

1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International."

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DENOTIX IMAGES

For Joint Arab-Jewish Class Struggle to Smash Zionism!

Israeli Apartheid & Palestinian Oppression

Shulamit Aloni is a former leader of Israel's liberal Meretz party who served as education minister in Yitzhak Rabin's Labor-led government in the early 1990s. Her ideological commitment to Zionism has not, however, prevented her from candidly discussing the Israeli state's brutal treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. In

one report, Aloni describes traveling on one of the "Jewish only" roads that crisscross the West Bank:

"Wonderful roads, wide roads, well-paved roads, brightly lit at night—all that on stolen land. When a Palestinian drives on such a road, his vehicle is confiscated and he is sent on his way."



PALESTINIANMONITOR.ORG

Israeli settlers attack Palestinian woman in Hebron

"On one occasion I witnessed such an encounter between a driver and a soldier who was taking down the details before confiscating the vehicle and sending its owner away. 'Why?' I asked the soldier. 'It's an order—this is a Jews-only road', he replied. I inquired as to where was the sign indicating this fact and instructing [other] drivers not to use it. His answer was nothing short of amazing. 'It is his responsibility to know it, and besides, what do you want us to do, put up a sign here and let some antisemitic reporter or journalist take a photo so he that [sic] can show the world that Apartheid exists here?' ...

"Indeed Apartheid does exist here."

—"Yes, There is Apartheid in Israel," *CounterPunch*, 8 January 2007

Aloni is of course dismissed by Zionists as a "self-hating" Jew, but this smear (and its equivalent—"anti-Semitic") to describe those who object to Israeli crimes is increasingly losing impact. The ritual incantations—that Israel is "the only democracy in the Middle East," that it possesses "the most moral army in the world," etc.—become more ludicrous with each atrocity.

Norman Finkelstein's defense of Palestinian rights and his exposure of what he terms the "Holocaust Industry" have always been particularly galling to America's powerful "Israel Lobby." In an outrageous act of academic censorship, Finkelstein was denied tenure at DePaul University in 2007 after arch-Zionist Alan Dershowitz orchestrated a grotesque slander campaign against him. But such desperate measures have failed to reverse the shift in popular opinion, as Finkelstein himself recently observed in an interview:

"If you are, as I am quite frequently, speaking at college campuses in the United States, it's quite clear that support among Jews for Israel has dried up.

"You'll find there is a handful of people that you might call the Hillel faithful, who will still have some public events in support of Israel, but barely anybody shows up for them, and when critics of Israeli policy speak, the 'Hillel faithful' no longer really show up to protest, to demonstrate, to shout down, to hand out leaflets, because they realize how isolated they are."

—"It Wasn't a War," ZNet, 5 August 2010

Peter Beinart, former editor of the *New Republic*, a journal well known as an apologist for Israeli crimes, offended many of his erstwhile allies when he observed that in the U.S. today there is "an American Zionist movement that does not even feign concern for Palestinian dignity and a broader American Jewish population that does not even feign concern for Israel." Beinart blamed the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and its ilk, for whom "the Holocaust analogies never stop, and their message is always the same: Jews are licensed by their victimhood to worry only about themselves." He also observed that rather than checking their liberalism at Zionism's door, "many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead" (*New York Review of Books*, 10 June 2010).

However, the traffic has not been entirely one way. In "The Lede," a *New York Times* blog, Robert Mackey reports that some leading figures in the European far right are lining up in support of Israel:

"Geert Wilders, whose anti-immigrant party supports the government of the Netherlands, said in a speech this month in Tel Aviv, 'Jews need to settle Judea and Samaria,' using the ancient Hebrew name for the West Bank. He added, 'Without Judea and Samaria, Israel cannot protect Jerusalem.'

"Mr. Wilders told Reuters, 'Our culture is based on Christianity, Judaism and humanism and [the Israelis] are fight-

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On the 'Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions' Campaign Strategies for Palestinian Liberation



1917 PHOTO

IBT participates in mass labor/community picket of Israeli Zim Lines ship Zim Shenzhen, Oakland, 20 June 2010

The Israeli ruling class and its international allies are increasingly apprehensive about the growing “delegitimation” of the Zionist state due to widespread revulsion at its bloody crimes. From the construction of an Apartheid Wall (aka “separation barrier”) cutting off the occupied West Bank, to the December 2008/January 2009 massacre in Gaza, to the murder of nine activists aboard the Gaza relief flotilla on 31 May 2010: the depravity of the Zionists has drained whatever sympathy still existed for “poor little Israel.”

Amnesty International has been advocating an arms embargo on Israel since January 2009. In a recent report, the New York-based Human Rights Watch concluded that “there appears to be no legal justification for Israel’s differential treatment of Palestinians, which breaches Israel’s obligations under international law, violating the prohibition against discrimination as well as a host of associated rights” and proposed that the U.S. “consider suspending financing to Israel in an amount equivalent to the costs of the Israeli government’s spending in support of settlements” in the West Bank. The group also suggested that Washington look more closely at tax breaks for donations to Israeli settlement construction projects to see if they “are consistent with governmental obligations to ensure respect for international

law, including human rights prohibitions against discrimination” (“Separate and Unequal,” 19 December 2010).

Appealing to the imperialist predators, who have aided and abetted Israeli crimes at every turn for decades, to suddenly “ensure respect for international law” is delusional. But the very fact that such appeals are being made within the bourgeois human-rights establishment is worrisome to the Zionists. A related, but even greater, concern is the recent growth of the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” (BDS) campaign on campuses in North America and elsewhere.

The origins of the BDS initiative can be traced to a 2004 opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which noted that Israel’s infamous “separation barrier” in the West Bank is “contrary to international law,” and proposed that the parts of the wall built inside the Occupied Territories should be dismantled and that Palestinians negatively affected by it be compensated. The ruling was initially greeted with enthusiasm by activists for Palestinian national rights, who hoped that it might force Tel Aviv to change its policy. But, predictably enough, both Israel and its supporters in the “international community” were completely indifferent to the judgment. On 9 July 2005—a year after the ICJ opinion—170 organizations of “Palestinian civil soci-



Amman, Jordan, May 2010: demonstrators burn Zionist flag and Israeli produce boxes

ety" called for a new political strategy explicitly "inspired by the struggle of South Africans against apartheid":

"We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace.

"These non-violent punitive measures should be maintained until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:

- "1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
- "2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
- "3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194."

The three interlinked tactics (boycotts, divestment and sanctions) were aimed at achieving three goals: ending Israeli occupation and colonization, securing equality for Israeli Arabs and winning the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The BDS National Committee (a loose coordinating body) has not formally endorsed either a "two state" or "one state" solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But the right of return and the demand for full equality for Palestinians within Israel are widely recognized as incompatible with the maintenance of a "Jewish state." Consequently, most BDS activists favor some variant of a "single, democratic, secular" state embracing the entire territory of what is today Israel and the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

The BDS strategy appeals to students, academics and liberals who hope that global "civil society" can exert sufficient pressure to wring important concessions from the

Zionist ruling class. According to Mustafa Barghouthi, head of the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees: "Boycott is the best way of changing the balance of forces. Military force will not work, because of the imbalance of forces, but also because it is not right. I don't think Israel will change its policy unless it hurts, and BDS will hurt it" (*The Nation*, 28 June 2010). Noura Erakat, a human-rights attorney, explains:

"The tripartite strategy of boycott, divestment and sanctions is rooted in economic logic: Israel must comply with international law because non-compliance is too politically and economically costly to maintain. Divestment pressures institutions with stakes in Israeli companies, or in companies that sustain Israeli human rights abuses, to drop their holdings. Boycotts encourage consumers to 'let the market decide' upon justice by refusing to buy goods made by companies that benefit from the occupation or inequality in Israel. Sanctions, on the other hand, are trade restrictions imposed by governments upon others."

—*Middle East Report*, Summer 2010

Each element of the BDS strategy, by itself, is simply utopian; taken together, they express and reinforce the debilitating illusion that the institutions of monopoly capitalism and global imperialism can be employed as tools of liberation for the oppressed.

For many, the appeal of consumer boycotts—beyond the immediate gratification they offer to those who want to do something "concrete"—lies in the notion of using the market to modify the behavior of individual capitalists, who, though indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinians, are very attentive to their own bottom line. Yet consumer boycotts are notoriously ineffective in achieving even very modest objectives. Agitation aimed at persuading an undifferentiated and atomized "buying public" to make political statements through everyday purchases may resonate with socially progressive middle-class elements, but such appeals rarely gain traction among those who do not have the luxury to scrutinize labels or pay upmarket prices for household necessities. In any case, the internationalization of production makes it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to precisely discern which corporations or products have an Israeli connection and which are untainted. Another problem is that in isolating particular corporations for moral opprobrium, boycott campaigns implicitly endorse their "better" corporate rivals and thus obscure the fact that social oppression derives from the entire system of production for profit.

The divestment tactic has similar problems. Rather than seeking to influence corporate behavior by *indirect* consumer pressure, divestment involves *direct* appeals to shareholders, both private and public. Capitalist investment tends to seek the highest rate of return, and profit-making is, in the final analysis, supreme. Even if a few companies divest from Israel, others will soon step in if there is money to be made. A recent example was the 2009 sale by Motorola of an Israeli subsidiary which produced bomb fuses for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) where the purchaser turned out to be an Israeli weapons manufacturer. BDS activists hailed the transaction as a victory, while Motorola denied that it had been influenced by the divestment campaign. Today the IDF is still getting bomb fuses from the same facility—the only difference is that the owners are now less susceptible to pressure from Western liberals.

The third element of the BDS campaign is the call for major capitalist powers to impose “sanctions” on Israel. This presumes that state policy in these countries can be pushed into benefitting the downtrodden. Marxists view the bourgeois state as a machine of repression and exploitation—a proposition amply confirmed by the historical record. Sanctions, much like foreign “aid,” are never anything but a weapon of bourgeois diplomacy and power projection (humanitarian and other rhetoric notwithstanding). Sanctions, like those imposed on Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, or more recently on Iran, are intended to bring recalcitrant neocolonies to heel. In Iraq, the UN-imposed sanctions resulted in the death of over a million civilians, mostly people from working-class and poor neighborhoods.

On those rare occasions when the U.S. threatened Israel with various sorts of sanctions, it did so to advance its own interests (see accompanying article). In the 1940s and 50s, the object was to ensure political stability in the region. In the early 1990s, the aim was to launch a fraudulent “peace process.” Palestinian national rights have never been a priority for Washington (or any other imperialist power), nor are they likely to be in the future. Yet as America’s grip on the Middle East weakens, it is possible to foresee the European imperialists distancing themselves from Tel Aviv in order to pursue new diplomatic openings. Such maneuvering would represent a significant sharpening of inter-imperial rivalry, but would be unlikely to deliver much besides rhetorical support for the Palestinians.

BDS & the Left

The overtly reformist premises of the BDS campaign have not deterred many ostensibly revolutionary organizations from signing on. Their enthusiasm is directly proportional to their willingness to embrace non-proletarian forces as potential agents of social emancipation. Among the larger formations that promote BDS is the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP—the flagship of the International Socialist Tendency founded by the late Tony Cliff). While occasionally making pro forma references to the desirability of socialism and formally subscribing to Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution (which holds that in the imperialist epoch national liberation and other tasks historically associated with the bourgeois revolution can only be achieved through proletarian power), the SWP has advocated an openly two-stage strategy in both South Africa and Palestine. In 1994, the SWP rationalized its call for a vote to the bourgeois African National Congress as a means to consolidate the gains of the anti-apartheid struggle. And for years the Cliffites echoed the PLO’s calls for a “secular, democratic” (i.e., capitalist) state in Palestine/Israel. Today the SWP promotes BDS as a way to achieve a “meaningful compromise” with the Zionist oppressors:

“Whatever the differences between struggles against South African and Israeli versions of apartheid, the similarities loom large. Outright military victory was and is not a viable aim in either case, and negotiations could not take place or have any prospect of progress until those with power foresaw that the cost of stonewalling would exceed the cost of meaningful compromise. In South Africa the mutually reinforcing factors of internal mass mobilisation and external solidarity pressure for divestment and boycott produced a change in the balance of forces. Without external pressure on compa-

nies and governments internationally, the risings might now be remembered as heroic but not regime changing. Without mass struggle internally, and the repression it exposed, the external BDS movement would not have been able to develop widespread support among trade unions, students, activists and eventually growing numbers of politicians.”

—*International Socialism*, Autumn 2010

The same article speculates that a BDS campaign might not have as much impact as its South African antecedent did in the 1980s:

“Can BDS be applied to Israel much as the AAM [Anti-Apartheid Movement] directed its strategy towards South Africa—and can it have a similar impact? A consumer boycott is unlikely to bring crisis to the Israeli economy, a socio-economic system supported by massive US aid. It will, however, bring to worldwide public attention the circumstances of the Palestinians—which have been obscured by decades of ideologically distorted reporting and by the efforts by partisans of Israel to dismiss the Palestinian case.”

—*Ibid.*

At bottom, the Cliffites champion the BDS strategy not because they think it can bring the Zionists to their knees, but because it is popular. It also provides their members with practical activity, while distracting them from the fact that their leadership has no idea how the utopian formula of a “secular, democratic” Palestine can possibly be realized.

Other, more leftist, proponents of BDS at least talk about the necessity of a socialist solution to the national question in Israel/Palestine. In a recent speech, Marcus Halaby, who has emerged as a leading spokesperson on Middle East affairs for Workers Power (WP—British section of the League for the Fifth International [L5I]), called for “a bi-national, workers’ state, which would have to be brought about in the context of a regional workers’ revolution, which would lead to a federation with equality of rights and autonomy for all, including the Jewish-Israeli nation” (“Palestine and Israel: two states or one state and the right of return?,” 15 July 2010). Elsewhere, Workers Power has noted that:

“The Arab leaders—the so-called ‘nationalist’ or ‘progressive’ one[s] as well as the ‘pragmatic’ and ‘conservative’ ones, act objectively as the agents of imperialism in the region. They represent a major obstacle to the liberation of the Palestinian people, as well as their own citizens.”

—“A programme of liberation for Palestine,”
27 December 2008

This would seem to point in the direction of applying the program of permanent revolution in the Middle East. Yet, as is frequently the case with Workers Power, formally correct premises are followed by starkly revisionist conclusions.

In a lengthy theoretical document on Israel-Palestine, published in 1989, which, to our knowledge, the L5I still stands on, its forerunner (the League for a Revolutionary Communist International [LRCI]) addressed the character of Israel’s Jewish population and the Zionist state’s relationship to U.S. imperialism:

“The Israeli Jews, while they have forged a national consciousness in the last forty years which is distinct from their sense of themselves as part of world Jewry, are part of an oppressor nation; their national consciousness has been forged only by a simultaneous denial of the legiti-

mate rights of the Palestinians to self-determination. Consequently Israel is an oppressor nation and as such we do not recognize its right to exist as a nation state."

"...since the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the oriental Jews [Sephardim] have experienced a degree of social/class mobility which has both further stratified them and consolidated the whole Jewish population of Israel into a shared common oppressive and exploitative relationship to the Palestinian Arabs."

"The starting point for a revolutionary party's programme in Palestine and the surrounding countries must be the struggle against imperialism and its wide variety of local agents. The world-hegemonic imperialist power—the USA with its fleets in the Mediterranean and the Gulf defends 'its' oil and the semi-feudal rentier regimes it props up in the Arabian peninsula with a limitless arsenal. Yet as its ignominious fiasco in Iran and its inglorious retreat from Lebanon shows it is far from invincible when the masses are roused against it even under the most appalling leadership. This 'leadership' whether Stalinist, bourgeois nationalist or clerical reactionary can however only score partial and limited victories against the USA and its agents."

"So essential to the USA is the existence of the Zionist state that it is repeatedly forced to adapt its overall strategy and tactics for controlling the region to the wishes of its Israeli ally. Most frequently undermined and sabotaged are its relations with its Arab clients (Mubarak, Hussein and the Saudi rulers) who it is repeatedly obliged to abandon and swindle."

— "Theses on Zionism, Israel, Palestine and Arab nationalism," *Trotskyist International* No.2, Winter 1989

Confusion abounds in these "theses." To begin with, there is the petulant petty-bourgeois declaration that "Israel is an oppressor nation and as such we do not recognize its right to exist as a nation state." Does WP recognize the right of other "oppressor nations" like the Han Chinese, Great Russians or Americans to exist as nation states?

While Israeli Jews constitute a nation, Marxists do not consider the existing state of Israel to be a legitimate expression of their national right to self-determination (since it is premised upon the subjugation of the Palestinians). But all nations have a right "to exist" and to self-determination, and Marxists defend those rights while opposing any attempt to exercise them at the expense of another people. It is simply liberal moralism to suggest that "the whole Jewish population" shares in the oppression of the Palestinians. Jewish workers are not responsible for the crimes of their rulers, and few derive any tangible benefits from them (even if they are fooled into solidarizing with their exploiters by Zionist ideology).

Finally, while Workers Power correctly observes that the Arab states function as agents of imperialism, the suggestion is also made that they are somehow qualitatively different from Israel, which is why WP sides with the Arab regimes in the wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973 (see *Trotskyist Bulletin* No.3). In its April 2007 "Programme of action for Palestine," the L5I issued a blank check for the future, declaring: "For an active defeatist position towards the Zionist state in any conflict with an Arab bourgeois regime" and "Critical support to even bourgeois Arab states in economic or military conflict with imperialism and Israel!"

In his July 2010 speech, Halaby distinguished between the Israeli state and the Israeli-Jewish nation: "If I recognise that they are a nation, then it follows that I have to recognise that they have the right to a state. I don't advocate it, though, and I can't recognise their actually-existing nation-state as a legitimate expression of that right." Halaby also clearly rejects any blanket condemnation of the Jewish working class: "Despite the reactionary colonisation policy most of the Jewish population are workers and farmers with no ulterior motive beyond seeking to work and bring up their families" (*op. cit.*, 27 December 2008). But he remains deeply pessimistic about the possibility of breaking Israeli workers from their Zionist masters:

"the liberation struggle should encourage all and any developments within Israeli society that might fracture the bloc between the Jewish-Israeli proletariat and the Zionist bourgeoisie. Given the strong material basis and historic durability of this reactionary alliance, it would be a mistake to make the liberation struggle strategically dependent on this occurring first."

—*Ibid.*

In his 2010 remarks, Halaby advanced the same prognosis:

"I think it will take a series of defeats for Israel to shake the confidence of Israel's working class in Zionism's ability to provide them with security, with prosperity, with continued democratic rights, and with peace and normality...."

"Now, we might be lucky. They could learn from their defeats quickly enough that they avoid a complete catastrophe for themselves. They could even learn quickly enough that a section of them provide useful allies to the struggle. But one thing I'm not willing to do is to advise the Palestinians to make their struggle strategically dependent on winning over the Israeli working class."

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Der politische Streik

Der erste dokumentierte Streik ereignete sich vor mehr als 2000 Jahren. Im Jahre 1159 vor unserer Zeitrechnung legten die Arbeiter beim Bau der Pyramiden in Theben die Arbeit nieder und forderten mit dem Ruf „Wir haben Hunger“ ihren ausbleibenden Lohn.

In Deutschland ist der ökonomische Streik vielen Kollegen unverständlich. Der politische Streik ist gesetzlich verboten. Das Beispiel Frankreich zeigt, dass die Einführung der Rente mit 62 Jahren Millionen auf die Straße bringen kann. Die meisten Gewerkschaften stellen gegen die Renten mit 67 Jahren lediglich zu sehr kurzen Streiks auf.

Das Streikrecht ist durch das Grundgesetz, Art. 9 Abs. 3 GG und durch die Rechtsprechung so interpretiert, dass ein Streik nur für den Arbeitsort oder zur Abwehr eines Tarifvertrages geführt werden darf.

Das Streikrecht in Frankreich dagegen ist ein individuelles Recht, das allerdings gemeinsam ausgeübt werden muss. Finden sich also einige Arbeiter zusammen, so können sie diesen Recht wahrnehmen, ohne dass es dazu eines Auftrags bedarf.

Es müssen allerdings arbeitsplatzspezifische Forderungen erhoben werden. Das französische Beispiel wird immer häufiger als gutes Beispiel genannt und die Forderung an die Gewerkschaften wächst, endlich ihre Kraft zu zeigen. Ken Winder, also, dass Frank Barak, zeigt den Wandel der Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft von der Verdrängung der Legalisierung des Streikrechts, neuerdings die Legalisierung des Streikrechts fordern oder dass die IG Metall (Industriegewerkschaft) durch den Streik (Umwelt) in ihre Sackgasse hineingeführt hat, dass sie sich für ein umringeltes Streikrecht einsetzen.

Der ökonomische Streik

Das deutsche Recht garantiert die sogenannte Tarifautonomie. Durch solche Verträge über Entlohnung und Arbeitsbedingungen von Bossen oder den Interessenvertretungen der Arbeiter und Gewerkschaften auf der anderen Seite abgeschlossen werden. Solche sind seit nach Ablauf der sogenannten Friedenspflicht rechtlich zulässig, also nach Kündigung oder Ablauf des Tarifvertrages. Solche kann man auch eine Unterbrechung sein.

Der politische Streik

Versteht Nordkorea Sekret als Blockade für revolutionäre Wiedervereinigung

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Massen-Striktposten israelische Schiffe

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Für die Sofortige Freilassung von Hama

Zum 60. Geburtstag

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If it is not realistic to hope to win over a chunk of the Israeli-Jewish working class as a strategic ally in the struggle to shatter the Zionist state, then what forces does WP expect will administer the “defeats” its strategy hinges on? Instead of attempting to propose a revolutionary solution, Workers Power advocates pushing the trade-union bureaucracy to embrace the BDS program and bring pressure to bear on the imperialist rulers:

“Small-scale practical actions can be used to place pressure on the official workers’ organisations in the West and elsewhere, to promote trade and academic boycotts of Israel, to block arms sales, military aid and loan guarantees, and to isolate Israel in the way that the South African apartheid regime was isolated....

“At the same time we must fight worldwide for workers’ sanctions and an academic boycott of Israel, the apartheid state. Any international campaign must target the US and EU governments, which have economic and military ties to Israel, forcing them to break the link and stop funding the racist, settler state of Israel.”

—*op. cit.*, 27 December 2008

WP reiterated this a few weeks later: “we need to go on the offensive and must demand that our governments sever all diplomatic contacts, expelling Israeli ambassadors/withdrawing ambassadors from Israel, cutting all cultural and educational links” (“Build a Mass Movement to aid the Gaza Resistance,” 13 January 2009).

The keystone of WP’s approach is the “anti-imperialist united front,” recently rechristened the “anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist united front.” This formula conflates, rather than distinguishes between, political and military support—although at times WP seeks to give the impression that its proposed bloc is strictly limited to practical cooperation and excludes any political support:

“Thus we are advocates of an anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist united front against each and every attack of these plunderers, including in its ranks socialists, Islamic and secular nationalists. All we ask from our partners in struggle is mutual respect for each other’s democratic rights and freedom of expression for our differing views. Naturally we will never give political support to our united front partners on their different end goals for society (an Islamic or a secular capitalist republic).”

—*op. cit.*, 27 December 2008

Yet after baptizing this hypothetical alliance a “united front,” the political chameleons of Workers Power proceed to anoint their projected bourgeois partners as anti-imperialists and anti-capitalists who may end up playing a role in “the insurrection itself”:

“We should organise against any attempt to subordinate the working class to their oppressors or to non-proletarian ideologies. However, in the united front, we support joint action with all forces fighting imperialism and capitalism wherever possible to maximise its chance of success of the struggle, irrespective of the ideology of those forces. This goes from strikes, military action up to the insurrection itself.”

—*Ibid.*

This absurdity—postulating a bloc with bourgeois forces not only to “fight” capitalism but also to carry out the proletarian revolution—can only be characterized as “left”-utopian popular frontism. Its underlying logic meshes nicely



Pro-Palestinian contingent at Martin Luther King Jr Day march, Atlanta

with WP’s policy of blanket support to imperialism’s Arab clients in any military conflict with their Zionist rivals.

Having virtually written off the Jewish-Israeli working class as a potential ally on the grounds that its bond with the Zionist exploiters is too strong, WP proposes instead to pressure imperialism to sever economic, diplomatic and military ties to Israel while advocating cross-class blocs with “anti-imperialist” and “anti-Zionist” Arab bourgeois forces. This amounts to a repudiation of Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution.

For Labor Strikes Against Israeli Apartheid!

The international labor movement has both the objective interest and potential social power to effectively defend the desperately oppressed Palestinians through concrete labor actions. At the height of the campus-based divestment campaign against South African apartheid in the 1980s, Howard Keylor, a long-time union militant on the docks of San Francisco and an IBT supporter, proposed a motion that the International Longshore and Warehouse Union “hot cargo” (i.e., refuse to unload) the next ship arriving with South African freight. For 10 days, beginning on 24 November 1984, hundreds of Bay Area dockers defied the companies and their arbitrators by refusing to touch the blood-stained cargo aboard the *Nedlloyd Kimberley*, despite the highly ambivalent attitude of the local union bureaucrats.

This bold action electrified opponents of apartheid. Hundreds of people turned out at the pier in support and a wide variety of black organizations, community groups and other unions hailed the dockers' initiative. On the eleventh day, when the police arrived to enforce a federal injunction, the union leadership buckled and the South African cargo was finally unloaded. Yet this powerful example, which was hailed by Nelson Mandela when he was released from prison years later, resonates internationally to this day.

In the wake of the 2008-09 assault on Gaza, dockworkers from the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union refused to load an Israeli vessel in Durban. On 20 June 2010, shortly after the flotilla raid, a mass picket of 700-800 workers and activists in Oakland, California prevented the Israeli Zim Lines ship *Zim Shenzhen* from being unloaded for 24 hours. The Oakland picket marked the first time an Israeli vessel was blocked at a U.S. port, as well as the first international blockade of an Israeli ship since the assault on the *Marvi Marmara*. On 19 June 2010, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions sent a message to Bay Area militants which included the following stirring passage:

"Dear brothers and sisters, trade unionists, workers, and people of the San Francisco Bay Area, we remember and salute your historic and massive action on the docks in 1984, when you acted to boycott the apartheid regime in South Africa.

"We look to you today from the Gaza Strip and all of Palestine, and call upon you to repeat that courageous stand today. This genuine solidarity is something we have longed for and expected."

In the following weeks, similar actions occurred around the world. In Turkey, Western Australia, Sweden, Norway and the Indian Port of Cochin, dockworkers' unions refused to unload Israeli cargo.

Some of these actions were promoted by their initiators, and welcomed by pro-Palestine activists, as an implementation of the BDS campaign. Yet the logic of workers' solidarity actions is in fact *counterposed* to a strategy premised on the illusion that opponents of Israeli apartheid can find allies in corporate boardrooms and among the Zionists' imperialist patrons. The reason that the international workers' movement is a potentially powerful ally of the Palestinians is that it can deal tangible blows to the oppressors by paralyzing the means of production, communication and transportation.

More concerted labor actions against Israeli apartheid would arouse profound anxiety among the planners of the imperialist world order—not only because it would pose a threat to their profits and geopolitical calculations, but also because it would signal a rising level of class-consciousness in the labor movement. Pseudo-Marxists like Workers Power, who imagine that it is very clever to combine class-struggle tactics (e.g., labor boycotts) with class-collaborationist calls on the imperialists for self-reform, are, in Trotsky's words, attempting to combine "fire and water":

"Most dangerous of all, however, is the Stalinist policy. The parties of the Communist International try to appeal especially to the more *revolutionary* workers by denouncing the League [of Nations] (a denunciation that is an apology), by asking for 'workers' sanctions,' and then nevertheless say-

ing: 'We must use the League when it is for sanctions.' They seek to hitch the revolutionary workers to the shafts so that they can draw the cart of the League."

