

Imperialist victory is no gain for Libyan people

Gianluigi Guercia / AFP/ Getty Images



Sergey Ponomarev / AP



BY JEFF MACKLER

For the Socialist Action (U.S.) Political Committee

Tragically, Libya's short-lived February 2011 "Arab Spring" was rapidly transformed into a six-month imperialist-led onslaught that wrought death and destruction on the Libyan people. The U.S. and other NATO countries are seeking to establish a beachhead in Libya that can be used to derail the mass revolts that have taken place throughout the region and to restore the status quo.

The "no fly zone" Resolution 1973, approved 10-0 by the UN Security Council on March 17, was immediately followed by more than 20,000, and still ongoing, sorties by U.S./NATO warplanes against the forces of the Libyan dictator, Col. Muammar Gadhafi. These were complemented by drone strikes and artillery bombardments from NATO's armada, centered on a French aircraft carrier anchored off Libya's coast.

The UN "no-fly zone" resolution, never more than a li-

cense for the wholesale destruction of Libya's military apparatus and much of Tripoli's infrastructure—including its water and fuel supplies, electricity, schools, hospitals, and residential neighborhoods—was a Euro-American declaration of war. "Humanitarian wars" conducted by the world's superpowers will never benefit the oppressed masses in Libya or anywhere else.

In the assault on Tripoli in the last days of the war, Gadhafi's estimated 65,000 troops were pulverized by an intensive air and sea bombing campaign that NATO commanders estimate to have "degraded"—that is, killed, wounded, or scattered—some 50 percent of his forces. The remainder is thought to have retreated to Libyan cities and towns that continue to support the Gadhafi regime. These are today being bombed with impunity.

Estimates of the number of Gadhafi soldiers killed outright on just one day by this late-August intensive bombardment exceeded 1300. Well before the last week of August, when Gadhafi's forces were compelled to flee

(Above) Libyan rebels capture suspected loyalist soldier in Tripoli, Aug. 25.

(Left) Benghazi celebration as rebels enter Tripoli.

Tripoli, the defection of top commanders of the Libyan army to the imperialist-backed Transitional National Council signaled at least the partial disintegration of the army.

The TNC today "governs" most of Libya, but it is definitely not to be excluded that yet another long-lasting imperialist-abetted war and occupation is in the making. The Tripoli Brigade and associated TNC forces, aided by the ongoing and still massive NATO bombing campaigns, are currently engaged in street-to-street mop-up battles in Gadhafi strongholds in Tripoli as well as in regions of the country still loyal to the deposed dictator.

Historians have documented some 700-plus U.S. in-

(continued on page 4)

Palestine: 'Statehood' or liberation struggle?

By ANDREW POLLACK

The Palestinian grassroots, including people in exile, continues the independent organizing that earlier this year led to the historic May and June Nakba and Naksa border-crossing "Marches for Return." In August the focus turned to an intervention into the controversy over Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas' plan to call for a vote on "statehood" at the UN in September.

In the United States, Palestinians and their allies are mobilizing for a rally outside the UN on Sept. 15 calling for support for the full panoply of Palestinian rights. While taking advantage of the media attention to Abbas' plan, central

organizers of the rally, such as the U.S. Palestinian Community Network (US-PCN), have made clear that the UN vote is not only inadequate but an actual danger to Palestinian rights.

USPCN called on all Palestinian and Arab community and student groups and solidarity campaigns "to reject fully and unequivocally the Statehood initiative as a distraction that unjustifiably and irresponsibly endangers Palestinian rights and institutions." They pointed to the danger of PA usurpation of PLO prerogatives, which would lead to the abandonment of historic rights such as the right of return.

Instead, they call for a return to struggle for liberation, rejecting a bogus in-

dependence through pursuing a caricature of statehood, saying that only when liberation and return are achieved will true independence be won. "Not before, and not without the mandate of the entirety of the Palestinian people. Indeed, it is in struggle and the emboldening of our emancipatory spirit that we free ourselves."

"Through the PLO, and its countless popular committees, associations, unions, and camp formations, many (though not all) Palestinians had a voice within their movement. Indeed, it is that popular democratic mobilization that gave the PLO its legitimacy. And in its continued role as legitimate representative, the PLO, and only the PLO, has the

legal mandate to advance the political will of the Palestinian people.

"We say this knowing full well that, in the last few decades, the PLO has been decimated by corruption, ineptitude, collaboration, and betrayal. It must be reclaimed, cleaned, revived and rebuilt. ... The PLO must expand to truly represent all Palestinians, inside Israel, in the West Bank and Gaza, in the camps, and across the *shatat* ... it is we who will breathe new life into our long too dormant national institutions through popular democratic mobilization. ... We must return to a framework of genuine struggle and a cohesive and coherent strategy built upon our inalienable rights.

"The first step in such a strategy must be an escalated focus on Palestinian mobilization for direct elections to the Pal-

INSIDE SOCIALIST ACTION:

Protests of SF police killings — 2

Obama: no economy solutions — 3

Housing rallies in Israel — 6

Protest planned for NATO — 7

Canada News — 8

Greenwash of fracking — 9

Greece to face more austerity — 10

Syria critical to Arab revolt — 12

S.F. activists protest murders by police

By MARC ROME

Heating up the typically cool summer months in the San Francisco Bay Area have been the nearly unmitigated mobilizations and solidarity meetings throughout July and August to protest the police murders of a Black man and a white man in two of San Francisco's transit systems. In an attempt to cool off a planned political demonstration on Aug. 11, BART shut down cell-phone service for three hours throughout the underground downtown transit area, the first time any governmental agency has resorted to such measures in the United States.

Charles Hill, a homeless white man, was gunned down on July 3 by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) police for allegedly wielding a vodka bottle and knife on the Civic Center Station platform (downtown SF). Pressured by the mobilization of hundreds at the site of the police murder, BART and the SFPD released footage of the shooting. However, Charles Hill is not visible in the video.

No Justice No BART, a group formed several years ago in the wake of the BART police murder of an unarmed Black man, Oscar Grant III, issued the following demands and posted them on their website: "(1) The release of the platform video. (2) The release of the police reports and a full public investigation into the shooting. (3) At a minimum, the shooting of Charles Hill was unjustified. The officers must be held accountable for their roles in this incident, which is why a public investigation is so important. At a minimum the shooter should be fired and prosecuted.

"Our demands also include total transparency in the investigation of—and accountability for—police misconduct. We want all available information released to the public when there are questions about whether the police acted appropriately, and we don't want any



Aaron Sankin

lies, half truths, creative omissions, or misdirections. Accountability should extend to any BART administrators who cover up police misconduct. Accountability should be both criminal (we want the DA to prosecute cops and BART administrators to the fullest extent of the law), and disciplinary: BART should fire employees who participate in violence and cover-ups."

Seemingly overshadowed by the BART protests is the murder of 19-year-old Kenneth Harding, who was gunned down on July 16 by the SFPD in the Bayview/Hunter's Point district, a major Black neighborhood of San Francisco. (Incidentally, this summer marks the 45th anniversary of the Hunters Point rebellion, touched off by the police murder of 16-year-old Matthew Johnson. It was put down by the declaration of martial law by Gov. Pat Brown, father California's current governor, Jerry Brown.) Harding was shot in the back while running away from being subjected to a Municipal Railway (MUNI) transfer (proof of payment) checkpoint. A protest on July 20 in San Francisco's Mission District disrupted transit service briefly, during which 43 persons were arrested in the unpermitted

street mobilization.

The BART protests garnered national and international attention and protests from defenders of free speech and civil liberties when an Aug. 17 mobilization called by the hacktivist organization Anonymous protested the curtailment, a week earlier, of the constitutional right to political protest when BART disrupted cell phone service.

The ACLU posted a statement on its website: "BART's actions must be seen in the context of today's events. All over the world, people are using mobile devices to protest oppressive regimes, and governments are shutting down cell phone towers and the internet to silence them. BART has never disrupted wireless service before, and chose to take this unprecedented measure for the first time last week in response to a protest of BART police. BART's decision (which cited protection of "public safety") was in effect an effort by a governmental entity to silence its critics."

In the midst of the economic meltdown and high level of class struggle taking place throughout the world, repressive government tactics and the apparatus for their deployment are being sharpened. The post-9/11 trend in the U.S. by governments, from local up to the federal level, of preemptive actions in the interest of "national security" and "public safety" has left not a few progressive forces untouched or unshaken by their myriad forms—FBI-spying, wire tapping, FBI-raids, ICE-raids, infiltration of agent provocateurs—of repression and intimidation.

Mass-action tactics, allowing the participation of the broadest sections of the working class and their allies among the poor and oppressed, will be important at a time when governments are not adverse to using their control of the levers of telecommunications to quell political dissent. To varying degrees, activism the world over relies upon internet and cell-phone service, and progressive forces must demand that their right to use this medium be protected. ■

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!

SOCIALIST ACTION. Closing news date: Sept. 5, 2011

Editor: Michael Schreiber International Editor: Gerry Foley Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 460501, San Francisco, CA 94146-0501. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. BOX 460501, San Francisco, CA 94146-0501. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor. It is printed by members of Local 583, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, Calif.

SOCIALIST ACTION

© 2011 GCC/IBT 869-M

For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, socialistaction@gmail.com, (510) 268-9429

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: socialistactionnews@yahoo.com Website: www.socialistaction.org

WHERE TO FIND SOCIALIST ACTION

- ASHLAND, Ore.: damonjure@earthlink.net
- ASHLAND, Wis.: northlandiguana@gmail.com
- BOSTON: boston-socialistaction@gmail.com (781) 630-0250
- CARRBORO, N.C.: (919) 967-2866, robonica@lycos.com
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, chisocialistaction@yahoo.com
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: P.O. Box 16853, Duluth, MN 55816, risforrevolution@yahoo.com, www.the-red-raven.blogspot.com
- FLORIDA: socialistaction_tampa@hotmail.com
- KANSAS CITY: kcsa@workernet.org (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE area / Lexington, Ky.: redlotus51@yahoo.com, (502) 451-2193
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, socialistaction@visi.com
- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157

- PHILADELPHIA: philly.socialistaction@gmail.com
- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 gary1917@aol.com
- PROVIDENCE: ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM (401) 419-1706
- SALEM, ORE.: ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, sfsocialistaction@gmail.com
- SUPERIOR, Wis.: wainosunrise@yahoo.com
- WASHINGTON, DC: christopher.towne@gmail.com

SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE
526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779
www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com

Subscribe to Socialist Action

Get Socialist Action newspaper each month by 1st-class mail!
— \$20 for 12 months — \$37 for 24 months

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

I want to join the Socialist Action Newspaper Supporters Club.
I enclose an extra contribution of: \$100 \$200 Other

Clip and mail to: P.O. Box 460501, San Francisco, CA 94146-0501.
Credit cards: See www.socialistaction.org to subscribe with PayPal.

By IAN WOLFF

"ZERO JOB GROWTH LATEST BLEAK SIGN FOR U.S. ECONOMY," reads the lead headline of the Sept. 3 *New York Times*. The article expresses the deep pessimism of the U.S. ruling rich that no solutions are in sight.

The government's new report on hiring—a better term would be "firing"—released the day before, according to *The Times*, "provided fresh evidence that the recovery has fizzled without gaining momentum, prompting another round of relentless diminution of economic expectations." The "diminutions" consisted in the president's estimate that unemployment would remain at the present 9.1 percent rate until at least 2013.

There has been nothing resembling a real recovery for working people since the U.S. and world economic crisis erupted in 2008. Even in the speculative or casino sectors, wherein the financial elite scramble to find ever new devices to make money in the stock market and other Ponzi-type adventures not related to the production of commodities for the market, the recovery has been essentially non-existent.

The stock market's wild gyrations stunned and perplexed even the most experienced Wall Street pundits when a few weeks ago the market broke all records and experienced four "swings" that daily registered rises and falls in the Dow Jones Industrial averages in excess of 400 points. These were matched in terms of percentage gains and loses by all other U.S. stock exchanges. Down by some 1200 points from the Dow's April 2 high of 12,400, the markets more generally reflected the panic of big capital.

The official unemployment rate of 9.1 percent announced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for August squares with the union busting, annihilation of existing contracts, plant closures, speed-up, pay and pension and health-care reductions, mortgage foreclosures, and plant closures imposed by the corporate elite. Last year's massive layoffs in the nation's major industries like auto and construction have been matched and exceeded by state layoffs and shredded contracts in the public sectors.

Of course, the official and real unemployment rates are two different matters. Add in those who are no longer counted in the statistics, those who have given up looking for work—discouraged workers—and those who are compelled to live on below subsistence part-time work at near minimum wages, or less, and the figure leaps to perhaps 20-25 percent or more. The government formally admits to a 16.1 percent out-of-work figure.

The same *Times* article strikingly refers to the Federal Reserve's "limited arsenal of tools" to rejuvenate the economy. For decades the term "limited arsenal" was excluded from the nation's general economic terminology. The Federal Reserve's chair was endowed with near-magical powers to regulate the economy to guarantee its steady growth and stability.

