

NATO leaders escalate attacks in Libya, vow to 'finish' Gadhafi

By ANDREW POLLACK

During recent weeks the imperialist forces attacking Muammar Gadhafi's regime have dropped what little pretense existed about their goal of regime change in Libya. The defining moment of this shift came when an op-ed cosigned by the heads of state of the U.S., Britain, and France declared: "Gadhafi must go." In an article published in the *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Figaro*, and *The Times* of London on April 15, Barack Obama, Nicolas Sarkozy, and David Cameron announced they would take whatever military action they needed to remove Gadhafi from power.

Their strategy was made bitterly clear on April 29, when a NATO airstrike targeted a house in which Gadhafi and his family were present, killing his youngest son and three of his grandchildren.

The imperialists' openness about their real goals, and their ever-expanding military measures, have been greatly facilitated by the hijacking of the leadership of the anti-Gadhafi uprising by the Transitional National Council, a mélange of ex-Gadhafi officials and pro-imperialist capitalists and professionals.

This hijacking comes at the expense of a movement that in the first weeks of the uprising had a strong base among the working-class masses and was often led by neighborhood committees. The early phases of armed battles were likewise often characterized by partisan-style fighting. This was only possible because hundreds of thousands in every town and city—even Tripoli—had poured into the streets and organized themselves for freedom.

But while the combined forces of the imperialist countries and their local clients have succeeded—for now—in immobilizing the popular movement against Gadhafi, they have found only stalemate on the military front—which military officials worry could drag on for months.



Arif Ali / AFP / Getty Images

The U.S. had supplied much of the initial firepower to impose a no-fire zone, and then left the heavy lifting to its European allies. But as the battles moved increasingly into urban areas, NATO powers began to complain that only Washington had weapons allowing for more precise attacks against forces on the ground. In response, Obama on April 21 authorized the use of unmanned Predator drones (which have been responsible for numerous civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Pakistan).

On April 20 France, Italy, and the UK announced they would send ground troops. While the troops, termed military "advisors," would number at first only in the dozens, their numbers are almost sure to swell—given that every imperialist military official quoted has predicted that the war will drag on for months. Other measures

(Above) April 10 protest in Lahore, Pakistan, against NATO military action in Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

to try to break the stalemate include the announcement by Obama of the provision of as much as \$25 million in military surplus supplies and communications equipment for their Libyan allies in the Transitional National Council—but not (yet) weapons.

Meanwhile, politicians and media commentators in the United States and Europe have been calling for even more military intervention in order to "finish the job now." One of the most widely quoted military analysts, Anthony Cordesman, wrote a bloodcurdling piece for the Center for Strategic and International Studies calling

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April 9 & 10 protests show a new and diverse antiwar movement

By CHRISTINE MARIE

The extrajudicial killing of Osama bin-Laden by U.S. special forces in Pakistan, and the Obama administration's celebration of it, increase the likelihood that the U.S. government will seek to prolong its wars in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa—and even to launch new wars in the region. We can also expect a rise in Islamophobia and attempts to restrict dissent as part of the U.S. campaign to justify its "war on terror."

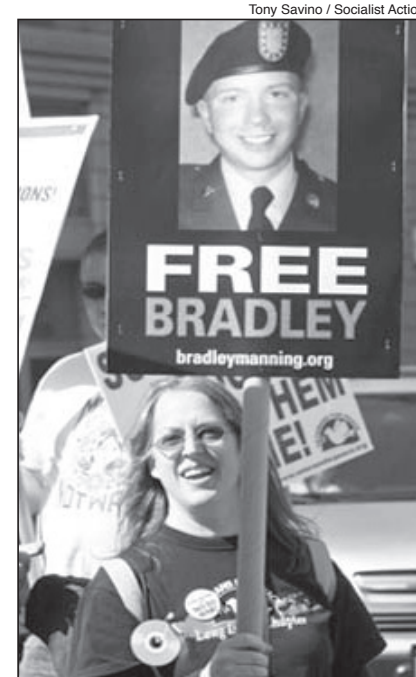
With these dangers before us, the recent upswing in antiwar activity in the United States rises in importance. The April 9 and 10 demonstrations in New York and San Francisco, sponsored by the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC), brought iconic antiwar figures like Col. Ann Wright and Cindy Sheehan, as well as thousands of marchers from highly diverse communities—a large proportion of them youthful—into the streets and into the discussion of what steps should be taken next.

The demonstrations called for all U.S. troops and war dollars to be brought home immediately from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Libya, along with an end to U.S. aid to Israel and an end to Islamophobia.

The breadth and democratic procedure of last July's Albany, N.Y., antiwar conference, from which the call for national united bicoastal demonstrations was issued, contributed to making the April actions diverse and politically sophisticated. Because the Albany conference drew in and took seriously the voices and votes of the leaders of Muslim, Palestinian, immigrant rights, and other community organizations on demands and foci, the resulting demonstrations had a special impact on movement building.

In New York on April 9, up to 10,000 people participated in two rallies anchored by the leadership of the Islamic Council of North America, the Islamic Leadership Council of New York, the

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Tony Savino / Socialist Action

April 9 marcher in New York City.

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Illinois teachers-union leaders bow before the Democrats

By DAVID BERNT

CHICAGO—State houses and governors throughout the U.S. have put forth bills aimed at cutting education, firing teachers, and curtailing their union rights. A similar bill pending before the Illinois Senate would virtually end teachers' seniority for job security, severely limit their ability to strike, and allow school boards to unilaterally impose working conditions.

But while in many states this would sound like the start of a new round of fighting between a Tea Party-backed governor and the labor movement, here it is quite different. In Illinois, voters bucked the national trend and retained "friends of labor" Democrats in both state houses and the governor's office. The legislation was passed unanimously in the Democrat-controlled House.

There are no protests outside the capitol in Springfield like the historic labor mobilizations in Madison and throughout the country. Instead, the leaders of all the major teachers' unions in the state are endorsing this anti-teacher legislation.

The proposed law, SB 7, has as its crowning achievement (from the vantage point of teacher-union enemies) the end of seniority in determining teacher layoffs. SB 7 would end "last hired, first fired," and determine layoffs based on each teacher's performance—which, of course, is determined by management. The law would only enforce seniority if there were a "tie" in performance.

The reality of how such a "performance-based" system would function was exposed last year when Chicago Public School CEO Ron Huberman illegally fired 1300 teachers without regard to seniority, in violation of the union's contract. Principals targeted higher seniority teachers—meaning higher paid teachers. The *Chicago Reader* ran a series of articles chronicling the firings of several highly accomplished teachers who had broad support among parents and students.



April 13 protest at Michigan state capitol. But in Illinois, teachers' unions endorsed state cuts!

The elimination of teacher seniority in layoffs will give a green light to school boards to get rid of more expensive higher seniority teachers regardless of performance. Initially, this provision will not apply to members of the Chicago Teachers Union until the outcome of lawsuits filed by CTU against the illegal firings are settled, though it will for teachers in the rest of the state—severely weakening CTU's legal and bargaining options.

SB 7 also places draconian restrictions on the Chicago Teachers Union's ability to strike. The new law would require 75% of the membership to vote to authorize a strike. That means that all eligible members who don't vote would be counted as an effective "no" vote.

The bill also applies a series of "cool-off" periods that would delay any Chicago teacher strike by six months.

And the bill would also increase probationary periods before tenure for all Illinois teachers. It would give the Chicago Board of Education the right to unilaterally impose a lengthening of the school day.

On the heels of the historic labor mobilizations in Madison, Wis., where labor showed its massive potential in fighting the anti-union agenda, one might ask why Illinois teacher-union heads are not only accepting concessions but endorsing them. The answer is that these union tops are taking the wrong lesson from Madison. Instead of seeing it as a struggle that must spread, they view it as a conflict that must be avoided.

Illinois teachers-union leaders proclaimed the law as a victory since it does not contain the worst provisions proposed by anti-union organizations. CTU President Karen Lewis wrote a letter to the membership in support of the legislation, which read, "On Dec. 3, 2010, three groups backed by millionaires—Stand for Children, Advance Illinois and the Illinois Business Roundtable—slammed down an education "reform" proposal in Springfield dubbed 'Performance Counts,' which had one main goal: union-busting.

"In an unprecedented effort, the three unions—Chicago Teachers Union, Illinois Federation of Teachers, and Illinois Education Association—joined forces to stop these millionaires from turning teaching into a low-wage, high turnover job. Had they succeeded, the goal of high-quality education for all students would have been lost forever. Had they succeeded, Illinois would have been the next Wisconsin. The initial proposal laid out a plan to outlaw using seniority as a factor in staffing decisions, make tenure nearly impossible to attain and more improbable to keep, eliminate the right to strike statewide, and, for Chicago only, prohibit permissive bargaining issues."

The teachers' union leadership apparently believes that by taking concessions now they can avoid worse concessions

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A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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Pennsylvania blowout unmasks fracking dangers

By WAYNE DELUCA

PHILADELPHIA—On April 19, a natural gas well in Bradford County in northeastern Pennsylvania had to be shut down for several days in order to stop a leak of fluid used to break rocks and force out gas buried deep underground. The well is being sealed, while drilling has stopped at seven fracking sites.

Fracking (hydraulic fracturing) uses a highly toxic soup of chemicals to extract gas deposits from deep pockets beneath shale rocks. Pennsylvania is home to several such formations, although the Marcellus shale that was tapped in Bradford County has been the primary focus of both drillers and environmental groups opposing them.

This was not the first time that Bradford County has felt the effects of gas drilling. In recent months families along Paradise Road in Wyalusing have seen their well water become undrinkable, thanks to barium contamination, or their yards become methane fields. Residents are afraid that their homes could explode from something as simple as taking a shower. Yet Chesapeake Energy Corp., which operates the local wells, has dodged any responsibility and joined Pennsylvania officials in blithely calling natural gas extraction safe.

Hydraulic fracturing works by sending fluid down a deep well bored into the earth, at the fracturing pressure of the rock below. This creates cracks in the rock that force out the gas buried underneath at a relatively quick rate.

In order to break the shale and create a reliable conduit for the gas to escape, a variety of chemical accelerants and propellants are mixed into the fracking liquid. Numerous measures are taken to prevent leakage, but they are unreliable; waste materials, including radioactive and carcinogenic chemicals, often seep into the surrounding environment. The recent documentary "Gasland" gave a dramatic picture of the dangers, including methane-contaminated water that can be lit on fire.

Fracking extracts gas more quickly than conventional drilling, and the resulting profits have made it popular with energy companies across the United States. However, conditions in Pennsylvania make fracking here particularly dangerous. It sits atop multiple shales, with the Marcellus shale already being exploited in the northeast, and recent surveys showing high reserve levels in the Utica shale below the western part of the state.

The toxic waste, euphemistically called "water," is still being deposited into riverside treatment plants and from there can enter the watershed, although regulators have clamped down on the practice in the last few months and it is due to stop in May. The Delaware River basin, the affected watershed in Bradford County, is the source of drinking water for 16 million people.

Public controversy had forced a moratorium on new wells, which ended this year. Republican state officials, particularly Gov. "Toxic Tom" Corbett, have wholeheartedly embraced fracking and made the practice even easier. Pennsylvania has been accused of "rubber-stamping" applications for natural gas wells, spending as little as 35 minutes reviewing the average site's paperwork and potential environmental impact. And Corbett has kept off the table any question of a state tax on drilling.

Meanwhile, the gas industry has been campaigning to greenwash natural gas as "the bridge to a clean energy future," particularly ExxonMobil, whose subsidiary XTO Energy had a 13,000-gallon fluid spill in Pennsylvania last year. Gas is promoted as a "cleaner" alternative to other fossil fuels because burning methane releases less carbon into the atmosphere per BTU than coal or oil.

But a Cornell study, published in the May issue of Cli-



(Above) April 11 demonstration in Albany, N.Y., against fracking in the Marcellus shale.

matic Change Letters, warns that gas from fracking actually has a worse impact on the environment than even coal. While carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas released by human activity into the atmosphere, its impact is relatively small compared to that of methane gas. One pound of methane is equivalent to over 100 pounds of carbon in the atmosphere. The study finds that even with a low rate of methane expulsion (around 8% of the gas extracted), fracking releases enough that, combined with the carbon emitted when the gas is burned, the overall contribution to climate change is greater than mining and burning coal.

In Philadelphia, the environmental group Protecting Our Waters has been at the forefront of opposition to fracking. It has raised awareness and resistance to unsafe drilling practices, including an Earth Day protest that coincided with the Bradford County blowout. The state government has responded not by listening but by placing Protecting Our Waters, which is a threat only to the profits of energy corporations, on a list of groups monitored under the pretext of "anti-terrorism" reports by the Israeli/American Institute of Terrorism Research and Response. This shameful abuse of power (the state

has also spied on antiwar groups, among others) has shown clearly which side the government is on.

The continued use of fracking in Pennsylvania and around the country reflects a reckless drive for profit with no regard to environmental or human impact. A moratorium on the practice should be put into effect immediately, and if proper environmental safeguards cannot be made, it should not continue at all. As long as fracking is done, the state needs to tax the energy corporations and force them to pay for any cleanup.

