

1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

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For the Socialist United States of Europe! **Capitalist Crisis & the EU**

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of massive and chaotic social upheaval triggered by brutal austerity measures imposed to cover bad bets made by bankers and financial speculators. The gutting of pensions, healthcare and social services, combined with rising unemployment and homelessness, has created a volatile mix of anger, fear and despair among millions of people, who resent being stuck with the bill for an economic crisis for which they

are not responsible.

Greece has been in the front line of the capitalist offensive, but Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Italy are not far behind. Together they comprise approximately 40 percent of the population of the "euro zone"—the 17 members of the European Union (EU) that use the euro as their common currency. The precarious economic position of these countries led U.S. banks and other international investors



SUSANA VERA—REUTERS

Madrid: family preparing to sleep on the street

to dump government bonds issued by many EU members and tighten credit for their banks. This, in turn, spurred European financial institutions to reduce their loan portfolios and increase capital reserves. The resulting "credit crunch," combined with decreased government expenditures due to austerity, has shrunk aggregate GDP and pushed much of the continent into recession.

A crisis in the EU, whose 27 member states account for roughly a quarter of global GDP, is, practically by definition, a crisis for the entire international capitalist order. The leaders of the advanced capitalist world are deeply concerned that the euro crisis may spiral out of control. In June 2012, World Bank head Robert Zoellick warned: "Europe may be able to muddle through but the risk is rising.... There could be a Lehmans moment [the 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers in the U.S. that led to the worst financial panic since 1929] if things are not properly handled" (*Observer* [London], 16 June 2012). Zoellick is not the only one who fears that a euro crisis could unleash an uncontrollable global financial meltdown that might well plunge the world into a deep depression of indefinite duration.

Capitalist Development & European Integration

The current problems in the euro zone are, at bottom, the result of the inherent crisis tendencies of the capitalist mode of production. The expression of these problems in the form of a crisis of the common currency (and of the EU) reflects a profound contradiction within bourgeois society between nationally-based capital and the imperatives of an increasingly integrated international economy.

The removal of much of what remained of Europe's feudal economic, social and political structures during the course of the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic wars laid the basis for the continent's vigorous but uneven capitalist development during the 19th century. The enormous social

transformations wrought by the industrial revolution were, from the beginning, international phenomena, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels noted in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*: "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations." Capitalism, they famously observed, "batters down all Chinese walls," yet its development is constrained by the framework of the nation-state, even as it begins to lay the foundations of a world market and an international division of labor.

The tension between the "international" and the "national" aspects of capitalist development has always characterized the bourgeois mode of production. During the period of capitalism's historical ascendancy, this contradiction did not pose a serious impediment to the growing ability of humanity to control and transform nature through the development of the "forces of production." The catastrophe of the First World War, which was a direct product of the rivalries between competing imperial great powers for domination, signaled that capitalism had outlived its historically progressive role and that it was necessary to construct a new world order based on collective ownership of the means of production and rational planning: a system of global socialism.

The obvious solution to the problem of capitalist rivalry, and the danger of inter-imperialist military conflict, is economic integration, as the great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky observed in 1929:

"The basic task of unification must be economic in character, not only in the commercial but also productive sense. It is necessary to have a regime that would eliminate the

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Mass Struggle Repels Austerity Attack

Quebec Students Fight Back



NO CREDIT

From February to August 2012, Quebec was rocked by a powerful strike involving hundreds of thousands of students, actively supported by unionized faculty members, many of whom defied court injunctions directing them to cross their students' picket lines to resume teaching. At its high point, the strike posed the possibility of a social explosion on the order of Paris in 1968. By far the broadest and most successful struggle against austerity in any imperialist country in recent years, the Quebec student strike contains valuable lessons for militants around the world.

Quebec's Liberal premier, Jean Charest, initiated the conflict by announcing that tuition costs would rise by 75 percent over five years. This was a key element of a broader capitalist assault, and the students' determined resistance tapped into widespread popular anger at ongoing factory closures, public-sector layoffs, union bashing and attacks on healthcare, education and pensions. The "newspaper of record" of the Anglo-Canadian ruling class acknowledged the breadth of popular discontent:

"Much like protesters from the infamous 'battle in Seattle' during the 1999 meeting of the World Trade Organization to the recent Occupy movements, Quebecers... [are] connecting a number of threads from the environ-

ment and the state of public services to abuses in the financial industry over the past decade."

—*Globe and Mail*, 2 June 2012

Charest's Liberals, already languishing in the polls and facing near certain defeat in the next election, were further damaged by revelations of widespread corruption—including bid-rigging in construction contracts, influence peddling and connections between cabinet ministers and organized crime. Charest hoped that by taking on Quebec's historically militant student movement he could rebrand himself as a tough, "law and order" leader, and perhaps wriggle out of the dead-end the Liberals found themselves in after almost a decade in power.

Universities, Colleges & the 'French Fact' in Quebec

Quebec, a historically oppressed francophone nation which enjoys a limited autonomy as a province in the Canadian federal state, was until the 1950s an insular, priest-ridden and predominately rural backwater. In the 1960s, a section of the educated French-speaking elite, demanding to become "maîtres chez nous" (masters in our own house), undertook an extensive modernization

program. During this “Quiet Revolution” the Liberal government vastly expanded and secularized education and healthcare (which had previously been the domain of the Catholic Church). It legalized trade unions, expanded the public sector and nationalized the production and distribution of Québec’s abundant hydro-electric resources.

The creation of a network of new universities and colleges was vital to modernizing Quebec while preserving it as a viable francophone island in a sea of English-speaking North Americans. If Québécois youth were educated in English Canada or the U.S., the “French fact” would rapidly erode. The creation of free two-year junior colleges (CÉGEPs) and universities charging half as much for tuition as those in English Canada (which is much lower than that charged by their American equivalents) has led the vast majority of Québécois students to stay in Quebec and complete their studies in French. This has been essential to maintaining the vibrancy and vitality of Québec’s national culture. Many Québécois are strongly attached to the idea of affordable post-secondary education, as well as the comparatively good childcare and other social services that distinguish Quebec from the Anglo-American neoliberal “mainstream” in the rest of North America.

This largely accounts for why Charest’s demand that Quebec students start paying their “fair share” failed to gain the traction he had hoped. Québécois youth have a history of mobilizing against attempts to raise tuition, with successful strikes in 1968, 1974, 1978 and 1986. Determined resistance by two generations of student militants ensured that for 22 years—from 1968 until 1990—tuition remained at \$500 a year. In 1990, a Liberal government managed to raise it to \$1,668. Vigorous student opposition defeated a subsequent attempt in 1996 by a Parti Québécois (PQ) government to further increase fees. In 2007, Charest’s Liberals managed to overcome resistance and push through a \$500 hike (which was phased in over five years).

By 2011, when the Charest government announced plans to raise tuition a further \$325 each year for five years (which would have taken it from \$2,168 to \$3,793 by 2017), public opposition to austerity had grown, and a serious grass-roots student organizing drive was underway by the Coalition Large de l’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Etudiante (CLASSE), the largest and most militant of Québec’s four student federations.

Core activists in CLASSE had participated in the powerful anti-globalization protest in Quebec City in 2001. CLASSE, which represented a majority of the striking students, identifies with broadly anarchist and feminist critiques of the inequities of capitalist society and prides itself on making decisions by “direct democracy” in local assemblies.

In preparing for the 2012 strike, CLASSE militants drew two lessons from the 2007 defeat. The first was that it was essential to forge a bloc with the more conservative federations: the Fédération Etudiante Universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) and Fédération Etudiante Collégiale du Québec (FECQ), each of which represented roughly 20 percent of the strikers, as well as the smaller Table de concertation étudiante du Québec (TaCEQ), representing another five percent. The agreement they reached was adhered to by all (with only minor exceptions) throughout the struggle, which made it difficult for the government to play them off against each other.

The second lesson drawn by CLASSE from 2007 was

that to defeat the government it would be necessary to go beyond students and win the active support of a broad section of the population, including Québec’s powerful and historically militant working class. Throughout the struggle, CLASSE leaders sought to present their resistance to the tuition hike as one front in a larger fight to defeat the Liberals’ austerity project that targeted not only students, but also immigrants, aboriginals and, particularly, women. Student strikers reached out to indigenous peoples opposing Charest’s “Plan Nord,” a corporate development project for northern Quebec, as well as to aluminum smelter workers in the town of Alma locked out by the vicious union-busting mining conglomerate Rio Tinto.

The “CLASSE Manifesto,” released during the struggle, held out hope that a more “democratic” society could somehow be created through popular pressure and mass mobilization:

“When the elite feels threatened, no principle is sacred, not even those principles they preach: for them, democracy works only when we, the people keep our mouths shut. “Our view is that truly democratic decisions arise from a shared space....As equals, in these spaces, women and men can work together to build a society that is dedicated to the public good.

“We now know that equal access to public services is vital to the common good. And access can only be equal if it is free.”

“Our strike goes beyond the \$1625 tuition-fee hike. If, by throwing our educational institutions into the marketplace, our most basic rights are being taken from us, we can say the same for hospitals, Hydro-Québec, our forests, and the soil beneath our feet. We share so much more than public services: we share our living spaces, spaces that were here before we were born.”

Over the course of the struggle, the Charest government was frustrated by the success that CLASSE had in getting out its message, and particularly by the favorable response it received from a large section of the population. The government’s initial tactic was to paint the strikers as spoiled brats who wanted a free ride from taxpayers. This was supplemented by massive and unprecedented police repression, which the capitalist media played down while denouncing strikers as thugs and violent hooligans.

From February to May: Strike Gains Momentum

The strike was launched by CLASSE in February 2012, with the other federations initially adopting a “wait and see” attitude before joining in after three weeks. Charest had hoped to wait out the students, and initially refused to negotiate. But, as the weeks passed, instead of fizzling, the strike gained momentum with mass pickets barring entrances to classes on struck campuses. In many cases student scabs (often Liberal Party youth) obtained court orders for the suspension of picketing, but the injunctions were routinely ignored. Rather than contracting, the strike expanded, as CLASSE pickets moved off campus and began disrupting “business as usual” by blockading bridges, financial institutions, courts and other government buildings.

On 22 March 2012, strikers held their first mass mobilization, which drew an astounding 200,000 participants

in Montreal. Throughout the strike there were large demonstrations on the 22nd of each month. The date was chosen in homage to the French “Mouvement du 22 Mars” (March 22nd Movement), the Nanterre student group led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit whose occupation of a university administration building initiated the mass worker-student revolt in May-June 1968 that took France to the brink of social revolution. The success scored on 22 March 2012 drew more students into the movement, particularly on the francophone campuses. The strikers’ symbol, a red square, which had been introduced in the 2005 strike to protest the fact that tuition hikes would put students “squarely in the red,” was worn by tens of thousands of supporters.

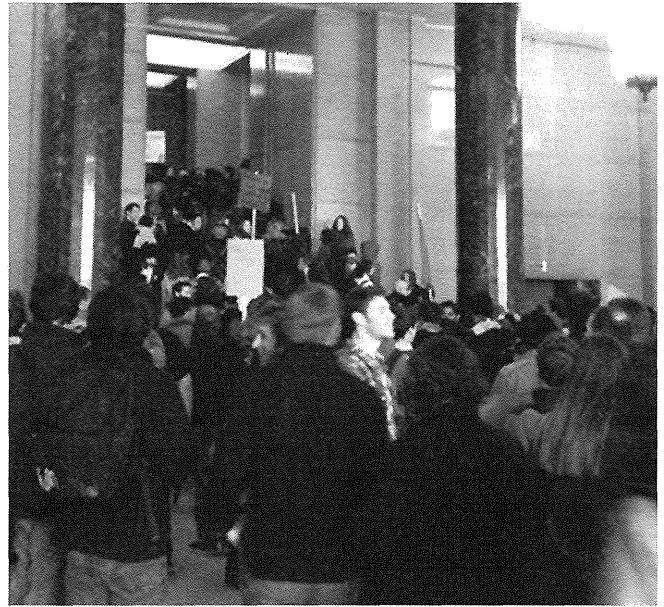
Charest’s offer to negotiate with student federation representatives (with the exception of CLASSE) was rejected as the strike continued to grow in strength with nightly marches through Montreal. On 4 May 2012, striking students gathered outside a Liberal Party conference that had been moved from Montreal to the small town of Victoriaville 150 kilometers away to avoid demonstrators. Quebec riot police viciously attacked the protesters: more than 100 people were arrested and two seriously injured, one of whom lost an eye. Pauline Marois, leader of the official opposition Parti Québécois, which had spent the past several years criticizing Charest’s Liberals for failing to implement austerity with sufficient vigor, denounced the government’s “authoritarian” tactics at Victoriaville.

The next day Charest announced a tentative settlement brokered with the help of the leaders of Quebec’s three major trade-union centrals. If students would return to class, the government promised to “freeze” tuition for the rest of the year, appoint a committee to look for ways to cut spending, to reduce the amount of new revenue required and to implement the resulting tuition hike over seven, rather than five, years. The strike leadership agreed to put the proposal to a vote. To the considerable surprise of the bourgeois media and the government, the offer was overwhelmingly rejected. Instead of becoming demoralized, it became clear that tens of thousands of strikers, who had grown increasingly politicized through three months of hard struggle, were not prepared to settle for so little. Line Beauchamp, the Liberal government’s education minister and deputy premier, took the fall, announcing that she was resigning her parliamentary seat and leaving politics.

Politicizing the Struggle

From the outset, the leading elements of CLASSE rejected the model of lobbying government and university officials, and did not rely on the capitalist media to get their message out. Instead, they focused on educating their base by providing information and analysis that framed the struggle against the tuition hike in a broader context. This strategy worked, and is a large part of the reason why, to the amazement of the government and media, tens of thousands of students were prepared to fight on, week after week, month after month, without wavering.

Much of CLASSE’s analysis was based on the work of the left-wing think-tank, Institut de recherche et d’informations socio-économiques (IRIS). IRIS research revealed that, far from being starved for investment as the government claimed, “grants and research contracts allocated to universities [in Quebec] more than doubled from 1995-1996 to 2005-2006, swelling from \$721 mil-



MARC VERREULT—RADIO CANADA

Strikers block main hall of Université de Montréal

lion to \$1.276 billion in constant 2006 dollars” (quoted in *Academic Matters*, November 2012). At the same time, public funding was increasingly redirected from operations and teaching into applied research tailored to the requirements of Quebec business. The tuition hike thus represented a concealed transfer from students (many of whom are from working-class families) to corporations. IRIS researchers estimated that if Charest got his way, as many as 30,000 students might be forced to drop out.

The government insisted that keeping the university system viable depended on the additional \$160 million that the proposed tuition hike would have generated. CLASSE countered with a proposal to find most of this money by reducing expenditures on commercial research (while leaving funding for basic research intact). The balance, they proposed, could be obtained by freezing the pay of the upper layer of administrators (whose salaries had risen an astronomical 83 percent between 1997 and 2004). CLASSE also proposed that national “Etats généraux” be convoked—a sort of mega public forum—where issues relating to education and social priorities could be thoroughly aired. CLASSE promised to use such an opportunity to make the case for abolishing tuition altogether and replacing it with a 7 percent levy on financial institutions (which are currently taxed at lower rates than other businesses in Quebec). These sorts of reforms, fairly moderate by historical standards, are directly counterposed to the current ruling-class austerity project.

When the strike began, CLASSE had a substantial number of members who identified as “anti-capitalist,” and their numbers grew as the struggle intensified. Another, broader, layer was composed of those who did not necessarily oppose capitalism per se, but were not happy with the idea of going further into debt to acquire a qualification to work in the future—particularly as obtaining secure, decent-paying jobs is increasingly difficult. These people tended to be open to arguments that education provides positive social benefits, and that a rational society would not make access to university dependent on personal finances.



PAUL CHASSON—THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hundreds of lawyers in Montreal protest Bill 78, 28 May 2012

As the struggle progressed, a process of radicalization occurred in which a substantial layer of relatively apolitical students, angered by the combination of government cynicism, wanton cop brutality and the willful distortions of the capitalist media, began to see their problems as part of a larger pattern in which the rich and powerful have interests at odds with those of the vast majority further down the social pyramid.

Social Media & Campus Television: Countering Corporate Propaganda

The strikers and their supporters skillfully employed the internet and social media to bypass corporate outlets and put their case directly to the public, as the *Globe and Mail* observed:

“Political authority isn’t the only target of deep distrust—the mainstream media have been relegated to a secondary role as the movement demonstrates a fresh determination to resist policies and test limits. For example, online rumours that police had killed and seriously wounded protesters, and journalists were conspiring to cover it up, were conclusively debunked, but spread widely anyway, often with the help of prominent entertainers and activists.

“At the same time, use of alternative sources such as social media and live feeds from Concordia University’s decidedly pro-student community television have exploded during the conflict.

“Last fall, as students carefully prepared their strike and protest campaign, CUTV obtained a backpack broadcasting system that allows it to stream video over the Web from the midst of marches. Its crews have walked long into the night, often pounded by police for their trouble, while the major networks have slept, or been bound by their satellite trucks and tight overtime budgets.”

—*op cit*

Concordia has a well-deserved reputation as by far the

most leftist of Quebec’s English-language post-secondary institutions. CUTV played a vital role in exposing police attacks on protesters and their indiscriminate use of percussion grenades, rubber bullets, pepper spray and tear gas to disperse demonstrators. As the struggle went on, CUTV’s viewership grew, and, according to the *Globe and Mail*, “drew more eyeballs some nights than leading local newscasts.”

Repression Backfires— Bill 78 Provokes Mass Resistance

Instead of resuming negotiations after the students voted down his original offer, Charest raised the stakes on 18 May 2012 by pushing through legislation—Bill 78—which closed campuses for three months, banned picketing within 50 meters of universities, required teachers and student union leaders to advocate obedience to the law and prohibited rallies or marches of more than 50 people unless they obtained advance permission from the police.

This draconian legislation was applauded by Yves-Thomas Dorval, president of the Conseil du patronat du Québec (Quebec Employers Council) but immediately denounced as unconstitutional by strike supporters, trade unions and even the Quebec Bar Association. The student strikers responded the night after the law was adopted with an “illegal” protest in which thousands marched through the streets of Montreal. Police attacked the demonstration but were unable to disperse it.

It became clear that Charest’s gamble on repression was a spectacular failure when, on 22 May 2012, an “unauthorized” demonstration of at least 250,000 people marched against Bill 78 in Montreal. This was a turning point. Defiant “casserole” demonstrations (with participants banging pots and pans) took place on a nightly basis across Quebec, drawing in broad sections of the population. On 28 May 2012, several hundred robed lawyers staged their own protest against repression in Montreal.

Demonstrations against Bill 78 and in support of the student strikers spread to English Canada. The largest was in Toronto, on 30 May 2012, when approximately 2,000 people marched in solidarity with the Quebec strikers. A few weeks earlier the *Globe and Mail* (7 May 2012) had reported that a poll of "students across Canada" found: "About 62 per cent of postsecondary students said they would join a similar strike in their own province; 32 per cent said they would not, while 5.9 per cent were undecided." In Ontario, the most populous English Canadian province, "Sixty-nine per cent said they would strike to oppose a raise in tuition." This is not the first time that militant struggles by Québécois workers and youth have resonated among their English Canadian counterparts (see "Marxism & the Quebec National Question," *Trotskyist Bulletin* No.7).

For several weeks, tens of thousands of people joined students banging pots and pans in protests across Quebec. The students' anti-austerity struggle was particularly popular in working-class neighborhoods, where there was already widespread resentment at growing income inequality and attacks on public services. In a few areas of Montreal, "Assemblées populaires autonomes de quartier" (popular independent neighborhood assemblies) began to meet to coordinate local protests. With hundreds of thousands actively defying Bill 78, the police announced that they were not even going to attempt to enforce it. On 30 May 2012, the *Globe and Mail* ran a story with a headline reading: "How casseroles overcame cudgels on the streets of Montreal."

Union Bureaucrats Sabotage Struggle

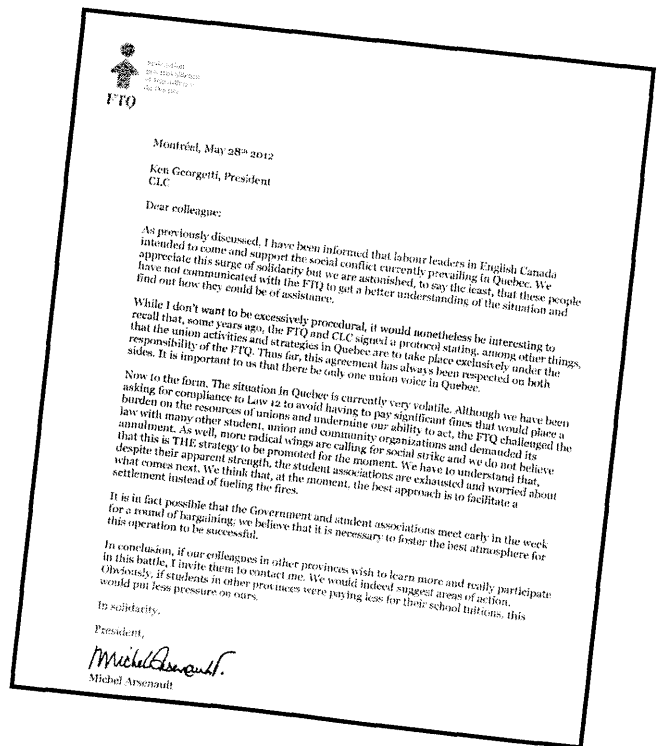
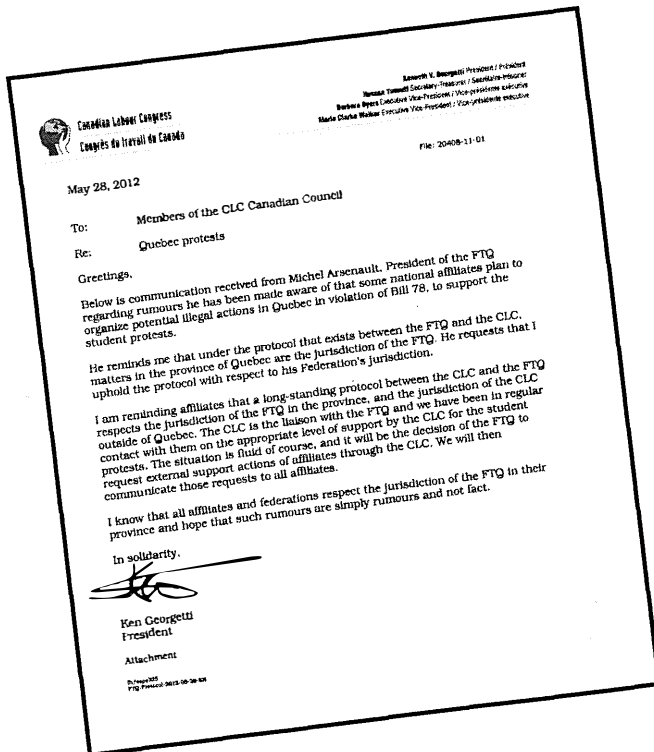
CLASSE attempted to capitalize on the mass anger over Bill 78 with a call for a one-day "social strike" to galvanize resistance to the increasingly isolated Charest government. The union leadership was alarmed when some units of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN—Quebec's

second-largest labor federation) endorsed the idea. This tactic, while limited in scope, would have represented an escalation and broadening of the struggle and, as such, was completely counterposed to the strategy of the union tops, who were trying to work out a backroom deal with Charest to end the strike.

Unlike the CSN, the larger Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) has many affiliates which also operate in English Canada (where they are grouped in the Canadian Labour Congress [CLC]). Charest's outrageously anti-democratic Bill 78 produced an outpouring of sympathy for the student strikers from anglophone trade unionists across Canada. In response, FTQ President Michel Arsenault, intent on demobilizing the struggle, wrote to CLC head Ken Georgetti on 28 May 2012 to request his assistance in squelching union support for the strikers. Noting that the "situation in Quebec is currently very volatile," Arsenault complained that the campaign of mass defiance of Bill 78 (aka Law 12) was led by "radical wings." He explicitly opposed the CLASSE call for a "social strike" with the gratuitous lie that, "despite their apparent strength, the student associations are exhausted," so "the best approach is to facilitate a settlement instead of fueling the fires." In spurning the spontaneous solidarity of English Canadian workers, Arsenault cynically lamented a lack of militancy outside Quebec: "if students in other provinces were paying less for their school tuitions, this would put less pressure on ours."

