

What Happened to the “Arab Spring”?

Storm over the Middle East

U.S./NATO Imperialists Hands Off Syria!

A year and a half after a wave of protest and revolt swept through the Arab East, where are we at? In the wake of the popular upheaval touched off by secular youth joined by workers, in **Tunisia** and **Egypt** military-based authoritarian regimes have been replaced by military-based pseudo-democratic regimes with weak Islamist governments subordinate to imperialism. U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton and war secretary Leon Panetta jet around the region “advising” presidents, generals and “rebels.” Women protesters are brutalized. Thousands of demonstrators are jailed by military tribunals.

In **Libya**, the U.S./NATO imperialists bombed the government of nationalist strongman Muammar Qaddafi to smithereens, so that a hodgepodge of competing Islamist and tribal militias now hold sway. In **Syria**, the U.S. and its European allies together with Arabian peninsula monarchs are arming a Sunni Muslim military insurgency against the regime of Bashar Assad, dominated by the Alawite minority and allied with Shiite Iran. In **Bahrain**, a revolt by the Shiite majority against a Sunni puppet monarchy backed by the U.S. Fifth Fleet was ruthlessly put down with Saudi aid.

U.S. imperialism would seem to be sitting pretty, considering that last year its satraps were falling one by one. Back then, everyone from Barack Obama’s White House to the bourgeois media to the vast majority of the left were all hailing the “revolutions” that overthrew Hosni Mubarak in Cairo and Mohammed Ben Ali in Tunis. The Internationalist Group was among the very few voices warning that there had only been a popular revolt, and so long as the army ruled, calling it a revolution was a fraud. Today the military still holds the whip hand. Yet the civil war in Syria and U.S./Israeli threats to “bomb, bomb Iran” could set off a conflagration engulfing the region. And the working class is beginning to move, notably in Egypt.

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For Workers Revolution!



al-Masry al-Youm

Striking Egyptian textile workers at Mahalla al-Kubra, July 19.

We Don’t Beg, We Demand: Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

The Empty Election Promises of “Mr. Deportations” Obama

The June 15 announcement by President Barack Obama that he would stop the deportations of certain undocumented immigrant youth set off a tremendous stir nationally. “Light At the End of the Tunnel” proclaimed New York’s *El Diario/La Prensa*. “Close to the Dream” cheered the headline of *La Opinión* in Los Angeles. For youth known as *dreamers*, the article reported, the action, which would defer deportation proceedings for renewable two-year periods for those who fulfill the requirements, was “like a dream fulfilled.” Conservative anti-immigrant groups, in contrast, criticized the measure as “back-door amnesty.”

Ten days later, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision on Arizona’s sinister SB1070 law. In this case there was none of the delirious optimism which accompanied the Obama administration’s

earlier action. “Supreme Disappointment for Immigrants” headlined *El Diario*. Although the ruling rejected three of the disputed sections of the racist law, it did not disallow the key provision, which instructs police to ask people about their immigration status when questioning them about a misdemeanor or criminal offense, if the cops have a “reasonable suspicion” that they are undocumented. Obviously, this invites “racial profiling” of brown-skinned people or those who “look Mexican,” both immigrants (undocumented or “legal”) and citizens. Thirty percent of Arizona’s population is of Hispanic origin.

As we pointed out in our article, “Deportation Elections 2012: For a Revolutionary Workers Party!” (*The Internationalist* supplement, May 2012), immigration is a hot issue between Democrats and Republicans in the current presidential campaign. Hispanic and immigrants’ rights groups are assiduously us-

ing the Obama administration’s administrative action and the Supreme Court’s green light to the Republican-sponsored SB1070 to round up votes for the Democrats. But while Republicans are appealing for support from the most reactionary sectors of the white population with barely disguised xenophobic rhetoric, this doesn’t make the Democrats friends of immigrants.

In fact, the two partner parties of American capitalism are enemies of the workers, both those who have arrived from abroad and those born here. In his 2008 presidential campaign, Obama promised to enact “comprehensive immigration reform” in his first year in office. He did nothing of the sort, not even presenting a bill. Blaming the Republicans for their opposition, he is now making the same promise for the first year of a second term in the White House. In his June 22 speech before the National Asso-

ciation of Latin American Elected Officials, the Democratic president excused himself, saying “we did what we could do.” A bald-faced lie. And by deporting *more than a million immigrants*, double the figure of his Republican predecessor George W. Bush, Barack Obama is in no way a “lesser evil.”

The Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, warns against the fraud of a mythical “immigration reform” which won’t happen, certainly nothing favorable to immigrant workers, who constitute a huge and potentially militant section of the working class. We call for no votes to the Democrats, Republicans or any capitalist candidate or party. Only a workers party can lead a victorious struggle to defend immigrants. As we chant in demonstrations, “*Ni ilegales, ni criminales, ¡somos obreros internacionales!*” (Neither

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Forge a Revolutionary and Internationalist Workers Party!

Empty Promises...

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illegal nor criminals, we are international workers). The IG fights for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* as part of a struggle for *international socialist revolution*.

The Dream Is Still a Nightmare for Undocumented Youth

So let's briefly analyze the two latest measures: the deferred action on deportation of certain youth, and the implementation of the Arizona law.

For the roughly 65,000 immigrant students who graduate from high school every year, many of whom don't even know their countries of origin, the proposal to suspend deportations was reason to celebrate. Those who are approved get a temporary suspension of deportation which will enable them to get a work permit. In principle this could benefit some 700,000 youths between the ages of 18 and 30, who arrived in this country when they were under 16 years old, who have lived here for at least five consecutive years, who are studying or have graduated high school, or who have been in the military, and who have no criminal record. It would also eventually benefit another 700,000 minors under the age of 18. But in the words of the president himself, "This is not amnesty, it doesn't provide immunity, this is not a path to citizenship."

Obama's 2008 campaign was based on weasel words like "hope," "change" and "yes we can." Today he is again selling false hopes and empty election promises. During the last two years, a movement has arisen of undocumented youth in support of the Dream Act. The campaign is led by a network of liberal "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) in order to serve as a safety valve to vent the frustrations of a generation of youth who live in the shadows. Upon leaving high school, lacking the proper papers it is difficult for them to study in the universities or get a legal job. For their part, the Democrats want to give the impression that they are doing something about immigration in order to rev up the Latino vote in key "swing states" like Florida, Colorado, Nevada, North Carolina and Virginia.

We have refused to support the national Dream Act because of a key provision which offers legal residence in exchange for serving in the military. This is an attempt by the Pentagon to recruit young immigrants in order to fill a gap in cannon fodder for their imperialist wars¹. But despite the generals' testimony, anti-immigrant hysteria buried

¹ The state-level Dream Acts generally lack this clause, and thus we have taken a different position toward them (see the note in *The Internationalist* supplement, May 2012, p. 2).

the Dream Act in Congress and almost all the state legislatures. In the face of this failure, the Obama administration is seeking to profit from the sympathies by and for this sector, which is considered "innocent" even by many reactionaries. And with the young *dreamers*, who courageously came out of the shadows to affirm their identity, the maneuver worked. Many received the news of the action with tears in their eyes.

But let's look more closely at what was approved. Not only is it not an amnesty, nor permanent residence, nor a path to citizenship, it isn't even an executive order. It was only an internal administrative memo from the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), a sinister agency which is at the heart of the drive to intensify repression in the United States. Indeed, under both Bush and Obama, thanks to the DHS and its Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) police, *undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are already living in a police state*. And even if young people manage to qualify for deferred action, this measure could be withdrawn tomorrow if the DHS chief changes her mind, or if the Republicans win the elections. Immigration law specialists are recommending not to make use of the measure until after seeing the outcome of the November elections.

Keep in mind that the government generally doesn't know whether a young person is an immigrant or not. When they request deferred action, they enter the immigration control system. As a Phoenix-based immigration lawyer remarked, once in the system "they may not be able to get back into anonymity." Moreover, they will have to hand over a stack of documents, informing the authorities of the whereabouts and immigration status of their parents; they will probably have to pay a stiff processing fee; and they will have to undergo a background check by the FBI. In practice, it is likely that only a small layer of middle class youth who are seeking to get a university degree will benefit from this action. For the bulk of the youth in immigrant



Internationalist contingent in May Day 2012 march in New York.

neighborhoods it offers little or nothing.

What those who are approved will receive will not be an exemption from deportation but only a deferment. In contrast to the "temporary protected status" granted to Central Americans, the action announced by Obama does not change the immigration status of the youth concerned. It is only an "exercise of prosecutorial discretion," deciding to temporarily not proceed with deportation. A year ago, the ICE director made a similar announcement, that on the basis of prosecutorial discretion in the future they would not deport "low priority" persons. He promised to review 340,000 cases in which deportation proceedings had already begun. But of the 200,000 cases examined so far, only 2% have been closed (*Arizona Republic*, 16 June). In other words, the result has been negligible.

SB1070 Goes Into Effect: "Show Your Papers!"

If the action announced by President Obama doesn't turn out to be as beneficial for undocumented youth as many thought, the Supreme Court decision permitting the implementation of the key provision of Arizona's SB1070 law promises an increase in police harassment against immigrants and Latinos, and an avalanche of legal battles over this and similar racist laws. It already has people reeling in Arizona: after hearing the verdict, parents flocked to lawyers' offices to draw up letters of parental rights, transferring custody of their children if they are picked up on the street or highway under the new law. (There are already several thousand cases of undocumented immigrants who were detained and their children then kidnapped by the authorities, and in some cases given up in adoption.)

In strictly legal terms, the Court ruling has contradictory elements. It turned down **Section 3** of the SB1070 law which would have made it a crime not to carry alien registration papers. So if a police officer in Arizona or another state demands to see someone's papers, the person being questioned is under no obligation to produce documents. It also annulled **Section 5**, which would have made it illegal for an undocumented immigrant to ask for a job. The Court pro-

hibited states from implementing laws on this issue, underlining that Congress, by making the employer responsible, "made a deliberate choice not to impose criminal penalties on aliens who seek, or engage in, unauthorized employment." So it spelled out that day laborers who are harassed by the police, and not only in Arizona, are not violating the law in looking for work.

The Court also struck down **Section 6** of the law, which would have authorized the arrest without a warrant of individuals simply for being undocumented. In doing so, the highest court in the country reaffirmed in writing that, "As a general rule, it is not a crime for a removable alien to remain present in the United States." This has been the case for many years, but it must enrage the xenophobes to see it reaffirmed in so many words, and by this ultra-reactionary Supreme Court. Nevertheless, while immigration law experts applaud these sections of the ruling, the supporters of SB1070 correctly emphasize that the Court let the key piece of law go into effect, **Section 2B**, which requires police officers to ask about the immigration status of anyone being questioned if they suspect that the person is undocumented.

Even in this case there are limitations. It is not permitted to stop people simply to inquire about their immigration status. All this means is that the police will have to look for a pretext, but officers are already well-trained in doing that. It further stipulates that the stop cannot last longer than normal in order to verify the person's status. But these are only questions of form. The most important thing is that the Court did not issue a decision on whether SB1070 violates the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which prohibits "unreasonable searches and seizures" which would be the case if individuals were stopped according to a racial profile. The Court didn't rule on this key aspect because the U.S. Attorney General, who sought the injunction to stop the law from going into effect, *didn't ask it to*.

The Obama administration only objected to the Arizona law on the grounds that U.S. law preempts state legislation on immigration matters. There are several additional

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Portland Trotskyist Study Group Fuses with Internationalist Group

After intensive discussions, visits and several months of joint work, the members of the Portland, Oregon Trotskyist Study Group and the Internationalist Group have decided to unite their forces in a single organization, the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International. The comrades of the PTSG see this as a big step forward in embracing authentic Trotskyism against the parodies they had known of various currents which falsely claim the legacy of Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution. Together we see this as an opportunity and challenge to build a class-struggle opposition in the workers movement on the program of revolutionary Marxism.

The members of Portland Trotskyist Study Group have a number of years of experience on the left, both as unionists and members of socialist organizations. One member of the PTSG was a longtime cadre of the International Socialist Organization, playing a leading role in founding a branch of the ISO in Southeast Portland. After nearly a decade of membership, disagreements over positions on a variety of issues, from the ISO's shifting position on labor to the question of Leninism and the ISO's campaign against supposed "ultra-leftism," led to a split earlier this year. Two members of the PTSG (one of whom was also a member of the ISO for several years) are experienced labor activists, who have struggled to put forward a class-conscious perspective inside their unions and in the labor movement at large. They helped to form and build a group for construction workers from all trades to work together to defend picket lines and act in solidarity.

They also fought against bureaucratic sabotage to build support for the courageous longshore workers of Longview, Washington battling a union-busting attack by a giant grain/shipping consortium. It was their experience of running up against the dead-end of reformist politics and a labor bureaucracy that continually sells out the rank and file that led the Portland comrades to seek out

an organization whose revolutionary words were matched by deeds. Having grown frustrated with the malleable positions which many on the left take on crucial questions in labor and class struggle, and having read *The Internationalist* over some time, they recognized the IG as a politically resolute and steadfast group. The first contact was a phone call that began, "There's a group of us here in Portland who are fed up with the ISO and we want the real Trotskyism." Obviously, we had to talk.

Although the initial contact predated the outbreak of the Occupy Wall Street movement, in which the Portland comrades played an active role, the contradictions of that amorphous populist movement – and of the politics put forward by various left groups in it – brought the need for a revolutionary leadership to the fore. This was highlighted following a January 6 labor solidarity forum in Seattle called by Occupy to support ILWU Local 21 in Longview. When ILWU bureaucrats physically disrupted the forum, after attempting to do the same in Portland, the ISO was caught between two groups it was tailing after, Occupy and the labor bureaucracy. The ISO chose the latter, justifying it with some convoluted and distorted accounts of events, and launched an internal campaign on the need to fight "ultra-leftism." This led to a fair amount of discontent in the ISO, whose members had up until then mainly been chasing Occupy.

The misinterpretation of Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* within the ISO was combined with a deliberate confusion between tactics and program. While an activist from Occupy may smash a window to express frustration with big banks, the Occupy movement's demands for banks to restructure and form a "more democratic" or "more local" institution are still liberal at root. While most of those who call themselves anarchists today are basically "liberals in bandanas," we must seek to win the best elements to revolutionary Marxism by presenting a genuine class line.

The current crisis facing the revolutionary movement is not one of rampant ultra-leftism, as the ISO leadership pretended, but of rampant liberal reformism that Lenin also identified in *Left-Wing Communism*. The lesson of that polemic was on the need for revolutionaries to organize within the existing mass organizations of the working class in order to go beyond their limitations, point out their contradictions, and build a revolutionary party.

A series of key questions were taken up in discussions between the Internationalist Group and the Portland comrades who are now fusing with the IG. First and foremost is what is known in the Marxist movement as the "Russian Question." A text outlining initial areas of political accord began with agreement with James P. Cannon's 1940 "Speech on the Russian Question" and more generally agreement with Cannon and Trotsky's program of unconditional military defense of the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states combined with the fight for proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. This was a given from the outset, as Portland comrades had already rejected the supposed "third camp" theory of "state capitalism." Reading what Trotsky actually wrote, as opposed to what others (such as the ISO) said he wrote, was key.

In relation to this, there was discussion on the issue of Kronstadt, in which after reading articles drawing lessons from the writings of anarchist historian Paul Avrich, it was agreed that in the terrible situation in which the embattled Soviet power found itself at the end of the cruel 1918-21 Russian Civil War, it became necessary to militarily suppress the Kronstadt revolt whose leaders were coordinating with White Guard and imperialist counterrevolutionaries, even though many sailors (who for the most part came from sectors that had sat out the Civil War while the vanguard of the workers was decimated on the battlefield) professed attachment to anarchism. The life or death of the Revolution was at stake, as the counterrevolutionaries and their agents on Kronstadt were well aware, saying it was necessary to replace the Soviet regime with a military dictatorship.

A second subject for discussion was on China, on the mid-1960s "cultural revolution" and the class character of China today, with readings from the pamphlet *The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited* published by the Spartacist League when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, and reissued by the IG under the title *What Is Trotskyism?* It was agreed that China today remains a deformed workers state, whose very existence is deeply endangered by inroads of capitalist production and the growth of pro-capitalist tendencies inside the bureaucracy. In contrast, the majority of the left claims that China is capitalist, echoing the claim of the imperialist media and bourgeois academics, a defeatist argument that undercuts the vital struggle against counterrevolution which faces Chinese workers today and is a crucial fight for workers worldwide.

The PTSG reached agreement with the IG on the fundamentals of Trotskyism

including upholding Trotsky's program outlined in the Transitional Program. There was also common commitment to forging a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class as capitalism grows increasingly rotten, including the wholesale destruction of past gains with the complicity of the labor bureaucracy.

The joint work between the PTSG and the IG included intervention in the organizing of Portland's May Day march and rally. The Portland comrades were able to win union support for key demands for a six-hour day with no loss in pay, and backing for full citizenship rights for all and for free contraception and childcare for all, as official demands. This involved overcoming resistance from social democrats of the local Workers Action group¹. The joint work included writing articles for *The Internationalist*. An initial report recounted the actions of the Portland comrades in the December 12 port shutdown called by the Occupy movement in solidarity with Longview longshore workers, explaining how a potentially explosive confrontation between some anarchist activists and port truckers was averted.

The discussion over the six-hour day demand underlined Lenin and Trotsky's policy of united-front actions on clear demands, as opposed to the general practice of the opportunist left of forming popular-front type "coalitions" in which liberal and social-democratic groups dominate in formulating a lowest-common-denominator reformist program. Putting forward transitional demands, which link the fight for reforms to the struggle to raise workers' revolutionary consciousness, is recognized by the IG and the PTSG as a fundamental aspect of party building. Transitional demands provide a bridge between the immediate demands of the working class for jobs, wages, housing rights, against acts of racist violence, in defense of basic democratic rights, etc. and the revolutionary struggle for workers rule. Raising demands for independent action by the working class that go beyond the limits of capitalism is as crucial today as it was when the Transitional Program was written in 1938.

The collaboration between the IG and PTSG also included trade-union work, in which it was agreed from the outset to oppose any government intervention in the unions, demanding cops, courts and Department of Labor out of the unions. This was outlined in the article by the Portland comrades, "Labor Must Clean Its Own House: For a Class-Struggle Opposition in the Union Movement." Many left groups talk of trade-union independence from the bosses, but when it comes to drawing a hard line against any and all government interference in the labor movement it is another matter. In fighting entrenched bureaucracies, a number of left groups have gone to the capitalist courts or DOL, with disastrous results for the union membership. We defend the unions despite, and against, the sellout bureaucrats.

Another point of agreement from the
¹ A split from the Workers International League, affiliated with the International Marxist Tendency led by Alan Woods.

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Leon Trotsky in Mexican exile, Coyoacán, 1940.

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February 2012

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beginning was on opposition to any support for capitalist politicians, such as Ralph Nader, who was twice supported by the ISO for president, and on the need to build a Leninist workers party. Such a party must be the tribune of all the oppressed; in the U.S., this requires an understanding of the crucial strategic question of the fight against black oppression. In this period in which the bourgeoisie proclaimed the “death of communism,” many leftist groups have turned sharply to the right, retreating to pre-Leninist conceptions, re-engaging arguments long since settled and seeking to unite politically with liberal and social-democratic groups. Instead it is necessary to undertake the struggle to cohere the nucleus of a revolutionary party politically independent from such formations, and point the way forward toward workers revolution. Rather than go backwards and restart history, it is important to go forward by reforging the Fourth International.

Having had more than their fill of working in and alongside groups like the International Socialist Organization that are constantly building reform movements and coalitions rather than raising the level of class struggle with principled united-front actions, comrades were reminded of the phrase of Eduard Bernstein, the granddaddy of all reformists, that “the movement is everything, the final goal nothing.” For the likes of the ISO, even the immediate goals of reform struggles they undertake are nothing: “The goal seems to be to recruit, regardless of whether there’s any agreement on any political basis,” as one comrade characterized it.

In international politics, a whole host of opportunist groups are endlessly hailing the “Egyptian Revolution,” the “Libyan Revolution” and now the “Syrian Revolution.” Yet in Egypt a military-based regime was replaced by an even more nakedly military government now combined with Islamists who want to introduce sharia law. Regarding Libya and Syria, various social-democratic groups claim to oppose U.S./NATO imperialist intervention, even as they hail “revolutionaries” who call for just that, and close their eyes to the dominance of Islamist forces waging communalist struggles. These reactionaries dubbed “revolutionaries” would massacre leftists, as they did in Iran under Khomeini (who most of the left supported) and in Afghanistan (when the bulk of the left lined up with imperialism against Soviet intervention, whereas genuine Trotskyists hailed this rare progressive act by the Kremlin). In the face of this fatuous cheerleading, the IG’s programmatic consistency was appreciated by the PSTG.

The fusion of the Portland Trotskyist Study Group with the Internationalist Group signifies a sharp break with reformist politics for the purpose of fighting for the kind of communism that the historic founders of our movement actually stood for. The misleadership of groups that put forward a program of liberal reforms has served to stifle class consciousness and led many activists down a blind alley. The members of the PTSG have come to the conclusion from their experience in the class struggle that what is needed to foment an international socialist revolution in keeping with October 1917 is a revolutionary party that holds itself firmly in the tradition of Trotsky, Lenin and Marx. Rather than following the tide of movements as they ebb and flow, and throw up reactionary as well as progressive ideas, it is important to put

Labor Must Clean Its Own House: For a Class Struggle Opposition in the Union Movement

By the Portland Trotskyist Study Group

In a recent article entitled “Fighting for the Soul of the Carpenters Union,” Workers Action writes about the Reform Slate of United Brotherhood of Carpenters Union Local 156. The members of the slate had organized a campaign aimed at resisting labor-employer partnership bargaining and giving more power and control to the union membership. While its program does not go beyond militant trade-unionism, the members of the Reform Slate have been brought up on charges by the incumbent union leaders. They aren’t guilty of anything except trying to represent themselves and fellow union members by ousting an entrenched leadership that ignores the rights of the membership and sells out to the bosses. But in defending them the Workers Action article repeatedly favorably references the Landrum-Griffin Act, also known as the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) of 1959.

The LMRDA was the result of an offensive by the ruling class, spearheaded by Democrat Bobby Kennedy –together with right-wing Republican Barry Goldwater—to seek to smash the growing power of the Teamsters union in particular. Holding the Landrum-Griffin Act up as an alternative for labor dissidents perpetuates the lie that the government is a neutral body that can make unbiased decisions on our behalf. The way that rights under the LMRDA are accessed

forward a program that can act as a bridge between the consciousness of the working class now and the tasks we must undertake to make socialist revolution possible.

The current crisis facing humanity remains a crisis of revolutionary leadership. Across the world, from Egypt to Greece to Wisconsin and Washington, there has been no lack of revolts and mobilizations of the working class. What has been absent is the leadership to take this forward to a struggle for international workers revolution. Maintaining political independence from liberal and reformist organizations is crucial to winning the working class to the revolutionary program. The members of the Portland Trotskyist Study Group see in this fusion the chance to join with comrades internationally to make Trotsky’s Transitional Program a living reality and not just words on paper.

A comrade of the Internationalist Group expressed in meeting one of the Portland comrades, “for us as immigrant workers it gives us great pleasure and tremendous hope to join with North American workers, for revolution here in the United States is key internationally.” The fusion of the PTSG with the IG is an expression of revolutionary regroupment which will be vital in seeking to reconstitute an authentically Trotskyist world party of socialist revolution.