But natural gas is not a solution to our energy problems. We need to move entirely to renewable energy sources, and stop the burning of carbon-based fuels. This is one key component of a shift to an economy based on ecological and human needs, not profit. If we do not make this transition, we could all wind up in Gasland. ■

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... Teachers union

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sions later. This strategy is something like a person allowing a tiger to eat his arm in the hope that the tiger will be satisfied. But the taste of that arm only wets the tiger's appetite.

The mainstream media has applauded the legislation, as it would weaken the unions. At the same time, they have called for more flesh from the teachers' union. On April 14 the *Chicago Tribune* ran an editorial endorsing the proposed education "reforms," but at the same time it said, "Those reforms, should they be signed into law, don't mean lawmakers can pat themselves on the back and figure their long-term job is done. It isn't. Too many Chicago students need help right now."

"That's why we're glad to see a separate bill that would offer private school tuition support to as many as 30,000 Chicago school kids back on the Senate's agenda."

The *Tribune* views this education reform law as the first round in the decimation of public education; labor leaders should take them at their word. The ruling class and

their henchmen have become emboldened, not pacified, with the proposed new law and labor's surrender.

The last thing Chicago teachers, students, and parents needed was an emboldened Rahm Emmanuel, the mayor elect. Emmanuel, even before assuming office, has made it clear he has union busting on his mayoral agenda. Emmanuel has announced that he will appoint as CEO of the Chicago public schools Jean-Claude Brizard, the head of the Rochester, N.Y., school district, who in his tenure there sought to bust the teacher's union through concessions and charter schools. Emmanuel has also declared war on the city's other unions, demanding they take concessions.

Although the proposals in Illinois are not as extreme as in Wisconsin and Ohio, Illinois' politicians have accomplished for the ruling class what the Tea Party governors have not—labor's submission to concessions.

In order to successfully fight back against the anti-worker assault foisted on teachers and other public workers labor, must adopt a new strategy—breaking with its dead-end dependence on supporting the political lesser evil. The lessons of Illinois may ultimately be more important than the lessons of Madison for the labor movement. ■

Profit system fuels food crisis

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Globally, more than 935 million people go hungry every day. The dramatic rise in food prices adds millions monthly to the mass of starving people. It precipitated the "Arab Awakening" from Tunisia to Egypt. It sparked food riots in Bangladesh, and now confronts Afghanistan with a 50 per cent shortfall in funding for food operations.

Food prices soared 36 per cent over the past year, according to the World Bank. Why? Severe weather and crop diseases certainly took their toll.

But other causes are man-made (even if you think climate change is not). Market speculation and the diverting of farm land to biofuels are two of the causes, and they are no freaks of nature. They are the products of capitalist greed.

Corn, cassava, canola, and sugar are increasingly used to make ethanol to power cars and trucks. "Global maize prices rose about 73 per cent in the six months after June 2010," said the World Bank's Agriculture and Rural Development Team. Forty per cent of the U.S. corn crop now goes into ethanol production.

Using food to make fuel is profitable for business, but as a substitute for oil, it's like flipping humanity from the frying pan into the fire—with no reduction of the impact of carbon-burning on nature.

Since world population is predicted to top 9 billion by 2050, the urgency of increasing food production cannot be overstated. At the same time, the hypocrisy of the capitalist rulers should never be underestimated. In 2008, leaders of the G20 countries pledged \$22 billion over three years to help poor countries increase food production. According to the World Bank fund set up to administer this money, only \$400 million has so far been received.

How long will the starving wait? How long can capitalism get away with murder? ■

Egyptian workers organize for political and economic rights



Arm Nabil / AP

By ANDREW POLLACK

On Friday, April 8, hundreds of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square to demand that Mubarak and his clique be put on trial for their crimes. In the early hours of the next morning, the military savagely attacked those still in the square, killing two. But in a sign of the depth of the masses' continuing pressure, on April 13, the military had to give in to demands that Mubarak and his two sons be arrested.

One of the chants heard before the army moved in was "Tantawi is Mubarak and Mubarak is Tantawi", referring to Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, who heads the military council running the country.

A statement from the Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt on the attacks pointed out that "the Military Council is the guardian of dictatorship and corruption. The attacks ... put the Military Council clearly in the camp of counter-revolution. ... Now is the time to get rid of them, just as the revolutionaries finished off Mubarak.

"After today nobody will be fooled by the slogan 'the army and the people are one hand.' For the past two months that the Military Council has held power, it has crushed protests and tortured demonstrators and dragged them before the military courts. ... We must continue our revolution until the country has been cleansed and Mubarak's Military Council has been removed from power."

As Egyptian human rights lawyer Gamal Eid pointed out at a forum sponsored by Al-Awda NY, justice has yet to be served for the past victims of the Mubarak regime or for those newly framed up or repressed, and aid from solidarity activists in the U.S. is sorely needed. This task will become increasingly urgent as the battle over the shape of the post-Mubarak economy unfolds, likely leading to new clashes and repression.

On April 16, Reuters quoted several mainstream economists on how "growth" is only possible in Egypt if "populism" is set aside. Such growth requires leaders to "resist pressure from the very protesters whose rage

has reshaped the region.

"The problem is how do you in short run satisfy the economic demands of the people who were in the streets protesting?" said Mohsin Khan, the IMF's former director for the Middle East. "My worry in the short run is the return to populist policy, back-tracking and undoing reforms" (those reforms being privatization, cutting subsidies and services, etc.).

In a repulsive insight into the thinking of these bankers, World Bank head Robert Zoellick provided an amazingly callous and twisted account of how the revolutions began. He relegated the martyrdom of Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian fruit vendor who immolated himself after police seized his scales and slapped his face, to the outrage of a small businessman against government bureaucracy! Said Zoellick: "Keep in mind that the late Mr. Bouazizi was basically driven to burn himself alive because he was harassed with red tape." Government, said Zoellick, should "quit harassing those people and let them have a chance to start some small businesses."

Meanwhile, Egyptian workers are pushing ahead on both economic and political fronts. In April *Labor Notes* reported on the fight of Egyptian teachers, who have demanded the impeachment of the education minister. Abdel Hafiz, a leader of the 40,000-member independent teachers union, said protesting teachers have demanded the arrest of Mubarak, increased pay, better working conditions, and the right for teachers to organize independent unions.

Hafiz noted that despite Mubarak's fall, the security apparatus "still controls everything in education." The education ministry is still dominated by Mubarak-appointed officials, and political security still watches teachers. Hundreds of teachers were fired and transferred during the pro-democracy demonstrations, and the union is seeking their reinstatement. At the same time, the union is fighting to raise "abysmally low" salaries, and decrease class sizes (some classrooms have 90 students).

Similar struggles are spreading in other industries. In

Syria intensifies repression

By the end of April, protests in Syria involved hundreds of thousands in every major city and town. In response, the Bashar al-Assad regime sent tanks, soldiers and security forces into several towns, including many suburbs of Damascus, and conducted raids on homes, detaining hundreds. Security forces have been following the wounded into hospitals and killing or arresting them. By May 1, at least 545 had been killed.

Eyewitnesses told *Al-Jazeera* that some army officers had refused orders by security forces to attack civilians and instead turned their guns on them.

Protests on April 22 were the occasion for the first public declaration of the Syrian Local Coordination Committee, a coalition of groups. The committee denounced the killings, torture, and arrests, and demanded the release of all political prisoners. It further demanded constitutional reforms to limit presidential terms, increase parliament's power, and legalize parties other than the Baath.

As in every other Arab country where protests have been met by repression, demands for reform have turned into calls for the regime's removal. And as in the rest of the region, the regime's turn to neoliberal

economic policies, leading to greater inequality, unemployment, and higher prices, has helped fuel the revolt. As in Libya, the current president's father, Hafez al-Assad, had nationalized many industries while not eliminating capitalism.

The Syrian regime long justified its repressive Emergency Law by pointing to the formal state of war with Israel. Both Assads had used false claims of being fighters against Zionism to stifle dissent. But Palestinians have not forgotten how in 1976 the Baathist regime entered the Lebanese civil war against left nationalist and Palestinian forces, and massacred Palestinians in Tal al-Zaatar refugee camp.

The regime joined the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in 1990 and the "war on terror" after 9/11. It tortured Maher Arar when he was handed over to security services as part of the [U.S.] controversial extraordinary rendition policy.

But Assad isn't fooling the masses, who on April 24 revived a chant used earlier against him: "Bashar al-Assad, you traitor, you coward! Take your soldiers to the Golan," chiding Assad for turning his forces on his own people instead of recapturing the Golan Heights.

— ANDREW POLLACK

(Left) Egyptians shout anti-Mubarak slogans during protest rally in Cairo's Tahrir Square, April 10.

hopes of uniting them, as well as to deepen working-class leadership of the revolution, labor activists have begun organizing new worker-based parties.

The Egyptian newspaper *Al Masry Al Youm* noted calls for such parties since the outbreaks of strikes in the textile industry five years ago, and profiled activists involved in new formations such as the Democratic Workers' Party. One obstacle is a ban on class-based parties in the interim constitution and the new Political Parties Law. But the paper said party activists were ignoring the ban, just as they have ignored the military council's threat to ban strikes.

Kamal Khalil, a leader of the DWP and member of the Revolutionary Socialists, which is building the party, said he wasn't concerned about regime interference: "We don't want a party based on paper, we want a party based in factories and workplaces. ... Whether or not the law allows it, we shall continue to work toward the establishment of the DWP."

Hundreds have joined the party, including many factory and transport workers. The party's draft program demands radical agricultural reforms, rent/lease controls on farms, and governmental subsidies for seeds. It also calls for combating corruption and re-evaluating Egypt's economic ties to Israel.

Kamal al-Fayyomy, a labor-activist and textile worker at state-owned Egyptian Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahalla, is another founding DWP member. He told the paper it was working with other labor groups to demand a minimum wage of \$200 per month, for trade-union freedom, and improved working conditions. Workers in Mahalla are struggling to have privatized companies return to the public sector, he said.

Al Masry also reported on the Revolutionary Workers' Coalition, which is not a party but rather an attempt to forge coordinated action among workers, farmers, NGOs, and parties "for the realization of the rights of all laborers, regardless of their political affiliations." The coalition held a preparatory conference on April 8 and demanded the right to strike and form independent unions, a monthly minimum wage, and a maximum salary for administrators not more than 10 times the minimum wage.

Another profile of new workers' parties, this one in *Al Jazeera*, noted that the formation of such parties comes at the same time as struggles for nationalization were picking up: "It has become a familiar scene in Egypt. Security forces attempted to hold back the crowd, but were swiftly overwhelmed by the chanting masses.

"The setting was a small, provincial courthouse in Shubra El-Kom, an industrial town 70 km north of Cairo, but the modest surroundings disguised a case that will shape the course of Egypt's ongoing revolution. April 19 marked the latest showdown in a battle between the Indonesian owners of one of the country's largest textile firms and their disgruntled employees."

Furious over lay-offs, a lack of safety provisions and imposed changes in working hours, workers have called regular strikes since the Indonesian takeover in 2007. The workers' lawyer said the current owners bought the company for \$3 million when it was worth \$174 million.

After the court postponed issuing a ruling until May 10, workers gathered outside and sang songs and yelled chants popular in Tahrir Square, such as "thowra thowra huta nasr" ("revolution, revolution until victory"). Workers are demanding the plant be renationalized, and hope victory will spark struggles for renationalization of all other major companies.

Another sign that the revolution continues to deepen is a meeting held in Tahrir Square on April 22 of popular committees from around Egypt. *Al Masry Al Youm* reported the meeting was intended "to inaugurate a prolonged coordinated effort." Committees set up to provide security during the uprising on a neighborhood or factory basis are now dedicated "to protecting the gains of the revolution."

The committees "engage in oversight over government committees and municipalities—which a majority on the square yesterday said should be dissolved." About 5000 attended the event, named the "Inaugural Conference of Popular Committees for the Protection of the Revolution."

"Representatives from different groups say that pro-Mubarak individuals are deceiving many by pretending to be a part of the revolution in order to escape punishment, or to maintain their power.

"Representatives from Suez, a city that saw some of the fiercest battles between protesters and government forces during the revolution, say that they are in place to counter the continued presence of corrupt officials in office." Said one Suez activist: "We must stay formed, because all of Suez's money is still being robbed by those running the public companies in the city."

One participant said that Tahrir Square, site of huge demonstrations during the uprising, should "continue as a form of popular assembly." Participants reiterated calls for speedy trials for corrupt figures and purging those still in public institutions. They demanded the end of military tribunals as well as the release of detained activists. ■

... NATO's war in Libya

Park Ji-Hwan / AFP / Getty Images



(continued from page 1)

for massive attacks without regard to civilian "collateral damage," allegedly to stop greater loss of civilian life later on.

Cordesman called explicitly for targeting "Qaddafi, his extended family, and his key supporters," without worrying about other civilians who would die as a result: "Hard, and sometimes brutal, choices need to be made between limited civilian casualties and collateral damage during the decisive use of force and an open-ended war of attrition that will produce far higher cumulative civilian casualties and collateral damage."

