

Risks escalate for climate catastrophe

By CHRISTINE FRANK

At a meeting last month in Yokohama, Japan, the UN's IPCC Working Group II issued its risk assessment—the second of three reports—stating that climate change is felt “on all continents and across all oceans.” As the globe warms, the risks to food production, freshwater supplies, and human health are steadily multiplying.

Some ecosystems, such as the Arctic and warm-water coral reefs, have already reached tipping points. As Arctic soils and continental shelves thaw, more carbon dioxide and methane will be released, triggering a positive feedback that heightens global heating. As ice masses melt and sea levels rise, people in low-lying coastal areas and on small islands are becoming more vulnerable to storm surges and inundation. With ocean acidification, fisheries will be severely reduced.

There was recently a massive die-off of scallops in the Pacific Northwest due to low seawater pH. With increased changes in rainfall patterns resulting in either flooding or drought, crop yields could decline by two percent per decade, depending on the region, and with every one-degree rise in temperature, they can decline by as much as 10%.

Food security is expected to be a major problem, affecting poor nations even more than now and causing chronic malnourishment in children. The threat of famine and mass starvation is very real. Killer heat waves are becoming longer and more frequent. The global area struck by extremely hot summertime temperatures has increased 50-fold. With heat wave and drought, come wildfires that are growing into raging megafires from which forests and grasslands do not recover easily.

There is a clear and present danger to Earth's ecosystems and civilization as we know it. The face of the planet, as well as human society, will be altered forever as people are forced to cope with impoverishment from loss of their livelihoods, injuries, and death from weather calamities, and spreading disease. Climate refugees and mass migrations will be on the rise as people flee uninhabitable regions.

The IPCC panel's report paints a grim picture. However, to hundreds of thousands, this is nothing new, given all the natural disasters that have already occurred—most recently, Typhoon Haiyan, Hurricane Sandy, the ongoing Brazilian, Californian and Australian droughts, and UK flooding. Scientists are warning that we can expect more of the same—but with greater intensity, frequency, and duration, and consequent suffering. The message is that we must not only carry out abatement measures but adapt to



(Above) Protesters demanded more and faster action from major governments at UN Climate Change conference in Durban, S. Africa, in 2011.

the rapidly changing conditions of a warming planet.

This requires that advanced nations assist developing ones to do so. At a September 2014 summit meeting in New York, world leaders plan to discuss a new treaty that is supposed to be finalized in Paris in 2015. Given recent history, we can't expect much in the way of results. Leaders of advanced nations will probably spend most of the time haggling over the \$100 billion price tag on assistance to poor nations of the Global South, who are suffering the brunt of the hardship caused by the North's gross overconsumption and monstrous carbon footprint.

The prophetic assessment comes after 20 years of abject failure by government leaders to give the least thought to human survival and to act. Instead, capitalist politicians, connected at the hip to the Carbon Barons and other corporate giants, have refused to end business as usual, citing the costs, the alleged disruption of economic growth, and the “loss of jobs” and a cherished way of life. Of course, what they really mean is that giving up fossil fuels would mean a



huge fall in profits for all vested interests.

Climate scientists have conducted study after study, issued numerous caveats about the risk of inaction, and urged that drastic reductions be made soon if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change

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Senate rejects nomination of former attorney for Mumia

By BEN FORTEN

In early March the U.S. Senate rejected President Obama's nomination of Debo Adebile to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. Adebile, an attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, had briefly worked on an NAACP appeal brief submitted on behalf of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Adebile's rejection was vigorously pursued by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the national police agency that has unsuccessfully sought Mumia's execution as its sole pre-occupation for almost 30 years. The FOP's racially coded and Mumia-demonizing letter to President Obama was published in *The Wall Street Journal* under the title, "The Justice Nominee and The Cop Killer."

In the end, seven Democratic Party senators overseeing the Obama nomination voted against Adebile. The fundamental democratic principle of the right to counsel, not to mention the legal obligation of attorneys to fully represent their clients without fear of prejudice or recrimination was thrown to the winds of government-promoted hate and prejudice.

America's racist criminal "injustice" system once again intruded into the legislative system. President Obama declined to make an issue of his nomination, knowing full well the political dangers associated with anyone who

Celebrate Mumia's 60th birthday!

forcefully challenges the system's inherent bigotry and anti-democratic functioning.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, perhaps the world's most well-known political prisoner, was the innocent victim of a 1982 monstrous police/prosecution and government frame-up on charges of murdering a Philadelphia police officer.

The profuse evidence of judicial and prosecutorial misconduct and the worldwide mobilizations on behalf of Abu-Jamal have made his case a global symbol of racist injustice. In 2000, Amnesty International found that the case "was irredeemably tainted by politics and race and failed to meet international fair trial standards."

Mumia is currently serving a life sentence in a Fracksville, Pa., prison, following three critical federal court decisions that affirmed his claim that the



jury instructions of the racist, "I'm going to help 'em fry the nigger," Judge Albert Sabo were constitutionally flawed.

Rather than retry the case and allow for the introduction of massive evidence proving his innocence and the details of a police/prosecution frame-

up, as Mumia demanded, Pennsylvania prosecutors chose an alternative "legal" option to impose a life sentence without possibility of parole.

Mumia's supporters, celebrating his 60th birthday with events on April 24 and April 26 in Philadelphia (and on May 4 in Oakland, Calif.), are engaged in new efforts to re-open his case and win his freedom.

Philadelphia "Celebration of Life" activities will include a fund-raiser and dinner at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 24, at 1016 South St. The event will feature Cornel West, a message from Angela Davis, and performances by the Last Poets and other entertainers. Saturday, April 26, will feature a march, assembling at 19th and Cecil B. Moore at 10 a.m.

Saturday evening, the Celebration will culminate at a major event with dancers, musicians, speakers, vendors, and political workshops. For information, e-mail bringmumiahome@gmail.com.

The Oakland "Celebration of Life and Struggle" for Mumia will also welcome civil-liberties attorney and former political prisoner Lynne Stewart to the Bay Area. The event will take place beginning with a 6 p.m. reception at the Humanist Hall, 390 27th St., in Oakland.

Pam Africa, head of the International Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, will speak at the 7 p.m. rally, together with Lynne Stewart and many other leading activists. Contact jmackler@lmi.net. ■

SOCIALIST ACTION'S 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 withdrawal of all U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! No war on Iran! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.
- 5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age

to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

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

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

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

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

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

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By CARRIE LESTER

The author is of Kanien'ke'ha:ka (Mohawk)-Onondaga and British-Canadian settler ancestry.

TORONTO—There is a renewed push for a national inquiry into the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and girls across Canada. The numbers are ever changing, but the most recent list involves 824 Indigenous women and girls whose murders or disappearances over the past 30 years have been mostly disregarded by police forces.

The population of Indigenous women is about two per cent of Canada's total population. If two per cent of the total disappeared, that would amount to about 70,000 non-Native women missing or found murdered. In that case, would there be so little interest or compassion?

Several grassroots Indigenous women's groups, like Sisters in Spirit and No More Stolen Sisters, have been instrumental in doing the work that the police seem reluctant to do. They compiled a database of names collected by word of mouth, newspaper articles, and police reports. Not surprisingly, such groups are suspicious of any inquiry run by the very institution (the colonial settler state) that is complicit in the cultural harm done to a race of people.

To understand why, one need only look at the failed Pickton Inquiry. It was headed by Commissioner Wally Oppal, previously a Supreme Court judge, an Appeals Court judge in British Columbia, and Attorney General for BC, who arrived on the scene with his own shameful baggage. His inquiry was marked by his refusal to hear full evidence, by his exclusion of several Indigenous and allied women's groups, and by the termination of financial assistance to pay legal fees for the families of the disappeared. Meanwhile, police legal expenses were fully funded by Canadian taxpayers.

As of mid-March 2014, only three of the 65 recommendations from that inquiry were implemented. These include safe travel measures along the dan-

Indigenous women demand full inquiry into murders



gerous Northern B.C. Highway 16, a.k.a., The Highway of Tears, and funding for 24-hour emergency services to women in the sex trade.

Now one more recommendation has been ticked off: compensation for surviving family members, to the tune of \$50,000, to be thinly distributed across 11 of 13 families.

Shawn Brant, a Mohawk from Tyendinaga Territory near Belleville, Ontario, issued an ultimatum

in an open letter in early February to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. It stated that if there were no action by the government by the end of February, Brant and members of his community would feel compelled to take whatever action might be necessary to convince Harper that an inquiry is mandatory.

Brant assured Harper that actions would spread across the Canadian state. Several road and rail blockades did occur—so far, in Tyendinaga and Toronto. But Harper insists that an inquiry would be a waste of time and money.

Last year James Anaya, the UN special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, came to Canada to dialog with Indigenous peoples. He determined that an inquiry is required. But many Indigenous people believe the inquiry should come from the grassroots women's groups already on the ground, who are compiling the data, and not from the colonial state.

So, besides an inquiry, what can be done? For starters, Canada needs "a national DNA database for missing persons and unidentified human remains," says Maryanne Pearce, a federal government worker who has spent the past seven years compiling data on missing and murdered women in Canada.

Police forces should be compelled to share information. Better training in the handling of missing persons' cases is needed, as is sensitivity training with regard to dealing with all people, regardless of background, but especially in appreciation of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada. ■

Fascist goons attack Swedish feminists

This article was published on the Swedish site Motkraft.

Late last night [March 8] several people were attacked in central Malmö by members of the fascist Svenskarnas Parti (Swedes Party). They were on their way home after having taken part in celebrations for International Women's Day.

The incident occurred just after a nighttime demonstration against violence against women finished up at around midnight on Möllenvångstorget (a square in the heart of a multicultural and left-wing district of Malmö). One person is now in intensive care with serious head injuries, and a further three have suffered knife wounds to the arms and lung, amongst which was a member of Allt åt Alla Malmö. The nazis had been searching for potential victims the entire evening in the vicinity of the March 8th Festival at Moriska pavilion in Folketspark. The attack was, in other words, no coincidence.

The attack on the March 8 demonstrators can't be seen as an isolated incident. The arson attack on Kvarnby peoples' high school in October 2013 was only the beginning of an escalation in nazi violence around Malmö. Left-wing locales and premises have been exposed to graffiti and broken windows. In January, a 16-year-old member of SSU (Sweden's Socialdemocratic Youth organisation) was attacked by two men, warning her about spreading her views. In several other places and cities, nazis have been identified registering participants in demonstrations on International Women's Day.

The seriously injured 25-year-old Showan, who is currently being cared for in a sedated state in hospital, is a leading figure in the fight against racism and homophobia in the football world, a SAC member and devoted supporter of Malmö FF.

He also helped to found "Football fans

against homophobia." Based on this, he has been recently hung out on the Swedes Party-linked website "Realisten."