29 July 2012



Banner of Carpenters Local 156 at Portland, Oregon May Day, 2012.

is by filing suit in court. The government already has a team they play for, and it’s the bosses’ team every time. Asking them to solve internal labor disputes is issuing an open invitation for our bosses to destroy our unions, and that is unacceptable.

The support for the Reform Slate of Local 156 reflected widespread opposition in the local to a leadership that had sold out members by agreeing to reopen a five-year contract that had been voted on by the membership each year that it was in place, and agreeing each time to less money than the initial agreement. In addition, several locals in Oregon were combined into one, making it difficult for many members to attend meetings or have a voice in decision making. The reform opposition flyer worked worksites, organized fundraisers and set up a network of communication for their campaign, all perfectly within their rights as union members.

Members of the Reform Slate were able to do important outreach and solidarity work with other unions, voting to raise the demand on May Day for a 6-hour workday with no cut in pay, as is written in the Carpenters union constitution. They also got Local 156 to come out in open support for Longview ILWU Local 21 in their struggle with employer EGT, criticizing Operating Engineers Local 701 and even members of the UBC for working behind Local 21 picket lines.

The Reform Slate won 15 out of 17 district council delegate seats and 5 executive board positions. Twelve of the reformers that were elected last February as the leadership of Carpenters Local 156 were convicted in a rigged trial. They were accused of phone-banking to get out the vote

International Workers Day
WE WON'T BE DIVIDED
MAY 1, 2012
Portland, Oregon

South Park Blocks
Between SW Park Avenue and SW Salmon Street

6 hour day w/ no cut in pay and full employment
Free contraception and childcare for all
Halt all foreclosures and evictions
End the surveillance and repression of minorities and activists
No cuts to public services
Full citizenship rights for all
End the collaborations between the local police and ICE

Rally at 3:30 pm
March at 4:30 pm

There will be activities before the march
For more info visit maydaypdx.blogspot.com

Sponsors: American Friends Service Committee, Civil Liberties Defense Center, International Socialist Organization, Movimento Estudantil Chicamb de Aztlan, Oregon New Sanctuary Movement, Portland Central America Solidarity Committee, Portland Immigrant Rights Coalition - PIRC, Portland Jobs with Justice, Comité de Solidaridad de Amigos Músicos Unidos Here, AISCME, Oregon AFL-CIO, National Association of Letter Carriers - Branch 82, Carpenters Local 156, Painters Local 10.

from the union hall, which isn’t against the rules. However, they were charged by the incumbent regional council leadership with causing dissent in the ranks, failing to uphold the union oath and defrauding the union. The charges are baseless, and an obvious attempt at preventing the opposition from taking office.

Even after the opposition won a second election, ordered by the international leadership, the onslaught from the incumbent leaders continued. In order to silence the Reform Slate, the leadership reappointed a trial committee twice, excluding any members from Oregon. In spite of a letter from the Reform Slate stating objection to the process the Pacific Northwest Regional Council used, citing that there was no proof that the trial committee was selected by a lottery as is mandated by the District Council Bylaws, the trial proceeded. Once

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Explosion of Outrage in Orange County, California

Anaheim Cops on Murderous Rampage Against Latino Youth

AUGUST 3 – A wave of outrage has swept through southern California in response to a rampage of racist shootings of Latino youth by the Anaheim police. When cops gunned down two young men, **Manuel Angel Diaz** and **Joel Acevedo**, on July 21 and 22, residents in the Anna Drive neighborhood immediately took to the streets. Their protests were met with even more vicious cop terror. These were the seventh and eight police killings in Anaheim in the last year. And as graphic videos of the events are played over and over on the Internet, the wealthy white rulers who lord it over the poor and Latino population worry at the prospect of “Rodney King riots,” the 1992 upheaval over the acquittal of the racist cops caught beating him on videotape.

On Saturday the 21st, police piled out of an unmarked car to go after three men in an alley. Manuel Diaz, 25, was shot in the leg and then again in the head as he fell to the ground. A bystander’s video shows him still alive for three minutes as the police leave him lying and push back the gathering crowd. The cops then brought in a riot squad, which fired rubber bullets, beanbags and pepper-sprayed a crowd of 100. A second video shows police firing into a group of women and children, then unleashing a vicious dog which went after the strollers, biting parents as they tried to protect their babies. Dozens were injured and five arrested. News reports labeled the protesters an “unruly crowd,” to justify shooting and setting police dogs on children.

The next night, following the killing of 21-year-old Joel Acevedo more than 200 protesters took over a parking lot in front of the Anaheim Police Department. The crowd chanted, “The whole system is guilty” and “Am I next?” On Tuesday, July 24, hundreds of protesters turned the downtown into a huge protest zone after being denied entrance to the City Council meeting. The media declared it a riot. Despite the angry protests, the cops’ shooting spree has continued while police attempt to intimidate neighborhood residents to fabricate eye-witness accounts of the shooting. On Friday, July 27 cops opened fire on a man they labeled a “burglary suspect,” who luckily was unhurt. The city had become a war zone, “Anaheimistan,” as *OC Weekly* (2 August) put it.

Throughout, the police and media trumpet their disdain for the victims and the Latino population in general. Manuel is routinely referred to as “the suspect.” (Suspected of what?) He was also labeled a “known gang member” and Joel a “suspected gang member.” Meaning that they have no rights and can be blown away by the cops – the deadliest gang around – with impunity. Clearly they were suspect simply for being young Latino men. Anaheim is the largest city in once lily white Orange County, notorious for its racial profiling. And located next door to Los Angeles, the Anaheim police with their “shoot first, ask questions later” mentality act like the LAPD, a paramilitary force notorious for its racist assaults on black and Latino youth.

Mobilize Workers’ Power Against Racist Cop Terror



Paramilitary police have turned Anaheim into a war zone. Above: at July 29 protest against killer cops.

Back in 1993, a whistle-blower Anaheim cop, Steve Nolan, was fired for breaking the cops’ code of silence and reporting on constant police brutality against “suspected gang members.” In response, the APD prepared a notorious “dossier” (known as “link analysis,” typically used to investigate organized crime) seeking to tie leaders of the community activist group Los Amigos to “suspected criminals.” The Latino community reacted with outrage and a lawsuit. “The existence of the dossier became symbolic of the Anaheim Latino community’s plight. It was clear evidence, said [former president of Los Amigos Amin] David and other activists, of an orchestrated plan by the city government to stifle dissent” (Voice of OC, 1 August).

The economic super-exploitation of the Latino and racist treatment of immigrant youth community underlies the current explosive situation. Thousands of immigrant workers and their families live in poor neighborhoods of Anaheim’s flatlands, while the city rulers live in wealthy white Anaheim Hills. They run the city in the interests of the corporations and the profitable entertainment, hotel and resort industry – Anaheim is home of Disneyland and the Los Angeles Angels baseball team. While many Latinos are labeled “undocumented,” even those with voting rights are unrepresented in a system which elects council people “at large.” Although the city is over half Latino, none of the five council members are, and four are from Anaheim Hills.

Racist police brutality is rampant throughout Orange County. While more than a third of the population is now Latino (two-thirds in the country seat, Santa Ana), in upscale enclaves like the Balboa and Corona del Mar neighborhoods of 90% white Newport Beach residents tend to call the cops whenever they see a black or Latino youth who isn’t their

gardener. Meanwhile, Orange is crawling with racist vigilantes. Nearby Costa Mesa a few years ago elected a prominent supporter of the fascist Minuteman Project, Allan Mansoor, as mayor. His successor also has political ties to white supremacists and neo-Nazis. The city beat Arizona to the punch with an ordinance to question anyone suspected of being undocumented about their immigration status.

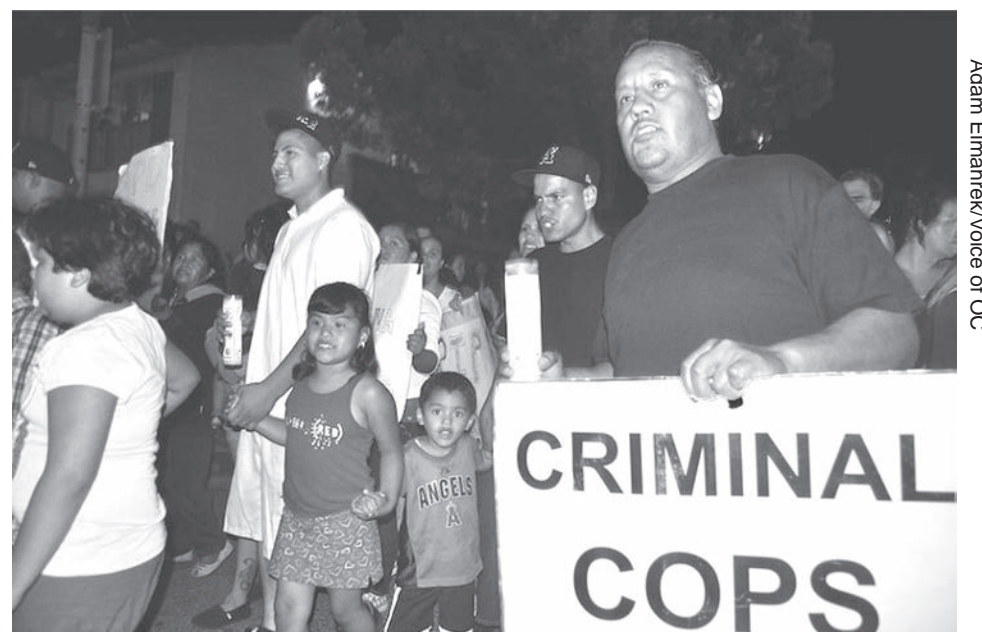
In Anaheim, even before the recent shootings there were weekly demonstrations against the endemic police brutality and killings. Prominent among the protesters has been Theresa Smith of the Anaheim Crusaders, whose son **Caesar Cruz** was murdered by the APD in 2009. Also present have been family members of **Justin Hertl** (killed by cops in 2003), **David Rya** and **Marcela Ceja** (killed in 2011), and **Bernie Villegas** and **Roscoe Cambridge** (shot to death this past January). The protests against the police killings of Miguel Diaz and

Joel Acevedo have brought welcome support from throughout the Los Angeles Area, including Struggles United/Luchas Unidas, Occupy San Luis Obispo, the L.A. ANSWER Coalition and groups such as Kelly’s Army (named for **Kelly Thomas**, killed by Fullerton police in 2011) and Nida’s Rydas (named after **Michael Lee Nida**, gunned down by Downey police last October).

In addition, there have been solidarity demonstrations in the San Francisco Bay Area and as far away as Portland, Oregon. Anaheim’s mayor and police chief, who have a soft cop/hard cop routine, complained of “outsiders” in the protests, as if the local population wasn’t up in arms. But this didn’t stop them from mobilizing police from other southern California cities who showed up for a July 29 demonstration ready for war in battle fatigues and helmets with horses and military armored vehicles. And “outsider”-bashing isn’t limited to words: after ANSWER was singled out in the media on July 23 for its participation, its L.A. office was deluged with hate calls and that night its office was broken into, its files ransacked and ten computers stolen.

In face of the building outrage in the Latino community, many liberals and reformists are calling for a variety of measures. Some want a return to “community policing” – i.e., the cops spy on you, carry out “stop and frisks” and talk with “community leaders” before they shoot you down. Others are calling for federal civil rights investigations (the Justice Department and FBI say they are on the case) while the American Civil Liberties Union has a suit to change the voting process to allow district representation of the Latino communities. A whole lot of good such penny-ante cosmetic changes would do: demonstrators are right that racist police brutality is built into the system. That system has a name: capitalism.

Just look around California: in South San Francisco, 15-year-old **Derrick Gaines**, shot down by police in June for “behaving suspiciously” at a gas station; in San Francisco, **Kenneth Harding Jr.**, shot and left



Residents march in Anaheim’s Anna Drive neighborhood to protest police killings of two Latino young men.



Above: poster by Lalo Alcaraz. Below: Anaheim cops fire rubber bullets at women and children protesting police murder of Latino youth.

to die on the pavement in July 2011 for not having a MUNI ticket; in Stockton, **James Rivera**, a black teenager executed by at least 30 police bullets in 2010 (a recent report by the San Joaquin County district attorney ruled it justified homicide); in the East Bay, **Raheim Brown**, shot to death by Oakland school police while sitting in a car in January 2011 (police now claim he killed himself); and **Oscar Grant**, shot in the back by BART cops on New Year's Day 2009. The police murder of Grant, a 22-year-old supermarket worker, touched off huge protests of angry black youth and opponents of police brutality. The cops responded with massive arrests, turning downtown Oakland into an armed camp.

So what can be done about the racist killer cops? Various left groups routinely chant "no justice, no peace," as if there could be justice for the oppressed under the rule of capital. Another standby is the demand to "jail killer cops," which is a favorite of the Party for Socialism and Liberation and its ANSWER Coalition but is raised by virtually the entire reformist left. Revolutionary Marxists warn instead that the state, as the instrument of the capitalist ruling class to enforce its interests against those it exploits and oppresses, stands by its killer cops. In the rare case where a killer cop is convicted, as was Johannes Mehserle, the murderer of Oscar Grant, on the insulting count of "involuntary manslaughter," he was out in a few months instead of spending the rest of his life behind bars.

When they are not pushing liberal/reformist pipe dreams about controlling the bourgeoisie's murderous thugs in blue, opportunist leftists hail the community "rebel-

lion." As justified as frustrated youth and residents are in defying the deadly forces dispatched to "keep them in their place," a few rocks and bottles won't stop killer cops armed with heavy weapons. To fight police brutality it is necessary to mobilize an even more powerful force, that of the working class without whose labor capitalism would grind to a halt. An important step in this direction was the October 2010 union mobilization and one-day port shutdown by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 in Oakland demanding justice for Oscar Grant. Workers in southern California should mobilize their power now against the rampaging killer cops in Anaheim, starting with ILWU Local 13. But that will pose a fight *within labor* for class-struggle policies and against the pro-capitalist bureaucracy.

American capitalism is racist to the core. Capitalist politicians need their killer cops to defend their class rule. Democrats might speak out about the murder of Trayvon Martin, because it was done by a racist vigilante. But they are mum about the police murders of Manuel Diaz, Joel Acevedo and so many more. There can be no "solution" to the pervasive racial profiling, to black oppression and the super-exploitation of immigrant labor short of overthrowing the ruling class that profits from it. A strong mobilization of labor's power in conjunction with the

Latino, African American and Asian poor and working people to stop racist police brutality should also demand full citizenship rights for immigrants. And it must be built independently of Democrats and Republicans, the partner parties of capital. We need to build a workers party fighting for socialist revolution to put an end racist to cop terror once and for all. ■

Labor Clean...

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the planned convictions were made official, members of the opposition were fined as much as \$1,500 and stripped of their union privileges including the right to hold office for up to 6 years. The worst of the fines were aimed at the reformers who were elected to important e-board positions, but several others were charged as well.

After two elections, and an unnecessary trial proceeding, members of the Reform Slate and the members who voted for them had their rights trampled thoroughly. Opposing the rigged trial is a fight not just for members of Local 156, but for all Carpenters. The last thing the ranks need in their unions now is the government, who will always represent the interests of the employers.

In claiming that the opposition slate "has federal labor law on their side," the author of the Workers Action article, Shamus Cooke, promotes the dangerous illusion that the Department of Labor (DOL) has union members' interests at heart. While Workers Action correctly defends the Carpenters opposition against employer-union partnership, their solution is a partnership with an even bigger enemy, the DOL and the U.S. government. Seeing the DOL as a neutral interpreter

of justice ignores the fact that the government is far from neutral. Rather, the DOL and other government bodies from the courts to the cops are capitalist institutions designed to protect the bosses' interests, what Karl Marx called the "executive committee" of the capitalist class.

Any intervention on the part of the government into the union should be resisted, even in cases where the bureaucracy is corrupt or unfair. Inviting the biggest gangsters the world has to offer, the U.S. government, to run a union places control in their hands and union members' rights at their whim. Far from being a law that "was created to give basic democratic rights within all labor unions," as Cooke claims, the LMRDA was intended to strangle unions, and was used by Kennedy and his liberal cohorts in an attempt to gut the Teamsters Union.

Landrum-Griffin isn't a set of new protections for union members, it's a law that gives the government far more power to interfere in a union's affairs. The law's provisions include the prevention of "secondary boycotts" which are pickets or strikes against businesses other than those which directly employ that union's members. Sometimes this takes the form of sympathy strikes and "hot cargo" agreements, clauses written into union contracts that allowed union members to refuse to handle scab goods. These were two of the most successful tactics used by Jimmy Hoffa (who learned them from the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters) in his drive to win the first national Master Freight Agreement. In other words, the LMRDA outlawed solidarity actions between unions.

At the time the LMRDA was passed, Farrell Dobbs, one of the leaders of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strike, wrote of "the new Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin law" that "among its many provisions hostile to labor this law clears the way for open FBI intervention in the unions. The future will see these imperialist political police attempting to give all of labor the same treatment they have been dealing out to radical workers all through the witch hunt."

Other aspects of the law allow for the Secretary of Labor to ask for an injunction if a union is breaking or on the point of breaking the law, as well as give courts and the DOL free rein to "supervise" the internal financial affairs of unions and intervene in cases of dispute to run elections. In other words, the law limits what unions can do to fight and win strikes, and simultaneously gives the U.S. government more power to interfere with the internal functions of unions. This is the same piece of legislation Workers Action so glowingly refers to in their article.

The way that this translates to life on the job site has been devastating. For example, on a single construction site there are at any given time several unions represented. If there is a dispute between the carpenters on a worksite and their boss and the Carpenters decide to strike their workplace, the Painters union representatives are prevented from encouraging their members in any way to strike in solidarity. Even the wrong body language or attitude on the part of a union official at a job site may be viewed as "signaling" their membership to leave work. Those representatives can be hauled into court and charged with a variety of offenses, and the Secretary of Labor can then issue an injunction preventing them from picketing. Thus the carpenters' power to shut down a job site, and the painters' interest in upholding all union contracts at

their workplace is seriously undercut. The LMRDA is shown to be a disaster for the labor movement as a whole.

Look what happened when opposition groups went to the bosses' government against their unions in the past. In the 1980s, Teamsters for a Democratic Union sent Ronald Reagan's Justice Department a detailed plan on how to "reorganize" their union and filed a suit against the union accusing it of violating Landrum-Griffin. Under a consent decree, TDU-backed Ron Carey won government-controlled elections in the early 1990s, but Teamster wages went down as Carey sold out strikes. (When under pressure from the ranks a militant 1997 UPS strike won, the feds moved to expel Carey in retaliation.) Not only did wages suffer, under another consent decree the government took control of the Central States Pension Fund and appointed managers who invested in the stock market and lost so much that it is in danger of going under.

The Workers Action article cites "an excellent book on the interesting history of the LMRDA" by Herman Benson, *Rebels, Reformers and Racketeers*. Benson is only a "reformer" so far as discovering new ways to sue the union. A former editor of the magazine of Max Shachtman, who went on to become a flack for U.S. imperialism, Benson was behind the campaign of Miners for Democracy. They used Nixon's Labor Department to get rid of the corrupt Tony Boyle regime in the United Mine Workers, but once MfD candidate Arnold Miller was elected, he became an object of hatred in the coalfields by enforcing sellout contracts and quashing wildcat strikes on behalf of the government which put him in office.

Even Benson, who claims the Landrum-Griffin Act "protects civil liberties of members in their unions," admits in an article titled "Landrum-Griffin at 50: Has It Been Good or Bad for Unions?" that the supposed protections are either "a failure" or "ordinarily too expensive for victimized rank and filers." But most fundamentally, Benson and his "Association for Union Democracy" are sinister instruments of the bosses who sucker union dissidents into suing the unions and aiding government control of labor.

Decades ago Leon Trotsky wrote, in an unfinished essay on "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay": "The primary slogan for this struggle is: complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy. The second slogan is: trade union democracy. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state." Replacing sellout bureaucrats with flunkies for the feds is not union democracy.

We need union democracy in order to better fight capital. You can't do that by appealing to the capitalist state, its laws and courts against our unions, no matter how rotten the leadership. That crosses the class line. While the article published by Workers Action and reproduced by various liberal web sites lays the basis for suing the Carpenters, class-conscious unionists in the building trades have from the beginning insisted instead that labor must clean its own house. What is key is to build a fighting opposition in the unions based on a program of militant class struggle, uncompromising independence from the bosses and their government, and for the workers to take power. ■

Part of a Whole System to Criminalize Black and Latino Men

Thousands Protest Racist NYPD “Stop and Frisk”

A constant, antagonistic police presence is a defining feature of life for black men in New York City, as it is in cities, towns and rural areas across the United States. To be black in this country is to have no effective rights against arbitrary detention and arrest. It is the sense of being the target of a police apparatus that makes its presence felt everywhere, from the streets to the hallways of schools and apartment buildings, from the workplace to social and religious institutions.

In New York City, this oppressive cloud of contempt over the black community is *official policy*. It is summed up in the police practice of “Stop and Frisk.” The New York Police Department carries out thousands of brief detentions (stops) and searches (frisks) every day, overwhelmingly targeting poor black and Latino youth. On Fathers’ Day, June 17, some 15,000 people came out to march down Fifth Avenue against “stop and frisk.” Prior to the “official” start, there was a noisy march through Harlem. But the “mainstream” event was led by a coalition of bourgeois politicians and labor bureaucrats who insisted on a silent march, lest the pent-up anger of the masses find expression outside the organizers’ program for cosmetic “reforms” to the police.

The scope of “stop and frisk” is staggering. Last year, 685,724 people were stopped by the NYPD, according to the department’s own reports. This is “racial profiling” with a vengeance: over half were black and a third were Latino, in a city where blacks and Latinos each make up around a quarter of the population. Nine percent were white. “Stop and frisk” operations are concentrated in the poorest, most racially segregated neighborhoods – yet when they are conducted in wealthier, whiter precincts in Manhattan, blacks are stopped even more disproportionately than they are in the ghettos of Brooklyn and the Bronx. Of all demographic categories, young black and Latino men bear the brunt of the policy: the NYPD stopped 168,126 black and Latino men aged 14 to 24 in 2011, ten thousand more than live in the city!

Even if “stop and frisk” had never been invented, the NYPD, a police force larger than most standing armies, would be infamous for racist brutality and murder. The middle-class Occupy Wall Street protesters last year who were shocked by the cops’ wanton violence and callous contempt for their democratic rights got a brief taste of what the NYPD brings to bear daily on the ghettos and barrios. Here police menace the population from mobile watchtowers, public schools for black and Latino children are infested with cops who treat students like prisoners, and every few months another young man is executed in a hail of police bullets.

“Stop and frisk” is allegedly intended to crack down on “illegal” weapons, although the vast majority of those stopped are absolutely innocent. King Bloomberg rolls with a phalanx of private bodyguards,

emperor Obama assassinates U.S. citizens via remote-control drones with impunity, but the “crime” of mere possession of a gun, supposedly a right guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the Constitution, can get a black man or woman thrown in prison for years, effectively unable to gain employment and barred from public housing upon release. That is, if they aren’t executed on the spot by trigger-happy cops.

The Internationalist Group calls to mobilize black, white, Asian and Latino workers, women and men, in militant class struggle to demand an *immediate end* to “stop and frisk,” arbitrary police stops and entrapment. But even such a simple prohibition, which doesn’t go beyond the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution against “unreasonable searches and seizures,”

won’t happen in capitalist America. Racist repression is part and parcel of this system of exploitation and social oppression, and if it doesn’t take one form it will take another. Nothing short of socialist revolution that sweeps away capitalist rule can put an end to cop brutality. Without a revolutionary leadership based on the social power of the working class, the current protests *cannot* break through the blue wall of police power.

