economy for the imperialists, particularly the U.S. imperialists, who are the true masters of the weak Mexican bourgeoisie. The main offering is PEMEX, the core of what remains of nationalized industry and the main source of wealth in the country. Just as Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution, defended the expropriation of U.S. and British oil companies [in Mexico] in 1938, we defend the nationalized energy industry as a measure of self-defense on the part of semicolonial Mexico against imperialism.

Bourgeois populists such as AMLO promote the now widespread notion that PEMEX belongs to “the people” or “the nation.” The truth is that PEMEX really belongs to the bourgeoisie, and the Mexican capitalists are divided on how to better profit from the enormous wealth produced by oil. Regardless of what they do with PEMEX, regardless of who rules and under what program, capitalist Mexico will remain a backward oil producer that is subordinated to imperialism and subject to market crises and the wild fluctuation of oil prices.

In all countries of belated capitalist development, the national bourgeoisies are utterly incapable of breaking with imperialism. Unlike populism and neoliberalism, imperialism is *not* a disposable, conjunctural policy but a global system of exploitation and oppression. This system is dominated by large financial monopolies, backed by the armies and fleets of their respective nation-states, which long ago divided up the world between them and today keep the backward countries in their grip. Within the framework of capitalism, it is impossible to reach a level of industrial development comparable to that of advanced countries. In *The Permanent Revolution* [1930], Leon Trotsky explained:

“With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”

Upon taking power, the proletariat can-

not stop at the democratic tasks but must immediately continue with the socialist tasks (expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class, i.e., collectivization and economic planning) and fight for the international extension of the revolution. This is the only way to guarantee that the heartfelt democratic aspirations of the masses, such as national emancipation, political democracy and agrarian revolution, are fulfilled. *For a workers and peasants government!*

Zapatismo vs. Permanent Revolution

The return of the PRI to the presidential residence sparked the largest EZLN [Zapatista] mobilization since this movement burst onto the scene in 1994. The indigenous Zapatista peasants marched in silence through several towns of Chiapas on December 21, simply to show that they are still there. For 19 years, the Zapatistas have endured government attacks as they

much of the criticism directed at the EZLN from its former supporters has come from the right (see *Espartaco* No. 25, Spring 2006). In truth, the EZLN simply offers a peasant variant of the bourgeois populism promoted by the PRD/Morena. The most prominent demand in the “Sixth Declaration” was for a new constitution that “recognizes the rights and liberties of the people and defends the weak before the powerful” and that would be imposed by a “civilian, peaceful movement.”

It is utopian to think that the capitalist regime can be reformed to serve the exploited and the oppressed, whether through new legislation or by any other means. As we wrote then, in spite of its criticism of the PRD (and now Morena), the Zapatista movement is “a politically amorphous petty-bourgeois movement whose purpose is to pressure the nationalist bourgeoisie. It leads those breaking from the PRD to the left to remain within



December 21: Protesters in Chiapas march with EZLN and Mexican flags in commemoration of massacre of Zapatista villagers.

struggle against rural poverty and racist, anti-indigenous oppression. We defend the EZLN against capitalist state repression while pointing out that this petty-bourgeois peasant organization is incapable of offering a solution to the demands of the peasantry and the indigenous population. After several years of silence, “Subcomandante” Marcos issued new communiqués some days after the demonstration. In one of them, the EZLN correctly denounces the repression carried out by all the bourgeois parties. At the same time, the communiqué demands compliance with the “San Andrés Accords” [1996 “autonomy” agreement between EZLN and the government], promises to build “the necessary bridges towards social movements” and reaffirms its 2006 “Sixth Declaration.”

The EZLN lost a substantial portion of its support in 2006 after it distanced itself from the PRD, at a time when AMLO’s popularity was at its peak. Ever since,

the limits of bourgeois politics” (see “Zapatista ‘Sixth Declaration’: Petty-Bourgeois Populism,” *WV* No. 872, 9 June 2006).

The peasantry is a heterogeneous, petty-bourgeois stratum. Poor peasants are reduced to producing for their own consumption and aspire to have their own plot of land. Peasants who own small farms compete among themselves to place their produce on the market. The objective interests of the peasantry as a social stratum reside in private property of land. Because of these characteristics, the peasantry—and the petty bourgeoisie as a whole—is incapable of formulating its own revolutionary program. It always trails behind one of the two fundamental classes in capitalist society: the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. In the absence of a revolutionary workers party waging a struggle for power, peasant struggle today is limited to the framework of capitalism.

After 19 years, the politics of the Zapatistas confirm and reinforce this Marx-

ist analysis. “Subcomandante” Marcos’s new communiqué makes assertions such as, “Our standard of living is higher than that of the indigenous communities that support the governments in office and who receive handouts that they squander on alcohol and useless items.” This is a grotesque and moralistic statement that stigmatizes, at least by default, the non-Zapatista indigenous communities (those who fail to appreciate Marcos’s charm) as government acolytes, beggars and irresponsible people for wanting to enjoy a few pleasures, perhaps a drink.