Georgetti forwarded Arsenault's letter to his members the same day with the "hope" that there was no truth to "rumours... that some national affiliates [of the CLC] plan to organize potential illegal actions in Quebec in violation of Bill 78, to support the student protests." He instructed member unions to "respect the jurisdiction of the FTQ in their province" and not do anything without its sanction.

The desire of the union leadership to derail the struggle is ultimately rooted neither in personal cowardice nor an inability to understand the issues, nor is it the product



of the Anglo-chauvinism of the English Canadian union bureaucrats or the Québécois nationalism of their counterparts in “La Belle Province.” It is rather an expression of their role as “labor lieutenants of capital” whose job it is to ensure that social struggle does not seriously threaten the interests of the ruling class. Diane Kalen-Sukra, a disenchanted former union staffer, perceptively observed that the private communication between Arseneault and Georgetti (which was leaked to a leftist website) illustrated the vast gulf that separates the interests and concerns of the union tops from the ranks:

“Rather than feel the pain of their members—the eroding wages, lack of dignity at work, and loss of all security—such union bureaucrats cling ever more tightly to their positions, their privileges and perks. Any challenge to the status quo, is a threat to this parasitic existence, even if it means turning a blind eye to gross injustice.”

—therealnews.com, 25 June 2012

Charest’s Election Gamble Backfires

The student strikers remained active over the summer, with successful mobilizations on both 22 June and 22 July 2012. On 1 August 2012, Charest called a snap election for 4 September and, channeling Richard Nixon, sought to cast himself as the champion of the “silent majority”:

“Now is the time for the silent majority to speak,” Charest told a news conference at the Quebec City airport.

“In the last few months we’ve heard a lot from a number of student leaders. We’ve heard from people in the street. We’ve heard from those who have been hitting away at pots and pans. Now is the time for the silent majority.”

—Canadian Press, 1 August 2012

But Quebec voters had had enough of the Liberals and their leader; Charest not only lost the election, but his own seat as well. The separatist PQ (which assiduously avoided any discussion of independence during the campaign) formed a minority government and quickly moved to rescind Bill 78 and cancel Charest’s tuition hike, proposing instead to tie future increases to inflation. There are few illusions in the PQ among those who remember the damage wreaked on education and healthcare by the zero deficit policy of Lucien Bouchard’s PQ government in the 1990s. Marois, the new premier, had been personally responsible, as Bouchard’s health minister, for introducing draconian legislation to break a nurses’ strike in 1999.

Lessons of ‘le Printemps érable’

The Quebec student strike, impressive in both its breadth and duration, successfully beat back a serious attack and brought down the government that initiated it. While the core organizers of the struggle were ultimately unable to realize their ambitious agenda of shifting the axis of the struggle into a fight to abolish tuition fees altogether, the depth and resilience of their movement shocked the capitalist ruling class in Quebec and English Canada.

At the height of the struggle, Mario Dumont, who for 15 years led the rightist Action Démocratique du Québec (at one time the official opposition in Quebec’s National Assembly), assessed the outcome as “basically a major victory for the unions,” and concluded that “one of the consequences of this will be that no government will

dare propose any significant change for the next decade” because “Any reform will be seen as political suicide” (*Globe and Mail*, 2 June 2012). The article cited University of Montreal professor Christian Nadeau’s speculation that the impact of the Quebec student struggle might be to lead “people across the country [to] rise up against [Conservative] Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s steady march toward smaller government and freer markets.”

Unfortunately the impact, at least in the short term, has been less dramatic. While the 2012 mass mobilizations against austerity are likely to make the architects of future attacks more cautious, it is no secret that the PQ minority government remains committed to pursuing its own program of cuts and tuition hikes.

The 2012 student mobilizations, referred to by many as the “*Printemps érable*” (“Maple Spring”), politicized the issue of austerity within Quebec. It also demonstrated to an entire generation that solidarity and mass resistance to capitalist attacks can be effective, particularly if opposition is seriously prepared and able to communicate a counter-narrative to the lies and distortions of the corporate media.

One of the key slogans of the striking students during their months of struggle was “On ne lâche pas” (We’re not backing down). To their credit, they did not back down. However, when CLASSE raised the slogan “Cette victoire est la nôtre” (This victory is ours) for its 22 September 2012 demonstration, it was, as Montreal activist Micha Stettin wrote, implicitly abandoning some of the broader anarcho-utopian vision which had motivated its core activists because, “The pressure to ‘win’ something, to claim that which is external and easily identifiable, has proven too great.” Stettin complains that:

“Such a narrative suggests that the strike was just a fight over university accessibility. It makes the events of the previous months non-threatening; it removes the content and context from each act. According to this fiction, forming a new politics based on the negation of representation was just a side point. Autonomous organizing and direct, unmediated action were simply a means. Attacks on banks, government offices, and media were all just to put enough pressure on the government to listen to the primary demand of university accessibility....

“It is a beautiful truth that much went right; much has been gained and learned. But the story that is now being told is a fantastical one. A strike that based itself on a rejection of representative democracy has betrayed itself to electoralism—a reliance on political parties and voting to achieve an end.”

—*McGill Daily*, 25 September 2012

It is hardly surprising that the “new politics” of “direct unmediated action” that seemed so transcendent in the heat of battle could not be maintained indefinitely—with Charest gone and his tuition program shelved, it was time to return to the classroom. Stettin is disappointed that the struggle “to build a society that is dedicated to the public good” as sketched in the CLASSE Manifesto, via a “negation of representation,” devolved into proclaiming “victory” with the electoral defeat of the Liberals and the election of the equally bourgeois PQ.

But the CLASSE Manifesto is mistaken in presenting the question of the future direction of human society as hinging on the form of decision-making—representative vs “direct” democracy. In fact, what is decisive is the ques-



ROGERIO BARBOSA—AFP—GETTY IMAGES

Pots and pans protests swept Quebec after Bill 78 introduced

tion of which social class rules—those who do the work or those who possess the capital. This determines the fundamental structure of the economic system from which all other elements of social organization derive. There are essentially two options for a modern economy—either a for-profit system based on the private ownership of the means of transport, communication and production, or the creation of a planned, collectivized economy based on the expropriation (or “socialization”) of the means of production in which political power is wielded by those who perform the labor necessary to keep society operating. One system is in crisis; the other has yet to be born.

While the CLASSE Manifesto accurately describes the agenda of the ruling class, and calls for the creation of a society in which human need trumps the imperatives of profit maximization, it stops short of identifying the root of the problem as the capitalist system itself.

Although the “*Printemps érable*” was shaped in part by the relative isolation of the nation of Quebec within a predominantly English-speaking continent, the analysis presented in the CLASSE-Manifesto is also flawed by an implicit assumption that the borders of Quebec constitute the political framework within which the battle must be fought and won. The fact that Québécois workers have a well-deserved reputation as the most militant and politically-conscious section of the North American proletariat lends the class struggle in Quebec an exceptional significance. But geopolitical and social reality dictates that any anti-capitalist revolt that begins in Quebec must spread to English Canada and the U.S., or risk being drowned in blood.

Under capitalism, the mass of humanity has no right to the essentials of life—employment, healthcare, food, shelter and education. In order to “provid[e] everyone with the resources they need to develop their full capacities” and create a society of “shared” decision-making, which the CLASSE Manifesto describes as “the heart of our vision,”

it will be necessary to overthrow capitalism, expropriate the ruling class and break up its apparatus of repression. The only section of society with both the social power and material interest in carrying out such a perspective is the working class.

Yet the current leaders of the workers’ movement operate as a brake on social struggle and are agents of the bosses, as the FTQ’s sabotage of the proposed “social strike” illustrates. In English Canada, the labor bureaucracy—and its political expression, the New Democratic Party—pushes Canadian nationalism, a bourgeois ideology bound up with denial of the right of self-determination for the Québécois. In Quebec, the trade-union tops pursue class collaboration through political support to the PQ and Québécois nationalism. The central strategic task of revolutionaries is to struggle to break the grip of the labor lieutenants of capital on the organizations of the working class, drive them from their roosts and install in their place a class-struggle leadership committed to doing whatever is necessary to end exploitation once and for all.

The radicalization of thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, of youth through first-hand experience with the ugly reality of capitalist “law and order” may prove highly significant for future confrontations. These young militants have learned a lot, but those who are serious about eradicating the root causes of the ravages of capitalist irrationality must study the history of the class struggles of the past. The only agency capable of carrying out the sort of fundamental social transformation dreamily gestured toward in the CLASSE Manifesto is a politicized working class led by a disciplined revolutionary organization composed of the best, most combative and self-sacrificing militants. This is the key lesson of the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1917—the only historical example thus far of a successful overthrow of capitalism by working people and the oppressed. ■

Quebec Students Show the Way For Workers' Strikes to Smash Austerity!



15 May 2012: Parent and teacher supporters of student strikers face off with Quebec provincial police in Ste. Therese

The following IBT statement was distributed in both French and English in Montreal in May 2012.

The Liberal government's decision to raise tuition fees by 75 percent represents an attack on working people and the poor. It is part of a generalized austerity offensive by ruling classes aimed at restoring profitability and escaping the consequences of the capitalist crisis. The mass student strike that has rocked Quebec since mid February is one of the high points of global anti-austerity resistance organized by hundreds of thousands in Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Britain, the United States and elsewhere in recent years. As the Quebec student strike has grown and gained momentum, spreading from the universities and CEGEPs to the high schools, it has revealed the intensifying contradictions at the heart of this society.

Predictably, the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state—cops and judges—has been used in attempts to crush the movement. Hundreds of protesters have been arrested, many "preventative arrests," in the largest wave of detentions since the October Crisis of 1970. Police have assaulted demonstrators with sound bombs, tear gas, pepper spray and clubs. Many youth have been seriously injured, including Francis Grenier, who was partially blinded by the Montreal police while playing his harmonica at a demonstration outside the offices of Loto-Québec. Cops are not part of the working class!

The student strike has become the target of frenzied denunciations by those with far-right sympathies. In a letter to *Le Soleil* (12 April [2012]), Bernard Guay, director of taxation at the Quebec Ministry of Municipal Affairs,

openly proposed using the tactics of "the fascist movements" of the early 20th century to crush the protests:

"We must organize to regain ground. In the 1920s and 1930s, that's what the fascist movements did by giving leftists a taste of their own medicine. The latter have retained a memory so bitter that, three quarters of a century later, they still are bent on demonizing this political safety reaction. Strike opponents must work together and organize en masse to cross the picket lines and go after those who wear red squares where they encounter them, challenging intimidation."

For the time being the ruling class prefers to rely on the police to "regain ground" rather than gangs of scabs and fascists. Yet the bourgeois press has routinely portrayed the protests as "violent," thereby facilitating police repression and justifying attacks by the far right.

Line Beauchamp, minister of education, demanded that the main student organizations condemn "violence" on the demonstrations as a pre-condition for negotiations. Of course, the real violence is that inflicted by the police on people engaging in acts of civil disobedience. Marxists do not regard self-defense by protesters or property damage as "violence." Breaking windows and overturning cop cars are not usually effective tactics, but revolutionaries defend those militants who imagine that such acts somehow pose a challenge to the system. Drop all charges now!

What really scares the ruling class and its politicians is the prospect of the mass political radicalization of Quebec youth. Even the petty bourgeois reformists of Québec solidaire (QS), who present themselves as left-wingers, share

this concern. While denouncing “the vandalism of provocateurs who don’t respect the will of the students who want to express themselves firmly but peacefully,” QS MNA [Member of the National Assembly] Amir Khadir was chiefly concerned that the government’s intransigence risks destabilizing the bourgeois social order:

“It is irresponsible to end the dialogue with 200,000 students using the excuse of the vandalism of a handful of thugs. The government acted in bad faith and that’s enough! It must return to the negotiating table with all students rather than inflame tensions, playing the pyromaniac firefighter!”
—“Conflit étudiant: Québec solidaire lance un appel au calme,” 26 April [2012]

Beauchamp speculated that “certain people are profiting” from the demonstrations: “I think that’s because they want to pursue other causes, so-called social causes” (Radio-Canada, 25 April [2012]). The government’s attempt to impose extortionate tuition fees is rooted in the desire of bankers and the capitalist elites to make working people pay for their crisis. Beauchamp fears that the protests are providing the students with the sort of education they can’t get in a classroom.

Obviously, the leadership of two of the student unions—the Fédération Etudiante Universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) and the Fédération Etudiante Collégiale du Québec (FECQ)—cannot be accused of trying to promote revolutionary consciousness among their members. The Coalition Large de l’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Etudiante (CLASSE) seeks to pose a more radical alternative. CLASSE not only opposes tuition hikes but also calls for “free education” and a “more egalitarian, solidaristic and just society” (www.bloquonslahausse.com). It proposes that free education is a “realistic project” that can be achieved simply by “ceasing to give the rich tax reductions of \$950 million like in 2007 or by using the budget allocated to the universities to ensure the quality of teaching instead of allowing research funds to disappear, often to the benefit of private firms” (*Ibid.*). Serious militants in CLASSE should ask themselves exactly how “realistic” it is to expect the bourgeois government to do anything other than “serve and protect” the interests of the capitalists. Any concessions that students win will result from hard struggle and the bosses’ fear that failing to make some reforms might push thousands of youth further to the left and embrace demands that point beyond the framework of capitalism.

Student strikers have shown ingenuity as well as remarkable bravery and determination on the demonstrations and picket lines. The government has sought to minimize the importance of the movement by insisting that this is not a strike but merely a “boycott.” According to Jean Charest: “This is not a strike....The Quebec government is not the employer of the students and students are not employees of the Government of Quebec” (Canadian Press, 10 April [2012]).

While the students have disrupted “business as usual” at the universities and CEGEPs, their strikes lack the social power to bring the wheels of the capitalist economy to a grinding halt. Most students come from a working-class background, and many hold part-time (and even full-time) jobs to help pay for their studies, but student strikes amount to a combination of consumer boycott and political protest. If the student strike spreads to the organized

working class, as it did in Paris in 1968, the possibilities are enormous. If a significant section of Quebec unionists were to walk out in solidarity with the students, Charest’s austerity drive could be smashed—and such a victory would not only shake Quebec society to its core but would reverberate in the rest of Canada and, through the English Canadian proletariat, find an echo within the powerful U.S. working class.

Some students have been attempting to forge links with workers. Students demonstrated in solidarity with the 800 laid-off Aveos workers at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montreal on 25 April [2012]. There is undoubtedly a lot of sympathy for the striking students in the union ranks—but the bureaucrats who control the unions are tied to the bourgeois Parti Québécois and have no desire to lead any serious struggle against the bosses.

The Alliance sociale, founded a year and a half ago by the main trade-union formations (FTQ, CSN, CSQ, CSD and SFPQ) along with the FEUQ and the FECQ, was supposedly designed to resist government austerity attacks. But the real perspective of the union tops is clear from its founding document, “Un autre Québec est possible,” which, in addition to a few reforms, proposes “social dialogue” with employers to strengthen Québécois capitalism:

“We expect strong measures to ensure the vitality of the manufacturing sector and promote job creation in a sustainable development perspective. We expect measures which enhance Québécois know-how and encourage the modernization of equipment and access to technology—measures which recognize the vitality of our service companies, measures to stimulate the social economy.

“For this, we rely on the establishment of a social dialogue that would focus the true contribution of workers in the development of work organization and innovation in enterprises.”

The reformists who lead Quebec’s powerful trade unions, like their understudies among the student movement bureaucrats, are wedded to the perspective of class collaboration. They are, in the final analysis, the ideological agents of the ruling class.

The magnificent struggle carried out during the past several weeks by Québécois students should inspire people across North America to resist similar austerity attacks by the ruling class. Ultimately, however, the endemic problems created for the mass of the population by the operation of a social system based on production for profit can only be eliminated by expropriating the capitalists and establishing a planned economy, run by the producers, to serve the interests of working people and the oppressed.

What’s needed is a struggle to oust the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats and replace them with a new, revolutionary leadership committed to a program of consistent class struggle. Such a leadership will not arise spontaneously—it must be built. The key to this is a process of political regroupment based on drawing a serious balance sheet of the lessons of the socialist movements of the past—both their successes and their failures—and a commitment to forging an internationalist revolutionary workers’ party that can unite the most combative and politically advanced elements in Quebec with their sisters and brothers in English Canada and beyond. The International Bolshevik Tendency is dedicated to the project of winning a new generation of militants to the struggle for world socialist revolution, and we look forward to actively cooperating with all those who share this goal. ■

Letter to the Internationalist Group on Quebec

Learn to Think

8 June 2012

Comrades,

We were pleased to learn that you raised the issue of solidarity with the Quebec student strike during demonstrations at CUNY [City University of New York] on 10 and 18 May [2012]. We agree that "To win the strike, it is absolutely necessary to extend it to the workers' movement" ("La grève étudiante québécoise: il faut vaincre l'attaque capitaliste," 20 May [2012]), and also that the perspective of forging a revolutionary workers' party on a global scale requires a serious political struggle against the poisonous reformist/nationalist ideology of the trade-union bureaucracy.

However, your advocacy of "the independence of Quebec in the framework of a federation of workers states of North America" (*Ibid.*) is seriously mistaken, especially in the context of the current struggle. You inherited this position from the degenerated Spartacist League/International Communist League (SL/ICL), which rejected its original (and correct) analysis of the relationship between the Quebec national question and the North American revolution.

Nationalists advocate independence as an end in itself, but Leninists approach the national question from the perspective of how best to push forward the class struggle. The position developed by the SL in its revolutionary period (which we uphold today) recognizes that the Quebecois have the inalienable right to self-determination, i.e., the right to separate from Canada and form a new state. The duty of Marxists in English Canada, should the Quebecois decide to separate, would be to actively defend their right to do so by every possible means. However, Marxists would only agitate for immediate separation if national antagonisms had so poisoned relations that joint class struggle was no longer possible.

In *Spartacist* No.52 [1995], the ICL claimed that "successful proletarian struggle [in Quebec and English Canada] demands separation into two independent nation-states." The same article asserted that "The recognition by the workers of each nation that their respective capitalist rulers—not each other—are the enemy can come only through an independent Quebec." This pessimistic and objectivist assessment has been repeatedly falsified by events in the class struggle. The strike by Canadian Pacific rail workers (who were legislated back to work on 30 May [2012] by the federal Conservative government) is just the latest example of joint class struggle by Anglo and Quebecois workers.

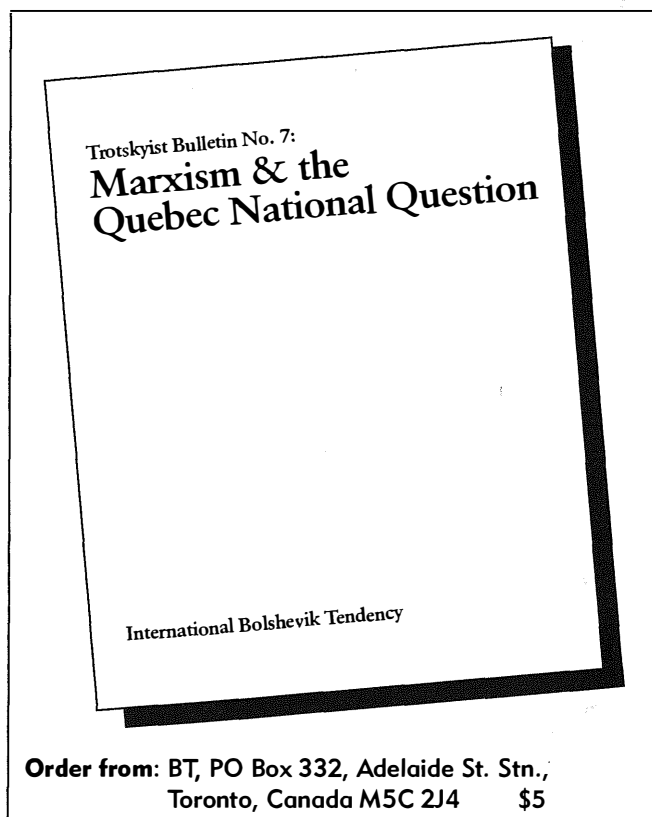
From a Leninist standpoint, advocating Quebec independence today makes even less sense than it did in the mid-1990s, given the precipitous decline in popular support for separation. The ICL's repudiation of the Spartacist tendency's historic position represented a politically demoralized retreat from Trotskyism and, as such, a manifestation of what the Internationalist Group in another con-

text described as the SL's "Drift Toward Abstentionism," culminating in its "Desertion from the Class Struggle."

Your recent statement correctly describes the ongoing student strike as "the biggest student mobilization in the history of Quebec and one of the most bitter social struggles in Canada for decades" (*op cit*). This massive anti-austerity struggle—which has now acquired international significance—completely refutes the claim that without independence significant social struggle is impossible. Striking francophone students are well aware that it is not the Anglo bourgeoisie headquartered in Toronto and Ottawa but rather the Quebecois bourgeoisie represented by Jean Charest's Liberal government in Quebec City that is the immediate enemy. It is no coincidence that the symbol of the student strike has not been the *fleur-de-lys* but the red square.

Referring to the effects of the student struggle, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (2 June [2012]) observes that "a sort of 'grand awakening' is under way, bringing with it the level of public discourse that Quebecers call a *débat de société*":

"As well as protesting against the tuition rise and the legal measures imposed to tighten the rules on protests, Quebecers are marching against dwindling economic opportunity, corruption, and a widespread view that their Liberal rulers are tired and disconnected.



Order from: BT, PO Box 332, Adelaide St. Stn.,
Toronto, Canada M5C 2J4 \$5

“Nationalist and progressive politics are often aligned in Quebec, but it’s far from clear that there is any resurgence of the sovereignty movement on the horizon—the issue has barely even come up.”

The position developed by the revolutionary Spartacist tendency of the 1970s was premised on a recognition of the enormous potential strategic significance of the linkages between the historically more militant and volatile Quebecois working class and its counterpart in English Canada (and through it the American proletariat). The current mass resistance to austerity by the Quebec students is beginning to resonate in English Canada, and this worries the Anglo rulers. The 2 June [2012] *Globe and Mail* mused: “After hundreds of demonstrations [in Quebec]—several have drawn crowds of 100,000 or more—scattered protests have begun to appear in other Canadian cities, leading many to suggest that Quebec’s unrest will carry on for months and the rest of Canada may yet be in for and [sic] awakening of its own.” Solidarity rallies have been organized across English Canada, from Halifax to Vancouver. In Toronto, these demonstrations have drawn thousands.

This is not the first time that struggles beginning in Quebec have spread to English Canada, as we documented in *Trotskyist Bulletin* No.7, which includes the transcript of a debate we had on this question with the ICL’s Canadian affiliate in 1999. We suggest that you reevaluate



STAN BEHAL—TORONTO SUN

IBT signs at Toronto demo in solidarity with Quebec strike

your stance and recognize that, in the current context, calls for independence are best left to petty-bourgeois nationalists and their fake socialist hangers-on.

Leninist Greetings,
International Bolshevick Tendency

‘Revolutionary Socialists’ Embrace Islamic Reactionaries Cliffites Vote for Muslim Brotherhood

The following remarks were made by an IBT comrade at an International Socialists meeting in Toronto on 5 June 2012.

In his writings on the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky characterized class collaborationism as “the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch” [“The POUM and the Popular Front,” 16 July 1936]. While many leftists viewed political support to bourgeois forces as a mere tactical issue, Trotsky insisted that betraying the principle of working-class independence could only result in the defeat of the revolution.

The situation in Egypt today, while different from that of Spain in the 1930s, once again sharply poses the question of multi-class political alliances vs. working-class political independence. There is no “lesser evil” for Egyptian workers in the second round of the presidential election on 16 and 17 June [2012]. Ahmad Shafiq was Hosni Mubarak’s last prime minister, while Mohammed Morsi of the Freedom and Justice Party is the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood. Both represent the ruling class and are the sworn enemies of the workers’ movement. Marxists call upon working people to reject this charade, spoil their ballots and begin building organs of class struggle capable of advancing their interests against both the bourgeois military and Islamic reaction.

