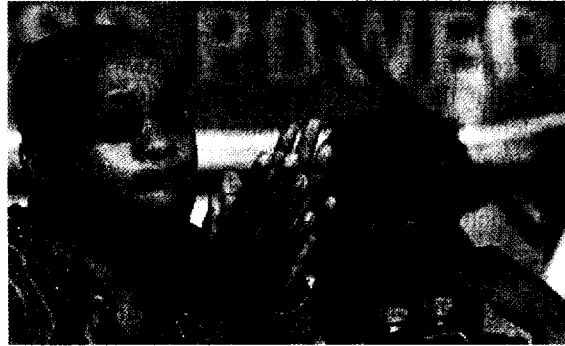




Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Fight for a Black-Centred Workers Government!



Siphiwe Sibeko/Reuters



AP



FIFA

Top: Police terror against protests in Siyathemba township in Winter; Jacob Zuma with SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande, partners in capitalist Tripartite Alliance government. Bottom: July strike of construction workers outside Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg

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Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Fight for a Black-Centred Workers Government!

The African National Congress (ANC) wasted no time after sweeping the April parliamentary elections to demonstrate that the new government under Jacob Zuma would crack down on strikes and township protests. The day after the elections, military personnel were called on to break a strike by doctors demanding overdue pay hikes and more funds for the overburdened, hellish public health system. Municipal workers who struck this winter for a rise in their paltry wages were attacked by cops firing rubber bullets and thrown in jail. Protesters throughout the country demanding houses, roads and sewage systems for their impoverished townships have met with similar treatment.

Like the “neoliberal” Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela before him, the populist Zuma is doing his job as chief of the *capitalist state*—an apparatus of organised violence, based centrally on the police, military and prisons, that is wielded on behalf of the filthy-rich ruling class against the overwhelmingly black masses they exploit and oppress. This bourgeois *class dictatorship*, which continues to defend a system of white privilege, is cloaked by the “non-racial democracy” that was installed in 1994, when white-supremacist apartheid rule was replaced by a government led by the ANC and its Tripartite Alliance partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

As revolutionary Marxists, Spartacist South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), declared that no party in the April elections represented the interests of the working class and the poor. The SACP and COSATU bureaucracy worked overtime to get out the vote for the ANC, tirelessly portraying Zuma as a “friend” of the workers as opposed to the leaders of the Congress of the People (C.O.P.E.), who split from the ANC to the right after Mbeki was ousted as president last year. But as we wrote in *Workers Vanguard* No. 933 (27 March), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.: “Despite the ANC’s ‘pro-worker’ and ‘pro-poor’ rhetoric, the ANC and C.O.P.E.

are both bourgeois-nationalist—i.e., capitalist—parties” that “represent the interests of the aspiring black bourgeoisie and the predominantly white capitalist ruling class”.

At the core of the recent spate of strikes and protests is the explosive anger at the base of society over the failure of the Tripartite Alliance, after 15 years in power, to fulfill expectations of social and economic equality for the majority. Township protesters complain that they voted for a better life but what they have is getting worse. Striking postal workers demanded the closing of the apartheid wage gap. Adding to longstanding mass unemployment, the world recession has thrown hundreds of thousands more out of work.

A new study shows that the chasm between the wealthy at the top and the masses at the bottom has become the largest in the world, surpassing that in Brazil. The wealthiest are overwhelmingly white and enjoy First World living conditions, while blacks as well as coloured and Indian toilers are at Third World levels. This is a damning indictment of the SACP/COSATU misleaders, who promised the masses that the alliance with the bourgeois ANC would bring social transformation and equality. The result instead was neo-apartheid capitalism. While the political superstructure underwent a major change with the end of the apartheid system of rigid, legally enforced racial segregation and subjugation, the foundation of the capitalist economy remains the superexploitation of mainly black labour.

As the black majority’s anger over their unbearable conditions continues to build, the Zuma government has made clear its intention to beef up the state’s arsenal of repression against labour and the poor. On the opening day of the COSATU national congress in September, Zuma lectured delegates about “violent strikes”. In a speech a week later, he supported giving cops more leeway to “shoot to kill”, supposedly to fight South Africa’s “abnormal criminal problem”. Zuma’s reprimands, echoed by COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, did not go down well at the COSATU congress. Leaders of the SAMWU municipal

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workers and SATAWU transport workers unions criticised the top COSATU leadership for failing to condemn police attacks on their strikes this year. But these same unions include cops and security guards whose job is to defend capitalist rule and profits by violently repressing workers and the poor. SSA demands: Cops and security guards out of the unions!

To justify their class-collaborationist alliance with the bourgeois ANC, the SACP and COSATU tops speak of a “developmental state” under the ANC in which the working class must fight for “hegemony”. This claptrap was answered almost 140 years ago by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Summing up the lessons of the 1871 Paris Commune, the founders of scientific socialism insisted that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes” (1872 preface to a German edition of the *Communist Manifesto*). The capitalist state must be smashed through socialist revolution and replaced with a workers state—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Based on this fundamental Marxist understanding, SSA fights for a black-centred workers government that would expropriate the capitalist bloodsuckers and build a society where the wealth created by labour is used for the benefit of all. Socialist transformation, extending throughout Southern Africa, would depend above all on the victory of proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries of the U.S., West Europe and Japan, where the workers are ruthlessly exploited and, in times like the current economic crisis, thrown onto the scrap heap. It will take an international socialist planned economy, based on the highest level of technology, to lift the urban and rural masses out of poverty and backwardness and create a classless society of material abundance—the beginning of communist society.

Nationalism and Class Collaboration

Squalor in black and coloured townships; miserable wages for factory workers, miners, teachers and municipal workers; jails jam-packed with black and coloured youth and deaths in police custody rising steadily; the criminal neglect of health care in the midst of the AIDS pandemic and other rampant diseases: all are signs that the masses’ aspirations for social equality and a decent life have not even begun to be met. An education specialist at the Development Bank of Southern Africa gave one stark measure of persistent, deep racial inequality: While one in ten white children get A-level passes in their matriculation exams, the number for black learners is **one in 1,000**. Underlining that blacks continue to be treated as second-class citizens, recently the newly-appointed vice-chancellor of University of the Free State pardoned the so-called “Reitz Four”, inviting them to return to the university in what was grotesquely called an act of “racial reconciliation”. The four white racist students had been kicked out last year following outrage over a video they made of black campus workers being fed urine-laced food and enduring other humiliations, part of a racist campaign resisting integration of campus residences.

The achievement of national liberation for the oppressed majority is inseparable from the emancipation of the overwhelmingly black working class from the chains of capitalist exploitation. It is the proletariat, which can stop the flow of capitalist profits by withdrawing its labour, that has the social power to lead the unemployed and all the urban and

rural poor in overthrowing the murderous capitalist profit system.

A prerequisite for such revolutionary struggle is the political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. In struggling for this basic Marxist principle, we say that the Tripartite Alliance must be broken along **class** lines. The Tripartite Alliance is a nationalist popular front—the South African variant of a governmental coalition binding a reformist workers party to the bourgeoisie. The SACP and COSATU tops perpetuate the illusion that the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be expressed in a common programme, like the “national democratic revolution”. This is the essence of their class collaborationism. In fact, the class interests of the exploited are irreconcilably counterposed to those of their exploiters.

In the early days of the “new South Africa”, telling the truth about the bourgeois class nature of the ANC was fighting words. After 15 years of neo-apartheid capitalism, many working-class militants—including inside the SACP—now will admit that the ANC is a bourgeois party. The critical question is, what programmatic conclusions does one draw from this. Some reformist dissidents use this to argue that the SACP should adopt a more “independent” posture in order to gain more influence within the Tripartite Alliance, thus giving a “left” cover for maintaining the subordination of the working class to its capitalist exploiters in the nationalist popular front. This is counterposed to the programme of class independence of the workers from the bourgeoisie and its parties, which means recognising that the ANC is a party of the class enemy. We seek to win advanced workers to this programmatic understanding, which is needed to politically arm them to fight against the betrayals of the SACP and COSATU tops.

