

For a Workers United Front to Stop Golden Dawn!

Greece: Mass Outrage over Fascist Attacks



Athens: Greek Communist Party's trade-union formation initiated September 19 march against Golden Dawn near where Pavlos Fyssas (inset) was killed. Lead banner of the seamen's unions reads: "Block the Fascists."

Trotskyist Group of Greece, AP (inset)

In Athens in mid September, hip-hop artist Pavlos Fyssas was attacked by black-shirted thugs and fatally stabbed by a reputed supporter of the fascist Golden Dawn, sparking a wave of protests across the country. Notorious for frequent, deadly attacks on immigrants, minorities and leftists, the fascists have recruited and grown bolder as brutal imperialist-imposed austerity measures have inflamed nationalism and driven many Greeks to despair. Notably, the protests against the killing of Pavlos Fyssas overlapped with strikes of public sector workers, underscoring the urgent need to link the struggle against capitalist depredation with the fight against fascist terror.

On October 5 in cities across Greece, supporters of PAME, the trade-union formation of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), rallied in the thousands against government austerity and layoffs and in protest against Fyssas' killing. What is needed is a program to sweep Golden Dawn off the streets through united working-class mobilizations that draw in the workers movement as a whole, as well as immigrants and other intended victims of the fascists. This is the perspective put forward by our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece in the 1 October leaflet, reprinted below, that they distributed at the demonstration in Athens together with the article "Capitalists Bleed Greek Working Class" (printed in WV No. 1013, 23 November 2012).

* * *

The coldblooded killing of 34-year-old leftist and hip-hop artist Pavlos Fyssas by a reputed supporter of Golden Dawn on September 17 in Keratsini laid bare the deadly danger these racist terrorists rep-

resent to immigrants, minorities and the entire workers movement. The mass outrage expressed by thousands of protesters in the streets of the working-class district where Fyssas lived and died, and all around Greece, must be channeled into an uncompromising struggle against the fas-

Members of Parliament and party officials on felony charges of belonging to a criminal organization. *Workers and the oppressed must not be fooled by this spectacle!* Are we to believe that the same state that rounds up and brutalizes immigrants in police cells and overflowing camps

attacks by the fascists and the killing of Fyssas are an embarrassment internationally. The attacks and ensuing protests have hurt the government's attempts to promote the fantasy that Greece is stabilizing and on the road to recovery from its economic crisis. In reality, the lives of millions of Greek working people are being devastated through endless rounds of savage austerity dictated by the imperialist masters of the European Union (EU), centrally German imperialism. The desperation of the proletariat and petty-bourgeois masses thrown into destitution by this crisis is the fertile soil out of which Golden Dawn has grown. In the absence of a revolutionary, working-class leadership pointing the way out through struggle against the capitalist order, the fascists have found a real hearing for their scapegoating of immigrants and the left.

It is because the fascists conveniently deflect the responsibility for the crisis away from the capitalist system that they have also been nourished by the forces of the capitalist state, especially by the police. The extent of Golden Dawn's support among the police was revealed in the recent wave of resignations and reassignments of highly placed police officials suspected of colluding with these fascists. In fact, the capitalists have given aid and assistance to Golden Dawn because they always seek to keep fascist shock troops in reserve to unleash against any revolutionary struggle by the workers. It is therefore a deadly illusion to believe that the capitalist state can be used to combat the fascists, whether through the cops, courts or Parliament. This should be especially clear in Greece with its long and

continued on page 9



AFP

Golden Dawn *führer* Nikos Michaloliakos at February 2 rally in Athens.

cist menace and the capitalist system that breeds it. It is urgently necessary to stop the fascists through *mass, united-front mobilizations centered on the power of the organized proletariat!*

The right-wing government of New Democracy and PASOK is currently making a show of cracking down on Golden Dawn, with the September 28 arrests of the party's leader along with several of its

has suddenly become concerned about hundreds of cases of racist attacks by fascists? When Pakistani immigrant worker Shehzad Luqman was killed by racists in Athens in January there was no speech on television by the prime minister condemning the "successors of the Nazis."

The government's actions against Golden Dawn are both in order to defuse protests and because the escalating



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John Bellamy Foster & Co.: "Ecosocialism" Against Marxism...6

“Who Can Save the Unions?”

By James P. Cannon

At its convention in Los Angeles last month, the AFL-CIO voted to bolster its numbers through affiliating unorganized “worker centers” and individual workers, creating “a student membership” and joining with “community partners” such as religious and environmental groups in its lobbying efforts. Purporting to address the massive decline in union membership after decades of anti-labor attacks by the bosses and their government, this policy is counterposed to any perspective of labor using its own weapons—from militant organizing drives to strikes—to beat back the capitalist offensive.

The following article by James P. Cannon—a founding leader of the Communist movement in the U.S. and later of American Trotskyism whose early political education was in the Industrial Workers of the World—addressed a similar situation faced by the labor movement nine decades ago, when it was dominated by conservative craft unions. A period of labor radicalism inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution had crested in the U.S. in 1919, receding in the face of a wave of anti-black pogroms as well as the Palmer Raids in which thousands of Communists and other militants were arrested or deported. Membership in the American Federation of Labor would decline from over 5 million in 1920 to less than 3.5 million in 1929, as the bourgeoisie wielded “anti-trust” injunctions against unions and “yellow dog” contracts giving employment only to those who pledged not to join a union. Cannon’s call to revive the labor movement through class-struggle means would find powerful expression in the mass strikes of the 1930s, out of which this country’s industrial unions were forged.

Cannon’s article was published in the

7 May 1921 issue of *The Toiler*, newspaper of the United Communist Party (later the Communist Party). It is reprinted in *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism: Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928* (Prometheus Research Library, 1992).

* * *

The Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York has just adopted three recommendations of a special committee of 25 appointed to devise ways and means to combat the “open shop” campaign of the bosses. The unions cannot

will present the case for unionism to civic bodies, church forums and similar organizations.

2. To amend the constitution of the central body, permitting the seating of fraternal delegates from non-labor organizations interested in unionism.

3. To seek greater cooperation with such bodies as the Interchurch World Movement, and other organizations felt to be working for union labor.

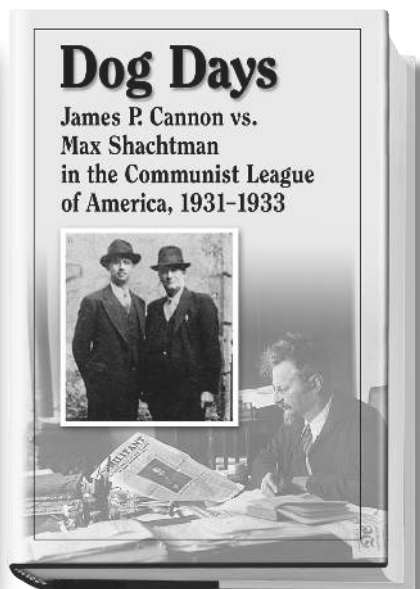
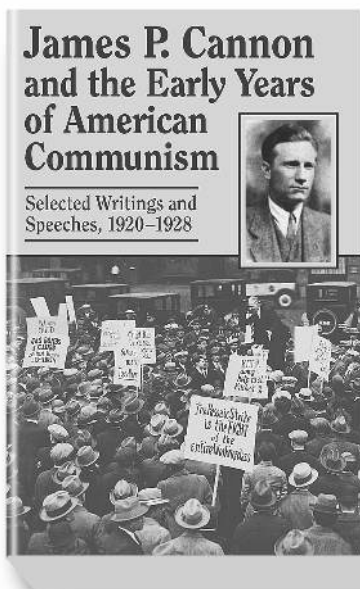
All three of these undertakings are based on a misconception of the nature of the struggle. The impression seems to be that labor’s troubles in the present crisis

zations”—the elements who go to make up such groupings are poor props for the unions to seek to lean upon. They may “feel” for organized labor, but the organized workers never feel it in the shape of substantial support in their fight.

The “open shop” campaign is one of the manifestations of a state of war that exists in society between two opposing classes: the producers and the parasites. This war cuts through the whole population like a great dividing sword; it creates two hostile camps and puts every man in his place in one or the other. Those to whom the New York unions would turn for aid are beneficiaries of the present system of labor exploitation. Their interests lie with the system and, as a general rule, people do not allow their sympathies to interfere seriously with their interests. They live in the camp of the enemy. Their material welfare is bound up with those who aim to destroy the unions.

No, the labor unions can get no help in their struggle outside of the working class. More than that, they need no other support. The working class has the power not only to defeat the effort to destroy the unions, but to end the system of exploitation altogether. The principal thing lacking for the quick development of this power is the mistaken point of view illustrated by the program of the New York central body.

Let the labor unions put aside their illusions; let them face the issue squarely and fight it out on the basis of the class struggle. Instead of seeking peace when there is no peace, and “understanding” with those who do not want to understand, let them declare war on the whole capitalist regime. That is the way to save the unions and to make them grow in the face of adversity and become powerful war engines for the destruction of capitalism and reorganization of society on the foundation of working class control in industry and government. ■



Prometheus Research Library books. Visit www.icl-fi.org/prl or write to Box 185, Canal Street Sta., New York, NY 10013 for prices and ordering information.

fight the open shop by the measures proposed; in that respect they have no value. But as striking examples of what not to do they may serve a useful purpose and, from that viewpoint, should be considered and analyzed. This is what the special committee recommended:

1. To organize a speakers bureau which

are mainly due to a “misunderstanding” as to the aims of the labor movement on the part of some pious people who don’t work for a living, but who are “felt to be working for union labor.” But the real misunderstanding is in the minds of the delegates who adopted this program. Civic bodies, church forums, “non-labor organi-

Former Panther in Solitary for 41 Years Herman Wallace

Herman Wallace succumbed to liver cancer on the morning of October 4, nine days shy of his 72nd birthday. A Black Panther who organized fellow prison inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, known as “the bloodiest prison in the South,” Wallace had been free for just three days after over four decades in solitary confinement.

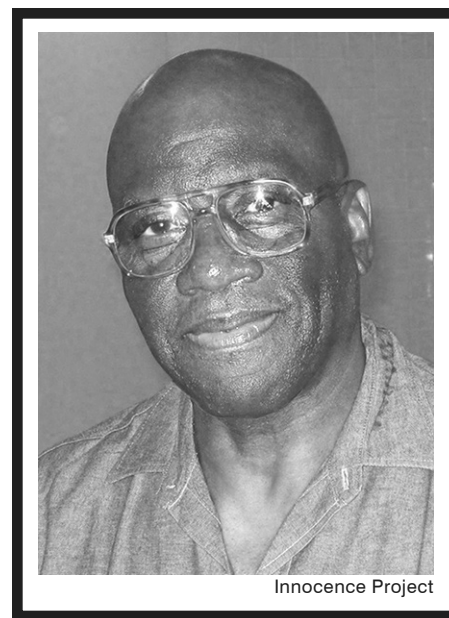
1941-2013

Along with fellow Panthers Albert Woodfox and Robert King, Wallace fought against the racist segregation and barbaric abuses rampant at Angola. When a white prison guard was fatally stabbed inside

the prison in 1972, Wallace and Woodfox were targeted for their political activism and framed up for the killing. King was also held in solitary for 29 years, falsely charged and convicted of the murder of a fellow inmate. Each of these men, who came to be known as the Angola Three, was convicted by all-white juries.