Marcos also writes about how Zapatista housing “improves things without damaging nature by imposing roads alien to it.” The idealization of isolated and technologically backward agrarian communities may be popular among a sector of the “green” petty bourgeoisie that does not have to endure the daily consequences. But the poor peasants and the exploited and oppressed of the world have no interest in adopting that perspective. We fight against the isolation of the countryside and for a world where everyone can benefit from advances in technology, culture and all other endeavors.

Furthermore, the demand for autonomy for indigenous communities is utopian under capitalism, as it would imply a long-term agreement between the indigenous communities and the capitalist government. The proposed autonomous regions, with limited rights over the land, would frequently find themselves at odds with landowners and potentially with industrial corporations. This is particularly the case in Chiapas, which has 30 percent of Mexico’s scarce water supply, 47 percent of its natural gas reserves and 21 percent of its oil. Only a workers and peasants government—the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry—can provide and guarantee true autonomy for the indigenous communities as part of a conscious and planned effort to eliminate the age-old rural destitution and the divide between the countryside and the city.

As communists, we fight for the complete eradication of poverty and for a society based on generalized abundance. Only a socialist revolution and its international extension can bring about *this* perspective, by establishing an international planned economy that puts the immense resources and productive forces developed under capitalism at the service of the exploited and oppressed of the world. The working class, because of its relationship to the means of production, is the *only* class with the historic interest and the social power to lead the oppressed masses to that end. We seek to build a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the poor peasantry, but this can only be done under the leadership of the workers’ vanguard organized in a communist party. Thus, our purpose is to build a workers party like that of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, capable of leading the working class in this historic task. ■

Teachers...

(continued from page 12)

For its part, the National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE), the pro-PRD opposition in the SNTE, criticizes the *Elbazo* [the ousting of Gordillo] as too partial. For the CNTE, Gordillo’s jailing is “a ‘settling of scores’ that will have no effect on union transparency and democracy, because in any case the new leader is part of the same clique, which ought to be investigated” (*La Jornada*, 1 March). The CNTE has called for a “megamarch” on March 5 against the imposition of the new bootlicker. But on the other hand, the logic of their statements is to demand *greater* state intervention! Similarly, Artemio Ortiz Hurtado of the National Democratic Executive Committee—another SNTE opposition—speaks of a possible indefinite teachers strike against the imposition of the new leader and against the “education reform,” while at the same time he “takes [Peña Nieto] up on his word” and

demands that the state go after “the entire Gordillo Morales clique”! These union opposition groups thus prove their political bankruptcy and fundamental affinity with the pro-capitalist perspective of the venal, gangster-like leaderships they seek to replace. We oppose such groups’ appeals to the bourgeois courts in their efforts to gain leadership of the unions.

“La Maestra” became SNTE leader by Carlos Salinas’s own appointment, and for over two decades she stood out as a professional gangster and a traitor to the proletariat. But as a union leader, she should be judged by the workers movement. The working class must clean its own house! The struggle for the genuine democratization of the unions is inseparable from the struggle to forge a class-struggle, revolutionary leadership that fights for the historic interests of the proletariat. Workers must forge their own party, a revolutionary party that champions their own interests and those of the oppressed in the struggle to once and for all end the bosses’ regime. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

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

Chicago Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

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

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

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

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Vancouver Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

WORKERS VANGUARD

Repression, Privatizations, Union Busting

“Pact for Mexico”: War on Workers, Poor



Getty

The following article was translated from *Espartaco* No. 37 (February 2013), which is published by the *Grupo Esparquista de México*, section of the *International Communist League*.

While taking the oath as Mexico’s new president in December, Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) proclaimed that one of the priorities of his government would be to “restore peace.” Meanwhile, the repressive forces of the capitalist state that he and the Mexico City government under the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) had mobilized were unleashed against students, workers and peasants protesting his inauguration outside the Congress building and at other locations. Unbridled, the cops beat and arrested people at random in downtown Mexico City. Some 100 people were wounded, 29 of them requiring hospital care. Dozens were arrested,

some accused of “attacks against public order”—a rehash of the draconian “social dissolution” law used for decades by the PRI to quell social struggle. To release those who were arrested, the Mexico City legislative assembly modified the part of the legal code dealing with that offense to “eliminate the aggravating circumstances,” while refusing to abolish the code as requested by the local human rights commission.