There is growing disgruntlement at the base of the SACP over the more forward role their leaders are playing in the Zuma government. Many are angry that Blade Nzimande took a post as Higher Education Minister in direct violation of the SACP constitution, which specifies that the party’s general secretary must serve full-time as an official of the SACP. (Of course, serving as ANC government ministers has been the rule for leading SACPers ever since the late Joe Slovo was Housing Minister under Mandela.) Nzimande has also been ridiculed for his R1,1 million BMW, which many see as exposing the hypocrisy of SACP leaders who decry the corruption of government ministers.

The SACP is an example of what revolutionary leader V. I. Lenin called a bourgeois workers party, with a working-class base and a pro-capitalist leadership and programme. A revolutionary workers party will be built in political combat against the SACP and other reformist organisations, whose best elements must be won away from their treacherous leaderships to the Leninist-Trotskyist programme. We fight to forge a party modelled on the Bolshevik Party, which under the leadership of Lenin and Leon Trotsky led the workers in Russia to power in the October Revolution of 1917. In South Africa, such a party can only be built independent of **and in opposition to** the bourgeois ANC. This requires a head-on fight against the nationalist ideology that holds the Alliance together and poses the biggest obstacle to winning advanced workers to a Marxist worldview.

Nationalism is a bourgeois ideology that obscures the fundamental class divide in society by preaching the common interests of all who were oppressed under white racist rule. Thus, everyone from government ministers on the gravy train

to black mothers in desolate villages struggling to keep their families fed are told to unite in the “broad church” of the ANC, which the SACP falsely portrays as the party of national liberation.

In South Africa, where the capitalist class is white (now including a handful of others) and the working class is overwhelmingly black, class divisions are hugely distorted by the lens of racial colour. The SACP uses this historic characteristic of South African society to openly and shamelessly advance its popular-front alliance with the ANC. The confusion of race and class fostered by nationalism is seen in the widespread misidentification of all poor and oppressed people—from township unemployed to petty shopkeepers—with the working class, which is defined by its key role in the process of production.

Most dangerous of all is the reformist left’s embrace of the cops as fellow workers. Black cops under apartheid were despised because they were correctly seen as serving the interests of the oppressor. But Alliance apologists say that under the ANC-led “democratic” government, the police serve the people. So a white cop may still be a racist Boer, but a black cop is your “comrade”. Meanwhile, they’re both attacking strikes and firing rubber bullets at township and student protesters.

The Debate About Race

Against a backdrop of strikes and township struggles, the Tripartite Alliance has seen sharpening divisions at the top, mainly pitting elements on the ANC’s right wing against the SACP/COSATU bloc. Former Intelligence chief Billy Masetlha condemned the growing influence of SACP and COSATU leaders at the top of the ANC. Speaking from a bourgeois perspective, he correctly pointed out to the *Mail & Guardian* (9 October) that the ANC “was not founded on a socialist agenda”. Earlier, ANC Youth League (ANCYL) leader Julius Malema sought to take advantage of the unease at the SACP’s base by condemning Blade Nzimande as a fake working-class leader. Malema also made several appeals to the ANC’s plebeian base by pointing to the perpetuation of white privilege, touching off a wide debate in South Africa on the question of race.

In the main, Malema voices the interests of the emerging black bourgeoisie. While spewing reactionary demagoguery about sex under the pretext of fighting “imperialist” concepts, Malema complains about the Zuma government giving whites, coloureds and Indians key economic portfolios. While not naming names, an SACP Central Committee discussion document for an upcoming SACP policy congress responded

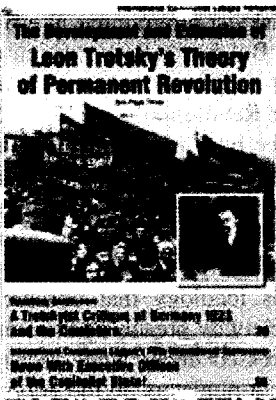
by criticising a “new anti-left tendency” in the ANC espousing “narrow ‘Africanist’ ideology”.

Despite differences in rhetoric and (sometimes) policy, both sides uphold ANC nationalism. For the SACP and the ANC mainstream, this comes wrapped in the doctrine of “non-racialism”, a vague concept mainly defined in opposition to the racially exclusive citizenship and property rights that were the rule under British-dominion and apartheid rule. As Govan Mbeki, a historic leader of both the SACP and the ANC, explained: “The ANC is struggling to form one people, to be represented in one parliament in one country.... The ANC is seeking to forge one nation, building a non-racial democracy in a unitary state” (quoted in Michael MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa* [2006]).

“Non-racialism” promotes the notion that national liberation and social equality for South Africa’s vast majority can be achieved under capitalism. The bankruptcy of this perspective is exposed every day in every way. The stark truth is that 15 years after the demise of apartheid, **whites—joined by a handful of blacks—are still on top and the black masses on the bottom.** “Non-racialism” provides an increasingly flimsy cover for the neo-apartheid capitalist order that is administered by the Tripartite Alliance government.

The continuation of “racialised inequality”, as the SACP document delicately puts it, is not due to the so-called “1996 class project”, which the SACP invokes in order to blame the Mbeki camp for the masses’ misery. The “class project” really began at the ANC’s founding in 1912 by tribal chiefs and others in the black elite. The ANC always represented the interests of an aspiring black bourgeoisie, although there was no meaningful layer of black capitalists until recently. When the ANC consummated its aspirations to share power with the white ruling class in 1994, it was the logical outcome of its programme.

A key factor in the negotiated settlement with the apartheid government was the demise of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state that had been the main sponsor of the ANC and SACP in the international arena and had given military support to their guerrilla actions, largely symbolic, against the apartheid state. With the end of the Cold War, the ANC/SACP quickly came to terms with Western imperialism and its South African junior partner. Nelson Mandela himself assured the capitalists that an ANC-led regime would defend private property. In 1990, even before the ANC came into power, the SACP sent its leader Joe Slovo and NUMSA metalworkers union chief Moses Mayekiso to break a strike by workers at Mercedes-Benz in East London who had occupied their plant. Once in power,



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the Tripartite Alliance imposed austerity and continued to break strikes, from the 1995 nurses strike and the 2000 VW strike to this year's strikes by courageous public hospital doctors.

It was the elementary duty of Marxists to defend the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress and the Azanian People's Organisation against murderous apartheid repression. At the same time, genuine Marxists give no *political* support to such petty-bourgeois and bourgeois parties. Writing after the 1994 elections, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president, the ICL declared: "The ANC-led nationalist movement cannot achieve any semblance of 'liberation' for the nonwhite masses since it is committed to maintaining South African capitalism, which has always been based on the brutal exploitation of the black toilers" ("South Africa Powder Keg", *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12, February 1995).

Against all forms of nationalism, we counterpose the fight for a black-centred workers government as part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa. It will take a workers government centred on the black majority to break the power of the Randlords, expropriate capitalist property and begin the socialist reconstruction of society, finally opening the road to the liberation of the non-white masses. Such a government would not be racially exclusive but would unite the many black tribal- and language-based groups along with the coloured and Indian populations while providing ample room and full democratic rights for those whites who would accept a government centred on the black toilers and join in building a society based on genuine equality.

The call for a black-centred workers government is an application of Leon Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution. Trotsky explained that in the colonial and neocolonial world, where capitalism developed belatedly, the democratic tasks associated with the bourgeois revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries can be achieved only through proletarian revolution. Adequate housing for the millions in the townships, squatter camps and villages, electricity and water for the entire population, free quality education, the eradication of *lobola* (bride price) and other traditional patriarchal practices oppressive to women: these desperately needed measures require the socialist transformation of the economy and society under the dictatorship of the proletariat, fighting to promote socialist revolution internationally.

