

Greek gov't kneels to capitalist piracy



By **MARTY GOODMAN**

The new \$93 billion (86 billion euros) economic bailout deal in Greece is a shameless act of international capitalist piracy. The July 13 proposal—approved by the Greek parliament two days later—wielded cuts to pensions, including special aid to the poorest; a hike in taxes on food and other goods and services; a “liberalizing” of the labor market (that is, voiding labor protections and job security); and perhaps the most odious, the privatization of Greek public institutions, with the proceeds (50 billion euros) to be hijacked off to Luxemburg banks, out of reach of the Greek people.

And, that was only the beginning. On July 22, the Greek parliament, by a 230-

63 vote, approved a second set of cuts demanded by international creditors.

A quickly organized government referendum on July 5 of an earlier version of the “memorandum” of agreement resulted in a heroic vote of 61% of Greek voters who said “NO!” to more misery by the European banks. That historic “no” was turned into a “yes” by a government unwilling to fight. The Syriza government agreed to an even more punishing bailout than the memorandum the Greek people had rejected. One TV commentator quipped sarcastically when news of the deal emerged, “Why not auction off the Parthenon?”

Indeed. The middle-class Syriza leadership, headed by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, calculated that, while promising to not to leave the EU (“Grexit”),

they could outwit and shame the billionaire leaders of European capital and bend them to the will of the Greek people. But, the bloodsuckers who rule Europe would have none of it and imposed their will on the long-suffering Greek masses.

Despite the continued personal popularity of Tsipras, disbelief at the results of patient negotiations turned to anger at what is now the third and most punishing bailout for Greece in five years.

On July 15 unions called for a one-day general strike and demonstration against the memorandum. The action was called mainly by ADEDY, a union representing public workers who are facing layoffs and wage cuts under the terms of the agreement. The march was led by women cleaners and hos-

(Above) Athens protest by anti-capitalist coalition ANTARSYA.

pital workers, followed by transit workers who had shut down trains that morning. Street protests that day amounted to about 15,000 memorandum opponents.

That evening some 15 protesters were arrested, many of whom had been savagely attacked by police in front of the parliament building. The arrested demonstrators included two members of OKDE-Spartacos, supporters of the Fourth International and co-thinkers of Socialist Action in the United States. Protesters say that the previous government had removed confinement

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Keith Christensen

Plaque marks historic 1934 strike

By DAVID JONES

"Pickets returned to the Minneapolis Warehouse District on Saturday, nearly 81 years to the day after a strike there turned violent when police shot 67 truckers, killing two and sparking the city's labor movement," journalist Steven Montemayor reported in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* on July 18.

"Their cause this time: To remember the events of July 20, 1934, by dedicating a plaque on the side of the Sherwin Williams building on 3rd Street N., where striker Henry Ness was killed by officers. ... 'How many slugs did they say he had put in him?' Gail Martinsen asked her sister, Nadine Ness, as they stood on the corner where their grandfather was shot."

Minneapolis *Labor Review* editor Steve Share told his readers (LR, July 2015), "Two hundred-plus people gathered in the warehouse district in downtown Minneapolis July 19 for a ceremony unveiling a plaque to mark the spot where Minneapolis police opened fire July 20, 1934 on unarmed striking members and supporters of Teamsters Local 574.

"The strikes also set the stage for the organization of over-the-road drivers throughout an 11-state area, transforming the Teamsters into a million-plus-member union in a few years," according to Dave Riehle, a local labor historian who is one of the leaders of the Remember 1934 Committee."

The plaque was installed by the Remember 1934 Committee with the support of the 11,000-member Teamsters Local 120 and other donors, including the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. "Welcome to a sacred place," said Bob Kolstad, master of ceremonies and member of the Remember 1934 Committee and Teamsters Local 320. "We believe the plaque we are unveiling today is the first public monument to the labor movement in Minneapolis."

Descendants of 1934 strikers, including Donna Severson, held signs featuring photos of relatives who participated in the 1934 strikes. Severson said her father, Don Severson, and her uncle, Jack Maloney, were strike participants. "I think it's great that they're finally recognizing the strike, what it did for Minneapolis—because you don't learn about it in school,"

Severson said. "I was actually out of the country and taking an American history class when I read [Farrell Dobbs's book] 'Teamster Rebellion.' That's when I saw a picture of my uncle Jack and learned about it."

Descendants of 1934 strikers listening to the speakers included Linnea Sommer. Last year, she told the *Minneapolis Labor Review*: "My grandfather, Chester Johnson, was in the Socialist Workers Party and was involved in the strike. ... I know it broke the back of the Citizens Alliance and made Minneapolis a union town."

Linda Leighton, granddaughter of 1934 strike leader Vincent (Ray) Dunne, is an SEIU shop steward: "Finally, we have an actual marker that will commemorate the strike."

Cherene Horazuk, granddaughter of 1934 striker Harry Horazuk and president of AFSCME Local 3800, was one of the featured speakers at the July 19 event. She held a sign with a photo of her grandfather, who was age 17 at the time of the strike.

Another featured speaker was Thomas Keegel, general secretary-treasurer emeritus of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Keegel came out of what is now Teamsters Local 120, the successor local to the former Teamsters Local 574, which waged the strike.

Keegel said he got to know veterans of the 1934 strike when he first became a Teamster in 1959. "These guys, they were proud that they stood up and fought that battle. ... They had nothing. They were coming off the greatest depression in the history of this country. ... Those strikers fought for respect and dignity."

The crowd included current members of Teamsters Local 120. "I was proud to drive the Teamsters truck to the event here today," said Rick Mulcahy, Wyoming, Minnesota. "These guys all came together, worked, spilled blood to get workers' rights."

"We have weekends off, we have breaks, we have lunch, we have fair wages—within reason," Nadine Ness said. "[Many] don't understand what got them there. They are standing on the shoulders of heroes and they don't know it. And I think this plaque helps in that direction, to show these were amazing people, and look at what they did."

The plaque was designed by well-known public artist Keith Christensen. ■

Socialist Action: Where we stand

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers' party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite—whose profit-driven system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics—not alliances with the bosses' parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism—women,

queers, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. We are internationalists, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with their own nation's capitalist class. We seek to link struggles across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons. That is why we maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International

Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where various groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution, instead of seeking to merely reform or work within the system. When we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers' government, and the fight for socialism.

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WHERE TO FIND US

- ASHLAND, Ore.: damonjure@earthlink.net
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: adamritscher@yahoo.com. www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE, KY: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MADISON, Wis.: Northlandiguana@gmail.com
- MINNEAPOLIS/St. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: philly.socialistaction@gmail.com

- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 gary1917@aol.com
- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 592-5385
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com, (202) 286-5493

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
 526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779
<http://socialistaction.ca/>

Cops dish out racially defined 'justice'

By JOE AUCIELLO

"In my career, my only training in the Constitution was how to get around it," (Sue Rahr, former sheriff, executive director of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, and member of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing).

Drivers on their way to work, zipping by one of the predominantly Black neighborhoods in any major city, might not notice the presence of parked police cars and aggressive cops questioning small groups of Black youth. After all, scenes like this are an everyday occurrence, just part of the landscape. It could be—and certainly is—Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Cleveland, Los Angeles, etc.

If any passers-by do notice, they may not really understand what they see. In fact, they are observing criminals at work, but not those who always appear to be suspects. Stop and search, frisk and harass—these are crimes routinely committed by the police. It is the improper use of force, intimidation, and assertion of state authority predominantly directed against Black people, usually young men. This is standard procedure, what the police do to keep minority youth in their place.

That's how the law works in this part of town. In a predominantly Black neighborhood, there is no "presumption of innocence." The police eye sees suspects everywhere, so the police act on a presumption of guilt. Throughout the nation, communities that are poor and Black typically experience a distinct and special type of justice. Critics condemn "racial profiling"; the cops praise "good police work."

In a more well-to-do neighborhood, this kind of misconduct would be correctly described as "illegal search and seizure"—the violation of a person's presumption of innocence. Since people of means have ready access to the courts, this police offense is less likely to occur, and any instance of it would more likely result in lawsuits and punishment of the guilty cops.

In minority communities the police not only violate human rights with impunity, they can also get the results they want without having to break the law. Sometimes, for instance, they bend the law beyond recognition in a practice known as a "pretextual stop." This occurs when police find a legitimate but minor excuse to stop someone—on the sidewalk or in a car—and then use that pretext to escalate to a more thorough but unwarranted investigation.

So, a busted rear light on a vehicle becomes an opportunity to search for drugs, etc., typically resulting in questioning and arrests. Even when, for lack of evidence, the person—the "suspect"—is released, the police have committed an act of harassment. These practices are routine in neighborhoods the cops have marked as "high crime areas."

Racially-defined justice is also a highly profitable operation. These stops and searches provide an opportunity to issue fines and collect fees to support the city budget—literally, a racist tax. This was the conclusion the Justice Department reached in its report on Ferguson, where the residents were seen as "less as constituents to be protected than as potential offenders and sources of revenue."

The Justice Department report went on to note: "City and police leadership [in Ferguson] pressure officers to write citations independent of any public safety need, and rely on citation productivity to fund the City budget."

With or without pretexts, though, police ignore the civil and human rights of minorities, especially the young, who are viewed as guilty by their race and age. They are treated as probable criminals who have not yet been caught. As a result, unwarranted police questioning can typically escalate to frisking, searches of individuals and cars, threats, arrests, and—as is now well known—even death.

The lead lawyer in a suit against the city of Ferguson, Alec Karakatsanis, has said, "There's clear case law that police can't illegally search you for no reason, but it happens 10,000 times a day" (*The New York Times*, March 8, 2015).

One young man, a resident of Freddie Gray's neighborhood in Baltimore, gave this account of his encounters with police: "They trip you, choke you out, cuss you out, disrespect you..." Further, "the police tell him and his friends, while they are in their own neighborhood: 'You're not welcome around here. Keep moving. Get the eff off this corner'" (*The New York Times*, May 3, 2015).

The protests in Baltimore have shown, by their abil-



(Above) Lanitra Dean speaks about her friend Sandra Bland at July 17 rally outside Waller County courthouse in Hempstead, Texas.



ity to inspire marches and demonstrations in localities all over America, that biased and violent police abuse directed against Black people and other minorities is not some local or rare occurrence. The criminal actions of police against Black people, against young Black men in particular, are not unique to Ferguson, Washington or any other city or town. Only a powerful effort of self-deception can allow someone to believe that police violence is merely the occasional mistake of some "bad apples" or rogue officers.

The recent death of Sandra Bland, a Black woman found hanging in her jail cell, may have resulted from suicide—her family disputes the official claim—but the taking of her life began with police threats and violence. Ms. Bland was pulled over by a white Texas state trooper for the stated reason that she might have changed lanes in traffic without signaling.

If she had been a white man in a business suit, the matter could more easily have been overlooked. Instead, Ms. Bland was stopped for what even Illinois Senator Richard Durbin called "a highly questionable traffic violation." From that point, Ms. Bland was treated as if she had no civil rights. The trooper told her to put out her cigarette, and her proper refusal was met with a threat—the cop said he'd "light her up" with his stun gun. Ms. Bland was removed from her car, handcuffed as she lay on the ground, and arrested on a third-degree felony charge of assaulting an officer. After three days in jail, held on a \$5000 bond, she was dead, a tragic combination of race, class, and gender.

