

Low-wage workers fight for \$15/hr.

By CHRISTOPHER HUTCHINSON

Today, around the world, an insurgent movement of low-wage fast-food workers is beginning again to challenge the notion that “unskilled” laborers deserve to be poor. For decades, while wages stagnated across the board, fast-food workers have barely made more than the minimum wage allowed by federal law—which today is \$7.25.

While \$200 billion is grossed by the fast-food industry annually, the average worker in New York City makes only \$11,000 annually. While profits are being raked in daily off the backs of hard-working people, the average daily salary for most fast-food CEOs is \$25,000 a day. That is more than double what the average New York City fast-food worker makes in a year.

This month, Seattle workers won a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, albeit somewhat altered by the mayor and his business cronies for their own benefit. This announcement marks a giant step forward in raising the real wages of working people across the U.S. Recently-elected socialist city councilor Kshama Sawant played no small role in bringing national attention to this initiative, but it has been the continued mobilizations of fast-food workers around the world that have made a higher quality of life seem within reach.

Fast-food and other low-wage workers walked off their jobs in some 150 U.S. cities on May 15 to demand a minimum wage of \$15 an hour and the right to join a union without retaliation. The action was taken in coordination with strikes and protests by low-wage workers in 150 U.S. cities, and in 30 other countries from Britain to Panama to New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. Fast Food Forward and other groups supported by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) were the main organizers of the protests in the United States.

According to *Socialist Action* reporter Tony Savino, about 200 workers rallied in New York City’s Herald Square before marching through some of Midtown Manhattan’s busiest streets. Latinos and other recent immigrants were heavily represented in the march, one of several actions that took place in the city on May 15.

Bill Onasch writes from Kansas City that “the fast-food actions here involved about 500 people. My guess is that it was about a 60-40 split between fast-food workers and labor/community allies.”

A striking McDonald’s worker told a Channel 9 reporter covering a 6 a.m. protest at a Golden Arches in Kansas City: “We’re going to do whatever it takes. We’re going to come out here and fight. We’re going to let them know we want \$15 an hour and a union.” This was the first of several Kansas City area events over a



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

12-hour period. In the early afternoon, another action took place in Shawnee Park, near a McDonald’s in the Armourdale district of Kansas City, Kan. Firefighters donated food and labor to give the activists a hearty lunch.

Ernie Gotta reports that nearly 100 people marched and rallied in Hartford, Conn, one of many actions around the state by striking workers and their supporters.

Hartford strikers chanted, “What’s outrageous? Poverty wages!” as they marched through the parking lots of McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Burger King, and Dunkin’ Donuts. They were greeted with solidarity by a heavy chorus of car horns including blasts from a Teamster tractor trailer, driven out for the action by Local 671’s president, who represents 1100 UPS workers nearby.

Labor and community support has been important to the movement. A fear of getting fired has kept many workers who may support the effort to organize off the picket line. Samuel Velez, a McDonald’s worker in Hartford and a participant in two other fast food strike actions, told *Socialist Action* newspaper that he tells his coworkers, “Don’t be afraid, join us. You won’t get fired. We got your back.”

Many workers like Velez have children and see building this movement as a way to better provide for their families. When asked about what he thinks the future will hold for the \$15 and a union movement, Velez said, “I really think we’re going to get \$15 an hour because these stores can’t stop us.”

The strikers in Hartford ended the day by marching

(Above) Workers rally in New York City as part of May 15 international strike for \$15 an hour.

into Burger King to encourage their coworkers to join the strike. The noise level was so high that customers could not place their order, and police were called in to disperse the strikers. As the restaurant cleared, a strong refrain of “We’ll be back!” filled the air.

Michael Schreiber reports from Philadelphia that about 100 fast-food workers and their supporters, accompanied by a young people’s drum corps, marched on May 15. The opening rally, outside a MacDonald’s franchise, was led by Fred Jones of Fight For Philly, a community organization linked with SEIU. The protesters attempted to enter the building to briefly address the workers inside but were turned away by city cops.

Strikers who addressed the rally included Glenn Davis, 44, who has worked at a MacDonald’s for more than a year and gets a check for \$200 every two weeks. Davis said that later in the day he was due in court in order to try to save his house from foreclosure. “It’s hard when you go home and your electricity is off,” and all the food in the refrigerator is ruined, he said.

Davis told a reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that several years ago he had a steady job as a regional maintenance supervisor, in which he earned \$12 an hour, plus overtime pay. However, his efforts to help unionize his coworkers cost him his job.

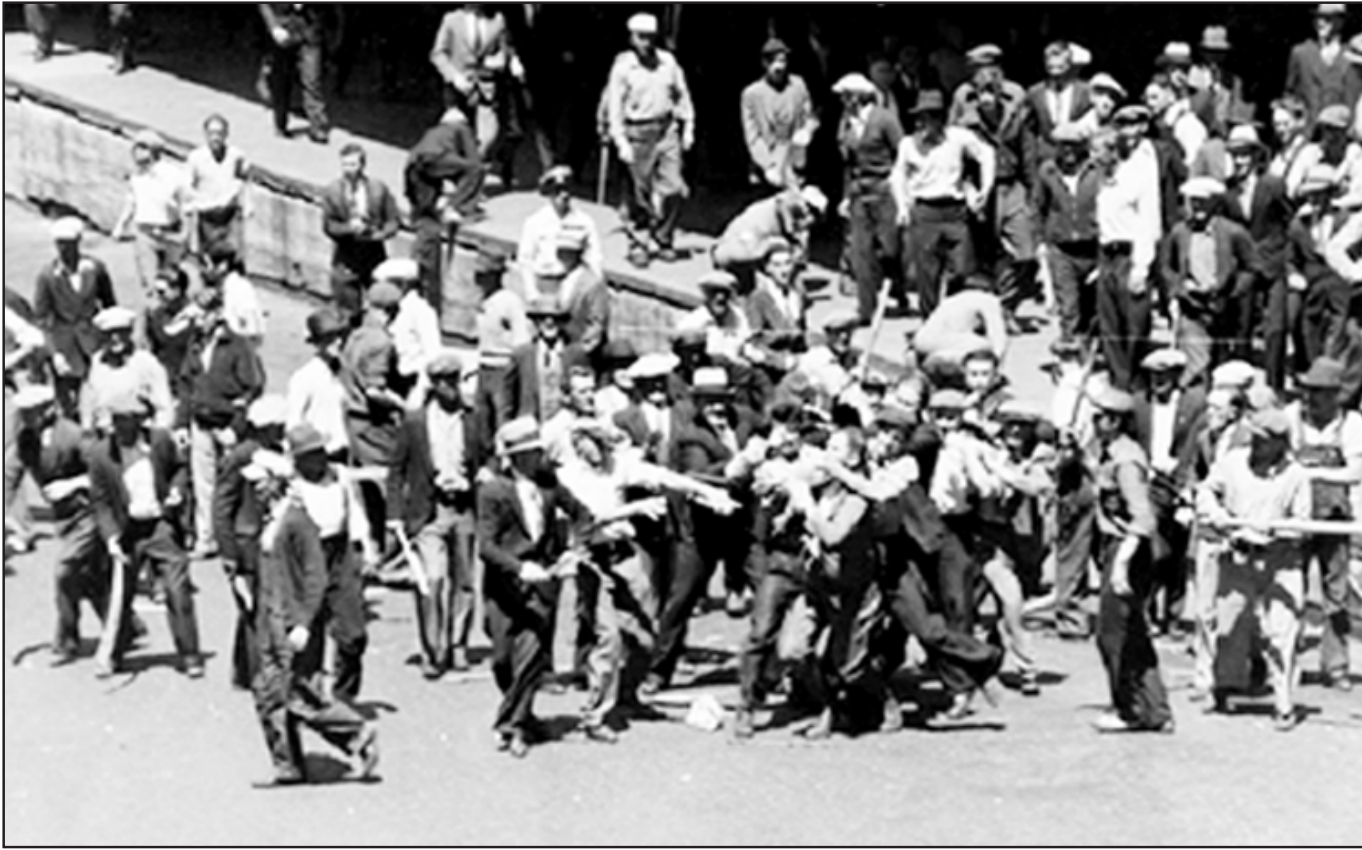
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(Left) Minneapolis truck drivers battle deputies and scabs in 1934 strike.

stitutionally protected speech including street protest marches ... political rallies and events, and displaying political signs."

The letter went on to state, "The proposed Clean Zone imposes a prior restraint on speech and would condition licenses and permits for constitutionally protected speech and expressive conduct on approval by MLB. ... Even worse here, the City of Minneapolis is planning to give that arbitrary unfettered discretion to a private company."

When the City of Minneapolis was originally named as the site of the All-Star game, Commissioner Bud Selig announced, "I think I can conservatively say here today that this game will produce, at a minimum, \$75 to \$100 million just for those five days. ... It is enormous." The Clean Zone was designed to make sure that all those profits would go directly into the hands of the MLB, not second-party vendors.

Jim McGuire, an organizer on the Remember 1934 Street Festival committee, said in a statement to the press, "It is an insult to me, and to all Americans, that before exercising my First Amendment right to speak and assemble I must first get permission from a private company. ... It is ironic that in trying to commemorate a horrific violation of our rights in the past, we are now facing further violations."

"The Pohlads, the Steinbrenners, and Bud Selig don't get to decide when, where, and how we commemorate this important part of our history," he said. Nonetheless, the Minneapolis City Council passed the Clean Zone resolution without discussion.

The ACLU then sued the City of Minneapolis on behalf of the Remember 1934 committee, claiming that the Clean Zone was unconstitutional. The ACLU sought a temporary restraining order, and later an injunction that would bar the city from enforcing the resolution.

A day after the suit was made public, the Minneapolis City Council passed an amended resolution, which reduced the scope of the Clean Zone to six instead of 15 days, and stated, "It is the city's intention that constitutional rights will preempt other considerations." The City of Minneapolis has approved a Teamster march to the street festival site on July 19, and is currently in the process of granting the Remember 1934's street festival permits without fees.

The decision was a huge victory for the Remember 1934 committee, who will now be able to go forward with all their activities as planned. To find out more about the Remember 1934 committee and the events they have planned, please visit their facebook page at: www.facebook.com/Remember1934. ■

Remember 1934 Committee gains victory for constitutional rights

By LISA LUINENBURG

MINNEAPOLIS—The Remember 1934 Committee continues to gear up for the 80th anniversary of the historic Teamster strikes in this city. The strikes, which took place between February and July of 1934, were famous for defeating the Citizen's Alliance (an employer's organization) and making Minneapolis a union town.

On May 4, 2014, the Remember 1934 committee marched as part of the 40th annual May Day Parade in Minneapolis, organized by Heart of the Beast Theater. The parade, which is attended each year by close to 40,000 people, gave the 1934 contingent a prominent place this year at the front of the parade, recognizing the important contribution the strikes made to the city of Minneapolis. The parade was followed by a festival in Powderhorn Park, where committee members talked to people about the history of the strike and invited them to upcoming events.

To commemorate the anniversary of the strike, the Remember 1934 committee is planning a Street Festival for the Working Class on July 19, followed by a family-friendly and union-friendly picnic at Minnehaha Falls Park on July 20. That date marks the anniversary of the day, known as Bloody Friday, when police

set a trap for the strikers in downtown Minneapolis. When the pickets attempted to stop a decoy truck guarded by police, the police ambushed the strikers, shooting and wounding 67 workers (who were mostly shot in the back, as they were running away), and killing two, Henry Ness and John Belor.

The Street Festival will be held on the site of Bloody Friday, in the historical warehouse district in Minneapolis. However, the organizers of this year's Street Festival faced the possibility that their permit request would be denied when the city of Minneapolis passed a "Clean Zone" resolution on behalf of Major League Baseball (MLB) in February of this year. The Clean Zone ordinance banned certain activities, including block events, parades, food vending, music, and the use of signs and banners, from taking place on public or private property in a large area surrounding Target Field and the University of Minnesota, where the MLB All-Star game will be played on July 15. The Clean Zone extended for 15 days around the date of the baseball game, including the date planned for the Street Festival.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) immediately sent the Minneapolis City Council a letter urging them to reject the Clean Zone, based on the fact that "it would deny permits for a vast array of con-

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Behind U.S.-China cyberwar debate

BY JEFF MACKLER

We live in a society of law and order for sure! Indeed, the U.S. likely has more laws than any nation on earth. Many, if not most, are derived from the U.S. Constitution and its associated Bill of Rights, both of which have been subjected to endless revisions or re-interpretations over the centuries to meet the needs of modern capitalism, the present social order that prioritizes the rights of the one percent over those of the vast majority.

