

The

January-February 2011

No. 32

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Internationalist



From Resistance to Counteroffensive
to the Struggle for Workers Power

Focal Point Europe: Capitalism in Crisis, Class Struggle Erupts



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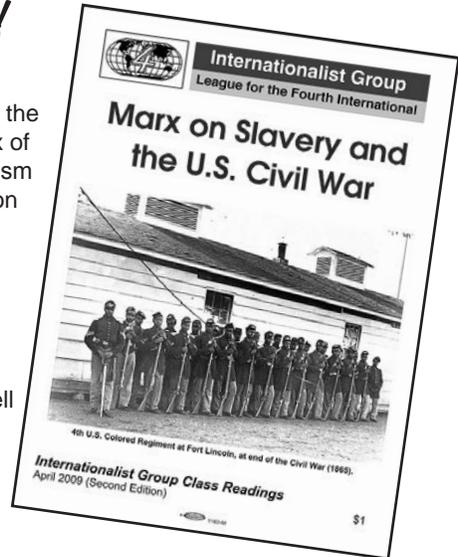
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Feds Break Into Homes, Seize Documents, Subpoena Activists Denounce FBI Raids on Leftist Antiwar and Solidarity Activists

28 SEPTEMBER 2010 – At around 7 a.m. Friday, September 24, agents of the Joint Terrorism Task Force of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) barged into eight homes in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Chicago, Illinois, breaking down doors in a coordinated raid against leftist activists. Agents seized papers, computers, cell phones and personal items of Hatem Abudayyeh, Joseph Iosbaker and Stephanie Weiner in Chicago, and served Thomas Burke of Chicago with a subpoena ordering him to appear before a grand jury investigating “material support to terrorism.” In the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, agents raided the homes of Meredith Aby, Mick Kelly, Tracy Molm, Anh-Thu Pham, Jessica Sundin, and the offices of the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee. FBI spokesmen said that “interviews” were being conducted across the country. No arrests have been made or charges reported, yet about a dozen activists have been subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury, whose proceedings are secret.

In Minneapolis on Friday evening, over 100 gathered at an emergency meeting at a church to express their solidarity with the targeted activists. Protests outside of federal offices across the U.S. are planned for this week. These raids are a blatant attempt to criminalize leftist politics, antiwar and solidarity advocacy and political dissent generally. Those targeted include University of Minnesota and University of Illinois staff members and unionists who have been outspoken in opposition to U.S. policies. They include activists associated with Students for a Democratic Society, the Colombia Action Network and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO-Fightback) group. The labor movement and all defenders of democratic rights should respond with powerful mobilizations to denounce this political persecution, the latest in the “home front” of the imperialist “war on terror.” ***An injury to one is an injury to all!***

One of the warrants authorizes search and seizure of papers, property and electronic records related to alleged violation of the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA). The warrant bandies about charges, citing no evidence whatsoever, of having “supported, attempted to support or conspired to support” the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Hezbollah, the Islamist political party in Lebanon. But the main object of the FBI’s fishing expedition appears to be to the finances, members, recruiting and structure of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. The Internationalist Group defends the activists targeted by these raids and demands a halt to the grand jury and the government “investigations,” spying on and attempts at intimidation of leftists and anti-war activists!

The AEDPA, signed by Democratic president Bill Clinton,

prescribes up to ten years in prison for anyone who “knowingly provides material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization, or attempts or conspires to do so.” These deliberately vague terms are used to suppress political dissent and erase democratic rights that are supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution. The Center for Constitutional Rights, which issued an 88-page report on *The Policing of Political Speech: Constraints on Mass Dissent in the U.S.* the same day as the raids, notes that the AEDPA’s “material support” clause has been construed to include “humanitarian aid, expert advice, and political advocacy, to any foreign entity that the Executive branch decides to designate as a ‘terrorist’ group.”

Thus courageous civil liberties defense attorney Lynne Stewart is in federal prison today for supposed “material support” to her client – holding a press conference! The AEDPA is also infamous for restricting the right of prisoners on death row from suing for their freedom even when new evidence of innocence and judicial misconduct comes to light. These provisions have been used against the renowned black radical journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, an innocent victim of a racist political frame-up on Pennsylvania’s death row for the last quarter century, among many others.

This is a classic red squad frame-up job, from the federal police organization that began in the first “red scare,” Woodrow Wilson’s police raids and deportations of thousands of union organizers, radicals and socialists during the first imperialist world war. The Twin Cities Anti-War Committee played a central role in organizing the demonstrations against the Republican Party convention in St. Paul in 2008. Before and during that event over 300 activists were arrested, some charged with felony “conspiracy to commit riot” charges, while Minneapolis/St. Paul was transformed into an armed camp. The only rioters to be found were the riot police, who assaulted peaceful protest marchers with tear gas, concussion grenades, and pepper spray. While most of the trumped-up charges have been dropped, some defendants go to trial on October 25.

The U.S. “war on terror,” which has brought nine years of mass murder and chaos to the peoples of Afghanistan, Iraq and now Pakistan, has been from the beginning an assault on elementary democratic rights “at home.” In the weeks following 11 September 2001, the FBI rounded up thousands of Arab, South Asian and Muslim immigrants, subjecting them to indefinite detention without charges. This was soon accompanied by the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act, a wholesale assault on civil liberties which was rammed through Congress with

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Imperialist War Abroad Means Police-State Repression “At Home”

From Resistance to Counteroffensive to the Struggle for Workers Power

Focal Point Europe: Capitalism in Crisis, Class Struggle Erupts



Jean-Paul Pelissier/Reuters

French high school students, rail and postal workers mobilize in the port of Marseille, October 21, against government attack on pension rights.

Over the past year, a wave of class struggle has swept across Europe. In country after country, working people are facing devastating attacks on their livelihoods, their past gains, and their futures. And they are fighting back. On December 15, Greece had yet another one-day nationwide strike – its eighth this year. On November 25, more than 3 million workers walked out in the biggest strike in Portugal’s history. All fall, France was in turmoil as millions of workers and students repeatedly mobilized against the government’s pension “reform,” with numbers and militancy not seen in years. In Ireland, Italy and Spain as well there have been huge marches of hundreds of thousands trade unionists, students and youth. Now in Britain,

angry student protests against drastic fee hikes could spark working-class resistance to the government’s program of vicious cuts. But demonstrations in the streets, no matter how massive, have not stopped European governments – whether of the right or “left” – from proceeding with their onslaught. Nor will they in the future, for this is not a matter of pressuring over budget priorities, it is a concerted capitalist assault on the working class. *To defeat it, we must go from resistance to a struggle for power.*

The burning question is how to get there.

The particular issues involved vary from country to country. In Greece, the battle was set off in December 2009 when so-called “bond vigilantes” drove up interest rates on loans

after a ratings agency downgraded the country's credit rating over the size of the budget deficit. As part of a €10 billion (US\$140 billion) bailout by the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank, the "socialist" Greek government ordered a draconian austerity program, slashing public sector wages by 30 percent and threatening tens of thousands of public workers' jobs. In France, the fuse that lit the explosive worker-student revolt was a plan by the right-wing government to raise the retirement age. This was understood as the opening wedge for a drive against social security and other hard-won labor gains. In Britain, the detonator was the Conservative-Liberal coalition's plan for tripling university tuition and eliminating student maintenance grants, the first of a series of

planned cuts supposedly aimed at reducing the deficit (mostly the result of bailing out the banks and war in Afghanistan). And in Ireland, Portugal and Spain, workers are up in arms over austerity programs aimed at pleasing bond holders.

The attacks are rooted in the global capitalist economic crisis that came to a head in 2008 with the financial panic set off by the fall of the Wall Street banking house of Lehman Brothers. As major banks faced bankruptcy, housing prices collapsed, industrial production plummeted, unemployment shot up. Now often referred to as the Great Recession, it is in fact a *depression* which like those of the 1930s or after 1876 will take years to overcome. At present, numerous governments are insolvent and the capitalist financial system could come crashing down. Yet after an initial period in which high-flying bankers sought trillions in government aid to survive, they are now back to business as usual, paying themselves billions in bonuses. Of course, someone has to foot the bill to pay off the mountain of debt. For the capitalist masters and their politicians, it is the working class that must pay. Using the crisis as an excuse, they are attacking workers' rights and jacking up the rate of exploitation to fatten profits. So even though the "free market" policies of "neo-liberalism" set off the crisis, the neo-liberals are back on the offensive.

While bourgeois economists spoke of an "upturn" earlier this year, it didn't feel like one to hard-hit workers. Long-term unemployment continued to rise in the "jobless recovery," which soon fizzled out. Anger spread over the obscene bonuses financiers paid themselves with billions from the public treasury. In the politically backward United States, where there is no mass political representation of workers and the labor movement is beholden to the Democrats, who currently hold the reins of power, the rage has been siphoned off by right-



On November 24 more than 3 million Portuguese workers struck against the Socialist Party government in the largest one-day general strike in the country's history and the first in 28 years (since 1982).

wing "Tea Party" populists bankrolled by leading billionaires. In Europe, with its left-wing, socialist and Labourite political traditions, protests against the ravages of the economic crisis and government attacks have been led in many cases by the unions. As millions poured into the streets to protest, capitalist governments, bourgeois media and reformist labor leaders have all been caught by surprise at the size, militancy and determination of the mobilizations.

Using time-honored ruses, right-wing regimes in Italy and France tried to divert the disgust by launching chauvinist attacks on immigrants, Muslims and Roma (gypsies). But the "security" offensive fell flat. In France the unions came out in defense of the Roma. So bourgeois opinion-makers tried another tack, railing against "violence" by "hooded anarchists." They sought to capitalize on the deaths of three workers trapped in a bank in Athens that had been firebombed during the May 5 Greek national ("general") strike. To no avail: the strikes kept on coming. Likewise with the sacking of Conservative Party headquarters in London on November 10 accompanied by thousands of protesting students. Despite howls of horror from the government and mainstream media – as well as "official" student leaders – campus occupations and mass student marches intensified. A month later, the British heir apparent and his consort drove into a crowd of demonstrators, some of whom decorated their vintage Rolls-Royce while the shaken royals were treated to a chorus of "off with their heads." But all the government/media fear-mongering over "feral mobs" of anarcho-"yobs" had zero effect.

The scare tactics aren't working because the assault on the livelihoods of working people is so severe. Millions of workers, students, youth and even many in the middle classes see that their lives are being ripped up in order to pay off the banks and

Aris Messinis/AFP



Police flee charging demonstrators in Athens, May 5.

giant corporations – in short, the capitalists – who set off the economic crisis. Yet after months of demonstrations and one-day nationwide strikes, it's clear that the usual means of pressure from "the street" have no effect. It's common to hear protesters remark that the mobilizations must be "radicalized," that the struggle must be taken to a higher level. But how, and led by whom? The labor tops have no intention of waging a serious struggle against capital, and instead hold one march after another, hoping to run them into the ground. While the unions are workers organizations, the bureaucracy that sits atop them is a privileged petty bourgeois layer that serves as a transmission belt for the bosses, to make sure the ranks don't get out of hand. The bureaucrats are, in Daniel De Leon's phrase, the "labor lieutenants of capital" and the name of their game is *class collaboration*.

To wage a serious fight, the labor fakers must be ousted by a leadership committed to *class struggle* with a program and the determination to see it through to victory. To defeat the attacks on the working class will require the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, as the severity of the economic crisis should underline. Yet the vast majority of the European left presents a reformist platform that differs at most quantitatively, if at all, from that of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy. With ever-so-slightly different formulas, they call for competing coalitions to "fight the cuts" or "fight the right," when the task at hand is to *defeat the capitalist attack*. Seeking to gain credibility, these "popular front" type coalitions tie the workers to sections of the ruling class. If they talk of "fighting politically" or "winning the battle of public opinion," they mean channeling the struggle into the straitjacket of bourgeois parliamentarism. But playing by the bosses' rules is a ticket for defeat.

The reformist social-democratic and Communist parties of West Europe have long been cogs in the machinery of capitalist rule, integrated into the state through local administration, national parliaments and the mechanisms of the "welfare state." With the latter under full-scale attack by "free market"

forces, this traditional left has been caught between the pressures of their capitalist masters and the demands of their working-class base. So they do nothing (as in Britain, so far) or call ritual protests to blow off steam (Greece, France, Ireland, Spain, Portugal). The erstwhile "far left," while maintaining a distinct political profile, are no longer the radicals of 1968, having become comfortably ensconced in the labor bureaucracy, electoral politics and the bourgeois media. But whether seeking to build "anti-capitalist" parties and coalitions (the NPA in France, ANTARSYA in Greece) or calling for "new mass (or socialist) workers parties," these are *reformist* political formations

operating in the confines of bourgeois electoralism. They talk of resistance, but they *cannot* lead a revolutionary *class* struggle to bring down the rule of capital.

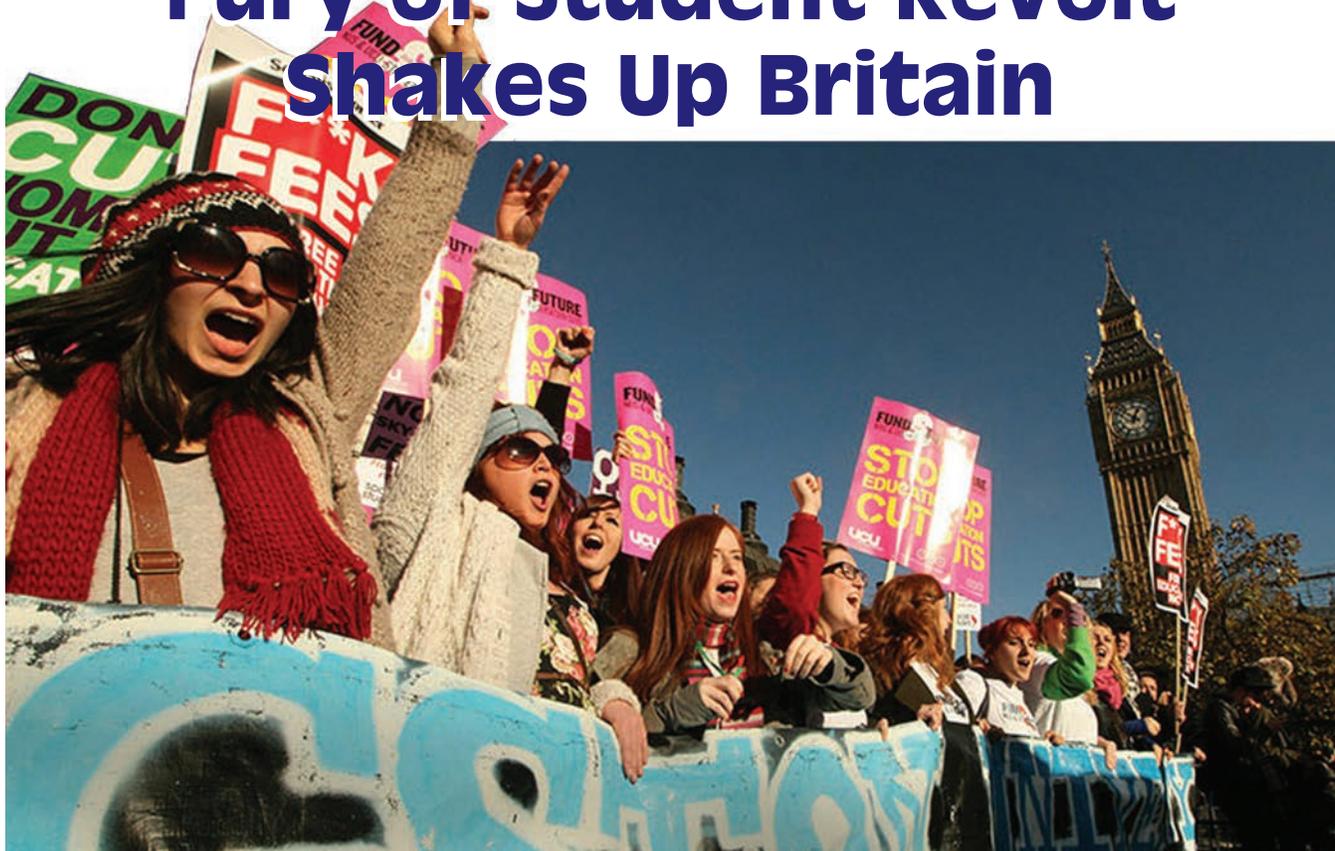
The present crisis highlights as seldom before the urgent need for a program of *transitional demands* such as that put forward in the founding document of the Fourth International, "to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution" (Leon Trotsky, *The Transitional Program* [1938]). Over the decades, Trotsky's program has been distorted by opportunists in myriad ways: classic demands such as a sliding scale of wages and hours are watered down to turn them into contract demands (an escalator clause and limits on layoffs) or appeals to capitalist governments; workers control is translated into "self-management" under capitalism; calls for workers militias are disappeared. Above all, they leave off "the final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat." In the hands of pseudo-Trotskyists, it becomes a "bridge" to nowhere. Yet what is required today is precisely to mobilize the power of the working class on a program to turn defensive struggles into a proletarian counteroffensive on the road to socialist revolution.

So far the rulers have been able to muddle through, while keeping a vigilant eye on the "spreads" (between interest rates for German or U.S. bonds and those of country x) as they once watched opinion polls. In the imperialist "democracies" the vote of "the market" can topple governments, wielding far more power than the electorate ever had. The stakes are high. Greece, Ireland and Portugal can be "bailed out," a run on Spain or Italy could spell the end of the euro. Trotskyists have always opposed the European Union as an imperialist alliance. But while national tensions between the rulers could blow apart the EU, this is the time to counterpose the Europe of the workers to the Europe of the bosses. Until now "internationalism" for the Euroleft consisted of inviting a couple of speakers from other countries to address marches. Today,

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50,000 March in London Against Conservative/Liberal Cuts

Fury of Student Revolt Shakes Up Britain



Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

Students outside Parliament in Westminster, London, November 10 protesting tripling of tuition fees.

19 NOVEMBER 2010 – Finally! When an estimated 52,000 students marched through London on Wednesday, November 10, their mobilization ended up shattering not only the windows of Conservative (Tory) Party headquarters at Millbank Tower but also the eerie calm that had enveloped the country following elections last April. The incoming cabinet of Conservative prime minister David Cameron and Liberal Democrat deputy PM Nick Clegg vowed to impose “painful” cuts to what’s left of Britain’s once extensive social programs. Already badly tattered after 18 years of Tory rule beginning under Margaret Thatcher, followed by 13 years of “Thatcher II” under the “New Labour” Party of Tony Blair and then Gordon Brown, the “welfare state” was about to receive the death blow. So where was the resistance? Labour was passive, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) put off national protest until March 2011 (!). Except for several solid one-day London Tube (subway) and firefighters’ strikes, silence on the social front had settled in. Would the Con-Dem coalition get away with their program of budget axe murder?

Not if the students could help it. Organised by the National

Union of Students (NUS) and University and College Lecturers Union (UCU), tens of thousands came by coach from all over the country. They even travelled from the farthest reaches of Scotland, which will be spared this round of cuts – but students could read the handwriting on the wall. As they marched down the Strand past the government ministries in Whitehall and Parliament in Westminster, they chanted “Tory, Tory, Tory – scum, scum, scum.” When they reached the Conservative headquarters at Millbank, the pent up anger exploded. About 500 broke away from the “official” demonstration and began to lay siege to and take over the building. With few police to stop them, windows were kicked in, the lobby received a thorough ransacking, some office furniture was burned in an impromptu bonfire. This brought out the riot cops but they were dwarfed by the crowd that had grown to several thousand cheering on the action. Some protesters managed to reach the rooftop, from where they sent a defiant text message:

“We stand against the cuts, in solidarity with all the poor, elderly, disabled and working people affected. We are against

**Workers: The Time for Strike Action Is Now!
Break with Labourism – Build a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!**

all cuts and the marketisation of education. We are occupying the roof of Tory HQ to show we are against the Tory system of attacking the poor and helping the rich. This is only the beginning.”

“*This is only the beginning.*” We hope so, a lot of the bourgeois political establishment fear so. The *Guardian* (11 November) splashed the phrase across its front page. It was repeated by MPs (Members of Parliament) and cabinet ministers as they shuddered with recollections of the 1968 demo against the U.S. embassy in Grosvenor Square over the Vietnam War, and the much larger 1990 “riots” over the Tories’ “poll tax.” For students facing a drastic increase of university tuition fees, their lives are at stake: tens of thousands will be driven out, and many of the rest will be saddled with a lifetime of debt. After venting against the Tories on Wednesday, much of the anger is now directed at Nick Clegg and his fellow Lib-Dems who pledged during the election campaign to “vote against any increase in fees”

even as secret documents show they were planning to raise them. But to really *defeat* the cuts and fee hikes, it is necessary to mobilize working-class power to take on not only the government parties but the capitalist system itself, among whose most ardent defenders over the century have been the Labour Party, “New” and old.

The Occupation of Tory Headquarters: An “Unrepresentative Minority” of Thousands

The government and media have sought to divert attention from the issue of cuts and fees by expressions of feigned outrage over the trashing of the Conservative party HQ, blaming it all on an “unrepresentative minority” of “anarchists” and assorted riffraff and ne’er-do-wells. The press all ran the same photo of a protestor kicking in a window at Millbank. “Hijacking of a Very Middle Class Protest,” screamed the *Daily Mail* (11 November). The same theme came from official protest leaders: UCU general secretary Sally Hunt denounced the “actions of a mindless and totally unrepresentative minority.” NUS president Aaron Porter tweeted his “disgust” at the actions of “a minority of idiots.” Before TV cameras he “absolutely condemn[ed] the actions of a small minority who have used violent means to hijack the protest,” calling them “despicable.” What’s truly despicable is this support for the rulers. But what else could one expect from a right-wing Labourite like Porter anxious to use his NUS position to launch his political career, as generations of Labour MPs before him have done. The fact is, and everybody knows it, that nobody in power would have



Protester delivers swift kick to window of Conservative Party central office in Millbank Tower, London, November 10. Government, media and official student leaders piously intoned against “destruction,” but demonstrators furious over cuts that could destroy their lives, cheered.

Dominic Lipinski/Press Association

paid the least attention to the students’ march, no matter how large, if it weren’t for the Millbank occupation.

Time and again, all over the world it is claimed that the most militant actions are the result of a “handful of outsiders.” Nonsense. John Harris in the *Guardian* (12 November) quoted a colleague who described the scene at Millbank as “ordinary students who were viscerally angry,” adding that this was “an early sign of people growing anxious and restless, and what a government pledged to such drastic plans should increasingly expect.” Damage to property? Please spare us the cynical hand-wringing. Cameron and his fellow members of the Bullingdon Club at Oxford used to regularly smash up pubs and the like in their drunken sprees. Likewise for threatened charges of “attempted murder” against demonstrators. In fact, very few people were hurt, far fewer than in the G20 protests last year where riot police of the Territorial Support Group sought to terrorise protesters and killed newspaper vendor Ian Tomlinson (for which no cop has been prosecuted, or even disciplined). Some 58 protesters have been arrested for the occupation of Conservative Party headquarters. There should be an outcry demanding that they *all* be released and *all* charges dropped. The criminals are the government and the ruling class it serves.

Not all NUS and UCU representatives had the same belly-crawling response as their top leaders. Student union presidents at the University of London, Sussex University and others issued a statement saying: “We reject any attempt to characterise the Millbank protest as small, ‘extremist’ or unrepresentative of our movement. We celebrate the fact that

thousands of students were willing to send a message to the Tories that we will fight to win. Occupations are a long established tradition in the student movement that should be defended.” Several thousand activists have added their names to this statement. Certainly the police will use this incident to ramp up repression in the next round. A “senior police figure” was quoted as saying “In the past we’ve been criticised for being too provocative. During the next demo no one can say a word.” But more fundamentally, lashing out at such symbols of an upper class elite, while thoroughly understandable and justified, cannot break its *power* to cause misery for the masses. *Much more* is needed to hit the capitalist rulers in their pocketbooks where it counts. To really *fight to win*, it will be necessary to mobilize the power of the working class in action. And despite the treachery of the trade-union misleaders, millions of British workers are ready to fight.

Although the government and police commissioners were reportedly “caught by surprise” by the size and militancy of the students, which far exceeded their expectations, such angry protest has long been in the cards. A “senior Tory aide” was quoted back in May saying that “if we win, this is going to be a deeply unpopular government. They have six months at maximum” to get their program of cuts in place. Now, writes Michael White in the *Guardian* (11 November):

“Right on cue, exactly six months into David Cameron’s premiership, the ancient British roar of ‘Tory scum’ echoed across central London again. In honour of the coalition’s deal on higher tuition fees, student protesters spliced their message with cheerful abuse of Nick Clegg. After almost 100 years of apathy Lib Dems can hold their heads high – hated at last.”

And the hatred they are harvesting is not limited to “professional protesters,” as Tory spokesmen claim. All accounts agree that for many if not most of the students who marched on November 10, including the thousands who cheered the occupation of Millbank, this was their first demonstration. It won’t be their last.

Fee Hikes: A Class Purge of Higher Education

The Con-Dem cabinet’s plans will drastically change British universities and schools. University tuition fees are set to be tripled to £9,000 (US\$14,500) a year! At the same time, government expenditure on university instruction is to be cut by 40 percent. Not only is this paying “more for worse” education, the only way it could be accomplished is if there is a big fall in enrolment, which is exactly what they are aiming at. The *intent*, and not only the predictable consequence, is to deprive tens, possibly hundreds of thousands of young people of a college education. And by cutting as well the £30-a-week



Thousands of protesters cheered the occupation of the hated Tories’ HQ.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 16-19 year olds and slashing budgets for FE (Further Education) colleges (similar to community colleges in the U.S.) by 25 percent, universities are set to be places just for the wealthy, leaving the working class either unemployed or stuck in dead-end McJobs.

The responsibility for this *class purge* of Britain’s universities is not confined to the Tories and Liberal Democrats who are carrying out the horrendous program. This was, after all, the outcome of a review by Lord Browne – what better “expert” on education than a former CEO of British Petroleum! – that was commissioned by the previous Labour government of Gordon Brown. The expansion of higher education courses and the student population by New Labour under Tony Blair after 1997 was deliberately under-financed. The costs of paying for it were shoved onto students and their families by cutting student grants and introducing tuition fees in 1998. While they were at first means-tested and many working-class students still studied for free, this changed drastically in 2004 when Blair/Brown introduced top-up fees, tripling the maximum of £1,250 to £3,290. Like previous Conservative measures, they were mainly aimed at expanding the pool of skilled labor: according to the 2003 New Labour white paper, “The Future of Higher Education,” students are to attend universities merely for the “acquisition of skills.”

Seeking to one-up Labour’s extreme business-friendly policies, the Con-Dem coalition has come out for all-sided privatization. Culture secretary Jeremy Hunt announced budget cuts with the idiotic claim, “The changes I have proposed today would help us deliver fantastic culture, media and sport, while ensuring value for money for the public” (*Guardian*, 26 July 2010). But “value for money” is hardly an invention of this coalition. Commenting on government spending cuts in 1922, the historian R.H. Tawney observed: “consider the philosophy behind its proposals. It does not actually state, in so many words, that the children of the workers, like anthropoid apes, have fewer convolutions in their brains than the children of the rich. It does not state it because it assumes it.... While most decent men have viewed with satisfaction the recent considerable development of secondary education, they deplore it as a public catastro-

phe, and are indignant that education ... is sold 'below actual cost'" (*Guardian*, 21 February 1922).

The rhetoric of the authors of the 1922 cuts has now resurfaced unchanged, with talk of the undeserving poor who commit a "sin" by not working for starvation pay. Such Social Darwinism inevitably has a racist character. This was recently expressed in its crudest form by the Social Democrat banker Thilo Sarrazin in Berlin, who has made waves by openly bemoaning the destruction of German *Kultur* by Turkish immigrants. Sarrazin argues, as the *New York Times* (13 November 2010) summed up his views, that "since Muslims are less intelligent (his conclusion) than ethnic Germans, the population will be dumbed down (his conclusion)." That this is not just some crackpot talking was underscored by Chancellor Angela Merkel's pronouncement last month that "multiculturalism is dead." And as Sarkozy in France goes in for mass expulsion of Roms and threats to cancel immigrants' citizenship, the Con-Dem government in London shares the same worldview, vituperating against an "out of control" immigration system.

This cabinet of 18 millionaires (by the *Guardian's* count) really has it in for Britain's working people. The day after the student protest, the government announced plans to replace hardship payments (to the unemployed whose benefits have been held up) with loans (to be repaid), and to ban anyone who refuses a job or "community service" from receiving benefits for up to three years. According to the spending review by Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, some £18 billion is to be slashed from the welfare system. Public sector workers are to be hit with a pay freeze and a 3 percent increase in pension contributions – in other words, a pay *cut*. Local council grants are to be slashed by 27 percent. Planned cuts of 500,000 public sector jobs could lead to an equal number of private sector job losses, adding one million more people to the dole queues (unemployment lines). While the health service is supposed to be exempt from cuts, nurses say 10,000 jobs are threatened. It's all supposed to reduce a budget deficit of £149 billion. Yet as a result of the world capitalist economic crisis, the Labour government funnelled *ten times* that amount – £1.5 trillion – into the coffers of Britain's banks to stave off collapse.

But Britain's students aren't taking it. The London protest was the latest in many in Europe over the austerity measures



The coalition government of Prime Minister David Cameron (Conservative), left, and Deputy PM Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrat), posh twins in a millionaires' cabinet. Shown here in front of No. 10 Downing Street, the prime minister's office, after taking office on May 12. Luckily they are wearing different ties so you can tell them apart. Politically they are united on a program to make the working class pay for the capitalist economic crisis.

Carl de Cour/AFP

being pushed by the capitalists to make the working class pay for the economic meltdown. Repeated one-day "general strikes" in Greece during the winter and spring, mass protests in Portugal, a strike by Spanish unions against the Socialist government in Madrid, and now two and a half months of weekly "days of action" by French unions and students¹: the working people of Europe have demonstrated their readiness to do battle. Barely three weeks ago the *New York Times* (23 October 2010) was contrasting Britain – "stiff upper lip," "inherent stoicism," "bulldog resolve in the face of hardship," and all that – to the strike-prone French for whom taking to the streets

is a "rite of passage" for the young. Confronting "five bleak years of austerity, the British barely seemed to blink," the writer sagely opined. But now British students are accused of "acting French," and the deputy editor of the *Wall Street Journal Europe* suggests that perhaps French president Nicolas Sarkozy would lend Cameron his CRS riot police.

The fury of British students over the fee hikes and cuts was all the more fierce as they had been pushed through by the recently elected Lib Dem/Conservatives. After the broken promises of Tony Blair/Gordon Brown's "New" Labour which oversaw the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and repeated attacks on immigrants and the working class, many young people (especially students) voted for Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats hoping that they would be a 'progressive' alternative. They have been disappointed – big time. Yet Labour is no opposition. Even today, while needling Clegg in Parliament, Labour spokesmen have not flatly opposed the cuts. They mainly differ over the pace, and Labour local councils will be administering the cuts. As for the student fee hikes, Labour is now toying with a "graduate tax," which only means that students will have to pay off the £9,000 a year fees later. They may quibble about specifics, but *all* the parliamentary parties support the attacks on working people in Britain. And that is because all of them – including Labour, which Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin long ago characterized as a "bourgeois workers party" – uphold the capitalist order.

¹ See our articles "French Students and Workers Strike: May in October? The Spectre of a New '68" (page 51), "To Drive Out Sarkozy & Co., Fight for Power to the Workers" (page 56) and a series of reports from Paris on the www.internationalist.org web site.

“Broad Coalitions” vs. Worker-Student Struggle

So what is to be done now? British students are energized, even exhilarated. NUS leaders want to pull back and limit themselves to embarrassing Liberal Democrats who signed the “no fee rise” pledge. However, the Labourite student bureaucrats of the NUS and UCU are hardly in control of the protests. On November 10, there was a “free education bloc” of assorted left social democrats and a “radical students and workers bloc” of a more anarchist and syndicalist bent. Now, over opposition from the NUS, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) has called for university walkouts and occupations on November 24 and a central national demonstration at Trafalgar Square to be accompanied by “direct action.” Already an occupation has begun at Sussex, after a one-day occupation at Manchester U.

There are a host of leftist student groups in Britain, usually led by one or another socialist group, ranging from Communist Students of the CPGB (Communist Party of Great Britain) and Socialist Students of the SPEW (Socialist Party of England and Wales, led by Peter Taaffe) to the Education Activist Network (EAN) led by the SWP (Socialist Workers Party, followers of the late Tony Cliff²). The EAN is a follow-on to the SWP’s earlier Student Respect and Another Education Is Possible ventures, and of course the Stop the War coalition. Where Che Guevara called for “two, three, many Vietnams,” the SWP’s variant is two, three, many front groups, one (or more) for every “movement” it is tailing at the time (Muslim, anti-globalisation, antiwar). It has been noted that while the parent organizations may have some differences, the programs of their student affiliates are virtually interchangeable. This reflects the fact that at bottom they are all part of the social-democratic reformist milieu.

As always, the SWP places itself squarely on the right flank. Positioning itself one baby step to the left of the NUS leadership, which calls for the graduate tax, the SWP, while itself formally in favour of “free education” (that is, the abolition of all fees), insists that the EAN should *not* raise this fundamental demand, as that might hinder its opportunist manoeuvring in the NUS. Following November 10, the SWP decided to pose as the biggest defenders of the Millbank occupation, crowing that “First through the doors of Millbank Tower were members of the Socialist Workers Party...” (*Socialist Worker*, 20 November). The SWP’s perspective was set out in a pamphlet calling for “a huge campaign that turns every college into a centre of resistance.” This is

² Though often referred to in the British press as a Trotskyist, Cliff broke with Trotskyism at the start of the Cold War, declaring the Stalinist-ruled Soviet Union to be “state capitalist” rather than a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, and in 1950 refusing to defend North Korea and the USSR against imperialist attack, an act of class treason for which his supporters were rightly expelled from the Revolutionary Communist Party.



National Union of Students

Liberal-Democrat leader Nick Clegg in April 2010, holding up his signed pledge to vote against any increase in university fees. The entire Lib-Dem parliamentary slate signed the pledge. Now they will vote to triple fees as part of coalition government.

bread and butter for the SWP, which looks to everyone from CIA-run unions in Poland to mullahs in Iran, but never the working class (though while calling for everyone to “build the fightback,” it does say that they could “invite local trade unionists to come along”).

Other groups have their own profile. The SPEW calls for “building a mass, sustained and determined movement that can stop the Con-Dem onslaught” – carefully avoiding any attack on Labour – that would be “joined by the powerful organisations of the working class.” Meaning they want the TU bureaucrats to sign on. Alan Woods’ Socialist Appeal (SA), which bills itself as a tendency in the Labour Party, calls for “a movement that can bring this government down” – and thus pave the way for a return to Labour. They all have their criticisms of the “New Labour” of Blair and Brown, and they may say that the recently elected Labour leader is not the “Red Ed” (Miliband) portrayed in the media. But, the SWP writes, “the movement will be looking to Miliband to speak up for all those who will be hammered by coalition cuts” (*Socialist Review*, November 2010). And there they and their various coalitions all were, lobbying the Labour conference in Brighton September 27, “to tell the Labour Government that they must change direction,” as the UCU put it.

Whether in the SWP’s “student power” version or the more Labourite SPEW/SA variant, these social democrats act as pressure groups on the Labour stewards of capitalist Britain. Lobbying Labour, especially now that it is out of office, *cannot* stop the cuts. Only powerful worker-student *class* struggle, independent of all political ties to the bourgeois state, can take the struggle forward.

Dreams of a New Poll Tax Revolt and Social-Democratic Support for the Police

In the wake of the November 10 occupation of Millbank Tower, the bourgeois press harked back to the 1990 “poll tax riots” as a harbinger of what could be in store. At the same time, several socialist groups saw that as a model of how



Poll tax “riot,” 31 March 1990. Bloody police attack on demonstrators sealed Margaret Thatcher’s fate.

mass struggle could bring down this Tory government, as the revolt over the poll tax led to the downfall of “Iron Lady” Thatcher. SWP: “This is a sign we can resist. The poll tax riots show it is possible.” SPEW: study “the lessons of the poll tax struggle and how we took on the Tories and won last time round.” Socialist Appeal: “The anti-poll tax movement ... shows that the government can be defeated if a serious and effective struggle is mounted.” This is at best a partial truth. While hatred of this tax on the poor and working people and revulsion over police brutality eventually led to Thatcher’s resignation and abandonment of the tax, she was succeeded by the Tory John Major ... and eventually by Tony Blair, whose “New Labour” government continued the anti-worker policies of Thatcher.

The “poll tax” replaced graduated local taxes (based on the rental value of houses) by a single head tax for every adult, whether earl or pauper, a capitalist or an unemployed worker. Those who didn’t pay would go to jail, bringing back the debtors’ prisons of centuries past. The Militant tendency in the Labour Party, from which both Socialist Appeal and the Socialist Party devolved, initiated a national Anti-Poll Tax Federation. Eventually 14 million people refused to pay the tax, making it effectively uncollectible. On 31 March 1990, some 200,000-plus people jammed into central London to protest the tax. They were met with a wanton cop attack. Police vans drove into crowds at high speed, police horses trampled on demonstrators, police batons rained down on old ladies. Millions were shocked as they watched the spectacle on TV. The Tory barons concluded Thatcher had to go if they were to avoid defeat in the next elections. A few months later she was out. And the Tories got seven more years in office.

Bringing down a hated government in a palace coup

by fellow Tories, though it may have given a measure of belated satisfaction to those who were defeated in the epic coal miners’ strike and other hard-fought labour battles, hardly counts as a victory for the working class. Moreover, when the poll tax battle is held up as an model for how to struggle today, it is an argument that it is possible to go around the obstacle of the Trades Union Council. In particular circumstances, mass civil disobedience may be a possible tactic – such as when 14 million people are willing to risk jail rather than pay the heinous tax. But to actually defeat Thatcherism, it was necessary for the trade unions to undertake political strike action against the poll tax, as Trotskyists called for at the time. Today it

will take workers action on a national basis to defeat Cameron and Clegg’s cuts and fee hikes. And that means a fight within the labour movement.

A key issue is the nature of the police. Various left groups, but particularly the heirs of Militant (SPEW and SA) characterize the cops as “workers in uniform.” But there is a vital difference between workers conscripted into the army and the police, who are strikebreakers and professional agents of repression. “We have to distinguish ordinary police officers from Chiefs of Police,” write Socialist Appeal supporters Adam Booth and Ben Peck about the recent student march (In Defense of Marxism web site, 12 November). But did chiefs of police kill Ian Tomlinson at the G20 protests in 2009; or execute Jean Charles de Menezes with shots to the back as he entered the London Underground in 2005; or beat anti-fascist demonstrator Blair Peach to death in 1979? No, these were the acts of “ordinary police officers,” who are the *armed fist of the capitalist state*.

Not surprisingly, the authors of the article sought to distance SA from the “attack” on Millbank Tower, saying it was “initiated by a minority of ultra-lefts” and was “not a method that the labour movement would adopt.” An article by the SPEW criticized the NUS leadership for denouncing the protesters at Millbank, but remarked elliptically that “stewarding of the protest was inadequate - particularly at the end.” Meaning that had SPEW “stewards” been there, they would have tried to prevent the occupation of Tory headquarters? Naturally, the SA does not call to defend the arrested protesters, and the SPEW has only a mealy-mouthed reference to “no victimisation of students involved in the demonstration.” What constitutes victimisation, and what about non-students? The SPEW scandalously includes a leader of the Prison Officers Association among its mem-



Coalition of Resistance march protesting cuts, October 20. What welfare state? Defending remaining social gains will require hard class struggle, not “popular-front” coalitions with minor bourgeois parties and politicians.

bers, in total contradiction to Leon Trotsky’s insistence that “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.” In contrast to the SA/SPEW, the League for the Fourth International calls for *cops out of the unions* (see our article, “Her Majesty’s Social Democrats in Bed with the Police,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009).

Class Struggle vs. Class Collaboration

Clearly there needs to be a massive mobilization against the *war on the working class* spearheaded by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government. Mobilize on what basis? Campus occupations and mass marches are necessary, but with the strategic aim of mobilizing workers’ industrial power on a program of class independence. Talk of “student power” is illusory – by themselves, students do not have the social weight to bring down the government, although they can play a key role in sparking struggle. And marching alone will do little. A million people demonstrated against the Iraq war, but it didn’t sway Labour PM Tony Blair, who kept right on wagging his tail for poodle master George Bush. What is called for is *joint strike action pointing toward a general strike*, based on *elected strike committees*, to break the stranglehold of Labour and a trade-union bureaucracy beholden to capitalism.

There must be a struggle to mobilize labour’s strength, in the factories and on the streets, now, not some time next year, in a sharp class battle against the capitalist rulers. This will face opposition from the Trades Union Congress tops, who have been dragging their heels – and not just from open right-wingers like Unison, which clearly wants to avoid a showdown with the government. Tony Woodley, general secretary of Unite, Britain’s largest union, and one of the “awkward squad” who sought to “reclaim” Labour for “socialism,” saluted the “anger and passion” of the students, but would only commit to “linking up with the broadest range of other groups, including

students, to make the government change its mind.” Like how? Even Bob Crow, general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which earlier appealed to the TUC for “coordinated strike action,” now says only that the RMT seeks “the strongest possible co-ordinated and peaceful resistance in the coming months.”

What they are aiming at is to build yet another “broad” coalition of a popular-front character that would tie workers, students, immigrants and others to minor bourgeois forces and a program of cosmetic reforms, in order to ensure that any protest does not challenge capitalist rule. An example was the no²e coalition, initiated by Crow and the

RMT, an alliance with the thoroughly bourgeois splinter Liberal Party for the June 2009 elections to the European parliament. One of the coalition’s top candidates was John McEwan, a Socialist Party supporter and leader of the chauvinist 2009 strike by Lindsey oil refinery workers whose main demand was “British Jobs for British Workers.” (The strike committee tried to prettify this disgusting demand as hiring of “locally skilled union members” instead of the Italian and Portuguese workers employed there.) This year a popular-frontist Coalition of Resistance has been launched by former Labour left MP Tony Benn last August to fight the cuts and “defend the welfare state.” This is also what most groups on the British left are angling for. But such “coalitions” are vehicles for class collaboration and roadblocks to militant class struggle.

After World War II, the Labour Party under Clement Atlee and Aneurin Bevan enacted a series of measures to salvage bankrupt British capitalism. As Britannia no longer ruled the waves, having lost its Empire, the bourgeoisie hoped to stave off the “communist menace” by nationalizing unprofitable but vital branches of the economy (coal, rail, steel, docks, electrical energy), and providing some social services to the workers, notably the National Health Service and council housing. Following the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe during 1989-92, capitalists the world over no longer felt the need to make concessions to the workers they exploited. In Britain the process of dismantling the “welfare state” had already begun under Margaret Thatcher. It continued apace under “New Labour” and now the bourgeoisie is determined to finish it off under the Con-Dem cabinet.