Meanwhile, Democratic Party politicians exploit the righteous anger to mask their support to the racist social order that *all* capitalist parties and politicians defend. The Fathers Day march in NYC was adorned by Democratic politicians: every major Democratic mayoral candidate was on hand, including City Council speaker Christine Quinn, Manhattan borough president Scott Stringer, former comptroller Bill Thompson and his incumbent successor, John Liu. *None of them want to end “stop and frisk”!* They, along with the “Communities United for Police Reform” coalition that headlined the march, want to enact a few cosmetic “reforms” that would only *sanitize the image* of the police while doing nothing to stop the massive dragnet operations against the black and Latino communities.

While tossing out the slogan “Stop ‘Stop and Frisk’” to attract a crowd, their actual program is the “Community Safety Act,” a package of bills before the City Council that would “ban profiling,” require proof of consent to a search without probable cause, require police to identify themselves to anyone they stop (except in

Police Are the Armed Fist of Capital – It Will Take Socialist Revolution to Get Rid of Racist Cop Terror



Internationalist contingent at June 17 Harlem march against NYPD’s “stop and frisk.”

“extenuating circumstances”) and establish an “Inspector General” of the NYPD. These measures will not change anything about the racist, oppressive nature of the police. Make profiling illegal? The NYPD *already has* an anti-racial-profiling policy, which the department agreed to in settling a previous lawsuit against “stop and frisk” (*Daniels, et al. v. The City of New York, et al.*)! Fat lot of good that did. Cops will simply ignore the consent requirement, claiming they have “probable cause” to search, which the Supreme Court has defined so broadly as to include nearly any conceivable pretext.

As for Officer Friendly identifying himself as he throws you up against a wall and goes through your pockets, don’t bet on it. When plainclothes cops stopped black deputy mayor (now NYC schools chancellor) Dennis Walcott in his chauffeur-driven car last year, they refused to give their badge numbers. The fact that even this flunkey for billionaire mayor Bloomberg (and defender of “stop and frisk”) has been repeatedly stopped by the police is one more proof that the policy is racist. If young black men on the street in impoverished Brownsville are presumed to be gang-bangers, black men in expensive cars in middle-class St. Alban’s are presumed to be drug kingpins until proven innocent.

Even these proposed non-reforms are likely to be preempted by the outcome of pending court cases. The Center for Constitutional Rights is litigating a class-action suit against the NYPD (*Floyd, et al. v. City of New York, et al.*) which demands an end

to “suspicionless” stop-and-frisks. Various establishment voices have been hinting at a resolution similar to the settlement between the American Civil Liberties Union and Philadelphia over that city’s “stop and frisk” policy. As part of settlement, according to the ACLU, “the city and the plaintiffs recognize that stop and frisks are a legitimate police enforcement practice.” As for the toothless “safeguards” and “monitoring” of police conduct, these have changed little. As a recent *New York Times* (12 July) article made clear, the numbers of stops may be down, yet black Philadelphians are still harassed and threatened by the cops for no reason but the color of their skin.

“Stop and frisk” is neither the first nor the most horrendous aspect of racist police-state repression of blacks, immigrants, and other oppressed groups. Cops don’t just stop, they murder too: the family and friends of Ramarley Graham, the 18-year-old black man shot to death by a plainclothes narcotics squad in his apartment on February 2 of this year, have been prominent in many anti-Stop and Frisk demonstrations. The NYPD is spying on Muslim student organizations all over the Northeast. And under the Obama administration’s “Secure Communities” program, information even on those charged with minor violations and misdemeanors as a result of police stops is sent to Homeland Security to feed the deportation of 400,000 immigrants every year.

These are all parts of a whole *system* of racist repression, dubbed the “New Jim

Internationalist photo

Crow” by some commentators. We have noted before that racial oppression is part of the DNA of American capitalism. Following the Civil War that abolished chattel slavery, new methods were devised to keep the black population down and deprive them of democratic rights. This eventually took the form of “Jim Crow” segregation even more rigid than before. After a long and bloody struggle by the civil rights movement, the last of the overtly racist segregation laws were abolished in the mid-1960s. But no democratic gains are secure under decaying capitalism, and those rights have since been gradually rolled back. Today schools in the U.S. are more racially segregated than before *Brown v. Board of Education*, voting rights of blacks and Latinos are under massive attack, and apartheid-style laws against “illegal” immigrants proliferate.

In addition, the authorities have devised a system of mass incarceration and criminalization of an entire generation of inner-city black youth. As the bourgeois media peddle the lie of a “post-racial America” following the 2008 election of a black man as president, the subjugation of the oppressed black population is carried out in ostensibly non-racial terms. In this monstrous system of police control, “stop and frisk” programs are key to a “school-to-prison pipeline.” Today over 40% of prison inmates are black, and 30% of black men in their twenties are in prison, on probation, or on parole. There are more black people under the control of the “justice” system than there were slaves in 1860. And once labeled a “criminal,” “color-blind” discrimination in employment, housing and education is not only perfectly legal, but in many cases mandated by law.

Reformist groups like the International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party ran uncritical articles about the June 17 march (WWP called the creepy silence a “reverent funeral procession”). Yet the first duty of anyone who claims to be a socialist, much less a revolutionary, is to tell the truth to the masses: namely, that the police, the backbone of the capitalist state, are not going to be reformed, and the Democrats and union bureaucrats *don’t even demand an end to “stop and frisk.”* If the unions mobilized their potential social power in protest strikes against cop brutality and legalized murder, from police executions in the street to the barbaric death penalty, they could strike a blow against the rising police-state repression. (In 1972, as the U.S. imperialists were facing social upheaval “at home” fueled by a losing war against the Vietnamese revolution, the bosses’ Supreme Court suspended the racist death penalty.)

But for the workers organizations to be organs of struggle against racist oppression and capitalist exploitation, the labor bureaucracy which chains the working class to the Democratic party must be driven out and replaced by a revolutionary leadership. Neither the formal, legal concession of equal rights for black Americans, nor the election of black mayors, police chiefs, governors, and now for the first time a black president, has changed the bitter reality of black oppression, because this oppression is not based on bigoted attitudes or Jim Crow laws. Rather it is rooted in the bedrock of capitalist rule in the U.S., which from its inception has required the division of the working class along racial lines and the subjugation of the black population as an oppressed race-color caste.

From the very first issue of *The Internationalist* (No. 1, January-February 1997),

we have insisted that “Police Are the Armed Fist of Capitalism.” As the CUNY Internationalist Clubs wrote in their newspaper *Revolution* (No. 9, November 2011), “The fight against ‘stop and frisk’ must be part of a larger struggle to bring down capitalism... To put an end to police brutality and racist repression it is necessary to mobilize the power of the working class in socialist revolution.” The indispensable instrument of this struggle is a revolutionary workers party, championing the cause of all the oppressed, not another tail of a bourgeois-led “movement” to reform the unreformable. ■

Empty Promises...

continued from page 2

court cases by individuals and immigrants’ rights groups against SB1070, as well as the underlying federal case, which take up the discriminatory nature of the law. The Court accepted, even invited, that there can be “other preemption and constitutional challenges to the law as interpreted and applied after it goes into effect.” It is obvious to everyone that the main criteria for questioning someone about their immigration status is their ethnicity and physical appearance. As the sheriff of Santa Clara county admitted, “I’m dark-skinned and Hispanic. If you put me in tennis shoes and a baseball cap in the wrong place, they will ask me” (*Arizona Republic*, 26 June).

However, an eventual judicial challenge doesn’t worry the supporters of the racist law. Nor are they bothered by the statements from the DHS that it won’t make detentions beyond its priority categories. The police are not authorized to arrest undocumented persons, nor is there space in the jails: there is already a tent city in front of the Maricopa County Jail to house some 2,000 people picked up in raids by Sheriff Joe Arpaio. What the law’s supporters are looking to accomplish is “deportation by attrition.” They want to make life unbearable for immigrants. They figure this would force them to “go home,” ignoring the fact that Arizona is territory stolen from Mexico in the first place. In any case, if undocumented immigrants leave, they won’t be heading south of the border but instead to elsewhere in the U.S. In the face of similar laws in Alabama and Georgia, thousands fled north.

Mobilize the Working Class to Defeat Racist War on Immigrants

In this election year, the Democrats need the votes of Latinos and the 12.5 million immigrants who have been naturalized as citizens and vote. Well aware that they have done nothing to carry out their 2008 campaign promises, they want to turn the deferred action measure and the fear produced by the racist Arizona law into campaign issues in order to get out the vote for Obama. As a professor, Humberto Caspa, wrote in *El Diario/La Prensa* (22 June): “So the new order issued by Obama is good news for undocumented students, although it is only the first battle won. Another, extremely important battle will be waged this coming November when it will be decided if President Obama keeps his post or will be replaced by a Republican leader.”

The fight to defend immigrants cannot be won – or even fought – on the bourgeois electoral terrain. This is fundamentally a class battle. The two parties of capital represent a system which profits from the superexploitation of millions of workers who lack even the most fundamental rights. If there are divisions within the ruling class over a mythical “immigration reform,” it is

because the capitalists have contradictory interests concerning workers from abroad. On the one hand, they want to exploit their cheap labor on a large scale; on the other, they don’t want the exploited to be able to resist. The bosses’ preferred solution would be a system known, with hair-raising euphemism, as “guest workers” – i.e., contract workers, like the *braceros* program during and after World War II.

Thus in this epoch of capitalist decay the bosses are introducing forms of forced labor characteristic of the era of brutal primitive accumulation of capital. Contracting workers without rights recalls the servile labor systems of debt servitude of white workers in the North American colonies, and the system of peonage which replaced the *encomienda* in Mexico. There is no better proof that the capitalist system is rotting, at an accelerating pace – contrary to the starry-eyed reformists who think that the productive forces are still growing – with the destruction of unions, elimination of social programs and trampling underfoot of democratic rights won in centuries past.

An authoritative spokesman for U.S. imperialism, Bill Keller, former executive editor of *The New York Times*, for example, proposes to adopt a national identity card that would include biometric data. He wants to thereby introduce a method of control favorable to *a police state for everyone*. This is what the “enlightened” bourgeois yearn for. The more barbaric types prefer directly fascist methods, as in the case of the “Minuteman” immigrant hunters. But repression carried out by a few paramilitary militias, or even by the Maricopa County sheriff (who detained 38,000 undocumented immigrants up to the end of 2010) cannot even be remotely compared to the one *million* immigrants thrown into ICE detention centers in Arizona *every year*. *By far the biggest repressor of immigrants is the liberal Democrat Barack Obama.*

The immigration police, the hated *migra*, are a repressive apparatus that is racist to the core, particularly against Latinos. Although 58% of the 11 million undocumented residents of the U.S. (according to official estimates) are of Mexican origin, they constitute 73% of those deported, while 97% are Latin Americans. In short, *the immigration policies of the Obama administration are a Latino removal program*, and of Mexicans in particular. The government has also targeted Arab immigrants and those from south Asia. Not only that, under the “Secure Communities” program a third of those deported have spouses or children who are U.S. citizens. And even though ICE says it is focusing on “criminals,” last year immigrant defense groups in Boston showed that half of those deported under this program were stopped for traffic violations.

The Boston mayor fears that if the Secure Communities program continues, “people will say that the police are Gestapos,” referring to the feared secret police of fascist Germany. In point of fact, the *migra* is a Gestapo, a police force dedicated to repressing a whole section of the population (Jews and communists in Germany, undocumented immigrants here), which carries out mass arrests of people who have committed no crime and packs them off to concentration camps (here called “detention centers”). It’s hardly accidental that the black uniforms and heavy armament of ICE (they even have tanks) starkly resemble those of the Nazi SS storm troopers: in both cases, the aim is to intimidate. And despite all the protests, the Obama administration is defending the “Secure Communities” program against all criticism.

However, the capitalist ruling class cannot resolve its “immigration problem” with police methods. The *New York Times* (17 May 2005) concluded that “deporting all of the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the United States would not be feasible.” It cites the lack of police personnel and the cost of new detention centers (there are now about 1,000 of them). But the bigger problem for the bourgeoisie is that the U.S. economy can no longer do without these millions of workers. Foreign-born workers constitute more than 15% of the entire U.S. labor force. The percentage is even higher in certain jobs, such as agriculture (35%) and construction (27%). Massive deportations would lead to a collapse of whole sections of the economy.

It is here, in the economy, where immigrants’ strength resides, in their capacity as workers. Beyond the institutionalized fraud of every bourgeois electoral system, in which the enormous sums invested in it by the capitalists determine the results, immigrants, “legal” or undocumented, don’t vote. But they do produce value and create the wealth which is appropriated by the capitalists through their control of the means of production. The power of immigrants as workers was seen in the “general strike” of 1 May 2006 against the pernicious Sensenbrenner bill (HR 4437), which was quickly shelved in the Senate as a result of this show of force. Even the Catholic church joined in calling for that unprecedented mobilization, but no more.

To assert the rights of immigrants, it is necessary to organize their power, and then use it. Trade unions can play an important role in this. If in the past unions controlled by bureaucrats representing a labor aristocracy promoted xenophobic policies, accusing immigrant workers of “stealing American jobs,” today immigrants make up more than 12 percent of union ranks. The action by unions and unionists in Portland, Oregon, who adopted as an official slogan for the May Day 2012 the demand “full citizenship rights for all,” is an important step in this direction. But it is not enough.

Defense of immigrants cannot be limited to demanding this or that reform. Immigrants are persecuted not only by reactionary elements, but also because the capitalists need an “enemy within” in order to whip up the population for their imperialist wars. During and after World War I, there was the “red scare” against communists, anarchists and immigrant workers, especially Italians. In World War II, citizens of Japanese origin were locked up in concentration camps. In the current “war on terror,” which has already gone on more than a decade, immigrants are the target of choice. In order to defeat this *war* on immigrants it is necessary to forge a workers party capable of waging the battle against the representatives of capital and their state.

Against Democrats and Republicans, and all capitalist parties and politicians, the Internationalist Group seeks to cohere a nucleus of this revolutionary internationalist workers party that is needed to lead international socialist revolution. We insist, following the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, that “the workers have no fatherland.” We raise the motto “workers of the world unite” and chant in marches “Workers struggle has no borders.” For the millions of immigrant workers, the *Manifesto*’s phrase that “the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains” expresses the reality of their daily life. Join with us in a powerful class struggle to *break those chains*. ■

The Internationalist

Beyond the June 17 Elections

Greece: Battle Over Anti-Worker Austerity Comes to a Head

In the second Greek elections in two months, the right-wing New Democracy party and bourgeois nationalist PASOK together received 39% of the vote, while the social-democratic SYRIZA coalition received 27%. However, because of undemocratic election laws, the ND/PASOK coalition got a majority of the seats. The Communist Party (KKE) saw its vote cut in half as many of its supporters went over to SYRIZA. The new “center-right” government is made up of the same parties that have alternated in power for the last three and a half decades and which presided over the collapse of the Greek economy. It has now accepted the eurobankers’ demands for more draconian cuts and privatizations, while the opposition has limited itself to parliamentary maneuvers and ritual demonstrations. The following article was published shortly before the June elections.

On the eve of the June 17 Greek elections, the most momentous in recent European history, imperialist bankers and political leaders are on pins and needles. The financial press is acting like Armageddon is near. Major investment houses in Wall Street and the City of London have crisis teams set to go Sunday in case the voting returns from Athens portend a collapse of the euro and a run on the banks when markets open. On Monday, the Group of 20 heads of state, including U.S. president Barack Obama and German chancellor Angela Merkel, will be meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico to gauge the fallout. They fear a worldwide “contagion” like that which set off the 2008 financial crisis following the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment house. They’re worried about the trillions in the capitalists’ coffers. But Greek working people face a threat to their very existence, and it won’t be solved at the ballot box.

Over the past two and a half years, workers in Greece – who already worked far longer hours than in any other country of the European Union (EU) – have seen

Not Euro vs. Drachma, But a Struggle Leading to Workers Revolution

Build a Workers Party on the Program of Lenin and Trotsky



Election rally of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), May 3. KKE perspective is of parliamentary “resistance” to austerity ordered by eurobankers when near pre-revolutionary situation calls out for powerful workers action.

their livelihoods devastated. Public sector employees’ salaries have been slashed on average by over 30%, and in many cases much more. Teachers who earned €20,000 (US\$25,000) a year have had their income fall to €12,000 (\$15,000). Sales taxes have been raised to 23%. The economy has shrunk by more than a quarter since 2008, as much as in the depths of the U.S.’ Great Depression (1929-1933). Official unemployment is 22%, and 53% among the youth. An estimated 70% of recent college graduates are trying to emigrate. And the “troika” of international bankers (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Commission) are demanding huge (\$14.5 billion) additional cuts that would mean a decade or more of deep economic depression.

Historically, such drastic attacks on workers’ living standards have required dictatorial regimes, and since last November the Greek government has been run by unelected leaders imposed by the troika. Greek workers haven’t taken this capitalist assault passively, but despite their efforts at resistance, they have been stymied at every turn. Repeated one-day “general strikes” (a dozen in 2010 alone) didn’t stop, or even slow, the international bank-

ers and their flunkies in Athens. Neither did street battles between cops and anarchists. The middle-class “*aganaktismeni*” (outraged) who camped out in Syntagma (Constitution) Square fared no better. Counting on demoralization, the conservative New Democracy (ND) party forced an election, figuring it would pick up the votes of those angered by the austerity imposed by the previous government of the Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) on behalf of the eurobankers.

The conservatives miscalculated, badly. To be sure, in the May 6 election, more than 2 million voters deserted the PASOK, which got barely 13% of the vote. Yet the ND also lost big, over 1 million votes, leaving it with 19%, and the far-right LAOS party didn’t make it past the 3% threshold for representation in parliament. Greek rulers and the international markets were stunned by the dramatic increase in the vote for SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Radical Left, which won over a million votes (17% of the total). The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) picked up another half million (8.5%), as did several smaller left groups between them. But while leftists advanced, so did the outright Nazi thugs of Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi), which got 7% of the votes, encouraging them to step up their attacks on immigrants and the left. In sum, the vote reflected a sharp political polarization as usually occurs in situations of social crisis, with a marked tilt to the left, for now.

Ever since the fall of the dictatorship of the “colonels’ regime” in 1974, Greece has been governed by a duopoly of New Democracy and the PASOK, which alter-

nated in office and stocked the administration with patronage jobs. The collapse of the established parties sent shock waves through stock markets from Athens to New York. Politicians, bankers and media decried the “red menace” in Athens, portraying SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras as a telegenic latter-day Lenin. This bourgeois hysteria is utterly misplaced. PASOK was not a workers party at all but a bourgeois nationalist party run by the scions of the Papandreou dynasty which has governed the country off and on from 1944 to 2011. The “socialist” in its name reflected a preference for a strong state sector, typical of countries with a weak bourgeoisie. PASOK is now replaced by SYRIZA, which is a social-democratic party that is no threat to Greek or international capitalism.

Despite its name, the Coalition of the Radical Left is utterly reformist. With 13 members in the present parliament, in the last half year of bankers’ rule SYRIZA hasn’t waged a fight against the troika-imposed prime minister Papadimos or the package of vicious anti-working-class cutbacks ordered by the international bankers. It hasn’t mobilized in support of the workers of the Hellenic Steel Company, on strike for the last eight months over mass firings and wage cuts. SYRIZA leader Tsipras has vowed to rip up the so-called Memorandum of Understanding with the banks that has brought untold suffering to the Greek masses, saying it is unworkable, which many bourgeois economists agree with. But all he is saying is that he is a better bargainer who can renegotiate the terms of submission to the eurocrats and eurobankers and make them more palatable by allowing for a little economic growth instead of unrelieved cutbacks and decline.

Many reformist socialists in Europe and the United States have hailed SYRIZA’s electoral breakthrough and are calling for its victory in the June 17 vote. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S., whose Greek comrades of the Internationalist Workers Left (DEA) are part of SYRIZA, argues that “an election victory for SYRIZA” would give “firm political shape to workers’ demands that the cost of paying for the crisis be shifted from them to the capitalist class” (Socialist Worker website, 13 June). Socialist Alternative (SAIt) is part of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), whose Greek supporters in Xekinima (Socialist Internationalist Organization) are calling to “Vote for SYRIZA” and for a “left government on a socialist program.” The ISO and SAIt/CWI admit that SYRIZA is not revolutionary, but these social democrats yearn for just such a reformist coalition.

The opportunist socialists make much of SYRIZA’s five-point platform to “cancel the bailout” of the banks, “tear up” the EU austerity agenda and “tax the rich.” Contrary to leftists’ fantasy that it would nationalize the banks, in fact the SYRIZA economic program calls for “bank recapitalization”

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Alexis Tsipras, leader of SYRIZA coalition billed as “radical left” but actually social-democratic.

The Boom of the Lula-Dilma Government Paralyzes the Popular Front Left Brazil Prepares for Militarized Olympics Repressing Poor and Working People

We Fight for International Socialist Revolution

The following article is translated from a May 2012 supplement to *Vanguarda Operária*, the newspaper of our comrades of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil* (Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil).

The year 2011 around the world was one of explosive popular uprisings, of workers' struggles, of rebellions by students and youth in general. Contrary to the propaganda of the bourgeois press and the opportunist left, however, the hard reality is that it was not a year of revolution. Protests and revolts can break out in a spontaneous and unplanned way, generating a great deal of enthusiasm. But in order to win, what's needed above all is the preparation and intervention of a proletarian vanguard, forged in the class struggle, with a revolutionary program.

The windstorm of revolt which shook the Near East and North Africa, also gusted on the southern coast of Europe (the movement of the "Indignados," or Outraged), in Latin America (the student struggle in Chile) and North America (the Occupy movement). The winds of class struggle extended from Egypt to Spain (a general strike in March) and even the United States (struggles against union-busting attacks in Wisconsin and Washington). But in the final analysis, the capitalist classes have preserved their rule and are preparing to intensify their assault on the exploited and oppressed.

The bourgeois media present Brazil as an exceptional case. The government of Lula and his successor Dilma Rousseff has made use of the raw materials boom to dish out a few crumbs to the poor, using its welfare programs to reduce extreme poverty. They are silent about the fact that 16 million people, the large majority of them blacks, still live with a monthly income of less than R\$70 (US\$35); that they have only managed to raise the poorest to the level of a brutal "normal" poverty; and that the programs Fome Zero (Zero Hunger), Bolsa Família (Family Stipend) and Bolsa Escolar (School Stipend) are financed by slashing health care and pension programs.

On this May Day, amidst the worst world economic crisis in three-quarters of a century, the struggle of the working people against wage-gouging and intensified attacks on their rights continues worldwide. In a situation of great social volatility, with the ebb and flow of the class struggle, more than ever a leadership is required that can go beyond the merely "democratic" bourgeois program, to intervene in events with a program aiming at international socialist revolution.

Capitalist Carnival: The Imperialists and Their Vassals Seek to Escape the Crisis Putting On New Masks

Since 2008 the capitalist world has been jolted by a financial crisis that led to great turmoil in the leading powers. It shook the economic foundations from Wall Street to the European Union, spilling over into North

Africa and other areas around the globe. It is the biggest crisis since the counterrevolutionary wave that destroyed the former USSR at the beginning of the 1990s, which the imperialists celebrated as the "end of history" while inaugurating their "New World Order" with a bloodbath massacring the population of Iraq in 1991. In 2003 U.S. imperialism invaded that Mesopotamian country again, while naming Lula's Brazil sheriff for Latin America.

