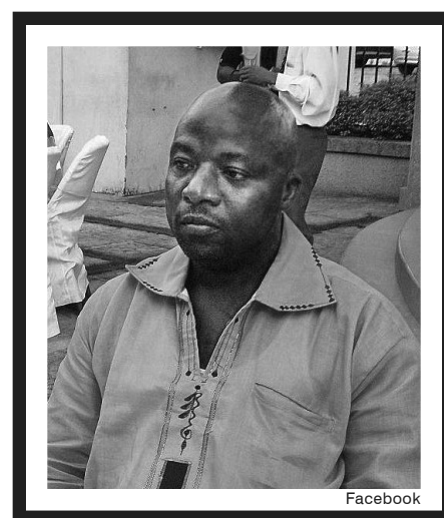


Ebola in America

Capitalist Criminality and Racist Indifference



National Nurses United



Union nurses rally in Oakland, October 12, to demand proper training and adequate protective gear for Ebola treatment. Above: Thomas Eric Duncan died of Ebola at a Dallas hospital after being initially turned away.

With racist indifference to the lives of black Africans, for months the U.S. imperialist rulers ignored pleas for medical aid to deal with the epidemic of Ebola virus disease in West Africa. When President Barack Obama finally responded in mid September, it was by dispatching thousands of troops. As we noted in our article opposing this military intervention, “Obama made clear his motivation for intervening militarily: to curb the political and economic ‘ripple effects’ that the spread of the virus could have on the region and beyond. His calling Ebola a ‘national security priority’ is a declaration of U.S. intent to limit the epidemic to Africans and not let it reach American shores” (WV No. 1053, 3 October). The disease continues to spread in West Africa, where by official count over 10,000 people have been infected and 5,000 have died.

The American rulers’ hubris and contempt for victims of this disease in Africa was paralleled in the few cases that have now emerged in this country. Repeated warnings by health care workers unions that hospitals here were woefully unprepared to deal with an outbreak of the disease were ignored. Then on September 25, Thomas Eric Duncan, a black Liberian, went to Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. He had a high fever and severe pains, and told a nurse that he was recently in Liberia. He was sent home without being tested for Ebola, only to be rushed back to the hospital three days later, seriously ill. Ten days after that he was dead from Ebola, failed by a health care system riddled with the race and class bias of this society.

The hospital saw Duncan not as a patient but as potential trouble and a financial lia-

bility. His nephew wrote a powerful indictment of his ordeal for the *Dallas Morning News* (14 October):

“He was a man of color with no health insurance and no means to pay for treatment, so within hours he was released with some antibiotics and Tylenol.... From his botched release from the emergency room to his delayed testing and delayed treatment and the denial of experimental drugs that have been available to every other case of Ebola treated in the U.S., the hospital invited death every step of the way.”

Meanwhile, the Dallas D.A.’s office considered bringing charges against Duncan for supposedly exposing the public to the virus.

The treatment of Duncan by hospital authorities is emblematic of what passes for health care in the U.S. for the poor and uninsured, especially black people and immigrants. If you have enough money,

you can get some of the best care in the world. But if you’re poor and have black or brown skin, the care is far from adequate, as captured in overcrowded emergency rooms, long wait times and hurried examinations. What is needed is quality health care for all, provided free at the point of service.

After Duncan died, matters soon proved to be even more serious as two nurses who treated him, Nina Pham and Amber Vinson, tested positive for Ebola. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) initially tried to blame the nurses themselves, claiming there had been a “breach of protocol.” The truth was only revealed when nurses from the non-union hospital contacted the National Nurses United union (NNU), which in an October 15 statement

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Kurdish Leaders Join Imperialist Onslaught Down With U.S. War Against ISIS!

The U.S. bombing of reactionary ISIS forces in Syria is the latest episode in the imperialist wars and occupations that have laid waste to Iraq and other parts of the Near East and touched off spiraling communal and ethnic bloodletting. Since

the start of U.S. operations against ISIS in northern Iraq on August 8, scores of civilians as well as hundreds of fighters have been killed. Cynically launched in the name of “humanitarian” assistance to Shiites, Kurds, Christians, Yazidis and others threatened by the ISIS cutthroats, the imperialist onslaught is aimed at reinforcing the U.S. hold over the Near East, with the Obama administration offering the prospect of many more years of war. It is the duty of class-conscious

workers everywhere, particularly in the U.S., to oppose the bombing campaign and all other wars and occupations carried out by the imperialists. ***Hands off Iraq and Syria! All U.S. forces out of the Near East!***

After the initial airstrikes by the U.S. in northern Iraq, we declared: “Any force, however unsavory, that attacks, repels or otherwise impedes U.S. forces strikes a blow in the interests of the exploited and the oppressed” (“U.S.

Out of Iraq! No Intervention in Syria!” WV No. 1051, 5 September). However, in the reactionary, mainly Sunni-Shi’ite communal conflicts in Iraq and Syria, the world’s toilers had no side.

Since then, Iraqi government forces and Kurdish *pesh merga* in Iraq are again conducting joint military operations with the U.S., as they did for years under the occupation. More recently, Syrian Kurdish nationalists have also

continued on page 8



U.S./UN Role in Haiti's Cholera Crisis

9 October 2014

In the recent article on the Ebola crisis in Africa (WV No. 1053, 3 October), we take up the latest in a series of imperialist interventions and occupations around the world cloaked in humanitarian disguise. The U.S./UN imperialist occupation of Haiti was mentioned. The bourgeois press and the capitalist rulers have conveniently and hypocritically buried the occupiers' role in the cholera epidemic that ravaged Haiti.

As I was writing, I noticed a brief note in the "World Briefing" section of the *NY Times* (8 October), which mentions that "a federal judge in New York has agreed to hear oral arguments in a lawsuit filed against the United Nations by advocates for Haitian victims of the deadly cholera

epidemic that first appeared on the island four years ago. The lawsuit, filed last year, argues that United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti were responsible for introducing the disease through sewage contamination from their barracks after the earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010. The epidemic has killed more than 8,000 people."

That's right, 8,000 and counting. We communists have thrown a sharp spotlight on imperialism's role in thwarting basic lifesaving measures to ameliorate the cholera outbreak in Haiti. In 2010, the U.S. prevented the development of water purification facilities that could have saved countless lives. The cholera strain was similar to a South Asian strain and perhaps linked to the presence of UN troops from Nepal. ("Haiti: Cholera Epi-

dem and Imperialist Oppression," WV No. 970, 3 December 2010).

The U.S. occupation in 2010 was designed to keep desperately poor Haitians out of the U.S. following the devastating earthquake and to perpetuate U.S. imperialist domination over the region. The Democratic Party Obama administration and the UN special envoy to Haiti, Bill "I feel your pain" Clinton, provided a "kinder, gentler" face for bloody U.S. imperialism

in its strangulation of desperately impoverished Haiti. In accordance with the racist ideology of the imperialist rulers, black/dark-skinned people throughout the world are viewed as the inherent carriers of disease, crime and bestiality. On the contrary, it is the imperialist criminals worldwide, led by the U.S., who are monstrous, rapacious beasts. Armed with an internationalist revolutionary program, class-conscious workers will struggle to sweep away capitalist class rule through world socialist revolution.

Don A.

On Nestora Salgado

7 September 2014

Comrades:

I found the following story to be of interest; not sure if you are aware of it.

The upshot is that it's 'legal' under the Mexican Constitution for people to form militias to police and protect themselves when the central or local government fails to do so. US support for the Mexican regime has created narco-capitalist anarchy in that country, in which elements of the state are either engaged in a criminal enterprise for the federal government (capitalist) or for the narcotics shadow organizations (narco). People who have found themselves at the mercy of either also discovered that the formal bourgeois laws mean almost nothing at all in terms of personal safety or protection, and in some areas have attempted to form militias.

The attached story concerns a woman who was part of a people's militia in rural Mexico, who was so successful at mobilizing the people to restore order, she was of course arrested by the 'legitimate' police at the behest of the criminal elements who dominate the area.

In any case, I think the implications are interesting for revolutionaries—the only drawback in the Salgado case was that the militia was not quite massive enough to actually nullify capitalist power in the area. In time they may be.

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/americas/mexico/130917/mexican-woman-vigilante-nestora-salgado-militia-drug-war>

<http://www.socialism.com/drupal-6.8/?q=node/2863>

Fraternally Yours,
Todd B.

WV replies:

To start, we refer our readers to the articles from our Mexican section on pages 6 and 7: "Mexico: Community Police and the War on Drugs" and "IG: For 'Inde-

pendent' Vigilantism." The case Todd B. mentions, that of Nestora Salgado, exemplifies the nature of such community police forces, which do not pose a threat to capitalist rule, but act as auxiliaries to the bourgeois state. As a U.S. citizen of Mexican origin, Salgado returned to Mexico and took it upon herself to restore "law and order" in the face of drug cartel violence and official corruption in Guerrero, and was elected commander of the community police in the town of Olinalá.

As our comrades explain, these armed indigenous-based militias occasionally run afoul of the bourgeois state when their vigilantism is directed against the authorities and narco gangs. Nestora Salgado was arrested in August 2013 on charges of having detained a local sheriff under somewhat murky circumstances. Salgado was also indicted for her role in the kidnapping of several girls in order to "reeducate" them, no surprise given her group's morality policing based on indigenous, anti-woman "customs and traditions." (This particular kidnapping is referred to in "IG: For 'Independent' Vigilantism.")

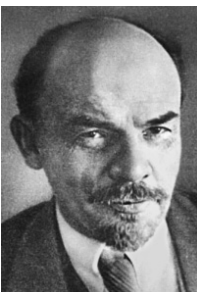
The second link that Todd B. provides is to an article by the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP), which joins much of the reformist left in tailing these vigilante forces. While approvingly referring to a letter from Salgado's lawyer stating that she was "armed and trained with the help of the governor of her state," the FSP nevertheless hails her for personifying "the international solidarity and bravery" critical to survival of "the poor and working classes...throughout our hemisphere." No doubt in the eyes of the "socialist feminists" of the FSP, the fact that Salgado is a woman of indigenous origin is sufficient cause for them to tout her as a proletarian internationalist. But, as an adjunct to the capitalist state, Nestora Salgado is no class-war prisoner. ■



TROTSKY

The Russian Revolution Showed the Way

Led by the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the working class in Russia overthrew the rule of the capitalist exploiters and seized power on 7 November 1917 (25 October 1917 by the Julian calendar used in Russia at the time). In marking the 17th anniversary of the Revolution, the U.S. Trotskyists explained how that world-historic victory gave flesh and blood to the program of revolutionary Marxism.



LENIN

The Bolshevik revolution was the decisive factor in taking the disputes between the Left and Right wings in the labor movement out of the realm of academic discussion and bringing them down to the solid soil of practical reality. If it is true that the establishment of the first successful workers' state revived and reinforced the undistorted doctrines of Marx and Engels, then only because it demonstrated in life that far from being obsolete and applicable only to the middle of the last century, they were the indispensable weapons of the modern proletarian struggle for emancipation from wage slavery. The revolution, taking place as it did in a backward agricultural country, underscored the fact that the only consistently progressive class in modern world society is the proletariat. By what the latter accomplished for formerly oppressed racial and national minorities, and for the peasant millions—freedom and development immeasurably greater than that ever effected for similar groups by the bourgeoisie even in its most revolutionary period—it confirmed all previous theoretical affirmation that no section of the population can free itself and be guaranteed a progressive evolution save under the leadership of the working class. The October victory brought forward sharply the tremendous importance of the revolutionary party as the leader of the working class, without which it is a headless, inchoate mass, condemned to spontaneous but finally futile assaults upon its class enemy.

