

# Europe's rulers press demands on workers as debt crisis deepens



Christopher Furlong / Getty Images



Armando Franca / AP

By ANDREW POLLACK

The May 6 vote in Greece, which placed the leftist coalition SYRIZA a close second behind the conservative New Democracy, with the possibility that the former could take first place in June's runoff, has the ruling classes in Greece and throughout Europe shaking.

They have demanded that SYRIZA's leaders drop promises to renounce the anti-working-class "memorandum" agreed to with Europe's bankers. And the rulers' steely eyes look past SYRIZA to the millions of Greek workers—and the millions more throughout the continent inspired by Greek resistance—with a threatening glare that says, "nothing has changed, you will continue to give us our pound of flesh!"

The rulers' fears are compounded by the multiple levels on which the deepening crisis plays out, making it more difficult for them to manage it. First, the global depression that began in 2008 is steadily worsening. Second, the disparate levels of productivity and market domination within the European Union have its poorer countries resisting efforts by the stronger to make them pay a disproportionate share of the crisis.

Third, the Eurozone as a whole is engaged in heightened competition with the U.S.—as well as Russia, China, India, and other countries—in the context of a deepening worldwide downturn. Fourth, within each country—especially the poorer ones, but increasingly the richer as well—workers, youth, and immigrants are once again riding the wave of strikes and huge protests that has crested repeatedly since the crisis began.

What's more, within each country there are also differences in the economic strength of various regions and as a result in the type and size of demands placed on them by the bosses. Thus, in a *Forbes* story titled "Local debt is the big untold story of the Euro crisis," Haydn Shaughnessy wrote of the debt problems of local governments in Spain and even Germany—partly a

take advantage of it, brought millions of immigrants to Europe. These immigrants are now threatened by government officials such as Britain's Home Secretary, Theresa May—who threatened recently to curb immigration if the euro collapses via the exit of Greece or other countries and as a result workers from poorer countries looking for work seek entry into England. They are also menaced by fascist parties gaining strength in the streets and in the continent's parliaments.

But for the moment, Greek workers are the main targets of angry European officials. Thus on May 25, Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, told Greeks they should stop complaining and learn to pay their taxes. She capped her bullying lecture by telling them they should be thankful they're not as poor as African children (conveniently ignoring the role of the IMF itself in impoverishing Africa).

This bullying of Greek workers is also intended as an indirect warning to Spanish workers, who are once again on the move in strikes and protests against cuts in government spending. The last thing that Europe's rulers want is for Spanish workers to follow the Greek precedent, especially as Spain's economy is teetering on the brink.

Spain's borrowing costs soared in late May as Bankia, the country's largest mortgage lender, neared collapse and sought government aid. Analysts expect that more bank failures, increasing loan defaults, and soaring borrowing costs for the Spanish government will require the country to seek emergency financing for its banks from the European Union. This prospect is worsening the tremors felt by Europe's rulers, especially since Spain's economy is four times the size of Greece's, and the likely scale of a spillover from the latter's troubles across the continent is steadily increasing.

The UK as well would be severely impacted. Even

result of national governments foisting off their own debt and deficits onto local shoulders (a phenomenon that should sound all too familiar with our U.S. readers), and partly a replication on a smaller scale of the continental and worldwide uneven development that is inherent in capitalism.

Such uneven development on a world scale, and the centuries-long efforts by imperialist countries to

(Above) November 2011 general strike in Lisbon. (Left) Student in Naples, Italy, protests austerity cuts in education.

though it's not an EU member, the country's Office for Budget Responsibility said a Greek exit from the euro would "plunge Britain into a second recession equal in ferocity to the record postwar slump of 2008-09. The OBR's chair said that such a scenario in a country still not back to pre-2008 economic levels presented a risk that "you go down and you never quite get back up to where you started."

After the Greek elections German officials launched a campaign, both in public and behind the scenes, demanding that Greek workers abandon their resistance. For instance, an official in German Prime Minister Angela Merkel's government proposed a plan to force Greece to carry out a new round of massive privatizations of public assets, slashing job protec-

(continued on page 5)

## INSIDE SOCIALIST ACTION

- Students in Colombia — 2
- 15,000 protest NATO — 3
- Egypt vote fraud — 4
- No intervention in Syria! — 4
- Which way for Greece? — 6
- Latin American revolution — 8
- Movies / Books — 9
- Canada news — 10

Quebec  
page 12

# Students mobilize in Colombia

Socialist Action reporters Ana Noli and Lisa Luinburg interviewed Sergio Fernandez at the conference of the United National Antiwar Coalition in March. Fernandez is a leader of the student protests in Colombia and a representative of Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil (MANE). The interview has been translated from Spanish and slightly edited for publication.

**Socialist Action:** Sergio, can you tell us a bit about the state of the student movement in Colombia and what their demands are?

**Sergio Fernandez:** Last year, we managed to defeat the "reform" of higher education (Law 30) put forward by [Colombian President] Juan Manuel Santos, which was intended to adapt higher education to the requirements of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. We set the task for ourselves to build—along with teachers, workers, peasants, indigenous people, and virtually the whole country—truly democratic reforms to ensure that education will be public, free, of high quality, and serving the people.

**SA:** Would this law have affected primary and secondary education, or only the universities?

**SF:** Our fight today, above all, concerns the universities. Secondary education in Colombia is mostly public, but higher education, university education, is mainly private. In Colombia there are 32 public universities and 48 private universities. Only half of Colombian students are at a public university—and out of those who enter the public universities, only half can finish their career.

Our fight is to try to ensure that higher education is a right and that the state adequately funds education. The public universities are on the verge of bankruptcy, and what Juan Manuel Santos proposed in the reform we defeated is that when the public universities would go bankrupt, private capital could enter, fund them,



Sergio Fernandez speaks at UNAC conference.

and they would be governed by private law, meaning that they [universities] would be fully privatized.

**SA:** Which organizations have joined the struggle?

**SF:** There are many student organizations in Colombia. I am the national spokesperson of one of them, the Colombian Student Organization. But what we accomplished last year was to create Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil (MANE). MANE brings together all student organizations in the country and operates in a democratic, participatory, and broad manner. Out of the 80 universities in the country, MANE already has a presence in more than 70. MANE has managed to unify groups around what we call the minimum program.

**SA:** When did the struggle begin and what are some of the victories that have been achieved so far?

**SF:** The movement began years ago. But the fight against the reform began in March 2011. The national government stated its intention to reform higher education, presenting its proposal to the media and public opinion. This generated major opposition from students. And in October the government gave the proposal to Congress for its adoption. At that point, the national university strike began. All student organizations came together in Bogota, and in a huge gathering of thousands of students we outlined a program of political unity. ... The mobilizations of last year drew about one million students and their families to the streets and were the largest in the history of the student movement in Colombia.

**SA:** Does the student movement have a relationship with the trade unions in Colombia?

**SF:** Yes, of course. We have been working side by side with the United Confederation of Workers (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores), and unions of education. The telephone workers, miners, and other unions of all kinds have given us support. Support was given not only in the demonstrations, where many of them mobilized with the students, but also through funding. They have helped to fund MANE activities such as concerts, demonstrations, and theater works—which gathered thousands of Colombian students.

**SA:** Is it possible to create links between the student movement in Colombia and others in Latin America?

**SF:** Last year we developed a continental mobilization that was supported primarily by countries like Costa Rica, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. This was a success and we have begun to build links.

However, MANE, while the largest organization of the student movement in Colombia's history, was only born last August. It takes gigantic strides, but it is still a baby. We are still in the process of organizing committees and appointing spokespeople. For example, we do not have a committee in charge of international relations; relationships with other organizations have been carried out mainly around specific activities or through the work of spokespeople. ■

## A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

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

1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.

2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.

3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.

4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SOCIALIST ACTION** Closing news date: June 3, 2012  
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

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



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

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: [socialistactionnews@yahoo.com](mailto:socialistactionnews@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org)

## WHERE TO FIND SOCIALIST ACTION

- ASHLAND, Ore.: [damonjure@earthlink.net](mailto:damonjure@earthlink.net)
- BOSTON: [bostsocact@gmail.com](mailto:bostsocact@gmail.com) (781) 630-0250
- CARRBORO, N.C.: (919) 967-2866, [robonica@lycos.com](mailto:robonica@lycos.com)
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, [chisocialistaction@yahoo.com](mailto:chisocialistaction@yahoo.com)
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: [wainosunrise@yahoo.com](mailto:wainosunrise@yahoo.com). [www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com](http://www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com)
- FLORIDA: [socialistaction\\_tampa@hotmail.com](mailto:socialistaction_tampa@hotmail.com)
- GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.: [Kowalskimike@comcast.net](mailto:Kowalskimike@comcast.net)
- KANSAS CITY: [kcsa@workernet.org](mailto:kcsa@workernet.org) (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE / LEXINGTON, KY.: [redlotus51@yahoo.com](mailto:redlotus51@yahoo.com), (502) 451-2193
- MADISON, WIS.: [Northlandiguana@gmail.com](mailto:Northlandiguana@gmail.com)
- MANKATO, MINN.: [Misshbradford@yahoo.com](mailto:Misshbradford@yahoo.com)
- MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, [socialistaction@visi.com](mailto:socialistaction@visi.com)

- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: [philly.socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:philly.socialistaction@gmail.com)
- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 [gary1917@aol.com](mailto:gary1917@aol.com)
- PROVIDENCE: [ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM) (401) 419-1706
- SALEM, ORE.: [ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET](mailto:ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET)
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, [sfsocialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:sfsocialistaction@gmail.com)
- WASHINGTON, DC: [christopher.towne@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.towne@gmail.com), (202) 286-5493

## SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

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

## Subscribe to Socialist Action

Get Socialist Action newspaper each month by 1st-class mail!

— \$10 for 6 months — \$20 for 12 months — \$37 for 2 years

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.

# 15,000 protest NATO in Chicago

By MARTY GOODMAN

CHICAGO—On May 20, the largest U.S. antiwar demonstration in years took place, defying a violence-baiting campaign orchestrated by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel (a former member of the Obama cabinet), the Chicago police, and the Obama administration.

Some 15,000 protesters jammed into the streets to voice their outrage at the May 20-21 conference in Chicago of the U.S.-led military alliance known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It was the first big protest against the U.S.-led NATO in U.S. history, marking a new level of understanding in the United States of the imperialist aims of this organization. It was also the first major antiwar action with Occupy-era young people as the main participants.

The protest was a clear victory for the antiwar movement and for democratic rights. The legal, peaceful, permitted march began with a rally in Grant Park and marched downtown about two miles to conclude in the vicinity of the NATO meeting.

The day's protest concluded with 40 veterans delivering their personal antiwar messages and—in an incredibly powerful act of defiance reminiscent of the protests by anti-Vietnam GI resisters—tossing their medals in the direction of the NATO summit. Concluding were “Afghans Against the War” members living in Canada, who read statements and recited angry resistance poetry.

(To see the vets throw away their medals, see [www.democracynow.org/2012/5/21](http://www.democracynow.org/2012/5/21).)

The protesters came from mainly from Chicago and the Midwest but also from California, New York, Canada, and many other places—including Europe and Afghanistan. The antiwar veterans led the march, followed by antiwar activists, Occupy rebels from several cities, immigrant workers, trade unionists, Filipino youth, Palestinians, Muslim civil-liberties advocates, and others. Anti-NATO rallies were also held in London and other European cities and in Iran, India, Bangladesh, Russia, and Canada (see international rallies: <http://nepajac.org/internationChicago.htm>.)

The rally in Grant Park at the start of the protest included speakers such as Jesse Jackson Sr.; Inge Hoyer, a member of the German legislature; Malik Mujahid of the Muslim Peace Coalition; Carlos Montes of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression and himself a frame-up victim facing trial; and UNAC leaders (see UNAC speaker Chris Gauvreau: <http://nepajac.org/chris.htm>).