But why does police brutality occur? Why do police, from departments all across the United States, continue to harass and even shoot Black people, including those who are unarmed? Shouldn't the cops realize by now that their actions are likely to be recorded by any eyewitness with a cell phone and splashed all over the media? To commit these offenses in public would appear to defy logic and common sense. What is the explanation?

Conservative and even some liberal commentators

are quick to point out the dangers inherent in police work, asserting that police violence is actually self-defense carried too far. This argument holds that cops only seem trigger-happy. As they make split-second decisions in potentially life-threatening circumstances, they are really acting on the instinct for self-preservation.

This familiar answer is a rationalization that fails to account for the racial difference in deaths at the hands of police. It's as if killing Blacks at several times the rate of whites somehow "just happens" or is the acceptable cost of "public safety."

Of course, even an excuse is not completely false. After all, any number of people armed with knives and guns actually do attack police. Yet, statistics consistently show that most on-duty fatalities result from traffic accidents.

In truth, the terrible pattern of cop violence is a sum of symptoms and underlying causes, all flowing from the social function of the police to protect a social system based on inequality and oppression.

Most efforts of social reformers are aimed only at the symptoms of police violence. These efforts include a reduction of the militarization of local law enforcement, changes in tactical training, increasing the use of cameras, and enlarging the authority of civilian review boards, etc.

Taken together, these reforms can be helpful in trimming the worst excesses of the police, but new methods alone cannot solve the old problems of brutality and racism. Reforms don't address the underlying causes that allow police to act above the law. Even with better formal procedures in place, a young Black man fleeing the cops will likely be beaten if captured (what cops call a "foot tax"), perhaps maimed, or even shot and too often killed.

Before Baltimore police subjected Freddie Gray to the "rough ride" that killed him, that department had undergone decades of reform. For instance, a lawsuit from the 1980s spurred integration efforts favoring minorities and women. Nonetheless, according to the chairman of a group representing Baltimore's Black officers, "This department is a very racist police department. The issues that you see manifesting themselves on the outside are the same problems we have been dealing with on the inside for years" (*The New York Times*, May 10, 2015).

There is good reason to be skeptical of what can be accomplished by reform. Consider, first of all, that police are typically accountable only to themselves or to prosecutors and courts that work with and support them. Since most police violence takes place with no eye witnesses present, and therefore no publicity, the legal system typically accepts the accounts of the police instead of the victims. (The familiar videos that have been aired on television and the internet create a misleading impression by suggesting that many

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Organized labor must join the battle for climate justice

By BILL ONASCH

Marlowe Hood opened a July 18 AFP story, “Foreign and environment ministers and other high-level officials from 45 countries are set to gather in Paris Monday seeking to re-energize climate talks mired in technical details and political squabbling.”

“Just four months ahead of a UN conference in the French capital tasked with producing a historic climate pact, US scientists this week said 2014 was a record year for sea level rise, land temperatures, and the greenhouse gases that drive dangerous global warming. But overwhelming consensus on the urgency of the problem has not translated into significant progress on united action to prevent the planet from overheating.”

The referenced findings are based on contributions from 413 scientists in 58 countries and include detailed data updates on numerous global climate indicators—virtually all bad news.

Suzanne Goldenberg wrote in the *Guardian*, “Global sea-level also reached a record high, with the expansion of those warming waters, keeping pace with the 3.2 ± 0.4 mm per year trend in sea level growth over the past two decades, the report said. Scientists said

the consequences of those warmer ocean temperatures would be felt for centuries to come—even if there were immediate efforts to cut the carbon emissions fuelling changes in the oceans.

“I think of it more like a fly wheel or a freight train. It takes a big push to get it going but it is moving now and will continue to move long after we continue to pushing it,” Greg Johnson, an oceanographer at NOAA’s Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory, told a conference call with reporters. “Even if we were to freeze greenhouse gases at current levels, the sea would actually continue to warm for centuries and millennia, and as they continue to warm and expand the sea levels will continue to rise,” Johnson said.”

Recent reports from tracking surface temperatures show 2015 to be hotter yet. June was the hottest month ever in recorded history.

Certainly some of the *impacts* of these trends—droughts, wildfires, flash floods—are headline news, but the science explaining their cause contained in these reports not so much. The mainstream media in the USA was instead focused on hanging on every word of GOP presidential front runner Donald Trump; a video slandering Planned Parenthood made by “Right-to-Life” crooks fraudulently posing as repre-

sentatives of a bio-science company; and promotion of Israeli condemnation of a deal with Iran.

They reckon we won’t think about what we don’t know about. That’s why we have to rely on sources based elsewhere, such as AFP, Aljazeera, and the *Guardian*, even for details of a definitive report compiled by our own National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

While “technical details and political squabbling” are palpable obstacles to meaningful action, they are symptoms—not the core malignancy posing a mortal threat to our biosphere. Bickering is inevitable as long as the futile goal is trying to contain the damage from global warming without harming global capitalism.

Assuring an ecologically sustainable future for human civilization will require changes in energy production, transportation, housing, and agriculture on a scale far beyond the capabilities of a market economy. Only governments engaged in international collaboration can effectively do the job. It means planning not for corporate profits but for the health of our planet and all creatures great and small upon it. It will be action united not by consensus of the climate wreckers but through the assertion of the worker and farmer majority of humanity.

Unions and working-class parties throughout Europe will play a major role in mass demonstrations in Paris before, during, and after the COP21 climate summit Nov. 30-Dec. 11. There is some union participation in preliminary discussions about national and regional mass actions in North America as well.

The Northern California Climate Mobilization states in an e-mail blast: “Please join us for this third planning meeting aimed to coordinate a mass march and rally in the East Bay on Nov. 21 as a lead up to the Paris UN COP21 climate meeting (Nov. 30-Dec. 11).”

“We are activists from various groups who organized the Northern California People’s Climate Rally in Oakland on September 21, 2014, in solidarity with the People’s Climate March in New York on the same date. Based on discussions at our first two meetings we have drafted points of unity for our coalition...”

Among their unifying demands are Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground and 100 Percent Clean, Safe, Renewable Energy. The venue for their planning meeting is the SEIU Local 1021 Hall in Oakland. This 54,000-member local has a Climate Justice page on their website.

SEIU is among the few unions, along with AFSCME, ATU, and National Nurses United, who have mobilized for past climate actions. They could do more, however, and it’s high time the rest of the labor movement heeds the warnings from science. We will not win the battle for climate justice without the heavy battalions of organized labor. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

British filmmaker Marc Silver’s documentary, “3½ Minutes 10 Bullets,” mainly consists of the trial of Michael Dunn, the killer of Jordan Davis, a Black teen. It plays out like television’s “20/20” or “Dateline” production, with no commercials. Despite the current inflamed debate on racial injustice, director Silver offers us a cool-headed portrayal of an egregious white on Black murder.

Question: When does a person unload a clip from an automatic handgun on a four teenagers sitting in a car in a gas station, killing one of them?

Answer: When a middle-aged white man objects to the loud music the teens are playing in their car, even after they agree to turn it down, but then increase the volume.

Circumstances: The killer is a known racist and arrogant misogynist; the teens are Black, and the location is Jacksonville, Fla., where Stand Your Ground is law.

In the early evening of Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving in 2012, Michael Dunn and his fiancée were returning home to a neighboring state after his son’s wedding reception. Dunn admitted during his trial that they’d had a lot to drink. Still, Dunn sent his fiancée into the store at the gas station to “buy more wine.”

Meanwhile, the teens were on their way to a mall to meet friends after shooting hoops. When they also stopped at the gas station to buy gum and snacks, Michael Dunn pumped 10 bullets into their SUV, killing 17-year-old Jordan Davis.

In his film, Silver used footage from security cameras in the gas station and convenience store to show the actions as they happened. He included both Davis’s

Film: A racist killer on trial



(Above) Jordan Davis’s mother holds *Jet* magazine with her son’s photo on cover while speaking at protest.

and Dunn’s family videos; courtroom videos and graphics—which both prosecutor and defense attorney had prepared for the jury—as well as audio of recorded phone calls from Dunn to his fiancée, Rhonda Rouer, when he was in prison.

In one recording, Dunn complains that he’s like a rape victim, blamed for wearing skimpy clothes. He also says that if he hadn’t shot him, Davis could have killed someone. At one point, Rouer tells him that he shouldn’t be in prison: “You are man of the waters. A man of peace.” I couldn’t help thinking, “Wrong! The guy’s a murderer!”

Jordan’s mother Lucia McBath and father Ron Davis had tried unsuccessfully for years to have a baby. After several miscarriages, Lucia carried Jordan to full term; he was born by Caesarean section. Family videos show the parents’ joy at this event. They named him “Jordan” after the river, Lucia said during an in-

terview. A symbol of change, renewal, and new beginnings: not after Michael Jordan, as most thought.

According to one of his friends during an interview, Jordan Davis was a klutz at basketball, though he dressed the part. In fact, his friends said that Dunn had the wrong impression of them, especially during the trial when Dunn insisted that they’d had a gun. No gun was ever found.

Despite Dunn’s labeling them “thugs” who were listening to loud “thug rap crap music”—as if that would have legitimized his right to shoot them—it was evident that the kids were just out to have fun with friends. (“Thug,” Jordan’s friend explained, has become a euphemism for the “n” word.)

Throughout his trial, Dunn maintained his innocence. In fact, he played himself as victim even when he took the stand. The turning point came when his shaking, obviously terrified, fiancée testified against him. In an interview with the McKenzies, Dunn’s next door neighbors, which appears on YouTube but not in the film, they stated that Dunn was an arrogant bully who voiced his hatred for anyone who did not obey his orders. They added that they had evidence of his cocaine and alcohol consumption, wife-beatings, and pornography.

The jury came back with an “undecided” on the first count of first-degree murder of Jordan Davis; and “guilty” on three counts of second-degree attempted

murder (of Jordan’s friends)—a victory of sorts for Jordan’s parents. There is a hauntingly beautiful scene of families of all races marching in support of justice for Jordan, carrying umbrellas in a rain.

Dunn was sentenced to 60 years in prison with no option for parole. But Jordan’s parents, relatives, friends, and supporters were not satisfied. Lucia, whose father had worked with LBJ on the Civil Rights Bill, took the case to the U.S. Senate, where she succeeded in having the Stand Your Ground defense thrown out, paving the way for a new trial for first-degree murder against Dunn.

It was a risk, but it paid off. In the judge’s words: “Mr. Dunn, your life is effectively over!”

Looking back, we see a string of past injustices: i.e., Fruitvale victim Oscar Grant, shot by a BART cop one New Year’s Day; Trayvon Martin, killed by a self-proclaimed neighborhood watchman; Jordan Davis, murdered by a civilian (the latter two used Florida’s Stand Your Ground law as their defense); and Michael Brown, shot one year ago by a white officer in Ferguson, Mo. All were young Black males.

We live in a time when Black adults—both male and female—are routinely beaten, “tazed,” cuffed, physically restrained, and thrown in jail by cops, often for minor traffic violations. Some, like Sandra Bland last month in Texas, have died under mysterious circumstances while in custody.

