

A SOCIALIST ACTION

**Renewed attack
on women's
abortion rights**

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Egypt, Tunisia in revolt!

By CLAY WADENA

As *Socialist Action* goes to press the revolt of the Egyptian people seems poised to topple the almost 30-year-old regime of dictator Hosni Mubarak. Events are proceeding at breakneck speed, and nothing is guaranteed, but the determination and unity of the Egyptian masses indicates that there will be no end of unrest without Mubarak's exit.

The uprising in Egypt, which began on Jan. 25, follows on the heels of another popular uprising that started mid-December in Tunisia, and resulted Jan. 14 in the end of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali's 23-year-old regime. All in all, there have been over 200 deaths in both Egypt and Tunisia as result of police clashes with protesters—a heavy price paid in blood by the citizens of these countries who wish to be free. Millions around the world have been watching events unfold in the region with great interest and solidarity—with the natural exception of the corporate heads and imperialist politicians, who all have much to lose by the fall of the hated dictators.

With particular respect to Egypt, media analysts routinely point out the crisis in foreign policy that the United States has faced—either support a dictator who is an ally in a region that finds America's foreign policy objectives detestable or support the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Egyptian people against their ally. To their everlasting shame, though not surprisingly, the Obama administration came out of the gate riding hard for the Mubarak dictatorship.

As soon as the protests began, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attempted to assure the world that the situation was under control, telling reporters that the Mubarak regime was "stable" and urging calm for both sides. On Jan. 27—after news of deaths caused by police firing on peaceful demonstrators had reached the world—Vice President Joe Biden praised Mubarak in an interview on CBS as "responsible." He then said flat out, "I would not refer to [Mubarak] as a dictator."

Since then, U.S. officials, including President Obama, have been in frequent contact with Mubarak, apparently seeking a way to gently ease him out of office. The U.S. gave guarded approval after Mubarak defied the will of the people in the streets on Feb. 1 by announcing that he



Mohammed Abed / AFP / Getty Images

intended to stay on until September, at which time elections could be arranged. The fact that neither Mubarak nor his son would be allowed to run as a presidential candidate, said one U.S. official, "would be a significant step in the right direction."

But a plan to keep the dictatorship in power for nine more months will hardly placate the people in the street. As crowds in Cairo's Tahrir (Liberation) Square watched Mubarak's limited concession on a giant TV screen, they booed and waved their shoes in the air. "We are not leaving until he leaves!" they chanted. Even the moderate opposition parties in Egypt have joined in a call for Mubarak's immediate resignation.

Thus, the U.S. has been hedging its bets by giving some attention to finding a pro-Western leader who could

(Above) Woman at mass demonstration in Cairo, Jan. 27, calling for end to Mubarak dictatorship.

take his place. The U.S. ambassador to Egypt met on Feb. 1 with Mohamed Elbaradei, the former head of the UN Atomic Energy Commission, who at this point seems to be the main figure that reformist forces are rallying around. And U.S. officials stated that they would meet with other opposition leaders as well.

One must note the putrid air of Islamophobia and paternalism that courses throughout the mainstream media when Egypt's future is discussed. Many speakers brazenly declare that Mubarak the dictator is better

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Support grows for April 9 & 10 antiwar mobilizations

By CHRISTINE MARIE

"No More Support to the Mubarak Dictatorship! Hands Off Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen!" So began a statement from the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC), the coalition calling and building major bi-coastal antiwar demonstrations to be held on April 9 in New York City and April 10 in San Francisco.

As the world watched dramatic video footage in which the Egyptian masses enroute to Tahrir (Liberation) Square pushed Mubarak's police back across the Kasr al-Nil bridge, UNAC activists in the U.S. fanned out to demonstrations in solidarity with the revolt against the dictators. Seasoned U.S. activists understood that the U.S. State Department was already plotting to limit the impact of the popular revolts in the interest of an only slightly modified status quo. The global stakes involved for those attempting to rebuild the U.S. antiwar movement have never been clearer.

On Jan. 29, close to 1000 demonstrated outside the UN Building in New York in solidarity with the struggle

in Egypt. The same afternoon, a march of about 500-700 people went from Harvard Square into Boston, ending near City Hall. There were placards calling for freedom and democracy in Egypt, cutting off U.S. military aid, and some that said "support Egyptian workers." Some chanted, "Not a nickel, not a dime! No more money for Mubarak's crimes!"

The revolt against the dictators, if the most earthshaking and historic, is only one of a number of the events inspiring antiwar activists from coast to coast. On Jan. 8, more than 150 Muslim Americans and their allies crowded into the Islamic Center of Long Island to organize a unified response to the McCarthyite and Islamophobic Congressional hearings planned by Congressman Peter King and to plan outreach for the April 10 antiwar march in New York. Representatives from major Long Island

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M. Khahouli / AFP / Getty Images

(Above) Tunisian women denounce the country's ruling party. Antiwar demonstrations on April 9-10 in N.Y. and S.F. will take up the call: "U.S. hands off the Middle East!"

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Philly tribunal: Witness to police brutality

By SALVATORE MASTRIANO

Philadelphia Independent Media Center

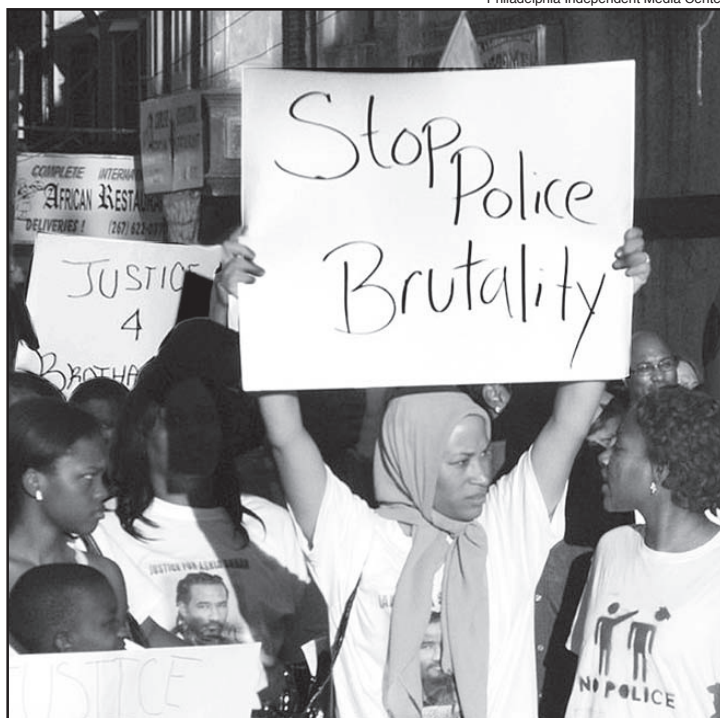
PHILADELPHIA—The Black community here has responded to brutal police beatings and abuse with united organized action. The Askia Coalition Against Police Brutality was formed after Askia Sabur suffered head trauma, a broken arm, and an injured back when beaten by police using metal batons.

Askia was waiting for take-out food when police ordered him to leave the sidewalk. Askia told the police it was too hot to wait for his order indoors. He was asked for his ID, then attacked while reaching into his back pocket for his wallet. Witnesses who tried to stop the violence managed to record the horrific event on video even though one of the cops reportedly drew a gun and pointed it at them. Askia required six staples in the back of his head and continues to suffer pain.

The Askia Coalition, made up of community people and diverse organizations in the Black community, is mobilizing with marches, leafleting, posting, and street-held “people’s courts.”

On Oct. 26, a troop of police arrived on Conestoga Street, where Askia and his extended family have homes. Supposedly in pursuit of a “male shooter,” they forced open the door of Askia’s 80-year-old grandfather. When Tonya, a young cousin who also lives in the house, arrived home from a breast cancer awareness event, she was physically and verbally abused; then

(Photo) Protesters against police brutality took over the streets in Philadelphia’s Black community for “people’s courts.”



she was arrested in her own house.

Unintimidated, the ACAPB went on to organize a well attended and effective “People’s Tribunal” event. Witnesses to pervasive abuse testified that the problem goes beyond that of “a few bad apples.” Responsibility for systemic problems in some police districts goes to the top.

It was pointed out that Internal Affairs, the police commissioner, the D.A., and Democratic Mayor Michael Nutter—Mr. Stop and Frisk himself—all fail to protect the people. Several speakers felt that police behavior, particularly toward youth, was aimed at “people re-

moval” for commercial development reasons.

In particular, people felt that Philadelphia’s three-year-old unconstitutional “stop and frisk” policy fostered abuse while failing to protect people from crime. Annette Dickerson of the Center for Constitutional Rights reported that in New York City it was shown that 80% of people selected to be stopped were African American or Latino.

During the testimony, Abdus Sabur, Askia’s father and a member of the Nation of Islam, related what his family has been going through. Others described incidents of being tasered, having a tooth punched out, frequent abusive language, and disregard for the law. Diop Olugabala of the Uhuru movement showed a video of rough treatment and arrests at a City Hall hearing on cutbacks.

Supporters of death-row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal also gave testimony. Ramona Africa related the ordeal of the MOVE family in their ongoing struggle for justice in the legal system.

The judges—Rochelle Bilal, president of the Guardian Civic League, the African American police officers association in Philadelphia; and Inez Rogers, assistant council general of the Universal Negro Improvement Association-ACL Legal Defense Fund—both spoke powerfully in finding the Philly police guilty as charged.

The Askia Coalition Against Police Brutality meets on Mondays, 6 p.m., at the Conestoga Recreation Center, 5301 W. Media St., in West Philadelphia. Readers in Philadelphia who wish to help victims record and report abuse, pursue legal action, end oppressive procedures like “stop and frisk,” educate on abuse avoidance, and continue to mobilize against brutality are all welcomed to help with the work.

The ACAPB will be showing support for Askia and Tonya at their court hearing, 8 a.m., on Thursday, Feb. 10, at the Criminal Justice Center across from City Hall. They will be holding community control of police and abuse avoidance workshops on Feb. 25-27. For more information, call (215) 300-6480. ■

A WORKERS’ ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers’ committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people’s needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers’ government!

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By ANDREW POLLACK

In his State of the Union address on Jan. 25, President Barack Obama laid out his goals for the second phase of his efforts to rescue U.S. capitalism. His first term was devoted to preventing a total system breakdown, with efforts that consisted of bailouts for banks and corporations, paid for by workers. He succeeded in restoring confidence to a point in which a total freeze of credit markets was ended, and plunging production and consumption were reined in, if not revived to pre-recession levels.

Having minimized some of the worst symptoms of speculative capital's excesses, Obama now believes he can take measures to reassert U.S. capital's global dominance. But these efforts are doomed to failure. While the economy has limped out of the pit of the recession, the wild flights of fancy stemming from profits based on speculative capital have not—and cannot—be replaced by any significant new revival of manufacturing or services.

Nor will the modest sums announced by Obama for the keystone of his proposals, a mild dose of infrastructure investment, do much to encourage revived, much less expanded, investment in new productive capacity. Given the continued global downturn and the resulting heightened competition between countries, such capacity would clearly be pointless in any case, even if Obama were to advocate far larger sums.

In a slap in the face to the country's jobless, still suffering from Depression-level unemployment rates, as well as to the millions still worried about home foreclosure, Obama said, "Two years after the worst recession most of us have ever known, the stock market has come roaring back. Corporate profits are up. The economy is growing again."

"The past two years were about pulling our economy back from the brink. The next two years, our job now is putting our economy into overdrive. Our job is to do everything we can to ensure that businesses can take root and folks can find good jobs and America is leading the global competition that will determine our success in the 21st century." There was not a word, of course, about the trillions spent on weapons, war, and occupations.

Obama proposed a five-year freeze in spending on some domestic programs that he said would reduce the deficit by \$400 billion over 10 years. While he does not yet have the capital to move ahead with his "deficit" commission's proposal to destroy Social Security, *The New York Times* reported that this "left open the possibility of benefit 'trims.'"