In the broader social sense, the contributions of the Bolshevik revolution are equally deathless. Under a thousand handicaps, it nevertheless refuted the bourgeois canard that the working class is unable to manage the affairs of society, that the scrubwoman must wash floors and the banker direct the government because of qualities inherent in each of them. The veritable torrent of initiative, resourcefulness, talent released from the midst of the "dark masses" when the revolution broke down even the first few barriers of traditional class repression, shows that a new Golden Age undreamed of by Pericles is held in store for humanity under communism. Shut off from the advantages of world intercourse enjoyed by capitalism, the Soviet state nevertheless established the fact that only in a socialist order is security and plenty possible for all; that even in the transitional period leading to socialism, crises and economic difficulties are due not to a plethora, to an overproduction of the means of life and comfort which the masses cannot share—a condition which is the distinguishing mark of capitalism—but to a shortage in production attendant upon the growing pains of a new order hemmed in by stifling capitalist walls. With all the vast technical superiority and advantages of experience on its side, capitalism still is unable to produce in any way but anarchically, whereas only the working class in power has been able to undertake and carry through planning in economic life with a success which is grudgingly acknowledged even by its astonished foes.

—"The Russian Revolution 17 Years After," *New International* (November 1934)

WORKERS VANGUARD



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People's Climate March Toxic Fumes from Eco-Socialists

Upwards of 400,000 people wound their way through the streets of New York City on September 21 in a heavily stage-managed affair dubbed the People's Climate March. Coming just prior to yet another United Nations confab on climate change, the procession gave pride of place to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and an assortment of bourgeois VIPs. Organizers, sky-high over the throngs clamoring for "climate action," gushed: "We are moving towards a brighter and more just future." Some future. Within 24 hours, the U.S. imperialists were raining death and destruction on Syria; at home, killer cops getting started on a busy week had gunned down two mentally ill men in separate states. Meanwhile, working people are still drowning in a sea of debt. The march did manage to make a mark, mainly by leaving behind a sizable trail of litter for sanitation workers to clean up.

Among the hundreds of diverse organizations that lent their names to the initiative were outfits espousing eco-socialism, demonstrating once again that this moniker is shorthand for grafting the most vapid anti-capitalist verbiage onto the bourgeois environmentalist agenda. Demanding climate action, as the eco-socialists do, is to urge the capitalist rulers to make some adjustments on energy-related matters. Genuine Marxists have an altogether different audience to set in motion for an altogether different purpose. That is the working class, the only force with the potential power and historic interest to sweep away capitalism and its many ravages through socialist revolution.

Standing out among the brood of eco-socialists at the march was the System Change Not Climate Change (SCNCC) coalition. Its activists embraced the "big tent" event with the zeal of true-green acolytes, serving on the People's Climate March Host Committee. When a few radical liberals in the milieu, such as journalists Chris Hedges and Arun Gupta, bemoaned the openly corporate character of the march, elements in the SCNCC, centered in the International Socialist Organization (ISO), rushed to its defense.



Eco-socialists pushed bourgeois environmentalist agenda at New York City events. Top (from right to left): UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, NYC mayor Bill de Blasio and Al Gore at People's Climate March, September 21. Bottom: "Flood Wall Street" rally the next day.

The critics did not exactly have to turn over a lot of rocks to get the dirt on the main forces behind the march, the liberal activist groups 350.org and Avaaz. The Rockefellers are well known to have funneled sizable sums into the coffers of 350.org; ditto billionaire George Soros

and Avaaz (the global counterpart of his U.S.-based MoveOn.org). These two Democratic Party stalwart organizations, with their deep pockets, connections and market-based schemes to reduce carbon emissions, are out to fertilize the growth of green capitalism, although admittedly

Avaaz has other pursuits, such as agitating for U.S. military intervention first in Libya and now Syria.

Well aware of the potential for profit-making, some of the largest companies on the planet, Big Oil not excluded, issued a blizzard of climate solidarity statements pledging more support for renewable energy and greener supply chains, timed to coincide with the UN meeting. At that gathering, Barack Obama invoked the march in order to sanctimoniously wag his finger at China on the need to "answer the call." Behind such efforts to chastise Beijing stands the imperialist drive for counterrevolution in the largest remaining country where capitalist rule has been overthrown. Meanwhile, the loudest climate alarm heard in bourgeois circles over the last month was sounded not by the parading masses but by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, who openly fretted over the national security threats it posed.

"What puts bankers and hipsters in the same march?" was the tagline of an Avaaz-funded ad in NYC subways. Well, the bankers have visions of the piles of money to be made and also probably would not mind something like seawalls to protect lower Manhattan. Hipsters, as always, are attracted to fashionable causes. Many are moved by the countless dire predictions of the consequences of a warming world. Whatever the future holds, one thing is certain. As long as the capitalist order is not shattered and replaced with workers rule, the vast bulk of humanity will be at the mercy of the drive for profit, which breeds mass impoverishment and insecurity, threatens ever more outbreaks of war and runs counter to any attempt to rationally organize society to deal with the vagaries of nature.

There certainly is no mystery as to what put the eco-socialists of the ISO and its SCNCC umbrella in the march. In his *Socialist Worker* (25 September) riposte "Against the Climate March Cynics," ISO honcho Paul D'Amato goes through great contortions to dress up the demonstration as something more than *continued on page 4*

Feds Witchhunt Palestinian Activist Hands Off Rasmea Odeh!

On November 4, Rasmea Odeh, a 67-year-old Palestinian activist and associate director of the Arab American Action Network (AAAN), will be tried in a Detroit federal court on trumped-up charges of "immigration fraud" for which she faces ten years in prison followed by deportation. The supposed fraud is that, when she applied for U.S. citizenship in 2004, Odeh failed to disclose her 1970 frame-up conviction by an Israeli military court for her alleged involvement in planting bombs at a Jerusalem supermarket and the British consulate. That conviction was based on a supposed confession extracted through vicious torture, including electric shock and multiple rapes, at the hands of the Zionist butchers. Odeh, alleged to be a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which was deemed a "terrorist" organization by the U.S., languished for a decade in Israeli dungeons.

Her prosecution springs out of a "war on terror" witchhunt against AAAN and activists associated with the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. In September 2010, FBI agents raided the homes of AAAN

executive director Hatem Abudayyeh and six others. As the Partisan Defense Committee, a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, noted at the time: "From its inception under the Bush administration, the 'war on terror,' which initially victimized Arab and Muslim immigrants, set into motion repressive measures that also target leftists, trade unionists, and black people. Now the Obama administration is escalating these wholesale attacks on civil liberties with these neo-McCarthyite raids" (see "Protest FBI Raids on Leftists, Union Activists!" WV No. 966, 8 October 2010). Ultimately, 26 activists were subpoenaed by a federal grand jury investigating charges of "support" to terrorism. There has not been a single indictment, but the investigation is being kept open in order to intimidate the activists.

A year ago, after collecting documents from the Israeli state, the Feds arrested Odeh. In an 18 November 2013 protest letter to U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade, the PDC wrote: "Ms. Odeh is being prosecuted for being a Palestinian activist. The

object of the Federal Government's prosecution of Ms. Odeh is to make an example of her and deter not only Palestinians but any other immigrant who makes it here from continuing to struggle for their democratic rights." We say: **Drop the charges! Hands off Rasmea Odeh!**

On August 13, Odeh's lawyers filed a motion to dismiss the charges against her because she has been caught up in a politically motivated witchhunt. On October 8, federal judge Gershwin Drain rejected this motion in a Catch-22 ruling in which he claimed that Odeh had not offered enough "specific detail" to show that she is being targeted, but denied her the discovery she needs to amass that detailed evidence.

Now the prosecutors are targeting Odeh's defense committee, accusing AAAN director Abudayyeh "and his hoard [sic] of supporters" of threatening to "taint" the jury pool through their demonstrations outside the courthouse. On October 16, the judge ordered the jurors to meet at a secret off-site location for escort to the courthouse garage by federal marshals so that they would "not be exposed to the



Arab American Action Network
Rasmea Odeh

Defendant's supporters." The judge also directed that the city's noise ordinance be used to harass protesters and ordered that Odeh's supporters not be allowed into the courtroom wearing "inappropriate attire," such as "Free Rasmea" T-shirts.

The PDC has signed a statement at stopfbi.net in support of the right of the Rasmea Defense Committee and others to protest against the witchhunt. We urge trade unions, civil liberties organizations and others to do the same. Funds are urgently needed for Odeh's legal defense, to which the PDC has contributed. Donations can be mailed to: Committee to Stop FBI Repression, PO Box 14183, Minneapolis, MN 55414. ■

Government Out of the Bedroom!

No to Crackdown on Prostitution!

Canada

The following article originally appeared in Spartacist Canada No. 182 (Fall 2014), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste.

In eight years, the Harper Tories [Conservative Party under Prime Minister Stephen Harper] have waged war on pretty much everyone: the old, the young and the sick, scientists, environmentalists, veterans, Mennonites, Native people, Muslims and, always, trade unionists. Now it is prostitutes and their clients who, if the government has its way, are to

SPARTACIST CANADA

be abolished. Conservative justice minister Peter MacKay introduced Bill C-36 on June 4, snarling that “the purchase and sale of sex has never been illegal in Canada. That changes today.” This law won’t get rid of prostitution, but it will make it much more dangerous.

In late 2013, after a seven-year legal battle waged by former sex workers Terri-Jean Bedford and Valerie Scott, and Amy Lebovitch, a prostitute, the Supreme Court struck down Canada’s reactionary prostitution laws. While prostitution itself is not illegal in Canada, nearly every activity associated with it has been. The bourgeoisie’s hand-picked judges had to admit that these laws forced sex workers into dangerous situations in order to avoid arrest and thus violated their constitutional rights. The court gave Ottawa a year to come up with new legislation. Bill C-36, the “Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act,” is the Tories’ malignant reply.

Bill C-36 revives and *sharpens* previous restrictions against working from the



Canadian Press

20 December 2013: Protesters rally in Toronto in defense of sex workers.

safer conditions of a home or a brothel and against “living off the avails,” which targets people providing security or other paid services to a prostitute. It bars advertising in print media or on the internet and makes it a crime to have “communication” about selling sex anywhere near schools, playgrounds and daycare centres. Above all, the very purchase of sex will become illegal and those convicted will face up to five years in jail. As Bedford pointed out, “under the proposed new law a man will likely have more chance of going to jail for paying a woman for sex than for raping her on a date or beating his wife” (rabble.ca, 20 June).

The Trotskyist League strongly opposes these measures. We are for the decriminalization of prostitution—paying or being paid for sex is no crime! Because it is usually heavily regulated by capitalist laws, Marxists consider prostitution to be a “crime without a victim,” like drug use, gambling, pornography and consensual

sex with minors. In the eyes of the working class such activities are not crimes and those who pursue them are not criminals. We oppose all government interference into people’s sexual lives. Our guiding principle is that of effective consent, which means mutual agreement and understanding as opposed to coercion.

