

Obama Presses for Missile Strikes

No to Imperialist Attack Against Syria!



White House

U.S. Navy
Guided-missile destroyer USS Gravelly, part of fleet deployed to Mediterranean in preparation for U.S. attack against Syria. National Security Staff discusses Syria at White House, August 30.

SEPTEMBER 2—After having signaled that a military assault on Syria was imminent, Barack Obama backtracked two days ago and asked Congress to grant him authorization after it gets back in session on September 9. But the Commander-in-Chief is no less determined to order missile attacks. Obama claims that bombing Syria would be retribution for a poison gas attack on August 21 allegedly carried out by the Syrian bourgeois regime of Bashar al-Assad against his own people. In fact, the projected missile strikes are an ominous assertion of the imperialists' power to brutalize any country whose leaders do not toe the line laid down by Washington. Factoring heavily in the calculations of the White House is Assad's ally Iran, with Secretary of State John Kerry arguing that Tehran would "feel emboldened, in the absence of action [against Syria], to obtain nuclear weapons."

Obama announced the pause in his march to attack after encountering unexpectedly strong opposition in foreign capitals. In Britain, the Conservative Party's David Cameron became the first prime minister in memory to have lost a vote on military action—by some accounts since 1782, when parliament voted to stop fighting against the American colonies' War of Independence. The opposition Labour Party, which under Prime Minister Tony Blair led Britain into wars against Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq, put forward an amendment supporting an attack against Syria under certain conditions (like at least waiting for the UN inspectors' report). The Labour Party amendment failed by an even greater margin than the government motion.

Among the major European powers, that left only France, the former colonial

overseer of Syria, as a likely participant in the U.S.-led assault. Backing the Syrian regime is capitalist Russia, which has provided Assad with sophisticated missile defense technology and vowed to veto any military action proposed under the aegis of the United Nations. In a boost to the U.S., yesterday Saudi Arabia, one of the major backers of the jihadist component of the Syrian opposition, and the United Arab Emirates announced their support for the plan to attack Syria.

Before Obama launched U.S. warplanes to bomb Muammar el-Qaddafi's Libya in 2011, he ostentatiously affirmed the power of the imperial presidency by refusing to seek a vote of approval by Congress. Now, with precious few coalition partners internationally and little popular support in the U.S. for military intervention in Syria, Obama has turned to Congress to share responsibility and provide him some political cover, although the administration has made it clear that it will not be bound by the vote.

The bulk of working people in the U.S., war-weary and squeezed by the years-long economic downturn, do not back an attack on Syria. A sizable section of the capitalist ruling class has its own qualms about getting bogged down in another Near East quagmire. After devastating Iraq, once a cultural center of the region, and butchering its peoples, the U.S. bourgeoisie ended up with a black eye diplomatically and a Shi'ite government in Baghdad that is a close ally of Iran.

The shadow of the war in Iraq, sold on phony reports of Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction," has stoked widespread skepticism about the intelligence claims that the gas attack in the suburbs of Damascus was carried out by the Assad regime. Even U.S. intelligence officials acknowledge that their case is no "slam dunk." Certainly, the imperialists are masters at fabricating provocations when they find it expedient. Recall the 1964 "Gulf of Tonkin incident," a phony

attack on a U.S. warship by North Vietnamese forces cooked up by the Lyndon Johnson administration to provide the pretext for a massive escalation of American forces in Vietnam.

In any case, what motivates the U.S. rulers is not protecting civilians from massacres. They hardly batted an eye last month when the military regime in Egypt that took power in a July coup slaughtered hundreds of protesters. On the home front, the American bourgeoisie has no shortage of blood on its hands, from the gunning down of striking rail workers in 1877 to the 1985 bombing of the largely black MOVE commune.

We do not know who is responsible for the August 21 gas attack. But as Marxists, our stance is not guided by which of the two reactionary forces in the devastating Syrian civil war was behind it. What must be understood is that it is U.S. imperialism that is the greatest danger to the working people and downtrodden of the planet. It is the duty of the proletariat, especially U.S. workers in the belly of the imperialist beast, to stand for the defense of Syria against the impending military attack by the rapacious imperialists. Our call for defense of Syria, a semicolonial country, in the military sense does not imply the least political support to that country's reactionary Alawite-dominated regime. This is in sharp contrast to reformist organizations, such as the Greek Communist Party (KKE), that combine opposition to U.S. military intervention

with political support to Assad. Nor do we support the rebels—who are largely Sunni-fundamentalist—as does much of the left in the imperialist centers.

An imperialist missile attack against Syrian military sites would necessarily strengthen the insurgents and further inflame communal tensions. The Syrian civil war is increasingly escalating into a Near East-wide Sunni versus Shi'ite communal war extending from Syria to Lebanon and Iraq. In Iraq, Sunni forces linked to Al Qaeda have stepped up bombings in Shi'ite neighborhoods, threatening a return to the orgy of sectarian bloodshed that engulfed the country in 2006-07. Lebanon is also suffering its worst sectarian violence in years, including car bombings in Beirut suburbs controlled by the Shi'ite Hezbollah, which has troops in Syria fighting on behalf of Assad. Meanwhile, since mid July rebel forces have been carrying out "ethnic cleansing" of Kurds in north-east Syria.

The spreading communal violence is being seized upon as a pretext for further U.S. military buildup in this oil-rich region. In June, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, revealed that top U.S. commanders were seeking permission from Iraq and Lebanon to deploy troops in those countries. This would be in addition to the U.S. Patriot missile batteries and fighter planes stationed in Jordan and Turkey, the two British military bases in Cyprus and the massive U.S.

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Partisan Defense Committee

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

Sentenced to 35 Years

Free Chelsea Manning!

Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning was sentenced by a military judge at the end of her court martial on August 21 to 35 years in prison with a dishonorable discharge for giving more than 700,000 classified military documents, diplomatic cables and war footage to WikiLeaks. After over three years of pretrial detention, which included torture in solitary confinement, she has been demoted and is now incarcerated in the military's maximum-security prison at Leavenworth undergoing "the indoctrination process," according to Manning's lawyer, David Coombs, during which all contact with the outside world is cut off. The persecution of Manning is a cornerstone of the Obama administration's campaign against whistle-blowers and significantly its first conviction under the 1917 Espionage Act. It serves as a warning of what the government has in store for WikiLeaks' Julian Assange and Edward Snowden for publicizing details of U.S. war atrocities and massive routine domestic spying.

In a statement to Obama requesting a presidential pardon, Manning referenced

the crimes of U.S. imperialism in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo, and continued: "Our nation has had similar dark moments for the virtues of democracy—the Trail of Tears, the Dred Scott decision, McCarthyism, the Japanese-American internment camps—to name a few. I am confident that many of our actions since 9/11 will one day be viewed in a similar light." Manning released the classified documents in order to expose inhumanity and torture. In so doing, Manning performed a service to the working class internationally in helping lift the veil on U.S. imperialist barbarity.

The next day, Manning issued another brave statement: "I want everyone to know the real me. I am Chelsea Manning. I am a female. Given the way that I feel, and have felt since childhood, I want to begin hormone therapy as soon as possible. I hope that you will support me in this transition." Despite court rulings that have upheld transgender prisoners' constitutional rights to receive hormone therapy, the Army immediately announced that none would be forthcoming for Manning

in the all-male Leavenworth penitentiary. Coombs said that he will "do everything in my power" to make sure the Army provides quality care and medication, a fight that the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee fully support.

Initially, most of the U.S. media refused to accept Manning's clear request that she be referred to by her name Chelsea and the female pronoun. Since then, the *New York Times*, NPR and others have changed their policy to conform to Manning's wishes. The abiding prudery of some bourgeois news outlets is but the "polite" end of the spectrum of hatred faced by transgender peo-

ple in this bigoted, brutal capitalist society, where transgenders are frequently targets of violent, sometimes murderous, attack.

To help alleviate the isolation of imprisonment, write to Chelsea Manning. For now, the envelope should be addressed to PVT Bradley Manning, 89289, 1300 N. Warehouse Road, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2304. The Partisan Defense Committee has donated to Chelsea Manning's defense and encourages others to do the same. Send checks or money orders earmarked "Manning defense" and payable to: The Courage to Resist, 484 Lake Park Avenue #41, Oakland, CA 94610. ■

Medical Release Denied

Free Lynne Stewart!

Lynne Stewart, 73 years old and terminally ill with Stage IV breast cancer, was again denied medical release from prison on August 9. Judge John G. Koeltl turned down her latest request on the grounds that the Federal Bureau of Prisons must first make a motion in favor of such a release. This ruling throws the case back to the very prison authorities carrying out the vendetta against this outspoken leftist lawyer with a history of defending radicals, black militants and the poor. Federal prison director, Charles E. Samuels Jr., refused to release Stewart last June, falsely and vindictively citing an improvement in her health! Stewart, whose cancer has metastasized to her lungs, bones, lymph nodes and shoulder, is facing death within the prison walls if she is not released soon.

In a 2005 "war on terror" show trial, Stewart was framed up and convicted for giving material support to terrorism when representing Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist cleric Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman. The alleged "material support" was to communicate her client's views to Reuters news service. This verdict gave the government a green light to prosecute lawyers for the alleged crimes of their clients and trampled on the basic right to counsel and free speech.

Her Arabic translator Mohamed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar were

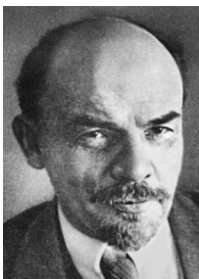
also convicted. In 2010, at the instigation of the Obama administration, a federal appeals court instructed Judge Koeltl to re-examine Stewart's sentence. Appearing his superiors, he upped the original 28-month sentence to ten years, making it in effect a death sentence for Stewart, who was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer. Despite her situation, Stewart remains unbroken and unapologetic and continues to fight for her release.

On August 12, Attorney General Eric Holder announced a new policy for "compassionate release" due to the financial strain of caring for the growing number of elderly, infirm prisoners in the federal system. But the bourgeoisie has a particular hatred for political prisoners who have taken up the cause of the oppressed, and there is no reason to assume Stewart will be included among those who might be deemed to "pose no danger" to society. We continue to fight for Lynne Stewart's freedom and urge our readers to write her, donate to the defense fund and sign the petition that can be found at lynnestewart.org. Contributions to her legal defense can be sent to: Lynne Stewart Organization, 1070 Dean St., Brooklyn, NY 11216. Letters can be sent to: Lynne Stewart #53504-054, Federal Medical Center, Carswell, PO Box 27137, Fort Worth, TX 76127. **Free Lynne Stewart now!** ■



Imperialism and War

The looming U.S. attack on neocolonial Syria is but the latest example of the predatory wars through which the imperialist powers maintain their system of brutal exploitation and oppression the world over. The drive for war under imperialism was eloquently explained in 1936 by then-Trotskyist James Burnham (under the pseudonym John West).



TROTSKY

The truth of the matter is this: In the stage of imperialism, capitalist society is continuously at war. This is of the essence of imperialism. It is not a question of one war starting, then stopping, to be followed in a decade or two by a new war. It is war all the time, changing only in the form it takes, in the degree of violence.

Conflict at the "economic level" continues without interruption: economic struggles for sources of raw material, for new markets, for new fields of exploitation; tariff and exchange battles; competition for shipping and loans; exploration to discover new mines, oil wells, land for rubber and coffee and cotton plantations; and all the rest.

But the conflict can never remain at the purely economic level. The stakes are too high—failure at the economic level means the destruction of the defeated economic group. Therefore, the finance-capitalists must utilize constantly their political servants—the governments of their respective countries. And the governments are not slow to answer. They build up their military and naval armaments to almost unbelievable heights. They are ever ready to unseat a Central American government, threaten a native prince, wipe out "red bandits," stop or start a revolution, send a flotilla of warships or a regiment of marines, resent an "insult to the flag," if necessary set two countries—Bolivia and Paraguay, for example—flying at each other's throats to settle the dispute of Standard Oil and Shell over rights to an oil field. At the beck and call of finance-capital, the government, with the guns and cruisers and airplanes, snaps quickly to attention. That, indeed, is what the governments are for....

The moral, religious, racial and ideological disguises that war wears must not be allowed to hide the fundamental conflicts which are the true source of modern war. The general conclusion is inescapable: Modern war is neither accidental nor due to the evil of human nature nor decreed by God. War is of the very essence of imperialist-capitalism, as much a part of capitalism as wage labor. To speak of capitalism without war is like speaking of a human being without lungs. The fate of one is inextricably bound to the fate of the other.

—"John West" (James Burnham), *War and the Workers* (1936)

LENIN

CORRECTION

WV No. 1028 (9 August) reprinted a Spartacist League leaflet on the George Zimmerman verdict, "There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts!" noting that we had made a factual correction without stating what it was. The correction was to the leaflet's description of Dred

Scott as a fugitive slave. Though enslaved at the time of the notorious 1857 Supreme Court decision, Dred Scott was never a fugitive. The leaflet also stated that the jury in the Zimmerman trial had not a single black person on it, as was widely reported at the time. Subsequently, one of the jurors identified herself to the press as a black Hispanic.

