

Mass Upheaval Topples Hated Mubarak



AP photos

Egypt: Military Takeover Props Up Capitalist Rule

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 974 (18 February), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

FEBRUARY 14—For nearly 30 years, he governed Egypt with an iron fist. But on February 11, after 18 days of an unprecedented upheaval capped by a wave of strikes, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was finally forced to resign as president, handing power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Mass celebrations of millions of people from all walks of life erupted in Cairo's Tahrir (Liberation) Square and in cities throughout the country—jubilation over the seeming end of a venal and corrupt dictatorship that ruled under emergency law, imprisoning and disappearing its opponents in Egypt's vast torture chambers.

Inspired by the uprising in Tunisia, where protesters braved severe repression to topple the dictatorship of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, Egypt exploded beginning on January 25. Protesters courageously faced down a massive crackdown by the despised Central Security Forces that left at least 300 dead. Throughout the country—from the capital to Alexandria in the north and Aswan in the south, from industrial centers like Mahalla al-Kobra, Suez and Port Said to desert towns like Kharga

Above left: Protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square celebrate Mubarak's ouster, 11 February. Above right: Soldiers on guard in Tahrir Square, 12 February, after military assumed power in defence of capitalist "order."

in the Sahara and al-Arish in Sinai—demonstrators unleashed their fury at the regime by targeting police and security buildings as well as those belonging to the ruling National Democratic Party.

Mubarak is toppled. But the central pillar of Egypt's bonapartist capitalist state apparatus, the military, is now directly in power. The military has announced the dissolution of Mubarak's sham parliament and the formation of a panel to amend a constitution that has never been worth the paper it was written on. As we warned in our last article on the protests in Egypt, "Make no mistake: there remains the dire threat that whatever happens to Mubarak, Egypt's bourgeois rulers will demand fierce military repression to restore and maintain capitalist "order"" (WV No. 973, 4 February). Scuffles have broken out between protesters in Tahrir Square and soldiers trying to remove them. With rumors circulating that the regime will ban strikes, on February 14 the military issued Communiqué No. 5, which denounced strikes as leading to "negative results" and ordered workers to return to their jobs.

Bourgeois oppositionists—from liberal democrats like Mohamed ElBaradei and his National Association for Change, Kefaya's George Ishak and the Ghad party's Ayman Nour to the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood—have all embraced the military in the interest of restoring stability. The ubiquitous Egyptian flags waving in the protests, which drew virtually all layers of society other than the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie, reflected a deep-seated nationalist consciousness. Born of a history of imperialist subjugation, nationalism has long served Egypt's bourgeois rulers by obscuring the *class divide* between the tiny layer of filthy rich at the top and the brutally exploited and impoverished working class.

Today, this nationalism is most clearly expressed in the belief that the military is the "friend of the people." From the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser's 1952 Free Officers coup, which toppled the monarchy and ended the British occupation of the country, the army has been viewed as the guarantor of Egyptian

national sovereignty. In fact, the military has been the backbone of one dictatorship after another since 1952. That year, it was mobilized by Nasser to shoot down textile strikers in Kafr Al-Dawwar near Alexandria. In 1977, it was mobilized by Anwar el-Sadat to "restore order" after a two-day countrywide upheaval over the price of bread. Just last week, the army facilitated murderous attacks by plainclothes cops and hired thugs of the regime against protesters occupying Tahrir Square. Despite claiming that it did not oppose the anti-Mubarak demonstrators, the military arrested hundreds, torturing many. Down with the emergency law! Free all victims of bonapartist state repression!

Together with the police, courts and prisons, the army is at the core of the capitalist state, an apparatus for the violent suppression of the working class and the oppressed. Above all, the drive to "restore stability" is aimed at the working class. Amid the anti-Mubarak protests, tens of thousands of workers launched strikes, which continue to this day. These have included some 6,000 workers on the Suez Canal, through which 8 percent of world trade travels. However, Canal pilots

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**For a Revolutionary Workers Party!
For a Workers and Peasants Government!**

Queensland Floods

Capitalist Greed and Neglect

During January large areas of Queensland, almost a third of Victoria, as well as parts of northern New South Wales and South Australia were awash with devastating floods produced by one of the strongest La Niña events ever recorded. Hardest hit was Queensland where at least thirty-five died and thousands were left homeless. While large areas of Brisbane were inundated, those living in the Lockyer Valley in southeast Queensland experienced the terror of what has been described as an "inland tsunami" as an unstoppable torrent of water crashed through everything in its path.

While natural disasters inevitably inflict havoc, the extent of the death and devastation in Queensland was a product of capitalist greed and neglect. The Bureau of Meteorology gave repeated advance warnings to the Queensland government that the east coast would suffer torrential downpours this summer, yet nothing was done. Now controversy rages over the state Labor government's administration of Wivenhoe Dam near Brisbane, which was built in the aftermath of the 1974 Brisbane floods. Despite the repeated flood warnings, water levels at Wivenhoe were allowed to reach dangerous heights. On 11 January the situation had become so precarious the dam administrators were forced to release more than the volume of water in Sydney Harbour into the already swollen Brisbane River, thus contributing to the flooding of the city.

According to reports in Murdoch's *Australian* newspaper, in 2006 the state government skimped on a necessary safety upgrade of Wivenhoe Dam in order to save tens of millions of dollars. This penny-pinching in effect reduced the flood-mitigation capacity of the dam by up to 20 percent. This is hardly surprising. In search of the quick buck, and refusing to build adequate infrastructure, one Queensland government after the next has had no policy for limiting development on flood prone locations or for constructing levees to protect towns most under threat. Alongside this, the Queensland government has embarked on massive union-busting privatisations of infrastructure, from rail to wharves, in order to help enrich their capitalist "mates."

Julia Gillard's federal Labor government aims to pay for flood reconstruction by slashing spending and imposing a new tax that will target large sections of the working class. Meanwhile the parasitic insurance companies have scrambled to deny payouts, absurdly claiming that what happened in Brisbane was not a "flood" but a "rising river." With the usual capitalist government double-speak about "transparency," the premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh, announced a royal commission-style "inquiry" into the handling of the floods. Such state inquiries

are not only designed to amnesty the capitalist rulers and their governments but in this case has also served to deflect the anger and despair of flood victims into safe channels. Throughout the crisis the bourgeois media bombarded the population with "national unity" rhetoric thick with eulogies to a mythical "Aussie spirit" while calling on everyone to "stick together."

In conjunction with this nationalist outpouring, the government seized the opportunity to call in the army, placing Major-General Mick Slater, former head of Australian imperialism's 2006 neo-colonial occupation of East Timor, in charge of the "flood recovery task force." The capitalist rulers use such natural calamities to accustom the population to the intervention of the military into civil society, while their media hacks work

of Aboriginal people, there has been barely any mention of the conditions in impoverished Aboriginal communities, which have doubtless been left to fend for themselves amidst fetid mud-encrusted wreckage. Reflecting conscious capitalist neglect, the Palm Island Aboriginal community, the largest and one of the most poverty-stricken indigenous communities in Australia, was pointedly not evacuated prior to the devastating cyclone *Yasi* that struck shortly after the floods. The chronic homelessness, mortality rates and unemployment experienced by Aboriginal people in this racist capitalist society will only be exacerbated as a result of these natural disasters.

The misery inflicted by the floods or other natural disasters is magnified tenfold by the decrepit, irrational, capitalist system which, in the search for the great-

er military!? As for Socialist Alternative (SAI) they provide a slightly different but no less reformist schema, baldly headlining that the "Gov't should rethink priorities to deal with flood region." Typical of reformists the world over SAI meekly advise the capitalist rulers to change their policies: "The Afghanistan war cost \$1.2 billion last financial year—scrap it. Gross operating profits of business totalled \$248 billion over the last year—tax it" (*Socialist Alternative*, 14 January).

In sharp contrast to the reformists' self-appointed role as advisers to the bourgeoisie, we revolutionary Marxists look to the working class as the agency for social change. The Queensland Council of Unions reported that there was an outpouring of "thousands of hours of volunteer labour and significant financial assistance" from unions in the immediate aftermath of the floods. This was a good thing. But while the union bureaucrats are happy to sing the praises of workers volunteering their labour and money they do nothing to organise a class-struggle fight for a massive rebuilding program of public works and infrastructure to create full employment, with union jobs at union wage scales and conditions.

That the union misleaders refuse to engage in such a struggle is rooted in their support to the capitalist profit system, expressed politically in their Laborite nationalism and reliance on the capitalist state, which they repeatedly campaign to be administered by a Labor government. To unleash the social power of the multi-racial working class means a fight to break with the politics of Laborism. Concretely this will require a political struggle to replace the hidebound union bureaucrats with a leadership committed to mobilising proletarian power, independent of the capitalist state and in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed. Ultimately it will take the construction of a revolutionary workers party, on the model of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks who led the great 1917 Russian Revolution, to lead the working class in the overthrow of this anarchic, irrational, profit-driven system, which endangers the safety and welfare of the population. ■



Sam Mooy/Australian
Woman in Grantham, Lockyer Valley, following the devastating Queensland floods.

overtime to paint the repressive capitalist state as a supposed humanitarian force for good. Nothing could be further from the truth. Leninists understand that the bourgeois state—at its core the military, police, prisons and courts—is a violent repressive apparatus that exists to defend the property and profits of the filthy rich capitalists against the struggles of the working class and oppressed.

Following the floods the mendacious capitalist rulers and their media sensationalised the harrowing ordeals of some, while in general disappearing the desperate reality that most working people and the oppressed particularly confront in the wake of such disasters. Following the flooding of coal mines in Queensland, the bourgeoisie bellowed about the potential negative impact on the national economy and future coal contracts (read their profits) but there has been nary a word about the impact of the floods on mine workers. Meanwhile the Labor government backed those bosses who refused to pay workers stood down as a result of the floods.

Highlighting the bourgeoisie's contempt and indifference toward the plight

of est profit margins, treats human life with criminal disregard. It is the proletariat, poor and oppressed who always suffer the most as a result of capitalist neglect and greed. It will take a socialist revolution and the establishment of a planned collectivised economy under workers rule for the natural resources and the technological and productive forces of society to be marshalled on behalf of human needs not profit.

Counterposed to this perspective is the puerile reformism of the fake-left opponents of revolutionary Marxism. In their 11 January statement calling for "Money for flood relief, not for war," Socialist Alliance (SA) demand the Gillard government "call our troops back from the war in Afghanistan to assist with tackling the flood crisis and its aftermath" (our emphasis). For their part, the misnamed Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), proving yet again that their split with SA's antecedent (the Democratic Socialist Perspective) had no programmatic basis, write, "A simple first step could be to re-deploy the troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan to flood affected areas to do socially useful work." What will these toadies of the bourgeoisie come up with next? Help "the people" by building a

CORRECTION

A photo used in the article "For a Workers and Peasants Government in Thailand!" in *Australasian Spartacist* No. 211, Summer 2010/11 was wrongly identified as showing the brutal 19 May 2010 military crackdown on "Red Shirt" protesters in Bangkok. The photo in fact showed a bus in flames during a protest in support of ousted prime minister Thaksin in April 2009. We apologise to our readers for the error.