The so-called "Washington consensus" was nothing more than a pact among the imperialist powers led by the U.S. in the post-Soviet period to do away with or slash the rights and gains of the working class around the world. Particularly in Latin America, a sharply limited critique of "neo-liberalism" was expressed in bourgeois populist governments with a social-democratic pink hue and various types of popular fronts. But they barely masked the deep poverty of the working class with cosmetic reforms while seeking to coopt their leaderships. The government of the Workers Party (PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores) in Brazil was the archetype.

From 2000 on, in Latin America south of the Equator this "left" policy was used to gain favor with "popular" sectors using nationalist and ethnic appeals. Thus in Brazil, the "worker" Lula (who Obama calls "my man") launched his career as a "fireman for the IMF" (International Monetary Fund), as we in the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil* (LQB) dubbed him. Next came Evo Morales in Bolivia, boasting of his indigenous roots in order to divert the discontent of the indigenous working people in the "gas war" which took the country to the brink of revolution. Once installed in office, "Evo" made a few nationalist gestures while repressing the workers and peasants who elected him.

In the U.S., the election of Barack Obama and the arrival of the first black president in the White House caused even more sensation. With his famous "yes we can," he appealed to the discontent of an American population tired of years of war in the Middle East and alarmed by the fall of the stock market that heralded a new economic depression. He put a new face on the imperialist monster. Then came the election victories of the ex-guerrilla Dilma Rousseff in Brazil and the populist Peronist Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina. Despite their populist appeals, they all applied the same bitter medicine as their predecessors, foisting the dictates of the IMF on their misled electorate.

Inheriting the mantle of Lula and the popular front of the PT, PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) and others, Dilma currently enjoys around 70% approval ratings according to the bourgeois polling institute IBOPE. The secret of her success is her continuation of the program guided by the IMF. This program, first implemented by Fernando Henrique Cardoso



Self-defense brigade in Pinheirinho, São José dos Campos, resists police attack, January 22.

followed by Lula, offered a basket of basic necessities to the roughly 10 million impoverished Brazilians who continue to live (or more accurately, survive) below the poverty line. Although the population living in "extreme poverty" (monthly incomes below R\$70 [US\$1 a day]) has fallen, according to data from the United Nations Development Program, the numbers who live in "normal" poverty have *increased*, reaching one-third of the population, around 47 million people.

Another axis of Dilma's "secret" is the provision of credit at relatively low rates of interest (compared to the recent past, when Brazilian interest rates were among the highest in the world). For whole layers of the working people, particularly public employees, this produced the illusion of prosperity due to a growing indebtedness of the population. At the same time, along with profits from the world "boom" in raw materials, the policies of the Lula-Dilma government produced a paradise for the bankers in context where roughly 20% of Brazilian companies are in default.

In the countryside, the powerful agribusiness sector of large landowners, armed to the teeth, keeps on murdering peasant leaders. In the northern state of Pará alone, there were 219 killed in the last decade, according to *O Globo* (22 June 2011). Meanwhile the agribusiness lobby in Congress keeps chalking up victories. While the bodies keep piling up, the MST (Landless Workers Movement) has become one of the main electoral canvassers rounding up votes for the PT. The pseudo-Trotskyist followers of Ernest Mandel¹, who had managed to get themselves a minister's portfolio to supervise Brazil's land reform, have long ago given up their plans for brokering class collaboration between the PT and agribusiness on lands soaked in blood.

Militarization Against the Oppressed and Exploited

For the working class, life in the city has been no less cruel. Lula-Dilma have treated the exploited and oppressed as "police matters." Brazilian troops trained in Haiti and in the *favelas* and hilltop slums (*morros*) of Rio de Janeiro with their UPPs

¹ The Democracia Socialista current in the PT.

(Police Pacification Units), under the command of the Palácio do Planalto (Brazil's presidential palace) and the Palácio de Guanabara (seat of government of the state of Rio), have occupied large swaths with the intention of subjugating or expelling the (largely black) poor people.

The UPPs are being replicated daily in new variations, extending the militarization against the workers movement throughout the states of Brazil. They brutally repressed student demonstrations at the University of São Paulo. Meanwhile the UPPs ride herd over the workers' and students' movement, the exploited and oppressed of the cities. The most recent victims of this expanded militarization were the squatters in Pinheirinho in São José dos Campos (São Paulo).

At bottom, the popularity of Dilma and her "boom" which has so unnerved the Brazilian left is based on four pillars: (1) the social programs of *bolsas* (cash grants); (2) reduced-rate loans (*empréstimos consignados*) deducted from paychecks; (3) militarization against the movements of the exploited; and (4) cooptation of the leaders of these movements. In addition, they showered billions on the big capitalists in preparation for the 2014 soccer World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, offering very little bread and lots of circuses.

The reformist left with its (bourgeois) democratic policies has been left speechless by the economic policies of Lula-Dilma. With their horizons limited to the capitalist framework, all they can think of is to ask for "more." And concerning the militarization offensive, they only seek to "democratize" the repression. After supporting the "strike" of the military firemen of Rio de Janeiro in June 2011, earlier this year the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party, Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado) and its ill-fated Left Front went all-out to support the mutinies by firemen and military police.

The LQB and the Comitê de Luta Classe have resolutely opposed the movement of the armed firemen, many of them linked to the militias that terrorize the Rio *favelas* (see "Brazil: Reformists Tail After 'Strike' By Militarized Firemen in Rio de Janeiro," *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011).

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Quality Education Is Not a Commodity But Everyone's Right

Teachers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Stop Work to Stop High Stakes Test

A Fraud Against Students and Parents

A Weapon of Capital Against Teachers

A Noose to Strangle Public Education

The following article is translated from a June 2012 supplement to *Vanguarda Operária*, the newspaper of our comrades of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil* (Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil). The title of the original was, "Teachers, Students, Shred the SAERJ: A Fraud Against Students and Parents, A Weapon of Capital Against Teachers, A Noose to Strangle Public Education."

On June 27 and 28, teachers in Rio de Janeiro are stopping work for an unusual purpose: to boycott the SAERJ exam. This "Education Evaluation System of the State of Rio de Janeiro" has nothing whatsoever to do with a scientific diagnosis of the pedagogical development of the students. Like the national Prova Brasil exam, this test doesn't even measure the level of factual knowledge, much less the capacity for analysis, critical thought and ability to express oneself. By reducing education to a number based on answers to a standardized multiple-choice test designed to be corrected by machine, the SAERJ is a swindle perpetrated against students and parents and a weapon of capital against teachers. It is an arm of the enemy in the capitalist offensive to privatize public education. Teachers together with students, parents and working people must mobilize our strength to rip up this fraudulent test and prevent it from being administered.

The walkout called by the Teachers Union of the State of Rio de Janeiro, SEPE, is not an isolated local event. The SAERJ imposed by [Rio state governor] Sérgio Cabral is a key component of his Goals Plan, and only the most recent of a series of failed education "reforms" promoted by successive governors and the federal governments of Henrique Cardoso and Lula. Like the New Schools program of Anthony and Rosinha Garotinho (who governed the state of Rio from 1998 to 2007), it seeks to bribe teachers with promises of a few *reais* in addition to their wretched salaries. In exchange it demands acceptance of a system of evaluation based largely on students' scores on high-stakes tests ("provas"). In this way, the bourgeois politicians seek to link the wages of educators to the "product," as if education were a commodity purchased on the market rather than a fundamental democratic right of working people and the entire population.

At the national level, the Lula administration's Educational Development Plan (PDE) is based on the earlier Law of Educational Fundamentals and Directives approved by the government of Henrique Cardoso [in 1997], which declared education to be



Members of the Teachers Union of the State of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE) during recent strike in the city of São Gonçalo.

"open to private enterprise," permitted state financing of "non-profit" private schools, and provided vouchers and scholarships for private schools. Lula's PDE is also the result of a campaign, "Everyone for Education," sponsored by high finance (the Santander, Itaú, Unibanco and Bradesco banks) and big companies (Gerdau [steel], Suzano [wood products]), to monitor the "proper management of public resources invested in education." And above all, it is in response to the directives of the imperialist financial institutions, notably the World Bank and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which promote a business model of educational management in order to increase the "productivity" of teachers. This is where the SAERJ exam and other high-stakes tests come from.

In calling a work stoppage of the state school network, the SEPE correctly underscores that these tests blame teachers for the results of "decades of neglect and dismantling of public education." The lack of investment, the overcrowded classrooms, the inadequate or non-existent computers, laboratories and libraries, teachers' starvation wages¹ and students' difficult living conditions are all factors which impinge on the quality of education but are ignored by the SAERJ exam. "Rewarding" or "punishing" teachers and staff on the basis of test scores is not only unjust, not only does it promote cheating, it introduces competition into an undertaking (education) which is inherently collective and collaborative. But the conclusion that the reformist union leadership draws is to suggest to the state education secretary to end bonuses based on "productivity," open a "discussion" on necessary conditions for a quality education, and construct "a pedagogical policy plan for every school"! This is a recipe for defeat.

When they broaden the topic, the SEPE leaders criticize "neo-liberalism," i.e., the "free market" policies that currently dominate bourgeois political economy. But this isn't a discussion about reforms to improve learning. Nor is it a matter of a policy which could be replaced by another. *It is a war of the capitalists to gut public education and privatize it, to demolish teachers unions and*

¹ The average salary of teachers in Rio de Janeiro is approximately US\$600 a month.

intensify the exploitation of teachers. That is why the Class-Struggle Committee (CLC) insists that we have to respond with the weapons of class war. The work stoppage called by the SEPE after previous efforts to boycott the SAERJ is a beginning. The combative Mexican teachers have taken resistance to another level in calling strikes to stop these phony "evaluations." And because it is an offensive of imperialism, of capitalism in its phase of decay, of systematic destruction of past gains, the reformist trade-unionism of the past no longer works – what's required is a revolutionary international response.

Commodification of Education: the U.S. Experience

The United States is one of the countries where corporate "reforms" of public education have deepened the most in recent years. Since 1983, at the beginning of the administration of the conservative Ronald Reagan, a study was published under the title, *A Nation at Risk: the Imperative of Educational Reform*. This report was supported by the two partner parties of American capitalism, Democrats and Republicans, which with regard to education are truly twins. Posing the issue in terms of national security during that period of anti-Soviet Cold War, it placed the blame for the failings of the public schools on the shoulders of the teachers. It called for educators' salaries to be "professionally competitive, market-sensitive and performance-based." Ever since, the onslaught against teachers, and their unions in particular, hasn't let up for a minute.

Nevertheless, the professional teacher-bashers are frustrated in the face of the strength of teacher unionism, one of the few solid sectors of a badly weakened union movement.² Recently there has been an increase of resistance by education activists against the attacks of the government, particularly over the closing of "failed" schools. This racist policy has brought teachers closer together with the black and Latino neighborhoods affected by this operation of tearing down public education. At the same time there is growing opposition to the system of educational evaluation by

² Even today, 38 percent of U.S. teachers are union members, compared to less than 12 percent of the workforce as a whole and under 7 percent of private sector workers.

means of "high-stakes testing" that harms teachers and students alike.

One of the most prominent figures in this opposition is historian Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education in the administration of George Bush I. Her critique of the effects of this policy of standardized tests, holding teachers responsible for students' scores and closing schools is all the more influential because until a few years ago she was one of the most prominent defenders and proponents of this same program of corporate educational reform. The SEPE is circulating an interview with Ravitch with the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* (2 August 2010) where she criticized: "The administration of President Obama continues to accept the punitive approach which began with the Bush government. Privatizing schools negatively affects the public education system.... And making the teachers responsible is being used in order to destroy them."

For Ravitch and many educators, it is enough to detail these counterproductive results. But for the architects of these "reforms," for the capitalist governments that implement them and for the imperialist financial agencies that promote them, the educational outcome is utterly beside the point. The intention is not to improve "education for everyone" – that's only the sales pitch. The advocates of the commodification of education – the executives of the Business Roundtable, or "philanthropists" like Bill Gates of Microsoft, or the Walton family of Walmart – want to kick the present teachers out of the profession, get rid of teachers unions, slash the cost of education to the treasury and turn public schools into profit platforms (by means of contracts, public-private partnerships) and centers of labor force training for employers. Quality education would be restricted to the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie and upper middle class.

Beyond the critiques, anyone who really wants to defend public schools and fight for quality education for all must ask themselves what must be done to defeat this assault. If in Rio de Janeiro, the SEPE is taking a step forward in resisting by calling the work stoppage of June 27-28, the teachers unions in the United States, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA), shamefully capitulate

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Mission Impossible: #YoSoy132 Proposes to Clean Up the Electoral Farce

Mexico: Defeat the Bourgeois Repression of the PRI, PAN and PRD! Workers to Power!

No Vote to Capitalist Parties and Politicians!

Break with López Obrador's Bourgeois Popular Front!

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

UPDATE: In the July 1 Mexican elections, the presidential candidate of the PRI, Enrique Peña Nieto, was declared the victor amid widespread vote-buying. As we noted in an article on the 2006 elections, "Fraud in Mexico is not an aberration but an integral part of the electoral process. And not just in Mexico.... In fact, the whole system of bourgeois elections is a swindle. Behind the veneer of 'democracy' it is money that decides who wins and loses, the money of the various capitalist forces whose interests are affected. The state, as Marxists have insisted, is a machine for imposing the interests of the ruling class, and the government is its executive committee. Whether it is by 'dirty tricks,' handing out bags of cement in Mexico or buying up TV time in the U.S., this is how the contending bourgeois forces ensure that the 'popular vote' reflects their interests" (see "Mexico: Bourgeois Elections and Workers Blood," available online at www.internationalist.org).

Trotskyists give no political support to any bourgeois candidate, either at the polls or in the post-election maneuvering which is an integral part of the process. While supporting demands for recounts, we warn that calls on the courts and election commissions to investigate sows illusions in these administrators of the electoral farce. Moreover, the present demonstrations are essentially political support to the candidacy of the popular-front opposition candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador. If, however, the struggle leaves the terrain of the electoral circus and the capitalist



Contingent of the Grupo Internacionalista in the June 10 march commemorating the 1971 "halconazo," the massacre carried out by a paramilitary hit squad of the PRI (the Hawks) which attacked a student march, murdering dozens.

state apparatus imposes a candidate by a repressive crackdown pointing toward a police-military dictatorship, proletarian revolutionaries would call for politically independent working-class mobilization against the bonapartist threat.

The following article is a translation of a leaflet put out by the Grupo Internacionalista prior to the election on the anniversary of a 1971 massacre of students.

JUNE 10 – The sudden appearance on the political scene of the movement #YoSoy132 (I am 132) a month ago has shaken up the previously listless campaign for the July 1 elections. By questioning the

media coverage of the Televisa-TV Azteca duopoly and opposing the "imposition" of Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) as president, the students have thrown a wrench into the works. His main opponent, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (universally known by his initials, AMLO), candidate of the Progressive Movement, began climbing in the opinion polls while Peña Nieto's numbers began plummeting. Alarmed, ex-president Vicente Fox of the right-wing National Action Party (PAN) came out in favor of the PRI candidate, turning his back on PAN candidate Josefina Vázquez Mota. And while the entire bourgeois media treat the #YoSoy132 movement with kid gloves, even the most "progressive" ones are vituperating against the struggle of the teachers in the CNTE.¹

It all began with a routine visit by the leading presidential candidate to a private university, along with partial and lying media coverage. On May 11, the PRI standard-bearer Peña Nieto was loudly booed at the Universidad Iberoamericana. The students recalled his responsibility for the repression against the townspeople of San Salvador Atenco in May 2006, which resulted in the murder of two youths and the rape of 26 women being held by his state police. Amid shouts of "Murderer, murderer!" the candidate had to hurriedly leave the

¹ The National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE) is a union grouping of dissident teachers that arose in struggle against the leadership National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), a "corporatist" body integrated into the state apparatus that serves as an agency of government control rather than a workers union. The CNTE operates independently of the SNTE, while controlling several state federations. This May-June it launched extended teacher strikes in several states.

campus. When Televisa and journalists who act as flacks for the regime repeated the accusations that the students were *porros* ("thugs") and *acarreados* (bussed in) for AMLO, 131 of those who joined in the protest put up a video on the Internet where they denounced the media lies. The video went viral, and #YoSoy132 was born.

Naturally, various groups of the opportunist left who habitually tail after every new "movement" are trying to clamber aboard the latest one. Those who support López Obrador and his Progressive Movement (Militante and Izquierda Socialista²) groups are clamoring for #YoSoy132 to emphasize its call for an "informed vote" (i.e., for a "useful vote" for AMLO³). Those

who previously called for boycotting the electoral farce or for casting a "no vote" (the LTS, POS and LUS⁴) shelved their earlier proclamations, or at most they mention them in a whisper, while calling for 132 to emphasize its "non-party" character. The various denominations join together to try to push to the left a movement that arose in the private universities and which from the outset has had an elitist bias. Yet all the references to the "Arab Spring," the European *Indignados* (Outraged) or the Occupy Wall Street movement cannot hide the fact that #YoSoy132 is an attempt to prettify the rigged bourgeois electoral process.

As we said on signs we held outside the general assembly of the 132 movement at the National University on May 30, "We are communists and we fight for workers revolution." The Grupo Internacionalista emphasizes that all the capitalist parties and alliances are responsible for the deadly repression unleashed by the ruling class against the working people of town and country.

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² The Militante group, which considers itself the "Marxist" current of the bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution, split in 2010 with one wing keeping the original name (and ties to the International Marxist Tendency led by Alan Woods) while the other eventually adopted the name Izquierda Socialista (Socialist Left) and is associated with the Revolutionary Marxist Current led by the former Spanish section of the IMT.

³ As opposed to a throwaway vote for the rightist Vázquez Mota, who has no chance of winning, or abstaining or casting invalid ballots (a "no vote").

⁴ The Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo, Partido Obrero Socialista and Liga de Unidad Socialista had previously been part of a Socialist Front calling for a boycott of the elections.



#YoSoy132 outside the Federal Election Institute (IFE), above, imitates with its white gloves the reactionary student mobilization in 2007 in favor of the coup-plotting TV channel RCTV in Caracas, Venezuela.



In the Face of the War Measures of the Liberal Government,
Mobilize the Heavy Battalions of the Working Class!

Quebec Student Strike: Defeat the Capitalist Attack

The following is a translation of a supplement to L'Internationaliste distributed in Montréal on May 22.

MAY 20 – For more than three months, Quebec students have been on strike against the plan of the provincial government of Liberal Party (PLQ) premier Jean Charest to impose a massive tuition increase. Mobilizing up to 300,000 strikers, the students have rocked the Quebec nation. This is the largest student mobilization in the history of Quebec and one of the fiercest social struggles in Canada in recent decades. It is of prime international importance, together with the eight-month-long Chilean student strike last year. These are among the main current struggles against the capitalist war on public education, and on working people in general. The strike deserves the active support of all defenders of the democratic right to education, and of the world working class. And now is the time to show this support with concrete actions.

The Quebec student movement has arisen in the context of mass struggles around the globe. The description of the struggle as the “Maple Spring” of 2012 makes the link to the “Arab Spring” of 2011. Shortly after, the movement of the Outraged in Portugal, Spain and Greece occupied squares in the city centers of Europe. In Quebec, the starting point of the struggle, the big mobilization of 10 November 2011, when 200,000 students struck and 30,000 took to the streets of Montreal, came on the heels of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, and as the Chilean student strike was still going strong. But while the unrest is global, with the exception of the student strike in Colombia – which forced the rightist government to withdraw its “education reform plan” that opened the door to privatization – it has to be said that none of these struggles has resulted in victory.

In Tunisia and Egypt, the dictators have been overthrown but the military-based dictatorships remain. In Europe, even though several governments that have presided over the effects of the international capitalist economic crisis have fallen (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and most recently France), the new governments nevertheless continue to impose austerity policies. In the U.S., the hundreds of Occupy camps were almost all removed by police action. In Quebec, the scope of the movement has enabled it to endure in the face of a government that seeks to carry out its tuition hike at any cost. But now the government has decided to impose its program with the mailed fist of the police and the bourgeois “justice” system. Harking back to the watchword of U.S. imperialism



Above: Banner of the Broad Coalition for Student Union Solidarity (CLASSE) at huge May 22 march in Montréal in support of Quebec student strike. Below: Internationalists initiated solidarity demo that day in New York.

in Vietnam, Charest is prepared to shut down the universities in order to save them from the virus of student protest.

It is worth considering the reasons for the survival of these reactionary regimes and policies in the face of unheard-of popular opposition. This is not only due to repression, nor to the stubbornness of the rulers. The mafia-linked PLQ government of Quebec is hard-lining it because it is backed up by the power of imperialist capital, whose affairs it manages. And the forces that have risen up against Charest & Co. on a strictly democratic basis are weakened due to their failure to attack the economic and social bases of the regime. To be sure, maintaining the tuition freeze or even abolishing tuition are simply an expression of the democratic right to education. But in this epoch of decaying capitalism, when all past gains are under attack, one cannot win or even defend such gains except through revolutionary struggle leading to a workers government.

From Duplessis' “Padlock Law” to Charest's “Riot Club Law”

At this point, after 14 weeks of resisting the slanders of the bosses' press, the threats of the government and the ferocious repression of its police, having taken more



than 1,600 arrests, there are still more than 150,000 students from 1,964 student associations on strike. From the start, the PLQ government has categorically refused any negotiation or even discussion of the tuition hike. The only “modification” it would admit was to spread it over seven years instead of five, while indexing it for inflation so that the total increase rose from \$1,625 to \$1,778 a year, an increase of a whopping 82%. And when the student assemblies of

all the universities and colleges¹ on strike flatly rejected his latest poisoned “offer,” the prime minister who would be Emperor John James of Quebec decreed a “hardening” of the government's position.

Several cabinet ministers known as

¹ In Quebec, universities are institutions granting bachelor (and higher) degrees while the colleges (CÉGEPs) are roughly equivalent to junior colleges or community colleges in the United States.

Against Privatization and Commodification of Public Education,
Fight for Socialist Revolution!



Quebec provincial police (Sûreté du Québec) assault striking students and protesters against the policies of privatization and repression. To defeat the attack, it is necessary to call on a more powerful force, that of the working class.

“hawks” had been urging for some time for the government to play the “authority card,” and now Charest has done so, with Law 78. The bill was introduced to the National Assembly (Quebec’s provincial parliament) at 8 p.m. on Thursday, May 17, and was voted into law less than 24 hours later in a fast-track procedure worthy of any authoritarian regime. Budget minister Raymond Bachand inveighed: “Enough! Enough already! There are radical groups who want to destabilize the economy of Montreal. Anti-capitalist and Marxist groups” (*La Presse*, 16 May). “The Boss” Charest is assiduously imitating the habits of Maurice Duplessis, the last Quebec prime minister to win three consecutive terms. Pervasive influence trafficking, a docile parliament, brutal repression against the unions, demonizing protesters as dangerous “reds,” and tough legislation to stifle all opposition.

Winter in August? Duplessis decreed his *loi cadenas* (“padlock law,” titled “Law Protecting the Province Against Communist Propaganda”). His epigone issued a “Law Permitting Students to Receive Education From the Post-Secondary Establishments They Are Attending.” With this law, Charest put off the winter session at struck universities and colleges until August, to be finished in September ... so as not to “lower the quality of a diploma”! He says he wants to guarantee “the right to an education” and provide calm conditions for teaching. How does he propose to do that? By putting the campuses under lock and key for three months and sending police riot squads to arrest even more massively the students who violate the will of the autocrat. Meanwhile, his tuition hike guarantees the *exclusion* of thousands of youths from higher education.