Perhaps the single most cited “law” that trumps all others in virtually all circumstances is the government’s invocation of U.S. “national security interests” against all who would infringe on it. Whether applied to military matters, civil liberties and democratic rights, trade, economic competition, or business more generally, the nation’s courts never flinch from subordinating the rights of individuals, unions, social justice organizations or even the health and well-being of the entire nation to the fundamental needs of the capitalist ruling elite.

This includes spying on the entire population, deporting without legal recourse two million immigrants, interrogating hundreds of thousands of Muslim-Americans, banning or thwarting mass protests, and the murder and torture of accused “criminals” who have been denied their rights of due process. It also includes prioritizing the profits of trillion-dollar oil corporations to life itself, wiping out affirmative action in the name of a “colorblind” society, re-segregating and privatizing public education, obliterating pensions and hard won social programs at every level, banning access to legal abortion, criminalizing the poor and imprisoning the largest number and proportion of the population in the world.

In the name of “national security” or the associated “war on terror, or even in the name of “democracy,” the rights of all have been eroded faster and with greater intensity than at any time in the modern era.

In the name of this “national security,” the U.S. Justice Department on May 19 indicted five Chinese hackers—all members of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. The five were charged with 31 counts of espionage based on National Security Agency and FBI claims that they had employed cyber-war and related surveillance techniques to steal U.S. corporate secrets from Westinghouse Electric, the U.S. Steel Corporation, and other companies. The five were alleged to be members of the Shanghai-based and now well-known Unit 61398 of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, which the NSA had tapped into in order to steal what it claims are some 700,000 pages of evidence that they claim proves their case.

No one, according to two multi-page articles in the May 20 and May 21 *New York Times*, seriously believes that the U.S. government has even a slim chance of pursuing the matter other than for its propaganda value or to “shame” the Chinese government. Nevertheless, in John Dillinger-era style, the FBI printed the names and photographs of the five on old-fashioned “WANTED BY THE FBI” posters, presumably for public display in U.S. government buildings, as if a curious passerby might see the poster and subsequently turn in the accused.

U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder, according to *The Times*, “said that while nations routinely spy on one another for national security purposes, it was out of bounds for China to use state espionage operations to gain commercial advantage.”(!)

An accompanying “News Analysis” piece by David E. Sanger in the May 20 *Times* was entitled, “With Spy Charges, U.S. Draws a Line That Few Others Recognize.” Sanger wrote, “Spying for economic advantage,” says Holder, “is not U.S. policy. This is a tactic that the U.S. government categorically denounces. As President Obama has said on numerous occasions, we do not collect intelligence to provide competitive advantage to U.S. companies or U.S. commercial sectors.”

The Times analyst rejected, as did the Chinese government the following day, Holder’s distinction between what the U.S. government insists is spying to protect its “national security interests” and spying to gain economic advantage. Sanger wrote, “For example, the U.S. spies regularly for economic advantage when the goal is to support trade talks; when the Clinton administration was locked in a high-stakes negotiation in the 1990s to reach an accord with Japan, it bugged the Japanese negotiator’s limousine. At the time the chief beneficiary would have been the Big Three auto companies and a smattering of parts suppliers. It is also widely believed to be using intelligence in support of trade negotiations underway with European and Asian trading partners. But in the



view of a succession of Democratic and Republican administrations, that is fair game.”

Sanger continued, “Companies can also be targets. Documents released by Mr. [Edward] Snowden showed that the American government pried deep into the servers of Huawei, one of China’s most successful Internet and communications companies. The documents made clear that the N.S.A. was seeking to learn whether the company was a front for the People’s Liberation Army and whether it was interested in spying on American firms. But there was a second purpose: to get inside Huawei’s systems and use them to spy on countries that buy the company’s equipment.”

The following day, May 21, *The Times* carried another front-page article, entitled, “U.S. Snooping on Companies Cited by China: A Response to Charges Against 5 in Army.” The article provided meticulous details on U.S. economic spy operations around the world, stating, “Now, every one of the examples of N.S.A. spying on corporations around the world is becoming Exhibit A in China’s argument that by indicting five members of the People’s Liberation Army the Obama administration is giving new meaning to capitalistic hypocrisy. In the Chinese view, the United States has designed its own system of rules about what constitutes ‘legal’ spying and what is illegal.”

There is no doubt among any of the leading capitalist nations that spying to gain economic advantage is the rule, not the exception. No serious capitalist competitor would expend millions or billions of dollars in research and development if the data or “intellectual property rights” could be obtained by sophisticated surveillance operations overwhelmingly funded by the state power that exists to defend and advance the interests of always competing industrialized nations. There are no exceptions to this iron law of competition—a law that in and of itself is testimony to the irrational nature of capitalism.

Were we to live in a truly civilized society—that is, a socialist world—the scientific and technical achievements of any nation would become the collective property of all. Indeed, research and development would be the collective and shared enterprise of the entire world. Today, however, it is the more often than not the prized and exclusive property of the nation with the largest armaments and associated surveillance apparatus.

Nineteenth-century German military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz, in his famous and often quoted work on war, stated almost 200 years ago that war is “a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse carried on with other means.” Today, “peaceful” capitalist surveillance/spying or its military-directed cyberwar variant employed to infect, alter or destroy opponents’ storage and communication systems is a leading instrument of corporate America’s politics—of its inherent drive for world domination. It is carried out in the modern era by the unprecedented surveillance of virtually the entire world, accompanied by ever more sophisticated and brutal means of warfare, including privatized death-squad armies, drone warfare, torture, and the ever-increasing production of new weapons of mass destruction.

The documents leaked by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, reportedly 1.3 million, merely scratched the surface of what the U.S. military and economic war machine practices daily. Capitalist China and all other competitors in today’s crisis-ridden world order, ruled by the elite few in each nation, are

third-rate players by comparison, but nevertheless compelled by the logic of their “profit above all” social systems to use whatever means available to remain competitive in the deadly game of never-ending rivalry for the world markets, resources, and the domination and exploitation of its peoples.

Edward Snowden was one among 1.4 million U.S. contractors with security clearance, which enabled him to open the door on the monstrous Orwellian truth that freedom in its truest meaning is increasingly illusory in capitalist society.

Civil libertarians and defenders of democratic rights learned, perhaps for the first time, that the Bill of Rights has been largely shredded in the name of “national security” and the “war on terrorism.” No one is free from government spying on their private lives and persons. But Snowden, as well as whistleblowers Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, revealed an equally ominous threat to human existence—the threat derived from the fact that U.S. and world capitalism recognize few, if any, limits to the methods they employ to achieve world domination.

Unintentionally perhaps, the whistleblowers revealed that capitalism cannot be reformed. It must be replaced with a new social order that prioritizes human needs and the democratic and collective organization of society for the common good and not for the private profit of the one percent. This will be the first society in human history in which the majority truly rule in their own interests and through their own institutions. It will be a society free from the tyranny of the elite minority—a truly egalitarian society, within which the full potential of human beings can and will be fully realized. That social order is socialism. ■

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Kidnapped girls become tools of U.S. imperial policy in Africa

(Photo) Video released by Boko Haram.



By GLEN FORD

Glen Ford is executive editor of *Black Agenda Report*. This article first appeared in the May 14 edition of BAR. It is reprinted here with permission from the editors.

A chorus of outraged public opinion demands that the “international community” and the Nigerian military “Do something!” about the abduction by Boko Haram of 280 teenage girls. It is difficult to fault the average U.S. consumer of packaged “news” products for knowing next to nothing about what the Nigerian army has actually been “doing” to suppress the Muslim fundamentalist rebels since, as senior columnist Margaret Kimberley pointed out in these pages [of *Black Agenda Report*] ... the three U.S. broadcast networks carried “not a single television news story about Boko Haram” in all of 2013.

Nor did the misinformation corporations provide a nanosecond of coverage of the bloodshed in the Central African Republic, where thousands died and a million were made homeless by communal fighting over the past year. But that doesn’t mean the Nigerian army hasn’t been bombing, strafing, and indiscriminately slaughtering thousands of, mainly, young men in the country’s mostly Muslim north.

The newly aware U.S. public may or may not be screaming for blood, but rivers of blood have already flowed in the region. Those Americans who read—which, presumably, includes First Lady Michelle Obama, who took her husband’s place on radio last weekend to pledge U.S. help in the hunt for the girls—would have learned in the *New York Times* of the army’s savage offensive near the Niger border, last May and June. In the town of Bosso, the Nigerian army killed hundreds of young men in traditional Muslim garb “Without Asking Who They Are,” according to *The New York Times* headline.

“They don’t ask any questions,” said a witness who later fled for his life, like thousands of others. “When they see young men in traditional robes, they shoot them on the spot,” said a student. “They catch many of the others and take them away, and we don’t hear from them again.”

The *Times*’s Adam Nossiter interviewed many refugees from the army’s “all-out land and air campaign to crush the Boko Haram insurgency.” He reported: “All spoke of a climate of terror that had pushed them, in the thousands, to flee for miles through the harsh and baking semidesert, sometimes on foot, to Niger. A few blamed Boko Haram—a shadowy, rarely glimpsed presence for most residents—for the violence. But the overwhelming majority blamed the military, saying they had fled their country because of it.” In just one village, 200 people were killed by the military.

In March of this year, fighters who were assumed to be from Boko Haram attacked a barracks and jail in the northern city of Maiduguri. Hundreds of prisoners fled, but 200 youths were rounded up and made to lie on the ground. A witness told the *Times*: “The soldiers made some calls and a few minutes later they

started shooting the people on the ground. I counted 198 people killed at that checkpoint.”

All told, according to Amnesty International, more than 600 people were extra-judicially murdered, “most of them unarmed, escaped detainees, around Maiduguri.” An additional 950 prisoners were killed in the first half of 2013 in detention facilities run by Nigeria’s military Joint Task Force, many at the same barracks in Maiduguri.

Amnesty International quotes a senior officer in the Nigerian Army, speaking anonymously: “Hundreds have been killed in detention either by shooting them or by suffocation,” he said. “There are times when people are brought out on a daily basis and killed. About five people, on average, are killed nearly on a daily basis.”

Chibok, where the teenage girls were abducted, is 80 miles from Maiduguri, capital of Borno state. In 2009, when the Boko Haram had not yet been transformed into a fully armed opposition, the military summarily executed their handcuffed leader and killed at least 1000 accused members in the states of Borno, Yobe, Kano and Bauchi, many of them apparently simply youths from suspect neighborhoods.

A gruesome video shows the military at work. “In the video, a number of unarmed men are seen being made to lie down in the road outside a building before they are shot,” Al Jazeera reports in text accompanying the video. “As one man is brought out to face death, one of the officers can be heard urging his colleague to ‘shoot him in the chest not the head—I want his hat.’”

These are only snapshots of the army’s response to Boko Haram—atrocities that are part of the context of Boko Haram’s ghastly behavior. The military has refused the group’s offer to exchange the kidnapped girls for imprisoned Boko Haram members. (We should not assume that everyone detained as Boko Haram is actually a member—only that all detainees face imminent and arbitrary execution.)

None of the above is meant to tell Boko Haram’s “side” in this grisly story (fundamentalist religious jihadists find no favor at BAR), but to emphasize the Nigerian military’s culpability in the group’s mad trajectory—the same military that many newly-minted “Save Our Girls” activists demand take more decisive action in Borno.

The bush to which the Boko Haram retreated with their captives was already a free-fire zone, where anything that moves is subject to obliteration by government aircraft. Nigerian air forces have now been joined by U.S. surveillance planes operating out of the new U.S. drone base in neighboring Niger, further entrenching AFRICOM/CIA in the continental landscape. Last week it was announced that, for the first time, AFRICOM troops will train a Nigerian ranger battalion in counterinsurgency warfare.

The Chibok abductions have served the same U.S. foreign policy purposes as Joseph Kony sightings in central Africa, which were conjured-up to justify the permanent stationing of U.S. Special Forces in the

Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, in 2011, on humanitarian interventionist grounds.

This past March, the U.S. sent 150 more Special Ops troops to the region, claiming to have again spotted Kony, who is said to be deathly ill, holed up with a small band of followers somewhere in the Central African Republic. The United States (and France and Britain, plus the rest of NATO, if need be) must maintain a deepening and permanent presence in Africa to defend the continent from ... Africans.