As Trotsky stressed in an April 1935 letter to his South African comrades: "Insofar as a victorious revolution will radically change not only the relation between the classes, but also between the races, and will assure to the blacks that place in the state which corresponds to their numbers, insofar will the *social* revolution in South Africa also have a *national* character." He continued:

"The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*. The Comintern [Communist International], beginning in 1924, transformed the program of national liberation of colonial people into an empty democratic abstraction which is elevated above the reality of class relations. In the struggle against national oppression different classes liberate themselves (temporarily) from material interests and become simple 'anti-imperialist' forces."

Under the direction of the Stalinised Comintern, the forebears of the SACP adopted the dogma of "two-stage revolution", which they translated as the "national democratic revolution" that would somehow "grow over" into the

socialist revolution. The "two-stage" schema tells workers and the oppressed to subordinate their interests to those of the "progressive" bourgeoisie in the first stage of the revolution, while the second stage—socialism—is relegated to the distant future. In fact, the second stage never comes. From China in 1925-27 to Indonesia in 1965, the "first stage" has ended in the slaughter of Communists, militant workers and peasants. In South Africa, it means the subordination of the SACP to the ANC. The only "growing over" we have seen is some top "Communists" and union leaders becoming millionaires.

The Left and "Nation Building"

In reviving the call for a black-centred workers government, we note that Spartacist South Africa incorrectly stopped using this slogan after 2001. We remarked in "South Africa: For a Black-Centered Workers Government!" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 911, 28 March 2008) that "this deprived us of a crucial weapon in combating the illusion that the 'national democratic revolution' has achieved a 'rainbow nation' based on the ANC's celebrated doctrine of 'non-racialism'". Exemplifying those who purvey such illusions, the Workers International Vanguard League ludicrously claimed that our call "plays into the hands of those who still seek to divide the formerly politically oppressed along ethnic lines" (see our 1998 pamphlet *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacists* No. 1, "A Reply to the Workers International Vanguard League").

Everyone with eyes to see knows that tribal and ethnic divisions in the townships and villages that were consciously fostered by the apartheid regime are thriving under the "new dispensation", where those at the bottom continue to be pitted against each other in a desperate struggle for survival. As the enforcer of austerity, the Alliance government cannot help but perpetuate these divisions and engage in divide-and-rule tactics. ANC veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle and black capitalist Tokyo Sexwale, who is currently the Minister of Human Settlements, infamously remarked in 1994 that protests by impoverished coloured township residents made him vomit. The Democratic Alliance, a party of white privilege espousing "free market" capitalism, was able to defeat the ANC in the April provincial elections in the Western Cape largely through huge gains among coloured voters, many of whom had been alienated by the perceived favouritism of the ANC toward blacks.

The ICL stressed in the 1997 pamphlet, *The Fight for a Revolutionary Vanguard Party: Polemics on the South African Left*, that "if the masses' frustration does not find expression along *class* lines it will fuel and embitter every other kind of division". This result was seen in all its horror in the anti-immigrant pogroms of May 2008. The violence began when Alexandra residents demanding decent housing turned against immigrants in the township, unleashing an orgy of pillage and murder that spread throughout the country. Sixty-two people died in the pogroms, many of them South Africans killed because they "looked like" immigrants or did not belong to whatever the dominant ethnic group was in their area. Tens of thousands of immigrants were forced to flee the country or to try to survive in wretched refugee camps.

We issued a leaflet after the violence broke out calling on COSATU and other unions to mobilise in defense of the besieged immigrants, demanding: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations! Immigrants, who have

always formed a large part of the mining workforce and other components of the economy, must be organised into the unions with full rights and benefits. The unions should fight for jobs and decent housing for all, which could unite the poor across national, tribal and ethnic lines against the common capitalist enemy.

The urgent necessity for such struggle was again seen in this year's township protests, which often turned into attacks on Pakistani and Somali shopkeepers and other immigrants. Standing in the way of a united proletarian fight are the workers' misleaders, who accept the capitalist system of scarcity and promote bigotry against "foreigners" through protectionist "proudly South African" campaigns. The situation cries out for the construction of a multiracial vanguard party that would act as a tribune of the people. Championing all the exploited and oppressed, such a party would, as Lenin wrote in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), "produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation" in order to "clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat".

The SACP/COSATU tops and other proponents of "nation building" accept as sacrosanct the borders drawn up by the British colonialists, who practiced divide-and-rule in Southern Africa and throughout the Empire. South Africa is not a nation but a colonial-derived state comprising many national, tribal and ethnic groups, several of which span the country's borders. As we wrote in "South Africa Powder Keg":

"It is entirely possible that under proletarian class rule a South African nation will evolve through widespread inter-marriage and the development of a common culture and language or languages. However, 'nation building' is in no sense the supreme goal of the socialist revolution, nor will national integration be confined to the people now living within the borders of the South African state."

Only a *socialist federation of Southern Africa* can provide a framework for overcoming the ethnic and tribal divisions bequeathed by the imperialists in a democratic, egalitarian and rational manner.

Marxism vs. Reformist Nationalisation Schemes

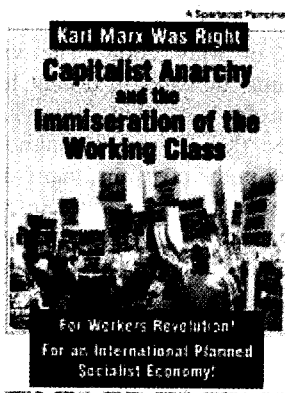
The need to forge a new proletarian leadership that is at once revolutionary and internationalist is underscored by the economic recession, which has led to renewed protectionist

and anti-immigrant chauvinism in South Africa and around the world. The 1938 Transitional Programme, written by Trotsky during the Great Depression as the founding document of the Fourth International, is acutely relevant to today's situation. To solve the problem of mass unemployment, the Transitional Programme calls to shorten the workweek and divide the available work at no loss in pay: **Jobs for all!** We call for massive pay hikes and a sliding scale of wages to keep pace with inflation. To answer the desperate need for houses, schools, roads and hospitals, we demand a massive programme of public works, with labour paid at good union rates. This points to the need for comprehensive economic planning, which the anarchic capitalist profit system cannot provide. Trotsky declared:

"Property owners and their lawyers will prove the 'unrealizability' of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references... The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."

The current economic crisis has thrown "neoliberal" policies, such as banking deregulation, out of favour in bourgeois governments around the world, which have turned to wage-slashing corporate bailouts and other spending to try to kick-start renewed economic growth. No amount of such tinkering can solve the problem of capitalist economic crises, which are *inherent* to an economic system defined by the private ownership of the means of production and the drive for profit (see the 2009 Spartacist pamphlet, *Karl Marx Was Right: Capitalist Anarchy and the Immiseration of the Working Class*.)

Earlier this year, ANCYL leader Julius Malema, the Young Communist League and COSATU officials revived talk about nationalising the mines that constitute the core of the economy. Zuma quickly assured business leaders that the ANC had no intention of nationalising mines and that this was all just a friendly debate inside the Alliance. The talk about



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nationalisation was at bottom just another bourgeois reform scheme. As several commentators pointed out, one factor driving the debate is the failure of some “black economic empowerment” mining enterprises whose owners cannot meet debt repayments and need to be bailed out. After nationalising one or two mines, the government could sell them to some of its cronies.