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Stop and Frisk, War on Drugs

Liberal Illusions and

Racist Law and Order

On August 12, U.S. District Court judge Shira Scheindlin in Manhattan ruled that the NYPD's practice of routinely stopping and frisking blacks and Latinos was unconstitutional. Since 2004, the cops have made over 4.5 million such stops, under what Scheindlin called a "policy of indirect racial profiling." The same day, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, motivated by the need to reduce the enormous financial costs of mass incarceration, announced proposals to bypass the draconian mandatory minimum sentences for federal drug charges. These two pronouncements were hailed in the bourgeois press as signaling a sea change in longstanding "tough on crime" policies—code for targeting black people who suffer daily brutalization and humiliation by the racist cops and courts. What is in the offing is nothing of the sort.

Scheindlin ordered a federal monitor to oversee police reforms, such as putting body cameras on some cops. In an August 12 editorial, the *New York Times* gushed that Scheindlin "upheld the bed-rock principle of individual liberty." Similarly effusive was the reformist Workers World Party in its article "NYC 'Stop and Frisk' Gets Court Slapdown" (13 August). Endorsing the view that the ruling "was just the beginning of a long struggle for real change," Workers World conveyed its own fatuous optimism through the words of the executive director of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), which brought the lawsuit. The CCR head declared: "This administration has created bike lanes throughout the city and is waging a major campaign to ban big sodas. If they can put that effort into bike lanes and big sodas, then they can make necessary changes to stop the unconstitutional harassment of millions of New Yorkers."

More grounded in reality was a *New York Times* (14 August) op-ed piece titled "Racial Profiling Lives On" by Devin Carbado, Cheryl Harris and Kimberle Williams Crenshaw. The authors pointed out that Scheindlin's decision "does nothing

to disrupt the authority the Supreme Court has given police officers to target African-Americans and Latinos with little or no basis." This authority gives the cops "frighteningly wide discretion to follow, stop, question, frisk and employ excessive force against African-Americans and Latinos who have shown virtually no indication of wrongdoing."

In our article "Stop-and-Frisk Trial and Bogus Police 'Reform'" (WV No. 1022, 19 April), we noted that if the judge

across the country—from civilian review boards to federal oversight—Scheindlin's ruling, along with similar measures adopted by the New York City Council, will serve only to refurbish the cops' image, making the thugs in blue more effective in carrying out their dirty work. The cold, hard fact is that the cops—white, black or Latino—harass, terrorize and brutalize the ghettos and barrios because as the enforcers of racist "law and order" that is their job. So, for example,



WV Photo

Spartacist banner cut against Democratic Party cheerleading at Al Sharpton's August 24 commemoration of 1963 March on Washington, D.C.

"rules for the cops, they will no doubt feel more emboldened as they mete out their daily dose of racist brutality. If she rules against the NYPD, stripping this practice of its legal license, the cops will no doubt move to repackaging their systematic abuse." Indeed, Scheindlin explicitly stated she was "not ordering an end to the practice of stop-and-frisk." Even so, the city is appealing the ruling, with Mayor Michael Bloomberg haughtily declaring: "You're not going to see any change in tactics overnight."

The billionaire Bloomberg had good reason to make this promise. As has been the case with countless police "reforms"

NYC police commissioner Ray Kelly—who rolled out stop-and-frisk to "instill fear" in black and Latino youth—was praised as an "outstanding" candidate to head the Department of Homeland Security by President Obama.

Rivaling the rose-colored view of a kinder, gentler NYPD was the illusion that Holder's announcement would make more than an insignificant dent in the mass imprisonment of blacks and Latinos. In that August 12 speech, the first black attorney general talked up how "too many Americans go to too many prisons for far too long" while also praising the Obama administration's efforts to build

up the police forces that send them there. Holder was subsequently given a place of honor at the March on Washington commemoration, which attracted tens of thousands of black people who are fed up with the injustice that defines their daily lives, most recently highlighted in the acquittal of the racist vigilante who blew away Trayvon Martin. From the speakers' platform, Holder—the top cop overseeing the entire apparatus of racist capitalist injustice—addressed the families and friends of his many victims.

It is conceivable that Holder's plan might mitigate the numbers sent to do hard time for drug "crimes," although its beneficiaries will overwhelmingly *not* be black people. All Holder did was direct federal prosecutors to omit the weight of drugs involved when drafting an indictment. This information will still be considered by U.S. attorneys when deciding *who* to prosecute and could be placed in evidence at trial. It also will be available to judges during sentencing.

Holder's proposal is also cheap given that most prosecutions take place in state courts, over whose prosecutors Holder & Co. have no authority. In federal prosecutions, it would apply only to "certain" drug offenders who have no ties to large-scale organizations, gangs or cartels and no significant criminal history. For instance, the case cannot "involve violence," the use of a weapon or sales to minors.

Branding blacks and Latinos for having "gang" connections is second nature to prosecutors, at both the federal and state levels. Thanks to the "war on drugs," many minority youth are already saddled with a criminal history. Furthermore, the judges—like the one in Florida who did everything possible to make sure Trayvon Martin's killer walked free—will no doubt find fewer occasions for leniency for blacks and Latinos than for white people facing similar charges. If anything, Holder's directive will widen the racial disparity in incarceration.

While we favor any measures mitigating the drug laws, no amount of tinkering will change their reactionary nature or racist enforcement. We call for the decriminalization of drugs, just as we call for abolishing all other laws against victimless "crimes." This or that measure may help decelerate but won't stop the disproportionate imprisonment of blacks. With black oppression ingrained in American capitalism, racist cop terror and the vast numbers warehoused in prison will continue to be the grim reality until the multiracial working class takes power and sweeps the entire apparatus of capitalist state repression into the dustbin of history. ■

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Dr. Henry Morgentaler, 1923-2013

Heroic Fighter for Abortion Rights

The following article originally appeared in *Spartacist Canada* No. 178 (Fall 2013), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste.

Dr. Henry Morgentaler died in Toronto on May 29 at the age of 90. For more than 40 years, he was at the centre of the struggle for abortion rights in Canada. A tenacious fighter and a humane and compassionate man, he repeatedly risked his freedom, security and even his life in this

SPARTACIST CANADA

struggle. In the early 1970s he was subjected to six years of trials despite three jury acquittals, and spent ten months in prison, suffering a heart attack after being thrown into solitary confinement. In 1983, police raided his clinics and he was again dragged through the courts for defying Canada's reactionary abortion laws. Again, no jury would convict him.

Morgentaler's greatest legal victory was in the Supreme Court of Canada in 1988. As a result, Canada today has no laws restricting abortion rights. Yet a patchwork of obstacles and regulations, including too few doctors and inadequate medical facilities, mean that many women lack access to this medical procedure. Morgentaler himself fought for 20 years against obstructionist provincial governments that refused to fund abortions or tried to bar him from setting up clinics. In New Brunswick, a woman needs the consent of two doctors for a publicly funded abortion. In Prince Edward Island, one cannot get an abortion at all. In Yukon and Nunavut, abortions are not performed after 12 weeks, hitting Native women harshly.

Morgentaler performed tens of thousands of abortions, and many of his patients sought to express their gratitude, for he had quite literally saved their lives. But his defiance of Canada's abortion laws also tapped into a seemingly bottomless well of anti-woman bigotry, often laced with anti-Semitism. Abortion is socially explosive because, in giving women control over their fertility, it undermines the institution of the family, a key instrument for the oppression of women. Thus the right to free abortion on demand is inseparable from the broader struggle for the emancipation of women.

From the Lodz Ghetto to the Auschwitz Death Camp

Henry Morgentaler's story began in Lodz, Poland where he was born in 1923, the son of ardent Jewish socialists. Poland was (and remains) overwhelmingly Catholic. Its deeply rooted anti-Semitism exploded in the mid 1930s as Jewish businesses were boycotted and Jews were barred from jobs in the civil service, in public schools and many other places. A wave of pogromist violence between 1935 and 1939 was instigated by reactionary political parties, the clergy, landowners, the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie, leaving many hundreds dead and well over 1,000 injured. As Morgentaler told his biographer Eleanor Wright Pelrine:

"Jews were the Christ killers, and Poles were vicious and virulent in their anti-Semitism, largely on a religious basis. There were other factors, of course. Jews were used as scapegoats; they were resented for their presumed economic power and almost everything else. An anti-Semite could use any argument he liked. There was a large Jewish proletariat, a lot of poor Jews in Poland, and on the one hand the anti-Semites damned Jews as the big capitalists, and on the other as revolutionaries trying to overthrow the system."

—Morgentaler: *The Doctor Who Couldn't Turn Away* (1975)

Henry's father Josef was a well-known



Montreal Gazette

Toronto, November 1984: Jubilant doctors Robert Scott (left) and Henry Morgentaler (center) with defense lawyer Morris Manning after jury acquittal.

and respected trade unionist and member of the Jewish Socialist Labour Bund. An early target for the Nazi stormtroopers, Josef Morgentaler was arrested and tortured just weeks after the 1 September 1939 German invasion of Poland. He died in a concentration camp at the hands of the Nazis. Jews in the Lodz ghetto, which included Henry, his brother Mumek (Mike) and mother Golda, endured starvation and forced labour. When the Nazis liquidated the ghetto in 1944, the Morgentalers were shipped to Auschwitz along with many others. Near the end of the war, the brothers were sent to Dachau. Against all odds, they survived.

Postwar Canada and Social Struggles in Quebec

After the war, Henry made his way to Belgium where he studied medicine. However, he could not practice there, and he and his wife Eva, also a survivor of the death camps, managed to get to Canada in early 1950. Anti-Semitism was endemic in the Canadian ruling class. Liberal prime minister Mackenzie King had effusively praised Adolf Hitler in 1937 and his government slammed the doors to desperate Jews fleeing the Nazi Holocaust. Between 1933 and 1945, Canada took in fewer Jewish refugees than any other imperialist power: not even 5,000.

This was one of many crimes committed by the imperialists during World War II, which was no "war for democracy" but, at bottom, an interimperialist conflict for global political and economic domination. While sharply opposing all the imperialist combatants, Trotskyists stood

for the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union which, despite its Stalinist degeneration, remained a workers state where capitalist and landlord exploitation had been overthrown in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. After the war, like their American and British senior partners, the Canadian rulers welcomed with open arms thousands of Nazi war criminals as "freedom fighters" in the imperialists' crusade to destroy the Soviet Union.

After settling in Montreal, Morgentaler was denied entry to the English-language McGill University which, like many Canadian universities, had quotas limiting the admittance of Jews. Instead, he completed his medical studies at the francophone Université de Montréal and in 1955 established a practice in the city's working-class, French-speaking east end.

Quebec at that time was still very much in the grip of the Catholic church; the oppression of women was profound. Divorce was prohibited, and until 1964 married women were legally deemed to lack the "capacity" even to sign contracts. The society was shaped by the national oppression of the French-speaking Québécois nation by the British-derived bourgeoisie, which worked in league with the Catholic hierarchy.

The 1960s and early '70s saw tumultuous social upheaval in Quebec, including in the francophone working class, whose struggles were fuelled in large part by opposition to national oppression. The dominance of the Catholic church was broken. Among other things, birth rates plummeted from one of the highest in the world to one of the lowest. It was amid this turmoil that Henry Morgentaler entered

the political arena as a secular humanist fighting against the confessional school system. Alongside the Mouvement Laïque de Langue Française, he launched the Committee for Neutral Schools.

At this time, abortion and all forms of contraception were illegal and Canada's laws were among the strictest in the world. Maria Corsillo, who helped found and today manages the Scott abortion clinic in Toronto, recalls the period vividly:

"I was a seven-year-old immigrant and I used to go with women to the doctor and translate for them. 'Tell him I can't have another,' they'd say to me, and the doctor would always respond, 'There's nothing I can do.'"

—Now [Toronto], 6-13 June

By now a prominent and outspoken crusader for abortion rights, in 1967 Morgentaler addressed a parliamentary hearing calling for the legalization of abortion. He was soon besieged by desperate women pleading for abortions and in January 1968 he consciously defied the law and performed his first abortion. In 1969, the federal Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau decriminalized contraception and somewhat eased the laws against abortion while keeping it in the Criminal Code. Now, to obtain an abortion, women had to win the approval of a panel of three doctors, the degrading "therapeutic abortion committee."

That same year, Morgentaler closed his family practice to devote himself to providing abortions. "I decided to break the law to provide a necessary medical service because women were dying at the hands of butchers and incompetent quacks, and there was no one there to help them," he told another biographer, Catherine Dunphy. "The law was barbarous, cruel and unjust. I had been in a concentration camp, and I knew what suffering was. If I can ease suffering, I feel perfectly justified in doing so" (cited in *New York Times*, 29 May). He quickly became renowned for his empathy and skill. He pioneered new and safer abortion techniques, and over the years trained hundreds of doctors to perform the procedure.