According to witnesses at the scene, a high-ranking member of the Swedes Party, Andreas Carlsson, was involved in the attempted murder. He was seen attacking feminists with a knife. Andreas Carlsson is one of the members of the Swedes Party who travelled down to Kiev as "Ukrainafrivilliga" (Ukraine Volunteers) to support the Svoboda party's efforts in taking power. On Realisten he has reported on the Swedish Nationalist delegation's operation. Some of the delegation's participants have stayed, according to their own reports, "to enlist in the Ukrainian army," while Carlsson's group returned to Sweden only a few days before March 8.

The Security Services (Säpo) chief analyst Ahn-Za Hagström claimed on the 8th of March that they "see no increased intention or capability of committing politically motivated crimes when they get home." (SR.se March 8) That same evening the nazis attacked. Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said in a recent interview on Swedish Radio's P1 channel that the Swedes Party's sister party Svoboda are "European democrats who work for values that are ours."

This minimization and normalization of fascist parties has given the Swedes Party and their "Ukraine Volunteers" the belief that they have a free pass for their violent acts.

Not only the Security Service but also the ordinary police have ignored "the far-right violence, by depicting the murder attempt as a "gang war" between "opponents on opposite fringes." This comes less than half a year after police ignored warnings that a similar nazi party, Svernska Motståndsrörelsen (The Swedish Resistance Movement), planned to attack the anti-racist demonstration in Kärntorp.

It is abundantly clear that the fas-

cist threat against Sweden and Europe, against individuals and social movements, is not taken seriously. Neither the government, the security services, nor the police have been able to present a clear and coherent approach towards this. Fascist violence should never be reduced to youth fights or extreme phenomena, such as [is stated in] Birgitta Ohlsson's government extremist investigation. Then one misses the powerful political force that the fascist parties

in Europe have become, the impetus it gives the corresponding parties at home in Sweden, and ignores the seriousness of the weapons training and street fighting skills Swedish right-wing extremists have gained during travels and visits with Jobbik in Hungary, Svoboda in Ukraine, and the Golden Dawn in Greece these last few months.

Today, they stand for violence in the streets. In September, they stand for parliamentary elections. ■

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The subscription drive coincides with our campaign to raise \$25,000 for the Socialist Action annual FUND DRIVE. Achieving this goal will enable us to expand our efforts to build the revolutionary socialist party in the United States and worldwide. Please send your contribution to Socialist Action, Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Thank you!

UPS rehires fired Queens drivers

Steve Fisher / Queens Chronicle



By DAVID BERNT

(Above) UPS trucks leave the Masbeth facility.

In a victory for labor, on April 9, UPS agreed to union demands that it rehire 250 drivers who were fired for walking off the job in Queens, N.Y. In return, Teamsters Local 804 agreed to monetarily compensate the company for alleged damages due to the loss of “productive employee time” and for other alleged company costs. The affected drivers must still serve a short suspension.

UPS had received broad criticism for its retaliation against 250 workers who stopped work for 90 minutes on Feb. 26 to protest the firing of a fellow union brother, Jairo Reyes, at the Masbeth hub in Queens,

N.Y. On March 6 the company informed all 250 drivers they were being given “working terminations.” The drivers had stayed on the job while Teamsters Local 804 negotiated with the company on a resolution to the dispute.

UPS fired Reyes, a union activist, on the trumped-up charge of punching in early and working without authorization. Reyes says he did have authorization. The fact that UPS fired an employee *for working* says much about the mentality of UPS management. In reality, Reyes was fired for filing grievances and challenging the company’s violation of the collective bargain-

ing agreement. Reports state that Reyes will now be rehired.

UPS claimed it had to fire drivers who participated in the walk-out for breaking the rules and “undermining the order of our delivery operations.” Yet it is UPS that “breaks the rules” on a daily basis by violating the contract. UPS continuously uses supervisors to do Teamster work, violates the excessive overtime protection article, and refuses to abide by discipline procedures, among many other contract violations.

On March 31, the company fired 20 of the 250 workers, walking them off the property at the end of their shift. Sixteen more drivers were walked off the job on April 4. UPS was planning to continue to fire all 250 as soon as replacements were found.

Local 804 fought hard against UPS’s strong-armed tactics. An on-line petition calling for the workers’ reinstatement gathered over 150,000 signatures. Customers of the 250 drivers called for their reinstatement. On April 3, a press conference was held on the steps of City Hall demanding that UPS reinstate the drivers. Officers from the New York City Central Labor Council, Transport Workers Union, SEIU 32-B, New York Nurses, and other unions—and more than a dozen elected officials, including NYC Public Advocate Letitia James—spoke in support of the fired workers.

Attention was called to the \$43 million contract that UPS has with the state of New York and a sweetheart deal the company has with the city to pay pennies on the dollar for parking tickets (saving them some \$15 million a year). Local 804 President Tim Sylvester said, “UPS takes millions from the city, and yet it’s going to bankrupt 250 families just because our guys stood up for a fellow worker.”

More information: go to <http://teamsters local804.org/>.

Minimum wage drive ignited

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

A grassroots movement to achieve a significant increase of the minimum wage, to \$15 an hour, is gaining momentum around the United States. The urgency of a higher minimum wage is shown by the fact that the number of “working poor” in the U.S. now exceeds 47 million people.

“People are busting their butts now, working two or three jobs and they’re not making it,” Andrea Bell, an organizer with the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, which has helped to organize fast-food workers, told the *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 16, 2014). “This [\$15 an hour] would help.”

The real value of the federal minimum wage has fallen by close to 30 percent during the last 40 years. The Center for Economic and Policy Research estimated in 2013 that if the minimum wage had kept up with inflation since its peak in 1968, it would now be \$10.75 an hour. And if the minimum wage had grown along with workers’ productivity, it would be as high as \$17.19 today.

Congress is balking over Obama’s proposal to raise the federal minimum wage from the current \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour. A recent article in the *Washington Post* (Jan. 4, 2014), basing itself on a study by Uni-

versity of Massachusetts at Amherst economist Arindrajit Dube, suggests that a raise to \$10.10 alone would be sufficient to reduce the number of people living in poverty nationwide by 4.6 million.

Activists around the country, however, have called for \$15 an hour as the minimum base rate that could begin to make significant changes in the standard of living of the working poor. “Fifteen dollars—now!” has been the demand at countless marches and “mike-check” rallies at fast-food restaurants and convenience stores in hundreds of cities during the last three years.

Recent campaigns have been inspired by the November ballot victory in SeaTac, Washington, which raised the minimum wage there to \$15. And new ballot initiatives for \$15 an hour have now been launched in Seattle and San Francisco.

On April 7, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021 and other activists, including the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, filed papers to place the “Minimum Wage Act of 2014” on San Francisco’s November ballot. The current base rate in the city is \$10.74, already the highest of any large city in the country; \$15 would represent an additional raise of roughly 40 percent.

Under the proposal, San Francisco companies with more than 100 employees would



Peter Foley / epa

have until 2016 to raise wages to \$15 an hour, but they must lift wages to \$13 an hour by next January. Businesses with fewer than 100 employees have until 2017 to raise wages to \$15 an hour, but must raise them to \$13 an hour by 2015 and \$14 by 2016. Polls show that the proposal has overwhelming support among the electorate in San Francisco—which has the highest cost of living of any sizable U.S. city and the fastest growing gap between rich and poor.

In Seattle, activists in the “15 Now” coalition are also working to put a \$15/hour wage ordinance onto the Nov. 4 municipal ballot. At least 20,000 valid signatures must be submitted in June in order to qualify, and activists will be mobilizing to collect a full 50,000. A conference will take place on April 26 to kick off the campaign, under the slogan “Onto the ballot, into the streets!”

The decision to file the signatures in June will depend on whether or not the city council has already passed a \$15 minimum wage measure without significant loopholes. Kshama Sawant, a member of Socialist Alternative who was elected to Seattle’s city council last November, is making the \$15 wage one of her major concerns.

Big business interests in Seattle, however, have been pushing back against the proposed measure—calling for exemptions such as counting the money that their employees receive in tips as part of the \$15 wage. In many cases, deducting tips from wages would result in no raise at all for hard-pressed employees. Activists in “15 Now” have been firm in stating that, while it might be reasonable to grant subsidies to

some authentic small businesses to offset the increased wages they would be paying, the base wage level of \$15 must remain for all enterprises.

Last month in Chicago, voters approved by an 87% to 13% margin a non-binding referendum expressing broad support for a \$15 minimum wage at large businesses in the city. The election results have sent a strong message to city council, which will be considering a minimum wage measure in upcoming weeks. At the same time, the Richmond, Calif., city council approved raising the minimum wage locally to \$12.30 by 2017. New York and San Diego are among other cities that are considering hikes in the minimum wage, while the SEIU and other forces in Oakland have set out to collect 50,000 signatures to obtain a city minimum wage of \$12.25 an hour.

On the state level, Connecticut recently approved a bill to raise its minimum wage to Obama’s goal of \$10.10 an hour—which will boost pay for 227,000 workers in the state, roughly 15 percent of the state’s workforce. Maryland legislators have followed suit, although their bill contains exemptions for many employers. Massachusetts and Hawaii are also considering minimum-wage increases.

The readiness of many city and state officials to accept at least modest raises in minimum wage rates can be explained in large part by their perceived need to cut down on spiraling public assistance payments to the working poor. In California, for example, researchers from the University of California and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign estimated that low-paid fast-food workers cost taxpayers \$717 million a year in state and federal assistance.

Capitalist politicians also sense that a rise in the minimum wage has broad popular support. Nationally, 69 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour, according to a March poll by Bloomberg news. For activists demanding a more equitable \$15 an hour, that should be a promising start.

But there is far more work to be done, and the goal cannot be achieved nationwide solely through municipal ballot measures or by “mike-check” rallies and flash occupations—however valuable and inspiring such local efforts might be. Winning the demand for \$15 nationwide will take a concerted campaign by the entire labor movement and its allies. It must be seen as part of a massive drive to organize low-wage workers throughout the country into a fighting trade-union movement.

Portrait of minimum-wage workers

According to a study conducted last year by the Urban League, service workers at Philadelphia International Airport (baggage handlers, aircraft cleaners, wheelchair attendants, etc.) generally earn about \$7.85 an hour—including tips. Skycaps earn \$3.90 an hour as a basic wage (some get even less), while wheelchair attendants receive \$5.76 (tips boost their earnings to about \$6.50).

Many have to work second jobs, if they can find them, in order to make ends meet.

Many of their jobs were once performed by airline employees, but in recent years the airlines have shed these workers in their drive to lower labor costs and substantially raise their prof-

its. These jobs have now been given to private contractors who pay substandard wages and no benefits.

Wheelchair attendant Tina Russell told Urban League interviewers: “My employer, Prime Flight, pays me \$6 per hour, and sometimes I get tips from the passengers. But a lot of times I get no tips at all. I make \$325 every two weeks. And I pay \$650 per month in rent. It’s not hard to do the math: by the end of the month, I have nothing left. And I haven’t even started paying my bills.