The Tories’ Moral Crusaders

The Tories, who have slashed billions from social programs and caused immeasurable harm to poor and working-class women, have fraudulently promoted Bill C-36 as a way of protecting victims of “exploitation.” In this they are backed by an unholy alliance of right-wing outfits like REAL Women of Canada and the feminist groups that make up the Women’s Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution.

In 2011, as the Bedford case was winding its way through the legal system, a lawyer for REAL Women abandoned even the pretence of concern for the

well-being of prostitutes in his appearance before the Ontario Court of Appeal. After Ranjan Agarwal called prostitution “an attack on the fundamental values of modern Canadian society” that should be “eradicated” a judge asked if he saw the risk of violence to sex workers as mere “collateral damage.” The REAL Women lawyer replied that this would be a “sad side effect” but that parliament should “send a signal” through laws aimed at ending prostitution (*National Post*, 16 June 2011). Bill C-36 sends that signal loud and clear.

A central theme of the campaign to sell this law is the false conflation of prostitution with “human trafficking” and “modern slavery.” This is pure sensationalism conjured up by MacKay and his religious and feminist allies to whip up support for their reactionary crusade. Kidnapping, debt bondage, sexual assault and beatings are real crimes. But there is a qualitative distinction between such coercion and the fundamentally consensual act between a prostitute and a client to exchange money for sex. To identify all illegal border crossings and exchanges of sex for money with “slavery” is to target immigrant women for state repression. Those ensnared in the “anti-trafficking” dragnet are more likely to be jailed and deported than anything. Indeed, anti-trafficking laws are a key part of the bourgeoisie’s drive against so-called “illegal” immigrants.

A decade ago, in an article titled “Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against ‘Sex Trafficking,’” we exposed this hysteria as a cynical and dangerous business because:

“it both legitimizes government persecution of immigrants and invokes state authority to intervene as moral arbiter in our most intimate affairs. It bolsters the anti-sex witchhunt as a whole and deflects attention from the real violence perpetrated every day against women and children under this class system.”

—*Spartacist* [English edition]
No. 58, Spring 2004

Climate...

(continued from page 3)

a one-day street fair, even paraphrasing an online liberal handbook titled “Why Protest Events Are Not a Waste of Time.” Among other things, D’Amato sings the praises of 350.org and its founder Bill McKibben for having initiated a series of protests at a time when a Democrat sits in the White House and most liberal organizations refrain from such activity for fear of rocking the boat. Left unsaid, those protests, which the ISO habitually endorses, were designed to stiffen the resolve of the Obama administration. In its SCNCC activities, the ISO also closely collaborates with the small-time capitalist Green Party, and continues to run candidates on that ticket.

The ISO’s making common cause with bourgeois elements does not make the climate march “cynics” right. To the contrary, they offer the same politics, only cloaked in somewhat more militant guise. Chris Hedges, for example, wrote of the need to “turn from a liberal agenda of reform to embrace a radical agenda of revolt” (“The Last Gasp of Climate Change Liberals,” *truthdig.com*, 31 August). What he had in mind was the next day’s 3,000-strong “Flood Wall Street” rally, where he helped fire up activists before they eventually sat down in civil disobedience for several hours on either side of the iconic bronze bull.

Truth be told, there is no dichotomy between the People’s Climate March and

Flood Wall Street; the two are part of the same political ecosystem. Indeed, the Occupy-style protest to “stop capitalism, end the climate crisis” simply bore moral witness to the fat cats and big wigs on the shortcomings of current bourgeois energy policy. Hence, the plaudits of NYC mayor Bill de Blasio afterwards. Environmentalism is still bourgeois politics when shorn of well-oiled PR machines and the active participation of the bourgeoisie or its paid representatives.

The centrist Internationalist Group (IG) intimated otherwise in a leaflet titled “The Great ‘People’s Climate March’ Scam” that it distributed at the event. The IG emphatically announced: “*The whole thing is a gigantic scam, a public relations stunt masquerading as social activism.*” What scam? The march was, as advertised from the outset, an exercise in lobbying for the environmentalist cause. In a transparent effort to cater to anti-corporate opinions in the “climate justice” milieu, the IG borrows heavily from the green march critics, beginning with the claim that it lacked concrete demands. So what? The entire purpose of climate activism is to advise the bourgeoisie on how best to fuel its economy. Tellingly, the pseudo-Marxist IG offers not a word of criticism of environmentalism or its eco-socialist variant.

In fact, the actual scam is the very idea of eco-socialism. The main enemy for the left-wing eco forces is carbon, and implacable hostility to fossil fuels is a must; environmental degradation, especially that linked to climate change, trumps the

exploitation of man by man and all other ills of class-divided society. According to this approach, for humanity to survive, progressive people must convince world leaders to shift economies away from carbon now, a recipe that inevitably entails cutting back personal consumption. In this project, sections of the bourgeoisie are ready and willing partners.

In contrast, the main enemy for revolutionary socialists is the tiny class of capitalist exploiters who organize production to maximize profit, not to meet human need. Implacable hostility to the U.S. capitalist rulers, who have trampled underfoot working people and the oppressed the world over, is a must. Environmental degradation is just one of a host of problems, many far more pressing, linked to the workings of the capitalist system: unemployment, extreme poverty, mass starvation, uncontrolled epidemics and imperialist military adventures and conquest, to list a few. For humanity to survive (and thrive), the working class must seize power and expropriate the bourgeoisie, which would set the stage for a flourishing of the productive forces in a worldwide planned economy and the general satisfaction of want.

In putting forward a threadbare anti-capitalism, the eco-socialists present the capitalist system as an engine of perpetual growth. Much the opposite is the case. Anarchic and crisis-ridden, production for private profit actually is a brake on development. The same inherent features of capitalism that reinforce material scarcity across the globe are barriers to addressing

climate change on the necessary world scale. When the workers are running society, it might prove necessary to harness fossil fuels for a period of time to lift everyone out of backwardness. Only in the context of an international socialist economy that relegates hunger and poverty to the past can a rational plan be hammered out to modulate climate change and minimize its human toll. ■

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Prohibition Fuels Police Violence Against Prostitutes

The Tories are keen to tout government measures aimed at the so-called “rescue” of prostitutes. What this will mean in practice was vividly described by the Sex Professionals of Canada: “Our colleagues are arrested, handcuffed, photographed, fingerprinted, and thrown in jail. The only way out, without a criminal record, is to agree to forced ‘re-education’ at one of the ‘exit’ programs.... [T]hose who seek to ‘rescue’ us are actually perpetrators of violence against us” (spoc.ca, 17 December 2013). An American prostitute interviewed in the London *Economist* captured the danger posed by police: “Screening for cops [is now] the priority over screening for rapists, thieves, kidnappers” (9 August).

Sure enough, in January, with the ink barely dry on the Bedford decision, police in 30 towns and cities across Canada unleashed “Operation Northern Spotlight.” In the name of cracking down on “trafficking,” this vicious campaign targeted over 330 women across the country. “Two or four police officers show up at the door and demand to see ID, bombard you with questions then come in under the pretense of looking for trafficked people,” said Valerie Scott. While no sex workers appear to have been “rescued,” there were plenty of lurid headlines about “potential sex slaves.”

In Vancouver, where the cops are particularly notorious for forcing prostitutes to have sex with them in order to avoid arrest, the police strategy has for years been almost identical to the Tories’ proposed new law. Successive “shame the john” campaigns and outcries against prostitution have driven desperate prostitutes—many of them Native women or drug addicts—into the most dangerous parts of the city. One such area is the Downtown Eastside, where serial killer Robert Pickton chose most of his victims. Prostitutes take the brunt of hatred of women: Pickton targeted these women because he thought he could get away with it. Indeed, police indifference to the disappearance of dozens of Native and other women allowed Pickton to carry out his hideous crimes for as long as he did.

More often than not prostitution is degrading and exploitative. But prostitutes are not victims of the act of prostitution itself. Rather, it is the moral condemnation, bourgeois hypocrisy and criminalization that stigmatizes them and sets them up for violence. As such, prostitution dramatically manifests all the racism, brutality and social inequality of the bourgeois order.

“Perversion”—Whatever Peter MacKay Isn’t Into

It is a certainty that whenever the bourgeoisie launches a moral crusade, it will be done with the maximum hypocrisy. As MacKay vowed to “crack down on pimps and johns,” he slammed those who pay for sex as “perverts.” One must ask, does this include his parliamentary colleagues? The prostitutes who work in the Ottawa area are showing great restraint in their principled refusal to identify the politicians who seek their services. As Terri-Jean Bedford, also the author of *Dominatrix on Trial*, quipped, “I am asked if Mr. Harper is still calling me and asking me to accept a job in the Senate, as a government whip. I had to tell him to stop calling. I could not accept the job. I was afraid I would run into too many former clients on Parliament Hill” (rabble.ca, 20 June).

The drive against prostitution is another one of the moral panics that the ruling class regularly whips up against various expressions of human sexuality, from pornography to homosexuality and sex with young people. The purpose of these crusades is to regiment the population by fostering fear and ignorance, while bolstering the repressive powers of the capitalist state. This state—centrally including the cops, courts and prisons—is not



Former sex workers Terri-Jean Bedford (center) and Valerie Scott (right) at March 2012 press conference.

a neutral arbiter, but the instrument for the suppression of the exploited by the exploiters. As such it plays a key role in enforcing the oppression of women (and youth) alongside organized religion and the patriarchal family, which remains the central instrument for the subjugation of women under capitalism.

Prostitution is closely linked to the oppression of women, the oldest social inequality in human history, and its roots go back to the origins of class society itself. With the rise of private property and a patriarchal, property-owning ruling class, monogamy for the woman was enforced precisely so that the paternity of the children would be known. The family is critical for the ruling class to pass on its property to “legitimate” heirs and to instill obedience to bourgeois codes of morality.

In his groundbreaking 1884 work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Friedrich Engels noted that the institution of monogamous marriage was stamped “from the very beginning with its specific character of monogamy *for the woman only*.” For centuries, it was the norm that the daughters of the ruling class were hawked to the highest bidder—a crass form of prostitution, as Engels put it, in which the women rents out her body not in a piecemeal fashion, but once and for all. It is the institution of the family that brings money into sexual relations.

Sharing the Sheets: Tories, Feminists and Reformists

Several feminist groups have been among the loudest champions of the Tories’ anti-prostitution crusade. Among them are Vancouver Rape Relief and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. Indeed, in voicing “grave concerns about the exploitation that is inherent in prostitution” and “the social harm caused by the objectification of the human body,” the Tory bill made a calculated nod to feminist sensibilities. This had Vancouver blogger Meghan Murphy, a self-described leftist, swooning. “All this kind of thrills me,” she wrote, “This language is explicitly feminist in that it names men as the problem...” (feministcurrent.com, 6 June).

One could not wish for a clearer example of the bankruptcy of feminism than this open embrace of a deeply repressive anti-woman law. Far from an aberration, this bloc with bourgeois reaction is typical of a large section of feminists, who have for decades lined up behind the bourgeoisie’s anti-sex witchhunts, from the anti-porn hysteria to the endless panics whipped up over supposed “child abuse” in daycare centres. These feminists promote themselves as protectors of women and children, but their remedy is to appeal to the state for more or stronger laws and more vigilance by police. In supporting the forces of capitalist reaction, such feminists serve to shore up the institution of the family, where much of the real and terrible damage that is inflicted on youth and women takes place.