Dr. Morgentaler was first charged under the new abortion law in 1970, and thus began the succession of trials and acquittals that dominated his life and the fight for abortion rights for the next two decades. He was acquitted three times by largely working-class francophone Québécois juries. In a legally unprecedented move, the Quebec Court of Appeal overturned his 1974 acquittal and sentenced him to 18 months in jail. He served ten months and was finally freed in early 1976.

Cold War II and the War on Women

In the early 1980s, access to abortion throughout Canada became even worse. In Toronto the need was desperate. In 1981, Women's College Hospital performed just three abortions per week, while Toronto General, which received some 75 requests *per day*, did six per week, but only on Thursdays. Fewer and fewer hospitals even had the wretched therapeutic abortion committees. Morgentaler returned to the battle, and in 1983 opened clinics in Winnipeg and Toronto.

The backlash was swift and violent. In both cities, police staged jackboot raids on his clinics. The then-ruling Manitoba New Democratic Party was in the forefront of this persecution. The NDP's attorney general, Roland Penner, vowed to prosecute any violations of the reactionary abortion laws, and he did. Morgentaler later spoke of his naiveté in believing that "since the NDP has a platform supporting freedom of choice, they would refrain from prosecution." A few months later, when we



U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Entrance to Lodz ghetto, in Nazi-occupied Poland, where the young Morgentaler lived before being sent to death camps.

interviewed Dr. Morgentaler for *Women and Revolution*, he told us:

"And the Winnipeg police raided the clinic twice, twice when operations were being done. They really were quasi-fascist acts. Somewhat like a police state—you know? It's never happened before anywhere and I think that the prosecution in Winnipeg is probably one of the most vicious that I've ever seen."

—“‘Pro-Life’ Gestapo Raids
Abortion Clinics,” *W&R* No. 27
(Winter 1983-84)

State repression fuelled anti-woman violence and vile anti-Semitism. In 1983, a man armed with garden shears attacked Morgentaler outside his Toronto clinic. Soon after, arsonists tried to destroy the clinic and it was continually besieged by mobs backed by the Catholic church. These “pro-life” fanatics were the shock troops in the bourgeoisie’s war on women, part and parcel of the then escalating war on “godless communism,” which sought to roll back every working-class gain from the Russian Revolution to trade unions. This was the reactionary climate of the renewed Cold War offensive against the Soviet Union, which despite its Stalinist degeneration stood as a roadblock to the imperialists’ drive to reconquer the entire globe for capitalist exploitation.

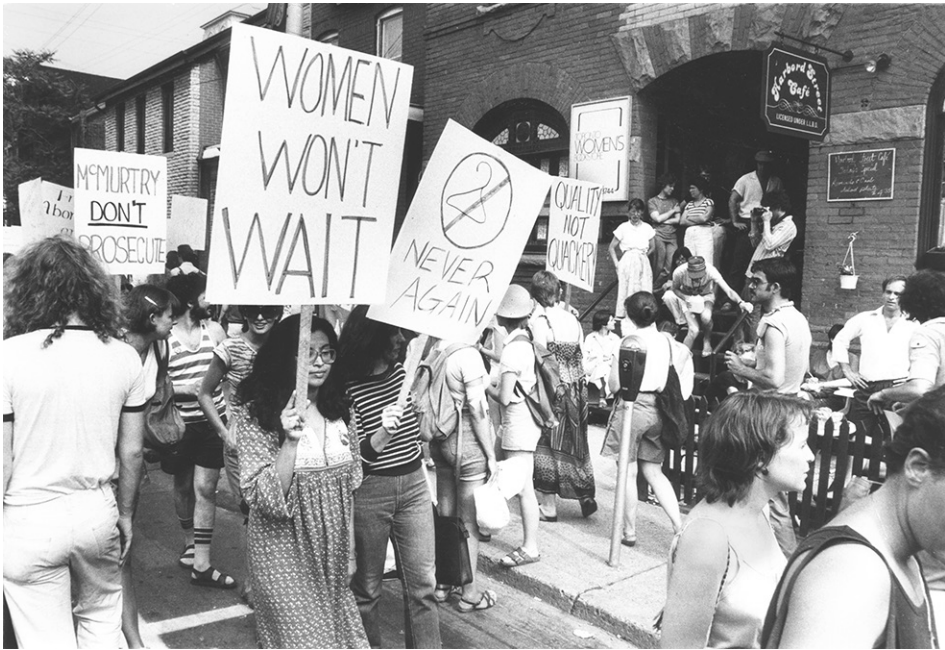
Throughout the 1980s, the Trotskyist League stood out for our defense of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe. For this, we were frequently attacked and excluded from protests, including International Women's Day demonstrations, by reformist leftists, feminists and their often male enforcers. The "pro-choice" reformists and feminists lined up behind the imperialist drive against the USSR,

to be acceptable to bourgeois liberals. As feminists, they drew the sex line rather than the class line, framing their campaigns around single-issue calls such as “repeal the abortion laws,” later reduced to “choice.” But neither of these slogans begins to address the needs of poor, immigrant and Native women who need free and unrestricted access to abortion. The wealthy will always be able to get medical care, including abortions. Indeed, more than once during his legal trials, Morgentaler noted that his patients included the wives, sisters and daughters of the same politicians and judges that were leading the prosecution against him.

The local Toronto abortion rights coalition made its stance all too clear in 1977, when it voted down the demand for “Free abortion on demand” put forward by a representative of the Immigrant Women’s Centre. The latter withdrew from the coalition, which was so obviously stacked against poor and minority women. The Trotskyist League has always fought for free abortion on demand, for free, quality health care for all and free 24-hour childcare, part of our broader struggle for women’s liberation through socialist revolution.

Murderous War on Abortion Rights

In 1984, Dr. Morgentaler and Drs. Robert Scott and Leslie Smoling were acquitted of charges laid in Toronto the year before, a major victory in a trial in which the crown attorney equated Morgentaler, an Auschwitz survivor, with Hitler. The judge all but ordered the jury to convict. As we wrote in "All Honor to Dr. Morgentaler!" (*Spartacist Canada* No. 62,



Szlukovenyi/Globe and Mail

Toronto, June 1983: Demonstration in support of newly opened Morgentaler clinic.

thereby trampling on women's rights. In 1978-79, when a modernizing, Soviet-allied government in Afghanistan moved to implement modest reforms for women such as lowering the bride price and instituting education, tribalist Islamic reactionaries backed by the CIA erupted in violence and terror. When the Soviet Union sent its Red Army into Afghanistan in late 1979 at the invitation of the left-nationalist government, the reformist left internationally echoed the imperialist hue and cry against this.

Poland was a particular flashpoint. When the oppositional Solidarność movement emerged in 1980, the feminists, along with much of the left, the NDP and the labour bureaucracy, hailed this clerical-nationalist outfit, which was also promoted by the Pope and the CIA. After it consolidated around an openly reactionary program for capitalist counterrevolution a year later, we raised the call to “Stop Solidarność counterrevolution!” even as we denounced the many crimes of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. After Solidarność came to power in 1989, capitalism was restored. In 1993 it made virtually all abortions illegal.

The feminists who organized the abortion rights campaigns of the 1970s and '80s generally supported the social-democratic NDP. Many were also supporters of ostensibly socialist groups which, in true reformist fashion, tailored their demands

November 1984), “Even by standards of bourgeois ‘justice’ the trial was stacked against the doctors, and aimed at whipping up an anti-abortion frenzy.” Outrageously, the Ontario attorney general appealed, and yet another jury acquittal was set aside and a new trial ordered. Morgentaler in turn appealed to the federal Supreme Court. No friend of women’s rights, the court evidently saw that putting Morgentaler behind bars was a losing battle and accordingly determined that the abortion laws were unconstitutional.

The anti-woman bigots quickly launched a counteroffensive. As in the U.S., the violence of the 1980s gave way to the even more murderous and open terror against abortion providers of the 1990s. Morgentaler's Toronto clinic was firebombed and destroyed in 1992. Eight doctors have been murdered in the U.S. since 1977 and there have been many more attempted murders. In Canada in 1994, Dr. Garson Romalis barely survived gunshot wounds; in 2000 he was again injured by an anti-abortion would-be murderer. In the 1990s, two other Canadian abortion providers, Drs. Hugh Short and Jack Fainman, were shot and injured.

The anti-abortion forces want to bring back the days when abortion was illegal and untold numbers of women were butchered or mutilated by back-alley or self-induced abortions. Although abortion



Spartacist Canada

Trotskyist League of Canada marches in Toronto on International Women's Day, 1982.

continues to be legal, the steady drum-beat of anti-abortion reaction has recently become louder. Largely hidden from view is the continued threat of violence against abortion providers.

Conservative [Party] prime minister Stephen Harper's hard-right coterie—including his cabinet—is full of religious “end-of-days” revivalists who are vicious opponents of abortion, gay rights, women's rights, evolution and much else. His tenure has greatly increased the influence of Christian fundamentalists in Ottawa. Recent years have seen a flurry of reactionary bills introduced by anti-abortion MPs [Members of Parliament]. One would have made killing a fetus a separate offence when a pregnant woman was murdered. Another sought to create a parliamentary committee to debate when human life begins. More recently, three Tory MPs demanded that the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigate hundreds of abortions as “homicides,” while anti-abortion bigots have started campaigning against “sex-selective” abortions as a wedge to roll back abortion rights.

The attacks on abortion rights are heavily conditioned by the level of class struggle. The working class has the social power necessary to mobilize in defense of women's rights and those of all the oppressed. Many Canadian unions support abortion rights. But the union movement has been on the defensive for many years, and the gains won through past struggles are being rolled back everywhere by a ruling class bent on ensuring that the working class pays for the economic crisis of the capitalist system. The leaders of the unions aim to contain working-class struggle within the bounds of capitalism.

Capitalism and Women's Liberation

Shaped by the torment of the Holocaust, Henry Morgentaler was driven, in his own words, “to feel vibrant, enjoying life, and to become a full person. To be open to experience—active and useful.... Active, as a sort of mover of history, doing something useful and important.” This powerful impulse led him to believe that “under some circumstances, it is imperative to defy authority” (*Morgentaler: The Doctor Who Couldn’t Turn Away*). He was an exuberant and talented man who spoke Polish, Yiddish, French and English, and could soothe a patient in almost any language. He loved women, had many affairs and was married three times. He never really stopped fighting on behalf of women and their rights.

An atheist, Morgentaler found in secular humanism a worldview that satisfied him. He was not a Marxist, but he agreed to be interviewed for our Marxist journal *Women and Revolution* in 1983. His interests in fighting on behalf of the oppressed went well beyond the question of abortion rights. A decade after the W&R interview, he joined other prominent intellectuals internationally in saluting a successful anti-Nazi action carried out by our German comrades, writing: "As a survivor of

the Nazi Holocaust I commend the supporters of the Spartakist Workers Party and the Committee for Social Defense for removing the swastika flag near the Brandenburg Gate" (see *Spartacist Canada* No. 91, Spring 1993).

Henry Morgentaler's personal and political history testifies to the fact that abortion is not a narrow "women's issue." Indeed, it is a *class* issue: an essential democratic right, the removal of which would redound against *all* working people. The status of women is inextricably linked to that of the working class, which is uniquely situated to bring capitalist rule, the basis for women's oppression today, to an end. The liberation of women requires a socialist revolution that will uproot the private property system and create a worldwide socialized planned economy. Only then will society be able to replace the institution of the family with socialized childcare and housework, bringing women into full participation in all areas of social and political life.

This perspective requires the forging of a revolutionary vanguard party, entailing a struggle in the working class to break the hold of the social-democratic NDP, which is committed to upholding the rule of capital. Understanding that the interests of the capitalists and the workers are counterposed, such a party would intervene into social struggle as the most historically conscious and advanced element of the proletariat. It would defend the rights of minorities and Native people. It would advocate Quebec independence to oppose the dominant Anglo chauvinism and get the national question off the agenda. It would champion free abortion on demand, fighting for the program of women's liberation through socialist revolution. This is the perspective fought for by the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, and it is in this spirit that we say: All honour to Dr. Morgentaler! ■

SPARTACIST CANADA

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ac-Mégantic Industrial Murder

By Chris Clark

Protest during Lac-Mégantic, Quebec: Rail horses' drive for profit poisons death and destruction.

On the state morning news of July 6, 43 people killed in a disaster in the railway train explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. Most were regulars arriving and at Mass-Gatineau. It was the 100th anniversary of the centre of this industrial and worst train of 1913 on the western part of the Canadian West and the disaster with Maine. Ignited by 7 unattended and scolded downed loads of crude oil from the Chicago East long haul and blasted into the river, at least 30 buildings burned to the ground. Many others remain uninhabitable. In the last contamination, while taking water was taken by 100,000 tons of diesel oiling from the river and the lake.