And he called for massive cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. State governors are already implementing cuts to the latter, which serves primarily children and the disabled. He called Medicare and Medicaid "the single biggest contributor to our long-term deficit." What this will mean in practice is hundreds of thousands tossed from the rolls, or having the number of covered visits and access to services cut. What it will not mean in any significant amount is cutbacks in funds to cover high-tech (and often unnecessary) care provided via machines made by manufacturers such as GE.

Certainly, the more Washington and statehouses get away with cuts to Medicaid, the sooner Social Security will be attacked.

These proposals were all motivated as part of a competitiveness agenda that would allow the U.S. to compete with rising powers like China and India: "We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world. We have to make America the best place on earth to do business."

Obama called on the nation to prepare 100,000 new math, science, and engineering teachers—this while his administration has backed the testing-based regime used as an excuse to close entire schools, fire or discipline teachers, and pack classrooms with more and more students! Obama also called for simplifying the corporate tax code by eliminating loopholes in exchange for lowering the 35 percent rate. This, of course, will merely shuffle around the largesse to corporations. Shortly before the address Obama also pledged to capital that he would get rid of supposedly "job-killing" regulations.

What's good for GE ...

If anyone had any doubts about the political direction of Obama's State of the Union, they should have been cleared up by his appointment of the CEO of General Electric, Jeffrey Immelt, to head his renamed body of economic advisers, the Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. "Jeff Immelt's experience at GE," said Obama, "and his understanding of the vital role the private sector plays in creating jobs and making America competitive makes him up to the challenge of leading this new council."

This follows Obama's appointment of William Daley, former Commerce Secretary and senior executive at JPMorgan Chase, as his chief of staff.

Some pundits claimed Immelt's appointment showed Obama's sincere desire to revive U.S. manufacturing,

Obama maps out plans to rescue U.S. capitalism



given GE's leading presence in many goods-making industries. But the company's financial arm, GE Capital, became the nation's largest non-bank financial firm during the real-estate bubble and was a leader in securitizing mortgages, leading to crashing profits that threatened to drag down the whole company. Like every other major corporation, GE was rescued by Washington, with the Federal Reserve giving it \$16.1 billion in credit guarantees.

And while Obama called for tougher competition with China, South Korea, and other emerging economic giants, his appointment of Immelt shows his real goal is to help corporations more tightly weave the chains that imprison workers both here and abroad.

GE, already a major player in Chinese markets, will invest \$2 billion in China through 2012, expanding its presence in what Immelt calls "the world's fastest growing market for aviation, energy, transportation, health care, and financial services."

Shortly before Obama's State of the Union, Immelt stood side-by-side with the president throughout the visit of President Hu Jintao of China. And when Obama was in India recently, he announced deals involving American companies, including a \$750 million order from Reliance Power for steam turbines manufactured by GE.

The United Electrical Workers Union said the company has closed 29 plants in the U.S. and one in Canada in the past two years, eliminating more than 3000 jobs. But the AFL-CIO, while mumbling about GE's destruction of jobs in the U.S., nonetheless supported Obama's move, saying Immelt had "embraced the president's agenda of investing in America's infrastructure and rebuilding manufacturing." The union federation also issued a joint statement with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, praising Obama's address for the jobs that will supposedly be created through his infrastructure projects and the resulting heightened competitiveness.

Criticizing the competitiveness theme of Obama's address, *New York Times* op-ed columnist Paul Krugman wrote: "It's true that we'd have more jobs if we exported more and imported less. But the same is true of Europe and Japan, which also have depressed economies. And we can't all export more while importing less, unless we can find another planet to sell to."

What's more, competition between countries is rivaled in economic significance by competition between multinational corporations. In an analysis of the production chains linking China and other East Asian economies to the U.S., radical economist Martin Hart-Landsberg pointed out, "We are being reshaped, just like East Asia, by a multinational corporate strategy ... approximately 90% of China's high technology exports to the U.S. are produced by multinational corporations."

This helps explain Immelt's laid-back attitude toward the supposedly artificially low levels of the Chinese currency, which he told interviewers wasn't even among his top five concerns. Instead, he told reporters, U.S. workers just had to work harder to compete more effectively.

Hart-Landsberg correctly noted, "Working people in China are struggling in the face of multinational corporate demands that the Chinese government keep wages low and working conditions profitable. ... Chinese workers are not stealing our jobs ... our problems are at root caused by contemporary capitalist dynamics. Forcing China to become more open to capitalism is not going to help us or them."

State governors and legislators will certainly do their part to make the U.S. more "competitive"—i.e. to force workers to tighten their belt—by stepping up already life-endangering attacks on jobs and services.

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When Puppets Fall

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

It may prove too early to predict the fall of Egypt's president for life Hosni Mubarak, but events do not look hopeful for [his] long-term success. Mubarak's regime has been the cornerstone of U.S. Middle East strategy, for, as an Arab state, it boasts the biggest population—and as Egypt goes, so goes the region.

Mubarak, who succeeded to power after the army's assassination of President Anwar el-Sadat on Oct. 6, 1981, stood by Sadat's "peace" deal, and has been more an ally of the West than of the Palestinians and other Arab nationalities. For his services, Egypt has been one of the biggest recipients of U.S. military aid in the region—second to Israel, of course.

Despite his long services to his Western paymasters, Mubarak is being prepared for an unwilling retirement. Mubarak, a man long on Egyptian internal security, may have been undone by kids of the Twitter generation. For those devoted to this technology, protests could be staged across the country against the regime.

Egypt's president may be on a rowboat largely because of the nation's economic crisis, its gnawing economic problems, and the brutal fiendish nature of the police. For several months now, pictures of people beaten and abused by cops have been flashed across the country, via the internet.

But as in Tunisia, brutality and repression by police can only work so long. Once fear evaporates, resistance grows. Egypt has served as the export destination of those who suffered U.S. rendition, whom the U.S. wanted to "disappear" forever.

And now, after decades of acquiescence to U.S. imperial whims, Mubarak may receive the Shah treatment—exile, if not worse. Panama's former dictator, Gen. Omar Torrijos, who gave refuge to an ailing Shah of Iran, remarked upon receiving his guest, "This is what happens to a man squeezed by the great nations." Said Torrijos, "After all the juice is gone, they throw him away." © MAJ 2011



(Left) Cristina Gutierrez of Compañeros del Barrio speaks at Jan. 25 San Francisco rally against government repression. At her right is S.F. Labor Council delegate David Welsh, who spoke on behalf of United National Antiwar Committee.

Stop the FBI witch hunt!

By DAVID BERNT

CHICAGO—On Jan. 25, about 350 activists rallied outside the federal building here against a McCarthy-style federal grand jury and witch hunt. Nine antiwar activists were subpoenaed to testify that day about their international solidarity work. The rally featured Maureen Murphy and Sarah Smith, two of the nine activists subpoenaed. Murphy read a statement on behalf of all nine activists stating their refusal to testify and declared, “We will not participate in this fishing expedition.” All of the activists who have been subpoenaed have refused to testify to the grand jury.

Starting Sept. 24, when the FBI raided 14 homes in Chicago and Minneapolis in an alleged attempt to investigate “material support” for terrorism, the FBI and federal prosecutors have harassed and subpoenaed 23 antiwar activists.

The government prosecutors claim they are seeking information related to trips taken by the activists to Colombia and Palestine. In truth, the government is

attempting to criminalize antiwar, international solidarity, and socialist activism and send a chill through activists’ circles in order to discourage this activism.

The extent of the government’s attempts to intimidate and disrupt was further revealed when prosecutors confirmed that an undercover FBI agent had spent 2 ½ years infiltrating Minneapolis antiwar and socialist organizations. The agent went by the name Karen Sullivan and claimed to be a single lesbian mother who had been discharged from the military under the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. She became a regular attendee of the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee, the organization that led the 2008 demonstrations at the Republican Convention, and assumed major responsibilities for the organization, including taking care of financial records.

Sullivan also went on a delegation to visit a Palestinian women’s organization; when the delegation arrived in Tel Aviv the group was turned back by Israeli officials. Activists now assume that the FBI agent’s information led to the group’s interception by Israeli au-

thorities. Karen Sullivan also joined the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, a socialist group that some of the subpoenaed activists support. As a member of these different groups, activists recall Sullivan making extreme statements and proposals; she was obviously sent by the FBI not only to gather information but to be a provocateur.

Activists from different social movements have rallied around those targeted by the government, demanding that the government end its witch hunt. The Chicago rally was attended by busloads of youth from the Palestinian and Puerto Rican communities.

Christine Boardman, the president of SEIU Local 73 and Jesse Sharkey, a vice president of the Chicago Teachers Union, both spoke. Those two unions, along with dozens of other labor locals, councils, and federations, have passed resolutions condemning the FBI raids and subpoenas. Other speakers included Ricardo Jimenez, a Puerto Rican Independence activist and former political prisoner of 20 years, and Basil Ali of American Muslims for Palestine.

Simultaneous rallies were held in over 50 cities across the country—including close to 250 people in Minneapolis, 100 in San Francisco, 100 in New York City, and 50 in Louisville, Ky.

The Northland Anti-War Coalition in Duluth, Minn., sponsored a Jan. 25 event on the steps of the federal building. Those in attendance were invited to enter the Federal Building and help deliver citizen’s subpoenas to the FBI office on the third floor. The subpoenas named three federal officials, ordering them to immediately bring forth “all documents in your possession which evidence violations of citizens’ First Amendment rights to Freedom of Speech, Press, Assembly and Association, particularly pertaining to the issuance of Grand Jury subpoenas against 23 antiwar and international solidarity activists and the Sept. 24, 2010 raids of activists’ homes in Minneapolis and Chicago.”

The movement that is being built to defend the FBI victims, along with their brave refusal to testify to the grand jury, has pushed back the government’s attempt to criminalize political activity. The stakes are high in this movement, as our very right to dissent is on the line. The Committee to Stop FBI repression is planning regional organizing conferences in Chicago and San Francisco on Feb. 12; and at Judson Memorial Church on Washington Sq. in New York on Feb. 19. For more information, see Stopfbi.net. ■

Citizens’ Hearing decries U.S. government’s war on Muslims

By CHRISTOPHER TOWNE

WASHINGTON—A climate of fear grips the Muslim community in the U.S. Countless people are behind bars, victims of sting operations and disgusting distortions of the law. Rep. Peter King of New York will soon hold hearings on Capitol Hill, where Muslim clerics will be forced to appear and testify to their efforts to combat “Islamic radicalization.” This is the new McCarthyism.

The Obama administration needs a bogeyman to justify its imperialist adventures in the Middle East and South Asia. Hundreds of innocent Muslims have been

imprisoned to convince the public that a real threat looms. It was for these reasons that a crowd gathered at the MLK Memorial Library in Washington to attend a “Citizen’s Hearing” on the loss of civil freedoms in America. Muslims and their supporters gathered to hear the testimonies of lawyers and relatives of political prisoners, victimized by “War on Terror” witch hunts.

The National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms (NCPFCF) organized the hearing, the first of several to be held around the country, to raise awareness about Muslim political prisoners and their defense campaigns. The hearings are also

organizing tools, to bring together Muslims who were previously fearful of mobilizing to defend their rights. The various campaigns have now unified their efforts, culminating in a national demonstration this spring.

Peter Erlinder, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, spoke at the hearing regarding the legal justifications for the massive imprisonment of Muslims, including the bizarre cases of “material support” for terrorist groups. “Material support” is not protected by the First Amendment, and it has been applied to all sorts of benign activities.

Though the main victims of this legal

distortion have been Muslims, the antiwar and Palestine activists subpoenaed by the FBI recently were also accused of “material support” for terrorism.

Noor Elashi gave a heartfelt testimony, speaking of her father’s conviction of “material support” for terrorism. Ghasan Elashi was a founder of what was once the largest Islamic charity in the U.S. By building schools for victims of Israeli terror in Gaza, the government claimed that Elashi and his friends increased the prestige of Hamas, a State Department-designated “terrorist organization.” Elashi was sentenced to 65 years in prison.

Besides the bogus charges of “material support” for terrorism, many Muslims have been the victims of provocateurs and “preemptive prosecution.” Under this strategy, agents befriend Muslims and manufacture phony terrorist plots that the individuals would never, or could never, have carried out on their own. Relatives of the “Fort Dix 5” and “Newburgh 4” also spoke at the hearing.

