

Palestinians beat back Israeli attack on Gaza



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

By ANDREW POLLACK

When a ceasefire agreement ended (for no-one knows how long) Israel's latest murderous assault on Gaza, Palestinians in the besieged area poured into the streets to celebrate their victory. But how could this be, after at least 160 Palestinians had been murdered, at least 40 of them women and children, and a thousand injured?

How could it be when everyone knew the clause in the ceasefire agreement about loosening restrictions on movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza only provided for discussions of the issue, discussions almost guaranteed to go nowhere?

How could it be when everyone knew that Israel was guaranteed to break this ceasefire as it had all others in the past, unilaterally and without provocation (except for the provocations arranged by Israel itself)?

The celebrations came because Palestinians knew that they had proven once again to the entire world that no

attack by Israel, however murderous, no government and media campaign of lies, no attempt to force psychological submission could stifle their almost century-long resistance to Zionist colonization.

And this time around, that word "resistance" was key. Despite attempts to portray Palestinian missiles as the cause of Operation Pillar of Cloud, more and more people around the world had come to learn that Israel's siege, its repeated unprovoked assassinations, and its 65-year-old campaign of ethnic cleansing are at the root of the endless series of wars launched by Israel.

What's more, just as education during the 2008-9 aggression ("Operation Cast Lead") convinced many in antiwar and solidarity movements that the right of return of refugees must be supported and that a two-state "solution" was a farce, now exposure of the roots of Operation Pillar of Cloud in Israel's policies, indeed its very nature as a colonial state, has convinced wider circles that they

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Bernat Armanque / AP

Palestinian woman holds her baby daughter at Nov. 16 funeral in northern Gaza. According to hospital records, the child was killed in an earlier Israeli strike.

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Fiscal cliff? More like 'austerity chicken!'

By USMAN KHAN YUSUFZAI

As we head into the New Year, Washington is buzzing about the impending "fiscal cliff." The topic was debated at length between both parties of the ruling class, the Democrats and the Republicans; and for all the wailing and doom-saying during and after the November election, one would think that we are approaching an unavoidable disaster for the American people on the scale of the financial crisis of 2008, or Hurricane Sandy.

The "fiscal cliff" has its origins in the budget-ceiling debacle in 2011. In order to fund the expansion of the security state, the extension of the Bush tax cuts, and the continuation of imperialist wars overseas, President Obama requested an increase in the debt ceiling, allowing the U.S. Treasury to issue more bonds and thus finance government spending in excess of revenue from taxes.

This is ordinary practice; the debt limit has been raised 74 times since March 1962.

In 2011, however, Republicans in the House and Senate refused to authorize a debt-ceiling increase that did not include massive cuts to education, jobs, and other programs that ordinary people rely on. In grand Washington tradition, the solution was the formation of a committee.

The crisis was "resolved" through the passing of the Budget Control Act of 2011, which allowed for a rise in the debt ceiling, but also required that a committee be formed, the Joint Select Committee on the Budget, tasked with eliminating \$1.2 trillion dollars from the federal budget. This committee was staffed with leg-



islators from both major parties, and in order to get them to comply, a further provision was included in the bill—if the committee failed to agree on the necessary cuts, what is known as "sequestration" would occur.

This entails automatic cuts to the tune of \$500 billion each over 10 years from defense spending and non-defense discretionary spending. (Non-defense discretionary spending is the money, outside of military expenditures, that the government spends from year to year. Included in this is the vast majority of education and other government services, like Head Start, housing assistance, Pell grants, national science research, and the federal highway system).

Of course, the committee did not agree on a single dollar of cuts, and so sequestration, the "fiscal cliff," is

set to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2013.

The most important thing to remember is that this crisis is *entirely manufactured*. The legislation has no binding effect on future Congresses; the new legislature elected into office in November can simply decide not to enforce sequestration and the problem will be solved. The cuts themselves will do little to assuage the growth of federal debt; non-defense discretionary spending (both parties have insisted that they will resist defense cuts by any means necessary) consists of only 19% of the federal budget and the cuts would have the effect of merely slowing down the growth rate of debt, rather than any meaningful debt reduction.

The greatest driver of debt growth in the United States, besides the ever-expanding military machine, is a health-care system designed to safeguard the profits of the insurance industry. According to the Congressional Budget Office, by 2016, federal spending on health care will outpace discretionary spending in absolute terms.

The quickest solution to the debt crisis, then, would be the immediate institution of a nationalized health-care system that provides for all based on need, rather than a predatory system that siphons off funds from the people and the public treasury to post mind-boggling profits. Instead, the most likely outcome will be a "compromise" in the Obama tradition—token tax increases along with deep cuts to social programs. It would be another step toward European-style austerity, in which the working masses of the world have to own up to the "shared responsibility" of recovering from a crisis imposed on them by the predatory capitalist system. ■

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 withdrawal of all U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! No war on Iran! 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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How can we counter global warming?

By BILL ONASCH

The following oral report was given to the Socialist Action National Convention, held in Minneapolis in August.

The once most prominent global-warming denier in the scientific world, Berkeley physics professor Richard Muller, recently wrote in *The New York Times*, "Call me a converted skeptic. Last year, following an intensive research effort involving a dozen scientists, I concluded that global warming was real and that the prior estimates of the rate of warming were correct. I'm now going a step further: Humans are almost entirely the cause."

This convert is surely considered an apostate by the billionaire Koch brothers, who had pumped big bucks into Muller's research team in the expectation that it would give some shred of credibility to the dismissal of the most serious challenge yet to humanity's future.

Muller went on to tell readers of *The Times*, "As carbon dioxide emissions increase, the temperature should continue to rise. I expect the rate of warming to proceed at a steady pace, about one and a half degrees (centigrade) over land in the next 50 years, less if the oceans are included. But if China continues its rapid economic growth (it has averaged 10 percent per year over the last 20 years) and its vast use of coal (it typically adds one new gigawatt per month), then that same warming could take place in less than 20 years."

The 50-year figure is close to the conservative consensus projections of UN bodies—which are dismal enough. The 20-year variant would mean calamity not just for our great-grandchildren but for most of you in this room. In fact, over this past summer most of us got a sneak preview of the earliest stages of what will only, with some ups and downs, get worse. In another *Times* piece the other day, a group of scientists said, "there can be little doubt that what was once thought to be a future threat is suddenly, catastrophically upon us."

I first heard a nutshell explanation of global warming in 1988 at the Fourth International Cadre School in Amsterdam. It came from a French comrade who is a climate scientist and was one of the presenters at a session on the environment and environmental movements. This view was new and disturbing to me and to nearly all of my classmates. It would be another several years before climate science attracted much public attention. But the French comrade emphasized the political implications. Among the points he made:

- The environmental mass movement launched in the late 1960s won some important victories around air and water pollution. These forms of environmental damage can be relatively quickly reversed through engineering and regulation without being a deal breaker for the ruling class.

- The greenhouse effect, however, will take centuries to dissipate. The only solution to global warming is rapid reduction—and ultimate elimination—of burning fossil fuels. This solution is a deal breaker for the ruling class.

Science gives us not only dire warnings but hopeful options of clean, renewable, safe, and largely free energy sources—solar, wind, tidal, geothermal, hydro, etc.—that can replace our dependence on fossil fuels. Combined with sensible conservation, and reduction in wasteful consumption promoted by capitalist marketing, restructuring our economies around these alternative fuels can give us a shot at stopping climate change short of irreversible disaster.

But fossil fuels are the underpinning of the most important profit centers of global capitalism and will not be surrendered without a fight to the finish—without regard of the fate of future generations. Even those few in the ruling class who appreciate the depth and urgency of the climate crisis, and who would like to do something about it—such as Al Gore—don't have a clue about what to do. They remain committed to market measures, such as cap-and-trade, and carbon offsets that are at best ineffective, often simply fraud.

Still others cynically peddle bogus alternative fuels such as burning food and—even after Fukushima—nuclear power, which, of course, is not clean, not safe, not renewable. Nukes have their own set of deadly, long-term environmental dangers. And we should look more closely at the new fracking exploitation of previously unprofitable gas and shale oil deposits, which has disastrous environmental consequences that science is only beginning to fully understand.

No, there are no market solutions. It will take a centralized, democratically planned economy to restructure not only our energy and transportation but also to reverse disastrous urban sprawl—reclaiming forests, wetlands, and farmland destroyed by irrational "development."



There is evidence that climate change is increasing strength of hurricanes, with tragic results: (above) food shortages in Haiti; (left) gas lines in New York.

theoreticians around *Monthly Review*, and the Fourth International. Our British comrades in Socialist Resistance have made climate change a central area of their work in the trade unions. Eco-socialism is a working-class current through and through. It has also established important alliances with peasants and indigenous peoples.

We have to start from a reality that in this country class-consciousness is at an historic low. Many workers buy in to the bosses' argument that environmentalism kills jobs. A majority of the union bureaucracy echoes this ruling-class lie. Even those "progressive" union officials who are allied with Pale Green groups such as the Sierra Club in the Blue Green Alliance remain dedicated to partnership with the employers who are wrecking our biosphere—as well as our jobs and living standards.

The Labor Party project [Labor Party Advocates was formed in 1996 with some official trade-union support; its main organizer was Oil Workers (OCAW) leader Tony Mazzocchi, who died in 2002] rejected the counter-position of jobs and the environment. It also reaffirmed the principle of Just Transition. That is, when jobs are eliminated for the benefit of society as a whole, society must assume responsibility for retraining affected workers for needed new jobs and to guarantee their living standards until they are placed in suitable new employment. But the steady decline of the Labor Party as it lost material support from unions made it increasingly difficult for us to use that opening to reach out to workers.

Two years ago, several Socialist Action members and sympathizers in trade unions signed on to a statement distributed at the 2010 *Labor Notes* Conference outlining a program for simultaneously tackling the climate and jobs crises. The action proposals in this initiative called for the kind of far-reaching and long-lasting projects that science tells us we must do to save a sustainable planet for future generations. It would not only put everybody to work now; these projects will endure longer than the building of the Egyptian pyramids or the erection of the medieval cathedrals.

This approach meets all the essential definitions of a transitional program. Its goals are eminently just and reasonable; the material and human resources necessary are clearly available; but, at the same time, this program will encounter such fierce resistance by the ruling class that it will require the working class to take political power to assure implementation.

Just as we don't counter-pose jobs versus the environment, neither do we see the central question of climate change conflicting with other areas of work that a rounded revolutionary party must also pursue such as around war, racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on. On the contrary, eco-socialism can help us intelligently link these struggles. This convention will better prepare our incoming national leadership, and comrades involved in trade-union and environmental work, for the decisive battle to save a planet fit for the socialist future. ■

Since the crisis is global, so must be the solutions. At the various UN-sponsored climate gatherings there is usually a sharp division between camps that are described as rich, emerging, and poor. We eco-socialists, of course, are not going to join those who tell the emerging and underdeveloped countries, "Sorry, you guys are too late. You must remain poor while we save the planet." Such an approach is not only morally reprehensible, not only a rejection of international solidarity that for us is the prime directive—it would also doom in advance the needed international cooperation to resolve the climate crisis.