“I have to borrow \$20 here, \$20 there. I get \$300 in food stamps. But I’m always broke. I don’t have enough money to eat. How can someone who works full-time in the richest country go hungry?” — M.S.

'One Nation Under Surveillance'

By ERNIE GOTTA

"I ask you, how many times does Barack Obama have to lie to you before you get it?" journalist and author Chris Hedges asked the crowd of over 200 gathered in Torpe Theater at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) on March 31. Hedges was the keynote speaker at the 2nd annual civil liberties conference there, which was titled "One Nation Under Surveillance."

Barack Obama's presidency has shown that Democrats are just as insidious as Republicans—if not worse. Obama has deported two million immigrant workers, expanded a massive national and international spying program, and imprisoned more Black workers than were incarcerated during the days of apartheid in South Africa.

Again and again, Obama has supported corporate interests over the interests of working people. His ability to do so has largely depended on a massive repressive apparatus, which Hedges pointed out, "primarily advanced and protected the profits of corporations, and solidified state repression and further imperialist expansion."

The one-day conference was politically sharp and insightful, which flowed from the experience and diversity of guest panelists who included Robert King of the Angola 3; Lynne Jackson of Project SALAM; author and professor Dr. Khalilah Brown-Dean; Hina Shamsi, director of the ACLU National Security Project; and many more. The event was initiated by the Connecticut Coalition to Stop Indefinite Detention, ACLU-CT, CAIR-CT, and United Action-CT, and hosted by the CCSU Youth for Socialist Action. Dozens of other organizations endorsed and sponsored the conference.

Student organizer Daniel Adam opened the proceedings by illustrating the continual erosion of civil liberties in the U.S. "Before we begin," Adam stated, "I want to take a moment to consider the context of our conference. On the one hand, there are the most recent outrages:

"In just the last month, in the midst of NSA revelations, a federal judge threw out a challenge to the NYPD-CIA campaign of mass surveillance of Muslim American community institutions, businesses, and campus groups. He claimed the only harm done was by the press who reported the spying. Northeastern University has suspended its campus Students for Justice in Palestine and begun proceedings to expel members for an educational campaign they carried out on campus.

"This month, the federal government sent an officer to the workplace of Majida Salem to begin garnishing her wages as part of her husband's punishment for



(Above) Keynote speaker Chris Hedges.

supporting charities for Palestinian children. Her husband, Ghassan Elashi, is serving 65 years in prison as part of the Holy Land 5.

"And in recent weeks, prisoners have again organized hunger strikes against cruel abuses in Georgia and Colorado Special Management Units and in a deportation center in Washington State. The advancing militarization of local police featured a trip last month by the LAPD to Israel for training in the use of domestic drones and other handy skills."

Another student organizer, Nicole LoPriore, emphasized the historical continuity of government repression: "We are meeting as the nation opens up its commemoration of World War I. This is important to think about because the domestic repression that stemmed from that conflict was brutal.

"Here in Hartford, when pacifist speakers at a mass meeting in the Socialist Party hall opposed conscription, the speaker and the whole audience were rounded up and thrown in jail. The Hartford jails became the holding pens prior to deportation for hundreds of union leaders of Russian descent who had been leading the fight for the eight-hour day. Entire organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World were completely crushed by the work of government spies and provocateurs, jailing, and deportations."

Although workers and students face a difficult battle

to defend their civil freedoms, past and recent history shows us that it is not impossible. Lynne Stewart, the People's Lawyer, unjustly imprisoned for defending a man who was a target of the so-called War on Terror, won her release from prison on grounds of rapidly failing health. Her release was largely due to tens of thousands of calls, letters, protests, articles, and defense forums.

Conference participants also learned how young immigrant rights activists have taken to the streets, demanding an end to deportations of undocumented workers. Their slogan is: "Don't Deport My Mother!" These bold activists have even chained themselves to buses filled with immigrant workers headed for deportation. It is important that we do everything in our power to build and support their efforts.

"Educate, organize, and mobilize" were three lessons clearly drawn from the day's activities. In that spirit Daniel Adam concluded, "This can be the future. A future where we roll back this offensive against our rights, and build a society where democratic rights can be exercised by every community—people with or without papers, those criminalized by the state, and low-wage working people fighting for more pay and benefits." ■

... Risks escalate for climate catastrophe

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and complete ecological collapse. Time is running out, yet little or nothing has been done. Instead, capitalist industry, now centered in China and India, continues to belch out massive amounts of greenhouse gases, while scientists are becoming increasingly alarmed by the effects.

Last month, the Climate Science Panel of the American Association for the Advancement of Science issued a call to action, stating that "we are at risk of pushing our climate system toward abrupt, unpredictable, and potentially irreversible changes with highly damaging impacts..." Also, a group of British climate scientists held a Radical Emissions Reduction Conference and called for "revolutionary change" on all levels, and bottom-up as well as top-down action. They are right about bottom-up action. It's exactly what is so desperately needed.

Rising CO2 levels

We are rapidly approaching a doubling of pre-industrial carbon levels of 275 parts per million (ppm). For a second consecutive year, atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations rose to over 400 ppm at Mauna Loa Observatory. Last year, levels exceeded the 400 mark in May, when there is a natural peak just before vegetation in the Northern Hemisphere begins summertime photosynthetic activity, carbon absorption, and growth. However, in mid-March, 2014, CO2 levels hit 401.6 ppm two months ahead of time, and it is expected that daily values could rise even higher this spring.

This troubling prospect is before us because the world emitted 40 billion tons (36 billion metric tons) of carbon dioxide last year, a 2.1% increase over 2012. The United States, with its ravenous consumption of goods that are largely manufactured in China, has the world's largest per-capita emissions and a carbon footprint of 17.6 tons (16 MT), compared with two tons (1.8 MT) for the people of India. Adding to that

are the enormous plumes of methane emanating from the Siberian Arctic seafloor.

The planet continues to warm up, despite a slight leveling off in the mean global surface temperature. This is deceptive since vast amounts of heat are being stored in the deep oceans due to a speed up in the South Pacific trade winds that are pushing warm ocean waters down to greater depths. Therefore, there is no "pause" in the warming—as the climate-change deniers like to harp. In fact, 2013 was the 37th consecutive year of above normal global temperature, which registered at 58.3 degrees Fahrenheit (14.6 C), roughly a degree warmer than the 20th-century average. This was the case despite the absence of an El Nino last year and Earth's currently experiencing a solar minimum.

Frenzy of fossil fuel extraction

The worsening situation can be blamed on the frenzy of carbon-intensive and resource-intensive fossil fuel extraction, as drillers go after what's left of the planet's proven reserves, regardless of the cost to the climate or the environment. The mad scramble for what's left has turned communities everywhere into energy sacrifice zones, with tar sands extraction, the fracking of tight shale oil and gas, silica-fracking sand mining, and deepwater offshore drilling.

BP has just gotten permission to resume drilling in the Gulf of Mexico even though clean-up there is far from over. Plus, there is the transport of the fossil fuels via pipelines, trains, and tankers, which has led to toxic spills and devastating explosions and fires.

The latest form of extreme energy extraction is underground coal gasification (UCG). In order to get at deep underground coal reserves that cannot be conventionally mined or strip mined, developers hope to pump air into the formations, set fire to the coal, capture the gaseous emissions embedded in the seams, and then at the surface separate the methane, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and hydrogen to be used

for energy and chemical feedstocks.

Just imagine hundreds of out-of-control coal fires smoldering within the bowels of Earth and what that might do to aquifers and seismic faults—not to mention the subsidence it could cause at the surface! In UCG trials in the United States, groundwater contamination was found from escaped benzene and toluene.

Building a movement

Tens of thousands of grassroots activists have been struggling to stop this madness and save what is left of Earth's climate by attempting to halt the Path of Destruction that is the pipeline network.

Preventing TransCanada's Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline from being built across the Great Plains is a major part of that effort. Landowners and tribal peoples along the proposed route have formed the Cowboy and Indian Alliance and will be trekking to Washington, D.C., where they will set up camp near the White House to make their opposition known to KXL. The encampment is the lead-up to what will hopefully be a large "Protect and Reject" demonstration on the National Mall on Saturday, April 26, to demand that the Obama administration nix the project once and for all.

With April being Environment Month and with the 44th Earth Day occurring, many local activists are planning events as part of the Global Climate Convergence. The Convergence will begin on April 22 and go through May 1, when environmentalists will join the May Day Marches for immigrants' and workers' rights—One Planet, One People, One Future!

In Europe, where fracking is ominously growing, Global Frackdown and other grassroots movements are conducting Climate Spring actions to opposed extreme energy and campaign for climate justice. Wherever you are, we strongly urge you to join the struggle to Save Mother Earth and to get out in the streets! ■

For further reading: "Capitalism Damns the Environment." Order this pamphlet for \$3 (plus \$1 postage) from Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.

Crimea secedes from Ukraine



(Left) Crimeans celebrate after vote to leave Ukraine & join Russia.

BY JEFF MACKLER

Crimea's overwhelming vote to secede from Ukraine and its annexation by Russia were followed by mass demonstrations and occupations of government buildings in southern and eastern Ukraine, where protesters have raised similar demands for affiliation with Russia.

An April 7 Associated Press article provided a measure of the stakes involved: "The Donetsk and Kharkiv regions—and a third Russian-speaking city besieged by pro-Moscow activists over the weekend, Luhansk—have a combined population of nearly 10 million out of Ukraine's 46 million, and account for the bulk of the country's industrial output."

Ukraine's acting President Oleksandr Turhynov, who was installed after the far-right coup of Feb. 20 had toppled the former regime in Kiev, said that he intended to treat the demonstrators as "terrorists." Police arrested dozens in a nighttime sweep. Meanwhile, Washington and NATO have escalated their Cold War rhetoric against Russia, which they accuse of fomenting the demonstrations in Ukraine's east and massing troops on the border in preparation for an invasion.

After the secession of Crimea, the Obama administration initiated limited economic sanctions against Russia, while raising the threat of stronger measures. But the best that Obama administration officials could muster to explain the 97 percent vote of the Crimean people on March 16 in favor of seceding from Ukraine and joining Russia was that there were "massive voting anomalies." No one disputed that 83 percent of the electorate participated in the referendum.

The *New York Times* Pulitzer Prize winner and on-the-scene reporter C.J. Chivers took on the task of discrediting the vote by reporting on the implied intimidating presence of Russian troops. It soon became clear, however, that few others in the world doubted that the vote totals reflected anything other than the reality—the large majority Russian-speaking population of Crimea was fearful of the consequences of the right-wing, virulently chauvinist, and anti-Russian coup in Ukraine, led in significant part by armed pro-Nazis militias.

Even Chivers felt compelled to note the massive Russian flag-waving rallies throughout Crimea that hailed the results.