Robert King was released in 2001 after his conviction was overturned. But James “Buddy” Caldwell, Louisiana’s state attorney general and ambitious Democrat-turned-Republican, went on to obsessively work to block every judicial overturn of the convictions of Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox. Woodfox remains locked up in solitary to this day despite having his conviction overturned by a federal judge in 2013—the *third time* a court has overturned the conviction—because Caldwell has again appealed his release.

A defiant Wallace made a statement before his death declaring: “I want the world to know that I am an innocent man and that Albert Woodfox is innocent as well.... The state may have stolen my life, but my spirit will continue to struggle along with Albert and the many comrades that have joined us along the way here in the belly of the beast.” In an act



Innocence Project

both sadistic and vindictive, the state of Louisiana responded to the court order releasing Wallace by indicting him again the day before his death.

This outrage is similar to what the government is doing to 74-year-old Lynne Stewart, an outspoken leftist attorney with a history of defending radicals, black militants and the poor who remains imprisoned despite being terminally ill with Stage IV breast cancer. Convicted in a 2005 “war on terror” show trial for representing Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist cleric Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman in court, Stewart has been denied medical release despite an outpouring of appeals on her behalf. All opponents of racial oppression and prison

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

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

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

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

The closing date for news in this issue is October 15.

No. 1032

18 October 2013

Ireland’s New Law: Still No Abortion Rights

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 224 (Autumn 2013), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). DUBLIN—Last autumn, Ireland and the world were outraged by the tragic death due to septic shock of Savita Halappanavar at University Hospital Galway after she had been refused a termination [abortion]. Thousands protested on the streets of Dublin, other cities and towns across Ireland as well as internationally, calling for abortion rights. The mobilisations in Ireland were the largest abortion-rights protests in years and many had real expectations that finally, 20 years after the massive struggles around the “X case,” women in Ireland would obtain some modicum of abortion rights.

During last year’s protests we produced a leaflet (dated 16 November 2012) [reprinted in WV No. 1013, 23 November 2012] calling forthrightly for what women need: “For free abortion on demand!” and pointing out that “any effective fight for abortion rights necessarily means a hard-fought struggle against the full force of clerical reaction and against the capitalist state.” In contrast, reformist left groups like the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) focused their demands on “Legislate for the ‘X case’” as a supposed first step in liberalising Ireland’s abortion laws. What actually came about, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act, doesn’t increase the availability of abortion one bit, while prescribing up to 14 years in prison for carrying out an abortion.



Irish Times (inset), Workers Hammer

Dublin, November 2012: More than 10,000 rallied in outrage after Savita Halappanavar (left) died of septicemia due to her being denied an abortion.

The new law, passed in July, codifies the ruling in the 1992 “X case,” in which the Supreme Court overturned a lower court injunction banning a pregnant 14-year-old—who had been raped and was threatening suicide—from travelling to Britain for an abortion. Under the Eighth Amendment to the Irish constitution, passed in 1983, the value of the life of a pregnant woman was grotesquely equated with

the life of “the unborn,” and abortion, which was already criminalised by the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, was made illegal except when the woman’s life was directly threatened. In the face of massive outrage over the refusal to allow the young woman to travel to Britain, the Supreme Court ruled that the threat of suicide is in fact a threat to the life of a woman. It also ordered the gov-

ernment to produce legislation allowing for abortion in Ireland—in accordance with the extremely limited provisions of the Eighth Amendment—including when a pregnant woman is suicidal. The right to information about abortion and the right to travel abroad to obtain one were subsequently written into the constitution through referenda, while two attempts to remove the risk of suicide as a valid reason for abortion were rejected. For 20 years, successive governments (twice including Labour) have bowed to the dictat of the Catholic hierarchy, refusing to make allowance in Irish law for even the most restricted availability of abortion in Ireland.

As a result, thousands of women are compelled to travel to Britain every year for a routine medical procedure. Because of having to arrange (and raise money for) travel and accommodation, Irish women tend to have abortions later in their pregnancies. In 2012, 3,982 women from Ireland had abortions in England or Wales (plus another 900 from Northern Ireland where abortion is also practically banned). Of the women from Ireland, 31 per cent had abortions at later than nine weeks pregnancy, compared to 24 per cent of women from England and Wales. Such delays present a greater risk of complications. It was recently revealed that a 32-year-old woman of African origin from Ireland died in January 2012 after having had an abortion in London. She had been diagnosed with extensive fibroids and her requests for an abortion in Ireland were denied. Moreover the health authorities in Ireland wouldn’t assist her in getting a termination abroad. She eventually managed to get to a clinic in London but died of extensive internal bleeding hours after the procedure.

Clerical Reaction Mobilises
The scandal-ridden Catholic church is today hated by wide swathes of Irish society. Few young people pay much heed
continued on page 5

torture must demand: **Free Albert Woodfox and Lynne Stewart now!**

A statement by angola3.org at the time of Wallace’s death read: “Herman Wallace’s early life in New Orleans during the heyday of an unforgiving and unjust Jim Crow south often found him on the wrong side of the law and eventually he was sent to the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola for armed robbery.” Wallace had landed in a hellhole of massive proportions. Angola was a former slave plantation named for the Portuguese colony in Africa where slaves had been captured. The land was purchased by a former Confederate officer in 1880. Using the murderously cruel convict lease system, the owner housed inmates in what used to be slave quarters.

As recently as the 1970s, Angola’s all-white corrections officers were called “freemen” and lived with their families on prison grounds, with inmate servants called “house boys.” According to Robert King’s autobiography, *From the Bottom of the Heap* (2008), prison guards stripped prisoners, shaved their heads and made them run a gauntlet of bats and clubs; incoming prisoners were sold as sex slaves.

At Angola—the largest maximum security prison in the country—some 85 to 90 percent of those imprisoned die within its walls. It is run by an evangelical zealot, Warden Burl Cain, who believes, literally, that the only way out of the place should be through redemption by Jesus. Grotesquely, Angola has become a popular stop for Christian fundamentalist tour groups. *Mother Jones* (23 March) reported: “In a 2008 deposition, attorneys for Woodfox asked Cain, ‘Let’s just for the sake of argument assume, if you can, that he is not guilty of the murder of Brent Miller [the slain guard].’ Cain responded, ‘Okay, I would still keep him in CCR [solitary].... I still know that he is still trying to practice Black Pantherism.’”

It took remarkable courage for the Angola Three to “practice Black Panther-

ism” in their patch of hell, establishing the only recognized prison chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP) in the nation. In a radio commentary released on October 12 to coincide with Wallace’s memorial service in New Orleans, class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, a leading BPP member in his youth, said: “The late L.A. BPP Deputy Minister of Defense, Geronimo Ji-Jaga (Pratt) once called them the most courageous Panthers of them all, for daring to organize in the heart of Angola.”

Of his own nightmare and his struggle, Robert King told *Democracy Now’s* Amy Goodman in a February interview: “A lot of people that end up in solitary confinement also end up on the psychiatric ward in Angola or some other institution.” As an article in *Slate* (7 October) noted, the U.S. invented systematic solitary confinement. Referring to the 1820s, the article remarked: “At the time, the system was considered extraordinarily progressive, given that it did not involve mutilating or executing prisoners for their crimes. It was also quite ineffective, as isolated prisoners tended to go insane.” Wallace, along with King and Woodfox, filed a civil suit seeking to abolish long-term solitary confinement. The suit is still being pursued following Wallace’s death.

The Angola Three collectively spent over 100 years in solitary, held in six-by-nine-by-twelve-foot cells for at least 23 hours a day. But they refused to be bowed. These men were motivated by revolutionary struggle as they understood it. Their persecution speaks to the capitalist rulers’ burning hatred for the Black Panther Party, which represented the best of a generation of black militants. The Panthers were targeted for systematic extermination: In the 1960s-early ’70s, the FBI’s COINTELPRO program gunned down 38 Panthers, while hundreds more were imprisoned on trumped-up charges.

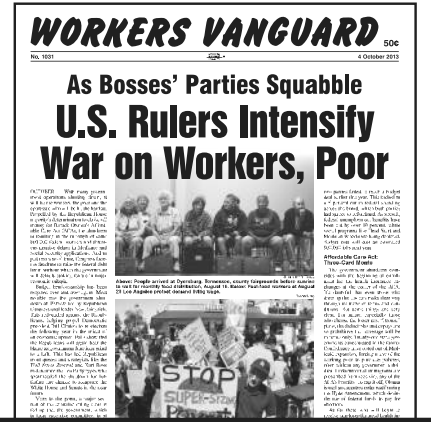
As revolutionary Marxists, we never shared the Panthers’ black nationalist program. At the same time, we insisted

that it was the duty of the workers movement to defend the Black Panther Party against vicious state repression. Herman Wallace’s story and that of the Angola Three illuminate the workings of the capitalist justice system in all its hideous, racist reality. Our task is to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party

that will lead the proletariat in sweeping away the entire apparatus of capitalist terror through the conquest of state power, finally uprooting black oppression and the system of wage slavery. Befitting their determined struggle, the Angola Three will be honored in a workers America. ■

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Defend the Nationalized Energy Industry!

Mexican Government Drives to Privatize Oil

The following article was translated and excerpted from *Espartaco* No. 39 (September 2013). *Espartaco* is published by the Grupo Espartaquista de México, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Since the 1980s, the PRI [currently ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party] and PAN [National Action Party] governments have been set on privatizing anything in state hands that can be sold—from bicycle and textile factories to strategic industries such as railways and telecommunications. But the real jackpot that the U.S. imperialists (and some domestic magnates) have been waiting for is the oil industry, nationalized by Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938. Although the 2008 energy reform act opened the door to private participation in limited areas of the energy industry, no government had dared, until now, to push for privatization. This is a potentially explosive question, since large masses of Mexican workers and poor regard the oil expropriation as a historic gain, deeply connected with their heartfelt democratic aspirations, particularly national emancipation. Tens of thousands have been taking to the streets in protests initiated by Andrés Manuel López Obrador and the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution].

The proposal by [President Enrique] Peña Nieto would essentially open up the whole process related to oil and gas to national and foreign private capital, from the exploration and extraction of fossil fuels and the processing of natural gas to the sale of electricity. Unlike what happens with the service contracts that are currently permitted, this reform would allow private capital to keep the profits (despite not being legal owners of the natural resources). A proposal put forward by the PAN would likewise amount to the privatization of the industry. The government and the PRI claim that its reform is not privatization because [state-owned oil company] Pemex will not be sold—“not even a screw.” But basically, all of its operations will be opened for private investment!