In the 2 June [2012] issue of *Socialist Worker* [Britain], the IS reprints a statement by their Egyptian sister organization, the Revolutionary Socialists, which:

“call[s] on all the reformist and revolutionary forces and the remainder of the revolutionary candidates to form a national front which stands against the candidate of counter-revolution [Shafiq], and demands that the Muslim Brotherhood declares its commitment to the following:

“1. Formation of a presidential coalition which includes Hamdeen Sabbahi and Abd-al-Moneim Abu-al-Fotouh as Vice-Presidents.

“2. The selection of a Prime Minister from outside the ranks of the Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party and the formation of a government across the whole political spectrum in which the Copts are represented.”

Calling for the formation of a new bourgeois government from “across the whole political spectrum” violates the most fundamental principle of Marxism: the political independence of the workers’ movement from the bourgeoisie. The struggle to build a revolutionary workers’ party in Egypt must begin by repudiating the “practical” class collaboration promoted by the IS which can only produce defeat and demoralization. ■

Crisis...

continued from page 2



Hitler's troops parade in occupied Paris

artificial barriers between European coal and European iron.... All this, in its turn, is inconceivable without the destruction of the ancient Chinese system of custom borders within Europe. This would, in its turn, mean a single, All-European customs union—against America.”

—“Disarmament and the United States of Europe”

German imperialism's bid to “unify” Europe under the swastika in the 1930s and 1940s was defeated by the armed might of the Soviet degenerated workers' state with assistance from a coalition of imperialist powers (chiefly the U.S. and Britain) pursuing their own predatory goals.

The defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 led to the partition of Europe (and Germany itself) between a Soviet bloc in the East and a capitalist bloc in the West. The workers of Western Europe were well aware that the Soviet military had defeated the Nazis and that partisans of the Communist Parties (CPs) had comprised the core of the Resistance. They were also aware that most of Europe's ruling elites had actively collaborated with the Nazis. Having suffered through severe economic depression, fascism and a conflagration that killed some 50 million people, many European workers were openly hostile toward capitalism and favorably inclined to the idea that a system based on collectivized (rather than private) property would produce a more egalitarian social order. This mood was reflected in the West European elections of 1945-46 in which the Communist Parties (which were mistakenly seen as revolutionary) polled much higher than they had in the 1930s—winning 10.5 percent of the vote in the Netherlands, 11 percent in Denmark, 12 percent in Belgium, 19 percent in Italy and 28 percent in France (Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance*).

This was the context in which the U.S. imperialists, the unquestioned leaders of the postwar capitalist world, decided to help their European and Japanese rivals recover

as quickly as possible. In addition to Marshal Plan assistance to revive the economies of the West, U.S. strategists viewed investment in the creation of a European “welfare state” as necessary to blunt the appeal of a powerful left wing within the working class. The U.S. State Department put a priority on establishing a new, pro-capitalist social-democratic union leadership unambiguously loyal to the West. CIA labor operatives played a key role in this effort, successfully engineering splits in those unions where pro-Soviet elements could not easily be dislodged. In 1947, for instance, Force Ouvrière was launched as a rival to the CP-dominated Confédération Générale du Travail, the largest labor central in France.

The U.S. viewed economic cooperation between Europe's major powers (particularly France and West Germany) as an integral part of the global drive to contain and roll back the Soviet bloc. Inter-imperialist hostilities in Europe had provided considerable room for maneuver for the Soviet Union in the decade following World War I, and America's rulers wanted to prevent any repetition in the postwar period. The economic support offered by Washington to Europe dovetailed with U.S. plans to end the system of “imperial preferences” and open European colonial holdings to penetration by American capital. From the standpoint of the European imperialists themselves, greater cooperation made sense as part of a reconstruction project that would eventually allow them to emerge as viable economic competitors.

The European Union began in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was composed of the Benelux countries, France, Italy and West Germany. Six years later, ECSC members launched the European Economic Community (EEC), aka the “Common Market,” and pledged to standardize policies in transport, agriculture and other sectors. The signatories to the 1957 Treaty of Rome—which also created the European Investment Bank, European Parliament and Council of Ministers—set as their long-term goal the full economic and political integration of Western Europe. By 1968, the countries of the Common Market (now nine in number) had negotiated a customs union with a common tariff system, and began to relax restrictions on cross-border movements of capital and labor.

British imperialism has traditionally expressed only tepid enthusiasm for European integration, and has sought to offset its historic decline in part by cultivating a “special relationship” with the U.S. In 1960, Britain, along with Switzerland, Portugal, Austria, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, created the European Free Trade Association as a rival to the EEC. When that failed, Britain attempted to join the EEC, only to have its applications blocked twice by France before finally being admitted in 1973 along with Denmark and Ireland.

George Soros, the maverick financier, recently described the project of European economic integration as an “unreal but immensely attractive” capitalist utopia, an open society “founded on the principles of democracy, human rights, and rule of law in which no nation or nationality would have a dominant position.” He described how the EU evolved under the leadership of politicians who:

“set limited objectives and firm timelines and then mobilized the political will for a small step forward, knowing full well that when they achieved it, its inadequacy



REUTERS

January 2013: François Hollande and Angela Merkel hobnobbing in Berlin

would become apparent and require a further step. The process fed on its own success, very much like a financial bubble."

—georgesoros.com, 2 June 2012

An apt analogy, particularly after the bursting of the financial bubble that followed the creation of the euro put the whole project in jeopardy.

Economic integration offered the possibility of operating on a much larger playing field, with a vast expansion of production, finance and trade that would enable European enterprises to become more competitive internationally. But from the outset, the success of the European project has depended on the rulers of each of the great powers willingly subordinating their own particular short-term interests to the long-term goal of being a minority shareholder in a much larger imperial enterprise.

Each European ruling class responded to the global economic downturn of the early 1970s by attempting to "export" the crisis by finding new markets and fields for investment—deepening the phenomenon now known as "globalization." This was combined with "neoliberal" attempts to restore profitability at home by reducing wages and social expenditures, weakening unions and introducing more "flexibility" into the labor process, while simultaneously lowering corporate tax rates and easing government regulation (particularly in the financial sector).

The triumph of counterrevolution in the degenerated and deformed workers' states of the Warsaw Pact emboldened the capitalists, who celebrated their victory by accelerating neoliberal attacks. Social-welfare policies that had been seen as necessary to maintaining stability during the Cold War could now be dispensed with. The biggest

beneficiary of capitalist restoration in the Soviet bloc was Germany, which not only absorbed the former German Democratic Republic (DDR aka "East Germany") but was also best positioned to take advantage of the vast new markets and opportunities for exploitation in the fledgling capitalist economies of the East.

This prospect was not particularly pleasing to Germany's major EU partners. In her 1993 memoir, *The Downing Street Years*, Margaret Thatcher recounted a discussion with Soviet chief Mikhail Gorbachev in September 1989 (prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall): "I explained to him that although Nato had traditionally made statements supporting Germany's aspiration to be reunited, in practice we were rather apprehensive." Italian leftist academic Guglielmo Carchedi noted that there was a "desire, especially by France, to contain a possible resurgence of German expansionism by integrating the German economy in a European context" (*For Another Europe*, 2001). The German bourgeoisie, making the opposite calculation, concluded that deepening and extending the process of continental integration would, over the long run, tend to strengthen, not weaken, its dominant position in Europe.

Imperialism, European Integration & Marxist Tactics

During the 1980s, the EEC admitted Spain, Portugal and Greece and deepened the common market's supranational elements. The 1986 Single Market Act expanded the role of the Brussels-based European Commission in developing economic policy, while an earlier agreement eliminated border controls in the so-called Schengen Area. The 1992



AFP-GETTY IMAGES

August 2012: French police evict Roma from 'illegal' settlement in Lyon

Maastricht Treaty projected the transformation of the EEC into a new, broader venture called the European Union, with an "economic and monetary union" and a single currency by the end of the decade.

The EU project has gone further down the road to economic integration than many—including ourselves—anticipated. In our 1994 assessment of the Maastricht Treaty, we asserted: "Plans for moving to a common currency (supposed to be a milestone on the road to European Union) were shattered by two monetary crises: in September 1992, and July 1993" (1917 No.13, 1994). In fact, the common currency project survived. In 1999, the euro came into existence in the form of permanently fixed exchange rates, and three years later began to circulate in 12 countries (now 17).

The Maastricht Treaty was endorsed by the section of the bourgeoisie that favored freer trade and closer economic cooperation, and was opposed by more protectionist elements, the far right and most of the European far left and workers' movement. In many cases, the arguments employed by the treaty's ostensibly Marxist critics were barely distinguishable from those put forward by its bourgeois opponents. We took a different view, criticizing those professed socialists who, "rather than be marginalized, strain to discover some kind of leftist, working-class pole in the Maastricht controversy." While we recognized that it is possible for "questions that would ordinarily be seen as intra-bourgeois disputes to acquire a class significance" in some circumstances, and noted that "Unlike voting for a candidate in an election, voting no in a referendum could also be a purely negative act," we concluded: "Revolutionaries refuse to choose between these bourgeois poisons, and call for opposition

to both capitalist 'options' for intensifying exploitation" (*Ibid.*).

The EU has expanded considerably since the Maastricht Treaty was signed. In 1995, Austria, Sweden and Finland joined, followed in 2004 by Malta and Cyprus as well as eight former members of the Soviet bloc: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Bulgaria and Romania were accepted in 2007, and Croatia is scheduled to join in July 2013. Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania have all applied for membership.

The triumph of capitalist counterrevolution in 1989-91 resulted in the effective subordination of Eastern Europe to West European finance capital:

"Above all, in the course of their transformation into market economies the CEEC [Central and Eastern European Countries] have become important trade partners for the EU-15 [the EU members that joined prior to 2004], which today source roughly 13% of their imports from the CEEC and ship 15% of their exports there. In the boom year 2007 the volume of trade between the CEEC and the EU-15 totalled some EUR 440 bn (with a surplus of about EUR 45 bn for the EU-15). The CEEC are far more dependent on this trade, their economic strength being considerably less. About 50% of CEEC external trade is conducted with the EU-15. This interdependence is similarly high in the banking sector. On average, foreign—most notably west European—banks hold 75% percent [sic] of the total assets of the banking sector in the CEEC. In the euro area countries, foreign-owned banks account for a market share of only 24%. European—mainly euro area—banks also hold a dominant position in cross-border lending to the CEEC, accounting for more than 90%. These high interdependen-

cies are clearly indicative of the CEEC's positive economic integration into the EU."

—Deutsche Bank Research, "As time goes by...,"

12 May 2009

The dependent capitalist states of Eastern Europe could, of course, be subjected to imperialist exploitation without membership in the EU, but German and French capital have opted to admit politically "stable" countries with a "viable market economy."

While we have always opposed both the European Union and autarkic alternatives, in the various EU referenda we have responded with different tactics in order to highlight particular issues, depending on the conjuncture. In 2005, the EU held a referendum to approve a new constitution designed in part to facilitate the incorporation of the former deformed workers' states. We advocated a "no" vote in an attempt to express opposition to the predatory plans of the imperialists for the East European countries. We did so while recognizing that: "Many of the supposed socialists in the 'no' camp put forward the notion that the austerity drives and anti-working class attacks undertaken by each national bourgeoisie originate in directives from Brussels, rather than from their own aggressive pursuit of profits" (1917 No.28, 2006). The proposed "constitution," which was derailed when voters in the Netherlands and France refused to ratify it, was repackaged two years later as the Lisbon Treaty and approved after a new round of voting.

In Ireland, any major EU treaty modifications must be ratified through a referendum. This has given the Irish more opportunities than most to have their say. In 2009, we advised a spoiled ballot in the Irish plebiscite on the Lisbon Treaty, because we considered the key political issue to be the rise of nationalist/protectionist sentiment within the working class:

"Whether it is better to vote 'No' or spoil your ballot in this referendum is a tactical question that boils down to how socialists can best promote class consciousness within the proletariat given current political circumstances.

"The present political context is sharply defined by a rising tide of nationalism being pushed by elements of the ruling class and the trade-union bureaucracy as a response to the crisis."

—"On the Lisbon Treaty referendum,"

29 September 2009

In 2012, we employed a different tactic, advocating a "no" vote in the referendum to ratify Irish participation in the Fiscal Compact, which requires signatories to balance their budgets, i.e., increase austerity. The Irish government was already engaged in a vicious campaign of cuts to social services and public-sector wages, combined with tax hikes for those on low incomes while holding corporate rates at 12.5 percent. Unlike the 2009 referendum, which was widely seen as a judgment on the EU project in general, the 2012 vote was posed in terms of supporting or not supporting austerity. Despite a huge "yes" propaganda campaign by the capitalist establishment, nearly 40 percent voted "no."

There are important parallels, but also significant differences, between the EU in its present configuration and the limited economic integration promoted by the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), by which U.S. and Canadian imperialism incorporated Mexico into their preexisting bloc. To smooth the integration of their



AIDAN CRAWLEY—BLOOMBERG

Unfinished houses in an abandoned development, Keshcarrigan, Ireland

Eastern European hinterland, the West European imperialists ceded certain powers to supranational bodies which none of them directly controls. While Mexican immigrants who cross the Rio Grande in search of work are persecuted as "illegals," EU citizens, with some restrictions (particularly for those from newer member states, Romania and Bulgaria), are permitted to work in other EU countries.

The resulting increased mobility of labor has generated a limited tendency toward convergence of wage rates across Europe. Demand for labor in Eastern Europe has risen, as Jane Hardy noted in the case of Poland:

"Migration has had a significant impact on the Polish economy. While it has contributed to lowering the unemployment rate, which by 2008 had fallen to 11 per cent [from 20 per cent in 2004] (GUS, 2008) migration has also brought about a significant drain of well-educated people and skilled workers."

—*Poland's New Capitalism*, 2009

In the imperialist countries, there has been an ugly nationalist response to foreign workers, reflected in rising popularity of anti-immigrant demagogues and the rightward shift of mainstream bourgeois parties. In France, the presidential candidate of the far right National Front, Marine Le Pen, won nearly 18 percent of the vote in the last election. President François Hollande of the Socialist Party has continued his right-wing predecessor's practice of dismantling the encampments of impoverished Roma (who are EU citizens) and sending them back to Romania or Bulgaria.

The growing danger of nationalism poisoning the workers' movement was underscored by the 2009 Lindsey oil refinery strike, where trade unionists reacted to the hiring of Italian and Portuguese labor with chauvinist demands for "British jobs for British workers." As we noted at the time, the response of class-conscious militants must be to vigorously champion full citizenship rights for all immigrants while fighting to "level up" pay and working conditions:

"a decisive intervention early on by class-conscious militants in favour of recruiting all workers who wished to join the union, while imposing a closed shop with union control of hiring, could have put the struggle on an entire-



ANDRES KUDACKI—AP

July 2012: riot police attack coal miners marching to Ministry of Industry in Madrid

ly different footing. Linked to demands for dividing the work equitably at no loss in pay, this approach could have set an example of how trade unions throughout the EU can 'level up' pay and working conditions. In this way it might have helped to popularise the idea of forging a single industrial union for all workers in the construction industry across Europe. Of course, even prior to achieving that, a class-struggle leadership would seek to extend union membership to all workers employed in their sector, give parity to members of foreign unions in Britain and seek to negotiate reciprocal agreements for British trade unionists abroad."

—*"Militant Tactics & Poisonous Nationalism,"*
1917 No.32, 2010

In relation to the Maastricht Treaty, we argued that the workers' movement has no interest in advising the bosses how best to organize capitalist exploitation. Marxists take no side in disputes among sections of the bourgeoisie over the relative merits of free trade or protectionism: "We neither advocate a strong dollar/pound/mark/yen nor a weak one, a return to the gold standard or floating exchange rates" (1917 No.13, 1994).

Revolutionaries are just as hostile to the existence of the EU as to the individual capitalist states that comprise it. For working people, the way forward is internationalist class struggle—opposing the EU, while also combating illusions in any sort of nationalist capitalist path. The only historically progressive solution to the contradictions of European capitalism is the revolutionary overthrow of the whole system of production for profit and the creation of a socialist order.

Prospects of a Greek Exit

Some leftists suggest that the diktats of the so-called "troika" (the International Monetary Fund, European Central

Bank and European Commission) to Greece and other dependent countries in the EU "periphery" can be countered by exiting the euro and restoring a national currency. Marxists do not oppose such demands in principle—our attitude is determined at every point by what is most likely to advance the class struggle. It is essential to win workers to the recognition that their main enemy is their own ruling class, not the Eurocrats in Brussels. This would very quickly become clear if Greece were to abandon the euro, as the restoration of the drachma would allow Greek capitalists to quickly push down wages through devaluation, rather than a frontal assault.

In a recent statement, the Spartacist League/Britain (a section of the International Communist League) characterized a possible Greek exit from the EU as a blow against imperialism:

"If Greece were to be propelled out of the euro—and the EU—under the impact of mass opposition to EU-dictated starvation policies, it would be a defeat for the imperialists and a step forward for the working class, in Greece and the rest of Europe."

—*Workers Hammer*, Spring 2012

This conflates workers' resistance to austerity with the reestablishment of a national currency—in fact, the "step forward" in their scenario would be the level of mass struggle, not the restoration of the drachma. If the troika were forced to make major concessions to Greek workers "under the impact of mass opposition," that too "would be a defeat for the imperialists and a step forward." If the Greek bourgeoisie were to be compelled to leave the EU, any benefits that workers might derive from a free-floating drachma would be more than offset by falling real wages, as the prices for essential consumer goods (most of which are imported) soared out of reach.

A leading Swiss bank made the following prediction

regarding the impact of a Greek departure from the euro zone:

“Consequences include sovereign default, corporate default, collapse of the banking system and collapse of international trade. There is little prospect of devaluation offering much assistance. We estimate that a weak Euro country leaving the Euro would incur a cost of around EUR9,500 to EUR11,500 per person in the exiting country during the first year. That cost would then probably amount to EUR3,000 to EUR4,000 per person per year over subsequent years. That equates to a range of 40% to 50% of GDP in the first year.”

—“Global Economic Perspectives,” UBS,
6 September 2011

While acknowledging that currency depreciation would make Greek exports more competitive, the report’s authors anticipate that the EU would likely impose countermeasures:

“The rest of the Euro area (indeed the rest of the European Union) is unlikely to regard secession with tranquil indifference. In the event that a NNC [new national currency] were to depreciate 60% against the Euro, it seems highly plausible that the Euro area would impose a 60% tariff (or even higher) against the exports of the seceding country. The European Commission explicitly alludes to this issue, saying that if a country was to leave the Euro it would ‘compensate’ for any undue movement in the NNC.”

—*Ibid.*

The response of the Greek bourgeoisie would inevitably be to attempt to further push down living standards while brutally repressing any working-class resistance in the name of national salvation (i.e., restoring the competitiveness of Greek capitalism). In the absence of massive class struggle, the price of leaving the EU for Greek working people would be roughly the same as remaining within it: tightened belts and dented skulls.

From ERM to Euro: Contradictions of a Single Currency

The current EU crisis, which has been shaped by attempts to remedy earlier problems, is clearly “stress-testing” the limits of European integration within a capitalist framework. Unlike the U.S. dollar with which it competes as a global medium of exchange, the euro is a currency without a state, an unprecedented phenomenon in modern history.

The origins of the euro can be traced to the 1971 termination of the Bretton Woods system, the post-WWII global currency regime that used a gold-backed U.S. dollar as its standard. In order to stabilize exchange rates to facilitate trade within the EEC, a European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) was eventually established, setting a narrow range within which member states’ currencies were permitted to deviate from a European Currency Unit (the euro’s notional forerunner). The relative weight of the German economy made the deutschmark the central currency in the ERM, and the West German central bank (the Bundesbank) the arbiter of the system. But the ERM was plagued by the same problem presently bedeviling the euro zone—the fact that different national currencies rise and fall in relation to each other as the relative strength of the economies they represent increases

or decreases.

Throughout the 1980s, Germany pursued a monetarist policy of low inflation, which set the tempo for the ERM as a whole. This limited the options of participating governments in coping with the ups and downs of the market and the class struggle, as a significant currency devaluation, for instance, would have placed a country outside the framework of the ERM. When France’s Socialist Party-led government turned toward austerity in 1982, its left-nationalist critics tended to blame the “strong franc” policy necessitated by adherence to the ERM. In reality, President François Mitterrand would never have pursued this strategy had it not suited the requirements of the French bourgeoisie.

The movement toward the common currency was decisively shaped by the economic preponderance of Germany in the EU, and by the fact that the overheads incurred in swallowing the DDR in 1990, which ran to some 400 billion deutschmarks, were considerably greater than anticipated. To dampen the inflationary pressures generated by these costs, the Bundesbank raised interest rates on government debt, which immediately attracted foreign investment and pushed up the value of the mark. This required other European currencies, which were effectively pegged to the mark through the ERM, to rise, thereby increasing the price of their exports and further depressing already sluggish economic activity.

In 1993, following a massive run on the French franc and Italian lira by speculators betting that the peg would not be maintained, the exchange rate margin soared from 2.25 to 15 percent—effectively nullifying the ERM, which was nonetheless formally maintained in anticipation of pending monetary union. While many hoped that the euro would somehow overcome the problems of the ERM, the present crisis is an expression of essentially the same dilemma—a common monetary policy without a common political authority.

Throughout the 1990s, the German government sought to improve the “business climate” with a mix of direct and indirect tax hikes, cuts to social services, downward pressure on wages and the gutting of a substantial chunk of basic industry, including steel plants and mines. This drive accelerated under the social-democratic Schroeder government with its “Agenda 2010” and the Hartz “labor reform” program initiated in 2002, which, due to the passivity and acquiescence of the trade-union bureaucrats, resulted in a sharp decline in working-class living standards. Real wages fell every year for a decade, with unemployment peaking in 2005 at 4.9 million. German industry experienced a corresponding rise in profitability during the same period. With varying degrees of success (generally inversely proportional to the stiffness of working-class resistance), the bourgeoisies of other EU countries pursued similar policies in an attempt to improve their rates of profit and keep pace with their German partners.

The requirements of the common currency, which is incapable of reflecting shifts in political and economic circumstances between member states, complicated these efforts. As Marx observed, the value of a currency ultimately reflects the productivity of labor in a given country. The euro lacks some of the key qualities of a national currency because it is not issued by a single political author-



GETTY IMAGES

BMW production line in Munich

ity, but rather by a bloc of distinct states with different, and sometimes conflicting, regulatory systems:

“Almost all of the money in a contemporary economy consists of the liabilities of financial institutions. In the eurozone, for example, currency in circulation is just 9 per cent of broad money (M3). If this is a true currency union, a deposit in any eurozone bank must be the equivalent of a deposit in any other bank. But what happens if the banks in a given country are on the verge of collapse? The answer is that this presumption of equal value no longer holds. A euro in a Greek bank is today no longer the same as a euro in a German bank. In this situation, there is not only the risk of a run on a bank but also the risk of a run on a national banking system.”

—*Financial Times*, 31 May 2011

The euro zone countries currently in the most trouble are those with lower levels of labor productivity. While no country is immune from the effects of capitalism’s crisis tendencies, it is hardly surprising that the “chain” of the European monetary union has begun to break at its weakest links.

The common currency acts as a sort of external constraint on every euro zone member state, with the partial exception of Germany, as leftist economist Michel Aglietta noted:

“Like the ERM before it, the single currency may be viable within the existing rules as long as there is calm in the financial markets, but becomes inoperable in periods of crisis. The euro is essentially a foreign currency for every Eurozone country. It binds them to rigidly fixed exchange rates, regardless of their underlying economic realities, and strips them of monetary autonomy.”

“...the euro is incomplete as a currency, for its sovereign guarantor has not been realized. Each Eurozone state is responsible for the capital it has invested in the ECB [European Central Bank], but not for its overall solvency; consequently, the ECB is not the lender of last resort for

the Eurozone states. This, again, makes the euro a foreign currency for each country. There can be no cooperative policy-making in Europe if the currency is external to all member-states.”