Other testimonies followed. A display stood to the left of the stage, naming 110 Muslims who are prisoners. In reality, hundreds more have been jailed, and the list includes only the names of those whose families have been courageous enough to fight public campaigns for their defense. The sheer number of these cases, built on secretive evidence and testimonies from paid-off informants, should rattle any reasonable person.

Organizers of the hearing promised a march on the Justice Department this spring, against this mockery of justice that has destroyed so many lives. The antiwar movement must join ranks with the domestic victims of the “War on Terror” and demand freedom for all political prisoners! ■

‘An injury to one is an injury to all’

By JOHN KIRKLAND

Following are remarks by John Kirkland, a member of Philly Against War and the United National Antiwar Committee, at a Jan. 25 Philadelphia press conference called as part of the National Day against FBI Repression. The conference was organized by the First Amendment Network, Philly Against War, International Action Center, and other groups.

Come here today inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt. There were mass demonstrations in both countries today. There are 100,000 in the streets of Cairo, with people demanding democracy, the right to eat, and the right to a job at a living wage—things our grandparents and parents, and we, are fighting for. The U.S.-financed dictatorships are being shaken to the core with something that scares the U.S. imperialists to death—the threat of democracy.

Government spying on and disruption of dissident political movements is nothing new. It has a history that goes back at least as far as the Red Scares and Palmer Raids after the First

World War. Spying and disruption were part of the COINTELPRO program, which targeted the left, the antiwar movement, and the Black Power movement in the 1960s. During the ‘80s, the Reagan administration spied on the movement in solidarity with the Central American people.

While spying, infiltration and disruption of legal, nonviolent, movements is nothing new, we know that this is an unacceptable attack on all of our democratic rights. Recently, it was revealed that the state of Pennsylvania had hired outside contractors to spy on legitimate political movements. This is unacceptable. On Sept. 24 last year, the FBI raided the homes of socialists and antiwar and international solidarity activists. This is unacceptable. These same activists have been targeted by a grand jury witch hunt. This is unacceptable.

The purpose of this political repression is to stifle a growing antiwar movement and the movement in solidarity with the people of Palestine and Columbia. This same government has targeted Muslims for frame-ups, pre-emptive prosecutions, and trials based on secret evidence. Secret evidence in a democracy is unacceptable, and the open door to a police state.

This government intimidation will not stop us. It will not back us down. No to Islamophobia and racism! Bring all the troops home now! Peace and justice for the Palestinian people! In the tradition of the labor movement, we say—an injury to one is an injury to all. ■

The battle for women's reproductive rights must meet new challenges

By ONA TZINGER

HARTFORD, Conn.—Emboldened by their gains in November's mid-term elections, conservative legislators across the country are working to systematically chip away at abortion rights at the local and state levels.

They are seeking to introduce bills that would redefine fetal viability to a nearly unprecedented 20 weeks, require women considering abortion to view an ultrasound of the fetus and to seek counseling about their decision, limit insurance coverage of abortion and other reproductive procedures, and alter tax laws in order to penalize businesses that provide abortion coverage.

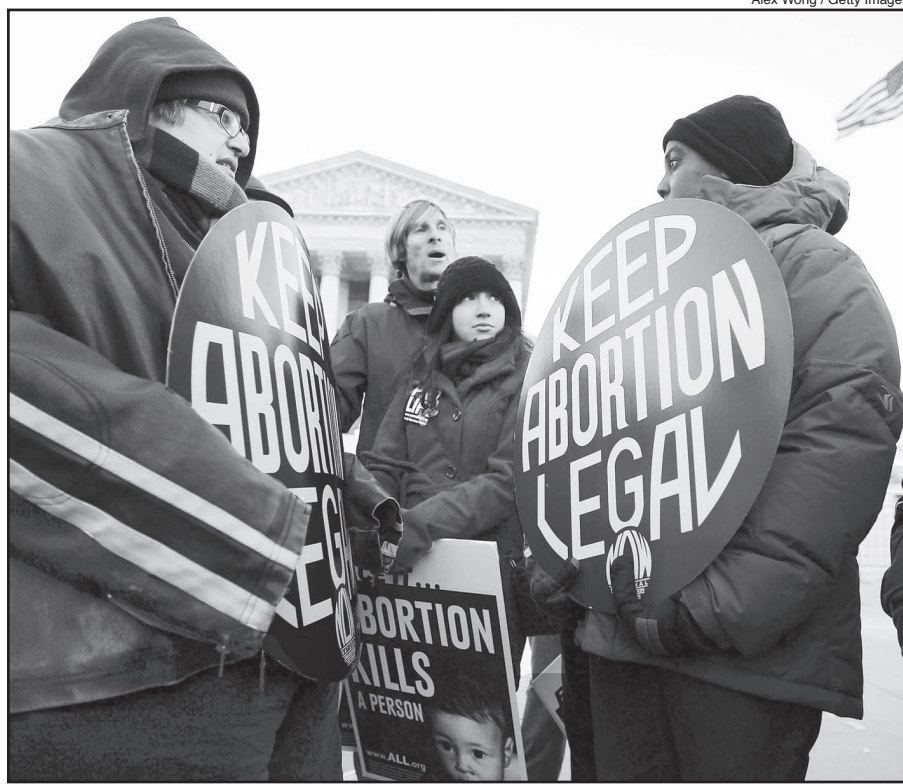
According to a recent NARAL (National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws) report, in 15 states both the legislature and the governor are explicitly anti-abortion. A recent *New York Times* article explained that in 2010 over 30 laws to restrict abortion were adopted in nine states. A Nebraska law bans abortions after 20 weeks, excluding cases where the woman's life is immediately threatened. Similar measures are underway in other states, including Iowa, Indiana, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma.

This ban and other legislation aimed at reversing the gains of *Roe v. Wade*, are based on the uncorroborated claim that fetuses can feel pain at this point in the pregnancy. Oklahoma enacted a requirement last year that women undergoing an abortion watch the entire procedure on an ultra-sound screen and listen to a technician explaining the procedure in meticulous detail as it is performed. This outrageous requirement is rife with sexist discrimination and would never be compulsory for any other procedure such as leg or heart surgery.

The push within the anti-abortion movement to stress fetal "personhood"—or the idea that a fetus is a full human deserving of rights even at the expense of the pregnant woman's rights—is not a new strategy. Since the introduction of reproductive technologies such as ultra-sound in reproductive care, anti-choicers have used fetal imagery on billboards and in movies to humanize the fetus and even grant it superhuman status while diminishing the personhood of the pregnant woman. It is important to note that anti-choice ideology not only privileges the fetus over the woman but also positions women seeking abortions as unfeeling, selfish, and irresponsible.

Anti-choicers argue that a fetus belongs to all of society and thus an individual woman should not have the right to determine one "innocent" life (even though it is growing within her body and she must sacrifice to produce, and later raise and pay for this life). However, if society at large is indeed responsible for protecting the growing fetus, why are pregnant women the *only* ones whose behavior comes under social and legal scrutiny? Why are other entities that are potentially threatening to a pregnancy, such as private industry, let off the hook? Why are there no laws that ban companies from producing waste that is toxic to a growing fetus?

Moreover, anti-choicers argue for defending the life of innocent "unborn children" but have nothing to say about the lack of social and economic resources that propel many women to resort to abortion in the first place. Perhaps they fail to recognize that defending fetal rights are fruitless if



there are no resources in place to defend children's rights.

It is notable but unsurprising that the attacks outlined above are being waged under Obama's allegedly pro-choice administration, which recently passed a health-care bill that renewed the Hyde Amendment—banning the use of federal monies for abortion. This bill nearly ensures that low-income women, who are disproportionately women of color, are denied the legal right to abortions when they can't afford private insurance.

Here in Connecticut, a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives during the week of Jan. 17 that would effectively eliminate insurance coverage for abortion and penalize businesses that seek insurance policies that cover abortion and other reproductive care.

In response to these mounting attacks, on Jan. 21, Socialist Action Connecticut hosted a forum both to commemorate the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*—the Jan. 22, 1973, landmark Supreme Court decision that reversed all state laws blocking legal abortion in the United States—and to underscore the urgency of continuing the struggle for full reproductive freedom. The featured speakers included women's rights activist and Socialist Action member Aubrey Arpie, and a long-time women's and labor rights activist and PhD candidate from the University of Connecticut, Bayla Ostrach.

Arpie opened the forum with a talk on the history of abortion criminalization and re-legalization in the U.S.

She explained that "women around the world have engaged in pregnancy termination for thousands of years, and for most of this time they were performed safely and legally," and further that "when the U.S. Constitution was adopted, first trimester abortions were legal and common."

She explained that at that time reproductive and gynecological care was dominated by women and midwives (which seems quite logical). However, as medicine developed as a professional career that required university training, only relatively wealthy men could afford this type of schooling and thus came to dominate the field. The newly trained male doctors felt threatened by midwives and other lay healers, and so they worked with state legislators to effectively criminalize abortion and eradicate any competition.

Aside from ensuring that women were erased from reproductive care, abortion laws were also developed

in many states because racist policymakers felt the threat of high fertility rates among new immigrants and feared that the white population would diminish.

Forum organizers made a point to acknowledge that the battle for reproductive freedom is not singular or universal. Women of color within the U.S. have a unique history of reproductive oppression that includes coerced sterilization, forced birth control, and social conditions that make it hard for them to raise children. Arpie noted that reproductive freedom not only means the right *not* to have children—through open access to birth control and abortion—but also the freedom to *have* children and to parent them without fear of economic deprivation.

All of these abuses stem from the potent combination of racism and sexism fostered by the ruling class. As Arpie noted, "It is in the interest of the ruling class to ensure that oppressed nationalities and groups remain in the minority and to continuously deny them rights in order to divide the working class to prevent people from fighting together for working class interests."

Aubrey Arpie concluded that full reproductive freedom and full rights for women generally cannot be realized within a capitalist system because such injustices "[are] symptomatic of capitalism." She noted that anti-choice laws have been made to control women and their bodies and that these laws in conjunction with the lack of social services and sufficient resources ensure that women are confined to the domestic sphere and forced to provide free labor as they raise the next generation of wage slaves. In this way capitalism ensures the perpetuation of a sexist and exploitative system.

An applied medical anthropologist by training, Bayla Ostrach spoke about her work in abortion clinics for over 10 years and her research on social and economic barriers to abortion access among low-income women in Oregon.

She provided on-the-ground evidence of the logistical barriers that low-income women face in seeking abortions—although abortion is purportedly legal on the federal level. Her findings indicate that obstacles preventing women from easily accessing abortions include cost of the procedure, difficulties in Medicaid applications, lack of social support—and occasionally, fear of abortion protesters.

She recounted several stories of women who waited weeks and even months to learn if they qualified for

(Left) Pro-choice activists debate anti-abortion protesters in front of U.S. Supreme Ct. building, Jan. 24.

Medicaid, despite the Department of Human Services' policy that patients seeking abortion coverage must hear back from the department in no more than 24 hours. Sometimes it was too late for women to have the procedure legally by the time they learned that they qualified for Medicaid.

Based on the logistical barriers to abortion access outlined in Ostrach's research, and the mounting legal attacks that we are seeing across the country, it is clear that attempts to undo *Roe v. Wade* and women's rights generally are on the rise and must be met with resistance.

As Aubrey Arpie noted: "We're made to beg for reforms, as if that has gotten us any closer to the freedom to choose than we were hundreds of years ago. Throughout U.S. history women have been given rights, and then have had them taken right back. All the while a woman has never been given the full choice over what to do with her body. And it won't be given to us; we have to take it. We must refuse to be silent and apologetic about abortion. We must educate ourselves and challenge the system and demand the impossible."

It is imperative that women speak out about their experiences with abortion and reproductive abuse in order to de-stigmatize abortion and expose the sexist oppression they suffer. Socialist Action argues for building a mass movement that unites women of all ethnicities, and men, to fight for women's rights. At the same time we must struggle to replace the capitalist system, which engenders women's oppression. ■

... Obama

(continued from page 3)

In what promises to become an increasingly common phenomenon, Nassau County in New York had its finances taken over by a state board, which immediately declared union contracts null and void.