—"Once Again the ILP," November 1935

At that time the issue was Benito Mussolini's fascist regime's invasion of Abyssinia (today known as Ethiopia). Trotsky's explanation of why workers' action is inevitably counterposed to capitalist sanctions remains entirely applicable to today's struggle against the crimes of Zionism:

"The truth is that if the workers begin their own sanctions against Italy, their action inevitably strikes at their own capitalists, and the League would be compelled to drop all sanctions. It proposes them now just because the workers' voices are muted in every country. Workers' action can begin only by absolute opposition to the national bourgeoisie and its international combinations. Support of the League and support of workers' actions are fire and water; they cannot be united."

—*Ibid.*

Unlike in 1935, the "democratic" imperialists today do not bother with verbal denunciations, much less symbolic sanctions, against Tel Aviv. In the advanced capitalist states, as well as in Israel/Palestine, only a class-struggle strategy can lay the basis for the liberation of the Palestinian people. Mobilizing the potential power of the international proletariat, however, requires a fight to forge a new, socialist leadership for the workers' movement—one committed to uprooting the entire exploitative and oppressive system of global capitalism. ■

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Israeli Apartheid...

continued from page 2

ing our fight.' He added, 'If Jerusalem falls, Amsterdam and New York will be next.'

"During his trip to Israel, Mr. Wilders also met with Israel's most prominent settler, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, as Radio Netherlands reported.

"The day after Mr. Wilders spoke in Tel Aviv, a delegation of anti-immigrant politicians from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Britain and Sweden toured West Bank settlements. Arutz Sheva, a settler news organization, observed: 'Sixty-five years after the defeat of the Third Reich, a senior delegation of European right-wing politicians toured Samaria Monday in support of the Jews who live there, whom they see as a bridgehead in the struggle against a common foe—Islamic jihadism and expansionism.'"

"The settler spokesman David Ha'ivri, who helped host the European delegation, told Arutz Sheva: 'If these European leaders—with their ties to anti-Semitic groups and their past—come around and declare that Israel has a right to exist securely in all of the areas under our control, and that Europe has a moral responsibility because of the crimes of their past, then I believe that we should accept their friendship.' Calling their statements of support for the settlements, 'the strongest possible tool in the war against anti-Semitism,' Mr. Ha'ivri added:

"No skinhead cares what [Anti-Defamation League Chairman] Abe Foxman has to say, but if Filip Dewinter and Heinz-Christian Strache make these statements they will have real impact. For that reason I am considering appearing with them in their countries for pro-Israel rallies.'"

One important factor in Israel's diminishing popular support is its brutality toward the residents of the tiny Gaza Strip. The international wave of mass protests that began in December 2008 when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched "Operation Cast Lead," a 22-day assault against Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants, reflected widespread revulsion at Zionist bullying and relentless cruelty. Gazans had already been under siege since 2006 after displeasing the Israelis and their U.S. sponsors by voting for the Islamist organization Hamas. The response of Tel Aviv, in the words of Israeli government advisor Dov Weisglass, was to "put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger" (*Observer* [London], 16 April 2006). With help from its imperialist patrons and the Mubarak regime in Egypt, Israel imposed a full blockade on this tiny sliver of land, halting all exports and most imports. While Israel claimed to permit "basic humanitarian supplies" to enter the territory, this apparently did not include pasta, light bulbs, shoes or blankets.

Documents obtained by the Israeli human rights group Gisha revealed the equations used by the Israeli government to calculate the amount of food, fuel and other supplies necessary to keep the population alive at a near-starvation level. This is eerily reminiscent of the Nazi blockade of the Warsaw Ghetto, where occupation authorities also calculated the minimal nutritional requirements of their victims. Not a single mainstream bourgeois English-language news source reported Gisha's sensational revela-



REUTERS

Israeli border cop grabs international protester at checkpoint outside Ramallah, 26 December 2010

tions (see "Put the Palestinians on a Diet," MediaLens.org, 17 November 2010).

Cut off from the outside world, Hamas was incapable of meaningful armed resistance, and could only resort to occasionally launching crude homemade rockets into adjacent Israeli territory. Compared to the pain inflicted on Gaza, Israel suffered minimal casualties: a total of 16 Israelis (all, unfortunately, civilians) were killed between 2004 and the start of "Operation Cast Lead" (*Economist*, 19 September 2009). Tel Aviv had fully anticipated such attacks prior to unilaterally pulling out of Gaza in 2005. In a 20 May 2004 interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, Arnon Soffer, the architect of the withdrawal plan, suggested that the problem could be managed by inflicting collective punishment on Gaza's population:

"the Palestinians will bombard us with artillery fire—and we will have to retaliate. But at least the war will be at the fence—not in kindergartens in Tel Aviv and Haifa.

"...we will tell the Palestinians that if a single missile is fired over the fence, we will fire 10 in response. And women and children will be killed and houses will be destroyed....

"...The pressure at the border will be awful. It's going to be a terrible war. So if we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day."

—quoted in "The Carnivores and the Ivy League Apologist," *CounterPunch*, 9 December 2004

In March 2008, Israel's deputy defense minister, Matan Vilnai, warned that the Palestinians faced a "holocaust" if homemade rockets continued to land in Israel (*Guardian* [London], 5 March 2008). Hamas observed a ceasefire for several months in an attempt to induce Israel to gradually lift the blockade. But the siege continued unabated, and when the ceasefire ended on 4 November 2008, the resumption of rocket attacks was seized on by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as the pretext for a policy of "kill and kill and kill." "Operation Cast Lead" was not a "war" but a one-sided blitzkrieg against an impoverished and essentially defenseless population. As the *Economist* (10 January 2009) observed: "Gazans have long felt they lived in an open prison; now they are trapped in a shooting gallery." Civilian ministries, food-processing factories, sewage treatment plants and electricity stations were all



Thousands of pro-Palestinian activists greet Mavi Marmara's return to Turkey, December 2010; banner with faces of nine IDF victims displayed on side of ship

targeted for destruction. The IDF finally ended its murderous vendetta in January 2009, after killing 1,400 Palestinians (40 percent of whom were women and children). Of the 10 Israeli soldiers who were killed, at least four were felled by "friendly fire."

Despite the ferocity of the assault, Hamas was not destroyed, so the blockade was further tightened, making everyday life for average Palestinians in Gaza even worse. Unemployment stands at almost 40 percent, and 80 percent of Gaza's residents are dependent on food aid for survival (*Independent* [London], 10 October 2010). Most of this aid is distributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), while other agencies avoid Gaza because U.S. law makes it a crime to provide money, material goods, training or services to individuals or groups that are in any way affiliated with Hamas. Since Hamas is the actual civil authority in Gaza and the chief source of employment, this makes providing assistance almost impossible. Moreover, serious tensions exist between UNRWA and Hamas, largely because of UN complicity in Israeli crimes.

Zionist Pirates of the Mediterranean: A 'Strategic Liability'?

In May 2010, when the local director of UNRWA, John Ging, welcomed the flotilla of nine boats from Ireland, Turkey and Greece that sought to break the siege, he was partly motivated by what the *Economist* (29 May 2010)

termed a desire "to preserve his beachhead of foreign influence." Israel had previously permitted a flotilla to dock in Gaza in August 2008, so nothing unusual was expected.

This time, however, the Israeli leadership decided to punish those who dared demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinians. Even before the flotilla departed, Israel's deputy foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, ludicrously insisted that "there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza," and denounced the aid shipment as a "provocation intended to delegitimise Israel." When IDF commandos executed nine activists aboard the Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara* while it was still in international waters, outraging tens of millions around the world, Ayalon brazenly defended this hideous crime and cynically denounced the flotilla as an "armada of hate and violence in support of the Hamas terror organisation" (*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], July 2010).

However, statements from those who witnessed the horror revealed what really happened:

"Greta Berlin, a representative of the Free Gaza Movement, said that she and her fellow activists were watching the live stream from the *Mavi Marmara* when the assault took place. 'We saw them come off the helicopter, we saw them turn around, look at each other and then shoot. We were speechless watching this,' she said.

"Hanin Zoabi, an Arab-Israeli member of the Israeli parliament, was aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. [She] said: 'It was clear from the size of the force that boarded the ship that the purpose was not only to stop this [voyage] but

to cause the largest possible number of fatalities in order to stop such initiatives in the future.”

—*Financial Times* [London], 1 June 2010

Protests against the Zionists' piratical assault were even more massive than those of a year and a half earlier, particularly in Turkey. Israel has long cultivated extremely close relations with Turkey, involving joint military exercises and extensive arms sales. Israel's bombing of an alleged Syrian "nuclear reactor" in 2006 was approved by both Washington and Ankara. While constantly invoking the Nazi holocaust against European Jewry to justify Zionist crimes, Israel has cynically refused to acknowledge the Turkish genocide of Armenians during World War I.

As Washington's attempt to turn Iraq and Afghanistan into stable client states floundered, the Turkish bourgeoisie (which was a reliable U.S. vassal throughout the Cold War and still hosts an important American airbase at Incirlik) has sought to chart a more independent course in the region. On the eve of the flotilla assault, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) announced that, with the help of Brazil, it had hammered out an agreement to restrict Iran's enrichment of uranium. The Obama administration welcomed this initiative at first, presumably anticipating an Iranian rejection, but became incensed when Tehran responded positively. The U.S. not only moved to block implementation of the deal, but also pushed for a new round of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran. This, along with popular outrage at the flotilla massacre, pushed the AKP into hardening its stance toward Israel and moving closer to Iran and Syria.

America's imperial strategists are concerned that the rupture of the Ankara-Tel Aviv axis represents another blow to U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. Anthony Cordesman, a well-connected military analyst in Washington who vocally supported the IDF's 2008-09 rampage in Gaza, commented that Israel's disregard for the geopolitical implications of its attack on the flotilla posed the question of whether it was becoming a "strategic liability" for its patron: "It is time Israel realized it has obligations to the United States, as well as the United States to Israel, and that it become far more careful about the extent to which it test [sic] the limits of U.S. patience and exploits the support of American Jews" ("Israel as a Strategic Liability?," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2 June 2010).

Israeli Apartheid: If the Shoe Fits...

It is not only the egregious actions of Tel Aviv that have put Zionists on the defensive. The energetic campaign of a new generation of Palestinian solidarity activists and the burgeoning "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" (BDS) movement (see accompanying article), which took off in 2005, has also had a significant impact. By focusing attention on the indisputable parallels between apartheid in South Africa and Israel, the BDS campaign has embarrassed and enraged the Israeli establishment and its apologists.

In a diatribe against pro-Palestinian activists, the ardently Zionist Anti-Defamation League (ADL) whines: "affirmation that Israel practices apartheid defies logic and poses a basic question: Why, out of all the countries in the world in which national, religious or ethnic minorities claim discrimination, is Israel selected for the apartheid label?" ("Israel



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On 18 August 2009, Shimon Peres (L) told Russian President Dmitry Medvedev: 'The problem with Iran is not only the desire to produce nuclear weapons, but also the character of the regime....' In 1975, Peres was eager to sell nukes to the apartheid regime of P.W. Botha (R).

and Apartheid: The Big Lie," 29 August 2005).

In Afrikaans, "apartheid" means "apart-ness" or "separation-ness"—a translation that *literally* renders Israel's "separation fence" an "apartheid fence" (or Apartheid Wall, as Palestinian activists more aptly call it). In 1973, the United Nations defined apartheid as: "Any legislative measures or other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups." An apartheid regime was defined as one which denies a particular group "the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression" (www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/resins.htm).

Apartheid South Africa's white rulers actively sought to emulate Israeli methods of control in the Occupied Territories:

"South Africa's army chief, Constand Viljoen, visited Israel's occupied territories in the spring of 1977, marveling at the Israeli checkpoint system and the searches of Arabs conducted by soldiers at each roadblock. 'The thoroughness with which Israel conducts this examination is astonishing. At the quickest, it takes individual Arabs that come through there about one and a half hours. When the traffic is heavy, it takes from four to five hours,' he observed admiringly. In addition to studying how Israel controlled the movement of Palestinians, the SADF [South African Defence Force] was also interested in Israel's battlefield training methods and sent twenty-two members of the army to Israel to study the IDF's combat school with the goal of establishing a replica in South Africa."

—Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa*, 2010

Collaboration between apartheid South Africa and Israel extended far beyond population control techniques, as Polakow-Suransky documents. In 1975, then-Israeli



**Palestinian woman harvesting olives near Hebron in the occupied West Bank, October 2010—
Israel's Apartheid Wall splits her family's land into two pieces**

defense minister (and current Israeli president), Shimon Peres, offered to sell South Africa nuclear missiles:

"On March 31, 1975...the Israeli delegation formally offered to sell South Africa some of the nuclear-capable Jericho missiles in its arsenal—the same missiles that were readied for use during the Yom Kippur War. South Africa's leaders yearned for a nuclear deterrent—which they believed would force the West to intervene on their behalf if Pretoria were ever seriously threatened—and the Israeli proposition put that goal within reach. Excited by the offer on the table, R. F. Armstrong, chief of staff of the South African Defence Force (SADF), wrote an enthusiastic memo analyzing the benefits of nuclear weapons for South Africa's defense strategy."

"Israel's offer of nuclear missiles, code-named 'Chalet,' came up again two months later, on June 4, when Peres and [then South African defense minister, P. W.] Botha held a second meeting in Zurich. Now the discussion turned to warheads. Minutes from the June meeting reveal that Botha expressed interest in buying the Jerichos if they came with 'the correct payload,' and that 'Minister Peres said that the correct payload was available in three sizes.' Armstrong's exclusive focus on nuclear-armed Jerichos in his March 31 memorandum makes clear that Botha was talking about nuclear warheads when he asked for 'the correct payload.' Eventually Botha backed out of the deal—due to its high costs and the fact that planning for nuclear weapons in South Africa was only in its early stages—and the nuclear transfer never occurred. The abortive deal in 1975 was only the beginning of Israeli-South African cooperation on nuclear missile technology, however: a decade later,

the two countries would begin work on a secret testing range along South Africa's rugged Indian Ocean coast.

"Nuclear missiles notwithstanding, the Israelis were extremely eager to sell anything and everything to Pretoria, including weapons from third parties. South Africa conveniently used Israel as an intermediary to buy arms from countries off limits to them because of embargoes."

—*Ibid.*

Secret collaboration on nuclear weaponry continued until at least 1989, two years after Tel Aviv had ostensibly imposed military "sanctions" on Pretoria.

Zionists in the United States were acutely aware of the South Africa-Israel axis. In the 1980s, ADL chief Irwin Suall turned his organization into a vigorous opponent of the anti-apartheid movement:

"[Suall] believed that the greatest threat to Israel emanated from the Soviet Union and the American left. As a result, Suall's fact-finding department shifted its focus from white supremacists and Aryan nationalists to every imaginable left-leaning organization in the country—from pro-Nicaraguan Sandinista groups to the anti-apartheid movement. Suall's ace fact-finder was a man named Roy Bullock."

"As the anti-apartheid campaign turned its attention to Israel's links with South Africa, the ADL entered the propaganda fray, publicly attacking Nelson Mandela's ANC [African National Congress] with arguments that mirrored those of the hard-line security officials in Pretoria. In May 1986, ADL national director Nathan Perlmutter co-authored an article arguing, 'We must distinguish between those who will work for a humane, democratic,

pro-Western South Africa and those who are totalitarian, anti-humane, anti-democratic, anti-Israel and anti-American. It is in this context that the African National Congress...merits a close, unsentimental look.'

"The ADL also became involved in the Israeli-South African propaganda war in a more covert manner, dispatching Bullock to attend the meetings of U.S.-based anti-apartheid groups, collect their publications, and take down the license plate numbers of leaders' cars—including visitors such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and South African Communist Party leader Chris Hani."

—*Ibid.*

In addition to his work for the ADL, Bullock also filed several reports every month for South African intelligence.

Ethnic Cleansing & 'Jim Crow' Segregation in Israel

The existence of Israeli apartheid in the Occupied Territories is so obvious that it is acknowledged by various mainstream liberals, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and John Dugard, the special rapporteur for the UN Commission on Human Rights. After the 2008-09 Gaza massacre, South African parliamentarians told the Israeli ambassador that IDF abuses "made [South African] apartheid look like a Sunday school picnic" (*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], August 2009). Comments on the issue by Condoleezza Rice—who aided and abetted Israeli and U.S. imperialist war crimes as a member of the Bush administration—infuriated many American rightwingers:

"And for the past year and a half, Rice has repeatedly undermined the administration's credibility by making statements suggesting that Israeli security checkpoints set up to prevent terrorists from entering Israel and blowing themselves up are somehow analogous to the mistreatment of Southern blacks under the Jim Crow laws."

—Joel Himefarb, *Accuracy in Media*, 31 March 2008

It is important to note, however, that these bourgeois worthies all carefully restrict their criticism to the IDF-ruled Occupied Territories, as distinct from "democratic" Israel proper. This echoes the well-rehearsed Zionist claim that while 3.5 million Palestinians under occupation may endure certain inequalities, Israel's 1.3 million Arabs are "equal citizens." Apartheid within Israel is less obvious partly because it is more long-standing and well entrenched, as Jonathan Cook, a leftwing British journalist based in Nazareth, observed in a talk he delivered in the West Bank village of Bilin:

"Certainly, it is true that apartheid in the territories is much more aggressive than it is inside Israel. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the apartheid under occupation is much less closely supervised by the Israeli civilian courts than it is in Israel. You can, to put it bluntly, get away with much more here. The second, and more significant, reason, however, is that the Israeli system of apartheid in the occupied territories is forced to be more aggressive and cruel—and that is because the battle is not yet won here. The fight of the occupying power to steal your resources—your land, water and labour—is in progress but the outcome is still to be decided...."

"In Israel, by contrast, apartheid rule is entrenched—it achieved its victory decades ago. Palestinian citizens

have third or fourth class citizenship; they have had almost all of their land taken from them; they are allowed to live only in their ghettos; their education system is controlled by the security services; they can work in few jobs other than those Jews do not want; they have the vote but cannot participate in government or effect any political change; and so on."

—"Israel's Big and Small Apartheids," *CounterPunch*, 26 April 2010

The 8 November 2010 *New Statesman* notes: "The Mossawa Centre, an organisation that lobbies for equal rights in Israel, maintains that there are at least 20 laws that discriminate against Israeli Arabs. The US state department accepts that 'institutional, legal and societal discrimination' exists." As a result, Israeli Arabs, who constitute 20 percent of the population, occupy only 3 percent of the land. Israel was consolidated in the late 1940s through a process of ethnic cleansing and war with surrounding Arab states. Ninety percent of the land owned by 750,000 Palestinian refugees was confiscated under the so-called "Absentees' Property Law," as was much of the land owned by the 180,000 Palestinians who remained within Israel. Access to this nationalized land requires vetting by quasi-governmental organizations like the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, which ensure that the land is held in trust for world Jewry (i.e., off limits to Arab "citizens"). In "democratic" Israel more than 700 communities (rural kibbutzim and suburban moshavim) bar non-Jews from residence (*Canadian Press*, 26 April 2010). As most Israelis prefer to live in larger urban centers like Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the chief purpose of the majority of these sparsely populated outposts is to stake an administrative claim to most of the inhabitable land and resources.

Land confiscations within Israel continue to this day, with government agencies routinely declaring Arab villages "illegal" before razing them to the ground. A stark example of this is the plight of the growing Bedouin population in the arid Negev desert, most of whom live in "unrecognized villages" deprived of all services, including water and electricity. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly warned his cabinet last year that "different elements will demand national rights within Israel—for example, in the Negev—if we allow for a region without a Jewish majority" ("Israel plans mass forced removals of Bedouin," *ZNet*, 6 August 2010). In the Bedouin village of al Araqib the houses—mostly wooden shacks and concrete homes—were knocked down twice, first by bulldozers and later by 1,500 police. After uprooting 850 olive trees, the Zionist authorities designated the land of al Araqib a "peace forest" to be administered by the Jewish National Fund. The government's objective is to force the Bedouin into seven deprived townships, but so far 90,000 of them (half the total) have resisted pressure to move.

Similar "Judaization" campaigns are underway both in the heavily-Arab region of Galilee and various urban centers. The Israeli cabinet has proposed "strengthening" Lod (a city near Tel Aviv populated by 20,000 Arabs and 45,000 Jews) by increasing its Jewish population while harassing Arab residents. Seventy percent of Arab homes have been declared "illegal," not only posing the potential danger of demolition, but also ensuring that they are deprived of many municipal services, including street lighting and garbage removal (*Economist*, 16 October 2010). Local authorities also recently finished constructing



Palestinian youths resisting Israeli police, East Jerusalem, July 2010

a three-meter high wall to separate Jewish districts from Arab ones. Lod's Arab suburbs are cordoned off to prevent their growth, while no comparable restrictions apply to Jewish expansion. Several gated estates reserved for religious Zionists have recently been built across the city. In Safed, a city in northern Israel, residents have been barred from renting rooms to Israeli Arabs—even though 1,350 Arabs are enrolled at a nearby college. A courageous 89-year-old Holocaust survivor defied this ruling, only to be threatened with having his house set on fire and declared a traitor for “returning the Arabs to Safed” (*Independent* [London], 15 November 2010).

State-sanctioned discrimination means reduced access to jobs and social services for Israeli Arabs. Per capita spending on education is as much as nine times greater for Jewish students than for Arabs, and there are no state-funded Arabic-language universities (ZNet, 9 September 2009). Employment discrimination, particularly for better paying jobs, accounts for the fact that the average per capita income of Israeli Arabs in 2009 was roughly a third of that of Jewish Israelis—\$6,756 and \$19,150 respectively (“Israel’s Domestic Ticking Time Bomb,” *Middle East Monitor*, June 2010). Arabs comprise less than 10 percent of government employees, a figure likely to decline further if recent proposals to give preference to IDF veterans are implemented. Social mobility is further constrained by reactionary laws which prohibit all Israelis from marrying outside their respective religious group, or with Arabs liv-

ing in the Occupied Territories or “enemy Arab states.”

While Arabs are allowed to vote, establish political parties and become members of the Knesset (MKs), the Israeli parliament, these rights are limited by the fundamental framework of the Zionist state, which is based on the negation of Palestinian national rights. Israel’s Declaration of Independence proclaimed it a “Jewish and democratic” state. In 2007, the Israeli Arab MK Azmi Bishara was stripped of his parliamentary immunity for advocating a non-racial democracy and defending the right of Palestinians and Lebanese to resist Zionist aggression. Three Arab parties were banned from running in the February 2009 elections because they had opposed the assault on Gaza (ZNet, 14 January 2009). The Knesset recently voted to strip the parliamentary privileges of Hanin Zoabi, the Israeli Arab MK who participated in the May 2010 flotilla and told the truth about the blood-bath she witnessed. Zoabi was viciously harassed by her “peers” and denied the right to leave the country or hold a diplomatic passport (“Israel’s Shrinking Minority Rights,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 4 November 2010).

The current Israeli coalition government has taken reactionary anti-Arab and anti-democratic legislation to new depths. One Israeli Arab MK commented: “In this Knesset...anything that’s anti-Arab can pass, even if it says the sun rises in the west” (*Economist*, 30 May 2009). The most notorious example is the so-called “loyalty oath” bill requiring new citizens to pledge allegiance to

a "Jewish and democratic" Israel. In addition to denying Palestinian refugees any right of return, the legislation sets the stage for a "transfer" (i.e., ethnic cleansing) of Israeli Arabs—a policy associated with Avigdor Lieberman's fascist Yisrael Beiteinu party and the ultra right, but which even "left" Zionists hold to be potentially necessary. In October, Israeli security forces staged a massive, five-day "training" drill simulating the forcible relocation of Israeli Arabs to a new Palestinian "state" ("Israeli Forces Test Transfer Scenario," ZNet, 15 October 2010).

The underlying connection between apartheid practices within the Green Line (the pre-1967 border) and those in the Occupied Territories is evident in Israel's two-tier nationality and citizenship laws. Most states make no distinction between citizenship and nationality—someone who is a citizen is also a national. The Zionist ruling class does not recognize "Israeli" as a nationality so that, in fulfillment of its self-definition as the "Jewish state," the collective "nation" of Jews around the globe have rights that supersede those of people whose families have resided within Israel's borders for centuries. This is accomplished by creating two categories of citizenship: one for "Jewish nationals" and another of lesser status for "Arab nationals."

The Law of Return makes immigration all but automatic for any Jew around the world who wishes it (although devising criteria to distinguish members of the "Jewish nation" has proven extremely difficult, and the definition has undergone numerous revisions throughout Israel's history). The Citizenship Law, for non-Jews, decrees that Palestinians expelled by force in 1948 have no right to return to their homes and land. These legal distinctions underlie the practices of apartheid and are both integral to the foundation of the Zionist state and essential to its maintenance. The myth of a global "Jewish nation" and the negation of rights for the Palestinians are two sides of the same Zionist coin.

The uncomfortable parallels with South Africa have, on occasion, been mentioned by leading Israeli politicians. In a 2003 interview with *Haaretz*, Olmert (then deputy prime minister) observed:

"More and more Palestinians are uninterested in a negotiated, two-state solution, because they want to change the essence of the conflict from an Algerian paradigm to a South African one. From a struggle against 'occupation,' in their parlance, to a struggle for one-man-one-vote. That is, of course, a much cleaner struggle, a much more popular struggle—and ultimately a much more powerful one. For us, it would mean the end of the Jewish state."

—13 November 2003

Four years later Olmert warned: "If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights (also for the Palestinians in the territories), then, as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished" (*Haaretz*, 29 November 2007). Defense Minister Ehud Barak offered an even blunter assessment: "As long as in this territory west of the Jordan river there is only one political entity called Israel it is going to be either non-Jewish, or non-democratic....If this bloc of millions of Palestinians cannot vote, that will be an apartheid state" (*Guardian* [London], 3 February 2010).

Such statements, while accurate, do not signal any openness on the part of Israel's rulers to recognize the national

rights of the Palestinians. For them the "two-state solution" formula negotiated by Rabin and Fatah's Yasir Arafat in the 1993 Oslo Accords was never more than an agreement that the Palestinian Authority would police Gaza and the 20 percent of the West Bank in "Area A," leaving Israel in charge of the rest of the territory of the West Bank ("Areas B and C"). "Final status" negotiations were deliberately dragged out by an endless series of new Zionist demands and provocations, most recently Netanyahu's insistence that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a "Jewish" state.

'Judaization' of the West Bank: Zionist Struggle for Lebensraum

Since 1993 the Jewish settler population has more than doubled, reaching 300,000 in the West Bank and nearly 200,000 in East Jerusalem (*Economist*, 26 September 2009). A Zionist settler, reflecting the ambition of Israeli state policy, commented: "What Arab East Jerusalem?...Today it's all Jewish" (*Economist*, 6 March 2010). About 270,000 Arabs remain in East Jerusalem, but the district is becoming less Palestinian every day. The Wall has separated it from other West Bank cities, and citizenship papers for Arabs are regularly revoked: "Israel, since occupying [East Jerusalem] in 1967, has stripped more than 14,000 native Palestinians of their residency rights, including a good 5,000 in the past two years" (*Economist*, 14 August 2010). Today, the settlements, attendant infrastructure and Jewish-only connecting roads cover an estimated 42 percent of the West Bank.