As for the [social-democratic] New Democrats [NDP] with their priggish Christian Fabian roots, they prize bourgeois respectability above all else. A 2013 NDP policy convention spiked a proposal to repeal the prostitution laws. The NDP has offered a few amendments to the Tory bill, but will not oppose it. More honest is Manitoba’s NDP provincial

minister of justice Andrew Swan who appeared at parliamentary hearings in Ottawa in July to *support* the Tory proposal, suggesting amendments to better protect the new law against challenges from sex workers!

The Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which says it is sympathetic to the plight of prostitutes, calls the Tories’ new law “good news” because it will supposedly “decriminalize women involved in prostitution” (*Partisan*, June 2014). Worse yet, they actually oppose the decriminalization of prostitution as such, an elementary position for any self-declared Marxist. They falsely equate the *clients* of prostitutes with pimps, a layer of social scum that exists only because prostitution is criminalized. The RCP’s retrograde views flow in part from the Stalinist/Maoist glorification of the patriarchal family as a model, “the building block of socialism.” At the same time, these self-described “proletarian feminists” echo their bourgeois big sisters, claiming that “in the vast majority of cases” prostitution is inseparable from the “ramifications of human trafficking” (*Partisan*, January 2014).

The Proletarian Road to Women’s Liberation

The Tories’ drive against sex workers has come under fire from various quarters. As the jails overflow with the victims of Ottawa’s “war on crime,” there is real unease over criminalizing yet another section of the population. Many other feminist organizations have spoken out against the law. So, notably, has the president of the Ontario wing of the Canadian Union of Public Employees,

Fred Hahn. In a July 9 National Post op-ed piece, Hahn called for “full decriminalization” and declared:

“Trade unions must support the health and safety of everyone, especially those working in precarious industries. We therefore stand in solidarity with sex workers and all organizations that are committed to defeating this regressive and dangerous legislation.”

In denouncing the Tories’ reactionary crusade, we Marxists also say that it is necessary to fight for the unionization of prostitutes and for access to quality housing and education and whatever else they may need.

Feminism, including its radical, socialist or “proletarian” variants, is counterposed to Marxism. For feminism, the main division in society is between men and women rather than class versus class. This outlook is shared by the substantial numbers of feminists who to their credit oppose the drive against prostitution. Feminism operates entirely within the framework of bourgeois rule. It is politically incapable of resolving the most basic aspects of women’s oppression because it is not premised on the destruction of the capitalist system that is the main source of women’s oppression today.

The social alienation of a system in which the vast mass of people have to sell their labour power to enrich the very few is compounded by institutionalized inequalities of race, nationality and sex. For Marxists, the liberation of women cannot be separated from the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed. To create genuinely free and equal relations between people in all spheres requires socialist revolutions worldwide to uproot the decaying capitalist system and open the road to the abolition of private property.

This alone will make possible the construction of an international collectivized economy based on the highest level of technology and science, laying the material basis for replacing the family and drawing women fully into social production. Prostitution and its social functions will die out only as the institution of the family is replaced. This is also the precondition for the genuine liberation of women. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste is dedicated to the task of building a revolutionary workers party that can lead the struggle to overthrow the barbaric rule of capitalism. ■

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Self-Defense vs. Vigilantism

Mexico: Community Police and the War on Drugs



AP



ZUMA

Left: Former “community police” in Michoacán state, now incorporated into official police force, May 10. Right: Mexican army tries to disarm CRAC vigilantes in Guerrero state, August 2013.

The following article is translated from *Espartaco* No. 38 (June 2013), newspaper of the *Grupo Espartaquista de México*, section of the *International Communist League* (Fourth Internationalist).

ESPARTACO

During the last year [2012-13], various “self-defense” groups or “community police” have emerged in rural areas, mainly in the states of Guerrero and Michoacán. These groups model themselves after the Regional Coordinating Committee of Community Authorities-Community Police (CRAC) of Guerrero, founded in 1995 by overwhelmingly indigenous communities in Guerrero’s La Montaña and Costa Chica areas. The embrace of such “alternative security” schemes by nearly all of the left is rooted in a sub-reformist liberal perspective. Far from fighting for the destruction of the bourgeois state through workers revolution and the building of a *workers* state, these leftists seek to paint a democratic gloss on the bosses’ state. As long as capitalism is not overthrown, any group dedicated to “fighting crime” will act as an auxiliary of the capitalist state and will have, in the final analysis, a fundamentally reactionary character.

Drug Violence, Misery and Oppression

The spread of these groups in poor and mostly rural and indigenous communities is a desperate response to the violence of the drug cartels, police/military brutality under the “war on drugs” and the overall criminality associated with growing misery. This “war on drugs”—which as of last year had cost the lives of some 60,000 people—has nothing to do with “protecting” the population. The police, the army, the courts and the prisons—the core of the capitalist state—exist to uphold the dictatorship of capital. And everybody knows that the Mexican capitalist state apparatus, from the state ministries down to the beat cops, is deeply interpenetrated with the drug cartels. The main goal of the “war on drugs” is to strengthen the repressive powers of the capitalist state. Although the occasional raid on some big-time dealer’s mansion might grab the headlines, the “war on drugs” means sow-

ing terror in the barrios and poor villages throughout the entire country, from Baja California to Chiapas and Yucatán.

In Guerrero over the past 50 years, the daily brutality of the capitalist state’s repressive forces has targeted indigenous communities, militant teachers and *normalistas* [teachers-in-training] and various leftist guerrilla groups. Historically dominated by a particularly savage and

of age and older had no income, half the indigenous population was illiterate and 97 percent of those living in the Montaña had no sewage system. Less than half of Guerrero’s population had electricity and 96 percent of the indigenous population had no access to health services. For the Mexican bourgeoisie, the indigenous peasants, especially in Guerrero’s Montaña, are simply surplus population. Thus,

For the Decriminalization of Drugs!

retrograde mafia of *latifundistas* [wealthy landowners], corrupt bourgeois politicians and businessmen, Guerrero epitomizes the race and class bias of backward Mexican capitalism. The over half a million indigenous people in the state—Nahuas, Mixtecs (ñuu savi), Tlapanecos (me’phaa), Amuzgos (suljaa)—as well as a significant black population, live in utmost destitution. Neighboring Cochoapa el Grande and Metlatónoc, in La Montaña, have the highest percentages of people living in extreme poverty in the country: 82.6 and 77 percent, respectively. According to figures from the last decade, 46 percent of Guerrero’s indigenous people 15 years

the broader context for the emergence of “self-defense” groups is not just the relatively recent “war on drugs” but also age-old extreme misery and violence.

Down With Vigilantism!

The desperation of these communities in the face of a new wave of violence is understandable. Communists are not bleeding-heart liberals who preach “Christian concern” for the downtrodden lumpen criminals marauding in the streets, killing, maiming, raping and robbing hapless citizens. However, to patrol territory to hunt down alleged criminals is not self-defense, but vigilantism. While we uphold the right

of individuals to genuinely defend themselves, we sharply oppose any kind of vigilantism. We do not call upon the working masses to implement the bosses’ and *latifundistas*’ racist “law and order.”

Ultimately, the solution to out-of-control crime rates is the abolition of the capitalist system that breeds misery and crime. In the meantime, it is elementary that the whole population should have access to firearms, i.e., not just the rich, cops and criminals, to protect itself from this odious and irrational social order. And it is equally elementary to call for the decriminalization of drugs. By eliminating the superprofits derived from the illegal and underground nature of the drug trade, decriminalization would also reduce crime and its related social pathologies.

The criminalization of everything drug-related has given rise to the formation of brutal mafias. Everyone knows that thousands of poor peasants throughout the country plant marijuana and poppies, which they then sell to the kingpins. However, for the CRAC community police, not only planting and selling marijuana but even *consuming* it “is a harshly penalized crime” (María Teresa Sierra, “Construyendo seguridad y justicia en los márgenes del Estado: La experiencia de la policía comunitaria de Guerrero, México,” August 2010, on the CRAC’s website policiacomunitaria.org). The group also punishes the simple possession of drugs as well as drug addiction.

Autonomy and “Security”

While trying to co-opt the CRAC, the bourgeois state views it with suspicion. Although the CRAC collaborates with the state, it is still an armed group of indigenous, poor peasants that does not necessarily function under state authority. The community police have arrested ordinary cops who infringe on their territory, and have mobilized against government and mining company plans to drive them off their meager land. More recently, a section of the CRAC mobilized with the Guerrero teachers’ union local in the struggle against the education “reform” [enacted in 2013].

The CRAC community police are broadly perceived as a guarantor of regional autonomy in the face of racist oppression and constant state abuse, and they seem



AP

Cochoapa el Grande, a town in Guerrero state where over four-fifths of residents live in extreme poverty.

IG: For “Independent” Vigilantism

The following article is translated from *Espartaco* No. 41 (June 2014), newspaper of the Grupo Espartaquista de México.

A year ago, we published an analysis of the “self-defense” groups around the Regional Coordinating Committee of Community Authorities-Community Police (CRAC) of Guerrero [see facing page], in which we denounced the reformists’ enthusiasm for these “people’s security organizations.” In that article, we emphasized our position for the decriminalization of drugs and for the right of genuine armed self-defense, sharply counterposing our perspective to that of the “self-defense” groups that make the “war on drugs” their own by means of vigilantism, i.e., mobilizing civilian groups to “fight crime.” We wrote at the time: “As long as capitalism is not overthrown, any group dedicated to ‘fighting crime’ will act as an auxiliary of the capitalist state and will have, in the final analysis, a fundamentally reactionary character.”

Our straightforward position has provoked the indignation of the Internationalist Group (IG), though with a year’s delay (see *Revolución Permanente* No. 4, May 2014). With centrist babble that borders on schizophrenia, the IG first correctly denounces the “self-defense” groups of Michoacán as those of “the bosses” that “associate with fascistic Cristeros” [the 1920s reactionary clerical movement] and maintains that “the Guerrero com-

munity police serve as organs of the capitalist state.” But then they come out in defense of the self-proclaimed police against the “arrogant petty-bourgeois” members of the GEM!

The IG rejects our characterization of the actions of these “self-defense” groups as vigilantism, which according to them is “a bad translation from English.” With this puerile pedantry, the IG tries to obscure the reactionary purpose of these groups in order to present them, after all their supposed leftist verbiage, as examples of genuine “collective self-defense.” There is no need to elaborate on the grotesque Michoacán forces to make clear what they’re about. As for the CRAC community police, even with its composition of indigenous peasants who have mobilized on occasion in defense of their lands, at its nucleus is effectively a police organization that constantly hunts down supposed “criminals” (including drug users and prostitutes). It also relies on prisons and a “justice” system based on the inherently misogynist concept of “customs and traditions.”

Here’s a recent example showing the nature of this group, according to an account by a CRAC supporter. In June 2013, the CRAC community police mobilized in search of two young women who left home without permission—a clear example of “collective self-defense”! According to the CRAC, when the young women were found, their mothers asked for them to be “re-

educated” because “the young women had already stepped beyond their mothers’ authority, coming home very drunk and very drugged up, and did many things that such citizens [young women] shouldn’t go around doing” (*Los Angeles Press* online, 14 November 2013, quoting a CRAC “commander”). One of them, Betzabé Baltazar, together with a third young woman, Sofia Navarrete, both minors, were denounced for “drug possession” and...“prostitution”! So the CRAC detained them and sentenced them to “reeducation”—usually administered by local “chiefs”—and to “community service” (forced labor). At the end of June 2013, the CRAC bragged about having 77 people in their prisons (*El Sur*, 29 June 2013), including “petty drug dealers” and several supposed “prostitutes.”