The likelihood of such barbaric tactics being used was heightened by events last month in the Ivory Coast, where French and UN armies brazenly removed from power Laurent Gbagbo, who had lost a recent presidential election but refused to step down. These actions in Libya and the Ivory Coast are a sign that after the "successes" of regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan, the imperialists feel less and less need to pretty up their interventions with lies or even rationalizations.

Can the mass revolt be revived?

On April 16, four analysts and activists co-authored a column in *Al-Ahram* titled "Using Libya to Abort the Arab Spring," which makes a very useful distinction between four conflicts in Libya: (1) Gadhafi versus the Libyan people; (2) the Western war against Libya; (3) rivalry among the aggressors over how the war is conducted and over the future spoils; (4) a yet-to-be begun conflict that the authors recommend

be started now—that of the Libyan masses "not only against Gadhafi but also against the forces trying to occupy Libya."

We wholeheartedly endorse the call for this fourth conflict, without which a post-Gadhafi Libya, or one carved up between him and the TNC, would be even more firmly under imperialism's domination.

Ironically, the new tactics used by Gadhafi's forces—mixing with civilian populations, camouflaging weapons, and driving pickup trucks instead of military vehicles—can provide an opening for the masses to re-enter the battle against him. The battles are no longer limited to Gadhafi's tanks and missiles versus the imperialists and their planes. Once again, it appears, decisive battles will be fought street by street.

However, to effectively combat both Gadhafi and his imperialist rivals, the masses must revive and deepen their own organizations. No one elected the Transitional National Council. Neither the rank-and-file fighters opposing Gadhafi guns in hand nor the broader masses in Libya's cities have any duty to obey a single order from TNC-appointed officers. And by the same token, the masses have no obligation to respect any of the political agreements for a post-Gadhafi Libya now being forged by imperialist diplomatic officials and TNC representatives.

Instead, the workers and peasants of Libya need to begin organizing now—starting with neighborhood, workplace, and militia gatherings—for a nationwide revolutionary constituent assembly of the sort called for by the left in both Egypt and Tunisia to enable the masses to vote democratically on what kind of government they want.

Such an assembly could seek to organize its own armed forces to battle both Gadhafi and the imperialists. And it could put forward a revolutionary economic and social program to meet the masses' needs, starting with the kind of political liberties that an imperialist-dominated TNC would never grant, and including such measures as putting Libya's oil for the very first time under the control of its workers so that its revenues go for the working masses' benefit.

A revitalized grassroots militia and a constituent assembly pro-

moting a revolutionary program could win the confidence of Libyans who have been misled into fighting on the side of Gadhafi, as well as the masses of Tripoli, whose uprising is in the final instance key to ridding the country both of Gadhafi and of imperialism.

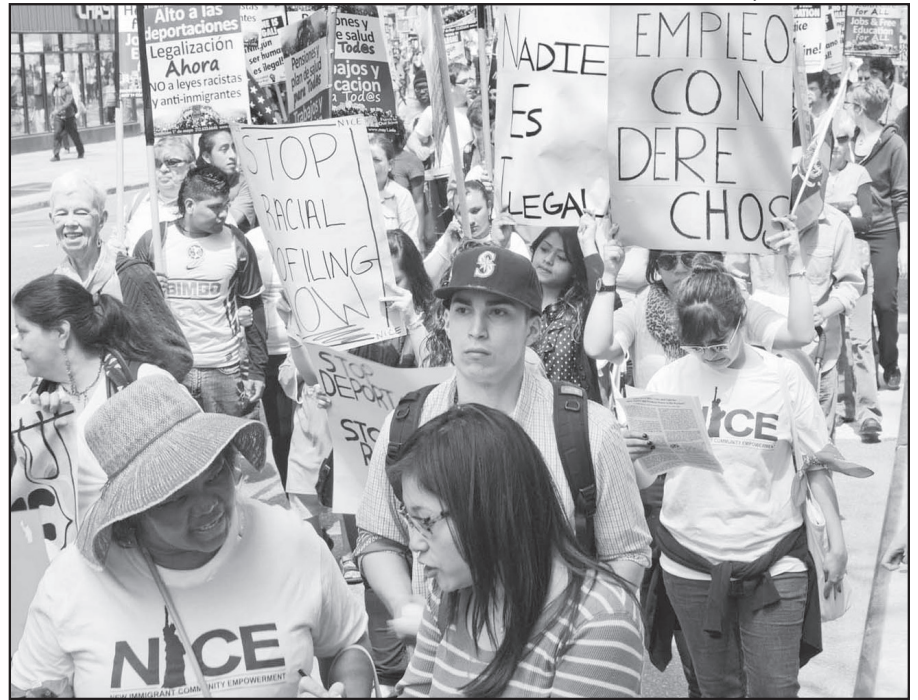
To provide the Libyan masses with

the space for such organizing, activists fighting against imperialist wars around the world must redouble our efforts to demand: U.S./NATO, Hands Off Libya! Victory to the Uprising! ■

(Photo left) March 26 Libya protest in Seoul, South Korea.

MAY DAY 2011

Tony Savino / Socialist Action



(Above) Thousands marched in New York on May 1 for the rights of immigrants and all workers.

Socialist Action salutes all workers on May Day 2011—the 125th anniversary of International Workers' Day! We recognize that workers have built our society and that we have the power to change its course towards democracy, justice, sustainability, and socialism.

The international working class today faces many struggles, and we take this moment to reflect on some of the current challenges, while working to inspire collective action for worker justice in an organized and energetic manner.

We call for justice and legalization for the millions of immigrant workers who helped revive May Day in the U.S. in 2006. Immigrant workers have long faced criminalization and dehumanization. Right now vicious anti-immigrant legislation is sweeping the U.S., while deportations of our immigrant sisters and brothers are at record levels. This May Day Socialist Action calls for an unconditional legalization for all immigrant workers.

We understand that the immigrant workers' struggle reflects the struggles of all workers. An injury to one is an injury to all!

Socialist Action stands in solidarity

with public sector workers in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan and across the U.S. and around the globe who are courageously taking on the boss-class and their government lackeys who seek to destroy workers' living standards while slashing taxes and regulations on the wealthy elite. In the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression we say, "The rich, with their incessant drive for profit and their greedy gambling with the housing and financial markets, caused this crisis. Make the rich pay!"

We stand with our sisters and brothers in the Middle East and North Africa taking the power back from thoroughly corrupt, anti-worker dictatorships across the region. Recognizing the autonomy and right to self-determination of each nation, we reject any outside imperialist interference from the U.S. or subordinate NATO forces in these struggles.

We call for political and economic democracy and justice for all workers in North Africa and the Middle East. The workers united will never be defeated! ■

Palestine: Support the Right of Return!

By ANDREW POLLACK

On May 15, Palestinian refugees from camps in countries surrounding Israel will march to its borders and demand to be allowed to enter and return to the lands from which they were ethnically cleansed in 1948.

The date is commemorated annually as Nakba (Catastrophe) Day. This year refugee and political organizations in the camps decided to move from declaring their right to return to actually implementing it, even if only symbolically. The action was announced by the Organizing Committee of Maseerat al 'Awda, the Return to Palestine March, after a meeting of Palestinian and Lebanese civil society organizations and in consultation with Palestinian groups around the world.

Said the organizers: "The March will serve to reaffirm the rights of return and of the liberation of Palestine

from the river to the sea, and to reaffirm that these rights are inalienable, irrevocable, and non-negotiable." The committee also called for solidarity demonstrations at Israeli embassies. U.S. supporters are targeting the UN to draw attention to resolutions passed by that body supporting the right of return, as well as the basis of that right in international law.

These actions come after revelations by *Al Jazeera* of attempts by the Palestinian Authority to barter away the right of return in exchange for a pseudostate in 22% of historic Palestine. And they come as the PA, failing to gain even such a bantustan from Israel, has turned to efforts to get the UN to vote in September to recognize such a mutilated vestige of Palestine.

Organizers of the march said one of their goals is to confirm "the centrality of the Palestine issue to all Arabs," and they place it squarely in the context of

the regional Arab revolt.

In an April 20 *Haaretz* column, Aluf Benn pointed out that Israel has been in a state of emergency since 1948—longer than any regime in the region. This parallel between Israel and other tyrannical regimes was drawn out further by Marwan Bishara in *Al Jazeera*, in a column titled "The Middle East's oldest dictatorship," in which he explained that all of Israel's policies—in fact, its very existence as a colonial state—makes the removal of its tyranny over the Palestinian people the longest running and most important unresolved task in the fight for democracy in the region.

What else but a dictatorship would one call a state that by practice and definition excludes on a racial basis the overwhelming majority of its former residents from their land, from civil and legal rights, from jobs and services?

Despite the substantive meaninglessness of the September UN vote, we must be ready for the possibility that Israel will use it as an excuse to launch a new war.

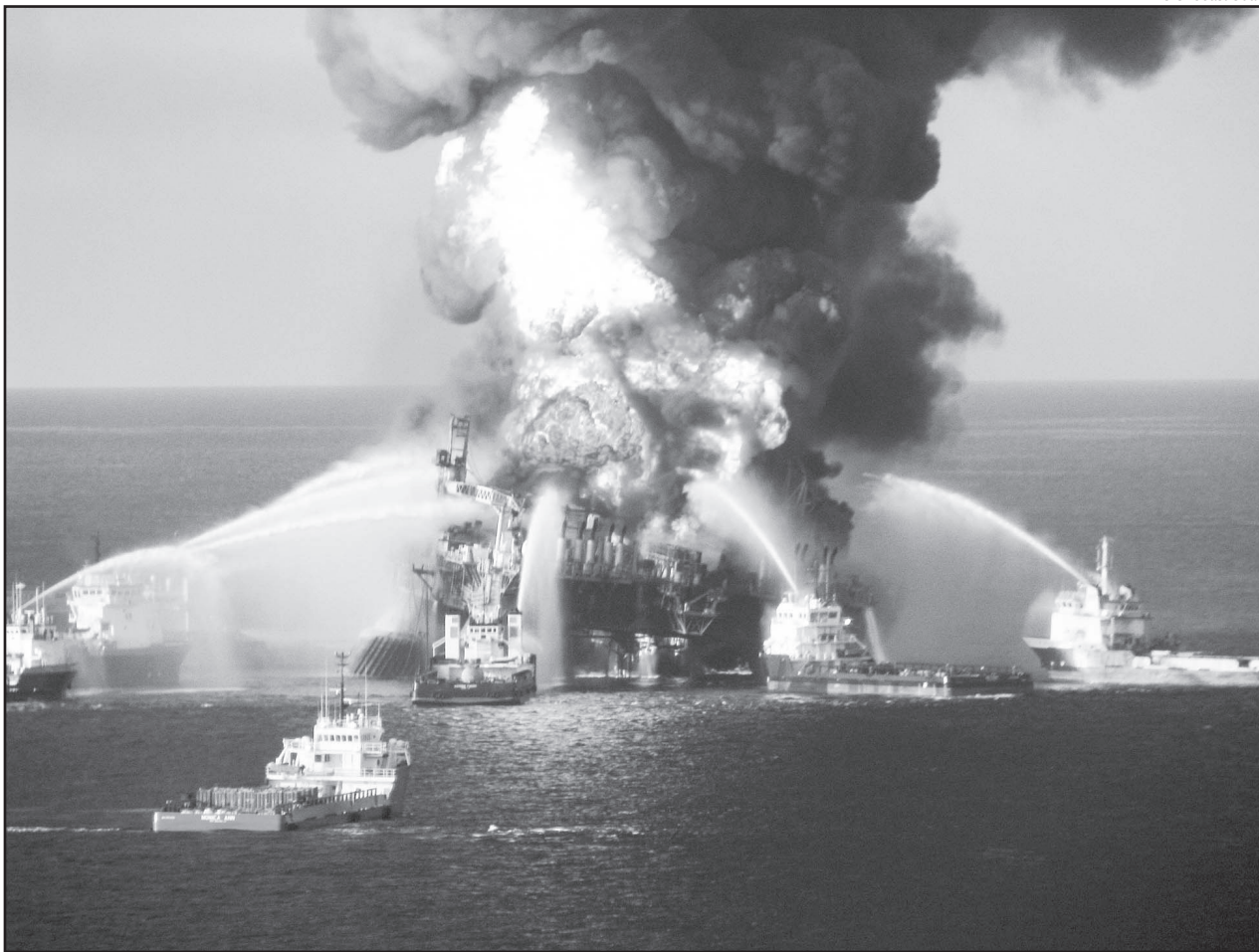
We can also expect violence to be used against the latest Freedom Flotilla trying to break the Israeli siege of Gaza in May. And we must be ready for repressive action against those trying to implement their right of return on May 15 as well as against their supporters.

Finally, as we go to press, a reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah has been announced. This also increases the danger of an Israeli attack—not because a unified Hamas/Fatah government would seriously seek liberation, but because the newfound unity would encourage calls for greater resistance to Zionism from the ranks of both factions.