The Associated Press reported that two-thirds of Ukraine's 18,800 soldiers chose to remain in Crimea—most of them joining the Russian army. The 6400 or so (according to one source) who elected to return home were assigned by Russian troops to their barracks to pack their bags to leave.

Every day, the corporate Orwellian-like NewsSpeak media conjured up the threatening spectacle of Russian troops and/or local Crimean defense forces surrounding Ukrainian military bases and preparing for bloody attacks. Instead, what appears to have happened is a series of political exchanges that quickly ended in Ukrainian soldiers' agreeing to evacuate all military bases and turn them over to Russian or allied local militias. A single person was reported killed and

Protesters in southern and eastern Ukraine have raised similar demands for affiliation with Russia.

zero wounded during this transition.

The March vote totals contrast sharply with the 90 percent Ukrainian vote in 1991 to secede from the disintegrating Soviet Union. The vote in Crimea was 95 percent to leave the USSR. Perhaps the past 23 years convinced the people of Crimea that the purported wonders of western capitalism were more myth than reality, that their new Ukrainian capitalist oligarchs were the same as the old bureaucrats except that they were no longer formally part of the USSR. Not even a change of names!

Or maybe the orders they received from a number of regional neo-fascist groups that their homes were to be commandeered by Ukrainian troops that might be called on to engage in a war against the Russians in the Crimea convinced them that the coup government could not act in their interests.

It is even possible, if not likely, that many got a stiff whiff of the Association Agreement's austerity terms, which included an end to government gas subsidies and other social subsidies in order to pay their new "benefactors" for the EU-IMF Greek-like bailout. This included major cuts in pensions, massive layoffs of public workers, and more (see below).

A March 25 decision of the rump Ukrainian parliament appointed General Mykhaylo Koval as the new defense minister, after approving the resignation of his immediate and post-coup predecessor, the neo-fascist and Svoboda party leader, Ihor Tenyukh.

Tenyukh tendered his resignation supposedly following growing criticism of his response to the Russian troop occupation of the Crimea. It was he who told the Associated Press that he had received some 6400 requests from soldiers in Crimea to return home. (Since then other sources have put the number at 1400.) His response was deemed "indecisive" by the even more fanatic coup deputies, implying that perhaps the Svoboda Party Defense Minister should have ordered reluctant Ukrainian troops to militarily engage with the Russians.

While no one doubted that such a confrontation would have been a disaster for the massively outgunned Ukrainian troops in Crimea, the adrenalin-hyped coup-makers perhaps had other thoughts in mind, including using a Russian response as a pretext to call on the U.S. and/or NATO to respond in kind. Such actions, even those that might lead to a world conflagration, are never ruled out by the U.S. ruling class.

On March 12, for example, *Bloomberg News* reported: "Earlier today, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, stated that in the case

of an escalation of unrest in Crimea, the U.S. Army is ready to back up Ukraine and its allies in Europe with military actions."

Prior to his "resignation," the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* asked Tenyukh if he was "concerned about being disappointed by the European Union," with regard to the harsh bailout terms of the Association Agreement.

Tenyukh's reply? "Our dream of Europe is not dependent on prosperity [an issue that we will return to at the conclusion of this article]. We want European values; we want an independent judiciary and freedom." [!]

In contrast, during a Jan. 19 Maidan (Independence Square) rally in Kiev, the "democratically minded" Tenyukh warned of the dangers posed by what he termed "the coup d'etat planned by the current [Victor Yanukovich] authorities." The now quickly deposed/resigned defense minister, perhaps too "moderate" today for the new regime, at that time called for members of the armed forces to defy "illegal" orders from those in power—that is, the elected government of Yanukovich.

Tenyukh stated, "Tomorrow the [Yanukovich] regime will enslave you too. Therefore we are calling on you to fulfill your military oath of loyalty to the Ukrainian people, and not to the [elected] authorities who have gone off the rails." Tenyukh's Feb. 29 appointment as minister of defense lasted just short of one-month. He resigned on March 25, a day after fascist militia leader Oleksandra Muzychko was killed by Ukrainian Interior forces. Apparently, the new regime is sensitive about its police or military forces killing one of its own!

In the meantime, at the instigation of the United States, the G7 group of the largest industrialized nations condemned both the Crimean vote to secede and Russia's subsequent decision to incorporate Crimea. The G7 called Russia's actions a "clear violation of international law," and booted out Russia from what previously had been the G8. The G8 meeting, scheduled to take place in Sochi, was cancelled. Perhaps revealing more than a bit of truth, the Russians responded that "the G8 is an informal club" that "can't purge anyone by definition." Indeed, a "club" it is—a place where the richest and most powerful imperial nations gather to negotiate deals that best meet the interests of their ruling classes.

That G7 nations' interests were in conflict was reflected in the financial sanctions imposed by the U.S. and European Union (EU) on a select and relatively unimportant group of Russian and pro-Russian Ukrainian elites. In essence, these lesser officials saw their U.S. and European bank accounts and other assets frozen. The EU, qualitatively more dependent on imports from and exports to Russia, especially the importation of Russian gas and other fossil fuels, took care to not sanction Russia's big-time capitalists, whom they depend on, at least for now, for vital fuel resources. The U.S., selecting a different group of industrialists and minor power brokers to punish, was similarly modest in its choices.

Few, if any, observers have commented on the definition of the word *sanctions*. In essence, in the present context, it means freezing the assets of one's enemies or competitors—an act close to stealing those assets. In the case of Libya, for example, when the U.S. froze the U.S. banking assets of the top Gadhafi regime leaders, it failed to release them after the U.S./NATO war that virtually destroyed that nation. In fact, the U.S. announced in effect that it would not return these assets at all and instead would use them to pay for the military expenses it had incurred in destroying the country—a neat imperialist bit of multi-billion-dollar rhetoric to be sure!

Despite their heated Cold War rhetoric, both the EU and the U.S. calculated that harsh sanctions, that is, stealing too much money from the Russian oligarchs or their Ukrainian counterparts, might bring on similar retaliatory measures that could interrupt the world's interdependent capitalist order. While Russia is a relatively minor player today, over-dependent on

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the export of fossil fuels to the tune of almost half its GDP, and suffering from a slowed growth rate of just above one percent, it nevertheless provides some 30 percent of Germany's gas, and perhaps even more to nations in Central and Eastern Europe.

At the same time, given the massively intensified use of shale fracking, the U.S. has just this year emerged as the world's largest gas exporter. On March 5, House Majority Speaker John Boehner called on President Obama to "dramatically expedite the approval of U.S. exports of natural gas" to Ukraine. ExxonMobil was listed as among the supporters of his proposal.

Moreover, U.S. ruling-class tops see control of Ukraine's vast shale-gas reserves, the fourth largest in the world, as a medium-term weapon to replace Russia as Europe's chief supplier. The world's marketplace in the modern era is almost always subject to the rule of the power with the greatest competitive edge. Both before and after the Ukraine coup, Chrevon and Shell signed major fracking agreements to exploit that nation's massive shale resources.

For the present, however, both the Ukraine and Europe remain heavily dependent on Russia's fossil-fuel resources. Roger Annis, a leading Canadian socialist and long-term political activist, aptly noted on the System Change, Not Climate Change listserv, "I find it hard to imagine that the capitalist rulers of Ukraine would turn their backs on acquiring relatively cheap natural gas from Russia in favor of LNG [Liquefied Natural Gas] imported from the other side of the world. For their part, Russia's rulers have every interest in continuing their sales of gas and other commercial relations with Ukraine."

The world's capitalist elite are quite capable of temporizing their moves rather than resorting to immediate military confrontation, and especially so when their contemplated medium-term gains—the U.S. and EU right to frack Ukrainian shale reserves—outweigh any possible immediate advantages. For now, Russian gas will continue to flow to Europe through Ukrainian pipelines. No doubt in the months and years ahead, Russia's dominance in this sphere will be diminished by its U.S. and EU rivals.

We need only note here that the environmental consequences for all humanity have been inadvertently exposed once again by the future imperialist projections to frack the earth to the point of no return, wherein capitalist-induced global warming murders tens of millions of people and countless other species critical for the earth's fundamental ecological balance.

One does not usually "cut off the hand that feeds it," as the saying goes. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian crisis warns us once again that capitalist economic competition in pursuit of profits and the monopolization of markets, on the increase today the world over, can and will give rise to capitalist wars. It is unmistakable that the U.S. has its calculating eyes on its chief competitors in the EU and China today. Militarily encircling Russia and limiting its future economic potential as a regional rival is similarly never far from the calculations of the world's leading imperialist plunderer.

This is not to underestimate the capacity of Russian or Chinese multi-billionaires to engage in heinous acts of plunder against their own people and others who fall under their control. Both emerged from the old Stalinist bureaucracies after looting the nation's wealth by plundering nationalized property and terminating the vast benefits that accrued to their peoples following the unprecedented social gains of the 1917 and 1949 revolutions that ended capitalist rule. U.S. and European bankers were more than eager to help finance this plunder, and in return gain substantial access to exploit China's and Russia's resources and labor force.

The Ukraine events of the past several months reveal that the central player has been U.S. imperialism.

Today, U.S. capitalists own or control half of China's multi-national corporations. China obligingly provides U.S. and EU corporations with the largest cheap labor force in the world. Russia's economy is similarly and increasingly dependent on deals between its oligarchs and their American counterparts at the expense of the Russian people.

In both instances, however, it is critical to understand that U.S. imperialism remains the most powerful actor on the world stage—dominant as never before in history in the military arena, and using this power and its far-flung military bases to its economic advantage wherever possible. U.S. accusations that Russia violated "international law" with regard to Crimea are not taken seriously by anyone who understands that U.S. wars around the world—whether accomplished by outright intervention or by funding other reactionary forces, by drone assassinations or by privatized squads—are the norm with regard to U.S. policy. The U.S. "cop of the world" has no standing when it comes to so-called international law. It operates by the defining law of imperialism only—plunder the earth and its people first and invent a "legal" justification later.

In an earlier article on the Ukraine crisis, published in the March issue of *Socialist Action*, we included material researched by Marilyn Vogt Downey, whose article entitled, "An Imperialist Invasion Without An Imperialist Army: Whither Ukraine," provided in-depth information as to the terms of the Association Agreement that the beleaguered Yanukovich government signed with the EU on the virtual eve of Yanukovich's demise. Vogt-Downey described in detail how the EU-IMF Ukraine bailout, with the assistance of the U.S., was and remains aimed at imposing an austerity regimen on the Ukrainian masses that parallels the economic rape of Greece imposed by similar European forces.

Further substantiation of Downey's central thesis is provided in a March 17 article by radical economist Jack Rasmus entitled, "Who Benefits, Who Pays for the Ukraine's Economic Crisis." The article appears on Rasmus' website: <http://www.kyklos-productions.com/articles.html>.

