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Internationalist



No to Imperialist Occupation – U.S./U.N. Forces Out!

Haiti Earthquake:

Capitalism, Occupation and Revolution

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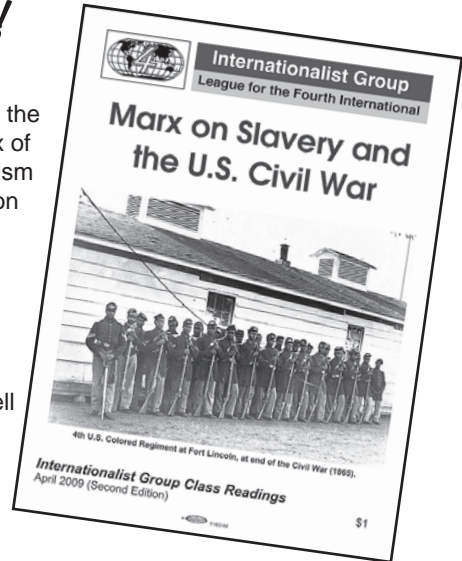
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The Internationalist



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U.S./South Korean Maneuvers A Threat to China As Well

Defend North Korea

Against U.S. War Threats and Sanctions

JULY 21 – On July 20, the United States and South Korea announced they would hold provocative military maneuvers next week in the Sea of Japan, to the east of North Korea. The exercises will include ten American warships, led by the USS *George Washington*, one of the largest nuclear aircraft carriers in the world. This will be followed up by maneuvers in the Yellow Sea, to the west of the Korean peninsula and close to China. On July 21, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and War Secretary Robert Gates in Seoul, South Korea announced new sanctions against the North Korea and traveled to the Demilitarized Zone on the armistice line in the Korean War for some nuclear saber-rattling against the North.

These “war games” and sanctions are a blatant attempt by U.S. imperialism to blackmail the isolated Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK), and also pose a threat to the People’s Republic of China. North Korea and China are bureaucratically deformed workers states, which the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International defend against imperialism at the same time as we call for proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucrats who endanger the remaining revolutionary gains.¹ We defend North Korea’s right to have nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the aggressive U.S. and Japanese imperialists, who have never abandoned their drive to “roll back Communism” to the Yalu River (North Korea’s border with China) and beyond.

Although a truce was negotiated in 1953, the Korean War has never ended. The U.S. still has tens of thousands of troops in South Korea (28,000 at last count). Moreover, as part of the current offensive of military threats against the North, late last month at a press conference at the G-20 summit in Toronto together with South Korean premier Lee Myung-bak, Barack Obama announced an agreement for the U.S. to keep command of Republic of Korea (ROK) military forces in case of war. Obama also renewed U.S. calls for a free-trade agreement with South Korea, which is strongly opposed by both Korean and U.S. labor unions. And he declared Washington’s support for the demands of the rightist-militarist Lee regime in Seoul seeking “accountability for the *Cheonan* incident.”

The current wave of North Korea-bashing was triggered by the sinking of the South Korean corvette on March 26 and the deaths of 46 sailors on board. South Korean military and intelligence officials almost immediately pointed the finger of blame at the North. In late May, the Lee government formally accused the DPRK of launching a torpedo attack against the *Cheonan*, claiming this was the finding of an “international investigation” of the sinking. It then cut off all trade with the North and declared it would classify the DPRK as South Korea’s “main

enemy.” The North Korean regime of Kim Jong Il countered by cutting off all ties with the South. North Korea categorically denies sinking the *Cheonan*, and has requested that North Korean military specialists be allowed to join the investigation.

What actually happened in the March 26 incident is unclear. The main “proof” is a fragment of a propeller bearing the inscription “№ 1,” matching a North Korean torpedo found in the Yellow Sea some years ago. However, this supposed evidence was not found in the intensive naval search of the sea floor in the area, but showed up almost two months later in a fisherman’s net. The area where the ship went down is only 10 miles from North Korea, next to a South Korean island which is the site of a U.S.-South Korean base for anti-submarine warfare (ASW). It is almost inconceivable that a North Korean mini-sub could have approached the area quietly enough to avoid detection, particularly since the incident occurred shortly after a joint U.S.-South Korean ASW exercise.

Both Russia and China have expressed skepticism about the South Korean-U.S. charges. An official DPRK statement called the “forged investigation” and accusations a “sheer fabrication.” It suggested the sinking could have been the result of an accident when the warship ran against rocks. Another possibility is that a U.S. “rising mine” laid during the March 11-18 Foal Eagle exercise could have struck the *Cheonan*. It also pointed out that the North’s focus on building up its economy was undercut by the incident, which has brought the two countries “to the brink of war.” On the other hand, it was convenient for Lee Myung-bak, who was elected on a program of ending any attempt at cooperation on the Korean peninsula. Lee’s party also tried to exploit the *Cheonan* sinking with patriotic appeals for electoral benefit, but this backfired when South Korean voters backed opposition candidates.

The Democrats in Washington have likewise been pushing a hard line against North Korea. An article in the *New York Times* (30 May) on “Five Possible Ways to War” in the Koreas, quotes a “senior administration official” saying, “We’re out of the inducements game... That’s over.” Nor is this something new. During the U.S. presidential election campaign, Obama argued that the Bush regime was pushing a “dumb war” in Iraq instead of the “real war” in Afghanistan, while ignoring other “threats” like Iran and North Korea. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2007), candidate Obama wrote that “we must develop a strong international coalition to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and eliminate North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.... In confronting these threats, I will not take the military option off the table,” but the first response should be “aggressive diplomacy -- the kind that the Bush administration has been unable and unwilling to use.

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¹ For a Trotskyist analysis of North Korea, see articles in *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003.

Washington Exploits Earthquake to Reoccupy the Country

Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!

JANUARY 20 – Suddenly the earth began shaking. In less than a minute Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince and the surrounding areas lay in ruins, virtually destroyed in one of the worst geological calamities of modern history. Even a week later, the number of those who perished is uncertain: surely well over 100,000 dead, perhaps anywhere from 200,000 to half a million. An estimated 1.5 million people are now homeless. Agencies calculate that some three million people, a third of the country's population, require emergency aid. And unlike the Asian tsunami of 2004, whose trail of destruction spread over a vast ocean expanse, the deadly force of the January 12 quake was concentrated in a few hundred square kilometers of this beleaguered Caribbean island nation. A land that was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere was laid waste.

Now the human suffering has been enormously compounded by the militarization of the relief effort and reoccupation of Haiti by the United States. More than a dozen flights by aid groups, carrying rescue squads, tons of medical supplies and entire field hospitals, were refused permission to land at the Port-au-Prince airport by U.S. military air controllers who are now in charge. Currently some 12,000 U.S. Special Forces and Marines are landing in Haiti, supposedly to provide "security." And the number of troops in the United Nations "peacekeeping" mission, which has occupied the country on behalf of the U.S. since 2004, is being increased from 9,000 to 12,500. This huge military occupation is not intended to deliver aid, but to *put down unrest by the poor and working people of Haiti*. For while President Barack Obama cynically talks of helping the Haitian people and the press and TV are filled with calls for donations, the reality is that the *U.S./U.N. forces have been actively blocking aid efforts*, just as they did after the Katrina hurricane in New Orleans under President George W. Bush.

Behind this propaganda is barely disguised racism. Some reactionaries openly spew out this filth. Christian fundamental-

Stop Blocking Aid to Haitian People –
U.S./U.N. Forces Get Out!



Ariana Cubillos/AP

Soldier of the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (MINUSTAH), an imperialist occupation force, repressing earthquake survivors during a food distribution in Port-au-Prince, January 19.

ist TV preacher Pat Robertson blames the earthquake on the Haitian people, whom he accuses of making a "pact with the devil" by throwing off French colonial rule more than two centuries ago. The mainstream bourgeois media are barely more subtle, portraying Haiti today as a basket case, incapable of providing for itself or doing anything at all in the face of this disaster. They whip up hysteria about "looting," and roaming gangs of "armed thugs," when in fact instances of violence have been remarkably few and "looters" are arrested for having a sack of powdered milk. There were already large stocks of food in warehouses in Haiti, *but the U.S./U.N. military and aid agencies refused to distribute it for fear of "riots."* And while groups of Haitian young men were desperately digging with their bare hands to try to pull out survivors from destroyed schools, what heavy equipment was available was focused on rescuing foreigners and U.N. officials in elite hotels.

The media blitz amounts to a *propaganda war to embellish the image of U.S. imperialism*. While Obama escalates the war on Afghanistan, Iraq and now Pakistan, killing scores of Afghan children, Haiti would show that Washington “cares.” This hypocritical theme is bolstered by selective reporting. As medical professionals who rushed to Haiti complained there were no supplies available, there was hardly a mention of the more than 400 Cuban doctors already in Haiti, along with several hundred Haitian doctors trained in Cuban medical schools, who had three field hospitals up and running within a day. But the broader point is that the colossal hypocrisy, journalistic distortion and phony humanitarianism are being used to disguise a new *U.S. occupation of Haiti*.

Clearly the needs of the Haitian masses are so overwhelming that they would accept aid from any source. Moreover, the Haitian government of puppet president René Préval, barely functional in normal times, has all but disappeared. Yet there is huge concern over what the U.S. forces are up to. When elements of the 82nd Airborne Division marched to the General Hospital skeptical crowds looked on, and as soon as the troops arrived they began forcing Haitians out. Washington is gearing up to declare Haiti a “failed state,” like Somalia, and to call for some sort of international protectorate, perhaps under United Nations auspices. The U.N. “peacekeeping” mission for the “stabilization” of Haiti (MINUSTAH), set up after U.S., French and Canadian forces ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, was already a U.S. occupation using Brazilian and other Latin American troops as mercenaries. Now Obama has apparently decided to assume more direct control.

Amid the media madness, it is necessary to sharply *denounce the imperialist occupation of Haiti* and *demand all U.S./U.N. forces get out!* To those who worry that this would mean cutting off aid to the suffering Haitian people, it should be pointed out that the U.S. military is not there to deliver humanitarian aid. You don’t need Navy guided missile destroyers and combat troops recycled from Iraq to provide medical supplies or food. And in fact, *for more than a week the U.S. government provided no assistance whatsoever*. All the rescue teams, doctors, medicines, water and food were provided either by American and international volunteer groups and agencies or by other countries, where they weren’t directly blocked by the U.S. Yet every day 25,000 people were dying due to lack of medical attention, according to a spokesman for Boston-based Partners in Health, which has been providing medical services in Haiti for years.

In the United States, various reformists are calling for one or another version of “aid not occupation,” much as in the “peace” movement they call for “jobs not war.” They want to change the government’s priorities, not attack the imperialist system. Certainly it is vital to oppose the occupation, and the



Internationalist photo

IG at demo outside U.S. Mission to United Nations, January 22, demanding U.S./U.N. forces stop blocking aid, no to occupation.

Haitian masses desperately need aid. But to call on the *U.S. government*, either implicitly (as does the social-democratic International Socialist Organization) or explicitly (in the case of the Mao-Stalinist Revolutionary Communist Party) to provide such aid feeds dangerous illusions. The RCP writes that “The U.S. government must immediately focus its resources on getting aid directly to the Haitian people” (statement, January 13). It is not only U.S. military forces who are involved in imposing imperialist tutelage. Financial “aid” from the U.S./U.N./IMF, etc., whether in the form of loans or grants, always comes with numerous strings attached. By placing distribution of vitally needed supplies in the hands of outside agencies, they prevent the Haitian population from organizing a capability to respond.

We demand that the U.S., U.N., Red Cross and other imperialist agencies *stop blocking aid from reaching the Haitian people*. While Obama has announced that Haitians already in the United States will be eligible for Temporary Protected Status, the U.S. is still threatening to return any Haitian caught in a boat headed for the U.S. It won’t even let many earthquake victims needing intensive medical care into the country for treatment. Thus we demand that the U.S. *stop blocking the entry of Haitian refugees* at the same time as we fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. In addition to demanding that all U.S. forces get out, we *oppose all measures subjugating Haiti to imperialist economic domination*, such as the infamous Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the World Bank and USAID that have led to the destruction of Haitian agriculture and wholesale privatization of government-owned utilities. We also emphasize that the military deployment is a threat to Cuba, just 45 miles away, where the U.S. maintains a torture prison. We *defend Cuba*, a (bureaucratically deformed) workers state, against imperialism and counterrevolution, and demand that the U.S. return the

Guantánamo naval base.

Haiti has a special place in world history, as the home of the only successful slave revolution in history. The Haitian Revolution of 1792-1804 inspired slave revolts in the United States, from Denmark Vesey to Nat Turner, and served as a beacon of liberation to oppressed blacks throughout the Caribbean and South America. Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture at the head of an army of former slaves was able to defeat three colonial powers: the French, Spanish and British. This struck terror in the hearts of the capitalists, who quarantined the black republic for decades. The United States militarily occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, and sent in the Marines in 1994 (under Bill Clinton, to put in Aristide as Washington's man in Port-au-Prince) and again in 2004 (under Bush, to oust Aristide). *Obama's dispatch of thousands of U.S. troops amounts to yet another U.S. invasion of Haiti, using the cover of "humanitarian" aid.* To symbolize it, he invited the two former presidents to the White House to announce an obscenely named "Clinton Bush Haiti Fund."

The earthquake was a natural disaster, but the horrendous death toll and monumental destruction were caused by *capitalism* and *imperialism*. As class war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal noted from Pennsylvania's death row, the media incessantly refer to Haiti as the poorest country in the hemisphere, but they never tell you how it got that way. One reason why there was such massive destruction is that some 2 million Haitians live in shantytowns around the capital where their flimsy dwellings can hardly withstand hurricanes, much less a 7.0 earthquake. Many of these urban poor were formerly peasants, forced off the land by the collapse of agricultural prices as a result of U.S.-engineered "free trade" policies. In the 19th century, the former French colonial masters demanded that Haiti pay a ransom amounting to \$21 billion in today's currency as the price of its independence. Since then, whenever the U.S. wasn't directly occupying Haiti, it employed puppet governments such as the notorious Duvalier dynasty ("Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc"), who ruled from 1957 to 1986. Even former Liberation Theology priest Aristide dutifully carried out Washington's dictates.

Reactionary imperialist forces such as the Heritage Foundation see the earthquake as an "opportunity" to impose new constraints on Haiti. For those fighting against imperialism, the popular mobilization to rescue earthquake victims, organize tent camps of the survivors and distribute aid can offer the basis for the only real solution to Haiti's woes: *international socialist revolution*. In Mexico following the 1985 earthquake, tens of thousands of Mexico City working people who were left homeless organized independently of and against the government whose soldiers prevented them from rescuing their neighbors and relatives. But leadership was key, and various self-proclaimed socialist groups that took charge of the organizations of those affected by the quake turned them into agencies for channeling government welfare funds, thus squandering an opportunity for revolutionary mobilization.

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Haiti on Our Minds

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

The recent natural disaster in Haiti has once again thrown Haiti into the eyes of the world, and once again, brought out both the best and the worst of us.

The sheer scale of human suffering has evoked massive compassion, as governments far and wide mobilize to assist those unable to assist themselves.

Haiti, once the colonial-era "pearl of the Antilles," then the mother of revolutions, has suffered for nearly two centuries for daring to fight for and win its freedom from European colonialism and plunder. Haiti, we are informed by the corporate media, is the poorest nation in the West. We are never told, however, how it got that way. How many of us know that the U.S. brutally occupied Haiti, and stayed there for over 20 years? Or that Haiti, which had the temerity to defeat not one, not two, but three colonial armies -- the French, the British and the Spanish -- was forced to pay France reparations for nearly 200 years, the first and only time that a victor in war had to pay back the nation it defeated.

Haiti isn't just poor. It's been impoverished by a global system of exploitation and a plantation capitalist economy that was designed as a sanction for black liberation.

C.L.R. James, the great revolutionary scholar-activist, has argued that the Haitian revolution was a singular event in human history, of more significance than either the French or American revolutions. In part, that's because the Haitian revolution spelled the end to French imperialism in America. Napoleon, having lost his Haitian cash cow, sold vast lands to the U.S. for a song, doubling the size of the U.S. in one day.

That an American preacher could today liken the event to the devil gives us some idea of its continuing power. Interestingly, neither of these other revolutions spelled an end to that truly demonic institution, slavery. Indeed, the reverse is true. For George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were slave owners. And Napoleon Bonaparte sent his army to Haiti to defend slavery.

Decades and decades of U.S.-supported dictators, a legacy of plantation capitalism and exploitation, U.S.-supported coups like the Bush-era removal of president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and corporate strangulation of the poor workers in Haiti, has left it severely underdeveloped and thus less able to cope with natural disasters when they strike.

Several years ago, when a hurricane hit a city in the world's wealthiest nation, the wealthy and middle classes had the resources to flee just before the worst struck the town. In Haiti, those resources were even more rare.

An earthquake isn't a hurricane. It strikes suddenly, without warning. But many nations, like Japan, have constructed buildings which resist the bumps and whirls of earthquakes. Such techniques, if applied to Haitian schools, homes and offices could have greatly reduced loss of life and suffering.

If it hadn't been bled and exploited for centuries, Haiti would have had the resources available to protect its people as much as possible. Let us hope that Haiti's future will be brighter than its post-colonial past. From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

17 January 2009

Brazilian Trotskyists: Kick U.N., U.S. and Brazilian Occupation Troops Out of Haiti!



Samuel Tosia

“Workers Solidarity Yes, Military Occupation No!” The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil in march for solidarity with Haiti called by unions and left groups in Salvador, Bahia state, on January 30. Salvador was the site of the Muslim uprising of 1835, a rebellion of the black slaves inspired by the Haitian Revolution. Below: special issue of *Vanguarda Operária* with collection of articles on Haiti. LQB calls to “Drive Out Brazilian Troops from the Slums of Rio de Janeiro and from Haiti.”

The following slightly abridged article is translated from a special issue of *Vanguarda Operária* (January 2010), published by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), section of the League for the Fourth International.

JANUARY 26 – On January 12 an earthquake measuring 7 degrees on the Richter scale devastated the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince. It was the worst quake in the country in the last 200 years, and according to specialists the most deadly tragedy of all times in the Americas and one of the worst earthquakes worldwide in the last century.

The whole world has been moved and a number of countries have promised solidarity to the long-suffering Haitian population. International news agencies are reporting numbers given by government spokesmen. Cuba, which also felt the temblor, and which already had more than 400 doctors in Haiti, along with hundreds of Haitian doctors educated in Cuban medical schools, sent another 50 physicians and medicine.

The United States military, however, is preventing aid from reaching needy Haitians. And in this they are being aided by the Brazilian

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No to Imperialist Occupation – U.S./U.N. Forces Out!

U.S. Puts Haiti Into Receivership

Sofia Paris/Haiti Liberte



(Under *Gouverneur* Bill Clinton)

What are these U.N. (left) and U.S. (right, in truck) troops doing in Cité Soleil, the largest slum area in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince? "Keeping the peace" and distributing humanitarian aid?

The Haitian earthquake of January 12 and the harrowing scenes of death and destruction led to an outpouring of sympathy and solidarity the world over for the people of this devastated land. A star-studded telethon, *Hope for Haiti Now*, raised \$57 million in the United States. The ten biggest French "non-governmental organizations" gathered €64 million. Residents of Gaza, martyred by an Israeli invasion a year ago and still under siege by the Zionist army, identified with the Haitians' anguish and scraped together donations. Professional rescue teams grabbed their equipment and scrambled to find flights to the hard-hit Caribbean island nation. Hundreds of medical professionals rounded up tons of medicines and equipment and took off for Port-au-Prince. Aid organizations booked space on charter planes for field hospitals, medical supplies, food and water. Governments tried to outdo each other with relief missions.

The administration of Barack Obama saw this as a golden opportunity to repair the U.S.' image, badly tarnished by the ongoing imperialist war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. The Democrats in power in Washington would pose as leaders of a people-friendly empire, motivated by compassion, in contrast to the Darth Vader-like Republican administration

of George Bush II. But behind all the talk of "helping" Haiti, what they actually *did* is no different from what the Yankee imperialists always do. The U.S. dispatched paratroops to occupy the Haitian capital, backed up by a nuclear aircraft carrier battle group in the Windward Strait between Haiti and Cuba. Their mission: "secure" the country against unrest, and make sure no rickety boats filled with Haitian refugees set sail for Florida. Any actual aid dispensed would be purely incidental, to provide a "humanitarian" cover for a military mission.

Longer term, the U.S. wants to tighten imperialist control of the strategically located country, occupied since 2004 at Washington's behest by a United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (MINUSTAH) force. We noted in a January 20 statement that "Washington is gearing up to declare Haiti a 'failed state,' like Somalia, and to call for some sort of international protectorate, perhaps under United Nations auspices." This plan is now taking concrete shape. At a March 31 "International Donors Conference for a New Future for Haiti" at U.N. headquarters, the donors, principally the United States, formally put Haiti in receivership. A Haiti Interim Reconstruction Committee (HIRC) was set up with two co-chairmen: the Haitian prime minister and the real power, "an

eminent foreign figure involved in the reconstruction effort.” Who that eminent foreign figure is was never in doubt. This HIRC will be in charge of rebuilding the country, displacing the Haitian government. And former U.S. president William Jefferson Clinton will be the neocolonial *gouverneur* of Haiti on behalf of Washington and Wall Street.

U.S. Blocks Aid to Haiti

The day after the quake hit, early on January 13, a U.S. military force moved in to assert its control in Haiti, taking over air traffic control at the Port-au-Prince airport and from that position actively *blocking aid from reaching the Haitian people*. Although the Pentagon later claimed this was at the request of the Haitian government of President René Préval, in reality the U.S. simply seized the airfield – a “memorandum of understanding” formalizing this was not signed until several days later. For 72 hours, the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and U.S. Federal Aviation Administration closed the airport to all but U.S. military flights while American troops poured in. Even after reopening the airport, for the first week very few humanitarian relief and rescue flights were permitted. With tens of thousands of Haitians trapped in the rubble, *this criminal U.S. blockade of aid likely cost thousands of lives.*¹

This led to angry denunciations from Europe to Latin America. When a French military plane carrying a field hospital was told it couldn’t land, the French minister in charge of humanitarian relief, Alain Joyandet, demanded the U.N. investigate, saying: “This is about helping Haiti, not occupying Haiti.” Médecins sans Frontières (MSF – Doctors Without Borders) said that five of its flights carrying 85 tons of medical supplies including an inflatable hospital facility, were diverted, and declared: “Priority must be given immediately to planes carrying life-saving equipment and medical personnel.” French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner commented acerbically that the airport had become “an annex of Washington.” Even Brazil, which commands the MINUSTAH occupation force, complained bitterly that its flights were being turned away. Argentine, Spanish and Peruvian planes with vital supplies were also turned back.

On January 16, all air traffic was shut down for three hours while U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton staged a photo op visit. The next day Bill Clinton and daughter Chelsea made

¹ On what basis do we draw this conclusion? *First*, in spite of all the media coverage, the total number of lives saved by international rescue teams in Haiti was 121. The reason for this shockingly low number is that the teams were unable to get into the country for the crucial first 48 hours because U.S. authorities shut down the Port-au-Prince airport to non-U.S. military flights. *Second*, Partners in Health, the medical aid group co-founded by Dr. Paul Farmer, the deputy U.N. envoy to Haiti, which has been active in the country for the last quarter century warned emphatically on January 19: “TENS OF THOUSANDS OF EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS NEED EMERGENCY SURGICAL CARE NOW!!!!” Alarmed by the continuing delays holding up aid, the statement continued: “Our medical director has estimated that 20,000 people are dying each day who could be saved by surgery.”

a show of unloading bottled water. Meanwhile, two Mexican Hercules aircraft carrying 45 rescuers (the famous Topos Mexicanos), several of them veterans of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, were denied landing rights. An emergency aid mission from the Caribbean Community was refused permission to land. “We are all going crazy,” said a spokesman for the American Red Cross, whose flights were also blocked. “US Accused of Annexing Airport as Squabbling Hinders Aid Effort in Haiti,” reported the London *Guardian* (18 January). “America Imposes Its Leadership,” wrote the Paris *Le Figaro* (18 January). The London *Telegraph* (19 January) headlined: “US Accused of ‘Occupying’ Haiti as Troops Flood In.” While the “free but responsible” bourgeois press in the U.S. gushed about Washington’s “humanitarian” intervention, even the *New York Times* (17 January) reported:

“[S]ome aid officials were describing misplaced priorities, accusing United States officials of focusing their efforts on getting their people and troops installed and lifting their citizens out....

“The World Food Program finally was able to land flights of food, medicine and water on Saturday, after failing on Thursday and Friday, an official with the agency said. Those flights had been diverted so that the United States could land troops and equipment, and lift Americans and other foreigners to safety.

“There are 200 flights going in and out every day, which is an incredible amount for a country like Haiti,” said Jarry Emmanuel, the air logistics officer for the agency’s Haiti effort. “But most of those flights are for the United States military.”

Even after a few relief flights began arriving, U.S. military authorities refused to let aid leave the airport. The *Telegraph* reported:

“As the rest of the city struggles to catch a glimpse of either aid or its American deliverers, the answer is that both are here at the airport, the supplies stacking up next to the runway as they are disgorged from the vast bowels of C-17 transport planes.

“Pallets of tinned sardines from Venezuela, blue shirts from Bolivia, tents from Italy, grain, milk powder, tartan blankets and enough bottled water to float the US aircraft carrier lying offshore, all lie waiting for a truck to collect them.”

Behind many of the complaints of blockage of aid there were certainly imperialist rivalries, particularly between France, the former colonial master, and the United States, which going back to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine has proclaimed “America for the (North) Americans.” Today the U.S. considers itself the sole, and indeed “indispensable” superpower, with the right to dictate terms to its rivals and semi-colonial subjects. But sour grapes from Paris does not negate the well-documented *fact* of U.S. blockage of relief flights and aid shipments to Haiti.

In response, the Internationalist Group put out a statement, “Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!” (20 January). We demanded, “Stop Blocking Aid to Haitian People – U.S./U.N. Forces Get Out!” While many reformist leftists – including the (social-democratic)

Mary Altaffer/AP



The Bill and Hillary Show at the United Nations, March 31. Between the Clintons, U.N. secretary general Ban Ki-moon (left) and Haitian president René Préval.

International Socialist Organization, the (Stalinoid) Workers World Party and (Maoist) Revolutionary Communist Party – and liberals called on the U.S. to aid the Haitian people, we warned, “It is not only U.S. military forces who are involved in imposing imperialist tutelage. Financial ‘aid’ from the U.S./U.N./IMF, etc ... always comes with numerous strings attached.” We demanded that “the U.S. *stop blocking the entry of Haitian refugees* at the same time as we fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*,” and called to “*oppose all measures subjugating Haiti to imperialist economic domination.*”

Imperialists Sideline Haitian Government

In the following days, calls in the bourgeois press for the U.S. and U.N. to formally take the reins from the Haitian government multiplied. An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* (27 January), titled “Envisioning a new Haiti,” reported:

“Robert Pastor, who was a senior adviser to the US mission to restore the democratically elected and overthrown Jean-Bertrand Aristide to presidential power in 1994, believes international donors should take advantage of this goodwill and ask Haitians – through a referendum – to allow their country to become a 10-year UN trusteeship or to approve some other form of strong international control....

“Dr. Pastor suggests that schools could swallow hard and drop Creole instruction in favor of French and English to better prepare Haitian students for the global economy.

“‘I spent my career advocating the democratic process and believe in it. But Haiti is an exception.’”

The next day at hearings of the U.S. Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Christopher Dodd (Dem., Conn.) asked: “Is it too wild a suggestion to be talking about at least temporarily some sort of receivership?” Sen. Bob Corker (Rep.,

Tenn.) chimed in: “I think something far more draconian than just us working behind the scenes to prod reforms and those kinds of things is going to be necessary” (*New York Times*, 31 January). Prior to the recent U.N. conference on Haiti, Dodd was again calling to “Place Haiti Under ‘Trusteeship’” (*Miami Herald*, 29 March).

These are no crackpots but influential shapers of the policies of U.S. imperialism. Dodd accepts that since Haiti is “an independent sovereign nation and a United Nations member,” it cannot be literally placed in trusteeship like Palestine and the former German colonies in Africa were under the League of Nations and then the U.N. Instead, a

“form of trusteeship” could be used, he said, like in Bosnia and Kosovo (after U.S. and NATO forces occupied those Yugoslav republics). That is exactly what was put forward in the “Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti,” presented to the March 31 U.N. conference. Although the cover page bears the seal of the Government of the Republic of Haiti, the plan was essentially dictated to it by the U.S. The *Miami Nuevo Herald* (11 February) reported:

“The plan, conceived by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s staff and presented a few days ago [during a visit by Bill Clinton] to Haiti’s president, René Préval, urges the creation of a Haiti Interim Recovery Commission (HIRC) to supervise the ‘urgent and quick recovery’ in the coming 18 months. Among the main priorities of the commission: to establish a Haitian Development Authority ... for the next ten years or more.”

The terminology is virtually identical to that presented by Haiti to the March 31 U.N. conference.

In exchange for promises of \$9.9 billion in aid, the Haitian government signed over control of its funds to this committee responsible to the imperialist governments and financial agencies like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. While press reports stressed the size of the commitments, the cost of rebuilding Haiti’s capital city from scratch will far outstrip those amounts. Besides, only a small fraction of the millions in aid pledged after the 2008 hurricanes was ever paid. The role of the HIRC recalls the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) in New York City set up in the wake of 1975 bank-engineered “fiscal crisis,” which took de facto control of NYC finances in order to impose massive cutbacks and layoffs. Felix Rohatyn of the Lazard Frères investment bank played the role in the MAC that Bill Clinton does now in the HIRC. The “new future” promised to Haiti will be shaped by the imperialist “donors,” who just to make sure have a beefed-

up MINUSTAH (increased from 9,000 to 13,500 troops) and a U.S. contingent at their disposal to maintain “security” and suppress any protests. For as the *New York Times* (1 April) noted, “anger mounts among Haitians who hear about billions in aid while hundreds of thousands of them still struggle for earthquake relief.”

Such a detailed plan, filled with specific budgetary targets, could hardly be worked up in the space of a few weeks in the midst of a crisis dominated by the aftermath of the earthquake and the dispatch of U.S. troops to take control of “security” in Haiti. In reality, the “new” plan is a reiteration (with some amendments) of the plan the U.S. has been pushing in Haiti since overthrowing the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in March 2004. Already by July 2004, a detailed (110-page) “Interim Cooperation Framework 2004-2006” was presented by the Haitian “government” installed by the U.N. after the U.S./Canada/French invasion, along with the United Nations, World Bank, European Commission and Inter-American Development Bank. This, in turn, was a rehash of a 1995 “Policy Framework Paper” of the IMF, World Bank and Haitian government, which was itself a continuation of the policies laid out in the 1993 Emergency Economic Recovery Program, which the government of Bill Clinton insisted that the exiled Aristide agree to in order to get U.S. support to return him to power in a U.S. invasion in 1994.

And they all go back to a 1982 World Bank “Economic Memorandum on Haiti.” That memo put forward an “export-led development strategy, under which the Bank and USAID designed a plan to develop the export potential of both agro-industry and the country’s assembly industry” (Lisa McGowan, “Democracy Undermined, Economic Justice Denied: Structural Adjustment and the Aid Juggernaut in Haiti,” Development Group for Alternative Policies, January 1997). The productive lands on Haiti’s plains would be converted from food production to crops for sale in the United States, while assembly industries like garments, toys and baseballs would be attracted by low-wage industrial labor. A key part of this “development model” was a strong state to keep down peasant and labor agitation: the dictatorship of Jean-Claude (“Baby Doc”) Duvalier. When he was toppled by popular protests in 1986, a generals’ junta took the reins of power. In 1990, swelling discontent led to the election of Aristide with almost three-quarters of the votes, but when he sought to introduce price controls and raise the minimum wage, the populist president was overthrown by a military coup in September 1991.

Ever since, succeeding administrations in Washington have responded to every crisis in Haiti by seeking to impose the same “model” of low-wage industry. Frequently it is not Republican reactionaries but Democratic liberals and high-flying academic “experts” who push this program. In January 2009, following the four devastating hurricanes of 2008, Paul Collier of Oxford University in Britain wrote a report to the Secretary General of the United Nations, “Haiti: From Natural Catastrophe to Economic Security,” advocating the creation of export zones for garment manufacturing and production of mangoes (for a new soft drink):

“[T]he fundamentals are propitious. In garments the largest single component of costs is labour. Due to its poverty and relatively unregulated labour market, Haiti has labour costs that are fully competitive with China, which is the global benchmark.”

After the earthquake, the execrable Nicholas Kristof, ever seeking U.S. imperialist intervention in the name of “human rights,” took up Collier’s plan in the *New York Times* (21 January):

“That idea (sweatshops!) may sound horrific to Americans. But it’s a strategy that has worked for other countries, such as Bangladesh, and Haitians in the slums would tell you that their most fervent wish is for jobs. A few dozen major shirt factories could be transformational for Haiti.”

The third leg of this “development” plan is tourism, pushed in particular by the Clintons, who keep talking about how they spent their honeymoon in Haiti. *So there you have the imperialists’ “new Haiti”: sweatshops for Levis, mangoes for Coca-Cola and beaches for the Royal Caribbean Lines.*

Actually, Mr. Kristof, Haiti had more than “a few dozen” major garment factories before, in the 1980s. The result was a steady drop in real wages, which fell by 9 percent from 1980 to 1985, and an even greater decline in minimum wages, which plummeted by 45 percent from 1985 to 1990. Haiti’s gross national product per capita also declined, because wages were so low that workers could hardly increase consumption. Rice farming collapsed as peasants, unable to sell their harvest in the face of lower-cost imports subsidized by the U.S. abandoned their fields and migrated to the swollen metropolis of Port-au-Prince. (Bill Clinton admitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently that his policies benefited rice farmers in Arkansas rather than those in Haiti.) And actually, Mr. Kristof, the standard of living of workers in free trade zone plants is *lower* than in many of Haiti’s rural areas. No one would work for such starvation wages if the alternative in the vast shantytowns were not, literally, starvation. And if the main attraction for such industries is low wages, this creates tremendous pressure to keep workers mired in poverty (see “Haiti: Battle Over Starvation Wages and Neocolonial Occupation,” *The Internationalist* No. 30, November-December 2009).

Two changes from past imperialist “development” plans for Haiti are that now lip service is paid to agriculture and “food security,” and calls are made to decentralize the country, so that it is not simply the “Republic of Port-au-Prince.” As the 2008 hunger riots showed, a situation in which 80 percent of Haiti’s export earnings go to pay for food imports is unviable. But even as planners now budget tiny amounts for agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer), many of Haiti’s peasants have fled the countryside, so financial incentives alone will not solve food shortages. And while the latest plan talks of five sites where 100,000 quake survivors could be relocated, more than *1.2 million* are now living in 460 camps around the capital, a number of them in acute danger of being wiped out in the hurricane season about to begin. Now private landowners (including schools run by Catholic clergy) are beginning to push out camps on “their” property (such as by cutting off waste removal), and on the other hand camp residents are refusing

to let the government exile them to South African apartheid-style townships far from the city.

So as torrential rains threaten a new catastrophe in which thousands more could die, a battle is brewing between the impoverished homeless population and the government of the bourgeoisie backed up by the imperialists.

Over the past quarter century, there has been a seemingly endless stream of plans calling for export-led growth in Haiti, yet except for the period before 1990 there has been no growth. Why? Right-wing zealots like evangelist preacher Pat Robertson blame the supposed sins of the Haitian people, while more mainstream conservatives and not a few liberals point to Aristide and Préval personally.

But imperialist spokesmen are virtually unanimous in writing off the Haitian government as a “failed state,” or more circumspectly as a “fragile state.” Naturally they don’t mention how the U.S. brought the Haitian state to its present condition, refusing to channel aid through the government, eliminating import duties and forcing the sale of government-owned industry. Virtually every source of government income was cut off, and whole swaths of normal government activities have been privatized or (like garbage collection) no longer exist.

As a result, there is a near consensus among the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie to dispense with, or at least sideline, the present Haitian government. Within 24 hours of the earthquake, the conservative Heritage Foundation in Washington issued a statement that “the U.S. response to the tragic earthquake in Haiti offers opportunities to re-shape Haiti’s long-dysfunctional government and economy...” James Dobbins, a former special envoy to Haiti under Clinton, now a senior official at the RAND Corporation think tank, argued that “This disaster is an opportunity to accelerate oft-delayed reforms,” such as privatizing the government telephone company and reorganizing the ports, two of the last remaining government enterprises in Haiti (*New York Times*, 17 January). In Haiti, a group of right-wing coup financiers headed by Senator Rudolph Henri Boulos put forward a “Strategic Plan of National Salvation” in early February whose centerpiece is to “reconstitute the Armed Forces the assure national security.”

There may not be consensus on every aspect of plans to make use of the “opportunity” to “refund” the Haitian state. Not everyone wants to resuscitate the armed forces, especially since the present Haitian National Police (PNH) was recruited from the death squads that appeared after Aristide dissolved the army in 1995. The plan presented to the March 31 donors conference includes as much money for police as for agriculture, calling to expand the PNH from 9,500 officers at present



Le Nouvelliste

Garment workers in AM Industries plant in Haiti, 2006.

to 16,000. Other government functions would be privatized, or administered by the HIRC under Clinton, with Préval as his powerless sidekick. Meanwhile, the Haitian president is calling on the legislature to renew the present “state of exception” for another 18 months, providing for rule by decree and cancellation of what civil liberties exist on paper. What Pastor, Dodd and other called for in advocating “a kind of trusteeship” for Haiti under imperialist auspices is what is now happening.

Not a “Savior” But a Revolutionary Leadership

The Boulos “national salvation plan” paints the “catastrophic image of a drowned country and a collapsed government” to justify its plans for the “refoundation” of Haiti with a militarized government. So here we have the right wing of the Haitian bourgeoisie adopting the language of nationalist-populist regimes like Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa who talk of “refounding” Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. Certainly the physical destruction of virtually every ministry (as well as the national palace) and decimation of the state apparatus means that there is little left to “reconstruct.” But Haitian working people have no interest in “refounding” a capitalist state that represents the interests of an infinitesimal ruling class, lording it over a vast mass of brutally exploited urban and rural poor. Workers and peasants should respond to this emergency by *beginning to organize their own class power against the rapacious capitalist rulers*. And that requires above all a struggle to *forge the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party*.

In Haiti today there is a proliferation of more than 1,000 “non-governmental organizations”; Bill Clinton speaks of 10,000 if you include the smaller operations. It’s the largest concentration of NGOs on the planet, many financed directly or indirectly by governments, foundations and international

(imperialist) agencies, or various churches. The politics of most reflect their role as privatized social support agencies in the framework of “free market” capitalist policies. But there is a fringe of supposed “progressive” NGOs around the Platform to Advocate Alternative Development Policies (PAPDA) which has been calling for a new “model” of development, involving “participatory democracy,” an “end to economic dependency,” a “break with exclusion,” and similar nostrums. PAPDA, whose slogan is “another Haiti is possible,” is a darling of the “anti-globalization” movement such as Alternatives in Canada, who call for an end to “neo-liberalism.” But the devastation of Haiti over the last two centuries is due to *capitalism*, not simply to the particular economic policies of the last two decades.

In fact, neither “another Haiti” nor “another world” are possible so long as the capitalist-imperialist system remains. “Neo-liberal” measures of rampant privatization and brutal slashing of social services are not due to a choice of budget priorities, which a different set of rulers could reverse if they wished and had enough popular support. Previous “Keynesian” economics were abandoned in the late 1970s economic crisis because capitalists no longer found it profitable to invest, due to what Karl Marx long ago analyzed as a declining rate of profit and overproduction of capital. In the U.S. this intensified as government expenditures on “guns and butter,” on the Vietnam War and “Great Society” social programs led to a bank-engineered debt crisis and “stagflation” which spread to the major capitalist powers. Today, even bourgeois nationalist governments with great oil wealth, allowing them a limited degree of autonomy which Haiti lacks, have carried out at most minimal nationalizations combined with welfare programs compatible with “neo-liberalism” (Venezuela) or have been aggressively privatizing (Iran).