—*New Left Review*, May-June 2012

Europe’s “sovereign debt crisis” is, at bottom, an expression of a long-term profitability crisis that began in the early 1970s. Blaming “generous” social programs in Greece or Spain for the euro crisis makes as little sense as explaining Wall Street’s 2008 financial meltdown as the result of “irresponsible” Americans who accepted offers of mortgage loans they could not possibly repay (see “Pathologies of Capitalism,” 1917 No.34, 2012).

Monetary Union & Economic Crisis

Germany’s weaker euro partners welcomed the common currency because it was perceived as the successor to the deutschmark and, as such, would allow them to borrow at relatively low rates of interest. At the same time, the euro prevented member states with lower productivity from engaging in competitive devaluations to boost domestic producers’ exports.

Monetary union initially appeared to guarantee financial stability and economic security for all participants. With government debt in the euro zone rated as virtually risk-free, weaker countries at the periphery could borrow money cheaply (which contributed to housing bubbles in Ireland and Spain and the explosive growth of public debt in Portugal and Greece). Meanwhile, German industry enjoyed record profits as demand for its products soared:

“In 1999, exports were 29% of German gross domestic product. By 2008, they were 47%—an increase vastly larger than in Italy, Spain and Greece, where the ratios increased modestly or even fell. Germany’s net export contribution to GDP (exports minus imports as a share of the economy) rose by nearly a factor of eight. Unlike almost every other high-income country, where manufacturing’s share of the economy fell significantly, in Germany it actually rose as the price of German goods grew more and more attractive compared to those of other countries.”

—*Wall Street Journal* online, 29 November 2011

It all came to an abrupt end in 2008 with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers. Suddenly the spigot was turned off as European banks sought to strengthen their balance sheets to offset exposure to toxic U.S. assets. Cheap credit disappeared overnight and the hyper-inflated housing markets in Ireland and Spain collapsed. The big EU banks were directly impacted by the U.S. crash, as Aglietta observed:

“The EU single market created an integrated financial space, open to capital flows. The large European banks became global operators. They played an active part in the expansion of debt and toxic assets in the US and, when the crisis broke out in 2007, found themselves in a position comparable to that of the American banks. But the French, German and Spanish governments initially allowed them to freeze their bad debts, rather than forcing them to restructure. The banks also loaded up on Eurozone public debt in the years that followed—raking in considerable profits for themselves in the process, by borrowing at practically zero rates and buying government bonds paying 3 to 4 per cent interest at the time of



December 2009: fascists deface mosque in Southern France

the 2009 stimulus plans. During the first two years of the crisis, as the 2007 credit crunch deepened into the banking crisis of 2008, the fall of Lehman Brothers and the global economic contraction of 2009, the Eurozone states saw private debt as a percentage of GDP continue to rise, while gross public debt—that is, without factoring in assets—also soared with the recession.”

—*op cit*

Prior to the crash little attention was paid to the fact that the European monetary union did not amount to a political union. Angela Merkel highlighted the significance of this fact when she announced that her government considered each member of the euro zone responsible for paying off its own creditors and bailing out its own banks.

The German bourgeoisie benefited from a “flight to quality,” as investors unloaded the euro-denominated debt of the EU’s weaker economies and purchased German securities. In exchange for rolling over the debts of Greece and others in the EU, Berlin has insisted on imposing “structural reforms” (i.e., austerity) supposedly to make their economies more competitive. The rulers of the EU’s debtor states, while loudly bemoaning these impositions, have used the troika’s directives as political cover for lowering wages, lengthening the workweek, easing restrictions on hiring and firing and implementing various other measures aimed at raising profitability. Vincent Navarro of Johns Hopkins University observed:

“The measures being taken in Spain and other peripheral countries, with the support of the Troika, by the Spanish

and other governments are the measures that the conservative forces they represent have always dreamed of: cutting salaries, eliminating social protection, dismantling the welfare state, and so on. They claim they are doing it because of instructions from Brussels, Frankfurt, or Berlin. They are shifting responsibilities to foreign agents, who supposedly are forcing them to do it. It is the externalization of blame. Their major slogan is, ‘There are no alternatives!’”

—*Counterpunch*, 16 August 2012

The monetary union established by the Maastricht Treaty has produced a situation reminiscent of the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s, when governments suddenly lost any room to maneuver as interest rates on their dollar-denominated loans started to rise. Unable to devalue their way out of the crisis, the debtor countries were compelled to turn to the IMF, which imposed the same sort of “internal devaluation” currently underway in Greece and Spain.

Dean Baker, a liberal economist at Washington’s Center for Economic and Policy Research, debunked the capitalist media’s treatment of the EU crisis as “profligate governments being reined in by the bond market”:

“The eurozone crisis is most definitely not a story of countries with out of control spending getting their comeuppance in the bond market. Prior to the economic collapse in 2008, the only country that had a serious deficit problem was Greece. In the other countries now having trouble financing their debt, the debt to GDP ratio was stable



GUILLAUME BAPTISTE—AFP—GETTY IMAGES

1 May 2012, Paris: Workers demonstrate

or falling prior: Spain and Ireland were actually running budget surpluses and had debt to GDP ratios that were among the lowest in the OECD.

"The crisis changed everything. It threw the whole continent into severe recession. This had the effect of causing deficits to explode since tax revenues plummet when the economy contracts and payments for unemployment benefits and other transfer programmes soar."

—Al Jazeera English, 18 December 2011

Most serious bourgeois analysts recognize that much of the debt can never be repaid and will ultimately have to be written down. The ECB's and IMF's attempts to contain the damage have largely involved providing low-interest loans for central banks to repurchase their own national debt. This has eased short-term pressure from financial markets and permitted foreign creditors to offload their holdings without taking much of a "haircut." The risk of a meltdown in the euro zone has thus largely been transferred from the private to the public sector.

Initially, the euro was celebrated as marking the dawn of a new era of harmonious integration and cooperation between Europe's disparate nations. Yet since the 2008 financial crash, there has been a sharpening of national antagonisms and growing resentment between the haves and have-nots. The pressures generated by seemingly endless rounds of austerity are increasing sentiment in some countries toward opting out of the euro and/or the EU itself. If the euro zone were to disintegrate, Europe would likely return to something closer to the situation of the 1930s, with competing states taking shelter behind protectionist barriers while seeking to blast their way into foreign markets. To prepare for the struggles to come, class-conscious workers must recognize that Europe's capitalist rulers would make essentially the same demands in preparation for a potential exit from the EU as they now

insist are necessary to remain within it.

Those leftists who blame Brussels and the IMF for the current attacks are not only engaging in cheap demagoguery, but are also alibiing their own rulers and laying the foundations for a "union sacrée" (i.e., overt class collaboration). The French Parti Ouvrier Indépendant (POI), led by cadres of the ostensibly Trotskyist Lambertiste tendency, are among the worst examples, with their complaint that France's "Hollande-Ayrault government is obeying the orders of the troika" (*Informations Ouvrières*, 18 September 2012). For these reformists, the key task of the workers' movement is "the reconquest of democracy and the sovereignty of the people" (*Informations Ouvrières*, 9 October 2012). Hollande, as the head of the French state, adheres to the instructions of the "troika" only insofar as they meet the requirements of the imperialist bourgeoisie he serves—those, like the POI, who refuse to recognize this are not socialists of any sort, but simply vulgar nationalists.

An alternative outcome to the current crisis would be a deepening of the process of European integration under German domination. The first tentative steps on this path have already been taken, as debtor countries are pressured to surrender elements of political sovereignty as the price for having their loans rolled over. During recent "bailout" negotiations, Germany floated a proposal that a "European Commissioner for Monetary Affairs" be empowered to overturn national budgets of euro zone states. This would in effect mean ceding control over fiscal policy (taxation and expenditure) to Berlin, because given economic realities, in any European "fiscal and monetary union," the German bourgeoisie will be calling the shots.

As the economic situation in the EU continues to deteriorate, it is possible that some reformists will propose that the answer is "more Europe" rather than less, i.e., moving in the direction of a closer political union under capitalism. The amalgamation of the euro zone's disparate national bourgeoisies into some sort of federated multi-national ruling class would require the fusion of their existing state apparatuses, a development without modern historical precedent. This would require the French, Dutch, Belgian and other imperialist bourgeoisies of Western Europe to opt for participation as junior partners (in some cases very junior partners) in an enterprise effectively controlled by Berlin.

The British ruling class, which has refused to participate in the existing limited currency union, is not likely to sign up for any kind of German-dominated European political union. Prime Minister David Cameron recently floated the idea of a referendum on leaving the EU. The French bourgeoisie has thus far adhered to a strategy of maintaining a bloc with Germany, despite secondary differences on social policy and other issues. But outside a catastrophic event that appears to threaten its very survival, it is impossible to imagine France's ruling class, or those of Europe's other imperialist powers, voluntarily subordinating themselves to German overlordship.

For a Revolutionary Solution to the Euro Crisis!

The present crisis of the euro zone presents a problem, but also an opportunity, for the corporate titans who dominate the continent, few of whom want to see

a collapse of the EU and a return to reactionary autarky. The present climate of fear and instability is bad for business, but also has an “upside”—it provides political cover for shredding social programs and breaking the trade unions. Europe’s rulers present the savage offensive underway against working people as an inescapable necessity imposed by impersonal “market forces” and carried out by foreign-dominated agencies over which they have no control and for whose actions they therefore are not responsible.

While the ECB markets its austerity diktats as “pro-growth,” in fact its policy is deliberately intended to impoverish the vast majority of the population, as Dean Baker observed:

“People should recognise this process for what it is: class war. The wealthy are using their control of the ECB to dismantle welfare state protections that enjoy enormous public support.

“This applies not only to government programs like public pensions and healthcare, but also to labour market regulations that protect workers against dismissal without cause. And of course, the longstanding foes of Social Security and Medicare in the US are anxious to twist the facts to use the eurozone crisis to help their class war agenda here.

“The claim that the countries in Europe are just coming to grips with the reality of modern financial markets is covering up for the class war being waged on workers across the globe.”

—*op cit*

Tens of millions of Europeans are currently without work (or are facing the imminent prospect of unemployment), while millions more have had both their hours and wages reduced. The rulers of the EU know that the demands for more cuts to public works, social services, pensions and unemployment benefits to pay for bailing out the big banks could set off a social explosion. Indeed, beating back austerity is the only way that working people—the vast majority—can begin to defend their right to a secure material existence.

Against the capitalist program of savage austerity, Marxists advance the perspective of a fight for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to combat unemployment. We also advocate a massive program of public works at full union wages to build social infrastructure. Those unable to “think outside the box” of capitalist profitability will consider such proposals fantastic. But the fact that capitalism cannot guarantee a decent standard of living for the majority of humanity proves that it is a historically obsolete social system. It is materially possible to expand production, boost pensions and ensure that free quality healthcare, childcare and post-secondary education are available to all—but this requires a revolutionary overturn of the existing economic system in favor of one based on collective ownership of the means of communication, transportation and production.

The present leadership of the working class is committed to a futile attempt to reengineer capitalism, rather than uproot it. Regrettably, much of Europe’s ostensibly revolutionary left has adopted the same approach. An article in the July 2012 issue of *International Viewpoint*, a journal published by co-thinkers of the late Ernest Mandel, proposes to mobilize “a vast anti-crisis move-

ment” to appeal to the masters of the EU to rejig their system: “we need a new deal: the ECB and national central banks must be allowed to directly finance member States striving towards social and environmental goals that meet the fundamental needs of people.” This wretched reformism, published by people falsely claiming to represent the political tradition of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, is premised on the notion that capitalism can somehow be turned into a system capable of meeting “the fundamental needs of people.”

Instead of trying to rationalize an irrational and outmoded social system, Marxists fight to build a mass, revolutionary workers’ party committed to the overthrow of capitalism. Such a party would pursue a policy of active class struggle, utilizing the militant tactics that won victories in the past—picket lines, sit-down strikes, factory seizures and mass mobilizations. To counter the attacks of the bosses’ thugs, a revolutionary party would seek to organize workers’ defense guards to protect the oppressed, particularly immigrants and ethnic minorities, scapegoated by fascists and other reactionary scum.

The existing union leadership cannot and will not organize the serious struggles required to effectively counter the capitalist offensive because they are organically integrated, as the materially privileged labor lieutenants of capital, into the bourgeois social order. They are an agency through which the capitalists poison the proletariat with reformism and nationalist lies about the identity of interests between the exploiters and their victims.

In reality, the two fundamental classes in bourgeois society—capitalists and workers—have irreconcilably opposed interests. Conversely, working people in all countries have the same fundamental concerns. Effective resistance to the current capitalist assault will require proletarian solidarity across national lines and the recognition that an injury to one is an injury to all. The answer to austerity (whether demanded by the troika or by a national bourgeoisie) is the creation of a fighting pan-European workers’ movement capable of acting in concert to defeat the bosses’ attacks.

To the impractical fantasies of reformism, Marxists counterpose the bold and practical solution of expropriation of the banks and industry and creation of a government based on workers’ councils. Since the victory of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991, bourgeois propagandists have had considerable success in discrediting the very idea of any possible alternative to capitalist barbarity. Yet the intractable problems caused by the profit system can only be solved through the socialization of production. And that can only be achieved through proletarian revolution.

The tendency toward European economic integration and cooperation is evident, though its potentially progressive content will remain unrealized until it is combined with the fight to overturn the nation-state system and the institution of capitalist private property on which it rests. The birth of a new world based on social equality, prosperity and harmony requires a midwife: the revolutionary working class organized behind a mass Leninist-Trotskyist party. Such a party is the indispensable factor necessary to transform today’s defensive struggles against austerity into tomorrow’s fight for the creation of the Socialist United States of Europe. ■

Austerity, Resistance & Betrayal Greece: A Crisis of Leadership



JOHN KOLESIDIS—REUTERS, LOUISA GOULIAMAKI—AFP—GETTY IMAGES

6 February 2013, Athens: desperate scramble for produce being given away by farmers

Greece remains the epicentre of Europe's slow-motion economic and political implosion. The June elections did nothing to resolve the crisis, and Greece continues to be profoundly polarized. On the one hand the fascist Golden Dawn party is growing rapidly, while on the other there has been a spectacular electoral shift to Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left). For a few weeks, it appeared that Syriza might emerge as the leading party in parliament. Ultimately, the conservative New Democracy (ND) took the helm in a coalition with the reformist Democratic Left and former ruling party, PASOK (the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Greek affiliate of the Socialist International).

The new government's willingness to implement austerity measures demanded by the hated "troika" (the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) has not slowed Greece's downward economic spiral. Most Greeks are extremely worried about the future, and many are angry. But to date, the trade-union leaders have made no attempts to initiate serious organized resistance. Instead, they have called around twenty toothless one-day general strikes which are essentially designed to let off steam.

Social Polarization Deepening

Workers' wages in Greece have fallen by a third since 2010, while consumption taxes have risen. During this same

time Greece's GDP has shrunk by almost a quarter, causing the ratio of gross government debt to GDP to increase (from 140 to 170 percent) despite the implementation of savage austerity measures. The official unemployment rate is around 25 percent—with youth unemployment over 50 percent. All public services have suffered deep cuts. One physician described the impact of austerity on the health care system:

"I think it will collapse," says Dr Kanakis. "Very soon. Because as the cuts continue, even very sick people can't get treatment; even people with social security. My mother has a pension of 500 euros and this month had to pay the special austerity tax, collected through her electricity bill. It was 350 euros. She's 80 years old. So tell me how she can survive?"

—BBC, 7 February 2012

Life for many ordinary working people has become unbearable. Dimitris Christoulas, a pensioner who took his own life in Syntagma Square in Athens last April [2012], left a suicide note saying that he simply could not face the prospect of spending the rest of his life picking through rubbish bins for food.

It is a far different story for those at the top like Spiros Latsis, owner of a shipping company which holds €7.5 billion of Greek state bonds. Latsis also owns a 40 percent share of Greece's national oil refinery ELPE (Hellenic

Petroleum) as well as a major real estate company (Lamda) that was implicated in starting forest fires to clear land for "redevelopment." Latsis and his ilk have long benefitted from a tax system grotesquely skewed in favor of the rich: "Greek shipowners, who have gained from their profits being tax-free and who control at least 15% of the world's merchant freight, have also remained low-key. With their wealth offshore and highly secretive, the estimated 900 families who run the sector have the largest fleet in the world. As Athens' biggest foreign currency earner after tourism, the industry remitted more than \$175bn (£112bn) to the country in untaxed earnings over the past decade. Greece's debt currently stands at €280bn."

—*Guardian*, 13 June 2012

Faced with a risky and uncertain future, Greek capitalists have opted to protect their money by sending it abroad: "An estimated €8bn flowed out of the Greek banking system in May as speculation over the country's possible exit from the eurozone mounted. Another €4bn was reported to have been withdrawn in the last two weeks—on top of an estimated €20bn since the start of the crisis in late 2009. Stories of rich Greeks sending their wives and best friends on 'shopping missions' to remove secret hoards kept in banks in Switzerland and Cyprus are legion."

—*Ibid.*

Greek Bourgeoisie—Dependent but Vicious

Part of the current huge public debt is attributable to a massive rearmament program undertaken by the Greek bourgeoisie in anticipation of a possible conflict with Turkey over Cyprus:

"Over much of the last decade, Greece—which has a population of 11 million people—has been one of the top five arms importers in the world. Most of the vastly expensive weapons, including submarines, tanks and combat aircraft, were made in Germany, France and the US.

"The arms purchases were beyond Greece's capacity to absorb, even before the financial crisis struck in 2009. Several hundred Leopard battle tanks were bought from Germany, but there was no money to pay for ammunition for their guns. Even in 2010, when the extent of the financial disaster was apparent, Greece bought 223 howitzers and a submarine from Germany at a cost of €403m. "In the new bailout agreement, Greece will pledge to reduce its defence spending by some €400m. Eurozone leaders have hitherto been notably more tolerant of Greece's arms expenditure—though this is twice the size of the Nato average as a proportion of GDP—than it has of excessive spending on health or pensions."

—*Independent*, 20 February 2012

A defining characteristic of the Greek ruling class—one it shares with many in Latin America—is a tendency to rely on military repression to control popular social mobilizations. In 1936, Greek capitalists supported a coup by pro-monarchist general Ioannis Metaxas which established a military dictatorship that only ended in 1941 with the invasion of Hitler's forces. In 1967 the army once again seized power and Greece was ruled by the brutal "regime of the colonels" until 1974.

Since then the Greek bourgeoisie has found it more expedient to exercise power behind a democratic façade, with the assistance of a compliant, pro-capitalist trade-

union leadership. The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), which represents private-sector workers, is partially state funded and closely linked to PASOK. In July 2010 the union leaders pulled the plug on a powerful truckers' strike in defense of a closed shop, after their allies in the PASOK government sent in the military to scab. The bureaucracy prefers class collaboration to class struggle and seeks merely to moderate the demands of finance-capital: "'There is a common agreement among the social partners,' said GSEE president Yannis Panagopoulos in a news conference. 'The government is obliged to respect that, and must push our creditors to respect it too'" (*Wall Street Journal online*, 2 February 2012).

Greek Austerity: Bailing out French & German Bankers

In 1981, when Greece joined the European Community, few of its producers were economically competitive. Since then the amount of foreign direct investment coming into Greece has been twice that of outward investment by Greek capitalists. The country imports most essential commodities, and its state sector has been primarily financed by foreign loans. Labor productivity is relatively low compared to the imperialist core countries of the EU, not because of the supposed laziness of Greek workers, as bourgeois demagogues contend, but rather because of a lower organic composition of capital—that is, less advanced technology and a relatively underdeveloped infrastructure. Greek workers have in fact been working *more* than most others in the EU to enable their employers to realize a rate of profit comparable to that of their European counterparts. In 2008, the average Greek worker logged 2,051 hours, compared to 1,659 in Britain, 1,492 in

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LEON TROTSKY SPEAKS

Concepted, Edited & Introduced by
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France and 1,422 in Germany (OECD StatExtracts).

While Greek membership in the EU increased the dominance of imperialist capital over the indigenous bourgeoisie, it did produce some short-term economic benefits:

"After a long period of economic crisis in the 1980s and early 1990s, in 1994 [the year that preparations began for joining the Economic and Monetary Union] the Greek economy entered a period of sustained growth which ended with the global financial crisis of 2008. During 1994-2007 GDP grew annually by 3.7 per cent on average; indeed, from 2001 to 2007, the Greek economy was the fastest growing economy in the Eurozone, after Ireland....

"Rising domestic demand and profitability were the main drivers of private capital accumulation and GDP growth. The main determinant of increase in domestic demand was consumption, fuelled by rising real wages, rents and profits, and sustained public spending, tax cuts and tax evasion, and growing private borrowing. A second determinant was public investment in infrastructure—which accelerated in the years before the 2004 Athens Olympics—and private residential investment."

—"Sovereign Debt Crisis," in *A triumph of failed Ideas—European Models of Capitalism in the Crisis*, European Trade Union Institute

The global financial crisis, which punctured the illusion that sovereign debt within the EU was almost risk-free, starkly revealed the divergence between the euro zone's weaker, dependent capitalist countries (Greece, Portugal, Ireland) and those at its imperialist core (Germany, France and the Netherlands). While Greek capitalists have important investments in banks, shipyards and industrial plants in Central and Eastern Europe—particularly in Bulgaria and Romania—on balance the Greek bourgeoisie remains dependent on its more powerful "partners" in the EU. This is reflected in the ownership structure of its financial sector. Deutsche Bank holds 10 percent of EFG Eurobank Ergasias, half of Greece's Geniki Bank is owned by France's Société Générale, while 67 percent of the Emporiki Bank belongs to another French institution, Crédit Agricole. German and French banks also hold significant quantities of Greek bonds, which is why Paris and Berlin are so anxious to avoid a default:

"Germany and France have suggested in recent days that rescuing Greece may be necessary to safeguard the euro zone, but both countries may have a more pressing motivation in the move—protecting their own banks. "German and French banks carry a combined \$119 billion in exposure to Greek borrowers alone and more than \$900 billion to Greece and other countries on the euro-zone's vulnerable periphery: Portugal, Ireland and Spain."

—*Wall Street Journal*, 17 February 2010

The imperialists have sought to extricate themselves from this predicament through writing off some of the debt and extending new loans to cover continuing repayment of the rest. In exchange for this self-serving "bail out," they insist on a massive reduction in popular living standards: with each tranche of funds, the prescriptions for austerity have become progressively harsher. In order to avoid outright default:

"'Greece has to legally commit itself to giving absolute priority to future debt service,' said the document, said to have been circulated by German officials. 'State revenues are to be used first and foremost for debt service.'"

—*New York Times*, 9 February 2012

Whenever Athens has shown any hesitation in the face of working-class resistance, the troika has bared its fangs. In October 2011, after Prime Minister Giorgios Papandreou proposed a referendum on a draconian bailout, he was promptly replaced by unelected technocrat Lucas Papademos. When Syriza suggested that it might not feel obligated to meet all the demands of the troika if it took power, François Hollande, the French president, responded with a "friendly" threat:

"I must warn them, because it is my duty, because I am a friend of Greece, that if the impression is given that the Greeks want to move away from the commitments that were taken and abandon all prospects of revival, then there will be countries in the eurozone that will want to end the presence of Greece in the eurozone."

—*Guardian*, 14 June 2012

It is entirely possible that at some point in the future the senior partners in the EU may decide to cut their losses and expel Greece from the euro zone. This is a course that has been discussed by the influential *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* for some time. Thus far, however, there seems to be an imperialist consensus that the risk of a Greek departure setting off an uncontrollable chain reaction of events makes it wise to continue to exploit the Greek people within the euro zone. On the other side, various left nationalists, including the Greek Communist Party (KKE), argue that leaving the EU would be a net benefit for Greek workers. In fact, such a move would merely change the political banner under which a continuing (and perhaps even intensified) capitalist austerity drive would be conducted. A shift from a European to a national autarkic framework would also likely increase the temptation for the Greek bourgeoisie to resort to a military/authoritarian "solution" to rising popular resistance.