The presently rich countries need to assist the world's poor to improve their lot—not by replicating our rulers' history of pillage and plunder of nature but through ecologically sound development. This not only includes saving once great but now endangered forests, and other threatened natural resources. It above all means providing the technology and material support to assist the poor majority to make great leaps in uneven and combined development. They can make rapid progress through introducing the most advanced renewable energy available wherever the sun shines and winds blow. And they can feed and clothe themselves by restoring sustainable organic agriculture geared first to their needs rather than export commodities.

We're talking about developing a global division of labor on a basis of equality that can guarantee a quality life for every human being. In other words, we are talking about socialism. Only socialism can save humanity from our biggest threat yet. Conversely, there can be no socialism if we fail to stop climate change short of climate disaster.

Eco-socialism is not a movement of petty-bourgeois tree-huggers. It is a global current that includes a Marxist most of us regard highly, Fidel Castro, Marxist

Greek workers join European strikes against austerity

Marty Goodman / Socialist Action



(Left) ANTARSYA marchers in Nov. 17 Athens commemoration of 1973 massacre of students by military dictatorship.

By BARRY WEISLEDER

On Nov. 20, a Greek socialist addressed a Toronto forum on the topic “General Strikes Against Austerity.” The speaker, via skype, was Nicos Loudus of the SEK (Socialist Workers’ Party in Greece). SEK is part of the anti-capitalist alliance ANTARSYA, in which the OKDE (the Greek Fourth International section) and 10 other leftist parties participate. The Toronto meeting was sponsored by the International Socialists.

Loudus reported the following: At the European Union/IMF meeting in Brussels the troika promised Greece \$30 billion if it would proceed with deeper austerity measures. The money is not yet delivered, even though the Greek parliament voted narrowly for the latest “package” of cuts and layoffs.

On Nov. 14 workers in Greece went on a three-hour strike in tandem with general strikes across Europe against capitalist austerity. Workers in Spain and Portugal coordinated their protests, for the first time in years. The Greek workers occupied train and subway stations, among other transit points. The strike took place on the heels of a 48-hour strike there earlier in the month.

The latest protest was followed three days later with a commemorative march on the anniversary of the Nov. 17, 1973, uprising at the Polytechnic University against the right-wing military dictatorship. On that date, the military fired upon and killed a number of protesters. According to *Socialist Action* reporter Marty Goodman in Athens, an estimated 30,000 people marched on Nov. 17.

Loudis reported that some 200 town halls have been occupied across Greece. Why? To prevent municipal officials from providing the conservative government coalition with the names of local employees to be laid off in the next round of cuts. Also, university employees seized an important downtown Athens building, which they occupied.

Although the Samaras coalition government nominally has 179 seats, only 153 MPs voted for the latest package demanded by the troika (European Union, International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank). And that was after a major campaign of brutal intimidation (“Vote for this, or there will be no money and there will be mass hunger”).

The latest opinion polls show the reformist coalition SYRIZA in first place. MPs are quitting the New De-

mocracy conservatives and the ex-social democratic PASOK. SYRIZA’s gains are shallow and confined to the parliamentary area, but they do reflect working-class rejection of the capitalist austerity agenda.

In the workplaces and on the streets there is little sign of SYRIZA, which is keen to cultivate an image of “responsibility” and is determined to keep Greece in the Eurozone. A conference planned to transform SYRIZA into a centralized “left” party was cancelled when the SYRIZA tops realized that they might not be able to control the outcome.

The ruling class might favour the re-establishment of the former two-party system, in which the two biggest parties (loyal to the capitalist order) take turns in government. New Democracy and SYRIZA would be the alternating parties of rule, with SYRIZA replacing PASOK. But under the present circumstances something like that is very unstable. One problem for the ruling class is that the New Democracy Party is shrinking in public support and may not be able to stabilize as the favoured bourgeois option. The other problem is that the rulers do not want a “left-wing” government, which could lead to uncontrolled reactions by the exploited and oppressed.

ANTARSYA is increasingly visible in the protests against austerity, and poised to play a leading role. At a recent major rally in Athens, ANTARSYA and the ultra-Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE) led the huge crowd to the Israeli Embassy to express solidarity with the Palestinian people of Gaza. SYRIZA did not participate.

The Golden Dawn neo-nazis are less visible now on the streets. Their attacks on leftists and minorities are fewer than previously because anti-fascist forces have confronted the GD and compelled their thugs to back away—for now. That does not mean that the fascist danger has been overcome. Polls show a continuous increase in support for the GD. The two major left parties, SYRIZA and the KKE, are hardly involved in anti-fascist actions. Anti-immigrant racism remains a pernicious factor in society.

Greek communities in Canada and the United States are significant in several major cities. Golden Dawn officials announced that they aim to establish offices in Montreal and Toronto. Urgently needed is a common front of labour, socialist and progressive organizations to stop the GD neo-nazis from establishing any public presence in North America. ■

Bill and Hillary Clinton: Friends of Haiti?

By MARTY GOODMAN

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti—Bill Clinton and Obama’s Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are called the “Friends of Haiti.” Oh, really?

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, President Obama appointed Bill Clinton as U.S. envoy, partnering with the Katrina and Iraq criminal George Bush Jr., author of the 2004 CIA-backed military coup that overthrew the elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. After the earthquake, Bill headed relief agencies, while ignoring the role of Haitians themselves. Today, Bill is the UN envoy and the acknowledged guiding hand behind international relief efforts.

Bill and Hillary are promoters of the World Bank’s low-wage assembly-based economic plan, angrily dubbed “the American Plan” by Haitians. Last year, Hillary signed an agreement committing \$124 million tax dollars to the building of the Caracol sweatshop assembly park in the north of Haiti. Workers there are making the starvation wage of about \$3.50 a day. On Oct. 22, Bill and Hillary were on hand for the inaugural ceremony in Caracol.

President Clinton appointed his close friend Ron Brown as Secretary of Commerce in 1993. In the early 1980s, Brown was a partner in the Washington law firm of Patton, Boggs & Blow and an attorney and lobbyist for Haitian dictator Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier and his family. Brown was also personally linked to wealthy Haitian pro-Duvalier figures.

In 1983, Brown wrote a report ad-



(Above) Last January, Bill Clinton greeted former dictator “Baby Doc” Duvalier.

ressed to the dictator detailing his successes on Duvalier’s behalf in overcoming Haiti’s “unfair image,” not once mentioning Baby Doc’s appalling human rights record. As Commerce Secretary (1993-1996), Brown helped steer Haiti’s World Bank economic plan. Brown was named Democratic National Chairman in 1989.

As a first-time presidential candidate, Bill Clinton correctly called Bush Sr.’s Haitian immigration policy “racist.” Bush intercepted refugee boats in international waters as they fled a brutal CIA-backed military coup in 1991. Bush erected a racist U.S. naval blockade around Haiti to intercept refugees, in violation of U.S. and international political asylum law. The desperate refugees, dubbed “the Black

Boat People,” were handed over by the U.S. to the military regime, which viewed returnees as “dissidents.” But once in office, Clinton dramatically intensified Bush’s racist blockade, which Aristide called a “floating Berlin Wall.”

In 1994, the deposed president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, got Clinton to agree to restore his presidency with the U.S./UN military occupation that his supporters had lobbied for. Included in the occupation agreement was a World Bank economic plan for Haiti based on assembly sweatshops, reconciliation with the coup makers, and the slashing of tariffs on U.S.

goods—which soon destroyed domestic production of rice, a staple of the Haitian diet.

The Clinton administration pressured the Haitian government into accepting the reintegration of hundreds of former Haitian army thugs into the “new” Haitian police. The CIA admitted openly recruiting police trainees, including members of the paramilitary goons in FRAPH, which was key to the 1991 coup against Aristide. Even Jan Stromsem, head of the U.S. police-training program (ICITAP) in Haiti, quit her post in 1999, after stating concerns that her staff was being forced to participate in CIA espionage activities.

It is well known in Haiti that Bill Clinton has friendly relations with the country’s current president, Michel Martelly, who is linked to Duvalier-era thugs and their kin. Martelly became president in a sham election in 2011 engineered by the U.S. Wikileaks partially revealed the U.S. embassy’s involvement in the election, which surely included Clinton.

Witnesses inform *Socialist Action* (off the record) that at a private meeting with candidates, Clinton arrogantly told a leading candidate, Jude Celestin, that he could not run and then offered Celestin a job in return. Clinton lent credibility to a sham election that excluded Fanmi Lavalas, the party of Aristide supporters.

Mario Joseph, a prominent Haitian human rights attorney, was asked by *Socialist Action* what he thought of the Clintons. Joseph replied, “They call them the ‘friends of Haiti.’ I don’t think so. They are the enemy.” Joseph also said that Bill Clinton must answer for the UN’s refusal to respond to suits by human rights organizations concerning the recent cholera epidemic, which killed over 7000. ■

Egypt: Morsi decree ignites mass protests

By ANDREW POLLACK

The day after the ceasefire in Gaza went into effect, Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi, the key link in the diplomatic chain that forged the agreement, issued a decree granting himself virtually unlimited power without recourse to challenge by anyone, including especially the country's judges.

Justified as a move to get around the mostly Mubarak-appointed judiciary, which—with his own connivance—has failed to bring to justice those responsible for killings and torture before, during, and after the revolution, Morsi's moves were immediately recognized as a brazen attempt to maintain power for the Muslim Brotherhood and the capitalist forces behind it.

The decrees included new means to stack elections in "official" trade unions, and are a warning to independent unions to quiet their dissent over the Morsi regime's failure to take any measures to improve conditions for the country's work-



ers and peasants. Stifling such working-class dissent is also key to maintaining U.S. aid, imperialist investment, and IMF loans. In fact, right after the decree was issued, IMF officials said explicitly that their loans were contingent only on Mor-

si's keeping his promise to guarantee repayment through austerity programs, and that the IMF had no interest in the means, democratic or not, by which Morsi would impose such programs.

Nor did Obama issue a word of criticism of Morsi's moves. This was a given, considering how Morsi had just finished working so diligently with the U.S. and Israel to broker a ceasefire in the Zionist attack on Gaza—a ceasefire unlikely to last long and addressing none of the demands of Palestinians in a serious way.