The cumulative effect, as Jeff Halper points out, is to pre-empt any possibility of even a marginally viable Palestinian "state":

"Israel's concentration of settlers in strategic blocs in East Jerusalem and the West Bank destroy any Palestinian territorial contiguity, and do so even if Israel removes the dozens of tiny settlements within the densely populated Palestinian 'cantons.' Those settlement blocs have already been incorporated into Israel proper through the construction of some twenty-nine major Israeli highways, meaning that Israel has expanded organically from the 1967 Green Line to the border with Jordan. Even if the Separation Barrier is dismantled, the entire country

Squatter settlement south of Soweto, 1990

JOANNE RATHE—BOSTON GLOBE



has been fundamentally reconfigured; there is simply no more room for a coherent, viable, sovereign Palestinian state."

—"Breaking the Vessels," *MRZine*, 19 November 2009

This voracious settlement building is integral to the Zionist drive for *Lebensraum* and the creation of a "Greater Israel." In carving up the West Bank into a series of small, impoverished and disconnected cantons, Zionist planners made sure that Palestinians were deprived of the richest agricultural land, natural resources and water. The hilltop settlements scattered across the rural West Bank constitute an auxiliary military force—armed and sanctioned by the state—which routinely engages in the harassment, brutalization and dispossession of Palestinians. The Israeli ministry of agriculture reports that some 500,000 Palestinian-owned olive trees have been bulldozed, burned down or uprooted since 2000 (*Economist*, 17 October 2009). Many Palestinian farmers actually live in their orchards or among their herds of sheep to prevent settlers from seizing them. Three-quarters of the output of West Bank quarries is controlled by Israel (ZNet, 11 May 2009), as is 89 percent of its water resources (*CounterPunch*, 15 October 2010).

The fertile farmland, abundant raw materials and strategic mountain water aquifer of the Jordan Valley, an area that constitutes 30 percent of the West Bank, are deemed vital for Israeli capitalism. Netanyahu's recent assertion that "Israel will never cede the Jordan valley" (*Economist*, 27 November 2010) is explained by the following comment made by former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2001: "Is it possible today to concede control of the hill aquifer, which supplies a third of our water?...you know, it's not by accident that the settlements are located where they are" (Jamil Hilal [ed.], *Where Now for Palestine? The Demise of the Two State Solution*). After almost a half century of Israeli occupation, the Palestinian population of the Jordan Valley has shrunk from over 200,000 to fewer than 60,000. Many of those who remain have fled to the town of Jericho because Zionist intimidation has made it impossible to eke out a living in the rural areas. In 2010, the Israeli army posted "danger" signs in front of the camps of Jordan Valley Bedouin, who lacked residency permits, declaring the area a military firing zone (*Economist*, 27 November 2010).

Some 9,000 settlers claim jurisdiction over 90 percent of the valley, and, backed by the IDF, use their control of water resources to pressure what remains of the indigenous population. Without sufficient water, Palestinian farmers' land is scorched, its meager produce uncompetitive. Since 1967, Palestinians have been forbidden from drilling new wells, while Jewish settlers are free to drill as many as they like, thereby diverting water from the mountain aquifer to feed their own agro-export plantations (*Irish Times*, 1 October 2010).

In other areas of the West Bank, particularly those cut off by the Wall or adjacent to the Green Line, settlements are not constructed as scattered militarized outposts, but rather as massive urban blocs largely populated by recent Russian Jewish immigrants. This land has also been expropriated from its Palestinian owners; but unlike in other areas of the West Bank, the agency formally in charge of land transfer, the Land Redemption Fund, has major investments from big Israeli capitalists looking for high returns (*New Left Review*, July-August 2006). Hundreds of Israeli enterprises do a brisk business in providing goods

and services to the settlements. Those that have set up production in the various "industrial zones" benefit from cheap (expropriated) land, tax perks and weak labor law enforcement. Increasingly, Israeli-owned enterprises in the West Bank are hiring only Jewish labor. The occupation has also provided considerable impetus for Israel's highly profitable arms and "homeland security" industries, which form the bedrock of the country's ballyhooed high-tech sector. In 2006, Israel's military exports reached a value of \$3.4 billion, the fourth highest in the world (ZNet, 29 September 2010).

Palestinian Authority: Zionists' Quislings

The Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank has been grotesquely complicit in the occupation. When the Oslo agreement was signed in 1993, Fatah (the most significant component of the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO]) was widely disdained by many working-class Palestinians who had made heroic sacrifices and suffered brutal Israeli repression, only to see their supposed PLO "liberators" arrive from Tunis to set themselves up with villas and black sedans. The noxious mixture of corruption, profiteering, repression and collusion which characterized this period was personified by two of the most senior members of Fatah: Muhammad Dahlan, who ran the reviled Preventive Security Force in Gaza; and former Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, whose family business raked in profits by selling Israel the cement used to build the Apartheid Wall (*Economist*, 15 March 2009). When Fatah lost the 2006 Palestinian elections to Hamas, its attempt to overturn the result (with the support of U.S. and Israeli authorities) set off a small-scale civil war in the summer of 2007 that resulted in the eviction of Fatah from Gaza.

Today, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rules a fifth of the West Bank ("Area A") essentially by decree, exercised through an appointed "emergency government" headed by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. Although Fayyad's party won only 2 of 132 seats in the 2006 election (*Economist*, 14 August 2010), his extensive background working for the IMF and World Bank qualified him as the best figure to ensure a "stable" West Bank (i.e., heavily policed and open for business). The American military (with the assistance of Canadian, British and Turkish personnel) has trained tens of thousands of new Palestinian security officers in Jordan. Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, who oversaw the project for the U.S., candidly described the plan to the House of Representatives as "truly important to advance our national interests, deliver security to Palestinians, and preserve and protect the interests of the state of Israel" (*Al Jazeera* [English], 8 February 2010). One of the primary ways that this new force has sought to carry out its mandate is by keeping close tabs on all political activity and collaborating with Israeli forces in quelling protests against rampant land theft and settlement construction. Some 40 demonstrations occur weekly, mostly out of sight of the international media in the rural areas (*Economist*, 22 May 2010). Activists in Ramallah who attempted to protest the Zionist assault on Gaza were met with savage repression. Journalist Naela Khalil recounted:

"Every time people went to the Manara [Square] for a demonstration, security forces prevented them. They beat them and threw tear gas. Prevented people from going to



NO CREDIT

Palestinian Authority security apparatus: indigenous enforcers of Israeli apartheid

the checkpoints. We are normal people and they came to beat us. These things slowly add up."

—*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], April 2010

Despite this shameful record of collaboration, Israeli security forces do not entirely trust the quisling PA, and continue to routinely patrol the area around its headquarters in Ramallah (*Economist*, 22 May 2010).

PLO Kapos Propose 'Reform & Development'

The petty-bourgeois nationalists of the PLO have always advocated the creation of an independent capitalist Palestine and, since 1974, they have projected this as existing side by side with Zionist Israel. Lacking significant military capacity, the PLO leadership sought to achieve its objective through diplomatic maneuvers, initially with the Arab regimes, and subsequently with the United States and Israel. The destruction of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s removed the PLO's chief diplomatic and military ally, and left Arafat and his cabal to settle for a perspective of building an "independent" Palestine on whatever Bantustans the Zionists were willing to concede.

In 2007, Abbas and Fayyad imposed a series of austerity measures in the West Bank as part of a "Palestinian Reform and Development Plan" (PRDP). The PRDP was drawn up in collaboration with imperialist institutions like the World Bank and the British Department for International Development (DFID), which pledged to put \$7.7 billion into a "PRDP Trust Fund" headquartered at the World Bank, to be disbursed if and when the plan was implemented. Aiming to foster an "enabling environment for the private sector" as the "engine of sustainable economic growth"

("Palestine in the Middle East: Opposing Neoliberalism and US Power," *MRZine*, 19 July 2008), the PRDP has provided cover for one of the most savage attacks on the public sector ever witnessed in the Middle East. The PA committed to cut the state workforce by 21 percent—a total of almost 40,000 jobs—while freezing salaries at a time of double-digit inflation. These measures are particularly punitive because Israeli capitalists drastically reduced the number of Palestinian workers employed within the Green Line after the first and second intifadas. Millions more Palestinians have been affected by the removal of subsidies for electricity and water, a matter of life and death for the 50 percent of West Bank Palestinians who live in poverty.

Palestinian workers have sought to resist the PRDP attacks. On 5 December 2008, public-sector workers launched a strike and demanded an end to the wage freeze and cuts in subsidies. The strike achieved little, however, in part because of the union leadership's political subservience to Fatah. A similar problem undermined a major Palestinian labor action a decade ago when teachers fought for higher wages. The leadership of that strike, which bypassed the traditional Fatah-allied union structure, faced severe repression, and dozens of teachers were arrested. Strike action continued intermittently until the onset of the second intifada in 2000 created so much political pressure for "national unity" that the teachers returned to work (*Ibid.*).

According to PRDP planners, gutting the public service and lowering living standards by slashing subsidies will kick start "development" by swelling the ranks of unemployed Palestinian workers who will then find jobs in the new industrial zones and parks that are expected to spring up on the edges of Palestinian cantons. The



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Palestinian women protest settlements at Jerusalem checkpoint, March 2000

idea is that Palestinian, Israeli and other Mid-Eastern capitalists can hire workers at low wages without having to worry about labor laws, environmental regulations or safety standards. Despite its connection to Fatah, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) has not been granted the right to represent workers in the industrial zones. Movement in and out is to be jointly controlled by Israeli and PA security forces. In May 2008, a "Palestine Investment Conference" was attended by over 1,000 delegates, including Abbas, Fayyad and other PA bigwigs, wealthy expatriate Palestinians from Europe and North America as well as Arab capitalists. The conference was sponsored by Palestinian business groups from the West Bank and Gaza (including the Arab Bank and Bank of Palestine), foreign corporations (CISCO, Intel, Coca Cola and others) and imperialist agencies (USAID, the British DFID and the French Development Agency). Israeli capitalists were also quietly encouraged to attend.

The process of laying the groundwork for developing a capitalist Palestinian quasi-statelet necessarily legitimizes and normalizes the structures of occupation. The land on which the projected Jenin Industrial Estate (JIE) is to be built was twice confiscated—first from Palestinian farmers in 1998, when the PA initiated the project, and again in 2000, by the Israeli military to build their Apartheid Wall (which is to form the estate's northern border). Another element in the plans for an "independent" capitalist Palestine is the grotesquely misnamed "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity," a project for an agro-industrial "free trade" zone in the Jordan Valley, premised on acceptance of the wholesale appropriation of resources, water and land that has already occurred. This program aims to convert remaining small-scale Palestinian farmers into day-laborers and subcontractors for agro-business.

Given the very bitter fruit of previous "liberation" struggles and the ugly realities of the quisling PA's ambitions to administer a future splintered Bantustan on behalf of the Zionist oppressors, it is hardly surprising that many Palestinians are exhausted, demoralized and infuriated.

Even within Fatah there is enormous anger at the current predicament. When a delegate from Jenin who attended the PLO's sixth "general assembly" in 2009 (the first in 20 years) commented that negotiations had led nowhere and proposed, "We must go back to the guns and throwing stones," the PA's ambassador to Japan responded: "Resistance has many forms and colours. One is economic development, which I believe is the only way" (*Economist*, 8 August 2009).

Many working-class Palestinians are dismayed by the prospect of "economic development" under continued Israeli occupation that will serve to enrich a thin stratum of Palestinian capitalists. In Qalandia, an impoverished refugee camp near Ramallah, one family expressed their predicament to a visiting reporter:

"[Muhammad Abdullah Ahmad] Wahdan long ago dismissed the dream that the PA could help him recover the lands of citrus and olives that his family were driven from during the creation of Israel 6 decades ago. Now, after losing a son to the struggle...he is wary of any more sacrifice for the Palestinian leadership. As she served us refreshments, Wahdan's wife said that these are the people who 'put our kids under the cannon fire.'

"Wahdan said: 'This particular class of the bourgeoisie exploited the people who fought the struggle. We did this for their benefit. They were the ones who got something out of it.' Wahdan's 15-year-old grandson Anas, sitting under a large portrait of his martyred uncle, added: 'They wanted us, with no weapons, to [make the] sacrifice. Their kids have cars and villas, they own phone companies. There's no equality between someone like that and someone like me, who lives in a house that's falling apart, and whose father may or may not have enough money to bring bread or have clothes.'

"And if he and his friends should voice their displeasure? 'We'll be told, "Well, you're just refugee camp kids,'" said Anas's friend Munir....Refugee-camp teenagers like these once fuelled the resistance to occupation. Not now, said Munir: 'All that anger has been absorbed by depression.' Perhaps some day, that anger will again rises [sic]. But for now, said Anas: 'People say "I'm exhausted, and rocks will not liberate me.'"

—*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], April 2010

The complete political bankruptcy of the PA's petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership was dramatically illustrated by its attitude to the Goldstone Report on the Gaza assault commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council. Despite being an avowed Zionist, South African jurist Richard Goldstone delivered a clear indictment of numerous Israeli war crimes. Yet Abbas and the PA did not seek to press the UN Security Council to act on the report because they did not want to make trouble for the Obama administration. Ali Abunimah, the well-informed co-founder of the Electronic Intifada website, has suggested that a more important factor may have been Abbas' business interests ("Abbas helps Israel bury its crimes in Gaza," ZNet, 2 October 2009). Telephone companies have long provided senior PA leaders with substantial revenue streams. When the report was released, Wataniya Mobile—a joint venture between Gulf investors and the Palestinian Investment Fund, which is closely associated with Abbas' son—had already applied for control of a new share of the radio spectrum. The Israeli authori-



GETTY IMAGES

Palestinian farmer on his land facing Apartheid Wall in West Bank village of Nazlat Issa, September 2010

ties apparently indicated that the application would be approved if the PA abandoned efforts to advance the report (*Independent* [London], 1 October 2009).

Managing Palestinian Oppression

Despite everything, Palestinians in the West Bank continue to courageously defy settlers, the IDF and the Palestinian security service on a daily basis. Tel Aviv, Washington and Ramallah are all concerned that, if the population is pressed too hard, the situation could spin out of control and potentially destabilize the entire region. Washington's foreign policy establishment worries that Israeli intransigence could soon extinguish all illusions in any possibility of an eventual "two-state" solution, a development that could have negative repercussions for American hegemony in the Middle East. U.S. Lieutenant General Dayton has warned that the loyalty of the PA security forces—the supposed nucleus of the military apparatus of a future Palestinian state—cannot be taken for granted: "There is perhaps a two-year shelf life on being told that you're creating a state, when you're not" (*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], April 2010). Many Palestinians have, of course, already lost faith in the PA leadership and its plans. After the murderous Israeli intervention in Gaza, the mouthpiece of British finance capital reported:

"Over the past year, scores of Palestinian intellectuals and analysts have been writing about the demise of the two-state solution—and a raft of opinion polls last year showed that more and more Palestinians were calling for a single, binational state shared by Israelis and Palestinians, a concept that is vehemently opposed by Israel."

—*Financial Times*, 21 January 2009

The publication of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* in 2007 represented the increasing influence of "realists" relative to liberal and neo-conservative Zionists within American foreign policy circles. (For a Marxist assessment of the "Israel Lobby," see "Imperialism, Zionism & the Middle East," 1917 No.29, 2007.) The occasional public expression of frustration with Israeli policy by senior American government and military figures reflects growing tension between Washington and Tel Aviv. When Netanyahu ostentatiously announced the construction of 1,600 more Jewish homes in East Jerusalem on the eve of a visit by Joseph Biden in March 2010, the U.S. vice president complained: "This is starting to get dangerous for us. What you're doing here undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. That endangers us and it endangers regional peace" (*Guardian* [London], 5 July 2010). American General David Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command (Centcom), who is currently running the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, offered an even blunter assessment to the U.S. Senate:

"The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbours present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in [Centcom's] AOR [Area of Responsibility]....The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of US favouritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of US partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaida and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilise support. The conflict also gives Iran

influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas.”

—*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], April 2010

Petraeus' concerns about Israeli recklessness apparently led him to suggest that the Occupied Territories should be placed under Centcom's area of responsibility—which would be a major affront to Tel Aviv. Meanwhile, America's Zionist propagandists dismiss any suggestion that U.S. military difficulties in the Muslim world are related to its support for Israel. As Abe Foxman of the ADL put it: “This linkage is dangerous and counterproductive” (*Ibid.*).

There has long been a range of opinion within the American ruling class over Israel's role as chief gendarme in the Middle East. For the first two decades of Israel's existence, the U.S. State Department was dominated by “Arabists” who feared that too close a relationship with Tel Aviv could inflame Arab nationalism, damage relations with the Arab regimes and ultimately endanger U.S. control of the region's petroleum deposits. On three separate occasions in only seven years, Washington threatened Israel with sanctions. The first was in May 1949:

“In that month, the United States demanded that Israel allow the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, regardless of the cause of their flight and not even pending the conclusion of a final settlement. On May 29, 1949, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, James McDonald, conveyed a very sharp letter from President Truman to [Israeli Prime Minister David] Ben-Gurion which made an explicit threat of severe sanctions if Israel did not adjust its policies. This was accompanied by the suspension of a promised loan.

“In June 1949, Israel succeeded in conveying the impression that it was about to heed the pressure but asked for time to deal with some technical aspects of the request. In the meantime, conflicts broke out in different parts of the globe as the cold war began to heat up; hence, until the end of Truman's administration, that pressure was never attempted again.”

—Ian Pappé, “Clusters of History: U.S. Involvement in the Palestine Question,” in Noam Chomsky and Ian Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis*, 2010

In 1953 the Eisenhower administration suspended aid when Israel inflamed Arab opposition by unilaterally embarking on the National Carrier Project to divert water from the Jordan River. The biggest showdown came in 1956, when Israel collaborated with France and Britain in an attempt to seize the Suez Canal from Egypt. Eisenhower feared that the military intervention of the Zionists, in league with the region's former colonial masters, could radicalize the Arab masses and open the door for increased Soviet influence. American pressure forced Tel Aviv to make a humiliating retreat from the Egyptian Sinai, and compelled London and Paris to acknowledge the U.S. as the pre-eminent imperialist power in the Middle East (*Ibid.*).

Israel's easy victory in 1967 over the combined Arab armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the “Six Day War” represented a turning point in U.S.-Israeli relations. Under the Nixon Doctrine, Israel became the main pillar of U.S. policy in the Middle East, although the traditional “Arabist” aim of maintaining a free flow of oil was not abandoned. The Arab states' rhetorical support for Palestinian rights and occasional acts of defiance (e.g., the 1973 oil embargo) were

accepted in Washington as necessary to maintaining some domestic legitimacy for these brittle autocratic regimes.

Israel, America's Mid-East watchdog, is the top recipient of U.S. foreign “aid”—some \$3 billion annually. Egypt, where U.S. ally Hosni Mubarak was overthrown by mass protests in February that were touched off by the fall of Tunisian dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali the previous month, has long been the second largest recipient. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf States are also important American clients. In 2010, the Arab regimes in the Gulf “embarked on one of the largest re-armament exercises in peacetime history,” with an order for \$123 billion in U.S. weapons (*Financial Times*, 20 September 2010). The overturn of Mubarak has enormous implications for the rest of America's Arab vassals:

“Obama abandoned America's protege for vague promises of democracy, but his considerations were also practical: He presumably judged that Mubarak's regime is a lost cause and that it's better to be on the winning side. Obama's position must worry the leaders of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which fear similar uprisings at home and now recognize that the Americans will throw them under the bus.”

—*Haaretz*, 31 January

While feigning concern about the plight of the Palestinians, none of the Arab regimes really cares about them. Jordan and Egypt have a long history of oppressing Palestinian refugees and complicity in the Israeli occupation. In 1970, the infamous “Black September” massacre of Palestinian fighters by Jordan's Hashemite monarchy drove the PLO into Lebanon. The Egyptian military, which lost territory to Israel in 1967, has served as the gate-keeper of Gaza ever since the Sinai was returned in 1977. One of the first acts of the military junta set up after Mubarak's removal was to pledge to continue this unpopular policy.

U.S.-Brokered ‘Peace Process’ Fraud

The last time an American administration seriously pressured Israel to make some concessions to Palestinians was in 1991, when George Bush Senior leaned on Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to cease expanding Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories and actively pursue “peace talks.” U.S. Secretary of State Jim Baker told Shamir that if building in the settlements did not stop, the U.S. would withdraw \$10 billion in loan guarantees. Baker's ultimatum created a major political crisis for the Israeli ruling class, which resented Washington's dictates but could not afford to lose imperialist sponsorship. Many influential members of the Israeli bourgeoisie decided in the 1992 elections to dump Shamir and back the Labor Party, led by “dovish” Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin was no dove—he had overseen the repression of the first intifada and personally ordered Israeli troops to “break the bones” of stone throwing teenagers—but he was shrewd enough to make short-term tactical concessions in order to strengthen Israel's position in the long term. The 1993 Oslo “peace” accord he signed with Arafat, which was supposed to open the door to Palestinian statehood, in fact reduced the PLO to little more than a Zionist auxiliary, and freed Tel Aviv to continue creating “facts on the ground.”

Today things are entirely different. In return for Netanyahu's assent to a mere 90-day freeze on settlement building, the Obama administration promised to request



RAFAHTODAY.ORG

Hamas mass demonstration against closure of Rafah border, September 2007

no further freezes; to approve Israel's continued occupation of the Jordan Valley; and to agree to Israeli control of the borders of any future Palestinian "state," security guarantees, increased "aid," advanced weapons systems, a regional security pact against Iran and a year's veto of any UN Security Council resolutions detrimental to Israel. The U.S. also signaled that it was prepared to recognize "subsequent developments" since Oslo, widely interpreted as a reference to the influx of settlers into the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The shift in U.S. policy over the past 20 years is commonly attributed to the machinations of an all-powerful "Israel Lobby" in Washington. But the reality is more complex. U.S. policy has always been calculated in accordance with its own perceived imperial interests, including factors often cited by the "realists" themselves—in particular the fragility of America's "moderate" Arab clients. These concerns have been validated by recent events in Tunisia and Egypt. Emboldened by the first Gulf War and the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was prepared in the early 1990s to lean on the Israeli bourgeoisie in pursuit of a broader vision of a "New World Order." The Obama administration, in contrast, is licking its wounds after a series of humiliating setbacks for U.S. imperialism, and does not seem inclined, at least in the short run, to want to risk alienating its foremost regional ally. At the same time, the U.S. has an interest in maintaining the pretense that some sort of "peace process" is still alive, as Robert Satloff, of the pro-Zionist Washington Institute for Near East Policy, explained:

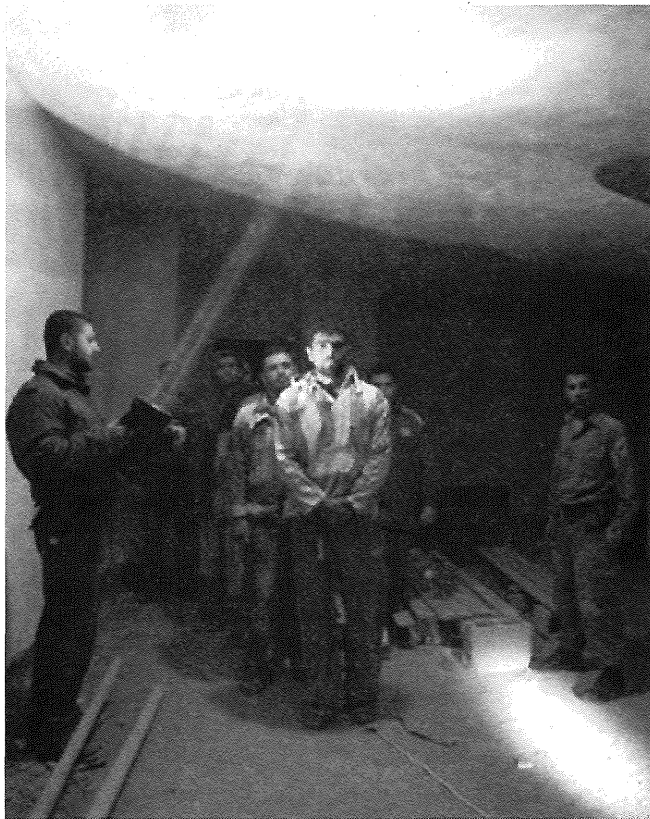
"it is still important that the administration create a functioning diplomacy between Israelis and Palestinians—not

because serious observers believe a near-term breakthrough is in sight but because an active and ongoing diplomacy denies both critics and naysayers an opportunity to make mischief. Furthermore, it frees the administration to inject international urgency into the Iran issue."

—"Biden's Israel Visit and its Aftermath: The Importance of Maintaining Strategic Direction in U.S. Middle East Policy," PolicyWatch No.1642, 15 March 2010

The U.S., which has sanctioned every Zionist crime for years, cynically manages the "peace process" as a means to "free" itself for operations in the region, including against Iran. The negotiations are a charade in which the main players know in advance that the final result must correspond to Israeli wishes. This gives the whole process a very peculiar character: Israel refuses to participate in "negotiations" unless the outcome is stipulated in advance. The PA leadership, which has given up on achieving any semblance of the nationalist project they long espoused, understands the situation but continues to participate, partly to avoid vindicating Hamas and other "critics and naysayers." But pressure is building, and Fayyad has occasionally floated the possibility of a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood (*Haaretz*, 18 December 2010).

While such talk by the PA is often seen as a defiant response to Israeli intransigence, implementation would amount to sanctifying the "facts on the ground," thus accomplishing *de jure* what Abbas and Fayyad have striven for *de facto*: a capitalist Palestinian quasi-statelet made up of a welter of micro Bantustans sprinkled across the West Bank. A unilateral bid of this sort would spare the



Palestinian workers arrested by Israeli border police for permit violations

PA the ignominy of officially abandoning the struggle for Palestinian national rights (especially the right of return), without requiring the Zionists to make territorial concessions. The PAmay hope that a unilateral declaration would give it the upper hand over Hamas, but it could end up providing the Israeli ruling class with a destination for the “final transfer” of its Arab population.

Hamas: From Quietism to Resistance

The political bankruptcy of the PLO has enabled the Islamists of Hamas to pose as principled and uncompromising defenders of Palestinian national interests simply by upholding the right to resist occupation. While Hamas is on the receiving end of unrelenting diplomatic and military hostility from both the Zionists and the imperialists, its political program amounts to little more than an Islamist version of the policy that led the PLO to abject complicity. The forerunner of Hamas, the Islamic Center, was established as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood when Gaza was still under Cairo’s control. After Gaza’s seizure by Israel in 1967, the Islamic Center promoted reactionary religious revivalism with a “quietist” political focus on rooting out “un-Islamic” behavior, while largely abstaining from resistance to the occupation. Organizations linked to the Center provided the only social welfare and healthcare services available to Gaza’s residents. Israeli authorities supplied funding and assistance to the Center as a counterweight to the dominance of secular, left-nationalist trends in Palestinian politics.

With the outbreak of the first intifada, the Islamists, facing marginalization, established the “Islamic Resistance

Movement” (Hamas) as their political arm. The 1988 charter of Hamas (routinely invoked by Zionists today) combined bourgeois nationalism with the reactionary anti-Semitism of the Brotherhood and called for the establishment of *sharia* law across Palestine. In condemning the Oslo accords and championing the right of return, Hamas positioned itself to grow rapidly when the PLO leadership took over administration of the PA.

Control of smuggling across the border is a vital source of income for the Hamas leadership, which takes a cut from everything transported. The group also gets funding from Palestinian businessmen and Arab capitalists in the Gulf and receives practical support from the Muslim Brotherhood. These connections, while providing a lifeline, have also made the Hamas leadership reluctant to destabilize the existing social order. In January 2008, when its engineers in Gaza successfully detonated charges that opened the wall separating the Rafah camp from Egypt, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians streamed across the border to obtain food, water, medicine and other necessities. The Mubarak regime pressured Hamas to restore the wall, which it promptly did.