As revolutionary Marxists, we defend the nationalized energy industry as an elementary measure of neocolonial Mex-

ico’s defense against imperialism. As Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky—co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution—wrote in defense of the oil expropriation against the schemes and attacks of the British imperialists, who were affected the most by the nationalization:

“The oil magnates are not rank-and-file capitalists, not ordinary bourgeoisie. Having seized the richest natural resources of a foreign country, standing on their billions and supported by the military and diplomatic forces of

ist tasks—the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class and the establishment of a collectivized, planned economy. The revolution must be extended internationally. The survival of the revolution in Mexico and its subsequent development toward socialism is unthinkable, economically and militarily, without the help of the multiracial U.S. proletariat. A workers revolution in Mexico would give a formidable impulse to revolution north of the Río Bravo. The proletariat in the U.S. must make its power felt in joint



August 31: Thousands protest in Mexico City against oil privatization plans.

their metropolis, they strive to establish in the subjugated country a regime of imperialistic feudalism, subordinating to themselves legislation, jurisprudence, and administration. Under these conditions expropriation is the only effective means of safeguarding national independence and the elementary conditions of democracy.”

—“Mexico and British Imperialism” (June 1938)

For a Workers and Peasants Government!

As Trotsky himself explained, “The expropriation of oil is neither socialism nor communism.” Although it raises an obstacle to imperialist dominance, the nationalization of oil or other strategic industries does not lead, in and of itself, to genuine national emancipation. We Spartacists base ourselves on Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, confirmed by the Russian Revolution, which maintains that the bourgeoisie of backward countries like Mexico, no matter how radical its political representatives might sound, is incapable of solving the historic tasks associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries. The problems of political democracy, agrarian revolution and independent national development can be solved only under the class rule of the proletariat, through socialist revolution.

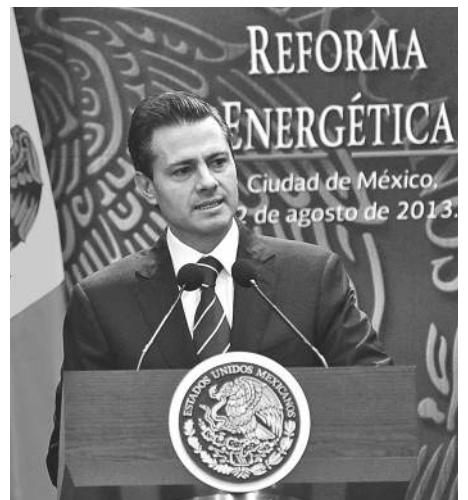
The working class in power cannot stop at these democratic tasks but must immediately move forward to the social-

class struggle with its Mexican brothers and sisters against the designs of the capitalist rulers.

Break with the Bourgeois Nationalists!

Imperialist penetration has developed a powerful proletariat in Mexico. The national bourgeoisie, fearful of the working class and tied by a thousand threads to its imperialist masters, zigzags between these two poles at different times. As Trotsky explained, to the extent that the capitalist government tries to offer some resistance to excessive imperialist demands, it must lean on the proletariat. This was the case back in the 1930s with Lázaro Cárdenas, who stimulated national capitalist development through some nationalizations and secured the support of workers and peasants in the face of imperialist bullying. On the other hand, the governments in backward countries that consider it unavoidable or more advantageous to walk hand in hand with foreign capital destroy workers organizations and establish more or less totalitarian regimes.

Until the 1980s, PRI governments after Cárdenas pursued, to a greater or lesser extent, these nationalist politics. Mexican bourgeois nationalists maintained relative stability in the imperialists’ backyard for half a century through brutal repression against striking workers, the left, union dissidents and rural guerrillas and, at the same time, granting significant conces-



Reuters
Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto lays out plan to privatize energy industry, August 12.

sions to the working class and the peasantry and carrying out some nationalizations. More recently, the Mexican rulers have been impelled by the economic crisis, their own ideological inclinations and certainly the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR in 1991-92—which removed a global counterweight to U.S. imperialism—to open the doors to unbridled plundering of the country by the imperialists. This was done particularly but not exclusively through NAFTA, the treaty for the imperialist rape of Mexico.

If there is something that Mexico’s recent history demonstrates, it is that neoliberalism and populism are but two sides of the same coin. The PRD and Morena [López Obrador’s Movement for National Regeneration] represent a nationalist wing of the bourgeoisie which strives to return to some version of the old PRI populism; these organizations serve the class interests of the Mexican bourgeoisie, and through this agency, the interests of world imperialism.

In any case, the PRD has a lot of gall posing as an opposition to energy privatization. Last year this party, along with the PRI and PAN, signed the “Pact for Mexico,” which includes pushing forward “the necessary reforms to create a competitive environment for the economic activities of refining, petrochemical processing and transportation of fossil fuels”—the core of Peña Nieto’s reform. Now the PRD, which also lost face after its support to the sinister education reform, has resurrected Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of General Lázaro Cárdenas, to launch a campaign against privatization. [For more on these issues, see “‘Pact for Mexico’: War on Workers, Poor,” WV No. 1019, 8 March.]

Government Hands Off the Oil Workers Union!

Privatization will also mean attacks on the oil workers union and the labor gains of its members. Given the strategic nature of the oil industry and the state monopoly, the oil workers union is the most powerful in the country. The *Economist* magazine (10 August) declares that one of the problems with Pemex is that “it has never been treated as a profit-making company”; company revenues account for some 40 percent of the government’s income instead of being reinvested. The same article complains that the “bloated and pampered” union is a burden on the company because many workers cannot be fired even when the wells they work have dried up. An article in *Letras Libres* (September 2008) lamented: “Currently, union members at Pemex enjoy the best contract of all public employees” and “are the only ones with their own health care system, which currently includes dozens of doctors’ offices, 15 clinics and 22 hospitals.” Oil workers are also entitled to a bonus equaling 60 days’ wages as well as significant company support for renting, buying, building, remodeling or repairing a house, among other bene-



Publication of the Grupo Espartaquista de México

No. 39, September 2013, \$5.00 (24 pages)
Subscription: \$2 for 4 issues
(includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

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Ireland...

(continued from page 3)

to the church’s “moral” teachings in relation to their personal lives. However, the church still wields tremendous power in Irish society, not least through its control of most schools and hospitals. As soon as the government started making noises about legislating for the “X case,” the anti-abortion bigots (who had kept a low profile in the immediate aftermath of Savita Halappanavar’s death) came out in force. They organised large protests in Dublin at which busloads were brought in from around the country; priests and bishops fulminated from the pulpits, with Catholic primate of All Ireland, Cardinal Seán Brady, hysterically describing the Bill as a “‘Trojan horse’ which heralds a much more liberal and aggressive abortion regime in Ireland” (irishtimes.com, 2 July). Independent TD [member of parliament] for Waterford John Halligan received a death threat after he criticised the Catholic church for “attempting to interfere in the running of the State.” He explained, “I am now being branded by personnel around the country as being a murderer. I’m going to have on my soul the death of 20 million babies. I’m getting medals, scapulars, plastic foetuses, letters written in blood, telephone calls all over the system and it’s not confined to me” (irishtimes.com, 14 June). However, when the chairman of a Catholic primary school board in Dublin distributed leaflets for an anti-abortion protest to the students, outraged parents forced him to resign.

Despite the at times surreal right-wing uproar along the lines that the new law would “open the floodgates” and lead to “abortion tourism” into Ireland, the law in fact does not make abortion one bit more accessible. And Labour communications minister Pat Rabbitte ruled out any extension of abortion rights in the lifetime of this government. While the law now spec-

ifies that an abortion may be carried out when there is a “real and substantial risk of loss of the woman’s life,” this must be certified by two medical practitioners (except in an emergency when a second opinion is not required). If the risk to her life is due to suicide, the woman must submit to an inquisition consisting of an obstetrician and two psychiatrists to “prove” that she is suicidal! Almost any woman in that situation would rather get a flight to Britain than go through such a demeaning ordeal. Already some abortions are carried out in Irish hospitals to save women’s lives, but they are at the discretion of the obstetrician (and the management board of the hospital, many of which are run by the church), a situation which will remain the same under the new law.

The most egregious part of the new law repeals the sections of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which outlaws “procuring a miscarriage,” but replaces them with a more far-reaching offence: “to intentionally destroy unborn human life.” The penalty may be as much as an unlimited fine and *imprisonment for up to 14 years!* This sentence could be applied to a pregnant woman who carries out an abortion on herself, for instance by ordering Misoprostol and Mifepristone pills over the internet. While there are not good statistics for how many women obtain an abortion in this way, Irish Customs seized 487 tablets in 25 detentions in 2012 and 194 tablets in the first five months of 2013. While taking these pills is generally safe and effective, there is a risk of complications, which requires prompt medical attention. The criminalisation of abortion may deter women from seeking the necessary assistance, a danger which is increased now that they could face 14 years in prison.

For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The new abortion law is so regressive that even the SWP and Socialist Party,

who have been campaigning to “Legislate for X” for years, felt compelled to vote against it. The Socialist Party’s Joe Higgins complained that the new law is “more restrictive than what the Supreme Court Ruling of 1992 and subsequent referenda would have permitted” (joehiggins.ie, 10 July). The SWP calls the law a “pathetic attempt to deal with the X case ruling” and notes that: “Unfortunately the worst fears of the movement for choice are now being realised” (swp.ie, 28 May). These groups have spent the past 20 years building illusions that abortion rights in Ireland would follow automatically if the government was forced to legislate. They restricted their demands to what was “possible” within the existing framework, and least likely to invoke the wrath of the clergy.

Even to obtain minimal abortion rights in Ireland requires a major confrontation with the Catholic church, which none of the major parties—including Labour and Sinn Féin—would contemplate, for fear it would be political suicide. The left has a shameful record of conciliating Catholic reaction. During the protests in 1992, the Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) explicitly tried to restrict the demands, arguing: “To campaign now for a referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment would be a mistake.” They added: “Even more important, the campaign should demand that the government produces draft legislation to provide for abortion in Ireland under the circumstances permitted by the Supreme Court ruling” in the “X case” (*Militant Socialist*, May 1992). As for the SWP, in the aftermath of the 2002 referendum to overturn the “X case” ruling (which was defeated), they said: “We need to keep the pressure on parties such as Labour and Fine Gael to make sure that they make good on their commitment to bring in legislation—legislation that gives a liberal interpretation of the X case judgement and introduces real access to abortion rights for the women who need it” (*Socialist Worker* [Ireland],

15-28 March 2002). And this is not just ancient history—in the protests after Savita Halappanavar’s death the Socialist Party wrote, “X is a start but it’s not enough” while the SWP demanded of the government, “Legislate now!” They both appended calls for more abortion rights... some time in the future.

The Catholic church has very deep roots in Irish society and is intertwined with the whole edifice of capitalist rule. Abortion is a simple and safe medical procedure, yet it is politically explosive because it provides women with some control over whether or not to have children. This raises the spectre of equality for women and threatens to undermine the family, a central institution for raising the new generation and in helping to maintain and legitimise the system of capitalist class rule. The liberation of women from oppression requires socialist revolution which, among other things, will replace the social functions of the family, like housework and child rearing, with social institutions.

In the immediate aftermath of the “X case,” the Dublin Spartacist Youth Group stated: “This Gordian knot of bourgeois ‘constitutional’ and legal wrangling can only be cut in a progressive sense by a tough, principled, iron-hard fight: not for this reform or that wording but for what is *needed* by women and the working class. Armed with a programme for working-class social revolution, the fight for free abortion on demand must be taken up with the same sense of unbending determination that marks the SPUC [Society for the Protection of Unborn Children] reactionaries on the other side of the barricades” (*Workers Hammer* No. 129, May/June 1992). Twenty-one years on, the utter bankruptcy of reformism is starkly apparent. The way to win any meaningful abortion rights (and decent health and child-care provision) is through mass struggle against the capitalist state, the church and reactionary anti-woman forces behind it. ■

fits. These are gains worth defending and extending!