When the crowd yells that America “Do something!” somewhere in Africa, the U.S. military is likely to already be there. Barack Obama certainly needs no encouragement to intervention; his presidency is roughly coterminous with AFRICOM’s founding and explosive expansion. Obama broadened the war against Somalia that was launched by George Bush in partnership with the genocidal Ethiopian regime, in 2006 (an invasion that led directly to what the United Nations called “the worst humanitarian crisis in Africa”).

He built on Bill Clinton and George Bush’s legacies in the Congo, where U.S. client states Uganda and Rwanda caused the slaughter of 6 million people since 1996 – the greatest genocide of the post War World II era. He welcomed South Sudan as the world’s newest nation—the culmination of a decades-long project of the U.S., Britain and Israel to dis-

member Africa’s largest country, but which has now fallen into a bloody chaos, as does everything the U.S. touches, these days.

Most relevant to the plight of Chibok’s young women, Obama led “from behind” NATO’s regime change in Libya, removing the anti-jihadist bulwark Muammar Gaddafi (“We came, we saw, he died,” said Hillary Clinton) and destabilizing the whole Sahelian tier of the continent, all the way down to northern Nigeria.

As *BAR* editor and columnist Ajamu Baraka writes in the current issue [May 14, 2014], “Boko Haram benefited from the destabilization of various countries across the Sahel following the Libya conflict.” The once-“shadowy” group now sported new weapons and vehicles and was clearly better trained and disciplined. In short, the Boko Haram, like other jihadists, had become more dangerous in a post-Gaddafi Africa—thus justifying a larger military presence for the same Americans and (mainly French) Europeans who had brought these convulsions to the region.

If Obama has his way, it will be a very long war—the better to grow AFRICOM—with some very unsavory allies (from both the Nigerian and American perspectives).

Whatever Obama does to deepen the U.S. presence in Nigeria and the rest of the continent, he can count on the Congressional Black Caucus, including its most “progressive” member, Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), the only member of the U.S. Congress to vote against the invasion of Afghanistan, in 2001. Lee, along with Reps. Marcia Fudge (D-Ohio), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) and fellow Californian Karen Bass, who is the ranking member on the House Subcommittee on African, gave carte blanche to Obama to “Do something!” in Nigeria. “And so our first command and demand is to use all resources to bring the terrorist thugs to justice,” they said.

A year and a half ago, when then UN Ambassador Susan Rice’s prospects for promotion to top U.S. diplomat were being torpedoed by the Benghazi controversy, a dozen Black congresspersons scurried to her defense. “We will not allow a brilliant public servant’s record to be mugged to cut off her consideration to be secretary of state,” said Washington, DC, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton.

As persons who are presumed to read, Black Caucus members were certainly aware of the messy diplomatic scandal around Rice’s role in suppressing United Nation’s reports on U.S. allies Rwanda’s and Uganda’s genocidal acts against the Congolese people. Of all the high-profile politicians from both the corporate parties, Rice—the rabid interventionist—is most intimately implicated in the Congo holocaust, dating back to the policy’s formulation under Clinton. Apparently, that’s not the part of Rice’s record that counts to Delegate Norton and the rest of the Black Caucus. Genocide against Africans does not move them one bit.

So, why are we to believe that they are really so concerned about the girls of Chibok? ■

Seattle city council approves \$15 wage

By ANN MONTAGUE

On June 2, the Seattle City Council voted unanimously for a plan to implement a \$15 minimum wage for all workers in Seattle, which includes a yearly cost of living increase. This victory was won in the streets. It started in 2013 when SEIU started organizing fast food strikes in the Seattle area around the demand of a \$15 an hour minimum wage.

The courageous workers who walked off the job in 2013 and in increasing numbers in 2014 created the impetus for a movement throughout the city. Their testimony and persistence in telling their stories expanded the movement beyond fast-food workers to all workers who were making only minimum wage—and ultimately to the Seattle community as a whole.

The movement grew as Kshama Sawant, the Socialist Alternative candidate for city council, picked up the baton and made it the central demand of her successful campaign. The city council vote came only six months after the formation of \$15 Now—an aggressive organizing campaign that kept the issue visible and created “15 Now” community groups throughout the city.

When the \$15 minimum wage is implemented, it will lift the wages of 100,000 workers—two thirds of whom are women. Over the next 10 years, it will also transfer \$3 billion from businesses to workers who are at the bottom of the wage scale.

In her victory speech, Sawant said it was clear that this success would inspire people across the nation. She reminded supporters about how it had been won: “15 was not won at the bargaining table as the so-called ‘sensible compromise’ between workers and business. It was not the result of the generosity of corporations or their Democratic Party representatives in government.

“What was voted on in the city council was a reflection of what workers won on the street over this last year. In 15 Now, groups of workers and activists

met weekly, held mass conferences and debates, organized rallies, and engaged thousands of people around the city about the need for a living wage. We won the public debate; in a recent poll 74% of voters now support 15.

“We defeated the arguments of business in the corporate media. Let this be our guide. At every stage of the struggle, corporations and their representatives have sought to undermine our efforts. And future victories will also depend on the organization of working people fighting for our interests.

“This is also why we need an alternative to the two parties representing business. Despite the Democratic Party’s posing as a progressive alternative to the Republicans, we can see here in Seattle how it was only with the election of a socialist that the establishment was forced to pass real gains for workers. We need many more independent and socialist candidates to turn the tide against corporate politics.

“Our victory is not complete, but we have fought until the last day, the last hour, against all the loopholes demanded by business.”

\$15 Now struggled against the compromises that the labor leaders and the business community representatives on the mayor’s advisory committee brought forth to the city council. This included a long implementation proposal and giving employers credit for tips that their workers receive. And at the last minute, they added a lower “training” wage, and changed implementation of the first increases from January 2015 to April 2015.

Sawant was able to get support for a multi-lingual application that will be easily accessible for workers to file wage theft claims. This included significant fines for any business not implementing the pay raises



as required by the minimum wage legislation. In two to four years there will be an evaluation of the ordinance by the Minimum Wage Commission.

\$15 Now has been circulating a ballot measure that would implement \$15 in January 2015 for big businesses, with a three-year phase-in for small businesses. There would be no tip credit and no training wage. They will decide whether to proceed with the ballot measure later this month.

Meanwhile, Steve Caldeira, president of the International Franchise Association, is threatening a legal challenge. He maintains that hundreds of franchise owners should be considered “small businesses” under the implementation plan, since their enterprises are not operated by their brand’s corporate headquarters. Caldeira is threatening to file a legal challenge against Seattle to “overturn the unfair and discriminatory minimum wage plan.” And so, the struggle for a living wage must go on. ■

... Wage fight

(continued from page 1)

Striking MacDonald’s worker Munira Evans told *Socialist Action* newspaper that she is struggling to support her two children. “Everything is going up—the price of milk, electricity,” she pointed out. “Why can’t our wages also go up?”

After marching down Broad St., the protesters rallied a second time outside another MacDonald’s near City Hall. Chants included, “MacDonald’s, come off it! You’ve made enough profit!”

Shamira Jones told the rally that she works two jobs in order to try to make ends meet; one is at the airport and the other is at a Popeye’s. Although she has worked at the airport for five years, she still makes only \$7.60 an hour. Michael Burrell, 25, is a cabin cleaner at the airport and makes \$7.25 an hour with no benefits. Addressing strikers who are fast-food workers, he said, “Why should you guys make food [for customers], when you can’t eat properly yourselves?”

Several workers complained that they are forced to put in extra hours of work



for which they never receive compensation. A man named Justin, who works at a MacDonald’s, said that at the end of a week, when he reviews all the hours of work that he put in, the wages that he received “don’t add up.” But when he asks about the missing money, the man-

agers reprimand him and say that he’s “got an attitude.”

A young woman who works at Subway for \$7.50 an hour concluded, “I’m striking today for \$15 and a union because I want my daughter to have a better life. We’ve fighting for the future. You can’t

be afraid to speak out.”

The global fast-food strike was soon followed by a march on McDonald’s corporate headquarters in Illinois by some 2000 workers from around the country. The action forced the corporate bosses to flee their headquarters.

This type of mass action will continue to bolster other initiatives to raise the minimum wage. SEIU and local coalitions in Richmond and Oakland have also launched minimum-wage campaigns. Although they are working towards \$12.50 per hour, it is clear that momentum is gathering behind this new wave of organizing.

With every new action the demands of fast-food workers make President Obama’s recent announcement of a \$10.10 increase by 2016 look more like crumbs off the tables of the ruling elite. Clearly, the Democrats and Republicans are feeling the heat from the ignition of what may one day be a greater independent working-class movement. ■

U.S. schools are still segregated

By T.J. BLACKMORE

May 17 marked the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* that ended the “separate but equal” doctrine that allowed districts to segregate schools based on race. The landmark 1954 ruling served as a stepping stone in the rise of the civil rights movement.

But today, despite the many gains made by the civil rights movement, the goal of desegregating the education system remains elusive. According to a report by Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute, schools now are more segregated than any time since 1970.

President Obama’s Race to the Top education policy—which promotes charter schools, high stakes testing, and the new Common Core State Standards—is only exacerbating the problem of school segregation. Research conducted over the last seven years by the University of

California, Los Angeles’ Civil Rights Project reveals that charter schools are more racially isolated than traditional public schools in virtually every state and large metropolitan area in the nation.

A large body of research also shows that charter schools, on average, do not out-perform traditional public schools (Gill et al., 2007; Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwoyer, 2010). Additionally, despite receiving vast amounts of public money, charter schools’ financial books are not open to the public, and little, if any, oversight is provided by school districts or state departments of education.

A report issued on May 5 by the Center for Popular Democracy and Integrity in Education documents waste, fraud, and abuse by charter school executives in 15 states, amounting to over \$100 million in taxpayer money. And that report doesn’t even cover the remaining 27 states that publicly fund charter schools.

On May 9, the House of Representatives passed a bill

with overwhelming bipartisan support that would provide an additional \$300 million in funds for expanding charter schools. There are now more than 2.5 million students attending more than 6400 charter schools in 42 states. New Orleans will become the first city to completely run an entire district with only charter schools; the last five public schools have closed their doors this month.

Journey for Justice Alliance, a coalition of community organizations, is filing complaints under Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the Department of Justice that cite school closures that disproportionately affect communities of color in New Orleans, Newark, and Chicago.

The vast amount of evidence concerning charter schools, their academic performance, and criminal misuse of public funds makes clear that President Obama and our elected officials are less concerned with improving education, desegregating schools, and creating an equitable education system than they are with lining the pockets of their corporate masters. ■

South Africa

What went wrong?

(Photo) Strikers at the Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana, where police massacred 34 workers in August 2012.

merely evaporate, has literally disarmed and disqualified the popular movement in playing any active ongoing role.”

In 1993, before the ANC fully took power and as apartheid laws were falling, a transitional government, which included ANC officials, accepted a \$850 million loan with secret, but typical, International Monetary Fund conditions—lower import tariffs, cuts in state spending, and large cuts in public sector wages. In 1996, when launching the neoliberal “GEAR” program, ANC leader Thabo Mbeki (and later South African president) said, “just call me a Thatcherite.” Mbeki had already said in 1974 that the ANC never pretended to be a socialist party, telling the world that the ANC would go easy on capitalism, if not welcome it. This was reiterated in 1987, when a South African Communist Party message to the second COSATU trade-union congress warned, “socialism is not on the agenda.”

The U.S., British and other imperialists engaged in direct talks with the ANC, with the Soviet Union as partners. The ANC was asked to give-up armed struggle, limit mass mobilizations, and step back from nationalizing the banks, as the ANC had promised in the Freedom Charter.

One ANC top official told the *Los Angeles Times* as far back as 1988, “We are probably getting more pressure from Moscow to agree to negotiations than we do even from London or Washington today.” Soviet officials advised the ANC to go slow on implementing the Freedom Charter and to accept “monopoly capitalism” for many years.

Dr. Neville Alexander, a South African Trotskyist and leader of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action, later wrote, “the ANC itself never set out to overthrow the South African state; instead, their stated goal was always to force negotiations on the regime.”

Joe Slovo, the Stalinist SACP leader in 1992 and one time head of the armed wing of the ANC, offered the key compromise of a “Sunset Clause,” to be included into the new South African constitution, which guaranteed that a white-Black coalition capitalist government would remain in power for at least five years. It was adopted, although the term “power-sharing” was removed. The impending collapse of the Soviet Union and the utter confusion of those educated by the politics of Stalinism drove these life-long sell-out reformists even further to the right.

By 1991, Mandela reassured President Bush and U.S. corporate types that “our perspectives have changed” on the issue of nationalizing banks. “We chickened out,” admitted Ronnie Kasrils, ANC central committee member and one-time head of intelligence for the armed wing of the South African Communist Party.