No “broad coalition” is going to stop this wrecking ball, only mobilizing workers’ power and the students’ militancy in sharp *class* struggle can do the job. To stop the purge of higher education, the mass redundancies (layoffs), the

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London tube strike, 7 September 2010. RMT must not stand alone! Urgently needed: all-out strike action to defeat the cuts.

destruction of local services will take a battle far surpassing the 1984-85 coal strike in scope and intensity. What then? In the 1978-79 “winter of discontent,” British workers undertook widespread strike action, but since they had nothing to replace the Labour government of James Callaghan, the forces of reaction won, in the figure of Margaret Thatcher. A general strike would starkly pose the question of which class rules. If the workers movement is not prepared to fight for power, as the TUC was not in the 1926 general strike, the result will be a colossal defeat. Today, the only way to defend the remaining gains of the “welfare state” of distant memory is by fighting to overthrow capitalist rule.

To Defeat the Cuts, Fight for International Socialist Revolution

The struggle against the class war on the workers currently being waged by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition is no isolated national battle. Across Europe, workers and students are confronting a drive by governments and business to make the working class and large sections of the middle classes pay the costs of the capitalist economic crisis. The bankers who triggered the new Depression are demanding that the bailouts be paid for by massive elimination of social programs such as they have sought for years. They have no compunctions. Last week, Barclays Bank announced it was anticipating paying out £2.24 billion in bonuses in 2010, an amount equal to the entire planned cuts in government expenditures on university teaching budgets. Meanwhile, market speculators hold entire countries hostage. Earlier this year Greece was targeted, today it is Ireland, tomorrow Portugal, and the day after tomorrow... Britain?

If the Con-Dem cabinet does not succeed in ramming through the cuts, the impersonal forces of “the market” will take their revenge and push the country into sovereign bankruptcy, which would make the collapse of the Wall Street banking house Lehman Brothers in September 2008 seem

small potatoes. When social-democratic leftists speak of a “socialist transformation” of Britain through an enabling act, as Militant did in the 1970s and ’80s, and their offspring do today with programs for “socialist nationalisation” and “public ownership” of 150 top companies under “democratic workers’ control and management” (SPEW, “Where We Stand”) they are peddling democratic illusions. Such a “transformation” would be no more socialist than the post-WWII nationalisations by Labour, and in any case a peaceful transition to “socialism” through parliamentary channels is impossible. It will take nothing less than *socialist revolution* on an international scale to expropriate British capital, and only by fighting for that goal can British workers hope to defend what’s left of their past gains.

The starting principle of Marxist politics is the class independence of the workers from the bourgeois exploiters. Thus the League for the Fourth International opposes voting for any bourgeois candidate, party or coalition – even for workers parties in “popular fronts” – no matter how leftist their rhetoric may be. In Britain, after a dozen years in office, Labour was thoroughly discredited and no class-conscious worker or genuine Marxist could have voted in the 2010 elections for these warmongers and loyal servants of British (and U.S.) capital. But class independence is only the beginning. To obtain decent housing, quality health care, free and accessible education for all, capitalism must go. And it is necessary to build a workers party to lead that struggle, by putting forward a transitional program leading to socialist revolution.

Workers should mobilize to *force British troops out of Afghanistan – and Northern Ireland* – with proletarian action, including strikes, such as heralded by the West Coast U.S. port strike against the war on May Day 2008 (which was endorsed by the RMT). Fight mass unemployment by demanding a *shorter workweek, with no loss in pay*, to divide the available work among all hands. Government attacks on Travellers must be vigorously opposed, and the anti-“foreigner” backlash combated by demanding *full citizenship for all immigrants*. The growing threat of the British National Party, the English Defence League and anti-Muslim attacks should be met by *workers defence guards* to disperse the fascist scum. In the face of all the hoopla over the upcoming wedding of Prince William of the House of Windsor (will his swastika-loving brother Prince Harry attend in full Nazi regalia?), we call to *abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords*, and for a *voluntary federation of workers republics of the British Isles* and a *Socialist United States of Europe*.

It is necessary to struggle within the unions as well as among students, the black and immigrant populations and all the oppressed to break from Labourism, the heritage of an all-embracing social-democratic reformist party, and forge a proletarian revolutionary vanguard. The LFI seeks to build the nucleus of a workers party such as Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, to educate and lead (in word *and* deeds) the fight for a workers government, as part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

Workers Revolt: Government Wage Slashing, Jobs Massacre “Could Lead to Civil War”

Greece on the Razor’s Edge



Agence France-Presse

Some 300,000 marched in Athens on May 5 to protest anti-worker austerity program of “Socialist” government of George Papandreou.

Economist Trade Unionism, Left Electoral Coalitions No Answer Build a Leninist-Trotskyist Party to Fight for Socialist Revolution

On December 15, more than 100,000 angry demonstrators rallied outside the Greek parliament in Athens shouting “thieves, thieves” and “no sacrifice for the rich.” Workers were protesting drastic anti-labor legislation by the “Socialist” government which would effectively eliminate the minimum wage, throw out collective bargaining agreements, privatize the state railways and fire thousands of workers. Bus drivers went on a three-day strike, tying up traffic throughout the capital; piles of trash, uncollected due to a sanitation workers strike, burned; TV, radio and newspapers were shut down; workers occupied the Acropolis where 300 are due to be sacked. Police fired tear gas and flash grenades at demonstrators. Hundreds of youths used sledgehammers to break paving stones, hurling them at the cops. Police, “rioters,” journalists and cameramen all wore gas masks. It was by one count the tenth one-day “general strike” in a year, and certainly the largest and most militant since May ... when workers tried to storm parliament.

Greece is where the current wave of European workers’ struggles against a massive capitalist assault on their livelihoods first broke out this past January. It is also where they have gone

the farthest, bordering on a full-scale revolt. With a population of 11 million – the same as the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil – Greece has a cultured, leftist and militant working class. Despite facile talk of Greece as “the birthplace of democracy” (in the slave society of Athens!), it also has a long history of oppression. From the fascistic Metaxas dictatorship in the 1930s, Nazi occupation and an anti-Communist bloodbath in the st-WWII civil war in the ’40s to a U.K./U.S.-imposed monarchy in the ’50s and a military junta in the ’60s and ’70s, a weak but bloodthirsty ruling class backed by the leading imperialist powers held Greece in thrall for decades. This means that Greek workers have a long history of struggle against repression, and that the threat of bonapartist dictatorship is never far off – including today.

Greek capitalists have been living in fear of an uprising threatening their rule since the December 2008 youth revolt over the police murder of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. The center of Athens was aflame as hundreds of youths clashed with the militarized riot police; police stations were attacked around the country. In succeeding days, thousands demonstrated in protest, with the support of some trade unions

and many trade-union militants. After the global economic crisis hit in 2008, the ruling class decided they needed some protection from the left to stave off worker unrest. In October 2009 elections the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) ousted the right-wing New Democracy (ND), under fire even in bourgeois circles for its rampant corruption and budgetary finagling. Despite its name, PASOK is a liberal bourgeois-nationalist party founded by former prime minister Andreas Papandreou, the son of Giorgios Papandreou who was installed as a puppet prime minister by the British in 1944 to crush the Communists, and father of the present prime minister George Papandreou.

Many voted for PASOK expecting that it would at least be more worker-friendly than the ND spokesmen for big business. But in office, Papandreou has defended the interests of Greek and European capital to the hilt, imposing vicious austerity programs of mass layoffs, drastic salary cuts and tax hikes on working people far worse than the rightist New Democracy even proposed. He has been able to do this so far because of the support of PASOK trade unionists who lead the ADEDY (public employees) and GSEE (the General Confederation of Greek Labor, including private sector workers) federations. When Papandreou announced in November 2009 that the projected budget deficit was actually 12.7 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) instead of the 3.7 percent earlier predicted by his ND predecessor, and total government debt was over €300 billion (about US\$430 billion), the markets went bananas. Ratings agencies downgraded Greece's credit-worthiness, raising the rates it would have to pay to borrow money to finance the deficit (and to roll over existing debt).

Bowing before finance capital, in December 2009 Papandreou announced a pay freeze for government employees and sharp cut in twice-annual bonuses, which make up a large part of their pay. In response, public sector unions called a strike on February 10, declaring "We won't pay for their crisis." A February 24 one-day general strike included private sector workers as well. But the austerity plan was not sufficient to satisfy the bond speculators. So the government announced further cuts, including an additional 10% public sector wage reductions and raising the value added (sales) tax, just to pay the €2.5 billion in interest due this year. This sparked an even larger one-day general strike on March 11. Still it was not enough for "the markets." So the Greek government asked the European Union and International Monetary Fund to bail it out, and on May 2 ordered massive cuts to public sector pay, eliminating bonuses for many government workers, raising the VAT to 23% for most goods, slashing pensions and raising the retirement age from 61 to 65. The EU and IMF agreed to provide €10 billion in loan guarantees.



Athens in flames, December 2008, as thousands protested police murder of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

Aris Messinis/AFP

This devastating attack on workers' living standards provoked rage in the population. While German chancellor Angela Merkel and the financial press scold "the Greeks" for "living beyond their means," Greek workers have a longer workweek (over 42 hours on average, compared to 38 in France) and are among the lowest paid in the Eurozone (earning just over €800 a month, as opposed to €1,250 in France), while the cost of living is higher even than in Belgium. Pensions average €700 (less than US\$1,000) a month. And now with the cuts imposed by the "socialist" government, teachers, for example, have seen their already low pay slashed by a staggering 30%. In addition, the unions calculate that unemployment has shot up to 1 million, out of a workforce of under 5 million. Attacks of this magnitude threaten the vital minimum necessary for the very survival of the proletariat, and have seldom been achieved except under the iron heel of military rule. It's not surprising, then, that a new general strike broke out whose size and fury haven't been seen in Greece since the fall of the hated "colonels regime" in 1974.

The protests kicked off at daybreak on May 4 as supporters of the Communist Party (KKE) took the Acropolis and unfurled giant banners in Greek and English proclaiming, "Peoples of Europe Rise Up." Public sector workers went out, shutting schools and government offices and bringing air, rail, maritime and public transport to a halt. The next day, May 5, up to 300,000 demonstrated in the streets of Athens, with huge marches in Thessaloniki, Patras and elsewhere around the country. In the capital, the PASOK-controlled unions kept their march away from the center, yet GSEE leader Giannis Panagopoulos was loudly booed by his own ranks (on March 6 he was physically attacked by irate workers). The KKE-led PAME (Militant Front of All Workers) labor front rallied in front of Parliament. As their rally was breaking up, thousands of angry demonstrators showed up. According to the *London Guardian* (6 May), "hundreds tried to storm the building, screaming 'let the bordello burn'." Riot police then savagely attacked the crowd. Soon battles were raging between cops



and protesters all over central Athens.

The KKE denounced those who tried to enter parliament. But the angry demonstrators who surged across Syntagma Square were not the “black block” or “far left.” The *Guardian* reported that many were “once-stalwart supporters of the governing socialist PASOK party.” Others observed that most came directly from the PAME rally. In the course of the fighting, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the Marfin Bank, where workers were trapped inside: three employees tragically died in the blaze. Was the firebomb thrown by provocateurs (as some anarchists claim), or by proponents of “direct action” who had no concern for the potentially lethal consequences of their acts? The fact is, as a bank worker reported, that the employees had been required to work that day or lose their jobs, there were no adequate fire extinguishing devices, and the boss had locked the doors. While lamenting the tragedy, bank workers did not let themselves be deterred and struck the next day, rightly blaming the police and management for the deaths, while distancing themselves from the anarchists.

It may be a tad overheated to describe the May 5 general strike as “semi-insurrectional,” as some have done. But it certainly showed that the anger of Greek workers had reached the boiling point and large numbers were prepared for radical action going far beyond the ritual marches that have achieved nothing. The government and the capitalist rulers breathed a sigh of relief when subsequent one-day general strikes on May 20, June 29 and July 8 were less tumultuous, though

still huge. After the August holidays (which many families saw as perhaps their last summer vacations for years to come), thousands of workers protested a speech by Papandreou at the Thessaloniki trade fair in September, where he announced a lowering of corporate taxes on profits to the lowest rate in the EU, while the VAT (mostly paid by workers) is now one of the highest. Some “socialist”! Most of the fall was taken up with campaigning for local elections on November 7, in which the PASOK lost 1 million votes. While the KKE and an “anti-capitalist left” coalition advanced to over 12% of the vote, the biggest increase was for abstention.

But after a brief electoral interlude, the battle continues. Papandreou and the PASOK have carried out every step that the “troika” of the IMF, European Commission (EC) and European Central Bank (ECB) have required – to no avail. In December 2009, after the first downgrade of Greece’s credit standing, speculators pushed the spread between interest rates on a German and a Greek ten-year government bond to 2.5% (250 basis points). Today, the spread stands at 10%! And the day after Parliament voted, Moody’s rating agency, while congratulating the government for “significant progress in implementing a very large fiscal consolidation effort,” announced it was considering lowering Greek notes to junk-bond status if it concluded that the country’s debt-to-GDP ratio (currently 125%) was not stabilizing.

In fact, every reputable economist knows – and many have said publicly – that Greece cannot possibly pay the amounts demanded by the international creditors. As the austerity measures sink the country deeper into economic depression, lowering the gross domestic product by 4 percent this year, probably more in 2011, the debt will soon rise to 150% of GDP. Even with EU/IMF loan guarantees, no commercial bank will lend to it. Only a dramatic return to prosperity would enable Greece to grow its way out of this morass, and there’s no sign of that on the horizon. As the prominent German economist Hans-Werner Sinn of the IFO Institute in Munich remarked to an elite gathering at Lake Como, Italy in early September, “The policy of forced ‘internal devaluation,’ deflation, and depression could risk driving Greece to the edge of a civil war. It is impossible to cut wages and prices by 30 per cent without major riots.” In any case, the present course will inevitably (and possibly soon) lead to a blowup.

I. KKE: “Communists” vs. Revolution

This excruciating situation cries out for revolutionary leadership. Instead, most of the Greek left and labor movement are responding in their usual manner, ranging from economist trade unionism to bourgeois electoralism, opportunist maneuvering and coalition-building. The Stalinist-reformist Communist Party, by far the largest group on the left, has attracted support in recent months mainly for its name, symbolizing

rejection of capitalism, rather than its actual policies, which prop up bourgeois rule. In the November local elections, the KKE raised its share of the vote from 7.5% in the October 2009 parliamentary elections to 10.7% today, picking up 60,000 votes, many from former PASOK voters. The KKE-led PAME trade-union front has also gained strength at the expense of the PASOK-controlled ADEDY and GSEE, of which it is formally a part. But what does the KKE/PAME do with this increased support? Basically they call for more one-day general strikes¹, just as the French reformist union and left leaders keep holding “days of action” that go nowhere.

In the “general strikes” that have taken place on a nearly monthly schedule in Greece over the past year, with August off for summer vacation and another break for the fall local elections, PAME has insisted on organizing separately from PASOK-controlled unions. But while criticizing the austerity measures of the Papandreou government, the Stalinists have blocked any protest going beyond usual marches. The ritualistic character of these parades can be seen in the march routes: typically PAME will start at one point (e.g., at Syntagma Square in front of Parliament) then march to another spot a couple of kilometers away (e.g., Omonoia Square, where GSEE headquarters are located). Meanwhile, ADEDY/GSEE will go the opposite route, avoiding contact by marching along separate avenues. For the next march, they reverse itineraries. The clear purpose, both for PASOK and the KKE, is to avoid at all costs united working-class action in the streets, which could lead to the fall of the Papandreou government. That, for all their “opposition” to its policies, they don’t want.

Sometimes, however, unable to control the workers’ anger, the bureaucrats miscalculate and get caught up short in their attempts to stage-manage militancy. What that happens, as on May 5 when hundreds of thousands of protesters poured into the streets, the KKE doesn’t hesitate to denounce the ranks of its own trade-union front as “provocateurs” and even “fascists.” For what? For trying to enter parliament hoping to prevent the despised bourgeois politicians from voting for austerity measures that will ruin the lives of millions of Greek workers. This craven denunciation is nothing new for the KKE, which dismissed the “petty-bourgeois” youth revolt in December 2008 as “Talibans,” “gangsters,” “drug dealers,” “pimps” and “police agents”! The same KKE condemned the

¹ What passes for a “general strike” these days in most of Europe is a one- or at most two-day walkout by the most militant sectors plus a big parade – one more pressure tactic rather than a showdown between the capitalist government and labor.



Demonstrators of the PAME (All Workers Militant Front), the trade-union tendency led by the Greek Communist Party (KKE) during May 5 general strike.

student sit-ins at the Athens Polytechnic in November 1973, even though its leaders now lay wreaths on the monuments commemorating the uprising against the colonel’s regime (as do representatives of the ND!).

It is the same Stalinist party that betrayed the December 1944 uprising against the British occupiers, begging Churchill at the Hotel Grand Bretagne for a “government of national unity.” Meanwhile, its OPLA hit squads hunted down and killed hundreds of Trotskyists in order to head off the possibility of the struggle turning into a revolution.² It is the same KKE that joined a coalition government under the rightist New Democracy in 1989. The same KKE which in its December 2008 “Theses on Socialism” hails “the leadership of Stalin,” defending his nationalist dogma of building “socialism in one country” against Trotsky’s Marxist critique. It even justifies the bloody Moscow Purges of 1936-37.³ Today, the KKE calls for a “social popular front” to “repel and undermine the barbaric measures” of the government and the

² Vassilis Bartzotas, a KKE central committee member, boasted in a message to Stalin’s GPU secret police that the OPLA killed 800 Trotskyists. See the article by Loukas Karliaftis (who barely escaped assassination himself), “Stalinism and Trotskyism in Greece (1924 - 1949),” in *Revolutionary History*, Spring 1991.

³ The draft theses made an elliptical reference to “some excesses in the measures taken” in the purge trials, while quoting the approval of U.S. ambassador Joseph Davies as “proof” of the correctness of the verdict. In fact, the purge trials were a blood sacrifice to imperialism, hoping to achieve “peaceful coexistence” by killing off the entire remaining political bureau of the Bolshevik Party which made the revolution, except for Stalin who played only a marginal role in October 1917 (after earlier opposing a workers revolution). The theses also cited as an authority the Belgian “ice-axe Stalinist” Ludo Martens who justified Stalin’s assassination of Trotsky. In the final “Resolution on Socialism,” the reference to “excesses” was dropped, so the KKE is on record as giving uncritical support to the bureaucracy’s murderous anti-communist purge.

Antonis/Citizenside



Hundreds of workers from the PAME demonstration tried to occupy parliament, for which they were denounced by KKE leaders as “pro-vocateurs” and “fascists.”

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Communist Party general secretary Aleka Papatou

“plutocracy.”⁴ While talking of “people’s power” and “socialization of the banking system,” there is no mention of socialism or revolution. What the KKE is angling for is a new edition of Salvador Allende’s Popular Unity government in Chile. We have seen that film before, and know its bloody ending.

For these arch-Stalinists, popular-front class collaboration and patriotic appeals go hand in hand. The KKE calls on a nationalist basis for Greek withdrawal from the European Union and the Eurozone, rather than opposing this imperialist alliance with workers action (see below). It fails to mention that the attraction of leaving the euro is that it would allow Greece to devalue its currency, which while making its exports cheaper would make imports more expensive and *inevitably lead to a sharp drop in workers’ living standards through inflation*. And while today KKE spokesmen rail against capitalism, should Greece exit the EU, you can bet your last drachma that the Stalinists will hold out their hand to a mythical “patriotic bourgeoisie,” offering their services for another “government of national unity.” Media propaganda to the contrary, the last

⁴ Aleka Papatou, “KKE’s Proposal – Solution for the Crisis” (12 May)

thing the KKE wants is to organize for revolution. Savas Michael-Matsas of the EEK (Revolutionary Workers Party)⁵ reports (*Prensa Obrera*, 11 November):

“In a recent parliamentary debate, Prime Minister Papandreou (president of the Socialist International) challenged the secretary general of the KKE, Aleka Papatou, saying that ‘her party wished Greece to default in order to promote world revolution,’ Papatou rejected the accusation, noting that her party saw no possibility of defeating capitalism and didn’t support the idea of world revolution like ‘Trotsky, Pablo⁶, Castoriadis⁷ or Marcuse⁸!’” Last May, Gen-Sec Papatou laid out the KKE’s aims: “since the political balance of forces does not permit us effective intervention in favour of the people, we put priority on the movement,” i.e., “for working people to disassociate themselves from PASOK.” Translation: since we can’t stop the attacks, we’ll use the opportunity to win over PASOK’s working-class supporters.

But what about the KKE leader’s claim that nothing can be done about the attacks on workers’ rights and living standards, except to try to limit the damage? The germ of truth in this lie is that little can be effected *within the framework of capitalism and bourgeois parliamentary “democracy,”* whose limits the KKE scrupulously respects. Nothing to be done? Papatou’s May 15 statement came only ten days after the biggest, most militant working-class mobilization in Greece since the fall of the junta in 1974, after a demonstration in which hundreds of militants of the KKE’s labor front tried to storm parliament (for which the KKE denounced them). There is plenty that a genuinely communist, revolutionary party could do. It could prepare for a general strike until the anti-worker laws are withdrawn by calling for the election of strike committees

⁵ The EEK is affiliated with the Coordinating Committee for the Re-foundation of the Fourth International led by the Argentine Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira.

⁶ Michel Pablo (Mikhailis Raptis) became the main leader of the Fourth International after many of its leading cadres were killed by the Nazis or the Stalinists during World War II. In the 1950s his capitulatory policies toward the Stalinists and other non-revolutionary leaderships, abandoning the struggle for an independent Trotskyist vanguard, led to a deep split of the FI and its destruction as the world party of socialist revolution.

⁷ Kornelius Castoriadis broke with Trotskyism in 1948, declaring the Soviet Union under Stalinism to be “bureaucratic capitalism” rather than a bureaucratically degenerated workers state which must be defended against imperialism while fighting for a proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic bureaucracy, as Trotsky held. Castoriadis founded the Socialisme ou Barbarie group in Paris and definitively broke with Marxism in the 1960s.

⁸ Herbert Marcuse was a philosophy professor and writer originally associated with the Frankfurt School of “academic Marxism.” His Hegelian idealist views (as opposed to Marxist materialism) were influential in the 1960s, and he gained fame as the father of the New Left in the United States.

everywhere; it could organize the permanent occupation of central Athens by thousands of workers; it could call on bank workers to open the books, to find out what happened to the €100 billion in bailout money given to the banks to prevent their default. Etc.

All of this, of course, would bring into question the foundations of capitalist rule. And that the “Communist” Party will not do.

II. Left Electoral Coalitions: Antechamber to a Popular Front

In addition to the KKE, there are quite a number of would-be socialist and communist organizations in Greece, grouped together in two main coalitions, SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) and ANTARSYA (Anti-Capitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow). Both the “radical” and the “anti-capitalist” left coalition are electoral fronts running on platforms of reforming capitalism that, with a little finessing, could be accepted by a bourgeois “partner” – a split-off from PASOK, or some minor party, perhaps an eco-capitalist Green varietal. Each of the left coalitions is made up of a dozen or so smaller groups, many of which have been in prior coalitions with each other. Such electoral combinations are made possible by the fact that the actual political programs of the various components are not all that different from each other. And in the struggle against the assault on the working class by the PASOK government on behalf of the EU/IMF/ECB “troika,” neither SYRIZA nor ANTARSYA call for a counterattack against capitalism. Their laundry lists of demands are entirely on the bourgeois parliamentary terrain.

SYRIZA is the older of the two alliances, dating from the 2004 elections and an earlier “Space for Dialogue” going back to 2001. Its leading party, Synaspismos (which itself began as the Progressive Left Coalition), traces its lineage to the “Eurocommunist” split from the KKE, originally called the KKE-Interior (later called the Greek Left).⁹ Far from representing a “radical left” alternative to the Stalinist reformism of the KKE and the bourgeois Hellenic Socialist Party government, SYRIZA’s politics are traditional reformist social democracy. As such, it has had a hard time deciding whether it wanted to be an opposition to or a pressure group on PASOK. This contradiction reached a breaking point this summer, when the right wing of Synaspismos split to form the Democratic Left, which in the November 2010 elections ran candidates on the

⁹ A 1968 split in the Greek CP produced the KKE-Interior which rejected Kremlin tutelage, prefiguring and later aligning with the Eurocommunists. The latter was a current that arose in the West European Communist parties, led by the Spanish PCE under Santiago Carrillo and the Italian PCI under Enrico Berlinguer, which broke with Moscow in order to integrate themselves more fully into capitalism through popular fronts with bourgeois forces. Eurocommunism was a stage in the social-democratization (and in the case of the PCI, liquidation) of these parties. In the guise of rejecting Stalinism, they discarded the last vestiges of Leninism, including democratic centralism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. When the second anti-Soviet Cold War broke out in 1980, the Eurocommunists refused to defend the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Alexis Tsipras,
leader of
SYRIZA



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PASOK ticket. SYRIZA, on the other hand, ran a slate in the Attica regional elections, including Athens, headed by Alexis Mitropoulos, a founding member of PASOK who recently resigned from the government party’s national council over differences with its “neo-liberal policies.”

While SYRIZA mostly consists of ex-Stalinists (and Mao-Stalinists of the KOE) who have become social democrats, a couple of ostensibly Trotskyist outfits are also part of this coalition. This includes Xekinima, the Greek section of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) led by Peter Taaffe, while Marxistiki Foni, part of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) of Alan Woods, is a current inside Synaspismos. Both the CWI and IMT come out of the Militant tendency of Ted Grant in Britain, notable for its decades-long submersion in the Labour Party. The whole Militant tradition is one of “entrism,” burying themselves in the big social-democratic or Stalinist reformist parties and seeking to pressure them to the left. Another component of SYRIZA is the DEA (International Workers Left), which is linked to the International Socialist Organization in the United States. Several of these groups joined SYRIZA in 2007-08, after a slight “left turn” in Synaspismos and when the coalition was up to 18% in the opinion polls due to a crisis in PASOK. Now that SYRIZA has split, its candidates got barely 4.5% in the 2010 local elections, and the opportunists are lamenting that they may have picked the wrong horse.

Just as they were forever calling on the Labour Party in Britain to adopt a “socialist program,” the CWI and IMT groups in Greece call for Synaspismos/SYRIZA to commit to a “clearly left-wing program” for a “left government” (Xekinima), or alternatively for a “truly socialist government” (Marxistiki Foni), in fighting the right wing of this coalition which yearned to join a “center-left” government with PASOK. Yet when the pseudo-Trotskyists talk of a “left” or “socialist” government, this would be a government of *the capitalist state*. Even if it commits to a program for “full employment” and “nationalise the big monopolies, all the commanding heights of production,” etc. – as the British Labour Party under Clement Atlee and Aneurin Bevan did in the late 1940s – such a government would remain subject to the capitalist market. Genuine Trotskyists explain to the masses that *no* bourgeois government, no matter how left it talks, can provide full employment or expropriate the capitalists (as distinguished from

Athens IMC



ANTARSYA banners (foreground) in 100,000-strong strike demonstration in Athens, December 15.

nationalizing the losses of certain bankrupt sectors). That can only be done by a revolutionary government based on workers councils that bring down the state of the capitalist exploiters.

The second alliance, the “anti-capitalist left coalition” ANTARSYA, was formed in early 2009, also as a combination of previous coalitions. Its components include the NAR (New Left Current)¹⁰; the OKDE-Spartakos,¹¹ and the SEK (Socialist Workers Party).¹² If SYRIZA’s openly social-democratic policies can sometimes place it to the right of the Stalinist KKE, ANTARSYA assumes a more radical posture – while at bottom it is no less reformist. And if SYRIZA’s vote has been declining, ANTARSYA has picked up steam electorally, quadrupling its 2009 score to 98,000 in the November 2010 vote, giving it about 1.8% of the vote and eight local councillors. This led SEK leader Petros Constantinou (who was elected to

¹⁰ Originating in a split of KKE youth members in 1989 in opposition to the KKE joining (along with PASOK) an all-party government led by the right-wing New Democracy.

¹¹ Greek section of the United Secretariat (USec), the heirs of Ernest Mandel who claim to be the Fourth International although their politics are counterposed to authentic Trotskyism.

¹² Linked to the British SWP and the current founded by Tony Cliff which labeled Stalin’s Soviet Union “state capitalist” and refused to defend the USSR in the imperialists’ anti-Soviet Cold War.

the Athens city council) to wax lyrically about how “the anti-capitalists have a big opportunity to help lead the whole of the left and the movement to a victory of historic dimensions” (*Socialist Review*, December 2010). To draw such grandiose conclusions from this modest result shows ANTARSYA’s parliamentarist nature.

ANTARSYA is seen by various of its components as a precursor to some kind of “anti-capitalist” left party, along the lines of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) in France, where Mandelites and Cliffites amiably cohabit in the leadership. Where the pseudo-Trotskyists in SYRIZA orient toward the periphery of the Stalinist KKE and its offshoots, their counterparts in ANTARSYA look to the “anti-globalization” movement which, as in France, also includes bourgeois elements.¹³ But politically, their programs are pretty much interchangeable, so much so that if someone hacked into the websites of SYRIZA and ANTARSYA and switched their programs in the dead of night, it is doubtful that anyone would notice. The latter’s program includes: nationalization of banks under workers control; stop payment of the foreign debt; a ban on layoffs; “secure and decent jobs for all”; wage increases; tax capital; “cuts to military expenditures”; health care, social security and public education for all; legalizing immigrants; refusal to obey EU and IMF directives; exit from the Eurozone and European Monetary Union, and “an anti-capitalist exit from the EU.”

In a statement of the “European radical left” on the economic crisis and in solidarity with the struggle in Greece, these demands are watered down to: stop pension “reform”; “health and education are not for sale”; for a “public banking service and financial system under public control”(!); a guaranteed right to work, etc. (see *Socialist Worker* [Britain], 8 May). In either version, nothing in this platform goes beyond the limits of capitalism, and deliberately so. The call to “tax the rich/capital” was raised by none other than the head of the IMF, Dominique Strauss-Kahn (“Greece Urged to Tax the Rich,” *Financial Times* [London], 8 December). And any number of bourgeois governments have pledged themselves to achieve full employment, though few have and then only temporarily. These are essentially democratic demands to be implemented by a more left-wing bourgeois regime. It is a program geared toward a popular front including elements in and around PASOK disappointed by the conversion of these “Hellenic socialists” to free market “neo-liberalism.” As such, *this “radical left” platform is in reality a program to salvage bankrupt Greek capitalism when it is on the point of collapse.*

III. A Revolutionary Program to Defeat the Capitalist Offensive

Thus in the face of the *existential threat* to the Greek proletariat, while hundreds of thousands repeatedly take to the streets to show their anger and will to struggle, what the Greek left offers instead of a revolutionary mobilization of workers’ power, is the usual reformist pabulum and hunting for votes in the framework of bourgeois “democratic” parlia-

¹³ In France, the ecologists symbolized by José Bové and the Attac movement of *Le Monde Diplomatique* director Ignacio Ramonet.

mentary politics.

In Greece as in France, the reformists' demands and their whole mode of struggle reflect the basic fact that they seek not to overturn capitalist rule, but rather to find a niche within it as a pressure group. Unfortunately for them, the bourgeoisie has launched a frontal attack on the working class in order to stave off its own collapse. So when old-line social democrats, pseudo-communists and even younger "anti-capitalists" try to divert resistance to the capitalist assault into electoral politics or siphon off anger with endless marches, they have no crumbs from the capitalist table to hand out, hoping to buy off sections of the workers. In this situation, with the manifest willingness of the working class to fight back against capitalist attack and the equally clear incapacity of the reformist left, resolving the crisis of leadership is key, as Trotsky insisted in the Transitional Program. Revolutionary Marxists put forward **a program of transitional demands to turn defensive struggles into a proletarian counteroffensive leading to international socialist revolution.** We seek to build **a vanguard workers party to lead the exploited and oppressed from resistance to a struggle for power.**

The clash between reformist and revolutionary programs is constant. Take the demand for *nationalization of the banks*, which is put forward by the KKE, the "radical left" and "anti-capitalist left" coalitions and all their components. At the present time, the Greek banking system – at least in its operations within Greece – is essentially bankrupt. Its debts to European and North American banks and the imperialist agencies (IMF, ECB, etc.) vastly exceed its assets and any income it expects to receive from outstanding loans. Certainly the savings and accounts of working- and middle-class depositors should be guaranteed. But for the government to take over the banks today would be to rescue the leading Greek capitalists and financiers from collapse: it is a *pro-capitalist* not an anti-capitalist demand. Look at what happened with the nationalization of the banks by Mexican president José López Portillo in 1982 at the time the famous "debt bomb" exploded. This was a measure that saved the Mexican bourgeoisie from utter ruin. A dozen years later, after recapitalizing the bankrupt financial institutions, they were reprivatized. Trotskyists do not call for "trash can socialism" or socializing the capitalists' losses, but for **expropriation of the banks – and the entire bourgeoisie – by a workers government.**

As a step in that direction, **Greek workers today should occupy the banks, instituting workers control, and "open the books"** so everyone can see the financial swindles that have been going on. This is a very different demand than the reformists' talk of "public ownership" under "public control," or even "socialization" of the banks. What they are presenting is a program for a "left" bourgeois government. Thus an article by the editor of Marxistiki Foni (IMT), "The EU, Greece and the Demands of the Left" (29 June), after listing a series of demands, concludes: "To implement this program as a whole, requires *the election of a leftist socialist government.*" If he adds "based on self-organization of workers in every workplace and every neighborhood," etc., this is just to cover the fact that he is calling for a government installed by a bourgeois election. Likewise, when the reformists refer to "workers control," they mean the revisionist distortion of this transitional demand into

"*self-management*" under capitalism.¹⁴ But having a union commission occasionally glance at some fraudulent statement cooked up by the capitalist bankers is very different from the workers effectively taking control of the banks, on the road to workers revolution.

Similarly with the international demands of the various left groups. ANTARSYA calls for "immediate stoppage of foreign debt payments," some left groups call for a "moratorium," SYRIZA leader Tsipras wants to "restructure the terms" of Greece's public debt (and "perhaps write off some of the debt"), KKE leader Papatriga says only that "The public debt will be re-examined under people's power." These wishy-washy demands, each more feeble than the last, all present a program for a "left government" trying to work out a deal with the creditors. Temporary debt moratoriums and "restructuring" debts have been common in Latin America, although this still leaves the debtor country chained to the imperialist banks. The SEK raises the correct demand to "abolish Greece's debt" to the imperialist bankers (but then waters this down to stopping payment for the purposes of its electoral coalition). Yet even in this "left" version, the reformists don't make clear that the dominant imperialist powers would oust any government and subject to a devastating embargo any country that dared to cancel their debt. **Abolition of the imperialist debt requires workers revolution,** as the Bolsheviks did in 1917, and international extension of the revolution.

What about Greece's relation to the euro and the European Union? ANTARSYA and the KKE call for Greece to leave the EU, various components of SYRIZA do not. For Trotskyists, our opposition to the imperialist European Union is not nationalist but internationalist, opposing the Europe of the capitalists by fighting for workers rule – a **socialist united states of Europe**. To call for Greece to exit the EU and drop the euro in favor of the drachma is quite different – this is a *bourgeois nationalist* demand, with negative consequences for Greek workers. What concretely would be accomplished by Greek withdrawal from the Eurozone? It would be able to devalue its currency, making Greek exports and Greek vacations relatively cheaper. It would increase tourist income; whether it would enable Greece to export more is debatable, since much of its industrial capacity has been destroyed. But it would also make servicing Greece's euro-denominated debt more expensive, and imports more costly – producing serious inflation. In fact, a principal effect *and main purpose* of currency devaluations is to slash wages through inflation, which is a lot easier for the bosses than imposing a direct pay cut.

Thus in calling for Greece to leave the European Union, and drop the euro and even to abolish the debt, leftists are angling for a political bloc with a section of the bourgeoisie, and the PASOK

¹⁴ Ernest Mandel carried out this revisionist operation in 1968, just when a fight for workers control as Trotsky defined it – dual power in the factory – was eminently possible as a means to combat the Stalinists' sellout of the French general strike. Mandel's embracing of self-management ("*autogestion*") served as a basis for his French followers' alliance with the Unified Socialist Party (PSU) of the long-time bourgeois Radical and ex-prime minister Pierre Mendès-France.

government in particular. In an article on “How can Greek workers beat the IMF?” (*Socialist Worker*, 15 May), the British SWP argued that:

“The ruling class is vulnerable. It could decide that the best way out of the crisis—and to protect its power—is to abolish Greece’s debt.

“The Greek government could pull out of the euro, take charge of its own currency and defy the IMF’s demands for cuts.”

This is not just the opinion of the British Cliffites. Supporters of the SEK in Athens argued the same *pro-capitalist* line.

Calls for Greece to leave the EU are not limited to left-wing Greek nationalists. Mainstream bourgeois economists like Paul Krugman, Nouriel Roubini and Hans-Werner Sinn have stated that as part of a “controlled default,” Greece will have to abandon the euro.¹⁵ No matter how severe the austerity, they argue, Greece will never be able to pay the full amounts owed to the international bankers as long as it is tied to the euro. Moreover, if bankers don’t have confidence in Greece’s ability to pay, it won’t be able to get loans to finance its annual budget deficit of 13% of GDP – or even its unattainable target of 3%. If Greece does abandon the euro, Krugman writes, “it will play something like Argentina in 2001, which had a supposedly permanent, unbreakable peg to the dollar. . . . [I]t will send shock waves through Europe, possibly triggering crises in other countries” (*New York Times*, 7 May). In Argentina, the abandonment of the U.S. dollar peg led to the fall of five governments in the space of a week, factory occupations and movements of laid-off workers (the *piqueteros*). Capitalism is still intact on the Río de la Plata, but Argentine workers paid the price with a devastating fall of their living standards.

Many on the left, particularly in and around the KKE, speak of Greece as being subject to “imperialist oppression,” thereby portraying withdrawal from the EU as an “anti-imperialist” step. Yet Greece is not some semi-colonial country struggling for independence. It is a sub-imperialist power whose capitalists own the largest shipping fleet in the world (though mostly not sailing under the Greek flag); whose banks have historically had a privileged position in the eastern Mediterranean and are now buying up banks and companies throughout the Balkans; and which economically dominates Macedonia and Albania. Moreover, there are small Albanian and substantial Macedonian minorities in northern Greece. The KKE calls to “defend the territorial integrity and the sovereign rights of our country” and joins the Greek government in referring to its northern neighbor as FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) while calling to “safeguard Greece” from the “irredentist views of the leadership of FYROM.”¹⁶ In contrast, **Trotskyists support the**

¹⁵ Sinn: “All the alternatives are terrible but the least terrible is for the country to get out of the eurozone, even if this kills the Greek banks.” Krugman: “What remains seems unthinkable: Greece leaving the euro. But when you’ve ruled out everything else, that’s what’s left.” “Roubini Says Greece May Lead Euro Exodus,” Bloomberg BusinessWeek, 12 May.

¹⁶ “About the situation in the Balkans and the issue of the FYROM



Kafedromi

Greek troops participate in the U.S./NATO war/occupation of Afghanistan. Trotskyists say: Drive out all imperialist forces!

Macedonian right to self-determination and fight for a socialist federation of the Balkans.

Significantly, some who call for Greece to exit the EU do not call for Greek withdrawal from NATO. Why not? Because that could weaken Greece militarily in its eternal jousting with Turkey, both over Cyprus and the Aegean Sea, where Ankara claims that several islands held by Greece belong to it. The Stalinist-nationalist KKE, while opposing NATO, vociferously upholds “The struggle for sovereign rights in the Aegean, for the territorial integrity of our country.”¹⁷ This is no abstract issue for the KKE: as recently as last July Greek F-16 fighter jets intercepted Turkish F-16s near the island of Ikaria, the only locality where the Greek Communist Party has close to a majority.¹⁸ But as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, that “the workers have no country (fatherland)” so long as the bourgeoisie rules. **Genuine Marxists support neither side in Greek-Turkish disputes over the Aegean and Cyprus, and call instead for unity with Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot workers in struggle against capitalism.**

While ANTARSYA calls in its program for “cuts to military expenditure” and several of its components call for withdrawal from Afghanistan, the League for the Fourth International says “not one euro for the imperialist military” and calls to **drive all U.S./NATO occupation forces** (including the 125-man Greek contingent) **out of Afghanistan**. Domestically, the economic crisis has been accompanied by the growth of ultra-rightist name,” KKE statement, 8 November 2007.

¹⁷ “Report of the Central Committee of the KKE to the 17th Congress,” February 2005.

¹⁸ Ikaria, located near the Turkish coast, was used as a prison island under the Metaxas dictatorship, and again for Communist prisoners during the post-WWII Greek Civil War. A number of Communists stayed on the relatively underdeveloped island and in the November 2010 municipal elections the KKE received 48 percent of the vote. However, all the other parties joined together to prevent it from controlling the local government.

forces such as the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and openly Nazi-fascist groups such as “Golden Dawn,” which ominously got 5% of the vote in Athens and which has mounted virulent anti-immigrant campaigns. In the face of right-wing attempts to whip up chauvinist hysteria, ANTARSYA calls vaguely to “legalize immigrants,” Trotskyists fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* and for *workers defense against anti-immigrant attacks*.

The same clash between reformist and revolutionary politics is manifest in the question of methods of struggle to be employed. With one-fifth (or more) of the labor force out of work, with less than one youth in four having a job (and most of those being part-time, temporary or for short-term contracts), and now with looming mass layoffs, the issue of unemployment is a key battleground for Greek workers.

The call for a *shorter workweek with no loss in pay (a sliding scale of hours)*, to provide jobs for all through distributing the available work among all takers, is a classic demand of Trotsky’s Transitional Program. Likewise with the call for *indexing pay to inflation (a sliding scale of wages)*, which will be vital should Greece abandon the euro. But in the programs of the reformists, these demands – which prefigure a socialist planned economy – are to be implemented when a future “left/socialist government” gets elected. In contrast, *revolutionary Trotskyists call on the workers movement to mobilize its power today to impose these demands against the resistance of the bourgeois rulers*.