After reviewing in detail the massive negative impact of the previous IMF loans of 2005 and 2010 to Ukraine, Rasmus' conclusions regarding the present negotiated bailout are to the point: "To briefly summarize in terms of just the net impacts of the EU/IMF deal, 'Who Benefits' include: western European banks who will continue to receive principal and interest payments from the IMF that would have defaulted; global currency speculators who will be able to sell Ukrainian currency to the Ukrainian central bank at a subsidized price, Ukrainian companies that will be given export credits to continue selling to western Europe and the western Europe companies that import the Ukrainian exports at a more attractive price.

"Those 'Who Pay' and who lose include: majority of Ukrainian households that will have their real income reduced as they pay higher prices for gas, Ukrainian elderly who will have their pensions cut, Ukrainian government workers who will lose their jobs, and all Ukrainian households who will lose other government services."

In a follow-up article on the post-coup re-negotiated terms of the updated March 21 EU Association Agree-

(Left and above) Fascist groups led Maidan confrontations in Kiev in February.

ment, Rasmus reports that the bailout sum was increased to \$27 billion, as opposed to the \$15 billion that had originally been offered. Rasmus concludes with two projections that are not unexpected but catastrophic. After the world's imperial bankers and financial speculators get their hands on this money, the 2014 IMF "bailout" will result in a net Ukraine GDP loss of \$30 billion. In Rasmus' words: This "net reduction in Ukraine's GDP of \$30 billion in the next two years, or about \$15 billion a year, represents a cumulative decline in GDP of at least 18%. And that's a Greece-like Depression."

Rasmus continues: "By absorbing the Ukrainian economy into the Eurozone, the latter is in effect taking under its economic wing yet another 'Greece' and 'Spain.' And as in the case of those latter economies, those who will pay will not be the bankers and multinational businessmen, but the Ukrainian people. But that is the essential and repeated history and legacy of IMF deals globally for the last three decades."

Viewed from this vantage point, the Ukraine events of the past several months reveal that the central player was and remains U.S. imperialism, whose economic and now political penetration of the Ukraine has been all but finalized.

The U.S. is the leading player in the IMF and was far from playing second fiddle to the EU in the events that led to Yanukovich's fleeing the country. It was central to the coup regime's decision to appoint Arseniy Yatsenuk as prime minister as opposed to the EU's choice. Indeed, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland disclosed at a Washington D.C. conference that the U.S. had spent \$5 billion in funding the "democratic opposition" in Ukraine, according to a Dec. 16, 2013, report issued three days later by the Strategic Forecasting Inc., or Stratfor, an agency linked to the CIA.

The \$5 billion was funneled to some 40,000 Ukrainian NGOs that undoubtedly played a role in the largely middle-class Maidan mobilizations that came to be militarily dominated by organized and armed neo-fascist militias, several of whose leaders now hold top government posts and head ministries in the new Ukraine. It was Nuland's never denied "Fuck the EU" remark, secretly taped by Russian authorities and broadcast around the world, that made it clear that the U.S. had no intention of ceding the right to be top dog in Ukraine to the EU or anyone else.

The dispute over Crimea has now been settled by a referendum vote that few dispute represents the will of the majority. But the Crimean people, now part of Russia, are far from free from capitalist exploitation and oppression. In this vital sense their future, and that of the people of the Ukraine more generally, will be determined by events to come—by events that will eventually include the formation of revolutionary socialist parties deeply integrated into all the organizations of the working masses and prepared for a break with capitalism in all its manifestations worldwide.

In recent years the world has witnessed magnificent mobilizations against tyranny and repression time and again. The masses come into the streets looking for real alternatives to the destructive social and economic order that in the context of an unprecedented worldwide capitalist economic crisis has wrought unspeakable horrors to the working masses everywhere. In many, if not all, of these repeated mobilizations, the absence of revolutionary socialist leadership has allowed reactionary forces to come to the fore, sometimes with the direct assistance of U.S. imperialist intervention and war, and other times through political-economic alliances with whatever pro-capitalist

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Fourth International debates revolutionary strategy



(Left) Close to 2 million people from all over the Spanish state took part in the “March for Dignity” in Madrid, March 22, to protest government austerity measures and joblessness. The rate of unemployment is 37% and over 50% for people under 25.

Counter-resolution by Socialist Action (U.S.) on the question of ‘broad anti-capitalist parties’

A critical discussion and debate over revolutionary strategy has been taking place for several years in the world socialist current known as the Fourth International (FI), founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky and his cothinkers. The debate centers on the role and function of “broad anti-capitalist parties.”

As a contribution to that discussion, we here reprint the counter-resolution to the FI leadership document titled “To continue the debate on broad parties,” presented to the March 2013 meeting of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

The text below was approved by the National Committee of Socialist Action (U.S.) on Jan. 23, 2013. Socialist Action stands in fraternal solidarity with the FI. Reactionary U.S. legislation, however, prohibits formal affiliation.

Socialist Action has repeatedly asserted [in this discussion] that the construction of mass revolutionary socialist parties in every country of the world based on the program of the Fourth International is the indispensable and prime reason for the existence of the FI itself—to advance the cause of world socialist revolution. Mass Leninist parties are the prerequisite instruments for the conquest of power, the abolition of capitalism, and the establishment of workers and farmers governments to establish the future socialist order. This is a foundational principle of revolutionary socialist politics. Today it appears to be in serious dispute in our world movement.

The issue of whether revolutionaries should enter or construct broad anti-capitalist parties, labor parties based on the trade unions, or any other political formation based on the working class is a tactical question to be decided based on the situation in every country. In different circumstances, these working-class formations can be either an asset or an obstacle to the education and mobilization of the working class. The major criterion determining whether revolutionary socialists should participate in, build or construct such parties is whether or not it advances the construction of the mass revolutionary socialist party of the Leninist type.

The new Bureau text today seeks to distinguish between two kinds of parties, one overtly reformist, the other vaguely defined as broad anti-capitalist—a party that, according to the Bureau, “places itself from the outset in the perspective of the overthrow of the capitalist system, with an acknowledged revolutionary horizon, even if they do not develop a completed revolutionary strategy and if within them they could bring together political currents of different history and traditions...”

With this distinction the Bureau reminds us that

“everyone understands that there is no impermeable boundary between the two projects.” Indeed, the FI’s history over the past decades, as well as the decisions of the past several World Congresses, promotes participation in and building of “the two,” kinds of parties. Today, the Bureau’s focus is on just one.

Socialist Action has never indicated any opposition to FI sections participating in or building either of “the two”—qualified only by us with a clear answer to the question, “Does our participation serve to advance or retard the cause of building the revolutionary socialist party of the FI?”

It should be noted that the Bureau’s “revolutionary horizon” party has too often become the overtly reformist party. Thus, Communist Refoundation (RC), initiated by a “left” split from the Italian Communist Party [in 1991], became part of a coalition capitalist government; the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) came to power in an electoral alliance with a Catholic party of capitalist reaction. Our FI comrades originally and for years described the PT and RC as “their parties” and were emphatic in their theory and practice that the building of FI parties was subordinate to the building of these now discredited reformist or dissolved parties.

What is at stake in this debate is not whether our sections are encouraged to enter and build this or that party, anti-capitalist (however defined) or reformist (however defined). What is under discussion is whether these new formations are a substitute for the revolutionary party—whether something new in the world has appeared following “the fall of the Berlin Wall,” as the text states, which today fundamentally changes our historic perspective of building what we have fought for and advocated for three-quarters of a century, “the world party of socialist revolution.”

The report at the last Fourth International World Congress, “Role and Tasks of the FI,” centered on the proposition that the task of the FI was to build a new International based on parties of the French New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) type. We are and remain in staunch opposition to this perspective. If it becomes the norm for all or most FI sections, we are heading toward the demise of the FI.

When this clearly stated orientation was challenged by a significant number of sections during the World Congress debate, the reporter for the Bureau, in his summary remarks, felt compelled to modify this categorical assertion by stating that the NPA was for the French, and other sections could do as they pleased based on the conditions in their own countries. This summary marked an important, but still inadequate retreat that has since proved to be ephemeral.

But the proverbial cat was out of the bag, and espe-

cially so when the French League Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) dissolved itself [to form the New Anti-capitalist Party in 2009]—effectively liquidating our strongest party. Today, we are proceeding to evaluate the wisdom of this dissolution.

If the question were to be stated more clearly, we must ask, why did the comrades believe that the formation of the NPA made necessary the complete liquidation of the LCR, along with its publications and party institutions? It’s clear that what was involved was not a tactical decision but rather a strategic decision that was based on the fundamentally flawed proposition that world politics had been fundamentally transformed with the demise of the USSR and the other Stalinist states, along with the “social liberal” transformation of the social democracy. From this, it has been all but concluded that the need for the FI and its Leninist sections was now in question. An FI consisting of NPAs was to be the new project—an orientation whose negative consequences are now rapidly unfolding across the board.

Most egregious was the fact that the FI’s objective in these new parties was not to advance the “programme of the FI” and win supporters to it. Had this been the case, our comrades would have organized serious formations—whether they had been called currents, tendencies, platforms, or whatever—for that purpose. But in general, this was not done, much less seen as a priority. In France there is no FI section and no FI current inside the NPA. What remains of the NPA appears to be an ever-growing number of “platforms,” each putting forward its own and counter-posed perspective, and each mostly led by FI comrades.

The Bureau is on unstable grounds to speak of the perspective of a “revolutionary break from capitalism” when the very parties it characterized as being of that nature have embraced capitalist austerity bailouts (as in Portugal) or coalition capitalist budgets (as with the Danish Red Green Alliance). (See *International Viewpoint*: SAP national conference statement, “Budget 2013: A major mistake by the Red-Green Alliance.”)

Today the Bureau seems to be proposing yet another shift. “Taking stock of the Brazilian and Italian experiences,” the Bureau repeats, we now have something else in mind—not broad parties, but broad anti-capitalist parties, “seeking to consolidate all currents rejecting the logic of management of the capitalist system and acting explicitly for a socialist break, a revolutionary rupture based on the activity of social movements.”

Here we note that the “language” of revolution has been added to the mix of what these new anti-capitalist parties are to be, if they come into existence, that is, explicitly “socialist” and for a “revolutionary rupture” with the capitalist state. Our estimation is that, given the class-collaborationist politics of past and present “anti-capitalist” parties, the Bureau feels the need to take some distance from the parties that it previously praised.

Let us assume that such “currents” could come together to form what the Bureau calls “useful parties,” parties that can “organize the class struggle” instead of what the Bureau describes as “small propaganda groups,” namely the sections of the FI. Were this the case we would certainly be the first to participate, wholeheartedly, BUT NEVER as a substitute for building and transforming the small, largely propaganda groups that FI sections are today into mass revolutionary socialist parties capable organizing the revolutionary transformation of society. Vaguely defined anti-capitalism and socialism, including a vague reference to a future break with the state power, are no substitute for disciplined revolutionary socialist parties armed with a program for socialist revolution.