Much of the opposition to the U.N. occupation of Haiti has come from supporters of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his Lavalas (Landslide) party, which since his ouster in 2004 has fragmented. The Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* (31 January) visited Lavalas strongholds such as Cité Soleil and Bel-Air reporting that “Anti-Brazil Mobilization Reverberates Since the Earthquake.” “We haven’t stopped closely following, with concern, the actions of Aristide’s supporters, despite their weakened position,” said a spokesman for the Brazilian command of the MINUSTAH occupation troops. On February 5, thousands demonstrated outside the offices of the mayor of Pétiön-ville, shouting “We’re hungry, down with Péval.” A Lavalas leader of the protest declared, “Aristide can help us. He must come back to save us” (*Haiti-Liberté*, 10 February).

Today, in the face of the arrogant U.S. takeover, many Haitians look to Aristide to guarantee “Haitian sovereignty.” Certainly all opponents of imperialism support demands that the occupation forces lift their ban on Haiti’s democratically elected president who was kidnapped and spirited out of the country by U.S. forces in 2004. At the same time, we warn against illusions in Aristide, who in his South African exile has done nothing for the Haitian masses. In office (with Préval as his prime minister and later successor as president), Aristide dutifully carried out the dictates of Washington, which put him

back in office with U.S. troops, and of the imperialist banks. Aristide sold off state-owned companies, suppressed wages, repressed unions and maintained the “free trade” that spelled ruin for Haitian peasants. Haiti doesn’t need a condescending savior, in the words of the workers anthem, the *Internationale* – not another capitalist ruler, but rather a hard struggle to forge a revolutionary working-class leadership fighting to establish the class rule of Haiti’s working people.

In the workers movement, the syndicalist organization Batay Ouvriye (Workers Struggle) has been active for a number of years organizing workers in free trade zone plants. Batay Ouvriye has led important struggles of workers in the CODEVI industrial park in Ouanaminthe, who were repressed by Aristide when he was in power, and then by both the Dominican military and Haitian right-wing coup plotters while the U.S. was engineering the ouster of Aristide in 2004 (see “The Struggle for Workers Revolution in the Caribbean,” *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004). But while B.O. represents perhaps the most left-wing sector of the small workers movement in Haiti, and although it is quite hostile to Aristide and the Lavalas milieu, its political statements are couched in the same populist language that is the common idiom of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois “progressives” in Haiti.

Thus a position statement of Batay Ouvriye, “After the January 12, 2010 Earthquake” (7 February) says that there can be no confidence in the present Haitian state: “t is not our state; it is not a worker’s state. On the contrary, it is the state of the bourgeoisie, it is against working people, and it is against the popular masses! ... If we want to realize our own interests, we have no other choice, we need another state. We need our own state.” But *what kind* of state, and how to get it? B.O. writes that “we must work to reinforce the progressive camp both inside and abroad (in the belly of the beast). We must reinforce the people’s camp.” Like the popular-front left that chants “The people united will never be defeated,” B.O.’s talk of a “progressive camp” and “people’s camp” amounts to calling to unite with bourgeois sectors. Marxists do not orient to a mythical “progressive camp” as opposed to a “reactionary camp” – we seek to mobilize the *working class*, leading all the exploited and oppressed, against the bourgeoisie.

This conception led Batay Ouvriye to make common cause with the rightist-led mobilization against Aristide in late 2003, even as it declared “Lavalas and the bourgeois opposition are two rotten legs of the same torn pair of pants.” A B.O. statement argued that it was necessary to “thwart the bourgeois orientation *within* the anti-Lavalas mobilization” (our emphasis). Rather than posing a *class* struggle against both wings of the Haitian bourgeoisie, it called upon workers, poor peasants, students and “consistent progressives” to “build their autonomy” as the “camp of the people” representing the popular masses “within the general movement of struggle.” But that “general movement of struggle” was a reactionary pro-imperialist mobilization, led by factory owner (and Duvalier supporter) André Apaid and his Group of 184. Class-conscious workers had to *oppose* this “movement” at the same time as they opposed Aristide and his Lavalas supporters who were



Brian Jackson/Millennials Project

Haitian women march on MINUSTAH February 5 during visit by Bill Clinton, chanting “tents not guns!”

implementing the plans of U.S. imperialism. Two years later, guided by the same program, B.O. declared in a January 2006 statement that the election campaign had led to the “formation of two poles. We must take up position against the fascists, block the reactionaries.” This amounted to backhanded support to Préval.

B.O. has recently joined an alliance of left-wing trade-unionists set up by the Conlutas federation in Brazil, led by followers of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno.² Conlutas has raised considerable sums for Batay Ouvriye. Previously, a scandal was unleashed when B.O. accepted a grant of almost \$100,000 from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which funneled the money through the AFL-CIO’s “American Center for International Labor Solidarity” (ACILS).³ We wrote that – even though this was pounced on by Aristide supporters, who are only jealous that they didn’t get the Yankee dollars – receiving U.S. imperialist funds from the NED/ACILS was a “betrayal of the Haitian workers” (see “Batay Ouvriye and the ACILS,” *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009). As a result of the uproar, B.O. has stated that it no longer receives money and “does not have any relationship with the Solidarity Center,” but this “doesn’t convince us that this is best for the Haitian working class, in its extreme needs and abandon.” Repeatedly, Batay Ouvriye has let its financial needs determine its decisions.

² Moreno was a political quick change artist whose trademark was to present his current in the clothing of whatever movement was in vogue at the moment (often literally, as when the Morenoites donned olive green uniforms posing as Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua). At different points in his career, Moreno appeared as a Peronist, briefly as a crypto-Maoist, as a Castro-Guevarist and finally settling down as a left-wing social-democrat, which is what his followers are today.

³ The NED replaced the CIA’s covert funding of union and opposition groups after the U.S. spy agency’s cover was blown, while the ACILS replaced the notorious American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) as the vehicle for U.S. imperialist-financed anti-communist labor subversion in Latin America. The NED/AIFLD has been particularly active financing right-wing “union” opposition to the nationalist Chávez government in Venezuela.

A Program for Class Struggle

By pretending that the imperialists would tolerate a more “inclusive” program to “refund” Haitian capitalism, anti-neoliberal groups like PAPDA and its allies are spreading dangerous democratic illusions that serve to divert struggle and lead to defeat. The *only* way to stop the privatizations and dismantling of social services, and to cancel the imperialist debt – in fact, and not as an empty slogan – is by fighting for international socialist revolution. That will not happen overnight, and such a revolution, even if it should break out in Haiti with an impoverished population and a tiny working class, can only be completed on an international scale. But proletarian revolutionaries in Haiti can begin to fight by building a workers party guided by the perspective of *permanent revolution*, put forward by Leon Trotsky in summing up the experience of three Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

In our initial (20 January) article, we pointed to the experience of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake that led to organizing efforts in the working-class districts that were independent of and against the capitalist PRI-government. In Haiti today, many if not most of the hundreds of camps and many heavily damaged neighborhoods (such as Delmas 36 and the huge camp of 70,000 people in Delmas 40) have formed committees to obtain and distribute aid (see “A Neighborhood Tries to Take Matters in Hand,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 January). It is necessary to give political orientation to such efforts, if they are not to turn into mere vehicles for a resuscitated government, the NGOs and imperialist agencies. Camp committees in alliance with workers organizations should undertake a *census of the available food and supplies*, and *demand that all aid be turned over to them to distribute*. For the safety of the residents, they should demand that *Haitian National Police, MINUSTAH and U.S. occupation forces keep out*. In industrial districts, *defense guards linking the urban poor to workers in the factories* should be formed.

The emergency conditions in Haiti have not made the class struggle go away. Some bosses saw their factories destroyed (and hundreds of workers killed as they were do-

ing forced overtime on January 12) and are now asking for subsidies from aid funds. Others restarted production within a week, raising production quotas to make up for the hundreds of workers who were injured, dead or left for the countryside. Class-struggle unionists would **renew the struggle for a massive increase in the minimum wage, indexed to the rate of inflation**, and call for new workers to be hired instead of speed-up. In garment plants, most of which are intact, militant workers could join with community residents in this emergency to **demand that production be reoriented to producing tents**, thousands of which are needed, and which such factories (accustomed to switching designs) are quite capable of producing. *The example of Haitian workers producing shelter for their people would inspire the survivors and workers worldwide.*

Neighborhood committees could work together with peasant organizations to ensure food supplies, rather than depending on the U.N. functionaries who refused to distribute tons of stockpiled food and still refuse to enter “red zones” such as Bel Air and Cité Soleil because of whipped-up hysteria over “riots” and “violence.” Rather than wait for the government to restart education in the *4,000 schools that were destroyed or irremediably damaged* in the Port-au-Prince area, **teachers, parents, students and workers could begin organizing schools** on their own, demanding that the authorities provide financing and build facilities. In the face of the impending catastrophe due to hurricanes, which will sweep away tents and precarious dwellings, workers and community organizations could **demand and begin constructing large buildings that could provide shelter** to hundreds during the storms and later serve as community centers or schools.

Rather than submit to forced relocation by the government or MINUSTAH, **worker and community organizations advised by geologists and architects could occupy areas appropriate for residential housing** that would not be so vulnerable to earthquakes and flooding. Haitian working people and workers everywhere should organize to **drive the MINUSTAH and U.S. imperialist occupation forces out of Haiti**, as well as Iraq, Afghanistan and everywhere. And they should join with the over 800 Cuban doctors and other medical personal who have been in Haiti throughout to **defend Cuba against imperialism and counterrevolution**, demanding that the *U.S.’ torture prison and naval base in Guantánamo be returned to Cuba*. Calls on international agencies and imperialist countries **cancel Haiti’s debt** would have broad resonance, but bankers rightly fear the example could be contagious. Thus this demand must be part of a program to **expropriate the banks, factories and the whole of the bourgeoisie by a workers and peasants government** as part of an *international* revolution.

These are some of the measures that working-class revolutionaries could raise and fight for in Haiti today in the midst of the ongoing emergency. And calls for mobilization of the working people and the poor against the rulers are not illusory. On February 5, during the visit of Bill Clinton to Haiti, some 500 women marched more than seven miles from

the Carrefour district to the airport, then to Préval’s office at the building of the judicial police and on to MINUSTAH headquarters and the U.S. embassy, chanting “tents not guns!” in Kreyol (*Haiti Liberté*, 17 February). On February 17, another big protest demonstration was held at the time of French president Nicolas Sarkozy’s visit, when several hundred demanded that France pay back the 90 million gold francs that it extorted from Haiti in exchange for recognizing the country’s independence in 1825 (worth US\$22 billion in today’s currency). This debt later passed into the hands of U.S. bankers, and served as one of the pretext for Washington’s occupation of the country from 1915 to 1934. Haiti was unable to pay it off until 1947.

To achieve victory, the Haitian working class, which despite its small size demonstrated its capacity for struggle last year, must champion the interests of all the oppressed. It can undertake sharp class struggle against the imperialists and their Haitian flunkys. But, like the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 against slavery and French colonialism, a successful struggle to overthrow U.S. imperialist domination can only be carried out in conjunction with the working class internationally. This means allying with workers next door in the Dominican Republic, as well as fighting for full citizenship rights for the estimated one million Dominican residents of Haitian ancestry who are today denied legal rights, denied schooling and subject to repeated racist massacres. No less crucial is the need to mobilize the hundreds of thousands of Haitian working people in the diaspora, from New York City to Montréal, Quebec. This population can be a human bridge to the imperialist center, where in the past tens of thousands have marched to protest attacks on Haitians, in the U.S. and on the impoverished island. And Haitian-Dominican workers unity in New York can begin the effort to build revolutionary workers parties that can unite the island of Quisqueya (Hispaniola) and make it once again, “the pearl of the Antilles.” ■

Haiti: Workers Solidarity...

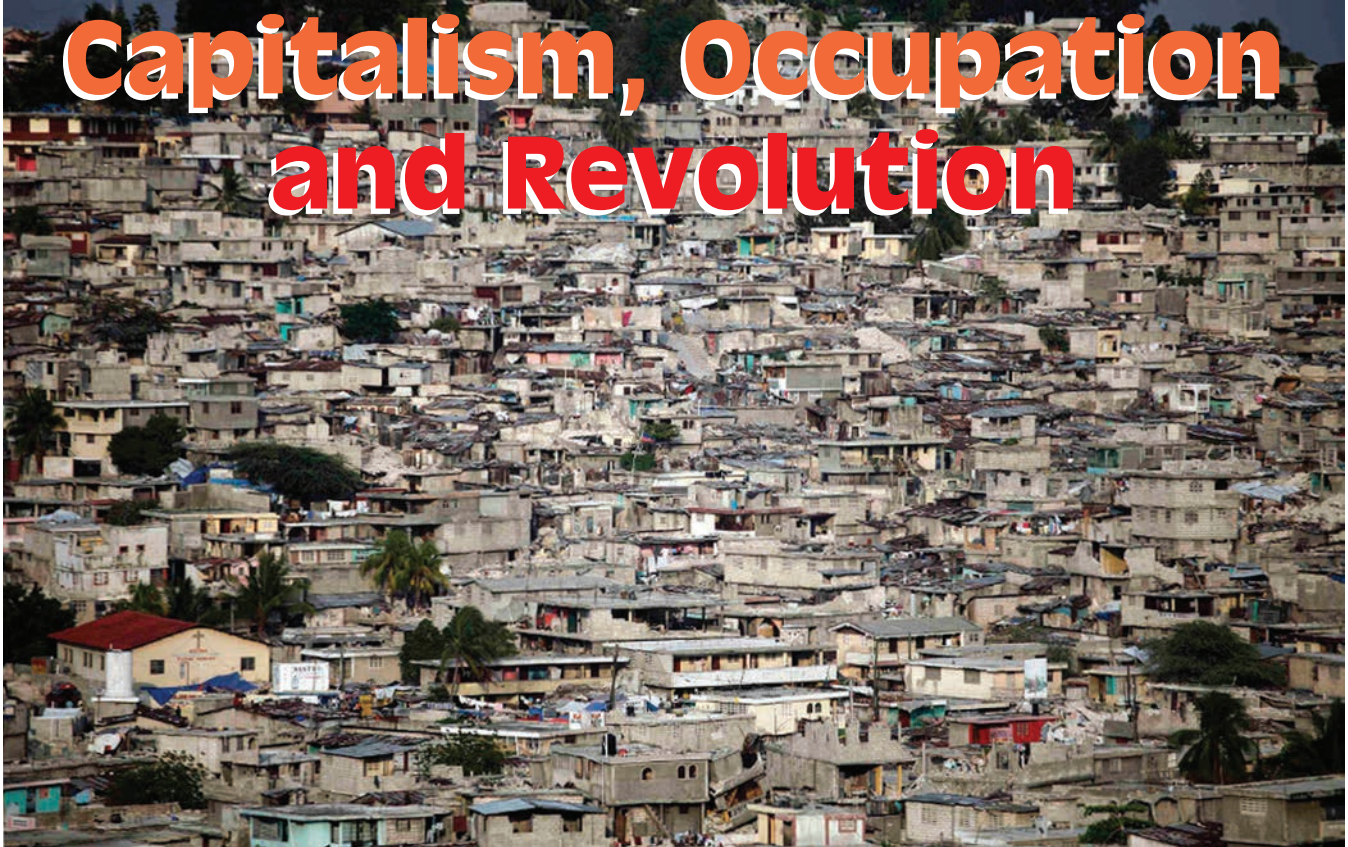
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Although Haiti is indeed a desperately poor country, in addition to slum dwellers and peasants it has a working class, much of it employed in factories producing directly for the U.S. market. These workers last summer waged a bitter battle seeking to raise the minimum wage to a mere \$5 a day (see “Haiti: Battle Over Starvation Wages and Neocolonial Occupation,” *The Internationalist* No. 30, November-December 2009). This small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power, particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police, many of them former members of death squads. The key is to forge the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party that can wage an internationalist struggle against imperialism and its local capitalist flunkys, to fight for a workers and peasants government to expropriate the bourgeoisie, call for a voluntary socialist federation of the Caribbean and extend the revolution to the imperialist heartland of North America. ■

No to Imperialist Occupation – U.S./U.N. Forces Get Out!

Haiti Earthquake:

Capitalism, Occupation and Revolution



Carlos Barria/Reuters

Delmas 33 neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. Warnings by geologists that Haiti's capital was in danger of a devastating earthquake were ignored. Peasants were forced off the land and into precarious slums by U.S. economic policies that destroyed Haiti's agriculture. Capitalism and imperialism caused the horrendous death toll.

JULY 2 – The earthquake that wrecked the capital of Haiti and surrounding areas on January 12 produced human tragedy of almost unfathomable proportions. The numbers are staggering: up to 300,000 bodies picked up on the streets, many dumped in mass graves; perhaps half a million dead when you include those buried by relatives and untold numbers lying under the rubble. In absolute numbers it is far greater than the Asian tsunami of 2004; compared to total population, this is eight times the death toll of the Nicaraguan earthquake of 1972 that destroyed its capital, Managua. The 1912 earthquake that leveled Tokyo produced two-thirds as many fatalities. Most families in the Port-au-Prince area lost close relatives, tens of thousands of children are now without parents. On top of this, hundreds of thousands of dwellings were wiped out: over 2 million people were left homeless, living in overcrowded, unsanitary tent camps and other makeshift shelters. The presidential palace and hillside shantytowns alike were wiped out, virtually every government building collapsed along with the

cathedral, 4,228 schools were destroyed. The Inter-American Development Bank “estimates Haiti’s quake is likely to be the most destructive natural disaster in modern times” (*New York Times*, 17 February).

Five months later, Haiti is no longer in the headlines or on the nightly TV news. The hordes of journalists who descended on the ravaged country to record its agony have left. The aid telethons are over. Haiti is awash with NGOs,¹ each branding their projects with their own logo (and squabbling over who gets the most visible sites). Some rubble has been cleared, but for the hard-hit Haitian population the scene has hardly changed. The

¹ Non-Governmental Organizations, which are mostly fronts for governments, foundations and international agencies. There were an estimated 10,000-plus present in Haiti before the earthquake, making it the highest NGO/population ratio in the world, and there are more now. The reason for the large number of NGOs is the refusal of the U.S. and U.N. to send aid through the Haitian government, instead funneling it through these private groups.

From Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo to New York and Montréal: Workers to Power!

number of homeless has not decreased. According to a United Nations report, as of June 19 some 1.5 million are living in 1,200 camps (“spontaneous settlement sites” in U.N. bureaucratese) in and around the capital, while another 660,000 “internally displaced persons” (“IDPs”) have sought refuge elsewhere in the country. Since the rains began in April, the camps have turned to mud, leading to a sharp increase in communicable diseases. And with the official start of the hurricane season on June 1, flood waters and lashing winds will soon be washing and blowing away the flimsy tents and tarps along with whatever the earthquake didn’t destroy, potentially causing thousands more deaths. Meteorologists predict 15 to 18 named tropical storms will hit Haiti this summer.

Meanwhile, Haiti is still under imperialist occupation, as it has been ever since the U.S. kidnapped the bourgeois populist president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in March 2004, depositing him in a Central African jungle, and together with France and Canada took over the country. Three months later they subcontracted the occupation to the United Nations, to be policed by a hired “peacekeeping” force, the MINUSTAH, under Brazilian command. With the January 2010 earthquake, the Obama administration figured it could get some good press by invading again, only this time under the cover of “humanitarian aid.” Humvees crawled menacingly through Port-au-Prince with heavily armed U.S. Marines and paratroops, M-16s at the ready to shoot down “looters.” The U.S. has now withdrawn the 82nd Airborne Division and turned over “security” to a beefed-up MINUSTAH. But not entirely: while Joint Task Force Haiti has been dissolved, 500 National Guard troops of Task Force Kout Men (Helping Hands) are stationed outside Gonaïves and in July the USS *Iwo Jima* will arrive for “Operation Continuing Promise.”

Meanwhile, the U.N. mercenary occupation force continues its repression against the Haitian masses. A horrendous massacre took place a week after the earthquake, at a jail in the town of Les Cayes, only coming to light in May. Although the jail was not seriously damaged, nearly 500 hundred inmates were jammed together in tiny cells. When the prisoners tried to escape on January 19, they were surrounded by Haitian National Police (PNH) and MINUSTAH police. After several hours, the Haitian police stormed the jail, executing unarmed prisoners as they lay on the floor. Anywhere from 12 to 19 were murdered. The bodies of the dead and wounded were left “strewn through the courtyard and crumpled inside cells. The prison smoldered, a blood-splattered mess,” according to a report by the *New York Times* (23 May), which exposed the slaughter. While the U.N. police claim they didn’t shoot anyone, at the very least they let the butchery happen and then covered up the crime. As for the PNH, it was set up and trained by the imperialists and staffed with killers recruited from the death squads of the military dictatorship.

Under the U.S./UN occupation, armed violence against the Haitian masses continues unabated. The day after the

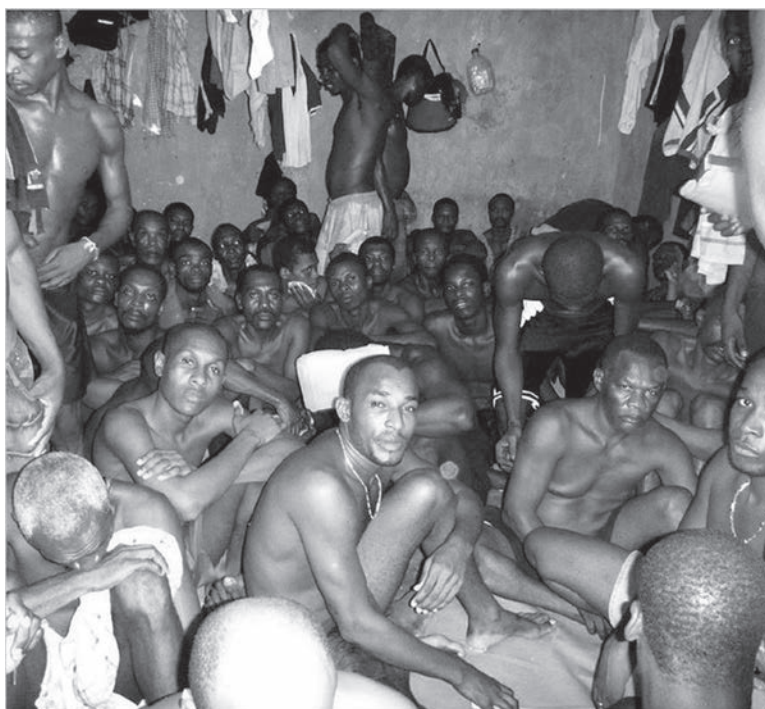


Photo published by New York Times

Prisoners in jail at Les Cayes. Police massacre killed as many as 19 prisoners.

massacre at Les Cayes was revealed, Brazilian MINUSTAH troops attacked students at the State University of Haiti, firing rifles as they invaded the school of ethnology and blanketing the surrounding area with tear gas. Clouds of gas choked residents of the huge nearby tent camp on the Champs de Mars, opposite the presidential palace, while a number of the 60,000 residents were wounded by rubber bullets. Ansel Herz of the IPS news agency, who reported the attack, showed photos of U.S.-supplied munitions used by the troops. Naturally, none of this appeared in the “mainstream” imperialist press. What did get covered was the installation of the Haiti Interim Reconstruction Commission (HIRC), headed by Bill Clinton as the new colonial *gouverneur*, at the luxury resort of Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. The HIRC is intended to sideline the formal Haitian government of President René Préval and give effective control of “reconstruction” to the imperialist donors (see “U.S. Puts Haiti into Receivership,” in this issue). Yet not even 1 percent of the money pledged at earlier meetings in Montréal and New York has been received, much less spent.

Contrary to their humanitarian pretensions, the U.S. and U.N. forces are there to ensure Washington’s domination of Haiti and the region. From the dawn of the imperialist era, U.S. rulers have invaded country after country, time after time, to ensure that the Caribbean remains an “American lake.” After occupying Puerto Rico and seizing Cuba in 1898,² the U.S. (under liberal

² After imposing the Platt Amendment to the Cuban constitution, giving the U.S. unlimited rights to intervene militarily, U.S. troops landed in Cuba again in 1906, 1912 and 1917, as well as Honduras (1907, 1911), Panama (1908, 1918, 1925), Nicaragua (1909, 1910) and the Mexican port of Veracruz (1914). By World War I, the western Caribbean was ringed with U.S.-occupied countries and puppet regimes.

Democrat Woodrow Wilson) launched an extended occupation of Haiti (1915-34) and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924). With the onset of the anti-Soviet Cold War, the U.S. has made sure that, one way or another, it had firm control of Haiti – under the dictatorship of the Duvalier dynasty (1957-86), under the boot of the military (1986-90, 1991-94), under the government of populist president Jean-Bertrand Aristide (put in power by Bill Clinton and a U.S. expeditionary force in 1994, removed from power a decade later by George Bush II and a U.S. expeditionary force), and since 2004 under a U.N. occupation force. Today, Yankee imperialism still insists on controlling this strategically placed country – just across the Windward Passage from Cuba and within striking distance of Venezuela – even against imperialist allies/rivals such as France.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International defend Cuba, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, and Venezuela under the bourgeois nationalist-populist Hugo Chávez against U.S. imperialism. We fight for independence of Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony. Unlike many on the left who hesitated to call for U.S. troops out of Haiti when Obama claimed they only were providing aid to earthquake victims (and in sharp opposition to the Spartacist League which grotesquely supported the U.S.’ “humanitarian” invasion³), the IG and LFI have ceaselessly fought to drive U.S./U.N. forces out of Haiti, all in the framework of a struggle for a socialist federation of the Caribbean.

Now a new calamity is looming in Haiti, and like the one last January, the disaster is anything but natural. In its consequences it is, as Guatemalan survivors of an earlier calamity expressed it, a “*class quake*.” More specifically, the terrible toll of death and destruction and the non-existent reconstruction are the direct consequence of the capitalist social order and imperialist domination of the impoverished Caribbean nation. For more than two centuries, Haiti, the black republic born of a slave revolution, has been condemned to endless misery imposed by the former colonial masters and modern imperialists. Their empires are built on the superprofits extracted from the toilers in the semicolonies – together with exploitation of the proletariat within the imperialist countries – and their economic and military world domination. What’s needed to escape from this vicious circle is not simply more money to rebuild from the ruins (or to “refund” or “reimagine” Haiti, as the bourgeois politicians are now lyrically proclaiming) but a *new Haitian revolution*, a region-wide *workers revolution* that with hurricane force sweeps away capitalism throughout the Antilles and extends to the imperialist metropolis itself.

³ See “Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti” (30 January), “SL Twists and Turns on Haiti” (9 April) and (after the SL flip-flopped and “repudiated” its betrayal in supporting the U.S. invasion) “Open Letter from the Internationalist Group to the Spartacist League and ICL” (8 May).



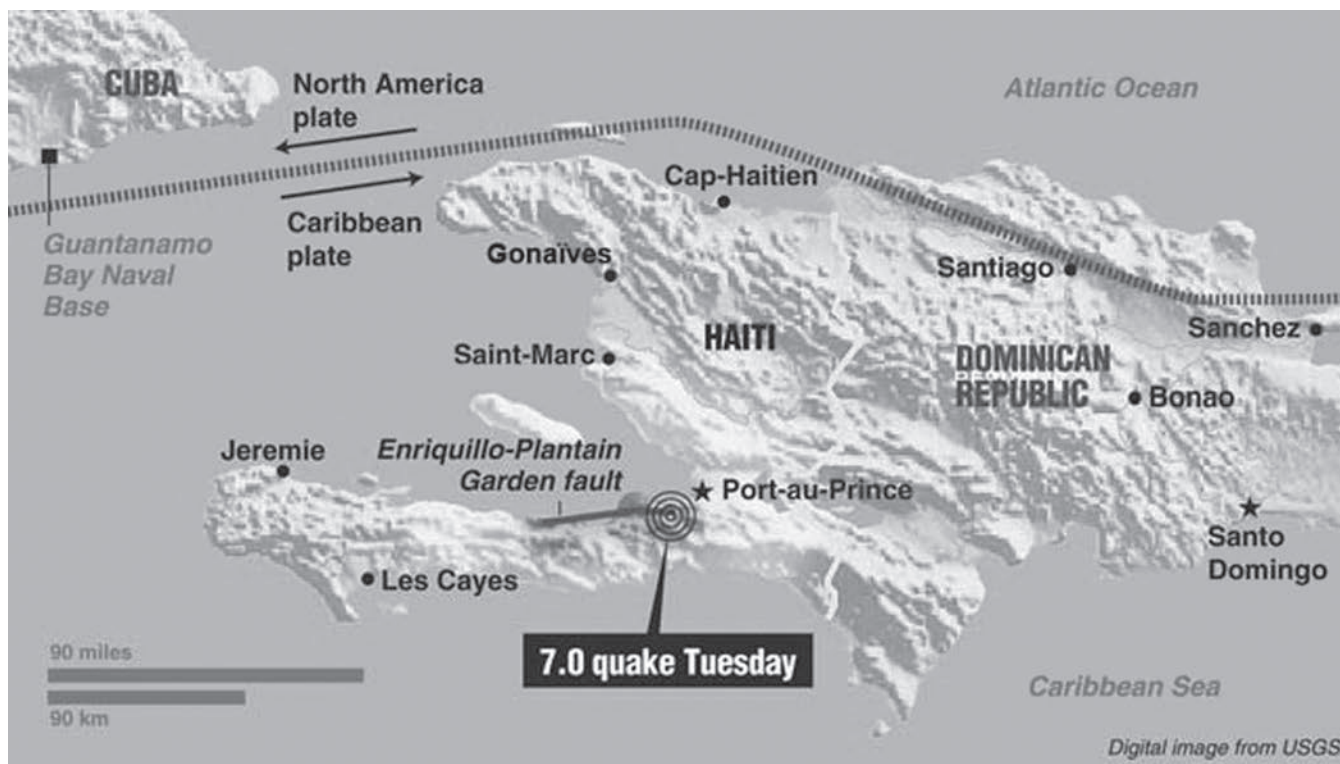
United States Marine Corps

U.S. Marines searching for “bandits” – that is, peasant insurgent bands, known as *cacos* – in 1919 during the first occupation of Haiti by the United States, lasting from 1915 to 1934.

A Catastrophe Made By Capitalism

How was the Haitian earthquake calamity caused by capitalism? Let us count the ways. First, the January 12 quake was entirely predictable, *and was predicted*, yet no provisions were made to ensure or improve the safety of the population. Second, a quarter million people were killed not by the temblor itself, which killed practically no one, but by collapsing buildings which were not constructed to withstand even a relatively mild quake. Third, the massive carnage was the result of some three million people being jammed into a geologically risky space, largely as a result of economic policies that have ruined Haitian agriculture, forcing peasants into the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Fourth, there was no civil emergency plan to rescue those trapped in the rubble, and no public health and hospital system to care for the survivors. These features are not uniquely Haitian but common to semicolonial capitalist countries under the boot of imperialist world domination.

To begin with, this was a tragedy foretold. Scientists had been warning for some time that an earthquake was likely, precisely where it occurred, on the Enriquillo Fault, which runs from Jamaica through the Haitian capital to the Dominican Republic. Port-au-Prince had suffered a devastating earthquake in November 1751, shortly after it was made capital of the French colony of Saint-Domingue. “Only one masonry building had not collapsed,” according to the French historian Moreau de Saint-Rémy, who wrote: “During these days of anguish, the population lived in tents. Port-au-Prince is transformed into a Bedouin camp” – like today. A second quake occurred in June 1770, completely leveling the small city, destroying government buildings, hospitals, houses. And



as Eric Calais, a professor of geophysics at Purdue University (Indiana), emphatically warned at a conference at the State University of Haiti in May 2008: “Where there has been an earthquake before, there will be an earthquake again!” (“Will There Be an Earthquake in Haiti?” in *Le Nouvelliste*, 21 May 2008). Calais and Paul Mann of the University of Texas had done recent studies showing greatly increased stress on the Enriquillo Fault.

Over the last two years there was extensive discussion in Haiti over the danger of a quake. In December 2008 there was a “Conference-Debate On Earthquakes and Their Consequences”; in March 2009, engineer Claude Prepetit spoke to a meeting of specialists on the subject, “What Will Happen If a New Earthquake Strikes Haiti?” A newspaper report, “The Spectre of a Destructive Earthquake” began: “Demographic growth, anarchic construction and environmental degradation render Haiti even more vulnerable to natural catastrophes” (*Le Nouvelliste*, 26 March 2009). In October, engineer Prepetit gave another talk, beginning with the warning that seismologists say “Haiti is a high-risk place.” He reported on the liquefaction of the earth in certain areas and pointed to particularly vulnerable slums, showing slides of active faults in the capital area. In December, yet another talk by Prepetit. *Le Nouvelliste* (17 December) headlined: “Are We Living on a Powder Keg?” Three weeks later the deadliest earthquake of modern times struck, turning Port-au-Prince into a gigantic cemetery.

Construction standards were obviously non-existent in reality. Even buildings housing international agency personnel such as the Hotel Montana or the MINUSTAH headquarters collapsed. Haiti had a building code before the earthquake – all of two pages, which was reportedly used by engineers but not contractors. However, the main concern of builders was not a

once-in-200-years earthquake but withstanding the destructive hurricanes which occur several times a year. Thus most housing construction consisted of concrete with steel reinforcing bars, with heavy roofs that pancaked, with particularly deadly effect. Older wooden buildings caused far fewer casualties. Then there was the effect of shoddy construction: rebars were of brittle, rather than ductile steel, so they snapped rather than bent; they had no ribbing to hold the cement together; the cement was of poor quality, with four and five parts sand to one part concrete instead of one-third, etc. As geologist Robert Bilham of the University of Colorado reported after returning from an inspection trip of the Haiti quake zone, buildings in Haiti acted as “weapons of mass destruction” (interview on *Democracy Now*, 1 March).⁴

The Haiti quake was not even terribly intense: at 7.0 on the Richter scale it was 1/500 the intensity of the 8.8 magnitude earthquake in Chile a few weeks later in which a little over 500 people died. The inferior construction methods in Haiti reflect the generalized poverty of the country. Even if there had been adequate building codes, few could afford to erect safe constructions. The building practices were also the result of the destruction of Haiti’s industrial capacity by capitalism. A main reason why the use of substandard cement was universal is that Haiti’s

⁴ Bilham notes that no one should have been surprised by the January 12 earthquake since “Most islands in the northern and eastern Caribbean owe their existence to seismic processes on or near the edges of the Caribbean Plate.” Moreover, he warns (as have other geologists) of the danger of a new earthquake in the same area around Port-au-Prince, since “adjacent segments of the fault to the east and west of the recent subsurface rupture are now near breaking point because of stress transferred to them.” Even at the epicenter of the recent quake, the surface was not broken, indicating the possibility of a new temblor in the very same place (*Nature*, 18 February).



Haiti-Liberte

Demonstrators march in Port-au-Prince on June 1, sixth anniversary of the occupation of Haiti by United Nations forces (MINUSTAH) on behalf of U.S. imperialism. Sign says: “Down with the Occupation, Down with the Reconstruction Plan, Long Live a Socialist State.”

only cement plant was privatized in 1996 at the insistence of U.S. economists, and then closed down because it was cheaper to import from Mexico, given the U.S.-ordered reduction in tariffs. Today, with Haiti’s lack of foreign exchange, the result is a permanent shortage of concrete at any price. Meanwhile, the country has a dire lack of engineers, since most educated professionals emigrated to escape from the Duvalier dictatorship and the military junta, and are reluctant to return to a chaotic pseudo-democracy under foreign occupation. Haiti’s engineers live in the Dominican Republic, the U.S., France and Quebec.

Imperialist Devastation of Haiti’s Economy

The destruction of Haiti’s agriculture is likewise the result of conscious policy. The first case was the wholesale slaughter of creole pigs, which were a mainstay of the peasant economy. The reason given was to control the spread of African swine flu (which originated in Spain, then spread to the Dominican Republic). After all 1.2 million of Haiti’s pig population were butchered in 1983 at the insistence of the U.S., USAID said it would replace a fraction with “better” piglets from the U.S. Midwest (at \$50 each, a windfall for U.S. hog farmers but nearly impossible to afford for Haitian peasants, with an average annual cash income of around \$130). However, “Iowa hogs” were not nearly as hardy, requiring clean water (something 60 percent of the Haitian population doesn’t have), imported feed and roofed pigpens with concrete floors. Haitian peasants quickly dubbed them “four-footed princes.” The imported pigs soon died off. A main source of protein disappeared from the Haitian masses’ diet, and peasants had lost their “savings account” (pigs were sold to pay for marriages, schooling, medical emergencies).⁵

⁵ See the Grassroots International video, narrated by Pulitzer Prize winning Haitian American author Edwidge Danticat, *Haiti’s Piggy Bank: The Story of the Loss and Recovery of Haiti’s Creole Pig*,

Then came the destruction of Haiti’s sugar and rice industries. In his book *Planet of Slums* (2006), urban theorist Mike Davis points to Haiti – along with Mexico – as a country where the vast expansion of the slum population in recent years was the result of cheap food imports (under “free trade” agreements, “structural adjustment programs” and bilateral deals with the United States) making local agriculture uncompetitive in the market and pushing ex-peasants to migrate to the cities, or to the U.S. In 1987, Haiti’s sugar mill was privatized, sold like the cement plant a decade later to the Mervs family, who closed it down in favor of importing cheaper sugar from the Dominican Republic – where it is produced by Haitian workers toiling in near-slavery. That put an end to Haiti’s sugar industry (3,500 workers, 40,000 peasant growers). Next on the chopping block was rice farming. In the 1970s, Haiti exported rice. But in the early ’90s, the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton demanded that Haiti eliminate tariffs on rice in exchange for the U.S. lifting duties on Haitian citrus exports.

U.S. experts were perfectly aware of the consequences. A 1995 USAID report assessing Haiti’s potential for agribusiness wrote:

“An export-driven trade and investment policy has the potential to relentlessly squeeze the domestic rice farmer. This farmer will be forced to adapt, or (s)he will disappear.” –quoted in Lisa McGowan, “Democracy Undermined, Economic Justice Denied: Structural Adjustment and the Aid Juggernaut in Haiti” [January 1997],⁶

That is exactly what happened. Soon Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, was the fourth-largest importer of

available at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2407538368251439007&hl=en#>

⁶ See also Laurie Richardson, *Feeding Dependency, Starving Democracy: USAID Policies in Haiti* (Grassroots International, May 1997).

Jorge Saenz/AP



A quarter century of importing heavily subsidized rice from the United States has devastated Haiti's agriculture. Above: market in Port-au-Prince.

(heavily subsidized) rice from the U.S. Dubbed "Miami rice" by the peasants, it mostly came from Clinton's home state of Arkansas. The disastrous results of these policies were driven home by the April-May 2008 food crisis in Haiti, when millions faced starvation and many were reduced to eating "cakes" made of mud and straw. Now, following the earthquake, Bill Clinton made a dramatic self-criticism, saying "we made this devil's bargain on rice." "It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas," Clinton said to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "but it has not worked." (see *Democracy Now*, 1 April). The ex-president added that he has to "live every day with the consequences of the lost capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people, because of what I did. Nobody else."

No show of contrition can absolve Bill Clinton from the responsibility of producing a massive food crisis, destroying the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Haitian peasants, and forcing them to move into the swollen Port-au-Prince slums where many died in the earthquake. And now he's back at it, this time pushing Coca-Cola's mango scheme (see below) and a "development model" of Rwanda – the Central African country where Clinton's protégé, Tutsi leader Paul Kagame, sparked a genocide that killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and Hutus.⁷ Yet it wasn't just Clinton, and it wasn't just the policy of "neo-liberalism." Haiti was no paradise for peasants and workers under the 29-year dictatorship of the Duvaliers when "import substitution" was all the rage among economists. Haiti then had high import duties and nationalized sugar milling, flour milling, cement, telephone and electricity companies

⁷ We have written of Kagame's outfit, the Rwanda Patriotic Front, that "the RPF itself carried out massive killings of Hutus," which is contrary to the standard U.S. account that there was a one-sided genocide against Tutsis by Hutus (see "Kabala Army's Genocidal Mass Murder of Rwandan Hutu Refugees," *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997). Kagame, an English-speaking Rwandan exile who had been head of military intelligence in the Ugandan armed forces, was trained at the U.S. Army Command and Staff College. More recently, considerable evidence has come to light of RPF actions that touched off the genocide.