Thus under the batch of anti-labor laws just voted by the PASOK majority in Parliament, the government plans to privatize the state railway OSE, and in preparation for that, to fire 2,500 rail workers (40 percent of the total). The POS rail union has staged repeated strikes over the last six months to protest the privatization/layoff plan, but only for one or a few days at a time. Faced with this death threat from the capitalists, rail workers should *strike and occupy the OSE until the government’s plan is withdrawn*, including cancelling all layoffs and wage cuts. Kick out management, stop all freight traffic, perhaps maintain passenger service. Ask government workers to help them inspect the state railroad’s books. If that is not enough, occupations could be extended to include, say, the Acropolis, where workers have not been paid for months (and riot police recently attacked union pickets). Their example would soon be followed in other sectors facing the massive jobs slaughter by the PASOK budget axe murderers.

The growing brutality of police attacks on demonstrators points to the danger that the ruling class could resort to bonapartist measures in enforcing its anti-worker offensive. Indeed, the head of the EU, former Portuguese prime minister



AP and EPA

EU chief Barroso threatens dictatorship in Spain, Greece, Portugal if austerity is rejected. From left: Gen. Francisco Franco, caudillo who ruled Spain from 1939 to 1975; Col. Giorgios Papadopoulos, who led military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974; and António Salazar, who established right-wing authoritarian regime that ruled Portugal from 1932 until 1975.

Jose Manuel Barroso, told trade unionists several months ago that if austerity measures were not approved, Greece, Spain and Portugal “could virtually disappear in the way that we know them as democracies.” The London *Daily Mail* (15 June) portrayed Barroso’s warning as “an ‘apocalyptic’ vision in which crisis-hit countries in southern Europe could fall victim to military coups or popular uprisings as interest rates soar and public services collapse because their governments run out of money.” Clearly this is blackmail, yet the bonapartist threat is real. The workers movement must build up its defensive capacities. Unions should initiate *worker defense guards to defend strike pickets and protests*, including *flying squads* to come to the aid of workers under attack – and immigrants threatened by fascist gangs. However, the rare mentions of workers defense guards in the reformist left press have called for their formation to protect workers demonstrations from ... the anarchists!¹⁹

What will it take to defeat the bosses’ attacks? Accounts of the “general strike” mobilizations in Greece as far back as last February quote demonstrators complaining that such marches

¹⁹ Following the deaths of the three bank workers in the May 5 general strike, Xekinima (the CWI affiliate) issued a press statement the next day declaring, “the first task to which the organised workers’ movement and particularly the mass parties of the Left should respond to, is the defence of the rallies and mass actions of the working class, by all means, from these ‘anti-state’ groups.” They were echoing the KKE and SYRIZA tops and along with them were capitulating to the hysteria whipped up by Papandreou and the bourgeois media. Trotskyists are against the *capitalist* state, including when it is administered by sniveling social democrats like Militant – in Liverpool, England between 1983 and 1987 – who consider cops to be “workers in uniform” and support police “strikes.” While taking necessary precautionary measures to protect the integrity of demonstrations, the *first task* for revolutionary communists would be to *defend them against the murderous bourgeois state*.

are not about to force the government to back down, and more militant tactics are needed. Yet what does the “radical/anti-capitalist” left offer? Essentially more of the same. Thus an article by Fred Weston of the IMT and Stamatis Karagiannopoulos of Marxistiki Foni states: “The fact is that the bourgeoisie can live with a few general strikes and protests as long as these don’t seriously challenge their power.”²⁰ Quite true. Their conclusion? “What is required is a 48-hour general strike of all sectors, both public and private, with mass rallies all over Greece.” Yet the May 4-6 mobilization already amounted to a 72-hour strike by key sectors! “After that the movement needs to be taken to a higher level,” namely an “all-out struggle ... to stop the PASOK government in its tracks.” How is not specified. But the situation cries out for a real

general strike to defeat the capitalist attack and open the way to workers revolution.

Many would-be socialists and anarcho-syndicalists make the general strike into the be-all and end-all of class struggle. (The anarchist equivalent is a fetish for occupations: “Occupy Athens, London, Rome,” read a slogan on a wall during the December 15 strike.) Some point to Rosa Luxemburg’s enthusiasm for the mass strikes that swept Russia in 1905. But by itself, the strike (withholding labor) is essentially a passive form of defensive struggle. Trotskyists stress that while the general strike poses the question of power, it alone cannot resolve it. The general strikes in Russia ultimately led to the Moscow uprising of December 1905. In his article summing up this experience, Lenin wrote: “A peaceful strike and demonstrations immediately ceased to satisfy the workers. They asked: What is to be done next? And they demanded more resolute action.” Recalling Marx’s observation that the progress of revolution also produces strong counterrevolutionary tendencies, Lenin spelled out:

“The strike was growing into an uprising, primarily as a result of the pressure of the objective conditions.... Over the heads of the organizations, the mass proletarian struggle developed from a strike to an uprising. This is the greatest historic gain the Russian revolution achieved in December 1905.”

—“Lessons of the Moscow Uprising” (March 1906)

The organs of struggle thrown up in such a battle could become workers councils, like the soviets in tsarist Russia, and eventually become the framework of a proletarian state. That depends centrally on the leadership of a vanguard workers party like the Bolsheviks, taking the struggle in the direction of ***socialist revolution not in the distant future but in the here and now.***

²⁰ “Greece: What Now?” In Defense of Marxism (18 June)



Workers march in Moscow during during general strike, October 1905.

The IMT article does say that “the question of who is to govern the country, and in the interests of which class, would be posed.” But what is their answer? As “a political alternative to the present government,” they call for “a united front of the KKE and Synaspismos/SYRIZA aimed at the wider labour movement.” They add: “Unless these two parties adopt a fully worked out socialist programme, come together and direct their propaganda at the ranks of the labour movement who support the PASOK, then the present stalemate will continue.” This is not calling for a ***united front for workers action***, but an appeal to the sellout party/union bureaucracies to form a *propaganda bloc* with “socialist” rhetoric. The OKDE-Spartakos, for its part, calls for “united mobilization to defeat the government’s measures,” noting that the KKE/PAME “go to great lengths never to call actions jointly or in the same place as the majority unions.”²¹ Others cite as a precedent Trotsky’s appeal for a workers united front in France in 1934, following a violent fascist demonstration against the bourgeois Radical government. Yet while saying that Marx and Lenin were prepared “to make *practical agreements* with any mass organization for the defense of the *daily* interests of the proletariat,” the Bolshevik leader emphasized:

“[I]t is not true that the proletariat is in need of unity in and of itself. It needs *revolutionary unity in the class struggle*.... Opportunistic ‘unity’ has proven itself to be the road to ruin.... Such unity is a rope around the neck of the working class. “We need genuine, revolutionary, fighting unity: for the resistance against fascism, for the defense of our right to live, for an irreconcilable struggle against bourgeois rule, for the full conquest of power, for the *dictatorship of the proletariat*....”

²¹ Tassos Anastassiadis and Andreas Sartzekis, “Workers against the so-called stability programme,” *International Viewpoint* No. 423, April 2010.

– “France Is Now the Key to the Situation” (March 1934), *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1933-34)*

The reformist misleaders of the unions can sometimes be forced by pressure from the ranks and the severity of the attacks to undertake defensive actions: this is what happened this past spring in Greece and in the autumn in France. But even then, they place themselves at the head of mobilizations only to sell them out. That is why Trotskyists direct their appeals for an all-out general strike to the workers organizations themselves, including but not focusing on the leaders; and also why we call for the formation of *elected strike committees* to take control of the struggle out of the hands of the pro-capitalist bureaucrats. In fact, the general strike with the greatest revolutionary potential in recent times, in France in May 1968, came about largely because of the initiative of the masses overcoming bureaucratic resistance. And in any case, the KKE, SYRIZA or ANTARSYA, whether separately or united, *cannot* be an alternative to PASOK, for they also ultimately support bourgeois rule, having been thoroughly integrated into the capitalist electoral apparatus. Calling on committed reformists to be transmogrified into revolutionaries can only breed illusions.²²

As for the anarchists, their repertoire consists essentially of endless skirmishes with the police that, in the absence of a revolutionary mobilization of the working class to *defeat* the guardians of bourgeois “law and order,” can only be a form of street theater. It makes for dramatic photos, and sometimes tragedy, while offering ample opportunity for police provocation. While pseudo-socialist reformists see their number one task as “protecting” demonstrations from the likes of the “black bloc,” Trotskyists defend anarchist and autonomist militants against capitalist state repression. At the same time we underline that “direct action” by small groups, a program born of desperation and despair, undercuts the struggle to raise revolutionary consciousness among the proletariat and promote the self-organization of the workers and oppressed in overthrowing capitalism.

There can *and should be* “popular uprisings” in Europe against the breakdown of services *and* against the bourgeoisie’s austerity plans, but it is crucial that such upheavals be led by the working class, and that they aim at bringing down capitalism and instituting workers rule. This prospect is still distant, but when hundreds of thousands of Greek working people repeatedly strike and occupy Athens, when thousands of trade unionists boo their leaders off the stage, when hundreds of workers attempt to storm the Greek parliament, the union bureaucrats as well as spokesmen for the bourgeoisie can see quite clearly where this is heading. Their response is to try to head it off, for like their social-democratic predecessors in Germany in 1918-19, they fear revolution like the plague. The formation

²² Note also that the “radical/anti-capitalist” left’s opposition to PASOK is only conditional (“so long as the right-wing PASOK leadership continues to collaborate in these crimes being carried out by the international capitalists against the working people of Greece,” as the IMT put it [In Defense of Marxism, 24 February]). Let Papandreou nationalize a couple of banks and these pseudo-Trotskyists would eagerly offer their support, “critically” of course.

of politically undefined “new mass workers parties” – even if you add the adjective “socialist” – cannot defeat the capitalist attack. To turn the present defensive struggles of the Greek working class into a proletarian counteroffensive and to lead it forward to the overthrow of bourgeois rule, the central need is for a genuinely communist, Leninist-Trotskyist workers party.

In a resolution on Europe from its recent international congress, the CWI writes: “But what has saved capitalism, so far, has been the political weakness of the working class, a result of the past decades’ falling back in class consciousness, that has meant there has been no general counter-posing of socialism as the alternative to capitalism” (posted CWI web site, 23 December). Actually, no: what has saved capitalism has been the betrayals of the leadership. This same argument has been proffered by opportunists the world over, in order to excuse their own failure to fight for revolution.²³ (It must be admitted that in the case of the CWI, IMT, USec and the rest, the argument has a certain twisted logic: since their own policies consist of chasing whatever is popular, if there is no “mass movement” for socialism, how can they tail after it?) As Lenin emphasized – and Marxists from the then-revolutionary Karl Kautsky to Leon Trotsky also held – consciousness of the need to fight for socialist revolution to overthrow capitalist rule does not arise spontaneously, it results from a dialectical interaction between the masses’ experience of class struggle and the intervention of the revolutionaries.

Instead of the “class patriotism” of the KKE, a Leninist-Trotskyist party would be animated by proletarian internationalism. Waging the struggle on a Europe-wide rather than a national basis is indispensable, as the capitalist offensive against the working class is continental in scope. Even a limited victory in Greece, or anywhere else, would have to spread internationally or soon be overturned. Such a revolutionary-internationalist leadership of the working class does not now exist in Greece. Should one therefore throw up one’s hands and say that, alas, until such a leadership arises nothing can be done? Or seek to pressure the existing anti-revolutionary leadership to change its spots? Both would be a betrayal of the workers’ cause. Instead we must build a Bolshevik vanguard party through intervening in the struggles of the working class on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, fighting for a socialist united states of Europe and to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

²³ Notably the International Communist League, or Spartacist tendency, in expelling long-time cadres in 1996-97 who went on to found the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, rejected the IG’s assertion: “The central thesis of the 1938 Transitional Program of the FI fully retains its validity today: ‘The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.... the crisis of the proletarian leadership, having become the crisis in mankind’s culture, can be resolved only by the Fourth International.’ ” Trotsky’s thesis, the ICL wrote in revising its program a year later, was outdated by “the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness” so that today the backwardness of the working class is key. For a discussion of how this claim has been raised by a host of ex-Marxists, see our article, “In Defense of the Transitional Program,” *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998)

Sinister Attack on WikiLeaks to Cover Up Imperialist Crimes

Free Julian Assange!

Drop All Charges!

9 DECEMBER 2010 – The December 7 arrest in London of Julian Assange, the founder and editor-in-chief of the Internet investigative site WikiLeaks, is a threat to freedom of the press and an attempt to silence critics who expose the bloody deeds of imperialism. We are convinced, along with many others, that Assange is innocent of the trumped up accusations of the crimes of rape and sexual molestation that are being manipulated by Swedish authorities to request his detention and extradition. It is clear that sinister forces are pushing the persecution of this courageous man, and his life could be in danger.

We have no hesitation in naming the criminal forces who are behind this frame-up: first and foremost, the United States government of Barack Obama and its military and spy agencies. They have enlisted U.S. corporations such as Amazon, MasterCard, PayPal and others, Swiss banks and the complaisant Swedish, British and Australian governments in their war on WikiLeaks. They seek to silence whistleblowers who have not only caused them diplomatic embarrassment but also lifted a corner of the veil on Washington's Murder, Inc. If the would-be masters of the world cannot stop the leakage of information through judicial/police methods, they will surely resort to other means.

Despite the arrest of its leader, the shutdown of some of its websites by service providers due to U.S. threats and cutoff of donations by payments companies, WikiLeaks has vowed to keep publishing. It is urgent that all defenders of civil liberties and opponents of imperialist war stand up in defense of Julian Assange, demanding that he be *immediately freed* and that *all charges against him be dropped*, including those that are in the works. It is also necessary to defend his comrades who are at risk for their dedication to shining a light into the dark corners where the capitalist rulers hide their dirty secrets. And we must oppose all efforts by the U.S. and its allies to enact gag laws to enforce police-state controls. We demand: *Hands off WikiLeaks!*

For the last nine months, U.S. imperialism has been smarting over a series of revelations of a small proportion of its crimes by WikiLeaks. The website won global fame and attention when it released the video "Collateral Murder" last April, showing the crews of U.S. helicopter gunships nonchalantly mowing down with



Julian Assange, presenting WikiLeaks' release of files on Afghanistan war in London, July 26.

machine-gun and rocket fire two reporters, several first aid responders and even children in Baghdad in 2007. Millions of viewers watched in horror as they saw the massacre unfold before their eyes.

The Pentagon, stung by the worldwide outrage, responded by arresting Private First Class Bradley Manning, a military intelligence analyst stationed in the Iraqi capital, charging him with leaking the incriminating footage. In our article, "Defend PFC Bradley Manning!" (*The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010), we wrote:

"If Bradley Manning did indeed help to uncover evidence of U.S. imperialism's war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, and if he did try to bring to light the secret dealings of U.S. diplomats and spies, these were justified acts evidencing rare moral courage. Class-conscious workers and all defenders of democratic rights should hail Manning as a hero. Exposing U.S. imperialism's crimes and tearing the curtain of secrecy from its plots can save the lives of innocent people by helping to put an end to the Pentagon's reign of terror in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world."

We also warned that Julian Assange, the founder and editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks, was at risk of arrest or even assassination: "Make no mistake, Julian Assange is in real danger from the same imperialist war criminals that have Bradley Manning in a military jail. *Hands off Julian Assange and WikiLeaks!*"

In July, WikiLeaks followed up by releasing over 90,000 documents from the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan spanning the six-year period from 2004 through 2009. The Afghanistan War Logs were provided in advance to several leading news media, including the *New York Times*, the *London Guardian*

and the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, which published excerpts. Naturally, the *Times* downplayed some of the most egregious war crimes – for example, suppressing a story by its correspondent on the hit squads of Task Force 373, professional assassins responsible for numerous massacres in Afghanistan – alleging lack of space and other implausible excuses. *Der Spiegel* (26 July), at least, put the story on its cover.

In October, Wikileaks released 350,000 documents about the Iraq war, showing, as Assange summarized them, that it was “a bloodbath on every corner.” It also documented 15,000 civilian deaths that the U.S. never publicly admitted. Then at the end of November, WikiLeaks began releasing documents from a trove of 251,000 secret State Department and CIA cables. As rad-lib journalist Alexander Cockburn noted in an article titled “Julian Assange: Wanted by the Empire, Dead or Alive” (*Counterpunch*, 3-5 December), the “communications released by WikiLeaks contain no earth-shaking disclosures that undermine the security of the American empire.” The latest stash of documents published so far mainly illustrate the prejudices and stupidities of the diplomatic corps. Most of the yelps are coming from the governments being reported on, not from the U.S. If anything, as a columnist for an Israeli liberal Zionist paper noted:

“They depict the fall of the American empire, the decline of a superpower that ruled the world by dint of its military and economic supremacy.... The days when American ambassadors were received in world capitals as ‘high commissioners’ are long since gone. The diplomats who wrote the WikiLeaks documents are tired bureaucrats: Nobody rises in their honor and clicks their heels when they enter a room. They spend their days listening wearily to their hosts’ talking points, never reminding them who is the superpower and who the client state that needs military or financial aid from America.” –Aluf Benn, “WikiLeaks Cables Tell the Story of An Empire in Decline,” *Haaretz*, 1 December

That certainly describes Israel’s dismissal of any pressure from the Obama administration.

No doubt, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton felt put-upon to excuse U.S. envoys’ denigrating comments about their “allies,” and to explain why the Foreign Service and even ambassadors had been tasked with ferreting out the cellphone, credit card and frequent flier numbers of their counterparts. Or to explain about the list of facilities in other countries that the U.S. considers its own (“critical foreign dependencies”). Moscow was irate about a secret NATO treaty to defend Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. “Against whom else could such a defense be intended? Against Sweden, Finland, Greenland, Iceland? Against polar bears, or against the Russian bear?” asked the Russian ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin. Russian president Dmitri Medvedev suggested perhaps Assange should be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

U.S. spokesmen keep repeating that the leaks will get their secret informants killed, for which there is not a shred of evidence. After getting heat for releasing the names of Afghan informers collaborating with the NATO occupiers (what about the identities of Nazi collaborators in occupied Europe?), WikiLeaks is so intent on appearing responsible that it has taken to excising the names of such covert operatives

themselves. At least former CIA agent Philip Agee named names when he broke with “The Company” in the 1960s. Still, official Washington is fit to be tied. Democrats and Republicans alike fear that the U.S.’ ability to dictate to the world will be gravely compromised unless it clamps down on “unauthorized disclosures.” “The empire can’t exist without secrecy,” said Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers history of the Vietnam War, in defending Assange and WikiLeaks.

Democrat Dianne Feinstein, head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, notorious for covering up CIA torture, called for Assange to be prosecuted under the 1917 Espionage Act. Democratic turncoat Joe Lieberman, head of the Senate’s Homeland Security Committee, wants to investigate the *New York Times* as well. And Attorney General Eric Holder vows to “close the gaps in current U.S. legislation” by enacting new laws infringing on freedom of speech. But that may take some time. They yearn for an Official Secrets Act like in Britain, so they could stop publication of anything by slapping a “D Notice” on it. They wish they were back in the post-9/11 days when they rammed through the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act with a near-unanimous vote before anyone bothered to read it.

For now, they want to defame the WikiLeaks founder, to take away Assange’s moral authority by smearing him so that he looks dirtier than they are – a pretty tall order. So we get this persecution on sex charges. Not prosecution yet, for curiously no charges have been filed. In fact, the allegations against him were not even described to Assange and his lawyers before he was arrested on an Interpol alert and held for deportation to Sweden. No evidence has ever been presented. Everything about this legal vendetta stinks to high heaven of state provocation. Briefly:

- Assange is supposedly being held only for questioning. Yet he stayed in Sweden for 40 days after the allegations were first made, seeking to speak to the prosecutor, who would not see him and finally let him leave the country legally. He offered to be questioned at the Swedish embassy in London, to no avail.
- The allegations were first made on August 20 by a prosecutor in Stockholm. But, as Assange’s attorney in London, Mark Stephens, said in an interview with Channel 4 News (7 December), “the most senior prosecutor in all of Sweden looked at them, and she said there is not a shred of evidence here that warrants an investigation” of rape or sexual harassment. So in less than a day, the main accusations against him were dropped.
- Weeks went by, and then “a politician got involved with these women and took them off to another prosecutor, in Gothenberg, and we’re now seeing these warrants coming out suspiciously close in time to the date of the release of the cables.” This kind of “witch-hunt,” Stephens said, suggests that this affair is “politically motivated, there are darker forces at work.”

Indeed there are. And what are those “darker forces?” the interviewer asks. Assange’s lawyer responds that “Sweden is one of those lickspittle states that allowed for ‘extraordinary rendition’ and torture flights to go through their country.” Good point. Not only did Sweden dispatch asylum seekers to Egypt where they were imprisoned, beaten and tortured, as well as allowing CIA “rendition” flights, under Prime Minister Göran Persson of the Social-Democratic Labor Party (SAP), despite its professed neutral-

ity, Sweden sent troops to join in the occupation of Afghanistan.

This points to the crucial social-democratic connection in this affair. Sweden's social democracy has long been a handmaiden of U.S. intelligence agencies. During the 1980s, much of the CIA's clandestine aid to the anti-Soviet Polish Solidarność was channeled through Sweden with the blessing of SAP prime minister Olaf Palme. This was hardly novel. The CIA financed social-democratic parties throughout Western Europe after World War II in order to break their wartime alliances with the pro-Moscow Communist parties. It is particularly significant in the case of Assange, because the politician/lawyer who contacted the prosecutor in Göteborg was Claes Børgstrom, who is the SAP's chief spokesman on gender equality issues.

This brings us to Anna Ardin, one of the two women who made the accusations against Assange. Ardin is a well-known feminist activist who was a gender equality officer for Uppsala University, the Harvard of Sweden. She is also the press secretary of the Christian Social Democratic Association, commonly referred to as the Brotherhood Movement. Former prime minister Persson is likewise a member of this association. Anna Ardin worked at the Swedish embassy in Buenos Aires for a time when the Social Democrats were in power, and also reportedly at the Swedish embassy in the U.S. But most particularly, Ardin has been active on the issue of Cuba, as a social-democratic operative keeping in touch with anti-Castro "dissidents" (see box on "Anna Ardin's *Gusano* Connection").

Anna Ardin was the person who invited Julian Assange to speak at the Stockholm meeting on August 14, hosted by the Christian Social Democrat Brotherhood organization. An article by Israel Shamir and Paul Bennett ("Assange Besieged," *Counterpunch*, 14 September) noted that while Assange went to Stockholm hoping to shield WikiLeaks from legal persecution, "the moment Julian sought the protection of Swedish media law, the CIA immediately threatened to discontinue intelligence sharing with [SAPO], the Swedish Secret Service."¹ It turns out that Ardin has a brother who works in Swedish intelligence, and who was a liaison in Washington to U.S. spy agencies. Nothing but a strange coincidence?

Ardin offered to let Assange stay at her flat, and the night before the meeting they had sex. This sure smells like a classic intelligence agency "honey trap," but with a Swedish twist.

¹ Since this article was first published on the Internet, it has come to our attention that Israel Shamir is a Holocaust denier, which could call into question his credibility. However, on the charge of pressure from U.S. spy agencies on their Swedish counterparts, Assange himself reports that WikiLeaks had "two reliable intelligence sources that state that Swedish intelligence was approached last month by the United States and told that Sweden must not be a safe-haven for WikiLeaks" (AFP dispatch, 8 September). When the Swedish news agency Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå asked a top official of Sweden's Migration Board whether in denying Assange a residency permit it had been advised by the Swedish intelligence agency SÄPO, the official responded: "I cannot go into the details" – a "non-denial denial" in classic Watergate fashion. As for the report of Anna Ardin's activities with the U.S.-funded group Damas de Blanco and other anti-Communist "dissidents" in Cuba leading to her effective expulsion from the country (see page 33), this is amply documented, including by Ardin herself in her master's thesis, which is available on her website.

The usual pattern is to lure the target into bed with an attractive woman, photograph the tryst and then use the pictures to blackmail the mark into cooperating. In this case, after the sex come accusations of rape and howls about male chauvinism. At this point it's sounding like the plot of a Stieg Larsson novel, perhaps "Wikileaks: The Man Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest," as the London *Guardian* (8 December) titled its editorial.

Although no formal charges have been brought, or evidence presented, the content of the prosecution dossier against Assange were handed over to a major Swedish tabloid, *Aftonbladet*, which published a special supplement detailing the accusations. The affidavit read in court in London provided some detail of the allegations, but although it claimed to buttress accusations of a sexual assault, they could also be interpreted as "a frivolous case of miscommunication during consenting sex acts," as the Toronto *Globe & Mail* (7 December) put it. There are numerous aspects that cast doubt on the claims by the two women.

Ardin now asserts that Assange has a "warped view of womanhood and can't take no for an answer." Yet by all accounts their sexual encounter was consensual, although apparently the condom split. Still, the two appeared to be on friendly terms at the meeting the next day. That same day Ardin twice posted "tweets" on her accounts gushing about "Julian" and a party she threw for him, telling the world at 2 a.m. that she was "with the world's coolest smartest people, it's amazing." Later, when she went to the police she deleted the tweets from one account, but forgot another. In any case, cybersleuths retrieved them from the Google cache.²

The second woman admits that she actively pursued Assange, landing an invitation to the meeting, sitting in the front row, hanging around afterward like a groupie to get invited to dinner, calling him repeatedly for two days, then taking him home where they had sex in the evening, and again in the morning, first with a condom then without. They parted amicably. She asked Assange if he would call again, he said he would. But two days later when he didn't, she called Ardin to say she was worried about getting pregnant or a sexually transmitted disease. Earlier both women sent out text messages that police describe as "exculpatory" toward Assange. Now the two text each other about going to the scandal sheet *Expressen* to get back at him.

Then they go to the police. The second woman tells police that Assange "had sex with her against her wishes" while she was asleep. Ardin now tells the police that Assange "deliberately" ripped the condom during their sexual encounter. The police officer and prosecutor on duty classify the former as rape, the latter as sexual molestation, and open an investigation (only to have it dropped in 24 hours, and then suspiciously reopened weeks later). Details of the case are immediately leaked. Editors are tipped off, top reporters are called in the middle of the night to hop on the story. By the next morning it is splashed across the pages of Sweden's tabloid press. Within a day the news is shot around the world via the Internet.

That there was calculation here seems clear. Ardin's deletion of the "tweets" from her blogs looks like an effort to make her story more plausible. Call it cover-up. The fact that the

² "Assange Case: Evidence Destroyed Over and Over Again," *Radsoft*, 1 October.

women don't make a formal complaint and let the police do it shows that the Uppsala gender equity officer knows how the law works. Is there more to it? On her blog, Ardin has posted a "Seven-Step Program for Getting Revenge," for women whose boyfriends have been unfaithful. Step 7: "Ensure that your victim will suffer the same way he made you suffer." That much they have achieved, whether it's what they were after or not: Assange is certainly suffering now.

Assange is accused of (but not yet charged with) rape, sexual molestation, and molestation. Rape is an extremely serious crime, overwhelmingly against women, involving violence and coercion. For centuries, women have been intimidated from bringing charges of rape, fearing that they will be subjected to humiliation, or far worse persecution (as in U.S.-occupied Afghanistan, where a woman who has been raped can be stoned to death for her "sin"). However, under Swedish law, a complaint of sex without a condom can be the basis for a charge of rape – of the lowest of three categories, which is what is alleged against Assange (but which still carries a sentence of up to four years in jail). This trivializes the horrible nature of this crime. And as a spokeswoman for the British group Women Against Rape wrote to the *Guardian* (9 December):

"Many women in both Sweden and Britain will wonder at the unusual zeal with which Julian Assange is being pursued for rape allegations.... Though Sweden has the highest per capita number of reported rapes in Europe and these have quadrupled in the last 20 years, conviction rates have decreased.... In 2006 six people were convicted of rape though almost 4,000 people were reported....

"There is a long tradition of the use of rape and sexual assault for political agendas that have nothing to do with women's safety. In the south of the US, the lynching of black men was often justified on grounds that they had raped [the Scottsboro Boys] or even looked [Emmett Till] at a white woman. Women don't take kindly to our demand for safety being misused, while rape continues to be neglected at best or protected at worst."

Criminal cases involving sex are notoriously difficult and messy (often no witnesses, complex relations between the individuals). However, in this case it is evident that *there was no violence or coercion*. None has been alleged, and whatever they may have felt afterwards, indications are the sex was consensual at the time. Add to this the judicial mishandling of the case: immediately leaking it to the press, switching prosecutors in order to reinstate the investigation, refusing to meet with Assange, then demanding his extradition. Throw in a connection with intelligence agencies, and Cold War anti-Communist connections via Swedish social democracy. Plus the overriding determination of the U.S. empire to strike back at, and shut down, WikiLeaks.

The conclusion can only be that *Julian Assange is the victim of a political frame-up*. The purpose of that frame-up: to staunch the flow of information about imperialism's crimes and machinations.

Was it a "honey trap"? Was it two women who felt they had been wronged getting "revenge"? We don't know. At the very least, the two are being used by sinister forces who will use any excuse to nail the founder of WikiLeaks: start by defaming him, and go from there.

Julian Assange is not guilty of rape, but there is plenty of serious criminality here. There have been highly publicized death threats against the WikiLeaks founder. A former aide to Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, Tom Flanagan, said on CBC Television that "Assange should be assassinated." Former Nixon staffer and convicted Watergate criminal G. Gordon Liddy says that Assange should be put on a "kill list." Conservative pundit William Kristol calls to "neutralize Assange and his collaborators." Another, Jonah Goldberg, asks "Why isn't Julian Assange dead?" A *Washington Times* columnist calls to "treat Mr Assange the same way as other high-value terrorist targets: Kill him."

People who make such death threats should be behind bars. They would be if they made them against top capitalist politicians. But they won't be when they are made against the man who is No. 1 on the Obama administration's "enemies list." Moreover, while liberal luminaries headed up by Noam Chomsky are circulating an open letter to Australian prime minister Julian Gillard citing these threats by vicariously murderous conservatives, *the real danger to Assange comes from the liberal Democrats now wielding state power in the U.S.* – and from their "lick-spittle" social-democratic allies, and partners in war crimes in Afghanistan, from Australian Labor Party to Swedish social democracy.

Assange is in potentially mortal danger. As the material published by WikiLeaks shows, and as he is well aware, the U.S. government is in the assassination business big time. It has multiple apparatuses to "terminate" opponents "with extreme prejudice," as the Nixonians used to put it. Alexander Cockburn recently published excerpts from the CIA's 1950s "how to" guide to pushing people out of windows. Then there was the Reagan administration's illustrated *Everyman's Guide to "Selective Violence,"* issued in Spanish for the Nicaraguan contras and subsequently translated into Arabic for use by Al Qaeda. Or the Bush administration's secret *Waterboarding for Dummies* memos. One way or another, the masters of American imperialism would dearly like to "take out" the troublesome website's founder and editor-in-chief.

The work that WikiLeaks has been doing has been useful in exposing a tiny proportion of the bloody crimes of U.S. rulers. But there should be no illusion that "leakers" from within the government will ever be able to show in all its horror what the imperialists are up to. For that, it will be necessary to carry out a revolution, as in October 1917 when the Russian workers seized power, and opened the archives and the dungeons of the tsarist autocracy. Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky was named Commissar for Foreign Affairs and proceeded to publish the secret treaties of the tsar and the other Great Powers. Only when U.S. imperialism is brought down by international socialist revolution will we be able to really delve into the vast secrets of Washington and Langley.

For now, it is urgent to demand that Assange be immediately freed and all charges against him be dropped, and that Bradley Manning be freed. They will be awarded their justly earned medals for uncommon valor, and the war criminals brought to justice, when the workers rule. ■

Anna Ardin's *Gusano* Connection

It has been known for some time that Anna Ardin, one of the accusers against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, has been involved with counterrevolutionary anti-Castro dissidents in Cuba (see the article by Israel Shamir and Paul Bennett, "Assange Besieged," *Counterpunch*, 14 September). Shamir and Bennett called attention to articles by Ardin denouncing the "dictator Fidel Castro," which appeared on the website of the *Revista de Asignaturas Cubanas*,¹ a well-funded anti-Communist exile outfit based in Sweden which puts out a glossy magazine, *Misceláneas de Cuba*.

Ardin's anti-Communist articles speculating about prospects for Cuba when the "dictator Fidel Castro" dies highlight the Corriente Socialista Democrática Cubana,² one of the numerous Cuban "dissident" groups bankrolled by the U.S. government. A main spokesman for the Corriente is Miami-based exile Orlando Patterson, who specializes in bashing the Cuban regime for racism.³ The Corriente was founded in 1992 as an expression inside Cuba of the exile Cuban Democratic Platform (PDC) of Carlos Alberto Montaner⁴, a notorious CIA agent. In 2008, after several years of infighting in the tiny fragmented Cuban social-democratic milieu, the Coordinadora founded the Arco Progresista.⁵

Shamir and Bennet also report that:

"In Cuba she interacted with the feminist anti-Castro group *Las damas de blanco* (the Ladies in White). This group receives US government funds and the convicted anti-communist terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is a friend and supporter. Wikipedia quotes Hebe de Bonafini, president of the Argen-

tine Madres de Plaza de Mayo as saying that 'the so-called Ladies in White defend the terrorism of the United States'."⁶

Now important new information has come to light. According to Juan Tamayo writing in the *Miami Herald* (8 December), "Ardin visited Cuba about four times between 2002 and 2006 as a representative of Swedish social democrats, said Manuel Cuesta Morúa, head of Cuba's Arco Progresista, a social-democratic dissident group." Her masters thesis, Tamayo reports, was on the subject, "The Cuban Multi-Party System. Is the democratic alternative really democratic and an alternative after the Castro regime?" What he doesn't mention is that Ardin was expelled from Cuba for her activities with the pro-imperialist *gusanos* (worms).

While giving no political support to the Castro regime, which is introducing measures which greatly strengthen pro-capitalist tendencies, Trotskyists resolutely defend the bureaucratically deformed Cuban workers state against imperialism and internal counterrevolution, whether from such U.S.-funded "dissidents" or from within the bureaucracy. Cuban social democracy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the CIA, and those who aid it are doing the work of the Yankee imperialists.

Ardin is no babe in the woods. Four visits in four years, "as a representative of Sweish social democrats": Ardin is up to her neck in the swamp of anti-Communist subversion in Cuba, and not just as a wide-eyed tourist. So much so that, according to the *Herald* article, an annoyed Cuesta Morúa complained that she "wrongly alleged that some European funds for Cuban dissidents had been mishandled." Question: How would she even know to make such an accusation, accurate or not? Answer: She was tasked to do so, she was acting as their control.

The main accuser of Julian Assange is an anti-Communist social-democratic operative. ■

¹ For a Spanish translation of Ardin's January 2005 articles, see <http://www.miscelaneasdecuba.net/web/article.asp?artID=1277> and <http://www.miscelaneasdecuba.net/web/article.asp?artID=1271>.

² For information about the Corriente's subversive activities in Cuba and ties to the U.S. embassy in Havana, see the book by Rosa Miriam Elizalde and Luis Báez, *The Dissidents* (Havana, 2003).

³ For a denunciation of U.S. government sponsorship of counterrevolutionary Cuban blacks, including Patterson and Carlos Moore, see the article by Esteban Morales Domínguez, "El tema racial y la subversión anticubana" in *La Jiribilla*, 8 September 2007.

⁴ Carlos Alberto Montaner, son of a major in the army of dictator Fulgencio Batista, was convicted in Cuba of terrorist action in 1962, and after escaping was selected by the CIA for training in Fort Benning, Georgia. He operates out of Madrid, posing as a "moderate" opposition to the Castro regime, more palatable to European social-democratic and liberal sensibilities. But his Cuban Democratic Platform (PDC) is bankrolled by the U.S. (via the National Endowment for Democracy) and he participates in various enterprises with the Cuban American National Foundation (FNCA) of hard-line *battistiano* exiles in Miami, including the RECE (Cuban Exile Representation). The notorious CIA terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is also part of the PDC.

⁵ In addition to the Corriente, the other main component of the Arco is the Coordinadora Social-Demócrata Cubana, an exile group even more closely associated with the CIA and one of the founding components of Montaner's Democratic Platform.

⁶ Luis Posada Carriles is a Cuban-born terrorist and CIA agent who in 1963-64 was trained in sabotage and the use of explosives at the U.S. Army's base at Fort Benning (the same period when Montaner was there). Operating out of Venezuela, he was responsible for – and convicted of – bombing a Cubana de Aviación airliner in October 1976, killing 73 people, including an entire sports team. After escaping from prison, in the 1980s, he was involved in the U.S.' clandestine supply of arms to the Nicaraguan contras. In 1997 he organized a dozen bombings in Havana aimed at discouraging the tourist trade. In 2000, he was arrested in Panama with 200 pounds of explosives and convicted of attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro. Pardoned by Panama in 2004, he now lives comfortably, protected from deportation in the U.S., where he marches together with Cuban American pop singer Gloria Estefan in Miami demonstrations for the *damas de blanco*. The *damas* receive \$1,500 a month from Rescate Jurídica [Legal Rescue], the foundation of Santiago Alvarez Fernández-Magriña, who is also Posadas Carriles's financier (*Machetera*, 26 March 2010). Estefan's father was a bodyguard for the dictator Batista.

Defend North Korea and China Against Imperialism and Counterrevolution

U.S./South Korean Provocations



Could Ignite New Korean War

South Korean navy hovercraft coming from military garrison island of Yonphyong, November 24.

Chung Sung-Jun/Getty Images

For Revolutionary Reunification of North and South!

5 DECEMBER 2010 – American imperialism and its South Korean militarist ally have embarked on a dangerous course of escalating actions against North Korea and China. Washington and Seoul invent North Korean “provocations” and hide their own role in provoking reactions by Pyongyang. Three times in the last nine months, aggressive U.S./South Korean military exercises have been held in the Yellow Sea. Now a “crisis summit” of U.S., South Korean and Japanese foreign ministers is to be held to plot a joint strategy against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Bogged down in a losing war in Afghanistan, despite tripling U.S. forces there, and having lost the midterm elections to right-wing Republicans who deride him as weak, U.S. president Barack Obama may delude himself into thinking he could score points by striking a hawkish pose on North Korea. For his part, South Korean president Lee Myung-bak, a virulent Cold War anti-Communist, won office railing against “appeasement” of the North and has since staged one incident after another.

Judging from diplomatic correspondence recently published by Wikileaks, decision makers in Seoul and Washington seem to have convinced themselves that North Korea is about to collapse (as they have often miscalculated in the past). They want to push it over the brink. In the process, they may bring

the region – and the world – to the brink of war. In this perilous situation, we reiterate our call to *Defend North Korea against imperialist war provocations and sanctions*, and demand: *All U.S. troops out of Korea!*

The latest *casus belli* (cause of war) was an exchange of artillery fire on Yonphyong Island just off the western coast of North Korea. According to the account broadcast around the world, at 2:30 p.m. local time on November 23, North Korean artillery shells suddenly began raining down on the island, held by South Korea. Two South Korean soldiers were reported killed, and two bodies of island residents were later found. After 100-plus rounds were fired from the North, the South Koreans responded by lobbing scores of shells at a North Korean military base.

The Western press screamed bloody murder about North Korea targeting civilians. South Korean legislators demanded heavy-duty retaliation. A White House statement quoted President Obama saying he was “outraged,” and that the North Korean government is “an ongoing threat that needs to be dealt with.” Liberals and conservatives in the U.S. joined in denouncing the North’s “belligerence.” “Diplomats” (usually a codeword for spies) speculated about effects of leadership transition in the North. Korea “experts” psychoanalyzed DPRK leader Kim Jong Il.

Reuters



U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton and war minister Robert Gates at the DMZ for some nuclear sabre-rattling, July 21.

The whole rigamarole is one big smokescreen, to create a fog of war.

Repeating a common refrain, British foreign secretary William Hague condemned the North Korean government for its “unprovoked attack.” Yet provoked is exactly what it was. The North Korean salvos came just one hour after the South Koreans unleashed a massive artillery barrage from Yonphyeong Island, as part of the “Hoguk” military exercises. (The island is home not only to 1,350 fisher folk but also to a South Korean military base with 1,000 soldiers.)

The DPRK had warned repeatedly, including in an urgent telephone message to South Korean military leaders at 8 a.m. that morning, that “if even a single shell of the enemy is fired inside the territorial waters of the DPRK, it will take a prompt retaliatory strike.” Moreover, days later, the South Korean National Intelligence Service admitted it knew from electronic surveillance that the North was preparing to respond to the South Korean artillery by shelling the island. But the South Koreans went ahead anyway, daring the North to respond.

The *New York Times* did have a story reporting a North Korean statement that “the South ‘recklessly fired into our sea area’,” and that “The North blamed the South for starting the exchange; the South acknowledged firing test shots in the area but denied that any had fallen in the North’s territory.” The story went on to say that “The attack on Yeonpyeong came as 70,000 South Korean troops were beginning an annual nationwide military drill called Safeguarding the Nation. The exercise has been sharply criticized by Pyongyang as ‘simulating an invasion of the North’ and ‘a means to provoke a war’.” But after a few hours this dispatch disappeared from the *Times*’ web page, so one could only find it by searching. It was never published in the paper.

“Senior American officials” said the North Korean attack was “premeditated,” since the South Korean maneuvers were announced in advance. Premeditated is right – about the U.S.

and South Korean provocation. They knew what the consequences would be of holding war “games,” including artillery barrages, just off the North Korean coast in its territorial waters, and they went ahead anyway.

South Korean spokesmen ridiculed the North’s assertion that the Hoguk exercises were simulating an invasion. Yet photos of the drill show soldiers practicing landing exercises. Where do you suppose they might be preparing to land? Is the South Korean military perhaps planning to invade ... *South Korea*?

The media accounts have also passed over a basic fact: Yonphyeong Island is located just seven miles off North Korea’s coast. The South Korean artillery shells fell even closer. That’s roughly the distance from Wall Street to the tip of Staten Island. What do you expect would happen if an enemy power staged a live-fire military exercise in the New York harbor?

And Yonphyeong sits at the mouth of the North Korean deep water harbor of Haeju. What would be the response if the North unleashed artillery barrages from an island facing the South Korean port of Incheon? The fact that South Korea occupies this and other coastal islands is a standing military provocation.

U.S. spokesmen accused the DPRK of violating the 1953 armistice agreement that ended combat in the Korean War. Yet North Korea never agreed that the islets hugging its western coast belonged to South Korea. The “Northern Limit Line” claimed by the South is just a few miles offshore, well to the north of the Military Demarcation Line. It was unilaterally imposed by the United States at the end of the Korean War.

The DPRK was unable to prevent South Korean occupation of the islets, now turned into a string of military outposts targeting the North, because in 1953 it didn’t have a navy or air force. But it has always insisted that these islands belong to North Korea, being well within its territorial waters, as they certainly are.