Organizing for the NATO/G8 protest was made doubly difficult in an election year given the illusions that many working people still have in the Democratic Party wing of the 1%. Obama authored the 2010 “surge” of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, although some 60% now oppose that war. The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), an initiator of the Chicago protest, was founded on the principle of independent mobilization against war, poverty, and joblessness—regardless of who sits in the White House.

The NATO summit concluded by essentially restating the position of the White House to withdraw most U.S. troops by 2014 and hand over combat duty to Afghani troops and police, leaving out the role of private U.S. “security” forces. However, Gen. John Allen, commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, has said, “There is a narrative that combat operations for the U.S. will stop at milestone 2013. That is not, in fact, correct. We fully expect that combat is going to continue.”

Protesters linked the war to the Camp David meeting that week of representatives of eight of the world's top economies, known as “the G8,” for years the target of massive protests worldwide. Also led by the U.S., G8 meetings are strategy sessions of the 1% aimed at targeting the working people of the world for brutal austerity drives (or cutbacks, as it is more commonly known in the U.S.). These massive attacks on jobs and public services promote massive inequality, poverty, and the ongoing destruction of the environment. The theme on May 20 was, “Say No to the NATO/G8 War and Poverty Agenda!”

## Organizing in the face of city obstructions

The powerful May 20 action was carried off despite one of the most concerted efforts ever mounted by government officials to limit the size of a protest, which they carried out by daily violence baiting over a period of eight full months. Playing its role in the service of the 1%, the corporate media bombarded Chicagoans with scary stories about so-called protester “violence,” “terrorism,” “anarchists,” and the minutest details of the city's denial of permits. Rarely was there discussion about issues raised by protesters—war, NATO, poverty, and the G8.

Reflecting the fears of the 1% over the deepening crisis



of capitalism and the spread of worldwide resistance, the rulers put Chicago under virtual police lock-down, using the city as a giant test lab for future repression. The fear factor was ramped up in order to get working people to accept unprecedented attacks on democratic rights.

Many businesses and museums were shuttered. Roads were periodically closed. Backpacks, even cups of coffee, were banned on trains. Many bosses were telling workers to dress in black in the style of the loosely organized “Black Block” anarchists in order to avoid beginning hassled or assaulted in the street by unruly protesters. A Chicago sheriff proposed opening up for mass incarceration of protesters the shuttered Joliet prison, made famous by the “Blues Brothers” movie. Red Cross officials in Milwaukee were notified to prepare for an evacuation of the entire city Chicago!

Fearing the prospect of a large protest like the Toronto G20 protest in June 2010, both Obama and Emanuel were forced to recognize the growing size of the NATO/G8 protest movement and changed the location of the G8 meeting on May 19 to the isolated Camp David in Maryland. Soon afterward, the Chicago rally was rescheduled by organizers from Saturday, May 19, to May 20 (at the beginning of the NATO conference). That change, unfortunately, cut into attendance by those outside Chicago who had to be back at work Monday.

The successful rally was the culmination of months of organizing. CanG8 activist Joe Isobaker, a UNAC member and FBI spy-frame-up victim, first submitted UNAC's march permit request to the city last July. In August, a larger than expected first meeting took place in Chicago of over 100 activists.

Protest organizing in Chicago centered on the Coalition Against NATO/G8 War and Poverty Agenda ((CanG8), composed of some 100 community organizations. Support for the rally gained ground with endorsement from

Jesse Jackson Sr. of Operation PUSH, SEIU locals, the Chicago Teachers Union, the United Electrical union (UE), and the National Nurses Union (NNU).

For five months, organizers had been told there could be no protests during the summits. But after numerous protests, press conferences by CanG8, Occupy Chicago and many unions, plus a full-page ad by UNAC in the Chicago *Sun Times*, signed by hundreds of people, organizers were finally told that they'd get a permit.

City ordinances, backed by the mayor and dutifully approved by the Democratic Party-run Chicago City Council, meant agreeing to massive fines for civil disobedience and submitting protest signs and banners in advance to police for approval. Those undemocratic ordinances were not accepted by rally organizers.

After months of city obstructions in negotiations with rally organizers, the request for a legal, peaceful rally permit was finally issued in writing by the Chicago administration on May 15. Yet, in the end, the permit still denied protesters the right to be “within sight and sound” of NATO, which is the internationally accepted standard. Andy Thayer, a key organizer of CanG8, told *Socialist Action*, “It was important to conduct this first amendment battle. “We got close to the summit sight.”

## “Standing proud”

At a May 10 press conference on the upcoming actions, CanG8 organizer Andy Thayer told the media, “Occupy rapidly learned to focus not just on the economic, but on the political and on the military. They got it. They were not fooled when president Obama pulled the G8 summit from Chicago. They knew that NATO represents the de-facto military arm of the G8. They are standing proud. We are standing proud with them. I am an Occupy Chicago participant. Do not let the city of Chicago intimidate you

(continued on page 11)

## Immigrant groups march in Chicago

By LISA LUINENBURG

CHICAGO—The march against NATO drew thousands—including young people, seniors, families, workers, students, veterans, and people of all races and ethnicities. They brought forward their demands on the issues of war, poverty, civil liberties, and everything in between.

Several immigrant groups participated in the march. Martín Unzueta, a prominent immigrant rights organizer from Chicago, spoke at the opening rally. He highlighted the plight of the millions of undocumented workers from Latin America who are living in the United States and the need for a change in our immigration system.

Among other immigrant groups present at the march and rally were BAYAN USA, representing Filipino immigrants in the U.S., a group of Latino chaplains from Chicago providing support to the protesters, and the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee (MIRAc), who traveled eight hours on a bus from Minneapolis to participate in

the anti-NATO demonstration.

“We are here today to protest NATO and their continuing wars and military interventions around the world,” said a MIRAc volunteer who was present at the march in Chicago. “U.S.-backed military interventions have created thousands of refugees from Latin America and other areas of the globe. That's why we're here today marching in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and other parts of the world who have been affected by ongoing violence and war. This cannot continue; the violence needs to end now!”

MIRAc organizers also marched to protest violence and austerity at home, including the increasing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and immigrant detention system and cuts to vital social services.

Earlier this year, MIRAc waged a campaign to fight cuts to undocumented immigrants who were receiving Emergency Medical Assistance from the state of Minnesota to help them pay for services like kidney dialysis and chemotherapy. ■



(Left) Egyptians demonstrate in Tahrir Sq. on May 29 against election results and military rule.

through a gift of \$3 million to the PEC, which went not only for polling supplies but also for “voter awareness campaigns” encouraging participation in the electoral process.

During the campaign and afterwards, Shafiq made clear that he was the “law and order” candidate and would continue the Mubarak/SCAF regimes’ repressive policies. Shafiq spokesman Ahmad Sarhan was quoted as saying that Egyptian voters had chosen his candidate because he had promised to “save Egypt from the dark forces” and restore domestic security.

The May 28 *New York Times* contained a report with several chilling quotes by Shafiq, which reinforce fears of what Mubarak regime holdovers and their wealthy allies have in store for the country. The article’s lead sentence announced that “Ahmed Shafiq said he never regretted calling former President Hosni Mubarak ‘a role model.’” In response to this statement, said the reporter, which was made at a “lunch of elite businessmen held this month by the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, an umbrella group for multinationals and those who work with them,” the crowd “erupted in applause.”

“The well-heeled audience,” *The Times* reported, “cheered as Mr. Shafiq suggested that he would use executions and brutal force to restore order within a month, repeatedly mocked the Islamist-led Parliament and accused, against all evidence, the Islamists of harboring hidden militias to use in a civil war.” *The Times* noted that Shafiq’s platform “calls for the military to play a continuing political role as ‘the guardian of the constitutional legitimacy,’” and he calls “the military’s economic activities—which include a far-flung commercial empire with little military application—‘a strategic necessity.’”

*The Times* also noted his record of anti-labor repression: “As a former aviation minister in charge of airports and the state airline, he was known for his ‘iron fist,’ especially on labor demands.” Shafiq has declined to rule out appointing Mubarak’s former vice president and hated intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman, to a top post. “‘If it was possible for the expertise of Omar Suleiman to be used in any place, why not use it?’ he said, to big applause” at the Chamber of Commerce meeting.

Rightfully fearful of Shafiq, some radicals are unfortunately calling for a vote for Morsi as a lesser evil. But the Muslim Brotherhood has supported SCAF since Mubarak’s fall, differing with it only tactically when under extreme pressure from its membership, and regularly denouncing workers, peasants, and youth who have protested the military’s policies and repression.

What’s more, the Brotherhood has repeatedly and explicitly affirmed its commitment to “the free market,” i.e. to the capitalist system. This should be no surprise as its leadership and funding have always been drawn primarily from Egypt’s capitalist class.

The record of native bourgeoisies in the neocolonial world make clear that there can be no stable democracy as long as capitalism, and thus dependence on imperialism, exist. A Morsi presidency, coupled with a Brotherhood-dominated parliament, will prove once again the truth of this statement.

Other radical forces have declared their refusal to pin their hopes on Morsi. And all revolutionary groups, regardless of their opinion on the second-round vote, have pledged to continue their crucial, day-to-day base-building work in workplaces, neighborhoods, and on campus, and to redouble efforts to construct a genuinely independent political voice representing the masses they meet there. ■

# Egyptian military rigs presidential elections

By ANDREW POLLACK

The Egyptian masses returned to the central squares of Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, Mahalla, and elsewhere on June 2 and 3 to protest the verdicts in the cases of ousted President Hosni Mubarak and his partners in crime. Mubarak, who had orchestrated efforts to repress the revolution by sending in his military and security forces, killing hundreds and wounding thousands, was found guilty only of not preventing such attacks. His closest aides, including his sons, were acquitted of any role in the murders, and also cleared of corruption charges.

This renewed mass upsurge is further fueled by anger over the massive fraud committed in the recently concluded first round of presidential elections, which were run by the Egyptian military (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, or SCAF) and its appointees. The candidates receiving the first and second largest votes in the May 23 and 24 election—Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Ahmed Shafiq, former Prime Minister under Mubarak—will take part in a June 16-17 runoff.

Hamdeen Sabahi, labeled a “left Nasserist” by the media, finished in third place and is thus out of the runoff. But Sabahi alleges that the 700,000-vote difference between him and Shafiq is dwarfed by the votes of 900,000 military and security personnel whose ballots, he claims, were assigned by the military to Shafiq. Others allege that rather than their votes being assigned, military and security personnel were pressured by their superiors to vote for Shafiq.

In any case, under Egyptian election law the highly politicized military and security forces are supposed to be banned from registering to vote in the first place. The rigging of these elections is yet more proof that SCAF has no intention

of fully relinquishing its control over the country’s politics.

Rules for the elections and their administration were in the hands of the Presidential Election Commission, a body appointed by SCAF. PEC’s rulings are not subject to legal or administrative appeal.

Shafiq’s very eligibility to run is the subject of a pending court case. He was briefly banned from running as a sop to mass protests against the participation of former regime officials (whom Egyptians refer to collectively as “felool”) in the elections—protests that the regime met with murderous violence. In the end, the PEC allowed him to run and referred a new law barring top Mubarak-era officials from the race to the constitutional court.

Other candidates and Egyptian NGOs also cited many instances of vote buying. And the “Judges for Egypt” movement called on PEC to explain the swelling of voter rolls by an additional 4.8 million in just the last 14 months.

Other examples of violations cited by candidates and independent election observers included registering the deceased, polling staff telling voters who to vote for and/or filling out voting cards and inserting them into ballot boxes, prohibition of all observers from sites where votes from regions were aggregated on a national scale, the maintenance in force of the Emergency Law, late amendment of election laws and procedures, polling stations that opened late and closed early, restricting witnesses and the media to a time limit of 30 minutes inside polling stations, and more.