South Africa followed a far different path than revolutionary Cuba. The corrupt capitalist state in Cuba was smashed, but not so in South Africa. All of the capitalist institutions remain intact in South Africa, including the capitalist police and army.

A shock to the entire political system was the police/government/corporate massacre in August 2012 of 34 striking miners at the Lonmin mine in Marikana. Clumsy attempts by South African officials at a cover-up included planting weapons next to bodies. Incredibly, the workers themselves have been charged with murder. All of this is shown and more in an incredible film: www.minersshotdown.co.za.

ANC leader Cyril Ramphosa is on the board of the Lonmin mine and has an estimated wealth of \$1 billion. He called strikers “criminals,” and even COSATU said much the same. The irony is that Ramphosa was once regarded as a militant miners’ union leader.

The struggle did not take place in a vacuum. Six months earlier, scores were killed after 17,000 miners were fired nearby at the world’s second largest platinum mine, Impala platinum. The Marikana massacre itself was followed by a massive wave of wildcat strikes.

What went wrong in South Africa? The post-apartheid South African tragedy was not a mistake. The ANC was not caught napping; nor has it merely succumbed to the temptations of power.

No, there’s something more fundamental here. The ANC was heavily influenced by the SACP, which made the error of embracing capitalist rule as part of its acceptance of the strategy of so-called “two-stage democratic revolution.” This doctrine, which was developed under Stalin, views capitalist development as a “progressive” replacement for backward dictatorships. The socialist goal, workers’ power, is relegated to a distant future.

The reformist Russian socialists of the early 20th century, called Mensheviks, held a similar view. Backward Tsarist Russia, they said, must go through an extended period of capitalism, which would grant democratic

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By MARTY GOODMAN

Following are major portions of a talk by Socialist Action member Marty Goodman at a panel discussion, “The Mandela Legacy,” sponsored by Socialist Action at the Left Forum in New York City, on May 31. Other speakers on the panel included Nellie Bailey, Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, and Margaret Kimberly from *Black Agenda Report*.

When we saw Obama with Mandela’s family on TV, we were supposed to forget the CIA’s role in Mandela’s imprisonment on Robben Island. We were supposed to forget that heroic Mandela spent 27 years in an apartheid jail but remained on the U.S. terrorist list until 2008. The TV images implied a passing of the torch from Mandela to Obama. But can we compare the commander in chief of a country that promotes war and racism with a man who played a colossal role in toppling the horrors of apartheid?

For decades U.S. imperialism blocked meaningful U.N. sanctions, even after the Sharpsville massacre in 1960, when 69 were shot protesting pass laws. The impunity continued long after the murder of anti-apartheid leader Steven Biko and up to 1000 school children protesting the Afrikaans language in schools were mowed down in 1976.

All the while, U.S. investments poured into apartheid South Africa, topping \$1 billion. New York’s Chase Bank was a prominent investor. It took a massive campaign for Congress to finally override President Reagan’s veto, and to allow a weak congressional sanctions bill to pass.

We are also supposed to forget how “democratic” Israel, itself an apartheid state, played its own sinister role as South Africa’s second largest trading partner and a source of weapons and military training in its dual role as a U.S. surrogate.

South Africa is a test of working-class strategy—reformism versus revolution. Unfortunately, 60 years after the adoption of the so-called 1955 “Freedom Charter” and 20 years after the fall of formal apartheid, no component of the ruling “triumvirate”—the 102-year-old African National Congress (ANC), the trade-union confederation COSATU, or the South African Communist Party (SACP)—has passed the test of revolutionary leadership.

As the leading economy in Africa, a socialist revolution would have had a massive impact on the continent and world politics. It would be an alternative to what we see with the kidnapping of school girls in Nigeria; people would shun groups like Baku Haram. A revolutionary government in South Africa would inspire revolutionary struggle, provide it with material aid, and give the masses an alternative to the World Bank starvation policies prevalent throughout Africa.

Make no mistake, South Africa is a player in the world economy, seen as an “emerging country.” Decades of apartheid and its aftermath guaranteed a very high rate

of profit in the mining of gold, platinum, diamonds, and other valuable resources. Manufacturing and the financial sector are also growing. Yet today, the share of wealth held by the Black majority is actually less than under racist apartheid. The term “class apartheid” best describes South Africa today.

The failure of neo-liberal capitalism could not be more devastating than in South Africa, which is one of the most unequal societies on earth.

- South Africa’s official unemployment rate stood at 16% in 1995 and rose to 30% in 2002. Adding discouraged workers to that number, the figure was 43%.

- Average Black household income fell 19% from 1995 to 2000, while average white household income rose 15%. At the same time, primary corporate taxes dropped from 48% to 30% in 1999.

- Half of South Africans earned just 9.7% of national income in 2000, down from 11.4% in 1995. The richest 20% earned 65% of all income.

- In 2013, using the national poverty line of \$43 a month, 47% of South Africans, mostly Black, remained poor. In 1994, this figure was 45.6%.

Adding to those outrages is the \$25 billion debt inherited from the apartheid regime and assumed by the ANC government. Moreover, the ANC refused to press for reparations from the corporations that profited from apartheid. And the ANC agreed not to prosecute apartheid murderers after the findings of its own “Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” Compare that to the aftermath of the post-World War II Nuremberg trials, when several Nazis were hung!

What is interesting is that the capitalist class actually came to realize that apartheid was an impediment to economic growth—that is, profits. Capitalists learned that, despite their racism, more Black workers were needed in towns instead of being banished to bantustans. Moreover, super-exploited Black workers, as well as “Coloureds” (mixed-race people) and “Indians,” could not afford to purchase a sufficient amount of South African-made goods for economic expansion (profits).

In recognition of these realities, some corporate leaders signed an open letter in 1985 calling for full citizenship rights for “all our people.” Signers included mining interests like the giant Anglo-American and de Beers corporations, and also multi-nationals such as General Motors, Coca Cola, General Electric, and Toyota. Finally, mass mobilizations, sanctions, and international outrage at apartheid pushed these criminals to cut a deal with the ANC. At an early stage, they undertook negotiations with Mandela in his prison cell.

In February 1990, National Party President de Klerk unbanned the ANC, SACP, and Pan Africanist Congress and released Mandela from jail. Apparently, as part of the deal, the United Democratic Front or UDF, which represented much of the mass movement, was asked to disband by the ANC. As the South African socialist Patrick Bond puts it, “the ANC, in encouraging the UDF to

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rights. The Mensheviks supported the liberal capitalist government of Alexander Kerensky after the fall of the Tsar.

A version of the “two-stage democratic revolution” was used by Lenin in his early essay, “Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,” as he strategized the tasks of workers and peasants in power. But Lenin discarded that vague formula in 1917 in his famous “April Thesis,” delivered on his return from exile. Lenin castigated the leadership of the old Bolshevik Party (Stalin, Kamenev, etc.) for supporting Kerensky.

Why was Lenin angry? Because the capitalist system was already imperialist, globalized and deeply entangled with the Russian aristocracy. The capitalists became a reactionary force, as they are in South Africa and all over the world today.

The revolutionary Lenin-Trotsky government, as it was known, declared “all power to the soviets,” the mass workers’ coalitions. After workers toppled the bourgeois Kerensky, they began to carry out the democratic tasks of the revolution, at the same time that they moved forward on socialist goals. This was Leon Trotsky’s famous “permanent revolution” in practice: There are no progressive capitalist governments anywhere—neither here in New York nor in Cape Town. Not in the age of imperialism.

In the 1930s, the conservatized, privileged bureaucracy led by Stalin applied the “stagist” strategy worldwide. This retrograde strategy led to defeats and massacres in China and Spain, and later in Chile, Indonesia, and many other countries.

The political landscape appears to be slowly changing in South Africa, with some promising developments. The South African national election, on May 9, resulted in sustained support for the ANC, with 62% of those voting, about the same as 1994, although significantly down in several urban centers. The center-right democratic alliance drew 22%.

The new Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema—who is facing



(Above) NUMSA General Secretary Irwin Jim.

corruption charges—won 6.4%. The EFF has demanded nationalization of the banks and the redistribution of land, as did the historic Freedom Charter. Their representatives appeared in parliament in red berets and red worker’s clothes.

A significant development took place when the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, or NUMSA, declared last December that they are splitting from the ANC alliance. They have vowed to form a workers’ party (“United Front and Movement for Socialism”) that might run candidates in 2016, but they sat out any role in the last election. Their leading spokespersons, like General Secretary Irwin Jim, claim to be Marxists and call for the

nationalization of resources.

Jim has spoken to the formation of a “united front” of class struggle and the building of a “movement for socialism.” NUMSA has said that its break with the ANC is “irreversible.” If this union, with its 340,000 workers, pursues a genuinely class-struggle movement, then it will be a development of world importance. With few exceptions, the leaders of the working class throughout the world come as beggars to the capitalists’ table. Without revolutionary leadership, the workers’ movement will remain beggars. ■

... Ukraine

(continued from page 12)

have said in media interviews that they come from the Russian side of the border—but they emphasize that they are “volunteers.” Evidence of organized and direct Russian military intervention remains elusive, no matter how much the White House and the Kiev government scream about it.

On June 1, Reuters printed an interview with the commander of the Vostok Battalion, Alexander Khodakovsky, a Donetsk native who formerly had been the head of an elite unit of the Ukrainian state security service. Khodakovsky told Reuters that he had gradually shifted his political outlook, from rejection of the Kiev coup in February to now embracing the cause of complete independence from Ukraine.

“The split of the country is final. There is nothing uniting us with them (the Kiev leadership) now,” Khodakovsky said. He told Reuters that he had no illusions in Russia’s immediate goals for the region: “I think Russia uses us to pursue its geo-political interests, have a buffer between itself and the West. We do not deceive ourselves about that. But even knowing this, we stick to Russia because it is our culture.”

Addressing the question of non-Ukrainian volunteers, he said, “there are no Chechens now. There were. They left yesterday [May 29] with their injured and killed.”

The Donetsk Peoples Republic was reinforced by a May 11 referendum; it was announced that 96 percent of voters in Luhansk province had endorsed self-rule for the DPR and almost 90 percent in Donetsk province. Since then, support for the DPR appears to have remained strong in the region. If anything, according to reporters on the ground, bloodshed caused by the Ukrainian military offensive has hardened popular opinion against the Kiev regime.

Striking coalminers marched and rallied in Donetsk’s Lenin Square on May 28 in support of the DPR and in protest of the attack by the Kiev army. Many spoke out against the presence of fascists in the Kiev government. The miners, on strike in at least six mines, were members of the Union of Mineworkers, which apparently has had links to ousted President Victor Yanukovich’s Party of the Regions.

And on May 25, several thousand people demonstrated in Donetsk against the coup government in Kiev and the Ukrainian presidential election held the same day. Later, a large portion of the crowd marched to the residence of Rinat Akhmetov, an industrialist who is supposedly the richest man in Ukraine.

The protesters were angered by the fact that several days earlier Akhmetov had ordered thousands of his workers to march in daily rallies against the “separatists.” The workers were reportedly given time off



(Left) Construction workers cheer striking miners as they march in Donetsk on May 28.

from work for the rallies, and threatened with reprisals if they refused. In retaliation, some of the May 25 protesters demanded nationalization of Akhmetov’s properties, which include mines, metal works, banks, insurance, power generation, media, and real estate.

Demands for nationalization of the property of the oligarchs, which have been made in several instances, show that a degree of working-class consciousness underlies the protest activity in Ukraine—especially in the major industrial belt in the country’s east. With little doubt, many working people realize that yoking their country to the big imperialist powers, the United States and the European Union, will provide few rewards for Ukraine. They are fearful that the economic measures stipulated by the EU will send their already low living standards tumbling.

Unfortunately, a mass-based leadership that can speak to the interests of working people is as gravely lacking in the Donetsk Peoples Republic as it is in the rest of Ukraine. This is readily reflected in the provisions of the DPR’s constitution—which is a profoundly conservative document.

The constitution, adopted on May 16, proclaims the DPR as a parliamentary state, with Russian and Ukrainian as its official languages. It is evident that the document’s framers believe the new state must remain capitalist. For example: “The right of private property is protected by law.”

The constitution enshrines the Russian Orthodox Church as the “leading and dominant belief” in the new republic and as the “backbone” of the “Russian World.” Rights are granted to citizens of the DPR “from the moment of conception,” a phrase that indicates there will be restrictions on the right of women to choose to terminate pregnancies. And gay and lesbian relationships are outlawed: “Any forms of perverted unions between people of the same sex are not ac-

knowledged, not allowed, and will be prosecuted.”