Washington and Seoul linked this incident to the sinking of the South Korean naval vessel *Cheonan* last March, claiming both are North Korean “provocations.” Not only does the DPRK vehemently deny having anything to do with the sinking of the *Cheonan*, the available evidence upholds its denial. This was discussed in a previous article (“Defend North Korea Against U.S. War Threats and Sanctions,” *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010). Since then, an independent South Korean newspaper, *The Hankyoreh*, has done an independent investigation that makes mincemeat of the government’s claims (see article, “What, Sank the *Cheonan*?” on page 37). Opinion polls in South Korea report that less than one-third of the public believes the official story.

Adding up the *Cheonan* and Yonphyeong Island incidents, the imperialists and their South Korean auxiliaries have been

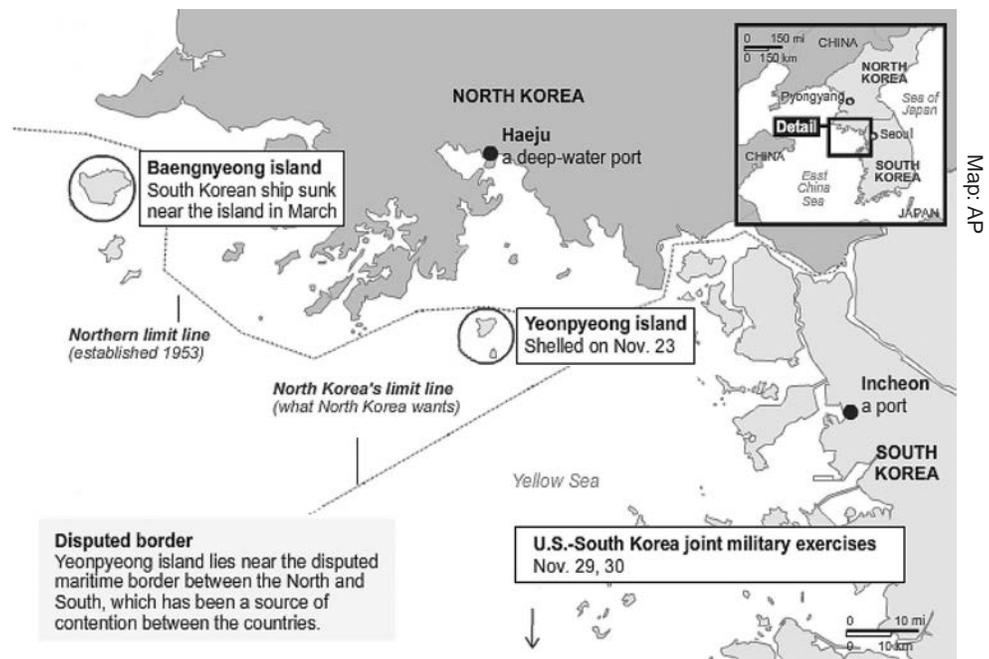
pressuring the Chinese government to pin the blame on North Korea, which it has refused to do. Both China and North Korea are bureaucratically deformed workers states, and China is the main trading partner for the North, enabling the DPRK to circumvent the imperialist sanctions orchestrated by the United Nations. For Beijing to abandon Pyongyang would be an act of class treason of the highest order – and suicidal as well, for the imperialists' ultimate target is the People's Republic of China, which they avidly seek to reconquer for capitalism.

Beijing issued a statement objecting to the U.S./South Korean military exercises because they were being held within China's "economic zone." Indeed, in the area where the South Korean and U.S. navies held joint maneuvers last March before the *Cheonan* sunk, North Korea is barely 200 miles from China's Shandong peninsula. Last week's U.S./South Korean maneuvers involving the U.S. nuclear supercarrier *George Washington* were held in the East China Sea. Next week's U.S./Japanese operations will be in the Yellow Sea, between Japan and China. All these "war games" are aimed at containing the rising influence of China, and with one false (or deliberate) move, the "games" could easily turn into the real thing.

The background to the current crisis is U.S. imperialism's longstanding vendetta against North Korea over nuclear weapons. The DPRK has sought to develop the capacity to generate nuclear power because since the demise of the Soviet Union it is chronically short of fuel, lacking hard currency to buy oil on the capitalist world market, while it does have uranium. It has sought to develop nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the imperialists, who devastated the North during the Korean War (see "U.S. War Against North Korea Never Ended," on page 38), who subject North Korea to punishing sanctions, who refuse to sign a peace treaty and are constantly plotting counterrevolution.

While giving no political support to the Stalinist rulers of the DPRK, we defend North Korea's right to have nuclear weapons to defend itself. Why should the United States, the only power ever to use atomic bombs in war, slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have a monopoly on "weapons of mass destruction"? The purpose is to subjugate the world to the *diktat* of U.S. imperialism. And Washington wants to deprive North Korea of its nuclear deterrent so that the U.S. can finish the Korean war by destroying the DPRK with impunity.

Skirmishing over North Korea's nuclear program has been going on for almost two decades. Prior to the 1990s, the main deterrent to imperialist conquest of North Korea was the certainty that this would mean war with the Soviet Union.



With the USSR destroyed by counterrevolution, the regime headed by Kim Il Sung and his son Kim Jong Il rightly figured it had better get the bomb to ward off attack. It did, to great consternation in the White House and the Pentagon.

In the latest installment of the ongoing saga, Pyongyang invited an American scientist, Siegfried Hecker, the former head of the U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories at Los Alamos, to visit the DPRK's most sensitive nuclear site, the reactor at Yongbyon. Hecker had been there before, and certainly could recognize a weapons lab if he saw one. He reported that the North was building a 25-30 megawatt electric light-water reactor, and that it had a small, quite modern industrial facility with 2,000 centrifuges producing low-enriched uranium for the new reactor. The North Koreans wanted to show this to a qualified nuclear expert before U.S. intelligence agencies announced that they had "discovered" another "secret bomb factory."

Instead, the imperialists screamed that this was another "provocation," it was Kim Jong Il bragging that he had a "second route to making nuclear weapons." Yet Hecker in his report on his November 12 visit made clear that North Korea had shut down its plutonium producing reactor and "has apparently decided not to make more plutonium or plutonium bombs for now." And while a light water reactor could produce some nuclear fuel, it is "much less suitable" for bombs than what they had before. In fact, when the U.S. tried to stop the DPRK from getting nuclear weapons in the 1990s, it offered to build a light-water reactor to supply the North's power needs!

So officials in Washington and Seoul add up the sinking of the *Cheonan*, centrifuges at Yongbyon and the North Korean shelling of Yonphyong Island to make a case for ... what? Following the last incident, South Korea president Lee sacked his minister of defense and announced "robust" new rules of engagement would be forthcoming. Yonhap news agency said the South was "planning further artillery drills, 'including waters close to the Yellow Sea border'" with the DPRK. The

clear intent is to provoke a new “attack” by the North.

Some imperialist geostrategists worry about where this is all headed. The *New York Times* (24 November) noted early on: “[F]or Mr. Obama, much stronger responses, including a naval quarantine of the North, carry huge risks. A face-off on the Korean Peninsula would require tens of thousands of troops, air power and the possibility of a resumption of the Korean War, a battle that American officials believe would not last long, but might end in the destruction of Seoul if the North unleashed artillery batteries near the border.”

Yet the U.S. government still seems to be caught in the “brief bubble of sole superpower fantasy,” as one analyst (Robert Rothkopf) put it. Whatever Washington’s intentions are, full-scale fighting could easily break out. The threat by the new South Korean war minister on December 3 to “retaliate immediately” against the DPRK, including air strikes in the North, “until they completely surrender,” would do it. The U.S. boarding a Korean freighter on the high seas could also set it off. This is a war waiting to happen, and a new Korean war would not stay limited to the peninsula for long.

In response to the stepped-up imperialist onslaught against North Korea, China called for resumption of the six-party talks including South Korea, Japan, the U.S. and Russia. This was contemptuously dismissed by the White House, whose spokesman declared that the U.S. is “not interested in stabilizing the region through a series of P.R. activities.” The Chinese English-language newspaper *Global Times* (2 December), wrote: “The Cold War ended 20 years ago.... But the US, South Korea and Japan are still dealing with Pyongyang with an old Cold War mentality.” The Beijing bureaucrats are still pursuing the Stalinist pipedream of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism, an illusion that contributed greatly to the demise of the USSR. They fail to see, or pretend not to see, that Washington views Beijing through the same lens.

On the left in the United States, some reformist groups that follow the political line of Pyongyang call on the U.S. to “sign a peace treaty with the DPRK” (Workers World Party statement, 1 December). The Party for Socialism and Liberation says that “normalization of relations” between Pyongyang and Washington “seemed like a realizable goal in the last months of the Bill Clinton administration in 1999 and 2000” (ANSWER Coalition statement, 26 November). Wrong. It wasn’t about to happen under Democrat B. Clinton, and it sure won’t under Democrat Obama and H. Clinton. Faced with a challenge to their class domination, the imperialists will go for “peace” only when they have been *defeated*, as in Vietnam.

The fact that Washington refuses to sign a peace treaty is certainly indicative of its “Cold War mentality,” but for left-ist opponents of U.S. imperialism to call for that reveals the same dangerous illusions that Washington and Seoul can be pressured into peacefully coexisting with North Korea. The war threat comes from the South Korean militarists and U.S. imperialists, who are bent on the destruction of the DPRK. Revolutionaries and class-conscious workers should *defend North Korea’s right to nuclear weapons*, call for an *end to the imperialist sanctions against North Korea* and demand *immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Korea, Japan,*

Okinawa, Philippines, Indochina and all of East Asia.

Above all, a real defense of the deformed workers states of North Korea, China and Vietnam cannot be successful on the narrow nationalist program of the Stalinists. What is ultimately required is the international extension of the revolution to the imperialist centers of Japan, North America and Europe. In the immediate crisis, it is urgent for South Korean workers to mobilize against the looming war threat. Spokesmen for the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) joined with other labor and civic groups in a press conference December 1 calling for “no war” and calling “dialogue the only way to recover stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula” (*The Hankyoreh* [Seoul], 1 December). The vast majority of South Korea’s population opposes war moves against the North. But what’s needed is to bring the *power* of the militant labor movement into the streets to *stop* the drive to war.

South Korean workers have demonstrated repeatedly that they have the strength to bring the capitalist economy to a grinding halt. In December 1996 over a million workers walked out and stayed out to protest anti-labor laws and increased powers to spy and police agencies. Another general strike in June 2001 protested austerity measures ordered by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as calling for abolition of the infamous National Security Law. Again in 2006, the KCTU (and particularly the militant transport workers) struck against a law increasing the use of temporary workers. Most recently Korean workers held militant protests against the G20 summit in Seoul, and have repeatedly demonstrated against the just-signed Korean-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. What’s needed to mobilize this tremendous force against the South Korean militarists and *chaebol* capitalists is a class-struggle leadership.

The League for the Fourth International calls for *revolutionary reunification of Korea* under workers rule, through a proletarian political revolution against bureaucratic misrule in the North and a social revolution overturning capitalism in the South. Such a struggle would send shock waves to Japan, where antiwar sentiment among the population remains strong due to the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; to Okinawa, where a labor-led struggle could drive out U.S. military bases; and to China, where it could inspire tens and hundreds of millions of workers to rise up against capitalist exploitation in the special economic zones and the threat of capitalist counterrevolution engulfing the entire country.

And in the United States, the Internationalist Group warns, as we did even during the 2008 election campaign when the left caved in to the popularity of Barack Obama, that Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties and politicians are responsible for the endless imperialist wars. The war machine can only be stopped through proletarian action (of which the May Day 2008 West Coast port strike against the Iraq and Afghanistan war was a small token) to defeat U.S. imperialism and bring down the whole imperialist system through international socialist revolution.

To lead such a struggle we must build revolutionary workers parties on the internationalist communist program of Lenin and Trotsky, fighting to reforge the Fourth International. ■

What Sank the *Cheonan*?

Earlier this year, the sinking of a South Korean navy corvette *Cheonan* off the North Korean coast and the deaths of 46 sailors on board led to a chorus of accusations from Washington and Seoul that it was sunk by military forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). North Korea categorically denied having anything to do with the March 26 sinking of the South Korean warship. Numerous technical experts also questioned the charge of North Korean responsibility. After a so-called "international commission" claimed the *Cheonan* was sunk by a North Korean torpedo, the U.S. announced new sanctions against the DPRK and provocative naval maneuvers led by the nuclear aircraft carrier USS *George Washington*. We wrote about the incident and analyzed the contradictory claims against the North in the article, "Defend North Korea Against U.S. War Threats and Sanctions" (*The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010).

Since our article was published the imperialists have continued to use the *Cheonan* incident in their escalating war propaganda, routinely alleging that North Korea was responsible, as if this were an established fact. However, a *Los Angeles Times* (24 July) article, "Doubts Surface on North Korea's Role in Ship Sinking," reported that the official version of events was being challenged in South Korea itself. One of the doubters is Shin Sang-chul, a former shipbuilding executive who was appointed to the investigating commission by the opposition Democratic Party. Shin was peremptorily removed from the commission when after inspecting the vessel he said that in his opinion, the *Cheonan* ran aground in the shallow water, and then damaged the hull trying to get off a reef (which is what the South Korean navy originally reported). The defense ministry accused him of "lack of objectivity and scientific logic" and "intentionally creating public mistrust."

Numerous elements of the official story have been challenged. One is the piece of a torpedo propeller fortuitously discovered weeks after the sinking. A physics professor, Seunghun Lee, questioned why there was so much corrosion after less than two months in the water, while the supposed North Korean marking was very clear and on top of the rust. "You could put that mark on an iPhone and claim it was manufactured in North Korea," Lee scoffed. Also, the marking used an abbreviation common in the South, not in the North. Many asked why the government was refusing to let the press or outside investigators speak with surviving crew members. The *Hankyoreh* (21 May), a liberal Seoul paper, questioned how it could be that no North Korean submarine or torpedo launch was detected, either by the *Cheonan*, which is an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) vessel, or by the South Korean ASW base on the nearby Baengnyeong Island, or by U.S. ships that were present in the area following ASW maneuvers (codenamed *Foal Eagle*) with the South Korean navy.

As the controversy continued, more questions have been raised. The South Korean government invited Russia to send a team to investigate, which it did in early June. However, the Russian team concluded that damage to the propellers on the salvaged *Cheonan* indicated it had scraped the shallow ocean floor; that the torpedo propeller was dubious (markings and rust); that there were significant time discrepancies between sailors' reports of an explosion and the time code recorded on closed circuit TV images inside the ship; and that the corvette could have touched the antenna of an ocean mine (*Hankyoreh*, 27 July). This would jibe with a report from Beijing suggesting that the South Korean warship could have been sunk by a bottom mine laid by the U.S. The report noted the presence in the U.S.-South Korean maneuvers of a diving support ship, USNS *Salvor*, of a type frequently associated with the Office of Naval Intelligence ("Did an American Mine Sink the South Korean Ship?" *New American Media*, 27 May).

The National Union of Media Workers and Korean Federation of Journalists set up their own committee to investigate the *Cheonan* incident. On November 11, HaniTV, a video production unit of *The Hankyoreh*, put up a documentary on the Internet with material from that inquiry providing a detailed critique of the government's story. In addition to the questions about the *Cheonan*'s propellers, the alleged North Korean torpedo propeller fragment and the various times given for the explosion (suggesting tampering with the tape), it questioned the location where the sinking reportedly occurred based on coast guard reports, and noted that based on NASA experiments, a torpedo blast sufficiently strong to slice the ship in two would have mangled sailors' bodies. Yet none of the survivors or the recovered bodies show signs of this; the sailors who died were drowned, not blown apart. (The video can be seen on the Internet at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDITkTEDVNA>).

At this point there is still insufficient public evidence to determine who or what sank the *Cheonan*, which was a warship engaged in hostile military maneuvers against the DPRK. But it can be said with certainty that the account presented by the South Korean government and backed by U.S. authorities is a concocted story. Its purpose is to whip up a war hysteria against North Korea. As noted in our earlier article, "There is a long history of imperialist governments staging provocations or seizing on unrelated events to justify launching a war. Recall how 'Remember the Maine!' became the battle cry for the U.S. occupation of Cuba in 1898, after an explosion sank the American battleship in the Havana harbor.... [I]f the provocative U.S.-South Korean military maneuvers escalate into war against North Korea, the war cry will no doubt be 'Remember the Cheonan!'" In opposing the war moves against North Korea, it is important to expose the fabrications being used to justify them. ■

Denounce FBI Raids...

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the bipartisan support of both capitalist parties. The Democratic Obama administration picked up where the Republican George W. Bush left off, blocking investigations of torture, vastly expanding warrantless wiretapping, and now demanding unfettered access to everyone's e-mail. The behemoth of the Department of Homeland Security, which includes the FBI and the ICE immigration police, deports nearly 400,000 immigrants annually, a number which has increased sharply under Obama.

This war is a war to ensure world domination by U.S. imperialism. It goes hand in hand with the war on working people, immigrants and democratic rights here. The goal of Democrats, Republicans and their FBI goons is to make all resistance to the capitalist order illegal. They target anyone who is seen to be on the side of the working class, the oppressed Black minority and immigrants. In justifying a violent police attack on San Francisco Bay Area longshoremen and antiwar protesters on 7 April 2003, a spokesman for the state's Anti-Terrorism Information Center argued "if you have a protest group protesting a war where the cause that's being fought against is international terrorism, you might have terrorism at that." Yet the longshoremen and protesters refused to be intimidated, and on May Day 2008, dock workers shut down every port on the West Coast to stop the war on Iraq and Afghanistan.

On Sept. 27, the San Francisco Labor Council unanimously passed a motion condemning the recent raids, noting: "The FBI raids are reminiscent of the Palmer Raids, McCarthy hearings, J. Edgar Hoover, and COINTELPRO, and mark a new and dangerous chapter in the protracted assault on the First Amendment rights of every union fighter, international solidarity activist or anti-war campaigner..."

The real terrorists are the Pentagon generals and Wall Street CEOs, and their politicians of both capitalist parties. To these warmongers, "terrorism" is the watchword under which they shred democratic rights and condemn millions around the world to the horrors of war. They use the indiscriminate terror attacks of "9/11" as a ploy to justify an expanding war to intimidate the world into submission. Their evidenceless insinuations that the FRSO provides "material support" to those the U.S. brands as terrorists are a cynical device to hide the real intent of these raids: to disrupt an organization that protests and opposes the ongoing terrorism against civilian populations committed by the U.S. and its allied regimes, the states of Israel and Colombia.

The Internationalist Group defends the FRSO and all those targeted for political persecution under the U.S.' terrorist "war on terror." We seek to mobilize the power of the international, multiracial working class to defeat "our own" imperialist rulers – and to put an end to the capitalist system that produces endless war – through international socialist revolution. Our defense is based on the principle of non-sectarian defense of all victims of capitalist state repression, irrespective of political differences.

In fact, while the IG opposed both Obama and McCain in the 2008 actions, most reformist left groups tried to sidle up to the Democratic nominee. The FRSO went further than

most and openly supported Obama. It claimed in an editorial ("2008 Presidential Elections: Defeat McCain," 5 June 2008) that: "The facts are plain; Obama parts ways, to a degree, with Clinton on the Iraq War, free trade agreements and racism. He has a message of hope with wide appeal.... his election will create a better political climate for the anti-war, immigrant rights, labor and national movements." Not so.

In reality, as genuine Marxists warned, a vote for Obama was a vote for more war, more domestic repression, and more attacks on the labor movement. That is what happened, and now this is thrown into stark relief as the Obama administration takes aim at some of its leftist supporters, with more to come. We call to unchain its power to defeat this latest attack on our rights. Working people should break with the Democratic Party of racist police repression and imperialist war, and forge a revolutionary workers party that champions the struggle of all the oppressed. ■

Focal Point Europe...

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the attack on workers' gains throughout the continent should be met with Europe-wide strike action. The action last fall by unionists at Belgian refineries stopping exports in solidarity with striking French refinery workers points the way forward to a *socialist united states of Europe*.

Collapse of the euro would produce international financial chaos. Soon the "bond vigilantes" may train their sights on the British pound and the American dollar, for the finances of the United Kingdom and United States are just as shaky as those of the second- and third-tier capitalist countries currently under siege. Plus the U.S. imperialist superpower (along with its European NATO allies) is bogged down militarily in a losing war in Afghanistan and endless occupation of Iraq. If the holders of U.S. T-notes and T-bonds ever decided to cash in their paper holdings, it would be all over. But with this "debt bomb," the only thing stopping them is the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, mutual assured destruction (MAD): in the ensuing global economic meltdown, bondholders would lose big as well.

A decaying capitalist order in the throes of the deepest economic crisis in three-quarters of a century is seeking to ensure its survival by impoverishing the proletariat and destroying its ability to resist. From Athens to London, the ruling classes have launched an across-the-board offensive against the working class, taking aim at every social gain and even, in some cases, threatening its very existence. But no matter how severe the crisis, *capitalism will not fall by itself*. To defeat this onslaught, the usual fare of bourgeois pressure politics ("coalition building," "peaceful protest," electoral politics and limited defensive struggles) is wholly inadequate. It is necessary not only to resist the particular attack but to turn the tables and direct the fight not merely against the policies of "neo-liberalism," but the capitalist system itself. To lead that struggle, we must begin to build a party of the proletarian vanguard like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, reforging the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

Beginning in 1945, at the End of World War II



U.S. bombing of port of Wonsan in 1951. U.S. saturation bombing flattened 18 of North Korea's 22 cities, an unequalled level of destruction in modern wars.

The American media have demonized North Korea ever since the start of the anti-Soviet Cold War following the end of World War II. It is typically portrayed like something out of a comic book – an irrational, paranoid regime constantly engaged in provocations, behaving like a petulant child, lashing out in order to get attention, immersed in a never-ending succession crisis, a hermit kingdom bent on incinerating the South and nuking Japan, if not Hawaii, while deliberately starving its own population. This caricature is nothing but crude war propaganda. In fact, it is North Korea that was incinerated by U.S. imperialism in the Korean War, and which ever since has been the object of endless provocations and nuclear threats from Washington. Even before the official start of the war in June 1950, the U.S. government vowed to “roll back Communism” in the Korean peninsula and elsewhere. During the war, it officially adopted the goal of “destruction” of North Korea. And despite the 1953 armistice, the Korean War has never stopped.

During the fighting, General Douglas MacArthur prepared to hit North Korea with dozens of atomic bombs; in 1951, President Harry Truman signed off on the plan to nuke the North if Communist forces pushed further South. In 1969, Richard Nixon put nuclear-armed warplanes on 15-minute alert and had Henry Kissinger order the Pentagon to come up with scenarios for using the hundreds of U.S. warheads prepositioned in South Korea. In the 1990s, Bill Clinton weighed

a nuclear strike against North Korea's nuclear facilities and set up task forces to plan for “end game” in North Korea, which Hillary Clinton is still pursuing as Secretary of State. In 2002, George W. Bush listed North Korea as one part of his so-called “axis of evil,” a hit list of “rogue regimes” slated for annihilation once Washington had bumped off Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Currently, the Obama administration is escalating its pressure on North Korea, tightening an economic blockade and staging provocative U.S.-South Korean war “games” just off its Western coast. No matter whether Democrats or Republicans are in office, U.S. rulers have been scheming about how to destroy North Korea for more than six decades.

Contrary to its political supporters, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not socialist but a bureaucratically deformed workers state modeled on the Stalinized Soviet Union. It is similar in its fundamentals to China, Vietnam and Cuba, albeit with its own peculiar features – notably an extreme “cult of the personality” that has morphed into a dynastic succession. Its official ideology of *juche* – self-reliance – is but an extreme version of the national autarky inherent in the Stalinist dogma of “building socialism in one country.” But the relatively privileged position of the Northern bureaucracy and the vagaries of the Kim family hardly bother U.S. rulers, who have for decades propped up a regime of mass murdering colonial puppets in the South. North Korea's original sin, in the U.S.' eyes, was overthrowing



Leftist mass meeting in Seoul, South Korea on May Day 1947.

capitalist rule – for which “crime” Washington has constantly sought to topple the regime, or failing that, to obliterate the entire country. Trotskyists, in contrast, *unconditionally defend North Korea against imperialism and internal counterrevolution*, while seeking to oust its conservative, nationalist Stalinist ruling stratum through a proletarian political revolution in the North and revolutionary reunification of Korea.

1945-49: Imperialist Occupation and Massacres in the South

As World War II ended abruptly after the horrific U.S. atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the Soviet Army rapidly pushed the Japanese army out of Manchuria and northern Korea. It stopped at the 38th Parallel north of Seoul, in accordance with the August 1945 Potsdam agreement that carved up Soviet and Western spheres of interest worldwide. At the same time, Korean Communists led by Kim Il Sung, who had fought the Japanese colonial occupiers in guerrilla struggles since the 1930s, rapidly expanded their influence throughout the peninsula, even setting up a short-lived People’s Republic of Korea (PRK). The U.S. military government brought in Syngman Rhee from the U.S. to head a right-wing “democratic council” in the South, whose apparatus consisted of the puppets who ran Korea as a Japanese colony from 1910 to 1945. The U.S. proceeded to



Carl Mydans/Life Magazine

Captured rebels in Suncheon, 1948.

repress the left, banning strikes and outlawing PRK authorities in December 1945.

But this didn’t stop the spread of unrest in the South. Unlike other countries occupied by the U.S. after WWII (Germany, Japan, Austria), Korea was not a defeated imperialist power but a colonized nation yearning to throw off foreign rule. In 1946, an Autumn Uprising broke out with a peasant revolt against hated landowners, a railroad strike and mass assaults on police stations. The U.S. military government declared martial law. Although in 1945 it was agreed that after a five-year “trusteeship,” Korea would be reunited and independent, with the start of the Cold War, Washington reneged on this pledge. In March 1948, the U.S.

announced elections for an anti-Communist government in the South. When the Workers Party of Korea (WPK) held rallies to oppose this, the U.S. arrested 2,500 Communist cadres. In April, South Korean police on the island of Cheju (or Jeju) fired on a demonstration commemorating the struggle against Japanese rule, touching off a mass rebellion that was put down with bloody terror:

“Over the next year, the soldiers burned hundreds of ‘red villages’ and raped and tortured countless islanders, eventually killing as many as 60,000 people – one fifth of Cheju’s population. They committed these atrocities in plain view of the highest authority then in southern Korea – the U.S. military, which had occupied the peninsula south of the 38th parallel following the World War II defeat of Japan. The Americans documented the brutality, but never intervened.”

–“Ghosts of Cheju,” *Newsweek*, 19 June 2000

For the next 50 years, it was a crime to even mention the *Cheju Massacre* in South Korea, but it was only one of several. A new Republic of Korea quickly passed a National Traitors Act outlawing the WPK, forcing Communist militants to head to the hills to begin guerrilla struggle. In October 1948, a rebellion in the southwestern cities of *Yeosu and Suncheon* was crushed by U.S.-led forces which killed up to 2,000 civilians. In December 1949, South Korean troops in *Mungyeong* executed scores of prisoners (mostly children and elderly



Suspected “communist collaborators” arrested in Yongdong.

people) accused of collaborating with Communist bands. Meanwhile, the U.S. authorities were revamping their worldwide strategy for the Cold War, shifting from “containment” of Communism, the watchword of the early years, to “rolling back” the Soviet bloc, a policy embodied in National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68), issued in April 1950. The first place this doctrine was tried was in the Korean War, which broke out that June.

Newsweek quoted University of Chicago historian Bruce Cumings on the origin of the Korean War:

“Americans remember it as a lightning bolt in the morning, like the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.... In fact, the war began as a civil conflict in 1945 – and still hasn’t ended.”

In response to the proclamation of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the South, a Democratic People’s Republic (DPRK) was established in the North. Later in 1948, Soviet troops left North Korea, and in mid-1949 U.S. troops pulled out of the South. However, South Korean strong man Rhee (who opposed the U.S. withdrawal) was acutely aware that his survival depended on an American military presence, especially following the victory of the Chinese Communists against Chiang Kai-shek that October. So throughout 1949 and early 1950, the ROK army staged provocative raids across the 38th Parallel which everyone (including North Korea and U.S. officials) understood were intended to provoke a DPRK counterattack that would force the return of U.S. troops.

At the same time, Kim Il Sung and Korean nationalists, angered at the Americans’ ripping up of the 1945 agreement for a reunified Korea in five years’ time, saw the departure of U.S. troops as an opportunity to reunify the country by sweeping away the hated landlord/militarist regime in the South. When its forces were sufficiently built up, and assured of Soviet and Chinese backing, on 25 June 1950 the Korean People’s Army (KPA) launched the attack. The “ROK” army, which had been a garrison police force under the Japanese, was no match for the KPA, which included 60,000 battle-hardened soldiers who had fought with the Chinese Communists in the just concluded civil war. As the KPA rolled south, they were welcomed by

uprisings in several provinces. Rhee responded as always, ordering the execution of 30,000 prisoners accused of Communist ties, as well as tens of thousands more who had been forced into an official “re-education” campaign, called the *Bodo League*. Adding it up, just this past summer the *New York Times* (10 July) reported that a South Korean commission: “...confirmed that during the first chaotic weeks of the war, when North Korean troops barreled down the peninsula, the South’s military and police rounded up thousands of suspected leftists – historians say as many as 200,000 – and executed them to prevent them from aiding the invading forces.”

Korean War: More U.S. Massacres in South Korea

The prewar (1946-49) massacres by the U.S.’ South Korean flunkies (sometimes overseen by American officers) were only the warm-up to the wholesale slaughter of Koreans carried out directly by the U.S. military during the Korean War, as American warplanes and troops returned, this time supposedly as “United Nations” forces. In the name of “freedom” and “democracy,” the United States engaged in mass murder in Korea on an industrial scale from 1950 to 1953. This included leveling virtually every city in North Korea with carpet bombing; targeting civilian population centers with firebombs and dropping huge quantities of napalm (jellied gasoline), burning inhabitants to a crisp; executing vast numbers of peasants and “suspected Communists” in cold blood; and deliberately murdering thousands of refugees. This was a policy of mass extermination. The United States wiped out *one fifth of the entire North Korean population* at the time. In addition, Washington prepared to drop scores of atomic bombs on the North and turn the country into a vast radioactive cemetery.

For years, there was a curtain of silence about the massacres in the South. But in 1999, a team of reporters for the Associated Press – Sand-Hun Choe, Charles J. Hanley and Martha Mendoza – published a series of groundbreaking articles laying out in horrific detail a massacre on 26 July 1950 of up to 400 Korean refugees at a bridge outside *No Gun Ri*, near the city of Yongdong.¹ The reports were based on testimony from Korean survivors and from a dozen U.S. soldiers who had participated in or witnessed the slaughter. The reports had a profoundly shocking effect. The Pentagon had been denying this and similar reports for years. At first it claimed that no troops were even in the area of No Gun Ri. But faced with the testimony of a dozen American veterans, it had to backtrack.

¹ The reports were later published as a book by Choe, Hanley and Mendoza, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare From the Korean War* (Henry Holt, 2001).

The AP stories won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. Fifteen months later, the Pentagon issued a report acknowledging that large numbers of civilians were killed by soldiers of the 7th Cavalry Regiment at No Gun Ri, though claiming it was less than 100. Nevertheless, it concluded that the carnage was “not a deliberate killing” but “an unfortunate tragedy inherent to war.”

The right-wing *U.S. News & World Report* tried to discredit the AP story, as did a former 7th Cavalry officer, Robert Bateman, who published a book seeking to refute it. With information from Pentagon records, they focused on one of the vets, Edward Daily, who it turned out had fabricated his story in order to claim benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder.

But the detractors admit that numerous refugees were killed, and cannot explain the testimony of 30 Korean survivors or the eleven other U.S. soldiers who had indelible memories of the massacre. “We just annihilated them,” said ex-machine gunner Norman Tinkler. “It was just wholesale slaughter,” ex-rifleman Herman Patterson told the reporters. Vets reported that a Captain Melbourne Chandler, “after speaking with superior officers by radio, had ordered machine-gunners from his heavy-weapons company to set up near the tunnel mouths and open fire.” “Chandler said, ‘The hell with all those people. Let’s get rid of all of them’” (“War’s hidden chapter: Ex-GIs Tell of Killing Korean Refugees,” AP dispatch, 23 September 1999).

A BBC report on the Korean War quoted 7th Cavalry vet Joe Jackman about No Gun Ri: “There was a lieutenant screaming like a madman, fire on everything, ‘kill ’em all’.... I didn’t know if they were soldiers or what. Kids, there was kids out there, it didn’t matter what it was, eight to 80, blind, crippled or crazy, they shot ’em all.” But this was not the action of some panicked soldiers – *they were acting on orders*. The original AP story quoted retired Colonel Robert Carroll, then a lieutenant, who witnessed aircraft strafing the refugees and then riflemen opening fire on the refugees: “This is right after we get orders that nobody comes through, civilian, military, no-



Long lines of refugees fleeing from Yongdong on 26 July 1950. The day before, hundreds of refugees were massacred by U.S. soldiers and warplanes at bridge at No Gun Ri, eight miles away.

body.” That very morning, July 26, the U.S. 8th Army radioed orders throughout the Korean front that began, “No repeat no refugees will be permitted to cross battle lines at any time.” A day earlier, the headquarters of the Fifth Air Force issued a memo (labeled “Secret”) on “Policy on Strafing Civilian Refugees.” In cold bureaucratese, it read:

“3. The army has requested that we strafe all civilian refugee parties that are noted approaching our positions.

“4. To date, we have complied with the army request in this respect.”

And on July 24, the 1st Cavalry Division HQ sent out an explicit order: “No refugees to cross the front line. Fire everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children.”

The slaughter at No Gun Ri was only one of scores of such mass murders. The slaughter at No Gun Ri was only one of scores of such mass murders. A far larger massacre took place outside the city of *Daejeon* in the first week of July 1950, when South Korean police executed over the space of three days at least 1,800 jailed leftists and other prisoners. Altogether some 4,000 civilians were murdered in Daejeon by the retreating ROK forces. This was known at the time by the top U.S. authorities. Nevertheless, when reports of this atrocity were published by Communist journalists, the United States government denounced them as



USAF aerial photo, from U.S. Department of the Army, No Gun Ri Review [January 2001]

Scene of the crime: railroad bridge where hundreds of South Korean refugees were massacred by U.S. troops on 25 July 1950.

U.S. Army



Some 1,800 South Korean leftists and other prisoners were massacred near Daejeon by the ROK police over the space of three days in July 1950.

“fabrications.” The Pentagon also hid photos of this massacre for half a century by classifying them secret. Even larger numbers of South Korean leftists were executed, an estimated 10,000, in the city of *Busan* (Pusan) during this same period (July-August 1950). Documents show that a U.S. advisor to the ROK military authorized the machine-gunning of 3,500 prisoners in Busan. An extensive presentation of evidence about the Daejeon massacre, using material uncovered by the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Mass Killings in Korea: Commission Probes Hidden History of 1950,” was prepared by the Associated Press and is available on the Internet.

Meanwhile, in the South Korean countryside as well there was a reign of terror. On 26-29 July 1950, U.S. soldiers and planes slaughtered more than 100 people in a massacre at *Chugok* village in Yongdong county. On August 3, the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, Maj. Gen. Hobart Gay ordered a *bridge crossing the Nakdong River* in South Korea blown up in order to stop refugees crossing it. Gay later wrote to a military historian, “up in the air with the bridge went hundreds of refugees.” The same day, 25 miles downstream at the village of *Tuksong-Dong*, army engineers blew up a second bridge over the Nakdong. The detonation “lifted up and turned it sideways and it was full of refugees end to end,” said Leon Denis, one of the engineers (“Other Incidents of Refugees Killed by GIs During Korea Retreat,” AP dispatch, 13 October 1999). More incidents kept coming to light. On 20 January 1951, in *Yungchun* American bombers dropped incendiary bombs at the mouth of a cave, killing 300 local villagers huddled inside. “Earlier that week, 60 miles to the west, another 300 South Korean refugees were killed by a U.S. air attack as they jammed a storage house at the village of *Doon-po*,” the AP journalists reported in a third dispatch (28 December 1999). A colleague reported seeing “the frozen bodies of at least 200 Koreans in civilian clothes” on 26

January 1951 on a road near the village of *Yong-in*.

Infantry massacres, aerial bombing, even the Navy got in on the indiscriminate slaughter. Years later, researchers found records in the National Archives of a massacre on a beach near the southern Korean port of *Pohang*. On 1 September 1950, the destroyer USS *DeHaven* “received orders from the SFCP [shore fire control party] to open fire on a large group of refugee personnel located on the beach,” according to the ship’s log. The ship’s officers questioned the order, but then complied. The AP (13 April 2007) reported: “‘The sea was a pool of blood,’ said Choi Il-chool, 75. ‘Dead bodies lay all over the place.’ Witnesses say 100 to 200 civilians were killed in the Navy

shelling.” On 20 August 1950, a U.S. air attack on 2,000 refugees assembled at *Haman*, near Masan, killed almost 200 (AP dispatch, 3 August 2008). On 10 September 1950, the air force dropped 93 tanks of napalm on *Wolmi Island*, killing 100 or more residents, according to survivors (*International Herald Tribune*, 21 July 2008).

No Gun Ri, Daejeon, Busan, Chugok, Tuksong-Dong, Yungchun, Doon-po, Yong-in, Pohang, Haman, Wilmi Island, the bridge over the Nakdong River: these names should be seared into the collective memory as horrendous massacres committed by U.S. forces in the Korean War. And these are only some of the ones in which 100 or more dead are reported. There are countless others in which dozens and scores were machine-gunned, strafed, napalmed and fire-bombed.

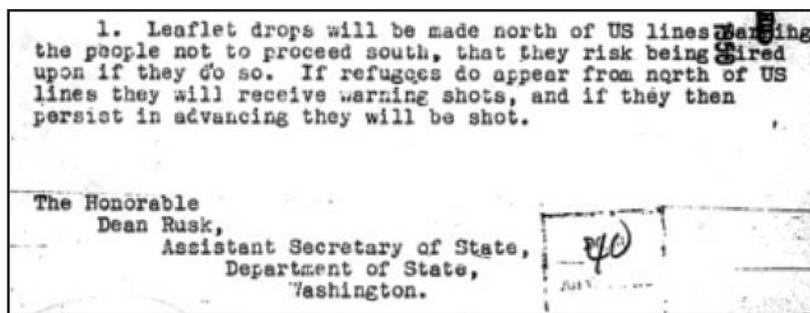
Like the infamous 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam, these were not the actions of some lone lieutenant – they were the result of official policy. In 2006, a former Harvard historian now at the National Archives, Sahr Conway-Lanz, discovered a letter from the U.S. ambassador to Korea, John Muccio, to his superior, Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk, sent the night before the No Gun Ri massacre. It reported on a high-level meeting with military commanders and outlined the policy: “If refugees do appear from north of US lines they will receive warning shots, and if they then persist in advancing they will be shot” (see “U.S. Policy Was to Shoot Korean Refugees,” AP dispatch, 29 May 2006). *So there is not the slightest doubt that the top U.S. military authorities in Korea directly ordered the deliberate killing of non-combatant refugees, an unambiguous war crime, and that this was known by civilian authorities in Washington. Yet no one has ever been tried, or even charged, for this mass murder.*

For decades, right-wing dictatorships in South Korea and the United States government kept a lid on all reports of mass

AP



U.S. president Truman decorates Gen. MacArthur, October 1950. In the background, U.S. ambassador to South Korea John Muccio. MacArthur planned to wipe out North Korea with atom bombs. Muccio sent letter (below) saying it was official policy to fire on refugees.



killings by their armed forces. But in December 2005, under a liberal government in Seoul under President Roh Moo-hyun, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up to investigate mass killings going back to the period of Japanese colonial rule. It had more than 200 wartime cases on its docket. Last summer, it was reported that the Commission had found that “American troops killed groups of South Korean civilians on 138 separate occasions during the Korean War.” But now a right-wing government headed by Lee Myung-bak is in office determined to wrap up the commission without antagonizing the U.S. So with new commissioners in charge, the slaughter was written off as due to “military necessity.” No compensation will be sought or criminal charges filed in 97 percent of the cases brought before the body, and the survivors will get nothing. So much for “truth” and “reconciliation.”

Napalm and Nuke Threats in the North

In the South, the U.S. forces engaged in retail level mass murder, mowing down hundreds of civilians at a time. As the U.S. Army (along with ROK troops and contingents from Britain and Turkey) crossed the 38th Parallel invading the North, they turned to wholesale slaughter of thousands and tens of thousands of North Koreans, treating the entire population as “the enemy.” This was billed as a “limited war” but it was under the command of Gen. MacArthur, who advocated total war against Communism – and had waged it against Japan. Even after he was relieved of his command for insubordination in April 1951, MacArthur’s policies were continued. The preeminent historian of the Korean War, Bruce Cumings, has written:

“The air force dropped 625 tons of bombs over North Korea on 12 August [1950], a tonnage that would have required a fleet of 250 B-17s in the second world war. By late August B-29 formations were dropping 800 tons a day on the North. Much of it was pure napalm. From June to late October 1950, B-29s unloaded 866,914 gallons of napalm.”

–“Korea: Forgotten Nuclear Threats,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition), December 2004

From the outset, the aim was to wipe out every urban center in the North. In his recent book, *The Korean War: A History* (Modern Library, 2010), Cumings notes:

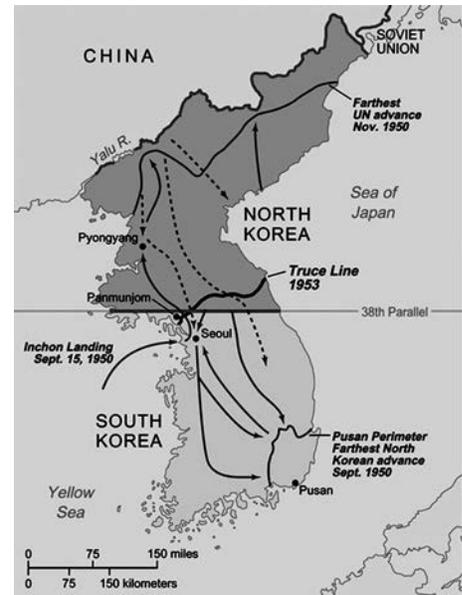
“The United States dropped 635,000 tons of bombs in Korea

(not counting 32,557 tons of napalm), compared to 503,000 tons in the entire Pacific theater in World War II. ... [A]t least 50 percent of eighteen out of the North’s twenty-two major cities were obliterated.”

Responding to apologists for this devastation, Cumings points to the implicit racism behind it: “note the logic: they are savages, so that gives us the right to shower napalm on innocents.”