Hamas has sought to identify a “resistance culture” with Islamic morality. In Gaza, its military wing, the Qassam Brigades, has prohibited pop music, torched resorts for allowing girls and boys to swim together and instructed restaurateurs and hoteliers to segregate unmarried men and women. Hamas, like Fatah before it, combines armed resistance and “pragmatic” diplomacy, with the former tending to condition the latter. Only by creating a viable military apparatus does the Hamas leadership expect to gain a place at the negotiating table and win diplomatic support from the Arab states. But today Hamas possesses even fewer military resources than the PLO of the 1970s.

Before the Israeli “withdrawal” from Gaza in 2005, Hamas relied heavily upon suicide bombings, including indefensible—and counterproductive—attacks on Israeli civilians. Since then, Hamas has resorted to firing homemade rockets into Israel. As neither tactic made a dent in the Zionist fortress, Hamas has attempted to strike some sort of deal with Tel Aviv. Ahmed Yousef, the group’s deputy foreign minister, insists that “Hamas is very close on recognition of Israel....We show all sorts of ideological flexibility on this” (*Economist*, 1 August 2009). Hamas, which has made several offers of a unilateral ceasefire, is prepared to uphold all previous agreements made by the PLO with Israel (including Oslo) and accept the 1967 borders. Yet Israel and the “Quartet” (Russia, United States, European Union and United Nations—which are supposedly working to promote the “peace process”) have demonized and isolated Hamas to demonstrate that no act of resistance, however minor, will go unpunished.

Zionists, Arab Rulers & Imperialists: Oppressors of the Palestinians

There are three interlocking facets of Israeli apartheid/Palestinian oppression: the denial of the right of return for the victims of Zionist ethnic cleansing in 1948; the ongoing occupation and effective colonization of the West Bank and Gaza that began in 1967; and the special oppression of those Arabs who, remaining on their ancestral lands, are now within the borders of the Israeli state. All three injustices are expressions of the Zionist character

of Israel, a state born in a wave of bloody pogroms which can only be maintained by denying any genuine expression of Palestinian self-determination. At every step, one or another imperialist power has provided military, diplomatic and financial support to Tel Aviv in pursuit of broader strategic considerations. Under American sponsorship, Israel has developed into a formidable garrison state, with advanced conventional armaments as well as nuclear "weapons of mass destruction."

Yet it is not only the Zionists and imperialists who have committed historic crimes against the Palestinians—neighboring Arab rulers also sought to carve out pieces of Palestinian territory for themselves, whether in secret collaboration with Zionist leaders (as the Hashemite monarchy did in 1948) or through open warfare with Israel (in 1948, 1967 and 1973). They also have a record of brutally repressing Palestinian refugees on their territory. Both Jordan and Egypt, after reaching an accommodation with the Zionists, have provided important support for the continuing occupation.

Without sufficient military capacity to create an independent capitalist state by force, Palestine's nationalist leaderships, both secular and Islamist, have sought to substitute a combination of symbolic acts of armed struggle, diplomatic maneuvers and appeals to the Arab elites and imperialist power brokers who share responsibility for the Palestinians' present situation. The PA's wretched collusion with the Zionist occupation in the name of "economic development" is an entirely logical product of this bankrupt program.

A strategy for Palestinian liberation must begin by identifying the agents that possess both the objective interests and potential social power to successfully challenge not only the Zionist oppressors, but the entire complex web of imperialist domination in the Middle East. Viewed from this angle, the problem with moralistic appeals to the "international community" to come to the aid of the desperately oppressed Palestinians (which is the basis of the current campaign for "boycotts, divestments and sanctions"—see accompanying article) is immediately apparent.

'Settler Colonialism' in South Africa & Israel

Many ostensibly Marxist groups involved in promoting the boycott campaign invoke South Africa as a positive example of what can be achieved even *within* the parameters of capitalism. Equating the common practice of apartheid in both societies, and their common origins as "settler-colonial states," they argue that a strategy that apparently succeeded in South Africa should eventually prove successful in Israel/Palestine.

There are, however, important differences between the forms of apartheid in South Africa and Israel, which represent two variants on a spectrum of settler-colonialist practices over the past several centuries. At one end (in the U.S., Australia and Canada), European settlers eradicated most of the native population and forcibly isolated the remainder in impoverished "reservations." At the other end of the spectrum, in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), a tiny stratum of white settlers super-exploited the indigenous population. Israel and South Africa, which both fall somewhere between these two extremes on the scale of "settler colonialism," are only roughly analogous to one another. The distinctions between them derive from the different ways in which class ques-

tions have intersected democratic and national ones during the course of capitalist development.

South African apartheid grew out of the requirements of British mining interests at the end of the 19th century. After expropriating the land of the indigenous African population (thereby destroying the basis of their pastoral, pre-capitalist economy), the colonialists consigned them to the role of migrant laborers hired only for short-term contracts and forbidden to settle in the vicinity of their jobs. Administered by a complex system of pass laws, the intent was to create a massive low-wage, socially atomized and politically disenfranchised labor force.

For most of the 20th century, apartheid proved to be a stable and extremely profitable arrangement for South African capital and international investors. The white ruling class used their ownership of the means of production and the political framework of apartheid rule as a means of extracting super-profits. White workers enjoyed the status of a super-privileged labor aristocracy, with a guaranteed monopoly of skilled jobs and artificially high living standards at the expense of black workers. The enormous expansion of the South African economy in the 1960s undermined the foundations of the apartheid system by creating more demand for stable, skilled labor than the white population could supply. The migrant labor system gradually became an impediment to growth, and by the 1980s white capital had become dependent on the labor of six million increasingly restive black workers.

In liberal and social-democratic mythology, apartheid rule was replaced by the "rainbow democracy" of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) as a result of the "isolation" of South Africa through morally-guided boycotts, divestments and sanctions. There was indeed significant divestment, and western capitalist governments did impose various forms of sanctions on the apartheid state. But liberal accounts leave out both the geopolitical changes that turned South Africa into a liability for the

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1 August 2010: Foreign workers in Tel Aviv learn of new regulations to deport their children. Many of the 200,000 migrant workers from the Philippines, China and Africa have children born in Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared: 'This is a tangible threat to the Jewish and democratic character of the state of Israel.'

imperialist "free world" cabal that had long embraced it as a reliable ally against the Soviet Union, and more importantly, the domestic class dynamics that propelled the process. The ultimate result, a system of neo-apartheid presided over by the ANC, turned out to be a *betrayal*, rather than a triumph, for the masses who bore the burden of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Appeals by the bourgeois-nationalist ANC to Britain, the U.S. and other "democratic" imperialist powers to pressure the apartheid regime for reform went unheeded for decades as South African investments produced ample returns for international capital, and the apartheid regime served as a vital bastion of "Free World" anti-Communism on the African continent. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, the South Africans conducted military and covert operations against left-nationalist forces in the region, particularly in Angola where the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) regime was backed by Cuban troops and Soviet military assistance. In November 1975, Cuban and MPLA forces defeated a South African armored column headed toward Luanda to overthrow the "People's Republic."

The defeat of the vaunted apartheid military by a predominantly black force was a major factor in sparking a rebellion in Soweto seven months later, which in turn ignited a wave of mass social struggle that the white supremacist regime in Pretoria was unable to suppress. A series of successful militant labor actions in the 1980s that won

significant wage gains and spurred the rapid growth of powerful black-centered trade unions dampened enthusiasm for investment in South Africa. The inflexibility of the hidebound racists who controlled the apartheid regime posed the possibility of social revolution in South Africa, a prospect that terrified both the white rulers and their imperialist sponsors. This led the Reagan administration to shift from "constructive engagement" (i.e., across-the-board support for the white supremacists) to the pursuit of an accommodation with the ANC to rein in the radicalizing black masses. The more sophisticated elements among the South African bourgeoisie recognized that the advantages of stabilizing the labor pool, expanding social investments and granting formal political equality for all citizens outweighed any reason to cling to the unsustainable apartheid system.

The celebrated "end" of apartheid came as a deal between Mandela's ANC and Prime Minister F.W. de Klerk's National Party which guaranteed the property and privileged position of the white ruling class. The "Tripartite Alliance" of the ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) sold their followers a vision of "democratic" capitalism which would free them from the burdens imposed by white supremacy and offer a road out of poverty. But racial exploitation is inextricably fused with South African capitalism, and in guaranteeing the latter, the new "black faces in high places" agreed to maintain a

form of neo-apartheid.

While important gains were achieved—the legal edifice of official racism was abolished, universal suffrage was granted and black political leaders took the helm—neither the social order nor the state apparatus protecting it changed fundamentally. The vast majority of South African wealth is still held by the white bourgeoisie, and their state machine remains committed to the defense of privilege and inequality. The chief beneficiaries of the promised economic “redistribution” under the ANC-dominated government (which to this day maintains a close economic relationship with Israel) have been the thin layer of black petty-bourgeois careerists who occupy executive positions in corporations or the civil service. Instead of the white-supremacist regime of yesteryear, today it is the Tripartite Alliance that breaks strikes and unleashes police terror on rebellious township youth. What has not changed is that white incomes are still, on average, seven times that of blacks, just as they were in the 1980s (*Economist*, 5 June 2010).

The South African experience powerfully vindicates one of the central theses of Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution:

“With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”

—*The Permanent Revolution*, 1931

“Progressive” forms of capitalism, traditionally promoted by petty-bourgeois nationalists and Stalinists, are simply pipe dreams. What was tragically absent in South Africa was a proletarian vanguard party that could have led the oppressed masses in ripping out the *capitalist* roots of the apartheid system. A revolutionary leadership would have necessarily been based on the black working class and other victims of white supremacy, and openly espoused as its goal the creation of a black-centered workers’ government. In pursuit of this objective, it would have also had to win over a “fifth column” of whites to the side of proletarian insurgency, not least to paralyze the SADF, as we pointed out at the time:

“In the present situation—barring a massive and powerful military intervention from outside the borders of the apartheid slave state—the SADF can only be defeated with the active collaboration of at least a fragment of the white conscripts. And this can only be achieved by a revolutionary party built on a program of *class struggle*, in opposition to every variety of class-collaborationism and nationalism.”

—1917 No.1, 1986

The aspirations of the founders of the Zionist colonial-settler project were very different than those of the rulers of apartheid South Africa. Yet the separate trajectories of South African and Israeli capitalist development demonstrate the enduring relevance of Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution: in neither society can basic democratic and national demands be meaningfully achieved short of proletarian social revolution.

Israel’s citizenship laws are premised on the Zionist proposition that the Jewish population of every coun-

try on the planet is part of a single distinct “nation.” The Zionist claim to the Palestinians’ land was based on biblical mythology:

“[Zionists] believe that these people—their ‘nation,’ which must be the most ancient—wandered in exile for nearly two thousand years and yet, despite this prolonged stay among the gentiles, managed to avoid integration with, or assimilation into, them. The nation scattered widely, its bitter wanderings taking it to Yemen, Morocco, Spain, Germany, Poland, and distant Russia, but it always managed to maintain close blood relations among the far-flung communities and to preserve its distinctiveness.

“Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, they contend, rare circumstances combined to wake the ancient people from its long slumber and to prepare it for rejuvenation and for the return to its ancient homeland. And so the nation began to return, joyfully, in vast numbers. Many Israelis still believe that, but for Hitler’s horrible massacre, ‘Eretz Israel’ would soon have been filled with millions of Jews making ‘aliyah’ [ascent] by their own free will, because they had dreamed of it for thousands of years.

“And while the wandering people needed a territory of its own, the empty, virgin land longed for a nation to come and make it bloom. Some uninvited guests had, it is true, settled in this homeland, but since ‘the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion’ for two millennia, the land belonged only to that people, and not to that handful without history who had merely stumbled upon it. Therefore the wars waged by the wandering nation in its conquest of the country were justified; the violent resistance of the local population was criminal; and it was only the (highly unbiblical) charity of the Jews that permitted these strangers to remain and dwell among and beside the nation, which had returned to its biblical language and its wondrous land.”

—Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*

While few leading Zionists actually took such biblical claims seriously, enormous energy was invested in promoting them after Israel’s creation. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion organized fortnightly study circles in his home where professional historians, Bible interpreters and political figures gathered to work out the details of a patently false but politically convenient “national statement”:

“This national statement, which was simplified into a useful and popular slogan for the Zionist movement, was entirely the product of an imaginary history grown around the idea of the exile. Although most of the professional historians knew there had never been a forcible uprooting of the Jewish people, they permitted the Christian myth that had been taken up by Jewish tradition to be paraded freely in the public and educational venues of the national memory, making no attempt to rebut it. They even encouraged it indirectly, knowing that only this myth would provide moral legitimacy to the settlement of the ‘exiled nation’ in a land inhabited by others.”

—*Ibid.*

The Zionist myth serves to justify the historic crimes against the Palestinians while also obscuring the actual record of Jewish struggles. For centuries Jews resisted vicious segregation and discrimination throughout Europe and fought for political equality and social integra-



Israeli restaurant workers strike for union rights, 2008

tion within the nations of which they were a part. Many leading figures in the socialist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were secular Jews who identified their fight for liberation with the broader struggle against class exploitation and other forms of social oppression. While Zionism held little appeal for working-class Jews and most Jewish intellectuals in this period, many capitalist politicians (including overt anti-Semites) regarded it as a useful counterweight to Marxism:

"in a 1920 article, 'Zionism versus Bolshevism', [Winston] Churchill wrote that Trotsky hated Zionism because it thwarted 'his schemes of a world-wide communistic state under Jewish domination.' For Churchill, Zionism helped thwart Trotsky, directing 'the energies and the hopes of the Jews in every land towards a simpler, a truer, and a far more attainable goal'."

—Lenni Brenner, *The Iron Wall*

The Zionist project was only realizable through the consistent direct and indirect assistance of imperialist states. British support was essential for the establishment of a Zionist presence in "mandate" Palestine, a territory carved out of the Ottoman Empire in the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement. The famous Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 read:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

—cited in Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel*

Issued five days prior to the October Revolution, the declaration was intended to undercut Jewish support for the Bolsheviks, who were intent on terminating Russian participation in World War I. In an August 1919 memorandum, Balfour was somewhat more candid about his attitude toward Palestinian rights: "in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country." Balfour considered Zionism to be "of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land" (*Ibid.*).

Among the less publicized episodes in the history of Zionism was the attempt to assist the Nazis in solving Germany's "Jewish problem" through mass emigration to the Holy Land. In 1938, Ben-Gurion, who subsequently founded the IDF, stated: "If I knew that it was possible to save all the children in Germany by transporting them to England, but only half of them by transporting them to Palestine, I would choose the second—because we face not only the reckoning of those children, but the historical reckoning of the Jewish people" (quoted in Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million*). Ben-Gurion was also worried that the savage brutality of the Nazis' Kristallnacht pogrom might stir the "human conscience" of other governments and lead them to open their doors to Jewish refugees fleeing Germany. If that were to happen, Ben-Gurion warned, "Zionism is in danger" (*Ibid.*). He needn't have worried: even after the horrors of the Nazi holocaust against European Jewry were exposed at the end of World War II, the "democratic" imperialists refused to accept any significant number of desperate Jewish "displaced persons." Most of those who sought refuge in Palestine did so not out of Zionist conviction, but because they had no other option.

The Zionists sought to construct a purely Jewish state in which the immigrant settler population not only owned the means of production and occupied all professional and politically significant posts (as in South Africa), but also comprised the entire labor force. Rather than seeking to exploit the indigenous population, the Zionist policy was to exclude them—expressed by Shimon Peres as "maximum space, minimum Arabs" (*maximum shetah, minimum aravim*) (*Le Monde diplomatique* [English], March 2010). The expansionist dynamic of Zionism inherent in an ideological commitment to "Eretz Israel" aimed at conquering land and resources (e.g., the Jordan Valley) for an exclusively Jewish capitalist state.

The Zionist project was therefore much closer to the white settler colonialism of North America and Australia than that of South Africa—the indigenous peoples were viewed as an obstruction to be removed. The minority of Palestinians who managed to remain on their ancestral lands after 1948 undermined the legitimacy of the Zionist claim by serving as a reminder of the ethnic cleansing that accompanied Israel's birth. The conquest of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 brought millions more Palestinians under Israeli administrative authority.

In the 1980s the Israeli ruling class began hiring large numbers of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza as menial, low-paid laborers in Israel. At one point there were at least 100,000 (and perhaps as many as 200,000) migrant Palestinians employed inside the Green Line. With the outbreak of the first intifada, Palestinian labor was largely replaced by Russian immigrants and workers from East

Asia. After the second intifada, work permits were no longer issued to Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. Today Israeli capital employs some 20,000 Palestinians in West Bank industrial parks and another 10,000 in settlement construction.

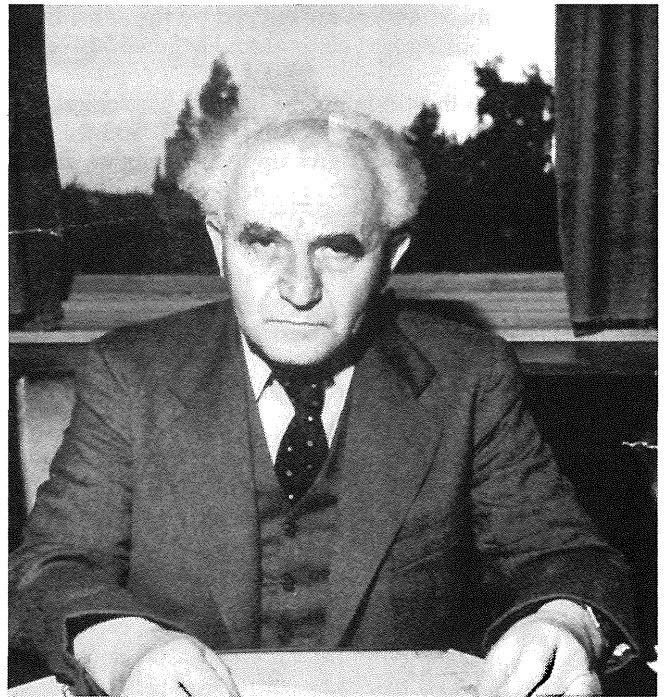
Zionism has produced a geographically compacted Hebrew-speaking nation, with a common culture, language and political economy. The exclusion of Palestinian labor from Israel's economic life means that for the most part Israeli capitalists exploit Jewish workers. In Israel, as in all capitalist societies, the most fundamental division is that of social class. However, there are other deep and potentially explosive fault lines within Israel's Jewish population—most notably between the European-derived Ashkenazim and the generally less educated and darker skinned Sephardim from the Middle East and North Africa. The Sephardim, who are forced to compete for lower-paid jobs with Israeli Arabs, provide the popular base for the most virulently chauvinist religious parties, especially Shas.

Another increasingly significant division is between secular Israelis and the ultra-Orthodox Jews (*Haredi*). Half of *Haredi* men do not work, but instead enjoy significant state subsidies for devoting themselves to religious studies. The misogynist religious ideology of the *Haredi* has produced a birthrate many times higher than the national average, and some elements of Israel's ruling class are expressing concern that the *Haredi* (many of whom reject Zionist ideology on theological grounds) are a drag on "competitiveness."

While Jewish Israeli workers are privileged relative to their Israeli Arab counterparts, they are not part of a closed color-caste with the sort of grotesque disparity in living standards that characterized South African apartheid. The allegiance of Jewish workers to Zionist ideology is a form of false consciousness through which the grievances and frustrations arising from capitalist social relations are displaced onto targets which bear no responsibility (i.e., Palestinians). The reactionary attitudes prevalent among Jewish workers in Israel are comparable to the toxic mix of flag-waving xenophobia and religious irrationality embraced by plebeian supporters of Sarah Palin and the Tea Party in the U.S.

Since the late 1970s, the Israeli ruling class has been systematically attacking working-class living standards to boost flagging profitability. During the 1980s, a massive privatization of state-owned industry was pushed through while redistributive tax and transfer payments were curtailed. In the 1990s, as education and healthcare were semi-privatized, many Israelis were forced to pay to supplement increasingly meager state services. The Sharon government followed this up with yet another round of harsh austerity:

"The recession, coupled with a sharp increase in military spending due to the *intifada*, occasioned six rounds of budget cuts and structural economic changes between September 2001 and September 2003. In overall monetary terms, the state budget was cut by nearly 20 per cent. In broader political-economic terms, the cumulative effects of the fiscal austerity and structural changes were greatly detrimental to the interests of the working class. Levels of employment, wages, unionization, social services and retirement plans declined, while employers



DMITRI KESSEL

In 1938, David Ben-Gurion, future IDF founder, stated: 'If I knew that it was possible to save all the [Jewish] children in Germany by transporting them to England, but only half of them by transporting them to Palestine, I would choose the second...'

benefited greatly from increased labour 'flexibility' and lower wage-costs and taxes."

—Yoav Peled, "Profits or Glory," *New Left Review*, September-October 2004

Jewish workers were told that any attempt to improve their situation posed a danger to national "security":

"The chairman of the Manufacturers Association in Israel said that because of the struggle with the Palestinians, because of the intifada, Israelis have to learn that they cannot expect an increase in the minimum wage, or perhaps even they should expect a decrease in the minimum wage, meaning that the security constraints are used as a justification to stifle social struggle."

—Shir Hever interviewed by Paul Jay, "The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation," *TheRealNews.com*,

6 July 2010

As conditions have worsened for those at the bottom of the Zionist pyramid, it has been a different story at the top. According to the 2009 Merrill Lynch World Wealth Report, "Between 2005 and 2007, Israel produced more millionaires per capita than any other country" (reported in *New Jersey Jewish Standard*, 19 June 2010). The growth in social inequality and the increasing concentration of wealth prompted Yuval Steinitz, Israeli finance minister, to remark: "The fact that the Israeli economy is controlled by 30 families does not constitute corruption. But it does cause economic problems and damages competition" (*Haaretz*, 2 May 2010).

Cuts in social services and the shortage of jobs and affordable housing within Israel have pushed many working-class Jews into the burgeoning settlement blocks near the Green Line. Unlike the fascist zealots who populate the hilltop settlements throughout the interior of the West

Bank, most of these settlers are enticed by the subsidized wages, cheap housing and comparatively generous social services:

"But even if they didn't come here for ideological reasons,' said the spokesman for the Settlers' Council with confidence, 'they won't give up their homes so easily.' The mechanisms that incorporate people into the colonial process, making them settlers despite themselves, occasionally emerge into the open. In 2003, the mayor of Betar Illit [another large settlement], Yitzhak Pindrus, went so far as to tell the reporter that the ultra-orthodox were sent to the Occupied Territories against their will, to serve as 'cannon fodder'."

—Gadi Algazi, "Offshore Zionism," *New Left Review*, July-August 2006

The more ideologically motivated settlers used as foot soldiers in the continuing campaign to dispossess the Palestinians are also, in many cases, ruthlessly exploited by their Zionist employers. In the settlement of Mod'in Illit, religious proscriptions are judiciously used by software companies to wring super-profits from low-paid ultra-Orthodox women:

"Although many are mothers of six, they miss fewer days of work than a mother of two in Tel Aviv', an Imagestore project director in Mod'in Illit told a journalist. 'These women have no issues. They just work. No smoking or coffee breaks, chatting on the phone, or looking for vacation deals in Turkey. Breaks are only for eating, or pumping breast milk in a special room. Some women can pop home, breast-feed and come back.'"

"Personal conversations in the work room of Matrix's development centre are forbidden, not only between men and women, but among the women. 'They pay you for eight hours of work,' says Esti [one of the workers], 'so they expect you to work. If someone is talking too much...someone else will tell her, "Hey, that's *gezel* [a religiously-infused term for stealing]', as though we are taking from the company. Once we asked if we could take a break of five minutes for prayer, but the Rabbi said that the ancient Sages didn't take a break but would call out the *Shma'* while working, and thus we can put off the prayer until after the working day.'"

—*Ibid.*

Not Jew Against Arab, But Class Against Class!

The Jewish Israeli and Palestinian peoples, interspersed within a single geographical territory, both have a right to self-determination. Yet under capitalism, one people can only exercise this right at the expense of the other. For more than 60 years, the Israeli ruling class has viciously oppressed the Palestinians—expelling most from their land, disenfranchising those who remained and corraling those in the occupied West Bank into tiny Bantustans. Today there is little talk among either Islamists or secular nationalists of "driving the Jews into the sea" and reclaiming the entirety of Palestine. Even if such a project were feasible (which it is not, given the enormous disparity in the existing balance of forces), it would only mean reversing the terms of oppression.

The walls of the Zionist fortress cannot be breached by

any combination of symbolic guerrilla actions and diplomatic maneuvers with corrupt Arab rulers and their foreign patrons. The PLO's willingness to forfeit Palestinian national rights in exchange for policing the residents of a tiny and unviable capitalist mini-state has completely discredited it. The leaders of Hamas have signaled they are open to negotiating a similar arrangement, although Israel has thus far refused any contact because of their militant posture.

The only way the right of self-determination can be equitably realized for both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis is through the creation of a new egalitarian economic order linking the countries of the Middle East in a Socialist Federation. This requires the overthrow of not only the odious Zionist state but also imperialism's Arab clients and the Iranian theocracy. Only through the establishment of institutions of working-class rule—collectivized property and international planning—can the resources of the region be employed for the benefit of all the peoples of the Middle East. And only within that framework will it be possible to achieve a *just* division of the land claimed by both the Palestinian and Jewish Israeli nations.

The Zionist state—armed to the teeth with hundreds of nuclear weapons and backed by the American military colossus—must be smashed if such a revolutionary transformation is to be achieved. Jewish workers, subjected to increasing pressure from their rulers in recent years, have a great deal to gain by escaping from this militarized prison state within which they are assigned the roles of wage slaves and cannon fodder.

The Zionist behemoth can only be destroyed through proletarian revolution from the inside. This requires the construction of a bi-national Leninist-Trotskyist party in Israel-Palestine, intransigently committed to the defense of Palestinian national rights. A revolutionary workers' party would side militarily with any Palestinian resistance to Zionist repression, while opposing indiscriminate attacks on Jewish civilians and making no political concessions to bourgeois-nationalist, Islamist or other petty-bourgeois misleaders.

It is a profound mistake to view the Jewish working class as one large undifferentiated reactionary mass. There has always been a layer of Jewish Israelis who have had the courage to oppose the crimes of their rulers. While mercilessly combating all variants of Zionism as inherently reactionary and anti-working class, Marxists must seek to develop connections with the more advanced elements of the Jewish proletariat and find ways to intervene in their conflicts with the Zionist master class.

The struggle to build a vanguard party rooted in both communities that is committed to the creation of a bi-national workers' state within a Socialist Federation of the Middle East will be an extremely difficult one. But there is no other historically progressive solution to the poisonous morass that imperialism and Zionism have created. Only a perspective of joint class struggle by Jewish and Palestinian workers against Zionist tyranny can lay the basis for the equitable resolution of the deep-seated national antagonisms and open the road to social emancipation for all the exploited and oppressed peoples of the region. ■

A Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership

Mass Revolt in Egypt



GETTY IMAGES

17 February, Mansoura: Egyptian workers demonstrate for better conditions

The following International Bolshevik Tendency statement was published on 7 February, prior to the departure of Hosni Mubarak.

The fall of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, long-time dictator of Tunisia, set off shock waves across the Arab world and sparked a popular revolt in Egypt, the most populous and politically important country in the region. The powerful Egyptian working class, which has carried out militant struggles over the past decade, has played a major role in the mass demonstrations rocking the country. Workers belonging to the state-controlled Egyptian Trade Union Federation defied their leaders and staged a nation-wide "illegal" work stoppage.