Supporters of Palestine must be ready to mobilize against any such attacks. And we must do all we can to maximize turnout for May 15 Right of Return events. ■

GULF OIL SPILL: ONE YEAR LATER

U.S. Coast Guard



By CHRISTINE FRANK

On April 20, the anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon Rig explosion, Gulf Coast residents held sunrise memorial vigils for the 11 workers who were killed as a result of the criminal negligence of British Petroleum. Others held similar actions elsewhere around the country in solidarity.

One year later, the media has been asking the question, "How bad is the damage?" and presenting different views. The federal government maintains that crude oil-consuming bacteria ate up all the oil, so the 4.9 billion barrels spilled is completely gone, while Gulf Coast Chambers of Commerce are chiming in and urging tourists to "Come on down. The water's fine!"

This view is underscored by various researchers from major institutions within the university/industrial complex, whose work is funded in part by Energy Giants such as BP. They say luck had something to do with it because of favorable ocean currents that did not carry huge amounts of oil ashore. Also, allowing the Mississippi River to increase its flow closer to natural levels helped to push the oil away from the delta. They do not like to talk about the 1.8 million gallons of toxic dispersants that were sprayed over vast areas to break up the oil into fine droplets to make it less noticeable.

The administrator of the BP Claims Fund, Kenneth Feingold, cheerily predicts that the region will be completely recovered by 2012. From this, we are to conclude that Mother Nature can handle just about any assault with which big corporate polluters assail her. The bright picture of the pollution having all magically gone away is being presented as Gulf Coast residents report that tar balls are still rolling up on shore, marshes are encrusted with thick asphalt mats, the sand is riddled with crumbly surface residue balls, and white beaches are being marbled with oil at the surf/sand interface—meaning it is still in the seawater.

Given the experience of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, we know that ecosystem damage in the Gulf of Mexico will be a cumulative process occurring over several generations and will take even longer to recover, if at all. For example, the herring population of Prince William Sound appeared to be fine immediately after the spill, and then crashed the fourth season. The fishery has not recovered to this day.

Every environmental disaster goes through acute short-term and long-term phases of damage. Last year, we witnessed the acute short-term phase characterized by a blight of thousands of oiled birds, dead sea turtles, beached mammals, fish kills, shellfish die-offs, and withered marsh grasses. It gave us an idea of the immediate destruction, at least in terms of what was visible. However, we do not know precisely how many shorebirds and marine animals died and sank to the bottom of the sea, never to be counted. The visible carcasses represent only a small percentage of the actual mortalities. Estimates range anywhere from eight to 50 times greater for those cruelly slaughtered.

A rosy picture is presented of pollution having all magically gone away — as Gulf Coast residents report tar balls on the shore.

Scientists are only beginning to observe the long-term effects as they cascade through the marine and coastal ecosystems. Since January of this year, fatalities have included 77 bottlenose dolphins, five times the average, and about as many small whales, along with 250 sea turtles. It is likely that the dead cetaceans were born during the spill and were too weak to survive. Many of the dead dolphins were either stillborn or weak infants, indicating that oily contaminants were passed *in utero* from the mother. For a small population such as the sperm whales, who number only about 1600 in the Northern Gulf, just a few unnatural deaths can have a devastating effect.

In terms of primary production, algae and seaweed are slow, suffering from photosynthetic impairment, and mangroves are sickly. New satellite data show that the Louisiana marshes failed last summer by well over the 24 square miles usually lost each year to erosion. Instead of greening up this season, coastal wetlands are browning down, according to the NASA imagery. This means reduced nurseries and feeding grounds for shrimp and other species as well as eroded storm surge barriers due to vegetation die-off. Ironically, the oyster beds were damaged (80-90%) not only by oil but by the freshwater flushed into the Gulf from the Mississippi, and will probably take 10 years to recover.

Contrary to government claims, the oil is persisting and has not gone away. In the benthic region of ocean around the Macondo wellhead, University of Georgia oceanographer Samantha Joye and her team of researchers witnessed from a submersible a scene of total destruction. The seafloor is now a huge graveyard strewn with dead crabs, sea stars, fans and cucumbers, burrowing & tube worms, and corals that either suffocated or were poisoned. There is nothing left of that deep-sea community, which is now enshrouded under 10 centimeters (4 in.) of crude and dispersant residues, including elemental black carbon in the form of soot from oil burned at the surface. None of this is degrading.

The filter and detrital-feeding species on the seafloor serve a vital role in stimulating microbial activity and oxygenating sediments in ways that affect surface life. The data Joye collected from sediment cores show that the oil and gas at depth have lingered much longer than suggested by the preposterous oil budget from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Joye also faults NOAA for having completely ignored the 500,000 tons of gaseous hydrocarbons that were released with the 86-day gusher and included methane and pentane. The deep-sea plumes that were spotted consisted of oil that had both atomized as the crude burst from the wellhead as well as oil dispersed into droplets by the Corexit.

Also in the plumes were large amounts of methane and methane oxides that rose to 75,000 times the normal background rate. This resulted in small-scale zones of extensive and persistent oxygen depletion, as microbial processes broke down the gases under high pressures and low temperatures. Very little of the methane is still present in the water. Therefore, much of it rose through the water column and entered the atmosphere as a powerful greenhouse gas, contributing to global warming, while the pentane continues to be a serious risk to the health of sea life and humans.

Although Gulf microbes have evolved to consume petroleum from the basin's over 1000 natural seeps, they were able to degrade only about 10 percent of the well's total discharge, according to Joye. The probable reason for this is that they were handicapped by the dispersants and became overwhelmed and asphyxiated by the settled oil that turned into a mucilaginous matrix on the seabed.

In addition, NOAA just opened the last of the federal waters that were closed to commercial and recreational fishing—the 1041 square miles over the wellhead. The agency did so, claiming that the fish samples they subjected to chemical and "sensory" analysis—wholly inadequate "sniff & taste" tests—contained oil-related compounds and dispersants well below FDA "levels of concern." Our advice: don't eat the seafood because there are no safe levels for the consumption of toxic hydrocarbons no matter how small the dose.

The long-term ecological effects of the BP Gulf Oil Spill Disaster will be felt from the bottom up, beginning with base of the food chain. All eggs and larvae of marine species that came into contact with the oil dispersants would have perished for certain, which means that significant portions of last year's offspring were obliterated. The impact on populations of these "cryptic mortalities" or "phantom die-offs" will become apparent on down the line—if not this season, then later.

The contaminants on the seafloor, in the water column, and along the coasts will have their insidious effects as well. Marine biologists who have introduced healthy bacteria and phytoplankton to contaminated seawater samples found genotoxic and mutagenic effects on the organisms, which were evident in mutations, tumors, cancers, and general weakness that makes species more susceptible to prey and vulnerable to disease and other stresses such as climate change. Those effects will be heritable and impact future generations.

Much more needs to be learned about the extent of this ecological catastrophe. It will take years to assess immune system strength, disease resistance, and reproductive viability among the affected species. Unfortunately, BP is stalling about paying the next installment of the \$500 million (\$50 million a year for 10 years) it promised for independent research on the environmental impacts of the spill.

Springtime in the Gulf is a crucial period for the observation of spawning, nesting, and habitat status, but the money will not be available apparently until after June from the funding board, half of whose members have been hand-picked by BP. Plus, we're talking about a murder scene from which evidence should be recovered as soon as possible. The research will not be done entirely independently either since it will be overseen by BP contractors—scientists and consultants they have recruited and bought off.

On the other hand, BP and the federal government are already doing research for the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) to determine the harm done to "ecosystem services" from which humans profit. Its main objective is to arrive at BP's liability. For that reason, only commercially important species will be examined by the NRDA, ignoring others vital for the healthy functioning of dynamic ecosystems. This scientifically abysmal and legally driven process is designed to put a price tag on death and destruction, and independent researchers with any integrity are highly critical of its approach. Plus, it is not known if any of the NRDA information will be released to the

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Japan nuclear crisis continues unabated

By CHRISTINE FRANK

On March 11, Northeastern Japan was struck by a Magnitude 9.0 megathrust earthquake, followed by a powerful tsunami from which the nation is still struggling to recover. The human-made part of the disaster is also still in progress at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant One, where three of its six reactors have experienced hydrogen explosions and partial meltdowns (70-80%).

A fourth unit had a self-sustaining zirconium oxide reaction when its spent fuel rods were exposed to fresh air because their storage pool was cracked by the earthquake and has been leaking ever since. Its fuel rods are emitting gamma rays, which go into the atmosphere, bounce off the air molecules through “sky shine” and rain back down on the site, making work around the plant extremely difficult. The pool could also be releasing volatile plutonium, the most deadly substance known.

Nuclear engineer and Vermont Yankee activist Arne Gundersen believes that Unit 2, which has a hole in its reactor vessel bottom, is still in serious trouble. It is not cooling, and the reactor pressure readings appear to indicate the presence of hot hydrogen gas. The pressure in its containment—the box enclosing the reactor—is non-existent, indicating that the explosion caused a leak.

Gundersen also believes that Unit 1 has reached periodic criticality because of the neutron beam that was detected 13 times along with the presence of Chlorine-38, Tellurium-129, and radioiodine-131 & 132. The Chlorine-38 isotope does not exist in nature. Therefore, it could have come from only one thing—the splitting of uranium atoms whose neutrons were being absorbed by the *natural* Chlorine-37 in the seawater the workers were injecting to cool the reactors.

Tellurium-129 has a half-life of only 70 minutes. So it can exist only if there has been fission in the last half day. From this, Gundersen has concluded that Unit 1 has been experiencing an on/off fission or “inadvertent criticality” because the water with which they flood the reactor boils off, igniting a new chain reaction each time temperatures rise.

Areva is the French nuclear engineering firm that is providing technical assistance to the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), the utility that owns the plant. At an invitation-only seminar at Stanford University, Areva nuclear engineer Alan Hanson said of the Fukushima cataclysm, “Clearly, we are witnessing one of the greatest disasters in modern times,” even while he was minimizing the radiation levels in his power point presentation.

Nonetheless, deadly radioactive fallout has been released into the atmosphere, ocean, soil, food, and drinking water, endangering the Japanese people as well as the rest of the planet. An atmospheric plume has been carried around the globe by prevailing wind patterns, and the enormous amounts of radioactive water leaking or being purposely discharged from the plant into the sea are being swept across the Pacific by ocean currents, reaching the shores of the Americas.

The situation in Japan has been continuously out of control and is yet to be stabilized, as temporary contract workers—whose lives are being sacrificed—have struggled unsuccessfully to get the stricken plant’s cooling systems back on line. Many of them have lost their families and homes. They are toiling in lethal radiation levels without hope and under tremendous pressure and stress, yet the fate of the world is in their hands.

The facility is in its death throes, and TEPCO has admitted that its crippled nuclear power plant will have to be scrapped. Company officials have acknowledged that it could take up to nine months to get the plant into cold shutdown, assuming that further setbacks would not delay the process.

TEPCO does not plan to bury the facility in a steel-reinforced concrete sarcophagus as was done at Chernobyl, where the entombment has gaping holes and is leaking. Instead, they plan to develop specialized equipment to remove the damaged fuel and store it. It’s a good question as to how and to where it will be transported. It will take decades for the plant to be decommissioned once they cool down the still melting fuel rods.

However, they must still pump out 18.5 million gallons of contaminated water from turbine buildings and nearby trenches before they can get the cooling systems back up and running. They are using Areva technologies to reduce the radioactivity and desalinate the seawater so it can be used to cool the reactors. Because of widespread damage to the containments, storage pools, and plumbing, enormous amounts of radioactive water are leaking throughout the plant and entering the sea, threatening marine ecosystems



Toru Yamanaka / AFP / Getty Images

(Above) Protester at anti-nuclear rally outside TEPCO headquarters in Tokyo, April 9.

and the people, who depend upon the fisheries.

One of Japan’s most important farming regions is being completely irradiated, as is its groundwater. An ionizing plume has encircled Earth from the release of radioactive steam, three hydrogen explosions, and a zircalloy reaction, putting everyone at risk for cancer and threatening unborn fetuses with birth deformities and children with leukemia and thyroid cancer.

The irresponsibility of the Japanese government is utterly astounding, but typical. Originally the accident severity was rated at five, the equivalent of Three Mile Island, which is bad enough. Then it was upgraded to seven, as severe as Chernobyl. Yet to quell public fear and outrage, the government has stalled on mass evacuations until they are now way too late in terms of the cumulative exposure of the local people.

They have deliberately delayed a full, forced emergency evacuation because they prefer to downplay the severe health impacts for which the population has been at risk since the get-go. The authorities have lackadaisically set the deadline at the end of May for another 10,000 to be evacuated. Fortunately, many have already left. But because Japan is an aging nation, there are many elderly who have been abandoned, and the government apparently is doing nothing to help them.

We cannot afford to allow the capitalist system to gamble with human lives and the biosphere, which as we know from the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster of 1986, will lose a tremendous amount of biodiversity. This will certainly be true for the marine ecosystem. It is essential that we voice our opposition to this absurdly expensive and deadly form of energy, which threatens the health of the entire planet. The technological wonder of nuclear power is a horrible lie, and at its inception was nothing but a cover for the proliferation of nuclear warheads.