To comprehend the scope of the destruction of North Korea by U.S. air power, consider some comparisons. In Germany, estimates of the number of civilians killed in the Allied air war range from 305,000 (U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey) to 600,000, out of a total German population of 78 million. The bombing aimed at destroying the Reich’s industrial capacity and breaking morale (which it notoriously failed to do) through sheer terror. (This, from the “democratic” imperialists who today claim to be waging a “war on terror”!). Where the civilian population was targeted with firebombing – notably Hamburg and Dresden – this was widely denounced as war crimes. In Japan, due to racist prejudice the U.S. rulers had fewer compunctions about indiscriminately slaughtering Asian, rather than European (“white”) civilians (see John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* [Pantheon Books, 1986]). Some 100,000 people were killed in a single firebombing raid on Tokyo in March 1945, and more than 200,000 were murdered in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that August. In Japan, estimates of civilian deaths range up to 600,000, out of a total population of 72 million – the same scope as in Germany, but over a much shorter time period of nine months.

In North Korea, in contrast, the U.S. bombing went on for three years, and its purpose was not terrorizing the population, it was *annihilation*. Cumings quotes Curtis LeMay, the architect of the aerial bombing that incinerated Japanese cities (and who later advocated bombing Vietnam “back to the Stone Age”). LeMay says he argued with his Pentagon superiors at the outset to “let us go up there . . . and burn down five of the biggest towns in North Korea.” While there were objections about civilian casualties, he said, in the end “over a period of three years or so . . . we burned down every town in North Korea and South Korea, too.” The number of civilian dead



Napalm bombing of village near Hanchon, North Korea, 10 May 1951. Use of napalm on villages later became infamous in Vietnam, but much more was dumped on North Korea.

in North Korea during the war was over 1 million, and total casualties were 1.5 million-plus, out of a total population at the time of 8-9 million: **almost 20 percent of the population**. Plus another million killed in South Korea.

When the revelations came out about the massacre at No Gun Ri and other cases of mass murder by U.S. forces in South Korea, the ministry of foreign affairs of the DPRK put out a memorandum (21 March 2000) detailing the slaughter carried out by the imperialists in the North. A main target was the capital, Pyongyang, which was 75 percent destroyed by aerial bombing. The memo reported: "During the war, the U.S. aggressors made more than 1,400 air raids on Pyongyang dropping over 428,000 bombs, destroying all industrial establishments, educational, health and public service facilities and dwelling houses and killing many innocent civilians." In just one of those raids, on 11-12 July 1952, U.S. planes dropped over 6,000 napalm bombs, killing some 8,000 people. They also hit other Northern cities repeatedly, including Nampho, Hamhung, Hungnam, Sinuiju and Chongjin, burning them to the ground. Overall, the memo stated, "Napalm and other bombs dropped by U.S. warplanes totaled nearly 600,000 tons, which was 3.7 times the 161,425 tons of bombs they dropped over Japan proper during the Pacific War," although North Korea is only one-third the size of Japan.

While the North's KPA rapidly defeated the South Korean army early in the war (July-August 1950), as soon as the United States reinvaded in force in September (in the guise of a United Nations "police action"), the balance of forces shifted dramatically. In a few weeks, the U.S./"U.N." army pushed the overextended KPA back to the north. But when Americans crossed the partition line at the 38th Parallel on 1 October 1950, the military balance shifted again. China sent a People's Volunteer Army of 1 million troops to aid their North Korean comrades. Under the illusion that they were still advancing, the U.S. Eighth Army launched a "Home by Christmas Offensive" on November 25.

Instead, by December 25 the entire U.S./U.N. force had been pushed out of North Korea. As it retreated, it adopted a scorched earth policy, destroying everything and everyone in its path.

During its brief (October to mid-December 1950) occupation of the North, the U.S. escalated the indiscriminate massacres it had carried out in the South. A museum in *Sinchon*, where the slaughter was particularly intense, documents many of these, including over 1,500 people blown up or burned to death in air raid shelters in the city from October 17 to 20; 2,000 people shot, bayoneted and pushed off *Sokdang Bridge* over a period of three weeks; and another 900 (including 500 women and children) massacred on December 7. Altogether, over 35,000 civilians were killed in the Sinchon region, a quarter of the entire population. Elsewhere, on November 7, they shot to death more than 500 civilians on *Mt. Sudo in Haeju*, and another 600 in *Haugogae valley* in Kumsan. On December 5 in *Sariwon City* they arrested and took 950 inhabitants to Mt. Mara, then machine-gunned them to death. When the U.S. military entered the North Korean capital of *Pyongyang*, they jailed 4,000 civilians and shot 2,000 of them in the prison yard. For a listing of these horrific murders, see the section on the DPRK of the report of the Korea International War Crimes Tribunal (held on 23 June 2001 in New York).

But that's only (some of) what the U.S. *did*. What it was preparing to do was far worse. After MacArthur had been pushed out of the North, on 24 December 1950, the U.S./U.N. commander made a formal request for 38 atomic bombs accompanied by a list of 24 targets, to turn North Korea from a wasteland (which U.S. bombing had already made it) into an uninhabitable moonscape. In posthumously published interviews, MacArthur claimed he had a plan to win the war in ten days: "I would have dropped 30 or so atomic bombs . . . strung across the neck of Manchuria," leaving "behind us – from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea – a belt of radioactive cobalt . . . it has an active life of between 60 and 120 years. For at least 60 years there could

Photos: AFP



Above: U.S. and South Korean forces cross the 38th Parallel, invading North Korea, on 12 October 1950. Below: U.S. forces hightail it back across the 38th Parallel in retreat, on 25 December 1950.



have been no land invasion of Korea from the North.”² Or any human life in Korea north of the 38th parallel.

This was a program for genocide on a scale surpassing Hitler. Was it just bluster from a general known as a braggart? Not at all. On 30 November 1950, President Truman (who had ordered the A-bombing of Japan) threatened in a news conference to use any weapon in the U.S. arsenal. Many considered this a slip of the tongue. It was not. The same day, an order was issued to the Strategic Air Command to prepare to dispatch bomb groups to the Far East with “atomic capabilities.” Earlier,

² Quoted in Bruce Cumings, “Korea: forgotten nuclear threats,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition), December 2004.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff had estimated that atomic bombs could establish “a cordon sanitaire ... in a strip in Manchuria immediately north of the Korean border.” This was exactly MacArthur’s doomsday scenario, minus the cobalt bombs (which didn’t exist).

Cumings reports that “The US came closest to using atomic weapons in April 1951, when Truman removed MacArthur [as commander in chief in Korea].... Truman traded MacArthur for his atomic policies.” In March, the atomic bomb loading operation at the U.S. air base on Okinawa became operational; the bombs were there, and only had to be assembled. On April 5, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered immediate atomic retaliation against Manchurian bases if large numbers of new Chinese forces entered the fighting. That same day, the head of the Atomic Energy Commission began the process of transferring Mark IV nuclear capsules to the Ninth Air Force for use in Korea. Only Chinese restraint apparently stopped this *operational* plan. In June 1951 the JCS again considered using A-bombs, this time for tactical battlefield purposes. And in October 1951, U.S. forces carried out “Operation Hudson Harbor,” a simulated atomic bombing including weapons assembly and sending lone B-29 aircraft from Okinawa to North Korea to drop dummy A-bombs or heavy TNT bombs as a trial run for using nuclear weapons.

Plans for nuking North Korea didn’t stop with the 1953 armistice, which ended the fighting but left tens of thousands of U.S. troops occupying South Korea (29,000 are still there). This past June, on the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, the National Security Archive (a group dedicated to “piercing the self-serving veils of government secrecy”) published a series of documents on planning by the Nixon administration following the North Korean shutdown of a U.S. EC-121 spy plane in April 1969. Code-named “Freedom Drop,” the plan called for “the selective use of tactical nuclear weapons against North Korea,” with warheads ranging from 10 to 70 kilotons each against a dozen airfields. This was hardly abstract: in 1967, the U.S. had 950 nuclear weapons stockpiled in South Korea, in flagrant violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement which banned (in Paragraph 13d) the introduction of any new weaponry. During the 1969 crisis, “nuclear-armed U.S. warplanes stood by in South Korea on 15-minute alert to strike the north” (AP dispatch, 9 October 2010). The plan was eventually shelved after concluding that it would likely lead to all-out war, bringing in the Soviet Union.

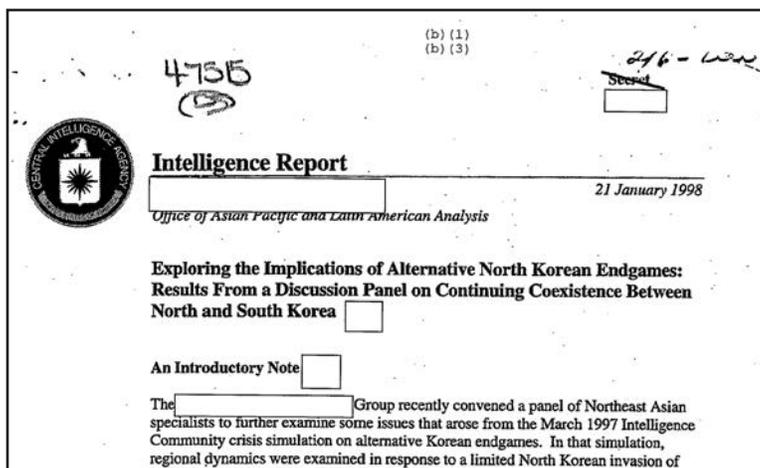
U.S. Imperialists Going for “Endgame” in North Korea?

Again in the 1990s, the Clinton administration considered “surgical strikes” against North Korean facilities after the DPRK threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty³. Ultimately the plan was dropped in favor of negotiation. Why? First, the North Korean army is a formidable force of 1 million soldiers, backed up by another 8 million reservists. It has double the manpower, more armor and substantially more artillery than the South Korean and U.S. forces in the theater. If full-scale fighting broke out, the South Korean capital, located only 35 miles from the Demilitarized Zone, could be pounded to smithereens by well dug-in North Korean artillery. The war would be fought not in the desert like the 1991 attack on Iraq, but in the suburbs or in the center of Seoul, producing millions of refugees and a staggering death toll. Second, even the right-wing South Korean government was not eager for a war. It worried about the tremendous economic cost to it of a collapse of the DPRK. Moreover, some in the ROK military were not adverse to North Korea developing nuclear weapons, figuring they would inherit them in the event of reunification. And an all-out war would likely bring in China on the other side, with untold consequences.

So once again, the U.S. attack plans were archived, but the threat remained. The Clinton administration negotiated an “Agreed Framework,” promising a regular supply of fuel oil and delivery of two light-water reactors in exchange for North Korea abandoning its plutonium enrichment efforts. However, the funds for the reactors were never appropriated, and the oil supply was soon cut off. In response, North Korea began a uranium enrichment program and eventually left the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a toothless pact aimed at keeping a monopoly of mass destruction in the hands of the dominant imperialist powers, mainly the U.S. The DPRK has developed atomic weapons and carried out at least two successful tests, in October 2006 and April 2009. It has a range of short, medium and long-range rockets capable of delivering nuclear warheads. In short, North Korea’s nuclear deterrent exists and is credible. Yet despite this, the South Korean and U.S. rulers have in the last two years sharply stepped up their pressure on the North. Again, the question must be asked: why?

On the U.S. side of the equation, Barack Obama has repeatedly pointed to North Korea as a “threat” that should be focused on. In his 2006 book *Audacity of Hope*, Obama asked, “Why invade Iraq and not North Korea or Burma?” (He later “clarified” this to say he wasn’t advocating invasion of North Korea.) In an article in *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2007), candidate Obama called for a “strong international coalition to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and eliminate North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.... In confronting these threats, I will not take the military option off the table.” Mired in a losing war

³ See our article, “Defend North Korea Against Nuclear Blackmail and War Threats!” *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003 for a detailed analysis.



in Afghanistan, the Obama administration is in no position to wage another war in northeastern Asia. Yet it is systematically stepping up military and economic pressure on the DPRK in the evident belief that “endgame” for North Korea is near.

In South Korea, the relatively liberal governments of Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008) pursued a “sunshine policy” of “engagement” with the North. But after a decade out of office, during which the liberals never dared touch the military, the right returned under President Lee Myung-bak, in the shape of the Grand National Party. This is the political instrument of the military command, which ruled South Korea uninterruptedly until the late 1990s, and the powerful *chaebol* conglomerates (Samsung, Hyundai, LG, etc.) who dominate industry and finance. Lee perfectly embodies this capitalist fusion of militarists and industrialists, having been installed in Hyundai by the dictator-president, Gen. Park Chung-hee. In the 2007 campaign Lee accused his predecessors of “appeasement” of the North. Since coming to office he has shown unremitting hostility to the DPRK, cutting off aid and rattling sabers at every chance. In the summer of 2009, at a meeting of Korean, Japanese and American left-wing trade-unionists, the South Koreans alerted us that following consultations in Washington and Tokyo – about whose results nothing was said publicly – South Korean president Lee had embarked on a course of provocations that could lead to war with the North.

The right-wing regime in Seoul is acting aggressively to push North Korea over the brink, on the supposition that with enough pressure the DPRK will implode. That is what is behind holding provocative South Korean live fire military exercises barely seven miles off the North Korean coast. A “confidential” diplomatic dispatch by the U.S. ambassador to South Korea, Kathleen Stephens, dated 12 January 2009, published by Wikileaks in December 2010, reports that Lee is “quite comfortable with his North Korea policy and ... prepared to leave the inter-Korean relations frozen until the end of his term in office, if necessary. It is also our assessment that Lee’s more conservative advisors and supporters see the current standoff as a genuine opportunity to push and further weaken the North, even if this might involve considerable brinkmanship.” One of those advisors is the former vice foreign minister Chun Yung-woo, who has now been promoted to Lee’s national security advisor.

A Wikileaks cable from Ambassador Stephens (22 February 2010) quotes Chun saying that “The DPRK ... had already collapsed economically and would collapse politically two to three years after the death of Kim Jong-il.” Chun also “claimed [Chinese] Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai and another senior PRC [People’s Republic of China] official from the younger generation both believed Korea should be unified under ROK control,” and that they “were ready to ‘face the new reality’” that “the DPRK now had little value to China as a buffer state.” Chun argued that while China would “not welcome” U.S. forces north of the DMZ, he “dismissed the prospect of a possible PRC military intervention in the event of a DPRK collapse, noting that China’s strategic economic interests now lie with the United States, Japan, and South Korea – not North Korea.”

Saner observers have ridiculed these reports, saying “much of the information in the outed memos amounts to little more than dinner party chatter that reflects outdated opinion or wishful thinking” (Barbara Demick, “Beijing support for Korea reunification not so clear, despite leaked cables,” *Los Angeles Times*, 30 November). For China to stand by as an army of 1 million is removed that is the main obstacle standing between it and front-line U.S. forces, would be militarily suicidal. Moreover, counterrevolution on its doorstep would be a direct threat to the Chinese deformed workers state – something that the imperialists (and quite a few leftists) who think that China has already gone capitalist cannot grasp. China’s refusal to condemn North Korea over the recent incidents, driving Hillary Clinton into a frenzy, show that the Stalinist leaders in Beijing have some grasp of this reality. But the U.S. and its South Korean allies may believe that their chitchat about Chinese acquiescence to a South Korean takeover of the North is accurate, and are acting accordingly. If so, the chances of renewed military aggression against the DPRK have sharply escalated, and with it the danger of a third imperialist world war.

U.S. strategists have often predicted the imminent collapse of North Korea in the past. In 1997, a CIA panel of experts concluded that “the Kim regime cannot remain viable” – due to its deteriorating economic condition – “beyond five years.” (In 2006, the National Security Archive published this paper, “Exploring the Implications of Alternative North Korean Endgames,” and a series of other documents from the Clinton administration under the skeptical title, “North Korea’s Collapse? The End Is Near – Maybe.”) Likewise, an article by Robert Kaplan reported that “Middle- and upper-middle-level U.S. officers based in South Korea and Japan are planning for a meltdown of North Korea” (“When North Korea Falls,” *The Atlantic*, October 2006).⁴ The prevalent opinion among imperialist liberals has for

⁴ Kaplan is not just another liberal journalist. His book, *Balkan Ghosts* (1993), reportedly influenced Bill Clinton’s two wars on Yugoslavia (1995 and 1999). He is currently on the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Board.



Ailing North Korean leader Kim Jong Il (right) and son Kim Jong Un, his heir apparent, with North Korean generals reviewing troops, 10 October 2010.

Xinhua

some time been that the North Korean economy is a shambles, and now that that the ailing Kim Jong Il has introduced his son Kim Jong Un as heir apparent they see a succession crisis. This view is repeated as well by social-democratic reformists such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which writes of North Korea that “its economy is on the edge of collapse” (*Socialist Worker*, 29 November).⁵

The accuracy of this picture is open to question. A number of recent reports from the North indicate that markets are functioning, the population is making do as they have done for years under U.N. sanctions, most consumer goods are domestically produced, and while there are still food shortages they had a fairly good harvest this year. Over the years there have been numerous premature announcements of the impending collapse of North Korea. In fact, the dispatches released by WikiLeaks from 2009 and early 2010 bear an uncanny resemblance to the U.S. diplomatic and intelligence analyses from the last time power changed hands in Pyongyang, in 1994, when Kim Jong Il succeeded his father, Kim Il Sung. And the analysts all agree that the North Korean bureaucracy shows “no signs of losing its political will to stay the course” (CIA analysis, 1998). Unlike the Soviet bloc Stalinists, DPRK leaders can have no illusions that they could emerge as leaders of a capitalist North Korea. They are faced with an economically and militarily powerful capitalist South Korea, whose leaders are bent on revenge – sort of Cuban *gusanos* with state power – and would rather see DPRK leaders shot than make any kind of a deal.

Whether endgame is looming for North Korea is debatable. What is true is that the Stalinist regime ultimately has no way out. What’s posed is a struggle for revolutionary reunification.

⁵ The intellectual godfather of the ISO, Tony Cliff, broke with the Trotskyist Fourth International in declaring the Soviet Union to be “state capitalist” at the onset of the anti-Soviet Cold War, and then in 1950 refusing to defend North Korea against the U.S.-led imperialist forces in the Korean War.

For Revolutionary Reunification of Korea: Political Revolution in the North, Social Revolution in the South

It is impossible to learn anything about North Korea from the bourgeois press, which has demonized the country and the Kim regime like no other. Even serious imperialist publications like the London *Economist* (27 November) write such utter nonsense as, “No government anywhere subjects its own people to such a barbarous regime of fear, repression and hunger.” Similarly for statements like “North Korea is the poorest country in the world.” Like poorer than Somalia? (To the extent that such absurd claims are intended seriously, they are statistical flim-flam, comparing the DPRK, where housing, transportation and food are distributed by social mechanisms, with countries based on a capitalist market. Thus according to the *Economist*, using black market exchange rates, the average North Korean wage in 2008 was *US\$1 a month* – a sheer impossibility.) No one reading this drivel would have a clue that the DPRK is a modern industrial country, where people work in factories and offices, have TV sets and VCRs, live in high-rise apartments, play in parks, ride in subways and on locally manufactured trolleybuses, etc.

And who exactly is subjecting the North Korean population to hunger? In the first place, there are wild claims that 2 million or even 3 million people died (the latter figure from the demonic North Korea-basher Jasper Becker) in famines in the mid-late 1990s. There certainly was widespread hunger at the time, some 60 percent of North Korean children under 5 years of age were underweight. But while the U.S. government’s Centers for Disease Control (CDC) spread blatant lies that that food consumption had fallen to under 1,000 calories a day, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the U.N. estimated the caloric intake at between 2,100 and 2,200: seriously deficient, but hardly mass starvation. As we have written,

“Contrary to imperialist propaganda about the North Korean population being reduced to eating grass, due to food rationing there have been no credible reports of mass starvation, as there certainly would have been in any capitalist country facing similarly drastic food shortages.”

–“U.S. Tries to Starve North Korea Into Collapse,” *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003

Yes, there was a famine and widespread malnutrition in the 1990s, but the reports of millions of North Koreans starving to death are pure invention. The food shortages were the result of a combination of bad weather (severe flooding made much of the limited farmland unusable) and the cutoff of oil supplies and export markets as a consequence of the counterrevolutionary collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea’s main trading partner and source of aid. Prior to that, the DPRK had a productive, highly mechanized agriculture, using tractors and industrial fertilizer. With energy supplies cut off, industrial production shut down and tractors sat idle in the fields. And yes, there was someone deliberately trying to starve the North Korean people: it was U.S. imperialism under Bill Clinton, which cut off delivery of heavy oil supplies the United States was obligated to deliver, in the midst of the brutally cold Korean winter.



AP

U.S. gearing up for its next invasion. U.S. and South Korean military stage dramatic reenactment of 1950 Inchon landing, using 14,000 troops, September 15.

We Trotskyists of the League for the Fourth International are no fans of the Stalinist North Korean regime. As we have written: “The Kim dynasty is surely one of the most bizarre nationalist varieties of Stalinism on the planet. The ‘cult of the personality’ in North Korea rivals that of Stalin or Mao. For sheer capriciousness and intrusiveness the Kims rivaled the Ceausescu family in Romania, although the latter’s bloody downfall was due in good part to its efforts to pay off loans from Western bankers, plunging the country into darkness for lack of energy.” But our opposition to the bureaucratic regime of the Korean Workers Party is the exact opposite of that of the imperialists and their South Korean allies. The latter want to get rid of the Kims and the KWP in order to restore capitalism; in contrast, we warn that the bureaucracy’s attempts to appease the capitalists endanger revolutionary gains.

After years of an “Army First” policy, the DPRK has declared its focus is on building a strong economy and expanding consumer goods production by 2012. But its attempt at an economic reform in November 2008 was a fiasco, wiping out functionaries’ savings with a currency reform which limited the amount that could be exchanged while leaving intact private traders’ hoards of dollars and euros. As a result, the architect of the reform, Pak Nam Ki was reportedly executed by a firing squad after being found guilty of “deliberately ruining the national economy” (*Los Angeles Times*, 25 March). No doubt this was intended by the bureaucracy to show that they took seriously popular discontent over the botched reform, but it does tend to dampen discussion of policy differences if the consequence of having the wrong line means getting shot. One more reason why Trotskyists oppose the death penalty not only under capitalism – where it serves as a measure of racist repression – but also in countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown.

By abolishing capitalist exploitation and establishing a collectivized economy, the DPRK was able to make tremendous strides in recovering from the utter devastation of the Korean War. Pyongyang and other cities were rebuilt from the ground up, with modern housing and facilities. Up to the mid-late 1970s, North Korean workers had a higher standard of living than those south of the DMZ, as Korean capitalists accumulated capital through ruthless superexploitation of South Korean workers under the iron heel of the military regime. But ultimately, as Marx and Engels insisted as long ago as 1847 and as Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stressed from the early 1920s on, it is not possible to build socialism in national isolation from the world (capitalist)

market. A classless society can only be built on the basis of abundance, for otherwise “want is generalized” and some kind of police regime will arise to decide the distribution of scarce goods. That is the origin of the bureaucratically degenerated (in the case of the Soviet Union) and deformed workers states. If “socialism in one country” could not last in the case of the USSR with its vast resources, it certainly won’t work in a tiny half-country like North Korea starved of vital inputs.

That is why the very real gains from the overthrow of capitalism in North Korea – which lay the basis for a rationally planned economy – can only be defended by extending the revolution to the South, and to the industrial powerhouse of imperialist Japan. This requires a *proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy*, whose capricious mismanagement undercuts the social gains in order to protect its privileged status. An authentic, *Leninist-Trotskyist communist party* is needed to establish a regime of egalitarianism and *revolutionary workers democracy*, based on councils (soviets) that can recall officials at any time. In a divided land like Korea, such an upheaval in the North can only succeed if it goes hand in hand with a social revolution in the capitalist South, to break the power of the kill-crazed militarists and expropriate the profit-crazed *chaebols* and other capitalists. A political revolution in Pyongyang would also send a powerful stimulus to the Chinese workers to rise up and smash the growing danger of counterrevolution as capitalist

exploitation takes root and spreads.

Meanwhile, with North Korea having been subjected to countless massacres by the U.S. and its Southern puppets; having already lived through a U.S. *war of annihilation* that engulfed the northern half of the peninsula; and having been repeatedly threatened with nuclear attack by the U.S., it’s hardly surprising that the DPRK should seek to develop nuclear weapons in self-defense, as it has prudently done. As internationalist communists, *Trotskyists defend North Korea’s acquisition of a nuclear deterrent* and emphasize that the current war hysteria makes the *defense of North Korea against imperialism and counterrevolution* all the more urgent. ■



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South Korean workers march against G20 meeting in Seoul, November 11.

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Students and Workers Strike

France: May in October? The Spectre of a New '68



Stéphane Mahe/Reuters

Striking workers block fuel depot in Donges, 15 October 2010.

The Big Obstacle: Pro-Capitalist Union Misleaders and the Now-Reformist “Far Left”

18 OCTOBER 2010—A national “day of action” on October 12 brought 3.5 million French workers and youth into the streets to protest the conservative government’s bill to push back eligibility for retirement and pension benefits. It was the fourth day of nationwide strikes and marches against the pension law since the beginning of September. Although even more came into the streets this time, President Nicolas Sarkozy and his cabinet figured the demonstrations had run out of steam and they could go on to their next anti-working-class “reform.” Big mistake. Instead, worker-student protests continue to mount, along with some heavy-handed repression by the cops. By Friday, after several days of roiling student protests, a police “union” complained (with some exaggeration) of “scenes of urban guerrilla warfare” in cities around the country.

Strikes have continued on the railroads and at the country’s oil refineries. On Friday, riot police dispersed pickets at several fuel depots, only to see the last two refineries walk out in response. Several hundred service stations have run out of gas,

while long lines of motorists are forming to fill up their tanks. The pipeline servicing the Orly and Roissy airports outside Paris closed down and then reopened, although where the aviation fuel is to come from is unclear. Meanwhile, the government is telling airlines to fill up their planes outside France. Ferries to the Mediterranean island of Corsica are not running. And starting Sunday night, the French truckers union called on its members to stage “*operations escargot*” (driving at a snail’s pace to tie up traffic on the main highways), blocking intersections with their rigs and other actions against the pension law everywhere.

A fifth mass mobilization was called for Saturday, October 16. The unions reported that 3 million people participated in 264 marches around France (325,000 in Paris), roughly the same as in the October 2 mobilization. Police estimates claimed that the numbers were slightly less than two weeks ago, but in any case it’s clear the mass protests have not let up. A sixth day of action has been called for Tuesday, October 19, the day before the Senate is scheduled to vote on the pension “reform.”



High school students march in Paris against pension “reform” law, October 12.

This will likely be as large or larger than previous protests, as new sectors join in. So far, despite the radicalization of the protests, media propaganda about “violent” youth and tough talk from government ministers about forcing the law through no matter what, a large majority of the population “support” the strike action (52 percent in a recent poll) or “sympathize” with it (19 percent). But the key question is, what happens next? Some unions are hinting that they will pull out once the law is approved, in order to look “responsible.”

One “day of action” after another will not stop Sarkozy, nor will a few walkouts here and there. By endlessly repeating these tactics, union leaders are actually aiding the government in wearing down protest. What’s urgently needed is to mobilize the entire working class, private and public, in militant strike action to *shut the country down*, beginning with key sectors and leading quickly to a nationwide *general strike until the anti-worker pension “reform” is dropped*. But the attack on pensions is only part of the ruling-class offensive against working people. Students and youth are going into the streets as well to protest the unpaid internships, low wages, precarious jobs and massive unemployment they face. Hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants are demanding legalization, and the government’s racist attacks against the Romany people and French “travelers,” shutting down their camps and carrying out mass deportations, are a taste of the police-state repression it has in store for everyone. The power of the workers movement must be brought out to defend all the exploited and oppressed.

Students Unite with Workers in Struggle

The last week marked a significant change in the protests as the struggle entered its decisive phase. Instead of one-day walkouts continuing strikes were called, notably on the rail system and at refineries. In addition, students and youth mo-

bilized for the first time in significant numbers. On October 12, there were walkouts at over 400 high schools and 90 were totally blockaded. More than 150,000 students participated in the demos. A popular sign read: “Youth toiling in the slave galleys, older people living in poverty, this isn’t the society we want.” In the universities there were assemblies of several hundred students to discuss what action to take. In succeeding days the number of schools “mobilized” rose to 1,000 as student protests spread around France.

The largest were in provincial cities including Toulouse (20,000 marchers), Rennes (7,000), Bordeaux (5,000), Orléans (2,000), Le Havre, Montpellier, Nîmes, Lens and elsewhere. In Paris, several thousand rallied outside the headquarters of the employers association (Medef). A lead banner said, “Neither kids nor puppets,” responding to government claims that they were too young to protest about a pension law and were being manipulated. Students’ signs read (in reference to Sarkozy’s model-wife Carla Bruni), “Carla, we’re like you, the head of state is screwing us too.” A favorite chant: “Sarkozy, you’re screwed, the youth are in the streets.” And: “Put youth to work, send oldsters to the cafés” (“*Les jeunes au boulot, les vieux aux bistrots*”). One protester’s sign put it personally: “Mom and Dad, I’ll get your right to retire at 60 for you.”

Government spokesmen complain about the “irresponsibility” of “bringing 15-year-olds into the streets” for “something that doesn’t concern them.” But students pointed out that as a result of the law, a million potential jobs will be eliminated, as older workers are forced to stay on, aggravating the astronomical (26 percent) youth unemployment. The government, media and trade unions all agree that if the students and youth go out, this fundamentally changes the battle, widening it into a general social conflict rather than a strictly union issue. They recall 2006, when after two months of student strikes,

the right-wing government of Jacques Chirac was forced to withdraw the law for a lower minimum wage for youth (the CPE). Sarkozy remarked, “you have to watch them [the youth] like heating milk on the stove” (i.e., they may boil over). A Paris newspaper (*Libération*, 12 October) wrote: “Experience shows, when you say the youth are in the streets, you’re saying withdrawal of the law is in the cards.”

Police responded to the youth mobilization with heavy-duty tactics in a number of cities. In Montreuil, in the working-class suburban district of Seine-St. Denis outside Paris, cops shot a 16-year-old high school student in the face with a flash-ball gun – a French anti-riot weapon that fires rubber bullets – breaking his cheekbones and detaching his eye from the retina. Several times in recent years, youths have lost an eye when cops shot them point-blank with flash-ball guns. This police provocation only angered the students more and spread the walkouts. A student leader pointed out that the more the government tells youths they don’t belong in the streets, the more they come out. The government poured oil on the fire by sending letters to parents telling them to keep their offspring from demonstrating. This, too, backfired. The main parent-teacher association, FCPE, issued a statement denouncing police running amok and calling for parents to join the student demonstrations to stand in the way of clashes with the “forces of order.”

Key to a Fight for Victory: A Revolutionary Program

At present, “public opinion” is running heavily against Sarkozy. Three-quarters of the population is opposed to the pension “reform” and 54 percent said they wanted “the unions to organize a general strike as in 1995” to force the government to back down. On October 13, *Le Monde* headlined an article on its web site, “What’s needed is an insurrectional general strike,” quoting a retired woman trade-unionist. One recently publicized survey reported that a quarter of French youth agree that “it’s necessary to radically change the social order by revolutionary action” (up from 6 percent in 1990). So the “radicalization” of the struggle is not simply in terms of tactics. In the face of the most severe capitalist economic crisis since the 1930s – a new Depression, in fact – and the evident impotence of the usual trade-union protests, we are seeing renewed receptivity to calls for class struggle and even revolutionary agitation. This is what the ruling class and its labor lieutenants are deathly afraid of in the battle over pensions.

It will take more than massive strikes “like in 1995” to bring Sarkozy to his knees. In December of that year, a series of millions-strong mobilizations of public sector workers along with continuing walkouts by rail, metro, postal, gas, telephone and other public workers, brought France to the brink of a general strike. But the union tops were afraid to call it. Eventually, Prime Minister Alain Juppé dropped his “reform” of public sector pensions (which would raise the number of years service to 40) but not his attack on social security, which has led to years of cuts in France’s public health system. With its chants of “*tous ensemble*” (all out together) the 1995 struggle infused new spirit in a trade-union movement shaken



Libération

“Carla, we’re like you, the head of state is screwing us too.” Paris, October 16.

by counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe. But it did not provide a revolutionary program to combat the bourgeois offensive. In 2003, Chirac was able to push through the rest of the Juppé Plan on public sector pensions, aided by the defection of the leadership of the CFDT union federation.

If 1995 doesn’t provide a model, no one in France, least of all government and trade-union leaders, can help recalling 1968 – particularly since the entry of large numbers of student youth onto the scene. Last week, as high-school protests spread, Olivier Besancenot, the young postal worker who ran for president on the ticket of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and is now (since the LCR dissolved) the main spokesman for the “New Anti-Capitalist Party” (NPA), issued a statement calling “For a New May ’68.” The reference to the 1968 student-worker revolt that brought France to the brink of revolution and sent shock waves around the world produced a chorus of yelps from supporters of the conservative government. But while the so-called “far left” races to catch up with the student-youth protesters, there are problems with this call. First and foremost, the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy stands in the way of any serious radicalization of the struggle. They’re looking for the exit, for a way out without losing face.

Many union leaders are privately worrying to the press about the participation of youth. *Libération* (16 October) quoted the head of one labor federation saying, “It’s a real pain to manage the youth ... it will take some time to separate them.” A CGT leader remarked, “We didn’t ask them to come out,” but said it’s probably better they are there, while worrying about “security.” Another union leader complained of “things getting out of hand and the violence discrediting the movement, turning off public opinion.” And the more right-wing union tops, notably of the



“Youth toiling in the slave galleys, older people living in poverty, this isn’t the society we want.” Youth demonstrate in Strasbourg, October 12.

CFDT and UNSA, have hinted that once the law is passed by the Senate, “other forms of action” will be called for – “in other words, the end of the movement,” as *Le Monde* (17 October) put it. They may hesitate to break ranks; Jean-Claude Mailly of Force Ouvrière may invite youth into FO contingents; Bernard Thibault of the CGT and François Chérèque of the CFDT may do their unity dance; but ultimately the union bureaucracy will bow to the pressure of the bourgeoisie, for they are all committed to working in the framework of capitalism.

Meanwhile, the once-upon-a-time far left that came out of May ’68 has long-since become thoroughly reformist. In the recent protests, groups like Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle) and the NPA did *not* initially call for a general strike (LO still doesn’t), but only for massive participation in the marches. As students joined in this month, one of their main chants was for a “general strike until the law is withdrawn.” So now the NPA and unions it influences (notably Sud-Rail, Sud-Éducation and the Solidaires union federation) are calling for “extendable strikes until victory.” But what do they mean by “victory,” withdrawal of the law, or just some changes? When they’re

feeling pressure from the students, they sometimes call for an “extendable general strike” (*grève générale reconductible*). In other words, one that isn’t limited to a single day, which amounts to a big parade combined with work stoppages in places where the unions are strong. But to call a general strike without a clear objective, voting daily on whether to continue, is to ask for defeat. Like the bureaucrats’ endless “days of action,” it’s a pressure tactic.

The kind of tame parades that have taken place repeatedly in the last year in France, Spain and particularly Greece are hardly general strikes, which as Leon Trotsky pointed out, pose the question of who is the master of the house, *which class shall rule?* Naturally, the reformists and pro-capitalist union bureaucrats have no desire to raise the struggle to that level, because they have no intention of fighting for power, for workers revolution. Thus everyone from the union tops to the “anti-capitalist” left are dead-set opposed to a real general strike, which they dismiss as “unrealistic,” “dreaming” (a “*rêve générale*,” a general dream) and the like. But the reformist ex-“far left” is caught in a bind: they are afraid to raise slogans too far out in front of what the CGT-FO-CFDT-UNSA union tops find acceptable, yet if they lag too far behind the students, they risk losing their potential recruits. So they try to find somewhere in between.

That hardly amounts to revolutionary leadership that can prepare people for the struggle that is posed. Instead, these tailist politics will “lead” protesters into a dead end. Even the bourgeois press knows perfectly well what should be, and isn’t being, done. An editorial in *Libération* (14 October) referred to the “phony strike,” pointing out that the union leaders are fighting against a bill but not calling for it to be withdrawn, that while the marches are huge the actual strikes are limited to a few sectors, not including some of the historically most militant. “One could imagine a ‘proxy’ strike, led by a minority but valiant vanguard” (meaning, militants could set up strike pickets that other workers would not cross). “Rail workers are ready, on paper, to open the way by blocking the rails. But they are not candidates to be kamikazes for the social movement.” (Rail workers are mainly organized in the CGT, influenced (but no longer tightly controlled) by the Communist Party, and in the “far left” SUD-Rail.)

For this struggle to win a real and lasting victory, it is necessary to raise not just vague “anti-capitalist” demands but to put forward a *transitional program* leading toward socialist revolution. A serious struggle for a real general strike would call for the formation of *elected strike committees*, as a way to wrest control from the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats. Because of the division of the union movement into several competing labor federations, serious strikes often produce joint coordinating committees on the local or regional level. At the time of the last big truckers strike, *Le Monde* (5 November 1997) noted that in 1992, “the unions lost control of the movement to spontaneous coordinating committees and ‘*jusque’au-boutists*” (those who want to “go all the way”). Strike committees elected by the ranks of all the federations as well as non-members would be greatly strengthened, and would be a real step toward industrial unionism.



Students join with workers outside Renault auto factory at Billancourt, 17 May 1968.

To strengthen ties between labor and youth and mobilize the heavily immigrant working-class *banlieues* (suburbs), class-struggle trade-unionists should fight not only to stop the pension “reform” law, but also for a drastically *shortened workweek, at no loss in pay*, to provide jobs for all. They should fight the explosion of temporary jobs and “disposable” workers by demanding *job security and equal rights for all workers*, from the moment they begin working. And they should mobilize union power to demand an *end to expulsions of the Roms*; to block the destruction of their camps, including with *workers defense guards*; and to demand *freedom of travel and full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. A number of leaders of the CGT, CFDT and FO union federations as well as spokesmen for the NPA have signed a “citizens’ appeal” in defense of the Roms (which, however, upholds “republican security” and the “necessary respect for public order”). Yet on October 12, the same day that the National Assembly voted the racist Bresson immigration and nationality law, this was hardly (if at all) mentioned by the various union *and far left* groups in their leaflets and signs in the protest over the pension law.

A *Libération* article talked of elements of a “pre-revolutionary situation” today, and a quote from Lenin on the role of the youth in revolution was highlighted. But when a reformist like Besancenot of the NPA talks of a “new ’68,” in good part he is engaging in the old French sport of “*épater le bourgeois*” (throwing a scare into the bourgeoisie), as Baudelaire put it. In contrast, the former *soixantehuitard* (68er) Daniel Cohn-Bendit dumped cold water on talk of a new ’68, or even a general strike. Instead, “Danny the Green,” now a respectable deputy in the European parliament, called on the unions to organize “a Grenelle together with the left.” (In 1968, the Grenelle Agreement between the union tops and De Gaulle’s prime minister George Pompidou was massively *rejected* by the striking workers!) May 1968, when students joined with up to ten million workers in a general strike which went on for more than two

weeks, is definitely a point of reference. The situation today is different in many ways, particularly coming in the middle of a deep capitalist economic crisis. But this only heightens the revolutionary potential. The real problem with this call is that *May ’68 was defeated*. The reformist Communist Party clambered on board the general strike to put an end to the agitation, and the “far left” did not have the revolutionary program to fight them.

In 1968, rather than agitating for workers control and occupation of factories throughout the country, as Trotsky called for in the mid-1930s and as had already begun in mid-May, Ernest Mandel and his followers in the JCR (Revolutionary Communist Youth) joined with left social democrats in calling for “anti-capitalist structural reforms” and “self-management.” Other pseudo-Trotskyists such as the followers of Pierre Lambert abandoned the barricades at the height of struggle, and Lutte Ouvrière limited itself to the same-old, same-old of factory-based struggles, while lambasting students for “fighting in the streets”! (Today, LO’s main banner reads, “What a Parliament Decides Can Be Reversed in the Streets.” Yes, but how?) A genuinely communist leadership would be calling for a defensive general strike against the Sarkozy government’s attack while putting forward the perspective “a new May ’68 that goes all the way” to a struggle for power, for workers revolution. And key to that struggle is forging an authentically Leninist-Trotskyist workers party. ■

For Unconditional Release of Everyone Arrested in the Protests – Drop the Charges!

Over the last several weeks, police have responded to high school demonstrations against the pension law with ferocious repression. Some thousands of youth have been detained and hundreds arrested on the accusation of being “casseurs” (smashers). Many of those detained are youth of immigrant origin from the suburbs, who are always the target of racist attacks by the cops, and who are referred to in the bourgeois press as the “other youth.” The real casseurs are the police, the armed fist of capital and professional anti-worker repressors. We say: police out of the unions! ***The workers movement must demand immediate and unconditional release of all the detained and dropping of all charges. Down with the “Republican” racist repression!***

French Battle Over Attack on Pensions Continues

To Drive Out Sarkozy & Co. Fight for Power to the Workers



Claude Platiau/Reuters

Union demonstration outside the French Senate, Paris, October 20. What's needed is to bring to bear the power of the workers in a general strike to block the economy and defeat Sarkozy's anti-working-class offensive.

PARIS, 26 October 2010 – In the last week, the battle lines in the conflict over the conservative government's pension "reform" law have hardened. On Tuesday, October 19, once again some 3.5 million people responded to the call of unions, striking and demonstrating in cities around France in the sixth "day of action" in the last seven weeks. In some places, such as Toulouse, the marches were the largest yet. Meanwhile, the two-week-old strike of French refineries and the blockade of fuel depots are beginning to bite. Despite government imports of 100,000 tons of fuel a day, a third of France's 12,000 service stations have run out of fuel. And while the number of passenger trains has been cut in half by strikes on the SNCF, the national railways, rail transport of freight has been slashed by 90 percent while go-slow actions by the truckers unions have tied up major highways. As a result, a number of key industries are running out of supplies. Yet public support for the strikes and protests is still overwhelming.

The response of the President Nicolas Sarkozy has been to crack the whip. On government orders, the Senate shut off debate on the pension "reform" just as opposition Communist and

Socialist parties were presenting amendments. Its passage on Friday evening [October 22] was pre-ordained, given Sarkozy's presidential majority in both houses. The final law, combining Senate and National Assembly versions, may be voted as early as today. While ramming the bill through parliament, the government ordered the CRS riot police to dissolve strikers' blockades around the fuel depots. At the Grandpuits oil refinery about 100 km. outside Paris, the departmental prefect (an agent of the national government) requisitioned strikers to get the fuel supplies moving. On Friday morning, riot cops attacked the pickets, injuring three strikers. When a judge ruled this military measure illegal, for violating the constitutional right to strike, the prefect simply issued a second requisition order. Yet while fuel stocks are drawn down, no additional amounts are being produced by the struck refinery.