Australasian

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 Saturday 30 April, 3pm

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 Saturday 14 May, 1pm

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Pandering to Reactionary Muslim Brotherhood

Cliffites on Egypt

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard No. 974 (18 February), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S. The Socialist Workers Party, referred to in the article, is the British parent group of Solidarity and Socialist Alternative. Solidarity is formally affiliated.

The ouster of Mubarak after years of dictatorship has lifted the lid on Egyptian society and its many contradictions. The tremendous mobilizations of unemployed youth, students, women and workers have created space for the left and working class to engage more openly in political activity—an opening that is directly threatened by the military takeover. At the same time, the upheaval has provided an opening for the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest opposition movement.

While many protesters say that they would oppose the Brotherhood coming to power, in the absence of a viable revolutionary proletarian alternative it could win a hearing among the desperate masses. This is not least because it provides clinics, schools, charities and other social services for slum dwellers that the bourgeois state fails to provide. A mass movement, the Brotherhood is heavily entrenched among professionals, students, peasants in rural areas and other petty-bourgeois layers as well as the lumpenproletariat of the impoverished urban slums. In the last parliament, despite state repression and electoral rigging, the Brotherhood had 88 seats compared to the 34 seats for all other opposition parties combined.

Because of its historic hostility to workers struggles, the Brotherhood has not made significant inroads into the working class. But it has found allies in its attempt to win support among workers and youth. The opportunist Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group in Egypt—heavily promoted by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, a section of the international tendency founded by the late Tony Cliff—has been fostering suicidal illusions in the Brotherhood. The RS tries to invest these obscurantist clerical forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials and has pursued alliances with them over several years. No one should be fooled by the Brotherhood's claim to fight against “all forms of injustice, tyranny, autocracy and dictatorship,” as a statement of theirs published in the London *Guardian* (8 February) proclaims. Whether or not it is currently in any position to make a bid for power, the Muslim



February 5 Muslim Brotherhood statement posted on Revolutionary Socialists organisation Web site.

Brotherhood represents a deadly danger to the working class, the Coptic Christian minority, all secularists, gays and especially the brutally oppressed women of Egypt.

The RS is so fascinated by these reactionaries that it posted on its Web site a February 5 statement by the Brotherhood, complete with the Brotherhood's emblem of crossed swords. In a reminder of the criminal betrayal by the opportunist left internationally in the 1978-79 upheaval in Iran, when these groups supported the mullahs led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the RS today is championing anti-Semitic Islamic reaction in Egypt. Capitulation to Islamic forces or any other form of religious reaction is antithetical to secular humanism, not to mention the liberating goals of socialism.

In an article titled “Comrades and Brothers,” published in *Middle East Report* (Spring 2007), Hossam El-Hamalawy, a self-described socialist journalist, boasts that the RS “pushed for close coordination” with the Brotherhood and praises its “brotherly spirit.” The RS joined with the Brotherhood to form the National Alliance for Change in 2005, organizing joint demonstrations. El-Hamalawy notes: “The rapprochement between Islamists and the left continued when students from the Revolutionary Socialists' Tendency, Muslim Brothers and some independents formed the Free Student Union (FSU) in November 2005, with the aim of acting as a parallel organization to the government-dominated student unions.”

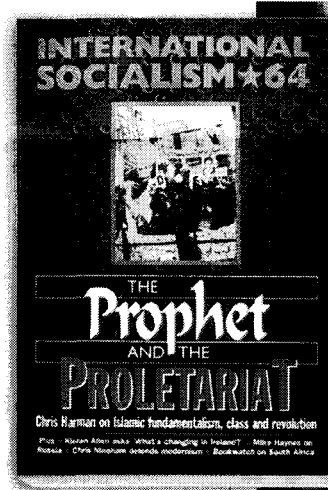
The RS fatuously claims that the Brotherhood has “contradictions” that socialists can exploit. As our Canadian comrades wrote when the Cliffites used the same argument to support the introduction of *sharia* courts (!) in Canada, “The contradiction in religion lies in the fact that human beings created religions, only to have their creations rule over them like a Frankenstein monster. It is obscene to have

propping up capitalist class rule, the system which ensures vast wealth for its rulers and dire poverty for the urban and rural masses. We look instead to the revolutionary mobilization of Egypt's proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, in a fight for socialist revolution, which alone can address the fundamental problems facing the masses. We oppose the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, which bolsters their credibility and also fosters illusions in the “secular” credentials of the bourgeois nationalists while buttressing the repressive powers of the capitalist state.

The RS's criticisms of the Stalinists for reliance on the state are a cover for its accommodation to the Muslim Brotherhood. For our part, we understand that bourgeois rule in semicolonial countries like Egypt, which groan under abject poverty and subjugation to imperialism, reinforces social backwardness and the hold of the Brotherhood and other reactionary religious forces.

Muslim Brotherhood: A Reactionary Mass Movement

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, when there was widespread disappointment at the failure of the weak secular nationalist parties to secure Egypt's independence from



Karim/AI Akhbar

Left: Cliffite leader Chris Harman's 1994 paean to “anti-imperialist” Islamic reaction. Right: 1980 executions in Iran, as “revolutionary” Khomeini regime unleashed terror against workers, leftists, women, national minorities.

to debate with ostensible Marxists whether clerical reaction should be supported. Marxists regard all modern religion as an instrument of bourgeois reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people” (see “*Sharia* ‘Socialists,’” WV No. 861, 6 January 2006).

In March 2006, the RS issued a pamphlet by the Center for Socialist Studies, *The Muslim Brothers: A Socialist Perspective*. The pamphlet opens with a denunciation of the Egyptian Stalinists for characterizing the Brotherhood as “a political enemy of the left that must be fought at all levels.” El-Hamalawy's 2007 article echoes this theme, stating: “Most independent leftist organizations in the 1980s and 1990s hewed to a line on political Islam similar to that of the Egyptian Communist Party,” which translated into an alliance “with the Egyptian secular intelligentsia—and with Mubarak's regime.”

We Marxists reject this bankrupt reformist framework, which posits that the only two “choices” for the working class in Egypt are to capitulate either to the “secular,” military-backed bourgeois nationalist regime or to political Islam. In fact, these are *alternative ways* of

British colonialism following the 1919 uprising. Under the slogan: “The Koran is our constitution,” al-Banna preached a fundamentalist Islamism and aimed at establishing a theocratic state in Egypt. The organization rapidly grew, branching across the Islamic world from Algeria and Jordan to Pakistan.

The Brotherhood became a tool for the monarchy against its political opponents, sponsoring assassinations and mass violence against Communists and the bourgeois-nationalist Wafd party and providing shock troops to break workers strikes. After the army seized power in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser briefly embraced the Brotherhood before ruthlessly suppressing it. Anwar el-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak alternately repressed and demonized the Brotherhood or tolerated it. Sadat released Islamists jailed by Nasser and funded, armed and trained them as an effective antidote to Communists and other leftists. Emboldened by the state, Islamists turned university campuses into *terra islamica*. “They banned, clubs in hand, anything that fell foul of their norms,” writes Gilles Kepel in *The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (1993). “Couples were

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1953: U.S. president Eisenhower meets in White House with group of Muslim delegates, seeking to build anti-Communist alliance during Cold War. Muslim Brotherhood leader Said Ramadan is second from right.

Egypt...

(continued from page 1)

continued to work, ensuring movement of ships. Thousands of textile and steel workers went on strike in the industrial city of Suez, which saw some of the most militant protests. According to the London *Guardian* (28 January), protesters there "seized weapons stored in a police station and asked the policemen inside to leave the building, then burned it down." Cairo public transport workers continue to strike, while, in the wake of Mubarak's fall, strikes have spread to steel workers outside the capital, postal workers, textile workers in Mansoura and other cities as well as thousands of oil and gas workers.

In fighting for economic demands—against poverty-level wages, casual work and constant humiliation at the hands of the bosses—the working class is demonstrating the unique position it holds in making the wheels of the capitalist economy turn. This social power gives the working class the potential to lead all the impoverished masses in struggle against their abject condition. In a country where nearly half the population lives on \$2 a day or less and where such misery is enforced through police-state repression, the democratic aspirations of the masses are intertwined with the struggle against their economic conditions.

Elementary democratic rights such as legal equality for women and the complete separation of religion and state; agrarian revolution to give land to the peasants; ending joblessness and grinding poverty; the basic aspirations of the masses cannot be met without the overthrow of the bonapartist capitalist order. The indispensable instrument for the working class to take the lead is a proletarian revolutionary party, which can be built only through relentless struggle against all bourgeois forces, from the military to the Brotherhood and the liberals who falsely claim to support the struggles of the masses. Such a party must act, in the words of Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin, as a "tribune of the people," fighting against the oppression of women, peasants, Coptic Christians, homosexuals and ethnic minorities.

The liberation of the productive forces from the chains of imperialism and its economic and political agents in the Egyptian bourgeoisie can come only through the conquest of power by the proletariat standing at the head of all the oppressed. This was accomplished for the first and only time with the victory of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Led by the Bolshevik Party, the working class overthrew bourgeois rule, freeing the country from the imperialist yoke, abolishing private ownership of land and freeing the myriad oppressed nations and peoples of the former tsarist empire. The achievement of these democratic tasks was combined with the expropriation of the means of production by the workers state, laying

the basis for the development of a collectivized planned economy.

For Permanent Revolution!

Egypt is a country of combined and uneven development. Alongside modern industry there is a vast landless peasantry under the thumb of ruthless landlords. The country has a small layer of technologically savvy and highly educated youth together with a literacy rate of only 71 percent (59 percent for women). Medieval minarets and modern buildings vie in Cairo's skyline, while on its streets modern cars jostle for space with herds of goats and sheep and donkey-drawn carriages. Inhuman poverty and squalor compete with grotesque displays of wealth. The obscenely affluent enclave of Zamalek looks across the Nile at the Imbaba slum, where children drink from open sewers and at times get eaten alive by dogs and rats. Popular hatred for Mubarak was driven in no small part by the enormous fortune amassed by his family, estimated as high as \$70 billion.

A regional power in its own right, Egypt is nonetheless a neocolony whose brutal and murderous bourgeoisie is tied—and cannot but be tied—by a million strings to world imperialism, which benefits from the exploitation, oppression and degradation of its masses. For decades, the main prop of the Mubarak regime was U.S. imperialism, for which Egypt is a linchpin for its domination of the oil-rich Near East. Beginning with Sadat's rule, Egypt has been a strategic ally of Zionist Israel and in recent years has aided in the starvation blockade of the Palestinians in Gaza, including by sealing the border in Sinai.

Throughout the upheaval against Mubarak, the Obama administration seesawed between expressing support for his regime—especially the "reforms" promised by his vice president Omar Suleiman, who has long played a key role in Washington's "war on terror" rendition and torture program—and mouthing criticisms of the government. The U.S. has poured in \$1.3 billion a year to arm the Egyptian military. After Mubarak resigned, Obama intoned that the U.S. stands "ready to provide whatever assistance is necessary—and asked for—to pursue a credible transition to a democracy."

To get a taste of what Washington means by democracy, one need only look further east, to the corpses of more than one million Iraqis who died as a result of the 2003 invasion and occupation, as well as to the imperialist barbarism inflicted by U.S./NATO forces upon the peoples of Afghanistan. One need only look at the sheiks, despots and strongmen that litter the Near East, who along with the Israeli rulers act as U.S. imperialism's agents. When Obama says he wants an "orderly transition of power" in Egypt, he means he wants a "stable" Egypt, with the military fulfilling its role in the region on behalf of the U.S.