In recent weeks, right-wing media commentator Glenn Beck has repeatedly attacked Professor Frances Fox Piven as a terrorist for encouraging the country's unemployed to take to the streets to demand jobs. No doubt Beck would apply the same label to workers in Portugal, Greece, France, and elsewhere in Europe who have repeatedly engaged in general strikes and mass revolts against unemployment and benefit cuts.

And there's no question Beck would label as Islamist dupes the heroic unemployed youth who are right now engaging in revolutionary upsurges in Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen and elsewhere throughout the Arab nation against regimes whose subservience to dictates of Western banks and corporations and the IMF have meant catastrophic levels of unemployment.

Workers in the United States must study closely the tactics used by these workers, and find in ourselves the same heroism they are showing, a heroism shown frequently in pitched battles against our own U.S. employers—including GE!—in the past. ■



Ibrahim Usta / AP

... Egypt, Tunisia in Revolt!

(continued from page 1)

than the direction a free Egypt might hypothetically take (falsely implying that Egypt is likely to replicate the current Iranian regime).

The fear of Islam—under the pretense of only disliking “radical Islam”—has been one of the main justifications for U.S. support for the “secular” Mubarak regime. This and the immense political and logistical assistance Egypt provides to both the United States and Israel comprise the ways in which repeated American administrations have tried to dress up the brutal dictator Mubarak as some sort of force for progress.

There are some common elements to the conditions and events in both Tunisia and Egypt that to a large extent caused these uprisings. The first is that the economic situation facing the majority of people in both countries is bleak. Particularly for the youth of these countries, unemployment has been fiercely high and future work prospects dim. Additionally, 40% of the people in Egypt—which is the second largest economy in Africa—are living below the World Bank poverty line of \$2 per day (and have faced a 17 percent increase in the price of basic food items for three consecutive years). Basic economic concerns, faced by millions around the world in the recession, are the backbone of the people’s resistance.

Frustrating economic situations were combined, in both cases, with dictators who repressed almost every expression of real political opposition. There was effectively no legitimate institutional recourse for democratic dissent in these countries. Leaders and members of opposition parties in both countries have been imprisoned, forced to flee, and in some cases murdered. For the youth coming up, allowing these aging autocrats to continue to monopolize power was indigestible.

Another element that spurred protest in both countries was the constant police harassment and brutality the youth faced. Almost everyone agrees that the spark that set off the protests in Tunisia was the attempted suicide of a youth, Mohamed Bouazizi, after he was harassed, intimidated, and brutalized by Tunisian police. In Egypt, it was the June 2010 murder of the youth Khaled Said by police that became the original reason youth organizers called a protest on Jan. 25, not knowing that when that

day came the scope of the protest would be drastically larger because of events in Tunisia.

One final similarity worth noting is the general refusal by army troops in both Tunisia and Egypt to fire on protesters. Most analysts agree that the fact that Ben Ali could no longer rely on the army to counter the pro-democracy protesters forced him to abdicate power and leave the country. Likewise, the Egyptian military’s announcement on Jan. 31 that they wouldn’t fire on peacefully demonstrating citizens, and that the grievances held by citizens were legitimate, seemed to put Mubarak in an untenable situation. We must note, however, that army troops did nothing to aid protesters who were attacked by pro-government goons on Feb. 2.

Meanwhile, Mubarak is using every trick up his sleeve to stop the protests, including shutting off the internet and a majority of cell-phones. He has also sought from the beginning to portray the protests as the beginning of chaos that would tear Egypt apart.

This last issue is quite important, as Mubarak is attempting to divide the opposition by casting security concerns and appeals to the sanctity of private property as the main issues for Egyptians to be concerned about. Mubarak reiterated this theme in the speech he gave the evening of the “March of Millions” protest on Feb. 1. But the Egyptian masses haven’t been buying it from the beginning; and took it upon themselves to stop the narrative that the protests were about looting and destruction in its tracks. They formed neighborhood defense groups, which organized block by block to stop looting and destruction (which almost all Egyptians believe is the work of the police forces).

The stakes are high for the outcome in Egypt, both due to the implications it would have on international relations (vis a vis the Israel-Palestine conflict) and because Egypt controls the Suez Canal (which is a crucial point of global trade). Western powers cannot stand a stoppage of goods and oil passing through the Suez Canal due to unrest; and they know that it will be very difficult to find any incoming Egyptian administration that is as friendly to American and Israeli interests as the Mubarak regime has been.

It is no secret that the Egyptian people do not approve of the horrible treat-

ment given to their Palestinian brothers and sisters; in fact, the Egyptians protested against the Mubarak regime in support of Palestinians on multiple occasions, facing down police repression every time. And while reformist leaders like Mohamed Elbaradei are quick to dismiss Western fears that a democratic Egypt might revise its foreign policy to be more favorable for Palestinians than during Mubarak’s reign, the bottom line is that Egyptians should be able to decide for themselves.

The events of Tunisia and Egypt have inspired people all around the world. Protests in which the participants have evoked Tunisia or Egypt have erupted all around the Middle East—including Algeria, Yemen, and Jordan. Even mainstream analysts believe that Mubarak—if he does indeed fall from power, as most predict—will not be the last leader to fall from this wave of unrest. Some leaders are *already* taking extraordinary measures in efforts to undercut any detractors; Jordanian King Abdullah II fired his entire cabinet on Feb. 1, ordering his new prime minister to immediately pursue political reforms.

Outside of the region, these uprisings have also inspired worldwide solidarity protests—usually held to demonstrate support for the Egyptian protesters and to oppose the imperialist support given to the dictator Mubarak.

The people of Tunisia, despite the inspiration they have given to many, face a precarious situation; they have gotten rid of a dictator but have no assurance that lasting political or economic gains will result. As it is now, the current Prime Minister (Mohamed Ghannouchi) of the interim government has reshuffled his cabinet and promised reforms, but is viewed as a discredited ally of the ousted dictator. Not only are lasting political gains unsecured, but the economic concerns of the Tunisians have also been hardly addressed at all.

Egyptians face a similar predicament. Will this uprising result in tangible gains that not only address their democratic concerns but also their dire economic situation? To achieve both political and economic change, Egyptians will need to build organizations that fight independently for working-class interests. On this note, the news that a new Egyptian union federation has been formed



(Top) Protesters board army carriers near Cairo’s Tahrir Sq., Jan. 28.

(Below) Members of Islamic group in Istanbul show solidarity with Egyptian protesters, Jan. 28.

(which will not be directly controlled by the Mubarak regime) and that an indefinite general strike is being undertaken are very welcome.

As their struggle develops, it is to be expected that more and more Egyptians and Tunisians will understand that in order to substantially better their conditions, they will need to construct a revolutionary political party that is fully representative of the working class of their countries, and that can also speak to the aspirations of the peasants, youth, and other oppressed people. Ultimately, they and the people of the entire Middle East will need to do away with the rotten neo-colonial regimes that dominate the region and take the same road that the Cubans took 50 years ago toward making a socialist revolution.

It is necessary for concerned people around the world to demonstrate solidarity with those struggling for political freedom and economic change. We must oppose the funding and maintenance of repression and autocracy by the U.S. government. Protests are scheduled locally and regionally in support of Tunisians and Egyptians. And this will be a major theme of the antiwar protests scheduled for April 9 in New York City and April 10 in San Francisco. U.S. hands off the Middle East! ■

U.S. readies machinery for military intervention throughout Middle East

By GERRY FOLEY

A question that arises immediately in the wake of the political earthquakes shaking whole series of neocolonial regimes in the Middle East is how and how much the U.S. will escalate its military intervention in the area. The U.S. has already been heavily involved in major wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the latter case, the U.S. war has the potential for expanding to a regional level, if it spreads to Pakistan.

In the Middle Eastern theater, in particular, the U.S. has developed instruments for waging covert war that far exceed anything in its already dark past. It has financed mercenary forces that are veritable private armies that recruit professional killers from the entire world and are directly accountable to no elected authority. The founder of the most notorious of these mercenary armies, Erik Prince, has recently moved to Abu Dhabi, where he is under the protection of corrupt sheikhs who rule as absolute monarchs, and out of the reach of courts in countries with elected governments.

If the Egyptian upheaval leads to an anti-imperialist regime, the U.S. bosses will need to vastly escalate their military intervention to maintain their control of the region. Besides Iraq and Afghanistan, they are already covertly intervening in Somalia and Yemen. A major expansion of these operations would be a catastrophe for the peoples of the Middle East and for the American people itself.

Ironically, just at the time the Middle East began to blow up in the faces of its American overlords, it became known that a mercenary army, the Saracen International company, an outfit headed by a former officer of a white South African secret service notorious for murdering opponents of apartheid, was preparing to move into Somalia to help the U.S./UN-backed fake official government suppress an Islamist insurgency.

The British *Independent* reported Jan. 22: "The project, which emerged yesterday when an intelligence report was leaked to media in the United States, requires Mr Prince to help train a private army of 2,000 Somali troops that will be loyal to the country's United Nations-backed government. Several neighbouring states, including the United Arab Emirates, will pay the bills." A spokesman for Prince denied that his boss had put money into the scheme but admitted that he offered "advice."

As soon as this report became public, the phantom Somali government started backing out of the deal. But the "autonomous" government of Puntland, a territory claimed by Somaliland, maintained the contract that it signed with Saracen in November. A report by *Idarat Maritime*, a research journal devoted to maritime issues, reported that it appeared likely that the mercenaries would be used primarily to secure oil-bearing areas over which the Puntland government is anxious to assert its sovereignty.

Pointing up the murky identity of these mercenary outfits, *Idarat Maritime* noted that there are at least three and maybe more companies called Saracen, although reports in other papers suggest that these different companies may simply be different avatars of the same beast. One was supposedly based in Beirut but Lebanese authorities said, according to *Idarat Maritime*, that it is actually based in the United Arab Emirates, where Erik Prince now hangs his hat.

The allegedly Beirut-based outfit has as its chief officer Lafras Luitingh, the former white South African officer of the apartheid-era Civil Cooperation Bureau. The United Arab Emirates, notoriously subservient to imperialism, seems to have become the base of a whole network of international gangsterism.

It is understandable that the Somali government does not want to be linked to mercenaries of the Saracen or Blackwater ilk, since it depends on the support of international bodies that are anxious to maintain a certain legitimacy, such as the UN and the African Union. Obviously, it would have less control of these mercenaries than the U.S. or the Afghan government has had over similar desperados hired to do their bidding.

Idarat Maritime noted: "In addition we will also see an influx of hundreds of new and well-trained militia into southern Somalia. Once trained these men will



Hani Mohammed / AP

Protester holding two pieces of bread joins chants for end of government of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The rally, inspired by Tunisia events, took place in Sanaa, Yemen, Jan. 27.

it was pretty much on ice. All of a sudden, it isn't anymore," the senior U.S. official said.

The Washington Post summarized: "A decision to ban the major violators and those that have relationships with senior Afghan officials would affect firms that provide about 800 guards for the U.S. Agency for International Development projects and about 3,000 who work on military construction projects for the coalition, said a senior U.S. official. 'We're wringing our hands over this,' the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. 'We're waiting to hear which companies will get disbandment notices and when they will have to disband.'"

Apparently, Karzai was unnerved by U.S. plans to expand greatly the numbers of mercenary forces already plaguing the country: "Earlier this month, U.S. Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry told Karzai that new NATO development projects could require an additional 25,000 guards, according to Afghan officials. This would be on top of the 27,500 private guards currently in the country, a total that alarmed the Afghan government."

Obviously, the U.S. government under Obama, no less than under Bush, who was reportedly personally linked to Erik Prince (both of them being self-styled servants of Jesus), has no intention of reducing its use of mercenaries. It apparently considers them the elite troops of imperialism, whose role will constantly expand.