This has been the first time since the 1968 general strike that all of France's refineries have stopped production. Moreover, oil imports at the Mediterranean ports of Marseille and Fos-sur-Mer have been halted since dock workers there went

on strike at the end of September over the government's privatization plans

**Build a Revolutionary Workers Party
on the Program of Lenin and Trotsky**

Laurent Cipriani/AP



Gendarmes arrest youth during protests against pension law in Lyon, October 19.

which threaten their jobs. (Simultaneously, Marseille garbage workers struck for the last two weeks.) Car owners consult Internet sites desperately looking for stations that still have fuel. Yet despite the inconvenience, public support is strong: a survey on Saturday, October 23 showed fully 69 percent in favor of the strikes and protests even after the Senate passed the law. French working people understand that the pension “reform” is a frontal attack on their living standard and indeed way of life. A big majority have come to despise Sarkozy for his high-handed measures, his cavalier treatment of parliamentary opposition, his brutal repression, his catering to the rich and contempt for the common people. One of the most expressive photos of last week was a sign in a demonstration of high school students, “Stop with the Contempt.” Another read: “Take a Good Look at Your Rolex, It’s the Hour of Revolt!”

Millions have had it with Sarkozy, and this *raz-le-bol* (roughly, being fed up) is a major factor fueling the protests. Last summer, there was a huge scandal because his labor minister, Eric Woerth, had proposed Liliane Bettencourt, heiress of the L’Oréal fortune and the second richest person in France, for the Legion of Honor just when she was revealed (on a tape recorded by her butler!) talking with her financial advisors about how to avoid \$100 million in taxes by sending money to Swiss banks, and making illegal payments to key politicians, notably in Sarkozy’s party, the UMP. One of Bettencourt’s main financial advisors was none other than Woerth’s wife, while the labor minister himself was treasurer of the UMP and organizer of his quarterly meals with rich supporters at the three-star Hotel Bristol. Yet this didn’t stop the president from having Woerth present and defend the pension law to parliament. Everyone could see that Sarkozy was catering to the rich while stealing workers’ retirement.

According to Saturday’s poll, 70 percent of the French

public is dissatisfied with Sarkozy’s performance, the highest figure for rejection of any president since General Charles De Gaulle founded the Fifth Republic in 1958. The *Journal du Dimanche* (24 October) published the survey under the headline, “An Anti-Sarkozy Movement.” But this doesn’t faze him. The French president fancies himself like De Gaulle as a “savior” of the bourgeois nation against the forces of disorder and dissolution, and presents the battle over pensions as the opening of his campaign for reelection in 2012. He wants to be known as having the “courage” to enact an unpopular law, that is, thwarting the democratic will of the majority. Sarkozy’s bonapartist appetites are notorious, and in many ways he imitates the style of Berlusconi

in Italy – although, so far, without the neo-fascist squads and Lega Nord thugs. Those he intends to pick up by grabbing the electoral base of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s fascist National Front, which is a major reason behind his “security” offensive and racist repression against the Roms, and immigrants generally.

Many bourgeois commentators have asked incredulously why high school students take to the streets and youth of immigrant origin from the working-class suburbs invade the elegant city centers to protest a law about pensions, and why the mobilizations keep up even though they have almost no chance of success in the usual terms of parliamentary politics. Sarkozy has made it clear he will not back down no matter what, and with his “presidential majority” he has the means to ensure that. This arrogance is a good part of the reason why Sarkozy has earned the kind of massive and deep hatred among French working people and particularly the youth that U.S. president George W. Bush had in the last years of his presidency. But while this has swollen the ranks of demonstrators, and helps explain why weeks of mobilizations and strikes have not diminished popular support for the protests, it also has the potential to undercut the very real possibility of winning a genuine victory. Why? Because rather than bring strike battle to a head, the reformists (including the so-called “far left”) are looking to electoral politics.

The Socialist Party (PS) in particular wants to channel the protests into the 2012 elections. Its leaders march in, and even at the head of the mobilizations, but don’t want them to “go too far.” And they waffle on the substance of Sarkozy’s attack on workers’ pension rights: they are for a “reform,” just not his. PS first secretary Martine Aubry last January at first accepted the proposal to raise the retirement age to 62, then backed down ten days later, promising to restore the right to retire at 60 if Sarkozy took it away. Now she has once again put

this pledge in question. A leading contender for the Socialist presidential nomination is International Monetary Fund head Dominique Strauss Kahn, whose IMF earlier this month issued a report backing the French government's pension "reform" – for which minister Woerth effusively thanked him. Strauss-Kahn is an actual bourgeois figure in this social-democratic bourgeois workers party that has followed Tony Blair's "New Labour" in abandoning its support for the "welfare state" and increasingly distancing itself from the labor movement. Bottom line: if the PS returns to office in 2012, French workers will have to work longer to get the right to retire, just as under Sarkozy.

There is a long history in France of reformist misleaders holding back struggles, and then some time later claiming victory when they get a turn in office managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie for a few years. The 1968 general strike was sold out, but De Gaulle ended up resigning (handing the presidency over to his prime minister Georges Pompidou). When in 1981 Mitterrand finally became president, this was hailed as a belated victory for the '68ers. But the popular-front coalition led by the refounded Socialist Party in conjunction with minor bourgeois parties like the Left Radicals fully supported NATO in its imperialist drive against the Soviet Union and carried out *dirigiste* (capitalist state planning) economic policies similar to those of its conservative predecessors. After the 1995 mobilizations only partially stopped Prime Minister Alain Juppé's pension "reform" plan, the election of Socialist Leonel Jospin as president two years later was again hailed by the reformists. Yet Jospin's policies were just as "neo-liberal" as those of his conservative predecessors and successors, and under the Socialist-led bourgeois coalition government France fully supported NATO's 1999 war on Yugoslavia.

Sabotaging struggles in the factories and on the streets so that they are defeated and then channeling the discontent into the swamp of parliamentary politics is a main purpose of *popular fronts*, which organizationally chain the workers movement, along with other movements of the oppressed, to sections of the bourgeoisie. In 1968, the French Communist Party wanted to call off the general strike in order to build support for a popular front on a "common program," with Mitterrand as its potential leader. In Mexico today, the struggles of the electrical workers and miners against union-busting attacks by the government of Felipe Calderón have been limited to petitioning Congress and begging the Supreme Court, and are now subordinated to the 2012 election campaign of a popular front around Andrés Manuel López Obrador. In a different



"Down with the Contempt." Sign in a demonstration by high school students in Paris, October 21.

AFP



"Take a Good Look at Your Rolex, It's the Hour of Revolt!" Sign at demonstration in Lyon, October 19.

Stéphane Maher/Reuters

context in the United States, leftist organizers tied protests against the invasion of Iraq to the Democratic Party via a popular-front antiwar "movement," feeding into the election of Barack Obama, who then continued the U.S. occupation of Iraq and escalated the war on Afghanistan.

The current struggle in France presents tremendous possibilities for a revolutionary break with bourgeois politics and trade-union reformism, which is a dead-end in this epoch of capitalist decay where genuine reforms in the interest of the working people are no longer possible and past gains are being systematically ripped up. What's needed is a revolutionary leadership to defeat the politics of class collaboration and lead the way forward on the road of class struggle. This not only means breaking with the Socialists, but also with the Communist Party (PCF) which has been pushing the Left Front as the core of a new popular front. The most prominent

Bob Edme/AP



Despite police action to remove blockades, the refineries strike could have shut down the capitalist economy. Above: fuel depot at Bassens, near Bordeaux.

presidential hopeful for this front is Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the head of the Left Party (PG), which split from the Socialists after the last election. Mélenchon's politics borrow liberally from the rhetoric of Latin American nationalist populists like Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Ecuador's Rafael Correa, taking over the latter's slogan for a "citizens' revolution." In terms of French politics, he describes himself as "a child of the Common Program" of Mitterrand's NATO popular front (see *Libération*, 20 October).¹

Mélenchon's Left Party has largely eclipsed the so-called "far left" formations, the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) and Lutte Ouvrière (L.O.), whose 2006 presidential vote scores were a flash in the pan and have since dwindled to a little over 1 percent. While occasionally saying that a general strike would be nice, the thrust of the NPA's position in the present struggle is to simply keep on mobilizing. Thus the 14 October issue of the NPA's paper *Tout Est À Nous* argued that "it is necessary to prolong the mobilization with extendable strikes where possible but also by all forms of capable of bringing together the largest number [of people]." (No general strike in that issue.) The 21 October issue of *TEAN* headlines, "Victory Is Possible!" gushing:

"In a few days the climate has changed. It's a turning point!

You can sense everywhere that it could tip over, that the mobilization could carry it off, that there is a chance to be seized upon: that it is possible to win....

"It is a social and political crisis, a deep-going movement

¹ Mitterrand, the model for both the "leftist" Mélenchon and the rightist Socialist Strauss-Kahn, was the French Socialist president in the 1980s and early '90s, who in an earlier incarnation was a perennial bourgeois minister during the Fourth Republic, notoriously in charge of the interior ministry (i.e., police repression) at the outbreak of the Algerian war for independence. This supposed socialist started out his political career as an official in the Nazi-collaborationist regime of Marshal Philippe Pétain during World War II.

demanding the resignation of Sarkozy, [Prime Minister François] Fillon and the other Woerths! They should give in or get out!"

Meanwhile, according to today's *DirectMatin*, NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot, "who has had to ... put a damper on his call for 'a new May '68,' has proposed a summit meeting of the left parties," an open door for a new popular front. But this also has gone nowhere.

From a battle to stop an attack on workers' rights, these "anti-capitalists" are now posing it as a "movement" calling for resignation of the government. To be replaced by what? Another capitalist government. The NPA's sometime talk of an "extendable general strike" and a "new May '68" is just that – talk to keep any

radicals and would-be revolutionaries in its ranks content. When the former LCR abandoned its last pretenses to "communism" and "revolution" by dissolving and reinventing itself as the NPA; when it ditched references to the dictatorship of the proletariat in favor of (bourgeois) "democracy," when NPA spokesman Besancenot says he is anything but an admirer of Lenin and Trotsky, at least they are being consistent with their actual program of "reforming" capitalism. But seeking to reform the unreformable – a system based on exploitation of workers, racist repression and imperialist war – is a ticket for defeat.

It's clear that Sarkozy, Fillon, Woerth & Co. are not about to give in or get out. Nor can the present mobilizations do the job: endless marches, even if they are extended (a seventh "day of action" is scheduled for Thursday, October 28, and an eighth for November 6), will eventually run out of steam. With his command of the machinery and tremendous resources of the capitalist state, the hardline rightist president will either try to wait them out or to crush them. Yes, it is possible to bring down a bourgeois regime, especially one as widely hated as this one, *but this can only done by driving it out through sharp class struggle* leading to a fight for a workers government. Simply replacing one bourgeois government with another anti-working-class regime, even if it is decked out in "left" clothing, is no victory.

A real general strike requires solid preparation for a confrontation with the capitalist state. To be successful, even at the level of a defensive struggle, it must become a proletarian counteroffensive, raising transitional demands – from a shorter workweek with no loss in pay to workers control – that are not vaguely "anti-capitalist" but incompatible with capitalism, posing a struggle for socialist revolution. Breaking with reformism and popular-frontism to begin the arduous task of forging the nucleus of a Trotskyist vanguard party of the working class to lead that struggle is the key task in France today. ■

For Independence and a Socialist Federation of the Antilles!

Guadeloupe on Strike!

PARIS, 27 October 2010 – Today's papers report on a strike and protest in France's Caribbean colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyane. According to the accounts, the demonstrations were largest in Guadeloupe, where a historic 44-day general strike took place in February-March 2009. This time, some 20,000 demonstrators came out in the capital of Guadeloupe, Pointe-à-Pitre, according to the unions (6,500 according to the police), in response to the appeal of the Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon (LKP – Collective Against Super-exploitation), and it was mainly public sector workers such as the post office that struck. The main demands of the mobilization were for carrying out the settlement reached at the end of the 2009 strike, named after Jacques Bino, a trade-unionist shot to death on the eve of that strike.

The Bino Accords called for a wage increase of 200 euros a month for the lowest-paid category of workers, as well as for controls on inflation for basic necessities, most of which (including foodstuffs) are imported and cost much more than in metropolitan France, even though income levels are at least 50 percent lower. According to Élie Domota, the spokesman of the LKP and general secretary of the General Union of Guadeloupe Workers (UGTG), the government has tried to shortchange the agreed-upon wage increases. Moreover, the employers' association, the Medef, representing the local ruling class descended from the white settlers (known in Creole as *békés*), who own a number of sugar refineries and superstores such as Carrefour, refused to sign the agreements in the first place.

In the union-led mobilization yesterday, demonstrators sang the theme song of the 2009 general strike, "*La Gwadeloup sé tan nou, la Gwadeloup a pa ta yo*" (Guadeloupe belongs to us, it doesn't belong to them). While the militancy and consciousness of that struggle remains, the March 2009 Bino accords have remained pretty much a dead letter. A commission was set up to oversee the implementation of the accords, but it hasn't met since November 2009 and government officials refuse to even talk with representatives of the LKP. If there is no change by December 5, Domota declared, an open-ended general strike will begin on December 14.¹ The LKP supports the struggle of French unions against the pension "reform" law, Domota said, but he would rather have

¹ On December 14-15, the LKP held a two-day work stoppage protesting the failure to implement the 2009 accords and announcing an "Operation to Root Out Superexploitation" in early 2011.



Demonstrators in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe during October 26 [2010] strike and mobilization called by LKP demanding implementation of accords that ended historic 44-day general strike in 2009.

seen a ten-day strike against it than ten separate "days of action."

In an interview published in today's *L'Humanité*, Domota called the LKP "an anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist organization." The popular-front-type coalition is led by the UGTG, which calls for independence for Guadeloupe, and includes the CGTG union federation (historically linked to the Communist Party and headed since 2002 by Jean-Marie Nomertin, a supporter of Lutte Ouvrière), CFDT, F.O., and a host of petty-bourgeois nationalist political and cultural groups. The LKP's demands include the right to use Creole in official matters. Recently, judges refused to hear union officials in their own language after being arrested in protests. "It's as if we were back in the days of the Code Noir [the Black Code, which held sway in French colonies prior to the abolition of slavery in 1848] when you couldn't speak, sing or express yourself in your own culture without the permission of the master," commented Domota.²

In Guadeloupe, after upsurges of nationalist struggle following the massacre of dozens of workers in May 1967 and in the mid-1980s, overtly anti-colonial protests died down. In 2003, a referendum on increased autonomy for local governments was defeated. However, Guadeloupe and Martinique remain colonies, and pro-independence unions have increased their strength – mainly the UGTG, which has majority support, but also the CTU (United Workers Federation). Even the Guadeloupe Communist Party (PCG) calls for "support for independence for the

² Since this article was written, the LKP issued a statement on November 6 calling for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. A public meeting sponsored by the Guadeloupe Collective to Support Mumia was held on November 3 and addressed by Jacky Hortaut of the French Unitary National Collective "Together We Will Save Mumia Abu-Jamal."

people of Guadeloupe.” PCG general secretary Alain Flémin told a gathering in Cuba last year, “France tries to make-believe that Guadeloupe is not a colony but a French department. Our people has never been consulted about its political status and therefore has not been able to exert its right to self-determination” (*Pambazuka News*, 4 June 2009). The supporters of Lutte Ouvrière, are more reticent, saying only that “workers will not counterpose their own goals to anti-colonial and national aspirations, if they appear” (*Combat Ouvrier*, 18 April 2008). How big of them!

One group that explicitly does *not* call for independence for France’s Caribbean colonies is the Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF, part of the International Communist League). In an article on the 2009 general strike, the LTF claims that it “would be in favor of independence” *but* ... “we do not currently call for independence for Guadeloupe and Martinique, notably because the large majority of the population is currently opposed” to it (*Le Bolchévique*, March 2009). To back this up it cites a poll published in *Le Figaro Magazine*. So the position of these intrepid would-be Trotskyists depends on opinion polls, or perhaps a colonial referendum! The LTF says it is against “‘unconditionally’ imposing a separate state on a people.” This is a red herring. Just who is proposing to “impose” independence on the Antilles islands? The French government? Hardly. Leftists? Absurd. This “argument” is a cynical justification for its failure to oppose colonial rule.

The LTF is not alone. In fact, during a visit of Ségolène Royal in 2007, a local nationalist group asked the former Socialist Party presidential candidate how is it that she calls for independence for Quebec, but not for Guadeloupe? The LTF has the same policy as Royal. And while the question of independence for Québec, an oppressed nation in a multi-national state (Canada), is greatly influenced by the actual state of opinion, Guadeloupe and Martinique are *colonies*. Genuine Trotskyists and Leninists are duty-bound to oppose colonial rule anywhere and everywhere, and to support national independence from the imperial power. Once upon a time, the LTF called for “Immediate, total and unconditional independence for Guadeloupe, Martinique and the other French colonies” (*Le Bolchévique*, September 1985). But that was when it upheld revolutionary Trotskyism and before it discovered a supposed qualitative regression of workers’ consciousness, which it now uses as a “theoretical” excuse for its own opportunism.

Refusing to call for independence of France’s colonies is a betrayal of the class interests of the proletariat and a capitulation to imperialism. So was the abandonment in 1998 by the ICL’s U.S. section, the Spartacist League, of its previous call for independence for Puerto Rico (see “ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence,” *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998). It only takes one more step to go from this “socialist” toleration of colonialism to outright support for imperialist invasion, as the ICL did in backing the U.S.’ “humanitarian” occupation of Haiti following the earthquake last January. After three months of loudly accusing the Internationalist Group of “nationalism” because we demanded that all U.S. troops get out of Haiti, the ICL did an about-face and admitted that its line was a betrayal, that we were right to call it “social-imperialism,” and that it had lied about the aims and actions of the U.S. military and even about the ICL’s own position (see the ICL’s 27 April 2010 confession, “A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism”).

The class struggle is not like the Catholic church where you can confess to your sins and a priest grants you absolution. Who can trust a “leftist” group that supports an imperialist invasion, and then lies about it? Today the LTF argues that, “in Guadeloupe and Martinique the crucial task is to break the hold of nationalist false consciousness.” The is a key task, but what about the *struggle against the national oppression inherent in colonial status*?

That oppression is very real and concrete. After the 2009 general strike, the French government charged Domota in court of fomenting racial hatred for saying that “we will not let the *békés* reestablish slavery.” Why did he say that? Because a leading spokesman for the *béké* bosses, Alain Huyghes-Despointes, said in a TV interview broadcast in February 2009 that “Historians only speak about the negative sides of slavery, which is regrettable,” adding that *békés* “want to preserve the [white] race.” Currently, the police are demanding DNA samples from unionists arrested during demos and strikes, as if they were criminals...or escaped slaves.

The LTF and ICL have formally repudiated their admitted social-imperialist support for U.S. occupation of Haiti. Will they renounce their social-colonialist refusal to call for independence for Guadeloupe and Martinique? Don’t hold your breath.

To be sure, supporting independence of French colonies is no be all and end all. Some petty-bourgeois Guadeloupe nationalists adopt a frankly chauvinist hostility to Haitian refugees, who constitute as much as 10 percent of the island’s population. Some no doubt support independence because they want to reap the profits of the superexploitation of Guadeloupe workers. And while the UGTG and other *indépendantiste* unions have waged sharp class struggles (as in 2009), they do not advocate socialist revolution.

If many in Guadeloupe do not favor independence today it is because they rightly fear that under capitalism it would mean increased poverty, as they see in other small islands around them. Does this mean we abandon the call for independence? Not at all. Trotskyists, who stand for proletarian internationalism and permanent revolution, say that the liberation of the colonial peoples of the Caribbean poses the need for a voluntary socialist federation of the Antilles and extension of revolution to the imperialist metropolises, France and the United States. ■

Dateline Paris: Reports on the French Worker-Student Uprising

In addition to the articles printed here, additional on-the-spot reports are available on our web site, www.internationalist.org:

- French Students Mobilize: “Sarkozy, You’re Screwed, The Youth Are In the Streets!” (26 October 2010)
- With the Paris Student Blockades, Assemblies and Marches (27 October 2010)
- Seventh Day of Action in France: 2 Million in the Streets Against Sarkozy Attack (29 October 2010)
- Paris Workers’ Assemblies Declare “We’re Continuing to Fight,” Call for General Strike (3 November 2010)
- Eighth Day of Action in France: The Unions and the “Interpro” Assemblies (8 November 2010)

Union Tops Call Off Strikes in Refineries, Port of Marseille And Now Comes the Stab in the Back

PARIS, 31 October 2010—The very next day after millions marched in the streets of France to oppose the government’s pension “reform” law, top union leaders moved to end the strikes which had shut down all 12 of France’s oil refineries and blocked the key port of Marseille. Early on Friday, October 29, the five refineries still on strike held almost simultaneous votes on whether to continue the strike. Leaders of CGT and CFDT union federations, historically close to the French Communist Party (PCF) and Socialist Party (PS), told refinery workers that the strikes could not be maintained. The ranks then voted to call them off.

Later on Friday, the workers of the oil terminals at the port of Marseille also voted to return to work after 33 days on strike. “A certain number of elements have made it possible to propose resuming activity, which was acted on by the workers,” according to Pascal Galéoté, the head of the CGT union representing port workers at the terminals in the Marseille area (*Le Monde*, 31 October). The strike had been totally effective, with 79 oil tankers and 4 barges sitting in the harbor waiting to be unloaded, some of them since the end of September, blocking five refineries (one in Switzerland), at a cost of €10,000 to €20,000 (roughly US\$14,000-\$28,000) a day per ship and losses of €35-40 million (US\$48-55 million) to the oil companies.

Anyone with any critical faculty had to ask:

- What were these “elements” which “made it possible” to overcome the bargaining impasse and lift the siege of the port? Neither the port authority nor the unions would say, although management said the deal allowed it to pursue “port reform.” Yet it was precisely against that “reform” that the unions had struck, objecting to plans to allow 40 percent private investment in a subsidiary to operate the terminals. So what’s the story?
- “Why this strange defeat of the refinery strike?” asked a blogger, noting that all 12 refineries had gone back in the last two days (Bellacio, 31 October). “What kind of blackmail or intimidation were the heroic strikers subjected to?” he asked, noting that everyone who visited a struck refinery recently reported they were “extremely motivated.” Moreover, the strikers were “firmly determined not to give in at this moment, at the beginning of November, when they were finally going to see the country’s gasoline supply dry up.”



Benoit Tessier/Reuters

Striking workers at the Grandpuits refinery outside Paris during attack by gendarmes (paramilitary riot police) on October 22. Strikers held firm, shutting down fuel production until union tops moved to end strike a week later.



Internationalist photo

Striking worker from Grandpuits refinery at Paris mobilization, October 28. The next day the union bureaucrats moved to call off the strike.

At the Feyzin refinery of the French Total oil company outside Lyon, CFDT delegate Damien Galera declared: “The situation was no longer tenable. We made a balance sheet of our forces and observed fatigue, weariness. We also see what’s happening elsewhere: the mobilization on Thursday brought out fewer demonstrators, the other refineries are going back to work, the same with the rail workers. It couldn’t be Total against the rest of France.” This defeatist evaluation sharply contradicted the actual facts. Even *Le Monde* (29 October) quoted the CGT delegate at the plant, Michael Lavastrou, saying sadly, “They were told to leave their jobs to mobilize, and now they’re being told that it’s all over. That’s not at all clear.”

In fact, we saw workers from the Grandpuits refinery about 100 km. outside Paris brimming with energy and determination during the march on Thursday (October 28) that brought out some 170,000 demonstrators in the capital, according to the unions. The Grandpuits van became a focal point for union militants at the end of the march. Refinery workers and rail workers chanted, sang, blew whistles, danced and vowed to keep up the struggle. The amount of popular support they received from everyone was unimaginable, they said. So many people brought food to the pickets that they didn’t know where to put it. At the same time, they added, other sectors had not gone out, and they were under pressure to call off the strike.

Strikes Were at the Point of Paralyzing French Industry

The fact is that the refinery workers had a powerful stranglehold. The effects of their two-week-long strike were threatening to bring much of French industry to a halt. The oil companies said it had cost them “hundreds of millions of euros.” This was the first time since the 1968 general strike that the whole of the country’s oil refining capacity was shut down. Despite imports of 100,000 tons of fuel a day, stocks were rapidly dwindling (the strategic reserves are mostly unrefined oil). And Belgian unions blockaded a refinery to stop it from supplying tankers from France. What happened was not that the strikes were running out of steam, but that the union bureaucracies were frightened by the prospects of an “uncontrollable” struggle and the mounting denunciations by the government and bourgeois spokesmen. So to show their “responsibility” (to French capitalism), they called off the strikes.

To justify their betrayal, the union tops cited a declining number of demonstrators, and the fact that other sectors hadn’t joined the refinery and port workers. Nonsense. Everyone knew beforehand that the demonstrations on Thursday would be



Above: Tankers waiting offshore to unload at struck oil terminals in the port of Marseille, October 17. Port and refinery strikes were solid until union tops called them off. Below: Empty gasoline pumps in Nice.



smaller than earlier marches because they came in the middle of a two-week school vacation when many families had left town. The fact that close to 2 million came out anyway for the seventh day of action in as many weeks, full of energy and determination, was remarkable. As for the fact that other sectors didn’t go on open-ended strikes, *this was the result of the decision by the labor misleaders not to call them out*, and instead leave it up to each group of workers to decide on their own.

At the beginning of the month, union leaders began talking of “renewable” or open-ended (*reconductible*) strikes. At first, *Le Monde* (3 October) reported:

“In fact, the CGT doesn’t consider the political and social terrain propitious for open-ended strikes any more than the UNSA and CFDT do, and even less for the general strike which the Solidaires and Force Ouvrière federations say they would like if they had their way.... As for the CGT, it suffered some setbacks in the SNCF (railways) and RATP (Paris Metro) which inclined it toward caution.”

But following the mobilization on October 2, which once again was unexpectedly large, CGT leader Bernard Thibault declared

that “in certain sectors, workers are available for strikes that wouldn’t be limited to 24 hours.” If the government didn’t listen, he said, “the movement could take on a new configuration” after October 12. But, he added, this would be “on the basis of decisions made by the workers” (AFP, 4 October). By putting the responsibility for striking on the workers in the different sectors, rather than calling out the ranks in a united show of force, *the union leaders virtually ensured that the walkouts would be restricted to certain sectors.*

On Friday, union leaders used the classical excuses of reformists everywhere to justify their sellout. Charles Foulard, the head of the refinery section of the CGT, argued, “We came close to the objective, we only needed a few more occupational sectors to join the strike,” but in any case, “the unions have won the battle of ideas,” because their “arguments on the possibility of having another reform ... have been heard” (AFP, 29 October). “The government lost the battle for public opinion,” said CFDT head François Chérèque. This is the same claim put forward by spokesmen for the PS to argue that accounts with Sarkozy can be settled in the 2012 presidential election. Sarkozy himself cynically issued a statement saying “Worries have been expressed, some of them legitimate. I have heard them and am reflecting on them. I will take some steps.” Meaning precisely nothing.

At a local level, the CGT delegate at Feyzin, Lavastrou, even as he doubted that it was all over, repeated the famous phrase of Maurice Thorez in selling out the June 1936 general strike, “*Il faut savoir terminer une grève*” (you have to know how to call off a strike), although the PCF leader added “once its essential demands have been met.” But today, said Lavastrou, “Going back to work under these conditions,” when refinery workers won nothing after two weeks on strike, “is not going to be pretty.” Even so, said David Faure, the CFDT secretary of the plant committee, “people are only waiting for a sign from the union organizations to go into the streets. The next step is a general strike. And at that point, the response of the workers will be violent.”

It has been an open secret for weeks that the union leaders have been looking for the exit door, but no one wanted to be the first to throw in the towel, for fear of being labeled a traitor, as the CFDT’s Chérèque was rightly called for breaking ranks and selling out the 2003 battle over public sector pensions. Now the sellout has begun, “all together” (*tous ensemble*) this time, as the striking union leaders act in concert to end the refinery and port strikes. Everything indicates that the Intersyndicale is planning to do the same and call off mobilizations of any sort after the November 6 day of action. “If unity has lasted so far,” *Libération* (22 October) wrote last week:

“it is also and above all due to the determination of the demonstrators, who are still quite numerous. Because secretly, a number of leaders of national union federations wouldn’t look askance at the mobilization running out of steam in order to call an end to the match.... And the longer the movement goes on, the harder it will be to manage the frustrations of the militants internally....

“On the other hand, some of the rank-and-file militants are beginning to believe in it [the possibility of winning]. And in the absence of a victory, they could end up demanding an

accounting from the respective union leaderships. The end of the movement is looking to be difficult.”

Urgently Needed: A Revolutionary Opposition in the Unions

But who is going to challenge the pro-capitalist union leaders? So far not a word of criticism from the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) or the Solidaires union federation associated with it against the CGT and CFDT for calling off the refinery and oil terminal port strikes. Nor, of course, from the leadership of the Force Ouvrière labor federation under Jean-Claude Mailly, close to the Independent Workers Party (POI) led by ostensibly Trotskyist followers of the late Pierre Lambert. If the “far left” were serious in its occasional references to a general strike, it would loudly denounce this betrayal. But since its actual politics are reformist and its support for a general strike is merely platonic, complicit silence is to be expected.

The World Socialist Web Site of the followers of David North claims that this betrayal only proves “the treachery of the unions” (WSWS, 30 October). By deliberately conflating the *pro-capitalist union bureaucracy*, who are literally agents of the bosses within the workers movement, with the unions themselves, which are the largest existing mass organizations of the working class, these frauds frequently use leftist language to literally do the work of the employers (for example, opposing union organizing drives). In this case, their calls for organizing “committees of action independently of the unions” means undercutting the urgent necessity to wage a struggle within the unions to oust the sellout bureaucracy.

To pretend, as the WSWS does, that “the unions” are simply capitalist institutions and do nothing but oppose the struggle against the pension reform is to hide the *contradictory* character of the labor movement, whose pro-bourgeois leaders while acting as conduits for the bourgeoisie are also subject to pressure from the working-class ranks. All the recent mass mobilizations in France were called by the unions, indeed by the same treacherous bureaucrats who are now stabbing the struggle in the back. The strikes in the refineries and the ports were called by local union bodies. What this struggle shows is not that unions must be opposed, but that even reputed hardliners, such as Pascal Galéoté of the Marseille dockers and Charles Foulard of the refinery workers, are still bureaucrats, beholden to the capitalist system, and when the chips come down, they will do the bidding of the bosses.

That is why it is crucial to fight *within the unions* to defeat and drive out not just particular individual leaders but the whole parasitic layer that sits atop, holds back and when called upon betrays the membership they claim to represent. In calling for the formation of elected strike committees as part of the struggle for a real general strike, the League for the Fourth International does so as a means for combating the union misleaders’ stranglehold and fighting for a revolutionary leadership of the workers movement. This requires above all building the nucleus of a proletarian vanguard party to lead the struggle for a workers government based on workers councils, and to fight to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

Profits Are Rising – Army, Military Police and Landowners Are Killing In Haiti, in the Slums of Rio and in the Countryside

Brazilian Elections: The Bourgeoisie Goes For More Lula

28 SEPTEMBER 2010 – In the current Brazilian election campaign, the dominant tone has been that of praising the “stability” of the eight years of the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the historic leader of the Workers Party (PT). The big bourgeoisie is enamored of the fabulous profits they have raked in and of the country’s rapid economic recovery after only two quarters of recession amid the world financial crisis. The “left-wing” supporters of Lulaism cite a reduction of extreme poverty due to the government’s welfare programs. The PT candidate, Dilma Rousseff, presents herself as a guarantee of the continuity of the policies of the popular front government. In order to govern, the PT struck alliances with bourgeois sectors, mainly the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), which supplied Rousseff’s running mate, Michel Temer. Even her main opponent on the right, José Serra of the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB), broadcast television commercials showing him with Lula, and the other bourgeois competitor, Marina Silva of the Green Party (PV), declared that her candidacy was not against Lula’s project. On every side, these elections are one big celebration of Lulaism.

Everything points to a big victory by the PT candidate, possibly on the first round of voting on October 3. The opinion polls give Rousseff close to a majority and a big lead among low-income voters, while registering almost 80 percent approval of Lula’s presidency. However, despite its huge popularity, the government of the “worker president” has been anything but a “fiesta” for working people the way it has been for the capitalists. The current boom is not the result of some economic “model” but rather of a (temporary) spike in the export demand for commodities, fundamentally due to China’s economic growth. While the profits of big companies went into the stratosphere, wages have only progressed slowly and have been accompanied by a drastic increase in jobs filled by subcontracting or short-term contracts. During the first year of his first term, Lula carried out a “reform” of the social security system which was a frontal assault on government workers’ pensions. Now Dilma is announcing a new “reform,” to raise the retirement age for public and private sector workers.

Contrary to the slogan “another world is possible,”

**CAST A BLANK BALLOT!
We Need to Build a Workers Party That
Fights for International Socialist Revolution**



Valter Campanato/Agência Brasil

Dilma Rousseff at the Workers Party (PT) convention in June 2010.

In the October 3 first round of the Brazilian presidential elections, Dilma Rousseff, the candidate of the PT won 47% of the votes, while José Serra of the PSDB received 33% and Marina Silva of the PV got 19%. Although Rousseff’s first-round score was higher than her predecessor and mentor Lula ever received, this was portrayed as a defeat by the right-wing bourgeois press, which launched a last-minute campaign to stop the “former guerrilla Dilma” from gaining a majority on the first round.

In the month between the first round and a second run-off election, conservative forces stepped up pressure on Rousseff to renounce any support for the right to abortion (which she did). The PT candidate also reaffirmed her support for the pro-capitalist policies followed by Lula, which won the backing of key bourgeois sectors, while maintaining the PT’s base of support among poor and working people. In the final round of voting, on October 31, Rousseff won 56% compared to 44% for Serra. Altogether the four left-wing candidates (PSOL, PSTU, PCB and PCO) received barely 1% of the votes on the first round, while 3 percent cast blank ballots, a traditional way to register a protest vote. Rousseff was inaugurated president on 1 January 2011.

for Brazil's workers and peasants, the urban poor, blacks, women and other sectors of the oppressed and exploited, Lula's regime has been *just another capitalist government*. His economic policy of "neo-liberal developmentalism" doesn't differ qualitatively from that of his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the PSDB except for raising the minimum wage. While in the rural areas the Bolsa Família (family stipend) alleviated somewhat the incidence of extreme poverty, the peasant population continues to live in miserable conditions; and in the cities, due to the higher cost of living and the elimination of other welfare programs, it did not cut down on poverty in the *favelas* (slums). The main difference with Henrique Cardoso, aside from the economic conjuncture, was that the popular front in power managed to diminish strikes and worker/peasant protests which under the previous government had multiplied and radicalized. Lula was able to do this because of the ties linking the PT tops and of the reformist PCdoB (Communist Party of Brazil) to the pro-government union bureaucracy of the CUT (Unitary Labor Confederation) and the MST (Movement of Landless Rural Workers) in the countryside.

But the relative "social peace" during Lula's two-term presidency was also due to the absence of a hard *class* opposition to the bourgeois popular front. The left-wing union and party bureaucrats refused to carry out an all-out struggle against the capitalist government *which they elected*. Thus the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), the main force in the leadership of the Conlutas labor federation, called to vote for Lula on the second round of the 2002 elections. At the time, the future founders of the PSOL (Party of Socialism and Freedom) and leaders of the Intersindical union federation were still PT functionaries and parliamentary deputies. When they were chucked out over their timid opposition to the first social security reform, the expellees continued their parliamentarist and electoralist course in the new party. From the outset, the reformists – both of the PSTU and the PSOL – have pursued a policy of pressuring the mother party, the PT, from the left. Some internal tendencies in the Workers Party call for a return to the "original PT," which in fact is the policy of the overwhelming bulk of the Brazilian left. It's just that the original PT, like today, was the party of Lula who (along with Henrique Cardoso) began his political career in the Brazilian Democratic Movement and today shares out ministerial posts with its continuation, the PMDB.¹

The umbilical cord which ties the parties to the left of the PT to the "PT family" partly explains its lack of mobilization during electoral season. Where are the combative strikes or tumultuous demonstrations of metal workers, oil workers, bank workers, teachers and other public employees? There are only negotiations in the corridors. If any left-wing force intended to disturb the tranquil cruise toward a third term for

¹ The Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) was a house "opposition" group set up by the military dictatorship in 1965 in order to keep a rein on dissidents. In 1979, it became the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB) and has since functioned as the bourgeois political instrument of government functionaries, based in the federal ministries and city and state administrations.

"Lulaism," they would be in the streets loudly denouncing the anti-worker plans of Dilma Rousseff and her vice-presidential running mate Michel Temer of the PMDB. Instead, every two years when elections roll around the supposed class-struggle trade unionists and parties of the former "far left" abandon workers' struggles and devote themselves to the campaign hustings. After the Supreme Electoral Tribunal excluded what the bourgeois media have dubbed "midget parties" (all of them on the left) from the televised debates between Rousseff (PT), José Serra (PSDB), Marina Silva (PV) and Plínio Arruda Sampaio (PSOL), the excluded parties were invited by the left-wing news magazine *Brasil de Fato* to a September 21 debate broadcast on the Internet. Yet during the one-and-a-half-hour-long chat between José (Zé) Maria de Almeida of the PSTU, Rui Costa Pimenta of the PCO (Workers Cause Party) and Ivan Pinheiro of the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) there was not a single call for workers action.

Rather than a hard-hitting denunciation of the fraudulent and anti-democratic character of bourgeois elections, which any revolutionary candidate would be duty-bound to make, during the debate we only heard some soft-spoken complaints about discrimination against them. Each of the participants ticked off a list of almost identical reforms (a program of public works, agrarian reform, tax the rich, abolish the sales tax, state takeover of the banks, cheap credit), none of which went beyond the limits of the capitalist system. They made ritual mentions of socialism and uttered pious wishes for the unity of the left. In truth, those following the debate on the Internet ("internauts") would have had a hard time understanding why there were three different tickets if not for the competition for organizational influence (which is in fact the case). However, real unity of the working people against capital is only possible on the basis of a revolutionary program, which was the big missing factor in these elections.

We in the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil are opposed to voting for any candidate, party or member of a bourgeois coalition, such as the PT's popular front with capitalist parties. We didn't vote for Lula or his allies in 2002 or 2006. As opposed to the anarchists and some ultra-leftists, we do not reject participation in capitalist elections on principle – it can serve as a platform for revolutionary propaganda. We seek to cast a class vote. Unfortunately, but predictably, as in the past elections, none of the candidates to the left of the PT puts forward a class opposition to the bourgeois parliamentary game. Therefore, the LQB calls on working people to CAST A BLANK BALLOT in the October 3 elections and prepare for the coming struggles.

The Candidacies of the Left – PTers of the Second Mobilization

Since the end of 2009, like clockwork, the entire political life of the Brazilian left turned to the electoral contest. Trade-union struggles, those of slum dwellers, of landless peasants were relegated to second or third place. The main large-scale strike, of the APEOESP, the union of public school teachers in the state of São Paulo, took place in March and April

Sergio Moraes/Reuters



The police are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie. Here, Rio de Janeiro state military police using counterinsurgency techniques perfected in policing Haiti for U.S. imperialism to occupy the Mandela 2 favela (slum), 23 November 2010. Drive Brazilian police and military out of Haiti and out of the Rio slums.

of 2010. After 30 days on strike, the *paulista* teachers were betrayed by the pro-Lula leadership of the union, the Articulação caucus, which capitulated in the face of the onslaught by the governor and PSDB presidential candidate, José Serra. The governor dispatched the police to brutally repress the strikers, and there wasn't resistance capable of combating it. However, one has to say as well that the various opposition groupings inside the APEOESP were also unable to wage a class-struggle fight against the popular-front leadership. The PSTU (through Conlutas) and PCO were also immersed in their election campaigns, and both of them – along with the POR (Revolutionary Workers Party) – defend the police, claiming that these professional repressors are part of the working class and not, as Marxists insist, the armed fist of the bourgeoisie and backbone of the capitalist state.

The concerns of the PSTU were concentrated on the definitive collapse in December 2009 of its coveted Frente de Esquerda (Left Front) with the PSOL. In the 2006 elections, this Front supported the presidential candidacy of Heloísa Helena, who at the time was a senator for the PSOL from the northern state of Alagoas. But this candidacy could hardly be considered leftist, and certainly didn't constitute a working-class opposition to the class collaboration of the popular front. In playing footsie with various bourgeois politicians, notably with the "labor" sectors of the PDT (Democratic Labor Party)²

² The Partido Democrático Trabalhista is a bourgeois party generally classified as "middle-of-the-road" (rather than right- or left-wing), whose ideology harks back to the populist "laborite" tradition of Brazilian strong man Getúlio Vargas's *Estado Novo* in the 1940s and '50s. The PDT was founded in 1970 by Leonel Brizola, who provided more of a European social-democratic tint of support for "welfare state" programs.

and "progressive" elements of the Catholic church, the coalition headed by the PSOL candidate ended up being, as we said at the time, a "mini-popular front." Moreover, Heloísa attacked women's right to abortion, criticized Lula for "lacking firmness" in not insisting on compensation from Bolivian president Evo Morales for his nationalization of two oil refineries belonging to Petrobras, denounced landless peasants for invading Congress in Brasília, and said that due to a constitutional prohibition it was not possible to expropriate productive land (see our article, "Brazil: Lula vs. Alckmin, Candidates of Capital Against the Workers," *The Internationalist* No. 25, January-February 2007).

The Left Front disappeared right after winning 6.8 percent on the first round of voting in 2006. Sectors of the PSOL, including its current candidate Plínio Arruda Sampaio, announced they were voting for Lula on the second round. However, in the run-up to the 2010 elections, the PSTU wanted a second edition of the Heloísa Helena campaign, this time with its own Zé Maria for vice-president. These hopes vanished in December 2009 when Heloísa announced her support for Marina Silva of the Green Party. In her campaign, Silva, who was environment minister for the PT in Lula's government from 2003 until 2008, repeatedly declared her personal opposition to abortion, and the eco-capitalist party included among its candidates deputies who had been expelled from the PT for supporting a law for the rights of the unborn (Estatuto do Nascituro), which would turn abortion into the crime of homicide. Even today the PSTU wants to hold the door open for a turnaround by Heloísa and is not running a candidate against her campaign to return as senator for Alagoas. At the beginning of 2010, the PSTU's hopes of forming a new Left Front were focused on the PSOL itself, but in vain, as the PSOL launched the candidacy of Arruda Sampaio.