Giving the ANC some left cover, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), part of the Committee for a Workers’ International, and Keep Left!, followers of the late Tony Cliff, jumped in with calls for “workers control” of nationalised enterprises. These reformists’ entire framework is to pressure the bourgeois Alliance government to serve the interests of workers and the poor. The DSM was buried inside the ANC for more than a decade before declaring in 1996 that the ANC was “pro-capitalist”. The Keep Left! leadership in effect called for a vote to the ANC in the April elections in an article by Alan Goatley and Claire Ceruti in *Socialism from below* (November 2008) on the split of “Terror” Lekota and other Mbekiites from the ANC. The article falsely drew a “class line between the Lekota ANC and the Zuma ANC” and declared that “boycotting is not an option with this choice”.

Malema & Co. lean on the ANC’s 1955 Freedom Charter, with its statement that “the mineral wealth beneath the soil shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole”. There is nothing socialist about the Freedom Charter. At best it poses nationalisation within the framework of capitalism, not uncommon for bourgeois populists in Third World countries dominated by imperialism. Deliberately vague on how the transfer of property is to be realised, the Charter states that “only a democratic state...can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief”. As we noted in “Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party to Fight for Workers Revolution!” (*Spartacist South Africa* No. 5, Spring 2007): “‘The people’ are divided into different classes with counterposed interests. In referring to ‘democracy’, the ANC meant *bourgeois democracy*, which means above all defence of the ‘right’ of the capitalists to exploit the workers.”

Answering Malema in the *Sunday Times* (19 July), Ben Turok, an ANC Member of Parliament and author of the Freedom Charter’s economic clause, wrote: “It was the colonial aspect that the charter sought to reverse, not private ownership of property. It has never been the intention of the ANC to create a command economy by nationalisation, either then or now.” He added: “Certainly, as the ANC moved to a negotiated settlement, there was no suggestion of taking over major industry, and this continues to be the formal policy position.”

Revolutionary Marxists are for the expropriation of the mines, large farms and factories, without compensation to their former owners. This is key to achieving genuine national liberation for the oppressed masses. But it will take a *workers state* to carry this out.

Trotsky noted in the Transitional Programme that while Marxists are for the expropriation of the capitalist class as a whole, it is also appropriate to occasionally call for “the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence, or of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie”. Trotsky continued: “The difference between these demands and the muddleheaded reformist slogan of ‘nationalization’ lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People’s Front who, giving lip service to nationalization, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call on the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers.”

The mining bosses who for more than a century have reaped incredible profits from the superexploitation of mainly black labour should not get one cent in indemnification. Against Vavi, Nzimande, Malema and all the demagogues of the nationalist popular front, we say that only by taking power in their own hands can the workers begin to reconstruct society in their interests. This requires building a Leninist-Trotskyist party in South Africa as part of the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution.

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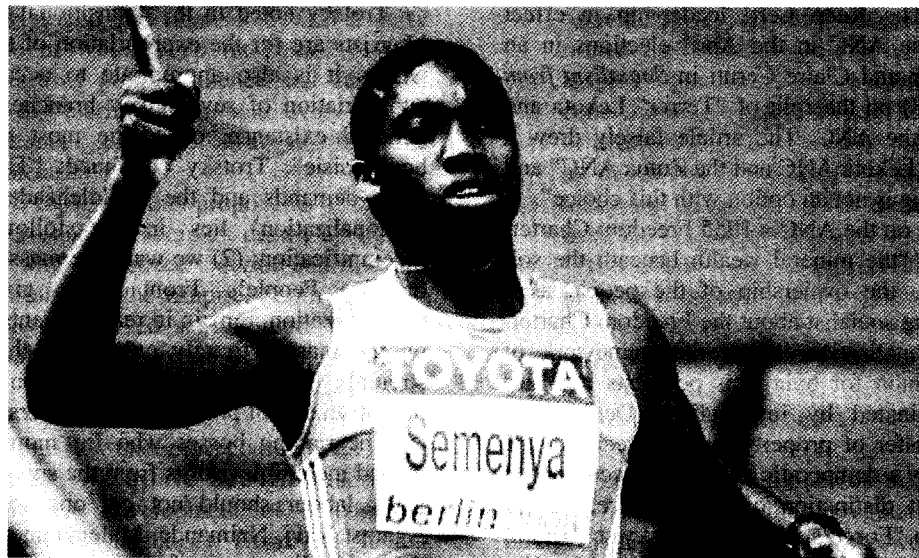
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Racist, Sexist Furore Over Caster Semenya Leave Her Alone!



Caster Semenya wins the 800-metre finals at the world athletics championships in Berlin, August 2009

Photo: Thomas Lohnes/AFP

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 942, 11 September 2009).

JOHANNESBURG, September 7—At last month’s world athletics (track and field) championships in Berlin 18-year-old Mokgadi Caster Semenya, a black woman from an impoverished village in rural South Africa, achieved a stunning victory in the women’s 800-metre race, running the fastest time this year with a huge lead over her competitors. Her accomplishment was all the more impressive given what transpired just before she ran the final: the world media was informed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) that Semenya was being subjected to “gender verification” testing. After Semenya won the gold medal, an IAAF spokesman announced that she would be stripped of the medal if tests showed that she was not a woman.

Caster Semenya was able to become a world champion athlete despite growing up in a country where the degraded status of women is reflected in traditional practices such as *lobola* (bride price) and polygamy, which reduce women to property to be bought and sold into marriage. Yet it was in Berlin that she faced the ultimate humiliation at the hands of athletics officials and doctors who wanted to prod and poke her young body to determine whether she had an “unfair

advantage” over her competitors because she is not female enough. The treatment of this athlete, who has struggled to overcome the barriers of race, sex and class in neo-apartheid South Africa, has ignited a firestorm of indignation and protest from all quarters in this country, and beyond. It has been aptly described as a modern-day version of the abuse of Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman who was taken to Europe in 1810 to be studied and exhibited as an anthropological and sexual curiosity (“the Hottentot Venus”) and whose brain and genitals remained on display in the Paris Musée de l’Homme until at least 1974.

The IAAF is well aware that there was nothing questionable about Semenya’s performance, which was slower than that of the woman gold medallist in last year’s Olympics. The vilification of Semenya, in which the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* had a hand, has everything to do with race and sex. As Semenya’s mother bluntly stated, “They’re just jealous because they don’t want black people improving their status” ([London] *Guardian*, 23 August).

Black South African athletes suffered “double apartheid” for many years. Under the system of apartheid segregation, the country’s white capitalist rulers denied most black athletes the material and legal means to participate in organised sport at the national and international level. This isolation was exacerbated by the international boycott of everything South

African promoted by anti-apartheid liberals throughout the 1960s to '80s. While apartheid formally ended in 1994, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first black president, sport, like other aspects of life, still reflects the poverty and deprivation of the oppressed non-white masses.

The Politics of Biology

In Caster Semenya's case, the most advanced forms of medical testing, including genetics and endocrinology, are to be used to supposedly determine her sex. The IAAF states that it is not accusing Semenya of knowingly cheating by trying to pass for a woman. Instead, according to their cruel logic, they are checking whether, unbeknownst to her and her family, she is not really female. As some have pointed out, Semenya's rapid improvement as an athlete can be explained in large part by the fact that last year she moved from a rural backwater with virtually no sporting facilities and enrolled as a student of sport science at the University of Pretoria, where for the first time she received high-quality training as a runner.

Semenya is hardly unique among women athletes in having what is deemed a "masculine" appearance. Legendary Mozambican 800-metre champion Maria Mutola was dogged throughout her career by similar speculation that she was not really female. Compare this with the treatment of white South African runner Zola Budd who was described merely as "tomboyish". But even when it comes to the question of "sex determination", research shows that one in 1,000 people are born with an "intersex" condition ("The Gender Trap", guardian.co.uk, 30 July 2008). According to the Intersex Society of North America, the term "intersex" is used to describe a variety of conditions in which a person's sexual anatomy doesn't fit the typical medical definitions of male and female. There are also chromosomal and adrenal anomalies that are sometimes described by this term. As Alice Dreger, a professor of medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University, pointed out to the *New York Times*: "It turns out genes, hormones and genitals are pretty complicated. There isn't really one simple way to sort out males and females. Sports require that we do, but biology doesn't care. Biology does not fit neatly into simple categories, so they do these tests." Dreger said, "But at the end of the day, they are going to have to make a social decision on what counts as male and female, and they will wrap it up as if it is simply a scientific decision" ("Gender Test After a Gold Medal Finish", 19 August).