... which were sources of graft for the ruling kleptocracy. Switching to another "development model" won't solve Haiti's food supply problems, make the countryside flourish or bring about rationally planned urban development. The capitalist system itself must be swept aside along with the debris from the earthquake.

"It's to me completely unacceptable that we should live in a world where you can shake the ground a little bit, and the buildings will fall down," said geologist Robert Bilham. "We know how to do it right." Yes, but this knowledge must be put to use, and that depends on the social order. It should be equally unacceptable to live in a world of mass hunger and unemployment which produce the precarious slums that become death traps in the face of "class quakes," hurricanes, tsunamis, landslides and other "natural" calamities. Haiti is an abundant tropical island and while there are certain things it can't produce (like

fodder for milk cows), it can certainly feed itself *and* export agricultural produce it is now constrained by the world market to import. Deaths from post-hurricane flooding can be greatly reduced by river control and drainage, but who will pay for this? Reforestation will take some time, but how to avoid pirate loggers cutting down the forests again? Industrial production can provide a road out of poverty, but not with sweatshop wages and conditions.

Geologist Bilham calculates that "earthquake-proof reconstruction in Haiti is likely to cost an order of magnitude [ten times] more than has been promised so far, even using local materials and local manpower." So long as Haiti remains a poverty-wracked capitalist semi-colony, the many tens of billions of dollars necessary to build infrastructure, public buildings and housing will not be forthcoming. Haiti will be like Nicaragua, a country where almost four decades after the earth trembled, the lasting devastation is a constant reminder of the need for *international socialist revolution*.

For Haitian-Dominican Workers Revolution in a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean

So the Haitian earthquake and its horrendous consequences were predictable, and were predicted – but nothing was done about it. The devastating effects of U.S.-imposed economic policies on the Haitian economy were likewise predictable, and predicted – but with slight modifications, the same policies underlie the imperialists' plans for capitalist "reconstruction" of Haiti. It will take a revolutionary mobilization of the Haitian workers, peasants and poor people to put an end to the endless tragedies that have plagued the land of Toussaint Louverture, the "black Spartacus" who led the revolution that abolished slavery and threw off French colonial rule. With the bankruptcy of the rickety Haitian capitalist state glaringly obvious in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake, there is a patent need to overturn the bankrupt social order. What's key is an internationalist program, for Haitian and Dominican workers to join hands in overthrowing their capitalist rulers on the

island of Quisqueya (Hispaniola) and to overcome the colonial legacy that carved up the region, through a socialist federation of the Caribbean and a joint struggle together with North American workers to smash imperialism.

In recent weeks, there have been a number of protest demonstrations by diverse political forces. On May 10 and 17, several thousand demonstrators of the bourgeois opposition bloc demanded Préval's departure. This bloc brings together the Fanmi Lavalas, supporters of the ousted president Aristide, and the Alyans grouping headed by Evans Paul, one of the leaders of the right-wing opposition to Aristide in 2004. On May 24, the Agence Haïtienne de Presse headlined, "Rock throwing, burning barricades and great panic in the center of the capital," as MINUSTAH "peacekeepers" attacked students protesting against the Préval government and the HIRC. On May 25 and 27, the bourgeois opposition was back in the streets. On June 1 several hundred marched on the sixth anniversary of the MINUSTAH occupation of Haiti, demanding U.N. troops out and that Préval resign as president; a lead banner read, "Down with the Occupation, Down with the Reconstruction Plan, Long Live a Socialist State!"

On June 4, there was the demonstration by tens of thousands of peasants against Monsanto in the town of Hinché; and on June 8, a protest of several dozen mainly Lavalas supporters outside the Brazilian embassy. Again, none of these were reported in the imperialist press.

So even though the entire country was traumatized by the devastation of the quake and the 1.5 million people left homeless in Port-au-Prince, Leogâne and nearby towns are consumed by the daily struggle to survive, protests have not stopped – though so far they are mainly by a politically active minority. It is notable that the targets of the bourgeois opposition are Préval and Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, *not* the U.S. and the HIRC headed by Bill Clinton. And they have spared the NGOs and aid agencies, even though there has been virtually no construction of structures to provide shelter against storms. Some "left" sectors in the splintered Lavalas milieu, such as the weekly *Haïti-Liberté*, criticize the "restavèk" bourgeoisie, comparing the country's current figurehead rulers to children consigned to slave labor. It's right to point to the utter dependence of both Préval & Co. and bourgeois opposition groups such as those around Charles Henry Baker and other sweatshop capitalists on the U.S. But Lavalas itself is and has always been a bourgeois political movement. What these "leftists" are yearning for is a more robust, independent bourgeoisie, not a revolution.

Other leftists, such as Marc Arthur Fils Aimé, director of the Karl Lévesque Cultural Institute and spokesman for the Inisyativ Pati Kan Pèp La (Initiative for a Party of the People's Camp), have noted the fundamental identity of the government and the opposition, noting that the protests by the latter do not seek to "question the nature of the current system," that they "never say they want a state that will stop this government from selling off the people's property, that would carry out an



Alice Speit

Peasants demonstrate against Monsanto, Hinche, June 4. Hinche is where in 1917 Charlemagne Péralte launched the peasant guerrilla struggle against the U.S. occupation.

agrarian reform," etc. The Inisyativ defines itself as "a Marxist, Leninist political organization," but with its demands and by its self-definition as representing the "people's camp," it indicates that it is seeking reforms *within the framework of capitalism*. Similarly, the syndicalist organization Batay Ouvriye (Workers Struggle) in a statement "After the January 12, 2010 Earthquake" (7 February) declares that "we must work to reinforce the progressive camp both inside and abroad (in the belly of the beast). We must reinforce the people's camp" which "can only happen through the leadership of working people."

Since the time of the French Revolution, "the people" has stood for a conglomeration of classes *including the bourgeoisie*, as opposed to the aristocracy, monarchy, etc. The "people's fronts" or popular fronts of the 1930s and their continuations such as Salvador Allende's Popular Unity (UP) in Chile in the 1970s are class-collaborationist alliances intended to chain the workers to a supposedly "progressive" section of the capitalist class. But in the imperialist epoch, there can be no independent, progressive or national bourgeoisie capable of carrying out revolutionary democratic tasks in the semi-colonial countries. The minuscule local ruling classes are dependent on domestic reaction and on imperialism in order to maintain their exploitation of the vast mass of workers, peasants and poor. Even with the addition of a few words about "working-class leadership," any "alliance" with bourgeois sectors, however tiny, in a "people's camp" or popular front will restrict the struggle to the limits of capitalism. And from Spain in the 1930s to Indonesia in 1965 to Chile in the '70s, that always spells defeat for the proletariat.

The slogan of Allende's UP, "the people united will never be defeated" is a lie – it's rather the opposite: so long as the toilers are tied to a sector of the exploiters in the name of "the people," capital will triumph. Victory for the wage slaves

Esteban Félix/AP



Demonstrators protesting against Préal government and presence of U.N. occupation forces flee tear gas barrage by MINUSTAH troops.

against their masters depends on breaking with the bourgeoisie and fighting for power to the workers leading all the oppressed in a revolutionary *class* struggle.

Haitian leftists who see themselves as Marxists all look back to Jacques Roumain, the founder of the Haitian Communist Party in the early 1930s. In his *Analyse schématique 32-34*, Roumain trenchantly analyzed the fraud of bourgeois nationalism:

“The great majority of the working class now understands the lies of bourgeois nationalism. More and more, it closely ties the notion of anti-imperialist struggle with that of the class struggle; more and more it becomes aware that fighting imperialism is to fight capitalism, foreign or indigenous, it means an all-out fight against the Haitian bourgeoisie and the bourgeois politicians, the valets (servants) of imperialism and cruel exploiters of the workers and peasants.”

But while clearly seeing the reactionary nature of the bourgeois nationalists, Roumain did not draw the vital conclusion that the working class must seize power, backed by the peasants and poor, and institute its own class rule. And with his references to the “National Proletariat,” he obscured the need to fight for the victory of the *international* proletariat. Roumain’s essay was written in 1934, at a time when the official Communist parties following the “general line” laid down by Stalin in the Kremlin were on a bureaucratic centrist, at times even ultra-leftist, course. But soon after, the Stalinists went over to the popular front and sought alliances with the very “national bourgeoisie” that Roumain had so sharply excoriated.

Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with V.I. Lenin of the Bolshevik October Revolution, summed up the lessons of the Russian 1905 and 1917 revolutions in his theory of *permanent revolution*. Precisely because of the inability of the bourgeoisie in late-developing capitalist countries to carry out the democratic tasks of the classical bourgeois revolutions, he concluded, “the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the

alliance with the peasantry.” Moreover, once in power, led by their communist party, the workers will soon be required to infringe on the rights of bourgeois property: “The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution,” which while it begins on national terrain must be extended internationally in order to survive. This is doubly true in a small, impoverished semi-colonial country like Haiti facing the most powerful imperialism in history. But Haitian workers have an important trump card: they are present not only in the periphery but in the heart of international finance capital.

It is necessary to promote the self-organization of the poor and working people in a fight against the capitalist system and imperialist domination – a class struggle for power. Above all, this requires building the nucleus of a Leninist vanguard party of the working class as part of the struggle to reforge the Trotskyist Fourth International.

A *transitional program* is necessary leading from today’s struggles to socialist revolution, beginning with the fight against imperialist occupation. The League for the Fourth International demands: *MINUSTAH and U.S. forces get out of Haiti!* A communist nucleus in Haiti would oppose the state of emergency under which Préal/Bellerive have prolonged their terms and the “Interim Reconstruction Commission” has supplanted the Haitian government. It would call for elected committees in the camps to take charge of relief and, seizing well-suited land (in consultation with geologists and engineers) no matter who claims it as their property, to begin constructing urgently needed housing. It would call for hard-hitting mobilizations to massively unionize export industries, not shop by shop but all together. And in this country where 85 percent of the schools are private and half the adult population cannot read and write, educators, students, workers and parents together with university students and faculty can begin organizing public schools near the camps, turning them into community centers for literacy training.

In this country where the formal economy has been devastated by rapacious capitalists, domestic despots and their imperialist patrons long before the earthquake, the Haitian proletariat is relatively small – but it can lead the masses of urban and rural poor in a struggle against capital. And while as a result of the endless disasters besetting the island nation, a large part of the population has emigrated, the dispersal of Haitian workers can be turned to advantage. Next door in the Dominican Republic, Haitian workers in the sugar fields and construction industry can be a link to Dominican fellow workers, laying the basis for mutual defense against racist victimization and government attacks. In Brazil, our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil have waged a successful fight to win education workers to struggle for the *expulsion* of Brazilian troops from Haiti. And in Canada and the U.S., notably the cities of Montréal and New York, hundreds of thousands of Haitian working people can be a bridge to North American workers in common struggle against imperialism. ■

No Housing, No Jobs – Bonanza for NGOs, Sweatshops and Agribusinesses

Capitalist “Reconstruction” of Haiti

After all the televised hype about “Hope for Haiti,” the post-earthquake reality remains grim. Little aid is reaching survivors, almost no housing has been built, the “temporary” camps are breeding disease and liable to be swept away by the next storm, residents are facing eviction with nowhere to go, and the police and mercenary occupation troops are back to their usual practice of arbitrary arrests and raids on poor districts. All this is the result not of a natural event, but of the chaos and oppression inherent in capitalism. This is the continuing devastation of New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward (almost five years after Hurricane Katrina) to the *n*th degree, compounded by semi-colonial dependence. If NOLA residents got the 82nd Airborne and toxic trailers for housing, Port-au-Prince got the 82nd Airborne plus U.N. “peacekeepers” ... and no housing. Not even one-fifth of “tent camp” residents have received tents, most are still living exposed to the elements under tarps and make-shift shelters.

First there are the looters. No, not the non-existent roving bands of youths stealing food from babies that the U.S. military was supposedly sent in to control, but some of the aid agencies themselves. Most suspect is the American Red Cross (ARC), notorious in the “aid community” for its bloated bureaucracy and for diverting funds. The ARC raised \$430 million for Haiti, partly through appeals by First Lady Michelle Obama. People in Haiti are asking “where did that money go?” – particularly since nobody has seen any of it on the ground. The ARC refuses to make its records public, but said it had spent “or allocated” \$106 million in the first two months, mainly by giving it to the U.N.’s World Food Program and international Red Cross efforts. But an ARC official argues that spending lots of money in an emergency when “everything is expensive” is “not being efficient.” The ARC is holding back the rest to be used for things like “water sanitation systems” – plus, of course, the 9 percent it charges for administration (*Miami Herald*, 27 April). A bitter Haitian joke says that if a local politician takes a rake-off, it’s corruption, but if an NGO takes the same cut, it’s called “overhead.”

Then there is shelter. Initially, the Haitian government vowed it would provide housing for earthquake victims on safer ground. However, when 2,000 residents were bused to the first site, Corail Cesselesse, they found a barren dust-



MINUSTAH soldier stands guard as residents of tent city inspect “relocation” site, Corail Cesselesse, where they were moved on April 10. No housing, no water, no food, no sanitation facilities, no jobs, no transportation.

blown plain far from the city without electricity, water supply, latrines, jobs, transportation, a place to buy food or anything at all. When President Préval showed up for a photo op, people complained they were being dumped in a “wasteland.” The bureaucrats’ talk of “decentralizing” Haiti was nothing but forcibly depopulating the capital – finishing the job for the earthquake. “Although there is open land closer to the city, landowners have not been willing to give it up,” reported the *Los Angeles Times* (18 April). A month and a half later, even the World Vision aid agency complains that the flimsy tents provided at Corail are inadequate for storms: “no tent or tarp is able to withstand that type of weather.” A spokesman for Oxfam asks: “Why did we pick a flood plain in the middle of the desert for this site?” (“Many Say Haiti Unprepared for Hurricane Season,” *Miami Herald*, 31 May).

In contrast to the perilous situation at the Corail site, the *Herald* writes, “Petionville Golf Club is a model of what can be done.” Disaster experts point out the sandbagging, ditches and fence around a ravine, adding that 4,000 people living in the most “at-risk” part of the Golf Club were relocated. Two things the article didn’t mention are: that the at-risk residents were relocated to the hellhole of Corail, and the manager of the Pétienville camp in the lush hills above Port-au-Prince is actor Sean Penn. Every visiting statesman passes through the Pétienville camp, and with USAID, Catholic Relief Services and the Israeli government pumping in resources, there are a few more facilities. Right across the street are boutique shops and posh restaurants catering to prosperous Haitians from the

nearby gated mansions, as well as a casino and brassy nightclub for foreign aid workers. “The thumping beat of capitalism can be heard by those now living on Pétienville’s streets,” reported the *New York Times* (28 March). So things go better with money – lots of it – but whether any will trickle down is another matter.

As for temporary shelters, barely 2,000 have been built. (Although no more than glorified wooden boxes, they do offer some protection from extreme weather.) The American Red Cross said it had spent \$30 million on materials for such “T-shelters,” but they are sitting in storage. The Canadian Red Cross was about to start building T-shelters, but they stopped. Why? In both cases because the Haitian government could not find land with clear property title to place them on. Meanwhile, some landowners, particularly several church-owned schools, have been creating obstacles to access, blocking food deliveries, destroying latrines, cutting off water, even threatening to use tear gas – doing everything possible to push camps off of their property. The Haitian government and the U.N. agreed on a temporary moratorium on forced evictions, but the minister in charge hasn’t informed anyone, and the ban is not being enforced (“As ‘Temporary’ Camps Linger, Tensions Rise with Haitian Landowners,” IPS, 9 June).

This brings us to the role of the “multinational” (mainly U.S.) corporations, waiting to cash in on the reconstruction. A liaison to Clinton’s HIRC told a Haitian entrepreneur that only 15 percent of the aid contracts would go to Haitian contractors (*Haiti-Liberté*, 16 June). U.S. debris-removal companies (Ashbrit, Ceres) are lining up at the trough, and giant construction firms like Halliburton, Bechtel, Fluor and Brown & Root are eager for action as their Iraq contracts wind up. In the countryside, the agrochemical giant Monsanto figured it would get in ahead of the competition by donating 475 tons of hybrid seeds. Peasant organizations held a protest march in Hinche that burned some of the seeds, saying they would make small growers with limited cash income dependent on annual purchases from Monsanto (producer of Agent Orange and other herbicides used in counterinsurgency warfare) and would lead to the destruction of peasant agriculture. In turn, Coca-Cola (with the endorsement of Bill Clinton) has launched a \$7.5 billion “Haiti Hope Project” to produce mangos for a new mango-lime beverage, claiming this would provide 25,000 jobs for Haitian mango farmers. As with Monsanto’s “donation,” those likely to benefit are agribusinesses, not peasants.

However, the main focus for capitalist reconstruction schemes is on expanding Haiti’s role as a provider of low-wage sweatshop labor. The garment industry, Haiti’s largest employer and source of export revenue, was relatively unscathed by the



Bill Clinton, the new neo-colonial gouverneur of Haiti, with Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive (center) and Muhtar Kent, chairman of Coca-Cola, launch new mango beverage at imperialist donors’ conference on Haiti, March 31.

The Coca-Cola Company

earthquake: of 28 plants, 23 suffered minor damage and for most, production resumed within weeks. However, the Palm Apparel factory in Carrefour, near the epicenter of the quake, collapsed, killing some 500 workers doing overtime to fulfill their piecework quotas. Garment workers are almost entirely non-unionized, with most earning no more than the minimum wage of 125 gourdes (US\$3) a day. The HOPE I and II acts passed by the U.S. Congress in 2006 and 2008 allow duty-free apparel imports from Haiti, and George Soros is building a new industrial park near the impoverished slum of Cité Soleil in Port-au-Prince to take advantage of this. But aside from the absurdity of pretending that \$3-a-day jobs are a road out of poverty, the reality is that the garment industry in the Caribbean and Central America is rapidly *declining* as U.S. companies prefer even lower-wage Asian producers (see David Wilson, “Rebuilding Haiti – the Sweatshop Hoax,” *MRzine*, 4 March).

In short, the plans for capitalist reconstruction of Haiti may be money-makers for U.S. multinationals, but they are a dead-end for Haitian workers, peasants and the poor. And the pipe dreams of the “anti-globalization” movement and various “progressive” Haitian NGOs such as the Platform to Advocate Alternative Development Policies (PAPDA) – of a new “development model” based on “participatory democracy,” “an end to economic dependency” and an end to “neo-liberalism” – will go up in smoke because the real obstacle is not a particular policy but the workings of the capitalist system. The reality is, as Bruno Lemarquais, Haiti director of the U.N. Development Program, pointed out: “The same rain that is killing 200 people in Haiti is not killing anybody in Cuba. It’s not the disaster that kills. It’s the way a country or its people are prepared.” And Cuba is prepared with an elaborate system of shelters, plans for mobilization and free medical facilities *because it had a social revolution*. The League for the Fourth International insists that nothing short of that can rescue Haiti from the cycle of poverty and destruction, and in this imperialist epoch that must be a socialist revolution reaching into the heart of the empire. ■

Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti



Ramón Espinosa/AP

U.S. troops from 82nd Airborne Division patrol Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. Aiding the Haitian people? No, this is what imperialist occupation looks like.

JANUARY 30 – The latest issue of *Workers Vanguard* (No. 951, 29 January 2010), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., has a front-page story, “Haiti Earthquake Horror: Imperialism, Racism and Starvation,” that *supports* the presence of United States and United Nations occupation troops in Haiti. *WV* buys the U.S. rulers’ cover story for their latest invasion as supposedly aiding the desperate Haitian masses left homeless, hungry and in dire need of medical attention in the wake of the devastating January 12 earthquake that demolished the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas. The article ends with an apoplectic attack on the Internationalist Group for exposing the imperialist lies and demanding “U.S./U.N. Forces Get Out!” We have here a classic example of the term Lenin coined during World War I: “*social-imperialism*,” which he applied to those who espouse socialism in the abstract while supporting imperialism in practice. Then as now, its practitioners launch virulent attacks on revolutionaries for actually standing against their “own” imperialist rulers.

This is a deeply significant step for the SL/U.S. and its International Communist League, marking the point at which they have gone over from bending under pressure from the

ruling class to outright apology for imperialism. Many of those who continued to see the SL/ICL as orthodox Trotskyists – despite its repeated lurches to the right in recent years – may be shocked and find it hard to believe. Earlier, the SL *flinched*, no longer calling for the defeat of their own imperialist rulers when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Now it has gone a big step further in actually *justifying* the massive deployment of 12,000 U.S. troops in Haiti and deliberately prettifying their role there. It is one thing to read in history books about former revolutionaries capitulating to the pressures of imperialism, but here we see the process unfolding in real time, before our eyes.

This latest step in the Spartacist League’s abandonment of revolutionary principles and program is a textbook case of revisionism. It’s worth examining carefully to see how it’s done. First, you start off with a hearty dose of abstract socialist principles spiced up with some history. The *WV* article goes into the U.S. record of occupying Haiti to punish the black republic for successfully liberating the slaves of the French colony of St.-Domingue in the first successful slave revolution in history. They do this in part by quoting articles published by *WV* in the period when it was still the voice of revolution-

ary Trotskyism. Still, any good liberal or rad-lib like Noam Chomsky could agree with most of what the SL has written here about the past crimes of U.S. imperialism without compromising their present support for U.S. imperialism in the name of responding to the “humanitarian crisis.”

After columns of this packaging material we get to the ritual denunciation of the reformist left. But here *WV* attacks them *from the right*. While groups like the International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party “call for the U.S. to provide aid without the exercise of American military might, we have no such illusions,” it writes. Indeed, the hard-eyed “realists” of the SL hold that “the exercise of American military might” (i.e., occupation) is necessary to provide aid, *and they support it*. (In this, they’re actually closer to Hillary Clinton than to the ISO or WWP.)

WV makes that clear when it attacks the Internationalist Group, for calling for “all U.S./U.N. forces to get out” of Haiti. This, *WV* says, “would result in mass death through starvation.” How so? According to the SL pretend revolutionaries, “The U.S. military is the only force on the ground with the capacity – e.g., trucks, planes, ships – to organize the transport of what food, water, medical and other supplies are getting to Haiti’s population.” This is false in every respect. First, the U.S. military has no (or very few) trucks in Haiti – when troops of the 82nd Airborne Division went from the Port-au-Prince airport to the General Hospital they had to go by helicopter and then on foot. And while Haiti lacks a lot of things, it has huge numbers of trucks. Second, U.S. ships have not been providing aid, (a) because the pier at the main port collapsed, and (b) because the U.S. ships consist of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a guided missile cruiser, a guided missile frigate, several Coast Guard vessels and a hospital ship (which arrived over a week after the quake); none of these ships carried cargo for Haiti. And third, the U.S. military planes did not deliver anything for distribution to the population – they brought soldiers, and what food and water they carried was for the U.S. troops or the U.S. embassy. Their mission was not rescue and relief or rebuilding but “security.”

So here the SL is prettifying the actual role of the U.S. forces in Haiti. And they are doing it consciously, because doctors and aid groups have vociferously complained about how the U.S. has been blocking their supplies. Even spokesmen of the French government (for their own imperialist reasons, but no less accurately for that) openly denounced the U.S. forces for *blocking aid* – while Cuba’s Fidel Castro pointedly wrote: “We send doctors, not soldiers.” In an exchange with the *WV* writer on Haiti at a demonstration on January 29, he insisted that the U.S. military forces are providing aid, which is simply not true with a couple of isolated exceptions like the one-day photo op mission to the outlying area of Leogane. As for the U.N. military and police forces, the MINUSTAH, they have only distributed a limited amount of food aid, while repeatedly blocking private agencies from distributing. According to the U.N.’s World Food Program, two weeks after the quake they had only distributed food to 310,000 people, when relief agencies estimate that 3 million Haitians need emergency food aid on a daily basis – i.e., barely one in ten have received anything at all from the U.N.

A video on the Internet shows a team from the U.N.’s World Food Program (WFP) putting boxes of food *back* onto its truck after a crowd became frustrated when people were asked to *fill out forms* before they received food aid! No wonder people became restive in a country where more than half the population is illiterate! What a travesty of “humanitarian” aid. See: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/35089945#35089945> This is the reality of U.N. “aid” in Haiti.

So what the SL is saying is “there is no alternative” to the U.S./U.N. military distributing aid at present. This is nonsense, since the vast majority of what little aid is actually getting through is being distributed by private or quasi-governmental agencies like the Red Cross, not by soldiers. But the fundamental point is that *the pretext of providing aid is the excuse that the U.S. is using to reoccupy the country militarily*. And the U.S. commanders make it clear they intend to stay “until the job is done,” the same phrase Obama uses in Afghanistan. Since the Haitian “government” is virtually non-existent, that “job,” however defined, is going to take awhile. There is nothing unique about this. While Republicans like Bush launch wars by saying they are on a crusade, and Cheney says he is after the oil, the Democrats always cite lofty aims. Woodrow Wilson waged World War I to “make the world safe for democracy,” Franklin D. Roosevelt packaged World War II as a fight for the “four freedoms,” Bill Clinton claimed he was defending “human rights” in Haiti by sending the Marines to put back President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1994. Then in 1995, and again in 1999, he bombed Serbia with the same excuse. Much of the left bought Clinton’s lie of “human rights” imperialism over the Yugoslav wars. Now the SL is doing it with Obama over Haiti.

We predicted that the U.S. wants to go beyond the patrolling of Haiti by the MINUSTAH mercenary occupation force of 9,000+ soldiers and cops to take over the government and impose something like a U.N. protectorate on Haiti. Now this is being said openly. Robert Pastor, then-president Clinton’s point man on Haiti in the 1990s, told the *Christian Science Monitor* (27 January) that the U.S. and other donors “should take advantage of this goodwill and ask Haitians – through a referendum – to allow their country to become a 10-year UN trusteeship or to approve some other form of strong international control.”

While falsely claiming the U.S. military is necessary to provide relief, *WV* admits they do the job “in the typical piggy U.S. imperialist manner.” It goes on to say:

“We have always opposed U.S. and UN occupations in Haiti and everywhere – and it may become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the near future – but we are not going to call for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on.”

So here we have the SL saying, first, that it opposed U.S./U.N. occupation in the past, and may do so again in the future. *But it doesn’t oppose it now!* And now is when the troops are arriving. *WV* denounces us for calling for U.S./U.N. troops to get out, and when it says the military machine is indispensable to provide aid, it means it wants the troops to stay, “piggy imperialist manner” and all. The bottom line is, the Spartacist League *supports the imperialist occupation*. In any case, its

prior “opposition” to the occupation is nothing more than words on paper. When the U.S. invaded Haiti in 2004, we didn’t see the SL in the streets protesting. In contrast, our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and LQB trade-union supporters in the Comitê de Luta Classista were able to get the teachers union of Rio de Janeiro and the National Federation of Education Workers (CNTE) to pass motions calling on Brazilian workers to “aid the Haitian working people in expelling the invading Brazilian troops.”

Then, in the second half of the same sentence, in order to justify this shameful support, the SL implies that calling for U.S./U.N. forces to get out now amounts to cutting off aid and condemning the Haitian masses to death. This is a typical “straw man” ploy common to all demagogues: set up a phony argument in order to knock it down. Where did the Internationalist Group ever say or suggest that we are “call[ing] for an end to such aid as the desperate Haitian masses can get their hands on”? What the IG called for in our headline, and spelled out in our January 20 statement, and what was a main demand of a January 22 demonstration that we helped organize and participated in, was the demand that the U.S./U.N. “Stop Blocking Aid to Haitian People.” Of course, the *Workers Vanguard* article never mentions this, and for good reason, since it is counting on its readers not reading IG publications. In fact, it is precisely “the desperate Haitian masses” who are and will be in the crosshairs of the U.S. imperialist occupiers whose presence the Spartacist League is openly supporting and prettifying.

WV really hits its stride in denouncing “the IG’s deranged and grotesque fantasies.” And what might those be? Why our statement that Haiti’s “small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power,” of course. This, says the SL, ignores the “stark reality” that “even before the earthquake, there was virtually no working class in Haiti.” Do tell. In the most recent issue of *The Internationalist* (No. 30, November-December 2009), we published an article, “Haiti: Battle Over Starvation Wages and Neocolonial Occupation,” with a big photo showing a demonstration of thousands of workers from one of the free trade zones in the capital marching on parliament. According to *WV* those workers don’t exist, and therefore to call on them to lead a struggle for power is a “grotesque fantasy.” So who are you going to believe, the pseudo-socialist savants of the SL or “your lying eyes,” as the comedian Richard Pryor used to quip.

Now there are several things to be said about this. First, *WV* is simply regurgitating here the bourgeois press, which always presents Haiti as nothing but one big slum filled with



Here it is again: the Haitian working class which according to the Spartacist League doesn’t exist. More than 10,000 workers from free trade zone march on Haiti’s parliament on 4 August 2009 demanding a raise in the minimum wage.

jobless poor people, beggars, thieves, “looters,” you name it. Second, Haiti has now joined a growing list of places where, according to the SL, there is no working class. It started off with Bolivia in 2005, then came Oaxaca in 2006, now Haiti in 2010. Who’s next? Third, in each case the SL proclaims there is no proletariat in country x just when there are explosive workers struggles there. Those Bolivian miners leading mass marches while setting off sticks of dynamite, those Oaxacan teachers and government workers who set up hundreds of barricades to stop the death squads, those Haitian workers who shut down the factories to march on parliament – you may have seen pictures of them in *The Internationalist*, but they’re all figments of the IG’s fertile imagination, so says *WV*.

Finally, and most importantly, *the purpose of this discovery of the supposed absence of a working class is to proclaim that workers revolution is impossible.* In detective novels or criminal trials, a key question is always: *cui bono*, who benefits from the crime? In politics, you should always look for the programmatic conclusion of an analysis. Example: When in 1948 one Tony Cliff abandoned the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet Union under Stalin as a *degenerated workers state* and instead labeled the USSR “state capitalist,” it explained nothing about the functioning of the Soviet economy. But it did serve as an argument for refusing to defend the Soviet Union in the imperialist-launched Cold War. The latter-day Spartacist League has been multiplying its analyses, always couched in Marxist-sounding verbiage, purporting to prove that one can’t struggle for revolution in the here and now. To do so, they claim, is both “deranged and grotesque.” The heat behind these lurid adjectives is telling. At war with its own Trotskyist past, the SL spews rage and venom at the IG for refusing to abandon fundamental Marxist principles that the SL itself used to uphold. Self-proclaimed “revolutionaries” who preach that revolution is off the agenda during this historical period, they are in a real bind.

In the advanced capitalist countries, the SL proclaimed in its 1998 revised program, there has supposedly been a qualitative *regression in working-class consciousness* as a result of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. To say, as Trotsky did in the Transitional Program, that the crisis of proletarian *leadership* is the key is outdated, according to the SL, which imitating a long line of revisionists says the problem is the working class itself. In desperately poor semi-colonial countries the reason one can't fight for revolution is that there is supposedly *no working class*. And in the more developed "Third World" countries like Mexico, which undeniably has a proletariat since it is now producing many of the goods formerly churned out by industries in what is now the U.S. "Rust Belt," the proletariat is allegedly *so befuddled by bourgeois nationalism* that it can't even get it together to have a plain old popular front, much less wage a struggle for power. Three different analyses, one conclusion: no fight for revolution – and it's all the workers' fault. So saith the SL.

We will have more to say on this in commenting on the SL's latest conference.

WV throws in a quote from Leon Trotsky about not interfering with soldiers extinguishing a fire or rescuing drowning people during a flood. But Trotsky was explicitly talking of a "national" army, not an imperialist invasion force. When U.S. troops go to Fargo to put sandbags along the raging Red River, are they invading or occupying North Dakota? Hardly.

Skipping over some of the insults (the IG's "demented logic") and pure inventions (our supposed "glorification of Third World nationalism"), this brings us the SL's feigned interest in the Haitian diaspora, the workers who over a period of decades have dispersed to other countries to escape desperate conditions in Haiti. "The IG's article does not even mention the hundreds of thousands of Haitian workers in the urban centers of North America," WV writes. This is an example of the SL's patented form of *gotcha* politics: to go over articles with a fine-toothed comb looking for anything that's not there, and then portray that as a deviation. In the present case, they fail to mention that a second article on Haiti in the same special issue of *The Internationalist*, also available at our Internet site www.internationalist.org, concludes with a paragraph precisely on the importance of Haitian and Dominican workers in the U.S. and New York City in particular.

The fact is that the Internationalist Group has been unique on the left, especially for a small group, in actively working with Haitians in the diaspora in a systematic way to protest the repression of Haitians by the government of the Dominican Republic (see "Stop Persecution of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic!" and several other articles in *The Internationalist* No. 23, April-May 2006). We have regularly participated in protests every month for the last four years, and played a leading role in organizing a joint demonstration of Haitian and Dominican groups over that issue in front of the Dominican consulate in NYC in August 2008 (see "New York Protest Against Persecution of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic" in *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009). The Spartacist League has never once done anything about this, zero. And when there were protests about the NYPD

torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997, we recall how the SL showed up briefly to sell at the starting point and then quickly exited because they considered it too dangerous to march through the Haitian community to the police precinct, even though hundreds of Haitian immigrants (many of them presumably undocumented) dared to do so.

The SL/ICL's position of supporting U.S. intervention in Haiti confirms what we have said for some time, that they are headed in the direction of becoming a variant of social democracy. Add up its refusal to call for independence for Puerto Rico (and the French colonies in the Caribbean), its persistent silence on the Honduras coup, and now its support for the U.S. imperialist reoccupation of Haiti in the guise of humanitarianism, throw in its ever-expanding list of countries that supposedly have no proletariat, and you get the profile of centrist social democrats similar to the Italian G.M. Serrati. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 Serrati rejected Lenin's theses on the national and colonial question. The "maximalist" socialist claimed to be for proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist countries but dismissed any support to struggles for national liberation in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. It's centrism, but hardly of a left variety.

This step also fits the pattern of many of the SL/ICL's recent programmatic revisions, coming in the middle of a crisis when they cede to the pressure of the bourgeoisie: in 1997, proclaiming that there was no, and could not be any, popular front in Mexico just at the point that the popular front was about to take over the Mexico City government; in 1998, in the middle of the Puerto Rican general strike declaring that the SL no longer called for the island's independence from the U.S.; in 2001, during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, dropping the call for the defeat of one's own imperialist bourgeoisie; in 2002, dropping the call for "hot cargoing" war materiel during the build-up to the Iraq invasion and when the U.S. government threatened to militarize the West Coast docks, etc. Who knows where they will end up? Some of the SL/ICL's revisions, such as its on-again, off-again claim that the Stalinists "led the counterrevolution" in East Germany, bear an unmistakable stamp of Shachtmanism. Max Shachtman broke with Trotskyism over his refusal to defend the Soviet Union in World War II and ended up embracing U.S. imperialism in the Korean War and over the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1960.

Supporting the new U.S. occupation of Haiti on allegedly humanitarian grounds is shameful and significant, but it cannot be a surprise coming from the SL/ICL which at the height of the post-9/11 war hysteria accused the IG of *anti-Americanism* (literally, "Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism" and allegedly pandering to "'Third World' nationalists for whom the 'only good American is a dead American'") because of our insistence on upholding Lenin and Trotsky's program of revolutionary defeatism in imperialist war. The harsh and undeniable reality is that today the SL is playing the liberal card of supposed humanitarianism to justify open support to military occupation of the land of Toussaint Louverture by the most dangerous, violent and bestial gang of imperialist looters, torturers and mass murderers on the face of the planet. Those who believe revolution is not just an empty word can draw their own conclusions. ■

Trying to Justify Support for U.S. Invasion

SL Twists and Turns on Haiti



Moises Saman/Panos Pictures

Humanitarian aid workers? Hardly. Paratroops of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division patrolling Port-au-Prince, January 19. IG said: No to imperialist occupation! U.S./U.N. Troops get out now!

APRIL 11 – Since the mid-1990s, following the wave of counterrevolution that brought down the Soviet Union and swept through East Europe, the Spartacist League (SL/U.S.) and its international tendency, the International Communist League (ICL), have undergone a process of degeneration. Step by step, the SL/ICL has abandoned key elements of the program of revolutionary Trotskyism it championed for three decades. Seemingly at every crisis or major turn of events, another plank would go: opposition to popular fronts (defined out of existence in Mexico, the United States, etc.), calls for defeat of their own imperialist rulers in wars on semi-colonial countries (trashed in the wake of 9/11), the demand for unconditional independence for U.S. colonies (dropped). The list goes on and on.

Recently, in the wake of the earthquake that devastated Haiti's capital, as Washington sent thousands of U.S. combat troops and a naval armada to secure the country, the SL/ICL ostentatiously declared it was *not* calling for withdrawal of U.S. and United Nations military forces. Going further, the SL newspaper *Workers Vanguard* (No. 951, 29 January) *justified* the presence of imperialist occupation forces in Haiti, falsely claiming they were engaged in – and indeed essential

to – distributing aid when in fact the U.S. military was actively *blocking* relief flights and refusing to release what aid was arriving. In contrast, *The Internationalist* put out a statement, “Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!” (20 January), saying “Washington Exploits Earthquake to Re-occupy the Country.” *The Democratic Obama administration in Washington reinvaded the island under the guise of emergency relief, and the ex-Trotskyist SL bought the cover story.*

In order to hide its grotesque capitulation to the pressure and propaganda of the U.S. rulers, in the same article and in three subsequent issues, *WV* hysterically attacked the Internationalist Group, claiming that our call for imperialist forces to get out of Haiti “would result in mass death through starvation.” In response, we issued a statement, “Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti” (30 January). The SL's apology for the U.S./U.N. “humanitarian” occupation of Haiti was “social imperialism,” we wrote, such as what was denounced by Lenin during World War I, who excoriated those who claim to be socialist while in fact backing imperialist war. The SL came back with a frenzied response, “Haiti: IG Conjures Up Revolution Amid the Rubble” (*WV* No. 952, 12



U.S. 82nd Airborne Division the “only force” able to provide food to earthquake victims? Not so. Panorama

February), and a follow-up going after the misnamed Bolshevik Tendency for belatedly calling for imperialist troops out, “The BT on Haiti: Postscript to IGioey” (WV No. 953, 26 February).

Strikingly, WV portrays Haiti in the same way as the propaganda spewed out by the bourgeois press, which paints Haiti as nothing but violent slums with no working class. The imperialists then use this caricature to justify the “need” for U.S. and U.N. troops to maintain “security.” Yet international observers were unanimous in remarking on the near absence of riots and the low level of looting, except for people desperately seeking food during the early days when the U.S. was blocking aid. In fact, the SL’s line on Haiti bore an uncanny resemblance to that of the right-wing *Washington Times* (25 January), which editorialized on “The Upside of Yankee Imperialism in Haiti”: “America’s critics are claiming that the United States is using the pretext of earthquake relief to take over Haiti. The Haitians should be so lucky.... The United States deserves credit for this humanitarian effort, not blame for imagined invasions,” wrote this mouthpiece for Sun Myung Moon’s sinister Unification Church. Still, despite a similar line, the latter-day Spartacists are not a bunch of Moonies, but opportunist leftists bowing to the pressure of “their own” imperialist rulers.

Finally, after squirming for weeks to justify its support to the U.S. military “aid,” two months later the SL tries to slither out of its predicament by calling for “All U.S./UN Troops Out of Haiti Now!” (WV No. 955, 26 March). Sure, *now*, when U.S. troops are securely entrenched on both sides of the capital, and some are even being withdrawn, but once again they denounce the IG for demanding troops out when the Yankee imperialists were moving in and it was necessary to combat illusions in their role in Haiti. This recalls Trotsky’s remark about the anarchist “theoreticians” who found it necessary to abandon their principles during the Spanish Civil War: “Such revolutionists bear a close resemblance to raincoats that leak only when it rains, i.e., in ‘exceptional’ circumstances, but during dry weather they remain waterproof with complete success.” So it is with the SL’s sometime “opposition” to U.S. occupation of Haiti.