So the response of the liberal chief to the student strike is a *lockout* plus a “riot club law” to ban picket lines. With this he hopes to make future strikes impossible. He says so himself, complaining that “we’ve run up against debate of this question in Quebec for dozens of years.” Alas for him, the students still have something to say on his attempt to mortgage their future, condemning them to years of debt servitude to the banks. And they are saying it very loudly.

From the outset, the prime minister who has governed Quebec for almost a decade has excluded any discussion of his plan to raise tuition, in the name of improving the “competitiveness” of Quebec universities. He pejoratively dismisses the leaders of the student associations as “*enfants roi*” (spoiled brats) who refuse to pay “their just part.”

Displaying unlimited arrogance, he has refused to sit down with them, leaving the “dirty job” to his female ministers. As Jean Barbe noted in *Le Monde* (16 May), “He hoped to repeat his coup of 2005, the date of the last student strike, to sow discord among the student associations, excluding the most militant one, the Broad Coalition for Student Union Solidarity (CLASSE, Coalition large pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante), and reaching an agreement with the other two.” But this time the maneuver didn’t work.

Why not? With his *diktat*, Charest wants to put an end to the debate over university tuition. Hence he has adopted a position which allows no compromise, which excludes any negotiation. With more than 75% of respondents in public opinion polls saying they are dissatisfied with his administration, he wants to project an image of toughness. A revealing fact: on the eve of the announcement of the special law, the leader of the most “moderate” group, Léo Bureau-Blouin of FECQ (Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec, the Quebec College Student Federation), proposed a “new scenario,” also backed by the FEUQ (Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, Quebec University Student Federation) and even by the minority of students who favor a tuition hike. This formula would have meant betraying the goal of the strike, but the government refused. The new education minister, Michelle Courchesne, declared that “there isn’t room for compromise anymore.” In short, the Liberals want to *crush* the strike.

A Non-Cordial Non-Entente. We saw the same thing following the talks which the previous education minister, Line Beauchamp, and the new minister Chourchesne held with the student leaders on May 4-5. In a marathon session they wore down the resistance of the strike negotiators. Trade-union leaders, who had been brought in to do a “service for Quebec,” counseled the students to make concessions. At the same time, the Sûreté du Québec, the provincial police, were bloodily repressing thousands of demonstrators outside a PLQ congress in Victoriaville. The ministers called on the student leaders to make a statement “against violence,” which they did. The media then broadcast this as a denunciation of the “violence” of the demonstrators who sought to defend themselves against the clouds of tear gas and hail of dozens of plastic bullets fired by the police.

At that point, what was called for was to denounce the police fusillade and to declare that it was impossible to discuss in such conditions of intimidation. But the student

leaders stayed. Finally, after 22 hours locked up with their enemies and false friends (the union bureaucrats), they accepted a document submitted by the government. Unfortunately, the students hadn’t checked to make sure that the compromises they thought they had reached were included. Moreover, the government presented as an “*entente*,” or agreement, what for the students was only a government offer. In any case, this document amounted to a capitulation to the regime. It didn’t touch the tuition hike at all, it proposed to reduce accompanying student fees by questionable savings, and proposed a “provisional committee” with a clear majority appointed by the government and businessmen.

This was a disaster. There was a hullabaloo among the CLASSE leaders when they saw the text. Even the leaders of the FEUQ and FECQ couldn’t defend it. So what did the government do? It added fuel to the fire. Beauchamp wrote to Liberal deputies crowing that the tuition hike was intact and there wouldn’t be sufficient savings to appreciably lower the accompanying fees. Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois of CLASSE complained, “they literally bragged about pulling a fast one on us” (*La Presse*, 8 May). Subsequently, student associations throughout the province voted by overwhelming majorities against the phony “agreement.” Yet what’s striking is that even this capitulation to the pressure of the government wouldn’t satisfy it. Charest is above all out to demoralize the students, to ensure that there won’t be another student strike for many years.

But why did the student leaders sign this abomination, or even agree to discuss it? In the case of the FEUQ, it had already proposed, last November, to form such a commission to look for savings in university operations. Marxists call for a tri-partite government of the universities by councils of students, teachers and workers. But the commission proposed by the FEUQ, including representatives of the administration and the government, amounted to class collaboration rather than a body to combat the capitalist hold on education. For CLASSE, on the other hand, discussing the commission proposed by the government was a capitulation on the goals for which they said they were fighting. It accepted the limits imposed by capital, which would have made them accomplices in the administration of the universities on behalf of the bourgeoisie.

A Struggle Against the International Capitalist Assault on Public Education

It is quite clear that the Charest government enjoys the support of almost the entire Quebec bourgeoisie to impose a tuition hike on the students. Among the few organizations to declare itself “delighted” with the government’s “riot club law” is the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce. Earlier, an open letter supporting the government’s position was signed by the president of the Federation, the head of the Montreal Board of Trade, the head of the Quebec Council of Employers and, significantly, Lucien Bouchard, ex-prime minister of Quebec, of the Parti Québécois (*The Gazette*, 4 May). Even if PQ deputies wear red squares in the National Assembly, and [PQ leader] Pauline Marois has said she would repeal the tuition hike, she’s not in favor of a freeze either, calling to index tuition to inflation.

But the eagerness of the Quebec gov-

ernment to apply this “reform” reflects the pressure not only of Quebec employers but also that of international capital. Recall that in the 1960s, after the government seized control of the schools from the Catholic Church – which ran them until 1959 and which saw in free education “the spectre of neutral and secular schools” – the Parent Commission recommended setting up a system of Colleges of General and Professional Education (the CÉGEPs). Its declared aim was democratizing access to university education in order to satisfy “the requirements of the modern economy,” and also because “every person has the right to have access to the diverse realms of knowledge.” Canada at that time signed a United Nations convention which established moving toward free higher education as a goal.²

What is happening now is that “the requirements of the modern (capitalist) economy” have changed. In the 1960s and ’70s, Western governments were confronted by big struggles for the democratization of education. Key examples were the racial integration of schools in the United States and the expansion of university education in France following the student-worker revolt of May-June 1968. In Quebec there was also a desire, among the capitalists as well, to take control of the natural resources of the province (the expansion of Hydro-Québec) and to escape from an economy of producing raw materials. So in order to make the Quebec economy more competitive, the bosses needed a technically qualified labor force.

Today, the needs of capital are different. With the “globalization” so praised by the capitalists and denounced by “alternative globalization” activists, only a handful of Quebec companies are competitive on the international level – Bombardier, Quebecor, Power Corporation – while many others have been sold to “multinational” firms, as in the case of the Alcan, now Rio Tinto Alcan. These are the ones who control the media and the formation of “public opinion.” Even though there may be disputes between these empires (the Power Corporation mouthpieces *La Presse* and *Le Soleil* don’t always see eye to eye with the *Journal de Montréal* and *Journal de Québec* owned by the Péladeau family’s Quebecor), the Charest government is the servant of these monopolies.

Currently, these giants of world capitalism no longer feel the need to have access to a reservoir of skilled labor. If they need technicians, they can subcontract the work to other companies in other countries, as RTA and Bombardier do. They can build plants in countries with lower labor costs, or closer to the main imperialist markets, as Quebecor does in the U.S. and France. Confronted by union struggles, they can resort to lockouts and hiring desperate strikebreakers, as they have increasingly done in Quebec, despite the impotent anti-scab laws. And now they have taken aim at public higher education, which they deem too expensive.

The increase in tuition in Quebec is part of this *international* offensive by imperialist capital against the expenses of social overhead capital, which do not contribute to profits and whose costs the capitalists wish to slash. Facing a crisis of a falling rate of profit, which led to the 2008 financial crisis, they want to make

² The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1966, declared: “Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.”



Contingents of secondary school students march for education in Santiago de Chile, 30 June 2011. The struggle against privatization and commodification of education is international.

higher education a new profit center. There is no justification for raising tuition costs from the standpoint of financing the universities. The cost of totally eliminating tuition, some hundreds of millions of dollars, is trivial. The bourgeoisie wants to raise tuition in order to produce superprofits for the banks from student loans (which are risk-free since the government guarantees them), and to subject students to the discipline of debt servitude.

Thus the Charest government's attack is not a case of the desperate, mafia-infested PLQ running amok looking for a campaign theme for the next elections. It is perfectly in accord with the actions of governments and banks in the U.S., where the incidence of student debt has risen from around 45% of graduates in 1994 to 94% today, and where hundreds of thousands of students have taken on more than \$50,000 in debt (and today cannot find a job). This offensive has been coordinated and theoretically justified over the last two decades by the international financial agencies including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and particularly the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.³

Thus in order to resist this offensive by international capital, it is entirely insufficient to fight on the basis of a bourgeois democratic program. For the bourgeoisie there are fundamental class interests at stake, and they will not be deterred by some thousands of students and faculty who produce no profit and who, even if they can "disrupt" the economy cannot bring it to a halt. It is therefore absolutely necessary to mobilize a proletarian counteroffensive, a workers response, to the assault not only by the Charest government but rather by the employers and the bourgeoisie as a whole. Expressions of solidarity are nice, but above all now that the government has thrown down its challenge with Law 78, it is high time to undertake workers action to shut down the economy and government.

To win the strike, it is indispensable to extend it to the workers movement. We have

³ For more specific references on the role of the OECD, see the documents of the Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques (IRS), in particular: "L'endettement étudiant : un 'investissement' rentable?" (March 2012), "Faut-il vraiment augmenter les frais de scolarité?" (May 2011) and "Financement des universités : Vers une américanisation du modèle québécois?" (October 2008).

suggested the formation of a common front of students and faculty with the locked-out metal workers of RTA at Alma, with the locked-out Aveos airline mechanics and construction workers under government attack as a first step toward a strike of at least the key sectors of the Quebec economy in support of the students and all working people targeted by the offensive of capital. Given the furious reaction of large sections of the working people and even the middle classes against Charest's *loi matraque*, which many compare to the stage of siege laws issued during the 1970 October Crisis, one can even pose the need for an unlimited general strike to sweep away this corrupt government which endangers the well-being of all working people.

We are presently witnessing a stream of student struggles (Puerto Rico, Chile, England, Quebec) being waged on a national and democratic program in the face of an iron front of capital. Last week there was a demonstration of upwards of 100,000 Chilean students and their supporters, and there will in all probability be many thousands of Quebec students and their defenders in the streets of Montreal on May 22. But they remain isolated from each other, and they are not supported by workers action.

It is instructive to consider the experience of the ten-month strike of the National University of Mexico (UNAM) in 1999-2000 against a government attack which, in order to satisfy a contract with the World Bank, sought to introduce tuition. The students suffered more than 1,000 arrests, but in the end they won. How were they able to do it? To be sure, they occupied University City with tens of thousands of strikers. They fought off

SME
Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) formed joint defense guards with students during the ten-month strike of the National University, July 1999.



attacks by strikebreakers. Quebec students have also shown great combativeness in this respect, driving the Liberal government crazy. The big difference is the intervention of the power of the working class.

We in the League for the Fourth International fought in the UNAM strike for the formation of worker-student guards to defend the strike against threats of invasion by the army. At first, many students thought we were crazy, dreaming of long-gone and more heroic times. But as the threat of a military attack drew closer, the strike committees approved our proposal. At the key moment, hundreds of electrical workers arrived on campus to participate in joint defense guards which made it possible for the strike to go on. The Mexican bourgeoisie was well aware that while students can cause lots of "trouble," the workers in the electrical system could throw the switch and plunge Mexico City into darkness. And today, there is still no tuition at the UNAM.

The democracy of the assemblies in the Quebec student strike is an important gain, which has made it possible to continue for almost 100 days. Popular support is tremendous. The determination of the students in the face of merciless repression and demonization in the bourgeois press has even surprised the strike leaders. To wage a victorious strike, a class struggle going beyond the limits of phony bourgeois democracy which is now being revealed as a police state, it is necessary to forge a leadership based on a revolutionary program. This leadership, the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party, will not appear from one day to the next. It must be built through intervening in struggle, proposing measures to mobilize the forces necessary to win and which also raise class consciousness.

The League for the Fourth International fights for the independence of Quebec in the framework of a federation of workers states of North America. We fight on the basis of an internationalist program both against the chauvinism of the Anglo bourgeoisie and also against the bourgeois Quebec nationalism of the PQ and its offshoots as well as the petty-bourgeois reformism of much of the left. We offer our observations on the course and program for victory for this historic movement in the spirit of combative solidarity, as participants in a common struggle.

Mobilize the power of the working class to win the student strike! Send Charest packing, this wannabe emperor who rules with the riot club, gas and bullets! Fight his financiers and his backers in the forces of big capital, from Toronto's Bay Street to Wall Street in New York. The power of a mobilized working class with a revolutionary leadership can defeat these relics who represent the dead hand of the past that seeks to destroy our future. ■

#YoSoy132...

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We insist that the exploited and oppressed have no one to vote for in the electoral contest. Today, just as 31 years ago, when the *Halcones* (Hawks, a bloody shock troop financed by the PRI government) violently broke up the first student demonstration after the massacre of 2 October 1968, leaving a couple dozen dead, violent repression of social protest is part and parcel of the capitalist state. And that will not change whether one or another person is elected to administer that state. We call to not vote for the PRI, PAN, PRD, PT, PANAL, PVEM, MC⁵ or any other bourgeois party, and to break with the popular front led by López Obrador. We seek instead to mobilize all the strength of the working class in support of the teachers in struggle, under attack by the entire bourgeois political spectrum (see "Mexico Electoral Farce 2012: Militarization and Anti-Worker Attacks," a May 2012 supplement to *El Internacionalista*, available online in English and Spanish at www.internationalist.org).

It's undeniable that there is a certain political fluidity in this recently formed movement, as well as struggle between its different components. Various left groups complain of a lack of democracy in the leadership of the Inter-University Coordinating Committee, which puts out statements in the name of #YoSoy132 and calls meetings behind closed doors. But this doesn't mean that the movement overall doesn't have a political profile. By criticizing "a manipulated electoral process that aims at restoring the old political regime," and by saying that "the face of this old regime is the candidate Peña Nieto," as it has done from the outset while not calling for a "no vote," it is in reality supporting the candidates running against Peña Nieto. By registering as election observers with the Federal Election Institute, it is joining with the electoral apparatus of the capitalist state. By denouncing the undeniable authoritarianism of PRI rule while barely mentioning the more than 60,000 dead in the "war against drugs" of President Felipe Calderón, it is attempting to prettify the present government of the PAN.

#YoSoy132 is a cry of anguish of the sons and daughters of those who with their "useful vote" against the PRI in 2000 thought that they would achieve "democracy." Instead they got a dozen years of ultra-reactionary governments of the PAN, which has brutally attacked the rights of women (equating abortion with murder), launched a union-busting assault (against the electrical workers of the SME) and turned the country into a "cemetery," as the poet Javier Sicilia put it. At the same time, Sicilia, the architect of the Movement for Peace and Justice, gives kisses and hugs to the murderous and repressive candidates. Now that it looks like the PRI could return to Los Pinos (Mexico's White House) – this time with the support of Fox! – those who kept silent as the country

⁵ PRD, Party of the Democratic Revolution, bourgeois nationalist party led by ex-PRI politicians and staffed by ex-leftists. PT, Labor Party, a phony workers party set up by PRI president Carlos Salinas. PANAL, a "party" which is little more than a vehicle for the political maneuvering of SNTE boss Elba Esther Gordillo. PVEM, Green/Ecological Party, allied with the PRI. MC, Citizens Movement, a bourgeois coalition allies with López Obrador.

was militarized are shocked. As the PAN candidacy implodes, it is likely that today the “useful vote” would be in favor of López Obrador, who has softened his image, assuming a “loving” posture towards capital. The supporters of #YoSoy132, to the extent that they don’t back AMLO directly, and despite their supposed political independence, will act as defenders of his vote. And, as in 2006, the opportunist socialists will once again be the “left” flank of a bourgeois movement.

Repression Is the Work of All the Bourgeois Parties

After the May 11 incident which gave rise to the #YoSoy132 movement, it rapidly spread through the elite private universities around the country. On May 18, hundreds of students from the Iberoamericana and the Monterrey Technological Institute demonstrated outside Televisa offices in the Mexico City neighborhood of Santa Fe; at the same time, students of the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico did the same outside the Televisa installations in San Angel. That Televisa lies is hardly news. Students from the National University (UNAM), SME electrical workers and CNTE teachers regularly protest outside the TV station and are routinely ignored. But this time, instead of repeating the usual insults, the media suddenly changed their tone: they praised the initiative and civic sense of the students. Their class origin was decisive. The Ibero, the Monterrey Tec and the ITAM are hardly hotbeds of leftist activism, they are preparatory schools for the bourgeoisie. The protests indicate that there is discontent in the well-off sectors of the country. This rebellion wasn’t born in the vast plebeian cities of Nezahualcoyotl or Chalco, but instead comes from the upscale districts of Polanco and Lomas de Chapultepec.

The class character of the movement is also manifest in its complaints and demands. The web site yosoy132.mx has a collection of photos, many of them of political signs: for a march against Peña Nieto, for Ibero pride, for a useful vote for López Obrador’s MORENA (Movement of National Regeneration, another component of the opposition popular front), etc. One graphic compares the gasoline price hikes under PRI presidents (900%, 1,810%, 290%) and those of the PAN (28% and 36%). The comparison is evidently of interest to *students who have cars*. In contrast, there is no mention of the increase in the price of tortillas, which has soared from 4.5 pesos a kilo in 2000 to more than 12 pesos today. Communiqué No. 1 of the Inter-University Coordinating Committee called to “make Internet access an effective constitutional right.” *But what about the more than two-thirds of Mexico’s population that doesn’t have a computer or iPhone?* No mention either of the right to a job, to food, to housing, to public transportation. It is significant when even youth of the upper middle class begin to protest, but they don’t represent “youth” in general.

The question of class is also key in talking about repression. It is quite true that PRI candidate Enrique Peña Nieto’s hands are covered in blood, which is his calling card for the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist masters who are anxious to impose “stability.” However, it should be remembered that in repressing the people of San Salvador Atenco, Peña Nieto had the full military backing of the Federal Preven-

tive Police, commanded by PAN president Vicente Fox. At the same time, it should be also be noted that the clash began with the arrest of flower vendors in a terrifying police assault ordered by *the PRD mayor of Texcoco*.

In 2006, while the candidates of the PAN, PRI and PRD were going after each other with hammer and tongs in the election contest, the politicians of these bourgeois parties joined in *repeatedly* coordinating repression against the workers. This was the case in the state of Michoacán, when on April 20 federal forces obeying the PAN president, state forces under the control of the PRD governor and municipal forces answering to the PRI mayor orchestrated a bloody attack on the steel workers on strike in the port of Lázaro Cárdenas. The toll of this attack was two workers murdered (specifically by state police under the orders of Governor Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, son of the PRD *caudillo* Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas) and 41 injured.

The same thing occurred that year with the suppression of the popular mobilization begun by the teachers strike of Section 22, SNTE-CNTE in Oaxaca. On that occasion, the notorious PRI governor, Ulises Ruíz Ortiz, after his “caravans of death” murdered more than 20 teachers and members of the People’s Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO), requested the aid of the PAN federal government to retake the city of Oaxaca, from which the state police forces had been expelled and kept at bay for six months. At that time, the request by the murderer Ruíz Ortiz for federal “police aid” had the *explicit* support of the state Congress, including the PRD, PT and Convergencia caucuses [all of which supported López Obrador].

Today as well, while the capitalist parties and politicians compete with very similar programs, PAN president Calderón’s bloody war against the drug traffickers has been *financed and carried out* by state and municipal governments of the PAN, PRI and PRD. One only need recall that Calderón began his militarist campaign with “Operation Michoacán,” at the request of Cárdenas Batel. More recently, police under the orders of the PRD governor of Guerrero together with federal police under Calderón’s command murdered two students of the Rural Teacher Training College of Ayotzinapa on the Mexico-Acapulco superhighway last December 12.

Thus it is perfectly obvious that in only opposing Peña Nieto *and not the other bourgeois candidates*, #YoSoy132 is ignoring *the repressive character of the Mexican bourgeoisie as a whole*. When all is said and done, what is decisive is the class struggle. It is high time for the working class and oppressed to stand up against their exploiters and oppressors, both politically and by organizing workers self-defense. And for that, the fundamental axiom of proletarian struggle is indispensable: complete and radical *class independence* from the bosses, their politicians and their parties.

“Democratization of the Media”

#YoSoy132 has come out against “the false democracy of *telenovelas*” (soap operas).⁶ One of its main initial demands was that Gobernación (Mexico’s interior ministry) order that the insipid presidential

⁶ Peña Nieto’s wife, Angélica Rivera, is a *telenovela* star on Televisa.

debates be carried by all networks. (Televisa and TV Azteca quickly agreed to broadcast them on their main channels.) It is hard to see how this could “raise the consciousness” of the population. The first debate between the four candidates on May 6 was so boring and insubstantial that the main news was the 20 seconds during which an *edecán* (escort) of the Federal Election Institute appeared on the screen.

The Iberoamericana students discovered that the bourgeois media *lie*. What a revelation! In fact, that is their basic function: to cultivate a “public opinion” consistent with the interests of the capitalist class. Subsequently, #YoSoy132 raised the banner of “democratization” of the communications media, and to that end they proposed to encourage competition by authorizing new television networks. But whether there are many more channels, or even 1,000 TV cable channels as in the United States, the mass information media will continue to be a means to dominate the exploited and oppressed.

Some left groups have tried to give an “anti-capitalist” interpretation to the demand for democratizing access to information. This was notably the case of the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS). In its newspaper *Estrategia Obrera* (No. 97, 8 June) it notes, correctly, that “so long as class society exists, freedom of the press translates into free enterprise.” Or as the famous American publicist H.L. Mencken is said to have remarked, “freedom of the press is limited to those who own one.” Yet further on, the LTS calls for “expropriation without compensation of the big communications media, which should function under the control of their workers.” All this without mentioning the word *revolution*.

At the same time, the LTS demands that “any group of workers, students or organizations... shall have the right and resources, paid for by the state, to publish its positions,” and calls to “struggle in addition for subsidies and budgets for independent media, community radios,” etc. All this feeds dangerous democratic illusions, that the present-day state of the exploiters can be pressured into serving the interests of the exploited. Calling on a bourgeois government to expropriate the communications media or to provide subsidies would inevitably hand over control over information to *the capitalist state*, notwithstanding sugary phrases about “workers control.”

Genuine access to the communications media for the exploited and oppressed is *only possible in the midst of sharp class struggles*. In Oaxaca in 2006, the workers organized Radio APPO by occupying the facilities of Radio Universidad. They later took over TV Channel 9 as well as, for a time, several commercial broadcasters. But they were only able to do this, and thereby put a stop to the lying bourgeois propaganda orchestrated by the government and the private TV and radio station owners, because they were able during several months to keep the repressive apparatus of capital outside of the capital city of Oaxaca.

Democratization of the information media is not possible within the framework of capitalism. The exploited and oppressed will only be able to control the communications media by expropriating the bourgeoisie as a whole, through workers revolution.