Questions have also been raised about U.S. support for the inherently flawed process. The U.S. has been the main financial prop and diplomatic ally of the Mubarak and SCAF regimes, and in recent years has given Egypt’s military \$1.3 billion a year. The presidential elections themselves were funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development

## Syria massacre heightens danger of imperialist intervention

By ANDREW POLLACK

On May 25, 108 Syrian civilians were murdered in the Houla area of towns and villages, including 34 women and 49 children. Some were killed by artillery shells, some at close hand by guns or knives.

Not surprisingly, the regime and the opposition blamed each other. It’s most likely that responsibility for the carnage lies with President Bashar al-Assad’s security forces and his sectarian Shabiha armed gangs. True, it is certainly not beyond the power or immorality of imperialism to have orchestrated the massacre through local agents. But no one except the most benighted sycophants of the pseudo-anti-imperialist Assad can deny the thousands of murders that had already been committed by the regime before the Houla massacre.

Naturally, imperialist governments, institutions, and media used the massacre to demand tougher sanctions and greater arming of the opposition, and to step up threats of direct military intervention. On May 29, new French President François Hollande said on France



(Left) Syrian opposition photo shows May 23 funeral of Samir Abu Nabbut, allegedly killed by government forces.

2 television, “I want what happened in Libya to be perceived as proof that foreign intervention is possible in Syria. Homs today is Benghazi yesterday.” Several Western countries expelled Syrian diplomats in the following days.

It is still not clear if Houla will be the turning point for what has been up to now a Western approach longer on

rhetoric than action against Assad. After all, Assad, for all his crimes, was a useful tool for Washington, from its acquiescence to Israel’s conquests (even of Syria’s own territory), to its collaboration in war against Saddam Hussein, as well as cooperation in the “rendition” and torture policies of the “war on terror.”

What’s more, the geography, demo-

graphics, and infrastructure of the country would make direct intervention far more difficult than the relative walk-over in Libya. As a result, to this point the U.S. has relied primarily on arms and soldiers funneled by Saudi Arabia and Qatar into the country, and on special operations forces of as yet unconfirmed Western origin.

Even after Houla, *The New York Times* on May 30 reported that “Obama now shows no signs of intervening with force, an option his White House sees leading only to ‘greater chaos, greater carnage.’... If the president considered Libya a model of humanitarian intervention, Syria increasingly looks like Mr. Obama’s Bosnia.”

But that is hardly a reassuring parallel if one remembers how in the end his fellow Democrat Bill Clinton was more than happy to launch a murderous bombing campaign in the former Yugoslavia, using a similarly fraudulent

(continued on page 5)

## ... Europe

(continued from page 1)

tions and throwing open further the doors to foreign investors. When a Greek official leaked word of the plan, Germany denied it, but no one took the denial seriously.

Greek Prime Minister Panagiotis Karamanlis said Merkel had suggested in a phone call to Greek President Karolos Papoulias that Greece hold a referendum on its continued membership of the single currency alongside next month's elections, in an apparent attempt to encourage voters to back mainstream parties who support austerity. The German government said that no suggestion of the kind had been made. But the Greeks insisted that it had.

Germany itself leaked news that its central bank had called for an end to financial support for Greece, and that eurozone finance ministers were preparing contingency plans for a Greek exit from the euro.

The *Guardian's* Seamus Milne quoted EU commission president José Manuel Barroso as saying that "to remain in the euro, Greece must respect its commitments." By commitments, he meant the package of pulverising privatisations, tax rises and cuts in jobs, pay and services demanded by the EU and IMF in exchange for loans which cannot be repaid and are reducing the country to beggary."

Milne noted that "the Irish are getting similar treatment, as the country's elites try to scare voters into backing the EU's permanent austerity treaty in a referendum later this month. Crucial to the campaign has been the threat that Ireland will be denied future emergency bailout funds for its own shrinking economy if the treaty is rejected."

Milne predicted that "a disorderly Greek default—which could still take place inside the euro—has the potential to trigger a cascade of bank runs and knock-on crises across the eurozone whose impact could dwarf the Lehman crash of 2008. ... Greece is, after all, only the state furthest down the road of collapse. The threat to crippled Spain could already be on a much larger scale. Across the eurozone, the banking system is once again tipping towards breakdown, as self-defeating austerity deepens the crisis."

"As one EU commissioner told me yesterday, 'this austerity union is simply not sustainable.' Eurozone leaders' attempt to solve the crisis by 'internal devaluation'—cutting wages and services across the southern periphery to restore competitiveness—was a 'complete disaster,' he said, that would deliver mass poverty and migration to the north."

*New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman reported: "Greece is experiencing what's being called a 'bank jog'—a somewhat slow-motion bank run, as more and more depositors pull out their cash in anticipation of a possible Greek exit from the euro. ... This demonstration that the euro is, in fact, reversible would lead, in turn, to runs on Spanish and Italian banks."

Such predictions of financial collapse were replicat-



ed in the paper's business pages. *The Times* reported May 16 that "German officials have been boasting recently about the ability of the eurozone to handle a Greek exit. Though aimed at reining in Greece's left-wing parties and their goal of renegotiating the bailout deal, the talk also unsettled markets and had the potential of turning into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The perils of brinkmanship in an unstable environment were on full display on Wednesday as the news emerged that Greeks had pulled nearly \$900 million in savings from banks in the days after the May 6 elections, prompting fears of an uncontrollable bank run."

## U.S. jobless rate rises

The U.S. Labor Department reported at the end of May that employers had added a paltry 69,000 jobs to their payrolls last month, the fewest in a year. The news, coupled with unsettling reports from Europe, sent the stock market diving and capitalist politicians scrambling to come up with job-creating "solutions."

The report showed that the official unemployment rate rose to 8.2 percent from 8.1 percent. Government data said that 12.7 million Americans were unemployed, with four out of 10 unable to find work for 27 weeks or more. A major explanation for the rise in official unemployment rates was that many workers who had previously given up looking for a job, had sensed some growth in the



(Above) Italian demonstrators protest in front of Greek pavilion at Venice Biennale art show, in November 2011, to protest austerity.

(Left) Striking public workers protesting British government's cutback policies, May 12, express solidarity with struggle of Greek working class.

As always in the midst of such crises and upheaval, the most parasitic find new opportunities to profit from despair. *The New York Times* reported on May 15 of a "Vulture Fund," which got almost 90% of the profits from the Greek government's payment of hundreds of millions of euros to investors who had rejected the terms of the country's debt renegotiation and held out for full payment. The firm, Dart Management, is a secretive investment fund based for tax purposes in the Cayman Islands, built on a fortune made originally in Styrofoam cups. Dart had in years past made huge profits twisting the screws on debt-burdened Latin American countries.

Throughout the tumult of May, stock markets throughout Europe reeled like drunken sailors. But workers in Greece—and increasingly, elsewhere on the continent—have shown their resolve to resist capitalism's menu of cutbacks and unemployment. It is the duty of workers everywhere to show solidarity with them, including by increasing the resistance to their own banks, corporations, and governments. ■

economy and once again entered the job market.

That was virtually an admission that the actual number of long-term unemployed workers is much higher than the government cares to admit. Only about half of the non-governmental jobs lost during the recession, which began in 2008, have yet to be recovered.

According to *Al-Jazeera*, the government report hinted at a fundamental weakness: "Some had believed that we had decoupled from China slowing and all the problems in Europe, but that seems to be short-sighted," said Malcolm Polley, president of Stewart Capital Advisors in Indiana, Pa. "We're slowing alongside the rest of the world." Chinese factory output barely rose in May, and manufacturing activity in Britain shrank at its fastest pace in three years. Earlier data had shown manufacturing activity also declined in Germany and France. ■

## ... Syria

(continued from page 4)

humanitarian rationale.

Despite their armed intervention into the former Yugoslavia, Clinton and U.S. imperialism never intended to give real support to the struggle of the Bosnians, Kosovars, and other oppressed nationalities for self-determination. In Yugoslavia and in Syria today—indeed, throughout U.S. imperialism's history—the right of oppressed people for freedom and self-determination has never been on the agenda.

In any case, Washington will no doubt find more ways, however indirect, to intervene in what U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice declared after Houla would most likely "develop into a regional sectarian war ... a proxy conflict with arms flowing in from all sides."

Some progressive supporters of the uprising against Assad latched on to Houla to call for direct imperialist military intervention now. Such action,

however, will do nothing to free the Syrian people from tyranny. It could in fact bolster Assad's hold on power as he rallies disaffected elites back to his side. And on the other hand, if Western intervention pushes Assad out, it could lead to a puppet regime even more beholden to the neoliberal economic policies begun by Assad, and to a switch from silent acquiescence in Zionist crimes to outright support for them.

If Assad goes, of course, we can be sure that a regime as repressive as his will be needed eventually to crush Syrian worker, peasant, and youth dissent against these policies.

In the last few months, the mass movement against Assad—which originally mobilized constant and often huge demonstrations, spreading ever further across the country—has been subverted by the pro-imperialist leaderships of the Syrian National Council and Free Syrian Army. The latter group's military activities, divorced from a mass base, have been neither effective in military terms nor a rallying point for the mass movement. To the contrary, they have

increasingly pushed aside that movement, and left less and less room for the neighborhood and town/city-based committees to organize ordinary Syrians. The militarization of the conflict has also opened space for more sectarian reactionary forces.

This militarization of the opposition and the growing dependence of its self-appointed "leaders" on imperialism is orchestrated by a segment of Syria's ruling class that supports Assad's neoliberal economic policies but wants to be the ones to implement them "efficiently" and "democratically" (and in the process to enjoy a greater share of the profits).

And not coincidentally, the SNC and FSA's policies have actually hindered the one military policy that could defeat Assad—a major split in his army's ranks. The last thing the bourgeois leadership of the SNC/FSA wants is a successful revolution against Assad carried out by armed workers, peasants, and youth. But it is only a grassroots-based mass movement that could achieve such a split by organizing the families,

coworkers, and neighbors of the military to appeal to rank-and-file soldiers and junior officers to come over to the revolution arms in hand.

Imperialist intervention in Syria has nothing to do with saving the rights or even the lives of Syrians, but is solely designed to maintain Western dominance of the Middle East and Northern Africa. It aims to shore up the Gulf Cooperation Council-led counterrevolution, intended to derail the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions and turn back the growing movements in Bahrain, Yemen, Morocco, and elsewhere in the region.

Those misguided progressive activists who cry out that only imperialist arms can stop civilian massacres forget the lessons learned from past interventions in Libya, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, etc.—which only increased the civilian death toll and the destruction of the infrastructure of those countries.

No imperialist intervention! Victory for the workers, peasants and youth of Syria against Assad's dictatorship! ■

# Which way for Greece?

Simon Dawson / Bloomberg



(Left) Syriza supporters celebrate in Athens following the May 6 election.

By ANDREAS KLOKE

Andreas Kloke is a member of the leadership of OKDE-Spartakos, Greek section of the Fourth International

The Greek parliamentary elections led to an earthquake-like change in the political landscape and to the end of the two-party domination by the conservative New Democracy (ND) and the social democratic PASOK. Compared to the 2009 elections, the ruling PASOK party fell from 43.9% to 13.2%, ND, which is now the strongest party, won 18.9% (2009: 33.5%). On the other hand, SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) rose from 4.6 to 16.8% and has thus become the second largest party.

The Independent Greeks, led by P. Kammenos, a right-wing nationalist split from ND and founded in February 2012, a party that refuses to support the memoranda policies, are in fourth place with 10.6%. The Communist Party (KKE), up to now the strongest left party, received 8.5% (2009: 7.5%).

Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn), a gang of neo-Nazi Hitler-nostalgia addicts, gained 7.0% (441,000 votes, 2009: 0.3%), certainly the real “scoop” of these elections.