However, the expanding role of private armies financed by imperialists in dependent countries threatens to make even neocolonial pseudo-independence into an egregious farce. Moreover, there is osmosis between the neocolonial rulers and their imperialist overlords. *The Washington Post* reported Jan. 26: "Afghan justice and security officials want to adopt the U.S. practice of detaining suspected insurgents indefinitely without trial, according to senior U.S. and Afghan officials involved in efforts to have the government in Kabul take control of detention operations in the country." The U.S. has long tried to wash its hands of torture by shunting political suspects to countries that they know practice it. Now, it seems that the Afghan officials want to institute indefinite imprisonment, citing the example of the United States.

The growth of ruthless private armies and the increasing use of torture and indefinite imprisonment without trial are the features of a descent into international barbarism that has accompanied the U.S. interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The crumbling of neocolonialist regimes in the Middle East is obviously a threat to the domination that the U.S. rulers have paid such a high price for. It may be a turning point.

Which way will the U.S. turn—toward a deeper descent into barbarism or toward a respect for human rights and the right of self-determination of dominated peoples? That is going to depend on whether masses of American people stand up and say clearly that the game the U.S. has been playing is now clearly a losing one, that they are not going to accept it any more, and that they will not let any politician tell them that politicians subservient to the capitalist bosses are going to solve the problem.

A danger to the peoples of the Middle East and the U.S. is that the fall of the Egyptian dictatorship, which has been the major prop to U.S. domination of the region, will lead to bigger U.S. military intervention, either directly through the official U.S. military, or indirectly through the murky mercenary forces that the U.S. bosses more and more employ to do their dirty work. It is vital that Americans mobilize to stop any such moves. Now is the time for solidarity with the peoples of the Middle East who have been the victims of our government. ■

A danger to the peoples of the Middle East is that the fall of the Egyptian dictatorship, which has been the major prop to U.S. domination of the region, would lead to bigger U.S. military intervention.

serve whoever can pay regularly and will look for the highest bidder; loyalty is not a feature of the Somali conflict." Loyalty is not a feature of mercenaries in general, as was discovered by the authorities of the Roman Empire when their mercenaries destroyed their empire and themselves.

Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan has upset his American sponsors by threatening to oust the mercenaries there that are working for the U.S. government and companies. He has well-founded fears that they work for anyone who will pay them, including the Taliban and rival warlords. *The Washington Post* reported Jan. 22: "The Afghan government has accused several prominent private security companies, including some that work with the U.S. government, of committing 'major offenses,' a move that U.S. officials fear could hasten their departure from the country."

The article continued: "A list compiled by Afghan officials cites 16 companies, including several American and British firms, for unspecified serious violations and seven others for having links to high-ranking Afghan officials, according to a copy obtained by *The Washington Post*."

Karzai had declared earlier that he intended to ban the mercenary groups, but the American officials seem to have been privately assured that no action was planned in the near future, so they were surprised by the Afghan government's recent pronouncement: "U.S. officials believed that they had reached a compromise in December that would protect key operations and give the companies more time before they would have to depart, but the list has raised new concerns that the timeline has accelerated. 'We thought

Bob Woodward avoids asking hard questions about 'Obama's Wars'

By BARRY WEISLEDER

"Is there anybody who thinks we ought to leave Afghanistan?" the president asked. Everyone in the room was quiet. They looked at him. No one said anything. 'Okay,' he said, 'now that we've dispensed with that, let's get on.'"

One hundred and eighty-six into its 441 pages, the political framework of "Obama's Wars" by Bob Woodward (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2010) is clearly delimited. There is no questioning of the "right" of the United States of America to intervene in the affairs of countries and nations the world over.

There is no elaboration on the admission that important energy resources are at stake. The vast and valuable mineral reserves of Afghanistan, its potential as a convenient corridor for oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean, and the array of Canadian, U.S. and other transnational mining and energy companies lining up for territorial concessions, do not merit even a footnote. Concerning imperialism as an economic system, which the ideology of "national security" dutifully serves, the book is mute.

But as a booster of the dominant ideology, like its namesake hero, "Obama's Wars" is effusive. America is presented as the repository of world civilization and democracy, and its "resilient" response to the 9/11 attacks at home is to wage wars abroad. How Obama squares that with his pre-election end-the-wars pledge, and how he takes on the vested military establishment, is Woodward's literary spin. It is the stuff of his latest "instant-history".

Along the way the reader is treated to a sweeping survey of the personalities and tactical conflicts at the summits of capitalist political and military power. One is offered an intimate portrait of the young president who strives to master "the game". As a Who's Who guide to D.C., this crisply written, very readable book is a useful reference. But that's about it.

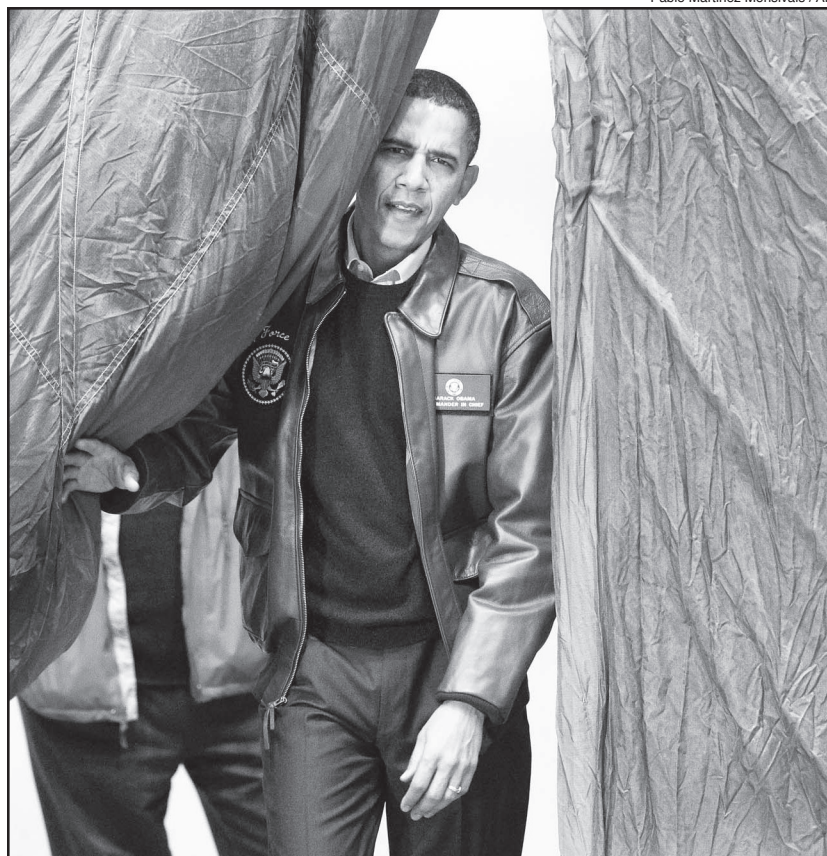
Bob Woodward, the Pulitzer Prize-winning associate editor at *The Washington Post*, has gained a reputation as gossipmonger to the governing elite. From his keyboard (or that of his much-praised, but little-credited chief researcher/writer Josh Boak), a rogues' gallery of war criminals comes to life. Their interactions in Congressional hearing rooms, Pentagon offices, White House corridors, and the hallowed Situation Room appear to drive all that happens in the world. And, for what it's worth, Woodward's characters are more articulate and voluble than their counterparts on the TV drama "24."

Within a shared imperial framework, Vice-President Joe Biden ("avoid the shame of another Vietnam defeat") confronts gung-ho interventionist Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel calls the war "political flypaper". An ominous review of Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy by Bruce Riedel, ex-CIA analyst, delivers a political hot potato: the central problem is Pakistan. Obama muses about taking civic measures to "reduce the appeal of violent extremism to young Muslims".

However, "this sounded alarm bells for Gates, Mullen, Petraeus and McChrystal", the Secretary of Defense, U.S. Navy Admiral, U.S. Military Commander, and U.S. Army General, respectively. A debate about "counterterrorism" versus "counter-insurgency" ensued. The former course is remote-controlled and weapons intensive; the latter requires an extensive, endless occupation, to the tune of one soldier or police per 50 residents. Given the stratospheric rate of attrition from the Afghan Forces (over 25 per cent a year) such a ratio is surreal, short of a permanent U.S.-NATO occupation force of 500,000 plus.

Woodward uses his superior access to powerful people and his uncanny ability to acquire purloined classified documents and coveted private notes of participants, to reconstruct a chronology of debates, disputes, and decisions made within the ruling circles. These he employs to illuminate a number of false dilemmas: Is the aim to *defeat*, or to *disrupt* the Taliban? Should the "surge" be comprised of 30,000 or 40,000 additional U.S. troops? To what extent should the lethal drone attacks on insurgent forces in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) be escalated at the risk of further de-stabilizing the U.S. client regime in Islamabad?

It's 10 overlapping wars in one, says a circumspect Army Lieutenant Douglas Lute. There's the NATO war (with a Canadian General in command), the CIA covert paramilitary war, and distinct wars being conducted by Green Berets and Joint Special Operations Com-



Pablo Martinez Monsivais / AP



(Above) Author Bob Woodward.

(Left) Obama is introduced to U.S. troops stationed at Bagram airbase, Afghanistan, on Dec. 3, 2010.

mand, each tracking "high value" targets. The training and equipment commands have their own operations. The Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Directorate for Security are also fighting separate wars.

There is so much money expended, yet so little popular support for the occupation, which (not surprisingly) is seen as foreign, and cruelly indifferent to massive Afghan casualties. This increasingly casts in a positive light the austere, reactionary Taliban, most active in the mainly Pashtun eastern provinces, as well as other insurgent forces. Woodward, who toured Helmand province with General James L. Jones, admits that without American billions, bombs, and economic conscripts on the ground, President Hamid Karzai would not even be mayor of a Kabul cul de sac.

Jones, Obama's national security adviser, put the Afghanistan war in a political context: "If we don't succeed here, organizations like NATO, by association the European Union, and the United Nations might be relegated to the dustbin of history." Shorn of their fig leaf, the nakedness of the malefactors of global injustice would be more visible. Should we be worried?

Life can be hard on publishers. WikiLeaks stole the thunder of "Obama's Wars" by revealing Washington's contempt for its allies/puppets in the region, and by exposing Obama's order for a dramatic increase in the bombings of Pakistan's untamed northwest.

At home, Obama's hand-picked cabinet of militarists wants "more boots on the ground". As Petraeus and others kept agitating for further escalation, ignoring study after study of the deepening quagmire, the president took the unusual step of writing a six-page plan that defined goals and set limits. He fired McChrystal for disparaging its author. But no matter how lawyerly well-written, no president's scheme can arrest the dynamic of imperialist intervention.

Fraught with terminal contradictions, Obama's exit strategy resembles the plot line of a George Orwell novel. It starts with a military surge, and is tied to a shrinking social base dominated by some of the most corrupt, undemocratic politicians on Earth. Washington's surge specialist, the "hero of Baghdad", General Petraeus, confides, "This is the kind of fight we're in for the rest of our lives and probably our kids' lives."

As in Vietnam, the reality is that there is no *voluntary* exit strategy for the U.S. in Afghanistan—or in Iraq and Pakistan, for that matter. The smoke and mirrors of politically embedded, award-winning journalists can buy only so much time for imperial ambition.

The inconvenient fact that 60 per cent of Americans polled, plus 80 per cent of Canadians, and untold majorities of peoples worldwide demand total withdrawal *now* of foreign military forces from the Middle East and South Asia is of no concern to the imperialist rulers—at least, not until those popular majorities are mobilized in such a way as to threaten the profits and power of the classes that rule.

Barack Obama made his bed with the bourgeoisie long ago. The cerebral former community organizer pushes trillions of depreciating U.S. dollars to Wall Street and the Pentagon, while starving human needs. That, apparently, is the price of "greatness" in the decadent capitalist game. "Change you can believe in",

from within the system, it turns out, is no change at all. From Palestine to Pakistan, these are truly now Obama's wars.

But it doesn't end there. Civil liberties, more precisely the basic rights of the working-class majority of society, are another casualty of the wars abroad. Fortunately, there are some recently published books that do address this crucial human dimension.