In recent years, these generally consisted in lowering federal interest rates to provide cheap money to banks and corporations to supposedly encourage their investment in industries that produce new jobs and hence a steady supply of commodities for the market. The steady decline in such investments has been the general trend in the past several decades as banks and corporations understand that, in a world of unprecedented and globalized competition, profit rates in the industrial sector have registered steady declines, with major U.S. corporations like General Motors, and thousands of others, going bankrupt.

Today's corporate owners prefer to invest their money in the bubble-driven speculative or financial sectors—where big fortunes were made seemingly out of thin air—or abroad, where labor and production costs are qualitatively lower than in the U.S.

It has been frequently noted in recent months that U.S. corporations today sit on some \$2 trillion in cash, but nevertheless decline to invest in the American economy. It's not a lack of patriotism that explains this apparent contradiction, but rather a lack of profits.

In today's increasingly integrated world economy, U.S. multi-national corporations find it qualitatively more profitable to invest in poor nations, where near slave wages and tax breaks result in profits far in excess of what can be obtained at home. But when U.S. competitors follow suit and seek the same advantages of low-wage labor abroad, the initial gains soon evaporate, and undercutting one's competitor's prices becomes increasingly more difficult.

The "race to the bottom" eventually takes its toll on all workers, but the capitalists themselves have no choice but to drive each other out of business in order

Obama, Fed offer no solutions as capitalism's crisis deepens

Scott Olson / Getty Images



No nation has been able to escape capitalism's inherent contradictions. War and austerity are its solutions — consequences be damned.

to remain in the profit/accumulation game.

Corporate profits are supposed to be taxed in America, but only when they are repatriated to the U.S. But compliant government policies have increasingly allowed corporations to avoid taxation by legislative devices. To encourage corporations to bring their profits home for investment in the domestic economy, for example, legislation is in progress to declare "tax holidays" in which taxes owed would be forgiven or reduced to qualitatively lower rates.

Grateful corporations, who in truth own the legislators as well as their multi-national companies, readily comply, but only long enough to quickly return to their low-wage operations abroad. Meanwhile, others simply avoid all taxation by declaring that their corporate offices are no longer located in the U.S. but rather in tax havens like the Cayman Islands or Barbados.

One of the monetary measures increasing employed today to supposedly re-balance or "save the system," "quantitative easing," was hotly debated during the Aug. 9 meeting of the Federal Reserve, where divided bankers could not agree on any solution to capitalism's crisis other than to guarantee that they would maintain federal interest rates at near zero levels until at least 2013. This would allow banks and other corporations to borrow with impunity based on the premise that they can profit by investing the government's money at higher rates of return, but again, largely in the speculative sectors of the economy. Casino capitalism rides again!

"Quantitative easing," or QE, is not the norm in capi-

talist functioning. It is employed when interest rates are so low ("cheap money") that government managers have no other means to prime the pump of a failing economy—supposedly to encourage corporate investment in job-producing endeavors. QE consists of the Federal Reserve essentially creating fake money via electronic transfers to purchase various bonds and other "assets" from banks or from the government directly. The banks turn over these "assets," whose real value is questionable and therefore difficult to sell, like subprime mortgage-based financial instruments.

The Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) was akin to QE, wherein the government bailed out failing banks to the tune of \$1 trillion. Similar bailouts to the rich have continued in various forms, totaling some \$17 trillion or more since the crisis began.

Last year the Federal Reserve's QE policy pumped an additional \$600 billion into the economy by purchasing U.S. Treasury notes that were used to pay off government debts to nations like China and Japan. All these measures consist of the Federal Reserve or the government essentially printing paper money or bonds, or fake money via electronic transfers, for which there are no commodity equivalents. In truth the process is closely tantamount to an individual writing checks on an account with no funds.

This is illegal in the world of personal finance but the norm in today's government functioning in the U.S. and around the world.

The British Central Bank has followed the U.S. policy. The weaker capitalist nations, who can't effectively compete in world markets, are the first to suffer, when their debts eventually exceed their ability to pay. Hence the near bankruptcy of nations like Greece—with Spain, Ireland, and Portugal not far behind. A default on their obligations to the more powerful capitalist nations, to the tune of trillions of dollars or euros, would send the entire system into a crisis that all agree would threaten the system's essential cohesion.

The European solution to date has been twofold: to re-negotiate the loans of the defaulting or near-defaulting nations, with the more solvent ones absorbing the risks of future default, and to ensure that these loans are repaid by imposing draconian austerity measures on the world's peoples—as in Greece, where decades of social gains in pensions, wages, and health care have been stolen.

A *New York Times* article entitled "Banks Hard-Sell Greek Bailout Plan" makes this explicit. "In the case of the proposed second bailout for Greece—the one that is supposed to make private interests feel the financial pain along with taxpayers—the biggest banks in Europe are on the road now promoting the plan. It's not that the banks are suddenly masochists. It's that this first major bond restructuring in Europe's long-festering debt crisis is shaping up as a much better deal for the banks than for the Greeks it is supposed to be helping."

No nation has been able to escape capitalism's inherent contradictions. War and austerity are its solutions, the consequences be damned.

"There is work to be done, and there are workers ready to do it," said President Obama during his Labor Day speech to the Detroit AFL-CIO, where the sellout labor chiefs pledged their ongoing support to labor's greatest public enemy. "Labor is on board. Business is on board," said the posturing president. And, in anticipation of Congress's return to session next week, Obama continued "We just need Congress to get on board. Let's put America back to work."

Empty rhetoric in the extreme! President Obama has proven to be U.S. capitalism's strongest weapon, exceeding George Bush in literally every attack on U.S. working people, with his abandonment of the Environment Protection Agency's already inadequate planned "stricter limits on air pollution" being the latest example of subordinating the interests of the many to the corporate few. ■

... Libya victory no gain for masses

Moises Samran / NY Times



Roberto Schmidt / AFP / Getty Images

(continued from page 1)

interventions and wars, covert and overt, over the past century or so—all to advance the interests and power of the ruling elite, who require the constant expansion of their “spheres of influence,” today in the name of the “War on Terror,” to sustain their competitive advantage over their rivals. The interests of the oppressed peoples of the world have *never* been a factor in imperialist calculations.

Both the Bush and Obama administrations were more than happy to deal with the Gadhafi dictatorship as long as the formerly left-sounding populist dictator, turned U.S. ally, was willing to open the country’s economy to foreign capital. And Gadhafi readily acceded to IMF-dictated austerity programs, to giving a lion’s share of and reducing the costs of Libya’s oil to Western corporations, privatization of key industries, border guard assistance in thwarting the immigration of Black Africans into Italy and France, and joining in the “War on Terror” and the associated rejection of the Palestine liberation struggle. Gaddafi’s harsh repression of dissent was never of any consequence to the Western corporations and governments who have now conquered the nation.

TNC officials have promised that they will honor all contracts that the Gadhafi regime made with Western capitalists. But the Libyan catastrophe will undoubtedly result in a new race by European and North American corporate rivals to turn a larger profit out of the nation’s oil wealth. The British *Independent* commented on Aug. 24, “After five months of fighting in the world’s 12th-largest oil producer, industry figures are acutely aware that billions could be made in the coming years from rebuilding Libya. Immediate focus will fall on the country’s oil fields that are currently producing a 10th of the 1.6 million barrels a day that were exported pre-revolution.”

As with the devastation in Iraq and Afghanistan, the conquerors can be expected to seek payment for their services and to rebuild what they have destroyed via the impounded hundreds of billions of dollars of Libyan funds that have been frozen by imperialism’s more-than-cooperative banking and financial institutions. As the Aug. 28 *New York Times* so delicately noted, “With so much uncertainty over the governance



(Top) School in Zlitan, Libya, reportedly bombed in NATO airstrike, July 25.

(Below) Burned copy of “Green Book,” with cover photo of Gadhafi speaking at UN, in Benghazi.

of Libya, none of the money will be given to the rebels, but instead will go directly to pay for services [provided by imperialism] and fuel costs.”

The U.S./NATO war began when the Gadhafi dictatorship ordered its troops to open fire on a group of protesting human-rights activists. As with the anti-government mobilizations in Tunisia and Egypt, this was followed by massive protests that were violently repressed by Gadhafi’s police and military, which did not shrink from using its still intact ground and air power to quell the deep resentment that permeated Libyan society. Gadhafi’s decision to make amends with Silvio Berlusconi’s Italy and Nicolas Sarkozy’s France, in the context of world capitalism’s economic crisis, could

only be at the expense of the Libyan masses.

In the early days of these mass protests, there were unmistakable but only modest indications of the independent character of at least a portion of the anti-Gadhafi leadership, as when anti-government protesters unfurled massive banners from rooftops, declaring, “No Foreign Intervention: The Libyan People Can Manage It Alone.” Even then, it was not always clear whether opposition to foreign intervention referred to troops on the ground only, since major elements of the opposition had announced early on, and even demanded, support by U.S./NATO forces and a “no-fly zone.”

When a team of British secret operatives was captured by early anti-Gadhafi forces, they were summarily deported, an indication that at least a portion of the early fighters rejected any association with imperialist troops and other would-be liberators.

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) referred to the mass character of the early mobilizations against Gadhafi when it issued its “Statement on U.S. Non-Intervention in Libya and Other Countries,” declaring: “UNAC calls for an immediate halt to U.S. intervention in regions and countries where mass mobilizations are challenging oppressive regimes.”

The statement continued, “We have seen the horrific consequences of U.S./UN-imposed economic sanctions against Iraq, as well as the consequences of U.S./UN operation of ‘no-fly zones’ over northern and southern Iraq, prior to the U.S. Shock and Awe attacks and invasion.

“We therefore oppose any form of U.S. military or economic intervention in Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, Tunisia and other countries where movements are rising in opposition to dictatorships and military rule.” UNAC continues to oppose all U.S. intervention in Libya, North Africa, and the Middle East more generally.

Unfortunately, the mass and independent character of the anti-Gadhafi mobilizations proved to be ephemeral. They had been politically limited and poorly organized, and therefore incapable of overcoming what rapidly devolved into a self-appointed government-like formation consisting of assorted factions from the Gadhafi regime, including leading political figures and top military commanders. These were supplemented by a swath of returning capitalists with connections to imperialist forces and representatives of assorted anti-Gadhafi tribal and fundamentalist groups. Virtually all these “leaders” demanded and expected U.S./NATO intervention to remove Gadhafi.

The conquest of Libya and the division of the spoils was moved to the top of the warmakers’ agenda. Libya, with some 3-4 percent of the earth’s known high quality, “sweet crude” oil reserves—and an important European supplier—was slated for permanent imperialist oversight, if not occupation. The European and American interveners brooked no voices to warn against or denounce the savage history of foreign intervention in the Arab world. They much preferred and selected the present mix of pro-capitalist Libyan oppositionists, who proudly sported and mass-produced the flag of King Indris al-Senussi, deposed by Gadhafi in 1969, and whose reign consisted in a permanent accommodation to world imperialism.

As we write, plans are in the works to establish an imperialist “stabilization” force to disarm the masses of Libyans who still retain the automatic rifles and other weapons captured from Gadhafi forces or liberally distributed by British, French, U.S., and other NATO forces parked at Misrata and other coastal ports. But disarming the population might prove more difficult than the imperialists originally thought. An Aug. 31 *New York Times* article entitled “Tripoli divided as rebels jockey over leadership” makes it clear that plans to stabilize Tripoli, not to mention several other cities, are uncertain.

The *Times* article states: “There are growing hints of rivalry among the various brigades over who deserves credit for liberating the city and the influence it might bring. And attempts to name a military leader to unify the bands of fighters have instead exposed divisions within the rebel leadership, along regional lines but also between secularists and Islamists.

“They were all signs, one influential member of the council said, that point to a continuing ‘power vacuum’ in the civilian leadership of the Libyan capital. But the jockeying for power also illustrates the challenge a new provisional government will face in trying to unify Libya’s fractious political landscape.” The imperialist overlords are far from certain that their initial TNC choices are reliable in this task. As in Iraq and Afghanistan, Libya has long been divided along fractious tribal and religious lines as well as warring bourgeois factions.

A 70-page plan obtained and published by the *London Times* embarrassed the imperial invaders when it described their preparations for the long-term pacification of Libya. The *Times* wrote: “The plans are highly reliant on the defection of parts of the Gaddafi security apparatus to the rebels after his overthrow. This is likely to prove not only risky, but controversial, with

(continued on page 5)

Documents reveal Gadhafi ties with U.S. government

Documents show that the Bush and Obama administrations were intent on developing firm “military to military” ties with the Libyan regime of Col. Muammar Gadhafi. This was revealed in transcripts of diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks on Aug. 24. In addition, Human Rights Watch has released copies of papers found in Libya’s office of External Security in Tripoli, which disclose ties between that agency and the CIA and British intelligence. Photos of the documents were given to the U.S. media.