Although the Jordan family was finally able to obtain justice in a small measure, we cannot rely on the courts, let alone the U.S. Senate, to stem racist violence. Only with the increasing growth of a mass protest movement, like Black Lives Matter, can these atrocities be halted. ■

Is the Sanders campaign a 'new movement'?

By DANIEL ADAM

Senator Bernie Sanders continues to draw large crowds to his presidential campaign rallies. Now, unfortunately, a growing wing of the socialist movement in the United States is seeking a way in.

On July 29, Solidarity published a winding statement approved by its convention entitled, "Connecting Sanders' Audience's Aspirations to Clear Working Class Political Alternatives." It seems to be an effort to support the enthusiasm for Sanders without supporting the candidate himself—or the Democratic Party, whose nomination he seeks.

The paper suggests there is a movement separate from Sanders that can be continued if and when he loses the nomination and throws his support to Hillary Clinton. It calls on Sanders supporters to not "waste this moment where folks are coming together around an anti-corporate, anti-austerity program by ... voting for Hillary and calling it a day. ... The tragedy would not be so much people pulling the lever for Clinton, but dissipating and disbanding this mass outcry."

Dan La Botz, a leading member of Solidarity (who won 25,000 votes as a Socialist Party candidate in 2010), posted a far more explicit piece on July 30 entitled, "Sanders for President: a Political Phenomenon that Challenges all Preconceptions."

He concludes that Sanders' campaign may "contribute to the launching of a new period of social movements and upheavals with a higher level of political consciousness" and that he will "work with the Sanders campaign in the primary period, hoping—like other Sanders supporters—that out of this experience we can build a new, stronger, left in America."

Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant, who was elected as a socialist to the Seattle city council two years ago, took a further leap into the Sanders camp with an announcement that she would conduct an Aug. 8 joint rally with Sanders. She called for supporters to attend, wearing 15 Now t-shirts. Sawant solidarized with Sanders as an "alternative to corporate politics," and concluded, "let's greet Bernie Sanders with a sea of red supporters. Let's show him how strong the socialist movement is in Seattle!"

The assumptions that some tendencies in the socialist movement have made to justify their support must be examined. In the first place, there is nothing new about Sanders' rallies that "challenges all preconceptions." Obama's first presidential run was able to build many mass gatherings, with 10,000 to 20,000 participants at most primary rallies and far more in the general election—75,000 in Oregon and more than 100,000 in Missouri.

The excitement for the former community organizer was qualitatively greater than that for the alleged "socialist" today. Obama's campaign was peppered with movement flavor, right down to iconic posters and "yes, we can" slogans. The campaign (we were then told) depended upon small donations, and Obama made a few promises to his supporters to pass reforms like universal health care, a ban on torture, and a closure of the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay.

Organizations like Progressives for Obama said this was a "movement," and "one greater than the candidate himself ever imagined," which would "renew our economy with a populist emphasis" and "confront the challenge of global warming."

However, the rallies for Obama did not spawn a new



Eric Gay / AP

movement, but rather ushered in one of the lowest periods of working-class and left activity in American history. How could it have been otherwise? Support for candidate Obama naturally became support for President Obama, and with him the capitalist state that he heads. Historic rallies for the candidate produced historic support for imperialism.

In exactly the same way, Sanders' mass rallies are not rallies for socialism, but rallies for the capitalist state. As in any election, the primary question does not turn on a handful of promised reforms, but on the advancement of the rule by one class or another—either the workers or their bosses. The question, then, is not which class supports a given party, but which class the party supports. Decades of working-class votes, for instance, have failed to change the class basis of either the Democrats or the Republicans.

As James P. Cannon, the main founder of the American Trotskyist movement, observed in regard to the 1948 third-party campaign of Henry Wallace, "the class character of [a] party is determined first by its program; secondly by its actual policy in practice; and thirdly by its composition and control."

There is nothing in Sanders' program that threatens the rule of business. As Sanders himself observes, every proposal of his fits neatly within the experience of imperialist states. They could be taken up by any number of other capitalist politicians.

Sanders' practice will be fully explored in a future *Socialist Action* article. Suffice it to say here that with his voting record and his commentary, Sanders has thoroughly proven his loyalty to the Democratic Party and big business over 35 years in office. No serious political person disputes this.

In his career, he has graduated from small-time deals in waterfront developments to big-ticket items like F-35 jet manufacturing. When Sanders wants to know what he should do next he goes to the heads of Lockheed Martin and the Democratic Party, not to union locals.

Conservative George F. Will notes that any definition of "socialist" that includes Sanders would have to encompass most of the Republican Party. Meanwhile,

Sanders caucuses with the Democrats, attends their policy lunches, and owes them his committee seats. Howard Dean says that Sanders is a liberal Democrat who votes with the party "98% of the time." Clinton instructs her canvassers to tell voters that Sanders is a "Good Democrat" and that her votes were identical to his 93% of the time they were both in the Senate.

Managing a capitalist state means organizing society under the leadership of the capitalist class. It requires the cooperation of investors and the political parties who represent them. This has been Sanders' job for the last 35 years.

Sanders' call for a "political revolution against the billionaires," which Socialist Alternative has mistakenly trumpeted, is completely hollow. Sanders' platform and campaign rhetoric are closely restricted to issues and proposals that lie within the parameters established by the Democratic Party. It is impossible to build any effective "anti-billionaire" tendency within the Democratic Party—Sanders' speeches notwithstanding—since the party operates expressly to further the interests of big capital.

Undoubtedly, many working people join Sanders' campaign activities in hopes of building a movement against the big corporations. But they soon find they have no mechanism or leverage with which to alter or affect the Democratic Party's pro-corporate politics.

Moreover, to support Sanders means to defend what he says and does—especially against growing movements that demand more than he offers. Supporters must defend his attacks on immigrants, his opposition to anti-racist politics, his support for imperialism and for Israel. They must defend his politics because they cannot offer recruits any way to change them. A person either buys the whole campaign or doesn't participate.

Joining his campaign doesn't change the politics of Sanders and the Democrats—it changes yours!

The forces that will create a "new period of social movements and upheavals" must come from outside the Democratic Party—Sanders included. And we can hear them already. They're saying, "15 Now!" and "Black Lives Matter!" ■

... Police 'justice'

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of these incidents are recorded. Not so. Police violence usually occurs when only the police and their victims are witnesses. The fact is not lost on even the newest patrolman).

So, police expect to get away with their crimes, and they have every reason for that assurance. For instance, Florida's Broward County, the largest in the state, has seen 168 deaths from police shootings since 1980, with no charges ever filed against any officer. Is it coincidence, then, that in the last 15 years the number of deaths in the county from police shootings has tripled?

The freedom-to-fire granted to cops in Broward County is not exceptional. According to a lengthy investigation published on May 31 in *The Washington Post*, "So far, just three of the 385 fatal shootings [in 2015] have resulted in an officer being charged with a crime—less than one percent." In these three cases where charges were filed, and only in these cases, "videos emerged showing the officers shooting a suspect during or after a foot chase."

Further, and more importantly, *The Post* reports that "of thousands of fatal police shootings over the past decade, only 54 had produced criminal charges." In the

other cases, internal department investigations or state prosecutors found that police officers were justified when they killed.

Of course, it should be recalled that the initial police inquiry into the death of Eric Garner in New York contained no mention of a chokehold. Without video evidence, police use of deadly force would have been considered legitimate and necessary.

Recently in Cleveland a white police officer who, from the hood of a car, had fired 49 shots into the front windshield, was acquitted of manslaughter following the deaths of the car's occupants, two unarmed Black men. Since 13 officers fired 137 rounds at the car, it could not be determined that the officer on trial had fired the fatal bullets. Further, the defense lawyers argued that this policeman was in fear for his life, the circumstance that legally allows the police to use deadly force.

The harsh, brutal, and sometimes fatal measures of the police flow directly from their social function. The role of the police and the courts is to protect a national state founded on class division, permanent inequality, and racial discrimination. Their role in protecting the state gives them a special status and the belief that "the police are above the law." They are the billy club of the state.

In this sacred duty local police are joined by the National Guard and other branches of the military, by fed-

eral police agencies, and the security apparatus that taps the phones, stores the e-mails, and spies on American citizens.

The police are no more neutral or fair-minded than the government they ultimately serve or the laws they enforce. As attorney William M. Kunstler has observed, the law "is, in fundamental essence, nothing more than a method of control created by a socioeconomic system determined, at all costs, to perpetuate itself, by all and any means necessary, for as long as possible" ("The Emerging Police State," Ocean Press, pp. 38-39).

Kunstler goes on to say that in the United States, "We steadfastly deny, or refuse to acknowledge, that the criminal justice system, insofar as blacks and other minority members are concerned, is merely a device to keep them at bay" (p. 41). What Kunstler wrote two decades ago is no less true today. It only remains to be added: To change the behavior of the police, change the nature of their role in society. Change the nature of the state.

Meanwhile, police violence against Black people will continue. A people excluded from the mainstream of society can only be held in check by force, including prison. Here is yet another sign, if any more are needed, that America's "post-racial" society has yet to fully acknowledge the crime that is racial injustice. ■

Greece 2015

Lessons of a tragic defeat



(Left) Greek Prime Minister Tsipras at a late-night parliament session.

By JEFF MACKLER

The classic definition of Greek tragedy from the times of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides 2500 years ago applies with a vengeance today. The Greek working masses have suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of Europe's imperial economic and political powers—tragically, with the full complicity of the reformist, that is, pro-capitalist, Syriza party (Coalition of the Radical Left).

Tragedy in the theater is defined as an unfolding drama in which the main player is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow especially as a consequence of an innate flaw or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances.

Today, without doubt, the “unfavorable circumstances,” an understatement if there ever was one, lies with the Syriza government's “negotiating partners”—the brutal, bullying, and crisis-ridden European capitalist elite embodied in the “Troika” (the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund). This is the same Troika that has reduced Europe's weaker and debt-ridden capitalist states—Spain, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and Greece, among others—to subordinate status, rendering them increasingly incapable of effectively competing on the globalized world markets that are dominated by the most technologically, financially, and militarily advanced imperialist powers.

All the hype about European unity, the sanctity of the euro, “following the rules” of the European Central Bank, and fiscal responsibility pales before the fact that European capitalist unity inevitably takes a back seat to the incessant and inherent drive to maximize the profits of big capital, represented in the most powerful European states. Were it otherwise, were the smaller and weaker nations treated as equal and harmonious partners in a humanistic endeavor in which the interests of peoples were prioritized above all others, the present European and world crisis would instantly disappear.

Pipe dreams aside, no self-respecting capitalist sees it this way. The cardinal rule of the corporate game is to destroy your opponent to maximize your own profits. Drive the lesser competitors out of the marketplace! Monopoly! “Dog eat dog!”

At best the European “dis-union” was conceived as a necessary or potential bloc to counter the weight of U.S. imperialist economic hegemony, to at least partially combine the economic and natural resources of Europe to withstand the U.S. onslaught from without. But this never happened. It was doomed to failure at the outset as the conflicts between the ruling-class elites of all European states inevitably drove them to

prioritize their own interests.

The grand scheme of European unity stands in ruins as all agree that the weaker, less competitive states have been driven to near bankruptcy and massive indebtedness at the expense of the stronger. The capitalist playing field will never be made level.