Carlos Romero Deschamps, head of the union and also a PRI senator, has avoided taking a clear position on Peña Nieto’s reform. What he made clear, however, is that the union will “defend its rights through dialogue” and not by mobilizing: “Unionized oil workers will not behave like the teachers in the National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE) when energy reform is taken up” (*El Economista*, 21 August).

For the time being, the PRI does not seem keen on going after the union on the eve of the vote on its reform. But neither the PAN nor the PRD nor Morena misses any opportunity to demand state action against the union. PRD head Jesús Zambrano declared that there can be no further development of the oil industry “on the basis of the corruption underlying the quasi-state company’s union” (*La Jornada*, 19 March). In fact, the demand “Out with Romero Deschamps!” is part of Morena’s “energy proposal.”

Workers must oppose any intervention by the bourgeois state in the unions. Romero Deschamps is undoubtedly a

corrupt and gangster-like bureaucrat, but the working class must clean its own house. As shown by the “Quinazo” and the “Elbazo” [referring respectively to the incarceration of a long-serving leader of the oil workers union and, earlier this year, the head of the SNTE teachers union], state intervention in the basic defense organizations of the working class can have no goal other than furthering state control over the unions, if not their outright destruction. The capitalist state—at its core made up of the police, the army, the prisons and the courts—is a machine of systematic repression directed against all the exploited and the oppressed. It operates at the service of the bourgeoisie in order to keep the working class under submission and to secure capitalist class rule. The state cannot be reformed to serve the interests of the working class; it must be destroyed through socialist revolution and replaced by a workers state that defends proletarian class rule.

The oil workers union, like other unions, is led by a pro-capitalist bureaucracy that acts to defend its own privileges. The bureaucracies that support

the PRI generally stave off the membership through the fist of repression, while those loyal to the PRD more often resort to nationalist ideology to push class collaboration and illusions in the state. But whatever their ideology or political differences, all of these bureaucracies beg the state to be their protector and, frequently, their arbiter.

Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution is the alternative to trusting in fan-

tasies that the backward Mexican bourgeoisie, lackey of imperialism, will be a vehicle for liberation. As communists, the Grupo Espartaquista de México, together with our comrades throughout the International Communist League, fight for an international socialist economy through new October Revolutions around the world in order to end imperialism and every form of exploitation and oppression. ■

Spartacist League/SYC Forums

Mexico, Imperialism and the Struggle for Socialist Revolution

- **For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**
- **For a Workers and Peasants Government!**
- **Down With Government Union Busting!**

LOS ANGELES

Friday, October 25, 7 p.m.

Metropolitan Community Church
Hunter Room, 4607 Prospect Ave.

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

OAKLAND

Saturday, October 26, 2:30 p.m.

Rockridge Library, 5366 College Ave.
(5 blocks south of Rockridge BART)

For info: (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@sbcglobal.net

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Thursday, November 7, 7 p.m.

**The Marxist
Scientific Worldview:
Historical Materialism vs.
Liberal Idealism**

San Francisco State University
Cesar Chavez Student Center
Rosa Parks D

Information and readings:
(510) 839-0851
sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

LOS ANGELES

Thursday, October 24, 5:30 p.m.

**Readers Circle:
U.S. Imperialism
Hands Off Syria!**

UCLA, Ackerman Union
Meeting Room 2410

Information and readings:
(213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, November 6, 7 p.m.

**Lenin and the
Vanguard Party**

CCNY, NAC, Room 1/211
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.
Take #1 train to 137th St.

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

CHICAGO

Thursday, November 7, 6 p.m.

**Socialism: Utopian
and Scientific**

University of Illinois at Chicago
Addams Hall, Library, Room 200
830 S. Halsted Street

Information and readings:
(312) 563-0441
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

**Wednesday, October 30, 6:30 p.m.
Capitalist Profit Drive Kills**

U of T, Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2104
100 St. George Street

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

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, November 6, 6:30 p.m.

**Free Chelsea Manning!
Hands off Edward Snowden,
Julian Assange!**

**Capitalist Surveillance State:
Everyone’s a Target**

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

John Bellamy Foster & Co.: “Ecosocialism” Against Marxism

The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a new comprehensive review of climate-related scientific research on September 27. The authoritative report finds that recent warming of the planet is, in its words, “unequivocal” and that human activity is “extremely likely” to be the primary cause. As the world continues to heat up, sea-level rise and the loss of Arctic sea ice are expected to be somewhat greater than was forecast in the IPCC’s previous report, issued in 2007, although extremes of weather will likely not be as bad as some headlines have suggested.

Predictably, the “climate skeptics” launched a fusillade of anti-scientific drivel in an attempt to discredit the report, whereas the full spectrum of environmentalists read it as sounding the alarm for immediate government action. Among the green missionaries is System Change Not Climate Change: The Ecosocialist Coalition (SCNCC). This lash-up was initiated by the reformists of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), along with

PART ONE

the Solidarity group, in the name of “bringing together eco and socialism.” Other endorsers include the fake Trotskyists of Socialist Action, the left-wing intellectuals of *Monthly Review*, the spiritually minded *Ecosocialist Horizons* and chapters of the small-time capitalist Green Party.

For young radical activists, it might seem a natural to try to fuse eco-radicalism with socialism. But environmentalist ideology and socialism are entirely irreconcilable. All variants of environmentalism are an expression of bourgeois ideology, offering fixes predicated on class-divided society and the reinforcement of scarcity. Marxists fight for a society that will provide *more* for the toiling and impoverished masses and ultimately eliminate material scarcity altogether. To this end, it will take a series of workers revolutions across the globe to rip the mines, factories and other means of production from the grip of their private owners, paving the way for an internationally planned, collectivized economy.

WORKERS VANGUARD
No. 965 24 September 2010

Production for Profit: Anarchy and Plunder

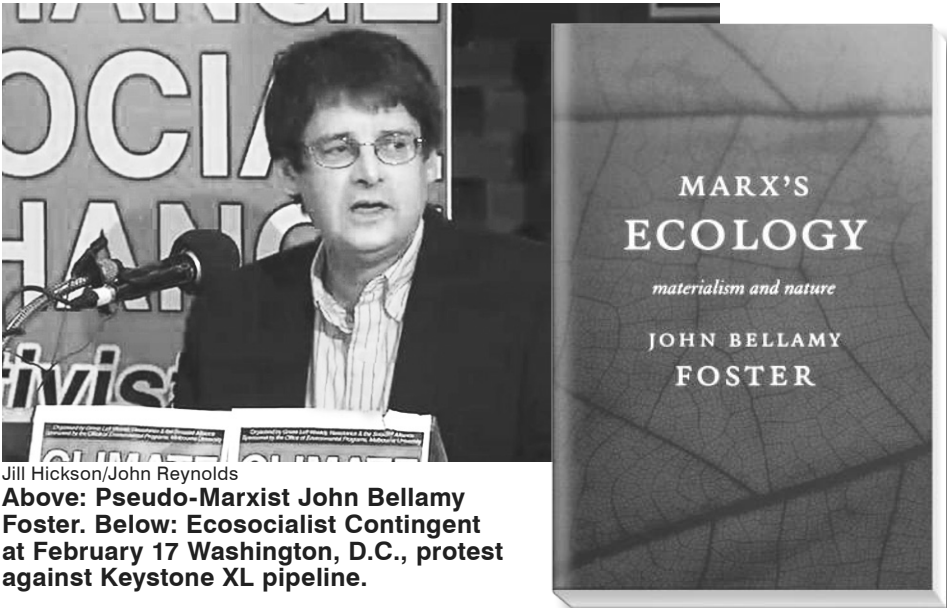
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Jill Hickson/John Reynolds
Above: Pseudo-Marxist John Bellamy Foster. Below: Ecosocialist Contingent at February 17 Washington, D.C., protest against Keystone XL pipeline.



Ecosocialist Coalition

Until then, the profit-driven capitalist system—marked by the anarchy of production and the furious chase for markets, the division of the world into nation-states and the accompanying interimperialist rivalries—will remain a fundamental barrier to addressing the unintended human-derived contribution to climate change. Decaying modern capitalism also greatly exacerbates the potential toll of a warming world on mankind. The wretched conditions imposed by the imperialists on Third World countries make their populations especially vulnerable to climate change, not to mention disease, famine and other ever-present ravages. (These issues are taken up in depth in our two-part article “Capitalism and Global Warming,” WV Nos. 965 and 966, 24 September and 8 October 2010.)

In contrast to revolutionary Marxism, for the eco crowd the villain is growth, and their watchword is *less*. Proposals to limit consumption and cut back production dovetail with capitalist austerity measures. The main political organization of the environmentalists, the Green Party, is open about its defense of production for private profit, simply favoring small-scale enterprise. The 13th-richest person in the world, the union-hating Michael Bloomberg, is an outspoken environmentalist who, after Superstorm Sandy, proposed that New York City “lead the way” in battling climate change. Even if the city rulers take steps to protect Wall Street from storm surges like the one that accompanied Sandy, it will still be hell—and perhaps high water—for those in public housing. Then there are the many large corporations, such as DuPont, not about to be mistaken for a paragon of virtue, that have voluntarily adopted the emissions goals of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Most SCNCC supporters do not openly

subscribe to the primitivism at the core of the environmentalist worldview, preferring to focus on dispensing policy advice to the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the ISO and its SCNCC partners proceed from the false equation of capitalism with economic growth. The putative anti-capitalism of these and other eco-socialists is simply another means of arriving at the doorstep of an anti-growth agenda, providing a thin reddish veneer on retrograde green nostrums.

Take one of its foremost luminaries, *Monthly Review* editor John Bellamy Foster, who has written or coauthored several books published by Monthly Review Press. Foster’s seminal work, *Marx’s Ecology* (2000), paints Marxism as “deeply, and indeed systematically, ecological.” In a February 2010 interview, Foster opined: “We need a new economic structure focused on enough and not more. An overall reduction in economic scale on the world level, particularly in the rich countries, could be accompanied by progress in sustainable human development.”

Progress in human development, i.e., ending misery and want, will not result from curtailing production but from *raising* it to unparalleled heights. By lifting the dead hands of private profit and property rights, the proletarian seizure of power would give great impetus to economic growth. In this event, humanity also will be best equipped to consciously marshal its collective resources to meet both known and unforeseen challenges, including climate change.

Our vision of the socialist future accords with that expressed by the great Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky in an article titled “If America Should Go Communist,” which was published in the 23 March 1935 issue of *Liberty Maga-*

zine. In describing the vistas that would be opened by a victorious socialist revolution in the world’s most advanced capitalist country, Trotsky wrote:

“Should America go Communist as a result of the difficulties and problems which your capitalist social order is unable to solve, it will discover that Communism, far from being an intolerable bureaucratic tyranny and individual regimentation, will be the means of greater individual liberty and shared abundance....

“National industry will be organized along the line of the conveyor belt in your modern continuous-production automotive factories. Scientific planning can be lifted out of the individual factory and applied to your entire economic system. The results will be stupendous.”