The anger of the masses and their willingness to risk their lives in the struggle to overthrow the hated dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak have been repeatedly demonstrated over the past two weeks. The objective social power of the proletariat makes it the natural leader of all the oppressed in the fight to smash the Egyptian police state and, in so doing, break the chains of global imperialism. But to fulfill this role, the workers' movement requires revolutionary leadership—a Leninist party armed with the program of permanent revolution. Unfortunately such a party does not yet exist, not even in embryo.

Mubarak has long been one of the most prized regional assets of U.S. imperialism. The \$1.5 billion in (mostly military) "aid" doled out to Egypt annually by Washington is second only to Israel. Initially, U.S. policy was to pretend nothing was happening—exemplified by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's 25 January pronouncement that

Mubarak's regime was "stable." When youthful protesters overwhelmed security forces a few days later and succeeded in torching scores of police stations (as well as Mubarak's party's political headquarters), the Egyptian strongman's patrons reluctantly concluded that it was time to start talking about an "orderly transition." At this point they favor a "new" regime headed by Omar Suleiman, Mubarak's chief henchman and long-time head of Egypt's national intelligence agency, who is engaged in negotiations with the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood and other figures ostensibly opposed to the dictatorship.

If Suleiman does not pan out, the Egyptian ruling class may be prodded into experimenting with some sort of pseudo-democracy led by Mohammed ElBaradei (former head of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency) or an equivalent figurehead. Any such regime would be little more than a fig leaf for the fearsome military-police state apparatus. If a "democratic" solution proves too difficult to arrange, the ultimate option for Egypt's rulers would be a military coup.

On 2 February, in an attempt to counter the growing momentum of the protests, Mubarak's political police led several thousand thugs in an organized attack on dissidents in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the center of the upheaval. Several people were killed and many more were wounded, but the demonstrators fought back with improvised self-defense units and managed to hold their ground. The Egyptian army, which had earlier declared that it would not fire on the protests, did nothing to obstruct the murderous pro-regime thugs. This doubtless came as a revelation to some of the more naïve dem-



GETTY IMAGES

Tahrir Square, 18 February: Muslim women celebrate Mubarak's departure

onstrators who had been chanting "the people and the army are one" only a few days earlier. The notion that the army, whose top brass have supported the dictatorship for decades, is on the side of the people and of democracy is a dangerous illusion. Mubarak's rule has always rested on the police, intelligence agencies and the military. Taken together, these institutions constitute the core of the state. Any significant improvement in the conditions of life for the masses requires the destruction (or "smashing") of the capitalists' machinery of repression. Smashing the capitalist state will involve splitting the conscript army by winning over a section of it, primarily among the ranks, to the side of the insurrection.

Many who have suffered under Mubarak imagine that free elections will solve their problems. Some have called for a constituent assembly to draw up a new democratic constitution. Marxists support the masses' yearning for democracy while insisting that a constituent assembly capable of sweeping away autocratic rule requires the revolutionary overthrow of the present regime. The fundamental issue posed in Egypt today is which class shall rule. In order to move forward, the anti-Mubarak revolt must begin to create institutions which will allow workers and the poor to exercise their will. An essential step is to establish new unions which are independent of the bosses and their state. It is also necessary to set up councils of delegates from different workplaces and working-class neighborhoods throughout the country, just like Russian workers did in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Another obvious step is to organize armed self-defense guards in each enterprise and working-class district as well as local committees to procure and distribute food, water and other essentials. Such institutions can lay the basis for a new state apparatus—one dedicated to serving and protecting the interests of working people and all the oppressed. Two key demands in the struggle against Mubarak's tyranny are that all those victimized for political opposition to the dictatorship be freed immediately, and that key figures in the old regime be tried by workers' tribunals.

The fundamental problem confronted by the Egyptian masses today can be described as a "crisis of leadership." The workers and youth at the forefront of the struggle are determined not only to get rid of the current regime, but

to free themselves from the dead hand of the oligarchs who own and control the vast majority of the country's wealth. This determination is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the fundamental (i.e., revolutionary) reconstruction of Egyptian society. The essential requirement for social revolution is the creation of a revolutionary workers' party capable of giving direction to the struggle to uproot the social system that spawned Mubarak.

A revolutionary party in Egypt would seek to address the material deprivations of the masses, beginning with a demand for the immediate expropriation of Mubarak (who managed to amass a personal fortune of some \$40 billion in a country where 40 percent of the population ekes out an existence on less than \$2 a day). While the ill-gotten gains of Mubarak's corrupt bourgeois friends should also be immediately seized, it is necessary to go beyond the brutal dictator and his immediate circle and expropriate the capitalist class as a whole. This would make it possible to address the chronic unemployment suffered by Egyptian youth, as well as plebeian concerns over food, housing, healthcare and education through the introduction of rational economic planning.

The authorities are trying to outwait the demonstrators in order to regain control of the streets while also proffering various meaningless cosmetic concessions. Washington is alarmed at the prospect of instability spreading in the region and therefore would like to find a political, rather than military, route to winding down the protests. The only way forward for Egypt's workers and youth lies through the creation of a disciplined Bolshevik combat organization modeled on the party headed by Lenin and Trotsky that led the Russian workers to victory in October 1917.

***Down with Mubarak/Suleiman Dictatorship!
No Support to ElBaradei or the Muslim Brotherhood!
Imperialists: Hands Off Egypt!
For Working-Class Independence from the Bosses
and their State!
For a Revolutionary Workers' Party in Egypt!
Forward to an Egyptian Workers' State in a
Socialist Federation of the Middle East!***

ULA: 'There is nothing revolutionary about our policies'

Capitalist Austerity & Ireland's Election

The following statement by the International Bolshevik Tendency was distributed in Ireland in February.

Many bourgeois commentators are predicting a radically transformed political landscape after this year's election. The truth is, beyond the collapse of the Fianna Fáil vote, little is likely to change. A Fine Gael-Labour coalition government, despite minor tactical differences with its predecessor, would adhere to the conditions of the EU/IMF bailout package and carry out major attacks on working people. Both parties are committed to the service cuts and tax increases contained in Budget 2011 as well as the other targeted assaults in the four-year plan, which is why they helped pass—rather than block—the Finance Bill.

Sinn Féin has tried to project itself as a friend of working people with talk of a wealth tax and spreading the pain over six, rather than four, years. North of the border, where it shares power with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Sinn Féin is busy implementing the cuts demanded by Westminster, and it makes no secret of the fact that it would jump at the chance to join a coalition government here. RTE [Ireland's public broadcaster] interviewed Gerry Adams on 4 January and reported: "When asked about the possibility of working in a coalition with [Labour leader Eamon] Gilmore, Mr Adams said that if Sinn Féin could do business with Ian Paisley, it could do business with anyone" (RTE [online], 5 January).

In November 2010 the United Left Alliance (ULA) was launched as an electoral bloc between the Socialist Party (SP), the Workers and Unemployed Action Group (South Tipperary) (WUAG) and the People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA), which is run by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP):

"The newly formed United Left Alliance (ULA) is opposed to the governments' bailouts and the slash and burn policies which are only making the crisis worse. In the general election we aim to provide a real alternative to the establishment parties as well as Labour and Sinn Féin, who also accept the capitalist market and refuse to rule out coalition with right wing parties."

—"Our Programme", www.unitedleftalliance.org

The electoral platform of the ULA is a list of various unobjectionable demands, but it does not contain a plan to mobilise effective mass resistance to the attacks, nor does it point towards what is truly necessary—the socialist transformation of the economy. It therefore falls far short of the type of fighting programme needed to address the desperate situation facing Irish workers. The ULA does claim that it:

"Rejects so-called solutions to the economic crises based on slashing public expenditure, welfare payments and workers' pay. There can be no just or sustainable solution to the crisis based on the capitalist market. Instead we favour democratic and public control over resources so that social need is prioritised over profit."

—*Ibid.*

Any meaningful "democratic and public control" of the economy can only be achieved through the expropriation



DEMOTIX IMAGES

Dublin, 16 February: 3,500 student nurses and midwives protest proposed pay cuts

of the capitalist class. But the ULA merely advocates a progressive taxation system and a wealth tax, promising that if in power, "corporation tax on the massive profits made in Ireland would be increased". Rather than calling for the expropriation of the expropriators, the ULA presumes the indefinite continuation of capitalism—a social system which celebrates and reinforces obscene social inequality and produces crises like the one we are living through.

The ULA platform does at least reject "Social Partnership" and the Croke Park deal [in which Ireland's trade-union bureaucracy agreed to enforce class peace until 2014]. It recognises:

"the urgent need to reclaim and rebuild the trade unions and to mobilise the power of workers through [sic] mass action. The approach of Social Partnership has left workers defenceless and has led to a massive transfer of wealth from workers to employers and must be scrapped.

"Our elected TDs will give full support to those unions and workers who oppose the Croke Park deal and will use the Dail to raise the real issues that affect ordinary working people."

But anyone serious about mobilising the power of workers through "mass action" to take "the banks, finance houses, major construction companies and development land into democratic public ownership and use them for the benefit of people" (*Ibid.*) must reckon with furious resistance from the capitalist class and its state apparatus. The bourgeois state (the bureaucracy, judiciary, military and the Gardai) exists to defend privilege and wealth—just ask the Shell to Sea activists, or the student demon-

strators in Dublin last November, or the Thomas Cook workers whose workplace occupation was attacked in 2009. But the ULA is silent on what “public ownership” means in relation to the bourgeois state—does the ULA advance the utopian fantasy that the capitalist state can be utilised to collectivise the economy? If it is necessary to break up the existing state apparatus and create a new state to serve and protect the interests of working people and the oppressed, why not say so?

For Marxists, standing for parliament presents an opportunity to put forward ideas (such as forming workers’ defence guards, expropriating the bosses and initiating rational economic planning) to a much broader audience than is normally available. The value of participating in capitalist electoral contests can be measured by the extent to which they provide a chance to popularise the programme of revolutionary socialism—the only alternative to the chaos of the capitalist market.

A serious socialist organisation can only be built on the basis of firm opposition to all wings of the capitalist class. This is why Marxists uphold the principle of complete working-class political independence from all bourgeois (and petty-bourgeois) parties. Given the strong tendency towards coalition government that exists under the proportional representation system (the Labour Party has only ever governed as a partner of either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael), this is a very important question. Yet the ULA pledges only that:

“Alliance Oireachtas members will not give any support by voting or abstaining to any government or proposed government, including a ‘national government’, containing conservative parties including Fianna Fail or Fine Gael.”

—“Candidate Pledge”, www.unitedleftalliance.org

The bourgeois nationalist Sinn Féin is not included in this list because the ULA would jump at the chance to join a “popular front” coalition with Sinn Féin, Labour and a few “left” independents—an outcome that is being seriously discussed as an outside possibility by some bourgeois commentators (*Independent* [London], 5 December 2010). The ULA effectively rejects the fundamental principle of working-class political independence by selecting only “conservative” bourgeois parties for its critique—which is reason enough for class-conscious workers not to vote for it.

The Socialist Party criticises its ULA partners (SWP/PBPA) for refusing to even mention the word “socialism”:

“In the initial discussions which only involved the Socialist Party and the PBPA, there was debate and disagreement between us, particularly with the SWP, on the issue of whether an alliance should explicitly advocate socialist policies and socialism as the solution to the crisis. The Socialist Party did not agree with the SWP’s view that socialist policies would put people off from voting for candidates or from getting involved in a left alliance.

“We felt it was very unfortunate that this argument was being put forward at precisely the time when there is emerging, a new interest and need for socialist policies because this is a crisis of the capitalist system itself.”

“If the left believes that policies like taking over the wealth of society and using it in a planned and produc-

tive way are necessary to create jobs, then it makes sense to advocate them and try to win people to these ideas rather than obscure the solution.”

—“United Left Alliance to challenge at general election”, 11 November 2010

A laudable sentiment in the abstract, but one not taken seriously enough by the SP to prevent it from participating in the ULA and describing its programme as “a fundamental alternative to the attacks on the living standards of ordinary people and public services” (“General Election Challenge of United Left Alliance Strengthens”, 14 January).

This is doubtless seen by some SP supporters as a clever tactic to engage with wider layers of the working class at little or no political expense. But the real content of the ULA’s programme was evident when Anne Foley, PBPA candidate for Cork North West, was interviewed by a local newspaper:

“I feel the ULA has very common sense policies. When people think of socialists, they think of communism, which is not the case. There is nothing dramatic or revolutionary about our policies. A lot of countries have functioning social democracies, especially in Scandinavia. They have great health, transport and childcare systems. This is the direction we want to take, a direction this Government failed to follow.”

—*Cork Independent*, 6 January

What the SP describes as a “fundamental alternative” to crisis-ridden capitalism is nothing more than recycled social democracy. The ULA not only fails to provide answers to the immediate tasks that confront workers faced with vicious attacks by the bosses—it actively encourages illusions that parliamentary gradualism, rather than hard class struggle, can provide a way out of the present impasse.

There has been talk of the ULA moving beyond an electoral lash-up, perhaps to initiate a process leading to the creation of a new working-class party. This could indeed present an important opportunity to discuss the revolutionary socialist programme that the working class so desperately needs. But in this election the ULA must be judged on its current programme and activity, and on that basis can only be described as a reformist road-block.

The capitalist class wants to offload all the costs of its crisis onto the backs of working people. The present economic mess is not simply a product of bad decisions by stupid or corrupt politicians and the short-sightedness of greedy bankers (though Ireland has plenty of both) but rather of the systemic failure of the entire capitalist world order, rooted in the profound irrationality of production for profit.

Instead of reformist fairy tales about the wonders of Scandinavian social democracy, working people need an action programme that is based on the sort of class-struggle tactics that can beat back the immediate attacks. They require a perspective that connects militant resistance today to the necessity to forge a revolutionary workers’ party, the only instrument capable of overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with an egalitarian, socialist society geared towards meeting human need rather than maximizing private profit. ■

Irish Anarchists & the Defense of Neocolonies

Anti-Imperialism & the WSM

During Dublin's Anarchist Bookfair in November 2010, a claim made by a Workers Power supporter that the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM—Ireland's leading anarchist organization) had not called for British troops out of Northern Ireland was promptly challenged by WSM members, who referred the comrade to their position paper, "The Partition of Ireland" (October 2005). In addition to demanding the removal of British troops, the paper made a broader observation: "As anarchists, we oppose imperialism...and believe it cannot play a progressive role."

The WSM's statement, "Capitalist Globalisation and Imperialism" (July 2004), defined imperialism as:

"the ability of countries to globally and locally dictate trade relations with other countries. This means the term can only be usefully applied to a few countries, in particular those composing the permanent members of the UN security council and the G8."

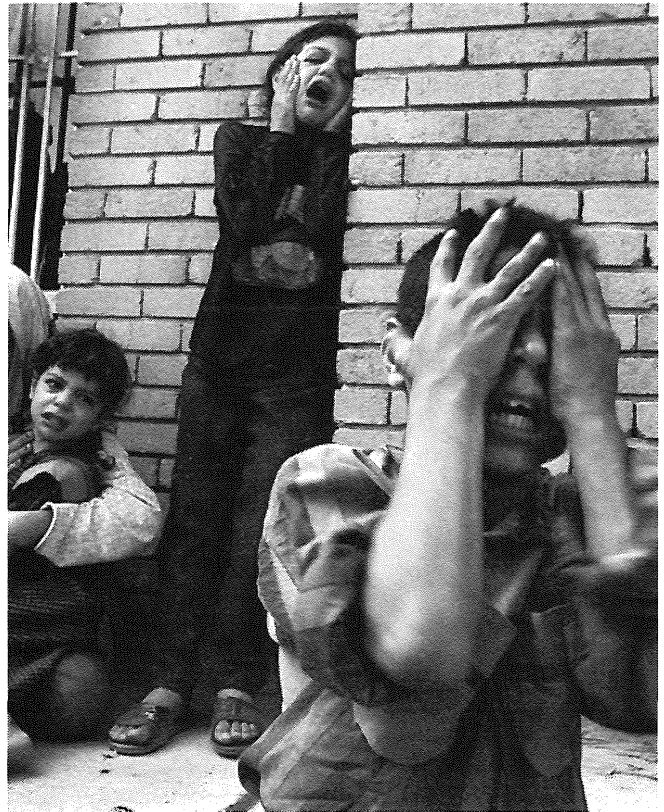
While we consider this to be an impressionistic and one-sided description, the WSM, unlike most anarchist organizations, at least attempts to make some sort of distinction between imperialist states and their neocolonial victims. The WSM adds:

"While we oppose the imperialist powers we recognise that the states that defy them do so in the interests of their own ruling class rather than [sic] their people. So rather than [sic] supporting, critically or otherwise, these local ruling classes we look to support the working class (including rural workers) of those countries in there [sic] struggle against imperialism and their own ruling class. We make this concrete by offering solidarity including material aid to independent working class and libertarian organisations."

It is true that neocolonial regimes which have come into conflict with the imperialist powers generally do so in order to protect or advance their own interests, but revolutionaries must uphold the right of subjugated nations to resist the predations of the "advanced capitalist" global powers—which is why, for example, Lenin and the Bolsheviks sided with the Easter Rising of 1916. Anti-imperialism means taking sides—and it cannot be restricted solely to cases where "independent working class organisations" are involved. When Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, revolutionaries supported Egyptian military resistance to British/French/Israeli attempts to restore colonial control. More recently when the U.S./UK invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq, no genuine revolutionary could have adopted a position of neutrality. We called for driving out the invaders—despite the reactionary character of the Taliban/Baathist regimes.

To its credit, the WSM does pose the issue in an international context and supports military resistance to imperialist aggression (which, for those who are consistent, would imply taking sides):

"to win any permanent improvements anti-imperialist/



NO CREDIT

U.S./UK imperialist war on Iraq: a horrific crime

anti-neoliberal struggles have to be transformed into the struggle for the international anarchist revolution. That said we recognise that short of this any military defeat for imperialism will not only reduce the ability of the imperialist powers to engage in future interventions but is also an encouragement for those involved in similar struggles elsewhere."

The WSM further elaborated its view in a subsequent article, "Anti-imperialism":

"Anarchists believe that people should be in control of their own lives and should have a say in how the resources in the places where they live are used. Therefore, anarchists are opposed to imperialism and they are not alone in this. Almost nobody likes it when a powerful group invades the place where they live, steals all the resources and orders them to do as they are told and, inevitably, they organise themselves to oppose the imperialists. Since imperialists use force of arms to control the countries which they invade, this generally means that the natives will need to physically oppose them. They aren't going to leave just because they're unpopular, after all.

"Thus, anarchists support people's right to fight against imperial invasions. If somebody has decided to control you with violence, you have no choice but to overcome this violence or else remain a slave. This is why anar-



Abyssinian fighters mobilize to resist Italian invasion, 1935

chists call themselves anti-imperialists.

"However, unfortunately, anarchists are currently a small minority in the world. Nationalism has been the most powerful political ideology in modern times. When people fight against imperialist control, they also generally fight for some version of nationalist alternative.

"Anarchists are opposed to nationalism. We do not think that people can be neatly divided up into areas where the populations have a shared culture, history and heritage. The world is much messier than that and cultures and identities are fluid and intermingled. What's more, nationalist movements normally simply try to replace the foreign imperialist control with control by a local ruling class, who might be just as bad—or even worse—than the imperialist rulers. Therefore, while we support anti-imperialist struggles, we always strive to argue against nationalist politics within them. Instead we seek to promote the most progressive, libertarian and socialist strands so that, if we can defeat the imperialists' control, we won't just be replacing them with new masters."

—*Workers Solidarity* No.93, September-October 2005

The Leninist/Trotskyist approach to such conflicts is to uphold the political independence of the working class from its "own" bourgeoisie, while being prepared to bloc militarily with indigenous petty-bourgeois or bourgeois formations against imperialist invaders. In the 1930s, when Mussolini sent his troops into Ethiopia (then known as Abyssinia), Trotskyists sided militarily with Haile Selassie *despite* the extremely reactionary nature of his regime. If the WSM indeed considers imperialism to be the central feature of the global capitalist order, then a neocolonial ruling class could not, from the standpoint of the working class, be "just as bad—or even worse—than the imperialist rulers." Imperialism is not a lever for lifting up the economically and socially more backward areas of the world—but rather the primary reason that their backwardness is maintained.

The WSM's anti-imperialism is confused in theory, and inconsistent in practice. In the aftermath of the January 2010 Haitian earthquake, for example, the WSM's Haiti Solidarity Ireland correctly proclaimed:

"We call for the immediate departure of international troops from Haiti, and for aid and reconstruction efforts to be controlled by Haitians themselves through their unions and community organisations."

—"US Troops out of Haiti," 24 February 2010

Yet when Iraq was invaded by the U.S./UK et al, the WSM's "anti-imperialism" went out the window in favor of equating Saddam Hussein's brutal regime with the foreign imperialist expeditionary forces attempting to seize control of the petroleum resources of the Persian Gulf:

"We take no side between the major imperialists led by the U.S. and the would-be mini-imperialists led by Saddam Hussein. Saddam is no anti-imperialist and tying Iraqi workers to an 'anti-imperialist' front with him would be criminal. The regime would betray such a struggle as soon as it believed it was [i]n their own class interests to do so."

—"The Gulf War" [undated]

The WSM's neutrality in this conflict between a neocolony and its former imperialist patrons stands in stark contrast to the formally correct observation that: "any military defeat for imperialism will not only reduce the ability of the imperialist powers to engage in future interventions but is also an encouragement for those involved in similar struggles elsewhere."

The WSM's attempt to get around the blatant contradiction by labelling Iraq's rulers as "would-be mini-imperialists" can only be described as political cowardice. Of course the Iraqi regime, like every neocolonial bourgeoisie, was quite willing to bully its weaker neighbors, but this does not change the fact that there is a qualitative difference between the U.S./EU imperialists and dependent underdeveloped countries like Iraq. The WSM's own position paper provides an abstractly correct description of the relationship of imperialism to neocolonial client states:

"In any specific region one country will be more powerful than [sic] others. They will attempt to use their dominance to gain favourable trade and territory concessions. They are however subject to the major imperialist nations, and are probably retained as client states by one or more of them. It is not [sic] therefore not useful to refer to such countries as imperialist."

Neither is it "useful" to describe Iraq under Saddam (or Iran under Ahmadinejad) as "would-be mini-imperialists," particularly when the point of doing so is to rationalize a refusal to defend them against imperialist attack.

The inconsistencies in the application of the WSM's anti-imperialist stance appear to directly correlate to popular opinion in the radical left. With opposition to the British military occupation of the Six Counties a default setting for all Irish radicals, the WSM was very clear that it favored the departure of the imperialist troops. So too in the case of Haiti, where the reactionary role of the imperialist troops was obvious to (almost) the entire international left. In Iraq, where Saddam's blood-soaked rightist dictatorship was deeply unpopular, the WSM refused to take sides as the U.S./UK "coalition" launched its "shock and awe" terror campaign.

The WSM's inability to "swim against the stream" on this important issue provides an index of how far it is from being able to provide the revolutionary "leadership of ideas" to which it aspires. A genuinely revolutionary organization determines its political positions solely on the basis of the inexorable logic of the class struggle—opportunists, on the other hand, always have an eye on what is likely to be most popular. ■

Class Struggle Trade Unionism & Critical Support 'Defiance of unjust laws'



Unite workers on strike at North London bottling plant, 22 September 2010

The British government's attacks on social services, benefits and education are among the most severe across the imperialist countries and are clearly aimed at solving the capitalists' problems at the expense of working people. The effects are broad and deep—from teenagers losing the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and being priced out of universities, to parents already on tight budgets suffering cuts in child benefit and tax credits, to thousands of local government employees being made redundant.

Resistance has so far been uneven. There have been large protests by students and youth, but the pro-capitalist leadership of the British trade unions took months just to organize a token national demonstration. While there are rumblings at the base about the need to strike against public-sector cuts and in defense of basic living standards, little has yet materialized. Union militants must challenge their sell-out leaders by arguing for coordinated political strike actions aimed at laying the basis for a defensive general strike to defeat the cuts.

A general strike raises, at least implicitly, the question of who holds power in society, and it is clear that the current leadership of the trade-union movement (and the reformist left) cannot imagine anything more "radical" than brokering some sort of deal with the bourgeoisie to negotiate concessions. Even the more left-wing union leaders, such as Mark Serwotka of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and Bob Crow of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union (RMT), are intimidated by the anti-union laws, which prohibit solidarity actions. A serious strike movement would necessarily develop much

faster than would be legally permissible under the cumbersome balloting procedures imposed by the state (which of course is why the legislation was written that way in the first place). Any effective trade-union action against the current capitalist offensive must involve defiance of this legal straitjacket right from the start.

Reprinted below is a November 2010 leaflet by our British comrades giving critical support to Jerry Hicks, a candidate for the leadership of Unite (Britain's largest union). We called for a vote to Hicks (who finished second behind rival Len McCluskey) because of his stance in favor of defying anti-union laws. At the same time, we criticized Hicks' willingness to use the capitalist state for perceived tactical advantage in internal union struggles, as well as his failure to break decisively from the Labour Party. These are key issues in building a class-struggle wing of the trade-union movement in Britain.

It has been a long time since a contender for the leadership of one of Britain's major trade unions has said anything like the following:

"We also have to change how we deal with the anti-union laws, brought in by Thatcher under the Tories, left unchanged by three terms of a Labour government and virtually unchallenged by our Union or the TUC. The laws work by threatening the union's funds, so putting pressure on those at the top of the unions to 'police' the members and stop them taking action which is often effective."

"Defiance of unjust laws is part of Trade Unionism's proud

history and is the most likely route to get them repealed, and the best deterrent against the government introducing even worse legislation."

—Jerry Hicks, "What I Stand For"

Many trade-union leaders make empty calls to "repeal the anti-union laws", then turn around and cite those same laws as an alibi for refusing to use effective tactics or to defend workers who do. Hicks's call to openly *defy* anti-union laws clearly demarcates him from all the other candidates. For this reason, in the 2010 election we are calling on Unite members to vote Jerry Hicks for general secretary.

While voting for Hicks, we have no illusions that he will consistently uphold workers' interests, or even necessarily carry through his promise to defy the anti-union laws. Hicks is not a revolutionary, and his political perspective falls far short of providing a sufficient answer to the many complex and difficult questions that the workers' movement faces on the eve of a ferocious, all-out attack by the ruling class. Hicks embodies a profound contradiction: his expression of a willingness to fight rather than fold sets him apart from the social-democratic mainstream in Britain, yet he remains within the pro-capitalist political framework of Labourite reformism—particularly the naive belief that the bourgeois state can be wielded as an instrument by the oppressed and exploited.

Hicks is correct to identify the question of willingness to defy the bosses' laws as one of life and death for the unions, but he poses the issue too narrowly. The great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky addressed the full dimensions of this problem when he wrote:

"The primary slogan for this struggle is: complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy."

—"Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay", 1940

Trotsky rejected the idea that confused reformists or simple rank and file movements, however militant, are politically capable of preserving the independence of the unions from the control of the bourgeois state and its agents:

"As a matter of fact, the independence of trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state can, in the present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International. This leadership, naturally, must and can be rational and assure the unions the maximum of democracy conceivable under the present concrete conditions. But without the political leadership of the Fourth International the independence of the trade unions is impossible."

Hicks is no Fourth Internationalist and can therefore hardly be expected to act or speak as one. In the final analysis, only revolutionary leadership can consistently uphold the fundamental principles of workers' democracy and maintain class independence from the bosses and their state apparatus. Hicks's record perfectly illustrates the validity of Trotsky's insight—and reveals that despite his tactical militancy, Hicks is, in the end, only a reformist.