But the reaction of the Egyptian masses was swift and massive. Millions poured into the central squares of Cairo, Alexandria, and many other cities and towns, in numbers rivaling some of the largest protests against Mubarak. Thousands have stayed around the clock. The Muslim Brother-

hood threatened to call its own rally in Cairo's Tahrir Square for Saturday, Dec. 1, sparking fears of civil war, but in the face of such huge numbers already filling the square against Morsi, the Brotherhood backed down and announced that they would choose an alternate location for their rally.

Revolutionaries in Egypt, while denouncing Morsi's decree, made clear that opposition to it could not include the "feloul," the supporters of the Mubarak regime. The Revolutionary Socialists, for instance, declared that "we will not accept remnants of the old regime returning to the revolutionary scene under the pretext that 'we are all against the Brotherhood.' We will not work with anyone who worked hand in glove with the deposed dictator. ... We call on our comrades in the revolutionary march to step back from this game of shuffling the decks of cards. We call on people to come out into the streets with the slogans: bread, freedom, social justice."

Supporters of the Egyptian Revolution must be ready to stand by the masses who have returned to the squares to advance their cause. ■

(continued from page 1)

must uphold the right to resist of the Palestinian people.

During the attacks, many progressive activists and authors refuted official claims about the timetable of who attacked whom and when, and about whether the attacks were "disproportionate." More importantly, this refutation opened the door to a discussion about the non-equivalence between the actions of the oppressed and the oppressor, between those resisting and those ruling. The very attempt to assess "proportionality" is ludicrous, as the right to self-defense cannot be measured by the same scales as violence committed to maintain an illegitimate regime built on a century of theft and murder.

By the same token, the reappearance in the media of pictures of murdered children, parents, and grandparents was an occasion to point out that not just civilians but anyone killed while exercising their legitimate right to resist, including by force of arms, must be considered a victim of aggression.

Such discussions, of course, led to deepened education about the inherently murderous and expansionary nature of the settler colonialist regime, which owes its origin to the first violent and illegal seizures of land decades before 1948. An admission of that was stated by David Ben-Gurion in 1948 when he said, "[we must] strike mercilessly, women and children included. Otherwise the reaction is inefficient."

Other crucial facts exposed have been the desperate poverty and malnutrition and the resulting stunting of children's growth in Gaza imposed by the Zionist siege; the falseness of its claims to have "disengaged" when Israel in fact maintains control over the land and population, making it the world's largest open-air prison; and the billions of aid given by the U.S. to Israel every year to buy weapons.

What's more, the discussion about these underlying causes led away from superficial analyses, which saw behind the latest attack such factors such as the upcoming Israeli elections, the need to test the U.S.-funded anti-missile "Iron Dome" apparatus, the desire to send a warning signal to Hezbollah and Iran, or to halt Abbas's farcical UN "recognition" bid.

And this attack, coming after the regional Arab uprising, was an occasion for Palestinian revolutionaries around the world to educate about the role of Palestinian liberation within the broader Arab revolution (and the debt owed the former by the latter), and about the role of that revolution in the growing global battle between imperialism and

... Palestinians beat back Gaza attack

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



its victims.

In these new circumstances it is instructive to look at the contrasting role during the attack on Gaza of Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi and of that country's workers and youth.

Morsi used his newfound diplomatic maneuvering room to work with the U.S. to get a ceasefire agreement in place before an imminent Zionist ground invasion—but took no serious steps during the assault to side with those under attack in Gaza. Having worked previously with Israel to maintain the siege, to destroy tunnels through which life-saving food and medicine flow, Morsi—desperate to maintain billions in U.S. funds and IMF loans—never even threatened to abrogate the peace treaty with the Zionist entity, which allows such massacres to occur, much less threaten Tel Aviv with entry into the war on the Palestinian side. Revolutionaries in Egypt in contrast organized a delegation of over 500 to visit Gaza while the bombs were dropping, as well as groups of medical volunteers.

Rallies around the world were called almost as soon as Israel's first bombs dropped to demand an end to the aggression. Widespread protests broke out in the West Bank and among Palestinian students at universities in pre-1967 Israel. The organizers of these rallies called for increased efforts to end U.S. and other imperialist aid to Israel, and for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against all Israeli institutions and any institution supporting them.

Most significantly, which brings us back to the question posed at the beginning, solidarity actions increasingly

raised the call to support Palestinian resistance in all its forms—from hunger strikes to BDS to popular mobilizations to armed struggle—on its own terms. For instance, a statement endorsed by a broad spectrum of Arab and solidarity groups in the New York region declared that "international law guarantees all people, including Palestinians, the right to resist." Signers included groups who previously would have insisted on referring only to "nonviolent" forms of resistance.

By the same token, the very first sentence of a statement by the United National Antiwar Coalition declared that "UNAC supports the Palestinians' right to resist tyranny." This resistance will be tested again and again. Palestinians know it's only a matter of time before the ceasefire is broken by Israel—as promised by racist politicians who talk of "mowing the lawn" every few years.

While such murderous rhetoric has been a staple of Zionist politicians from before 1948 (see again the quote above from Ben-Gurion), the daily, casual issuance of such barbarous sentiments has come to define mainstream Israeli rhetoric. For example, writing in the *Jerusalem Post* during the attack, Gilad Sharon declared that "we need to flatten entire neighborhoods in Gaza. The Americans didn't stop with Hiroshima—the Japanese weren't surrendering fast enough, so they hit Nagasaki too." Israel shouldn't worry about innocent civilians in Gaza, he said, because there are no innocent civilians in Gaza: "They elected Hamas ... they chose this freely, and must live with the consequences."

Palestinians know that in between this ceasefire and the next war, more Palestinians will be shot down. Nearly 3000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel since 2006, as against 47 Israelis by Palestinian fire.

And they know a new war is inevitable, because however limited and hypocritical was the Zionist easing of control over Gaza in 2005, any sign of self-governance on the part of Palestinians in Gaza was seen as a mortal threat to the colonial-settler regime as a whole, because of the example it set of truly liberated Palestinian land. The sight of Palestinians with guns staffing entry and exit sites in Gaza, instead of Zionist thugs, sent shivers up Tel Aviv's spine for fear of the example it set. Similarly, the elections won by Hamas tore apart the notion that Israel can impose with impunity its own regime or puppets beholden to it.

They know also that because the overwhelming majority of Palestinians will not rest until their land is free from the river to the sea, until every Palestinian who wants to return to their original home can do so, Israel is bound to continually launch new wars to maintain its existence as an apartheid state that functions as the long arm of U.S. imperialism in the region.

As we go to press, there have been no serious talks on the border-crossing question raised in the agreement. Meanwhile, Israel has resumed shooting Palestinians who approach the "no-go zone" established by Israel on the Palestinian side of the border and at boats who approach the illegal Israeli limit on sea travel.

Just three days after signing the ceasefire agreement, Israeli soldiers killed one Palestinian and wounded more than 19 for approaching the "no-go zone" on the Gaza side of the Israeli fence. And hardly had the ceasefire come into effect before Israel raided the West Bank to round up more than 50 Hamas supporters, while Netanyahu warned that Israel "might be compelled to embark on a much harsher military operation."

Knowing that another attack is inevitable—whether on Gaza, on Iran, on Sudan or elsewhere—the renewed self-confidence of the Palestinians will inspire preparation for it as well as deepening opposition to Abbas' quivering regime. Supporters of Palestinian liberation must use the precious time before the next attack to organize on-going solidarity and to mobilize against aid to the Zionist regime. ■



Revolutionary socialist politics in the era of world capitalist crisis

This is our second installment of major excerpts from the Political Resolution adopted at the August 2012 Socialist Action National Convention in Minneapolis.

Today we are witness to a new world armaments race, with every major power striving to increase its military arsenal. This clearly indicates the desperate need of all capitalist nations to protect, expand, and develop new markets by force, when necessary. The U.S.-led NATO war against Libya served as a perfect example, when the U.S., England, France, and Italy jockeyed for position regarding whose military forces would predominate in the destruction of that nation and which would secure the largest percentage of the oil booty.

The already severe sanctions against Iran and Syria and the increasing threats of war have but one objective, to re-integrate these nations into the economic and military framework of the great powers. Equally overt examples of the use of force to advance imperialist needs includes the Belgian-based, U.S.-controlled AFRICOM operation, in which the U.S. seeks to advance its neo-colonial interests in Africa at the expense of its European and Chinese competitors.

In Afghanistan, the fiction of an external imperialist power training an oppressed people to fight has been dropped. Instead, the “trainers” are to be re-named and continue to operate in one form or another as death-squad mercenaries backed by the most advanced off-shored military equipment in the world, including drones, now to be manufactured in the thousands.

It is instructive in this regard to note that in Iraq, despite government reports to the contrary, the lion's share of the oil proceeds, according to *The New York Times*, are now in the hands of U.S. corporate interests. The U.S. did not murder some 1.5 million Iraqis only to withdraw from that nation with little or no booty!

In the super-competitive capitalist world of today no previous or present alliances are permanent. New power blocs, including China, which spends approximately one-quarter of the amount that the U.S. does on upgrading its military, and perhaps Japan and other Asian nations, can be expected to collaborate when their interests coincide—as is the case today, when trading in major commodities between Japan and

China is based on the Chinese currency, the renminbi, as opposed to the ever-weakening U.S. dollar.

The U.S.-backed Philippines' confrontations with China in the North China Sea is another major example of imperialist rivalry, wherein naval maneuvers are aimed at securing access to unpopulated and disputed islands that are known to be rich in fisheries as well as oil deposits.

The same applies to every continent. U.S. troops are increasingly the lynchpin in all major military ventures, as in Colombia, where seven new U.S. bases are under construction—aimed at potentially revolutionary developments in Latin America. The U.S. imperial venture today confronts the entire planet, with troops on the ground when needed and a massive program to employ drone warfare and privatized mercenary armies, the increasingly common calling card of U.S. imperialism.

The Arab Spring

In Tunisia and Egypt, U.S. imperialism's corporate media machine posed the Obama administration as a friend of the Egyptian people and a defender of democracy in the face of the fact that the Mubarak dictatorship was second only to Israel in receipt of U.S. military aid. So swift, broad, and deep were the mobilizations against Mubarak that any U.S. decision to smash it with massive and brutal force was untenable. A similar dynamic emerged earlier in Tunisia, with the hated Ben Ali dictatorship lacking any credibility among the Tunisian masses.

Instead, the U.S. relied on diplomatic guile, threats, and maneuvers to achieve a “democratic” transition through elections overseen by the still-in-power tyrants' military heirs. While the mobilization of significant trade-union forces, including mass strikes in Egypt and Tunisia, was sufficient to drive out the dictators, the reformist leaderships knew full well that any steps beyond Mubarak's and Ben Ali's removal would pose the issue of overt military intervention. The native bourgeois forces never contemplated anything other than the constitution of reformed and “democratic” capitalist governments.