It should be noted that Trotsky was writing long before U.S. industry was hollowed out by its capitalist owners—a deterioration that itself points to the need for the working class to overthrow the capitalist order.

Intellectual Dishonesty and Opportunism

In 2002, Foster published *Ecology Against Capitalism*, a collection of essays written between 1993 and 2001. Leaning on sociologist Allan Schnaiberg, Foster described capitalism as “a treadmill of production” that consumes ever greater quantities of limited natural resources while disgorging their waste products into the environment:

“Clearly, this treadmill leads in a direction that is incompatible with the basic ecological cycles of the planet. A continuous 3 percent average annual rate of growth in industrial production, such as obtained from 1970 to 1990, would mean that world industry would double in size every twenty-five years.... It is unlikely therefore that the world could sustain many more doublings of industrial output under the present system without experiencing a complete ecological catastrophe. Indeed, we are already overshooting certain critical ecological thresholds.”

Ecology Against Capitalism in its own way mirrored bourgeois ideological triumphalism in the aftermath of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Communism was declared “dead” and capitalism was trumpeted as an ever-expanding global system. Government policies in the major capitalist countries, especially control of the money supply and interest rates, would supposedly henceforth ensure permanent and steady economic growth. Bourgeois economists coined the term the “Great Moderation” to describe conditions in North America and West Europe: low inflation and relatively shallow and short-lived economic downturns.

But then came the financial crisis of 2007-08, plunging the capitalist world into the deepest and most prolonged economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Great Moderation gave way to the Great Recession. Mass unemployment, savage cuts in wages and benefits and the slashing of government-provided social programs (fiscal austerity) became the order of the day.

Logically, Foster should have welcomed the current downturn since he identified the expansion of production with increasing environmental degradation. Fewer automobiles manufactured and on the road mean less atmospheric pollution. With less income, working-class families are forced to “conserve energy” by reducing their heating in the winter and air-conditioning in the summer. However, Foster does not argue that the Great

Recession has brought certain ecological benefits. To do so would provoke a hostile response from the young left-minded activists—e.g., those who identified with the Occupy movement—to whom he appeals.

So he sings a different tune about what’s wrong with capitalism. Last year, he came out with the book *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly-Finance Capital Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the U.S.A. to China*. It begins:

“The world economy as a whole is undergoing a period of slowdown. The growth rates for the United States, Europe, and Japan at the center of the system have been sliding for decades. In the first decade of this century these countries experienced the slowest growth rates since the 1930s; and the opening years of the second decade look no better. Stagnation is the word that economists use for this phenomenon.”

The “treadmill of production” has disappeared. Instead, we are told that the core countries of world capitalism have been mired in economic stagnation for decades and beset by perpetual crises. Foster continues: “In human terms it means declining real wages, massive unemployment, a public sector facing extreme budget crises, growing inequality and a general and sometimes sharp decline in the quality of life.” Notably absent from this list of ills is environmental degradation. In his speeches, Foster is known to describe capitalism both as a constant growth engine when addressing the “environmental crisis” and as a victim of stagnation when addressing the fiscal crisis, and never the twain shall meet.

From New Left Maoism to Green Radicalism

Foster’s views are conditioned by his longstanding association with *Monthly Review*. In the 1960s and early-mid ’70s, it was the main journal propagating Maoism (the Chinese variant of Stalinist ideology) in American left-wing intellectual/academic circles. Today a professor of sociology at the University of Oregon, Foster attended Evergreen State College in Washington State as an undergraduate in the early 1970s, when he first came under the influence of *Monthly Review* and its leading figures, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff.

The Maoist-Stalinist politics expounded by *Monthly Review* originated as the ideological expression of what Trotsky described as the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state in the mid 1920s-30s. Rejecting and fearing the fight for international proletarian revolution, which animated the Bolshevik Party that led the October Revolution of 1917, the ruling bureaucratic caste under J.V. Stalin put forward the doctrine of “building socialism in one country.” This dogma turned Marxism on its head. Socialism is a society of material abundance in which class distinctions are being finally overcome. Despite its possession of abundant natural resources, the USSR could not on its own surpass the material level of the advanced capitalist countries, which exerted economic and military pressures that eventually brought about the destruction of the Soviet workers state.

China experienced a profound social revolution in 1949 that overthrew capitalism and liberated the country from imperialist subjugation. The subsequent establishment of a planned, collectivized economy brought great social gains to workers, peasants and deeply oppressed women. However, the revolution, issuing out of a peasant-guerrilla war, was deformed from its inception under the rule of Mao Zedong’s Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, a materially privileged, bureaucratic caste resting atop the workers state.

The Mao regime was modeled politically, economically and ideologically on Stalin’s Russia, although China in this period was far more backward than the Soviet Union. Mao’s version of “building socialism”—especially during the so-called “Cultural Revolution” that began in the mid 1960s—glorified the Spartan virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice. While today’s CCP bureaucrats are not



known for professing such nostrums—to say the least—they share Mao’s opposition to the Marxist program of world proletarian revolution. Challenges to the capitalist order would give impetus to the Chinese proletariat to sweep away the Stalinist caste that has politically suppressed it and appeased the imperialists.

To understand the appeal of Maoism as propagated by *Monthly Review* for critical-minded, young American intellectuals like Foster, it is necessary to consider the outlook and evolution of the self-described New Left. In the late 1950s-early ’60s, a generation of young liberal idealists, mainly college students, was propelled leftward by the mass black struggle against racist oppression domestically and the Cuban Revolution and escalating war in Vietnam internationally. Many of these radicals looked to Mao’s CCP as an alternative to the stodgy conservatism of the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy.

In this period, the large majority of the American working class, especially its predominant white component, supported U.S. militarism abroad in the name of combating world Communism. In their own way, New Left radicals accepted but then inverted official anti-Communist ideology. The political leaders and ideological spokesmen for U.S. imperialism claimed that capitalism was superior to Communism in Soviet Russia, not to speak of “Red China,” because it provided the American people, including industrial workers, with a much higher standard of living. New Left radicals agreed with the logic of this argument but reversed its

conclusion. That working-class families could afford a late-model car, a washing machine and a TV set or two was viewed as the material basis for their support to U.S. imperialist predations in the Third World.

The *Monthly Review* circle sought to provide a “Marxist-Leninist” rationale for these prevalent New Left prejudices: disdain for the working class in the advanced capitalist countries combined with enthusing over “socialism” in the Third World. Sweezy argued that the working class as a whole in North America, West Europe and Japan constituted a labor aristocracy relative to the impoverished toilers of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In *Monthly Review* (December 1967), he wrote that Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin “also argued that the capitalists of the imperialist countries could and do use part of their ‘booty’ to bribe and win over to their side an aristocracy of labor. As far as the logic of the argument is concerned, it could be extended to a majority or even all the workers in the industrialized countries.”

When describing the labor aristocracy, Lenin was explicit that he was not painting the entire working class in the imperialist centers with the same brush. Taking stock of England’s industrial monopoly and rich colonies in the mid 19th century, Lenin observed in “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism” (1916): “It was possible in those days to bribe and corrupt the working class of *one* country for decades. This is now improbable, if not impossible. But on the other hand, *every* imperialist



AP photos

Left: Peasant commune in China’s Henan province, 1959. Above: Mao welcomes Nixon to Beijing in 1972 as U.S. bombs rain down on Vietnam.

‘Great’ Power can and does bribe *smaller* strata (than in England in 1848-68) of the ‘labour aristocracy’” (emphasis in original). This well-paid layer can occupy a privileged social position only in relation to the working masses of the society of which it is a part.

While disparaging the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, Sweezy glorified Mao’s China for supposedly building an egalitarian socialist society in one of the poorest countries in the world. Indeed, he considered China’s poverty a socialist virtue while crediting Mao with overcoming and eliminating what he contended were remnants of bourgeois ideology embedded in classical Marxist doctrine: “It was only in China, where of all countries in the world conditions were most favorable for revolution, that Marxism could finally be purged of its (essentially bourgeois) economic taint” (*Monthly Review*, January 1975). By “economic taint,” Sweezy meant the identification of socialism with qualitatively raising the material and cultural level of society.

At the time, we polemicized against those intellectuals like Sweezy and Charles Bettelheim who had revived the *anti*-Marxist doctrines of primitive egalitarianism and “socialist” asceticism:

“Far more so than Moscow-line Stalinism, therefore, Maoist ideology is a sustained attack on the fundamental Marxist premise that socialism requires material superabundance through a level of labor productivity far higher than that of the most advanced capitalism....

“Maoism’s primitivism and extreme voluntarism—particularly as presented during the ‘Cultural Revolution’ period—have had great appeal for petty-bourgeois radicals in the West. It was the promise of an end to alienated labor here and now, without the whole historical period needed to raise the technological and cultural level of mankind, that enabled many of the followers of [New Left theorist Herbert] Marcuse to transfer their loyalty to Maoist China in the late 1960’s.”

—“The Poverty of Maoist Economics,” WV No. 134, 19 November 1976

Maoism, however, lost its luster, particularly following the official rapprochement between the U.S. and China signaled by Richard Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972 as American bombs rained down on Indochina. By the late 1970s, it was no longer attractive to American student youth of leftist sympathies. So the *Monthly Review* circle latched on to the burgeoning green radical movement, which also came out of the New Left. Whence John Bellamy Foster, today the journal’s leading figure.

Bolivia and the Fraud of “Ecological Revolution”

Just as his mentors could posit the introduction of socialist relations in China through a “Cultural Revolution,” Foster does the same today in places supposedly in the throes of “ecological revolution.” In both cases, the professed values of the ruling regime are sufficient evidence of socialist achievement. This is despite the fact that whereas capitalism had been overturned in China with the 1949 Revolution, the countries that Foster hails today are unmistakably capitalist.

continued on page 8



Reuters photos

Left: Bolivian president Evo Morales (at right) with Cuban foreign minister at forum outside UN climate talks in Cancún, December 2010. Below: Bolivian riot police fire water cannon at miners protesting Morales government and demanding higher wages, La Paz, April 2011.



Foster & Co....

(continued from page 7)

In the book *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (2011), Foster and his coauthors proclaim: "An ecological revolution, emanating first and foremost from the global South, is emerging in our age, providing new bases for hope." In keeping with *Monthly Review* tradition, they reject the unique capacity of the working class in both the advanced countries and in the neocolonial world to overturn the capitalist order and collectivize the means of production—a potential based on the proletariat's role in making the wheels of industry turn. Instead, Foster & Co. posit an "environmental proletariat" consisting of "the third world masses most directly in line to be hit first by the impending disasters," especially sea-level rise, as "the main historic agent and initiator of a new epoch of ecological revolution."

Ground Zero for this supposed revolution is Bolivia under Evo Morales, whom Foster hailed in a 2010 interview as "probably the strongest single voice for an ecological relation in the world today." Environmentalists widely laud Morales for hosting the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in April 2010 as a counter-summit to official United Nations climate negotiations. Foster also finds evidence of his environmental proletariat in "the water, hydrocarbon, and coca wars" that "helped bring a socialist and indigenous-based political movement to power" in Bolivia.