The SL’s claims are the usual subterfuges of opportunists seeking to justify the unjustifiable. It is one thing to read old polemics about the abandonment of Marxist program by once-revolutionary groups, of their zigs and zags as they sink deeper into centrism and outright reformism – and something else to see it happening before your own eyes.¹

¹ And now the SL is back at it. In its latest issue, WV No. 956 (9 April) attacks the Internationalist Group yet again, this time over

SL Amalgams and Straw Men

Groups that pretend to be socialist while apologizing for imperialism have to resort to myriad lies and distortions seeking to obscure the glaring contradictions. The Spartacist League today is no exception, dismissing reality and dispensing with intellectual honesty and even rudimentary logic in order to obscure the spectacle of an ostensibly revolutionary organization supporting a military occupation by its own imperialist government.

Take WV 952’s claims that “in its two articles on the earthquake, the IG has only oblique and passing references to [Jean Bertrand] Aristide” and “the IG largely sidesteps the issue of Aristide.” They allege we avoid confronting illusions in the populist former cleric who was elected Haitian president in 1990 and 2000. Nonsense. All one has to do is look at our denunciation of the U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1994 “under Bill Clinton, to put in Aristide as Washington’s man in Port-au-Prince,” and our statement “Even former Liberation Theology priest Aristide dutifully carried out Washington’s dictates,” to see that this is false.

Moreover, a second article included in our January 2010 special issue of *The Internationalist*, “Haiti: Battle Over Starvation Wages and Neocolonial Occupation,” stressed that, “in forging a revolutionary consciousness, it is vital to combat illusions in petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist forces.” Referring to current Haitian president Préval who was elected as a stand-in for Aristide, we noted that, “both Aristide and his former protégé [have] been loyal enforcers for the Haitian bourgeoisie and the imperialist overlords.” So WV’s charge is a flat lie. Both articles are available on the Internet, so interested readers can see for themselves.

Or another claim: WV No. 952 writes, “By the IG’s logic, workers in the U.S. should be actively blocking any aid being shipped to Haiti by the U.S. military.” Once again, these inventors of straw men dream up positions for us in order to make a phony (and particularly stupid) polemic. The fact that we demanded the opposite, “Stop Blocking Aid to Haitian People – U.S./U.N. Forces Get Out!” is never mentioned –

– what else? – a panel discussion on public education. Here WV conjures up an “alliance” between the IG and “scabherders” that exists nowhere but in the SL’s fevered imagination. It all reeks of desperation, and it’s oh-so predictable: one of the first rules in *Mudslinging for Dummies* is to just keep on slinging mud, never mind the content, in hopes that some of it will stick. But after a while it dawns on observers that it is the mudslingers themselves who are covered with it.



New York Times

view of pre-existing stocks of commodities in the warehouse of the Bureau de Nutrition et Développement.

not once in four articles – by these professional prevaricators.

What's more interesting is *why* the SL resorts to transparent falsifications. It is desperate to make an *amalgam* between the Internationalist Group and various pro-Aristide nationalists, such as the newspaper *Haiti Liberté* and the Stalinoid *Workers World*, which regularly hails Third World nationalists.² Never mind that the IG uniquely called to resist the imperialist coup that ousted Aristide in 2004 but explicitly *not* to reinstall him as president.³ Never mind that we called on Haitian workers to fight attempts by U.N. and right-wing Haitian forces to overturn Préval's 2006 election victory, but *not* with the aim of installing Préval as president.⁴ The SL makes this false equation in order to assert that "the IG's shrieking about the supposed imperialist 'invasion' of a country already under imperialist occupation" ... "essentially portrayed Préval and his predecessor Aristide not as quislings of the imperialist powers but as the embodiment of national independence."

So the IG "largely" ignores Aristide and "essentially" hails him as the embodiment of Haiti's independence? How blithely WV drops in those weasel words to serve as an escape hatch for its conscious, deliberate falsification! The SL lies about our position on Aristide so it can construct a tangled sophist argument according to which our opposition to the U.S. imperialists' renewed occupation of Haiti somehow equals "nationalism." They falsely claim we prettify Washington's former puppet in hopes of distracting readers from *their support for the imperialist puppet-masters*.

But they have a little problem: we have *repeatedly* denounced the *imperialist occupation* of Haiti by Brazilian and other mercenary troops wearing U.N. blue helmets over the last six years, calling to drive out U.N. troops. Writing, as we

² Stalin used the technique of the *amalgam* (mixing up diverse elements) frequently against Trotsky, equating the Trotskyists with Francoist forces in the Spanish Civil War, and notably in the murderous Moscow Purge Trials, claiming an identity between Trotsky (as well as other Bolshevik leaders, including Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin) and counterrevolutionaries seeking to overthrow the Soviet Union – and on that basis executing every remaining member of the Bolshevik Central Committee of 1917.

³ See "Combat the Coup Plotters – No Political Support to Aristide! Organize Worker-Led Resistance Against Death Squad Invaders!" *The Internationalist* leaflet, 28 February 2004.

⁴ See "Attempted Election Theft in Haiti: Form Committees of Working and Poor People to Expropriate the Bourgeoisie and Drive Out U.N. Mercenaries! No Confidence in Préval – Workers to Power!" *The Internationalist* No. 26, April-May 2006.

did, that Aristide was "Washington's man" and that he and Préval were "loyal enforcers" for the "imperialist overlords" hardly portrays them as representatives of Haitian independence. Our opposition to the recent reoccupation of Haiti by the U.S. military had nothing to do with support for Préval and Aristide. Rather, it was because the U.S. action was, as we wrote, "not intended to deliver aid, but to *put down unrest by the poor and working people of Haiti*." In contrast, the SL social-imperialists *justify the dispatch of up to 20,000 U.S. troops to impose "order" on the Haitian people* in the name of disaster relief.

The 82nd Airborne as Humanitarian Aid Workers?

The central claim by the SL apologists for the U.S. imperialist takeover of Haiti in WV 952 (29 January) is that "The U.S. military is the only force on the ground with the capacity – e.g., trucks, planes, ships – to organize the transport of what food, water, medical and other supplies are getting to Haiti's population." This is almost word-for-word what Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said on January 27, when he told reporters: "No one can provide the kinds of assistance we can... We have to provide the kind of security that will facilitate a safe, secure flow of food, water, medicine." Morrell also laid out the U.S. rationale, saying that this shows "we are a force for good and try to provide assistance to those who need it around the world." Belying the pretense of emergency aid, he added: "we envision that there will be a role for the United States military for some time to come in Haiti."

We answered WV's bogus claim in our earlier (30 January) article. Since we noted that the U.N. claimed to have fed up to 310,000 people, a drop in the bucket considering that agencies estimated 3 million people were in *daily* need of emergency food supplies, WV writes, "the question of how those hundreds of tons of supplies got to Haiti remains a mystery." It's no mystery. For starters, the U.N.'s World Food Program alone had *15,000 tons of emergency food supplies stockpiled in Haiti* in warehouses around Port-au-Prince filled with rice, beans and other foodstuffs, most of which were not seriously damaged (many didn't have concrete roofs). One of them is in the huge slum area of Cité Soleil. But the U.N. "peacekeeping" occupation troops, MINUSTAH, *ordered international agency personnel not to distribute these supplies for a number of days* out of fear of "crime" and unrest.

Beyond that, particularly since the terrible food shortages of early 2008, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) has operated a Logistics Cluster in Port-au-Prince, with an elaborate operation trucking in supplies from the Dominican Republic. You can see it on the Internet at <http://www.logcluster.org/ops/hti10a> and <http://wfplogistics.org/haiti-earthquake-2010>. You can look at the daily updates going back to January 13 showing conditions of the roads, reports of space available, forms to submit for donated shipments, and the like. *This* is how the vast bulk of the food and other aid arrived in the Haitian capital. For a panorama photo of a warehouse of the Bureau de Nutrition et Développement warehouse stocked to the brim with bags of food, see <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/haiti-panoramas.html#/4>.

Statistics? The U.S. Department of Defense reported on February 17 that it had brought in 7,000 tons of bulk food to Haiti; the United Nations reported that Venezuela alone had donated 10,000 tons of food, Thailand donated 20,000 tons of rice. The DOD reported it had delivered 60 tons of medical supplies; Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) alone brought in 1,400 tons of medical supplies. The “meals ready to eat” (MRE) brought by the U.S. military were not for the Haitian population but a six-week supply to feed the troops and U.S. embassy personnel. The fact is that the vast majority of food and emergency supplies distributed in Haiti after the quake were *not* brought by the U.S. military, but through various governments, international agencies and so-called “non-governmental organizations.”

Not that we’re praising the work of this “humanitarian” aid apparatus. The NGOs, of which more than 1,000 were at work in Haiti before the earthquake, are funded by governments, international agencies and foundations. They are a means by which what used to be government functions are semi-privatized under prevailing “neo-liberal” policies of “free market” capitalism. They and the International Red Cross, the U.N.’s WFP and various church programs have for years distributed aid in Haiti since the U.S. has refused to let the Haitian government touch the money. Some agencies, like the various national Red Cross groups, are stand-ins for imperialist governments. The head of the American Red Cross is



Ariana Cubillos/AP

U.S. soldier from 82nd Airborne clears Haitians out of Port-au-Prince General Hospital, January 19.

named by the U.S. president, Médecins sans Frontières was founded by French foreign minister Kouchner and provided medical aid to the CIA-financed anti-Soviet mujahedin in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The International Red Cross kept silent about torture at U.S. military prisons in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo.

The point is not that these agencies are “good guys,” but simply that the aid is not being distributed by the U.S. military. Clearly, our demand that U.S. and U.N. forces get out of Haiti does not equal calling for mass starvation, as the SL cynically contends, but would have speeded up rescue missions and delivery of relief supplies. It is also interesting, in view of claims that they are supplying emergency relief, that U.S. forces (along with their Canadian allies) took over *all* of Haiti’s ports, including in the north (Cap Haïtien and

Môle St. Nicolas, a deep-water harbor just across the strait from the Guantánamo Naval Base the U.S. stole from Cuba), far from the earthquake-devastated capital of Port-au-Prince.

The U.S. mission in Haiti was and is “security,” not aid. The U.S. military made its aims clear from the outset. Gen. Douglas Fraser, commander of SOUTHCOM, in his January 13 Pentagon news briefing defined the Haiti mission as a C3 operation: “we’re focused on getting command and control and communications.” More recently, the house organ of the U.S. military, *Stars and Stripes* (15 March) wrote, “Marines in Haiti training for Afghanistan.” The article reports that “the Marines from 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment have been honing warfighting skills” in anticipation of their Afghan deployment. It quotes one corporal saying, “I want to kill the terrorists and get rid of the bad people.”

The idea that the U.S. Army’s 82nd Airborne Division 2d Brigade Combat Team or the Marine Amphibious Unit of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit are humanitarian aid workers delivering MREs to a starving population is grotesque. Anyone (like the Spartacist League) who pretends they are is peddling imperialist propaganda. These units, which were deployed to Haiti after tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, are combat forces. Any incidental aid they hand out in order to gain good will is no more “humanitarian” than are “civic action” medical teams in counterinsurgency operations.

Baits, Non Sequiturs and Smokescreens

Among the diversionary arguments raised by *WV* are the following:

- *WV* 952 writes: “we don’t recall the IG screaming about an imperialist invasion when the U.S. and Canada dispatched warships to Haiti after the country was devastated by four hurricanes in the summer of 2008.” No, because what the U.S. did then was send the USS *Kearsarge*, an amphibious ship which delivered 1,500 tons of internationally donated aid. This time it dispatched a nuclear aircraft carrier (USS *Carl Vinson*) plus its battle group including two guided missile destroyers and a complement of Coast Guard vessels aiming to stop Haitian refugees from heading for Florida. The Navy says the *Vinson* transported 150 patients in medical evacuations. The hospital ship USS *Comfort* which only arrived after a week, and has already left the scene, reportedly performed 8,000 operations – a pittance. By way of contrast, the more than 800 Cuban medical personnel and Cuban-trained Haitian doctors performed over 100,000 operations and serious medical procedures.
- *WV* 951 writes: “By the IG’s reasoning, the Cuban government is to be condemned for opening its airspace to American military planes after the earthquake.” *WV* 952 writes that it “challenged the IG” to condemn Cuba. In fact, we praised Cuba’s actions in Haiti. What the Cuban government did was open its air space to *medical evacuations* from Port-au-Prince to Miami, not generally to overflights by the U.S. military. Medevacs are not the same as bringing in U.S. occupation troops. But since the SL is so exercised about its “challenge,” we suggest it direct it to Fidel Castro, who said the Cuban government was right to aid medical evacuations and in the same article (“We Sent Doctors, Not Soldiers” *CubaDebate*, 23 January) denounced the U.S. for sending military forces that “occupied Haiti’s territory.”
- *WV* 952 condemns the “cynicism of the IG’s vituperations,” claiming this is revealed by the fact that “the IG itself did not oppose the deployment of National Guard troops to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.” It quotes our article, where we wrote: “Revolutionary communists would certainly not stand in the way of troops actually providing aid or helping rescue survivors” (*The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005). Yet we did not say that the 82nd Airborne was *necessary* for relief operations, as the SL claims about Haiti today. In fact our 2005 article *denounced* the U.S. government action, whose purpose was to “*militarily occupy the devastated city and put the population under martial law.*” Does the SL do that in Haiti today? No. We also detailed how the 82nd Airborne and 2d Marine Expeditionary Forces blocked emergency aid from reaching the population, as they are doing in Haiti today. But there is one difference between New Orleans and Haiti: Port-au-Prince is the capital of another country, a *semi-*

colonial country oppressed by imperialism. Is *WV* perhaps “challenging” us to call for *U.S. troops out of the U.S.?*

Again, what we have here is an exercise in what stage magicians call “misdirection”: a bluff in order to draw attention away from what is really going on. With *its* reasoning, the latter-day Spartacist League has simply wiped out Haiti’s independent existence with a few keyboard strokes. What does it matter to the SL if thousands of U.S. troops occupy another country? “Haiti has been a UN protectorate in all but name” anyway, *dixit WV*, so what’s the big deal if the U.S. nails it down? Well, it is a big deal if you are a Haitian worker facing U.S. soldiers of the 82nd Airborne with their M16s, even if some leftist flacks for the Pentagon claim the troops are there to provide aid and succor. And it is a threat to the entire region, since strengthening U.S. imperialist control over Haiti provides another precedent for Washington’s intervention throughout Latin America.

The “Non-Existent” Haitian Working Class: SL Says No to Permanent Revolution in Haiti

The other centerpiece of the SL’s “argument” for the presence of U.S. troops is its claim that Haiti has “virtually no working class,” hence proletarian revolution is supposedly impossible on the island. At a February 24 forum in New York City on “Haiti Earthquake: Capitalism, Occupation and Revolution,” sponsored by the Internationalist Club at Hunter College, we responded that SL supporters in the audience could look at our newspaper where a large photo shows thousands of Haitian workers marching on Haiti’s parliament to demand a raise in the minimum wage last August. Or if they refused to believe their eyes, they could check out the clothes they were wearing, since most Hanes and Fruit of the Loom brand underwear is made in Haiti, as are Levi’s jeans and clothes from The Gap, Banana Republic, DKNY and other fashion houses. As we have stressed: “In a country with a numerically weak proletariat such as Haiti, throwing off the imperialist yoke can only come about as part of a struggle spanning borders from the island of Quisqueya [Hispaniola] to Brazil to the United States” (“Haiti: Battle Over Starvation Wages...”) But revolutionary struggle could certainly break out there.

This is fundamental to Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution, which holds that in the imperialist epoch achieving revolutionary democratic tasks such as agrarian revolution, national liberation and democracy “is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses,” led by a communist party, that “grows over directly into the socialist revolution” while extending internationally to the imperialist centers (Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* [1930]). Although *WV* quotes from this work, it is in order to *deny that the permanent revolution applies to Haiti* – due to the supposed lack of a working class. It quotes a single sentence out of context to claim the authority of the co-leader of the Russian 1917 October Revolution for writing off countries like Haiti. What Trotsky meant, however, was quite different. Here is what he wrote:

“Under the conditions of the imperialist epoch the national democratic revolution can be carried through to a victorious end only when the social and political relationships of the country are mature for putting the proletariat in power as the leader of the masses of the people. And if this is not yet the case? Then the struggle for national liberation will produce only very partial results, results directed entirely against the working masses.”

The SL falsifiers leave out Trotsky’s reference to the maturity of the “social *and political* relationships” (our emphasis), as well as the very next sentence, which reads:

“In 1905, the proletariat of Russia did not prove strong enough to unite the peasant masses around it and to conquer power.”

Was Trotsky saying that the proletariat in Russia was non-existent or numerically too weak to carry out a revolution? Obviously not. Yes, there are economically extremely backward areas that have “virtually no working class.” But Haiti, with 9 percent of its labor force in industry and thousands of workers employed in modern plants in export processing zones, is hardly the same as the pastoral society of Mongolia in 1920 or semi-feudal conditions in Afghanistan in the 1980s. So what is the SL’s program for Haiti? What’s a (supposedly non-existent) Haitian worker to do? *Emigrate to the U.S. or Canada* is the SL’s answer, referring to “a sizable Haitian proletariat in the diaspora, which went unmentioned in the IG’s revolution-mongering around the earthquake.” We have already pointed that this ignores our article on Haitian workers printed in the same special issue of *The Internationalist* which ends with an entire paragraph on the vital role of Haitian and Dominican workers in New York City.

Then there is *WV*’s claim that “In the IG’s fantasyland, the earthquake placed workers revolution on the immediate agenda in Haiti.” Did we say that? We did not. What we wrote was that “particularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few marauding bands of police,” Haiti’s “small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power.” We referred specifically to the experience of the Mexican earthquake of 1985, when “tens of thousands of Mexico City working people who were left homeless organized independently of and against the government whose soldiers prevented them from rescuing their neighbors and relatives.” We stressed that “leadership was key,” noting that in Mexico “various self-proclaimed socialist groups that took charge of the organizations of those affected by the quake turned them into agencies for channeling government welfare funds, thus squandering an opportunity for revolutionary mobilization.”

This is hardly saying that “now is the time” for Haitian working people to “rise up in revolution,” as the SL claims we say, but that Haitian workers can take the lead in organizing the vast poor population “independently of and against

the government,” which lay in tatters. Ah, but “the real state power” in Haiti for the last six years has been the imperialist occupiers, says the SL. Yet the MINUSTAH was also laid low by the quake and barely functioning. History shows that natural catastrophes that reveal the incapacity of the bourgeois regime to provide even minimal conditions for survival of the population, and whose toll of death and destruction are vastly intensified by conditions created by capitalism, can spur revolutionary organizing. The 1972 earthquake that leveled Managua, Nicaragua was a key factor in setting off struggles that eventually brought down the Somoza dictatorship. But what does today’s SL care? It would no doubt write off Nicaragua as yet another country without a working class, like Haiti, Bolivia, etc.

Shades of Shachtman

With their refusal to call for U.S./U.N. troops out of Haiti and their justification of the U.S. military forces as supposedly saving lives, the SL borrowed a page from the followers of Max Shachtman who became notorious as “State Department socialists.” (Secretary of State Clinton was said to be “mortified” at accusations that the U.S. was using earthquake aid to reoccupy Haiti.) Some decades later, anti-Soviet Cold Warriors

and “neo-cons” from the Shachtmanite Social Democrats U.S.A. staffed the upper echelons of the Reagan administration, including U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick (a fan of “moderately authoritarian regimes” such as the Shah’s Iran); Carl Gershman, head of the National Endowment for Democracy (which replaced the CIA’s covert funding of international subversion); and Undersecretary of State Elliott Abrams (a key figure in the Iran/Contragate scandal). But for now the SL/U.S. remains a centrist outfit, albeit one that is lurching precipitously to the right.

The closest parallel to the Spartacist position is that of the British Alliance for

Workers Liberty (AWL) of Sean Matgamna, whose article on Haiti could have been lifted from the pages of *Workers Vanguard*. Matgamna and his AWL are the main current partisans of Shachtman’s brand of pro-imperialist “socialism” on the left, notorious for their support to Israel. The AWL writes:

“The basic accusation of much of what passes for the far-left is that the US/imperialism is in the process of occupying Haiti under the pretext of aiding the relief effort. Some even add to this ‘analysis’ slogans about the troops... The logistics of the operation cannot be met by ‘civilian’ agencies.

“At the moment any ‘US troops out’ message, directly or by implication, means ‘Let the Haitian people starve and heal themselves’.”

–“Haiti, emergency aid and the left,” *Solidarity* (4 February)

Like the SL, the AWL claims that in Haiti “the working class, as a class, has been scattered and put out of work.” It also admits that “the US has an appalling history of bullying and bossing its poor neighbour,” and makes some noises about not



Max Shachtman

endorsing U.S. policies, similar to the SL's lame disclaimers about the "piggish" way the U.S. dispenses aid. But according to these avowed Shachtmanites, "the nature of its intervention, now, in Haiti, is not motivated by the need to 'control Haiti' through military occupation. Why would the US need to invade to 'control Haiti'?" it asks. The answer: while Haiti may lack oil, it has one thing in common with Iraq – strategic location, just off Cuba and within striking distance of Washington's current nemesis in Latin America, Hugo Chávez' Venezuela.

SL's Path to Social-Imperialism

Since the time of the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. has considered the Caribbean an American lake and vigilantly kept other powers away from its Latin American pawns. It's notable that the U.S. reoccupation of Haiti comes after the Obama administration's complicity in the overthrow of Honduran president Manuel Zelaya in June 2009. Spurred on by the Reaganite right, the Democrats in power are moving to encircle Venezuela. In light of the SL's support for U.S. occupation of Haiti (since the country was already occupied), and its call (along with the U.S. State Department and pro-imperialist forces) for a "no" vote on Chávez' December 2007 referendum (we called for a blank ballot), it is curious indeed that *WV* has not seen fit to print one word, much less an article, against the U.S. backed Honduran coup.

The SL's line on Haiti also recalls its shift on Puerto Rico in 1998, when it suddenly "corrected" its longstanding position of advocating independence for the U.S.' main Caribbean colony. Instead it only called for recognizing Puerto Rico's right to self-determination, as every recent U.S. president has done, including George Bush II. This is no minor matter, as one of the famous "21 Conditions" for admission to the Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky required that: "Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists in its 'own' country, must support – in deed, not merely in word – every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies...." In that case as well, the SL's "correction" – refusing to call for the expulsion of U.S. imperialism from Puerto Rico just as it recently refused to call for the expulsion of the imperialists from Haiti – came in a polemic against the IG which continues to uphold the Leninist position of unconditional independence for colonies (see "ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence," *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998).

The SL's justification for not opposing the U.S.' "humanitarian" occupation of Haiti boils down to: there is/was no alternative. Former members of the Spartacist League who were active in the 1970s have written to us that they were struck by the parallels between the SL's current line and the arguments of the Socialist Workers Party in 1974 justifying its demand that U.S. troops be sent to defend blacks in Boston against anti-busing racist mobs (i.e., that the armed fist of the ruling class – the main enforcer of racist oppression – be pressured into "defending" the oppressed). Just as the SL today vituperates against "deranged and grotesque fantasies" of the Internationalist Group when we call for Haitian working people to "organize their own power" independently of and against the bourgeois state, the SWP's Peter Camejo railed against calls for workers defense guards in Boston, saying: "The Black Community lives in the real world, and it demands real, meaningful solutions, not unrealistic slogans" (*Militant*, 1 November 1974).

Unlike the latter-day SL and before it the SWP, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International polemicize against positions that groups actually hold rather than inventing policies for them. What's at stake here is far more important than the tawdry and dishonest point-scoring that the SL revels in. As we noted in our January 20 statement, under

Barack Obama, the U.S. imperialist rulers have switched gears to posture as defenders of "human rights." And as we pointed out, from Woodrow Wilson to Bill Clinton, both of whom invaded Haiti, this is standard operating procedure for Democratic presidents. The purpose is to reel in liberals and reformists, like those who supported Clinton's two wars on Yugoslavia in the name of defending the rights of Bosnian Muslims and Kosovar Albanians. What's striking in this case is that a *centrist* group, the Spartacist League, has taken the bait. While support to imperialist occupation is a small step for reformists, who only seek to modify imperialist *policies* rather than to bring down the imperialist system, in the case of the SL/ICL it should be harder to digest – unless the membership is already so inured to careening down the revisionist

road that they can't see they just went over a cliff.

The SL disingenuously claimed in its initial article that "We have always opposed U.S. and UN occupations in Haiti and everywhere – and it may become necessary to call for U.S./UN out of Haiti in the near future" (*WV* No. 951, 29 January). We noted that this meant that these pseudo-Trotskyists-become-apologists-for-U.S.-imperialism were

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CORRECTION

The article "General Strike Rocks Puerto Rico" (*WV* No. 694, 31 July) includes a quotation taken from *WV* No. 588 (19 November 1993) stating that we "advocate independence" for Puerto Rico but do not favor forcing that, or any other status, on the Puerto Rican people. In fact, these statements are self-contradictory. Our position was correctly expressed in the article "A Century of U.S. Imperialist Plunder" (*WV* No. 686, 13 March):

"Marxists defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and support struggles for independence in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism and to remove the national question from the agenda in Puerto Rico.

But we are not in favor of forcing annexation, federation, or even independence on anyone, least of all by racist U.S. imperialism."

We do not currently *advocate* independence for Puerto Rico, not least because the vast majority of the population there is not in favor of it at this time. As the article in *WV* No. 694 noted, "While there is deep resentment among Puerto Ricans over their colonial oppression, most are contradicted and loath to relinquish the benefits of U.S. citizenship—such as the right to work on the mainland—and fear that independence would mean falling into the crushing immiseration typical of capitalist Caribbean states such as the Dominican Republic."

Spartacist League "corrects" its long-standing call for independence for Puerto Rico, bowing to pressures of U.S. imperialism. Communist International's "21 Conditions" for admission insisted that any party wishing to join the CI has the "obligation" of "demanding that their imperialist campatriots should be thrown out of the colonies." The SL would have flunked.

not opposing the U.S./U.N. occupation in the here and now, as U.S. imperialist troops were arriving in Haiti in the guise of providing emergency aid. As for past SL “opposition” to U.N. occupation of Haiti, this was hardly of any great import: up to 2010 *WV* had one brief article at the time of the 2004 U.S./French/Canadian invasion – the *only* article on contemporary Haiti it published since the founders of the Internationalist Group were expelled by the SL/U.S. in 1996, compared to 20 in the decade before then. The SL’s newfound “opposition” to the occupation is just as chimerical as before, it only exists on paper, like the rest of its politics as it flees the class struggle. Its supreme disinterest makes clear that the SL’s main concern over Haiti is to denounce the IG.

For our part, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have done our level best to fight the U.S. occupation of Haiti. In the U.S., the IG helped organize protests on January 21 and February 4 outside the U.S. mission to the U.N. We put out a special issue of *The Internationalist* headlining “Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes, Imperialist Occupation, No!” We have sold well over 100 copies in the Haitian areas of New York City, as well as going to weekly meetings with Haitian activists in Brooklyn and speaking on February 20 on *Radyo Panou* in a program that was rebroadcast in Haiti. We organized a February 24 panel discussion at the City University of New York together with Haitian and Dominican leftists, where we put forward our different programs of what should be done. In Brazil, the LFI section, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, put out a special issue of *Vanguarda Operária* with a collection of articles on Haiti calling to mobilize to drive Brazilian troops out of Haiti and out of the slums of Rio de Janeiro. The LQB also demonstrated in the city of Salvador with a banner calling for U.S./U.N. and Brazilian troops out. In Mexico the LFI section, the Grupo Internacionalista, put out a 38-page supplement to *El Internacionalista* of articles on Haiti.

So now, two months later, *Workers Vanguard* No. 955 announces that the SL is calling for U.S. troops out of Haiti. It claims that in *WV* 951 it “made clear” that “we were not for the U.S. military going into Haiti” – an outright lie, they never said it – but they would not call for “the immediate withdrawal of any forces there were supplying such aid as was reaching the Haitian masses.” No, *WV* swore that the U.S. military was providing such aid, whitewashed the U.S. military takeover as a “supposed imperialist ‘invasion,’” and *opposed withdrawal of U.S. forces*, which were *in fact* “securing” Haiti for imperialism. This is a pure case of the “cynical phrasemongering” the SL falsely accuses us of. But the bottom line is that when the Pentagon invaded, when it was necessary to take a stand, to expose the Obama administration’s humanitarian pretensions and demand it stop blocking the aid, *these fakers went for the U.S. justification for occupation, hook, line and sinker.*

This is a sharp turn, but it didn’t come out of the blue. Following the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the IG put out a 14 September 2001 statement, “U.S. Whips Up Imperialist War Frenzy, Drives Toward Police State” (<http://www.internationalist.org/wardrive0901.html>) calling to

defeat the U.S./NATO war drive and defend Afghanistan. At the same time, the SL put out a statement (see *WV* No. 764, 14 September 2001) that went on for paragraphs denouncing terrorism, yet didn’t call to defend Afghanistan nor to defeat the U.S. war. When after a few weeks, it came out for defense of Afghanistan, it coupled this with denouncing us for allegedly pandering to “anti-Americanism” for upholding the Leninist position (which the SL precipitously dropped) of being for the defeat of “one’s own” imperialism in a war on a semi-colonial country. We encourage people to read both the SL and IG statements, as well as our response to *WV*’s ominous “anti-American” baiting of the Trotskyists (see <http://www.internationalist.org/iclantiamericanbaits.html>).

To justify its support to U.S. troops in Haiti, *WV* 951 cited an article by Trotsky, “Learn to Think: A Friendly Suggestion to Certain Ultra-Leftists” (May 1938), in which the Bolshevik leader rightly said that “workers would not interfere with soldiers who are extinguishing a fire or rescuing drowning people during a flood.” *WV* claimed that this applied to Haiti, even though what Trotsky wrote was that the proletariat does not enter into a struggle in all cases “against its own ‘national’ army.” He wasn’t speaking about an *invading imperialist army*, and certainly not one that was blocking, not delivering aid. Now *WV* treats us to a quotation from the then-Trotskyist *Militant* writing in 1941 about U.S. aid to the Soviet Union in the middle of the imperialist Second World War, while remarking that “the circumstances were different than those in Haiti today.” That’s putting it mildly. This is what’s known in the trade as “baffle ’em with bullshit,” a common practice of opportunist groups trying to cover up their betrayals. The revisionist SL seems to have mastered the technique.

Our friendly suggestion to certain centrists, like the SL, is, to cite another Trotsky article, “Even Slander Should Make Some Sense” (August 1933). With its support to Washington’s “humanitarian” invasion, the SL placed itself to the right not only of much of the reformist left but also of rad-lib types like Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, who along with Al Jazeera TV documented how the U.S. and U.N. were blocking aid from reaching the Haitian population. While *WV* now claims that this zig is over, one has to wonder where the next zag will take it. It may still keep twisting and turning for some time in a bizarre centrist holding pattern, but Haiti marks a milestone in the SL’s flight from revolutionary Trotskyism. ■

Brazilian Trotskyists...

continued from page 8

contingent at the head of the United Nations occupation forces, which are repressing the Haitians. The aid is utterly insignificant, far below the immense needs.

Military Occupation Led by the U.S., U.N. and Brazil

Ten days after the earthquake which laid waste to Haiti, more than 12,000 U.S. troops are occupying the airport of the Haitian capital on the pretext of helping to organize the distribution of food and water for the starving and thirsty

population. In reality, the Yankees are trying to turn Haiti into their own protectorate.

The NGO¹ Doctors Without Borders (MSF, according to its initials in French), complained that a plane carrying one-fifth of its emergency medical supplies for the survivors of the earthquake was denied permission to land at the Port-au-Prince airport, under U.S. control since last week. The Paris-based medical humanitarian agency stated that “the plane with 12 tons of medicines, surgical material and two dialysis machines had to give up landing and was diverted to the Dominican Republic next door.”

Brazil already had 1,270 military personnel in Haiti, and now it is embarking more troops and armament. The total size of the U.N. peacekeeping mission under Brazilian command, known as MINUSTAH, is set to increase from the current level of about 9,000 to 12,651.

Stoking national pride, the Brazilian media is glorifying the military occupation and memorializing the Brazilian troops and civilian personnel who died in Haiti. But it leaves out the fact that, consciously or unconsciously, they were part of a colonization plan led by Viva Rio² and the Brazilian military hoping to make Brazil into a kind of sub-imperialist power in Latin America.

The dispatching of additional Brazilian troops takes place as the government of President Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva is complaining behind the scenes that the U.S. is not allowing its troops and planes to land at the Port-au-Prince airport. At the same time, the government tries to hide the oppression it is exercising over the Haitian people.

At a time when the United States had a large part of its military forces tied down in Iraq [in 2004], Brazil offered to do its “dirty work” by heading up the MINUSTAH, an undisguised mercenary force for military occupation under the auspices of the United Nations. Now the Brazilian servants have been shunted aside and the U.S. poses before the world media as good guys who are promoting humanitarian actions, when in reality it is setting up a parallel government in Haiti, in order to secure this country in its Latin American backyard.

This week, the *Jornal do Brasil* noted:

“The European Union announced Monday that it would send a total of €129 million (the equivalent over more the US\$600 million) of short- and long-range aid to Haiti while the U.S. will donate US\$100 million. However, the financial contributions by the European and American countries to the banks during the world financial crisis were 4,000 times greater. Aid to bankers in Europe reached US\$2.28 trillion and in the United States came to US\$700 billion. Just to prop up the insurance company AIG (American International Group), the U.S. government handed over US\$180 million – almost double the amount donated to Haiti.”

¹ Non-governmental organization, referring to “private” agencies funded by governments, foundations and international bodies to channel (and disguise) official aid funds.

² Viva Rio is an NGO that has been active carrying out government programs in the shantytowns (favelas) of Rio de Janeiro, often in conjunction with the military police and army units occupying these areas. Since 2005, Viva Rio has been active in Haiti, notably in the Bel Air shantytown, as a “civilian” component of the military occupation.

The Lula government has been bragging about the miserable R\$375 million (US\$200 million) it has donated to Haiti, which is utterly insignificant compared to the more than R\$200 billion (US\$1.15 billion) it donated to the Brazilian capitalists in trying to save them from the world capitalist crisis which has shaken the bourgeois world over the last three years. This shows for the umpteenth time that for capitalism and its agents, bourgeois profits are above everything, especially when it comes to saving poor people. But when it’s a matter of saving capitalist institutions, the “free-marketeers” use the entire economic power of the bourgeois state to protect their own.

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, currently Washington’s principal critic in Latin America, accused the U.S. of occupying Haiti on the pretext of providing aid and sent a military plane loaded with food, medicines and bottled water along with a 50-member rescue team. Bolivian vice president Álvaro García Linera said on January 19 that the U.S. was seeking to establish a permanent military presence in Haiti through sending troops to aid the local population after the earthquake, as part of a U.S. strategy to “control the continent.”

Yet the “left-wing” governments of Latin America, with Lula in the lead and including Evo Morales of Bolivia and Rafael Correa of Ecuador, also have troops subcontracted to the U.S. and the U.N., maintaining small contingents in Haiti under Brazilian command as part of the cynically named United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti. This conglomeration of troops from different countries acts as flunkies for imperialism, as its “*capitães de mato*” (slave catchers), in repressing the combative Haitian population. This undeniably amounts to collaboration with imperialism by the so-called “left-wing” wave of governments that have been elected to office around Latin America over the last decade and which say they are fighting “neo-liberalism.”

Mobilize the Power of the Working Class

The “humanitarian” campaigns organized by the bourgeoisie and capitalist countries through the Red Cross are utterly insufficient and hypocritical. These campaigns only seek to massage the egos and vanity of those bourgeois figures who pose as do-gooders before the media and world public opinion but are having a hard time masking their support to the occupation forces stationed in Haiti who massacre the population and seek to undermine its capacity for struggle.

The MINUSTAH under Brazilian leadership is nothing but an occupation force, typical of a militarized popular front that acts as a servant of imperialism. What’s needed is for workers organizations to immediately undertake efforts for solidarity with the Haitian people, organizing through their unions donations of medicines, clothes, food and to organize convoys to see that this aid in fact reaches the Haitian population.

At the same time, more than ever it is necessary to fight to build a revolutionary workers party to go forward in the struggle for socialist revolution in this combative Caribbean country, the only country in the world where there was a victorious revolution of the slaves at the turn of 19th century whose effects spread like a trail of gunpowder throughout the Americas, setting off a struggle for the abolition of slavery in the so-called “New World.” ■

Repentant Social Imperialists

Open Letter

FROM THE INTERNATIONALIST GROUP TO THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE AND ICL

MAY 8 – The Spartacist League/U.S. and the International Communist League it leads are in a heap of political trouble. The International Executive Committee of the ICL has now issued a statement “Repudiating Our Position on Haiti Earthquake,” headlined “A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism” (27 April 2010). More specifically, it repudiates the SL/ICL’s support to the U.S./U.N. invasion of Haiti in the name of humanitarian aid. The statement doesn’t mince words, characterizing the position taken by the SL’s newspaper *Workers Vanguard* as “a betrayal of the fundamental principle of opposition to one’s ‘own’ imperialist rulers,” that included “justifying the U.S. imperialist troops as essential to the aid effort” and “polemiciz[ing] against the principled and correct position of demanding the immediate withdrawal of the troops.” You write:

“We accepted Washington’s line that the provision of aid was inextricably linked to the U.S. military takeover and thus helped to sell the myth peddled by the Democratic Party Obama administration that this was a ‘humanitarian’ mission.... “Thus we gutted the revolutionary internationalist essence of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution linking the fight for social and national liberation to the struggle for proletarian state power both in neocolonial and in more advanced countries.”

That’s some pretty strong coffee, as the Germans say, and all true.

Your statement says that this became the “de facto line” of the ICL, which was carried by the presses of a number of other sections. It admits that the Internationalist Group “correctly characterized” the SL/ICL’s line as “social imperialist.” In fact, whole passages of the ICL’s repudiation statement seem to have been taken almost word-for-word from two *Internationalist* articles, “Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti” (30 January) and “SL Twists and Turns on Haiti” (9 April). Clearly, someone read at least our latest article, agreed with much of it, and said so. But what the IG wrote simply upheld the Leninist position of unconditional opposition to imperialist rule of semi-colonial countries that the SL/ICL stood for when it represented revolutionary Trotskyism.

Your emphatic repudiation of the ignominious position you vehemently pushed for three months shows a degree of candor uncommon on the left, and is a considerable improvement over the Pentagon propaganda you were retailing and your blatant support for U.S. imperialist occupation of Haiti. Yet in your April 27 statement and afterwards, even as you acknowledge the “dishonesty” of your earlier articles, the lies against those who did tell the truth continue unabated.

Moreover, your explanations of *why* and *how* your fundamental betrayal came about don’t hold water. You admit to the crime, but fail to give a serious explanation of the reasons for it. And that virtually guarantees it will happen again. This isn’t the first time that the SL/ICL bowed to the pressure of its “own” ruling class, nor the first time you have smeared the IG/LFI for our revolutionary opposition to U.S. imperialism.

So let’s begin with the key issues raised by your abrupt reversal about the U.S. troops in Haiti. The most fundamental is: why wasn’t there a gut response of opposition to the imperialist invasion? How could you become active propagandists for U.S. imperialist invasion without any internal turmoil? In any genuinely revolutionary party, a betrayal of class principle would lead to a rip-roaring faction fight and eventual split. Relying on recovered memory of the revolutionary Trotskyism the SL/ICL once championed, it is possible to write a statement. But to actually become a revolutionary leadership requires a hard fight that goes to the root of the betrayals.

It all goes back to the devastating impact on the Spartacist League and International Communist League of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states in 1989-92. It began by a turn toward passive propagandism and desertion from the class struggle, and subsequently led to a series of revisions of key programmatic questions. The most fundamental was your declaration (in your 1998 revised program) that the key thesis of Trotsky’s Transitional Program, that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership, was outdated due to a supposed “deep regression of proletarian consciousness.”