The IG is absolutely silent about all this in order to present the CRAC as a leftist peasant organization:

“But peasant and indigenous communities besieged by small armies of drug traffickers, by landowners eager to take away their ancestral lands, by mining companies that want to exploit their resources and pollute their environment, and by military and police forces, what should they do? The GEM has no answer. In fact, they completely ignore the problem.”

The IG’s answer is the CRAC. You don’t have to be a Marxist to take the side of poor peasants, whether or not they are part of the CRAC, when they defend their lands against the state and *lati-*

fundistas [wealthy landowners]. Moreover, as genuine communists we are for agrarian revolution and the revolutionary alliance of the peasantry and the proletariat, led by a Leninist-Trotskyist party, in the struggle for socialist revolution. It should be more than clear that “community police” forces have nothing to do with this perspective.

The *only* reservation the IG has about CRAC is its relationship to the state, as if “independent” vigilantism were any less reactionary. And the IG goes even further: “The Internationalist Group denounces the self-defense groups of Michoacán and the community police forces of Guerrero for being intertwined with the bourgeois state, not for resisting attacks perpetrated by the forces opposed to workers and indigenous peoples’ interests.” So, by the IG’s lights, the Cristero killers led by “Papa Smurf” and company could play a role in the interest of the exploited and oppressed provided that they are “independent” of the state. As we stated in our last article:

“In the event of a revolutionary upsurge—a dual-power situation—ethnically integrated workers and poor peasants militias, with recognized authority among the masses of the barrios and indigenous villages, would certainly deal firmly and justly with lumpen violence. In the meantime, the ‘citizens’ security’ schemes are a liberal fraud that can only divert the working and oppressed masses away from the perspective of taking their destiny in their own hands through proletarian revolution.”

But this is taboo for the IG as they try to peddle the reactionary chimera of community police forces “independent” of the state.

to have significant support among communities in the region. We oppose any attack or encroachment on these indigenous communities by the bourgeois state in its attempts to assert control over the area. But a regional autonomous police force—whether official or de facto—is still a police force subordinated to the rule of capital.

At the same time that we demand the bourgeois state respect the agreements and orders granting autonomy to some communities, we do not raise the demand for autonomy, given that it is ultimately utopian under capitalism. The autonomous regions, with limited rights to the land, frequently come into conflict with landowners and prospective industrial enterprises, as is the case in Guerrero. What is needed is a workers and peasants government—the dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry, in which workers and peasants would direct the future of society through soviets, or councils. Only such a government can grant and guarantee true autonomy for indigenous communities as part of a conscious and planned effort to eliminate age-old rural misery and the divide between the city and the countryside.

We understand, more fundamentally, that the peasantry on its own is incapable of putting forward an alternative to the capitalist system of exploitation. The peasantry is a heterogeneous petty-bourgeois stratum; its objective interests as a social stratum lie in private ownership of land. As such, the peasantry—and the petty-bourgeoisie as a whole—cannot present its own revolutionary program. It always trails behind one of the two fundamental classes in society: the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

The Left and the Reactionary Fraud of “Citizens’ Security”

The CRAC embodies the program of Catholic theologian Javier Sicilia, whose bourgeois-liberal movement from a few years ago focused on providing the capitalist state with a “new strategy for citizens’ security” in order to “confront the root cause of organized crime” (see *Espartaco* No. 34, Autumn 2011). And the bulk of the left tails the liberal bourgeoisie. Just



Detained woman before community assembly in El Meson, January 2013.

like back when the pseudo-Trotskyist Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS, League of Workers for Socialism) hailed Sicilia’s movement as a “great democratic movement,” today it enthuses over the new “self-defense” groups that it sees as “people’s security organizations,” which “directly question the State” (“Sobre las policías comunitarias y los ‘grupos de autodefensa,’” *Estrategia Obrera*, 4 April 2013). On the other hand, the LTS complains that the community police “have the limitation that they restrict themselves to the framework of the law.”

The fundamental problem with the CRAC and similar groups is not that they limit themselves “to the framework of the law,” but that their very reason for existing is to implement the “law and order” of the bourgeois state. It is false that the community police “directly question the State”—the only thing these groups question is the state’s effectiveness in “fighting crime.” Even though the CRAC has had a rocky relationship with the state and has denounced competing “self-defense” groups for taking payment from the government, the fact is that from the get-go the CRAC has tried time and again to obtain state patronage as an autonomous police force—and it has often succeeded. In the late ’90s,

Guerrero’s then-interim governor Aguirre Rivero handed arms and a vehicle over to the CRAC (Verónica Oikión Solano, et al., *Movimientos armados en México, siglo XX* [2008]). A year ago, as the elected Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD] governor Aguirre Rivero enthusiastically praised the CRAC and promised to deliver over 200 AR-15 assault rifles (which apparently he never delivered), radios and uniforms (*Milenio*, 29 May 2012). This year, he gave the community police a million and a half pesos [about \$110,000], 1,200 uniforms and four trucks (*La Jornada Guerrero*, 22 January 2013).

Last April, the teachers union local formed an alliance with the Tixtla CRAC that gave rise to the Guerrero Popular Movement. We oppose this type of bloc: the CRAC, though it has contradictions (in fact, there is an overlap between the CRAC and the teachers union) is a police-vigilante force entirely alien to the workers movement. It should be elementary for the workers movement to distance itself from organizations whose express goal is “fighting crime.” But this alliance provoked a renewed conflict between the CRAC and the state. In the face of this conflict, it was the CRAC who broke the bloc: a few weeks later,

three out of the four CRAC “Houses of Justice” disassociated themselves from the Guerrero Popular Movement and the teachers union “until new agreements are made” (*La Jornada Guerrero*, 1 May 2013).

Soon after, Governor Aguirre Rivero met with CRAC authorities to mend fences. The governor declared, in reference to the failed alliance between the CRAC and the teachers union, that “those who want to do politics, let them go to a political party, but let them not contaminate the CRAC [which] was born with noble purposes.” Thereupon, he handed over three ambulances, announced the construction of four houses of justice for the CRAC—each at a cost, he said, of 5.7 million pesos—and promised: “I’m going to raise your subsidy from 500,000 to a million pesos.” A CRAC coordinator limited himself to demanding “a security plan with your government, jointly with the Secretary of National Defense through the Ninth Military Region” (*La Jornada*, 17 May 2013). So much for their “directly questioning the state”—and their “refusal” to take money from the government!

It is noteworthy that the LTS enthuses over the spread of “new self-defense groups with more radical methods than those of the CRAC, who caused the death of people at their checkpoints.” The LTS explains that “the CRAC has disassociated itself [from these new groups] by saying that [those groups] are loyal to the politics of Aguirre Rivero and may even be linked to criminal groups.” The LTS concludes: “Without denying the possibility that these or other groups may eventually be co-opted, what we see today is that they are more determined to fend off the attacks of drug traffickers in their communities.” The LTS does not bother to explain which groups they are referring to or who was killed. But in any case, their position is the height of reformist idiocy, a veiled call for lynchings, and an example of vicarious bloodthirstiness—something easy to write from an office in Mexico City.

Here’s an example of this kind of “radicalism”: last January, a “Citizens
continued on page 8

(continued from page 1)

sealed a treacherous alliance with the U.S. in the battle over Kobani in northern Syria, acting as the imperialists' bomb spotters and otherwise coordinating military movements. The fact that all these forces are "boots on the ground" for imperialist intervention means that revolutionary Marxists have a military side with ISIS when it targets the imperialists and their proxies, including the Syrian Kurdish nationalists, the *pesh merga*, the Baghdad government and its Shi'ite militias.

In the case of Kobani, on September 16 its predominantly Kurdish population came under siege by ISIS, forcing more than 200,000 people to flee across the border to Turkey. Pitted against ISIS were the Kurdish Democratic Union Party and its military wing, the People's Protection Committees (YPG), which are affiliated to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) based in Turkey. Then in early October Washington decided to make a stand in Kobani, with the YPG offering its services. The *Wall Street Journal* (October 21) reported: "A Syrian Kurdish general in a joint operations center in northern Iraq delivered daily battlefield intelligence reports to U.S. military planners." According to a YPG spokesman, several Americans and dozens of Europeans are fighting alongside them in Kobani.

It goes without saying that we internationalist communists are die-hard enemies of the ultra-reactionary social and political program of ISIS, whose methods of rooting out “apostates” amount to mass slaughter. We condemn communal atrocities on all sides. ISIS is itself the imperialists’ creation, having emerged out of the intercommunal slaughter triggered by the U.S. occupation. It counts as precursors those who cut their teeth as *jihadis* in the CIA-backed war against the Soviet Union



Imperialist airstrike on Syrian city of Kobani, October 22.

in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Washington could very well switch to supporting ISIS under certain conditions—for example, against the Assad regime in Syria, which is decidedly not a part of the U.S. military alliance despite its best efforts.

But ISIS today is in battle against the local tools of U.S. imperialism, the main enemy of the world's working people. A setback for the U.S. in Syria might give pause to Washington in its military adventures, including by encouraging opposition at home. Such opposition adds to the tinder that must be ignited in class struggle against the capitalist rulers who, in their quest for ever greater profits, beat down the workers, black people and immigrants.

We uphold the right of national self-determination for the Kurdish people, who are oppressed by the bourgeois regimes in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. However, in Iraq and Syria today as in Iraq after 2003, when the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan enrolled as adjuncts of the U.S. occupation, the

nationalist parties have subordinated the struggle for Kurdish national rights to their role as imperialist proxies. Championing the Kurds in the current conflict can only mean lending support to imperialist plunder. And their collaboration with the imperialists is antithetical to the cause of Kurdish national liberation, which can only be achieved through the proletarian overthrow of the four capitalist states in the region and the forging of a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan.

Protests called by Kurdish nationalist groups in Germany, Australia and elsewhere have backed U.S. airstrikes in Syria and demanded that the imperialists supply the Syrian Kurds with arms. These calls have been echoed by many reformist leftists around the world, giving credence to the “humanitarian” cover for the imperialist onslaught. Thus, the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France and some leaders of the Left Party in Germany (not to mention the bourgeois German Greens) have called on their respective capitalist

governments to arm the Kurds in Kobani.

Thousands have also demonstrated at the PKK's call in Istanbul and other cities in Turkey to pressure the Erdogan regime to militarily support the struggle in Kobani. More than 30 protesters have been killed by cops and Islamist thugs. To date, Erdogan has refrained from joining the fragile U.S.-led coalition that includes Britain, France and Australia as well as Saudi Arabia and other Near Eastern countries. For the Turkish government, the main enemies in Syria are the Assad regime and the Kurds. Strong-armed by the Obama White House, Ankara is letting Iraqi *pesh merga* transit Turkey into Kobani, where Erdogan hopes they will help police the groups aligned with the PKK.

By selling their souls to the imperialists as well as to various regional bourgeois regimes, Kurdish leaders help perpetuate the divide-and-rule stratagems that inevitably inflame communal, national and religious tensions and serve to reinforce the oppression of the Kurdish masses. A glaring example was the murderous U.S. military assault on the Iraqi city of Falluja in 2004, in which Kurdish fighters played a prominent role. Aimed at a largely Sunni population, the siege of Falluja helped fuel the rise of the Sunni-based ISIS insurgency. Inevitably, the Kurdish people will again pay for the crimes of their leaders.