The constitution also raises the prospect of the new state’s becoming part of “Greater Russia,” although Moscow has so far given a cold shoulder to this. Annexation to Russia, however, would provide little relief for Ukrainian workers. Working people in Russia are held down by their own exploitative capitalist class, and oppressed by the autocratic Putin regime.

Indeed, the myriad of secret negotiations between the new U.S./EU-advised Ukrainian government, Russia, and the U.S. appear to be centered on critical economic matters that include who will control Ukraine’s massive shale gas reserves, the fourth largest in the world, and whether Russia’s annexation of Crimea will be eventually formally recognized.

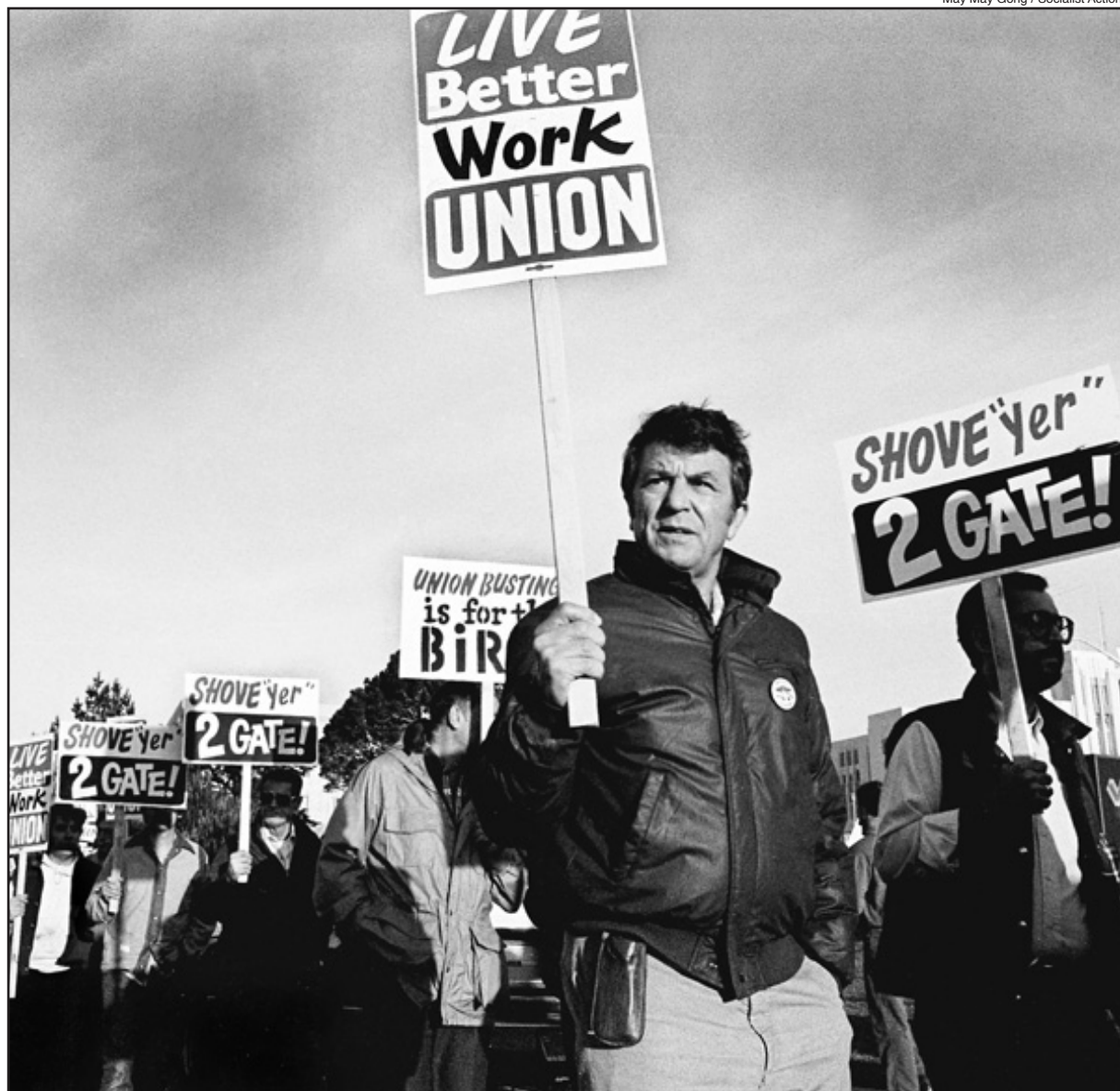
The future exploitation of oil, gas, and other fossil-fuel resources are at stake in all these matters. Crimea’s offshore fossil fuel resources, estimated to be worth over \$1 trillion, are currently under Russian hegemony, while U.S. oil cartels, before and after the February coup, have been signing contracts to frack Ukraine’s massive reserves.

In all these instances, the pursuit of profit for the capitalist elite trumps the needs of the Ukrainian people, not to mention the interests of all humanity. Today, diplomatically conducted and increasingly military-backed “oil wars” over the very resource whose continued use spells doom for humankind are in full swing in the events surrounding the struggle for power in Ukraine.

Working people in Ukraine need a revolutionary party and program that can transcend national and cultural differences and unite the country in a broad movement to sweep away the capitalist oligarchs and their fascist shock troops. Instead of the current Kiev government of billionaires and thieves, Ukraine needs a government that is led by working people and serves their interests. That is a socialist government.

In the meantime, the Kiev government is escalating its war against people in the east who are seeking self-rule or autonomy. Once the conflict widens, the danger increases of direct U.S. military intervention.

With U.S. troops taking part in ongoing maneuvers in Poland and the Baltic states, and U.S.-backed mercenaries from Blackwater already on the ground, this is no small threat. This danger must be answered in the United States by building a powerful and united antiwar movement that stands in uncompromising opposition to all U.S. intervention in Ukraine. ■



(Left) Nat Weinstein (ctr.) joins construction workers' picket line in San Francisco in 1980s.

Nat Weinstein: life-long revolutionary and a founder of Socialist Action

By JEFF MACKLER

Nat Weinstein, life-long revolutionary socialist and a founder of Socialist Action, died on May 9. He was 89 years old.

Nat joined the Socialist Workers Party in 1945. He overstated his age to get into the Army as a youth, but then met members of the SWP, which had a strong fraction in the Seaman's Union. Nat did his military service in the Merchant Marine, a dangerous assignment in which U.S. supply convoys not infrequently came under fire and were sunk. He was won to Marxism while serving on a ship bound for Venezuela, when he became friendly with a seaman on board who was a member of the SWP.

Nat's dad was a Jewish worker of Russian origin, and a prizefighter, who in his waning years came to live with Nat and his wife Sylvia. Sylvia also joined the SWP in her youth and worked in the SWP National Office in New York for many years. Later, she was part of the team that staffed Socialist Action's national headquarters, and she wrote a regular column for Socialist Action newspaper. Sylvia died in 2001 in San Francisco.

In the 1960s Nat took a party assignment to rebuild the Seattle branch after most SWP members there had split to form the Freedom Socialist Party. Later, he and Sylvia moved to San Francisco.

Before that, Nat was the organizer of the New York Socialist Workers Party branch. Nat, a member of the SWP's National Committee, played a critical role in the party's growing relationship with Malcolm X. Sylvia Weinstein, who along with Nat helped to organize an historic meeting between Malcolm and Fidel Castro, was contemptuously characterized by the bourgeois press as "Fidel's blonde prostitute" because she was often seen entering and leaving the Harlem hotel where Fidel had decided to stay after U.S. officials tried to interfere with his lodging arrangements while he spoke for Cuba at the United Nations.

During his time in New York, Nat became a member of the Painters Union, where he acquired the old-school skills that painters of his generation learned well. These included wood graining, marbleizing and gold leafing—techniques that Nat would later put to good use.

Highly skilled, Nat could paint a pine board to look like any kind of quality wood or stone. He was fond of telling the story of his experience in marbleizing several dozen giant wooden pillars in a huge downtown San Francisco commercial building. While high on a scaffold, Nat remembered, he had been denounced by a woman below, who was outraged that he appeared to be painting over the building's beautiful "marble" pillars. He recalled that the woman was astonished to learn that the opposite was

the case!

Nat, who taught his skill in classes to several advanced painters, published a successful book entitled "Wood-graining, Marbleizing and Other Decorative Techniques." Typical of Nat, he contributed the proceeds to Socialist Action—a hearty sum indeed.

After moving to San Francisco, Nat earned his livelihood as a painter, but was eventually blacklisted from the trade. This took place after Nat had become part of an important opposition caucus in Painters Local 4, which defended the local and its fighting leader, Dow Wilson, at a time when the Mafia-led international union was trying, unsuccessfully, to place it in receivership. After that experience, Nat made his living as a freelance painter and took what jobs were available using his special skills.

The employers hated the fact that Local 4 had won the best painters' contract in the country, a pioneering contract that included provisions to reduce the workweek with no cut in pay in order to bring on new painters.

In 1966, Dow Wilson was shot and killed. The men who were arrested for the murder had links with disgruntled contractors who were roiled at the gains achieved by militant union action. SWP comrades continued as militant activists in the Painters Union following Wilson's murder. Local 4 continued its militancy for many years, contributing to the radicalization of the 1960s and long after.

Nat never feared to express his views in the SWP, at that time a party with a rich tradition of internal democracy and one that was inclusive of differing political viewpoints. Nat was sometimes in a minority in party debates, including in regard to the party's support for the 1973 Palestine Liberation Organization-initiated demand for a "democratic secular Palestine." Nat believed that this represented a potential step in the direction of abandoning permanent revolution in favor of a "two-stage solution." In time, however, he became convinced that this was not the case.

As with other disputes, Nat firmly expressed his views, and always in a comradely manner—a trait that served the party well and enriched the discussions and debates. Similarly, Nat was initially reluctant to accept the SWP's groundbreaking views on the revolutionary potential of Black Nationalism. But again, he allowed the test of events and time to resolve what in his mind had been unanswered questions.

Nat was a man of great political and organizational courage. He was among the first to recognize the moves by major SWP leaders to abandon the party's historic programmatic acquisitions with regard to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which states that in the modern era, the so-called democratic or bourgeois revolution would not and could not be separate and distinct from the

socialist revolution.

In this critical internal dispute, he put aside a host of legitimate organizational differences, which might have caused oppositionists to focus on important but secondary matters, in order to organize a principled opposition in defense of the party's fundamental ideas. These were expressed in texts that Nat authored and/or supported with regard to the 1979 Nicaraguan and Iranian Revolutions, when the SWP majority leadership adapted to critical weaknesses of the Sandinistas and essentially lent support to the bourgeois Iranian leadership of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In the face of what soon became a massive and unexpected purge of all SWP oppositionists, Nat stood firm in his ideas and traveled to several branches around the country in an effort to convince comrades of the validity of the SWP's historic program. He thereby began the process of assembling the initial cadre who, in 1983-84, became Socialist Action's founding members. These included some dozen old-timers—founding members of the SWP and the Fourth International in 1938.

At the height of the purge of SWP oppositionists, Nat, who fought to remain in the party in order to try to reorient the SWP and to win the best militants to his cause, was compelled to operate under the most difficult of conditions. These included the occasion after Nat's longtime mentor, Tom Kerry, who had been in political agreement with him, passed away and Nat was called on to be the obvious keynote speaker at Tom's memorial meeting. Nat took on this difficult assignment with courage, realizing that mere mention of Tom's critical views on the evolution of the SWP—at a public meeting—could lead to his rapid expulsion from the party.

I will never forget how skillful Nat was in recounting Tom's life, including his dedication to the founding ideas of the party that he and Tom had devoted their lives to. To remain in the party during the great purge initiated by the SWP's Jack Barnes leadership while doing justice to Tom Kerry's life was done with the utmost honesty. Tom, a top SWP leader for decades and co-leader with Farrell Dobbs of the SWP following the death of SWP founder James P. Cannon, would have been proud of Nat's oration.

Not long afterwards, Nat, along with oppositional leaders Lynne Henderson, Frank Lovell, and George Breiman, were bureaucratically suspended from the SWP and ordered to refrain from all contact with others who had been undemocratically and unjustly expelled. This was an order that went against Nat's very being. Believing that the SWP's revisionist course had become irreversible, he began the process of preparing to build a new party, which could unite those expelled from the SWP—and potentially with other revolutionary socialists who were still members of the SWP. Nat's dedication to the Cannon tradition in the SWP and to the party's historic program—derived from the struggles of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition, and the bedrock of American Trotskyism since 1928—was the decisive element in Socialist Action's emergence as a viable national formation.