As we wrote following the repression in a December 2 leaflet:

“In contrast to the widespread illusions in the possibility of reforming the bourgeois state displayed by [the student-based movement] #YoSoy132 since its inception, we as Marxists understand that the bourgeois state is and will always be an instrument of organized violence. Made up at its core of the police, army, courts and prisons, its purpose is to uphold the rule of the capitalist exploiters, regardless of which party is in charge. The repression launched by the rightist Rajoy gov-



Presidencia de la República

Left: Protest outside inauguration of Enrique Peña Nieto, Mexico City, December 1. Above: Party of the Democratic Revolution, National Action Party and Institutional Revolutionary Party signed “Pact for Mexico” the following day (Peña Nieto is second from left).

ernment in Spain against anti-austerity demonstrators, the killing of 34 striking black miners at the hands of the South African ANC/SACP/COSATU popular-front government last August, and yesterday’s events in Mexico, for example, prove vividly and brutally that the state machinery does not serve the interests of the exploited and the oppressed. It must be destroyed and replaced by a workers state.”

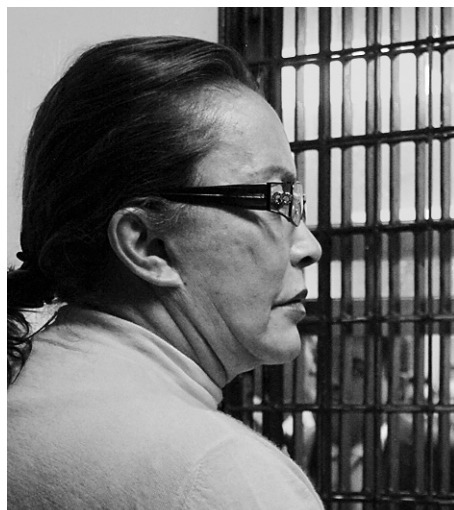
On December 2, a day after the repressive onslaught, the three main bourgeois parties signed the “Pact for Mexico,” a declaration of war against unions and the poor. Among other things, the agreement promotes “competitiveness” (i.e., reducing costs at the expense of the workers), private investment in [state-owned oil company] PEMEX (read: privatization), “education reform” (by destroying the SNTE teachers union) and “strengthening of the Mexican state” (i.e., the repressive apparatus). Adding insult to injury, Peña Nieto

launched a “national crusade against hunger” just as the PRI announced its “firm” determination to tax food and medicine.

The “Pact for Mexico” comes in the wake of the enactment of the reactionary labor “reform.” The previous labor law had imposed mandatory arbitration, collection of union dues directly by the employer and several other measures designed to keep the unions tied to the state and the bosses. While upholding these measures, the new labor law makes firing workers easier, encourages temporary contracts, promotes outsourcing even further and attacks health care and the right to strike. **Down with the labor “reform”! Down with the “Pact for Mexico”!**

There is no doubt what type of “peace” Peña Nieto was referring to in his inaugural speech. It is a new rendition of “Pax Porfiriana” [named after longtime dictator
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Hands Off Mexican Teachers Union!



February 27: SNTE leader Elba Esther Gordillo at hearing in Mexico City prison.

The following is a translation of a leaflet published on March 4 by the *Grupo Esparquista de México*.

On February 26, the Enrique Peña Nieto government arrested Elba Esther Gordillo Morales, “La Maestra” [the teacher], leader “for life” of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE). Peña Nieto’s immediate goal was to eliminate any obstacle to the “education reform,” which he had enacted the previous day and which represents an attack on the teachers union and the gains made by its members [see article on this page]. Having declared her opposition to the “reform,” Gordillo—for decades a trusted ally of every government administration—became an evident target of the new state onslaught. “La Maestra” has been accused of “money laundering” and “organized crime,” and two other SNTE officials, Nora Guada-

lupe Ugarte Ramírez and Isaías Gallardo Chávez, have also been arrested.

Gordillo’s arrest is an attack on the teachers union and the workers movement as a whole, as was the 1989 *Quinazo*, when President Carlos Salinas of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) imprisoned oil workers union leader Joaquín Hernández Galicia, known as “La Quina.” We Spartacists oppose on principle the intervention of the bourgeois state in the affairs of the unions, which are the elementary defense organizations of the working class. State intervention into the unions has nothing to do with “democratizing” them; the bourgeoisie’s goal is to place them ever more firmly under its control. Defending the union movement must include the demand for the **immediate release of Gordillo and all arrested union officials.**

It took the rest of the SNTE national leadership barely a few hours to go from promising Gordillo “loyalty, affection and solidarity” to replacing her and declaring that they were “being born again.” After receiving Peña Nieto’s approval, one Juan Díaz de la Torre was “elected” new SNTE leader. Without wasting any time, he asserted in his inaugural speech that the SNTE will support the “education reform.”

As was to be expected, the main bourgeois parties—PRI, PAN [National Action Party], PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] and Morena [Movement for National Regeneration]—cheered the news of Gordillo’s arrest. Martí Batres, [Andrés Manuel] López Obrador’s sidekick in Morena, demands that [Carlos Romero] Deschamps, leader of the powerful oil workers union, be arrested as well.
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