EU tops threaten Greece with shut down

Greece today, as with all capitalist states, is ruled by an elite ruling class that long ago established the fundamental rules that govern social relations. Its highly profitable shipbuilding industry and related merchant-marine manufacturing stands second or third in the world. Yet these industries are virtually untaxed by the state. The same situation exists with virtually all major Greek private capitalist corporations and financial institutions.

In significant aspects, Greece is an underdeveloped nation; it stands among the poorest of the European capitalist states. Its technological infrastructure, agriculture, and therefore its industrial capacity are inferior to that of most European countries. It is thus subjected to unequal terms of trade, including prices for agricultural and other commodities it produces. Its capacity to obtain credit to renovate or modernize its largely obsolete manufacturing infrastructure is extremely limited.

Like most poor nations, Greece's imposed underdevelopment renders it nearly incapable of competing with the more advanced capitalist nations. As with most of the rest of the world, it is subordinate to the dictates of the great world powers. A world capitalism in crisis requires victims, not equals—and certainly not vibrant competitors who threaten to or are capable of undermining imperialist hegemony.

The smashing of the Syriza “experiment” was a conscious decision—a message to all oppressed people of Europe and beyond that “leftist” rhetoric and the election of “leftist” governments of the reformist variety cannot and will not alter the relationship of forces in favor of the oppressed masses.

Greece, as with all nations on earth, including the United States, where capitalist rule requires ceaseless attacks on every aspect of working-class life, has no solutions within the unequal parameters of the capitalist order.

With Greece tottering ever closer to the economic brink, and following Syriza's January 2015 election victory, the Troika's top European players, Germany and France, engaged Syriza's leading “Marxist” economist professors and political leaders in six months of futile “negotiations.” Europe's smug elite team, headed by Germany's Wolfgang Schäuble and backed to the hilt by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, offered

not a single revision of their third and most devastating “bailout” package—a series of proposals that would further reduce Greece to an occupied or vassal state of European capital.

Syriza's chief negotiator and finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, stated following the early July breakdown of negotiations, and without exaggeration, that during his six-month stint in Brussels and in talks across Europe, *not a single counterproposal to his numerous revisions was ever made by the Troika!* “Take it or leave it” was the top European bankers' first, last, and only offer—and if you leave it, we will immediately stop all credit flows to Greek banks and effectively shut them down, leaving essentially bankrupt Greece with no means to conduct the business of running the state!

Indeed, that is precisely what the Troika did almost immediately—17 hours after the resounding 61.3 percent “no” vote in the July 5 snap referendum called by Greek Prime Minister and Syriza leader, Alex Tsipras.

At the time, Greek banks were on the verge of collapse. There was not enough cash in their ATMs to sustain the meager withdrawals by pensioners and the unemployed. Factories were quickly exhausting their last stocks of raw materials, and preparing to cut work shifts. There was a risk that the country would run out of food stocks by the end of the month.

A portrait of Syriza

Here we are compelled to frankly evaluate the other side of the Greek equation, the tragic side—the fundamentally flawed political perspectives of Syriza. *We begin and end with the proposition that the capitalist system in its fundamentals cannot be reformed, a proposition that is rejected by the reformist Syriza-led government.*

The almost unprecedented and ever intensifying catastrophic conditions of life that confront the world's working classes today—massive and Great Depression era austerity, poverty, starvation, endless wars, impending life-threatening global warming, racism, sexism, homophobia, slave labor and sex trafficking, scapegoating Islamophobia, and racist attacks on immigrants—are inherent in the operations of the capitalist system of plunder and profit.

These are not accidental policy decisions made by right-wing governments (“left-wing” reformist governments do the same), but rather brutally imposed and “necessary” measures to guarantee the exploitation, oppression, and subordination of the world's people to the dictates of the crisis-ridden capitalist world order.

While revolutionaries fight for any improvement or positive reform in the quality of life of working people, we have absolutely no illusion that temporary gains achieved in the course of struggle—and these are increasingly few and far between—can be maintained for long if the capitalist system as a whole remains intact. Advocacy and the struggle for socialist revolution—the abolition of capitalism based on the organization and engagement of the vast working class majority—is the prerequisite requirement to ending the horrors of capitalist minority rule and ushering in a new world order, in which the fulfillment of human needs, full equality and the elevation of all to the highest and richest standards of education, health, and culture are realistic and attainable goals and objectives.

The greatest contradiction of our times is that between our present technological capacity to achieve all of the above and the rule of the tiny but powerful minority elite that stands in our way. With this in mind, we offer the following evaluation of the decisive events that have transpired in Greece since the Janu-

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ary election that allowed Syriza to form a government:

- Syriza is a reformist party, not a revolutionary party. It is largely an electoral coalition of various radical and reformist socialist groups, many with lofty aims but lacking the perspective of organizing the Greek working class for a challenge to capitalist rule and a struggle for state power. Most of the components of Syriza are made up of former members and/or leaders from the Eurocommunist tradition, a reformist current that “broke” with many of the “official” policies of the long Stalinized and counter-revolutionary Communist Party of the Soviet Union but *never* with its overall anti-socialist and reformist politics.

Both Eurocommunists and the more orthodox variety of Stalinists inside the USSR routinely supported participation in electoral coalitions around the world with openly capitalist parties and, when these coalitions were “successful,” participated in coalition capitalist governments—taking ministerial posts and otherwise aiding in the administration of the capitalist states.

All rejected the independent organization of the working class in a struggle for socialism. All, without exception, in both the advanced and underdeveloped counties, subordinated the organization of the working class for socialism to coalitions and agreements with local and international capitalist powers at the expense of the interests of the working class.

John Pilger’s harsh but accurate Syriza description is noteworthy (“The Problem of Greece Is Not Only a Tragedy. It Is a Lie,” *Global Research*, July 13, 2015): “The day after the January 2015 election a truly democratic and, yes, radical government would have stopped every euro leaving the country, repudiated the ‘illegal and odious’ debt – as Argentina did successfully—and expedited a plan to leave the crippling Eurozone. But there was no plan. There was only a willingness to be ‘at the table’ seeking ‘better terms.’”

Pilger continues: “The true nature of Syriza has been seldom examined and explained. To the foreign media it is no more than ‘leftist’ or ‘far left’ or ‘hardline’—the usual misleading spray. Some of Syriza’s international supporters have reached, at times, levels of cheerleading reminiscent of the rise of Barack Obama. Few have asked: Who are these ‘radicals’? What do they believe in?”

“The leaders of Syriza are revolutionaries of a kind—but their revolution is the perverse, familiar appropriation of social democratic and parliamentary movements by liberals groomed to comply with neo-liberal drivel and a social engineering whose authentic face is that of Wolfgang Schauble, Germany’s finance minister, an imperial thug. Like the Labour Party in Britain and its equivalents among those former social democratic parties still describing themselves as ‘liberal’ or even ‘left,’ Syriza is the product of an affluent, highly privileged, educated middle class, ‘schooled in postmodernism,’ as Alex Lantier wrote.”

- For revolutionary socialists, participation in capitalist elections is a sometimes useful educational *tactic*, but it is always subordinate to the ongoing organization of workers to challenge capitalism itself. For reformists, like the various social democratic parties and former Stalinist/Communist parties around the world, and Syriza in Greece, elections are a *strategic* orientation aimed at winning government posts to administer the capitalist state.

Today, in an era of capitalist crisis, such administration necessitates imposing the massive austerity measures that capitalism requires for its continued functioning. Thus, every social democratic and/or social reformist government on earth today has become the willing and often preferred tool of capital, including the “left” capitalist governments of Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua.

- Syriza, elected on a pledge to refrain from all future austerity measures and to seek reversal of those implemented by the previous government, won the January 2015 Greek election with 36 percent of the vote and 149 of the 300 seats in the Greek parliament—one vote short of a formal majority to form a government on its own. To achieve this constitutionally required majority, it formed a coalition government with ANEL (Independent Greeks) an openly right-wing nationalist, anti-immigrant capitalist party. This, in and of itself, amounted to an ironclad pledge that Greek capitalism’s essential prerogatives would not be challenged! As part of the deal, the Syriza leadership granted ANEL ministerial posts to help administer the new government, including the post of head of the Greek armed forces.

- Syriza’s new parliamentary majority voted to



Syriza prioritized six months of negotiations with European capital above the mobilization of the Greek masses.

designate former Minister of the Interior and Public Order Prokopis Pavlouopoulos as president of Greece. Pavlouopoulos is a current Central Committee member of New Democracy, Greece’s main capitalist party and the party in power prior to the January 2015 elections. Pavlouopoulos’s election to the Greek presidency, a largely ceremonial post, was nonetheless a conscious statement to Greek’s creditors that Syriza’s objective was a negotiated debt settlement as opposed to a challenge to Greek’s creditors and capitalist institutions at home and in Europe.

Prime Minister Tsipras said that Pavouopoulos has “a proven democratic sensitivity, a high feeling of national conscience, and ... enjoys broad approval in society and parliament.” These are kind words indeed for a leader of Greek capitalism and a proponent of austerity and privatizations. Syriza further sought to insure its credibility as a reliable capitalist government administrator by including in various government positions members of the discredited and former governing capitalist PASOK party.

- In the year or so *prior* to the Jan. 15 election, the Greek masses engaged in an unprecedented number of strikes, including 33 one-day or two-day general strikes against the New Democracy and PASOK governments’ implementation of sweeping austerity measures. *Following Syriza’s Jan. 15 election victory, however, the number of such strikes against capitalist austerity dropped to zero!*

- Syriza prioritized six months of negotiations with European capital over the mobilization of the Greek masses to challenge capitalism at home, a mistake of epic proportions. Syriza pledged to pay the debts incurred by the previous government and to carry out the austerity measures imposed by them while simultaneously seeking modest debt relief with possible measures such as lower interest rates, extended payment deadlines, or a partial debt “haircut.” That is, it asked for a measure of forgiveness of some of the debt on the basis that it was in fact nearly impossible to collect and that it was incurred by a corrupt government that had been repudiated.

But Syriza, while agreeing at the bargaining table to not reverse the previous government’s two previous negotiated austerity packages, sought funds to “reorganize” Greek capitalism to make it more competitive on world markets through investments in more efficient technology and privatization of government-owned “inefficient” industries and other measures in the framework of maintaining Greek capitalism.

In short, Syriza’s entire negotiating strategy was to pay the \$300 billion debt, continue the present austerity, and perhaps moderate the terms of payment in return for an additional \$96 billion in new loans to avert an impending bankruptcy. About \$50 billion of

(Above) Banners of the anti-capitalist coalition ANTARSYA at an Athens protest rally.

this new loan is set aside to pay off creditors immediately—in one door and out another!

Varoufakis’ blunt admissions

Yanis Varoufakis’ negotiating counterparts, as he forthrightly stated in several widely published interviews following his July departure/removal as Greece’s chief negotiator, did not believe for a second that Greece’s third bailout in the past five years would be anything other than an across the board heinous assault on the Greek people. His removal signaled nothing less than a Syriza/Tsipras decision to make this absolutely clear to the Troika.