This tragedy was no accident. It was shaped by imperialist capitalism, by profit and imperial profits by the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic (MMAA) rail company, owned by General Electric's Rail World or GE. It was born out of the desire for cheap oil for the large Canadian railway conglomerate, and was aimed at securing the oil and government's guarantee of safety. Millions at the bottom of the train rail route.

About a decade ago, Canadian Pacific abandoned or sold off unprofitable rail lines in western Quebec and New Brunswick to another company, the NAC, even though these

lines are essential to get products to the Atlantic ports. With the vast expansion of New American oil industries, mostly in the Gulf of Mexico or Saudi, transport of crude oil by train has been skyrocketed, to more about 500 trains per year just in a projected 100-mile run. The Lac-Mégantic disaster was carrying more than 10,000 tons of oil for processing in the Irving refinery in Sackville, New Brunswick. In 1994, the government's own safety officials warned that 60 percent of the rail traffic that was made the carrying oil—40 to 50 day mass shipments are carried in such cars, *(continued on page 15)*



Dr. Henry Morgenthau, 1923-2013
Heroic Fighter for Abortion Rights
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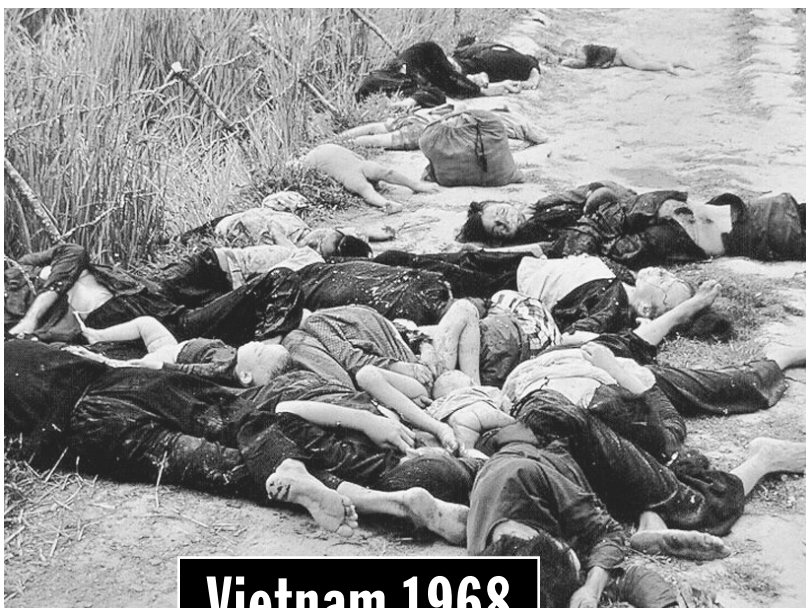
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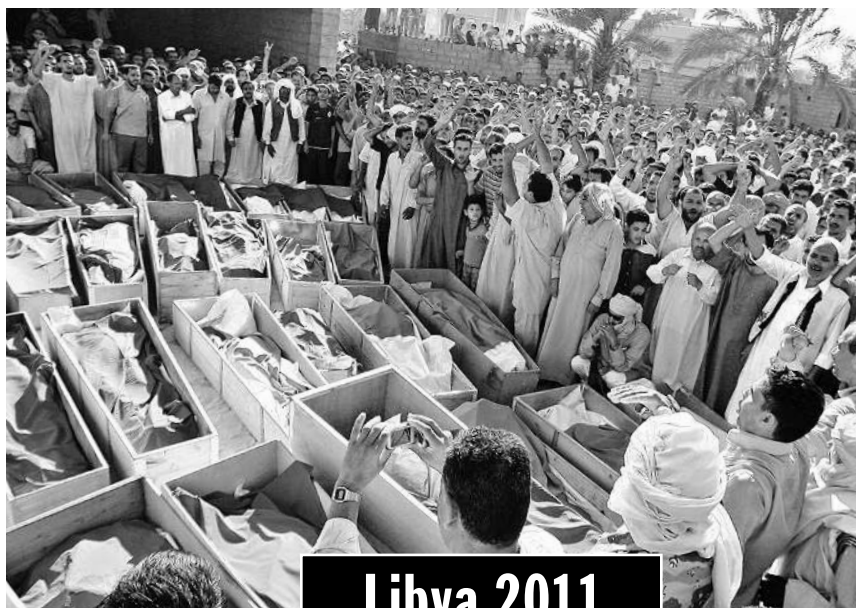
Young Spartacus

Not One Person, Not One Penny for the Imperialist Military!



Ronald Haeblerle

Vietnam 1968



AFP

Libya 2011

Victims of U.S. imperialist slaughter.

The U.S. military's Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) is now returning to the City College of New York (CCNY) for the first time in over 40 years. Forced off CCNY and over 100 other campuses by the militant struggles against the Vietnam War, ROTC is a program that trains students to become the next generation of officers whose job will be to carry out U.S. imperialist slaughter around the globe. The Spartacus Youth Clubs oppose the imperialists, their war aims and their armed forces, upholding German revolutionary Wilhelm Liebknecht's call: "Not a man and not a penny" for bourgeois militarism!

From the atomic incineration of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the dirty wars in Central America that slaughtered leftist insurgents, to today's global "war on terror," U.S. imperialism—under both Democratic and Republican administrations—has proven to be the most powerful terrorist force on the planet. It sits on the largest stockpile of operational nuclear weapons and has a military budget greater than that of the next 19 countries combined.

The Democratic Obama administration is infamous for its "Terror Tuesday" meetings to decide which Pakistanis, Yemenis and U.S. citizens to assassinate in drone strikes. The Commander-in-Chief orders his officers to oversee the torture of Guantánamo prisoners, including through force-feeding. And as we go to press, Obama is putting the finishing touches on his plan to bombard Syria. *Hands off Syria! U.S. out of the Near East!*

Domestically, the military is a key tool for suppressing dissent and carrying out strikebreaking. The U.S. rulers sent the National Guard to Los Angeles to crush the 1965 Watts ghetto rebellion and the 1992 upheaval sparked by the acquittal of the LAPD cops who beat black motorist Rodney King. In 1970, the same troops who massacred four antiwar protesters at Kent State University had been dispatched straight from strikebreaking duty against Cleveland Teamsters. In 2011, Obama deployed the military against ILWU Local 21 during the struggle between the longshoremen's union and the bosses in Washington State. At home and abroad, these are the jobs for which ROTC is training students.

While carrying out its crimes against the world's peoples, the Obama White House has prosecuted twice as many whistle-blowers as all previous administrations combined. U.S. Army Pfc. Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning, a 25-year-old hero, was tortured, subjected to a military show trial and sentenced to 35 years under the Espionage Act for the "crime" of

ROTC Off Campus!



Young Spartacus

SYC protests against General Petraeus in New York, June 26.

releasing to the world classified documents showing only a fraction of the horrors carried out by the U.S. military. Through its treatment of Manning and its unrelenting war on Edward Snowden and WikiLeaks' Julian Assange, the White House is sending a message that it will tolerate no dissent or exposure of its war crimes, its massive spy operations and its shredding of basic democratic rights. *Free Manning now! Hands off Snowden and Assange!*

Petraeus, ROTC, Military Recruiters Off Campus!

The City University of New York (CUNY), which has 24 campuses including CCNY, has granted General David Petraeus a visiting professorship at Macaulay Honors College. The résumé of this former CIA director and commander in Iraq and Afghanistan includes overseeing the torture of insurgents and civilians; directing drone strike assassinations; and heading up the CIA spy apparatus that, for decades, has organized to destabilize and overthrow

elected governments that are not to Washington's liking, and to install its lackeys.

The halls of CUNY campuses are crawling with academic ideologues for U.S. imperialism. But Petraeus is different: he has the blood of thousands of Iraqis, Afghans and others on his hands. He should be driven off campus—not for his views, but for his deeds. We are in favor of students, teachers and campus workers driving imperialist war criminals off campus through protest and exposure. Last fall, when NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen came to campus, the SYC initiated a protest against him (see "SYC Protests NATO at CCNY," WV No. 1011, 26 October 2012).

Many campuses have been welcoming back ROTC, especially after Obama's 2011 repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT). For years, many reformists and liberals based their protests against ROTC solely on the U.S. military's institutionalized anti-gay bigotry. We protest all forms of discrimination, including in the military. At the same time, our opposition to ROTC is based not on the multitude of anti-democratic features of the U.S. armed forces, but on our dedication to the destruction of imperialism and opposition to its depredations worldwide.

We fight against every attempt by the ruling class to use college campuses as direct training grounds for the agents of U.S. imperialism. But academic institutions are not "ivory towers" isolated from the rest of capitalist society; rather they serve the needs of the capitalists. The CCNY administration was *never* against ROTC or the U.S. military. When it dropped ROTC from campus in 1971 in response to student protests, it simultaneously encouraged the setup of a regional ROTC center to serve CCNY off-campus. The administration is the agent of the ruling class on campus. *Abolish the administration! For student, teacher, worker control of the universities!*

The Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee (RSCC), a Maoist student group active at CUNY campuses, wants

the administration to be wielded for "revolutionary" ends. The RSCC Platform states, "We want teachers who suppress progressive and revolutionary ideas to be removed." This is a despicable call to purge teachers and feeds into the nationwide crusade against the teachers unions, spearheaded by the White House and directed in New York City by Bloomberg's administration. We side with the teachers unions against the wholesale attacks on public education, including the attempts to shred seniority rights and tenure.

In its July 13 leaflet "Hands off Assata Shakur! Eyes on David Petraeus! Stop the Militarization of CUNY!" the RSCC claims, "We find two tendencies within the legacy of CUNY: one revolutionary and one reactionary." It fatuously declares: "We must view CUNY as an ideological front against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, particularly US imperialism!" While the RSCC peddles the myth of a potentially anti-imperialist state-run college, the SYCs expose and protest the administrators, who unleash the cops to quash student protest. In 2005, three CCNY students and one staff member were arrested and brutalized by the cops for protesting military recruiters during a career fair. The students were also suspended (see "ROTC, Military Recruiters Off Campus Now!" WV No. 846, 15 April 2005).

We oppose signing up for the volunteer army. Correspondingly, we also oppose military conscription, which serves to turn the bulk of working-class youth into cannon fodder for imperialist wars. Since their humiliating military defeat in the Vietnam War, the U.S. rulers have been hesitant to reinstate the draft for fear of the public outrage this would cause. Yet, sooner or later, the U.S. ruling class will find it necessary to reinstate the draft. The duty of revolutionaries, if drafted, is to go into the military with the mass of young workers and seek to win the working-class ranks to the fight for socialist revolution (see "On Draft Resistance: You Will Go!" *Spartacist* No. 11, March-April 1968).

The U.S. rulers today catch poor and minority students in the vise of minimum-wage jobs and skyrocketing tuition, and many youth see no alternative to eternal debt peonage other than through a tuition break offered by joining ROTC and carrying out the imperialists' bidding. What is necessary is a fight to *abolish the student debt! For free, quality education and a state-paid living stipend for all!*

Democrats—The Other Party of Racism and War

Reformists and antiwar liberals would have you believe that imperialism is just

Soviet Woman Combat Pilot Fought Nazis

In Honor of Nadezhda Popova

World War II Soviet bomber pilot Nadezhda Popova died on July 8 at age 91. In her early 20s, she was Guards Captain of an elite corps of women pilots who were known as the “Night Witches” by Nazis who feared their nightly sorties. We honor Nadezhda Popova for her brave defense of the Soviet Union, homeland of the first successful workers revolution in history. At the cost of 27 million Soviet lives, it was primarily the USSR that smashed Hitler’s war machine and ended the Holocaust.

The daughter of a railway worker, Nadezhda was born on 17 December 1921 and grew up in Donetsk, Ukraine. She was a wild spirit who loved to tango, fox-trot, sing along to jazz and run barefoot in the grass. She became passionate about flying after watching a pilot land near her house. “I thought, ‘Oh my God! He’s just an ordinary man!’ We touched the wings of the plane and his leather jacket,” she recalled decades later. “I had thought that they were some Hercules. And then I thought it would be great if I could fly like a bird.”

Without telling her parents, the 15-year-old Nadezhda joined a flying club. At age 16, she made her first parachute jump and her first solo flight. She was trained at the aviation school in Kherson, Ukraine, and became a flying instructor, training 30 new pilots while still a teenager.

Her life was torn apart by the Nazi invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941. Her home was taken over by German troops, and her brother Leonid was killed at the front. “My mother sobbed, ‘That damn Hitler.’ I saw the German aircraft flying along our roads filled with people who were leaving their homes, firing at them with their machine guns.”