A memo sent from the U.S. embassy in Tripoli in early 2009, released by WikiLeaks, stated that the U.S. views Libya as “a strong partner on counterterrorism,” though it cautioned that “the Libyans remain wary of initiatives that put foreign military or intelligence assets too close to their borders.” Nevertheless, the documents indicate, Washington hoped to integrate Libya into AFRICOM, its military front that would rely on U.S. troops and bases in Africa.

The Wikileaks documents also reveal that in meetings with Muammar Gadhafi and his son Muatassim, U.S. Senator John McCain assured them that he would support their requests to purchase weapons from the

United States, and that he “pledged to see what he could do to move things forward in Congress.”

Human Rights Watch has released a 2004 memo it found in Tripoli that was written by top CIA official Stephen Kappes to Libya’s then intelligence chief, Moussa Koussa. Kappes wrote in hopes of establishing closer relations, stating, “Libya’s cooperation on WMD and other issues, as well as our nascent intelligence cooperation mean that now is the right moment to move ahead.”

Some of the Tripoli papers open a window onto the practice of rendition, in which the U.S. sent prisoners to other countries for interrogation—including countries known for using torture. “We are eager to work with you in the questioning of the terrorist we recently rendered to your country,” Mr. Kappes wrote in the memo to Koussa, adding that he would like to send two additional agents to Libya to question the suspect directly.

It must be noted that none of the released documents demonstrate that the United States had any concerns at all about violations of human rights in Gadhafi’s Libya. — MICHAEL SCHREIBER



(Above) Amphibious assault ship *USS Kearsarge* in Suez Canal on March 2, on the way to the coast of Libya.

(Left) Pro-Gadhafi supporters at government rally in Tripoli, July 28.

... Libya 'victory'

(continued from page 4)

many rebel fighters determined to sweep away all vestiges of the regime.

"The document includes proposals for a 10,000-15,000 strong 'Tripoli task force,' resourced and supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to take over the Libyan capital, secure key sites and arrest high-level Gaddafi supporters...." (See the reference below to the UAE's Blackwater mercenary death squads.)

"The blueprint contains plans for about 5000 police officers now serving in units not ideologically committed to the Gaddafi regime to be transferred immediately to the interim government's forces to prevent a security vacuum. The documents claim that the rebel groups in Tripoli and surrounding areas have 8660 supporters, including 3255 in the Gaddafi army."

As expected, the TNC and imperialist spokespersons everywhere promise "democratic" elections within eight months—the same kind of elections that brought to power the various corrupt puppet regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. Any notion of excluding Gadhafi supporters entirely, as the Bush administration "mistakenly" did in its Iraq "de-Baathification" program (removal of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party supporters from all key posts in the government and army), is said to be absent in the projected Libya scenario.

It is more than ironic that today's more "enlightened" occupiers seek to first physically destroy Gadhafi's resisting bureaucrats, generals, and soldiers and then reconstitute a new government with at least a portion of the old. Compliant Gadhafi supporters are expected to share power in a coalition government to supposedly avoid the kind of schisms that continue to plague Iraq and Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, today's "nation builders" have no intention of including representatives of the mass of Libya's working class, other than as window dressing.

But imperialism's prevaricating diplomats nevertheless seek to paste a democratic facade on these delicate matters. Said French foreign minister Alain Juppé, "It's up to the Libyans and the Libyans alone to build a new Libya, which will be a democratic Libya." (!) Mention of Libya four times in a single sentence certainly sends a message. Had Juppé said instead, "It's up to the imperialists and the imperialists alone to build a neo-colonial Libya, which will be an autocratic Libya," he would have been closer to the truth.

What rapidly emerged six months ago, in February 2011, was a patched together TNC, replete with a core of defecting Gadhafi military and diplomatic officials and an array of Western capitalist-connected, Libyan lawyers and "human rights" advocates largely operating to advance the interests of the major NATO-affiliated invaders. From the earliest announcement of this government-in-waiting, now recognized by some 57 nations and counting, not a single TNC voice has been heard to indicate anything other than full support to and collaboration with the imperialist-orchestrated invasion, not to mention pledged support for peaceful negotiations between potentially competing forces as to who will get what in the post-Gadhafi Libya.

Some of the TNC's components are already registering disagreements, as with the recent demonstration of 500 Misrata residents who mobilized and formally petitioned to protest the inclusion of top Gadhafi officials in the new "government." The TNC's top leaders, however, have been thoroughly briefed by imperialism's presently silent advisers to the effect that the new "government" must begin with the "inclusion" of a broad range of forces to avoid future degeneration as was the case with Iraq.

The TNC's central leaders have included:

- Mahmoud Jibril, present head of the new "government" and, until his early-on defection, head of Libya's National Economic Development Board. Jibril has spent most of his time in Europe, rounding up support for his imperialist-created regime. He studied at the University of Pittsburgh and served as an asset manager to the wife of the Emir of Qatar.

- Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, chair of the TNC and Minister of Justice under Gadhafi until he resigned to protest the attacks on students and other protesters.

- Gen. Abdul Fattah Younis, the TNC's top military commander, Libya's interior minister, a French intelligence asset and a personal friend of Gadhafi before defecting. Younis was likely killed by the TNC's Muslim Brotherhood faction, also included in the new "government."

- Ali-al-Essawi, former Gadhafi cabinet official and ambassador, thought to be involved in Gen. Younis' murder.

- Khalifa Hifter, senior commander of TNC troops, who had been living in exile in the U.S. Hifter appointed himself the TNC's military commander, replacing his rival, Younis.

- Abdel Hafidh Ghogi, a Benghazi-based human rights attorney.

- Fathi Terbil, youth representative on the TNC and a human rights attorney, whose arrest by Gadhafi security forces is said to have sparked the rebellion.

Most of these "leaders" are hardened Gadhafi bureaucrats, military strongmen who defected from the Gadhafi government, or Libyans in exile who have collaborated with U.S. officials. A few youthful "human rights" activists may have been added to the mix to lend it a liberal cast.

Of the TNC's 31 members only 13 were formally announced, supposedly due to security reasons. With the TNC's relocation to Tripoli in late August, the number has been expanded to 40 and is expected to rise to 80. This self-appointed body of essentially Libya's elite has no connection with any mass political organization of Libya's working masses; to the extent that these groups exist at all, they are largely in embryonic form.

Whatever self-organization was evidenced in the earliest days of the mass protest was essentially spontaneous and created to organize the distribution of food and the coordination of vital services as Gadhafi's forces bombarded Benghazi. We have yet to see any indication that these organizational forms gave rise to or were based on independent political forces aiming at developing a program to advance the interests of the masses. Nor is there evidence that they took on the task of consolidating an alternative to the leading bourgeois and pro-imperialist forces, which fully understood the need to rush to the "leadership" of the mass movement.

Given the political void among the anti-Gadhafi forces, the TNC was quickly recognized as the nation's "legal" government by France and Italy—with the United States, briefly considering the feasibility of a greater military and political role, following suit soon afterwards. The Europeans' and Americans' public pretensions of "protecting civilians" from Gadhafi's forces rapidly gave way to their real objectives—"regime change" pure and simple. The order of the day was Gadhafi's removal. Inter-imperialist negotiations as to the role and weight of Libya's future overseers were temporarily set aside.

The U.S./NATO intervention and massive bombing were qualitatively intensified while TNC forces were prepared to take Tripoli. Some 30 percent of all sorties were scheduled for the last five days. The "rebels" were further aided by massive supplies provided by the imperialist-backed military governments in Egypt and Tunisia. The Qatari government served as the overt organizer and trainer of the Tripoli Brigade, which led the assault, undoubtedly with assistance of the Qatar-based Blackwater mercenary death-squad

forces, financed by the U.S. and based in Qatar.

The Aug. 19 *Washington Post* reported: "For months, we have been gathering information in Tripoli and shipping weapons, money and men to the capital," said Abu Oweis, the founder and deputy commander of the Qatari-trained Tripoli brigade. "We are completely ready to take over," he added. "All people there will be very happy."

"The brigade's temporary headquarters, a school building near the city of Zintan on the vast plateau of the Nafusa Mountains, was stocked with ammunition during a visit on Thursday. Commanders worked on laptops and used satellite phones as recruits assembled their weapons.

"Oweis said his troops would arrest 'over a hundred' high-profile Gaddafi loyalists designated as criminals and potential troublemakers by the rebels' Transitional National Council, which for now is based in the city of Benghazi in eastern Libya.

"The rebel leaders succeeded in quickly gaining diplomatic recognition from countries around the world, including the United States. International support, in which Qatar and the United Arab Emirates play a key role, has given the rebels access to frozen assets that once belonged to Gaddafi, as well as weapons deliveries from abroad.

"Cargo planes from the United Arab Emirates could be seen in Benghazi's airport Monday, and rebels have turned a slab of highway in the western mountains into a provisional airstrip where they regularly receive cash and automatic weapons from representatives of the Transitional National Council."

The *Washington Post* report neglected to mention that Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, with virtually no armies of their own, rely on U.S.-financed Blackwater mercenary death-squad armies to defend their regimes against "domestic unrest." Mercenaries of the Blackwater type constitute nearly half of the U.S. fighting forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the largest U.S. deployment of privatized military forces in history. Whatever pretensions the Obama administration offers to indicate the withdrawal of some troops from Iraq and Afghanistan are more than compensated for by the massive mercenary forces it maintains in these countries.

The May 15 *New York Times*, in a front-page article entitled "Secret Desert Force Set up By Blackwater Founder," asserted, "The force is intended to conduct special operations missions inside and outside the country, defend oil pipelines and skyscrapers from terrorist attacks and put down internal revolts, the documents show. Such troops could be deployed if the Emirates faced unrest in their crowded labor camps or were challenged by pro-democracy protests like those sweeping the Arab world this year" (emphasis added).

An Aug. 25 *Washington Post* article by Spencer Ackerman entitled "Tiny Qatar Flexes Big Muscles in Libya" similarly noted: "If the Persian Gulf nation has any defense profile at all, it's mostly for hosting the giant al-Udeid air base, a major transit point for U.S. troops and material heading to Iraq and Afghanistan. But despite having very few men under arms, Qatar not only helped keep Moammar Gadhafi's planes grounded, it helped turn the ragtag Libyan rebels into a real fighting force—and even, according to one well-placed source, played a key role in getting them into Tripoli."

The Aug. 23 *New York Times* told the same story: The "rebels" received "steady supplies of weapons, fuel, medicine and food from British, French and Qatari troops" as well as "an escalated bombing campaign by American jets and Predator drones." *The Times* added, "Hundreds of rebels took part in secret military training in Qatar." None of these corporate media reports dared to explicitly state that Blackwater forces—that is, U.S.-financed mercenary death squads, as are routinely deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq—were en-

(continued on page 10)



(Left) Sign in Hebrew reads, "People before Profits!" in Aug. 9 protest march to prime minister's house in Jerusalem.

Do Israeli protests signal a shift toward class-struggle politics?

By JOHN LESLIE

July and August have seen an unprecedented number of mass demonstrations in Israel. These mobilizations are similar, in many ways, to protests in the Arab world and in Europe. The demonstrations have raised demands against high prices and against privatization, and for increased minimum wages, but the main thrust has been high rents and a shortage of housing. Protesters themselves made comparisons to mobilizations in Egypt, and during marches Israelis chanted, "Mubarak, Assad, Bibi Netanyahu."

Beginning on July 14-15, protesters erected about 50 tents in central Tel Aviv. By the end of the first week of August, the protest had grown to over 400 tents and hundreds of protesters. Tent cities have been put up in other parts of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and several smaller cities. On July 23, a mass protest march of over 20,000 took place in Tel Aviv. There were minor clashes with police and 43 were arrested; including 11 members of Anarchists Against the Wall.

In the days following the Tel Aviv march, there were protests and road blockades in a number of other cities. Netanyahu's response was to announce a new housing plan that was immediately dismissed as inadequate by protest organizers. On July 30, about 150,000 marched across the country, including 80,000 in Tel Aviv. On Aug. 7, over 300,000 protesters marched in Tel Aviv—a city of less than 500,000.

On Aug. 18, protest organizers suspended planned weekend demonstrations following Israeli retaliation attacks on Gaza. Earlier in the week, in an attack at Eilat, six Israeli civilians and one soldier were killed. Israel's retaliation attacks included air strikes on Gaza—with nine Palestinians killed and dozens wounded. IDF forces also killed three Egyptian police officers. After initial claims that Palestinian terrorists from Gaza had carried out the attack, the government later admitted that they were unsure of the real identities or origins of the attackers.

Subsequent Israeli social-justice demonstrations were smaller in scale than ones preceding the Eilat attack. On Aug. 27, about 10,000 protesters gathered in Tel Aviv, with a similar number protesting in Jerusalem. However, the movement came back to life on Sept. 3, with an estimated 450,000 taking part in demonstrations across Israel—including 300,000 in Tel Aviv and 50,000 in Jerusalem. Rally speakers blasted the Netanyahu government's economic and defense policies. Calls for cuts in defense spending are increasing amongst demonstrators as the movement progresses.