In fact, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) abolished universal gender testing after the Atlanta games in 1996, where eight women "failed" the tests but were cleared after challenging the results. Seven of these women were found to have an intersex condition. Such gender testing in Olympic sports began in 1968 at around the same time that anabolic steroid use by athletes came under scrutiny. Much of the hysteria against steroid use and accusations of cheating by having men compete as women were whipped up against the former Soviet degenerated workers state, as well as the East European deformed workers states, as part of the anti-Communist Cold War. Czech runner Jarmila Kratochvilova was dogged by gender and steroids accusations after setting the world record in Semenya's event in 1983, a record which still stands. Such anti-Communist accusations of cheating also did the rounds in the bourgeois press around the Olympic

Games in China last year, such as the imputation that China had lied about the age of some of its champion female gymnasts.

Anti-Communism also plays a role in the attacks on Caster Semenya. An article in the *Mail & Guardian* (28 August) focuses on one of her coaches, Ekkart Arbeit, who was the head coach of the athletics team of the former DDR (East Germany) and a key target of the furore whipped up over the "doping" of athletes. Such accusations were used to deny the enormous advantages of the planned economies of the bureaucratically deformed workers states, where capitalism was overthrown. As Katarina Witt, the world champion East German figure skater, recalled, "The state provided for me.... Skating is rather expensive, and in East Germany all the equipment and the time on the ice that you needed were provided" (*Times* online, 25 May 2003).

The IOC and IAAF have continued the practice of "gender testing" if a complaint is made about a particular athlete. These tests are supposed to be kept private, but in Semenya's case she and her coaches were clearly pressured by IAAF officials to have her drop out of the competition prior to the final, including by making public the accusation that she is not a woman. The IAAF has managed to take to truly grotesque levels the regular humiliation Caster Semenya has been subjected to here in South Africa, such as bathroom inspections demanded by rival teams in local athletics competitions. Today it was reported that after Semenya returned from the African championships in Mauritius in July, she was given gender tests that she thought were just standard drug tests. Her coach, Wilfred Daniels, has resigned and apologised to the athlete for the way he and Athletics South Africa, the sport's national governing body, had handled the whole debacle. The devastating consequences of such high-tech "gender testing" as the IAAF practices were seen in the case of Santhi Soundarajan, an Indian runner whose brief hope of lifting her family out of dire poverty in the state of Tamil Nadu was shattered after she "failed" a gender test and was stripped of an Asian Games 800-metre medal in 2006. Soundarajan subsequently tried to commit suicide.

The cruel and twisted treatment of Semenya and other athletes before her who have faced scrutiny for not looking sufficiently "feminine" is an expression of the reactionary sexual stereotyping upheld as the norm in capitalist society. These stereotypes along with entrenched male and female gender roles flow from the institution of the family, which is the main social source of oppression of women, youth and homosexuals in class society. The institution of the family, along with organised religion and traditional authority, serves as a key prop for the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression by instilling subservience to authority and ensuring that the task of rearing the next generation of wage slaves falls largely on the shoulders of the domestic slaves, women. Anything that deviates from the family "ideal" is thus viewed as a threat to social order, whether it be gay sex or giving women control over reproduction through access to contraception and abortion.

The consequences of not conforming to these reactionary sexual stereotypes are often quite brutal in South Africa, where women suspected of being lesbians are targets for "corrective rape" as with the gang rape and murder in 2008 of former women's soccer star and gay rights activist Eudy Simelane ("Raped and Killed for Being a Lesbian: South Africa Ignores 'Corrective' Attacks", guardian.co.uk, 12

March). This murder echoed that of AIDS activist Gugu Dlamini in 1998 by a rabid mob who beat her senseless for having the courage to talk openly about her disease and sex life. In Durban in 2007, Zandile Mpanza was stripped naked and paraded by a group of men who then burnt her house down for violating a rule against women wearing pants in the area of their hostel. South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world, and for those women who even try to report the crime, the result is generally further humiliation at the hands of the police and the courts.

Such violent abuse is the most extreme reflection of the degraded status of women more generally in South Africa, which is also measured in high rates of HIV/AIDS infection and death among women, with a high maternal mortality rate along with infant mortality that has worsened since 1990. The intersection of racial, sexual and class oppression in South Africa is in many ways epitomised by the legions of black women who toil in the most menial of domestic service and cleaning jobs in the wealthy, white suburbs, just as they did under apartheid.

For a Black-Centred Workers Government!

South African athletics officials along with the Tripartite Alliance government have vigorously protested the treatment of Caster Semenya, with Parliament planning to lodge a complaint with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights because the gender tests constituted a “gross and severe undermining of rights and privacy”. The government organised a “hero’s welcome” for Semenya and other gold medallists upon their return to the country along with a meeting with the president, Jacob Zuma. The justified outrage over the abuse of Semenya is predictably being used by the capitalist government of the bourgeois-nationalist African National Congress (ANC) and its partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the COSATU trade-union bureaucracy, to whip up a frenzy of nationalist pride, complete with “anti-imperialist” rhetoric. Yet it is these very same leaders who for 15 years have administered a system of neo-apartheid capitalism in South Africa, where the economic order continues to be based on white privilege and the superexploitation of the overwhelmingly black working class by the Randlords and their imperialist partners.

The misleaders of the working class in the SACP and COSATU bureaucracy seek to obscure the reality that they themselves are responsible for maintaining the capitalist system which perpetuates racial, national and women’s oppression. The SACP/Young Communist League and COSATU spokesmen piously preach the need to defend

women’s rights, while defending a bourgeois constitution that enshrines the authority of tribal chiefs and elders who enforce a benighted social order in rural areas. That practices such as abducting women into marriage continue in some parts of the country gives a sense of how fraudulent the SACP’s purported “national democratic revolution” really is. What we wrote ten years ago remains true today:

“While the African National Congress-led bourgeois-nationalist government of Nelson Mandela has put on paper some of the broadest liberal democratic laws—striking down prohibitions on homosexual sex, legalising abortion and promising free health care to pregnant women and their children—all these legal provisions amount to a cruel hoax.... This capitalist government cannot and will not deliver on promises of quality health care for women, housing, jobs, education or anything else the population desperately needs.”

—“Brutal Murder of South African AIDS Activist”, *Workers Vanguard* No. 706, 5 February 1999

The only road forward in addressing the triple oppression of race, sex and class faced by black women in South Africa is that of permanent revolution. Genuine national and social liberation will be realised only through the expropriation of the capitalists and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We fight for a **black-centred workers government**. There can be no justice in South Africa until the non-white majority has power in a workers state that would unite the many black tribal- and language-based groups along with the Coloured (mixed-race) and Indian populations, with ample room and full democratic rights for those whites who would join in building a society based on genuine equality. Proletarian revolution will put the enormous wealth of this country at the disposal of the workers and poor. Only by extending socialist revolution internationally, especially to the imperialist centres, and building a world socialised planned economy can the material conditions of life for the masses of southern Africa and the rest of the neocolonial world be lifted up to a level of material abundance for all.

Such a revolutionary overturn will make it possible to eliminate the material roots of women’s oppression: to replace the institution of the family with socialised childcare and housework, thus freeing women from domestic servitude. This is the programme that Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party sought to carry out in the young Soviet workers state following the October Revolution of 1917. Our task is to build a revolutionary workers party like the Bolshevik Party that will act as a tribune of the people, a defender of all the oppressed, to lead the fight for socialist revolution as part of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International.