FI sections are not small propaganda groups by choice. History has dealt us a hand that we cannot reverse by magical formulas, as the Bureau proposes. Our admitted difficulties stem not from inherent programmatic deficiencies and Leninist democratic centralist norms but from the long, perhaps longest

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By JEFF MACKLER

A startling but perhaps, in these repressive times, routine April 3 Associated Press (AP) story entitled, "U.S. secretly created 'Cuban Twitter' to stir unrest" was based on 1000 pages of USAID (United States Agency for International Development) documents obtained by AP. To date AP has not revealed how it obtained these documents. Neither has the U.S. government moved to compel AP to do so. Indeed, if AP follows the "norm" established in these matters, there is little doubt that its article was subject to prior government "approval" for "national security" reasons.

As with the voluminous Edward Snowden revelations, the validity of the material has not been challenged by any government official. Indeed, after a few days of evasions regarding the legality of its operations, including USAID official statements that its highly secret program was "approved" by unnamed officials, President Obama ended the speculation in a press conference where he verified and justified the illegal operation.

In today's increasingly Orwellian political environment, what was "illegal" yesterday, including mass surveillance on virtually all e-mail and cell-phone communications of all Americans, is made government policy the next—by presidential decree or via "approval" by judges operating secret courts immune from public scrutiny.

Few secrets in U.S. society today can be kept hidden from government spies. This is evidenced by the revelations in early January 2014 by U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein, who heads the Senate Intelligence Committee and was the National Security Agency's most avid defender until she discovered that the confidential 10,000-page report her committee was preparing on NSA surveillance operations had been surreptitiously entered and altered by the NSA itself!

The AP documents detail a massive program aimed at triggering mass protests—a "Cuban Spring" that would supposedly provide the basis for "civil society" challenging the policies of the Cuban government.

The AP independently "verified the project's scope and details in the documents—such as federal contract numbers and names of job candidates—through publicly available databases, government sources, and interviews with those directly involved..."

"In a play on Twitter," AP reports, the secret operation that began in 2009 and purportedly ended some two and a half years later "was called ZunZuneo—slang for a Cuban hummingbird's tweet."

USAID has been financed to the tune of billions by the U.S. government for decades. Its stated purpose of providing "humanitarian" aid to "democratic" forces around the world is belied by its record of funding right-wing trade unions and other organizations aimed at installing and defending a broad range of military dictatorships and/or bringing down governments whose policies were deemed contrary to U.S. interests. U.S.-instigated "flash mob" mobilizations are but another weapon in imperialist hands today along with mass surveillance, drone warfare, systematic torture, and overt intervention and war.

AP reports that the ZunZuneo operation was overseen by Joe McSpedon, "who worked for USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), a division that was created after the fall of the Soviet Union to promote U.S. interests in quickly changing political environments—without the usual red tape." AP's documents, like Snowden's, repeatedly reveal USAID's efforts to maintain absolute secrecy due to their central concern that the messages to be tweeted could be linked to the U.S. To this end they sought the assistance of a broad range of experts in the field of organizing social networks, including a co-founder of Twitter and officials in the Spanish government.

"Their mission," AP states, "was to launch a messaging network that could reach hundreds of thousands of Cubans. To hide the network from the Cuban government, they would set up a byzantine system of front companies using a Cayman Islands bank account, and recruit unsuspecting executives who would not be told of the company's ties to the U.S. government." USAID reports that funds for the program were claimed to be expended for unspecified projects in Pakistan.

Camouflaging ZunZuneo included intricate operations and agents based in several Central America nations, Spain, and England, as well as across the U.S. and elsewhere. An unnamed Cuban engineer at Cubacel, Cuba's cell-phone agency, is said to have provided a Cuban associate in Spain with 500,000 Cuban cell-phone numbers. AP does not indicate whether this "engineer" or his Cuban accomplice based in Spain were U.S. agents, or for that matter, whether the cell-phone numbers were actually obtained in the same manner that U.S. NSA secret surveillance operations steal information from computer systems everywhere.

The ZunZuneo social network began with providing non-political information—including jokes, reports on sports events, hurricane warnings and entertainment. The aim was to organize what appeared as an innocuous and extremely low-cost social network, aimed mostly at Cuban youth, that eventually signed up some 40,000 Cubans. Initially, USAID, through its front groups, secretly

U.S. secret Twitter plan aimed to create 'flash mobs' in Cuba



financed the extremely low cost of Cubans' joining the network. The costs to Cubans were paid directly for each tweet to Cubacel.

AP documents how similar text messaging had been used to "mobilize smart mobs and political uprisings in Moldova and the Philippines," among other unspecified places. "In Iran," AP reports, "the USAID noted social media's role following the disputed election of then President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June 2009—and saw it as an important foreign policy tool."

AP's documents reveal that "USAID divided Cuban society into five segments depending on loyalty to the government. On one side sat the 'democratic movement,' called 'still (largely) irrelevant,' and at the other end were the 'hard-core system supporters,' dubbed 'Talibanes' in a derogatory comparison to Afghan and Pakistani extremists." It is not possible to discern whether the parenthetical "largely" above was inserted by AP or was in the original USAID texts, or perhaps inserted by an embarrassed U.S. government "censor" who worried that the AP exposé from its own sources gave proof to the fact that the so-called democratic opposition, minus a few U.S. operatives, did not exist.

While AP reports that USAID, out of concern for being discovered and discredited by the Cuban government, attempted to sever any connection to ZunZuneo, it is not clear how this could be accomplished, on the one hand, and simultaneously be utilized for its stated purpose, on the other. Perhaps establishing it formally as a private, for profit operation, as opposed to a U.S. government operation, was sufficient in the minds of USAID officials to grant the U.S. "plausible denial."

In the end, the program was dropped, according to AP, with no clear reason other than that the "privatized" ZunZuneo was now operating at a financial loss. However, given the untold billions expended on U.S. spy, surveillance, and related operations, it appears doubtful that the "Cuban Twitter" project was put to pasture due to lack of funds!

Within days of the AP release, ZunZuneo was widely discussed in the Cuban media, including full coverage during Cuba's nightly two-hour Round Table television program. As with other U.S. destabilization programs, Cuban officials, always in measured tones, denounced the U.S. operation as "cyberwar," along with similar aggression against Cuba's sovereignty. ■

... Crimea secedes

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forces are available.

In Ukraine, today's U.S. allies include neo-fascists and their ilk, along with more compliant and pro-U.S. and EU oligarchs and politicians, employed to reset the status quo to the advantage of a new Ukrainian ruling capitalist elite. The new U.S.-backed, if not U.S.-installed, prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenuk, pledged in late March to fully implement the Greek-like massive austerity measures demanded by the terms of the new bailout agreement he had signed, while stating bluntly that the pain inflicted was necessary to resolve Ukraine's economic crisis.

Meanwhile, the U.S. sound and fury and repeated warnings against "a Russian invasion" of eastern and southern Ukraine have been accompanied by diplomatic exchanges between Secretary of State John Kerry and his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Ironically, both appear to agree that "constitutional changes" are an urgent and immediate necessity in Ukraine today. These include the direct election, as opposed to the present appointment, of regional governors, at least in places where Russians are in the great majority.

From the vantage point of Russia's capitalist elite, increasing the influence and power of its allies in these regions is aimed at maintaining as much as possible Russia's prior financial and geo-political interests. No doubt, Russia's elite are far more concerned with maintaining their economic power than with any notion of the democratic rule of the people.

Obama and Kerry, bluster aside, are more than

content with the overall result of the U.S.-aided far-right and fascist Kiev coup, which in its essence turned over one of Europe's largest nations, minus Crimea, to the grasping hands of Western bankers. What is now to be negotiated, as always behind the backs of the Ukrainian people, is precisely whose interests will prevail given the changed relationship of forces.

That Crimea has joined Russia is no longer in dispute, U.S. hyperbole aside. Russia's leverage in the east and south will undoubtedly be employed to advance its ruling-class interests as opposed to those of the working masses there or anywhere else. The same is the case with the U.S. and EU, whose economic power dwarfs Russia's and who can only be expected, over time, to use it to further marginalize Russian capitalism and subordinate it to its will.

Tragically, in Ukraine and virtually everywhere else in the world today, the working-class majorities, victims of a world capitalist order in its deepest crisis in decades and longer, have yet to find a voice in the form of powerful and independent mass political and economic formations that represent their interests.

Only when the undeniable worldwide anger and resentment of capitalist austerity, repression, and war are matched with a deeply rooted revolutionary socialist leadership, will the present series of terrible defeats be reversed, and a new social order brought into being. The present capitalist system will then become little more than a footnote in human history. And socialism, a system free from all the monstrous deformations of the previous era, will ring in societies whose central purpose is peace, equality, and the fullest development of human potential. ■

Harper claims Afghanistan is better off today — What's the truth?

By EVAN ENGERING

The Stephen Harper-led Conservative federal government announced the end of Canada's large armed presence in Afghanistan on March 12. Harper told returning Canadian troops that "you fought to loosen the grip of terror and repression." He added, "the people of Afghanistan are better off today because of Canada's investments."

The occasion, at least officially, marked the end of 12 years of Canadian military intervention in the country. The war aligned Canada closer to American foreign policy. It claimed the lives of 158 Canadians, along with many thousands of Afghan civilians.

But how true are Harper's claims? Former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien sent troops to Afghanistan in 2001 following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In the wake of massive demonstrations across Canada against joining the U.S. war in Iraq in 2003, Chretien instead began ramping up the Afghanistan "mission."

Despite the Taliban's initial willingness to co-operate in pursuing al-Qaeda, NATO forces occupied the country and waged the conflict unilaterally, only to have Taliban fighters retreat to mountainous regions to pursue a painfully protracted war.

Canada's participation stirred domestic political unrest. A majority of Canadians opposed the intervention from the start, and during most of the 12 years of the debacle. In 2009, Prime Minister Harper prorogued Parliament for a second time, then to shield his government from mounting allegations of handing over prisoners to Afghan authorities for torture—a war crime in violation of the Third Geneva Convention. In 2006, New Democratic Party convention delegates, led by the Socialist Caucus, debated and passed a resolution calling for an end to Canada's role in the war. Antiwar opposition was visible in the streets, where large demonstrations took place at least annually.

Canada's many years of involvement in Bush's jingoist "crusade," indifferent to the lessons learned by

Stalinists during the 10-year Soviet occupation, failed to win over many Afghan hearts and minds, much less establish a liberal capitalist democracy. In fact, it only retarded Afghan political progress, and fueled religious fanatics waging jihad against the West.

So what is the "success" that Harper and the business media are touting? Decades of conflict driven by foreign powers have left Afghanistan one of the poorest countries on Earth. Over one-third of the population is unemployed and living below the poverty line. Even with all the foreign aid, the country is ranked last, or in the bottom 10 for every category in the Human Development Index.