The PSTU is following in the footsteps of its mentor, the late Nahuel Moreno, who from the start of his political career always sought to tail after other larger political forces. He began as the "socialist wing" of Peronism, a bourgeois nationalist movement in Argentina, then went on to chase after Guevarism, Maoism, Sandinismo [in Nicaragua] and finally ending up as a plain old social democrat. Although Moreno claimed to be a Trotskyist, his policies were diametrically opposed to the struggle of genuine Trotskyism to forge a Marxist vanguard on the program of permanent revolution. The Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky fought against the nationalist and conservative dogma of the Stalinist bureaucrats

of building “socialism in one country” and rejected any political alliance with bourgeois forces. Trotsky insisted only with the conquest of power by the working class, supported by the poor peasants, could bourgeois-democratic tasks be achieved by going directly over to socialist tasks and extending the revolution internationally. In Brazil, ever since its origin in the *Convergência Socialista* current inside Lula’s PT, the PSTU has always following the capitulatory line of Moreno rather than the revolutionary policy of Trotsky. Today the Brazilian Morenites are divided, including some tendencies inside the PSOL (the CST and MTL), but they are all reformist social democrats to the core.

Faced with the repeated failure of its project of a new Left Front with the PSOL, the PSTU is now brandishing a “Socialist Program for Brazil,” which in the space of 80 pages offers a catalogue of electoral proposals. It criticizes the popular front for having “a class character as bourgeois as the previous” parties and “creating the illusion that the workers had conquered power” – only leaving out that the PSTU fed those illusions by calling for a vote to Lula on the second round in 2002. It insists on the need for a socialist answer to the right-wing candidates, but only a few months earlier it was seeking an alliance with the PSOL, which promotes the same “popular democratic” and *explicitly non-socialist* project which has characterized the PT since its beginnings. Moreover, the grab-bag of “socialist” proposals of the PSTU contains nothing that breaks the framework of the capitalist regime. Above all, the Morenites are ever-ready to abandon any socialist pretensions in order to form their desired front. Thus in the state of Goiás, the PSTU made an alliance with the MTL, the *right* wing of the PSOL, led by Mariniano Cavalcante, putting forward Washington Fraga as candidate for governor. The platform of the PSOL/PSTU candidate explicitly admitted that it was “a program within the framework of capitalism.”

The laundry list of measures cited by Zé Maria during the cyber-debate – agrarian reform, nationalize the land, tax reform, program of public works, low-cost public transport, construction of public housing, suspending debt payments, changing the economic structure – all have been carried out by one or another bourgeois government. The call for a “respectable minimum wage and decent pension” are utterly vague. “State ownership of the large enterprises, beginning with the multinationals” may sound very radical; however, in Mexico during the reign of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) the economy was dominated by state companies. If the banking system is bankrupt, as the PSTU candidate insisted, then calling for “state ownership of the banks” would not be an anti-capitalist measure but rather one to *save capitalism* from the danger of collapse, as was the case of the nationalization of the Mexican banks in 1982. And it is not so, as the standard-bearer of the PSTU claims, that with these measures “we will see to it that all the wealth will be channeled in order to attend to the needs of the working people.” Even under state ownership, the enterprises will be subject to the iron hand of the world capitalist market.

As for the other tickets to the left of the PT, they don’t

differ substantially from the program of the PSTU. Ivan Pinheiro of the PCB also calls for state ownership of the financial system, although with more honesty, presenting this measure as part of a *democratic* program, to be sure, of a Stalinist-style “new democracy.” Even though the PCO is a centrist organization, with socialist rhetoric, in practice it has the same catalogue of reformist measures as the PSTU: no consumer sales tax, agrarian reform, state takeover of the banks, etc. Of course, Rui Costa Pimenta spoke in his summary remarks about a struggle against capitalism and for a “government of the working people built on its organizations” in the struggle for socialism. But in the absence of an insistence on bringing down the capitalist state or regime, a “government of the working people” which carries out the above-mentioned measures would only be a regime slightly to the left of other bourgeois governments. This is the classic vocabulary of social democrats who struggle day-to-day for a minimum program of reforms under capitalism and reserve their hosannas to socialism (the maximum program) for Sunday speechifying.

Any real Trotskyist candidacy would insist on the need for an *agrarian revolution* carried out by the peasants themselves, not by the bureaucrats of some agrarian reform agency. It would emphasize that ripping the financial system out of the hands of capital can only be the result of the seizure of the banks by the workers themselves in the course of a *workers revolution* which would go beyond the state takeover of large companies to *expropriate the bourgeoisie* as a class. We fight for *transitional demands*, such as a substantially shorter workweek with no loss in pay, to create jobs for all. It would seek to unite the working class by *defending subcontracted workers and workers on short-term contracts*, demanding the same rights for all. Rather than dropping the campaign for withdrawal of troops from Haiti during the electoral period, as the PSTU has done, it would fight to drive the military out of the Caribbean country and out of the hillside slums of Rio de Janeiro, where they use the “counterinsurgency” tactics which they tried out as mercenaries for Yankee imperialism in repressing the population of the first-ever black nation.

A proletarian Marxist would explain that the conquest of power by the working class may begin the revolution within the national framework, but there is no program for a solitary “socialist Brazil.” It is necessary to extend the revolution internationally throughout Latin America and into the imperialist heartland of North America, Europe and Japan. A revolutionary intervention would use the bourgeois elections as a platform to denounce the systematic fraud of capitalist “democracy” and its electoral machinery, and in accordance with this it would present its candidacy in the framework of a campaign for mobilizing the workers and peasants, in the factories, in the streets, on the haciendas and modern “agro-businesses,” in preparing the working people for a struggle for power. In order to do so, it would focus its intervention on emphasizing the need for a Leninist and Trotskyist revolutionary workers party, built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

Build a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!

Québec: What's Needed to Defeat Privatization and Defend Public Services

The following article is translated from L'Internationaliste No. 7, April 2010.

March 31 marks the end of the no-strike, wage-freeze “contract” imposed by decree on 550,000 employees of the Quebec government by Liberal Party prime minister Jean Charest in December 2005. Across the province, the Common Front of public sector unions will be sending a message to the population on the need for fight for public services. On April 1, a coalition of labor, community and student organizations will be demonstrating in the business district of Montréal against schemes for privatization and introducing or raising fees on services and social programs. But on the eve of the mobilizations, the government announced a budget attacking working people, public services and social programs down the line. The battle lines are drawn.

A real show of strength could be a warning to Charest and the federal government of Conservative Stephen Harper. Already on March 20 [2010], more than 75,000 workers went into the streets of Montréal in response to the call of the Common Front. However, for months the leaders of all three labor federations (FTQ, CSN and SISP) have repeated that they are only asking the government to “negotiate,” and they are prepared to “target” (reduce) their demands accordingly. Nothing about the possibility of a strike. Yet the Liberal cabinet is wedded to its program of privatization and raising/introducing fees, and it is backed by the official opposition of the Parti Québécois (PQ). They will not be stopped by discussion and appeals to reason.

The real stakes are political, and workers, students and community activists urgently need a party representing the mass of working people. Not an electoral party but a *workers party* to lead hard class struggle to chase out the privatizers and freemarketeers in Quebec and Ottawa in the fight for a *workers government*. Going back to the Common Front of 1972 and before, Quebec unions have been hamstrung by



75,000 workers participated in the demonstration called by the trade unions' Front Commun in Montréal on 20 March 2010.

ties to bourgeois parties, from the Liberals to the PQ, and the refusal of the labor bureaucracy to challenge the capitalist state. This means that professions of socialism and talk of independence will remain a dead letter. To win real victories will require a workers leadership that fights for international socialist revolution.

Battle of the Budget – “Re-Engineering” the Capitalist State

In October 2009, the Common Front of public sector unions opened negotiations with the government by calling for a 11 percent raise spread over three years. A month later, the government responded with a counter-offer of 7 percent over five years – less than half as much. After stalling for months, on the eve of the March 20 Common Front mobilization, the head of the Quebec Treasury Council, Monique Gagnon-Tremblay, called on the unions to engage in a “blitz of negotiations” to arrive at an agreement by March 31. But on March 30, the government issued a budget calling for a freeze on the total wage bill until 2014. Any raises would be paid for by shrink-

ing the workforce through attrition – increasing the workload of those who remain.

The Charest government is using the economic crisis as an excuse to ram through plans he has been pushing since 2003 for “re-engineering” the state in order to lighten the “burden” of social services on the capitalists. But it is not alone. Earlier this year, PQ leader Pauline Marois declared that the unions’ minimal wage demands were “a little high,” and the bourgeois nationalist party focused its March 13-14 congress on calls for an economic policy centering on “individual enrichment” and opposing a welfare state. Marois & Co. are clearly chasing after the votes of the right-wing populist-chauvinist electoral clientele of Mario Lamont’s ADQ (Action Démocratique du Québec), which has made free-market economics and anti-immigrant chauvinism its calling card. But even the ban on the SPQ Libre, a political club trade-unionists in the PQ hasn’t stopped bureaucrats from continuing to support this bosses party.

The budget announced on March 30 includes a 30 percent increase in the sales tax (TVQ), raising \$1.5 billion; a tax on fuel; a increase of electricity rates of 20 percent over five years, raising \$1.6 billion, to be paid to the banks to cover Quebec’s debt; and the introduction of a fee for using Quebec’s health care system, up to now free, rising to \$200 per adult, bringing in another \$1 billion and opening the door to hefty co-pays (*ticket modérateur*). The spokeswoman for the Quebec Employers Council approved, saying “at least there are no new fees, new harmful taxes”! True enough, for the bosses – the new taxes will be paid by poor and working people, and the electricity rate hike only affects consumers and small companies, not large enterprises.

There will also be an increase in university student fees, already rising by \$100 a year, how much to be determined later. Earlier this year, a committee of the Finance Ministry called for raising fees by a staggering \$3,000, a 150 percent increase over the present level, already up by a third since 2007 (ASSÉ, *Ultimatum Express*, 4 March 2010). These hikes could lead to tens of thousands of students dropping out. A committee of political, business and private university leaders headed by former PQ prime minister Lucien Bouchard went even further, calling for all increases in university financing to be paid for by students. In 2005, Bouchard issued a manifesto “Pour un Québec lucide” calling for rate hikes, consumers taxes, increasing student fees and a series of privatization measures which are now being carried out by the Charest government.

Accompanying the privatization and “tarification” of public services, Quebec workers have come under increasing attack. 2009 opened with the lockout of 253 workers of the *Journal de Montréal*, owned by the conglomerate Quebecor, one of the largest printing companies in the world, based in Quebec, whose CEO (Karl Pierre Péladeau) is a former Maoist. Using loans from the Quebec provincial pension fund (Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec), whose board includes union representatives, Quebecor bought up Vidéotron, the main cable TV distributor in the province, and then broke a strike by Vidéotron employees. While the CSN is circulating

petitions calling on Quebecor to bargain in good faith with the locked-out employees, the unions should mobilize thousands of workers to shut down operations of the union-busting company.

A second hot spot are the workers of Quebec’s health care system, particularly nurses. Recently there has been an explosion of overtime and use of outside agencies to fill in for the system’s refusal to hire more full-time nurses. Over the last month, nurses at the Maisonneuve-Rosemont, Haut-Richelieu and Charles-Lemoyne hospitals refused the forced overtime that has obliged many to work 16-hour shifts. This is a particular hardship for the many single mothers (98 percent of the nurses are women). As the refusals spread, the ministry of health called for urgent negotiations with the health workers union, FIQ. But when they arrived at the bargaining table, they were met with demands to increase the nurses work loads. The unions slammed the door and issued orders to prepare a list of essential services, in case of a walkout.

Meanwhile, after working without a contract for six months and attending 20 fruitless negotiating sessions, some 2,500 adjunct professors (*chargés de cours*) at the Université de Montréal have been on strike since February 24. The university has been demanding a number of givebacks, including loss of seniority, and wants to exclude a whole sector of the workforce that recently joined the union. The adjuncts are fighting a two-tier academic labor system which superexploits the majority of university instructors, who receive poverty-level salaries. Class Struggle Education Workers and CUNY Contingents Unite, an organization of adjunct faculty and staff at the City University of New York, are publicizing the Montréal strike, and the CUNY faculty union, Professional Staff Congress raised it with leaders of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, who are issuing statements of support.

Key to all these labor struggles, to the fight against privatization and tarification, and to the battle of the budget, is building a proletarian leadership, the nucleus of a workers party, on a program of revolutionary class struggle against *all* wings of the capitalist rulers, whether “federalist” Liberals and even more right-wing forces, or the bourgeois-nationalist PQ which long ago stopped talking of independence and has increasingly left even its “pro-sovereignty” pretensions behind. The experience of seven years of the Charest government underlines that it is necessary to bring down the entire bourgeoisie, which is firmly united in defending its fundamental class interests, and to gird the working class for battle with the capitalist state, which our class enemies will not hesitate to use against us. To defeat such powerful forces, the revolutionary vanguard must act as the champion of all the oppressed under the banner of proletarian internationalism.

Building an Class-Struggle Workers Leadership Is Key

The struggles that are posed this April 1 [2010] are a direct outcome of the fight against the Charest government in 2005, which the unions lost, and along with them allied sectors, such as the students. Under Law 142, which was rubber-stamped in



Adjunct faculty of the SCCCUM union at the University of Montréal struck from late February to mid-April 2010 against takeback demands by the administration. By maintaining solid picket lines with up to 400 union members, the adjuncts managed to defeat the takebacks and win a modest raise.

a one-day session by the National Assembly in Quebec City, hospital workers, teachers, school support staff and other state employees were subjected to a three-year wage freeze, followed by minimal raises, far below the rate of inflation. Under the decree, labor unions lost the right to bargain over wages and working conditions while strikes in the public sector were outlawed. Any workers who walked out were subject to loss of two days pay for every day on strike and a fine of up to \$500; union officials faced fines of up to \$35,000 a day, and the unions would be subject to potentially crippling fines of up to \$125,000 per day.

The labor leadership had carried out a series of rotating strikes from late November to early December, region by region and sector by sector, notably by health and education workers. These were intended as pressure tactics to induce the government to make concessions at the bargaining table, leading up to a last-minute showdown in Québec. But when the final face-off arrived, the Charest government refused to budge and used its majority in the National Assembly to impose its anti-labor law. The effect on the union tops and public employees was that of an “electrical shock,” as *La Presse* (15 December 2005) headlined. They thought they were playing by the usual rules. “The government has gone over the top and set off a psychodrama,” said Henri Massé of the Fédération de Travailleurs du Québec. “The government mocked the democratic process,” said Claudette Carbonneau of the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux. A spokeswoman for the PQ opposition said the government’s tactics were “preposterous.”

But the union tops did nothing. They had not prepared the ranks for such a struggle, not could they, for their entire “strategy” is to pressure and use the capitalist state, not to

combat it. They see their role as working within the system, possibly winning a few crumbs and social programs, or not, depending on the political winds. As the bosses’ union-busting offensive escalated during the last years of the anti-Soviet Cold War and then continued without let-up, these “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class” would preside over the destruction of “their own” unions. This occurred to many unions in the United States, and if the process has been somewhat delayed in Quebec, it is because the labor movement is stronger there (over 40 percent of the work force, compared to less than 10 percent in the U.S.). But the same forces are at work.

It was even worse than in 2003, when on another fateful December 15 thousands of unionists ringed the National Assembly to

oppose the government’s bill to end the ban on outsourcing. Yet even though they could have easily taken the parliament, they stood by as the mortal threat to the labor movement was approved. Today, if the government cracks down, it will be no different. The Common Front has already made it clear that it has no intention of striking. The CSN even feeds into the government’s phony argument that it has no money by proposing other cuts and sources for increased revenue. CSN president Carbonneau commented that “clearly we must share the bill, but in function of justice and equity among citizens” (*Ultimatum*, November-December 2009). Yet the issue here is not budget priorities but class *power*.

And to wage a struggle for power, the workers movement must defend the oppressed. At present a debate over the government’s Bill 94, introduced in late March, which would ban women wearing Islamic veils such as the burka or niqab which cover the face from employment in government offices, public services, health care and education. Marois of the PQ wants to go even farther and ban the Islamic headscarf, the hijab. Even in the petty-bourgeois “left” nationalist coalition, Québec Solidaire, some wished to ban all religious insignia from public services. In practice, what this would mean is an anti-Muslim witchhunt, as has occurred in France with the ban on the hijab in public schools. While claiming to be about “secularism,” this measure is in fact an act of religious exclusion by the capitalist government and must be opposed by all defenders of democratic rights.

Certainly, the Islamic veil symbolizes the subjugation of women, which is institutionalized in the family and ideologized in different ways by Christianity and Judaism as well. As atheists, Marxists fight the obscurantism and subjugation



Montréal demonstration against privatization, 1 April 2010.

of women ingrained all organized religion and inherent in capitalist society. But to do away with the retrograde effect of religion, it is necessary not only to promote a scientific understanding of the world but also to provide social institutions that can fulfill the needs that are filled by religious reaction. And it is necessary for the entire workers movement to combat all forms of religious discrimination. Union federations like the CSN, which has a strong presence in the public sector, cannot duck this issue. Genuine class-struggle militants would fight for the unions to defend their Muslim members and oppose this discriminatory bill.

Likewise the workers movement must be in the forefront of defending immigrants against discrimination in the name of “Quebec values.” Hypocritical “reasonable accommodation” that leaves immigrants without equal rights is no answer – labor must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The unions should massively mobilize their ranks to protest against police brutality, such as the cop assault that killed Freddy Villanueva in Montréal-Nord in August 2008. Labor must oppose discrimination against homosexuals. The workers movement must also come to the aide of indigenous peoples under attack by the state, such as the police/army assault on the Kahnawake Mohawk Warriors no further from downtown Montréal than Chateauguay on the other side of the St.-Lawrence River.

And workers should use their power against imperialist war and occupation, such as Canada has been carrying out for years in Afghanistan and Haiti, and which has been a staple for the Québec police and military units who put on U.N. blue helmets in “peacekeeping” missions in Africa. Such a struggle can forge powerful links with the sizable Haitian and North African immigrant populations in Montréal. There have been innumerable and very large antiwar demonstrations in Montréal and elsewhere in Quebec. But *workers strikes against imperialist war*, of which the May Day 2008 port shutdown by the ILWU dock workers union on the Pacific Coast against the war on Iraq and Afghanistan was a small taste, would pose a fundamental challenge to the capitalist state. Internationalist

communists seek *defeat* the imperialist war in fighting for socialist revolution.

The League for the Fourth International calls for independence for Québec, an oppressed French-speaking nation within the Canadian state. All talk of “sovereignty-association” and other PQ circumlocutions only serves to disguise continued subjugation. The persistence of national oppression of the Québécois has made separate states necessary *in order for the working people to fight the respective bourgeoisies* who use the nation to organize their oppressive class rule. From the early 1970s on, militant trade-unionists and much of the left supported the Parti Québécois, a *capitalist* party. Even today, as the PQ stands exposed as a class enemy of Quebec working people, most of the reformist left and some sectors of labor support Québec Solidaire, a petty-bourgeois nationalist electoral vehicle that can only

be an obstacle to united *class* struggle against all wings of the ruling class. As proletarian internationalists the LFI supports Québec independence in order to overcome national oppression to the extent possible under capitalism and thereby more easily defeat nationalism in all its variants.

Québécois nationalists of various hues have periodically sought to make their peace with U.S. imperialism as a counterweight to Anglo Canadian domination. (For its part, the CIA has also considered whether an independent capitalist Québec with suit U.S. imperial interests.) Hydro Québec was set up in order to provide a source of riches for the Québécois bourgeoisie so it could compete with the Toronto banks by supplying the New York energy market. It is no accident that the future PQ founder René Lévesque played an important role in nationalizing the hydroelectric companies, as minister of natural resources in the Liberal government of Jean Lesage. But as the saga of Quebecor strikebreaking shows – or Bombardier downsizing and outsourcing, or the Alcan buyout by Rio Tinto, or the bankruptcy of AbitibiBowater – having Québec-based companies does not alter the exploitation of the workers that is the motor force of capitalist production, whatever the nationality of the bosses.

A struggle against privatization, “tarification” of public services, cutbacks of social programs and all forms of the capitalist offensive against working people can only be successful through a socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie as a class and extends the revolution internationally. In fighting the effects of “free trade” in destroying trade unions and living standards, Québec workers must ally with working people throughout Canada as well as with their U.S. and Mexican sisters and brothers. While Québécois nationalists may look back to Louis-Joseph Papineau and the Patriotes of 1837-38, communist internationalists are inspired by the example of Lenin and Trotsky who tore asunder the tsarist prison house of peoples. We seek to build a Québec workers republic as part of a socialist federation of North America, in alliance with a socialist United States of Latin America. ■

G20 Protests: Largest Mass Arrests Ever in Canada

Police State in Toronto

On June 26 and June 27 [2010], an army of 20,000 troops and cops turned downtown Toronto into a police state, arresting over 1,100 demonstrators. It was the largest number jailed at one time in Canadian history, twice as many as when the Canadian army occupied Québec in 1970. The excuse for this exercise in naked police power was the summit of the leaders of the world's 20 largest economies (G20). While Barack Obama tried to browbeat China into accepting the competitive devaluation of the U.S. dollar, a form of monetary warfare, finance ministers talked about how to slash budget deficits by making working people pay for the capitalist crisis.

Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper decided to use the occasion to stock up on "riot control" weaponry and try out the latest repressive tactics. As at the April 2009 London G20 summit, crowds of demonstrators were "kettled" for hours in the rain, turning Queen's Park into a giant holding pen. As in the 2004 Republican Convention in New York City, hundreds were arrested at a time to get them off the street. The police bought water cannon and an ear-splitting Long Range Acoustic Device. To facilitate this, the Ontario cabinet secretly passed "enhanced arrest powers" allowing police to grab anyone they wanted near a three-metre high fence that snaked through the financial district. Protesters' chants of "This is what democracy looks like" soon became "This is what a police state looks like."

Labour leaders held a large (30,000) march early in the afternoon on June 26, bragging that they worked closely with the cops. But all it took was a few smashed bank windows and some torched police cruisers for the defenders of capital to launch a full scale assault on the protesters. Tear gas was used (a Canadian first) along with rubber bullets and paintballs filled with pepper. Youthful demonstrators and random passers-by were set upon at every turn by the uniformed thugs. Even before the protests began,



Christine Muschi/Reuters

scores of demonstrators from Québec were picked up. Of those arrested, 800 or so were eventually released without charge, many after spending days in the degrading "Prisoner Processing Center," while another 200 had charges dismissed or stayed.

In the aftermath, various social-democratic left groups such as the International Socialists have joined with liberals in calling for a public enquiry into the police brutality and for the resignation of the Toronto police chief. This only fosters illusions that the police – the backbone of the capitalist state – can be reformed. But the reformists saved their real venom for the anarchists of the Black Bloc, claiming they "gave the cops ammunition to brutalize and jail over 900 innocents" (Barry Weisleder of Socialist Action). Fightback was even more foam-flecked, saying the anarchists "used our movement in order to hijack it" and "comparing" them to "agents provocateurs." Quite a statement from an outfit (part of the International Marxist Tendency) which considers cops to be workers! Against the police occupation and assault on civil liberties, we demand that charges against *everyone* detained in the G20 protests be dropped. The criminals were the police, not the protesters. ■

Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images



Hundreds Come Out for Mumia at Philly Federal Court Hearing

No Justice in the Capitalist Courts

Mobilize Labor/Black Power to Free Mumia Now!

On November 9, some 500 demonstrators converged on the federal courthouse in Philadelphia to defend Mumia Abu-Jamal, the renowned radical journalist and former Black Panther who has been sitting on Pennsylvania's death row for the last 28 years, sentenced to die for a crime he did not commit. It was the first large mobilization for Mumia in more than two years, and was accompanied by demonstrations elsewhere. In France, where 300 demonstrated in Paris, the left-wing daily *L'Humanité* devoted its front page to Mumia. The occasion for the worldwide protest was a hearing on Mumia's case by a three-judge panel of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, on orders of the U.S. Supreme Court. In July 2008, the appeals court had upheld a ruling by federal judge William Yohn which, while dismissing every challenge to the grotesque frame-up trial that declared Mumia guilty, set aside the death penalty on the grounds that the judge's instructions to the jury on sentencing were confusing. Then in January 2010, after earlier refusing to hear Mumia's appeal on the exclusion of black jurors and other instances of flagrant racism during the trial, the reactionary high court instructed the appeals court to reconsider its earlier verdict and possibly reinstate the death penalty.

Jamal, the author of *Live from Death Row* and several other books on the racist injustice system and hundreds of commentaries on the crimes of capitalism and imperialism, was convicted of the December 1981 killing of police officer Daniel Faulkner. In fact, Mumia, an innocent man, nearly bled to death from a cop bullet to his lung. He had been in the cops' gun sights for years, ever since he was Minister of Information for the Philadelphia Black Panther Party at the age of 15, and then later reported on the murderous police siege of the predominantly black MOVE organization. The trial judge, Alfred Sabo, was notorious as a "hanging judge" who sentenced more defendants to death than any other sitting judge in the United States. Sabo was a lifetime member of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) and was heard by a court reporter to say of Mumia that he was going to help the prosecution "fry the n----r." The judge helped the prosecution shield cops from testifying, and during the 1995 appeal (which he presided over) of his earlier verdict, Sabo even had a witness arrested on the stand after she recanted her earlier coerced testimony, as well as ordering the arrest of a defense attorney.



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Mumia Abu-Jamal

The narrow issue now being heard in the Third Circuit Court is whether Judge Sabo's instructions to the jury during the sentencing phase of the trial suggested that they would have to unanimously agree to any mitigating circumstances favoring life imprisonment over execution, when a majority is sufficient. The Supremes told the appeals court to use as its guideline a case they decided a week earlier concerning a Nazi in Ohio, Frank Spisak, who murdered three people because they were black or – he mistakenly believed – Jewish. The Philadelphia district attorney argued on November 9 that the case of Jamal and Spisak were essentially the same. Mumia's attorney pointed to big differences: aside from the fact that the Nazi bragged of his guilt in his trial while Mumia has steadfastly upheld his innocence, the jury in the Ohio case wasn't told explicitly that unanimity was required for mitigating circumstances, whereas in Jamal's trial Judge Sabo repeatedly said jurors had to be "unanimous." This was noted by two of the judges on the panel. But that only means that if they do reinstate the death penalty, it will be knowing full well that Jamal was railroaded. The rulers' goal is to silence the "voice

of the voiceless.”

On the eve of the November 9 hearing, the defense legal team was thrown into commotion when attorney Robert Bryan refused Mumia’s request that Judith Ritter, a law professor who had previously argued the issue of jury instruction and mitigating circumstances to the same panel, make the presentation – whereupon Jamal fired him. In his submission to the court withdrawing from the case, Bryan disgustingly claimed it was because he had been “threatened” by Jamal’s supporters. Earlier, in 1999, Jamal had to fire his then-attorneys Leonard Weinglass and Dan Williams after Williams published a book saying he had “no idea whether Mumia Abu-Jamal is innocent or guilty.” Bryan, like Weinglass and Williams, focused exclusively on the legal issues of the trial and refused to present evidence of Mumia’s innocence or the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, and not Mumia, was one of two killers who shot police officer Faulkner in a contract “hit.” Bourgeois liberal lawyers simply refuse to recognize the fundamental fact about the legal lynching of Mumia Abu-Jamal: that the bourgeois state is trying to kill an innocent man because it considers him a dangerous black revolutionary who it must silence.

The issue of the capitalist state has sharply divided Mumia’s supporters for years. Liberals and reformist leftists want to argue that this was a “miscarriage of justice,” all due to a



Internationalist photo

IG marches for Mumia in Philadelphia, 9 October 2010.

racist judge, an aberration which could be rectified by insisting that the law be fairly applied. They refuse to admit that the relentless persecution of Jamal is part of a *system* of racist *injustice* rooted in the bedrock American capitalism. Black people have been subjected to this “lynch law” since the days of slavery, from which the barbaric death penalty stems. A decade ago, the issue was the liberal/reformist call for a “new trial,” which implied that a different verdict would result. Presenting new evidence to a different judge won’t save Jamal any more than appealing for a new trial by the apartheid judges would have won freedom for Nelson Mandela, to whom Mumia has often been compared. Revolutionary Marxists insist that while lawyers should pursue every avenue of legal defense, there is no justice for the oppressed in the capitalist courts. The key is to mobilize the power of the working class and the black, Latino and immigrant population to demand that Mumia be freed.

Lately, as a string of adverse court decisions has made the call for a “new trial” ever more illusory, the liberals and reformists are petitioning President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder to pardon Mumia or conduct a civil rights investigation. (A petition being circulated in France calls on Obama to initiate a new trial.) Yet black Democrats Obama and Holder are *capitalist rulers* who depend on the machinery of repression to maintain their *class* domination. Obama has said, specifically in reference to Mumia, that he supports the death penalty for “cop killers” – which is what Jamal was wrongly convicted of. And the FOP endorsed Holder as the nation’s “top cop.” Some liberals may believe that a new trial or intervention by Obama could actually save Mumia from the executioner. Most reformists know better, but instead of telling the truth, they promote illusions in bourgeois “democracy,” calculating that when it doesn’t deliver justice people will be radicalized. Instead, most will become demoralized, lacking



L'Humanité, formerly the newspaper of the French Communist Party, featured Mumia on its front page the day of the appeals court hearing in Philadelphia.

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Healthcare “Reform” Law: Bonanza for Wall Street, an Attack on Working People

The following articles are reprinted from *Class Struggle No. 2* (October-December 2010), the newsletter of *Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW)*, a trade-union tendency active in the *United Federation of Teachers (UFT)* representing public primary and secondary school teachers and staff in the *New York City public schools*, and in the *Professional Staff Congress (PSC)*, representing faculty and staff at the *City University of New York*. The program of the CSEW, which is politically supported by the *Internationalist Group*, is published in *The Internationalist No. 28* (March-April 2009).

By **Class-Struggle Education Workers/UFT**

March 24, 2010

President Obama and the Congressional leaders say they’ve just passed a “historic” healthcare reform. It’s not.

- It’s not historic, it’s not a reform, and it’s not even a step in the right direction. ***The healthcare “reform” is an attack on working families and a gift to the insurance companies, the drug companies and the private hospital corporations.*** It’s going to hurt our healthcare coverage in the UFT. It’s a setback in the struggle for universal healthcare coverage.
- If people aren’t aware of that, they haven’t been reading the fine print. Just like many people didn’t pay attention when Obama said he had the *same* education program as John McCain, and when he said he *wasn’t* going to pull all the troops out of Iraq and he *was* going to escalate the war in Afghanistan.
- ***First, it won’t mean anything like universal health coverage.*** Even by the most optimistic estimates ***23 million people will remain uninsured***, many of them immigrant workers in dangerous and low-paid jobs. Not only are undocumented immigrants not covered, the care they now receive in emergency rooms will be cut back because the government is slashing \$40 billion out of funds to “disproportionate share hospitals” to cover the uninsured.
- ***Probably many more will remain uninsured.*** Why? Because the insurance plans they will be required to buy are so expensive and provide such lousy coverage. In Massachusetts the basic plan costs \$2,800 for an individual and has a \$4,000 deductible, so people will pay almost \$7,000 before they see a dime of benefits. As a result many people, especially younger people, may figure they’re better off paying a fine.
- ***Second, this is the biggest government attack on women’s right to abortion since Jimmy Carter signed the Hyde Amendment in 1976.*** Yet “pro-choice” Democrats in Congress knuckled under and women’s organizations like NOW and NARAL didn’t say boo. The ban on abortion will now apply to community health centers, and abortion coverage will be dropped from *all* insurance plans.
- ***Third, this “reform” is a giant subsidy to the insurance companies, the drug companies and the for-profit hospitals.*** The insurance companies are supposed to pay \$70 billion in taxes, but in return they are going to get subsidies of \$450 billion and hundreds of billions more in new customers who are going to be forced to buy their defective products.
- ***The right wing pretends that this is a government takeover of medical care.*** Wrong. It’s the ***consolidation of corporate control of medicine.*** Rather than socialized medicine, it’s going more towards the corporate state, just like all the corporate “education reform.”
- ***Fourth, a main way this “reform” is going to be paid for is by taxing our insurance plans.*** The excise tax on so-called “Cadillac health plans” is the biggest source of additional funds to pay for the subsidies. Yet *individual* high cost health insurance plans like Wall Street execs have are exempt from this tax, it’s the union plans they’re going after.
- The Senate bill originally said the tax would bring in \$140 billion by 2019. Richard Trumka of the AFL-CIO did some last minute horse-trading and reduced that to “only” \$32 billion. He must be taking lessons from [Randi] Weingarten [the former UFT president, now head of the national American Federation of Teachers]: hand over two-thirds of the givebacks the bosses are demanding, then claim “victory” because you didn’t give away the whole store.
- In any case, ***this is an illusion.*** The AFL-CIO tops just ***postponed the tax***, so that it starts in 2018 instead of 2013. It’s still going to be a whopping tax and the main outside source of funding, and it will be taking an increasing bite out of our health plans as medical inflation increases.
- ***Employers won’t agree to a 40 percent increase in cost, instead they’ll cut benefits to come in under the ceiling.*** Since dental and vision care were exempted, it will probably be cut from long-term hospitalization and major surgery. People don’t go into the hospital for a month or have a major operation frivolously. So now we will have to pay out of pocket or buy super-expensive additional private insurance.
- ***What it comes down to is they are taking tens of billions of dollars from the pockets of working families and giving them to the capitalists of the medical industry.*** That’s the bottom line of this health insurance “reform.” ***On top of that they plan to cut “hundreds of billions of dollars” out of Medicare payments.***
- ***And they’re not stopping there. Next up is “reform” of the Social Security system.*** The *New York Times* reported on March 23 that the administration plans to raise the

retirement age and reduce benefits for Social Security, which is “the other big entitlement benefits program and one that Mr. Obama has suggested in the past that he is willing to tackle.”

- *Many younger teachers don't grasp the role of a union because they've never seen a real union struggle.* Many tend to see the UFT as an agency for providing health insurance. Why? Because that's how the union leadership acts. When Trumka goes to the White House to negotiate to postpone the tax, he's just following the insurance company execs' playbook.
- *A fighting union leadership would insist on national health insurance as a first step. And it would not only refuse to support Obama and the Democrats' corporate healthcare "reform," it would bring tens of thousands of union members out into the streets to oppose it.* Instead, the union leaders leave opposition to the ultra-rightist Tea Party racists.
- *What we need is exactly what the right wing and the corporate interests and the Tea Partiers fear – real socialized medicine, so that universal healthcare is a right,*

not a commodity. And to do that, it's necessary to *break with the Democrats* and *build a class-struggle workers party that fights for a society in which the working people rule, not the corporations.*

- *So when you find your health insurance premiums going up and your coverage cut, when your Medicare benefits and Social Security payments are slashed, don't be shocked.* The UFT bureaucracy's Unity caucus and the reformist ICE-TJC opposition don't warn about this because neither is prepared to go up against the Democrats. They are *blocking* a real fight against corporate takeover of the schools and healthcare.
- *Whether it's education "reform" or healthcare "reform," it's all an attack on working people. And it's all coming straight from the top, from the White House and Wall Street.* Until labor is ready and willing to fight those forces, it will just go from defeat to defeat, losing membership and sacrificing union gains piecemeal until the unions themselves are destroyed (or become an empty shell), as has happened with many already. *That's one more reason why we need to build a class-struggle opposition in the unions.*

Class Struggle Education Workers Statement **On the Healthcare Crisis**

The CSEW issued the following statement on 16 September 2009.

1. A burning issue in class struggles in the United States is the crisis of healthcare, with an estimated seventy million people uninsured or underinsured, untold numbers pushed into bankruptcy by medical costs, and millions more bound to unsatisfactory jobs for fear of losing their costly and insufficient healthcare. With its grotesque class and race inequalities, denial of medical care to millions of poor and working people, and domination by outright criminal insurance and pharmaceutical monopolies, the “healthcare system” is a dramatic condemnation of American capitalism. We call for full socialized medicine, while recognizing that only through a socialist revolution in the U.S., and in the most powerful capitalist countries throughout the world, can full access to high-quality comprehensive healthcare be provided for all.

2. The current spectacle in Washington underscores the need for class-struggle militants to oppose the attacks of Obama's healthcare plan on immigrants, unionized workers and Medicare benefits. Clearly, the Democratic administration's objective is not to see that healthcare is available to all, but to respond to major capitalist forces concerned about rising health-care costs at the same time as it seeks the favor of the insurance and pharmaceutical giants, who were major contributors to Obama's election campaign and who stand to rake in billions from the extension of insurance under his plan.

3. The reactionary nature of the “debate” between the capitalist parties is illustrated by Obama pledging that “illegal” immigrants would not be covered, only to be interrupted by

a frenzied Republican congressman screaming “You lie!” As bourgeois politicians compete over who is the most effective enemy of the oppressed, it has never been more urgent to fight for labor to break from all wings of the ruling class.

Having worked overtime to spread illusions in Obama, the unions' bureaucratic leadership preaches submission, passivity and collaboration in the face of escalating attacks on the working people. Key to defending the most basic rights and conquests of the workers and oppressed is the building of a class-struggle opposition in the unions, committed to the struggle for a workers party and workers government.

4. The demand for a “national single-payer healthcare system” has been put forward as a call for providing comprehensive healthcare, including to undocumented immigrants, within the present U.S. capitalist system. Although it leaves the providing of healthcare in private hands, if actually carried through, such national health insurance would substantially benefit millions of working people, and would also represent a political defeat for the enormously wealthy private health insurance industry that profits from death and disease. Thus, the Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) gives critical support to this demand. While rejecting “popular-front” strategies which would tie this struggle to the Democratic Party, we will participate where appropriate in united-front actions and protests around this issue. At the same time, we recognize that were the single-payer plan to be implemented, the capitalist system would continue to place profit-seeking pressure on it such that, even on its own terms, the call for comprehensive coverage would be distorted. Access to healthcare is further

impacted by systems of oppression that are manifested in the allocation of both power and resources within a given society: for example, housing, education, the criminal injustice system, and the limitations on democratic rights inherent in capitalism.

5. Although every other advanced capitalist country has such a system, given the sway of “free market” ideology in the U.S., even national health insurance, let alone socialized medicine, would likely not be won short of a mass upheaval threatening the bourgeoisie with the spectre of socialist revolution. Having long since become a brake on human progress, capitalism rips up past gains of the working class and proves incompatible even with lasting reforms. This fundamental aspect of capitalism in the “imperialist epoch” has been demonstrated with particular force since the 1970s – a striking example being the case of open admissions at CUNY, a significant gain which the rulers of New York City began to dismantle almost as soon as it was won. When the bourgeoisie is forced to “give” concessions with one hand, it seeks to take them away with the other. Thus, while supporting every real, even partial gain, we link this always and everywhere to the question of power, that is, for the working class to take power into its own hands in alliance with all the oppressed.

Free Mumia Now!

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a revolutionary perspective to bring down racist U.S. capitalism which, with 2.3 million people behind bars and more than 3,200 on death row, jails and executes a far higher percentage of its population than any other country on Earth.

The attitude toward the capitalist state underlay the scandalous action by some leading U.S. members of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, who sent a secret memo to the organizers of the February 2010 WCADP congress in which they opposed highlighting the case of Jamal, who has come to symbolize the struggle against the racist death penalty around the globe. “Continuing to give Abu-Jamal focused attention unnecessarily attracts our strongest opponents and alienates coalition partners,” they declared. Noting that the FOP calls for a boycott of anyone who supports Mumia, these lily-livered liberals declared: “The support of law enforcement officials is essential to achieving abolition in the United States.” So in order to get police to oppose the death penalty, they want to “throw Mumia under the bus,” as one leader of Murder Victims Families for Human Rights put it. Outraged death penalty abolitionists rejected the secret memo, but the fact that its authors could achieve prominence in such a movement is due to the fact that it only attacks “flaws in the capital punishment system” and “reprehensible actions” by the police, not the racist “justice” system itself.

The question of the capitalist state is also key in two recent movies on Mumia Abu-Jamal. A well-financed pro-police film, *The Barrel of a Gun*, by Tigre Hill, whose specialty is producing pseudo-documentaries for Philly Republicans, was shown to a crowd of several hundred cops and family members on September 21 while a police motorcycle gang, the

Centurions, cruised up and down Market Street to intimidate the population. Hill’s movie is police propaganda. The liberal *Philadelphia Inquirer* (21 September 2010) showed where it stood by celebrating the film with a major article titled “The Case Against Mumia.” Meanwhile, a few blocks away at the National Constitution Center the second film, *Justice on Trial*, by Johanna Fernández, a professor at Baruch College, and filmmaker Kouross Esmaeli was being shown. The movie goes over the many glaring contradictions in the prosecution’s story, shows ballistic and photographic evidence belying their claims, reports the several witnesses who saw two shooters fleeing, and has valuable footage about the FBI war on the Panthers. But while dissecting the legal frame-up, *Justice on Trial* leaves out the key evidence of Mumia’s innocence, weakening an otherwise strong presentation.

The film doesn’t mention the confession of Arnold Beverly, who has stated in detail that he and another mob hit man were hired to gun down Faulkner, who corrupt Philly cops suspected was acting as an informant to a federal investigation going back to 1979 of center city police involvement in drug and prostitution rackets. Liberals and reformists don’t want to deal with this because they feel that it would not be “believable” to their audience that the police were acting as a gang of criminals. Another revealing incident, the police firebombing of the MOVE commune on Mothers’ Day 1985, authorized by black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode, which murdered eleven black men, women and children and burned down the entire neighborhood, destroying 61 homes, is touched on only briefly in the film. Yet to understand the vendetta against Jamal it is necessary to come to grips with how the racist cops, courts and capitalist politicians act in concert to “serve and protect” the interests of the ruling class against the population it rules over. “Speaking truth to power” will not save Mumia – it is necessary to mobilize a superior force to stop the machine of state murder.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International seek to mobilize labor/black power in fighting for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Our Brazilian comrades sparked the first-ever strike action for Mumia, in April 1999, stopping work in schools of the state of Rio de Janeiro to hold teach-ins about his case, in conjunction with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) which the next day shut down every port on the U.S. West Coast declaring “An injury to one is an injury to all, Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” This fall IG comrades from New York traveled to Philadelphia to help in providing security at the September 21 showing of *Justice on Trial*, which we have also shown at Hunter College in NYC. We sent a team to an October 9 march for Mumia in Philly and attended the November 9 hearing. We also highlight the case of Troy Davis in Georgia, another innocent black man on death row, whose appeal was turned down by the Supreme Court in October. Against the capitalist parties of death, Democrats and Republicans alike, we fight for a revolutionary workers party. And to the many trade-unionists, unions and labor bodies who over the years have defended Mumia we say: the time to act is now. ■

UFT, Students, Parents and Working People Have the Power We Can Stop the School Closings

By Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT

15 DECEMBER 2010 – As he heads toward the door, New York City’s departing schools chancellor Joel Klein (aka “The Terminator”) is still at it. After announcing at the end of October a total of 46 schools it wanted to shut down, at the beginning of December the Department of Education issued a list of 25 public schools to be closed starting next fall. The hit list includes major high schools such as Columbus and John F. Kennedy in the Bronx, Norman Thomas in Manhattan, Jamaica and Beach Channel in Queens and Paul Robeson in Brooklyn. Altogether 15 of the 19 schools Klein tried to shutter last year are back on the list, despite the court suit by the United Federation of Teachers, the NAACP and others which temporarily stayed the dead hand of the DOE.