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All U.S./NATO Troops Out of Afghanistan, Iraq! Down With Obama's War in Afghanistan!

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 942, 11 September 2009), newspaper of the *Spartacist League/U.S.*, section of the *International Communist League*.

SEPTEMBER 6—The Afghan presidential elections held on August 20 were never meant to be anything but a “democratic” veneer for the American-led imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. But within days of the elections, even the veneer disappeared amid a welter of charges and countercharges of ballot stuffing and vote rigging. Whether current president Hamid Karzai manages to steal the elections outright or there is a runoff with his main challenger Abdullah Abdullah, the real rulers are the mass murderers in the White House and Pentagon. On September 4, a U.S./NATO airstrike near Kunduz killed some 90 people, the latest in ongoing airstrikes that have slaughtered thousands in Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan.

The more significant fact overshadowing the elections is that the U.S./NATO occupiers have been losing ground militarily. The Pashtun-based Taliban insurgency now covers an estimated 40 percent of the country's districts. Southern Afghanistan is now largely outside government control, while major cities like Kabul and Jalalabad are being squeezed. Obama's troop “surge” has increased the fighting in southern Helmand province, a Taliban stronghold, with U.S. military casualties in July-August at their highest levels in eight years of war and occupation.

The brutal military occupation by U.S., British and other NATO forces, with its attendant atrocities, has fueled bitter resentment especially among the Pashtun peoples, the largest ethnic grouping, which makes up about 42 percent of the population. Days after a sustained U.S. bombing attack on three villages in the western province of Farah on May 4-5

killed over 100 civilians, thousands of local villagers brought 15 newly discovered bodies to the house of the provincial governor, chanting, “Death to America” and “Death to the government.” Not surprisingly, many Pashtuns have increasingly joined forces with the re-emergent Taliban and others, both in Afghanistan and on the other side of the Pakistan border, an artificial boundary that carves up ethnic groups. U.S. air attacks in Pakistan have increased markedly under the Obama administration.

Now the Obama administration is preparing for massive reinforcements, up to 45,000 more troops on top of the 68,000 already committed. Obama recently assigned Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, a “special ops” commander, to lead the U.S./NATO forces in Afghanistan. A 13 May *Washington Post* article described his “manhunter” credentials from commando operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan: “As commander of the military's secretive Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) for nearly five years starting in 2003, McChrystal masterminded a campaign to perfect the art of tracking down enemies, and then capturing or killing them.” For the captured, the JSOC oversaw a special forces torture center named Camp Nama near the Baghdad airport.

With opposition to the Afghanistan occupation growing, Obama, echoing his predecessor George W. Bush, invokes the “war on terror,” “national unity” and fear. Speaking to an audience of veterans on August 17, he declared: “This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans.”

Obama's speech had little effect on public sentiment, as recent polls show that a majority of Americans disapprove of the war. Indeed, with support for the Afghan war among his

1979 Soviet Intervention Brought Social Progress



Kabul University in 1980s: more than half of students were women.

Photo: Planeta

Democratic base dwindling, Obama has increasingly turned to Congressional Republicans for support.

As we warned during the election campaign, the Afghanistan occupation was “Obama’s preferred theatre of imperialist carnage” (“Fight for a Revolutionary Workers Party!” WV No. 924, 7 November 2008). Obama repeatedly said as a candidate that he would divert (not eliminate) troops from Iraq to pursue the “good” war in Afghanistan. And he’s kept his campaign promise. Unlike the reformist “socialists,” who gave open or backhanded support to Obama, we oppose *on principle* any political support to bourgeois politicians—whether Democrats, Republicans, Greens or “Independents.”

Our starting point is proletarian class opposition to the U.S. capitalist rulers and to the imperialist system as a whole. In the lead-up to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq we called for the military defense of these countries without giving any political support to the reactionary, woman-hating Taliban cutthroats or the capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Today, insofar as the forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan aim their blows against the imperialist occupiers, we call for their military defense against U.S. imperialism without giving them any political support. ***All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now! Hands off Pakistan!***

Antiwar Movement: Shill for Democrats

A recent *New York Times* (30 August) article, commenting on protests planned for October against the Afghanistan occupation, noted that the antiwar movement has been “largely dormant since the election of Barack Obama.” In fact, it has been largely comatose since the 2006 midterm elections, when the Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives. Now, as the article described, liberals have been especially loath to “challenge” the Democratic administration they helped elect. The call for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan has been packaged as a plea to Obama to fulfill his promise of “change,” both at desultory antiwar rallies in March as well as for the upcoming October protests.

The *Times* article notes that a more recent liberal refrain is that the president “risks his entire domestic agenda” by getting bogged down in Afghanistan. Another antiwar organizer complained, “There are some who feel that powerful forces are pushing the president to stay on this course and that we have to build a more powerful movement to change that course.” In reality, the Afghanistan war *is* Obama’s war and his domestic agenda—bailing out the capitalists while shafting workers, blacks, immigrants and the poor—goes hand in hand with U.S. imperialist military depredations abroad.

The *Times* article confirms what we have said all along: the liberal/reformist-led antiwar movement has been nothing but a shill for the Democrats. In the lead-up to the presidential election, World Can’t Wait, run by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), screamed, “Drive Out the Bush Regime.” The International Socialist Organization (ISO) enthused that the Democrats “are finally giving voice to the frustration” about the war (*Socialist Worker*, 4 May 2007). Likewise, the ANSWER coalition, currently led by the Party for Socialism and Liberation, and the Troops Out Now Coalition, initiated by Workers World Party, both pushed the politics of “Anybody but Bush.”

A recent article on the CounterPunch Web site (4-6 September) by quirky radical-liberal columnist Alexander Cockburn reported that Socialist Action leader and West Coast antiwar coalition organizer Jeff Mackler recently cancelled an antiwar protest against Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi when it was learned that Pelosi’s appearance was sponsored by the San Francisco Labor Council. Cockburn quotes Labor Council chief Tim Paulson saying: “Our partners in the anti-war movement”—among which Paulson includes U.S. Labor Against the War and ANSWER—“have been calling me to say they are condemning this protest as irresponsible and divisive.”

Afghanistan and Soviet Intervention

For much of the reformist left, support for the Democratic Party at home and for anti-Communism abroad have been defining features. With few exceptions, these reformist “socialists” all howled with the imperialists in demanding Soviet troops out of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Washington started funneling arms to Islamic *mujahedin* (holy warriors) from the moment the Soviet-allied People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power in April 1978. As modernizing left-nationalists, the PDPA attempted to implement a program for redistributing land, lowering the bride price, educating women and freeing them from the *burqa*. In the context of backward, benighted Afghanistan, these relatively modest reforms were nothing short of revolutionary. When the huge Islamic hierarchy launched a fierce insurgency, the Soviet Union intervened in December 1979 after repeated requests by the embattled PDPA regime. Beginning with Democrat Jimmy Carter and continuing under Republican Ronald Reagan, the U.S. seized on the Red Army intervention to launch a renewed anti-Soviet offensive (Cold War II), in particular waging a proxy war aimed at killing Soviet soldiers and officers in Afghanistan.

For Marxists, there was no question which side working people and the oppressed the world over had in this conflict. The threat of a CIA-backed Islamic takeover on the USSR’s southern flank posed pointblank the need for ***unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union***, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. Moreover, the Soviet military intervention opened the possibility of social liberation for the Afghan masses, particularly women. We Trotskyists proclaimed: ***Hail Red Army! Extend social gains of October Revolution to Afghan peoples!***

In contrast, the ISO and its then-parent group in Britain, Tony Cliff’s Socialist Workers Party, demanded: “Troops Out of Afghanistan!” (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 12 January 1980). The Maoist RCP likewise condemned the Soviet intervention. To justify siding with the reactionary *mujahedin* and their imperialist patrons, the reformist left invoked the lie of “poor little Afghanistan” and screamed about the national rights of the country being trampled by “Soviet imperialism.” In fact, even if Afghanistan were a nation, the question of its national self-determination would have been subordinated to the overriding class and social questions—i.e., defense of the Soviet Union as well as the struggle for women’s rights and social progress in Afghanistan.