One well worth reading is "Dark Days: The Story of Four Canadians Tortured in the Name of Fighting Terror" by Kerry Pither (Viking Canada, Toronto, 2008, 460 pages). It relates, with the narrative drive of a thriller, the harrowing experiences of four Canadian Muslim men who were intercepted abroad and sent by U.S. officials to Syria and/or Egypt for interrogation and torture, with full RCMP and Canadian Security Intelligence Service collaboration. Ahmad El Maati, Abdullah Almalki, Maher Arar, and Muayyed Nureddin were eventually released without charge, after unspeakable sufferings, and only due to persistent public campaigning by their families, their lawyers, and allied social movements.

Possession of a tourist map, knowledge of electronics or of aviation, or simply being Arab or Muslim is enough for state authorities, keen to justify "security" expenditures, to implicate innocent persons in terrorism. But behind the zealous cops, spies, and torturers are the policies and interests of capital—the fountain of divide-and-rule tactics in the pursuit of war for profit.

Although "Dark Days" misses the forest for the trees, and overlooks the system served by the lies, hubris, and malfaisance it lays bare, the book rescues the humanity of some of the system's victims. And it reminds us, in the words of Ahmad El Maati, that "since 9/11, so many others have just disappeared, or are still in prisons, with no right to ask questions."

National security, which is really about the security of capital from its critics, has been a tool of conformism long before post-9/11 trauma. "The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation" by Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile (UBCPress, Vancouver, 2010, 554 pages) provides a very well researched history of the movements for gay/lesbian equality from the 1950s through the 1990s. The book vividly connects Canadian state discrimination against homosexuals, the spying on and interrogation of activists, and the disruption of grassroots human rights campaigns directly to the imperatives of capitalist rule.

Heterosexism, like sexism, racism, and today's top-down fostered Islamophobia, is a long-standing divide-and-rule prejudice. It is particularly useful to the state in the event of war—that is, all too often. The ongoing nature of the attack on democratic and human rights (from the incarceration or imposition of ultra-restrictive living conditions on Muslim and Tamil refugees in Canada, to the widespread violation of civil liberties by police in connection with the G20 Summit in Toronto last June, to the latest FBI raids on antiwar activists across the USA) makes it crucial that the process of "forgetting" the historical roots of state repression, and the struggle against it, be confronted and overcome.

Despite much self-conscious, arch-academic phraseology, Kinsman and Gentile make a compelling case, masterfully summarized in the last chapter, that capitalist globalization and the "expanding national security state" go hand in hand. Gay or straight, religious or secular, regardless of colour, sex, language, or ethnicity, working people will find freedom sooner when we come to see "national security", like patriotism, as the common refuge of many a monied scoundrel. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

Toronto sets April 9 antiwar protest

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

The call for mass anti-war actions on April 9, issued by the U.S.-based United National Anti-war Committee (UNAC), has been heard and answered in Canada. A Jan. 14 membership meeting of the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War responded with a Yes. It is proceeding to organize an outdoor rally, and numbers permitting, a street march in that city.

Members, supporters, and friends of Socialist Action started in September to urge the Toronto coalition to favour a broad demonstration to demand "Canada Out of NATO, NATO Out of Afghanistan Now!" The TCSW is an affiliate of the Canadian Peace Alliance. The CPA endorsed the UNAC actions slated for the U.S. East and West Coasts on April 9 and April 10.

A show of international solidarity with UNAC, and with other participating organizations, including in other countries as well, in opposition to the imperialist wars of occupation in the Middle East, is now posed.

Several Socialist Action members from Toronto and Montreal attended the UNAC conference, along with 800 peace and social justice activists on July 23-25, 2010, in Albany, N.Y. It was the largest U.S. gathering of its kind in over a decade. It enjoyed the backing of 31 national organizations. With the assistance of the Albany-based Sanctuary Media, 17,000 more people witnessed the conference and many of its 30-plus workshops via video-streaming.

The convergence of major forces of the U.S. antiwar movement presents a challenge to the antiwar movement in Toronto, and across the Canadian state. In the wake of the revelations by WikiLeaks of the sheer ugliness and hopelessness of the Afghan military quagmire, with anger mounting over the money earmarked for the purchase of new fighter aircraft, leaks about war crimes condoned by Canadian military officials, and following the three-year extension of Canadian Forces' intervention in Afghanistan by Prime Minister Steven Harper without even a debate in the House of

Commons, opposition to the war is cresting.

Many Canadians want to take to the streets, but for the past three years occasions for united mass action have been few. The CPA and TCSW have waged many important campaigns and actions in that time, such as organizing a cross-country speaking tour by former Afghan female MP Malalai Joya, by protesting at a Toronto appearance by former British PM Tony Blair on Nov. 26, and particularly by conducting the highly successful George Galloway tours. The former British MP attracted international media coverage to the issue of the Zionist siege of Gaza, to the just struggle for Palestinian freedom, and to the popular legal triumph over the Canadian government's initial bar to Galloway entering Canada. Antiwar coalition leaders seem convinced that now is the time to take the next step.

The call to action in Spring 2011 provides an opportunity to unite in the streets all opponents of Ottawa's war policies, priorities, and actions. This is the occasion to invite and involve labour unions, the labour-based New Democratic Party, and all social movements that want to put human needs first. Now is the time to build support for the April 9 demonstration in Toronto, and to explore the prospects for similar actions all across the Canadian state. ■

For more information about the Canadian Peace Alliance, call (416) 588-5555, e-mail cpa@web.ca or write to 427 Bloor Street West, Box 13, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X7.



... Antiwar

(continued from page 1)

mosques—including national Muslim organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Islamic Council of North America (ICNA), the Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA), the Muslim American Society (MAS), and the Islamic Leadership Council of New York—together with large numbers of young Muslim women and men, all gathered and agreed to a mobilizing plan for the April 9 demonstration.

Five thousand flyers were distributed on the spot, and participants pledged to get them to 50 of their associates and friends as the beginning of a campaign to use personal contact, social networking, and the newsletters of their mosques to reach out to the 500,000 Muslim Americans resident in the NYC area.

Around \$10,000 was raised on the spot to support the demonstration building effort of the Muslim Peace Coalition, a recently formed organization with members in 16 states and a commitment to being part of the leadership of UNAC. A public panel of interfaith speakers was anchored by a keynote address by George Gresham, the president of SEIU 1199, who spoke out against discrimination and noted his opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Islamic Leadership Council of New York also played a leading role in a large Jan. 13 New York City UNAC organizing meeting for April 9. ILC President Iman al-Amin Abdul Latif joined with 70 others—including representatives from local antiwar formations, student groups, Black is Back, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), the Al Awda Right to Return Coalition, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and dozens of other organizations—to discuss outreach for the spring antiwar action. At this meeting and subsequent New York City gatherings, the

potential for April 9 was demonstrated in the plans for nearly a dozen community outreach centers and for the translation of April 9 building materials into Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, Spanish, and Arabic.

The response of a large number of diasporic communities in the heart of New York City has been more than matched by the response of the antiwar grassroots nationwide. Nearly 400 organizations, representing activists in every corner of the United States, have endorsed the call for the April 9 and 10 marches.

The political breadth of that response is indicated by the fact that new endorsers include groups such as the U.S. Peace Council, Pax Christi, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Veterans for Peace, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Voices for Creative Nonviolence, the War Resisters League, the U.S. Palestine Community Network, Boston United for Justice with Peace, and numerous New York chapters of Peace Action.

A major endorsement of the April 9-10 actions, received just as we go to press, was that of the United Steel Workers Union, the largest industrial union in the country.

The basis for such breadth and united action was created by the fact that the April 9 and 10 bicoastal actions were called out of the large, inclusive, and democratic conference of over 800 that was held in Albany, N.Y., last July. The United National Antiwar Committee hopes to broaden the April actions even further by lending their endorsement to the call by the ANSWER coalition for local actions on March 19, the anniversary of the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, and in this way urging a united national calendar of spring actions. Such local actions, UNAC believes, can be a powerful tool for building the national actions three weeks later.

Momentum for the national spring antiwar actions is building. Philly Against War, a UNAC affiliate, is reserving buses to the April 9 New York action, and planning a March 12 forum at the Friends Center in Philadelphia to help build the

Canada: Universities just for the rich?

By TYLER MACKINNON

The first-year university student is typically bright and energetic, ready to embrace a whole new world of ideas that allegedly can be grasped only by the cream of the intellectual crop. The student worked for months, pulling up high school grades, working on countless essays and tests, still recovering from a lack of sleep endured last May and June. But all that work finally paid off. At last s/he is a true scholar. Then comes the tuition bill. The colour literally drains from the eyes. All emotion is sucked dry at a glimpse of the absurd price.

University fees are pushing working-class scholars out of their deserved classroom seats and into the service industry faster than you can say delta-hyde. According to a report by the Canadian Federation of Students, the share of university operating budgets funded by students' tuition fees more than doubled between 1985 and 2005, rising from 14% to 30%.

This, plus unprecedented levels of student debt, have been a growing concern for working-class students for the past 20 years, despite the popular student movement slogan "education is a right, not a privilege".

The CFS report shows that student debt skyrocketed between 1999 and 2004, going from \$21,177 to over

\$28,000—an increase of more than 33% in just five years.

Even the once reliable government assistance programs and scholarships, which were introduced supposedly to give struggling students support while they pursue post-secondary education, take months to deliver.

And when funds are finally released, the amount is barely enough to get a student through the first term. Whatever doesn't go towards tuition gets spent on text books, transportation and basic living conditions.

Researchers also state that financial issues are the most commonly cited barrier for students trying to get into post-secondary learning. Speaking from experience, I can honestly say that OSAP will cause more sleep loss and stress than any exam ever will!

If something is not done soon about this issue, university will revert to the conditions of the early industrial revolution. Only the rich will be educated; the poor will be denied. That ought to keep the latter from "getting dangerous ideas in their heads".

If government can afford to fight an unjust and unwinnable war, then it can afford to provide access to free education to every man, woman, and child. Education is a right, not a privilege. Let's make it so. Drop fees! Tax the corporations! ■

march. Seattle and Portland, Ore., activists are planning to join the April 10 San Francisco march. Canadian activists from three major organizations have pledged to hold solidarity actions on April 9.

Connecticut activists have found a new receptivity to the antiwar message among many community organizations and on the city council of the capital city of Hartford. City Councilman Luis Cotto organized the use of city council chambers for the first meeting of a Hartford Bring the War Dollars Home initiative.

On Jan. 27, activists from more than 10 organizations met to plot out a campaign to win a city council resolution to tell Washington to end the war and use the trillions spent for human needs and jobs. A petition drive, public meetings, and a city-wide hearing on March 17 are designed to be the prelude to the passage of such a resolution and the allocation of funds to get Hartford residents to the April 9 march in New York.

One additional campaign that is animating the movement to end the war is the fight to stop FBI harassment and the victimization of the 23 Midwestern an-

tiwar and solidarity activists being targeted with grand jury subpoenas (see article, page 4). UNAC activists nationally have distinguished themselves in their effective efforts to foreground the attacks on all movement activists in the run up to the April 9 and 10 national demonstrations. In San Francisco, the Bay Area UNAC is building its April 10 national action (which assembles in Dolores Park) by calling a large rally on Sat., March 5, at the Iglesia Presbiteriana de la Misión, at 23rd and Capp Streets.

The rally will protest FBI harassment and link it to the related attacks on Bradley Manning and Julian Assange, and the "manufacture" of U.S. terror suspects via the "preemptive prosecutions of Muslim Americans, and the increased government attacks on the Latino, Black, and immigrant communities."

For more information on the national April actions and for downloadable flyers, visit www.nationalpeaceconference.org. Activists are encouraged to quickly send their bus and transportation information to UNACpeace@gmail.com for posting on the site. ■

Films: *The Company Men*

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

The Company Men, written and directed by John Wells, starring Ben Affleck and Tommy Lee Jones.

Emmy-winning TV series director John Wells (“ER,” “The West Wing”) brings us a slickly produced film about high-paid “white-collar” workers in “The Company Men,” featuring Ben Affleck, Tommy Lee Jones, and Chris Cooper. The film illustrates what happens when a corporation in which workers once felt secure “downsizes.”