The National

Squalid conditions in Imbaba, one of many slums in Cairo.

Getty



February 12: Army officer tries to quell crowd in Tahrir Square, one day after Mubarak's departure.

Authentic national and social liberation requires mobilizing the proletariat in revolutionary struggle against the imperialists and the domestic bourgeoisie. A proletarian revolution in Egypt would have an electrifying impact on workers and the oppressed throughout North Africa, the Near East and beyond. Over one-quarter of all Arab speakers live in Egypt, a country of over 80 million that has the largest proletariat in the region. Already, protests have erupted from Morocco to the U.S. client states of Jordan and Yemen in solidarity with the Egyptian masses and in opposition to those countries' own despotic rulers. In Algiers on February 12, some 35,000 cops descended upon a protest of 10,000 demanding the resignation of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, arresting hundreds.

In Gaza, thousands mobilized after Mubarak's resignation, waving Palestinian and Egyptian flags and desperately hoping that a new Egyptian regime would ease their starvation. Prior to February 11, both Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank had labored to suppress any solidarity demonstrations. A socialist revolution in Egypt would open a vista of national and social liberation for the oppressed Palestinian masses, and, extending a hand of working-class solidarity to the Hebrew-speaking proletariat of Israel, would help lay the basis for shattering the Zionist garrison state of Israel from within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution.

Crucially, a proletarian revolution in Egypt would immediately face the need to extend to the advanced capitalist countries of West Europe and North America, which would lay the basis for the elimination of scarcity by establishing an international planned socialist economy. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution, underlined in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930):

"The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle on a national and international scale...."

"The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet."

Break with Bourgeois Nationalism!

The present situation in Egypt provides an extraordinary opening for Marxists to put forward a series of transitional demands that link the current struggles of the working class and the oppressed to the conquest of proletarian power. But virtually the entire left internationally has offered nothing but empty cheerleading for what they dub the "Egyptian Revolution." This is exemplified by Workers World Party in the U.S., which, as the military took control of the country on February 11, headlined: "WWP Rejoices with the Egyptian People."

In Egypt, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group, which is inspired by the late

Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party in Britain, issued a statement on February 1 calling on Egyptian workers to "use your power and victory will be ours!" But this is not an appeal for the working class to fight for power. On the contrary, the RS dissolves the power of the working class into the classless demand for "all power to the people" and the call for a "popular revolution." While declaring "Down with the system!" the RS identifies that system as the Mubarak regime rather than the capitalist order. Left out of the statement is even the mere mention of the word "socialism." Nor is there a hint of opposition to the liberal bourgeois democrats like ElBaradei, the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood (see article, page 3) or the pervasive nationalism that serves to bind the exploited and the oppressed to the Egyptian bourgeoisie. In fact, the RS appeals to crass Egyptian nationalism, declaring, "Revolution must restore Egypt's independence, dignity and leadership in the region."

Amid rampant illusions in the military, the RS complained, "This army is no longer the people's army." The army of the capitalist regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak was *never* "the people's army." Now these reformists are even promoting the despised police, rejoicing in a February 13 statement that "the wave of social revolution is widening every day as new sections join the protests, such as policemen, *mukhabarin* [intelligence agents] and police officers"! So deep are the RS's illusions in the benevolence of the capitalist state that they embrace the butchers, rapists and torturers of the regime, the very forces that have long terrorized the population, that murdered at least 300 protesters in recent weeks and that helped organize the February 2 assault on Tahrir Square.

Working Class Must Take the Lead

The Egyptian youth who initiated the "January 25 Revolution" have been hailed by one and all, from bourgeois oppositionists to the state-run media that had, until the fall of Mubarak, denounced them as foreign agents. Among these mainly petty-bourgeois youth, a good number had been animated not only by their own grievances but particularly also by the restive Egyptian proletariat, which for the last decade has engaged in a wave of struggle that included over two million workers participating in over 3,000 strikes, sit-ins and other actions. These were carried out in defiance of the corrupt leadership of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, which was established by Nasser in 1957 as an arm of the state.

At bottom, the petty bourgeoisie—an intermediate class comprising many layers with disparate interests—is incapable of advancing a coherent, independent perspective and will necessarily fall under the sway of one of the two main classes of capitalist society: the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Among these militant youth, who showed incredible courage in taking on the Mubarak regime, those committed to fighting on behalf of the downtrodden

AUSTRALASIAN SPARTACIST

must be won to the revolutionary internationalist program of Trotskyism. Such elements will be critical to forging a revolutionary party, which like Lenin's Bolsheviks will be founded through a fusion of the most advanced workers with declassed intellectuals.

In opposition to a proletarian revolutionary perspective, the reformists of the United Secretariat (USec) present bourgeois democracy as the pinnacle of struggle. In a January 2011 article posted on the Internet titled, "In Tunisia and Egypt the Revolutions Are Underway," the USec demands "opening a process of free elections for a constituent Assembly," presenting this as part of a "programme of a democratic government that would be at the service of the workers and the population."

There will be no government that "would be at the service of the workers and the population" without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. As Lenin wrote in his December 1917 "Theses on the Constituent Assembly": "Every direct or indirect attempt to consider the question of the Constituent Assembly from a formal, legal point of view, within the framework of ordinary bourgeois democracy and disregarding the class struggle and civil war, would be a betrayal of the proletariat's cause, and the adoption of the bourgeois standpoint." We are for the workers and peasants driving out government rulers appointed from above. We demand an end to the ban on political parties and call for a revolutionary constituent assembly based on universal suffrage. The achievement of this demand requires a popular insurrection to overthrow the military regime. At the same time, Marxists must fight for mass, inclusive working-class organizations as embryonic organs of proletarian state power.

Our purpose is to win the oppressed and downtrodden to the side of the working class, counterposing its social power and leadership to all wings of the Egyptian national bourgeoisie and struggling to break the masses from illusions in bourgeois democracy. Throughout the strikes carried out over the past decade and during the current upheaval, workers formed strike committees and other bodies to coordinate their actions. These organs of struggle directly pose the need for trade unions independent of the capitalist state and all bourgeois forces. Today, there is a palpable basis to advance a perspective of building broader organizations of the working class. These include joint strike committees, drawing in workers from different striking plants; workers defense guards, organized independently of the military, to defend against the regime's thugs and strikebreakers; popular committees based on the working class to take charge of distribution of food and goods in the face of shortages and black market corruption.

The emergence of such organizations, culminating in workers councils, would pose the question of which class rules society. Acting as a pivot around which millions of toilers are united in their



Grey Villet

Left: State-owned TV manufacturing plant, 1963. Right: Textile factory workers demonstrate at their factory in Mahalla al-Kobra, 2008. While women have faced increased oppression fueled by religious reaction in recent decades, they have emerged as a leading force in strikes.



Reuters

struggles against the exploiters, workers councils, such as the soviets that arose during the Russian Revolution, would be organs of dual power, vying for power with the bourgeoisie. It is only when the working class comes forward as a serious contender for power that the conscript base of the army, overwhelmingly drawn from the working class and peasantry, can be split from the bourgeois officer corps and won to the side of the proletariat.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

While protests in Egypt have centered on secular and democratic demands, images of the protests show repeated sessions of prayer—not only Islamic but also a Coptic prayer in Tahrir Square on Sunday, February 6, "The Day of the Martyrs." Religion is omnipresent in Egypt, promoted by Islamists, the Coptic church and the government, whose line can be summed up as: if they can't have food, let the people have God. This deep religiosity weighs like a stone on women, whose conditions of life have worsened over the last several decades. Any socialist organization that does not take up the fight for women's liberation in Egypt is a sham and an obstacle to human liberation.

The women who came out to Tahrir Square and elsewhere in Egypt were more often than not wearing the headscarf. More than 80 percent of women in Egypt wear the headscarf—not by law but by force of a social norm based on obscurantism—much to the consternation of many of their mothers, who decades earlier fought to take it off.

Women's oppression goes to the heart of Egyptian society. Together with the prevalence of religion, it is rooted in the country's backwardness, which is reinforced by imperialist subjugation. Egyptian law codifies this oppression. The Constitution declares, "The State shall guarantee coordination between woman's duties towards her family and her work in the society" and "the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)." Polygamy is legal, as is repu-

diation (in which a man can divorce his wife by simply saying, "I divorce you"). Abortion is illegal, with very few exceptions, and by law a woman is subordinate to her father or husband. Egyptian law treats adultery by a man and by a woman as two very different things, the latter being far graver.

Though illegal, female genital mutilation is rampant, and equally so among Muslims and Christians. According to the United Nations, 96 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone genital mutilation. "Honor killings" are also rampant among Muslims and Christians, although statistics are impossible to find as these murders are either unreported or reported as suicides. A brief glance at Egyptian films and television will show such barbarism to be a highly valued and well-respected tradition. Egyptian law has mitigating exceptions to punishing murder, allowing judges to reduce sentences for men who kill women as a result of "crimes of passion."

The courageous Egyptian socialist and feminist Nawal El-Saadawi has written numerous works on the oppression of women in the Near East. In her 1980 classic, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, she spoke of the entrenched obsession with "honor":

"Arab society still considers that the fine membrane which covers the aperture of the external genital organs is the most cherished and most important part of a girl's body, and is much more valuable than one of her eyes, or an arm, or a lower limb. An Arab family does not grieve as much at the loss of a girl's eye as it does if she happens to lose her virginity. In fact if the girl lost her life, it would be considered less of a catastrophe than if she lost her hymen."

At the same time, women are a crucial part of the working class, where they have played a leading role in the strikes over the last decade, especially in the textile industry. One of the most dramatic of these was the December 2006 textile strike in Mahalla al-Kobra. More than 20,000 workers went out. And it was the women workers who led the strike, walking out as the men continued working. Protesting outside the plant, they started chanting, "Where are the men? Here are the women!" This had the intended effect, as the men joined them, launching one of the biggest strikes Egypt had seen in years.

The Egyptian woman may be the slave of slaves, but she is also a vital part of the very class that will lay the material basis for her liberation by breaking the chains of social backwardness and religious obscurantism through socialist revolution. As Trotsky stressed in a 1924 speech, "Perspectives and Tasks in the East," "There will be no better communist in the East, no better fighter for the ideas of the revolution and for the ideas of communism than the awakened woman worker."

The Bankruptcy of Egyptian Nationalism

Egyptian rulers have long played on the fact that, uniquely in North Africa and the

Near East, the country's modern borders are similar to its ancient ones. This supposedly supports the claim that the Egyptian nation goes back to the dawn of civilization. In reality, Egyptian nationalism is the product of the modernizing work of early 19th-century Albanian Ottoman ruler Mohammed Ali, who created the first secular schools, established the first national army and laid the basis for the emergence of a domestic bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, Egypt remained in thrall to the European colonial powers.

The strength of Egyptian nationalist mythology is also seen in the adulation of the rule of left-nationalist strongman Colonel Nasser, including by many on the left. Central to the deep popular faith in the military is the fact that Nasser's regime marked the first time that Egyptians ran the country since the Persian conquest in 526 BC. Since Nasser took power in 1952, every Egyptian ruler has come out of the military.