There was an element of reality in the Troika’s position. Europe’s top negotiators knew full well that, Syriza’s posturing sound and fury rhetoric aside, Tsipras had sent its negotiating team, hat in hand, with only a hope and prayer that the conditions of a third bailout might be slightly less onerous. Indeed, Varoufakis himself later admitted that he was personally granted permission to establish a secret six-person team to prepare a “Plan B” when it became clear that the Troika’s insistence that Greece pay its \$300 billion debt in full, with interest, and via the imposition of even more draconian austerity measures than the two previous bailouts was the only option.

Here is Varoufakis’ blunt assessment of this matter based on an interview with Martin Hart-Landsberg, Professor of Economics at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Ore.:

“HL: You must have been thinking about a Grexit (Greek exit from the Eurozone) from day one...”

YV: Yes, absolutely.”

“HL: ... have preparations been made?”

YV: The answer is yes and no. We had a small group, a ‘war cabinet’ within the ministry, of about five people that were doing this: so we worked out in theory, on paper, everything that had to be done [to prepare in the event of a Grexit]. But it’s one thing to do that at the level of 4-5 people, it’s quite another to prepare the country for it. To prepare the country an executive decision had to be taken, and that decision was never taken.”

“HL: And in the past week, was that a decision you felt you were leaning towards [preparing for Grexit]?”

YV: My view was, we should be very careful *not* to activate it. I didn’t want this to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. *I didn’t want this to be like Nietzsche’s famous dictum that if you stare into the abyss long enough, the abyss will stare back at you.* But I also believed that at the moment the Eurogroup shut our banks down, we should energize this process.

“HL: Right. So there were two options as far as I can see—an immediate Grexit, or printing IOUs and taking back control of the Bank of Greece [potentially but not necessarily precipitating a Grexit]?”

YV: Sure, sure. I never believed we should go straight to a new currency. My view was—and I put this to the government—that if they dared shut our banks down, which I considered to be an aggressive move of incredible potency, we should respond aggressively *but without crossing the point of no return.*

We should issue our own IOUs, or even at least an-

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... The Greek defeat

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announce that we're going to issue our own euro-denominated liquidity; we should haircut the Greek 2012 bonds that the ECB held, or announce we were going to do it; and we should take control of the Bank of Greece. This was the triptych, the three things, which I thought we should respond with if the ECB shut down our banks. ...

I was warning the Cabinet this was going to happen [the ECB shut our banks] for a month, in order to drag us into a humiliating agreement. When it happened—and many of my colleagues couldn't believe it happened—my recommendation for responding 'energetically,' let's say, was voted down."

HL: And how close was it to happening?

YV: Well let me say that out of six people we were in a minority of two. ... Once it didn't happen I got my orders to close down the banks consensually with the ECB and the Bank of Greece, which I was against, but I did because I'm a team player, I believe in collective responsibility.

"And then the referendum happened, and the referendum gave us an amazing boost, one that would have justified this type of energetic response [i.e., Varoufakis's plan] against the ECB, but then that very night the government decided that the will of the people, this resounding 'no,' should not be what energized the energetic approach [his plan].

"Instead it should lead to major concessions to the other side: the meeting of the [European] council of political leaders, with our Prime Minister accepting the premise that *whatever happens, whatever the other side does, we will never respond in any way that challenges them. And essentially that means folding. ... You cease to negotiate.*" [Emphasis added in italics — J.M.]

"The referendum of 5 July," said Varoufakis, "has also been rapidly forgotten—preemptively dismissed by the Eurozone, and many people saw it as a farce—a sideshow that offered a false choice and created false hope, and was only going to ruin Tsipras when he later [almost immediately] signed the deal he was campaigning against. As Schäuble supposedly said, 'elections cannot be allowed to change anything.'"

Wolfgang Schäuble made a critical point here, one that goes to the heart of the Greek crisis. From his vantage point as the Eurozone's top-gun negotiator, armed with the full powers of European finance capital, the January 2015 election that brought Syriza/ANEL to government and the July 5 referendum that rejected his take it or leave it final and crippling bailout proposal meant absolutely nothing. Schäuble and all the other Eurozone nations had full confidence that Greek's coalition capitalist government had no alternative but to accept another austerity package—elections, referendum results, and political bluster notwithstanding.

The terms of the deal

The first two Greek bailouts negotiated by the previous rightwing PASOK/New Democracy government brought Greece to its knees, reducing the standard of living by some 25 percent, raising unemployment levels to Great Depression levels exceeding 26 percent—60 percent for Greek youth—privatizing major Greek industries, and slashing pensions and social services. The third and most recent bailout, this time negotiated by Tsipras on behalf of his "left" coalition capitalist Syriza government and approved by the Greek parliament in mid-July, is far worse!

The *New York Times* pointed out in a July 14 article: "In signing on to the deal, however reluctantly, Mr. Tsipras suddenly found himself the champion of poli-

cies he was elected to oppose and the best hope for de-escalating a crisis he had helped to create. Should he succeed on carrying out the policies set out in the agreement, he would oversee just the kind of market-based changes that creditors have been demanding and successive Greek governments have been failing to deliver for years."

The July 13 British *Guardian's* summary of the new agreement is devastating. Here's my own shortened version: Tsipras, some 17 hours after the July 5 "no" vote, rushed to Brussels for an all-night session with the 18 representatives of the Eurozone nations and approved a seven-page agreement that included the establishment of a \$55 billion Greek fund that is to be used to privatize Greek assets—that is, to sell them to corporate interests at bargain basement prices. Greek planes, airports, ports, vital infrastructure and communication industries and banks are slated for the chopping block.

The new measures include a 50 percent increase in the cost of pensioner health care (almost 40 percent of pensioners live in poverty) and an extension of the age of pensioner eligibility to 67. New and increased sales and value added taxes up to 23 percent as well as restrictions on collective bargaining rights, automatic or triggered social spending cuts when Greece's future budgets fail to reach new required surplus criteria, continued IMF monitoring—if not control—of Greek finances, and a host of other measures aimed at humiliating Greeks in favor of capitalist profits were all approved at Syriza's insistence.

The seven-page agreement mandated that 13 billion euros be cut from the public purse—4 billion euros more than the "austerity" figure rejected overwhelmingly on July 5 by the majority of the Greek population a week earlier. And if one believed that the agreement could not be even more deadly, it affirmed that "the Euro Summit stresses that nominal haircuts on the debt cannot be undertaken." On this last point alone Varoufakis had previously noted, "If the specifics of debt relief are not written clearly into the overall package, it is not worth anything."

Indeed, not only was debt relief/forgiveness in any amount *not* included, it was explicitly excluded. This rejection even irked the U.S.-dominated IMF, whose top echelons knew full well, and stated so in intentionally leaked internal communications, that without a significant debt forgiveness as well as a prolonged, perhaps 30-year, extension of the maturity dates along with interest rate reductions, Greece would be absolutely incapable of anything resembling a recovery. Greece would once again rapidly fall into bankruptcy—as it now will—but not before the new austerity measures take their pound of flesh and line the pockets of the creditor rich while further undermining the standard of living of the Greek people.

Schauble understood this well. He crudely and publicly suggested an alternative—that Greece withdraw from the Eurozone for at least five years and seek relief from other non-troika financial institutions. Pouring into Greece the amount of debt relief that the IMF recommended as the minimum to avoid yet another and close to immediate bankruptcy and bailout—30 percent of Greece's GDP—would, in his view, be the equivalent of throwing good money after bad.

For Schäuble, and for essentially the entire Eurozone group, a "voluntary" Greek exit—in reality throwing Greece out of the Eurozone for non-payment of its debts—would be their first preference. In the end it was only political considerations that altered their approach. These centered on their fear that throwing Greece out of the Eurozone might well trigger a political firestorm among the masses of the other European debtor nations that would threaten the present capi-

talist order. While forcing Greece out was put on hold, no one denies today that the third "bailout" will fail to resolve anything other than to postpone the day of reckoning to perhaps a year or so down the line.

Why did Tsipras ignore the referendum results?

Tsipras began his government's abject capitulation just hours *after* the massive "no" vote was announced. As a gesture of "good faith" and to assure Greece's creditors that his government had ceased its high talk about challenging austerity he presented and won the approval of several initial and devastating measures insisted on by the troika.

A week or so *before* the referendum, when negotiations had effectively ended, Tsipras had defiantly reported: "They asked the Greek government to accept a proposal that accumulates a new unsustainable burden on the Greek people and undermines the recovery of the Greek economy and society, a proposal that not only perpetuates the state of uncertainty but accentuates social inequalities even more." Yet Tsipras now demanded its acceptance.

To date there has been but one plausible explanation put forward for this near instant Syriza reversal—Tsipras fully expected the referendum to produce a "yes" vote! Varoufakis' lengthy interview strongly implies that this was the case. Tsipras, he implies, planned to use a "yes" vote to immediately go to the parliament to ask for approval of the "people's will," and thus provide justification for acceptance of the ruthless measures required by the Troika. Nevertheless, a stunned Tsipras went to the same parliament, throwing the "no" vote into the dustbin and demanding acceptance.

On July 6, again, one day after the massive "no" vote, he secured a near unanimous vote of approval from Syriza's parliamentary delegation, including its Left Platform. This vote, with only two Left Platform ministers in opposition—a pre-planned token opposition vote of the two—was secured based on the fear that if the Syriza/ANEL government failed to secure a majority of its own members of parliament, Greek law might require the holding of elections for a new government.

In addition to the almost unanimous Syriza/ANEL vote—minus the Nazis Golden Dawn "no" votes and those of the opportunistic and sectarian Greek Communist Party (KKE), which in years past did its own stint in Greek coalition capitalist governments—the traditional Greek capitalist parties, New Democracy and PASOK, voted their approval. Varoufakis did not attend the meeting but sent a note indicating his vote in support of Tsipras's proposal!

A week or so later, when the full Eurozone/Tsipras seven-page agreement came before the Greek parliament, some 32 MPs of the Left Platform and other leftist tendencies voted "no." But the agreement was overwhelming approved by the parliament, with some 80 percent of the Syriza representatives voting in favor and joined by the traditional Greek capitalist parties. As we have noted, the terms of Tsipras's negotiated agreement are harsher by a full order of magnitude than those rejected by Greek voters the previous week!

The lessons of the Greek experience in the "rule" of mis-named "broad parties of the anti-capitalist left," with Syriza being today's touted model by those who reject the formation of revolutionary socialist parties of the Leninist type, is glaring and tragic. The spectacle of "leftists" in "power," including "Marxist" professors, ex-Stalinists, social democrats, and even some who describe themselves as Trotskyists taking responsibility for and imposing massive austerity measures on the working class must be a warning to serious revolutionaries.

Syriza's Left Platform's alternative Grexit proposal was summarized on the *Greek Reporter's* on-line news site as follows: "An exit from the Eurozone would generate further benefits, namely, the restoration of financial liquidity, a sustainable growth program based on private investment, the rebuilding of the internal economy to reduce dependence on imports, an increase in exports, independence from the European Central Bank, its policies and restrictions and finally the utilization of unused resources to create rapid growth so as to protect against the first difficult months following the Grexit."

We must note, however, that this "technical" proposal never once deviated from solutions based on Greece's remaining in the world capitalist orbit via the promotion of a more profitable and efficient capitalist economy in Greece.