The Democratic Left (DIMAR) is in the seventh place with 6.1%. DIMAR was founded in 2010 and is a right-wing split from SYN, the left-reformist party with ori-

**European leaders, and the media, have launched a wild propaganda campaign to secure the plunder of Greek society, in favor of the domination of capital.**

gins in euro-communism and the main component of SYRIZA. The far-right LAOS failed with 2.9% (2009: 5.6%) due to the 3% threshold. The same happened to the Green Ecologists, with 2.9% (2009: 2.5%) and three right-neoliberal formations, namely Democratic Alliance (DISI), with 2.6%, Dimourgia xana, with 2.2% and Action (Drasi), with 1.8%.

ANTARSYA (Anti-Capitalist Left Alliance for the Overthrow), essentially a coalition of some 10 anti-capitalist revolutionary organizations, received 1.2% (over 75,000 votes; 2009: 0.36%); the alliance of two ML organizations 0.3%; and EEK, an organization that calls itself Trotskyist, 0.1%.

The percentage of valid votes cast was 62.7% (2009: 68.9% and 2007: 72.1%), again significantly lower

are getting louder.

Because of its good election result, the SYRIZA leadership under A. Tsipras is playing a key role. The ideas of the left parties as a whole had been characterized during the election campaign as “unrealistic,” “highly dangerous,” and “catastrophic.” But after the elections the tables have been turned, and SYRIZA was asked to “take its responsibility” and to participate in a “government of national unity” with ND, PASOK and DIMAR. The DIMAR leadership, which would like to serve in such a government, played a particularly bad role, but finally did not dare to do so without the consent of SYRIZA in the face of the election results.

A day-long wrangling over the formation of a new government began, but ended without result. Therefore, the second round of the elections has been scheduled for June 17. According to current opinion polls, SYRIZA has bright prospects to become the strongest party, with well over 20%, and thus also to get hold of the “bonus” of 50 (of the total 300) seats in parliament. This totally undemocratic scheme was specifically included in the electoral law to allow a majority, at least, of a coalition government of ND and PASOK. But it did not work since both parties together received only 149 seats.

There is no denying that it is not by chance that SYRIZA has become the first force of the left. Because SYRIZA spoke during the election campaign of a “left-wing government”—for example, to pressure KKE, but also because it does not favor a withdrawal from the euro-zone, despite the rejection of the memoranda policies—people voted for it massively. This reflects in part the stagnation or weakness of the resistance movement that has been seen since February and caused the rise of rather vague hopes that a fundamental shift in government policies could be achieved through a changing of parliamentary majorities.

The SYRIZA leadership is coming under attack from two sides because of the ambiguities of its election promises: First, the forces of the establishment can harass SYRIZA to do everything to ensure that Greece remains in the eurozone, or make SYRIZA also responsible for a possible failure of this intention and expose it. On the other hand, there are critics on the left, pointing out quite rightly that the various promises of

## Critical support for Syriza?

SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) is an electoral coalition of some 13 political groups in Greece, most of which are reformist in the Marxist sense. It includes a variety of social democrats, euro-communists, eco-socialists, Maoists, and some small Trotskyist groups.

In the May 6 election, SYRIZA captured the broad sentiment in Greece that opposed the infamous massive austerity “memorandum” that the previous coalition capitalist government had signed with the Troika—the European Central Bank, IMF, and European Commission. SYRIZA finished second with some 22 percent of the vote, making it Greece’s second largest party. Since no party was able to form a majority government at that time, a new election is scheduled for June 17.

Some polls give SYRIZA close to 30 percent, the highest of all parties in Greece, thus opening the possibility that Syriza could finish first and win the right to form a government. SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras has refused talks with capitalist formations requesting that SYRIZA join a coalition capitalist government. SYRIZA has also pledged to cancel the memorandum, which is aimed at “bailing out the banks at the expense of the workers.”

Unfortunately, SYRIZA has failed to put forward a clear orientation to mobilizing workers through transitional and immediate demands in massive actions to challenge capitalist rule. Nevertheless, a victory for SYRIZA in the election would open the door wider for revolutionaries to gain a hearing for a fighting program that aims at socialist revolution.

Socialist Action sees critical support to SYRIZA as a timely tactic to advance the struggle. Not only would this tactic allow revolutionaries to educate about maintaining working-class independence in the electoral sphere but it would also reinforce their efforts to build united-front actions in the streets. Such actions would build on the general strikes and huge demonstrations that helped raise the self-confidence of the masses and made SYRIZA’s strong showing possible in the first place.

If the reformist SYRIZA is able to form a government but defaults on its pledges, revolutionaries would then be presented with new opportunities to expose reformist solutions and to build the mass revolutionary party that is necessary to lead the workers’ movement to challenge and defeat capital once and for all.

— The Editors

(continued on page 7)

By TASSOS ANASTASSIADIS and  
ANDREAS SARTZEKIS

The following is taken from a longer article, "Greece: The Effects of the Crisis on Daily Life," which appears in *International Viewpoint*, the on-line English-language journal of the Fourth International. It was written a month before the Greek national elections of May 6.

The authors are members of OKDE-Spartakos, Greek section of the Fourth International, which is part of the Coalition of the Anti-Capitalist Left, Antarsya.

Although they had been relatively discreet since 1974, the year of the fall of the military dictatorship, the fascists had never completely disappeared, shamelessly exploiting nationalism and anti-Semitism and trying for several years now rebuild their forces on the basis of racist campaigns against the many immigrants arriving from Africa and Asia. This far right has today a double visage:

- An institutional face with the LAOS party, a kind of equivalent of the French National Front, around its caudillo, Karatzafaris. It failed, however, in the gamble it took: to support the policy of Papandreou, from conviction but also so as to offer a presentable face and to enter the government of national union that it was advocating. In fact, it paid quite dearly for it, pulled out its ministers (but two of them joined New Democracy!), so it re-launched its activity, rediscovering its habitual anti-immigrant discourse.

- Neo-Nazi activists, petty thugs organized in Chryssi Avgi ("Golden Dawn"), whose leader is a former terrorist who planted bombs. Openly protected by the MAT (Greek riot police) and used when necessary as auxiliaries of the police, they have had a certain success in a district in the centre of Athens by organizing part of the population against the immigrants who live there in dire poverty.

Thefts, but also some murders committed by immigrants have provided the pretext for a wave of racism, with violent attacks and the formation of "vigilance" groups, and the intolerable election to Athens City Council of the leader of the group, who had no hesitation in giving the Nazi salute in the town hall.

## The brown plague tries to rise again



(Left) Golden Dawn leader Nikos Michaloliakos.

- A central battle for the rights of immigrants, in particular for them to be welcomed in a way that is worthy of the rights of man. From this point of view, it is certainly necessary to put a stop to the policy which forces immigrants without resources to survive in terrifying and dangerous conditions in some districts of Athens. But to remove the public benches in the main squares, as the mayor of the capital has done, reinforces exclusion and justifies racism.

However, the demands concern both the Greek and immigrant population: job creation, in particular in the building industry (a sector that has been very hard hit by the crisis), the right to quality health care, the right to an education (this year, there were no school books for months on end and schools were closed as economy measures) ...

- Unity of the antiracist movement so as to give it the mass and effective character that is necessary. On March 17, a demonstration of 1000 people marched (and was blocked by the police) towards Aghios Pandelimonas, the district where the neo-Nazi area active. This demonstration, called by an association linked, as is often the case in Greece, to a political organization, was an example of a fightback that was necessary but very insufficient.

At a time when the neo-Nazis are credited in the opinion polls with scores sometimes higher than those of LAOS and could get into parliament, united and prolonged mass campaigns are on the agenda, and we have seen some examples of this, with the massive participation of high-school students. Preventing the fascists from growing, and reconquering, through mass mobilizations and anti-capitalist perspectives, the neighbourhoods that have fallen into their hands form part of our urgent tasks! ■

As of now, the group, as though it had been made respectable by the participation of its LAOS counterpart in the government, is trying to move to the next stage, in suburbs of Athens and in the provinces—on the one hand, attempts to infiltrate assemblies of the Indignant, on the other, enrollment of young people to attack immigrants and antiracists.

They even try incursions into suburbs with a democratic tradition, such as this week in Nea Smyrni, where they injured two Syrian refugees right in the main square, which was full of people who did not react.

For its part, the Network for Monitoring Racist Attacks has recorded a very sharp increase in attacks, and is worried by the participation of minors.

Faced with this situation, the government is making the conscious choice of encouraging racism and thus fascist violence, with a policy and declarations that are illustrated by the minister "for the protection of citizens," Michalis Chrysochoïdis, a very reactionary cadre of PASOK.

Justifying the opening of a veritable concentration camp for immigrants fleeing their conditions of war and pov-

erty (1000 places in a former barracks, which will be guarded by a private militia), he declared (quoted by *Epochi*): "We must face resolutely the question of immigration, which has now been transformed into a social and national problem."

And speaking about the policy of camps: "It is the only way that will enable us to neutralize this bomb (sic). Otherwise, inevitably, we will be led to catastrophe. And so we can no longer as a society stand for this. Hundreds of thousands of poor and wretched men in the streets, without work, with nothing to do and starving, victims of the criminal gangs of the slave trade: it is absolutely vital that we take steps."

Since then, the government has announced the construction of 30 similar camps in the country, where 30,000 immigrants will be held. Parallel to this we have a big campaign by the government and the media about the danger that this population represents, including for public health.

The tone is set. And so, the anti-racist and today anti-fascist tasks are extremely urgent. There are at least two such tasks:

## ... Which Way?

(continued from page 6)

SYRIZA leadership are inconsistent and contradictory. It is virtually inconceivable that a Greek left-wing government, if it came about, could accomplish a revocation of the memoranda policies and thus of the credit agreements agreed with the Troika, that are leading to a strangulation of the Greek society, without Greece's exit or expulsion from the eurozone.

### SYRIZA, KKE, and ANTARSYA

In other words, a consistent "reform policy" in favour of working people and all memoranda victims that does not come into direct conflict with the interests of finance capital and big business in Greece, the EU countries and the United States, is very unlikely to be practicable. The SYRIZA leadership is anything but prepared to conduct politically this inevitable clash between the disparate interests of the perpetrators and victims, the exploiters and the exploited. However, it will have to put its cards on the table in one way or another.

SYRIZA is an alliance with some "semi-Stalinist" and "semi-Trotskyist" organizations of the milieu of the (as yet) non-parliamentary left, but is dominated by the Synaspismos leadership. The latter group assumes that the problems of the global capitalist crisis, but also the crisis of Greek society, are to be solved with Keynesian means within the framework of the capitalist system of exploitation. "Socialism" is in this perspective, at best, a distant goal, and achievable only at an "all-European" level etc.

Despite its "radical" name, SYRIZA is an alliance oriented to limited reforms, although in some nuances more to the left than the German Left Party, for instance. It is certainly not a good sign that Tsipras

wants to discuss and perhaps to come to an agreement with the French president F. Hollande, regarding the memoranda policies.

The explosiveness of the current social and political situation will make inevitable a clarification of the contradictions in the policies of the SYRIZA leadership. Too strong is the desire of the great majority to finish with the continued impoverishment, and too weak is the current will and ability of the SYRIZA leadership, to implement this need into a real anti-capitalist (ultimately revolutionary) orientation.

The KKE (Communist Party) leadership has decided to isolate itself even more from SYRIZA and the rest of the left because its election result was not very favorable. The disadvantage of this attitude is that it is increasingly difficult to convince its own base that this strategy and tactics might be successful. The KKE leadership considers more or less openly that there will be no overthrow of the memoranda policies by mass mobilization from below and by the movement itself.