We have pointed out how virtually every revisionist, from Ernest Mandel to Nahuel Moreno to Peter Taaffe, embraced the same doctrine of historical pessimism in order to justify abandoning the revolutionary program (see *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998). Like all revisionism, this comes down to a loss of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat. It is just a “left” version of the bourgeois lie of the “death of communism” – you need only read the notes by the SL’s theoretical spokesman to see this (see *WV* No. 949, 1 January 2010). As we have remarked, it is the SL/ICL’s consciousness that has suffered a qualitative regression. This is proven by your line of support to the U.S. invasion of Haiti.

Since the April 27 statement vows to carry out a “savage indictment of our line” in the interests of “political rectification,” we would like to pose a few key issues that need to be addressed by any comrade in or around the SL/ICL who wants to get to the bottom of this betrayal.

1) *How did this betrayal come about?*

We, too, have had some discussion of what the SL/ICL's support for the U.S. imperialist invasion of Haiti and repudiation mean. No one can be convinced by the ICL's claim that this betrayal occurred because of the absence of "an organized discussion and vote, instead setting our line through informal consultation." For a momentary lapse, an article that missed the mark, perhaps; as an explanation for a fundamental betrayal of class principle, crossing the class line, impossible. This was no accidental slip, no oversight by the editor. It was full-throated support for imperialist invasion. *Workers Vanguard* published five articles in six consecutive issues repeatedly denouncing the IG for calling for U.S./U.N. forces out of Haiti. *WV* heaped lie upon lie, distortion upon distortion. And now, all of a sudden, the SL flip-flops. All because of a lack of formal discussion? Please.

The ICL statement remarks, "As one leading party comrade argued, the only difference between the position we took and August 4, 1914, when the German Social Democrats voted war credits to the German imperialist rulers at the outset of the First World War, is that this was not a war." So follow the analogy: "Well, you see we didn't have a formal discussion with Karl and Rosa there, so we unfortunately ended up voting for the war budget"? The SPD reformists didn't "correct" their vote, of course, but the centrists who later formed the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) did, voting against war credits in December 1915. Yet the USPD played a key role in preventing proletarian revolution in Germany in 1918-19. Or take the Spanish POUM, which supported the People's Front in the 1936 elections, then later pulled back as the popular-front government was sabotaging the Civil War against Franco. As Trotsky explained, the centrist POUM played a key role in blocking workers revolution in Spain.

Think about it a minute: how could SLers insist (as they did at a panel discussion with Haitian and Dominican leftists sponsored by the Internationalist Club at Hunter College in New York) that calling for U.S./U.N. troops out of Haiti equaled support for bourgeois nationalism? Because of a lack of "formal discussion"? The ICL gives a definitive answer as to why this is not true. It states, "However, once the line was published in *Workers Vanguard* it was picked up by many of the ICL's other sectional presses, indicating that there was little initial disagreement." You support a U.S. invasion under the guise of humanitarian aid and there is "little initial disagreement." That says it all: the entire ICL swallowed this betrayal. Had any section strongly objected, we can be sure this would have been noted in the repudiation as saving the ICL's honor. So even if you had had a discussion, you would likely have come up with the same line.

In fact, you did have a meeting, on March 18, and what did it do? According to the ICL statement, "the motions adopted at that meeting, which became the basis for the article in *WV* No. 955, reaffirmed that 'we were correct in not calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.'" And then, by your own admission, you proceeded to *lie* about your original line, claiming that you had "made clear in our article" of 29 January that "we were not for the U.S.

military going into Haiti," when in fact you said no such thing. Moreover, the March 18 meeting reportedly passed motions "criticizing the formulation that the U.S. military was the only force on the ground with the wherewithal to deliver aid," but "did not mandate a public correction of this statement." And again, by your own account, you "misused the authority" of Trotsky, distorting the meaning of his 1938 article "Learn to Think," "in order to alibi support to an imperialist occupation."

The whole business reeks of cynicism. You didn't just accidentally fall into error by an oversight or lack of clarity. You not only repeatedly screeched that the IG was embracing bourgeois nationalism by opposing the U.S. invasion, you distorted Trotsky and then lied to cover your tracks. You held onto your "zealous apologies for the U.S. imperialist military intervention" (your description) for dear life. But under polemical pounding from the LFI, someone, perhaps the "leading party comrade" referred to in the ICL statement, took note and said this was going too far. This time. Without that call to order, you would still be hailing the 82nd Airborne Division and the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit as humanitarian aid deliverers.

You might pause to consider the ramifications of your admitted betrayal. What if no leading party comrade had said, "stop" – where would you be then? "Pentagon socialists" anyone? Ask yourselves, how could an entire organization which declares itself revolutionary, Marxist and communist swallow this apology for U.S. imperialism, hook, line and sinker? Why didn't a whole layer of comrades vociferously object, saying "this makes me sick to my stomach – I'm revolted and outraged over the apology for the takeover of a semi-colonial country by U.S. imperialism." Why did this go down without a ripple and remain your line for almost three months?

2) *Why did this betrayal come about? It was an extension of previous capitulation to the pressures of U.S. imperialism.*

We submit that the origin of this betrayal lies in *the fact that repeatedly over the last decade, the Spartacist League and International Communist League have shamefully capitulated to the pressures of U.S. imperialism.* As a result, *alibiing the U.S. invasion of Haiti must have seemed to many just a logical extension of your previous positions, which it was.*

Take a look at what happened after the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, which clearly shook up the SL and ICL. But having lost your political compass with the demise of the Soviet Union, the SL/ICL reacted by abandoning key elements of the Leninist-Trotskyist program toward imperialist war. You issued a statement (see *WV* No. 764, 14 September 2001) with paragraphs of denunciations of terrorism but not a word in defense of Afghanistan (which the U.S. immediately targeted for retaliation). After Washington invaded, you belatedly came out in defense of Afghanistan, but still pointedly refused to call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism.

That was not all. You then proceeded to viciously attack the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International for our call from the very outset (in our 14 September 2001 statement) for defense of Afghanistan and for the defeat of U.S. imperialism. You wrote that our line amounted to "Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism," as you stated in

SL “Anti-American” Baites the Internationalist Group

as in Puerto Rico and Mexico
rushed out to flatter petty-bourgeois
nationalist forces.

Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism

In its 27 September statement, the IG writes of the Spartacist League: “Thus the SL put out a statement dated September 27 with the innocuous title, ‘The Workers’ Center Attack.’ While

from *Workers Vanguard* No. 767,
26 October 2001

and jingoism the
is manipulating.
But the IG’s purpose is otherwise; it is playing to a different audience, one of “Third World” nationalists for whom the “only good American is a dead American.” One can search their two statements in vain for anything of substance with how the fake left

a subhead, and of appealing to an audience of “‘Third World’ nationalists for whom the ‘only good American is a dead American’” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 767, 26 October 2001). Yet the position we put forward was the same program the SL/ICL had proclaimed on the front pages of *WV* for years, in the Persian Gulf War, Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

Think what that vile accusation meant in the midst of the war hysteria sweeping the United States. Not only was this a monstrous lie, but as anybody could see, it could have encouraged repression against us. And consider the implications for today: if it was okay to go around “anti-American”-baiting opponents on your left, for upholding the political line you abandoned under fire, then it’s small potatoes to say – demagogically, as you now admit – that our call for U.S./U.N. troops out “would result in mass death through starvation.”

Your dropping the call for defeat of U.S. imperialism’s war on Afghanistan and Iraq had many expressions. Our call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism was not an abstract slogan. As we had done in the Spartacist League and ICL, we coupled it with propaganda and agitation calling on transportation workers to refuse to handle (“hot-cargo”) war materiel, and for workers strikes against the war. Yet you abandoned the call for “hot-cargoing” military goods precisely when it was most possible to realize it, at the beginning of October 2002 in the midst of the build-up for the Iraq invasion, when the employers shut down the ports with a lockout. (Your excuse: that a Taft-Hartley injunction on the West Coast docks supposedly made this too dangerous.)

As for workers strikes against the war, you ridiculed this in 1998 when our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) raised this call (over a U.S. attack on Iraq by the Democratic government of Bill Clinton), saying this had no “resonance” among the workers. And on May Day 2008, when it turned out the demand had plenty of “resonance” among the workers and the *ILWU longshore union shut down every port on the Pacific Coast to stop the war*, you claimed that this was just flag-waving support for the Democratic Party, it was only about Iraq, not Afghanistan, it didn’t have any impact, etc. The fact that the union delegates, in voting to shut the ports, denounced the Democrats for helping continue the war – and

that in fact there was a striking dearth of American flags in the San Francisco march – made no difference. Here, as well, your goal of covering your own tracks made you twist the facts. And you repeat the lies put out by the bureaucracy that bitterly fought against calls for strikes against the war.

Your refusal to call loud and clear for the *defeat* of U.S. imperialism, your dropping calls for “hot-cargoing” war goods, your sneering at the first workers strike in the United States against a U.S. war are all capitulations to “your own” imperialist bourgeois rulers. And then, when Obama dispatched an invasion force to Haiti in the name of providing earthquake relief, you alibied it. That step placed you squarely in the camp of social imperialism; it crossed the class line to open support for the bourgeoisie. But it was another step on a road you had been going down for years.

3) *How can you claim to uphold permanent revolution while denying the possibility of workers revolution in Haiti?*

Having admitted that the Internationalist Group was right in opposing the U.S. imperialist invasion of Haiti, you still accuse the IG of “Third Worldist fantasies,” of seeing the earthquake as being an “opening for revolution” because we wrote that the “small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power” while the Haitian capitalist state machinery lay in tatters. Evidently you continue to hold that Haiti has “virtually no working class.” We have suggested various ways to test this claim, including photos of more than 10,000 Haitian workers marching on parliament demanding an increase in the miserable minimum wage. However, again, the *fact* of the existence of a Haitian proletariat has no impact on your position.

But if it is a “Third Worldist fantasy” to say that a proletarian revolution could begin in Haiti – as we do, while emphasizing that it must spread to the Dominican Republic, other parts of Latin America and above all the U.S. imperialist heartland if it is to succeed – then *how can you claim to uphold Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution in Haiti?* That program emphasizes that in the imperialist epoch in order to achieve even the democratic tasks of the classic bourgeois revolutions, the workers (led by their communist party) must take power and go on to undertake socialist tasks and spread the revolution

internationally. If there is no working class, it can't take power, and revolution can only come from without. That was your position from January 29 to April 27. Do you maintain this?

The SL/ICL also accuses us of being "apologists for Third World nationalism," though no specifics are given. (In 2001, the "proof" for this claim was that the IG and LFI called for defeat of U.S. imperialism.) In particular, there is no mention of your bogus claim that we support Aristide, perhaps because your main "proof" of this lie was that "the IG's shrieking about the supposed imperialist 'invasion'" of Haiti somehow portrayed Aristide as "the embodiment of national independence." Since you now agree there was a "U.S. military invasion," this charge falls flat.

And if you are curious about the existence of a Bolivian working class, which the SL/ICL also denies, you might watch a video of a recent demonstration by factory workers in La Paz, Bolivia, available on the Internet at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g67JkH0srEE>. What comes through here from the SL is rank American imperialist chauvinism and disdain for the struggles of the workers in semi-colonial countries. In loudly proclaiming that they no longer "advocate" independence for Puerto Rico and then extending that internationally to other colonies, they abandon one of the cardinal points of the Leninist struggle against imperialism. Up until now SL members have shrieked that to say such a thing is sheer "provocation." Perhaps they will be less quick to do so now. But that remains to be seen.

4) *What does your support for the U.S. invasion/occupation of Haiti mean for the ICL's claim to be the embodiment of revolutionary continuity? A "revolutionary leadership" doesn't betray the class interests of the proletariat.*

We hear from the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the LFI, that members of the Grupo Espartaquista came to the May Day marches with a rote response to justify the ICL's claim to represent the revolutionary vanguard. Other communist formations have committed "errors" in the past, they argued, but didn't cease to be communists. For example, when the Polish Communist Party supported the putsch by the ex-Socialist Josef Pilsudski in 1926. This is just grasping at straws. The Polish CP's "May error" was a reflection of the general "right-centrist" degeneration of the Comintern, as Trotsky explained in *The Third International After Lenin*.

What the GEM members considered their trump card was Trotsky's call on the eve of World War II for a "Proletarian Military Policy," for trade-union control of military training (for the imperialist armies). After all, Max Shachtman, the renegade from Trotskyism, polemically exposed what was wrong with the PMP, but he remained a centrist while the SWP, which upheld Trotsky's policy, was revolutionary.

To equate this mistaken call by Trotsky with the SL/ICL's "zealous apologies for the U.S. military intervention" in Haiti is grotesque. Are you saying that Trotsky *betrayed* the world's workers with the PMP? Also, *why* do we say that the SWP remained the revolutionary party? In the first place, the error represented by the PMP was *not* equivalent to active support to U.S. imperialist takeover of a semi-colonial country. Moreover, on the key issue in dispute with Shachtman, the SWP defended

the Soviet Union against imperialism, despite Stalin's betrayals, while Shachtman with his "Third Camp" position refused to defend the bureaucratically degenerated workers state. The SL/ICL, however, had abandoned the call for defeat of its "own" imperialist rulers in war against semi-colonial Afghanistan (and then Iraq) years before its Haiti betrayal. This call, which it used to raise with regularity on the front page of *WV*, is now only mentioned as a whispered aside, if at all.

This desperate search for historical precedents is a textbook case of scholasticism, of a piece with *WV*'s convoluted comparison of the question of aid to Haiti today with the SWP's line on aid to the Soviet Union in World War II. A clever (?) comeback can't explain away a betrayal.

Your basic argument is that you repudiated your support for the U.S. imperialist invasion, and indeed "savagely" attacked it, so that supposedly proves you are still the revolutionaries. As in the Catholic church, it seems you can confess to all sorts of venial and even some mortal sins, but as long as you admit all (and don't question the role of the Catholic church as the one true representative of Christianity), you can be absolved. But unlike religions, revolutionary politics is not a revealed doctrine and self-enclosed movement of the elect. The vanguard party has a dialectical relationship to the proletariat, representing both the fundamental interests of the class and the revolutionary program that is the product of historical experience. It has to earn its spurs by providing revolutionary leadership in the class struggle.

This was at the core of the fight over the ICL intervention in Germany, where you proclaimed the ICL was the (self-anointed) revolutionary leadership and declared comrades apostates for saying that we were struggling to *become* it. With your position of vociferous support to the U.S. invasion of Haiti, you grievously misled whoever still believed that you were the revolutionary leadership, which mercifully is not very many. Despite your pious proclamations today, how is one to know that what you say tomorrow isn't a continuation of what you said yesterday? The only way to tell is if there is a revolutionary *consistency* to the program, but the ICL has been anything but consistent over the last decade and a half (just reread what you wrote about your last two conferences). And the program must be carried out. As we pointed out, even when the SL claimed to oppose imperialist occupation of Haiti, it was essentially meaningless: one short article at the time of the 2004 U.S./French/Canadian invasion. And then silence.

You can't just say, "Oh, we really messed up, but we confessed and washed away our sins, so everything is okay." Your members go right on vituperating at the Internationalist Group that the SL is "the real thing," as if nothing had happened. How about a little recognition of what you have just done? The ICL statement says, "Without a public accounting and correction, we would be far down the road to our destruction as a revolutionary party." Actually, the SL/ICL ceased some while ago to be a revolutionary party, as your own account of your betrayal in Haiti makes abundantly clear. What is true is that if you hadn't repudiated your line of support for the U.S. imperialist invasion, you would be far down the road to outright *reformism*. By pulling back from that, you only demonstrate

that the ICL is today, and has been for the last decade, a *centrist* political formation. The next zigzag, the next upheaval, the next revelation – these are only a matter of time.

It is hardly convincing to proclaim that, “Only through a savage indictment of our line can we avoid the alternative of going down the road that led the founders of the IG to defect from our organization in the pursuit of forces other than the proletariat” when you yourselves have had to admit that we upheld the class line as against your “zealous apologies” for U.S. imperialism.

Which brings us to a matter that keeps coming up in your voluminous polemics against the IG and League for the Fourth International (which you never mention). In this instance you say the founders of the Internationalist Group “defect[ed]” from the ICL, on other occasions you have claimed we “fled,” “broke from” or “departed from our ranks.” You resort to these circumlocutions in order to avoid dealing with the simple fact that the founders of the IG and the LFI were *expelled* from the ICL sections in the U.S., Mexico and France in a political purge. You thereby try to equate us with the misnamed International Bolshevik Tendency, whose founders quit, and indeed fled from, the ICL at the height of Cold War II, objecting to our hard-edged defense of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and Poland. In the case of the founders of the IG, we were thrown out precisely because we wouldn’t quit.

Judging by its own description of its last three conferences, the SL/ICL seems to have a penchant for “correcting correct verdicts,” as Chinese Stalinist leader Deng Xiaoping put it. Stalin, too, made many zigzags during his time as a centrist. But he was based on the material reality of the bureaucracy that had at its disposal the enormous resources of the Soviet state. What does the SL have? When we read, in your account of your latest conference – which was dominated by a huge faction fight – that your “central task” is “to arm the party programmatically and theoretically, from *Spartacist* to the maintenance of our Central Committee archive,” the picture is that of an inwardly turned group voluntarily walled off from the class struggle. You can practically hear the embalming fluid dripping. But for all the importance of archival work, the ICL hasn’t been doing such a good job arming the party programmatically, has it?

The SL/ICL declares that, in this period, the struggles of the working class no longer have any link to the goal of socialist revolution. That supposed theoretical justification allows it to haughtily dismiss the possibility that sectors of the working class could be won to key aspects of the revolutionary program, or carry out actions that concretize them (like strikes against the war or “hot-cargoing”). This “revolutionary” rationale is really just an adaptation to what is, to the bourgeois order. As the ICL statement rightly stated, your line on Haiti was the “politics of the possible,” the phrase of Michael Harrington, the “socialist” advisor of Democratic presidents Kennedy and Johnson. This current has a long history going back to the French *possibilists* in the 1880s, who reflecting demoralization following the bloody 1871 defeat of the Paris Commune said one could only fight

for what is possible, which was not workers revolution.

While other groups may limit themselves to bourgeois democratic demands or low-level trade-union struggle, the ICL line is “Stop the class struggle, I want to get off.” This is your particular version of the demoralization that affected large sectors of the left (even those who denied the Soviet Union was any kind of workers state) as a result of the victory of counterrevolution in the USSR. The SL/ICL pulled back from its support for the U.S. invasion when it saw its image in the mirror of reformism. But for those who do not wish to keep on gyrating in centrist confusion while insisting they “are” the revolutionary leadership, there must be a thorough-going search for the causes of the betrayal. Those genuinely looking for the roots of the SL’s pro-imperialist “politics of the possible” over Haiti would do well to examine the real record of its adaptations and capitulations to “its own” bourgeoisie over the past years.

Your leadership will undoubtedly tell you (and themselves) that this is the most serious challenge the ICL has faced. Indeed. However, the challenge is not to defend the revolutionary pretensions of the ICL at all costs, but to fight for revolutionary programmatic clarity. Of course, if you do undertake such a fight, you will doubtless soon discover the limits of the desired political rectification.

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Against Police Seizure of the Mine and the Firing of SME Electrical Workers

Mexico: Cananea Miners Call for a National Strike

JUNE 10 – In the dead of night, this Sunday more than 2,000 federal and Sonora state police stormed the Cananea copper mine, which had been occupied by the mine workers in a strike that lasted almost three years. Federal agents snuck in through the back entrance while hundreds of police harassed workers in front of the offices of Section 65 of the Miners Union. They used tear gas grenades which affected many women and children present. People responded by throwing rocks at the *federales*, who began firing their rifles and swearing at the crowd to intimidate them, according to a reporter from Radio Bemba in Hermosillo.

Thus, the federal government finally made good on its threat to “liberate” the mine and return the property to its “owners,” the infamous Grupo México of Germán Larrea, who got the company as a gift from his pal, the ex-president Carlos Salinas. Almost simultaneously, police forces of the state of Coahuila drove relatives of the miners who died in the Pasta de Conchos mine explosion [February 2006] out of their encampment at the mine entrance, definitively declaring that they would not recover the remains of the 65 miners buried inside.

Notably, the police invasion occurred on the night of the 104th anniversary of the miners’ return to work after the crushing of the historic Cananea miners’ strike of 1906.¹ Carried out by a government that wants to eradicate all traces of the Mexican Revolution, which the 1906 strike helped to set in motion, this could not be a coincidence. President Felipe Calderón and his technocrats seek to subject the workers to the iron discipline of capital like Porfirio Díaz and his “*Científicos*” [technocratic advisors]. The police invasion of the Cananea mine is a copy of the federal police operation that seized the facilities of Central Light and Power (LyFC) last October.²

This new episode of government attacks on the proletariat has immediately sparked the anger of workers in Sonora and elsewhere in Mexico. The Permanent Union Council, formed by various Sonora labor organizations, demanded the withdrawal of police forces from Cananea. The secretary of the faculty union at the University of Sonora, Sergio Barraza, floated the possibility of a campus strike to protest the bosses’ attack. If the miners joined their struggle with the workers at the Hermosillo Ford plants, who are presently up in arms over the firings and police harassment of workers fighting for a genuine union, this would be even more powerful.

¹ See “Cananea: A Century of Internationalist Class Struggle,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009.

² See “Mexico: Forward to a General Strike in Defense of the Electrical Workers,” *The Internationalist* No. 30, November-December 2009.

At the assembly of Section 65 of the National Union of Mine, Metal, and Allied Workers of the Republic of Mexico (SNTMMSRM by its initials in Spanish), the Secretary-General of the local, Sergio Tolano, stated that “the workers will take back the mine ‘whatever it takes,’ and announced that they would organize a national work stoppage, along with blockading the country’s ports and highways,” according to a note on the website of *Proceso* (8 June). Yes: that is precisely what is needed to begin a struggle that could defeat the government of the usurper Felipe Calderón.

However, the activity of the mine and metal union, at the state level and nationally, focuses on seeking support from legislators, particularly of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and even from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, the “state party” that ruled Mexico for 70 years). The bourgeois politicians can make resonant speeches, they can ask for the federal police (PFP) takeover to be declared illegal, etc., but this is just grandstanding. These capitalist politicians will never lead the workers struggle to victory: the working class itself must deliver the knockout blow to the bosses.

Since the Cananea strike began, the Grupo Internacionalista has called for a national miners strike so that the battle-hardened Cananea miners would not have to take on the capitalists by themselves. “Cananea Must Not Stand Alone: For a Nationwide Miners Strike!” headlined an article we published [in February 2008] during the previous attempt by the PFP to retake the mine.³ The miners of Cananea know what needs to be done. Mexico City daily *La Jornada* (8 June) quoted miners at the Section 65 assembly: “Sergio Beltrán and other national leaders were pelted with demands: ‘And what about the nationwide strike? Since we began you’ve been talking about it, and nothing happens!’”

Mobilization is all the more urgent because the miners who remain on strike in Sombrerete (Zacatecas) and in Taxco (Guerrero) are now facing increasingly sinister threats of being forced out by the federal government. At the same time, steel workers at Lázaro Cárdenas (Michoacán), who in 2006 effectively defeated a police attack of the joint forces of the federal government of the National Action Party (PAN), the state government of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the PRI municipality attempting to break their strike, have announced that they will undertake work stop-

³ Available on-line at <http://www.internationalist.org/cananeas-trike0802.html>, along with several articles about the Cananea miners struggle, including “Mexican Miners Strike for Safety, Against Anti-Worker Attacks” (December 2007) and “Two Years of the Cananea Strike: Mobilize to Defend Striking Mexican Mine Workers” (July 2009), which are reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 29.

pages in solidarity with their comrades in Cananea. In 2006, the steel workers succeeded in defending themselves with a toll of two miners cowardly assassinated by the police forces.

Last May 24 the more than 3,000 workers at the Arcelor-Mittal (formerly Sicartsa) steel plant [at Lázaro Cárdenas] laid down their tools and marched on the Pacific ocean cargo port to blockade it. They demanded that the PFP leave the port, where on May 20 the federal police had attacked scores of steelworkers. At the same time, the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) announced that it would break off negotiations with the government in protest against the repression in Cananea. Now it is necessary to go from words to deeds.

In the last few months, the bourgeoisie, its governments, parties and politicians have landed blow after blow on the workers. It is urgently necessary to go over to the offensive, unchaining the power of the working class all across the country. Since the brutal attack on the SME [in October 2009, when the government fired all 44,000 workers of the LyFC], there has been more than sufficient reason to begin a general strike in the central part of the country, to strike back hard at the government and the bosses where it really hurts them: in their pocketbooks.

Today, June 10, the SME has called a “Mega March and Rally Against Repression,” with the slogan “Scabs, Paramilitaries, Federal Police and Army Out of Cananea!” To carry out this correct demand, we would add: *Miners, electrical workers, unite to launch a nationwide strike to shatter the capitalist offensive against the working class!*

It’s also important to note the important international support that the Cananea miners have received. Since, in addition to Cananea, Grupo México owns copper mines in the neighboring U.S. state of Arizona where the workers are members of the powerful United Steelworkers (USW) union, it is time to call for a solidarity strike by all workers at Larrea’s conglomerate, from the Southern Peru Mining Company and the railroad workers of Ferromex to the workers in the mines and refineries of ASARCO in the United States.

Although it talks of work stoppages, and even occasionally mentions the need for a nationwide strike, the leadership of the SME has concretely opposed taking the steps necessary to organize such a strike. Instead, this leadership has focused on mobilizing the tens of thousands of electrical workers to futilely petition for the aid of congressmen and senators, or to beg for justice from the courts. Above all, the leadership of the SME has subordinated the union’s struggle to the electoral campaign of the *popular front* around Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO) and his allies in the PRD, the PT (a fake “Labor Party”) and Convergencia, a class-collaborationist alliance that chains the “independent” unions to a sector of the bourgeoisie, the supposedly democratic opposition. This is a recipe for defeat, as has been amply demonstrated in previous electoral campaigns by PRD founder Cuauhtémoc Cardenas and AMLO.

This has also been the perspective of the leadership of the Miners Union. Historically, this organization was one of the bastions of corporatism in Mexico. Corporatism is a

mechanism of social control, one of the pillars on which the PRI regime stood for six decades, characterized by the organic integration of the unions and other mass organizations into the capitalist state. The SNTMM, under the leadership of Napoleón Gómez Sada, was instrumental in keeping the miners under this control for decades, and especially in forcing them to take the bitter pill of privatizations under the regimes of Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo. (Cananea itself was privatized in this period, as was Ecatepec Steelworks, Altos Hornos de México, the National Railroad Car Construction Company, and many others.)

In the first term of the “alternation” between bourgeois parties that began after the PRI’s fall from power, the son of Gómez Sada, Napito, inherited the corporatist mine and metal “union” from his father. After the disaster at Pasta de Conchos, he fell out with his government patrons – whom he had until then served as faithfully as did his father. Under the pressure of enraged family members of the trapped miners he correctly characterized the explosion as “industrial homicide.” Persecuted from then on by the government at the insistence of Grupo México, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia had slipped the leash of control by the PAN government, without completely breaking with corporatist unionism.

In spite of harassment by the PAN governments of Vicente Fox and Calderón, who have denied him government recognition (the *toma de nota*⁴), favoring other bought-off figureheads such as Elías Morales Hernández and Carlos Pavón, Gómez Urrutia has invariably insisted that the miners stick to the legal strictures defined by the federal labor code and the corporatist mechanisms embodied in the arbitration boards. In Sonora, the union remains loyal to the ruling PRI, at least under governor Eduardo Bours, even as he would periodically send in his police to repress the Cananea miners.

While insisting that the SNTMM has not definitively broken away from the corporatist system, we of the Grupo Internacionalista have consistently supported the struggles of the miners of Cananea. Since the strike broke out in 2007 we have called to “Bring Grupo México to its knees with a great nationwide miners strike!,” as the headline of our special supplement to *El Internacionalista* (December 2007) declared. That same month, the GI played an important role in sending a delegation from the Union of Workers at the Autonomous University of Mexico (SITUAM), which brought with it a symbolic donation of 5,000 pesos (about US\$390) worth of supplies and an enormous banner proclaiming “fraternal greetings” to the “righteous strike of the Cananea miners.”

Nevertheless, declarations of solidarity are no substitute for the key factor: a class-struggle leadership, armed with a revolutionary program to defeat the attacks of the bosses. The main obstacle to a workers’ victory, in Cananea – and likewise

⁴ A procedure under Mexico’s corporatist labor law, copied from Mussolini’s fascist Italy, by which the federal government “takes note of” (i.e., recognizes) elected union officials. Although purportedly a bureaucratic procedure, in fact the government has repeatedly used this device to get rid of leaders it doesn’t like and replace them with its flunkies.

in the case of the electrical workers of the SME – is the supposedly “independent” union leadership, which keeps the workers struggle within the bounds of bourgeois pressure politics.

To really undertake the re-occupation of the Cananea mine by the workers, and to declare a nationwide strike that would block ports and highways across the country means breaking out of the shackles of corporatism. But to do this, it is necessary to break politically with all sectors of the capitalist class. The thousands of workers of the SME who are still holding out must also draw the lesson that it is not by petitioning the Supreme Court that they will win. Not even if they try to pressure it with a hunger strike, which as much as it demonstrates the determination of the electrical workers, will never awaken mercy from the bosses who are eager to privatize LyFC and the whole energy sector. To gain the support of other sectors of the working class is a fundamental task now that the electrical workers have been dislodged from their workplaces where they had industrial power. But the fundamental obstacle to this is the political subordination of the workers to the popular front represented by the PRD and López Obrador.

Even though today many electrical workers repudiate the “*chuchos*” (the PRD leadership under Jesus Ortega), who have blatantly allied themselves with Felipe Calderón (many state PRD parties are running in alliance with his PAN in the elections this summer), the workers continue to see Andrés Manuel López Obrador as an ally who could carry them to victory. On the day after the seizure of the Cananea mine by the federal police force, the first speaker at the Section 65 assembly (via telephone) was AMLO himself. Many workers are under the utterly false belief that if AMLO wins the presidential elections in 2012, they will get their jobs back. This is a dangerous illusion.

Under the slogan of “peaceful civil disobedience,” AMLO showed the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist patrons that he can mobilize the plebian masses, without allowing them to as much as break a windowpane. The recipe for social control favored by AMLO is to give a few more concessions to the oppressed to avoid a social explosion that would destabilize Mexican capitalism. But neither the fired electrical workers of the SME nor the striking miners of Cananea can defeat the bosses’ attacks with a bourgeois program. What’s needed is a program of class struggle inspired by the Russian October Revolution of 1917 led by Lenin and Trotsky, not a program of compromise with the exploiters inspired by the bourgeois “pacifism” of Ghandi.

Today, as spokesmen for the PAN government and Grupo México hold a joint press conference to announce their idyllic future for Cananea, where the bosses will be assured a sweet-heart contract with a yellow union, it is essential to begin to forge the nucleus of a workers party based on the program of permanent revolution, which would extend throughout the hemisphere, above all to the imperial center of the north. Without this perspective, there can only be more defeats for the exploited and oppressed. This is the program that the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, fights for. ■

Defend North Korea...

continued from page 4

The Chinese government has strenuously complained about the upcoming U.S.-South Korean military maneuvers. Chinese specialists have called the exercises “needlessly provocative,” pointing out that nuclear-armed U.S. warships in the Yellow Sea, near major Chinese naval installations and within striking distance of Beijing, is a lot closer than Russian nuclear missiles in Cuba, “90 miles from Florida.” (More like holding military exercises off Norfolk, Virginia.) An editorial in China’s *Global Times* (12 July) warns that “One false move, one wrong interpretation, is all it would take for the best-planned exercises to go awry,” adding that Chinese fighter plans and war ships would likely “go all the way out to closely watch the war game maneuvers.”

There is a long history of imperialist governments staging provocations or seizing on unrelated events to justify launching a war. Recall how “Remember the *Maine!*” became the battle cry for the U.S. occupation of Cuba in 1898, after an explosion sank the American battleship in the Havana harbor. The jingoist press quickly blamed Spanish saboteurs for planting a mine. After the Spanish were driven out, they blamed Cuban freedom fighters. Cuban historians have argued that the United States probably blew up its own ship to provide a *casus belli* (justification for war). Or it could have sunk as the result of an explosion of the boiler or in the coal bunker. In any case, if the provocative U.S.-South Korean military maneuvers escalate into war against North Korea, the war cry will no doubt be “Remember the *Cheonan!*”

Could South Korean and the U.S. be responsible for the sinking of the *Cheonan*? Certainly they would not shrink from sacrificing the lives of South Korean sailors. In the 1980s, U.S. intelligence agencies working together with the KCIA sent a South Korean civilian airliner (KAL flight 007) on a spy mission over Soviet military installations on Sakhalin Island, and then screamed bloody murder when the Soviets shot down the intruder. In the 1950-53 Korean War, in which it slaughtered millions of Koreans, the U.S. Army was guilty of numerous massacres of refugees fleeing the fighting. A South Korean “truth commission” investigating wartime atrocities counted 138 U.S. massacres (for which it is being shut down by the Lee regime) while the ROK military and police executed as many as 200,000 “suspected leftists.” Trotskyists defended North Korea in the war.

There have been a number of warnings recently – including from Cuba’s Fidel Castro – of imminent U.S. war moves against North Korea and Iran that could escalate into an imperialist world war. Whether the Obama regime, already stretched thin by its losing war in Afghanistan and continuing occupation of Iran, has the military capability of launching such an adventure is another matter. Bolstered by recent U.N. Security Council sanctions it may opt for steps like boarding Iranian and North Korean freighters, with potentially dramatic consequences. In any case, while giving no political support to the Islamist capitalist rulers in Tehran or the Stalinist regime in Pyongyang, the duty of all opponents of imperialism is to defend Iran and North Korea against the warmongers in Washington and Seoul. ■

Judge Resentences Radical Lawyer to 10 Years in Prison *Free Lynne Stewart!*

No Justice in the Capitalist Courts

On July 15, federal district court judge John Koeltl sentenced radical civil liberties lawyer Lynne Stewart to ten years behind bars. For 70-year-old Stewart, who has been fighting breast cancer, this could be “a death sentence,” her husband Ralph Poynter said after the judge’s decision. More generally, the effect and intended result of this draconian decision will be to intimidate lawyers from vigorously representing defendants in the imperialist “war on terror.” The whole purpose of the prosecution’s case was to make an example of Stewart. From start to finish, the persecution of Lynne Stewart has been a major step in the direction of a police state in the United States. Stewart is not a criminal, much less a “conspirator” or “terrorist,” but a fighter for the oppressed who has been targeted by a criminal and terrorist conspiracy, the United States government. All defenders of democratic rights must join in demanding, “Free Lynne Stewart!” Her translator Mohammed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar, who were convicted along with her in the frame-up trial, should also be freed.

In 2005, the same Judge Koeltl sentenced Stewart to 28 months in prison for the same supposed “crime” of violating “Special Administrative Measures” (SAMs) imposed on her client, the Islamist cleric Sheik Abdel Rahman. The conviction itself was an abomination and a frontal assault on democratic rights, upholding the government’s “right” to hold prisoners incommunicado by administrative fiat, and then to enforce the gag order by jailing their lawyers for “violating” the ban (see “Lynne Stewart Conviction Is Legal Terror,” *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005). But last November, a federal appeals court in a virtually unprecedented action ordered Koeltl to “reconsider” his sentence in light of the “terrorism enhancement” that allows courts to impose a maximum sentence, in this case of 30 years, and ordered Stewart immediately jailed, despite a pending surgery – all for violating an arbitrary administrative order of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons!

The whole case against Stewart was cooked up in order to apply the “terrorism” ploy to lawyers and the courts generally. It was considered necessary to “synchronize” (*Gleichschaltung*, in Nazi German) the American legal system to the demands of the post-9/11 era. The indictment was announced with great fanfare by Attorney General John Ashcroft in early 2002, shortly after the USA PATRIOT Act curtailing civil liberties was rammed through Congress following the September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The tabloids and right-wing talk radio shows labeled Stewart a “terror lawyer” and “traitor.” The resentencing was intended to make sure that she is treated as a “terrorist.” Stewart was charged with providing “material support” to a conspiracy to commit murder in another country, and the fact that there was no evidence that anyone was killed or even harmed as a result of her actions was ruled irrelevant.

The reason for existence of this case was sheer intimidation, and to regiment the population for war. Like the arrests of radical syndicalists and socialists on sedition charges in World War I, the jailing of the Trotskyists and Minneapolis Teamsters in World War II and the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg at the onset of the anti-Soviet Cold War, domestic witchhunts are an integral part of imperialist war. They go hand in hand with the mass deportations and jailing of immigrants in concentration camps, going after the “enemy within.” In fact, one of the judges on the Second Court of Appeals panel, John Walker, was so incensed at the “breathtakingly low” and “extraordinarily lenient” initial sentence that he practically called for jailing trial judge Koeltl for aiding a conspiracy to aid a conspiracy. Judge Walker, a first cousin of former U.S. presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, would have done well in the Third Reich.

But it’s also worth noting the role of the Democrats. Various liberal and reformist socialist commentators have made much of the fact that Bill Clinton’s attorney general, Janet Reno, could have prosecuted Stewart but didn’t, considering her transgression a minor infringement of the SAMs. But Judge Koeltl, who just handed down the ten-year sentence, was himself appointed to the federal bench by Bill Clinton. It was also the Clinton administration (via AG Reno) that imposed the Special Administrative Measures in the first place, and that in 1996 put in place the “terrorism enhancement” provisions under which the radical lawyer was given a virtual death sentence. The fact is that Lynne Stewart was tried and sentenced by a Clinton judge, for violating Clinton administration edicts, and had her prison time nearly quintupled under a Clinton decree. And on July 15 it was a prosecutor for the liberal Democratic administration of Barack Obama who argued the government’s case against Stewart.

The U.S. “war on terror,” whose purpose is to terrorize the people of the world (and the American population) into submission, is a *bipartisan* enterprise of the imperialist rulers. Democrats and Republicans have voted over and over for the war on Afghanistan and Iraq, and for the war “at home.” But, in fact, the mass roundups of immigrants and deportations are carried out not under the USA PATRIOT Act but under Clinton’s “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act,” just as black radical journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal had his right to defend his innocence in appealing his frame-up trial eliminated under Clinton’s “Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.” As signs of the Internationalist Group and Class Struggle Education Workers outside the court at Stewart’s resentencing declared: “There Is No Justice in the Capitalist Courts.” As the struggle continues to *Free Lynne Stewart*, we insist that it will take nothing less than *socialist revolution* to put an end to this racist injustice system. ■

Organize to Defeat the Capitalist Assault on Public Education!

Obama, Democrats Spearhead Teacher-Bashing, Union-Busting Corporate Education "Reform"

By Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT

JUNE 16 – Public schools, teachers and teacher unions are under attack across the country. Billionaires like Bill Gates and Eli Broad want to tie teacher pay to student test scores. State legislatures take aim at teacher tenure and seniority. Hedge fund operators fund semi-privatized “charter schools.” Corporate lobbies like the Business Roundtable and the National Center on Education and the Economy call to end high school at the tenth grade. University students are hit with huge tuition hikes. Schools are closed in minority areas, teachers are threatened with mass layoffs and pay freezes.

We’re facing a full-scale capitalist assault on public education. It’s not just here in New York, billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg and his schools chancellor Joel Klein are not the only enemies. The war on public education is taking place across the country, and the bottom line is: *Barack Obama and the Democratic Party are leading the charge.* Until educators and labor militants are prepared to take on these teacher-bashers and union-busters politically, to break with the Democrats and oust the pro-capitalist bureaucrats with a class-struggle leadership, every remaining job protection is at risk.

It was liberal Democrats, not just right-wing Republicans who handed over trillions of dollars to bail out the Wall Street bankers. Now they’re claiming there’s no money left for schools, unless teachers agree to give up every union gain they have ever won. It’s Obama and the Democratic Congress, not George Bush and Dick Cheney, who are running the imperialist war in the Middle East, which has taken close to a million lives over the last nine years. Now they’ve suddenly “discovered” precious metals in the Afghan hills along with the oil in Iraq, confirming that the U.S. plans to run those countries indefinitely.