Despite its name, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS—Movement Toward Socialism) headed by Morales makes no bones about administering "Andean capitalism." The social turmoil that Morales rode into office as the head of the bourgeois state involved a series of desperate struggles by Bolivia's impoverished masses to resist imperialist exploitation. For example, the "water war" in 2000 consisted of large plebeian protests that broke out in Cochabamba after the Bechtel corporation took control of the city's water system and jacked up rates by more than 200 percent.

In much of Latin America, popular revulsion at nakedly pro-imperialist "neoliberal" governments resulted in the election of a layer of bourgeois populists, including Morales and the late Hugo Chávez of Venezuela. This shift has nothing to do with socialism. Posing as defenders of the oppressed and exploited masses, Morales, Chávez et al. sought to co-opt and contain discontent within a capitalist framework, which necessarily means subordination to the world imperialist system. To smash the chains of imperialist oppression requires a proletarian revolution, led by a vanguard party, that shatters the bourgeois state. Such a revolution must have the perspective of spreading elsewhere in Latin America and, crucially, to the United States and other advanced capitalist countries.

The Morales regime showed its true colors this May when it unleashed violent repression against a nationwide strike called by the country's largest union federation, far from the first time that it had suppressed workers and peasants struggles. The strike had galvanized tin miners, teachers and health care workers in the fight for better pensions. Police repeatedly attacked, gassed and beat striking workers, arresting hundreds. The guns have also been turned on the indigenous population. In September 2011, the government carried out a bloody crack-down on a protest against the building of a new highway through indigenous lands. The brutal assault by paramilitary police reportedly left a three-month-old baby dead.

The anti-proletarian essence of eco-socialism is captured in Foster's salute to Morales and earlier to Chávez, which also shows how empty his "ecological revolution" is, even on its own terms. The economies of Bolivia and Venezuela are heavily dependent on natural gas and oil, respectively. Both regimes carried out

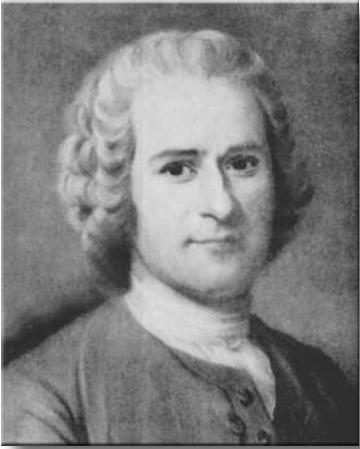
partial nationalizations of their hydrocarbon industry. But it is not as if output has slowed. Indeed, in an attempt to double the production of natural gas by 2015, state-owned Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos is seeking both new foreign partners and new areas for exploration and production. The Bolivian government also plans to harness fossil fuel resources in national parks and protected natural areas.

Marxists defend such nationalizations as a means by which countries under imperialist domination can achieve a degree of economic independence. But these nationalizations do not herald a new socialist era. The hydrocarbon industries of Bolivia and Venezuela are part of national capitalist economies that are subordinate to the world market. In the end, nationalizing the hydrocarbon industry actually benefits the national bourgeoisies, not only at an economic level but mainly at a political level, by tying the masses ideologically to their own exploiters.

Taking a Bite Out of Consumption

There is another important element of continuity between the version of Maoism espoused by *Monthly Review* in the 1960s-70s and its eco-radicalism of recent decades: the condemnation of American capitalism for creating a society of excessive consumption. For Sweezy/Magdoff, the wide range of goods available to most workers in the U.S. came at the price of the impoverishment of the peoples of the Third World. For Foster, the existing level of consumption of the American populace is destroying the ecological basis for the future survival of the human species and other higher forms of animal life.

The notion that a large part of the living standard of working people in the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries consists of artificially created wants that serve corporate profit-making has been a recurring feature of left-liberal ideology since the late 1950s. It was explicated in *The Affluent Society* (1958) by John Kenneth Galbraith, at the time the best known and most widely read liberal economist in the U.S. (He subsequently became an adviser to the Democratic Kennedy/Johnson admin-



Maurice Quentin de La Tour
Jean-Jacques Rousseau

istration in the 1960s.) A few years later, the identification of American capitalism with consumerism was given a "Marxist" gloss in Sweezy and Paul Baran's *Monopoly Capital* (1966), a book that strongly influenced Foster. In *Ecology Against Capitalism*, Foster declares that "wants are manufactured in a manner that creates an insatiable hunger for more."

At the same time, Foster criticizes mainstream green intellectuals and activists who appeal to individuals to curtail their personal consumption, i.e., reduce their "carbon footprints." As a polemical foil, he cites Alan Durning of Worldwatch Institute, who argues: "We consumers have an ethical obligation to curb our consumption, since it jeopardizes the chances for future generations. Unless we climb down the consumption ladder a few rungs, our grandchildren will inherit a planetary home impoverished by our affluence." Foster responds:

"This may seem like simple common sense but it ignores the higher immorality of a society like the United States in which the dominant institutions treat the public as mere consumers to be targeted with all the techniques of modern marketing. The average adult in the

United States watches 21,000 television commercials a year, about 75 percent of which are paid for by the 100 largest corporations."

Both Durning and Foster accept that the consumption levels of most Americans should be curbed, differing only in the means of accomplishing this goal. Foster worries that appeals for sacrifice in the name of some ecological morality alone would fall on deaf ears. His answer is government action to reorganize the economy. Somebody, then, would have to make decisions regarding the genuine needs of working people as opposed to their supposedly unnecessary wants. This task undoubtedly is meant to fall to Foster and other like-minded guardians of green virtue.

This focus on opulent consumer faddism is above all a petty-bourgeois critique of capitalism. For children of suburbia who turn to individual lifestyle changes to find meaning, the problem might be having too much. But "doing more with less" is not an option for the vast bulk of the population struggling each month to pay the bills and make ends meet.

Rousseauian Moralism vs. Marxist Materialism

Denunciations of the culture of consumerism did not originate in the post-World War II United States. The underlying idea that the striving of most people for higher levels of consumption is driven by artificially created wants conditioned by a competitive society based on private property was expressed in the mid 18th century by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The main intellectual influence in the European radical left before Karl Marx, Rousseau was the intellectual godfather of all later forms of leveling-down egalitarianism. Describing the world after the advent of private property, Rousseau wrote in *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755):

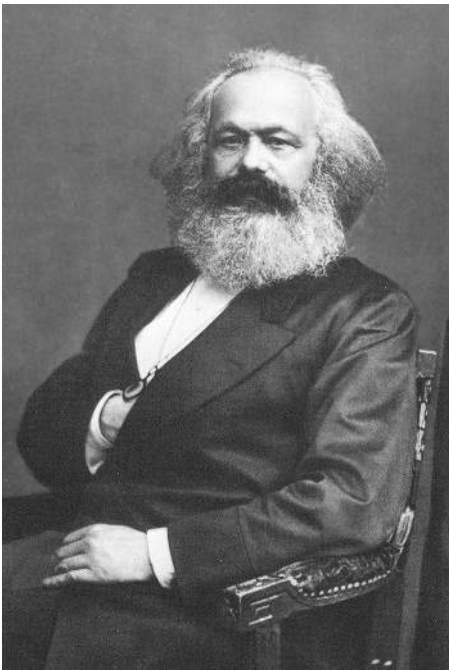
"Free and independent as men were before, they were now, in consequence of a multiplicity of new wants, brought into subjection, as it were, to all nature, and particularly to one another....
"Insatiable ambition, the thirst of raising their respective fortunes, not so much from real want as from the desire to surpass others, inspired all men with a vile propensity to injure one another.... In a word, there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other, together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others. All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable attendants of growing inequality."

Marx opposed the leveling-down egalitarianism prevalent among the socialist and communist currents in the early 19th century. The goal of communism is not to reduce people's wants to some preconceived minimum. Rather, it is to realize and expand those wants. In a fully communist society, everyone will have access to the great variety of material and cultural wealth accumulated over the course of civilization. Consider what is required to do research in particle physics or to investigate the archaeological remains of ancient civilizations. We Marxists aspire to a future society in which all can pursue the creative scientific and cultural work hitherto restricted to a privileged few.

For Rousseau, the emergence of private property was the social equivalent of the Christian concept of original sin, the moment when all manner of evils entered into and disrupted mankind's natural harmony:

"The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'"
—Ibid.

In opposition to Rousseau's moralistic idealism, Marx applied a dialectical materialist understanding to the history of the human species. To reach a communist



Mayall
Karl Marx in 1875.

society, mankind must traverse a lengthy epoch of class-divided societies in which the majority is exploited and oppressed by a small minority of property owners:

"Although at first the development of the capacities of the *human* species takes place at the cost of the majority of human individuals and even classes, in the end it breaks through this contradiction and coincides with the development of the individual; the higher development of individuality is thus only achieved by a historical process during which individuals are sacrificed." [emphasis in original]
—*Theories of Surplus-Value*, Part II (Moscow, 1968)

In *Marx's Ecology*, Foster makes a big deal about upholding dialectical materialism. However, his actual outlook is essentially Rousseauian, not Marxist. Thus, in his earlier *Ecology Against Capitalism*, he describes the capitalist ruling elite as representing a "higher immorality" and condemns capitalism for bringing about the perversion of humanity and degradation of nature:

"By reducing the human relation to nature purely to possessive-individual terms, capitalism thus represents (in spite of all of its technological progress) not so much a fuller development of human needs and powers in relation to the powers of nature, as the alienation of nature from society in order to develop a one-sided, egoistic relation to the world."

The left wing of the green milieu—neo-Rousseauian in its basic outlook—is especially incensed by the statement in Marx and Friedrich Engels' 1848 *Communist Manifesto* recognizing the historically progressive character of capitalism compared to earlier modes of production: "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together." In *Marx's Ecology*, Foster offers a halfhearted apology for this statement and then adds: "This leaves open the whole question of sustainability which they did not address in the panegyric to the bourgeoisie in the first part of the Manifesto."

With the advent of industrial capitalism, there was for the first time a material basis for envisioning an end to scarcity and class divisions altogether. But the private ownership of the means of production increasingly acted as a brake on the further development of the productive forces. The emergence of modern imperialism at the end of the 19th century marked the onset of an epoch of global capitalist decay. The nation-state system, which had served as a crucible for the rise to power of a modern capitalist class, proved too confining to the pursuit of profit. The imperialist powers, having divided the world through bloody conquest, embarked on a series of wars for its redivision, seeking to expand their colonial holdings and spheres of influence at the expense of their rivals. The goal of proletarian revolution is to resolve the contradiction at the heart of capitalism by collectivizing the means of production, thereby making the bounty of society available to all and unleashing the productive forces.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

(continued from page 1)

Democracy and Fascism

While Samaras & Co. were making pious pronouncements against Golden Dawn after the killing of Pavlos Fyssas, the prime minister's main adviser, Chrysanthos Lazaridis, made a statement on September 18 blaming Syriza as well as Golden Dawn for "political violence." Lazaridis' statement is in line with his theory of "the two extremes," which ludicrously posits that the very tame Syriza opposition is a "non-democratic party" comparable to Golden Dawn. It should be clear from this that any moves the government is making toward suppressing Golden Dawn are aimed at establishing a basis for crushing the left. Allowing actions to speak louder than words, the police have brutally attacked anti-fascist protesters and arrested dozens. *We demand that all charges against the anti-fascist protesters be dropped!* Meanwhile, the police, of course, amassed



Police round up immigrants in central Athens, August 2012.