Greek Fascists on the Rise

The increasingly desperate situation facing Greece has provided fertile ground for the fascists of Golden Dawn, who specialize in pogroms against immigrants and the left. Police officers constitute a major part of the fascists' core support: "There have been accusations of police bias after it emerged that 50 percent of Athens police officers voted for Golden Dawn. Suspected perpetrators are often arrested but not charged" (*Telegraph*, 13 June 2012). During a live television debate prior to the June election, viewers saw Golden Dawn in action when spokesman Ilias Kasidiaris threw water into the face of a Syriza MP and punched a female KKE representative.

Crushing Golden Dawn is a matter of life and death for the left and organized workers' movement, but the trade-union bureaucrats, Stalinists and social democrats have shown little appetite to combat the growing fascist danger, nor have they undertaken any serious struggle against the anti-immigrant hysteria that fuels the ultra-right.

Syriza & KKE—Cross-Class Reformist Politics

Loss of confidence in the political parties identified with the status quo translated into a surprisingly strong support in last spring's elections for the "radical left." Syriza is a lash-up of a dozen different groups ranging from social democrats and eco-socialists to the ostensibly Trotskyist International Marxist Tendency and the Maoist



NO CREDIT

'Golden Dawn' members of parliament give fascist salute

KOE (Communist Organization of Greece). Syriza's electoral surge came in the midst of a wave of street demonstrations and strikes—expressions of growing anger at the endless assault on living standards. Although Syriza promised that, if elected, it would reverse many of the austerity measures already enacted and block further attacks, its program puts the interests of Greek capitalists ahead of workers. While pledging to refuse to pay off debts to foreign investors, Syriza's charismatic leader, Alex Tsipras, also claims to be committed to keeping Greece in the euro zone. But defaulting on outstanding loans would mean exiting the common currency through the back door.

While talking about fighting austerity, Tsipras revealed in an interview with *Time* magazine a few days before the June election that his party really stands for more "targeted" cuts:

"If you go to the offices of members of parliament or of the ministers, you will see that there are dozens or hundreds of 'dispatched' and some of them might even be sinecure jobs [where they're paid without doing anything]. "We need to deal with this dysfunction and this irrationality but not with horizontal cuts and lay-offs. Because if you do it this way and not in a targeted way, you will destroy completely the state, you will destroy the welfare state, you will have no hospitals, no schools.

"Therefore, the public sector, and how you will bring health to it, how you will make it more effective, and more socially efficient, is a very sensitive issue, that we have to approach with attention."

—*Time*, 31 May 2012

Syriza's leaders have made it abundantly clear that they can be trusted to administer the affairs of the bourgeoisie "responsibly" and to ensure that Greece remains in the EU. Tsipras told the *Observer* (5 May 2012) that what Greece needs is a "Roosevelt-style New Deal" to restore "fairness" and economic stability. In the run-up to the elec-

tions, Syriza even refused to participate in an anti-fascist demonstration in Athens in order to avoid any risk of tarnishing its electoral "respectability."

The Stalinist KKE, which for decades has been supported by between five and ten percent of the electorate, has significant influence within the unions. The KKE ruled out any sort of coalition with Syriza, which it denounced for aspiring to "manage capitalism" on behalf of the bourgeoisie:

"As you may be aware the possibility of forming a 'left' government was a significant issue in the recent elections. And they persisted in calling on the KKE to participate in it. Our party refused from start to finish to participate in such a government as it is very well aware that no government which manages capitalism, the power of the monopolies and private ownership of the means of production, no government which implements a programme based on capitalist profits, on the competitiveness, productivity and profitability of the major business groups can follow a political line in favour of the working class and popular strata."

—14 September 2012

Yet while refusing to consider participation in a left reformist coalition with Syriza, the KKE simultaneously promoted its own opportunist cross-class political bloc:

"We place more emphasis on the alliance policy which we had elaborated at the 15th [congress] and our subsequent congresses regarding the construction of a socio-political alliance, the construction of the Anti-Monopoly Anti-imperialist Front of Struggle based on the alliance between the working class, small and medium-sized farmers and the urban petty bourgeois strata, with the participation of women and youth."

—*Ibid.*

The precedent for this "anti-monopoly" unity with sup-



NO CREDIT

Fascist skinhead (L); KKE supporter, Giorgos Sifonios, leader of striking Elliniki Halivourgia workers, with mic

posed progressives (a category that inevitably includes a section of the capitalists) lies in the KKE's history of popular-frontism. In 1936, when the KKE derailed a general strike in the hope of attracting a bourgeois partner in government, it opened the door for the Metaxas dictatorship which jailed thousands of working-class militants (including many KKE cadres). The KKE joined a "national unity" coalition government in 1944, only to have its right-wing partners (backed by British occupation troops) turn on it a few months later in the prelude to a vicious civil war that lasted until 1949. Forty years later, in 1989, the KKE once again joined a capitalist government—this time with the conservative ND.

Today, in pursuit of a similar cross-class alliance, the KKE in its practical activity advances a program of minimal reformism—deferring any movement in the direction of socialism to the indefinite future. The KKE's denunciation of Syriza's pro-capitalist opportunist program has nothing in common with a principled Marxist rejection of class collaboration. It is merely demagoguery motivated by organizational rivalry.

The depths of the KKE's cynical Stalinism were revealed by the presence of Golden Dawn thugs at a rally of workers on strike at the Elliniki Halivourgia steel works in February 2012. According to the left-communist Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT), the fascists were personally welcomed by the president of the union branch, Giorgos Sifonios, a well-known KKE supporter:

"PAME, the trade union coalition of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) has played a key role [in the strike], trying to promote their fighting prestige ('make all Greece into Elliniki Halivourgia') and using it as a weapon for their trade union and electoral tactics. "On Friday 17 February a group of the notorious fascist party 'Xrisi Afti' ('Golden Dawn') visited the factory; they passed unmolested through the gate, took the microphone and made a speech to the strikers express-

ing their 'solidarity' in the presence of some members of the union. Then, the president of the factory trade union welcomed the fascists, saying that 'all Greece is with us.' "See a full video below.

"First you see the Nazis making a speech and then the president welcomes the Nazis. The union's president, Giorgos Sifonios, is a member of PAME and he was a candidate of the KKE in the district elections in 1998. Until now PAME haven't given any explanation, and they haven't tried to dissociate themselves from that event. So, it is justified to assume that the president acted according to party policy. Otherwise, they would have expelled him immediately."

—Internationalist Communist Tendency,
21 February 2012

The ICT reported that the local union leadership subsequently declared the Golden Dawn visit to have been a "provocation" and, in classic Stalinist fashion, sought to make an amalgam between the fascists and the KKE's leftist critics:

"We declare that the steel-workers are beyond the reach of 'Golden Dawn' and several other alleged revolutionaries. The steel-workers are part of the organized class movement, which was and remains the main supporter of their cause. It is no coincidence that all these groups, inside and outside of Greece, made accusations against PAME, which from the beginning remains the main supporter of our struggle."

—cited by Internationalist Communist Tendency,
23 February 2012

Antarsya, Syriza & the International Left

One of the KKE's more prominent competitors on the left is Antarsya, a politically unstable reformist bloc which includes the Greek affiliates of two international ostensibly Trotskyist formations, the SEK (sister organization of the Cliffite SWP in Britain) and OKDE-Spartacos (affiliate

of the Pabloite "Fourth International"). In an attempt to carve out a niche to the left of Syriza, Antarsya employed somewhat more radical rhetoric:

"What is needed is the mobilization and organization of goals and demands, put today on the agenda by reality itself (cancellation of debt, leaving the euro zone and the EU, nationalization and workers' control). This can be achieved by a united front of the break with the system and the revolution, the escalation of the workers' and popular uprising with strikes, occupations, demonstrations and by the organization and coordination of struggles at the rank and file on the basis of an anti-capitalist program. This is the way to the power of working people, true democracy with a contemporary socialist and communist perspective. That is the left ANTARSYA struggles for."

—21 April 2012

Contrary to the expectations of those who imagine these conflicts as the unfolding of an inevitably "revolutionary" objective process, the experience of over a century of workers' struggles shows that spontaneous turbulent mass struggles that threaten bourgeois stability, yet lack an effective leadership with an overall strategic plan to overturn capitalism, often have the effect of dissipating revolutionary energy and can thereby help pave the way for defeat. Rather than posing the urgency of constructing a revolutionary challenge to the current reformist leadership of the workers' movement, Antarsya applauds instances of semi-spontaneous resistance and expresses the hope that the objective dynamic of the struggle will somehow surmount all obstacles:

"We have demonstrated our strength during the great general strikes, the occupation of the ministries, the unique les-

sons in democracy and struggles during the occupancy of public squares. We can see it every day in small and large conflicts, in the heroic struggles of Chalivourgia (steel industry), in the movements of civil disobedience ('I do not pay'). It is shown by the many forms of organization and coordination of struggles by the rank and file, outside of and against the institutionalized trade unionism of GSEE and ADEDY, by developing new forms of solidarity, self-organization, and self-determination. The popular uprising, the continued popular and labor war that is increasing its strength, will lead to victory!"

—*International Viewpoint* No. 447, April 2012

In 2010 Antarsya had polled almost two percent of the votes in regional elections, but as the 2012 national election neared, it became clear that Syriza's overwhelming momentum would marginalize its competitors on the left. This was not lost on various international tendencies that had previously displayed a more critical attitude toward Syriza. A few weeks before the May vote, for example, Workers Power and its League for the Fifth International (L5I) complained that:

"the 'anti-austerity' and 'anti-neoliberal' government conceived and proposed by SYRIZA would not touch the foundations of Greek capitalism. It does not even call for the expropriation and nationalisation of large scale monopoly capital. Unsurprisingly for a reformist party, it has a purely parliamentary conception of such an 'anti-austerity government'. SYRIZA presents the bourgeois state apparatus, which has served numerous Greek capitalist governments so well and which is tied by a thousand threads to the ruling class and imperialism, as a tool which could be used by a 'left government' for its own purposes. It has no strategy, no plan, for how to respond to the inevitable sabotage and overt attacks by the ruling class and the EU/ECB/IMF if even the slightest attempt were made to stop following the demands of the Troika."

—League for the Fifth International, 25 April 2012

When the votes were counted, Syriza's impressive showing led Workers Power to awkwardly attempt to reposition themselves. Instead of focusing on the coalition's commitment to the capitalist state and the preservation of the "foundations of Greek capitalism," the L5I began fantasizing about Syriza somehow morphing into an instrument of revolutionary struggle:

"With its huge reserve of support, Syriza can and should now transform itself into a fighting party of the class struggle. And it can do this if the left is both unsectarian in its drive for militant united action and unsparing in its criticism of reformist backsliding.

"At the heart of the party's programme must be the recognition that only a workers' government, controlled and supported by organs of struggle, action committees, self-defence militias, arising from a political general strike and put into power by a mass uprising of the working people, will be able to implement a programme that delivers genuine improvement in the situation of the masses and breaks decisively the entrenched power of the capitalist class."

"Overcoming this situation means revolutionaries now need to be where the bulk of the Greek working class today places its hopes—in Syriza, campaigning for it to become a democratic, class-conscious party. Concretely, this means launching an organised campaign to free Syriza from the influence

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Die folgende Artikel eines britischen IBT-Unterstützers wurde am 26. November 2012 auf der Webseite der Antikapitalistischen Initiative (www.antikapitalismus.org) veröffentlicht und von dort übersetzt.

Griechenland bleibt das Epizentrum der langsame vor sich gehenden wirtschaftlichen und politischen Implikationen Europas. Die Jugendlichen haben nichts dazu beigetragen, die Krise zu lösen und Griechenland bleibt weiterhin zusetzt polarisiert. Auf der einen Seite wächst die faschistische Partei Golden Morgenröte rasche während es auf der anderen Seite eine spektakuläre Verschiebung bei den Wahlen hin zu Syriza (Koalition der Radikalen Linken) gegeben hat. Ein paar Wochen lang schien es, als ob Syriza als die führende Partei im Parlament hervor gehen würde. Schließlich übernahm die konservative Neue Demokratie (ND) die Führung der Koalition mit der reformistischen Demokratischen Linken und der ehemaligen herrschenden Partei PASOK (Griechenland).

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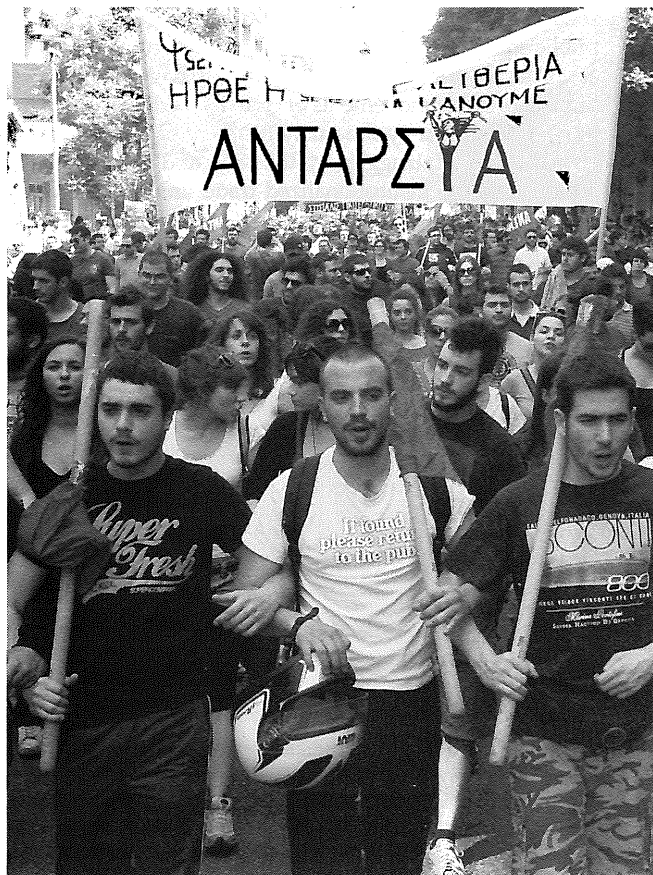
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SIMELA PANTZARTZI—EPA

May Day 2012, Athens: leftists march to parliament

of reformism and fighting for it to adopt a revolutionary programme and structure.”

—League for the Fifth International, 8 July 2012

The Fifth Internationalists did not attempt to explain why, only a few weeks earlier, they had been sagely intoning that it is “wrong to suggest that the reformist parties could carry out a ‘socialist programme’” (League for the Fifth International, 25 April 2012).

The fact is that Syriza (like Antarsya and the KKE) stands as a reformist *obstacle* on the road to working-class victory. Syriza openly declared that if elected it would use its political capital to defuse the anger of working people and seek to stabilize Greek capitalism.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

Greek workers have shown a willingness to vigorously defend themselves against a social system designed to enrich the few at the expense of the many. The essential problem confronting the Greek masses is one of leadership—their leaders are committed to operating within a parliamentary-reformist straightjacket and resigned to the necessity of bailing out the bosses. Their concern is merely to negotiate the timing, extent and severity of the concessions that they agree have to be made. They are, however, shrewd enough not to spell this out too clearly, and instead work overtime to channel discontent into various nationalist, class-collaborationist dead-ends.

The main enemy of the Greek workers’ movement is the Greek bourgeoisie, which has viciously oppressed its “own” people for decades in partnership with its European

imperialist allies. The immediate objective of class-conscious militants in Greece must be to organize support for an aggressive extended general strike aimed at breaking the capitalists’ austerity offensive. A successful general strike could only be organized by structures that bypass the existing bureaucratic union leadership—elected strike committees in each workplace that send delegates to co-ordinating bodies at the local, regional and national levels. One of the most essential tasks in carrying out such a perspective would be the creation of effective workers’ self-defense units to disperse strikebreakers and defeat the fascist thugs of Golden Dawn.

A better life for Greek workers requires a struggle against the rule of capital and its institutions—both national and international. And that poses the question of forging a new revolutionary leadership—a combat party modeled on the Bolshevik Party that led the October Revolution of 1917. Fighting for full citizenship rights for immigrants, a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party would act as the champion of all the downtrodden and oppressed, and would demonstrate that a working class that rises to its feet can soon bring the capitalist class to its knees.

Greek workers need an internationalist communist party committed to the fight for proletarian power. Following the example of the Bolsheviks, such a party would advance *transitional demands* aimed at deepening workers’ struggles and exposing the pro-capitalist politics of the union bureaucrats and their partners in the reformist left. To address the problem of growing unemployment, revolutionaries would demand the construction of public works on a massive scale, as well as a sliding scale of wages and hours to distribute work among all those able to perform it, while also ensuring that purchasing power is not eroded by inflation. A mobilized, militant workers’ movement would demand an end to capitalist secrecy and an opening of the books of the banks and commercial and industrial enterprises to expose the massive swindles and outright theft that have helped bring Greek society to the brink of the abyss. When the imperialist financial agencies demand the dissolution of public sector companies as part of their “rescue” plans, the workers’ movement must respond by mobilizing the masses to seize the means of production, transport and communication in order to lay the basis for constructing a new society in which planning replaces irrational speculation.

A socialist revolution requires the expropriation of the capitalists—both foreign and domestic. It can only be secured by dismantling of the capitalists’ repressive apparatus, and replacing it with new institutions of proletarian rule. On this basis, the road is open for humanity to eliminate the insanity of an economy geared to maximizing private profit for the few, and create a social system dedicated to meeting the needs of all.

A revolutionary breakthrough in Greece would, of course, immediately be targeted by every imperialist power on earth. But the victorious Greek workers could count on an enormous outpouring of enthusiastic support from billions of victims of capitalist austerity—just as the Russian workers could after their revolution in October 1917. The birth of a Greek workers’ republic would dramatically reconfigure global politics and signal the beginning of a struggle to create the Socialist United States of Europe—an event of world-historic importance. ■

IBT Remarks at SA/SWP Cuba Confab

Trotskyism vs Castroism

The following remarks are a slightly edited version of those made by an IBT supporter at a Cuba Solidarity meeting co-sponsored by Socialist Action and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), on 20 July 2012 in Hartford, Connecticut. In 1963, the leaders of the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP, whose political positions the IBT upholds today, were expelled from the ostensibly Trotskyist SWP for opposing the party's political support to Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party. The RT correctly characterized Cuba as a deformed workers' state not qualitatively different from China, Vietnam, etc. By the 1980s the SWP, under the leadership of Jack Barnes, formally repudiated Trotskyism while continuing to adulate Castro's Stalinist regime. In the course of making the "turn" away from any pretense of Trotskyism, many former SWP cadres were expelled, some of whom went on to found Socialist Action.

I am a supporter of the International Bolshevik Tendency. As Trotskyists, we defend the achievements of the Cuban Revolution in the areas of education, housing and healthcare. The reason there is none of the endemic disease and desperate poverty so common throughout the rest of the region is because the Cuban ruling class was expropriated during the revolution and now resides in Miami, not in Havana. As revolutionary socialists, we of course also call for the immediate release of the Cuban 5 [who were convicted of infiltrating counterrevolutionary Cuban terrorist organizations by U.S. courts and have been unjustly imprisoned].

However, our attitude toward Cuba cannot be uncritical. As Socialist Action put it: "Part and parcel of our defense of the revolution is telling the truth about it" ("The Cuban Revolution—Beleaguered but Undaunted"). The truth is that, unlike the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Cuban Revolution was not led by a proletarian party. As a result, it suffered severe deformations from its inception. Perhaps the most glaring one is the absence of workers' democracy. It is indicative that the supporters of the ostensibly Trotskyist Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) were arrested by the Castro regime on 18 August 1962 and only released when they renounced the struggle for their ideas. This was classic Stalinism.

For decades the Castro leadership has promoted the "socialist family" like every other Stalinist regime. Cuba's 1976 constitution formalized the Communist Party's political monopoly as "the highest leading force of the society and of the state." The party did not hold its first congress until 1975—16 years after Castro came to power. That meeting concluded, in classic Stalinist style, with a unanimous endorsement of the party leadership.

However, Socialist Action views the Castro clique as revolutionary internationalists. There is no denying the useful work of Cuban doctors abroad and Cuba's role in driving South Africa's apartheid army out of Angola in the 1970s. On the other hand, Castro supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet tanks in 1968 and Cuba has shored up the credibility of numerous capitalist governments in Latin America. When the pope visited Cuba in 1998 Fidel Castro pointed to the supposed similar-

ity between socialism and Catholicism in promoting the "equitable distribution of wealth and solidarity among human beings" (*Granma*, English edition, 22 March 2012). A revolutionary regime could not countenance any of this.

Socialist Action attempts to alibi the unpleasant truth about the Cuban regime as [attributable to] a Stalinist bureaucratic wing (originally tied to the Soviet bureaucracy) against which the supposedly revolutionary Castro wing is struggling. The Soviet Union has been gone for 20 years and very little has changed within the bureaucracy. The reason that the Cuban regime is so similar to other deformed workers' states (like China and Vietnam) is because they were all created by victorious peasant-based insurgencies in which the politically conscious working class played no significant role—unlike the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The devolution of [SWP founder James P.] Cannon's SWP into the bizarre Barnes cult began with the uncritical embrace of Castro and the guerrilla road as a viable alternative to the proletarian-centered strategy codified in Trotsky's *Transitional Program*. The duty of revolutionaries today is not to promote illusions in any wing of the Cuban Communist Party, but rather to point to the necessity for workers to oust the bureaucrats and establish direct organs of proletarian rule. ■

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Bolshevism vs Kautskyism

Leninism: 'Irreconcilable Ideological Demarcation'



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Lenin and Trotsky together in Red Square, 7 November 1919

Any serious consideration of the prospects of a socialist future must begin with an assessment of the only successful workers' revolution, as well as the organization that led it—the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. Among those groups on the left that continue to lay claim to this political heritage, Lenin is invoked to justify a range of organizational and political methods, many of which run directly counter to his actual practice and writings.

As the "far left" has continued to lose influence and drift rightward in recent decades, some groups have begun to suggest that Leninism is not so very different from pre-WWI social democracy. Those who advance such arguments embrace Karl Kautsky's model of broad, programmatically diffuse "parties of the whole class," rather than "vanguard" formations composed solely of revolutionaries.

Tom Riley of the International Bolshevik Tendency was invited to participate in a discussion of Leninism at the Platypus International Convention in Chicago on 31 March 2012. Pham Binh, a prominent Occupy Wall Street activist who had recently published a controversial critique of a 1975 biography of Lenin by Tony Cliff (founder of the International Socialist Tendency), was slated to speak, but withdrew at the last minute for personal reasons, leaving Riley and Ben Lewis of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) to debate.

Lewis presented the CPGB's view that a socialist organization should permit internal disputes to be aired publicly. He dismissed as "Toytown Bolshevism" the democratic-

centralist model in which members of a revolutionary organization are free to discuss their differences internally, but are required to defend the majority line in public. He also dismissed as a Stalinist invention the idea that Lenin's Bolsheviks were a "party of a new type."

In response, Riley argued that Bolshevism represented a qualitative step forward from the Second International:

"Lenin's party, in its maturity, is premised on the basis that there is a section of the [working] class that is corrupted by imperialism....You don't want those people in the party. You want the revolutionary elements. You want the vanguard to extend its influence over as many workers as possible. But you don't want opportunists, you don't want social-chauvinists, you don't want social imperialists in the vanguard. That is a party of a new type. That is *not* a party of the whole class."

Lenin built a combat party designed to lead the working class in a revolutionary struggle for state power. This was a very different conception than that of the social-democratic parties of the Second International, which focused on participation in bourgeois parliamentary politics and included the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy and the more privileged layers of the proletariat.

After leading the Russian workers to power in October 1917, the Bolsheviks sought to launch a new revolutionary workers' international (the Third, or Communist, International). Organizations wanting to join the Communist

International (aka Comintern) had to accept "Twenty-One Conditions" specifically designed to exclude reformists and centrists. As Riley put it, the Comintern was "set up to *split* the Second International and build revolutionary organizations all over the world."