Ben Affleck’s Bobby Walker, an operations manager at GTX, a global shipping and ship-building company, displays affability and confidence as he strides into his corner office, greeting his staff. Almost immediately, he discovers he’s been axed.

His boss, Gene McClary (a weary-looking but sharp, Tommy Lee Jones), explains that the company sold some shipyards, making Walker’s job “redundant.” Human Resources head Sally Wilcox (an unlikely Maria Bello) puts sugar on the bitter news, telling Bobby that in addition to his severance package, the company is paying for his job-placement training at an agency.

Humiliated and carrying his personal belongings in a cardboard box through the parking lot, Bobby avoids eye contact with others doing the same. He finds camaraderie with fellow job seekers at the agency, one of whom is upbeat Danny (Eamonn Walker), a laborer, the only Black guy. The head of the agency cheerleads them in slogan-infused pep-talks.

Bobby lives in an affluent community in suburban Boston with his wife, Maggie (Rosemarie De Witt), a part-time nurse, and two children. One of the film’s strong points is that Wells takes his time in allow-



ing the kids to show how their dad’s situation affects them. At a birthday celebration, Walker’s brother-in-law, Jack (Kevin Costner in a humble role), a successful home restorer, offers to hire him, but Walker arrogantly puts him off. Still, he blows corporate interviews and turns down offers that don’t equal the position or pay scale he once had.

The film gives us insights into the personal life of savvy old-timer Gene McClary (who is boffing Sally on the side)—a sense of his lifestyle in the luxurious trappings of his mega-mansion on a lake, the whopping price tag on a table, and his wife’s assumption that the corporate jet is available for a shopping trip.

Chris Cooper plays sad sack Phil Woodward, who has a depressive overweight wife. He, like McClary, rose

from a welder to upper management at GTX. But, he, too, has been fired. We see defeat in his face when his daughter asks him for the deposit for a class trip.

McClary is an outspoken friend of and serves directly under GTX’s CEO, James Salinger—beautifully played by Craig T. Nelson as the embodiment of the clueless, emotionless corporate head. His stature in his black cashmere overcoat and swept-back mane of white hair exudes wealth. He does what he does, he tells McClary, because he’s responsible not to his employees but to the stockholders. When their stock loses a fraction of a point, he closes another shipping company and has a list compiled of 5000 more employees to ax. Yet construction continues on a new, multi-million dollar corporate headquarters. And McClary gets his pink slip.

Bobby Walker finally wakes up. He cuts back on personal perquisites, puts the house on the market, and moves his family to his parent’s home in an older part of Boston. Humbled, he takes Jack up on his job offer; Jack also hires Danny on Bobby’s recommendation. Danny says, “If you lose your job, the world doesn’t end.” Sadly, it does for Phil. Director Wells allows his scenes to unfold slowly to a satisfying if not happy conclusion. We watch Phil put his house in order, take out the garbage, close the garage door, get in his car and start the engine.

You almost feel sorry for them. Most of us have been in a similar situation. Still, what have they really had to sacrifice compared to the tens of thousands of ordinary people who have lost their jobs, and small-business owners forced to close their shops? And now, with the economy at its lowest since the 1930s, more and more people are unemployed, their homes foreclosed; and jobless tenants, no longer able to come up with rent, end up homeless.

The film ends on a hopeful note—actually, more like false hope. Having come up the hard way, McClary isn’t about to give up. He starts his own ship-building company, re-hiring a certain number of the laid-off GTX workers. But it will take more than grand entrepreneurial dreams to provide well-paying and rewarding jobs on a meaningful scale. ■

For the decolonialization of Indian Country!

By JEFF ARMSTRONG

U.S. imperialism originated and continues unabated in Indian Country, indigenous territories demarcated under international treaties brazenly flouted by the United States since its inception. Indigenous peoples in the Americas languish under layers of oppression at the hands of federal, state, and, more often than not, tribal authorities. Under President Obama, the U.S. has accelerated its assaults on internationally recognized human rights standards in Indian Country and intensified its longstanding policy of propping up compliant puppet dictatorships there. As a result there is an institutionalized human rights crisis in Native America, which must be addressed.

The Obama administration has extended its declared war on terror and undeclared war on illegal immigration to Indian reservations, most notably the Tohono O’odham nation straddling the U.S.-Mexico border, where U.S. border patrol and military forces have systematically violated the sovereignty and human rights of the indigenous inhabitants and refugees alike. In 2009, the IRS took the unprecedented move of seizing tribal lands of the Crow Creek Dakota people, who were forcibly relocated to the South Dakota reservation after the U.S.-Dakota war of 1862, for unpaid federal employment taxes on a reservation with 70% unemployment.

Likewise, the U.S. recently pressured the British government to reject the passports of the Iroquois Confederacy, an alliance of indigenous nations that predates and informed the creation of the United States of America. Thus, because of the Confederacy’s refusal to relinquish the sovereignty it never surrendered, the lacrosse team of the nation that invented the sport would be



barred from participation in an international competition in which it was ranked fourth in the world.

At the same time, tribal sovereignty is considered sacrosanct when it comes to human rights abuses committed by U.S.-backed tribal governments. Nowhere was this more evident than on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the 1970s, a time when the FBI helped train and equip death squads to defend a corrupt tribal president while waging a relentless COINTELPRO operation against the American Indian Movement. Dozens of Lakota deaths from that time have gone unpunished and uninvestigated, while indigenous freedom fighter Leonard Peltier unjustly remains in prison and subject to threats on his life and safety.

In January 2009, Peltier was viciously assaulted by fellow inmates in what appears to have been an incident orchestrated by prison authorities and possibly the FBI in the run up to his unsuccessful parole hearing that year. The U.S. continues to suppress as many as 100,000 government documents relative to Peltier’s railroading, including some 10,000 pages involving law-enforcement agents and informants, whose privacy is deemed by federal judges to be more important than justice or

historical truth.

To break from this deeply ingrained pattern of imperial domination, we must unequivocally recognize the inherent and internationally accepted right of self-determination of indigenous peoples in the Americas and elsewhere. By extending our solidarity to those who struggle against all odds for its realization, we might assist Native nations to create the space to develop new models of economic development founded upon true democracy, equality, and ecological sustainability.

We should stand with the Anishinaabe people of the White Earth Reservation, whose fight to hold the reservation governing body to its own tribal constitution was met with brute force by the colonial Bureau of Indian Affairs police on July 13, 2010. It is noteworthy that White Earth was the first reservation to petition for tribal court recognition under Obama’s Tribal Law and Order Act, which in conjunction with the White Earth Prohibited Conduct Code, an enactment that would put Joseph McCarthy himself to shame, raises the prospect of the U.S. government holding tribal dissidents in federal prison on a scale rivaling or exceeding that of the illegal colonial detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

President Obama’s token support for the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on Dec. 16 was nothing more than an attempt to rationalize the U.S. government’s assumed totalitarian authority over Indian Country and undermine the effects of the Declaration as a statement of international law.

The U.S. State Department, which has no role in the formulation or implementation of federal Indian policies, immediately served notice that Obama’s statement would have zero effect on U.S. conduct: “The Declaration’s call is to promote the development of a concept of self-determination for indigenous peoples *that is different from the existing right of self-determination in international law*” (emphasis added). Indeed, the U.S. statement seeks to undercut the effect of the Declaration itself as reflecting “aspirations ... not legally binding or a statement of current international law.”

The UN Declaration must instead serve as the minimal standard for assuring tribal self-determination and implementing unfulfilled treaties. Indigenous self-determination and territorial sovereignty are integral and inextricable elements of a program for revolutionary, democratic change in the Americas. As Friedrich Engels observed more than a century ago, there is much for socialists to learn from indigenous peoples and their histories.

Native peoples in the Americas today are on the frontlines of struggle against corporate and state domination and exploitation, but on the margins at best of public attention. By offering ideological solidarity and concrete support to besieged indigenous communities, we might reduce their sense of isolation and in the process find invaluable allies for the international proletarian movement. ■

WORD OUT

Poems written under the Big Top of Dodge & Stanley correctional facilities.

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How socialists fought government repression in 1940s

By JIM GRILLI

In light of the FBI's recent attack on the civil liberties of antiwar activists in the Midwest, it would be useful to look back to a moment in history in which state-sponsored oppression served as a tool for silencing dissent.

During the 1930s and '40s, working people in the United States made tremendous gains through their labor struggles, but they had to face vigilante goons, union bureaucrats, and a backlash by the Roosevelt administration that left people behind bars or worse. In the face of these attacks, and not unlike the activists recently charged with abetting terrorism, the Minneapolis Teamsters Local 544-CIO and their Trotskyist members and supporters admirably stood their ground.

In the wake of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strike, in which truckers and other organized workers won the right to unionize, the bosses undertook a fierce and prolonged attempt to stifle future victories. In the face of expanding unionization and growing working-class political consciousness, the Roosevelt administration and its corporate partners tried to portray the men and women involved in the labor and antiwar movements of the day as criminals.

On June 27, 1941, the FBI raided the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) headquarters in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Twenty-eight trade unionists and SWP activists were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury in Minneapolis. They were charged with violating the Smith Act, which outlawed advocating the violent overthrow of the government, and also with creating insubordination in the military ranks. The Roosevelt administration targeted the SWP especially for its work in the movement to oppose U.S. entry into World War II, and was able to enlist the support of the bureaucratic leadership of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, headed by Daniel J. Tobin, for its red-baiting efforts.

Immediately upon realizing that a trial was imminent, the SWP reached out broadly to assure that those accused could count on support from a wide section of the movement for social justice. Support was requested based on the common need to defend civil liberties, while setting aside any political differences that defense supporters might have had with the defendants.

The Civil Rights Defense Committee (CRDC), headed by George Novack, a member of the party's national committee, was formed to organize the public campaign to vindicate the activists. Prominent figures such as John Dewey and W.E.B. DuBois endorsed CRDC. The SWP published a declaration in the July 1941 issue of its journal, *Fourth International*, addressed to all who wanted to fight back against the attack on free speech. They also distributed over 200,000 pamphlets, formed local committees to raise awareness, and raised \$50,000 to take some of the financial burden off the convicted activists and their families.



The trial was held in Federal District Court in Minneapolis, Oct. 27 through Nov. 21, 1941. The Socialist Workers Party saw its tasks in the trial as exposing the accusations as false, and stressing the legality of their political activity.

In addition, the SWP saw an opportunity in the trial to communicate its political program to a broad audience. SWP leader James P. Cannon's testimony before the jury was designed to reach a labor movement that, despite strikes and protests, still strongly supported Roosevelt. It was the defense's hope that a presentation of the SWP's basic politics and Marxist fundamentals would help working people understand the recent economic struggles in a political context.

In addition to the educational aspect of his testimony, Cannon also heeded the advice of Leon Trotsky (who had been murdered in Mexico the previous year), when Cannon emphasized the party's opposition to conspiratorial violence and sabotage.

To the prosecution's accusation of attempting to create insubordination among those enlisted in the military, Cannon explained the SWP's belief that agitating for individual acts of abstention from military service or attempts to create disturbances among the rank-and-file soldiers would only serve to estrange the party from the masses. That is why SWP members who were drafted were advised to comply with military discipline along with the rest of the enlisted soldiers while taking part in peaceful propaganda work in hopes of convincing the majority of the unjust nature of the war.

In terms of the accusation of conspiring to overthrow the government by force, Cannon emphasized

(Above) U.S. Trotskyist leader Vincent Dunn is arrested by National Guard troops for his role in the 1934 Minneapolis truckers' strike. Several years later, Dunn was one of the Smith Act defendants.

that socialists always favor a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. Historically, it has always been the outmoded ruling class that has initiated violence. For this reason, Marxists warn the working class of the need to prepare to defend the gains made by a mass movement against ruling-class violence.

The Communist Party publically supported the government's prosecution of the Trotskyists under the Smith Act. After the war, however, some 140 CP leaders and members were also victimized by the same legislation.