Nat was the driving force in initiating key organizational steps to implement the decisions of Socialist Action's founding convention in Chicago. These included seeking out talented comrades to come to San Francisco to work full time as professional revolutionaries for our new party, securing a national headquarters—which he and other comrades with skills in the construction trades helped to remodel—and founding, within weeks of our formation, *Socialist Action* newspaper.

Nat and I were elected co-national secretaries at our founding convention, a position Nat held for many years. We were close, if not daily, collaborators for over 15 years. He eventually took on the assignment as Socialist Action's National Labor Secretary, when he played critical roles in several Bay Area and regional strikes in which SA comrades had jumped in to help secure some significant victories.

Immediately after the founding of Socialist Action, Nat played a key role in San Francisco support activities for the national strike of Greyhound bus drivers. Nat also took the lead in engaging Socialist Action in the one-year P-9 Austin, Minn., strike by Hormel meatpacking workers, and he was in the forefront of engaging our party in Ron Carey's Teamster presidential election campaign. Carey was elected to head the national Teamsters union, but was removed from office by government prosecutors who falsely accused him of illegal actions.

When Teamster oppositionists abandoned Ron Carey in the face of government intervention in the union, which was at that time under government receivership, Nat remained a loyal supporter. His support was subsequently vindicated when Carey was cleared of all charges against him, albeit too late to resume the presidency that had been stolen from him by a combination of corrupt Teamster officials and government union-busters.

Nat's Socialist Action pamphlets on the promise of the Carey presidency remain instructive reading for union activists today. He attended the founding convention and

(continued on page 9)

Film: 'The Immigrant'

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"The Immigrant," directed by James Gray, is an engaging and thoughtful film set in New York in 1921, with production values true to the times. The theme concerns immigrants who are forced into prostitution—a horrid victimization of women that is still prevalent today. Gray is frank about the exploitation of women in this manner, but tempers his presentation when it becomes a love triangle.

The film focuses on the exploitation of Ewa (pronounced "Eva") a woman who emigrated to the U.S. with her sister, Magda, from Poland, after their parents had been killed by soldiers.

The story opens with an image of the Statue of Liberty in the middle of New York Harbor and the head and shoulders of a man, shot from the back, against a dawn pink sky. Wearing a derby and a black coat, the look is reminiscent of a well-known painting by René Magritte. The man is Bruno Weiss, a "dealer" in women.

We soon see thousands of weary immigrants, newly arrived at Ellis Island, standing in long lines, their baggage at their feet. Delicate, fresh-faced, wide-eyed and beautiful, Marion Cotillard plays Ewa. Her sister, Magda (Angela Sarafyan) does little but cough and look distressed. You get the impression that the sisters are inseparable.

Magda is culled from the line and sent to the infirmary. Ewa is told that when she is diagnosed she will be kept till she is cured, then possibly deported. Unfortunately, Ewa is charged with having "loose morals" and will also be deported.

Enter Bruno Weiss (Joaquin Phoenix, in another standout role, after "Her" and "The Master"). He bribes an official to free Ewa, under the condition that she work for him to pay off the bribes, and for money for her sister's care. Bruno is a shady businessman, pimp, and impresario of a cheesy burlesque review, owned and run by Rosie, a blowsy, demanding yet sympathetic, older woman—like many who are complicit in the female flesh-trade business.

High-born and well-educated, Ewa is a sylph compared to Bruno's full-figured female performers who double as prostitutes. She has an innate sense of pride and morality, with overtones of suspicion and paranoia intrinsic to a young, foreign woman such as she, alone in New York. Though she recoils

in fear (and revulsion) at another's touch, she is determined and strong, constantly nagging Bruno that she wants money for her sister's care.

Bruno's "girls" are costumed to represent foreign women. Their outfits showcase their breasts to an audience of howling men in the smoke-filled audience, and a scattering of smirking women. One of Bruno's wealthy patrons pays to have Ewa "break in" his meek virgin son, who leaves after a bit, still a virgin.

Pressured into prostitution, she runs off and makes it to her well-off aunt and uncle's house. But her stay is cut short; she is arrested and detained for deportation. There, she attends a show featuring Orlando, the magician, and the opera star, Enrico Caruso. (This is true: Celebrities often volunteered to perform for Ellis Island detainees.)

Charismatic, and exciting—also a liar and a cheat—Orlando, aka Emil (Jeremy Renner), Weiss's cousin, falls in love with Ewa. The film then becomes more a story of rivalry for a woman's love and the desire to kill for her. Bruno loses his theatre and is sadly reduced to putting on his show in the Central Park's squalid tunnels for the down-and-outs and criminals who live in them. You sit there thinking, "How low can one get?"

In a church, Ewa goes to confession. Bruno eavesdrops and learns the truth of how she came by the designation of a woman of "loose morals." Emotionally undone, he confesses to her of his betrayal. In the end, Ewa's aunt comes through with some money. Thus, she and her sister are spared lives of degradation. And Bruno's love for her outweighs his vices.

In real life, of course, not many women are as fortunate to have wealthy relatives. The exploitation of women (and, sadly, children) for prostitution and slavery will soon be a bigger moneymaker than the drug trade. Today, it is a multi-billion dollar "industry."

"In many respects, the girl trade has replaced the drug trade," writes Malika Saada Saar, on the website, "Think Progress." She adds, "Drug routes have been repurposed to sell girls along I-95, and up and down the I-5 corridor. The emergence of the Internet also allows the sale of a girl to be executed with ease, discretion, and convenience for the buyer."

Saada goes on to say, "And unlike selling



Socialist Action at Left Forum

"Reform and/or Revolution: Imagining a World with Transformative Justice" was the Left Forum 2014 official theme. Thousands of radicals and socialists representative of a broad spectrum of the U.S. and international left participated in hundreds of workshops, panels and plenary sessions over the May 30-June 1 weekend at City University of New York's John Jay College.

Socialist Action newspaper sponsored two well-attended workshops. The above photo shows the panel that discussed "The Mandela Legacy and the Way Forward for South Africa," in which Marty Goodman of SA and Nellie Bailey, Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, and Margaret Kimberly from *Black Agenda Report* presented a critical analysis of Nelson Mandela and the present capitalist plunder in South Africa.

A second panel sponsored by *Socialist Action*, entitled, "Independent Political Action in the Streets and the Political Arena," featured SA 2012 congressional candidate Chris Hutchinson; Socialist Alternative's 2013 Minneapolis city council candidate, Ty Moore; Green Party 2014 gubernatorial candidate for New York, Howie Hawkins; Marilyn Levin and Joe Lombardo, United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) co-coordinators; and former political prisoner Lynne Stewart. *Socialist Action* National Secretary Jeff Mackler participated in a popular UNAC antiwar panel entitled, "The New Face of U.S. Imperialist Wars."

a drug, the girl is 'reusable.' The ugly truth is that it is less risky and more profitable to sell a girl than crack cocaine or meth. The U.S. government spends 300 times more money each year to fight drug trafficking than it does to fight human trafficking. And the criminal penalties for drug trafficking are generally greater than the ones usually levied against those who traffic in girls."

She continues, "Traffickers, and especially the politely termed 'Johns,' are rarely arrested and prosecuted. Which explains the growing demand for very young girls—the

click of a mouse, a 'John' can purchase a girl online on legitimate websites like Backpage.com, with minimal fear of punishment."

Malika Saada Saar is the executive director of Rights 4Girls, a U.S.-based human rights organization for young women and girls. Unfortunately, the majority of these women—among the most oppressed and degraded victims of American capitalism—do not end up with a sympathetic "trafficker" like the reformed Bruno Weiss in the movies. ■

... Nat Weinstein

(continued from page 8)

led *Socialist Action*'s subsequent participation in the Labor Party initiated by Tony Mazzochi of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union. He authored several *Socialist Action* pamphlets on labor struggles, in each instance pointing to key lessons that would prove invaluable for future fighters.

His pamphlet, "Socialist Action: Who We Are, What We Stand For: Why Karl Marx's critique of capitalism is alive and well over 100 years after his death," stands the test of time and continues to provide deep insights into the history and relevance of revolutionary socialist ideas. Similarly, Nat was frequently the initial author of *Socialist Action* draft political resolutions that formed the basis of our political orientation for years to come.

During the 1999 U.S./NATO intervention and war in Yugoslavia, Nat developed important differences with others in *Socialist Action* over matters of Marxist theory, which directly related to our work in the U.S. antiwar movement. Following a major debate on these points that took place within *Socialist Action*'s leadership and ranks, Nat's views did not prevail.

In 2001, not long after the convention that settled that dispute, Nat and his co-thinkers left *Socialist Action*—in my view, mistakenly—and soon afterwards formed the Socialist Workers Organization and its magazine, *Socialist Viewpoint*. The former dissolved a few years later. A few of Nat's comrades continue to publish their magazine and engage in important political work.

Nat, like all revolutionaries who devote their lives to the liberation of humanity from capitalist oppression and exploitation, was not without faults. He had a hot temper that could on occasion distract comrades from the essence of his arguments. But his faults in political discussion were far outweighed by his strengths—of which the greatest was his clarity of exposition. If you had a



Yuri Kochiyama died at 93 on June 1 in Berkeley, Calif. Yuri's radicalization began when she and her family were interned in an Arkansas concentration camp with other Japanese-Americans during World War II. In the 1960s Yuri's Harlem apartment was often the meeting place for social activists, including Malcolm X, whom she cradled on her lap immediately after he was shot in 1965.

Yuri was a supporter of human rights causes from Puerto Rican independence to Mumia Abu-Jamal's freedom. Her life was an inspiration to all social movements. A few days before her passing she was visited by Lynne Stewart, Pam Africa, and Ramona Africa during their Bay Area tour sponsored by the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and 45 other organizations.

disagreement with Nat, you soon learned that this was no place for raising secondary or subordinate issues.

Nat had the capacity to get to the heart of the matter post-haste and to drive his point home. With just a few exceptions, when subjective judgments could mar his political insight, Nat's political acumen was the indispensable quality that helped *Socialist Action* remain on course to this day.

I visited Nat at the Veterans Hospital in San Francisco a week or so before his death. He faced his end with the same courage and revolutionary optimism that he exhib-

ited during his entire life.

Nat remained optimistic for the socialist future and convinced more than ever that capitalism's evolution could only produce increasing misery for people everywhere. His confidence never waned in the capacity of the working class to advance humanity's cause and usher in the socialist future.

Nat left behind two daughters, Bonnie and Debbie, and several grandchildren. Messages to Nat's family can be sent to Bonnie Weinstein, giobon@comcast.net. or to Carole Seligman, caroleseligman@sbcglobal.net. ■

Dreamers of the world, unite!

By MARK T. HARRIS

Book review: "Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA," by Frances Golden, Debby Smith, Michael Smith. (HarperCollins, 2014.)

To imagine a socialist United States is what many people might consider a utopian vision. In that particularly pragmatic strain of American thought, utopian has an almost pejorative association to it, too. As in, get real, that'll never happen.

In fact, so thoroughly have the intellectual traditions of socialism been marginalized in the United States that it's hard to imagine a major corporate publisher even bringing out a book on the theme of a socialist America.

With HarperCollins new title, "Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA," the latter at least has happened. The brainchild of veteran literary agent Frances Goldin and co-editors Michael Smith and Debby Smith, the new anthology offers a lively cross-section of writing on themes related to revolutionary social change. From economists to poets, psychotherapists and labor activists, the book strives admirably to suggest the potential for a better world beyond capitalism.

Contributors include Angela Davis, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Rick Wolff, Clifford D. Connor, Juan Gonzalez, Dave Lindorff, Paul LeBlanc, and Michael Moore.

Where it starts is with an appraisal of just how far we are from the egalitarian ideal. As writer Paul Street aptly summarizes in the book's opening essay, inequality and poverty are deeply entrenched traditions in American life—and worsening. According to the 2010 census, the number of citizens living in official poverty in the United States stood at 46.2 million. That's over 15 percent of the population, or every one in seven people.

If you consider also those living in "near poverty," as a New York Times 2011 survey did, the overarching reality of poverty expands to include an astonishing one in three Americans. Of course, for minorities the reality of American life has long been more akin to a permanent Great Depression. In 35 of the largest cities, the first half of 2010 found unemployment rates among Blacks ranged from 30 to 35 percent. The poverty rate of 26 percent was double that of whites.