However, Afghanistan is not a nation but rather a patchwork of tribes and peoples, with a minuscule proletariat. There weren’t sufficient internal class forces to sustain the PDPA’s reforms, let alone a social revolution. Soviet military

intervention, however, posed the overthrow of the landlords, tribal warlords and mullahs that dominated Afghan society and perpetuated its backwardness. The social progress potentially open to the Afghan peoples was visible in the stark contrast between Afghanistan's impoverished backwardness and the huge advances in living standards, education and women's rights just to the north in Soviet Central Asia, which once looked much like Afghanistan.

Under the Soviet military umbrella, the Afghan government began mass literacy campaigns and provided medical care. Over 300,000 peasants received land. By the late 1980s, half of all university students in Afghanistan were women, and women made up 40 percent of the country's doctors, 70 percent of its teachers, and 30 percent of its civil servants. Women in the workforce had increased 50-fold, and 15,000 women served as soldiers and commanders in the Afghan army. The London *Guardian* online (30 September 2001) quoted Saira Noorani, a woman surgeon who left Kabul in 2001: "Life was good under the Soviets," Saira said. "Every girl could go to high school and university. We could go wherever we wanted and wear what we liked." She also said: "Since then everything has been a long dark night."

Afghanistan and American Intervention

In a campaign to militarily and economically bleed the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the U.S. launched the largest CIA covert operation in history. But the Red Army was *not* defeated militarily in Afghanistan. A prominent commander of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, Major General Alexander Liakhovskiy, asserted in his book, *Afghan: Tragedy and Valor* (1995): "During the period of the 'Afghan war' they [Soviet soldiers] never once retreated and never surrendered their positions." He added: "They did much for the good of the Afghan people in carrying out their peacekeeping functions (they provided medical aid to the population; they built roads, schools and hospitals; they provided humanitarian aid and so forth). For many long years, for example, they preserved from destruction Kabul and other major cities, which, as I have already stated, after the mujahedin came to power were reduced to battlefield arenas and now lie in ruins."

It is not just this former Soviet general who recognizes that the Red Army was not militarily defeated. Even on the eve of the Soviet withdrawal, a writer for *Soldier of Fortune* magazine noted that the Soviet army could "still go wherever it wants to go in Afghanistan" (quoted in Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan* [1995]).

The Soviet withdrawal in 1988-89 was a *political* betrayal by the Stalinist bureaucracy under Mikhail Gorbachev, opening the door to capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR itself in 1991-92. The Soviet intervention cut against the grain of the nationalist Stalinist dogma of "socialism in one country." Gorbachev's betrayal flowed from the whole outlook of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which subordinated the interests of the international proletariat in an attempt to defend its own privileged position as a parasitic layer resting on the collectivized economy, thus undermining the defense of the Soviet workers state itself. We fought for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and return the Soviet Union to the Bolshevik internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky. We warned from the outset that the Kremlin bureaucracy, in its quest for "peaceful coexistence"

with U.S. imperialism, might cut a deal at the expense of the Afghan peoples.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the Afghan government fought on valiantly for three years. The Partisan Defense Committee—a legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League—wrote to the PDPA government in 1989 offering "to organize an international brigade to fight to the death" against the forces of Islamic reaction. When that offer was turned down, the PDC, at the request of the Afghan government, launched an international fund drive to aid civilian victims of the *mujahedin* siege of Jalalabad, raising over \$44,000.

When the *mujahedin* finally took Kabul in 1992, re-enslaving Afghan women, the various tribally based *mujahedin* militias carried out a vengeful war of mass murder, torture and rape of rival ethnic populations, which left at least 50,000 people dead in Kabul alone. The Taliban, recruiting from the historically dominant Pashtun ethnic population, emerged as the strongest of the *mujahedin* factions. Backed by the Pakistani government and supported by U.S. imperialism, the Taliban came to power in 1996.

The 2001 U.S. invasion that drove the Pashtun-based Taliban fundamentalists from power installed in its place a regime based largely on the coalition of former Islamic *mujahedin* militias—Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara—grouped in the Northern Alliance. Karzai was chosen by the U.S. as the Pashtun figurehead, while Northern Alliance warlords, mainly Tajik, filled key security and military posts. This remains, more or less, the reactionary regime overseen by the U.S. today. Karzai's vice presidential running mate in the recent election, Muhammad Fahim, is one of the biggest drug lords in the country, while another of his supporters, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, was notorious for cutting off women's breasts (*Libération*, 20 August). For his part, Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister under Karzai, was once an aid to Tajik *mujahedin* leader Ahmed Shah Massoud, a butcher who in 1993 ordered the massacre of hundreds of Hazara men, women and children, and destroyed the Hazara neighborhood in Kabul, killing up to one thousand more.

While cynically decrying the plight of women under the deposed Taliban regime, Afghanistan's U.S. overseers brokered a constitution in 2004 that effectively enshrined Islamic *sharia* law. Today, the average life expectancy for Afghan women, as well as men, is 44 years (24 years below the world average for women) and the literacy rate is 12.6 percent. Women are still forced to wear the head-to-toe *burqa* in public. According to the Afghan Education Ministry, as of early summer at least 478 schools, mostly for girls, had been destroyed, damaged or threatened out of existence by Islamist terror.

The U.S. fights its "war on terror" in order to impose its will on oppressed peoples around the world. The horrors produced by U.S. imperialism's "holy war" against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, as well as the present occupation of the country, show once again that the capitalist system is a barrier to social progress and a breeding ground for barbaric reaction. Our purpose is the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party that fights for the defeat of U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution. As opposed to the Obama-enthralled reformist opponents, we follow the proletarian, internationalist and revolutionary road of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky.

Spartacist Archives:

"Chilean Popular Front" Popular Front Paved Way for Pinochet Terror

The following article was reprinted by our comrades of the Spartacist League/U.S. (*Workers Vanguard* No. 883, 5 January 2007) following the death on December 10, 2006 of Chilean general Augusto Pinochet, which touched off demonstrations throughout the country, mainly by those celebrating the final demise of this bloody butcher. It was Pinochet, backed by the U.S., who on 11 September 1973 led a military coup that overthrew the Chilean Unidad Popular (UP—Popular Unity) coalition government of the Socialist Party's Salvador Allende. Some 30,000 workers, peasants and leftists were killed in the aftermath of the coup. Untold thousands more were tortured and thrown into concentration camps. Up to 100,000 were forced into exile, where many were hounded and assassinated by Pinochet's DINA secret police and others under the aegis of the CIA's Operation Condor terror campaign. The economic austerity imposed upon Chile's working people under Pinochet was directed by the University of Chicago's Milton Friedman, who died in November 2006.

The Allende regime and the Pinochet coup were defining political events for a generation of leftists around the world. The UP was a classic popular front—a coalition government subordinating the Chilean workers to their deadly class enemies through a bloc of workers parties with a mythical "progressive" section of the bourgeoisie and the "democratic" officer corps. The Allende government appointed Pinochet Army Commander in Chief. The purpose of the UP popular front was to head off the threat of workers revolution and disarm the working class, buying the capitalists time to behead the proletariat. Allende was not simply a martyred victim of the CIA and Chilean generals; he and his reformist supporters, with their promotion of a "peaceful" (i.e., parliamentary) road to socialism, led the Chilean working masses directly into this crushing defeat.