While he is celebrated by many on the left for his declared opposition to the anti-union laws, there is a tendency to downplay the fact that in 2008 Hicks went to the Certification Office for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations to

force an election for general secretary of the Amicus wing of Unite. The Certification Officer is an essential element of the web of state control of the unions. Appealing to this office is equivalent to calling in ACAS during a strike or taking the union to the bosses' court. Whatever short-term advantage may be gained, any appeal that involves state authorities meddling in the internal affairs of the unions can only serve to undermine the interests of the working class in the long run. But Hicks understands none of this and sees nothing wrong with what he did.

Hicks adopts a similarly "pragmatic" attitude to the question of affiliation to Labour, despite his criticisms of their record of maintaining all the Tory anti-union legislation during their 13 years in office. In an article in *The Socialist* in August [2010], he said:

"Another reason for not supporting me is that I am not calling for disaffiliation from the Labour Party.

"True I don't, but I do say we should only back those MPs and councillors who support our union's policies, ending the close and cosy relationship between Unite and the Labour Party."

—www.socialistparty.org.uk

What exactly does "support our union's policies" mean? Notwithstanding the occasional abstract call for repeal of the anti-union laws, everyone knows that Labour MPs and councillors who are actually prepared to stand up in support of those who "illegally" defy those laws are virtually non-existent. Why did Hicks endorse Diane Abbott for the Labour leadership when she consistently ducked the issue of union-bashing? When Workers Power "asked her campaign office on 17 June if she was in favour of repealing Britain's anti-union laws, they were unable to answer the question!" (*Workers Power*, Summer 2010). Does Hicks count this as "support" for unions?

If Hicks seriously intended to "end the close and cosy relationship" with those who won't defend workers' rights, he would be advocating cutting political ties and funding for the Labour Party—that is, disaffiliation. Instead, he prefers to pose the question in terms of support for individual MPs. In an interview with *Workers Power* in October [2010], Hicks said:

"I believe we should keep our members' money in a clenched fist until the Labour leaders prove to us by deed that they will carry out the policies of the union. The first test will come in a few short weeks when left-wing Labour MP, John McDonnell, has a Private Member's Bill that attempts to get rid of the challenges to union strike ballots based on technicalities [as seen earlier in the year with the British Airways strike and RMT ballot]. Any Labour MP who didn't vote for that would immediately lose all financial support if I became general secretary."

This sounds tough, but what does it mean? For the "first test" on 22 October [2010], only 89 Labour MPs turned up to support McDonnell's extremely timid bill. How does Hicks propose to ensure that those who didn't vote for the bill "immediately lose all financial support" when Unite's affiliation fees go to the party as a whole? In 2009 payments from Unite to Labour totalled 3.6 million pounds. The only way to keep this money in a "clenched fist" is through disaffiliation, and if it were actually withheld that would quickly put the viability of continued affiliation on the agenda. Hicks's refusal to advocate disaffiliation means that he is not serious about a political break with the Labour traitors.

There is an obvious contradiction posed for trade-union leaders who are tied to the Labour machine and who also seek to defend the rights of their members. Labour would itself be leading the attack on the unions and slashing jobs and benefits if it were still in office. When the Con-Dem coalition announced plans to cut 490,000 public-sector jobs, Labour effectively agreed that three-quarters of those jobs would have to go. Serious resistance to this massive attack will automatically pose the issue of shredding the anti-union straightjacket fashioned over the past three decades, supported by Labour to this day.

Hicks is being backed by those members of Unite who recognise that in the present circumstances a failure to carry out aggressive strikes and other sorts of "illegal" workplace actions in response to the government's plans to gut the public sector could see their union turned into an empty shell. We want to put Hicks to the test of office, where the shortcomings of his brand of militant Labourite trade unionism will become clear to many workers who currently have illusions in him, thus providing a potential opportunity to win militant workers to a perspective of revolutionary class struggle.

The duty of Marxists is to explain the contradictions in Hicks's standpoint to militants attracted by his call for workers to defend themselves rather than passively wait to be kicked in the teeth. Hicks's attitude towards capitalist legality reflects the sentiments of the most politically conscious layers of the working class. Despite the fact that he falls qualitatively short of providing the political leadership that is necessary, Hicks's assertions that it is necessary for the workers' movement to fight and that the bosses' laws need to be defied are true as far as they go. If such sentiments are acted on by millions of British workers, it could considerably complicate things for the bosses in the coming confrontations.

Len McCluskey, Hicks's main opponent, is the candidate of Unite's "United Left" group and is supported by the Socialist Party and other left groups chiefly on the basis of calculations of how best to gain petty organisational advantage within the union. McCluskey, as a current deputy general secretary of the union, is part of the leadership that shamefully betrayed the BA strikers. He makes no pretence that he will be prepared to support members who challenge the law.

The ostensibly revolutionary groups who support Hicks trumpet the fact that his fighting posture is attracting many of the best militants in the union, but they are very sparing with any criticism. For example, Workers Power limit their critique to a call for him to "go further":

"Jerry is the best candidate—but he needs to go further and organise a nationwide rank and file movement in Unite, committed to dissolving the bureaucracy altogether and organising action without, or even against the will of the official Unite leaders.

"If he wins, there would still be a 10,000-plus strong bureaucracy in Unite. But Jerry's campaign has the potential to ignite a rank and file movement that can replace the officialdom with a fighting alternative leadership."

—Workers Power, Summer 2010

Workers Power may consider this "critical support", but in fact it is support plain and simple. During the 2009 cam-



GUY SMALLMAN

Jerry Hicks addresses Rolls Royce workers who walked out to protest his firing, Bristol, July 2005

paign, when they also supported Hicks, Workers Power did express some concern about his use of the Certification Officer, but they have gone very quiet on the subject lately. Their position on Hicks roughly comes down to this—he is a good guy who, if pushed a bit further to the left, can achieve great things.

Absolute rejection of intervention by all agencies of the capitalist state in the union movement is a vital component of the programme necessary to lead workers' struggles forward. Hicks has a bad record on this question and should not be let off the hook. Workers Power have also failed to criticise Hicks's membership of the cross-class Respect organisation. Closing one's eyes to unpleasant facts is never a good idea.

We are hardly surprised that Workers Power have no criticism of Hicks's continuing attachment to Labour, given that, after a brief interlude, they are returning once again to their traditional Labour loyalist posture, as signalled by recent calls on "Keynesian" Ed Miliband to "get off the fence". Miliband, a former member of Gordon Brown's cabinet, was never on "the fence", and his faux-friendly attitude to the unions does not put him significantly to the left of his brother or the rest of the Labour establishment. Having stealthily abandoned their call for an "anticapitalist party", Workers Power, like Hicks, supported Abbott for Labour leader and are now advising workers to build a "revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party" (*Workers Power*, October 2010).

It is necessary to construct a revolutionary current within the trade unions on the basis of a militant class-struggle programme, one that starts with absolute independence of the unions from the state and recognises the need to expropriate the capitalists and establish the rule of the working class. This strategy is counterposed to calls to "ignite a rank and file movement", which can mean almost anything programmatically. Faced with an impending avalanche of capitalist union-bashing and austerity, the advanced elements of the working class must be won to a perspective of struggle to throw out the existing pro-capitalist union leadership and replace them with a leadership committed to carrying forward the struggle to end exploitation and capitalism once and for all.

Vote Jerry Hicks! Smash the anti-union laws!

No state interference in the trade unions!

Break with the Labour traitors!

Oust the Bureaucracy—For Revolutionary Reunification! Defend North Korea!



VINCENT YU—AP

North Korean soldiers on parade, Pyongyang, 10 October 2010

The following statement by the International Bolshevik Tendency was originally published in December 2010.

On 23 November [2010] artillery from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK—aka North Korea) fired 130 shells on Yeonpyeong, a small island in disputed waters close to the North Korean coast that is the site of a South Korean military base. The bombardment killed four people on the base—two South Korean marines and two construction workers. Ominous threats and the outpouring of feigned indignation about “unprovoked” attacks on civilians emanating from the South Korean government and its backers in the imperialist “international community” were predictable enough. Yet some of the Western media acknowledged that the shelling had been preceded by a warning to the South Korean military to suspend its “live fire” exercise in territorial waters claimed by the DPRK:

“For a start, Yeonpyeong is not exactly a ‘South Korean island’, but a military base used by South Korean forces. It is located about seven miles away from the North’s ground territory, on a disputed ‘northern limit line’ unilaterally drawn by US-led UN forces after the Korean war. As the South has admitted, the North’s warning, and then attack, was preceded by their artillery drills in the maritime area around the island. In other words, the provocation was provoked.”

—*www.guardian.co.uk*, 30 November 2010

The hysterical and bellicose reaction to North Korea’s response is part of an ongoing pattern of imperialist attempts to bully and isolate Pyongyang and to exert pressure on its Chinese patron. We are not particularly interested in who fired first—for Marxists, the essential issue is the necessity to defend the social gains represented by the overturn of capitalist property in North Korea (and China) against any attempt, whether foreign or domestic, to undermine or overthrow them. We militarily defend North Korea against

imperialism despite the anti-working class character of the bureaucratized Stalinist caste headed by Kim Jong-il. To open the road to genuinely socialist development in North Korea and China, it is necessary to carry out a proletarian political revolution to oust the ruling bureaucracies whose repeated attempts to conciliate imperialism threaten the collectivized property system over which they preside.

The recent exchange of fire involving the Yeonpyeong military base occurred at the outset of the *Hoguk*—an annual provocation in which, under the rubric of “safeguarding the nation,” some 70,000 South Korean troops, supported by the U.S. military, rehearse a coordinated attack on North Korea. This exercise is one of a series of military expressions of the enmity of the capitalist world for the DPRK—a sentiment which has not abated since the Korean War, when Chinese military intervention prevented a U.S.-led imperialist coalition under the flag of the United Nations from restoring capitalism throughout the Korean peninsula. For 60 years North Korea has been under continuous military and economic pressure from world imperialism.

The unconditional defense of North Korea against capitalist restoration—a development which would represent an important milestone in the drive for social counterrevolution in China—requires revolutionaries to demand the *complete and immediate removal of all U.S. troops and military bases from Korea*. It also includes the defense of the DPRK’s right to develop an effective nuclear deterrent to the very real danger of imperialist attack. On 28 November, in an interview with CNN’s “State of the Union,” Republican Senator John McCain ominously expressed the sentiment of a significant section of the American bourgeoisie when he stated that “it’s time we talked about regime change” in North Korea.

Despite the rhetorical militancy of the Pyongyang bureaucracy, it has long promoted dangerous illusions in the possibility of a “peaceful” reunification of Korea. Such talk is intended

to appeal to nationalist elements in South Korea who resent the continuing American military presence in their country. Many South Korean leftists are attracted to such nationalist sentiments, but the goal of finding common ground with an anti-American "patriotic" wing of the capitalist class can only retard the development of class consciousness.

The economic situation in the DPRK is increasingly desperate, as the tightening imperialist embargo has blocked many critical inputs for industry, and crop failures have resulted in widespread malnutrition. The counter-revolution in the Soviet Union led by Boris Yeltsin in 1991 deprived North Korea of its principle source of aid and most powerful strategic ally. Today the DPRK's survival depends on support from the treacherous Chinese bureaucracy, which has voted for U.S.-proposed sanctions in the UN Security Council on several occasions in recent years.

The defense of the North Korean deformed workers'

state is an issue of vital importance to the entire international workers' movement. For as Leon Trotsky, the great Russian revolutionary, observed: "It is the duty of revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class even though it may be distorted by the pressure of hostile forces. Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones" (*In Defense of Marxism*).

What is necessary in Korea is the creation of an internationalist workers' party committed to the *revolutionary reunification* of the entire Korean peninsula. This requires a struggle to carry out a *social* revolution in the South to uproot capitalist property and a *political* revolution in the North to shatter the grip of the Kim dynasty and the brittle caste it heads. Only by establishing working-class rule throughout Korea, in the framework of a Socialist Federation of East Asia (including China and Japan), can the people of the region be freed from the threat of hunger, poverty and war. ■

ICL's Mea Culpa on Haiti

'A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism'

In our previous issue we published a polemic against the Spartacist League/International Communist League's (SL/ICL) endorsement of the U.S. military intervention in Haiti. Subsequently, *Workers Vanguard* ([WV] 7 May 2010) printed a retraction entitled, "A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism," which compared their original position to "August 4, 1914, when the German Social Democrats voted war credits to the German imperialist rulers at the outset of the First World War." The statement also repudiated the arguments put forward in polemics against the IBT and the Internationalist Group. What was missing, as we pointed out in our statement, "Sclerotic Spartacists Unravel," was any serious explanation of how such a blatantly pro-imperialist position could have been adopted in the first place, and why it was not met with immediate, furious internal opposition.

We were not entirely surprised at the acquiescence of the ICL membership, as this flinch was not a unique occurrence. A similar impulse was evident in the initial failure of the SL Political Bureau to distinguish between the Pentagon and the World Trade Center as targets of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. Only after we challenged them did the SL leadership acknowledge that the Pentagon, unlike the World Trade Center, was indeed a "genuine military target, representing the brutal attacks of U.S. imperialism on the world's working class and oppressed." The SL had also refused to adopt a defeatist position toward U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2001, and following the imperialists' early success against the Taliban, declared that "the call for a U.S. military defeat is, at this time, illusory and the purest hot air and 'revolutionary' phrasemongering" (WV, 9 November 2001). A decade later, as defeatist sentiments are expressed even within the top echelons of the American military, it is clear that this position was simply historical pessimism masquerading as realism.

However, the roots of the SL's Haiti deviation go back considerably further. In 1983, when an Islamic Jihad truck bomb leveled the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, WV

scandalously called for "Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!," i.e., for saving the survivors. This social-patriotic flinch contradicted the SL's entire prior record as well as the image it sought to project of itself as a fearlessly revolutionary organization, and set off a series of sharp polemics between our two tendencies (see *Trotskyist Bulletin* No.2, "Marxism vs. Social Patriotism"). ■

1917

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOLSHEVIK TENDENCY

Supplement

SL Repudiates 'Capitulation to Imperialism'

Sclerotic Spartacists Unravel

May 2010

"In a statement following the Kuznetsov report (on the crimes of Stalin), Togliatti asked: 'What made such grave errors possible? And why was it that around them should have been created an atmosphere of consent and acceptance...?'"

—Hedwig Meyer, *The Kuznetsov Report and the Crisis in the American Left*

On 27 April, the International Communist League (ICL)—headed by the Spartacist League/US (SL) publicly denounced its previous support to the U.S. military intervention in Haiti as a social-imperialist betrayal comparable to "August 4, 1914, when the German Social Democrats voted war credits to the German imperialist rulers at the outset of the First World War" ("A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism").

(7 May) declared: "In addition to justifying the U.S. imperialist troops as essential to the aid effort, these articles [in WV Nos. 991, 992, 993 and 995] politicized against the principled and correct position of demanding the immediate withdrawal of the troops." The polemics the ICL repudi-

ated were directed at two organizations launched by former Spartacist cadres: the Internationalist Group (IG)—whose founding members left the SL in 1996) and the Internationalist Bolshevik Tendency (IBT). [1]

The SL's spectacular about-face has generated considerable buzz in the international left. Various individuals who are struck by the depth of the auto-critique and its "save-our-face" tone have asked us what we think is going on. The statement forthrightly admits that the ICL was engaged in "promoting illusions in U.S. imperialist 'democracy' as the savior of the Haitian people. We all but echoed Barack Obama as he dispatched imperialist combat troops..."

At a 20 March ICL meeting on Haiti held in Toronto, where the Spartacists announced they would henceforth demand the departure of occupation troops (without vacating—or even frankly acknowledging—their earlier position) an IBT comrade remarked:

"Tonight we are told that the ICL is now also calling for troops out because there is a changed 'conjuncture'—the only thing that has changed is that the initial military

1 The ICL's mea culpa mentions the IG but not the IBT, despite the fact that one of the polemics alluded to ("The IBT on Haiti: Postscript to Ideology," WV, 28 February) is a response to our 9 February statement condemning its position as social-imperialist. Some Spartacist League supporters have explained that this is because we are out of "touch" with the ICL. In 2003 the SL suggested that we are "opponents of revolutionary Marxism" whose method is to "kill an organization by chopping off its head" (WV, August 2003) when we criticized the ICL. James Robertson by mentioning a grossly chauvinist reference he had made to Kurt "Turk" in a speech printed in the ICL, at the height of Cold War II. In a 1979 Spartacist internal discussion bulletin, "The whole affair [between the ICL and the IBT] subsequently published an equally ridiculous explanation of why Robertson's character 'polar' meant something other than meant. The whole affair [documented in our pamphlet *Polemics with the ICL, Kurdistan & the Struggle for National Liberation*].

As we noted in *Whatever Happened to the Spartacist League?*, the IG has withheld comment on the controversy. "Unwilling to unnecessarily antagonize the SL, membership just for the sake of being the 'truth'."

In his May "Open Letter," the IG complains that the ICL attempts to mislead international Bolshevik tendencies by "quoting us with the aid and indeed feet from, the ICL, at the height of Cold War II." In fact our founding cadres were driven out of a series of political papers that purged the similar treatment meted out to the IG a decade and a half later. The IG unanimously confirmed this by publishing accounts of what happened to the comrades. The two accounts are compared in our lengthy 15 December 1998 letter to the IG (reprinted in *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 6, pp. 20-21) and also in *The Robertonites in Denial—Willful Blindness*, 1977 No. 20, 1998).

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An Exceptional Proletarian Militant Comrade Bill Savery



Bill Savery & Jack Heyman crewing CV Staghound, July 1973

The following statement by the IBT's Ursula Jensen was read at Bill Savery's memorial meeting, 11 September 2010 in Oakland, California.

We will remember Comrade Bill!

William Parker Savery was born on 3 November 1944 in Plymouth, Massachusetts where his father made a living as the captain of a fishing boat. When he was a young man in the 1960s, Bill went to sea as a member of the National Maritime Union (NMU). He was soon won to the class-struggle political program of the NMU's Militant Solidarity

Caucus, supported by the then-Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL). In the mid-1970s, Bill was involved in a serious industrial accident from which he was not expected to fully recover. He won a large financial settlement, and used a chunk of it to make a six-figure contribution to the SL to help purchase a building on Warren Street in Lower Manhattan, which still serves as the group's headquarters.

Bill was a remarkably tough individual. In the mid-1980s, after recovering from his injuries, he moved to the Bay Area and once again became active as a maritime militant in the Inland Boatmen's Union (IBU—Marine Division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union). Bill played an important role in the 1987 IBU strike against Crowley Maritime.

Bill's move to the Bay Area coincided with a shift in political allegiance to the Bolshevik Tendency, the basis of which he explained in a November 1984 letter to the SL entitled, "Whither Spartacism?" Eloquent in its honest simplicity, Bill's statement clearly expressed his profound dismay at seeing the organization on which he had pinned his hopes degenerating before his eyes.

When Bill died suddenly and unexpectedly at his home in Oakland on 21 June 2010, it came as a nasty shock to all of us who knew him and had worked with him. Comrade Bill was not only an exceptional proletarian militant with a profound understanding of the application of the Trotskyist program in the unions, he was also personally a wonderful guy: modest, serious and fun. And he always knew where to draw the class line!

All of us who knew Bill are saddened by his passing. ■

IG Ignores ILWU Port Shutdown for Oscar Grant Another 'Blank Page'

In "IG & Revolutionary Defeatism—'A Blank Page'" (1917 No.28, 2006), we observed that when unable to explain an event that contradicts its political line, the Internationalist Group (IG) has a tendency to "pretend it did not happen—thus producing an example of what Mikhail Gorbachev used to disparage as a 'blank page'."

The 23 October 2010 shutdown of all ports in the San Francisco Bay Area to protest the racist cop murder of Oscar Grant is another example of this strange phenomenon. This important labor action was the last major event initiated by class-struggle militant Jack Heyman, who has since retired. For years the IG celebrated Heyman's role in sparking class struggle on the docks, but this time they had no comment. We can only assume that the reason is that one of the union's slogans was to "Jail the Killer Cop" who executed Grant. This wholly supportable demand was repudiated some years ago by the degenerated Spartacist League (SL). The IG is quite willing to criticize SL politi-

cal deviations that occurred after Jan Norden and other IG leaders were purged from the group in 1996, but defends pretty much everything before that. Yet, as we noted:

"To defend previous political errors is to open the door for future ones. The IG has always been reluctant to seriously address the origins of the SL's degeneration, which was qualitatively complete long before Norden et al. were unceremoniously driven out. Largely for reasons of personal prestige, the IG's founders pretend that, prior to their own departure, the SL had an almost pristine political and organizational record."

—1917 No.26, 2004

Unwilling either to defend or to distance itself from the SL's brainless sectarian repudiation of the call to "Jail Killer Cops," the IG has opted to ignore the most important labor action against racist capitalist injustice since the 1999 ILWU shutdown of U.S. West Coast ports in solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal (also initiated by Heyman). ■

Racist Injustice & the Murder of Oscar Grant Killer Cops & Democrats

On 23 October 2010, dockers of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), along with ILWU Local 34 (clerks) and port workers in the Service Employees International Union Local 1021, shut down all ports in the San Francisco Bay Area to protest the January 2009 police execution of Oscar Grant on the platform of the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station and the kid-glove treatment of the cop responsible, Johannes Mehserle. On the same day, ILWU Local 10 held a rally in downtown Oakland which drew hundreds of participants, including many longshore workers and BART members of Local 1555 of the Amalgamated Transit Union. The demonstration was unanimously endorsed by both San Francisco and Alameda County Labor Councils and supported by local public employees, teachers' unions and autoworkers, as well as a variety of leftist and community groups. Local 10's slogans were: "Justice for Oscar Grant! Labor Unity with the Community! Jail Killer Cops!"

Grant's murder has stirred so much anger in the Bay Area because it was recorded on cellphone cameras by horrified onlookers who posted it to the internet, where it has been viewed by hundreds of thousands of people. Anyone can see that this was a case of cold-blooded murder. Yet, as expected, on 5 November 2010, Judge Robert Perry proclaimed that it had all been an "accident," and handed Mehserle the absolute minimum sentence—two years less time served. This outrageous verdict set off spontaneous protests which Oakland police brutally suppressed, arresting 152 people who were attempting to march to the Fruitvale station.

The following IBT statement was distributed at the 23 October 2010 rally.

Since the murder of Oscar Grant by BART cop Johannes Mehserle on New Year's Day 2009, thousands of people have mobilized to demand "Justice for Oscar Grant" and oppose attempts to let Mehserle walk free after his conviction on the far lesser charge of "involuntary manslaughter."

Involuntary manslaughter usually carries a sentence of two to four years, but if a gun was used, the judge can add three to ten years to the sentence. Mehserle is a dangerous racist killer who should be locked up for life, but 14 years would be a lot better than what Judge Robert Perry, who conducted his trial, is probably intending to give him. Perry was responsible for the official cover-up of the LAPD Ramparts scandal in which more than 70 police officers were implicated for planting evidence, framing innocent people and taking payoffs from drug dealers, while organizing robberies, beatings and shootings. Tony Pirone and Marysol Domenici, two other BART cops who were complicit in Grant's murder and withheld information during Mehserle's trial, also deserve long stretches in prison.

Outrage at this murder has come from many places, so it is no surprise that there are different ideas about how to take the struggle forward. We have to start by recognizing that responsibility for this crime goes beyond Mehserle, the

BART police and the BART board. Oscar Grant's murder was a product of the routine functioning of the American social system and particularly the racist administration of "criminal justice." Responsibility for Oscar Grant's death is therefore shared by all those who materially support and perpetuate the system, including many of the local politicians who made a show of protesting Mehserle's crime.

While many innocent people like Oscar Grant have been killed by cops, no police officer has ever been jailed for murder in the State of California. The popularity of the slogan "I am Oscar Grant" reflects widespread awareness of the profound injustice of this racist system. There is no way justice for Oscar Grant can be achieved by reliance on institutions that exist to maintain and defend the status quo—or on those who run them.

To suppress the growing social tensions resulting from the decline of American capitalism over the last 30 years, ruling-class politicians (Democrat as well as Republican) have ramped up state repression and vastly expanded the police and prison system. In California, between 1988 and 2008, the number of prison guards increased at four times the rate of other state agencies. In the 2009-2011 City of Oakland budget, the police department eats up an incredible 43 percent of the general fund, compared to a measly 2 percent for community development and human services. An Oakland cop's salary averages an astounding \$162,000 a year.

It is obvious to tens of millions of working-class Americans that capitalism is unable to provide meaningful employment or meet the most elementary needs of the population for housing, healthcare and education. And in this racist system, people of color and youth are always the hardest hit. Today

23 October 2010, Oakland: ILWU-initiated rally for Oscar Grant. Over 100 dockers and many other trade-union militants participated. Former Black Panther leader Bobby Seale was among the speakers.



the official unemployment rate for blacks stands at 15.6 percent (compared to 8.6 percent for whites) while more than 40 percent of black youth are unemployed. As the economy pushes more and more workers downward and jobs dry up, the prison population is rising.

All of the Democrats running for election this November [2010] in Oakland are tied to law enforcement one way or another. Indeed, the majority of them are directly funded by the police and prison guards. Democratic Assemblyman Don Perata, a frontrunner in Oakland's mayoral race, has accepted \$409,000 from the Prison Guards' Union since 2009 and has made it clear that he intends to increase the police budget. Jerry Brown, the Democratic candidate for governor, helped push through the "Police Officer's Bill of Rights" in the 1980s during his first term. This was cited by Mehserle to avoid speaking to BART internal affairs investigators following the murder. Not only has Brown been endorsed by organizations representing cops and screws, he has accepted \$825,000 from them for campaign ads.

Oakland Councilmembers Jean Quan and Rebecca Kaplan are striking more critical poses with calls for increased community "oversight" of the police. But "community control" of the cops will never amount to more than a symbolic gesture, and neither Quan nor Kaplan have any serious intention of trying to rein in the police. Rather than openly talking about the reality of systemic racism, or the need to punish killer cops, they recycle fairy tales about police "serving and protecting" all members of the public equally. This is the kind of pledge of allegiance to the status quo that anyone who wants to pursue a career as a Democratic politician has to make.

Councilmember Desley Brooks, who has been closely associated with the Oscar Grant movement and was one of the main speakers for the "Mothers Taking a Stand" event in September [2010], told protesters commemorating the first anniversary of Oscar's murder outside the Fruitvale BART station that "justice might not look like what you expect!" This amounted to a not-so-veiled appeal for trusting the BART board (which had provided the stage and sound equipment for the event) and accepting the decision engineered by a "justice" system that first moved the trial to Los Angeles and then put together a jury without even a single black on it.

Brooks, along with Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Minister Keith Muhammad of the Nation of Islam and various other black clergy, co-signed an "Open Letter" prior to the demonstration at 14th and Broadway on 8 July [2010], the day the verdict was announced, calling on citizens to "shut down outside agitators." This statement provided political cover for the cops to carry out the mostly random arrests of more than 80 people, including Oakland School Board member Jumoke Hinton Hodge.

No Democratic politician will tell the simple truth that any sort of real "Justice for Oscar Grant" can only be won outside a racist justice system which has long validated state-sanctioned murder. To be a member of the Democratic Party is to be a cog in a political machine committed to the maintenance of a social order based on the exploitation of the working class and the special oppression of black and brown workers who are segregated at the bottom of the economic pyramid. The role of the Democrats is to keep the lid on potential mass struggle by promot-

ing the illusion that electoral politics—organized on the principle that every dollar is equal—can offer an avenue for ordinary people to achieve real change. Reliance on the Democrats will undermine any possibility of winning "Justice for Oscar Grant."