Meanwhile, look at what’s happening on the education front: last February, the school board in Central Falls, Rhode Island decided to fire the entire faculty and staff over lack of progress in student test scores. Speaking to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, with his education czar (and basketball buddy) Arne Duncan on stage, President Obama approved this union-busting attack. Forget that Central Falls is the poorest city in the state with the highest percentage of immigrants: just label

the school and its students failures and blame the teachers. Even American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Randi Weingarten let out a yelp. She thought she had a deal with Obama to do education “reform” together with, not against the unions. Surprise.

Then Obama announced he was rewriting the Bush-era “No Child Left Behind” law to require states to evaluate teachers based on student scores on annual tests, and to subject some 10,000 schools nationwide to “vigorous state intervention” – i.e., closing. If this passes, the deliberate “dumbing down” of education, the elimination of science and enrichment (music, art, foreign language) classes will continue. “Teaching to the test” will become universal. As always, schools in black ghettos, Latino barrios, immigrant communities and working-class areas will be left behind.

Meanwhile, we have the Obama administration’s Race to the Top scheme to bribe state legislatures into passing laws requiring “merit pay” linking teacher salaries to student test scores, ditto for teacher tenure, sharply increasing the number of non-union charter schools and eliminating seniority job protection.

In New York, Mayor Bloomberg tries to blackmail teachers into a pay freeze by threatening thousands of layoffs. Meanwhile, they shell out half a million dollars on double-digit raises to DOE execs and increasing the number of deputy chancellors from two to eight, spend \$5 million on teacher recruitment in the middle of a job freeze, and drop tens of millions onto their vaunted ARIS computer system whose main accomplishment so far has been to spawn a computer worm. Etc. But the worst is yet to come.

At issue is seniority. Under the New York State civil service code, any layoffs of public workers must be done by reverse seniority. A bill to eliminate that clause, for teachers only, has been bottled up in the legislature. At the end of May, Democratic attorney general Andrew Cuomo announced his candidacy for governor, picking as his running mate Rochester mayor Robert Duffy. His qualification? Duffy “tangled with public employee unions,” namely the teachers union. Cuomo went on: “Guess what? We’re going to be tangling with public employee unions.” Specifically, he’s talking about calling a constitutional convention (which could axe the seniority provisions).

**Break with the Democrats, Oust the Bureaucrats –
Build a Class-Struggle Workers Party!**

So what is the union leadership doing about this? In the run-up to the election for United Federation of Teachers (UFT) president, Weingarten's successor as head of the UFT Mike Mulgrew did a little tough talking. Mulgrew filed a court suit against the closing of 20+ schools on procedural grounds, which put that off a bit. (Klein just ignored the judge's ruling and sent out notices to parents assigning affected students to other schools.) But since then he has been going for one "deal" after another with the DOE.

First there was the agreement to close the infamous "rubber rooms" (teacher reassignment centers) which had given both the union and the schools bad press. While it may let some victimized teachers back into the classroom earlier, it also makes it easier for the administration to take disciplinary action. Next was the agreement on teacher evaluation, with 40 percent of the score based on "student achievement," both on state tests and local criteria. As usual, the UFT tops tried to pass this off as a victory, fending off calls for teacher evals based exclusively on state tests.

Then comes the bill to more than double the number of charter schools. Once again, Mulgrew & Co. try to peddle this sellout by saying that a ban on new for-profit schools and a requirement to include more English language learners and special education students will crimp the charter operators' style. Both this law and the teacher evaluation system were rammed through the state legislature in order to qualify for Obama's Race to the Top funds. Meanwhile, with the aid of Randi Weingarten, union-bashing Washington, D.C. schools chancellor Michelle Rhee managed to push through a contract effectively eliminating seniority (teachers excessed by school closings can be fired if they don't find a new position in two months). The *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and business interests cheered.

So what can be done? Around the country, union reform caucuses have sprung up in a number of AFT locals. In New York there is the Independence Community of Educators and Teachers for a Just Contract (ICE/TJC), which got 11 percent in the last presidential vote. While the bureaucracy's "Unity" caucus has a stranglehold on the UFT, a reform caucus won control of the United Teachers of Los Angeles in 2005 and last week the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) won the top positions in the Chicago Teachers Union, ousting the deeply corrupt and fractured regime of Marilyn Stewart.

Many dedicated union militants fed up with the sellouts of the AFT leadership have joined these reform groups. But now that they have taken the reins locally, they are up against the powerful forces pushing corporate education "reform" that Weingarten, Mulgrew, Stewart and the rest have capitulated to. The problem is, they have not prepared their ranks for the bitter battle that must be fought.

CORE, ICE, TJC and similar groupings in other union locals all have pretty much the same program. They basically oppose the leadership's sellouts and want to go back to the trade-union reformism of the past. CORE's election platform consisted of things like "get members on board with a common strategy," "mobilize the union against budget cuts," "develop a legal strategy," "develop a political strategy," and similar meaningless phrases. They're going up against Arne Duncan's

hand-picked successor, in Barack Obama's hometown. Is the CTU membership ready for the blast they are going to get accusing them of selfishly sacrificing kids' education and other hogwash straight from the White House?

The fundamental fact is that in the present imperialist epoch, the reformist or even "social" trade unionism of the past is impossible. There is a bipartisan capitalist consensus to go after unions, rip up their gains and eliminate workers' minimal job protections in the name of competitiveness. Obama & Co. are pushing a race to the bottom, and the labor fakers are doing their job by going along. A real opposition to the Weingartens and Mulgrews would point out that it's not a matter of individual sellouts or corruption, they are a parasitic petty-bourgeois layer that seeks to discipline the workers for the bosses. They are, as Daniel De Leon said, the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class."

Reform caucuses that only fight for union militancy, democracy and the like, are doomed to fail once they come into office because they are incapable of battling an implacable foe. That's what happened with New Directions in TWU Local 100 and the sellout of the 2005 New York City transit strike, and it's been repeated over and over in the Teamsters, Steelworkers, Mine Workers and elsewhere. The bureaucracy must be defeated and driven out of the unions, replaced by a leadership with a program of hard class struggle if labor is to succeed against the concerted capitalist offensive.

What's going on here is a *one-sided class war*. As billionaire investor Warren Buffet said a while back, "There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning." The reason it's one-sided is that no one is seriously fighting back. A class-struggle opposition would not be limited to "bread-and-butter" issues. It would stress that the U.S. war and occupation "over there" in the Middle East and Central Asia are part of the same war being waged against working people, immigrants and minorities here. It would fight police-state measures like the USA PATRIOT Act, defend immigrants and oppose racist repression.

It would drive home that the capitalist politicians who pose as phony "friends of labor" at election time are actually enemies of the working class. The Democrats are in office in good part because the teacher union tops *and most of the oppositions* either openly or implicitly said to vote Democrat. But the Dems are no "lesser evil," their program on education was *identical* to the Republicans'. What Obama and education czar Arne Duncan are doing to teachers now was entirely predictable and we predicted it (see "No to Teacher-Basher McCain and Education-for-War Obama." *The Internationalist* supplement, November 2008). That was not a popular position. Most self-proclaimed socialists opted to go with the flow and downplay any criticism of Obama. But now we face the consequences.

It's necessary to break with the Democrats and begin building a workers party that can lead a broad class struggle against the bosses' offensive, ousting the bureaucrats who are giving away everything we have fought for, threatening the very existence of the unions, the livelihoods of its members, and the education of our students. ■

Hands off WikiLeaks!

Defend PFC Bradley Manning!

On July 6, the U.S. military announced that charges have been filed against Private First Class Bradley Manning for allegedly leaking classified material – in particular providing the (in)famous “Collateral Murder” video to the investigative website WikiLeaks. PFC Manning, a military intelligence analyst, has been held since some time toward the end of May by the U.S. Central Command at a military base in Kuwait. The video shows U.S. helicopter gunships cold-bloodedly gunning down two journalists and other civilians, first aid responders and children in Baghdad in 2007. Its release provoked a storm of outrage worldwide, and it has by now been seen by millions of viewers on the Internet. The “hacker” who fingered Private Manning to the Army brass, Adrian Lamo, also alleges that Manning claimed to have passed on video of a massacre of some 125 civilians by U.S. forces near Garani, Afghanistan in May 2009.

The Pentagon claims that in addition, Manning released some 150,000 State Department cables. WikiLeaks denies that it has the diplomatic cables, but says it is preparing to release the video of the Garani massacre (for background on this case of mass murder, see our article, “Defeat U.S. War on Afghanistan and Iraq,” *The Internationalist* No. 30, November-December 2009). While refusing on principle to name its sources or confirm whether Manning is one, WikiLeaks has retained U.S. civilian lawyers for him. However, the military has not allowed them to contact their client. Manning’s friends and the government informant Lamo say that he was suffering a crisis of conscience over the conduct of the U.S. war, read “horrific” contents of secret U.S. diplomatic correspondence, and wanted to spark “debate” and “reform.”

If Bradley Manning did indeed help to uncover evidence of U.S. imperialism’s war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, and if he did try to bring to light the secret dealings of U.S. diplomats and spies, these were justified acts evidencing rare moral courage. Class-conscious workers and all defenders of democratic rights should hail Manning as a hero. Exposing U.S. imperialism’s crimes and tearing the curtain of secrecy from its plots can save the lives of innocent people by helping to put an end the Pentagon’s reign of terror in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world. That’s why the U.S. government under the liberal Democrat Barack Obama is pursuing “whistle blowers” with a vengeance. Under the charges brought against him, a court-martial could sentence Manning to up to 52 years behind bars. We demand: *Free Bradley Manning now!*

In the wake of the revelations of Manning’s arrest, government officials told the Daily Beast news website (10 June) that they were seeking Julian Assange, an Australian who is the main figure of WikiLeaks. Assange dropped from sight for several weeks, rightly worried that he is in danger, but surfaced in Brussels on June 21 to speak at a seminar on freedom of information at the European parliament. A lengthy article on



WikiLeaks

Frame from the leaked video “Collateral Murder” publicized on WikiLeaks last April.

Assange in the *New Yorker* (7 June) magazine pooh-poohed such concerns, referring to “A low-grade fever of paranoia [that] runs through the WikiLeaks community.” But Daniel Ellsberg, a former military analyst who in 1972 revealed the “Pentagon Papers,” a top-secret “Defense” Department study of the Vietnam war, commented in a Daily Beast interview (11 June) that “on May 3, 1972, a dozen CIA assets from the Bay of Pigs, Cuban émigrés were brought up from Miami with orders to ‘incapacitate me totally.’”

Only in the past? Hardly. Despite post-Watergate laws banning assassinations, U.S. leaders today openly proclaim their supposed authority, under war powers voted by Congress following the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and their intention to have government hit squads murder or kidnap “enemies,” foreign citizens and Americans alike, without the pretense of a judicial procedure. In testimony to the House Intelligence Committee on February 3, the Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair declared that American citizens could be assassinated by their “own” government overseas. Make no mistake, Julian Assange is in real danger from the same imperialist war criminals that have Bradley Manning in a military jail. *Hands off Julian Assange and WikiLeaks!*

In the Daily Beast interview, Ellsberg congratulates Assange for “doing good work for our democracy” and says that if Manning did what he is alleged to have done, he “upheld his oath of office to support the Constitution.” Ellsberg asserted that “our national security” would benefit from the release of diplomatic cables allegedly intercepted by Manning, but counsels Assange to withhold “dangerous” government secrets from the public. Wikileaks has indeed done very good work, not

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Shut the Detention Camps – Free the Detainees!

Mobilize Workers, Immigrants to Stop the Deportations!



Sarah L. Voison/Washington Post

Flight to nowhere: ICE deportation flight from Washington, D.C.'s Dulles Airport carrying 100 Central American immigrants, shackled at wrists and ankles.

The following was the lead article in a special bilingual tabloid edition of The Internationalist that sold some 1,000 copies at the March 21 immigrants rights march in Washington, D.C. and the May Day march in New York City.

On Sunday, March 21, tens of thousands of immigrants and their supporters will demonstrate in Washington for immigration reform. Some activists will stay behind to lobby Congress. It's being called the largest march of the Obama "era." Demo organizers want to "send a message" to the Democrats in power in Washington that tens of millions of immigrants won't be ignored. But the fact is that the Democratic Congress and Democratic president Barack Obama are not about to legislate "meaningful" immigration reform, which would make it possible for the 15 million or more U.S. residents labeled "illegal" to become legal. Begging the racist rulers to be "fair" won't work – they will grant rights only if forced to do so. And together, we *have the power*.

Most likely the whole issue will be dropped until after the mid-term elections, while immigrant-bashing reactionaries have a field day on the airwaves and the campaign trail. Any "reform" they do come up with promises to be a nightmare:

undocumented immigrants will have to declare themselves criminals, pay thousands of dollars in fines and taxes, and wait for years – if they are among the lucky few. This would be coupled with indentured servitude for temporary ("guest") workers, stepped up militarization of the borders and a "biometric" national identification card, harbinger of a police state for all. To hell with that! The Internationalist Group says everyone who lives here should have equal rights. *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

The demonstrators are speaking for millions of people who live and work in the United States yet lead a shadowy existence without basic rights. Toiling at the worst jobs for miserable pay, they are subject to systematic abuse. They fear deportation every time they come into contact with the authorities. Children born in the United States are separated from their foreign-born parents. After years on the job, workers can suddenly be deprived of employment because a computer spits out a dreaded "no match" letter. They can be rounded up by jack-booted, black-uniformed ICE police of the Department of Fatherland Security – the hated *migra* – and thrown into concentration camps. Hundreds of thousands are expelled from the country without legal defense,

while others are held behind bars or barbed wire for years before their cases are heard.

Anger has been building against President Barack Obama and the Congressional Democrats, who were elected with a big majority of Latino and immigrant votes on the basis of their promises to reform the immigration system to provide a “pathway to citizenship.” Obama vowed last week that his commitment to “comprehensive immigration reform” is “unwavering.” Yet since taking office a year ago with a lopsided Democratic majority in both houses of Congress, the administration has done nothing about immigration – except to intensify the repression. The partner parties of American capitalism, Democrats and Republicans, are enemies of immigrant workers, and of all working people. Thinking they could be allies is a dangerous illusion.

Bad for Immigrants Under Bush, Even Worse in Obama’s America

Many immigrants, and many immigrant leaders, had illusions in Barack Obama – figuring “since we had an African American president immigration reform was guaranteed,” in the words of one. Certainly the election of a black president represented a major social shift in this country founded on slavery, and by nearly a century of Jim Crow segregation. The oppression of blacks remains fundamental to every aspect of racist American capitalism – a fact that is central to any real struggle for immigrant rights. But politically Obama represents the capitalists, not black workers and the ghetto masses. He gives trillions of dollars to Wall Street banks as millions of workers are fired. He was elected to put a friendly face on U.S. imperialism, while continuing its wars and occupations.

And for immigrants, Barack Obama has meant more repression. “Yeah, things are changing,” says Subhash Kateel, an immigrant rights worker in Miami. “They’re getting worse” (*New America Media*, 22 February). Under Obama, the Bush administration’s dramatic factory raids have been replaced by mass firings of workers whose Social Security numbers don’t match the eVerify database. While claiming it is only going after serious criminals, Homeland Security is feeding immigration data to local police who turn people picked up on traffic violations over to the ICE for deportation. Over 387,000 people were deported in the first year of Obama’s presidency (*New America Media*, 8 March). And as DHS chief Janet Napolitano bragged at a Border Security Conference, the figures are running roughly *double* those for 2007 under the Bush administration (*New York Times*, 12 August 2009). So yes, immigrants are outraged.

Meanwhile, immigration courts are swamped with a record number of deportation cases (228,000 so far in fiscal year 2010)



Rick Scuteri/AP



Ross D. Franklin/AP

Left: Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio, March 18, announcing anti-immigrant police sweep. Right: Riot police at anti-Arpaio demonstration of 10,000 on March 12.

while the average time in prison before cases are heard is well over a year (439 days) and close to two years (612 days) in California (*El Diario/La Prensa*, 12 March). And more information is being uncovered about the sinister secret prison network that has been set up as part of the reign of terror that the DHS has unleashed against immigrant communities. The *New York Times* (10 January) published an exposé about the cover-up of 107 deaths in ICE prisons, and how officials of the “haphazard network of privately run jails, federal centers and county cells” where immigrants are held refused medical treatment, hid the records and then lied to reporters and family members about it.

Migra officials brag that “ICE operates the largest detention system in the country. During FY 2008, ICE supervised a total of 378,582 aliens” and held a similar number a year later (DHS, *Immigration Detention Overview and Recommendations*, October 2009) Political theorist Jacqueline Stevens writing in *The Nation* (4 January) on “America’s Secret ICE Castles” revealed that, in addition to official detention centers, “ICE is also confining people in 186 unlisted and unmarked subfield offices, many in suburban office parks or commercial spaces.... ICE has created a network of secret jails.” ICE agents work out of hidden offices such as the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force on the third floor of Chelsea Market in New York City, above the Fat Witch Bakery and next to Rachel Ray and the Food Network.

Along with the secret jails and ICE snatch squads who prowl 7-11 convenience stores and pick up students on public transportation as they go to school, the official war on “illegal aliens” whips up murderous anti-immigrant hatred around the country. In November 2008, the murder of Ecuadorean worker Marcelo Lucero by a gang of teenage racists led by a Nazi skinhead in Patchogue, Long Island threw a sharp light on the pervasive hostility and widespread violence against Latino immigrants in the area (see article, page 3). A year later there was much talk of “signs of hope” and reconciliation, of “diversity and tolerance” in the community. But as the trial of the fascist killer began this month, so many prospective jurors voiced anti-immigrant racism that the judge had to go through hundreds just to get the requisite dozen (*New York Times*, 8 March).

The lynch mob atmosphere on Long Island was whipped

up by local politicians, particularly Suffolk County chief executive Steve Levy, a Democrat who has just announced he is switching to run for governor as a Republican and who has been railing against “illegal” immigrants for years. Across the country in Arizona, the sheriff of Maricopa County, Joe Arpaio, has been running an anti-immigrant witchhunt since 1992. Racially profiling Latinos, using Taser stun guns on prisoners and working with the fascist Minuteman vigilantes in hunting immigrants, Arpaio has whipped up racist hysteria ... and outrage. Over 10,000 protested the immigrant-bashing sheriff in Phoenix in January. But DHS chief (and former Arizona governor) Napolitano called off a Department of Justice investigation of him that had revealed numerous abuses.

Break with the Democrats – Build an Internationalist Workers Party

The organizers of the March 21 demonstration are not protesting the U.S. government’s war on immigrants, they’re just trying to put pressure on Democrat Obama in the White House and the Democratic leadership in Congress. In New York they are asking demonstrators to petition Democratic senator Charles Schumer, who together with Republican senator Lindsey Graham is drawing up a “bipartisan” immigration “reform” bill. On March 11, they presented a “blueprint” of the bill, whose contents are still secret, to Obama. A few hours earlier, the president met with immigration rights groups after a chorus of complaints over the increased ICE arrests and deportations and administration inaction on reform. Yet Graham said he made it clear that if Democrats pushed through a health care bill, immigration reform would “come to a halt.” And while Graham is calling on Obama to insist on a temporary worker program over union opposition, Shumer wants a high-tech national identity card that is a threat to civil liberties.

Beyond the cynical maneuvering by bourgeois politicians and the impotent bourgeois pressure politics of various immigrant rights organizations, the fundamental point is that ***immigrants are the scapegoats for the capitalist economic crisis, and targets in the imperialist “war on terror.”*** Although the economic time bomb was set off by years of frenzied stock market speculation by Wall Street bankers, they get bailed out while immigrants are blamed for “stealing American jobs” and deported. In the 1930s Great Depression as well there were mass deportations of immigrant workers to Mexico. And in every imperialist war, U.S. rulers have found an “enemy within”: in World War I, it was the “reds,” in World War II it was Japanese Americans, who were thrown into “detention” camps like undocumented immigrants are today. ***That is why the struggle for immigrants’ rights cannot be divorced from the fight the defeat the imperialist war and do away with capitalist exploitation.***

The efforts to pressure political leaders to enact pro-immigrant legislation cannot succeed. Moreover, while right-wing Republicans have made immigrant-bashing their calling card, the greatest attacks on immigrants have come from the Democrats. The thousands of Near Eastern and South Asian immigrants who were rounded up after 9-11 were not arrested and held incommunicado under the notorious USA PATRIOT Act passed

by Republican Bush (with near unanimous support from the Democrats), but under the 1996 “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act” passed under Democratic president Bill Clinton. The same goes for the expedited deportations, in which immigrants are denied legal counsel, and the Section 287(g) program where the federal government deputizes state and local police to enforce immigration laws. ***The Democrats are no friends but some of the biggest enemies of immigrants’ rights.***

Organizers of the March 21 demonstration want everyone to wear white, as the Catholic church called for in 2006. They seek to wrap the demo in red, white and blue, calling it a “March for America.” This flag-waving marketing will achieve nothing. What made immigrants’ rights a burning issue in 2006 was the huge walkout by millions of immigrant workers on May Day. The walkouts were so massive, and immigrant workers so vital, that even virulently anti-labor employers like Smithfield Packing Co. in North Carolina had to shut down. Two years later, joint action by Latino, black and white workers managed to unionize that key plant. To win immigrants’ rights it will be necessary to mobilize the power of immigrant labor, along with the rest of the workers movement, on an even larger scale than in 2006, shutting down ports, plants and transportation around the country. Can it be done? Yes. But it will require revolutionary leadership.

Four years ago, most liberals and reformist leftists called for “amnesty.” We objected that undocumented immigrants had committed no crime, and had no reason to plead for pardon. Instead of begging for mercy, we demanded full citizenship rights for all. Today, Democrats, union bureaucrats and many leaders of immigrants’ rights groups repeat the mantra that the immigration system is “broken.” Clearly. But this ambiguous phrase only masks their refusal to forthrightly demand that immigrants, with legal residency or without, should have full rights, equal to everyone else in this country. They will never make this simple statement because they all support the capitalist system, based on the national state, which for its very existence requires a limitation of citizenship and the exclusion of “outsiders.” They all support the “right” of employers to exploit workers. They just want to soften the terms of exclusion a bit.

As proletarian internationalists, communists have an entirely different standpoint. We are citizens of the world, fighting for a world in which national boundaries have been superseded. Although we cannot simply abolish the borders today, we fight against every racist attack and against exclusionary immigration laws. We call on the workers movement to mobilize to *sweep away anti-immigrant vigilantes* and to take to the streets to *stop the deportations*. We demand: *Shut down the detention camps and free the detainees!* In defending democratic rights, we fight to put an end to the capitalist system which exploits all labor and superexploits those without rights – while it incites racist violence against these most oppressed wage slaves. We call to *break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties*, and to *build a workers party on a revolutionary, internationalist program*. The demand for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* is a simple democratic demand, but it will take *socialist revolution* to achieve it. ■

After Racist Arizona Law, Obama's Border Patrol Kills Mexicans

Blood on the Border

SAN DIEGO/TIJUANA, June 10 – Today in the United States, under the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, xenophobic and racist violence is escalating. The last few days have been particularly bloody. The criminal agents of the Border Patrol continue their routine “labor” of deporting and mistreating migrant workers – as well as murdering them under cover of darkness. And now they have reached the point of killing in cold blood, before the eyes of hundreds of witnesses, so sure are they of their impunity, since they act under the orders and protection of the highest levels of the U.S. government.

These crimes are not accidents, but part of a conscious policy of racist repression in search of scapegoats, exemplified by the legalization of xenophobia and the use of “racial profiling” by the police, in the Arizona law known as SB1070. This law calls for the persecution of anyone who “looks illegal” (like the native people of this continent? Mexicans?). Now similar laws are in the works in other states, like Texas and Colorado, and even in northern states like Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. All this is occurring in the context of the global crisis of the capitalist system, and of the imperialist wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in which immigrants have been made into the “enemy at home.” What will happen when thousands of National Guard troops arrive at the border, fresh from killing men, women and children in the Middle East?

On June 7 in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, directly across the border from El Paso, Texas, Border Patrol agents once again violated Mexican territory, shooting at a group of youths, killing 14-year-old Adrián Hernández with a bullet to the head. This boy was not an immigrant, certainly not a “coyote” (trafficker in “illegal” immigrants), but an honors student, cowardly murdered in his own country! The absurd attempt at justification by the spokesmen of the murderers – that the youths were throwing stones (with “potentially lethal force”) – was clearly contradicted by videos taken by witnesses, which show that Adrian was trying to protect himself and take cover from shots fired by the psychopath in uniform.

Only a few days earlier, on May 28, the day before a march in Phoenix, Arizona against the new racist law, construction worker Anastasio Hernández Rojas, age 42, who had lived in San Diego county with his family for nearly 30 years, was beaten to death by 20 Border Patrol and ICE (Immigrations and Customs Enforcement) police at the San Diego/Tijuana border crossing as he was about to be deported. Videos taken by some witnesses



Protest march in San Diego, June 3, over the killing of Anastasio Hernández Rojas, murdered by the U.S. Border Patrol on May 28.

show that Anastasio was beaten and electrically shocked with savage ferocity for several minutes, as he cried out for mercy and help until he lost consciousness, never to awaken again. The video shows that the Border Patrol is chock full of sadistic killers.

On Thursday, June 3, sympathizers and activists of the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International participated in protests called by the family and friends of Anastasio Hernández at the San Diego/Tijuana border crossing, where the pain of those he left behind was palpable. His five children, now orphans, were inconsolable. This border is truly an open wound. This sorrow was transformed into anger when Anastasio's killers – those who weren't on paid holiday while “investigations” that will absolve them are carried out – surrounded the march, mocking the march with cynical smirks as protesters hurled back chants of “¡Asesinos!” – “Murderers!”

Everyone in the San Diego/Tijuana area is talking about the recent killings, in the schools, at work, in the streets; this time, the media haven't covered up the story. But the result shouldn't be limited to indignant cursing at the TV set, or translated into the slogan heard at all the marches, “Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha” (Obama, listen, we are in the struggle), begging the commander in chief of murderous imperialism to take up the banner for “immigration reform” that will never come about. Obama's secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, is notorious for calling for the militarization of the border when she was governor of Arizona.

No less absurd are the calls on the Mexican government whose marines aimed their machine guns and grenade launchers

at us as we protested, and who cowardly witnessed the killings of Anastasio and Adrián. The pious declarations of the Mexican government in defense of immigrants are contradicted every day by its actions. A notorious example is the Grupo Beta, the police of the National Immigration Institute, which under the guise of “protecting the human rights of migrants” arrests and deports immigrants from Central America daily. Now the U.S. press reports that “In a politically sensitive operation at the Arizona-Mexico border, U.S. Border Patrol agents and Mexican federal police officers are training together, sharing intelligence and coordinating patrols for the first time,” in joint operations which “could lead to the creation of a Mexican force serving as a counterpart to the Border Patrol” (*Los Angeles Times*, 17 February).

The president of Mexico, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, is a loyal servant of U.S. imperialism, an instrument to maintain Mexico’s semi-colonial status. His dispatch of military units and the federal police (PFP) to Ciudad Juárez is opposed by virtually the entire population there, which now suffers the harassment both of the drug trafficking “cartels” and the *fede-*

rales. The latest feat for this president who likes to put on an army cap was to send his troops in PFP uniforms to crush the heroic miners’ strike in Cananea, Sonora state, before setting off for South Africa to watch the World Cup. It is a naïve, even suicidal, illusion to think that the government and the guard dogs of Mexican capitalism would help the workers.

These atrocities will not stop here, but will only get worse until we act: it’s high time to struggle to mobilize the power of the working class on both sides of the border to defend our immigrant brothers and sisters, to defend ourselves against the destruction to which capitalism condemns us. As we wrote in our article, “War in Iraq, Immigrants Under Attack” (*The Internationalist* special issue, March 2007), we must “Mobilize Union Power to Defend Immigrant Workers!” We added: “Above all, it is necessary to build a multi-racial and multi-ethnic revolutionary workers party to lead the struggle for workers revolution that alone will secure genuine equality and liberation for all the exploited and oppressed.” Now more than ever the choices facing us are socialist revolution or barbarism. ■

Imperialist War Abroad, Racist Police State “At Home” Defeat Bipartisan Capitalist Attack on Immigrants!

The annual conference of state governors held on Saturday, July 10 in Boston, Massachusetts was met by several hundred demonstrators protesting against Arizona governor Jan Brewer and calling for repeal of the state’s racist anti-immigrant SB 1070 law. The xenophobic Arizona law that has police stop anyone who could be an “illegal immigrant” (i.e., anyone who looks Mexican) *should* be vigorously protested. However, the leaflet and call for the protest by the ANSWER coalition didn’t mention the racist anti-immigrant laws in *Massachusetts* with its Democratic governor and state legislature. Nor did it say a word about the sharp increase in deportations and firings of undocumented immigrants out by the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) police of the Democratic administration of Barack Obama.

Focusing exclusively on the Arizona law, as most of the left does, distorts the racist onslaught against immigrants that is coming from *both* capitalist parties. Around the country, state governments are viciously ramping up police “enforcement” against “illegal” workers. Democrats and Republicans want a scapegoat to distract from the billions in cuts to education, health care and other public services they are imposing. There is a *bipartisan* war on immigrants going on, and it’s part of the bipartisan imperialist war on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq.

In Massachusetts, while the Democratic Boston City Council and Mayor Thomas Menino piously pledge to boycott Arizona (“to the extent reasonable”) and liberal Democratic Governor Deval Patrick criticizes the infamous Arizona law on talk radio, Patrick’s latest state budget *cuts 30,000 green card-holding legal immigrants off from state-sponsored health insurance*. It also *orders state agencies from welfare to education to cooperate with the federal migra to identify undocumented immigrants*. Next door in Rhode Island, state police demand proof of legal residence on all traffic stops, and hand over those

who can’t produce documentation to the federal authorities.

The Democrats, from Bill Clinton to Janet Napolitano to Barack Obama, have pushed to militarize the border with Mexico, causing the deaths of thousands of immigrants annually. Now the blatantly racist Arizona law is being used by Obama and the Democrats as a whip to push through their “concept” of “comprehensive immigration reform”: national ID cards, more “enforcement” at the federal level, and the creation of a permanent, super-exploited underclass of “guest workers” without most legal rights. This adds up to a program for a police state to benefit the bosses.

Yet in their coverage of the July 10 Boston march, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and the ANSWER coalition it leads, carefully avoided criticizing Democrats. This is not new. As they have done for decades, the PSL and the Workers World Party from which it split build “popular front” protests as a platform for Democrats to pose as friends of the workers and oppressed. ANSWER’s first major “anti-war” protest against the Iraq war, on 26 October 2002, featured Democrat Jesse Jackson, who proclaimed his *support* for George Bush I’s 1991 Gulf War I!

The key to defeating this bipartisan *class war* against immigrants is building a *revolutionary workers party*, opposed to all the capitalist parties, that fights for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. The power of the multiracial working class, in the U.S. and internationally, must be mobilized to defeat Obama’s war and break the power of the ICE *Gestapo*. Without a class-struggle program of opposition to all capitalist parties and their imperialist war, the justified outrage of millions of undocumented workers will be used by the reformists to prop up the Democratic party and its government, who no less than the Republicans are enemies of immigrants, workers and all the oppressed. ■

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Mobilize Workers Against Racist Arizona Anti-Immigrant Law!



Internationalist photo

Internationalist contingent at New York City May Day march from Union Square, 1 May 2010.

Democrats' "Concept" of Immigration "Reform": A Police State

The passage of a spectacularly racist immigration law by the Arizona state senate on April 19, and its signing into law by the governor four days later, has provoked a wave of justified outrage across the United States and internationally. Senate Bill 1070 authorizes police to stop people on the street to demand that they produce documents to prove their immigration status. Despite the pious claims by the racist politicians to the contrary, this means blatant "racial profiling" by the cops. In Arizona, anyone who "looks Mexican" is now subject to arrest. The clause in SB 1070 saying police "may not *solely* consider race, color or national origin" (our emphasis) means that those racist criteria can be a legitimate basis for stopping someone on the street. The Internationalist Group not only denounces Arizona's racist immigration law, we call for *full*

citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Comparisons are being made, including by the Catholic archbishop of Los Angeles, to the racial laws of Nazi Germany, where people were stopped on the street because they "looked Jewish." Perhaps Arizona police will now practice saying "show your papers" in the same peremptory tone that the Gestapo or German officers in occupied Europe demanded "*Papiere zeigen.*" And if immigrants (or others) can't come up with the required documents, "suspects" will be shipped off to concentration camps, and eventually jailed or deported. Other comparisons are being made to South Africa's infamous "pass laws," requiring blacks to carry special internal passports, or fugitive slave laws in the pre-Civil War U.S. The comparisons make a point, but the criminalization of immigrants won't just

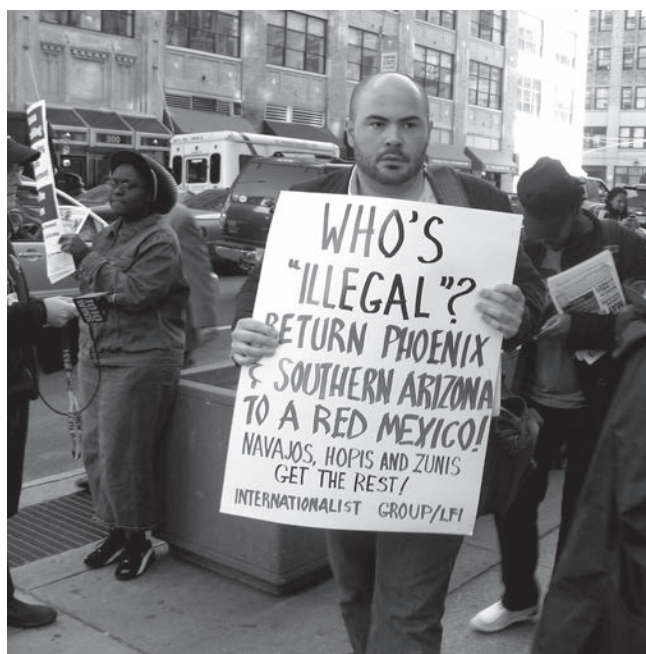
be a result of the Arizona law. *Every day more than 30,000 immigrants are being held in the United States in more than 350 detention centers around the country.*

Racist forces around the U.S. are hailing the Arizona law as a model for the kind of anti-immigrant witchhunting they are demanding. The bill's author, Russell Pearce, hobnobs with well-known neo-Nazis and circulates literature from white supremacist groups. Meanwhile, just about everyone to the left of Adolph Hitler is using the opportunity to pose as a false friend of immigrants by making a few mild criticisms of SB 1070. Mexican president Felipe Calderón wraps himself in the tricolor flag and says the Arizona law "opens the door to intolerance, hate, discrimination, abuse in applying the law." Yet the Grupo Beta of the Mexican Army notoriously cooperates with the *migra* in persecuting immigrants (particularly those from Central America), and the militarization imposed by Calderón is pushing thousands of Mexicans across the border.

Because of President Barack Obama's description of the racist bill as "misguided," many immigrants' rights groups are calling on the federal Justice Department to carry out an "investigation" of whether it will violate civil rights. (The xenophobes say immigrants have no rights.) Others look to the courts to declare the law in violation of the U.S. Constitution, for preempting federal legislation on immigration. Many groups are calling to "boycott Arizona," now dubbed the "hate state." Yet not all Arizonans are responsible for this racial-profiling law: at that rate, why not boycott the U.S. as a whole for its racist violence and imperialist wars?

The biggest threat to immigrants is not from right-wing yahoos and immigrant-bashing Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Arizona's Maricopa County but from the *federal government*. The biggest immigrant hunters are not fascist Minuteman vigilantes but the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police. Under Democrat Obama's "Homeland Security" chief, former Arizona governor Janet Napolitano, the Justice Department has set (and almost reached) a goal of 400,000 deportations a year, more than double the number in 2006 under Republican George Bush. Already jack-booted black-uniformed *migra* cops are kicking in apartment doors and arresting anyone they find who can't provide instant proof of citizenship or legal residency, separating crying U.S.-born children from their foreign-born parents. Hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers are fired because of computer-generated "no match" letters.

Now liberal Democrats led by New York senator Charles Schumer are circulating a 26-page "conceptual framework on immigration." Democratic Senate leader Harry Reid of Nevada has vowed to bring immigration reform legislation to the floor "this year." Like Obama's professed "commitment" to reform the "broken" immigration system, which he repeated in a video message to the huge (more than 200,000 participants) March 21 immigrants' rights march in Washington, this is a cruel hoax, a cheap trick to get immigrant and Hispanic votes. The Democrats are not about to pass an immigration law in this mid-term election year when they would face relentless attacks from Republican immigrant haters. More importantly, any "reform" they would pass would be a further attack on im-



Internationalist photo

Internationalist Group at April 23 New York City protest as Arizona law was signed by governor.

migrants. The Schumer "concept" includes greatly expanding border patrols, increasing the number of ICE police, imposing thousands of dollars of fines on immigrants who seek to legalize their status and introducing a national identification card with biometric data.

For undocumented immigrants, the United States is already a police state, where they have no rights and seek to avoid any contacts with the authorities. The Democratic liberals' immigration "reform" would turn the country into a police state for everyone.

The Internationalist Group urges immigrants to look not to the capitalist politicians but to the workers movement as their real allies. Although pro-capitalist bureaucrats have often spewed chauvinist poison against Chinese laborers in the 1800s and Latino, African and Asian immigrants today, hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants are union members. Moreover, the labor movement as a whole has an interest in seeing that all workers have full and equal rights. We call on unions to take the lead in mobilizing to defend immigrants against racist attacks, which are sharply escalating in recent months. And we fight to *defeat U.S. imperialist war* abroad and the racist repression "at home" that always accompanies it. In World War II, Japanese Americans were portrayed as the "enemy within," today Arab, South Asian and Latino immigrants in particular are targeted.

Immigration laws under capitalism are inherently chauvinist and racist. While national borders will not be eliminated short of socialism, class-conscious workers can and must fight here and now for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Such laws were among the first introduced by the 1789 French Revolution, which enacted the Rights of Man and made American revolutionary Thomas Paine a citizen; by the 1871 Paris Commune, the first workers government;

Defend PFC Manning...

continued from page 51

only in decoding the encrypted videos revealing the U.S. war crimes, but also in verifying the authenticity of documents and establishing contact with the families of the victims. But talk of “our democracy” is delusional. Today, a Pentagon Papers case would never win in a Supreme Court that just ruled that even political speech in support of anyone deemed a “terrorist” by the U.S. government can be outlawed. And the Democrats in the White House are *worse* than the Republicans in going after whistle blowers.

“In 17 months in office, President Obama has already outdone every previous president in pursuing leak prosecutions. His administration has taken actions that might have provoked sharp political criticism for his predecessor, George W. Bush....”
—*New York Times* 11 June

The imperialist “democracy” that the liberals believe in and the Democratic administration they elected operate torture camps from the Guantánamo Bay naval base stolen from Cuba to the Bagram air force base in Afghanistan. Over two million, mostly black and Latino men railroaded on non-violent drug “crimes,” are imprisoned within U.S. borders. Tens of thousands of working-class immigrants are being held in private jails and concentration camps, while some 400,000 are deported every year. U.S. military power and billions of dollars in subsidies prop up theocracies and dictatorships throughout the Near East from Israel to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the “oildoms” of the Persian/Arab Gulf, while the U.S. plans an endless occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq (where combat missions are soon to be rebranded “stability operations”). The generals, diplomats and spies who conspire to maintain U.S. dominance over the world will go to great lengths to silence those who would expose their machinations and crimes.

What’s behind all this is that U.S. imperialism is bogged

and by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia led by Lenin and Trotsky. After all, except for Native Americans who were almost wiped out in genocidal violence by white settlers and the federal government, everyone in the U.S. ultimately came from somewhere else. No matter how they got here, documented or undocumented, everyone residing in the United States should have the same rights. Period.