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

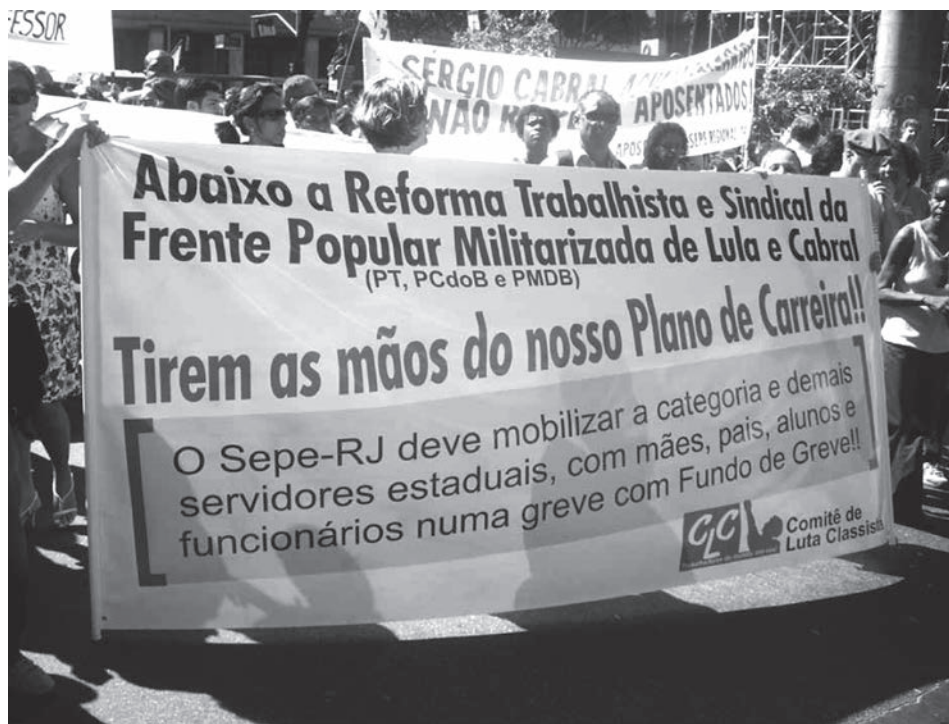
After some days of hesitation, on May 22, on the eve of the inter-university assembly in Ciudad Universitaria (University City, main campus of the National University), the youth group of the pseudo-Trotskyist LTS, Contracorriente, announced that it was joining the new movement, declaring: “Today more than ever, we are all #132!” In an accompanying article the called to expand the movement with a “platform of common demands or manifesto which unifies all the demands of the youth.” A program of *the entire* youth? The implicit premise of the Contracorriente position is that the youth are above the division of society into classes. They couldn’t be more wrong.

In Mexico, access to higher education is highly restrictive: barely 25% of youth between the ages of 19 and 25 attend an institution of higher education. Consequently, many university students are part of the upper petty bourgeoisie or bourgeoisie. Hence the first demands of a student movement arising in the private universities must be for the expropriation of these institutions, for opening the universities to all who wish to study, for control of the universities by councils of students, faculty and workers, for the elimination of all tuition and fees at all educational levels, and for a living stipend for students.

The #YoSoy132 movement seeks “real democracy,” as did the “Outraged” in Europe, to which they trace their origins. To be sure, the right to free, quality public education is no more than a democratic demand, and as such it is not in itself incompatible with capitalism. However, aside from exceptional cases, in this epoch of capitalist decay, this right can only be achieved through revolutionary mobilization of the working class. The fact that even students of the well-off petty bourgeoisie are mobilizing, both in Mexico and southern Europe, indicates the depth of the world economic crisis. But in order to really fight against oppression and poverty, they will have to break their ties with the ruling classes and take their place along side the proletariat and the oppressed in the class struggle.

Despite the tremendous hopes raised by the sudden mobilization of thousands of youth, the #YoSoy132 movement is essentially electoral, with a bourgeois program. As communists, we fundamentally oppose this perspective. We call for *no votes for any of the bourgeois candidates*. It is urgently necessary to build a Leninist party of the proletarian vanguard, armed with the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. Emphasizing that the struggle for achieving the most pressing democratic rights (land to the peasants, democratic rights in reality and not just on paper) goes beyond the framework of the capitalist system, this party would fight for a workers and peasants government to begin the socialist revolution, expropriating the capitalists and spreading internationally.

The Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, seeks to form a fighting propaganda group to prepare the cadre for a future revolutionary workers party. In this struggle it is vital to attract working-class youth, but also the most conscious radicalized youth, to the camp of workers revolution. We invite you to join us in this effort. ■



Banner of the Class-Struggle Committee in a protest by the SEPE teachers union says “Down with the Labor Reform of the Militarized Popular Front of Lula and Cabral.”

Brazil Teachers...

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before the corporate onslaught. They *accept* that tests be used as the basis for teacher evaluations, only trying to limit them to 40% of the points. Union oppositionists are calling for a boycott of the tests *by the parents*, individually, a tactic that is doomed to failure. Now they are circulating a petition calling on local, state and federal governments to “reexamine the evaluation system of public schools” and to “develop a system based on multiple forms of assessment which does not require extensive standardized testing...”

In both cases, of the union bureaucracy and the reformist opposition, their proposals reflect the illusion that we are engaged in a conversation about how to improve education. In contrast, our comrades of Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW), an opposition tendency in the New York education unions, call for occupying closing schools by teachers, students and parents, and have argued for the union to mobilize its forces to stop the administration of these tests, if necessary by strike action. (It is illegal in the state of New York for teachers to strike for any reason.) And while the bureaucracy and oppositionists in their overwhelming majority supported the Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama in 2008, the CSEW, politically linked to the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, called to support neither of the two capitalist parties and to fight for a class-struggle workers party.

Combative Union Struggle in Mexico

The policy of the CSEW might seem rather “advanced” in the context of the United States, but in Mexico it has actually been carried out recently in combative strikes. In the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacán, tens of thousands of teachers mobilized to prevent the administration of a national high-stakes test of students (the ENLACE) and the “Universal Evaluation” of teachers’ knowledge. Not only did they stop educational activity, shutting down the schools, unionists occupied state education departments and, as a precaution, placed the warehouses where the exams were being stored under guard. In three of the states they forced the governors to sign agreements to not administer the tests, and in

Oaxaca, where tens of thousands of teachers occupied the center of the capital for two weeks, teams of some 500 unionists sent out patrols to places where exams might be held to ensure that they did not take place.

In Mexico, the National Education Workers Union (SNTE) is not a workers union but an organ of the state to control teachers. It is one of the main “corporatist” pseudo-unions left over from the regime of the state party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), similar in their integration into the capitalist state to the “*pelego*” (state-controlled) unions in Brazil under the bonapartist Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas (1931-45, 1951-54) or the military dictatorship (1964-85). The current “leader for life” of the SNTE, Elba Esther Gordillo, was installed as president of the organization in 1989 (and her predecessor, Carlos Jonguitud, was removed) by the president of the republic, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, in a private meeting. Under Jonguitud and Gordillo, “union” gunmen murdered well over 100 members of the organization. Currently, the SNTE is supporting an “Agreement for Quality Education” (ACE), which includes the ENLACE test and the “Universal Evaluation” of the teachers.

Fighting against the *charro* (state-imposed) bureaucrats of the SNTE, an opposition current arose in the 1980s, the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE), which today and for many years has controlled the state federations of the SNTE in Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán and Oaxaca, along with a considerable presence in the federal district (Mexico City) and other states. The CNTE acts as an independent organization, calling for extended strikes of up to a half million teachers. Section 22 of the SNTE-CNTE in Oaxaca was the main force behind the turbulent revolt which kicked the governor, the police and other repressive bodies out of the state capital for more than five months in 2006. In 2012, Section 22, after a march of 50,000 teachers on May 15, went out on an unlimited strike on May 21. Tens of thousands of teachers occupied 20 blocks in downtown Oaxaca. A week later, the CNTE called a national strike to oppose implementation of the ACE “and all of its programs.”

In Oaxaca, the strike lasted two and a half weeks, resulting in the state government agreeing to all the teachers’ demands. The ACE was cancelled, as was the ENLACE and the teacher evaluation, financing was agreed upon on alternative programs negotiated with

Section 22. In Chiapas, the governor also agreed to cancel the student exam. In that state as well as Guerrero and Michoacán, where the mobilization of the dissident teachers was weaker than in Oaxaca, they were able to close between 25% and 50% of the schools. But the teachers were able to block the student exams and in some cases the teacher evaluations by occupying the state education departments and the warehouses where the teachers “guarded” the examination booklets. After a month of massive mobilizations, Mexico’s secretary of *governación* (interior minister) agreed to negotiate about the evaluation with the teachers.

The considerable power of mobilization, the militancy and tenacity of the dissident teachers of the CNTE in confronting the capitalist state are obvious. In the midst of the campaign for the July 1 elections, the press and television channels almost unanimously are constantly condemning the teachers in struggle. (In contrast, they have given very favorable coverage to the new movement of petty-bourgeois students, #YoSoy132, who are calling for clean elections.) Yet the unions which are (organizationally) “independent” of corporatist control remain politically subordinated to the bourgeoisie. Today, as in 2006, the CNTE is calling in effect to vote for the candidate of the opposition popular front, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, even though his supporters in the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in Oaxaca voted for the bloody repression in 2006 and today join the chorus of criticism of the teachers.

Our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico, in contrast to the #YoSoy132 movement, are calling for no vote in the elections, opposing all the bourgeois candidates, parties and coalitions. They defend the CNTE teachers and join in their mobilizations. They call, as do the CLC in Brazil and the CSEW in the United States, for control of the schools by assemblies of teachers, students, staff and parents. It is such elected bodies that should evaluate the efforts of the students and teachers, and not some capitalist authorities who are out to destroy the unions and subjugate public education to the orders of capital. **We insist: Sérgio Cabral, Lula, capitalists and imperialists, keep your hands off our schools! We educate, we decide!**

The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, together with the Internationalist Groups in México and the U.S., seek to build the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party, Leninist and Trotskyist, that fights for international socialist revolution, the precondition for achieving an education that is genuinely in the service of the working people and the oppressed. ■

Brazil Olympics...

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For us, this is not a new or accidental position. From our beginnings, we have insisted that police of any sort are the armed fist of capital. Moreover, we translated this Marxist and Trotskyist understanding into practice when our comrades, elected to the leadership of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union (SFPMVR), removed the municipal guards from the union.

The pseudo-Trotskyists of the PSTU, PSOL (Socialism and Freedom Party) and similar reformist groupings became rudderless more than a decade ago with the election victory of the bourgeois popular front of the PT and PMDB and the arrival of President Lula in the Palácio do Planalto. Having grown up in the PT and sharing its parlia-

mentarist outlook, all of them gave “critical” support to Lula in the 2001 elections. Centrists like Causa Operária (PCO) and the LBI (Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista) gave thinly veiled support, calling to defend Lula’s victory when in fact key sectors of the ruling class supported his election, after the candidate gave his guarantees to capital in his “Letter to the Brazilians.”

Ever since, the various components of the opportunist left have been unable to put forward a genuine opposition to the Lula-Dilma government. On the contrary, they always try to push the PT in power to the left, or in the absence of a positive response, to form an alternative popular front. Centrist groups like the LER-QI (Liga Estratégia Revolucionária-Quarta Internacionalista), even when they criticize the reformists for their positions on the police and other issues, come back to the same “strategy,” trying to push the PSTU and PSOL to the left. In both cases, their efforts have uniformly resulted in failure.

A genuine opposition to the popular front and the PT social-democratic managers of capitalism must intervene in the class struggle, seeking to mobilize the working people to defeat the “firemen for imperialism.” While the PSTU, PSOL, PCO, LER-QI, etc. all politely asked the government to withdraw its troops from Haiti, the LQB and CLC have fought to *throw the military police out of Haiti and out of the Rio slums by the action of the workers*. This policy of class-struggle opposition has been repeatedly supported by the Teachers Union of the State of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ) and by the national teachers union, the CNTE.

The hapless reformists, who play on the same field as the PT, seeing the most impoverished sectors of the population shrink a bit, are left without a compass, lacking direction or goal. They cannot manage to propose anything different between their minimum program of minor reforms and their “socialist” maximum program which they confine to Sunday speechifying. Bound hand and foot by their left social-democratic vision, they get fewer and fewer votes in the elections and don’t advance one bit in their political project, which we could sum up as “another popular front is possible.”

Authentic Trotskyists put forward a transitional program of measures which take aim at key elements of capitalist domination. We respond to the global capitalist crisis, which has also affected Brazil, with demands such as a sliding scale of wages and working hours, to distribute work to all and fight inflation. In calling for worker-neighborhood defense of the poor districts, linking the factory to the *favela*, to drive out the police and militias, we seek to mobilize the “heavy battalions” of the proletariat to defend and strengthen the resistance of the poor.

Above all, the central task is the struggle to build a revolutionary workers party based on the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution. A generic workers party or party of the working people, such as proposed by those who falsely claim to be Trotskyist, would at most be a new edition of the “original” PT. But the experience of PT government underlines the impossibility of winning fundamental democratic demands such as national liberation from the grip of imperialism, agrarian revolution and democracy for the oppressed and exploited without fighting for a workers and peasants government to carry out international socialist revolution. This is the program of the LQB, and of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. ■



Left: Immigrant workers union demonstrates, January 2012. Right: fascist Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) movement stages provocation following May 6 election where they got surge of votes due to their attacks on immigrants. Now government is expelling thousands of immigrants. It is necessary to mobilize workers' power to smash the Nazi lynchers and to defend immigrants against racist attacks and government action. **Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**



Greece Austerity...

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by the government, and for “dialogue with stakeholders for the shaping of an effective system of public control” (*Greek Left Review*, 12 June). And contrary to the claims of the bourgeois press that SYRIZA is aiming for a Greek exit from the euro (dubbed “Grexit”), its leader Tsipras has assured capitalist moneymen that “Syria is committed to keeping Greece in the eurozone” (*Financial Times*, 13 June). In the same article, Tsipras identified his program for economic growth and deficit reduction with that of U.S. president Obama, and says SYRIZA only intends to raise taxes to “average European levels.”

In recent days, the press has reported private opinion polls giving New Democracy a slight edge in the June 17 vote. Under Greece’s undemocratic election laws, the leading party gets an additional 50 seats in the interests of government “stability.” But even if SYRIZA comes out ahead, the “left government” it talks of would in fact be a coalition with a section of the Greek bourgeoisie, as it could not win a majority in parliament without the participation of, or support from, at least a big chunk of PASOK. A vote for SYRIZA would not draw a class line against the bourgeoisie, and should be rejected by class-conscious workers. Other Greek leftist organizations, including the OKDE-Spartakos, are part of a second coalition, ANTARSYA (Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow), which criticizes SYRIZA for not attacking capitalism. Yet in a response to its “comrades” of the misnamed United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), which favors SYRIZA, the OKDE-Spartakos says it would take “a critical stance, supporting progressive measures” of a class-collaborationist left government (*International Viewpoint*, May 2012).

While the reformist left is all flocking to support SYRIZA, either enthusiastically or “critically,” the International Communist League (ICL) led by the Spartacist League/U.S. has published a June 5 statement on the Internet by its supporters of the Trotskyist Group of Greece calling to “Vote KKE! No Vote to Syriza!” The ICL argues that “A massive vote to the KKE ... would deliver a slap in the face to the imperialists and their Greek lackeys and could give a boost to the defensive battles of workers across Europe.” In these elections, the KKE has adopted a more leftist language than often in the past, and has rejected calls on it by SYRIZA to join a bourgeois “left” government, which

has reportedly led to a sharp drop in its electoral support while some Communist youth say they will vote for SYRIZA. But would the KKE refuse to vote for such a government of the capitalist state if its votes were needed to keep it in office?

Since the KKE is running independently of and against the bourgeois parties, against the EU and NATO, critical support to its candidates is a conceivable tactic, but in the concrete, given the KKE’s ingrained passive parliamentarism it is hard to see how this could be a lever to move Greek workers toward the needed revolutionary class struggle posed by the desperate economic conditions they face today. A KKE statement, “Between two tough battles” (23 May), talks of “the overthrow of capitalism” and “the construction of the new socialist-communist society” in the sweet bye-and-bye, but all it calls to do today is to be a parliamentary opposition. An 8 May Central Committee statement says that in the next period “the difference between a government and real people’s power will become even clearer” and that the “political electoral activity of the KKE ... constitutes an important legacy for the years to come. Or as a 10 May statement put it, “The KKE is ‘a thorn in the side’ of the bourgeoisie and opportunists.”

An article on a June 5 press conference of KKE general secretary Aleka Papariga headlined, “The strengthening of the KKE will determine the people’s position the day after the elections.” Papariga argues that Greek working people will face either renegotiation of the loan agreements with a new harsh “memorandum,” or a push for

“departure from the Eurozone with the possibility of an uncontrolled state bankruptcy.” So what then? Her answer: organize in the workplace and promote a popular alliance with other hard-hit sectors. To do what? She rightly criticizes SYRIZA for ducking the issue of NATO and the potential use of Greek military bases for an imperialist attack on Syria or Iran. But what would the KKE do, would it mobilize the workers to march on the bases to prevent this? The general secretary denounces the fascist Golden Dawn, one of whose candidates assaulted KKE and SYRIZA women candidates on national TV, but the KKE has opposed mobilizations against the Nazi thugs.

In its election propaganda, the KKE is largely silent about immigrants who are being physically attacked by fascist lynchers, although given its leadership of the PAME union federation it could bring out powerful worker-immigrant defense mobilizations. While Trotskyists oppose the capitalist-imperialist European Union on a proletarian internationalist program, fighting for Europe-wide workers revolution, the KKE rejects the EU in the name of defending Greek sovereignty. While SYRIZA calls for a bourgeois “left” government within the EU, the KKE in calling for Greek “disengagement from the EU with people’s power” at most is talking of bourgeois popular-front government such as Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular in Chile. And while SYRIZA awakens illusions that it can do away with harsh austerity by negotiations, which the eurobankers will not agree to, the KKE doesn’t warn about the imperialist onslaught that an Allende-style

“people’s government” would face.

Greece today is seething with discontent on the cusp of a pre-revolutionary situation. June 17 is not one more parliamentary election, and defensive struggles by the workers are wholly inadequate to counter the capitalist assault. Imperialist spokesmen talk of “Fears of Social and Political Unrest if Greece Leaves Euro” (*New York Times*, 16 June). Neither SYRIZA, nor the KKE or ANTARSYA present a program for revolutionary class struggle. The ISO writes that “SYRIZA’s program recalls what the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky described as ‘transitional politics’ – when, in a period of prolonged economic crisis, serious demands of the working class can lead to a major confrontation with the capitalist class.” Please! What Trotsky called for was not some nebulous “transitional politics,” but a series of *transitional demands* which challenge the rule of capital, “unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat” (as he put it in the 1938 Transitional Program).

Facing mass layoffs and drastic wage cuts, Greek workers should be waging industrial struggle leading to a real general strike (not the endless one-day or 48-hour work stoppages) and workers control of production. A starting point could be the eight-month-old strike at Hellenic Steel in Halyvourgia against firings under labor laws imposed by the troika. PAME, which has a notable presence in the strike, has basically limited the strike, calling only for token regional solidarity strikes for a few hours. Since an Athens court recently ruled the strike illegal, an appropriate response by the workers would be a strike/occupation extending to the company’s plants in Volos and surrounding installations. Likewise, at the state-owned Larco ferronickel mine threatened with privatization, an occupation imposing workers control would be appropriate. But SYRIZA didn’t even denounce the court ruling against the Hellenic Steel strike, and in meeting with Larco unionists, the KKE’s Papariga only said she would take the matter up with the Treasury secretary in charge of privatization.

Criticizing SYRIZA’s talk of “public control” of the banks subsidized by the government, ANTARSYA speaks of nationalization of the banks and big companies under workers control. In reality, that amounts to a program for a slightly more left “left government” of the capitalist state, whereas what is needed is for workers to seize the banks, impose workers control and open the books to reveal the actual figures and dirty dealings of financial vultures while fighting



Demonstration in solidarity with Hellenic Steel strike, July 24. Strike against firings should be trigger for movement to occupy plants, workers control.

Middle East...

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After all the high hopes of 2011, how could things come to this impasse? Key to perpetrating the fraudulent illusion of revolution was proclaiming its goal as simply “democracy.” Democratic demands can mobilize millions in overthrowing bonapartist military/police rule. But in this era of capitalist decay, as imperialist rulers systematically destroy democratic gains of the past, from trade-union rights to public education, they will not and *cannot* tolerate even limited bourgeois democracy for those who toil in the workshops of “globalized” capitalism. If one semi-colonial dictatorship is overthrown, it will be replaced by another, slightly reformulated anti-democratic regime so long as the weak bourgeois ruling class dependent on imperialism remains in power.

In Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere, there are no more jobs now than a year ago. Landed estates stolen by the crony capitalists have not been returned to the peasants. Unions still face heavy repression. And since nothing but a mockery of democracy is possible in the late-developing capitalist countries, where living standards are falling and there is desperate squabbling over the few remaining crumbs, a struggle that limits its goals to “democracy” can end up menacing the democratic rights of the oppressed. With the election of Islamist governments in North Africa in uneasy cohabitation with the military, what limited rights exist for women are at risk. In Egypt, over 12,000 protesters have been tried by military tribunals, more than in the entire three decades of Mubarak’s rule. What kind of “democracy” is that? And in Syria, an imperialist-backed largely Sunni Islamist insurgency could lead to a Lebanon-style sectarian-communal war.

The experience of the abortive “revolutions” of the “Arab spring” is confirming once again what the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky explained over a century ago in his theory of *permanent revolution*. In the impoverished capitalist countries, the fundamental democratic gains of the classical bourgeois revolutions can only be achieved by the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the taking of power by the working class that quickly passes over to socialist tasks and spreads the revolution to the imperialist centers. That was the program of the Russian Revolution of October 1917, led by Lenin and Trotsky, and however “last century” it may appear to many today, events are demonstrating that it holds true in the Middle East and North Africa today. As we wrote last year, it is necessary to “Turn Popular Revolt Into Workers Revolution!”

for the expropriation of the capitalists by a workers government. As in previous articles where we in the League for the Fourth International have put forward this perspective,¹ we have emphasized that the key is building the nucleus of a Leninist-Trotskyist party that fights for Europe-wide socialist revolution. The present crisis in Greece underscores the urgency of this task. ■

¹ See “Greece on the Razor’s Edge” and “Focal Point Europe: Capitalism in Crisis, Class Struggle Erupts,” in *The Internationalist* No. 32, January-February 2011; and “Greek Revolt Against Bankers’ Diktat: Upheaval in Europe Over Capitalist Austerity” in *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011.

Part I: Egypt – Military and Islamists in Power in Alliance with Marauding Imperialism



Egyptian presidency via Reuters

Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood meeting with generals of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces on August 5.

In Egypt, it was the massive strike wave that triggered the downfall of Mubarak after three decades in power. Joyous crowds chanted, “the army and the people are one hand.” The earlier slogan, “The people want the regime to fall,” became “The people have brought down the regime.” But who actually ousted the despotic *Rais* (leader) was not “the people” but the Egyptian military, after getting the green light from Obama and the Pentagon. And while the despised dictator was gone, the military-based dictatorship remained intact. As we warned then:

“In short, the revolution that so many Egyptians yearn for may have begun, but it is far too early to proclaim victory....

In the name of ‘democracy,’ the Egyptian army (with Washington’s backing) just staged a coup.”

–“Egypt: Mubarak Gone, Workers to Power!” (13 February 2011), in *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011

In the following days, the military moved to squelch the revolutionary ferment. It called on demonstrators in Tahrir (Liberation) Square to go home and workers to go back to work. When this failed, the military-appointed cabinet issued a law banning strikes and protests.