The perpetual cycle of wars, occupations and communal bloodletting in the Near East, with its promise of more years of slaughter and devastation, is a glaring demonstration of the barbarity of the capitalist world order in which the U.S. rulers hold predominant power. The goal of Marxists in the belly of the imperialist beast is to instill in the U.S. proletariat the understanding that it has the social power and historic interest to destroy capitalist-imperialist rule from within, through socialist revolution. To realize this task requires forging a revolutionary workers party committed to the struggle for workers rule over the entire planet. ■

(continued from page 7)

Movement” in Atliaca, Guerrero, killed a young driver, Benito García Hernández, who was never proven to have committed a crime. García Hernández was detained at a checkpoint and, according to these self-styled “community police,” was killed—with three shots, one to the temple—because “he tried to escape” (*La Jornada Guerrero*, 25 January 2013). A “radical” fight against “crime,” indeed. In its vigilante zeal, the LTS of course omits any mention of its formal position for the “legalization of drugs” from its article.

The Oppression of Women and “Customs and Traditions”

Favorable writings on the CRAC highlight the concept of "customs and traditions" that provides the foundation for its decisions. According to reports, the CRAC has implemented a judicial system based on "reeducation" in contrast to the "eye for an eye" of bourgeois "justice." Perhaps. But this does not preclude the arbitrariness of its decisions or the reactionary character of peasant backwardness. The concept of "customs and traditions" includes, among other retrograde elements, a tacit endorsement of the oppression of women as essentially the property of husbands, fathers or brothers. Whereas the condition of women in the more advanced capitalist countries demonstrates the limits of freedom and social progress under capitalism, in countries of belated capitalist development such as Mexico, the acute oppression and degradation of women is deeply rooted in precapitalist "tradition" and religious obscurantism. This oppression reaches simply grotesque levels in the countryside. In Cochoapa el Grande, 90 percent of women are sold into marriage; in Metlatónoc, the figure reaches 40 percent. According to the PRD municipal president of Cochoapa, "the selling of girls in this community...[takes place] by custom and social consent" (*La Jornada*, 3



**November 2012:
Members of
“community
police” attend
mass in San
Luis Acatlan,
Guerrero state.**

December 2011). And the selling of wives is not just unique to Guerrero.

Already a few years ago, a women's assembly demanded that the CRAC ban the selling of wives. We do not know whether the CRAC has accepted this proposal. What we do know is that among the "offenses" that it punishes with "reeducation" is "disrespecting parents" (Jesús Antonio de la Torre Rangel, "Sistema comunitario de justicia de la Montaña de Guerrero. Una historia actual de derecho antiguo" [2006], policiacomunitaria.org). What will the CRAC do when a woman refuses to be sold, thus "disrespecting" her parents? What will the CRAC do when a woman "disrespects" her husband? Adultery, prostitution, abortion? We have no answers to these questions, but we have just as few illusions in peasant "justice" as we have in bourgeois justice. Even according to one of the few CRAC apologists who pays attention to the subject, "community justice continues to be a justice that does not provide for, in practice, the rights of women" (María Teresa Sierra, "Las mujeres indígenas ante la justicia comunitaria. Perspectivas desde la interculturalidad y los derechos," *Desacatos* No. 31, September-December 2009).

We communists decisively oppose this concept of “customs and traditions,” which glorifies peasant backwardness.

Revolutionaries are the most consistent champions of the elementary democratic rights of women, such as legal, free abortion and "equal pay for equal work." At the same time, we understand that the oppression of women is rooted in the capitalist system and propagated through the family, the church and the state. We fight for the liberation of women through socialist revolution.

For a Workers and Peasants Government!

The elimination of rural misery and the age-old special oppression of indigenous people requires a socialist revolution that destroys the bourgeois state and builds a state dedicated to the defense of the proletariat as a new ruling class. It requires the expropriation of the expropriators for the economy to no longer be run for the profits of the few, but rather for the needs of the many. Because of its relationship to the means of production, the working class is the only class with the historic interest and the social power to lead the oppressed masses in the struggle for socialist revolution. We Spartacists fight to bring this consciousness to the working class and to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party capable of leading an alliance of the urban industrial proletariat and the poor peasantry.

But in order for the proletarian revolution to survive when confronted by the imperialists and to effectively begin to eliminate poverty in the countryside and in the city, it is necessary to extend the revolution internationally, especially to the colossal power to the north. Only in the context of an international planned economy can industrial development comparable to that of the advanced countries be achieved. Only in that way can the isolation of the countryside be stamped out, and all advances—technological, cultural and other—be made available to the urban and rural working masses.

In the event of a revolutionary upsurge—a dual-power situation—ethnically integrated workers and poor peasants militias, with recognized authority among the masses of the barrios and indigenous villages, would certainly deal firmly and justly with lumpen violence. In the meantime, the “citizens’ security” schemes are a liberal fraud that can only divert the working and oppressed masses away from the perspective of taking their destiny in their own hands through proletarian revolution. ■



“Reforma” migratoria e hipocresía liberal
La maquinaria de deportaciones
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Ebola...

(continued from page 1)

summed up the situation: “There was no advance preparedness on what to do with the patient, there was no protocol, there was no system.”

That statement graphically describes the chaos and danger present at Dallas Presbyterian. When a nurse supervisor demanded Duncan be moved to an isolation unit, there was resistance from hospital authorities. Hospital personnel as well as CDC officials moved freely from the isolation unit into other areas. There was no mandatory Ebola training before Duncan was admitted and even after his positive test the training was limited. For example, not everyone got hands-on training with personal protective equipment. And the protective equipment available was grossly inadequate, including suits that left nurses’ necks exposed so that they had to use medical tape to try to seal the openings. That the infection did not spread beyond the two nurses (both of whom have fully recovered) can only be attributed to the conscientious actions taken by the nurses and other workers.

The CDC has scrambled to tighten up their protocols for training and protective equipment, although huge gaps remain. One Midwest nurse showed *Workers Vanguard* a set of typical guidelines that state: “Put on a mask and gloves and ask patient to put on mask, gloves, and gown (if available).” Meanwhile, hands-on training in the correct use of this specialized personal protective equipment remains largely nonexistent. Another nurse said, “It’s like they think you can learn to ride a bike by watching YouTube videos.”

Management then turns around and blames workers for safety violations, including the unsanitary conditions in hospitals, where patients routinely acquire infections during their stay. In fact, the cost-cutting reductions to staffing levels and nursing ratios are the real source of the problem in a system where the profit motive reigns supreme. Hospital staff are forced to work grueling shifts laden with responsibilities and not given sufficient time to scrub up and maintain hygienic practices. Poorly paid cleaners have to rush from one infected ward to another.

Organize the Unorganized!

It is not only in the health care industry that workers are now fearful of contracting Ebola on the job. On October 8, 200 cabin cleaners at New York’s LaGuardia Airport, locked in a union organizing battle, went on strike to protest their unsafe and unsanitary working conditions. For paltry wages, they’re expected to clean up all kinds of filth and bodily fluids in airplanes without the time to do a proper job or the equipment to do it safely.

Union control of safety makes all the difference in ensuring proper conditions on the job. Health care unions must demand sufficient staff levels and sufficient time to scrub up and to put on and remove protective equipment as needed. The bosses are not about to just grant such demands, which are part of the fight for better pay and work conditions. This requires the class-struggle mobilization of the unions, including for the crucial task of organizing the unorganized. But the NNU and other union bureaucrats betray the concerns of their members by pushing reliance on the bosses’ state agencies and political representatives, primarily the Democrats.

On October 21, 1199SEIU, the country’s largest health care union, and several hospitals hired the huge Jacob Javits Center in New York City to host a supposed Ebola training session. Rather than any hands-on training, though, there were only talks from government officials and a demonstration of personal protective equipment. In fact, this event was just an opportunity for Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio and governor Andrew Cuomo to address thousands of workers two weeks before the midterm elections.

De Blasio blathered: “We have the world’s strongest public health system



October 2: Cuban doctors and other health care workers, part of mission to combat Ebola epidemic, unloading medical supplies at airport in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

here in this city and state.” Maybe the rats, head lice and bed bugs rampant in NYC can enjoy this sick joke. The rotten state of the public health system played a part in allowing HIV to reach epidemic proportions in the city in the 1980s, along with anti-gay bigotry and other social reaction. In his speech, 1199SEIU president George Gresham sermonized that being a health care worker is “a very special gift from God.” That’s all the union misleaders have to offer: trust in god and the Democrats.

The fight to mobilize the unions to protect their members as well as patients must be based on the elementary understanding that the interests of labor and capital are irreconcilably counterposed. What is needed is a leadership that looks to the social power of the workers as against the class-collaborationist viewpoint of the trade-union bureaucracy.

Racist Anti-Immigrant Hysteria

Historically, fear of disease has been a cover for all kinds of prejudice and discrimination. Today, the few cases of Ebola in the U.S. have become a political football, with right-wing yahoos blaming Obama for bringing this “African” disease to American shores and calling to seal the borders. Such calls have fueled a witchhunt atmosphere against West Africans. Students from various African countries have been banned from schools and colleges. Oretha Bestman-Yates, a New York health care worker and president of the Staten Island Liberian Community Association, was barred from returning to work after visiting Liberia in July, despite having no symptoms more than 21 days (the incubation period of the virus) after her trip.

This hysteria was ratcheted up a notch when Dr. Craig Spencer, who had recently returned from treating Ebola victims in Guinea with Doctors Without Borders (known by its French initials, MSF), tested positive in NYC on October 23. Spencer had followed MSF guidelines, including monitoring his temperature twice a day, and contacted health services as soon as he detected a fever. He was immediately rushed to Bellevue Hospital and placed in quarantine. His fiancée has been quarantined in the apartment they share.

The next day, Governor Cuomo and New Jersey Republican governor Chris Christie announced a mandatory quarantine for all those arriving at New York-area airports who report having had contact with Ebola victims in West Africa. This quarantine is an obvious political maneuver by the two governors. Cuomo is facing an election next week and his Republican challenger has called to close the airports to travelers from West Africa altogether. For his part, Christie is eyeing a run for the White House in 2016. The governors of Illinois and Florida subsequently announced their own quarantine orders.

Unsurprisingly in this irrational capitalist society, where every state issues

its own set of guidelines, the first person quarantined in New Jersey, nurse Kaci Hickox, was treated like a criminal. Detained for six hours at Newark airport, she was then whisked off to Newark’s University Hospital. Although she tested negative for Ebola and presented no symptoms, which means she was not contagious, she was confined to a tent with a portable toilet and no shower. As she observed in a CNN interview: “To put me in prison is just inhumane.” In response to the public outcry generated by her accounts of the conditions, Christie released her after three days.

Mandatory quarantine of non-symptomatic health care workers has come under fire from many medical experts, who fear this policy will deter



October 8: Cabin cleaners at LaGuardia Airport walked off the job to protest unfair labor practices (ULPs), including being forced to clean bodily fluids without proper equipment.

volunteers from traveling to West Africa. An editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (27 October) judged that such an approach “is not scientifically based, is unfair and unwise, and will impede essential efforts to stop these awful outbreaks of Ebola disease at their source, which is the only satisfactory goal.” Several times in recent days, the details of the state quarantine directives have changed, as the White House butted heads with the governors.