Thus, the KKE points to a future "people's economy" and "people's democracy." But it is not able to explain how its objectives can be achieved if not by a sudden and massive increase of KKE votes, something that is obviously not in sight. It remains the mystery of the party leadership how all verbally proclaimed objectives, particularly the overcoming of capitalism and imperialism, may be imposed. It is foreseeable that the party itself might get into a crisis that could soon lead to greater losses.

ANTARSYA had not a sensationally good, but solid, election result, gaining 1.2%. It was the main force on the left that placed at the center of its election campaign the importance of social resistance through strikes, occupations and mass protests, the self-organization of all victims of the memoranda policies, of the workers, young people, pensioners, and of the partially "illegal" immigrants. ANTARSYA has shown the way how social resistance may be victorious through

the propagation of a program of actual transitional solutions that are geared to the real needs of the vast majority of the population and aimed at the self-organization of these people, and by adhering to the perspective of the anti-capitalist revolutionary overthrow of the existing political and social system.

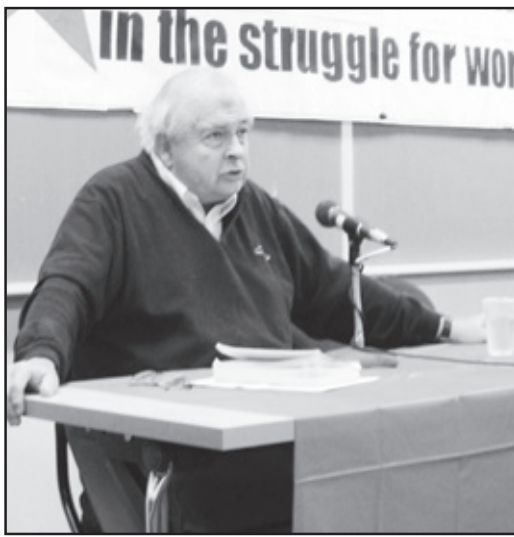
ANTARSYA could have achieved a better result through a more consistent policy in the past two years, through greater unity, more and better activities of the local committees, etc. But there was hardly a cure against the prevailing mood for a parliamentary change mainly in the last week before the elections.

As the slogan of "left-wing government" before the election was nebulous and even now continues to remain so, it was essentially correct not to feed such hopes. However, ANTARSYA could come up with a statement supporting critically a left-wing government under certain conditions. That has not happened so far. The basic political and programmatic direction of ANTARSYA remains correct after all (see *ANTARSYA declaration on page 11*).

Racist incitement and chauvinism in the mass media over decades and through the official policies of racism as well as the evil governmental racism are responsible for the spreading of the fascist plague in Greece, which is only one step away from being transformed into a mass movement along the lines of the German Nazi Party before 1933. But the apathy and indifference of the political parties and organizations of the Left and the workers' movement have also greatly contributed to the rise of Nazi gang, and this responsibility is very serious.

It is urgently necessary to reverse this disastrous trend. It may be that the specter of a left-wing government has appeared in Greece, but more serious is the drift of the social and political conditions into the direction of a new Weimar Republic. Greek capitalism and its bourgeois democracy have evoked this witching hour. ■

# Reform and Revolution in Latin America



By GERRY FOLEY

Gerry Foley, the former international editor of Socialist Action newspaper, died on April 21, in Chiapas, Mexico. Over the span of nearly two decades, Gerry often commented in this newspaper on the political situation in Latin America. This included reports on his visit to Chiapas at the time of the Zapatista rebellion. More recently, he visited Argentina and Brazil to interview and confer with revolutionary socialists in those countries.

The article below has been transcribed from Gerry Foley's last public speech and is slightly edited for publication. It is the first portion of a forum sponsored by the Philadelphia branch of Socialist Action in May 2011. Unfortunately, we don't have space to print the entire presentation, in which Foley dealt extensively with Venezuela and Argentina. A video of the speech can be viewed at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

The processes in Latin America have a special importance for us because they came just at the time to prove that the fall of Stalinism did not mean the end of socialist revolution. Basically, you could date the fall of Stalinism to 1989, when the [Soviet] bureaucracy decided to head toward the restoration of capitalism. They were frightened by the [Russian] miners' strike and they saw a workers revolution on the horizon. They decided that the best way to defuse it was to move toward capitalism, because that would atomize and demoralize the working class—and [their plan] essentially worked.

With the fall of the old Soviet bloc, which was for many years seen as the alternative [to capitalism], you began to get capitalist apologists saying that "this is the end of history," by which they meant the end of class struggle—things will never change. When I was living in France, there were books published with titles like "Adieu, les lendemains de change," "Farewell to the bright futures...."

But in the 1990s, you began to see an upsurge of very violent struggles in Latin America. By the turn of the century, there were three presidents of Ecuador who had been forced to flee from mass mobilizations, two presidents in Bolivia, and one president in Argentina—he had to flee from the Argentine equivalent of the White House in a helicopter to escape a crowd of 100,000 people who were besieging the palace.

And then you had the election of Chavez in Venezuela in 1998. Chavez had been the leader of a military coup in the early 1990s; he had spent [two] years in prison for his role in the uprising. But that was symptomatic; the uprising was triggered by what was called the Caracazo, the Caracas uprising [of 1989].

At the end of the 1980s, the IMF had demanded that oil subsidies be cut; that was part of the whole neoliberal offensive. All these countries have debt they can never pay; Fidel Castro wrote an interesting book on that, saying that the debt is unpayable, since it's several times the GNP of most of these countries. Petro-dollars were recycled, and banks encouraged Latin American countries to incur debt, and they all got into debt way over their heads. And so, in order for the debt to be recycled, they had to appeal to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. What [the World Bank

and IMF] demand is that government deficit can only be 4 percent, and there can't be any subsidies.

What typically had happened was that as a solution to the pressure of mass revolt in Latin America, the governments would subsidize basic food as well as fuel prices. In the case of Caracas, they took the subsidy off fuel oil, which meant that the bus fares went through the roof. Caracas is a sprawling area, and people needed the buses to go to work, and they couldn't afford the fares. There was an uprising, which was put down at the cost of 2000 dead. That created a crisis in the army, because [instead of] defending the country, they were shooting down their own citizens. ...

A section of the army, the young officers, went into revolt and staged a coup to overthrow the government—which failed. Hugo Chavez, who was one of the leaders of the coup, went to prison. But when he emerged from prison, he was a popular hero, and was elected by a big majority in 1998 on the grounds that he would make real changes—that he would be the president of the people, instead of the president of the political parties.

In a number of Latin American countries, there was a situation in which you had two political parties—a conservative and a liberal party—and they would rotate the executive between them.

In Colombia it was actually written down; for so many years the conservatives would be in power, and for so many years the liberals would be in power—while the changes meant absolutely nothing. It was really one party with two heads that ruled all the time.

There is another timeline: From the end of the 1960s to about 1985, most of the Latin American countries were ruled by dictatorships. This was a response by the oligarchies to the uprisings and social movements very largely inspired by the Cuban Revolution; there were guerrilla movements in most Latin American countries.

The U.S. government encouraged the oligarchies to return to parliamentary rule; you can't defend military dictatorships forever. They're ugly, and nobody likes them—you know, the generals with dark glasses, who kill and torture people—it looks much better if you have an elected president! And so, by 1985, most of the military dictatorships had converted themselves into parliamentary "democracies."

And in the beginning, there was a lot of hope in these parliamentary regimes. It was back to "democracy!" The age of dictatorship, torture, and mass slaughter was over! The Argentine dictatorship had killed 40,000 people. ... And in Brazil, a very large number of people were killed by the right wing, and a lot were tortured. The popular writer, Paulo Coelho, was tortured in prison, for example; that's one of the things that led him to become a mystic.

But by 1990, the parliamentary "democracies" had become essentially discredited, and you began to see new popular rebellions. The first was probably in Mexico, in 1992—the Zapatista uprising of native people in one of the most Native American provinces of the entire country. The Zapatistas were able to hold territory and to force the Mexican government to compromise and keep troops out of the territory they controlled. So they were able to have their own territory, which they formally have to this day, though it is eroding more and more because of the pressure of the military on them and the ability of the government to buy off people by subsidies, etc.

Also, the Zapatistas abandoned their perspective of taking power. They now said, "we just want to enlarge the civil society," by which they meant to take over some of



(Above) Fidel Castro and Salvador Allende in Chile in 1971.

(Ctr.) Andrés Manuel López Obrador is running for president of Mexico as a "leftist" pro-capitalist candidate in elections scheduled for July 1.

(Far left) Gerry Foley, speaking in Toronto in May 2010.

the governmental functions by voluntary organizations. You know, probably every radical in Mexico considers himself a Zapatista, or a member of the Zapatista network. But in reality, it just a nebula; there's nothing there, no real organization. It has slowly faded away—which illustrates some of the problems of the current wave of populist movements in Latin America.

Traditional radicalism in Latin America is what we would call *populism*. What populism represents is an attempt to balance between the native working class and imperialism. In order to maintain this balance, it means there must be some inroads into imperialist power, some attacks on imperialism, but they are always limited. It doesn't involve a real break with imperialism, much less a decisive route to socialism.

Populism was the main response to the Great Depression in Latin America during the 1930s and '40s. It was represented

by the Perón regime in Argentina, the Vargas regime in Brazil and the Lázaro Cárdenas regime in Mexico. It was Mexico where populism went the furthest because that led to the nationalization of the oil industry when the country was the world's second largest oil-producer. It came very close to foreign [armed] intervention in Mexico. Britain broke relations with Mexico, and there were a lot of very ugly noises in the United States. The U.S., of course, had been intervening in Mexico all through that period, ever since the 1910 revolution.

That was probably the height of the populist upsurge in Latin America, but already by 1940 it was beginning to ebb; a right-winger was elected as the presidential candidate of the Party of the Revolution (PRI), the party that was established by Cárdenas regime, and continued to move steadily to the right since that time. And starting with the 1970s, the regime actually abandoned populism, and the Mexican ruling party split over that.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who was the son of Lázaro, broke away and formed his own party, and he ran for president in 1988 and apparently won. But the election was stolen. The computers were showing that Cárdenas was ahead in the voting up until the wee hours of the morning, when suddenly the computers went down. When the computers went up again, he was behind. The election was very obviously stolen. There was a period of protest against it, but Cárdenas not being a revolutionist, these mass mobilizations didn't lead to anything.

This happened again in the last elections in Mexico [in 2006], which were apparently stolen again, though the vote was smaller. In that case, López Obrador, who was the bourgeois "left" candidate, organized mass mobilizations of up to more than half a mil-

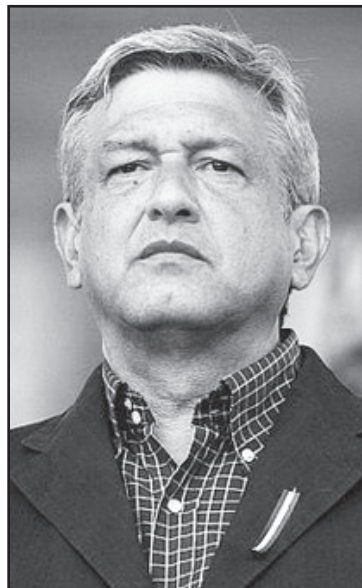
lion in Mexico City, and he even set up sort of a government in exile, but it slowly faded away because there was nothing he could do. Governmental power was in the hands of the official victor, and since López Obrador was not a revolutionist, he wasn't going to organize a counter-power.

If you set up a "counter-government," to be real it has to be like *dual power*. The soviets in Russia in 1917 were a *real* power. The rail workers would not move the trains unless they got an order from the soviets [revolutionary workers councils]; they were not impressed by an order from the provisional government. ... The army obeyed the soviets, the workers obeyed the soviets, but the government could count only on the loyalty of the police and the upper ranks of the army. Eventually, it came to a clash that was resolved in favor of the soviets. The slogan of the Bolsheviks was "All power to the soviets!" That's a *real* alternative government; Lopez Obrador wasn't prepared for that.