Stalin left the USSR criminally unprepared for the war. During the Moscow show trials of 1936-38 he purged the entire Red Army leadership and executed the best generals. Despite desperate warnings from Communists in Germany and elsewhere, Stalin refused to believe that the Nazis would attack the USSR. The defeats of the Red Army in 1941 forced the bureaucracy to initiate mass campaigns to induct women like Nadezhda into the military. The Stalinists



Pilots of the 588th Night Bomber Regiment: Nadezhda Popova (standing), Irina Sebrova (left) and Vera Belik (right).

did this in spite of their reactionary glorification of “women’s role” as household drudge, which was of a piece with their anti-internationalist program of building “socialism in one country” and their Great Russian chauvinism. Unlike Stalin & Co., who used nationalist ideology to motivate the defense of the USSR, our Trotskyist defensism was internationalist: the Soviet Union’s collectivized economy was an advance over capitalism and a conquest for all the world’s workers and oppressed.

Nearly one million Soviet women served at the front as soldiers, snipers,

machine gunners, field medics, tank drivers and partisan fighters behind enemy lines. Nadezhda Popova, then age 19, was one of the first to join the all-women 588th Night Bomber Regiment. She flew old Polikarpov PO-2 biplanes made of fabric strung over plywood frames with no radio, no guns, no parachutes, and only enough weight allowance for two bombs. Flying under enemy radar at night, Popova would dive full-throttle through enemy searchlights, swerving and dancing, acting as a decoy for another pilot who would glide in with the engine shut off and drop her payload. Then the second pilot would

act as a decoy so that Popova could drop her bombs. To the sleepless Germans, the swishing glide of the silent planes of the 588th sounded like a witch’s broomstick passing, and so they called them the *Nachthexen* (see “The Story of the Night Witches,” *Women and Revolution* No. 36, Spring 1989).

Nadezhda Popova made 852 sorties during WWII; she made 18 sorties over Poland in a single night in 1944. She also dropped lifesaving food and medicine to Russian marines stranded at Malaya Zemlya in 1942, flying so low she could hear the men’s cheers. Afterward she found 42 bullet holes in her plane. For her skill and bravery, she was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

WWII German fighter ace Hauptmann Johannes Steinhoff, commander of II./JG52, paid a compliment to Popova and her comrades in a letter on 2 September 1942: “We simply couldn’t grasp that the Soviet airmen that caused us the greatest trouble were in fact women. These women feared nothing. They came night after night in their very slow biplanes, and for some periods, they wouldn’t give us any sleep at all” (quoted in Henry Sakaida, *Heroines of the Soviet Union*, Osprey, 2003). The Nazi high command reportedly promised to award an Iron Cross to any Luftwaffe pilot who managed to bring down a Night Witch.

In an unusually moving tribute, the bourgeois *Economist* magazine (20 July) described Popova’s pain endured as friends died defending the Soviet Union:

“The worst, though, was to lose friends. Eight died in a single sortie once when she was lead pilot, as hulking Messerschmitts attacked them in the dazzle of the searchlights. To right and left each tiny PO-2 went down like a falling torch. She never cried as much as when she returned to base and saw the girls’ bunks, still strewn with letters they had never finished writing.”

The pilots and navigators of the 586th, 587th and 588th regiments—as well as the female ground crews who armed and maintained their planes—were crucial to several key battles, such as in the oil-rich Caucasus, Stalingrad and Kursk, that turned the tide of the war against the Nazis (see Bruce Myles, *Night Witches: The Untold Story of Soviet Women in Combat*, 1981). Many also flew missions around Berlin in the war’s final days. In Berlin, Popova reunited with pilot Semyon Kharlamov, whom she had met and fallen in love with after they both got shot down in July 1942. After the war she married him, had a son and worked as a flying instructor.

Our party has a proud history of defending the Soviet degenerated workers state and fighting against the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR, a historic defeat for the working class and oppressed worldwide. We called for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and to restore the revolutionary internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky. Such is our perspective today for China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba—countries where capitalism has been overthrown but where political power is monopolized by parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies.

Working-class women have proven in every revolutionary struggle that they are among the best fighters for the liberation of their class. The fight for women’s liberation means a struggle for international socialist revolution. Among the best cadres in this struggle will be new generations of women, who will draw inspiration from heroic fighters of the past including Nadezhda Popova and the Night Witches of World War II. ■

a militaristic “policy” that the ruling class can scrap if they are pressured hard enough through protests, elections or moral suasion. In his classic work on the subject, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Lenin explained why imperialism is not a set of particular policies, but the final stage of capitalism in its decay. The words of our Trotskyist forebears, written over 80 years ago, are still true:

“It is necessary, however, to understand that war is an integral part of capitalism. Every national section of capitalism depends upon its military arm for the defense of the same. War is the practical means through which one or the other capitalist state acquires control of the world market. The armed forces of a capitalist state has a twofold function: on the one hand the defense of the interests of the state externally, and on the other, the weapon by which the working class is kept in subjection at home. When this is understood it will become quite clear why the ‘outlawing’ of war can come about only through the destruction of capitalism.”

—“Imperialist War and the Class Struggle,” *Young Spartacus*, March 1932

To abolish imperialist militarism and capitalist exploitation, it is necessary to organize the social power of the working class for socialist revolution. Students by themselves do not have the social power

necessary to transform society. They must ally themselves with the multiracial working class, which can physically bring capitalist production to a halt. The working class has the capacity to drive the bosses from power and establish workers rule. Only workers revolution can smash U.S. imperialism!

Returning a fifth of the world’s population in China to capitalist enslavement is today the ultimate prize sought by the imperialists. Anyone who is seriously committed to fighting U.S. imperialism must take a firm stand in defense of China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states—Vietnam, North Korea, Laos and Cuba—without giving any political support to the Stalinist bureaucracies. Genuine opposition to U.S. imperialism requires the unconditional military defense of the countries where capitalism has been overthrown.

Fighting against imperialism means fighting for the working class and militant youth to break from the parties of the class enemy. But the RSCC is doing the exact opposite. Founded in February 2012, the RSCC was or is affiliated with the pro-Democrat Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO). RSCC supporters have verbally claimed to us that this relationship has ended, but we have looked

in vain for any evidence of such a rupture. Where is the RSCC’s written position on the FRSO’s 2008 endorsement of Obama, the candidate of the class enemy? (See “Freedom Road Socialist Organization: Democrats’ Loyal Maoists,” *WV* No. 1004, 8 June 2012.) So stung were they by this exposure of the FRSO that, on March 16, the RSCC organizers outrageously threatened to call the cops on our comrades who were distributing this *WV* article outside an RSCC forum!

The Democratic Party, in fact, is the bourgeoisie’s preferred party to lead it into war. Democratic Party administrations led World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the wars against Serbia and Libya. And it is on Obama’s watch that the ruling class is waging its ideological war to mop up any vestiges of the “Vietnam syndrome” and get the ROTC operations back up and running openly rather than in a semi-covert way.

For all their “revolutionary” rhetoric, red flag waving and occasional criticisms of Obama, these Maoists do not breathe a word of opposition to the capitalist Democratic Party in the RSCC Platform, Constitution, or Points of Unity. Currently the RSCC, together with the centrist Internationalist Group (IG), is spearheading the

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Egypt: For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

This article concludes below. Parts One and Two appeared in WV Nos. 1027 and 1028 (12 July and 9 August).

Since deposing President Mohamed Morsi in a coup on July 3, the Egyptian military has massacred adherents of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood, most graphically in clearing two protest encampments in mid August, and imprisoned much of its leadership. In the name of fighting the Islamists, the crackdown has been extended to striking workers, journalists and liberal activists. The struggle between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood—both reactionary forces—has set off a new wave of violence against the oppressed Coptic Christian minority. Historically, Egypt's military-backed strongmen have alternately repressed the Brotherhood and unleashed it against leftists and workers struggles.

The ascendancy of political Islam as a mass movement of religious fundamentalism based on the lower middle classes and the poor has been a reactionary response to the manifest dead end of bourgeois nationalism in the semicolonial countries of the Muslim world in the absence of a communist alternative. Though looking to the 7th century for inspiration, political Islam emerged out of the oppressive conditions of the 20th century.

With their social expectations born in the struggle for national emancipation shattered, the dispossessed masses—desperate, ragged, illiterate, unemployed or forced to labor for a pittance—find solace in religion and comfort in the false hope of happiness in the hereafter. Noting that “*Man makes religion*, religion does not make man,” Karl Marx wrote:

“*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.... To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*.”

—“Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction” (1843-44)

It is not only the solace of superstition that the Islamists offer to attract the down-trodden but also some very material social services. With funding from Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich sheikdoms, Egyptian fundamentalists established wide networks, centered around the country's more than 170,000 mosques, for providing services the state does not deliver. In her book, *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey Through the World of Militant Islam* (1999), journalist Mary Anne Weaver described how the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists had built their own welfare system in the impoverished Imbaba district of Cairo. For example, mosques under the control of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, the hardline Islamic Group, provided meat at wholesale prices and set up discount clinics, schools and day-care centers as well as furniture factories where the unemployed got work. Weaver observed:

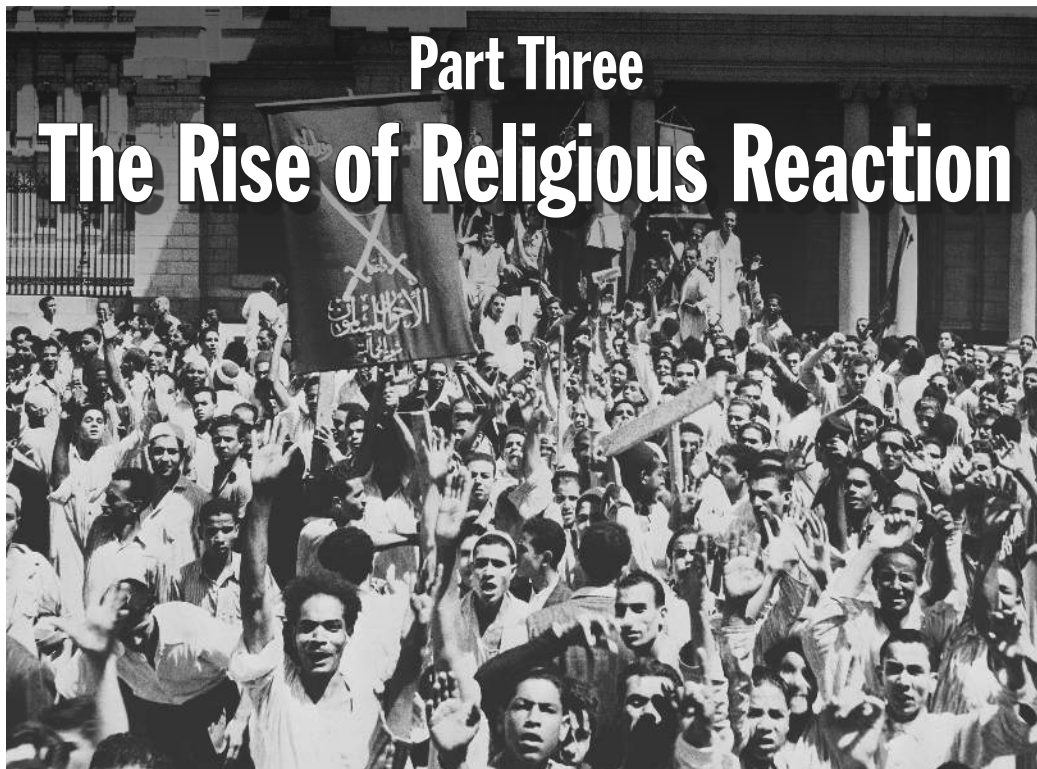
“Despite an aggressive \$10 million social program launched by the government at the end of 1994, the Islamists' institutions remained generally far more efficient and

far superior to run-down government facilities. Along with the collapse of every secular ideology embraced by Egyptian politicians and intellectuals during this century, it was government repression and ineptitude, far more than militants' guns and bombs, that was fueling the Islamic flame.”

Muslim Brotherhood: Enemy of Workers, Women

Founded in 1928, Egypt's Society of Muslim Brothers was the prototype for subsequent Islamic movements in other countries. The writings of its early leaders Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb have been translated into all the languages of the Muslim world and remain the prime sources for those who aspire to overthrow “impious” society and build an Islamic state on its ruins.

Indonesian Islamist leader Amien Rais paid tribute to the Muslim Brotherhood by writing his doctoral thesis on the movement. Egyptian Islamist teachers brought in by the Algerian government in the 1970s as part of an “Arabization” scheme were instrumental in building a base for the Islamic Salvation Front, which went on to wage a bloody but unsuccessful civil war against the nationalist military regime in the 1990s. Muslim Brother-



Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Cairo, 1947. Brotherhood was used as shock troops against striking workers and leftists by monarchy.

hood leaders fleeing repression in Egypt contributed to the growth of the fundamentalist movement in Jordan, while the Palestinian Hamas originated as a branch of the Brotherhood. Sudanese and Syrian youth studying in Egypt carried home the seeds of the Brotherhood, establishing regional branches in the 1930s and '40s.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in the period following the bourgeois-nationalist Wafd party's failure to achieve independence through the 1919 uprising against British rule. Its establishment was a reactionary response to the abolition of the caliphate, the 1,300-year-old system of Islamic rule, by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the nationalist founder of modern Turkey, in 1923. The Brotherhood's purpose, expressed in the slogan “the Koran is our constitution,” was to establish an Islamic state modeled on the caliphate of the 7th century. The organization began to grow explosively during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the educated sons of the petty bourgeoisie could no longer count on secure government jobs after graduation. Disenfranchised urban youth gravitated toward radical organizations—many to the Muslim Brothers on the right, others to the fledgling Communists. Soon the Brother-

hood swelled into a mass movement of hundreds of thousands.