The rich and powerful forces who are behind the “strategy” of “turning around” schools by closing them hope to wear down the opposition. Last January 26, thousands of parents, students and teachers came out to Brooklyn Tech to loudly voice their opposition to the last round of school closings. In a marathon meeting that went until 3 a.m., only one of the 300+ speakers supported Klein’s demolition plan. Then [NYC mayor Michael] Bloomberg’s hand-picked majority on his puppet “Panel for Educational Policy” voted to close the schools anyway, without a word of explanation for why they were ignoring the clear voice of the largely black and Latino as well as white working-class and middle-class families who pay the price for the DOE’s crimes.

A couple of months later, a sympathetic judge ruled in favor of the UFT/NAACP court suit to hold off the closings because the DOE didn’t follow the state law on public notification. But that didn’t stop Klein. The very afternoon the court decision came down, the DOE sent out ninth-grade assignments excluding the affected schools. So the schools stayed open, but with tiny incoming freshman classes. And now they’re on the chopping block again. The billionaire mayor (the tenth richest man in the U.S.) and the well-heeled hedge fund moguls who bankroll the charter schools think they are the masters of the world and can do as they wish. They’re wrong. The fact is that ***we have the power to stop Bloomberg’s wrecking ball.*** But we have to ***use that power or lose it.***

By now, the battle lines have been drawn and the arguments made. The claims by the advocates of wholesale school closings have been shown to be false. A study of schools that were closed during the five years of U.S. education secretary Arne Duncan’s tenure as CEO of the Chicago public schools showed that most students saw little or no benefit, even on the standardized tests that are now the holy grail of the educators. “Most students who transferred out of closing schools re-enrolled in schools that were academically weak,” said the report by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Furthermore, there was a precipitous drop in reading scores in

the six months after the closings were announced (*New York Times*, 29 October 2009).

In New York, Mayor Mike Bloomberg claimed last year that for the 91 schools that he has already closed since taking office in 2003, graduation rates in the new schools that replaced them went up 15 percent over the citywide average. This is lying with statistics, as the DOE does regularly, with their inflated scores on state tests, the unfathomable methodology behind the school report cards, etc. The charter “replacement” schools raise test scores and graduation rates by excluding English language learners and special ed students. And of displaced students, up to *half* from the last two classes at closing schools are forced to transfer to GED programs or disappear from school records.¹ They are *forced out* to boost Bloomberg/Klein’s “metrics.”

Bloomberg has proclaimed his goal of closing another *10 percent* of NYC’s 1,450 schools in the remaining three years of his term, while opening 100 new charter schools. Arne Duncan wants to close 1,000 schools a year nationwide in the next five years. This goal is accompanied by a bribe of \$3 billion in “stimulus” money to be doled out as part of the “Race to the Top” to school districts that buy into this scheme. This is not about improving education. *It is part of a wrecking operation against public education, in New York City and around the United States.*

Former mayor Rudolph Giuliani famously vowed to “blow up” the NYC Board of Education, and that is exactly what his successor Bloomberg has been doing. There are various factors going into how they choose which schools to close. Real estate interests who want to grab some juicy properties are an element in Manhattan. Making room for hedge fund-backed charter schools run by mayoral favorites such as school space imperialist Eva Moskowitz is another. Shutting down big high schools has been a key goal of the corporate education “reformers” for years. Instead of having campuses offering a rich range of educational opportunities, they want to pare down secondary education to basic skills training, tracking and regimenting students in small schools.

This strategy has the special attraction, from the bosses’ standpoint, of targeting schools that are bastions of teacher union militancy. In New York, the big high schools have often been opposition strongholds in the UFT (possibly a reason why the bureaucracy has done so little to defend schools like Jamaica, Norman Thomas, etc.) The capitalist education “reformers” want to destroy the unions on the road to privatizing what they can of the public schools via charters and corporatizing what’s left, turning them into profit platforms for vendors and the like.

¹ See the study by Columbia sociologist Jennifer Jennings and Leonie Haimson of Class Size Matters, “High School Discharges Revisited” (30 April 2009) at: http://www.classsizematters.org/High_School_Discharge_Report_FINAL.pdf

But a key factor is that *closing schools is part of a racist agenda to destroy public education*. Just look at a map of where the schools on the closing lists are located and see what student populations they serve. The billionaires pushing this campaign, such as Microsoft's Bill Gates and real estate mogul Eli Broad, want to turn the black and Latino population against the unions, like the Ford Foundation did in the 1960s over community control. That's why Bloomberg reportedly first offered the schools chancellorship to Geoffrey Canada, but the black capitalist education entrepreneur of the Harlem Children's Zone turned him down.

This time, however, the cynical ploy is backfiring. Black parents have seen through the lies and realize it's their kids' education that is being ripped up. Voters dumped Mayor Adrian Fenty in Washington, D.C. and his broom-wielding schools chief Michelle Rhee is gone. From Harlem to Rhode Island, virtually every candidate supporting charter schools was defeated in elections this fall. In NYC black and Latino parents and education advocates have been in the forefront of the struggle against Bloomberg's new chancellor, Cathy Black. *Today there is a historic chance to unite the oppressed majority population of New York City with the unions in a labor/black struggle that can actually defeat the charterizers and school closers.*

The UFT Delegate Assembly will be voting on a resolution presented by the leadership calling to "build a grassroots movement of opposition to school closures." While that is certainly needed, the resolution fails to demand that all school closings be stopped now (instead it has a mealy-mouthed call for a moratorium on closures where the DOE has not given the school adequate resources and support). It leaves each school on its own, instead of bringing teachers, parents and students of the threatened schools together. And while calling for the D.A.

to march today to DOE headquarters at Tweed Courthouse, and for a mass demonstration at the February PEP meeting, it does not call for a citywide mobilization well *before* the vote that could bring out the forces that can actually *stop* the closings.

The rhetoric in the resolution is tougher than the usual mushy fare from the UFT bureaucracy (aka the Unity Caucus and its hangers-on). Union militants and education activists should call on the UFT to actually lead a mass labor/black and immigrant struggle against the racist school closings and the "educational apartheid" of the charter schools. But what's centrally needed is to build a *class* opposition the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy, which has given up vital rights such as seniority transfers, and let Bloomberg/Klein introduce "merit pay" (on a school basis), teacher evaluations using student test scores, and is now caving in on teacher tenure (see below).

Class Struggle Education Workers seeks to build such an opposition, to fight the privatizing education "reform" agenda. While teachers union leaders (both AFT and NEA) and many union oppositionists and education activists backed Obama in 2008, either openly or tacitly, the CSEW warned from the outset that the Democrats' and Republicans' education agendas (as well as their support for imperialist war in Iraq and Afghanistan) were identical. We say the assault on public education is coming straight from the top, from the Democrats in the White House and Congress, to Democrat Cuomo in the New York statehouse (elected with the votes of the UFT-backed Working Families Party).

In waging this struggle, we rely not on the courts (which enforce the bosses' law and order, such as the anti-strike Taylor Law) or on capitalist politicians but on the power of the working people and the oppressed, building a workers party that fights for a workers government that can revolutionize education under teacher-student-parent-worker control.

The DOE Goes After Teacher Tenure

They're on a tear: one day, it's closing schools, the next day it's trying to blast teachers names across the tabloid press. On Monday (December 13), the DOE announced new tenure "guidelines." They are bad news. Among the new provisions are:

- Principals will use a four-point "effectiveness framework," not just "S" (satisfactory) or "U" ratings as until now. This rating will be based, among other things, on student test scores. This is the wedge for bringing in their "value added" model, which they want to use to bust union wage scales and seniority job protection.
- New "expanded" data will be considered, like whether or not you are an ATR. This is victimization – teachers do not control when/if their school is closed and they become ATRs.
- Instead of a check list, principals now have to write several paragraphs justifying granting tenure. It's a transparent attempt to make it easier to deny, or delay than to grant tenure. And for some of these principals just out of the "leadership" academy, we wonder if they can even write an essay.
- Most sinister is the financial incentive for denying

tenure: if a principal denies a teacher tenure, they are permitted to hire a new teacher and ignore the hiring freeze. This will also be used to intimidate teachers – stay in line, work through lunch, do cafeteria duty etc., or we'll get somebody who will.

For years the teacher-bashers, the chancellor, the mayor, the New Teacher Project, et al. have been screaming about tenure. New chancellor Cathleen Black says tenure is a "lifetime guarantee." This is false. What tenure does is give teachers "due process" after three years probation. In order to fire a teacher, the DOE has to provide "cause" (which can include successive annual U-ratings, charges of "insubordination" and the like).

The DOE intends to keep teachers on lengthy probation, so they are free to fire at will. In response, UFT president Mike Mulgrew rushed to say that the UFT has no role in the process of granting tenure. While complaining about DOE "pontificating," he ends up saying he hopes that the new procedure "can help solve the system's real problems." A

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Let NYC Muslim Center Be Built! Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Mobilize Against Racist Attacks on Muslims and Immigrants!

5 SEPTEMBER 2010 – Over the last few months and particularly in recent weeks there has been a concerted drive by reactionary forces to whip up hysteria against a project to build a Muslim community center in New York City, a few blocks from the World Trade Center, target of the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attack. It is cynically claimed that building a “mosque” in proximity to “Ground Zero” is somehow an affront to the 2,700 people who were killed in that attack. How so? The implicit message: that Muslims were responsible for the indiscriminate terror. The same rationale presents the U.S. imperialist war on Iraq and Afghanistan as part of a “Judeo-Christian” crusade against Islam. What do these bigots care that the organizers of the Muslim center chose the site in order to promote “multi-faith dialogue”? The hysteria is part of the violent racist campaign targeting Muslims and immigrants for attack ever since 9/11. Thus a couple of days after an August 22 anti-mosque hate fest, a passenger stabbed and slashed a NYC taxi driver after he confirmed to the would-be murderer that he was a Muslim. Now the bigots plan an even bigger Muslim-bashing event at the WTC site for September 11. ***This provocation must be met with a vigorous labor/immigrant countermobilization to defend Muslims and drive out the racists.***

As the mid-term election campaign heats up, right-wing forces are vituperating against immigrants. In a number of states, bills have been introduced imitating Arizona’s racial-profiling law, SB 1070, instructing police to stop and question anyone on “reasonable suspicion” of being an “illegal alien” – which in practice means anyone who “looks Mexican.” This was followed up by a manufactured frenzy over so-called “anchor babies,” alleging that immigrant women come to



Internationalist photo

Internationalist Group, CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Class Struggle Education Workers at September 11 demonstration against racist anti-immigrant attacks on plans for an Islamic center near NYC’s World Trade Center.

the United States to give birth so that the parents can obtain residency (a total myth, particularly as the U.S. government is deporting tens of thousands of parents of U.S.-born children). This morphed into a frenzy over “terror babies,” product of the fevered brain of Texas congressman Louis Gohmert, who claimed Muslim moms come to the U.S. to have children who grow up to be terrorists. From there it was only a short step to the mid-summer mania about abolishing the post-Civil War 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which grants citizenship to anyone born in the United States. (Many of the anti-immigrant racists would no doubt like to get rid of the 13th Amendment as well and bring back slavery.) ***Against the xenophobes, the Internationalist Group calls for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.***

The uproar over the Muslim community center in lower Manhattan is also a blatant electoral ploy by the reactionary forces

Defeat U.S. Imperialist War on Afghanistan, Iraq!

that coalesced in the so-called Tea Party movement. These are the people who during the 2008 election campaign staged rallies for Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin who accused Barack Obama of “palling around with terrorists,” and where death threats against the black Democrat were yelled from the crowd. Now right-wing Republicans want to get their Christian fundamentalist base mobilized to vote out Democrats in the November 2010 elections. Newt Gingrich compared building a mosque to support for Nazi Germany and the genocide of Jews. At the August 22 anti-mosque rally there were loud chants of “Obama Must Go!” and references to “Imam Obama.” *Time* magazine (30 August) reported that nearly a quarter of Americans think Obama is a Muslim. Yet Obama, as president and commander in chief of the U.S. military, is responsible for waging and escalating the war that is slaughtering Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq. As usual Obama equivocated on the Islamic community center, first coming out for the “right” to build a mosque there, then backtracking the next day on the “wisdom” of doing so. This only emboldened the anti-Muslim bigots.

Other Democrats were even more explicit in pandering to the right-wing mob, including Senate majority leader Harry Reid (who said the mosque “should be built someplace else”), liberal darling Howard Dean (who said a mosque near the World Trade Center would be an “affront”) and New York governor David Paterson, who proposed a “compromise” by building the center away from the WTC area. Looking to Democrats and bourgeois liberals to oppose the anti-Muslim hysteria is a recipe for disaster. New York’s billionaire mayor Mike Bloomberg has opposed attempts to stop the mosque, on the grounds that this kind of virulent Muslim-bashing is bad for business – and bad for war. Same concern from Obama, who needs Muslim allies to justify the U.S. terror war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. But as the polls show two-thirds of New Yorkers opposed to construction of a mosque at “Ground Zero,” no doubt the push for moving the Islamic center will grow. It should be clear to all that any such ruling-class “compromise” would hand the bigots a victory and constitute an assault on freedom of speech, supposedly enshrined in the 1st Amendment.

The racist instigators of the anti-Muslim protests spew out wild claims that this would be a “Ground Zero victory mosque,” a “command center for terrorism,” a center to “train and recruit Sharia law advocates who become terrorists,” etc. Yet the sponsors of the Park51 project (named for its location at 51 Park Place), Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf and Daisy Khan (his wife and founder of the American Society for Muslim Advancement), stated as their purpose “to promote inter-community peace, tolerance and understanding.” Rauf and Khan have also sponsored the Cordoba Initiative, recalling when a thousand years ago “Muslims, Jews, and Christians coexisted and created a prosperous center of intellectual, spiritual, cultural and commercial life in Córdoba, Spain.” Their brand of Sufi Islam is considered heresy by the Salafi and Wahabi Sunni Islamists such as the World Islamic Front (Al Qaeda) of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. So why the over-the-top rhetoric about a “terror mosque”? Because the promoters of the anti-mosque frenzy are pushing a

war on Islam, and anything that goes against that undercuts their warmongering. As an Internationalist Group sign at a counterprotest on August 22 stated, “Imperialist War Abroad Breeds Bigotry ‘At Home’.”

Right-wingers complain that Imam Rauf commented (on the CBS-TV *60 Minutes* program, 30 September 2001) that “United States policies were an accessory to the crime that happened.” Despite U.S. espousal of democracy and human rights, he noted, “we ally ourselves with oppressive regimes in many of these countries” and “in the most direct sense, Osama bin Laden is made in the U.S.A.” Nothing radical about this, these statements are undeniable facts. Imam Rauf is currently speaking on a tour of the Middle East sponsored by the U.S. State Department, as he has done before. Some have complained that he did not forcefully oppose the U.S. attack on Afghanistan or the round-up of thousands of Muslims in its wake. In fact, the Cordoba Initiative reports, “At the request of the F.B.I. after 9/11, he provided cultural training to hundreds of F.B.I. agents”! Far from denouncing the war, Rauf ends his book *What’s Right with Islam is What’s Right with America* (2005) with a ruling by five Islamic clerics titled, “Fatwa Permitting U. S. Muslim Military Personnel to Participate in Afghanistan War Effort.” To top it off, Rauf declares: “I am a supporter of the State of Israel” (*New York Times*, 22 August).

Many “progressives” argue that Muslims have a right to build a mosque, the issue is where. Chris Mathews on MS-NBC’s *Hardball* argued with an opponent of the mosque that the issue is “location, location, location.” The whole brouhaha over the location of the cultural center is phony. In fact, Imam Rauf has led a mosque located only 12 blocks from the WTC site in Tribeca for the last 27 years. There is another mosque only two blocks away from the Park51 center. On the other hand, there have been right-wing protests against a mosque in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn and plans to turn a Roman Catholic convent into an Islamic community center on Staten Island. In the latter case, a meeting of a civic association this past June erupted into an orgy of bigotry. Anti-mosque rallies there have taken on the quality of lynch mobs, with the few defenders of the mosque who showed up in physical danger. And all the talk of the “Ground Zero” area as “hallowed ground” is hogwash, the area is full of strip joints and betting parlors: a block away are the “gentlemen’s clubs” New York Dolls and Pussycat Lounge, an OTB location is only a few doors down from 51 Park Place. (Just to be clear, we have no objection to those business establishments being there either.)

Politically, we are no friends of Imam Rauf, who is a supporter of U.S. imperialist and Zionist war and occupation which communists seek to defeat. As Marxists and atheists, we are ideologically opposed to all religions – whether “moderate” or “extremist” Islam, evangelical, mainstream Protestant or Catholic Christianity, the different varieties of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism – which throughout history have served to justify the rule of exploiting ruling classes and blind the exploited population to a real solution to their misery. As Marx noted, at the same time that it serves as the “opium of the masses,” religion can be an illusory refuge for those seek-

ing salvation from distress. To finally overcome religion, it is necessary to abolish the oppressive conditions that produce it, through international socialist revolution, and lay the basis for the masses to achieve a scientific understanding of the world. From Afghanistan and Iraq to Egypt and Algeria, we oppose Islamism as a political movement while fighting to mobilize the working class and the oppressed to defeat the imperialist occupiers and “secular” dictatorships. Back when the U.S. (and much of the Western left) was backing the likes of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, Trotskyists hailed the Red Army intervention against the Islamists.

Various leftist groups have taken up the cause of the Park51 Islamic cultural center. For the most part, however, they have done so not on a class basis but by joining in political coalitions with various liberal and supposedly “progressive” bourgeois forces, and even appealing to outright reactionaries. The International Socialist Organization (ISO), which in the 1980s praised the Iranian Islamic “revolution” and hailed the victory of the CIA’s anti-Soviet Afghan cutthroats, is now campaigning against Islamophobia. Recently the ISO has helped initiate an NYC Coalition to Stop Islamophobia which issued an appeal, stating in part:

“We call upon the leaders of hate groups such as Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) and their supporters to end their campaign of venomous falsehoods, intimidation, and hate speech against the Park51 project and its supporters, as well as against the Muslim community more generally.... In particular, we call upon SIOA to stop politicizing the grief that all New Yorkers will feel this September 11th....

“Finally, we call upon both local and national politicians, as well as media outlets, to stop using the so-called ‘Mosque Controversy’ for partisan political ends, and to take a strong and unequivocal stance against Islamophobia.”

There is certainly a good deal of hatred of Islam as a religion among the opponents of a “Ground Zero mosque.” Televangelist Franklin Graham has for years vituperated against Islam as “a very evil and wicked religion,” a “religion of violence,” and fundamentalist Christian evangelicals make up a sizeable part of right-wing forces in the U.S. But the current hysteria goes beyond religion. As Daisy Khan remarked on ABC’s *This Week* (22 August), “This is like a metastasized anti-Semitism.... It’s not even Islamophobia, it’s beyond Islamophobia – it’s hate of Muslims.” And this organized anti-Muslim bigotry will not be stopped by appealing to the conscience of the bigots or municipal unity (“all New Yorkers”). The idea that the SIOA and right-wingers will stop bashing Muslims is an illusion.

This coming September 11, another orgy of chauvinist hatred is in the works. A Florida pastor says he will burn the Koran. In New York there will be a larger anti-mosque mobilization at the Islamic community center site. Dutch ultra-rightist politician Geert Wilders has announced he will speak there. On the other hand, while many liberals inveigh against bigotry, most are loath to publicly protest the bigots. A left-wing version of this is the Spartacist League (SL), which published a front-page article on the chauvinist anti-mosque mania. The article notes that on August 22 anti-mosque protesters outnumbered counterprotesters, but doesn’t mention that

the SL only bothered to send a couple of newspaper salesmen. The Internationalist Group came out on August 22, as seen in a *Newsweek* video where our spokesman recalled the attacks on Jews in Nazi Germany and denounced the racists for seeking to stigmatize Muslims. We will be there again this September 11 with our signs calling for workers defense guards against racist anti-immigrant attacks. For the IG, this is not an abstract issue. Starting the day after 11 September 2001, when there was a danger of anti-Arab attacks, we patrolled at night for an extended period in Arab neighborhoods of Brooklyn. When the City University of New York tried to carry out an “anti-immigrant war purge” of undocumented students by doubling their tuition, we led a struggle that resulted in substantially rolling back this chauvinist measure.

The current anti-Muslim frenzy in the United States is whipped up by bourgeois rightists. Nobody was bothered by the Islamic center until the *New York Post* and Zionist bloggers seized the issue. It is of a piece with anti-Muslim mobilizations by the Lega Nord and other government parties in Berlusconi’s Italy, or the current hysteria against Romanis (Roma) in France. The media have fed the hysteria by exaggerating its popular support. While noting that polls in New York City show a majority against building the mosque, they do not highlight that this is of *registered voters*, which excludes a huge percentage of the population in a city which is 40 percent foreign born, nor that a majority of those in Manhattan, where the cultural center is to be built, support it. At bottom, the witchhunt against Muslims is an integral part of the anti-immigrant campaign fostered not only by Republican conservatives but also by the liberal Democrats. While media attention and protests by immigrants’ rights groups focus on the Arizona law, the Obama administration has sent more than 1,200 troops to patrol the U.S.-Mexican border, 500 of them in Arizona. And while among the racists there are fascistic forces involved in the anti-mosque mobilizations, the far greater threat to immigrants and Muslims is the U.S. imperialist government, currently controlled by the Democratic Party.

Thus the fight against the Muslim-bashing hysteria over the New York mosque must be part of a struggle to build a revolutionary workers party that champions the cause of all the oppressed. Communists vigorously defend bourgeois democratic rights including freedom of assembly and the separation of church and state (which were united under feudalism and in theocratic Islamic regimes). While expropriating the holdings and breaking the secular power of the church and its control of education, as well as combating religious prejudices among the masses and the use of religion as a cover for counterrevolution, the Russian Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky upheld the freedom of religious belief and worship. As Leninists and Trotskyists, the Internationalist Group defends the building of an Islamic cultural center and place of worship (mosque) near the World Trade Center and anywhere else, and comes to the defense of immigrants and religious minorities under attack. Rather than looking to the Democrats and bourgeois liberals, who are supporters of the imperialist rulers, we defend democratic rights through mobilizing workers, oppressed minorities and immigrants against the entire ruling class and its racist capitalist system. ■



Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

The Dream Act Swindle

OCTOBER 2010 – Recently there has been a campaign on campuses and in immigrant communities to push for passage of the DREAM Act. This legislation, which has been around for a number of years, would make some undocumented immigrant youth eligible to apply for citizenship after completing two years in college ... or two years in the military. The latest device to get it past anti-immigrant forces in Congress was to attach it to the military appropriations bill. But in late September, it failed in the Senate (despite a majority vote in favor) because the Democrats said they couldn't overcome a Republican filibuster against it. *El Diario-La Prensa* (23 September) headlined a report on a rally at New York's City Hall, "Students Feel Used."

Immigrant students are indeed being used, not only by rightist opponents *but also by promoters of the DREAM Act*. This supposedly pro-immigrant bill is supported by the Pentagon as a way to make up for the fact that fewer young people are signing up to kill and be killed in the U.S. war and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. As we wrote in "CUNY and the Imperialist War" (*Revolution* No. 4, September 2007),

"With the help of the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement branch of Homeland Security) *Gestapo*, and the new drive for segregation in education, the imperialists are scheming ways to beef up their dwindling recruiting totals. One example of this is the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act. Many reformers hope this proposal will help undocumented immigrant students to continue with their higher education once they are out of high school, but the Pentagon has its own reasons to look forward to this 'immigration reform': a 'hidden provision in the DREAM Act ... would tie permanent legal residency to military service.' Offering oppressed immigrants the 'choice' of racist persecution or 'earning' citizenship by serving as cannon fodder for the class enemy is a tried-and-true recruiting method for the U.S. war machine."

Recently, the Class Struggle Education Workers newsletter (October-December 2010) published a note on "DREAMS of Citizenship, Nightmare of War," saying that this deceptive bill in reality "is a Trojan Horse for the Pentagon to target the already vulnerable Latino population, together with ad campaigns like 'Yo Soy el Army'."

In case anyone had any doubts about this, *USA Today* (24 September) spelled it out, noting that in "the less publicized part" of the DREAM Act, "the Pentagon is pushing for it as a means to staff the armed forces" in the face of a looming "crisis in military manpower." The article quotes Jorge Mariscal, director of Latino studies at the University of California-San

Diego, who stressed that many families of undocumented students are too poor to pay for college education: "Our concern is that people are just going to get trapped for economic reasons into the military."

Several statements by Latino immigrant youths are being circulated saying they no longer back the DREAM Act, for a number of reasons. A September 17 letter by Raúl Al-qaraz Ochoa, "My Painful Withdrawal of Support for the DREAM Act," noted how the Democrats are using it "as a political stunt to appeal to Latino voters for the November elections." Raúl's letter was greeted by many. One Latina wrote: "thanks a million for voicing... these feelings and reflections out. I think many of us have felt afraid and impotent to hold this conversation." Latino youth

No Alliance with Democratic Pols!

Last March 4, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs participated in protests in New York as part of a national day of action in defense of public education (see reports in *Revolution* No. 7, April 2010). We warned, however, that the coalition calling for the March 4 rally was a "platform for class-collaboration," the purpose of which, far from organizing a powerful worker-student struggle, was to unite students and workers with supposed allies in the capitalist Democratic party. This is the war party that from Albany to the White House is leading the charge to destroy public education in the service of Wall Street! Sure enough, the star speaker at the March 4 citywide rally was Democratic city councilman Charles Barron, who called on the protesters to "support" Democratic governor and budget-cutter-in-chief David Paterson!

Now Barron is officially part of the October 7 protest coalition. While currently running for governor on the ballot line of the recently formed Freedom Party, he remains emphatically a Democratic member of the New York City Council. The inclusion of Democrats by the protest organizers (many of whom claim to be socialists) is a promise that the "movement" they are building won't go beyond the limits of what's acceptable to the capitalist class. Such a coalition can only be an obstacle to any serious attempt to mobilize the kind of class power needed to stop the attacks on public education. Any real fight against tuition hikes, budget cuts, union-busting and imperialist war is centrally a fight against the Democratic Party with whom the phony socialists want to ally.

in the Vamos Unidos group in the Bronx wrote that they now oppose the DREAM Act as a “de facto, military draft” targeting undocumented immigrants.

The October 7 NYC demonstration “in defense of public education” originally called for passage of the DREAM Act. In the face of mounting opposition to it, that demand mysteriously disappeared from some e-mail messages for the demo. However, it is still on the official flyers and call. The organizers knew long ago what the DREAM Act was about, but they went along with it because as always they tail after Democratic

liberals, just as they did in organizing a “socialist contingent” for the pro-Democratic Party get-out-the-vote mobilization in Washington on October 2.

The Internationalist Clubs oppose the draft (military conscription) for the imperialist army, and have taken the lead in defending undocumented immigrant students, as we did in the fall of 2001 in initiating the several-hundred-strong mobilization against CUNY’s “war purge” of immigrant students. *We demand: full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

Abolish the Board of Trustees! **For Student-Teacher-Worker Control of CUNY!**

Part of the revolutionary program of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs that sets us apart from those who just want to reform the system is our attitude toward the university administration. As we exposed in “Look Who’s Trusteeing at CUNY” (*Revolution* No. 5, September 2008), the CUNY Board of Trustees (BoT), like similar “public” governing boards nationwide, is a den of union-busters, McCarthyite witch-hunters, police-state enthusiasts and other ideological opponents of public education.

It is this BoT that has been campaigning longest and loudest to raise tuition at CUNY and eliminate remedial English and math programs, effectively driving out many poor, working-class, minority and immigrant students. Recently, CUNY Trustee and former FBI counter-intelligence agent Jeffrey Wiesenfeld signed onto the hate campaign against the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque.” We internationalists demonstrated in defense of the proposed Islamic center against the Muslim-bashing bigots.

The CUNY Internationalist Clubs call for the BoT and its campus administrations to be *abolished*, and for CUNY to be run by democratic bodies of students, teachers and workers! Moreover, the private universities, those bastions of class and race privilege, should be expropriated and annexed to a free and universal public university system.

We noted: “[The BoT’s] composition corresponds to its function: to run CUNY in the interests, not of the people who work and study here, but of the parasitic elite of money-men, speculators, real-estate moguls and ruling-class politicians.” The reformist organizers of the October 7 rally carefully avoid the issue of who controls education, no doubt figuring it would cause problems with their desired Democratic Party “allies.”

In fact, one of the first things the International Socialist Organization (ISO) did in response to the current round of cuts and tuition hikes was to author a petition to Hunter College President Jennifer Raab, who was a political flack for Republican former mayor Rudolph Giuliani, calling on her to “come out against tuition hikes and support student activities in opposition to tuition hikes.” Like calling for a boss to support a union organizing drive.

Recently one prominent campus leftist, Frances Villar, a former NYC mayoral candidate for the Party for Socialism and

Liberation (PSL) and spokesman for its ANSWER Coalition, went a step further. Villar, a student bureaucrat at Lehman College who is on the University Student Senate (the tame “student government” owned by the CUNY administration) ran for the token student seat on the BoT. (Only USS delegates can vote in this election.)

No mention of socialism, though. Her election platform was full of calls for things like “university pride & parties,” including a CUNY-wide senior ball and “CUNY-wide masquerade ball.” More importantly, her program was pro-administration, pro-U.S. military, and pro-police. She promised to “work with” the anti-student, anti-union CUNY administration and to “help advocate and get the DREAM Act” being pushed by the Pentagon as a way to fill a “manpower gap” with immigrant youth (see above).

But that’s not all: Villar’s manifesto stated she would “Support our CUNY Public Safety Officer[s] in their struggles, because they are one of us!!” Really??!! We’ve seen the CUNY cops “struggling” – like when they savagely beat Hostos Community College student leader Miguel Malo for the “crime” of holding up a sign during a campus protest against cuts to ESL classes in 2001. Or when they attacked parents with pepper spray at a graduation ceremony at Medgar Evers College in 2003.

No, the campus cops are not “one of us” – they’re one of them, the oppressors. CUNY “Public Safety” officers are armed with a staggering weapons stockpile with “100,000 rounds of ammunition, including at least 4,000 rounds of nine-millimeter hollow point bullets” which even the NYPD are not supposed to have (*Village Voice*, 5 May 1999). Anyone who’s been to a campus protest should know which side the cops are on: they are the armed fist of the capitalist government and its school administrations whose job is to repress us if we fight for our rights.

PSL/ANSWER has its own experience with the police at student-faculty demonstrations: *this group called the cops on a protest* by CUNY Contingents Unite and students against tuition hikes, budget cuts and layoffs outside a BoT meeting at Baruch college in December 2008 (see “What Program to Fight the Crisis” in *Revolution* No. 6, April 2009).

The Internationalist Clubs demand: *All cops off campus! Abolish the Board of Trustees! For Student-Teacher-Worker Control of CUNY!*

Teacher Tenure...

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fighting union leadership would point out how the new procedures can be used to victimize teachers. Instead the UFT's leader washes his hands of a crucial decision determining a teacher's future.

On one issue after another, the UFT bureaucrats bow to the initial step in the offensive on teachers' rights, then complain they were "betrayed" when the assault keeps on coming. They accepted linking teacher ratings to student test scores, on an "experimental" and "confidential" basis of course, then scream when the DOE wants to publish the teachers' individual scores in the press and use them for tenure decisions. Administrators will go after teachers by pushing them down the "effectiveness scale" increments until they are pushed out the door.

The UFT must stand up to defend teacher tenure instead of how it didn't defend seniority transfers. Already chancellor-designate Black is saying that she wants to lay off experienced teachers so she can get "younger, newer, fresher ideas" (*Daily News*, 6 December). The handwriting is on the wall. ■

Haiti Elections...

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From Earthquake to Cholera

Despite all the hoopla about providing shelter, more than 1.3 million Haitians are still living in tents and (mostly) under tarps in 1,376 camps strewn about the ruins of Port-au-Prince. Very little of the rubble has been removed. After the quake Haiti was inundated with missionaries and "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) financed by various governments, international agencies, capitalist foundations and humanitarian telethons. In a much publicized "donors' summit" at the United Nations at the end of March, presided over by Hillary and Bill Clinton, almost US\$10 billion in reconstruction aid was pledged, half of that in the first two years. However, not even 30% was ever concretized in firm commitments, and altogether less than a tenth of the amount promised has arrived in Haiti.

The U.N.-appointed Haiti Interim Reconstruction Commission (HIRC) headed by Bill Clinton approved \$1.6 billion in projects last August, but these are still mostly on paper. Another meeting of the HIRC was scheduled to be held in Port-au-Prince in mid-December, but Clinton decided to move it to the Dominican Republic because of fear of cholera: result, no Haitians attended. But one form of "humanitarian aid" is functioning: the city of Pétiion-Ville, home to a camp managed by Hollywood film star Sean Penn, has set up a "clearance plan" offering inhabitants of the camp at Place Saint-Pierre 15,000 gourdes (about US\$400) to get out. "The amount is not enough to relocate, but those who refuse are being forced to leave anyway" (*Ouest France*, 21 December).

During the June-September hurricane season, the camps were regularly inundated. Health officials repeatedly warned of the danger of an epidemic due to lack of sanitation and contaminated water supplies. Then in October, a cholera

epidemic broke out in the central Haitian region of Artibonite. Once again much emergency aid was promised by the "international community," but very little delivered. At last count (26 December 2010), the U.N. Health Cluster says that almost 150,000 cholera cases have been reported, more than 80,000 have been hospitalized and more than 3,300 have died.

Cholera was an unknown disease in Haiti, which had not experienced a case in over a century. The panic-stricken population and medical professionals alike wondered where it came from. Soon the finger was pointed at a MINUSTAH base. U.N. officials issued denials and refused an investigation. Still, Haitians demonstrated with signs proclaiming "MINUSTAH = Kolera," blaming the occupation troops for bringing in the disease. The U.N. troops shot down demonstrators, claiming "self-defense." Imperialist media cautioned against ignorant suspicion.

But a month and a half later a suppressed report by an epidemiologist dispatched by the French government, Renaud Piarroux, revealed by *Le Monde* (5 December 2010), placed the origins of the outbreak at the MINUSTAH base. No longer able to deny it, on December 9 the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, a U.S. government agency, which until then had said tracking down the source was "not a good use of resources," finally admitted that the strain of cholera in Haiti, a particularly virulent form, was virtually identical to one that hit Katmandu, Nepal last summer, shortly before the Nepalese troops departed to join the MINUSTAH base in Artibonite.

The MINUSTAH occupation troops should be driven out of Haiti, not only because they are responsible for the cholera epidemic which has killed more than 3,000 Haitians in two and a half months, but also because the "mission" of these "peacekeepers" from the outset has been to "stabilize" Haiti by brutally repressing the population in the interests of U.S. imperialism. The Brazilian-led force was brought into Haiti to replace the U.S./French/Canadian forces who had invaded in March 2004 in order to oust populist president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was bundled off to Central Africa. Although installed as president by Democrat Bill Clinton a decade earlier, Aristide was persona non grata to the Republican conservatives around President George W. Bush.

While some on the left scandalously supported the U.S. military invasion of Haiti following the earthquake, buying the Pentagon lies that its aircraft carriers and paratroops were supplying humanitarian aid,¹ and various reformists called on the U.S. imperialism to supply "aid not troops," the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have called throughout for *U.S. and U.N. troops and police to get out of Haiti*. Our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil have campaigned for this, winning the support of Rio de Janeiro state and national teachers unions for resolutions calling for the expulsion of the Brazilian military from Haiti – and from the *favelas* (slums) of Rio, where troops and officers use counterinsurgency techniques perfected in occupying the shantytowns of Haiti.

¹ See "Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti" and "SL Twists and Turns on Haiti" in *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010.

Sham Elections Ordered by Washington

Barely ten days after mass demonstrations in a number of Haitian cities demanding that U.N. troops get out, “elections” were held on November 28 in which the country’s main party, Fanmi Lavalas, was excluded and less than a quarter of the voters cast ballots. It was absurd from the outset to hold elections in such conditions, but the vote was ordered from Washington in order to provide a veneer of “democratic” legitimation to the U.S./U.N. occupation under the MINUSTAH mercenaries and imperialist donors’ protectorate under Bill Clinton’s HIRC.

Various personalities joined the contest, including the Haitian American hip hop star Wyclef Jean who was barred on the grounds that he hasn’t lived in Haiti for years. Washington likely favored Mirlande Manigat, the wife of Leslie Manigat who was briefly president under a military junta in 1988. The candidate sponsored by the Inite (Unity) party of the current, widely despised president René Préval was a non-entity, Jude Célestin, the head of the government road construction unit.

Another entertainer, Michel (“Sweet Mickey”) Martelly, was a leading contender. The imperialist media focused on Martelly’s tendency to drop his pants on stage during performances. They neglected to mention that he was a close associate of the head of Haiti’s death squads, Lt. Colonel Michel François; was a prominent supporter of the 2004 coup against Aristide; was a close associate of U.S. military officials and intelligence operatives; was a defender of the “Tontons Macoutes” thugs who terrorized the poor under the Duvalier dictatorship; and during the years of military dictatorship ran a nightclub frequented by the military elite.

Unrest broke out during the voting itself as thousands of voters were prevented from voting because their names were not on the official lists (although many who died in the earthquake were listed). The protests got serious when Préval’s hand-picked Provisional Electoral Council announced that the official candidate Célestin had nudged out Martelly for second place, so that he would run against Manigat in the runoff election. Crowds of Martelly supporters took to the streets, burning tires and calling to “hang Préval.” But the anger over the phony elections (which many called a “selection”), the non-existent reconstruction, the U.N. occupation and everything else was so great that the protests turned into a more general revolt.

Now the Organization of American States (OAS), that imperialist agency which Ché Guevara rightly called a “Yankee ministry of colonies,” has taken control of the election process, displacing Préval and his electoral council. The second round has been put off until February, to permit a recount of the fraudulent November 28 vote, thus prolonging the political impasse. With everyone from right-wing Macoutes like Martelly to left-wing organizations like Batay Ouvrye protesting the election mess, there has been a good deal of political maneuvering.

Today, while opposing the bourgeois populist wing of the Haitian bourgeoisie around Préval, as well as the business elite and death squad supporters around Manigat and Martelly, B.O. talks of the need to organize a second “camp” on the program of “autonomy,” with “the goal of a regime in the interests of the popular masses, of the working masses, of the working class” (Declaration

No. 2, “On the Electoral Process,” 2 December 2010). But the struggle is one of classes, not of “camps,” and what’s needed is a struggle for *workers* power, supported by the vast masses of rural and urban poor, for a workers and peasants government. And to lead this struggle what’s needed is a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class, built on not on some nebulous concept of “autonomy” but on the program of permanent revolution, that proceeds from democratic to socialist tasks.

Beset by earthquakes and cholera, with more than a million people living on the street, blocked from rebuilding by a government of kleptocrats, exploited by avaricious capitalists who profit from the misery of the workers, groaning under an imperialist occupation by U.N. mercenary troops, and facing the guns of a “national” police force made up of former death squad members, the weakness of the tiny Haitian working class in the face of the enormous forces arrayed against it is obvious. But that only means that it must look to its class allies, fellow workers on the other side of the border in the Dominican Republic and in North America, where hundreds of thousands of Haitian émigrés reside.

The Internationalist Group, which has been active in defending Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic and the U.S., urges that even relatively modest forces can make a start in building sorely needed working-class solidarity by mobilizing against the threatened deportation of Haitian refugees to their ruined homeland – an act of such spectacular cruelty that it could be blocked, even in the present atmosphere of racist hysteria over “illegal immigration,” by a determined opposition that brings out the Haitian immigrant population while appealing the most conscious sectors of the U.S. labor movement. ■

League for the Fourth International

LFI, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Internationalist Group/U.S.

Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.
Tel. (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711
E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Brazil: write to Caixa Postal 084027, CEP 27251-740, Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Rio de Janeiro: write to Caixa Postal 3982, CEP 20001-974, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil
E-mail: lqb1996@yahoo.com.br

LIVI/Deutschland

Germany: write to Postfach 74 06 41, 22096 Hamburg, Germany

Grupo Internacionalista/México

Mexico: write to Apdo. Postal 70-379, Admón. de Correos No. 70, CP 04511, México, D.F., Mexico
E-mail: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx

A Year After the Earthquake, Over a Million Still Homeless **Haiti: Occupation Elections** **In Times of Cholera**



Haiti: Liberte

On November 18, anniversary of the last battle for Haiti's independence, thousands demonstrated in Port-au-Prince demanding that the MINUSTAH occupation forces leave.

Drive Out U.N. Troops, Police – Bill Clinton Keep Out!

Almost a year after the monster earthquake that killed upwards of 300,000 people and flattened Haiti's capital last January (2010), the hard-hit Caribbean nation is in truly dire straits. Already one of the most impoverished countries in the world in "normal" times, it has had to deal not only with the vast destruction – almost none of which has been rebuilt – but also with a deadly epidemic of cholera, a crudely rigged election that is still dragging on, a corrupt and barely functioning government, and a mercenary occupation force that has brutally repressed the Haitian population for the last six years. And now, adding insult to injury, two days before the January 12 anniversary of the quake, the United States government plans to start deporting Haitians back to the devastated island!

Haiti, the first black republic in the world, resulting from the only successful slave revolution in history, is oppressed by capitalism and imperialism like nowhere else on the planet today. Blockaded by the former colonial masters for most of the 19th century, repeatedly invaded and occupied by the U.S. in

the 20th and 21st, it has been saddled for decades with rulers selected by the imperial overlords. The latest is Bill Clinton, the former U.S. president who is now Haiti's neocolonial *gouverneur*, controlling the billions in promised reconstruction aid – little of which has materialized. And while the U.S. troops who seized control of Haiti last January using the pretext of providing humanitarian aid are now gone, the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (MINUSTAH) remains.

Haiti today is in desperate need of a new revolution led by its workers and backed by the huge numbers of urban and rural poor. And Haitians are fighting back. In November tens of thousands went into the streets denouncing the MINUSTAH for bringing cholera to Haiti and demanding that the occupation troops and cops leave. In December, thousands protested the sham election. *But ultimately, the key to any revolution is in the United States*, seat of the empire as well as home to hundreds of thousands of Haitian immigrants and refugees.

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