Syriza, and all its component currents, essentially subordinated organizing the Greek masses to defend and advance their interests to technical solutions and/or futile negotiations with Greek's capitalist predators and their international troika superiors. This undeniably *demobilized* the working class! It fostered illusions that socialists could administer capi-

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... Whose Lives Matter?

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"Seven years ago, in the gauzy afterglow of a stirring election night in Chicago, commentators dared ask whether the United States had finally begun to heal its divisions over race and atone for the original sin of slavery by electing its first black president. It has not. Not even close.

"A *New York Times*/CBS News poll conducted last week reveals that nearly six in 10 Americans, including heavy majorities of both whites and blacks, think race relations are generally bad, and that nearly four in 10 think the situation is getting worse. By comparison, two-thirds of Americans surveyed shortly after President Obama took office said they believed that race relations were generally good.

"The swings in attitude have been particularly striking among African-Americans. During Mr. Obama's 2008 campaign, nearly 60 percent of blacks said race relations were generally bad, but that number was cut in half shortly after he won. It has now soared to 68 percent, the highest level of discontent among blacks during the Obama years and close to the numbers recorded in the aftermath of the riots that followed the 1992 acquittal of Los Angeles police officers charged in the beating of Rodney King."

The once optimistic commentators referred to in *The Times* included virtually all participants in Netroots Nation. *The Nation* held a symposium speculating on what President Obama might accomplish in his First Hundred Days—an historical reference to FDR's taking office during the Great Depression, warmed over by Bill Fletcher Jr. in the *Black Commentator*.

Joe Dinkin is right to be wary of a non-nuanced

"economics and class trump all," but that formulation is spot on concerning the first Black person nurtured by the ruling class to become president. The only problem is that the economic policies of the current administration are not in the interest of *our* class—and especially not the doubly oppressed Black sector of the working class.

The 100,000 jobs eliminated at the peak of the Great Recession by the bankruptcy/bailout restructuring of General Motors and Chrysler, imposed by the White House, impacted African Americans hardest of all. The attacks on public education through the Race to the Top enriched testing and textbook companies as well as charter schools while hitting Black communities with massive school closings and attacks on teacher seniority and pensions.

Pro-privatization policies have also axed tens of thousands of good jobs largely held by African Americans at the U.S. Postal Service. The disparity in Black/white unemployment and wage rates remains firmly entrenched—helping to make racism profitable for the employers of wage labor.

But there was still little criticism of the president at Netroots, and most unions and civil rights organizations swallowed their tongues long ago. Even the "socialist" in their midst avoids denunciation of the reactionary character of the administration winding down its second term.

Ruling-class strategists appear to favor a "bump" from a first woman president taking the launch codes from the first Black. The real first choice for the Netroots Nation would be Senator Elizabeth Warren—who has firmly declined the offer. Hillary Clinton—a loyal and highly visible part of the Establishment for as long as any Millennial can remember—is a tougher sell. Netroots hopes Bernie can at least force her to

trim "left." She has in fact already out bid the "socialist" by promising to put solar panels on *every American home* within 10 years of taking office.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson ran an issue campaign for the Democrat nomination in 1988. It resembled in some respects the Bernie Sanders effort, with one important exception—Rev. Jackson played a leading role in mass movements while the "socialist's" resume is mostly based on winning elections in Vermont. When the Rev. Jackson gave his concession speech at the convention that nominated Dukakis, he reminded the delegates that the party needs "two wings to fly."

Though it was not his intention—perhaps not even his understanding—this famous quote explains why American politics revolves around sentiment, rhetoric, and personalities masking the underlying divisions of class and color. It's what enables a tiny ruling class to run government without any effective opposition.

Those who do not yet understand this are not entitled to lead us. If you're not part of the solution—you're part of the problem.

I'm confident that, whatever organizational forms may evolve, the struggle for Black Lives Matter will continue. So will the Fight for Fifteen by low-wage workers who, at least in urban areas, are overwhelmingly Black and Latino. We are seeing the early stages of a mass movement around climate change. These are battles that deserve the support of all workers.

It seems inevitable that in the course of these game-changing struggles will come recognition that our side needs a party of our own to challenge a political monopoly that benefits from racism, sexism, economic exploitation—and has put us in danger of wrecking our biosphere. Then—and only then—will working people have a stake in the elections. ■

... Greek defeat

(continued from page 8)

talist states without challenging capitalist power and capitalist rule itself.

Capitalist rule is based on the forced imposition of the will and interests of society's tiny property owning elite on the vast majority. It is based on the deployment of the combined institutions of the capitalist state to enforce this minority rule, from capitalism's legislative bodies, courts, police and army to all other government dominated institutions. All exist solely to defend the interests of the capitalist state power, its wealth and unimpeded right to exploit and oppress its working class victims.

A revolutionary course of action

Some Greek revolutionaries did seek to alter the present relationship of forces between labor and capital. Revolutionary parties, small as they were—including the Greek Fourth International section, OKDE-Spartakos (Organization of Communist Internationalists of Greece)—looked to the organizations of the working masses and oppressed to exercise their power in the streets. They encouraged and helped to lead united-front mass actions that challenged capitalist austerity in all its manifestations.

They acted to defend the rights of immigrants against the fascist Golden Dawn attacks. They aimed at the organization of working-class communities and neighborhood groups to fight for their own interests. In the electoral arena and in united-front mobilizations, they participated in the relatively small but important ANTARSYA (Anti-capitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow) to pose a mass-struggle alternative to Syriza's reformism.

They worked to foster the education and active engagement of the Greek masses and warned that there are no reformist—that is, capitalist—solutions to the massive austerity imposed on by Greek and international capital. Immediately following Syriza's vote to approve the third "bailout," they helped to build a general strike and mass rally of 15,000 in Athens' Syntagma Square, which was brutally attacked by the government's police, including the frame-up arrest of OKDE-Spartakos members and other revolutionary activists who challenged the Syriza sellout.

For revolutionary socialists, politics is the art of organizing, uniting, and mobilizing the working class for the seizure of power when the conditions have been properly prepared.

Revolutionaries operate on the irrefutable premise that no ruling class in history has ever voluntarily ceded power to the vast majority of the working masses, who produce all the world's wealth. When faced with a serious challenge to their rule, the capitalist elite resort to every means necessary to sustain it. Their tactics range from electoral guile (for example, run-

ning radical-sounding politicians for office), restrictive election laws, and stealing elections via their control of the ballot box to outright repression including mass arrests, imprisonment, and murder. And finally, when all else fails to stem an impending mass uprising that directly threatens their rule, they can resort to outright dictatorships of the fascist type, with rule by force and violent repression.

Revolutionaries certainly do not advocate isolated groups running wild in the streets demanding "socialism now!" Nor do we believe that socialism can triumph in a single country without its being accompanied by a social transformation worldwide—especially including the most advanced industrialized countries.

But on the other hand, revolutionaries do not advocate passivity until the "world revolution" comes. In 1917, V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky won their Bolshevik Party to the task of organizing Russian workers, peasants, and oppressed nationalities in order to *prepare* for the seizure of power to end capitalist rule. They saw backward Russia, in the context of a worldwide rise in revolutionary struggles and the devastation brought on by World War I as a critical moment where their revolution—their example—might inspire workers everywhere to follow suit.

Indeed, they prioritized and helped foster the formation of disciplined revolutionary socialist parties of the Leninist type everywhere in the world. They saw their revolution as only the first blow against the capitalist world order. And they also understood that the alternative to the organization of the working class for the seizure of power was the continued rule of capital, including Russia's continued participation in a monstrous war, the starvation of the Russian masses, and the continued oppression of Russia's colonially oppressed nationalities.

In Greece today, the central question before serious revolutionaries is *not* the immediate seizure of power but the prerequisite steps that are indispensable for achieving it. This begins, in Greece and in all nations, with the construction of a consciously constructed revolutionary socialist party of the Leninist type—a deeply-rooted mass revolutionary party that aims to unite all of society's millions and billions of oppressed and exploited people, the vast majority, into an unbeatable force—the *only* force capable of defeating the repressive capitalist state power in all its manifestations.

That this process takes time is indisputable. Patience, fortitude, conviction, and confidence in the working class are the indispensable qualities of serious revolutionaries. There is no other way. Socialist revolution requires the organization of the working masses to rule in their own name, in their own interests, and through their own institutions.

Had Syriza spent its first six months governing



Former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis made telling criticisms of Syriza's negotiation process, but voted for the austerity package anyway.

Greece looking to the working-class masses as its source of strength and power, the result might well have been inspirational to the workers of the rest of the oppressed European states and beyond.

But instead of mobilizing its millions to challenge capitalist rule, to take over the major industries, to tax and/or expropriate the rich, to nationalize the banks and major corporations, all under the control of the working masses, Syriza and its sycophants (blind and obedient followers) envisioned social change as a product of clever negotiations with the capitalist elite, employing leading intellectuals to press for modest reforms within the framework of capitalism. Greece's working-class masses were shunted to the sidelines by the Syriza/ANEL government.

Many of the "left" argued that this was the only possible choice, that the time was not ripe for revolution, or that the Greek workers were not ready to fight back. Some added that Tsipras and Syriza negotiators were exhausted from their yeoman efforts and should be praised for their work. They fought the good fight against unbeatable odds!

But nothing could be further from the truth. Reforming capitalism as opposed to the perspective of abolishing it, formation of multi-class electoral alliances to administer the capitalist state, and a rejection of revolutionary party building in favor of vaguely defined "broad" reformist parties constitute Syriza's "tragic flaws." Now this dead-end strategy has once again ended in defeat.

Those who absorb these fundamental lessons of independent working-class politics will be best prepared to help lead the coming struggles for a socialist future. ■



(Left) Protest against austerity takes place outside parliament building in Athens in February 2015.

... Greece

(continued from page 1)

barricades for protests in front of the Greek parliament—only to have them replaced by police clubs and teargas. An international campaign for their release has been mounted.

The Greek debt of \$330 billion (300 billion euros) is currently 174% of the country's Gross National Product (GNP), up from 134% GDP in 2010. The European Union (EU) lenders have refused a "haircut," meaning the kind of debt reduction that is offered to some countries by big lenders for mostly strategic political reasons, such as the recent write-off of a 13.5 to 18 billion euro loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the CIA-backed Ukrainian regime.

The major financial institutions that are strangling Greece, nicknamed the Troika, are the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the European Commission (EC). On July 20, a 7 billion euro EU bridge loan and an emergency bank credit got the bank doors reopened in Greece. Banks had been closed since June 29, except for ATMS, where customers were limited to withdrawals of 60 euros per day. Capital controls on large withdrawals are still in place.

Clearly, the EU's hard line is meant to punish Greek workers for daring to defy capitalist diktat by electing an ostensibly "leftist" government. Since Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) took power in January with 36% of the votes, Greece's corrupt elite have removed hundreds of millions, if not billions, of euros from the country and deposited their booty in foreign European banks, depriving Greece of taxable wealth.

Greece's debt crisis is only one of several scenarios of the worldwide debt and economic crisis, one that includes Puerto Rico, a colony of U.S. imperialism. Many nations are still reeling from the capitalist crisis of 2007-8 and drowning in debt to international banks, particularly the U.S.-dominated World Bank and its austerity enforcement arm, the International Monetary Fund. In Europe alone unemployment remains high: The youth jobless rate is still 42% in Italy and 49% in Spain despite mass emigration.