For a Workers United Front Against Fascism!

It is notable that the KKE, a mass workers party that leads key sectors of the Greek working class, has through its PAME trade-union formation recently mobilized unions such as the metal workers and seamen together with others in Piraeus and nearby areas to stop Golden Dawn from rallying and carrying out a racist, “Greeks-only” food handout. The killing of Pavlos Fyssas was preceded the week before by a brutal attack by supporters of Golden Dawn on the KKE itself in Perama—nine KKE supporters were sent to the hospital as a result. The trade union-led actions called by PAME to stop

Although the KKE has the objective capacity through its influence over militant sectors of the working class to take the lead in mobilizing contingents of workers *based on the trade unions* to sweep the fascists off the streets, the KKE does not have the program to do this. Instead of a workers united front against fascism, the KKE today talks of a "people's alliance" against the fascists. This serves to hide the fact that Greece is a class-divided society in which the



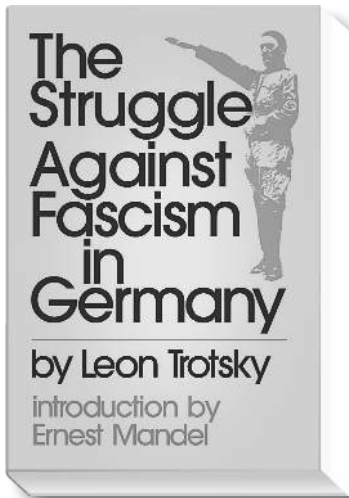
Exiled Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky raised urgent call for workers united front to stop German Nazis in early 1930s.

"In order that the nation should indeed be able to reconstruct itself around a new class core, it must be reconstructed ideologically and this can be achieved only if the proletariat does not dissolve itself into the 'people,' into the 'nation,' but on the contrary develops a program of *its* proletarian revolution and compels the petty bourgeoisie to choose between two regimes.... Under present conditions in Germany, the slogan of a 'people's revolution' wipes away the ideological demarcation between Marxism and fascism and reconciles part of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie to the ideology of fascism, allowing them to think that they are not compelled to make a choice.

—“Thälmann and the ‘People’s Revolution,’” 14 April 1931

People's Front: Policy of Class Betrayal

That the Nazis were able to march to power in 1933 without even token resistance was a world-historic defeat and a betrayal by the Stalinist and Social-Democratic misleaders. After not a single section of the Communist International protested this betrayal, it was apparent to the Trotskyists that a new International and new revolutionary parties needed to be built. In a panic over the defeat, the Stalinists flip-flopped from their earlier policy of refusing to carry out united-front actions jointly with other



In revolutionary situations, the popular front has led to nothing but a long string of bloody defeats for the working class: Spain and France in the '30s, Indonesia in the '60s and Chile in the '70s. This is because the popular front is a bloc of organizations and parties representing various classes on the basis of a common program—the defense of bourgeois democracy. By definition, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties cannot agree to fight for a revolutionary, working-class program. Thus the popular front forces the working class to give up the aims that are in its class interests and to accept the aims of other class forces—defending capitalism. A people's front always means abandoning the program of proletarian revolution and subordinating the workers

continued on page 10

Greece...

(continued from page 9)

to the bourgeoisie. This is the recipe for working-class defeat that the KKE leadership has upheld for more than 70 years. Subordinating the proletariat to the “people” goes hand in hand with the promotion of nationalism—the idea that there is a common interest among all Greeks regardless of their class. While the masthead of the KKE’s newspaper may read “Proletarians of the World Unite,” the party’s response to the proposed closure of three state defense companies was pure Greek nationalism:

“This situation develops at the same time that the rivalries in the area are increasing, sovereignty rights of the country are in question and the existence as well as the functioning of the war industry is more and more necessary in order not to weaken the defense capacity of the country.”

—Statement in Parliament by KKE MP Thanasis Pafilis, kke.gr, 12 September

The working class has no interest in maintaining capitalist Greece’s defense capacity or the capitalist army. As V.I. Lenin said: “Not a penny, not a man’, not only for a standing army, but even for a bourgeois militia” (“The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution,” September 1916). The purpose of the capitalist army is to defend the interests of the Greek capitalists by sending Greek workers to kill and be killed by their Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian or Turkish working-class brothers, when the capitalists deem this necessary. It is therefore not surprising that the bourgeois press is now circulating stories that members of special forces units in the military have helped train Golden Dawn supporters.

The working class cannot successfully fight to win the discontented and dispossessed masses to its side away from forces like Golden Dawn by competing to be the

best defenders of the “nation” and its borders, as the KKE does. In Greece, nationalism means the brutal oppression of immigrants, Roma and national minorities such as the Macedonians, Vlachs, Pomaks, Turks and Albanians. It is no accident that Golden Dawn first made its mark in the early 1990s in chauvinist protests against the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia including “Macedonia” in its name. Golden Dawn MPs now get up in Parliament and spout racist abuse against Muslim MPs from Thrace, while claiming Istanbul as the rightful capital of Greece. In opposition to such vile nationalism it is necessary for the workers movement to take up the fight for full democratic rights for the national minorities of Greece, for the right of self-determination for the Macedonian minority in Greece and for a socialist federation of the Balkans as the only way to resolve the myriad national questions in the region.

For New October Revolutions!

There appear to be no bounds to the attempts of the Troika [International Monetary Fund, European Union and European Central Bank] and the Greek capitalists to decimate the working class. The public health care system, which was already nearing collapse, is now faced with further cuts in staff and funding. The government has even talked of entirely dismantling the main state health care provider, while you cannot even be seen in a “public” hospital without paying a fee and as of 2014 will not be hospitalized without paying 25 euros. The education system is also under attack—thousands of schoolteachers are facing layoffs. Major universities around Greece have announced that they are suspending all operations due to massive cuts in administrative staff demanded by the government. Official unemployment has swelled to almost 30 percent, while for youth it is around 60 percent. The bloodsucking banks are now demanding that the Greek



Reuters

February 6: Crowd scrambles for free produce distributed by farmers during protest outside Agriculture Ministry in Athens.

government lift the ban on bank reposessions of the homes of those unable to make their loan repayments. The imperialist rulers and their domestic henchmen are not only trying to drive Greek wages and living conditions down to the level of neighboring Balkan countries but are also using Greece as a guinea pig for what they would like to do to the working class and poor throughout West Europe.

For all the protests and strikes called by the pro-capitalist bureaucracy of the ADEDY and GSEE trade-union federations since the beginning of the crisis in 2008, not a single austerity measure has been defeated. The increasingly desperate situation of Greek working people requires a leadership that through transitional demands links the daily struggles against austerity to the need to overthrow the capitalist order. For example, in response to mass unemployment and plummeting wages, such a leadership would fight for jobs for all with no

loss in pay and the indexing of wages to inflation. But the trade-union bureaucracy, of which KKE representatives are a significant part, are not about to mobilize the full power of the working class in opposition to capitalist attacks because this would represent a challenge to the whole capitalist order. What is needed is a struggle for a new, revolutionary leadership of the trade unions, one that fights to keep the unions completely independent of the capitalist state to which they are currently tied by a thousand strings.

Unlike the rest of the left, the goal of the Trotskyist Group of Greece is not to build a movement that takes control of the existing state in the form of a “left” capitalist government. Our goal is to build a revolutionary, internationalist workers party like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, one that fights for the overthrow of the capitalist state, as part of the struggle for socialist revolutions internationally. ■

NYC Elections...

(continued from page 12)

De Blasio’s career hews to a not-so-rare arc of Democratic Party operatives of his generation. From youthful flirtation with leftist politics, he went on to work for Dinkins, former New York Senator Hillary Clinton and the state’s current governor, Andrew Cuomo. Next stop was New York City Council, then the city’s Public Advocate and now, presumably, the mayor’s office. Railing about income inequality is just the flavor of the day for a wing of the Democrats whose traditional role is to get in front of mounting discontents and channel them into the dead end of bourgeois electoral politics.

De Blasio and Labor

Despite his populist projection, de Blasio has a history of cozy relations with New York real estate developers, who join the construction industry as his top donors. Michael Greenberg observed in the *New York Review of Books* (24 October): “As a councilman his policy was much the same as Bloomberg’s: to work with real estate developers to ease the way for large-scale projects, while attaching to these projects as many units of below-market housing as the developers would accept.” De Blasio was instrumental in pushing through the City Council two rezoning laws to ease the way for apartment development in Brooklyn’s Gowanus neighborhood that included no affordable housing. With property taxes currently making up nearly half of the city’s tax revenue, Greenberg noted, “The city pays for basic services largely on the assumption of an ongoing real estate boom.”

To bolster his “labor friendly” credentials, two years ago de Blasio made sure to have his picture taken at a picket line of striking Verizon workers. Such posturing gives him more credibility to try to rein in unionized workers on his own turf. Early this year, de Blasio used his Public Advocate office to clamor for an end to a



AP

March 18: Protesters outside federal courthouse in Manhattan where suit against NYPD’s racist “stop and frisk” policy was being argued.

strike by school bus drivers. The popular strike was called off by Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181 leaders the day after they received a letter from de Blasio, Comptroller John Liu, former Comptroller William Thompson and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn—all of whom ran in the Democratic mayoral primary—calling on them to end the walkout (see “Union Tops Sell Out School Bus Strike,” WV No. 1019, 8 March).

More recently, de Blasio made a point of getting arrested at a protest against Brooklyn hospital closings. As we reported in “Brooklyn Hospital Crisis: Union Jobs, Services for Poor Under the Ax” (WV No. 1030, 20 September), he has called for setting up a “super-authority” with extraordinary powers to oversee Brooklyn hospital restructuring—a body that would contain the same city and state officials who are overseeing and approving the closures right now. De Blasio holds up Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx as a model for providing hospital services in a high Medicaid area—the same institution that

has been buying up smaller facilities and laying off workers in the process.

One of de Blasio’s first tasks in office will be to deal with the municipal unions. For years, the labor officialdom has played dead in the face of the bosses’ anti-union assault, bowing to New York State’s Taylor Law, which bans public employee strikes. During Bloomberg’s last term, the union tops’ strategy was to work under the old contract, reasoning that whatever they could get from Bloomberg would be worse than what his successor would give out. Today, as the bureaucrats obediently fall into line behind the Democratic mayoral candidate, virtually every major public-sector union in the city, from teachers and other city employees to transit workers, is working under an expired contract.

In the face of union demands for up to \$7 billion to compensate for past give-backs, de Blasio indicated that he would be willing to offer *some* back pay. In an interview with the *Nation* (20 August), he declared: “I always use the example of the 1970s, when the near-bankruptcy of New

York City was a much tougher situation than what we face now, and labor stepped up and was very creative and responsible.” The “creativity” he harkens back to is the labor tops’ signing on to the looting of union pension funds and to job-cutting, wage-gouging contracts designed to meet the banks’ demands to bail the city out.

Occupy Wall Street in the Mayor’s Mansion?