On the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Russian and Ukrainian heads of state called for stricter safety standards for nuclear power plants. This will do little good since the technology is inherently unsafe on every conceivable level. Plus, the radioactive wastes will remain on the planet, affecting life for thousands of generations in perpetuity. There is virtually no “away,” so radiation is forever.

We cannot allow the U.S. government and corpora-

tions to Nuke the Climate by duping the American people into thinking that nuclear reactors are eco-friendly. Given the routine venting of radioactive steam and the discharge of tritium-laced water, the likelihood of catastrophic accident due to equipment malfunction, operator error—and yes, natural disaster—in addition to the endless waste problem, nukes are not a clean form of power and never will be regardless of what Obama’s new energy standard purports them to be.

We can all appreciate the fact that heavily subsidized TEPCO has been ordered to compensate the victims of its recklessness and cost-cutting with a measly million yen, or \$12,000. Since we know they fudged on their earthquake assessment, will anyone be charged with criminal negligence? Has anyone from BP been charged for the Gulf oil spill, for that matter? Clearly, the *real* culprit here is the ruthless drive for profits at any cost, which to the capitalist class is just fine as long as it’s Mother Earth, toiling humanity, and the rest of the biosphere that pay the price—and indeed, we are.

There is no need for this nuclear madness when we can harness the benign energy produced through nuclear fusion by the sun, using the clean, renewable, *non-radioactive* technologies we already have at our disposal—wind turbines and solar arrays.

We must build a movement to halt the “Nuclear Renaissance” being planned and demand that they shut down *all* existing reactors, whether they are on earthquake fault lines or not, and begin the lengthy process of decommissioning them immediately. The entire U.S. fleet of 104 nuclear power stations are aging and dilapidated, yet the government has seen fit to extend their licenses and allow increased output, while the radioactive wastes continue to pile up *ad infinitum* with no solution for safe storage.

We must end this brutal war on nature. Ultimately, the only way to do that is to establish a zero-waste, zero-growth, steady-state, green, sustainable, democratically planned and collectively run ecosocialist economy, which puts ecological and human needs before private profits. No more nukes! ■

(continued from page 6)

public because of litigation in the courts or how much will be suppressed to help BP’s case.

Nothing has essentially changed with the country’s energy policies. The Carbon Barons are still pursuing the last barrel of oil, tank of natural gas, and boxcar of coal. After rewriting some regulations, the Obama administration lifted the moratorium on deepwater drilling last autumn. The Department of the Interior (DOI) has five permits pending that were approved by crooked regulators back in April 2010. Environmental groups are suing DOI Secretary Ken Salazar to force him to rescind them.

The President’s National Oil Spill Commission, which was assigned to investigate the BP blowout, has made its recommendations, calling for better drilling equipment and safety measures with great-

er oversight and accountability. We’ve heard it all before, and it will make little difference because energy extraction is inherently hazardous. Meanwhile, Shell is going ahead with plans to drill in the fragile Arctic Circle, where if a major spill were to occur in icy waters, it would be a thousand times worse, especially because the industry would still be employing the same useless mop-and-bucket-brigade clean-up methods. Even the Coast Guard’s Thad Allen said, “You can’t lay boom in frozen seas.”

Under the circumstances, there will be more blowouts, spills, ecological devastation, illness, misery, and climate change unless we nationalize the energy industry and put it under workers’ control so that we can conduct a nationwide emergency conversion to renewable energy and clean mass transit. It will take nothing less than an ecosocialist revolution to accomplish that. ■



(Left) Pro-Outtara militia patrols Abidjan, April 13.

French, UN forces install new president in the Ivory Coast

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Weeks after Alassane Ouattara replaced Laurent Gbagbo as president, the Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) remains in chaos. The capital city, Abidjan, has been wracked by looting and gun battles by rival armies professing loyalty to Ouattara. The discord came to a head on April 27, when Ibrahim Coulibaly, commander of the so-called Invisible Commandos, was killed in a firefight with other pro-Ouattara troops.

The UN had declared Ouattara the winner in disputed elections last November, but Gbagbo refused to give up power—claiming vote fraud in the north of the country. Ouattara was able to enlist for his cause the Republican Forces of Ivory Coast (FRCI) and other militia mainly from the north. In the conflict, civilians died at the hands of soldiers from both sides. Millions fled their homes.

Ouattara's armies were able to win territory from Gbagbo's defenders in rapid fashion—until they got to Abidjan, where Ouattara was aided by some 10,000 French and UN "peace-keeping" troops.

The capture of Gbagbo on April 11 was made possible through the direct action of France—whose military forces are the best equipped in the country. French and UN helicopter gunships fired on loyalist

troops and arms depots close to Gbagbo's compound in Abidjan; French ground forces then occupied the area. Only after they had set the stage to their liking did the French allow the FRCI the honor of flushing Gbagbo from his bunker while photographers filmed the event.

Gbagbo's arrest and the inauguration of the Ouattara regime were applauded in the U.S. and European media as a gain for democracy against tyranny. Even the compliant African media hailed the event. Kenya's *The Star*, for example, stated: "Ouattara is the rightful president of Ivory Coast, and Gbagbo was a usurper. The French government was right to support his removal, even if they are accused of neo-colonialism."

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's *Le Potentiel* declared: "The international community's intervention in the Ivoirian crisis saved African democracy—a response to those who believe that democracy in Africa is just an illusion."

Unfortunately, Ouattara is hardly a democrat, having served as prime minister in the repressive regime of Houphouët-Boigny in the early 1990s. His standing in the West comes from the fact that, after two terms as a top official in the International Monetary Fund, he has shown himself to be constantly attentive to corporate and imperialist interests. On April

17, Ouattara spoke by phone to President Obama, who pledged support. The leaders reportedly discussed "the importance of re-establishing normal trade and assistance relationships to jump-start the Ivoirian private sector."

Gbagbo's early political orientation was quite different than that of his rival. Gbagbo was leader of the 1982 teachers' strike, a former political prisoner (Ouattara jailed him for the second time in 1992), and a professed social democrat. But like Ouattara, Gbagbo embraced the "structuralization" policies of recent years that handed over formerly nationalized industries and utilities to Western corporations. Despite Gbagbo's image as a leader who stood up to French governmental interference in the country, he was ready enough to purchase weapons from France and to welcome many French corporations seeking acquisition of Ivory Coast resources. He committed a "crime" in French eyes, however, by enabling U.S. and British interests to obtain oil industry concessions.

Since granting "independence" to the Ivory Coast in 1960, France continued to dominate the country economically and politically. Abidjan is a major regional hub for French banks and commodities brokers. French corporations own most of the utilities in the country, and French officials played a constant role through the years as advisors in Ivoirian government and economic sectors.

The Ivory Coast is a major prize of neo-colonialism—the largest economy in the region. It produces more than one-third of the world's yearly supply of cocoa, and other lucrative crops, such as coffee. In recent years, oil has risen to become the country's second major export.

The cocoa crop, in particular, brings huge profits to the corporate merchandisers in the United States and Europe, though the wages of the African farm laborers are paltry. Yet farm jobs have attracted immigrants to Ivory Coast from other West African countries that are even more impoverished. Most of the newcomers are settled in the (heavily Muslim) north of the country, where the majority of the cocoa plantations are located.

When in office, Gbagbo tried to latch

onto the scapegoating campaign initiated by earlier administrations against "foreigners" in the north who were "stealing jobs" from native Ivoirians. Ouattara too, when he was prime minister in the 1990s, endorsed issuing identity cards for "foreigners," a measure that was put forward as a means of raising state income. But then, Ouattara himself was (temporarily) excluded from running for office since his parents had emigrated from Burkina Faso.

It is important to understand that the regional, ethnic, and religious conflicts taking place throughout Africa result primarily from the underdevelopment, inequality, and demoralization that the imperialist countries have forced upon the region. And the imperialists have often attempted to deepen such cleavages in order to thwart a united opposition to their policies.

In Ivory Coast, for example, troops from the north were on the verge of taking over the entire country in 2002. But French and UN "peacekeepers" pushed them back, and established a borderline that divided the country into two distinct sectors. Rather than healing the disputes between the warring sides, however, the imperialist-imposed territorial division merely hardened the differences.

Now Ivory Coast has been militarily unified once again; Ouattara has pledged to U.S. officials that he will be the president "of all Ivoirians." However, the death of Commander Ibrahim Coulibaly in April underscores the danger that the country could still break up into warring fiefdoms and armies, as politicians jockey for power and privileges.

Though Ouattara might still rely on French or even U.S. troops to keep him in office, he would have to pay the price (which he seems willing to do) of allowing foreign capitalists to extend their control over the country's resources. And thus the cycle of poverty and desperation would continue.

Repairing the despoliation caused by the recent war, and healing the social divisions, are the main tasks of the moment for Ivory Coast. But at the same time, the working people and poor farmers need to make sure that proceeds from the country's bountiful resources are used to solve the needs of the masses—rather than squirreled away in French, American, or Swiss bank accounts. Fulfilling that task will take the construction of a nationwide working-class party with a revolutionary program. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"The Conspirator," directed by Robert Redford, written by James Solomon, starring James McAvoy, Kevin Kline, and Robin Wright.

On this 150th anniversary of the opening of the Civil War, Robert Redford and writer James Solomon have created a beautifully shot, intense legal drama of the period that parallels much of the U.S. administration's thinking since 9/11. The theme of their new film, "The Conspirator," is the arrest and conviction of those who conspired to take down the government. At the same time, the film is notable for its strong storyline about a mother, Mary Surratt's (Robin Wright) deep love for her son and her willingness to sacrifice herself to save him.

James McAvoy plays Frederick Aiken, a former Union captain who saw many of his comrades slaughtered. Aiken returns to his law practice, as the junior partner to Senator Reverdy Johnson (Tom Wilkinson, in a rather thankless role). Johnson has foisted the defense of Mary Surratt, a Southerner, on Aiken.

The film shows a victory celebration attended by Washington, D.C., society, politicians—including a smarmy, boorish Secretary of State Edward Stanton (Kevin Kline)—army officers, and their ladies. Someone asks if President Lincoln will be there. No, the president prefers the theater to a party.

That night, a man breaks into the home of Vice President Andrew Johnson (Dennis Clark) and tries to murder him. He survives; the would-be assassin escaped. At the same time, the actor, John Wilkes Booth (Toby Kebbell), sneaks into Lincoln's box at the theater and shoots him in the back of the head, jumps onto the stage shouting a "rebel" slogan, and breaks his ankle.

Booth is later shot dead, hiding in a burning barn. The conspirators had roomed at Mary Surratt's boarding house and held meetings there. Aiken discovers that

Above the Law



Booth was a friend of John Surratt, Mary's son.

Redford filmed the indoor scenes to give the impression of natural light—sunlight filtering through dusty windows into dark rooms. He also make us feel we are part of the mob moving along with police and Union soldiers carrying a wounded Lincoln (Gerald Bestrom) through a noisy, milling crowd. Besides being an emotional scene, it was interesting that they approached at least two houses before someone, finally realizing what the uproar was about, let them in.

Aiken, a patriot and ex-Union officer, is not happy defending the woman behind the slaying of the president. Though he detests Surratt, he balks at trying her—a U.S. citizen and a civilian—in a military tribunal, which is what Stanton demands. Aiken states, "Our forefathers wrote the Constitution to warn us against trying civilians in military courts. You have judged

Mary Surratt guilty before she's proved innocent."

Robin Wright makes for a commanding Mary Surratt. Dressed in black with a voluminous black veil over her face, steely and jut-jawed, you never once forget that she is a Catholic and the widow of a Confederate soldier. But is she the head of a group of eight conspirators aiming to bring down the Union?

When Surratt's conspirators march into the military compound wearing burlap hoods and shackles, which they also wear in their cell, you can't help but think of the prisoners held today in the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo, and previously at Abu Ghraib. Redford's direction can get heavy-handed. He makes sure the audience doesn't miss the parallels between these trials and today's, of U.S. citizens and innocent foreigners imprisoned without charge and tried in military courts; the fear and anxiety over catching and killing "terrorists."

"We can't put the tragedy behind us," someone says. Aiken interrogates Surratt's daughter, Ann (Evan Rachel Wood); he inspects the boarding house and finds a picture of Booth; and learns that her brother had run off to Canada before the assassination. Aiken also discovers that the plan was only to kidnap Lincoln for a ransom in exchange for Confederate prisoners; not to kill him.

Aiken must now convince Surratt to give up her son. It is he who should stand trial, not her. Ann testifies, implicating her brother, sacrificing him for her emotionally overwrought mother. The suspense is riveting. The trial over, the film seems to speed up; it has you on the edge of your seat as Mary's fate is decided. It rests on the judgment of those who feel they are above the law.

On this 150th anniversary of the Civil War, which led to the end of slavery, nothing has changed. The U.S. government continues to bend, break, and ignore the Constitution, proving to us who pay their salaries that justice must be constantly fought for. ■

Malcolm X biography marred by political confusion

By CLAY WADENA

"Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention," by Manning Marable. New York, Viking Press. \$30.