The Cuban government has arranged for its doctors who are combating Ebola in West Africa to be quarantined before returning home. There is no shortage of Cuban volunteers, who receive their full salary plus a per diem. MSF protocols differ substantially from what was first announced by Cuomo and Christie, not least by encouraging staff members who have returned to take three weeks off with pay to recuperate from their arduous field work in West Africa. Quarantine of symptomatic individuals is clearly necessary,

even if it impinges on their personal liberties, in the interest of public health. That also means training and properly equipping the workers who deal with those in quarantine.

For Socialized Medicine!

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa is a stark example that the capitalist profit system is an obstacle to providing the necessities of life, including health care, to wide swathes of the globe. Control of disease is as much a social question as a scientific one. Under capitalism, the profits of pharmaceutical and insurance companies almost always come before public health, which is indelibly imprinted with the reactionary bigotry of capitalist society.

The *New York Times* (October 23) reported that an Ebola vaccine had been developed and shown to be 100 percent effective in monkeys nearly a decade ago. However, it was never tested on humans because the big pharmaceutical companies saw no profits to be made from a vaccine that would mainly save the lives of poor Africans. If human trials had proceeded at the time, the vaccine might have been ready before the outbreak and thousands of lives saved. With Ebola now infecting a handful of Americans and Europeans and the U.S. military a potential customer, this vaccine and other treatments are being fast-tracked. The calculations of the profit-bloated pharmaceutical companies were captured in a recent headline in the satirical *Onion*: “Experts: Ebola Vaccine at Least 50 White People Away.”

The struggle for decent health care for all must be tied to the fight against the capitalist system. A hint of what is possible with socialized medicine based on a collectivized economy is provided by the case of Cuba, a bureaucratically deformed workers state where capitalism was overthrown following the 1959 defeat of the U.S.-backed Batista dictator-

ship. Despite poor natural resources and a suffocating U.S. embargo, Cuba has more than twice as many physicians per capita and lower infant mortality than the U.S. While Washington is sending soldiers to West Africa, Havana is sending hundreds of medical workers. We stand for unconditional military defense of Cuba, for socialist revolution in the U.S. and for workers political revolution in Cuba to oust its Stalinist bureaucracy.

For the masses of society to have full access to the benefits of medical science, the health care system and the whole economy must be ripped out of the hands of the capitalist class through a workers socialist revolution. The key element in that fight is a revolutionary party capable of instilling in the working class the consciousness that it alone has the power and interest to overthrow the rotten capitalist system. In a workers America, medicine for profit will be consigned to a museum of quackery, alongside exhibits on blood-letting and faith healers. ■

Elections...

(continued from page 12)

whole program of class collaboration, tying labor to its class enemy and sapping its fighting strength.

As black people continue to be gunned down by the cops across the country, the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the brutal suppression of protests that followed revealed the real face of racist capitalist America. A *New York Times* (14 September) editorial, focused on drumming up the Democratic vote, chastised the town’s black residents for low voter turnout, proclaiming, “The cost of nonparticipation was a City Council wholly unrepresentative of the town’s population.” Al Sharpton and other black Democrats similarly berated black people in Ferguson, sending out the message that their oppression was their own damn fault.

Amid the widespread disillusion and disaffection with the Democratic Party, a number of reformist groups on the left have thrown their hats into the ring. Still flush with excitement over the election of Socialist Alternative’s (SAlt) Kshama



WV Photo

August 23: Spartacist placard at Staten Island protest against cop killing of Eric Garner.

Sawant to the Seattle City Council last year, they are waging liberal reform campaigns either under their own banner or by supporting or joining bourgeois third-party tickets. None of these efforts represent, even in a partial manner, the independent class interests of the proletariat.

V.I. Lenin, leader of the Russian October Revolution, captured the fraud of capitalist democracy in his 1918 polemic, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*:

“Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor.”

It is the means by which the bourgeoisie disguises its rule with the appearance of a popular mandate.

There is a crying need for hard class struggle against the rapacious capitalist rulers. However, in the absence of such struggle and with the working class lacking its own organized political expression, disaffection can go in many different directions, from political apathy to racist, anti-immigrant scapegoating to voters once again holding their nose and voting for the “lesser evil” Democrats. As revolutionary Marxists, our purpose is to translate discontent among the toiling masses into an understanding that the working class needs its own party, one that champions the cause of all the exploited and oppressed in the fight for workers revolution.

Refurbishing Liberal Illusions

In New York, International Socialist Organization (ISO) member Brian Jones is running for lieutenant governor on the small-time capitalist Green Party ticket headed by the Solidarity group’s Howie Hawkins. The ISO also endorses civil rights lawyer Dan Siegel, a bourgeois politician currently disaffected with the Democrats, for Oakland mayor. A similar politician in Chicago, the self-described socialist Jorge Mújica, is backed by a coalition of left organizations. SAlt’s Jess Spear is running for a seat in the Washington state legislature.

In no way do any of these campaigns represent a break from bourgeois politics. Each puts forward at best a wish list of liberal measures—\$15 minimum wage, police reform, rent control, increased taxes for the rich, environmental protection—variants of which have been ban-

heavy support from the PFT. He holds sway over a city of deindustrialization marked by impoverished inner city neighborhoods, segregated and underfunded schools and crumbling infrastructure and services. These desperate conditions are enforced by Philly’s infamously racist police force. Nutter is just one of the political overseers of a system that has fewer and fewer decent jobs to offer young workers, which for the ruling class means less reason to spend money on education. This brutal fact stands behind the attacks on teachers across the country and the demands that they “share in the sacrifice.” It points to the need to overthrow the capitalist system, which cares only for its profits and throws millions of youth, especially minorities, on the scrapheap.

Philadelphia is a union town where sanitation and other city workers have a history of hard labor struggle. But here as elsewhere in this country, the rulers have been emboldened by decades of union givebacks. The only way forward is through mobilizing the power of the working class at the head of all the oppressed in battle against its class enemy. That struggle will bring forth the new leadership that the unions require, one based on working-class independence from the bosses’ state and their political parties. A revolutionary party is the indispensable factor for a successful working-class conquest of power, replacing the class rule of the bourgeoisie by a revolutionary workers government. ■



Reuters

Oakland police arresting protester at May Day 2012 rally. ISO-backed “independent” candidate for mayor, Dan Siegel, calls for doubling number of cops on the street.

died about by Democratic Party candidates as well. So housebroken are these “independent” campaigns that they utter not a peep of opposition to the bombings of Syria and Iraq or any other depredations of U.S. imperialism. A particular lowlight of this electoral season is the support on the left for the “socialist” candidate for Milwaukee sheriff (see page 11).

The ISO exemplifies how for the reformists “independence” from the Democrats is little more than a mask that one can wear or discard as suits the moment. In backing Siegel, the ISO exalts his “consistent progressive message,” even as it complains that Siegel has not made his supposed break with the Democrats central to his campaign (socialistworker.org, 21 October). In fact, he only separated from the Democratic Party in January, after falling out with current mayor Jean Quan. At that time, Siegel, an attorney known for representing the family of Alan Blueford, a victim of racist cop terror, declared: “I’m not antipolice.” He calls for doubling the number of cops on the street, i.e., putting more racist killer cops in the ghetto. The ISO admits the obvious point that his policing plan means “more potentially deadly interactions between cops and young people of color.” Not that this would stop the ISO’s efforts on behalf of this “fighter for social justice.”

SAlt plays the same game by shining up the credentials of Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, a self-described “democratic socialist,” who caucuses with the Democrats and votes the Democratic Party line. SAlt fervently urges Sanders to run an independent campaign for president

in 2016. Not even the ISO can stomach Sanders, with his support to Israel’s recent offensive against the Palestinian people in Gaza and his votes for the U.S. military budget. Describing Siegel, Sanders or the Green Party as “independent” makes it no more so than sprinkling some juniper berries in 16 ounces of water gives you a pint of gin.

Red-White-and-Blue Greens

The role of the Green Party is no different than that of other “progressive” third parties historically: to channel the discontented back into the fold of the Democrats. The ISO/Green campaign in New York State is entirely compatible with Democratic politics. A Hawkins campaign press statement of October 23 trumpets endorsements from NYC Democratic Party outfits like the Downtown Independent Democrats, who stated, “Howie Hawkins and Brian Jones are aligned with the Democratic values we support.”

The campaign also boasts of the endorsement from the “venerable” Village Independent Democrats (VID), the first time this group has supported a third-party candidate. Hawkins/Jones pay special homage to the VID as “best known” for “starting Ed Koch’s political career.” As mayor, Koch was a voice of white petty-bourgeois rage against black people and labor. The Koch years laid a trail of horrors, beginning with the legions of black people killed by the cops—among them 67-year-old Eleanor Bumpurs and 25-year-old artist Michael Stewart. For Koch, the high point of his tenure was strong-arming labor during the eleven-

Philly Teachers...

(continued from page 12)

repressive apparatus that serves the rule of the capitalist exploiters.

Union-busting against the teachers is a *bipartisan* effort. Appointed by Governor Corbett, the current SRC chairman, William Green, is a stock trader as well as a corporate lawyer who represented top Fortune 500 companies. Corbett’s broadside against the teachers was calculated to shore up his losing campaign for re-election. His unpopularity is in part due to more than a billion dollars in cuts he has made to public education. His challenger, Wolf, is a folksy moderate who has pledged to restore education funding and to ensure “accountability” of charter schools, the favored vehicle for siphoning off public monies into private hands and busting teachers unions. Democrats running for office often posture as friends of the working people, but in office they do the bidding of the ruling class as do the Republicans. A Democrat drew up the plans for the creation of the SRC in 1998. In 2001, the Democratic mayor worked with the Republican governor to trigger the SRC takeover of Philadelphia schools in evident reprisal for a teachers strike in 2000.

Philadelphia’s current black Democratic mayor, Michael Nutter, was elected with

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Thursday, November 6, 7:30 p.m.

Contradictions of the Civil Rights Movement

SFSU, Cesar Chavez Student Center Room T-153

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

CHICAGO

Wednesday, November 12, 4:30 p.m.

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism

University of Illinois-Chicago Addams Hall, 2nd Floor, Room 200 830 S. Halsted Street (Take Blue Line to UIC-Halsted)

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

LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.

The Communist Manifesto

UCLA, Kerckhoff Hall, Room 152

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

Visit the ICL Website:
www.icl-fi.org

NEW YORK CITY

Tuesday, November 4, 7 p.m.

Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism

City College of New York NAC Rm. 1/209 138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue (Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)

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

TORONTO

Thursday, November 20, 7 p.m.

From Marikana Miners to B.C. Port Truckers—

The Social Power of the Working Class

University of Toronto Sidney Smith Hall, Room 2114 100 St. George Street

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VANCOUVER

Wednesday, November 5, 6:30 p.m.

1917-1992: The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union

The Fight for New October Revolutions

University of British Columbia Irving Barber Learning Centre, Rm. 315 Information and readings: (604) 687-0353 trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Plumbing the Depths in Milwaukee

Reformists Say: Support Your “Socialist” Sheriff

A host of phony socialists have climbed aboard Angela Walker’s bandwagon as she runs for sheriff of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Walker is a self-proclaimed “free range socialist,” a former bus driver turned legislative lobbyist for Amalgamated Transit Union Local 998. Her opponent, who like Walker is black, is the incumbent sheriff David Clarke. A right-wing Democrat, Clarke is a Tea Party favorite with backing from the Koch Brothers among others.