The only industry in which Afghanistan leads the world is the production of addictive drugs. The opium industry accounts for over one-third of the country's GDP, with 10% of the population working in the poppy fields to generate almost all of Asia's supply of heroin. No solution to the problem of poverty can be found here, though, as most of the profits go to powerful drug lords.

Perhaps the most tragic failure concerns physical insecurity. The magnitude of the problem is underscored by the March 20 attack on Kabul's luxury Serena Hotel, which left nine dead, including two Canadian aid workers. In the lead-up to the April 5 Afghan presidential election, a spate of deadly attacks occurred.

The Taliban is hardly gone, and given the country's stagnation and rampant corruption, Afghanistan is doomed to the same cruel fate of countries devastated by foreign intervention—until the menace of imperialism is ended. Foreign powers, whether Russian, Pakistani, or Western, can drop bombs and kill people, but only democratic grassroots organizing by the Afghan people themselves can make their country self-governing and prosperous.

Fight Imperialism! Canada out of NATO! NATO out of Afghanistan! ■

Autocratic rule — a growing trend in Ottawa

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Unwarranted secrecy, stonewalling, illegal legislative initiatives, and voter suppression—these continue to be the hallmarks of the Stephen Harper-led Conservative government.

Some fall flat, as did Harper's attempt to appoint an ineligible judge to the Supreme Court of Canada, and to re-write the law that stands in his way. The high court judges voted six to one to strike down both the appointment and the amendment that would have loosened the requirement to fill the Quebec vacancy with a judge or lawyer who practises law in Quebec.

On other fronts, however, Harper's autocratic agenda is forging ahead. A prime example is the lifelong gag order imposed on some of Ottawa's top officials and lawyers in the name of "national security." Anyone who deals with foreign and defense policy, security, and intelligence, including lawyers who work with the Communications Security Establishment and the Justice Department, faces up to 14 years in prison for disclosing information without permission.

Even former officials are gagged in this surreal post-Snowden move to blunt criticism of government, on issues ranging from military operations in Afghanistan to security services that spy on the public.

When it comes to the release of government documents through the freedom-of-information system, longer delays are almost a certainty. A Federal Court judge said she was unable to censure National Defense for taking a three-year extension on delivering records requested under the Access to Information Act.

The request, made in late 2010, was for documents related to the sale of surplus Canadian military assets to Uruguay. Now, lengthy delays are entrenched in jurisprudence, anchored there short of explicit legislative change.

Secrecy can have literally explosive consequences when it concerns the transportation of hazardous goods. After the Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, rail disaster in July 2013 that took 47 lives and reduced a town centre to fire and ashes, concern remains high over the exponential growth in the number of trains carrying crude oil through densely populated urban areas, including

mid-Toronto. But Canadian National and Canadian Pacific refuse to release details about hazardous goods transiting Toronto and other cities—even long after the train has departed.

Although railways across North America have been forced to step up safety procedures, crews, inspections and training, residents have a right to know what's passing through their neighbourhoods. And they have a right to say no, especially because there are cleaner and safer energy alternatives to bitumen-laced oil and fracked gas.

Finally, the voter suppression tactics of the Harper Conservative have sections of the corporate elite and their obedient media upset. (In fact, as we go to press in early April, rumours are rife that the government may make a partial retreat on some of its plans.)

The bone of contention is the Fair Elections Act, a name that fans of George Orwell can truly appreciate. It would do away with votes cast by people with only a voter information card, or with a friend, family member or neighbour to "vouch" for them. About 120,000 people voted this way in 2011. Many of them were seniors, youths, aboriginal people or disadvantaged citizens—arguably people less likely to vote Conservative.

According to Pierre Poilievé, Minister of State for Democratic Reform, the reforms to the voting law are about putting a stop to fraudulent votes. But as Marc Mayrand, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, stated, of all the millions of ballots cast in the 2008 and 2011 federal elections, only 18 complaints were lodged about possible ineligible voting.

An Angus Reid Global poll in early March showed that 62 per cent of Canadians believe that the Conservative government is settling political scores with its election law—especially against Elections Canada, which the new law would bar from promoting electoral participation via ads, as well as weaken its ability to investigate wrongdoing.

What prompted this tit for tat? Recall the "robo calls" affair, which is currently before the courts. It involves accusations against the Conservative Party over alleged widespread efforts to suppress the votes of non-Conservative supporters—by sending



Toronto picket hits postal cuts

A protest against the plan to terminate door to door mail delivery hit Toronto streets and Canadian mass media on Saturday afternoon, March 15. Close to 100 people answered the call of Socialist Action and braved freezing high winds to picket the constituency office of Conservative Minister of Natural Resources Joe Oliver (who is now the Finance Minister), at a busy uptown intersection.

Members of more than a dozen labour unions, political parties and community groups rallied to demand that Canada Post Corporation and the Conservative federal government of Stephen Harper reverse the decision to phase out home mail delivery to over 5 million addresses, and refrain from increasing the price of postage.

Demonstrators walked next to the MP's office entrance. They chanted: Stop the Cuts at Canada Post, Save Letter Carrier Jobs, No Cuts No Price Hikes—Defend Postal Services, and Seniors Demand Home Mail Delivery.

About one quarter of the crowd appeared to be members of the Toronto Local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). The rest identified as partisans of UNIFOR, UNITE HERE, OPSEU, CUPE, secondary school teachers, and a host of local groups—including Put Food in the Budget and the United Jewish People's Order.

Placards signed by Socialist Action,

plus a large SA banner were highly visible on the street, as well as in the TV coverage of the event broadcast by CBC, CTV, CITY-TV, OMNI-TV and CP24. Participants sported buttons demanding, "Save Canada Post," distributed by CUPW, and bought 13 bright yellow buttons produced by SA bearing the slogan "Capitalism is Organized Crime."

Protest organizer and SA Federal Secretary Barry Weisleder told the crowd, "The scheme to curtail home mail delivery is part of a plan to gut the federal public sector. It is part of a plan to shrink postal workers' pensions and to break a progressive, democratic union. It is part of a scheme to sell profitable parts of Canada Post Corporation to private sector vultures."

Darryl Ellis, president of the Toronto Local of CUPW, pledged that the campaign to save home mail delivery "is not a sprint, it's a marathon. We will continue to fight until we win." Representatives from OPSEU, UNIFOR, PFIB, the NDP Socialist Caucus, UJPO and Youth for Socialist Action also addressed the shivering crowd.

Weisleder, two days earlier, submitted a written application for a meeting with Joe Oliver. Should the request be granted, organizers would like all the groups involved in the Saturday protest to send a rep to that close encounter with the Tory MP for Eglinton-Lawrence. ■

them to false polling place locations.

It goes beyond mere chutzpah that the Tories are taking this opportunity to skew

election procedures to their advantage, and to grease the skids for their hated agenda of austerity, authoritarianism, and war. ■

... Slave revolts

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ters, that the slave does not understand the term—does not comprehend the idea of freedom.”

Despite Northup’s counsel against insurrection, he fought back when he had no choice. The movie graphically portrays a fight with a white carpenter, John Tibeats. As graphic as it is, the beating Northup gave Tibeats was even more brutal than shown in the film. “I placed my boot upon his neck. He was completely in my power. My blood was up. It seemed to course through my veins like fire. ...

“I snatched the whip from his hand ... I cannot tell how many times I struck him. Blow after blow fell fast and heavy upon his wriggling form. At length he screamed—cried murder—and at last the blasphemous tyrant called on God for mercy. But he who had never shown mercy did not receive it. The stiff stock of the whip warped round his cringing body until my right arm ached.”

In reality, but not in the movie, Northup had a second fight with Tibeats, in which he once again overpowers the carpenter. This time Northup flees, eludes a pursuing party of hounds and takes refuge in the swamp. Eventually, as after the first fight, Northup is saved from deadly retaliation from Tibeats by the intervention of his first master, William Ford, avoiding that “certain defeat.”

Not just victims

I don’t know how the movie “12 Years a Slave” came to downplay the specter of slave revolt, despite its prominent place in Northup’s autobiography. But there is a current among some who call themselves progressive to see exploited people as mere victims, unwilling or unable to fight back, meekly waiting for deliverance from some savior. It appeases the conscience of some liberals, but it is not a true story.

People fight back against their oppressors. It is part of human nature. Sometimes we fight back smart, and sometimes we just fight back. Sometimes we are organized, and sometimes we are disorganized. But history is in fact the story of rebellion after rebellion.

Last year, another Oscar-award winning movie about slavery, “Lincoln,” told the story of the passage of the 13th Amendment and the end of slavery in the United States. Yet slaves were barely present in this story of slave liberation.

Daniel Day-Lewis won praise for his stunning portrayal of Abraham Lincoln, but where was the incomparable, escaped slave leader Frederick Douglass? What mention was made of the slave revolts that had terrorized the South prior to the Civil War?

Where were the 180,000 or more Black men who fought in the Union army, as portrayed in another great Civil War movie, “Glory”? Where were the thousands upon thousands of slaves who had deserted the plantations during the war?

This year, the movie “42,” the story of Jackie Rob-

Rallies demand: ‘Not one more deportation!’



(Above) From Montana to North Carolina and throughout the United States, immigration activists marched and rallied on April 5 in an effort to pressure the Obama administration to put a freeze on deportations. In fiscal 2013, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau (ICE) deported 368,644—over 1000 a day!

“Not one more deportation!” demanded protesters gathered in front of Los Angeles City Hall. Many signs denounced Obama as the “Deportador en Jefe” (“Deporter in Chief”).

More than 100 people rallied in front of the ICE detention center in Elroy, Ariz. Dozens marched to the center from Phoenix—some 70 miles away. In Hartford, Conn., people came from around the state to protest in front of the federal building. San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., and some 50 other cities and towns also saw demonstrations on this “Day of Action.”

inson, who courageously challenged segregation in baseball, did not win a single Oscar nomination, despite Chadwick Boseman’s powerful portrayal. Why not?

Contrast “12 Years a Slave” and “Lincoln” with “Django Unchained,” last year’s epic spaghetti Western depiction of slavery, where Black hero and bounty hunter Django says without regret, “Kill white people and get paid for it? What’s not to like?” “Django Unchained” won Oscars, including Best Writing for Quentin Tarantino’s screenplay. It appears that stereotypical comedy is easier for Hollywood to take than real Black heroes.

Back in 1997, Chiwetel Ejiofor, who plays Northup in “12 Years a Slave,” had an important role in “Amistad.” “Amistad” was based on a true story of slave revolt, the mutiny on a slave ship. That movie, like “12 Years a Slave,” did not flinch in its portrayal of the bestiality of slavery, in particular of the slave trade. “Amistad” starred Djimon Hounsou as Cinque, the leader of the mutiny. The defiance and rebelliousness of Cinque and the mutineers was on full display in that film. We

need more such films.