As a student of Malcolm X's life and powerful ideas, I eagerly waited for Manning Marable's new biography "Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention." Here, I thought, would be an exhaustive presentation of Malcolm by an academic heavyweight out of Columbia (Marable died April 1, just days before the publication of this book), which would hopefully reveal new insights into the mind of a man who touched millions of lives.

In the prologue Marable tells us that he wrote this book because he felt that the famed "Autobiography of Malcolm X" (which he had used to teach college courses) was inadequate in some areas and inaccurate in others. Marable writes that he aims to go "beyond the legend: to recount what actually occurred in Malcolm's life." And for those who are becoming newly acquainted with Malcolm X's life and work—who may be hungry for more details regarding Malcolm's life and assassination—the book may prove to be a useful companion to the "Autobiography."

But sadly, Marable's strength—bringing together an astounding amount of details regarding Malcolm's life—turns into a liability, as it leaves little room for consistent in-depth analysis of Malcolm's ideas, and makes the book far less engaging than the gripping pages of the "Autobiography."

Furthermore, especially for those that have long studied Malcolm, the book will likely be disappointing (particularly in the epilogue) due to a politically weak and disjointed analysis on Malcolm's changing ideas.

The book's strengths are on display as soon as it begins; Marable weaves the tale of Malcolm's birth and very early years into the context of the rising movement of Marcus Garvey, for which Malcolm's father (Earl Little) was a dedicated activist. Marable notes that it was "one of the largest mass movements in black history," and for readers unfamiliar with the Garvey movement, this will be an excellent introduction. We find out that the Little children were "constantly drilled in the principles of Garveyism, to such an extent they expressed their black nationalist values at school" (p. 29).

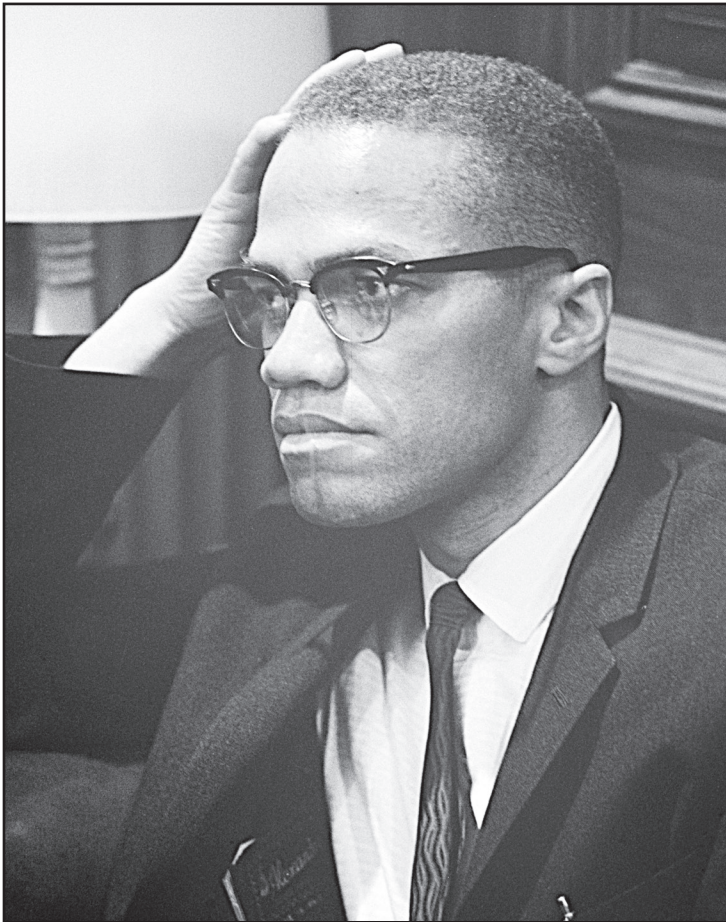
Marable gives a similar historical treatment to the Nation of Islam as the book progresses, showing how Malcolm's siblings urged him to join the NOI in letters and visits while Malcolm was incarcerated. Marable adeptly makes links with the past, writing, "The black nationalist message of racial pride, a rejection of integration, and self-sufficiency rekindled strong connections with the driving faith of his parents" (p. 78).

Here too (while Malcolm was locked up), we see the beginning of Malcolm's skills as an activist and teacher develop. Marable writes that in prison Malcolm had "committed himself to a rigorous course of study. In doing so, he consciously remade himself into Gramsci's now famous "organic intellectual," creating habits that, years later, would become legendary" (p. 90).

Upon Malcolm's release from prison, Marable describes his meteoric rise within the Nation of Islam due to his amazing ability to organize and recruit. After a few months of work in the Detroit NOI mosque where Malcolm was first active, membership had tripled. Soon Malcolm was an assistant minister and then a minister, and was responsible—in a relatively short time—for establishing four new temples and successfully reviving those in Philadelphia and New York. Malcolm's record of tireless work, which Marable documents throughout the book, is an amazing testament of love for his people, and should inspire all activists.

Marable does a skillful job of detailing Malcolm's growth away from the NOI's abstentionist politics. Marable repeatedly brings up the instances—such as Malcolm's response to the police brutality toward Johnson X Hinton and others, which was depicted in Spike Lee's movie "Malcolm X"—that "set in motion the forces culminating in Malcolm's inevitable rupture with the Nation of Islam. ... Malcolm knew that the Nation's future growth depended on its being immersed in the black community's struggles of daily existence. His evangelism had expanded the NOI's membership, giving it greater impact, but it was also forcing him to address the problems of non-Muslim black Americans in new ways. Eventually he would have to choose: whether to remain loyal to Elijah Muhammad, or to be 'on the side of my people'" (p. 129).

This became painfully apparent when Los Angeles police brutally shot down seven NOI members, paralyzing one for life and killing another. Malcolm was livid, and according to Marable, began to assemble a NOI hit squad to retaliate against the LAPD. Elijah Muhammad wouldn't give his approval to any such



move—but even more important, stopped Malcolm from "organizing a black united front against the police in Southern California..." (p. 208).

"Malcolm himself was humiliated by the NOI's failure to defend its own members. Everything that he had experienced over the previous years—from mobilizing thousands in the streets around Hinton's beating in 1957 to working with Phillip Randolph to build a local Black united front in 1961-1962—told him that the Nation could protect its members only through joint action with civil rights organizations and other religious groups. ... He had become convinced that Elijah Muhammad's passive position could not be justified. ... Political agitation and public protests, along the lines of CORE and SNCC, were essential to challenging institutional racism..." (p. 209).

While discussing Malcolm's own struggles with tactics and strategies, Marable also details the contours of the debates taking place in the civil rights movement. But the weakness of Marable's political analysis becomes apparent as he sets up Malcolm's break from the Nation of Islam.

At this point, Marable guesses at Malcolm's thought process as the latter examines the NOI's racial views: "Were Yacub's History [an important part of the NOI ideology]... false, then people of European descent were not devils to be fought against, but individuals who could oppose racism ... a new religious mapping of the world based on orthodox Islam would not necessarily stigmatize or isolate the United States because of its history of slavery and racial discrimination. Instead of a bloody jihad, a holy Armageddon, perhaps America could experience a nonviolent, bloodless revolution. At some point, Malcolm must have pondered the unthinkable: it was possible to be black, a Muslim, and an American" (p. 285, emphasis in original).

How does an embracing of orthodox Islam, and rejection of Yacub's History, equate to a lack of stigmatization directed at America for its racial record, or to a nonviolent, bloodless revolution, or to Malcolm perceiving himself as an American? The jumps in logic are confusing.

Marable is similarly confusing in his attempts to explain Malcolm's views on race. At one point Marable tells us that Malcolm "made his race-neutral views clear" (p. 333), but later he writes, "[Malcolm] did not embrace 'color blindness'" (p. 484). The reality of Malcolm's views on these questions is more nuanced than Marable takes the time to explain. It is true that Malcolm had moved beyond Yacub's history, and the belief that all whites were totally unredeemable, but this didn't give all white people a free pass in his eyes.

In religious terms this meant that white people could, in fact, become practitioners of Islam. In political terms, Marable quoted Malcolm as pointing to a litmus test as well. Malcolm believed that the white people who had a strong personal commitment to racial inequality were usually "socialists" (p. 336).

Later he quotes Malcolm revealingly: "I firmly believe in my heart," [Malcolm] declared, that when the black man acts "to use any means necessary to bring about his freedom or put halt to that injustice, I don't think he'll be by himself. ... I for one will join in with anyone, I don't care what color you are, as long as you want to change this miserable condition" (p. 391). The

understanding implicit in this statement is that the whites who join with Malcolm would also have to adhere to his credo of "by any means necessary." It is worth noting additionally that Malcolm "characterized U.S. racism as being an inseparable part of the entire political and social system" (p. 412).

Marable implies later that Malcolm was in the process of breaking from Black nationalism. He writes, "By the final months of his life he resisted identification as a "black nationalist," seeking ideological shelter under the race-neutral concepts of Pan-Africanism and Third World revolutionaries" (p. 485). But this allegation is undermined by Marable's own work, which cites Malcolm—after being asked by the son-in-law of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood why he failed to see that Islam confirms the oneness and equality of all races—as responding, "As a black American, I do feel that my first responsibility is to my twenty-two million fellow black Americans" (p. 368).

Marable himself writes, "Despite his newfound reluctance at being described as a black nationalist, Malcolm still perceived political action in distinctly racial categories, which may further explain why he made no moves to integrate his groups" (p. 407). And "Malcolm [in 'striking contrast' to MLK] perceived himself first and foremost as a black man. ... [He] perceived black Americans as an oppressed nation-within-a-nation, with its

own culture, social institutions, and group psychology. ... he always thought first and foremost about blacks' interests" (p. 482).

For some reason, Marable feels the need to separate Malcolm's politics into an American point of view on one hand and a third world point of view on the other: "Despite his radical rhetoric ... the mature Malcolm believed that African Americans could use the electoral system and voting rights to achieve meaningful change. ... But outside of the United States ... he did not see electoral politics and gradual social change as a viable approach for transforming postcolonial societies. He endorsed revolutionary violence against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and guerrilla warfare against the neocolonial regime in Congo and in the Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique..." (p. 484).

But was Malcolm only a revolutionary when it came to Africa, and then a reformist when it came to America? Marable further confuses us when he writes, "What Malcolm sought was a fundamental restructuring of wealth and power in the United States—not violent social revolution, but radical and meaningful change nevertheless" (p. 483).

Here Marable admits that Malcolm sought *fundamental restructuring of wealth and power*, but then he states that this excludes violent revolution. Malcolm's famous credo is "by any means necessary"! What part of "by any means necessary" would lead anyone to believe that Malcolm was ruling *any* strategy out—either elections or revolution—when it came to his goals?

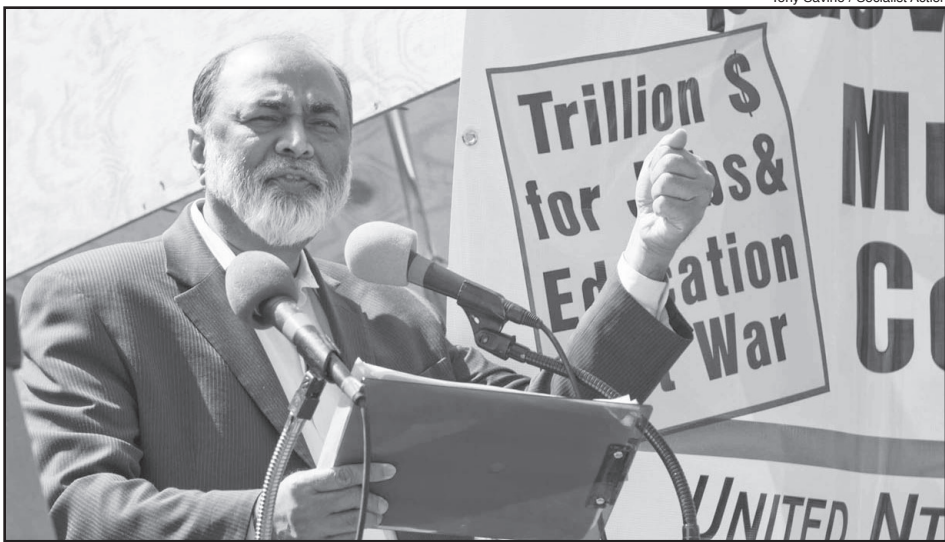
Had Malcolm been making statements in favor of registering voters and urging voting? Yes. But Marable notes that there was something else among these statements, something that troubled him: "There was a glaring inconsistency in [Malcolm's] logic. Malcolm was encouraging African Americans to vote ... yet simultaneously he accused both major parties of racism. ... The African American who habitually voted for the Democrats 'is not only a chump but a traitor to his race'" (p. 307). And again Marable notes that "[Malcolm] sincerely believed that blacks and other oppressed Americans had to break from the existing two-party system" (p. 405).

The only way that readers might believe there is inconsistency in Malcolm's logic is if they are bound to one of the major capitalist parties; here Marable doesn't leave open the possibility that Malcolm was preparing those who looked to him for political guidance to register to vote, but to withhold that vote until they got a candidate that truly represented their interests (or until putting forth a candidate themselves).