The fate of the proposal is now in the hands of Germany, the acknowledged financial and political leader of the 28-member EU. Germany's parliament should vote on the proposal within the next month, agreeing thus far only to discuss terms. The remaining EU parliaments must also vote on it. The draconian austerity guidelines of the bailout are to be monitored by the IMF, whose trickle-down, starvation policies have left hundreds of millions in poverty and misery.

Fifty billion euros of the Greek loan is to be used for bank recapitalization, i.e., private profit, 25% toward internal investment—mostly capitalist profit—and 25% to pay debt, mostly to bankers. Greece needs \$7.7 billion currently and over \$5 billion in August alone. Already implemented are cuts to pensions and added taxes on items, such as food.

Further austerity measures will wreck an already imploding economy. Unemployment in Greece is 26%, U.S. Great Depression levels; for youth, 60%. Some 800,000 haven't been paid in weeks or months. Pensions have been slashed in half, and wages and jobs have been massively cut since the capitalist crisis began and austerity measures imposed in 2010. The Greek economy has shrunk by 25% since that year. The suicide rate is up 35% since the crisis began.

During the early 2000s, the U.S. investment bank of Goldman Sachs played an important role in helping to unleash the Greek crisis, masking Greece's true debt while raking in 600 million euros in profit from a shady \$2.8 billion deal with the corrupt Greek government. The managing director and vice president of the European branch of Goldman Sachs in 2010 was Mario Draghi, previously head of the Bank of Italy and involved in the privatization of public utilities there. In 2011, Draghi was made the head of the European Central Bank and today negotiates directly with Greece over the debt.

Syriza: What went wrong

The proposal passed in the Greek parliament on July 15 with 229 "yes" votes to 64 "no's"; 123 members of Syriza or its right-wing governmental partner ANEL supported the bailout. Thirty-two "no" votes came from Syriza MPs, most of whom are in Syriza's "Left Platform," while seven other Syriza MPs abstained or were absent. The Left Platform makes up about 30% of Syriza's Central Committee. Former Greek Energy Minister Panagiotis Lafazanis, a leader of the Left Platform, said that the memorandum was "incompatible with Syriza's program" and added that the EU had "acted like cold-blooded blackmailers and economic assassins."

The "leftist" Syriza was elected on a promise to refuse the austerity that came with loans accepted by the former PASOK (social-democrats) and center-right governments. Most of Syriza's major "red lines" that it pledged to workers that it would not cross were swept aside to maintain the euro-banksters' choke hold on Greece.

Also swept aside were the June 17 findings of a Syriza-sponsored "Debt Truth Committee," which had concluded that Greece's debt to the banks was "illegal, illegitimate, and odious." The committee had gone on to state that "Greece has been and still is the victim of an attack premeditated and organized by the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission. This violent, illegal, and immoral mission aimed exclusively at shifting private debt onto the public sector."

Since the July 15 parliament vote, some 10 Syriza top government officials who did not back Tsipras have been removed and replaced with mostly conservative MPs. Energy Minister Lafazanis was dismissed from his post, but even so, the "leftist" pledged his support to the Syriza government. There is talk of another election in the autumn.

At a Syriza Central Committee meeting on July 31, the Tsipras leadership was able to defeat motions by the Left Platform to convene a Syriza congress in order to discuss the Aug. 20 payment of 3.2 billion euros in interest on bonds held by the European Bank. The decision will leave Tsipras free to negotiate the Aug. 20 terms with the Troika.

This was not the first Syriza betrayal. The vote for Syriza in January 2015 was a major rebuke to capitalist rulers—the first electoral revolt in some years by the working class of a so-called advanced capitalist country. Syriza's slogan was "no sacrifice for the euro," but just a month after forming the government the SYRIZA leadership betrayed its supporters by brokering a four-month bailout extension with the Troika—much as the previous capitalist government did when it negotiated a two-month extension.

Syriza Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras himself called the recent deal "a bad agreement." Even the IMF referred to the Greek debt under the proposed deal as "unsustainable." Nevertheless, Greek President Pro-

kopis Pavlopoulos, in an April interview in *Spiegel Online*, pledged to pay off the banks, saying, "We will pay back our debts to the last euro." Pavlopoulos is a member of the conservative New Democracy party and was elected president by the Greek parliament in February with Syriza's votes.

Syriza began in 2004 as a fusion party of reformist ex-Stalinist "Euro-Communists," like Tsipras, from the Greek Communist Party (KKE) but also included independent leftists, Trotskyists, Maoists, and later, Greek Occupy activists. Its leading lights, like Tsipras, are middle-class intellectuals, many of them centered in universities. The organized working class within Syriza is small, around 10% to 15%, according to estimates earlier this year. Despite a vote of 2,250,000 votes in the January election, only 35,000 voters were Syriza members at that time, a sure sign that it is a movement based on elections, not on mass struggles in the streets and in the factories (see the March 2015 *Socialist Action* newspaper).

Earlier Syriza platforms, such as the 2014 Thessaloniki Program, called for radical reforms such as nationalizing the banks (the Greek government already holds most of the major banks' shares), public services, railroads, and airports, and saying "no" to the Troika memorandums on jobs and wages. It promised democratic, not top-down, decisions. However, since Syriza took office, there have been few meetings of its decision-making Central Committee; the leadership turned its back on its previous platform, ruling by decree and photo-ops.

Electoral strategy and trying to outfox the Troika at negotiations drove Syriza strategy—not mass mobilizations, strikes, occupations, let alone nationalizations. A July 13 radio interview with former Syriza Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis illustrates in starkest terms the middle-class mindset of the party's betrayers. Varoufakis related the details of his personal meeting with Tspiris, as giant crowds surrounded the parliament in celebration of the "no" vote: "I sensed immediately a sense of resignation, a negatively charged atmosphere. I was confronted with an air of defeat, which was completely at odds with what was happening outside.

"At that point I had to put it to the prime minister, 'If you want to use the buzz of democracy outside the gates of this building you can count on me. If, on the other hand, if you feel you cannot handle the big interest in 'no' to the rather irrational proposition from our European partners then I am going to simply steal into the night.

"I could see that Tsipris didn't seem to have a positive attitude, didn't have what it took sentimentally, emotionally to carry the 'no' vote to Europe, to use it as a weapon."

Modern capitalism is adept at co-opting forces that have the attention and loyalty of the working class in order to corrupt, mislead, and derail any serious fight-back against deteriorating conditions. At these times, reformists masquerading as "socialists" have shown themselves to be reliable allies of the super-rich and capitalism.

In that role, the non-revolutionary Syriza fits the bill. Syriza has organized few, if any, mass mobilizations against the 1%. Instead, it has focused attention on the negotiating table, not even employing the essential union tactic of supplementing talks with a display of labor's power in the streets or in the shops. Without it, the struggle is thus reduced to a few elite members on both sides of the table. And when that happens, the ruling class always wins.

Syriza's services to imperialism

Syriza also renders services to international imperialism. In June 2013, *The New York Times* published an op-ed: "Only SYRIZA Can Save Greece." The piece was co-authored by future Finance Minister Varoufakis, who wrote that if Syriza took office, "Syriza doesn't intend to leave NATO or close American military bases." The ever-expanding U.S.-led NATO forces are poised squarely at Russia, elevating the war danger.

A further example was Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias' recent tour of Israel. Kotzias stated in a joint press conference with Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu, "We must learn to love Israel." Kotzias even claimed that Israel is part of a "line of stability in this area," despite the atrocious bombing of Gaza last year, resulting in 2200 deaths, mostly civilians. Hypocritically, the Syriza 2012 platform calls for the "abolition of military cooperation with Israel."

Since the introduction of the Syriza-proposed memorandum, there is the growing danger that the fascists of the Golden Dawn party, who won 6.3% of the votes in the January election, can steal the mantle as the opponents of the Troika. On Greek TV, a Golden Dawn parliamentarian ripped-up the memorandum.

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By BARRY WEISLEDER

Over 90 per cent of Canadians back the concept, according to a recent Angus Reid Institute poll. Canada is the only country with a universal health-care system that doesn't also cover the cost of prescription medicine.

High prices force many people to avoid filling prescriptions; even more skip doses or split pills to try to make medicine last longer. In this way, thousands risk aggravated illness and needless suffering.

It needn't be this way. A study released in mid-July titled "Pharmacare 2020—The Future of Drug Coverage in Canada" makes a strong case for a national pharmacare programme. Not only would it ensure that everyone would have access to drugs they need; it would save billions of dollars.

Other countries achieve lower drug costs by purchasing medicine through a single, national buyer of pharmaceuticals. In New Zealand, a year's supply of

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

website: <http://socialistaction.ca>

Pharmacare: What are you waiting for, Tom Mulcair?

the cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor, costs \$15; in Canada it is at least \$811 annually.

Canada funds drugs through an array of private plans and disconnected governmental systems that force many people to pay out of pocket. Many Canadians aren't covered by workplace drug insurance plans, and those who are often face extra charges such as deductibles and co-payments. This is totally unacceptable.

For the New Democratic Party, which gave birth to medicare, this should be a no-brainer. So, what's the hold up, federal NDP Leader Tom Mulcair? Why isn't pharmacare a top plank in the current NDP federal election campaign?

Sure, there would be start-up costs. But these could be covered by the tax reforms also needed to fund a \$15/day national child-care plan, and to provide for the housing, transportation, and education needs of the working class.

Road test this slogan: For Housing and Pharmacare, Not Pipelines and Warfare! This idea is clearly expressed in the 4 Ps petition of the NDP Socialist Caucus, which is attracting greater interest as the federal election campaign gathers momentum. Visit www.ndpsocialists.ca to learn more about it.

And why stop there?

Should medicine continue to be a gold mine for giant, private profiteers? Or should the industry be taken into public ownership under democratic workers' and community control? Putting those billions in assets to work for the common good would go far—beyond boosting public medicare. ■

Hands off the CBC!

Care for a glimpse of the venomous agenda of the Conservative government for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation? Just look at a report emanating from the widely discredited Senate. The Conservative-dominated Senate committee on transport and communications, in a document titled "Time for Change: The CBC/Radio-Canada in the 21st Century," recommends gutting the public broadcaster.

It dismisses calls for giving the CBC stable, multi-year funding, stating that CBC needs are subordinate to the government's needs. Instead, the appointed Conservative Senators insist the CBC "explore alternative fund-

ing models." That could include slapping a licence fee on households, forcing the public to pay extra to get the CBC channel, and asking viewers to sponsor programmes and make voluntary donations (shades of the feeble PBS in America).

The Senators also want the CBC to stop in-house production of non-news and non-current events programming. They recommend that "a portion of the CBC's funding be reallocated" to a superfund that private companies could draw on to produce Canadian content. Could this corporate agenda be any more obvious?

Now, the CBC is no paragon of proletarian virtue. Liberal ideology defines its programming, reserving plenty of air time for more conservative propagandists (Don Cherry, Kevin O'Leary, and Rex Murphy instantly come to mind). Occasionally, someone to the left of news anchor Peter Mansbridge is shoehorned into a regular discussion panel (like UNIFOR's spritely left-

Keynsian economist Jim Stanford).