The duties of sheriff, the top law enforcement official in the county, include overseeing police “services” such as drug enforcement, evictions and running the jails. For Marxists, it is unprincipled to give even the most critical of support to any candidate running for an office that has as its exclusive responsibility wielding the repressive powers of the capitalist state, such as sheriff or district attorney. One need not pore over the texts of Marx and Lenin to have a gut feeling of revulsion at the

thought of either running for such a post or supporting anyone doing so. Black youth are being gunned down by cops around the country; poor and working people are being evicted from their homes; the black and Latino population of the prisons has reached historic levels.

None of this is an obstacle for Walker’s ostensibly socialist backers, including the Socialist Party USA, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, the International Socialist Organization and Solidarity. Their shared program of seeking to reform the capitalist system led them right into campaigning for a would-be top cop. Walker herself has made quite clear that she intends to carry out the duties of the office. As she explained in an interview published in *Solidarity* (18 June), she wants to promote “greater cooperation” between the sheriff, the county board and the police department.

Solidarity (24 September) gushes

about all the nifty things this “socialist sheriff” could do in cahoots with the small-time capitalist Green Party candidate for state treasurer with whom she is campaigning. Walker would “refuse to aid banks in forcing foreclosed homeowners out of their homes,” invoke a local ordinance allowing the sheriff’s office “to refrain from enforcing ICE sweeps against immigrant workers” and not “waste resources” on locking up pot smokers. You surely need to be in some kind of altered state to buy into the reformist pipe dream that the “people” can take over the instruments of their repression and wield them for their own purposes. The fake socialists, who make a practice of calling for “community control” of the cops and other bogus schemes to cleanse the criminal justice system of the racism endemic to American capitalist society, have managed to outdo themselves here.

As *Solidarity* proudly notes, if elected, Walker would be the fifth “socialist”

sheriff in Milwaukee’s history. The previous four came out of the tradition of the “sewer socialists,” Victor Berger’s Milwaukee section within the right wing of the Socialist Party, beginning at the end of the 19th century. The openly white-supremacist Berger promoted a program of municipal reform—from equitable taxation to better sewer systems—promising to usher in “honest” government while administering racist capitalist oppression.

Revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky put it bluntly: “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.” Ditto the sheriff. When miners used to sing the old labor anthem “Which Side Are You On?”, the question was not directed at the cops. The armed bodies of men who comprise the core of the capitalist state—the cops, courts, prisons and military—cannot be reformed but must be smashed through victorious workers revolution.

day transit strike in 1980, during which he was conspicuous in whipping up racist animosity against the heavily black and immigrant transit workers union.

It is no skin off the Democrats’ nose to salute the Green campaign. The Green Party program to which the ISO has signed on calls to “repair the plummeting opinion of the United States” abroad and bemoans the “grave imbalance” between U.S. citizens and their rulers for creating “an imminent danger to our security and national and global social stability.” The Green “alternative” is for the ravages of U.S. imperialism to be adorned by the blue helmets of the United Nations, a den of imperialist thieves, their accomplices and their victims. Its program baldly declares, “The U.S. is obligated to render military assistance or service under U.N. command to enforce U.N. Security Council resolutions.” Washington agrees. It was under a UN resolution that the starvation sanctions were enforced against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the 1990s and the U.S. and British invaders were recognized in 2003 as “occupying powers.”

Any radical youth possibly attracted to the Hawkins/Jones ticket should consider its support from Ralph Nader, the keynote speaker at a recent campaign rally. Nader’s current shtick is to bring together the Tea Party with the left against the “two-party tyranny.” Well, he has support from the left, including the ISO and SAIt, which both backed his presidential candidacies in 2000 and 2004. As for the right, Nader openly embraces virulently racist,



Reuters

Vermont’s Bernie Sanders (second from left) poses with Democratic chums, November 2006. Reformists appeal to this “independent,” a member of Senate Democratic caucus, to run for president in 2016.

homophobic, anti-abortion Tea Party nuts as “authentic libertarian conservatives.”

Class vs. Class

We oppose on principle support to any capitalist party and stand for the complete political independence of the working class. We recognize that there are times when the intervention of revolutionaries into the parliamentary/electoral arena can provide a useful platform to put forward the Marxist program. This can include the revolutionary party standing its own candidates for legislative office and/or offering critical support to working-class

organizations that draw even a crude class line. The misnamed “independent” campaigns championed by the fake socialists merit plenty of criticism—but no support.

All of the current left campaigns cloak themselves in the short-lived Occupy movement’s mantra the “99 percent” versus the “1 percent,” a false construct that promotes the myth that everyone from the unemployed, shopkeepers, students and the police to wage workers share common interests. Predictably, as the 2012 presidential elections neared, the amorphous populist movement, which was wedded to pressuring the government for piecemeal reforms, in the main ended up occupying the Democrats’ campaign to re-elect Obama.

We start from the Marxist understand-

ing that society is divided into two main classes. The bourgeoisie is the tiny group of families that owns the banks, industry, mines, newspapers, telecommunications; the proletariat is the large section of society that must sell its labor power to the capitalists in order to live. The labor of the working class creates the profits pocketed by the obscenely rich owners. The interests of these two classes are diametrically counterposed—they cannot be reconciled. Social gains and political reforms that have benefited workers and the oppressed were not won through the ballot or in the courtroom, but were the product of tumultuous class and social struggle. By the same token, the capitalist rulers will seek to dismantle these gains, which must be defended by class-struggle methods.

The revolutionary workers party that must be built in this country will be forged through combating the illusion that the exploited and oppressed can advance their causes through reform of the capitalist state, including through the agency of capitalist third parties. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote in his 1912 article “The Results and Significance of the U.S. Presidential Elections” concerning the bourgeois Bull Moose progressives of Theodore Roosevelt:

“We shall save capitalism by reforms, says that party. We shall grant the most progressive factory legislation. We shall establish state control over *all* the trusts (in the U.S.A. that means over *all* industries!). We shall establish state control over them to eliminate poverty and enable everybody to earn a ‘decent’ wage. We shall establish ‘social and industrial justice.’ We revere *all* reforms—the *only* ‘reform’ we don’t want is *expropriation of the capitalists!*” ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Labor Tops Derail Anger, Promote Democrats

Government Junks Philly Teachers Contract

In a move aimed at crippling the Philadelphia teachers union, the state School Reform Commission (SRC) that runs Philly schools voted 5-0 on October 6 to rip up the union contract. For 21 months the SRC had dragged out negotiations with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), which represents 16,000 public school teachers and support staff, seeking to squeeze deeper concessions than the compliant PFT tops had already volunteered. The state board, which has run the local school system since 2001, expects to save \$50 million it pays into the union-run health care plan and force teachers to pay hefty premiums (up to \$200 a month for some) for an inferior plan. Every public workers union contract in Pennsylvania will be on the chopping block if the SRC gets away with nullifying a collective bargaining agreement by fiat.

Many parents and students as well as teachers and the city's unions were furious over the SRC action, the latest offensive in a nationwide war against teachers unions. The decision was termed an "ambush" after the supposedly public hearing was held virtually unannounced. By its own reckoning, the board had already closed 31 schools in a district where half the students are black and most are poor, shedding librarians, nurses and music teachers and cutting basic education to the bone. Others put the number of closed schools much higher, with the jobs of more than 4,000 unionized custodians, bus drivers and cafeteria workers being axed in the last couple of years.

In the days following the cancellation of the contract, protests culminated in a 3,000-strong PFT-led demonstration at rush hour on October 16 that shut down North Broad Street, the city's main artery. Protesters then filed into school district



October 16: Philly students and teachers protest move by School Reform Commission to void teachers contract.

Michael Bryant

Defend the Unions Through Class Struggle!

headquarters and packed the first SRC meeting held since its salvo against the teachers. Earlier, students at several high schools had walked out of school in protest.

The SRC's attempt to tear up the contract with the union is outrageous enough to have prompted the city's union tops to hold two meetings at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

(IBEW) Local 98 hall where they mooted the possibility of a one-day general strike. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (16 October), "Labor leaders debated the wisdom of asking members of all area unions—laborers, electricians, communications workers, janitors, nurses, bus drivers, city employees—to walk off their jobs to protest the SRC's decision." But PFT president Jerry Jordan "told the group that he wanted to exhaust legal remedies first."

Shelving the strike weapon, the union officials decided to dedicate their efforts to voting out Republican governor Tom Corbett on November 4 in favor of Democrat Tom Wolf—the same class-collaborationist strategy of looking for friendly capitalist politicians that has crippled the labor movement. The big October 16 rally was filled with signs calling to vote for Wolf and "Crush Corbett."

But even the talk of a general strike made people take notice. On October 20, the teachers union won a temporary injunction in Common Pleas court blocking the SRC from scrapping its contract, which remains in effect. But this settles nothing. Solidarity in action from the city union movement must be brought to bear in defense of the teachers, who are forbidden to strike by the same state laws that imposed SRC control on Philadelphia schools and whose pay has been frozen since August 2013. The union bureaucrats who debated calling a citywide strike know that such hard class struggle would entail a head-on collision with not only the Republican state house but also the Democratic Philadelphia city administration. It also means going up against the courts, which like the cops and prisons are a core component of the state

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Fake-Socialist Clowns and the Bourgeois Electoral Circus

Many may not have noticed, but next week elections will be taking place across the country. With surprising perception, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks captured the population's mood: "Giddy with disinterest. Tingling with unconscious ennui. Quivering with apathy."

With good reason. The "hope and change" promised by Barack Obama that drew millions of disaffected blacks, Latinos and youth to the polls six years ago—the prospect of ending the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, closing the Guantánamo torture chamber and improving the living standards of working people—has proven to be less than hollow. The U.S. has embarked on yet another imperialist assault in the Near East, Guantánamo thrives, repression and sur-

veillance under the "war on terror" have fresh legs. Workers and the poor continue to get ground down despite the "great recovery." Millions across the country are scrambling to get by, one paycheck ahead of eviction, often working two or three jobs to make ends meet, standing in lines of thousands at job fairs offering employment for a hundred at most. And once again they are offered the chance to select between the two parties of capital, Democratic and Republican, that oversee their misery. The Republican candidates openly revel in their pain, hoping to seal greater electoral victories by disenfranchising poor and black people through voter ID laws. The Democrats, who pretend to be different, also carry out anti-labor, anti-black, anti-immigrant programs.



HawkinsforNYGovernor

Kneeling to the Greens: International Socialist Organization's Brian Jones running for New York lieutenant governor on capitalist Green Party ticket, Brooklyn, September 1.

Obama's job approval rating is around 40 percent, while for Congress it is a mere 12 percent. Even the usual election burlesque has fallen short this time around. No "legitimate rape" quips from Republican anti-abortion crazies, no railing against Obamacare "death panels." This time, the Republicans have launched an ad campaign claiming that they "are people too" with slogans like "Republicans are Black," "Republicans Recycle" and "Republicans Have Feelings." As for the

Democrats, besides keeping the president away, their candidates' main election strategy is to declare: "I'm not the other guy."

Most people couldn't care less whether the Democrats maintain control of the Senate, which is the main issue on tap. Not so the AFL-CIO tops and other pro-capitalist labor statesmen who yet again are stumping for the Democrats. The union bureaucrats' lie that the Democrats are "friends of labor" is central to their

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