Significantly, the protest on Sept. 3 in Haifa drew a mixed Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli crowd of 40,000 and specifically raised the issue of discrimination against Arabs. According to *Ha'aretz*, one speaker, Shahin Nasser, representative of the Wadi Nisnas protest tent in Haifa, said: "Today we are changing the rules of the game. No more coexistence based on

hummus and fava beans. What is happening here is true coexistence, when Arabs and Jews march together shoulder to shoulder calling for social justice and peace. We've had it. Bibi, go home ... go and don't come back ... good-bye and good riddance." *Ha'aretz* reports many red flags in the crowd in Haifa.

Opinion polls show overwhelming support for the protests in Israel; however, we have to address the limitations of this movement. It is made up almost entirely of Israeli Jews. In the early weeks only a few Palestinian-Israelis participated. The movement itself reflects an alliance of "left" reformist forces and right-wing settlers.

There has been a conscious decision not to raise demands relating to the occupation or the Palestine question. Early on, some protesters set up a "1948" tent in Tel Aviv for discussion of the issue, but rightist settlers attacked the tent organizers. The movement has failed to directly address the way a society built on Zionism by its very structure enforces dispossession and discrimination, and requires the constant enlistment of Jewish workers in an anti-Palestinian hegemony.

As in the days of Jim Crow in the U.S. or apartheid in South Africa, struggles for economic justice for people only from the dominant ethnic group are inevitably and inherently limited. The fact that the movement stepped back when Israel was attacking Gaza speaks volumes about the limited nature of the social-justice movement there.

Palestinian Israelis face discrimination in education and jobs. There are whole sectors of the economy in which Arab labor is banned for "security" reasons. Poverty inside Israel for Arabs is 52 percent, while it is 16 percent for Jewish Israelis. In Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinians are subject to land confiscation, home demolition, destruction of crops, and the violence of settlers and the military against communities. The military regime in the occupied territories amounts to an apartheid system, with separate roads and legal systems for settlers and the indigenous Palestinian people.

It remains to be seen whether this protest movement represents a major shift toward class-struggle politics in Israel. It's possible that these protests will topple the rightist Netanyahu government, but what will happen next?

This is a critical question for Israeli workers and for those who want to build a just society. The continued oppression of the Palestinians and the occupation of Palestinian lands is the main obstacle to both multinational working-class unity and to full attainment of class-consciousness by Israeli Jewish workers. The liberation of the Israeli working class cannot be achieved separately from the liberation of the Palestinian people.

As long as the Israeli working class maintains its support for Zionism, it will be unable to move towards socialism. The ultimate solution is the building of a multinational revolutionary socialist party and a unified Palestinian workers state from the river to the sea, with full rights and equality for all. ■

... Palestine

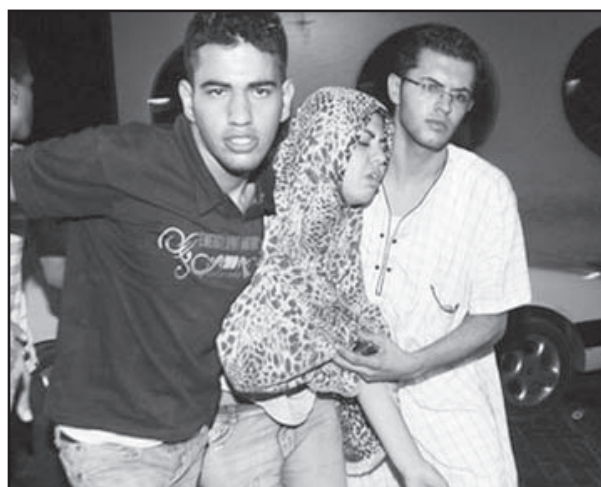
(continued from page 1)

estinian National Council (PNC), the legislative body of the PLO. It is the PNC that holds the mechanism by which Palestinians can collectively determine the strategy the PLO must execute in our name. ... Indeed, democratization of our movement must reach into all aspects of our political work."

And they situate the struggle in the regional revolt: "To our beautiful brave Arab people, from Tripoli to Cairo to Homs to Sana'a to Amman to Manama, we salute you and stand with you. In devoting ourselves to our liberation, we honor your sacrifices and struggle for our Palestine and for our Arab future. Stand with us, open the gates and crossings that besiege us, and rest assured: we will not stop until the banner of freedom flutters above the skies of our Jerusalem."

USPCN called for attendance at the Sept. 15 rally, and for stepping up the already-launched nationwide campaign for direct elections to the Palestinian National Council, a campaign organized through the Palestinian Movement Assemblies and Community Meetings for Democratic National Representation being held around the U.S.

This focus on grassroots participation and leadership of the movement couldn't come at a more crucial time. For while the UN events will likely lead to mass action by Palestinians around the world for genuine liberation, Israel has already warned it will meet a



(Left) Palestinians carry wounded woman into hospital after Aug. 19 Israeli attack on Gaza.

new intifada with mass murder.

A foretaste of that came with the regime's murder of 19 civilians in Gaza in bombing raids after an attack on a bus carrying Israeli soldiers from a military base in Eilat. After the attacks, Palestinian doctors seeing children with hands and feet amputated reported that new, unknown weapons had been used with effects surpassing even the dreaded white phosphorus. These attacks were feared to be the opening of even greater slaughter, but at a meeting of the Zionist cabinet several officials had to admit that Israel's increasing international isolation made such an attack difficult.

However, the regime has already warned that a mass revolt in September will be met with live fire. The Zionist army has begun training settlers in the West Bank

for joint IDF-settler attacks on Palestinian protesters.

The settlers, the vast majority of whom already carry guns, received tear gas and grenades from the army, which also announced (but kept secret the exact location of) two lines in the sand: If protesting Palestinians cross the first, tear gas and other "riot control" measures will be used. If they cross the second, the Zionist army will fire "at their legs" (in IDF investigations of murders by its soldiers, the latter were always said to have aimed at Palestinians' legs when the bullets entered the chest or head).

We can be sure too that the report of the UN Secretary General's Commission investigating the Mavi Marmara massacre, which gave its blessing to Israel's naval blockade of Gaza in complete defiance of international law and even the denunciation of the blockade by other UN bodies, will further embolden the Zionist regime. On the other hand, it will likely lead to a revival of the movement against the siege of Gaza, which has already gotten back in action around a campaign to open the Rafah crossing with Egypt.

And Palestinians have taken heart in the mass demonstrations in Egypt demanding the closing of Israeli embassies, and the replacement of Zionist flags with Palestinian ones by wall-climbing protesters in Cairo and Alexandria. We urge all supporters of Palestinian rights to mobilize Sept. 15 at the UN, and to hit the streets in solidarity with renewed Palestinian mass action and in response to every Zionist attack. ■

Chicago meeting plans NATO/G8 protests

By CHRISTINE MARIE

CHICAGO—On Aug. 28 over 160 activists, representing 73 organizations, met at the Kent College of Law here to take the first steps toward building a national coalition capable of mounting sizeable peaceful, permitted marches on the occasion of the NATO/G8 summits to be held next May. Speakers from many Chicago communities spoke alongside leaders of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), all of whom reminded the audience that much of the world is in revolt against the wars and austerity packages recently imposed by NATO aircraft and G8 bankers.

“The entire world will be watching us,” said UNAC co-coordinator Joe Lombardo. Given that the U.S. is dominant in both NATO and the G8, Lombardo continued, U.S.-based antiwar and social justice movements have a special responsibility to act in solidarity with the victims of these institutions by building the largest demonstrations possible.

Tuesday, May 15, 2012, the opening day of the summit, was affirmed as the day on which the first of two peaceful legal demonstrations would be held. A larger action, a demonstration that can be more easily be joined by both national and international contingents, is being planned for Saturday, May 19.

Leading Chicago movement figures Joe Iosbaker, a recent victim of FBI harassment and founding member of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, and Pat Hunt of Chicago Area Code Pink and Chicago Area Peace Action opened the meeting. UNAC co-coordinator Marilyn Levin set the political themes for the day in welcoming remarks. Levin said that while the heads of state coming to Chicago say that they will meet to foster consensus on global economic growth and security, they really plan to increase “draconian austerity measures” and soaring debt to pay for their “wars, nukes, drones, and bases.”

And to carry this through, she argued, they are planning “increased suppression of civil rights and liberties, with attacks on unions and dissidents, racist

attacks on Blacks, Latinos, immigrants and Muslims;” assaults on the environment; and new controls on energy, food, water and mineral resources.

Kathy Kelly of the Center for Creative Non-Violence brought home the continuing human costs of the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan by telling the story of one of the child victims of a recent drone attack. Mark Johnson, executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the largest and oldest interfaith peace organization in the U.S., explained that failing to take on the fight against NATO/G8 would leave both the movement and all individual activists seriously weakened.

A panel titled “From the Wars Abroad to the Wars at Home” featured Chicago community activists who have committed to building the NATO/G8 permitted marches. Keenaga Taylor, from Communities United Against Foreclosures and Evictions; Mark Clement of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty; and N'dana Carter of Southside Together Organizing for Power highlighted the connections between the rise of the war spending and the growing economic hardship and repression in the Black community. Alex Han of Stand Up Chicago!, an SEIU-initiated community labor formation, told the crowd about the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a NAFTA-type free-trade agreement with Pacific Rim countries that is being negotiated in Chicago.

Alejandro Molina, from the National Boriqua Human Rights Network, connected the repression of Puerto Rican independence activists with the broad history of colonialism carried out by the NATO countries over a century or more. Muhammed Sunkari of the Arab American Action Network, an organization based in the extremely large Arab American community of the city, urged the attendees to remember the organic connections between war and decades of attacks on the civil liberties of the Palestinian community in the U.S. Activists responded to this panel and other presentations by applauding the idea that there should be 100 teach-ins that



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

The NATO/G8 summit must be the occasion to reclaim our right to political protest.

educate about the relationship of NATO and G8 to domestic poverty in the different communities of the city between now and May 2012.

The originator of this idea was Malik Mujahid of the Muslim Peace Coalition and executive producer of Radio Islam, a Chicago-based broadcast with an audience of 60,000. Mujahid came to address the meeting, although he said it was unusual to do such a thing during the month of Ramadan, because he felt an obligation to stress the power of massive, peaceful, legal actions as a movement-building activity. Mujahid was instrumental in bringing over 1000 Muslim Americans, many from the Bengali community, to the national April 9 antiwar march in New York City.

Proposals to build and broaden the NATO/G8 march by Mujahid and others were tied throughout the day to the knowledge that the government was going to use all the powers at its disposal to thwart political protests during the summit. On July 15, in response to the news that antiwar organizers had submitted applications for march permits, Chicago Police Dept. Superintendent Garry McCarthy told a *Chicago Sun Times* reporter that he was preparing 13,000 cops for “mass containment.”

The initial response of the antiwar movement was a July press conference at which Christine Boardman, president of SEIU Local 73; Jokarhi Shakur, student leader, Save City Colleges coalition; Bob Clarke, Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights; Joe Lombardo, United National Antiwar Committee; and others asserted the right to protest and a guarantee from Mayor Rahm Emmanuel that civil liberties would be respected during the summit. The Aug. 28 meeting charted a nine-month national campaign against government efforts to criminalize protests during the May summit.

This effort was informed by activists who had led demonstrations at the 2008 St. Paul Republican National Convention, the 2009 Pittsburgh G20 meeting, and the 2010 Toronto G20 gathering. Meredith Aby from the Twin Cities Antiwar Coalition, Pete Shell from the Thomas Merton Center, and Barry Weisleder from the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War all told of dangerous government repression before and during the demonstrations in their areas.

The NATO/G8 summit in Chicago, all asserted, must be the occasion for the movement as a whole—local, national, and international—to repudiate these dangerous precedents and reclaim the right to political protest.

In response to a individual who wanted the group to consider the likelihood that permits would be denied, UNAC co-coordinator Marilyn Levin reflected the majority sentiment when she said, “We will win the permits to rally and to march.”

.... Uprising in Syria

(continued from page 12)

working society, par excellence, against the society of power and privilege.” But that fact must find open political expression, argued Hassan Khaled Chatila, a member of the Syrian Communist Action Party, in a May interview with A World to Win News Service. He noted that “conditions [in Syria] created a spontaneous consciousness that can’t go higher without the intervention of a political party that represents the working class and brings the masses a materialist understanding of the situation as translated into a political program.”

Chatila argued that to avoid either a military coup which would bring another Assad-type figure to power, or a descent into civil war along religious and ethnic lines, it is necessary “to mobilize millions of Syrians,” and to do so “the revolt would have to put forward not just demands for political democracy but also social demands that could win over people far more broadly.”