But the point is this: the CBC offers some creative space, and presents a range of voices not found on Bell Media-CTV, Shaw-Global, Rogers, TVA (Quebec), etc. Moreover, the CBC is a public employer whose unionized workers are under attack.

This year the CBC will get about \$930 million from the federal government—a third of what the BBC gets on a per capita basis—and it will raise \$700 million from ads and other sources. Stephen Harper's Conservatives have cut \$212 million in funding for the network in recent years.

CBC, and its employees, deserve increased funding—starting with a reversal of the Harper cuts. That is clearly necessary, as is workers' and community democratic control of the corporation, for there to be greater scope for progressive public broadcasting in the future.

— BARRY WEISLEDER.

... Labour Day

(continued from page 12)

the slowdown on overseas events beyond Canada's control, declining to explain just how his government allowed the country to become so exposed in the first place.

Business pundits continue to suggest that the U.S. economy will fuel a rebound—except that, so far, that hasn't happened. Canadian manufacturing has been slow to recover, despite a weakening loonie (now below 77 cents U.S.) making exports, at least in theory, more attractive. To top it all off, the International Monetary Fund cut America's growth forecast for 2015, while also slashing its outlook for Canada.

In just a few short years, Canada went from being one of the developed world's most resilient economies to among the most vulnerable. And, unfortunately for heavily indebted Canadians, there are plenty of storms (including the extreme weather kind, stemming from climate change) that threaten to push us under.

But those are not the only forces pressing down on workers. Our corporate rulers, and their servants in government, continue to seize on capitalist decline to argue that we are "living beyond our means" and to demand concessions in wages, job security, and benefits.

To the extent that the bosses can force unionized employees to our knees, they can more easily impose wretchedness all across the board.

Thus, Labour Day 2015 can be a turning point,

for good or ill. Many collective agreements, in the private and public sectors, are up for negotiation.

The auto bosses are pressing for rollbacks and three-tier wage structures. Owners in the service industries, where wages are typically low, often get away without even paying workers, many of whom are immigrants. Ottawa seeks to eviscerate, and then privatize the postal service. Queen's Park is targetting education workers and members of the Ontario public service for major givebacks.

In Quebec it's the same story, but with a potential difference. Unions have formed a common front. Their leaders talk about taking joint job action in the fall.

Such talk should be translated into action. *Not after* the Oct. 19 federal election, *but now*. The fight against labour concessions, the battle for good jobs, decent pensions, green energy conversion, replacement of crumbling infrastructure, improvement of public services, justice for indigenous peoples, the conscription of "dead capital," and the steep taxation of the rich, should fill the work places and spill out onto the streets.

With class-struggle leadership, workers could set the tone for massive change, laying the basis for a new society. Now is the time to act—to install fighting union leaders, and to mobilize the ranks against the capitalist austerity agenda. Both steps, inseparably linked, are required to go forward.

Across the Canadian state, the rallying cry for this Labour Day should be: Common Front, General Strike, Workers' Government. ■

True North: Strong and Free?

Not so much, says a United Nations human rights committee report. It harshly criticizes the Canadian state for a broad range of failures, including an "inadequate" response to the problem of missing and murdered aboriginal females, gender inequality, and "abuses" related to Canadian corporations operating overseas.

The July 23 report expressed deep concerns about Canada's new anti-terrorism law, C-51, saying it is a threat to civil liberties and could lead to "mass surveillance and targeting activities" by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. It cites a lack of oversight and review of bodies like CSIS.

The UN study also took aim at excessive use of force by police during protests in Canada. It listed police

crackdowns during the G20 protest in 2010 in Toronto, and student protests in Quebec in 2012.

The five-year UN committee review pointed to human rights abuses connected to Canadian firms operating abroad, particularly mining corporations.

Although not mentioned in the report, Barrick Gold has been criticized for acts of violence against women in 2009 and 2010 allegedly committed by private security officers for Barrick's Porgera gold mine in New Guinea.

The review also sounded the alarm over Canada's lengthy immigration detention (8519 people in 2014 alone) and the lack of medical support for inmates with mental health problems.

— B.W.

... Greece

(continued from page 10)

Without a sharp challenge to capitalist misery from the left, the violent anti-immigrant racists of Golden Dawn could make substantial gains.

The left must be in the streets to pose a revolutionary alternative to capitalism and smash the fascist threat.

Capitalism is a brutal system that defends its wealth at any cost. The left cannot fool capitalism with clever arguments and slogans. Only the working class has

the power to defeat the Troika. What's at stake in Greece is an historic battle between its working people and a capitalist system gone mad in a worldwide war over shrinking profit margins. Only a revolutionary strategy based on working-class mobilization can defeat the Troika. Only an overthrow of capitalism can save Greece.

Since the "no" vote victory, Greece has seen terrible setbacks to the struggle to shake off the Euro-Banksters, but the spirit of the July 5 referendum must be nourished and strengthened as Greek workers face even bigger challenges.

A united workers' front of all labor and socialist organizations against capitalist austerity can and will

be built, although it will not happen overnight. Such a united front must take bold action that cuts into the very fabric of capitalist privilege, with not only mass protests but also prolonged general strikes and occupations that can lead the way to the overthrow of capitalism once and for all. That strategy must link together anti-austerity movements in Greece and across the continent to defeat the bankster class of Europe. Building a revolutionary party in Greece that can lead these struggles remains a top priority.

Build a united front against austerity and privatizations! Break with the EU!

Nationalize the banks! Occupy the factories! For a government of workers, not capitalists! ■

Whose lives matter?

By BILL ONASCH

Netroots Nation bills its live body gatherings as the biggest conference of Progressives—by which they mean liberal Democrats. At their annual conclave, held in Phoenix in July, they featured a presidential candidate Town Hall Meeting that included the two top long-shot challengers to Hillary Clinton for the Donkey Party nod—Senator Bernie Sanders, the Vermont independent who for the past quarter-century has caucused with the Democrats, and Martin O'Malley, who just completed two terms as governor of Maryland and prior to that served two terms as Mayor of Baltimore. They came prepared to give their stock spiel to a friendly audience. But that was not to be.

A vocal contingent from the movement in formation known as Black Lives Matter insisted that the Democrat hopefuls respond to their issues. I'm sure that as a former mayor of Brown Town Baltimore, this was not O'Malley's first exposure to edgy African-American dissent. But, after first demonstrating the stereotype that white people can't get the hang of rhythmic clapping, he appeared flustered and blurted, "Black lives matter, white lives matter, all lives matter."

While few would challenge such banality about the sanctity of life in general, O'Malley got a reminder that context rules. The BLM agitators were there because Black lives are being taken in alarming numbers by those charged to protect and serve them. The *Guardian* has been updating a running account of those killed by police in the USA, along with their color. As I write, the total for this year is 648. Broken down by fatalities per million of their color's population: 4.12 Black; 1.77 Latino; 1.58 white.

If the numbers and colors were reversed, if unarmed suburban, middle-class white youth were being gunned down by Black cops, it would undoubtedly be considered a national crisis. Clearly in America today Black lives don't matter as much. But few white liberal politicians are willing to explicitly acknowledge this—much less take any meaningful action to end this disgrace.

And what about the "socialist" who has been drawing big crowds—including 11,000 at a rally in Phoenix—in his quest for the Democrat nomination? One of Bernie's most avid supporters, Joe Dinkin, national communications director of the Working Families Party, wrote in that venerable organ of liberalism, the *Nation*, "Both candidates did damage to themselves; Sanders was defensive, and O'Malley's response included the words 'white lives matter.' But Sanders had far more to gain by getting this right.

"I approach this incident as a fan of Bernie Sanders.



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But when he had the opportunity to rewrite his own narrative and broaden his own base, he failed. ... With the protest, Sanders was presented an opportunity on a silver platter: He could overcome his perceived negatives and grow his base. All he would have had to do was act with a little humility. But instead, he talked over the protesters, got defensive about his racial-justice bona fides, and stuck to his script.

"Essentially, he appeared to be arguing that economics and class trump all. For an audience mourning the death of Sandra Bland, a woman who was arrested at a traffic stop on the way to her new job before mysteriously dying in police custody, the jobs program Sanders suggested just didn't seem like a sufficient answer."

Dinkin makes some good points but you will note that his perspective begins with Bernie's missed op-

portunities. He thinks a few well-chosen humble words might have got his candidate off the hook. CYA is what "getting this right" means to politicians—not engaging in genuine dialog with African-American activists about what needs to be done both in the short-term and long-run.

Class and economic issues are key to the goal of eliminating racism root and branch. Whites don't need to explain this to Black workers who understand it much better than their pale pigment class siblings. Black leaders from Frederick Douglass, through A. Phillip Randolph, down to Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., have taught African Americans to be much more pro-union, and more inclined to advance their struggle through mass action, than most white workers who have much more to learn.

The Black Lives Matter movement is focused on an immediate tactical objective, while Class and Economic Justice is a long haul strategy. They can build one another—synergy. Nothing good comes from counterposing them.

Patently, despite great expectations, there has been no progress on any aspect of racism on the watch of the currently governing ruling-class party with an African-American president in charge and Black attorneys general overseeing Justice.

A recent feature in *The New York Times* begins, (continued on page 11)

Canada Labour Day 2015: Workers should not pay for recession

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Workers didn't create this mess. Neither did Stephen Harper, at least not exclusively—although his policies have made it significantly worse.

It's true that Ottawa's over-reliance on the energy sector, its reduced public spending—and virtually no government action to sustain, let alone bolster, manufacturing—have hastened Canada's economic decline. But this occurs in the context of a world economy in chaos.

China's stock market saw nearly \$3 trillion (USD) of wealth obliterated in a matter of weeks, panicking investors. The stock market rout quickly spread to

commodities, accelerating declines that had already been hammering resource-producing countries. Copper, an indicator of global economic health because of its use in so many industries, plunged to a six-year low. The price of iron ore fell 11 per cent in a single day, leading one analyst to note that the price of steel in China—of which iron ore is a key ingredient—was "cheaper per tonne than cabbage."

Capitalism in China, increasingly foreign-controlled, is no different than capitalism elsewhere in that it is utterly reckless, wasteful, and anarchic. Once the poster-child for global recovery from the Great Recession of 2008, China is now the harbinger of doom for

North America, Europe, and the world.

Back in Canada, the collapse in oil prices crushed Alberta's energy boom more quickly and deeply than anyone expected. In mid-July, Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz trimmed the benchmark lending rate by a quarter point to 0.5 per cent, the second such cut in six months, and slashed the central bank's growth outlook for the remainder of 2015. The bank effectively admitted that the economy had entered a recession by noting that "real GDP is now projected to have contracted modestly in the first half of the year."

While Canadian consumers have so far helped offset the damage by borrowing and spending, the resulting debt that

households have taken on now represents an economic risk in itself—particularly if job and wage growth weaken. Moreover, much of that borrowed cash has been sunk into real estate, a relatively non-productive sector of the economy, resulting in home prices that are as much as 63 per cent overvalued, according to Deutsche Bank. It's a case of a resource economy that's been blown apart sitting on top of a housing bubble.

Now, economists debate how long and deep Canada's downturn could be. Federal Finance Minister Joe Oliver denies that the economy is in a recession. Prime Minister Stephen Harper blames (continued on page 11)