The Egyptian army is also the only Arab army to have inflicted a black eye on the Israeli military, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (after suffering a humiliating defeat in 1967). In speaking of how the army is "no longer the people's army," the Revolutionary Socialists group wrote in its February 1 statement, "This army is not the one which defeated the Zionist enemy in October 1973" (the war actually ended in a stalemate). In fact, the 1973 war, like the 1967 and 1948 wars, was nothing more than a battle between two regional powers for their own interests, in which the proletariat had no side. In contrast, the international working class was duty-bound to militarily defend Egypt against imperialist attack during the 1956 war launched after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal.

As for Israel, there is no question that the Zionist state is the brutal enemy of the Palestinian masses, and we demand the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli troops and settlers from the Occupied Territories. But so are the Arab rulers, who have the blood of tens of thousands of Palestinians on their hands. The social and national liberation of the Palestinians requires not only the sweeping away of the Zionist state but also the overthrow of the capitalist Arab rulers in Jordan, where half the population is Palestinian, and elsewhere in the region. We understand that it will be no easy task to break the Hebrew-speaking proletariat from the grip of Zionism. But any view of Israel that rejects the perspective of Arab/Hebrew workers revolution dooms the Palestinian masses to their national oppression.

Support to Arab nationalism has led to the bloody defeat of workers movements throughout the Near East, not least in Egypt, where Nasser came to power with the support of the Egyptian Stalinists. Upon coming to power, Nasser sought to appeal to the U.S. but was rebuffed; he then turned to the Soviet degenerated workers state for financial, military and

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Reuters

Farmer in the Nile Delta.



AP

Free Private Manning! Hands Off Julian Assange!



Getty

WikiLeaks, Imperialist Lies and Retribution

The following is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 971, 7 January), newspaper of the *Spartacist League/U.S.*

The release by WikiLeaks of some 250,000 State Department cables has provoked a vicious campaign of retaliation by the rulers of U.S. imperialism against Julian Assange, the Web site's founder, and Army Private Bradley Manning, who is accused of leaking secret material. Attorney General Eric Holder is reportedly preparing criminal charges against Assange, an Australian citizen, possibly under the Espionage Act of 1917. Manning faces a court martial and up to 52 years in prison if convicted. He incurred Washington's wrath when a video of a U.S. war crime in Baghdad was posted last April by WikiLeaks. It showed an Apache helicopter gunning down and killing at least 12 people, including two Reuters journalists, while the pilots gloated over the carnage.

Manning—if he was, indeed, the source of the leaks—and Assange are courageous individuals who have performed a laudable service by lifting, however slightly, the veil of secrecy and lies that enshrouds the imperialists' machinations. They richly deserve to be defended by workers and the oppressed throughout the world. Protests in defense of Assange have been held in a number of countries, and the Australian Council of Trade Unions has spoken out for him. It is crucial for the international working class to defend WikiLeaks and Assange and also to demand freedom for Private Manning, who is being held under torturous conditions of solitary confinement at the U.S. Marine brig in Quantico, Virginia.

Though one would hardly guess it from the Obama administration's frenzied reaction to the latest leaks, they actually contain little in the way of dramatic revelations. The imperialists are, simply,



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Demonstrators in Multan, Pakistan burn American flag in support of WikiLeaks, 9 December.

enraged at the slightest light being shed on their workings. A number of the cables are, to be sure, somewhat embarrassing for the U.S. and its client regimes. Thus, the leaked cables reveal that NATO has developed a secret military plan for defense of Poland and the Baltic states against Russia. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Arab countries are revealed to be pressing the U.S. to stage a military attack targeting Iran's nuclear enrichment program, showing yet again that Iran *needs* nukes to deter attack by the U.S. or its Israeli proxy. And the Palestinian Authority and Lebanese government are shown to be working with Israel to target, respectively, Hamas and Hezbollah.

The cables also provide an insider's view of U.S. imperialism's high-handed operations within the borders of its client states. They show U.S. participation in the operational command of the "drug war" in Mexico, from developing overall strategy to selecting individuals to be targeted. American officials in Yemen negotiated a scheme with that country's president to disguise U.S. air strikes on suspected Al Qaeda camps as being carried out by the Yemeni government, including when civilians get blown away. Such exposures are not, to say the least, to the benefit of the imperialists or their lackeys. The cables also include a report from the U.S. ambassador to Honduras on the June 2009 overthrow of populist president Manuel Zelaya characterizing the actions of "the military and/or whoever ordered the coup" as "illegal." Whatever the case, the Obama administration has backed the government brought to power by the coup.

A particularly noteworthy subject

covered by a number of the leaked cables is the case of torture victim Khaled el-Masri. A German citizen of Lebanese descent, el-Masri was seized in late 2003 while on vacation in Macedonia and shipped off to a secret CIA prison in Afghanistan where he was held in solitary confinement, interrogated and beaten. Even after the CIA established that el-Masri was not the man they thought he was (his name is similar to that of a suspect in the 9/11 attacks), they continued to hold him incommunicado because "he knew too much." Finally, after nearly five months' detainment, el-Masri was dumped in a remote part of Albania, never having been charged with a crime.

The cables about el-Masri, which were sent from the U.S. embassies in Germany, Spain and Macedonia in 2006 and 2007, confirm what was long suspected: Berlin did not enforce arrest warrants against 13 CIA operatives accused of involvement in the kidnapping of this German citizen because Washington exerted intense pressure, warning of "potential negative implications for our bilateral relationship" if the case was pursued.

Obama White House: Vicious and Vindictive

Following the release of the video of the helicopter attack in Baghdad, WikiLeaks made public some 76,000 classified military field reports from the Afghanistan occupation that document the brutality inflicted by imperialist forces upon civilians, including by CIA-led forces operating out of bases along the border with Pakistan. Then in October, WikiLeaks published nearly 400,000 field reports on

the Iraq war and occupation detailing more than 109,000 deaths, mostly of civilians.

The Obama administration has lashed out in fury against Private Manning by subjecting him to inhuman prison conditions that are clearly intended to break his will. Since his arrest last May, Manning has been held in solitary confinement. He is prohibited from exercising or watching television news programs; guards check on him every five minutes; a light is kept on in his cell, including when he tries to sleep. According to journalist David House, the only person to visit Manning in prison other than his lawyer: "He is being kept in a kind of punitive fashion before his trial and it is definitely weakening his mental state" (*BBC News*, 24 December 2010).

Manning is, as Assange correctly noted, a political prisoner. Assange, meanwhile, is under house arrest in Britain as he fights a Swedish extradition order citing allegations of "rape" and "sexual molestation." Those accusations—which boil down to charges of unprotected sex in what were by all accounts consensual relations—are patently trumped-up. Prosecutors in Sweden initially opened, then dropped, then reopened an investigation into the accusations, which were made by a couple of WikiLeaks groupies. In fact, Assange has not been charged with any crime.

As Assange has pointed out, the real threat he faces is the possibility of extradition to the U.S., where both Democratic and Republican politicians are screaming for his head on a pike. Vice President Joe Biden was joined by Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell in branding Assange a "high-tech terrorist." The implied threat behind this smear was made explicit by Tom Flanagan, former adviser to Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, who declared that Assange "should be assassinated."

Assange is, basically, an ardent liberal critic of imperialist policy. In the late 1990s, he co-authored an encryption program called Rubberhose that activists in places like East Timor, Russia, Kosovo, Guatemala, Iraq, Sudan and Congo could use to protect sensitive data. In 2009, Amnesty International gave Assange its media award for a WikiLeaks investigation of the killing of hundreds of young men in Kenya by government forces. The fact that U.S. government spokesmen are discussing hitting Assange with the 1917 Espionage Act is a crystal-clear demonstration of how "national interests" are invoked by the capitalist rulers to clamp down on their critics. Meanwhile, Bank of America, MasterCard, PayPal and Visa Europe have done what they can to help shut down Assange's Web site by blocking payments to WikiLeaks.

The Espionage Act was one of an array



Reuters

President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton at 20 November NATO summit in Lisbon on Afghan occupation.

of repressive measures adopted after U.S. imperialism's entry into the First World War to criminalize antiwar activity. It mandated imprisonment for any act deemed to interfere with the recruitment of troops. Haunted by the spectre of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, which ripped Russia from the capitalist market and ended its participation in the war, in 1918 Congress passed the Sedition Act that made criticizing the "U.S. form of government" a felony.

Among the first and most prominent targets of the Espionage Act was Socialist Party spokesman Eugene Debs, who was jailed for a June 1918 speech at a workers rally in Canton, Ohio, where he denounced the war as capitalist slaughter and paid tribute to the Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution. The same law was used in 1953, at the height of the Cold War, to execute Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were accused of spying for the Soviets during World War II, when the U.S. and the USSR were allies. As their son Robert Meeropol declared in a December 29 statement in defense of Assange, the Espionage Act "transformed dissent into treason." In the early 1970s, the Nixon government tried, unsuccessfully, to use the law to go after Daniel Ellsberg, whose release of the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* shed light on the history of U.S. imperialism's war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants.

While no one knows exactly what the Obama administration is cooking up against Assange, there is no question that the vendetta against him threatens an ominous further attack on free speech, press freedoms and other democratic rights. Commenting on the case of an intelligence consultant hit with the Espionage Act for exposing what he considered wasteful expenditures on eavesdropping programs, the *New York Times* (11 June 2010) noted that "the Obama administration is proving more aggressive than the Bush administration in seeking to punish unauthorized leaks." As we have repeatedly stressed, Barack Obama, who came into office with broad support from liberals and the left, is simply carrying out his duties as U.S. imperialism's Commander-in-Chief—from expanding the murderous occupation of Afghanistan to stepping up attacks on democratic rights in the name of the "war on terror."

The Bolsheviks vs. Secret Diplomacy

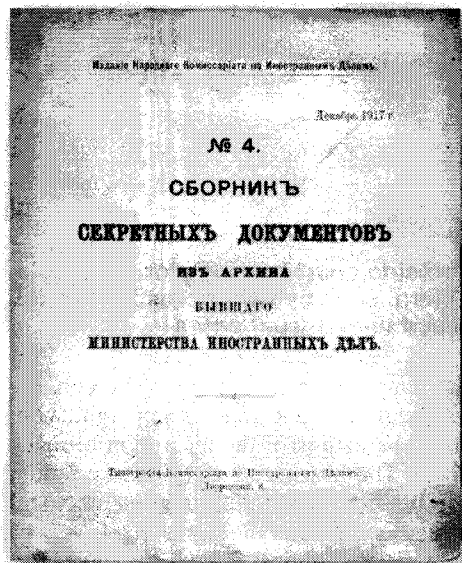
The furious reaction of the Obama administration to the WikiLeaks exposures points to the importance the rulers of capitalist imperialism place on secret diplomacy, which, as revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky explained in November 1917, "is a necessary tool for a propertied minority which is compelled to deceive the majority in order to subject it to its interests." Trotsky made this point in a statement he issued as Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet workers state that had just issued out of the October Revolution. Trotsky was announcing the publication and abrogation of secret treaties hatched by the prior tsarist regime and the bourgeois Provisional Government with their imperialist allies.