In Egypt and Tunisia the massive and ongoing Tahrir Square mobilizations of youthful fighters nevertheless lacked anything close to a disciplined core of organized and revolutionary forces of sufficient

(Above) Israeli soldier takes aim at West Bank protest in solidarity with Gaza, Nov. 16.

strength and implantation to effectively guide the mass power in the streets in a revolutionary socialist direction. Despite the valiant efforts of tiny revolutionary groups to unify their forces and strive to build independent unions and to challenge with a revolutionary party and program in the elections, their forces were too meager and inexperienced to affect an outcome that differed in its fundamentals from the old regime with some new bourgeois components.

Within a year's time the massive uprising was channeled into bourgeois reformism—the old and temporarily restrained military regime coupled with the Muslim Brotherhood electoral victors in pretending democratic rule.

In Libya, the situation was worse. The initial mass mobilizations against the Gadhafi dictatorship were almost entirely lacking in revolutionary leadership. Whatever forces appeared on the scene early on that tried to pose a semblance of a revolutionary alternative to Gadhafi and to U.S./NATO intervention were soon overwhelmed and likely disappeared. The door was open wide to an overt imperialist resolution.

Gadhafi's concessions to imperialism over the past years proved insufficient to realize his efforts at a negotiated solution. The imperialists used the UN's “humanitarian no-fly zone” to deploy massive NATO forces, led by the U.S. Tens of thousands of Libyans were slaughtered, along with Gadhafi's army.

So weak was the imperialist orchestrated internal opposition that it took what amounted to a continuous six-month bombardment by the world's super-powers, coupled with the covert use of U.S.-trained Qatar mercenaries who “liberated” Tripoli, to remove Gadhafi and install a handpicked imperialist government. In such a war, regardless of their criticisms of the Gadhafi regime, revolutionaries must not only demand the immediate withdrawal of all NATO/U.S. troops but also favor without qualification an imperialist defeat.

In the antiwar movement, “U.S./NATO Out Now!” was the critical and principled demand of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). Tragically, others

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The new assault on civil liberties



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

Below is a section of the Political Resolution discussed and approved at the August 2012 Socialist Action National Convention in Minneapolis.

The past few years have seen a rapid and alarming rise in government attacks on basic civil liberties. Any underestimation of the gravity of this assault would be a serious mistake. It is not our intention here to list all of assaults; it is sufficient to point to a few to make the necessary points that need explication.

Since 9-11, for example, over 100,000 Muslims have been investigated by government agencies. Some 40,000 have been detained, and thousands arrested. Just a handful of these have been convicted of any serious crime and of these most convictions have been as a result of court interpretation of the Constitution or legislation that has stretched definitions beyond recognition. In the name of national security, as in the McCarthy era, basic civil liberties have been subordinated to Constitutionally protected rights to free speech, association, and assembly.

Indefinite detention without charges and recourse to the courts now applies to citizens and non-citizens alike, as was most recently demonstrated the week leading up to the May 20 anti-NATO protests in Chicago, which saw the arrest of a few scores of people who had committed absolutely no illegal acts. This kind of “preventive” arrest and detention of antiwar activists has now become the norm whenever government agencies declare any protest a “national security” event.

In the name of securing convictions against the most innocent of groups, as with the largest Muslim charity, the Holy Land Foundation, five leaders of which were convicted of providing material aid to terrorism, the law has been bent beyond recognition. In this case the material aid was given to a hospital that no one, including the government, charged with having any relation to terrorist groups. But the gift itself was nevertheless ruled illegal on the grounds that had the Holy Land Foundation *not* given such aid, a terrorist organization would have had to do so!

This case followed that of attorney Lynne Stewart, which resulted in a 10-year sentence for conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism because Lynne had issued an innocent press release on behalf of her client, the “blind sheik” Omar Abdel Rachman.

Every variety of internet spying, FBI spying, drone spying, NYPD spying on Occupy activists, and more are justified in the name of the fake war on terrorism. This time round, however, the “enemy” is a handful of Muslims who resent imperialist mass murder around the world and who resort to isolated terrorist attacks, as opposed to the Cold War era, when the state power of the USSR and its associated deformed workers’ states, along with China, Vietnam, and North Korea, presided over some two billion people. However degenerated and deformed, and however counterrevolutionary, these states nevertheless represented a severe limitation on imperialist prerogatives around the world. Today’s endless U.S./NATO wars of conquest and occupation could not have been conceived of during that era.

The anti-NATO, UNAC-initiated and CANG-8-spon-

sored demonstration in Chicago on May 20, according to our Chicago comrades, received the most concerted violence baiting than they had seen in that city for their entire lives. Every kind of government police agency—local, state and national—was mobilized in numbers estimated by city officials to be in the neighborhood of 20,000, with police squads mobilized from as far away as San Francisco.

This took place in the face of a nine-month effort on the part of protest organizers to repeatedly counter the unprecedented violence-baiting, with great efforts to secure permits for march routes and rally sites for a peaceful, “family-friendly” mobilization.

Not a day passed in the months preceding May 20 when new restrictions were not announced to discourage public participation. Major streets and expressways were closed, stores were pressured to close, landlords were instructed to allow no one but tenants in their downtown buildings to enter, colleges and universities were asked to shut down, and inspection stations were established at sites for plane, train, and other forms of public transportation.

City officials sought to enact special legislation imposing qualitatively increased fines for any arrested persons. While these new forms of intimidation have been pressed into operation at various “anti-globalization protests in the past, the Chicago preparation appeared to far exceed anything previously experienced. It would not be an exaggeration to postulate that the Chicago preparations were more in accord with mass practice sessions aimed at qualitatively larger working class-led protests in the future than they were for the modest turnout expected on May 20.

Government incursions on civil liberties and democratic rights already described in this resolution, including the deepening attacks on immigrants, the rise in police brutality and murder and near slave labor prison-industrial complex and more add up to something more than a modest change in government policy.

Private companies can, in most states, lease factories in prisons or prisoners to work on the outside. All told, nearly a million prisoners are now making office furniture, working in call centers, fabricating body armor, taking hotel reservations, working in slaughterhouses, or manufacturing textiles, shoes, and clothing, while getting paid somewhere between 93 cents and \$4.73 per day.

All previous resolutions in which we discussed increasing government attacks on civil liberties always noted that however severe they are, we cannot conclude that we are heading for a degree of repression akin to fascism, if for no other reason that such monstrous measures are in no way required by a U.S. capitalism that faces little or no resistance from a still passive working class.

Fascism, we correctly observed was that form of capitalist political rule, as compared to bourgeois democracy, where the very existence of an organized and fighting working class was incompatible with the existence of capitalism. In short, fascism is the politico-military rule required by a ruling class whose desperation in the face of the immediate possibility of socialist revolution, gives it no choice.

German bourgeois democracy ceded leadership and power over the economically and politically crisis-ridden state to Hitler when the overt exercise of mass repression, including of the para-military or extra-legal death squad-type, was a necessity. German capitalism preferred the fascist dictatorship of Hitler, despite restrictions on its own prerogatives, than it did to working-class rule and the abolition of capitalist property and wealth entirely.

Of course, we are nowhere near the situation that prevailed in 1933 Germany. Then why, we must ask, the imposition and putting into place of so many and such serious restrictions on all forms of civil and democratic rights? The answer to this question lies in part in capitalism’s realization that there are no immediate if not mid-term solutions to its present crisis other than deepening austerity imposed on workers.

Second, the ruling rich understand full well that workers, consciously or not, do have limits as to what they can endure without fighting back. They understand that such a fightback, to be successful, must consist of a level of unity, mobilization, and leadership that has not existed for almost 100 years, that is, since the 1917 Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution.

Today, capitalism’s best advisers, experienced in the administration of every form of mass repression imaginable, anticipate, perhaps better than we do, a working-class fightback that exceeds in power and scope anything in modern history. They also understand, as we do, that the pace of development of working-class consciousness is not arithmetic—that is, a slow and steady rise—but rather one characterized by sudden great leaps that occur at special moments when everything that seemed impossible yesterday becomes the order of the day today.

A tiny example is the leap into the public eye of the Occupy movement, whose class-divide, 99% versus 1% formulation crystallized a deeply felt sentiment that had been developing for a long period. Undoubtedly, the Occupy movement served to change the national dialogue regarding the cause of the economic crisis from a Tea Party emphasis on big government spending, including racist overtones fostering resentment against recipients of welfare, to a focus on the ruling rich as the cause of the crisis.

Perhaps the best explanation for the present “war on terror” and its associated escalating attack on civil liberties is the ruling-class anticipation of and preparation for the coming fightbacks. This includes putting into place the “legal” justification for arrests of every sort, from socialists to trade unionists, and concerted efforts to arm these repressive forces with the most modern technology and devices, to prepare them for action.

The preparation itself, as with the months of threats of mass arrests and fear-mongering that preceded May 20, undoubtedly had a deterrent effect, making it clear, in advance, to millions that even the democratic right to protest, to peacefully march down the street in a “family-friendly” protest, could come at a costly price. Some 15,000, perhaps, or more, took to the streets on May 20. Had the unprecedented threat of repression and violence emanating from the police been absent, few doubt that the size and scope of the action would have been larger.

On the eve of the Chicago protest an official report was released on the excessive use of police force employed in Toronto a few years ago when some 10,000 took to the streets to protest a G-20 Summit. Some 1100 arrests were recorded, the great majority—the overwhelming majority—innocent bystanders or peaceful demonstrators. Of course, the powers that be are more than willing to pay some modest fines, perhaps a few million dollars, in exchange for the message

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Jean Paul Marat — presente!



By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

“Jean Paul Marat: Tribune of the French Revolution,”
by Clifford D. Conner. Pluto Press, London 2012.

Historians have not been kind to Jean Paul Marat. Published scholars of the French Revolution, at least in the English language, almost invariably disparage Marat and his work, portraying him as a wild man, a demagogue, even a criminal. Some historians belittle Marat’s significance to the revolutionary struggle as being of small consequence, while others, in complete contradiction, credit his calls for the guillotine as a major inspiration for the Terror that began after his death.

Similarly, a glance at popular biographies of Marat on the internet will find little sympathy for the French leader. The on-line Encyclopedia Britannica states in its summary for young readers: “... Jean-Paul Marat was murdered at the peak of his power and influence. His own violent death came as a result of his fanatic support of violence and terror.” Another essay (NNDB, “tracking the entire world”) concludes: “He stands in history as a bloodthirsty monster, yet in judging him one must remember the persecutions he endured and the terrible disease from which he suffered.”