The police, as the front-line defenders of social inequality and capitalist privilege, are the natural enemies of workers and the oppressed. Blacks, other minorities and "illegal" immigrants face continuous intimidation, harassment and violence from cops and other agents of the state. Defenders of capitalism like to portray the police as neutral enforcers of "the law," but everyone knows that laws are written by politicians who are bought and paid for by big business. The role of cops during major labor disputes throughout American history has been to escort scabs, bust picket lines and even, in some cases, murder strikers. In the 1934 West Coast Maritime Strike that founded the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), the police killed seven people coast-wide, including Howard Sperry and Nicholas Bordoise in San Francisco.

In 2003, Oakland police fired wooden bullets and tear gas without warning at ILWU members and anti-war protesters at the Port of Oakland. It later came out that the California Anti-Terrorism Information Center had been intercepting dockers' emails prior to the protest. A few weeks ago, under the guise of "national security," the FBI raided anti-war activists in Minneapolis, Chicago, Michigan and North Carolina, absurdly claiming that supporters of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization and the Arab-American Action Network are "terrorists" because they solidarize with the Colombian FARC guerrillas and the Palestinians.

The bureaucratic leadership of the labor movement eagerly welcomes the affiliation of police "unions." The International Union of Police Associations has belonged to the AFL-CIO since 1979. In a 12 May 2009 letter to the Labor Council, the president of the San Francisco Police

Mumia Salutes Longshore Militant

On 25 February Mumia Abu-Jamal sent the following greeting to Jack Heyman's retirement party.

Long Live John Africa! On a Move! Greetings to all assembled in honor of Jack Heyman, the long-time ILWU organizer and organizer for a half dozen other causes besides. Jack represents the best of the labor tradition, one not bounded by national borders or the other lines we create to keep us corralled into spaces approved by the state. I think the last time I saw him on the tube he was in London before about a million people protesting maybe the stupidest war in generations—Iraq. Jack knows, as do we all, that our borders are a lot like prison walls that keep us divided and isolated. So he spent a lot of time and a lot of energy with his sledgehammer knocking holes in the walls. Oh, by the way, I KNOW, I KNOW that Wisconsin has him chomping at the bit. Anyway, congratulations on his retirement and on a move. This is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Officers' Association reported that in the previous year his organization had donated \$25,000 "to the labor community and members of the San Francisco Labor Council for everything ranging from golf tournaments to installation dinners."

The ILWU's San Francisco Local 10 constitution stipulates that no cop can be admitted to the union. This is a policy that should be adopted by every self-respecting union: *cops out of the labor movement!* Local 10's initiative in launching today's port shutdown and labor-community rally to demand justice for Oscar Grant provides a glimpse of the enormous impact a militant, politically-conscious labor movement could have in waging the struggle against racism and all other forms of social oppression.

Whatever sentence Mehserle gets on 5 November [2010], it won't be enough to pay for his crime. Effective struggle against the racist social order that permits such outrages starts by breaking with the Democratic political agents who administer it, as well as the armed thugs who "serve and protect" it. A labor movement led by people

tied to the ruling class will never be able to launch a serious struggle to advance the interests of its members, much less other victims of capitalist injustice.

In the end, the only way to secure justice for Oscar Grant and the thousands of others murdered by racist cops over the years is by breaking up the existing police force and all the rest of the capitalist apparatus of repression. This requires a social revolution to expropriate the ruling elites and establish a collectively-run, democratically-planned economy in which all important decisions are made, not by a tiny handful of ultra-wealthy individuals, but by workers' councils organized on the principle that those who labor should rule. The International Bolshevik Tendency is committed to the struggle to build a party capable of leading such a revolution and opening the way to establishing an egalitarian, socialist society in every country on the planet.

***Cops out of the labor movement!
Break with the Democrats—
Build a revolutionary workers' party!***

No to Legal Lynching! Mobilizing for Mumia

Mumia Abu-Jamal, the prize-winning journalist and former Black Panther, has been the target of a racist police/judicial vendetta which extends from the Fraternal Order of Police thugs all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. Mumia has been on Pennsylvania's death row since being framed for the December 1981 killing of police officer Daniel Faulkner.

On 9 November 2010, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals held a hearing in Philadelphia to consider whether to reinstate the death penalty or order a new sentencing trial. Supporters of the International Bolshevik Tendency participated in the demonstration outside the courthouse as well as in protests held in various cities around the world.

In Oakland, California our comrades took part in a demonstration of over 150 people initiated by the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal. In London, an IBT supporter addressed a rally of 200 people that was organized by the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Defense Campaign UK. In Wellington, New Zealand IBT comrades initiated a small united-front protest. A similar demonstration was organized in Hamburg by the IBT and the Antikrisen-Bündnis. In Toronto, an IBT-initiated united-front rally, endorsed by over 30 organizations, drew more than 250 participants—the biggest Mumia event held in Canada for 15 years.

As a follow-up, on 13 December the IBT, along with Socialist Action (Canadian affiliate of the United Secretariat) and the anarchist group Common Cause, organized a Toronto showing of *Justice on Trial*, an important new film which presents a great deal of evidence that the courts have refused to hear, including an admission of perjury by a witness as well as photographic proof of police tampering with the crime scene. One thing left out of the film, unfortunately, is the most powerful proof of Mumia's

innocence—the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he and an accomplice shot Faulkner (see our pamphlet, *The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal*). ■

Emergency Protest

STOP THE EXECUTION OF MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

On November 9, the U.S. Third Circuit Court in Philadelphia will hear oral arguments concerning whether Mumia Abu-Jamal, a black journalist and political prisoner who has been on death row for 28 years, should be executed or given a new sentencing trial. If the court rules against Mumia he could soon be executed. According to lead attorney Robert R. Bryan, Mumia is now "in the greatest danger since his 1981 arrest."

In 2001, U.S. District Court Judge William Yohn ruled that before Mumia could be executed there must first be a new sentencing-2001 ruling was affirmed by the U.S. Third Circuit in 2008, but in January 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated that ruling and sent the case back to the Third Circuit for reconsideration.

Mountains of evidence, including witness recantations, a confession from the actual killer and photographic evidence of the crime scene, prove Mumia's innocence. Yet state and federal courts have slammed the door on this outspoken opponent of war, racism, police brutality and corruption.

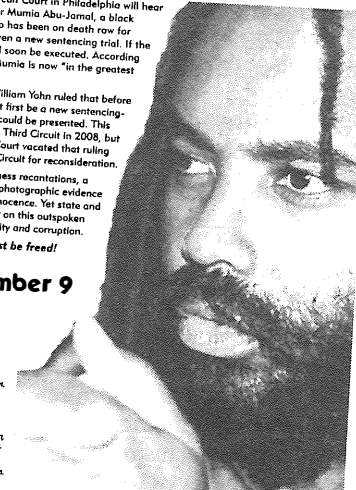
We have to stop them! Mumia must be freed!

**Tuesday, November 9
6 pm**

**U.S. Consulate
360 University Ave
between Dundas & Spadina**

FREE MUMIA! ABOLISH THE RACIST DEATH PENALTY!

November 9 Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal
nor9mumia@gmail.com



United-front poster, 9 November 2010, Toronto

Drop All Charges Now!

Down With the G-20!



GETTY IMAGES

Toronto, 27 June 2010: Riot cops pen protesters on the last day of the G-20 summit

In June 2010, comrades of the International Bolshevik Tendency participated in mass demonstrations against the G-20 summit of imperialist gangsters and leaders of "developing" economies that met in Toronto, Canada. The G-20 message was that "recovery" from a deepening global capitalist meltdown hinges on restoring profitability through savage layoffs, wage cuts and brutal austerity.

An IBT statement widely distributed at the protests linked the G-20 gathering to the unprecedented ecological disaster inflicted in the Gulf of Mexico by British Petroleum, and observed that:

"capitalism is intrinsically hostile to the interests of the vast majority of humanity. Most people who identify themselves as 'anti-capitalists' already know this and have concluded that appeals to the ruling class are completely useless, as are any attempts to achieve meaningful change by working within the system."

We also pointed out that amorphous and disorganized "anti-capitalist" sentiment is not enough:

"Two decades ago, after the fall of the Soviet Union, bourgeois ideologues were trumpeting the 'death of communism' and proclaiming that globalized capitalism represented the 'end of history.' It is now obvious to tens of millions of people even in the imperialist heartlands that the 'free market' is a rigged game. The only way to guarantee a secure and sustainable existence for all is to expropriate big business and construct a rational, centrally-planned, producer-run economic system where human need, not private profit, determines social priorities. This requires building an international, revolutionary socialist party

dedicated to the overthrow of all existing capitalist states and the dissolution of the cops, the military and all the other institutional mechanisms that 'serve and protect' privilege and inequality."

Hundreds of young people, spearheaded by the anarchist Black Bloc, broke away from the main trade-union march on 26 June 2010, attempting to get through a police cordon and approach the site of the summit. Several cop cars were burned and shop windows broken. Police responded with random violence and unlawful detentions. In all, some 1,100 people were rounded up in the biggest mass arrest in Canadian history. Most were held in an improvised detention center and subsequently released without charge.

In a 27 June 2010 statement, we called for dropping the charges and noted:

"The G-20 presides over a global order in which tens of thousands of children starve every day. During the last decade, the imperialist powers at the core of the G-20 (including Canada) have killed hundreds of thousands of people in dirty neocolonial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Emerging from fancy 'working dinners' where plans are fine-tuned for how best to offload the global capitalist crisis onto the backs of working people and the poor, the imperialist criminals and their spinmasters cynically denounce the 'violence' of a few broken windows and torched cops cars. Their hypocrisy knows no bounds."

In the aftermath of the demonstrations there was widespread outrage at the police-state measures, yet many ostensibly Marxist organizations echoed the pro-capitalist

social democrats of the New Democratic Party (NDP) and denounced the “violence” of the youthful militants of the Black Bloc.

The following is a 3 July 2010 letter sent by an IBT comrade to “Fightback,” Canadian affiliate of the International Marxist Tendency.

Comrades,

On 30 June [2010], four supporters of the International Bolshevik Tendency attended the “townhall” meeting on police repression during the G-20 that you co-sponsored with the Esplanade Community Group and the Toronto Young New Democrats. As we were not called on during the discussion round, we are writing to clarify our rather sharp differences with the leadership of Fightback and the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) on this important question.

To begin with the obvious: the crackdown on dissent we have witnessed in the past week powerfully vindicates the Marxist proposition that the capitalist state is essentially a weapon wielded by the exploiters against their victims. The police aggression toward bystanders and protesters alike—with Québécois youth particularly targeted—was the largest display of state repression seen in Canada for decades. Tens of thousands of people have seen with their own eyes how the “fundamental rights and freedoms” supposedly guaranteed by law can be arbitrarily (and secretly) shredded at the whim of the ruling class.

The duty of the left and workers’ movement is to demand the freedom of *all* those arrested and thrown into the overcrowded cages at the “Torontonamo” detention center and the dropping of *all* charges—including those laid for breaking windows or torching cop cars. Marxists do not share the illusion that trashing a few symbols of corporate and/or state power will somehow pave the way for a revolutionary challenge to capitalism. But we understand the anger against the manifest injustice of the capitalist world order that motivates young militants, and we seek to win the best of them to a strategy that can actually succeed.

Echoing Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, who denounced “Black Bloc terrorists” for the trivial property damage (*Toronto Sun*, 29 June [2010]), various liberal commentators have decried the “violence” and criticized the cops for not going after the Black Bloc “hooligans” hard enough. At the Monday, 28 June rally to demand the release of the prisoners, Naomi Klein told the cops: “Don’t play public relations—do your goddamned job!” NDP leader Jack Layton earlier declared that “vandalism is criminal and totally unacceptable” (*National Post*, 27 June [2010]).

Marxists do not advocate the tactics of the Black Bloc because, however emotionally fulfilling for the individuals involved, they are at bottom an expression of frustration by powerless and socially isolated (if personally courageous) militants. Their focus on striking symbolic blows against the oppressors is conditioned by the absence of a mass working-class movement with a level of political consciousness sufficient to potentially overturn capitalist rule.

This issue has a history that stretches back to the anarchist “propaganda of the deed” notion of the late 19th century. Then, as now, the capitalist rulers made use of isolated actions by individual militants (sometimes instigated by police *agents provocateurs*) as a justification for repression. Yet anyone with an ounce of revolutionary commitment knows that the *real* criminals are the imperialist mass mur-

derers who were wined and dined behind the G-20 security fence, and that the young militants who aspired to pull it down are on *our side* of the class line.

The Marxist position on isolated acts of “left-wing terrorism”—a category that could hardly be stretched to include the relatively minor property damage that took place during the G-20—was summed up by Leon Trotsky as follows:

“We Marxists consider the tactic of individual terror inexpedient in the tasks of the liberating struggle of the proletariat as well as oppressed nationalities. A single isolated hero cannot replace the masses. But we understand only too clearly the inevitability of such convulsive acts of despair and vengeance. All our emotions, all our sympathies are with the self-sacrificing avengers even though they have been unable to discover the correct road.”

—“For Grynspan,” February 1939

The response of much of the self-proclaimed “revolutionary” left to the recent events in Toronto has been rather different. A Socialist Action leaflet observed:

“The anger of the Bloc-istas against the social injustices perpetuated by the G20 is understandable. But their tactics are worse than deplorable. They proved to be straight men for Harper’s predictable punch lines about how ‘security’ spending was justified. The Bloc-istas also gave the cops ammunition to brutalize and jail over 900 innocents, using expanded police powers of search and arrest granted by a secret Ontario Liberal Cabinet decision just weeks prior to the summits.

“Now that a majority of the 900-plus detainees have been released without charge, questions are multiplying. Why did 20,000 cops, including literally hundreds of them within spitting distance of burning vehicles and shattering store windows, just let it happen? Was it an exercise in policing or PR? And if cop claims are true that they had infiltrated the Bloc-istas, how many police were involved in prompting, as opposed to just spying on, the planners of mayhem? NDP and Labour leaders should be expressing rage over these issues instead of obsessing over petty property damage.”

—“Summits of Deceit and Repression,”
distributed on 30 June [2010]

The description of the Black Bloc’s actions as “worse than deplorable,” because the cops used them as a pretext for rounding up “innocents,” aligns Socialist Action’s position with Jack Layton’s denunciation of “criminal” behavior. There is a logic to politics, and the NDP’s role as a prop for the capitalist status quo requires those who want to find a home in the party of the labor aristocracy to accept its bourgeois distinction between “innocents” and “criminals” among the protesters.

The leadership of Fightback has been even worse than Socialist Action in its repudiation of the young militants: “The labour movement must now fully denounce the black blockers and draw a dividing line—they are not welcome in our movement or on our demonstrations” (www.marxist.ca, 27 June [2010]). A few days later you went further: “We state that the Black Bloc are not part of our movement and there is no difference between them and police provocateurs. As seen in other protests, some of them may in fact be police agents” (www.marxist.ca, 30 June [2010]). In your 27 June statement you even claimed that: “The workers at Novotel, the trade unionists at Queen’s Park, and the peaceful demonstrators downtown were all beaten, abused,



GETTY IMAGES

26 June 2010: police abandoned several vehicles in downtown Toronto

and arrested *because of* the black bloc..." (emphasis added). Suggesting that, without the Black Bloc, the police would have respected everyone's "civil rights" can only sow dangerous illusions in the bourgeois state. Marxism teaches that the way the police treat strikers, minorities, leftists, etc. is not determined by legal niceties but rather by the exigencies of maintaining capitalist domination and control.

Fightback's apparent willingness to blame the Black Bloc for the behavior of the cops contrasts with various accounts in the right-wing press. A columnist in the *Toronto Sun* (30 June [2010]) headlined her report of how a bicycle cop gave her a "bruised elbow and tricep" at the peaceful 28 June demonstration: "Police brutality—on 2 wheels." The "Report on Business" section of the *Globe and Mail* (28 June [2010]) contained an article in which the author, complaining that the police heavy-handedness was "bad for business," sardonically commented:

"Come to Toronto, for work or pleasure, and enjoy having your civil liberties trampled and your right to free expression stifled. Avail yourself of our hospitality in a crowded detention pen, with free stale buns and water when (or if) your hosts get around to it. Partake of an invigorating massage, courtesy of police officers wielding truncheons. The best part—there's no charge! Except that seems to mean the cops will pick you up, hold you, then let you go without ever following through criminal charges or prosecution, suggesting they had nothing on you in the first place."

The refusal to defend the Black Bloc is particularly scandalous in light of the IMT's history of supporting police "unions" and "strikes." A year ago, Fightback's own Alex Grant wrote that the "lower ranks of the police and army are made up of working class boys in uniform" (www.marxist.ca, 28 May 2009). Rob Sewell, a leading member of the IMT's British section, spoke glowingly of a "sea of burly blokes with white base-ball caps" in describing a march by London police to demand higher wages for their thuggery (www.marxist.com, 29 January 2008). The IMT's view of cops as "workers in uniform" is not only a difficult pill to

swallow for those protesters who fell under their batons—it flatly contradicts Trotsky's position that a "worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state is a bourgeois cop, not a worker" (*What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat*, January 1932).

Your demand that the subjectively revolutionary youths who smashed a few windows during the G-20 be driven out of the movement is as alien to Marxism as your claim that the cops who rounded up and imprisoned protesters are simply "workers in uniform." This is not Leninism, but social-democratic reformism. The first step for members of Fightback who are serious about building a revolutionary socialist party is to renounce this position and demand that *all* charges against *all* G-20 protesters be dropped *immediately*. ■

Drop the Charges Against G-20 Protesters!

Approximately 1,100 people were arrested during the Toronto G-20 protests. While most were released without charge, some 300 were hauled into court. Many charges were subsequently dropped, but 97 cases are outstanding. Alex Hundert, who already faces three counts of conspiracy, was outrageously jailed for three months for supposedly breaching a bail condition against participation in public demonstrations by appearing at a seminar on the G-20 held at Ryerson University in Toronto in September 2010. We demand that all charges be dropped against Hundert and all those arrested during the G-20 summit.

The IBT has contributed to the G-20 defense fund, and we encourage our readers to do likewise. Donations can be sent to:

Toronto Community Mobilization Network
360A Bloor Street West
P.O. Box 68557, Toronto, ON M5S 1X0

Checks should be earmarked "G-20 Legal Defence."

Class Struggle...

continued from page 56

a general strike—the necessary response to Sarkozy's offensive. As the struggle radicalized, Bernard Thibault, leader of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT—traditionally seen as the most militant), denounced the idea of a general strike: "To me it's a slogan that's completely abstract and abstruse [...] it doesn't correspond to the way in which you improve the relation of forces" (AFP, 7 October 2010). Instead of launching a serious struggle, the *intersyndicale*, which did not even call for scrapping the pension bill, initiated staggered "days of action" to allow militants to vent their anger and pressure the government to include them in negotiating the details of the "reform." Their behavior was applauded by Prime Minister François Fillon, who declared: "the leadership of the big union organizations is being responsible for the moment" (AFP, 5 October 2010).

The political counterparts of the union bureaucrats in the Socialist Party (PS) nominally opposed raising the retirement age, but supported measures designed to reduce pension benefits. The Parti de Gauche (PG), a recent left split from the PS led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, proposed holding a referendum as an alternative to settling the issue in the streets. The decrepit French Communist Party, which is in an electoral bloc with the PG, backed the leaders of the *intersyndicale* and suggested a few minor reforms in parliament.

On what is considered the "far left," the ostensibly Trotskyist *Lutte ouvrière* (LO), whose policy was one of wholesale adaptation to the labor bureaucracy, rationalized its capitulation with predictions that the union leaders would inevitably be forced to adopt a more confrontational policy in order to retain credibility with their base (*Lutte de Classe*, October 2010). But in the absence of a militant alternative leadership, the bureaucrats did not feel compelled to posture to the left, despite growing sentiment among the ranks for some sort of general strike. At one point, pollsters reported that 54 percent of the population said they would back "a general strike like in 1995" (LeParisien.fr, 14 October 2010). But when no general strike materialized, LO blamed the ranks rather than the leadership of the *intersyndicale*:

"Apart from those in the refineries, the majority of workers in large industrial enterprises were not drawn into the strike. The walkouts were, in the private companies, only a technical complement intended to allow participation in the demonstrations. They were not the beginning of a strike movement, let alone explosive strikes leading to the general strike.

"It is childish to denounce the union confederations for not having made such calls. They, in this case the CGT and CFDT—for SUD and, in another sense, FO were all the more inclined to radical phrases inasmuch as they had neither the necessary strength nor authority to do what they claimed would be useful—obviously had no desire to pursue a policy of preparing a general strike. But they held nothing back either, because, in this case, they had nothing to hold back.

"Leading the showdown with Sarkozy through demonstrations suited the union leadership. But it also suited the workers. These were, once again, the limits of the movement."

—*Lutte de Classe*, November 2010

LO even took the opportunity to congratulate the labor bureaucrats on a job well done: "The union centrals, by their successive calls to demonstrate, allowed the movement to take place" (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 12 November 2010). In drawing up a balance sheet of the struggle, LO derided the demand for a general strike as "empty words" and characterized the defeat as: "A success for the union apparatuses that was not achieved to the detriment of the workers" (*Lutte de Classe*, December 2010). It is hard to know whether this is simply a reflection of profound political demoralization or whether LO's leadership is really so brain-dead that it is no longer able to distinguish between victory and defeat. What is certain is that French workers cannot afford many more "successes" of this sort.

LO's chief "far left" rival, the reformist Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste (NPA), struck a somewhat more militant posture, and at one point even proposed strike committees and a general strike. But it was obvious from the mild tone of its criticism of the union bureaucracy, and its speculation that the "days of action" might somehow turn out to be springboards for more radical initiatives, that the NPA's "general strike" talk was really only aimed at giving its essentially parliamentary orientation a left cover. A serious effort to promote a general strike would have required a sharp attack on the labor tops as collaborationist saboteurs, as well as a struggle to break their organizational stranglehold. This would probably have been resisted by many of the NPA's union supporters, who do not want to jeopardize their comfortable positions in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy.

The terminology the NPA employed and the politics it put forward were overtly reformist: "Cutting into profits

1917
JOURNAL DE LA TENDANCE BOLCHEVIQUE INTERNATIONALE
2010
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« Regarder la réalité en face; ne pas chercher la ligne de moindre résistance; supporter les choses par leur nom; dire la vérité aux masses, quelque amère qu'elle soit; ne pas craindre les obstacles; être rigoureux dans les petites choses comme dans les grandes; oser, quand vient l'heure de l'action, se fier aux règles de la Quatrième Internationale. »

Les pablistes français renoncent au trotskysme
NPA : Nouveau Parti réformiste

Le texte suivant est une traduction des extraits d'un article de 1917, édition de langue anglaise, n° 32, 2010.
Pour être réellement « anticapitaliste », il faut en dernière analyse qu'une organisation se base sur un programme socialiste révolutionnaire. Le Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste (NPA), basé sur la Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR), l'ancienne section principale du « Secrétariat unifié de la Quatrième Internationale » pseudo-trotskyste, ne prétend même pas respecter la tradition politique de Marx, Lénine et Trotsky. Au cours de l'interview dans laquelle il a proposé publiquement pour la première fois la création du NPA, Olivier Besancenot a expliqué le caractère explicitement anti-trotskyste de ce dernier: « Si [le NPA] voit le jour, la LCR n'a plus

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REUTERS

22 October 2010: CGT workers in general assembly vote to continue strike

and sharing work time to allow everyone to benefit from our retirement—it's not utopia, it's not even socialism, but we must impose it by inverting the relation of forces" (*Tout est à nous!*, 16 September 2010). The NPA is a left social-democratic organization that does not set itself the task of overthrowing, but rather reforming, capitalism. Its chief objective is to gain enough electoral support to secure a place in a new popular-front government and thereby share responsibility for the administration of the state machinery of the French bourgeoisie.

The following is the text of a speech given by IBT comrade Josh Decker in Toronto on 17 September 2010.

France's capitalist rulers are currently engaged in an attempt to roll back many of the gains won through workers' struggles in the past and to free themselves from any obligation to pay decent wages, offer job security or provide social benefits like healthcare and pensions. Karl Marx observed that class conflict is the motor force of historical development. While reformists try to paper over the social contradictions that produce class struggle, Marxists seek to help working people and the oppressed find the means to win the class war by seizing state power and reconstructing society along socialist lines.

Historically, class conflict in France has tended to be rather sharp. In his introduction to the third edition of Marx's classic work, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Frederick Engels observed:

"France is the land, where, more than anywhere else, the historical class struggles were each time fought out to a decision, and where, consequently, the changing political forms... have been stamped in the sharpest outlines.... France demolished feudalism in the Great Revolution and established the unalloyed rule of the bourgeoisie

in a classical purity unequalled by any other European land. And the struggle of the upward-striving proletariat against the ruling bourgeoisie appeared here in an acute form unknown elsewhere."

The modern communist movement has various progenitors, including Gracchus Babeuf's ill-fated "Conspiracy of Equals," which stood on the extreme left of the radical-bourgeois French Revolution of the 1790s. This historically premature and unsustainable appearance of egalitarian collectivism was soon submerged by the wave of reaction unleashed by Thermidor, which eventually produced the Emperor Napoleon and later saw the restoration of the monarchy.

Yet the ideals espoused by Babeuf and his comrades lived on in the collective imagination of the oppressed and their champions. In the first half of the 19th century, France emerged as the center of what Marx and Engels called Utopian Socialism—a petty-bourgeois doctrine developed by Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Etienne Cabet that aimed at attenuating the contradictions of nascent capitalist industrialization. Another French forerunner of modern socialism, Auguste Blanqui, who had a conspiratorial conception of social revolution, was also influenced by Babeuf.

The shortcomings of the early socialist movement were starkly revealed by the revolutions of 1848, in which it failed to mobilize the proletariat as an independent political force. The aspirations of the French working class were pushed aside as the bourgeoisie consolidated a republic tailored to its own requirements. A few years later, Louis Napoleon, Bonaparte's nephew, seized power in a coup d'état and established the Second Empire.

The socialist left retreated, but it did not disappear. Two decades later, in March 1871, the Parisian proletariat seized power for the first time in history. Among the participants

in the "Paris Commune" were Blanquists, anarchist supporters of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, as well as a handful of adherents of the Marxist wing of the International Workingmen's Association. The Communards made many mistakes, and were brutally crushed after only two months, but much was learned from their experience. Marx celebrated them as heroes who had "stormed heaven," and asserted that the government they created was the world's first glimpse of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

It was 46 years before the working class—this time in Russia—again took power. The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 had a profound impact on the workers' movement in every country around the globe. In 1920, a majority of the French social democratic party (the SFIO) formed the Communist Party of France. The rightwing minority kept the name SFIO.

The isolation and economic backwardness of Soviet Russia led to the emergence of a parasitic and oppressive bureaucracy headed by Joseph Stalin which appropriated political power in 1924. Lenin's partner Leon Trotsky, who had taken a close interest in the development of the French Communist Party, was exiled as the Left Opposition was sidelined. The Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union was mirrored in the Communist International, and the revolutionary capacity of its various national sections was incrementally destroyed.

But the Communist Parties retained the loyalty of hundreds of thousands of the best proletarian militants across Europe, including in France. In 1936, in the midst of the Great Depression, a series of mass strikes and factory occupations erupted in France, terrifying the bourgeoisie and creating the possibility of a working-class seizure of power. Instead of taking advantage of this revolutionary opportunity, the leaders of the workers' movement—the social democratic SFIO and the Stalinized Communist Party (PCF)—formed a "Popular Front" government with the bourgeois Radical party supposedly to defend "democratic" capitalism against fascism. This counterrevolutionary policy of open class collaboration was directed by Moscow as part of a futile campaign to win allies among the "democratic" imperialists to hedge against the threat of attack by Nazi Germany. Stalin's popular-front strategy short-circuited the struggle for socialism, which was a real historical possibility, and instead opened the door to the barbarism of WWII and the bloody invasion of the Soviet Union.