The key question, Chatila concludes, is “will the March 15 revolutionary process continue and give birth to a new left and new leadership? ... [T]he important thing is not to launch a revolution but to continue it, as the Bolsheviks quickly learned.”

Unfortunately, a completely different class perspective on the revolt’s prospects is expressed by Burhan Ghalyoun, the most widely quoted leader of the opposition inside Syria (as opposed to those living outside the country). He said in an interview reprinted in *jadaliyya.com* that he believes what will be decisive for the revolt is the coming over of “businessmen, pro-

professionals, manufacturers, and economists”—sectors that are seeking “stability.”

And while he rejects foreign military intervention, he has misplaced hope in a regional conference of governments such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to mediate a solution.

An “anti-imperialist camp”?

Meanwhile, the waves of disgust with the Assad regime are mounting higher—and not just from his lying former allies in Washington, Paris, and London, but among fighters for liberation around the world, including from some among those who previously held illusions about Assad’s “anti-imperialist” credentials.

One crucial moment in the expansion of this consciousness was the regime’s Aug. 14 shelling of the port city of Latakia. Among the targets was a Palestinian refugee camp, leading to the desperate flight of thousands. This provoked an angry column by British MP and Palestine solidarity activist George Galloway denouncing the hypocrisy of a regime that claims to be a leader of the “resistance [to Israel] camp.”

Similar denunciations of Assad’s supposed pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist and anti-U.S. credentials came from As’ad Abu Khalil: “It seems that the Syrian army does not mind being used against a civilian population, while being trained to avoid any contact with Israel.” Abu Khalil noted that “the Assad regime’s calculations were never about liberating Palestine or about empowering resistance against Israel,” describing the “Machiavellian” record of twists and turns, and outright surrenders, motivated by its own desire to stay in power.

Similarly, in a February 2005 interview with *International Viewpoint*, Syrian Trotskyist Monif Mulhem

noted that the regime “is incapable by its nature of resisting U.S. imperialism, exactly as Saddam’s regime was incapable. “On the contrary, the regime is even our greatest weakness in the anti-imperialist struggle. The absence of democratic liberties weakens terribly our capacity to respond.”

Reflecting this consciousness—one far in advance of those who promote illusions in Assad’s “anti-imperialist” credentials—is the common chant among Syrian protesters denouncing Assad as a coward, and asking why his guns are trained on Syrians and Palestinians while Israel occupies Syria’s Golan Heights and murders civilians in Gaza.

If the Syrian uprising can stay mass-based and independent, it could also have an important impact in deepening and radicalizing the regional character of the revolts. For instance, after a demonstration in Beirut in support of the Syrian uprising was attacked by pro-Assad thugs, Bassem Chit, a member of Lebanon’s Socialist Forum/Al-Mountada Alishtiraki, wrote in *International Viewpoint* that “the revolutionary left, along with some independent activists, have been pushing since the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution to create a political space that gathers popular support to the Arab revolutions as a whole, and pushing to look at this revolutionary wave as a process, that engages the whole of Arab masses...”

“We call on all progressive and revolutionary currents to heighten the level of support to the Arab masses in their struggle for freedom, and especially in Syria, as it is one of the hardest knots in this revolutionary wave, and to stand united against the interference of Western powers in these revolutions, and to show that the only real ally for these uprisings and revolutions are the world masses and not Western ruling classes.”

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

Ontario: On Oct. 6, Vote NDP!

Tax cuts for the rich. Service cuts and fee hikes for the rest of us. That's how the bosses make workers pay for the capitalist crisis around the world. Ontario, Canada's most populous province, is no exception. And if the governing provincial Liberals, or the official opposition Progressive Conservatives, have their way, the austerity drive against workers and the poor will intensify.

But the rulers have reason to fear that their plans may be derailed by a wave of votes for the labour-based New Democratic Party on Oct. 6, similar to the *orange surge* seen in the May 2 federal election. The task of every class-conscious worker is to make that happen, for there is much at stake.

Once the prosperous industrial heartland, Ontario is now a have-not province in terms of transfer payments. Unemployment is above the cross-country *official* average of 7.2 per cent. Ontario's poverty rate is up 17 per cent since the Dalton McGuinty-led Liberals were re-elected in 2007 on a pledge to reduce it. Nearly 1.7 million Ontarians are living in poverty, including almost 400,000 children, according to StatsCan data.

In 1995 the Conservative Mike Harris government cut welfare by 21.6 per cent. Since the Liberals were elected in 2003 they perpetuated the decline in welfare and disability rates, which are now 55 per cent below where they'd be otherwise. McGuinty froze the minimum wage in 2011 and slashed the Special Diet supplement to the ailing poor.

Tuition fees are the second highest in Canada, with annual increases between 4.5 and 8 per cent. University graduates carry a debt load of nearly \$25,000, accord-

ing to the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario.

Ontario's Liberal finance minister, Dwight Duncan, declared a two-year wage freeze on public-service workers. He threatens to cut 1900 full-time public-service jobs (including water inspectors and workers who help the disabled live at home) by April 2012.

Meanwhile, Premier McGuinty forces Ontarians to pay a permanent health-care premium and a Harmonized Sales Tax. The HST costs the average family an additional \$792 annually. In August, British Columbia voters rejected and cancelled their HST in a referendum.

Queen's Park starves municipalities and chokes funding to public transit, as it pours billions of dollars into the lethal, wasteful nuclear power industry. Schools are under-funded; recreation centers and libraries face closure; roads and bridges are disintegrating under the ever-growing weight of traffic congestion. And what do the business elite and their hired political hacks say? They say we can't afford any better.

The truth is—we can do better. How? By reversing the corporate tax cuts and putting Ontario back to work. The provincial budget deficit of \$14 billion, and the \$235 billion accumulated debt is largely the result of Tory corporate tax cuts in the mid-1990s and early 2000s of \$18 billion per year. In each of the last two years, the McGuinty Liberals cut corporate taxes more than \$2.4 billion.

What effect did that have? It didn't increase fixed capital spending by business. The rich pocketed the savings, while public budgets and public services were squeezed.

What's the difference between the Liberals and the Tories on this front? McGuinty promises to *restrain growth* below 2 per cent, whereas PC leader Tim Hudack threatens to *reduce spending* by 2 per cent, while further cutting taxes on the rich.

The Green Party would reduce the deficit even faster, without saying how. In any case, one thing is certain: the capitalist parties will declare, after the election, that the situation is much worse than predicted. Their unwavering aim is to make workers pay (both for the manufactured fiscal crisis, and for the endemic capitalist overproduction crisis).

Hudack, a Mike Harris henchman, rubs salt into the social wounds by demanding more prisons, longer sentences, and forced labour for convicts. He courts the anti-choice-on-abortion lunatic fringe, and he pushes for much more privatization and de-regulation. Hudack is a neoliberal in a hurry. He's the flip side of the big business coin. Heads they win. Tails we lose. Many people are tired of this political farce they call a "choice," reinforced by a regressive, non-proportional electoral system.

The NDP, led by Andrea Horwath, pledges to stop the corporate tax giveaways, to remove the HST from hydro and home heating, to freeze transit fares, cut emergency room wait times in half, end ambulance fees, cap government CEO salaries, stop burning coal, and phase out nuclear in favour of green energy alternatives.

Although these policies fall short of what is needed to meet human needs—public ownership of the big economy, under workers' control, to realize eco-socialist solutions—a vote for the NDP is a vote for a workers' party. It opens the door for working people, as a class, to have a say in the political direction of society.

The striving of the powerless to give voice to their demands, through their own class organizations, is not diminished by the loss of Jack Layton; it is rather reinforced in ways that might resound through the ONDP.

In sum, the real choices are these. The Tories will stab you in the back with a straight face. The Liberals will do it with a smile. The alternative in Ontario on Oct. 6 is an NDP government, which workers should press to implement socialist policies. ■

Jack Layton 1950-2011

The death of NDP federal Leader Jack Layton evoked an immense outpouring of sadness and solidarity across the Canadian state. The popularity of Layton, who led his party to unprecedented electoral success on May 2 despite his apparent illness, prompted Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper to declare an official state funeral to honour the NDP leader. Normally, such honours are bestowed only on deceased prime ministers and cabinet ministers.

Thousands of working people passed by Jack Layton's coffin in Parliament in Ottawa, and again at Toronto City Hall. They lined the streets for the funeral procession to a packed Roy Thomson Hall on Aug. 27. Thousands more stood outside the famous concert venue in a nearby square, before giant screens on which the eulogies and musical tributes were



projected.

Layton's last written public testament is hailed as a social democratic "manifesto" (it can be viewed at www.ndp.ca). Although its content is suffused with general sentiments about love and hopefulness, its strongly partisan stand for the NDP does put it at odds with the views of some union and NDP officials who favour a merger with the Liberal

Party. The leadership race to replace Layton is virtually underway.

The NDP Socialist Caucus, which will host a conference on Nov. 26 in Toronto to decide its position on the leadership and policy questions, issued the following statement on Aug. 24: "Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, fought valiantly, but lost his second battle with cancer early on Aug. 22 in Toronto. His passing, at age 61, is a cause of great sadness for all working people and the population at large, a tremendous blow to his family, to whom we send heartfelt condolences, and to the labour-based NDP to which Jack devoted his political life.

"Layton's optimism, energy and passion defined his approach to issues of great social importance. He was a tireless advocate for more and better social

housing, a combatant against violence that victimizes women, and against the scourge of AIDs. Layton promoted environmental protection, the rights of cities, and he heeded the call of the antiwar movement to demand 'Canada out of Afghanistan now.'

"While his policies often didn't go as far as we wished, Layton earned the respect of socialists by campaigning steadfastly to form an NDP government—which he came closer to accomplishing than any of his predecessors. His last major speech in Parliament, as Leader of the Opposition following the 'orange surge' on May 2, was a stirring defence of postal workers against the draconian back to work legislation imposed by the Harper Conservatives. Layton won Quebec, not only with his charm and charisma but by affirming Quebec's right to decide its future, sans the strictures of the undemocratic Clarity Act.

"The best tribute we can pay to Jack is to win the struggles to which he was committed." ■

By BRUCE ALLEN

Bruce Allen is vice president of CAW Local 199 (writing in a personal capacity).

Many retired employees of GM of Canada (GMC) attended meetings held in early August about the proposed settlement between them and GM of Canada on the future of retiree health-care benefits. The settlement will put in place the Health Care Trust (HCT) agreed to in the 2009 contract negotiations. The administrators of the HCT will oversee and allocate these retired workers' health care benefits.

The retirees listened with concern as they were told that, with the funding GM is providing to the HCT, benefits would be cut to between 77% and 84% of their current level if the fund is to be sustained indefinitely. Failing that, the fund will eventually run out of money—meaning all health-care benefits will end. At the time of this writing it remains to be seen what benefits will be cut and to what extent.

A principal justification cited for establishing the HCT is that it will sustain health-care benefits if GM goes bankrupt. But the creation of the HCT makes it even more unlikely that will ever happen. GM of Canada President Kevin Williams made this rather obvious earlier this year when he stated that the HCT will reduce Canadian labour costs by over \$16 an hour.

Two-tier health care at GM of Canada

This revelation explains why GM has repeatedly told the CAW that future investments in Canada are contingent upon the HCT being finalized. It also showed once again how GM has successfully used its control over investment decisions to extract endless contract concessions from an acquiescent CAW.

The immediate effects of the finalization of the HCT will not just involve big new cuts to retiree health care benefits. The most significant effect will be the establishment of two-tier health-care benefits at GM of Canada. Active workers will not endure the cuts that will come with the HCT, meaning their health-care benefits will remain as they are, while retiree benefits get sharply reduced.

This two-tier arrangement is especially devastating for retirees because they need their health-care benefits more than active workers. It is also morally indefensible because GM retirees fought the contract battles that got the health-care benefits all GM workers enjoy.

The consequences do not end there. Retired GMC workers will be hit by these new cuts just as they are

experiencing steadily declining real incomes due to the loss of cost-of-living adjustments on their pensions and due to the health-care concessions negotiated in 2008 and 2009.

Increasing financial hardship will go hand in hand with the indignity of having health-care benefits very inferior to those active workers get.

The finalization of the HCT is also bad news for the continually shrinking active workforce at GM. With the HCT they have another reason to put off retirement for as long as they can because retirement will mean living with less than it did before. GM workers who "retire" will become even more inclined than they already are to get a new job to compensate for their steadily declining retirement incomes.

Another thing must be understood. Two-tier health-care benefits at GMC mark yet another break from pattern agreements in the Canadian auto industry. There will be no two tier-health care benefits at Chrysler of Canada because the HCT there is much better funded. Nor will there be two-tier health-care benefits at Ford of Canada because there is no HCT there.