Peter Weiss’s musical play “Marat/Sade,” from 1963, is certainly sympathetic to Marat. But at least in its English-language rendition, the revolutionary leader (portrayed by an insane asylum inmate) appears rather pathetic. Throughout the production, Marat declaims from his bathtub, as the loyal Simone Evrard sponges his disease-pocked body. When the “common people” of the asylum demand, “We want a revolution now,” Marat can offer them no effective leadership, and they end up in nihilistic riot.

The playwright, a Marxist, added an epilogue to the script in which Marat was brought back to life, and an attempt was made to present the political dialogue in more reasoned outline. But the epilogue is missing from English-language versions and from the popular Peter Brooke movie based on the play.

In truth, Marat was neither a bloodthirsty monster nor ineffectual in his political activities. The recurring nature of these slanders, in fact, might well raise suspicion that they were manufactured precisely in order to blot out Marat’s ideals and tactical successes as an example for social revolutionaries of later generations.

Although Marat’s ashes were removed from the Pantheon in Paris a year and a half after his death, he should be restored to our “pantheon” of revolutionary heroes. To that end, it is important news that a biography of Marat has been published this year that aims to clear the record of the myths and half-truths concerning his political views and activity. And the book, “Jean Paul Marat, Tribune of the French Revolution,” goes even further in providing insight into Marat’s efforts as a political organizer, with the observation that such knowledge might be of use to social struggles today.

The author, Clifford D. Conner, a teacher at the City College of New York Graduate Center, has written several books in the fields of scientific and political history, including “A People’s History of Science” (Nation Books 2005). Socialist Action Books has published a number his pamphlets.

Conner begins with a summary of Marat’s years as a physician and scientist. He debunks the notion, which originated in Marat’s own lifetime, that Marat was a charlatan or a crank. This topic is developed further in Conner’s book, “Jean Paul Marat: Scientist and Revolutionary” (Humanities Press 1997).

In the present volume, Conner rapidly leads us into and through the later phases of Marat’s life, in which Marat devoted himself almost exclusively to political journalism. The author shows that Marat was awakened—and even rejuvenated from the effects of his debilitating disease—by the political ferment that led to the French Revolution.

Conner notes that the upsurge was carried out by a broad range of social forces: “The process of the Revolution has been described as a succession of four overlapping revolutionary waves crashing against the monarchy. In the wake of the aristocratic rebellion, the bourgeoisie (the incipient capitalist class) joined the fray, and then the peasants, and finally the urban poor for whom Marat became the tribune.”

Other chroniclers of the French Revolution, such as Albert Saboul, have pointed out that protests by the poorer classes often took place in the years preceding the revolution, as living conditions steadily worsened. But these protests had been local and generally sporadic in character. Moreover, the majority of the population was itself divided. Some 80 percent of the French population was comprised of small peasants, and rural laborers who thirsted for land. And the working populace of the towns and cities was stratified. Its “higher” ranks included master craftsman and small merchants, many of whom identified with the bourgeoisie more than with the journeymen, apprentices, and laborers who worked in their shops.

However, the mass movement against royal privileges, and later against the aristocracy, was able to unite the disparate classes into a united revolutionary movement—at least for a time.

Conner shows that Marat’s views at the beginning of the revolution were not yet very radical. At the time of the fall of the Bastille, on July 14, 1789, Marat was still a political unknown, and still harbored illusions that the king could help bring democracy to the nation. But the mobilizations of the common people so inspired Marat that he quickly adapted his views. He began to publish a journal, *L’ami du peuple* (*The People’s Friend*), which championed the demands of the masses for social equality and economic justice.

In taking this stance, Marat soon encountered the wrath of major political leaders—not only functionaries left over from the old regime but also ostensibly “revolutionary” (though conservative) politicians. His courageous refusal to back down in the face of slanders and outright police repression only increased his political influence. Marat’s wide circle of supporters defended and hid him from the police.

Louis XVI’s failed attempt to escape Paris in June 1791, and the appearance of evidence that the king had conspired against the Revolution, began to strip away any confidence in schemes to retain a constitutional monarchy. Conner shows, however, that Marat was far from elated by the outcome: “In his view, the people had not yet fully awakened, but were sleepwalking, wandering in confusion, far, far from achiev-

ing the political clarity that would be necessary to consolidate the Revolution.”

The following year, the population was gripped by chauvinistic war fever, when France declared war on Austria. But Marat refused to join the celebrations, even going so far as to say that French defeats would be preferable to victories. “There’s a real danger,” he wrote, that one of our own generals might win a victory and, manipulating the drunken joy of his soldiers and the population, might lead his victorious army against Paris to reestablish the King’s power.”

Marat’s prediction was proven correct sometime later, when Charles François Dumouriez, the major French military commander in the field, threatened to march on Paris to expel the radical wing from the National Convention. Soon Dumouriez defected to the Austrian army—and later to the British.

The accuracy of this and other “prophecies” that Marat made in his newspaper reflected in part the access he had acquired to “inside” information—often supplied by his underground supporters within the army, government, and in the streets. But it also showed his acute ability to analyze such information within the context of strategic debate. In many circumstances, the clashes of political forces within the Revolution were an expression of the elemental conflicts between social classes. During this era, of course, the two major opposed classes of today, proletariat and capitalists, were only beginning to develop.

In the spring of 1793, the French Revolution was quickly rising to its apogee, and Marat was climbing to the height of his powers. The conservative Girondist wing of the National Convention attempted a counterattack against Marat, indicting him for “sedition.” Instead of simply denouncing his accusers, however, Marat demanded a trial, which he then used as a forum not only to demonstrate that the charges were absurd but to condemn the Girondins for their complicity with Dumouriez.

Within a month, it became apparent that popular sentiment had turned against the Gironde and toward the radical wing of the Convention, the Montagnards and Jacobins. Tens of thousands of people came into the streets and blockaded the Convention, demanding that the Girondist delegates resign. Marat had earlier cautioned against a premature uprising—which should put to rest the history-book image of him as a violence-prone “wild man.” But the situation had changed; seeing the masses in the streets, he gave the word that “now is the time” for decisive action. Marat was instrumental in persuading the Girondins to leave the Convention, thus avoiding the necessity of a pitched battle to force them out.

That triumph, writes Conner, marked the watershed of the Revolution, the complete defeat of aristocratic privileges. With that, Marat retired from politics and from public life; his disease was proving too debilitating to allow him to continue. And virtually immediately, the Jacobins began to ignore him, converting the “People’s Friend” into a harmless icon—which they embraced in order to fight more radical critics.

Conner remarks that Marat, to a certain extent, aided the Jacobins in that task. A week before he was murdered, on July 4, Marat published a denunciation of Jacques Roux and other “Enragés,” who advocated a classless society and were giving voice to the anger of the common people against skyrocketing food prices. Marat claimed that such propaganda undermined the support of the people for the revolutionary government and thus emboldened the counter-revolution.

Even today, the issue of whether the Enragés were “too left” might be debatable. In his “Marat/Sade” play, Peter Weiss uses the figure of Roux as the voice of modern class struggle, who sees farther and with more perception than Marat. But in the era of the French Revolution, of course, the working class lacked the cohesion and power to take the reins from the rising bourgeoisie. It took another half-century until Karl Marx could write that the “specter of Communism” had come to the fore.

In summarizing Marat’s political bequest, Conner gives special emphasis to his role as a tactician, one gifted with a sharp sense of *what to do next* at key political junctures. But Conner notes an important failing in Marat’s revolutionary leadership—the fact that he refused to organize his followers into a political party. Marat always insisted that the only “party” was the people. And so, unlike Robespierre and other Jacobins, Marat lacked any lever other than himself to act in crucial situations.

If an influential Maratist party had been on the scene, perhaps the French Revolution might have been spared some of the pitfalls, and the rapid degeneration, it encountered in the years following Marat’s death. But putting aside such speculation, we should note that the political legacy that Marat left for future generations is still very real, and needs only to be rediscovered. Marat’s uncompromising struggle for social revolution, Conner concludes, has lost none of its relevance and urgency. The People’s Friend—presente! ■

Talk of Lib-Green alliance is not quite dead yet

By BARRY WEISLEDER

The strong showing of the Green Party in the Nov. 26 federal by-elections, and the words of a prominent candidate in the federal Liberal Party leadership race, have bourgeois tongues wagging again for an electoral alliance with the labour-based New Democratic Party to oppose the Tories.

The Conservative Party held its seats in Ontario's Durham riding and in Alberta's Calgary Centre. The NDP retained Victoria constituency in British Columbia. But the increase in the Green share of the votes in all three areas has political opportunists pushing for run-off nominations amongst Liberal, NDP, and Green Party members to choose a single candidate in ridings where defeat of the ruling Tories seems within reach.

Vancouver MP Joyce Murray, one of 12 candidates for the federal leadership of the Liberal Party, has made such an electoral alliance her platform. So did B.C. NDP MP Nathan Cullen when he ran to be NDP leader in 2011-12. The "orange wave" of May 2011 nearly crushed that idea. Opinion polls that boost Liberals and Greens, however temporarily, can sway the impressionable. But they should not prevail.

Remember, *Liberals are Tories too*. Just look at Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, who prorogued the Ontario Legislature and seeks to impose austerity measures, like his anti-teacher Law 115, on hundreds of thousands more workers. Also recall the ferocious federal expenditure

cuts made by the Jean Chretien and Paul Martin governments of the 1990s and early 2000s.

The capitalist parties, including the Green Party, have a common agenda—capitalist austerity to revive the profit system at workers' expense. The working class has but one mass party, the labour-based NDP. It is not socialist, but it is the only big party in North America that can be held accountable by labour.

That labour link, which helped to win medicare, employment insurance, Canada Pension, environmental standards and much more, must not be extinguished by submission to the deadly embrace of parties controlled by capital.

Aid for profits

Ottawa's bid to more nakedly tie its shrinking foreign-aid budget to expanding the operations of Canada's mining, oil and gas giants abroad, has got even some liberals upset. Canada's biggest daily newspaper, the liberal *Toronto Star*, took Conservative Minister for International Co-operation Julian Fantino to task for saying that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) plans to "engage more" in private sector partnership because it is "the driver of long-term economic growth globally."

This means CIDA will fund more three-way partnerships with Canadian resource companies on projects—like the CIDA/IAMGOLD/Plan Canada project in Burkina Faso.

Instead of non-profit programmes that

... Civil liberties

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sent to these and future protestors. "Don't challenge our system!"

This explanation, of course, is not offered in an absolute manner. There will inevitably be times when the level of outrage supersedes the level of fear, and when government repression serves a effect opposite to what is intended—as when 20,000 mobilized in the streets of Oakland the day following the brutal demolition of the Frank Ogawa Plaza Occupy encampment.

An interesting May 2012 article in Minneapolis's main daily, the *Star Tribune*, reported on police department plans to honor in the Washington, D.C.'s national police memorial building, one C. Arthur Lyman, "a leader in the Citizens Alliance, a group of employers that squashed unions in Minneapolis for 30 years."