In the epilogue to the book Marable turns to the present: "Given the election of Barack Obama, it now raises the question of whether blacks have a separate political destiny from their white fellow citizens. ... Malcolm's vision today would have to radically redefine self-determination and the meaning of black power in a political environment that to many appeared to be "post-racial" (p. 486).

Marable speaks of a "post-racial" society even though impoverished Black communities, prisons overflowing with Blacks, and instances of police brutality are

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... Antiwar

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Muslim Umah of North America, the Council on American Islamic Relations, and the organizers of the Muslim Peace Coalition—a group formed to link the fight against Islamophobia to the fight against the U.S. wars. In San Francisco on April 10, 3000 activists heard Iman Zaid Shakir, founder of Zaytuna College, and Zahra Biloo, executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations.

Perhaps 2000 Muslims marched on the East Coast, and in this way demonstrated their willingness to consider the idea that fighting together with the antiwar movement might be an effective defense against the terror of preemptive prosecution, deportation, and other kinds of victimization.

Nor were the McCarthyite hearings aimed at Muslim Americans the only civil liberties focus of April 9 and 10. Victimized Chicago antiwar activists Hatem Abudayyah and Mick Kelley urged the crowds in New York and San Francisco respectively to embrace their fight against FBI raids and grand jury witch hunts. “I will not submit to government efforts to criminalize Palestine solidarity work,” Abudayyah said. The Committee to Stop FBI Repression organized a spirited contingent to march in the San Francisco demonstration.

The inclusion of the clear demand to end the \$3 billion that the U.S. gives annually to Israel resulted in a more youthful and spirited demonstration. Students for Justice for Palestine, one of the most active groups on campus today, organized a contingent in New York City. Contrary to some April 9/10 critics, the demand to cut all U.S. aid to Israel and to end U.S. support to the Israeli occupation of Palestine did not cut across this important bicoastal mobilization. Endorsements from were secured from more than 600 organizations across the country, including some of New York’s largest or most powerful unions—SEIU Local 1199 and TWU Local 100.

Speakers from the nations under assault by the U.S., or with family ties there, were prominent in both cities’ rallies. In San Francisco, Afghan activist Malalai Joya explained that U.S. intervention had strengthened, rather than weakened, the enemies of women’s rights. Zaineb Alani, an Iraqi-American poet and peace activist, with more than 40 members of her extended family currently living under occupation in Iraq or in refugee status in neighboring countries, opened the rally in New York City. Her message, she said, was inspired by the news that Iraqi activists were bravely sitting in at U.S. military bases around her homeland.

Zohra Ahmed, member of the Pakistan Solidarity Network, addressed the crowd in Manhattan, who were also informed that the Labor Party of Pakistan and other groups had organized April 9 solidarity demonstrations in four cities of the South Asian nation.

“Bring the War Dollars Home!” was another prominent theme of both rallies. New York Transport Workers Union Local 100 Vice President Kevin Harrington demanded an end to the devastating budget cutbacks faced by his membership. The San Francisco rally heard greet-

ings from Tim Paulsen of the Central Labor Council and from Clarence Thomas, executive board member of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10—now being sued by the bosses’ Pacific Maritime Association in retaliation for their heroic one-day strike in solidarity with Wisconsin workers.

Nellie Bailey, a leader of Harlem Fights Back Against the War, told of the devastation being wrought on the social services needed by New York’s Black community. Teresa Gutierrez, a leader of the May 1 immigrant rights coalition, linked the war on immigrant workers to the attacks on the unions and working people abroad. Mary Richmond, president of the Capital District (N.Y.) National Organization for Women, stood at the mike with a handmade sign that said, “Class Warfare.”

Harvey Wasserman, a longtime anti-nuke activist and the author of “Solar-topia,” made the case for spending war dollars on wind and solar power technologies that could slow down the climate crisis. Luis Cotto, a Hartford, Conn., city councilor, encouraged others to pass “Bring the War Dollars Home” resolutions, as his colleagues had done. While the challenge remains to firmly connect the antiwar movement and the growing struggle against government cutbacks and the attacks on the unions, the seed was surely sown on April 9 and 10.

U.S. ramps up war machine

Without a movement in the streets mobilizing greater and greater parts of the population for an end to Washington’s project, the wars abroad and at home can only become more brutal.

According to analyst Ray McGovern, at the end of April the number of U.S. troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan passed the 6000 mark, “with 43,184 the official figure for the number wounded. An additional 54,592 have required medical evacuation from combat. Thus, about 104,000 U.S. troops—a conservative minimum not including the walking wounded, those with traumatic brain injury, attempted or successful suicides, and civilian contractors—are casualties of these long wars.”

While the White House would have the populace believe that these numbers are going to go down, projected military spending gives no reason for such optimism. Gareth Porter, deconstructing the Obama Pentagon budget, argues that the president’s war expenditures from 2012-2020 will result in an average base military expenditure 40% higher than similar budgets from the 1990s.

The NATO bombing of Libya suggests the kind of deadly operations the Pentagon has in mind in response to the threat posed to U.S. interests by the Arab Spring. *Tom Dispatch* editor Nick Turse explains that the Huey helicopters being deployed against the democracy demonstrators in Yemen are likely aircraft sent by the U.S. in response to the outbreak of the movement against the Sanah regime. This deal was just a small element of the \$1.3 billion in military equipment that has been sent to Yemen to maintain “stability.”

In fact, the White House is streamlining the process by which the U.S. goes to war in response to challenges to the Middle East status quo. The precedent of the undeclared war on Libya is clearly not good enough for the war makers. According to the former congressman and director of Win Without War, Tom Andrews, legisla-



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



(Photos) Scenes from April 9 in New York City. (Left) Malik Mujahid of the Muslim Peace Coalition addresses the rally at Union Square.

tion expected to become part of the Defense Authorization Bill has been introduced in both the House and Senate (H.R. 968 and S. 551) that will, he claims, authorize the president and the secretary of defense to take military action anywhere, anytime, against anyone they claim is associated with al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

This legislation seemingly further codifies the right of the president to detain anyone he suspects of links to terrorism, make them available for a military tribunal, or hold them indefinitely with no provisions for any kind of review.

What is the road ahead?

Despite the relative success of the April antiwar actions, there is no doubt that the size of recent U.S. antiwar mobilizations pales before the massive turnouts of almost a decade ago when hundreds of thousands took to the streets against the U.S. invasion of Iraq. But the smaller turnouts are less a product of a decline in antiwar sentiment than they are of other critical factors that have served to undermine all social movements.

Indeed, polls taken by a dozen mainstream newspapers and polling organizations over the last month indicate a majority opposition to all U.S. wars. But the gap between consciousness and action has yet to be bridged.

Working people have likewise absorbed body blows to their standard of living to a degree that seemed inconceivable just a few years ago. But with the exception of the impressive mobilizations in Wisconsin and perhaps a few other places, the hidebound and class-collaborationist trade-union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party have succeeded in channeling mass protests into “lesser-evil” electoral politics and futile lobbying campaigns.

Unless confronted by a counterforce of historic proportions, there will be no victories today. Only the force of millions in massive and united actions that challenge every aspect of the capitalist offensive can begin to reverse the present trend of one defeat after another.

Growing understanding of this fact was revealed when a youthful working-class protester in Wisconsin carried a placard that was widely reproduced. It read, “Fight like an Egyptian!”

What seemed impossible yesterday in Egypt, ruled by a brutal U.S.-backed dictator, is now on the order of the day. We can and should expect no less from U.S. workers—who have some lessons of their own to teach, based on their proud history and traditions. But to carry out these tasks, new grassroots movements of labor and political activists, with true democratic leaderships, will have to be built.

Based on the success of the April 9 and 10 demonstrations, the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC) Coordinating Committee has issued a call for coordinated Oct. 15 local antiwar actions across the country and internationally. In addition, UNAC is urging antiwar activists to embrace the call by Black is Back for local activities on Aug. 20. This is the date set for action protesting U.S.-backed wars against African people on the continent, in Haiti, and in the Black community here at home.

UNAC has also begun organizing for a second antiwar conference. UNAC’s example of democratic organization, mass open conferences, unity with all the oppressed, and linking the wars abroad with the wars at home is an example to all social movements. It is indeed the same strategic path that the broader working class will follow in the months and years ahead to change the present relationship of forces and launch an offensive that will shake the world.

For more information, please visit www.unacpeace.org.

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Canada: Build on historic gains for NDP!

TORONTO—Voters in Canada made history on May 2 when they catapulted the labour-based New Democratic Party into Official Opposition status. Relegated to distant third place is the former main party of business rule, the Liberal Party. Its leader, Michael Ignatieff, lost his own Toronto seat and resigned as party leader. And despite a mere 1.8 per cent increase in its share of the vote, the autocratic right-wing Stephen Harper Conservatives gained a majority of seats.

The election produced a fundamental re-alignment of forces that dashed any thoughts of parliamentary coalition. Voters tossed aside class-collaborationist “strategic voting” schemes. The new left-right polarization makes the NDP a government in waiting, with the onus on the party to show that it represents real change for working people.

Perennially in fourth place, New Democrats soar into the new Parliament in second spot with 102 seats, backed by 31 per cent of the votes cast. The Conservatives captured 167 seats and 39.5 per cent of the votes. (In the 308 seat House of Commons, 155 is a majority.)

The Liberals suffered a crushing defeat, winning only 34 seats (down from 77 MP s in 2008, and 103 in 2006) and 23 per cent of the votes. The bourgeois nationalist Bloc Quebecois nearly disappeared. It held onto four seats (a steep nose dive from 49). Its leader Gilles Duceppe, lost in his riding too and promptly resigned.

The capitalist Green Party won its first and only seat, for Leader Elizabeth May in British Columbia, despite attracting over 4 per cent of the ballots across the country. Such distortions argue forcefully again for replacement of the archaic, Westminster-style, first-past-the-post system by a system of direct proportional representation in Parliament.

This result, flawed as it is, still expresses a seismic shift. Stunning gains achieved by the labour-based NDP, nearly doubling its share of the vote, more than tripling its seat total to an historic high, gives the federal NDP Official Opposition status for the first time in history. It comes 50 years after the birth of the party, resulting from a merger of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the Canadian Labour Congress.

In terms of class politics, the NDP electoral breakthrough places an obstacle in the path of the capitalist austerity drive. The “orange wave” raises working-class expectations for better times in a situation of growing economic polarization amidst crumbling physical and social infrastructures. But the realization of those expectations depends, especially given the Tory majority, on class struggles outside Parliament, with which the NDP can and should be totally identified and involved.

Conservative pundits hail the Tory pick-up of 24 seats, aided by a small bump up in the polls and the collapse of the Liberals and the BQ, as a major advance that landed a majority government on their third try in five years. On this basis, Harper’s party (an amalgam of the former hard-right-wing Reform Party and the reactionary remnants of the destroyed Progressive Conservative Party) claims a strong mandate for more jails, jets, and austerity. The claim, however, is entirely overblown, and can be smashed if challenged on the streets and in the work places.

So, why the sudden shift? After a sleepy start, the campaign ignited around the TV leaders’ debates, one in English and one in French. Popular revulsion over the status quo, combined with broad discontent over Tory bullying and Liberal re-cycled promises, passed the breaking point. Cynical attempts to target “ethnic” voters, demonize the opposition, and obscure critical issues produced uneven effects. Months of vicious political attack ads by the two main capitalist parties frayed loyalties in both camps, while annoying many non-partisans.

... Malcolm

(continued from page 9)

as widespread—if not more so—than during Malcolm’s life.

Marable offers us his view of what Malcolm “certainly” would have said about 9/11, but he doesn’t even wonder what Malcolm would have said, for instance, about hurricane Katrina; the fact that there are more Black men incarcerated, or on parole or probation, than were enslaved in 1850; or that only one in four young Black men in New York City are employed.

If readers are looking for a true representation of Malcolm’s political legacy, they are advised to attend the International Day of Action on Aug. 20, called by

the Black is Back Coalition (and endorsed by the United National Antiwar Committee), “where Africans and all others will mobilize in opposition of war on Africa on the continent and African people everywhere else.”

And if readers are hungry for political depth in studying the thought of Malcolm X, they are advised to turn to his own words and George Breitman’s excellent book, “Malcolm X: Evolution of a Revolutionary.”

Marable’s book makes a contribution to our understanding of Malcolm’s political development, but it is marred by the author’s own biases and confusion—especially in regard to the last period of Malcolm’s life, when he “reinvented” himself one last time by striking off in a fully independent direction. ■



“Vote mobs” organized by social media-savvy youths set out to stimulate participation. They rallied thousands of youths to the idea of political change, injecting an element of excitement into the process. Turnout for the election was 61.4 per cent, up from a dismal 58.8 per cent in 2008.

But the biggest change factor, arguably, was popular disgust with frozen wages, shrinking pensions, shrivelling social benefits, and the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of full-time jobs. While the rich got richer from tax cuts and obscene CEO bonuses, and by pillaging the treasures of nature, the rest of us did a slow burn, watching as our living standards sank.