Greg Grandin, in a recent Nation article, “Slavery & Freedom,” talks of the “falsehood on which the whole ideological edifice of slavery rested: the idea that slaves were loyal and simple-minded, in possession of neither independent lives nor thoughts.”

It is not just the history of slavery that matters. It is the history that exploited and oppressed people make every day by fighting back that matters. We are not just victims. There is some Solomon Northup, and some Nat Turner, in all of us. We must be the agents of our own liberation. ■

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Marc Norton has been a rank-and-file member of UNITE HERE Local 2, the San Francisco hotel, restaurant and culinary workers union, since 1976. He is also a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). His website is www.MarcNorton.us.

... 4th International debates revolutionary strategy

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period of relative capitalist stability ever. As with Lenin’s party, in periods of such stability and/or working-class defeats and retreats, prospects for transforming “small propaganda parties” into mass revolutionary parties are difficult, if not impossible.

This is qualitatively different for reformist parties that have a stake in the capitalist system and that are often called on to help “manage” it.

No serious revolutionary party enjoys being compelled by circumstances beyond its control to be relegated to a small propaganda group lacking broad influence in the working class and oppressed. But every revolutionary has faced this unavoidable dilemma, from Marx and Engels to Lenin and Trotsky, and all others, everywhere. How to continue to exist, to fight, to grow, to gain significant influence, to prepare for the future when the mass forces for change in the broad working class remain relatively passive, is the question of questions.

But we are not without instruction. The method of the united front has proven invaluable for major sections of the Fourth International in uniting major currents of the left, and often in the broader workers movement, in common struggle. It is an essential tactic in the transformative process of advancing the class struggle and winning at first small numbers of dedicated cadre and then broad forces to the revolutionary party—and it is properly stressed as such in the Bureau text.

In its essence, the tactic of the united front is aimed at achieving two objectives: (1) the mobilization of our class to fight in its own interests, thereby increasing its confidence, power, and capacity to win; and (2) distin-

guishing ourselves in the process from those currents who stand aside from such struggles for sectarian or reformist reasons. Of course, to the extent that other currents in the socialist left join with us in common action and democratic planning, important differences are less magnified, while trust and confidence is advanced that can lay the basis for future collaboration and eventually principled fusions.

We must stress that the central purpose of the united-front tactic is to build the revolutionary socialist party. History has tragically and repeatedly demonstrated that the absence of such a party and the leadership it has forged in struggle guarantees defeats of major proportions. We need not review its consequences in the Arab Spring, in Syria, Libya, Egypt and, indeed, throughout the modern era.

The united-front tactic, as with all others, is not without its limitations. It is not a magic formula, especially today when the world capitalist system is in a crisis of historic proportions and the important but still limited struggles have yet to score, with few exceptions, significant victories.

Such victories, that we are confident will emerge from the present crisis and the fight against it, will lay the basis for deeper and united-front mobilizations that open the door wider to the revolutionary transformation of the state. Need we repeat that these are highly improbable without a deeply rooted mass revolutionary party with that single-minded objective?

Having recognized the “problematic” of so-called anti-capitalist parties too often subordinating united front mobilizations to electoral politics, the Bureau is compelled to remind us that the direct engagement of the

masses in action in the streets remains essential. Nevertheless, immediately following this section, the Bureau reaffirms its major “strategic” objective: “At the same time, the experiences of the last ten years make it necessary to maintain the problematic of the last Congress of building broad anti-capitalist parties.” These “useful” parties have more often than not been more electoral/parliamentary in nature than parties aimed at mass mobilizations to exercise working-class power in the streets, hence the Bureau’s need to essentially caution comrades against electoralism.

In recent years the FI majority leadership has rushed headlong toward the subordination, if not substitution, of building Leninist parties to vaguely defined parties with electoralist illusions—including some that violate our principles of class independence. If this project is carried much further, it will necessarily mean the abandonment of our historic program.

Tragically, if we were to draw a balance sheet of our experiences with such formations, not only in the past “ten years” as the Bureau states, but for decades before, we would be compelled to come to largely negative conclusions. Many of these groupings have already faced dissolution or are in rapid decline.

Were we discussing a mere tactic regarding a combination of electoral and united-front mobilizations to advance the class struggle, a tactic centered on building disciplined FI sections based on our historic program and that maintained an organizational expression inside and outside any formation that we chose to build and/or enter, we would be on solid ground. The test of time and the measure of the lack of success of these projects, however, warns us that the above is not the case. ■

12 Years a Slave: *What happened to slave rebellion?*



By MARC NORTON

"12 Years a Slave," the story of a free Black man kidnapped by slave traders, has won an Oscar for Best Picture of the Year and a slew of other awards—including Best Writing for a screenplay adapted from another source, in this case the autobiography of Solomon Northup. But in one important respect, the movie comes up short. Missing from the film is the slave rebellion and revolt that Solomon Northup portrayed so vividly in his book.

It is unfortunate that slave resistance is missing from a movie destined to become a classic portrayal of slavery. "12 Years a Slave" plays into that political current, which sees oppressed and exploited people only as victims, as mere objects of uncontrollable historical forces, rather than people making history by fighting back.

"They are deceived who flatter themselves that the ignorant and debased slave has no conception of the magnitude of his wrongs," Northup writes. "They are deceived who imagine that he arises from his knees, with back lacerated and bleeding, cherishing only a spirit of meekness and forgiveness.

"A day may come—it will come, if his prayer is heard—a terrible day of vengeance," Northup continues, "when the master in his turn will cry in vain for mercy."

Slave revolts

Nat Turner led a bloody slave revolt in Virginia in 1831, 10 years before Northup was sold into slavery. Turner rallied an estimated 70 or more slaves and killed 50-60 whites. Turner was later captured and hanged, along with many others. But this rebellion struck terror into the hearts of the slave masters.

Turner's rebellion was only the largest of many. Herbert Aptheker documented 250 similar rebellions in his groundbreaking book, "American Negro Slave Revolts."

"Let them know the heart of the poor slave ... and they will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred are intelligent enough to understand their situation, and to cherish in their bosoms the love of freedom," Northup writes.

Even before he was sold into slavery, Northup, living in Saratoga, New York, "frequently met with slaves, who had accompanied their masters from the South. ... Almost uniformly I found they cherished a secret desire for liberty."

It is unfortunate that slave resistance is missing from a movie destined to become a classic portrayal of slavery.

But where is this slave resistance in the movie? There is little to be seen. The tone of the movie is set early on in a conversation between Northup and two other free men who have been kidnapped. "I say we fight," says Robert, proposing a mutiny and seizure of the slave ship on which they are being transported.

"The crew is fairly small," says Northup. "If it were well planned, I believe they could be strong armed." But Clemens responds, "Three can't stand against a whole crew. The rest here are niggers, born and bred slaves. Niggers ain't got the stomach for a fight, not a damn one." And, in the movie, that is the end of any talk of mutiny.

This is not the story Northup tells. Northup wrote that he and another kidnapped free man, Arthur, hatched a plot to seize the brig *Orleans*, on which they were being transported to New Orleans. They then recruited another kidnapped man, Robert, who "entered into the conspiracy with a zealous spirit."

They developed a detailed plan about how to overpower the brig's captain and crew. They did not tell any of the other slaves about their plan, not knowing who to trust, but obviously counted on their acquiescence, if not their support, once they seized control of the ship. The plan was only abandoned after Robert came down with smallpox and died, his body thrown overboard.

On the plantation

The only slave who fights back once Northup gets to Louisiana is Northup. We see the slave Eliza wailing and weeping about being separated from her children. We see the slave Patsey beg Northup to kill her. Later Patsey speaks back to slave master Epps before being brutally whipped. And in one scene Northup stumbles onto the lynching of two slaves, although we never learn why. That's about it.

Early on in his autobiography, Northup meets a slave named Lethe in a slave pen in Richmond, Virginia. "Le-

the ... continually gave utterance to the language of hatred and revenge. Her husband had been sold. ... She cared not whether they might carry her. Pointing to the scars upon her face, the desperate creature wished that she might see the day when she could wipe them off in some man's blood!"

Northup later relates a story where "some man's blood" was shed. A certain slave, not far from the plantation on which Northup was enslaved, "was ordered to kneel and bare his back for the reception of the lash. They were in the woods alone—beyond the reach of sight or hearing. The boy submitted until maddened at such injustice, and insane with pain, he sprang to his feet, and seizing an axe, literally chopped the overseer in pieces."

Having risen from his knees and slain his oppressor, "He made no attempt whatever at concealment, but hastening to his master, related the whole affair. ... He was led to the scaffold, and while the rope was around his neck, maintained an undismayed and fearless bearing, and with his last words justified the act."

Despite the near certainty of apprehension, "the woods and swamps are ... continually filled with runaways," Northup writes. He even describes one incident where he is attacked by a group of escaped slaves trying to seize "a dressed pig in a bag swung over my shoulder." Northup escapes, but acknowledges,

"They had no evil design upon me, except to frighten me out of my pig ... driven to this extremity by necessity."

Northup even tells of a "concerted movement among a number of slaves" to escape to Mexico. "Lew Cheney, with whom I became acquainted ... conceived the project of organizing a company sufficiently strong to fight their way against all opposition, to the neighboring territory of Mexico."

"A remote spot, far within the depths of the swamp back of Hawkin's plantation, was selected as the rallying point. Lew flitted from one plantation to another, in the dead of night, preaching a crusade to Mexico, and, like Peter the Hermit, creating a furor of excitement wherever he appeared. At length, a large number of runaways were assembled; stolen mules, and corn gathered from the fields, and bacon filched from smokehouses, had been conveyed into the woods. The expedition was about to proceed, when their hiding place was discovered."

Unfortunately, Cheney then turned traitor. "Departing secretly from the encampment, he [Cheney] proclaimed among the planters the number collected in the swamp, and, instead of stating truly the object they had in view, asserted their intention was to emerge from their seclusion the first favorable opportunity, and murder every white person along the bayou."

Doubtless with Nat Turner's revolt in mind, Cheney's story "filled the whole country with terror." The planters surrounded and surprised the runaway encampment. The prisoners, along with "many who were suspected, but entirely innocent," were "without the shadow of process or form of trial, hurried to the scaffold."

This revolt, although tragically aborted, became "a subject of general and unflinching interest in every slave-hut on the bayou." Despite its tragic consequences, "such an idea as insurrection" persisted.

"More than once," Northup relates, "I have joined in serious consultation, when the subject has been discussed, and there have been times when a word from me would have placed hundreds of my fellow-bondsmen in an attitude of defiance. Without arms or ammunition, or even with them, I saw such a step would result in certain defeat, disaster and death, and always raised my voice against it. ...

"It is a mistaken opinion that prevails in some quar-

(continued on page 11)