Prior to the proletariat's seizure of power, the Bolshevik Party had demanded the abolition of secret diplomacy and the publication of secret treaties as part of its revolutionary proletarian opposition to World War I, a conflict between competing imperialists for redivision of the world. This demand was raised against the Provisional Government, which, coming to power after the overthrow of the tsar in the February Revolution of 1917, continued Russia's participation in the war.

Immediately following the October Revolution, the workers state issued a decree on peace removing Russia from the war and demanding of the belligerents a "just, democratic" peace without

annexations or indemnities. Two weeks later, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* began publication of treaties concluded during the war. Historian E.H. Carr noted in Volume Three of *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923* that publication of the treaties in English in the *Manchester Guardian* galvanized British radicals and "created a sensation in the United States." In his Canton speech, Debs declared, "When the Bolsheviks came into power and went through the archives they found and exposed the secret treaties—the treaties that were made between the Czar and the French government, the British government and the Italian government, proposing, after the victory was achieved, to dismember the German Empire and destroy the Central Powers. These treaties have never been denied nor repudiated."

The October Revolution was a beacon of liberation for the exploited and



Soviet leader Leon Trotsky arriving at Brest-Litovsk talks with Germany, January 1918. As Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Trotsky oversaw publication of *Collection of Secret Documents of the Former Ministry of Foreign Affairs* shortly after October Revolution.



Imperial War Museum

the oppressed in the advanced capitalist countries and in the colonial and semi-colonial world. Along with the Soviet government's renunciation of predatory agreements reached by prior regimes, publication of the treaties helped spark waves of struggle by those under the boot heel of the imperialists, whose dirty deals were now laid bare.

One of the first treaties to be exposed was the May 1916 agreement between Britain's Mark Sykes and France's François Georges-Picot, which plotted the carving up of the Ottoman Empire in anticipation of its defeat, along with Germany in WWI. Tsarist Russia approved this pact on condition that it receive part of eastern Anatolia and Constantinople (Istanbul) with its Straits of Dardanelles, a critically strategic passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The exposure of this deal, which was revised at the end of the war in favor of Britain, had an electrifying effect in the Near East, whose peoples expected that the Ottomans' defeat would result in their self-determination. Strikes and demonstrations swept Egypt in 1919, and the following year in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) the masses stood up to the more than 130,000 British troops deployed to occupy the territory. The Soviet government also disowned plans by the tsarist regime and the imperialists to divide up Persia (Iran).

A similar impact was seen in China, whole chunks of which had been carved up by the Western and Japanese imperialists. The Soviets published a secret treaty signed by Japan and Russia in 1916 that upheld a series of prior secret agreements dividing Manchuria in northeast China into Japanese and Russian spheres of influence. Other areas, such as Inner Mongolia, were similarly demarcated. The Bolsheviks' renunciation of tsarist annexations and machinations in China made a deep impression on key radical intellectuals and among students returning to China after the war. Many of the students had

illusions in U.S. president Woodrow Wilson's promises of "self-determination" and social justice for all peoples. However, with the 1919 Versailles Treaty, the U.S. and other imperialists awarded all of defeated Germany's territory in China to the Japanese Empire, sparking a wave of mass protest known as the May 4th Movement, some of whose leaders went on to help found the Chinese Communist Party.

A Revolutionary Perspective

A number of reformist "socialist" organizations around the world have referred positively to the Soviets' publication of secret treaties in light of the WikiLeaks exposures, only to draw a continuum between the two. While performing a valuable service to the exploited and the oppressed, Julian Assange is what he is: a bourgeois liberal who vainly seeks to rid the imperialist system of its worst

excesses through exposure of its crimes. The Bolsheviks had a different purpose. By exposing the deeds of the previous Russian rulers and their imperialist patrons and allies, they helped educate the working class in Russia and internationally. Their program was to extend the October Revolution internationally, which they knew was the only road to achieving a socialist society. However, the revolutionary wave that accompanied and followed the end of World War I in Germany and elsewhere in Europe failed to overthrow the rule of capital, centrally due to the lack of the kind of steeled vanguard party that V.I. Lenin had built in Russia.

While maintaining its revolutionary internationalist perspective and program, the early Soviet workers state itself needed to engage in diplomatic dealings with the capitalist world. Thus it signed the Rapallo Pact, which arranged for the German military and its industrial suppliers to set up operations on Soviet territory. While this gave the German militarists a chance to rearm, it also provided the means to begin the mechanization and modernization of the Red Army and related branches of

Soviet industry. This part of the Rapallo Pact had to be kept secret from the victorious Entente powers. As Trotsky wrote of the revolutionary Bolshevik regime: "Wherever it could, it, of course, deceived the class enemies; on the other hand it told the toilers the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Only thanks to this did it succeed in winning their trust to a degree never before achieved by any other party in the world" (*Their Morals and Ours*, 1938).

With the defeat of the 1923 German Revolution, the Soviet workers state, which had suffered greatly from the effects of the interimperialist war and the Civil War that followed the revolution, found itself isolated. Under conditions of scarcity, a new conservative and bureaucratized layer in the party and state apparatus led by Joseph Stalin came to the fore, usurping political power beginning in 1923-24. In place of the banner of world socialist revolution, Stalin in 1924 put forward the false dogma of "socialism in one country," out of which the corollary of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism inevitably developed. Over time, and against the opposition of Trotsky and his followers who fought to maintain the program of the October Revolution, the Communist Parties were transformed from instruments of revolution into instruments of class collaboration.

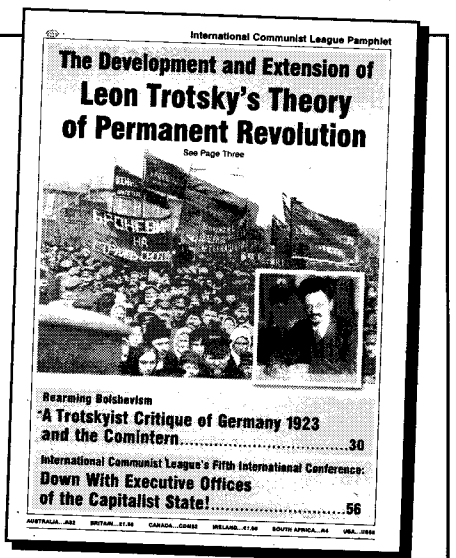
Trotsky observed in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), his classic analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy, that "foreign policy is everywhere and always a continuation of domestic policy, for it is conducted by the same ruling class and pursues the same historic goals. The degeneration of the governing stratum in the Soviet Union could not but be accompanied by a corresponding change of aims and methods in Soviet diplomacy." While unconditionally defending the degenerated Soviet workers state against imperialism and domestic capitalist counterrevolution, Trotskyists fought for proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy and return to the road of the October Revolution.

The bureaucracy's betrayals led to the ultimate undoing of the October Revolution through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. In the aftermath, the imperialists who crow about the "death of communism" are ever more brazen in their rampages from Iraq to Afghanistan and in their assault on democratic rights and the livelihood of workers "at home." Liberals and the reformist left seize upon revelations of the (everyday) workings of the capitalist rulers—disinformation, secret political police, assassination, etc.—to pressure the imperialists to adopt more "humane" policies. Our aim is to build a workers party of the Bolshevik type. Imperialism and its savage wars and occupations, sold through systematic lying and duplicity, will be defeated only through victorious proletarian revolution which, extended internationally, will lay the basis for the liberation of all humanity in a future communist world. ■

International Communist League pamphlet comprising three articles from ICL press: "The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution," "A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern" and "Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!" These articles together constitute an introduction to the historically founded principles and program of Trotskyism (i.e., genuine Marxism).

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Gay Marriage...

(continued from page 12)

on same-sex marriage and veto against recognising gay marriages conducted overseas. In 2004, the ALP Opposition helped the reactionary Liberal/National Coalition government of John Howard ram the legislation through parliament and has opposed attempts to overturn it since. The *Act* defines "marriage" as "the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life." With one in three marriages reportedly ending in divorce, such a puritanical definition is clearly far removed from the reality of people's lives.

Defending the ban on gay marriage, Gillard and Rudd boast that in 2008 the ALP government removed a raft of discriminatory legislation so that de facto same-sex couples are now recognised as de facto partners in areas such as superannuation, healthcare, taxation, immigration and social security. It is a good thing such discrimination is removed and gay couples at least have the same legal rights as de facto heterosexual couples. Of course, the bourgeoisie happily extends such rights when it means saving money. We oppose the government using the recent changes to cut social-security and other benefits to same-sex couples, hitting those that are older, poorer and disabled the hardest, just as we are opposed to slashing meagre benefits to any couple.

While Julia Gillard intones ad nauseam the Labor Party's wretched line that "marriage is between a man and a woman," polls have shown wide community support for equal marriage rights such that a number of politicians now echo support. Not surprisingly many activists are encouraged that legislative change is within grasp. Gay-rights groups such as Australian Marriage Equality (AME) have been pushing a parliamentary pressure campaign, directly lobbying politicians and pressing parties to allow a conscience vote on the issue.

Labor has of course for years allowed its members a "conscience" vote on abor-

tion, not least to give a free hand to the reactionaries of the ALP right-wing machine heavily influenced by the Catholic Church hierarchy. Catholic leaders recently instructed their clergy and members to actively campaign against gay marriage. Meanwhile the reactionary nutters in the Australian Christian Lobby fretted that gay marriage would lead to a push

union endorsements for its same-sex marriage campaign, including the Construction Division of the CFMEU, the Australian Education Union, the National Tertiary Education Union as well as the Victorian Trades Hall Council. While it is a good thing that unions have gone on record defending gays, the fact that the pro-capitalist misleaders of these unions



Sydney, June 1978: Spartacists at protest outside court hearings for 53 people arrested during brutal assault on first gay Mardi Gras by Labor premier Neville Wran's cops. SL fought for broad union-based united-front defence.

for polygamous relationships, and the Christian Democrats' candidate for Sydney in the upcoming NSW state elections incited further hatred and violence against gays, calling to remove the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras from the streets (*Sun Herald*, 6 February).

Reflecting the ongoing poisonous influence of clerical reaction within the workers movement, Laborites like Catholic bigot Joe de Bruyn, head of the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association has predictably expressed vehement hostility towards gay marriage. However, other union tops have given support, with the gay marriage campaign group Equal Love garnering a number of

are happy to endorse reflects the conservative framework of the campaign, with its embellishing of the institution of marriage. The bitter truth is that these union tops do little to mobilise their members in struggle to defend the rights of gays.

A visible political force in the rallies for same-sex marriage has been the Greens, a small capitalist party with support particularly among the "small-l" liberal petty-bourgeoisie. In parliament its members have moved legislation to end the ban on gay marriage and opposed the 2004 anti-gay bill. Helping to preserve illusions in parliamentary capitalism, the Greens at times pose as friends of workers, minorities and the oppressed, while giving unalloyed backing to the Australian capitalist state. Today they help to prop up the minority Gillard Labor government, which administers racist Australian imperialism for the bosses.

Tailing along behind are the anti-Marxists of Socialist Alternative (SAIt) who bury the class character of the Greens in order to promote illusions in its "progressive" character, particularly as a means to pressure the social-democratic ALP. Thus in the 2010 federal elections, SAIt called for a vote to Labor, the capitalist Greens "or others who are genuinely left-wing," once again trampling on the elementary Marxist principle of working-class independence from parties of the bourgeoisie. On gay marriage rights, SAIt likewise look to the Greens to "be an ally of the campaign in the parliament" lamenting that "we can't expect them to drive the agenda. Nor do they have anywhere near the numbers in their own right to overturn the bigoted amendment to the Marriage Act" (*Socialist Alternative* Issue 159, September 2010).