At the same time, the NDP should be credited for positive moves. Leader Jack Layton, unlike his predecessors, campaigned openly to form a government, not just to win “a few more seats.” He fought to reverse gigantic Tory and Liberal give-ways to big business. He promised that greater revenues from the rich would pay for better health care, pension improvements, and post-secondary education access. The NDP tax plank (despite its limitations) resonated so well with the population that the Liberals, under Leader Michael Ignatieff, nearly copied it.

But Layton’s most adept move was to tap the leftist sentiments of the Quebec electorate. French-speaking Quebecois, particularly workers, have a collective consciousness shaped by national oppression and a keen aversion to the strictures of the Canadian state. For once, the English-Canada-based NDP took this into account.

After years of dithering and policy reversals, Layton asserted that he would repeal the undemocratic Clarity Act, recognize a declaration of Quebec independence after a sovereignty referendum win, and support asymmetrical federalism. That means Quebec will be treated as a nation, and not just another province in Confederation. It includes a guarantee that Quebec will have no less than a quarter of the seats in Parliament after re-distribution.

The NDP Leader committed to ensure that French would be the working language in federally-regulated industries in Quebec, such as railways and banks. Layton pledged to fight for rules that would require future judges appointed to the Supreme Court to be fluent in French. He promised to support efforts to plug the loophole that allows English private school students in Quebec to skirt Language Law 101 and, after a couple of years, transfer to an English-language publicly funded school.

While it is wrong to read massive NDP gains in Quebec as signaling the end of the sovereignty movement, they do reflect a disconnection by pro-independence Quebecois from the strategy and economic policies of the capitalist Parti Quebecois and the Bloc. The shift may prove big gains by the leftist, pro-sovereignty Quebec Solidaire at the next provincial vote.

In the meantime, a majority of the NDP Parliamentary Caucus, 59 of 102 MP s, consist of francophone Quebecois. One is 19 years old, another is a former communist candidate, and the vast majority are strong Quebec nationalists completely new to the federal party. Jack Layton may, or may not succeed in taming this corral of tigers.

As is often the case, in the commercial media personalities trump political content. Media fixation on the alleged assets and foibles of politicians usually benefits the bourgeois parties. This time it backfired.

Many comedians make a good living ridiculing Stephen Harper as a heartless, humourless martinet, and by por-

(Above) Antiwar protesters filled the streets of Toronto on April 9. The dominant theme of the action sponsored by the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War was “Canada out of Afghanistan,” and “Fund human needs not war.”

Over 300 people rallied near the U.S. consulate, and then joined a larger Ontario Federation of Labour protest against cutbacks and anti-union policies. After 2 p.m. up to 10,000 people marched to a rally at Toronto City Hall Square. Over a dozen cities and towns held rallies in Canada on April 9.

traying Michael Ignatieff as a vampiric opportunist on temporary leave from a teaching gig at Harvard U. Jack Layton, a colon cancer survivor who walks through the election campaign with a cane due to recent hip surgery, emerged as a sincere, honest, likeable guy who “won’t give up until the job is done.” Nonetheless, this superficial approach to politics can bite, as well as feed proponents of social progress.

Equally dangerous is the tendency to exaggerate the evils of the Conservatives to try to justify a “strategic” vote for the Liberals, or to favour the formation of a bourgeois coalition government, which ultimately failed. Still, the NDP brass is its own worst enemy in this regard.

When Jack Layton told the CBC’s Peter Mansbridge that the main difference between the NDP and the Liberal Party is that the Liberals didn’t keep their promises and the NDP is more trustworthy, he was wrong. The difference is actually profound. The corporate elite simply do not back the NDP. It’s no accident. For them the issue is class, embodied in the NDP connection to the labour movement in English Canada.

Layton’s comment was a sad admission of the illusions harboured by the current leadership of the party. Moreover, it underscores the task we face as workers, poor people, students, seniors, and youth. That task is to replace the Liberal-look-alike policies of the NDP with socialist policies to meet the needs of the vast majority.

In the dying days of the campaign the NDP Leader began to issue excuses to forestall the implementation of NDP policies. Investment in rapid transit, social housing, and urban infrastructure would be contingent on anticipated revenue from a new cap-and-trade carbon tax (a bad environmental policy in any case). The proposed doubling of Canada Pension Plan benefits, and the much-touted promise to train new doctors would be dependent on the cooperation of the provinces.

Instead, Layton should insist on taxing the rich, cutting the military, and transforming eco-harmful private monopolies into publicly-owned, green industries run democratically under workers’ and community control. Start with Big Oil, auto, mining and the banks. Use their billions to meet the needs of millions.

Clearly, the right has made gains by moving to the right. The left, to make gains, must move to the left. Not just in words, but in deeds. That means challenging the pro-capitalist direction of the labour and NDP leadership. It means opposing any talk of NDP merger with the Liberal Party, or any coalition for government with a capitalist party.

In a bourgeois coalition the NDP would have to carry the can for war abroad and austerity at home. Instead we need an NDP government committed to socialist policies. That’s what many of the thousands of new members who will stream into the newly buoyant labour party will seek.

Historic gains for the NDP make it time now to step up the fight for a Workers’ Agenda and a Workers’ Government. On the crest of rising hopes and expectations, the socialist left can organize to gain a bigger-than-ever hearing for a class-struggle programme inside the unions and the NDP.

Don’t make excuses. Make waves. Join the NDP Socialist Caucus and fight for socialist policies at the NDP federal convention in Vancouver, June 17-19. ■

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL WINS CRITICAL COURT DECISION

BY JEFF MACKLER

Jeff Mackler is the director of the Northern California-based Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia ruled on April 26 that world-renowned and innocent death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal must either receive a new sentencing hearing within six months or have his 1982 jury-imposed death-penalty sentence reversed and be incarcerated for life in the general prison population without possibility of parole.

Jamal, 58, was framed up for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, despite massive evidence that he had nothing to do with Faulkner's murder. An award-winning journalist at the time—and today a leading critic of racist, anti-working-class, and imperialist U.S. policies—Jamal is the author of nine books. His weekly news commentaries are published in radical and social justice newspapers around the world.

Mumia has become an international symbol of opposition to the racist and classist U.S. criminal “justice” system, which today incarcerates some 3500 people—the majority poor, Black, and Latino—in its growing death-row institutions, and 3.5 million in its increasingly for-profit and virtually slave-labor prison-industrial complex. An astonishing 7 million people are today in U.S. prisons or under the jurisdiction of the system's various institutions.

The Third Circuit's decision reaffirmed its own 2008 ruling on the same issue, as well as the original 2001 decision of Federal District Court Judge William H. Yohn. Both courts found that the sentencing instructions presented to Mumia's jury in 1982 by “hanging judge” Albert Sabo violated the Eight Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Supreme Court's precedent-setting case, *Mills v. Maryland*, wherein the Court had ruled that flawed jury instructions akin to Sabo's were unconstitutional.

Sabo instructed the jury during the sentencing phase of Mumia's frame-up murder trial that they must be unanimous with regard to each possible mitigating circumstance in order to determine whether such mitigation could later be considered in weighing whether or not to impose the death penalty versus life imprisonment without parole.

Sabo's instructions, and the associated written forms that jurors were given while deliberating Mumia's sentence, essentially implied that a single juror had the right to exclude from consideration any mitigating circumstance. The Third Circuit disagreed and reaffirmed its 2008 ruling that a single juror may find a mitigating circumstance that in his or her view outweighs all aggravating circumstances. This alone would be sufficient to prohibit a death penalty sentence and require a sentence of life imprisonment. This eventuality assumes, of course, that the jury first finds the defendant guilty by unanimous vote.

Mumia's trial was a legal, political, and racist atrocity, so much so that human rights, labor, and social justice groups from Amnesty International, the NAACP and the California Labor Federation to the European Parliament and thousands of labor unions and internationally prominent individuals around the world condemned it and demanded Mumia's freedom and/or a new trial.

As the case wound its way through the criminal “justice” system, a series of gross violations of Mumia's legal rights, including blocking direct evidence of his innocence in the case, was systematically employed to march Mumia toward the death chambers. He has been held in a tiny and isolated cell at the maximum security SCI Greene prison in rural Pennsylvania for almost three decades.

The mind-boggling resort to spurious interpretations of the “law”—“innocence is no defense”—and the passage of new laws that make the presentation of evidence of innocence virtually impossible, brought to light the government's “Mumia Exception” policy, wherein the law “in all its majesty” applies fully to everyone *except* Mumia.

Such was the case with the infamous 1996 Clinton-signed, Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), which for the first time in 70-plus years held that the findings of “fact” of state courts had to be granted a “presumption of correctness” by federal appeals' courts. This law, applied early on in Mumia's Federal District Court hearing, effectively eliminated the historic habeas corpus (right to appeal) founda-



Mumia was framed for the 1981 killing of police officer Daniel Faulkner, despite massive evidence he had nothing to do with it.

tion of the original U.S. legal system.

Prior to AEDPA some 40 percent of state court convictions in capital cases had been reversed on appeal, usually based on findings of police corruption, planting of evidence, intimidation of witnesses, and incompetent counsel—all of which were grossly operative in Mumia's 1982 frame-up trial. Under AEDPA, they were effectively excluded from consideration on appeal, and the findings of Judge Albert Sabo (“I'm going to help 'em fry the n----r”), aided by the AEDPA, were allowed to stand unchallenged.

When the above-quoted statement (made by Sabo immediately prior to entering the courtroom to preside over Mumia's case) was introduced in court as evidence of bias, the assigned Judge Pamela Dembe crudely ruled that however reprehensible such a statement might be, “there was no evidence” of Sabo's bias “during Mumia's trial!” This in the face of more than 100 rulings against motions presented by Mumia's legal team and virtually none against the prosecution! This in the face of Mumia's being physically excluded from the courtroom for a majority of his own trial! And this in the face of key prosecution witnesses being threatened with imprisonment unless they falsely testified against Mumia!

The court's April 26 decision, reaffirming its previous 2008 decision on the exact same issue, was a product of the U.S. Supreme Court's intervention at the request of Pennsylvania prosecutors. The High Court, composed of essentially reactionary jurists selected by the representatives of the ruling rich, cited their earlier ruling in the infamous January 2010 case of *Smith v. Spisak*, where the Court ruled against a self-confessed Nazi triple murderer, who had sought relief by citing the improper jury instructions of an Ohio trial judge.

Using this ruling the Supreme Court remanded Mumia's case to the Third Circuit with instructions to reconsider its previous ruling in light of its new *Spisak* decision—the latter, in the tradition of reactionary “states' rights” rulings, aimed at opening the door to Mumia's execution. The refusal of the Third Circuit to do so on April 26 sets the stage for yet another appeal by Pennsylvania prosecutors to the U.S. Supreme Court, a decision that Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams has pledged to mount.

In truth, however, the resort to the Supreme Court

by Pennsylvania and Philadelphia authorities has less to do with a final shot at “legally” reversing a decision made against Philadelphia's persecutors in three separate rulings than it does with abiding by the order it has repeatedly fought—that is, to grant Mumia a new sentencing hearing. While formally a new jury in such a hearing would be prohibited from reversing the previous “guilty” verdict of the 1982 jury, it would be compelled to hear evidence of innocence in Mumia's case that had previously been banned or suppressed by Judge Sabo and his cohorts in the frame-up system that places millions of poor people, mostly Black and Brown, in prison with little or no recourse.

Here Mumia's would-be executioners would be compelled to suffer the humiliating possibility of a jury that just might refuse to render any sentence at all against Mumia after being presented with the massive evidence of his innocence and after the full force of Mumia's frame-up is finally revealed. Better to have the Supreme Court murder Mumia than to be frontally exposed by a jury as being integral to the criminal frame-up of an innocent man!

Should the Supreme Court refuse to do DA Seth Williams' dirty work, many observers estimate that Williams and his associates, with prodding from above, would chose the lesser of the two perceived evils before it. That is, they would cease efforts to murder Mumia through the legal system and accept his ordered life imprisonment sentence without parole. The public exposure of the 29-year frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal would pose an unacceptable risk to the very credibility of an already fundamentally flawed system.

Meanwhile, the direct and immediate threat to Mumia's life has been averted, unless the Supreme Court chooses to abrogate its own decisions and affirms Pennsylvania's twisted interpretation of established case law. This certainly cannot be excluded. However, unresolved legal issues could keep Mumia's case in the courts for many years. This would involve several avenues of appeal that the Federal District Court mooted after Judge William Yohn had ruled in favor of the argument concerning Judge Sabo's misleading instructions to the jury on the death penalty.

But while Mumia lives, the struggle for his freedom must continue. Indeed, were it not for the worldwide efforts to reverse his racist conviction, he would have been executed long ago. Mumia's life rests in our hands—in the hearts, minds, and ongoing efforts of all those who understand that only a massive and united effort can wrest Mumia from the clutches of a social system in which justice and freedom are won in struggle and not gifted from those on high at their pleasure.

We must make the political price of Mumia's continued incarceration too high for the ruling class and its governmental agents to pay. We must return Mumia to his comrades in the U.S. and the world over who clearly understand that his freedom represents a resounding blow against the tyranny that oppresses us all. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! ■