At the time of Mubarak’s overthrow it was crucial for Marxists to warn that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was no ally of the poor and working people, that the army was the backbone of the regime, and that it was necessary to continue the uprising to fight for a workers and peasants government. Yet the self-proclaimed socialist left did not do that. Certainly it would have been unpopular with many amid the victory celebrations. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S. wrote in an editorial that “many Egyptians will welcome the transfer of authority to leaders of the military as an alternative to Mubarak and his top henchmen,” saying only that this posed “new questions for Egypt’s revolution.” New questions, but no answers. How about a call for “No alliance with the military butchers”? Not from these tailists.

In a report from Tahrir Square on the same day, Mostafa Omar, a spokesman of Egypt’s Revolutionary Socialists (RS), repeated the mantra:

“At this point, people want a role for the armed forces in ensuring that the remnants of the old regime will be dismantled and figuring out a transition.... There will be mass pressure on the army to live up to those promises.”

–*Socialist Worker*, 11 February 2011

A month later, speaking to an ISO-sponsored event at the Left Forum in New York, Omar noted: “Sections of activists that were quiet before are now publicly criticizing the timidity of the Council in meeting the revolution’s demands for democracy and social justice – something you could not do in the first few weeks after February 11. Some are drawing the conclusion that the army is complicit in counter-revolutionary actions” (*Socialist Worker*, 30 March 2011). Certainly the ISO and its cothinkers in the Egyptian RS did not do that on February 11 and immediately thereafter, much less call for struggle to bring down the SCAF.

Beyond tailing after the masses, the ISO and RS social democrats did not even seek workers power, speaking instead of a “democratic revolution.” This is the hoary program of “two-stage revolution” – first (bourgeois) democracy, then sometime later socialism – put forward the by the Menshevik opponents of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks in 1917 and later taken up by Stalin. Yet history has shown repeatedly that the second stage never comes, and instead the supposed democratic “allies” turn on the socialists and begin persecuting and even massacring them. In Egypt, when the mass pressure on the military eventually came, the SCAF went after striking workers and the secular and leftist youth who sparked the uprising, murderously attacking demonstrators in Tahrir Square in early April with armored cars and live ammunition.

Islamist-Imperialist-Militarist Alliance

In this and subsequent attacks on demonstrators, leftists and workers, the ruling military junta was backed by the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1928 by Egyptian imam Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood is a mass Islamist organization dedicated to ordering society on the basis of Islamic law (sharia) according to the Sunni tradition. Over the decades it has built up a clientele of millions of impoverished Egyptians through social works while organizing conservative businessmen and professionals. Its main leader, Khairat al-Shater, the presidential candidate of the Brotherhood-sponsored Freedom and Justice Party until he was disqualified by the SCAF, is a millionaire financier, as are a number of MB leaders. After being jailed under the previous regime, they are now moving to displace Mubarak’s cronies as

leaders of the business sector¹.

The Brotherhood is a bulwark of capitalism and an archenemy of communism, socialism, trade unions, strikes, secularism, democratic rights for women or anything else that goes against the interests of capital or Islamic law. It is not against alliances with the military and imperialism, quite the contrary. In the late 1940s when the Egyptian Communist Party was making big gains in the working class, Hassan al-Banna worked closely with the British military occupiers and his MB was the main force fighting the left. In the early ‘50s, the Brotherhood was deeply involved in the Free Officers coup which ousted King Farouk, but later turned against nationalist colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, tried to assassinate him and was banned. Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat, a former Brother, released MB prisoners but was subsequently killed by Islamist *officers*.

Under Mubarak’s rule, the Muslim Brotherhood was tolerated, its leaders sometimes jailed to keep them in line. The MB only joined the demonstrations at the end. In the immediate aftermath it mobilized to approve the military’s constitutional decree, since its Article 2 made Islam the state religion and the principles of sharia the basis for law. Over the next few months, the MB denounced protests against the SCAF as “counterrevolutionary.” They were joined in this by the more extreme Salafi and jihadi Islamists, who together with the MB held a giant rally in Cairo at the end of July calling for the imposition of sharia, for “national unity” with the army and denouncing secular liberals and the left. In September and October, as a new wave of strikes broke out, the Islamists and the military both opposed them. Islamists and the military competed in attacking religious minorities.

On the eve of parliamentary elections in November 2011, when the SCAF spelled out that it intended to act as arbiter over a new constitution, posing as a defender of individual rights, the Islamists for the first time mobilized massively calling to end military rule. But as battles raged, the MB made a deal to leave the military in power until June 2012. After an MB/FJP-led alliance took half the parliamentary vote and a Salafist bloc headed by the Al Nour party won another 28%, the skirmishing continued through the presidential elections. In the first round in May the Islamist vote plummeted from over three-quarters to one-quarter while the Nasserite candidate, Hamdeen Sabahi, did far better than the MB’s Mohammed Morsi in Alexandria, Cairo, Port Said and the industrial cities of the Nile Delta. But in the June run-off, the Islamist Morsi beat the representative of the “*feloul*” (the old regime), Ahmed Shafik, Mubarak’s last prime minister.

Once again, the regime pulled a last-minute maneuver: on the eve of the vote, the Mubarak-appointed supreme court threw out much of the parliamentary election results and dissolved parliament; then hours after the polls closed the SCAF issued a decree gutting presidential powers. The Brotherhood and many liberals cried “*coup d’état*” – although it was more of a “self-coup” since the military already controlled all the levers of power. This set off days of jockeying for position and many stories in the media about a clash between the Islamists and the leaders of the armed forces. Clinton and Panetta flew in to talk

¹ See “The Economic Vision of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Millionaires,” *Bloomberg Business Week*, 19 April 2012.

with both sides. In reality both the SCAF and the MB are willing to do business with each other: this was maneuvering over the terms of the deal. *The real contradiction, as it has been throughout, is between the working class and a militarist-Islamist-imperialist alliance.*

Reformist Socialists Call for Vote for Muslim Brotherhood

As the second round election approached, many on the left lamented that voters were being given the “choice” between “jail or the veil.” Yet at this point, the Revolutionary Socialists suddenly sprung a call on “all the reformist and revolutionary forces” to “form a national front that stands against the candidate of the counterrevolution,” Shafik (*Socialist Worker* [UK], 2 June). In other words, it was an appeal to vote for Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood. This was linked to “demands” on Morsi and the MB to form a coalition government with the Nasserite Sabahi and liberal Islamist al-Fotouh and select a prime minister outside the FJP; to approve a “civil” (code word for secular) constitution, guarantee the right to strike, include representatives of Copts, workers and youth in a constituent assembly, etc.

The RS’s shamefaced call to vote for a bourgeois candidate was a betrayal of the most basic Marxist political principle of working-class independence. Moreover, this was not your usual popular-front coalition tying the workers organizations to some bourgeois “progressives,” it was calling to elect an outright reactionary. The demands tacked on were just window dressing, since there is no way the Brotherhood would agree to them. Even if they did, this would be a trap for the left and would not benefit Egyptian workers. Morsi has made it clear he will agree to a \$3.2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, which will include onerous conditions. The job of any “left” representatives in an MB government would be to impose the cutbacks and keep a lid on workers’ protests. After the dirty work was done, they would be tossed aside.

The call to vote for the MB/FJP leader caused a commotion inside the RS, and on June 4 the leadership produced a letter “To the comrades” regretting the “muddling and confusion” caused by their “hurried” appeal made after the “shock” of the first-round election result (namely that Shafik would be in the runoff) caused “panic for some.” But the leadership upheld and made explicit “the call not to vote for Ahmed Shafik, and therefore to vote for the Brotherhood candidate Morsi.” Internationally, while the RS’s mentors in the British Socialist Workers Party supported this opportunist call, it threw the American ISO for a loop. The ISO posted an article oh-so-politely criticizing the RS’ stand, saying “for socialists to call for a lesser-evil vote for the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, an avowedly pro-capitalist organization committed to Islamist politics” raises “many troubling questions” (*Socialist Worker*, 31 May).

Mostafa Ali wrote back for the RS defending its call, saying the ISO “fell into a disastrous trap.” He counted the vote for MB leader Morsi in the first round as part of a “majority vote for the revolution” (*Socialist Worker*, 3 June). Yet before that vote, Ali had argued that “for the left, the Brotherhood is considered to be in the camp of the old regime and the counterrevolution” (*Social-*



Mohamed El Shamy/al-Masry al-Youm

Military forces chase woman during attack on Tahrir Square, Cairo, 17 December 2011. The day before, military attack on protesters left 8 dead, 299 injured.

ist Worker, 22 May). This led to a further exchange in which the ISO repeated back what the RS had said earlier about the MB being in cahoots with the military against strikes, leftists, etc., while Ali replied by citing the ISO’s longstanding position of making political blocs with “reformist Islamist groups.” (For that matter, the ISO twice endorsed Ralph Nader, a flag-waving avowedly pro-capitalist candidate who opposes women’s right to abortion and ran on a populist platform bashing immigrants.) And with that, they diplomatically dropped the subject.

Ali’s sharpest rejoinder to the ISO was that it didn’t see the difference between the danger to “the revolution” of the Muslim Brotherhood’s “right-wing program” and the return of “a regime ready to slaughter the revolution.” In fact, *the MB is quite prepared to slaughter any real revolution* through its still-tenuous alliance with the military and imperialism, or with Islamist squads who have repeatedly attacked leftists. Conservatives of the Muslim Brotherhood may have their differences with Salafists and jihadis, yet they are all committed to Islamic law and capitalism. When MB supporters proclaim “Islam is the solution” and “the Koran is our constitution,” when MB leader el-Shater calls for wholesale privatization, this is not empty rhetoric. This is a mortal threat to working people because *neither Islamists, nor militarists, nor imperialists nor domestic capitalists can tolerate democracy for the toilers they exploit.*

The reality is that the SWP, ISO and RS are all reformist organizations deeply committed to pursuing opportunist policies – their only differences are over who to tail after and how far to go. At the same time, the

Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists without a doubt have among their ranks many committed militants who have braved repression. Yet in the continuing turmoil, such betrayals (this was far worse than a mistake) can have disastrous consequences. Today, many in the Cairo streets are saying that a “second revolution” is needed. But as the Muslim Brotherhood was losing support, particularly among workers, the RS told people to vote for the MB. While it is false to say that the overthrow of Mubarak amounted to a revolution, the stark choice facing Egyptian working people today is indeed revolution or counterrevolution. And the stark fact is that *both Morsi and Shafik were candidates of counterrevolution.*

If anyone still thought that voting against the Muslim Brotherhood would be a blow against the ruling military, they should have been disabused of this notion as soon as Morsi took office. The new president tacitly agreed to the SCAF’s sharp limitations on his powers, and while the MB-dominated parliament “challenged” the supreme court’s order dissolving it by meeting ... it then closed the session after 15 minutes. And although Morsi released some jailed Islamists and jihadis, he has done nothing about the thousands of protesters tried by closed-door military tribunals. From Hassan al-Banna to Mohammed Morsi, the Brotherhood has always sought an alliance with the capitalist military.

Reformist Support for Islamism, Product of Clifflite Anti-Sovietism

In justifying their precipitous call in a moment of “shock” and “panic for some” to vote for the candidate of the Muslim

Brotherhood, the RS leaders argued that this was just carrying out a policy of blocking with “moderate Islamism” which had been decided long ago. That at least is true. For years, the RS and their SWP mentors held antiwar conferences in Cairo together with top MB leaders. They all hark back to the anti-Marxist tract by the late Chris Harman, *The Prophet and the Proletariat* (1994). Flitting from Egypt to Algeria to the Sudan to Afghanistan and Iran, SWP honcho Harman presents a catalogue of erudite and treacherous arguments for why socialists should ally with Islamic reaction ... “sometimes.” The Islamists recruit among the downtrodden masses and the impoverished petty bourgeoisie; they are a response to the bankruptcy of Stalinism and nationalism; they sometimes adopt “anti-imperialist” postures, etc.

In more recent years, the SWP/ISO/RS buttress their arguments by lambasting Islamophobia and bourgeois ideologues who equate Islamism with fascism. (One of the main purveyors of the “Islamofascism” excuse for supporting imperialism was ex-International Socialists/SWP member Christopher Hitchens.) Yet the policy of politically allying with deeply anti-communist, reactionary Islamists has been literally suicidal, in the case of Khomeini’s Iran, where tens of thousands of leftists were executed by the “Islamic Revolution.” (Harman faults the “mistaken positions” of the Iranian left for this.) While Trotskyists called for “Down with Shah, No to Khomeini!” the ISO in the U.S. published gushing headlines on Khomeini’s Iran like “The Form – Religious, the Spirit – Revolution!” (*Socialist Worker*, January 1979).

More fundamentally for this social-democratic current, this policy was a post-facto justification for supporting Islamic reaction in alliance with imperialism against the Soviet Union. Over Afghanistan, where the Soviet Army intervened to prop up a weak reform government against the onslaught of U.S.-financed Islamic mujahedin, the British SWP demanded “Troops Out of Afghanistan!” (*Socialist Worker*, 12 January 1980). An article in the SWP’s journal *International Socialism* (Spring 1981) praised the *mujahedin* as “brave freedom fighters giving their lives in a struggle against imperialism,” referring to the Soviet intervention. While these anti-Soviet social democrats lined up with imperialism in Cold War II, genuine Trotskyists instead proclaimed, “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the Gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan Peoples!”

We strongly *greeted* Soviet intervention in defense of a regime carrying out a (very limited) land reform, which defended



Left: Afghan mujahedin executes communist school teacher during imperialist-sponsored proxy war against Soviet Union. Right: Afghan women’s militia in 1988. Trotskyists hailed Soviet intervention, Clifflites praised CIA’s “holy warriors” as “freedom fighters.” Now they’re back together again in alliance with Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.



EFITU trade unionists in Tahrir Square on eve of Mubarak ouster, February 2011. Banner reads; “The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions supports the demands of the people’s revolution and calls for a general strike of Egyptian workers.”

women who refused to wear the Islamic veil and whose teachers were murdered by the CIA’s “holy warriors” for the “crime” of teaching girls to read. Harman, in contrast, criticized the Afghan land reform for supposedly provoking “spontaneous risings from all sections of the rural population.” Those “spontaneous” uprisings were led by the landowners, khans and mullahs, they were also sparked by the reform government’s decrees favoring women’s rights, and (it was confirmed years later) were financed and encouraged by the CIA even *before* the Soviet intervention.

So there is a pre-history to the SWP/ISO/RS policy of political support to Islamism, and it all goes back to the anti-Sovietism of their godfather Tony Cliff, the founder of the International Socialist Tendency. Cliff broke with Trotskyism at the onset of the first Cold War, declaring the USSR under Stalin to be “state capitalist.” He formalized the break with the Fourth International during the Korean War when he refused to support Soviet-backed North Korea against the U.S./U.N. imperialist attack. From that time on, although claiming to represent a “third camp” (“neither Moscow nor Washington”), in fact, the Cliffites have acted as “socialist” hangers-on of the “first camp” – U.S./NATO imperialism. Today, by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, in increasingly open alliance with Washington, and the U.S.-backed Islamist insurgency in Syria, the latter-day Cliffites are once again backing the same horse as the imperialists.

Egypt under the Muslim Brotherhood and the military may not be identical to Iran under Khomeini and the military. But in Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt or elsewhere, Islamism is antithetical to communism. The Islamists understand this, so do the imperialists. Hard-line Cold Warrior John Foster Dulles, Republican president Dwight Eisenhower’s future Secretary of State, wrote in his tract *War or Peace* (1950): “The religions of the East are deeply rooted and have many precious values. Their spiritual beliefs cannot be reconciled with Commu-

nist atheism and materialism. That creates a common bond between us, and our task is to find it and develop it.” That is exactly what U.S. imperialism did by allying with Islamist *mujahedin* against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s, pouring in over \$1 billion a year in the biggest CIA operation in history. And then as now, it gets some cover on their left flank from the fake-left.

Egyptian Working Class Needs an Internationalist Communist Vanguard

Marxists have always insisted on independence from all wings of the bourgeois as the bottom line of working-class politics. Karl Marx put it succinctly in a speech to the International Workingmen’s Association (the First International) in September 1871, summing up the lessons of the failed 1848 revolutions and the Paris Commune: “Our politics must be working-class politics. The workers’ party must never be the tagtail of any bourgeois party; it must be independent and have its own policy.” This principled opposition to class collaboration was carried forward in Trotsky’s political opposition to the “popular fronts” of the 1930s, when the workers organizations tied their ranks to capitalist parties, often no more than “the shadow of the bourgeoisie,” but which acted as barriers to proletarian revolution (see the Internationalist Group bulletin on *The Popular Front: Roadblock to Revolution* [May 2007]).

Thus in Egypt the League for the Fourth International has opposed political blocs not only with “moderate” Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood but also with bourgeois secular liberals like Mohammed El Baradei. The RS (backed by the ISO and SWP), on the other hand, has blocked with both, and their main complaint against the liberals (and against the former Muslim Brotherhood youth, now called the Egyptian Current) is that they want to have a “third way,” supporting neither the SCAF nor the MB! Instead of navigating among the various bourgeois forces, genuine Marxists

fighting for socialist revolution look to the working class. And in recent weeks workers on the Nile have once again been fighting back hard.

It has been well-documented and is widely known that since 2006, the Egyptian working class has been engaged in the largest strike wave in its history. Moreover, while the protests that led to the downfall of Mubarak were started by petty-bourgeois youth, it was the strike action by hundreds of thousands of workers on 9-11 February 2011 that forced the military to finally oust the hated autocrat. Ever since then, there have been numerous strikes. Many have been led by the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), which was founded just days after the revolt broke out. Historian Joel Beinin reported that at least 150,000 workers participated in 489 strikes in February 2011. The EFITU issued a list of “Demands of the Workers in the Revolution” which proclaimed:

“If this revolution does not lead to the fair distribution of wealth it is not worth anything. Freedoms are not complete without social freedoms. The right to vote is naturally dependent on the right to a loaf of bread.”

–Joel Beinin, *The Rise of Egypt’s Workers* (Carnegie Papers, June 2012)

Those demands and calls for do not basically go beyond the call for democracy and do not challenge capitalism. Beinin notes: “Many public and private sector managers treat workers, especially women, no less contemptuously than they did in the Mubarak era.” When women workers of a textile company that went bankrupt held a sit-in to demand back wages they were owed, at the invitation of a police officer (who said that the blood money for their deaths would only be \$8 each), a truck driver plowed into them, badly injuring one and killing another. The driver was released. A year after the overthrow of Mubarak, many new unions have been formed and the EFITU now claims over 2 million members. But the military still continues

to uphold the corporatist Egyptian Trade Union Federation, which is an organ of state control of labor.

This July, following the election, workers have again launched a new wave of strikes, notably in the center of labor militancy in the past, Mahalla al-Kubra, a textile city in the middle of the Nile Delta. Some 23,000 workers of the state-owned Misr Spinning and Weaving factory walked out on February 17 and were joined by another 12,000 workers from other state textile mills. They returned a week later after receiving some concessions, but threatened to go out again in September. Other strikes include the Pirelli Tire workers. The English-language *Egypt Independent* (22 July) reported that “Strikes sweep Minya, Fayoum and Ismailia.” This shows that the Egyptian working class is ready to fight. But to stand up to and *defeat* the military and the MB government (which the reformist socialists voted for!), workers must fight politically.

This includes centrally building a workers party, and not just some reformist parliamentary “labor party” such as the Democratic Workers Party (DWP) that the RS and others launched in April 2011. The program of the DWP is limited to reforms under capitalism such as land reform, rent control and the like. Its founders make clear that this is *not* to be a revolutionary party. RS leader and DWP founder Kamal Khalil declared, “if this was a vanguard’s party we would’ve named it the Socialist Labor Party, or the Communist Workers’ Party, and its agenda would have been geared toward revolutionary socialism rather than reform” (*Egypt Independent*, 15 April 2011). This in the midst of convulsive struggles which the RS claims is already a revolution!

Again, this reformist policy is diametrically counterposed to that of Leon Trotsky, who in made clear in discussions on the Transitional Program that calling for a workers party in the United States Marxists advocate a party that fights for a series of transitional demands including workers control of industry, the formation of factory committees and a “workers and farmers’ government.” In Egypt today, the focus of communists should not be on the terrain of bourgeois elections but in building such a workers party on a program of revolutionary class struggle, and on founding workers committees and councils that would challenge the bourgeois state. Such bodies are directly posed by struggles in industrial centers with a militant tradition such as Mahalla. But who on the Egyptian left is fighting for such a program?

The impoverished masses of the Near East certainly yearn for revolution. For decades they have groaned under the iron heel of dictatorships either installed and financed by the Western imperialists (Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, the Arabian peninsula monarchies, etc.) or periodically in league with them (Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Qaddafi’s Libya and Assad’s Syria all allied with the U.S. at one time or another). Even those regimes that occasionally went in for “socialist” rhetoric signed on to the “free market” policies known as “neo-liberalism,” under which state industries were sold off to cronies, living costs soared as subsidies were abolished, and a tiny elite grew obscenely wealthy while working people saw their standard of living plummet. This extreme disparity between fabulous riches and deadening poverty drove the first Arab revolts.

The revolutionary potential is there, but it requires an internationalist communist vanguard party to guide it toward the goal of overthrowing all the emirs, kings, presidents and generals, the Islamists and Zionists, in a socialist federation of the Near East. Only such a framework will make possible a genuine solution to the oppression of the Palestinian people, suffering not only under the yoke of the Zionist militarists of Israel but also under the various Arab regimes which have pretended to be their benefactors. Such a voluntary federation on the basis of workers rule would for the first time make possible overcoming the bloody sectarian-communal conflicts which have beset states like Lebanon and Syria as well as Palestine, and make possible a united socialist Kurdistan, in this region of interpenetrated peoples where artificial borders drawn up by the imperialists have set the oppressed masses at each others' throats.

The League for the Fourth International seeks to build such a world party of socialist revolution.

COMING NEXT: CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA

Promesas...

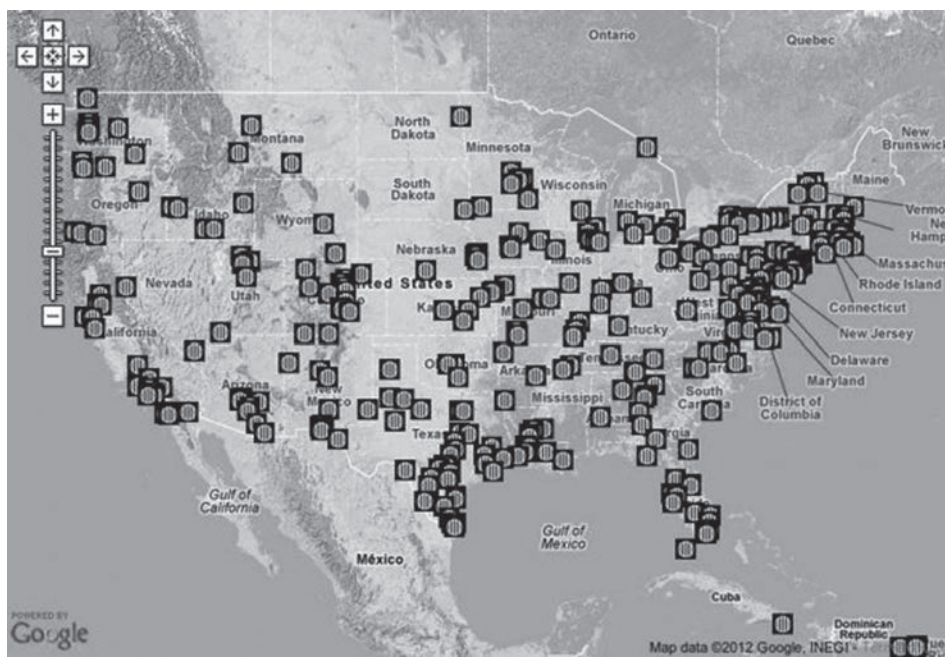
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imperialistas.¹ No obstante el testimonio de los generales, la histeria antiinmigrante ha enterrado el Dream Act en el Congreso nacional y en casi todas las legislaturas estatales. Ante ese fracaso, la administración Obama quería cosechar las simpatías de y hacia este sector considerado “inocente” hasta por muchos reaccionarios. Y con los jóvenes *dreamers* (soñadores), que con osadía salieron de las tinieblas para afirmar su identidad, la jugada dio resultado. Muchos acogieron el anuncio de la acción diferida con lágrimas en los ojos.