Riley argued that the CPGB's attitude amounted to a repudiation of the policy of Lenin's Comintern. Lewis responded: "I actually agree with a lot of the stuff you said....I think that the degeneration of the self-conception of Bolshevik organization does set in earlier [than Stalin] and Lenin does bear some responsibility for that....In 1920, the Bolsheviks, under the pressure of the civil war and what's happened, they do actually have to change their organizational model, which they did export....The Twenty-One Conditions were basically 'purge yourselves of the opportunists and the reformists, and organize on that basis'...."

"The problem we've got is that has been generalized as a political method in order to combat opportunism and right wing ideas. And that's not going to get us anywhere."

Lewis rejected the idea that the CPGB embraces the "renegade Kautsky" and specified that they identify only with Kautsky prior to the outbreak of World War I, when he was an effective Marxist propagandist. Lewis conceded that Kautsky's capitulation to the social chauvinists was prefigured by his failure to politically attack the right wing of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) with the kind of vigor that Lenin displayed toward the Russian Mensheviks. Nonetheless, he argued that on balance the organizational conceptions of the Second International represent the best option for leftists today.

Kautsky's capitulation to the tide of social patriotism that accompanied the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 stunned those leftists in the Second International (including Lenin) who had seen him as a paragon of revolutionary integrity. Kautsky's status as an "orthodox Marxist" theorist made his role in rationalizing the political descent of the Second International into chauvinism and social imperialism particularly odious.

Paul Frölich, in his important biography of Rosa Luxemburg (the preeminent leader of the revolutionary left wing of the SPD), described how Kautsky attempted:

"to cover the shame of the socialist movement with a web of platitudes, sophisms, and misrepresentations. He asserted [in October 1914 in *Neue Zeit*] that it was impossible to determine the character of the war because it had not broken out in the normal way....And he airily dismissed the collapse of the International with the brilliant statement: 'It [the International] is not an effective weapon in wartime; it is essentially an instrument of peace.'"

In hindsight, Lenin bitterly regretted his failure to identify Kautsky's opportunism earlier, and reproached himself for having defended the SPD leader against Luxemburg's leftist criticism. Frölich cites Lenin's observation in a letter he wrote to A.G. Shliapnikov in October 1914:

"Rosa Luxemburg was right; she realized long ago that Kautsky was a time-serving theorist, serving the majority of the party, serving opportunism in short. There is nothing in the world more pernicious and dangerous for the intellectual independence of the proletariat than the horrid self-satisfaction and base hypocrisy of Kautsky, who glosses over everything and attempts to lull the

awakening conscience of the workers with sophistry and pseudo-scientific verbosity."

—*Ibid.*

The following is an edited transcript of Riley's presentation.

We are living in peculiar times—the Marxist critique of the irrationality of production for profit is powerfully vindicated on a daily basis, "capitalism" has become a dirty word, and the popular legitimacy of the existing social order is as low as it has been since the 1930s. Yet the organized left has never been weaker in terms of numbers, influence and the ability to project a vision of a plausible alternative to the endless horrors of the "free market." This is clearly a very contradictory situation.

We believe that the struggle to politically rearm the left and lay the basis for a resurgent revolutionary workers' movement must begin by assimilating the essential lessons—both positive and negative—of the generations of militants who have preceded us. Above all this means studying the lessons of October 1917, the only successful workers' revolution in history.

There is little time today to address such an enormous topic, so let me begin with what I think is the bottom line: *the essential precondition for the success of the Bolshevik Revolution was recognizing the necessity to split the workers' movement*—that is, for revolutionaries to organize themselves separately from opportunists, centrists and reformists.

James P. Cannon, who was in our opinion the best communist leader America has produced so far, contrasted Lenin's role with two other revolutionary giants, Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg:

"Trotsky's greatest error, the error which Trotsky had to recognize and overcome before he could find his way to unity with Lenin, was his insistence that the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks had to unite....Lenin's policy was vindicated in life. Lenin built a party, something that Luxemburg was not able to do with all her great abilities and talents; something that Trotsky was not able to do precisely because of his wrong estimation of the Mensheviks."

—"Again: On 'Unity with the Shachtmanites,'" 2 September 1945

Trotsky explicitly acknowledged this in the first chapter of his 1929 book, *The Permanent Revolution*:

"I believed that the logic of the class struggle would compel both [Bolshevik and Menshevik] factions to pursue the same revolutionary line. The great historical significance of Lenin's policy was still unclear to me at that time, his policy of irreconcilable ideological demarcation and, when necessary, split, for the purpose of welding and tempering the core of the truly revolutionary party."

Trotsky was a bit slow to absorb that lesson—he'd been in the movement a long time by 1917 when he finally came around to Leninism. But once he learned it, he never forgot it. The Left Opposition, which he led and which alone upheld the political heritage of Bolshevism through the Stalinist nightmare, was built on the basis of always putting "program first."

Lenin's conception from relatively early on was that a revolutionary organization should be composed exclusively of revolutionaries, i.e., people who understood and agreed with the Marxist program and were prepared to act in a dis-

ciplined fashion to carry it out. The famous split at the 1903 RSDLP [Russian Social Democratic Labor Party] Congress between Menshevik “softs” and Bolshevik “hards” over this question prefigured the eventual division over whether to support or overthrow Kerensky and his bourgeois provisional government in 1917.

The Leninist conception of “democratic centralism” is based on full freedom of discussion internally—including the right to modify the program and change the leadership. That is the “democratic” part. The “centralist” element involves the duty of all members to carry out the decisions of the majority—even those decisions that they personally may not agree with—until they win a majority and can change them.

Some people, including the CPGB, who consider themselves Leninists, think it is fine for members to disagree with each other in public. The CPGB has the unique distinction of claiming the Leninist tradition while also embracing “the renegade Kautsky.” Lenin derided this kind of “broad church” approach as “swamp-building,” and we agree with him. But to each their own, and the comrades of the CPGB are certainly welcome to Kautsky as far as we are concerned.

Of course, we are here because of the ripples caused by comrade Pham Binh’s critique of the first volume of Tony Cliff’s biography of Lenin. Cliff was neither a great writer nor an outstanding historian, and his book would be of little interest except for the fact that he was the historic leader of the International Socialist Tendency, an organization which no one could accuse of ever putting “program first.”

Cliff deserted the Trotskyist movement in 1950 when, under the pressure of the Cold War, he refused to defend North Korea (and Red China) against military attack by the U.S. and various other imperialist powers and their vassals. For most of the next two decades, the IS was buried in Britain’s social-democratic Labour Party, during which time (in 1959) Cliff published a study of Rosa Luxemburg which provides some insight into his group’s politics at the time. Cliff applauded Luxemburg’s notion prior to the experience of the Bolshevik Revolution that somehow the working class could more or less spontaneously overthrow capitalism and wield state power without any sort of general staff to provide leadership.

For most of her active political life Luxemburg operated as the leader of a small revolutionary faction within the mass reformist German Social Democratic Party. In contrasting this model with Lenin’s, Cliff concluded: “For Marxists, in advanced industrial countries, Lenin’s original position can much less serve as a guide than Rosa Luxemburg’s...” By 1968, when the IS got around to reprinting the book, Lenin was more in vogue, so the offending passage was simply excised (without any explanation). That is not how serious Marxists operate, but it is pretty typical of Cliff and the political tendency he created.

While there is much to object to in Cliff’s biography of Lenin, I think that for the most part comrade Binh and I do not share the same criticisms. I do not agree, for example, with his assertion that the original 1903 split with the Mensheviks had no particular importance. For those who may not have read his critique, I will quote from it:

“Cliff is like most other ‘Leninists’ who invest the 1903 membership debate with an artificial and ahistorical significance. If Lenin did not mention the issue in

his discussion on the ‘Principle Stages in the History of Bolshevism’ in *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder* written for foreign communist audiences unfamiliar with RSDLP history it could not have been a terribly important issue from his point of view.”

—24 January 2012, *Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal*

When I read this I was astounded. I could not imagine how anyone could dismiss the split with the Mensheviks so lightly. When I went back and checked Lenin’s account in *Left-Wing Communism*, which Binh used to back up his claim, I discovered the following passage in the fifth paragraph of the second chapter:

“As a current of political thought and as a political party, Bolshevism has existed since 1903. Only the history of Bolshevism during the entire period of its existence can satisfactorily explain why it has been able to build up and maintain, under most difficult conditions, the iron discipline needed for the victory of the proletariat.”

—emphasis added

A little further on Lenin writes:

“On the one hand, Bolshevism arose in 1903 on a very firm foundation of Marxist theory. The correctness of this revolutionary theory, and of it alone, has been proved, not only by world experience throughout the nineteenth century, but especially by the experience of the seekings and vacillations, the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia...”

“On the other hand, Bolshevism, which had arisen on this granite foundation of theory, went through fifteen years of practical history (1903-17) unequalled anywhere in the world in its wealth of experience.”

—emphasis added

This all tends to suggest that Lenin viewed 1903 (i.e., the initial political differentiation and split with the Mensheviks)

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as somewhat significant.

The first section of the third chapter (which comrade Binh specifically cited) is entitled "The Years of Preparation for Revolution: 1903 to 1905." I would like to read a few sentences from this:

"Representatives of the three main classes, of the three principal political trends—the liberal-bourgeois, the petty-bourgeois-democratic (concealed behind 'social-democratic' and 'social-revolutionary' labels), [Here the editors of the Marxist Internet Archive comment: 'The reference is to the Mensheviks (who formed the Right and opportunist wing of Social-Democracy in the R.S.D.L.P.), and to the Socialist-Revolutionaries'] and the proletarian-revolutionary [i.e., the Bolsheviks]—anticipated and prepared the impending open class struggle by waging a most bitter struggle on issues of programme and tactics. All the issues on which the masses waged an armed struggle in 1905-07 and 1917-20 can (and should) be studied, in their embryonic form, in the press of the period."

—emphasis in original

Lenin is quite clearly asserting that the fight between these three trends posed "all the issues" of the subsequent revolutionary struggles of 1905 and 1917 and that they "can (and should) be studied in their embryonic form, in the press of the period," i.e., in the polemics against the Mensheviks that begin in 1903. How comrade Binh, citing this, can conclude that Lenin did not consider the 1903 split to be "a terribly important issue" is, I have to say, beyond me.

Comrade Binh is similarly mistaken in his assessment that Cliff's treatment of Lenin's seminal work, *What Is To Be Done?*, is "unremarkable" apart from a suggestion that Lenin may have bent some of the party rules now and then for factional purposes. That's the only thing that Binh faults Cliff for. In fact, what is "remarkable"—particularly from someone purporting to be a Leninist—was Cliff's claim that Lenin's book displayed a "mechanical juxtaposition of spontaneity and consciousness" because he asserted that through their own isolated experiences workers can only develop trade-union consciousness, which, as Lenin explains, is a form of bourgeois consciousness. This is why it is necessary to struggle to bring the workers' movement "under the wing of the revolutionary" party. Cliff takes this as evidence that Lenin:

"assumed that the party had answers to all the questions that spontaneous struggle might bring forth. The blindness of the embattled many is the obverse of the omniscience of the few."

Binh may not find that "remarkable," but I do, particularly from someone claiming to be writing some sort of manual on Leninism. Cliff's philistine remark is an attack on the entire Bolshevik conception of the relationship between the conscious revolutionary vanguard and the mass of the "class in itself." It is textbook anarcho/social-democratic anti-Leninism. Cliff's organic hostility to *What Is To Be Done?* is hardly accidental—because Lenin's whole book is a polemic against opportunists who adapt their politics to whatever illusions are currently popular. Lenin called such people "tailists," and the International Socialists provide a perfect contemporary example.

When Cliff's book first appeared, Bruce Landau, a disaffected former I Ser, published a stimulating and incisive critique in which he identified a series of critical errors by Cliff: failure to grasp Lenin's analysis of "economism";

misrepresentation of the reasons for launching *Iskra*; and misreading the significance of both the 1903 split and the 1905 turn to mass worker recruitment—which Cliff mistakenly described as Lenin's "correction" of his earlier conception of a party of professional revolutionaries.

Another work that came out around the same time, which dealt with Cliff in passing, was *Lenin and the Vanguard Party* by Joseph Seymour, the leading intellectual of the then-revolutionary Spartacist League. We consider this pamphlet to be an extremely valuable study of the origins and development of Bolshevism and have posted it on our website.

I found Lars Lih's commentaries on the discussions at the 1905 congress and the 1912 Prague conference to be among the more informative contributions to the discussions of Binh's critique of Cliff. Contrary to comrade Binh, the Prague conference is generally seen as marking the point of no return for any prospect of a Bolshevik/Menshevik reunification, although, as Seymour observed:

"Even before 1912, the Bolsheviks were essentially a party, rather than a faction, because Lenin would refuse to act as a disciplined minority under a Menshevik leadership. The Menshevik leaders, including Plekhanov, reciprocated this attitude. Unity with the numerically small 'pro-Party' Mensheviks did not challenge Lenin's leadership of the party as he reconstructed it at the Prague Conference."

Comrade Lewis and I briefly discussed the 1912 conference last night, and I was rather surprised to discover that we could agree that from that point onward the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks maintained separate underground apparatuses, leaderships, finances and publications (with sharply divergent political positions on most issues). The only thing they shared was a name—the RSDLP. To my mind that signifies that they constituted two separate and distinct organizations; comrade Lewis draws a different conclusion which he will no doubt explain shortly.

Finally, I want to comment on what I gather comrade Binh sees as the inevitability of bureaucratic degeneration in groups with a democratic-centralist organizational structure. I think he is mistaken; there have been groups which operated within that framework for decades that maintained democratic internal regimes. I would cite the American Trotskyist movement led by James P. Cannon from the 1920s to the 1960s as an example of a group that operated in an essentially democratic fashion, where dissident points of view could get a hearing and minority rights were respected. I believe there are other examples as well.

In the decade between the launch of *Iskra* and the 1912 conference, the Bolshevik faction evolved from a revolutionary social-democratic formation (inspired by the German social democracy led by Kautsky) into an embryonic revolutionary combat party. Along the way a few sticks were bent, some doors were slammed, voices were raised and harsh words exchanged. Lenin undoubtedly made some mistakes and got some things wrong. But he had a pretty good record of correcting his errors and probably came as close as anyone has to "combining theory and practice to perfection"—a phrase in comrade Cliff's book that Binh found objectionable. The simple fact is that Lenin's party succeeded where every other attempt has failed. That was no accident—and I submit that we all have a great deal to learn from that experience. ■

A Woman's Struggle to Tell the Truth Veronica Jones & the Frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal

Veronica Jones was a key witness at the scene of the murder for which class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was falsely convicted. Her powerful memoir, *Veronica & the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, finished posthumously by her sister Valerie Jones, pivots on 9 December 1981, when her life became entwined with Mumia's. That night, her lover, Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, was shot dead on Locust Street, where she was working as a prostitute. Veronica was on the scene immediately after the shooting, and what she saw flatly contradicted the story police concocted to frame Mumia. The cops pressured Veronica to lie and brand Mumia as the shooter, but she refused. When she attempted to tell the truth, they tried to silence her, but, as Mumia wrote in his forward to her book, "she did not fold. She did not say what the government *wanted* her to say."

While Veronica did not break and give the testimony the prosecution wanted, as a young mother of three faced with the threat of a lengthy prison sentence on serious weapons possession charges, she did change her story. In her initial statement to the police six days after the killing, she said that within seconds of hearing gun shots she had seen "a policeman falling to the ground." She also noticed a black man at a distance, who she said "probably saw everything" as well as two tall black men standing "only a couple of feet" from the policeman. When Veronica testified at Mumia's trial in June 1982, however, she stunned the defense by denying seeing these two men at the scene. This supported the prosecution's claim that only three people were present at the crime scene: Faulkner, Mumia and his brother.

Veronica recounts how the police attempted to persuade her to change her story three weeks after her original deposition. She was told that if she identified Mumia as the shooter, she could get the same deal as Cynthia White, a fellow sex-trade worker who, after becoming the prosecution's lynchpin witness, was allowed to work the streets without interference. Veronica had decided to give up prostitution and had no charges pending, so the police had little leverage.

By the time of Mumia's trial, however, the situation had changed considerably. Veronica recounts how, in June 1982, while in jail on robbery and weapons charges (which were ultimately dismissed), she was taken into an interrogation room, where she was humiliated and threatened. The detectives questioning her refused to allow her a bathroom break and laughed when she wet herself. They told her that she was looking at serious jail time (five to fifteen years) but offered to get her case thrown out. All she had to do was finger Mumia as the shooter.

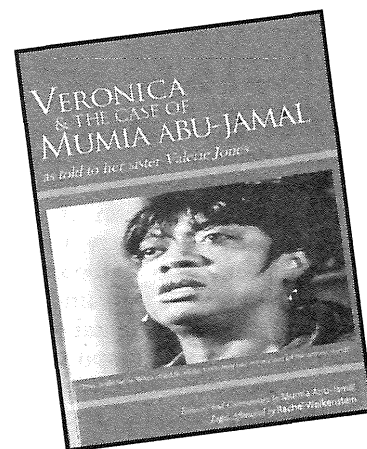
When Veronica began to reveal this police blackmail at Mumia's trial, "hanging Judge" Albert Sabo (who was overheard in 1982 by a court stenographer to say, "I'm

going to help them fry the nigger") refused to permit it, and ordered all mention of it struck from the record.

In a legal afterword to the book, Rachel Wolkenstein, a former member of Mumia's legal team and a long-time supporter, explains the importance of Veronica's role at the 1982 trial: "[Veronica] did *not* testify that Mumia was the shooter. She got on the record that the police made promises and threats to prostitutes to lie and falsely accuse Mumia. She named Cynthia White ('Lucky') in particular."

Fourteen years later, when Mumia's defense team located Veronica, she was, according to Wolkenstein, "pro-actively forthcoming." The book includes a transcript of Veronica's testimony at Mumia's post-conviction relief hearing in 1996, at which she appeared for the defense, and revealed that the police had coerced her into lying at the original trial in 1982. Before Veronica began to testify, Judge Sabo asked: "has your attorney advised you that if you say something now which is different from what you said at the trial, you could be charged with perjury?" He threatened that she could face up to seven years in jail for each perjured statement. When attempts to intimidate her failed, the authorities took a different tack and arrested her *on the witness stand* on a charge of passing a bad check years earlier. She was subsequently slapped with a 14-year-old prostitution charge, which was later dismissed thanks to the intervention of a sympathetic lawyer.

Veronica & the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal is a vivid, compelling and deeply personal account with important political and social implications. Told by someone marginalized by the gender and racial oppression endemic to capitalist society, it is the story of a woman's struggle to tell the truth about the frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal. ■



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Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

Why Marxists Voted 'No' on Prop 34

On 6 November 2012, Californians voted down "Proposition 34" (aka the "SAFE California Initiative") which would have converted all death sentences into life without the possibility of parole (LWOP). As opponents of the death penalty, Marxists would normally support a measure proposing to eliminate this barbaric form of punishment, which has always highlighted the social biases of "American justice." In 1972, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas candidly remarked: "One searches our chronicles in vain for the execution of any member of the affluent strata of this society. The Leopolds and Loeb[s] [two wealthy young murderers from the 1920s] are given prison terms, not sentenced to death."

While we favor the abolition of the death penalty, we recognize that getting rid of state-sanctioned murder will not change the racist nature of a judicial system that, in addition to class prejudice, routinely deals with blacks and Latinos far more harshly than whites. The liberal authors of Proposition 34, however, in a shamelessly opportunistic attempt to win support from elements of the "law enforcement community," agreed to cut off funding for attorneys representing death row prisoners in *habeas* proceedings once their sentences are converted to LWOP. Rather than stressing the inhumanity and injustice of capital punishment, they pitched abolition as an opportunity to reduce state expenditures and save money for taxpayers. Section 2.5 of the proposal suggested that savings from a truncated appeals process could be used to hire more cops and prosecutors: "By replacing the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole, we would save the state \$1 billion in five years without releasing a single prisoner—\$1 billion that could be invested in law enforcement...."

Currently, anyone convicted of a crime that could result in a death sentence proceeds to a sentencing trial to determine whether or not the death penalty should be imposed. In this second "penalty" phase, a jury is supposed to weigh mitigating circumstances against specifically enumerated aggravating factors. A decision in favor of execution must be unanimous. Under Proposition 34, any defendant found guilty of a crime that would previously have made them "eligible" for a death sentence would automatically have been sentenced to LWOP. As well as eliminating the penalty phase, Proposition 34 would also have converted the sentences of the more than 700 inmates currently on death row to LWOP.

In California today, a prisoner condemned to death has the right to challenge the decision. First, there is a "direct appeal" based on the record of the original trial; second, there is a *habeas corpus* petition in the state courts. If both of these are unsuccessful, the prisoner then has a right to file a *habeas corpus* petition at the federal level. These proceedings allow challenges on a variety of issues, including racial bias in jury selection and prosecutorial or judicial misconduct. They also provide an opportunity to introduce new evidence of innocence. This can be extremely important in a system that not only routinely frames up political opponents (like Mumia Abu-Jamal and Geronimo Pratt) but also wrongly convicts many other innocent people. According to Amnesty International, "Since 1973, over 130 people have been released from death rows throughout the country due



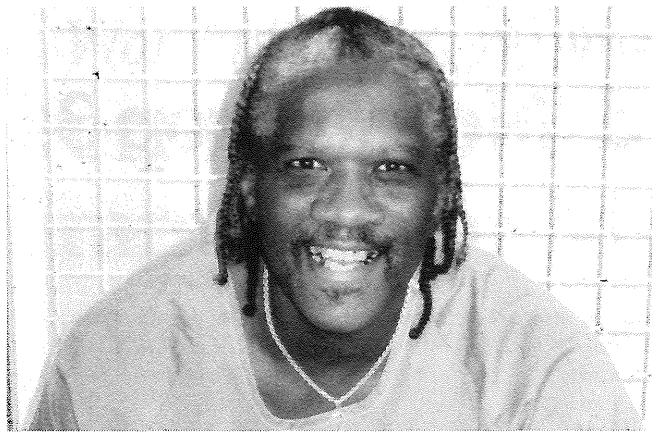
Mumia Abu-Jamal with Rachel Wolkenstein (L) and his wife Wadiya Jamal (R) shortly after leaving death row

to evidence of their wrongful convictions."

Prisoners under death sentence in the United States have a constitutional right to free legal representation in *habeas* proceedings because of the irrevocable nature of execution. Under Proposition 34, those whose death sentence would be converted to LWOP would also have lost their right to publicly-funded legal representation in *habeas* proceedings to which they are presently entitled. This would have left them with no effective means of challenging their convictions because of the prohibitive cost of hiring the highly-experienced attorneys with specialized knowledge necessary to successfully pursue the extremely complicated and drawn-out *habeas* proceedings. California presently pays qualified private attorneys to represent indigent death row prisoners in *habeas* proceedings and provides \$13.5 million a year for the Habeas Corpus Resource Center to supervise and assist them. Proposition 34 would have redirected this money to cops and prosecutors to "solve unsolved crimes," inevitably resulting in more frame-ups of innocent people and further tipping the scales against overworked and underfunded public defenders. The right to *habeas corpus* has been under bipartisan attack for decades—from Bill Clinton's Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act to Barack Obama's National Defense Authorization Act, which permits the "indefinite detention" of U.S. citizens. Had it passed, Proposition 34 would have represented one more step down the same path.

While, at its core, Proposition 34 was a "lock 'em up and throw away the key" initiative, it also included the following stipulation pursuant to Section 190 of the California penal code:

"Every person found guilty of murder and sentenced pursuant to this section shall be required to work within a high-security prison as many hours of faithful labor in each day and every day during his or her term of imprisonment as shall be prescribed by the rules and regulations of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, pursuant to Section 2700. In any case where the prisoner owes a restitution fine or restitution order, the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall deduct



Kevin Cooper: Prop 34 'a step backwards'

money from the wages and trust account deposits of the prisoner and shall transfer those funds...."

This provision clearly authorizes prison authorities to compel convicts to work for up to seven days a week, 365 days a year for the rest of their lives at little or no pay, without even the minimal protections afforded by labor laws. Proposition 34 would, in effect, have condemned those currently on death row to legalized slave labor.