As for Arizona, the entire territory was stolen as booty from the U.S.’ 1848 invasion of Mexico, except for the 1853 “Gadsden Purchase” (more like robbery) of southern Arizona sought by War Secretary Jefferson Davis, the future president of the slaveholders’ Confederacy. Most of the state’s Anglo population could be considered illegal. As the state’s governor was signing SB 1070 into law, the Internationalist Group joined others in demonstrating in New York with our sign declaring: “Who’s Illegal? Return Phoenix and Southern Arizona to a Red Mexico! Navajos, Hopis and Zunis Get the Rest.”¹ ■

¹ And let’s not forget the Apaches, particularly the Chiricahuas, who were uniquely held as prisoners of war for 27 years (1886-1913) and dispossessed of their lands in southeastern Arizona and New Mexico.

down in losing wars. The caste of military and political specialists who manage these wars for Wall Street is rife with internecine rivalries. This was highlighted recently when high-flying General Stanley McChrystal, who president Obama had installed as commander of the Afghanistan/Pakistan war in May 2009, “resigned” after being hastily summoned to the Oval Office when a profile of this martinet in *Rolling Stone* quoted him and his staff disparaging the president and his political and diplomatic staff. As the editors’ lead to that article succinctly put the mindset of the “Runaway General,” McChrystal “seized control of the war by never taking his eye off the real enemy: The wimps in the White House.” So Obama seized the chance to play Harry Truman vs. General McArthur in the name of civilian supremacy, but while firing the general arguably most likely to carry out a coup d’état, he replaced him with the one most likely to order it (Gen. David Petraeus).

As the situation on the ground continues to elude the Pentagon’s grasp, the generals and diplomats are especially in need of the services of their colleagues in the “free but responsible” imperialist media. And the media oblige. According to Glenn Greenwald of *Salon.com* (18 June), Manning offered the “Collateral Murder” video to David Finkel of the *Washington Post*, but the *Post* stayed silent. As Greenwald writes,

“When the *NYT* learned in 2004 that the Bush administration was illegally eavesdropping on Americans without warrants, George Bush summoned the paper’s Publisher and Executive Editor to the Oval Office, demanded that the story not be published, and the paper complied by sitting on it for a full year until after Bush was safely re-elected. When *The Washington Post*’s Dana Priest learned that the CIA was maintaining a network of secret prisons – black sites – she honored the request of ‘senior U.S. officials’ not to identify the countries where those prisons were located so as to not disrupt the U.S.’s ability to continue to use those countries for such projects.”

Nor, it should be noted, has the press (or any civil liberties group) so far come to the defense of Manning and Assange. The *New Yorker* article even argued that, after all, the wanton killing shown in the “Collateral Murder” video didn’t violate the military’s rules of engagement. But that, after all, is the point: this carnage is all legal according to the bloodthirsty imperialist rulers.

And that includes Obama just as much as George W. Bush. As we have insisted over and over against those leftists who called Iraq “Bush’s war,” this is a *bipartisan imperialist war*. The Obama administration has continued the policy of warrantless wiretapping, spying on political dissidents, and CIA kidnappings and assassination. From “Che” Guevara to Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, this “democracy” has always resorted to murdering its perceived enemies. While exposure of the imperialist war makers’ crimes will hardly convince them to “reform,” revelations such as the “Collateral Murder” video perform a valuable service in exposing the crimes of a vicious ruling class that can only be – and must be – defeated and swept away by a revolutionary mobilization of working-class power. ■

After Occupying Ten Campuses for Two Months

First-Round Student Victory in University of Puerto Rico Strike

JUNE 22 – In Puerto Rico’s first-ever National Student Assembly, held yesterday, the almost 3,000 students present cheered as they ratified the agreements marking their initial victory in the strike of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). After holding firm for 62 days during which they occupied ten out of the eleven UPR campuses (the other was closed by a campus workers’ strike), the students successfully beat back a concerted attack by the right-wing colonial government and a servile university administration that did its bidding. When the settlement was announced late on June 16 the streets around the main UPR campus at Río Piedras in metropolitan San Juan exploded with joy. The celebration continued into the wee hours of the morning. The students won this round ... but the battle over public higher education goes on.

Everyone understands that the fight is not over. Today’s edition of the San Juan daily *Primera Hora* titled its article “‘The Struggle Continues,’ Despite the End of the Strike.” *El Nuevo Día* headlined: “Students Put UPR Strike on Pause.” On the main issues that provoked the strike in the first place – elimination of tuition waivers and introduction of “public-private partnerships” (disguised privatization) – the students won early on. But the UPR Board of Trustees then indicated it would impose a special fee of over \$1,000 per student next semester, beginning in August, and threatened severe sanctions against strikers. The settlement stipulated that no fee would be imposed in August and there would be no summary sanctions. However, the Trustees said they still thought a special fee would be necessary in January (to pay investors for a loan), and some strikers could face disciplinary actions.

So the showdown over fees was postponed for some months and there will likely be a battle over administration reprisals. (Meanwhile, Governor Luis Fortuño is preparing for the next round by naming and ratifying at top speed four new hard-line trustees.) But this will take place with the university in session, giving the students several valuable months to reinforce their organization and demonstrate their power. And they can do so from a position of strength, having won this



National Student Assembly voted unanimously on June 21 to oppose increase in tuition, including with a preventive strike.

round. Even those who voted against the strike initially or were hesitant recognized by the end that it paid to resist. Thus the National Student Assembly voted unanimously to oppose any fees, and to carry out a “preventive strike” (including, if necessary, during the fall semester) if the administration announces its intention to impose them. In that case, it will be crucial to turn the widespread sympathy with the student strike among working people into active mobilizations of union power.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International actively supported the UPR strike, gaining international solidarity for it in Brazil, Mexico, the U.S. and Quebec. IG comrades also spent a week in San Juan discussing with strikers and reporting on the vicious repression they faced (see our article, “Puerto Rico: Beatings at the Sheraton,” on page 62 of this issue). In response to the announcement of the strike settlement, the IG sent greetings (translated below) saluting the strikers’ determination. A subsequent article will analyze the lessons of the UPR strike for the battle to defend public education against capitalist assault in the United States.

Greetings comrades,

As you know, we in the Internationalist Group in the U.S. and the sections of the League for the Fourth International in Mexico and Brazil have closely followed the development of

the strike at the University of Puerto Rico. We sought to make a modest contribution by obtaining expressions of solidarity with the important struggle you have waged. We now wish to salute you for the important victory which you have won in this battle, due to the resolve and determination of the UPR students and all those who have contributed their support during these nearly two months of hard struggle. By lasting "one day longer" than the boss, as the old trade-union saying goes, you have won something that serves us all, in many places, by showing that the ruling class, no matter how arrogant it acts, is not all-powerful and that we can win.

Recognizing that you have won an initial victory does not imply ignoring its limitations, nor the dangers that still loom over the University. The war goes on. You will have to fight in the coming months to prevent any disciplinary sanction against strikers that the authorities may attempt as a reprisal to make up for their defeat. If the most hardened reactionaries didn't support the agreement out of fear that the strike could break out again in January, it must be made clear that this will be the response if they keep trying to impose a "special" fee, taking money from the pockets of the working people to pay interest to the bankers.

Clearly the colonial government and its servants who administer the UPR will soon be back on the warpath. By postponing for some months the definitive settlement of the conflict produced by their sinister plans to rip up and ultimately privatize public higher education, you have won valuable time to build up strength. We believe that trade-union and working-class support to the strike was a key element in being able to hold out for these 55 days. This support now has to be turned into hard-hitting workers action. We are all being pounded by the onslaught of capital, facing the blows of capital's onslaught, and only together can we win.

The struggle for the right to free, high-quality public education for all is a class struggle, and for that very reason is an international struggle.

Comrades, please accept our congratulations for your victory, expressing the solidarity of those who fight together in a common cause.

Internationalist Group
17 June 2010

Statements of Solidarity with the UPR Strike

Greetings from the Internationalist Clubs at the City University of New York were printed in Revolution No. 7 (April 2010). We translate here statements from Mexico and Brazil:

From Mexico

Mexico City, 30 April 2010

Dear comrades,

For several days we have wanted to write you to send greetings to the strike which you are waging at the University of Puerto Rico, but the last few days have been pretty frenzied the Comité Internacionalista, a group which is active in the College of Sciences and Humanities in southern Mexico City (CCH-Sur), a junior college that is part of the National University (UNAM) system. One of the axes of our struggle is to unite students and workers in the various struggles of the exploited and oppressed. The frenzy we were referring to is due to intensified threats of an attack on our campus by "porros."

The "porros," as they are called in Mexico, are thugs who are part of shock groups whose purpose is to crush student struggles. In many cases, they are armed with pistols and explosive devices. A couple of years ago they murdered a student at the CCH in Naucalpan. Today, on the tenth anniversary of one of these shock groups, these thugs tried to seize our school. But they failed! Today we brought together more than 150 students and a dozen workers on the central explanade of the

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CCH. The *porros* were intimidated, and after hanging around for several hours outside they left, defeated.

While all this was going on, we were thinking of your struggle. The attempts to destroy public education, as you know well, are part of a policy being pushed by international financial bodies who seek to implement them throughout the world. In Mexico in 1999, the government of then-president Ernesto Zedillo tried to impose tuition at the National University, the largest university in Latin America, with more than 200,000 students and tens of thousands of faculty and staff.

A strike broke out that was quite tenacious, supported by tens of thousands of students, which won the solidarity of many, many workers in Mexico City and the surrounding area. Our comrades participated in this struggle and we achieved something unheard of, so far as we know, in Latin America: as a result of our efforts, defense guards were formed composed not only of students but also of hundreds of workers from two key unions: the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME), a powerful union which is currently under attack, and the Union of UNAM Workers. These guards were key to preventing the government from sending the army and police to seize Ciudad Universitaria (University City, the main campus of the UNAM).

The workers not only have an interest in fighting to defend public education at every level, but they are also the only ones who have the strength to defeat the bourgeoisie and its puppet rulers.

The UNAM strike lasted ten months, and it was only suppressed by a police attack that hauled a thousand students to jail on 6 February 2000. But ten years later, there is no tuition at the National University of Mexico. Meanwhile, we are fighting for a living stipend for every student.

Comrades, we are truly excited by the strength with which you are waging your struggle. We understand as well that several trade unions have declared their solidarity with the UPR strike. It is necessary to take another step and win these unions, and the workers who make them up, to join in a common struggle in defense of free public education, and against the colonial rulers of Puerto Rico, those puppets of imperialism!

Tomorrow on the May Day march, we will carry signs in solidarity with your struggle. With pride and admiration, we say: Victory to the UPR strike!

Comité Internacionalista at CCH-Sur, UNAM

From Brazil

The following motion was approved by the assembly of the SEPE-RJ, the teachers union of Rio de Janeiro state, on May 25, during a 24-hour strike in defense of cafeteria workers of the public school system. The motion was put forward by our comrades of the Comit  de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Caucus), which is affiliated to the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (Fourth-Internationalist League of Brazil). The motion was approved by acclamation, with much applause, in the assembly of more than 600 union delegates. It was subsequently approved as well by the national Congress of the Working Class (CONCLAT) held in Santos, Brazil on June 5.

Students at the University of Puerto Rico have been on strike since April 23 demanding cancellation of the measures of the colonial government, which has slashed some US\$100 million from the budget of the the university as well as eliminating tuition waivers. Taken together, these measures would exclude thousands of students from higher education, and are part of a process of privatizing the university. Thus the students' struggle is against the same attacks which we in the Union of Educational Professionals of the State of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ) are facing – it is the same struggle.

For the last month, students have occupied the main campus in R o Piedras, in metropolitan San Juan, and are supported by the professors and university staff as well as the whole of the workers movement. On May 18, several unions and labor federations called a general strike in support of the students. There were work stoppages in government agencies around the island, as well as demonstrations of thousands of trade-unionists in front of UPR facilities. Two days later the militarized police of the Fuerza de Choque (Shock Force) brutally attacked a demonstration of hundreds of students and workers who were protesting a gala dinner hosted by Governor Luis Fortu o....

The same “emergency” law which the government of the U.S.’ Caribbean island colony is using to slash the university budget authorizes mass layoffs of government workers, even when this violates union contracts. Moreover, last month it attempted to privatize school janitors (just as here they are attacking the cafeterias and their workers).... This onslaught against public education is coordinated by the international banking institutions and is part of an offensive of capital, of the masters of Wall Street (and in Brazil of the S o Paulo Stock Exchange), against all working people. Thus it is an elementary duty of the entire workers movement, and particularly of teachers unions, to come to the aid of those fighting for free, secular public education.

In February 2008, SEPE-RJ called for victory to the hard-fought teachers strike of the FMPR (Puerto Rican Teachers Federation). That strike ended in a setback for education workers on the island. The government decertified the union, and now it wants to privatize the teachers pension fund, an attack on retirement systems that is being orchestrated by the imperialist masters which the Lula government in Brazil is also following to the letter. But the teachers continue to struggle. The student strike at the UPR can spark a powerful class struggle that can defeat the starvation plans of the government and the parties of capital. The SEPE-RJ proudly adds its voice to the chorus of workers who proclaim: **Victory to the student strike at the University of Puerto Rico!**

The SEPE knows well that the struggle for education is not separate from the struggle of all workers for their liberation. We fight to aid the heroic Haitian people and to drive the Brazilian troops, naturally along with those of the U.S., out of Haiti. To the young Puerto Rican students who are confronting police repression and the obstinacy of the government, we say: **You are not alone!** We would like to express our admiration for your steadfastness and will to struggle, which are an inspiration to all. An international working-class offensive is needed to defeat those who would destroy public education. ■

“Shock Force” Riot Police Assault Students and Workers

Puerto Rico: Beatings at the Sheraton

From our correspondent

SAN JUAN, May 20 – This evening, there was a picket of several hundred students of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and workers from a number of sectors, including port workers, university professors and many others. The picket was held in front of a fancy fundraising dinner for businessmen where Governor Luis Fortuño was to give a speech.

When several dozen students entered the luxurious restaurant of the Sheraton Hotel in the Convention Center where the event was being held and tried to go up to where the privatizing, anti-worker governor was scheduled to speak, the notorious Fuerza de Choque (Shock Force) riot squad of the Puerto Rican Police poured in and savagely beat the students, spraying pepper gas in their faces and in some cases directly into their eyes.

The Shock Force brutally beat many students, as well as some older ladies. When the students managed to escape, the police took off after them and charged into the workers who were still picketing the hotel. This militarized police force fired off large amounts of tear gas, to the point that a cloud of gas hung over the area.

The police also beat and pepper-sprayed a number of union leaders in the face, among them the president of the UGT (General Workers Union), Manuel Perfecto, a representative of the Puerto Rican Labor Federation (FTPR), John Viguera, as well as the president of the Solidarity Union Movement (MSS), José Rodríguez.

Perfecto estimated that more than 25 people were injured. “They threw them on the ground, they kicked them and beat them with riot sticks,” he told *Primera Hora*, one of the leading San Juan daily newspapers. The president of the FCT (Central Labor Federation) Luisa Acevedo was beaten in the back, and José Rodríguez Báez, president of the FTPR, was also injured. Both were taken to the hospital, according to the UGT leader. Several demonstrators were arrested.

A student from the UPR Humanities Department, Mariana Lima, told our reporter: “We came here to demonstrate because the universities are closed in protest over privatization. Governor Fortuño held a tea party here in the Sheraton Hotel, charging \$1,000 a plate. One thousand dollars is what my education costs, in a public university! They want to take away our scholarships. They beat us with riot clubs. They tear-gassed us. They sprayed pepper gas right in my face.”

An airport worker who is a member of the HEO (Brotherhood of Office Workers) of the port authority, Jesús, said: “We’re here because we’re fighting against privatization of the ports, of the UPR and the rest. We have to keep on fighting against these outrages by the police and the government.”

Gilberto, another port worker who handles heavy machinery, said: “The police provoked this incident and they were ruthless. We’re here partly because Law 7 affects us indirectly. We don’t want them to privatize us like they did with the Puerto Rican Telephone Company [in 1998]. We have to show that we are united, students and workers.”



Xavier Araujo/El Nuevo Día

The Shock Force of the Puerto Rican Police brutalizes protesters at Sheraton Hotel, San Juan, May 20.

Law 7, introduced by the governor and rammed through the legislature last year, authorizes the government, in the name of the economic crisis, to lay off public employees despite union contracts. It also changed the financing formula for the University of Puerto Rico, leading to the budget deficit that is now being used to justify the elimination of tuition waivers and other measures against the students.

Another student, from Social Sciences, said: “They were beating us with riot clubs, especially in the back, affecting people’s disks.” A Social Work student, Joel, who uses a wheelchair, gave a speech on the corner where a number of students and workers managed to regroup after the police assault. He said: “People should stay militant to the end. We have to keep on fighting. I’m glad we spoiled Fortuño’s party.”

At this moment (9 p.m.), there is a picket line in front of the main entrance to the UPR campus in Río Piedras (in metropolitan San Juan) where students and workers are chanting, “Struggle yes, sellout no!” They are also singing a famous anthem of the workers movement that goes back decades. Along with indignation, they are showing their determination to continue this fight, which is shaking up bourgeois public opinion as well as important sectors of the working class. It is this class that has the power to defeat the increasingly brazen and brutal attacks by the bourgeois government.

We must not allow the ruling class and its rabid guard dogs to attack labor leaders and student activists with impunity for coming out in defense of the struggle against privatization. The strike this Tuesday (May 18), where thousands of workers joined with students and professors in front of the Río Piedras campuses and at UPR campuses around the island, shows that the working class of this country is vitally interested in defending public education, along with the fight against layoffs, Law 7 and other attacks by the bourgeoisie. It is urgently necessary to carry out powerful strikes to shut down key sectors of the economy and to multiply solidarity protests internationally. ■

**For International Workers Solidarity Action –
Defeat Israeli/U.S. War on Palestinians!**

Israel's Gaza Flotilla Massacre: Bloody War Provocation

In the early morning hours of May 31, Israeli commandos seized a flotilla of ships in the Mediterranean carrying humanitarian supplies to Gaza, the Palestinian territory devastated by the Israeli military a year and a half ago. The Israel "Defense" Force sent an armada of navy gun ships to stop the Gaza Freedom Flotilla which had set sail from Cyprus with over 700 unarmed anti-occupation activists and some 10,000 tons of supplies including medical supplies, used clothing, toys, milk powder, as well as building materials – all excluded by the Israeli blockade which has sealed off the Gaza Strip for over three years. At least nine of the passengers were killed by the commandos, while 57 were wounded. Israeli authorities grotesquely claimed its killers engaged in "self-defense" against "lynching" by passengers armed with "life-threatening means," including "deck furniture." But IDF commandos confirm that the Israeli forces opened fire even before they hit the deck, and photos show that wounded Israeli soldiers were cared for by ship doctors. All but one of the dead were shot at close range, their bodies riddled with bullets. These were executions, and the Israeli ship seizure was state terrorism.

All this took place in international waters, at least 60 miles from Gaza. The Zionist state of Israel carried out a clear act of piracy on the high seas. The slaughter touched off an outpouring of anger around the globe. Since the aid flotilla was organized in Turkey and the dead were Turkish, tens of thousands converged on Taksim Square in Istanbul to protest the Israeli outrage. There were huge protests as well in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt, in Pakistan, Malaysia and other largely Muslim countries. In London, thousands demonstrated outside the Israeli embassy; thousands more protested in Paris and elsewhere across Europe. In New York, over 1,500 showed up in Times Square on a few hours notice on May 31, while hundreds came out in cities from Chicago to San Francisco and Los Angeles. The protests brought together Turks, Arabs, leftists, and many Jewish demonstrators (including in Israel) outraged over the massacre. The Internationalist Group joined the NYC protest with signs proclaiming, "Gaza Supply Ship Massacre = Bloody Israeli War Provocation," "Israel Out of



Israeli killer commandos of the Shayetet 13 squad assault the Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara* carrying humanitarian supplies to Gaza, May 31. The Israelis killed at least nine passengers in cold blood.

Gaza and the West Bank – Defend the Palestinian People!" and "Defend Gaza – Defeat Israeli-U.S. War on Palestinians!"

Imperialist rulers felt obliged to issue mild criticisms of the Israeli government's brazen actions. German chancellor Angela Merkel said she was "shocked" at the deaths and that Israel's blockade of Gaza was "not helpful." French president Nicholas Sarkozy criticized Israel's "disproportionate" use of force. U.S. president Barack Obama's reference to the deaths on the Gaza flotilla as "tragic" set off a torrent of vituperation from right-wingers and hard-line Zionists. But Washington mainly concentrated on making sure a United Nations Security Council resolution didn't explicitly criticize Israel. The diplomatic tut-tutting was followed by a feigned dispute over who was to carry out an "impartial investigation" of events, the U.N. or Israel! Aside from the absurdity of the Zionist mass murderers investigating themselves and the notion that the imperialist powers that dominate the U.N. could possibly be "impartial," what's to investigate? Whether the Israelis shot before or after meeting resistance is irrelevant. Any and all efforts to repel the marauding Zionist killers were utterly justified. We salute the activists who heroically sought to defend the ship and its passengers against the Israeli terrorists.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call to ***break the murderous Israeli blockade of Gaza!*** We warn against illusions that the imperialists will somehow come to the aid of the beleaguered Palestinian population. Particularly for the U.S., of which Israel has for decades been a “strategic ally,” but also for the other imperialist powers, the Zionist state serves the role of a gendarme to police a vital region against the semi-colonial peoples of Asia and Africa (as well as a supplier of paramilitary mercenaries in Latin America). It is to the world working class that we look to ***defend Gaza and the Palestinian masses***, both in the Occupied Territories and in Israel itself. In the face of this latest bloody crime we call on the workers movement to ***boycott cargo, ships and planes to and from Israel*** while fighting for ***Arab-Hebrew workers revolution in Palestine*** and a ***socialist federation of the Middle East***.

For International Workers Solidarity Action to Defend the Palestinians

In response to the December 2008 Israeli assault on Gaza, the IG and LFI issued a “call for action by the international working class in defense of Gaza and the Palestinian people, including efforts to break the siege.” We added:

“Impotent consumer boycotts of Israeli goods or Israeli academics do not target the Zionist rulers or their imperialist backers, whereas a refusal by transport workers to unload Israeli ships or planes is the kind of *class* action that could send a powerful message to the racist rulers.”
—“Zionist Mass Murder: Break the Siege, Defend Gaza!” (31 December 2008), reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009

In fact, in February 2009 dock workers in Durban, South Africa carried out such an exemplary action, boycotting the Israeli ship *Johanna Russ*. In response to the recent Israeli massacre of the Gaza aid flotilla, the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) instructed its members “not to allow any Israeli ship to dock or unload in any South African port.” This call was taken up by a dozen Palestinian labor organizations who called on dock workers unions worldwide to block Israeli maritime trade, demanding an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

At the same time, the Swedish Port Workers Union issued a notice that it would blockade all Israeli ships and cargo to and from Israel for a period now set for the week of June 22-29. The Swedish dockers earlier played a leading role in boycotting cargo to and from apartheid South Africa and the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. On June 9, the Norwegian Transport Workers Federation went further and called for a two-week blockade of the country’s ports to Israeli ships and cargo beginning June 15. Similar actions are under discussion by dock workers federations and local unions elsewhere in Europe and the U.S., posing the possibility of wider internationally linked workers boycott action. In line with this, on June 20 a picket of an Israeli Zim line ship has been called for the Port of Oakland, California.

Trotskyists look to independent working-class action



Josep Lago/AFP

Protester in Barcelona calls to boycott Israel, May 31.

that has the power to combat Israeli crimes and point the way to bringing down the murderous Zionist regime through proletarian revolution. Reformist leftists, in contrast, almost unanimously call for action by the imperialist governments, as if they could somehow become potential allies of the oppressed Arab masses.

In the United States, Socialist Action circulated a statement by the United Secretariat (USec), with which it is fraternally related and which falsely claims to be the continuity of Trotsky’s Fourth International. The June 1 USec statement declares that “Everywhere where the solidarity movement is not yet strong enough to compel governments to break in practice with the Israeli state, people should take matters into their own hands with massive boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns.” The International Socialist Organization (ISO), approvingly quotes an organizer of the Free Gaza Movement saying, “The U.S. government has to be put under pressure to act in a responsible manner and stop the double standard it always applies to Israel” (*Socialist Worker*, 1 June). The ISO also pushes the boycott-divestment-sanctions campaign:

“The BDS movement is a people’s initiative, based upon both consumer and worker-end boycotts of Israeli goods and services, while asking people to deprive Israel of the immunity it has enjoyed while committing its crimes. It consciously models itself upon the same movement which helped defeat apartheid in South Africa.”

The movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Against Israel arose in response to a 2005 call by a number of Palestinian “civil society organizations.” Pressed to the wall by relentless Zionist repression, many in occupied Palestine desperately call for any and all solidarity action. In the imperialist countries, particularly on university campuses, campaigns for

“BDS” have sometimes become a referendum on opposition to vs. support for Zionist Israel and its crimes.¹ The boycott campaign in the West is an expression of moral outrage, but at bottom it is aimed at enlisting imperialist rulers. BDS activists hope that the Gaza flotilla massacre could be the event, as Ali Abunimah wrote on the website *Electronic Intifada* (4 June), “spurring governments to follow the lead of their people and take unprecedented action to check Israel’s growing lawlessness.” This perspective is deeply disorienting, in several ways, to a real struggle against the oppression of the Palestinian people.

For one thing, BDS implies that the supposedly democratic imperialist countries are less culpable than Zionist Israel. Yet the victims of U.S. imperialism number in the many millions (3-4 million dead in Korea, 2-3 million in Indochina, close to 1 million killed in Iraq, Afghanistan and counting), vastly outnumbering the numbers slaughtered by the Israeli military and paramilitary settlers in Palestine. So why not refuse to buy any products made in the United States, refuse to hire American faculty, call for U.N. and European Union sanctions against the U.S., etc.? BDS also implies that a “mass movement” could pressure the imperialists into defending the Palestinian Arab people. This is an illusion, particularly in the case of the United States, whose alliance with Israel is strategic. Israel is a key element in Western domination of the Middle East, including vital oil supplies and trade routes, which also benefit the European imperialists. No amount of popular pressure will change that.

If Washington pushes that Tel Aviv to lighten up on the repression, it will only be a slight modification at most. The Palestinians will still be caught in a Zionist vise. Consumer boycotts notoriously have little effect – and who buys Israeli matzo or chocolate anyway? Moreover, anyone who thinks the Pentagon will stop buying Israeli software for its computers or stop hiring Israeli mercenaries to train its paramilitary death squads in Latin America is dreaming. Getting a few pension

¹ At the University of California-Berkeley this past April there was a hotly contested vote by the student senate to override an executive veto of a student body resolution calling for divestment of UC funds from General Electric and United Technologies. Although a large majority of the student senate supported the resolution, both the right-wing Zionist American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the liberal Zionist J Street lobby teamed up to defeat the measure by getting a few student senators to change their vote. In such a situation, particularly as the targets were two U.S. military contractors, it would have been correct to critically support the divestment motion.



IG at June 1 protest in New York City’s Times Square against Israeli massacre.

funds and imperialist corporations not to invest in Israel won’t starve Israeli businesses of funds. But even if by some miracle they did, and Israel became an international pariah, this won’t stop the Zionist butchers. They are junior partners and allies of imperialism, but Israel’s capitalist rulers have their own reactionary interests and agenda. They are perfectly capable of turning on their patrons in Washington, like when Israeli jets and gunboats napalmed and torpedoed the U.S.S. *Liberty*, evidently out of pique over U.S. neutrality in the 1967 war.

The boycott, sanctions and divestment campaign also distorts what happened in South Africa. That effort was launched by the African National Congress, which calculated that pressure from U.S. and European imperialists would get South Africa’s racist rulers to make democratic reforms. It didn’t happen. The apartheid regime couldn’t be reformed, and it was not brought down by Americans refusing to buy krugerrands or Citibank not investing in South Africa. In fact, as Trotskyists warned at the time, to the extent that sanctions and boycotts had an effect, it was to increase the exploitation and weaken the South African black proletariat, particularly miners and metal workers, whose militant strikes were a key factor in ending apartheid. The other principal factor was that, as a result of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the South African Communist Party (which played a dominant role in the ANC and the black workers unions) was deemed less of a threat. So the Western imperialists and South African capitalists decided to cut a deal with Nelson Mandela.

Moreover, while the end of apartheid brought formal democratic gains (“one person, one vote”) and put in office a black majority government, the class oppression of black and colored working people in South Africa has not only *not* diminished, it has actually increased the inequality and poverty.

Who has benefited is a tiny layer of black professionals who climbed aboard the capitalist gravy train. Should a Palestinian pseudo-state come about as the result of imperialist pressure, the beneficiaries will not be the impoverished masses living in the giant slum of Gaza or in West Bank ghettos like Ramallah, but a gaggle of Palestinian capitalists who will exploit Palestinian labor on behalf of Israeli capital. Palestinian refugees will still be unable to return to their homes and lands stolen by the Zionists in 1948 and since. And the corruption of legendary proportions that infused the Palestinian Authority under Yasir Arafat and his successor as P.A. president Mahmoud Abbas is only a foretaste.

Trotskyists do not call for consumer boycotts, capitalist divestment and imperialist sanctions against Zionist Israel, nor did we against Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile in the 1970s, apartheid South Africa in the '80s or Haiti under the

military junta in the '90s, for the same reason we do not call today for U.S. aid to earthquake-ravaged Haiti: imperialism is not a policy but a system – it cannot be pressured into aiding the oppressed, it must be overthrown. We demand an end to the Israeli blockade of Gaza and defend efforts to break it. Likewise, we demand an end to *all* U.S. aid to Israel, some \$7 million *a day*. We demand that the Israeli army (and U.S. military advisers) get out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, that the Zionist settlements be dispersed, that all Palestinian refugees have the right to return, that Palestinian prisoners be released. But the key to freeing Palestinians from a century of Western imperialist and Zionist domination is to mobilize the international working class (including Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking workers in Israel) which alone has the power to sweep away the Zionist rulers and their imperialist overlords.

The Blockade of Gaza and Zionist Plans for “Transfer”

An Internationalist Group sign at the May 31 demonstration in NYC proclaimed, “Gaza: The New Warsaw Ghetto.” In the 1970s many on the left joined Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasir Arafat in calling for a Palestinian “mini-state” in the West Bank and Gaza. Trotskyists, however, warned that a Palestinian “state” in the territories Israel conquered in 1967 – whether consisting of tiny enclaves separated by Israeli “security corridors” or the whole of the Occupied Territories – would be nothing more than the so-called “bantustans” in South Africa. These were the African “homelands” set up by the apartheid rulers to disguise their racist domination of the overwhelming black majority. Gaza is even worse – a giant concentration camp, an open air prison in which 1.5 million Palestinians are crammed into an area the size of the city of Detroit. It is a Palestinian ghetto, surrounded by steel walls and barbed wire, with the Zionist military acting as Nazi jailers.

And the Israelis play their role to the hilt. For 38 years, from 1967 to 2005, the Gaza strip was directly occupied by the Israeli army, even if after 1993 there was a fiction of administration by a Palestinian Authority (P.A.). Following the second *intifada* (Palestinian uprising) in response to a Zionist provocation at the Al Aksa mosque in September 2000, a barrier fence around the entire strip was erected by Israel and Egypt. Gaza's airport was destroyed by Israeli bombs in 2002. In 2005, Israeli premier Ariel Sharon – the butcher who oversaw endless massacres of Palestinians – ordered the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from the strip, while the army only pulled back



to the perimeter. Despite an agreement for hundreds of trucks a day to carry Gaza agricultural produce to Israel and bus convoys to the West Bank, Israel began restricting the flow of goods and people. Gaza exports barely reached 8 percent of the agreed-on amount. Following the unexpected landslide victory of the Islamic fundamentalist party Hamas in January 2006 P.A. elections in Gaza, Israel turned the restrictions into a full-scale blockade.

In June 2007, Hamas squelched an attempted takeover of Gaza by a U.S.-advised, Israeli-armed strike force of the bourgeois nationalist Fatah faction of the PLO, which had become notorious for its corruption administering the P.A. in collaboration with the Israeli occupiers. In response, the Israelis cut off all Gaza exports and reduced imports to a trickle, hoping to turn the Gaza population against Hamas out of sheer desperation. When this did not happen, Israel launched a full-scale war on Gaza in December 2008-January 2009 that deliberately

targeted civilian areas – apartment blocks, schools and universities (see “Defend Gaza! Defeat U.S./Israel War on the Palestinian People!” in *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009). Having already wrecked the Gaza economy, completely shutting down manufacturing and agricultural export production, the Israeli blockade is only letting in the bare minimum of food and fuel sufficient to prevent mass starvation. The Gaza population is being punished for the “crime” of voting for Hamas in a democratic election.

The Israeli blockade of Gaza is precisely the kind of *collective punishment* supposedly outlawed by the Fourth Geneva

Convention on the protection of civilians in wartime and occupied territories. That convention was in response to Nazi reprisals against entire populations, from villages punished for resistance attacks to the imprisonment and annihilation of entire population groups, particularly Jews. The Nazis kept detailed lists of daily rations: for example, a “hard laborer” in the Auschwitz annihilation camp in December 1942 received about 1,800 calories a day, less than the 2,000 calorie minimum for adult men, while most inmates got far less, as little as 300 calories.² It turns out that Israel keeps the same kind of records for Gaza. A suit by an Israeli human rights group Gisha forced the admission in court that a document titled “Food Consumption in the Gaza Strip – Red Lines” set out the minimum calorie intake needed by the 1.5 million residents of Gaza, according to age and sex. But the authorities refused to divulge actual caloric levels as it would “damage national security and harm foreign relations.”

Back in 2006, at the beginning of the blockade, Sharon spokesman Dov Weinglas chillingly remarked: “the idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.” As a result of this policy of half-starving the Gaza population, 10 percent of all children show stunted growth due to malnutrition, two-thirds of infants suffer from anemia. Hundreds of patients are lined up waiting to be allowed out for medical treatment. According to a “Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey Report” of the Gaza Strip published in November 2009 by the U.N.’s World Food Program (WFP), “Only 23% of total households in the Gaza Strip are considered marginally secure and food secure,” meaning that they can cover their daily nutritional needs. Four-fifths of the remaining 77% can only survive with food handouts from the U.N. Relief and Works Agency. Even Amnesty International concluded in its 2009 annual report: “The scope of the blockade and statements made by Israeli officials about its purpose showed that it was being imposed as a form of collective punishment of Gazans....”

The Israelis are not the only ones guilty inflicting this barbaric crime. The U.S. encouraged the blockade from Day

² The German imperialists and Israeli Zionists are not the only ones to engage in collective punishment – the “democratic” imperialists, with the U.S. in the lead, also engaged in mass murder by restricting food supplies. In the last stages of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the entire German people culpable for the Nazi dictatorship. On FDR’s instructions a document was drawn up (Joint Chiefs of Staff directive 1067) ordering that “no steps looking toward the economic rehabilitation of Germany” be taken. The head of the U.S. occupation, General Lucius Clay, declared, “I feel that the Germans should suffer from hunger and from cold.” The civilian population in the U.S. sector was reduced to 1,200 calories a day, and at most 1,500 calories in 1946, less than half the average in the United States, while U.S. army personnel received 4,000 calories. Food shipments to Germany were drastically restricted, imports of vegetables from the Netherlands and Italy along with animal and fish products from the Nordic countries were banned. Chronic malnutrition spread and the German death rate quadrupled, while mortality of children increased ten-fold over prewar levels. *Three million or more people died as a direct result of the U.S. policy of imposing hunger and cold as collective punishment on the Germans.*



Smuggling food into the Warsaw Ghetto (above) and into Gaza under the Israeli blockade.



Shahb Khaib/AFP

One, and U.S. Navy ships offshore help enforce it. Even after the Gaza flotilla massacre, U.S. senator Chuck Schumer (Democrat, New York) justified it in a June 9 speech to an organization of Orthodox Jewry, saying: “Since the Palestinians in Gaza elected Hamas ... to strangle them economically until they see that’s not the way to go, makes sense.” Now Israel says it will let in more food products, while still restricting the amount. Cement and steel are still banned, even as tens of thousands of Gaza families cannot rebuild their homes and apartments destroyed by Israel for lack of building materials. Thus Israel’s rulers and their U.S. backers continue the policy of trying blackmail the Palestinian population. The rationale for this is drenched in racism, presuming that Arabs can be cowed into submission. On their face, such tactics are self-defeating, for in reality they only stiffen opposition, just as U.S. terror-bombing of Germany did in World War II. But the Israeli government has more far-reaching aims: *to prepare the way for mass expulsion of the Palestinian population.*

The Zionist regime is not reacting to mythical waves of “thousands” of Hamas rockets hitting Israeli towns and suicide bombers blowing up Israeli civilians, as it regularly pretends. Quite the opposite. The London *Economist* (5 June) reports: “So far this year 34 rockets have landed in Israel, none

launched by Hamas. ‘Hamas is defending Israel,’ chuckles an Israeli foreign ministry official.’ As for the justification that Hamas “refuses to recognize Israel,” this is another red herring. Hamas has repeatedly offered to negotiate an extended (ten-year) ceasefire with Israel. And if it did capitulate and agree to accept Israel as a “Jewish state,” it would instantly lose credibility with the almost 5 million Palestinian refugees living in Gaza and the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere, many of them still confined to refugee camps six decades after being forced from their homes by the Zionist terrorists in 1948. Plus there are the more than a million Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, who are second-class citizens of Israel. And Israel would keep on persecuting Hamas, just as it did with Arafat after the PLO recognized Israel.

The Zionists will never agree to a Palestinian state unless obliged to do so by overwhelming force, and U.S. imperialism, which relies on Israel to do its dirty work in the Near East and elsewhere, is not about to force it. While Democratic presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have timidly tried to get Israel to agree to an impotent Palestinian pseudo-state (no army, no territorial integrity, economically dependent on Israel), they back down when Israeli leaders and the powerful Zionist lobby in the U.S. growl. *The vaunted “peace process” has been all process and no peace.* In fact, as As’sad Abu Khalil of the Angry Arab News Service remarked on Al Jazeera TV on June 6, ever since the Rogers Plan in 1970 (rejected by Israel), “the illusion of a peace process enabled Israel to wage wars, to perpetrate massacres and more occupations.”

Meanwhile, rightist and ultra-rightist Zionists in Israel are growing more aggressive. Foreign minister Liberman, a former member of Meir Kahane’s fascist Kach party, in 2003 talked of drowning Palestinian prisoners in the Dead Sea, in 2006 said Arab members of the Knesset would be “executed” for collaborating with the Palestinian cause, and last year demanded that Israeli Arabs swear loyalty to a Jewish state or have their citizenship canceled. Many liberals dismiss Liberman’s threats as the ravings of a fringe element, but in the aftermath of the Gaza flotilla massacre, even so-called “moderate” Zionist forces have been whipping up anti-Arab sentiment. Representatives of ex-Mossad agent Tzipi Livni’s Kadima were the most vociferous calling to cancel the parliamentary rights of MK (Member of the Knesset) Hanin Zoubi of the Arab Tajamu slate (Balad in Hebrew – National Alliance) for participating in the flotilla, where she tended to the wounded on the *Mavi Marmara*. Another Knesset member of the United Arab List, Talab al-Sana, received death threats for remarking that “the public is venting its anger on the [Arab] minority in its midst” and noting that in “other countries ... right-wing fascist extremists have exploited the mood of crisis to take control of government.”