During the upsurge in class and social struggle in 1945-46, the monarchy used the Muslim Brotherhood as shock troops against striking workers, Communists and the left-nationalist Wafdist Vanguard. The Brotherhood established a base of support among factory owners, foremen and backward workers, fingering strike leaders for state repression and attempting to undermine or destroy militant unions. The Communist-led Congress of Private-Sector Trade Unions issued a statement denouncing the Brotherhood for “fascist methods using their sticks” against leftist students and workers at the combative Shubra al-Khayma textile mill and “for [religious] sectarianism aimed at splitting the ranks of the people for the benefit of imperialism.” The statement concluded with a sharp warning to “worker colleagues against joining any committee formed by the Muslim Brothers” (quoted in Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* [1987]).

But the Brotherhood's growing strength soon alarmed the monarchy itself. After a series of assassinations of government officials and other violence attributed to the Brotherhood, the organization was banned in 1948. Secret service agents assassinated al-Banna the following year.

Colonel Nasser, supported by Islamists and Stalinists alike, pragmatically embraced the Brothers in an effort to win their mass base and to use them against the Stalinists. Six weeks after the 1952 military coup that brought his Free Officers Movement to power, the Nasser regime executed two strike leaders. The Brotherhood hailed the act, calling on the government to “strike these Communists...with an iron hand so that they are driven to their dens” (quoted in *Workers on the Nile*).

The honeymoon ended in 1954 when a Brotherhood member allegedly attempted to assassinate Nasser. By that time, the Islamists had served their purpose in helping to suppress the Communists, and the regime had built a wider base of support, including through limited land reforms. Six Brotherhood leaders were executed and thousands of its members jailed. The crackdown culminated in the 1966 execution of Sayyid Qutb.

Sadat Rearms Islamists

Nasser, who died in 1970, was replaced by his protégé and vice president, Anwar Sadat, a former adherent of the Muslim Brotherhood. Sadat would go on to cancel Egypt's “friendship” treaty with the Soviet Union and order the withdrawal of Soviet military advisers, paving the way for closer ties with the United States. He launched his policy of *infitah*—economic liberalization based on an open door to imperialist investment—whereby key industries were denationalized and Nasser's land reform was scrapped. Sadat's policies drew increasing opposition from Nasserites as well as Communists and other leftist elements.

To deflect growing anger over the country's perpetual economic crisis, Sadat fostered mysticism and superstition. He made



Police attack striking workers at Mahalla al-Kobra factory near Cairo, September 1947.

several pilgrimages to Mecca and acquired the title of “pious president.” He affirmed Nasser’s declaration that Islam was the state religion and decreed that *sharia* was the prime source of state law. Thousands of mosques were built and prayer rooms were added to office buildings. Day and night on television screens, robed, turbaned and bearded sheiks expounded the virtues and morals of Islamic society. Pedestrians were bombarded with taped Friday sermons blaring from newsstands, food carts and passing taxicabs. The 1973 military offensive that inflicted a black eye on Israel was launched by Sadat in the month of Ramadan and code-named “Badr” after the Prophet’s first victorious battle in 624. And the battle cry was “God is great.”

Initiating in 1971 what he called the “Rectification Movement,” Sadat arrested Nasser’s chief lieutenants and suppressed a student revolt the next year. He released imprisoned Islamists and enabled them to gain control of the Egyptian Student Union, the prime objective of which, according to a 1976 presidential decree, was now “to deepen religious values among the students” (Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt* [2003]). By 1977, the Islamists held sway over student unions on a national scale. Using the considerable funds and facilities now at their disposal, they organized “Islamic summer camps” where thousands of students received religious and paramilitary training with the patronage of the rector of the state-financed Al Azhar, the world’s leading Islamic institution, and other regime officials.

The fundamentalists wielded such power that university campuses were turned into “terra Islamica.” Iron bars in hand, thugs attacked couples and unveiled women. They banned movies, concerts and evening dances. Rampaging through



Jahangir Razmi
Khomeini’s 1979 “Islamic Revolution” carried out bloody repression against minorities, leftists.

the city’s nightclubs, they smashed windows and beat belly dancers. The fundamentalists subsidized Islamic dress for women and offered segregated buses for those who wore the veil. Emboldened by Sadat’s imprisonment of Coptic Christian religious leaders, Islamists planted bombs at churches in Cairo. Prayer rallies staged on religious holidays drew hundreds of thousands; in Cairo, the rallies were held in the square facing Abdin Palace, the presidential residence. It was perhaps out of gratitude that Islamist Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi laid a wreath at Sadat’s tomb last October, an honor that Sadat had never before received in the three decades since his death.

The Islamists’ agenda went well beyond the role designated for them by Sadat’s regime. Kepel wrote:

“The infrastructure they were establishing, and the cadres they were training in the summer camps and Islamic study weeks, were well prepared for the possibility of taking on tasks other than smashing the Nasserist and Communist left for the benefit of the ruling group. As far as they were concerned, although Nasserism had been an especially execrable period of *jahiliyya* [ignorance], fundamentally the Sadat era was scarcely any better. Its internal contradictions, however, had enabled the [Islamic] *jama’at* to grow in the regime’s shadow.”

Sadat’s trip to Israel in 1977 marked the beginning of the rift with the Islamic



New York Review of Books
White House, 1953: President Eisenhower meets with group of Islamist delegates, seeking to build anti-Communist alliance during Cold War. Muslim Brotherhood leader Said Ramadan is second from right.

fundamentalists, sealed by his signing of the 1979 accords that made Egypt the first Arab state to recognize Israel. Sadat trumpeted the return of Sinai to Egypt, but his embrace of the “Jewish state” was the ultimate sacrilege in the eyes of the Islamists. In 1981, he was assassinated by army officers and soldiers from al-Jihad, one of the Islamist groups that had sprouted in the fertile ground Sadat had nurtured.

Repressed by Sadat’s successor Hosni Mubarak, Islamic fundamentalists carried out a terror campaign targeting tourists, Copts and secular intellectuals in the 1990s. Faraj Fawdah, a radical liberal intellectual and lifelong crusader against religious zealotry and obscurantism, was assassinated in 1992. In 1994, an attempt was made on the life of Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, a novelist who wrote compassionately about homosexuals and prostitutes and of the lives of women in general. Three years later, 58 tourists were massacred in Luxor.

Iran 1979: Ascent of Islamic Reaction

Sadat was not the only Near Eastern leader to foster Islamic reaction. In the early 1980s, Turkey’s military rulers, self-proclaimed guardians of secularism, spurred the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in their effort to suppress leftists and trade unionists. Religious instruction was made compulsory at all pre-university levels, and religious schools for imams were set up. These schools became seedbeds for Islamic ideology and provided leaders for the Islamist movement, including those who would go on to found current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP). The Zionist rulers of Israel consciously encouraged the growth of Hamas as a counter to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), with General Yitzhak Segev, former military governor of Gaza, admitting: “We extend some financial aid to Islamic groups via mosques and religious schools in order to help create a force that would stand against the leftist forces which support the PLO” (quoted in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, eds., *Political Islam* [1997]).

“To some extent fundamentalism was of our own making, and was at one time encouraged in order to combat the threat of communism,” Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, then the bonapartist ruler of Tunisia, told the London *Financial Times* in a 1994 interview. “Such groups were fostered in the universities and elsewhere at that time in order to offset the communists and to strike a balance” (quoted in *Political Islam*). Decades earlier, the U.S. imperialists had embraced Islamists and other religious reactionaries in the Cold War against “godless communism.”

It was the Ayatollah Khomeini’s rise to power in Iran in early 1979 that gave a huge impetus to the growth of Islamic reaction in the Near East. This was not inevitable. The Stalinist Tudeh party had the allegiance of the mass of the working class. Militant struggles by the Iranian proletariat, especially the strategic oil workers, played a pivotal role in the ouster of the hated, U.S.-backed Shah, posing the possibility of a fight for workers power. Yet in the name of “anti-imperialism,” Tudeh and other Iranian left groups threw their support to the mullah-dominated opposition led by Khomeini, as did the bulk of

ostensibly socialist organizations internationally. Khomeini swept into power, and the result was a massive bloodbath against unveiled women, leftists, trade unionists and Kurds, among others.

As we note in the International Communist League’s Declaration of Principles (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“The 1979 ‘Iranian Revolution’ opened up a period of ascendant political Islam in the historically Muslim world, a development which contributed to and was powerfully reinforced by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Khomeini’s seizure and consolidation of power in Iran was a defeat akin to Hitler’s crushing of the German proletariat in 1933, albeit on a narrower, regional scale. The international Spartacist tendency’s slogan ‘Down with the Shah! No support to the mullahs!’ and our focus on the woman question (‘No to the veil!’) stood in sharp opposition to the rest of the left’s capitulation to mullah-led reaction.”

Religious fanaticism, which is especially oppressive to women, is not a uniquely Islamic phenomenon. Among Protestant televangelists, ultra-Orthodox Jews, Catholic Opus Dei adherents and Hindutva fundamentalists, there is no lack of zealots who believe they have a god-given mission to impose the dictates of their particular “holy scriptures” and to exterminate the faithless; pogroms by Buddhist mobs against the Muslim Rohingya minority in Myanmar (Burma) are a recent example. The outlook of Islamists who see unveiled women and leftists as infidels deserving the wrath of god is not fundamentally different from that of Christian bigots who terrorize abortion providers in the U.S. or of fascist Zionists who spray Palestinians with bullets in the middle of their dawn prayers.

What makes Islamic fundamentalism stand out is the particular historical development of the region where it flourishes. In West Europe, sections of Christianity and Judaism, which like Islam and other religions have their roots in pre-capitalist society, were driven to adapt to rising capitalism and its material advances over backward, feudal society. Islam did not have to adapt in the same way. Until the 16th century, the Muslim societies of North Africa and the Near East were qualitatively more advanced than Catholic Europe. But centuries of stagnation and decay under Ottoman rule sealed the Islamic world from the Renaissance, Enlightenment rationalism and the Industrial Revolution. As Ottoman power waned, colonial occupation fettered capitalist development and reinforced social backwardness as a prop to its domination. Analogous in some key ways to pre-Reformation Christianity, Islam asserts control over all aspects of individuals’ lives in societies where religion and state have never been separated.

Afghanistan: Imperialists Foment Religious Reaction

During the period of the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, the nascent capitalist classes wielded science against religious obscurantism in their struggle to destroy the feudal barriers to capitalist development. But in its imperialist epoch of decline and decay, capitalism has increasingly fostered retrograde beliefs. In their drive to destroy the Soviet Union and stem the tide of Communism

everywhere, the imperialists have allied themselves with all manner of religious obscurantists—from the Dalai Lama to the Indonesian Islamic Masyumi and the Afghan *mujahedin*. John Foster Dulles, who would serve as U.S. Secretary of State at the height of the Cold War, declared in 1950: “The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Communist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it” (quoted in Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* [1968]).

Immediately after World War II, the U.S. recruited Soviet Muslims, including many who had fought alongside the Nazis, for its covert operations against the USSR. Some were used by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty to air anti-Soviet propaganda. In 1953, President Eisenhower invited three dozen Islamist leaders, including from the Muslim Brotherhood, to the White House to enlist them in Washington’s anti-Communist crusade. Dulles’ common bond was called into service in 1965-66 when the CIA backed the slaughter of over a million Indonesian leftists, workers and others at the hands of the army and Islamists. It was further cemented in the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Upon taking power in Afghanistan in 1978, the modernizing, pro-Soviet People’s Democratic Party (PDPA) government embarked on a program of reforms: canceling peasant debts, carrying out land redistribution, prohibiting forced marriages and lowering the bride price to a nominal sum. The PDPA’s measures, particularly those aimed at freeing women from feudal tyranny, threatened the mullahs’ stranglehold on social and economic life and provoked an immediate, murderous backlash.

Most explosively, the PDPA made schooling compulsory for girls and launched literacy programs for women, building 600 schools in just over a year. The tribal insurgents denounced schooling for women as the first step in a “life of shame,” and the earliest bloody confrontations were over women’s literacy, as PDPA cadres and women literacy workers were driven from villages and killed. A decree allowing women to divorce was not officially announced because of the revolt. Even the *New York Times* (9 February 1980) acknowledged, “It was the Kabul revolutionary government’s granting of new rights to women that pushed Orthodox Moslem men in the Pashtoon villages of eastern Afghanistan into picking up their guns.”