More recently, there was a mass uprising in Oaxaca [Mexico] by unionists. It was in response to a right-wing state governor's attempt to crush the teachers' union. As a result, the unions came together with indigenous organizations of that area, and they formed a "counter-government." But it remained under the political influence of the PRD, the bourgeois left party led by López Obrador. Although there were demonstrations of supporters in Mexico City, López Obrador didn't try to organize the masses in support of this government in Oaxaca. So it just faded away. The city was surrounded, and eventually, the "counter-government" collapsed. Leaders were arrested. Some of them are still in jail.

In Latin America, if you talk about a revolution, you have to be *serious* about it. In a sense, what condemned [Salvador] Allende in Chile was that he won the elections in the spring of 1973. The bourgeoisie was figuring that the [Allende] government was going to erode—it wasn't making real changes in people's lives, it wasn't keeping its promises, so support for it would erode. And the right would come back to power in its usual way. But what happened instead was that hopes were still there, and the coalition won the elections of May 1973. And after that, the right-wing-oriented military, in September 1973, carried out a coup and established a military dictatorship. In Chile, 40,000 people were killed by the repression.

And so, I remember people in Mexico saying, "Why should we vote for López Obrador? Because he is not really ready to fight. If he wins, it just means there is going to be repression, and we're going to suffer." So in Latin America, it doesn't make sense to vote for anyone who says they're a leftist, unless they're ready for revolution. ■





By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

*"The Dictator,"* directed by Larry Charles. Starring Sacha Baron Cohen, Anna Faris, and Ben Kingsley.

**"The Dictator"** is over-the-top hilarious; Sacha Baron Cohen's character, the heavily bearded Admiral General Aladeen, in a militaristic, beribboned white suit and cap, is the dictator of the fictional oil-rich country of Wadiya.

In a speech about democracy versus dictatorship, Aladeen riles up the crowd by asking if they want to live in a country that spies on its citizens, arrests them without charge, and imprisons them indefinitely; and also assassinates its citizens who happen to be friends or relatives of suspected terrorists who are in another country at the time. Hopefully, the audience gets that he is talking about America, espousing truths that no mainstream media would dare touch. The self-important major TV newscasts anchors reporting on Aladeen's every move are portrayed as a bunch of well-groomed, clueless nitwits.

Aladeen's handlers hire an imposter because Aladeen has decapitated so many detractors that Wadiyans want him killed. On the lam, Aladeen ends up in New York dressed in the rags of a homeless person; he runs into fellow countryman Nadal (Jason Mantzoukas), whom he thought he'd ordered beheaded. Nadal now owns a restaurant called Death to Aladeen. He then gets involved with an organic foods co-op run by Zoey (a gamin Anna Faris), who outfits the 6 ft. 4 in. Cohen in a Take Back the Night T-shirt and baggy, baby-blue, thigh-length shorts. Without even trying, Zoey innocently and naively effects a major change in him.

The film touches on the U.S. dealing with the Wadiyan nuclear enrichment program; the push for an Arab Spring democracy in dictatorships. Cohen

## A spoof and a tale of horror

leaves no sensitive issue unscathed—such as female infanticide, women's rights (women, generally), police brutality, racism—Blacks, Jews, Asians, and more. Still you will not hear an anti-Muslim peep. There's some bathroom and high-school jock humor throughout, but the concept is like a Michael Moore documentary, only totally fictionalized with bizarre characters, dialogue, and scenes.

Ben Kingsley plays Tamir, Aladeen's right-hand man who plots to overthrow him. He is a dead-ringer for Hamid Karzai, complete with hat and cape, and the only character who plays it absolutely straight. The audience in the theatre was mostly women, and we all laughed out loud throughout. ■

*"Chernobyl Diaries,"* directed by Bradley Parker. Starring Jesse McCartney and Jonathan Sadowski.

**Bradley Parker shot his film** in the manner of the popular scare-fest "The Blair Witch Project," using handheld cameras, and like that film, the characters film themselves. Three young Americans are in Ukraine visiting a friend's brother, Paul (Jonathan Sadowski), who now lives there.

Paul bullies the others into joining him and another couple on an extreme tour run by Uri (Dimitri Diatchenko) a blocky, shaven-headed, alien-from-another-planet-like dude. Their destination? Chernobyl—site of the world's worst nuclear disaster until last year's catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in Japan that damaged its Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear reactor, laying waste to everything for miles.

The premise of "Chernobyl" is that the post-Soviet government is keeping secrets of what became of people who



Sacha Baron Cohen as "The Dictator"

didn't, or couldn't, evacuate the town of Prypiat, two miles away from the reactor complex, after the nuclear meltdown 25 years ago. The Soviet authorities had given the evacuation order. Everyone was given only five minutes to pack up and leave.

The film hints that the old, the sick, the invalids, and the infirm who couldn't leave are imprisoned there to slowly die of radiation poisoning; the healthier ones are not allowed to leave lest they tell others about what's really going on. We see this as a possibility in the fate suffered by Amanda (Devin Kelly) as the last survivor. (Of course, this is fiction. In real life, the abandoned city of Prypiat is open for guided tours, and frequently visited.)

Although the film is billed in the horror genre, first-time director Bradley Parker's "Chernobyl Diaries" will disappoint horror movie fans. It is slow moving except when characters run through labyrinthine passageways trying to escape things that go bump in the night or

flee ravenous beasts; and it is bereft of creepy, supernatural monsters.

In Uri's beat-up military van, the extreme tourists approach the Ukrainian town of Prypiat, once inhabited by hundreds of families whose adult members had worked at the Chernobyl nuclear facility two miles distant. They are stopped at the gate by a guard, who tells them that the facility is closed due to maintenance. But of course, Uri knows a secret way in.

They take pictures of the area that once boasted tree-shaded gardens and a playground with a Ferris wheel and other rides, now eerily still and rusted. Led by a confidant Uri, they wend their way in the half-light through the still furnished apartments, a school with overturned desks, a hospital, and here and there a tattered, eyeless doll. They hear noises. Uri assures them that nothing can live here.

Then something happens to belie Uri's assurance. They realize they should not have come, so pile into Uri's van. Predictably, the vehicle breaks down; things go from bad to really, horribly bad until there is just one of the six tourists left, then none. One inconsistency is that the tourists start out exploring Prypiat on foot, yet appear to end up in the damaged reactor itself, two miles away.

I believe Parker's "Chernobyl Diaries" is timely and important; but it got bad reviews. People wanted more horror. What can be more horrifying than a domestic nuclear plant explosion and meltdown, which kills people, contaminates, and lays waste land for hundreds of miles and for hundreds if not thousands of years? This could be the future for Okuma, Futaba, and other towns that lie within a 50-mile radius of the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Most of the footage for "Chernobyl" was shot in Prypiat. I recommend seeing the Greenpeace and BBC videos of the history of Chernobyl and Prypiat, then and now, on youtube. ■

## The Autobiography of Malcolm X

By BARRY WEISLEDER

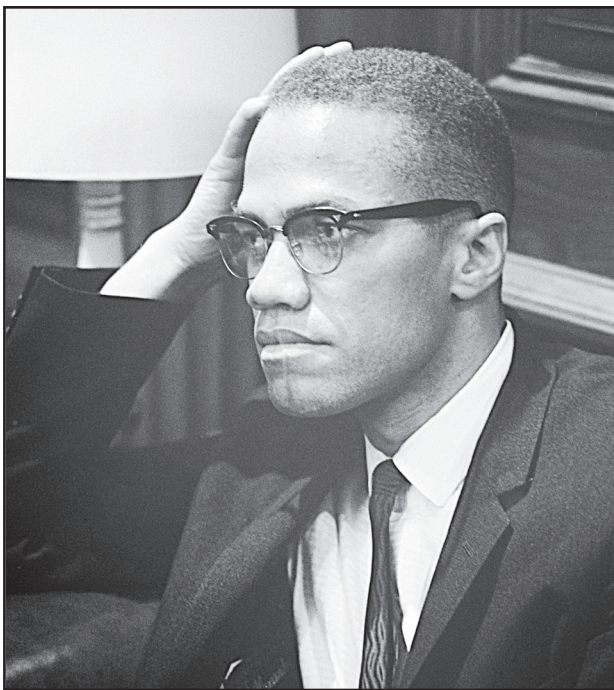
"The Autobiography of Malcolm X, As Told to Alex Haley," is a book worth reading again and again. Many have pointed out that Haley's rendition of the life of the Black leader is flawed and incomplete—barely acknowledging the ways and the extent to which Malcolm's political worldview radically evolved in the year before he was assassinated in 1965. Nevertheless, most readers will find the book to be both engrossing and richly informative.

"The Autobiography" is a survivor's tale, to a tragic point, bearing witness to the institutional racism that persisted long after the formal abolition of slavery in America. Malcolm X moves painfully through great personal transformations, from individual to collective forms of resistance. The shifting forms of his combat reflect the dynamics of social radicalization against the prevailing order.

Born Malcolm Little (1925–1965), the iconic human rights leader felt the flames of racism early in life. Klansmen burnt the Littles out of their home in Omaha, and the racist Black Legion did the same to them near East Lansing, Mich., after the birth of Malcolm. The book describes his childhood in Michigan, the murder of his father—a preacher and devoted proponent of the ideas of Marcus Garvey—and his mother's deteriorating mental health, which resulted in her commitment to a psychiatric hospital.

Little's young adulthood in Boston and New York City is covered, as is his involvement in organized crime, which led to his arrest and subsequent imprisonment for six-and-a-half years (1946–1952). The book is Malcolm's account of his transition from street hustler to preacher, and his subsequent shift, however short-lived, to being a revolutionary Black nationalist political leader.

The completely captivating quality of the book is Malcolm's very frank, articulate, autopsy-like examination of racism in America. He delves below the obvious—the hateful and exploitative discrimination against Blacks in employment, housing, education, the court system and political life. He excoriates the psychological poison of low self-esteem that led many of his contemporaries to straighten their hair or bleach



their skin, while kowtowing to the white boss man. Malcolm's reaction was to extol Black pride, and to promulgate Black self-determination.

The first organization to reach him with that message was a strict, eccentric religious sect. The Nation of Islam (NOI) promotes Black economic self-reliance and separation from white society, and demands adherence to a code of abstinence from drugs, sports, gambling, and extra-marital sex. Rather than criticize capitalism as the system that grew out of the slave trade and that profits from racism today, the NOI posits a demonology centred on the "white devil race."

Whatever else one may wish to say about it, NOI ideology attracted tens of thousands of victims of racism and created one of the largest, most powerful Black organizations in U.S. history. Although it echoed the prevalent sexism and anti-Semitism of bourgeois society, it based itself on a vast population of the oppressed. That set it on a collision course with the overwhelmingly white, male, capitalist ruling elite.

Malcolm learned about the NOI from family mem-

bers who visited him in prison. While incarcerated, Malcolm devoted himself to study, to improve his reading and writing skills. He acquired a prodigious vocabulary, and became widely

read in history, science, politics, and religion. He joined the NOI and became one of its leading spokespersons. At the same time he became the object of jealousy in its hierarchy.

On July 3, 1963 the media reported that 67-year-old Elijah Muhammed faced paternity law suits from two former secretaries. The young women charged that he fathered their four children, with a fifth on the way. Muhammed rationalized his actions as "the fulfillment of prophecy", a kind of test of the flock. But when Malcolm told some NOI officials, to help them prepare to deflect the scandal, he was accused of "throwing gasoline on the fire."

Then came the Nov. 22 assassination of President Kennedy, and Malcolm X's comment that it was a case of the "chickens come home to roost." Muhammed "silenced" Malcolm. A stream of anonymous death threats followed. Assassins caught up with Malcolm in February 1965 at the Audubon Hotel, after he had broken with the NOI, and had made two major tours of the Middle East and Africa. There is reason to believe that governmental authorities, recognizing that Malcolm represented a growing danger to America's rulers, permitted or facilitated the assassination.