Ensnared in Equal Love, SAIt push a parliamentary cretinist campaign, including petitioning for a repeal of the laws. They only differ from more mainstream pressure groups by offering some militant-sounding rhetoric and the occasional left-sounding critique of capitalism and the family as they channel social protest into the dead end of pressuring capitalist governments. Urging supporters to "keep fighting" to "force the Labor government to change their policy and the law," SAIt sow the dangerous illusion that the brutal, racist capitalist state can be made to administer this class-divided society in the interests of the oppressed.

While defending every gain won from the capitalist rulers against attack by the

state and other reactionary forces, we recognise that reforms won under capitalism are necessarily partial and can be reversed by the bourgeoisie: witness California's Proposition 8 overturning the legalisation of same-sex marriage and the deepening attacks on abortion rights in the U.S. SAIt's rare declaration that "lasting sexual liberation" requires "the overthrow of capitalism" is a cover for their *actual* reformist campaign. For Marxists, the understanding that full democratic rights for gays cannot and will not be guaranteed as long as bourgeois class rule remains is integral to winning workers and the oppressed to a revolutionary perspective.

Marriage and Bourgeois Respectability

With the number of marriages in 2008 at a 20-year high, *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Adele Horin wrote "it is no wonder the subject of gay marriage has reared its head. Shock and horror: gays and lesbians are just like other Australians. They are just as conservative as the mainstream, just as influenced by the social currents that have made living in sin till death doth part them so 1970s" (20 November 2010). Such conservatism is reflected in the hoopla of mass mock wedding ceremonies that have on occasion been conducted at the end of marches for same-sex marriage rights. This year the central theme of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras was marriage. The drive for bourgeois respectability is graphically seen in AME's recent "pledge" to "respect the views of people who oppose same-sex weddings on religious grounds," a futile attempt to conciliate religious bigots like Cardinal Pell and the Catholic Church as well as the powerful Australian Christian Lobby. AME's national convenor declared "Just like the Christian lobby, we believe in the importance of marriage, protecting families, and religious freedom...in fact, we see these as three keys [sic] reasons for marriage equality" (*Australian*, 31 January).

It's little wonder that many, like freelance writer Helen Razer, are repelled by the social conservatism that permeates the campaign for gay marriage. In her caustic article "Homosexuality is a bore now so many gays are wedded to a rickety institution" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March) Razer quipped, "But 'gay' itself has become a rickety institution. Wedded to the idea of weddings, military participation and cheering on 'out' footballers, the visible gay culture retains all the radicalism of a radish."

SAIt have been in the forefront of conciliating the social conservatism that underlies the campaign for gay marriage. In a 2009 polemic, SAIt vituperate against those in the gay movement who oppose the campaign for gay marriage because they oppose the conservative institution of marriage: "So in general their argument is something like 'we don't want to fight to be included in these institutions, we want to smash them!' This sort of argument needs to be exposed for the bullshit phrasemongering that it is" (*Socialist Alternative*, December 2009). While such opposition to supporting gay marriage rights stands at odds with the necessary struggle for democratic rights for all, it speaks volumes that not once in their polemic does SAIt even vaguely solidarise with the desire to sweep away the institution of marriage or raise the call for socialist revolution.

At the same time as defending the right of gays to marry, we socialists fight for a society in which no one needs to be forced into a legal straitjacket in order to get medical benefits, visitation rights, custody of children, immigration rights or any other privilege that capitalist society grants to those who are embedded in the traditional legal marriage mould. While marriage is held up to be "special," more

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“sacred,” the “ultimate expression” of a relationship, in reality monogamous marriage is a creation of class society, imposed by state and church. It has been used historically as a means of reactionary social control by the ruling class.

In “Marriage and the Capitalist State” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 824, 16 April 2004), our U.S. comrades quote the apt remark by radical columnist Alexander Cockburn: “Why rejoice when state and church extend their grip, which is what marriage is all about.” Cockburn goes on to quote early U.S. ACTUP activist Jim Eigo on the question: “Why are current mainstream gay organizations working to strike a bargain with straight society that will make some queers less equal than others?... Marriage has no more place in efforts to achieve equality than slavery or the divine rights of kings. At this juncture in history, wouldn’t it make more sense for us to try to figure out how to relieve heterosexuals of the outdated shackles of matrimony?”

It certainly would! And it is the Marxist movement that figured out how to break those shackles, through abolishing the system of private property in the means of production, thus rendering obsolete the function of the bourgeois family

the Bolsheviks sought to build socialised alternatives to the family.

The young Soviet state’s economic backwardness and its international isolation meant that the Bolsheviks could only hint at the large-scale allocation of social resources necessary to achieve the liberation of women from household drudgery. Under these conditions and following the failure of revolutions abroad particularly in Germany, a conservative, nationalist bureaucratic caste arose headed by J.V. Stalin. With the Stalinist bureaucracy’s usurpation of political power in 1923-24, the Bolshevik internationalist program was abandoned, replaced with the anti-Marxist dogma of “socialism in one country.” Over time the bureaucracy rehabilitated the reactionary ideology of bourgeois society, not least glorifying the family unit. In 1934 a law making homosexual acts punishable by imprisonment was introduced, and mass arrests of homosexuals took place. Despite the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union, we Trotskyists always stood for the unconditional military defence of its socialised property forms against capitalist attack and counterrevolution. At the same time we fought for workers political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist



Women’s protest in Russia, 19 March 1917. Following the 1917 October Revolution Bolsheviks abolished all legal impediments to women’s equality and all laws against homosexual acts and other consensual sexual activity.

structure to pass on such private wealth. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution with Lenin, responded to the magazine *Liberty* (14 January 1933) which asked, “Is Bolshevism deliberately destroying the family?”:

“If one understands by ‘family’ a compulsory union based on the marriage contract, the blessing of the church, property rights, and the single passport, then Bolshevism has destroyed this policed family from the roots up.

“If one understands by ‘family’ the unbounded domination of parents over children, and absence of legal rights for the wife, then Bolshevism has, unfortunately, not yet completely destroyed this carry-over of society’s old barbarism.

“If one understands by ‘family’ ideal monogamy—not in the legal but in the actual sense—then the Bolsheviks could not destroy what never was nor is on earth, barring fortunate exceptions.”

Russian Revolution and the Fight for Gay Rights

Following the Russian Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks began immediately to undercut the old bourgeois prejudices and social institutions responsible for the oppression of women and homosexuals. They abolished all legal impediments to women’s equality and all laws against homosexual acts and other consensual sexual activity. Within the limits of their capacity in backward Russia, bled white by world war and the outbreak of civil war soon after the Revolution, and under the immense pressure of hostile imperialist encirclement,

bureaucracy and restore the liberating proletarian-internationalist program and goals of the party of Lenin and Trotsky.

Not so the anti-Communist Socialist Alternative. Their political origins date back to the late Tony Cliff in Britain who split from Trotsky’s Fourth International in 1950. Bowing to the pressure of anti-Communist Cold War hysteria during the Korean War, Cliff capitulated to the British bourgeoisie and then-ruling British Labour Party, refusing to defend the Soviet Union, China and North Korea against imperialist attack. Cliff’s claim that the Soviet Union had become “state capitalist” (promoted earlier by social democrats who had opposed the 1917 Russian October Revolution) was the “theoretical” justification for his pro-imperialist program.

Similarly during the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War of the 1980s, as then members of the Clifite International Socialist Organisation, SALT cadre lined up with their own capitalist rulers against the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and deformed workers states of Eastern Europe backing vile, reactionary, anti-communist, anti-woman and anti-gay forces from the Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* in Afghanistan to Solidarność in Poland. To this day, SALT laud Solidarność, a creature of the CIA and Catholic Church, while they march in lockstep with the imperialists’ push for capitalist counterrevolution in the remaining deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba.

Shane Brennen and partner Craig Gee (left) suffered vicious homophobic attack in Sydney, December 2007.



Meanwhile under cover of fighting against the “war on terror,” SALT continue to conciliate reactionary anti-gay religious forces, campaigning for Muslim prayer rooms on university campuses. (See “On Marxism and Religion—Socialist Alternative: God Delusional Opportunists,” *ASp* No. 204, Autumn 2009). Given their conciliation of religion, it’s not surprising that SALT soft-soap marriage in their approach to the same-sex marriage campaign. The common link between their justification for those who push *sharia* law and their enthusing for marriage is their capitulation to bourgeois ideology.

Government Out of the Bedroom!

While fighting for every possible democratic right, including the right of gays to wed, we recognise that gay marriage will not end the often deadly prejudice and violence that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and intersex people encounter every day in this homophobic, anti-sex society. In a recent national study, 61 percent of the thousands of gay, lesbian and gender-questioning youth who took part reported being subjected to homophobic verbal abuse while 18 percent also reported physical abuse, with most abuse taking place in schools. Facing schoolyard bullying and bashings, assaults while walking down the street, rejection and violence from intolerant parents, many of those surveyed said they had tried to harm themselves, including attempted suicides.

Underscoring the deeply entrenched homophobic nature of White Australia capitalism, the earliest Australian rulers were fanatical about suppressing homosexuality, for which the death penalty was prescribed. As recently as 1997, homosexuality was illegal in Tasmania. While Western Australia (WA) removed its anti-sodomy laws in 1989, it replaced them with “age-of-consent” laws that criminalised homosexual sex before the age of 21 (for heterosexual males, age of consent was 18 and for women, 16). Age of consent in WA was equalised at 16 in 2002. The state uses “age-of-consent” laws to target gays and especially youth nationwide. While “age of consent” for vaginal sex in Queensland today is 16, the state Labor government of Anna Bligh retains anti-sodomy laws that make anal sex involving a person under 18 a criminal offence punishable with up to 14-years jail.

It is nobody’s business, least of all the state’s, what sexual activities people engage in as long as it is consensual. State out of the bedroom! As we explain in the programmatic statement of the Spartacist League/Australia (1998):

“We stand in opposition to the state’s attempts at social regimentation, whether through censorship, anti-sex witchhunts or mandatory reporting of “under-age” sexual activity. Instead of reactionary age of consent laws which in Australia particularly target male homosexuals, we are for the principle of *effective*, i.e., meaningful, consent. We are for full democratic rights for gays.”

We have long opposed the anti-“paedophile” hysteria that has been whipped up by the state and which especially

targets gays. In 1983, the Cain Labor government in Victoria unleashed a vicious witchhunt against supporters of the Paedophile Support Group (PSG), a grouping which took up the issue of consensual cross-generational sexual relations between adults and “under-age” youth, in an attempt to smear the small organisation of homosexuals as child molesters and sex criminals. As we wrote then in defence of the PSG: “The case is also a test of elementary political decency, as most feminists and the reformist left are washing their hands of the small and vulnerable group, if they are not actively egging on the witchhunters. Down with Cain’s puritanical witchhunt! Drop the charges!” (*ASp* No. 105, March/April 1984).