"When police called for help in controlling a truckers' strike in May 1934," says the *Star Tribune*, "he signed on as a special deputy. He wound up getting clubbed by strikers in the Warehouse

District, and died of a fractured skull."

Our Twin Cities comrade David Jones was fortunate in the *Star's* decision to print his rejoinder setting the record straight on Lyman's role. He explained that the Citizens Alliance goons killed two strikers who fought to make Minneapolis a union town.

Our point here is only to call attention to the fact that in 1934 police authorities believed it was perhaps sufficient to quell a major union strike by calling on a group like the Citizens Alliance, a tiny private group of Twin Cities entrepreneurs dressed in their business and/or sportsmen's attire, including polo uniforms and high boots in one case, with police-issued clubs, and prepared to take on union members face-to-face.

Today, the repressive apparatus at the disposal of the ruling rich qualitatively exceeds anything imaginable in 1934. We need not review its varied components other than to conclude that we find no better explanation than a conscious effort at the highest levels of ruling-class circles to prepare for a massive working-class offensive, the likes of which the world has rarely experienced. ■

... Pakistan

(continued from page 12)

and torture. The military also uses anti-terror laws to harass and imprison activists: in late 2011, Labor Party Pakistan organizer Baba Jan, along with four others, were imprisoned and tortured for organizing workers and peasants in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The economic structure of Pakistani society is still largely feudal. Some 14% of farms operate 56% of the country's agricultural area, while 55% of the Pakistani population owns no land at all. Workers in rural Pakistan are either sharecroppers or travel to the city as day laborers; or they participate in cottage industry and simple manufacturing.

Politically, the large landowning families dominate the civilian government; the massive farms are run

as personal fiefdoms, with voting blocs organized by the landed village elites, and the power bases of most of the major parties are centered in the landowning class.

This feudal economic structure maintains a corresponding feudal social structure rooted in inequality between powerful landowners and workers with little access to land. It is also grounded in the inequality between men and women—who have still less access, despite providing all of a household's domestic labor and a portion of the labor outside in the form of domestic labor in other peoples' homes and agricultural labor in the fields.

It is rural inequality that provides the basis for the oppression of women in Pakistan, not Taliban militancy, which is itself an expression of those same patriarchal feudal relations. Thus, the idea that we advance the causes of Pakistani feminist activists like Malala Yousufzai and Fareeda Afridi by shooting rockets and

leveling villages is ludicrous. The position of women in rural Pakistan can only be advanced by the total overturn of the rule of feudal elites in the countryside. Yousufzai knew this—she was fighting for the right to an education, crucial to breaking the stranglehold of feudal relations of production over rural women.

People in the United States have a critical role to play; we must halt the drone war, which only provides a more fertile recruiting ground for reactionary groups. We must end support for the military bureaucracy that serves to preserve the feudal hierarchy and prevent the wealth of the nation from being directed towards education and empowerment.

We must end the neoliberal world order, expressed through the World Bank and the IMF, which keeps the country in perpetual debt slavery, immiserates the lives of ordinary workers, and consolidates the control of an unaccountable military, agricultural, and industrial elite. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

supply aid to the poorest, Canada's rulers are more interested in corporate branding and in plunder for private profit in the third world. This is the agenda behind Stephen Harper's much ballyhooed aim to shift economic activity abroad from the faltering United States, to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Canadian foreign direct investment is now \$25 billion in developing countries.

The *Star's* editorial preference for balancing "Canadian interests without sacrificing our commitment to the very poorest" seems to carry very little weight on Bay Street.

To defeat this aspect of the corporate agenda, unions should step up independent working-class political action and mobilize aggressively against the capitalist austerity drive. Apparently, the retreat by union bureaucrats over the past 30 years has not sated the appetite of the ruling class.

Teachers refuse givebacks

Secondary school teachers at two southern Ontario school boards voted down local tentative agreements compliant with the terms of Draconian provin-

cial legislation. Law 115, outrageously titled the "Putting Students First Act," imposes a two-year wage freeze and cuts to sick leave benefits. It enables the Education Minister to halt teacher strikes and make sure any locally negotiated agreements are "substantially identical" to the Ontario Liberal government's austerity terms.

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) officials reached concessionary deals with York and Niagara school boards, but teachers there rejected the deals, and gave a defiant middle finger to Law 115's general assault on free collective bargaining and the right to strike.

To avoid further embarrassment, OSSTF bureaucrats cancelled tentative agreement votes at other boards.

Elementary school teachers are planning walk-outs in December. Their Secondary panel colleagues may follow suit.

The questions remain: when Education Minister Laurel Broten orders teachers back to work and imposes terms and conditions, will teachers stay out? Will they be joined by other public-sector workers now suffering under the lash of austerity? ■

Chasing Ice

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"Chasing Ice," a documentary by photographer James Balog, directed by Jeff Olowski.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, which "snapped Americans to the reality that rising temperatures are a risk to their own well-being" (*LA Times*), the documentary "Chasing Ice"—filmed in 2009—is probably the most important film, if not *the* most impressive media event to date concerning climate change.

National Geographic photographer James Balog's disturbing film deals with the dramatic and rapidly melting and calving (breaking) glaciers in Iceland, Greenland, Alaska, and in Glacier National Park in Montana (which Balog says will have to be renamed "Glacierless National Park" by the end of the decade). He speculates on the cause of the rapid meltdown and how it will affect coastal areas. Most dramatic is the superimposition of Manhattan onto one of the calving glaciers to gauge its size and impact (one thinks of Sandy's effect on Manhattan at that time).

The film includes video clips from

both climate-change believers and deniers (mostly Fox news pundits like Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh). However, the evidence is undeniable. Balog was a skeptic until he decided to photograph and check out for himself the regression of the glaciers.

During several arduous treks, he and a small team set up special time-lapse cameras on several continents to photograph changing glaciers over several years' time, compressing years into seconds. The results are beautiful, awesome, shocking, and frightening.

As I write, corporate and government spokespeople, meeting at the UN climate conference in Doha, Qatar, are putting generations, not to mention planet earth's, future at risk by not ruling for immediate action to halt this world menace.

The UN weather agency warned at the talks that an area of Arctic sea ice bigger than the United States melted this year, and that ice cover had reached "a new record low" in the area around the North Pole.

Nathan Hultman, Brookings Institution climate policy expert, told the conference, regarding Hurricane Sandy, "[That] demonstrated to a large part of the country that we are certainly vulnerable to the kind of events we might see under climate change." Change "might" to "will." ■



New Potential for Occupy's 'Strike Debt' Campaign

By ANDREW POLLACK

From its beginning Occupy Wall Street has had a focus on debt—student, homeowner, health care, etc.—and has encouraged debt refusal and resistance. Part of the logic behind that focus is the tens of millions affected by debt, and their common interest in rejecting the misery imposed on them by the huge financial firms holding their debt.

But OWS had never grappled with the difficulties of building a movement centered on such an atomized, amorphous group: debtors, like the middle class, lack the social cohesion and strategic weight of the working class, which shares a common place in the sphere of production, drawing both potential collective consciousness and strategic weight from that positioning.

But the Strike Debt Campaign—which has been initiated by and drawn most of its activists from Occupy Wall Street—has recently broadened its focus, tactics, audience, and even (take a deep breath) its demands. By doing so it is providing opportunities to involve workers as workers, and to reach out to those fighting “sovereign debt” in the Middle East, Europe, and elsewhere. What’s more, sinking roots in those new bases can lend added force to the other components of the campaign, those around student or homeowner or other forms of debt.

As we’ll explain in the last part of this article, that is not to say that all the theoretical problems behind Occupy’s debt focus have been addressed, but rather that the door to such a discussion has been flung wide open.

A new campaign launched

On the September weekend marking its one-year anniversary, OWS held a forum to discuss its newly released “Debt Resisters’ Operations Manual.” Speakers discussed what until now has been the core of the campaign—individual debt refusal—and described the sections of the manual containing detailed advice on the origins of such debt and what the options were for resisting or even defaulting on it. But the speakers, and the manual itself, went way beyond that.

The manual notes: “Everyone is affected by debt, from recent graduates paying hundreds of dollars in interest on their students loans every month, to working families bankrupted by medical bills, to elders living in ‘underwater’ homes, to those taking out payday loans at 400% interest to cover basic living costs, to the teachers and firefighters forced to take pay cuts because their cities are broke, to countries pushed into austerity and poverty by structural adjustment programs.”

After describing the financialization of the economy, the manual points out: “Although American workers continue to lead the world in productivity, we haven’t had a raise since the early 1970s. Over the last four decades, we’ve been working longer and longer, trying to keep up with the rising costs of living—housing, health care, education. Yet we haven’t actually managed to keep up without plastic. ... So, despite all our exertions over the last four decades, the 99% have only gone deeper into the red, in debt to the 1%. The

reason is clear: we’re in debt because we’re not paid enough in the first place and there’s barely any ‘welfare state’ left to pick up the slack. This setup is called financialization.”

And Strike Debt doesn’t stop at just encouraging debt resistance to address this financialization. For instance, one of Occupy’s leading theorists, David Graeber, has begun to promote the idea of a shorter work-week as one measure to address this situation (see our own article on this demand in the September 2012 issue of *Socialist Action*).

In the same spirit, the manual, after recounting the horrific impoverishment due to mushrooming health-care debt, calls for introduction of a single-payer health-care system: “The only real solution [to ‘medical debt’] is to change the system from its current for-profit model to a nonprofit model.” Activists are encouraged by the manual to work with such single-payer advocates as Healthcare-NOW!, Physicians for a National Health Program, National Nurses United, and OWS’s own Healthcare for the 99% and Doctors for the 99%.

Similarly, the section on student debt takes on a new, more collective approach. Most attention in this area until now was given to encouraging student debtors to pledge that they would default on their loans once a sufficient number of pledges had been gathered. But the manual goes further:

After recounting the failure of lawmakers to respond to a petition signed by over a million asking for bankruptcy protection and partial debt forgiveness, the manual notes that even had such measures passed, they would not “de-commodify education nor claim it as a public good.” It declares that the Occupy Student Debt Campaign “believes that our public education system must be free, that any future student loans must be offered at zero interest, that all university institutions must be transparent and accountable, and that all current student debt must be cancelled.”

Other sections of the manual analyze forms of debt that by their very nature are imposed on whole groups of people rather than individuals. It introduces those sections this way: “What about those who don’t have debt in the traditional sense? Are they debtors too? Our answer is clear: Yes. We are all debtors, whether we have debt or not. Debt affects us all. But how?”