A disparity of justice and riches

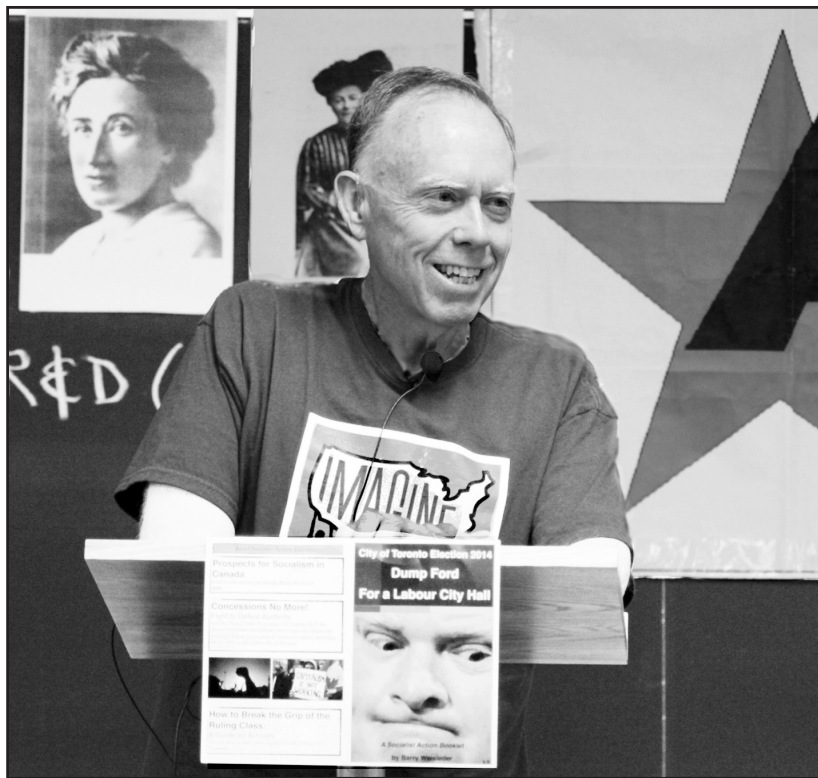
For a country long considered the richest in the world, the figures are astonishing. But there's a reason for the rich nation designation. This is a country that produces families like the Waltons, magnates of the Wal-Mart empire of cheap goods and underpaid jobs, who now own more wealth than 48 million families. Consider also the 57,000 people with at least \$30 million in wealth, representing the top .05 percent of the population. Then there's the rarified air breathed by the American billionaire class, the pinnacle of concentrated ruling-class wealth and power. There are about 400 of them.

It's hardly left-wing hyperbole to suggest that the power of these elites corrupts democracy. In fact, a recent Princeton study came to just such a conclusion. The report, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," analyzed data from nearly 1800 U.S. policies enacted between 1981 and 2002. As political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page write, "economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence."

The modern United States is more an economic oligarchy than a popular democracy, conclude Gilens and Page. That's a dry way of saying that raw, naked power in the hands of a privileged few rules the nation.

Indeed, as the 21st century proceeds, global extremes of wealth and inequality are reasserting themselves with renewed force, declares French economist Thomas Piketty in his surprise bestseller, "Capital in the Twenty-First Century." From Piketty we get a long view of rising inequality as a structural component of international capitalism, one expected to deepen in coming years. With few ideas of their own, Piketty's sobering critique has "free market" apologists screaming "Marxist!" at the professor.

But Piketty is hardly a Marxist. His solutions involve not revolutionary social and political change, but ideas like implementing a "global wealth tax" to reduce inequality and raise living standards. In a recent Salon essay, Thomas Frank, author of "What's the Matter With Kansas" (Holt, 2005), criticizes Piketty's solution for ignoring the importance of labor's organizing as a counter to capitalist greed.



(Left) Clifford D. Connor, a contributor to "Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA," speaks at May 23-24 Socialist Action (Canada) international conference in Toronto.

That's right, as far as it goes. Currently, as Frank notes, only 6.7 percent of American workers have union collective bargaining rights to protect them from the predatory greed of employers. An organized, independent mass labor movement is indeed a prerequisite to turning back the oligarchy's long assault on living standards.

But, ultimately, what's all the organizing for? Is it just to engage in a perpetual historical tussle with employers over higher wages? Or to protect Social Security benefits, resist skyrocketing college tuition costs, and demand much-needed paid family medical leave for new parents? Is our vision only to see the AFL-CIO transformed into a strong, fighting instrument of the people's interests? Is that all it will take to earn capitalism a seal of approval as a fair and just system?

Or is the answer something more? Is the answer a completely new society, one beyond capitalism? Is the answer socialism?

What exactly is the socialist alternative? Definitions abound, including even one that claims Barack Obama's politics fall under the socialist label (not). For sure, socialism is not the distorted legacy of dictatorial bureaucratic power represented by Stalinism in the Soviet Union or China. Nor is it the reformism of a kinder, gentler capitalism envisioned in the traditions of European Social Democracy.

Simply put, as several contributors to this book explain, socialism means economic democracy. It is political democracy extended into economic life, the people managing society's productive resources in the interests of the majority. The socialist alternative equals a society in which economic decisions are made on the basis of humane goals and rational planning, democratically determined and for the benefit of all. This is in sharp contrast to the authoritarian business model of modern capitalism, in which corporations exist only to return profits to owners and investors.

Despite its marginalization, socialism as a philosophy or political alternative has rich traditions in the United States going back to the 19th century. Indeed, the great historic movements of labor, civil rights, women's rights, the movement to end the war in Vietnam, and other social struggles have often been led or deeply influenced by men and women of socialist ideals.

The limits of bipartisan politics

Admittedly, Imagine is less concerned with how to achieve socialism—the leadership issue—than it is with persuading readers of the essential validity of the socialist vision. With this limitation in mind, the book is appropriately titled. For one of the worst consequences of mainstream politics and media is the way it deflates the social imagination. This is no accident, of course.

The corporate news media rarely sees beyond the narrowly defined limits of bipartisan politics, the perennial election dramas and legislative skirmishes among professional politicians who at the end of the day remain in service to "the 1 percent." On television the likes of David Gregory, Chris Matthews, and others solemnly pontificate over the endless minutia of beltway power politics, assuring us what is under discussion is very, very important. Even the earnest liberals of MSNBC fall into this narrow, stupefying perspective. It's all a dreary, cacophonous blur of a system on

autopilot, flying straight into its own eventual ruin.

At this late stage in capitalism's history, it ought to be obvious that the system, even at its most prosperous, cannot offer the majority of the people enduring economic security or social peace. Even during a boom cycle, the specter of recession or depression always looms. Meanwhile, basic necessities of life such as food, housing, health care, and jobs remain ultimately just pawns of a "free market" in which nearly every human resource is reduced to a commodity. And when economic struggle between competing nations reaches an impasse, let the wars begin! How many hundreds of millions of the modern era have died violently as a result of global capitalism's failures?

Some of us imagine a different world, one in which economic exploitation is a thing of the past. We envision an end to a system in which privileged elites gorge on profits earned at the expense of society's well-being and future.

Instead, we foresee a time in which the world's great technological and productive capacity is used to lift up society, eradicate poverty, and empower the people in ways far more profound than most can now imagine.

But imagine and act we must. For as the early 20th-century Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg once described it, the choice before the world was one of "socialism or barbarism." A century later we see that latter choice still embodied in the ever-enduring possibility of nuclear war, but also in the specter of catastrophic climate change caused by the skewed legacy of industrial capitalism.

Despite the cynicism of our age, the possibilities for a new society are endless and profound. As the contributors to this provocative new collection of writing on socialism remind us, we can indeed only begin to imagine the limits of what is possible.

As the French student movement of May 1968 once declared, we also face now only the very realistic task of demanding the impossible. ■

Climate panel condemns Harper's direction

Scientists studying climate change urge a dramatic move away from fossil fuels, like oil and coal, to renewable energy to avoid rising sea levels and an increase in storms, flooding, drought and other extreme weather. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its April 2014 report, insists that the output of renewable energy, like solar and wind power, must triple by mid-century.

But the Stephen Harper-led Conservatives are taking Canada in the opposite direction with their devotion to tar sands oil and pipelines.

Canada is falling farther behind its commitment, made as part of the Copenhagen agreement, to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 17 per cent from 2005 levels.

Environment Canada, a federal government department, in a report on emissions from 1990 to 2012, admitted that the energy sector surpassed transportation as the largest generator of gases causing climate change. It says the oil and gas sector now accounts for one-quarter of the country's gas output, edging out vehicle emissions. Energy sector emissions have soared since 1990 – up about 70 per cent – due to crude oil and tar sands expansion.

The IPCC report in September stated that climate change is caused by human activity, pointing to growing evidence of its causes.

The April report, released in Japan, focussed on the impact of climate change and warned that global warming was already damaging crops, spreading diseases and increasing acidity in our oceans. Wars and mass migration could be the outcome, it said.

The next gathering of negotiators from around the world to try to reach a climate deal will take place in Paris in 2015. But who will be calling the shots? Will it be directly affected workers and farmers, or big business politicians, and billionaire oil and gas tycoons? — B.W.

By BARRY WEISLEDER

By the time you read the hard copy of this article in the June edition of *Socialist Action*, the provincial election in Ontario will be history. During the campaign an unusual controversy arose within the labour-based political party membership, which is the subject of this commentary.

Some long-time New Democrats, suddenly on May 23, issued a critique of Andrea Horwath's provincial election campaign.

Now, there's nothing wrong with constructive criticism of one's own party, even in the midst of its desperate efforts to woo voters.

But I have to wonder: *What* were those 34 progressive voices saying before the writ was dropped? *Where* were those activists one year ago when Horwath backed the Liberal minority government when it was still fresh from gas plant, e-health, and ORNGE scandals?

And just *what* were those activists doing during the past decade when Socialist Caucus militants and other concerned New Democrats spoke repeatedly at party conventions in opposition to leadership policies that favour corporate bail-outs, tax incentives to business, state funding of Catholic separate schools, the estrangement of the labour movement, and the abandonment of public auto insurance and Ontario Hydro?

Where were they when Andrea Horwath, Gilles Bisson, and the ONDP Election Planning Committee prevented socialists from being NDP candidates in the 2011 Ontario election?

No doubt, the current Ontario NDP electoral cam-

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

NDP Ontario election campaign draws internal fire

Change starts with joining the fight!

campaign is the worst since Bob Rae vainly defended his odious Social Contract in 1995. Gerry Caplan is right to complain that the platform has "No coherent theme, no memorable policies, nothing to deal with the great concerns of New Democrats everywhere."

Horwath ditched the provincial pension plan she HAD previously touted. She proposes a measly increase in the corporate tax rate, a new ministry of "Savings and Accountability" to cut \$600 million a year (shades of Rob Ford's anti-gravy train mythology), and is silent on poverty and growing social inequality.

But *what* do Caplan, and Michelle Landsberg, Judy Rebick, Cathy Crowe, Winnie Ng and the others propose? Abstain? Vote Liberal?

Have they forgotten that Liberals act like Tories in government? That the Liberals suspended the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike for tens of thousands of education workers? That the Liberals kept millions without decent housing, affordable

post-secondary education, liveable welfare rates, an adequate minimum wage, AND good public transit, and subjected everyone to a deteriorating and increasingly toxic environment.

Conservative Leader Tim Hudak aims to cut 100,000 jobs and cripple unions. He says aloud what other capitalist politicians think. Workers and allied folks need to stop the corporate agenda. We need to stop Hudak, but also stop Kathleen Wynne (and her Drummond Report austerity policies).

So, what should be done? Supporting either one of Bay Street's two main political parties is no solution.

On June 12, vote NDP. It remains a labour party, despite its present leadership and right-wing populist campaign. Demand that the NDP fight for a Workers' Agenda, and strive to form a Workers' Government, in the interest of the vast majority of the people of Ontario.