So GM of Canada retirees are on their own in this regard. They need to mobilize for the 2012 contract negotiations to compel their leadership to negotiate gains elsewhere—sufficient to make up for the big cuts they are about to endure. Active workers at GMC should be in full support of them. ■

Panel's report continues greenwashing of gas fracking

By WAYNE DELUCA

On Aug. 11, a panel convened by the Department of Energy released a report on natural gas "fracking" (hydraulic fracturing), the first time a federal regulatory agency has weighed in on the practice. The report makes no direct policy suggestions but suggests significantly more oversight, including the disclosure of the chemicals being pumped into deep wells. These mixtures have been jealously guarded by energy companies, which consider them trade secrets.

While the panel's suggestion for more public information about practices is certainly a welcome step, it carefully toes the line of the energy giants pushing for more and further fracking. The report is awash in terms such as "best practices" and "production efficiency," and its overall thrust is not for clean and sustainable energy but to send a strong word of caution that the drilling industry must improve its public image through increased voluntary compliance and communications. This is hardly surprising given that six of the seven panel members had ties to the natural gas and oil industry, according to a letter signed by 28 scientists (<http://bit.ly/qvilm>).

Fracking is a method of rapidly capturing natural gas (methane) that has sat for centuries under shale rock. A stew of chemicals is used to crack open the shale rock, sometimes buried miles underground, and chemical propellants are injected to force the gas out quickly. The fracking "water" becomes a hazardous waste, polluted both by chemicals added to speed the process and by radioactive elements buried deep in the ground.

Since gas sequestration is imperfect and since methane is a light gas, there is always some seepage of methane even when the fracking liquid does not spill out of the wells. In addition to methane, fracking has been linked to increased levels of bromine, which is carcinogenic.

Controversy has surrounded fracking, including the documentary "Gasland," which showed methane-contaminated water that can be set on fire. The Department of Energy panel is the first step away from a state-by-state framework for regulation that has proven inconsistent. New York has maintained a moratorium over drilling, while Pennsylvania's Gov. Corbett has rushed into the arms of the gas companies. New Jersey's Chris Christie has taken a position on the fence, vetoing a ban on the practice while proposing a one-year moratorium.

These states, along with Ohio and West Virginia, sit atop the Marcellus Shale, the largest known reserve of gas targeted by energy companies. In New York and Pennsylvania, the Delaware River watershed, a major source of water for millions of people, stands to be directly impacted by fracking.

In Pennsylvania, news about fracking continues to roll in, almost all of it negative. The Philadelphia *In-*



Michael Okoniewski / Bloomberg

quirer (Aug. 21) reported that the Susquehanna River Basin Commission has stopped water withdrawal from 40 locations in the basin, primarily in areas where gas drillers collect water. The sheer volume of water needed has literally been draining the creeks of Pennsylvania dry, and the always thirsty operation has even forced drillers to collect rainwater for fracking purposes. Of course, this liquid can no longer be a part of any healthy ecosystem, meaning that any water used in fracking is withdrawn for the long term.

The gas industry is relentlessly focused on its image. Natural gas is touted as "cleaner burning" and an alternative to oil that is abundant and domestically available. The greenwashing campaign has reached the point where some new buses are being touted for running on natural gas instead of diesel fuel—a mainly economic concern that is painted as an environmental gesture.

Of course, methane still releases carbon dioxide when burned, even if the rate is lower than for oil or coal. And when it does get into the atmosphere (the capture rate of fracking wells is about 92%), one particle of methane has the greenhouse gas effect of one hundred carbon dioxide molecules.

The long-term effects of modern drilling and fracking operations are not well studied. The residue of wastewater underground and the act of fracturing rocks itself may have unforeseen consequences. Geologists have found links between fracking and increased seismic activity.

Other long-term effects, including those on water basins, still lack sufficient study. What research has

been done is often obfuscated by flimsy claims from the energy industry, such as claiming that 20-year-old reports of bromine in an area invalidate any claim that bromine poisoning is related to fracking.

Many of the steps in the Department of Energy's report would be improvements over the status quo, but the truth is that it has no regulatory teeth. The environmental impact of fracking should be grounds to force a moratorium and much stricter regulation, paid for directly by the corporations that are enriched by it, if the practice is allowed. Any drilling that does occur should be subject to steep carbon taxes, to be used to fund a renewable energy infrastructure.

No matter how much it is painted otherwise, natural gas is no way out of the environmental catastrophe the human race is facing. Even if it replaced coal and oil entirely, the developed world would still be pumping unsustainable levels of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Yet fracking shows the weakness of attempting to use market "solutions" to combat the ongoing climate crisis. Instead of putting money into actual renewables, the U.S. government would much rather help polish the image of natural gas, which is much more profitable for the energy companies that have latched onto "green" as a buzzword.

Markets don't reward good ideas, only profitable ones. What is needed is a system based on human need, balanced with environmental sustainability, which is only possible in a planned economy—what we call eco-socialism. The alternative is environmental collapse, whether we get there through coal or methane. ■

CAAT support staff strike back

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

TORONTO—Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology support staff, represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union, went on strike on Sept. 1 to defend full-time jobs and to challenge the threat of a two-tier system for benefits. Both kinds of management attacks have dire implications for all public sector workers.

Management's concession demands would further isolate and impoverish young workers who make up a large

proportion of the 8000-strong OPSEU CAAT-S (College Support) members who work in 24 colleges across the province. Their sick leave would be limited to 10 days a year, with no carry-over or accumulation of unused days.

The workers are in collective bargaining with the province and now operate under legislation that allows the employer to use scab labour for the first time. Intimidation and coercion are being used against workers already suffering from the biggest economic recession in recent memory.

The Chair of the CAAT Support Bargaining Team, Rod Bemister, reported on the OPSEU website: "This round of bargaining is not about us getting ahead; it is about us staying even. It's about holding onto the job security, benefits and pay that others before us fought to get. It's about keeping good jobs, not just for right now but for the future. We care too much for our students and the future of Ontario to allow the workforce to be filled with jobs that are part time, insecure, and low paying."

Members across the province gave the bargaining team a 77 per cent strike mandate. Clearly, those workers were prepared to back their demands with action. They did not flinch in the face of management's obstinacy.

Socialists, campaigning in support of the college workers, say: End corporate tax breaks, tax the rich, defend full-time jobs, and demand equal pay and benefits for equal work! ■

Canadians live in a sea of debt

Nearly three-quarters of Canadian households carry some debt, according to a Harris-Decima survey done for the CIBC. Over four in 10 households find their debt interferes with achieving financial goals such as saving for retirement or paying for children's education. Those in the 35-to-44 age bracket are the most indebted, with nearly 90 per cent carrying some form of loan.

'People not Poisons' rally in Louisville

By LEVI GRUENWALD

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—On Aug. 13, residents of this city's Chickasaw neighborhood, along with organizations such as the Sierra Club and Jobs with Justice, held a rally called "People not Poisons," which focused on the effects of toxic pollution in local communities caused by private companies and corporations. The rally was located in Chickasaw Park, which stands in the shadow of the towers of Gallagher power plant.

Gallagher is one of the most polluting facilities in the region, and is the source of many problems for the Chickasaw and other historically Black and working-class neighborhoods in its shadow.

"People not Poisons" was excellent in explaining the impact of capitalism on the environment, and also how its destruction of the environment is leading to the destruction of people's livelihood, culture, standard of living, and rights.

The main speaker was Michelle Roberts, who works for the law firm, Advocates for Environmental Human Rights. Roberts highlighted the dangers of the toxic chemicals that private facilities like Gallagher release into the community, namely the pollution of the local water supply with dioxins.

But the rally was not just an educa-

tional forum on the harm that corporate greed has on the environment. It was an opening for mass action to demand a solution. Roberts stressed that organizations can work together for a common cause within coalitions without losing their autonomy.

Roberts also tore down the illusions about the so-called "Green Economy," exposing it as a smokescreen to cover up the ravaging of the environment by capitalist interests.

Roberts and other members of participating organizations stressed that the struggle for environmental human rights cannot be isolated from other struggles. Speakers highlighted how violations of environmental human rights have culturally wounded the Black community. Everyone was in general agreement when it was said that the struggle for environmental human rights must be linked with other social movements (labor, antiwar, oppressed nationalities, civil rights, etc.).

It is important to note that no one at the rally called on people to vote for the Democrats in the coming elections. Leaders of the rally stressed that to solve the environmental crisis, people must organize on a grassroots level and mobilize activists, workers, and their communities. ■

Antarsya: Summit decisions on Greek debt will bring *more* austerity measures

Stop payments! • Cancel the debt! • Nationalize the banks under workers control!

ATHENS, July 27—The decisions of the EU summit of July 21 do not represent the “salvation of Greece”—as the prime minister hastened to explain of the Memorandum and the Midterm Program, and the mass media—submissively dependent on the government—has parroted ever since. Nor will they offer a means of avoiding the likelihood of bankruptcy. Least of all are they intended to grant a breathing space to the Greek population; quite the opposite.

These decisions basically represent a restructuring of the Greek debt as well as an admission that the debt problem as such has not been dealt with at all, that it is more intractable now than ever. The Greek government will not be able to pay off the debt despite the brutal social cuts that were made with the first Memorandum, the cruel austerity measures, the dizzying rise in unemployment, and the closure of thousands of companies.

The measures associated with the decisions of the EU summit are geared to save time and protect the interests of banks and the international lenders. The national bankruptcy facing Greece has simply been deferred to the future. In addition, it has become clear that the current debt crisis concerns not just Greece, but the eurozone and the EU as

a whole—precisely because it represents a manifestation of the general contradictions and crisis-prone tendencies of global capitalism. Today Greece is the victim. Tomorrow the same is likely to happen in Spain and Italy.

Similarly, the measures themselves—along with the new loan package of the EU, the IMF, and private banks—tighten the chokehold of debt. The total debt Greece has committed to pay off for the next 30 years has been dramatically increased. The interest alone reaches a height of 450 billion €, which is far above the current total debt of 350 billion.

At an average interest rate of 5 percent, the Greek budget will have to pay €15 billion annually simply to cover interest payments. In this way, the treaty on “international economic control” that was completed with the Memorandum and the Midterm Program is being extended dramatically.

The overseers of the international institutions, the Troika, will continue their activity in the coming decades to enforce and monitor a relentless austerity policy, along with the selling off of public enterprises and state property. Greece remains the laboratory for the application of the most aggressive capitalist neoliberal prescriptions.

The Papandreou government has chosen to pursue the most brutal attacks on the living standards of broad popular layers. To illustrate the scale of these at-

tacks it is only necessary to note that the Memorandum No. 1 reduced the deficit by 6% of GDP, but now, with the Memorandum No. 2, a reduction by 10% is required. During the entire term of the current policies, therefore, we will see no “growth” and no “wealth.” There will simply be further Memoranda and more Midterm Programs, tougher austerity, rising unemployment, “internal devaluation,” more privatization, and a continuing policy of social destruction.

Precisely for this reason there can be only one answer at the present time: The resolute and complete reversal of this policy—i.e., the fall of the PASOK government and of the right-wing “New Democracy,” which again would like to take the helm, plus the fall of the entire political system composed of “willing” representatives of this cruel policy. The massive uprising in recent months by broad segments of the population, the general strikes and the great movement to occupy public squares need to continue to the point where it becomes uncontrollable.

The next steps must lead to the immediate organization of resistance to fend off attacks by Health Minister Loverdos and Minister of Education Diamantopoulos, aimed at leveling the hospitals and schools, also to prevent the selling off of state-run enterprises, new pay cuts, and the layoffs in public and private sectors.

The “social bankruptcy” the rulers want to impose on us must be opposed with

the only real “bailout,” which is represented by the mass mobilization:

- Immediate withdrawal from the Memorandum and the Midterm Program! A relentless fight against their practical implementation!

- Immediate suspension of payments on the debt and debt cancellation!

- Withdrawal from the Euro! Anti-capitalist disengagement from the EU!

- Nationalize the banks and corporations under workers’ control! No to the privatizations; no to the sale of public enterprises and public property; no to environmental destruction in the name of “investors” and “debt repayment”!

- Radical redistribution of social wealth in favor of the workers! Prohibition of layoffs!

- Escalate the battle; expand the strikes; for the emergence of a workers’ and popular movement and the unity in action of the left to promote radical change and the overthrow of the existing conditions; for the emergence of a genuinely anti-capitalist and revolutionary left!

Such an approach is required if we want to open the road to a genuine alternative. The combination of a new round of actions by the militant trade-union movement with a broad mobilization of those involved in the occupations of public spaces can create new organs of militant action and of self-organization by activists against the rotten bourgeois political system.

The militants of ANTARSYA and of the anti-capitalist left will participate with all their energy in this great struggle. ■

ANTARSYA is an alliance of the anti-capitalist revolutionary left in Greece. This article was translated by Andreas Kloke.

... Libya ‘victory’

(continued from page 7)

gaged in combat missions in Libya. A growing body of evidence reveals that they were.