The country was undergoing a deepening radicalization. The challenge to the status quo was posed by the civil rights movement, by campaigns in solidarity with anti-colonial struggles (including those in Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam), and the first stirrings for radical change among students, youth in general, and women. Malcolm X won a mass audience in the Black community, independent of the white power structure. Increasingly, he indicated the need for mass independent Black political action.

Malcolm took an increasingly nuanced view of the liberal-led NAACP and the peaceful mass protest campaigns waged by Dr. Martin Luther King. He pointed in the direction of a united-front approach—that is, unity in action of people of diverse points of view, who can agree on the fight for specific change—and a turn away from the insularity and sectarianism practised by the NOI.

(continued on page 11)

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

## CPR workers railroaded when labour tops fail to defend right to strike

By BARRY WEISLEDER

First it was postal workers. Then Air Canada workers. Now 4800 Canadian Pacific Railway workers are the victims of aggressive concession demands, backed up by federal back-to-work legislation. The question is: What are the Canadian Labour Congress and its major affiliates doing to resist the gutting of workers' rights?

Conductors, locomotive engineers, and rail traffic controllers represented by Teamsters Canada Rail Conference walked off the job on May 23, shutting down CPR's entire freight service from Vancouver to Montreal. Management laid off another 2000 employees, with a further

1400 affected.

The strike impacted many economic sectors, including coal, fertilizer, grain, and auto. CPR operates 24,000 kilometres of tracks across Canada, and into parts of the U.S. Midwest.

Doug Finnon, vice-president of Teamsters Canada, told the media that CPR bargained in bad faith, hiding behind the federal government to roll back workers' pensions and to ignore serious health and safety concerns.

CPR boss Ed Greenberg demands the same concessions CPR squeezed out of workers at other railways. Conservative Labour Minister Lisa Raitt proved eager to help the bosses, introducing legislation on May 28

### Nearly 1 million youths jobless

Statistics Canada has a new acronym for it: NEET, "Not in Employment Education or Training." But there's nothing neat about 904,000 young Canadians, Quebecois and aboriginals being unemployed. They represent roughly 13 per cent of all young people between the ages of 15 and 29. More than half of them have given up even looking for a job.

In some countries, high levels of youth unemployment have led to mass protests and demands for fundamental change. In Greece and Spain more than half of those under age 25 are out of work due to the economic crash, aggravated by government austerity measures.

Perhaps Greece is coming to Quebec. —B.W.

to end the work stoppage. The dispute now goes to an arbitrator, who is likely to impose a settlement *right down the middle ... of the company demands*. NDP federal labour critic Alexandre Boulerice said the most the NDP Official Opposition could do is delay passage of the strike-busting bill.

The truth is, much more could and should be done, including mass sympathy strikes, before free collective bargaining—not to mention decent pensions, employment insurance benefits and many other past gains—disappear entirely.

## Union merger & innovative organizing: the way forward?

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Two major unions in Canada, now in merger talks, want to include workers who lack collective bargaining rights. Is it a step forward, a way to reverse decades of decline, or just a cynical move to make bureaucrats look good?

The 195,000-member Canadian Auto Workers union and the 120,000-strong Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union, both of which have lost thousands of members since the 2008 economic crash, are exploring ways to

include temporary workers, contract workers and the unemployed in their ranks. This is the return of a good and old idea. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when modern unions began, they first offered tangible benefits like burial insurance and summer camp for kids. They sought also to engage the widest layers of the working class in mass action for progressive social and political change.

That led to union-based political parties like the CCF and the NDP in English Canada. But it morphed into an arbitrary division between economic (union) action, and political (party) action, along

with the abandonment of non-unionists by a largely co-opted and conservative labour bureaucracy.

The fact that CAW and CEP leaders now express a desire to incorporate unemployed, laid-off, part-time, and young workers may be a sign that they want to overcome the prevalent image of unions as distant or privileged, and that they see Labour once again as a social movement. But how does that square with concessions bargaining and with backing for Liberal politicians by these same unions, among others?

And what rights will non-bargaining

unit members enjoy for the modest dues they will pay in the merged union? Will they be an active, democratic influence on the direction of the organization, or just campaign cannon fodder?

The truth is, for any good tactics to be fully realized, good leadership is required. That means leaders who are accountable, and committed to class-struggle policies.

Qualities like those will come only from the bottom-up. So beware of schemes and panaceas from the top-down. Without workers' control, they aren't worth a tinker's damn. ■

## Charge, try, and jail criminal cops of Toronto's G20 summit

Two years after the event, the flak continues to fly, but justice remains elusive. With no open, unlimited public enquiry, and after several "reviews" and reports, only a couple of dozen cops have been accused of misdeeds under administrative police rules. No criminal charges have been laid. No firings. No resignations have occurred.

The latest report, by Ontario's police watchdog, Gerry McNeilly, found excessive use of force and rampant Charter of Rights violations. No wonder. Cops used "kettling" tactics at least 10 times during the Toronto G20 Summit.

Over 1100 people were arrested and held for hours, or days, in filthy, overcrowded metal cages. Judges subsequently dismissed or set aside most of the charges. Only 24 of 317 charged were convicted.

Meanwhile, police received extravagant amounts of overtime and vacation pay to "work" the gathering of leaders of the major capitalist powers in the downtown core. Some cops made more than \$14,000 for a few days' attendance. The bill was an astounding \$1 billion—just to facilitate elite approval of the austerity agenda now in noxious full

bloom.

McNeilly's report stands in stark contrast to Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair's review. Blair acknowledged that police were "overwhelmed," but downplayed the extent of their brutality, their Charter rights violations, unlawful mass arrests and appalling detention conditions.

Instead of public accountability, the norm has been stonewalling and failure to disclose evidence. McNeilly puts this down to "mistakes" and "poor planning." That misses the mark. Toronto Summit policing reflected state repres-

sion evident at such events before, and since June 2010.

We've seen reruns of this film from Quebec City and from Genoa, Italy, in 2001—and again at the anti-NATO protests in Chicago, May 2012.

Such repugnant practices will not soon end, as they are the hyper establishment response to general resistance to their ignoble agenda.

While labour and the left should continue to press for prosecution of cop criminals, from top to bottom, our efforts should be waged without illusions. Democracy and capitalism are simply incompatible—increasingly so in the throes of economic crisis. Fundamental change is necessary if we are to overcome.

— BARRY WEISLEDER

## ... Malcolm Autobiography

(continued from page 9)

Following his trips abroad—including his pilgrimage to Mecca, during which he met Muslims of every colour and ethnicity—Malcolm X announced the formation of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, "a non-religious and non-sectarian group organized to unite Afro-Americans for a constructive program toward attainment of human rights." He said that the OAAU "would seek to convert the Negro population from non-violence to active self-defence against white supremacists across America." On politics he declared, "Whether you use bullets or ballots, you've got to aim well; don't strike at the puppet, strike at the puppeteer" (page 478).

More and more, Malcolm X indicted the capitalist system—whether he called it that, or whatever he called himself—philosophically. Sadly, the "Autobiography," including its epilogue, omits reference to the fact that Malcolm spoke frequently at Militant Forums hosted by the (then-Trotskyist) Socialist Workers' Party in New York City. Those talks weren't just an act of outreach to mainly white workers, but to an explicitly revolutionary Marxist current. And that was more than the fear-

ful FBI, White House, and Wall Street were willing to bear. Some of Malcolm's speeches to the socialists can be found in "Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements"

(edited by George Breitman, Grove Press 1966).

Like that of Che Guevara, Malcolm's image is ubiquitous, and his views are more relevant than ever. Why? Because the rulers' war against "communism" (Stalinism) has been replaced by their war on Muslims; because there is a Black man in the White House imposing the interests of the 1% on the 99%; and because the working class is awakening from the nightmare of capitalist economic and environmental crises and, as the Occupy movement demonstrates, is desperately looking for alternatives.

Reading "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" has reminded me of two things in particular. One concerns the amazing qualities of the man, his courage, his passion, his inner strength. It makes me wonder how many more Malcolms there'd be but for the body-and-mind-destroying conditions of poverty and oppression.

The other lesson concerns the importance of seeking principled unity in action with people with whom one may not fully agree. There is great revolutionary potential in forces that take the path of struggle against an unjust order. ■

## Women's equality by year 2593!

They say patience is a virtue. But waiting 581 years for economic equality may be pushing it.

Queen's University (in Kingston, Ontario) professor Kathleen Lahey thinks that is how long it will take, given present trends, for women to enjoy economic parity.

"The rate of change has been virtually nonexistent since 1997," wrote Lahey. She pointed out that the recession of the early 1990s, and the current recession, erased many of the gains women won from 1977 to 1993, noting that they benefited little from billions of dollars in federal and provincial infrastructure spending.

Lahey said that the 2012 federal budget changes to Canada's Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement, health care spending, the national private retirement system, infrastructure spending, and cuts to public services and employment will impose the heaviest cuts on women and on members of other vulnerable groups. — B.W.

(continued from page 3)

from exercising your first amendment rights. We are going to be very proud to have the people who have sacrificed more than other Americans leading our march.”

Next was Aaron Hughes, a member of the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and one of some 40 veterans who turned in their medals at the end of the march. Hughes said:

“Everyday 18 veterans commit suicide; 17% of the service members in Afghanistan are under psychotropic medication; 20-50% in the service are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or military sexual trauma. One-third of the women serving in the military are sexually assaulted by their peers; 48% of the individuals that report sexual assaults are males.

“The military is in a mental health crisis right now. These generals—their task is to care for these service members—are not living up to that task. If they cannot live up to their task, how are soldiers to accomplish their mission of supposedly building democracy with their brothers in Afghanistan? That’s why IVAW demands an immediate withdrawal and the return of all our brothers and sisters from Afghanistan, so Afghans can begin healing, so we can begin healing.”

Also at the press conference was Jan Rodolfo, National Nurses Union Midwest director. The 170,000 strong NNU joined the anti-NATO/G8 protest call, providing free bus rides for many protesters from outside Chicago.

The NNU called its own noontime rally/march for May 18 in downtown Chicago. The nurses finally settled on a rally in Daley Plaza, after settling with the city following a protracted fight over the march route and “security” issues. The NNU rally drew busloads of nurses from around the country, especially from California, and with supporters, totaled a lively crowd of 1000-2000 protesters. Speakers focused on the savage attacks on health care and unions around the world.

Rodolfo explained the NNU’s proposed “Robin Hood Tax,” a .05% tax on all stock sales. The NNU says the modest tax would generate \$350 billion per year, three times the debt of all 50 states! Supporting the nurses’ struggle was Chicagoan Tom Morello, formerly of Rage Against the Machine, who performed a defiant set of radical, class-struggle songs.

There were no arrests during the permitted May 20 march, except for the very end. However, there were well over 100 arrests over the full 10 days of action, which included a march against the Boeing aircraft company war makers on May 21 in downtown Chicago. The National Lawyers Guild noted over 70 instances of police brutality, most of which took place at the end of Sunday’s anti-war march, when police blocked people who were trying to leave the area at the conclusion of the rally. A number of completely innocent protesters were subjected to a deliberate episode of police violence.

More than two-dozen protesters were taken to the hospital and treated for broken bones, knocked-out teeth, concussions, and several open wounds requiring stitches (see videos of police violence at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cKHc0NTgIQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cKHc0NTgIQ)).

A National Lawyers Guild statement of May 25 said that most of the injuries to demonstrators were from baton blows to the body, and there were also serious head injuries.

Leading up to the march was the “People’s Summit” on the weekend of May 12-13, which attracted 750 participants. Featured were over 40 workshops on poverty war, racism, health care, worker’s rights, women’s liberation and gender liberation, democracy and debate.