Given what was on offer, it is hardly surprising that many who stood to lose the most roundly rejected Proposition 34. The Campaign to End the Death Penalty emailed 220 death row inmates to solicit their opinions. Of the 50 who were able to respond, 46 advocated voting "no" while only four favored a "yes." Prominent death row prisoner Kevin Cooper wrote that Proposition 34 "takes a step backwards in our ability to challenge our convictions" (*San Francisco Bay View*, 5 June 2012). Other death row prisoners who wrote detailed explanations of why they opposed Proposition 34 included Jarvis Jay Masters, Correll Thomas and Darrell Lomax.

The story was different among California leftists, many of whom supported Proposition 34. Some argued that because *habeas* proceedings in the capitalist justice system are so drawn out and tilted against blacks and other oppressed people, little would be lost by a blanket conversion of death sentences into LWOP. The Spartacist League, for example, asserted that because the death sentence is not overturned in most *habeas* hearings, "death penalty appeals provide little more than a facade of 'due process,'" and observed that: "Of the 970 people condemned to death in California since 1978, only 54 have obtained new trials from such appeals; 32 other death row prisoners died awaiting a decision" (*Workers Vanguard*, 28 September 2012). During the same time, California has carried out 13 executions, the latest in 2006.

While 90 percent of state-level *habeas* challenges are rejected, federal-level challenges from California have actually been upheld in 70 percent of the cases heard (see Gerald F. Uelman, "Death Penalty Appeals and Habeas Proceedings: The California Experience"). This is why Cooper and so many other death row inmates do not want to exchange a chance at freedom for a guaranteed life sentence. One of the most striking contradictions in the Proposition 34 campaign was that its advocates argued that the death penalty should be abolished because innocent people get executed, but at the same time were apparently prepared to see these same people condemned to life imprisonment in virtual slave labor camps for crimes they did not commit.

Marxists oppose the entire bourgeois justice system, which is designed to serve and protect the interests of the capitalist class. We recognize that the oppressed cannot expect justice from the capitalist courts. Yet, at the same time, we resolutely defend the limited democratic rights won through past struggles. Proposition 34 was pitched as a way to end the death penalty, but in fact it amounted to an attempt to gain popular assent for rolling back important civil liberties. Regrettably, much of the left seems to have fallen for this liberal gambit.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal raises many of the issues posed by Proposition 34. The abuses suffered by Mumia over the years—judicial and prosecutorial misconduct, incompetent representation, racial bias in jury selection—can all be challenged in *habeas* proceedings. The fact that Mumia's Post-Conviction Relief hearing was sabotaged by his lead attorneys, Leonard Weinglass and Daniel Williams, who refused to introduce powerful new evidence of his innocence unavailable at the time of the original trial (see "The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal"), does not detract from the importance of defending the right to such appeals for the wrongly convicted.

Liberals who turned their backs on Mumia did so, in many cases, because they shrank from drawing the obvious conclusions about American "justice" exposed by his frame-up. In 2010, the director of Death Penalty Focus, the organization which produced Proposition 34, conspired with other liberals to attempt to exclude Mumia from the Fourth World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Switzerland. They wanted Mumia out of the anti-death penalty movement because of the venomous hatred he inspires in the Fraternal Order of Police. Their strategy was to attempt to find common ground with law-and-order rightists by emphasizing the economic benefits of eliminating the death penalty while downplaying the reality of racial and class bias that permeates the entire so-called criminal justice system.

The death penalty has been abolished in a number of states in the U.S., and can certainly also be abolished in California. But doing so requires an honest campaign which educates people about the racism and barbarity of the death penalty and the injustice and inequality of its application—i.e., a campaign that takes on the "law and order" rhetoric directly instead of capitulating to it. Campaigning against capital punishment can provide a valuable opportunity to popularize the Marxist critique of bourgeois legality and the capitalist social system it serves. But this is not what Proposition 34 was about, and the failure of this "devil's bargain" with the cops and prosecutors demonstrates the political bankruptcy of the liberals' strategy.

In a clearly worded referendum on abolishing the death penalty that did not include the repressive provisions of Proposition 34, revolutionaries would, of course, have voted "yes." It is good that Proposition 34 failed—had it succeeded, it might have become a model for similar campaigns in other states. There is now an opportunity for revolutionaries to intervene in the anti-death penalty movement to draw the appropriate lessons from Proposition 34's defeat and point the way forward to abolishing capital punishment in California and the rest of the United States.

The duty of revolutionaries is to endeavor to act as "tribunes of the people" by opposing every instance of capitalist injustice while doing everything possible to hasten the overthrow of this profoundly unjust social system. That is why in California on 6 November 2012, IBT supporters voted "no" on Proposition 34. ■

Wikileaks, Sex & Imperialist Law

Hands Off Julian Assange!

The following remarks on the campaign against Julian Assange were made by Roxanne Baker of the International Bolshevik Tendency at a debate with the Alliance for Workers Liberty in London on 9 October 2012 hosted by the Anticapitalist Initiative.

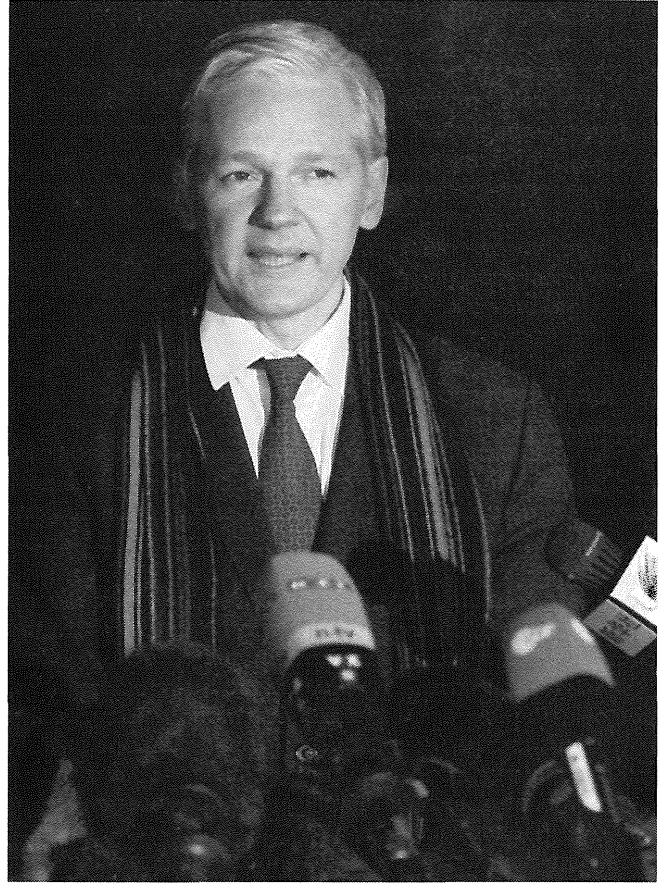
The persecution of Julian Assange, which is presented as an issue centring on questions of rape, sexual assault and the rights of women, is in fact essentially an attack on democratic rights—in particular, freedom of the press. Differences on the left over the Assange case do not revolve around ‘taking rape seriously’, but rather subservience to ruling-class pressure and the willingness of some ‘revolutionaries’ to act as mouthpieces for imperialist propaganda.

Everyone knows that Assange and WikiLeaks antagonised the leaders of the ‘free world’ by publishing hundreds of thousands of classified documents and pieces of diplomatic correspondence that laid bare the inner workings of imperialist diplomacy and exposed the monstrous crimes committed in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Of particular concern was a video entitled ‘Collateral Murder’, released by WikiLeaks in April 2010, that showed American soldiers in an Apache helicopter gunning down Iraqi civilians (including children and journalists).

The savage persecution of Bradley Manning, the young soldier who is accused of providing WikiLeaks with documentation of the crimes of the US military, stands as an object lesson in how ‘enemies of the state’ are treated in ‘the world’s greatest democracy’. Manning has been held in solitary confinement for more than two years without a court hearing, a blatant violation of the supposed right to a speedy trial. Socialists demand the *immediate* release of Bradley Manning.

The attack on Manning and Assange provides dramatic evidence of the erosion of democratic rights in the American security state and its partners in Sweden, Britain and elsewhere. I believe we should applaud the decision by the Ecuadorean government to grant asylum to Assange and I note with pleasure that [British Foreign Secretary] William Hague has had to backtrack on earlier threats to invade the embassy to seize him. Assange, as everyone knows, has not even been charged with a crime. The Swedes ostensibly want him for questioning in connection with accusations attributed to two women with whom he had sex during a visit to Sweden in August 2010. Assange is willing to answer questions from Swedish authorities, but not to be extradited to Sweden, from where he could be whisked to the US to face charges under the Espionage Act that could result in life imprisonment or even execution.

It is impossible to know with certainty what, if any, legitimacy there is to the allegations against Assange. But there are many indications that the whole case is essentially a stitch up. The two women supposedly originally approached police in an attempt to compel Assange to get tested for sexually transmitted diseases. The lead complainant, Anna Ardin, who had invited Assange to Sweden and organised his trip, proposed to the other alleged victim, Sofia Wilen, that they go to the police after they compared



UPI—HUGO PHILPOTT

February 2011: Julian Assange talking to the press

notes about their sexual encounters with Assange. Ardin accompanied Wilen to the police station, having already set up an appointment with a policewoman who was a personal friend. Ardin herself was subsequently interviewed by telephone.

When Wilen learned that Assange was going to be charged with rape on the basis of her statement to the police, she terminated the interview and refused to read or sign the transcript. The officer who uploaded the transcript to the police data system apparently amended it subsequently at the request of her superior. Despite Wilen’s objections to the whole proceeding, the Swedish tabloid press immediately began publishing lurid allegations that Assange had been accused of double rape.

A senior prosecutor who reviewed the case declared that there was not enough evidence to go forward, and dropped it. In a very unusual move, this decision was reversed through the intervention of Chief Prosecutor Marianne Ny. There have been plenty of suggestions that this resulted from political string pulling from on high.

Ardin has connections with an anti-communist Cuban group called Ladies in White, which has received funding from the US government and is supported by Luis Posada Carriles, a CIA asset convicted of killing hundreds of peo-



DOMINIC LIPINSKI—PA

Anonymous protests persecution of Assange

ple in terror attacks. Ardin's brother 'works in Swedish intelligence, and was a liaison in Washington to US intelligence agencies', according to an account that appeared in *Counterpunch* on 7 December 2010.

Unfortunately, several socialist groups in this country have lent legitimacy to the campaign against Assange. The Socialist Workers Party [SWP] proposed that: 'if the Swedish authorities were serious about investigating [the charges], they would guarantee that Assange would not be extradited to the US. That could clear the way for him to face his accusers' [*Socialist Worker*, 21 August 2012]. Such a 'guarantee' is not on offer, but if it were, it would not be worth the paper it was printed on, and Assange would be a fool to accept it.

The naiveté of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty [AWL] is even more breathtaking: 'The Swedish state's legal system is independent and does not simply deliver verdicts at the whim of Swedish politicians or, still less, Washington. Swedish law requires evidence showing "probable cause" for believing the crime was committed, before any extradition request can be made. In other words we have every reason to believe Assange has a serious case to answer' [*Solidarity*, 22 August 2012]. The AWL claims 'to argue both against extradition to the US and at the same time for a fair trial in Sweden on the rape charges' [*Solidarity*, 11 July 2012]. They might want to consider the fate of Ahmed Agiza and Muhammad Alzery, two asylum-seekers who were immediately sent back to Egypt from Sweden in December 2001 following a request from the CIA. In that case, the magnificent machine of impartial Swedish justice sent these two unfortunates to Mubarak's torture chambers without even bothering to notify their lawyers.

Assange has no chance of receiving a 'fair trial' (in Sweden or any other US ally). The sensationalist and prejudicial press coverage of the allegations against him reflect the implacable hostility of the ruling elites of Sweden, Britain, America and all their imperialist allies towards the man behind the

WikiLeaks revelations. A leaked memo from the American private strategic forecasting firm, Stratfor, includes a comment by a former deputy chief of the US Department of State's counterterrorism division for the Diplomatic Security Service on how to go after Assange and his friends:

'Ferretting out [Assange's] confederates is also key. Find out what other disgruntled rogues inside the tent or outside. Pile on. Move him from country to country to face various charges for the next 25 years. But, seize everything he and his family own, to include every person linked to Wiki.'

—<http://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/1056763-re-discussion-assange-arrested.html>

Another Stratfor analyst casually remarked: 'Charges of sexual assault rarely are passed through Interpol red notices, like this case, so this is no doubt about trying to disrupt WikiLeaks release of government documents'. So you do not have to be left-wing to understand what is underway here.

Much of the discussion around this case has swirled around questions of what constitutes rape. Leaving aside the politically motivated character of the charges and the virtual impossibility of determining exactly what transpired, on a more general level the key issue in cases of rape and/or other forms of sexual assault is that of informed consent. It is, for example, clearly criminal to engage in unprotected sex when consent has been made conditional on the use of a condom.

As there is no chance of Assange getting a fair hearing in Sweden on these allegations, socialists must oppose all attempts to extradite him. To do so is not to downplay the seriousness of the crime of rape or any other sort of sexual abuse. In an article headlined, 'We are Women Against Rape but we do not want Julián Assange extradited', published in the *Guardian* on 23 August 2012, two experienced anti-rape campaigners correctly pointed out: 'The authorities care so little about violence against women that they manipulate rape allegations at will, usually to increase their powers, this time to facilitate Assange's extradition or even rendition to the US'.

Assange is being hunted by America for daring to shine a light on some of the crimes of imperialism, a capital offense in the eyes of the oppressors. He is no Marxist—he is a liberal who considers himself a realist, and he has serious illusions. Speaking from the Ecuadorean embassy on 19 August [2012], he said: 'I ask President Obama to do the right thing: the United States must renounce its witch-hunt against WikiLeaks'.

Assange is certainly aware that the US ruling class will not cease its attempt to make an example of him. The reason he is reduced to calls on bourgeois authority figures to reform themselves is because any notion of the potential of class struggle lies outside his political framework. We must defend Assange because he is an advocate of freedom of the press whose revelations have helped the working class and other victims of capitalist rule. Only by defending the rights and liberties won through the difficult struggles of past generations—which the capitalist class often tries to reverse during times of reaction—will it be possible to go forward to win new gains and lay the basis for overturning the entire system of global oppression and mass murder that imperialist rule entails. ■

Black Bloc...

continued from page 48

many Black Blocs," commented:

"I was hardly the only Black Bloc veteran who took part in planning the initial strategy for Occupy Wall Street. In fact, anarchists like myself were the real core of the group that came up with the idea of occupying Zuccotti Park, the '99%' slogan, the General Assembly process, and, in fact, who collectively decided that we would adopt a strategy of Gandhian non-violence and eschew acts of property damage. Many of us had taken part in Black Blocs. We just didn't feel that was an appropriate tactic for the situation we were in."

—David Graeber, *n+1*, 9 February 2012

Proponents of the Black Bloc insist that it "is a tactic, not a group...where activists don masks and black clothing (originally leather jackets in Germany, later, hoodies in America), as a gesture of anonymity, solidarity, and to indicate to others that they are prepared, if the situation calls for it, for militant action" (*Ibid.*). The tactic originated in:

"the early 1980s in Germany among autonomist protesters defending squatters rights and anti-nuclear activism, [and] hit America hard in the anti-globalization demonstrations of the late '90s, especially in the 'Battle of Seattle,' which resulted in heavy damage of multinational retail property in downtown."

—Cagle, *op cit*

Graeber, in response to Hedges, asserted:

"Many of the young men and women who formed the famous Black Bloc in Seattle were in fact eco-activists who had been involved in tree-sits and forest defense lock-downs that operated on purely Gandhian principles—only to find that in the US of the 1990s, non-violent protesters could be brutalized, tortured (have pepper spray directly rubbed in their eyes), or even killed, without serious objection from the national media."

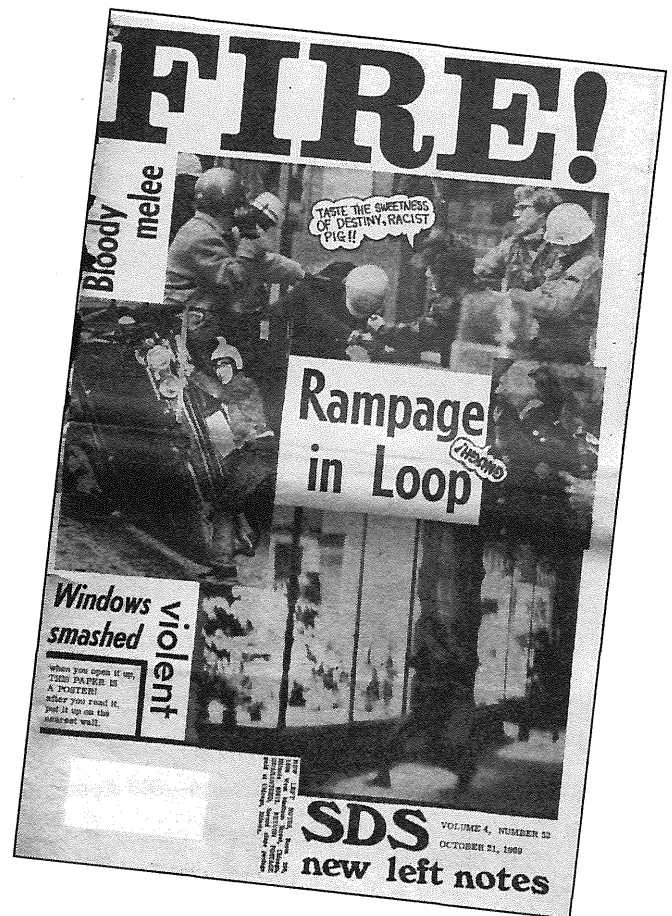
—Graeber, *op cit*

Long before the "Battle of Seattle," Earth First! was publishing instructions on industrial sabotage in their journal, including tree-spiking, a practice aimed at slowing down the timber corporations. This was, of course, not the first time that frustrated liberals felt driven to "up the ante" tactically in response to the brutality (or mere inflexibility) of the ruling class and its agents.

The Fire Last Time: New Left 'Action Faction'

Ostensibly "leaderless" movements like Occupy that profess no formal program inevitably contain a spectrum of political tendencies which over time tend to harden into factions of various sorts. The controversies surrounding the Black Bloc bear more than a passing resemblance to those that wracked the New Left in the late 1960s. Much of what is said about the Black Bloc today was then being said about those identified as the "Action Faction" in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), who eventually ended up as the Weather Underground.

Frustrated with the apparently overwhelming power of the ruling class and despairing of the revolutionary potential of the American working class, Weatherman set off to



Weatherman celebrate 'Days of Rage'

directly confront the armed thugs of the capitalist state. Of course they were unable to coherently explain how a handful of isolated confrontations with cops and other authority figures was supposed to change the relation of social forces and bring closer the overthrow of capitalism. Their behavior was driven by a combination of liberal guilt and anger at the crimes of American imperialism as well as an intense subjective desire to do something dramatic to express their feelings.

Former Weatherman leader Bill Ayers's impressionistic memoir, *Fugitive Days*, captures something of the mentality that animated these militants:

"We wanted to bear witness, to put our bodies on the gears of the death machine, to stop a war and bring justice home. We wanted to intensify the action whenever possible. We would each wear a red headband and carry a small backpack with Vaseline and gloves and goggles to protect us from the anticipated tear gas, a first-aid kit, a hammer to break windows, marbles to scatter in front of any potential police cavalry charge, a bottle of water, and a sling-shot or homemade blackjack...."

Weatherman's strategy amounted to hoping that setting a militant example would spark a rising wave of revolt in the "belly of the beast." Predictably, the scheduled street fighting of the October 1969 Chicago "Days of Rage" failed to galvanize significant numbers of alienated radical youth and resulted in a series of legal charges which Weatherman countered by going "underground"—effectively removing themselves from public political life.

While many New Left anti-war activists were drawn into dovish George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign, the



NO CREDIT

11 October 1969: Weathermen in Chicago—Bill Ayers, first row, third from right with glasses

Weather Underground, no longer able to engage in street confrontations of the sort the Black Bloc is involved in today, redirected their activity into setting off small bombs in various high-profile symbols of American imperialism, including police stations, the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon. After a few years, many key figures resurfaced, served brief jail sentences and emerged as “rehabilitated” left-liberals. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama was denounced for being a “pal” of Ayers and his wife, Bernadine Dohrn, also a prominent Weather Underground leader. Having taken a more circuitous route to the same Democratic dead-end as the McGovernites, Ayers hailed Obama’s election as “an important strike against white supremacy” while hoping “we don’t become adventurous in Iran or Pakistan or Afghanistan.” Such “hopes” are just as ludicrous as the Republicans’ depiction of Obama as some sort of “socialist.”

Despite their fearsome reputation and success at making fools of the FBI and the rest of the U.S. political police for years, Dohrn and Ayers could, in the end, do no more than lead their followers on a long march from angry anti-imperialism back to the Democratic Party because, despite their subjective revolutionary impulses, their political program never transcended militant radical liberalism.

Unlike the Black Panthers, whose willingness to “pick up the gun” was defended by many white liberals, Weatherman was denounced by almost the entire left—from the reformist Stalinist Communist Party to the International Socialists and the “peaceful, legal” suit-and-tie reformists of the Socialist Workers Party. The Workers League (today the Socialist Equality Party/World Socialist Web Site) denounced the Weather Underground as a “protofascist group of declassed hoodlums” (*Bulletin*, 6 October 1969, quoted in *Spartacist* Nos.17-18, August-September 1970).

The Maoists of the Progressive Labor Party (PL—Weatherman’s chief opponent in a protracted factional strug-

gle within SDS) were even more hostile. In the run-up to Weatherman’s “Days of Rage” in Chicago, PL denounced the organizers as “a group of police agents and hate-the-people lunatics who walked out of the SDS at the June Convention,” and claimed that “The bankers and big business men who run the country are using this clique...for two purposes. First, to divert people so they won’t fight back anymore. Second, to discredit SDS and radical ideas in general. This group’s ‘Days of Rage’ planned for Chicago, Oct. 8-11 is a police trap” (quoted in *Spartacist* Nos.17-18, August-September 1970).

‘Violence,’ Cops & Repression

While none of the cadres of the Weather Underground were in any way connected to the police, Hedges’s suggestion that “It is a safe bet that among Black Bloc groups in cities such as Oakland are *agents provocateurs* spurring them on to more mayhem” (*op cit*) may well be true. But any leftist group is a potential target for infiltration by cops. It is, of course, easier to enter amorphous formations like the Black Bloc—macho tough-guy tactics provide a favorite entry point for provocateurs, and the anonymity of the costume offers obvious opportunities for such elements. There was quite a bit of internet buzz suggesting that the vandalism of Tully’s Coffee (which had been supportive of the Occupy encampment) during the 2 November 2011 “general strike” may have been the work of police agents posing as Black Bloc.

There is no doubt that the “Homeland Security” apparatus is intent on disrupting and destroying radical opposition to the status quo. On 24 September 2010, FBI agents in the Midwest conducted simultaneous raids on seven homes and an anti-war office and subpoenaed 14 activists. The targets included the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee, the Palestine Solidarity Group, the Colombia Action Network, Students

for a Democratic Society and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. The nationwide suppression of Occupy camps across the country in mid-November 2011 was coordinated by federal police agencies, including Homeland Security and the FBI.

Hedges's assertion that "with or without police infiltration the Black Bloc is serving the interests of the 1 percent" (*op cit*) is an expression of his liberal worldview. As one Occupier at the 2 November 2011 Oakland General Assembly commented:

"It's a lot more violent to foreclose on somebody and throw them out of a house than throw a rock through a window. And if that's how people deal with things, then that's how they get it out and we can't tell people how to live."

—quoted in Cagle, *op cit*

Hedges complained that protesters in New York who chanted "Fuck the police" and "Racist, sexist, anti-gay—NYPD go away" undermined the possibility that Occupy might "win the hearts and minds of the wider public and those within the structures of power (including the police) who are possessed of a conscience" (*op cit*).