Pero veamos más de cerca lo que se aprobó. No sólo no amnistía, sino que tampoco otorga el estatus de residencia, ni permite el acceso a la ciudadanía. Tampoco es una orden ejecutiva: es sólo un memorándum interno de la secretaria del Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria (DHS), una agencia tenebrosa que está al centro de la intensificada campaña represiva en Estados Unidos. De hecho, gracias al DHS y su Agencia de Control de Aduanas e Inmigración (ICE), bajo Bush y Obama, *los inmigrantes indocumentados en EE.UU. ya viven en un estado policíaco*. Aún si se consiguiera la acción diferida, esta medida podría ser retirada mañana si la jefa del DHS cambia su opinión, o si los republicanos ganan las elecciones. Especialistas en derecho migratorio están recomendando que no se haga uso de la medida hasta ver el resultado electoral en noviembre.

Hay que tener presente que actualmente el gobierno normalmente no sabe si un joven es inmigrante o no. Cuando se solicita la acción diferida, uno entra en el sistema de control de inmigrantes. Como observó un abogado de Phoenix, Arizona especializado en asuntos migratorios, una vez adentro “es posible que no se pueda volver al anonimato”. Además, habría que entregar un montón de documentos, informando a las autoridades sobre el paradero y estado migratorio de los padres; probablemente se tendría que pagar una tasa administrativa bastante alta; además, los solicitantes serán sometidos a una revisión de antecedentes

¹ Los proyectos de ley estatales generalmente carecen de esa cláusula, y por lo tanto hemos tomado una posición diferente respecto a ellos (ver nota en *The Internationalist/El Internacionalista*, suplemento de mayo de 2012, p. 11).



Campos de concentración USA: algunos de los 961 centros de detención para inmigrantes indocumentados. Abajo: centro de detención en Texas.



Kirsten Luce/Washington Post

por el FBI. En los hechos, es probable que sólo una capa reducida de jóvenes de clase media que quieren obtener título universitario se beneficiará de esta medida. Para el grueso de los jóvenes de los barrios de inmigrantes esta medida ofrece poco, o nada.

Los jóvenes que fueran aprobados sólo lograrían que su deportación sea prorrogada, no suspendida. A diferencia del “estatus de protección temporal” concedido a centroamericanos, la anunciada acción de Obama no cambia el estado migratorio de los jóvenes afectados. Sólo se trata de un “ejercicio discrecional de la fiscalía” al decidir temporalmente no proceder con la deportación. Hace un año, el director del ICE hizo un anuncio parecido, al sostener que con base en la discrecionalidad de la fiscalía, no procederían en el futuro a la expulsión del país de personas de “baja prioridad”. Prometió revisar 340 mil casos pendientes en los que ya se ha iniciado el “procedimiento de remoción”. Pero de los 200 mil casos revisados hasta la fecha, sólo el 2% han sido cerrados (*Arizona Republic*, 16 de junio). O sea, el efecto ha sido prácticamente nulo.

SB1070 entra en vigor: “¡Muestran sus papeles!”

Si la medida anunciada por el presidente Obama no resultó tan benéfica para los jóvenes indocumentados como muchos creían, la decisión de la Corte Suprema que permite la entrada en vigor del elemento central de la Ley SB1070 de Arizona garantiza un aumento en el acoso policial contra inmigrantes e hispanos, y una avalancha de litigios en torno a esta y otras leyes racistas semejantes. Ya causó zozobra en Arizona, donde al conocer el veredicto padres de familia acudieron a los despachos de abogados para tramitar cartas de patria potestad transfiriendo a parientes la custodia de sus hijos

en caso de que los padres sean detenidos en la calle o en la carretera bajo la nueva ley. (Ya hay varios miles de indocumentados arrestados cuyos hijos han sido secuestrados por las autoridades y en algunos casos han sido dados en adopción.)

En términos estrictamente legales, el dictamen de la Corte tiene elementos contradictorios. Rechazó la **sección 3** de la Ley SB1070 que quería convertir en delito el no portar papeles de registro de extranjeros. Así que si un policía de Arizona u otro estado exige que muestre sus papeles, el interrogado no está obligado a dárselos. Asimismo anuló la **sección 5** que haría ilegal que un indocumentado busque trabajo. Prohibiendo a los estados instituir leyes sobre la materia, la Corte Suprema subrayó que el Congreso, al responsabilizar al empleador, “hizo una decisión deliberada de no imponer castigos penales sobre extranjeros que buscan o realizan un empleo no autorizado”. Explicitó así que los jornaleros que son hostigados por la policía, y no sólo en Arizona, no cometen ninguna violación de las leyes al buscar trabajo.

La Corte también derogó la **sección 6** de la ley que habría autorizado el arresto sin orden judicial de una persona por el solo hecho de ser indocumentado. Al hacerlo, el más alto tribunal del país reafirmó textualmente que “Como regla general, no es un delito que un extranjero que puede ser removido permanezca en Estados Unidos”. Esto ha sido el caso durante muchos años, pero debe enfurecer a los xenófobos verlo reafirmado sin ambages por esta Suprema Corte tan reaccionaria. No obstante, mientras los expertos en derecho migratorio aplauden estas partes del dictamen, los partidarios de SB1070 subrayan, con razón, que se permitió la puesta en vigor de la pieza central, la **sección 2B**, que obliga a los policías a pedir información sobre el

estado migratorio de un interpelado cuando sospechen que sea indocumentado.

Aun en este caso, hubo limitaciones. No se permite detener a personas solamente para indagar sobre su condición migratoria. Esto quiere decir que la policía tiene que buscar un pretexto, aunque en este terreno los agentes ya están bien adiestrados. Luego se estipula que no se puede prolongar la detención más de lo normal para verificar su estatus. Sin embargo, sólo se trata de cuestiones de forma. Lo más importante es que no se emitió una decisión sobre si la Ley SB1070 viola la Cuarta Enmienda a la Constitución de EE.UU. que prohíbe las “pesquisas y aprehensiones arbitrarias” como sería la detención de una persona en virtud de un perfil racial. No se dictaminó sobre este aspecto clave porque el procurador general de la nación, que interpuso la demanda por una medida cautelar impidiendo la implementación de la ley, *no lo pidió*.

El gobierno de Obama sólo objetó que la ley de Arizona violara la primacía del gobierno federal en materia migratoria. Hay múltiples demandas adicionales de particulares y grupos de derechos del inmigrante contra la SB1070, además del caso subyacente a esta demanda, que tratan del carácter discriminatorio de la ley. La Corte aceptó (y casi solicitó), que podría haber “impugnaciones constitucionales sobre el modo en que se interpreta y aplica la ley después de que entre en vigor”. Es evidente para todos que el principal criterio para la pesquisa por estatus migratorio será la etnia y la apariencia física de la persona interpelada. Como admitió el *sheriff* (alguacil) del condado de Santa Clara, “Soy moreno e hispano. Si me pongo una gorra de béisbol y zapatos deportivos y estoy en un lugar no oportuno, me van a interpelar” (*Arizona Republic*, 26 de junio).

Sin embargo, una eventual impugnación jurídica no les preocupa a los partidarios de la ley racista. Tampoco les molestan las declaraciones del DHS de que no van a hacer detenciones fuera de sus categorías prioritarias. La policía no está autorizada para arrestar a los indocumentados, ni tiene espacio en sus calabozos: ya hay una ciudad de carpas frente a la cárcel del condado de Maricopa para alojar a 2 mil detenidos de las redadas del *sheriff* Joe Arpaio. Lo que buscan es la “deportación mediante una guerra de desgaste”. Quieren hacer la vida imposible para los migrantes. Piensan que así los obligarán a “retornar a casa”, pasando por alto que Arizona es territorio robado de México. En todo caso, si se van, no será al sur de la frontera sino a otros estados de EE.UU. Ante leyes semejantes en Alabama y Georgia, miles huyeron hacia el norte.

Movilizar a la clase obrera para derrotar la guerra racista contra los inmigrantes

En este año de elecciones los demócratas necesitan los votos de los hispanos y de los 12.5 millones de inmigrantes que han logrado la ciudadanía y son votantes. Conscientes de que no han hecho nada para cumplir con las promesas de campaña del 2008, quieren convertir la medida de acción diferida a favor de los jóvenes indocumentados y el temor producido por la ley racista de Arizona en materia de campaña para motivar el voto a favor de Obama. Como escribe un profesor, Humberto Caspa, en *El Diario/La Prensa* (22 de junio): “Así la nueva orden de Obama es una buena noticia para los estudiantes indocumentados, aunque es solo la primera batalla vencida.

The Internationalist



Contingente internacionalista en la marcha del 1° de mayo de 2012 en Nueva York.

Otra batalla importantísima será librada el próximo noviembre cuando se decidirá si el presidente Obama mantendrá su puesto o será remplazado por un líder republicano”.

La lucha por defender a los inmigrantes no puede ganarse –ni siquiera librarse– en el terreno electoral burgués. La contienda es fundamentalmente de clase. Los dos partidos del capital representan un sistema que lucra con la sobreexplotación de millones de trabajadores que carecen de los derechos más fundamentales. Si hay divisiones entre la clase dominante sobre la mítica “reforma migratoria” es porque los capitalistas tienen intereses contradictorios con respecto a los trabajadores venidos del exterior. Por un lado desean explotar en gran escala esta mano de obra barata; por otro lado, no quieren que los explotados puedan resistir. Su solución preferida sería un sistema que con eufemismo espeluznante llaman “trabajadores huéspedes”, o sea contratados, como el del programa de *braceros* durante y después de la II Guerra Mundial.

Así, en esta época de decadencia del capitalismo, los patrones introducen formas de trabajo forzado características de la era de brutal acumulación primitiva del capital. La contratación de trabajadores sin derechos se asemeja al trabajo servil, como la servidumbre por deudas (*debt servitude*) de blancos en las colonias norteamericanas, o el peonaje que reemplazó la encomienda en México. No hay mejor prueba de que, al contrario de lo que sostienen los ilusos reformistas que pretenden que las fuerzas productivas siguen creciendo, de hecho el sistema capitalista está pudriéndose, y eso a un ritmo cada vez más febril, destruyendo sindicatos, eliminando programas sociales, echando por tierra derechos democráticos conquistados en siglos pasados.

Un portavoz autorizado del imperialismo norteamericano, Bill Keller, ex redactor ejecutivo del *New York Times*, por ejemplo, propone adoptar una cédula de identidad nacional, que incluya datos biométricos. Así quiere introducir un método de control propicio para un *estado policíaco para todos*. Eso anhelan los burgueses “ilustrados”. Los más bárbaros prefieren los métodos directamente fascistas, como en el caso de los cazamigrantes “Minuteman”. Pero la represión ejercida

por unas cuantas bandas paramilitares, o incluso por el alguacil del condado de Maricopa (38 mil indocumentados detenidos hasta finales de 2010) ni de lejos se compara con el millón de inmigrantes detenidos cada año en los centros del ICE en Arizona. *El mayor represor de inmigrantes, y con mucho, es el liberal demócrata Barack Obama.*

La policía migratoria, la odiada *migra*, es un aparato de represión racista hasta la médula, en particular contra los latinos. Aunque el 58% de los 11 millones de indocumentados residentes en EE.UU. (según estimaciones oficiales) son de origen mexicano, éstos constituyen el 73% de los deportados, y los latinoamericanos el 97%. En realidad, *la política migratoria del gobierno Obama es un programa de remoción de latinos*, de mexicanos en particular. El gobierno también ha lanzado una persecución especial en contra de los inmigrantes árabes o del sur asiático. Es más, bajo el programa de “Comunidades Seguras” la tercera parte de los deportados tiene cónyuges o hijos que son ciudadanos norteamericanos. Y aunque el ICE dice que se enfoca en “criminales”, el año pasado grupos de defensa de los migrantes en Boston mostraron que la mitad de los deportados bajo este programa fueron detenidos por infracciones de tráfico.

El alcalde de Boston teme que si el programa de Comunidades Seguras sigue, “la gente dirá que los policías son *gestapos*”, refiriéndose a la temida policía secreta de la Alemania fascista. De hecho, la *migra* sí es una *gestapo*, una policía dedicada a la represión de todo un sector de la población (judíos y comunistas en Alemania, inmigrantes indocumentados aquí), que arresta en masa gente que no ha cometido ningún delito y los envía a campos de concentración (aquí denominados “centros de detención”). No por casualidad los uniformes negros y armamento pesado del ICE (incluso tienen tanques) se asemeja asombrosamente a los de las tropas de choque de los SS nazis: en ambos casos la intención es de aterrorizar. Y a pesar de todas las protestas, el gobierno de Obama defiende el programa Comunidades Seguras contra toda crítica.

Sin embargo, la clase dominante capitalista no puede resolver su “problema migratorio” con métodos policíacos. El *New York*

Times (17 de mayo de 2005) llegó a la conclusión de que “el deportar a la totalidad de los 12 millones de inmigrantes ilegales en los Estados Unidos no sería factible”. Cita la falta de personal policial y el costo de nuevos centros de detención (ya rondan a un millar). Pero el problema mayor para la burguesía es que la economía norteamericana ya no puede prescindir de esos millones de trabajadores. Más del 15 por ciento de la fuerza laboral de EE.UU. es de trabajadores nacidos en el exterior. El porcentaje es aún mayor en algunos

empleos como la agricultura (35 por ciento) y la construcción (27 por ciento). Deportaciones masivas podrían llevar al colapso de ramos enteros de la economía.

Es aquí, en la economía, donde radica la fuerza de los inmigrantes, en su condición de trabajadores. Más allá del fraude institucionalizado que es todo sistema electoral burgués, controlado por las enormes sumas de dinero invertido en él por los capitalistas, los migrantes –“legales” o indocumentados por igual– no votan. Pero sí producen los valores y crean la riqueza que se apropian los capitalistas debido a su control de los medios de producción. La potencia de los inmigrantes como trabajadores se vio en el “paro general” del 1° de mayo de 2006 contra el nefasto proyecto de ley Sensenbrenner (HR4437), que ante este despliegue de fuerza obrera fue rápidamente archivado en el Senado. Hasta la iglesia católica se sumó a la convocatoria de aquella inusitada movilización, pero ya no más.

Para hacer valer los derechos de los tra-

bajadores inmigrantes hay que organizar su fuerza y ponerla en marcha. Los sindicatos pueden jugar un papel importante en eso. Si en el pasado los sindicatos controlados por burócratas que representan una aristocracia laboral promovieron una política xenófoba, acusando a trabajadores inmigrantes de “robarles los empleos de los norteamericanos,” hoy en día los migrantes constituyen más del 12 por ciento de la matrícula sindical. La acción de sindicalistas y sindicatos en Portland, Oregon que adoptaron para la marcha del 1° de mayo de 2012 la consigna oficial de “plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos” es un paso importante en esa dirección. Pero no es suficiente.

La defensa de los inmigrantes no puede limitarse a pedir esta u otra reforma. Los migrantes son hostigados no sólo por elementos reaccionarios, sino porque los capitalistas necesitan un “enemigo al interior” para azuzar a la población a favor de sus guerras imperialistas. Durante y después de la I Guerra Mundial hubo una caza de brujas contra los “rojos”, comunistas, anarquistas y trabajadores inmigrantes, sobre todo italianos. En la II Guerra Mundial se confinó a los ciudadanos de origen japonés en campos de concentración. En la actual “guerra contra el terrorismo” que dura ya más de una década, los inmigrantes en general son el blanco preferido. Para derrotar la *guerra* contra los inmigrantes es indispensable forjar un partido obrero capaz de librar la batalla contra los representantes del capital y su estado.

Contra demócratas y republicanos y todos los partidos y políticos capitalistas, el Grupo Internacionalista busca cohesionar el núcleo de este partido obrero, revolucionario e internacionalista, necesario para dirigir la revolución socialista internacional. Insistimos, como lo hace el *Manifiesto Comunista* de Karl Marx y Friedrich Engels, en que “los obreros no tienen patria”. Enarbolamos su lema, “proletarios del mundo, uníos”, en las marchas gritamos “La lucha obrera no tiene fronteras”. Para los millones de trabajadores inmigrantes, la frase del *Manifiesto* según la cual “los proletarios no tienen nada que perder excepto sus cadenas”, expresa la realidad de su vida diaria. Únete a nosotros en una poderosa lucha de clase para *romper estas cadenas*. ■

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No rogamus, exigimos:
¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!

Las huecas promesas electorales de “Mr. Deportaciones” Obama

¡Forjamos un partido obrero, revolucionario e internacionalista!

Cuando el presidente Barack Obama anunció el 15 de junio que suspenderá las deportaciones de ciertos jóvenes indocumentados, se generó un inmenso revuelo a nivel nacional. “Luz al final del túnel” proclamaba en primera plana *El Diario/La Prensa* de Nueva York. “Cerca del sueño” rezaba con júbilo el encabezado de *La Opinión* de Los Angeles. En una nota informaba: “Como un ‘sueño cumplido’” describieron los jóvenes conocidos como *dreamers* (soñadores) la medida que puede diferir por dos años (renovables) los procedimientos de deportación de quienes reúnan los requisitos. Grupos conservadores antiinmigrantes, en cambio, criticaron el anuncio de Obama al calificarlo como una “amnistía por la puerta trasera”.

Diez días más tarde, la Suprema Corte de Estados Unidos emitió su fallo sobre la siniestra Ley SB1070 de Arizona. En este caso no se dio el optimismo delirante con que se acogió la medida previa de la administración Obama. “Suprema decepción para inmigrantes” tituló su artículo *El Diario*. Aunque el fallo del tribunal desechó tres de las secciones disputadas de dicha ley racista, no rechazó el artículo principal, que instruye a la policía indagar sobre el estado migratorio de personas durante la investigación de una infracción o delito si tiene la “sospecha razonable” de que se trate de indocumentados. Evidentemente, esto invita al uso de “perfiles raciales” contra los de piel morena o los que “parezcan mexicanos”, tanto de inmigrantes (indocumentados o “legales”) como de ciudadanos. El 30% de la población de Arizona es de origen hispano.

Como señalamos en nuestro artículo, “Deportaciones y elecciones 2012: ¡por un partido obrero revolucionario!” (*El Internacionalista*, suplemento de mayo de 2012), el tema de la inmigración es uno de los puntos neurálgicos de la actual contienda electoral para los partidos Demócrata y Republicano. Grupos hispanos y de defensa de los derechos de los inmigrantes están aprovechándose asiduamente de la decisión administrativa del gobierno Obama y de la luz verde que dio la Suprema Corte a la Ley SB1070, de autoría republicana, para cazar votos a favor de los demócratas. Pero aunque los republicanos solicitan el apoyo de los sectores más retrógrados de la población blanca con un lenguaje xenófobo apenas velado, los demócratas ciertamente no son amigos de los inmigrantes.

De hecho, los dos partidos gemelos del capitalismo norteamericano son enemigos de los trabajadores, tanto los llegados del exterior como los nacidos en el país. En su campaña por la presidencia en 2008, Obama prometió legislar una “reforma migratoria comprehensiva” en su primer año en funciones. No hizo nada: ni siquiera presentó un proyecto de ley. Culpando a los republicanos por su oposición, ahora promete lo mismo para el primer año de un segundo período en la Casa Blanca. En su discurso del 22 de junio ante la Asociación Nacional de Funcionarios Latinos Electos, el presidente demócrata se excusó: “hemos hecho lo que hemos podido hacer”. Esto es una burda mentira. Y al deportar a *más de un millón de*



John Moore/Getty Images

Migrantes son deportados en avión a Guatemala, junio de 2011. El gobierno Obama ha expulsado un millón de indocumentados en menos de cuatro años.

inmigrantes, el doble de los que deportó su antecesor, el republicano George W. Bush, Barack Obama no es para nada un “mal menor”.

El Grupo Internacionalista, sección norteamericana de la Liga por la IV Internacional, advierte contra el fraude de la mítica “reforma migratoria” que no se va a dar, mucho menos una que favorezca a los trabajadores inmigrantes que constituyen un sector enorme y potencialmente combativo de la clase obrera. Llamamos a no votar por demócratas, republicanos ni por cualquier candidato o partido capitalistas. Sólo un partido obrero puede dirigir una victoriosa lucha por defender a los inmigrantes. Como gritamos en las manifestaciones, “Ni ilegales, ni criminales, ¡somos obreros internacionales!” El GI lucha por los *plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes* como parte de la lucha por la *revolución socialista internacional*.

El sueño sigue siendo una pesadilla para jóvenes indocumentados

Analicemos brevemente las dos medidas más recientes: la acción diferida sobre la deportación de ciertos jóvenes y la puesta en marcha de la ley de Arizona.

Para los aproximadamente 65 mil jóvenes estudiantes inmigrantes que se gradúan de la secundaria cada año, muchos de quienes ni siquiera conocen sus países de origen, la propuesta de suspensión de las deportaciones fue motivo de celebración. Para los que sean autorizados, la suspensión temporal de sus deportaciones facilitaría obtener un permiso de trabajo. En principio podría beneficiar

a alrededor de 700 mil jóvenes de entre 18 y 30 años, que llegaron al país con menos de 16 años cumplidos, que han vivido aquí al menos cinco años consecutivos, que están estudiando, se han graduado de la secundaria o han salido del ejército, y que no tengan antecedentes penales. Beneficiará eventualmente a otros 700 mil menores de 18 años. Pero en palabras del propio presidente, “Esto no es amnistía, no da inmunidad, ni abre la vía a la ciudadanía”.

La campaña de Obama de 2008 se basó en referencias tramposas a la “esperanza”, el “cambio” y el “sí se puede”. Hoy está nuevamente vendiendo sueños falsos y promesas electorales huecas. Durante los últimos dos años, ha surgido un movimiento de jóvenes indocumentados a favor del Dream Act. La campaña la dirige una red de “organizaciones no gubernamentales” (ONG) financiadas por fundaciones liberales para que sirvan como una válvula de escape para la frustración de una generación de jóvenes que viven en las sombras. Al salir de la escuela secundaria, sin los papeles requeridos, les resulta muy difícil cursar estudios universitarios o conseguir un empleo legal. Los demócratas quieren dar la impresión de que hacen algo en materia migratoria para revigorar el voto latino en estados clave como Florida, Carolina del Norte, Colorado, Nevada y Virginia.

Nos hemos rehusado a apoyar el proyecto nacional de Ley del Sueño por una provisión central que ofrece la residencia legal en cambio de servicio militar. No es más que un intento del Pentágono de reclutar jóvenes inmigrantes, dado el déficit de carne de cañón para sus guerras

sigue en la página 22

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