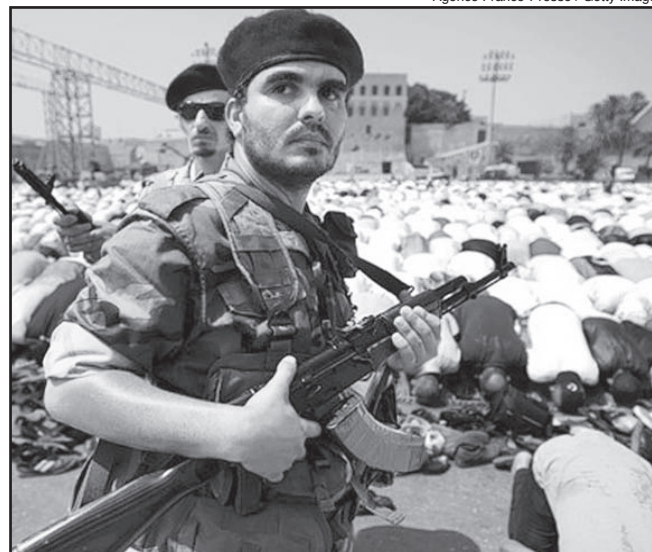
The imperialist-led conquest of Libya was reported in the kept media in the tradition of all imperialist wars. Gadhafi’s forces were demonized even though he was George Bush’s praised leader little more than a year ago. But much of the media hyperbole aimed at justifying the U.S. war proved to say more about the TNC than it did about Gadhafi.

The Aug. 14 *New York Times* article entitled “Waves of Disinformation and Confusion Swamp the Truth in Libya” is revealing not so much in its ridiculing of Gadhafi’s statements that he would “fight to the last soldier” but rather because a few skeptical reporters provided a rare glimpse into TNC politics. “The rebels have offered their own far-fetched claims, like mass rapes by loyalist troops issued tablets of Viagra. Although the rebels have not offered credible proof, their claim is nonetheless the basis of an investigation by the International Criminal Court.”

Furthermore, says *The Times*: “And there is the mantra, with racist overtones, that the Qaddafi government is using African mercenaries, which rebels repeat as fact over and over. There have been no confirmed cases of that; supposedly there are many African prisoners of war held in Benghazi, but conveniently journalists are not allowed to see them. There are, however, African guest workers, poorly paid migrant labor, many of whom, unarmed, have been labeled mercenaries.” *The Times* has referred to this anti-Black African racism promoted by TNC spokespersons on several occasions, as if to caution the “rebel” leaders that it counters the democratic image they have been encouraged to promote.

What lessons can be drawn from the impending imperialist victory in Libya? First and foremost, as the mass mobilizations in Egypt and Tunisia and now Libya have more than amply demonstrated, there are no shortcuts—not to mention imperialist interventions—in defeating dictators. The construction of mass revolutionary socialist parties, deeply rooted in the organizations and struggles of the masses for equality and freedom, is the first prerequisite to victory. There will be no sustained victories against capitalist regimes, liberal or dictatorial, unless these are complemented by coordinated struggles on a regional, if not international, basis.

Second, imperialist interventions in all of their manifestations must be vehemently opposed. The right of self-determination of all oppressed nations, even those led by heinous dictators, must be supported as against imperialist interventions. Imperialism’s defeat in any confrontation with oppressed nations weak-



(Left) Pro-TNC soldiers stand guard at Martyrs Square in Tripoli.

ens its capacity for future interventions and opens the door wider for others to follow suit. While revolutionary socialists have every right and obligation to criticize and oppose dictatorships everywhere, these criticisms are subordinate to the defeat of imperialist intervention and war. Revolutionaries are not neutral in such confrontations. We are always for the defeat of the imperialist intervener and would-be colonizer.

A critical element in the program of the United National Antiwar Coalition is opposition to any and all U.S. intervention. UNAC is united in organizing massive mobilizations to demand “Bring All U.S./NATO Troops, Mercenaries and War Contractors Home Now!” Its constituent organizations have a variety of views, which are sometimes conflicting, on the regimes of many countries, from Iran to Libya, as well as Iraq and Afghanistan. These differences are properly addressed by the various constituent organizations’ publications and activities. But the basis of *unity in action*, of the united-front-type formations that are critical to the organization of the masses to stay the hand of the imperialist warmakers, is defense of the right of self-determination of *all* oppressed nations—even those headed by hated dictators.

We live in deeply troubled and contradictory times—in which the worldwide capitalist offensive remains largely unchallenged on a scale necessary to change the present relationship of forces. But history repeatedly demonstrates that the working-class majority will once again rise to challenge its oppressors and once again boldly pose the question of which power shall rule—theirs, in the interest of the tiny parasitic few or *ours*, in the interest of all humanity.

Today, the imperialist-led war in Libya continues, with massive NATO bombing supporting the TNC troops’ efforts to conquer pro-Gadhafi cities. But we are compelled to recognize the tragic truth that a severe defeat has been inflicted on the Libyan people. To

our sisters and brothers in Libya, we can merely assert that the crisis-ridden imperialist beast can only provide new opportunities to build fighting mass movements and the essential mass revolutionary socialist parties capable of uniting all the oppressed in a common struggle against imperialism and all its agents. The Libyan masses will rise again!

In contrast to the massive mobilizations during the Arab Spring in North Africa that forced the ouster of hated dictators in Egypt and Tunisia, the Libyan people are saddled with an even greater evil—direct neo-colonial intervention into their country’s affairs.

This is not to say that the victories won by the Egyptian and Tunisian masses are secure. Imperialism’s satraps continue to rule in these nations in the form of the still-powerful military regimes. The work of revolutionaries in Egypt and Tunisia is far from completed. Indeed, it has just begun. Whatever space has been opened by the massive mobilizations can and will be quickly closed if the still-existing capitalist state power remains in place. The coming revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, and in all other nations, can only be secured with the abolition of the capitalist system, whose inherent logic is oppression, war, and destruction.

Today the imperialist boot is on the ground in Libya and deeply implanted. The Libyan masses have not been liberated. Thousands have been killed. Imperialism’s sights are now focused on doing the same in Syria and eventually in Iran. The liberation struggle in these countries also rests in the development of mass revolutionary socialist parties there, not with imperialism’s “humanitarian” interventions and not with any reliance on the present entrenched and brutal local capitalist exploiters.

Here in the United States, we must restate our revolutionary obligation to the world’s people to oppose our own imperialist government and all its wars, and to warn once again that American imperialism is incapable of serving anyone’s interests other than the elite ruling-class few. The Obama administration is a glaring example of this fundamental truth. It has exceeded the Bush administration in virtually every measure with regard to the attacks on workers at home and abroad. Any illusion that it is capable of doing otherwise will prove fatal to the coming mass struggles that will challenge the capitalist system as never before.

- Bring the Troops Home Now: Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan!
- Stop the U.S./NATO War on Libya! Imperialist Troops, Warships, Aircraft, Mercenaries Out Now!
- Self-determination for All Oppressed Peoples! ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"The Help," written and directed by Tate Taylor from Katherine Stockett's novel, starring Emma Stone, Viola Davis, and Bryce Dallas Howard.

When girls become housewives they end up treating the maids who raised them with the same mean oppressiveness their mothers once did. In Tate Taylor's film, *"The Help,"* from Katherine Stockett's eponymous novel, set in the early 1960s during the civil rights era (the book takes place a decade later), white mothers in Jackson, Miss., who drive around in Cadillac convertibles with the top down, want to protect their children from diseases that "colored" people allegedly carry ("they have different diseases than us").

Power housewife, take-no-prisoners Hilly Holbrook (a two-dimensional character played by Bryce Dallas Howard) gets a law passed barring maids from their employers' bathrooms, relegating them to bare, plywood "outhouses" in the garage. The irony is that the "help" feed, dress, potty train, diaper, and doctor the children, and often go an extra step by comforting them with warm hugs and soft words.

Black maids are ciphers in these households—seen but not heard. Not to speak unless spoken to. The daughters of maids become maids themselves, with their mothers advising them of the do's and don'ts of working for whites.

Sissy Spacek, in cat's-eye glasses, plays Missus Walters, Hilly's Alzheimer-stricken mother. Hilly's maid—seen-it-all, humorous Minnie (a terrific Octavia Spencer)—had raised Hilly. Nevertheless, when Hilly fires Minnie, Missus Walters is outraged. For a maid to be

'The Help' speak out!



fired from a family for whom she's worked for generations is shameful, always the maid's fault; they are sometimes beaten by their husbands for losing their jobs.

Eugenia "Skeeter" (believably played by Emma Stone) a New York college grad, returns to Jackson to care for her ailing mother, Charlotte (Allison Janney). In distinct contrast to her friends' crinoline skirts, floral dresses, and bouffant hair-dos, Skeeter wears plain cotton dresses or simple two piece suits. Her hair is wild and unruly; she wears little make-up. The family's maid, Constantine (a magical Cicely Tyson), who'd raised her, is gone. Charlotte refuses to explain. Later in the film the ugly truth behind her dismissal is revealed. Director Taylor shows flashbacks of Skeeter and Constantine, with Constantine waxing philosophical and

Biblical, like an ancient sage.

Aibileen, played by Viola Davis, is the maid for one of Hilly's close friends, and a fully developed character. Aibileen elevates the film beyond cliché. She inspires Skeeter, who got a job at a local newspaper, to write articles from a "colored" maid's point of view about working for white employers. These articles, many of which Aibileen dictates, are to be included in a book that Skeeter is writing.

Director Taylor includes scenes that make whites feel comfortable with racial oppression, thinking that things can't be too bad because Blacks merely laugh at themselves: For instance, Aibileen tells about being asked by a white child why her skin is that color; she says, "I'm Black because I drink too much coffee."

Jessica Chastain (the oppressed, mar-

tyrized wife of Brad Pitt in *"Tree of Life" plays Celia. Her character illustrates the social prejudices among whites, which broadens the film's scope. Celia is as refreshing as the bottle of Coke she offers Minnie when hiring her. Hilly and her housewife friends had tossed Celia into the white trash bin.*

It was nice that her husband, Johnny (Michael Vogel), was not portrayed as the stereotypical rich, white Southerner, but as a man who truly loves his wife, the only man who had a real presence. Celia becomes an excellent cook thanks to Minnie, who ends up being treated as an equal in their household. Unfortunately, this is more of a fantasy than reality, although maybe a rare occurrence.

A ring found behind a couch that hasn't been moved for a half-century results in Hilly's new maid being arrested, handcuffed, and beaten bloody by cops in front of her friends. The murder of Medgar Evers terrifies them and Black communities across the South. Yet this news and other reported atrocities are instrumental in inspiring all the Black maids in the neighborhood to step up and offer their life stories for Skeeter's book.

After the book is published, and against the background of the civil rights movement, Aibileen says that for the first time, "I felt free." Unfortunately, little has changed in the "help" department in the last half-century. Rich white people still get help, but not merely from Blacks. Now it's provided by female immigrants from all over the world, who are often raped, beaten, and locked into basement rooms—literally slaves. More media attention needs to be brought to this escalating atrocity, which will only worsen as the income gap continues to widen. ■

Verizon workers go back to work without a settlement

By DAVID BERNT

After a two-week strike, workers at Verizon have gone back to work with only an agreement from management to continue bargaining. The 15-day walkout by 45,000 members of the CWA and IBEW at Verizon's landline division on the East Coast was the largest strike in the United States since a brief strike of GM workers in 2007.

This dispute between workers and management is a familiar one for the labor movement: a highly profitable employer demanding massive concessions from workers, focusing on pension and health-care benefits. All too often union leaders have accepted the concessions without any struggle at all. The fact that Verizon workers fought back by striking, the vast size of the bargaining unit, and public familiarity with the company resulted in a groundswell of labor and community support, echoing the broad mobilization in Madison, Wis., last winter.

The sudden end of the strike, as the strike was building momentum, with no contract and not even agreement on any bargaining issues, has brought confusion and frustration for rank-and-file Verizon workers and their supporters.

Verizon is among the modern-day robber barons. In 2010 the company reported after-tax profits of over \$10 billion as the company continued to expand in the fast growing wireless market. Despite this, the company not only paid no federal taxes in 2010 but received a \$705 million refund!

In the context of massive budget cuts that workers are enduring on the pretext of the fake budget crisis, workers at Verizon and their allies are disgusted at the company's demands for concessions from union workers. Verizon wants \$1 billion in concessions from union employees by cutting health and retirement benefits and stripping work rules from the contract. The company is proposing that workers pay 25% of their health-care premiums, up from the current 0%.

The union workers at Verizon are almost entirely within the company's landline di-

vision. The company's rapidly growing wireless division has 80,000 employees, but only 75 are unionized. Today only 30% of Verizon workers are in a union. The company has continued to squeeze the landline division through outsourcing and downsizing as a means of weakening the unions' ability to exert pressure on the company.

Efforts to organize the wireless division have failed, despite the unions' winning a neutrality agreement with Verizon after a strike in 2000. To get strikers back to work, the company agreed to not interfere with organizing at wireless division operations, yet later completely violated the neutrality agreement. Verizon stalled implementation through lengthy arbitration hearings and closed facilities where CWA had formed organizing committees and moved the work to "right-to-work" states outside the jurisdiction of the agreement.