Such liberal illusions in the police are shared by various self-proclaimed "revolutionary" organizations (including the ISO, the International Marxist Tendency and the Committee for a Workers' International) which assert that cops and screws are merely "workers in uniform." This is completely wrong—cops are not part of the workers' movement or the left but are rather the armed thugs of the capitalist exploiters.

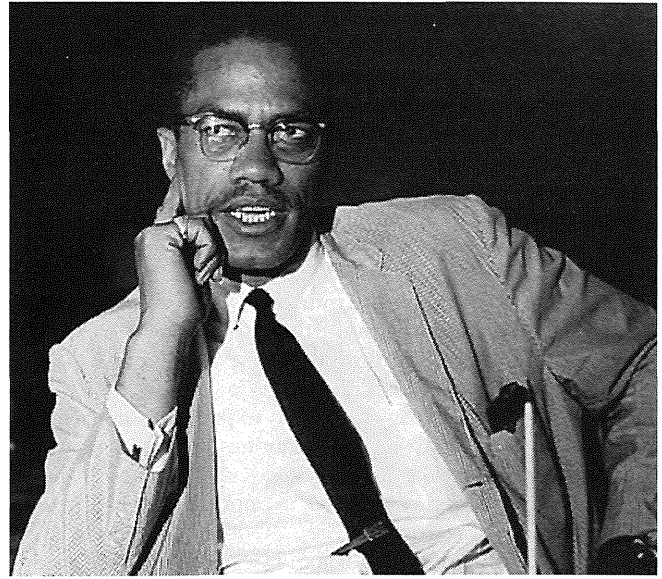
In "This is What a Revolution Looks Like" (15 November 2011), Hedges asserted that what appeared to be an "unsuccessful attempt by the power elite to quell the unrest and discontent through physical acts of repression" against Occupy heralded the second stage of an unfolding "revolution." He continued:

"George Orwell wrote that all tyrannies rule through fraud and force, but that once the fraud is exposed they must rely exclusively on force. We have now entered the era of naked force. The vast million-person bureaucracy of the internal security and surveillance state will not be used to stop terrorism but to try and stop us. "Despotic regimes in the end collapse internally. Once the foot soldiers who are ordered to carry out acts of repression, such as the clearing of parks or arresting or even shooting demonstrators, no longer obey orders, the old regime swiftly crumbles."

While the American ruling class is busy shredding many of the remaining civil liberties by suspending *habeas corpus*, legalizing indefinite detention without charges and even authorizing the assassination of citizens deemed enemies of the state, the primary tool of the "1%" remains fraud—usually in the form of Democratic Party "progressives."

Hedges proposes to encourage "defections" from the repressive apparatus "through a rigid adherence to non-violence, a refusal to respond to police provocation and a verbal respect for the blue-uniformed police, no matter how awful they can be while wading into a crowd and using batons as battering rams against human bodies" (*Ibid.*). This "turn the other cheek" strategy rejects any sort of self-defense:

"Losing this moral authority, this ability to show through nonviolent protest the corruption and decadence of the corporate state, would be crippling to the movement. It



21 May 1964: Malcolm X speaks at news conference in Harlem, New York

would reduce us to the moral degradation of our oppressors. And that is what our oppressors want."

—Hedges, www.truthdig.com, 6 February 2012

In motivating his policy of staking everything on appealing to the "morality" of the depraved racists who infest the Oakland police force, Hedges invokes the civil rights movement of the 1960s as a model: "Martin Luther King kept holding marches in Birmingham because he knew Public Safety Commissioner 'Bull' Connor was a thug who would overreact" (*Ibid.*). Malcolm X, whom Hedges claims to admire, denounced King's "Children's Crusade" in Birmingham, saying: "Real men don't put their children on the firing line." While Malcolm respected King's commitment to the struggle for equality, he recognized that the liberal civil rights movement was a safety-valve for the capitalist class and observed that "There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution" (*Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*). After repeated lynchings and assassinations, many of the key figures in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) drew similar conclusions and began carrying guns (see Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael*, New York, 2003).

Hedges's combination of "non-violent" sermonizing from the sidelines and rabid denunciation of those who engage in more militant tactics is rationalized by references to the example of the anti-revolutionary pacifism of Mahatma Gandhi in India. The success of Gandhi's bourgeois nationalist Congress movement in keeping a lid on a turbulent mass upheaval of millions against 250 years of imperial rule ensured that the social mechanisms of class, caste and gender oppression were preserved after the British departure. The Congress Party also facilitated the imperialist-orchestrated partition of the subcontinent into Muslim Pakistan and predominantly Hindu India, which was accompanied by a grisly communalist bloodbath.

While Gandhi is no model for anyone committed to the creation of a more egalitarian social order, Graeber points out that Gandhi, unlike Hedges, refused to denounce

those in the anti-colonial movement who pursued a more militant course:

"Since we are talking about Gandhian tactics here, why not consider the case of Gandhi himself?...He first began to frame his own strategy of mass non-violent civil resistance in response to a debate over the act of an Indian nationalist who walked into the office of a British official and shot him five times in the face, killing him instantly. Gandhi made it clear that while he was opposed to murder under any circumstances, he also refused to denounce the murderer. This was a man who was trying to do the right thing, to act against an historical injustice, but did it in the wrong way because he was 'drunk with a mad idea.'

"...He was regularly challenged to prove his non-violent credentials by assisting the authorities in suppressing such elements. Here Gandhi remained resolute. It is always morally superior, he insisted, to oppose injustice through non-violent means than through violent means. However, to oppose injustice through violent means is still morally superior to not doing anything to oppose injustice at all.

"And Gandhi was talking about people who were blowing up trains, or assassinating government officials. Not damaging windows or spray-painting rude things about the police."

—*op cit*

As Marxists, we have nothing but contempt for those who seek bourgeois "respectability" by turning on youth attempting to strike blows against the oppressors. While advising against adventurism, revolutionaries nonetheless defend leftist militants (including those whose tactics are seriously mistaken) against the capitalists and their state machinery.

Some of Hedges's critics have noted that his posture of absolute "non violence" seems to be solely for domestic consumption. He has been less concerned about occasional transgressions of bourgeois law and order committed by rebellious Greeks outraged by the continuing ravages of international finance capital:

"Here's to the Greeks. They know what to do when corporations pillage and loot their country. They know what to do when Goldman Sachs and international bankers collude with their power elite to falsify economic data and then make billions betting that the Greek economy will collapse. They know what to do when they are told their pensions, benefits and jobs have to be cut to pay corporate banks, which screwed them in the first place. Call a general strike. Riot. Shut down the city centers. Toss the bastards out. Do not be afraid of the language of class warfare—the rich versus the poor, the oligarchs versus the citizens, the capitalists versus the proletariat. The Greeks, unlike most of us, get it."

—www.truthdig.com, 24 May 2010

But don't try this at home, advises Hedges, who is nonetheless prepared to invoke the spirit of the French Revolution in excoriating the American bourgeoisie:

"The rogues' gallery of Wall Street crooks, such as Lloyd Blankfein at Goldman Sachs, Howard Milstein at New York Private Bank & Trust, the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, the Koch brothers and Jamie Dimon at JPMorgan Chase & Co., no doubt think it's over. They think it is back to the business of harvesting what is left of Amer-


ica to swell their personal and corporate fortunes. But they no longer have any concept of what is happening around them. They are as mystified and clueless about these uprisings as the courtiers at Versailles or in the Forbidden City who never understood until the very end that their world was collapsing. The billionaire mayor of New York, enriched by a deregulated Wall Street, is unable to grasp why people would spend two months sleeping in an open park and marching on banks."

—www.truthdig.com, 15 November 2011

Hedges compares the billionaire bankers of Wall Street to the courtiers of Versailles. Yet as soon as a few windows get broken or a flag is burned, his radical wordsmithing is revealed as little more than a cover for a frightened liberal preaching non-violent submission to the dictates of the master class.

Craven Liberalism: the Real 'Cancer' in Occupy

Hedges declares that any forceful resistance "is a gift from heaven to the security and surveillance state" while at the same time claiming that "Occupy encampments in various cities were shut down precisely because they were non-violent" (www.truthdig.com, 6 February 2012). In fact, the appropriate tactics in any given situation depend on a host of concrete circumstances. There are many times when the balance of forces precludes the use of physical force by protesters; and there are also situations where such attempts would be politically unwise. But those who refuse to distinguish between the violence of the oppressors and that of their victims (however tactically inadvisable) are incapable of playing any useful role in the struggle against the multiple and manifest injustices of the decaying capitalist social order.



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DIANA CLOCK

Black Bloc participates in Occupy Oakland demonstration

Hedges expresses a generalized opposition to political differentiation within the Occupy movement—particularly if it comes from his left. He is offended that some proponents of the Black Bloc dare characterize Noam Chomsky, America's leading radical liberal, as a "sellout." Chomsky has done a great deal of useful analysis and exposed many imperialist crimes, but he is also a card-carrying member of the pro-capitalist Democratic Socialists of America and advised people to vote for Obama in 2008. He can hardly be considered any sort of revolutionary.

Hedges also complained about an article published in *Green Anarchy* that criticized the Mexican Zapatistas:

"The essay declared that 'not only are those [the Zapatistas] aims not anarchist; they are not even revolutionary.' It also denounced the indigenous movement for 'nationalist language,' for asserting the right of people to 'alter or modify their form of government' and for having the goals of 'work, land, housing, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace.' The movement, the article stated, was not worthy of support because it called for 'nothing concrete that could not be provided by capitalism.'"

—*Ibid.*

The Zapatistas do not even profess to be revolutionary, but Marxists solidarize with them against repression by the Mexican state, just as we defend Black Bloc participants—many of whom, it should be noted, are radical liberals with plenty of illusions in Chomsky and the Zapatistas.

It is at least a little hypocritical for Hedges, who is so fiercely opposed to the Black Bloc, to object to them criticizing others. But it is common for reformists to advocate the exclusion or suppression of those to their left. As Graeber observed, Hedges's "cancer" polemic has an unpleasant political logic:

"Even if you did not intend this statement as a call to violence, which I suspect you did not, how can you honestly believe that many will not read it as such?"

"In my experience, when I point this sort of thing out, the first reaction I normally get from pacifists is along the lines of 'what are you talking about? Of course I'm not in favor of attacking anyone! I am non-violent! I am merely calling for non-violently confronting such elements and excluding them from the group!' The problem is that in practice this is almost never what actually happens. Time after time, what it has actually meant in practice is either a) turning fellow activists over to the police, i.e., turning them over to people with weapons who will physically assault, shackle, and imprison them, or b) actual physical activist-on-activist assault. Such things *have* happened...."

"This situation often produces extraordinary ironies. In Seattle, the only incidents of actual physical assault by protesters on other individuals were not attacks on the police, since these did not occur at all, but attacks by 'pacifists' on Black Bloc'ers engaged in acts of property damage. Since the Black Bloc'ers had collectively agreed on a strict policy of non-violence (which they defined as never doing anything to harm another living being), they uniformly refused to strike back. In many recent occupations, self-appointed 'Peace Police' have manhandled activists who showed up to marches in black clothing and hoodies, ripped their masks off, shoved and kicked them: always, without the victims themselves having engaged in any act of violence, always, with the victims refusing, on moral grounds, to shove or kick back.

"The kind of rhetoric you are engaging in, if it disseminates widely, will ensure this kind of violence becomes much, much more severe."

—*op cit*

Hedges's complaint about "hijacking or destruction of competing movements, which is exactly what the Black Bloc contingents are attempting to do with the Occupy movement" parallels many of those arguments routinely used against left critics of liberalism. One need not endorse the Black Bloc strategy (or lack of one) to recognize that this kind of baiting by prominent "leftists" like Hedges tends to legitimate attacks on more militant protesters and undermine solidarity in the face of ongoing, organized state repression.

Hedges objects to the Black Bloc because it asserts the right to do things he disagrees with. He complains that the St. Paul's Principles (an agreement worked out for protests outside the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota which called for a "separation of time and place" for more militant protests) "in the end opens the way for hundreds or thousands of peaceful marchers to be discredited by a handful of hooligans." This makes it clear that he is not so much concerned about militants using pacifists as "human shields," but more generally opposed to all those who do not promise in advance to slavishly abide by the rules laid down by the enemy, i.e., restrict themselves to impotent (and often invisible) "peaceful, legal" forms of dissent.

Hedges's antipathy toward youthful militants is shared by the chronically opportunist ISO:

"Unfortunately, a minority of the movement today has a different approach—one that can only be called elitist. By equating clashes with the police with militancy—and asserting their right to carry out such tactics whether or not the rest of the movement agrees—they are seeking to impose their leadership on Occupy."

—*Socialist Worker*, 8 February 2012

The ISO can certainly not be accused of attempting to "impose their leadership" on anyone—their method is to politically adapt to whatever milieu they are currently chasing. Hedges, the ISO and other "socialist" reformist outfits do not view the Black Bloc and other proponents of "direct action" as subjective revolutionaries who should be won to a better strategy, but rather as angry misfits who can be written off.

The flip side of the ISO's denunciation of the Black Bloc for substitutionism was its scandalous endorsement of the heavy-handed attempt of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) leadership to disrupt a 6 January 2012 public meeting at the Seattle Labor Temple in solidarity with striking Longview dockers. The thuggish attempt to break up the meeting was motivated by the bureaucrats' fear that the sell-out contract they planned to foist on their Longview membership might be rejected. (The reaction to the ISO's outrageous and cowardly toadying to the bureaucrats was so sharp that within a few days the group issued a partial retraction.) The reflexive identification with the labor tops against union militants and their "community" supporters vividly illustrates the ISO's essentially social-democratic character.

The Necessity of a Revolutionary Working-Class Perspective

There is, of course, a considerable spectrum of opinion among anarchists about how to fight the oppressors. In the Bay Area, the milieu around Occupy has a more overtly pro-union character than many other places because of a history of successful labor political actions initiated over the past several decades by class-struggle longshore mili-

tants in ILWU Local 10—beginning with the 1984 anti-apartheid boycott and continuing through the 1999 port shutdown for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the 2008 anti-war May Day strike and the 2010 day of action for Oscar Grant.

Many young militants have illusions that their own passion and commitment, amplified through drawing in fresh layers of angry youth, will provide sufficient leverage to achieve their aims, and they therefore see no particular need to develop a politicized and class-conscious base within the organized working class. Occupy has been amazingly successful in putting the issue of the grotesque inequality generated by capitalism on the political agenda and initiating discussion about the causes and possible solutions to this profound social problem. Its weakness is an organic incapacity to provide any real political leadership, precisely because it is so broad and inclusive. This is reflected in the utopian-liberal (and manifestly false) assertion that "99%" of the population have essentially similar social interests that are counterposed to the "1%" who compose the ruling elite. As we noted previously:

"The estimate that the other '99%' have essentially common interests is a considerable exaggeration—because this would include millions of cops, screws, military officers, managers and others whose material interests bind them closely to the ruling elite. On a global scale the estimate of 99 percent is probably considerably closer to the mark, but in all cases the vast majority of the population has interests which are objectively counterposed to those of the '1%' on top. Within this majority, however, the strategic core is composed of the workers who operate the transport, communications, manufacturing, agricultural production and everything else upon which a modern economy depends."

—1917 No.34

The task of revolutionaries is to seek to win the most class-conscious elements of this strategic core to a program representing their own historic interest in getting rid of capitalism once and for all. This perspective is the opposite of the "blank slate" approach of the Occupy leadership, which the ISO (as well as various other "socialist" tailists) essentially endorses:

"even some sympathetic liberals—missed the point when they criticized Occupy for its lack of demands. In fact, the movement was both making a general critique of a U.S. society dominated by the 1 percent, while opening up a political space for all those organizing against the injustices of that society."

—*op cit*

Occupy did open up space for political organizing and discussion in Oakland and across the country. The bold response of Occupy Oakland in calling for a one-day "general strike" to protest attacks by the city administration won the support of an impressive section of the population. Tens of thousands of working people and youth showed that they were prepared to stand up and actively resist the attack of Oakland civic authorities and their cops. While the 2 November 2011 protest was not a "general strike," it was large enough to scare the ruling elites and certainly helped make Occupy's subsequent pledges of mass solidarity with the embattled Longview dockers credible.

But this does not detract from the urgency of political struggle against the various strains of anarcho-liberalism that dominate Occupy and which will ultimately dissipate the energy to resist capitalist oppression that it has

been able to tap. The 12 December 2011 shutdown of the Port of Oakland revealed the inherent limits of intervention from outside the union. While the action was not violently repressed by the police, and won the sympathy of many rank-and-file ILWU members, the fact that it did not originate in the union and was not led by union militants limited its scope and effectiveness. The next month the ILWU bureaucracy was able to hobble Occupy's attempts to organize mass support for the besieged Longview local and impose the worst contract in the union's history.

If the recent upsurge is to produce any lasting results, it will be through the injection of fresh forces in the struggle to forge new, class-struggle leadership for the unions capable of ousting the labor traitors who dominate the workers' movement today. Only a revolutionary organization with a coherent set of ideas and a strategic orientation to the organized working class will be able to harness the anger and the willingness to take risks and make sacrifices exhibited by many of the youthful rebels (including Black Bloc participants) and transform them into effective proletarian organizers. The creation of a mass revolutionary workers' party is the precondition to a successful struggle to expropriate the financial parasites, corporations and the rest of the "1%" and open the road to the socialist future.

Reinventing the Wheel—a Pointless Exercise

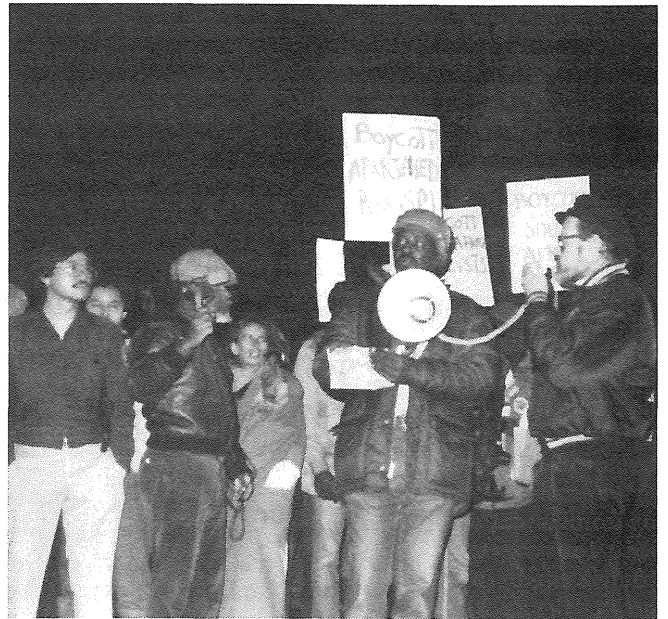
The New Left of the 1960s arose as a result of the failure of the major organizations of the Old Left (centrally the Stalinist Communist Party and the rightward-moving, formerly Trotskyist, Socialist Workers Party) to provide a plausible mass opposition to capitalism. In 1967, Leon Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher, made the following remarks to a group of university students in Binghamton, New York:

"you call yourselves New Left not because you have a new philosophy, but because you want to be distinguished from the previous generation of Marxists...you think... that your elders have done badly and you want to make a new start. This sounds very tidy: new people make a new beginning and call themselves New Left. But in what sense are you 'new people'? You are young? Young people can be very old if they start with very old ideas...I suggest that you have, first of all, to define what is the new idea you stand for. In what way are you opposed to your elders, and to which of their ideas are you opposed?"

—"Marxism and the New Left" in *Marxism in our Time*, 1971

The initial explosive growth of the Occupy phenomenon was conditioned by the absence of a viable mass revolutionary party. Like many radicals of the 1960s, today's anarcho-liberals are a reaction to the bankruptcy of tame "lesser evil" reformists whose hostility to the Black Bloc reflects their acceptance of the immutability of the existing social order.

Attacks on corporate symbols and the cops by angry youth are political actions, even if not well thought out and sometimes counterproductive (and perhaps dangerous to those who carry them out as well as other protesters). In the final analysis, the window-breakers of the Black Bloc et al are the flip side of the liberal pacifism promoted by the smug reformists of the ISO and sundry others who falsely claim the mantle of revolutionary Marxism. Without a program and a plan—i.e., a coherent strategy to awaken the revolutionary potential of the working class—they will find themselves arriving at the same liberal dead-end.



December 1984: Howard Keylor addresses ILWU militants at Port of Oakland during anti-apartheid cargo boycott

The *enragés* of the New Left, like the Black Bloc today, had no patience for the difficult and protracted commitment necessary to seriously undertake working-class organizing. Instead they opted for the short-term subjective satisfaction of going up against the cops rather than pursuing a long-term strategy that can actually end capitalist tyranny and create a new egalitarian social order based on institutions of workers' power.

A serious revolutionary Marxist party struggling for leadership of the workers' movement and championing the rights of the oppressed and downtrodden would attract the best of the angry anarchist milieu and turn them into serious proletarian revolutionaries. A glimpse of what is possible can be seen in the influence, both direct and indirect, of a few class-conscious militants in ILWU Local 10 in helping shape the political character of Occupy in the Bay Area, and via Oakland, the entire West Coast. The basis for this influence is the series of political actions spearheaded by militants in Local 10 who were schooled in the best traditions of Trotskyist trade-union work (see "Anti-War Strike," 1917 No.31 2009).

As Trotsky observed: "only a great revolutionary mass movement can free the oppressed, a movement that will leave no remnant of the entire structure of class exploitation, national oppression, and racial persecution" ("For Grynspan," February 1939). Only a revolutionary party rooted in the unions can lead such a movement through organizing the unorganized, mobilizing against murderous police violence, as well as spearheading the fight against INS dragnets, bank foreclosures, tuition hikes, attacks on pensions and social services and other issues of vital importance to working people.

It is necessary and possible to forge such a leadership, but there are no shortcuts. We must begin from where we are, and not waste time trying to reinvent the wheel. Indeed, it is only by drawing the lessons of the history of the revolutionary experience of the past—both the successes and the failures—that it will be possible to free humanity from the dead hand of the decaying and profoundly unjust capitalist order. ■

Black Bloc Streetfighters & Liberal Pacifists

The Politics of Confrontation



MARY ALTAFFER—AP PHOTO

Cops clash with Black Bloc in New York, May Day 2012

On 6 February 2012, Chris Hedges, a journalist, self-described Christian and prominent weathervane of the softer side of American radicalism, opined that Black Bloc anarchists were “the cancer of the Occupy movement” (www.truthdig.com). Hedges had earlier extended Occupy a hearty “welcome to the revolution,” and so his critique sparked considerable discussion.

What particularly offended Hedges’s liberal sensibilities was the 28 January 2012 “Move-In Day” march where Occupy Oakland unsuccessfully attempted to take over the long disused Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center with the intent of converting it into a community center. The peaceful protest of 2,000 was diverted in front of the Kaiser Center, with police firing tear gas, smoke and pepper bombs into the crowd, and ended with police kettling marchers in a public park and in front of a YMCA. According to Susie Cagle, a participant:

“There was a dispersal order, but no means of escape. Protesters with shields attempted to push the police line, which responded with several volleys of tear gas into the crowd, still trapped. Instead of enduring the gas, the crowd pulled down chain-link fencing that separated them from the street and safety.

“As marchers, both masked and bare faced, continued

north, taking the street, they chanted powerfully, suddenly and without reservation:

“‘When Oakland is under attack, what do we do?’

“‘Stand up, fight back!’”

—*Truthout*, 8 February 2012

Cagle reported that the mass kettling prompted some demonstrators (most of whom were not Black Bloc) to break into City Hall, where they allegedly did some minor property damage. Hedges’s denunciation of these young militants as Occupy’s “cancer” was promptly echoed by the left social democrats of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), who even denounced the desecration of “Old Glory”:

“At the end of the day, a small number of people got into City Hall and ransacked parts of it, including burning an American flag while the cameras rolled. This was utterly irresponsible and ought to be condemned.”

—*Socialist Worker*, 8 February 2012

In the Black Bloc milieu, people are connected by shared experiences, personal relationships and broadly anarchist politics (despite differences on some key issues). Black Bloc “veterans” have played important roles in the Occupy movement in many places, as David Graeber, who describes himself as “an anarchist who has participated in

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