After repeated urgent appeals from the PDPA regime, in December 1979 the Soviet government sent troops to Afghanistan to prevent a victory by the *mujahedin* on the USSR’s southern flank. This was a necessary act of military defense against imperialist counterrevolution. The conservative Kremlin bureaucracy certainly did not send 100,000 troops to effect a social revolution. However, an extended Soviet military presence opened the possibility of liberation for the peoples of that benighted land, especially women. We Trotskyists declared: “Hail Red Army!” and called to extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples.

Having helped provoke a Soviet military intervention, the imperialists seized on it as a pretext for a renewed Cold War offensive, using the woman-hating *mujahedin* cut-throats in a proxy war to kill Soviet soldiers. To this end, the CIA launched the biggest covert operation in its history, to the tune of many billions of dollars. Working through the Saudi monarchy and the Pakistani secret service, the imperialists coordinated the recruitment, arming and training of tens of thousands of “Arab Afghans” from around the world. The Egyptian Brotherhood was a linchpin in this “holy war.” Freed from prison by Hosni Mubarak and sent to Afghanistan, its members formed a major *mujahedin* contingent. Important figures within the leadership regularly visited Afghanistan. The Brotherhood-controlled Egyptian Medical Syndicate organized and funded 95 percent of the doctors working for the Islamist forces.

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Syria...

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military presence in the Persian Gulf. The workers movement must demand imperialist military withdrawal from the Near East.

Imperialist “Democracy” and Chemical Warfare

Obama claims to be defending an “international norm” prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. The norm is that the imperialists are fully prepared to use any means, including poison gas and other “weapons of mass destruction,” in pursuit of their interests. When imperialist forces intervened in Russia in 1919 in a failed attempt to crush the Russian Revolution, British warplanes bombarded Red Army troops with a chemical nerve agent. That same year, when Kurds in Mesopotamia rose in revolt against British occupation, Winston Churchill declared: “I do not understand the squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poisonous gas against uncivilised tribes.”

The Washington politicians lamenting civilian casualties in Syria represent the only ruling class to have used atomic bombs in warfare, incinerating some 200,000 Japanese civilians in August 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During the Vietnam War, U.S. forces employed massive quantities of Agent Orange defoliant and CS gas—the latter was used against insurgents holed up in tunnels—as well as burning alive untold numbers of Vietnamese villagers in napalm strikes. In Iraq, the U.S. used shells made of depleted uranium that produced radioactive dust. Scientists investigating widespread birth defects in Falluja describe it as now having “the highest rate of genetic damage in any population ever studied” and point to the depleted uranium as the likely culprit.

In 1975, the U.S. finally got around to signing the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical weapons, but Washington unilaterally retains the right to unleash them if an adversary uses them first. After a highly publicized promise to dispose of its gigantic stores of sarin and other chemical weapons, as of last year the U.S. still had some 2,700 tons in its stockpile.

During the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, the U.S. government was complicit as Saddam Hussein carried out horrific chemical



Workers Hammer

London, August 31: Spartacist contingent at “No Attack on Syria” demonstration.

weapons attacks. Determined to prevent an Iranian victory, Ronald Reagan’s administration provided Iraqi forces with satellite photographs of Iranian troop deployments as well as critical hands-on assistance in planning for battles and airstrikes. The U.S. did so with full knowledge that Iraqi commanders had been using chemical weapons against Iranian troops since 1983. Washington “wasn’t so horrified by Iraq’s use of gas,” one U.S. veteran of the operation told the *New York Times* (18 August 2002). “It was just another way of killing people.”

The sordid history of U.S. involvement in the atrocities carried out by the Hussein regime was highlighted by a number of recently declassified CIA documents published by *Foreign Policy* (26 August). A March 1984 CIA report noted that Iraq was using nerve gas and called it “a very good offensive as well as defensive weapon” that “could have a significant impact on Iran’s human wave tactics, forcing Iran to give up that strategy.” U.S. support to Iraqi forces continued right through the 1988 chemical weapons attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja, in which the Iraqi regime slaughtered 5,000 of its own citizens. That attack was later hypocritically decried by the George W. Bush administration as evidence of Saddam Hussein’s brutality as the U.S. was gearing up for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

As in the case of Saddam Hussein, Assad’s past services to the imperialists

were quickly forgotten once Washington decided that he no longer served their purposes. In the early years of the “war on terror,” Syria was a prime destination in the “extraordinary rendition” program in which the U.S. sent terrorism suspects to other countries to be tortured. That didn’t prevent the Obama administration, once civil war broke out in Syria, from providing financial support and small arms to some insurgents while ratcheting up economic sanctions that, along with those imposed by the European Union, have crippled the Syrian economy.

Even more punishing sanctions have been imposed on Iran, which Washington and Tel Aviv perceive as attempting to challenge the Israeli monopoly of nuclear arms in the region. Although the Iranian government denies that it is developing nuclear weapons, Iran clearly needs nukes as a deterrent to the imperialists. We demand: Down with the sanctions against Iran and Syria!

For Class Struggle Against the Capitalist Rulers!

The basis for the communal conflagration that is erupting in the Near East was laid under colonial rule as the European powers set various nationalities and ethnic groups against each other. Syria, Lebanon and Iraq are not nations but rather patchworks of different peoples and ethnicities that were carved out of the collapsing

Ottoman Empire by Britain and France following the First World War. In Syria, the imperialists promoted the Alawites to lord it over the predominantly Sunni population (see “Syrian Civil War: Legacy of Imperialist Divide-and-Rule,” *WV* No. 1009, 28 September 2012).

The international proletariat and semi-colonial peoples are paying the price for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. That historic defeat resulted in a catastrophic devastation of living conditions and culture in the former Soviet Union. It has also emboldened U.S. imperialism, which proclaimed itself the “world’s only superpower” while aggressively asserting its dominance over the globe. Today, the same reformist “socialists” who cheered the demise of the Soviet Union line up behind the imperialist-backed rebel forces in Syria, enthusing over a mythical Syrian revolution. A case in point is the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which touts the Local Coordination Committees (LCC), a network of local protest groups, as the “wellspring of the revolutionary movement” in Syria (socialistworker.org, 28 August).

In fact, the LCC openly calls for U.S. military intervention in its country. In a September 1 statement posted on its Facebook page, the LCC criticizes Obama for planning a “limited strike to merely warn Assad” instead of seeking to “paralyze” the Syrian military. The LCC demands that Obama’s military assault be “accompanied by close coordination with, and sufficient support to the Syrian opposition, both political and armed.”

The threatened attack against Syria represents the true face of imperialism, the profit-driven capitalist system in its epoch of decay. Military depredations are part of the “normal” workings of imperialism, in which the advanced industrial powers compete globally for control of markets, raw materials and access to cheap labor. This is reflected domestically in grinding poverty, racial oppression and intensified exploitation of labor by capital. The only way to put an end to this system is through international socialist revolution and the creation of a worldwide planned economy. We fight to build revolutionary workers parties as part of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International to lead the proletariat in the struggle for power. ■

Egypt...

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By the mid 1980s, the Red Army clearly had the *mujahedin* on the run. But the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy pulled the troops out in 1988-89 in its further pursuit of the chimera of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. We denounced this criminal betrayal not only of Afghan women and leftists but of the Soviet degenerated workers state, warning that it was better to fight the imperialists in Afghanistan than to have to fight them in the Soviet Union itself.

The pullout from Afghanistan paved the way for capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the USSR, a world-historic defeat for the proletariat internationally as well as for women, ethnic and national minorities and all the exploited and oppressed. The post-Soviet years have been marked by drastic declines in the living standards of working people and the poor, a tightened imperialist stranglehold on semicolonial peoples, intensified repression against immigrants and a sharp rise in racist and religious reaction. No longer constrained by the counterweight of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism has proclaimed a “one-superpower world” in which it is free to throw around its military might.

Afghanistan became once again a living hell for women. And the “Arab Afghans” spawned and nurtured by U.S. imperialism went on to foment reactionary movements elsewhere, tapping into deep popular resentment against brutal nationalist regimes and imperialist-dictated austerity. When this Frankenstein’s monster turned on its creator in September 2001, the U.S. cynically

declared its “war on terror.” In turn, every new imperialist military attack in the Muslim world has driven fresh forces into the ranks of the Islamic fundamentalists.

Meanwhile, the “war on terror” has not ended the collaboration between Islamic fundamentalists and the imperialists. When in power, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, like their Turkish counterparts in the AKP, operated within the framework of the imperialists’ hold on the region. As Perry Anderson observed at the time of Mubarak’s downfall:

“Earlier, the prospect of the Muslim Brotherhood or its regional affiliates entering government would have caused acute alarm in Washington. But the West now possesses a reassuring blueprint in Turkey for replication in the Arab lands, offering the best of all political worlds. The AKP has shown how loyal to NATO and to neo-liberalism, and how capable of the right doses of intimidation and repression, a pious yet liberal democracy, swinging the truncheon and the Koran, can be.”

—*New Left Review*,
March-April 2011

A Proletarian Revolutionary Perspective

The march of social reaction and imperialist aggrandizement across much of the globe in the years since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union demonstrates the enormity of that defeat. Accommodating to the bourgeoisie’s false triumphalist declaration of the “death of communism,” ostensibly socialist organizations the world over—most of which cheered the collapse of the Soviet Union—have washed away any taint of association with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its Bolshevik leadership.

We in the ICL have not. The Bolshevik



Friends of Afghanistan Society

Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s inspired Afghan women to take up arms against Islamic reaction.

Revolution remains the high point of contemporary history and the guide for successful struggle against exploitation and oppression, with crucial lessons for fighters in Egypt and elsewhere in the Near East who seek an alternative to military bonapartism and Islamic reaction. It will take the revolutionary victory of the proletariat to break the fetters of imperialism and feudal-derived reaction—a perspective that must be linked to the fight for workers power in the imperialist centers.

The combative Egyptian proletariat must come to the fore at the head of all the oppressed, including religious and ethnic minorities as well as women, and fight for its own rule—a workers and peasants government. From Egypt’s textile factories and Turkey’s auto plants to Iran’s oil fields, and in the Israeli Zionist garrison state as well, proletarian concentrations in the region point to the potential to sweep away

all of its reactionary regimes and forge a socialist federation of the Near East. To carry out this task, the proletariat must be broken from bourgeois nationalism and all forms of religious backwardness. And that requires revolutionary leadership.

This may seem a distant perspective at present. But there will be no end to the exploitation of working people and no emancipation of women short of proletarian revolution. The very workings of the capitalist profit system, which in the economic crisis of the last five years have ravaged the lives and livelihoods of workers around the world, sow the seeds of sharp class and social struggle. It is through intervening into such struggles, fighting for the political independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois forces, that we seek to forge workers parties of the Bolshevik type as sections of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

Hunger Strike...

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end of the 19th century, Blacks were a distinct minority of American prisoners. And while numbers certainly swelled post-slavery—to build the prison-contract-labor industry, really slavery by another name—the biggest bounce in Black imprisonment came in the aftermath of the Civil Rights and Black Liberation movements, when Black people, en masse, opposed the system of white supremacy, police brutality and racist juries.”

Despite the hat-in-hand pro-Democratic Party politics of the civil rights leaders, not least Martin Luther King, America’s rulers hated and feared the spectre of black militancy. They correctly saw it as a challenge to a system of class oppression rooted in the forcible segregation of the majority of the black population at the bottom of society. Despite the stone-cold racism of George Meany’s AFL-CIO bureaucracy, labor struggles like the 1970 national postal strike in defiance of anti-strike laws amplified fears that such militancy would spill over into the organized working class with its battalions of black workers.

In 1971, Republican president Richard Nixon launched a “war on drugs,” which centrally took aim at black militants and the inner-city poor on the heels of the ghetto upheavals of the 1960s. In 1973, following the bloodbath he launched against the 1971 Attica prison rebellion, New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller enacted draconian drug laws that became a model for other states. The “war on drugs” went into overdrive under Ronald Reagan with the avid support of black Democrats like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. Today, nearly half of the 2.3 million people behind bars in the U.S. are black.

The deindustrialization of much of the U.S., exemplified today by the bankruptcy of “Motor City” Detroit, drove millions more black people out of the workforce and into the ranks of the permanently outcast. Having created the conditions



Hundreds of inmates forced to live in overcrowded gymnasium at California’s San Quentin prison, 2009.

condemning black as well as Latino youth to desperate poverty, the rulers branded them criminals and devised a maze of “anti-gang” laws aimed at funneling ever more of them into prison. Once again, the state of California was in the lead with its 1988 “Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act.”

Wearing “gang clothing,” having tattoos or being named by a “reliable” source is enough to be entered into the statewide CalGang database, which now has an estimated 200,000 names, including children as young as ten. Those in the database are not notified and there is no way to remove one’s name. Such gang profiling begins in the schools, where poor and minority youth are branded for life. Latinos have been a particular target, as testified by the fact that they comprise 85 percent of those in the Pelican Bay SHU.