It is a key task of the workers revolutionary vanguard to fight for full democratic rights for all and to struggle to win the proletariat to this cause as part of the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system through victorious workers revolution. In his 1902 pamphlet, *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin sharply outlined what the revolutionary’s ideal should be:

“*the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

Sexuality is not in itself a political question. It is the bourgeoisie which politicise this issue, victimising those who do not fit the norms as established by the family, church and state. We carry forward the program of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks who led the working class to power in the 1917 Russian Revolution. We seek to mobilise the proletariat in defence of gay rights and the rights of all the oppressed as part of the fight to overturn capitalism through socialist revolution. To create genuinely free and equal relations among people in all spheres, including sex, requires nothing less than the destruction of capitalist class rule and the creation of a communist world. ■

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Egypt...

(continued from page 5)

political aid. At the same time, to consolidate his rule, he suppressed the Communists, imprisoning, torturing and killing them. But even as he brutalized them, the Communist Party continued to support Nasser, liquidating into his Arab Socialist Union in 1965.

Behind this abject capitulation was the Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution," postponing the socialist revolution to an indefinite future while in the first "democratic stage" the proletariat is subordinated to an allegedly "anti-imperialist" national bourgeoisie. History shows that the "second stage" consists of killing communists and massacring workers. Millions of workers who looked to the Communist parties for leadership in Iraq, Iran and elsewhere were betrayed by their Stalinist misleaders. In Egypt, such betrayal was sold as support for Nasser's "Arab Socialism."

In fact, "Arab Socialism" was a myth, amounting to capitalism with heavy state investment. It was designed to suppress

the proletariat, which had engaged in substantial struggles in the post-World War II period, including against British occupation. The role Nasser saw for workers was captured by his statement: "The workers don't demand; we give." In exchange for the proletariat's passivity, Nasser instituted several reforms, raising wages and reducing unemployment. But eventually, state investment dried up, and there was no longer much to "give."

After Sadat came to power in 1970, the Communists sought to reorganize. Sadat responded by unleashing the Muslim Brotherhood to effectively crush them. He also expelled Soviet advisers (after having used Soviet weaponry to fight Israel in the 1973 war) and instituted the "open door" policy of economic liberalization, cutting food and other subsidies as a way to address economic stagnation. This was taken further and deeper by Mubarak and his neoliberal program of mass privatizations. Contrary to popular illusions, Mubarak did not represent a break from Nasserism, but rather its legacy. Under Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, Egypt remained subjugated to the imperialist world market and its dictates.

Algiers, 12 February: Protesters shout anti-government slogans. Regime mobilised tens of thousands of cops who overwhelmed demonstrators, arresting hundreds.



The real difference between Nasser and Mubarak is that while the former was a genuinely popular bonapartist ruler, the latter was widely despised.

If the powerful and combative Egyptian proletariat is to come to the fore at the head of the oppressed and fight for its own

rule, it must be broken from its nationalist illusions. What is urgently posed today is the building of a workers party, section of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International, that will fight for a proletarian Egypt, part of a socialist federation of the Near East. ■

Cliffites...

(continued from page 3)

physically attacked for violations of upright Islamic morals; films could not be shown; concerts and evening dances could not be held."

In 1992, fundamentalists shot dead Egyptian intellectual Farag Foda, a secular opponent of Islamic reaction. "The killing of Farag Foda was in fact the implementation of the punishment against an apostate which the imam [referring to the president] has failed to undertake," declared the government-sponsored religious body Al Azhar to justify this heinous crime. Renowned novelist Naguib Mahfouz, whose books were deemed "blasphemous" by fundamentalists, was stabbed in 1994, five years after a leading Islamic cleric had said he deserved to die. In 2000, Islamic fundamentalists ignited riots in Cairo in opposition to the publication of a novel that they considered "heretical" (see "Banquet for Seaweed," WV No. 770, 7 December 2001).

From Iran to Afghanistan

The RS portrayed the Muslim Brotherhood as necessary allies in the struggle to bring down the Mubarak regime. The lesson to be drawn from subordinating the class interests of the toilers for the sake of maintaining an alliance with religious reactionaries has been written in blood by history. The International Communist League (then known as the international Spartacist tendency) warned from the outset of the 1978-79 Iranian upheaval that, absent a decisive break by the working class from the Islamic forces, the struggle would have a disastrous outcome.

In sharp contrast to the rest of the left's capitulation to mullah-led reaction, our program was summed up in the slogans: "Down with the Shah! No support to Khomeini! For workers revolution in

Iran!" We warned that Khomeini in power would reimpose the veil, suppress national minorities and seek to crush the left and the workers movement as ruthlessly as did the Shah. Tragically, the Iranian masses paid the price. Khomeini's seizure and consolidation of power led to the execution of thousands of leftists, Kurds, women, homosexuals and opponents of theocratic rule in what was a historic defeat for the powerful Iranian proletariat.

During the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War of the 1980s, the U.S. imperialists massively armed and organized the Afghan *mujahedin* "holy warriors" against the Soviet Union, using as a pretext the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. We hailed the Red Army, whose intervention opened the way to the liberation of the Afghan peoples, especially the miserably oppressed women. We called to extend the gains of the 1917 October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. In the first war in modern history in which women's emancipation was a central issue, the Red Army battled the murderous imperialist-armed and -financed Islamic fundamentalists, who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and killed schoolteachers who taught young girls to read (see "The Russian Question Point Blank," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 29, Summer 1980). We denounced the Kremlin Stalinists' 1989 withdrawal of Soviet troops as a betrayal of women and the oppressed Afghan peoples.

From their inception as a political tendency in Britain in the 1950s, the trademark of Tony Cliff and his followers was pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism, encapsulated in their slogan "Neither Washington nor Moscow." In Afghanistan in the 1980s, this merged with their tailing of Islamic fundamentalist forces. They lusted for the bloodying of the Soviet Army and prettified the *mujahedin* cutthroats as fighters against imperialism. The U.S. Cliffites of the International Socialist Organization

declared: "Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (*Socialist Worker*, May 1988). The Soviet pullout was indeed the precursor to the final collapse of the USSR itself. And, to be sure, the Cliffites cheered the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state—a historic defeat not only for the peoples of the former Soviet Union but also for the international working class.

Myth of Islamists' Anti-Imperialism

Keeping pace with the rise of political Islam in the wake of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, in 1994 the British SWP published a major article in *International Socialism* titled "The Prophet and the Proletariat" by the late Chris Harman, a leading Cliffite theoretician. Harman coined the opportunist slogan "With the Islamists sometimes, with the state never" and treated Islamic fundamentalist "mass movements" as radical petty-bourgeois nationalist formations which "have taken up anti-imperialist slogans and some anti-imperialist actions."

The notion that the Islamists are anti-imperialist flies in the face of history. During the Cold War, the American imperialists consciously sought to harness the deeply anti-Communist Islamic reactionaries as a force against the Soviet Union as well as secular nationalist regimes. In Egypt, Islamic reactionaries worked hand in hand with the imperialists and the Saudi monarchy to destabilize the pro-Moscow nationalist regime of

Nasser. Muslim Brothers were put on the CIA payroll. And for the anti-Soviet operation in Afghanistan, the CIA's largest covert operation ever, the Brotherhood provided a major contingent of the *mujahedin*, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, now a high-ranking leader of Al Qaeda. Today, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made clear that U.S. imperialism can do business with the Brotherhood in post-Mubarak Egypt.

Tailing the Muslim Brotherhood today certainly does not prevent the Cliffites from keeping open the option of capitulating to "secular" Arab nationalism. An article in the British *Socialist Worker* (5 February) notes that "Nasser's brand of secular Arab nationalism still has many supporters inside Egypt" and eulogizes the bourgeois strongman Nasser as an anti-imperialist, writing: "As president between 1956 and 1970 he stood firm against imperialism and transformed Egypt."

Here the Cliffites are retailing the illusions in Nasser and the mythical "Arab Revolution" that the Stalinists fostered for decades. In reality, Nasser came to power largely with the aim of crushing the struggles of the combative working class. Neither the "secular" nationalism of Nasser nor Islamism can overcome the depredations of imperialism or provide solutions to any of the fundamental problems besetting the working class and oppressed in Egypt today. What's needed is a revolutionary workers party to lead the proletariat in a struggle for socialist revolution against the military bonapartists, the religious fundamentalists and all bourgeois political forces, opening the road to the emancipation of women and the liberation of all the oppressed and exploited. ■

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Zimbabwe: Hands Off Leftists, Trade Unionists!

The following joint statement was issued by the Spartacist League/Britain and Spartacist South Africa, sections of the International Communist League, on 27 February. It is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 975, 4 March), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

The Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) and Spartacist South Africa (SSA) condemn the arrests on 19 February of some 52 trade unionists, students, workers and activists attending a meeting of the Inter-

national Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe. We vehemently protest the fact that these men and women were arrested in a raid on a lecture in Harare by police and were detained and tortured. Outrageously, they now face treason charges, which can carry the death penalty, for the simple reason that they organised a meeting in solidarity with the mass mobilisations that overthrew the dictators Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia. These arrests are a blatant attempt to suppress protest and strike fear into left organisa-

tions who oppose the government. It is in the direct interests of the working class to oppose this naked act of state repression.

As Marxists, the Spartacist League/Britain opposes the sanctions and other machinations practised by the racist British ruling class against Zimbabwe. From the time of Cecil Rhodes' bloody quest to establish a "British Africa" from Cairo to the Cape, to the racist "independent" Ian Smith government, to the sanctions against Zimbabwe today, imperialist Britain never hesitated to use bloody force to assert its control and was responsible for the deaths of thousands of black Africans killed during the independence struggle in Zimbabwe.

The present British government led by David Cameron and the Labour regimes that preceded it couldn't care less what the Robert Mugabe regime does to workers

and peasants. Their only concern is that the enormous wealth that is extracted from the exploitation of black labour continues to flow into the coffers of the City of London and Wall Street.

As revolutionary internationalists in South Africa, the dominant regional economic power, SSA fights for solidarity by the South African workers movement with its class brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe and throughout the region. In particular, we fight for the workers to vigorously oppose the South African government's harassment and threat of impending deportations against hundreds of thousands of Zimbabwean immigrants; we demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

We demand the immediate release of the detainees in Zimbabwe and the dropping of all charges. ■

North Korea...

(continued from page 12)

involved 20 South Korean and U.S. warships just 125 kilometres south of the disputed maritime border between the two Koreas. The U.S. is increasingly trying to pressure Beijing to "rein in" North Korea, which is heavily dependent on its economic as well as diplomatic ties with the Chinese deformed workers state. In the trove of U.S. diplomatic cables just released by WikiLeaks is a stern message from 2007 demanding that China "take action" to stop North Korea from shipping missile parts to Iran through Beijing.

The Yeonpyeong incident took place only days after the Obama administration raised a renewed hue and cry over North Korea's nuclear capacity. Stanford University scientist Siegfried Hecker, a former director of the U.S. nuclear lab at Los Alamos, had reported that North Korean officials had shown him a light-water reactor construction site at the Yongbyon nuclear complex. While Hecker noted that the facility was "much more suitable for making electricity than for bombs," he also opined that a companion ultramodern uranium enrichment facility designed to support civilian electrical generation had the ability to provide fuel for dozens of nuclear bombs. North Korea manifestly needs both electricity and nuclear weapons, the latter to deter imperialist military attack. Indeed, the fact that Pyongyang has demonstrated such capacity has served to stay the hands of the U.S. and its South Korean client state.