By the time the trial of the Socialist Workers Party was over, 18 of the original 28 grand-jury defendants were found guilty of violating the Smith Act and given prison sentences ranging from one year to 16 months. Despite the verdict, the SWP was still able to use the opportunity to convey its program effectively to an audience that might not have otherwise been exposed to revolutionary ideas. The socialists' widely supported defense campaign still remains a model for activists dealing with government repression.

On Jan. 25 nine antiwar and solidarity activists are scheduled to face a grand jury in Chicago on trumped-up charges of abetting terrorism. To show solidarity social justice activists around the country are organizing local protests. Just as in 1941, what is needed now is broad support from all those who value civil liberties. Hands off the antiwar activists! ■

... TUCSON

(continued from page 12)

than words when, after the signing of SB 1070, he sent thousands of National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border, as if to say to the racists, "Yes, this unauthorized immigration is terrible and must be stopped by any and all means, including military violence.

In addition to what we have outlined above, another crucial aspect of this dreadful event in Tucson should be stressed. The mentally disturbed assassin was also, in a very real sense, a victim of the current economic crisis of the bankrupt capitalist system. Cutbacks in social services—while trillions go for war and bailouts of banks—had a ghastly outcome in this case.

Although Loughner obviously needed treatment for his mental disorders, and should perhaps have been in a mental institution, the social services to accomplish that were not available—particularly because massive cuts to mental health programs, along with all public health programs, have been made in Arizona, as in other parts of this country, since the economic crisis broke out in 2008. ■

Arizona's long history of racism and violence

Tucson and a long strip of territory along the border in southern Arizona became part of the United States under the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, in the wake of the U.S. war against Mexico. That war had taken half of Mexico's territory, adding all or part of seven new states to the USA.

Under the Gadsden purchase, the territory acquired by the U.S. for \$10 million (under pressure and the threat of renewed U.S. war against Mexico) was particularly desirable because it was suitable for construction of a transcontinental railroad by a southern route from New Orleans, through El Paso, through Tucson, to California. The Southern slaveholders, who in the 1850s still dominated the U.S. government and its policies, were interested in such a railroad to help them extend their slave-labor, cotton-producing economy through the southern part of the newly acquired, former Mexican territories.

When the U.S. Civil War began, the slaveholders moved aggressively to occupy the southern part of what is now New Mexico and Arizona (all of it was then called New Mexico). They made Tucson the "western capital" of the former Mexican territory they had taken, and hoped to link up with pro-Confederate forces in southern California. But California had established itself as a free state, and a column of anti-slavery troops from southern California marched east and liberated Tucson from the slave power after a skirmish now referred to as the Battle of Picacho Peak.

After the Civil War, Arizona became part of the booming industrial expansion of U.S. capitalism as a whole, with the wage-slave system triumphing over the slave-labor system. In Arizona, the capitalist class wrote a brutal record of violence and harsh treatment against workers and oppressed nationalities, especially Mexicans and American Indians.

The notorious Bisbee, Ariz., deportations occurred in July

1917. Copper mining was a major source of profits for enterprising capitalists in Arizona, and with copper prices booming because of World War I, the Phelps Dodge corporation was making money hand over fist with its copper mine in Bisbee. Workers there, led by the IWW, sought to organize to win a larger share of the wealth their labor was producing.

When the workers went on strike in July 1917, the company used the excuse of "wartime emergency." (The Democratic president, Woodrow Wilson, had just taken the U.S. into the World War.) Phelps Dodge circulated the absurd charge that the striking workers and their organizers were "aliens" and "German agents." Some 2000 pro-company vigilantes raided the homes of more than 1200 workers, deported them from Arizona in cattle cars, and left them stranded in the middle of nowhere in New Mexico. Most of those workers—including Mexicans native to the area—were never able to return.

Similarly, in the copper mine strike of 1983-84 against Phelps Dodge, which also included many native-born Mexican American mine workers, the Arizona governor—again a Democrat, Bruce Babbitt—called out the National Guard and broke the strike with the use of harsh and violent police and military measures.

Capitalist violence was present, in fact, throughout the Southwest and West. One has only to recall the 1914 Ludlow massacre in southern Colorado, near Pueblo, in which dozens of organized mine workers and their families, many of them Mexicans, were killed or wounded. Thus we see that the culture of violence, the glorification of military action, the almost knee-jerk resort to military measures have long been a central, officially approved feature of life in these United States. ("Violence is as American as apple pie.")

— GEORGE SHRIVER

By **GEORGE SHRIVER**

TUCSON, Ariz. —This state has become a symbol of hatred, intolerance, bigotry, and violence—especially after the signing of the Arizona Senate Bill SB 1070 last April, which in effect authorized racial profiling. That law is now going through a lengthy process of court challenges and appeals. And harsh new laws are being prepared by the Arizona legislature—such as the denial of birthright citizenship to the children of undocumented immigrants

The immigrant rights movement continues to organize and build. But the fight-back against SB 1070 (and against other anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican laws and initiatives in Arizona) has not become sufficiently powerful. It is not yet supported by a big enough mass base, nor by a mobilized union movement. Most unions declined to back the boycott against SB 1070. And after the midterm elections of November 2010 it seemed as though the racist forces had been strengthened.

With the shootings in Tucson in January 2011, one wonders: Has the government-promoted atmosphere of hatred, violence, and dehumanization—directed mainly against Mexicans and generally against people of color—now boomeranged?

On Jan. 8, Jared Lee Loughner, a mentally unbalanced white 22-year-old from a lower middle-class suburb of Tucson killed six people and wounded at least 13 in a deliberate assassination attempt aimed at a white politician, U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, a pro-corporate “Blue Dog” Democrat recently reelected to the House of Representatives. Giffords was at a shopping mall to meet with constituents, and the assassin brazenly ran up and opened fire—with a Glock 9 mm semiautomatic pistol with a high-capacity magazine holding more than 30 bullets.

Reports have attributed to Loughner highly irrational reasons for his attack on Giffords. Allegedly he was dissatisfied with her answer to a vague question about language, which he had asked her at an earlier such event when she met with constituents. But surely he saw the many, inflammatory anti-Giffords signs that Tea Party types had posted by the roadsides in the Tucson metro area where he lived.

He could hardly have been unaware of the threatening tone of Tea Party candidate Jesse Kelly, who ran against Giffords in last fall’s election campaign. Kelly, a former Marine who served in Iraq, promoted a campaign event on his web site this way: “Get on Target for Victory in November. Help remove Gabrielle Giffords from office. Shoot a fully automatic M16 with Jesse Kelly.”

Last summer Tea Party supporters demonstrated in large numbers at the office of Congressman Raúl Grijalva, who had called for a boycott of Arizona to protest SB 1070. Grijalva received death threats, and gunshots were fired at one of his offices. And the website of Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin showed crosshairs targeting the Giffords electoral district. Palin also sent out an e-mail message: “Don’t Retreat—reload!”

Perhaps only on a subliminal level, Loughner must have known there was a widespread attitude of violent opposition to Giffords, a virulent atmosphere suggesting drastic measures against her. But in the background, without necessarily being aware of it, the assassin reflected in his actions the widespread messages of hatred and intolerance that have been encouraged by the U.S. federal and Arizona state governments for decades.

At the time that NAFTA was pushed through by the Clinton administration in 1993-94, backed fully by both Democrats and Republicans, the federal government began its deliberate policy of *border militarization*. That policy reinforced the general idea that the solution to problems is to take up the gun, use force and violence, i.e., bring in the military. One result, in the late 1990s, was the murder by U.S. Marines in Texas of a teenage Mexican American U.S. citizen, a totally innocent young man tending goats on his family’s land near the border.

The U.S. invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan carry the same message—if there’s a problem, shoot! Or send in 20,000 Marines, as was done in response to last year’s earthquake in Haiti. In April 2010 the top official of the U.S. government, Barack Obama, declared it was all right for the government to



Charlie Riedel / AP



(Above) Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.
(Below) Jared Lee Loughner.

Two years ago, self-appointed vigilantes invaded the home of a Mexican-American family and killed the father and his nine-year-old daughter. No great outpouring of grief greeted that action.

assassinate U.S. citizens. What Martin Luther King, Jr., said in 1967, is truer than ever: the U.S. government is “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.”

Isabel Garcia, a leader of the immigrant rights movement in southern Arizona as co-chair of the Derechos Humanos Coalition, pointed out that the assassination attempt and the killing of six people were directly related to the policy of border militarization: “These senseless deaths are the result of a border policy that has been building since 1994. This policy has propelled the growth of fear, hate, and violence. Over 5000 migrant deaths, shootings, and continuing violence are a direct result of this policy.”

At a press conference on Jan. 10, two days after the shootings, Isabel Garcia also stressed that Arizona had become “an incubator of hate and violence,” especially with the state legislature “promoting an atmosphere of intolerance and cruelty.”

The government’s border militarization policy took the form of blocking off traditional crossing routes for migrants from Mexico, through populated urban areas in California and Texas, with “Operation Gatekeeper” being implemented in San Diego and a similar military-style operation in El Paso. As a result, migrants were intentionally funneled into the inhospitable and dangerous desert regions of Arizona, more than half of all border-crossers now taking the Arizona route. As Isabel Garcia stated, since 1994, more than 5000 of these migrants have died in the desert, from dehydration and exposure to the blazing sun.

These migrants are essentially “NAFTA refugees.” An estimated 6 million peasant farmers in Mexico, growers of *maíz*, have been driven off the land, unable to compete against U.S. government-subsidized corporate agribusiness, which under NAFTA was allowed to flood the Mexican market with cheap corn. The ruined farmers, along with numerous unemployed or drastically underpaid Mexican workers, are forced to seek their livelihood wherever they can, and large numbers attempt to migrate north to the U.S. in search of jobs.

But the U.S. government dehumanizes these mi-

grants, labels them “illegal aliens,” and the huge number of unnecessary and preventable deaths among them is virtually ignored by officialdom and the corporate press. Meanwhile, the public in Arizona and elsewhere is made callous and hardened, inured to the ongoing cruelty. And many are frightened by the stream of impoverished migrants coming through the Arizona desert, don’t understand how and why they have been driven to make this desperate journey, and have no compassion for them.

The government policy of ICE raids—including a major raid in Tucson involving hundreds of federal agents and local police right around the time that SB 1070 was adopted—also suggests to the public that extreme and inhumane measures are necessary. A similar dehumanizing message, though less highly publicized, is enacted every workday in Tucson, as “Operation Streamline” processes 70 or more detained migrants each day, with chains on their legs, a parody of legal action, and then turns them over to a privatized prison-for-profit outfit, the Corrections Corporation of America.

On top of that, since the 1990s many migrants, but also Mexican Americans and American Indians who live near the border, have been killed with impunity, mainly by Border Patrol agents—most recently a 17-year-old youth in Nogales, Sonora, killed on Jan. 6, 2011, by the Border Patrol. The young man had scaled the 10-foot border fence, but there he met his death.

Two years ago, in May 2009, self-appointed vigilantes, inspired by hatred of Mexicans and wearing uniforms to give the impression that their actions were officially approved, invaded the home of a Mexican American family near the border south of Tucson. The family members were U.S. citizens living in the small town of Arivaca in full legality. The vigilantes killed the father of the family and his nine-year-old daughter, and wounded the mother.

No great outpouring of grief or outrage greeted that action. There was no visit by a U.S. president to southern Arizona to protest the killings. The corporate-owned media and the capitalist Establishment actually look with tolerance, even with favor, on the vigilante types, the so-called Minutemen and others, and encourage the hysteria and hatred voiced by these racists, who include self-proclaimed Nazis and “white power” advocates. The corporate bosses are happy to divide and conquer by encouraging racial antagonism by one section of the population against another.

Rather than denouncing and opposing the racist policies of the state legislature in Arizona, Obama & Co. act in a similarly harsh anti-immigrant manner. The White House website brags that nearly 400,000 “illegal aliens” were deported in 2010, hailing that as an unprecedented achievement.

Obama even boasted that “we now have more boots on the ground on our Southwest border than ever before in our history.” Obama’s actions spoke louder

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