In prison, the charge of “gang association” is all that’s needed to end up in solitary. “Evidence” of such association includes everything from tattoos to greeting cards; written material, especially by or about black freedom fighters like Mumia Abu-Jamal or even classics like Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*; jailhouse lawyering and

advocacy of prison reform. As Shane Bauer wrote: “In California, an inmate facing the worst punishment our penal system has to offer short of death can’t even have a lawyer in the room. He can’t gather or present evidence in his defense. He can’t call witnesses. Much of the evidence—anything provided by informants—is confidential and thus impossible to refute.”

While the maximum confinement in the SHU for killing a guard is five years, the length of stay for “gang association” is indeterminate. Outside of death, virtually the only other road out of the SHU is “debriefing,” i.e., snitching out others as gang members. We demand an end to this Kafkaesque nightmare both inside and outside the prison walls from the anti-gang laws to solitary confinement! Decriminalize drugs and all other “crimes without victims,” such as gambling, prostitution and pornography!

The Farce of Prison “Reform”

During the hunger strike, Attorney General Eric Holder called for an end to mandatory federal sentencing for “nonviolent” drug users. Many in the Republican Party establishment have also embraced such

appeals. Overwhelmingly, the concern on all sides is the cost to the government, with prisons now grotesquely seen as some kind of new “welfare” for black people. Jerry Brown, though, isn’t letting anyone go. According to the *L.A. Times* (22 August), the governor is now working on a plan with the California prison guard “union” and Corrections Corporation of America—the country’s largest for-profit prison enterprise—to transfer prisoners to one of its jails in the Mojave Desert.

“It’s a win-win,” boasted an official of the prison guard association. Prisoners won’t be released, and the guards will get more jobs policing the new facility. If there is any criminal gang in California’s prisons, these sadistic screws are it. But they are embraced as “union brothers” by the sell-out labor misleaders. Having allowed the industrial and now public-sector unions to be savaged in the name of shared “sacrifice” while turning a blind eye to the destitution of the ghetto and barrio poor, the labor bureaucrats seek to maintain their dues base by organizing the strikebreaking cops and jailhouse thugs whose purpose is the violent suppression of the working class and oppressed. Cops and prison guards out of the unions!

The multiracial working class is the only force in capitalist society with both the social power and historic interest to eradicate a system rooted in exploitation. To unleash this power, there needs to be a political struggle to break the chains forged by the trade-union bureaucracy, which have shackled labor to its class enemy, particularly in its Democratic Party face. The purpose of the Spartacist League is to build the revolutionary party that will lead the workers in the fight to shatter the capitalist order. With the proletariat in power internationally, the vast wealth now appropriated by a tiny class of exploiters will instead provide the material basis for achieving an egalitarian communist society. The modern instruments of incarceration, torture and death will be placed alongside their medieval complements as relics of a decaying social order that deserved only to perish. ■

Young Spartacus

ROTC...

(continued from page 7)

“Ad-Hoc Committee Against the Militarization of CUNY” and called two protests this month against ROTC and General Petraeus. Given the RSCC’s politics—as well as those of the IG, which chases almost any reformist tail to wherever it leads—it is no surprise that the Ad-Hoc Committee’s

500-word manifesto (“CUNY Must Not Be a War College!” undated leaflet) manages the nearly impossible feat of failing to mention the Democratic Obama administration for which Petraeus worked, which is now overseeing the return of ROTC, and which is terrorizing the planet.

The fight against ROTC is part of a necessary fight for workers revolution to expropriate the capitalist class. We seek to join in concrete action with those who

want to drive ROTC and Petraeus off campus, while always maintaining our separate political program and freedom of criticism. The SYCs, youth auxiliaries of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), seek to break young workers and students from the ideological chains that bind them to illusions in capitalism and the warmongering Democratic Party. Young militants must

study the lessons of history and understand that the world as it is today is not how it has always been, nor will always be. The capitalists may seem omnipotent today, but they are not so powerful as to prevent class struggle from breaking out. We stand for building a revolutionary Trotskyist party to lead a workers revolution that will replace today’s dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the working class. ■

Workers Vanguard Readers Circle

Zimmerman Goes Free, Detroit Goes Under Capitalist America: Racist Hell

This readers circle will be discussing the above article
in *Workers Vanguard* No. 1028

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, Sept. 7, 3 p.m.

299 Broadway, Suite 318
(Manhattan, 1½ blocks north of
Chambers St.)

For info: (212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

Trotskyist League/Spartacus Youth League Forum

Karl Marx Was Right—Capitalist Barbarism and the Fight for Revolutionary Leadership

TORONTO

Saturday, Sept. 28, 7 p.m.

OISE (Ontario Institute for
Studies in Education)
252 Bloor Street West, Room 5280
(at St. George subway)

For info: (416) 593-4138 • spartcan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Saturday, Oct. 5, 2 p.m.

Roundhouse Community Centre
181 Roundhouse Mews
Multimedia Room

For info: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Thursday, September 19, 7 p.m.
**Class Struggle and the Fight
for Black Liberation**

Rosa Parks D, Cesar Chavez Student
Center, San Francisco State University
Information and readings:
(510) 839-0851 • sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO

Thursday, September 12, 6 p.m.
**The Struggle for
Black Liberation: The Key to
Socialist Revolution in America**

222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)
Information and readings:
(312) 563-0441 • chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, September 11, 7 p.m.
Meet the Marxists

CCNY, Room TBA
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.
Information:
(212) 267-1025 • nysl@tiac.net

TORONTO

Wednesday, September 18, 6:30 p.m.
**Introduction to
the Marxist Worldview**

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

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, September 11, 6:30 p.m.

**Scientific Socialism vs.
Idealism and Religion
The Dialectical Materialist
Universe**

UBC, Irving Barber Learning Centre
Room 460

Information and readings:
(604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

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

WORKERS VANGUARD

Hunger Strike Against the Torture of Solitary

California Prison Hell

In early July, some 30,000 California prisoners launched their third hunger strike in two years against the barbaric torture of solitary confinement. At its peak, the strike encompassed two-thirds of the 33 state prisons and all four private out-of-state prisons that hold California inmates, making it five times the size of the strikes in 2011. Prison officials retaliated by blasting freezing air into the cells of hunger strikers and by denying them vitamins and any liquids except water for 18 days. In an *L.A. Times* (6 August) op-ed column titled “Hunger Strike in California Prisons is a Gang Power Play,” the head of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Jeffrey Beard, ranted that the men starving themselves to put an end to the depravity of solitary did so “to advance their own agenda of violence.”

With some 123 prisoners continuing to hold out eight weeks into the strike, a federal court judge ruled that prison doctors can force feed the remaining hunger strikers. A spokesman for the federal receiver in charge of prison medical care celebrated the court order as clearing the way to “save their lives”! Although prisoners had signed “do not resuscitate” directives, the Dr. Mengeles of the CDCR are preparing to “save” them for the torments of the Security Housing Unit’s (SHU) isolation chambers.

Welcome to Guantánamo North, where the systematic brutality is of a piece with the unspeakable sadism of the U.S. jailers abroad. With 25 percent of the prison population on the planet, the U.S. leads the world in the number of people—disproportionately black and Latino—it throws behind bars. And California leads the nation. Like Dante’s *Inferno*, the Italian poet’s 14th-century epic portrayal of a journey through the nine concentric circles of hell, California’s prison “Inferno” is a journey through concentric circles of increasing barbarism. Located far from inmates’ families and enclosed by lethal electric fences, “supermax” lockups like Pelican Bay State Prison contain the high-tech sensory deprivation chambers of the SHU.

Entombed behind heavy metal doors in windowless, ten-by-eight foot concrete cages for more than 22 hours a day, prisoners have no human contact other than with guards. Conditions in the SHU were powerfully captured by Shane Bauer, one of three Americans seized by the Iranian government and held incommunicado in the notorious isolation ward for political prisoners at Iran’s Evin prison. In a *Mother Jones* (November-December 2012) article titled “Solitary in Iran Nearly Broke Me. Then I Went Inside America’s Prisons,” Bauer describes visiting the Pelican Bay SHU, where his guide wants to know if it is different from Iran. Bauer wonders if he should “point out that I had a mattress, and they have thin pieces of foam; that the concrete open-air cell I exercised in was twice the size of the ‘dog run’ at Pelican Bay...; that I got 15 minutes of phone calls in 26 months and they get none.” Instead, he simply opts to reply that he had “a window.” The sunlight, fresh air and sounds of the outside



Above: Inmates from solitary await group therapy in “treatment cages” at Mule Creek State Prison, California. Below: Protest outside Department of Corrections office in solidarity with hunger strike, Sacramento, July 2013.



world it afforded kept him from breaking. But in the Pelican Bay SHU “there are no windows.”

As far back as 1890, the Supreme Court condemned solitary as an “infamous punishment” that drove prisoners “violently insane.” Today prison authorities simply deny that the SHU is solitary. Unspeakably cruel, the conditions in California’s prisons are not an aberration in racist America. On the contrary, such barbarism is the product of a capitalist system that is in a state of advanced decay.

As we wrote in “Hunger Strike in California Prison Hell” (WV No. 984, 5 August 2011):

“High-tech sensory deprivation chambers like the SHU throw into stark relief the nature of the bourgeois state as an apparatus of organized violence to preserve the rule and profits of racist American capitalism.

“The prisons are the concentrated expression of the depravity of this society, a key instrument in coercing, torturing and brutalizing those who have been cast off as the useless residue of a system rooted in exploitation and racial oppression. Elementary humanity demands that the SHU and all other solitary confinement chambers be abolished. But it will take nothing short of proletarian socialist revolution to destroy the capitalists’ prison system and

sweep away all the barbaric institutions of the bourgeois state.”

California Prisons: “The Worst of the Worst”

Even in the dungeon empire of “incarceration nation,” California prisons are among the worst of the worst. Conditions are so atrocious that the most reactionary Supreme Court in 60 years found them in violation of the Eighth Amendment’s ban on “cruel and unusual punishment.” A 2011 majority opinion recounted that California’s “prisons had operated at around 200% of design capacity for at least 11 years” during which “needless suffering and death have been the well documented result.” The court mandated that California cut its prison population to 137 percent capacity. For nearly three decades, lower courts had directed the state to relieve overcrowding, provide medical care and stop abuse by prison guards.

In the two years since the Supreme Court ruling, California’s Democratic Party governor Jerry Brown has openly flouted orders to release 9,600 prisoners. In April, a three-judge panel threatened to hold the governor in contempt of court for defying orders to provide adequate

medical treatment, particularly for thousands of mentally ill prisoners who often find themselves locked in single holding cells awaiting “group therapy.” Brown defiantly retorted that his jailhouses provided “among the best healthcare in America and probably the world.”

Following this ringing endorsement, an outbreak of coccidioidomycosis, or Valley Fever, at two San Joaquin Valley prisons impelled a federal judge to grant a class-action suit by seven inmates and order the state to relocate around 2,600 prisoners to other facilities. For years, the state has opposed any such move, arguing that it could cause race riots, an open admission that segregation reigns in California prisons. Blacks, Filipinos and people with compromised immune systems are at high risk for Valley Fever, a disease that can be fatal if left untreated. In the past three years alone, close to 2,000 inmates at the two prisons have contracted the disease and in the past seven years 40 have died from it.

As the suit argued, the state’s refusal to transfer prisoners from the Valley “was the equivalent of conducting a human medical experiment on the inmates, without their consent. For an unacceptable percentage of inmates, including the plaintiff subclasses identified here, assignment to these facilities is a potential death sentence.” Here is recalled the infamous “Tuskegee experiment,” in which from 1932 to 1972 public health officials denied lifesaving penicillin to 600 black men in Alabama afflicted with syphilis.

There was, however, one medical treatment readily available in California’s prisons: forcible sterilization. From 2006 to 2010, at least 148 women inmates were coerced into undergoing tubal ligations in a throwback to the genocidal pseudoscience of eugenics. Between 1909 and 1964, California sanctioned 20,000

such operations on patients in state-run facilities under a law authorizing the sterilization of the “feeble-minded,” the “diseased” and the “perverted.” This law was only repealed in 1979. But its motivation remains. When questioned about the \$147,460 price tag for sterilization, one ob-gyn opined: “That isn’t a huge amount of money compared to what you save in welfare paying for these unwanted children—as they procreated more.”

The Criminalization of Black and Latino Youth

Mumia Abu-Jamal, America’s foremost class-war prisoner, knows solitary from the inside. An innocent man, this former Black Panther spent 30 years on death row in Pennsylvania on frame-up charges of killing a cop until he was released into the general prison population last year. In his “Sept. 14th Statement on Solitary” from a year ago, Mumia wrote:

“Is it cruel and unusual and thus violative of the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. constitution? Apparently this was so in the 1890s but not so in the present, probably because of who was in prison then—and who are now.

“It may surprise you to know that at the

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