One way to see that, says the manual, is to look at municipal debt: “Is your city experiencing a budget crisis? Is your town laying off workers and cutting services? Are local hospitals understaffed and underfunded? Do you worry about whether your child’s school will have enough money to provide students with a quality education? If this is happening in your community, you are a debtor.”

“Over the last forty years, our common goods and resources have been privatized to profit the 1%. In the wake of reduced public funding, cities and towns have taken out more and more private loans to pay for everything from basic operations, like sewers, to large developments, such as sports arenas. Municipalities are forced to partner with Wall Street to tap revenue streams because Wall Street controls access to credit

markets. The only way cities and towns can win access to those markets is by issuing tax-exempt municipal bonds. But that means Wall Street profits from those bonds through interest payments and through securitization, as traders repackage bonds into debt bundles that are sold and resold on the global market. ... After Wall Street’s mortgage-lending practices crashed the economy in 2008, many municipalities were unable to pay their debts.

“From coast to coast, cities have become completely beholden to big banks. The result is shuttered schools, smaller fire departments and block upon block of abandoned homes in foreclosure.”

And the manual gives examples of resistance by municipalities to such policies: “Some municipalities are fighting back against the big banks. After their pay was cut to minimum wage, Scranton’s municipal unions sued the city, and their wages were restored. Years of community resistance delayed the construction of Barclays Arena in Brooklyn because the stadium was financed with tax-exempt bonds and built on land seized by eminent domain. Baltimore is suing more than a dozen big banks for manipulating LIBOR, a benchmark for interest rates. In July 2012, Boston activists held subway turnstiles open to protest Wall Street’s vise grip on their city’s transportation budget. After a toxic interest-rate swap deal sent it off a fiscal cliff, Oakland, California, is trying to take the dramatic step of severing its relationship with Goldman Sachs for good.”

Meanwhile, the drumbeat of propaganda demanding that city workers’ pensions be cut is growing ever louder. Some municipal unions have resisted attacks on their pensions, as well as on jobs, wages, and services provided. The recent victory of the Chicago Teachers’ Union could provide inspiration for other unions to wade into the battle. In fact, this is not just an opportunity but a dire necessity, as seen in Chicago itself: In a clear act of retaliation, just days after the CTU victory Chicago bosses threatened to cut CTU members’ pensions and jobs.

The manual argues: “We must also insist that the 1% is no longer allowed to write the laws dictating how our communities will be financed. We must insist on an end to the debt-financing of U.S. cities. This case for ending Wall Street’s control over our lives should also be made through direct action. We can target the banks profiting from the corrupt bond market with actions such as sit-ins and marches.

“The most important thing we can do as occupiers is refute the myth that the 99% are to blame for the fiscal emergencies that are declared when the bond vigilantes come knocking.”

Even when addressing the plight of individual debtors, the manual argues for the need of those in debt to develop a collective sense of their plight. It says, for instance: “[W]e’ve struggled to balance advice that you, the reader, can use to survive under this debt regime with a structural analysis of the system that put you in debt. The reason you have tens of thousands of dollars of student loan debt or medical bills that you cannot pay is because we live in a society that refuses to make education and health care accessible and free to all.” It encourages debtors to share their stories in order to overcome this sense of isolation and even shame, an effort captured in the Campaign’s witty slogan: “You are not a loan!”

The manual also draws connections to mass struggles around the world in countries where bankers have ordered governments to impose austerity plans to make sure their loans are repaid.

Weaknesses of Strike Debt

While noting the new and praiseworthy aspects of Occupy’s anti-debt campaign, we must still address its continuing theoretical weaknesses, and the resulting strategic shortcomings. It appears, in fact, that the campaign’s broadened focus is more the product of an admirable nonsectarian inclusion of other activists’ and movements’ perspectives, rather than a rethinking of the anarchist ideology at the heart of Occupy.

In the section on housing debt, for instance, the manual notes the difficulties now and in the past in unifying the tens of millions of homeowners who share a common fate: “However, although there is a lengthy history of ‘rent strikes’ to gain repairs and other concessions from landlords, there is little history of mortgage refusal. There are many reasons property owners might be unwilling to strike—from the glorified perception of ownership to the taboo against failing to pay debts, to the fear of bad credit, to the belief that the market will improve. Yet as more and more victims of the housing market understand the complicated details of the game our government played with the banks at our expense, the potential for collective action grows.”

We would argue instead that such potential among homeowners as homeowners is inherently limited, as opposed to the strategic potential of workers sharing a

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... 'Strike Debt'

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similar class position. This is not to say there is no potential for organizing among those burdened with mortgages, rather that only a revived and militant labor movement can provide the inspiration to encourage homeowners and other isolated social groups to see the potential of collective action, and that only the strategic weight of the working class can forge a movement strong enough to seize power from those who create all these forms of debt—and who rule the system of exploitation at the point of production on which it is based.

Strike Debt also shares Occupy's one-sided interpretation of the roots and character of "financialization." For Marxists, this term refers to a shift in the relative weight of profit-seeking from production to investments in other sectors. As the rate of profit has fallen in recent decades, opportunities to invest profitably in goods-producing sectors have shrunk. This has led, on the one hand, to diversion of trillions of dollars into speculative investments. It has also led, however, to the commodification and/or privatization of such sectors as health care, education, and child and elder care.

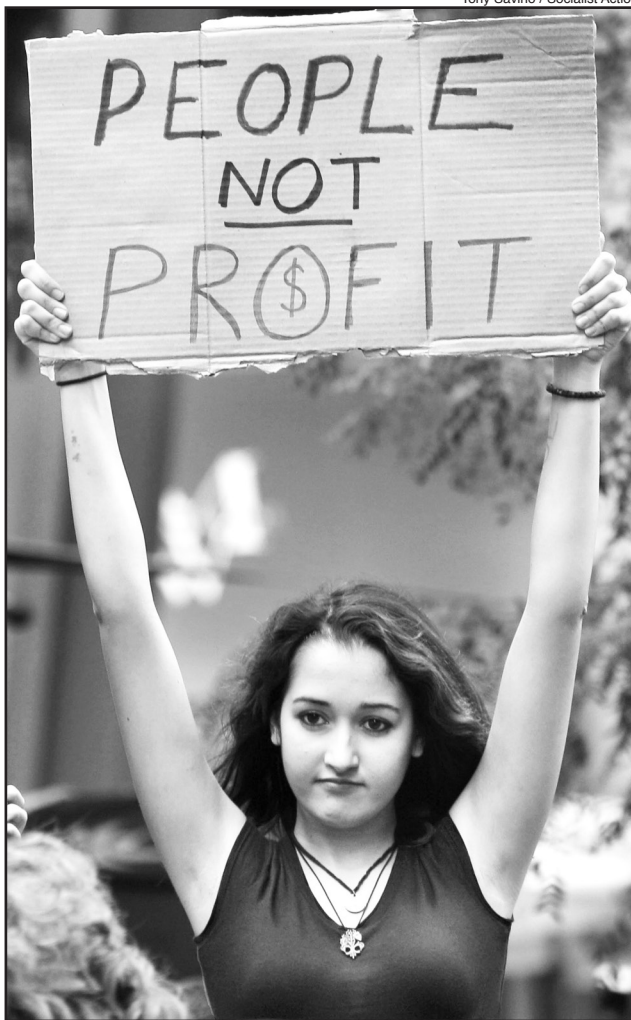
But none of this has eliminated the core and inescapable requirement of the capitalist system if it is to stop from going under—the making of profit at the point of production, or, put another way, the extraction of surplus value in the making of commodities.

That is why periods in which profits are disproportionately based on financial speculation inevitably end in crashes. From the speculative bubble that sprang a leak in 2008 and continues unplugged today, back to the equally manic Wall Street speculation of the 1920s and other similar periods, we have seen over and over that the fictitious nature of investments divorced from commodity production, and the profits resting on them, inevitably rebound back on the system. Financial institutions play an essential role in circulating and redistributing profits extracted in production, but when their investments are relied on to substitute for vanishing surplus value from investment in productive labor, that's a sign that the economy as a whole is on its way to a devastating crash.

This analytical point has real-world impact. It allows us to determine the respective strengths and weaknesses of the two most important classes in society—capitalists and workers—as well as those classes and other social groups hovering between or around them. Such an analysis is crucial for forging strategies and tactics, based on an understanding of which forces are most capable of collective action. What's more, without understanding the nature of the system one can't understand what can replace it.

For instance, the Strike Debt manual calls for a "jubilee"—a one-time society-wide cancellation of debt. And it reminds us that "there are conservative as well as revolutionary jubilees; debt cuts can save the system if what follows is business as usual. A Debt Jubilee needs to be accompanied by a program of social transformation.

"By dissolving the bonds which bind us to the 1%, we seek to forge new and equitable bonds with one



another. ... We are not looking for debt 'forgiveness'; what we seek is the abolition of debt profiteering and its replacement by a society that nurtures the common good." Yet the next sentence shows that the Campaign has not evolved very far in considering how society could be reorganized to eliminate this problem:

"We should be clear: we are not against all debt nor are we against credit. Rather, we call for new, fair arrangements that help us exceed the boundaries of the present (as credit does) without burdening the future in chains of compound interest." Here the manual is paying tribute to the notion of a society built on federated mutual aid associations, a notion dreamed up by early 19th-century anarchists and still at the core of most anarchist visions of a post-capitalist society.

Even on the level of tactics for the present, Strike Debt retains a heavy focus on individual debt. And in at least some cases, the mobilizing potential of that issue is said to outweigh that of traditional, labor-based strikes. Andrew Ross, an NYU Professor and Strike Debt leader, argued in the joint Occupy/n+1 newspaper: "We could also call it [individuals walking away from debt] debt strike. In this time of high unemployment, battered trade unions, and job insecurity, we may not be able to signal our discontent by not going to work, but we can refuse to pay. Alongside the labor movement, a debtors movement. For those who can't strike, we propose a Rolling Jubilee in which we buy debt in default, widely resold online for pennies on the dollar: and then abolish it."

Such attempts to conjure up panaceas to replace the

supposedly lost potential of class struggle always surface in times of relative labor quiescence — often just before the labor movement breaks out once again with stunning size and militancy. And such pessimism about labor's potential is also odd at a time when tens of millions of workers have engaged in general strikes and mass uprisings in recent years in Europe and the Middle East—and when, albeit on an as yet smaller scale, workers even in the U.S. are showing their potential (think Chicago teachers).

In a similar vein to Ross's prescriptions, the manual announces that "Strike Debt is focused on bringing debt resisters together. ... Imagine, if you will, a global Debtors' Union made up of a network of lender-specific sub-unions. ... These unions could, eventually, be platforms for sustained agitation, providing support for strategic actions, including debt strikes, akin to the labor battles of earlier eras."