At a time when even some ruling-class voices fret that the country’s yawning inequality may be hurting the economy by limiting consumption, de Blasio’s primary victory was widely hailed by liberal pundits. Charles Blow, op-ed columnist for the *New York Times*, called it a triumph of the “we are the 99 percent” call of the Occupy movement, while the *Nation* (4 September) celebrated the “rebirth of economic liberalism.”

In a *Daily Beast* (12 September) article titled, “The Rise of the New New Left,” Peter Beinart writes that many Democratic activists are envisioning their party breaking from the neoliberal playbook associated with the Clinton presidency. Beinart cites the younger political generation of “millennials” that came of age in a terrible economy, saddled with massive debt at a time when the government provided even less support. According to a 2011 Pew study, many Americans under 30 describe themselves as “have nots” and vaguely favor “socialism.” In this climate, a number of politicians on the Democratic Party’s left wing—such as de Blasio and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren—have achieved some prominence, playing the populist card to reinforce the illusion that the system can be made to work for the little guy. And you don’t even have to be a liberal Democrat to appear as the lesser evil when the Republican Party revels in union-bashing as well as racist, anti-woman, anti-immigrant reaction.

Playing the bourgeois shell game with its own rulebook, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) beams: “In the birthplace of Occupy, the mayor who

AP
With Democratic mayor Steven Fulop (above) ratcheting up harassment of black youth in Jersey City, cops swept through ghetto areas in early August, arresting 47.


Fulop has hired James Shea, a former deputy chief of the New York Police Department, to become Jersey City's Public Safety Director. Besides running the NYPD-FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, Shea helped devise training for the NYPD's notorious stop-and-frisk program, which has victimized hundreds of thousands of blacks and Latinos. Fulop

Sitting across the Hudson River from lower Manhattan, Jersey City was never an appetizing location for the affluent. It was the first stop after Ellis Island for millions of immigrants on their way to somewhere else. Those without the means stayed put. As Helene Stapinski put it in *Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History* (2001), “The Statue of Liberty pedestal may have read, ‘Give me your tired, your poor,’ but if Jersey City had had a statue in the harbor, it would have said, ‘Give me your completely exhausted, completely broken, completely hopeless and weak, who have no train fare to go any farther’.” Today Jersey City is one of the most racially and nationally diverse cities in the country, including immigrants from all parts of the world. In the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Jersey City residents from Egypt, Pakistan and other Islamic countries felt

A political climber, Fulop padded his résumé by trumpeting how he took a leave from his job at Goldman Sachs to join the Marines after September 11 and did a stint in Iraq. Back in Jersey City in 2004, he made a failed bid for U.S. Congress but later reconciled himself with a seat on the city council. In a town notorious even in the state of New Jersey for its extreme venality, Fulop won the mayoralty in large part by promising to clean things up. (His predecessor, Democrat Jerramiah Healy, saw many of his political allies arrested as part of a federal sting.) In other words, he was ready for business with Goldman Sachs, and who needs a middle man?

Today, most of Jersey City's industry is long gone, some of its structures replaced by luxury condos and office towers. The gleaming Goldman Sachs building on the waterfront is located where the Colgate soap factory used to be. Most of what remains of unionized jobs in the city is comprised of teachers, medical workers and transit workers. The decaying shells of factories seen from the crumbling Pulaski Skyway and the impoverished neighborhoods far from the new luxury pet boutiques are a testament to the stark inequality and racial oppression at the core of American capitalism. This situation will only be addressed when the U.S. working class takes power and expropriates the banks and industry, using that wealth to rebuild this society for the benefit of the masses. ■

defense of all the exploited, oppressed and dispossessed, such a party is a necessary instrument in the fight for a workers government that expropriates the capitalists and rebuilds society on the basis of a planned, collectivized economy. ■

<h1>SPARTACIST</h1>		
NUMBER 61	ENGLISH EDITION	SPRING 2009

Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!

Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics


PAGE 4

**Against Apologists for the Treachery
of the POUM, Then and Now**

Trotskyism vs. Popular Frontism in the Spanish Civil War

PAGE 24

Women and Revolution



Women Workers and the Contradictions of China Today

Defend China Against Imperialism, Counterrevolution!
For Workers Political Revolution!

PAGE 64

G rard Le M tel, 1959-2007.....3

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English edition
No. 61, Spring 2009

\$1.50 (64 pages)

Spartacist is sent to all WV subscribers.

Make checks payable/mail to:

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New York, NY 10116

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WORKERS VANGUARD

NYC Elections

De Blasio: Liberal Populist Face of Capitalist Politics



Getty
NYC Democratic mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio (left) with outgoing mayor Michael Bloomberg, October 8.

Bill de Blasio is poised to become the first Democratic New York City mayor in 20 years. The liberal politician came from behind to win the Democratic primary election and has built a 50 percentage point lead over his Republican opponent, Joseph Lhota, based on his populist appeals to working people, black people and Latinos and also middle-class professionals. De Blasio was an early critic of how the New York Police Department carries out its policy of stopping and frisking blacks and Latinos and went on to denounce the gaping and growing gap between the filthy rich and the bulk of the city's increasingly struggling population. But the hopes he has aroused are bound to be cruelly dashed. Whatever posture he takes today and whatever palliatives he may dole out, de Blasio as mayor will be charged with managing the finance capital of U.S. imperialism on behalf of the Wall Street plutocrats and real estate barons who run the city.

It has not hurt his chances that de Blasio's family portrait could have been commissioned by the producers of the *Modern Family* television series: an interracial family featuring a former lesbian activist and their photogenic children. De Blasio's TV ad describing concern over stop-and-frisk and featuring his 16-year-old son Dante sporting an Afro that would make a young Julius Erving jealous was a highlight of the campaign, so effective that lame-duck mayor Michael Bloomberg denounced de Blasio for running a "racist" campaign. That grotesque attempt at race-baiting fell utterly flat, which is as much a statement about how popular sentiment in the city is running as it is about Bloomberg's haughty piggishness. This is, after all, the same multibillionaire who responded to de Blasio's talk of a "tale of two cities" by declaring, "The way to help those who are less fortunate is, number one, to attract more very fortunate people."

De Blasio's promise to tax the rich and reform the police is being denounced as "class warfare" by Lhota and his press agents at the *New York Post*, who summon the spectre of New York returning to the fire-swept, crime-ridden 1970s. Deputy Mayor Howard Wolfson warns of a "wealth flight" from the city, while Bloomberg forecasts a Detroit-type bankruptcy if more money goes to social programs benefiting the poor and even minimal raises for city workers, who have been working under expired labor contracts for a year or longer.

In fact, de Blasio knows full well which side his bread is buttered on. The *New York Times* (11 October) reported: "Mr. de Blasio, who scarcely appears in public these days, has been holding closed-door fund-raisers at a breakneck pace, collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars in

campaign contributions from the same bankers and Wall Street lawyers whose excesses he has frequently bemoaned." In an attempt to win over big bankers and others alarmed by his populist appeals, de Blasio recently told a meeting of business moguls in Midtown Manhattan: "Wall Street is our hometown industry."

De Blasio's "tale of two cities" campaign slogan has tapped into a reservoir of growing anger among the vast majority who have reeled under 12 years of Bloomberg rule—a banker's dozen that saw the mayor and his Wall Street cronies swimming in billions in profits while most everyone else either treaded water or sank

Add to this the NYPD state of siege in the ghettos and barrios, where a walk to the corner grocery store is likely to be interrupted by a police interrogation. Since 2004, the cops have made over 4.5 million stops and frisks, under what federal judge Shira Scheindlin in an August ruling called a "policy of indirect racial profiling." Scheindlin declared the program as practiced unconstitutional and ordered a federal monitor to oversee police reforms, similar to the cosmetic measures de Blasio has called for.

As for the some 300,000 city workers wanting a new contract and expecting a reprieve now that Bloomberg is on the way

even more effective tool in keeping working people in the thrall of their capitalist exploiters. Workers and the oppressed have no horse in this race. As Marxists, the Spartacist League says: No vote to de Blasio! Workers need their own party, one that fights for workers rule!

Love Me, I'm a Liberal

"In every American community you have varying shades of political opinion. One of the shadiest of these is the liberals."
—1960s folksinger Phil Ochs

In addition to his police reform schemes, de Blasio calls for a slight tax hike on incomes above \$500,000 to pay for city-wide pre-kindergarten classes and after-school programs; for building more low-income housing; and for bolstering public schools rather than union-busting charters. This program appeals to many people after years of cutbacks under both Democratic and Republican governments on all levels.

De Blasio's program spurred his opponents to try to whip up right-wing hysteria, including by painting de Blasio as a socialist based on his support to Nicaragua's radical-nationalist Sandinista government in the 1980s. This effort gained as little traction as Bloomberg's race-baiting. At this juncture, the bourgeoisie sees no need for the whip hand to crack heads, such as that wielded by Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the 1990s: a massage of the plebeian masses by a "man of the people" will do just fine. And while the *Post* and Co. may have nightmares about de Blasio "handcuffing" the police and turning the city over to the municipal unions, they can turn off the nightlight and rest easy—he will do no such thing.

On his signature issue of stop-and-frisk, de Blasio has never called for its elimination, merely its reform—i.e., repackaging the daily terror the police mete out in enforcing the racial oppression that is endemic to American capitalist rule. De Blasio's campaign calls for putting more cops on the streets with greater resources. Among his candidates to replace NYPD commissioner Raymond Kelly are Philip Banks, currently the force's highest-ranking uniformed officer, and William Bratton, NYPD commissioner in the mid '90s and currently consultant for the Oakland police. Under Giuliani, Bratton engineered the "broken windows" method of policing—targeting minor violations like jumping a subway turnstile or playing hooky from school and designating "hot spots" for police attention and aggressive stopping and frisking. This spring, Bratton declared, "For any city to say they don't do stop-and-frisk.... I'm sorry, they don't know what the hell they are talking about. Every police department in America does it."

Break with the Democrats! For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

deeper into poverty. While Bloomberg's personal fortune grew from \$5 billion to \$27 billion during his tenure, today 1.7 million New Yorkers, including 31 percent of children 17 and younger, live below the official poverty line. Approximately 50,000 people across the city—including some working two full-time jobs—spend the night in homeless shelters; over 21,000 of these are children. More than 167,000 families are on waiting lists for public housing, many for as much as ten years. The South Bronx, just a subway ride from Wall Street, is home to the Congressional district with the highest poverty rate in the country. Meanwhile, Bloomberg's beloved Manhattan is home to the widest income gap of any large county in the country.

out, they should know that in an October 4 speech to an overflow crowd of wealthy businessmen, de Blasio got a standing ovation after describing himself as a "fiscal conservative" focused on keeping a balanced budget as he negotiates with municipal unions. De Blasio will be heading into these negotiations in the same spirit as his onetime boss David Dinkins promised Wall Street during his successful run for mayor in 1989, "They'll take it from me."

No less than the self-styled independent Bloomberg and the Republican Lhota, de Blasio and his Democratic Party are class enemies of the multiracial, multiethnic working class that makes this city run as well as of the ghetto and barrio poor. His pretensions to the contrary make him an



NYC fast-food workers protest starvation wages, August 29.

Reuters

continued on page 10