The witchhunt of Hanin Zoubi has become a flashpoint



Suhaib Salem/Reuters

Children in Beit Lahiya in December 2009 playing near their homes destroyed by Israeli bombing a year earlier but never rebuilt because blockade prohibits building materials.

for violent Zionist reaction against Israeli Arabs. When Zoubi sought to speak in a June 2 Knesset debate about the Gaza flotilla raid, there was an explosion of epithets from right-wing deputies calling her “traitor,” “terrorist” and “parliamentary spy.” A Likud legislator tried to rush the podium, and after five minutes of pandemonium her speech was cut off. But the uproar was not only from the right-wingers. Yossi Sarid, former head of the liberal Zionist Meretz party, accused Zoubi in a *Haaretz* (4 June) column of “provocation” for joining the Gaza Flotilla. After her Knesset appearance, a Facebook page was set up calling for Zoubi’s execution – thousands quickly signed up. Israel’s secret police, the Shin Bet, reported more than a dozen concrete plots to kill her. A Knesset committee stripped her diplomatic passport and now a bill has been introduced (the “Zoubi law”) to expel any MK who denies Israel’s existence as a Jewish state or supports the armed struggle of a “terrorist” group. As Jonathan Cook noted in recounting this “maelstrom,” such a measure could be used to ban all 10 Arabs in the Knesset (MERIP, 16 June).

Ultimately, the siege mentality of the Zionists will stoke the fires for what in Israeli politics is euphemistically known as “transfer” – namely, the expulsion of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Palestinian Arabs from their lands which the Zionists claim as “Eretz Israel,” at a minimum everything from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, if not beyond. Just fantasy? In early April, the Israeli military issued an order authorizing it to deport from the West Bank any Palestinian not holding residency papers (for example, anyone born in Gaza). *Tens of thousands* of Palestinians were suddenly made into criminals, subject to jail terms of five to seven years. This could well be the beginning of mass expulsions of Arabs from the Occupied Territories.

Traditionally, “transfer” has been advocated by fascists like Kahane’s Kach and the ultra-rightist Molodets party of General Benjamin Elon. But the historian Benny Mor-

ris showed that the “transfer” option was always part of the ideology of Zionism, that David Ben Gurion and Ezra Weizman embraced it, that this was behind the expulsion of over 800,000 Arabs who lived in areas conquered by the Zionist army in 1948, and that there was an explicit blueprint (the so-called “Plan D”) to carry this out on a far more sweeping scale. At the time Morris first reported this (in his 1987 book *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1948*), it was taken as a debunking of Israel’s founding myths. But on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Morris came out for “helping to resolve Israeli-Arab conflict by transferring or expelling some or all of the Arabs from Palestine,” saying Ben Gurion perhaps “would now regret his restraint” (London *Guardian*, 3 October 2002). Today, “liberal” Zionists including Morris wave the spectre of a



Associated Press

Palestinian refugees in 1948. Historians have shown that driving out Arab population was deliberate policy of the Zionists, who had a plan to “transfer” Palestinians on a far larger scale. Today as well, even some “liberal” Zionists contemplate mass expulsions.

new Holocaust if Iran gets nuclear capacity, talking of an Israeli nuclear first strike to take it out and mass “transfer” of Palestinians as a consequence.

The Real Nuclear Threat in the Middle East: U.S. and Israel Zionists Gearing Up for War on Iran

Many liberals in the West and in Israel talk of the Israeli massacre of passengers on the Gaza flotilla as a “bungled operation.” The costs to Israel in “public opinion” and with “decision-makers” in Europe and the United States from killing activists delivering humanitarian aid are so high, they argue, that the military planners of the raid, or Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and “Defense” Minister Ehud Barak who ordered it, must have made a big blunder. Writer David Grossman (a Zionist “peacenik” who supported Israel’s disastrous 2006 war on Lebanon) called the government’s response “stupid,” arguing: “Israel did not send its soldiers to kill civilians in cold blood; indeed, this is the last thing it wanted” (*Haaretz*, 2 June). On the contrary, Israel’s rulers absolutely wanted their soldiers to “kill civilians in cold blood.” Foreign minister Liberman declared on the eve of the raid that Israel was prepared to stop the flotilla “at any cost,” and called on the international community to show understanding for Israel’s action (AP, 30 May).

This was not a case of inexperienced, trigger-happy soldiers run amok. The unit that carried out the raid on the *Mavi Marmara* was Shayetet (Flotilla) 13, Israel’s equivalent of U.S. Navy SEALs. This killer elite is notorious for its assassinations of Palestinian militants on the West Bank. The



DHA

Commandos of Israel’s Shayetet 13 Navy SEALs unit storm the *Mavi Marmara*, May 31. They “were ordered to shoot to kill even as they were on their way onto the deck.”

commandos trained for a month for the grotesquely named “Operation Sea Breeze,” including practice takeovers of a ship at sea. According to the military correspondent of the liberal Zionist *Haaretz* (4 June), the training “included opening fire

at charging activists,” and if they thought the situation was life-threatening “the commandos were ordered to shoot to kill even as they were on their way onto the deck” – which is what they did. Moreover, the head of the Navy was on a boat next to the ship to supervise the operation; the chief of commandos unit, on another gunboat, “gave orders by radio to use live fire, two minutes after the incident had begun” and climbed on the ship during the raid. In short, killing civilians in cold blood was *exactly* what the commanders ordered. The only “mistake” was that they got more resistance than they expected.

A commentary on the site of an Israeli leftist group, the Alternative Information Center (4 June), remarked: “In contrast to the opinions of the Israeli newspapers that contend something went wrong in the military action, we believe that the natural conclusion from this criminal action of the occupation army is that it must necessarily have resulted in the slaughter of innocent civilians.... [T]hese are commando soldiers trained to kill in face to face combat who fell on the activists like a pack of wolves.” Precisely. But if the killing was deliberate and the public outrage predictable and expected, the question then is: *why* did Israeli leaders order it? In the first place, they wanted to deliver a bloody lesson to those who dared to break the Zionists’ deadly blockade of Gaza. But beyond that, the Gaza flotilla massacre was a message to the Obama White House. Already in Operation Cast Iron, the Israeli invasion of Gaza that murdered more than 1,400 Gazans and destroyed 50,000 homes just as the U.S. president-elect was taking office, the Netanyahu government put Obama to the test – and he remained silent.

Then last September, when the U.S. called on Israel not to expand West Bank settlements, Netanyahu’s refusal to stop new construction was a deliberate warning to Obama not to step on Israeli toes. Once again the Democratic White House backed down. No surprise there: several of Obama’s top aides are committed Zionists, including his political adviser David Axelrod and his chief of staff Rahm Emanuel (who did volunteer work for the Israeli army during the 1991 Gulf War), and pro-Israel hardliners like Hillary Clinton. So why do it again, especially as the raid had to screw up the U.S.’ diplomatic maneuvering over Iran and put the U.S. alliance with Turkey in jeopardy? Because the *attack on the Gaza aid flotilla was a war provocation*. Israel’s execution of activists delivering humanitarian aid was so brazen that it was designed to provoke some kind of revenge attack, potentially setting off a chain reaction. The rightist Israeli government is *gearing up for a military*



Shayetet 13 commandos are Israeli military’s killer elite. Shown here in Tripoli, northern Lebanon, during Israel’s 1980s occupation, after assassinating a PLO guard.

attack on Iran, and is making sure Washington is prepared to withstand the worldwide opprobrium that will bring.

Zionist spokesmen went out of their way to rub it in. The Israeli press office sent out a sneering video, “We Con the World,” financed by a “neo-conservative” Zionist think tank in Washington, that mocked the activists on the Gaza “love boat.” Israeli premier Netanyahu echoed the theme in defending the Israeli assault on the “terror boat” in a June 2 TV speech. He hammered on the theme that the blockade was necessary because Israel would not “permit Iran to establish a Mediterranean port a few dozen kilometers from Tel Aviv.” The claim that letting in used clothing, toys, prefabricated housing and cement would be tantamount to establishing an Iranian port in Gaza is ludicrous. In fact, Israel won’t let the beleaguered Strip have any kind of port. Moreover, as the astute Near East commentator Juan Cole pointed out, if that were the issue there has for years been a nearby port in the hands of a pro-Iranian Arab movement: Tyre, in Hezbollah-dominated southern Lebanon



Ariel Schalit/AP

Medical supplies seized by the Israelis from the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

SpaceImaging



Israel has hundreds of nuclear warheads, developed at the Dimona facility in the Negev (shown here).

(*Informed Comment*, 3 June). But this was not about irrational Israeli fears of an “Iranian port,” it’s pushing for war on Iran.

Various liberal and even serious conservative media wring their hands about the Israeli government creating enemies. The London *Guardian* (7 June) described Netanyahu’s response “almost as appalling as the commando raid itself.” The *New York Times* (6 June) published an article, “What to Do About Israel,” citing a piece by imperialist strategist Anthony Cordesman titled “Israel as a Strategic Liability.” Cordesman, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, lectures sternly: “It is time Israel realized that it has obligations to the United States ... and that it become far more careful about the extent to which it tests the limits of U.S. patience and exploits the support of American Jews.” The *Times* article reports on “deep soul-searching in parts of the American Jewish community,” the emergence of a liberal Zionist lobby, J Street (in contrast to all the conservative and Zionist lobbies with offices on K Street in Washington), and a seder in suburban Washington where “a debate broke out ... over where to draw the line when considering American support for Israel’s government.”

Even the conservative London *Economist* (5 June) headlined, “Israel’s Siege Mentality,” adding: “The government’s macho attitude is actually making Israel weaker.” It writes that “for Israel, the episode is accelerating a slide towards its own isolation,” that it is “now seen as the clumsy bully on the block.” Echoing the new Tory prime minister Cameron, it sums up: “The blockade of Gaza is cruel and has failed.... Just as bad, from Israel’s point of view, it helps feed antipathy towards Israel, not just in the Arab and Muslim worlds, but in Europe too.” The ultra-establishment *New York Times* (3 June) quotes “senior American officials” saying, “There is no question that we need a new approach to Gaza,” one “allowing more supplies into the impoverished Palestinian area.” Note that the Obama administration officials are *not* calling to end the boycott, only to modify it. These top-level imperialist spokesmen presume

that opinion in Europe and among Washington policy makers would dictate a shift in Israeli policy. Liberal Zionists in Israel assume the same thing, as do many leftists. But any change will be limited.

The head of the Mossad, Israel’s international espionage agency, testified before a Knesset committee the day after the Gaza flotilla raid that “Israel is less of an asset to the United States” these days (*Jerusalem Post*, 2 June). He was not referring to blowback from the massacre, however, but to the more fundamental fact that Washington needs a degree of Arab and Muslim support in order to get out of the morass it has sunk into in Iraq and Afghanistan and for its diplomatic maneuvers over Iran, and that Israeli intransigence on Palestine is an obstacle to this. That will not change tomorrow, no matter what happens to the Gaza blockade. But that by no means implies that the Israeli government will bow to Washington’s needs. The Zionists have always sought to sell their services to the dominant imperialist power, first Britain and then the United States, as a vital ally

in controlling the Near East, whether standing astride the Suez Canal, helping secure U.S. domination of oil from the Persian/Arab Gulf or working closely with the Turkish army. But they are fully capable of biting the hand that feeds them.

The Netanyahu government thinks it has taken the measure of the Obama administration, and that Washington will cringe if Tel Aviv snarls. So far they’re right, and on fundamental issues that will continue. But if the Zionists conclude they have to go it alone, the hardliners most likely will. During the last U.S. presidential campaign, Israeli historian Morris predicted that Israel would launch a strike against Iran before George W. Bush left office., writing that “an Israeli nuclear strike to prevent the Iranians from taking the final steps toward getting the bomb is probable” (*New York Times*, 18 July 2008). His timing was off, but his basic reasoning is that of mainstream Zionists. From the standpoint of U.S. imperialism, and of the peoples of the region, *including the Israeli population*, this would appear crazy. The idea that an Israeli nuclear first strike would stop or even set back efforts by Iran’s Islamic regime to obtain nukes is absurd. But the madmen in Tel Aviv have the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world, as big or bigger than Britain’s, with hundreds of A-bombs, the military means to deliver them, and they are possessed of a suicidal Masada complex³ that makes them quite capable of setting off a conflagration that would incinerate the Middle East.

³ That is, the Zionist rulers will stop at nothing, even suicidal measures. In the Judean struggle for liberation against the Roman empire, a sect of Jewish merchants and nobility, the Zealots, who had been expelled from Jerusalem after killing other Jews, took refuge by seizing the Roman fortress at Masada. As the Romans were about to retake Masada in the year 73, the Zealots murdered their own families and then committed collective suicide. Today Israeli soldiers end their basic training by climbing the mount and taking the oath, “Masada shall not fall again.” For the raid on the Gaza flotilla, the Israeli prison service mobilized its elite Masada unit, a hit squad notorious for provoking jail riots and executing Palestinian prisoners.

Gali Tibbon/AFP



Israeli nuclear submarine of the Dolphin class (U212), built in Germany, carries nuclear cruise missiles. These subs will be stationed in the Persian Gulf, within striking range of “any target in Iran.” Egypt allowed the subs to go through the Suez Canal. Saudi Arabia will stand down its air defense system to let Israeli jets attack Iran. Iran has every right to obtain nuclear weapons to defend itself against Israel’s nuclear-armed madmen – and the U.S., whose ships and subs in the Persian Gulf are loaded with nukes.

Contemplate, for example, the recent report from the London *Sunday Times* (30 May):

“Three German-built Israeli submarines equipped with nuclear cruise missiles are to be deployed in the [Persian] Gulf near the Iranian coastline.

“The first has been sent in response to Israeli fears that ballistic missiles developed by Iran ... could hit sites in Israel, including air bases and missile launchers. “The submarines of Flotilla 7 — Dolphin, Tekuma and Leviathan — have visited the Gulf before. But the decision has now been taken to ensure a permanent presence of at least one of the vessels....

“Some of the cruise missiles are equipped with the most advanced nuclear warheads in the Israeli arsenal....

“The submarines could be used if Iran continues its programme

Reuters



Mordechai Vanunu in prison in 2002. He was jailed for 18 years for revealing Israel’s nuclear arsenal.

to produce a nuclear bomb. ‘The 1,500km range of the submarines’ cruise missiles can reach any target in Iran,’ said a navy officer.”

The London *Times* is no sensationalist rag but the authoritative voice of British imperialism that in 1986 revealed the existence of Israel’s nuclear arsenal from information supplied by Mordechai Vanunu. The courageous Israeli technician working at the Dimona atomic facility was jailed for 18 years, eleven of them in solitary confinement, for his revelations. Now the *Times* (12 June) reports that “Saudi Arabia has conducted tests to stand down its air defences to enable Israeli jets to make a bombing raid on Iran’s nuclear facilities.” The dispatch from Dubai quotes a U.S. military source in the region saying, “This has all been done with the agreement of the [US] State Department.” So the Iranian government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad can have no doubts about Israel’s ability to deliver a nuclear strike, and it will no doubt act accordingly.⁴

The League for the Fourth International defends Iran, a semi-colonial country, against imperialism and Zionist Israel, which serves as a cat’s paw for the imperialists. We give no political support to the Islamic fundamentalist regime of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and denounce its brutal crackdown against opposition demonstrations last year. But we defend Iran’s right to develop nuclear power and to obtain nuclear or any other kind of weapons to defend itself against those countries that already have nuclear weapons in the region and have threatened to use them against Iran: the United States and Israel. With 5 million Jews facing 500 million Arabs in the region – as well as 75 million Persians, 70 million Turks and 35 million Kurds – no matter how great Israel’s present military superiority, no matter how brutal its oppression of the Palestinians, the long-term prospects of the Zionist state are somber. In 1940, Leon Trotsky warned that “the attempt to solve the Jewish question through the migration of Jews to Palestine” was a “tragic mockery of the Jewish people,” and a turn of military events could “transform Palestine into a bloody trap for several hundred thousand [now several million] Jews.” This is no less true today.

The Israeli lockdown of the territories it conquered in

⁴ Tehran will also have taken note of the article in the *New York Times* (28 March), “Imagining an Israeli Strike on Iran.” This is a report on a war game last December at the Brookings Institution’s Saban Center for Middle East policy, involving “former top American policymakers and intelligence officials — some well known,” simulating an Israeli first strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. Although the reporter concluded, “No one won,” cautioning that it would at most set Iranian nuclear programs back “a few years” and would quickly turn into a region-wide conflict centering on U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf, “the Israelis argued that it could further undercut a fragile regime” and was “worth the cost.” When they start publishing war simulations in the *Times*, even as a cautionary note, it’s clear that serious steps are being contemplated behind the scenes.

For Permanent Revolution Throughout the Middle East!

Egypt: Mubarak Regime Tottering

The bloody Israeli massacre of passengers on board ships in the Mediterranean delivering aid to besieged Gaza set off angry protests throughout the Middle East. The largest were in Turkey, where the flotilla was organized, and from where all but one of the martyred activists came (the other was a Turkish American). But nowhere did the Zionist crime have a greater impact than in Egypt, where the military-based government of the aging strongman Hosni Mubarak is on its last legs. Egypt has been swept by a series of strikes beginning in December 2006 at the giant Misr Spinning and Weaving Company complex at Mahalla al-Kubra in the Nile Delta. Thousands of workers, many of them women, threw off the state-sponsored corporatist labor bodies and forged their own unions. The fight for independent unions continued to mount through 2007-08. Then, following the devastating Israeli bombardment of nearby Gaza in December 2008-January 2009, striking workers from the textile center of Mahalla el-Kubra sent a convoy with supplies.

More recently, in response to the May 31 massacre, tens of thousands have taken to the street to protest in Alexandria and Cairo. A meeting with Egyptian textile workers from Tanta Flax, Amonsito Spinning and Weaving and Mahalla denounced the deadly Israeli attack (see report and video on *3arabawy*, 4 June). And as police cracked down on a demonstration by Amonsito workers in front of Egypt's parliament on May 23, angry workers drew parallels between their situation and Israel's treatment of Palestinians (*3arabawy*, 25 May). Writing in *Socialist Worker* (12 June), the newspaper of the British Socialist Workers Party, Hossam el-Hamalawy says: "People are linking the causes of freedom for Palestine and freedom for Egyptian workers." The Egyptian socialist sums up: "We are in a pre-revolutionary situation here." In an accompanying article, the SWP headlined, "Workers' movements across the Middle East can free Palestine," and even spoke of Trotsky's theory of *permanent revolution*. (Meanwhile, in demos in Britain, the SWP pushes the standard refrain of "boycott, divestment, sanctions.")

But coming from such reformists, the words permanent revolution have a very different meaning. Leon Trotsky wrote, on the basis of three Russian Revolutions (1905, February 1917, October 1917), as well as the negative experience of the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, that in the imperialist epoch the bourgeoisie in colonial and semi-colonial countries is too weak, and too tightly bound to domestic reactionary and imperialist forces, to carry out the tasks of the classical bourgeois revolutions – democracy, national emancipation and agrarian revolution. The peasantry, in turn, is a contradictory layer with conflicting interests. It therefore falls to the working class, led by its communist party and backed by the poor peasants and the oppressed nation, to seize power to achieve those revolutionary-democratic tasks. In doing so,

simply in order to preserve its class rule, it will be obliged to make the revolution permanent, proceeding directly to socialist tasks, expropriating the capitalists and extending the revolution internationally, centrally to the dominant imperialist powers.

Like many opportunists who abuse the name of Trotsky, the SWP divorces his theory from the *program* of permanent revolution by removing the key element, the need for a communist vanguard party, and turning it into an *objectivist* analysis of the "dynamic." This is the device used by numerous pseudo-Trotskyists to support a variety of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois-nationalist forces ranging from Egyptian colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser to the Algerian FLN, Cuba's Fidel Castro, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, the South African ANC and most recently Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, saying that objective forces will force them to go further than they intended. Yet the vital task is to forge a Leninist-Trotskyist revolutionary workers party, which requires above all fighting against illusions in precisely those petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces. In Egypt in recent years, many socialists have argued it is necessary to unite with reactionaries such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who lead many protests over Gaza, but at the same time oppose workers' strikes. This is a ticket to bloody defeat. Like Khomeini in Iran, these Islamists will slaughter the left if they ever take power.

Currently, as the Mubarak regime totters, some leftists are looking to Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who is positioning himself as a presidential candidate (see "ElBaradei Meets Leftist Supporters, *Al Masry Al Youm* [English edition], 12 June). While ElBaradei had numerous run-ins with the administration of U.S. president George W. Bush, it should not be forgotten that he also pushed for sanctions against Iran for developing its nuclear capability (and did nothing about Israel's nuclear arsenal). He is a bourgeois politician, although one who is more in line with European than the American imperialists. Moreover, ElBaradei is busy making alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood (which is backing him) and the conservative Wafd Party, which ran Egypt on behalf of the British from 1920 until it was overthrown in 1952 by the officers coup that installed Nasser in the presidency. Any political bloc with ElBaradei means an alliance with these reactionaries. A revolutionary workers party would ally instead with landless peasants, women and oppressed minorities such as the Copts on a program to overthrow all the exploiters.

From the banks of the Nile to the straits of Bosphorus and throughout the Middle East, the struggle for the political independence of the working class against Islamic fundamentalists, bourgeois nationalists and liberals, against sheiks and colonels, is key to the fight to sweep away the Zionist butchers and their imperialist patrons through international socialist revolution.

For an Arab-Hebrew Palestinian Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Near East

1967 leaves millions of Palestinians in enforced isolation. Turning Gaza into a giant Nazi-style concentration camp and the West Bank into a series of apartheid-like “Bantustans” is intended to induce despair, a feeling that all resistance is futile. Yet in 43 years the Arab population has not ceased to fight, and they are not alone. The Israeli massacre galvanized opposition to the blockade throughout the region and the world. More flotillas are on the way. How will Israel handle an Iranian flotilla, as Tehran has threatened – rappel down a rope with the Revolutionary Guard waiting at the other end? What about the boatload of German Jews, set to sail in July, coming to the aid of Gaza? Israelis with a sense of history worry that this could echo the 1947 *Exodus* clash in which British colonial authorities seized a

shipload of Jewish Holocaust survivors, but lost the propaganda war. The liberal Zionist *Ha'aretz* (10 June) forecast: “The Gaza flotilla episode heralds the onset of a long, tense summer in the Middle East.” Earlier (1 June) it warned that “this could even end in a third *intifada*, or Palestinian uprising. In military terms, this can be considered a ‘life-altering event’.”

Once again, as in 1987-1993 and from 2000-2005, Palestinian youth with slingshots and stones could face off against Israeli troops with Galil assault rifles and armored bulldozers. But what has the IDF general staff (if not the “political echelon”) worried is that this time it could be in conjunction with widespread disturbances among Israeli Arabs. If it had to simultaneously put down protests on both sides of the Green Line⁵, even the Israeli military juggernaut would be challenged. Even more importantly, unrest could spread through the region, particularly next door in Egypt, where strong man Hosni Mubarak is dying and his military-based regime is fraying. Since 2006 there has been an on-going strike wave by Egyptian workers, from textile mills to government services. Militant Egyptian workers have also taken up the cause of the besieged population of Gaza (see article page 74, “Egypt: Mubarak Regime Tottering”). And the unrest in Iran, while temporarily suppressed by heavy repression, could spark an

⁵ The armistice line established following the 1948 war, leaving the Zionists in control of almost four-fifths of pre-partition Palestine. In 1967, Israel conquered the rest, occupying East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.



10,000-plus demonstrators at leftist-led protest in Tel Aviv June 6 against 43 years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian Arab territories and the May 31 Israeli commando attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

explosion of working-class struggle in the mullahs’ republic

But what of the working class in Palestine itself. Many on the left internationally see Israel as one solid reactionary mass, and there is no doubt that ever since the proclamation of the “Jewish state” six decades ago the Zionists have held total sway. (Prior to 1948, there was a history of joint Arab-Hebrew workers struggles in Palestine.⁶) However, the Arab minority in Israel of roughly 1.3 million people makes up almost a fifth of the population and tens of thousands live in cities with mixed Hebrew and Arab population (Jaffa, Acre and Tel Aviv). Moreover, there is still something of a left in Israel. A candidate of the Hadash slate and leader of the Communist Party received 35 percent of the vote in last November’s mayoral election in Tel Aviv.⁷

In response to Israel’s Gaza flotilla attack there was a general strike on June 1 in the Arab areas of the north as well as sizeable protests in Tel Aviv. On June 6, some 10,000 or more

⁶ See our article, “Arab/Hebrew Workers’ Struggles Before the Birth of Israel,” in *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001.

⁷ Hadash (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) is an electoral list led by the Communist Party of Israel (the CPI or Maki, according to its initials in Hebrew), which holds four seats in the Knesset, mostly elected by Arab votes. However, Hadash/Maki accepts the existence of Israel, set up by the Zionists as a Jewish state. This renders the CPI’s formal anti-Zionism moot, since in everything from citizenship criteria to the military draft and myriad other aspects of civic life, the Israeli state is inherently oppressive toward Arab citizens.



Arab and Hebrew protest against Israeli massacre of Gaza aid flotilla in Haifa, June 1.

marched in a demonstration initiated by the Hadash electoral list led by the Israeli CP. Many of the marchers were liberal Zionists, particularly of Uri Avnery's "Peace Now" movement, who simply want a different policy for the Israeli state. And the protests are still relatively small. But fascistic elements and right-wing West Bank settlers are widely despised in Israel, and most of population does not want to live in a permanent garrison state. A military debacle or widespread unrest that drains Israel's limited manpower could produce cracks in the Zionists' until now monolithic domination of political life.

Internationally, for decades most of the left in the West has basically tailed the dominant nationalist currents in the Middle East, in the name of building solidarity movements. When in 1974 Arafat's Fatah, under pressure from imperialism, came out for a "two-state" position, tacitly recognizing Israel, the reformist left pretty much followed suit. Those Western leftists who liked to spice up their reformist "two-stage" politics with vicarious support for Guevara-style guerrillaism gravitated around the left nationalists of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). However, after engaging in a wave of indiscriminate terrorism (aircraft hijackings and bombings and the 1968 Lod Airport massacre in the case of the PFLP, and the 1974 Ma'alot school massacre in the case of the DFLP), these "rejectionists" ended up capitulating to Fatah. In contrast, authentic Trotskyists from the outset denounced the chimera of a Palestinian mini-state as a fraud.

When in 1993 under Bill Clinton's aegis Arafat and Israel prime minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords setting up the Palestinian Authority, the opportunist left once again supported this, some singing hosannas, others more critically. But a decade later, as the disastrous consequences of the Oslo agreement became evident, with a powerless P.A. serving as window dressing for the Israeli occupation, much of the Western

left switched back to the original PLO program, for a "democratic secular Palestine." This is the position today of the British Socialist Workers Party and its erstwhile comrades of the International Socialist Organization in the U.S., as well as the view of much of the Palestinian intelligentsia in exile who have come to despair of the "two-state solution."⁸

Those calling for a "democratic secular" (and implicitly capitalist) Palestine propose to treat Israeli Jews as just another religious group, like Muslims and Christians. Aside from the fact that Israeli Jews are mostly not religious (they are overwhelmingly secular, and a majority don't attend synagogue), this ignores the existence of a Hebrew nation which came into existence on the

territory of Palestine. This mirrors a standard argument of right-wing Zionists, who deny that Palestinian Arabs are a nation. As in the case of many nations, the formation of Israel took place as a result of a historical crime, perpetrated by the imperialists, notably the United States, who refused to accept Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors after World War II.⁹ Yet under the hammer blows of repression, two entities that in terms of common language, territory, economy, culture and history fully qualify as nations have been compacted on the territory of Palestine, and which for Leninists therefore have the democratic right of self-determination, that is, to a separate, independent state.

Under present conditions, the Hebrew population is unlikely to accept simply being a minority with democratic rights in a majority Arab Palestine: they would expect to be oppressed just as Israel has viciously subjugated the Palestinians over the past six decades. If multinational states like Belgium and Canada with different nationalities living largely adjacent to each other and with similar living standards are splitting apart as a result of nationalist tensions and national oppression, what are the prospects for a capitalist state in which two nations lay claim to the same territory, towns and even houses, and where the privileged minority long suppressed the impoverished majority? Those who call for a democratic secular Palestine under capitalist rule have in mind the example of South Africa, and

⁸ The United Secretariat (which masquerades as the Fourth International) is split between "two-staters" and "one-staters," while both the Committee for a Workers International, led by Peter Taaffe, and Alan Woods' International Marxist Tendency, accept the existence of Israel, and the latter entered the Israeli CP.

⁹ For example, genocide of the native population, slavery and theft of Mexican lands in the case of the United States; subjugation of the Scots, Welsh and Irish by England in the case of Britain; the slaughter of Occitans and Huguenots in France, etc.

Internationalist photo



To defeat the Zionist butchers you have to taken on their imperialist patrons as well. Times Square protest, June 1.

many talk of “Israeli apartheid” today. But there is a crucial difference. In South Africa, white oppressors and the black, colored and Indian oppressed were part of a single nation, in Palestine there are two quite distinct national entities.

The only way that competing national rights and the national oppression of the Palestinians can be transcended in a single state is through a *socialist revolution* that utterly transforms the economy and society as a whole, and which is the product of a joint struggle by Arab and Hebrew workers. Such a revolution would have to transform the consciousness of the Hebrew-speaking population to be successful. It would also have to deal with sizeable numbers of Zionist butchers, fascists and dead-end counterrevolutionaries who will never be integrated into a society with a Palestinian majority. But it is important that justice be meted out to these criminals by their own people. If one can overcome the chasm in living conditions by vastly improving the lot of the oppressed majority, do away with segregation into separate communities, share scarce resources equitably, lay the basis for a full flowering of culture in both languages, then it is possible to overcome national antagonisms – but that is utterly *impossible* under capitalism.

In the 1940s, while the Stalinists of the Communist Party supported partition of Palestine and the formation of Israel, including bringing in weapons that were used to massacre and drive out the Arabs, the Palestinian Trotskyists opposed partition and called for joint revolutionary struggle against imperialism by Arab and Hebrew workers.¹⁰ Into the 1980s, the Spartacist League (SL) in the U.S. and its International Communist League (ICL) affiliates called for an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Near East, as we in the IG/LFI do today. However, the SL/

¹⁰ See “The Fight for Trotskyism in Palestine,” in *The Internationalist* No. 12, Summer 2001.

ICL today no longer raises the demand for a bi-national workers state. Declaring that the demise of the Soviet Union produced a qualitative regression in working-class consciousness, the SL/ICL evidently despairs of Hebrew-speaking and Palestinian workers constructing a common state. But what is the alternative? Two separate workers states in the same area? But how could class-conscious Hebrew workers smash the Zionist state except together with their Palestinian sisters and brothers? And after victory they separate?

The League for the Fourth International calls to defend the Palestinian people, not only against Israel, but also against U.S. imperialism, which finances, militarily arms and diplomatically props up the Zionist oppressors. We demand that Israel get out of all the territories occupied since the 1967 war (including East Jerusalem), and along with it must go the Zionist settlements on the West Bank, which serve a military function

of subjugating the Arab population. Trotskyists oppose the existence of the Israeli theocratic state and all confessional or religion-based states: separation of church and state is a basic bourgeois-democratic gain, and a “Jewish state” in Israel just like an “Islamic republic” in Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, or a “Christian state” such as Vichy France, is inherently undemocratic.

The LFI also supports the Palestinians’ right to return to their homes and lands. But the forcible expulsion of Jews from Palestine today would also be criminal. Recognizing the right of self-determination for *both* Hebrew speakers and Arabs in Palestine, we note that the conflicting national claims of two interpenetrated peoples in the same small territory cannot be equitably resolved in a capitalist framework. Moreover, any Palestinian state must include present-day Jordan, an artificial country which was part of Palestine under the League of Nations mandate and where close to 2 million Palestinians live today, many still crammed into refugee camps. If a Palestinian mini-state were somehow to be established alongside Israel, we defend the Palestinians’ right to be freed from occupation under the Zionist jackboot. But this would be an obstacle to resolving the national oppression of Palestinian Arabs. Therefore, we seek to build an Arab/Hebrew Trotskyist party in all of Palestine to lead the fight for a binational *Arab/Hebrew workers state* in the framework of a *socialist federation of the Near East*.

However, distant that prospect may seem today, it is the only basis on which Muslims, Jews, Christians, Druzes – not to mention Kurds, Zoroastrians and numerous other national and religious minorities throughout the region – can overcome sectarian divisions and live and develop in harmony. Achieving this is a vital task not only of Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers in Palestine, but of the world proletariat as we struggle to smash imperialism through international socialist revolution. ■



Mass picket of hundreds on the Oakland docks blocked the unloading of Israeli ZIM line ship June 20.

Workers Action...

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The “labor/community picket” of the Israeli container ship at the Port of Oakland docks was endorsed by the Oakland Education Association, and built by appeals from the San Francisco Labor Council and Alameda County Labor Council who condemned the Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and sent out notices urging Bay Area unionists to join the lines. Solidarity statements hailing the Oakland action were received from the Cuban Labor Federation (CTC), Labor for Palestine, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and fired Liverpool dockers, among others. The PGFTU message to the Oakland picket said that this action was “something we have longed for and expected,” recalling the “historic and massive action on the docks in 1984, when you acted to boycott the apartheid regime in South Africa.” The action of ILWU Local 10 longshoremen to boycott the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* was later cited by Nelson Mandela as a key event propelling solidarity with the South African struggle internationally.

The June 20 picket was reported on local television (KTVU) and in articles in today’s *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Oakland Tribune*, as well as wire service reports. Significantly, news of the picket was picked up by the web site of the right-wing Zionist *Jerusalem Post* and the popular Israeli Internet news site Ynet News, which also carried a video of the action. It is useful to bring to the attention of the Israeli public that the murderous actions of the Zionist regime have a price. Certainly the Israeli authorities were well aware of it, as the Israeli consul in San Francisco called up the SF Labor Council to complain about its support for the picket.

We have called on the unions internationally to carry out labor boycotts of Israeli ships, planes and cargo in protest against the latest massacre by the Zionist butchers. While the action on the Oakland docks was called by labor/community activists, it had wide union support and participation.



Labor Video Project

The *Oakland Tribune* article noted, “The longshoremen’s union largely cooperated with the picket line. No workers tried to cross it.” San Francisco-Oakland Local 10 of the ILWU has a long history of solidarity action, including boycotting cargo to and from the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and the death-squad regime in El Salvador. It also hosted an October 2007 Labor Conference to Stop the War and introduced the motion that led to the historic May Day 2008 Pacific Coast-wide ILWU port shutdown against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many of those who marched on the picket yesterday called for a boycott of Israeli goods by consumers, as well as divestment and sanctions. We have noted elsewhere (see our article “Israel’s Gaza Flotilla Massacre: Bloody War Provocation”) that the “BDS” campaign is oriented toward pressuring imperialist governments to take action against Israel. A real struggle against Zionist occupation and oppression of the Palestinians must be directed against the Israeli government, *and its imperialist backers* who are *enemies*, not neutrals or potential allies, of the Palestinian people. As ILWU Local 10 executive board member and labor solidarity activist Jack Heyman noted at a June 5 protest against the Israeli attack:

“Simply petitioning or pressuring the Obama administration

Union Bars Israeli Consul ILWU Local 10 Upholds Boycott of Israeli Ship

The picket that blocked the Israeli Zim line cargo ship *Shenzhen* this past June 20 in the Port of Oakland, California was a dramatic act of labor solidarity with the besieged Palestinian population. It has spurred further workers actions against the murderous Zionist regime worldwide. Following announcements of labor bans on Israeli shipping by dock workers unions in South Africa, Sweden and Norway, and boycott action by stevedores in India, the Turkish dock workers union Liman-Is announced that its members will refuse to touch Israeli ships or cargo. But while the imperialist media gave it little coverage, the Oakland picket greatly disturbed the Israeli government, worried by the spread of industrial action against it.

Even before the picket, the Israeli consul-general in San Francisco, Akiva Tor, demanded an audience with the head of the S.F. Labor Council to protest its support for the boycott. After the successful picket that drew hundreds of Bay Area unionists and solidarity activists, Tor called up Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, asking to address the union's executive board. A special meeting of the Local 10 leadership body was scheduled for July 6 to consider the issue. It is highly unusual for the representative of a foreign government to demand to speak to a local union, but the Zionist regime has always paid special attention to labor, assiduously seeking to buy sympathy by sponsoring expense-paid trips to Israel for national and local labor "leaders," including of U.S. longshore unions. But this time they failed, badly.

When Israeli deputy consul Gideon Lustig showed up at the union hall with a delegation, the Local 10 E-Board barred the representative of the regime that on May 31 murdered nine aid activists on a ship in the Mediterranean and which has been cruelly blockading Gaza for years. The body did admit a Zionist academic, Roberta Seid, despite a protest walkout by a number of members. Seid is an official of an outfit, Stand With Us, that witchhunts students and professors who criticize Israel, and she brazenly defended the killings on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. She also grotesquely claims that Israel was not to blame for the death of solidarity activist Rachael Corrie, who in 2003 was run over by a military bulldozer demolishing Palestinian houses. In the end Seid was dismissed to join the consular delegation cooling their heels outside.

Responding to a July 2 appeal by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, the Local 10 executive board rejected the Israeli pressure tactics and upheld its opposition to the Zionist government's blockade of Gaza, to the apartheid wall in the West Bank, the murderous Israeli attack on the aid flotilla and the continuing bloody Zionist oppression of Palestinians. Yet on the same day as the Local 10 meeting, Democratic president Barack Obama met with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the White House, reaffirming U.S. support for the Zionist regime. This underscores that along with workers solidarity action it is vital to break with the capitalist parties and build a workers party to wage the revolutionary fight to smash imperialism.

for justice is illusory, it's not going to work. Every U.S. government since the creation of the state of Israel has given that government a blank check.... And it's not going to happen by consumer boycotts either."

"The Swedish dock workers, who stood strong against the apartheid regime, have just announced yesterday, that they will strike against every Israeli ship in Sweden. That is the kind of action that is needed to oppose the oppression by the Zionists against the Palestinian people. Workers have the power. We need to exercise that kind of power today, just as we did in 1984 against the ship from South Africa."

The Zionist attack on the Gaza aid flotilla and cold-blooded murder of nine activists on the *Mavi Marmara* provoked disgust around the world. A host of unions and labor federations have issued statements denouncing the Israeli action to one degree or other, including the International Confederation of Trade Unions (the former ICFTU, which was organized to support the imperialists' anti-communist Cold War against the Soviet Union), which called for an "investigation," and the World Federation of Trade Unions, which called on unions to carry out a three-day strike in the world's ports against shipping to and from Israel. But whatever illusions in the reformability of capitalism and "their" governments the labor bureaucrats promote, the boycott of the Israeli ship at the Oakland docks underscored the power of international labor solidarity and pointed to the urgent need for workers action against the Zionist Murder Inc. ■

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International Workers Action to Defend the Palestinians



Oakland Picket Blocks Israeli Ship!

JUNE 21 – Yesterday mass pickets at the Port of Oakland (California) blocked the unloading of an Israeli ship, the ZIM *Shenzhen*. They were protesting the May 31 Israeli massacre of activists aboard a flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza. More than 800 demonstrators showed up before dawn at Pier 58 for the day shift picket lasting from 5:30 until 9:30 a.m. Demonstrators chanted, “Free, free Palestine – Don’t cross the picket line,” and “An injury to one is an injury to all – the Israeli apartheid wall will fall.” Longshoremen refused to cross the line, and after management demanded an immediate arbitration ruling, the arbitrator sided with the workers. Hundreds of protesters returned for the evening shift, but by then the company had given up on calling in a shift. So the picketers succeeded in blocking the unloading of the Zim Lines freighter for 24 hours. *This is the first time an Israeli ship was blocked in a U.S. port, and gives a big boost to efforts for international workers actions against the murderous Zionist regime.*

The Oakland action was organized by an ad hoc Labor/Community Committee in Solidarity with the People of Palestine including the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee, several Palestinian solidarity groups, the Bay Area ANSWER Coalition and area labor activists. It was formed after the executive board of the San Francisco-Oakland Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) two weeks ago passed a motion condemning Israel’s deadly raid and “call[ing] for unions to protest by any action they choose to take.” The Local 10 motion cited the ILWU’s commendation of the South African dock workers union for its February 2009 action refusing to unload an Israeli ship in the port of Durban, the decision of the Swedish Port Workers Union to refuse to handle Israeli ships and cargo (scheduled to start June 23), and the appeal by the Palestinian Trade Union Movement calling on dock workers worldwide to take action against the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

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- Egypt: Mubarak Regime Tottering
- For An Arab-Hebrew Palestinian Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Near East