Exactly how "akin" such a proposal would be to such labor battles, and whether the potential for reviving the latter is really so hopeless, remains an important disagreement between socialists and anarchists within Occupy.

Despite these areas of continuing difference, the door, as we stated at the beginning, has been flung wide open, both for joint struggle over the impact of capitalist-imposed debt, and for theoretical discussions about its origins and how to uproot the system that continually and inevitably fosters it.

One area in which such joint struggle is direly needed, and as soon as possible, is on the level of the federal budget. Here we need to extend the steps forward taken by Strike Debt on issues affecting city workers and services to a national scale. Come Jan. 1, "sequestration," i.e. across-the-board, fixed percentage budget cuts will take effect if there is no agreement on how to maintain or raise taxes and/or to cut spending by varying amounts for specific parts of the budget. Millions of jobs are expected to be lost in such a scenario, both from those directly laid off by the federal government and the spillover impact on the economy.

Of course, if Congressional agreement is found on targeted cuts, these will be on the same devastating scale. Either way, labor needs to begin mobilizing against this threat. These cuts, as in the case of the municipal debt, will occur in order to satisfy financial and other corporate moguls worried that growing federal debt and deficits are hurting their profits.

Agitating for the labor movement to adopt a federal focus in a massive anti-debt, anti-cuts campaign has been made easier by the recent introduction in Congress of HR 6411, a product of National Nurses United's campaign for a "Robin Hood" tax—i.e., a financial transaction tax of the sort which has often been coupled with anti-debt campaigns in Europe. While we have disagreements with the limited size and scope of this tax, it nonetheless opens wide a discussion of what labor and its allies could be doing in the run-up to the devastating cuts coming after the New Year.

For that reason, labor should be grateful to Strike Debt for broadening the terrain on which the discussion of an anti-austerity, anti-capital movement occurs. ■

... Socialist politics

(continued from page 6)

gave credence to the "humanitarian no fly zone," if not to imperialist aid to overthrow Gadhafi.

Palestine's plight deepens

While the Palestinian liberation struggle continues to inspire ever-mounting support around the world in direct proportion to the Zionist, racist, imperialist-backed Israeli state's policy of essentially driving all Palestinians from their historic homeland, it is plagued by the same fundamental weaknesses that, over the course of the past year or so, undermined the mass working-class and popular power exhibited during the Arab Spring.

Absent a revolutionary leadership capable of challenging the bourgeois Palestinian parties and uniting the Palestinian working masses, and in the region more broadly, the desperate plight of the Palestinian people, despite heroic efforts to win international support, has no prospect of near-term resolution.

In the U.S., the Palestinian struggle has, at least among the broad antiwar and social justice forces, won a level of support that previously did not exist. At the recent national conference of UNAC, with 700 present, a resolution was unanimously approved demanding an end to all U.S. military, economic, and diplomatic aid to Israel and supporting campaigns for BDS—that is, boycotts, divestment, and sanctions.

Similarly, for the first time, serious discussions are

underway regarding the validity of the "two-state solution." The growing recognition that the ongoing moves to drive Palestinians from their historic homeland and reducing Palestinian lands to some 18 percent of the original 1947 Palestine increasingly had made "two-state solutions" ridiculous; the reality of disconnected and militarized "bantustans," lacking any semblance of economic viability, has now made "two-state solutions" a horror to contemplate.

Facing the reality of what remains of Palestine today, it is only a matter of time until major organizations in the Palestinian community, as well as the broad solidarity/antiwar movement, take up in a serious manner the arguments for one or another variant of a democratic secular Palestine. The USPCN (U.S. Palestine Communities Network), a broad and prominent national organization, has already rejected the "two-state solution" in favor of a position closer to that of a democratic secular Palestine with equal rights for all, including the critical right of the dispossessed Palestinian Diaspora to return to their historic homeland.

The fate of the Palestinian people begins with their capacity to challenge and remove their bourgeois rulers and unify their struggle for self-determination—and continues uninterrupted with the rise of the Arab revolution to challenge capitalist rule in the region, an example par excellence of Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution—that is, in the modern era, there are no bourgeois solutions to national oppression.

Over the past year we have covered in great detail all of the struggles attendant to the Arab Spring and participated in innumerable U.S. protests in solidarity

with the courageous Arab masses who challenged their U.S.-backed dictators at great risk. We have reported that the unexpected and massive mobilizations of the oppressed were in significant part a product of the mounting crisis of world capitalism and its need to take yet another pound of flesh from the already poverty-stricken Arab masses. In each case, we pointed to the potential power of workers and their allies in motion and to the absolute necessity of organizing this power through the formation of revolutionary socialist parties and associated mass organizations capable of posing the issue of workers' power.

There are no shortcuts to this perspective, in the Middle East or in the U.S. Such shortcuts as were at one moment put forward by the majority current in the Fourth International leadership to the effect that the Mubarak regime should be replaced by one consisting of "all forces dedicated to democracy," that is, a bourgeois-democratic regime as opposed to a bourgeois military dictatorship, have proven to be fruitless and a fundamental departure from our programmatic perspective of permanent revolution.

In every instance, from the risings in the Middle East, to the massive mobilizations in Latin America that brought to power the nationalist/populist regimes in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina, bourgeois reformism in all its variations has again and again proved incapable of advancing the struggle for socialism. In every instance the bourgeois reformers have retarded such struggles—including absorbing "revolutionaries" who harbor illusions into the administration of the capitalist state. (continued next month)

Pakistan: Wedged between bureaucracy and theocracy



Neoliberal reforms forced on Pakistan by IMF and World Bank loans accelerate the process of wage suppression and privatization.

By USMAN KHAN YUSUFZAI

The modern history of the two extremisms in Pakistan, Islamic and neoliberal, is rooted in the interactions between Pakistan and the United States. It was in 1979 that the relationship between the United States and Pakistan shifted dramatically; prior to that, American support to Pakistan was mostly based around countering Soviet influence in India, and later on, the Sino-Soviet split.

At the time, General Zia-ul-Haq had assumed control of the country after arresting and executing Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, supported by the military, right-wing Islamic parties such as Jemaat-e-Islami (JI), and a group of powerful landowning families from Punjab who had been the target of Bhutto's politically motivated nationalization attempts. In return for their support, he immediately began to roll back Bhutto's modest reforms, institutionalize Islamic laws, provide massive state sponsorship for religious groups and institutions, and repress secular-left groups.

In 1979, a coup by a group of officers in the Afghan Army assassinated the prime minister of Afghanistan, Daoud Khan, and placed a Stalinist party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in power in Kabul. The party had no mass basis, being based primarily in the officer corps of the army, and began forcibly instituting social reforms throughout the country, triggering a massive reaction from the more conservative majority of Afghans outside of Kabul. In addition, the PDPA regime had been plagued with factional infighting since its origins, resulting in a government on the verge of collapse in a matter of months. To prevent this, the Soviet Union reluctantly decided to intervene militarily to prop it up.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser under President Carter, famously conceived of this as a "bear trap," the idea was to get the Soviet Union bogged down in Afghanistan, in much the same way the United States had become bogged down in Vietnam just four years earlier.

To that end, the U.S. began Operation Cyclone, the CIA program that funneled money and weapons through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to Afghan *mujahideen* fighting against the Soviet military. As a result, General Zia became the conduit for a massive quantity of arms and dollars flowing in from

the United States and Saudi Arabia. This aid was channeled mainly to reactionary Islamic groups with close ties to Zia and the military establishment.

The infrastructure in the areas in which Operation Cyclone was primarily occurring, namely FATA and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), was extremely undeveloped, with little access to schools, hospitals, and adequate nutrition. Flush with American and Saudi cash, Islamist groups like the JI provided education, health care, food, and support, especially in refugee camps flooded with Afghans fleeing the conflict. They built *madrassas* (religious schools) and mosques, preaching reactionary ideology, and urging their members to participate in *jihad* in Afghanistan. Of course, with no other alternative, most parents seeking literacy for their children had no choice but to send them to one of these schools.

The wave of reactionary terror unleashed upon South Asia that the current U.S. intervention is supposed to combat was actually deliberately created by U.S. intervention in the first place. The proliferation of guns and money translated into social and political power that propelled political organizations of the clergy, the largest of which are Jemaat-e-Islami and Jemaat-e-Ulema Islami, into significance.

However, the military has remained the most powerful institution in Pakistan, largely because of the support and patronage of the U.S. government. Various administrations have consistently seen the restoration of military dictatorship as the best, most "stable" method to advance its goals in the region; thus, the dictator Pervez Musharraf was supported in 2001, because he was willing to play ball with the U.S. "war on terror," and was only ousted as a result of a genuine popular movement after he had sacked the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The military also maintains close ties with militant groups operating within Pakistan, with whom they worked throughout the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and after the Soviet withdrawal. Many of the militants cultivated during the war were then encouraged by the military establishment to continue waging the *jihad* against India, ostensibly over Kashmir. As a result, the legitimate independence movement in Indian-controlled Kashmir was subsumed by the semi-official support for (and resulting Indian repression of) groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), responsible for

(Above) Protest against Taliban shooting of young women's rights advocate Malala Yousafzai.

(Left) U.S. and Pakistani antiwar activists join together on Sept. 20 march to Northwest Territories, which have been targeted by U.S. drone attacks.

the attacks in Mumbai in 2008, and Jaish-e-Muhammad, both of which were implicated in the 2001 attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi.

The Zia regime had pushed hard for policies of industrialization and privatization, heavily supported by U.S. investment, with special consideration given to military officers. Currently, the two largest business conglomerates in the country are the Fauji Foundation and the Army Welfare Trust. Both of these are private trusts that were designed, in principle, to provide a social safety net for veterans and retired officers. In practice, they act as massive corporate enterprises with little public accountability, with the main beneficiaries being Pakistan's most senior military officers.

The military foundations are the largest holders of both urban and agricultural land, in addition to large parts of nearly every industrial sector, including oil and gas, insurance, banking, schools, universities, radio, TV, cereals, and fertilizer. Although the net worth of each of the four military trusts (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Fauji) is not public, Ayesha Siddiqi, author of "Military, Inc.," estimates their 2011 holdings to be around \$15 billion to \$20 billion, or fully 1% of the country's 2011 GDP. This is in addition to the 26% of government expenditure that went to defense, the second highest percentage in the national budget after paying interest on IMF and World Bank loans.

The neoliberal reforms forced on Pakistan as conditions of those loans accelerate the process of wage suppression and privatization that benefit large industrialists and landowners at the expense of working people.

This has placed the army, as the largest industrialist and landowner in the country, into direct conflict with workers and peasants, such as the events in Okara from 2001-2003; as a result of the local tenant farmers' refusal to sign a contract changing them from tenants to lessees on military farms, they were subjected to a campaign of harassment, murder, imprisonment,

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