The French workers' movement suffered a major blow with the German occupation in 1940 and the creation of the pro-Nazi Vichy regime. Following the war, however, it sprang back to life, as workers, many of whom had fought in the underground resistance, reconstituted their unions. The reformist political parties also reemerged, and the PCF, which joined the bourgeois government, was particularly important in restabilizing capitalist rule in the face of a restive working class. The Stalinists' slogan for tamping down workers' struggles was: "Produce first, make demands later!" The bourgeoisie made many concessions to the working class in this period in order to prevent social revolution—including laying the foundations for the postwar "welfare state."

Twenty-odd years later, in May-June 1968, the French working class again rose in a mass general strike that shook the Fifth Republic to its foundations. Millions of workers and students took to the streets, occupied factories

and erected barricades, sending shock waves around the world. France had once again entered a pre-revolutionary situation. But also once again, the PCF and its allies among the "left" trade-union bureaucrats played a key role in defusing the struggle and restoring bourgeois order. In the following period new concessions were granted, including higher wages and improved pension benefits.

End of the 'Trente Glorieuses'

Despite the dissipation of the revolutionary energy of May-June 1968, much of the French working class continued to identify with the tradition of revolutionary struggle and the goal of socialism. There is a "red thread" woven through French history—the living memory of the experience of class struggle stretching back to the Paris Commune, 1848 and 1789 that has been passed on from one generation of fighters to the next. While this "memory" has become faded and warped by reformist/Stalinist influences, it remains a real factor in shaping French social and political conflicts to this day.

When the post-WWII economic expansion (known in France as the "Thirty Glorious Years") ended in the 1970s, governments across the advanced capitalist world began implementing "neoliberal" austerity programs. The French bourgeoisie was just as eager as the American or British to boost capitalist profitability by driving down working-class living standards with layoffs, wage reductions and cuts in social spending. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher won a major victory by smashing the miners' strike in 1985, and in the U.S., Ronald Reagan spurred a new wave of capitalist attacks by busting the air traffic controllers' union in 1981. But in France, the state had considerably less success.

I don't want to paint too rosy a picture here. The workers' movement in France has been pushed back a great distance since the 1970s. In the late 1940s, 40 percent of French workers belonged to a union. By the early 1970s, the figure had declined to roughly 25 percent, and today it stands at something like 8 percent, most of which is in the public sector. However, unlike in North America, there are no union shops and no dues checkoffs, so that counts for more than the 12 percent of American and 30 percent of Canadian workers who belong to a union. Moreover many radical workers remain unorganized because of union-busting in the private sector or because they are repulsed by the treachery of the conservative labor bureaucracy.

The decline in unionization in France—in both absolute and relative terms—is partly attributable to deindustrialization, but it is also linked to the ever more overt class-collaborationist policies of the trade-union bureaucracy and its increasing integration with the capitalist state. This rightward devolution is paralleled by the trajectory of the PCF and the Socialist Party (PS—the descendant of the SFIO), which, while in government at various times since 1981, have implemented a series of austerity measures.

Class Conflict in the 'Neoliberal' Era

A central battleground in the class struggle in France has been the complicated system of pay-as-you-go pensions. For more than a quarter century, the capitalists have been attempting to "reform" pensions, which are a major working-class gain. In 1983, French workers who had made 37.5 years of contributions were able to retire with a "full" pension at the age of 60. A decade later, in 1993,

the union leadership permitted the conservative government of Edouard Balladur to significantly reduce the payouts from the main private-sector workers' scheme and gradually increase the contribution period by 2.5 years. Essentially, private-sector workers were being asked to extend their working lives to collect smaller pensions.

Balladur's reform did not affect civil servants or employees of large (mostly state-owned) enterprises. In 1995, his successor, Alain Juppé, sought to "align" those pension schemes with that of the private sector—all in the name of "justice" and "equity," of course. The Juppé Plan, which also included a regressive overhaul of the health-care system, ignited a mass movement in November-December 1995. A series of powerful labor actions, centered on a three-week public transportation strike, and millions-strong demonstrations forced the government to back down on the pension overhaul, though the rest of the Juppé Plan survived, since the labor bureaucracy sabotaged the movement for a general strike that had emerged at the base (see 1917 No.18).

One of the most significant features of this strike wave was the practice of workplace "general assemblies" (AGs)—rank-and-file meetings open to all workers at a given enterprise. The AGs are a traditional organizational form for labor struggles in France that give workers, whether unionized or not, the chance to vote on their own strike tactics, and thus to potentially challenge the sabotage of union leaders at least on the level of a particular enterprise. AGs do not solve the problem of misleadership by the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, the defeat of which is ultimately a political, and not an organizational, problem. Indeed, they were not able to prevent the bureaucrats from winding down the movement before it had achieved its broader goal, but they did provide a forum where workers could discuss the lessons of the betrayal.

The struggles of November-December 1995, the most important since May-June 1968, shook up the entire social and political situation and played a role in the fall of the right-wing government a year and a half later and its replacement by a popular-front coalition of Socialists, Communists, Greens and other small bourgeois parties.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy entertains CGT leader Bernard Thibault at presidential palace, January 2010



The so-called "Plural Left" government, which remained in power until 2002, carried out a massive program of privatizations, but was forced to back down from a tentative plan to increase the pension contribution period for public-sector workers.

By the spring 2002 presidential election, the Plural Left was so discredited that PCF leader Robert Hue scored an embarrassing 3.4 percent, while the PS candidate, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, got only 16.2 percent and failed to qualify for the runoff election. The second round thus pitted right-wing President Jacques Chirac against Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front. The flipside of France's more radical workers' movement is that, in response, the fascists and extreme-right racists have been able to gain a significant hearing among middle-class layers (and even backward elements of the working class). With the support of most left-wing parties, which absurdly claimed to be defending the republic against a fascist takeover, Chirac easily won the election with 82.2 percent of the vote. One of the most important developments in the 2002 election was the willingness of disaffected PCF and PS supporters to vote for two ostensibly Trotskyist candidates—Olivier Besancenot of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) and Arlette Laguiller of Workers Struggle (LO), who got a combined total of 10 percent.

The next year, in 2003, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and his social affairs minister, François Fillon, pushed through a pension "reform" to increase contribution years for civil servants from 37.5 to 40 by 2008. The law also affected the private sector by mandating that the new "harmonized" contribution period rise to 41 years by 2012. There was considerable active resistance from the working class to these measures, but the union bureaucracy managed to contain it by organizing ineffective staggered "days of action" (strikes and demonstrations) intended to allow the base to blow off steam while ensuring that the labor tops retained their seat at the (concession) bargaining table.

Workers in the education, rail, postal, energy and other sectors voted in AGs to extend their strike activity, but little came of this in the absence of a general strike call from the traditionally largest and most militant union, the General Confederation of Labor (CGT). In this case, CGT leader Bernard Thibault explicitly rejected any pretense of serious class struggle and called instead for a petition to ask parliamentarians to postpone the vote on the pension bill. Fillon, who is today the prime minister, praised Thibault for his "responsible attitude" (*Le Monde*, 15 June 2003).

In late October 2005, when police chased two teenagers to their deaths in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, suburban ghettos across the country erupted in weeks of rioting. Suffering from vicious racism and chronically high unemployment, the impoverished Arab and black ghetto residents burned cars, attacked government buildings and clashed with police. Nicolas Sarkozy, then interior minister, declared a state of emergency and echoed the National Front in describing the rioters as "scum." The leadership of the unions, as well as the reformist PS and PCF, made some criticisms of the government's response, but their attitude toward the suburban population has long been tainted with racist disdain.

The government responded to the riots with heavy police



PHOTO THÉQUE ROUGE—JMB

Mass demonstration in Paris, 12 October 2010

repression but also with an “Equality of Opportunity” bill to, among other things, reinstate night work for 15-year-olds and deny family allowance benefits to parents whose children skip school. Particularly cynical was Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin’s proposal to reduce youth unemployment by creating a First Job Contract (CPE), under which workers could be fired without cause anytime during the first two years of employment—a major revision of France’s labor laws. This sparked an eruption of mass mobilizations and strikes across the country between February and April 2006. On 28 March the total number of protesters was estimated at some 3 million, and a similar number turned out on 4 April. I was in Paris for the demonstration that day, and there were as many as 700,000 people on the streets—it was by far the biggest demo I’ve ever been on. The students and youth were particularly vibrant and full of life, but the fix was already in, as the CGT leaders and company were ready to pull the plug on the movement. In the end the government was forced to scrap the CPE, but much of the rest of the “Equality of Opportunity” law remained (see 1917 No.29).

The next year the right-wing government finally managed to impose the public-sector pension “reform” on workers in the large enterprises (rail, Paris transit and energy). On 14 November 2007, on the eve of a scheduled public transport strike, the CGT’s Thibault met with Labor Minister Xavier Bertrand and agreed to company-by-company negotiations. This was deliberately intended to short-

circuit the possibility of a concerted struggle to defeat the measure. Once again the grateful capitalists were moved to praise their labor lackey, and Claude Guéant, a presidential spokesperson, declared that “Bernard Thibault has seen to it that the crisis can be resolved from the first day of conflict” (*Le Monde*, 15 November 2007). Thibault handed Sarkozy a major victory, allowing him to impose the same reactionary takeaway that Juppé had attempted 12 years earlier.

Capitalist Crisis & Working-Class Resistance

Unlike in Canada or the U.S., in France the bourgeoisie is very much aware of the possibility that the working class could seek a revolutionary solution if the situation becomes too desperate. During the economic meltdown of September 2008, Sarkozy felt it necessary to declare: “the crisis is not a crisis of capitalism” (*LeFigaro.fr*, 25 September 2008). In response to downsizing and looming austerity, the French working class began to mobilize for strike action. Throughout the first half of 2009, there were cases of workers occupying factories, ransacking government buildings and temporarily detaining their bosses. Former Prime Minister de Villepin warned of a “risk of revolution”: “[People have the] feeling that we’re doing a lot for the banks, we’re doing a lot to help businesses but that the workers themselves are paying the costs of the crisis, that it’s always the same ones who suffer” (*LePoint.fr*, 19 April 2009).



JEAN-PAUL PELLISSIER—REUTERS

Mobilizations drew millions of people of all ages into the streets of France

The reason that FOX News and its ilk have such a particular antipathy for France has a lot to do with the fact that Margaret Thatcher's aphorism that "there is no alternative" to brutal capitalist exploitation never gained much traction among the French masses. A poll commissioned by the BBC World Service to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall last November [2009] found that only "11% of those questioned across 27 countries said that [free-market capitalism] was working well" compared to 23 percent who felt it was "fatally flawed and [that] a different economic system is needed." This latter sentiment, which was shared by only 13 percent of respondents in the U.S. and 20 percent in Canada, was supported by 43 percent in France. This provides a rough index of the relative level of class consciousness. What was also interesting in the BBC account is that there were higher levels of anti-capitalist sentiment in France than in Mexico, Brazil or any other country mentioned.

While many French workers have a basic idea of how a "different economic system" to replace free-market irrationality might work, it is important not to exaggerate the likelihood of revolutionary struggle erupting in the near future. The semi-spontaneous strike wave of 2009 was chiefly defensive in character, and in many places focused on demands for things like better severance pay. While the level of militancy and degree of participation indicated the potential for more serious struggle, the union leadership was once again able to contain the discontent.

Instead of organizing a general strike (like the successful ones that erupted in the French colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe in early 2009), Thibault and his cronies resorted to yet another series of isolated "days of action," the highpoint of which came on 19 March 2009, when 3 million people participated. The level of activity declined afterward, though there were heated conflicts throughout the summer. Sarkozy began to prepare another attack on pensions in a new round of austerity in 2010.

That round commenced this past February [2010], when talks with the unions began. A national day of action was organized on 23 March and two more were held in May. In June the government announced it was opting to raise the official retirement age to 62 by 2018 and to increase the contribution period to 41.5 years by 2020. The CGT leaders, and most of the other unions, which formally oppose the age hike, are meekly requesting "real negotiations" to "rewrite" the text (*Le Monde*, 1 July 2010). On 24 June, as many as 2 million people were in the streets protesting the pension reform, which, while important in its own right, has also become a symbol for generalized capitalist austerity.

The labor bureaucrats decided to hold the next day of action a full two and a half months later, on 7 September, when parliament began debating the bill. I and other IBT comrades were on the demonstration in Paris, which drew up to 270,000 protesters (out of a total of 2.7 million across France). Anecdotally, no one we talked to seemed to disagree with the idea that a general strike is the only way to

force the government to back down. While we can't know what's going through people's minds, I think it's safe to say that a clear call for a general strike from the CGT would be immediately and enthusiastically picked up by the base of the unions and the wider workers' movement, which wants to smash Sarkozy, but lacks a class-struggle leadership willing to do what is necessary.

The CGT bureaucrats are fond of saying that a general strike is not decreed, it is built. It is certainly true that an authoritative force in the labor movement with influence in all industries and parts of the country is required to build a general strike, but that's precisely what the CGT tops are trying to prevent. Instead, there is another day of action planned for next Thursday, 23 September. These days of action are not *building* toward a general strike—they are *in place* of one. Barring a rank-and-file revolt that sets off a general strike (which would, initially at least, be over the heads of the national union leadership), it seems likely the government is going to score a victory: it will get its pension reform, with perhaps a few minor concessions. This would represent a serious blow, demoralizing at least the softer layer of working-class militants at a time when further austerity measures are being planned.

Racist Anti-Immigrant Campaign

In France, as elsewhere, the ruling class has sought to blame many of the ill effects of the global economic downturn on the most vulnerable sectors of society. In late July [2010], Sarkozy delivered a major "law and order" speech in Grenoble, where less than two weeks earlier riots had broken out when a young man of North African descent, Karim Boudouda, who was suspected of robbing a casino, was killed in a gunfight with the cops. The authorities responded by locking down the neighborhood of Villeneuve, home to many Arabs and blacks. The residents of Villeneuve, who already suffer from poverty, high unemployment, widespread anti-social violence and other social pathologies produced by institutional racism under capitalism, had to endure Sarkozy's insulting pronouncement that the riots could be attributed to "insufficiently regulated immigration." The recent ban of the burqa, which supposedly reinforces secularism and women's rights, is in fact an expression of the same racist conception.

Sarkozy announced his intent to table legislation to strip French citizenship from foreign-born citizens convicted of harming a police officer or practicing polygamy (*New York Times*, 9 August 2010). The legislation also abolishes the right of immigrants' children born in France to citizenship at age 18 if they are convicted of a crime as a minor. These measures, which are almost identical to proposals made by the National Front during the 2007 presidential campaign, led an FN leader to comment that Sarkozy's initiative "lends legitimacy to our arguments" (*Le Monde*, 15 August 2010).

Sarkozy's proposals, which clearly violate the first article of the French constitution supposedly guaranteeing "equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin," are pitched as necessary in a "national war" (*Le Monde*, 3 August 2010) against criminal elements. Everyone recognizes that the targets are Arabs and blacks, who are not really considered part of the French "nation." Sarkozy's vicious campaign to strip citizenship from the children of

immigrants parallels the actions of the Vichy regime, which during WWII deprived some 15,000 people, mostly Jews, of French citizenship.

Sarkozy also stepped up measures to "evacuate" Roma (or "Gypsies") from informal camps and squats inhabited by an estimated 15,000 men, women and children. Hundreds of Roma have been "voluntarily" shipped back to Romania and Bulgaria. Even before Sarkozy's pronouncement, many Roma had been deported. In 2009, almost 11,000 Roma were kicked out of France. And the "evacuation" of camps, too, is nothing new. The local governments that have initiated many of these attacks have often been composed of left-wing parties. On 6 July [2010], for instance, police in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis, which is run by the Communist Party, evacuated 150 Roma from their shantytown. On 1 September, when Martine Aubry, the leader of the Socialist Party who is also the mayor of the city of Lille, ordered the local police not to carry out any more expulsions, Sarkozy responded by pointing out that in April she had asked authorities to expel a Roma camp in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, a suburb of Lille (*Le Monde*, 3 September 2010).

To their credit, many French leftists have come out in opposition to these vicious attacks. Two weeks ago, on 4 September, a total of 100,000 demonstrators in 140 towns and cities across the country marched to protest the government's anti-immigrant repression and the campaign against the Roma.

For a Revolutionary Workers' Party!

The situation in the French workers' movement provides a clear example of what Trotsky called a "crisis of leadership." The official leaders of the working class—both in the unions and the reformist workers' parties—offer occasional verbal criticism of Sarkozy's attacks, but their actions demonstrate that they are more concerned about propping up the capitalist status quo than advancing the interests of working people.

The three main "far left" groups support the labor bureaucracy—some openly and some with a bit of criticism. None of them are making any attempt to build serious resistance, much less organize a fight for militant leadership in the unions. The organization associated with the late Pierre Lambert (today called the Independent Workers Party [POI]), which long claimed to be "anti-revisionist," has fallen so far as to embrace French nationalism. The POI falsely asserts that the French bourgeoisie's anti-working-class attacks are caused by pressure from the European Union and the United States.

LO, a group that long prided itself on its proletarian orientation, pushes bland reformism and low-grade class-collaborationist electoralism at the local and regional levels. The LCR, which for the past decade has been the most dynamic force on the "far left," recently rebranded itself the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) and formally repudiated the nominal Trotskyism which it had long espoused. The NPA has spent the past year signing joint statements with the PS, PCF, union bureaucrats and various small bourgeois parties in pursuit of a sub-reformist "citizens' mobilization" to pressure the government to "reconsider the place of work in our society" (*Le Monde*, 15 June 2010).

There is a huge gap between the tasks that confront the working class and the reformist class collaboration pushed

by the various left organizations. Over the past 15 years, French workers have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to fight capitalist austerity. When the current economic crisis erupted in 2008, the French ruling class was at a disadvantage in comparison with its rivals in Canada, the U.S. and most other imperialist countries, which over the preceding decades had successfully hobbled the workers' movement and are therefore far less concerned about the possibility of popular anger destabilizing their system. The French bourgeoisie remains confronted with a more militant working class which, despite the best efforts of the servile union bureaucracy and decrepit reformist parties, has not forgotten how to fight. While we can expect working-class resistance in all the advanced capitalist countries in the coming period, we are seeing it *now* in France, prior to the advent of really savage attacks of the sort that touched off the strikes and protests in Greece.

What is urgently needed is the creation of a revolutionary Trotskyist formation to fight inside and outside the unions to counterpose class-struggle politics to the reformism of the union bureaucracy and the left and "far

left." An authentically revolutionary organization would actively champion full citizenship rights for the Roma and all immigrants. It would support every fight against the attacks of the bosses and their state, whether over pensions, healthcare, jobs or anything else. Yet the role of a Marxist vanguard is not merely to lead a fightback, but to find ways to transform defensive actions into a working-class offensive to win full employment through a combination of reducing the work week with no loss in pay and the initiation of a massive public-works project to improve infrastructure, public transportation, education and other human services in suburban, urban and rural areas alike.

The situation in France today is not like the one we currently confront in North America—there is a tangible prospect that a genuinely revolutionary organization of even a few hundred people could make rapid progress. By advancing a *transitional program* to connect opposition to capitalist attacks to the struggle for workers' power, a fighting Bolshevik-Leninist group could play a catalytic role in building a mass revolutionary party capable of smashing capitalist rule and opening the road to the Socialist United States of Europe. ■

Self-Promotion & Timeless Abstractions LTF & the General Strike

During the autumn 2010 mass protests against French President Nicolas Sarkozy's attack on pensions, many of the more class-conscious workers favored the idea of escalating the struggle into a general strike to force the government to withdraw its "reform." In such situations, the job of revolutionaries is to propose how the sabotage of the class-collaborationist union leaders can be overcome—in this case through strike committees elected in workplace general assemblies and linked by delegated *coordinations interprofessionnelles* at the local, regional and national levels.

The Ligue trotskyste de France (LTF—French affiliate of the International Communist League [ICL] headed by the Spartacist League/U.S.), however, refused to call for a general strike. In its propaganda the ICL noted that the isolated "days of action," initiated by the labor bureaucrats, "were largely staggered according to the rhythm of the parliamentary debate on the pension 'reform' bill...with the aim of wringing some concessions on the wording of the law" (*Workers Vanguard*, 5 November 2010, translated in *Le Bolchévique*, December 2010):

"In the face of Sarkozy's determined attack on pensions, many militant workers clearly understood that isolated 'days of action' were not sufficient. Small locally based and generally brief initiatives mushroomed, including by rail workers, like an anarchic ferment lacking a plan. However, unlike December 1995, when rail and transit workers were in the vanguard of the struggle that effectively spelled the end of the right-wing government of Jacques Chirac/Alain Juppé by shutting down public transportation for over three weeks, the situation today is far more difficult for railroad workers."

It is true that many militants who knew that the "isolated 'days of action' were not sufficient" were "lacking a plan,"

or at least a sufficiently concrete one, for connecting up and spreading the local pockets of "anarchic ferment." The task of revolutionaries was precisely to sketch out how to do this, i.e., how to go about organizing a general strike from the bottom up. The LTF called for "real strikes to shut down production" (*Le Bolchévique*, September 2010), but failed to provide any hints about how such labor actions could be initiated, coordinated or defended.

The ICL's opposition to calling for a general strike is longstanding. Their position is that such a call should not be advanced prior to the establishment of a hegemonic, mass revolutionary party capable of seizing power (see "In Defense of Tactics," 1917 No.20, 1998). But this gets things backward:

"The masses want a general strike. The bureaucrats are afraid to initiate one. In this circumstance, the call for a general strike can both expose the bureaucrats' cowardice and demonstrate to militant workers (who may even be anti-communist) that, at least on this one question, the communists are right against their existing leaders. This is the only way that revolutionaries *can* begin the struggle to 'politically defeat and replace' the misleaders."

—"Resistance & Betrayal," 1917 No.19, 1997

While criticizing the union leadership, the LTF's position, in practice, was no better than that of Lutte ouvrière and other leftists who tailed the bureaucrats. The LTF claimed that "In our interventions in the recent strike movement, as in all our work, the Ligue Trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League, has sought to reassert the revolutionary program of Bolshevism and the liberating ideals of communism" (*Workers Vanguard*, 5 November 2010). In fact, the LTF/ICL offered only self-promotion and timeless abstractions. Those who really seek to represent the "revolutionary program of Bolshevism" have a duty to outline the steps necessary for the workers to win. ■

For Proletarian Politics Que Faire?

The following is a translation of the conclusion of "No to Class Collaboration—Down with the Attack on Pensions!," an article originally published in 1917, *édition française*, No.5, September 2010.

Millions of workers see the obvious necessity of beating back the government's attack on pensions. Many understand that even this modest task is being actively sabotaged by the trade-union bureaucrats with the more or less open support of their political counterparts in the reformist workers' parties, including the NPA and other sizable "far left" organizations. The labor bureaucracy is not even pretending to mobilize their ranks for mass struggle to force the withdrawal of the bill. If the workers are to make any effort to offer serious resistance, they must begin by challenging bureaucratic control of the struggle. An important step would be to elect strike committees by workers in workplace general assemblies. Coordinated at the local, regional and national levels, strike committees could provide a vehicle through which class-struggle militants could effectively challenge the sabotage of the bureaucrats.

The attack on pensions is the spearhead of a generalized assault on working-class living standards that deserves a generalized response—a general strike. The immediate objective around which to mobilize mass support is obviously the necessity to hand Sarkozy a stinging defeat over the pension reform. Revolutionaries must seek to intervene in such a struggle with a program addressing other essential issues faced by working people—including the urgent need to fight unemployment through shorter hours at no loss in pay and a massive program of public works.

A revolutionary nucleus within the unions that was prepared to initiate a vigorous response to the bosses' attacks would inevitably win support from the most militant sectors of the working class and thereby dramatically change the entire political equation. If Thibault and company are able to retain control of the mobilizations, the capitalists will rest easy. The consequences of any further retreats are likely to be particularly serious in this period, as the global capitalist order teeters on the brink of a massive meltdown: more layoffs, soaring unemployment and the disintegration of important sectors of the proletariat.

A fighting leadership for the working class can only be forged through a political struggle to break with the class collaborationism and reformism pushed by the trade-union bureaucracy and the parties of the "left" and "far left." Just as capitalist attacks on the working class flow from the logic of profit maximization, the objective interests of working people can only be satisfied by uprooting the entire system of wage slavery and collectivizing the means of production. This fundamental truth is denied by various left currents on the grounds that incremental steps and petty reforms are the most "practical" means of developing "anti-capitalist" consciousness. More than a century ago Rosa Luxemburg refuted such notions:

"...people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform *in place of and in contradis-*



PHOTO THEQUE ROUGE—ESSA KAMINO

Rouen, 2 October 2010: demo against pension reform

inction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the *same* goal, but a *different* goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modification of the old society. If we follow the political conceptions of revisionism, we arrive at the same conclusion that is reached when we follow the economic theories of revisionism. Our program becomes not the realisation of *socialism*, but the reform of *capitalism*: not the suppression of the system of wage labour but the diminution of exploitation, that is, the suppression of the abuses of capitalism instead of the suppression of capitalism itself."

—*Reform or Revolution?*

The revival of an authentically revolutionary pole within the working class requires the crystallization of a cadre of militants capable of breaking once and for all with the illusion that the interests of working people can be advanced by an alliance with one or another wing of the bourgeoisie. The International Bolshevik Tendency seeks collaborators in the effort to create the nucleus of an authentically Trotskyist organization committed to fighting inside and outside the unions for a revolutionary, class-struggle program based on a recognition of the necessity to expropriate the bourgeoisie and uproot the entire system of production for profit by shattering the capitalist state apparatus and replacing it with institutions of proletarian power. ■

The Necessity of Revolutionary Leadership

Class Struggle in France



22 October 2010: French gendarmes assault striking workers to open Total's Grandpuits oil refinery

Capitalist austerity has provoked mass protests across Europe—in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Britain and elsewhere. In France, the bourgeoisie is also intent on reversing past concessions; yet the depth of popular resistance to such attacks and the relative self-confidence and class-consciousness of the working class have limited the scope of the assault to date. President Nicolas Sarkozy's September 2010 proposals for "reforming" pension entitlements by raising the retirement age by two years touched off a movement that, at its height, brought 3.5 million people into the streets in the largest demonstrations since May-June 1968. Militant workers closed ports, oil refineries, post offices, railway lines and public transportation networks. Many high schools and universities were blockaded by students, often with the active support of teachers and parents.

Police repression against demonstrators was widely denounced, and one opinion poll reported that an astounding 70 percent of the population sympathized with the protests (*Sud Ouest Dimanche*, 10 October 2010). There were even instances of employees from different firms holding "inter-professional" meetings and joining each others'

picket lines and general assemblies. These sorts of initiatives, if developed more broadly and systematically, could have provided a framework for militants to overcome the sabotage of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy.

In the end, the government was able to push through its "reform" package and is now preparing further attacks. Although the fight against the pension overhaul was defeated, French workers are showing few signs of demoralization. The union bureaucrats managed to get their members to go back to work, but many—particularly the strategic refinery workers—returned reluctantly. The evident willingness to resist further incursions means that there is a potential opportunity for revolutionaries to help the more class-conscious layers of the proletariat learn from their recent experience.

Sarkozy's victory was clearly the result of what Leon Trotsky called the "crisis of proletarian leadership." The workers were ready to fight, but the treacherous conduct of the union misleadership, and the absence of a viable alternative, made defeat all but inevitable. The "intersyndicale," a bloc of the major labor confederations, refused to call for