Join the Socialist Caucus. Together, let's turn the NDP sharply to the left. ■

SA conference condemns capitalism's crimes

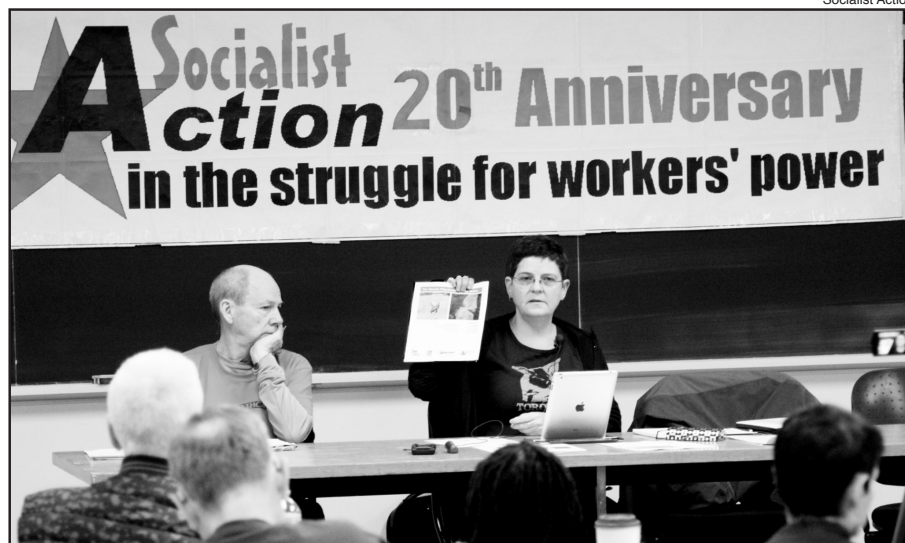
Members and supporters celebrated the 20th anniversary of Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste with an international educational conference and a party convention held May 23-25, 2014 at the University of Toronto.

The conference theme "Capitalism is Organized Crime" echoed across the agenda. Topics were "Capitalism Damns the Environment" (with speakers Malu Baumgarten, Toronto Socialist Action; and Robbie Mahood, member of SA/LAS and Quebec Solidaire in Montreal)

Also: Scandals, Repression and Corporate Dictatorship (with Barry Weisleder, federal secretary, Socialist Action—Canada; Jaime Gonzalez, LUS (Socialist Unity League)—Mexico; and Chris Hutchinson, Socialist Action USA, Connecticut),

Also: "Science: For Profit, or for People?" with special guest speaker Cliff Conner. And: "When Labour Won," with Julius Arscott, SA Toronto; Chris Hutchinson, SA U.S.A.; and Robbie Mahood. And: "Is Inequality Inevitable?" with Claudia Espinoza, president, USGE Local 00079 (Public Service Alliance of Canada) and an organizer with Justicia for Migrant Workers; Kaylie Tiessen from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; and John Orrett, member, Toronto Professional Firefighters' Association and SA Thornhill.

And finally: What Would Socialism



Look Like? (with Cliff Conner, who co-authored the new book "Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA").

Over 50 people attended one or more of the conference sessions, all of which exhibited a high degree of audience participation. Folks purchased over \$500 in literature and other items. During the conference two participants asked to join Socialist Action, in addition to the six people who joined SA in the month preceding the conference.

At the SA/LAS convention held on the Sunday, members adopted a plan of action and a budget, welcomed new members, and elected a bi-national leadership body.

The unanimously adopted central priorities of SA/LAS for the coming year include: (1) Participation in the campaign to elect an NDP government in Ontario—while honestly explaining our criticisms of the policies, tactics and undemocratic methods of the Horwath leadership—leading up to the Ontario NDP Convention in November 2014. To prepare the party left wing for the convention, we urge the Socialist Caucus to hold an Ontario conference in early September.

2) Continuing efforts to oppose the cuts to postal services, and to resist the ruling-class drive towards more austerity, autocratic governance, surveillance

of the population, and police repression. We believe that defence of the CUPW and home mail delivery, with sufficient broad backing and mass action tactics, could be the key to removing the unpopular Harper government.

3) Working with the environmental movement to oppose Line 9, to oppose new pipeline construction, to demand a rapid shift to green energy generation through public ownership and workers' control of the resource sector, and to support indigenous peoples' struggles for self-government and protection of the environment.

4) Stepping up efforts to build, together with others, a cross-union, class-struggle tendency in the labour movement. At the Peoples' Social Forum in Ottawa, Aug. 21-24, where it is expected that 20,000 people will attend demonstrations and forums, SA/LAS will host a workshop on questions of strategy and tactics for the workers' movement. Labour activists may gather at the Social Forum to launch a radical cross-union left opposition, which SA aims to actively build.

5) Intervening in the Toronto municipal election, leading up to the vote on Oct. 27. Armed with the new SA booklet "Dump Rob Ford, For a Labour City Hall," our aim is to shift the focus from the bizarre antics of Mayor Rob Ford towards a serious political discussion on the need for a Workers' Agenda. We want particularly to engage grassroots labour and NDP activists in such a discussion. — B.W.

Stop Bill C-13, Ottawa's latest assault on privacy

By JOHN WUNDERLICH

"Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you."*

It would be exceedingly easy to fall into the techno-libertarian trap and think that (a) privacy is dead and that (b) personal information is a commodity and therefore should be controlled by markets. Both statements are factually wrong and are ideologically deeply rooted in the neo-liberal state. Privacy is a fundamental requirement for people to freely communicate, associate, and organize.

It would also be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that information technology and electronic communications are inherently progressive, because they are

relatively cheap and allow activists to communicate widely at a low cost. This is the 'Internet routes around censorship' fallacy.

Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have tried to pass "lawful access" legislation since at least late 2005.** Lawful access is shorthand for legal rules to allow police investigators to gain access to subscriber and other information held by telecommunications and Internet Service Providers without a warrant. Despite repeated demands for proof to show how requirements for a warrant and due process have prevented an investigation, neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have been able to demonstrate a need for this type of leg-

islation.

Readers may recall former federal Conservative Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews' bleating, "you're with the child pornographers or with us". That was about Bill C-30 in 2013. This year's version of the bill is disguised as an anti-cyberbullying piece of legislation, C-13. When this persistent attempt to gain new legal powers to look at Canadians' communications is combined with the Edward Snowden revelations about Canada's participation in the Five Eyes spying program, the conclusion is inescapable: Whatever differences they might have, the Liberals and the Conservatives are agreed that all Canadians are suspects until proven otherwise.

The cumulative affect of such state surveillance is to create a "chilling affect" in which people are unwilling to express opinions outside the prevailing view of the day. This stifles dissent, inhibits activism, and ultimately narrows the perceived choices that people have to protest or organize.

Progressives should not mistake privacy as a 'liberal' civil right. Privacy, including the right to communicate and to organize free from the prying eyes of the state, is fundamental to the building of a social movement. Violations of privacy, such as the authorities' knowing to whom you talk and e-mail (the so-called metadata we hear so much about) enable the state to block, disrupt, or ultimately destroy the lives of everyone caught up in the surveillance sweep. ■

New Ukraine president promises war & austerity



By MICHAEL SCHREIBER



(Above) Members of the rebel Vostok Battalion tear up a Ukrainian flag in Donetsk.

(Left) New Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

While fighting rages in Ukraine's eastern provinces, the Kiev government, which came to power in a U.S.-backed coup in February, has made an attempt to shore up its shaky claims to legitimacy. This was achieved to a certain extent with the May 25 national elections, in which billionaire Petro Poroshenko, the "chocolate king," triumphed over the other capitalist candidates, snagging 54 percent of the vote.

According to the official Central Election Commission, a meager 60 percent of those eligible went to the polls nationwide. The percentage included votes of over 400,000 Ukrainian citizens living in the United States and other countries but excluded the rebellious Donetsk region, where only about 15 percent voted. But the outcome was enough for the White House and the Western big-business media to term the election a victory for "democracy" and to hail the new executive in chief.

Obama met with Poroshenko in Warsaw on June 4, while pledging up to \$1 billion in expenditures to beef up the U.S. military presence in Poland and other NATO countries bordering Russia.

Poroshenko had an advantage over the other presidential candidates in that many see him as having gained his immense fortune through the "normal" channels of capitalist enterprise, unlike most other Ukrainian oligarchs, who acquired their assets through outright theft of state property during the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. He is also a rather adept political chameleon, having switched his allegiances several times by serving in office for competing governing regimes.

Poroshenko was an occasional speaker at the initial Maidan (Independence Square) protests, which devolved into fascist-controlled mobilizations that became central to the February coup, in which armed militias led by the pro-Hitler Svoboda Party and the even more virulent Right Sector stormed the Ukrainian parliament (Rada).

Poroshenko says that he hopes to sign an economic association pact with the European Union soon after his June 7 inauguration. The major task for Poroshenko's government will be to enforce the EU's demands for austerity measures that will further cut living standards of the country's working class.

At the same time that Western European governments are pressing for austerity, they have nudged Kiev to mend its relations with Moscow; the Europeans are fearful of a possible cutoff of gas supplies from Russia since the pipelines run through Ukraine.

Following the overthrow of President Victor Yanukovich, Russia suspended the broad discounts on gas shipments it had given Ukraine. The EU, Ukraine, and Russia are now about to open talks concerning future supplies and prices. As a condition of the negotiations,

Instead of the current Kiev government of billionaires, Ukraine needs a government led by working people.

Ukraine has promised Russia that it will pay \$786 million as a first installment on its back debt.

Russia has given many indications that it is seeking an accommodation with the Kiev government. President Vladimir Putin said that he would "respect" the outcome of the May 25 elections, and that his government had no intention of heeding the calls of the breakaway Donetsk Peoples Republic (DPR) for Russia to annex the eastern region. And Russia has withdrawn most of the troops that it had stationed on the Ukraine border—a fact that was confirmed by the U.S. State Department on May 30.

But despite the Kiev government's talks with Russia, any notion that it will employ a soft hand in dealing with oppositionists must be put aside. Kiev troops are turning the country's rebellious east into a battleground. Casualties have steadily mounted as Ukrainian government forces advance on cities that have been held by supporters of the Donetsk Peoples Republic.

To be sure, the Ukrainian army draftees have shown little motivation in pursuing their military campaign against people in the east. In earlier confrontations, Kiev troops deserted to the rebels, bringing their armored vehicles and heavy weapons with them. More recently, anger has begun to swell in some districts of western Ukraine as young men are brought back in coffins. In several locations around the country, relatives of soldiers have picketed and blockaded military bases; in at least one instance, parents marched onto a base to reclaim their conscripted sons.

The army's poor record of dependability has caused the Kiev government to bolster its ranks with units of the newly formed National Guard—which includes members of the Right Sector and other fascist or ultraright bands—as well as with semi-private armies financed by various capitalist oligarchs.

The city of Slovansk has become a military focal point. The Kiev government has used jets, helicopters, and artillery to fire on residential neighborhoods, hospitals, and schools. According to the *Kyiv Post*, some refugees from the fighting in the east have started to arrive in Russia-annexed Crimea.

On May 29, DPR fighters shot down a helicopter that had been ferrying National Guard troops to their battle station on the outskirts of Slovansk. Reports stated that 14 men had been killed on board, including General Serhiy Kulchytskyi, the top officer in charge of

training the National Guard.

Meanwhile, in Donetsk, the largest city in the region, Kiev troops and airborne units were able to reclaim the airport, which rebels had briefly captured on May 26. Many DPR partisans were killed when a truck carrying their men away from the battle was hit by helicopter fire.

As warplanes screamed over Donetsk, Western press dispatches claimed that disorder, even "anarchy," had overtaken this city of one million. An Agence France Presse (AFP) report of May 30 stated that the city had become "lawless." Police were "nowhere to be seen" since many police officers have switched sides to support the insurgents.

One resident told an AFP reporter: "A few days ago, armed men in hooded tops arrived at two car showrooms. They demanded a dozen cars 'for the revolution.'" The article stated that while many attacks have apparent criminal motivations, others "have a more political edge, such as the looting of a warehouse belonging to chocolate tycoon and newly elected Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko in the nearby town of Makiivka."

The AFP dispatch commented that "one incident of criminality," the looting of a supermarket near the city's airport, "seems to have driven a wedge between rebel factions." Whether that is true is open to debate, however, since the structure and political goals of the rebel groups are not completely clear. Apparently, the thefts stirred armed members of the Vostok Battalion ("East" Battalion), one of the major armed units fighting in the Donbas region, to take over the regional administration building in Donetsk, which the DPR had been using as its headquarters. On May 29, bulldozers were employed to clear the barricades surrounding the building.

People's Republic leader Denis Pushilin later admitted that some of the stolen merchandise from the market had been found in the DPR offices. "We've begun a cleanup of our ranks—we want to stop looting so this doesn't happen any more," Alexander Maltsev, a spokesman for Pushilin, told *Bloomberg News* on May 30. "We detained 12 people yesterday and set up checkpoints around the city."

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has charged that there is "evidence of Russians crossing over, trained personnel from Chechnya trained in Russia, who've come across to stir things up, to engage in fighting." The Kiev government and the Western media have made similar allegations, and point to the Vostok Battalion as proof. And indeed, a few Vostok members

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