Keynote speakers at the “People’s Summit” included a substitute for the ill Malalai Joya, a former anti-NATO member of the Afghanistan parliament; Reiner Braun of the International Coordinating Committee of the European No to NATO Network; Kathy Kelly, Voices for

# ... Chicago NATO protest

Saul Loeb / AFP / Getty Images



(Above) Occupy Chicago marches on March 19 to protest the NATO summit meeting.

Creative Nonviolence; political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, via speaker phone, who received a standing ovation; Malik Mujahid of the Muslim Peace Coalition; Medea Benjamin of Code Pink; and Joe Lombardo of UNAC.

## Free the NATO 5!

Brian Church, Jared Chase, Brent Betterly, and two other protesters, called “the NATO 5,” were arrested on charges of terrorism on the eve of the May 20 mass march. They were accused under the first-time use of an Illinois state anti-terrorism law of making Molotov cocktails (with a device identified as beer-making equipment). The first three were arrested in an unlawful police raid on a home on May 16, in which 11 people were originally detained. The other two were arrested several days later.

Hundreds protested in Chicago on May 19 in their defense. It was revealed that the five had been the victims of entrapment schemes by at least two police agents, who carried out plans modeled on the operations inflicted on a numbers of Muslim Americans recently framed on terrorism charges. The only “evidence” against the accused was statements by the undercover cops.

The NATO 5, held in isolation cells, are being represented by National Lawyers Guild attorneys. NLG attorney Sarah Gelsomino said, “Charging these people, who came here to peacefully protest against NATO, with terrorism when in reality the police have been terrorizing activists in Chicago is absolutely outrageous.” Also, as we go to press, four protesters who were arrested as a result of police violence against the anti-NATO mobilization remain in jail.

All activists need to defend these victims. The cop attacks and police informant stings are precedents for a crackdown at the upcoming Republican and Democratic Party conventions or even before. We say: Hands off anti-NATO protesters! Release them now! Defend first amendment rights! Stop the frame-up of Chicano antiwar

leader Carlos Montes! Jail the NATO war criminals, not protesters! ■

## The Role of NATO

NATO is currently conducting wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and parts of Africa. Last year, a record number were killed in Afghanistan, the longest war in U.S. history—yet the 1% war tried to paint Chicago protesters as violent!

NATO was established in 1949 as an anti-Soviet military pact. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of NATO member states has increased 75%. Said author Noam Chomsky, “NATO is an intervention force under U.S. command.” NATO member countries represent 70% of all military spending in the world. As one CanG8 activist put it, “That’s not defense, that’s empire.” Apartheid Israel, although not a NATO member, shares strategic information with NATO, as part of its war on the Palestinian people. The United States, NATO’s leading member, has troops in 130 countries.

Moreover, the 2010 NATO conference produced the Lisbon Treaty, which allows for the further expansion of NATO’s role as an independent “security” arm of the European Union (EU) nations. This includes “missions outside the union,” that is, military missions *everywhere*.

— MARTY GOODMAN

## Excerpts from May 14 declaration by Greek Anti-Capitalist Left (ANTARSYA)

### The ANTARSYA declaration of May 14 states, among other things:

“The left must have as its target the conquest of political power and government power by a subversive political and social movement. This can be achieved through the institutions of popular power and workers’ control and the connection of the question of government power with a contemporary revolutionary strategy, by breaking with capital and imperialism through a workers’ and popular movement capable of imposing its own power and government.

• The influence of ANTARSYA was finally limited by parliamentary illusions of a “left-wing government” that might lead to the immediate and conflict-free solution of the problems without an insurrection. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to continue the efforts to convince the broad popular layers that it will not be possible to confront the most pressing and immedi-

ate social problems with answers simply directed “against the memoranda,” without leaving the eurozone, the decoupling from the EU, and without the complete break with the system that produces crises and memoranda.

The collision course with the lenders and capital is not an easy path, not the easy victory that a “left government” may give us, but will be a difficult, uphill battle, the culmination of the political class struggle that requires the development of the struggle organs of the workers’ rank and file. It will be necessary to continue the efforts to connect all militants who are in a radicalization process and their struggles on the basis of the program of “anti-capitalist revolution” and contemporary forms of a socialist and communist perspective.

• It is necessary that broad layers of the population take the matter into their own hands in order to avoid setbacks and to

proceed on the path of the great struggles and of the outcome of the May 6 result, to develop a political workers’ and grassroots movement, to fight for the abolition of the memoranda, of the loan agreement and of all related laws, to increase the salaries and pensions to a decent level and to enforce the prohibition of dismissals.

All further privatizations must be prevented — and those already implemented must be reversed. We have to demand the nationalization of the banks and big companies of strategic importance under workers’ control. ...

• ANTARSYA stands by its proposal to build at once a battle front for the break with the system and for the defense against the attack and to proceed immediately with the strengthening of the struggles. The workers’ organs of struggle must be developed and supported. The call is addressed to all forces of the left. ...

• At the same time ANTARSYA promotes the creation of a broad united front of the left and the workers’ movement against the fascist threat and the criminal activities of Chrysi Avgi directed against immigrants and activists of the movement. ...

ANTARSYA will immediately establish an initiative for a common approach in dealing with the fascist threat on the part of all social and political organizations of the workers’ movement and the left (including KKE and SYRIZA). ...

• We will continue on the necessary path of the front of the anti-capitalist left and call on all forces and the militants who choose to break with the system and support the overthrow, to discuss openly, to act jointly, and to cooperate in the elections. At the same time we continue the struggle for the further strengthening of ANTARSYA, primarily by the struggles in the movements, but also in the next elections. ■

# QUEBEC STUDENT REVOLT CONTINUES

Steeve Duguay / Agence-France Presse



(Left) Students march through downtown Montreal on May 22 to mark 100 days of protest against tuition hikes and repression.

By **ROBBIE MAHOOD**

MONTREAL—On May 19, Quebec's Liberal government passed draconian legislation, Law 78, to smash the mass student strike that has shaken Quebec society over the past four months.

The so-called Loi de Matraque (truncheon law) is an attack on the rights of association, demonstration and free speech. It suspends academic sessions at all Quebec colleges and universities affected by the strike, prohibits picket lines at educational institutions, forces professors (who had largely been supportive of the strike) to report to work when classes resume in August, authorizes withholding of dues check-offs for any student association deemed responsible for disruption of courses, and outlaws any demonstration that is not pre-approved by the police. Student associations found in violation of the law's provisions will be punished by fines of up to \$125,000 per day.

On May 22, some 200,000 people took to the streets to oppose this repressive law and support a negotiated settlement. Later the same day, the first "concert des casseroles" to show popular displeasure with the law was organized by internet "word of mouth." The banging of pots and pans, borrowed from the Argentine masses, has turned into a regular evening occurrence in many Montreal neighbourhoods. On May 31, solidarity "casseroles" rallies and marches took place in several cities across English Canada, with over 2000 participating in a noisy downtown west-end Toronto walk-about.

The police have chosen to use their new powers selectively and are biding their time. Even so, there have been more than 2000 arrests since the conflict started (four times the number arrested during the invocation of the War Measures Act in October 1970). Several students have been seriously injured by police weapons. Certainly, the huge demonstrations of March 22, April 22, and May 22 were virtually free of incidents, as both police and provocateurs bowed to the law of massive numbers.

The students have won widespread admiration for their courage, tenacity and creativity. Yet the government remains intransigent. Why?

Of course, there has been the inevitable backlash. Thirty years of "retro-liberalism" have had an impact on popular consciousness. Many believe the students should "pay their share" since austerity appears inevitable. Many want to see order restored.

The corporate media actively promote this view and try to taint the students by playing up every violent incident (though not, of course, the violence of the police). Remarkable in this respect is the difference in tone of the French versus the English-speaking media. The most vitriolic hostility to the students comes from the right-wing media outside Quebec; and inside Quebec, attitudes are highly correlated with mother tongue.

**In order to prevail, the students need the full support of the labour movement, including the preparation of a 'social strike.'**

But this alone does not explain the government's tough no-concessions stance. The Liberals are very much the party of the Quebec capitalist class, and Charest is their lieutenant. The Quebec bourgeoisie is anxious to impose austerity in a vain attempt to improve the competitive position of Quebec capital.

The Liberal years in office have been dedicated to

rolling back the legacy of the so-called "Quiet Revolution"—that is, the gains that the labour upsurge of the 1960s and '70s secured for Quebec workers and the Quebec nation as a whole. Indeed, the government was able to wring major concessions from the Quebec public sector unions in 2005 and 2010. By contrast, in 2005, the Liberals were forced to retreat before the student mobilizations that greeted their first attempt to force through a tuition hike. This time they are determined to win.

In order to prevail against such a determined opponent, the students would need the support of the labour movement, and not just the resources that the unions have donated but the preparation and organization of at least a one-day general strike. This, the union leaders have refused to contemplate. Unfortunately, although the idea of a "social strike" is in the air, no significant political force has been prepared to take this demand into the unions and fight for it.

Whatever the outcome of the strike, Quebec's young students have shaken the neo-liberal status quo to its roots. The fight for a freeze on tuition fees linked to the goal of achieving free higher education has struck a chord.

Two different visions of society are posed: on the one hand, relentless commodification of both natural and human resources to benefit the few and drive down the living standards of the many, while degrading the environment; and on the other, collective democratic control over the commonwealth so as to provide a decent life for all, and promote the stewardship, rather than the ruin, of the planet. ■

*Robbie Mahood is a member of Socialist Action (Canada) living in Montreal. Several of his pots have been bent out of shape.*

## Spread the Quebec strike! Solidarity with the students!

As the winds of mass protest and demands for change continue to surge across Quebec, now is the time for students and working people in English Canada to march in solidarity with the students' movement. What began as opposition to tuition hikes in Quebec has grown into a fight against austerity and a defence of fundamental civil liberties. Thousands, almost every night, for over 100 days, and including up to 300,000 students and workers on several occasions, have marched in Montreal and across the province.

Because Quebec has a history of mass protest action, its people have the best public transportation system, the lowest tuitions, and the most affordable provincial child-care system in the Canadian state. The Liberal government under Jean Charest is worried about the potential power of a united front of students and labour to advance an agenda for the 99%. Charest's use of the police to crack down on protesters, and the launch of a war against democratic rights, is his answer.

Law 78 restricts freedom of assembly, protest, even picketing on or near university facilities—indeed anywhere in Quebec without prior police approval. The law also places restrictions upon education employees' right to strike. This bill has been heavily criticized by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and by dozens of legal bodies, as a "violation of fundamental freedoms of association, assembly and expression."

Despite every attempt by the Charest government, the police, and the right-wing media to defame the protests, students continue to hit the streets, in-

credibly ever growing in strength.

In Ontario, with the rapid corporatization of universities, with tuition fees hiked by over 300% in the past decade, it is no longer enough to endorse the example of the Quebec students from afar. It is time to emulate their actions. While capitalist governments deliver bail-outs and tax breaks to the 1%, students are being forced to pay for a recession we did not cause!

Students—from Vancouver to Toronto to Halifax to St. John's, now is the time to show Charest, McGuinty, Harper and the other bourgeois leaders that an attack on any one of us, is an attack on *all* of us!

**We say:**

- Support the Canadian Federation of Students call for mass rallies, debates, and votes across Ontario in September in favour of a student strike to drop fees. Plan actions now to spread the Quebec strike.

- Create a common front of students' organizations and labour unions to support the Quebec students and fight the capitalist austerity measures everywhere.

- ELIMINATE ALL TUITION FEES! Free post-secondary education is a fundamental right, not a privilege.

- Cancel all student debt!

- Repeal Quebec Law 78 and all laws that restrict the right to association, assembly, and expression! Protest is a fundamental right. ■

*Youth for Socialist Action – Jeunesse pour l'Action socialiste: [www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com](http://www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com).*