The November U.S.-South Korean exercises followed similar military manoeuvres that began in July, ostensibly in response to the sinking of the South Korean Navy corvette *Cheonan* near Baengnyeong Island in March. A U.S.-South Korean report claimed that the warship had been sunk by a North Korean torpedo, which Pyongyang denied. China and Russia refused to go along with the story. As our comrades in the U.S. noted at the time "the 'official' story stinks." But that "even if the North Korean navy did sink the *Cheonan*, it would have been an act of defense against repeated provocations by the U.S. and South Korea" ("Defend North Korea Against U.S. Imperialism!" *Workers Vanguard* No. 960, 4 June 2010). Our comrades explained, "As Marxists, our attitude regarding this affair is determined not by claims of who was responsible for the sinking, the cause of which is shrouded in mystery, but by class considerations: Despite being saddled with a nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, North Korea is a workers state based on the overthrow of capitalist rule."

The U.S. launched the Korean War (under the UN flag) not only to smash social revolution on the peninsula but also to overthrow the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state that issued out of

the 1949 Revolution. The entry of a million Chinese People's Liberation Army troops turned the tide against the imperialist forces, leading to a stalemate at the 38th parallel, which divides North from South Korea. A peace treaty was never signed, and the South refused to sign the armistice agreement between the U.S. and North Korea. Both Yeonpyeong and Baengnyeong islands lie in disputed waters demarcated by a line unilaterally drawn by the U.S. which the North has never recognised. Since the Korean War, the U.S. has maintained a massive military presence in the South, today numbering 28,500 troops, while subjecting North Korea to decades of military encirclement and embargo.

For their part, the Australian capitalist rulers have aggressively enforced imperialist neocolonial rule in the region by dispatching troops to East Timor and the Solomon Islands. For the U.S. and Australian rulers, enforcing capitalist "stability" in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific also serves their strategic encirclement of China. U.S. embassy cables obtained by WikiLeaks recently revealed that in 2009 the federal Labor government secretly hosted teams of elite U.S. military personnel who were supporting operations of new ballistic missile defence satellites linked to a U.S. missile defence shield. Cables also revealed the deep commitment of Australian imperialism to the reactionary U.S./Australia alliance and that former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd advised the U.S. secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, to be prepared to use force against China. U.S. military and spy bases in Australia, which once primarily targeted the Soviet Union, now monitor China, North Korea, Laos and Vietnam with the object of reversing social revolutions that overturned capitalism in those countries. We say: **Down with the counter-revolutionary U.S./Australia alliance! U.S. bases out of Australia now! All U.S. troops and bases out of South Korea! Australian troops, cops get out of East Timor and the Solomons! Not one person, not one cent for the Australian imperialist military!**

Despite the rule of a nepotistic and bizarre Stalinist regime, North Korea's planned economy significantly outperformed the South until the mid 1970s, creating a modern industrial infrastructure. At the same time, being divided from the South by a "demilitarised zone" packed with more weaponry per square metre than any place on earth has severely distorted the North's economy. The situation became desperate in the aftermath of the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which had provided the bulk of military and technological aid to North Korea. In 1992, China's nationalist Stalinist regime cut off shipments of cheap oil to the North in order to obtain diplomatic and economic relations with South Korea. In 1995, North Korea was

November 29: New York City protest denounces U.S. threats against North Korea.



hit by a horrific famine, stemming from floods and droughts, from which it has still not recovered.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defence of the deformed workers states—North Korea, China, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba—against imperialism and internal capitalist counter-revolution. At the same time, we fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies, whose policies are encapsulated in the dogma of "building socialism in one country." Opposing the fight for international proletarian revolution, the privileged bureaucracies instead pursue a futile quest for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, undermining the defence of those states against the class enemy.

In 2006 and again in 2009, China criminally voted for sanctions against North Korea in the UN Security Council following missile tests by Pyongyang. Likewise, Beijing has repeatedly brokered "six-party talks"—involving the U.S., China, Japan, Russia and the two Koreas—aimed at disarming North Korea. Beijing's craven appeasement of imperialism not only imperils North Korea but dangerously undermines the defence of China itself.

As for the North Korean Stalinists, they have long called for "peaceful reunification" with the South—a recipe for reunification on a capitalist basis. An article titled "WikiLeaks Row: China Wants Korean Reunification, Officials Confirm" in the London *Guardian* (30 November 2010) cites Chinese officials in Europe who say that Beijing also favours the "independent and peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula in the long term." The program of capitalist reunification is a betrayal not only of the North Korean workers state but also of the historically militant and combative South Korean proletariat. Indeed beginning 15 November last year Hyundai workers on temporary contracts carried out a month-long plant occupation in Ulsan, which spread to plants in Chunju and Asan. During the strike a number of workers were kidnapped, beaten and turned over to police.

The brutal and deeply repressive South Korean capitalist government issued arrest warrants for 16 strike leaders from the Ulsan plant and five strike leaders from the Jeonju plant.

Many South Koreans feel a sense of solidarity with the North based on strong nationalist sentiments fed by a century of Japanese and American imperialist overlordship. But Korea is divided along class lines. Korean nationalism, promoted by both the North Korean Stalinist regime and the South Korean reformist left, serves to tie the South Korean proletariat to its own capitalist ruling class. What is needed is the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist party based on proletarian internationalism to lead the struggle for the *revolutionary reunification of Korea*—for socialist revolution in the South and workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats in the North. Linked to the fight for proletarian political revolution in China, this struggle must ultimately extend to the victory of proletarian rule in the imperialist heartlands of Japan, Australia and the U.S.

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Australian Section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

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Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals! For the Right of Gay Marriage ...and Divorce!

The campaign for same-sex marriage rights in Australia has seen numerous rallies held in cities around the country over the past few years. At times mobilising thousands onto the streets, the demonstrations and marches have attracted a significant number of youth. Supporters of the Spartacist League have intervened into protests held in Melbourne and Sydney. As Trotskyist fighters for the socialist liberation of humanity, we stand committed to full democratic rights for gays, lesbians, transgenders and intersex people, and support any legal advances that can be wrested from this cruelly bigoted society, including the right to marry. This is part of our struggle to sweep away bourgeois class rule and all its means of reactionary social control, including marriage.

Anti-gay prejudice flows from the repressive institution of the family, a key prop for the maintenance of capitalist rule and the source of women's subjugation. Enslaving women to domestic drudgery, the family serves the role of tying sex to private property rights. Its roots lie in the early division of human society into classes. The family is upheld to both ensure the "rightful" inheritance of property for the bourgeoisie and the raising of the next generation of wage slaves, instilling conservative obedience to the "values" of bourgeois morality. In bourgeois society the moral code of "one man on one woman for life" is reinforced by the authority of the family, the fear of god instilled by religion and the armed fist of the state. Homosexuality is deemed "sinful" and "deviant" because it chal-



Jeremy Seear

Thousands rally in Melbourne against reactionary ban on same-sex marriage, August 2009 (above). While defending right to gay marriage, we say "marriage mania" expresses fundamental conservative thrust by well-to-do petty-bourgeois gay milieu.



Torsten Blackwood/Getty Images

lenges the stereotyping decreed by the sexual division of labour within the monogamous, heterosexual family. The destruction of capitalism through workers revolution will lay the basis for replacing the family by providing the material means to socialise and collectivise its functions (for example, establishing communal childcare, communal kitchens, and

free quality healthcare).

In this country the deep-seated roots of misogyny and anti-gay bigotry go back to the establishment of an overwhelmingly male penal colony under British rule. Central to the transformation from penal colony to a modern capitalist society was the bolstering and glorification of the family, where women were to be "God's

police" and gays were not to be at all. Australian capitalist society was also founded on the attempted genocide of the Aboriginal people, pogroms against the Chinese and subsequent racial exclusion of all deemed "non-white."

Attacks on vulnerable sections of the population are intended to strengthen the repressive power of the state and stymie united class struggle by dividing the proletariat along sexual and racial lines. For revolutionary Marxists, democratic rights are indivisible—an injury to one is an injury to all! In its own defence, the labour movement must vigorously oppose all bigotry and discriminatory attacks on homosexuals and every oppressed sector. In order to liberate itself from the shackles of capitalist oppression and exploitation, the proletariat must understand its historic task is to abolish class society in order to open the road to human freedom for *everyone*. The mobilisation of the immense social power of the organised working class against capitalism necessarily means an intransigent political struggle against the nationalist, chauvinist leaders of the ALP and its trade-union lieutenants, and for the construction of a revolutionary leadership.

Gillard ALP Government Enforces Anti-Gay Laws

The federal Labor government, led initially by devout, anti-abortion Christian, Kevin Rudd, and now by the atheist Julia Gillard, has upheld the anti-gay *Marriage Amendment Act 2004* with its explicit ban

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Down With Imperialist Provocations! Defend North Korea, China!

In a calculated provocation directed against both North Korea and China, in late November last year the U.S. dispatched the nuclear aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* along with other warships for a joint exercise with its South Korean junior partners in the Yellow Sea. This brazen display of imperialist military force came less than a week after a South Korean naval exercise prompted an exchange of artillery fire in nearby waters off North Korea's coast. North Korea's shelling of the garrison island of Yeonpyeong resulted in the deaths of four South Koreans, including two civilians. U.S. president Barack Obama responded by openly threatening North Korea, declaring its regime to be "a serious and ongoing threat that has to be dealt with." Adding to this imperialist sabre-rattling

Australia's foreign affairs minister, Kevin Rudd, railed that North Korea has a history of "being exceptionally provocative towards the South" and "represents not just a threat to stability on the Korean Peninsula but more widely across East Asia, and that includes Australia" (Late-line, 23 November 2010).

It is in the vital interest of the proletariat internationally to defend North Korea, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, against U.S. and Australian imperialism and the South Korean capitalist rulers. It is the imperialists and their lackeys who are an ongoing, deadly threat to Asia's working people. U.S. imperialism carried out the atomic incineration of 200,000 people in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki in 1945. U.S. imperialism and its allies, including Australia, went on to slaughter some three million Koreans in the 1950-53 Korean War and another three million Vietnamese in the 1960s and '70s in failed efforts to crush social revolutions. Among the crimes of Japanese imperialism was its brutal 40-year colonial occupation of Korea, which ended with Japan's defeat in World War II. In the aftermath of the war, the northern part of the Korean peninsula was liberated from capitalist rule through a social revolution carried out under the protection of Soviet troops.

In addition to its military provocations, the U.S. is demanding that the UN tighten economic sanctions, attempting to starve North Korea into submission. For its part,

the Japanese government strengthened its coast guard monitoring in the Sea of Japan and

increased the number of spy flights in the area. Treacherously adding their voices to the war cries against North Korea were Japan's Social Democratic and Communist parties, whose parliamentary deputies voted for a resolution calling to "strengthen collaboration with South Korea and the U.S." and to consider further sanctions against Pyongyang. In South Korea, where right-wing legislators demanded aggressive action against the North, including air strikes, the government dumped its defence minister and the military issued new, less restrictive guidelines on how to "respond" to North Korea.

The U.S. and South Korean naval exercises carried out in late November

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