The article reprinted below, originally published in *Spartacist* No. 19 (November-December 1970) shortly after the UP's electoral victory, powerfully highlights the historical record of principled opposition to all popular fronts by the International Communist League (ICL) and its predecessors of the international Spartacist tendency. Spartacist South Africa, section of the ICL, draws on this tradition in our opposition to the Tripartite Alliance nationalist popular front in this country. Uniquely on the international left, the Spartacist tendency denounced any political support to the Allende coalition as class treason. We warned that unless the proletariat is mobilised independently of the bourgeoisie in a fight for socialist revolution, the desperate struggles of the

Chilean masses would be drowned in blood. That warning was tragically confirmed by Pinochet's 1973 coup and subsequent reign of terror.

* * *

The electoral victory of Dr. Salvador Allende's Popular Front coalition in Chile poses in sharpest form the issue of revolution or counter-revolution. The Chilean crisis is a fully classic expression of reformism's attempt to derail the felt needs of the working people for their own government to rule society in their own interests. The revolutionary duty of Marxists in Chile and internationally should be utterly unambiguous. Above all, the experience of the Russian Revolution and of Trotsky's critiques of the Spanish and French Popular Front governments of 1936 illuminate the objective of revolutionists in such a situation.

Dr. Allende's candidacy, which gained a plurality on 4 Sept., was based on a coalition of reformist-labor and liberal-bourgeois parties, including the pro-Moscow Communist Party, Allende's own somewhat more radical Socialist Party, the very right-wing Social Democrats, the rump of the liberal Radical Party, fragments of the Christian Democrats, etc. To gain confirmation by the Congress, Allende agreed to a series of constitutional amendments at the insistence of the dominant Christian Democrats. Most crucial among these were the prohibition of private militias and the stipulation that no police or military officers will be appointed who were not trained in the established academies.

With the maintenance of the foundations of the capitalist order thus assured, Congress elected Allende president on 24 October. He has now announced the division of spoils in his 15-man cabinet: the CP gets economic ministries, Allende's SP the key posts of internal security and foreign affairs, and a bourgeois Radical the ministry of national defense. This is reformism's answer to the Chilean masses' years of struggle and their desperate hopes that Allende's election would open up for them a new way of life, but they will not be held for long inside the Popular Front's bourgeois straight jacket.

It is the most elementary duty for revolutionary Marxists to irreconcilably oppose the Popular Front in the election and to place absolutely no confidence in it in power. Any "critical support" to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean working people when domestic reaction, abetted by international imperialism, is ready. The U.S. imperialists have been able to temporize for

the moment—and not immediately try to mobilize a counter-revolutionary coup on the usual Latin American model—because they have softened the anticipated nationalization losses through massive profit-taking over several years.

Within reformist workers' parties there is a profound contradiction between their proletarian base and formal ideology and the class-collaborationist aims and personal appetites of their leaderships. This is why Marxists, when they are not themselves embodied in a mass working-class party, give reformist parties such "critical support"—against overt agents of capital—as will tend to regroup the proletarian base around a revolutionary program. But when these parties enter a coalition government with the parties of capitalism, any such "critical support" would be a betrayal because the coalition has suppressed the class contradiction in the bourgeoisie's favor. It is our job then to re-create the basis for struggle *within* such parties by demanding they *break* with the coalition. This break must be the elementary precondition for even the most critical support.

The Left Views Chile

Chile's most extreme known formation, the Movimiento Izquierdista Revolucionario, comprising Guevarists, semi-Trotskyists, etc., demonstrated conciliationism toward Allende as his campaign wore on and on 4 Sept. issued a call for the workers, students and peasants to support his victory, thus throwing their weight behind the popular illusions.

While the "revolutionary" Chinese Maoists have been very diplomatically noncommittal, for Gus Hall of the U.S. CP, "the elections in Chile are a revolutionary, democratic mandate of the people." He goes on, "Does this experience deny the theses of Debray [i.e. Guevara and Castro] and Mao? Yes it does." (*Daily World*, 17 Oct.) Not to be outdone in enthusiasm, Castro's *Granma* of 13 Sept. headlined Allende's election as "The Victory of People's Unity," thus willy-nilly sharing the same bed with Gus Hall and once again exposing as political charlatans those who preach confidence in the Cuban leadership.

Tragically, most of those formations claiming the heritage of Trotsky's Fourth International have taken the same road, in disorientation or conciliation to Popular Frontism. At its April 1969 World Congress the United Secretariat majority around Livio Maitan affirmed that the strategy for Latin America was "rural guerrilla warfare" with a peasant base and a petty-bourgeois (student) derived cadre, thus rendering themselves irrelevant in the face of urban-based upheavals in Latin America. How about the United Secretariat minority, grouped around the American Socialist Workers Party? Their spokesman, Joe Hansen, stood on apparent Trotskyist orthodoxy, seemingly rediscovering the need to build revolutionary workers' parties as the key to the Latin American revolution, but this was just a fig leaf to cover the SWP's descent into legalistic reformism. The first response of Hansen's *Intercontinental Press* (14 Sept.) was agnostic, concluding, "Undoubtedly Allende's program is more radical, on paper, than the program of the Popular Front of 1938. But it remains to be seen what his bourgeois allies, present and prospective, will allow him to put into practice."

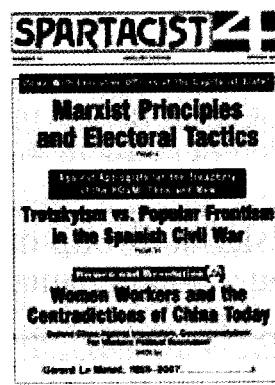
Behind the SWP's bland know-nothingism was its operational position: critical support: "It would be a crime to whitewash the UP [Unidad Popular]. But failing to recognize the positive elements in it, condemning it in toto out of some sectarian dogmatism, would mean suicidal isolation." (*IP*, 5

Oct.) To be sure, the SWP "knows better." But after all the Allende candidacy was enormously popular among the Chilean masses, so these revisionists chose to feed the illusions which block the path to socialist revolution and expose the workers, in this situation of great social polarization, to the danger of victorious reaction and right-wing terror.

Healy's Pabloism

The alleged anti-revisionists of Gerry Healy's "Fourth International" stand only quantitatively to the left of the SWP; they are just more critical within the same framework. Healy's *Workers Press* of 12 Sept. concludes, "There must be a preparation for class action to defend Allende's victory and his election programs to meet this danger." And the U.S. Workers League states: "There is only one road and that is the revolutionary road of the October Revolution.... As a step in this understanding the workers must hold Allende to his promises..." (*Bulletin*, 21 Sept.)—invoking the October Revolution, they demand the masses should compel an essentially bourgeois government to achieve socialism!

Not surprisingly, during the 1917 February Revolution in Russia the vacillating resident Bolsheviks, including Stalin, came up with the very formula the WL has rediscovered: to support the provisional government "insofar as it struggles against reaction or counter-revolution." Lenin telegraphed his protest from abroad: "Our tactic; absolute lack of confidence; no support to the new government; suspect Kerensky especially; arming of the proletariat the sole guarantee;... no rapprochement with other parties." All we could add today is to repeat Trotsky's fundamental conclusion about our epoch that the time has never been more urgent for the building of the international party imbued with Leninist aims and Lenin's determination.



Spartacist

Theoretical journal of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)
Issue No. 61 (English Edition)—R3

Included in subscriptions to *Spartacist South Africa* and *Workers Vanguard*

Send orders to: Spartacist, PostNet Suite 248,
Private Bag X2226, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa

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Web site: www.icl-fi.org

Spartacist League of Australia

Spartacist ANZ Publishing Co.
GPO Box 3473, Sydney, NSW 2001
Australia

Spartacist League/Britain

Spartacist Publications
PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY, Britain

Trotskyist League of Canada/

Ligue trotskyste du Canada
Spartacist Canada Publishing Association
Box 6867, Station A, Toronto
Ontario M5W 1X6, Canada

Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands

SpAD, c/o Verlag Avantgarde
Postfach 2 35 55, 10127 Berlin, Germany

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