On Aug. 2 the unions' leadership called a strike, stating that they could not accept the sweeping concessions sought by Verizon. But CWA president Larry Cohen said the purpose of the strike was merely to force Verizon to negotiate more seriously, not to win a new contract.

Despite the limited demands of the strike, Verizon workers and the labor movement mobilized to fight back against the company's attacks. Picket lines were set up from Virginia to Massachusetts outside Verizon landline facilities, and blocking or slowing down scab operations. Verizon quickly went to court and successfully got injunctions to limit picketing. Nevertheless, landline operations were significantly disrupted, as the scabs were unable to maintain the workload of maintenance and service calls.

Trade unionists along the East Coast set up informational pickets outside Verizon Wireless retail stores to publicize the strike and build solidarity with the strikers. The store picketing also allowed trade unionists to engage the non-union workforce in wireless. The CWA and IBEW reported a flood of calls from wireless workers asking how to join the union.



Sal Mastriano / Socialist Action

Although the strike was building momentum, CWA and the IBEW called off the strike after receiving promises from management that they would begin bargaining the key issues. Yet management has not conceded anything on the core issues. In fact, Marc Reed, the vice president of Human Resources at Verizon, told the press, "We remain committed to our objectives"—that is, busting the union.

Additionally, the unions agreed to not strike for 30 days and to suspend contractual overtime limits, allowing the company to catch up on its backlogged service work. The Verizon workers' allies were told to suspend picketing outside the wireless stores. This effectively cut off most of the unions' leverage in bargaining without gaining any real concessions from management.

It is likely that even if the strike had continued, management would not have moved in bargaining in the short term. Verizon was prepared to endure a long strike, especially since the strike was centered in its smaller and less profitable division. The IBEW workers also faced an additional challenge in that the union has no strike fund. And it is certainly no coincidence that the strike was called off right before workers were set to lose their company health insurance. All of these factors likely played a role in the union leaders' ending of the strike.

Striking workers always face many challenges, and in this era of austerity with a weakened labor movement strikes are

very difficult to win. Yet the cold truth for the labor movement is that strikes are the only way labor can effectively counter concessions. Verizon is clearly aiming for the jugular, and won't back down unless forced by massive economic pressure—that is, a major shutdown of the company's operations.

Despite the weakened state of the labor movement, it still has the ability to win strikes, if organized properly. The major labor federations and international should prioritize supporting the Verizon strike fund in order to alleviate the economic strain that workers face during a long strike. Unions could use the hundreds of millions earmarked for the budget-cutting Democrats for the 2012 election to support the striking Verizon workers.

Most critically, the unions could mobilize rank-and-file workers to form mass pickets to shut down scab operations, regardless of court injunctions, just as the pioneers of the modern labor movement did in the 1930s. The recent experiences of the mass protests in Madison, Wis., the UE factory occupation of Republic Doors and Windows, and the Verizon strike show that when workers fight back they draw support from broad layers of the working class, which can be used to overcome the various limitations of a particular union or bargaining unit.

While negotiations continue, the Verizon workers will continue their struggle. Some 80 workers, including a local union president, have been suspended for their actions on the picket lines, and a strong defense of these workers is critical for maintaining the battle with Verizon. Some workers have begun organizing "work-to-rule" campaigns (which necessarily mean slowdowns), and are discussing further actions they can take while back at work to maintain pressure on Verizon.

While the strike for now is over, all working people should be prepared to do whatever it takes to support the Verizon workers. A loss in this battle would be another sign for the bosses to continue and deepen their attacks on working people, while a win could be an inspiration for all workers to stand their ground and fight back against the bosses' offensive. ■

Syria uprising is critical to continuing Arab revolt



By ANDREW POLLACK

With the NATO victory in Libya, the regional Arab revolt faces a turning point. In our last issue we explained that Egypt was the key to the fate of that revolt, because of the weight of its working class, that class's militancy and state of mobilization, and new political projects in its ranks.

Now NATO has boots and suits on the ground in Libya. We will all look carefully for any signs of grassroots resistance to the dictates of NATO and its corporate/bank sponsors. Imperialism's victory in Libya threatens to reverse the forward motion that Egypt and Tunisia have provided for months. Resisting that backward trend depends in part on continuing and heightened efforts by Egyptian workers.

But in the short term, the pivot on which the direction of the Arab uprisings will revolve is events in Syria and Palestine, and in particular, on the ability of grassroots forces among Syrians and Palestinians to maintain leadership of their movements.

On Aug. 28, the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* both printed articles quoting ruling-class politicians and advisors speculating on whether events in Libya will lead to a similar intervention in Syria. The consensus seems to be that such an intervention isn't practical—for now—given the different politics of the country, its tighter enmeshing in regional affairs (rivalries and alliances with Turkey and Iran, for instance), as well as the absence of a clear voice in the anti-regime opposition for such meddling.

But the imperialists are desperately looking for bourgeois opposition figures willing to call for intervention—and, as in all the other Arab revolts, the U.S. is encouraging its allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, etc.) to encourage Muslim Brotherhood and salafi involvement in the uprising so as to have more pliable clients should Syrian President Bashar al-Assad fall.

The *Post* claimed to have found evidence of growing support for intervention among Syrians, alleging that "protesters in recent days have carried banners calling for a no-fly zone over Syria akin to the one that facilitated the Libyan revolt. 'We want any [intervention] that stops the killing,' said one banner held by protesters in the beleaguered town of Homs." We cannot yet determine if such incidents really occurred or are the product of wishful thinking by the *Post's* editors.

The same day *The Times* also claimed to have detected a pro-intervention shift in mood. "For now at least, the administration and its allies in the Libya action have stopped far short of threatening military force in Syria. Still, the officials argue that creating the broadest possible diplomatic pressure ... could ultimately have an effect and, if Mr. Assad continues his violent crackdown on dissenters, lay the foundation for more aggressive action."

Yet a senior U.S. official admitted to *The New York Times* reporter that "the Syrian opposition doesn't want foreign military forces." But, said *The Times*, "things could always escalate. 'There's no appetite to engage in military action in Syria,' Robert Malley of the International Crisis Group said. But, he added, 'If 30,000 people were killed there, that would be a different story.'"

As was the case in Yemen, Libya, and Egypt, opposition figures have been meeting outside Syria to draw up programs for a post-Assad regime, and have

It is clear that Syrians will continue their mobilizations while knowing that some will fall victim to bullets.

even met with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. But as in those other countries, the movement's leadership in the streets has rejected such attempts to speak in the masses' name.

And fortunately, that movement in the streets is maintaining its opposition to intervention. On Aug. 29 the Local Coordinating Committees in Syria posted a statement on their Facebook page criticizing calls for foreign intervention made by more conservative elements in the Syrian opposition after the taking of Tripoli by NATO. The LCCs wrote: "While we understand the motivation to take up arms or call for military intervention, we specifically reject this position as we find it unacceptable politically, nationally, and ethically. Militarizing the revolution would minimize popular support and participation. ... the Revolution is intended to ensure the independence and unity of Syria, its people, and its society."

It's unclear if the statement's rejection of armed resistance is a defensive formulation made by organizers who want to put the onus for eventual battle on the regime, or if they really believe the revolution can triumph without a resort to arms. But the most important thing for now is their explicit rejection of imperialist intervention.

Class forces in the Syrian revolution

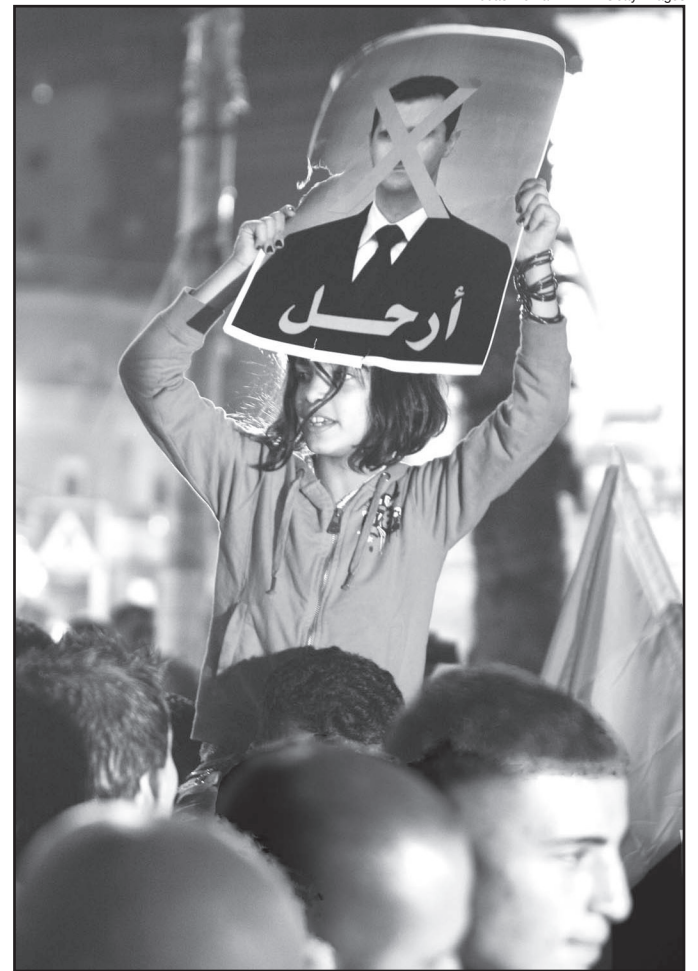
Like most players in the Syrian rebellion, the LCCs have generally limited themselves to calling for political reform, democratic elections, a revised constitution, etc. A clearly delineated social program addressing the very inequality and exploitation that helped spark the revolt has yet to be produced.

But what is key is that all accounts depict the LCCs as a widespread, genuinely grassroots phenomenon, in which thousands of youth have initiated, organized, and coordinated protests in every major city and town in the country. That mass base is providing countless venues for daily discussions of the country's politics, which provides opportunities to forge just such a desperately needed social program.

It is clear that the masses will continue their heroic, persistent mobilizations despite knowing that each time they march, some will fall victim to the bullets and batons of Bashar's military and thugs. A similar heroism has been seen in Yemen, where hundreds of thousands are still mobilizing repeatedly in the face of similar atrocities.

But this cannot go on forever. The masses know if they give up now, retaliation and repression by the Syrian regime will ensue on a horrific scale. On the other hand, the regime is weak enough that it can only mount counterassaults against one or two cities at a time. But the LCCs have also not yet been able to launch protests of significant size in more than a handful of places on the same day.

What, then, would rouse sufficient numbers all across the country to put an end to the regime? In Egypt, in



(Above) Palestinian youths in Ramallah conduct Aug. 14 sit-in to protest Syrian violence against protesters.

(Left) Syrian soldiers withdraw after raids in Damascus suburb of Sagba, Aug. 14.

the last two days of the revolt before Mubarak's fall, workers began to go on strike en masse. At the same time cracks in the army and signs of rank-and-file soldier revolt were beginning to appear. That was the turning point—just as worker strikes and military revolts were the turning point in ousting the Shah of Iran in 1979, another regime which appeared, after months of murderous repression of huge demonstrations, to be invincible.

The numbers protesting in Syria have been almost unbelievably impressive given the toll exacted. Of course, it's not just a question of numbers, but also of politics. Assad gave backhanded acknowledgment of this when announcing new subsidies on fuel and food, and increased government salaries, to try to quiet protesters. From the opposite direction, the LCCs will have to make clear to those workers and peasants still hesitating to join the revolution that their material lot will be concretely improved with the regime's ouster. Once they are convinced of that, they, as workers did in Egypt and Iran, will not only flood the streets but will begin themselves to take over the workplaces and government edifices where their exploiters and oppressors currently sit. And in dialogue with their brothers in the army, they will turn a rivulet of defections into a floodtide of mutiny.

Several Syrian activists and journalists have noted the role of such class issues and forces in the revolution. In his column "'The Syrian 'Colloquial': The Uprising of the Working Society," Yassin Al Haj Saleh wrote: "The uprising is fighting, in very cruel conditions, a class of special interests and their supporters from other classes. ... The uprising has brought together, for the first time in Syria's contemporary history, a multitude that was despised and isolated from public life, together with the most vital and faithful sectors of youth and intellectuals from the educated middle class. As for the owners of Mercedes and Four Wheel Drives, the great majority of their ranks are with the regime." (The column appeared in the Lebanese magazine *Al-Adab* and was translated by jadaliyya.com.)

"The Syrian uprising has a class-related character that is perhaps more prominent than what has emerged in other Arab uprisings. It erupted during the largest process of privatizing public wealth to benefit a corrupt elite with intimate ties to the ruling cabal. The uprising has consciously targeted those corrupt elements. ... It spread in the towns and municipalities that have suffered marginalization, unemployment and poverty more than other places."

"The uprising," he concludes, "is the rebellion of

(continued on page 7)